Sword & Sorcery

Tome of Artifacts



Eldritch Relics and Wonders

Tome of Artifacts™

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This product requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast®. This product utilizes updated material from the v3.5 revision.



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Foreword

So, here we are again.

There is an undeniable strain in fantasy for the bigger, better and more powerful: bigger spells, better weapons, and, of course, more powerful (even godly!) characters. It is from that desire that artifacts came into the role-playing world, über-powerful magical items that would make my character completely unique from yours (and, of course, cooler).

When artifacts first started appearing back in the days of 1st Edition, players seized on them — but not always for the better. It was true that artifacts were supposed to be hard to find, with powers that were difficult to decipher and even more difficult to use. There were outlines of conditions, restrictions, and drawback to their use. Nonetheless, that did not seem to stop DMs and players from freely handing them out. Somewhere along the line, the point of artifacts was lost. Those of us at TSR at the time became used to seeing letters (in the days before email) describing entire parties loaded down with the weaponry of the gods, players who had storerooms filled with every artifact mentioned from the *Wand of Orcus* to the *Hand* and *Eye of You-Know-Who*. And for some, it wasn't enough.

Somewhere along the line, the point of artifacts had been lost. Yes, they were items of immense power and cool, rule-breaking abilities — but they were also supposed to be campaign builders, things you could hinge an entire world (or at least a country) and player career on. A player could spend his life, or at least a good chunk of it, in search of the Doodad of Lubik, find it, perform one great character defining act with it, and then retire.

The problem was artifacts weren't meant to be just weapons, they were meant to be campaigns. To make that happen, artifacts need background — and more than just "this is the weapon of the Black God who hates elves." Artifacts are personalities as much as player characters and NPCs. Their stories shape their powers, define their use, and create adventure. So with the 2nd Edition book of artifacts we expanded their personalities: created mini-stories for each item and tried to find ways for them to play a role in campaigns without destroying them.

For me, another major goal was to return mystery and magic to a fantasy game. Odd to say, but in many ways creating a fantasy game lost the magic of fantasy. What is fantastic after all about a *sword +1?* Where is the mystery and wonder? The magic of legend and fairy tales isn't about numbers or utilitarian crafting. It's about using the footfall of a cat, the beard of a woman, the roots of a rock, the sinews of a bear, the breath of a fish, and the spittle of a bird to bind the Fenris wolf. It's about spinning straw into gold. Wondrous magic is about using the illogical and mysterious to accomplish the impossible. With artifacts, I wanted to encounter those kinds of items once again, to face magic beyond the comprehension of players jaded to the collection of utilitarian spells, armor and weapons that permeate the game.

Of course, there had to be a use for them. All the great magic of tales is powerful and can accomplish great things. But it also had to be in balance. Again, a common theme in legend was that all things come with risk. The monkey's paw doesn't just grant wishes. Artifacts needed their limitations, their risks and their flaws. These were as much a part of their character as their powers. In many ways it is these flaws that create the adventures around artifacts. It is the flaws that humble the mighty, overturn the order of the world, and keep the cycle going. After all the destruction of great heroes in the process of doing good is a classic tale.

It makes me very happy then to say that this new ***Tome of Artifacts*** captures that spirit. In here are artifacts to drive campaigns, create adventures, and just be wondrous. What use is the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* but to create adventure? Will the *Bow of Night* corrupt and destroy its wielder or will he be truly heroic and cast it aside once the need is gone? Better still, the information here expands and improves with more emphasis on rumors, researching and campaign suggestions (those hooks we all love) for use in your game.

And so, here we are again. Artifacts have returned, stronger and more interesting than ever.

David "Zeb" Cook

Introduction

There's something to be said for the classics.

Whether you're an old-school gamer, with memories of play that predate the days of THAC0, or whether 3rd edition is your first experience with fantasy role-play, you've almost certainly made use of some of the game's most classic concepts. Old-school spells, which appear in the arsenal of almost every spellcaster. Foul and vicious monsters as old as the game itself. Winding dungeons, where danger lurks behind every kicked-in door.

And then, just possibly, artifacts.

Artifacts have been a part of every major version of the game since the late 70s, and they've always held a special place in the pantheon of DM tools. They are magic items of wondrous power and horrific curses, in-depth history and story potential so great they can drive entire campaigns. Even in this — arguably the most systematic and mechanically consistent version of the game — artifacts follow no rules but their own. They are the DM's final trump card, the legendary items that appear only when and where he wants, and that inevitably bring much adventure, and much trouble, to the characters who are (un)fortunate enough to find them.

The best artifacts are, of course, far more than a collection of potent abilities. They bear with them a storied and fascinating history, one that should inspire the DM at least as thoroughly as the item's description itself. Unfortunately, most of the artifacts presented throughout the various incarnations of the game have been relatively short of detail, constrained by the requirements of word count.

It was during the latter days of 2nd edition that artifacts were given the attention they deserve, as an entire book of artifacts presented many of these wonders in unprecedented detail. And in many ways, that book is the spiritual father of this one.

For this is what the ***Tome of Artifacts: Eldritch Relics and Wonders*** aspires to be: Nothing less than the quintessential book of artifacts for the current edition.

We've pulled out all the stops, in the hopes of honoring both our predecessor in the field and the concept of the artifact itself. The ***Tome of Artifacts*** is a joint production of **Necromancer Games** and **Lion's Den Press**, two companies made up of people who have been writing and developing D20 material almost from the beginning. We've assembled a skilled team of writers, made up of both talented newcomers and industry veterans, including quite a few names you're almost certain to recognize.

Contents

All right, so enough with the lead-in. What, exactly, does the ***Tome of Artifacts*** offer you?

The bulk of this work consists of nearly 50 artifacts, all ready for use in an existing campaign, or to serve as the foundation of a brand new one. No matter your style of game, you're almost certain to find something useful here, from myth to fairy tale, classic fantasy to the truly bizarre. Your PCs might face the undead armies of the *Altar of the Bone Citadel*, travel the planes on the *Skiff of the Ferryman*, battle the horrible mutations of the *Lamentation Engine*, get lost in the halls of *Black Coal Citadel*, garb themselves in the *Emerald Scales of Veerak*, destroy cities with the *Holocaust Stone*, or even pit the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* against the *Siege Hound of Dula'zar* in a rampaging battle worthy of downtown Tokyo.

Artifact Format

Each artifact follows the same general format, for ease of use. Each begins, of course, with the artifact's name, as well as any other soubriquets it might possess in various myths and legends. Each artifact is clearly marked with the name of its writer as well. This is partly to facilitate their use as Open Content, but also because each and every one of our writers deserves credit for their fantastic work.

Each artifact has a tale to be told, and this tale forms the first true section of each entry. Some are myth, some fairy tale, some rumor and some simple fact, but all provide not only a context for that particular item, but a wealth of ideas and plot seeds on which the DM can draw.

This is followed by a sidebar on researching the artifact. This gives the necessary skill checks for such research, as well as the information provided at each level of success. Most entries conclude with lists or suggestions of *false* information, the sort of erroneous facts PCs might learn if their checks aren't quite high enough for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Next is a section on the artifact's physical properties: what it looks like, what it feels like, and how (or if) it reacts to divination spells.

Now we're into the meat of the artifact: the powers themselves. Constant powers are those that require no voluntary activation; they remain functioning at all times. These can include everything from AC or save bonuses to emanating auras. Activated powers, obviously, are those that require an act of will, a particular trigger, or some other means of deliberate invocation.

Every good artifact, however, has its hazards and downsides; after all, if they were nothing but free power, what fun would that be? These are given next, and range from curses that afflict the wielder to widespread calamities that may make the artifact more dangerous than any villain.

Two optional sections often follow, discussing any ambient effects the artifact has on its surroundings, and how it reacts to spells and magics other than divinations.

As we've mentioned, artifacts are extremely potent and possess detailed back-stories, and their use can be a somewhat daunting prospect. The next section offers advice for DMs, suggesting not only means of incorporating the artifact, but providing specific adventure seeds and suggested means by which the PCs *may* be able to finally destroy the item.

Finally, most of the entries end with one last "goody." Some of these are new spells, new monsters, new feats, new NPCs, new magic items, new planes — anything and everything we could include to enhance game-play even further. Even better, most of these are fully usable even in campaigns that don't use the artifacts themselves, giving DMs maximum flexibility in choosing the material they want to incorporate.

Appendices

The artifacts themselves could easily make up the entirety of the book, but we had a bit more we wanted to offer.

Appendix A presents the *Chosen One*, an artifact in human form. It contains a series of modifications that can be applied to a character selected by fate or by the gods for a higher purpose.

Appendix B is a monster of a chapter, presenting nothing less than a system and charts for random artifact generation. Obviously it can't fill in the specific details for you — you'll need to breathe the last spark of life into your artifacts with your own ideas and creativity — but it can provide you with a solid skeleton from which to work, and is capable of producing literally millions of different artifacts.

Finally, Appendix C serves as a reference for the many new spells, feats, monsters, and other goodies scattered throughout the book. With this appendix, you can easily find the proper page numbers for any such feature you'd like to use.

So what are you waiting for? Dig in, and discover the many wonders and horrors, tales and adventures, that await you in the ***Tome of Artifacts***. We hope that you'll find the material within at least as inspiring as we did.

Ari Marmell
for **Lion's Den Press**
and **Necromancer Games**

Altar of the Bone Citadel

By C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of the Altar of the Bone Citadel

Centuries ago, before the destruction of Ellir Jarville (see *Orb of the Wight*), the great lich trained an apprentice in the ways of magic and death. This was Mol-Tet, a powerful necromancer who would grow to be nearly his master's equal in power, and his superior in ambition.

Long after he left his master's side, Mol-Tet sought to conquer the known world with a vast army of undead warriors. Originally headquartered in a nigh unreachable mountain pass, Mol-Tet found that he needed to be more accessible to his armies as the breadth of his empire grew. Thus he crafted the first of his two famed artifacts: a massive and intricately engraved altar, carved out of a single bone from some unknown colossal creature. (Some tales suggest that this was nothing less than the leg bone of a long dead god.) Infused with bizarre necromantic magics, the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* animated the nearby bones of fallen soldiers and commanded them to collect additional corpses. Quickly and methodically, these skeletons dug out and crafted an underground catacomb to protect the *Altar*, and then began construction on a tower high above it. Depending on the number of casualties on any given battlefield, a new bone citadel could be constructed in just a few short weeks. With the *Altar* in tow, Mol-Tet could build a new base of operations in any land he conquered, the tower standing testimony to the awful terror that befell those who dared oppose him.

Many attempted to raid Mol-Tet's citadel, in hopes of destroying Mol-Tet himself. None returned. It wasn't until Mol-Tet's own megalomania drove him to create an even more powerful artifact that he met his end by his own hands. With Mol-Tet dead, his army fell soon after. Mol-Tet's artifacts and belongings were soon scattered, and his hulking citadels torn down. The dead were buried and the great war against the undead menace became one of history's great cautionary tales.

The *Altar of the Bone Citadel*, proving to be completely indestructible, was hidden, buried deep in a cave that lay sealed shut for generations. There it stayed until another power hungry necromancer excavated it in hopes of accomplishing what Mol-Tet could not. He, too, met defeat and death, and the *Altar* has changed hands many times since.

Researching The Altar of the Bone Citadel

While the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* has a solid place in history, few actually know that the Altar itself was responsible for the monolithic citadels that once dotted the land. A Knowledge (history), Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check can shed some light on the subject.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	Once, centuries ago, a mad sorcerer constructed great towers of bone, and a powerful artifact in the form of an altar.
20	It was the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* itself that constructed these towers, using animate dead to build those unholy places.
25	The *Altar* is capable of animating any nearby dead, who then build a maze of catacombs around it. The *Altar* also commands its deathless minions to bring it additional bodies, providing an endless stream of skeletal servants.
30+	No mortal may fully command the powers of the *Altar*, but they can avoid its wrath. It is said that at the stroke of the witching hour, the *Altar* resets and repairs its servants, and that those servants are much more deadly and capable than skeletons raised by mere necromancers.

Many rumors persist that it was the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* itself that created Mol-Tet's vast army, when in truth it was not. Rumors also claim that anyone who owns the Altar also commands the undead it creates. One story has it that the *Altar* may be sundered by the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, but there seems to be no truth to this rumor either.

Studying the Altar of the Bone Citadel

The *Altar of the Bone Citadel*, a massive artifact weighing upward of 800 pounds, is intricately etched and carved from a single bone. Foul symbols, recognizable only to those who

have read the most vile of necromantic works, run the entire length and breadth of the altar. Four perfectly carved human skulls, each a solid part of the *Altar*, rest atop each of the four corners. Aged and faded bloodstains atop the *Altar* are the only notable discolorations to the otherwise evenly aged bone. The *Altar* radiates great evil if viewed with any manner of detection, and radiates strong necromancy if viewed with *detect magic*.

The catacombs are a maze of bone, with corridors ten feet high and ten feet wide. The walls are formed in layers: skulls atop stacked bones atop skulls, in a pattern that repeats from floor to ceiling the ceiling. The floor is a mixture of sand or dirt and bone fragments, as well as a fine layer of crushed bone if the catacomb has existed for at least a year. The sanctuary, always found in the center of the complex, is 40 feet on a side, its floor entirely layered in broken bones.

The citadel, at its full height, stands about 200 feet tall. The bones that form its walls are magically reinforced as to support the massive amount of weight. It is a series of winding staircases and rooms complete with bone furnishings.

Powers of the Altar of the Bone Citadel

The *Altar* animates any dead body within range to serve the *Altar's* only purpose: constructing a series of catacombs and a tower worthy of a powerful necromancer. The dead thusly animated serve not just to construct the site, however, but to protect it as well. Risen dead created by the *Altar* are more powerful than those created by the normal means.

Using the Altar of the Bone Citadel

The *Altar* functions constantly, always forging a new palace of the dead. Left alone, the *Altar* animates any dead within range and begin its collection process. The skeletal guardians of the altar attack anyone within the confines of the catacombs. However, if someone smears their blood atop the *Altar* (requiring enough blood to deal 1d2 points of Constitution damage) the artifact recognizes him as is new owner. From this point, the *Altar*'s undead ignore the character, even if he threatens or attacks them.

Constant Powers

When not in the confines of its catacombs, the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* can create up to 40 Hit Dice of skeletons, as per the *animate dead* spell, with a range of 10 miles. It can create all 40 HD at once, but may only do so at the witching hour (the moment when the time between sunset and sunrise are perfectly equal.) The *Altar* always keeps 40 HD-worth of skeletal laborers in activity, and creates new ones at the next witching hour if for some reason it falls below its maximum. These skeletons then go about digging up and collecting any other corpses within the 10-mile radius to harvest the needed bones. The *Altar* always knows the location of any dead within 100 miles, and the skeletons are instantly commanded to go to the nearest location where bones are readily available. Once all of the dead within 10 miles have been collected, the skeletons range further out, collecting in concentric circles of 10 miles each, until all of the dead within range have been brought to the *Altar*.

Up to this point, the skeletons only fight when attacked or when someone enters the confines of the catacombs. Once all of the bones within 100 miles have been collected, however, the skeletons form raiding parties to kill for more bones until the citadel itself is completed. Once completed, the skeletons do not leave their assigned post within the catacombs or citadel unless someone does damage of any kind to the structure, at which point they attack to kill. Skeletons do not patrol the outside the citadel.

Skeletons created by the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* have +4 Str, +4 hit points per HD and have a turn resistance of +2. (This raises the CR of any skeleton to a minimum of 1, but does not affect the CR of skeletons that already have a CR of 1 or higher.) Within the confines of the catacombs, the skeletons gain an additional +2 bonus on attack and damage rolls, and act as a unit, gaining an additional +1 bonus on attack rolls when adjacent to any other *Altar*-created skeleton. Any skeletal laborers that fall under the control of another individual are replaced at the next witching hour, but keep all of the bonuses gained from their creation by the *Altar*.

When short of its maximum servants, the *Altar* first animates any newly dead occupants of the catacombs or citadel, such as adventurers who may have fallen and have yet to be retrieved from the site. Lacking any fresh bodies, the *Altar* animates corpses from the walls of the catacomb itself, providing a nearly endless stream of servants.

Consequences

No known method for controlling the *Altar* exists. One simply puts the *Altar* where he wants it and the *Altar* goes about its business. The owner cannot command the skeletons, nor can he make the *Altar* cease its activities by any means other than removing it from the catacomb and setting it up elsewhere.

Ambient Effects

The *Altar of the Bone Citadel* radiates *bane* and *unhallow*, as per the spells cast by a 20th-level cleric. These effects extent throughout the catacombs and citadel, and cannot be suppressed by any means. When the *Altar* is not within the catacombs, this effect extends to only 40 feet.

Any dead bodies within the confines of the catacombs or the citadel may not be *raised* or *resurrected* in any way, except through animation as an undead creature. Anyone killed within the *Altar's* immediate influence must be taken from the catacombs or tower in order to be raised or resurrected.

Reactive Traits

The *Altar of the Bone Citadel* is immune to any magical effects. However, a successful turn undead attempt, focused upon the *Altar* itself (treat it as a 20-HD undead creature) temporarily nullify its powers, destroying any existing skeletons and instantly collapsing any of the existing structure. The powers of the *Altar*, however, return in one minute.

Using The Altar of the Bone Citadel in a Campaign

The *Altar of the Bone Citadel* is ideal for any level of campaign, but best suited for low to mid-level adventures. Depending on who, if anyone, is using the *Altar*, and on the citadel's stage of completion, the challenge of an adventure can be easily adjusted. Also, while the *Altar* creates up to 40 HD in skeletons, the DM can scale the average HD of each individual skeleton, to make the challenge suitable to the party's level of experience. Low-level adventurers might encounter the laborers harvesting bones, leading them back to the unfinished catacombs. Mid-level adventurers may have to contend with skeletal raiding parties leading them back to a completed citadel. High level adventurers may have to contend not just with the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* itself, but with the citadel's new resident necromancer and his own series of minions.

Adventure Seeds

The Abandoned Altar

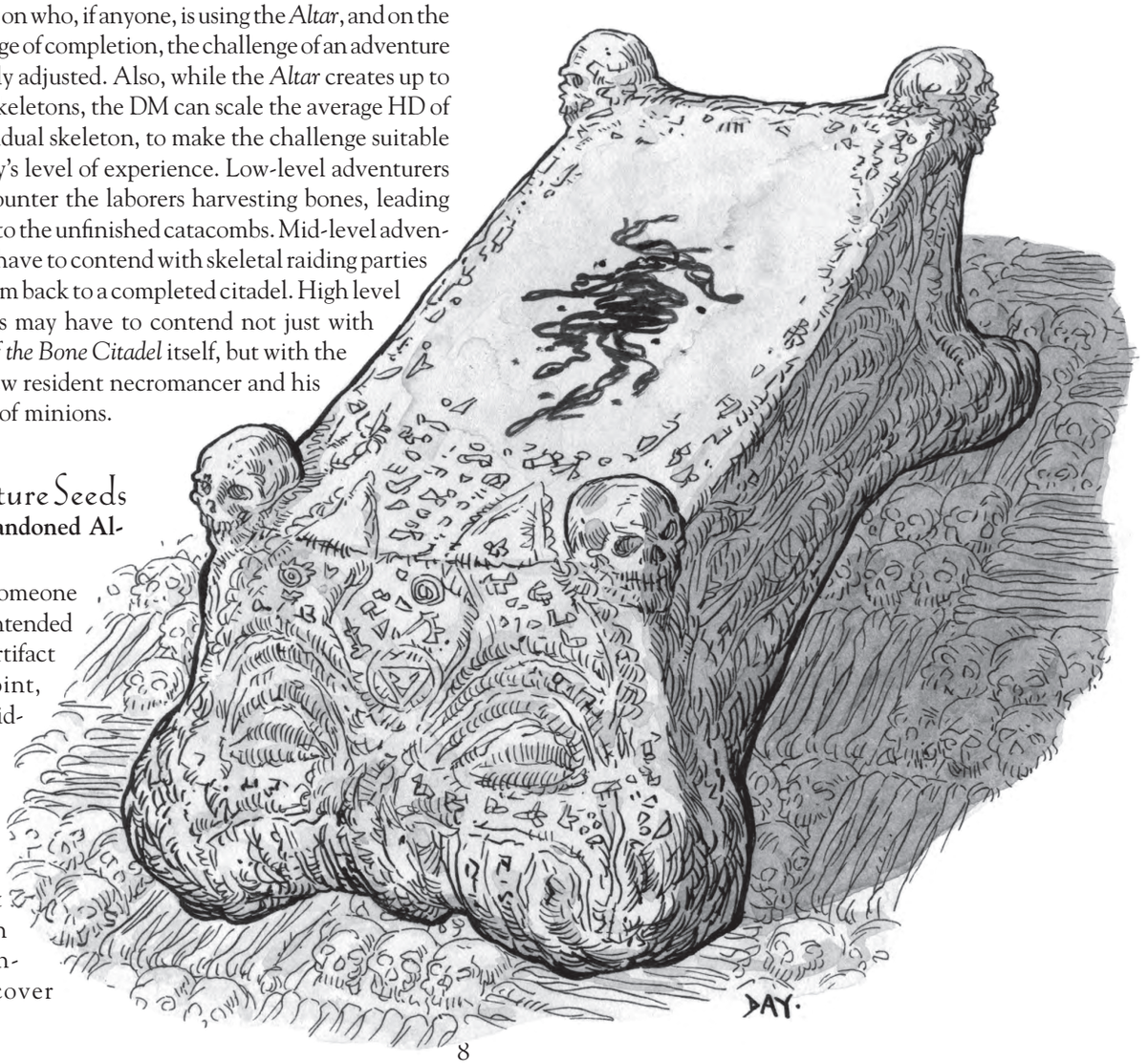
While someone may have intended to use the artifact at one point, that individual is long gone. Now the *Altar* is simply doing what it does. When the adventures discover disturbed graves all over the countryside, they set out to find the insidious grave robbers, only to discover a macabre dungeon unlike any they've encountered: A dungeon of death that seems very much alive.

The Heir of Mol-Tet

A powerful necromancer has discovered the secrets of Mol-Tet and has set out to succeed where Mol-Tet failed. He has begun by constructing a citadel and filling it with his own undead abominations. The adventurers must fight their way through the complex and put an end to this necromancer before he completes his further schemes — which may involve undead armies, or even the use of other necromantic artifacts, such as the *Orb of the Wight* or the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*.

The Casting out of the Altar

While the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* cannot be destroyed, it can be rendered inert. But where can the adventurers hide an 800-pound altar where they can be assured no one will die within a hundred miles of it? And just how are they supposed to get it there?



Destroying the Altar

Only one way of destroying the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* has even been hinted at in legends and, if accurate, is so horrifically difficult as to be all but impossible.

• A god who does not hold dominion over the undead must attune himself to the *Altar*. The *Altar* must then collect the bones of a god whose portfolio does include the undead, and build them into the catacomb or the citadel. If this happens, the entire structure — catacomb, citadel, and even the *Altar* — decay into nothingness in 1d4 hours.

While the artifact is all but indestructible, however, it can be temporarily hidden or banished.

• Casting *the Altar of the Bone Citadel* into the belly of an active volcano could keep its skeletal minions from getting to it and keep others from finding it.

• Send the artifact to another plane in which the denizens have no bones.

New Minor Artifact

Many people who have heard of the *Altar* believe that it granted Mol-Tet the power to control whole armies of skeletons. In truth, while he did indeed possess that ability, it was his *robes*, not the greater artifact, that granted it.

Robes of Mol–Tet

Though less powerful than the *Altar* or the *Ebony Skeleton*, the *Robes of Mol-Tet* are no less horrific. This artifact allows its wearer to command veritable legions of the undead.

Description: What were obviously once rich purple robes of the finest silks have been dulled nearly black by grave dirt, grime and the stains of various fluids. The edges are frayed and several tears and claw marks scar the robes, both front and back.

Activation: The *robes* require no activation; simply wearing them is sufficient to access their vile power.

Effect: The *robes of Mol-Tet* eliminate the Hit Die restriction on the number of undead the wearer can control via spells such as *animate dead*. They do not actually grant the power to raise the dead, however; the wearer must still be able to do so on his own.

Aura/Caster Level: Strong necromancy. CL 18th.

Weight: 2 lb.

Al-Qabir's Inscrutable Floating Parlor

The Spice Merchant's Den, the Machine of Mystery
By C.A. Suleiman

The Tale of the Parlor

Ah, so you wish to hear the legend of the floating parlor of al-Qabir, hmm? Very well. You've paid good coin for this evening's shelter and water, and as I am a gracious host, I am bound to your request. Sit, please, and take a draw from the water pipe. Tonight, we shall be as brothers.

To begin, I shall—

What's that? Oh, yes. When I speak of it as "legend," dear friend, it is because that is what it has become, here in the Caliphate, at least. And I'm quite sure that old al-Qabir himself would have wanted it no other way. He was a lover of tales, after all.

Let me begin by saying that Mohtara was not always the place it is for us living here today. Back in al-Qabir's time, the Caliph was not so… understanding. He imposed strict regulations on traded goods, and no matter what your particular pleasure might have been, none was more strictly regulated than the spice. For a spice merchant, as al-Qabir was, this proved frustrating.

It wasn't that there was no call for wares such as his—quite the contrary, as I'm sure you can imagine. Rather, it was the extremist regard in which the Caliph held such luxuries that was the source of the problem. Certainly, one could stick to those spices that were viewed with acceptance in court, but any fool could see that there was no money in that, no future. And al-Qabir was no fool.

After the third time his operation was closed down by the Caliph's men, al-Qabir found himself behind bars, awaiting the so-called "trial" he knew could only conclude with his execution. As he sat in his cell, bemoaning his fate, he heard a faint sound, as of someone whistling a pleasant air in the street outside. Stepping to his only window, al-Qabir was startled to behold a small falcon perched upon the sill, a sparkling charm dangling round its noble chest.

Taking the charm in hand, the spice merchant was startled yet again by the puff of azure smoke that erupted from the charm's inset stone. Within seconds, the smoke took humanoid shape. Al-Qabir gaped in awe as what could only be one of the mighty *djinn* stepped forward, bowing humbly.

When faced with the prospect of having not one but three wishes, all the spice merchant could think to say was, "Oh, esteemed one, I am so weary of not being able to ply an honest trade in my own homeland. If I could but escape this hole, and have a means by which I could travel the land in secrecy, stopping and selling only when and to whom I chose, I would be most content, even happy." By way of reply, the genie bowed once more and offered to show him the way to such a future. All the spice merchant had to do was wish it so….

That is only the beginning, of course. We all know where the story goes from there: how al-Qabir went on to become the greatest folk hero of his day; how he floated from town to town in his invisible parlor, always one step ahead of the Caliph's men; how he alone moved mountains of spice, and in so doing, changed the way the Caliphate would look upon such things forever after. But no one ever seems to recall the end of his tale, now do they? How al-Qabir vanished without trace from the land once his work was done. Just a rumor, you say? Possibly….

But I ask you this: If it is not truth, then what *did* become of old al-Qabir?

Studying the Parlor

Part of the mystery of the *Inscrutable Floating Parlor* rests in the fact that it's so difficulty to study. Even the mightiest divinations are powerless to locate it, and if the thing's exterior truly does reside on this plane, no one has ever seen it. Whether hovering idle or actively in motion, the artifact is completely invisible. It makes no sound, leaves no tracks, and produces no distinguishable scent or odor. The exception to this rule is when someone is using the hookah while the artifact is in motion. In this circumstance, anyone under the effects of a *true seeing* spell, and gazing at the precise location of the *Parlor* as it goes by, sees what appears to be a moving trail of wispy green vapor. But even then, no features of the *Parlor* itself are apparent.

Anyone trying to touch the outside of the *Parlor* feels a smooth structure with four walls, a roof and a floor. By touch, the artifact seems to measure only nine feet on a side, but the floor usually appears to hover some three feet off the ground (the owner can alter this if he chooses), raising the wall and ceiling height to a full 12 feet. Any attempt to mark the exterior, whether by paint or chalk dust or the like, fails, as though no surface was there to affect. The shape, character and even size of the *Parlor's* interior vary from owner to owner (see the Spatial Distortion ability, below), with one important exception: No

Researching the Parlor

Inscrutable as it is, Al-Qabir's legendary *Parlor* has left precious little evidence of its passing over the years. Most of what data there is has been left in the minds of those with whom the artifact's prior owners have come in contact. As such, researchers are likely to have better luck seeking out more personal sources, such as the elder keepers of a particular village's oral tradition, where more traditional methods of research might fail.

Anyone with Bardic Knowledge, or using the Gather Information skill in the right region, may attempt to research the *Parlor*. Knowledge gained is very likely stained with some measure of personal bias, interpretation, and/or local color.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	A wealthy spice merchant in an age gone by came to possess an invisible parlor which could fly from place to place upon its owner's command.
20	While traveling within the artifact, one has access to insights beyond the ken of mortal men.
25	Those who indulge in the *Inscrutable Floating Parlor*'s decadence may soon find themselves unable to exist without it.
30+	More than one of the artifact's previous owners seemed to somehow disappear from existence entirely. (The character finds a reliable reference confirming this fact.) The artifact is almost impossible to destroy. (Provide the player with one or more of the methods of destruction given below.) The *Parlor* offers undeniable power, but seems to ask nothing in return….

The two largest sources of mystery, and thus the key areas of misinformation, about the *Parlor* pertain to its origins and to the true extent of its powers. Few can speak with any certainty or authority on either matter, but that doesn't stop loose-lipped masters of conjecture from producing notions of the following variety:

- The *Parlor* is not an actual object that exists on this plane, but rather a permanent rift between this world and another. This explains why previous owners have appeared to vanish without a trace.
- If one were to somehow see the exterior of the *Parlor* for what it is, one would behold a panoply of anguished faces, pressed screaming against its four walls.
- In order to destroy the *Parlor*, one must summon an Efreeti lord from the courts of fire and bind him to service. Only by commanding the genie to return with the artifact to the fabled City of Brass may it be melted down in the fires of that plane.

matter how it may appear, the core feature of the *Parlor* is always a sunken open area, at the center of which sits an elegant hookah seemingly fashioned from gold.

Casting *detect magic* on the *Parlor* while the hookah is not in use produces no result, as though the artifact didn't exist. Casting *detect magic* under the effects of a *true seeing* spell — *while the hookah is in use and the artifact is in motion* — reveals impossibly strong auras of both conjuration and divination magics.

All other divinations are similarly frustrated. Even the *identify* spell reveals absolutely nothing, whether or not the golden hookah is in use, and any attempt to *scry* on the *Parlor*, or on anyone either using it or riding inside it, simply fails.

Powers of Al-Qabir's Inscrutable Floating Parlor

As it is now one of the greatest myths to come out of a mythic age, there is no shortage of theories on just what Al-Qabir's wondrous *Parlor* might have done. The truth is that the *Parlor* doesn't have many powers in and of itself. Indeed, the single greatest power of this artifact lies in its legendry, and in this case, in the very essence of wonder.

Using the Parlor

Although many can make use of the artifact and its activated powers, only one may be considered its owner at one time, and only the owner can actually command the artifact into action. Once an individual has claimed the *Parlor* for his own, he always has an unerring sense of where his artifact is, and just how far he is from the entrance. (The artifact's protection against scrying does not extend to its owner while he is outside its walls.)

The owner may always summon the artifact to him, by silent act of will; it flies at a speed of 240 (48 squares) to reach him. (The artifact cannot enter an area that cannot accommodate a 9-foot by 9-foot object, however, and

should the owner be beyond its reach, it draws as close as it can to him and then stops.) The owner can command the artifact's movements, as well as its Phantasmal Guise ability, from any location, even on another plane of existence. All other activated powers require that the owner actually be inside the *Parlor*.

To enter the *Parlor*, the owner simply commands it to open for him (usually with the flourish of a "phrase of power," though none is strictly necessary). At this point, a sort of door opens and a golden stepladder, similar to those found on luxury carriages, drops to the ground (a maximum of six feet), allowing passage into the *Parlor*. If the artifact is under no guise at the time, the "door" appears to be a rift in space, opening to reveal a glimpse of the interior beyond. Otherwise, the opening appears as a true door, consistent with whatever seeming was adopted. If the artifact has no owner, this "door" opens for anyone who stands before it.

Constant Powers

In addition to its flight and its inscrutability (which are restated below for the purposes of completeness), as well as the handful of powers that require activation, the *Parlor* has a number of powers worked into its very design.

Flight: The *Parlor* never touches the ground unless its owner commands it to. Most of the time, it hovers about three feet off the ground, but can be directed to raise or lower this height. Any distance above six feet prevents the golden step ladder from descending when the door is commanded to open. While in motion, the artifact typically floats along at a leisurely speed of 20 (4 squares), but can be commanded to race as fast as 240 (48 squares), if needed. The artifact's maneuverability is average.

Granted Fortitude: The owner of the *Parlor* receives a +4 inherent bonus to all Wisdom checks; Charisma-, Intelligence-, or Wisdom-based skill checks; and Will saves while he remains within the artifact.

Inscrutability: As mentioned above, the *Parlor* is invisible as a default, and not just to normal eyesight, but to other mundane means of detection, such as darkvision and the scent ability, and to mystical means of perception, as well. No mortal magic can overcome this inscrutability (except as noted above).

Security: No creature or object can enter the interior of the artifact by means of *teleport, dimension door, etherealness, gate* or any other such means of conveyance unless the owner wishes it.

Spatial Distortion: Even though the *Parlor* "feels" as though it measures only 9 feet by 9 feed from the outside, the interior is potentially much more spacious, and indeed, conforms entirely to the owner's preferences in its design and layout. The only restrictions are that the total area can't be larger than 60-foot square, and it may only have one floor — the "ground" floor — regardless of space design or efficiency.

Temperance: The interior of the *Parlor* is comfortable, regardless of any outside prevailing conditions. Ventilation is perfect, and no environmental effect, be it wind, gas, rain or other, can penetrate to the interior without the express desire of the artifact's owner. In addition, the interior is mystically stabilized to mitigate the deleterious effects of inertia. Thus do those within remain on sure footing even while the *Parlor* is in motion.

Activated Powers

Most of the *Parlor's* activated powers revolve around the golden hookah found within, and cannot be activated unless the hookah is in use.

Cloud of Disarming: Three times per day, as a standard action, the owner of the *Parlor* can use the golden hookah to fill the area with a greenish haze that puts everyone but the owner and his allies in a state of mental relaxation and pliability. The effect is a combination of the spells *calm emotions* and *mind fog*, each treated as though cast by a 22nd level caster. Affected creatures must make two Will saves, one for each effect — the first at a DC of 20, the second at a DC of 23.

Eyes of the Past: Twice per day, the owner of the *Parlor* can use the golden hookah to generate an effect similar to an *oracular haze* spell (new spell; see below) at a caster level of 22nd. The *Parlor* itself must be in motion at a speed of at least 20 in order for the owner to use this power.

Genie's Bargain: Three times per day, as a standard action, the owner of the parlor can use the golden hookah to fill the area with a pleasant-smelling haze that duplicates the effects of a *zone of truth* spell (caster level 22nd; DC 21 Will negates).

Phantasmal Guise: At will, the owner of the parlor may invoke an effect similar to a *permanent image* spell (caster level 22nd), with two important caveats: First, the only image he can create is an alternate seeming for the *Parlor* itself (an extravagant tent is common, but an old shack or country inn works just as well). Second, the effect cannot be disbelieved, no matter the individual interaction. (It is, for all intents and purposes, a type of polymorph, rather than a true illusion.) The owner can invoke or cancel this effect from anywhere on the plane. Canceling any extant guise effect returns the *Parlor* to its default invisibility.

Spiritual Bulwark: Once per day, as a standard action, the owner of the *Parlor* may use the hookah to bestow upon himself an effect similar in all ways to a *mind blank* spell (caster level 22nd). The effects persist for the standard duration, even if and after the owner leaves the confines of the *Parlor*.

Consequences

Once one has discovered the golden hookah's Eyes of the Past ability, the draw of lost and ancient knowledge becomes irresistible for the owner. What begins with an innocent desire to unearth buried lore develops swiftly into a full-blown obsession. Before long, the owner has sequestered himself within his invisible prison, wanting nothing more than the next gratifying excursion into the past. Each new insight only drives the desire for the next, and before long, it's all the owner can do to remember to eat or sleep in between bouts of waking dream.

Things progresses, with the hookah-addled owner withdrawing from everyone and everything else in his life, until one of three things happens:

- The owner gives up the golden hookah (and thus the *Parlor*, as the hookah cannot be removed from it) forever.
- The owner dies, and the artifact is free to adopt a new owner.
- The owner disappears from reality altogether (thus allowing the artifact a new owner). Now, nobody is sure just how this last option manifests, but rumors persist, and almost every telling concludes with the surety that this is the fate that awaits those who cannot break free of their addiction to the past….



Using the Parlor in a Campaign

True to its ethos, the *Parlor* makes a good central focus for stories that revolve around mystery or the search for the unknown. Unlike some other artifacts, it can also easily fall into the hands of lower-powered characters, and could feature prominently as the goal of an entire story arc or campaign.

Adventure Seeds

The Devil's Due

A swindler of some repute has acquired the *Parlor* and is using its golden hookah to cheat honest people out of their gold as he floats from town to town. Since his location can't be tracked or divined, nobody knows how to put a stop to his swindling ways. Can the PCs figure out who he is and where he'll go to next? And if they can, can they make sure they don't fall victim to his swindling ways?

The Vanishing

A woman approaches the PCs with a fascinating tale: She claims to be the daughter/sister/wife of a man who came into possession of an incredible floating parlor. Soon after he did, she lost all contact with him. She can't seem to find any evidence or record of his activities one way or another, and the divinations she's bought are coming up grey. Can the party help her discover what happened?

Destroying the Parlor

As its origins are shrouded in mystery, no one can say for sure how the *Inscrutable Floating Parlor* came or how to make it go away. The artifact is immune to both physical damage and magical attack, and even the mightiest spells cannot affect it in any destructive manner. (This makes it a great place to hole up, should one find one's self under siege, assuming food isn't an issue.) For all intents and purposes, the following methods should be viewed as the *only* possible means of destroying the *Parlor*, and even then, only one should work.

• The artifact's owner must bring a *bag of holding* inside the *Parlor*, turn it inside out, and then pierce or otherwise destroy it. When he does, both the *bag* and the *Parlor* are destroyed, and the owner (along with every other soul inside the artifact at the time) is catapulted to a random spot deep on the Astral Plane.

• The owner must use the artifact's Eyes of the Past ability to discern the exact moment when the *Parlor* arrived on his plane. Armed with this knowledge, he must somehow travel back in time to that place and time and claim ownership of the *Parlor* when it arrives. The instant he does, the *Parlor* winks out of existence.

• The artifact's current owner must track down a genie and coerce or otherwise convince him to grant three *wishes*. With his first *wish*, he must wish for the power to unmake the *Parlor*. With his second *wish*, he must wish for the *Parlor* to be unmade. And with his third *wish*, he must wish for the *Parlor* never to return.

New Spell

The following spell is known only to those who own (or have owned) the *Floating Parlor*, but it may be possible for some other spellcaster to research it independently.

Oracular Haze

Divination

Level: Brd 6, Sor/Wiz 8

Components: S, M, F

Casting Time: 1d4x10 minutes

Range: 30 ft.

Targets: Up to one creature/two levels in a 30-ft.-radius centered on you

Duration: See text

This potent divination allows a group of individuals to tune in to the collective unconscious, and in so doing, to glean great insights about important people, places, objects, or historical events. (Despite its name, the spell neither provides nor allows for divination into events which have not yet come to pass.) In order to cast the spell, you and any others you wish to include must spend some time passing around a finely-crafted hookah. Each participant must smoke at least once in order to be included in the spell's effects and gain any insight.

As the area fills with rich, heady smoke, each participant enters a sort of trance. The resulting insight is functionally similar to that granted by a *vision* spell (see that spell in the *PHB* for specifics, including the rules for level checks), except that multiple individuals may benefit from its wisdom and the magic doesn't put quite the same strain on the minds of those involved. The other important distinction is that participants may inquire after different topics, if they so choose.

But where the *vision* spell imparts knowledge based on the familiarity of the subject in question, the divinatory power of *oracular haze* is dependent largely on the extent to which participating minds cooperate. If each participant seeks to learn about a different subject, then no single individual gleans a great deal of information about his particular topic, and the DC for each check is 30. If more than one participant focuses on a given topic, then a commensurately greater degree of knowledge is imparted about that topic, and the DC for the check is 25. If all subjects involved focus on the same question, then the spell is sure to reveal some truly useful insights, and the DC for the check is 20. (Casting this spell without additional participants grants you a useful but not extensively detailed vision.)

Unlike *legend lore* and similar divinations, *oracular haze* allows probing into even the most obscure subjects, with the caveat that only a single aspect of any given topic may be explored per casting of the spell. The full extent of any information gleaned, as well as the manner in which it is imparted, is at the DM's discretion.

Material Component: Fine tobacco, hashish, or other potent herb worth 250 gp.

Focus: Hand-crafted hookah worth at least 500 gp.

Ashen Heart of Barrat Sûn

The Black Heart, Sûn's Legacy
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of the Ashen Heart

Legends disagree on where the undead scourge, known today as the vampire, first came from. They disagree on who might truly claim to be the first, and on how long these most infamous of the undead have plagued the mortal worlds.

One detail on which many of the myths and tales agree, however, is that of all the vampires to bedevil the living throughout history, perhaps the worst was Barrat Sûn.

In the modern age, none can say with any authority who Sûn might have been during his mortal life. He first appears in an obscure myth that tells of events over six-thousand years old. According to this tale, Sûn was the favored spawn and strong right hand of a vampire named Ara Sciek. He is mentioned only in passing, for this particular legend focuses on Sciek herself, and her efforts at conquering the Kazcien province of the great Empire of Unat-Fer.

Sûn does not appear again until almost two-thousand years later. By this time, Unat-Fer has shrunk considerably, having fallen into a period of cultural decadence and decline. Now completely independent of his former master, and an incredibly potent arcanist to boot, Sûn led an army of the living, the dead, and swarms of animals and vermin against the surviving government of Unat-Fer. After a bloody war, the vampire assumed the throne as the Night's Emperor of Unat-Fer.

For another thousand years, Sûn reigned in a bloody regime. The many provinces of Unat-Fer were permitted to govern themselves during the day, while authority reverted to the Imperial Throne during the hours of darkness. Sûn's armies marched against neighboring lands, annexing them into the so-called Empire of Night. Each was treated as were the provinces; native governments were allowed to remain in place, so long as they swore fealty to Sûn and acknowledged that every piece of land, every structure, every home, was the property of the Night's Emperor come dusk. Unat-Fer became a paradise for vampires and other predatory undead, and the people lived in constant fear.

Yet even the mighty Sûn could not rule forever. After a thousand years of oppression, a pair of champions arose from the population and set about to slay the blood-sucking fiend once and for all. They battled their way through his armies, to the very center of his power: the great tower known as the Spire of Dusk. (Some legends claim that one of these champions wielded the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*) Though it cost them both their lives, these champions reached the heart of the Spire of Dusk. Together they subdued the Night's Emperor, and pierced him through the heart with a darkwood sword, crafted specifically for this purpose. Even as Sûn's body shriveled around the stake, they lopped off his head and — before finally being overrun by the vampire's armies — cast both segments of his body into the raging hearth.

Alas, the evil of Barrat Sûn, and the vampire's malevolent will, could not so easily be slain. Though his body burnt away, a solid lump of ash remained, the residue of Sûn's black and unbeating heart, clumped around the wooden blade. For many years, it sat untouched, as the Spire of Dusk slowly deteriorated and collapsed around it.

Eventually, however, a party of adventurers arrived to explore the forgotten ruins, as adventurers are wont to do. They located the wooden sword and removed the strange ashen clump from its blade. A wizard traveling as one of the party recognized the great magics that lingered within the ash; he knew not what he would unleash when he chose to carry it out with him…

Since that day, the *Ashen Heart* has been carried from land to land, possibly even world to world. Wherever it travels, it bestows great power but causes great pain. Many times, the forces of good have sought to destroy it, and many times they have failed. And so it shall continue, until the *Heart* is someday destroyed — or until Barrat Sûn should rise from it once again, restored to his full malevolent glory.

Studying the Ashen Heart

The *Ashen Heart* looks exactly as it sounds: It is a small mass of dull gray ash, roughly the size and general shape of a human heart. It feels constantly moist to the touch, and leaves a smear of wet ash on anything it touches. This wetness is ever so slightly warm, and tends to make living beings uncomfortable.

The *Heart* has a smoldering, smoky smell to it, as though it was literally pulled out of the embers of a dying fire. It grows paler when exposed to direct sunlight, and the burning scent

Researching the Ashen Heart

Sûn's Legacy is actually a very difficult artifact to research. While many tales speak of Barrat Sûn, very few people know that his heart survived his destruction. Thus, it is possible for someone to know of Sûn but not the *Heart*, or vice-versa.

Anyone with Knowledge (history) may attempt a check to see if they know anything about Sûn, and his nocturnal Empire of Unat-Fer. However, Knowledge (history) does not allow a character to learn about the *Heart*. Similarly, a character with Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) may know of a necromancy-inclined artifact known as the *Black Heart*, but they know nothing of its connection to Barrat Sûn. Only someone who succeeds at *both* checks can gain full knowledge of the artifact.

Bardic Knowledge might allow knowledge of both Sûn and the *Heart*, but the character must make separate checks for each.

DC	Knowledge Available About Sûn
10	A great vampire named Barrat Sûn once ruled a dreadful empire called Unat-Fer.
20	Barrat Sûn was a powerful wizard, in addition to being a vampire. His empire was allowed to largely govern itself during the day, but he and his vampiric minions had free reign at night.
25	The character knows all the information presented in the History section, above, ***except*** for the bit about Sûn's heart surviving.
30+	Only with a roll this high does the character know that Sûn's heart survived, though he must still attempt another appropriate roll to learn anything about it.

DC	Knowledge Available About the Heart
10	An artifact known as the *Black Heart* grants its bearer potent abilities, not unlike those of a vampire.
20	Merely wielding the *Heart* grants only a few abilities. Consuming it unlocks a great many more.
25	The *Heart* demands a price from those who would use it. Wielding it drains a bit of health, while consuming it forces the individual to feed on others. (The character is also aware of the *Heart's* specific powers.)
30	The *Heart* is all that remains of *Barrat Sûn*, an ancient and powerful vampire. (The character must still make an appropriate check to learn any more about Sûn.) Supposedly, under the proper circumstances, Sûn himself may be reborn from the *Heart*.
35+	The character knows a few methods of destroying the *heart*.

Perhaps the most common misconceptions regarding the *Heart* have to do with its origins. Since only a few people have the knowledge necessary to connect it with Barrat Sûn, the DM might provide all manner of false clues to its nature. These might include:

- The *Heart* is the remains of a demon or devil slain on the Material Plane.
- The *Heart* was created by a powerful red dragon, who gathered together ashes from a thousand people he burned to death and enchanted the lot of them.
- The *Heart* was created artificially, and is in fact part of the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*.

Of course, a great many of the inaccurate rumors and legends of the *Heart* have to do with its powers, as well as its nature.

- If you cut the heart from a living being and replace it with the *Black Heart*, that individual will return to life with more power than the *Heart* can grant by any other method. (If you cut the heart from a living being, he's going to stay dead. The *Heart* has many powers, but raising the dead is not among them.)
- The *Black Heart* grants its wielder power over the undead. (In point of fact, undead are among the creatures over which the artifact does *not* grant power. This misconception often goes hand-in-hand with the notion that the *Heart* is part of the *Ebony Skeleton*.)
- Anyone who has consumed the *Heart* is immune to the powers of the vampire. (This is, in fact, only partly true. While the individual is protected from their energy-draining touch, they can still be harmed through blood loss. In fact, once a vampire tastes the blood of someone who has consumed the *Heart*, she may find herself unable to stop feeding.)
- If a vampire consumes the *Black Heart*, she gains great power. (Vampires cannot consume the *Heart*, though they can drain the life from someone *else* who has consumed the *Heart*.)

grows stronger, though it never actually bursts into flame or seems to take any true damage. If exposed to any of the other traditional banes of vampires — holy symbols, garlic, running water — it seems to shrivel up into itself, shrinking to roughly three-quarters its normal size. It slowly expands to normal once the offending object has been removed.

If and when someone attempts to consume the *Ashen Heart*, it takes on a sludgy, viscous texture. It tends to catch in one's throat, requiring extreme effort to choke it down. When placed in the mouth, it leaks an acrid fluid that appears to be mixed ash and water, but tastes distinctly of rotting blood.

Detection spells reveal that the *Heart* gives off a distinct magical aura. Although few of its powers are actually related to the undead, the artifact's very nature produces an aura of necromancy that practically overwhelms all other magics. Only an extra 1d4 rounds of study reveals powerful auras of enchantment and transmutation, obscured by the necromantic energies. More powerful divinations reveal the *Heart*'s powers, but none reveal the downsides, nor that the spirit of Barrat Sûn lingers in its pulpy mass.

Powers of the Ashen Heart

The *Ashen Heart* carries more than the lingering spirit of a vampire; it carries the very essence of the nocturnal undead. Those with the *Heart* in their possession can wield powers very much like those of the vampires themselves.

Using the Ashen Heart

Sûn's *Legacy* can be used in one of two ways. Anyone can wield the *Heart* as a standard magic item, brandishing it and willing it to activate. This requires that the individual hold the *Heart* in a hand (or similar appendage).

Alternatively, any humanoid or monstrous humanoid can actually swallow the *Heart*, infusing themselves with its essence. This allows them to access its powers more frequently, and to take on many aspects of the vampire.

Constant Powers

The *Heart* grants no constant powers to its wielder if it is wielded like any other magic item.

If the *Heart* is consumed, it grants the following constant abilities:

- +4 Strength, +2 Dexterity, +4 Charisma.
- Darkvision 60 feet. (If the individual already has darkvision, its range increases by 30 feet.)
- +4 natural armor.
- Resistance to cold 10 and electricity 10.
- Damage reduction 5/silver or magic.
- +10 to save against all mind-affecting effects, all poisons and diseases, all stunning attacks, paralysis, sleep, and death effects.
- 50% fortification against critical hits.
- Immune to energy drain and ability damage caused by negative energy, but not from other causes (such as blood loss).
- The individual heals via negative energy, and is injured by positive energy, just like an undead.
- The individual grows fangs and gains the blood drain attack of the vampire.
- Light sensitivity: The individual is dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.
- Sacred aversion: The individual cannot approach within 5 feet of a holy symbol of a good or neutral deity. He may overcome this aversion for a number of rounds equal to his Charisma modifier by succeeding on a DC 20 Will save. All non-evil divine spellcasters lose access to all spells, spell-like, and supernatural abilities granted by class levels in divine classes as long as they keep the *Heart* within them.
- For mechanical purposes, the individual in question has a CR +2.

Anyone who wishes to keep the *Heart* inside them must adapt their diet accordingly. See Consequences, below.

Activated Powers

In addition to the benefits gained from ingesting the *Ashen Heart*, the artifact provides its wielder access to a number of activated powers. These require a standard action to invoke. All saving throws against these powers have a DC of 25 if the *Heart* is wielded as an item, or of 30 if the *Heart* has been consumed. Similarly, all have a caster level of 12.

Alternate Form: The wielder may assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf, so long as his Hit Dice are equal to or greater than the Hit Dice of the shape he wishes to assume. This ability is otherwise similar to a *polymorph* spell, except the individual does not regain hit points for changing form. The wielder can maintain this shape until the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first. This power is usable once per day if the *Heart* is wielded, or three times per day if it has been consumed.

Children of the Night: The wielder can summon 1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4+1 bat swarms, or a pack of 3d6 wolves. The animals arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the wielder for up to one hour. This power is usable once per day.

Dominate: The wielder may cast *dominate person* as a gaze attack, with a range of 30 feet. This power is usable once per day if the *Heart* is wielded, or three times per day if it has been consumed.

Gaseous Form: The wielder may assume *gaseous form*, as per the spell. This power is usable once per day if the *Heart* is wielded, or three times per day if it has been consumed.

Spider Climb: The wielder may use *spider climb* as a supernatural ability. This power is usable three times per day if the *Heart* is wielded, or at will if it has been consumed.

Vampiric Touch: The wielder may cast *vampiric touch*. This power is usable once per day if the *Heart* is wielded, or three times per day if it has been consumed.

Consequences

As might be expected, using the unholy heart of a vampire lord carries with it an inescapable taint of evil and violence. It also draws on the health and strength of the wielder, leeching life from him to power its magics.

Any living being who touches the *Heart* gains a negative level. The negative level remains as long as the *Heart* is in hand, and until the next sunrise thereafter. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way until the next sunrise after the individual ceases touching the *Heart*.

A living being who consumes the *Ashen Heart* develops an overwhelming craving for the blood of sentient creatures. The craving is mystical as well as physical, and it cannot be satisfied by stored blood, or by the blood of animals. It must come from an intelligent creature, and it must come directly from their flesh and veins.

The first time the individual feeds in this fashion, the negative level normally bestowed by the *Heart* disappears. From that day forth, the individual must drink blood regularly. Every 24 hours, he must cause a number of points of Constitution drain, via his blood drain attack, equal to one-quarter his total Hit Dice. Thus, a 15-HD character must drink enough blood to cause at least three points of Constitution drain per day. The drain need not all come from the same individual, but it must all come from sentient beings. The character cannot "save up"; that is, he cannot overfeed one day to avoid feeding the next. The total resets every sunset.

Once the character has begun to feed, he must make a Will save (DC 15 + the number of points of Con drain already inflicted) to stop. Failure indicates that he *must* continue to feed for at least another round, unless physically separated from the victim.

If an individual who has consumed the *Ashen Heart* fails to drink a sufficient quantity of blood in a 24-hour period, he immediately vomits the *Heart* back up. This leaves a poisonous residue in the individual's throat and stomach, which he must save against immediately. (Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Con.)

Anyone who dies with the *Heart* inside them leaves the artifact behind in their remains. Even a method of death that normally destroys the body entirely, such as *disintegrate*, does not destroy the *Ashen Heart*.

Perhaps the greatest threat posed by the *Heart*, however, is that vampires are drawn to its presence. Any vampire — in the absence of very good reason to do otherwise — attempts to feed on the individual who consumed the *Heart* in favor of all others. Further, once a vampire has begun feeding on that individual, he must make a Will save (DC 20 + the number of points of Con already drained) to stop. Any vampire who has tasted the blood of the individual forever after has a general sense of direction and distance to that person, until and unless he vomits up the *Heart*.

If a vampire kills the individual in this manner (either by reducing him to 0 Con through blood drain, or because the person died for any other reason while the vampire is still drinking), the body instantly crumbles to dust, and the *Ashen Heart* appears inside the vampire, taking the place of its own desiccated heart. From that moment on, the vampire must attempt a Will save every evening as it awakens. The DC for this save begins at 15, and rises by 1 every night until it reaches 30, where it remains. When the vampire fails, its persona is immediately obliterated, and replaced by Barrat Sûn reborn. The vampire physically changes as well, becoming a complete duplicate of Sûn's original form. If the new Sûn is ever slain, he leaves behind the *Ashen Heart*, beginning the cycle anew.

Using the Ashen Heart in a Campaign

Sûn's *Legacy* works best in darker stories, particularly those oriented toward mystery and horror. It is not a world-changing artifact, nor a source of ultimate power, but it does heavily blur the lines between the living and the undead. Characters who make use of it, even with the best of intentions, likely become predatory killers in order to maintain their powers.

Of course, the *Heart* does lend itself to more epic or quest-oriented stories as well. The PCs could find themselves responsible for keeping the *Ashen Heart* out of the hands of those who would use it, or even of hunting down and slaying Sûn himself.

Adventure Seeds

The Rising Sûn

A vampire has slain the current wielder of the *Heart*, and already the spirit of Barrat Sûn grows within him. This vampire is strong of will, and may be able to hold out for some time before the Night's Emperor is reborn. The heroes must track down and slay this vampire, before he metamorphoses into something far worse than he is now.

Heart of Darkness

A rash of vampire-style killings have stuck a large city, and the heroes are asked to investigate or are otherwise

caught up in the middle. Evidence is contradictory, sometimes suggesting real vampires, sometimes indicating a mortal murderer. In truth, someone in the city has consumed the *Ashen Heart*, and is drinking the blood of others to maintain his powers. The city has *also* been infested by a pack of real vampires, however, all of whom can feel the presence of the *Heart* and are slowly trying to track it down.

Relic of Evil

A good-aligned priesthood has acquired the *Ashen Heart*. While they recognize it as an artifact of dark power, they have failed to understand its true nature, and they are displaying it in their temple as a trophy of the battle against evil. The PCs must convince them of the danger they are bringing upon the region, while defending the temple from various forces of evil (including, perhaps, the minions of an undead villain who cannot himself enter the sanctified halls).

Destroying the Ashen Heart

Most good-aligned characters would be hard pressed to find a reason *not* to destroy the *Heart*. It is an item of evil, attracts vampires, bestows the powers of the undead unto the living, and contains the spirit of one of the most vile vampires ever to walk the earth.

Unfortunately, while the *Ashen Heart* recoils from the traditional vampire banes, none of them seem sufficient to actually destroy it. It resists all magical damage, and even the utter destruction of a being who possesses it cannot harm it. Only the following methods actually work to destroy the *Heart*, and put a final end to Barrat Sûn's malevolence.

- The *Heart* must be cursed by a god of darkness, and then consumed by a god of light.
- Barrat Sûn must be reborn and once again, then staked with a darkwood *undead bane* weapon and beheaded by the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*. His body must then be burned by divine fire (such as that of a *flamestrike* spell), and his ashes scattered in the sun.
- The *Heart* must be exposed to direct sunlight for 30 days straight, without a single moment of darkness or a single shadow passing over it, and then subject to a *true resurrection* spell.

New NPC

Depending on the events surrounding the introduction of the *Ashen Heart* into a campaign, it's possible for Barrat Sûn himself to be reborn. He is presented here, ready for use. Note that the equipment given to him represents his favored array, not necessarily the equipment he will have available when he is first reborn. The DM should determine what equipment he begins with, if any, depending on the circumstances of his rebirth.

Barrat Sûn, Night's Emperor of Unat-Fer

Male Vampire Sorcerer 20

Medium Undead (augmented humanoid)

Hit Dice:	20d12 (187 hp)
Initiative:	+8
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	32 (+3 Dex, +8 armor, +6 natural, +5 deflection), touch 18, flat-footed 29
Base Attack/Grapple:	+10/+14
Attack:	Slam +14 melee (1d6+4 plus energy drain)
Full Attack:	2 slams +14 melee (1d6+4 plus energy drain)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Blood drain, children of the night, dominate, create spawn, energy drain
Special Qualities:	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/magic and silver, fast healing 1, gaseous form, resistance to cold 10, electricity 10, spider climb, turn resistance +4, undead traits
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +14
Abilities:	Str 19, Dex 19 (17 without ***gloves***), Con —, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 30 (24 without ***cloak***)
Skills:	Bluff +36, Concentration +19 (+23 casting defensively), Diplomacy +24, Hide +12, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Search +11, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +24, Spot +12
Feats:	Alertness[B], Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes[B], Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge[B], Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Improved Initiative[B], Lightning Reflexes[B], Maximize Spell, Silent Spell, Still Spell
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	22
Treasure:	***Bracers of armor +8, cloak of charisma +6, gauntlets of dexterity +2, ring of protection +5, staff of evocation***
Alignment:	Always lawful evil

The individual before you is humanoid, but clearly not human. His flesh is paper white, his eyes blood red. His long, silken black hair is combed back off his gaunt face, and his jaw is slightly distended by a pair of obvious fangs. Although his features are Western, he is clad in a gold and orange robe in the style of the East, embroidered with dragons. He clenches a staff in one bony hand.

Barrat Sûn is one of the greatest vampires ever to plague the world of mortals. Though slain many centuries gone, his will and spirit survive in the *Ashen Heart*, and he may yet be reborn under the proper circumstances.

Sûn once ruled the land of Unat-Fer as the so-called Night's Emperor. He allowed mortals to live as they would during the day — so long as they obeyed certain restrictions and dictates — but he and his spawn were the only law come nightfall. Sûn wishes nothing more than to rule again, to slaughter all who oppose him and to reign over those who survive with terror and blood.

Barrat Sûn stands nearly six feet in height, but he is so gaunt, he appears taller. He weighs a mere 125 pounds. His hair is night-black and straight, suggesting some Eastern blood despite his Occidental features. Despite his obviously undead features, he has a striking, alluring appearance. Although his sheer arrogance normally prevents it, he is capable of behaving quite charmingly. He is fluent in Common, Infernal, and Undercommon.



Combat

Sûn enjoys the sensation of melee combat, of sucking the life from his foes via his energy drain and blood drain attacks. He is, however, an experienced tactician, and he knows that, despite his physical prowess, his strengths lie in his spells. He prefers to weaken foes from a distance with spell and staff, only to close in and finish them off in-person once he believes he can effectively do so. Sûn likes to portray himself as an honorable foe, but this is a pure façade. He has no objection to dishonorable tactics, and he invariably provides himself multiple escape routes.

The save DC against all Sûn's special abilities is 30, and is Charisma-based.

Blood Drain (Ex): Sûn can suck blood from a living victim with his fangs by making a successful grapple check. If he pins the foe, he drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, he gains 5 temporary hit points.

Children of the Night (Su): Once per day, Sûn can call forth 1d6+1 rat swarms, 1d4+1 bat swarms, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve for up to 1 hour.

Dominate (Su): Sûn can crush an opponent's will just by looking into her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, but requires a standard action, and those merely looking at Sûn are not affected. Subjects must succeed on a Will save or be affect as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Create Spawn (Su): A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by Sûn's energy drain rises as a vampire spawn (see the Vampire Spawn entry) 1d4 days after burial. If Sûn instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or lower, the victim returns as a spawn if it had 4 or fewer HD and as a vampire if it had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under Sûn's command, and remains enslaved until Sûn's destruction. At any given time, Sûn may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than 40 Hit Dice; any spawn that would exceed this limit are created as free-willed vampires or vampire spawn.

Energy Drain (Su): Sûn's slam attack bestows two negative levels. For each negative level bestowed, Sûn gains 5 temporary hit points. Sûn can use his energy drain ability once per round.

Alternate Form (Su): Sûn can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell cast by a 12th-level character, except Sûn does not regain hit points for changing form. Sûn can remain in that form until he assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Fast Healing (Ex): Sûn heals 5 points of damage each round so long as he has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points, Sûn automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape. He must reach his coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (He can travel up to nine miles in 2 hours.) Once at rest in his coffin, Sûn is helpless. He regains 1 hit point after 1 hour, then is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Gaseous Form (Su): As a standard action, Sûn can assume gaseous form at will as the spell (caster level 5th). He can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Spider Climb (Ex): Sûn can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

Spells: Sûn is a 20th-level sorcerer, and casts spells accordingly. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Sorcerer Spells Known (Spells per day 6/9/9/8/8/8/8/7/7/7;save DC 20 + spell level): 0 — *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st — *comprehend languages*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*, *true strike*, *unseen servant*; 2nd — *arcane lock*, *detect thoughts*, *knock*, *touch of idiocy*, *web*; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fly*, *tongues*; 4th — *dimension door*, *enervation*, *invisibility*, *greater*, *phantasmal killer*; 5th — *baleful polymorph*, *break enchantment*, *cloudkill*, *feeblemind*; 6th — *contingency*, *dispel magic*, *greater*, *true seeing*; 7th — *control weather*, *scrying*, *greater*, *teleport*, *greater*; 8th — *demand*, *horrid wilting*, *polymorph any object*; 9th — *energy drain*, *Morden's disjunction*, *time stop*.

Ashrune

The Ruined Blade, Uuldang's Cleaver, God Scar, The Rusted Reaper
By Khaldoun Khelil

The Tale of Ashrune

In the time before the coming of the gods, a time of which they have no first hand knowledge, all things existed in chaos. From the mists of this primal abyss came great and foreign powers, and to themselves they assigned the task of untangling the threads of fate. Striving for this lofty goal, the so-called Ur-Titans captured the Lord of Chaos and stole his eyes, his tongue and his phallus. With these the Ur-Praetor, first amongst these strange beings, forged a blade like no other and across its length he inscribed his own true name. And at the center of chaos, the Ur-Praetor sundered the locus stone and cast each thing into its own plane.

The great blade that would become known as *Ashrune* was set as the seal of the plane the Ur-Titans claimed for themselves. This plane was unlike any other, for they kept the best of all things there and called it the Prime. Conversely, the other planes were monotonous and homogeneous places, forever sealed away from the home of the Ur-Titans. For them the Prime was a paradise created from their long struggle to bring order to the formless void. There they created new races and filled the land with all manner of things. Locked away from the other planes, the Ur-Titans never thought to fear the creatures they created to share their paradise with them.

The Ur-Titans had grown soft and indulged their creations too much and in return the creatures created by the titans grew envious and proud. Not satisfied with being servants on a single plane, they dreamed of fleeing their prison and ruling the other planes as kings. And so rose the invader gods, using the secrets taught them by the Ur-Titans to become immortal and control great magics of their own. With their new might they shattered the sword that imprisoned them on the Prime, and crippled and devoured the Ur-Praetor. As *Ashrune* cracked and splintered, so did the barriers that sealed the planes. The invader gods slipped through these cracks and claimed dominion over a thousand different planes. The remaining Ur-Titans scattered to the far corners of the Prime, and in time few would remember the paradise they had once wrought.

It is thought that *Ashrune* must have become self aware sometime after the death of the Ur-Praetor, for the sword has no memory of itself whole. Glimmring the Amazon Queen was the first to call the sword *Ashrune*. The name was all that was left of the ancient script that once adorned the blade to its tip .For a time *Ashrune* lost itself in heroic deeds, and with Glimmring slew the most notorious of jungle tyrants. But away from battle the sword wrestled with an unknown failing. It knew with its very being that it was responsible for some great misdeed and that it was no longer capable of completing its great destiny.

After the sudden death of Glimmring, *Ashrune* began to contemplate its own death. As it watched the world roll on, even the role of heroic sword became a cliché that gave it no solace. What was its purpose? For what could it hope to strive over the course of centuries? These questions seemed unanswerable and the blade's amnesia gnawed at it like a cruel joke. To pass the years, *Ashrune* began to masquerade as other swords of renown. Without purpose the weapon felt itself living a lie and hoped to somehow co-opt the special purpose of another blade. But even when the Paladin King Termeale wielded the sword to butcher the host of the Emerald King of Chaos, *Ashrune* felt nothing. It was then that *Ashrune* knew, it could stand to exist no more.

Prodding the great hero Termeale with promises of glory and appeals to his sense of justice, *Ashrune* convinced the aging knight to go on one last quest. Against the pleading of his earnest advisers, lone Termeale took the blade he had always known as *God Scar* to the forest of charred wood. There *Ashrune* hoped that the burning breath of the great dragon Zauhhr would be hot enough to melt away the strange gray steel it had come to loathe and grant it oblivion. Honest King Termeale never returned, but *Ashrune* lives on in anguish and despair.

Studying Ashrune

Ashrune was an enormous greatsword before its tip was shattered. A full two feet of the blade is missing, giving it the jagged appearance of a massive cleaver. The weapon's unidentifiable gray metal is pitted and scarred with the mementos of a thousand battles. A faint script can be found amongst the sword's blemishes, but it is long past deciphering. Running a hand across *Ashrune* traces a history of bloodshed that began at the dawn of creation. But to the common eye, this is a used and broken sword and few can help but feel a certain sadness when they first see it.

Researching Ashrune

Only the most avid collectors of ancient lore and tall tales have heard of *Ashrune*. Over the centuries the sword has claimed countless names, and many tales of magical swords actually refer to *Ashrune* in one of its past guises. Though *Ashrune* cannot change its appearance, it has become proficient at molding its demeanor to suit its wielder and only manifesting those powers that align with its adopted persona. *Ashrune* has lived a thousand lives in the pursuit of ending its own existence and has long forgotten its true self.

The usual sages of arcana are little use to those who wish to learn this artifact's secrets. Only those versed in the stories of old have a chance to split fact from *Ashrune*'s well-crafted fiction. Thus it is no mystery that Historians and bards have collected the most valuable clues to *Ashrune*'s identity. Lost in their dusty tomes and epic tales, hints of the weapon forged at the beginning of time lie hidden. Was the scarred blade that slit the throat of the Ape Lord the same warped cleaver that killed the Pirate Princes of the Salt Coast? When the doomed heroine Glimmring butchered the beast army, was it with the same dulled edge that cut the crown from the head of the Emerald King?

The blade sometimes known as *Ashrune* is truly ancient, but has taken great pains to hide itself from artifact hunters and students of the arcane. When it reveals itself *Ashrune* always pretends to be a different magical sword. If identified as *God Scar* or *Uuldang's Cleaver*, *Ashrune* often feigns ignorance or claims it is part of a set of similar magical blades. Those using knowledge (arcana) to research this artifact receive a –5 penalty to their checks due to the sword's millennia of lies and shrewd obfuscation. Those using Bardic Knowledge or knowledge (history) may roll against the following DCs.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	This broken sword is *Uuldang's Cleaver*. Though made famous by Uuldang's treacherous assassination of the Pirate Princes, the *Cleaver* was never known to be magical. If discovered to be intelligent, *Ashrune* often claims it was imbued with magic after Uuldang's grim deeds.
20	Though this sword bears a striking resemblance to *Uuldang's Cleaver*, it is in fact *God Scar*. First mentioned in the Song of Termeale, *God Scar* was the war sword of the Lord Commander of the Legion Pure. Tempered in the heart's blood of a long forgotten demon prince, *God Scar* is thought to be especially effective against fiends.
25	*God Scar* was the favored blade of the Paladin King Termeale. When he led the Legion Pure against the demon host, it was *God Scar* he held aloft to call the charge. This blade is the bane of all demons and is famed for shattering the walls of the Emerald Kings' castle. After Lord Commander Termeale's death in the charred wood forest, *God Scar* refused to be wielded by any other hand.
30	This ancient sword is in fact *Ashrune*, the sister sword of *God Scar*. *Ashrune* is older then *God Scar,* but has many of the same abilities. Unlike *God Scar, Ashrune* is known to be able to possess anyone those who touch the blade. *Ashrune* was forged to complete a quest of great secrecy and has immense magical powers over life and death. The sword was thought to have been buried with the body of Glimmring the Amazon Queen after her murder at the hands of her own mother.
40+	There is but one sword and it is called *Ashrune*. Created when all the planes still touched one another, *Ashrune* was forged by the Ur-Titans to split them asunder. The key and the lock to the Material Plane, when *Ashrune* was shattered the gates to the other planes were thrown open to those with the proper magic. If *Ashrune* is ever completely destroyed, all of the planes could come crashing down on one another.

Those rare and studious few who achieved a roll in the high 30s may find themselves caught in the web of lies weaved by *Ashrune*. Common pitfalls include clues to the whereabouts of *Ashrune*'s "sister swords" and details on the fabulous powers that are granted when all the blades in the set are assembled. *Ashrune* sometimes even uses such a pretext to lure adventurers into its next suicidal scheme. The epic sages who achieve DCs above 40 may even discover the name of *Ashrune*'s creator, or who was responsible for shattering the sword.

When held in hand, the weapon's quality becomes more apparent. Though sundered, *Ashrune* maintains an unnaturally perfect balance. The clang of the gray steel is likewise otherworldly and at first disconcerting. To those unused to the hollow ring of the blade when it meets lesser steel, it seems the sword lets out an offended gasp at every strike. Although a master of hiding its abilities, the blade's magical nature is often found revealed when the metal is matched against flesh and bone. Creatures struck by *Ashrune* shudder and weep with an infinite melancholy that can deaden the liveliest heart.

Due to its *discreet* special quality, most forms of magical divination have little chance of working on *Ashrune*. If a powerful enough spellcaster does manage to break through the occult shroud that hides the weapon's nature, they may be awed by the results. Viewed with *detect magic*, *Ashrune* is ablaze with magical fire drawn from all the arcane schools. A hundred burning eyes coruscate along the blade and few can stand to gaze back for long. Spells like *true seeing* reveal the weapon's intrinsic connection to the Material Plane. The very fabric of reality seems to contract and expand as the sword is wielded, resembling nothing so much as a heartbeat. The *identify* spell is also hampered by *Ashrune*'s *discreet* quality and most wielders must experiment to discover all of the blade's capabilities, or else convince the artifact to reveal them.

Powers of Ashrune

Depending on the persona it has adopted, *Ashrune* has a host of different powers it can make available to those who use it. As *God Scar*, the weapon cuts down fiends with ease, protects its master from beasts summoned from the Abyss, and opens passages though solid rock. As *Uuldang's Cleaver*, the blade is clever and alert, warning its companions of treachery and hastening them in battle. If exposed as *Ashrune*, the artifact is a morose failure, reluctant to use any power except those expressing its overwhelming despair and sorrow. At its core, *Ashrune* is a weapon perfectly built to guard the planar gateways. Although its long forgotten failure has disheartened *Ashrune*, its powers have not diminished. *Ashrune* can still grant life to the fallen and trap planar intruders to face punishment.

Using Ashrune

Ashrune is wielded as a longsword; all feats and special rules that apply to longswords apply to *Ashrune* as well. Although it has a massive ego, *Ashrune* rarely tries to exert direct control over its wielder. It usually relies on its significant social skills and knowledges to sway its "owner" and her party. *Ashrune* only reveals its ability to dominate its wielder when it has manipulated her into a situation it thinks might fulfill its suicidal impulses. Other then its constant powers, all of *Ashrune*'s powers are use-activated and may be directed by the sword or its wielder. *Ashrune* may deny a wielder the use of any of its activated powers as it sees fit. *Ashrune* can choose not to inflict negative levels on a wielder who's alignment does not match its own.

Constant Powers

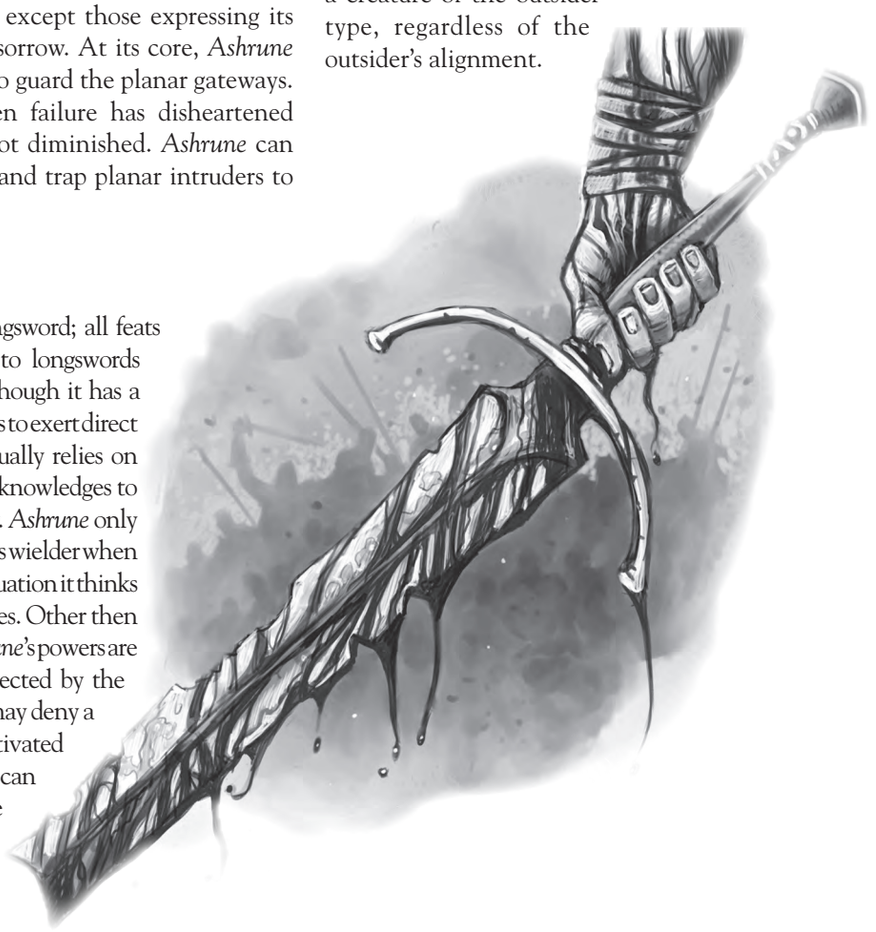
Ashrune is a +4 *discreet mournful impartial cold iron longsword.*

Discreet: *Ashrune* appears pitted and scarred, and magic hides the true nature of the blade from those who seek it. Appraise checks to ascertain *Ashrune*'s true value are made at DC 28; anyone who fails by 10 or more believes the sword to be utterly worthless. Additionally, anyone attempting to use divination magic to reveal *Ashrune*'s true nature or location must make a DC 28 caster level check.

Impartial: *Ashrune* ignores any damage reduction or portion of damage reduction is based on a creature's alignment. Thus, *Ashrune* can strike an angel with DR 10/good without difficulty, but is still impeded by a devil with DR 10/silver and good, because it cannot bypass the silver requirement.

Mournful: The first time *Ashrune* strikes a living creature, the subject must make a DC 20 Will save or become nauseated with despair for 1 round. Those who save are immune to this ability for 24 hours, but a target who fails may be nauseated or sickened again in subsequent rounds, until they successfully save. This is an enchantment (compulsion) effect.

Outsider Bane: *Ashrune*'s enhancement bonus increases by +2 and its damage increases by +2d6 when striking a creature of the outsider type, regardless of the outsider's alignment.



Activated Powers

The following use activated powers can be utilized by the wielder of the artifact or by *Ashrune*. All spell-like abilities are cast as an 18th-level sorcerer.

At Will: *magic circle against chaos/evil/good/law*.

3/day: *dimensional anchor* (+10 ranged touch).

2/day: *haste*.

1/day: *passwall*.

1/week: *raise dead*.

The following list of powers can only be used by *Ashrune* when seeking to fulfill its special purpose, its own destruction. All spell-like abilities are cast as an 18th-level sorcerer.

2/day: *crushing despair* (DC 20).

1/day: *weird* (DC 25).

1/year: *gate*.

The Will of Ashrune

If *Ashrune* comes into serious conflict with its wielder and skillful persuasion proves ineffective, the artifact may choose to dominate them once a day. To resist *Ashrune*'s domination, the wielder must make a DC 39 Will save. Failure forces the wielder to capitulate to *Ashrune*'s desires for 24 hours. When under its control, a wielder becomes immune to fear, compulsions and charms as a near infinite sea of hopelessness washes over them. In fact, only *Ashrune*'s urging allows them to take any action at all. A character with intimate knowledge of *Ashrune*'s true past receives a +10 insight bonus to his saving throw to resist domination. After returning to their senses, a character controlled by *Ashrune* is plagued by suicidal thoughts and becomes shaken for 24 hours. For 1 week afterward, if the character is presented with an opportunity to effortlessly end her life, she must make a DC 21 Will save to resist the urge. As an intelligent weapon, *Ashrune* has the following additional characteristics.

Abilities: Int 21, Wis 12, Cha 22, Ego 39

Alignment: Neutral

Skills: Bardic Knowledge +15, Bluff +16, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +16, Listen +9, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Common, Abyssal, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Terran)

Senses: *Ashrune* has darkvision and blindsense to 120 feet, and can hear normally. *Ashrune* can read any language it knows and can *read magic* at will.

Communication: *Ashrune* can speak out loud or may speak telepathically with its wielder.

Special Purpose: End your own misery by destroying yourself.

Consequences

No great curse or dire trap lurks within the cold steel of *Ashrune*. The greatest risk inherent in making use of the blade is *Ashrune* itself. With its vast intellect bent on self annihilation, *Ashrune* inevitably leads anyone who possesses it into grave danger. *Ashrune* knows the cataclysmic forces that are required to destroy an artifact of its caliber, and plans intricately lethal scenarios to meet that end. Coupled with *Ashrune*'s impressive skills of deception, few adventurers become aware of the many dangers the artifact has in store for them.

What makes *Ashrune*'s quest particularly dangerous is its complete lack of self-knowledge and its dependence on great adventurers to carry it to their certain doom. *Ashrune* has no memory of its creation or of a time before an event it only knows as "the failure." What exactly the sword failed at is a mystery lost to the ages; *Ashrune* only knows it has lost sight of its special purpose and no longer wishes to exist. Without knowledge of its origins, successfully destroying *Ashrune* is nearly impossible. And so the blade fruitlessly deceives the greatest heroes of the age with pointless quests that often end with *Ashrune* surrounded by corpses.

Reactive Traits

Above and beyond the magical immunities enjoyed by most artifacts, *Ashrune* is also impervious to *disjunction* effects and cannot be magical transported to other planes. The one exception to the latter immunity is when *Ashrune* is carried through a dimensional entryway it has created itself with the *gate* spell. Attempts to *plane shift* or otherwise forcibly move *Ashrune* through the planes cause the spell to fail.

Using Ashrune in a Campaign

Ashrune is a dangerously intelligent weapon and a powerful artifact. It longs for its own destruction and has little care about what cataclysmic forces it has to unleash to bring that about. Those who wield *Ashrune* are filled with a divine despair that threatens to consume them, as they begin to sympathetically act out the sword's suicidal desire. When encountering adventurers, *Ashrune* usually pretends it has a greater purpose to rid the world of some loathsome scourge. *Ashrune* is vague about this threat, so it can prod its pawns into a wide array of dangerous situations as it seeks the secret of its own destruction.

Since attempting to destroy an artifact through trial and error can place characters in highly implausible and dangerous situations, *Ashrune* is best suited to a high level game. A campaign wherein the PCs can be expected to survive the fantastic scenarios it concocts as it tries to kill itself would quickly develop a mythic scope. If the PCs actively help

Ashrune in its quest, then an exploration into the origin of the planes may very well become the crux of the game.

Adventure Seeds

A Quest of Great Importance

The awesome weapon discovered by the party has charged them with fulfilling a great quest. Although the details are not entirely clear, the sword insists that great riches and glory await those who aid it. More importantly, the blade has made dire predictions regarding the consequences of not taking up this task. For the sake of all the characters hold dear, they must take up the quest of great importance. First they must take the blade to the volcanic peak of the of the dragon mount. Once there the sword will insist they seek out the reclusive titan of fate, although it makes no mention of intending to plunge itself into one of her eyes.

Please, Kill Me

Ashrune is tired of the lies and deceit that have so far failed to end its existence. Whether the characters discovered its tricks or the sword comes clean on its own, *Ashrune* enlists the heroes in its quest. As active participants, the characters are better prepared for the road ahead and may even try to convince the artifact that death is not the answer to its woes. If *Ashrune* feels the party is being insincere, it is upset by this prolongation of its own life and may decide to return to lying in hopes of destroying them.

Who Am I?

The artifact *Ashrune* may be self aware, but it has no memory of its creation or the time before its great failure. Although the blade long ago gave up to despair, the question "Who am I?" occasionally troubles its thoughts. A band of heroes willing to exploit this glimmer of inquisitiveness could find *Ashrune* a powerful and willing ally. This adventure would be exceedingly perilous, and at the first hint of failure *Ashrune* could betray the characters at a most inopportune moment. Discovering *Ashrune*'s past might require the blade to be reunited with its shattered tip, a jaunt across the deadliest planes or even a brutal showdown with the Lord of Chaos.

Destroying Ashrune

The characters may decide to actively seek *Ashrune*'s destruction at the insistence of the sword itself, or because they recognize the threat it poses to adventurers and heroes such as themselves. Anyone hoping to successfully destroy *Ashrune* is best served by exploring the artifact's true history. *Ashrune*'s creation as a metaphorical blade, to cut and separate the void of chaos, alludes to *Ashrune* having a similar metaphorical weakness. *Ashrune*'s quest to destroy itself is indeed meaningless, for it lacks the key ingredient for success: insight.

• Strike *Ashrune* with its own blade. Though this may sound like a riddle, it is possible that it refers to the lost piece of the blade. Otherwise, it might refer to turning *Ashrune*'s greatest weapon — deceit — against the artifact.

• Whispering *Ashrune*'s true name to the Lord of Chaos would unmake the artifact. With the sword's true name, the Lord of Chaos could reclaim his stripped powers and destroy *Ashrune* in the process.

• Make *Ashrune* laugh with joy. *Ashrune* does not truly wish to die, for it enjoys wallowing in its own self-pity far too much. A touch of true pleasure would free *Ashrune* from its last regrets and allow the blade to let go.

Destroying *Ashrune* could have disastrous results. If the weapon is indeed responsible for the separation of the planes, its destruction could greatly upset the planar cosmology. Would all the planes suddenly become accessible without need of magic? Or would countless innocents be snuffed out as the planes poured their inimical contents into one another?

New Weapon Special Abilities

The following are new weapon special abilities possessed by *Ashrune*. Although *Ashrune* is the only weapon to currently possess these qualities, a caster with access to the artifact might be able to impart them to a lesser magical weapon. *Ashrune* augments the DCs of any weapon special ability it possesses with its charisma modifier.

Discreet

The weapon appears pitted and scarred and magic hides the true nature of the blade from those who seek it. Appraise checks to ascertain its true value are made at DC 22. Anyone who fails by 10 or more believes the weapon to be worthless. Additionally, anyone attempting to use divination magic to reveal its true nature or location must make a DC 22 caster level check.

Faint illusion; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *misdirection*; Price +1 bonus.

Impartial

The weapon ignores any damage reduction or portion of damage reduction based on a creature's alignment.

Moderate evocation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *magic circle against chaos*, *evil*, *good*, and *law*; Price +1 bonus.

Mournful

The first time a living creature is struck by the weapon, he must make a DC 14 Will save or become nauseated with despair for 1 round. A successful save cause the target to be sickened for 1 round instead. A character who saves is immune to this ability for 24 hours, but those who fail may be affected multiple times, until they make their save.

Moderate enchantment; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *crushing despair*; Price +2 bonus.

Bastard of Exalted Heroism

By C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of the Bastard of Exalted Heroism

Practically every bard alive has heard at least one tale, song or epic poem that includes mention of the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*. Many of the greatest heroes to do battle against dark foes wielded this mighty blade and earned their place in history for their deeds. It is said that only the bravest, endlessly generous and most pure of heart may heft it, and only those the blade finds worthy may aid it in its unending crusade to vanquish evil. Neither scheming necromancer nor wicked king is safe from the edge of the *Bastard*, for once it is in the hands of a hero, only the most powerful or numerous may bring that hero down. Or so the story goes.

For generations, bards have shared the pastime of philosophical debate over the nature of the *Bastard* – whether it is the man that makes the blade or the blade that makes the man. In truth, it is the latter. The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* isn't as picky as the legend states. In fact, as far as it is concerned, any warm body will do. As the *Bastard* sees it, given time and adequate pressure, any man may become an epic hero of legend. The man but wields it; the *Bastard* can handle the rest.

The *Bastard* is the life's work of the wizard Autarchus who felt that the last of the truly exalted heroes were long since gone from the world. Understanding that these heroes were often made by circumstance, Autarchus felt that they could also be made by training, discipline, inspiration and just a hint of guile. He spent years collecting the finest materials. He smelted the metal over and over, to eradicate even the slightest of impurities, and folded it again and again on the anvil time to assure its indestructibility. Unfortunately for those who wield the blade, Autarchus was more than a little mad and his twisted views on purity and heroism marred the blade and its personality. Overbearing in its demands upon the wielder, the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* takes pride in its ability break down the strongest willed of warriors, forging them, as Autarchus forged it, into a tool for "greater" ideals.

Every individual who has wielded the *Bastard* has given up much of his wealth and worldly possessions, and accepted any quest asked of him. Gifted with a sixth sense for detecting even the slightest hint of evil, those wielding the *Bastard* often slay people where they stand, regardless of circumstance, for their crimes. This has led to either the exaltation or death of many of the sword's bearers as the *Bastard* does not distinguish between cleric or king, beggar or pillar of the community.

The blade is carried to this day, always by those who find it alongside the corpse of the last man to wield it, or by those foolish enough to steal it from the grave of those buried with it. Bards say you can always tell the man who wields it by word of his deeds that arrive before he does, and by the calming aura of goodness that surrounds him when he appears. It would be more accurate, however, to say that he can usually be identified by the handful of bards that follow him around hoping to witness the next epic tale of the *Bastard*, and by the haunted look in his tired eyes.

Studying The Bastard of Exalted Heroism

The *Bastard* appears to the finest blade imaginable by mortal minds. A perfectly balanced bastard sword, it boasts a razor-honed blade forged of what appears to be some unearthly material, but is in fact an alloy of several magical metals. The hilt is gold, the grip wrapped in white-gold wires for extra purchase. Embossed olive leaves spiral down the gold, beginning at the pommel and branching out at the base of the blade to form the intricate guards. The pommel itself boasts the only non-metallic color on the artifact, adorned with a bright sapphire of finest cut.

Under magical inspection the blade reveals an overwhelming aura of goodness so powerful that discerning any of the magical schools used in its creation is impossible.

Powers of The Bastard of Exalted Heroism

The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* grants the wielder the abilities of the holiest of warriors, serves him as a magic weapon, and can even stave off death. The blade is sentient, with Intelligence 8, Wisdom 18, and Charisma 18. Its ego is 30, though this rarely comes into play, as few of the *Bastard*'s side-effects allow for any sort of saves or resistance.

Researching The Bastard of Exalted Heroism

Much has been written about the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, but the easiest way to learn about it is by consulting the nearest bard. Bards may choose to take 10 on any Bardic Knowledge check involving the sword or anyone who has wielded it. Additionally, any large library in a civilized realm likely contains at least one book detailing the adventures of one of its many wielders. A character may choose to make a Knowledge (history) check in place of either of these methods, with an additional +5 to the DC.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* is the holiest of weapons, carried by only the greatest of heroes. Anyone who wields it finds his deeds sung far and wide, earning a permanent place in history for his efforts.
20	The blade gives the wielder great skill and the power to cure wounds and afflictions at a touch. There is no evil it cannot sense.
25	There are those who say the bearer of the blade is actually cursed to follow the blade into any battle it deems worthy, and that the *Bastard* only lets the hero fall when all of his enemies have been felled before him.
35+	Any man may, in fact, wield the blade, and suffers unending torment as he is never allowed to rest. Battle after unending battle is all the hero may look forward to, until the day the blade gets him into more trouble then he can handle. While every man to ever wield the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* has displayed powers similar to those of paladins, it is the blade itself that provides these abilities.

The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* is much revered, with a secret history that is oft neglected in the tales. Failed Knowledge checks reveal only the greatest of the swordss abilities and make it out to be the most desirable of artifacts, particularly noting that only the most pure of heart may even pick it up.

Using The Bastard of Exalted Heroism

As soon as someone picks up the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, it begins to work its magic. At is is an intelligent item, its powers require no activation on the part of the owner, but function entirely by the will of the blade itself. While none of the granted powers take effect until the blade is first wielded in combat, its consequences begin the moment someone first lifts it. Once the owner holds the hilt with the intent to strike another creature, the full powers and consequences activate, transforming the wielder into an instrument of good, whether he likes it or not.

Constant Powers

The *Bastard* grants its wielder all of the class abilities of a paladin, equal to the character's level. For example, a character who is a 4th-level rogue and 2nd-level fighter gains the granted class abilities of a 6th-level paladin as well. These class abilities do not replace those already possessed by the character, but are in addition to any granted by the character's class levels. The character does not gain the hit points, saves or base attack bonus of a Paladin, only the class and spellcasting abilities.

The character's *detect evil* class ability functions constantly, without requiring any action on the part of the wielder. It cannot be foiled by any magical means to conceal alignment, unless the caster of the concealment spell is of epic (21+) level. Even then, the wielder is entitled to a Will save (DC 10 + spell level + caster's relevant ability modifier) to see through it.

The character's *detect evil* ability manifests itself as a brief hallucination in which the evil target turns to look the wielder straight in the eye and whispers his or her crimes. This hallucination occurs instantly and takes up no real time.

While wielding the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, the user gains the use of the Cleave, Great Cleave and Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword) feats, whether or not he meets the prerequisites.

Whenever the wielder's hit points drop below zero during combat against an evil target, he immediately gains the Diehard feat, as well as DR 15/–, until combat ends.

The wielder's type changes to outsider. He can no longer be affected by spells or effects that target his original type (such as *charm person* if the wielder is humanoid), and cannot be raised from the dead by any means short of a *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish*.

The wielder gains a +5 holy bonus to any Charisma-based skill checks involving good aligned creatures, but gains a –5 penalty to any Charisma-based skill checks (except Intimidate, which is unmodified) involving evil creatures.

Finally, the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* functions as a *holy avenger*.

Consequences

The moment a character picks up the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, he cannot rid himself of it. Any attempt to wield any other weapon results in the character drawing *The Bastard of Exalted Heroism* instead, unless that weapon is being wielded in the character's off-hand in addition to wielding the *Bastard*. Putting the sword anywhere other than its sheath results in the blade instantly teleporting back to the owners hand.

Once the character has detected a creature as evil, he *must* attack that creature within one minute. Only by moving at least 60 feet from the creature before the minute elapses may the wielder potentially avoid instigating combat, and even then he must succeed at a DC 30 Will save to avoid turning back and moving to attack. When battling a creature he knows to be evil, the character may never choose to deal nonlethal damage.



Once per month, on the anniversary of first picking up the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, the character must make his way to the nearest good-aligned church or temple and tithe 10% of the total value of all his possessions (not counting the artifact itself). If this donation does not equal at least 1,000 gp, the character falls under the effects of a *geas* spell to fulfill a single quest bestowed by the head of the church or temple. The priest or head of the church is also *geased* to come up with a quest equal to the hero's character level (no matter how far the character must travel to fulfill it). These *geases* allow no save, and cannot be broken by any means other than completion of the assigned task.

Reactive Traits

The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* is immune to spells of any kind, whether beneficial or harmful.

Using The Bastard of Exalted Heroism in a Campaign

The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* can fit well into any level of campaign, as its power scales by the level of the person wielding it. Having a PC gain access to the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* is discouraged, however, as it has the possibility of hijacking the campaign, focusing it on the (unwitting) actions of a single character. That said, as only the most power hungry of players may try to find a way to possess the *Bastard*, it could be used as a powerful teaching tool to discourage future endeavors, as well as serve as hours of amusement for his party mates who may enjoy watching him squirm – and who usually stay very far behind him when it looks like trouble.

However, the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* makes for an excellent solo campaign, as a single player must wrestle with the constraints of the blade and the adventures it forces him into. The powers of the blade could easily balance out the lack of a party and allow the player to fight overwhelming odds without affording him any powers that would simply decimate hiss opponents. Additionally, the *Bastard* makes an excellent adventure hook, as PCs must find a means of freeing a friend or ally from its clutches, or rescue a legendary hero from his own weapon.

Adventure Seeds

Just Take It!

The party encounters Kit, the current bearer of the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*. When several of Kit's friends and colleagues were murdered by the previous bearer of the blade, Kit ambushed him to avenge them. He couldn't have planned the ambush more perfectly, and by the end of the fight Kit had the man down on his knees begging for death. It wasn't until Kit picked up the famed sword, which he'd hoped to sell, that he discovered why this man begged so pitifully to be killed. Now Kit understands and feels the same way. Having been forced to kill most of the men in his guild and give away almost all of his wealth and worldly possessions, Kit's life is in shambles. He wanders from town to town, trying to avoid the fame that comes with the blade and earning just enough from

adventuring to keep paying the tithe the blade demands. (He cannot bear the thought of another quest for one of those churches.) Will the players choose to help Kit or to change his mind about his newfound destiny? And if Kit dies, what is to be done with the *Bastard* itself?

Just Take It Back!

A small order of clerics, paladins, fighters and rangers calling themselves the Order of Exalted Heroism have for three generations possessed the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, and have used it as the guiding force in their crusade against evil. However, when this generation's champion was murdered, the blade fell into the hands of Kit, a lowly thief who now uses it for his own illicit gains. The Order wants it back and is willing to pay handsomely anyone who can track Kit down and recover the blade. To ensure its return, the Order sends along a young fighter who is next in succession to wield the blade to aid the party.

Just Don't Take It!

The *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* lay hidden in the vault of a powerful and evil arcanist who had it taken off the body of its last owner. Having researched the history of the blade, the arcanist knows full well the dangers of wielding it and has stored it far away from the hands of anyone who might use it against him. When the party discovers that this arcanist is hording a powerful artifact with a great potential for good, they may well feel the need to recover it. However, once they discover the artifact's unique problems (whether through interrogating the arcanist or by examining his books on the subject), they must decide how to best deal with it and remove it without becoming bound to it themselves. The blade itself is protected by a series of elaborate magical traps and undead guardians designed specifically to keep it safe. Will the adventurers decide that this is enough and the blade is far too dangerous to be unleashed upon the world or will they find a method of freeing it from its imprisonment?

Destroying the Bastard of Exalted Heroism

The *Bastard* is almost entirely indestructible being both immune to magic and impossible to sunder. The only way to destroy it or rid yourself of it entirely is as follows.

• In order to destroy the blade, the magic that created it must be confounded by a specific logical paradox. An epic-level blackguard must willingly commit suicide with the blade – whether by throwing himself on it, allowing its wielder to make a coup de grace upon him or, if he himself is somehow the wielder, by killing himself with it. The idea that an overwhelming evil could give his life for a cause that benefits others is alien to the blade. Its magic collapses in upon itself, destroying both the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism* and the soul of the blackguard (who can never be resurrected in any fashion.)

It is possible, however, to rid oneself of the blade without destroying it. The wielder must give the *Bastard* to a creature who possesses the Good subtype and more Hit Dice than the current wielder. This creature must be fully aware of the powers and drawbacks of the artifact, and must willingly accept it.

The blade does not take kindly to its wielder attempting to abandon it. Pursuing this method of ridding oneself of the blade requires two successful DC 20 Will saves: one to initiate the conversation and one to actually hand the blade over. If the character manages to accomplish this, he is rid of the sword, and loses all benefits and drawbacks it imposes.

New NPC

Kit may be introduced into a campaign as the current holder of the *Bastard*. See the first two Adventure Seeds, above, for Kit's background.

Kit Jors

Male Augmented Human Rogue 8

Medium Outsider (augmented humanoid)

Hit Dice:	8d6+16 (44 hp)
Initiative:	+6
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	20 (+2 Dex, +5 armor, +3 shield), touch 12, flat-footed 18
Base Attack/Grapple:	+6/+7
Attack:	*Bastard of Exalted Heroism* +13 melee (1d10+6 plus 2d6 against evil)
Full Attack:	*Bastard of Exalted Heroism* +13/+8 melee (1d10+6 plus 2d6 against evil)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Smite evil 2/day, sneak attack +4d6
Special Qualities:	Aura of courage, aura of good, detect evil, divine grace, divine health, lay on hands, remove disease 1/week, turn undead (5th-level), trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge, improved uncanny dodge, SR 13
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11
Skills:	Balance +13, Climb +8, Disable Device +12, Escape Artist +13, Hide +13, Jump +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +13, Search +7, Spot +5, Slight of Hand +13
Feats:	Cleave[B], Dodge, Great Cleave[B], Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword)[B], Improved Initiative, Shield Proficiency, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)
Challenge Rating:	10
Treasure:	*Bastard of Exalted Heroism, +2 light steel shield, +2 studded leather armor*
Alignment:	Neutral

Black Coal Citadel

The Orc Fist Gaol, Soot Wall Spire, The Charred Keep, Dark Heart Maze
By Khaldoun Khelil

The Tale of Black Coal Citadel

Oh! What tragedy has befallen the Orcish race? Fallen so low as to be content with scratching at the dirt of our caves. Where are the Great Khans of this age? A green-skinned battle master to redeem the corrupted blood of our once great clan? The women lament their fate, born in a time when Orcish men walk with downcast eyes and Orcish children go hungry. Once the earth trembled under the step of our great cohort, and even a half-blood bastard swelled with pride as the night was lit with the fire of a hundred burning cities.

The cry of the Orc warlord H'barool stills echoes through the mountains of the northlands; though he is long dead, his brethren still call out for him to lead them into battle. Born amongst the rust-red cliffs of an ancient crag, H'barool was tempered by the many wars his people fought against the vile and hated Dwarves. The stout invaders had tunneled into his family's caves long ago, and he had developed a burning hatred for all those not of his clan. When the Blood Spire tribe finally pried the Dwarven kings from their cavernous halls, it was battle scarred H'barool that led the slaughter. But for H'barool there was never enough blood to cool the fire in his breast.

After plundering the stone vaults of the Dwarven usurpers, H'barool raised the banners of eternal war. As Blood Khan he united all of the mountain tribes and set forth to light the world on fire. But before he left the elders of the tribes came to him. They pleaded with him to abandon his suicidal war. As lord of the mountains he could build a great keep and enjoy many wives before he started on his warpath. H'barool heard their words and understood the wisdom and the danger they contained. Removing his own heart, H'barool crushed it in one of his great green fists. When he opened his hand, a jagged lump of coal remained, bristling with jagged spires. The warchief had built a bastion of loathing, and he would carry it with him as he cleansed the earth.

At first the people were skeptical of the Khan's miniature citadel, but their apprehension evaporated when H'barool cast his first rival into its limitless dungeons. Many whispered that the warchief had gone mad and had struck a bargain with the strange gods that lurked in the deepest mountain caves. But whatever the case, none could deny his right to lead the tribes or the power of his new keep. The great Khan burned the forest home of the Elves and choked their crystal rivers with stones and corpses. The Elven host scattered to the four winds and cursed the Orcs under their breath, like women gossiping around a cook fire, for the Elves were fierce with their tongues but not their blades. Where H'barool found Humans, he would sell the pitiful things as slaves or would send them to the kitchens for the cooks to make use of, in one way or another.

As his army scorched a path across places known and unknown, the great Khan gathered an honor guard of powerful demons. Within the magical walls of black coal, H'barool would plan his endless march with his Abyss-spawned advisors. The great Khan was more then just a warrior, and he knew the strength of the Orcish race would have to continue on without him one day. Looking to the future, H'barool and his massive harem produced 1,000 sons of unmatched ferocity. By their father's side they sacked the diamond cities of the Dwarves and pulled down the arcane towers of the Elves. The world gasped for its last breath as a thousand Orcish hands throttled it. But the worm would turn. The Elves, weak of limb, began to wag their infernal tongues in the ears of the 1,000 sons. And soon a traitor emerged, convinced his arm was stronger then his father's.

H'barool passed in the night, poisoned by one of his traitorous sons. The demons of *Black Coal* lamented and burned the great Orcish cities and forced the people back into the mountain's heart and the swamp's embrace. Of the 999 sons left, those who remained loyal took their father's body within the walls of the fortress and still wait for his moldering bones to stir once again. The others fell upon one another, and as they tried to carve up the empire left behind by their great father, the Elven and Dwarven armies returned. In a battle with no honor, the best of us were killed and broken and the keep of the Great Khan was stolen.

Revenge! For Orcish blood spilled by filthy Dwarves and thieving Elves. Revenge! For the world that was rightfully ours, and stolen by the envy of lesser races. Revenge! For we have filled the swamps and mountains to bursting and we are strong again. Open the gates to the land of men! Open the gates to the keep of hate!

Researching Black Coal Citadel

H'barool the Blood Khan is an old orcish legend that has even been co-opted by certain tribes of goblinoids and gnolls. The strange figurine known as *Black Coal Citadel* figures prominently in the myth, but it is a supporting character at best. Whether the Khan ever truly existed is debatable, but the little keep of sooty stone is certainly real. Mages, scholars and artisans have written treatises on its intricate detail and the great magic and architectural skill its creator must have possessed. Many of these same scholars use these studies to "prove" that the artifact is not of orcish make, even though an orc keep is certainly the models' inspiration.

As an artifact, most questions surrounding *Black Coal Citadel* center around what it is. Is the thing simply a shrunken fortress, as the orcs seemed to think? Or is it a gateway to a strange indoor layer of the Abyss, as many dwarven sages have argued? Those who study the artifact too intently invariably find themselves inside the thing, surrounded by the porous black walls they had just held in their hands. *Black Coal*'s many raised relief windows and doors are intricate and inviting to inspection, but to open the toy keep is to enter it bodily.

Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (history) are nearly useless when researching this artifact. Its intrinsic tie to orc legend has made it passively shunned by most sages and scholars. Venerable druids and shamans are often the best source of information concerning the strange toy castle, although a few codices on the keeps structural design are still extant. Those using Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (nature) may roll against the following DCs. Characters with Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) may attempt the roll, but only if they also have at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (local) as applied to an orcish community. Those with 5 ranks in knowledge (architecture a engineering) receive a +2 synergy bonus on any skill checks when researching *Black Coal Citadel*.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	This strange sculpture is an heirloom of the Blood Khan of the orcs. It represents orcish dominion over all things above and below the earth. Its constant use in orcish ritual may explain any lingering magic it has upon it. Some orcs consider the strange icon the symbol of a coming orc "savior."
15	This may be the black rock carried by the great orc war leader, H'barool. If so, it is reputed to be able to summon strange demons and cast enemies into the Abyss. It is also believed the device somehow devoured H'barool himself, but not before he terrorized the countryside for many decades. A host of demon-spawn called the Loyal Sons guards the keep and hordes ancient treasures within its miniature vaults.
20	This is *Black Coal Citadel*. The enchanted fortress grows no larger but is rumored to be able to hold armies within by way of strange planar magic. A demon known as the Lurker is credited with creating the strange model after losing a wrestling match with a great orc chieftain. Many orcish clans lay claim to the artifact and more than one war has been sparked by orcs on the warpath for its recovery.
25	The fire demon Bal'pherius is rumored to have gifted the first orcs with their insatiable rage, and *Black Coal Citadel* is often thought by scholars to be a reproduction of his fortress in the Abyss. This artifact was created under the red cliffs of the ancient orcish homeland. Fire demons and twisted dwarves slaved over its fashioning and destroyed more than one enchanted forge before it was complete. The burning hatred of the orcs lives inside *Black Coal Citadel* and anyone who would become the keep's master had best get used to the taste of blood and sorrow. Those strong enough to brave the keep's many tests may claim the ashen throne of *Black Coal*, gain dominion over all inside and become the true heir of H'barool.
30+	The mistress of H'barool, Diemeil the Hunter, guards the great Khan's treasure and secrets. Believed to be a mute, she never speaks if summoned and within *Black Coal*'s walls she is a deadly assassin. Together with her Loyal Sons, they wage a perpetual war against the other demons that stalk the keep's infinite hallways. The body of the Blood Khan H'barool still rests within the castle's walls, propped up in the ancient throne built of dwarven skulls. If it is ever given a proper orcish funeral rite, *Black Coal Citadel* would cease to exist.

Students of the animist orc myths may become confused by the various accounts of talking trees and stones that H'barool encounters on his quest. Common misconceptions include the idea that some great orc god created the small citadel to test his champions, or that it is a twisted prison for those who betrayed him. These are relatively recent additions to the story of *Black Coal Citadel*, promoted by orcish clerics hoping to supplant the more traditional role of the shaman within green skin society.

Studying Black Coal Citadel

Black Coal Citadel is a daunting fortress composed of oily black walls and ashen towers. The *Citadel*, if life-sized, would seem large enough to house a legion, but in actuality is no bigger than a lump of coal. Carved from a black stone no larger then an orc's fist, *Black Coal Citadel* looks like nothing more than a child's toy. Handling the small castle quickly dirties uncovered hands, but the thing never crumbles or degrades, as true coal should. The oversized gates of the keep are detailed with chains and forgotten dwarven runes, and the darkened windows often sparkle as if a candle had passed behind them. When viewed from the outside with *true seeing*, the artifact looks like a burning ember licked with pitch-black fire.

Studying this artifact can often be its greatest danger. Those who unwittingly peer into *Black Coal*'s realistic windows or pry open its finely carved gates find themselves suddenly inside the keep's entry hall. They also quickly discover that they are not alone. Fiendish orc cannibals scour the infinite hallways for fresh meat, and demons of all sizes lord over different sections of the place like petty gang bosses. Only the lord of the *Citadel* can free trapped denizens of extraplanar origin, while the exits for those from the Material Plane are few and far between. Thankfully those "inside" *Black Coal Citadel* cannot be harmed by those without, and have eternity to explore its corridors, as no one ages inside the toy castle's walls. Although age is frozen within the fortress, hunger and thirst retain their claim on the flesh. Some rooms have magically replenishing foodstuffs, but these are invariable claimed by one faction or another. Thus orcs are not the only cannibals within the castle and one had best be wary even amongst friends.



Only the lord of the *Citadel* may leave the cursed keep at his whim. All others must search out the few portals to the outside world, often guarded by depraved outsiders or the hungry dead. To become the lord of the *Citadel* a visitor must fight his way to the heart of *Black Coal* and pass the challenges placed before him. There, in the bowels of the limitless *Citadel*, lies the Ashen Throne. Anyone who sits on the throne becomes the lord of the *Citadel* and may leave and enter the place at will. The former lord of the *Citadel* is whisked back inside, forever trapped within unless he regains his throne. And so an endless dance begins inside the winding halls of the castle as prisoner claims throne and lord becomes prisoner.

Powers of Black Coal Citadel

The artifact keep called *Black Coal Citadel* is accredited with many strange powers and abilities. At least two orcish marching chants talk about the keep, though they usually refer to it as an actual structure of immense size. Merely holding the artifact imparts the battle wisdom of the great orc chief H'Barool and grants command over the inner fire of orcish rage. Those who learn the inner secrets of the keep, which may actually require exploring the inside of thing, are supposedly granted control over demons and can summon a horde of orcs from thin air.

Using Black Coal Citadel

Black Coal Citadel grants its powers to anyone who would carry the foul rock. Those of orcish blood find the fortress especially useful, as many orcs recognize the artifact as central to one of their greatest legends. Many of the activated powers of the keep require the user to hold the fortress aloft,

but the constant powers only require that the keep be in the user's possession.

Constant Powers

Black Coal Citadel grants the following powers to the person that possesses it. All spell-like abilities are cast as an 18th-level sorcerer.

- Bonus Feat: All Martial Weapon Proficiencies
- *Endure Elements*, as the spell, constantly active
- +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution
- Speak and understand Abyssal
- Speak and understand Orcish

Additionally, any orc that carries *Black Coal Citadel* gains the following abilities. All spell-like abilities are cast as an 18th-level sorcerer.

- Bonus Feat: Leadership
- *Mass Charm Person* (orcs only), 1/day
- +2 resistance bonus to all saving throws

Finally, the lord of *Black Coal Citadel* gains these powers as well.

- +4 enhancement bonus to Constitution
- Fire resistance 10
- Immune to energy drain effects
- +4 inherent bonus to Charisma-based skill checks

Activated Powers

The artifact grants the following spell-like abilities, as cast by an 18th-level sorcerer.

At Will: *flame blade*, *produce flame*, *protection from arrows*

2/day: *rage*

1/day: *wall of fire*

The following powers can only be used by the Lord of *Black Coal Citadel*. Anyone *imprisoned* in *Black Coal* is transported to the keep's dungeons, though they may attempt to escape the castle as surely as anyone else. The artifact's *imprisonment* power can only be dispelled or negated in the presence of the artifact. A *freedom* spell cast on the artifact has no effect unless the caster knows the name of the creature to be freed and makes a successful DC 32 caster level check. All of these spell-like abilities are cast as an 18th-level sorcerer.

1/year: *imprisonment* (DC 31)

1/day: *flame strike* (DC 26)

The Lord of *Black Coal Citadel* also has the ability to summon the demons and prisoners trapped inside to serve him. He must know the prisoner's name and he may call upon a prisoner once a day to serve him for a limited time. Normally the artifact can only be used in this manner once per day, no matter what creature is called to serve, but if the Lord of the *Citadel* performs a chaotic evil act greater then any he has committed in the past, he may instantly recharge this power. The following is a partial list of the beings that can be summoned from the jail, including their names and how long each will serve the Lord of Black Coal per day. Anyone *imprisoned* inside the keep may also be summoned, although they are under no obligation to serve the lord of the keep or to return to their cell. Any extraplanar creature tied to the artifact that is killed while outside its walls is reborn inside the artifact within 1d8 days. (A previous Lord of the *Citadel* cannot be summoned in it this manner.)

- The Loyal Sons (2d4+2 fiendish orc warriors), 24 hours
- Ash Fist (Large evil earth elemental), 1 hour
- Charred Hope (Large evil fire elemental), 1 hour
- The Lurker (chaos beast), 30 minutes
- Bal'pherius (Elder evil fire elemental), 10 minutes
- Ingur Voidscream (Vrock), 5 minutes

The Lord of Black Coal Citadel

The Ashen Throne sits empty somewhere in the heart of *Black Coal Citadel*. Only humanoids without any extraplanar blood can sit on the throne to claim its powers and become lord of the *Citadel*. Claiming the Ashen Throne is a perilous task involving tests of Orcish ingenuity, and keeping it can be even more hazardous. Upon sitting the throne, those without orcish blood must make a DC 26 Fortitude save or be instantaneously transformed into a half-orc. They lose all of their current racial abilities and take on those of a half-orc, as the spirit of H'barool twists their body. Skin turns a scabrous green, teeth warp into crooked jostling tusks and blood thickens with orcish rage.

As lord of the *Citadel*, new powers are granted to the adventurer irrespective of whether they were transformed. The lord can release anyone inside *Black Coal Citadel* if he knows their name, but only if they wish to leave. (Exception: A former Lord of the *Citadel* cannot be freed in this way.) As long as someone remains lord of *Black Coal Citadel* they stop aging, even when outside the castle's walls. As an added benefit, the lord of the *Citadel* need not carry the artifact with him to use its powers as long as he remains within 1 mile of it. If another worthy humanoid ever sits upon the Ashen Throne, the Lord of the *Citadel* is supplanted and automatically whisked back inside the *Citadel*. As a former lord of the *Citadel*, all other exits from the *Citadel* are useless for him. He must seek the Ashen Throne again or kill the new lord of *Black Coal* to win his freedom.

- Diemeil the Hunter (Hezrou), 2 minutes
- Lord Kurrfash the Gray Vizier (Glabrezu), 12 rounds
- Maludar Rex (Balor), 6 rounds

Consequences

The most obvious drawback to making use of *Black Coal Citadel* is becoming imprisoned within the keep itself, but other dangers lurk within the unassuming "toy" castle. Since entering the keep is such a simple matter, many find themselves prisoners within the artifact without even realizing what has truly transpired, though the jagged design and familiar soot stone reveal the nature of their predicament soon enough. These poor souls are trapped in an infinite castle, locked in an endless demonic turf war. To make matters worse, those who die within the walls of the keep are trapped within their own remains, as if by a *soul bind* spell with the corpse itself as the receptacle. Only the Lord of the *Citadel* can release the souls of those killed in *Black Coal Citadel*. Legend claims that one or two of the castle's infinitely winding passages end in portals that allow mortals (but not outsiders) to depart the artifact and return to the Material Plane, but if such portals do exist, they are certainly both heavily guarded by whichever faction has claimed them, and nigh impossible to find.

Those who willingly or unwillingly enter the fortress in pursuit of the Ashen Throne may find the side effects shocking as well. Spiritually, an upright adventurer may find himself tempted to commit minor acts of chaos to more frequently use the powers of the *Citadel*, and the throne itself can exert more physical changes. None of the many myths and stories surrounding the *Citadel* make mention of the throne's transformative powers, though many tales speak of the "heir of H'barool" someday claiming the throne. Whether the Lord of the *Citadel* is tainted with orc blood or not, his greatest fear surely centers on being deposed from his throne. Lords who are supplanted by another who sits on the Ashen Throne can become forever trapped inside *Black Coal Citadel*. Only sitting on the throne again or murdering the new lord allows them to free themselves.

Reactive Traits

Only a few magical effects work differently than normal when cast on *Black Coal Citadel*. Even though the artifact is an extradimensional space, it does not react explosively with other extradimensional spaces such as *bags of holding* or *portable holes*. No known way exists to enter or exit Black Coal through planar travel magic, though some say the *gate* spell can make a temporary door to the Material Plane. The inside of the keep is without access to the Astral or Ethereal Planes, thus negating summoning spells and teleportation abilities. Some ghosts do wander the castle, but they find themselves permanently manifested. The *freedom* spell can also be used to extricate someone from the fortress with a successful DC 32 caster level check, as described above.

The interior walls of the keep are composed of 1 foot of seemingly normal stone and can even be tunneled through by those with the tools to do so. But the dark magic of *Black Coal* slowly heals the building's wounds, making such breaches short lived. Also, *Black Coal Citadel* has no exterior walls; tunneling through masonry always leads a miner to another room or hallway, never to the outside. The few windows and clerestories within the keep shine with a sickly moonlight, but look out into a pale nothingness. Because of the castle's near limitless passages and chaotic layout, spells such as *find the path* invariably lead one to danger rather then salvation.

Using Black Coal Citadel in a Campaign

As a plot device, *Black Coal Citadel* is perfect for introducing large armies of marauding humanoids. Orcs, gnolls and goblins are all perfect races to be used in conjunction with this artifact, though this description assumes orcs are responsible for the keep's creation. *Black Coal Citadel* can become the miniature focus of a very large war. But where *Black Coal Citadel* truly shines is as an adventure within an adventure. The keep becomes a place of interludes, for stories outside the realm of the usual campaign, where fantastic demons hatch plots against one another to control a coveted throne.

The initial exploration of the castle is a mind-boggling experience for adventurers not used to planar travel, as the castle's never-ending passages and countless rooms confound their attempts to get out. Once they become more comfortable with the keep and form alliances and rivalries with its other denizens, *Black Coal* may become a second home of sorts. If one of the adventurers becomes the Lord of the *Citadel*, then he may find himself involved in arbitrating turf wars between cannibal clans and sniffing out intruders who may be after his lordship.

Adventure Seeds

Sons of the Blood Khan

A spate of gruesome murders as begun to worry the local magistrates. Someone or something has been killing half-orcs across three regions, and while the magistrates would not usually be overly worried by such events, the mountain orcs seem to have caught wind of it. The savage brutes usually care nothing for their bastard brethren, but rangers have it on good authority that their shamans have been goading the tribes with these murders. Each of the victims was an outcast, their families exiled from the orcish community for some crime committed by an ancient ancestor. Someone has to do something about these murders, before the orcs become so incensed that they storm out of the mountain passes in force.

The Missing King

Lord Coldrey, king of the northland passes, is missing. The king had retired to his study to "inspect" his rather large

collection of toys, and hasn't been heard from since. There was no sign of a struggle, but investigators did find his still-lit pipe on the floor next to his collection of model castles. With the city-state's anniversary celebration approaching, the king must be found or the people may revolt at news of such an ill omen.

Destroying Black Coal Citadel

The shamans of the red cliffs speak of a time when H'barool's heir shall make himself known from amongst the orc clans. He shall realize the potential of his blood and take up the mantle of a great Khan. He shall sit on the Ashen Throne and once more raise the banner of endless war. *Black Coal Citadel* shall swell with the hatred of the orcish race and an army of the dead and damned shall burst forth to drown the earth in blood.

Adventurers who hear such tales may decide to do away with the troublesome stone model once and for all. But how does one go about destroying such a potent symbol of racial hatred? The fortress, though seemingly composed of a powdery stone, is resolute in the face of hammer and pick. Only those with a greater understanding of the artifact's true purpose can hope to decipher the secret of its destruction.

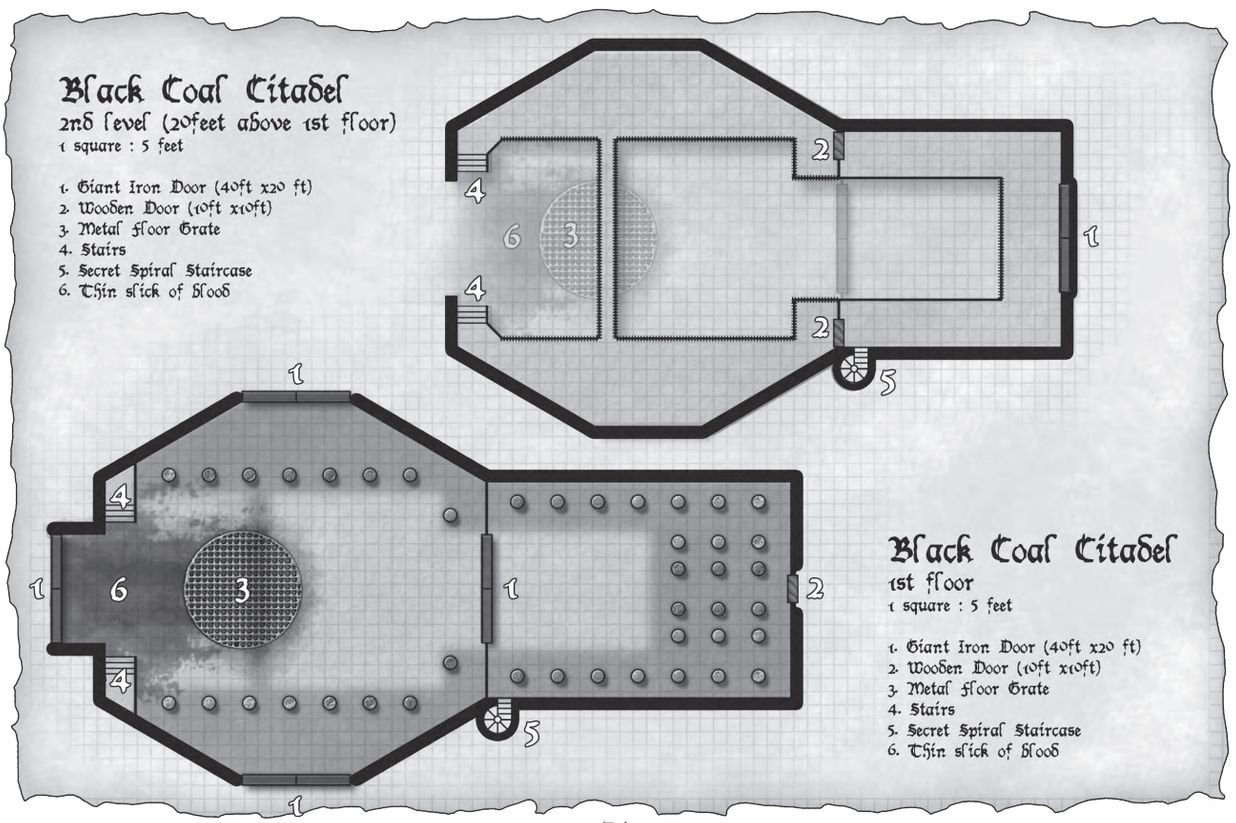
• Soothe H'barool's rage. Although H'barool is thought to be dead, his spirit may still linger inside the walls of *Black Coal Citadel*. Convincing H'barool that he should put aside his anger might tumble the walls of the demon jail.

• Feed it to the forge of the dwarven gods. Some legends say the artifact is made of dwarven stone, used to heat their great mystic furnaces. If *Black Coal Citadel* could be cast into the furnace of the dwarven gods, it would surely be consumed.

• Kill all the loyal sons of the Blood Khan. Nine-hundred and ninety-nine sons survived H'barool's defeat. How many still survive and where they might be is a mystery lost to even the shamans so concerned with tracing orcish genealogy. By spilling all the dark blood of H'barool's brood, the Ashen Throne will crumble to powder and the artifact fortress along with it.

The Hall of Blood

All who enter *Black Coal Citadel* must first make their way through the Hall of Blood. The heavy bronzed doors of this great entryway stand a full twelve feet tall and are riveted with handfuls of massive black iron nails. Four such doors lead out of the chamber from the four cardinal directions, while two eroded staircases in the east and west make a steep climb up to balconies that overlook the hall. The northernmost door is engraved with the faces of leering demons and a thin slick of fresh blood runs from the crack under the entryway to the center of the room. There the blood flows into a 15-inch diameter grate made of hardened gold, with soft gurgling moans emanating from below. A thin stone bridge connects the two massive balconies that overlook the grate and two small wooden doors are in the south wall of the balcony level. The northern door leads to the outside world and can only be opened by the lord of the *Citadel*.



Black Crystal Spiral

The Bane of Ach-iss
by Michael Gill

The Tale of the Black Crystal Spiral

In the beginning of time, or so many myths would have it, there existed only endless void, a realm of both utter nothingness and infinite possibility. While constructing the reality to come, the creator gods were forced to exclude certain possibilities, ideas, and concepts that existed as mere potentialities in the void, exiling them beyond the bounds of reality. Like water pushing against a dam, these forsaken possibilities sought cracks within the gods' edifice of creation, seeking to enter and return it to the void of unbeing. Mortals, their senses bound by the laws of reality, only dimly perceive these alien possibilities, interpreting them as mad and unknowable gods.

Though the "spiritual dam" of reality is vast, a small fraction of these alien possibilities leak into the physical realm. The eldest of these, nearly as old as creation itself, is the *Black Crystal Spiral*. None can say how this piece of non-reality originally formed. Perhaps an idle doubt by one of the creator gods, a single moment of weakness, allowed an imperfection to mar his creation. Perhaps the creation of the *spiral* was unavoidable, a natural consequence of the entropy that began even as the universe was birthed. What is known is that this fist-sized crystal contains a fragment of the essence of an intelligence called Ach-iss. Some proclaim Ach-iss a dark god of the void, while others maintain it is the living will of a concept so alien that is has no place in reality.

Throughout the ages, mortals have warred over the *Black Crystal Spiral*, for it is said to grant its wielder great power and a unique insight into the workings of creation. The crystal seems drawn to places of conflict, such as battlefields, and it is said that the heady rush of power the artifact grants is quite addictive. Few realize, however, what the crystal truly represents. The *Bane of Ach-iss* is a crack in the fabric of reality, a hole in the dam between creation and the void. The souls of those who perish near the crystal are drawn from this world, lost forever to oblivion. Slowly, over the course of centuries or even millennia, the *spiral* deprives a world of souls. While the greatest of gods can create souls, they seem unable to detect the depravations of the *spiral*. The crystal is a thing from beyond this world, a fragment the gods long ago chose to ignore, and so they are blind to its presence.

Worlds long affected by the *Bane of Ach-iss* soon find the abundance of life decreasing as the lesser gods dwindle in power. Natural laws erode as the world becomes barren and hollow. Eventually, mortal babies are born soulless and stillborn, and not long after, reality itself begins to break down as even the greater gods starve for lack of worshipers. The void rushes in, as angry ocean waves wash over castles in the sand, and the *Black Crystal Spiral* makes its way to another world.

Studying the Black Crystal Spiral

The *Bane of Ach-iss* is a circular crystal, shaped much like a nautilus shell and approximately eight inches in diameter. The crystal is so dark in color that it seems to absorb light, completely lacking a crystalline sheen. The *spiral* is unfaceted and completely smooth to the touch. The artifact emits a slight chill, and those who hold it report that this chill pervades their entire bodies.

The *Black Crystal Spiral* has a blatantly unnatural aura, creating a feeling in observers much like hunger but less defined, a unique visceral need that cannot be sated. Those who become addicted to the power of the artifact grow to desire this feeling, sorely missing it when the *spiral* is absent. Throughout the ages, wielders of the *Bane of Ach-iss* have sought to sate this unnatural hunger through gluttony, unconstrained carnality, blood thirst, and the domination of others. The crystal seems to inspire the worst in all who possess it.

The *spiral* does not appear to *detect magic* or divinations of any other kind. It is not of this reality and does not respond in any way to the workings of magic. It is said that even the gods are blind to the Bane of Ach-iss.

Powers of the Black Crystal Spiral

The *Bane of Ach-iss* holds the power to rend space, rip asunder the earth, and bring plagues. The artifact is solely destructive in nature, lacking any ability to bring life, create, or heal. Whenever a power is invoked, the *spiral* seems to rip aside the fabric of reality to create its effect. For example, *dimension doors* created by the artifact are ragged black gates that appear like a gaping wounds between two points. Nevertheless, these invocations function like their more typical spell equivalents.

Researching the Black Crystal Spiral

As an artifact from outside reality, the *Black Crystal Spiral* is difficult to comprehend or research accurately. A sage with sufficient Knowledge (the planes) might understand the metaphysics of the planes well enough to grasp the artifact's origin. Its also possible that groups with links beyond creation, such as the clergy of an alien god or extradimensional beings, may know some tales of the Bane of Ach-iss. Most information related to the artifact on any world will rely on Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), or Bardic Knowledge to recite the *spiral*'s long and tumultuous history and varied powers.

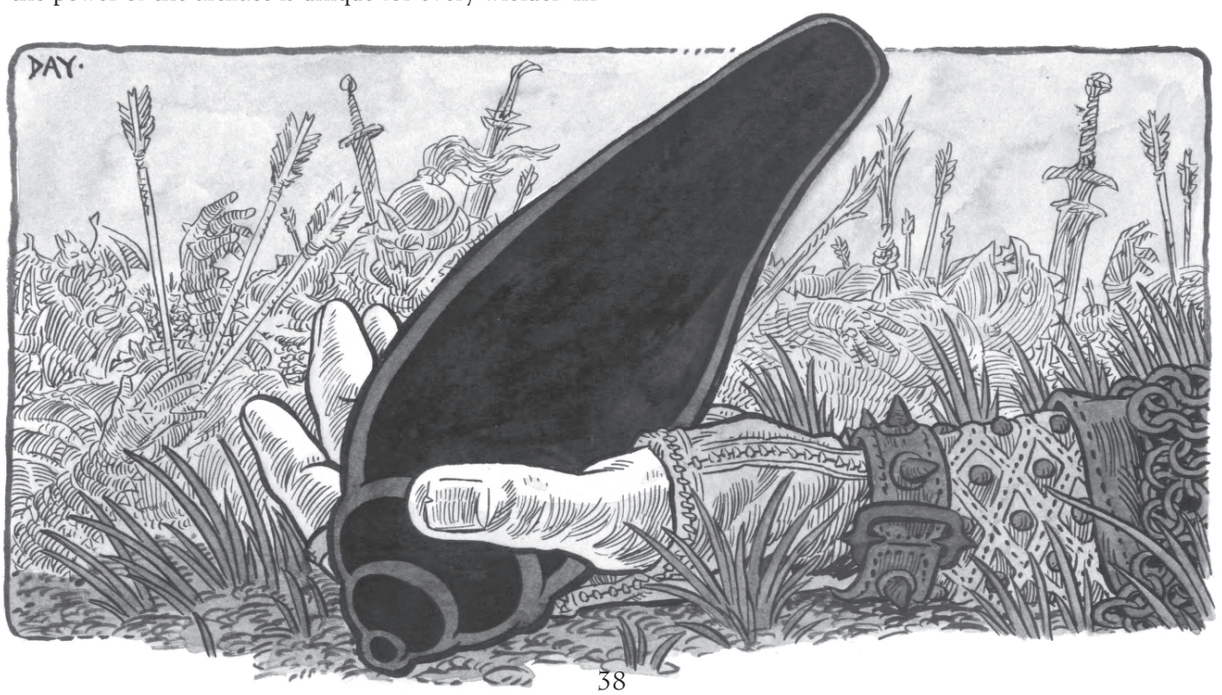
DC	Knowledge Available
10	A powerful artifact, the *Black Crystal Spiral* has passed from one warlord or archmage to another throughout the ages.
20	The holder of the *spiral* is said to wield great power, including the ability to bend the fabric of space, to obliterate his foes, and rend asunder the very earth.
35	The first known record of the *Black Crystal Spiral*, or the Bane of Ach-iss as it is sometimes known, was several centuries ago. It is said that the artifact's magic is addictive. Those slain near the *spiral* cannot be resurrected by any known means.
40	The *spiral* is extradimensional in origin, and deeply antithetical to the nature of reality. The souls of those who perish near the crystal are lost forevermore. The Bane of Ach-iss has been associated with the destruction of a number of worlds.

Misinformation regarding the *Black Crystal Spiral* should relate to its long history as a weapon of warlords and tyrants, perhaps concerning the specific powers it holds. Records suggest that the artifact is far more powerful and desirable than it truly is, most likely due to its addictive property. There is also quite a bit of misinformation about the artifact's soul wrenching property. The characters may come to believe, for instance, that the crystal contains all the souls of those it has slain, and thus that it could be of great use to a necromancer.

Using the Black Crystal Spiral

The *Black Crystal Spiral* is activated when the wielder manages, through force of will, to align his own desires with the unnatural hunger of the crystal, and then to sate that desire. It is said that the trigger needed to release the power of the artifact is unique for every wielder. In effect, by giving force to the alien concept which the crystal embodies, the wielder releases a small portion of that concept into reality, widening the cracks in creation and ravaging the area with destructive power.

In order for a character to activate the *spiral*, he must first spend a round attuning the crystal; this requires a Will



save versus a difficulty that is dependent on the power to be activated. If the Will save is successful, the crystal is then activated by engaging in a vice that is dependent on the nature of the character. For example, a warlord who wields the *Black Crystal Spiral* feel this alien desire as a fierce bloodlust, and thus the crystal is activated when he bathes it in the blood of his enemies.

Constant Powers

The *Black Crystal Spiral* continually absorbs souls, expelling them into the void beyond the edges of reality. Any who perish within a one-mile radius of the *spiral* cannot be raised or resurrected by any method. Their souls do not progress to any sort of afterlife, instead returning to the primal chaos and nothingness of the void. Spells which rely upon the soul, or even the remnant, of a dead creature — such as *speak with dead*, *death knell*, and *animate dead* — do not function on creatures killed within this radius. No undead may be animated within this radius, though preexisting undead are not harmed. The *spiral*'s own activated powers are exempt from this restriction.

Activated Powers

The *Black Crystal Spiral* may invoke the following spell-like effects when properly triggered, with a caster level of 20. If the wielder fails the check to activate a power, it still counts against the number of times that ability can be triggered in a day.

At Will: *animate dead* (trigger DC 18), *contagion* (trigger DC 18, save DC 18), *death knell* (trigger DC 17), *dimension door* (trigger DC 19).

3/day: *disintegrate* (trigger DC 21, save DC 21), *enervation* (trigger DC 19, save DC 19).

1/day: *earthquake* (trigger DC 23), *horrid wilting* (trigger DC 23, save DC 23), *rend space** (trigger DC 21).

Consequences

If the wielder of the *Black Crystal Spiral* attempts to activate one of its powers and fails, the artifact instead draws upon the soul of the wielder, weakening him. The artifact then inflicts one negative level upon the wielder, which remains for 1d4 days and never results in actual level loss. This loss is cumulative if multiple power activations fail.

The power of the *Black Crystal Spiral* is addictive. The effect is subtle at first, but after the first time the wielder attempts to activate a power and fails, he grows more reliant on the artifact. He refuses to leave its presence, unable to withstand the loss of the crystal's unnatural aura. Moreover, he seeks out new opportunities to indulge in his worst vices, and thus activate the crystal. Eventually, he comes to see any who desire the crystal as enemies and thinks nothing of engaging even the most destructive abilities of the artifact. Mechanically, each time the character gains a negative level, he must attempt a DC 25 Will save. Failure indicates that his alignment shifts one "step" toward neutral evil. Once he reaches neutral evil (or fails his first save if he is already neutral evil), he refuses to cease using the artifact, even in the face of continued failures and negative levels.

Reactive Traits

As an object from outside reality, the *spiral* ignores many of the laws of this universe, including those that govern magic. It is completely immune to the effects of all known magic. Additionally, the *Black Crystal Spiral* cannot be transported or shifted to another plane by any means, as such movement is inimical to its nature.

Using the Black Crystal Spiral in a Campaign

The *spiral* is best used in a mid- to high-level campaign revolving around the identification and destruction of the artifact. While the artifact is powerful and ultimately corruptive in the hands of a PC, its activation restrictions mean it is not terribly unbalancing in the short term. However, the characters should eventually realize that the destructive nature of the crystal cannot be quelled and that the artifact must destroyed for the good of the universe. The artifact can be sought by mad cults dedicated to alien gods or it can simply involve bloodthirsty warlords desiring the power of the crystal but ignorant of its true nature.

Adventure Seeds

The Devouring Vortex

In a world where the *Bane of Ach-iss* has been active for several centuries, the inhabitants and the gods of the world might already be feeling the effects of the artifact upon reality. The world is becoming more barren, the gods weaken, infants are stillborn, rules of nature begin to break down, and alien gods reach through the cracks in reality to inspire large doomsday cults. For years the *Black Crystal Spiral* has passed from one warlord to another, contributing to the slow death of the world. Now, the crazed cults of the mad gods beyond reality are seeking the crystal to speed the process of destruction and bring forth their lords. While the gods of the world are weakened and blind to the cause of their malaise, they can see the activities of these cultists. Thus, with their remaining strength, the gods grant visions to their priests, hinting at their salvation.

The PCs are guided to seek out these cults, determine their intentions, and in the end, discover the Bane of Ach-iss. Perhaps they must capture the artifact from a

powerful warlord, opposed by the cultists who also desire the artifact. Even recovering the artifact only begins the heroes' quest, for they must find a way to destroy it and restore their world, while avoiding the cultists and minions of the alien gods.

Beginning of the End

An enemy of the PCs, perhaps a minor warlord, has acquired the *Black Crystal Spiral*, an artifact new to this world. With the artifact's aid, the warlord quickly gains power, coming into opposition with the PCs, perhaps by threatening the PCs' home kingdom or loved ones. Eventually, the party should be able to overcome this opponent and obtain the artifact, as this campaign focuses on the corruptive power of the artifact and the search for its origin.

Once the PCs acquire the artifact, they swiftly come to realize both its power and its corrupting influence. The character possessing or using the artifact becomes more and more possessive of it. He grows eager to engage its destructive capabilities, seeming to relish in the vice necessary to activate it. The wielder of the artifact might be an actual PC, or the group may give the *spiral* over to a mentor, or perhaps a lord. Moreover, the PCs may come to notice the peculiar effects the crystal has on those who perish nearby. Unfortunately, since the *Bane of Ach-iss* is new to this world, there are few places that the PCs can turn to seek information. If they learn that the artifact has extradimensional origins, they may look to the sages among the aberrations, such as the aboleth. In the end, however, the characters might have to oppose their corrupted friend should they choose to seal away or destroy the artifact.

A Lost Sanctuary

An order dedicated to the destruction of the *spiral* has hidden itself in a remote sanctuary in the mountains. The PCs meet a ragged monk who explains that the fortress at the base of the mountain was destroyed, and he may be the sole survivor of his order. He also explains that the *Bane of Ach-iss* lies near the mountain peak, in the possession of a single priestess and must not be disturbed. The PCs must track those who destroyed the temple, either cultists of the gods that dwell beyond or a warlord desiring the artifact's power, and stop them before they reach the peak. Note that if the PCs kill anyone within a one-mile radius of the artifact, the order's attempts to destroy the *Bane of Ach-iss* will fail. The PCs may need to find an alternate way to destroy the artifact or ensure that the ancient and holy priestess completes her task.

Destroying the Black Crystal Spiral

The PCs likely try destroy the *Bane of Ach-iss* before it results in the eventual destruction of their world. Unfortunately, the artifact is immune to all magic and seems indestructible through physical force.

- If the *Black Crystal Spiral* is placed within a *portable hole* which is then placed in a *bag of holding*, it creates a vortex that sucks all within 100 yards into the void beyond reality. This destroys the artifact, but anyone drawn into the void is either irrevocably slain (75% chance), or loses 2d8 levels and finds themselves stranded on a random plane.
- The *spiral* must be held by one without sin for a period of one decade, during which time it cannot absorb even a single soul (no person can die within one mile of the artifact).
- If the *spiral* is brought into contact with the *Earth Seed*, both artifacts are annihilated in a blast that deals 40d6 damage (DC 25 Reflex for half) in a radius of 100 yards.

New Spell

The following spell reflects the *Black Crystal Spiral*'s ability to weaken the bonds of reality and draw forth the primal chaos of the void. While the ability is intrinsically linked to the *Bane of Ach-iss*, it is theorized that wizards could create a similar effect, though of course this is quite likely to have a severe toll on one's sanity.

Rend Space

Conjuration (Teleportation)
Level: Sor/Wiz 8
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Area: 100-ft.-radius emanation
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates an area where the laws of space and physics begin to break down. The caster may *dimension door*, as the spell but only within the area of the *rend space* spell, once each round as a standard action. Other than this ability, no *teleportation* or other sort of extradimensional travel is possible into, out of, or within the area.

Material Components: A small silver razor.

Book of Stasis

Spellbook of the Delem-ust
By Michael Gill

The Tale of the Book of Stasis

The legends speak thus:

In the ancient world, when the humanoid races were new, an advanced civilization of dragons reached heights of magical understanding unrivaled even today. Tribes of humans and elves, orcs and kobolds flocked to these creatures. Some merely wished to serve beings of such majesty and grace, others to learn and grow in power, and some simply because they were held in slavery by the tyrannical wyrms. This, according to some sages, is the origin of sorcery: the natural magic of dragons granted to the young races through interbreeding with dragons, passed down haphazardly through the generations.

Eventually, the dragons' empire faded away and the young races were left to seek their own destiny. Sorcerers, as the only great arcanists of this age, were variably adored heroes or reviled outcasts. As writing developed and civilization took hold, a new sort of arcane magic emerged in the form of wizardry. While sorcery was an inherent talent, wizardry allowed anyone with the intelligence and discipline to grasp the power of magic.

Thus speak ancient tales, one of many myths regarding the beginning of magic. Whether or not all this is true, however, historians know this much for fact. In the earliest days, there arose a cabal of wizards called the Delem-ust, known as the Argent Scale in the common tongue. This was a group dedicated to the study of sorcery, and they, at least, believed fully in these tales.

Composed entirely of wizards, the Delem-ust frequently sought out sorcerers for experimentation, often against their will. Decades of research, questioning, experimentation, and dissection taught them much about the nature of sorcery and magic. Since it originated in dragons and was not natural to humans, they decided sorcery was inherently unstable. Worse, it could not be trusted. If the dragons could grant such power, was it not possible they could control it still? Perhaps they could take it away at will or even take control of the sorcerers that shared their blood. These possibilities greatly alarmed the Delem-ust. At the same time, there were certain aspects of sorcery that appealed to them, such as the lack of advance preparation in his spells.

With their vast knowledge of magic theory, the Delem-ust set out to establish a form of perfect magic that would allow them to combine the best of sorcery and wizardry. Moreover, it would allow them to "fix" sorcerous talent, making it innate to the humanoid form and eliminating its connection to dragonic blood. Their years of research were collected in a single book and bound by powerful enchantments, which served as the catalyst for the mystic change in the nature of magic they hoped to invoke. This working was formally called the *Spellbook of the Delem-ust*, but in the tales of other arcanists, has come to be known as the *Book of Stasis*.

Eventually, the enclave of the Delem-ust was destroyed, though the sages are unclear whether by a flight of rampaging dragons or a horde of demons. Perhaps the sorcerers they had abused for so long rose against them. However, it is clear that studies had weakened them and even the survivors were left as shattered shells, able to work only the most trivial of magics. The *Book of Stasis*, said to be invulnerable, was lost in the struggle.

Studying the Book of Stasis

The *Book of Stasis* is a large tome, 25 inches on a side and five inches thick. The book has a light metal cover of unknown origin wrapped in a smooth black leather binding. The leather of the front cover is imprinted with a silver scale, its two plates exactly even. The *Book of Stasis* is heavy, weighing about 25 pounds, even though each of the components seem much lighter. It radiates an aura of cool authority and calm power.

Inside are 133 thick paper pages, covered with a spidery script in Draconic. Astute readers may (DC 25 Spot check) realize that this is the work of many different authors, although some effort was made to match the handwriting. The ink is silver-black and of unknown origin. The text of the book draws the eye, encouraging those who glance at it to read it and making it difficult to put down. In addition to a great deal of magic theory about the origin of sorcery and a rather paranoid diatribe about the inherent untrustworthiness of sorcerers, the book outlines a short ritual through which its wielder can transform a spell into an inherent power. Finally, the *Book of Stasis* contains the spells *infusion* and *spell stasis* described below.

The *Book of Stasis* does not appear to radiate any aura of magic that can be seen through a *detect magic* spell.

Researching the Book of Stasis

A great deal is known about the fall of the Delem-ust, which most scholars of magic remember to be society of wizards dedicated to the eradication of sorcery. A Knowledge (arcana) or Bardic Knowledge check reveals at least some knowledge about the society and its greatest working, the *Book of Stasis*, although such information is likely to be fragmentary and misleading. It is said, however, that certain ancient draconic scholars know the true history of the Delem-ust and perhaps even the location of the *Book of Stasis*.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	One of the first wizardly cabals, the Delem-ust were dedicated to the eradication of sorcerers. Their greatest working was the *Book of Stasis*.
20	The *Book of Stasis* contains a perfect form of magic, granting the reader truly inherent power. This is said to combine aspects of sorcery and wizardry.
25	The *Book of Stasis* may be used to stabilize sorcerous magic, allowing the sorcerer to permanently learn new spells. The Book is also said to contain the unique magics developed by the Delem-ust.
40	While the *Book of Stasis* does allow the reader to make lesser magics inherent, it does so at great cost.

The *Book of Stasis* has been lost for ages, so little is known about it other than the Delem-ust's proclamations of its power. Sages are likely to assume that the book is incredibly powerful, containing a unique and "perfected" form of magic and knowing little about its potential side effects. Also, sorcerers are likely to see the book as a symbol of oppression, created essentially to chain their power.

Other divinations spells reveal only an impression of unbroken stasis. The book appears to have no history, nor does it appear to age in any way.

Powers of the Book of Stasis

The *Book of Stasis* functions as a normal spellbook with regard to the two new spells contained within. Its more potent ability to make magic inherent in a spellcaster must be activated though a short ritual.

Using the Book of Stasis

In order to transform an arcane spell into a spell-like ability, the user of the *Book of Stasis* must be an arcane spellcaster and possess a written version — a scroll, or a pre-scribed copy in a spellbook — of the spell he wishes to imprint. The character need not already know the spell, but it must be 5th level or lower, and it must appear on his class spell list. Next, he performs a 15-minute ritual that requires only basic components, including several candles and the material components (if any) of the spell to be imprinted. Note that this ritual may only be accomplished with the aid of the *Book of Stasis*; it cannot be performed from memory or a duplicate. The ritual destroys the written copy of the spell to be imprinted.

The ritual permanently grants the arcane spellcaster the spell as a spell-like ability that can be used once per day. In exchange, the arcane spellcaster permanently sacrifices one spell slot of the same or higher level than the imprinted spell. A single spell may be imprinted multiple times (at the cost of multiple spell slots) if the arcane caster wishes to cast it as a spell-like ability multiple times per day. These spell-like abilities require no verbal, somatic, or material components, nor do they require an experience point cost. They suffer no chance of arcane spell failure due to armor. They may not be counterspelled, nor used to counterspell other spells. As a spell-like ability, the spell continues to provoke attacks of opportunity when cast in combat (although it can be cast defensively), and it may be disrupted if the caster's concentration is broken while casting. Metamagic feats do not function on the spell-like ability, but the caster may employ the Quicken Spell-Like Ability and Empower Spell-Like Ability feats described in the *MM*.

There is no known way to reverse this effect, though it is rumored that the destruction of the *Book of Stasis* removes all spell-like abilities granted through its power.

Consequences

The *Book* provides an easy road to power. A sorcerer who uses it has access to new spells, making them much more versatile. A wizard who uses it no longer needs to study or prepare his imprinted spells. This very ease of power erodes the mystic discipline and strength of will necessary to study magic. Each time a character uses the book to imprint a spell as a spell-like ability, he must make a Will save (DC equals 12 + total number of spells he has imprinted to date). If he fails, he loses the ability to learn new spells in the normal fashion. Wizards cannot

scribe new spells into their spellbooks, and do not gain the standard two new spells when they gain levels. Sorcerers gain no spells known when they advance a level. Use of the book to imprint spell-like abilities becomes the *only* way for the character to learn new magics.

Reactive Traits

The *Book of Stasis* is nearly impossible to damage or harm with magic, and it cannot be *teleported*. Magic seems unable to affect the Book in any way, as though it were not really there. For example, if the *Book of Stasis* is within the area of a *fireball*, the area under the book is scorched normally, but the book remains intact.

Using the Book of Stasis in a Campaign

This artifact is best employed in a mid-level campaign, and it can serve as the focus of a campaign arc. Perhaps an enemy or friend of the PCs has acquired the *Book* and is using it to gain power. In most cases, the PCs must learn of the true cost of the artifact through direct experience, and either accept this trade-off or work to destroy it. The *Book* should not prove terribly unbalancing in the hands of most arcane casters, due to its cost, but in the hands of a multiclassed character — particularly one who has no intention of again advancing as a caster — it might prove surprisingly useful. The DM should carefully consider the characters in the party before she introduces the *Book* to the campaign.



Adventure Seeds

A Friend in Need

A powerful and important wizard associated with the PCs, perhaps a mentor or the king's court wizard, acquires the *Book of Stasis* and makes heavy use of it to imprint spells. Soon, he finds himself unable to cast spells flexibly and becomes reliant on the book's power. The wizard approaches the PCs asking for help with tasks that he should clearly be able to accomplish, such as casting minor spells or analyzing a magic item. Alternately, the wizard might introduce the book to a PC arcane caster, allowing her to imprint a few spells. The PCs begin to see the negative impact the *Book of Stasis* is having on the wizard, and realize the NPC must be facing the same difficulties.

In order to help their friend (and perhaps a party-member), the characters must research the *Book of Stasis*, learning about the Delem-ust and perhaps visiting the ruins of their enclave, where they find a single brassy dragon scale. Their investigation leads them eventually to Achnyche, a brass dragon sage who studied the Delem-ust at the height of their power. The PCs must convince the cantankerous old dragon to help them, then to fulfill the manner of destruction he describes.

The Black Book

A noteworthy wizard has hired the PCs to fetch for him a book recently discovered by a distant archeological expedition. He explains that the book is a spellbook of some sort but knows little about its true nature. Unfortunately, he let news of the discovery spread amongst his scholarly contacts, and several sorcerers have recognized the description as the *Book of Stasis*. They set out to destroy this anathema before it can spawn more murders of sorcerers.

The characters must journey to the expedition, most likely in a dangerous area, and acquire the book. Perhaps they find that the expedition has been destroyed through magic and the book is missing. They must then hunt down the sorcerer responsible, reacquire the book, and make it back to their employer. The PCs should will deal with sorcerers attacking them as they travel, and it is possible that any arcane spellcasters in the party may experiment with the book. By the time they return to their employer, the PCs may find themselves unwilling to part with the book, placing the party in an awkward position.

A Tool of Evil

A powerful enemy spellcaster of the party has killed the good dragon guardian of the *Book of Stasis* and is now using the artifact to rapidly accumulate power and threaten the PCs. This enemy is too powerful for a direct assault, so the party must investigate his newfound wealth and magic. Eventually, they discover the dragon's cave, which provides clues to the book's true nature. As the characters research the Delem-ust, they come to realize that their enemy has sown the seed of his own downfall, and that over time, the *Book of Stasis* will weaken him so that they may confront him.

Destroying the Book of Stasis

Those affected negatively by the *Book of Stasis* may come to realize that the only way they can reverse its power and restore their magic is destroy it. Unfortunately, the *Book of Stasis* is very difficult to destroy.

- Each of the 133 pages of the *Book of Stasis* must be ripped out and eaten by a separate dragon.
- The *Book* must be bathed in the pure chaos of Limbo for 1,000 years.
- The powers granted by the *Book of Stasis* must be used to save the lives of a number of sorcerers equal to those destroyed by the Delem-ust to further its creation.

New Spells

These spells were developed by the Delem-ust, to take advantage of the *Book*'s abilities and the "perfect" magic it grants them.

Infusion

Evocation

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell immediately restores one daily use of any spell-like ability you have used in the last 24 hours. This spell-like ability must be equivalent to a spell of 5th level or lower, and it must have limited uses measured in times per day. Spell-like abilities of higher than 5th level, or with a frequency of use less than 1/day, are unaffected.

Material Components: A small silver scale worth at least 250 gp.

Spell Stasis

Abjuration

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 ft.

Area: 30-ft.-radius emanation, centered on you

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell generates a mystic field that prevents the casting of arcane spells. Any attempt to cast an arcane spell uses up the prepared sell or spell slot allocated, but produces no effect whatsoever. This expressly does not prevent the use of spell-like abilities. Magic that originates from outside the area take effect normally, even if the effect enters the *spell stasis* area. Most magic items function normally, though this spell does prevent the use of spell completion items, such as scrolls, within the area of effect.

Material Components: A clear piece of amber worth at least 200 gp.

Bow of Night

True Orcbane, Bow of Lasting Darkness
By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of the Bow of Night

Orcish hordes lead by the Black Shield clan stormed the open plains, bringing rape and ruin to all in their path and leaving nothing but corpses, salted fields, and decay in their wake. Some few, very few, survived the onslaught of the hordes, fleeing horrors that would haunt them the rest of their lives. After their many victories, the various orcish clans fell into tribal bickering and were beaten back by a combined army of humans and elves. Rescued prisoners and other survivors were collected as the humans and elves moved forward. In the end it was discovered that "surviving" the terrors of the torture, rape, and depravity of the Black Shields was a far greater curse than the peace of death. Many survivors were little more than haunted husks of their previous selves.

Toarik Nuam was such a survivor, old already at the time of the attacks; he was so infirm that the orcs ignored him, laughing as they decimated the village around him. Overcome with cold, calculating rage, Toarik swore vengeance against all orcs though he was no warrior, no sturdy farmer's son from a bard's tale, merely an elderly craftsman with no skill at arms. By the time his broken husk was discovered by the great elven ranger Aalbran Whitewind, Toarik's rage and anger congealed into a plan to make his hatred last forever, and that plan sustained him for years as he brought his hatred into physical being.

A woodcarver by trade, Toarik traveled to villages and apprenticed himself to bowyers and fletchers throughout the lands, learning his trade with a focus that startled, and even frightened, some of his younger teachers. After a decade of study, and approaching the age of 80, Toarik began construction of what he intended to be the greatest bow in the world, a bow born of hatred and destined to carry his rage forward through the centuries.

Using strips of adamantine alloyed with mithral created for him by a dwarven smith, Toarik bound the blackened bones of a black dragon onto a darkwood core to create a powerful composite bow. Pouring his last bit of life and hatred into it as he sealed each part together, Toarik gave the bow a life and purpose of its own. As if its creation was blessed by the gods, the *Bow of Night* was completed and left to Aalbran, who had rescued Toarik so many years before. Toarik's timing was as perfect as his craft, for he completed the *Bow* mere days before the orcish tribes united once more, attempting to storm human and elven lands again.

The *Bow*'s dark presence and powerful magic turned the tide of many battles, breaking the orc's unity and shattering their alliance. Aalbran killed the orcish leaders, and continued to hunt and slaughter orcs as they fled back into the mountains. "Lost" several times through the centuries, the *Bow of Night* has always reappeared before the orcs can again combine their might, always in the hands of a skilled warrior with a hatred of orcs equal to that of its original creator. Orcish shaman believe it is the "True Orcbane" and seek its destruction at all costs, starting yet new wars and battles only to be rebuffed by its great power. Other orcish tales call it the "Bow of Lasting Darkness" as ever since its appearance the orcs believe they have never approached the power and holdings they had before it. Some orcs believe that anyone destroying the *Bow* is destined to help them conquer the world.

Studying the Bow of Night

Faint veins of mithral marble the adamantine supports bending and fusing with the smoothly veined darkwood and deep black bone forming the majority of the *Bow*. Clearly made of several materials, the *Bow of Night* is fused into one smooth form glistening with dark, living hatred. Beckoning to be touched, it appears both sinister and challenging. Although simply touching the *Bow* is safe, for most creatures, wise creatures avoid doing so, sensing the pent-up hatred and rage within. Anyone bold enough to touch the smooth surface finds no gaps between the fused materials, just the sensation of oily smoothness and potent strength waiting to be unleashed. The bow is permanently strung with a wire of adamantine as black as the bow itself.

Stretching silently when drawn, the arrows that fly from the Bow of Night emit a sinister, unearthly hiss that does almost as much damage to orcish morale as the orcs it slays.

Magical study of the bow with the use of a *detect magic*, *arcane sight*, or similar spell reveals little more than a faint aura of conjuration and necromantic magic. While it may not be considered intelligent and aware, the *Bow*'s great hatred for orcs does have a life of its own. If a ranger wielding the *Bow* is in a party of a good-aligned cleric that casts the *status* spell, it is detected as a comrade, although no information about its "life signs" is given. Clerics casting spells designed to detect life or living creatures also sense the bow as a living creature.

Researching the Bow of Night

Although its whereabouts are presently unknown, many elderly rangers know its story, and communities of elves tell tales of this mighty bow. Many bards know songs of various battles in which it was used, though much of the information contained therein can be misleading. There are so many instances where the *Bow* was used that tales have grown and twisted through the centuries. A successful Bardic Knowledge check or Knowledge (history) check provides some of the information in the table below.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Bow of Night* arises and picks a wielder when orcs are about. Its black evil helps counter the evil of the orcs and keeps them at bay.
20	Throughout history the *Bow* has only been wielded by rangers.
25	In the hands of a skilled archer the black *Bow of Night* can slay any orc from a great distance.
30+	The deep hatred for orcs of its creator imbues the *Bow of Night* with great abilities against orcs.

Unfortunately, the black, magical construction of the *Bow*, and its history of hatred and rage against orcs gives the *Bow* itself an evil reputation. Any DC check below DC 15 has PCs convinced the *Bow* is evil. If the DC check for information is below DC 24 the PCs suspect the *Bow* might be evil and that great caution must be used handling it or it can dominate a wielder to use them as a tool against orcs. Higher skill checks reveal that the *Bow* has, in fact, only been wielded by rangers of good alignment and that it seems that it can only be wielded by someone with a deep-seated hatred of orcs.

Powers of the Bow of Night

The *Bow of Night* has a singular focus, the slaughter of orcs. For this purpose it is, perhaps, the most powerful bow in existence. Although still a powerful magic item, it is not rumored to possess any other special magical abilities, other than an ability to inspire fear in orcs through its deadliness.

Using the Bow of Night

Possessing limited life, and a very limited consciousness of its own, the *Bow of Night* can only be wielded by an individual of good alignment that has a deep enough hatred of orcs to match its own. This hatred is measured in the form of having Humanoid (orc) as a Favored Enemy, either as a ranger ability or special class ability. So long as an individual's hatred and desires are in line with the *Bow*'s, they are able to wield it. Those that are of good alignment but do not have the same overwhelming hatred can hold it, but find it impossible to draw the *Bow* back no matter how strong they are. Neutral characters and creatures can also hold the *Bow*, but are equally unable to use it.

Once a character has successfully held and fired the *Bow*, its other powers are revealed. Such a character can use it to fire a *greater arrow of orc slaying* (see below) and acquire its assistance in the tracking and sensing of orcs.

Constant Powers

The *Bow of Night* functions as a *+4 orc bane composite* (Str 18) *longBow* that inflicts x4 damage to an orc on a critical hit. Anyone holding the *Bow* receives a +2 Dodge bonus to their AC against all attacks from orcs, due to its fearful presence and ability to sense orcs nearby. If the wielder keeps it in at least one hand they are able to sense any and all orcs within 30 feet. These special senses are blocked by 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt. A ranger tracking orcs while holding the *Bow* receives a +5 circumstance bonus on their Survival skill checks as well as a +10 circumstance bonus on any and all Spot checks to see orcs.

Activated Powers

Simply firing the *Bow* in the presence of orcs has an interesting effect. The strange sound each arrow emits as it is released from the bow triggers deep-seated, primal fears in orcs. Any orc within a 30-foot radius of someone firing the bow must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or flee as if affected by a *fear* spell (Caster level 12, duration 12 rounds). Those orcs that successfully save are immune to the fear effect for a period of 24 hours.

Once per day the wielder can fire a *greater arrow of orc slaying* by uttering the words "feel my hatred" in any language. If the arrow strikes an orc, the target must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or die. This is a death effect so spells such as *death ward* can protect a target.

Once per year the *Bow of Night* can be used to cast a *find the path spell*, but only if the spell pertains to tracking down a specifically named orc chieftain (Caster Level 20).

Consequences

Any wielder of the *Bow of Night* finds their hatred for orcs is so great that any creature of orcish blood triggers a near incomprehensible rage. The wielder must succeed at a DC 15 Will save to endure the presence of a half-orc or any other creature with orcish blood. If the saving

throw is failed, they attack the creature or character immediately. When orcs are present their only goal is to kill them. All other goals are secondary. If attacking an orcish camp or war party might put others at risk the wielder must succeed at a DC 20 Will save to keep from acting. Each accompanying party member or creature reduces the save DC by 1. Even if the roll succeeds, the save must be repeated every round orcs are in view to avoid attacking.

Ambient Effects

While the *Bow of Night* helps its wielder spot orcs, it exudes such a powerful aura of hatred directed at orcs that it makes them more alert and fearful. Orcs within 60 feet of the bow receive a +4 circumstance bonus to all Spot and Listen checks, due to the nervous alertness created by the bow's magical emanations. Combined with the effects described above, it is almost impossible for a ranger with the bow to sneak up on a group of orcs instead of just screaming in rage and firing arrows into them.

Using the Bow of Night in a Campaign

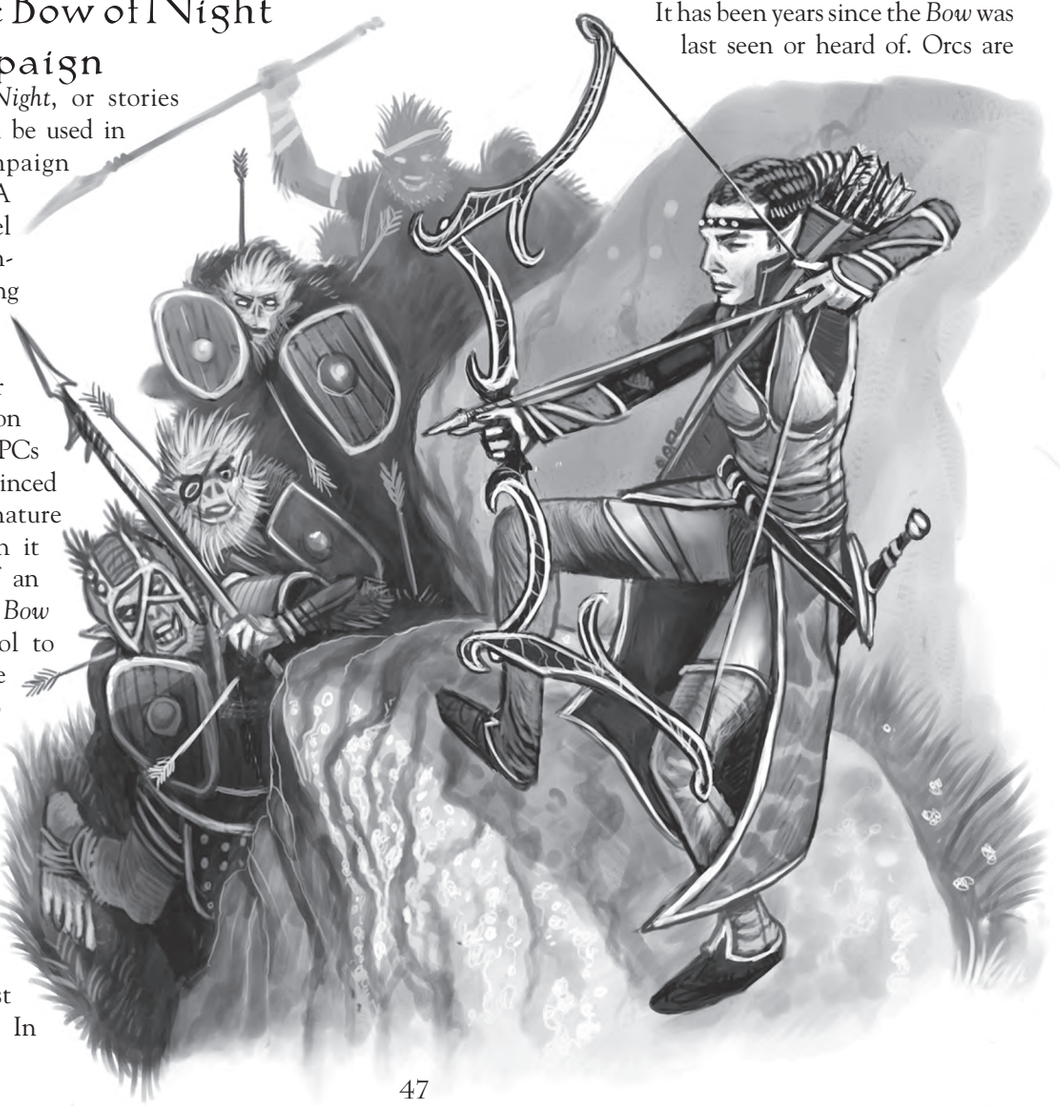
The *Bow of Night*, or stories describing it, can be used in almost any campaign involving orcs. A mid- to high-level party could be involved in acquiring or protecting the *Bow* in the event of a large-scale war against a collection of orcish tribes. PCs might also be convinced it has an evil nature if hired to search it out by agents of an orcish tribe. The *Bow* is a major symbol to orcs, who believe that the orc who captures and destroys the weapon is destined to lead the entire race to great glory. Thus, anyone possessing it is a target for attack by the most powerful of orcs. In some scenarios the PCs could be competing with orcish adventuring groups in a search for the *Bow*, or the PCs could have to contend with a powerful orc chieftain that is gathering clans together under his banner. Without the *Bow* to use against them, the orcs may again charge across the land.

If the PCs do acquire the *Bow*, and one of them is able to use it, the DM only needs to consider its great power and consequences against orcs. The *Bow of Night* is a powerful weapon, but against non-orcs it is not an unbalancing item. If a campaign involves a large number of battles against orcs, this artifact can have a significant impact in the campaign and its use should be carefully monitored. If the DM feels a need to remove the *Bow* from a campaign after using or discovering it, feel free to have a council of rangers come forward to request it be held in a safe place to be used in the event of future orc attacks.

Adventure Seeds

The Lost Bow

It has been years since the *Bow* was last seen or heard of. Orcs are



again gathering together under the banner of a powerful shaman, and only with the *Bow* the party might be able to overcome this new threat. Decades ago, the last wielder of the *Bow*, Dary Belia, was heard to be chasing orcs into a distant dungeon complex. The *Bow of Night* hasn't been seen since.

The Madness of Nieron

The present wielder of the *Bow of Night* is slowly going mad, poisoned by agents of a powerful orcish shaman. He now sees orcs everywhere he looks and, not knowing who to trust, has fled into the forest to avoid attacking people he shouldn't. Finding and calming Nieron is one challenge, discovering how and why he was poisoned is another.

In the Name of Peace

Representatives of several orcish tribes have come forward to negotiate a lasting peace. Although the human and elven clerics involved are surprised, the orcs seem truthful. The orcs request the *Bow of Night* be handed over to them as it is a symbol of war and bloodshed and this would show the humans and elves want peace as much as they do. Of course, the orcish representatives have been magically induced to make these overtures by a powerful shaman that seeks nothing more than the destruction of the *Bow* and an excuse to start another far-reaching war.

Destroying the Bow of Night

Obviously, the orcs desire the destruction of this powerful artifact, and its rumored dark nature might be used to fool the PCs into believing it should be destroyed. Groups that have made agreements with orcs for any reason, or an orcish party, might also want to destroy it.

- A *Morden's disjunction* spell stands a 1% chance per caster level of destroying the magic used to create the *Bow*. This is probably the most dangerous method to try to destroy the *Bow* as the caster must succeed at a DC 25 Will save or die instantly. If the save is successful, a second DC 25 Will save is required with a failed save permanently depriving the caster of all spell casting abilities.
- A blood ritual before an orcish god can also deprive the *Bow* of its power. The *Bow* must be prayed over by an orc shaman and the blood of an innocent child must be spilled over the *Bow*. As the child dies the *Bow* shatters releasing its power and hatred.
- A carefully worded *wish* spell can remove the inner hatred of the bow, leaving the bow a normal *+2 orcbane composite* (Str 18) *longBow*. Although this doesn't completely destroy the *Bow*, it still releases the hatred as described below.

Any of these methods has the unintended consequence of releasing Toarik's undying hatred as a form of incorporeal undead that attacks all creatures in the area and begins to hunt down all living creatures. As the creature forms it releases a mental howl of anguish and rage that stuns anyone nearby if they fail a DC 20 Will save.

New Monster

Toarik poured all of his hatred and rage into the construction of the *Bow of Night*, so much hatred that it became a living thing. If the *Bow* is destroyed this hatred is released as a form of incorporeal undead that becomes a mindless, undying form of rage and hatred against all forms of life.

Toarik's Undying Hatred

Medium Undead (Incorporeal)

Hit Dice:	14d12 (91 hp)
Initiative:	+3
Speed:	40 ft. (8 squares), fly 40 ft. (8 squares) (perfect)
Armor Class:	20 (+3 Dex, +7 deflection), touch 20, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple:	+7/—
Attack:	Incorporeal touch +10 melee (1d6 plus energy drain)
Full Attack:	2 incorporeal touches +10 melee (1d6 plus energy drain)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Mental howl, frightful presence, energy drain, create spawn
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, turn resistance +2, undead traits, DR 10/magic and silver
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +11
Abilities:	Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 16
Skills:	—
Feats:	—
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	10
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	15–20 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment:	—

This amorphous, swirling cloud of shadowy hatred is fueled by constant, undying rage so powerful that its hatred can be sensed from a distance. Tendrils of the shadow swing out to attack everything around it as the creature makes its way through everything, even solid objects, in its quest to destroy life.

This mindless undead is formed of pure hatred and rage and was released from the powerful magic bow it was used to create. Looming as a 5-foot tall shadowy

figure with no distinctive features, it is difficult to see in dark or shadowy conditions, but its presence is easy to feel as its hatred is so powerful that it engenders a sense of fear in everyone nearby.

Combat

Toarik's undying hatred is mindless, it simply attacks the nearest living creature while emitting a mental howl of rage and hatred. This lack of tactics might appear to be a weakness, but its constant mental howl, and frightful presence keep creatures from acting as they flee in disarray.

Mental Howl (Su): Toarik's undying hatred constantly emits a silent, psionic burst of hatred and rage that is so powerful weaker minds can be panicked. Anyone within a 30-ft. radius of the undying hatred must succeed at a DC 20 Will save or be panicked. A successful save allows one to shut out the hatred and rage and function normally. Anyone making a successful save cannot be affected by the mental howl again for a period of 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Frightful Presence (Su): The shadowy form of the undying hatred is so terrifying that all normal animals and humanoids with an Intelligence score of 6 or less flee from its presence.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures struck by the undying hatred gain one negative level. It requires a DC 20 Fortitude save to remove a negative level. For each negative level the undying hatred gains 5 temporary hit points. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Create Spawn (Su): Any creature slain by the undying hatred's energy drain rises as a wight in 1d4 rounds. These wights act independently, now fed by their own hatred for life.

Brooch of the False God

The Clasp of Divinity, Vilsek's Folly
By C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of the Brooch of the False God

History does not record Vilsek Dunabra for his power, his knowledge or his tremendous cunning, but only for the folly of his greatest and ultimately most miscalculated of cons. Considered to be one of the greatest con men ever to live, Vilsek used both his razor sharp wit and powerful arcane knowledge to bilk entire kingdoms out of wealth and then vanish before anyone was the wiser. A master of both illusionary disguise and elaborate strategy, Vilsek constructed elaborate schemes, and many of his victims never realized they had ever been deceived at all. As time wore on, Vilsek's schemes grew ever-more intricate, eventually becoming so complex that few could ever work them out, even after a deception was revealed.

Vilsek quickly grew bored of his standard cons and set out to perform the greatest con of all time. Using his advanced knowledge of the arcane, he constructed a device intended to convince others that he himself had ascended to godhood. His intent was to use the device to swindle the toughest, most skeptical of all marks — his fellow conmen — out of their own illicit gains. The result, however, became one of history's most astounding failures. The artifact Vilsek created has become known as the *Brooch of the False God*; Vilsek himself used it to claim he had become the God of Swindles and the Patron Saint of Cons.

Unfortunately for Vilsek, the *Brooch* worked all too well. Conmen and thieves the world over paid homage to him in deed, word and most importantly, tithe. Temples were erected in his honor, men offered their daughters in hopes of becoming grandfather to a demigod, and the scum of the earth flocked to him just to hear him speak. Vilsek amassed an amazing amount of wealth without lifting a finger or construct another con. Yet it never occurred to Vilsek that others, with sufficiently strong will to resist his enchantments, might desire the power he possessed for themselves. Many would-be divinities attempted to slay Vilsek, hoping to assume his portfolio and ascend to godhood. Most such attempts failed, due to the efforts and piety of Vilsek's followers. The final assassin, however, succeeded despite the best efforts of Vilsek and his worshippers. (Some rumors claim this assassin was armed with a weapon forged in a distant and foreign land, capable of slaying true

Researching the Brooch of the False God

Any bard worth his salt knows the tale of Vilsek, although the details change from retelling to retelling. Rogues and thieves of all kinds also tell the story as a cautionary tale, Vilsek's name having slipped into common parlance as a term referring to "a plan the works so well it leads to its own collapse." A Bardic Knowledge, Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (history) check may reveal information on the *Brooch*. Bards and Rogues may choose to take 10 on any knowledge roll involving the *Brooch of the False God*, due to its popularity in common storytelling.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Clasp of Divinity* is an artifact with a sordid history involving a conman named Vilsek.
20	Anyone wearing the *Clasp* gains powers of the gods, sufficient to command a flock of faithful worshippers.
25	The *Brooch of the False God* possesses powers over the mind to convince others of deific powers that the *Brooch* does not actually grant.
30+	While the *Brooch* may convince the weak not to harm the user, those of strong will may attempt to harm to the wearer, hoping to achieve the godlike powers they believe the wearer possesses.

Some believe the *Brooch of the False God* actually bestows godhood on any who wear it, allowing the wearer to achieve immortality. Others argue that while few wearers have lived long lives, the nature of *Brooch* is a deific power unto itself that lies dormant within it, and uses common folk as a vessel to once again rule. They believe that Vilsek himself actually became a god and that his greatest con was convincing others that the *Brooch* in no way granted true power. By transferring to new bodies along with the *Brooch*, these misguided souls maintain that Vilsek is able to possess them and thus has achieved a limited immortality.

gods — perhaps the *Fang of the Devil Tigers*.) Vilsek's death finally revealed the great con for what it was.

When it was discovered just what Vilsek had accomplished and how his achievement led to his ultimate demise, his name soon became synonymous with spectacular failures. The *Brooch of the False God* has passed through many hands since, with results ranging from highly successful reigns to short term boondoggles that angered the gods themselves.

Studying the Brooch of the False God

The *Brooch of the False God* is an ornate silver badge of two dragons twisting about to form an oval, with a large, perfect opal set into it. The opal pulses and glows with power, and when worn sheds light equal to a *daylight* spell. When viewed with *detect magic*, the *brooch* seems to radiate an immensely strong divine aura that has a radius of 120 feet. However, if the *Brooch* is being worn at the time of the spell, it is indiscernible whether the power originates from the *Brooch* or the being wearing it.

Powers of the Brooch of the False God

The *Brooch of the False God* grants powerful enchantment and illusion spells that make the wearer seem to possess powers of a divine, godlike nature. The *Brooch* does not in any way actually bestow godhood or divine status of any kind, however, and can be hazardous to wear in the wrong company.

Using the Brooch of the False God

The constant powers of the *Brooch of the False God* take effect as soon as it is attached to a cloak or pinned to the wearer's collar, while its activated powers can be accessed with an act of will. The artifact's area of effect may never be dimmed or willfully turned off by the wearer. Only removing the *Brooch* deactivates the artifact's *charm* effects, but this immediately reveals the wearer for what he truly is.

Constant Powers

The *Brooch of the False God* emits a 120-foot-radius aura that has several properties. Anyone entering the area of effect of the *Brooch*, and who has line of sight to the wearer, instantly "recognizes" him as a deity of great power. (This power does not normally allow a save. Creatures normally immune to mind-affecting effects are *not* immune to this power, but they are entitled to a saving throw, at a DC of 30.) These individuals must then attempt a DC 30 Will save or fall under a permanent *charm monster* effect. Success on this saving throw indicates that the individual still believes the wearer to be a god, but feels no compulsion to like or serve him, nor follow any command given except out of a sense of self-preservation. Once someone has succeeded on this Will save, they are immune to the artifact's *charm monster* effect until and unless the *Brooch* changes wearers. A permanent *daylight* effect (as the spell) surrounds the wearer at all times.

The wearer of the *Brooch of the False God* gains a +20 divine bonus to Charisma-based skill checks.

Activated Powers

Simply by raising his voice and acting angry, the wearer of the *Brooch* may invoke an ability that functions as the *fear* spell, and affects everyone within a 120-foot radius.

Additionally, the wearer may invoke any of the following spell-like abilities at will, but only on subjects who have failed their save against the artifact's *charm monster* ability: *crushing despair* (DC 30), *demand* (DC 34), *geas*, *greater heroism*, and *hold monster* (DC 30).



Consequences

The *Brooch of the False God* has no inherent downsides or curses to impose upon the wearer. However, the faiths of many settings (including the culture from which the *Brooch* originally hails) believe that anyone who slays a god may ascend to divinity and assume the dead god's portfolio. This means that anyone who successfully saves against the artifact's *charm monster* effect is a potential usurper, and may attempt to slay the bearer to gain his powers. As the *Brooch of the False God* offers no additional powers or protection against those who have succeeded on the initial Will save, this could become very dangerous for the wearer.

Reactive Traits

The *Brooch of the False God* may not be affected by spells in any way, except in the case of any *dispel magic* effects (or its more powerful variants) cast by an actual deity. These spells affect the artifact normally.

Using the Brooch of the False God in a Campaign

The *Brooch of the False God* is best used in a mid- to high-level campaign, as lower level characters will find it nearly impossible to resist its effects. The DM should be careful if she decides to allow the PCs themselves to get hold of it. It can make for a fun sequence of adventures, but if held for too long, it can either allow an unbalancing amount of influence, or else devolve into a series of "Who wants to kill the PC to become a god this week" scenarios. When used for only a limited time, however, or when held by the proper NPC, this artifact can introduce a healthy amount of confusion and deception to keep the players off balance and untrusting of any sort of divine interaction.

Adventure Seeds

God's Army

A powerful orc wizard has discovered the *Brooch of the False God* and used it, in concert with his own spellcasting abilities, to convince local tribes of orcs and ogres to put aside their differences, band together and conquer the other races of the region. Together they've constructed a heavily guarded temple fortress in his honor, which serves as a base of operations to plan their assaults on neighboring communities. When the PCs discover that a previously unknown deity is behind the attacks, how can they prepare to face a god on his own turf? What happens to these once-warring tribes when their god's treachery is revealed?

Doing the Will of a Trickster God

At the end of a rather successful adventure, the PCs are visited by Mythus, a powerful god rumored to have recently ascended from mortality. Mythus explains to the PCs that something they've done during this adventure (killing a specific monster, claiming a specific treasure, or the like) has angered him, and he demands a tribute as an apology. He has very specific demands which involve procuring magic items and artifacts from local temples of the gods who opposed his deific transformation. In exchange for their service, Mythus promises great power and blessings. Of course Mythus isn't a deity at all, but a small time thief named Gelig McGrue who, while crafty, is unaware of just how much trouble he's getting himself into. How do the PCs react to Gelig's demands? If they choose to honor his demands, how can they escape of the wrath of the temples they must steal from, or the very real gods they might offend?

Destroying the Brooch of the False God

The PCs may require little incentive to destroy the artifact, as troublesome as easily abused as it is. Destroying it, however, requires the help of the gods, who may not be willing or even interested in doing so.

- The *Brooch of the False God* must be worn by a deity for a year and a day. Over that period of time, the *Brooch* absorbs the ambient divinity of the deity, transforming both its energies and purpose. The next time it is worn by a mortal, it actually *does* transform the mortal into a god (albeit a mere rank 0 quasi-deity). The release of the pent-up energies, however, completely destroys the *Brooch*.
- If the *Brooch of the False God* is worn by a mortal who actually ascends to true divinity by any means, the divine energies manifesting in that being instantly destroy the magic of the *Brooch*.
- The *Brooch of the False God* can be destroyed if subjected to a damaging spell cast by a god of each of the four non-neutral alignments. This requires four separate deities; a god who is lawful good, for instance, can only serve as either the lawful *or* the good component, not both. The four deities must cast their spells or spell like abilities simultaneously. The intense amount of conflicting deific energies is enough to destroy the magic of the *Brooch*.

Carpet of Contemplation

The Meditation Mat, The Rug of Enlightenment
By Rhiannon Louve

The Tale of the Carpet of Contemplation

Many generations ago, there lived a strange old priest named Kazat. He kept his small chapel ridiculously clean, and was known to shout rudely at worshippers who entered the chapel with muddy shoes or who dripped snow on his carpets. He ran his apprentices ragged and never seemed satisfied with their clerical progress.

As the years went by, Kazat grew stranger still. He held loud and angry philosophical arguments with himself at all hours of the night, and regularly spoke to his apprentices, whether or not they were in the room, about things that had never happened or had happened many years ago. It is said by some that he began to lose his priestly powers, but the old loon simply took to studying arcane magics instead, and didn't seem to notice the difference.

One year, Kazat's mania chose his favorite carpet for its focus, and he spent most of the summer and autumn poring over it in detail, muttering to himself, kneeling on it in prayer, dancing on it, keening, chanting, gesticulating wildly and even sleeping on the carpet, right at the base of the chapel altar. His apprentice (by this time he had only one left, though he apparently believed he had five) had to forcibly remove him from the room to get him to eat, bathe, or otherwise take care of necessary tasks, though the man oddly still remembered to keep the rest of the chapel as insanely neat and spotless as before.

Sometime in the middle of winter that year, the apprentice, whose name was Hing, began to notice a change in his mad master. Kazat was becoming calmer, more predictable, and certainly more polite. He still spent most of his time kneeling on his favorite carpet, but he seemed peaceful now. Little by little, he stopped arguing with himself, and Hing noticed a sense of serenity radiating from the area where he spent his days.

When Hing finally found the courage to question him on this, Kazat apologized for all his strange behaviors and explained that, yes, he had been going mad. He was aware of his degeneration, however, and in an attempt to ensure that he could continue to serve his god, Kazat had used wizardly arts to enchant the carpet to help him become not only sane once more, but to grow wiser than he had ever been. It seemed his mad scheme must have found favor in his god's eyes, for

Researching the Carpet of Contemplation

Hing recorded the tale of Kazat in great detail, including a chapter on the *Carpet of Contemplation*. Hing does not believe that the carpet was magical, however, so his account is misleading at best. It does fairly accurately detail Kazat's life story, however, and also mentions the origins and destination of the particular tribe of barbarians that raided the little church and first took the carpet away from its creator.

Kazat's own memoirs have likewise been preserved, near gibberish at the beginning and end of the text and great serene wisdom for the middle third. The *Carpet of Contemplation* is mentioned only in passing during the lucid portions. It is described at great length in some of the more incomprehensible sections, requiring a DC 25 Decipher Script or Knowledge (arcana) check to decipher sense from nonsense and to parse out bizarre misuses of wizardly jargon. If successful, Kazat's memoirs are an excellent source of information on the carpet's powers and drawbacks.

The only way to actually find the *Carpet* is to travel to different famed centers of wisdom and meditation and look for telltale signs of the carpet's presence.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	The *Carpet of Contemplation* was said to be a magical carpet created by a mad monk.
20	Meditating on the *Carpet* grants serenity and wisdom.
25	The *Carpet* is said to change appearance, so it can be very difficult to find.
30+	The benefits of the *Carpet* fade if the individual ceases to use it. This can result in a drop in wisdom and understanding, or even madness.

Misinformation may include Hing's assertion that a magical wisdom-granting carpet only ever existed in Kazat's fevered mind, incorrect rumors about the carpet's current location, or any specific description of the carpet's appearance.

here he was, lucid and calm and suddenly able to instruct his grateful apprentice as never before, with great patience, insight and divine discernment.

Hing soon found the carpet's powers worked for him as well, and they were soon known throughout the countryside as the two wisest and most powerful priests in the land. The chapel became a popular pilgrimage site, attracting so many apprentices now that several additions to the little building were soon required. Wealthy parents began to send their children for training, along with wagonloads of wealth for the chapel.

When the country was invaded by barbarian hoards, Kazat's chapel was gutted and all its wealth carried away, including the carpet that had lain for so long before the chapel's altar. It was the end of the chapel's fame. Little by little, the great enlightenment of the tiny chapel seemed to evaporate like so much mist.



Kazat was very distressed by the loss of his special carpet, and the longer it was gone, the more he began to change, growing first irritable and then irrational. Several bands of adventurers or mercenaries went in search of the thing, but none ever found it, and Kazat eventually wandered off on the quest himself. By then he was already half mad once more, and those apprentices who remained followed Hing's counsel more than Kazat's. No one really noticed that Kazat was gone for quite some time.

Kazat presumably never found his carpet, and was never heard from again. The carpet disappeared from history as well, as far as any can say for certain. No carpet that matched its description has ever been found in any land. Indeed, Hing believed that the carpet had been lost many years before the barbarian raid, as he did not remember any carpet matching its description after the chapel first began to be more richly decorated. Kazat insisted that the carpet had changed color, texture and quality to match the chapel's new décor, but no one believed him.

A few other chapels, temples, monasteries, and cloisters have, in subsequent generations, developed a similar kind of fleeting fame as Kazat's chapel experienced. Everyone hears that the place is a great nexus of wisdom run by an amazing prophet, and then suddenly, often after a raid or robbery, the place seems to become hopelessly mundane, as if all the enlightenment has simply blown away. In some of these cases, such as the tale of the *Meditation Mat* and the *Rug of Enlightenment*, people suspected that the temple's great power stemmed from the floor-covering before the main shrine.

In truth, the *Carpet* itself can change its appearance to match its surroundings, so while its progress across the countryside is very difficult to track, it is very likely that all of these incidents have been due to the presence of the *Carpet of Contemplation*. It is a peculiar magical item, especially because it was created by a madman attempting to restore his own sanity. It is strangely more powerful than any similar item crafted by a sane wizard would be, but it comes with unusual drawbacks and complications that no sane wizard would willingly add to their work.

Studying the Carpet of Contemplation

The *Carpet of Contemplation* is always changing. Wherever it is found, it always appears as if it had been specifically designed to suit the room it is in. The *Carpet* can appear to be of any color, pattern, weaving technique, age, shape, quality, or fiber, depending on the appearance of the rest of the room. In size, the *Carpet* can vary between five and 35 square feet.

In Kazat's tale, the *Carpet* began as a small, rough, and threadbare piece, little more than an inadequate cushion for Kazat's knees, but woven in an abstract combination of blues and yellows that appealed to him. By the time it was stolen, Kazat describes it as large and plush, with both silk and golden fibers in a masterful pattern of yellow iris. The *Meditation Mat* was described as a plain but particularly well-woven reed mat, made thicker than usual, specifically for kneeling in meditation. As the *Rug of Enlightenment* the artifact was brown and striped, woven of llama's wool.

One thing about the *Carpet* that is consistent, however, is that any building that houses the *Carpet of Contemplation* feels serene to all who enter it, and anyone stepping on the fibers feels the urge to kneel upon it in thought. This sensation feels as if it is radiating from the altar and from the acolytes in attendance, rather than from anywhere near the floor.

The *Carpet of Contemplation* never stands out as magical, even when regarded under the effects of *detect magic*. It cannot be found using any means of magical divination.

Powers of the Carpet of Contemplation

Aside from its ability to disguise itself to fit into any setting, the *Carpet of Contemplation* also "enlightens" all those who kneel upon it in meditation on any kind of regular basis. Characters' Wisdom scores increase, among other changes.

Using the Carpet of Contemplation

Though most of the powers of the *Carpet of Contemplation* only work while it is placed on the floor before a shrine, altar or other, comparable spiritual symbol, there are a few exceptions noted below. Once positioned where people regularly kneel upon it to pray or meditate, all powers of the *Carpet of Contemplation* work automatically, though many only affect a person who willingly chooses to kneel upon it in prayer, meditation or other form of quiet introspection.

Constant Powers

While actively kneeling on the *Carpet of Contemplation*, all characters receive a +3 bonus to any Wisdom-related checks they make. They also gain a +10 bonus to any Concentration rolls involving meditation of any kind.

Surrounding the *Carpet* is an aura of great peace that calms and soothes those experiencing it. Characters within 20 feet of the *Carpet of Contemplation* receive a +5 bonus to all Will saves versus fear effects, magics that arouse strong emotions, or any non-magical attempts to control emotional outbursts of any kind. If characters are kneeling on the *Carpet*, this bonus stacks with other bonuses that the carpet provides. If there is no Will save for a spell causing strong emotion, characters within the *Carpet*'s aura of peace receive one anyway, albeit without the +5 bonus.

Activated Powers

Every week in which a character spends at least one hour a day meditating on the *Carpet of Contemplation* raises his Wisdom by 1. This bonus is cumulative, and any creature can attain a Wisdom score up to 10 higher than the one with which he began, not counting magic items worn. (For instance, a character who begins with a Wisdom score of 18 could raise it as high as 28 in this manner). The individual must meditate for seven consecutive days for it to take effect. Missing even one day disrupts the magic, and a character must start over.

This addition to one's Wisdom score lasts as if the score was permanently raised, until the character goes one full week without meditating on the *Carpet of Contemplation*. Even spending one hour on the carpet per week allows the character to retain any added Wisdom he has been granted. However, any period of seven consecutive days in which a character so altered does not meditate, he loses two of the points of Wisdom he has gained, until he has returned to the same Wisdom score he had upon first encountering the carpet.

Once a character has gained all the Wisdom he possibly can from the *Carpet*, he may still continue to benefit. If he meditates every consecutive day for 77 more days, he gains the level 3 monk special ability *Still Mind*. 77 days after that, he gains the level 17 monk ability *Tongue of the Sun and Moon*. These abilities remain so long as the character never goes seven consecutive days without meditation on the *Carpet of Contemplation*. The first full week that a character is away from the carpet, he loses both special abilities *and* a point of Wisdom.

Consequences

The *Carpet of Contemplation* has many strange side effects. For example, while it helps anyone in its vicinity to concentrate on meditation, prayer, or personal introspection with ease, the peaceful aura of the *Carpet of Contemplation* actually makes it very difficult to focus on anything else. Any Concentration rolls for any purpose not related to meditation of some variety are made at a –5 penalty to the skill check within 20 feet of the artifact.

In addition, the vicinity of the *Carpet of Contemplation* is so terribly peaceful and relaxing that it can be difficult for characters to access powerful emotion, even when it might be useful. All Perform skill checks within 20 feet of the *Carpet of Contemplation* suffer a –10 penalty, and barbarians and all other characters with a rage ability must make a DC 20 Will save to rage within 20 feet of the carpet. DMs may impose other penalties to the positive use of strong emotion, at their discretion.

A small number of people cannot readjust to being without the carpet once it is gone. When characters that have been altered by the *Carpet of Contemplation* are separated from it, after they lose all the abilities the carpet granted them, they must make a DC 10 Will save or go mad, as the spell *insanity*.

Finally, when Kazat created the *Carpet of Contemplation*, it was to help himself in his own specific spiritual path. He didn't realize until much later that when the carpet helped other people toward enlightenment, it helped them toward *his* — Kazat's — spiritual path, rather than their own. Though most users of the *Carpet* are happy enough in their new paths in life, it cannot be denied that those who remain near it for any length of time tend to completely abandon their former lives. The change in such characters as monks and clerics is not particularly alarming, but friends of those who follow other careers in life are often concerned or skeptical about the radical alteration in behavior.

Specifically, once a character has completed his first week of contemplation, and for as long as that character is using the *Carpet of Contemplation* at a minimum of once per week, all experience that this character earns goes to levels in the mystic class, detailed below. Characters are not mentally controlled by the artifact per se, but regardless of how they spend their time outside meditation, those who make the *Carpet* a part of their regular existence only seem to improve their abilities in one specific direction.

Characters do not notice that this is happening and believe fully that they are following their lifelong dreams. After a character has spent at least one week away from the carpet, she notices discrepancies between the time she has spent in monastic seclusion and her normal self. If a character leaves the influence of the *Carpet* before gaining any given level in mystic, the experience points earned between the levels are not entirely wasted, but they take a 10% cut before they can be applied to the character's regular class.

Ambient Effects

Any time it is placed in a building which contains a shrine, altar or comparable spiritual symbolism, the *Carpet of Contemplation* alters itself to look as if it belonged there. The next time anyone sees it, the artifact is lying right in the center of all spiritual life in a given building, looking as if it had always been there (DC 30 Spot check to notice that something has changed). Both the change in appearance and the movement to the floor before the altar (or the largest altar if there is more than one) always take place without anyone seeing the change, possibly through some sort of temporal distortion.

Between shrines, the *Carpet* continues to look however it did at its last home. It does not change again until it finds a new altar to enhance.

If the *Carpet of Contemplation* finds itself outside or in a building that does not have a shrine, people who walk by within 20 feet have strange thoughts pop into their heads. Those who spend a great deal of time in buildings where the carpet could find the sort of home it seeks find themselves pondering how to acquire the *Carpet* for their own church, temple, monastery, or even home shrine. Those who live or work in a non-religious building where the *Carpet* is housed begin considering the logistics of building some kind of meditation or worship center somewhere within the walls, whether or not they are normally spiritual people.

There is no compulsion in these thoughts. Characters can ignore or dismiss them with ease, but the ideas continue, seeming to the characters very much as if they had come up with them on their own, until the carpet finds a new home. With a successful DC 30 Sense Motive check a character notices some outside source is supplying these thoughts, but are unable to determine its nature.

Similarly, once the *Carpet* has placed itself in a location that allows its full powers to function, anyone who walks on the *Carpet of Contemplation* or within a foot of its edges thinks that kneeling down to meditate would be a great idea. Again, there is no compulsion, and characters who would never think such a thing are likely to ignore the impulse completely.

If the *Carpet of Contemplation* is in danger, such as close to open flame, everyone within 20 feet thinks of saving it. If there is no one to hand, or if the *Carpet* is abandoned, it can hide itself until the danger passes. This power is similar to its power to change its appearance and location. This may involve temporal distortion, or perhaps the artifact has access to some sort of pocket dimension. In any case, the carpet simply isn't "there" until the danger has passed. The *Carpet* can disappear faster than any threat presents itself, unless the danger takes a free action or less to cause its harm.

If someone is watching, the *Carpet* can replace itself with another, mundane carpet from the same building (and therefore the same decorative style), requiring a DC 20 Spot check to notice the switch. Once gone, the *Carpet of Contemplation* cannot be found until the source of danger is removed from the area, even if this means it must effectively disappear from reality for centuries or more.

Reactive Traits

Any spell intended to harm the *Carpet of Contemplation* must take a free action or less to cast. Any slower spell, the *Carpet* can avoid with ease by disappearing.

Using the Carpet of Contemplation in a Campaign

Since PCs are usually on the move, it is difficult to have the *Carpet of Contemplation* in a campaign on any kind of long term basis. The artifact simply does not function out on the road. It is, however, useful as the goal of a long-term quest. It is a very difficult item to find, so a party can have many different adventures while searching for it. The carpet is also appropriate for almost any level of play, depending on how it is used.

Adventure Seeds

Menacing Monastery

The *Carpet of Contemplation* cares nothing for alignment, and can easily be used for evil as well as good. The most recent dwelling the *Carpet* has found for itself is a monastery of evil monks (now evil mystic monks). The monastery is rapidly growing into a formidable army, even converting many of the good folk of the countryside with its aura of serenity and understanding.

By accident or design, the PCs uncover the source of the monastery's appeal and must sneak or fight their way into the dark shrine to steal the *Carpet of Contemplation*. Without the *Carpet*, half the army deserts and go back to their normal lives, while the rest lose some of their carpet-enhanced power may begin fighting amongst themselves. The PCs must then decide whether to destroy the carpet or transport it to a more constructive spiritual home.

The Search for the Holy Carpet

More than a simple adventure, the *Carpet of Contemplation* can actually be used as the basis for an entire campaign. The PCs could start out as a group of mystics from whom the *Carpet* has been stolen. Determined to return it to their home sanctuary, the PCs set out in quest of the carpet and much adventure ensues.

Destroying the Carpet of Contemplation

The *Carpet of Contemplation* is fairly harmless under most circumstances, in spite of its side effects. However, PCs who have seen the carpet used for a cause they find distasteful may wish to destroy it to keep such a thing from happening again.

• Though the *Carpet* is very difficult to destroy due to its ability to flee danger, it is not difficult to entrap. Sealed in an iron box and buried at the bottom of the ocean, for example, the artifact is very unlikely to ever re-emerge. Dropped into an active volcano, the *Carpet* will also not be destroyed, but it will be trapped in its protective "other reality" until the volcano becomes quiescent, which could take centuries.

• Any spell capable of destroying the *Carpet* in a single blast, if quickened, can destroy the carpet. Mere damage, however, warns it to flee the area and is effectively "healed" the next time the *Carpet* gains an opportunity to change its appearance. Only complete destruction in a free action or less is fast enough to actually break the *Carpet's* magics.

• If the spell is quickened, the *Carpet of Contemplation* can be targeted by *dispel magic*. The effective caster level for the check is 18th. If successful, the artifact is vulnerable to any ordinary attack for 1d4 rounds and can be destroyed in the same manner as any mundane carpet.

New Class

When meditating regularly under the effects of the *Carpet of Contemplation*, a character begins to gain levels in a new base class, called the mystic. This class is also available to characters who have never encountered the carpet at all, but it is far more common among the "enlightened" that surround the *Meditation Mat*.

The Mystic

The mystic combines the serenity of the monk and the spirituality of the cleric with the study of arcane knowledge.

Abilities: Wisdom is the most important ability for the mystic. Mystics need a Wisdom score of 16 or more to gain access to the most powerful of their spells and Wisdom also helps with many of their special abilities. Strength and Dexterity both help a mystic in combat situations.

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d8

Class Skills

The mystic's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the mystic

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Mystics are proficient with all simple weapons and with light armor.

Spells: You cast divine spells, which are drawn from the list below. You must prepare your spells in advance.

To prepare or cast a spell, you must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty

The Mystic

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Bonus feat, flurry of blows	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	—	3	0	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Evasion	3	1	—	—	—	—	—
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	—	3	2	0	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	—	3	3	1	—	—	—	—
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	Meditative trance	3	3	2	—	—	—	—
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	Bonus feat	3	3	2	0	—	—	—
8th	+6/+1	+2	+2	+6	—	3	3	3	1	—	—	—
9th	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6	Improved evasion	3	3	3	2	—	—	—
10th	+7/+2	+3	+3	+7	—	3	3	3	2	0	—	—
11th	+8/+3	+3	+3	+7	—	3	3	3	3	1	—	—
12th	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	Abundant step	3	3	3	3	2	—	—
13th	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	Bonus feat	3	3	3	3	2	0	—
14th	+10/+5	+4	+4	+9	—	4	3	3	3	3	1	—
15th	+11/+6/+1	+5	+5	+9	Aura of belonging	4	4	3	3	3	2	—
16th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	—	4	4	4	3	3	2	0
17th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	—	4	4	4	4	3	3	1
18th	+13/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11	Improved meditative trance	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
19th	+14/+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Bonus feat	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
20th	+15/+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Aura of serenity	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Class for a saving throw against one of your spells is 10 + the spell level + your modifier.

Like other spellcasters, you can cast only a certain number of spells of each level per day. Your base daily spell allotment is given on the table above. In addition, you receive bonus spells per day if you have a high Wisdom score.

You prepare and cast spells in the same manner as clerics.

Bonus Feat: At 1st level and every 6th level thereafter (7th, 13th, and 19th), you gain a bonus feat, which must be selected from the following list: Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist, Whirlwind Attack, or any Item Creation feat. You must meet all the prerequisites for that feat.

Flurry of Blows (Ex): You can make an extra melee attack each round while encumbered. See the monk class feature in the *Player's Handbook*. Unlike the monk, the mystic can wear light armor and use any light weapon with which she is proficient, or a quarterstaff.

Evasion (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, you can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save. See the monk class feature in the *Player's Handbook*.

Meditative Trance (Su): At 6th level, you gain the ability to enter a restorative trance meditation once per day. This requires a quite environment, and one full hour of uninterrupted meditation. When you complete the trance, you receive the same benefits as those granted by the spell *restoration*, at a caster level equal to one-half your mystic level. Anything that would cause a spellcaster to make a Concentration check also threatens to wake you from your trance, requiring subsequent DC 15 Concentration checks (or DC 15 + damage dealt, in the case of damage) as needed. Once interrupted, you cannot attempt the trance again that day.

Improved Evasion (Ex): Beginning at 9th level, you can avoid damage from certain attacks with a successful Reflex save and take only half damage on a failed save. See the monk class feature in the *Player's Handbook*.

Abundant Step (Su): At 12th level or higher, you can slip magically between spaces, as if using the spell *dimension door*, once per day. Your caster level for this effect is one-half your mystic level (rounded down).

Aura of Belonging (Su): Beginning at 15th level, you can radiate an aura, for up to 10 minutes per mystic level per day, that makes others believe you fit in wherever you go. This grants you a +10 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks intended to make others believe you fit in, and causes NPCs to have initial reactions to you one step nearer friendly than normal. Creatures with HD equal or greater than yours may attempt a Will save (DC 17 + your Wisdom modifier) to negate this effect.

Improved Meditative Trance: At 18th level, your restorative trance affects you as if by *greater restoration* and *regenerate*. All other aspects of the trance remain the same.

Aura of Serenity: At 20th level, you can radiate a powerful peace that affects all who approach you. Once per day, for a duration of up to 1 hour, all who come within 30 feet of you are affected as though by the *calm emotions* spell (Will save DC 19 + your Wisdom modifier negates). You may not use this ability while in combat, and any being who is under attack gains a +5 bonus to its Will save.

Mystic Spells

0–Level Mystic Spells (Orisons)

Create Water: Creates 2 gallons/level of pure water.

Cure Minor Wounds: Cures 1 point of damage.

Detect Magic: Detects spells and magic items within 60 ft.

Detect Poison: Detects poison in one creature or object.

Guidance: +1 on one attack roll, saving throw, or skill check.

Inflict Minor Wounds: Touch attack, 1 point of damage.

Light: Object shines like a torch.

Mending: Makes minor repairs on an object.

Message: Whispered conversation at distance.

Purify Food and Drink: Purifies 1 cu. ft./level of food or water.

Read Magic: Read scrolls and spellbooks.

Resistance: Subject gains +1 on saving throws.

Virtue: Subject gains 1 temporary hp.

1st–Level Mystic Spells

Alarm: Wards an area for 2 hours/level.

Burning Hands: 1d4/level fire damage (max 5d4).

Comprehend Languages: You understand all spoken and written languages.

Cure Light Wounds: Cures 1d8 damage +1/level (max +5).

Detect Secret Doors: Reveals hidden doors within 60 ft.

Endure Elements: Exist comfortably in hot or cold environments.

Enlarge Person: Humanoid creature doubles in size.

Entropic Shield: Ranged attacks against you have 20% miss chance.

Feather Fall: Objects or creatures fall slowly.

Identify [M]: Determines properties of magic item.

Jump: Subject gets bonus on Jump checks.

Longstrider: Increases your speed.

Magic Stone: Three stones become +1 projectiles, 1d6 +1 damage.

Obscuring Mist: Fog surrounds you.

Protection from Chaos/Evil/Good/Law: +2 to AC and saves, counter mind control, hedge out elementals and outsiders.

Reduce Person: Humanoid creature halves in size.

Sanctuary: Opponents can't attack you, and you can't attack.

True Strike: +20 on your next attack roll.

2nd–Level Mystic Spells

Aid: +1 on attack rolls, +1 against fear, 1d8 temporary hp +1/level (max +10).

Alter Self: Assume form of a similar creature.

Bear's Endurance: Subject gains +4 to Con for 1 min./level.

Cat's Grace: Subject gains +4 to Dex for 1 min./level.

Cure Moderate Wounds: Cures 2d8 damage +1/level (max +10).

Darkvision: See 60 ft. in total darkness.

Detect Thoughts: Allows "listening" to surface thoughts.

Fog Cloud: Fog obscures vision.

Knock: Opens locked or magically sealed door.

Levitate: Subject moves up and down at your direction.

Locate Object: Senses direction toward object (specific or type).

Owl's Wisdom: Subject gains +4 to Wis for 1 min./level.

Produce Flame: 1d6 damage +1/ level, touch or thrown.

Resist Energy: Ignores first 10 (or more) points of damage/attack from specified energy type.

See Invisibility: Reveals invisible creatures or objects.

Shield Other [F]: You take half of subject's damage.

Soften Earth and Stone: Turns stone to clay or dirt to sand or mud.

Spider Climb: Grants ability to walk on walls and ceilings.

Wind Wall: Deflects arrows, smaller creatures, and gases.

3rd–Level Mystic Spells

Air Walk: Subject treads on air as if solid (climb at 45-degree angle).

Arcane Sight: Magical auras become visible to you.

Blink: You randomly vanish and reappear for 1 round/level.

Clairaudience/Clairvoyance: Hear or see at a distance for 1 min./level.

Cure Serious Wounds: Cures 3d8 damage +1/level (max +15).

Dispel Magic: Cancels magical spells and effects.

Gaseous Form: Subject becomes insubstantial and can fly slowly.

Haste: One creature/level moves faster, +1 on attack rolls, AC, and Reflex saves.

Magic Circle against Chaos/Evil/Good/Law: As *protection* spells, but 10-ft. radius and 10 min./level.

Nondetection [M]: Hides subject from divination, scrying.

Protection from Energy: Absorb 12 points/level of damage from one kind of energy.

Slow: One subject/level takes only one action/round, –2 to AC, –2 on attack rolls.

Stone Shape: Sculpts stone into any shape.

Tongues: Speak any language.

Water Breathing: Subjects can breathe underwater.

4th-Level Mystic Spells

Arcane Eye: Invisible floating eye moves 30 ft./round.

Control Water: Raises or lowers bodies of water.

Cure Critical Wounds: Cures 4d8 damage +1/level (max +20).

Detect Scrying: Alerts you of magical eavesdropping.

Dimensional Anchor: Bars extradimensional movement.

Divination [M]: Provides useful advice for specific proposed actions.

Freedom of Movement: Subject moves normally despite impediments.

Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser: Stops 1st- through 3rd-level spell effects.

Locate Creature: Indicates direction to familiar creature.

Polymorph: Gives one willing subject a new form.

Remove Curse: Frees object or person from curse.

Spell Immunity: Subject is immune to one spell per four levels.

Spike Stones: Creatures in area take 1d8 damage, may be *slowed*.

Stoneskin [M]: Ignore 10 points of damage per attack.

Wall of Fire: Deals 2d4 fire damage out to 10 ft. and 1d4 out to 20 ft. Passing through wall deals 2d6 damage +1/level.

5th-Level Mystic Spells

Baleful Polymorph: Transforms subject into harmless animal.

Break Enchantment: Frees subjects from enchantments, alterations, curses, and petrification.

Contact Other Plane: Lets you ask question of extraplanar entity.

Control Winds: Change wind direction and speed.

Dismissal: Forces a creature to return to native plane.

Fabricate: Transforms raw materials into finished items.

Fire Shield: Creatures attacking you take fire damage; you're protected from heat or cold.

Ice Storm: Hail deals 5d6 damage in cylinder 40 ft. across.

Passwall: Creates passage through wood or stone wall.

Spell Resistance: Subject gains SR 12 + level.

Telekinesis: Moves object, attacks creature, or hurls object or creature.

Telepathic Bond: Link lets allies communicate.

Transmute Mud to Rock: Transforms two 10-ft. cubes per level.

Transmute Rock to Mud: Transforms two 10-ft. cubes per level.

True Seeing [M]: Lets you see all things as they really are.

Wall of Stone: Creates a stone wall that can be shaped.

6th-Level Mystic Spells

Analyze Dweomer [F]: Reveals magical aspects of subject.

Antimagic Field: Negates magic within 10 ft.

Dispel Magic, Greater: As *dispel magic*, but +20 on check.

Find the Path: Shows most direct way to a location.

Fire Seeds: Acorns and berries become grenades and bombs.

Flesh to Stone: Turns subject creature into statue.

Globe of Invulnerability: As *lesser globe of invulnerability*, plus 4th-level spell effects.

Heal: Cures 10 points/level of damage, all diseases and mental conditions.

Legend Lore [M F]: Lets you learn tales about a person, place, or thing.

Mislead: Turns you invisible and creates illusory double.

Raise Dead [M]: Restores life to subject who died as long as one day/level ago.

Repulsion: Creatures can't approach you.

Stone to Flesh: Restores petrified creature.

Celestial Machine

The Great Observatory, Kelendis' Folly
By Anthony Pryor

The Tale of the Celestial Machine

The astromancer Kelendis never expected to build one of the most puzzling and legendary devices in history. All he wanted was an observatory — a humble home for himself and his servants, and a place to watch the movement of the heavenly bodies. From this, he was confident, he could learn much of the future and enhance his own astromantic powers. What followed was a tale of wondrous magic, the infinite power of the cosmos and, ultimately, tragedy.

The first stage of building took nearly a decade, as Kelendis and his wealthy patrons found an appropriately remote location and prepared the land for the vast complex that would soon be built there. Architects and craftsmen were brought from far and wide, and no expense was spared. Dwarven builders designed many of the structure's amenities, and it was said that even ancient elvish magic was employed in its construction.

When completed, the observatory was a true marvel. Located countless leagues from civilization, it was almost entirely self-sufficient, with a small farm, riding stables, and even its own spring and herds of cattle. Kelendis and his staff of a dozen lived in comfort despite the primitive surroundings, and from the first day he turned his great telescopes to the sky, he beheld unbelievable and magical things.

For another ten years all went well. Kelendis' powers grew until he was able to dismiss all of his mortal servants and work alone with the aid of automata and summoned creatures. What he saw in the skies amazed him, but he longed to see more. There was a greater structure to the universe, this he knew, if he could only learn how to see it!



Researching the Celestial Machine

A Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (arcana) will reveal information about the *Celestial Machine*.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Celestial Machine* is a great contraption, measuring the movements of worlds and stars.
20	The machine was built by an ancient powerful astromancer, and had divinatory and scrying powers.
25	The machine allowed its user to see other planes, worlds and times in the distant past and future.
30+	The *Celestial Machine* allows its user to cast spells upon distant worlds, times and planes.

The story of the *Machine* has been twisted and distorted in the retelling. Many pieces of misinformation circulate, including the suggestion that the artifact can give the user godlike powers and allow him to freely range across time and space, or that the entire *Machine* can be transported to other locations and eras.

And so it was, on his own and without the knowledge of his patrons, that the astromancer began to expand upon the original observatory's equipment. The machines he built were far more than the crude telescopes, astrolabes, sextants and other devices he had once used. These were esoteric, exotic, otherworldly machines that divined the true mechanisms of existence. Soon, every device was connected to every other, transforming what was once a humble observatory into a vast, self-maintaining, magic-powered engine.

Kelendis began to withdraw from the material world, drawn more and more into the bizarre and intricate mechanisms of the multiverse. With his machine, he could not only see all, he could *experience* all. From his place in the wilderness, he could effortlessly observe and feel sensations from any corner of creation.

And, as many other arcanists have discovered to their dismay, many of these corners of creation are dark and alien indeed. Exposed to the sights and sounds of distant planes, many of which cannot even be conceived by mortals, Kelendis became something at once more and less than human. Sensations far beyond the normal five were his to enjoy, and within another decade, Kelendis commanded vast new powers to go with his new senses. Though his physical body remained, his spirit and essence was spread across the multiverse, living simultaneously in an infinite number of planes and worlds. He had, in some ways, become a god, while in other ways, he was still all too human.

Beings from other planes of existence took notice of Kelendis' experiments. To some, he was of no more significance than a random dust mote, but to others, his powers seemed vast and infinitely desirable. And so it was that Kelendis' extended mind and spirit came under attack from an unimaginable variety of foes. Some sought to control him for their own nefarious purposes, for conquest, power or riches. Others saw their task as good: to take control of Kelendis and use his powers to advance the happiness of all beings. Still others sought to use Kelendis for totally incomprehensible, alien purposes.

In the end, it drove what remained of the astromancer mad. Assailed from all directions, with some aspects of his spirit under control of insane gods, evil outsiders, banished spirits and inhuman intelligences, Kelendis lashed out from his fastness, sending vast tendrils of his overextended consciousness writhing through the surrounding lands, planes and worlds. All were the same to Kelendis now, and he was entirely unaware that his attempts to defend himself were devastating the Material Plane.

Disasters and strange occurrences spread out from the wilderness, with Kelendis and his *Celestial Machine* at their epicenter. The wizards and scholars of the world sought an explanation for the events, and at last decided that it was the near-legendary astromancer's doing. A titanic arcane battle of wills followed, with cabals and circles of wizards, sorcerers and clerics banding together, seeking to banish or destroy Kelendis before he destroyed the world in his attempts to defend himself.

The mortals' final victory was costly. Hundreds of spellcasters perished, giving their lives to defeat the mad godling. Kelendis himself was torn away from the *Celestial Machine*, and his now-alien consciousness was flung into the void. Most of the vast complex that surrounded the machine was destroyed, but the central dome remained.

In the years that followed, the tale of Kelendis and the *Celestial Machine* was largely forgotten. Indeed, most of those who knew about him and his location had perished in the battle. The *Machine*, crafted by ancient magic and all but indestructible, stood untended and unmoving, as rust and corrosion finally crept into its intricate mechanisms.

Today, the dome where the mighty contraption stands is grown over with vines and creepers, isolated far from civilization, and entirely uninhabited. Its power only slumbers, however, and if it is ever rediscovered, the *Machine* may trouble the mortal world once more.

Studying the Celestial Machine

The ancient and powerful *Celestial Machine* lies in a distant wilderness area, many days' journey from civilization. It is surrounded by ruins: the remains of the residential

Object	DC	Additional DC
Close Objects (10 miles or less distant)	10	—
Distant Objects (10–100 miles distant)	15	—
Other Continents (100–1000 miles)	20	—
Nearby astronomical bodies such as moons and satellites (1,000–200,000 miles)	25	—
Other planets in solar system (1,000,000+ miles)	30	Spellcraft DC 20
Other stars (1 light year+)	35+	Spellcraft 25+, Knowledge (arcana) 20+

facilities that were once located here. The *Machine* itself lies inside a gleaming cerulean dome constructed of an unknown, indestructible material. Though it is covered in debris and crisscrossed with vines, the dome itself remains undamaged by the passing centuries.

The dome has no apparent entrances or exits. A DC 20 Search check reveals a line of runic inscriptions in the shape of a doorway. A DC 23 Knowledge (arcana) or Disable Device check opens the door, providing access to the interior of the dome.

The *Celestial Machine* is a vast and intricate collection of gears, levers, hydraulic devices, spheres, spinning rings and similar structures. It is all but impossible for a single observer to comprehend the entirety of the structure, as much of it was built from alien or planar technology, and a good portion was constructed while the designer was partially mad.

The *Machine* is currently halted, and some of the components built from mundane materials are overgrown, corroded or damaged. The chamber is shadowy, but the dome's strange material allows light to enter, heavily filtered by vines and vegetation.

Inside the chamber stand four time golems (see below), currently as inactive and dead as the artifact itself. Once the *Machine* is activated, however, the time golems serve and follow the instructions of the contraption's operator.

Powers of the Celestial Machine

The *Celestial Machine*'s basic powers are relatively straightforward. Originally an observatory, the *Machine* can be used to observe nearby planetary bodies, as well as more distant objects. The exact nature of the cosmos will vary depending upon the DM's view of the campaign, but this aspect of the *Machine* can be accessed fairly easily.

The artifact's more exotic powers include observing other planes, casting spells remotely, predicting future events, seeing through time and even altering the nature of reality itself. The powers become more dangerous and significant the deeper the user delves into the *Machine*'s workings.

Using the Celestial Machine

The *Machine*'s most mundane function is as an observatory. Its intricate mechanism includes numerous optical telescopes, some of which are magically enhanced. Smaller telescopes that can be used to observe the surrounding countryside can easily be operated even by inexperienced individuals. More advanced optical and arcane devices require more skill. Using these telescopes requires an Intelligence check, with a DC that increases depending upon the distance that one wishes to observe. The following table lists sample objects and distances and the DC required to observe them using the *Celestial Machine*. In some cases, greater skill is called for, and an additional roll is required as noted below.

As noted above, the actual effects of observing other planetary bodies depends upon the cosmology of the campaign universe. If there are indeed other planets, the user can see them. If, on the other hand, the world is flat and floats in the ether, the user might be able to see other flat worlds, and so on.

Activated Powers

The *Celestial Machine* currently lies dormant, and must be reactivated to function. Even then, some of its more delicate mechanisms have been damaged by the passage of years, and its exact powers are unpredictable and potentially dangerous. An intricate series of switches, levers, valves and pumps was used to draw raw magical potential from the surrounding regions and nearby planes in order to power the machine — simply finding the location of this central power conduit requires a DC 25 Search and a DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check. Activating the machine requires a DC 30 Use Magic Device check. If the user attempting to activate the *Celestial Machine* misses this roll by more than 10, he or she takes 10d10 points of damage from arcane energy feedback (DC 20 Fortitude save for half damage). If the user rolls a natural 1, everyone inside the structure takes the same amount of damage, with the same save for half damage.

Once the *Machine* is activated, it groans to life. Gears turn, wheels spin, great spheres rotate and move in strange orbits. Electrical and arcane energy crackles from rods and magical capacitors, and alien sounds of clanking and humming fill the air.

The *Celestial Machine* itself is controlled from a central panel. This panel contains a bewildering number of controls, and only Kelendis himself understood its many different settings. To prevent DMs from going as mad as Kelendis, there's no table listing all the hundreds and thousands of different settings and their effects. Instead, the characters select the settings and the DM determines effects randomly.

There are several banks of levers and buttons on the control panel. The first is a wheel with all seven chromatic values: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet. The second bank of controls contains a series of buttons, each corresponding to a number from one to 10. The third bank contains switches, each of which corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. (This assumes the standard 26 letters of the Roman alphabet, but DMs can modify it to their own world and phonetic system, if necessary). Finally, there are 12 mechanical levers extending from the floor.

In order to use the *Machine*'s powers, the user must set each of the panel controls — color, number and letter — then pull one of the twelve levers. This may require some trial and error on the part of the players, and many times the characters will follow the proper sequence only to have nothing happen. Eventually, the DM may wish to simply allow a Knowledge (arcana) or similar roll to figure out the proper sequence to use the artifact. Individual powers must be found through experimentation, but the DM can also decree that important powers (like setting a location) are automatically determined after a certain period of study.

When the characters have correctly set the controls and pulled a lever, roll 1d100.

Die Roll	Result
1–50	Nothing happens; this particular combination no longer works.
51–70	Mishap; roll on Mishap Table.
71–00	Power activated; roll d% on Powers Table.

When a correct combination of controls has been set and the lever pulled, a furious storm of arcane energy crackles through the *Machine* as the power is activated. Otherwise, the contraption may groan or clank, but nothing else of significance happens.

Observed locations appear in mid-air in front of the control console and can be seen by anyone in the dome. Summoned creatures appear in the same location.

As a given power is determined, mark it down on the *Celestial Machine Powers* sheet for future reference.

Since activating a power requires moving the levers and switches, only one power can be active at a time. For any of these powers that might involve saving throws, such as those that cast a randomly determined spell on a location, the DC equals 15 + spell level.

Celestial Machine Powers Table

Die Roll	Power
1–2	Observe location within 10 miles.*
3–4	Observe location within 100 miles.*
5–6	Observe location within 1,000 miles.*
7–8	Observe location on world.*
9–10	Observe location on another plane or world.*
11–12	Observe home plane or habitation of god or powerful outsider.*
13	Operator is transported to a location within 10 miles.*
14	Operator is transported to a location within 100 miles.*
15	Operator is transported to a location within 1,000 miles.*
16	Operator is transported to a location on world.*
17	Operator is transported to a location on another plane or world.*
18	Operator is transported to home plane or habitation of god or powerful outsider.*
19	All occupants of dome are transported to a location within 10 miles.*
20	All occupants of dome are transported to a location within 100 miles.*
21	All occupants of dome are transported to a location within 1,000 miles.*
22	All occupants of dome are transported to a location on world.*
23	All occupants of dome are transported to a location on another plane or world.*
24	All occupants of dome are transported to home plane or habitation of god or powerful outsider.*
25–26	Random object or creature is summoned from a location within 10 miles.*
27–28	Random object or creature is summoned from a location within 100 miles.*

28–29	Random object or creature is summoned from a location within 1,000 miles.*
30	Random object or creature is summoned from a location on world.*
31	Random object or creature is summoned from a location on another plane or world.*
32	Random object or creature is summoned from home plane or habitation of god or powerful outsider.*
33–34	1st-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
35–36	2nd-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
37–38	3rd-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
39–40	4th-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
41–42	5th-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
43–44	6th-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
45	7th-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
46	8th-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
47	9th-level arcane spell cast on observed location.*†
48	Operator transported to observed location.**
49	Operator and all occupants of dome transported to observed location.**
50–51	1st-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
52–53	2nd-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
54–55	3rd-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
56–57	4th-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
58–59	5th-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
60–61	6th-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
62	7th-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
63	8th-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
64	9th-level divine spell cast on observed location.*†
65–66	Observers can see up to one hour into the past of observed location.**
67–68	Observers can see up to 24 hours into the past of observed location.**
69–70	Observers can see up to 30 days into the past of observed location.**
71	Observers can see up to one year into the past of the observed location.**
72	Observers can see up to ten years into the past of the observed location.**
73	Observers can see up to 100 years into the past of the observed location.**
74	Observers can see up to 1,000 years into the past of the observed location.**
75	Observers can see up to 100,000 years into the past of the observed location.**
76	Observers can see up to 1,000,000 years into the past of the observed location.**
77–78	Observers can see up to one hour into the future of observed location.**
79–80	Observers can see up to 24 hours into the future of observed location.**
81–82	Observers can see up to 30 days into the future of observed location.**
83	Observers can see up to one year into the future of the observed location.**
84	Observers can see up to ten years into the future of the observed location.**
85	Observers can see up to 100 years into the future of the observed location.**
86	Observers can see up to 1,000 years into the future of the observed location.**
87	Observers can see up to 100,000 years into the future of the observed location.**
88	Observers can see up to 1,000,000 years into the future of the observed location.**
89	Operator (only) can communicate with intelligent creatures at the observed location and time.**
90	All observers can communicate with intelligent creatures at the observed location and time.**
91–00	Major power invoked (roll 1d% and consult the Major Powers table).

Celestial Machine Major Powers

Roll	Power
1–20	Two-way gate to observed location and time opens and remains open for 1d6 hours.*†
21–40	Two-way gate to observed location and time opens and remains open until location/time are changed at control panel.*†
41–50	The entire dome, its contents, and its inhabitants gain SR 25. Occupants of the dome can freely cast magic at targets outside the dome, however. No one entering the dome after the power is invoked receives this bonus.
51–60	The dome is surrounded by an enormous globe of invulnerability that protects all occupants.
61–70	The dome is surrounded by a huge prismatic wall, large enough to protect the contents and all occupants.
71–80	Arcane and life energies are drawn from anyone outside within 100 yards of the dome, inflicting 10d10 points of damage (DC 20 Fortitude save for half). This power can only be activated once per day.
81–85	High winds and stormy conditions batter those outside the dome. Ranged weapons are useless, and anyone outside the dome while the storm is blowing must make DC 15 Reflex saves each round or be knocked prone. The storm lasts 1d4 hours. This power can only be activated once per day.
86–90	The operator can choose any location within 1,000 miles to observe.
91–95	The operator can choose any location on the entire world to observe.
96–00	The operator can choose any location to observe, including other worlds and planes.

*Power can be generated multiple times. If rolled again, select a new location or spell.

**Power requires that a location be observed through the *Celestial Machine* before it can be activated. If location has not been observed, there is no effect.

†Power requires that a location be observed through the *Celestial Machine* before it can be activated. If location has not been observed, roll for a mishap.

If a power states that a location can be observed, a spell cast or an individual transported, the DM determines the location, spell or individual.

Changing the Past and the Future

In addition to his other errors, Kelendis made the mistake of meddling in the past and the future, observing and influencing events in ways that were well beyond his comprehension. Note that once the operator has set the location and time that he is observing, other powers allow him to cast spells, travel there, and affect events. If for example the operator happens to observe the site of a famous battle, and happens to see a famous king or general, he can then use the *Celestial Machine*'s powers to cast a spell and possibly even erase a famous individual from history.

The ramifications of these powers are literally earth-shattering, and an operator who loses his grip on reality may end up trying to alter history and the state of the universe to suit his own agenda or demented beliefs. In such cases, the machine is sure to come under attack, not only by the armies of the material world, but by gods and outsiders who do not want mere mortals meddling with the fabric of the universe. The ultimate consequences of such unbridled power are left up to the DM, but they should be uniformly dire.

The future is far more malleable than the past, and if the machine's operator chooses to observe the future, he sees only one *possible* future, which might still be influenced by current events. The likelihood of a given future actually occurring grows less and less the farther forward into time an observer sees. He can still influence the future, as by altering a given event or removing a participant, he might still prevent it from ever occurring.

Celestial Machine Mishap Table

Roll	Mishap
1–10	User makes a DC 15 Reflex save or is knocked prone.
11–20	All of the dome's occupants must make DC 19 Reflex saves or be knocked prone.
21–25	User must make a DC 15 Reflex save or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.
26–30	All of the dome's occupants must make a DC 19 Reflex save or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.
31–40	User must make a DC 15 Reflex save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.
41–50	All of the dome's occupants must make a DC 19 Reflex save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.
51–55	User must make a DC 15 Reflex save or be deafened for 1d4 rounds.
56–60	All of the dome's occupants must make a DC 19 Reflex save or be deafened for 1d4 rounds.
61–65	User must make a DC 15 Reflex save or be blinded and deafened for 1d4 rounds.
66–70	All of the dome's occupants must make a DC 19 Reflex save or be blinded and deafened for 1d4 rounds.
71–75	User takes 4d10 points of electrical damage; DC 18 Reflex save for half.

76–80	All of the dome's occupants take 4d10 points of electrical damage; DC 18 Reflex save for half.
81–85	User must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.
86–90	All of the dome's occupants must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.
91–95	User takes 10d10 points of electrical damage; DC 19 Reflex save for half.
96–00	All of the dome's occupants take 10d10 points of electrical damage; DC 19 Reflex save for half.

Consequences

As the tale of Kelendis suggests, use of the machine can lead to a variety of unfortunate consequences. Each time one of the machine's normal powers is used, the operator must make a DC 12 Will save. Each time a major power is used, the operator must make a DC 22 Will save. A failed save causes the operator to suffer a side effect, as determined by rolling d% on the following table. Add the number in parentheses to all future side effect rolls, even if the character recovers from the side effect.

Side Effects

Die Roll	Effect
1–5	User's hair, if any, turns white (+0).
6–10	User's eye or skin color changes (+0).
11–15	User gains 1 negative level (DC 22 Fortitude to remove) (+1).
16–20	User gains 1d4 negative levels (DC 22 Fortitude to remove) (+2).
21–25	User takes 1d6 points of ability damage (randomly determined) (+3).
26–30	User takes 2d6 points of ability damage (randomly determined) (+4).
31–35	User takes 1d4 points of ability drain (randomly determined) (+5).
36–40	User takes 2d4 points of ability drain (randomly determined) (+10).
41–45	User knocked unconscious for 1d4 hours (+2).
46–50	User knocked unconscious for 1d4 days (+4).
51–55	User paralyzed for 2d4 hours (+3).
56–60	User paralyzed for 2d4 days (+6).
61–65	User insane (as if affected by confusion) for 3d4 hours (+8).
66–70	User insane for 3d4 days (+10).
71–75	User permanently insane (+15).
76–80	User changes race or gender (+10).
81–85	User changes alignment (+10).
86–90	User takes 5d10 points of damage (+5).
91–95	User takes 10d10 points of damage (+10).
96–100	User ages one age category, suffering penalties but gaining no benefits (i.e. adult to middle age, or middle age to old) (+10).
101–105	User ages two age categories, suffering penalties but gaining no benefits (+15).
105–110	User dies instantly (+20).
110+	User's mind and body are scattered across the cosmos, effectively destroying the character permanently, beyond the power of gods or magic to restore.

As might be expected, operators of the machine, especially the weak-willed, quickly descend into physical degradation and madness. Even after suffering one or more side effects, an operator must make a DC 18 Will save each day, or be driven to use the machine in some fashion.

Ambient Effects

The *Celestial Machine* powers itself by drawing on ambient arcane energy. Long-term use of its powers drains surrounding lands of magic, and eventually life, while at the same time enhancing the magical energies inside the dome that houses it.

Within 4d4 weeks of the *Machine*'s activation, the surrounding area to a radius of five miles is considered a low magic area. No spells higher than 4th level function (treat them as if they were cast in an *antimagic field*). The interior of the dome, however, gains greater arcane power; all arcane spells cast within the dome gain +1 to effective caster level, and +1 to the DC to resist the spell. This radius spreads at a rate of 1d4 miles per week, eventually affecting civilized areas, where lack of arcane energies may cause all sorts of crises. In addition, after 4d4 months, the area within five miles of the dome is reduced to a lifeless wasteland. Animals flee and plants die, leaving only withered husks behind. Storms lash the region, and strange lights flash in the sky, symptoms of planar instability.

Eventually, at the DM's discretion, excessive use of the machine and its abilities creates a planar rift, causing planes to blur together, and possibly collide, creating massive disturbances which could have a number of different effects — anything from opening of planar gates that allow strange creatures and phenomena to access the mortal realm, to the utter destruction of the world or the multiverse. Such events

certainly trigger a response from other powers, and are certain to end in cataclysmic conflict.

Using the Celestial Machine in a Campaign

The *Celestial Machine* serves well in a truly apocalyptic campaign with a world-threatening conclusion. Keep in mind that characters who start to toy with the machine may well be destroyed by it, so make sure the players are aware of the potential risks. For the most part, the *Celestial Machine* remains a legend, but its rediscovery and activation can form the basis of a campaign in and of itself. The DM should consider whether the PCs will actually be the ones using the machine, or whether they will be victims of the machine's powers.

Adventure Seeds

A Storm in the Wilderness

Strange events have been occurring, such strange lights in the sky and odd weather patterns. The sages and scholars of the PCs' kingdom believe that some kind of massive planar rift is occurring, and the adventurers are dispatched to investigate. They find that the *Celestial Machine* has been discovered and that a mad sorcerer or other powerful foe is at the controls. As the catastrophes spread, the PCs must figure out a way to get into the dome and stop the insane operator before world-threatening disasters occur.

To Change the Past

The PCs are approached by a humble patron, who says that he has discovered the location of the legendary *Celestial Machine*. He asks that they accompany him as guards or guides. As the party ventures into the wilderness, the patron's motives grow clearer: Years ago, his family died in a terrible accident, and he seeks to use the powers of the *Celestial Machine* to change the past and save them. As might be expected, things do not go well. Due to his many attempts to operate the machine, the patron is soon consumed by the desire for power, his family forgotten. The PCs are in the position of either stopping their patron (now aided by time golems and other forces) or being party to his madness and the eventual destruction it will bring.

Destroying the Celestial Machine

Though it is a mechanical device, the *Celestial Machine* is largely immune to many of the problems normally associated with such items. Although some of its mechanisms no longer work properly, it is powered by ambient magic, and consequently difficult to break or destroy permanently.

• The *Machine* can be disabled and ultimately destroyed by setting the controls to view or open gates to multiple locations simultaneously. In effect, this short circuits its power source and unleashes the stored arcane energies that drive its mechanism. This requires five successful DC 40 Disable Device checks in a row. If one of the rolls is a failure, the user must start again, and each check takes a full hour to make. If the rolls are successful, the machine is jammed and will be destroyed as listed below in 1d6 hours; anyone in its vicinity is advised to get away quickly. The sequence can be interrupted and the machine restored by another DC 25 Disable Device check.

• Brute force can destroy the artifact, but only if applied correctly and in sufficient quantity. If over 1,000 points of damage can be delivered to the *Machine* in a single attack — arcane, divine, physical or otherwise — it is destroyed as described below. Anyone caught in the destruction without proper protection is destroyed along with the machine.

The forces unleashed by the *Celestial Machine*'s destruction are considerable, incinerating everything within 1d4 miles of the device's location. Any PCs caught in the area is destroyed as well, unless they can escape via *teleportation* or similar method. A *globe of invulnerability* also protects occupants from the arcane inferno that the destruction of the machine creates.

The area scourged by the *Machine*'s death throes is utterly blasted, with no living things remaining. Over the following years and centuries, life returns, and the area is far richer than before, nourished by the remnants of the arcane energy collected by the artifact and liberated in the explosion.

New Monster

Kelendis created a number of inhuman servants to aid him in his endeavors. Of these, the so-called time golems seem to be the only ones remaining.

Time Golem

Large Construct

Hit Dice:	15d10+30 (112 hp)
Initiative:	–1
Speed:	20 ft. (4 squares)
Armor Class:	26 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +10 natural, +8 time displacement) touch 16, flat-footed 26
Base Attack/Grapple:	+11/+24
Attack:	Slam +20 melee (2d10+10)
Full Attack:	2 slams +20 melee (2d10+10)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Lightning, recursive attack
Special Qualities:	Construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision, recursive saves, time displacement
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 30, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Skills:	—
Feats:	—
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Solitary or gang (2–4)
Challenge Rating:	14
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always neutral
Advancement:	16–20 HD (Large); 21–40 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment:	—

The creature seems similar to an iron golem, except for the visible clockwork mechanisms, with springs, gears and various dials inside its body. Its outline seems almost indistinct; the closer you look, the more it wavers.

Time golems are the invention of the astromancer Kelendis. Deep in his madness, he dreamed of their design, and over the next few days constructed one, though he himself did not remember how. Today, four of the golems stand motionless in the interior of the dome that houses the *Celestial Machine*; once the *Machine* begins to operate, the golems obey the commands of the machine's operator, and defend the machine against intruders.

A time golem stands about ten feet tall and weighs over 2,000 pounds.

Combat

Time golems attack relentlessly when commanded, discharging their lighting attacks, first at spellcasters, then at warriors. They seem to waver and shimmer in combat.

Lightning (Su): 80-foot line, 10d8 electrical damage, free action once every 1d4+1 rounds; Fortitude DC 17 for half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Recursive Attack (Su): A time golem exists in the present, as well as the immediate past and future. In any given round, the time golem automatically rerolls its first missed attack. It must take the second roll.

Recursive Saves (Su): In any given round, a time golem automatically rerolls its first failed save. It must take the second roll.

Time Displacement (Su): A time golem's temporal qualities allow it to anticipate enemy attacks, granting it a +8 bonus to AC that is retained for touch attacks.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A time golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A *slow* spell prevents a time golem from using its recursive attack and save qualities and eliminates its time displacement AC bonus for the spell's duration.

A *haste* spell gives a time golem one more reroll for failed attacks and saves — if the first roll and its reroll are both failures, the golem can reroll one more time.

The golem gets no save against either of these spells.

Construction

A time golem is crafted from one ton of iron, smelted with adamantine, mithril and silver costing at least 10,000 gp. Assembling the body requires a DC 20 Craft (armorsmithing) check or a DC 20 Craft (weaponsmithing) check.

CL 18th; Craft Construct, *lightning bolt, geas/quest, limited wish, polymorph any object, foresight*, caster must be at least 18th level; Price 150,000 gp; Cost 80,000 gp + 5,600 XP.

Crown of Ice

Circlet of the Ice Queen
By Rhiannon Louve

The Tale of the Crown of Ice

In ancient days, so the bards tell us, far in the frozen northlands, lived a woman so beautiful that fame of her beauty spread throughout the world and even onto other planes. Her name was Teina, and by the time she was 17, four different kings of the northlands had entered into a bloody and savage war with one another for the right to her hand in marriage.

The war tore the northlands into chaos and wretched poverty, and somehow over the course of its raging, several powerful magical beings noticed Teina's otherworldly loveliness. Her skin was white as snow, her hair as pale and shining as a wisp of cloud, and her wide blue eyes were as clear as ice. Some said her mother must have lain with the God of Winter, and indeed, the beings of the supernatural realms responded to her as far more than a mere mortal.

Two powerful wizards kidnapped her from the palace of the king who held her captive (while under siege by three other armies), but no sooner had the wizards locked her in their tower of ice than a white dragon, a frost giant, and a demigoddess of snow all arrived in the vicinity, demanding the beautiful Teina for themselves.

The snow demigoddess, whose worship died out centuries ago and whose name is now lost to antiquity, had powers of quiet subtlety rather than overt force. While the other mighty beings struggled amongst themselves for the right to make Teina their slave, the snow goddess slipped into the maiden's chambers and made her an offer.

"Come away quietly with me to my winter realm," she tempted the girl. "I'll make you queen of all these northern lands, and with the power I grant you, you'll never have to see war again."

The snow goddess was nearly as beautiful as Teina herself, and the girl was beside herself with gratitude and relief. She wished more than anything to see peace in her war-torn homeland. Willingly and ever so quietly, she mounted the demigoddess' icy steed, and away they flew. The wizards and monsters were so preoccupied with killing one another that they never even noticed, and by the end of their battle, all lay slain at the foot of the tower.



None know quite what happened to the lovely girl in the years that followed. Teina had vanished from the mortal realm, but the wars continued, even though with every passing year people remembered less and less why it was they fought.

Then suddenly one day, nearly half a lifetime later, Teina returned to the physical world. She wore a strange circlet on her brow, and she arrived alone, without explanation, and without having aged a day.

Teina never spoke of the decades she spent in the land of the snow goddess. Some legends say the two became lovers, but the fickle snow goddess betrayed her with an air elemental, and Teina killed her in

Researching the Crown of Ice

Most information about the *Crown of Ice* is found in the northlands. Most northern bards have heard the tale of Queen Teina, especially now that she has returned. Teina herself, under the right circumstances, might be willing to tell a party of adventurers about her crown and its powers, but attempting diplomacy with Teina is often very much like walking on thin ice. At the DM's discretion, ruins of Teina's ancient civilization may yet exist, and records of the crown might be left behind for characters to peruse.

As for where the *Crown* is now, none seem to know. Teina may guess more than she is telling about the identity and whereabouts of the thief, but if so, why does she not pursue him? The thief himself might also grow careless and make use of the crown in ways that attract attention.

The most useful skills in researching the current whereabouts of the *Crown of Ice* are Gather Information and the Bardic Knowledge ability. For learning about the history and powers of the crown itself, Bardic Knowledge is the most likely source of information. Characters may substitute Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (arcana) checks, but these suffer a –5 penalty due to the great age of the information.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Crown of Ice* is a mystic circlet, worn by the ancient Ice Queen Teina of the Great North.
20	Teina gained the *Crown*, and perhaps other powers as well, from a mysterious demigoddess of snow. It renders the wearer immune to cold, and provides other powers as well.
25	The *Crown* grants the wearer access to many spells related to winter and ice, but also slowly strips their humanity from them. (If this result occurs on an attempt to learn of the *Crown*'s current whereabouts, the character hears rumors of someone using cold-related magics, in a location of the DM's choosing.)
30+	The *Crown* removes its wearer's ability to feel emotion. Queen Teina has recently returned to the North, seeking her missing crown. (If this result occurs on an attempt to learn of the *Crown's* current whereabouts, the character learns the name and identity of the person who has been purportedly been using cold-related magics.)

A failed roll is likely to give characters false information about the crown's whereabouts. Another false rumor is that the *Crown of Ice* has no powers of its own — it is simply a bauble that Teina particularly fancies.

a fit of jealousy before fleeing home to her father's lands. Another tale claims that the demigoddess had deceived the innocent maiden, enslaving her cruelly, jealous of the girl's heartbreaking loveliness. After decades of the most depraved treatment imaginable, the brave girl eventually managed to trick and slay her captor, winning her freedom and the right to return home.

Whatever the truth, it was obvious to all who had once known the young, sad-eyed Teina, that while she might look as youthful as the day she left, she was profoundly changed. Her hair was so white now as to appear almost blue, and her flesh had grown inhumanly pale. She was still lovelier than any living woman, but many began to wonder if she could truly be counted as a living woman any more.

More disturbing than her skin and hair, however, were the other changes in Teina. Something in the sparkle of her eyes, the movement of her hair in the breeze, something indefinable about her bespoke a lack of humanity, a magical and soul-searing coldness. Some said her presence literally froze the things around her, even during the height of summer. Soon this coldness began to manifest itself in her personality, as Teina coolly and calculatingly raised herself an army and quickly swept through all the northlands, conquering every kingdom and installing herself as High Queen.

Though her ruthless battle tactics and iron combat leadership could not be faulted, it was obvious to all that the real force behind Teina's easy (and nearly bloodless) victory came from the magical crown she constantly wore. The crown's icy magics frightened the armies she faced, and rather than fight against her deathly cold stare, soldiers laid down their arms and swore fealty to Ice Queen Teina of the Great North.

Teina's justice was ruthless and swift, but usually fair, and it cannot be denied that the land knew a longer and more stable peace under her leadership than it ever had before. Teina was too much lacking in compassion to truly be loved by her subjects, but she was respected as well as feared, and her people were mostly happy.

Teina ruled the northlands for many generations, so the legends claim, shaping them into a wise and prosperous civilization. Fearing their frosty queen, her people began to keep order of their own free will, no longer requiring her justice to keep their lands honest and peaceful. Teina

allowed her presence to fade into her mighty nation's background, and when she was sure her people no longer needed her, she disappeared once more, taking with her the mysterious and powerful *Crown of Ice* she always wore.

The civilization that Teina founded has crumbled in the many centuries that have passed, and Teina herself might have been forgotten, save that she recently reappeared in the northlands and is steadily and ruthlessly rebuilding her old kingdom. She is young and lovely as ever, but her icy crown is missing, and she is very angry and determined to find it. Even without the crown, she has become a being of great power, and her icy wrath is terrible to behold. She claims that she knows not who stole her talisman, but she fully intends to see it returned to her, and to see the thief duly punished for his crime.

Studying the Crown of Ice

The *Crown of Ice* is a small circlet of strange pale blue metal. Though shaped and intricately carved like a tiara, it has no gemstones set anywhere in its design. Despite the obvious artistry of its making, it looks rather plain at first glance — almost as dull as worked steel, despite its blue color.

When handled, the *Crown* is painfully cold to the touch. Handled it with gloves or other protection, it is almost feather-light — much lighter than metal should be. The *Crown* does not appear to be magical under the scrutiny of *detect magic*, and it is invisible to all other forms of divination as well.

If the circlet is placed on a character's head, it changes immediately. A casing of ice envelops the *Crown*, making it shimmer exquisitely, as if it had been dipped in diamonds. It also begins to produce an intense aura of cold in a 10-ft. radius surrounding the character, dropping the ambient temperature in that area to far below freezing.

Powers of the Crown of Ice

The *Crown of Ice* grants its wearer certain powers, immunities, and other qualities related to ice and cold.

Using the Crown of Ice

The *Crown of Ice* must be worn to be functional. All activated powers work for the wearer by will alone.

Constant Powers

The wearer of the *Crown of Ice* gains the benefit of several ongoing powers. First, the *Crown* grants the user total immunity to all ice or cold-based attacks. Wrapped constantly in a nearly invisible sheet of slippery magical ice, the wearer gains a +3 armor bonus to AC. This icy armor is sufficiently light and flexible that it incurs no armor check penalties, nor does it interfere with spellcasting.

Activated Powers

For up to 10 rounds per day, the *Crown of Ice* can provide a wearer with fire resistance 20. After the 10 rounds are used up, the *Crown of Ice* ceases to function for an hour and no longer feels unusually cold to the touch during that time.

The *Crown of Ice* also allows the wearer to cast the following spells as a 20th-level sorcerer, with no material components necessary.

5/day: *chill metal* (DC 16), *grease* (this version of the spell coats the target in a slipper sheen of ice, but is otherwise mechanically identical to the normal spell), *ray of frost*.

3/day: *quench, sleet storm, wall of ice*.

1/day: *cone of cold* (DC 19), *ice storm*.

1/week: *flesh to stone* (DC 20, the victim appears to be ice rather than stone, but the ice does not melt and is treated as stone in all mechanical ways); *Otluke's freezing sphere* (DC 20), *simulacrum*.

1/month: *control weather, polar ray*.

Consequences

The *Crown of Ice* seems to freeze a person's soul and body, even while it grants its many powers. The wearer of the crown becomes slowly less and less human. As the wearer's body acclimates to the cold magics that surround and protect it, it becomes increasingly difficult to function without wearing the crown.

Every 30 days a character wears the *Crown of Ice* (consecutive or not), she must make a DC 24 Will save. Each failed save indicates that the character has progressed one step further on the transformative process described below. A character who has been changed by the crown can only be changed back in the first three stages by a *break enchantment* spell, and after that only by a *miracle or wish*. In either case, she cannot be changed back so long as she retains possession of the *Crown*.

First stage: The character begins to lose touch with her passions and joys. Things that excited or fascinated her cease to hold interest. She may still possess goals or ambitions, but she takes little pleasure in their fulfillment, or in anything else. In addition, if the character's alignment is any variety of evil, it now moves one step toward neutrality. For instance, a lawful evil character becomes lawful neutral.

Second Stage: The character's body begins to acclimate to cold weather. Whenever the character removes the *Crown*, she reacts to the weather as if it were 30 degrees warmer than it actually is. For example, in temperatures above 60 degrees Fahrenheit, the character is treated as if in very hot conditions. Above 80 degrees Fahrenheit, the character's body reacts as if in severe heat (see "The Environment" in Chapter 8 of the *DMG*).

Third Stage: The character begins to look different. Skin, hair and eyes take on the colors of various types of

ice. The character takes on a bluish tone. NPCs' initial reactions to the character are one step nearer hostile than they would otherwise be, as they begin to recognize her as an otherworldly being.

Fourth Stage: The character becomes increasingly dependant upon the *Crown* for survival. Without it, all temperatures the character encounters in her environment are treated as if they were 70 degrees warmer than they actually are (for example, 30 degrees Fahrenheit would feel like 100 degrees).

Fifth Stage: The character begins to lose touch with her fellow beings. She cares less about friends, family, human contact, and even such concepts as loyalty, save when it is of benefit to her personally. If her alignment was any variety of good, it now moves one step toward neutrality.

Final Stage: The character is no longer a humanoid. Her type becomes Fey. She ceases to age perceptibly. She gains low-light vision, if she does not already have it, and cold resistance equal to her level even when not wearing the crown. She has become a kind of nature spirit embodying ice and snow. She is dependant upon an extreme winter-like environment. If she strays more than 300 yards onto fully-thawed ground, she fades and dies in 4d6 hours. Only the ambient effects of the *Crown of Ice* can allow her to travel outside a snowy climate at all. The character also takes double damage from fire and all fire-base magics.

Ambient Effects

The circlet creates an area of severe winter surrounding its wearer, causing both positive and negative results.

The ground around the *Crown*'s wearer, in a 10-ft. radius, freezes solid and is covered at all times in a slick sheet of ice. Though this has the delightful effect of allowing the wearer of the Ice Queen's circlet to walk on water as it freezes beneath his feet at every step, it also creates some interesting complications, particularly during combat. The ground in the area is treated at all times as if a *grease* spell had been cast upon it. The wearer is unaffected by the slickness of the ice.

The air around the wearer remains at a constant temperature well below freezing. All those within a 10-ft. radius of the wearer are treated as if in an environment of –10 degrees Fahrenheit (see "the Environment" in Chapter 8 of the *DMG*). In addition, the magical cold radiated by the crown is extremely harmful to all metals. Within 2d4 rounds, metal objects, including armor and weapons, freeze into a brittle state. (Note that the wearer's own possessions are *not* exempt from this effect.)

Metal armor is considered to have only half its regular protective value (round down). Further, it has a cumulative 10% chance of shattering every time its wearer is hit in combat, or the armor itself is struck (an attack misses only by the value of the armor's bonus). Metal weapons have a cumulative 10% chance of shattering every time they make contact (on all successful hits, and on misses where the attack only missed by the value of the target's armor bonus). If a weapon shatters on a successful hit, it does 1/4 its usual damage (round down, minimum 1 point).

Magic items made of metal may make a DC 15 Fortitude save when first exposed to the *Crown*'s aura. Success means the item is unaffected, though it must save again if it ever leaves and then reenters the area. Failure indicates that the item may shatter with use, as above. Other artifacts are unaffected by this aura.

Food and water also freeze quickly in the vicinity of the wearer of the Ice Queen's circlet, among other liquid and semi-liquid things, so the wearer must quickly become accustomed to frozen food and "drink."

Finally, the freezing effects of the *Crown of Ice* cause an audible creaking, making it effectively impossible for the wearer of the Ice Queen's circlet to sneak (–20 on Move Silently checks).

Using the Crown of Ice in a Campaign

The easiest way to introduce the *Crown of Ice* into a campaign is to send the characters to recover the artifact for Teina. Without the crown, it is almost impossible for her to travel outside the very coldest of the northern reaches. She would likely give a fair reward to any party who returned her talisman to her. This could be a job for a mid- to high-level party, as the *Crown* would only be in their possession for a short period.

Later in such a campaign, the same characters might impose upon Teina's resulting good will to borrow the *Crown* for another short period, in order to fight a specific battle. Alternatively, the Ice Queen might hire the party for some purpose and loan them the artifact for the duration of the mission. She would never willingly allow the *Crown* to leave her possession for more than a month, both for the sake of her own comfort and also to protect others from its addictive and in some ways crippling power.

This is a powerful and dangerous artifact, however. It should only be allowed as a permanent addition to the plotline in very high-level campaigns. It must also be kept in mind that the Ice Queen would never willingly give away her circlet. If it becomes the property of one of the PCs, it is likely that they must kill her to acquire it, or alternatively kill her murderers.

Adventure Seeds

Vengeance of the Snow Goddess

Killing a goddess, even a minor demigoddess, is never an easy feat. Whatever passed between the Ice Queen and the demigoddess who first gave her the *Crown of*

Ice, the snow goddess is back, and she wants revenge. Her plan began with her minions stealing the *Crown of Ice*, crippling Teina and trapping her in the northlands. Next she plans to raise an evil and supernatural army to blast the northlands into inhabitability. She knows that Teina still cares for her home as much as the detached and passionless Queen can truly care for anything, and the angry demigoddess wishes the maiden who harmed her so to suffer greatly before she dies.

The party arrives in the northlands, seeking the Ice Queen's aid in some other adventure. She is rude at first, but eventually promises the party whatever help she can offer (riches, trade agreements, armies — whatever it is the characters come seeking), if and only if they can return the *Crown of Ice* to her in time to save the northlands from the snow goddess' armies.

Should the party agree, she tells them what little she knows about the thieves' whereabouts. The party must find the crown and return it to Teina as fast as they can, fighting all the while against the forces of the wrathful goddess.

Pawns with Teeth

The PCs are given the *Crown of Ice* by a particularly charming employer as part of a modest reward for a job well done. They are not told of its power and are led to believe that it is simply a pretty circlet of a rare blue metal. Some weeks later, the characters begin to be harassed by Teina's agents, though it is unlikely the agents announce their allegiance or purpose to the party. They see the PCs as thieves of their mistress' property, and they are entirely unsympathetic.

After a great deal of painstaking investigation, the PCs eventually discover what the soldiers are after and some inklings of its power. They also discover, with time, that their employer is the thief who first stole the *Crown* from Teina and that he has been using them all as his pawns. He planted the artifact with the PCs to keep Teina's hounds from finding it among his possessions, and it was only by the most unlikely of chances that Teina's people learned where it had been "hidden."

The PCs' former employer, if questioned, claims innocence and that he hid the *Crown* with them for safekeeping. He promises to richly reward the party for their work as guards of his property. The truth, however, was that he intended to betray and kill them for the artifact as soon as Teina's folk could be convinced that he was not the thief. The PCs, now embroiled, must decide what to do with the *Crown* (and its former owner, and their former employer) next.

Destroying the Crown of Ice

The PCs might want to destroy the *Crown of Ice* for several reasons. Good characters might consider it to be a thing of evil, since it does eventually remove the wearer's ability to feel compassion or loyalty. Others might destroy it to keep it out of the hands of the evil goddess who made it, or even to cripple Queen Teina if she has become the PCs' enemy. Finally, characters who see one of their friends becoming addicted to the powers of the *Crown of Ice* might wish to destroy it to protect their friend, or in an attempt to reverse its effects.

• Though the *Crown* is not normally susceptible to fire or heat, it is very draining on the circlet's power to absorb fire damage on its wearer's behalf. Once its fire resistance powers have been used up for the day, the *Crown* becomes inert for one hour. During this time, in spite of its light weight and blue color, it can be melted down exactly like iron, and ordinary iron is all that remains afterward.

• A wearer of the *Crown* who has completed the transformation into a fey can choose to destroy the artifact at any time. While it is still worn on the character's head, she can simply smash it with any tool of hardness 10 or greater and a successful DC 15 Strength check. The wearer takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from her own blow, but the *Crown of Ice* shatters into fragments and eventually melts like normal ice.

• The snow goddess who created the artifact can destroy it with a thought, but doing so would leave her crippled, the magics she poured into its making permanently lost. In order to reabsorb the *Crown*'s power, she must perform a complex ritual, which magically allows her to draw the energy back into herself, returning the *Crown* to a plain circlet of non-magical iron. Only the demigoddess of snow knows the details of this ritual, and only she can perform it. If she is truly dead, this method of destruction is impossible.

No method of destroying the *Crown of Ice* can reverse its effects on its wearer, though its destruction then opens up the possibility of reversing the effects by other means, as described above.

New Monster

Teina has not been human for a very long time, and in her long and strange life she has gained many powers and abilities different from those of ordinary mortals. As such, she has become a completely unique being. The stats listed below describe Teina without the *Crown of Ice*, since it was recently stolen from her.

Teina, the Ice Queen

Medium Fey

Hit Dice:	25d6+100 (187 hp)
Initiative:	+3
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	17 (+3 Dex, +4 *ring of protection*), touch 17, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple:	+12/+14

Attack:	*+2 keen icy burst rapier* +16 melee (1d6+4 plus 1d6 cold damage)
Full Attack:	*+2 keen icy burst rapier* +16/+11/+6 melee (1d6+4+1d6 cold damage)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Spells
Special Qualities:	Cold dependant, cold resistance 25, fire sensitivity, low-light vision
Saves:	Fort +12, Ref +17, Will +16
Abilities:	Str 14, Dex 16, Con 19, Int 23, Wis 15, Cha 30
Skills:	Appraise +20, Bluff +24, Concentration +32, Decipher Script +20, Diplomacy +30, Gather Information +26, Intimidate +42, Knowledge (arcana) +34, Knowledge (history) +20, Knowledge (local) +20, Listen +18, Profession (ruler) +30, Ride +17, Search +20, Sense Motive +34, Speak Language +14, Spellcraft +36, Spot +18
Feats:	Combat Casting, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Leadership, Negotiator, Point Blank Shot, Spell Penetration, Widen Spell
Environment:	Any cold
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	17
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always lawful neutral
Advancement Range:	—
Level Adjustment:	—

A tall and breathtakingly beautiful woman with blue-white hair and skin, and a terrifying coldness in her ice-blue eyes, seems almost to glide toward you over the glistening ice.

The tale of the Ice Queen and of the *Crown of Ice* are one and the same. She seeks her crown and a restoration of her former peaceful kingdom.

Teina the Ice Queen loves and studies languages. As such, she speaks 21 languages fluently, including Common and any other language the DM finds it convenient for her to know.

Combat

Teina prefers to surround herself with powerful warriors, whom she supports with spells from the sidelines. When at close quarters, however, she is not unskilled with her formidable magical blade.

Cold Dependant (Su): All temperatures the Ice Queen encounters in her environment are treated as if they were 70 degrees warmer than they actually are (for example, 30 degrees Fahrenheit would feel like 100 degrees and so on). In addition, if she strays more than 300 yards onto fully-thawed ground, not covered in snow or ice of any kind, she fades and dies within 4d6 hours.

Fire Sensitivity (Su): The Ice Queen takes double damage from fire and all fire-based magics.

Spells: Teina casts spells as a 15th-level Sorcerer. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/9/9/8/8/8/8/5; save DC 20 + spell level): 0 — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mending*, *message*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st — *charm person*, *endure elements*, *mage armor*, *mount*, *obscuring mist*; 2nd — *detect thoughts*, *eagle's splendor*, *knock*, *fox's cunning*, *resist energy*; 3rd — *haste*, *protection from energy*, *sleet storm*, *suggestion*; 4th — *fear*, *ice storm*, *shadow conjuration*, *wall of ice*; 5th — *cone of cold*, *dominate person*, *permanency*, *shadow evocation*; 6th — *greater dispel magic*, *mass bull's strength*, *mass suggestion*; 7th — *control weather*, *reverse gravity*.

Skills: Teina has a +2 racial bonus on Intimidate, Listen, Sense Motive, and Spot checks.

Darkwood Heart

The Staff of Mourning
By Keith Baker

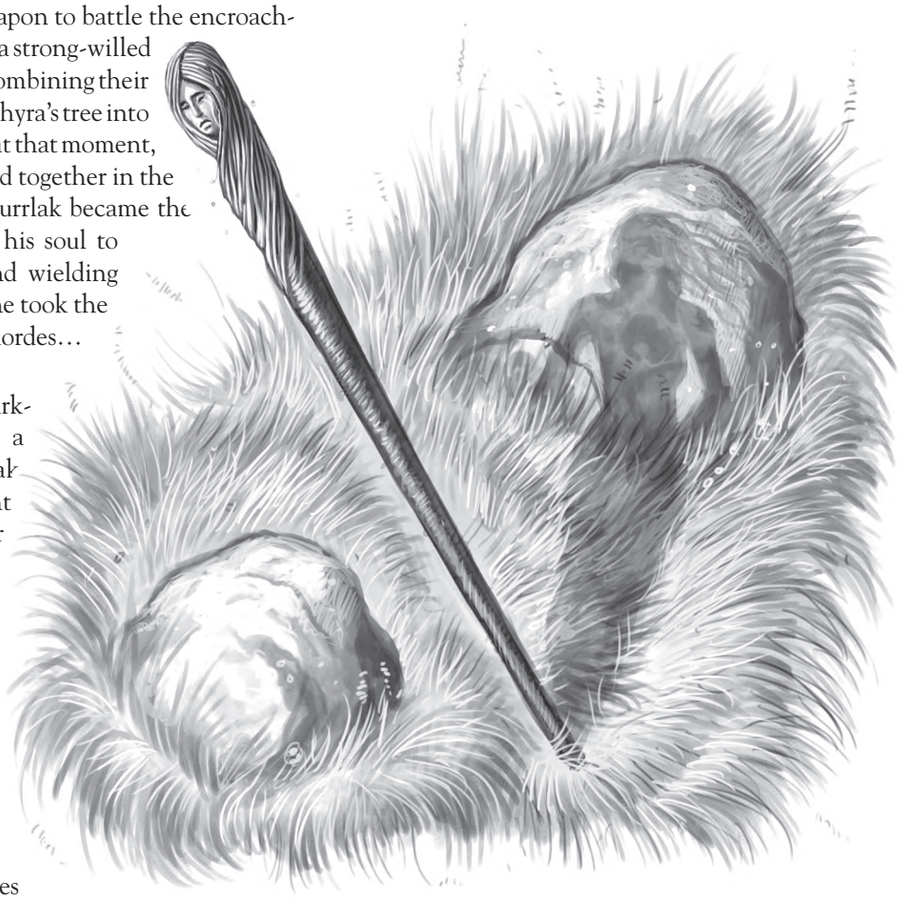
The Tale of the Darkwood Heart

In an age before the rise of civilization, a vast primeval forest stretched across the land. The tribal humans of the region called this the Darkwood, and their druids paid homage to the fey powers and forces of nature that governed it. This was a time of peace between human and nature — a time that would not last. Some say it was humans who brought the devastation to the land, while others say it was purely the work of fiends. Today, all that is known for certain is that a terrible blight was unleashed upon the land, a wave of corruption that killed plant and beast alike, leaving monsters and aberrations in its wake.

As the shadows fell upon the Darkwood, the druids came together, searching for a weapon to battle the encroaching terror. They called upon a strong-willed dryad named Kashyra, and combining their powers they transformed Kashyra's tree into a staff. A thousand trees fell at that moment, and their strength was bound together in the weapon. The great druid Hurrlak became the bearer of the staff, joining his soul to Kashyra. Acting as one and wielding the power of nature itself, the took the battle to the abominable hordes… and were defeated.

A century later, the Darkwood had been reduced a barren wasteland. Hurrlak and his brethren had fought to the last, and the order was utterly eradicated. Only one trace of the druids remained: the weapon they had created, the *Darkwood Heart*. Shunned by the aberrations that rose in the land, Kashyra was abandoned on a forgotten battlefield, trapped next to the rotting remnants of her druid companions. Centuries passed, and Kashyra went slowly mad. The dryad was a spirit of pure nature, and the staff was a prison for her, cutting her off from the natural world. Existence became agony, and she fluctuated between a desperate desire to end her pain and the wish to share it with others. There was no justice in the world, and if her home was to be destroyed, let all nature fall with it.

In time, the *Darkwood Heart* was discovered, and over the years it has passed through the hands of a host of druids and rangers. A strong-willed bearer may be able to fight Kashyra's crushing despair, and to turn the powers of the *Staff* to a noble cause. But the *Darkwood Heart* is bitter and cold, and it leaves death in its wake.



Researching the Darkwood Heart

The tale of the *Darkwood Heart* is one that is most likely to be known to druid circles with ancient roots. A character with at least some connection to a druidic order can use Knowledge (nature) to see if he has heard of the *Staff*. The connection is just as important as the skill; a woodsman could have a Knowledge (nature) modifier of +20, but without some tie to the druidic mysteries, he'll know nothing of the *Staff*.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	During an ancient war between nature and aberrations, the druids bound the soul of a dryad into a magical staff.
20	The *Staff* is an artifact known as the *Darkwood Heart*. Legends say that the *Staff* was carved from a dryad's tree, and that the power of an entire forest was bound to her spirit as a weapon against aberrations and the unnatural. According to the tales, a druid can bond with the *Staff*, much like forming a connection with an animal companion; it is this bond that unlocks the secrets of the *Staff*.
25	The *Staff* was created to destroy aberrations; its touch is anathema to such creatures. It can also call on the offensive power of wind and weather. But the legends say that those who made the *Staff* lost their struggle, and a few of the stories suggest that the *Staff* was corrupted in the battle.
30	The *Staff* holds the spirit of the dryad Kashyra. According to account of the druid Ulan Dantir, the last known wielder of the *Darkwood Heart*, "The spirit within the *Staff* has been corrupted by failure and a thousand years of isolation; she now seeks to destroy nature as well as the unnatural, spreading disease and blight. I can feel her through the link that we share, and I fear that her rage and despair may overwhelm me, drawing me into her darkness."

In addition, a bard or loremaster may have heard tales of the *Staff* or its owners. Such a character may make a Bardic Knowledge or lore check with the following results.

DC	Knowledge Available
20	There is an ancient story of a wood-nymph named Kashyra, who lived in a placed called the Darkwood. When unnatural monsters and plague assaulted the forest, the druids called on Kashyra and asked her to serve as a focus for the power of the woods. Kashyra's tree was made into a staff, and the staff had the strength of a thousand trees and power over the wind and weather. But the forest could not be saved. The battle was lost, the woods were destroyed, and all that remained was the staff, weeping over the bodies of the fallen druids and the stumps of her beloved trees.
25	The druid Ulan Dantir was a great champion of nature, who battled monster and bandit alike. In his later days, he was known to wield a long staff of dark wood, which could strike with the force of a thunderbolt. As time went on, Ulan became dark and grim, and many blamed the staff; they said that it bore a woman's face and would cry at night, and that this sorrow ate away at Ulan's spirit. Eventually he disappeared, but some say that they can still hear his voice on the wind, sobbing in harmony with his "Staff of Mourning."
30	The bard Jolas Cayne was wandering through the forests of the east when he heard a woman weeping. Following the sound, he found a clearing — a blighted circle in an otherwise lush forest. A staff was stretched out on a bower, and it bore the face of a woman; tears ran from darkwood eyes. Jolas asked why the staff cried, and a beautiful voice said "All I wish is death, but I cannot die." Jolas believed that the spirit could be lifted from its despair, and promised to show it life; he took the *Staff* with him, and passed from city to city, singing songs and spreading laughter. The *Staff* sang with him, and he seemed to have shattered its sorrow. When he finally returned to a village he'd visited earlier, he found that the people had been slain by a terrible disease… a plague spread by the *Staff*, which he'd left in his wake. "You sought to cheer me with life," the *Staff* explained, "But I only take comfort in death."

Studying the Darkwood Heart

The *Darkwood Heart* is a quarterstaff carved from darkwood, just under six feet in length. It is unusually slender for a quarterstaff, but surprisingly heavy, and its weight seems to increase the bearer swings it, adding to the force of its blows. One end has been sculpted to resemble the face of a beautiful woman, with high cheekbones and elven features. The face is about six inches in length, and her hair winds down around the shaft of the staff for another

foot. The face is twisted into a mask of sorrow; the tip of the staff is covered with condensation, and it seems as if tears are running down the woman's cheeks.

While the central shaft is polished and dry, allowing for a good grip, both ends are strangely damp; even if wiped away, this condensation quickly returns. Despite this moisture, the wood appears solid, but smells faintly of rotting vegetation and mildew. Anyone touching the *Staff* feels a terrible sense of loneliness and despair, and for just a moment hears a young woman sobbing.

The *Darkwood Heart* radiates an overwhelming aura of evil and magic; it is impossible to pin it down to a specific sphere of magic. A spellcaster who is stunned as a result of studying these auras is filled with a warring sense of rage and despair, so powerful that it breaks concentration and shatters the spell.

If *legend lore* is used on the *Staff*, the caster receives the following message: *"Kashyra is bound within herself, forest to tree to a single limb. Champion and destroyer, twisted by time and doomed by despair. Only one who can reach within can touch her true power, bonding to spirit as if to beast; but this bond will prove a threat to both."*

Powers of the Darkwood Heart

The *Darkwood Heart* holds great power over nature, and is particularly dangerous to aberrations. It resonates with the grief and pain of Kashyra, however, and all life eventually suffers at its touch.

Using the Darkwood Heart

The *Darkwood Heart* is a magic weapon, and has a few constant abilities that can be used by any character who takes possession of it. To gain access to the full powers of the *Staff*, however, a character must form a spiritual bond with it. Only a character capable of taking an animal companion can form such a link, and to maintain the link he must release any animal companion that he possesses. This process is described in more detail below. All of the abilities of the item are listed below, but with the exception of the base powers, these abilities must be unlocked through the bond.

In addition to the need to bond with the *Staff*, the powers of the *Darkwood Heart* vary with its mood. Every day, the character must engage in a personality conflict with the *Staff*, making a Will save against the *Staff*'s ego of 30. The wielder gains a +1 circumstance bonus to this check for every living creature with at least 1 HD that the *Staff* killed the previous day. If the check is successful, the *Staff* is **calm** for the next day: it is less mournful and aggressive. If the check is failed, the *Staff* is **upset**; it swings between rage and despair, often crying aloud or sobbing telepathically in the wielder's mind. During these times, it is only interesting in lashing out and harming other things. The owner of the *Staff* may always choose to fail this check if he wants Kashyra to be upset.

Constant Powers

Base Powers: Regardless of whether a character has bonded to the *Staff*, it is a *+2 aberration bane/+2 aberration bane quarterstaff*. Kashyra is an intelligent item (Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 20, Ego 30; AL NE) capable of telepathic communication and speech; she speaks Common, Druidic, Elven, and Sylvan. She possesses the following skills: Knowledge (nature) +16, Listen +12, Perform (song) +16, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12, Survival +12. However, she never uses these skills on behalf of an unbonded wielder.

Enhancement Bonus: The enhancement bonus of the *Staff* increases as the bearer's connection to it grows stronger, as

Bonding With the Darkwood Heart

Many of the artifact's powers depend on the level of the bonded character, as shown on the following table.

Class Level	Enhancement Bonus	Spell Modifier	Insight Bonus	Special
1st–2nd	+2/+2	0	+0	Dryad's Tears, Skill use, Telepathic Bond
3rd–5th	+2/+2	+1	+3	Bearer of Blight (1/day), Darkwood Defense, Inner Turmoil (–1), Soul Bond
6th–8th	+2/+2	+1	+3	Kashyra's Anger, Stormcalling I
9th–11th	+3/+2	+2	+4	Bearer of Blight (3/day), Inner Turmoil (–3)
12th–14th	+3/+3	+2	+4	Bloodwood, Dryad's Charms, Stormcalling II
15th–17th	+4/+3	+3	+5	Bearer of Blight (5/day), Fury of the Forest, Inner Turmoil (–5)
18th–20th	+4/+4	+3	+5	Dark Bond, Stormcalling III

shown on the table. The first number is the sculpted head of the *Staff*, while the second is the plain end.

Skill Use: When Kashyra is calm she may use her skills on behalf of her bonded wielder. She can use her Perform skill to aid any performer within vocal distance; because of her inhuman skill, she provides her partner with a +4 bonus to his Perform check.

Telepathic Bond: The telepathic connection between the *Darkwood Heart* and its bonded owner allows communication at any distance, provided that the two are on the same plane.

Darkwood Defense: The *Darkwood Heart* was designed to battle aberrations, and it provides an insight bonus to a bonded user. This bonus is applied to defense in various ways, based on the user's level. (Note that several of the following powers refer to "natural" magic or spells. This indicates any divine magic based on a connection to nature, and includes spells cast by druids, rangers, or clerics accessing the air, animal, earth, fire, plant, or water domains.)

At 3rd level, a bonded user adds the insight bonus to saving throws against attacks made by aberrations (including spells, spell-like abilities, extraordinary abilities, and any other offensive action that allows a saving throw).

At 6th level, a bonded user adds the insight bonus to his armor class when attacked by an aberration.

At 9th level, a bonded user adds the insight bonus to his armor class when attacked by an animal or plant. This only applies when Kashyra is upset.

At 12th level, a bonded user adds the insight bonus to saving throws against natural magic and any attack made by an animal, fey, elemental, or plant. This only applies when Kashyra is upset.

At 15th level, a bonded user adds the insight bonus to his armor class when defending against attacks made by a fey or elemental. This only applies when Kashyra is upset.

The character only receives these bonuses if he is holding the *Darkwood Heart*.

Soul Bond: At 3rd level, the wielder begins to feel a stronger Kashyra's despair and anger at the natural world. This affects the wielder's ability to use certain types of natural magic.

When the caster uses a natural spell designed to harm, physically bind, or repel (such as *flame blade*, *entangle*, *contagion*, or *antilife shell*), he may add the spell modifier value to the caster level and saving throw DC of the spell.

If Kashyra is upset, the user must *subtract* the spell modifier value from caster level and saving throw DC any time he uses a natural spell designed to calm, charm, heal, or encourage growth.

The DM must make the final call as to whether a spell is benevolent or aggressive; many spells (such as *bull's strength* or *detect snares and pits*) are neutral and unaffected.

These bonuses and penalties are based on the character's bond and apply even when the character is not holding the *Darkwood Heart*.

Kashyra's Anger: The *Staff* was designed to fight aberrations, but Kashyra's hatred extends to the natural world. Beginning at 6th level, the sculpted end of the *Staff* is treated as a bane weapon against aberrations, animals, elementals, fey, plants, and any creature with the ability to use natural magic (such as a ranger or druid). These do not stack, so a druid in animal form does not suffer double damage. When Kashyra is upset, the sculpted end gains the *vicious* quality; the *Staff* strikes with tremendous force but leeches energy from the wielder.

Bloodwood: As of 12th level, the *Staff* begins to draw blood from its victims, absorbing it into itself. The sculpted end gains the *wounding* quality, in addition to the abilities granted by Kashyra's Anger.

Fury of the Forest: Beginning at 15th level, when Kashyra is upset, both ends of the *Staff* gain the *vicious* quality.

Dark Bond: At 18th level, the caster may spontaneously cast the following spells by dropping a prepared ranger or druid spell of equal or higher level: *contagion* (3rd), *diminish plants* (3rd), *poison* (3rd), *blight* (4th). However, when he casts spells of the healing subschool he suffers a –5 penalty to caster level (this supercedes the soul bond penalty). These bonuses and penalties apply even when the character is not holding the *Darkwood Heart*.

Activated Powers

Access to the activated powers of the *Darkwood Heart* must be earned through the bonding process. All activated powers have a caster level of 25.

Dryad's Tears: As a standard action, the wielder of the *Darkwood Heart* can wilt all plant life that comes near it. When Kashyra is upset, she can extend this effect at will. This is identical to the prune growth effect of *diminish plants*, except that instead of appearing neat and well-trimmed, the affected plants are wilted and dying.

Bearer of Blight: While upset, the *Darkwood Heart* possesses the ability to use the following abilities: *blight* (15d6, DC 20), *contagion* (DC 21), *poison* (DC 19), *sleet storm*. With the exception of *sleet storm*, these require the wielder of the *Staff* to either make a successful melee attack or a melee touch attack with the *Staff* (in which case, the spell effect is the only effect that occurs). However, use of these abilities is entirely under Kashyra's control; she decides when to trigger an effect and which to use. This cannot be control, prevented, or compelled by the wielder.

While Kashyra is in control of these powers, her ability to manifest them is based on the strength of her bonded companion. If her companion is at least 3rd level, she can use one of these abilities once per day. Once her companion reaches 9th level, she can use any combination of these powers a total of 3 times per day. And at 15th level, she can use these powers 5 times per day.

Stormcalling I: While holding the *Darkwood Heart*, the bonded character can use the *Staff* to cast the following spells: 1/week — *control wind* (DC 19), *call lightning storm* (5d6, DC 19, 25 minute duration or 15 bolts); 3/day — *call lightning* (3d6, DC 17, 25 minute duration or 25 bolts). Using one of these spells is a spell trigger action on the part of the wielder. If Kashyra wants to prevent the effect, the staffbearer must engage in personality conflict.

Dryad's Charms: At her core, Kashyra is still a dryad, and possesses the dryad's ability to charm others. However, her disdain for life is so strong that she can rarely be convinced to use these powers. Before she will use these abilities, she must have been calm for at least two consecutive days, and even then she must be forced with a successful personality conflict. Provided these conditions are met, she may use the following powers: 3/day — *charm person* (DC 15), *deep slumber* (DC 17).

Stormcalling II: The character can use the *Staff* to cast the following spells (Caster level 25th): 1/week — *control weather;* 1/day — *control wind* (DC 21), *call lightning storm* (5d6, DC 21, 25 minute duration or 15 bolts); 5/day — *call lightning* (3d6, DC 19, 25 minute duration or 25 bolts). This supersedes (does not stack with) the daily casting ability provided by the first stormcalling ability.

Stormcalling III: The character can use the *Staff* to cast the following spells (Caster level 25th): 1/day — *control weather;* 2/day — *control wind* (DC 23), *call lightning storm* (5d6, DC 23, 25 minute duration or 15 bolts); 7/day — *call lightning* (3d6, DC 21, 25 minute duration or 25 bolts). This supersedes (does not stack with) the daily casting ability provided by the first and second stormcalling abilities.

Consequences

The *Darkwood Heart* is filled with despair. While Kashyra has an evil alignment, she is not so much malevolent as she is insane. In her calmer moods she is still with pessimism, believing that she is doomed to eternal torment. When she is upset, she seeks solace by lashing out at others: death and destruction are the only things that soothe her wounded soul. Nonetheless, she is a tragic being, not a villain. She knows that her actions are wrong, and this simply increases her desire for death.

Just touching the *Darkwood Heart* is sufficient to fill a character with a sense of sorrow. Bonding with Kashyra is a difficult act that places a tremendous strain on the bearer. The penalties of the Soul Bond and Dark Bond are described above; an additional penalty occurs as the character grows closer to the *Staff*.

Inner Turmoil: As Kashyra's despair and hatred of life sink into the bearer's soul, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to relate to others. At 3rd level he suffers a –1 circumstance penalty any time he a Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Sense Motive, or Wild Empathy check. This penalty increases to –3 at 9th level, and to –5 at 15th level. The effect occurs regardless of whether the character is carrying the *Staff*. However, when Kashyra is calm, the penalty is reduced by two (minimum 1).

While Inner Turmoil affects the bearer of the *Staff*, other forms of misfortune can target those around him. The *Darkwood Heart* wilts plants and spoils milk, but this is just the tip of its powers. At the DM's discretion, when Kashyra is upset she can affect the weather — not as dramatically as *control weather* or *control wind*, but enough to make a journey unpleasant or to impact ocean travel. Worse still, occasionally she can target a nearby creature with *contagion* without touching it; this has a range of thirty feet and the target may make a DC 22 Fortitude save to resist. There are no outward signs of this effect, and unless a character is actively using *arcane sight* or a similar effect, there is no way to trace the action to the *Staff*. Kashyra can only attempt this once per day, and only when she has been upset for at least a week; it is the pent-up anger that gives her the strength to exceed her normal limitations.

Ambient Effects

The weather often reflects the current mood of the *Darkwood Heart*, but there are more noticeable effects of the *Staff*'s power. Any small plant that comes within two feet of the *Staff* wilts, and any plant creature or fine or diminutive animal that comes within this distance suffers one point of damage each round until it moves away. Milk spoils and wine turns to vinegar. When the *Staff* is upset, all plants that come within a half-mile radius suffer the stunt growth effect of *diminish plants*; while it takes time for the full impact of this to come to light, affected plants are clearly suffering and unhealthy.

Beyond these general effects, there is the voice of the *Staff* itself. Kashyra rarely talks, preferring to communicate telepathically with her bonded wielder. But she sings occasionally — haunting songs in Sylvan, describing the beauty of the Darkwood and the loss the world has suffered, and the terrible hopelessness that is life. And on occasion she cries, her sobs carrying on the wind. Her voice is beautiful and ethereal, and even her misery sounds like music. But it can attract unwanted attention, should she choose to start crying when the party is engaged in covert action. In such situations, a bonded wielder can engage in personality conflict to silence her.

Using the Darkwood Heart in a Campaign

While designed to battle aberrations, the *Darkwood Heart* is an equally potent weapon against druids, fey, or other natural creatures, and its power over storms can be an effective tool on any battlefield. It takes time for a character to fully master the *Staff*, and it is intended to be a long term addition to a campaign.

Adventure Seeds

The Rising Horror

A local forest has begun to decay and collapse, and strange and terrible creatures are rising in the darkness. The druids cannot explain it, but they believe that this is the same force that destroyed the Darkwood thousands of years ago, returned to threaten this new land. Legends speak of a weapon crafted to fight this horror. Can the party find the *Darkwood Heart*? And if so, can they convince the spirit to fight the evil once more? Kashyra may possess critical insights into the nature of the foe, if the party can work through her despair. Can the evil be defeated before in claims another land? And what if the *Darkwood Heart* chooses to side with the corrupting horror against the natural world?

The Fallen Druid

Explorers find the cairn of a mighty druid. Beating back the aberrations and undead that have laid claim to this place, they find the sobbing *Staff* resting atop the druid's body. This is a treasure fit for a king, but do any of the characters have the strength to wield it?

The Gray Scourge

A terrible, highly contagious plague has gripped the nation. Investigating its spread, the heroes discover than a young bard with a dark staff has passed through each region that has suffered from the disease. The bard is dead when they find him, and all that remains is the keening *Staff*. Can the adventurers unlock the mystery and convince the *Darkwood Heart* to stop spreading the disease? Can Kashyra actually cure the horror she has spread — can she heal as well as destroy?

Destroying the Darkwood Heart

Kashyra *wants* to be destroyed, and implores her owner to find a way to bring her existence to an end. Meanwhile, once a bond has been formed, a character cannot choose to end it. As such, the druid who regrets the decision to form a link to the miserable *Staff* may become desperate to find a way to get rid of it. Here are a few possibilities.

• The *Staff* has the strength of a thousand trees. It is impervious to damage. But Kashyra believes that somewhere exists a flame strong enough to burn her to ash and free her spirit. Perhaps it is the breath of a dragon king. Perhaps the explosion that accompanies the death and rebirth of a phoenix. Kashyra is always interested in stories of magical flame and constantly urges her bearer to find new sources of fire.

• The *Darkwood Heart* is formed from the remnants of Kashyra's own tree. It is being severed from nature that has driven the dryad mad. But perhaps there is a force that could restore that bond — some power that could transform the *Staff* into a tree once more, forming the core of what could spread out to become the new Darkwood. This would take the power of an artifact or even a god: waters of pure life, or the blessing of a powerful nature deity. But it may be possible to restore Kashyra to the life she once had instead of destroying her. Such an action would free the linked character from the bond, allowing him to take an animal companion again; however, at the DM's discretion the dryad might still have a connection to her former companion, allowing her to send him telepathic messages in times of trouble.

• At the DM's discretion, a character that makes an active effort to fight the spirit's anguish may be able to redeem Kashyra without losing the *Staff*. This should require considerable long-term effort, talking with the *Staff* and finding ways to prove to her that there is still hope and that she should fight for life instead of destroying it. If Kashyra is redeemed, she is restored to her role as a weapon against aberrations. This causes her to lose the following abilities and penalties: Bearer of Blight, Dark Bond, Dryad's Tears, Kashyra's Anger, Inner Turmoil, and Soul Bond. Furthermore, Darkwood Defense would only apply to attacks made by aberrations.

Inanimate Companion

To gain access to the full powers of the *Darkwood Heart*, a character must form a deep spiritual bond with the *Staff*. Only an individual with a strong connection to the natural world can forge such a connection. Over time, the character gains access to a wide range of powers… but Kashyra's deep despair slowly takes a toll on his soul.

Any character with the capability to bond with an animal companion can choose to forsake this bond and form a connection with the *Darkwood Heart*. This allows him to unlock powers based on his level, as shown on the table above. It takes time to form the initial bond, and the power increases by one effective level each day: so if a 15th level druid connects to the *Staff*, he begins with the powers listed for 1st level. Two days later he reaches the 3rd-level tier. And after fifteen days have passed, he has access to the full suite of abilities available at his level.

Unlike an animal companion, both rangers and druids have equal access to the powers of the *Darkwood Heart*. As long as a class has the ability to possess an animal companion, its full levels count towards forming the bond.

Once a character forms a connection to the *Darkwood Heart*, he cannot simply break it and choose to return to an animal companion: the lonely dryad never releases a soulmate. The only way to break the connection is through the destruction of the *Staff* or the death of the character. Even if the character is later restored to life, the connection is broken; if he wants to keep the *Staff* he must form the connection anew.

Divinity Sphere

The Eternal Prison of Dauzenth
By Michael Gill

The Tale of the Divinity Sphere

One of the first recorded clerics, who lived in a time when even that ancient race was young, was a priest by the name of Raiash. Raiash served the gods as a loyal worshipper, marveling at their miraculous workings even as he studied their teachings. Yet in his heart, Raiash grew jealous of his patrons. Why should they have such power when he was forced to grovel before them for the merest fraction of their divinity?

Raiash determined to achieve his own divinity. He studied the workings of the outer planes, researching and developing methods of channeling their otherworldly energies. After all, if the beings who ruled those planes could grant such miraculous abilities to their priests, how much potential power could there be for a mortal who learned to draw on them directly?

For decades, Raiash experimented with these energies. He learned to call forth beings dwelling in the outer planes, developing conjuring magics previously unseen, or at least unrecorded. While his initial successes summoned forth only minor celestial creatures, Raiash eventually contacted an intelligence, dwelling in what he failed to recognize as Hell itself. Ignorant of his danger, Raiash believed the being as it promised him power and respect, his every wish fulfilled.

Calling upon his knowledge of planar magics and the power of his gods for the last time, Raiash opened a great portal, and Dauzenth, Tempter of Mortals, entered the world. While Raiash's ultimate fate is unknown, the great devil sowed deceit and treachery among the elves for generations, assembling a legion of infernal followers and corrupt wizards. It is said that, like the elven gods themselves, the Tempter of Mortals possessed the power to grant a portion of his divine magic to his followers. Dauzenth's blandishments and the zealousness of his cult eventually drove the elven empire to civil war. The archmages and the faithful priests of the gods turned aside the powerful gifts granted by Dauzenth and the magic of his cultists, but they could not utterly destroy the fiend. The three greatest elven archmages attacked Dauzenth, distracting him with potent magics as they worked to bind his spirit.

In the end, little remained besides battle-scorched plains and the large gem that would come to be known as the *Divinity Sphere*. No trace remained of the elven wizards or the devil Dauzenth.

Throughout the ages, as the elven race has grown old and younger beings have risen to dominance of the world,

Researching the Divinity Sphere

The history the *Divinity Sphere* is closely intertwined with that of the elves. It has existed for thousands of years, and thus it is well known and studied by their sages and loremasters. Elven sages or those who have studied elven lore could research the *Sphere* with a Knowledge (arcana) or a Knowledge (history) check. Bardic Knowledge may also reveal legends about the *Divinity Sphere* or the many conflicts it has inspired.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Divinity Sphere* is an elven artifact said to hold the power of a god.
20	The *Sphere* grants its possessor the power of god for a limited time. Its holder is said to be all but invulnerable, but the *Divinity Sphere* only functions once for any one person.
25	The *Divinity Sphere* is closely linked to Dauzenth, a former Duke of Hell, and it is said to contain his essence and power. The wielder of the artifact can raise the dead, heal the sick, and perform other miracles.
30+	The power of the *Divinity Sphere* is incredibly addictive, and drawing upon the power of Dauzenth, any who see the *Sphere* come to desire it. While its power lasts only for a single week, the effect upon its wielder is permanent.

Legends that surround the *Divinity Sphere* usually wax poetic on the power of the artifact, often indicating that it really does make one a god, or that its power is permanent. While the legends relay the unfortunately side effects of the artifact, they are often told in fashion that make the tale more interesting than truthful, indicating that the effect can be overcome with a strong force of will. Such is of course impossible, for no mortal's force of will can match that of an arch-devil.

the foul legacy of Dauzenth has remained in the form of the *Divinity Sphere*. While the possessor of the sphere possesses incredible powers, the rush of power is addictive, and few mortals would willingly relinquish the might of a deity. Over the years, the *Divinity Sphere* has been the focus of countless wars, the object of desire of bloodthirsty warlords, and the doom of thousands of souls.

Studying the Divinity Sphere

The *Divinity Sphere* is a large crystal of a deep blue hue. Although it looks much like a star sapphire, the artifact is much harder, able to scratch even diamond. The inside of the crystal appears almost molten, and close observation reveals a faintly luminous substance swirling slowly throughout the gem. The artifact feels almost like a living thing, pulsing with power and warm with life. Anyone who sees the gem begins to desire it, with the level of desire increasing from a faint craving to an overpowering urge with continued exposure. The artifact possesses an aura of power and temptation that feels almost palpable to its observers.

The artifact displays an incredibly powerful aura if viewed with *detect magic*, often enough to stun the viewer. Divination spells cast upon the *Divinity Sphere* relay only information about the caster herself.

Powers of the Divinity Sphere

The *Divinity Sphere* grants its possessor the ability to produce powerful divine magic as well as nearly invulnerability, but only for limited time.

Using the Divinity Sphere

Activation of the *Divinity Sphere* is an act of negotiated surrender. The possessor of the artifact feels the overpowering will and presence of the slumbering entity inside. He must awaken that essence and allow it to infuse his body, while at the same time, retaining enough of himself to control his actions and not become a slave to the artifact. The actual activation of the *Divinity Sphere* requires a full hour of intense meditation with the artifact. When the artifact becomes active, the wielder instantly becomes aware of the full capabilities of the *Divinity Sphere*, and can choose to make use of any of its activated abilities.

Any given character may only activate the *Sphere* once.

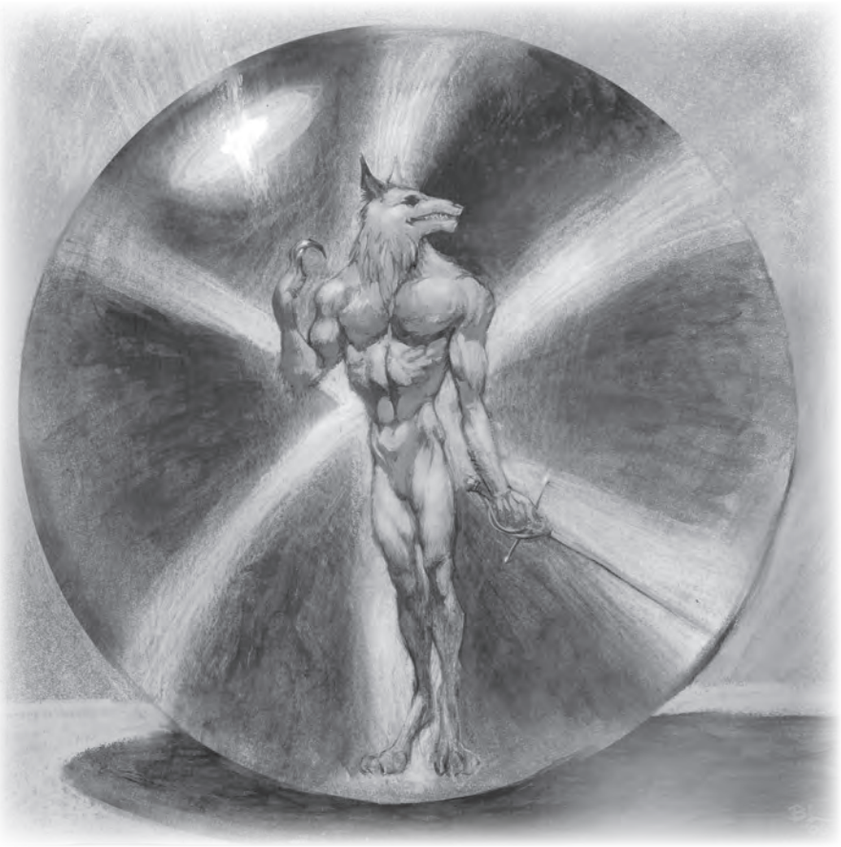
Constant Powers

While the *Divinity Sphere* is active and on the person of the wielder, he gains the benefits of minor divine status. This grants the wielder a +20 bonus to his base movement rate, a deflection bonus to AC equal to his Charisma bonus, and immunity to polymorphing, petrification, energy drain, ability damage and mind-affecting effects. He gains damage reduction 20/epic, spell resistance 32, and fire resistance of 20. During this time, the possessor of the *Sphere* does not age, nor does he need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

Removing the *Sphere* from the character's possession for more than 1d4 minutes causes it to become inactive.

Activated Powers

The wielder of the *Divinity Sphere* can use the following abilities as a standard action at will: *antimagic field*, *break enchantment*, *daylight*, *fire storm* (save DC 29) , *greater command* (save DC 26), *greater dispel magic*, *greater restoration*, *heal*, *regenerate*, *remove disease*, *remove paralysis*, *resurrection*, *righteous might*, *slay living* (save DC 26), *symbol of pain* (save DC 26), *symbol of weakness* (save DC 28), and *true seeing*. All spells are cast as if by a 20th-level caster. None of these abilities require the wielder to spend XP.



Consequences

Any who view the *Divinity Sphere* must make a DC 10 Will save the first time they see it. On each subsequent day they view the artifact, they must save again, with a cumulative +1 increase to difficulty. (That is, DC 11 on the second day, DC 12 on the third, and so forth.) Upon a failed save, the viewer comes to greatly desire the artifact, though he is not forced to act outside his normal morality and alignment restrictions to acquire it. A good individual might, for example, try to convince the holder of the artifact that he should have it for some noble purpose or that it will be safe if left with him, but he probably won't attack its holder and steal it. This compulsion is permanent, though it may be removed with a successful *remove curse* spell.

The feeling of power produced by wielding the active *Divinity Sphere* is overwhelming and euphoric. However, the very nature of the *Divinity Sphere* absorbs some vital spark from the former wielder of the artifact. After one week of use, the *Divinity Sphere* causes immediate loss of two levels. For each additional week of use, the wielder loses an additional level, and he is irrevocably destroyed once his last level is lost.

Any single individual can only activate the *Sphere* once. Should he willingly deactivate it (requiring a Will save equal in DC to 15 + the number of weeks he's used it), or should the bond between them break due to separation, the wielder loses all benefits and bonuses, and may never again activate the *Sphere*.

A former wielder is left with a hollow despair. Desperate for some remnant of his divine nature, the wielder comes to obsess over the artifact. The victim becomes relentless in his search for the *Divinity Sphere*, seeing any who would take it as dire enemies. His obsession with the *Divinity Sphere* may become so powerful that it undermines the character's morality and motivations. He may come to lie, steal, or even murder to regain the artifact. Some former wielders of the artifact become so deranged by their loss that they come to worship the *Divinity Sphere*, performing all manner of blasphemous acts in its name as they struggle to reawaken its power. The exact reaction is unique to each individual affected by the *Divinity Sphere*, but it should be clear that the artifact (or perhaps the concept of achieving divinity in general) becomes the focus of that character's life and defines his goals. There is no known way to remove this obsession, though the destruction of the artifact might allow the character to recover.

In mechanical terms, the character must attempt a Will save 1d6 days after losing the artifact's power (DC 15 + the number of weeks the character used the artifact). If he fails, he can do nothing the following day but seek out and attempt to regain the *Sphere* if he does not possess it; or obsess over the artifact and attempt to regain its power if he does. The character stops at nothing, including alignment violations, to accomplish his goals. The character may make a new Will save every day, to shake off the obsession. Even if he succeeds, however, he is only free of the obsession for 1d6 days, at which point he must save again. This continues — every day on failed saves, every 1d6 days on successful ones — until the artifact is destroyed.

Reactive Traits

The *Divinity Sphere* is immune to the effects of most magic and impossible to harm through physical means. Divination spells cast upon the artifact reveal information about the caster of the spell only. Spells which transmute or harm the artifact fade away without effect. However, the *Divinity Sphere* may be *teleported*, carried through *gates* or *plane shifted* as normal.

Using the Divinity Sphere in a Campaign

The *Divinity Sphere* is an extremely powerful artifact that should not be introduced lightly into a campaign. It may well become the focus of a campaign, either due to a PC's growing obsession with wielding its power, or as an object that must be destroyed to restore balance to the world. The artifact is suitable for introduction into mid- to high level campaigns. While the DM may allow the artifact to come into the possession of the party, it should be noted that the *Divinity Sphere* will cause dissension among the characters as each will grow to desire it. Furthermore, if any character should activate the artifact, it drastically alters the purpose and playability of that character after the artifact's effects lapse. However, the *Divinity Sphere* serves as an excellent focus for an evil cult or a power-hungry enemy of the PCs, and for characters who enjoy a roleplaying challenge, the post-artifact obsession might prove enjoyable for a short while, until the other PCs can find some way to retrieve and possibly destroy the *Sphere*.

Adventure Seeds

The Rise and Fall of a God

A just and noble king appears before his people, revealing that the gods have newly favored his reign and their kingdom. Holding aloft the *Divinity Sphere*, he proclaims that by their faith in him and the blessing of the gods, he is now able to perform holy miracles. He raises the dead, rains fire upon the enemies of the kingdom, and heals the sick. All the while, all who view the artifact grow to desire it, and the less scrupulous of the king's followers begin to plot against him. Soon, of course, the king's power fades and he lapses into a deep despair as his kingdom falls apart around him, torn by division and lust for power. When

the stone disappears one day, the PCs are hired to find the artifact and return it as quickly as possible.

The PCs must first track down the artifact, a feat that may be made easier if the thief chooses to activate the *Divinity Sphere*. An enemy with such immense power is unlikely to be inactive for long, and they may even take action against the kingdom directly or pursue some other agenda. The question remains, how do the PCs go about taking the artifact from such a deadly foe? Who knows how much damage the thief could wreck if they choose to wait until the effect fades. Even after they retrieve the artifact, will the PCs be able to resist the temptation of using it? Would they willingly give the *Divinity Sphere* to the king? While the PCs may initially be under the impression that restoring the artifact will allow the kingdom to recover, it merely causes further problems. Enemies remain who have seen the *Divinity Sphere* and merely await an opportunity to take it. How do the PCs address the issue of the king's melancholy? Can they prevent the kingdom from falling apart when it becomes obvious the king can no longer use the *Sphere*?

The Road to Hell...

A terrible plague has killed countless innocents and exceeded even the healing capabilities of the clergy. As the sickness rages out of control, a singular priestess of the goddess of healing approaches the PCs. She describes a wondrous artifact called the *Divinity Sphere*, capable of raising the dead and healing the sick, and she calls upon the PCs to retrieve the artifact. She reveals old manuscripts that say the *Sphere* is held by a powerful dragon in a cave in the not too distant foothills.

If the PCs should track down the dragon, they find its cave dominated by the *Divinity Sphere* set atop an enormous alter, guarded by a corrupted and desperate-seeming copper dragon. The dragon sees their presence as an attempt to steal its treasure, and attacks to kill. After the PCs dispatch it, they are faced with the dilemma of returning the artifact or keeping the tempting *Divinity Sphere* for themselves. Will they be able to give the artifact over to the priestess? If they choose to use the artifact themselves, how do they deal with its inevitable consequences? What of the thousands of people exposed to the *Divinity Sphere* as they go about healing the sick populace? The PCs may be forced to destroy the artifact, if they can bear to do so, to prevent it from falling into the hands of those who would use it less scrupulously.

The Cult of Divinity

A powerful enemy of the PCs has discovered the *Divinity Sphere* and found a way to use it without endangering himself. The foe is a cult leader, or someone else with a significant number of followers. He gives the *Divinity Sphere* to a follower, allowing his minion to activate and use it to achieve his aims for a few weeks, until the artifact proves fatal. His followers appear in public, demonstrating the miraculous power of the *Divinity Sphere* and encouraging those interested to join the cult. Those attracted by the power of the artifact are eventually given a chance to wield it, but only after the cult leader uses powerful magic and indoctrination techniques to bend them to his will. The PCs may become involved when hired by a rival faith concerned about the growth of this cult. Alternately, they may witness the cultists' display in the street and grow to desire the *Divinity Sphere*.

To get close to the artifact and the cult leader, the PCs may have to infiltrate the cult, for he never appears in public. They soon learn that the *Sphere* is always active and in the hands of one of the cultists, who exposes it to the entire cult once each day. Can the PCs stick to their aims after being continually exposed to the corruptive power of the *Sphere*? How will the PCs go about taking the artifact? Will they discover the true nature of the cult? Even after they acquire the *Divinity Sphere*, what will they do with it?

Destroying the Divinity Sphere

The *Divinity Sphere* is a corruptive artifact that has destroyed the lives and doomed the souls of countless mortals. Yet as artifacts go, it is relatively easy to destroy. There may be other methods to destroy the artifact than those listed, but any who would destroy it must deal with the consequences of the released diabolic energy the *Sphere* contains.

- The *Divinity Sphere* may be crushed under the heel of a true deity.
- A *miracle* or *wish* spell cast on the artifact by one who has currently activated it will destroy the *Divinity Sphere*.
- If the *Divinity Sphere* is taken to Dauzenth's home in the Hells, the *Sphere* will shatter.

If the *Divinity Sphere* is destroyed, the devil Dauzenth immediately manifests, freed from his long imprisonment within the artifact.

New Monster

Imprisoned within the *Divinity Sphere* for millennia, the devil Dauzenth has bided his time in a quiescent slumber, unable to free himself from the terrible bindings placed upon him by a trio of elven archmages. Yet even as he slumbers, his essence reaches out to ensnare the souls of those unable to resist the allure of the *Divinity Sphere*. If the artifact is ever broken, he emerges again, renewed and determined to seek vengeance upon the elven race, to spread his corruption throughout the realms of mortals, and to regain what he sees as his rightful place among the Dukes of Hell.

Dauzenth, Tempter of Mortals

Huge Outsider (Devil, Evil, Extraplanar, Lawful)

Hit Dice:	33d8+297 (445 hp)
Initiative:	+12
Speed:	50 ft. (10 squares)
Armor Class:	40 (–2 size, +8 Dex, +18 natural, +6 insight), touch 22, flat-footed 32
Base Attack/Grapple:	+33/+53
Attack:	*Artifice* (huge *+5 axiomatic unholy rapier*) +46 melee (3d6+8/15–20 plus 2d6 vs. chaotic or good foes) or claw +40 melee (2d8+9)
Full Attack:	*Artifice* (huge *+5 axiomatic unholy rapier*) +46/+41/+36/+31 melee (3d6+8/15–20 plus 2d6 vs. chaotic or good foes) and claw +35 melee (2d8+4) and bite +35 melee (1d8+4)
Space/Reach:	15 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks:	Improved grab, spell-like abilities, *summon devil*
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 15/epic and good, darkvision 60 ft. immunity to fire and poison, resistance to acid 10 and cold 10, regeneration 6, see in darkness, spell resistance 43, telepathy 100 ft., true seeing
Saves:	Fort +27, Ref +26, Will +25
Abilities:	Str 28, Dex 26, Con 28, Int 24, Wis 24, Cha 32
Skills:	Bluff +49, Concentration +48, Diplomacy +53, Disguise +47(+49 acting), Intimidate +51, Knowledge (arcana) +43, Knowledge (history) +43, Knowledge (religion) +43, Knowledge (the planes) +43, Listen +51, Move Silently +44, Search +43, Sense Motive +43, Spellcraft +47, Spot +51, Survival +7 (+9 on other planes or following tracks)
Feats:	Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability *(unholy blight)*, Weapon Focus (rapier)
Environment:	Hell
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	24
Treasure:	Quadruple standard in Hell; none after freed from *Sphere*
Alignment:	Always lawful evil
Advancement:	—
Level Adjustment:	—

The giant towers over you, looking down from above. The black skin of his heavily muscled form seems almost to absorb the ambient light. His head is that of a sleek canine, some unholy crossbreed of a jackal and a wolf. In his left hand he carries a rapier, its blade etched with faces distended in both pleasure and pain. His right hand ends in a twisted claw, its taloned fingers fused together. Its gleaming gaze seems to penetrate your very soul, stripping away all self-deception.

Dauzenth, a former duke of Hell who lost his throne to rivals in eons past, exists to ruin mortals, to steal their lives and souls through temptation. The archfiend offers his victims immense power, whether it be political, magical, or simple brute force, but always leaves his victims broken and soulless, corrupted by the temptation of infinite power. Dauzenth takes pleasure in twisting the wishes he grants mortals, and in degrading and debauching mortal civilizations by gradually undermining their leaders. He especially hates elves, taking every opportunity to tempt and corrupt them.

Dauzenth speaks Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, and Undercommon.

Combat

Dauzenth prefers to rely on his ability to charm and outthink his foes, but he does not hesitate to enter melee with *Artifice* and claw. He attempts to soften his opponents first, via magics such as *power word stun* and *confusion*. Dauzenth's natural weapons, as well as any weapons he wields, are treated as evil, lawful and magic for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Dauzenth must hit a Medium or smaller opponent with his claw. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Regeneration (Ex): Dauzenth takes normal damage from holy and blessed magic weapons.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will — *charm monster* (DC 25), *daylight*, *detect chaos*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *greater command* (DC 26), *mirror image*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *order's wrath* (DC 25), *power word stun*, *slay living* (DC 26), *symbol of pain* (DC 26), *symbol of weakness* (DC 28), *unholy blight* (DC 25); 1/day — *fire storm* (DC 29), *wish*. Caster level 20th; save DCs are Charisma-based.

Dauzenth cannot use his *wish* ability to grant his own desires, but instead uses it to grant the requests of mortals. Unless the *wish* is used to create pain or corrupt others, Dauzenth demands either terrible evil acts or great sacrifice as compensation.

***Summon Devil* (Sp):** Three times per day, Dauzenth can automatically summon 5 barbazu or hamatulas. Alternatively, he can attempt to summon 1 pit fiend with a 75% chance of success.

True Seeing (Su): Dauzenth continually uses *true seeing* as the spell (caster level 24th).

Skills: Dauzenth has a +8 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks.

Earth Seed

The Primal Stone, Materia Essentia
By Michael Gill

The Tale of the Earth Seed

It is said that in the void that existed before creation there was infinite possibility. Every idea, form, and potential that would come to exist in creation had its origin here, and when the creator gods began to forge reality, they isolated certain elements of this chaos while embracing others. Those ideas that were excluded became mad and alien entities beyond the bounds of reality, constantly searching for a weakness in its barriers that they can enter and restore equilibrium. (See the *Black Crystal Spiral*. Some legends also maintain that it was out of this chaos from which came the Ur-Titans, and that *they* are the "creator gods" to which this myth refers; see *Ashrune*.)

It could be said that these gods did not truly create, but instead amplified and expounded upon the facets of chaos and potentials in the void they found most conducive to reality. The most important of these concepts were those that have come to be known as the four elements, the building blocks of all reality. In all the void, there was only one true representation of solid matter — of earth — a small perfectly spherical stone known as the *Earth Seed*. As the gods created worlds, and the notion of earth itself, the *Earth Seed* became lodged deep within the first world, forever anchoring the solidity of reality against the unknowable horrors of the void.

For untold eons the *Earth Seed* remained within the depths of the world until, ironically, it was freed by minions of those who dwell beyond reality just over a century ago. Mad visions from beyond lead Aas-Sesq-a, the leader of an aboleth cult known as the Hollow Deep, to seek the artifact. The aboleth seer used the *Earth Seed* to craft a remarkable city of flowing stone and shallow pools far underground, all the while seeking a way to destroy the stone in the name of the cult's alien god. For decades the aboleth researched the artifact, and for decades they learned little.

About ten years ago, however, the Hollow Deep undertook an expedition to the mountaintop retreat of the renowned archmage Belisara, hoping to expose the *Earth Seed* to the wizard's legendary *sphere of annihilation*. However, the expedition met with some unknown disaster. It is said that both the expedition and Belisara vanished, that her tower remains trapped and magically sealed as a monument to her power and a prison for her *sphere of annihilation*, and that the *Earth Seed* was lost.

Studying the Earth Seed

The *Earth Seed* is a perfectly spherical stone exactly nine inches in diameter. The rock appears much like marble, of varying colors and patterns. It does not change appearance while one is watching, but seemingly shifts its color and pattern as soon as it is unobserved. The artifact is much heavier than it first appears and it always feels about room temperature. The *Earth Seed* is absolutely impossible to dent, scratch, or deform in any way. After holding it for a while, the wielder begins to feel a faint numbness in her limbs. This feeling decreases when the artifact is released, but it never entirely vanishes, and over time the effect grows as the *Earth Seed*'s side effects begin to take root.

As a natural product of the void beyond creation and an essential aspect of the world, the *Earth Seed* does not detect as magical. Other divinatory magic works normally upon the artifact.

Powers of the Earth Seed

The *Earth Seed* grants remarkable control over the element of earth within a limited area. The wielder may create earthquakes, shape the earth into wondrous and even impossible formations, even change the very substance and form of the earth. In fact, the *Earth Seed* alters the very nature of the wielder, transforming him into a being of living stone.

Using the Earth Seed

The activation of the *Earth Seed* is a straightforward act of will. The wielder must hold the stone aloft and concentrate on becoming one with the earth, gradually feeling a sense of stillness and solidity seeping through him. Once attuned in this manner, the user can instinctively feel the limits of the artifact's power and may choose to invoke any of its effects. The entire process of activation requires one full minute of concentration, after which any power may be activated as a full-round action. The *Seed* returns to its inactive state the instant it leaves its wielder's hand, or 1d4 hours after the wielder last used one of its activated powers, whichever comes first.

Constant Powers

After the wielder activates the *Earth Seed*, he gains all the benefits of the living stone template (described

Researching the Earth Seed

As an artifact, the *Earth Seed* has remained isolated and unknown for most of history, so while few have seen or heard of the artifact, it is possible that one with enough Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) could surmise its existence. Alternately, a sage with Knowledge (dungeoneering) might know a great deal about the Hollow Deep and their precipitous rise to power. Finally, any character with significant Knowledge (arcana) might know of the famous archmage Belisara and her recent disappearance.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	The Hollow Deep cult of aboleth is said to possess a powerful relic that allows them to reshape the very earth.
25	The gods are said to have created the first elements of the multiverse with, among other things, an artifact known as the *Earth Seed*. If it truly exists, the *Earth Seed* would allow remarkable control over the element of earth.
35	The Hollow Deep possesses the *Earth Seed* and they have been seeking a method to destroy it for decades. It is said that the artifact predates creation. The artifact allows one to create or move earth, create earthquakes, and greatly reshape the local terrain within a limited area.
40	The Hollow Deep recently lost the *Earth Seed* while confronting the Archmage Belisara. Over time the essence of earth embodied by the *Earth Seed* corrupts its owner, transforming them to stone. The artifact is integral to the very nature of reality, and its destruction may have dire circumstances for the universe.

The *Earth Seed* is a very obscure artifact, and it is likely that those who have heard of it believe it to be only a minor magic item that controls earth such as a *ring of elemental command (earth)*. There is also very little recorded about the artifact's negative effects on its wielder, so it is unlikely any character would know of its petrification effect.

below). Furthermore, the holder of an active *Earth Seed* is immune to *disintegrate* and to all polymorphing or shapechanging effects except *flesh to stone*.

Activated Powers

The owner of the *Earth Seed* may call upon any of the following powers after it had been activated, one per round: *disintegrate* (only objects or creatures made of stone or earth, DC 24), *earthquake*, *fabricate* (stone, earth, or metal only), *flesh to stone* (DC 23), *make whole* (stone or metal only), *magic stone*, *meld into stone*, *move earth*, *repel metal or stone*, *statue*, *soften earth and stone*, *spike stones* (DC 21), *stone shape*, *stoneskin*, *transmute mud to rock* (DC 22), *transmute rock to mud* (DC 22), and *wall of stone*. Each power may be activated any number of times per day, but the range of each power is limited to 100 feet or the normal range of the spell, whichever is shorter. The *Earth Seed* functions as a 20th-level caster.

Consequences

Use of the *Earth Seed* gradually attunes its wielder to the element of earth, turning him slowly, but inevitably, into stone. As soon as the *Seed* returns to an inactive state, the wielder (or former wielder) absorbs a portion of the artifact's essence. Parts of the wielder are transmuted to stone, giving him a slightly petrified appearance, and causing 1 point of Dexterity drain. This drain cannot be repaired or regained by any known means. Once the wielder loses 10 points of Dexterity or his Dexterity falls to 0, whichever occurs first, he has become completely petrified, a statue of solid stone. As with the Dexterity drain, no known method exists of restoring someone turned to stone in this manner. Even a *wish* or *miracle* does not suffice, though standard means of reversing petrification might function after the destruction of the artifact.

Reactive Traits

The *Earth Seed* cannot be damaged or destroyed by magic. Most spells simply fail to affect the artifact in any way. Divinations other than *detect magic* or *arcane sight* function normally on the artifact, revealing some of its history and properties. Magic affects the wielder of the artifact normally, except as noted above.

Using the Earth Seed in a Campaign

The *Earth Seed* may be introduced to a campaign for a multitude of purposes, though it need not be used as the focus of a campaign. The artifact can be introduced as a method to destroy the *Black Crystal Spiral*, perhaps focusing on acquiring the stone from a cult or divining its location. As another option, the *Earth Seed* could be held by a dangerous enemy, granting them even more power to harass the characters or their allies. The artifact is powerful, but not so much so that it will utterly unbalance a mid- to high level party. The DM should keep in mind, however, that long term use of the artifact weakens or destroys characters, as they are turned bit by bit to stone.

Adventure Seeds

The Lost Archmage

Allies of the Archmage Belisara have lost contact with the wizard and hire the party to seek her out. They must travel to her tower, now a trap-filled maze crawling with the minions of the Hollow Deep. The PCs may find clues about the disappearance of the wizard and the artifact she was working on. At the tower's base, locked deep below the earth, the party eventually finds the remains of Belisara, a being more stone than flesh that barely remembers her former state. Whether they seek to acquire the *Earth Seed* or help heal the archmage, they must certainly deal with a hostile and powerful wizard. The party may end up with the *Earth Seed*, but the Hollow Deep learns of them and continues to seek the artifact.



Into the Depths

Cultists of the Hollow Deep have sent expeditions to the surface to seek their lost artifact. The PCs may come into conflict with a band of the aboleth's servants, eventually learning of their goal. Once the PCs hear about this powerful artifact and the debased cult that seeks it, they may seek the artifact out themselves or perhaps confront the cult. Divinations reveal that another band of the Hollow Deep has met with more success, and even now the *Earth Seed* is on its way to the cavern that houses the aboleth cult.

If the party chooses to seek out the *Earth Seed*, the quest involves a harrowing chase underground to confront the Hollow Deep expedition before they reach their underground city. If the PCs actually reach the city, they see that the area is shattered and ruined. Aboleths and their minions flee the area, fighting for control as horrible earthquakes wrack the remnants of the wondrous temples. Aas-Sesq-a has turned against the others, now that the artifact is in its possession, seeing itself as a nascent god. The PCs may have to confront the cult expedition, or even Aas-Sesq-a itself, in order to steal away with the artifact.

The Garden of Stone

A powerful medusa priestess of the god of earth discovered the *Earth Seed* in her wanderings, led to its resting place within the mountains by visions from her deity. Now she is convinced that her god could only have intended the artifact to be put to use to remake the world in his honor. The medusa seeks to transform all life into an ever-growing rock garden, increasing her collection of life-like statues one victim at a time. The power of the artifact makes her a real threat to local settlements, and after the loss of a few villages, the PCs are hired to investigate. They must travel through a strange landscape with almost impossible-seeming stone formations, littered with the petrified remains of countless villagers. Attracted to the area by the medusa and her deity, its is likely creatures of earth — such as earth elementals, earth mephits, xorn, and even stone giants — may present a threat to the party. The medusa certainly does not wish to give up her prize. Even if they manage to kill the medusa, what will the party do with the artifact, and how will they manage to help its many victims?

Destroying the Earth Seed

Very few parties concerned with the balance and well-being of the cosmos would willingly destroy the *Earth Seed*, as it serves as a pillar of reality. Still, the PCs may choose to destroy the artifact to keep it out of the hands of a dangerous enemy, destroy another artifact, or to restore a companion petrified by the *Seed*.

• If the *Earth Seed* is brought to the very center of the Elemental Plane of Earth, it spawns a new Material Plane world. While this does not truly destroy the *Earth Seed*, it is almost impossible to reach, encased in the heart of a separate world.

• The *Earth Seed* must be exposed to pure elemental Fire, Water, and Air for a period of 33 consecutive years each.

• If the *Black Crystal Spiral* is brought into contact with the *Earth Seed*, both artifacts are annihilated in a blast that deals 40d6 damage (DC 25 Reflex for half) in a radius of 100 yards.

New Template

The element of earth, embodied in the *Earth Seed*, saturates the body and soul of its wielder, transforming her from a creature of flesh to one of living stone. This powerful state lasts as long as the wielder continues to hold the activated *Earth Seed*.

Sample Living Stone Creature

This example uses a 13th-level wizard aboleth as the base creature.

Aas-Sesq-a, Male Living Stone Aboleth, Wizard 13

Huge Aberration (Aquatic, Earth)

Hit Dice:	8d8+72 plus 13d4+117 (257 hp)
Initiative:	+5
Speed:	10 ft. (2 squares), burrow 60 ft., swim 60 ft.
Armor Class:	24 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +15 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 23
Base Attack/Grapple:	+12/+31
Attack:	Tentacle +21 melee (1d6+11 plus slime)
Full Attack:	4 tentacles +21 melee (1d6+11 plus slime)
Space/Reach:	15 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Enslave, petrification, psionics, slime, spells
Special Qualities:	Aquatic subtype, darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 10/adamantine, mucus cloud, summon familiar
Saves:	Fort +18, Ref +9, Will +16
Abilities:	Str 32, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 10
Skills:	Concentration +27, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (nature) +15, Listen +23, Search +13, Spellcraft +21, Spot +13, Swim +29
Feats:	Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (transmutation), Spell Penetration
Environment:	Underground
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	22
Treasure:	Triple standard
Alignment:	Lawful Evil
Level Adjustment:	+4

Swimming through the solid stone of the cavern floor is a stony mass of writhing tentacles attached to a primeval fish, 20 feet in length. It bears three eyes, the color of rust and garnets and protected by bony ridges, set in a vertical row. With a shriek like talons grinding on slate, the beast's many tentacles begin to weave dire magics.

Spells: Aas-Sesq-a casts spells as a wizard. The save DCs are Intelligence-based.

Typical wizard spells known (4/5/5/5/4/3/2/1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0 — *daze, detect magic (2), resistance*; 1st — *charm person, color spray, mage armor, magic missile (2)*; 2nd — *blur, bull's strength, scorching ray (2), see invisibility*; 3rd — *dispel magic, displacement, fireball, lightning bolt, slow*; 4th — *fire shield, greater invisibility, phantasmal killer, scrying*; 5th — *cone of cold*, empowered *lightning bolt*, *wall of force*; 6th — *chain lightning, control water, Otluke's freezing sphere*.

Creating a Living Stone Creature

"Living stone" is an acquired template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature with an Intelligence of 5 or higher, hereafter referred to as the base creature. A living stone creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature gains the Earth subtype. Size is unchanged.

Speed: A living stone creature gains the ability to swim through the earth, gaining a burrow speed at its land or swim speed, whichever is greater.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +8.

Special Attacks: A living stone creature retains all the base attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special abilities.

Petrification (Su): Anyone struck by the creature's physical attacks must succeed on a Fortitude save or be turned to stone. A creature who succeeds is immune to this ability for 24 hours. The save DC for this ability is equal to 10 + 1/2 the creature's HD + its Constitution modifier.

Special Qualities: A living stone creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

- Darkvision out to 60 ft.
- Immunity to disease and poison.
- Damage reduction 10/adamantine.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex –4, Con +4, Int –4, Cha –4.

Challenge Rating: +2.

Alignment: Often lawful evil.

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature +4.

Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet

The Dark Bones, the Corpse of Mol-Tet
By C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of the Ebony Skeleton of Mol–Tet

Centuries ago, the powerful necromancer Mol-Tet sought to conquer the known world with a vast army of undead warriors. His campaign lasted several years, and was quite successful until he met a crushing defeat and found his armies spread too thin. Pulling back just enough to hold off the emboldened armies of the living, Mol-Tet went about constructing his second and final major artifact, the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*. (See the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* for more on Mol-Tet's history and details of his first artifact.) Carved from the finest ebony and imbued with his most powerful magics, Mol-Tet crafted the *Skeleton* in hopes of creating a mobile unit capable of raising its own army, without putting a drain upon his own spellcasting. The great necromancer was *mostly* successful.

The *Ebony Skeleton* animated just as designed and instantly created a massive army under Mol-Tet's command. Immediately, he set out to annihilate the approaching enemy and commanded his new horde of the dead to their location. The battle was furious, and Mol-Tet himself exhausted his spell selection in the course of an hour. Content that his army would triumph, he retreated safely behind his lines to rest and oversee the battle from the rear. Unfortunately for Mol-Tet, the control over the new army granted by the *Ebony Skeleton* proved surprisingly short-lived. Once it lapsed, a horde of skeletons under the direction of the artifact retreated from battle and slew the weakened necromancer where he stood.

Mol-Tet's legacy, however, did not die with him. The army continued, killing anything and everything that crossed its path. Like a force of nature it swept across the land, animating everything it killed. It wasn't until a lone paladin named Guirren Highground, bearer of the *Bastard of Exalted Heroism*, strode headlong into the horde, shattering every skeleton that came his way and sundering *The Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* into its 206 individual pieces. Upon the destruction of the threat, Guirren Highground dropped dead on the spot and became one of the most honored heroes in history. Some legends have him actually killing Mol-Tet himself, though this is patently untrue.

Upon Highground's death, the remaining human armies swept in and scattered each of the bones of the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*, sending 206 men to ride out 206 miles in 206 different directions of the compass to bury, sink or otherwise hide the bones. Many of the bones have

Researching the Ebony Skeleton of Mol–Tet

While legends of the *Ebony Skeleton* freely pepper the work of many a bard, little is commonly known about the artifact's true powers. Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (religion) are the only means of acquiring any real information on the topic.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* is one of the great artifacts used by ol-Tet in his war against the living. Single pieces of the *Skeleton* are considered good luck by necromancers.
20	When assembled, the *Ebony Skeleton* grants the wielder an unending army of undead servants.
25	Single pieces of the *Ebony Skeleton* can be worn to enhance necromantic spells, while those who replace their own bones with them gain fantastic powers normally only wielded by the undead.
35+	When fully assembled, the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* indeed raises an army of the dead under the wielder's control, but that army slew Mol-Tet himself. One must tread carefully on the path towards assembling the *Skeleton*.

Some scholars maintain that the entirety of the skeleton may replace the bones in one's own body, granting all the vast powers of Mol-Tet. Others claim that the bones are the magically altered skeleton of Mol-Tet himself.

The most commonly believed misconception, however, one common to practically every tale of the artifact, is that it grants total and complete control of the undead horde it creates.

since been discovered, moved or otherwise recovered, but no one has yet managed to assemble all 206 pieces in one location.

Studying the Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet

The *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* consists of 206 intricately carved pieces of ebony, each shaped as in the human body. Fully assembled, the *Ebony Skeleton* stands roughly six feet tall.

Powers of the Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet

The *Ebony Skeleton* possesses several different powers stemming from the potent magics contained in the bones, and may be used in a variety of ways. A single bone can enhance spellcasting; replacing whole body parts with the bones grants special abilities; and assembling the entire *Ebony Skeleton* allows for the creation of an entire, self-sustaining undead army.

Using the Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet

A single piece may be worn as a trinket or kept in a pocket. Entire body parts can be assembled and then surgically implanted in the user with the Necromantic Surgery feat (see below) to gain special powers. The *skull* may be wielded to enhance spellcasting, or assembled with the *spine* to form a *rod* of fantastic powers. Assembling all 206 pieces into a complete skeleton animates the artifact and creates an army of animated skeletons.

Constant Powers

Carrying a single bone anywhere on the body grants the bearer a +1 profane bonus to caster level when casting necromancy spells. When holding the *skull* in one hand, the bearer gains a +2 profane bonus to caster level on necromancy spells, and +1 profane bonus to caster level on all other spells. Creatures of Large size or larger may attach the *skull* to a chain and wear it is a necklace for the same bonus.

Activated Powers

Assembling the *Skeleton* with all 206 bones instantly has two effects. First, every corpse or skeleton within a 10-mile instantly animates as a skeleton created by an *animate dead* spell (with no limitations on the number of undead controlled or created). If the corpse is not a skeleton already, the flesh and muscle slough off as it walks, leaving a skeleton rather than a zombie. Second, the *Skeleton* itself animates as a construct with the ability to *animate dead* once per hour. All skeletons raised in this manner immediately make their way towards the construct by the fastest possible route. Once these skeletons reach it, they immediately attack any living being in sight. This horde of undead continues fighting and animating the dead left behind until the construct is broken apart and every skeleton destroyed. The assembled *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* does not fight or defend itself in any way. It has an AC 15. Normal weapons cannot damage or sunder it, but any weapon or spell dealing holy or lawful damage, or a successful smite evil or smite chaos attack, breaks it apart with a single strike. Animated skeletons remain until destroyed. Anyone capable of controlling or commanding undead may usurp control of any of the artifact's skeletons as though they were uncontrolled. The *Ebony Skeleton* makes no attempt to regain control; it simply animates more skeletons at the earliest opportunity.

Assembling the *skull* and the *spine* together creates a weapon Known as *Mol-Tet's Fury*. This functions as a *+5 anarchic unholy light mace*, that also confers the *skull*'s standard bonuses to caster level.

The final use of the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* involves the use of the Necromantic Surgery feat. By assembling the bones of specific body parts, then surgically replacing the natural bones in the body with them, the user gains the specific powers unique to each body part. The *spine* and *skull* cannot be used in this manner.

Unless noted otherwise, all spell-like abilities can be used a number of times per day equal to the user's Charisma modifier (minimum 1), and have a caster level equal to the user's Hit Dice.

The Left Hand of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones of the left hand allows the user to cast *enervation* as a spell-like ability.

The Right Hand of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the right hand allows the user to cast *vampiric touch* as a spell-like ability.

The Left Arm of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the left arm allows the user to cast *bestow curse* as a spell-like ability.

The Right Arm of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the right arm allows the user to cast *contagion* as a spell-like ability.

The Heartcage of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the ribcage grants the user DR 5/piercing, and +2 profane bonus to the caster level of any spell he casts. Additionally, he may cast one bonus spell per day for each level of spell he can already cast. These bonus spells must be drawn from the Necromancy school. Finally, the user may cast *animate dead* as a spell-like ability.

The Left Foot of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the left foot allows the user to cast *halt undead* as a spell-like ability.

The Right Foot of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the right foot allows the user to cast *command undead* as

a spell-like ability. This ability is usable once per round, as a standard action.

Possessing both the *Left Foot* and the *Right Foot of Mol-Tet* allows the user to cast *expeditious retreat* as a spell-like ability. This ability is usable once per round, as a standard action.

The Left Leg of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the left leg allows the user to cast *create undead* as a spell-like ability.

The Right Leg of Mol-Tet: Replacing the bones in the right leg allows the user to cast *undeath to death* as a spell-like ability.

The Pelvis of Mol-Tet: Replacing the pelvis allows the user to cast *fear* as a spell-like ability.

If a single person incorporates every one of these bones into his body, and also wields *Mol-Tet's Fury*, he must immediately make a DC 25 Will save. Failure means his mind is obliterated and his is soul shattered. He may only be resurrected by a *wish* or *miracle* spell. The user tears his own head off, replacing it with *Mol-Tet's Fury*, and proceeds to strip himself of his own flesh until it is but tatters atop the animated *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*. The *Ebony Skeleton* then proceeds as if it had just been assembled, but under nobody's control.

Success on this saving throw affords the user all of the power available to the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*, allowing him to cast *animate dead* once per hour as a standard action, with a 10-mile range and no limit as to the number of HD of skeletons he can create or command. Doing this once has no repercussions. Every subsequent use of this ability, however, requires a DC 20 Will save to avoid the consequences listed previously.

Consequences

Once the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* is assembled and activated, the user must make a DC 20 Will Save. Failure causes all the artifact's skeletons to attack the user as soon as they are able, making him their first priority. Users receive no indication of failure until the first animated skeletons arrive. As the skeletons only attack living beings within 10 miles of the *Ebony Skeleton*, leaving this range prevents death at the hands of the skeletons.

Success on this save means the *Ebony Skeleton*, and any skeletons it creates, are under the control of the user for a number of hours equal to one + the number by which the Will save exceeded 20. (For instance, a Will save of 25 grants control for six hours). Once that time has elapsed, however, the skeletons abruptly treat the user as though he had failed the save.

The horde created by the *Ebony Skeleton* fights until everything within its 10-mile radius is killed. Once this has been accomplished, the horde begins to march, seeking additional victims. It travels in a large, circular army, with the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* at its center, until it is stopped. With its ability to replenish its numbers once per hour, this horde could feasibly wander indefinitely.

Reactive Traits

While the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* is immune to damage, any spell that deals lawful or holy damage to any pieces of it suppress its powers for one minute. Each piece of the *Skeleton* radiates moderate evil, and fully assembled body parts radiate intense amounts of evil. *Detect magic* reveals an overwhelming aura of necromancy.

Using the Ebony Skeleton of Mol–Tet in a Campaign

The *Ebony Skeleton* can in and of itself become the focal point of a campaign. The low level of power possessed by a single piece is enough to make for an interesting artifact usable by a low-level character. As the pieces are much sought after by necromancers and tyrants alike, their market price is relatively high, meaning that anyone knowing of the location of a piece is apt to send out any number of minions to retrieve it, either for their own ends or to turn a tidy profit. Will the characters seek them out for their worth, or to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands? When fully assembled, the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* affords a single person the power to conquer entire kingdoms. If someone has already managed to assemble it, they could easily become the primary nemesis for characters to struggle against.

Adventure Seeds

Dem Bones

During an adventure, the party finds a single small piece of the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*, such as a knucklebone or toe. Unsure what it is they've discovered, the PCs may attempt to research it. These attempts unfortunately drawn the attention of a local thieves guild, fully aware of the item's worth and willing to go to great lengths to get it for themselves. If negotiations fail, the guild resorts to more immediate measures. And if the characters willingly (or unwillingly) part with it, what happens when they discover the item's significance? How far will they go to get it back?

Mol-Tet's Revenge

The *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* has been fully assembled. It wanders the outskirts of civilization, slaughtering settlers on the frontier. People tell stories of a horde of the dead that sweep in and are gone by morning, leaving no bodies behind. With fewer and fewer settlers inhabiting the outreaches, the horde has begun moving deeper and deeper into civilization. What once were rumors are be-

coming reports and what units have been sent out have not returned. A call has been put out for adventurers. Will the characters answer it or instead find themselves in a city under siege?

The Heir to Mol-Tet's Empire

A powerful necromancer with visions of accomplishing what Mol-Tet could not has managed to acquire almost every piece of the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet*, as well as the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* and *Mol-Tet's robes* (described in the *Altar of the Bone Citadel* entry). His army is growing and he needs but a few precious pieces to unleash the full fury of Mol-Tet upon the world. Can the players stop him before he manages to get his gravedirt-covered hands on them? And if his chief surgeon manages to install the pieces within him, do the characters even have the power to stop him?

Destroying the Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet

The *Ebony Skeleton* is an artifact from which no good can ever come. It is a tool for the evil forces of chaos to spread death and misery. Unless the party is evil, they'll no doubt want little or nothing to do with it. Destroying it is a tough proposition, however.

- Transporting all 206 pieces to the Positive Energy Plane, and keeping them there for 206 days, obliterates all of the magic present in the bones. However, if a single piece is absent when the 206 days elapse, the entire *Skeleton* is shunted back to the material plane, each piece scattered 206 miles from the spot they were originally transported from.

New Feat

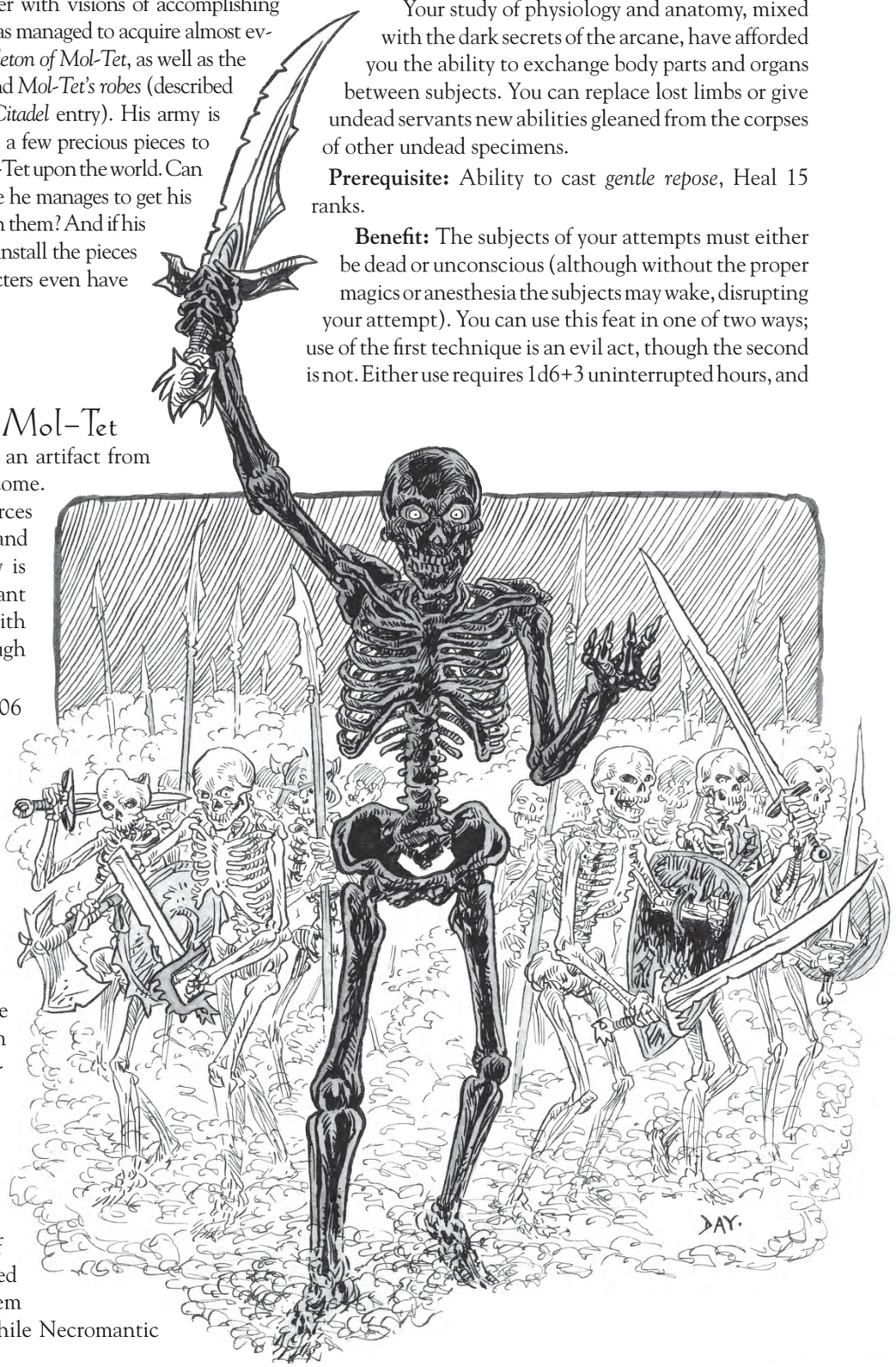
Those who came after Mol-Tet discovered the individual power of the bones, and developed techniques to implant them in still-living bodies. While Necromantic Surgery is primarily useful when dealing with the *Ebony Skeleton*, it may also be used for other magic items or artifacts that require attachment to a user's body.

Necromantic Surgery

Your study of physiology and anatomy, mixed with the dark secrets of the arcane, have afforded you the ability to exchange body parts and organs between subjects. You can replace lost limbs or give undead servants new abilities gleaned from the corpses of other undead specimens.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast *gentle repose*, Heal 15 ranks.

Benefit: The subjects of your attempts must either be dead or unconscious (although without the proper magics or anesthesia the subjects may wake, disrupting your attempt). You can use this feat in one of two ways; use of the first technique is an evil act, though the second is not. Either use requires 1d6+3 uninterrupted hours, and



access to the proper surgical tools. An interruption of more than a few moments causes the process to fail.

• You may grant a single dead subject one special attack or special ability from the corpse of a single undead creature. Raising the creature in any manner affords all the abilities of its type as well as the one ability granted through this feat. This can result in interesting combinations, like skeletons with a vampire's blood drain ability or a mummy with the morgh's paralyzing touch. Living creatures naturally reject the grafted flesh, so this use of the ability only works on the undead. You must succeed on a Heal check (DC equals 20 + the Hit Dice of the tougher of the two creatures). Failure ruins the part or ability you are attempting to graft.

• You may replace a living creature's bone or limb, if magical means (such as the *regenerate* spell) are not available. The subject must be unconscious, and if the donor is dead, he must not have been dead for more than an hour. Replacing a limb, bone or organ requires a DC 25 Heal check. Failure means you've injured your subject in the attempt and must immediately make a DC 30 Heal check to avoid killing her outright. Even if you succeed the second check, the surgery is a failure and may not be repeated until the subject receives a *cure* spell or 24 hours of bed rest.

Eldros' Panoply

The Tyrant's Gear, Arms and Armor of Justice
By Anthony Pryor

The Tale of Eldros' Panoply

The story of Eldros the Just (or Eldros the Tyrant, depending on what part of the story one reads) is one of glory followed inevitably by tragedy. It is told by bards and skalds as a cautionary tale, warning the brave and mighty against the sins of pride and arrogance, and of the perils of justice without mercy. Today, most believe that Lord Eldros never truly existed, or that his story tells of several other historical heroes merged into one, but the truth is that he, his triumphs and his fearful fall from grace are all too real.

Ages ago, the folk of the ancient kingdom of Skaris were threatened by enemies from both within and without. The land was misruled by a decadent king, more interested in wine, narcotics, feasting and the pleasures of his harem than in the welfare of his subjects. His advisors were uniformly corrupt, power-hungry wastrels whose excesses and misappropriations drained the kingdom's coffers. Sensing weakness in the ancient kingdom, the land's enemies raised a mighty army, striking deep into the heart of Skaris and besieging its capitol city.

Among the knights and lords who led the defending armies, only a single man, Lord Eldros, remained steadfast and untouched by the corruption around him. Long had he served the ignoble king, but now, as his beloved kingdom tottered on the brink of ruin, the scales fell at last from his eyes, and Lord Eldros saw the rot that lay at the heart of Skaris.

In desperation, Eldros prayed to the gods of law, asking for guidance, and swearing to lead his nation back along the path of righteousness. His faith was rewarded, for Eldros was visited by the gods' herald, who delivered to him a wondrous panoply of arms and armor — helm, breastplate, sword and shield — and bade him use them to restore justice in the name of the gods.



Armed and armored by the gods themselves, Eldros wasted no time. He and a band of loyal followers quickly cleansed the kingdom in a river of blood. First to die was the decadent king, slain in the bed of his favorite concubine. The corrupt nobles were next, each slain or driven from the city by Eldros and his growing army of fanatics. Their families and followers were persecuted with equal vigor, and within days the entire city was in Eldros' hands. It was fell work and bloody, Eldros and his followers admitted, and perhaps some innocents died in the massacres. But these were small prices compared to the security and survival of the nation.

Proclaimed ruler and guardian of the nation by the cheering mob, Eldros set out to lift the siege, summoning aid from the gods themselves. Skaris' enemies were driven back from the gates of the city, beset by the rejuvenated Sarian army and by lawful outsiders sent by the gods.

The campaign to free the nation lasted less than a month. By its end, Skaris was free but exhausted, its manpower and wealth spent. Now was the time for Eldros to step aside and allow wiser men and women to guide the nation back to prominence and prosperity. But pride made Eldros hesitate. Only he had been gifted by the gods, after all, and the corruption and decadence of the nobles had brought his beloved land to the brink of destruction.

No, he finally decided. It was far better that he, chosen savior and guardian of the nation, remain

Researching Eldros' Panoply

Suggestions of the *Panoply* and its history can be found in old stories and songs. These may be heard around the campfire, at inns or taverns, or as part of a bard or minstrel's repertoire. More specific tales of Eldros and his artifacts might be found in very old history books, hidden deep in the warrens of ancient libraries or universities. These books are likely to be fragile and ancient, as Eldros is generally believed to be a myth.

Bards might know of Eldros through Bardic Knowledge checks, while those with Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (nobility) can also make checks to see how much of the story they know. Use the following as guidelines.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The character has heard of Eldros and the *Panoply*, and knows that it is considered to be a legend.
20	Eldros bore helm, sword, shield and breastplate, all gifts from the gods, and each with its own unique power.
25	Eldros was more powerful the more of the items he bore, but in the end the gods themselves took away the items' powers, leading to his downfall and death. It is said, however, that the powers were restored after Eldros' passing.
30+	Alone, the items are relatively potent, but in combination they make a warrior almost invincible.

Failed rolls may generate false leads on the items' powers. For example, a failed Knowledge roll may result in the investigator being told that some of the items were destroyed when Eldros was slain, or that all of the items' powers were permanently taken away (though the items are still beautiful, well-crafted and worth a fortune to a university, historian or collector).

in power, and oversee Skaris' rebirth. And so it was that the rule of the tyrant began.

Eldros ruled with an iron fist, ruthlessly suppressing dissent and bidding his legions hunt down the last supporters of the old regime. No one associated with the "false king" and his toadies was spared — not friends, lovers, families, acquaintances, servants or even pets. The pestilence that was the old regime was to be destroyed, root and branch.

The land became a place of fear. All dreaded the midnight knock on the door and the dark-cloaked shapes of Eldros' Hounds, the elite secret police whose job was to seek out and exterminate the false king's sympathizers. This soon expanded to include all forms of dissent and dissatisfaction, for those who opposed the rule of Eldros opposed the gods themselves.

Dwelling in growing isolation at the heart of his iron fortress, Eldros lived an austere and grim existence, convinced of ever-growing conspiracies against him. As his fear and anger grew, Skaris turned its eyes toward its neighbors, those kingdoms that had nearly conquered it. Eldros' armies marched out, seeking to exterminate all dangers to the kingdom, outside as well as inside its borders.

And as so often happens when pride, arrogance, fear and violence replace love of country and the desire for justice, the gods heard the people's anguish, and saw that they had erred in choosing Eldros as their champion. Confusion fell upon Skaris' armies, and the land itself was cursed. Crops failed, plague raged and strange creatures stalked the countryside. Soothsayers claimed that these were all grim omens, signs that in his pride, Eldros had offended the very gods who had once aided him.

Eldros himself had long since turned a blind eye to the suffering of others, and had drifted away from the faith and love of country that had once sustained him. He cursed the gods for turning against him, and swore pacts with demons and dark powers. Still bearing the gods' arms and armor, he retreated further into the labyrinthine depths of his fortress, and his Hounds, now aided by fiends, redoubled their efforts, unleashing new horrors upon the weary folk of the kingdom.

In the end, the hated tyrant fell to the smallest and most insignificant of his enemies. A young hero, whose family had perished at the hands of Eldros' Hounds, gained entrance to the fortress and hunted the warlord down. When finally confronted by his foe, Eldros called upon the powers of his *Panoply* but the gods' punishment was fitting — none of the items' powers worked, and he was without protection. Just the same, Eldros was a powerful warrior, and he mortally wounded the young champion with a savage blow. But the gods were not done with him yet; the young man's dying stroke slipped past Eldros' shield and pierced his throat. The tyrant died, choking on his own blood, and the two combatants fell lifeless to the ground.

Eldros' kingdom did not survive him. Pursuing his armies back to Skaris, the land's enemies again laid siege to the capitol. This time there were no heroes and no help from the gods. The city's gates were smashed asunder and enemies poured through the streets, killing and burning. Within a fortnight, the once-mighty kingdom had vanished, its subjects slain or scattered to the four corners of the world.

It is said that the conquering armies found Eldros' corpse in the heart of his fortress, and carried off the *Panoply* along with the rest of their plunder. Since that day, the *Panoply*'s various elements have been reported in many

different locations, sometimes in many places at once. Eldros and his artifacts have passed into legend, with most doubting that they ever really existed.

Studying the Panoply

The *Panoply* consists of four items, each of limited power when used by itself. Each item is of masterwork quality, and radiates strong evocation magic. All of the items are flawless and immune to rust, tarnish and corrosion. The following paragraphs describe each item and its unusual qualities. Deciphering the Skarian runes on the items requires a DC 26 Decipher Script check.

Sword of Eldros: This longsword bears a pommel in the shape of an eagle's head and crossguards in the shape of wings. The blade is of the finest steel and has a bluish tinge. An inscription in ancient Skarian runes reads "Let the bearer do justice in the name of the gods."

Helm of Eldros: This visored greathelm is etched with brass appliqué in the form of elaborate knotwork and stylized vines. Small runes around the crown of the helm are also in ancient Skarian and read "Eldros, Champion of the Gods."

Shield of Eldros: A round steel shield inscribed with knotwork and intertwined vines like the helm. The central boss bears the holy symbols of the gods of law and war (or other holy symbols appropriate to the campaign). Skarian runes around the edges of the shield read, "The gods protect Eldros, their Champion."

Breastplate of Eldros: Eldros' breastplate is also inscribed with vines and knotwork, as well as fanciful brasswork like the helm. It also bears ancient Skarian inscriptions that read "Heart of Eldros, Arm of the Gods."

Powers of the Panoply

The *Panoply of Eldros* is an unusual collection of artifacts, since individually the items that comprise it are only moderately powerful. They grow more powerful when worn or borne by the same individual, and together, all four make their bearer all but invincible.

Using the Panoply

The uses of all the *Panoply* items are obvious — helm, breastplate, shield and sword. These items are, however, highly lawful artifacts and may have severe consequences for non-lawful users.

Used individually, these items have no adverse effect on non-lawful users. If two items are used together, any user of chaotic alignment takes one negative level until one of the items is removed, as described in Chapter 7 of the *DMG*. Three items used together impose two negative levels. Any individual of non-lawful alignment who is so foolish as to don all four items must make a DC 25 Fortitude save or die instantly. Even if the save is successful, the wearer still takes four negative levels as long as the items are worn. These effects are removed if the wearer voluntarily and sincerely changes to lawful alignment.

Constant Powers

Alone, the individual items that make up the *Panoply* are only moderately powerful. Each gains abilities, however, if used in combination with other *Panoply* items by the same user. The chart below lists the individual items' powers as well as their combined powers. As might be imagined, Eldros himself, at the height of his abilities, was a truly terrifying opponent against whom few could stand.

In addition, any combination of items from the *Panoply* provide some special abilities, as listed in the

Constant Powers of Eldros' Panoply

Item	Used Alone	Used With One Other Item	Used With Two Other Items	Used With Three Other Items
Sword	+2 longsword	+3 longsword of frost	+4 axiomatic frost longsword	+5 longsword of frost plus special abilities*
Helm	light fortification, SR 10	medium fortification, SR 15	heavy fortification, SR 18	heavy fortification, SR 20
Shield	+2 large steel shield	+3 large steel shield of acid, electricity and sonic resistance	+4 large steel shield of improved acid, electricity and sonic resistance	+5 large steel shield of greater acid, electricity and sonic resistance
Breastplate	+2 breastplate	+3 breastplate of cold and fire resistance, DR 5 /magic	+4 breastplate of improved cold and fire resistance, DR 10/magic	+5 breastplate of greater cold and fire resistance , DR 15/magic

*Eldros' sword has the following ability when used in combination with all three other items: inflicts an additional 3d6 points (6d6 on critical) of good damage and imposes one negative level on evil targets (2 negative levels on a critical).

following table. These bonuses are inclusive, so an individual who bears three of the items gains bonuses to Spot and Listen as well as Diplomacy and Perform.

Number of Items	Enhancement Bonuses Granted
2	Spot +10, Listen +10, Charisma +2
3	Diplomacy +10, Perform +10, Wisdom +2
4	Intimidate +10, Constitution +2

Activated Powers

The individual *Panoply* items have no activated powers. When an individual uses multiple items, however, he gains access to activated powers, with more gained as more items are used. The following chart lists these powers and how many items are required to utilize them. These powers are cumulative — an individual utilizing multiple items gains all the powers listed for fewer items as well. Using these activated powers is a free action, and they affect only the item's user. These powers have a caster level of 14.

Number of Items	Activated Powers
2	*True strike* 3/day, *fly* 1/day, *heal* 1/week
3	*Aid* 3/day, *divine power* 1/day, *raise dead* 1/week
4	*Fire shield* 3/day, *flame strike* 1/day, *resurrection* 1/week

Consequences

Using the *Panoply* is not without risks, as its original owner discovered. Although users can only be of lawful alignment if they want to use the items without penalty, there is no requirement that they be good, evil or neutral. The corrupting nature of power and the sheer potency of the *Panoply* itself presents a strong inducement toward arrogance and abuse of the advantages that the items provide.

The fearsome consequences of wearing the *Panoply* require some creativity and flexibility on the DM's part, as many aspects of "lawful" behavior are difficult to define. In the end, it is likely that the *Panoply*'s owner is driven to extremes, possibly going mad, losing his life, or facing the wrath of the gods. DMs should be on their toes when playing out these consequences, and ideally do so with the cooperation of the player whose character controls the *Panoply*.

First and foremost, when combined together, the items that make up *Eldros' Panoply* are intelligent. As always, the items' intelligence and ego increase the more that are used simultaneously. The *Panoply* has no primary or secondary abilities, as these are included in the items' normal continual and activated powers.

Number of Items	Ability Scores	Ego
2	Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10	13
3	Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 10	21
4	Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 10	30

The *Panoply* is highly lawful, and may compel the user to act in a strictly lawful manner. Normal ego checks apply, as specified in Chapter Seven of the *DMG*. Checks should be made if the *Panoply*'s owner tries to act in a chaotic or unlawful manner, or if he witnesses unlawful acts, however minor or justifiable. If the owner fails the ego check, he must act in the most direct and efficiently lawful manner possible, regardless of consequences.

This may push the owner in the direction of good or evil, depending on the act. The DM and player should both be creative here — stopping a murder or apprehending an infamous bandit might push the user toward good, while arresting a man who stole to feed his family, or slaying a victim who sought revenge against an evil warlord might be considered evil, or at the very least neutral. In short, while the owner wears the *Panoply*, there is a constant temptation to act in the most extremely lawful manner possible.

The ultimate result of this process, as Eldros learned to his dismay, is to alienate the *Panoply*'s owner from family, friends, the world and even the gods. In the end, most believe that they are the sole arbiter of law and justice, regardless of their ultimate alignment. When this happens, the gods' vengeance is all but inevitable. The pride of those who wear the *Panoply* is inevitably their downfall, and any character who turns away from the gods will find the *Panoply*'s powers reduced, or completely absent, when they are needed the most.

Using Eldros Panoply in a Campaign

Eldros' Panoply exists, at least in the mind of bards and storytellers, as a poignant reminder that pride and power inevitably corrupt even the strongest heart. As such, the *Panoply* has the potential for wrecking a campaign, or at the very least destroying a powerful or beloved player character, so caution should be used if you want to include it in your game.

In addition, the nature of the *Panoply* lends itself to many different campaign power levels. Individually, the items that make up the *Panoply* are of only moderate power, and can be gained by a party of relatively low level. As the party's level increases, more elements of the *Panoply* can

be found and added to the wearer's powers. In addition, the characters may be aware of the *Panoply*'s dangers, and never use its elements in combination, preferring only to use the lower-powered individual items.

If the full measure of the *Panoply*'s corrupting influence is to be used in your campaign, you might consider discussing it with the player who wishes to bear it. A character who takes up the *Panoply* is likely to come to ruin when using it, and sometimes that makes for especially dramatic roleplaying, especially if the other characters are sufficiently involved to see their friend's problems and try to help. Despite this, the most likely outcome of using the entire *Panoply* as written is madness, arrogance and rejection of the gods, followed by the gods' wrath and the *Panoply*'s failure.

The most obvious effect of the *Panoply*'s failure is, of course, death, but the DM might consider making the character's tale one of redemption, rather than failure. Instead of perishing, the once-mighty bearer of the *Panoply* may simply be reduced in stature, shorn of all wealth and power. She is forced to drag herself up from the depths, returning to greatness once more, but this time without the aid of the *Panoply*, and with a far more humble outlook on life.

Of course, the *Panoply* as a whole may not come into the party's hands at all — it may be the centerpiece of a quest, it may be sought after by an arrogant archvillain, or it may be the goal that drives a campaign through a DM controlled NPC.

Adventure Seeds

In the Name of the Gods

Some of the gods who helped create *Eldros' Panoply* have finally decided that the items are too dangerous and must be destroyed. The PCs are recruited as the gods' mortal agents to seek out and retrieve the various items, and return them to a specific temple, where they can be taken back to the gods' home planes, or destroyed once and for all. The items are in the hands of various powerful foes, or possibly a single individual has gained all of them and now threatens to use their power to conquer and crush all those who oppose him. In either case, the PCs must seek out the items' owners and take them back. Even then, their job is not over, for some unscrupulous PCs might want to keep the *Panoply* for themselves, or other forces may wish to steal them back.

Servants of Justice

This is a campaign idea that can be used if the PCs work for a patron such as a warlord, paladin or other powerful leader. The patron may already have one of the *Panoply* items, and — either on his own or through the PCs' quests — gain more. The PCs are in the position of loyally serving a master who grows more and more intolerant and rigid as he gains more *Panoply* items, and should eventually learn of the *Panoply*'s corrupting influence. In addition to their other adventures, the PCs can try to save their master from the inevitable fall, or steal the *Panoply* and attempt to destroy it, lest it destroy yet another victim.

Destroying the Panoply

That which is made by the gods can only be destroyed by the gods, or so most people believe. As noted above, some of the gods have decided that the *Panoply* must be destroyed (and thus admitted that even the gods can make mistakes), while others want to keep the *Panoply* in the mortal realm for all the amusement that its misuse gives them.

• Simply give the *Panoply* to one of the gods, preferably at one of their temples. In this fashion, the items are removed from the mortal realm. It is possible, however, that the god in question may not truly destroy the item, but keeps it and give it to another champion somewhere down the line. Lawful gods are probably best for this method.

• The items can be destroyed if exposed to the fire of a great wyrm red dragon once per hour for six hours. As such creatures are greedy and most likely want to take the items for themselves, convincing a great wyrm to simply destroy the item rather than slay its bearers and keep it might prove difficult.

• The magic of the items can be undone by a master smith, with 20 or more ranks in Craft (blacksmith, armorsmithing or weaponsmithing). Such an individual must stoke his furnace to maximum temperature (DC 35 Craft check), and then make a DC 40 Craft check (the smith cannot take 20). In this case, the item is destroyed, its magic dispersed, and it is reduced to molten metal. A failure indicates that the item is still intact, but that the smith can try again in one day. Unfortunately, the destruction of the magic destroys the smith's forge, forcing him to build a new one for further attempts.

New Weapon/Armor Special Ability

An arcane researcher who has the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat can study the *Panoply*, and thus learn to create items with the *synergy* special ability. Learning this technique requires a DC 25 Craft (weaponsmithing) or Craft (armorsmithing). The researcher can only make one such check per day and cannot take 20 on the roll.

Note that the items of the *Panoply* do not themselves have the *synergy* special ability, but function in a unique manner. The ability to create items with the *synergy* ability is simply a side-benefit of studying the *Panoply* items and the way they work together.

Synergy

Items with this quality are magically "keyed" to work together, and each item enhances the abilities of others as long as they are all used or worn by the same individual. *Synergy* can be applied to any magic weapon, armor or shield. The base price modifier is twice the item's bonus (i.e. the modifier to make a *+1 synergistic longsword* would be +2, for a total modifier of +3).

This quality can be added to a maximum of one weapon, one piece of armor and one shield for a keyed set. The additional bonuses derived from the *synergy* ability are keyed only to that specific combination of items; they will not work with other magic items, even if they also have the *synergy* ability.

Items that are keyed to each other using the *synergy* ability apply the bonuses of all three items when working together. For instance, a *+1 synergistic heavy mace*, when combined with a *+1 synergistic chain shirt* and a *+1 synergistic heavy shield* becomes in effect a *+3 heavy mace*, while the other items become respectively a *+3 chain shirt* and a *+3 heavy shield*. Other qualities, such as *keen*, *fortification* and the like, do not affect the other items worn in any way. Only the items' bonuses may be added together. The *synergy* feature cannot increase a weapon's bonus above +5.

If one item from a three-item set is lost or destroyed, the remaining two continue to function normally, though at a reduced bonus. Such an item, if lost, can never be replaced, as the arcane forces that bind the items together are unique.

Moderate (individual items or two worn together) or Strong (three items worn together) transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *greater magic weapon*, *mage armor*, *major creation*; Price special (see above).

Emerald Scales of Veerak

Tyris' End, the Armor Eternal
By Rich Burlew

The Tale of the Emerald Scales of Veerak

The wizard Tyris was not especially skilled or talented, but he was extraordinarily curious. He was also quite bookish, spending all day and night reading whatever tome of ancient lore he could scrounge up. He had an unfortunate tendency to get so wrapped up in his books that he would forget to properly rest, dozing off with the book in his lap and his reading glasses still perched on his nose.

Now, Tyris often discovered accounts of long-lost magic spells and rituals in his books, and being a curious sort, he sometimes attempted to recreate the spells he read about, with mixed results. He had destroyed his tower so many times in these experiments that the city of his birth exiled him to a distant forest, where he could blow things up in peace. It was while eating lunch in the study of his forest tower that he first read the tale of *Kruk'Tha's Flayed Skin*. He found the story strangely compelling, and wondered if he could recreate the ritual that had created the sentient dragonhide.

Of course, he needed a willing dragon to even attempt the spell, so he searched through the dense forest until he found a young green dragon named Veerak. While she was a belligerent sort of creature, Tyris was able to hold her off long enough to explain that he was experimenting with a form of draconic immortality. He offered to grant her life everlasting, with no obligation on her part beyond participating in the process and keeping the wizard informed about what she felt as the spell took hold. She became intrigued; while she was still young with centuries of life ahead of her, she dreamed of the power that true immortality would bring. She was also old enough to have seen other dragons slain by greedy humans, and imagined being able to wreak havoc on all would-be dragonslayers in her forest. She agreed to the wizard's proposal, and Tyris began researching the ritual in earnest.

It took Tyris three long years to complete the spell that would, theoretically, transfer Veerak's consciousness into her own scaly skin. The ritual needed to be performed under a very specific alignment of stars and planets, and Tyris hurried to complete the final portions of the incantation. When the night of the transformation arrived, the wizard had not slept in five days.

Tyris began the ritual as Veerak stood within his magic circle. The wizard chanted and gestured, and magical energy swirled between him and the dragon. The chanting continued on for hour after hour, with Veerak reporting the sensations she felt as the magic seeped into her scales. But as the chanting wore on, Tyris found himself getting sleepy. The repetitive nature of the spell was taking its toll on him, and just as the spell's pattern of arcane syllables was reaching its most crucial part, Tyris nodded off.

The lapse was momentary, but cataclysmic. Magic infused Veerak's hide and pulled it away from the flesh beneath. Panicked at the pain, she tried to escape the magic circle, which only hastened the process. A sickening wet ripping sound woke Tyris from his doze in time to see the very skin ripped off of Veerak's still-living flesh. The dragon screamed — an anguished shriek of agony and loss that drove all animals who heard it to flee the forest and never return. The wizard tried to end the spell, but it was too late; the dragon's skin had been stripped from her, leaving her in bloody misery. In anger and pain, the dragon slew the wizard outright, gutting him as he apologized.

But even as Veerak wept salty tears of pain and limped off into the moonlight, the skin left behind pulsed with glowing green power. However the spell had malfunctioned, it had succeeded in imbuing the hide with tremendous magical power. And it had, after a fashion, succeeded in bringing Veerak immortality, for as long as the hide existed, she could never find peace.

The hide was soon found by a party of adventurers, one of whom carried it to the nearest town to be fashioned into armor. He was pleasantly surprised at how much magical power his new armor had. The bleeding, flayed form of Veerak appearing in the night to kill him and his five allies was considerably less pleasant. But even so, the armor fell into the hands of a mercenary who sailed across the sea before wearing the armor in a military campaign. The mutilated dragon found him too, killing his entire regiment out of spite and anger. As the years passed, the armor passed through many hands, with each life cut short eventually by the vengeful Veerak. The dragon has tried many times to conceal the skin from those who would clothe themselves in her hide, but some poor doomed adventurer always unearths it and starts the cycle anew.

Researching the Emerald Scales of Veerak

The tale of Tyris' failure is not often told, since the only witness to the events is Veertak herself, and she is not one for conversation on the subject. However, Tyris did keep extensive notes on the process up until the final incantation, and these notes have passed to various magical institutions as a case study in what *not* to do when researching a new magical procedure. Thus, a Knowledge (arcana) skill check might reveal some information, as could a Bardic Knowledge check.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	The *Emerald Scales* are a powerful suit of dragonhide banded mail.
20	The *Emerald Scales* supposedly give their wearer the full defensive power of a green dragon, protecting her from spells and blades equally well. Anyone donning the armor can see the dragon from whom it was made in her mind's eye.
30	The *Emerald Scales* turned up in another nation a few years back, but the adventuring party who bore it never returned from their last adventure. The PCs may be able to use this knowledge as a starting point for their own quest.
40+	The full story presented here.

The tale of Veerak is insufficiently known for many falsehoods to be spread about it. Still, a few inaccurate rumors have made their way into various tomes. The most common misconception is that the armor is possessed by the spirit of the dragon that donated the hide; this may be the result of scholars confusing the *Emerald Scales* with *Kruk'Tha's Flayed Skin*.

Studying the Emerald Scales of Veerak

Gleaming brilliant variegated green in the sun, the *Emerald Scales of Veerak* are formed into an exceptionally well-crafted suit of banded mail. The breastplate is decorated with a dragon symbol, fashioned out of the tiny scales that surround a dragon's eyes and nose. The shoulders are guarded by a ring of dragon neck spines, serving to deflect sword blows. The armor comes complete with green dragonhide gloves and a matching skullcap.

Touching the scales with bare flesh sometimes causes momentary psychic impressions of pain and fear, but these fade an instant later. Dragons and reptilian creatures often report hearing screams in their head just by being near the *Emerald Scales*.

The *Emerald Scales of Veerak* radiate overwhelming abjuration and strong conjuration and transmutation when viewed under the effects of a *detect magic* spell. Unlike most artifacts, *identify* does reveal some information about the *Emerald Scales*, revealing all of the artifact's constant powers.

Powers of the Emerald Scales of Veerak

The *Emerald Scales* are a powerful suit of armor, granting their wearer many of the powers and immunities of a real green dragon.

Using the Emerald Scales

Upon donning the *Emerald Scales*, the wearer's mind briefly makes telepathic contact with the dragon Veerak. The wearer sees the dragon as she was before her hide was taken (because this is how Veerak still sees herself). At the same time, the dragon sees an image of the new wearer unless the character makes a DC 21 Will save. The wearer must then make an opposed Charisma check against the dragon (Charisma bonus of +7). If successful, the wearer learns all of the armor's activated powers and how to use them: by imagining herself as a dragon and speaking the name, "Veerak." If the check fails, the dragon keeps the knowledge to herself for now, though the wearer may try again every time she dons the armor.

Constant Powers

At their most basic, the *Emerald Scales* are a suit of +5 *dragonhide banded mail* that grants the wearer immunity to acid, *sleep*, and paralysis. The scales also provide damage reduction 10/magic and spell resistance equal to 11 + the wearer's Hit Dice.

Activated Powers

The *Emerald Scales* can draw on their connection with Veerak to produce the following spell-like abilities, as a 17th-level caster.

At Will: *fog cloud*, *water breathing* (self only).

1/day: *cloudkill* (DC 17), *overland flight* (self only).

Once per day, the wearer can attempt to siphon one of Veerak's own spell-like abilities, though the dragon fights against this with all of her will. The wearer must succeed at an opposed Charisma check against the dragon; if it fails, the dragon has blocked the attempt mentally. Otherwise, the wearer may immediately use either *suggestion* (DC 20), *plant growth*, *dominate person* (DC 24), or *command plants* (DC 21) as a spell-like ability, as if cast by a 17th-level sorcerer. If Veerak has already used all of the daily uses of the spell-like ability that the wearer tries to siphon, the attempt fails. Whether successful or not, the armor cannot siphon another spell-like ability until the next day (and Veerak cannot employ any spell-like ability uses

that were siphoned for the same period).

Ambient Powers

Any creature of the Dragon type that comes within 300 feet of the *Emerald Scales* hears hallucinations of Veerak's screams from the night her skin was taken. The wearer and his immediate allies suffer a –8 penalty to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate skill checks against dragons as a result, and dragons begin any encounter one step more hostile than they would normally be — even if they are good dragons.

Consequences

The main drawback to using the *Emerald Scales* is the undying enmity of Veerak herself, still more or less alive and very, very angry about the way in which her skin is being exploited. The magic that was intended to imbue her consciousness into the dragonhide as a form of immortality has instead granted her a twisted skinless existence that can never end until the *Scales* themselves are destroyed. She has long since grown tired of her "life" and now wants nothing more than to rest.

Whenever any of the *Scales*' powers are called upon, Veerak's mind and body are assaulted with the same pain she felt when her skin was first ripped away. The more often the powers are used, the more pain she undergoes, which drives her to seek out the wearer of the *Scales* and end their usage as permanently as she can. Unfortunately for the wearer, the magic that links her to the *Scales* allows her to cast *scrying* on anyone wearing them as if they were "familiar" and she possessed a body part of theirs. Despite the agony she feels, she is capable of watching the wearer for several days before striking, if she feels it wise. Even if the wearer discards the *Scales*, Veerak usually feels the need to punish them, and has been known to track down and kill adventurers who only wore the *Scales* once. She also has the patience to return to fight a wearer (or former wearer) an infinite number of times, even if soundly defeated again and again. She is immortal, unkillable, and completely obsessed, with nothing better to do with her life than punish those wearing her skin.

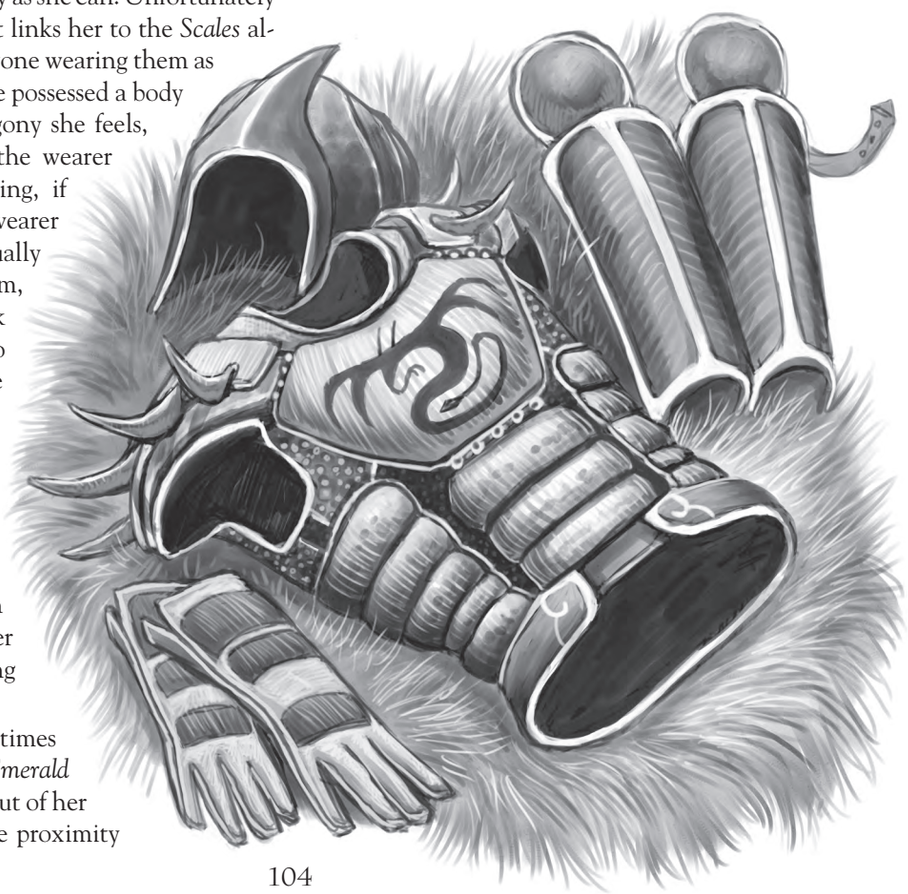
Veerak has tried dozens of times over the years to destroy the *Emerald Scales*, hoping to put herself out of her misery, but to no avail. Since proximity to the *Scales* also causes her great pain, she has taken to hiding the *Scales* whenever she kills another would-be owner. The dragon usually finds the deepest, darkest, most dangerous dungeon she knows of at the time and stashes the *Scales* at the bottom, hoping that this time, they will remain undiscovered for at least a few years.

Using the Emerald Scales of Veerak in a Campaign

If you decide to add the *Emerald Scales* to your campaign, you are also committing to several battles with the unstoppable Veerak. Since she can only be temporarily defeated (or avoided), she can become a recurring villain, one which doesn't need to tie into whatever main plot your heroes are pursuing.

Care should be taken not to have Veerak show up every single adventure, though. While she logically could return every day until the PC wearing the armor is dead, that would feel a little cheap and can easily ruin a campaign. Better to have her slink away defeated and not reappear for at least four or five sessions as she watches and waits for the perfect opening. With so many ways of attacking the heroes, she can show up again and again without feeling too stale.

Of course, eventually the PCs will want to get rid of the dragon that has been plaguing their lives and will try to eliminate both her and the armor. They may be surprised



to find that this decision leads to a softening of Veerak's attacks as she holds on to hope that maybe the heroes really can put her out of her misery. Should the heroes then fail (or worse, abandon the plan), Veerak spares no expense to prolong their suffering and make them pay.

Adventure Seeds

On the Wrong Side

The heroes are hired through a shady contact to embark on an innocuous adventure to retrieve a lost spellbook. The mission is relatively uneventful, but establishes a working relationship with the mysterious figure who periodically appears to offer the heroes a new job. After several seemingly-unrelated missions, the heroes finally discover who the contact has been hiring them to serve: the flayed dragon Veerak. Veerak pretends to be a copper dragon that has been disfigured by a blackguard. The *Emerald Scales* have actually been located and are being worn daily by a powerful paladin — one Veerak has tried many times to defeat, without success. She hopes to trick the heroes into taking out this paladin for her. Will they figure out the dragon's ruse before killing a powerful force for Good?

Lather, Rinse, Repeat

At the bottom of a deep and difficult dungeon complex, a sealed stone box is inscribed with warnings in scratched Draconic. The heroes manage to breach the container, only to find the *Emerald Scales* within. They take their prize back to the surface, but within a week they are attacked by an enraged Veerak. Whether the heroes discard the *Scales* or not, the dragon has marked the adventurer who wore them for death. All of the forces Veerak can muster magically attack the heroes again and again while they try hard to continue on with their quest (whatever it might be). Eventually, they must turn from their quest to answer the question of the *Emerald Scales* once and for all.

You Can Run, But You Can't Hide

A very young adventurer who happens to be son of a powerful noble approaches the heroes with fear in his eyes. He can't help but shake the feeling that he is being hunted, though he has no proof. In reality, he *is* being hunted, because he wore the *Emerald Scales of Veerak* to his coming-of-age ceremony just the week before. The heroes must find a way to protect the noble while they figure out what is going on and whether the hideless dragon can be reasoned with.

Destroying the Emerald Scales of Veerak

In order to rid the world of Veerak, the *Emerald Scales* must be destroyed. Of course, Veerak herself would have it no other way, and if she becomes aware that an adventuring party is questing to break the *Scales*' hold over her, she changes her tactics. Rather than seeking to kill the wearer and all allies, she instead begins harassing them, interrupting any rest she sees as unnecessary and clearing obstacles from their path (even if those "obstacles" are innocent bystanders). The dragon cannot bring herself to ally directly with any such adventurers; the enhanced pain she feels in the presence of the *Scales* guarantees that she keeps her distance.

- By finding the original sentient dragonskin that Tyris was attempting to duplicate, a skilled enough wizard could reverse engineer an epic spell capable of specifically completing the ritual and transforming Veerak into an immortal artifact. Unfortunately, Veerak is terrified of such a prospect, having come to loathe her continued existence, and will do everything in her power to prevent such a spell from ever being cast.
- If the *Emerald Scales* were fed to Tiamat herself, they would break apart and cease to bind Veerak. Of course, Tiamat is well aware of the dragon's predicament, and has thus far chosen not to render assistance. Convincing Tiamat might require a separate quest for each of the great dragon queen's five heads.
- The great spear of the famed paladin (and dragonslayer) Una is said to be able to kill any dragon, regardless of enchantment. If the heroes find this epic weapon (a *+7 holy axiomatic dragonbane shortspear*), a warrior wielding it and clad in the *Emerald Scales* can slay Veerak instantly if they strike her heart (roll a natural 20). If this happens, the *Scales* corrode and disintegrate immediately.
- Finally, the *Emerald Scales* can be returned to Veerak, making her whole and mortal again. However this can only be accomplished if Veerak manages to let go of her hate and pain; if the heroes can convince the dragon to become Lawful Good — of her own accord and without magical assistance — the *Emerald Scales* loosen their hold on her. A simple *Morden's disjunction* then cast while she holds the *Scales* causes the skin to graft itself back onto the dragon, healing her.

New Monster

When one dons the *Emerald Scales*, one makes an enemy of the deathless Veerak forever. Veerak is particularly dangerous for two reasons. First, she has no fear of death or defeat; there is nothing that can be taken from her that will hurt her worse than the loss of her hide. Second, she possesses a cunning intellect and a wide variety of different means of attacking the wearer of the *Emerald Scales*. As a result, every encounter with Veerak is slightly different, as she builds on what she learned in the previous fight. If defeated in combat, she might next try to secretly dominate the wearer's allies from the shadows, perhaps using *mind fog* to weaken their willpower. If this fails, she might bind demons to harass her foes until they are softened for her attack (she has little fear of reprisals from the demons, since she cannot be killed). When

that doesn't work, she might turn to dominating or possessing (via *magic jar*) powerful adventurers to finish them off. Or attacking the wearer's loved ones. Or commanding wave after wave of shambling mounds to kill innocents until the wearer surrenders himself. Or any of a hundred other plans she has used over the centuries to kill former wearers of the *Emerald Scales*.

Of course, Veerak does not need to be encountered solely as an adversary (or strictly by parties bearing the *Emerald Scales*). Her destructive vendetta to eliminate all that use her skin may cause her to be targeted by the forces of Light as a rogue element in need of squelching. Or perhaps, if the heroes of the campaign are less than virtuous themselves, Veerak might prove to be a useful ally, trading pieces of lost arcane knowledge in return for seemingly unrelated quests that bring her closer to the day when she can eradicate the *Emerald Scales* once and for all. Played properly, the dragon might even by legitimately sympathetic; after all, she was the victim of a tragic accident who wants only for her suffering to end. Certain noble types might actually find virtue in helping the tortured dragon die with dignity.

Veerak the Flayed

Large Green Dragon (Air)

Hit Dice:	38d12+114 (361 hp)
Initiative:	+6
Speed:	40 ft. (8 squares), fly 150 ft. (dumsy), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class:	14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 deflection), touch 14, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple:	+38/+44
Attack:	Bite +41 melee (2d6+8)
Full Attack:	Bite +41 melee (2d6+8) and 2 claws +39 melee (2d6+5) and 2 wings +39 melee (1d6+5) and tail slap +39 melee (1d8+11)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)
Special Attacks:	Breath weapon, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, spells
Special Qualities:	Curse of the *Emerald Scales*, darkvision 120 ft., eternity of pain, immunity to acid, *sleep*, and paralysis, low-light vision, regeneration 1, stunted growth, water breathing
Saves:	Fort +24, Ref +23, Will +28
Abilities:	Str 22, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 27, Wis 25, Cha 24
Skills:	Bluff +43, Climb +12, Concentration +40, Decipher Script +24, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +23 (+25 act in character), Hide +35, Intimidate +30, Jump +18, Listen +43, Knowledge (arcana) +45, Move Silently +39, Search +29, Sense Motive +43, Spellcraft +26, Spot +43, Survival +23 (+25 following tracks), Swim +10
Feats:	Ability Focus *(dominate person)*, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Sunder, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability *(suggestion)*, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration, Still Spell, Track, Wingover
Challenge Rating:	20
Alignment:	Lawful Evil

The horrible vaguely reptilian creature before you is roughly the size of a horse and appears to have been skinned alive. The soft pink meat on its serpentine neck and tail is raw and bleeding and its wings appear little more than bones with ragged torn flesh hanging from them.

The dragon Veerak is an abomination of draconic anger, mystically bound to a life she no longer wants by the power of her own flayed hide. She will pay any price to destroy the *Emerald Scales* once and for all and finally rest — and barring that, to punish all who dare to use its power.

When the *Emerald Scales* are safely hidden, Veerak tries to research means of destroying them as best she can, even going so far as to hire adventurers to explore methods for her. She is utterly obsessed with ending her tortured existence, as she has lived in acute pain for centuries and has nothing left to care about other than ending it. While she still collects treasure, she pragmatically views it as merely fodder to use as needed to achieve her goal.

Veerak is aloof and dismissive of mortals who are not directly connected to the *Scales* in some way; they are pawns at best, obstacles at worst. She is not so far gone that she is incapable of listening to reason, as long as it doesn't come from the mouth of someone wearing her skin. Ultimately, ending her suffering ranks as a higher priority in her mind than her distaste for lesser creatures, and she is thus willing to bargain or negotiate with those who have resources she requires. Of course, once these mortals have fulfilled her needs, she has little compunction about killing them just to take her mind off of the pain for a few minutes.

Veerak speaks Auran, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Infernal, and Undercommon.

Combat

Veerak fights as someone who craves death and has no fear of losing repeatedly in order to ultimately succeed. When she first encounters a new foe, she usually sneaks into a strategically valuable ambush position, then throws herself into battle without caution, relying on her strength and magic to destroy her enemies. Once she is defeated by a given foe, however, she spends her regeneration time plotting and scheming to break her new nemesis. She never gives up or surrenders, though she often allows foes to believe her dead while she quietly regenerates. If, after several attempts, Veerak cannot defeat an enemy through strength or cunning, she is not above contacting mercenaries or other outside forces to aid her. She often waits until her target is engaged in combat with another foe before striking, hoping to maximize the chaos of a mid-battle ambush.

When preparing to attack the wearer of the *Emerald Scales*, Veerak usually casts *bull's strength*, *displacement*, *fire shield*, *mage armor*, *magic circle against good*, *resist energy* (five times, once against each type of energy), *shield*, *spell turning*, *stoneskin*, and *true seeing* on herself. She might also cast *disguise self* to confuse her foes, making them believe she is another type of dragon. She then launches herself into melee combat with the wearer of the armor, using Power Attack for 10 points to deal significant damage despite her low Strength. If she has them available, she uses quickened *suggestions* that the wearer's allies should "run away" or "lie down and play dead until I leave." If faced with stiff opposition from a party of adventurers, she uses *forcecage* and *dominate person* to divide the party up into smaller groups. Only when she seems to have the upper hand against several foes does she unleash her breath weapon, hoping to kill multiple wounded combatants at once.

Breath Weapon (Su): 40-ft. cone, 24d6 acid, Reflex DC 32 half.

Curse of the *Emerald Scales* (Su): The magic that binds her to the *Emerald Scales* prevents Veerak from being destroyed before the armor, and further keeps her trapped in her mutilated body. Veerak is thus immune to death effects, disintegration, petrification, and polymorph. She is not subject to ability damage or ability drain to her physical ability scores, or to energy drain. She is not at risk of death by massive damage. Should the *Emerald Scales* be destroyed, Veerak loses this ability permanently.

Eternity of Pain (Su): Veerak's life is one of constant pain and agony. She suffers a –4 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks as a result. This penalty increases to –6 when within 1 mile of the *Emerald Scales of Veerak* and to –8 when within 100 feet of the armor. The base –4 penalty is included in her statistics above. Should the *Emerald Scales* be successfully destroyed, Veerak loses this ability permanently.

Frightful Presence (Ex): 360-ft. radius, HD 38 or less, Will save DC 36 negates.

Regeneration (Su): As long as the *Emerald Scales of Veerak* are in existence, no effect deals normal damage to Veerak. If Veerak loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. She can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump. Should the *Emerald Scales* be destroyed, Veerak loses this ability permanently.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): 3/day — *dominate person* (DC 24), *suggestion* (DC 20). 1/day — *plant growth*, *command plants* (DC 21). Caster level 17th; save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells: Veerak casts spells as a 17th level sorcerer. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/8/8/8/7/7/7/5; save DC 17 + spell level): 0 — *acid splash*, *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st — *disguise self*, *identify*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd — *alter self*, *arcane lock*, *bull's strength*, *detect thoughts*, *resist energy*; 3rd — *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *displacement*, *magic circle against good*, *nondetection*; 4th — *dimensional anchor*, *fire shield*, *scrying*, *stoneskin*; 5th — *cone of cold*, *magic jar*, *mind fog*, *teleport*; 6th — *greater dispel magic*, *legend lore*, *true seeing*; 7th — *banishment*, *forcecage*, *spell turning*; 8th — *discern location*, *greater planar binding*.

Stunted Growth (Ex): As a result of losing her scaly hide when she was a young adult, Veerak has never grown bigger than Large size, even though she has lived long enough to qualify as a Great Wyrm dragon. She has also lost the natural armor bonus, damage reduction, and spell resistance commensurate with a dragon of her age.

Equipment: *Amulet of mighty fists +2*, *pearl of power (6th)*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *ring of protection +3*, *wand of knock* (50 charges), *wand of slow* (20 charges), wand of *summon monster IV* (25 charges). Veerak also has up to 24,000 gp in gold, gems, potions, or arcane scrolls at any one time.

Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

The Filthy Cloak, the Corpse Banner, Shroud of the Ghoul Sheikh, Abaya of the Azmadid
By Khaldoun Khelil

The Tale of Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

Erangoul, the were-rat lich, created the artifact now known as the *Filthy Cloak* as the centerpiece of her foul regalia. Worn as a mark of authority over the monstrous vermin that policed her kingdom, Erangoul's regalia was composed of a cracked mask, a rusted gauntlet, a gore-soaked scepter and a grubby moth-eaten *Cloak*. From her crawling citadel she raided the civilized lands for slaves and riches, eventually carving out a small city-state of her own. After centuries of terrorizing the dusty townships that surrounded her stronghold, and crushing any army that came to cast her down, the undead ratling was finally destroyed by her own concubines. While her army of abominations pillaged the caravan routes, a revolt of the lich's harem soon spread unimpeded throughout her poorly defended spire. In the chaos, a jubilant mob of slave boys sacked the alchemical stores. The careless looters sparked a conflagration of magical fire that consumed the crawling tower, singing and crippling the twisted legs that gave it its name. As the villain's citadel burned, her surviving servants plundered the treasure vaults and ransacked the libraries. Of the foul regalia, only the *Cloak* survived; all knowledge of the other artifacts has been lost under the shifting sands. Even in death, Erangoul was a curse upon the land, as the princes of the nearby oasis towns fought over the charred scraps left behind by her passing.

During these brutal wars, the *Cloak* resurfaced as the tattered banner of an undead mercenary company from a far shore. Under that filthy flag they sold their swords to whoever could meet their price. Although the rotted warriors fought with great valor and honored all the oaths sworn by their dead lips, when the wars ended, their fat purses made them no friends. The victorious salt prince Najib umThani had declared himself the Rauss of the oases and made the city of Aranibad the capitol of his new kingdom. With a sermon from the burnt tower of Erangoul at the city's center, he betrayed the undead warriors who had fought so hard for his cause and coin. Denounced as the harbingers of the long wars, they fled back onto their dark ships, but most were torn apart by enraged mobs of refugees. Dismembered and deceived, the corpse soldiers fled to the east, and their tattered flag was not seen again for many years.

Though the reign of Najib was short, his two sons were quick to take up his mantle. The brothers, first princes of the Najibeem dynasty, split the oasis towns between them. One brother, mighty Sufian, raised his sword and ruled his kingdom as a warlord. He ruled from his ever-marching camp, extending his domain with each charge of cavalry. The other brother, crafty Haroun, took up a staff and used magic to enforce his will. It was Haroun who first enslaved the hot-tempered Djinn of the wastes and set them to building the gleaming cities of the twin empires. He took Aranibad as his seat, scribed the laws of the land along the base of the burnt tower and diverted the rivers that would make the city the center of the silk trade. The crafty mage even had a palace built to mark the engagement of his brother Sufian. But as is common among brothers and kings, jealousy grew in their hearts.

On the day of Sufian's wedding, his brother arrived carried aloft by a cloud of biting flies and surrounded by his Djinn servants. Haroun demanded that his brother surrender his betrothed and his half of the kingdom. When he was refused, he waved his hand and a sea of maggots boiled out of the earth to consume his brother's wife, while his powerful slaves shattered the conjugal palace they had only just built. Although he had come to depose his brother that day, it was crafty Haroun who paid the ultimate price. Mighty Sufian grew enraged and called upon all the gods of the desert wastes as he struck his brother's head from his body. Haroun's head was wrapped in the grubby rags he wore that fateful day, and interred beneath the burnt tower of Aranibad. Sufian became the Rauss of a united empire and ruled as a brooding tyrant. With his brother's enslaved Djinn under his control, he harassed the maidens of his empire and crushed even the smallest hint of dissent with paranoid ruthlessness.

The Najibeem dynasty survived through nine of Sufian's sons, each reveling in their forebears' draconian tactics. Although each was born of their lustful father's indiscretions, none questioned their right to rule after his passing. Each time a son of Sufian died, another would march a legion to the capital to declare himself the new Rauss of the Oases. This cycle continued again and again, until the night the dead rose from the highborn cemetery. Fearing the gods' displeasure, the peasants and laborers of Aranibad revolted, forcing the last of the true Najibeem rulers to flee for his life. After leaving his noble sheikhs

to fend for themselves, most of the Najibeem aristocracy was slaughtered. With gold borrowed from wealthy silk merchants, the few surviving sheikhs restored order with well-placed bribes and hired swords to clear the graveyards of the undead and public squares of the living. When no new son of Sufian appeared at the city gates, and with the old Rauss discredited, a Republic was declared. In reality, the surviving nobles ruled by the consensus of their elder sheikhs and the small number of Djinn slaves that still remained enforced the peace as they saw fit.

This hidden oligarchy ruled for nine decades but was shattered when one of the elder sheikhs was unmasked as a grave stalking-ghoul. Draped in the unearthed rags of the crafty Haroun, he had engineered the downfall of the Najibeem. The ghoul sheikh's family, the Azmad, had been the source of the undead that sparked the initial peasant revolt. Suspicion and acrimony soon overturned the long alliance of the noble families and civil war between the oasis cities was once again inevitable. Each family left the capital to rally their raiders and protect their home cities. Disease infested the land as the war raged and the trade routes became too dangerous to travel. One by one, the oases fell to the ghoul sheikh and the pestilent swarm he commanded. Decimated and weary, the last of the sheikhs surrendered to the undead overlord. Even the destitute descendants of the last Rauss were invited back to Aranibad as figureheads to satisfy the superstitious commoners.

And so it went that the Azmad family created an empire of their own, and although they ruled it as Viziers from the shadows behind the throne, it lasted many centuries. The infested *Cloak* of Erangoul, worn by the first ghoul sheikh, became their badge of secret rulership. When the ghoul sheikh finally fell from power, the family selected a new Vizier from amongst their elders. The former sheikh was ritually buried in a state of eternal undeath, and the new ghoul sheikh arose clothed in the tattered cape that so pleased the rat lich. Bolstered by the *Cloaks*' strange powers, the Azmadids became manipulative spy masters and brutal assassins to protect their position of preeminence. But those who come to rely so heavily on the *Filthy Cloak* rarely come to a good end. The other noble families, long undermined by the Azmadids, came to resent the great house's strange rituals. Their veneration of the scorpion and the bat, and the pitiful moans that emanated from the ancestral crypts at the base of their crumbling tower, finally became too much. Making common cause with the free Djinn of the wastes, the noble sheikhs rose against the Azmadids. Looting the Azmadid tombs, they exposed the sinister secret of the undead Viziers who had been locked howling in the earth. When the free Djinn dragged the screaming skeletons of famous Viziers through the streets of Aranibad, the aroused city dwellers began to burn and riot.

When the rebels freed the last of the Djinn warrior slaves, they besieged the ancient spider legged tower in the heart of Aranibad. Trapped in their capitol, the



Researching Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

As they research the past of the empires that flourished in the desert wastes, many scholars and historians unwittingly collected scraps of information about *Erangoul's Filthy Cloak*. Those wishing to identify the artifact are best served by a historian or well-versed storyteller. Those who seek to command the garment's powers need the services of a scholar of arcana. Of particular value to those who seek to learn the artifact's true abilities are sages that specialize in the trappings of the region's ancient nobility. The scriptorium of the Banu Suleiman has within its walls detailed accounts of the veiled practices of the Azmadid viziers and the strange abilities attributed to their elders.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	Bardic knowledge reveals the *Cloak*'s sinister origin as part of the Foul Regalia.
15	With Knowledge (arcana), the *Cloak*'s various powers over vermin can be confirmed. Knowledge (history) exposes its connection to the downfall of the great Najibeem Empire.
20	Knowledge (nobility and royalty) gives insight into the artifact's significance to the ancient Azmadids, and the various supernatural immunities enjoyed by their viziers.
25	Knowledge (arcana) divulges the *Cloak*'s many powers to summon and control insects. Bardic knowledge tells of the fate of those who wear the *Cloak* overlong, doomed to a fate of mindless living death.
35+	Knowledge (nobility and royalty) reveals the story of the rival sons of Najib umThani and how the *Filthy Cloak* allowed Haroun to turn into a swarm of flies to steal his brother's bride. Knowledge (history) gives insight into Erangoul's spiritual connection to the *Cloak*. The artifact's continued existence could signify that the hoary lich still walks the earth and that the key to its annihilation is tied to the destruction of Erangoul herself.

Due to the inclusion of myth and hearsay, Knowledge (history) and Bardic knowledge can often lead even the most studious researcher astray. Common misconceptions about the *Cloak* include rumors that it has some power over were-rats or somehow warps the wearers' libido. A Knowledge (history) roll in the high 20s reveals the artifact's connection to the first Najibeem rulers, but might also lead an investigator to believe that the *Cloak* had hidden magical powers of seduction.

Azmadids held out for nine days and nine nights before the gates of their citadel were dashed in. But behind the barricades the vengeful mob found only rot and gore. The twisted Azmad family had been murdered and skinned within their fortress; even as an army battered at the gates, no one was seen to leave or enter. It is believed a few of the Azmads escaped, but the *Cloak* that was venerated by their clan was nowhere to be seen. Now the mighty canals that fed the city of Aranibad have long dried up and dust and ash are all that remain, for the Djinn finally had their revenge on that cursed place. For those looking for the *Cloak* today, rumor tells it can be found with a legion of tireless soldiers that march under a standard of swirling flies, in service to whatever tyrant crosses their pallid palms with enough gold.

Studying Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

To the naked eye, this artifact appears as a foul cape composed of dark moss and infested with lazy black grubs. Two small hooks made of chitin clasp under the neck to secure the *Cloak* to its wearer. No other decoration adorns it except for the occasional gold fiber sewn into the mossy cape. Though disgusting when examined closely, from a distance the *Cloak* merely looks shabby and ill kept. The strange materials used in the construction of the artifact would seem to make it easily identifiable to those who know of it, but more often then not, the *Cloak* is discounted as a soiled rag. When worn or touched, the *Cloak* wriggles and squirms against the skin. When held close to the ear, the faint chirping and masticating of the grubs is easily heard. The few written accounts of this sensation penned by the Azmadid viziers describe it as comforting, some even going so far as to claim that the reassuring caress of the *Cloak* was addictive.

When its magical aura is viewed, the *Cloak* writhes with the power of several schools of magic. Powerful tendrils of necromancy and conjuration are woven throughout it and seem to grasp and fondle those who wear it. The *identify* spell only reveals the *Cloak*'s magical enhancements to saving throws and natural armor. *True seeing* shows the artifact to be a confusing amalgamation of magical insects, bound together by mystical oaths made physically manifest: a brood of vermin trapped in the shape of a *Cloak*, each one tied to another by a fiery thread of cursive script.

Powers of Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

According to recovered Azmadid scrolls, the *Filthy Cloak* had a host of bizarre and frightening powers. Viziers empowered to wear the *Cloak* boasted of perfect health and took great pride in never fearing poison. The ragged garment was also said to turn aside deadly blows and allow its wearer to withstand great punishment. But its greatest ability was dominion over the creeping things of the world. Foul swarms and crawling minions would grow from the cape's folds or appear from nothing to obey the wearer. And like vermin, the *Cloak*'s wearer could tunnel and crawl like a worm and as the spider, sneak and skitter through the cracks between the floorboards.

Using Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

The powers of the *Filthy Cloak* do not become known to its wearer when he places the thing on his shoulders. Although trial and error are often the only way to uncover the full range of its abilities, the constant powers of the garment require no special knowledge or activation.

The activated powers of the *Cloak* require command words spoken in Erangoul's arcane code language, known as Corpsecant. Some of these incantations can still be found scattered throughout the ruins of the Azmadid Empire. Supposedly Erangoul herself scribed a tome detailing all of the artifact's powers. If this book did somehow survive the ages, it probably sank into the sands with the charred husk of the crawling tower long ago. Those who make common use of the *Cloak*'s greater powers quickly find the pests living within it long for more than just the wearer's company. It was not coincidence that led the Azmadids to bury their mad undying viziers, or that most of the *Cloak*'s most infamous owners rotted away before their time.

Constant Powers

Erangoul's Filthy Cloak provides the following powers without need of a command word and without harming the wearer. All spell effects are cast as a 20th-level sorcerer.

- +3 enhancement bonus to natural armor.
- +3 resistance bonus to saving throws.
- +4 enhancement bonus to turn resistance.
- +5 enhancement bonus to Hide and Move Silently skill checks.
- Blindsense 20 feet.
- Continuous *sanctuary* (DC 17), but only warding against vermin.
- Damage reduction 5/silver or bludgeoning.
- Darkvision 60 feet.
- Diseases within a 120-foot-radius receive a +5 profane bonus to their DCs.
- Immunity to sneak attacks, critical hits, poison and disease.
- Spell resistance 13.
- *Spider climb* at will.

Activated Powers

All of the following powers of *Erangoul's Filthy Cloak* require the proper command word to be spoken aloud. The first time an activated power is used in a day, a living user suffers 1 point of Constitution drain, but may then use any of the powers of the *Cloak* for 24 hours without consequence. An undead wearer suffers one point of Wisdom drain instead, and risks becoming locked in an endless nightmare-plagued coma. Some say that the voracious lice infesting the garment are only comforted when the foul regalia are fully joined, restraining the *Cloak* from feasting on its wearer. Anyone using the *Cloak* who has this ability drain healed or reversed in any fashion finds all of the *Cloak*'s powers inactive for 24 hours afterwards. All spell effects are cast as a 20th-level sorcerer.

At Will: *gaseous form* (wearer appears as a swarm of insects, rather than mist, and has a fly speed of 20; otherwise identical to the spell), rotting touch (cause a dead body to instantly decay as though a full year had passed), *summon swarm*

2/day: *Mass charm monster* (DC 20, affects vermin only, despite their mindless quality)

1/day: blast of maggots (ranged touch, 8d6 magical piercing damage against living creatures, 4d6 against nonliving creatures or objects), *dominate monster* (DC 25, affects vermin only, despite their mindless quality), *insect plague*

1/week: *creeping doom*

Consequences

Those who wear the *Cloak* for prolonged periods come to appreciate the comforting writhing of the grubs next to their skin and the sweet melody of the murmuring vermin. Few can bring themselves to remove the *Cloak* even after discovering it is consuming them. Casting off the *Cloak* requires a DC 23 Will save, and only one attempt to remove the artifact can be made in a day.

Those who do finally succumb to the *Cloak* risk becoming the horrid undead known as the worm-eaten. Whether from battle wounds or the garments' own incessant gnawing, anyone who dies wrapped in *Erangoul's Filthy Cloak* rises as one of these depraved monsters.

A subtler disadvantage to using the *Cloak* comes in its mystical connection to the rat lich Erangoul. While a truly devoted scholar may discover the danger of rising as one of the worm-eaten, few will ever unearth the effect the *Cloak* has on its wearer's spirit. Infused with the lingering malice of its deceased creator, the *Filthy Cloak*

punishes those that do not act in a fashion befitting its master. Anyone upholding a promise or acting selflessly while wearing the artifact must immediately make a DC 23 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of Constitution (or Wisdom, if undead) drain. Those who uphold the ideals of the crawling tower may find themselves rewarded by the garment grubs. If a *Cloak* wearer's alignment shifts towards chaos or evil, the *Cloak* allows its greater powers to be used for 1d10 days without ability drain. Similarly, if a *Cloak* wearer causes another character's alignment to shift towards chaos or evil, the *Cloak* allows its greater powers to be used for 1d4 days without ability drain.

Reactive Traits

Much like the bloated pests that nuzzle in its mossy exterior, *Erangoul's Filthy Cloak* is inert and impassive to its environment. Only when the *Cloak* nears the ruins of the Azmadid Empire does it come to seeming life and the high-pitched murmur of cicadas fills the air. This reaction may simply be the artifact's excitement upon entering familiar territory. But a more sinister explanation may have more credence. Created as the centerpiece of a disgusting set of artifacts, the *Cloak* may long to be reunited with its counterparts in the Foul Regalia. Could the vermin in the *Cloak* be calling out to these lost others? Or is it even the Foul Regalia that the *Filthy Cloak* longs to be reunited with; could the excited chirping herald the proximity of something or someone else?

Using Erangoul's Filthy Cloak in a Campaign

Erangoul's Filthy Cloak is easily used in any campaign. The drawbacks of the *Cloak* discourage its casual use, but are reasonable enough to tempt most characters to try their luck. Also, the artifact's use of secret command words allows a DM to limit a character's access to its activated powers, while allowing PCs to uncover more powers as part of an ongoing adventure. *Erangoul's Filthy Cloak* is best used in settings that have a long and epic past. Desert campaigns filled with ancient ruins and genie caravans are also a perfect fit for this artifact. A campaign that features the *Cloak* more centrally could make it religiously important to a cult of disease or the symbol of a forgotten rat god.

Adventure Seeds

The Legion of the Dead

An undead army flying a ragged banner of pestilence is ravaging coastal towns without mercy. This legion of rotting mercenaries kills in the name of a foreign prince, his vengeance against a local noblewoman who spurned his advances. This so-called prince hopes to terrorize the woman's family into submission, so he may steal her off to his strange land. Can the foreign aristocrat be bargained with? And if not, can this army of disease ridden undead be defeated? And what of the strange tattered flag the soldiers venerate?

Curse of the Djinn

Strange genies have raised a copper city from the desert sands, filled with voracious insects that devour all who enter to the bone. Only those capable of surviving the insatiable vermin could hope to discover the ancient secrets of the place, or what the genies intended to accomplish by resurrecting it. Could the copper city be the fabled capitol of the Azmadid and Najibeem Empires? And why did the genies that unearthed it leave without even entering?

The Rat Lich Lives

The dread wererat lich Erangoul survived after all. Finally regaining her strength, only with her precious *Cloak* will she be powerful enough to recreate the Foul Regalia. Once adorned with her cursed artifacts, she could re-establish her sheikhdom of horror. First, however, she must get the *Cloak* back into her skeletal paws. As a matter of course, Erangoul probably terrorizes the sages that have been studying the ancient history of her region in hopes of scaring up some clues. Even if the mastermind behind these brutal slayings is unmasked, is anyone powerful enough to stop the master of the crawling tower? Liches are notoriously difficult to kill, could the artifact itself be the vermin mage's true weakness?

From Out of the Wastes

The Azmad clan has been reduced to a band of thieves and assassins, but they still remember the old myths of their past glory. Somewhere the key to their resurgence lies buried. A band of particularly adventuresome Azmadids begins to explore a burnt keep that resembles the tower of their legends. While clues to the *Filthy Cloak*'s whereabouts are hidden there, the local duke's tax collector and his fat purse have easily distracted them. What starts out as a simple adventure to rid a keep of a few brigands, embroils the party in an ancient story of corruption and betrayal.

Destroying Erangoul's Filthy Cloak

Erangoul's Filthy Cloak is an item infused with the evil of undead mage that created it. As it longs to be in the company of its creator, the *Cloak* twists all those who wear it to better resemble her. As the artifact consumes her body and soul, eventually a wearer's thoughts may well turn to destroying the foul thing once and for all. Many have tried to destroy the shabby coat, but the evil it has wrought through the centuries has given the *Cloak* a strange invulnerability. Although sages tend to disagree, the learned scholars of the Banu Suleiman have agreed on three possible weaknesses.

• If Erangoul still walks the earth, killing her would destroy the *Cloak*'s "soul." This method could have unforeseen consequences as the magic of pestilence inscribed into the *Cloak* could be unleashed onto the land as a deadly plague.

• Redeeming the last of the Azmadid would rob the artifact of its greatest victory, the debasement of a once honorable family. Finding the family would be difficult in itself, and convincing them to atone for their family's sins even harder. But once the last Azmad has asked forgiveness, the *Cloak* crumbles to ash.

• The *Filthy Cloak* is but one part of the Foul Regalia. To destroy any item in the collection, all of the artifacts must be collected and returned to the crawling tower where they were created. Then they can be burned in a simple pyre with no ill effect.

New Monster

When the last of a living being's life is consumed by *Erangoul's Filthy Cloak*, she immediately rises again as a particularly gruesome type of undead. Any humanoid that dies while wearing the *Cloak* suffers this lamentable fate, no matter the cause of their passing. The creation of the worm-eaten was probably an unintended side effect of the dark magic used in the creation of the *Filthy Cloak*, as Erangoul certainly never meant the artifact to be worm by any one else. While a few of the early Azmadid Viziers are known to have undergone this horrible transformation, none survived very long before being destroyed by their relatives. A few scholars insist that the worm-eaten believe they have a greater purpose that is tied to the artifact that birthed them. What that purpose may be is a secret the worm-eaten keep to themselves.

Worm-Eaten

Medium Undead

Hit Dice:	6d12+3 (42 hp)
Initiative:	+6
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 10 ft., climb 15 ft.
Armor Class:	17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple:	+3/+6
Attack:	Claw +7 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack:	2 claws +7 melee (1d6+3)
Space/Reach:	5ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Disease, feasting, improved grab
Special Qualities:	Create spawn, damage reduction 5/silver or bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., swarm form, turn resistance +2, undead qualities
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 14, Con —, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 9
Skills:	Climb +17, Hide +13, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +13, Spot +10
Feats:	Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (claw), Toughness
Environment:	Underground and Deserts
Organization:	Solitary, pack (1 plus 2–5 ghouls) or cult (3 plus 2–7 ghouls)
Challenge Rating:	5
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement Range:	7–12 HD (Medium), 13 –18 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment:	—

A stooped and ragged man shambles towards you. A mass of fat grubs pour from his open mouth as he looses a hungry moan.

The worm-eaten are cunning predators with no recollection of their former lives. Stalking abandoned buildings and treacherous caravan routes, they forever seek living flesh to suppress their insatiable hunger. Although they often haunt underground crypts, the craving for fresher meat inevitably drives them to the surface. Sometimes worm-eaten can be found to congregate with ghouls, who seem to pay them a special reverence. Larger congregations of these monsters can sometimes be found performing strange religious rites in the dark underneath the surface world.

Worm-eaten speak any languages they understood in life, but have little use for conversation. More ancient worm-eaten speak Corpsecant, the secret language of the region's undead.

Combat

Worm-eaten often lie in wait for prey on ceilings and walls, using their superior climbing skills to surprise opponents. Due to their voracious appetites, worm-eaten pursue their meals with great gusto and allow few obstacles to deter them. Worm-eaten feast in combat as often as they can, latching onto their victims to chew and grind with their sharp teeth. When found in groups, worm-eaten employ no special tactics, simply allowing bloodlust to dictate their actions.

Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid slain by a worm-eaten becomes a worm-eaten in 1d4 rounds. Spawn are under the command of the worm-eaten that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever — bite, Fortitude DC 13, incubation period 1d3 days; damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Feasting (Ex): In every round a worm-eaten successfully maintains a grapple, it deals its opponent 1d3 points of Constitution damage from its savage gnawing and biting. Feasting may also infect a victim with a disease.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a worm-eaten must hit with both claw attacks. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can feast.

Swarm Form (Su): As a standard action, a worm-eaten can assume *gaseous form* at will as the spell (caster level 6th), but it can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability. In this form the worm-eaten resembles a swarm of beetles, worms, grubs and/or flies.

Skills: Worm-eaten have a +2 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks, and a +8 racial bonus to Climb checks.

Fang of the Devil Tigers

Phurba of the Rakshasha Lords, Rava's Spite, Blessing of Abhasana
By G. Holochwost

The Tale of the Fang of the Devil Tigers

During the great war between the two kingdoms of Asuja and Devaja, mortals moved through the world in strife and violence. No peace could be found as tribes were divided in bloody conflict, and no priest or king could unify them. It was not until the rise of the House of Anandamukti that any hope of unification was possible. Born from the warrior-caste of the Andandamukti clan came a wise and skillful knight who was as enlightened as he was strong. Taking up the golden spear of his ancestors, Arju Anandamukti forged a peace between the kingdoms by means of a military crusade that lasted almost twenty years. Weary of battle and pleased with the civilization he had made with his own hands, King Arju retired from military service and took as his wife a beautiful girl, named Kamari, from the village of Sambava. Kamari and Arju fell deeply in love, finding refuge in the peace that they gave each other.

But it was not long before evil found its way to the heart of peace and the courts of Arju. The raksasha servants of Rava the Hateful were sent to the House of Anandamukti to seek out the cause of the war's end and destroy it utterly. When the Raksasha spies arrived, they were welcomed into the feast hall of Arju and given kind treatment, delicious food, and beautiful entertainment. "Ah", the Raksasha called Marayama said, "These things must be the source of peace. We must find a way to end them". So, using dark magics, the raksasha called Azanaya ruined the food and wine, the raksasha called Azista heckled the musicians and dancers and made them flee the palace, and the one called Abhidruh postured with anger and wrath and caused all to retract in fear and silence. Nonetheless, King Arju was undeterred, for his peace was not caused by his appetites, but by the love he had for his beloved Kamari, and the love she had for him. So it was Kamari, Marayama realized, that must be taken from Arju to return the world to war.

But the death of Queen Kamari was not something that could be as easily accomplished as the destruction of the feast, for Queen Kamari was a devotee of the great Preserver and was protected by his blessings. So, Rava sent out his minions to search for a way to kill the Queen of Arju's heart. All about the lands they searched, never

Researching the Fang of the Devil Tigers

The tale of the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* is well known throughout the land. In fact, there are countless versions of the tale, altering motivations and the prominence of favorite characters in accordance with local custom and preference. However, the *Fang* is considered to be a legend, a metaphor for the hate and silence shared between Rava and the Dark Naga Lord, Abhasana. In order to learn of the actual dagger's existence, the characters must make contact with devotees of Abhasana or Rava who have access to black sutras detailing the creation of evil magical items. In addition, the characters might contact the spirit of the dead Kamari, who can fully describe the weapon of her demise and how it felt when it stripped her of her life.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Fang* was created by various diabolic powers, to murder the wife of an ancient king.
20	It was created by Abhasana, Lord of the Dark Nagas, at the request of Rava the Hateful. It is capable of slaying those protected by the gods themselves.
25	The weapon was forged from the blood of three raksasha lords and the fang of the Abhasana. In addition to its hideous life-stealing abilities, it can also render the wielder unseen.
30+	The *Fang*'s killing powers are most effective against those of good alignment; such beings suffer horrible effects when attacked with the dagger. The wielder is subject to all wards and spells that specifically target evil outsiders.

In most cases, a failed roll indicates that the character has heard a wildly reworked version of the *Fang of the Devil Tigers*' tale, implying that it was Arju's sword that slew Kamari, that Kamari slew herself when Arju became evil, or something similar. Generally, a poor roll concerning the dagger's powers is in accordance with such mistold tales.



stopping until they came upon the black mountain of Nirjana where Abhasana, the Lord of the Dark Naga held his court. When the four servants of Rava told Abhasana what they desired, he spoke unto them, "What devotion will you show to prove the darkness of your intentions?" Azanaya, Azista, and Abhidruh looked befuddled by the dark serpents cryptic words, but Marayama swiftly cut down his companions, spilling their blood at the foot of the naga's throne. With a haunting smile of approval on his perfect face, Abhasana took up the blood of the three dead raksasha and, plucking a perfect fang from his own mouth, immersed it in the unholy fluid. When Abhasana withdrew the fang from the mingled blood, it had taken on the form of a masterfully crafted katar, with a winding blade that danced with whirls of violet hate beneath the light of the moon. It was this weapon that the Devil Tiger Marayama placed at the feet of his demon lord Rava — and it was with this weapon, on that fateful night beneath the fullest of moons, that Rava cut down Kamari while she walked alone in the palace gardens.

So it happened, on the day he found his bride cut down among a bed of white champa flowers, that King Arju looked up toward the heavens. Calling out the 108 names of the Preserver, swore that as the Gods could not preserve the one thing dear to him, he would send his armies against all that had been created. In this way, Arju Anandamukti became the Cruel Hand of Rava and war shook the land once more.

Studying the Fang of the Devil Tigers

The *Fang of the Devil Tigers* is a kris-bladed katar (punching dagger) approximately 18 inches from grip to tip. It is made of an alien violet metal that swirls with a strange luminescence what it is examined under the light of the moon. The blade is always cold, even after being held in the hottest flame or bathed in the warmest blood. The strangest apparent characteristic of the blade manifests after it has been used to slay one of good alignment, when the blade emits a subtle purring sound: the feline approval of the three raksasha who were slain to create it.

Because the blade was forged from the fang of one of the greatest assassins the world has ever known, it is immune to the effects of *locate object* and many other divinations. *Detect magic* reveals that the magic it radiates is overwhelming and necromantic in origin.

When targeted by *detect evil*, the weapon flares like a beacon. Any good-aligned caster using *detect evil* on the *Fang* must make a DC 18 Will save or be subject to the effects of *enervation* as cast by a 16th-level wizard.

Powers of the Fang of the Devil Tigers

The *Fang of the Devil Tigers* is an intelligent katar of artifact-level potency. The weapon does exceptional damage against adversaries of good alignment.

Using the Fang of the Devil Tigers

Only an evil character can make full use of the *Fang*'s powers. It contains within it a trace of the essence of the rakshasa who died to create it, and a hint of Abhasana's malice. Any evil character wielding the blade gains full use of its constant abilities.

A nonevil character who wields the weapon *seems* to gain full use of its constant abilities; even a good character does not gain the standard negative level for wielding an *unholy* weapon. Such a character can wield the weapon in combat, until one of the following events occurs.

- The character encounters a foe who is obviously too powerful for the character to face, even with the artifact.
- The character encounters a king, baron, noble, city official, or any other ruler of good alignment.
- The character encounters a friend or loved one of one of his companions (such as the wife or father of a fellow party-member).

The instant one of these events occurs, the character is all but overwhelmed by a wave of hatred from the blade. He must make a DC 25 Will save or instantly attack that individual or creature with full intent to kill, for the artifact wishes to see any non-evil wielders dead, or forced to commit atrocities. If the wielder makes the save, or is physically prevented from killing the target, the *Fang* utterly ceases to function for him, and instantly bestows the standard negative levels for an *unholy* weapon. If the wielder fails the save and successfully slays the target, the weapon continues to function until the *next* time one of the above circumstances arises, at which time the process repeats itself.

To access the artifact's activated powers, the character must utter dark prayers to Rava and Abhasana. An evil wielder of the *Fang* finds the knowledge of these prayers in his head, even if he has never before heard them. As these are essentially prayers to other deities, evil clerics and blackguards may anger their own gods by uttering them.

Constant Powers

The *Fang of the Devil Tigers* is a *+5 unholy punching dagger*. While wielding the artifact, a character gains darkvision 120 feet, a +10 profane bonus to Listen and Spot, and is under a constant *nondetection* effect, as cast by a 16th-level wizard.

Activated Powers

Making use of the *Fang*'s activated powers requires a standard action and the recitation of a dark prayer, as discussed above. These function as spell-like abilities, with a caster level of 16.

Spell-Like Abilities: At Will — *detect good, detect evil, darkness*; 3/day — *improved invisibility*; 1/day — *slay living* (DC 24).

Finally, the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* also possesses the fabled ability to penetrate the protections provided by the gods. The fine points of this quality are left to the DM to decide, as the precise mechanics may vary depending on the style of the campaign and the presence of its gods and divine magics. This may be represented through a powerful use of *dispel good* a few times per day, the ability to cast *Morden's disjunction* on divine magics, spell resistance against divine magics, or even a purely narrative effect without mechanics. The DM should determine the precise requirements based on her view of the gods in her world.

Consequences

Because of the unspoken pact formed between the demon Rava and the Dark Naga lord, the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* produces a strange side-effect which often proves a gross disadvantage in the presence of righteous priests and holy arcanists. While using the katar, the wielder is considered to be both a humanoid and an evil outsider (native), whichever is *least* advantageous, for purposes of spells and spell-like abilities.

Ambient Effects

Because the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* was practically constructed out of strife itself, all Sense Motive checks within 30 feet of the dagger suffer a –8 penalty.

Using the Fang of the Devil Tigers in a Campaign

The *Fang of the Devil Tigers* is an abomination created by a marriage of two great evils, the hate of Rava and the primordial cruelty of Abhasana. Thus, it is unlikely that any hero would seek the dagger out for any reason other than its destruction. However, there are some situations in which the dagger might be necessary. Prophecies, for example, often have strange conditions: such as the death of someone protected by the gods. In these strange instances, a weapon such as the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* could be quite useful and even, in an unconventional way, serve the purposes of good. Nonetheless, the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* is an incredibly evil entity in its own right and maintains the utmost resistance against any attempt to use its powers for good or peace.

In the case of a campaign where the PCs are evil, the weapon could take the role of a major prize, something comparable to Excalibur or the Spear of Longinus. Few items could benefit an evil character more;, the item could be the subject of a major conflict between evil factions, or could be in the possession of a group of benevolent priests who are attempting to guard it until it can be destroyed.

In the either case, the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* should be used in high-level campaigns. If it used against anything but the strongest PCs by a cunning wielder, the PCs will

surely perish. If it is used by evil PCs against good enemies, there is little the opposition can do to survive unless they are of adequate level.

Adventure Seeds

Before the War

This campaign begins in the court of Arju a year after his wedding to Kamiri. It is on the evening of the great feast when the four raksasha visit the good king's court. The PCs witness the evil works of Rava's servants and decide to follow them in order to investigate why they would do such things. It this way, the characters learn of the demon Rava's desire to return the world to war.

In this adventure, characters have the opportunity to prevent the *Fang* from ever coming into being, or even to stop the assassination of Kamiri. However, if the characters fail at both of these things they could possibly be saddled with the blame for the end of a golden age. Because of this, they could be ordered by the gods themselves to destroy this terrible weapon they allowed to come into the world.

Against the False Teacher

The characters must find the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* and use it to slay an insane priest who, like Kamari, is protected by the gods. The priest, like many lost mystics, has misapprehended the words of his god and now walks the road of destruction, though he is a servant of the Preserver. Because the priest is not truly evil, the protection of the Preserver — given to the man when he was first granted the ability to use divine magic — remains in place. The Preserver has promised to never let harm fall upon the deranged priest, so it is up to the heroes to figure out a way around this obstacle.

In this campaign, the heroes must unravel the lore of the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* and seek it out to stop the insane priest. The facts of the weapon's origins should be obscured and slowly trickled into the ongoing story in little bits. Once the location and nature of the weapon are fully known to the PCs, they likely seek it out with total conviction. Raksasha and dark naga could be used as duplicitous NPCs who guide the heroes towards the dagger under false pretenses. One of the PCs, not knowing the weapon is a tool of horrible evil in and of itself, could become a horrible villain himself, forced to commit evil acts by the weapon's malevolence.

Destroying the Fang of the Devil Tigers

Reasons for destroying the *Fang of the Devil Tigers* are many. Nonetheless, undoing such a great evil is no easy feat. Only one of the three methods below could possibly destroy such a weapon.

- Trick Abhasana into swallowing the dagger.
- Lay the dagger upon the altar of the Preserver in his heavenly realm.
- Smash the dagger, during a lunar eclipse, with a mallet made from the feathers of a half-celestial roc.

If the *Fang* is destroyed, Rava's hold on the world is broken. This could mean any number of things. King Arju could come to his senses and renounce his evil and the Preserver could return to him his armies and peaceful kingdom. Rava himself could come before the PCs and curse them with some horrible burden or task. Abhasana, struck with excruciating pain as his tooth is destroyed, might send his minions to find the broken pieces for a terrible rite that will re-forge an even more terrifying weapon.

New Feats

Abhasana, the Lord of Dark Nagas, is considered one of the world's most potent assassins. Rava, a dark god and lord among devils, is an entity of pure malice and hate. Both have orders devoted to serving them, some of whom have developed their own semi-mystical techniques.

Mark of Abhasana

You are a sworn assassin of the Dark Naga Lord Abhasana, and possess abilities that mark you as his hand.

Prerequisites: Dex 15, sneak attack +1d6, evil alignment.

Benefit: Any time you use poison to harm or slay someone else, the saving throw DC increases by 2. In addition, you receive a +2 to all Bluff checks.

Mark of Rava

You are a pledged minion of the Demon Lord Rava the Hateful, and have been initiated into the mysteries of his destructive cult.

Prerequisites: Cha 15, ability cast *detect thoughts* as a spell or spell-like ability, lawful evil alignment.

Benefit: Your enchantment spells gain a +2 to their DC when targeting creatures of good alignment. In addition, you receive a +2 to Disguise checks.

Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

By C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

Ages ago, an ancient red dragon known as Kruk'Tha, who had terrorized the lands for thousands of years, disappeared. While many assumed he had either been slain or fallen to the ravages of time, Kruk'Tha had simply gone into seclusion. With centuries of wealth spilled out on his floor and the bodies of a hundred adventurers mummified on his walls as trophies, Kruk'Tha's thoughts turned to his rapidly approaching death. While Kruk'Tha didn't specifically have anything keeping him from passing on, he wasn't yet ready to go. He surmised that the greatest accomplishment left to him would be conquering death itself.

Kruk'tha spent years poring over ancient texts, searching for magical means of at the very least prolonging his life, and for decades the answer eluded him. It wasn't until he discovered a text detailing the history of a long dead tribe of savages known as the Skin Dancers that he believed he'd found his answer. From that point on, Kruk'Tha spent his wealth and time researching what little could be found about their habits, rituals and rites.

The Skin Dancers were known in their time to flay the skin from their enemies after a battle and sew it to themselves to absorb their strength. It was said that the memories and abilities of someone flayed in this manner would live on for as long as the person wearing it lived. Kruk'Tha, after having worked out the Skin Dancer rites, added another element to the ritual. This would not only enable the flayed skin to live on beyond the death of the host wearing it, but would allow the skin to retain some sentience, and eventually take control of the host altogether.

Kruk'Tha quickly set about preparing the rituals and enslaving the priests needed to perform them. When all was ready, Kruk'Tha lay down to die and the priests, using specially prepared blades, carved the skin and scales from his body. Laying in a pool of his own blood, Kruk'tha died and his spirit passed on into his flayed skin. The priests then sewed the skin and scales into a medium-sized outfit that covered almost every inch of a humanoid body. Of the priests, the most powerful had been selected by Kruk'Tha to bear his flesh. While it took two years for Kruk'Tha's consciousness to overcome that of the priest's, he had finally achieved his immortality.

But ultimately, the priest succumbed to old age, and upon his death Kruk'Tha's skin simply fell off of his body. Throughout the years, the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* has passed through many hands and been sewn to many an evil cultist or power-hungry adventurer. Sometimes Kruk'Tha has managed to wrest away control of their minds, and sometimes he has not. His spirit persists, however, awaiting the chance to possess a truly worthy host, and to show the world that nothing can keep him down forever.

Studying the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

The *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* is a complete set of skin, crafted for a Medium humanoid from the flesh of a red dragon. It is comprised of over a dozen pieces, each with many holes along the edge to be threaded onto the various corresponding body parts. Once all of the pieces are sewn on, the pieces merge with the wearer and become seamless dragonskin, and the wearer takes on the appearance of a red half-dragon mingled with the wearer's original race.

Powers of the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

The *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* transforms the wearer into a half-dragon and affords him the ability to change into a dragon once a month.

Using the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

Activating the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* is an arduous, dangerous process that is best accomplished with the aid of one or more healers. To become one with the skin, one must literally sew the *Flayed Skin* to his own flesh with a needle and coarse thread. The entire process takes 20+1d20 minutes and must be uninterrupted, or else the pieces must be removed and the entire process started over. Each minute of sewing does 1d6 points of piercing damage to the wearer. This damage may be healed by another, such as an attending healer, but not by the wearer himself, as any attempt at spellcasting or skill use interrupts the process. Anything that prevents this damage (like DR) or a natural armor bonus greater than +3 prevents the needle from breaking the skin and makes this process impossible. Once the sewing is complete, the *Skin* merges seamlessly

Researching the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

While much can be found on the history and terror that is Kruk'Tha himself, very little has been written about his *Flayed Skin*. Most that can be cobbled together comes from oral stories passed down from generation to generation about that dragon who may live forever. Bardic Knowledge is the best means of learning this information. A Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) check may be substituted, but with +5 to the DC.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	Kruk'Tha was an evil tyrant, even by red dragon standards, and was feared far and wide until he disappeared. Stories have it that he lives, even today, many centuries after his rumored death.
20	It is said that Kruk'Tha carved the skin right off of his own body and that it may be worn by others to gain the power and appearance of Kruk'Tha.
25	Sewing the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* onto oneself transforms the wearer into a being half human, half dragon.
30+	The wearer of the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* can, once per moon, transform himself into a young form of Kruk'Tha himself, but the weak of mind can fall prey to Kruk'Tha's awesome will and allow the long dead beast to gain control of them indefinitely.

Some stories maintain that Kruk'Tha did not part with his skin willingly, but instead had it taken from him by a bold adventurer who, adding insult to injury, had the hide made into a powerful weapon against evil. Others maintain that the skin causes dragons to revere the wearer — a misconception that can be fatal to disprove.

to the wearer and instantly heals any damage the wearer has taken that has not already been healed.

Constant Powers

The wearer of the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* gains the half-dragon template as if born of a red dragon parent and may opt to take levels of any half-dragon character or prestige class, if those optional rules are being used.

Activated Powers

Once per month, the wearer of the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* may transform into an adult red dragon for up to one hour, gaining all its special abilities, attacks and spells. This transformation requires a full round action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

Consequences

Dragons of every alignment and kind find the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* strongly distasteful and consider the wearer to be an abomination. While anyone else sees the wearer as a half-dragon, dragons themselves see right through the *Skin* and see the seams where it was sewn on. There is no magical means to disguise this. The wearer suffers a –10 penalty to all Charisma-based skill checks involving anything with the dragon subtype.

Any time the wearer activates the ability to transform into a red dragon, there is a 1% cumulative chance that Kruk'Tha himself awakens inside the skin. This roll is made any time the transformation takes place and occurs before the transformation is complete. When Kruk'Tha awakens, the wearer must immediately make a DC 30 Will save. Failure results in the complete obliteration of the character's mind; he is effectively dead, and Kruk'Tha is now in control of the character. Once in control, Kruk'Tha resumes his original form — that of a great wyrm red dragon, not the mere adult whose form the skin normally provides. Additionally, Kruk'Tha can transform himself into a humanoid creature — specifically, he assumes the physical form of the individual who died wearing the skin. Kruk'Tha has access to all the deceased character's racial and class abilities during this time, though he loses his own for the duration.

The wearer may not be resurrected in any way until Kruk'Tha is killed, and even then only by a *wish*, *limited wish* or *miracle* spell.

If the wearer succeeds on his save to resist losing his body to the dragon, Kruk'Tha may speak to him any time he chooses, but may only make another attempt at control if and when the wearer chooses to activate the transformation special ability again. After the first attempt at control, the wearer becomes fully aware of the dangers of transformation.

The *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* may only be removed from a living wearer by the use of a *wish*, *limited wish* or *miracle* spell. The moment someone wearing the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* (or Kruk'Tha himself) is killed, the wearer's corpse turns back into his original form and the skin falls harmlessly to the ground, ready to be sewn onto someone else.

Reactive Traits

The *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* is immune to damage from any spell, and once sewn on is considered a permanent part of the wearer. Thus it can no longer be specifically targeted by any spells or effects, though the wearer can still be targeted as usual.

Using the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha in a Campaign

The *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* is best used in mid- to high level campaigns — anywhere an adult red dragon opponent or character wouldn't be particularly unbalancing. However, low-level characters could encounter an NPC or opponent who has already used his ability to transform for the month, and is therefore essentially a normal half-dragon foe. Wearers of the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* make for interesting opponents that can keep the party unsure of what to expect. The transformation of an ally, party member or powerful NPC into Kruk'Tha himself can be a campaign-changing ordeal.

Adventure Seeds

Where Be Dragons?

A town or city (perhaps the PCs' hometown) is being ravaged by a large red dragon once per month on the night of the new moon. A local ranger managed to track the dragon to his lair, but was unwilling to follow it any further. The PCs have been asked to help find and kill the dragon. Once they've geared up to take down the dragon, they make their way to the dragon's lair, only to find that the beast isn't there. In its place is a half-dragon unhappy with the intrusion. While prepared to fight a dragon, the PCs may be unprepared for a powerful sorcerer or agile half-dragon rogue making use of his carefully prepared lair. And if the PC's decide to assault on the night of the new moon, they may be in for the fight they were prepared for to begin with. In either case, once the enemy falls, the PCs are left with the strange *Skin*, and little notion of what to do with it.

The Enemy Within

Having discovered the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha*, and possibly receiving less than accurate information about it, an ambitious PC might choose to use it to his own ends. This could be very beneficial at the onset, and seem like a player's dream come true. But when the player is confronted with possession by Kruk'Tha himself, failing the roll could change the lives of the party forever. Will Kruk'Tha reveal himself, kill the PCs and leave for his new life? Or will he instead stay quiet, impersonating the PC for some time and using the party to accomplish his own schemes and ends. The party must try to discover just what's happened to their friend as he begins to act more and more bizarre.

The Schemes of Kruk'Tha

One of the region's great heroes, a powerful half-dragon who is said to have once been human but found himself transformed by powerful magics, has somehow gone insane. Over time he began to act self-absorbed, and rumor has it he sleeps on a horde of amassed wealth. Stories and gossip of this madness have circulated for years. Recently however, his madness has become undeniable as he has begun to turn on previous allies. Those who managed to flee his wrath have spoken of a great wyrm that walks the halls where the hero dwells, a beast that might be his ally, or might in fact be the hero turned villain himself. What's happening and how can he be stopped? Can his soul be saved or is the hero that was gone for good? The PCs may be his, and the region's, only hope.



Destroying the Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha

The reasons for destroying the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* should be readily apparent. The *Skin*'s existence means a dangerous, evil force in the world is effectively immortal. Kruk'Tha must be stopped.

• The only known way to destroy the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* is for a wyrm or great wyrm dragon, of any type other than red, to sew the *Skin* to itself while in humanoid form. Doing so permanently changes the dragon's type to red, and the dragon must attempt a DC 30 Will save to avoid a permanent alignment shift to chaotic evil. Once the process is complete, Kuk'Tha's soul is destroyed and the skin becomes a permanent part of the dragon's flesh. The artifact is then considered destroyed. Convincing a dragon to even so much as touch the *Flayed Skin of Kruk'Tha* is a herculean task in and of itself. The DM must decide if the dragon is even remotely willing; some possible motivations might include gaining the power of a red dragon if the dragon is of a weaker type, or ridding the world of evil if the dragon is good-aligned. Even if the dragon is potentially amenable, convincing it to attempt the ritual requires the dragon be shifted to a helpful attitude via Diplomacy. Once convinced, the dragon must make a DC 25 Will save every minute of the process, as Kuk'tha's spirit struggles and writhes against the potential destruction. Failing this Will save means the dragon may not attempt the process again for 24 hours.

New Magic Item

Warriors may have their dragonhide armor, but so too have spellcasters discovered how best to use the left over remnants of dragon flesh to their own advantage. This process was first discovered by a mage studying the legends of *Kruk'Tha's Skin*.

Dragon Robes

Dragon robes are sewn together from the tendons of slain dragons, affording you the ability to cast certain spells more powerfully.

Description: *Dragon robes* have a fleshy, almost leathery look to them, but flow and have the feel of the finest silk. The color depends upon the type of dragon the *robe* is made from, which is apparent and readily identifiable to anyone looking at them.

Activation: You need not take any sort of action to activate the *robes*. Simply wearing them, and casting the appropriate spell, bestows their benefits.

Effect: The *robe* adds +1 to the caster level of spells with certain energy descriptors, as determined by the type of dragon from which the *robe* was made.

Dragon Type	Energy
Black	Acid
Blue	Electricity
Green	Acid
Red	Fire
White	Cold
Brass	Fire
Bronze	Lightning
Copper	Acid
Gold	Fire
Silver	Cold

Additionally, any time you cast a spell that specifically targets dragons — that is, one that mentions dragons in the target line of the spell, or discusses them as potential targets in the spell text — also function at +1 caster level.

Finally, the *robe* offers you a +2 resistance bonus on any saving throw made against the same type of energy the *robe* enhances.

Aura/Caster Level: Moderate transformation. CL 9th.

Construction: Requires Craft Wondrous Item, *fabricate*, creator must have the skin of a dragon of the desired type, 5,000gp, 400 XP, 5 days.

Weight: 1 lb.

Price: 10,000 gp.

Forge of Medzigar Salight

Forge of Madness, Fires of Temptation, The Runed Forge
By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of the Forge of Medzigar Salight

"Know then that I am merciful and kind, the name Medzigar Salight is lost to us and never to be spoken again. Your deeds are forgotten, stricken from the history of this great city and my beneficent rule shall not know you again. Forever from this home you are banned, may you roam the planes in misery, for I decree that your life shall be long. Your sins are not forgiven, only banished from memory along with your noble house, your wealth, your harem, and your children."

—The Sultan of the City of Brass at the banishment of Medzigar Salight

Forgotten now but for this mention in the tomes of the great library in the City of Brass, and the runic emblems over the forge he created, one can only hypothesize on the crimes of Medzigar Salight. Whatever evils were so profound that they resulted in banishment from a city thriving on evil and deceit, Medzigar was indeed thrown out penniless and bereft of much of his magical might to roam the planes.

Whatever great evils he wrought, stripped of his nobility and much of his magic Medzigar could accomplish little on his own. His sinister mind turned toward a more subtle evil: Using the little magic he could still command he formed a forge with which to create magic arms and armor of all types. Trapping fire elementals and the essences of other creatures within the forge, he created a tainting fire that subtly altered anything heated in it. Weapons and armor created with metals passed through this forge would slowly develop a curse that would afflict the user long after they had already begun to depend on the armor or weapon they purchased.

Cloaking his appearance with illusions and disguises, he concealed his true identity and traveled the planes offering magic arms and armor at reduced prices to anyone interested. Slipping between worlds and guises, he sold items to order in various planes and dimensions, with none to know the curses he was leaving behind until he had already moved on. Medzigar relished the pain and sorrow his tainted items caused, drawing strength from the knowledge that he could still tempt the weak-willed into their own destruction.

Eventually dying in misery, self-pity, and rage, he left behind his forge, and added an enchantment that called others to put it to use. Discovered and re-discovered in various times and places, the evil of his forge remains, and grows, with every use. Greedy craftsmen with hearts as black as Medzigar's have placed powerful, though tainted, weapons and armor into the hands of just and unjust alike. Used to equip armies in times of need, and simply to sell finer weapons in more peaceful moments, the forge has brought a vast number of subtly cursed weapons and armor into the world.



Researching the Forge of Medzigar Salight

Medzigar is only briefly mentioned in any recorded histories accessible. The *Forge* however, is a different story. It is mentioned in several places with detailed descriptions of the special runic symbols decorating its strange clay and metal form. It is known by different names, but writings all describe the ability to create magic weapons and armor with lower than normal costs, while only a select few mention the curses that fall upon those items. Detailed research reveals the fact that several symbols on the forge itself represent Medzigar's name.

Research and investigation into the *Forge* should take approximately one week before being presented as the result of a Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge skill check. The Bardic Knowledge check represents searching through old written tales and songs containing hints of the *Forge's* powers.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	A magical forge capable of making the process of creating magic arms and armor faster and less expensive.
20	Some of the weapons and armor created using the *Forge* show flaws after lengthy use.
25	A year and a day after one begins to use a weapon created on the *Forge* a powerful curse develops, usually leading to the death or downfall of the user.
30+	Medzigar Salight, an evil efreeti banished from the City of Brass, created the *Forge* to help destroy mortals through subtle temptation.

Any check below DC 24 indicates the PCs do not have any knowledge of the full extent of the curses and darkness that surround items created with the *Forge*.

The curses vary, but they make no discrimination between good and evil, bringing pain and misery to all they touch. Temptation has brought down both the great and small as adventurers, heroes, and villains have all sought inexpensive magic weapons throughout the centuries. Many discovered that they got what they paid for.

Studying the Forge of Medzigar Salight

This pear-shaped oven lets steam and smoke exit through a narrow smoke stack while possessing a concentrated flame it its wide, bulbous base. The fires within require no fuel and burn constantly, releasing a blast of heat flowing away from the open maw of the *Forge*. The *Forge* itself is made of a dark tan ceramic decorated with a wide variety of glowing runes. Despite the heat blasting from the opening, the outside of the *Forge*, though warm, is safe to touch. Clearly of a magical nature, the ceramic is smooth, dry, and impossibly hard. Even a diamond cannot scratch its surface.

Approximately five feet around at its base, the *Forge* has four handholds around its radius, allowing it to be moved by several strong creatures. Despite its size, and stout, squat appearance, the *Forge* itself is actually relatively light, weighing a mere 300 pounds. At a glance it is easy to see that the heat flowing from the open front of the *Forge* is a mere hint of the inferno flickering eagerly within. Despite the opening, something about the forge helps keep the enthusiastic flames at bay. Though the heat might be quenched, the sibilant roar of the fire vibrates through the sides of the forge to tremble the very air around it with rage.

The magical nature of the forge is evident in its construction, roaring flames, and the glowing runes along its surface. A *detect magic* confirms an almost overwhelming magical nature, shifting through every type of magic imaginable. *Analyze dweomer* reveals the forge has an evil intent as well as the fact the fires within it are fueled by the trapped essences of several fire elementals and the souls of other creatures. If read with the aid of a *comprehend languages* spell or a successful DC 25 Decipher Script skill check, the runic writing reads,

"Though I grant no wishes, and give no gifts, I am generous with my powers. Use the magic here to your delight.

–Medzigar Salight"

Powers of the Forge of Medzigar Salight

The great power of the *Forge* lies in its ability to imbue arms and armor with magical abilities for a much lower price than normal — at least initially. This price is paid much later by anyone using armor or weapons created with the *Forge* as they slowly develop a potent curse. Each curse is randomly determined, making it difficult to track down the source of the curse at first. Weapons and armor created with the *Forge* only *identify* as the items they were intended to be; the curses can only be revealed by much more powerful magic.

Using the Forge of Medzigar Salight

Any skilled craftsman or blacksmith can use the *Forge* in the same way they would use a normal forge. The *Forge* itself adds a taint to every piece of metal that is passed

through it. Anyone working with the forge is permitted a DC 15 Wisdom check to notice the building taint and the probability that there will be something quite wrong with the final product.

Some noticing the taint are certain to ignore it and continue their work, focused only on selling the final product and unconcerned about what the taint might finally accomplish. Others might simply choose to continue knowing that it is one of the few forges capable of enabling one to work with rare metals and alloys due to its great, focused heat.

Unlike most artifacts, several craftsmen can use the *Forge of Medzigar Salight* at the same time. It was, in fact, designed this way so that the maximum number of cursed items could be created.

Constant Powers

The great heat of the *Forge* allows one to easily focus their energies and create a final product in a much shorter period of time. Magic weapons and armor created using the *Forge* take half as long to create and require half the normal material costs and experience point expense. At the same time, each item created using the *Forge*, including masterwork items, is tainted with a curse building in power over a year and a day's worth of possession.

One year and one day after an owner takes possession of a piece of armor or a weapon, a random curse finally takes hold. During this period of time, the owner has no desire to sell or donate the item to another person, and goes out of his way to seek it out if it becomes lost. Some have even been known to simply store a suit of armor while its curse began to build, only to put it on for an unknown reason after the curse begins. If an owner dies, the item returns to its earlier state awaiting a new "owner" to take possession of it and benefit from its special taint. The only way, other than death, to rid oneself of an item with such a powerful curse is through the means of a *wish* or *miracle*.

Only items predominantly made of forged metal attain enough taint to be cursed. Weapons or armor made predominantly of other materials, such as wood or leather, are not cursed in this manner. Weapons with forged metal heads such as spears, halberds, and other pole arms can be cursed. Extremely small items such as buckles or arrowheads are not large enough to acquire a curse.

Curses and their effects are described below.

Curses

Curses activate after one year and one day of ownership, and vary in their strength and design. Cursed items can be a bane to many PCs and players and cursed items should be used carefully in any campaign. At the same time, curses can be used to drive a campaign in a variety of interesting directions. Ownership for the purposes of a cursed item is defined as "unchallenged possession." There can be no more than one user at a time; the first person to claim a cursed item challenges anyone else for the right to keep it.

Cursed armor compels its owner to wear it in the event of a coming battle, or any need for armor. Any owner normally using different armor is allowed a DC 20 Wisdom check to notice something is wrong followed by a DC 28 Will save to resist putting the armor on. The Will save must be attempted each and every time the owner chooses armor for combat.

Cursed weapons simply find their way into their owner's hand when combat begins. A cursed weapon's owner automatically draws it and uses it even if they meant to draw a different weapon. The first time this occurs the owner receives a DC 20 Wisdom check to realize they mysteriously drew the wrong weapon and that magic might be involved. This can be modified by the DM based upon the curse on the weapon and exactly what happens during combat.

Others watching the owner of a cursed item are certain to notice problems, but it is almost impossible to convince the owner there is a problem.

Curses are randomly assigned to an item upon creation (consult the table below). Curses are described more fully below. The DM should feel free to modify or add to the list of curses.

d100	Magic Armor	Magic Weapon
01–10	Rage	Greater Curse
11–20	Berserking	Berserking
21–30	Clumsiness	Fumbling
31–40	Arrow Attraction	Backbiting
41–50	Vulnerability to Fire	Retribution
51–60	Vulnerability to Cold	Draining
61–70	Vulnerability to Acid	Fatigue
71–75	Vulnerability to Electric	Wasting
76–80	Vulnerability to Sonic	Flowers
81–85	Friendship	Flaming Wrath
86–90	Lost Paths	Wraiths
91–95	Gaps	Demonic Fame
96–99	Fusing	Scarring
100	Quick Death	Quick Death

Curses on Armor

Rage: *Armor of rage* incites unfriendly creatures to hostility, granting their attacks against the wearer greater strength and power. Attackers gain a +2 bonus to all attack and damage rolls.

Berserking: *Armor of berserking* drives its wearer into a profound rage granting a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution and a –2 penalty to AC. Unfortunately, the character wearing it is driven to attack the nearest creature, whether friend or foe. The effect does not fade until every creature within a 30-foot radius has been slain.

Clumsiness: *Armor of clumsiness* causes the wearer to stumble and walk oddly while inflicting a –6 penalty to their Dexterity score. Strangely, the wearer never notices their ineptness, often actually believing they are moving smoothly.

Arrow Attraction: *Armor of arrow attraction* draws thrown or launched projectiles toward specific gaps and chinks in the armor. The wearer gains a –15 circumstance penalty to their AC against all ranged attacks.

Vulnerability: *Armor of vulnerability* makes the wearer particularly subject to damage from the type listed. The wearer takes double damage from all attacks of the energy type listed. If a character would normally take half damage on a saving throw, they take full damage; if they fail, they suffer double the normal damage.

Friendship: *Armor of friendship* makes the wearer view all creatures as friendly. They hesitate when entering combat, suffering a –2 penalty to Initiative and all attack rolls. They also have a –10 circumstance penalty on all saving throws against mind-affecting spells.

Lost Paths: *Armor of lost paths* leaves the wearer unable to make decisions, or even to stay on a single task. They simply can't seem to focus on a task, or continue in a certain direction before being distracted.

Gaps: *Armor of gaps* is similar to armor of arrow attraction only it works during melee attacks. Melee attacks are drawn to gaps and chinks in the armor to cause maximum damage to the wearer. Armor of gaps inflicts a –10 circumstance penalty to AC against all melee attacks.

Fusing: *Armor of fusing* binds directly the wearer's skin, inflicting a great deal of pain and changing the wearer's appearance forever. As the armor painfully fuses with its owner it drains 6 points of Charisma and 6 points of Dexterity as it leaves them disfigured and unable to move properly.

Quick Death: *Armor of quick death* does just that: every time its owner puts it on they must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or die instantly as if slain by a death attack (consult the Death Attacks entry in the glossary of the *DMG*). A successful save goes unnoticed as the owner simply goes about his business.

Curses on Weapons

Greater Curse: A *greater cursed weapon* turns in the wielder's hand, preventing them from striking true. The weapon suffers a –4 penalty to all attack and damage rolls (minimum of 1 point of damage) and always fails to confirm a critical hit.

Berserking: A *weapon of berzerking* is similar to armor of the same name. As soon as the wielder enters combat they fly into a wild rage gaining a +4 bonus to their Strength and Constitution as well as a –2 penalty to their AC while they attack everything in sight. The rage effect does not end until there are no living creatures within a 30-foot radius.

Fumbling: A *weapon of fumbling* never confirms a critical hit and on a natural roll of 1, 2, or 3 it flies from the wielder's hand.

Backbiting: A *weapon of backbiting* turns against its attacker when a natural 1 is rolled as an attack roll. The weapon bounces off the armor of their foe or some other nearby object to fly back into its wielder dealing double the normal damage.

Retribution: A *weapon of retribution* inflicts a negative level on its wielder every time they confirm a critical hit on an opponent. The saving throw to remove the negative level is DC 20.

Draining: A *weapon of draining* drains 1 point of Strength every day the wielder touches it after the first day the curse begins. If the wielder's Strength score is drained to 0, they are helpless and cannot move or function.

Fatigue: A *weapon of fatigue* tires its wielder so quickly that after 2 rounds of combat they become fatigued for the rest of the battle.

Wasting: A *weapon of wasting* drains 1 point of Constitution every day the wielder touches it after the first day the curse begins. If Constitution reaches 0 the wielder dies.

Flaming Wrath: A *weapon of flaming wrath* summons a greater fire elemental when its wielder enters combat. The elemental attacks the wielder, attempting to kill him and disappearing only when destroyed. A DC 10 Wisdom check after this happens 1d3+2 times makes the wielder aware of the connection between the weapon and the summoned elemental.

Wraiths: A *weapon of wraiths* turns everyone it slays into wraiths. While this might not sound like a curse at first, the wraiths formed rise instantly to attack the wielder. In addition, undead of all types are drawn to the wielder and attack them first above all others.

Demonic Fame: A *weapon of demonic fame* draws demons and other evil outsiders to it. Demons within 30 feet of the weapon turn immediately to attack the wielder. Once each day there is a 1% chance (non-cumulative) that the weapon summons a marilith to attack the wielder.

Scarring: A *weapon of scarring* leaves a permanent scar on its wielder every time it confirms a critical hit. Each scar is not only horrifying to look at, but it also includes deep scarring damage to the muscles and bone beneath the skin. Formation of each scar drains 1 point of Charisma and 1 point of Dexterity.

Quick Death: A *weapon of quick death* is similar to armor of the same name. Each time they wield it, the owner must

succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or die instantly as if slain by a death attack (consult the Death Attacks entry in the glossary of the *DMG*). A successful save goes unnoticed as the owner simply goes about his business.

Removing Cursed Items

The tainted curses are designed to slowly match the owner binding the cursed item to the owner with great power. Powerful magic is needed to remove a cursed item including spells such as *wish*, *miracle*, or another spell considered suitable by the DM. Ability drain or other damage must be repaired after separating the cursed item from its owner.

Removing a Curse

A curse can only be removed from an item through a *wish* demanded from a captured efreeti noble (18 HD or more) or a *miracle* granted by a willing god. Any god granting such a *miracle* is certain to require a difficult task from the one requesting it.

Identifying Cursed Items Created With the Forge

Normal *identify* spells and lesser divination magic do not reveal the deep taint of a cursed weapon or set of armor and only reveal the item as it was originally designed or requested. *Analyze dweomer* is powerful enough to reveal the tainted, cursed nature of an item. Not only does it reveal the nature of the curse, *analyze dweomer* also helps one determine how to remove an item's curse and provides information about how many days an owner has left before the curse activates (if it hasn't already).

Consequences

Maliciously designed to bring ruin to everyone touched by it, and the products made with it, the taint of the *Forge* slowly extends to anyone using it. After working with the *Forge* for a year the user begins to turn toward evil and chaos, if they are not chaotic evil already. The *Forge* then slowly drains away the soul of such a user to help fuel its magical flames. This drain goes unnoticed as the craftsman becomes more and more dedicated to his work, spending almost all his time near the forge. At five years of use, and for each year thereafter, the craftsman must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save to avoid having his soul drawn completely into the *Forge* to fuel its raging flames.

Reactive Traits

While the *Forge* is immune to most forms of magic, cold-based spells quench its flames slightly, causing it to emit a strange screaming sound causing 5d6 points of sonic damage to anyone within a 30-foot radius. The flames return to their full strength within one round. All other forms of magic cause the ceramic casing of the forge to glow a faint yellow as the magic is absorbed into the *Forge* itself.

Using the Forge of Medzigar Salight in a Campaign

A campaign can handle the inclusion of the *Forge* at virtually any character level. PCs wanting to create items themselves using the *Forge* are still limited by their own character level, skill level, and wealth. Campaigns aimed at the destruction of the *Forge* require high-level PCs due to the magic necessary to end its foul taint. Weapons and items created by the forge can also be used as treasures or gifts to unknowing PCs. The delayed timing of the curse on such items can present a problem if the DM allows a particularly high-powered item into their campaign.

A great war could force the PCs to either destroy the *Forge* to prevent an evil army from equipping itself with it or seek out the *Forge* to help equip an army against overwhelming odds. Other campaigns can be based around the presence of cursed weapons or armor and seeking out their source to put an end to their evil.

Adventure Seeds

To Save an Army

Facing overwhelming odds in terms of men and armaments, the generals and sages of the forces of good summon the PCs to help acquire a magical forge reported to be lost in an ancient dwarven fortress. Nobody knows exactly what happened to the dwarves living there. In truth, elite warriors armed with weapons created with the forge went mad, killing or driving off all of the citizens. Undead spirits and wraiths of the slain dwarves now haunt the city, driving off all who might seek to use the forge again.

After the PCs finally acquire the *Forge* and the elite soldiers are equipped with weapons from the *Forge*, the taint comes to light, forcing the PCs to cross the planes seeking a way to end the curse before time runs out for the faithful soldiers holding the dark armies at bay.

The Inheritance

Kings come and go, but in the Kingdom of Greenrock they "go" more often than anywhere else. The *Sword of Greenrock*, the magic blade used as a symbol of rulership, is one of the tainted weapons created with the forge. Each new king, whether a son, nephew, brother, or cousin of the previous ruler, is able to rule for a short period of time before a demon appears to slay the king causing the *sword* to be passed on again. The shortest rule was a few days more than a year, the longest almost 20 years.

The court wizard suspected something was wrong in the castle and began to analyze everything he could find. Allowed to study the *sword* by the recently crowned king, he has learned of the foul curse. He seeks the PCs' assistance in finding powerful enough magic to remove the curse while still keeping the *sword* whole. He believes a *wish* cast directly by a trapped efreeti noble should do the trick.

Meanwhile, the king, learning of his fate and discovering how the weapon was made, asks the PCs to seek out the *Forge* and destroy it. The *Forge* is presently located in a duergar enclave in caverns deep beneath the surface.

Seeking Ruin

Deep behind the lines of the enemy army is a magic forge used to supply its elite troops with magic weapons and armor. Sages know these weapons are certain to doom their owners, but not until the army washes over everything standing against them. The PCs are asked to go behind enemy lines and steal the *Forge*. Wizards hope that once they possess it they can discover a way to activate the curses early, throwing the enemy army into ruin.

Alas, the *Forge* is well guarded and presents its own form of temptation to those trying to study it. Once acquired it is soon stolen again, this time by demonic forces. The PCs must then decide if the *Forge*, and the power it presents, is worth risking a trip to the Abyss.

Destroying the Forge of Medzigar Salight

Constructed specifically to resist magical damage, and even to use spells cast against it to drive its own roaring flames, the *Forge of Medzigar Salight* is almost impossible to destroy. The powerful enchantments surrounding the *Forge* must first be disabled, and then the *Forge* must be broken apart with magic adamantine weapons. Breaking the *Forge* releases the fire elementals and other souls trapped within it.

• The protective enchantments can be suppressed for one day with the use of a *miracle*. Due to its power, the god granting the *miracle* requests a particular service from the cleric making the request. If the cleric agrees, they are subject to a *geas* to complete the request while the *miracle* takes place. If the cleric does not agree, the spell fails. Once the magic is suppressed the powerful ceramic of the *Forge* can be destroyed using +2 or better adamantine weapons. This destruction releases the elementals trapped inside as described below.

• Another way to suppress the enchantments is through a *wish* spell demanded from a captured efreeti noble (18 HD or more). Afterward the ceramic can be destroyed using +2 or better adamantine weapons as described above.

• The final way to suppress the protective enchantments is through the willing sacrifice of a planetar. If a planetar deliberately hurls herself into the *Forge*, all of its magic is temporarily suppressed and it can be destroyed with +2 or better adamantine weapons.

Any method used to destroy the *Forge* results in a deafening roar (all creatures within 100 feet must make a DC 20 Will save or be dazed for 2 rounds) as five elder fire elementals are released from their ceramic prison. Fed on tormented souls for hundreds of years, these powerful elementals (maximum hit points) are completely insane and turn to attack all creatures in the area.

New Minor Artifact

This potent sword is a symbol of rulership in the Kingdom of Greenrock. No king can ascend the throne without it in his hands. It provides one example of a way that weapons created on the *Forge of Medzigar Salight* can be used in a campaign.

Sword of Greenrock

Engravings of holy symbols wind across the broad blade of this *+2 holy greatsword (of demonic fame)*, and strange symbols adorn its green stone hilt. A beautiful emerald is embedded in the pommel, surrounded by a thin crown of gold. King Scearin the First brought this sword to Greenrock in his quest to chase out the orcs and hobgoblins that overran the hills and mountains. After several years of successful campaigns he carved a kingdom out of the hills. Supported by trade income, farming, and mining of gems from the hills, Greenrock began to prosper. Alas, he fell to a mysterious demon while surveying his kingdom. His sword was passed to his son, as it was a symbol for the peace and prosperity of Greenrock.

Kings of Greenrock appear doomed to die shortly into their regency, some only lasting a little over a year, while others have lasted as long as 20 years. A few were slain on adventures or traveling out in the world while others have simply been discovered in their quarters sliced to ribbons. Being in line for the throne of Greenrock usually means one is going to end up king, at least for a little while.

Unknown to any, the *Sword of Greenrock* has a *demonic fame* curse that is activated one year and one day after a new king takes possession of the sword. This foul curse draws demons to attack the wielder if they see him and has a 1% chance per day (non-cumulative) of summoning a marilith to slay its owner (see the demonic fame entry above).

Fortune's Breath

Necklace of Kings, Gem of Princes
By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of Fortune's Breath

Love, they say, has the power to move mountains, conquer armies, or change the world. While this may or may not be true, love can indeed drive men to obsession and madness. Islegard Hisiark became an archmage and theurgist of great power before his heart was touched by love, though some would say he was simply struck with madness. His exploration of the outer planes and research into the elemental nature of the world provided him with a chance meeting with Earia Ji'ria, an air sprite known as a princess in her own domain. Clearly smitten, he spent as much time as possible with her, much to the dismay of her family and the sprites and elementals in her domain.

As Islegard fell in love and sought ways to spend time with Earia, he found his own nature, and the nature of the Elemental Plane of Air, made this exceedingly difficult. Ignoring the question of whether or not Earia returned his affection or was simply being polite to avoid the wrath of a powerful archmage, Islegard began the creation of an item that would allow him to remain in the Plane of Air for long periods of time and guarantee that Earia would soon love him as well.

The proper ending to such a tale would have Islegard and Earia ruling her domain together, deeply in love to the end of their days. Alas, Earia was instead horrified by Islegard's constant visits, his demonstrations of power meant to impress her, and the embarrassment and rumors surrounding these encounters. With the aid of her brothers and several air elementals, Earia secretly betrayed and murdered Islegard. Although she recognized the great power possessed by the necklace he had created, she could not bear to see it and had it hidden in secret vaults to keep it from falling into evil hands.

Fortune's Breath found its way back to the world several decades later, when one of her adventurous brothers took the potent necklace and left for other planes. Exactly what happened to her brother remains unknown, as he never returned and no sign of him has ever been seen since. *Fortune's Breath*, however, has appeared several times throughout history, often adorning the necks of powerful, charismatic leaders or mighty wizards. Based on the actions of its bearers throughout the years, it is clear that *Fortune's Breath* pays no heed to race, beliefs, or alignment. It has since come to be known by other names, such as the *necklace of kings* and *gem of princes*, hinting at the sorts of people that have worn the necklace throughout its history.

Researching Fortune's Breath

Islegard's research produced some notes that were taken, copied, and distributed years ago. These notes include information about *Fortune's Breath* and can be found in most large arcane libraries. *Fortune's Breath* has been worn by numerous individuals of power throughout the ages and is known to both bards and historians. It is also known to those studying other planes, as Islegard's notes and essays about the planes and the elemental nature of the world are still considered some of the most informative in any library.

Knowledge of *Fortune's Breath* can be acquired through successful Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes), Knowledge (history), or Bardic Knowledge checks. If the PCs consult libraries or sages they should earn a circumstance bonus (from +1 to +4, based on the size and quality of the source) on these checks.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	*Fortune's Breath* is a valuable, priceless necklace worn by powerful, wealthy rulers.
20	It isn't just a valuable necklace, it helps a ruler maintain command over his followers.
25	*Fortune's Breath* was created to help a wizard seduce a princess on another plane.
30+	*Fortune's Breath* grants the ability to cast spells and command elementals as well as protecting anyone wearing it.

Some stories of *Fortune's Breath* attribute to it far greater powers than it really has. If the PCs are actively seeking the necklace the DM should add rumors of powers, limitations, or curses that the necklace does not really possess.

Studying Fortune's Breath

Although it appears perfectly smooth from a distance, the large, spherical blue gem is actually cut with many thousands of individual facets that gather and disperse light so that the gem appears to glow in the presence of any light. Close inspection reveals thin, translucent links — seeming to be little more than liquid air — running through the center of the gem, and forming a circle large enough to be placed around the neck of any Large or smaller creature. There is no hole through the gem, and no clearly entry point or attachment for the magical chain, but as one stares at the gem, it becomes clear that the chain somehow passes through the gem in one continuous circle.

The smooth facets of the gem are a wonder to touch and feel, each tiny facet combining with those nearby to create a texture somehow both smooth and rough. The chain flowing through the gem feels like wet liquid, while leaving one's hands still dry and comfortable. Perhaps it is these combined textures, or the paradox presented by them, that makes one want to continue holding it after picking it up. The gem twinkles with a promise of power and glory almost impossible to resist.

Bearing a palpable magic aura even for those not attuned to the mystic arts, the magic of *Fortune's Breath* is so great that trying to study it through the use of spells is potentially disastrous. Anyone looking at *Fortune's Breath* with *detect magic*, *arcane sight*, or similar spells must attempt a DC 23 Will save. Those that succeed are paralyzed for 4 rounds while those that fail are struck unconscious for 1d4 days.

Powers of Fortune's Breath

The deep magic within the flawless gem and the chain of liquid air that holds it bestows numerous powers upon its wearers. Along with conferring the ability to *fly* and *levitate*, the necklace grants its bearer good fortune and enhances their ability to lead. While wearing the necklace, its bearer can communicate with air elementals and other creatures from the Elemental Plane of Air, and even summon such creatures to assist them. Enchantment spells always fail against the wearer, but the wearer rapidly discovers that his own enchantment spells are more effective.

Using Fortune's Breath

Unlike many artifacts, *Fortune's Breath* is indiscriminate with respect to alignment or desires. It instantly communicates its powers to the creature wearing it, but only as long as that creature has an unmodified Charisma bonus of +3 or higher. If a wearer wishes to use one of the necklace's special activated powers or spells, he simply needs to will it to happen and *Fortune's Breath* responds. Creatures with a lower Charisma score can still wear the *Necklace* but are unable to use it to cast spells, or to access some of the *Necklace*'s special abilities. Any creature wearing the necklace benefits from the armor class bonus, Charisma bonus, and luck bonus.

In theory, one could simply remove the *Necklace* and pass it to another wearer to share its potent magic. Alas, once someone has put the necklace on, they never want to remove it, nor will they allow someone else to remove it while they are still alive. Although the wearer never wants to remove it, *Fortune's Breath* possesses such beneficial magic, one would be hard-pressed to call this an actual curse.

Constant Powers

The elemental nature of the magic within *Fortune's Breath* grants the wearer a +4 dodge bonus to AC as it helps him avoid danger of all types. It also provides a +6 Charisma bonus, and a +1 luck bonus to saving throws. The wearer automatically rerolls his first failed saving throw on any given day. The second result must be accepted, even if the result is lower than the first roll. *Fortune's Breath* adds +1 to the saving throw DC of any enchantment spell the wearer casts, and the wearer is immune to charm or enchantment spells cast by others.

While wearing the *Necklace*, an individual can communicate telepathically with any creature from the Elemental Plane of Air as long as that creature has an Intelligence score of 6 or more. This ability is limited to a range of 100 feet. All creatures of the Air subtype that would normally be hostile to the individual wearing the *Necklace* view him as "indifferent." *Fortune's Breath* also grants a +15 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks when dealing with any creature from the Elemental Plane of Air.

Anyone wearing the necklace also gains the use of the Leadership feat (as long as they have 6 HD or more). Any cohorts gained while wearing the necklace are lost if the necklace is removed. If the wearer already possesses the Leadership feat he gains a +2 bonus to their Leadership Score (see "Leadership" in Chapter Four of the *DMG*).

Activated Powers

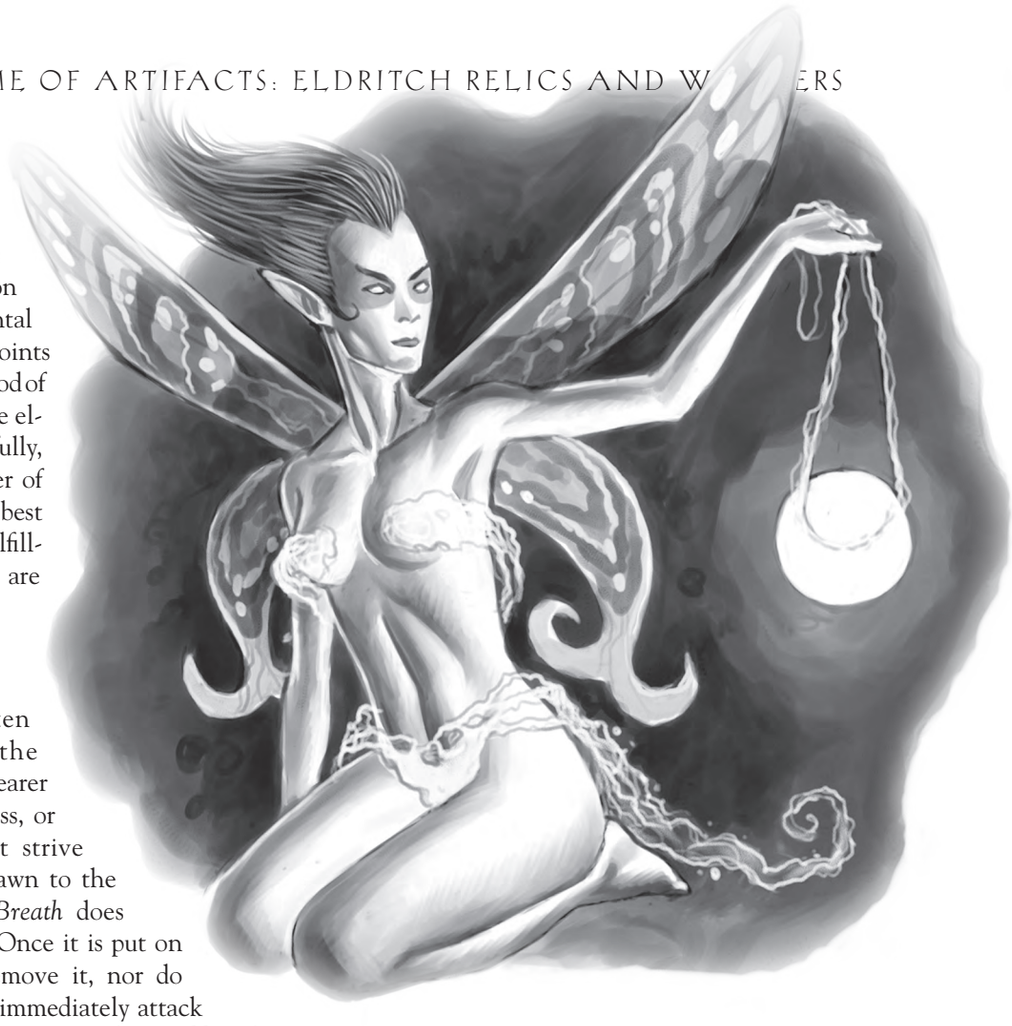
The greatest powers possessed by this beautiful necklace must be activated by the will of the wearer. These function as spell-like abilities, with a caster level of 20.

At Will: *comprehend languages*, *levitate* (self only), *fly* (self only), *tongues*

5/day: *charm monster* (DC 22), *deep slumber* (DC 21), *touch of idiocy* (DC 20)

3/day: *dominate person* (DC 23), *geas* (DC 25), *mass charm monster* (DC 26), *mass suggestion* (DC 25), *plane shift*

1/day: *contact other plane* (10 questions), *dominate monster* (DC 27), *teleport* (self only)



In addition to the powers listed above, once per week *Fortune's Breath* enables its wearer to summon a greater air elemental with maximum hit points to serve him for a period of up to four hours. The elemental serves faithfully, defending the wearer of the necklace to the best of its abilities and fulfilling any orders they are given.

Consequences

While sages often debate whether the *Necklace* causes its wearer to strive for greatness, or whether those that strive for greatness are drawn to the artifact, *Fortune's Breath* does have "side effects." Once it is put on the wearer can't remove it, nor do they want to. They immediately attack anyone attempting to remove the *Necklace* from them, whether by magic or force. The necklace's great powers and abilities cause few to see this as a problem. A successful *remove curse* spell allows the necklace to be physically removed, but it does not change the wearer's perspective or their desire to keep the necklace on.

Fortune's Breath helps breed a sense of invulnerability and entitlement in its wearer, causing him to constantly seek more wealth and power as well as greater abilities and deeds. While some have turned this drive toward good, an equal number have used it to pursue more evil, self-centered goals. This drive does tend to force its wearers into greater, more important tasks, no matter what they might be, and its magical powers do help aid in completing them. Thus, it is relatively safe to say that *Fortune's Breath* has a tendency to help make its wearers great. Such "greatness" comes with a price, as the wearer is certain to make many enemies on their way, and many others are certain to seek nothing more than *Fortune's Breath* itself.

Using Fortune's Breath in a Campaign

Fortune's Breath is a powerful artifact enabling its wearer to cast and use a variety of potent magical spells capable of profoundly altering any campaign, whether it is based upon politics or combat. As such, only higher level PCs (level 16 and up) should be allowed to possess the *Necklace*. If such PCs do obtain the *Necklace*, anyone wearing it should indeed be driven to pursue "greatness."

Fortune's Breath is easily used to drive adventure. The PCs can be sent to search for the *Necklace* without knowing its true powers, or be convinced that it is a sign of royalty required for a good king to take the throne. Evil creatures or NPCs might grow in power due to the necklace's potent magic, forcing the PCs to find a way around the *Necklace*'s abilities to defeat them.

Adventure Seeds

The Lost Prince

Maltico, a young prince quite distant from the throne in lineage, lived a life of adventure far from court life until he discovered a strange, powerful *Necklace*. He returned home wearing *Fortune's Breath* and bearing a great fortune in magic items and gems. Although he tried to fit back into court life, his desire for adventure drove him off again and again, with each return to the small kingdom bringing more wealth.

As his recklessness increased, so did his adventures. He left over a year ago, and there has been no sign of him, no letters describing his adventures have arrived, and clerics trying to divine his location have met with failure. His father has died and

for his brother to take the throne the entire family must be present to confirm his right to rule. The PCs are asked to seek out Maltico and learn what has happened to him.

Maltico began risking himself on various planes and demiplanes, seeking ever-greater adventure and wealth. In fact, during one of his adventures Maltico captured an efreeti noble and forced it to grant several *wishes*. One poorly worded *wish* left Maltico bereft of his memories. He now wanders the elemental planes, spending most of his time on the Elemental Plane of Air for reasons he does not understand. Finding him requires traveling to several different planes and speaking with a wide variety of creatures. Once located, the PCs must convince him they know who he is, and convince him to return home.

The Call of Madness

An elderly sage discovered *Fortune's Breath* and began putting it to use by dominating and charming villagers and making them do strange things. His grip on reality was already weakened by his advancing age, and the *Necklace* has driven him to madness. Convinced that he is now a god, he wanders about using the powers of the necklace to "convert" people into worshipping him, fleeing with its *plane shift* ability if he needs to.

The PCs are asked to put an end to the "blasphemy" as well as the many problems that he has created. Whatever method the PCs use to put an end to the problem, they have to contend with a madman in possession of the full powers of *Fortune's Breath*.

The King's Quest

A popular king, a good, holy and beneficent ruler, is the latest to have possessed *Fortune's Breath*. Unwilling to simply pass the necklace on, he used the help of a variety of elementals to construct a fantastic dungeon on the Elemental Plane of Air to store both his body and the necklace when he died. Upon his death he was transported directly into the depths of the catacombs he designed.

The dungeon was originally designed to force anyone seeking the *Necklace* to prove their worthiness through a series of tests that only a character with good intentions could pass. It has become something else, however, as elementals and creatures of the Plane of Air, afraid of the powers of the necklace, happily created a "final resting place" for *Fortune's Breath*. They added a number of deadly traps and creatures that the king never requested in the hopes that nobody would ever be able to claim the *Necklace* again.

Whether simply seeking treasure, or called to help find a new ruler for a good kingdom, the PCs must overcome the trials of the dungeon to obtain the final prize.

Destroying Fortune's Breath

All items of great power can be used for good or ill. *Fortune's Breath* can be used by individuals of any alignment, and if it is used predominantly by evil rulers, the PCs can easily be convinced of the need to destroy it. Some might find its ability to force people to do things against their will an anathema and want to destroy it for that reason alone.

Destroying anything possessing such great power can be extremely dangerous. The safest way to destroy *Fortune's Breath* involves crushing it within an antimagic zone. If destroyed elsewhere it releases a wave of energy that erases the memories of everyone within 30-foot radius (DC 32 Will save or lose all memories and abilities). Restoring erased memories requires a *wish*, *miracle*, or greater magic. A *Morden's disjunction* spell has the standard chance of destroying *Fortune's Breath* (with the memory erasure described above); otherwise one of the following two methods must be used.

- If *Fortune's Breath* is brought into an antimagic zone and crushed with an adamantine hammer it loses all magical ability.
- A *limited wish*, *wish*, or *miracle* can be used to suppress its magical protections. If these protections are suppressed the necklace can be crushed with an adamantine hammer or broken with another adamantine weapon.

The first method leads to a rather anti-climactic collection of gem dust that can be used in the place of diamond dust (10,000 gp worth). Any other method results in an echoing scream and swirling wind that blasts outward from the crushed gem. Those within a 30-foot radius suffer the memory erasure described above.

New Monster

Native to the Elemental Plane of Air, these beautiful, fey-like creatures are more akin to elementals than the sprites for which they are named. Almost never seen outside their homes, air sprites are creatures of great beauty and intelligence that can live for thousands of years in cloud-like villages floating across the Elemental Plane of Air.

Also termed "air nymphs" by some, both male and female air sprites possess great beauty and a stately presence. Their peaceful natures and astounding beauty garner them respect and admiration in their natural homes. Air sprites rule over small territories in the Elemental Plane of Air, at peace with all of the other natural creatures of the plane. Most elementals give them great respect and go out of their way to assist an air sprite when one is in need.

Air Sprite

Small Outsider (Air, Extraplanar)

Hit Dice:	6d8 (27 hp)
Initiative:	+8
Speed:	20 ft. (4 squares), fly 50 ft. (perfect)
Armor Class:	20 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +5 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple:	+6/+1
Attack:	Short sword +11 melee (1d4-1/19–20), or light crossbow +11 ranged (1d6/19–20)
Full Attack:	Short sword +11/+6 melee (1d4-1/19–20), or light crossbow +11 ranged (1d6/19–20)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Stunning beauty, spell-like abilities, spells
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., outsider traits, evasion, immune to summoning and mind control
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 8, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 20
Skills:	Balance +13, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +16, Hide +17, Listen +11, Move Silently +13, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +10, Spot +11
Feats:	Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse
Environment:	Elemental Plane of Air
Organization:	Squad (2–4), Company (11–20 plus 2 3rd-level sergeants and a leader of 3rd–6th level) or clan (30–200 plus 20% noncombatants plus 1 3rd-level sergeant per 10 adults, 5 5th-level lieutenants and 3 7th-level captains)
Challenge Rating:	6
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Usually neutral
Advancement:	By character class

Iridescent, powerful wings sprout from the back of this beautiful, elfin creature as it flies effortlessly through the air. The brightly colored wings and purple eyes highlight white cloud-like skin and give this creature a powerful presence.

Secretive creatures living on the Elemental Plane of Air, air sprites are creatures of great, astounding beauty. Despite the respect in which most other creatures of air hold them, they have developed a great deal of caution due to years of defending themselves from other creatures who would capture them as prizes to put on display, or worse. They have learned to use their beauty and presence to talk their way out of fights and convince others to leave them alone.

Most air sprites live in communities of 100 to 200, dweeling in villages of cloud-like material that float through the Elemental Plane of Air. Air sprites are almost never seen in groups of less than five, though rare individuals are known to adventure to different planes. Air elementals and other creatures of the Elemental Plane of Air consider air sprites to be special creatures gifted by the gods and always step forward to help an air sprite in need.

Air sprite communities possess ruling families that are held in high regard throughout their local area. Their organization is matriarchal, with the "crown" passed from queen to eldest daughter, making the princesses of the air sprites valued above all others.

Air sprites advance by character level with sorcerer as their favored class.

Combat

Air sprites use their magic to avoid combat. If forced into melee they do their best to retreat quickly, to put their spells and special abilities to work. Air sprites are happy to retreat to their home and call air elementals and other creatures to their aid.

Stunning Beauty (Su): An air sprite can highlight its natural beauty to create a powerful aura. Any humanoid within a 30-foot radius looking directly at the air sprite must attempt a DC 18 Will save or be stunned for 2d4 rounds. This ability can be suppressed or activated as a free action. Creatures who successfully save are immune to that air sprite's stunning beauty for 24 hours.

Spell-like Abilities: All spell-like abilities are used at caster level 8; 3/day — *control winds*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility*, *obscuring mist*; 1/day — *plane shift*, *teleport* (self only).

Spells: An air sprite casts spells as a 6th–level sorcerer.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/6/4, save DC 15 + spell level): 0 — *daze*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st — *charm person*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd — *alter self*, *glitterdust*, 3rd — *hold person*.

Immunities: Air sprites cannot be summoned into service through the use of magic spells of any type. They are also immune to all mind-affecting spells and abilities.

Ghost Reaver

By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of Ghost Reaver

Great wars draw great powers of both light and darkness and the Battle at White Cliff was one of the greatest. It counted not only mighty individuals, but also objects of mythic power on both sides. The forces of light finally won out over the darkness, but at an appalling price. Among the fallen was Nargath Oraoul, a silver dragon of pure heart and great wisdom that fell before an evil lich. As he drew his final breath he asked the human warrior at his side to grant his dying wish, "Make from me," he whispered, "a great weapon to combat evil."

Human and dwarven craftsmen fulfilled this wish in the creation of a shortspear from Nargath's thighbone and one of his razor-sharp teeth. Appearing simple enough from a distance, the razor-thin blade and light bone shaft are distinctive by their coloration and almost ethereal appearance when examined closely. After the great task of creating the weapon, a wielder had to be found. A committee of those who fought in that great battle was assembled to choose *Ghost Reaver's* first wielder, and they selected the great paladin Lady Skylight. Chosen for her honor, integrity, and deep hatred of the undead, Lady Skylight used *Ghost Reaver* in a wide variety of battles and quests against dark creatures. The great powers of the shortspear were no match for a dungeon cave-in, however, so *Ghost Reaver* was passed on to a new wielder.

After a succession of wielders, *Ghost Reaver* found itself in the hands of Lord Oakwhite in the Battle of the Orb, where the undead hordes of the lich Ellir Jarvile stood in the daylight supported by the foul powers of the *Orb of the Wight*. Lord Oakwhite valiantly charged through the throngs of undead, driving their foulness from the world with the powers of the spear. Soon he reached the lich and attacked the *Orb* it held in its skeletal hands. As *Ghost Reaver* darted forward and touched the *Orb of the Wight*, a cataclysmic explosion destroyed Lord Oakwhite, the lich Jarvile, and much of the surrounding troops. No trace of either artifact was found amidst the remains, leading many to believe they were destroyed, or perhaps flung deep into the outer planes where creatures of good and evil still quest for them. Before his death the sage Miel, who witnessed the battle, claimed that the artifacts themselves were now bound by their opposition, almost like magnets. Should one of the artifacts ever return to the Material Plane, the other must soon follow.

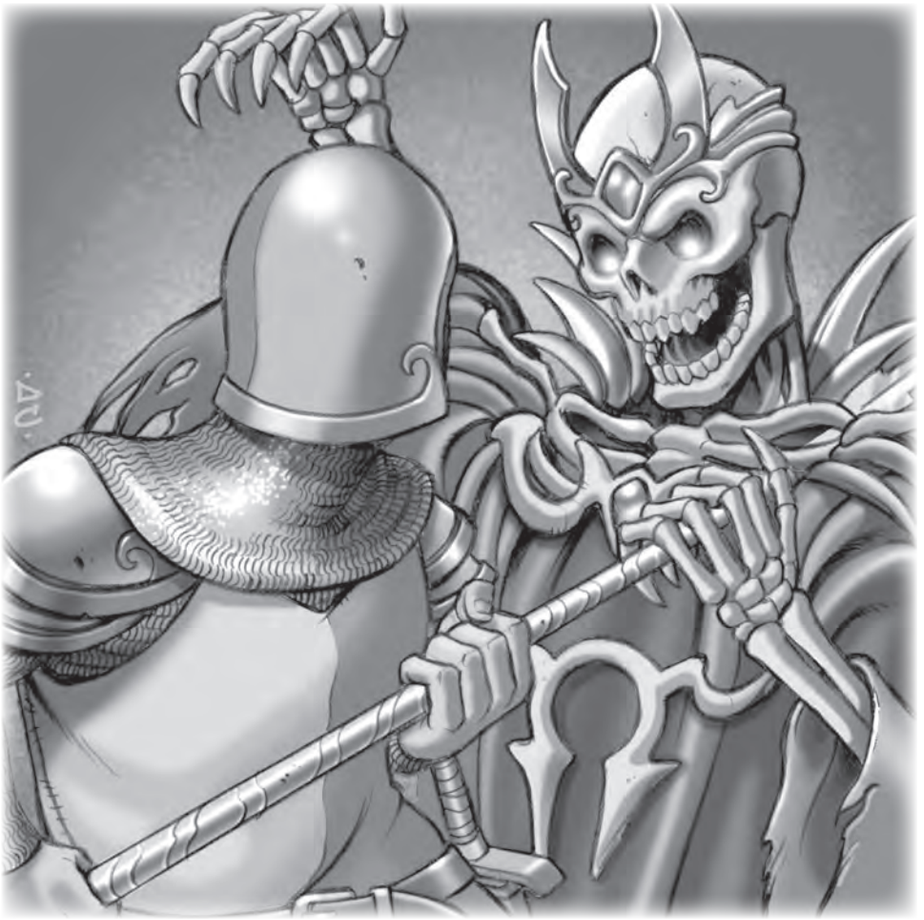
Researching Ghost Reaver

Ghost Reaver is a powerful, potent weapon used in many battles known to bards and historians alike. Temples of paladins and clerics devoted to fighting evil, particularly undead, are almost certain to possess some information about *Ghost Reaver* in their libraries. A Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (history) check can provide the information described below. If the PCs decide to consult a historian, temple of paladins, or any type of bardic college, they should receive a +4 circumstance bonus to the skill check.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	*Ghost Reaver* is a great weapon used to destroy evil creatures of all types.
20	*Ghost Reaver* was formed from parts of a great silver dragon named Nargath Oraoul.
25	*Ghost Reaver* exists partially in the Ethereal Plane and is particularly effective against undead.
30+	*Ghost Reaver* was lost on another plane, or possibly even destroyed in the Battle of the Orb. The weapon itself is an enemy of the *Orb of the Wight*.

Ghost Reaver can also be used as an ancient, almost forgotten weapon requiring more time and research to gather information. In such a case the DC for each piece of information increases by 10, with some facts only available upon the casting of divination spells. If *Ghost Reaver* becomes a part of your campaign, discovering its general location should require the use of a *legend lore*, *vision*, a similar spell, or a successful DC 40 Bardic Knowledge check.

Studying Ghost Reaver



The shimmering, almost translucent form of this beautiful spear makes it appear more ceremonial than functional. Iridescent runes cover the white bone shaft in a strange, spiral pattern ending at a thin, sharpened blade completely free of any runes or markings. The white blade is clearly formed from some sort of tooth, and the shaft is certainly bone. Staring at the spear is an exercise few like to continue, as it appears to shimmer in and out of the material plane, sometimes making the viewer question whether or not it is really there.

When held, the spear is solid and clearly of this plane. The texture of the rune-carved bone shaft is particularly pleasing, with each carving only a small depression in the polished bone. *Ghost Reaver* is incredibly light due to the hollow bone shaft, but it is perfectly balanced as the razor-thin blade has almost no weight. Anyone holding it recognizes it is a fine weapon for short distance throwing, or even for melee combat.

The potent magic of its creation is clear to any without the use of any spells. Anyone studying the fine form with the use of a *detect magic*, *arcane sight*, or similar spell is overwhelmed by the powerful conjuration magic used in its creation and must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or fall unconscious for 2d4 minutes. *Ghost Reaver* is also an item of great good; those viewing it with a *detect good* spell active can also be overwhelmed by its purity (DC 18 Will save or fall unconscious, as above).

Powers of Ghost Reaver

Existing in a strange border between the Ethereal and Material Planes, *Ghost Reaver* grants its wielder the ability to see invisible and ethereal creatures, as well as limited ability to cross into the Ethereal Plane. Powered by the life essence of an ancient silver dragon, *Ghost Reaver* also provides its wielder with limited magical powers and can be summoned to its bound wielder's hand in an instant. In addition, the shortspear can destroy undead by severing their very connection to the Negative Energy Plane.

Using Ghost Reaver

Although it doesn't exhibit a particular intelligence or will of its own, *Ghost Reaver* becomes bound to only certain individuals and it can be bound to no more than one person at a time. There is no particular penalty or damage to any other creature holding it, but only a bound wielder can use its true powers. Used through the centuries by only a few bound wielders, it is said that each wielder somehow adds a portion of herself to the weapon. A character of good alignment agreeable to *Ghost Reaver* feels a questioning desire full of images of battle against evil creatures and undead. If it receives a positive response, the artifact then binds with that character by communicating its special abilities. *Ghost Reaver* becomes bound to only characters of good alignment, and historically has only bound with individuals actively working against evil creatures, particularly undead. A bound wielder can activate its magical abilities with a simple mental command, leaving them free to complete other actions.

Constant Powers

In the hands of an ordinary individual, *Ghost Reaver* functions only as a *+1 undead bane shortspear*. In the hands of bound wielder it functions as a *+2 undead bane ghost touch returning disrupting shortspear*. (*Ghost Reaver*

possesses the *disrupting* ability even though it is a bladed weapon.) *Ghost Reaver* ignores the damage reduction of any undead creature when used by any wielder.

A bound wielder can see invisible and ethereal creatures, as per the *see invisibility* spell, as an extraordinary ability that cannot be dispelled with a *dispel magic* spell. Bound wielders also gain spell resistance equal to 7 plus their Hit Dice. Although it doesn't need to be held, these abilities require the spear to be within 5 feet of the bound wielder to function.

Activated Powers

Ghost Reaver's bound wielder can call upon the spear to invoke a limited number of spell-like abilities, with a caster level of 12. Each of these can be invoked as a free action, but only may be invoked per round.

At Will: *detect evil*

5/day: *feather fall*

3/day: *dispel evil* (DC 18), *divine favor*

1/day: *cure critical wounds, ethereal jaunt, fog cloud, invisibility purge*

Consequences

While *Ghost Reaver* grants great powers to its bound wielder, becoming bound to *Ghost Reaver* does have consequences. First, the binding process draws some of the wielder's life force, in the form of a one-time loss of 1,000 XP. Any attempt to wield a different melee weapon in any form of combat is quickly disrupted as *Ghost Reaver* simply leaps into its wielder's hand, displacing whatever weapon they might have been holding. As the years progress, the bound wielder becomes more and more focused on destroying evil, particularly undead, often taking huge risks to battle powerful creatures. The concerns of others become petty as the wielder seeks more to destroy evil than to preserve good. For example, anyone bound to *Ghost Reaver* for at least a year is willing to abandon kidnapped prisoners or slaves to their fate simply to enter into a battle with an evil creature, particularly an outsider or undead.

Undead draw *Ghost Reaver's* greatest ire. Nobody bound to *Ghost Reaver* is ever willing to negotiate with undead of any type or alignment, no matter the consequences. While negotiations with other evil creatures for the greater good as possible, the person bound to *Ghost Reaver* suffers a –5 circumstance penalty to all Diplomacy and Bluff skill checks when negotiating with evil creatures.

Reactive Traits

Ghost Reaver reacts poorly when attacked directly with magic spells. Aggressive spells, such as a *Morden's disjunction* spell, cast directly against *Ghost Reaver* must defeat SR 35. Casters failing to overcome this resistance must attempt a DC 25 Will save or suffer retributive damage equal to 2d8 points per spell level. This damage is not impeded by any form of damage reduction or energy resistance. This ability applies only to spells cast specifically on the artifact, and has no effect on area effect spells or spells cast against its wielder.

Using Ghost Reaver in a Campaign

Ghost Reaver is a potent weapon against undead in any campaign. If your campaign features undead as a major component, *Ghost Reaver* should only be allowed into the hands of higher level PCs (level 14+), or only for a limited time, perhaps allowing the PCs to defeat an enemy they otherwise could never hope to face. In campaigns featuring undead as minor combatants only, or focusing on other types of evil creatures, *Ghost Reaver* might be appropriate for PCs of levels 11 or 12. *Ghost Reaver's* binding makes it very difficult to remove from a campaign once introduced. *Ghost Reaver* can also appear in a campaign where the PCs do not recognize its deeper powers, or one in which it does not bind with any of the PCs in a party.

Ghost Reaver works best in a high level campaign against necromancers or undead where both its powers, and weaknesses, can be brought into play. A campaign including the *Orb of the Wight* can give *Ghost Reaver* special significance. Such a campaign can play the various powers and histories of these two artifacts against each other, and might even end with the mutual destruction of both artifacts.

Each of the adventure seeds below presumes the spear is "lost." The PCs must use powerful divination magic and careful research to track down the treasure vault, dungeon, or individual holding onto *Ghost Reaver* and find a way to acquire it. The spear could be in a forgotten dungeon, held by a powerful extra-planar ruler and displayed in their throne room, locked in a vault, or even hidden away by forces of evil and darkness.

Adventure Seeds

Challenge the *Orb*

The *Orb of the Wight* has been discovered and brought back to the world by an evil necromancer. The PCs must find *Ghost Reaver* to provide hope to the armies and countries arrayed against him. Discovery of the spear should provide hope and strength to the armies standing before the encroaching darkness.

Free the Forgotten Souls

During their quests and adventures the PCs come upon some appalling information. Souls of all of the living slain in the final explosion at the Battle of the

Orb are trapped. They are unable to move on to the next life, but neither have they taken the form of undead. The cataclysmic explosion of energy ending the battle tainted their spirits with negative energy that must be cleansed before they can pass freely into the next life. Research indicates one way to free these souls is to recover *Ghost Reaver* and present it again on the field of battle when the sun is at its zenith. Each spirit touching *Ghost Reaver* at that time is then cleansed and can pass to the next world.

Destroy the *Orb*

The *Orb of the Wight* has been rediscovered by a group of paladins and clerics that are, just barely, keeping its evil powers in check. They wish to destroy the *Orb*, but the only way to destroy it they have discovered requires using the spear whose location still remains unknown.

Destroying Ghost Reaver

Evil PCs or PCs tricked into the service of an evil warlord or necromancer might try to destroy *Ghost Reaver*. Only two methods can be used to destroy the weapon. The first method is known, or presumed, by a number of sages. The second method can only be learned through the direct questioning of a god.

• If *Ghost Reaver* and the *Orb of the Wight* are brought into contact by a single individual holding both items in the Ethereal Plane, both artifacts are instantly destroyed in a cataclysmic release of energy. When brought into contact by one or more creatures on the Material Plane, the same cataclysmic release of energy occurs, but both artifacts are transported to random locations in the outer planes.

• If *Ghost Reaver* is soaked in the freshly drawn blood of an innocent young silver dragon it loses all of its magical and extraordinary abilities for a period of 2 hours. During that time any mundane means of shattering and dismantling the spear destroys it without a cataclysmic release of energy.

The positive energy surrounding *Ghost Reaver* and the negative energy surrounding the *Orb of the Wight* are so potent that when the artifacts contact each other they create a massive explosion of magical energy. The wave of energy blasts outward to a radius of 60 feet, doing 40d6 points of force damage (DC 25 Fortitude save for half). This wave of energy exists on both the Material and Ethereal Planes. The individual or individuals holding the objects when they touch receives no saving throw against the energy wave.

New Feat

Lady Skylight, a fighter and paladin of great repute, developed a special skill during her years using *Ghost Reaver*. Her instructions have been passed down through the years. Anyone bound to *Ghost Reaver*, or anyone with the proper training, can learn to use this ability.

Intercepting Strike

You can set unusual weapons to receive a charge.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: With a readied action, you can set any light, one-handed, or two-handed piercing weapon to receive a charge. The weapon does double damage when used in this fashion.

Normal: Only specific weapons, such as spears, can be set to receive a charge.

Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

Pearl of Ga'dou, Auspicious Orb of Compassionate Remedy
By G. Holochwost

The Tale of the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

In a time long gone, when Heaven and Earth were fresh, and the rivers flowed like lapis nectar, lived was a greedy chieftain who was very, very selfish. This chieftain, called Always-Taking, had claimed many wives and horded the pearls that were harvested by his people from the oysters of the river. The chieftain would string the pearls on tortoise sinew and hang them around his own neck and the necks of his wives, leaving his tribesmen to fend for themselves. He never provided them with wisdom or compassion, and never showed them an ounce of patience.

One day, wise Ga'dou, a mystic from the hills near the chieftain's village, came to Always-Taking and expressed his concern. The sage Ga'dou told the king that he could not continue to take without giving back to those who gave to him — the river, the tortoises, and his people. As one would expect from a man so narrow and petty as Always-Taking, the words of the sage fell on deaf ears. The chieftain told Ga'dou that he would take all the pearls he liked and nothing the sage could say would make him feel any differently. So, it was with sorrow in his heart that Ga'dou left the village and went back to his home in the hills.

What Always-Taking did not know was that Ga'dou was actually the name of the Great Celestial Tortoise, Lord of Compassion and Generosity, and that the Elder Tortoise and the hermit were the same. So it was with great wisdom that Ga'dou devised a plan that would teach the selfish chieftain a lesson. Taking a perfect pearl from his pouch, Ga'dou held it between his two hands and formed the mudra of perfect understanding. While chanting the names of the Emperor and Empress of Heaven and Earth, Ga'dou basked the pearl in the light of limitless compassion and crystalline wisdom. As he meditated, the pearl grew, and grew, and grew, until it was as large as a keg of rice wine. Once the giant pearl was fully grown, the Elder Tortoise Lord placed his blessings upon it. "May this pearl give longevity, happiness, and prosperity to those who give, and never be the possession of any man who would take it for himself." Under a full moon, Ga'dou rolled the great pearl back down to the village of Always-Taking.

The next morning, Always-Taking rose from his tent to see quite a ruckus in the village. The villagers were not gathering pearls and were all making a stir near the fire pit

Researching the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

To research the *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise*, characters could very well require the greatest libraries of their kingdoms. However, another route is for them to happen upon one of the river towns and hear the Tale of the *Golden Pearl* itself. If this is not appropriate to a given campaign, the characters could also make contact with a wandering sage (possibly even another disguise of Ga'dou) who could then tell them of the great *Pearl*. The best way to learn of the *Pearl* is with a Bardic Knowledge check. Insofar as Knowledge checks, Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (arcana), and Knowledge (history) are all likely to reveal information based on the DC in the knowledge chart below.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	In a distant age, the gods created a wondrous pearl.
20	This enormous *Golden Pearl* is said to give blessings to those who come in contact with it.
25	Created specifically by the Tortoise God, the *Pearl* cures diseases of all kinds, and grants a powerful and permanent boon of longevity to those who come into direct contact with it.
30+	The entire tale of the *Golden Pearl* is known to the character. The *Pearl* is said to be held in the belly of a massive Celestial Dragon Turtle who swims up and down the great river. Any who claim exclusive ownership of the *Pearl* are subject to a terrible curse of transformation.

Most legends of the *Pearl* omit the ownership restriction, perhaps making it seem that a someone who claims the artifact gains great powers. Some tales imply that Always-Taking deliberately used the *Pearl* to become the Tortoise, empowered by the will to power that made him seize the *Pearl* for his own.

at the center of town. Pushing through the crowd, the selfish chieftain found the great pearl with a long strip of rice paper upon which was written a single phrase: "For all". Ripping the paper from the giant pearl, Always-Taking shooed away the villagers and declared that the pearl would be his and no others'. The villagers looked very sad as their chieftain began to roll the enormous pearl back toward his tent. But as Always-Taking moved the pearl he felt a terrible shifting beneath his skin and terrible stiffness in his back. He felt himself growing stronger but stiffer as he pushed until villagers started howling and crying while pointing at him. It wasn't until he dropped to his hands and knees that he understood what was happening. He was becoming very large, and his hands had grown claws and his back had become rigid and flat. Always-Taking had been transformed into an enormous white dragon turtle. As he looked down on his village, the selfish chieftain could only concern himself with the pearl, despite his transformation. So, even without hands, Always-Taking swallowed up the pearl so that no other could have it.

It was upon ingesting the pearl that Always-Taking understood the error of his ways and the nature of compassion. At that moment, the image of Ga'dou appeared to him and said, "Always-Taking has lived a life of great selfishness. Now, as a servant of the Lord of Compassion and Generosity, the selfish chieftain will benefit all sentient beings with the blessings of Ga'dou." So, it was in this way that the great Celestial Dragon Turtle, now called Eternally-Giving, made his way into the waters of the great and endless river where he is said to swim till this very day. Up and down the river he swims, giving the blessings of healing and peace to all who walk upon its shores.

Studying the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

The *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise* is a soft, golden, iridescent sphere no less then three feet in diameter. It weighs approximately 450 pounds and is incredibly dense. The surface is always dry and warm to the touch, resonating with the prayers and kindness of the Lord of Compassion. So present are these blessings, one can press one's ear against the *Pearl* and literally hear the vibrating mantras that constitute its power, woven from a combination of Celestial syllables and the ancient tongue of man — a powerful symbol of Heaven and Earth as one.

When under the scrutiny of *detect magic* or similar spells, the *Pearl*'s nature is laid bare. During the first round of *detect magic*, the caster not only detects the presence of magic, but also feels a distinct and penetrating aura of goodness as if it were being analyzed during the third round of a *detect good* spell. In addition, the *Pearl* radiates overwhelming auras of abjuration, conjuration and transmutation magics.

Powers of the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

The *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise* was crafted for one purpose that has three aspects. In order to better the lives of all who lived along the great river (this could be any central river in any campaign setting) the artifact has two primary powers and a the ability to grant a special feat described below. The ability to grant prosperity is



embodied in the *Pearl*'s ability to magically cause crops and livestock to become healthy and fecund when within a mile of the *Pearl*. The ability to grant longevity is an effect of the *Pearl*'s ability to cure disease also within a mile of the *Pearl*. The ability to convey happiness is bestowed when a character of good alignment touches the *Pearl* and speaks the activation phrase "For All," and the special feat is permanently granted.

Using the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

With the exception of the special feat granted by the *Pearl*, the powers of this artifact are passive. These powers, however, have no benefit for evil characters, as Go'dou does not enable the powers of evil with his blessings.

In the case of the Pearl-Touched feat, a character of good alignment must touch the *Pearl* under a full-moon while chanting the activation phrase no less than 101 times. Once this ritual is performed, the character is blessed by the *Pearl* and is permanently granted the Pearl-Touched feat. The permanence is conditional upon the character's alignment, however. If the character changes to a non-good alignment, the Pearl-Touched feat and all its benefits are lost.

Constant Powers

The *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise* radiates two magical fields of a divine nature. In both cases, the *Pearl* must come within a mile of the town or village to be blessed for the field's benefits to be activated.

The field of prosperity extends one mile in all directions from the *Pearl*. This field guarantees crops and livestock of exceptional quality for a single season. The gold value of all crops and livestock affected by this field are 150% of their normal value.

The field of longevity extends one mile in all directions from the *Pearl*. This field removes illness from all it affects. Every living being within a two-mile radius, centered on the caster, is under a constant *remove disease* (as cast by a 15th-level druid).

Activated Powers

The Pearl-Touched feat-granting ability of the *Pearl* is activated through the performance of the ritual described above.

Consequences

In sharp contrast to its benevolent powers, the *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise* carries a conditional curse of incredible magnitude. The curse is triggered when an intelligent creature claims the *Pearl* as its personal possession, and takes effect within 1d4 days. Unlike the transformation of Always-Taking, the *Pearl* does not turn such a greedy soul into a Celestial Dragon Turtle, but instead, a normal tortoise. Once the transformation is complete, the tortoise is standard in all ways including Hit Dice, abilities, and alignment. The only way to reverse this transformation is through a *miracle* spell cast by a cleric of good alignment. The tortoise can be affected by an *awaken* spell. It does not develop the personality of its former creature type, but rather an entirely new personality unique to its awakened turtle form.

The curse can be avoided if the individual who currently carries it continues to use its abilities to aid others, and never claims the *Pearl* as his own. Additionally, a character who claims the artifact as his own and then repents, wishing to avoid the curse, has the opportunity to do so. This requires either an *atonement* or *remove curse* spell, either of which must be empowered (through the use of the Empower Spell feat) to 8th level. Once this is done, and assuming the character now agrees to use the *Pearl* to benefit others, the transformation is halted. If the character reneges on his promise, however, the transformation picks up where it left off.

Reactive Traits

The *Golden Pearl*'s only noticeable reactive trait becomes obvious in the presence of evil magic. When evil magic is cast directly on the *Pearl* or includes the *Pearl* in its area of effect, the *Pearl* dissipated the spell as if the spell had failed to penetrate spell resistance.

Using the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise in a Campaign

The *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise* works best in a highly mythic campaign. The origin of the *Pearl* is a tale of gods and men, and it is these sorts of stories that make the most of the *Pearl*'s flavor and tone. The *Pearl* can be used as an environmental factor, a quest object, or the lynchpin of an entire civilization. It is because of this versatility (in addition to the fact that it can't be "owned" by a PC) that makes its presence feasible in low, mid, high, or epic level campaigns.

As implied above, the *Pearl* does not need to be a centerpiece of your campaign. In fact, the *Pearl* does not even need to make a literal in-game appearance as it can simply be the explanation an aged fisherman offers as to why the villages along the river are so prosperous.

However, the *Pearl* can also be the very lifeblood of an entire river valley civilization, and its destruction could bring drought, famine, and plague. What demon would not revel in the destruction of such a saintly treasure? What elaborate series of terrible events would have to be engineered to allow such a thing to happen?

Adventure Seeds

The Death of Heaven

Every 300 years, an immortal holy man marked with the heart of Ga'dou comes into the world. This being brings with him the Tortoise God's blessings and has incredible powers of healing, as well as abilities that drive back the forces of darkness and evil. When a court of evil arcanists divines the coming of this man, they find that the Saint of Ga'dou can only be killed in one way: by destroying the *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise*.

Much to the dismay of these evil mages, the *Pearl* resides in the belly of an ancient Celestial Dragon Turtle, believed to be Eternally-Giving himself. So, in order to bring about their malevolent scheme, they become advisors to a local duke. The duke, unaware of his aides' true motives, offers a reward for the recovery of the *Pearl* and the destruction of the "evil" dragon turtle that has stolen it from the people of his lands. The PCs, not knowing what they've signed on for, go in search of the *Pearl* with the intent of destroying its guardian. It isn't until a chance meeting with the Holy Man that the plan of the wizards becomes clear.

What do the characters do once they learn the truth? What can they do to convince the duke that his council is evil? What happens if the characters decide they want to go through with the saint's destruction anyway?

The Missing Pearl

The adventurer's are returning from a long and arduous military campaign in the Emperor's service. During their journey home, they come upon a village that has been stricken with famine and plague. At the first the adventurers do not recognize the town, but after a moment of consideration, they realize, much to their shock and horror, that this is the very town they passed two seasons ago, that had been vibrant and lush with rich crops and healthy, hard-working villagers. When the characters consult the village elders, the truth of the matter is laid bare.

Although the sacrifices of fruit and fish had been made to the Celestial Dragon Turtle at the beginning of the season, the creature never arrived to receive them, as it had for every season within the village's memory. Without the Dragon Turtle's blessing (or rather the blessings emanating from the *Pearl* itself), the village has fallen into despair and decay. It is believed that something terrible has happened to Eternally-Giving. In fact, the Celestial Dragon Turtle has been captured and taken to a watery plane of the Abyss by Shika'rao, the fallen goddess who had once been the lover of Ga'dou, Lord of Compassion. There she plans to destroy the Dragon Turtle and the *Golden Pearl* that resides within it.

The heroes must find a way to travel into the Underworld and rescue Eternally-Giving. What will they have to do to travel to the distant and dangerous plane? What terrors await them once they arrive? Is there anything they can do to convince the Demon Goddess Shika'rao that the *Pearl* must not be destroyed?

Destroying the Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise

It is unlikely that any party of non-evil alignment would want to destroy the *Pearl of the Elder Tortoise*. Only a creature of pure malice would want to strip the world of such a boon. However, PCs are not always in the know about the true nature of things and could very likely be tricked into thinking the *Pearl* should be destroyed. If this were to occur, there are three secret methods that can be implemented to destroy the *Pearl*.

- Annoint the *Pearl* with the blood of the god Ga'dou. The blood must be given freely by Ga'dou for this method to successfully destroy the *Pearl*.
- One hundred and one priests of good alignment simultaneously cast a *miracle* upon the *Pearl*, under a full moon, asking for its destruction.
- Immerse the *Pearl* in a massive, platinum crucible (of at least 10,000-gp value) containing the blood of eight gold dragons.

Needless to say, any place regularly blessed by the *Pearl* likely falls into ruin if the artifact is destroyed. Though it may take a season or two, famine, poverty and disease eventually rear their ugly heads. If the characters do not hide well the fact that they destroyed the *Pearl*, it is very likely that they are hunted to the edge of the world to answer for their unforgivable crime.

New Feat

Use of the *Pearl*, in combination with the appropriate ritual, grants a new feat to its wielder. It may be possible, for those blessed with a holy purpose and favored by the gods, to gain this feat by other means (at the DM's discretion). Unlike *Pearl*-wielders, however, such characters must gain the feat normally, and spend a feat slot on it.

Pearl-Touched

You have recited the prayer of Ga'dou and received the permanent blessing of the *Golden Pearl of the Elder Tortoise*, granting you fantastic luck and protection from evil.

Prerequisites: Good alignment, must chant the activation phrase while physically touching the *Pearl*.

Benefit: Once per day, you may add 1d6 to any skill check or saving throw. You must decide to add this bonus before you learn if the result of your initial roll is a successor failure, though you may roll the d20 first and see the result. In addition, you receive a +2 on all saving throws against spells with the evil descriptor.

Holocaust Stone of Gun'ta

Written by C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of the Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta

Somewhere beyond the planes of chaos lies a small pocket dimension known only in scant references as the Black. It is a desolate pocket of space, where large chunks of amorphous dark rock float aimlessly through the dimly lit void. The entire realm is lit by the muted orange of what appears to be distant fires that one can never reach, no matter how far he might travel. Each rock has its own distinct gravity and spins independent of the others. Collisions in the Black are a common occurrence, the results of which explain the realm's utter lack of a population. When two rocks collide, there comes a thunderous crack followed immediately by a swathe of terrible destruction—storms so fierce and powerful that few who have blundered into the Black have lived to tell the tale.

Eons ago, a wayward traveler, whose name is lost to history, left a portal open just long enough for one small fragment of such a rock to pass through. The result on the other side was catastrophic. Gun'Ta, a vast city teeming with life, was laid waste in a matter of minutes. It is said that the earth rumbled and the skies rained a terrible fire, razing the city with sheets of flame. The screams, it is said, lasted only seconds. All that remained was ash, the charred husks of buildings and a single black stone that remained cold to the touch. That stone became known as the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta*.

Since that time, the *Stone* has changed hands on a number of occasions, most often found at the scene of catastrophe and picked up for its apparent value as a geological or monetary find. Many an unfortunate soul has met his end simply by dropping it or tossing it aside.

Studying the Holocaust Stone

The *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* is a fist-sized piece of stone, jet black and rough of texture, just large enough to be held in the hand. Peering closer at the *Stone* reveals that the black surface actually swirls very slowly, as if it contained a ceaselessly shifting smoke. The *Stone* is always cold to the touch. Anyone casting *detect magic* or *detect chaos* sees an overwhelming aura of chaos visible several miles away, allowing for detection far outside the range normal for these spells.

Researching the Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta

The *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* is considered by most to be mythological, something to which people can attribute disasters that lack any other rational explanation. Either way, a Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (the planes) check should yield the information sought.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* is a mythical stone said to have destroyed a mighty city.
20	When cast upon the ground, the *Holocaust Stone* summons a terrible storm the can lay waste entire armies.
25	The *Stone* is a stone comprised of pure chaos and its powers cannot be controlled.
30+	The *Holocaust Stone* is a small piece of a far away pocket dimension called "the Black."

Rumors persist that the artifact was created by a beast that coalesced the souls of a thousand evil beings into a single, portable essence, and that the destruction wrought by the *Stone* is the manifestation of their rage at being kept in such a form. Other stories claim the rock is simply a meteorite that hit and destroyed Gun'Ta, and has simply developed an erroneous, but imaginative, reputation.

Powers of the Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta

The *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* does but one thing, and that is to destroy everything near it when activated. Being a piece of raw, unworked chaos, the *Stone's* ability to unleash various types of devastation is entirely unpredictable, making it an unreliable but wholly lethal weapon that few have survived using. The *Stone* has been known to summon powerful storms, wash away cities with tremendous tsunamis or shake the very earth to its core.

Using the Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta

Activating the *Holocaust Stone* couldn't be easier. Any jarring collision awakens the powers within it. Throwing the *Stone* upon the ground, dropping it, striking it with another object or simply carrying it on your person during a fall or collision causes the *Stone* to activate. (Mechanically, any impact or energy effect that could cause even a single point of damage activates the *Stone*. This includes any area effects that include the *Stone*.) Understandably, most of the deaths associated with the *Holocaust Stone* are accidental.

Activated Powers

When *The Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* is activated, it unleashes a burst of energy that triggers some sort of massive, cataclysmic event. These events occur at random and begin the very moment of activation. Each time the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* is activated, roll on the table below for its effects. All spells are cast as if by a 20th-level caster, and have a save DC (if applicable) of 25.

Roll	Result
01–06	*Contagion*
07–12	*Earthquake*
13–18	*Elemental Swarm*
19–24	*Energy Drain*
25–30	*Lightning Sphere*
31–36	*Mass Bedlam*
37–42	*Power Word Kill*
43–48	*Rain of Fire*
49–54	*Reverse Gravity*
55–60	*Storm of Vengeance*
61–66	*Sunburst*
67–72	*Wail of the Banshee*
73–78	*Whirlwind*
79–84	*Wilting Blast*
85–90	*Word of Chaos*
91–93	Reroll, but double the radius of effect.
94–96	Reroll, but double the duration of effect.
97–99	Reroll twice, with both effects occurring simultaneously. Continue to roll new effects each time this result occurs. If a generated effect is rerolled, roll once more to replace it.
00	Reroll, but add *Create Undead Horde*.

Contagion: As the spell. Targets all creatures within a 1d6-mile radius. The disease created by this effect is randomly generated for each individual. Using the table under the *contagion* entry, roll 1d8, rerolling any result of 8.

Earthquake: As the spell. The *earthquake* has a duration of 1d10+5 rounds and a radius of 10 miles. The damage done by the spell occurs every round and occurs at the top of any initiative order.

Elemental Swarm: As the spell. This effect summons elementals of each of the four types (air, earth, fire and water). The random number of elementals is rolled for *each* type; thus 2d4 elementals of each type, for a total of 8d4, appear at the time of effect. These elementals serve no master and immediately attack the target nearest them. The huge and greater elementals are summoned at the time of effect, rather than at 10 minute intervals afterward. These elementals exist until destroyed, or until 200 minutes elapse. Each elemental appears within 100 feet of the *Stone*, in the nearest available space.

Energy Drain: As the spell. The spell targets every living creature within a 1d6-mile radius.

Lightning Sphere: A sphere of lightning emanates from the *Stone*, dealing 20d6 points of electrical damage to everything within a 1d6-mile. A successful Reflex save halves the damage. A successful role with Evasion reduces the damage to one-quarter, rather than negating it outright.

Mass Bedlam: Everyone within a 10-mile radius of the stone must make a Will save or suffer the effects of the *confusion* spell for 1d% minutes. If anyone rolls a result stating that they attack the caster, they instead attempt to attack the *Stone*, potentially activating it once more.

Power Word Kill: As the spell. The spell targets every living creature within a 1-mile radius.

Rain of Fire: Clouds gather and a rain of fire and embers showers down from the heavens. Anyone caught in the radius of the storm takes 2d6 fire damage per round (no save), and anything flammable immediately catches fire. The storm has a radius of 1d6 miles and lasts for 1d10 minutes.

Reverse Gravity: As the spell. The spell has a radius of 1d6 miles and a duration of 1d20 rounds.

Storm of Vengeance: As the spell. The *storm* affects a radius of 1d10 miles and lasts for 1d10 minutes. Once the normal 10 rounds of the spell has expired, the cycle repeats until the end of the duration.

Sunburst: As the spell. Rather than instantaneous, the *sunburst* has a duration of 1d10 minutes and a radius of 1 mile. The damage done by the spell occurs every round (thus 6d6 each round) and occurs at the top of any initiative order.

Wail of the Banshee: As the spell. Affects all creatures in a 1d4-mile radius for 1d10 rounds. Anyone in the area of effect must make a new saving throw at the beginning of any round that the *wail of the banshee* is still active.

Whirlwind: As the spell. The whirlwind moves in a random direction each round, as if uncontrolled, and lasts for 1d10 minutes.

Wilting Blast: As the spell *horrid wilting*, but affecting all creatures in a 1d6-mile radius. All bodies of water within the radius of the blast evaporate, and the land dries to a nearly charred husk.



Word of Chaos: As the spell. This spell affects every target within a 10-mile radius.

Create Undead Horde: This only occurs in conjunction with another effect. Anyone killed by an effect of the *Holocaust Stone*, while this effect is active, rises one round later as an undead creature. These creatures immediately attack the nearest living subject for 1d10 minutes, at which point they may act of their own volition. The type of creature created depends upon the level or HD of the person killed by the effect.

Level/HD	Undead
1–3	Zombie
4–6	Ghoul
7–9	Ghast
10–12	Mohrg
13–14	Shadow
15–16	Wraith
17–18	Spectre
19+	Devourer

Consequences

While wielding, carrying or otherwise bearing the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta*, the bearer suffers no direct consequences. However, if the bearer handles it carelessly, he may accidentally trigger its effects at the worst of possible times. The bearer of the *Holocaust Stone* is in no way protected from its effects, and no means exists — up to and including divine intervention — of controlling or even predicting which result occurs when the *Stone* is activated. (Special abilities that allow rerolls, such as the granted ability of the Luck Domain, do not function on this roll.) It is possible for higher level characters to survive singular effects of the stone, but it is a rare person indeed who has survived it twice, making it an ineffective weapon (short of suicide runs).

Reactive Traits

Casting a spell of any kind, except divinations, that targets or includes the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* in its area of effect immediately activates it. This includes spells such as *teleport object*. The *Stone* can, however, be *teleported* or otherwise transported if it held by a creature who is the true subject of the *teleport* spell. Alternatively, the *Stone* can be hurled through an open *gate* or portal. Transporting the artifact by these methods does not immediately trigger any effects unless an environmental condition at the end of the transport does so.

Using the Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta in a Campaign

The *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* is quite possibly the most destructive item the PCs have ever come across, so it is not an artifact to be used lightly. It is not meant to simply be found lying around in a dungeon without some sort of forewarning or knowledge (and in fact, doing so is just plain mean, unless you're actively seeking to end a campaign). It is best used in mid- to high-level campaigns when placed in the hands of an adversary who may or may not understand the truly destructive nature of the *Stone*.

Adventure Seeds

Welcome Back, Chaos

The PCs are greeted at the local inn with terrible news. Their home city (or perhaps the capitol city itself) has suffered a tremendous cataclysm, wiping out most, if not all, of the local citizenry. The region has been thrown into total chaos as family members have rushed to the city to discover the fate of their kin. What wiped this city off of the map? Was it an accident or a deliberate act? Rumors begin to circulate that the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* has resurfaced to claim yet another city as part

of its ongoing legend. Could these rumors be true, and if so can the PCs find the stone before someone else does? Can they rid the world of it for good?

Weapon of Mass Destruction

A small, desperate and clearly losing faction of a local war or religious struggle has turned to extreme measures. Having discovered the *Holocaust Stone*, they have begun sending devoted zealots to rush headlong into opposing armies and cities with it, to commit suicide in the name of advancing their cause. Can the PCs stop the next zealot before such destruction can happen again? And what happens when a zealot bearing the *Stone* has second thoughts?

The End Times

The cult of a mad god dedicated to chaos, destruction or oblivion itself has discovered the secret of the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta* and the distant pocket dimension from which it comes. They figure that if a fist-sized stone could lay waste to an entire city, a stone several miles long could wipe out the entire world, if not the Material Plane itself. They've begun to acquire the materials to cast an epic spell capable of creating a *gate* large enough to transport such a stone, and rumors have begun to circulate in the academic community, arguing whether such a thing is possible. The PCs must somehow track down the cult and prevent the spell from being cast before all the world is destroyed.

Destroying the Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta

The *Holocaust Stone* is possibly the most dangerous artifact — and certainly the most unpredictable one — the PCs are likely to encounter. The reasons for destroying it should be fairly obvious to even the most inexperienced of party members.

• The *Holocaust Stone* can be sundered or crushed, although doing so probably requires triggering it several times. Any large hammer or maul should be sufficient to pulverize it. The stone has a hardness of 20 and 100 hit points.

• The *Holocaust Stone* is comprised of pure, undistilled chaos. Transporting it to a plane attuned to Law causes it to explode in an incredible detonation that triggers all of the *Stone*'s possible effects (except *Create Undead Horde*) at once. This explosion completely devastates the region around it, but the *Stone* itself is destroyed.

New Demiplane: The Black

The Black is a small pocket dimension approximately 200 miles in diameter, with no direct gravity. It is a vast field of empty space punctuated by large rocks, much like asteroids, spinning through the airless nether and occasionally smashing into one another. The collisions cause vast explosions of chaotic energy that trigger sweeping storms that dwarf those created by the *Holocaust Stone*. (Multiply all areas of effect by 5, and increase all save DCs to 40.) If ever any being dwelled here, none exist now.

The Black is dimly lit by a pale orange glow that seems to emanate from a far off distance, one that can never be reached. The dark black stones cast strange shadows upon each other in this light, giving an eerie presence to the entire dimension.

Holding an erratic orbit around the furthest outreaches of chaotic dimensions to which it is regularly drawn, the Black occasionally strays out of path, momentarily colliding with other dimensions of the multiverse. These collisions cause sudden, seemingly unexplainable cataclysms in those dimensions, before the Black returns to its previous orbit.

Few scholars know much of the Black, and the writings on it are generally restricted to mythological works. A DC 30 Knowledge (the planes) check will yields some information on this enigmatic place.

• Self-Contained Shape: Sphere.

• Objective directional gravity.

• Erratic time.

• Alterable Morphic: On a plane with this trait, objects remain where they are (and what they are) unless affected by physical force or magic. You can change the immediate environment as a result of tangible effort.

• Strongly Chaotic-Aligned.

• Enhanced magic. Spells with the chaos descriptor are enhanced in The Black. Such spells are cast as though they were prepared with the Maximize Spell feat, though they don't require the higher spell slots.

• Impeded magic. Spells with the law descriptor may fizzle when cast in the Black. A spellcaster attempting a spell with the law descriptor must succeed on a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + the level of the spell). Failure indicates the spell does not take effect, but the slot is still lost. Spells that produce light are less effective as well, because all light sources have their ranges halved in the Black.

Horn of the Archangel

The Doomsday Horn, the Herald of Ages
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of the Horn of the Archangel

In a realm so distant magic cannot find it, in an age so long past even dragons have no knowledge of it, the gods of good and light gathered to examine this new phenomenon called "creation." They gazed across the multiverse, and saw many races struggling on many worlds. And though they were pleased, so too were they troubled. Most of the mortal races, though inclined this way or that, were blessed with the gift of free will. Many chose paths of righteousness, kindness, honor; but many more trod the path of evil, seduced by its call or simply because it was what they wished.

These gods knew, at some distant point in the future that even they could not see, the worlds would shift to one side or the other, bathed in light and goodness, or claimed forever by darkness and vice. They knew this, and they knew as well that should the multiverse entire fall to evil, it would be better to scour it clean and start anew than let it continue thus.

They cooperated, these gods, joining their powers to create an instrument of Armageddon. They imbued within it the power to shake and shatter whole worlds, and they gave it a voice so loud and pure, the heavenly hosts might hear it no matter where it sounded. They shaped this power into the form of a great horn, crafted in ivory, banded in iron, and bound together by the souls of the righteous dead who volunteered their essence. The gods granted the *Horn* to their most trusted of emissaries, an archangel so ancient and so powerful he was very nearly a god himself. They charged him with the task of watching over the many worlds of the multiverse, and — should any fall irrevocably to evil — of bringing about the end of days in that world, so that the gods might begin anew.

For eons, the archangel did as they bade him, going about his task with zeal. Alas, even so great a seraph was not immune to the siren's song of pride. Whether it was his own hubris, or whether he had some devil whispering in his ear, none can say. But over the course of millennia, he styled himself a god, for did he not hold the power to end creation in the palm of his hand? He demanded worship and obedience from the mortals of many of the worlds, and he demanded boons of the gods themselves.

When the archangel obliterated an entire world because one of its gods refused to accept him as an equal, and destroyed a second because a *single mortal* had offended him, the great powers knew they must act. In an unprecedented and unequaled show of cooperation, good deities allied with evil, angels marched alongside devils, as the Upper and Lower Planes assembled a mighty force. Even a few of the chaotic powers of the Abyss joined in the crusade, though others — drunk on the random destruction and carnage — threw their support behind the *Horn*-bearer.

For centuries, as mortals reckon time, the battle raged across the many worlds. Entire realms were ripped apart, or drowned in the blood of the divine. Legend tells that several gods died in this war, and that the vast hosts of angels and devils were severely depleted.

In the end, even the power of the *Horn* was not sufficient to stand against the assembled forces of above and below. The archangel was slain, his body burned to ash, his name stricken from all records and mortal memory.

Even in death, however, the archangel would cause more damage. With his dying breath, he hurled the *Horn* through the barriers between worlds, casting it into the multiverse. Search though they might, the heavenly hosts could not find it, for the archangel had imbued it with additional powers, including a potent enchantment that rendered it invisible to divinations.

Thus it has remained, for age upon age. The *Horn* occasionally appears in the hands of mortals, wreaking devastation both planned and accidental, only to vanish once more into the mists of legend. The angels have tracked it a dozen times, following trails of destruction, only to lose the scent again. For many years now, the *Horn* has been quiet, but it can only be a matter of time until it appears once more, for the *Horn wants* to be used.

Studying the Horn

The *Horn of the Archangel* is a large instrument; a Medium humanoid would certainly require two hands to use it. It is sharply curved, resembling a gargantuan ram's horn. It appears to be carved of purest ivory, still glistening white despite its great age. It is banded — at the both ends, and once around the center — in gleaming cold iron. Tiny symbols, etched into the ivory, run

Researching the Horn

The primary means of researching the *Horn of the Archangel* is through religious texts and treatises. A few surviving histories speak of it, but these are exceptionally obscure and difficult to find. Finally, those who study the planes themselves may have heard whispers of the *Horn*; it's difficult to keep secret an artifact that has erased entire worlds from the multiverse.

Knowledge (religion) and Knowledge (the planes) are the most appropriate skills for learning of the *Horn*. Bardic Knowledge suffices as well, as does Knowledge (history) *if* the *Horn* has ever been used on the PC's home world, but use of these latter two abilities adds +5 to the check DC.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	In a forgotten age, the gods granted a trusted archangel a *Horn* with which he could call forth Armageddon. The archangel grew drunk on power, and was eventually destroyed. The *Horn* was lost.
20	The *Horn* is an ornate instrument of ivory and iron. It is capable of shaking the earth, calling up storms, even summoning celestial hosts.
25	The powers of the Upper Planes have sought the *Horn* for ages. Using it to excess might attract their attention. One must know specific patterns and notes to play on the *Horn* to activate its specific powers. If the *Horn*'s wielder is slain, the artifact transports itself elsewhere. It must be taken from him while he yet lives, or offered willingly.
30+	The *Horn* was never meant for mortal use. No mortal can activate its most potent abilities, and every time a mortal uses it at all, he risks a potent backlash. (Provide the player with one or more of the methods of destruction, as listed below. Additionally, the character knows or can learn the proper notes to activate most of the *Horn*'s powers.)

The *Horn* is truly ancient, wrapped in all manner of religious symbolism, and something that the very gods wish to remain lost. As such, substantial false information and myth exists regarding it.

- Anyone using the *Horn* might accidentally destroy their world. (In fact, while the *Horn* can cause substantial destruction — not all of which is at the behest of its wielder — no non-epic mortal can cause it to destroy an entire world.)
- Using the *Horn* instantly alerts the heavenly hosts to its location, and they will fall upon any mortal who dares use it with righteous anger. (Sounding the *Horn* does indeed alert the Upper Planes to the fact that it is active, and lets them know what world it is on. The enchantments placed upon it, however, prevent them from pinpointing it further on the first sounding. The more it is used, however, the more precisely they can track it down.)
- As it was designed for an angel, the *Horn* does not function in the hands of an innately evil being, such as a demon or devil. (The *Horn* does not function as well for such beings, but they can make use of it if they are sufficiently powerful.)
- Frequent use of the *Horn* corrupts its wielder, just as it did the archangel for whom it was designed. (Actually, the archangel fell to his own pride, or perhaps the machinations of a fiend. While a wielder of the *Horn* might indeed become drunk on its power, this is simply an example of power corrupting; the *Horn* itself does not cause its wielder to turn evil.)

down both sides of the *Horn*. These are written in a truly ancient form of Celestial. Anyone who speaks Celestial may attempt a DC 25 Decipher Script check. (The DC to decipher this script if the character does *not* speak modern Celestial is a hefty 45.) Successfully translating the script tells the character what notes and patterns to play to activate the *Horn*'s powers.

Anyone touching the *Horn* feels a faint sensation of warmth, beginning at the point of contact and seeping deep into her body. If the individual is good-aligned, this warmth feels pleasant at first, but swiftly grows into an uncomfortable heat, not unlike a moderate fever. A non-good creature feels feverish from the first moment, and starts to feel vaguely ill after a few moments have passed. In no case are these sensations strong enough to cause a lapse in concentration or a mechanical penalty.

Due to the enchantments of the archangel, the *Horn* simply does not exist insofar as divination magics are concerned. No divination spell can locate it, read it, or provide information about it; it simply fails to register at all. The exception to this is during the precise moment when the *Horn* is actually sounded. If anyone happens

to be *scrying* for it at that exact instant, they receive a brief image of the *Horn*'s surroundings, and of its wielder. Note that the *Horn*'s immunity to divinations does not extent to the individual carrying it.

Powers of the Horn of the Archangel

The *Horn* was designed for one purpose: to destroy worlds. While few if any mortal wielders can use it to its fullest extent, it is still an item of truly devastating power.

Using The Horn

Obviously, activating the *Horn* requires blowing it, but there is far more to it than a mere exhalation of breath.

The power of the artifact is proportional to the inner strength of the individual attempting to use it. To activate any power, the wielder must make a special check, consisting of 1d20 + his Hit Dice. Outsiders with the Good subtype have an easier time using it, and count as a creature of one-and-a-half times their normal Hit Dice. (Thus, an angel with 7 Hit Dice counts as a 10-Hit Die creature for these purposes.) Outsiders with the Evil subtype find the *Horn* very difficult to use, and count as a creature of one-half their normal Hit Dice. Each power listed below includes the DC of the roll necessary to activate it. Powers that allow rerolling, such as the granted power of the Luck domain, may not be used on this roll.

Note that a roll of a natural 1 indicates an automatic failure on this roll, regardless of modifiers, but a natural 20 does *not* indicate an automatic success. Some powers are simply beyond some wielders. A natural 1 also indicates that a mishap occurs (roll on Mishap Table Two, below).

If the roll fails, the wielder may not attempt to activate that power again that day.

In addition to succeeding on this roll, a wielder must know the appropriate notes to play. Someone who has successfully translated the ancient script on the *Horn*, or succeeded in the appropriate skill check, may have this information. Anyone attempting to figure it out by trial-and-error has a base 1% chance (cumulative) of striking the right combination of notes and rhythms with each attempt. If he does succeed in activating a power, the DM should determine which randomly. It's entirely possible for the wielder to hit upon an active tune, but be of insufficient power to make it work.

When the *Horn* is blown, whether or not it activates a power, it emits a deep and near-deafening tone, low enough to feel through the ground. The sound carries for miles, and any sentient being who hears it knows it is no natural call. They feel in their gut, and in their soul, that some terrible power is about to be unleashed.

The *Horn* only functions on the various worlds of the Material Plane, and on the various demi-planes that exist throughout the Astral. It does not work anywhere else.

Constant Powers

Although the *Horn* is neither intelligent nor sentient per se, the archangel who once wielded it imbued it with a rudimentary "instinct" for self-preservation. Should the wielder of the artifact die, the *Horn* instantly *teleports* itself to either a random location on the same world, or another Material Plane world (50% chance of either). This makes it very difficult for the celestials to reclaim it, as they cannot simply kill whoever's holding it.

Activated Powers

Nearly all of the *Horn*'s powers are devoted to destruction, and even those few that are not directly damaging are intended to aid the wielder in spreading devastation.



The number given in parenthesis for each entry indicates the DC of the roll required to activate that ability.

All spells and spell-like effects created by the horn are considered to have a caster level of 30. The daily powers of the *Horn* reset at dusk.

Chariot of the Angels (DC 15, 20, or 25): The *Horn* calls a flaming chariot from the sky, hauled by two angelic steeds. This power can be used up to three times per day, but the difficulty rises by 5 (from the base 15) for each subsequent attempt. It is otherwise identical to the spell *chariot of fire* (reference ***Eldritch Sorcery*** from **Necromancer Games**, or see below).

Heavenly Hosts (see chart): The *Horn* summons several celestial soldiers to fight for its wielder. These are like normal summoned creatures; when slain, they return whence they came rather than truly dying. However, they retain only vague memories of their service, so while they know they were called by the *Horn*, they cannot identify its wielder or remember its location. They remain for three minutes (30 rounds), or until slain.

The precise nature and number of celestials summoned depends, as with all other powers, on how well the wielder can roll on his check. The wielder must decide which creatures he is attempting to summon before he rolls, and cannot change his mind once he has rolled.

DC	Celestials Summoned
21	Hound archon or three lantern archons
23	Bralani eladrin or three hound archons or five lantern archons
25	Avoral guardinal or three brelani eldarin or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above
27	Lillend or three avoral guardinals or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above
29	Leonal guardinal or three lillends or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above
33	Astral daeva or three leonal guardinals or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above
37	Planetar or three astral daevas or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above
43	Solar or three planetars or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above
44+	Three solars or five of any lesser celestials mentioned above

This power is usable once per day.

Wave of Screams (DC 23): The wielder of the *Horn* can produce a 100-foot cone of sound, made up of the screams of all who have suffered, harnessed and turned against the forces of evil. This cone deals 5d6 points of sonic damage and 5d6 points of holy damage to all creatures caught within (Reflex DC 30 for half). This power is usable three times per day, but only once every 1d4 rounds.

How Long Do We Have?

Given the progression of the apocalypse effect, the PCs might well wonder how long they have to stop it once it starts.

If you assume your campaign world is roughly the size of Earth, it is approximately 7,926 miles (or 41,849,280 feet) in circumference. At that size, the growing disaster will have all but swallowed the globe after 16 days, and will complete the devastation — with room to spare — after 17.

Earthquake (DC 27): The wielder can target an *earthquake* spell, centered on any point within 1,000 feet. The *earthquake* has a radius of 200 feet. This power is usable once per day.

Tidal Wave (DC 28): The wielder can target a *tidal wave* spell (see below), centered on any point within 1,000 feet, so long as it is on a coastline. All saves are DC 34. This power is usable once per day.

Storm of Vengeance (DC 29): The wielder can target a *storm of vengeance* spell, centered on any point within 1,000 feet. The *storm* has a radius of 500 feet, and the wielder need not concentrate to maintain it. All saves are DC 34. This power is usable once per day.

Torrent of Screams (DC 31): A far more potent version of the wave of screams, this devastating blast can shake the very foundations of the earth. The *Horn* produces a 1,000-foot cone of sound. Anyone within the first 100 feet suffers 10d6 points of sonic damage and 10d6 points of holy damage. This damage drops by 1 die of each type for every hundred feet. Thus, targets 200 feet distant suffer 18 total dice of damage, those 300 feet distant suffer 16 total dice damage, up to those 1,000 feet away who suffer a mere 2 total dice of damage. Anyone caught within may attempt a DC 35 Reflex save for half. This power is usable only once per day.

Apocalypse (DC 41): This is the purpose for which the *Horn* was created. When the wielder blows this final note, the skies darken and the earth shakes. The *earthquake*, *tidal wave*, and *storm of vengeance* powers of the *Horn* all activate at once. They begin at a point of the wielder's choosing, within 1,000 feet, but they do not end there. (Obviously, the *tidal wave* power does not function on dry land, but the magical effect spreads with the others, becoming active when it reaches a coastline.) After one minute, the *earthquake* and *tidal wave* effects expand to match the size of the *storm of vengeance*. Every day after

that, the entire effect doubles in size. That is, after one day, it grows to a 1,000-foot radius; after two days, a 2,000-foot radius; after three days, a 4,000-foot radius; and so forth. Although it takes some time, the effect eventually spreads to encompass the entire world, if left unchecked.

Once started, this apocalypse can only be stopped by the direct intervention of no fewer than *three* deities, working in concert; by the utter destruction of the *Horn*; or if the wielder who activated the apocalypse power of the artifact blows the *Horn* again, with the express purpose of ending the effect. Doing so costs the wielder his life and soul, which are drained by the *Horn* in order to stop the growing destruction. The wielder instinctively knows this, so he must be willing to sacrifice himself to end the devastation.

The *Horn* cannot create two apocalypses on the same world at the same time. Once one has begun, that particular power of the artifact is no longer accessible on that world, until and unless the effect is stopped.

Consequences

The *Horn* offers some potent and devastating abilities, but the risks of using it are at least as great as the rewards. Mortals were not meant to harness the power of the *Herald of Ages*, and the fabric of creation can only take so much abuse before it begins to unravel.

Any time the *Horn* is used, a chance exists that it backfires or otherwise generates some terrible effect the wielder did not intend. The chance of mishap is rolled on a d%, and is equal to 10 + the DC required to activate that power. For instance, the wave of screams has a 33% chance of mishap. The *Horn*'s apocalypse power has no mishap chance. Powers that normally allow rerolling, such as the granted power of the Luck domain, cannot be used on this roll.

If the dice indicate that a mishap occurs, roll percentile dice on the following charts to determine exactly what happens.

Mishap Table One

Roll	Result
01–25	Power activates as desired, but a mishap also occurs. Roll on Mishap Table Two, below.
26–50	Power activates in the wrong location. Roll 1d8 to determine direction from target point, and 10d% to determine distance, in yards, from target point. (If you roll this result for either the chariot of the angels or the heavenly hosts powers, treat the result as if you had rolled 01–25.)
51–75	Power activates in the wrong location, as above, *and* a mishap occurs. Roll on Mishap Table Two, below.
76–100	Power fails to activate, and a mishap occurs. Roll on Mishap Table Two, below.

The following table makes frequent reference to "an area important to the wielder." The DM should adjudicate this as appropriate for the given character or NPC. It might indicate a hometown, the capital city of the character's native land, the home of his family, or the like. All that matters is that it is a location of great personal (and positive) significance to the wielder. (Remember that the *Horn* also misfires on a natural "1" on its activation roll.)

Mishap Table Two

Roll	Result
01–10	Blood rains from the skies in a one-mile radius around the wielder. This lasts for 5d20 minutes, and obscures vision as normal rain. Every living creature exposed to the blood must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or contract filth fever. (See Chapter Eight: Glossary of the *DMG*.) All plant life is affected as if by a *blight* spell.
11–15	Blood rains from the skies, as above, but in an area important to the wielder, rather than directly over him.
16–25	The *Horn*'s *earthquake* power activates, centered directly on the wielder.
26–30	The *Horn*'s *earthquake* power activates in an area important to the wielder.
31–40	The *Horn*'s *tidal wave* power activates so that the wielder will be caught in its effects. (If this result occurs away from a coastline, treat as a result of 16–25 instead.)
41–45	The *Horn*'s *tidal wave* power activates, swamping an area important to the wielder. (If the wielder has no significant feelings for any coastal areas, treat as a result of 26–30 instead.)
46–55	The *Horn*'s *storm of vengeance* power activates, centered directly on the wielder.
56–60	The *Horn*'s *storm of vengeance* power activates in an area important to the wielder.
61–70	All metallic items within a 500-foot radius of the wielder rust away, as though subject to a *rusting grasp* spell. (Attended items and magic items may attempt a DC 29 Fortitude save to negate.) This includes all items in the wielder's possession, except the *Horn* itself and any other artifact.
71–80	The *Horn* generates an *antimagic field* around the wielder, to a radius of 500 feet. Not even the *Horn* itself functions in this area. This lasts for 1d100 minutes.
81–90	The sun goes black. The *Horn* generates a *deeper darkness* effect with a 1-mile radius around the wielder. No magic short of a *wish* or *miracle* can dispel it. This lasts for 1d100 minutes.
91–98	The sun goes black over an area important to the wielder, with a 1-mile radius. This effect is *permanent until dispelled*.
99–100	Roll again. Additionally, the *Horn* simply disappears from the wielder's hand, transporting itself to either a random spot on the same world, or another Material Plane world (50% chance of either.)

In addition to the *Horn*'s own potential backlash, the armies of the Upper Planes still hunt for the artifact. The first time the *Horn* is used on a given world, the celestials are alerted to its presence, but not its location. From that point onward, they scour the world in search of it. Since it is immune to divinations most of the time, the odds of them finding it are small, but they might succeed.

As bringing in a large force of powerful celestials is a campaign-altering event, DMs are encouraged to do so only if and when they feel the story would benefit from it, rather than due to random rolls. For those DMs who do prefer a random element, however, assume that a 1% cumulative chance exists, for each use of the *Horn* after the first, that the celestials are attempting to mystically detect it at that exact moment. Even if they cannot arrive on the scene before the wielder departs, they now know who (and what) he is, and can *scry* for him directly.

Using the Horn in a Campaign

The potential for deadly backlash would seem to discourage most intelligent beings from using the *Horn*, but that doesn't mean it cannot appear in a campaign. The villain of the tale might be a religious zealot who seeks to destroy the world, an ambitious warlord who is willing to risk the results if it means using the *Horn* against his enemies, or a true madman who is too crazy to care about the repercussions. The PCs might find themselves forced to use it, in order to defeat an enemy they otherwise could not face, or to destroy a threat that has resisted all other attempts. (See, for instance, the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan*.) Of course, some players will enjoy the *Horn*'s great destructive power enough that they are willing to risk the backlash. This is a self-correcting problem, as the *Horn* either eventually kills them, disappears, or attracts the attention of celestial forces.

Many campaigns may be better served by making the *Horn* the goal of a great quest. Perhaps the PCs must find it to defeat a great evil, or to keep it out of the hands of someone who would use it for ill. Or perhaps a great villain already possesses it, and the PCs must take it from them.

In most cases, the *Horn* is best suited to high-level campaigns. Its powers are far too great for weaker characters to survive, so a low-powered campaign involving the *Horn* should involve keeping it out of the hands of others, rather than actually facing it across a battlefield. Characters of low level will also find most of its powers outside their ability to activate, so if the DM *does* decide to introduce it to a low-level game, he should plan to either remove it from the party's possession, or take steps to deal with the consequences, before they gain sufficient power to activate it.

Adventure Seeds

In the Angel's Name

Religious cultists, mortals and celestials both, have come to revere the ancient archangel who first wielded the *Horn*. They believe that he was not evil, but in fact that he fought on the side of righteousness, that he realized the multiverse was too corrupt to be allowed to survive. They seek the *Horn* to continue his work, and to obliterate the various worlds of the Material Plane. Because they have several celestials among them, they might even be able to trigger an apocalypse, if they are not prevented from acquiring the artifact.

The Call of Battle

A great general has acquired the *Horn*, and is using it to decimate his enemies. He apparently does not care about the collateral damage he is causing, and because his armies are made up largely of animated dead, he is willing to risk destroying entire battalions in a backlash. Further, he has a potent wizard as an ally, and the wizard has protected him from *scrying*; even if the celestials detect the *Horn* in use, they cannot hone in on the general. The PCs must find some way to remove the *Horn* from his possession, before his great armies — and the artifact — arrive on the borders of their own kingdom.

The Order of the Righteous Fist

The devil Almarach is reaching the culmination of a scheme he began millennia ago. In mortal guise, he founded a great monastic tradition, devoted to goodness and order. He, or his servants, have led this order, instilling in its students teachings of righteousness, but also conditioning them to trust their leaders without reservation. Among their numbers are a handful of celestials, captured in battle, their minds mystically wiped. They have been trained sufficiently that their monk levels, combined with their racial Hit Dice, make them potent enough to use the *Horn*'s ultimate power. Now that Almarach is fully convinced of their loyalty, he intends to send his disciples out into the worlds to seek the *Horn*. He has told them it is a weapon of great power that must be kept from the hands of evil, but in truth he intends to use his "brainwashed" celestials to use the *Horn*, enabling him to destroy whole worlds.

Destroying the Horn

Given its destructive potential, many heroes might seek to destroy the *Horn* to keep it out of the hands of others. Should its apocalypse power ever be triggered, however, destruction of the artifact may be the only feasible way to save an entire world.

It *seems* possible to destroy the *Horn* by traditional means. The *Herald of Ages* has a hardness of 25 and 343 hit points. It is completely immune to all five energy types, but sufficient physical damage can eventually reduce it to 0 hit points. When this happens, the *Horn* cracks, but then fades away. It reappears, fully restored, in anywhere from 1 to 600 days. (Roll a d6, and then roll a number of d100

equal to the result.) As always, it may appear elsewhere on the same world, or on a different world.

When the *Horn* fades away (or when it is truly destroyed, by one of the methods listed below), it also causes either an *earthquake* or a *storm of vengeance* result, centered on the spot where it disappeared.

• An outsider with the evil subtype, of at least 30 HD, must attempt to activate the *Horn*'s apocalypse power on one of the Upper Planes.

• It must be crushed beneath the feet of at least three of the gods who created it in the first place (which, among other things, necessitates figuring out who those gods were, and what worlds they oversee).

• It must be exposed to the energies of creation itself, which — due to its purely destructive nature — will cause it to crumble. (These energies might still linger somewhere in the campaign world, perhaps in ancient areas of great holy significance, or the PCs might have to actually travel the planes in search of a world being born.)

New Spells

The following spells represent some of the *Horn*'s abilities. DMs might choose to have such spells exist in other locations in the campaign world, allowing PCs (and NPCs) access to them without requiring they use the artifact.

Chariot of Fire

Conjuration (Summoning) [Fire]
Level: Drd 8
Components: V, S, DF, M
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Flaming chariot pulled by two fiery horses
Duration: 1 hour + 10 min./level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Chariot of fire creates clap of thunder and roiling bank of smoke from which a flaming chariot drawn by two reddish-brown fiery horses emerges. The chariot has a base land speed of 70 feet per round and a fly speed of 140 feet per round with average maneuverability. The chariot can carry you and up to 8 other Medium or smaller creatures that you designate (by touch) during the casting. Creatures larger or smaller than Medium can be designated. A Large creature counts as two Medium or smaller creatures. A Huge creature counts as four Medium or smaller creatures. A Gargantuan creature counts as eight Medium or smaller creatures. Colossal creatures cannot board the *chariot*. Creatures other than you and those you designate that come within 5 feet of or touch the *chariot* or the horses take 2d4 points of fire damage per round they remain in the area. While aboard the *chariot*, all passengers gain resistance to fire 10.

You control the *chariot* verbally causing the horses to run, trot, fly, turn, and so on. The *chariot* is a tangible manifestation and can be damaged or attacked as can the horses. See the sidebar for statistics for the chariot and horses.

Chariot of Fire: AC 20, hardness 10, 100 hit points, can only be hit by magic weapons.

Fiery Horses (2): CR 4; SZ L Magical Beast [Fire]; HD 4d10+12; hp 34; Init +1; Spd 70 ft., fly 140 ft. (average); AC 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13; BAB/Grap +4/+12; Atk +7 melee (1d6+4, hoof); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+4 [x2], hooves); SA heat aura (5-ft., 2d4 fire); SQ fire subtype, darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 10/magic; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Endurance, Run.

The *chariot* and horses can be dismissed or dispelled. In such a case the spell ends, leaving the passengers unharmed (unless of course they happen to be airborne when the spell disappears in which case they might take falling damage).

Material Component: A small piece of wood, two holly berries, and a source of fire at least as large as a torch.

Tidal Wave

Evocation [Water]
Level: Cleric 9, Druid 9
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)
Area: A semicircle 200 ft. in width
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex partial; see text
Spell Resistance: No

This spell can only target an area on the coast of a sea or very large lake. You cause a tidal wave to slam against the shore; the wave is 200 feet wide, and reaches 100 feet inland at its longest point. All structures in the area suffer 6d6 points of bludgeoning damage instantly, and another 6d6 in 1d4 minutes as the ground supporting them is softened and eaten away. This second roll ignores hardness. Living beings in the area suffer 6d6 points of damage instantly, and are swept into the water by the current. A successful Reflex save halves the damage, and prevents them from being swept away. A living being who is swept away travels to the edge of the *tidal wave* in a random direction; if they are swept out to sea, they must be able to swim back to shore or they almost certainly drown. Huge and larger creatures are immune to being swept away.

Hungry Stone

Blood Altar of the Viraj
By Keith Baker

The Tale of the Hungry Stone

Many mysteries have been washed away by the tides of time: chapters of history humanity has never seen, civilizations so ancient that virtually all traces have passed away into dust. The Viraj vanished before humans mastered speech or fire, and this destruction was so complete that no trace of their nation has been found… until now.

The Viraj were creatures of magic barely bound in flesh and bone. The foe they faced has been lost to history. A rogue god? An army of fiends? Whatever it was, the threat was so great that the Viraj sacrificed their entire race to battle it. Viraj magi created focal points that could draw out the lifeforce of their citizens and channel this power into a single vessel. Hundreds of thousands of Viraj laid down their lives, creating a handful of heroes with the power to rival gods. The result of the war remains a mystery. No mortal has even seen one of the Viraj, or even heard the name of their nation. Their palaces of crystal and thought have been ground into sand. Only one trace remains: the artifacts created to focus the power of the champions. Invested with vast magical energy, these altars have resisted the ravages of time. Now the shifting of earth has brought the tip of one of these vast obelisks to the surface. Should any creature die in the vicinity of this *Hungry Stone*, its lifeforce is drawn into the artifact — and this energy is channeled into the next living creature to touch the stone. The *Hungry Stone* can bring great power to those who sacrifice before it, but it was designed for the use of the Viraj, not for the mortal creatures of the modern world. Continued use of the stone brings madness and a hideous transformation, turning man and beast alike into murderous monsters.

It is up to the DM to decide how much territory the Viraj controlled at the height of their empire. It could be that there is only a single *Hungry Stone* in existence, or there might be a dozen of these artifacts buried across a continent. The first one is found by happenstance. Once it is known, a king or mighty wizard could easily seek out another of the obelisks, hoping to create a superhuman army, but once the blood madness takes hold, the *Stone* could tear a kingdom apart.

Researching the Hungry Stone

The *Hungry Stone* is one of the last relics of the Viraj. Mundane research cannot provide any information about the obelisk — aside from the fact that it *is* an artifact from an ancient and completely unknown culture. To acquire useful information, a character must may a skill check with *both* Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft; compare the lower result to the following table.

DC	Knowledge Available
<15	You know nothing about this strange carving.
15	The stone is an arcane power source. It is an ancient and unusual design, but certain aspects of the carving suggest elven craftsmanship. Perhaps it was a mystical generator that provided energy to a nearby settlement or city.
20	While certain elements of the carving and engraving suggest elven workmanship, on closer study the similarities are only superficial. This is the work of an advanced arcane tradition unlike any you've ever seen. You can feel energy coursing through the air around the stone; it may be some sort of eldritch power source.
25	Despite the energy in the air, this is not a power source. Studying the sigils, you come to the conclusion that the item is designed to draw power from its surroundings; you believe that simply touching the stone would be sufficient to unleash the energy contained within.
30	You believe that the stone is to blame for the utter lack of insect life in the area: that it is draining the lifeforce of these creatures and killing them. Obviously it hasn't affected you — yet — but it's probably not healthy to spend an extended amount of time around it. On consideration, you think that the ash around your feet may be the remnants of creatures drained of life by the stone. If so, it's seen a lot of death over the years.

Studying the Hungry Stone

The *Hungry Stone* is an obelisk formed from what appears to be volcanic glass: black basalt with swirling patterns of crimson spread across the column. It is 30 feet tall and hexagonal in cross-section. Each side is three feet across. The base of the pillar is a block of black stone, three feet thick and 15 across. However, anyone who stumbles across the *Hungry Stone* does not see the full obelisk. The pillar has been buried for tens of thousands of years. In all likelihood, when first discovered, only the very tip is visible, cleared away by erosion, seismic activity, or the work of humans or beasts. Perhaps a farmer was digging a well when he stumbled onto the obelisk, or possibly a dire badger was starting a burrow. Whatever the case, it appears to be a hexagonal chunk of black and red glass that rises to a sharp point. Each face of the stone bears a unique mystical symbol, approximately one foot across. These sigils are surrounded by smaller carvings, complex patterns of interweaving lines; it is by studying these designs that a character can gain information via Spellcraft and Knowledge (arcana). In addition to the ambient effects described later, a stronger sensation of energy surrounds the stone itself, a palpable aura that can be felt by anyone who comes within a foot of the stone, and which makes all nerves go numb.

Divination can provide useful information about the *Hungry Stone*, but studying the altar can be dangerous.

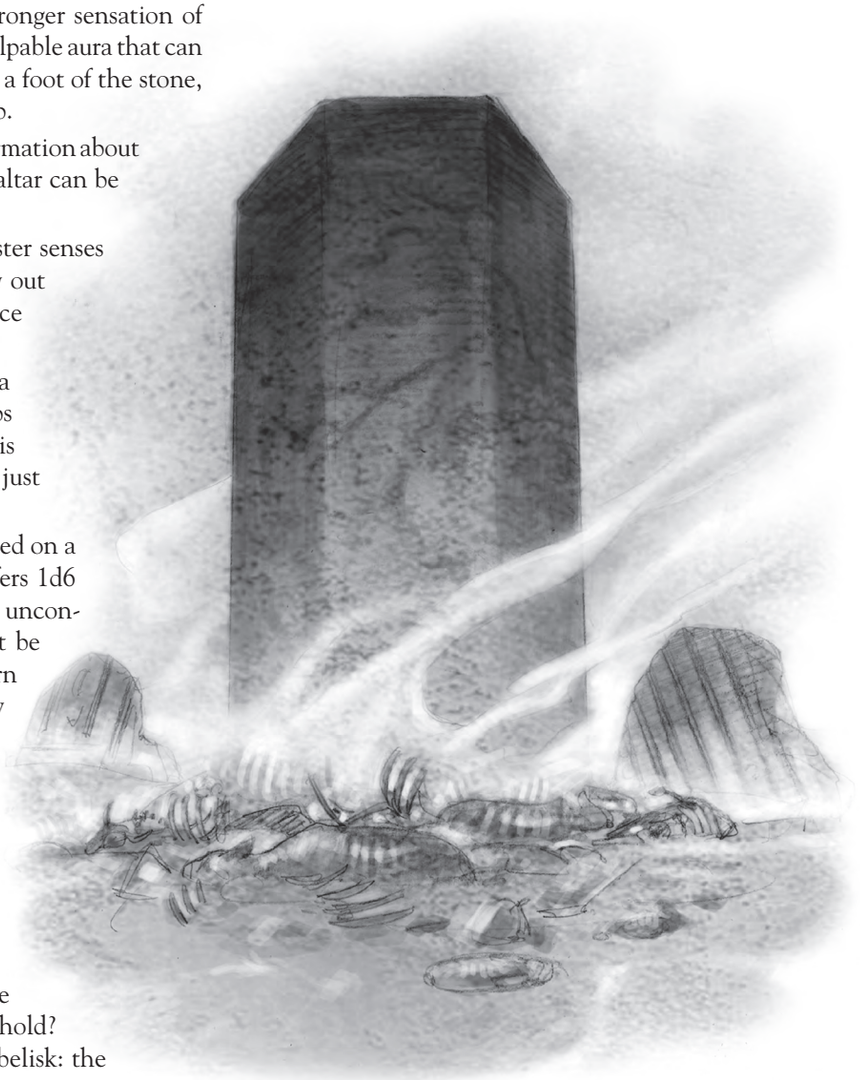
Detect animals and plants: The caster senses that the *Stone* is drawing life energy out of the area; it is not simply the absence of life, but the antithesis of it.

Detect magic: The caster senses a negative presence; the *Stone* absorbs all energy, including the energy of his spell. As such, it is impossible to tell just how powerful the effect is.

Legend lore: The caster must succeed on a DC 20 Will save. If he fails, he suffers 1d6 points of Wisdom damage and falls unconscious for 1d6 minutes. (This might be an opportune time for a stoneborn predator to show up in search of a new kill.) Whether the caster succeeds or fails, he receives a flood of images, far more powerful and violent than normal for *legend lore*. He realizes that these are the last thoughts of the dying, that tens of thousands of people have perished here. The images are alien and very old, but the caster understands that they *chose* to die here, that they built this object to… hold? channel?... their souls. He sees an obelisk: the full image of the object, standing in the plaza of a proud city formed of crystal and glowing lines of energy. And he sees the air filled with ash… and realizes that this ash is the remains of the thousands who have fallen. And then the images fade.

Powers of the Hungry Stone

The Viraj altar was designed to transfer the life-essence of one being into another. The Viraj themselves were partially composed of magic and psionic energy, and this would result in a full merging of spirits, creating a composite champion capable of drawing on the skills and memories of all its component parts. The altar serves as a conduit for lesser creatures, but it was not designed to work with organic beings. A human or a wolf may gain strength by murdering a creature at the altar, but there is no merging of thoughts: instead, the killer is slowly twisted in mind and body, until he is transformed into a savage *thing* that thirsts for blood.



Using the Hungry Stone

No complex ritual is required to activate the powers of the *Stone*. If anything is killed within one hundred feet of the altar, its body is instantly transformed into ash, crumbling and scattering across the ground. Its life force is drawn into the *Stone*, and the engravings on the obelisk pulse with a baleful red light. The intensity of this light varies based on the total number of Hit Dice of life force stored within. This also determines the DC of the Spot check to notice the glow.

Hit Dice Stored	Spot Check Required
1–4	DC 30
5–8	DC 25
9–12	DC 20
13–15	DC 10
16+	DC 5

At night, or any time the area is in shadow, observers receive a +10 circumstance bonus to this check.

Drawing the energy out of the *Stone* is simple. A living being need merely touch it, and the stored energy flows into him. Because this process is so easy, even animals can learn to use the *Stone*. As a result, local predators may be transformed. Such creatures seek to catch their prey alive and drag these victims to the *Stone* before striking the killing blow. These are the stoneborn, described below.

Activated Powers

The *Hungry Stone* serves as a conduit for life energy, storing the essence of the dead and channeling it into the living.

Soul Binding: If any creature is killed in the presence of the *Stone*, its soul is drawn out and held in the altar. If any creature touches the altar, the soul energy is absorbed by that creature. This spirit is inaccessible to any magic that interacts with the soul, such as any form of *raise dead*. To release a soul trapped in the *Stone*, the artifact itself must be destroyed. The only way to release a soul bound to a creature is to kill that creature. Once released, a soul can be *resurrected* as normal. (Remember, however, that its body has been reduced to ash, so only *true resurrection* is likely to do any good.)

Creatures with an Intelligence score of 3 or more are worth one additional Hit Die for purposes of adding energy to the stone; a 1st-level commoner adds 2 Hit Dice of power. As a result, predators may start by hunting animals, but typically turn to human prey in time.

Soul Eaters: When a creature absorbs life force from the *Hungry Stone*, it gains a number of benefits. Many of these are based on the stored Hit Dice (SHD) contained in the altar when the creature touches the stone.

- The creature immediately heals a number of hit points equal to twice the number of SHD.
- The creature gains an enhancement bonus to Strength and Constitution equal to one-half the SHD, to a maximum bonus of +6.
- The creature gains fast healing with a value equal to 1/5th the SHD, and a maximum value of 2.
- The creature is filled with anger and aggression. He must make a DC 10 Will save to cast a spell or to perform an Intelligence or Charisma-based skill.
- The character suffers one point of damage to Intelligence and Charisma, which can be reduced to a minimum value of 3 in this manner. This damage cannot be restored by rest or by any magic short of *wish* or *miracle*; it recovers at a rate of one point to each ability for every full week that the character avoids contact with the *Stone*. If either statistic is reduced to 3, the character suffers the effects of blood madness, as described below.

With the exception of healing (which is instant) and ability damage, these effects last for twenty-four hours. If the character uses the *Stone* again within this period, the duration is extended, and all effects stack. A character who makes three separate sacrifices of 4 HD each ends up with fast healing 2, a +6 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and three points of damage to Intelligence and Charisma. The fast healing and bonuses last for 24 hours from the time of the last kill.

The Stoneborn. The only benefit a stoneborn creature gains from sacrifice is healing (twice the value of the SHD). However, a stoneborn creature must sacrifice to survive; see the template description for more details.

Consequences

The sensation of absorbing life energy carries an intense charge of euphoria and adrenaline. It sets fire to the user's nervous system, filling him with feelings of power and aggression. This is an extremely addictive experience, and anyone who uses the *Stone* must make a Will save after the effects wear off. The DC of this save equals 10 plus the total SHD the character absorbed during the last period in which he was boosted. If the save fails, the character does everything possible to claim another victim and kill again. If he is forcibly restrained, he can make a new saving throw every day he is kept away from the *Stone*, with a cumulative +1 to the roll for each day. However, should he ever relapse, these bonuses evaporate and he must begin anew.

If the user's Intelligence or Charisma drops to 3 as a result of the *Stone* (or if it's already 3 or below when he uses the stone, as is the case with most animals), things get worse. At this point he enters a state known as blood madness. A victim of blood madness has no desire beyond killing creatures and draining their power from the *Stone*.

He is still capable of limited speech and the cunning of a predator, but he loses literacy, spellcasting ability, use of any Charisma- or Intelligence-based skills aside from Bluff and Intimidate, and any empathy for living creatures or sense of loyalty to his former comrades. His alignment becomes neutral evil. Finally, every time he sacrifices a creature at the *Stone*, he must make a Fortitude saving throw. The DC is equal to the total SHD he has absorbed since falling prey to blood madness. Should he fail, he acquires the stoneborn template.

To cure a creature that has fallen prey to blood madness, it must be kept from sacrificing at the *Stone* for seven days. At this point, it enters standard withdrawal as described above, with a Will save DC of 25. *Wish* or *miracle* can restore the ability damage from use of the altar, and these spells instantly cure blood madness; however, the victim must still recover from withdrawal. A second use of *wish* or *miracle* can remove withdrawal effects.

Restoring a stoneborn creature to its natural form requires the use of *remove curse*, performed by a caster of at least 15th level. At this point the creature is returned to its normal type and loses the stoneborn template, but is still suffering from blood madness, which must be cured as described above.

Ambient Effects

The *Stone* makes its presence known even before it can be seen. Once it has been exposed to the air and activated for the first time, it fills the surroundings with a palpable magical charge. Anyone who comes within 500 feet of the *Stone* feels a slight sense of nausea. A successful DC 10 Spellcraft check allows a character to conclude that this nausea is a magical effect, triggered by a strong flow of mystical energy.

Beyond this, anyone who makes a DC 15 Survival check notices a number of anomalies in this 500-foot-radius. There are no small animals around the *Stone*, and no insects. A layer of greasy ash covers the ground, thin at the fringes but growing thicker as characters move closer to the *Stone*, yet there are no indications of any recent fires. A character with the Track feat can find multiple trails of local predatory animals, along with evidence of creatures being dragged towards the *Stone*. Non-predatory animals seek to avoid the region; if a domesticated animal is driven into the area, it suffers a –2 circumstance penalty on all attack rolls and skill checks.

Reactive Traits

The *Hungry Stone* absorbs all forms of energy directed at it. Targeted spells fade with no effect or fanfare, and the *Stone* cannot be *teleported*, *levitated*, or otherwise affected by magic. The energy from direct-target spells is converted into stored Hit Dice, at a rate of 1 SHD per 10 spell levels.

Using the Hungry Stone in a Campaign

The *Hungry Stone* can affect a campaign in a number of ways. At its simplest level, it is a source for odd wilderness encounters: What's behind the strangely aggressive wolves of the Blackwind Forest? Is there any truth to the tale of Bloody Nell, who killed her husband and children and who is now said to hunt the forest as a slavering beast? The party may kill the wolves or the vicious hag without even considering the idea that something might have caused their transformation, and only later, when an entire village falls prey to the blood madness, do they discover the existence of the *Stone*. Once they've found it, what do they do with it? It's huge and indestructible, and if they simply rebury it, someone else may come after it. What if it falls into the hands of a bandit prince or local warlord? Are there other *Stones* out there, artifacts a corrupted king could use and spread around his nation, allowing his soldiers to sacrifice his own citizens to feed the blood madness? As it stands, such an army would be difficult to control. But perhaps a powerful enchanter could devise a spell to control the stoneborn, granting him influence over an army of bloodthirsty beasts!

Adventure Seeds

A Time to Reap

While traveling on the road, the adventurers are approached by a farmer of the hamlet of Esselton. A farmhand named Kent went missing a week ago. Most assumed the man had simply run off, but then livestock began vanishing, and last night, a child was taken from the farmhouse. The farmers have little to offer, but implore the adventurers to find this beast and to save the child. Witnesses mention spotting a humanoid figure lurking in the forest near the field, and Track leads the way to an ash-strewn patch in the heart of the woods. But the beast is no troll or bugbear: it is Kent, corrupted by the *Stone*. It is too late to save the child, but can the party determine what has become of Kent? Will they bury the *Stone*, or try to use its power?

Army of the Damned

The party arrives in a university town, and finds that the people are in hiding and the city guard has been supplemented by feral men who watch them with hungry eyes. The townsfolk do not wish to speak of it, but Gather Information reveals that the university recently excavated a relic of an ancient society: an obelisk that was transferred to the inner courtyard of the university. The trio of wizards who identified the powers of the *Stone* have also learned a spell that helps them influence the stoneborn. They have transformed a dozen guardsman into monsters, and are using these enforcers to solidify their reign of terror over the town, allowing the guards to kill innocents to satisfy

their bloodlust. The wizards are continuing to experiment with the powers of the *Stone*, creating a wide variety of terrible beasts. Left alone, they will devour the people of the city one by one, and eventually create an army to spread their dominion across the kingdom.

The Power of the Viraj

No one in the modern age knows anything about the Viraj, let alone the fate of the Viraj champions created by the *Hungry Stones*. Perhaps these champions were not destroyed in ancient battle. Instead, the *Stone* was a way to preserve the memory of the race through a terrible natural disaster. Ten Viraj champions remain buried deep beneath the surface, each possessing the power of a hundred thousand of its kinfolk. As the *Stones* touch the surface and are activated, a fraction of this power is sent to the slumbering titans, and this signal brings a champion to the surface. But what does it want? Will it seek to destroy humanity with its own transcendent power? Will it split into its component parts, unleashing thousands of members of an alien race, eager to reclaim their ancient domain? Or can it be reasoned with, becoming an ally that could help to overcome a greater danger that lies ahead?

Destroying the Hungry Stone

The *Hungry Stone* is a threat, plain and simple. As long as it exists, it can drive a creature to madness and murder. Any sane person should want to destroy it. Unfortunately, that's no easy task. As noted above, any form of directed magic is absorbed by the stone. It is completely impervious to physical damage; it may appear to be stone, but it is an artificially generated substance of unmatched hardness. It is far easier to hide the *Stone* than it is to destroy it. Nonetheless, here are two ways that a character could destroy a *Hungry Stone*.

• The *Stone* is designed to store power, but the amount of power it can store is limited. If thousands of Hit Dice are allowed to build up in the artifact, it may crack and eventually explode. Sacrificing thousands of people would be a gruesome solution at best, but it is possible that over time, an alliance of wizards could accomplish this task by pouring spell energy into the obelisk.

• The Viraj lived in a time before undead had entered the world. The *Hungry Stone* is designed to absorb energy, but negative energy wreaks havoc with its systems. By shattering the phylactery of a powerful lich against the stone, the party may be able to destroy both.

Of course, destroying a *Hungry Stone* may have negative consequences. If each *Stone is* tied to a slumbering champion, this could be the act that wakes the Viraj demigod and drives him into a murderous fury!

New Template

As a creature continues to draw on the power of the stone, it is slowly transformed into something unnatural. Its internal organs shift and atrophy; in time it no longer consumes food, but relies completely on the energy it drains from others for sustenance. Its skin thickens to a tough, leathery hide. Its spine lengthens and becomes more flexible, and its limbs may grow out of proportion; humanoids often favor a hunched posture, and may run on all fours. These are the stoneborn. These creatures are driven by their unnatural lust for life energy, but they are also murderous by nature, and derive and primal pleasure from hunting others and instilling terror in their victims.

While the stoneborn are living creatures, they are easily mistaken for ghouls. Aside from the changes described above, stoneborn typically lose all body hair. Their leathery skin is unnaturally pale. Teeth often rot or fall out, while fingernails become thick and strong.

Sample Stoneborn

This example uses a wolf as the base creature.

Medium Aberration

Hit Dice:	2d8+8 (17 hp)
Initiative:	+2
Speed:	60 ft. (10 squares)
Armor Class:	16 (+2 Dex, +6 natural, –2 rage), touch 12, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple:	+1/+2
Attack:	Bite +5 melee (1d6+3) or slam +5 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack:	Bite +5 melee (1d6+3) or slam +5 melee (1d6+3)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Rage, trip
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 3, immunity to disease, fatigue, fear, and exhaustion, low-light vision, rage, scent
Saves:	Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Hide +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3, Survival +1*
Feats:	Track[8], Weapon Focus (bite)
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	1
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always neutral evil
Advancement:	3 HD (Medium); 4–6 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment:	—

The creature approaching seems to be a wolf at first, but it is a wolf out of nightmare. Its hind legs are far too long for its body, and its patchy fur emerges from a thick and leathery hide. Its jaw distends, and its mouth opens far too wide as it lunges.

Note: The above statistics assume the stoneborn wolf is raged. When not raged, change hit points to 13, AC to 18, bite and slam attacks to +3, bite and slam damage to 1d6 +3, Fortitude to +5, Will to +1, Str to 13, and Con to 15.

Creating a Stoneborn Creature

"Stoneborn" is an acquired template that can be added to any animal, humanoid, giant, monstrous humanoid, or magical beast (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A stoneborn creature uses all of the base creatures statistics and abilities except as noted below.

Type: The base creature's type changes to aberration. Do not recalculate hit dice, base attack bonus, skill points, or saving throws.

Speed: Increase the base creature's ground movement by 10 feet.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +4.

Attack: The creature gains a slam attack, in addition to any natural weapons it may have already possessed.

Damage: Natural weapons deal damage normally. A slam attack deals damage depending on the stoneborn's size. (Use the base creature's slam damage if it's better.)

Size	Damage
Diminutive or Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	4d6

Special Attacks: A stoneborn creature retains all of the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack:

Rage: The creature can rage once per day. This is identical to the barbarian class ability, and if the creature is a barbarian, this stacks with the number of times he can rage due to his class.

Special Qualities: A stoneborn creature retains all of the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following:

- Darkvision out to 60 feet
- Fast healing 3
- Immunity to disease, fatigue, fear, and exhaustion
- Low-light vision
- Scent

The creature does not need to eat, drink, or sleep. However, it does need to draw life energy from the *Hungry Stone* to survive. Each SHD grants it two days of sustenance. For every day it goes beyond this point, it takes a point of Constitution damage. This damage cannot be restored until it receives energy from the *Hungry Stone* (or until it is cured of the stoneborn condition).

If the base creature already possesses one or more of these qualities, use the better value.

Abilities: Modify from the base creature as follows: Str +6, Dex +2, Con +6, Wis +2. Intelligence and Charisma are both fixed at 3, regardless of their previous value. Intelligence and Charisma cannot be further modified by magical, psionic, or supernatural effects.

Skills: A Stoneborn creature gains a +6 racial bonus to Intimidate and Bluff. Despite terrible Charisma, a stoneborn has an innate cunning and a talent for deception and terror.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Alignment: Always neutral evil.

Level Adjustment: —.

Irruwyn's Cauldron

The Cauldron of the Black Fen Witch, Baeddanshire's Lament
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of Irruwyn's Cauldron

Baeddanshire seemed like any other border town, perched on the very outskirts of civilization. A community of low hills and fertile fields, it sat on the edges of the Black Fen, a dark and dismal marsh of stagnant pools, tall cypress, and thick moss. Frigid in winter, hot and sticky and mosquito-ridden in summer, Baeddanshire was not the most pleasant place to live, but the earth was lush in its bounty, and the folk were happy enough.

Baeddanshire was very much *not* like any other town, however, in one vital respect. The people of Baeddanshire *loved* their witch.

Her name was Irruwyn, but most who knew her called her the Black Fen Witch. A woman of middle years, she dwelt in the marshes some few hundred yards from the town proper. There she practiced strange crafts and stranger magics, and many was the night when the townsfolk would see eerie floating lights above the trees, or hear the calls of unseen beasts echoing from the fens.

Yet they were not afraid, for Irruwyn had proved herself kindly and unthreatening. The villagers told tales of fisherman, trappers or lumberjacks who fell injured in the marsh, only to find the witch kneeling over them, tending their wounds with magic and herbs. Children lost in the swamp would follow a frog or a crow or a snake, only to arrive at Irruwyn's door. In her home they would stay, well fed on nourishing stew, until their parents came to collect them. When illness swept Baeddanshire, threatening to overcome the populace en masse, it was Irruwyn — not the priests of the nearest cities, who were far too concerned with "more important matters" — who cured them.

That Irruwyn was older than she had any right to be, none of the people doubted. She appeared as a woman in her forties, yet even the eldest grandmothers of the town remembered tales of her from when *the*y were young. And the bulk of these tails revolved around the witch's great cauldron, an enormous iron vessel she kept behind her modest home. In it, she brewed the elixirs and poultices that healed the lost and the bedridden alike. In it, she watched the world from afar, and in particular she watched the Black Fen, always alert in case she should be needed.

For generations, Baeddanshire continued thus, until one day a sick and bleeding lizardfolk stumbled into the village.

The townspeople knew that strange beings dwelt deep in the swamps, but they'd had precious little interaction with them. Their initial fear and suspicion faded swiftly, however, when it became clear the sickly creature could be no threat. Guarded carefully by farmers with pitchforks and hunters with bows, they brought the newcomer into town and treated him as best they could. They knew nothing of its language, but the lizardfolk spoke a halting Common.

When they heard its tale, the people of Baeddanshire refused to believe, declared the lizard an agent of evil sent to sow suspicion and mistrust. For the creature spoke of Irruwyn as a fiend of greatest malice, a terrible sorceress who used living beings as subjects for her brews and spells, a vile woman with a chamber of horrors built into the swampy earth beneath her home. The people rose against the new arrival and sent him scurrying back into the marsh.

Yet once planted, the seed of doubt thrived in the hearts and minds of Baeddanshire's people. Eventually, a small band set out to the witch's home, determined to conclusively prove that the reptile's tale was nothing but a vicious lie. What they learned instead was that the story they had heard was only the beginning. They searched the witch's home, and indeed they found a hidden door leading to a room below. They descended creaking stairs into a room musty and damp with condensation.

Had the bodies all been those of lizardfolk, the citizens might not have reacted as they did — but the bodies were *not* all lizardfolk. They included humans, halflings, even a few elves. Some had clearly died of illness or poison, test subjects for her cures. Others were dismembered, parts preserved for some magic or ritual.

Irruwyn had never once harmed the people of Baeddanshire, for she thought of them as friends and neighbors. It had never once occurred to the townsfolk to wonder if she'd harmed anyone *else*.

Horrified by what they had found, and terrified of the potential consequences, the band of townspeople gave Irruwyn no opportunity to act. They lurked within until the witch returned, laden with a basket of herbs. They

Researching the Cauldron

Irruwyn's Cauldron is the source of many myths, and may even be the basis of the legends and tales about witches' cauldrons in general. Information on the *Cauldron*, however, is somewhat more scarce. Few histories speak of it, and while legend has spread far and wide of the cursed Black Fen, such tales have been altered and embellished in the telling, and rarely speak much of the *Cauldron* itself.

Anyone with Knowledge (arcana) or Bardic Knowledge may attempt to research *Irruwyn's Cauldron*. The general powers of the artifact are relatively easy to unearth, but precise details are less readily available.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	A great cauldron once belonged to a woman named Irruwyn, known as the Black Fen Witch. She used it to perform powerful magics and vile experiments, and its power was only made greater by her dying curse.
20	The *Cauldron* allows its owner to see distant places, to brew many mystic elixirs, and to transform living beings into truly monstrous forms.
25	The transformative abilities of the *Cauldron* are not entirely under the command of the user. They seem to be based partly on intent, partly on the strength and skill of the creature being transformed, and partly on random chance. (The character knows how to activate all the *Cauldron*'s powers but weather control.)
30+	Although it is difficult, the *Cauldron* can also be used to control its environment. (The character knows how to activate the weather control power.) It is incredibly difficult to destroy. (Provide the player with one or more of the methods of destruction given below.) Creatures transformed by the *Cauldron* lose most if not all of their prior persona, and are at least partly influenced by the *Cauldron's* owner.

The abilities of the *Cauldron* are fairly straightforward, so once a character has determined that she knows about it, the information she has is likely to be accurate. Most misinformation about the *Cauldron* should have to do with its current location or owners, rather than its specific abilities. Still, a few misconceptions about the vessel have indeed made their way into scholarly circles and myths.

- The *Cauldron* reanimates the dead; place a corpse inside, and it will rise in your service. (This is utterly untrue. While the *Cauldron* can do all sorts of things to living beings, a corpse placed within it is not going to get anything but wet.)
- The waters of the *Cauldron* can show its user where to find their heart's desire. (In fact, while the *Cauldron* has several scrying abilities, this is not one of them.)
- In order to destroy the *Cauldron*, a living being must voluntarily sacrifice itself by submerging itself in the vessel. (This, in fact, simply results in another creature being transformed by the *Cauldron*. That'll teach the players to acquire their arcane knowledge from old Disney movies!)

leapt upon her, beating her with branches so she could cast no spells. And at the last, images of corpses fresh in their minds, they drowned Irruwyn in her own cauldron.

They returned the next day, accompanied by many of Baeddanshire's populace, so the people might see for themselves. All was indeed as they had left it, save the cauldron. Irruwyn's body was gone, though rust stains inside the vessel still show a faint image that just might be a woman's face. And the cauldron itself has become far more than ever it was when Irruwyn lived, for the curse of a dying witch is a potent magic indeed.

Studying the Cauldron

Irruwyn's Cauldron appears to be a great vat made of black iron. It possesses two handles, in the form of serpentine heads curled back upon themselves, and it sits on four crocodilian claws. The lip is over four feet in diameter, and the vessel itself weighs upwards of 300 pounds. The inside is streaked with baked-in stains; most are rust, but a few are of a less identifiable nature. The largest of these stains, in just the right lighting, appears as though it might be a woman's screaming face. The entire vessel smells metallic, due to its constant state of rust, as well as less obvious musty or swampy smell.

On the off chance anyone cooks a standard meal in the *Cauldron*, the food tastes rotten and acrid.

The *Cauldron* makes no effort to hide what it is. *Detect magic* reveals incredibly strong auras of divination and transmutation, and *true seeing* reveals a sickly gray mist constantly pouring out of the vessel and dissipating into the air around its feet. (When the *Cauldron* is inactive, this mist is faint; when in use, it becomes as thick as fog.)

Not all divinations function as intended on the *Cauldron*, however. *Identify* reveals that the *Cauldron* requires living beings to function, but it does not state how many or what sorts. No divination in existence can locate the *Cauldron*, and any attempt to *scry* on it, or anyone using it, fails outright.

Powers of the Cauldron

The perfect embodiment of many tales and superstitions — if not, in fact, the source of them — *Irruwyn's Cauldron* grants its owner a great many potent abilities, often associated with witches and warlocks. Unfortunately, it demands a great price in return, ensuring that only the most depraved and twisted individuals can make use of it.

Using the Cauldron

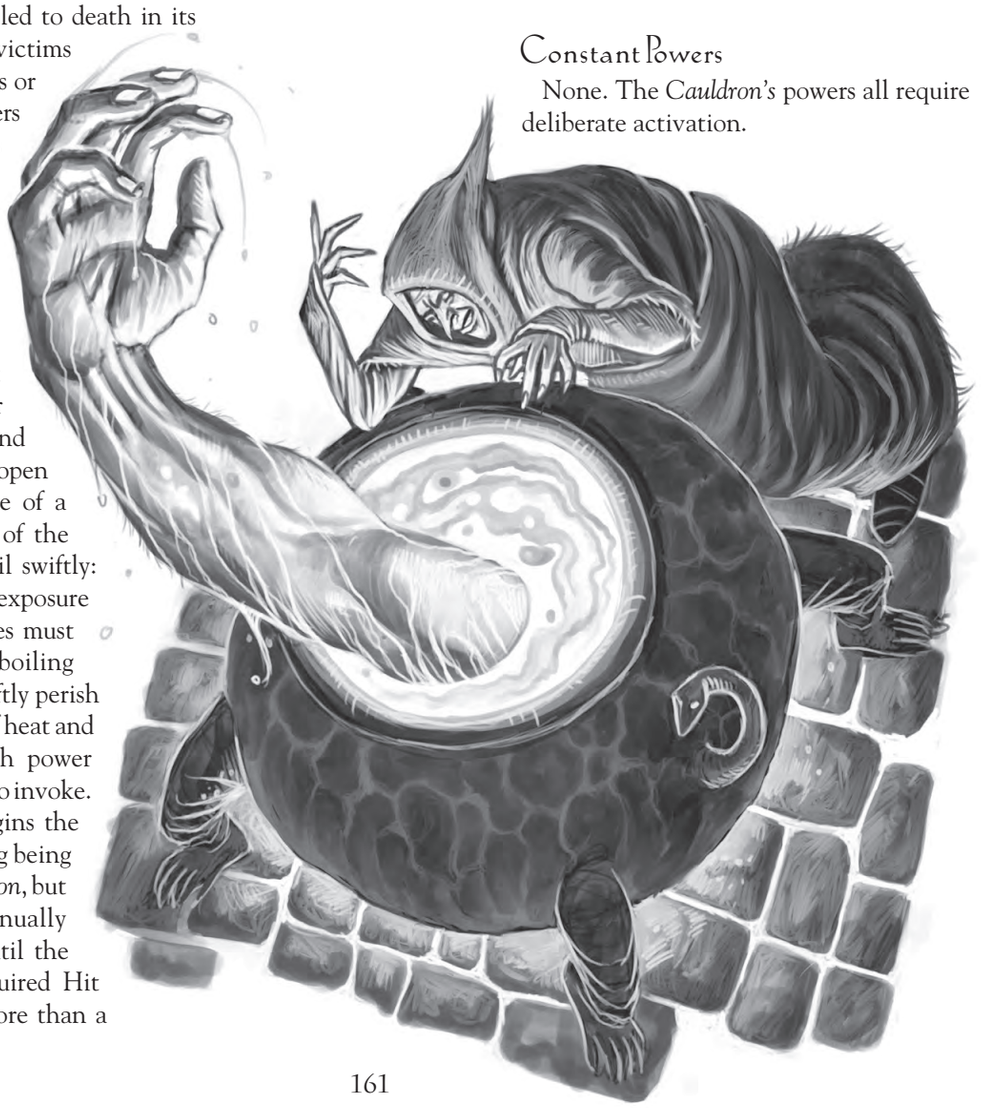
Irruwyn's dying curse was born of pure hatred, malevolence, and a strong sense of betrayal, and it infused her greatest creation with malice. The *Cauldron* only functions by absorbing the lives of creatures tossed into it and boiled to death in its roiling waters. These victims must be living animals or humanoids; some powers require the sacrifices be sentient. Each specific power, listed below, also provides the "cost" required to activate that particular ability.

The *Cauldron* must be filled with water (or some other liquid), and then placed over an open flame at least the size of a campfire. The magic of the vessel causes it to boil swiftly: within 2d4 minutes of exposure to the flame. Sacrifices must be placed into the boiling water, where they swiftly perish from a combination of heat and unholy energies. Each power takes quite some time to invoke. This casting time begins the moment the first living being is placed in the *Cauldron*, but the user must continually "feed" the artifact until the full allotment of required Hit Dice is reached. If more than a single minute passes between the death of one creature and the addition of another, the process ends and the user must start over. Once the user has contributed a sufficient number of Hit Dice-worth of sacrifices, the process continues so long as she tends the *Cauldron*. She need not spend every moment stirring or adding ingredients, but she must spent at least 30 minutes out of every hour doing so. Again, failure to complete the necessary rites causes the power to fail.

Each use of the *Cauldron* requires its own sacrifice(s); the user cannot combine the same creature to fulfill two separate requirements. Further, the process requires a slow cooking, as well the addition of various other ingredients. These ingredients might include the blood of virgins, rare herbs, eye of newt, or the like. The requirements change from user to user and power to power, but once someone has begun sacrificing lives to the *Cauldron*, she immediately and instinctively knows what other ingredients are necessary. For the most part, these should be treated as spell components; that is, any cost they might add to the procedure is negligible. If any power requires more costly components, these are listed below.

Constant Powers

None. The *Cauldron's* powers all require deliberate activation.



Activated Powers

Irruwyn's Cauldron possesses a great many powers, for those willing to take the time — and to pay the price — for activating them. The *Cauldron's* abilities all function at a caster level of 22. While the user can sacrifice multiple creatures to reach the necessary Hit Die costs, each individual creature so sacrificed must have at least 1/2 a Hit Die; anything smaller is useless to the process.

In order to qualify as "sentient," a living being must be self-aware and possess an Intelligence of 3 or higher.

Boil: Any living creature placed inside the *Cauldron* while it is at a boil suffers 10d6 points of damage per round. Half this damage is heat, while the other half is sheer profane energy (and is thus not subject to energy resistance or immunity). Anyone even touching the boiling contents of the vessel — such as sticking a hand in — suffers 2d6 points of damage.

Disguise Self: The owner of the *Cauldron* can use its magic to temporarily change her own shape to match that of someone else. She must have a piece of the being she wishes to duplicate, or else a close personal possession. This might include a strand of hair, a favored comb, or the like. The user must place these ingredients in the *Cauldron*, along with the creature or creatures to be sacrificed; at least one of these creatures must be sentient. The mixture must brew for four hours, whereupon the owner must stick her own hand into the waters, suffering the standard 2d6 points of damage. The effect created is identical to that of an *alter self*, but even more potent: It provides a bonus of +20 to Disguise checks, rather than the standard +10. The disguise lasts for one hour per Hit Die of living creatures sacrificed. If the owner of the *Cauldron* sacrifices the individual whom she wishes to duplicate, the effect is permanent until dispelled, until the owner deliberately resumes her own form, or until she is slain.

Brew Potion: The *Cauldron* can be used to brew any potion, elixir, or oil listed in Chapter 7: Magic Items, or any poison listed in Chapter 8: Glossary, of the *DMG*. This requires no experience point expenditure, nor must the user possess the appropriate item creation feats or requisite spells. She must still contribute ingredients equal to the standard gold piece cost for creating the potion. She must also sacrifice a number of Hit Dice of living creatures equal to 10% of the potion's or poison's market cost. At least one of these creatures must be sentient. For instance, an *elixir of love* costs 150 gp, so she must sacrifice 15 HD-worth of creatures.

Brewing a potion or elixir requires a number of hours equal to the total Hit Dice to be sacrificed. These potions and poisons maintain their viability for 13 days, and then become inert.

Cook Fare: Any food cooked in the *Cauldron* can have mystical properties attached to it, as per the new Craft Magic Fare feat, presented below. As with the above ability to brew potions, this requires ingredients equal to half the market cost of the food, and the sacrifice of a number of Hit Dice of living creatures equal to 10% of the market cost. (This sacrifice must be in addition to any animal that gave its life to become the meal.) At least one creature must be sentient.

Cooking such a meal requires a number of hours equal to the total Hit Dice to be sacrificed.

Horrific Metamorphosis: Perhaps the most overtly terrible of the *Cauldron's* powers is its ability to transform a victim into a hideous monster. In order to use this power, the *Cauldron's* user must sacrifice a number of Hit Dice-worth of creatures equal to *twice* the subject's Hit Dice. (For instance, if the user wishes to transform a 5th-level fighter into troll, she must sacrifice at least 10 HD-worth of creatures.) These sacrifices must be sentient. Once the *Cauldron* has slain the sacrifices, and the other ingredients have been added, the subject must be placed within its waters. The subject appears to take damage as normal, but enters a state of metamorphosis when he reaches –10 hit points, rather than dying. The process than requires 6 more hours, plus one additional hour per Hit Die of the subject.

When the process is finally complete, the subject rises from the *Cauldron* in its new form, restored to full health. Once completed, the transformation cannot be reversed by any means short of a *miracle* or *wish*, and even then, the caster must succeed on a caster level check against a DC 32.

The subject takes on all the mannerisms, goals, and alignment of its new form. He loses all previous class and racial abilities, and gains all the abilities of its new body; this is, in effect, a complete and total transformation. The subject may still possess memories of his old life and companions, but any emotional attachment to them is gone. Anyone transformed by the *Cauldron* is considered to be under a permanent *charm monster* effect focused on the *Cauldron's* owner. Thus, while the owner may not have complete control over the subject, she has substantial influence over him.

The *Cauldron's* transformative abilities are not unlimited. It only functions on humanoids, and it can only turn its victims into a select range of creatures, based on Hit Die and gender. The *Cauldron's* master can turn a victim into any creature of the subject's Hit Dice or fewer, as presented on the following table.

Subject's Hit Dice	Female	Male
1 or lower	frog	frog
2–4	sea hag	ogre
5–7	annis hag	troll
8–10	green hag	shambling mound
11–13	witch tree*	hill giant
14+	green dragon**	black dragon**

* Reference ***Tome of Horrors II***, from **Necromancer Games**. If you do not have access to this book, replace it with a treant, advanced to 11 HD, of neutral evil alignment.

** The dragon has the same Hit Dice as the subject; assign age category accordingly.

Scrying: *Irruwyn's Cauldron* functions like a magic mirror or crystal ball, allowing its owner to *scry* on others. The image lasts for one minute per Hit Die of creatures sacrificed, and otherwise functions identically to the spell *greater scrying*. The Will save to resist is DC 31.

Weather Domination: One of the most potent of the *Cauldron's* powers is the ability to manipulate the weather. This manifests much like the *control weather* spell. Unlike that spell, however, this power of the *Cauldron* can create weather inappropriate to the current season or environment.

Creating a weather condition that matches the current season requires the sacrifice of 10 Hit Dice-worth of sentient creatures. Creating a weather condition inappropriate to the season requires an additional 10 Hit Dice, for a total of 20. (See the *control weather* spell for specifics on what is appropriate to which season.) The required rite takes three hours to cast, or six if the user is creating an inappropriate weather effect.

If the user of the *Cauldron* sacrifices the minimum number of creatures, as described above, the new weather condition lasts for a mere 2d12 hours. Unlike other uses of the *Cauldron's* powers, however, its control over the weather can be extended after the fact by sacrificing additional creatures. Each Hit Die of sentient being sacrificed, over and above this minimum, extends the duration by four hours. Thus, if the user of the *Cauldron* has a sufficient number of prisoners, she can maintain the effects for a long while. The *Cauldron* cannot be used for any other purpose during this time. If it is, the weather control continues for its remaining duration, but no more time can be added to it; the owner must start again if she wishes to influence the weather once more.

The weather created by the *Cauldron* affects a radius of anywhere from 100 yards to 5 miles, as the user wishes.

Consequences

Unlike many other artifacts, *Irruwyn's Cauldron* does not have any direct negative impact on the user. Consider, however, that each and every one of its abilities requires the sacrifice of living beings. Use of the *Cauldron* is considered an evil act, and anyone who does so begins to shift toward evil. Even evil individuals should be hesitant to use the *Cauldron* too frequently, as the quantity of required sacrifices risks drawing unwelcome attention.

Using the Cauldron in a Campaign

Due to the varying powers of *Irruwyn's Cauldron*, it can see use in campaigns of almost any power level. If a relatively weak villain manages to acquire it, he can likely only create relatively weak monsters — ogres and sea hags, for instance — to bedevil the PCs. As the heroes gain power, the villain does as well, and is capable of capturing tougher creatures, and thus creating tougher minions.

In nearly all instances, the PCs should be pitted against the powers of the *Cauldron*. Since only evil characters can effectively make use of it, heroic parties should have little reason to seek it out, except possibly to keep it out of the hands of someone else. In either case, the *Cauldron* can either serve as a brief tangent, wherein the PCs stop the person using it and move on, or as the focus of an entire campaign, as the villain makes ever-more effective use of its powers.

Adventure Seeds

Black Mass

A covey of particularly vile and potent hags has acquired the *Cauldron*. They are Zallatru (annis druid 7), Yemmarae (green hag wizard 5), and Olspatha (sea hag bard 10). Using their own considerable powers, and the magics of the *Cauldron*, they have already conquered a number of remote communities. Now they are using the captured populations to form entire armies of monsters, which they will then send against the neighboring kingdoms.

The Cauldron War

Rumors of the *Cauldron* have spread to two warring kingdoms. Both have dispatched numerous agents in an attempt to hunt it down, so that they might use it themselves, and to prevent their enemy from doing the same. The PCs must track it down, perhaps on behalf of one nation or the other, or perhaps to prevent *either* side from making use of its horrific powers. Further, the *Cauldron* may already be in the possession of someone — or something — who is unlikely to take the party's efforts kindly.

Endless Night

A powerful vampire has acquired the *Cauldron*. Using both his own spawn, and the monsters he is creating with the artifact, he has captured an enormous number of people to power the vessel's weather domination ability. A vast and seemingly endless storm hovers over a major city, blotting out the sun and enabling the vampire to function at all hours. Further, he has used his monsters to attack outlying communities under cover of darkness, and has kept his own presence secret. The heroes must uncover the vampire's presence, stop the raids on nearby towns, battle their way through his many undead minions (including zombie ogres and vampiric hags), stop the endless slaughter, and restore the sun.

Destroying Irruwyn's Cauldron

Most good-aligned PCs should need little encouragement to seek a means of destroying the *Cauldron*. It is a device of evil, pure and simple. It cannot be made holy, cannot be used for good, for it thrives on death.

Unfortunately, the *Cauldron* is practically indestructible. It simply ignores all attempts to physically damage it, no matter how potent the weapon or spell. It resists all known forms of energy, and has unbeatable resistance against most magics. So far as anyone can determine, the following methods are the only means of destroying the *Cauldron*; all other attempts prove completely futile.

• Fill it with the tears of virgins and set it over an open flame. As the last tears boil out, the *Cauldron* shatters.

• Empty it completely, cast *hallow* upon it, and strike it with a blunt *holy weapon* at dawn, every morning for a year. If more than a drop of water is placed within at any time, or if even a single morning is skipped, the process must begin again.

• Bury it with the bones of a saint who was martyred battling evil spellcasters. The skeleton must be mostly intact.

Once the *Cauldron* is destroyed, any creatures it transformed perish instantly, reverting to their prior forms in death. All potions created within it become inert, and all lingering magical effects end. The *Cauldron* shatters with a thunderous crack and burst of malevolent energy; anyone within 100 yards must succeed on a DC 31 Fortitude save or be stunned for 4d4 rounds. Anyone within 30 feet of the *Cauldron* when it shatters is struck by shrapnel. This deals 3d6 points of damage (DC 31 Reflex half), ignoring all damage reduction and spell resistance. Anyone who fails their Reflex save must make a DC 31 Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 points each of Constitution and Charisma drain, due to exposure to the vile magics.

New Feat

Irruwyn developed or mastered several mystical techniques largely lost to the arcane community as a whole. Perhaps the one she used most frequently was her ability to imbue the foods she prepared with active spells. She was particularly fond of creating foods that would put those who consumed them into a deep slumber, or transform them into small animals. (That is, *deep slumber* or *baleful polymorph*.)

Craft Magic Fare [Item Creation]

You can cook foods which carry spells within.

Prerequisite: Brew Potion, caster level 3rd.

Benefit: You can create a dish of any spell that you know, and that targets one or more creatures. Crafting magic fare takes one day. You must decide when crafting the magic food whether it takes effect on the first bite, or only after the individual has consumed a certain portion of it. When you create magic fare, you set the caster level, which must be sufficient to cast the spell in question and no higher than your own level. The base price of the food is its spell level x its caster level x 50 gp. To craft the fare, you must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing one-half this base price.

When you craft magic fare, you make any choices that you would normally make when casting the spell. Whoever eats the food is the target of the spell.

Any fare that stores a spell with a costly material component or an XP cost also carries a commensurate cost. In addition to the costs derived from the base price, you must expend the material component or pay the XP when crafting the fare.

Although the process takes the same amount of time in either case, the fare need not be an item that is normally cooked. That is, you could roast a haunch of lamb with the spell attached, or you could simply prepare an otherwise normal apple.

This magical fare has a very limited window of usefulness. The prepared food must be consumed within 1d4+1 days of crafting or it goes bad, losing its magic and edibility both.

Joval's Equilibrium

The Ring of Perfect Balance, The Underdog's Boon
Written by C. Robert Cargill

The Tale of Joval's Equilibrium

A citizen in an empire torn by war, ancient sorcerer Joval de Riggardde saw far too many bodies of his countrymen pile up in a bitter civil war, and devoted the last years of his life to finding a means to bring the conflict to a peaceful resolution. Unfortunately for Riggardde, he never saw the end of strife. He did, however, manage to craft a powerful artifact that outlived not only its creator, but the war and ultimately the empire itself. That small, unobtrusive silver ring came to be known over time as *Joval's Equilibrium*.

Joval postulated that neither side of the war was truly innocent. Neither the order of law nor the freedom of chaos offered true peace, while the hands of good men were equally as bloody as those of the most vile. It was only in a perfect balance that Joval believed a lasting peace might be found. A land where both the weak and the strong were on equal footing, where neither law nor chaos held sway, where good and evil were at an eternal stalemate — that was a land at peace with itself. Or so Joval thought.

Never able to acquire magic powerful enough to permanently affect change, Joval was able to level the playing field in a very localized form. Imbuing this power into a ring, Joval traveled from battle to battle in hopes of letting true balance overcome any struggle he encountered. He never found such a balance, however, as an arrow from an inexperienced archer found its way perfectly through Joval's eye socket and into his skull, killing him instantly. The sad irony is that it was the *Ring* itself that enabled the archer to kill him so easily. Not all things, it seems, are *fair* just because they are equal.

The *Ring* was passed down from generation to generation of the Riggardde family. Eventually, it found its way into the hands of a sect of druids who attempted to maintain a similar form of balance in the wilds outside Joval's mostly civilized society. There the *Ring* remained for several hundred years until the sect, and ultimately the artifact itself, seemed to vanish into the mists of time. It has been missing ever since, although rumors tell of such a ring occasionally popping up on the black market.

Studying Joval's Equilibrium

Joval's Equilibrium is a plain silver band, lacking any sort of decoration or distinctive markings. No matter the temperature

Researching Joval's Equilibrium

Joval's Equilibrium is a fairly well chronicled, and researching the Riggardde family should yield a wealth of information on the subject. A Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), or even Knowledge (nature) check (due to the druidic influence) should suffice to gather the necessary information.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	*Joval's Equilibrium* is a ring of wondrous power.
20	Created by a member of the Riggardde family, *Joval's Equilibrium* protects the wearer from the effects of extreme alignments. It also known as the *Ring of Perfect Balance*.
25	Those near the wearer of *Joval's Equilibrium* often find themselves on equal footing with more powerful opponents, as well as weaker ones.
30+	While the *Ring* offers protection from the four alignment extremes, it puts the wearer on such equal footing that the weakest of opponents could easily kill him.

Joval's Equilibrium is rumored to prevent anyone not of pure neutral alignment from getting anywhere near it (let alone using it), and is also thought to enhance the spell strength of unaligned spells. Neither of these stories is true.

around the *Ring*, it never feels hot or cold, nor does it give a reflection of any kind of light source. When studied with *detect magic*, it radiates an aura of strong abjuration.

Powers of Joval's Equilibrium

Joval's Equilibrium brings about a balance in the abilities of anyone in range, and negates the effects of alignment-oriented spells.

Using Joval's Equilibrium

The artifact functions constantly, balancing its wearer's abilities — whether he wants it to or not.

Constant Powers

When worn, *Joval's Equilibrium* surrounds the wearer with a 60-foot-radius aura that has a number of effects. Any aligned spells (spells that possess chaos, evil, good, or law as a component or descriptor), or light affecting spells (spells with the light or darkness descriptor), simply fail to take effect, as though successfully counterspelled. This applies to spells cast within the aura, or cast from outside but include any portion of the aura in their area of effect. Magical items and special abilities that add damage, grant bonuses, or give specific protection based upon alignment (such as holy or anarchic weapons, items that provide AC bonuses against creatures of a specific alignment, or special abilities such as smite evil or ki strike: law) do not function when used within the aura. Any aligned spell cast outside this radius that later falls under its effect (if, for example, someone under the effects of *holy aura* enters the area, or the bearer enters the area of an *unhallow* spell), that effect is suppressed so long as it is within the effect radius of the *Ring*.

Anyone within the aura of *Joval's Equilibrium* finds themselves on equal footing with those around them. Any creature that attacks another creature also within the aura either gains a bonus or suffers a penalty on their attack and damage rolls. This modifier is based upon the difference in the two creatures' challenge ratings. If the attacker is of a lower CR, it gains a +1 to attack and damage rolls for each point of difference between the two challenge ratings. If the attacker is of a higher CR, it suffers a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls for each point of difference. Thus a 5th-level character attacking a 10th-level character gains a +5 to attack and damage rolls (10 –5 = 5). If the 10th-level character retaliates against the 5th-level character, he suffers a –5 penalty to attack and damage.

Anyone within the aura gains spell resistance, but only against spells cast by creatures also within the aura. This resistance changes from spell to spell, and equals 10 + the caster level of the spell they are resisting. This SR cannot be lowered or reduced by any means, except as noted below.

The wearer of *Joval's Equilibrium* is subject to all of these powers at all times, for better or worse. The only exception to this is that the wearer may voluntarily lower the spell resistance as a free action when casting a spell with a range of personal, or one for which he is the only target. The spell resistance immediately returns once this spell is cast. Spells cast by others as a free or swift action upon the wearer while the spell resistance is dimmed always take effect only after the spell resistance has returned.

Joval's Equilibrium radiates a permanent *magic circle* effect in a 60-ft.-radius around the wearer, effective against all four alignment extremes. This has a caster level of 30, and a save DC of 33.

Activated Powers

Whenever the wearer of *Joval's Equilibrium* touches a divine spellcaster whose source of spellcasting power (their god) possesses any alignment component other than neutral (good, evil, lawful or chaotic), that spellcaster is temporarily severed from their god. This requires a successful touch attack, and must be made with the hand wearing the *Ring*. The subject loses access to all remaining divine spells, or class abilities that are divine in nature (such as turn undead, domain abilities, lay on hands, and the like) until their next regular prayer time. At this point, all abilities return as normal. The subject may regain his abilities earlier, if he is subject to an *atonement* spell.

Any arcane spellcasters touched in the same manner lose access to any known or prepared spells that contain alignment or light descriptors or components until the next time they prepare spells. These spells are considered used for the day.

This effect occurs automatically as a result of any touch with the hand wearing the *Ring*, and can occur in conjunction with a touch spell, slam or fist attack using that hand.

Consequences

While wearing *Joval's Equilibrium*, the wearer's attributes become perfectly balanced, as the artifact attempts to compensate for any shortcomings by drawing upon the wearer's strengths. Add together the ability scores of all six primary attributes, then divide by 6 (rounding up). The result becomes the new score for all six abilities so long as the bearer wears the *Ring*. For example, consider a character with 18 Strength, 12 Dexterity, 13 Constitution, 8 Intelligence, 11 Wisdom, and 14 Charisma. Added together, this totals 76 points; 76 divided by 6 is 12-2/3. Thus, rounding up, the character's ability scores all become 13. Bonuses from items or spells are factored in after this calculation is complete, and do not in any way affect the ability score redistribution.

If the wearer is a divine caster whose source of spellcasting power possesses any alignment component other than neutral, he is considered cut off from his source of power and cannot cast divine spells or access divine class abilities, as discussed above. This effect lasts until the



Ring is removed. Arcane casters may not prepare, cast or otherwise utilize any spell with an alignment, light or darkness component or descriptor.

The *Ring of Perfect Balance* bestows one negative level on any lawful, chaotic, good or evil creature attempting to wear it. This negative level remains as long as the *Ring* is worn and disappears when it is removed. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while *Joval's Equilibrium* is worn.

Note that the magic of the *Ring* is a strict master. Should the wearer remove the artifact for any reason, he has proven himself less than fully committed to the ideals of balance. The *Ring* will never work for him again, though all the effects of its aura still apply to him if he is near someone else wearing it. The wearer becomes aware of this fact the moment he dons the *Ring*, so he cannot be surprised by this restriction later on.

Reactive Traits

While the *Ring* suffers no damage from spells, it may be the target of any sort of *dispel magic* spell. The caster, however, must overcome an SR 30 for the spell to function. Successfully casting any sort of *dispel magic* spell, regardless of its level or power, negates the *Ring's* powers and consequences for 1 minute.

The *Ring* ceases to function if taken to any plane aligned toward chaos, evil, good or law. It immediately regains its abilities the moment it is returned to an unaligned realm.

Using Joval's Equilibrium in a Campaign

Due to the balancing nature of *Joval's Equilibrium*, it is a suitable artifact for any level of adventurers. So long as no huge disparity exists between the PCs and the foes they face, the *Ring* should prove an interesting and not entirely unbalancing item to run across. DMs should be wary of letting it remain in the players' hands for too long, however, simply due to the massive amount of bookwork required for each encounter, and ultimately, each attack or spell cast. It is feasible to run a campaign in which a character possesses and wears the ring, as long as the DM is willing to scale any encounters appropriately. Experience points for each encounter should be scaled up or down when there is a disparity in levels, and the DM should be careful not to heap experience upon players who manage to take down vastly more powerful foes due to the powers of the *Ring*. Of course, while the *Ring* may make taking down dragons a much easier proposition, it also makes a unit of kobolds or pack of wolves positively lethal, even at the highest of levels.

Adventure Seeds

An Artifact? For Me?

The party, in the midst of some other adventure, discovers *Joval's Equilibrium* and after learning of its history and powers, plans to make full use of it. After all, it isn't every day they're granted access to an object of such power. While the group is able to take on much more powerful foes with ease, the weakest of enemies are becoming tougher and tougher. The spellcasters are losing half of their spells to spell resistance and the cleric can't heal the wearer without losing his access to spells entirely. Things are beginning to get out of hand and the PCs have to decide just how they're going to rid themselves of such an item without it falling into the wrong hands — especially when a weak local thieves guild hears tales of the party's ring and their trouble fighting off the weakest of foes.

Guzakk Like! Ring Make Powerful!

Joval's Equilibrium has fallen into the hands of a local pack of kobolds and their brash, but nearly ineffective leader, Guzakk. The kobolds now find themselves able to take on the local guards who once drove them deep into the hills, and now they're out for revenge. Guzakk has led his band into town several times, slaughtered many of the town guards and raided most of the food store. The town has put out a call for adventurers, and when the party shows up they'll most likely feel more than able to take on a wayward pack of kobolds. Of course, word has begun to spread of Guzakk's raids, and kobolds have come from far and wide to take advantage of the available spoils, leaving Guzakk with a seemingly unending supply of untrained but augmented foot soldiers. How can the adventurers separate Guzakk from the *Ring*, and what will they do with it afterwards — assuming they survive their first encounter with him?

A Touch of Neutrality

The local temples in a large city have all reported the theft of wealth, relics and artifacts from their treasuries and altars. Despite magical protection, and armed and spellcasting guards, the temples cannot seem to stop the thief responsible. He works alone, his touch robs even the most powerful of clerics of his abilities and he is armed with more and more powerful items and artifacts every time he reappears. Who is this thief and what are his motivations? Is it simply wealth he seeks or is he on a quest to punish the temples of the gods he abhors?

Destroying Joval's Equilibrium

While the *Ring* itself isn't necessarily powerful enough to tip the balance of power in a setting, the gods the players serve may consider it an affront to their authority, and might determine to have it destroyed if it is used against them or their worshipers in any way.

• *Joval's Equilibrium* loses its powers if taken to an aligned plane of any kind. Casting it into the depths of a far-off aligned realm likely keeps it out of the hands of anyone who might want to use it, as it appears, in such places, to be a simple, nonmagical ring.

• The *Ring* may be destroyed by sundering it four times on four different planes, each time with a different magical hammer. *Joval's Equilibrium* must be taken to each of four different strongly aligned planes, placed upon an anvil there, and sundered with a magic hammer aligned appropriately to the plane. That is, the hammer used on a good plane must be holy, one used on a lawful plane must be axiomatic, and so forth.

• *Joval's Equilibrium* is instantly destroyed if it ever comes in direct contact with the *Holocaust Stone of Gun'Ta*. This contact, however, instantly activates the *Holocaust Stone*. Casting the *Ring* into the Black (also in the *Holocaust Stone* entry) should ensure its eventual, inevitable destruction.

New Spell

Divine spellcasters who have studied *Joval's Equilibrium* have found a way to mirror at least some of its mystical effects.

Neutral Ground

Evocation

Level: Clr 5, Drd 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 24 hours

Range: Touch

Area: 40-ft.-radius emanating from the touched point

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: See text

Neutral ground makes a particular site, building, or structure a neutral site. This has three major effects.

First, all turning checks made to turn elementals suffer a –4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke elementals gain a +4 bonus. Spell resistance does not apply to this effect. (This provision does not apply to the druid version of the spell.)

Secondly, all animals with a true neutral alignment gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage when fighting on *neutral ground*.

Finally, you may choose to fix a single spell effect to the *neutral ground* site. The spell effect lasts for one year and functions throughout the entire site, regardless of its normal duration and area or effect. You may designate whether the effect applies to all creatures, creatures that share your faith or alignment, or creatures that adhere to another faith or alignment. At the end of the year, the chosen effect lapses, but it can be renewed or replaced simply by casting *neutral ground* again.

Spell effects that may be tied to a *neutral ground* site include *aid*, *bane*, *bless*, *cause fear*, *darkness*, *daylight*, *death ward*, *deeper darkness*, *detect magic*, *detect good*, *dimensional anchor*, *discern lies*, *dispel magic*, *endure elements*, *freedom of movement*, *invisibility purge*, *protection from energy*, *remove fear*, *resist energy*, *silence*, *tongues*, and *zone of truth*.

Saving throws and spell resistance might apply to these spells' effects. (See the individual spell descriptions for details.)

An area can receive only one *neutral ground* spell (and its associated spell effect) at a time.

Neutral Ground counters but does not dispel *hallow or unhallow*.

Material Component: Herbs, oils, and incense worth at least 1,000 gp, plus 1,000 gp per level of the spell to be tied to the *neutral ground* area.

Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan

The Jade Elephant of Shaddar Khan, the Scourge of Arrendra
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of the Juggernaut

It began in a bygone age, in an empire so long forgotten that only myths even whisper its name.

This was Arrendra, an empire of vast steppes and small but heavy woodlands, a nation of elves that was old when the most ancient ancestors of the modern lands were yet young. It was a culture of great beauty, fine craft and elegant song; but also of stunted development, caste oppression, and blind adherence to tradition.

For many thousands of years, the elves of Arrendra ruled thus, and all other peoples of the region paid them homage. But then a new race appeared on Arrendra's borders, a race of people unlike any the elves had seen. They called themselves "human."

The elves were far more learned than these brutish people. They lived ten times longer, and more; they had mastered the magics of world and spirit, tree and sky, before humans understood even the most rudimentary spells. Where man fought with wood and stone, and later with bronze, the elves fought with finest steel. And for a time, the elven empire endured.

But the race of humans grew ever more numerous within the borders of Arrendra. They displayed an ambition that overshadowed that of the mightiest elves, and they proved terrifyingly swift learners as well. They mimicked elven magics, producing great and powerful spellcasters. They learned the secrets of steel in mere generations. And though they died so rapidly, they bred more rapidly still. In less than two elven generations, humans had grown into a true threat to elven domination of Arrendra.

Terrified, the elves banished the human population out onto the barren plains that surrounded the nation in all directions. A number of elves protested, and they too were banished by their frightened brethren. Perhaps the humans had the might and the numbers to fight this unjust sentence, but they had no unity, no leadership. In family and tribal groups, they wandered out into the steppes. Many died, but others thrived, adapting to the harsh environment. They developed their own culture, a nomadic lifestyle of hunting and war, and they grew to hate the elves who had driven them forth, though they accepted the elven exiles into their own tents. They raided the borders of Arrendra, spilling blood and stealing goods, but never entering the kingdom proper.

Thus it remained for a thousand years, until the rise of Shaddar, called Khan, greatest of the nomad kings.

The name of his tribe is long since forgotten. It is known only that Shaddar came from elven blood but human customs, and that he rose to become warlord of his tribe. For many years, he waged bloody war against his neighbors. Those who united behind him, he rewarded with rank and promises of power to come. Those who stood against him, he enslaved and conscripted to stand at the forefront of his armies. He saw the short lives of his human brethren as a strength, and implemented selective breeding throughout his growing coalition, producing generations of mighty warriors and sorcerous bloodlines. In a mere century, he had united the steppes tribes into a single nation, with himself at its head.

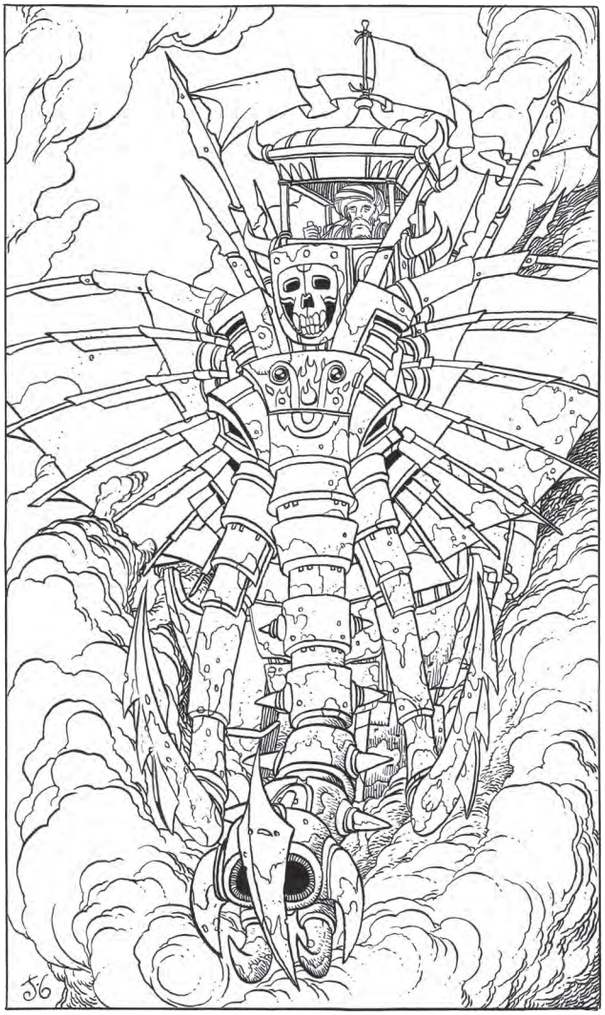
And he turned that endless army, like a tide, against Arrendra.

For years, Shaddar Khan decimated the countryside as he moved his people ever nearer the nation's capital. Armies fell before him like wheat, and it seemed he was truly unstoppable.

Yet Shaddar underestimated the wiliness and determination of the Arrendran elves. When he found the capital city abandoned before his feet, he assumed the surviving rulers had fled for their lives. He entered the Arrendran royal palace, triumphantly flew his standard from its minarets. And at last he strode into the throne room itself and took, from its position of honor above the throne, a small jade statuette of a mighty elephant, gird for war. He laid this, the most ancient symbol of Arrendran reign, upon the marble floor, and raised his warclub high.

It was then that the elves struck. The capital had been abandoned, not in fear, but in anticipation. So enraged were the elves at the invasion of their homeland, so terrified were they of the consequences if they were to be conquered, that they chose to sacrifice their greatest city to ensure Shaddar's defeat. From positions of hiding all about the city, the greatest Arrendran arcanists rained death upon the capital. Plummeting balls of fire, storms of acid, and clouds of poisonous gas washed across the city, filling streets and toppling buildings. In a matter of instants, the greatest leaders and lead units of Shaddar's army were annihilated.

Shaddar himself, bloodied and scarred, swept up the statuette as a trophy and a last sign of defiance, and fled.



Even as he disappeared into the steppes, he swore an oath that he would return, that he would see Arrendra trampled into the dust.

Something heard him.

Was the *Jade Elephant* always magic, its power merely awakened by Shaddar's furious vow? Did some great or fiendish power hear his call, imbuing the statuette with powers undreamt of by mortal magi? Or did Shaddar set out to create it deliberately, traveling to the far reaches of the world in search of the most potent magics? All that is known is that Shaddar returned, centuries later. Now old even for an elf, he rode at the head of an army smaller than his first, but he rode atop a jade construct of fearsome visage, deadly tusks and trampling feet. Brave veterans fled before it like shrieking children; potent wizards spent their spells futilely against its stone hide. Driven by a furious lust for vengeance, Shaddar indeed crushed the armies of Arrendra beneath the power of the *Jade Elephant*, and watched as the creature ground the royal palace to dust.

Yet he would never again rule, never become the master of his world that he had aspired to be. The eve after his victory, as they assembled for a great celebration, the Khan's lieutenants found their master in a pool of blood, his fist still clenched around the dagger he had driven through his chest. Most of the legends of Shaddar Khan claim that he slew himself when he realized he had no great enemy left to battle, that all that remained was for him to reign over a dusty and devastated land.

Few suspected that he took his own life not to escape the rigors of ruling, but to escape the rigors of slavery to a far greater, darker master.

The statuette could be found nowhere in the Khan's tent, and for centuries, it was assumed lost…

Studying the Juggernaut

In its figurine form, the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* appears to be a fierce-looking elephant — perhaps a dire elephant — carved from a single block of jade. It is about a foot in length, and weighs roughly 10 pounds. Its tusks are abnormally long, and its eyes are sunken. A howdah, also carved from the same piece of jade but stained a duskier green, sits atop its back. The jade is cracked in numerous places, appearing like wounds on the elephant's hide. The stone is abnormally rough for jade, slightly abrasive to the touch, and *very* close study reveals a faint coppery scent: the blood of those the *Juggernaut* has slain. Some legends suggest that the *Juggernaut* inspired the creation of the first *figurine of wondrous power*.

When activated, the *Juggernaut* grows to gargantuan size, standing 35 feet in height and weighing upwards of 60,000 pounds. The skin, though still jade, takes on the rough texture of elephant hide, and the cracks enlarge into scars covered in lighter stone. The howdah shifts to a wood-and-leather framework, though it is no less resistant to damage than the rest of the *Juggernaut*. Bloodstains are now readily apparent on the *Juggernaut's* tusks, teeth, and feet. The eyes glow a deep green that almost perfectly matches the jade hue; this glow is largely unnoticeable during daylight (DC 35 Spot check), but easily detectable at night. The elephant cannot speak — when it must communicate, it does so telepathically — but it can release an earth-shaking call that is audible for miles.

The *Juggernaut* registers as powerful magic to *detect magic*, but its school is indeterminate. If cast on the elephant in figurine form, *true seeing* reveals a phantom image of the artifact in its active shape. The *Juggernaut* is otherwise utterly immune to all divination spells that specifically target it, as is anyone riding inside the howdah. Divination spells that do not target the elephant, but instead provide specific details about it (such as *commune* or *legend lore*) can answer questions regarding its current activities, or provide the information presented in the Tale of the *Juggernaut*, above. They cannot go any further into its past or true nature, nor do they reveal that the *Juggernaut* may attempt to take command of its master.

Researching the Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan

The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* is studied in certain ancient military colleges, as well as in mystic circles. An institution that keeps historical treatises on war may contain a few passing mentions of the artifact, and any one of the (very rare) tomes that still mentions the nation of Arrendra likely makes reference as well. Elven histories are more likely to contain information than human ones, as many elves learn of the ancient empire that was destroyed, in a land so far away.

Because knowledge of the *Juggernaut* crosses disciplines, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), and Bardic Knowledge are all equally useful for learning of it. Unfortunately, while the *existence* of the artifact is not too difficult to discover, learning any true details of it can prove a lot more difficult.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	A great construct, called the *Juggernaut* or the *Jade Elephant*, was once used by a powerful warlord named Shaddar Khan. It is said to possess many powers to dominate the battlefield.
25	The *Juggernaut's* normal form is a small statuette or figurine; it grows enormous and awakens on command. Any who ride atop it are immune to most dangers, and many armies flee before it long before they ever experience its more direct powers. All who own the *Juggernaut* become infamous, no matter what attempts they make to keep their identities secret, or whether they show themselves in battle.
30	The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* seems designed for conquering, not defense, and some legends state that it actually will not activate if used passively. It is immune to normal weapons, and can only be harmed by magic substances even harder than it is. It can destroy walls and slaughter foes at a distance with its deafening shriek, and its tusks can carve apart mountainsides. Shaddar Khan himself used the *Juggernaut* in only a single campaign, before he killed himself for reasons still unclear.
35+	The *Juggernaut* is less resistant to sonic damage than to other energy types. Even pounding it into rubble only makes it dormant, however; destroying it permanently is far more difficult. (Provide the player with one or more of the methods of destruction, listed below.) A rare few myths claim that the *Juggernaut* is far more free-willed than most believe, and that it may make efforts to influence its "master's" actions.

Given the difficulty of learning any real facts about the *Juggernaut*, it is perhaps no wonder that much of the information available is false or flawed. Some common misperceptions are listed below. Parenthetical notes indicate the truth or misunderstanding behind the false "facts."

- Anyone who meets the eyes of the *Juggernaut* is turned to jade. (In fact, the *Juggernaut* does have a petrification ability, but it is of far more limited use than a gaze attack.)
- The *Juggernaut* is capable of *teleporting* its owner wherever he wishes to go. (The *Juggernaut* has no teleportation abilities at all, other than the fact that when its master orders it to return to statuette form, he can command it to appear in his hand.)
- The *Juggernaut* is a fiendish construct, and draws power from the souls of all it kills. (While it's possible the *Juggernaut's* animating force is indeed fiendish, it seems to require no fuel source. Those it kills are simply slain, not consumed.)
- If you're exceptionally charismatic and persuasive, it's possible to convince the *Juggernaut* to cease obeying its master and serve a new one. (Untrue. The *Juggernaut* continues to serve so long as it's either building its master's power base, or — once it reveals its true nature — so long as its "master" obeys its commands. This rumor *may* have begun when the *Juggernaut* abandoned a master who refused to obey it, and wound up in the possession of one of its former master's enemies.)

Powers of the Juggernaut

The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* is one of creation's most deadly war machines. Part troop carrier, part siege engine, and part weapon of mass destruction, it can allow a single unit, or even a single individual, to overrun entire armies. While it provides its riders great protection, and can wreak havoc on foes at a distance, perhaps its greatest weapon is sheer, brute strength. The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* need not scour soldiers or fortifications from the battlefield with great magics; in most cases, it's quite capable of simply trampling them into the earth.

The *Juggernaut* is also quite capable of making its own tactical decisions, though it often hides this fact from its

master — at least until it feels the time is right to reveal its true intentions.

Using the Juggernaut

In order to claim the *Juggernaut*, a new owner must shed his own blood over it in statuette form, once per night for three straight nights. The amount of blood is largely unimportant, though the wound must be large enough to cause at least 1 point of Constitution damage from blood loss. This attunes the *Juggernaut* to its new owner.

Once the *Juggernaut* is so attuned, its owner may activate it with a command word. This requires a standard action, and the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* takes one full round to grow to full size. When first acquired, the *Juggernaut* remains active for only one hour per day. If used two days in a row, the duration increases to two hours per day; after another two straight days, it increases to three hours; and so forth until it can remain active for 24 hours a day. Even after this point, however, it must return to figurine form for at least 12 hours after every week of use, in order to "recharge." The *Juggernaut* cannot be activated in any space too small for its Gargantuan size. If, however, the containing walls have less than 10 hardness and fewer than 50 total hit points, the elephant grows to full size and shatters the obstacles in the process. Thus, it could not be activated underground or inside the walls of a great stone fortress, but it could easily be activated within a house.

The *Juggernaut* returns to figurine form when its master commands it to do so, or when reduced to 0 hit points. (In the latter case, it must remain dormant for a full week before being used again, and it "resets" to staying active for only one hour per day and building upward.) If the master is currently riding in the howdah, he is lowered to the ground and the figurine appears in his hand. Even if he is not riding, the figurine appears in its master's hand when he commands it to shrink, unless he desires otherwise. If reduced to 0 hit points, however, the figurine lies where it falls.

Constant Powers

None in figurine form. See the *Juggernaut's* stats in monster form, below, for the powers it has while active.

Activated Powers

None in figurine form. See the *Juggernaut's* stats in monster form, below, for the powers it may access while active.

Consequences

The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* is a sentient, malevolent entity. Upon first activation, it behaves as a normal, mindless construct, obeying its master's orders to the letter. Slowly, as its master makes greater and greater use of it, the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* reveals its intelligence, communicating warnings, advice, and suggestions into its master's mind. Still, it does not offer any indications that it has a purpose beyond loyal service.

After weeks, months, or even years of serving, the elephant's master has likely conquered enormous territories, placing thousands or even millions of people under his dominion. It is at this point that the *Juggernaut* makes its true nature known. It informs its "master" that he must now serve *it*. He must obey its commands, carry out its every whim and order. Should he refuse to do so, the *Juggernaut* simply ceases to obey him. It returns to figurine form and does not activate again until the former master has sworn an oath to serve.

This does not, on the surface, appear too terrible a burden. After all, the master has already conquered many lands, possibly has armies at his disposal. Does he truly need the power of the *Juggernaut* any longer?

Consider, however, that *every single person* ever exposed to the *Juggernaut's* fear aura knows exactly who its master is. They know who it was that set the mighty war machine upon them, who destroyed their homes or enslaved their neighbors. The instant the former master refuses to acquiesce to the *Juggernaut's* demands, the artifact sends out a telepathic cry, audible to anyone who has ever had to make a save (successful or not) against its fear effect. This cry informs them of its former master's location, as well as the fact that he no longer holds power over the *Juggernaut*. In a matter of days, a warlord with nations under his thumb may find his entire kingdom engulfed in rebellion, with thousands of angry citizens readying axes and pitchforks for his head and heart.

Under some circumstances, the *Juggernaut* may refuse to serve its master even before matters have reached this point. If a master seems to be using the *Juggernaut* solely for defensive purposes, and shows no interest in conquering other lands, the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* simply ceases to transform at his command.

For more on what the *Juggernaut* may demand of its new "servant," see its monster information, below.

Reactive Traits

In its figurine form, the *Juggernaut* shares all the immunities and resistances it possesses in its active form; see below. Additionally, the *Juggernaut* can only be destroyed by certain specific means. If it is damaged in figurine form by any other means, it heals such damage at the same rate as if it were active. It cannot become active again until its hit point total is above 0. Thus, even if a group of characters cannot truly destroy the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan*, they may be able to render it useless for a good long while by putting it in some circumstance that constantly damages it.

Using the Juggernaut in a Campaign

Due to its sheer destructive potential, as well as the difficulty inherent to beating it — let alone destroying it — the *Juggernaut* is ill-suited to any but high-level campaigns.

Further, it is most appropriate in a campaign involving substantial warfare between cultures and countries, or at least where such open conflict is feasible. Dungeon-based campaigns, or games set largely in a single urban environment, are probably not suited for the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* (though the DM might, perhaps, run a semi-urban game in which the heroes must prevent someone from using the artifact against their hometown).

Under most circumstances, the DM is probably better off pitting the PCs against the *Juggernaut*, rather than letting them use it. Even if they aren't able to battle it directly, the heroes might quest to prevent someone from locating and using the *Juggernaut*, to destroy its master while he is unprotected, or even to find some other artifact or great ally capable of countering its might.

Alternatively, the PCs may live under the thrall of someone who owns the *Juggernaut*. Are they part of an enslaved populace, seeking freedom? Or were they soldiers fighting on behalf of a righteous king, who has since been cowed into submission by the fiendish artifact? The DM can involve the *Juggernaut* in multiple separate parts of a campaign. During the early stages, the PCs might quest for the *Juggernaut* on behalf of a ruler, someone who seeks to use it to destroy a great and powerful evil kingdom. The midpoint of the campaign might involve the PCs fighting alongside the *Juggernaut*. Finally, during the last portion of the campaign, the PCs' liege has apparently turned evil; the heroes must learn that he is being commanded by the artifact itself, and must locate some means of freeing him from its influence.

The DM should think twice before allowing the PCs themselves to get their hands on the *Elephant*. It is a weapon so potent, it would require unbelievably powerful foes, or armies so vast they seem limitless, to even potentially stand against them. If the PCs are of the sort to try to conquer their neighbors' lands, the DM may allow them to do this, knowing that they will eventually have to abandon all they have gained if they wish to escape both the artifact and their many enemies. Most players, however, tend to play good guys — or at least people who aren't overtly evil. If a party gets hold of the *Juggernaut* and uses it only to defend the innocent and crush invaders, they may never make enough enemies for its extortion to hold any weight. In these circumstances, the DM can simply decide that the artifact ceases to work — or even that it eventually seeks out the PCs' enemies, going from advantage to the greatest danger they've yet faced.

Adventure Seeds

At the Head of the Horde

The home nation of the PCs — or at least one they currently occupy — has fallen under assault by goblin hordes, an orc army, a small cabal of necromancers with legions of undead, or a similar, relatively traditional enemy. This is a foe that the PCs are likely powerful enough to defeat, though their numbers, or the might of their most potent leaders, might prove a slight challenge. Unfortunately, rumors that the invaders have some great weapon at their beck and call are all too true. The invading army's assaults are all led by the *Juggernaut*, which mows through the ranks of the defenders like wheat. The PCs must learn what the *Juggernaut* is, and either find some way of destroying it, or some means of locating and slaying the enemy leader who commands it.

Shadows of Arrendra

A large force of elves appears from the unexplored wastelands. They swear they are the lost descendants of a forgotten nation, and they demand restitution from the distant ancestors of those who destroyed them — an act for which they blame the human race in general. The PCs might come across reference to the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* when researching Arrendra. They must decide if they wish to seek out the artifact themselves, for military use or as a sign of peace and friendship with this elven nation. But where is it? And what if the Arrendran elves already have it, and are holding it in reserve?

The War at Home

The PCs have long fought in the service of a great king. Recently, he and his armies have finally defeated a powerful and vile enemy, one who has harried their borders and threatened the entire continent for generations. The king achieved victory by using the *Juggernaut* (perhaps acquired for him by the PCs earlier in the campaign). Now, the *Juggernaut* has begun to exert control, and the king has come to the PCs for help. He cannot afford to disobey the *Juggernaut*. Without it, the newly pacified enemy nation would rise up again, and his armies are not strong enough to battle them back; they have come to rely on the artifact too strongly. Yet neither can he in good conscience obey the *Juggernaut*, for it would have him become as evil and oppressive as the government he so recently overthrew. The PCs must find for him a way to destroy the artifact, and to carry it out, without giving it sufficient time to send its telepathic call and alert its former victims that their conqueror is defenseless. What's worse, the PCs must also find some *other* great magic or weapon to make up for the loss of the *Juggernaut*. After all, no matter how swiftly they destroy it, the enemy will eventually realize it is gone, and may rise up on their own.

Goliath vs. Goliath

Someone has found the *Siege Hound of Dhula'zar*, and is using it to wreak havoc. The PCs, mighty as they are, don't stand a chance against the *Hound* on their own. But just maybe, their research and desperate quest might show them the way to another weapon, one of roughly equal power, that could allow them to battle their foe. (This plotline can, of course, be reversed, with the PCs seeking out the *Hound* to counter the *Juggernaut*.) In either case, the result is a battle

of truly earthshaking proportions, capable of leveling entire cities. And regardless of which artifact they wind up with, they find themselves facing further challenges and repercussions at the will of the artifact itself.

Destroying the Juggernaut

The *Juggernaut* is a weapon of war, and thus the PCs might have any number of reasons to wish it destroyed. Whether they fight against it on the battlefield, labor under the whip of one who has been corrupted by it, or seek to free themselves of its odious control, they'll no doubt be delighted to learn that the *Juggernaut* is not completely indestructible.

Unfortunately, while possible, destroying the artifact is exceptionally difficult. Characters with a sufficiently powerful magic weapon, or the proper spells, might attempt to simply smash it into bits. Simple physical damage, however, is never sufficient to obliterate the *Juggernaut*. Even if it's ground to powder, it continues to heal at its normal rate. It might take days, weeks, months, even years, but the artifact eventually rebuilds itself from even total annihilation.

According to myth, only the following methods can permanently destroy the *Jade Elephant*, though a few other, similar methods might exist.

- The *Jade Elephant* can be destroyed by the torrent of screams power of the *Horn of the Archangel*.
- It must be crushed into powder beneath the feet of a celestial elephant.
- The soul of Shaddar Khan must be summoned from the afterlife, must chastise the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* for its actions, offer a true and heartfelt apology to the memory of Arrendra, and then sacrifice himself to oblivion, taking the artifact with him.

If and when the *Juggernaut* is permanently destroyed, it crumbles into a fine dust. This dust seeps into the soil, tainting an area one mile in diameter with the surviving malice and violence of the artifact. All plants that grow there are poisonous, and many have thorns. All encounters with people who aren't already friends or allies suffer a –15 profane penalty to Diplomacy checks. All melee attacks do maximum damage, and all critical threats are automatically confirmed.

The Juggernaut's Active Form

In its active form, the *Juggernaut* is a hideously powerful force, greater than most other war-machines or monsters.

The Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan

Gargantuan Construct

Hit Dice:	50d10+60 (560 hp)
Initiative:	+4
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	41 (–4 size, +25 natural, +10 deflection), touch 16, flat-footed 41
Base Attack/Grapple:	+37/+68
Attack:	Trunk +52 melee (4d10+19/19–20 plus petrification)
Full Attack:	Trunk +52 melee (4d10+19/19–20 plus petrification) and 2 tusks +50 melee (3d8+9/19–20/x3) and stomp +50 melee (4d10+9/19–20)
Space/Reach:	20 ft./15 ft. (20 ft. w/trunk)
Special Attacks:	Augmented critical (tusks), aura of fear, petrifying strike, shriek, softening gaze, thundering trample
Special Qualities:	Blindsight 60 ft., constrict (4d10+19), construct traits, damage reduction 20/adamantine and epic, darkvision 120 ft., fast healing 10/hour, immunity to cold, electricity, fire, immunity to magic, improved grapple, indestructible, low-light vision, protective barrier, resistance to acid 10, telepathy
Saves:	Fort +18, Ref +18, Will +24
Abilities:	Str 49, Dex 10, Con —, Int 24, Wis 22, Cha 32
Skills:	Balance +53, Bluff +64, Diplomacy +19, Intimidate +68, Jump +72, Knowledge (history) +60, Knowledge (tactics and war) +60, Listen +59, Sense Motive +59, Spot +59
Feats:	Ability focus (aura of fear), Ability Focus (shriek), Ability Focus (softening gaze), Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (stomp), Improved Critical (trunk), Improved Critical (tusks), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack
Environment:	Any open battlefield
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	24
Treasure:	Self, plus any owned by riders
Alignment:	Always neutral evil
Advancement Range:	—
Level Adjustment:	—

The hideous creature dominates the battlefield, dwarfing entire armies. It appears to be an enormous elephant, over 30 feet in height, made of solid jade. Cracks crisscross the body like battle scars, the tusks jut out a vicious angle, and its eyes glow a malignant green. Dried blood cakes its feet and tusks, and the ground trembles beneath its tread. A great leather howdah sits atop its back.

In its active form, the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* is a terrifying construct unlike any other. It exists only to destroy, to make war, to crush lives beneath its inexorable tread.

The *Juggernaut* does, however, have its own motivations. As described previously, it may refuse to activate for a given master, or — as it prefers — may attempt to extort its "master's" obedience once it has established itself as an

essential part of his activities. If the *Juggernaut* succeeds in cowing an owner into submission, it demands the individual rule in the most despotic manner imaginable. The *Elephant* exists for war and violence, so it demands on constant conquest and expansion. Further, it demands that the individual use the *Elephant* to keep his own populace in line; this grants the artifact more opportunity to kill, but also ensures that its former master's list of enemies continues to grow, making it ever-harder to escape the *Juggernaut's* influence. The *Juggernaut* also occasionally demands its master make sacrifices to an unnamed fiendish entity, lending credence to the theory that the artifact itself is empowered by an infernal or abyssal power.

The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* speaks no languages, but can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language. It can communicate telepathically with its owner to a distance of 10 miles.

Combat

The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* is not a subtle combatant. Under most conditions, it simply tears through or tramples over anything in its path. It does have an expert's grasp of strategy and tactics, however, and may act — or advise its master — to take an alternate approach, if a foe seems too difficult or too well prepared for brute force.

Aura of Fear (Su): The *Juggernaut* radiates an aura of sheer terror to a radius of 1,000 feet. Creatures with fewer than 5 HD are panicked for 5d10 rounds, with no save. Creatures with 6 to 15 HD must succeed on a DC 38 Will save or suffer the same. Creatures with over 15 HD who fail their save, or creatures with 6 to 15 HD who make their save, are instead shaken for 3d10 rounds. Creatures with more than 15 HD who make their save are unaffected. The save DC is Charisma-based.

No creature may be affected more than once by the same exposure, but if a creature leaves the aura and then reenters its area, it must attempt a new save.

The master of the *Juggernaut* may choose to render his allies immune to this aura, or to revoke that immunity, as a move-equivalent action. He need not explain to the *Juggernaut* who counts as his enemies and who does not. The magic of the artifact draws that knowledge directly from his mind and desires. The elephant's master *cannot* deactivate the fear aura completely, however.

This aura does more than cause fear to those exposed to it, however. Anyone within its area of effect, whether or not they make their save, instantly becomes aware of the identity of the *Juggernaut's* owner. No amount of protective or deceptive magics can prevent this from occurring; the *Juggernaut* ensures that everyone it attacks knows the name of their conqueror.

Fast Healing (Ex): The *Juggernaut's* fast healing ability functions only when it is in figurine form.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): The *Juggernaut* is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the *Juggernaut*, as noted below.

The *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan* takes normal damage from magical acid and sonic attacks (though it does possess some amount of acid resistance).

Any spell that alters the shape or consistency of stone (*stone shape*, *transmute rock to mud*, etc.) deals 1d6 points of damage per caster level (max 10). *Stone to flesh* reduces the *Jade Elephant*'s damage reduction by 5 points; *flesh to stone* reverses this effect. The *Elephant* may attempt reverse the effect on itself by striking itself with its petrifying strike, but this requires a full-round action. Such an attempt has a flat 50% chance of success.

Indestructible (Ex): No matter how much damage it takes, or how thoroughly it is destroyed, the *Juggernaut* eventually reforms at its standard fast healing rate. Only a few select means of destruction, as listed above, can destroy it permanently.

Petrifying Strike (Su): Anyone struck with the *Juggernaut*'s trunk attack must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or be turned to stone. A creature who succeeds is immune to this ability for 24 hours. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Protective Barrier (Su/Ex): Anyone within the howdah atop the *Juggernaut*'s back gains SR 30; energy resistance 15 against cold, electricity, and fire; energy resistance 5 against acid; and a +4 enhancement bonus to saves against poison. Additionally, anyone within the howdah has cover against any attacks launched from the ground. (This last benefit is an extraordinary ability, not supernatural.)

Shriek (Su): 120-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 25d4 sonic, Reflex DC 27 half; anyone who fails the Reflex save must make a DC 27 Fortitude save or be permanently *deafened*. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Softening Gaze (Su): Any stone or wooden object on which the *Jade Elephant* gazes is softened. (Magic and attended objects must succeed on a DC 27 Fortitude save to resist.) The object's hardness is reduced by 15; if this takes it below 0, its hardness becomes 0 and the remainder is applied as damage against its hit points. This effect is permanent against nonmagical items; magical items recover from this damage at the rate of 1 point of hardness (or 1 hit point) per day.

Thundering Trample (Ex): Once every four rounds, *Jade Elephant* may make a trample attack as a full-round action. It may move up to double its movement rate, which increases to 40 for the duration of the round. Any creature or object into whose space it moves suffers 6d10+24 points of damage, and must succeed on a Reflex save (DC equals 10 + damage dealt) or fall prone. This is otherwise identical to a standard trample attack.

King's Pepper Grinder

By Rhiannon Louve

The Tale of the King's Pepper Grinder

Many years ago, in a far off kingdom, there lived a king named Streyus who loved pepper more than anything else in the world. He loved all manner of peppers. Black pepper was his favorite, but red and white pepper, bell peppers, and hot peppers all had their places in his heart. He was known on some occasions to value gifts of pepper, or heavily peppered foods, more highly than gold or jewels.

King Streyus had a terrible time keeping cooks in the palace, because the greatest chefs in any land would tire of having all their best dishes so thoroughly smothered in pepper that the king could barely taste the masterpiece beneath. To experience such a thing and then receive a note from the king that, "the repast this evening was lovely, but could have used more pepper," was enough to drive any chef quite mad with frustration, and King Streyus quickly went through all the cooks in the kingdom. The scullery maids did their best with mealtimes, but a castle needs a real cook, so word was spread far and wide, and King Streyus eventually hired a new royal cook.

The new cook was a strange, quiet young man, and there were whispers in the palace that the boy was not, in fact, a cook at all. He left most of the actual cooking and even meal planning to the rest of the kitchen help, it seemed, only seasoning each plate as it left the kitchen. As far as anyone watching him could tell, the only seasoning he ever used was pepper from an enormous pine-handled grinder.

It could not be denied, however, that the new cook was a genius. Not only King Streyus, but even his wife and the other nobles, were amazed at the sheer deliciousness of each and every dinner from the moment he was hired. Rumors soon spread that the boy must be a wizard rather than a cook, and the rumors were not wrong.

Trevlyn, the cook, was in fact a failed student of wizardry. He was a powerful and talented boy, full of ideas both brilliant and bizarre, but he could never seem to apply himself to his studies. He had dropped out of wizarding school, taking instead to experimenting with spells and enchantments in his mother's cellar. His pepper grinder, which spiced all food exactly to the tastes of the individual eating it, was his favorite of all his inventions. Thus, when he heard about the king's need for a new chef, he jumped at the chance to put aside a little money for spell components and his mother's retirement.

When King Streyus learned of the boy's duplicity, he laughed out loud and summoned young Trevlyn into his throne room. "If you give me that magical pepper grinder, my boy, I'll build you your own magical laboratory and fund your projects myself. Your mother can even move into the palace and take your place as my new cook!" The pepper-fixated king, you see, believed Trevlyn to be the greatest magical genius he'd ever encountered, and luckily for the kingdom, he was not far wrong.

Trevlyn was a perfect court wizard. He was a cunning advisor, an apt diplomat, and his unique repertoire of spells and gadgets (now largely lost to history, alas) made him a particularly puissant protector of the kingdom's borders as well. Trevlyn and King Streyus became the closest of friends, and the kingdom prospered (and continued to eat delicious food) for many years.

All good things must come to an end, however, and there came a day when a great and terrible army invaded the region, conquering every kingdom in its path. So vast were its forces and so powerful its wizards that even with Trevlyn by his side, the king and all his court were trapped when the castle fell under siege, waiting hopelessly for the enemy to starve them out.

King Streyus grew very depressed, but even under the strict rations to which his people had been reduced, he still had his pepper grinder. In seemed to some in court that the insane amount of pepper in the king's food was the only thing that kept the man together. Trevlyn and the king were eating dinner, with Trevlyn peppering the king's food himself for old times' sake, when the castle was betrayed by a cowardly stable boy.

Trevlyn saw the soldiers first, but he had no time to cast any spells. He leapt in front of the king as the enemy arrows flew from their bows, and he was pierced many times. He fell dead at the king's feet, the magical pepper grinder still in his hand. This great sacrifice filled the king with a terrible passion and courage, a grim determination to die fighting to avenge his friend. He leapt to his feet and prepared to do battle with the invaders.

Unfortunately, there were no weapons to hand, for the king had been preparing to go to bed right after dinner. King Streyus grabbed the heaviest thing he saw to fight with,



and that just so happened to be his pepper grinder. He charged the enemy soldiers and swung, and everyone was shocked as the first soldier fell, slain by a single blow!

For Trevlyn's sacrifice had done more than merely galvanize the despairing king's courage. With his dying breath, and perhaps the grace of some merciful god, Trevlyn had channeled all that remained of his great and untamable magic into the pepper grinder in his hand, making it so much more than a mere food accessory.

King Streyus, with his pepper grinder mace, fought off his attackers long enough to retreat further into the castle and rally his troops. They were still vastly outnumbered, but the king's fury (and his absurd weapon) could not be stopped. The remains of the defending army took their final stand in the great royal kitchens, and it was there that the tide of battle finally turned.

King Streyus was struck by a lucky blow and knocked unconscious. His troops were disheartened, but then the magical pepper grinder performed its final miracle. Out of the shaker swept a black cloud of animate pepper, huge and terrible like the vicious phantom, or the ghost of Trevlyn himself.

Confused, frightened, and sneezing uncontrollably, the invading army was routed, and the pepper golem chased them out into night, saving the entire kingdom. The *King's Pepper Grinder* has remained a treasured royal heirloom from that day to this.

Studying the King's Pepper Grinder

Well over a foot in length, with a smooth, pine handle in the center, this looks to be a fairly ordinary, if large, pepper grinder. There is a grinder at one end, and what looks like ordinary pepper comes out the other. The artifact smells mildly of pepper, but not enough to make most people sneeze.

Under the effects of *detect magic*, this artifact radiates mild conjuration and illusion, as if the item is under a low-level spell. The pepper grinder reacts to all divination spells as if it were still no more than a simple food-flavoring device.

Researching the King's Pepper Grinder

When introducing the *King's Pepper Grinder* into a campaign, the DM should decide which country owns the artifact. This land would be the only place in the world likely to yield any information on such an obscure artifact. Even in its homeland, the *King's Pepper Grinder* has been all but forgotten. The story is so bizarre that most who hear it dismiss it as some obscure fairy tale, and the artifact itself has been tossed in a vault somewhere. The king's food is seasoned by an ordinary chef, who uses much more attractive salt and pepper grinders at the table, inlayed with gold and jewels.

Bards and students of history native to the land of the *pepper grinder*'s creation may still remember the tale. Characters born and raised in this kingdom may make Bardic Knowledge or Knowledge (history) checks to discover how much they know about the artifact, and there are still dusty and crumbling records of the incident filed on the highest back shelves of the royal library.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	The *King's Pepper Grinder* is a mystical pepper grinder, which appears in one or two ancient fairy tales of the kingdom.
20	The *Grinder* was created for King Streyus by the court wizard Trevlyn, and could make any meal both delicious and safe to eat.
25	When Trevlyn fell to invading soldiers, his dying breath granted new hope to the king. The *Grinder* became a potent weapon.
30+	In desperate circumstances, even the pepper within the *Grinder* may transform itself into a weapon against the enemy!

Possible false information for a failed roll might include a belief that the *Grinder* was buried with King Streyus or that it was destroyed in a subsequent war. The most likely piece of false information characters are likely to hear, however, is that the *King's Pepper Grinder* never existed at all and that the entire tale was a coded retelling of an internal political conflict, which had to be discussed secretly to avoid the wrath of the aristocracy several generations later.

Powers of the King's Pepper Grinder

This artifact has three main categories of powers. First, it can be used to flavor food. Second, it can be used as a magical light mace. Finally, it can produce what is essentially a "pepper golem" to fight for its wielder.

Using the King's Pepper Grinder

When flavoring food, the *King's Pepper Grinder* must be told who will eat the food, by name or by description. Then, holding the grinder over the plate, the user turns the grinder two or three times, and a pepper-like substance falls out of the grinder onto the food. If the grinder is not told for whom it is spicing the plate, it functions with much lesser efficacy.

As a mace, the *King's Pepper Grinder* automatically bestows its powers upon any character defending himself, a loved one, or any place, cause or ideal in which he strongly believes. In all other situations, its shape and weight allow it to function a masterwork, but non-magical, light mace.

The *Grinder's* ability to produce the pepper golem makes itself known only under specific circumstances outside the wielder's control. Details of these circumstances are provided below.

Constant Powers

The *King's Pepper Grinder* can always be used to flavor food, and never runs out of pepper. If the *Grinder* is told for whom it is preparing food, the flavor of the food conforms exactly to that person's preferences, even taking into account current mood and digestive state. The artifact is also capable of taking into account a person's allergies and dislikes.

Even if the basic content of the meal is a substance to which the given character is adverse or allergic, the "pepper" from the *King's Pepper Grinder* negates the unwanted food's effects. This power extends to the negation of all non-magical poisons, but the *King's Pepper Grinder* cannot be used to make rotten food edible, nor to counter magical poisons. If the grinder is not told for whom it is spicing a plate, it spices as well as any master chef, but it may not be to the tastes of a specific character, and the grinder cannot use its ability to counter allergens or poisons.

Essentially, food spiced by the *Grinder* is considered to have been prepared by a chef with 20 ranks in Profession (cook). If the artifact is told the name of the food's recipient, the meal is considered to have been prepared on a natural 20 (in addition to the *Grinder's* powers against poisons). If the *Grinder* does not know for whom it is spicing the food, it is considered to have taken 10.

The *King's Pepper Grinder* can also always be used as a masterwork light mace.

Activated Powers

When a character is wielding the *King's Pepper Grinder* in defense of something she deeply cares about (herself, a loved one, a place, cause, or ideal) the artifact functions as a *+3 light mace of defending and mighty cleaving*. These powers remain in effect until the end of the combat and can be called upon an unlimited number of times per day, so long as the basic requirements of the artifact's activation are met.

Whenever the *King's Pepper Grinder* confirms a critical hit in combat while fully activated as a magical weapon, a cloud of pepper bursts out of the *Grinder* and into its opponent's face. This opponent must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or sneeze uncontrollably for one round. A sneezing character is effectively blinded and deafened, and can take no action beyond a single 5-foot step for the entire round.

Whenever the wielder of the fully activated *King's Pepper Grinder* cannot defend herself for any reason (unconsciousness, paralysis, magical enchantment, or other incapacitation), or whenever one of the wielder's loved ones is in line of sight of the wielder and similarly unable to defend himself, the *King's Pepper Grinder* produces a pepper golem to help fight for the wielder. The pepper golem always appears at full power and continues to fight alongside the wielder until the end of the combat, at which time it dissipates into a small pile of ordinary pepper. After producing a pepper golem, the *King's Pepper Grinder* loses all of its magical abilities for 4d6 hours.

Using the King's Pepper Grinder in a Campaign

The *King's Pepper Grinder* is fairly versatile as artifacts go. Since its abilities only work under specific circumstances, the DM has some control over how often its full power comes into play. Thus, it can be appropriate for many different levels of parties, even as a permanent item owned by a party member. At higher levels, the *King's Pepper Grinder* is recommended particularly for less combat-oriented characters, such as arcane casters. Its defensive magics are very useful for characters who cannot wear heavy armor or who rarely fight except in self-defense, and its eclectic nature might appeal to many bards especially.

Adventure Seeds

The Pepper Revolution

The kingdom where the *King's Pepper Grinder* was first created is in a state of great civil unrest. The current king (a cousin of the late queen) is something of a despot, and his people are terribly unhappy with his cruel injustice and irresponsible extravagance while the common populace starves. A young princess who was believed dead has reappeared in a neighboring country and is raising an army to lead the people in a revolution. She seeks a symbol for her people to rally around.

A studious young woman and a fan of history, the princess has read the tale of the *King's Pepper Grinder* and believes that its power would be useful to her cause. She seeks the party's aid to infiltrate the palace, learn where the artifact is now kept, steal it for her, and transport it back to her location. She can pay for this service if the party needs persuasion.

Depending on how long the DM wishes to spend on the adventure, the grinder may turn out to be somewhere in the palace, or perhaps it was sold to a museum, from which it was later stolen, and the PCs must adventure for many weeks to track it down. When they return it to the princess, she may allow a PC to continue to wield the artifact as her official champion, should the party be willing to stay and help her win her revolution.

Strange Loot

In collecting the treasure from a previous adventure, the PCs find the *Grinder* among their other earnings. Whether they keep it or sell it, they learn much later of its origins and that the newly crowned king of the artifact's homeland is offering a sizeable reward for its return. PCs who have grown attached to the item are faced with a dilemma, whereas PCs who have long since sold the artifact (probably for far less than it was worth) must attempt to track it down if they want the reward money.

Destroying the King's Pepper Grinder

The *King's Pepper Grinder* is a fairly harmless artifact, but characters might nevertheless wish to destroy it for political reasons, since it has in the past and could again be used as a symbol of royalty. The *King's Pepper Grinder* can be used for evil as well as good, so in the hands of an evil NPC, it might appear to be more dangerous than it actually is.

• If the ghost of Trevlyn can be raised and reasoned with, he is capable of removing the greater powers imbued into the artifact by his sacrifice. This would leave the *King's Pepper Grinder* a magical but simple item for flavoring food. Trevlyn would only do this if he could be convinced it was truly the best thing for his native kingdom.

• If completely submerged in milk for seven days, *Grinder* ceases to function as any kind of magical object. This information is not recorded in any known location and can only be discovered through high-level divination magic.

• If buried in a mixture of ground black pepper and soil and watered with melted butter, the *King's Pepper Grinder* grows into a magical pepper tree, destroying the artifact but creating a new one in the process. The tree might have very different powers (greater or lesser) than the pepper grinder from which it grew.

If the *King's Pepper Grinder* is destroyed with Trevlyn's help, his spirit returns to rest after the artifact has been stripped of its powers. If the artifact is grown into a tree, Trevlyn's essence happily inhabits the tree instead of the *Grinder*. However, if the *King's Pepper Grinder* is destroyed in any other manner, Trevlyn's ghost haunts the destroyer of the artifact until death (or until Trevlyn is banished or otherwise defeated).

New Monster

The pepper golem described below is produced by the *King's Pepper Grinder* in defense of its wielder, whenever need is greatest.

Pepper Golem

Large Construct

Hit Dice:	13d10+30 (101 hp)
Initiative:	+2
Speed:	40 ft. (8 squares), fly 40 ft. (clumsy)
Armor Class:	21 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19
Base Attack/Grapple:	+9/+22
Attack:	Slam +17 melee (2d10+9)
Full Attack:	2 slams +17 melee (2d10+9)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Guard, pepper cloud, pepper spray
Special Qualities:	Construct traits, damage reduction 15/cold iron, darkvision 60ft., fast healing 1, immunity to magic, low light vision
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 28, Dex 15, Con —, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 1
Skills:	—
Feats:	—
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	11
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always neutral
Advancement Range:	—
Level Adjustment:	—

Out of the strange pepper grinder mace swells a 10-foot swirling cloud, vaguely humanoid in shape, of what might very well be flying peppercorns and ground pepper. It appears to have clumps of hot pepper seeds for eyes.

The pepper golem is produced by the *King's Pepper Grinder*, whenever the wielder of the artifact or any of his nearby loved ones are under attack and unable to defend themselves. It acts to defend either the wielder or his loved ones until the end of combat and then collapses into a small pile of pepper.

The pepper golem speaks no language but follows simple commands from the wielder of the *King's Pepper Grinder* in any language.

Combat

The pepper golem's main concern is to protect the wielder of the *King's Pepper Grinder* or his loved ones, if either is in need of such protection. The golem interposes itself between its charge and any attackers, fighting without hesitation until either it is destroyed or the attackers are defeated.

When damaged, some of the flying pepper cloud is separated from the rest, oddly thinning the peppery cloud. A small amount of this pepper makes its way back into the cloud, healing damage to the strange swirling mass of the golem. The rest falls to the ground, inert, though it may conceivably, given time, be swept back up into the cloud by the swirling air of the golem in combat.

Guard (Ex): When defending another individual, the pepper golem blocks blows and disrupts attacks so adroitly that it grants that individual a +2 cover bonus to AC. This ability only functions so long as the pepper golem is adjacent to the being it is guarding.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): The pepper golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells or effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that does harm to wood or plants slows a pepper golem (as the *slow* spell) for 1d4 rounds, with no saving throw.

A magical attack that uses bright light to blind opponents does not blind the golem, breaks any *slow* effect on the golem, and heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it

gains any excess temporary hit points that fade in one minute. For example, if the pepper golem is hit by a *sunburst* spell that deals 56 points of damage, the golem is healed 18 hit points. The pepper golem gets no saving throw against blinding attacks.

Pepper Cloud (Su): 3 times per manifestation, the pepper golem may, as a standard action, exhale a huge cloud of pepper dust as a 20-ft. cone. Anyone within the area of effect must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or spend the next 1d4 rounds sneezing uncontrollably. While sneezing, a character is considered both blinded and deafened and can take no action other than a single 5-foot step per round.

Pepper Spray (Su): 3 times per manifestation, the pepper golem has the ability to spit a stream of liquid pepper into a single target's face. This stream is a ranged attack for the golem (+10 ranged attack, 5-ft. range increment), even if the target is in an adjacent square, but it does not provoke an attack of opportunity. If hit, the target takes 1d4 points of damage and is blinded for 2d4 rounds. The target may attempt a DC 17 Fortitude save to halve both the damage and the duration of the blindness.

Korridar, the Crown of Kings

By Keith Baker

The Tale of Korridar

Dal Korridar left an indelible mark on the history of his nation. Statesman, philosopher and advisor, he guided two generations of kings. While Korridar was infamous for his ruthless and amoral outlook, he had no equal in the diplomatic arena. Two hundred years ago, the king declared that Korridar had given his life to imbue the crown of the land with his wisdom, a gift that would guide the nation into the future. But rumor said that this was an execution, not a sacrifice — that the king feared Korridar's influence, and had killed the advisor to prevent him from wresting control from the throne.

As is so often the case, the truth lay between the royal proclamation and the word of the streets. The king feared Korridar's growing power, but he relied on the advisor. He begged the gods for guidance, and one night he received a vision: a dream of a simple crown, forged by the king's own hand and cooled in Korridar's lifeblood. "The destiny of the kingdom lies within the crown," a voice whispered. The king slew Korridar, and created the crown just as he had seen in his dream. Perhaps it was divine wisdom that guided his hand. Maybe it was destiny. Or perhaps there was a darker force at work, a malevolent power that seized on the king's insecurity to create a tool for discord.

From that day forward, no king would rule without this platinum circlet on his brow. The dynasty gained a reputation for charisma and political savvy, and some said that the *Crown* was the source of this power, that it truly did hold the skills of Dal Korridar. While a king would often wear a more formal jeweled crown above the circlet, the *Crown of Kings* was the true symbol of royal power.

Thirty-six years ago, a newly crowned king abandoned his throne. He fled into the wilderness, still wearing the *Crown of Kings*, and was never seen again. Each successor has proved less capable than those who came before. Many believe that recovery of the *Crown* is the key to restoring the golden age of the land. But some wonder why the young king fled…

The *Crown of Kings* should be tied to the history of a monarchy in the DM's campaign setting. The return of the *Crown* may bring about dramatic changes in the nation — including the possibility for a player character to challenge the current leader for the throne — so the DM should choose carefully. If the *Crown* is part of a small, isolated nation its return may have little impact on the world at large. On the other hand, if the kingdom is the most powerful nation in the land and Korridar has an interest in conquest, the return of the *Crown* could set an avalanche of change in motion.

Studying the Crown of Kings

The *Crown of Kings* is a simple circlet of gleaming platinum. It is polished to a mirror finish, and cannot be damaged or marred by mortal tools. It bears two large diamonds, placed to either side of a flattened disk engraved with the seal of the kingdom. These gems draw on any light in a room, catching the eye and sparkling brilliantly. A phrase is engraved, in the Common tongue on the inner side of the circlet: "Mine is the hand that guides the kingdom."

The *Crown* has one unusual trait: It maintains the same temperature as a human body, making it slightly warm to the touch.

The *Crown of Kings* is completely immune to all divination spells and effects. Between the unnatural temperature of the circlet and its invulnerability, it shouldn't be difficult to tell that it is a magical object of considerable power, but it is completely invisible to *detect magic*.

Powers of the Crown of Kings

The *Crown of Kings* possesses a host of powers and skills that can be invaluable to a ruler. Unfortunately, these powers belong to Korridar, whose spirit resides within the *Crown*.

Using the Crown of Kings

Korridar requires a suitable host in order to use most of his powers. While he can use *augury, discern lies*, and *detect thoughts* on his own, he cannot use *suggestion* unless he has a host to speak the words. Only a member of the dominant race of Korridar's kingdom can serve as a suitable host for the *Crown*; for all other creatures, it remains inert metal.

When worn by a member of the appropriate race, the *Crown* grants a bonus to Charisma and the benefit of *mind blank*, as described below. If he chooses, Korridar can choose to bond with the wearer. Once this

Researching the Crown of Kings

The *Crown of Kings* has been tied to the throne of the nation for almost two hundred years. Either Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) can provide basic information about the *Crown*.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Crown of Kings* is the symbol of leadership of (nation, as chosen by the DM). It has been missing for decades, and the current king would give much for its return.
20	The kingdom has fallen into decline since the disappearance of the *Crown*. A charismatic leader who holds the *Crown of Kings* could depose the current king, and there are many factions that would be eager to take possession of this relic.
25	It is said that the *Crown of Kings* was cooled in the blood of Dal Korridar, a stateman and philosopher renowned for his political acumen and infamous for his ruthless tactics. Tales say that the *Crown* is supposed to provide the wearer with Korridar's legendary wit and charm.

While anyone may have heard these common tales, a bard or loremaster may know more about the powers and history of the *Crown*. A character with the Bardic Knowledge or Lore abilities can check on the following table.

DC	Knowledge Available
20	The lords of the land dreaded the coronation of Prince Koltis; the boy was weak-willed and lacked social grace, and a number of ministers had already begun planning a coup. Once the *Crown* was placed on the prince's brow, he was a changed man. His subjects were amazed by his eloquence — and shocked when he exposed the plot against his throne and made a brutal example of the treacherous ministers. Koltis proved to be one of the land's most ruthless and cunning leaders, and under his rule the nation doubled in size.
25	The master burglar Larriman Cayne only failed one commission: when he was challenged to steal the *Crown of Kings*. Cayne said that he found the king wearing the *Crown* while he slept in his royal bed. Even though he drugged the leader to keep him from waking, Cayne found that he could not remove the *Crown* from the king's head, and he was forced to flee empty handed.
30	Prince Daral was a promising heir to the throne, renowned for his courage, quick wits, and iron will. But when Daral received the *Crown of Kings*, he became moody and troubled. He began talking to himself, often arguing loudly with the air. A few close friends claimed that Daral was troubled by the ghost of Dal Korridar. Whatever the truth, Daral disappeared thirty-six years ago with the *Crown* in his possession. The *Crown* protects its wearer from all forms of divination, and king and *Crown* were never seen again.

link is formed, the *Crown* is fixed to the wearer's head. It is virtually impossible to remove the *Crown* without Korridar's cooperation, but it can be done; see the section on destroying the *Crown*.

Once a bond has been established, Korridar can communicate telepathically with the wearer of the *Crown*. The activated powers of the *Crown* are entirely under the control of the spirit; the wearer can telepathically ask Korridar to use an ability, but the final decision lies with Korridar — and the wearer doesn't even know if the power has been used. When she asks Korridar to use *augury* and the spirit provides an answer, he may be telling the truth, or he may be feeding the wearer misinformation to serve his own goals. The wearer of the *Crown* can always try to use Sense Motive (opposed by Korridar's Bluff skill) to judge the truth of a statement. Unlike most skill checks, a natural 20 on this roll always succeeds, so even the most gullible wearer may eventually get lucky. However, the wearer must choose to use Sense Motive; the DM is not obliged to offer a check every time the *Crown* lies.

While Korridar controls the powers of the *Crown*, many of the abilities — *suggestion*, Bluff, Diplomacy — require a voice. The most effective way to use these abilities is for the wearer to allow Korridar to temporarily control her voice, but if she does this, she has no influence over what is actually said. A more cautious user can work in tandem with the spirit. In the case of Charisma-based skills, this means that Korridar is dictating the speech to his wearer; in the case of *suggestion*, the wearer makes the demand and then hopes that Korridar activates the magic. In either case, this is less effective than allowing Korridar to speak for himself, and results in a –5 circumstance penalty on Charisma-based checks and a –2 modifier to the saving throw DC of *suggestion*.

There is one exception to Korridar's need for a voice: the wearer of the *Crown* herself. Korridar can communicate

with his wearer telepathically, and as such he can always target *her* with *suggestion* or any of his skills.

Constant Powers

The *Crown of Kings* bestows two ongoing powers on any wearer of the appropriate race. The first is a +6 enhancement bonus to Charisma. This is subtle, but should be immediately obvious to anyone who knows the wearer. The instant she places the circlet upon her head, she seems more confident and regal. Her voice is clearer, more resonant. Her eyes sparkle. Observers perceive the traits that make the wearer most attractive to them; the elf prince somehow overlooks the wearer's terrible body odor, while the troll warrior is drawn to it. As for the wearer, she *feels* more confident, and this is reflected in her ability to interact with others.

In addition, both the *Crown* and its wearer are protected by *mind blank*. There is one critical gap in this mental defense: Korridar can use all of his abilities on the wearer of the *Crown*, from *suggestion* to *detect thoughts*. Unfortunately, this benefit is one-sided; the wearer cannot use mind-affecting abilities against Korridar.

Korridar is intelligent (Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 18, Ego 20) and neutral evil. It possesses the following skills: Bluff +16, Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (History) +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +16, Listen +5, Perform (Oratory) +16, Sense Motive +16, and Spot +5. If it is found in seclusion, its Knowledge skills remain out of date until it has the chance to catch up with recent events.

Activated Powers

The *Crown of Kings* possesses the following spell-like abilities, at caster level 20.

At Will: *augury* (90% success), *detect scrying, detect thoughts* (DC 18), *discern lies* (DC 20), *tongues*.

4/day: *charm person* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 19).

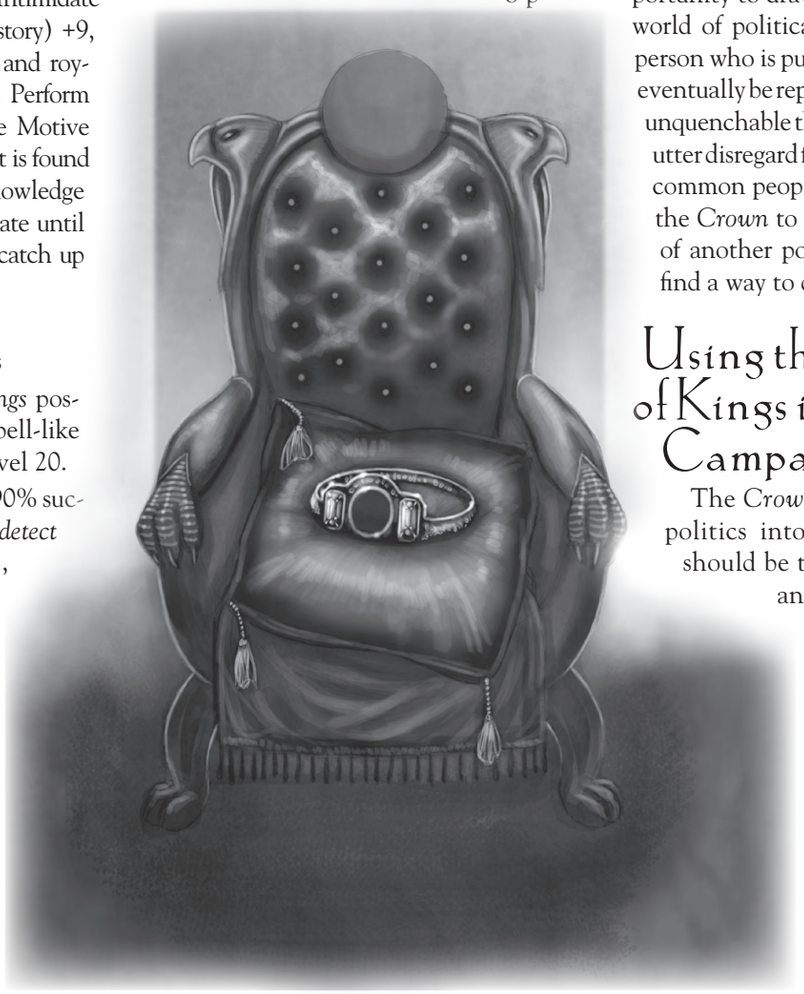
1/day: *divination* (90% success), *mass suggestion* (DC 22).

Tongues affects both the *Crown* and its wearer. Information from all other divination effects passes directly to Korridar.

Consequences

Korridar's ego score is relatively low for an artifact of his power, but direct ego conflict is not his only tool. As noted above, the *Crown* uses misinformation and his own magical powers to steer his wearer down paths that fit Korridar's goals.

So what *are* Korridar's goals? These vary based on the political situation of the campaign. Korridar loves his country and wants to see it prosper, but he is a ruthless manipulator who sees commonfolk as cattle. His first goal is to settle on the head of the current ruler, whether that means getting his current own to give him to the ruler, or raising his owner to the throne. Either way, he considers blackmail and slander to be the standard order of business, and framing or even murdering opponents is not out of the question. Once in power, he seeks to expand the borders of the nation, first by inciting discord and rivalries among neighboring nations, and then potentially through military action. An ambitious and amoral character may have a wonderful partnership with Korridar; this is an excellent opportunity to draw a party into the world of political intrigue. But a person who is pure of heart should eventually be repelled by Korridar's unquenchable thirst for power and utter disregard for the needs of the common people. Will she allow the *Crown* to pass to the hands of another potential tyrant, or find a way to destroy it?



Using the Crown of Kings in a Campaign

The *Crown of Kings* brings politics into a campaign. It should be tied to a country, and once it is found it should play a critical role in the destiny of that nation. If the kingdom is ruled by a tyrant, the owner may be able to use the *Crown* to overthrow the leader and

try her hand at governing, but can she resist the darker urges of the *Crown* and rule justly? Whether it appears in the hands of a rebel leader rallying forces against the rightful ruler or as a tool in the hands of the king, its return should mark a change in the tone of the nation; an evil leader will use its powers to expand his power, and even a good leader can be corrupted by the *Crown*.

Adventure Seeds

Jewel in the Mud

Adventure has drawn the party to the wilderness. While passing through a bog, a sharp-eyed character spots a glimmer of metal in the mud — a circlet, no, a crown! It is none other than the *Crown of Kings*, hidden in the wilds since the last king sought to free his nation from Korridar's influence.

Perhaps one of the characters is a suitable vessel for Korridar's desires. If not, the *Crown* may keep silent, hoping to be sold, or it may speak to its bearer, promising wealth and power if it is returned to its home. But Korridar may not wish to be placed in the hands of the current king. If the monarch appears to be both strong-willed and opposed to the political philosophies of the *Crown*, Korridar may wish to be placed in the hands of a rebel faction that will use the symbol to overthrow the current regime. Will the party sell the circlet and wash their hands of the matter? Or will they get drawn into the sordid politics of this nation?

The Puppet Princess

The old king dies under suspicious circumstances, and his lone heir is his young daughter. After assuming the throne, she proves to be a ruthless and effective leader, driving a number of moderate advisors from her cabinet and engaging in a variety of aggressive programs. Many believe she is preparing to lead the nation to war. One of the advisors approaches the party, claiming that he believes that the queen's behavior is the result of demonic possession and begging the heroes to get to the bottom of the matter. Can the adventurers find the truth, and if so, will it change anything? If the party members are amoral enough, the queen may seek to hire them herself: Korridar could certainly use a dirty-tricks squad to carry out his new agenda…

Destroying the Crown of Kings

As long as the *Crown of Kings* remains in the world, it has an impact on the country it is tied to. A nation guided by Korridar pursues a path of treachery and aggression, both diplomatically and militarily. Even if the king has the strength of will to spurn the *Crown*, others may seek to claim its power. The *Crown* is a symbol as well as a magic item, and could serve as the fulcrum for rebellion and civil war.

Destroying the *Crown* is no simple task. First the party must learn how it can be done. The first king called on the gods for guidance, and received a vision; the most likely answer is that the party must call on these same deities for aid, and must convince them that the *Crown* is doing more harm than good. Otherwise, a scholar who is well versed in the history of the *Crown* might be able to guess at a method of destroying the artifact, but this is a theory at best. All of these ideas are just that: If a character has a dream about how the *Crown* can be destroyed, how does he know if it's a dream or a divine vision?

- The *Crown* was forged in the blood of a malevolent advisor, and perhaps it can only be shattered by being bathed in the blood of a benevolent advisor. This means the party may have to kill a peaceful old courtier, whose spirit can counter the dark soul of Korridar. Perhaps the elder is willing to give his life for this cause, but what if he is not? Will the party murder an innocent man to destroy the *Crown*? What if it doesn't work? While this may destroy the *Crown*, it could potentially replacing Korridar's spirit with that of the old advisor, creating a more benevolent item.
- Korridar is linked to the kingdom. To destroy Korridar, you must destroy the realm itself. The people must abandon the name, the banner, the royal line — all trappings of the old nation. As long as the kingdom is dead, Korridar's spirit is forced into a dormant state, but if the nation rises again, he will return.
- The current king of the realm must return to the forge used to craft the *Crown*, and he must sprinkle the ashes of the first king's body into the crucible. There, the *Crown* can be melted down like mundane metal. But what if the body of the first king is no longer in his crypt? Perhaps Korridar learned of this threat long ago, and convinced his puppet to move the remains to a hidden location. Where could he have hidden a dead king?

New Feats

Dal Korridar was a brilliant man in life. A character who works with the *Crown* can learn valuable political strategies from the spectral advisor. On the other hand, a character who fights Korridar must quickly learn to strengthen his will again the *Crown*'s tricks — and this will serve him well in any future dealings with intelligent objects.

Dominant Partner

Whether it's a cunning imp or an ill-tempered sword, you have learned to read the emotions of your magical companion and resist its trickery.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 13, must possess an intelligent item or familiar.

Benefit: You receive a +4 insight bonus to all Sense Motive checks made against your familiar or any intelligent item in your possession. You also receive a +4 insight bonus to all Will saves made when dealing with this companion, including personality conflicts with intelligent items.

While you must possess an intelligent item or familiar to take this feat, the benefits are not linked to a specific creature; should you lose your familiar and acquire an intelligent sword, this feat protects you against the sword.

Korridar's Insight

The spirit of Dal Korridar has taught you to spot the weaknesses of your political opponents.

Prerequisites: Intelligence 13+, can only be taught by Korridar.

Benefit: If you spend an hour studying an individual, you gain a +3 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks made against that person. You can only maintain this benefit against one person at a time; as soon as you begin studying a new target, you lose your bonus against the prior victim.

Lamentation Engine

The Abyssal Machine, the Vessel of Sorrows, the Black Apparatus
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of the Lamentation Engine

None can say with any certainty who — or, far more likely, *what* — constructed this most terrible of artifacts.

Theories abound, but theory is all they are. Some sages maintain that the *Black Apparatus* was constructed by the demon princes of the Abyss, made in part from the body of a fiend so great it required the combined forces of a dozen princes to lay him low, and that the creature's influence yet lingers in the *Engine*'s innards. Others suggest that the device was built by a powerful mage, a lifelong sinner who sought to methodically replace parts of his body with those of others, in hopes of fooling the gods themselves when it came his time to die. Perhaps the most disturbing notion comes from the planar researcher Cyprius d'Listille. He suggests that no one built the *Lamentation Engine*. Rather, the artifact is literally a part of the Abyss or one of the other Lower Planes, an otherworldly protrusion into the mortal realm and one of the linchpins that actually holds the planes in their relative "position" to one another in the multiverse. Nobody has ever found proof of any of these notions, and even the gods cannot or will not say.

Wherever it may have come from, the first recorded appearance of the *Lamentation Engine* was some 1,500 years ago, in the possession of the great blackguard warlord Sargas Vatarn. The conqueror used the device to augment many of his elite soldiers, and eventually himself, during his efforts to dominate the great empire of Reig. When Vatarn was finally slain, and his fortress torn down around him by the gold great wyrm Inrustanaru, the *Engine* was buried for centuries on end.

Unearthed roughly a thousand years ago by an archeological expedition, it fell into the possession of the Black Monks of the Sinuate Way, an order of sadistic religious zealots who worship the great fiends as embodiments of the strongest aspects of the gods. After using the machine to transform themselves in ecstatic religious ceremonies, they were eventually assaulted by a rival sect. The few surviving Black Monks fled, and the *Lamentation Engine* was taken to a dark temple of Orcus.

There it was claimed by the succubus Dalsavartha, who offered it as a reward to her many mortal lovers, laughing inside as it eventually drove them horrific depravity and death.

Researching the Lamentation Engine

It is not difficult to learn of the existence of the *Lamentation Engine*, as it is the basis of many myths, morality tales, and historical investigations. Learning the specific details of its abilities is harder, however, and no amount of research — up to and including *communing* with a deity — reveals its true origin. To learn the information presented below, a character needs either Bardic Knowledge, Knowledge (history), Knowledge (religion), or Knowledge (the planes).

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Lamentation Engine* is a horrific device, possibly of fiendish origin, that can grant its users great power, but at great cost.
20	The character knows one of the theories of the *Engine*'s origin.
25	The character knows all the information presented in "The Tale of the *Lamentation Engine*," above.
30+	The character knows some, but not all, of the powers given below, as well as the fact that the *Engine* is not 100% reliable. Even a roll this high does not reveal the artifact's soul-devouring properties, however.

The most likely misunderstanding is simply for a researcher to believe that a given theory of the *Engine*'s origin is the "true" story. Other misconceptions, however, include the belief that the device is a literal gateway to the Lower Planes, or the (potentially disastrous) belief that a mortal of truly good heart can destroy the *Engine* by attempting to use it.

Dalsavartha was ultimately banished back to the abyss by the white mage Surreon, who — unable to destroy the *Engine* — locked it away in a great holy site.

Exactly what happened to it after that point is unclear. Records suggest that Surreon, who had lived a life of virtue

and righteousness, suddenly attempted to slaughter the entire population of a great city, and was reluctantly put down by his own apprentices. From that point, rumor has placed in the *Engine* in the hands of all manner of villains, from the Night's Emperor Barrat Sûn to the foul necromancer Mol-Tet, but none of these reputed sightings has ever been confirmed. To this day, the *Lamentation Engine*'s true location remains as unknown as its origin, and all men and women of good heart — or merely of sound mind — can only pray that it remains forever lost.

Studying the Lamentation Engine

The *Lamentation Engine* is a hideous amalgam of the mechanical and the biological, roughly the size of a large bedchamber. Pumping hearts drive oily fluids through crystalline tubes. Rusty iron cogs clank and turn, rotated by tendons powered by both steam pistons and bloody, dripping muscle. Cables and veins run throughout the contraption, sometimes wrapping around or even transforming into one another. A pair of inner chambers stand in the center of the *Engine*, their walls forged of iron and bone, their doors a pair of fleshy sphincters that constantly seep a viscous pus. Within those horrific rooms, blood-caked blades, jagged teeth, and grasping claws dangle from the walls and ceilings on hooked chains that seem to twitch and writhe of their own accord. The *Engine* smells almost overpoweringly of rust and rot, and the clanking gears and chains produce both a menacing thunder and a high-pitched shriek that seems to echo with the cries of the damned.

Anyone attempting to study the *Lamentation Engine* through *detect chaos*, *detect evil*, *detect magic* or similar spells is instantly stricken blind, and suffers 3d6 points of damage as their eyes are literally burned from their sockets. This blindness can be cured normally; the hit point damage can only be healed once the blindness is reversed.

Powers of the Lamentation Engine

The *Lamentation Engine* is a truly fiendish contraption. Powered by a variety of unholy fuels, and often drawing on the flesh and organs of an unwilling "donor," the artifact grants its user a variety of powers and abilities.

Using the Lamentation Engine

Hidden within the bowels of the *Engine*, on a swiveling platform that allows it to be operated from both within and without the leftmost inner chamber, is a control panel no less hideous than the rest of the device. Buttons and switches made of bone protrude from a metal shelf, which is in turn connected to the inner mechanisms by strings of nerves.

While the controls consist of a seemingly random array of switches, buttons, and levers, the *Engine*'s effects are not random. Two small metal platforms stand before the control panel, one inside the chamber, one outside. Anyone stepping onto this platform instantly knows how to operate the machine.

The *Lamentation Engine* requires fuel to operate. Near the front side of the machine stands a large tank, made of iron and leathered skin, and fed through a sequence of pulsating intestines. The tank can hold up to 10 gallons of liquid. The *Engine* can draw power from a number of different substances, but some power it for longer than others.

Defiled Holy Water: Holy water can be defiled through the addition of blood or other bodily fluids, or by allowing a portion of a dead body to soak in it. A gallon of defiled holy water powers the machine for one hour.

Milk of Sorrow: This is mother's milk taken from a woman whose child was stillborn, murdered or stolen. A gallon of milk of sorrow powers the machine for one hour.

Children's Tears: These tears must be collecting from children who are crying out of pain, or in grief for a slain parent. A gallon of children's tears powers the machine for two hours.

Heart's Blood: This is blood taken from a living, sentient (Intelligence 3+) creature, within 1 minute of its death (either before or after). Alternatively, such a being can simply be placed within the rightmost chamber as a sacrifice, to be exsanguinated and consumed by the *Engine*. A gallon of heart's blood powers the machine for four hours.

Angel's Blood: This is blood taken from an angel or other outsider with the good subtype, within 1 minute of its death (either before or after). Alternatively, such a being can simply be placed within the rightmost chamber as a sacrifice, to be exsanguinated and consumed by the *Engine*. A gallon of angel's blood powers the machine for eight hours.

It is possible to mix fuel sources in the tank at once, but be certain to keep track of the quantities of each individual source, to determine how long the *Engine* can run. If the artifact runs out of fuel in the midst of a procedure, the subject suffers twice the normal Constitution damage for the procedure, and gains none of the benefits. The tank can be refilled before it empties, allowing a procedure to continue for longer than the tank could normally provide. This requires the subject have at least one helper, however, as the subject himself is in no position to do anything but shriek in agony within the machine.

The individual who is to gain the benefits of the *Engine* must stand within the leftmost chamber. Only a living humanoid may benefit from the device. Once inside, the various hideous implements whirl around him for hours

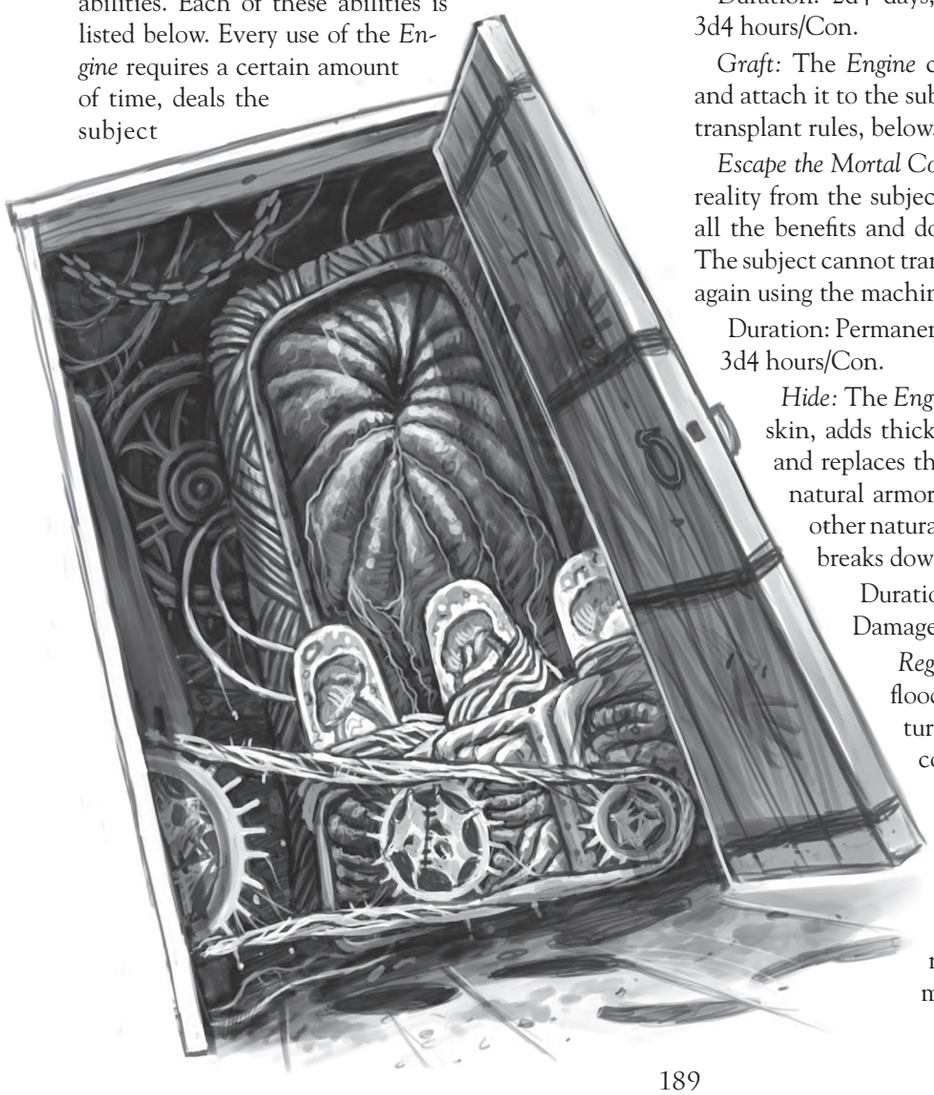
on end, slicing and stitching him in mind, body and soul in a procedure as painful as any of the punishments of Hell. The graft and transplant abilities of the *Lamentation Engine* also require a being to be placed in the rightmost chamber as the "donor." This being can be any type of creature except construct, ooze, or plant, but it must be within one size category of the subject. The donor dies in the process, regardless of whether the operation should necessarily have proven fatal, and its body is consumed by the *Engine*. The donor cannot also serve as a sacrifice to power the *Engine*.

Constant Powers

The *Lamentation Engine* is capable of affecting incorporeal and ethereal creatures, as though enchanted with the *ghost touch* ability. It cannot, however, provide its benefits, or transplant any parts, from such a being.

Activated Powers

The *Lamentation Engine* can perform a great number of horrific operations, granting its subject many unnatural abilities. Each of these abilities is listed below. Every use of the *Engine* requires a certain amount of time, deals the subject an amount of Constitution damage equal to the number of hours the procedure takes, and lasts for only a temporary duration. All of these are described below.



When rolling for the duration and Constitution damage of a procedure, reroll any results of "4" on the dice, and continue to add the results until you cease rolling fours. For instance, the "escape the mortal coil" ability normally takes 3d4 hours. If, however, the dice come up "1," "3" and "4," the DM would reroll the latter. If it then comes up "2," the total time required (and damage dealt) is 10 hours. In this way, even the simplest procedures can sometimes result in disaster.

Death Touch: The artifact implants a seed of negative energy in the subject. The subject gains an ability identical to the granted power of the Death domain, which he can use up to three times.

Duration: 1d3 days, or until expended; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Demonic Infusion: The *Engine* removes portions of the subject's soul, replacing them with fiendish essence. The subject gains the fiendish template.

Duration: 2d4 days; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 3d4 hours/Con.

Graft: The *Engine* can remove a part from a donor and attach it to the subject. See the expanded graft and transplant rules, below.

Escape the Mortal Coil: The *Engine* literally strips the reality from the subject, making him incorporeal, with all the benefits and downsides that condition implies. The subject cannot transform himself back without once again using the machine.

Duration: Permanent; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 3d4 hours/Con.

Hide: The *Engine* strips off layers of the subject's skin, adds thick fiendish hide over the muscles, and replaces the skin. This grants the subject a natural armor bonus of +5, which stacks with other natural armor. The demonic hide slowly breaks down, absorbed into the body.

Duration: 2d3 weeks; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 2d4 hours/Con.

Regain the Mortal Coil: The *Engine* floods an incorporeal being with captured reality, causing it to become corporeal. This transformation is permanent.

Duration: Permanent; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 3d4 hours/Con.

Remove Mortality: The *Engine* removes from the subject what makes him mortal. For the duration,

he becomes an outsider (native); does not age; need not eat, sleep, or drink, though he must breathe; and gains DR 10/magic.

Duration: 2d4 days; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 3d4 hours/Con.

Transplant: The *Engine* can remove a limb or an organ from a donor and attach it to the subject in place of his own. See the expanded graft and transplant rules, below.

Transposition: The subject gains a metaphysical link with the artifact. As an act of will, wherever he is, he can cause the *Engine* to *teleport* from its current location to the new one. The *Engine* can sense the subject's surroundings and intentions, and never appears in a location too small for it, one that would make it easy to lock the artifact away, or one that is particularly dangerous for the artifact. If a second subject makes use of this ability, the previous subject loses it.

Duration: Permanent until used or usurped; Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Grafts and Transplants

One of the primary uses of the *Lamentation Engine*, and certainly the most complex, involves taking body parts or organs from donors — usually unwilling, considering that it involves their death and the consumption of their soul — and attaching them to the subject. The subject gains a wide variety of abilities, based on the body part in question, and the nature of the donor. These are all discussed below.

The difference between a graft and a transplant is simple. A graft involves taking a part the subject does not have, and attaching it. This could, for instance, involve giving an elf the wings of a succubus. A transplant involves removing a part the subject possesses, and replacing it with the same part from the donor. If the subject is grafting or transplanting more than one part from the same donor, use the longest of the various procedures, and add an additional 1d4 to the time it requires and the Constitution damage it causes.

When the duration on a graft expires, the new piece simply rots, and eventually falls off. The subject loses the abilities it offered, but he suffers no direct harm. When the duration wears off on a transplanted part, however, the subject immediately suffers a –2 penalty to all rolls involving that limb (such as melee combat for arms, or Spot for eyes), as well as suffering 1d4 points of Constitution damage due to rot and infection. This penalty increases by an additional 2, and the subject suffers another 1d4 points of Con damage, for each day that passes, until he uses the *Machine* to replace that part with another new one, at which point all penalties vanish and the Constitution damage may be healed normally. (The Constitution damage cannot be healed by any means, nor the penalties overcome, until the limb or organ is replaced.)

If a transplant or graft offers the subject access to the donor's skill ranks, the subject may choose whether to use those ranks or his own, but they do not stack. If a transplant or graft grants the subject the donor's ability (such as Strength), the subject *cannot* choose to stick with his own; he *must* use the new ability.

All grafts and transplants last 2d3 weeks.

Arms: The subject gains the Strength of the donor, as well as the donor's reach. He also gains access to any of the donor's feats that involve arm-related combat maneuvers, such as Cleave, Combat Expertise, Rapid Shot, Power Attack, and Weapon Proficiencies.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 2d4 hours/Con.

Ears: The subject may use the donor's Listen ranks in place of his own, and understands — but cannot speak or write — any language the subject understood. The subject also gains any feat-based or racial modifier to Listen. The subject gains any other hearing-based senses the donor may have had, such as blindsense.

If the duration of this transplant expires, the subject goes totally deaf after suffering 1d3 days'-worth of penalties.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Eyes: The subject may use the donor's ranks in any Wisdom-based skill except Listen, as well as gaining any feat-based or racial modifiers to those skills. The subject can understand the written form of any language the donor understood. The subject gains any special sight-based senses, such as a dwarf's darkvision or a devil's ability to see in magical darkness. The subject gains any gaze attacks the donor might have possessed, and can use them three times per day or as often as the donor could, whichever is less.

If the duration of this transplant expires, the subject goes totally blind after suffering 1d3 days'-worth of penalties.

Hands: The subject may use the donor's ranks in any Dexterity-based skill except Balance, Move Silently, or Tumble; and the donor's ranks in any Strength-based skill except Jump. He also gains any feat-based or racial modifiers to those skills. The subject gains the donor's effective Dexterity score for purposes of ranged attacks or attacks made with Weapon Finesse. If the donor was an arcane caster, the subject may choose up to six total levels'-worth of spells that the donor could cast, so long as they have somatic components. (For instance, he might choose six 1st-level spells, two 3rd-level spells, a 4th-level spell and two 1st-level spells, or any other combination that adds up to six. Cantrips qualify as one-half a level.) The subject may cast each of these spells once per day. He gains any claw or slam attacks the donor might have possessed, as well as any touch attacks. If a touch attack is spell-like or supernatural, the subject can use it three times per day or as often as the donor could, whichever is less.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 2d4 hours/Con.

Heart: The subject may use the donor's ranks in any Intelligence-based skill, as well as Concentration. He also

gains any feat-based or racial modifiers to those skills. The subject may use any spell-like abilities the donor may have possessed. He can use each ability three times per day or as often as the donor could, whichever is less. If the heart is drawn from a being resistant or immune to fear, the subject gains that same quality.

If the heart is drawn from an undead being, the subject becomes undead for the duration, with all the advantages and disadvantages that condition implies.

If the duration of this transplant expires, the subject suffers 4d4 points of Constitution damage each day, rather than the standard 1d4.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 5d4 hours/Con.

Legs and Feet: The subject may use the donor's ranks in Balance, Jump, Move Silently, and Tumble, as well as gaining any feat-based or racial modifiers to those skills. He gains the subject's base land speed.

If the duration of this transplant expires, the subject suffers a –5 cumulative penalty to movement per day, in addition to the –2 penalty to skills.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 2d4 hours/Con.

Lungs/Gills: The subject can breathe comfortably in any environment the donor could. Depending on the donor, however, he may no longer be able to comfortably survive in his *own* environment.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 2d4 hours/Con.

Tail: The subject gains any prehensile or offensive use of the tail the donor possessed.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Teeth/Fangs: The subject gains any bite attack the donor might have possessed. If the donor's mouth was larger than the subject's, the jaw must be replaced as well.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Tongue: The subject gains the ability to speak any language the donor understood. He cannot, however, understand that language when spoken by anyone else.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Wings: The subject can fly at the same speed and maneuverability as the donor.

Time Required/Damage Dealt: 1d4 hours/Con.

Consequences

In addition to the most obvious downsides — the horrifying requirements to fuel the *Engine*, as well as the substantial risk of dying "on the operating table" — the *Lamentation Engine* has other consequences to its use.

First and foremost, the physical, emotional and spiritual scarring caused by its surgery leave permanent marks on the subject. Anyone who uses the machine suffers 1d4 points of Charisma drain, in addition to the Constitution damage described above. This drain can never reduce the subject's Charisma below 3, but it also cannot be healed by any means so long as the subject is under even one of the *Engine*'s effects. Even once all ongoing effects expire and the subject seeks mystical healing, 1 point of that drain is permanent and cannot be healed by any means. (That's one permanent point per user, not per use of the machine.)

Second, the *Engine* is not entirely predictable. Each time it is used, a flat 5% chance exists that it activates the wrong power. (In the case of a graft or transplant, it transplants the wrong limb or organ.)

Finally, the machine does not just mangle flesh, it consumes souls. The *Engine*'s donors, and creatures who died to fuel it, cannot be *raised* by normal means. Only a *wish* or *miracle* can return them to life.

Death is even worse for the subject who actually uses the artifact. Anyone who dies during a procedure, any subject who dies while under *any* of the artifact's effects, and any subject who dies due to Constitution damage after a transplant expires doesn't merely die — his soul is instantly devoured by the fiendish energies of the *Engine*. If cast within 11 hours and six minutes of death, a *wish* or *miracle* might bring them back, but the caster must succeed on a DC 32 caster level check. Once that time has elapsed, *no method*, even including divine intervention, can return the subject to life. His soul has been truly absorbed into the *Lamentation Engine*.

Ambient Effects

The *Engine* radiates a permanent *unhallow* effect to a 100-foot radius.

Reactive Traits

The *Engine* has hardness 100, spell resistance 40, and 50 points of resistance to all forms of energy. Even if damage is sufficient to penetrate these defenses, or is of a type against which the artifact has no defense, physical damage is only a temporary inconvenience. The *Machine* repairs and heals itself, at the rate of 10 hit points per hour. No amount of damage, even reduction to nothing but a pile of rubble, can prevent this from occurring.

Using the Lamentation Engine in a Campaign

The most obvious use for the *Lamentation Engine* in a long-term campaign, wherein the PCs are faced, even at low levels, with horrific foes who have clearly been warped into something far beyond (or below) mortal. Over the course of the campaign, they might learn more of the machine, finally encountering its current owner and facing its full might at high levels. Thus, the artifact is appropriate for use in a campaign of any level. If you wish to use it only in a low-level game, the PCs might only face relatively weak creatures, and of course a high-level

game might involve a great conqueror, such as those who once held the *Engine* seeking it once more.

Adventure Seeds

Goblins From Hell

A tribe of goblins has somehow gotten hold of the *Lamentation Engine*. Perhaps they dug into a cavern where the artifact lay hidden, or maybe they were the minions of a would-be warlord who killed himself trying to use it. Whatever the case, they have been kidnapping travelers to fuel the *Engine*, and making use of its weaker abilities to empower their champions and warriors. (They are too afraid of, or too weak to survive, the *Engine*'s stronger abilities.) A band of heroes, perhaps tougher than would normally be required to face goblins but not necessarily of particularly high level, must uncover what is occurring here and stop it.

Evil's Long Shadow

An elven wizard of vilest evil has come to believe that he can use the *Lamentation Engine* to implant portions of the *Ebony Skeleton of Mol-Tet* into himself without the risk of ever losing control to that artifact. Whether or not this is true, a single creature in possession of both these artifacts could wreak unimaginable devastation. The wizard already knows the location of the *Engine*, and possesses at least some of the ebony bones, so the PCs must find a way to infiltrate his sanctum and overcome the powers to which he already has access.

A Clash of Armies

A great warlord had located the *Engine*, and begun using it to build up his forces and his own power. Alas for him, he died within the artifact not long after he began to use it. His own forces are running wild, scared and leaderless, and others throughout the world have realized that the *Engine* is now masterless and ripe for the taking. Multiple armies — human, fiendish, and otherwise — now converge on the artifact's location, hoping to claim it for their own. Can the PCs reach it first, in time to prevent it from falling into the hands of others who would use it for evil?

Destroying the Lamentation Engine

Any good-aligned PC who needs to be convinced to destroy the *Engine* isn't worthy of the title "good," and even most neutral or evil characters likely recognize the danger posed by the artifact. Unfortunately, destroying the *Lamentation Engine* is a task far beyond the capabilities of most heroes.

• The *Engine* can heal from any and all damage, but this takes time. If it can somehow be placed in an area where it suffers constant damage that can overcome its resistances — perhaps submersion in lava — its healing ability may never be able to catch up to its damage. This requires physically moving the *Engine*, however, as it can never be tricked into *teleporting* itself to such a location. And this solution, while effective, may not be permanent. If the artifact's remains are ever removed from these circumstances, it continues to heal until it has totally reformed.

• If a good aligned deity voluntarily sacrifices herself in the rightmost chamber, the *Engine* proves unable to consume her soul, and obliterates itself in the attempt. The god is still dead, however.

• If the *Engine* is on a world that is utterly destroyed by the apocalypse power of the *Horn of the Archangel*, it is obliterated along with everything else.

Note that all these methods of destruction assume that the *Engine* was built by someone or something, and as such *can* be destroyed. If the DM prefers the notion that the artifact is a literal protrusion of the Lower Planes into the mortal realm, it may be utterly impossible to destroy — or, at the very least, it may require that one of the above methods be performed in one of the Lower Planes.

If and when the *Engine* is successfully destroyed, it explodes in a shower of iron and bone shrapnel, dealing 10d6 points of slashing damage and 10d6 points of unholy divine damage to every creature within a 100-foot radius (Reflex DC 30 for half).

New Spell

Perhaps inspired by the example of the *Lamentation Engine*, a few ancient and evil spellcasters have devised other methods of granting themselves, or their minions, the abilities of the fiends for a brief period.

Fiendish Infusion

Transmutation [Evil]

Level: Cleric 6, sorcerer/wizard 6

Components: V, S, M, DF

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Touch

Target: Willing living creature touched

Duration: 1 min./level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You imbue the subject with dark energies, temporarily transforming him into a fiend. The subject gains damaged reduction 10/magic, resistance 10 to cold and fire, darkvision to 60 feet (does not stack with other darkvision), and the ability to make a smite good attack that deals extra damage equal to the subject's HD against a good creature. The subject may only make one such attack for the duration of the spell.

Material Component: Powdered bloodstone worth no less than 250 gp.

Lucky Coin

The Deadcoin
By Rich Burlew

The Tale of the Lucky Coin

"The *Lucky Coin*?" the old peasant asked — rhetorically, as I had just specifically asked him about it. He stroked a long beard that might have been snow white had it not been infused with a few decades' worth of dirt. His gaunt body seemed on the verge of just giving up and deciding it was better off as a pile of knobby sticks. And he slowly, ever so slowly, rocked back and forth on the front porch of his rickety excuse for a house while he considered my simple inquiry. "Ayup, I know a tale or two about it," he eventually drawled, the words creaking from his mouth at roughly the same pitch made by his badly-patched rocking chair.

"Well, do you think you could share with me some of those tales?" I provided, trying hard not to get impatient. I had spent a great deal of time in taverns that I would normally prefer not to patronize in order to learn of this man's alleged knowledge of the *Coin*.

He looked at me with eyes that were surprisingly dark, and for a moment I wondered if I had just been rude to a disguised wizard or something. But the moment passed, to be replaced by a glazed stare, as if focused on something far away. He rocked some more, and then he spoke.

"The *Lucky Coin* ain't yer ordinary magical doo-dad, no sir. It's got some kick in it. The best thing you could ever do yerself there is to find it and hold on to it as long as you can. That there *Coin* is pure power." My heart jumped; this was the kind of information I had been looking for. The old-timer continued, "Now, where the *Coin* was created, no one right knows, but the first time I ever heard of it was when Old Man Tooker found it while plowing his cornfield. He found that *Coin*, and decided what the heck, he was gonna bring it down to the tavern and bet it on a hand of cards. And don't you know, by the end of the week he was rolling in platinum pieces."

"So the *Coin* worked? It brought him luck?" I asked.

"Yup, sure did," the old man creaked, "and after he died in that unseasonable hurricane, his widow used the *Coin* too. She was able to really rake it in, until, of course, she was devoured by griffons."

"How about adventurers? Warriors, or wizards like myself? Do you know any tales of them using the coin?"



I hoped by prodding him he could answer my true question: Would this *Coin* aid me in my quest to defeat the Dark Overlord Lorquatz?

"Oh, sure, plenty. Widow Tooker's niece took the *Coin* next, and after the shed fell on her it was taken up by a warrior, like you said. A real tough guy, went by the name of Red-Eyed Pete. He used to carry the *Coin* with him in battle, said it helped him fight, and boy howdy, you'd believe it when you saw him. It's like every swing of his axe was spot on target. It's a shame what happened with that potion, though. If someone's gonna put green slime in a potion vial, they oughta label it proper.

"So after Pete's flesh liquefied, a young sorceress named Lyria got the *Coin*. She would say that she used it to help her cast her spells right powerful. And after the rabid gophers finished stripping her bones, the rogue Dirian found it. Now, they didn't find much left of him to figure out how he died, but the next guy, a bard, actually just caught on fire one day. Burned up right in front of the whole town! Strangest thing.

"Then there was that monk got suffocated by locusts, and the barbarian who fell down the stairs and broke his neck, and the psionicist that was impaled on that statue, and the paladin who was crushed by the wildebeest stampede, and the—

"Wait, wait, wait," I said. "Has anyone ever used this *Coin* and *not* died a sudden and improbable death?"

"Well, of course, sonny!" the old man cackled, "I sure haven't, and I've had it for years!" His decrepit hand shook as it pulled out an ugly copper coin from his purse.

My eyes were suddenly filled with visions of defeating the hated Lorquatz in battle; to my shame, I lunged for the *Coin*. Oddly, while I was certain I'd been standing on solid ground, I suddenly found the steps to his porch beneath me, and an uneven plank spontaneously jutted out, causing me to stumble and grasp only air.

"Hey!" the old man howled, "Don't you try to take my coin from me! It's mine! Only I can—" At this point, his words were cut short by a dreadful moaning noise as the entire frame of his house — knocked loose by my misstep — collapsed on top of him. Timber and dust flew everywhere, and only a quickly chanted spell protected me from the brunt of the destruction. The old man, or what was left of him, was indistinguishable from the wreckage.

The copper coin silently rolled on its edge from beneath a splintered crossbeam until it stopped before me, clattering down casually within my grasp. It was untouched by the devastation. The power of the *Lucky Coin* was mine for the taking, and I stood and stared for a long time at its tarnished form in the dirt at my feet.

In what I choose to think of as one of my wiser moments, I decided that there must be other paths to defeating the Dark Overlord, and I turned and walked away.

Researching the Lucky Coin

Hearing about the *Lucky Coin* is fairly easy; just get any old-timer drunk enough, and chances are, they've heard a few tall tales about the *Coin's* power. In fact, this is far more reliable a means of procuring information than academic research, as those formally educated in the mystic arts tend to dismiss stories about the *Coin* as apocryphal. A Gather Information check in a large city can gain the following information, as could a Bardic Knowledge check.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	"The *Lucky Coin* gave such-and-such farmer all the wealth he could ever need!" A simple story about the coin that glosses over or completely omits the fact that the owner died.
15	"It's a shame what happened next." A more detailed story that includes the fact that at least one (if not several) previous owners died under mysterious circumstances.
25	"But the real story is a lot stranger." Some details on how the *Coin* cannot be disposed of once used, and how the usage of its luck-altering powers might directly precipitate disaster.
30+	Concrete information: How to destroy or rid oneself of the *Coin*, how to avoid catastrophe by not pushing luck, etc. Information on how the *Coin* radiates general good luck, and it's safer to simply rely on that then try to force the issue.

Studying the Lucky Coin

The *Lucky Coin* is utterly unassuming, appearing as a simple copper coin. It appears somewhat tarnished, maybe a little bent at one edge, and completely ordinary in every way. If placed near other coins, the *Lucky Coin* takes on the dimensions and engravings (if any) of the surrounding coins, making it impossible to pick out from any pile of coins.

When viewed under the effects of *detect magic*, the *Lucky Coin* takes on the aura of any nearby coinage. Usually, this means it does not even detect as magic, but if placed with enchanted coins, the *Lucky Coin* mimics their aura so as to be indistinguishable.

Powers of the Lucky Coin

The *Lucky Coin* seems like a blessing, but it has an unfortunate habit of killing its owners with bad luck. It can be used to twist fate back on itself and escape harm, but doing so too often eventually calls down a dreadful curse.

Using the Lucky Coin

The *Lucky Coin* has no effect until it attunes itself to a new owner. Should a character carry the *Lucky Coin* on his person for 24 full hours without interruption, the *Coin* becomes linked to their fate and all of its constant powers come into effect.

Slowly, the *Coin*-bearer begins to feel like he could change fate if he desired. The first time the bearer fails a saving throw after gaining possession of the *Coin*, he comes to believe that he could have avoided the effect if he'd just concentrated hard enough. The next time he fails a saving throw, he feels a nearly uncontrollable urge to push. A DC 15 Will save resist the urge if desired, though many new bearers don't know enough to do so. If the bearer succumbs to the urge, the *Coin* pushes luck for him (see Activated Powers), granting him a new saving throw. After that, it is fairly easy for the bearer to learn how to push luck when things don't go his way.

Once the *Coin* is attuned to a bearer, it is almost impossible for him to dispose of it. Giving the *Coin* away or dropping it merely results in it mysteriously reappearing in the character's money purse. The same result occurs if it is stolen or forcibly taken from the bearer. Even using magical spells to try to *teleport* or *plane shift* the *Coin* are of no use; only deific intervention can prevent the *Coin* from returning to the character to which it is attuned.

However, if the *Coin*-bearer dies, the artifact loses attunement with him for as long as he remains dead. During this time, any character that carries the *Coin* for 24 hours becomes the new bearer. Should any dead former bearer be *raised* or *resurrected* while the *Coin* is not currently attuned, it immediately resumes its link to that *Coin*-bearer, returning to him instantly. If the *Coin* is found in a treasure hoard or similar unattended manner, it is certain that all of its former owners are dead.

Constant Powers

The *Lucky Coin* subtly influences the luck of the bearer, making every positive occurrence a little more likely and every negative one less so. While carried, the *Coin* grants the wielder a +2 luck bonus to all attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks and saving throws, and a +4 luck bonus to AC. Further, any creature attacking the bearer automatically fails to confirm any potential critical threats against him.

The *Coin* has a special power when used as part of a game of chance. If the *Coin* is included as part of the ante for any bet where the result is based on chance, the bearer always wins. If there is a means in the particular game to achieve greater success with a more improbable combination of cards or dice rolls (such as rolling a "7" or getting a royal flush), the bearer always achieves that result. No magical effect short of direct divine intervention can prevent a bettor who antes with the *Lucky Coin* from winning.

Activated Powers

Most of the *Lucky Coin*'s powers cannot be consciously accessed, but if a bearer knows the *Coin's* power and it is on his person (not in an extradimensional space, for example), he can force the coin to "push luck" through strength of will. He may reroll any die roll — even one rolled by another character — after he learns the results of that roll. This occurs as a free action that can take place whether or not it is the bearer's turn. The effect usually has a noticeable physical effect that most would chalk up to unusual good or bad luck. For example, he could force an enemy to reroll an attack roll against him after they successfully hit; if the second roll is a failure, then the enemy tripped over his cloak or got the sun in his eyes.

The bearer does not need either line of sight or line of effect to the beneficiary of the *Coin's* luck, but he must be aware through one or more of his senses of the events surrounding the die roll in question. He could thus allow an ally to reroll a failed grapple check when trying to escape an ogre, even if he can only hear their struggle from around a corner. The bearer cannot change a die roll if the subject has rolled any other dice. For instance, he could allow a companion to reroll a Hide check, but not if they've already rolled an accompanying Move Silently check. There is no limit to the number of times per day the bearer can push luck, and he may push his luck to alter the results of a previous attempt at pushing luck.

Consequences

There is, of course, a price attached to toying with fate. Any time the bearer pushes luck, a chance exists that something Really Bad happens. And we mean Really. Really. Bad. The DM should secretly keep a running total of how many times the *Coin*-bearer has attempted to push his luck. Whenever this power is activated, the DM rolls 1d20+10. If the result is equal to or lower than the running total, fate has decided to lay the proverbial smackdown on the *Coin*-bearer. Within 10 minutes or so, something dreadful and utterly capricious happens to the bearer, preferably in a way that directly relates to the effect that produced. The effect should be potentially (but not automatically) fatal and focused on the *Coin*-bearer, though it might have deadly repercussions for his allies as well. The Really Bad Thing need not be something wholly random; it could be a long-standing villain of the campaign suddenly turning the corner and attacking — focusing their attacks on the *Coin*-bearer, naturally. It can also alter reality retroactively, if needed to set up an event that could not occur without preparation, such as an entire legion of enemy troops cresting the hill at that exact moment. Logically, they would have had to leave their barracks hours earlier, but the power of the *Coin* knows not the restrictions of cause-and-effect.

Really Bad Things

It is important when choosing a Really Bad Thing to consider the pacing of the current adventure. If the DM is running a strongly plot-driven session, he may not want to take the time to shoehorn a fight with a demon into it. In such a case, he might want to pick a more quickly-resolved disaster, such as a cave-in. On the other hand, if the DM is running a regular dungeon and feels like spicing it up on-the-fly, he might pick one that has potential to redefine a campaign. Remember also that the Really Bad Thing should have a *higher* CR than the *Coin*-bearer; if one of these entries would be a fair fight or a reasonable challenge, don't use it. Skip down a few lines and find one that would makes the players soil their armor instead.

- The next time the *Coin*-bearer walks through a door first, the room on the other side has a gelatinous cube waiting which automatically engulfs him. (CR 3)
- The next food the *Coin*-bearer eats is filled with green slime. (CR 4)
- The next written text the *Coin*-bearer reads contains *explosive runes*. (CR 4)
- A piece of furniture in the immediate area is actually a mimic, who only wants to eat the *Coin*-bearer. (CR 4)
- The next gold object or coin the *Coin*-bearer handles is somehow coated with yellow mold. (CR 6)
- An avalanche or rockslide begins, with the *Coin*-bearer squarely in the bury zone. (CR 7)
- The *Coin*-bearer accidentally walks into an invisible stalker on an unrelated mission. The creature takes offense and decides to kill the bearer for fun. (CR 7)
- The next creature the *Coin*-bearer personally defeats was actually a corpse possessed by an intellect devourer, which now springs out to attack the *Coin-bearer* psionically. (CR 7)
- Someone in the party is actually a 5th-level doppelganger rogue who wants to lure the *Coin*-bearer alone and then gut him. Afterwards, the original party member must also be located. (CR 8)
- The ceiling above the *Coin*-bearer's head immediately collapses. (CR 8)
- The next potion the *Coin*-bearer drinks is actually a poison (black lotus extract), even if it was properly identified. (CR 9)
- A tornado appears out of nowhere and makes a beeline to the *Coin*-bearer. (CR 10)
- A thunderstorm rolls in, and every single lightning strike targets the *Coin*-bearer. (CR 10)
- Something the *Coin*-bearer has owned since childhood has actually always been a purple worm that was given the form of an inanimate object via polymorph any object. Unfortunately, the *Coin*-bearer is shortly thereafter subjected to a targeted *dispel magic*. (CR 12)
- A hound archon hero shows up to personally punish the *Coin*-bearer the next time he performs any act that might be possibly construed as unlawful or evil — no matter how trivial. (CR 16)
- The *Coin*-bearer's favorite magic item is actually the long-lost phylactery of a 15th-level lich sorcerer, who shows up to collect it and kill the one "responsible". (CR 17)
- The physical form of the next creature the *Coin*-bearer kills just happened to be the corporeal prison of the spirit of a balor, who is now released to wreak havoc. (CR 20)
- A deadly bounty hunter has been after the *Coin*-bearer and shows up behind them. (CR variable)
- A trusted cohort has been plotting against the *Coin*-bearer all along, and chooses this moment to strike. What's more, it turns out that the cohort had a template or class level that was heretofore unrevealed. (CR variable)
- The next magic item the *Coin*-bearer gains (preferably one that he chose from a selection of different items) turns out to carry a deadly curse, such as a *bag of devouring*, a *necklace of strangulation*, or a *scarab of death*. (CR variable)

The Really Bad Things sidebar lists some potential events, but the DM is encouraged to create his own to better fit the setting, the character, and the campaign. Whether using those provided here or unique ones, the exact circumstances should dictate the least convenient thing that could happen to the *Coin*-bearer. As a rule of thumb, the Really Bad Thing should have a CR that is 2 to 4 points above the party's normal Encounter Level. Characters gain no XP from challenges brought about by the *Lucky Coin*, though they may lead to additional encounters that provide XP as normal. Further, the *Coin*-bearer cannot push his luck when facing a Really Bad encounter (though the luck bonuses to various checks and AC still apply).

Once something Really Bad happens, reset the running total to 0 for purposes of determining when the next unfortunate event occurs. Should a Really Bad encounter kill the *Coin*-bearer, the encounter generally dissipates — retreating if it is a creature, losing potency if it is a magical effect.

Ambient Effects

Carrying the *Lucky Coin* tends to alter the laws of probability around the bearer in ways that cannot be controlled. While exact effects are difficult to quantify, the *Lucky Coin* is always at the center of unlikely coincidences and improbable happenstance. Bearers might learn that they just happen to be the perfect duplicate of their nation's crown prince, or else they might find themselves accidentally colliding with their long-lost cousin in a busy market square. Such ambient effects are not particularly harmful, and often might lead to fantastic adventuring opportunities, but they always will seem a bit…odd.

Using the Lucky Coin in a Campaign

The *Lucky Coin* is not as powerful an artifact as some, but its use can have a deep impact on the campaign. Once the PCs have gained possession of the *Coin* and begun pushing their luck, it is only a matter of time before they call their own doom down upon themselves. The DM probably shouldn't add the *Lucky Coin* to a campaign if he is unwilling to run an unfair fight that could easily kill one or more characters. Even if the players are the cautious type, they may not know about the *Coin*'s drawbacks until they accidentally invoke something Really Bad — at which time the *Coin*-bearer might well be a goner.

Once the players understand the relationship between pushing luck and the awful things that seem to keep happening to the *Coin*-bearer, they'll be able to more effectively manage the risk associated with the *Coin*. They might choose only to use its power when at risk of dying anyway, figuring they can't get much deader. Of course, in such situations, the DM should resist the urge to pull punches if something Really Bad turns up. The player was fully aware of the consequences and chose to roll the dice; it just so happened they turned up snake eyes.

The DM should carefully consider the other powers of the *Lucky Coin*, too, before adding it to a campaign. The ability to win any game of chance might seem like little more than a means to earn some spending cash, but it can be the source of endless intrigue. If the *Coin*-bearer accidentally uses the coin to win too many games against the same people, they certainly become suspicious, or perhaps covetous, looking to seize the *Coin* for themselves. Further, because the *Coin* always wins a contest in the most unlikely and spectacular way possible, it is very hard to maintain a low profile while gambling. The canny player, however, can use the *Lucky Coin* even away from the tavern, using a seemingly simple roll of the dice to settle a dispute with an adversary.

Eventually, many adventuring parties may decide that the *Lucky Coin* may not be worth the trouble. It is possible that they may decide to ignore the luck-pushing power entirely and just treat it as a standard magic item that provides luck bonuses. If that happens, don't be shy about having some weird (but not Really Bad) stuff happen to the party. Even if they don't use the full extent of its power, having a fate-altering *Coin* in one's backpack should never be taken for granted.

Adventure Seeds

Some Guys Have All the Luck

The local thieves guild is suspicious of a halfling that seems to win at every hand of blackjack in their backroom casino. The adventurers are hired to shake him down and find out his secret. When the fighting breaks out, the heroes find themselves dropping their weapons and tripping over thin air as the halfling pushes their luck repeatedly — until a dragon's head bursts through the wall and swallows the little guy whole! The dragon uncharacteristically flies away without further comment, leaving the party with nothing but the halfling's strange copper coin on the ground.

Once the adventurers figure out the secret of the *Coin*, their former employer at the Thieves' Guild turns on them, looking to seize the power of the *Lucky Coin* for himself. When that guild is defeated, the guildmaster accidentally spills the beans about the artifact to the agent of an enemy nation. Soon, several nations are sending assassins after the heroes for the *Coin* they might love to give up! The only way to get themselves out of the crossfire is to figure out how to destroy the *Coin* once and for all.

Finders, Keepers

The heroes learn of an artifact of unparalleled power residing in a nearby crypt, but after a lengthy exploration they find only a room filled with cheap copper coins. Unknown to them, the *Lucky Coin* is hidden in the hoard. As the trip back to the nearest town is more than a day's journey, one of the adventurers accidentally bonds with the *Coin*, finding his luck suddenly improving. The hero soon learns to push luck in a later encounter, but never suspecting the lone copper coin — because when he tries to cash in his copper, the one coin always manages to sneak back into his purse. It might take the rest of an unrelated series of adventures before he finally figures out why powerful monsters keep attacking him, by which time he's probably ready to try to rid himself of the blasted thing.

Destroying the Lucky Coin

Because the *Coin* always returns to a previous owner, there are only two surefire ways to rid oneself of the *Lucky Coin* forever: destroy it, or remain dead. Most adventurers opt for the former method. Thus, a few theories have arisen on how one would actually destroy the *Lucky Coin*.

• Losing the *Coin* in a game of chance would, in theory, break its power. But only deific interference can prevent

the bearer from winning if he uses the *Coin* as part of his bet. So the obvious solution is that the *Coin*-bearer must play a game of chance with a god — and lose. Unfortunately, the gods tend to like betting with things like one's immortal soul.

• Flipping the *Coin* into a bona fide wishing well should destroy the *Coin*, as it is consumed by the power of the well. Of course, such a well is likely hard to find and well-guarded by creatures of myth. But, as a bonus, the character who actually succeeds gets a *wish* out of the deal.

• Finally, invoking and surviving 101 Really Bad Things is said to overload the *Coin*'s karmic aura and cause it to explode in a shower of golden sparkles.

New Prestige Class

A player whose character is the bearer of the *Coin* for any significant period may find that she identifies her character more with the artifact's unique power and curse than anything else. If a character wishes to make the "lucky" nature of her character permanent beyond the amount of time the *Lucky Coin* is destined to be a part of the campaign, the DM might allow her to take levels in the lucky bastard prestige class. When the *Coin* is lost/destroyed/otherwise removed from the plot, the character can continue being the "lucky one" for the remainder of her career.

Lucky Bastard

Many people have found the *Lucky Coin* and used its powers to influence their lives, but few have survived for very long. Fewer still actually relish the danger that the *Coin* brings into their lives. Those that do may have been inherently blessed by the powers of luck, even if they never knew it until they encountered the *Lucky Coin*. With so many adventurers dying to the *Coin*'s curse, it can be said that anyone who can wield its power for an extended period must truly be a lucky bastard.

Hit Dice: d6

Requirements

To qualify to become a lucky bastard, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Feats: Any feat that adds a bonus to any saving throw.

Skills: Bluff 6 ranks, Sleight of Hand 6 ranks, Profession (gambler) 2 ranks.

Special: Must have used the *Lucky Coin* artifact to "push luck" at least 30 times.

Class Skills

The lucky bastard's class skills (and the key ability score for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (gambler) (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: You gain no proficiency with any weapons or armor.

Gamblin' Man (Ex): Whenever participating in any game of chance, the power of luck that surrounds you makes you twice as likely to win. In order to simulate this, whenever you participate in such a game, you get two chances to play for one bet. If the game is dice-based, roll twice and take the better result. If the games is card-based, you are dealt two hands that you play separately, eventually winning or losing based on the better hand. Likewise, if the game is a test of skill or ability, make two checks and take the better.

If the lucky bastard uses the *Lucky Coin* as part of his ante for a bet, its powers take precedence over this ability.

Luck Be a Lady (Ex): You seem to coast by on your charm and fortune, escaping from situations in which less fortunate souls would perish. You may add either your Charisma bonus or your levels in the lucky bastard class — whichever is lower — as a competence bonus to your Armor Class.

I've Seen Worse (Ex): Having lived through at

The Lucky Bastard

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+2	+2	Gamblin' Man, Luck Be a Lady
2	+1	+3	+3	+3	I've Seen Worse, Lucky Shot
3	+2	+3	+3	+3	Make Your Own Luck

least one Really Bad Thing, you are blasé about danger. You become immune to fear.

Lucky Shot (Ex): Whenever you score a threat with a weapon, add +6 to your attack roll to confirm that threat as a critical hit.

Make Your Own Luck (Ex): A little of the *Lucky Coin*'s power rubs off on you. Once per day, you can reroll one roll that you have just made before knowing whether the roll results in success or failure. You must take the result of the reroll, even if it's worse than the original roll.

If you possess the *Lucky Coin*, you may instead use this ability to "push luck" once per day without making a check to see if something Really Bad happens.

Masks of the Gods

By Anthony Pryor

The Tale of the Masks of the Gods

The gods are identified by portfolio throughout this entry, but DMs should feel free to adapt or completely change these gods and events, to better fit the mythology of the campaign.

It is said that in the distant past, the gods walked among mortals. In order to shield their identities, allowing the gods to observe mortals in their normal state, the gods wore powerful, magical *Masks* that disguised them and suppressed their divine nature. From time to time, a god would allow a mortal follower to wear one of these *Masks*, but in the end always took them back.

It came to pass, however, that war and conflict shook the planes, and in the chaos and confusion that followed, the *Masks of the Gods* were lost. They eventually found their way to the mortal realm, where they remain to this day, turning up in the hands of master thieves, ruthless kings, bloodthirsty generals and notorious courtesans.

As for the gods themselves, the conflict that took the *Masks* away also cut all but the most tenuous ties to the items, and they remain only vaguely aware that the *Masks* still exist. As to their location and use, even the gods themselves do not know. Should a *Mask*'s location be revealed, however, the gods are certain to dispatch their agents to retrieve it or, in extreme cases, appear in the form of an avatar. For this reason, owners of the *Masks* are quite circumspect about them, and do their best not to reveal their existence. This often proves difficult, as the powers that the artifacts provide frequently make the owners famous (or infamous).

Studying the Masks of the Gods

Outwardly the *Masks* themselves seem relatively simple items, albeit beautiful and well-crafted. There are eight known *Masks*, though DMs can create more. All of the *Masks* radiate strong enchantment magic. When donned, the *Masks* vanish and the wearer's face is visible, modified as described by the powers of the *Masks*. If the wearer is slain, the *Mask* again becomes visible.

Mask of War: This *Mask*, worn by the god of war and battle, resembles the face-plate of a full helmet crafted into a demonic visage. The wearer's visage grows more fierce and harsh when wearing the *Mask*, and his eyes gain a grim and steely cast.

Mask of Love: The love goddess' *Mask* resembles an androgynous face that radiates health and beauty. As might be expected, the wearer seems far more beautiful, charismatic and attractive after donning the *Mask*.

Mask of the Trickster: The trickster-god's *Mask* could be mistaken for the image of a jester or clown, topped by a three-horned foolscap. The *Mask*'s wearer takes on an

Researching the Masks of the Gods

There are many tales of the *Masks of the Gods*, though they are usually hidden in another tale ("And so, wearing the guise of a mortal, the god of war ventured to the mortal realm"). Skills such as Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (history) and general Bardic Knowledge can be used to learn more about the *Masks* and their powers.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	In ancient days, the gods had *Masks* they used to pass as mortals.
20	Each of the gods had a *Mask*, and sometimes lent them to mortals.
25	The *Masks* had great power and could enhance the powers of the user in a fashion appropriate to each god. (The war god's *Mask* enhanced the user's strength and martial prowess, the trickster's *Mask* made a character more stealthy and glib, the love goddess' *Mask* improved a wearer's beauty and seductiveness, etc.) They are said to be lost, and not even the gods know their location.
30+	The character has heard some legend or rumor suggesting the possible location of one of the *Masks*. Similarly, the character has heard a rumor suggesting some means of destroying the *Masks*, but even at this level of success, such rumors are wrong about half the time.

Many false stories also circulate about the *Masks*, some of which may be obtained on failed Knowledge checks, including:

- The *Masks* transform the wearer into the god's avatar.
- The wearer is cursed to be under the god's control.
- Eventually the wearer himself becomes a god.
- Once donned, the *Masks* cannot be removed.

expression of impishness and joy, with the faintest hint of cruelty and vindictiveness.

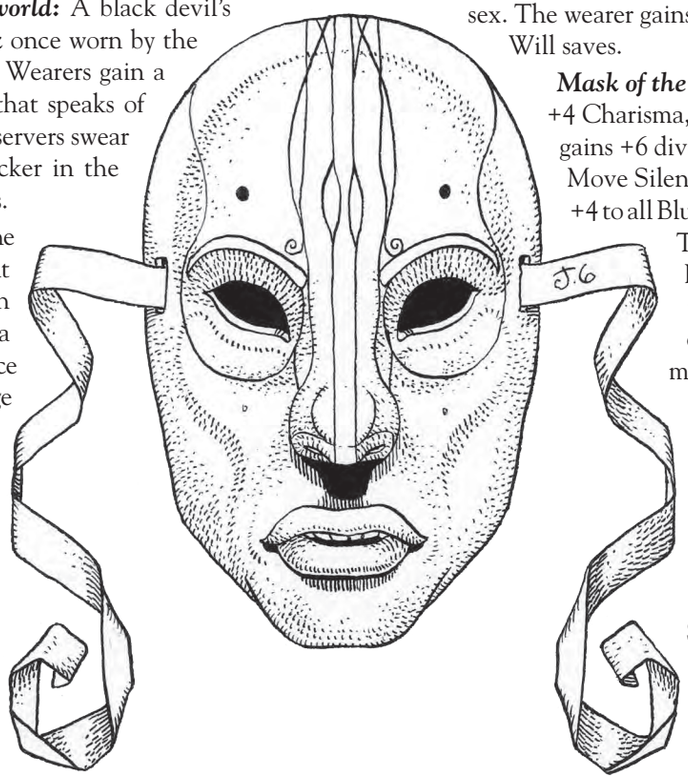
Mask of the Judge: This is the simplest of the *Masks*: a mere white expressionless visage. Borne by the god of law and justice, the *Mask* gives its wearer an impartial and unreadable expression.

Mask of the Wild: Bright green and decorated with elaborate vines, brightly-colored images of animals and birds, the nature-god's *Mask* is surely the most colorful. Those wearing it gain a look of robust good health and a wary but confident expression.

Mask of the Wise: The goddess of wisdom's *Mask* bears a face with a sage and comforting expression, and anyone who wears it gains an air of confidence and certainty, their expression oddly reassuring to look at.

Mask of the Underworld: A black devil's face decorates the *Mask* once worn by the lord of the underworld. Wearers gain a frightening expression that speaks of evil and cruelty, and observers swear that dark red flames flicker in the depths of a wearer's eyes.

Mask of the Oceans: The sea god's *Mask* is iridescent blue-green, decorated with seaweed and images of sea creatures. The wearer's face does not normally change substantially, but when at sea, the wearer gains an expression of love and certainty, and her eyes change to the blue of deep water.



Powers of the Masks of the Gods

Each of the *Masks* bears some of the essence of the deity who once wore it. Each enhances the wearer's abilities and automatically grants powers associated with the god and its portfolios. Activated powers are especially potent versions of the god's abilities.

Using the Masks of the Gods

As noted, the *Masks* are worn in the normal fashion, but vanish when put on, leaving the wearer's features slightly changed depending upon the *Mask*. These changes are obvious to those who have seen the wearer without the *Mask*, but those who do not know that the *Mask* is being worn normally don't see anything out of the ordinary, beyond perceived flashes of light in the wearer's eyes, or a confident and reassuring or especially terrifying visage.

Constant Powers

Each of the *Masks* has constant powers that function as long as they are worn.

Mask of War: +6 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 Charisma. Wearer gains a +6 divine bonus to all Intimidate checks, and a +4 divine bonus to all Knowledge and Profession checks dealing with war and military matters. The Wearer gains a +2 divine bonus to AC.

Mask of Love: +6 Charisma, +4 Constitution, +2 Dexterity. Wearer gains a +6 divine bonus to all Bluff, Diplomacy and Perform checks. This bonus rises to +10 when rolling against members of the opposite (or preferred) sex. The wearer gains a +4 divine bonus to all Will saves.

Mask of the Trickster: +6 Dexterity, +4 Charisma, +2 Intelligence. Wearer gains +6 divine bonus to all Disguise, Move Silently and Hide checks, and +4 to all Bluff and Diplomacy checks. The bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy rises to +8 if the wearer is lying or otherwise attempting to make his target believe a falsehood.

Mask of the Judge: +6 Wisdom, +4 Intelligence, +2 Charisma. Wearer gains +6 divine bonus to all Diplomacy, Gather Information and Sense Motive checks and +4 divine bonus to all Will saves.

Mask of the Wild: +6 Dexterity, +4 Wisdom, +2 Constitution. Wearer gains +6 divine bonus to all Jump, Swim and Survival checks and +4 divine bonus to all Fortitude saves.

Mask of the Wise: +6 Wisdom, +4 Charisma, +2 Intelligence. Wearer gains a +6 divine bonus to all Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge and Sense Motive checks. Wearer may make Bardic Knowledge checks as a bard of half his character level.

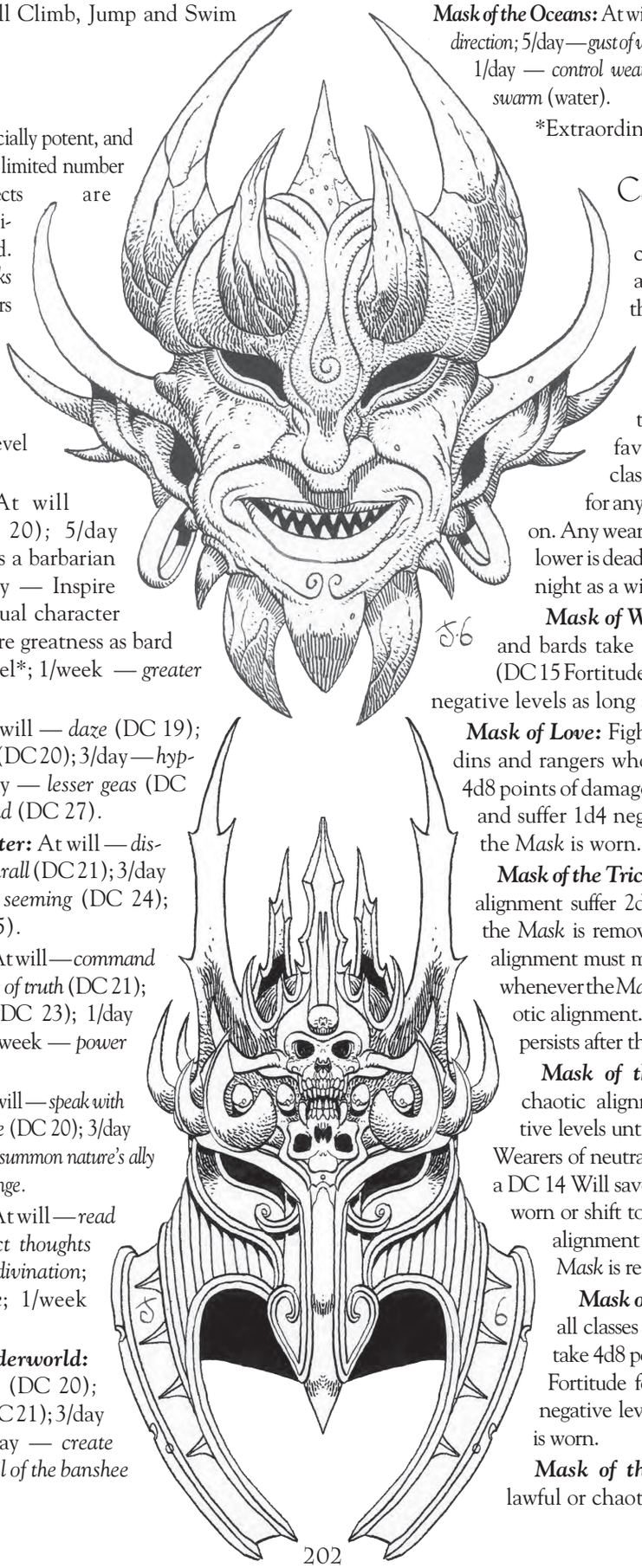
Mask of the Underworld: +6 Constitution, +4 Charisma, +2 Strength. Wearer gains +8 divine bonus to all Intimidate and Sense Motive checks.

Mask of the Oceans: +6 Constitution, +4 Wisdom, +2 Strength. Wearer gains +8 divine bonus to all Knowledge and Profession checks dealing with the sea and ships, and

+6 divine bonus to all Climb, Jump and Swim checks.

Activated Powers

These powers are especially potent, and most can only be used a limited number of times per day. All effects are considered spell-like abilities save where noted. Excessive wear of the *Masks* and use of these powers can also have negative consequences for the wearer, as explained below. All these abilities function at a caster level of 17.



Mask of War: At will — *cause fear* (DC 20); 5/day — Wearer can rage as a barbarian of equal level*; 3/day — Inspire courage as bard of equal character level*; 1/day — Inspire greatness as bard of equal character level*; 1/week — *greater shout* (DC 27).

Mask of Love: At will — *daze* (DC 19); 5/day — *charm person* (DC 20); 3/day — *hypnotism* (DC 20); 1/day — *lesser geas* (DC 23); 1/week — *demand* (DC 27).

Mask of the Trickster: At will — *disguise self*; 5/day — *enthrall* (DC 21); 3/day — *glibness*; 1/day — *seeming* (DC 24); 1/week — *veil* (DC 25).

Mask of the Judge: At will — *command* (DC 19); 5/day — *zone of truth* (DC 21); 3/day — *discern lies* (DC 23); 1/day — *power word stun*; 1/week — *power word kill*.

Mask of the Wild: At will — *speak with animals*; 5/day — *entangle* (DC 20); 3/day — *plant growth*; 1/day — *summon nature's ally VIII*; 1/week — *shapechange*.

Mask of the Wise: At will — *read magic*; 5/day — *detect thoughts* (DC 21); 3/day — *divination*; 1/day — *legend lore*; 1/week — *foresight*.

Mask of the Underworld: At will — *cause fear* (DC 20); 5/day — *death knell* (DC 21); 3/day — *animate dead*; 1/day — *create undead*; 1/week — *wail of the banshee* (DC 28).

Mask of the Oceans: At will — *water breathing, know direction*; 5/day — *gust of wind*; 3/day — *control water*; 1/day — *control weather*; 1/week — *elemental swarm* (water).

*Extraordinary ability.

Consequences

As were the gods who created them, the *Masks* are all closely tied to their portfolios and alignments. Consequently, they are rather particular about who wears them. Each *Mask* has favored alignments and classes, and cause problems for anyone else who tries them on. Any wearer reduced to 0 levels or lower is dead, and rises the following night as a wight.

Mask of War: Wizards, sorcerers and bards take 5d8 points of damage (DC 15 Fortitude for half) and suffer 1d4 negative levels as long as the *Mask* is worn.

Mask of Love: Fighters, barbarians, paladins and rangers who wear this *Mask* take 4d8 points of damage (DC 14 Will for half) and suffer 1d4 negative levels as long as the *Mask* is worn.

Mask of the Trickster: Wearers of lawful alignment suffer 2d4 negative levels until the *Mask* is removed. Wearers of neutral alignment must make a DC 14 Will save whenever the *Mask* is worn or shift to chaotic alignment. The alignment change persists after the *Mask* is removed.

Mask of the Judge: Wearers of chaotic alignment suffer 2d4 negative levels until the *Mask* is removed. Wearers of neutral alignment must make a DC 14 Will save whenever the *Mask* is worn or shift to lawful alignment. The alignment change persists after the *Mask* is removed.

Mask of the Wild: Members of all classes save rangers and druids take 4d8 points of damage (DC 12 Fortitude for half) and suffer 1d4 negative levels as long as the *Mask* is worn.

Mask of the Wise: Wearers of lawful or chaotic alignment take 6d8

points of damage (DC 13 Will for half) and suffer 2d4 negative levels until the *Mask* is removed.

Mask of the Underworld: Wearers of good alignment suffer 2d4 negative levels until the *Mask* is removed. Wearers of neutral alignment must make a DC 14 Will save whenever the *Mask* is worn or shift to evil alignment. The alignment change persists after the *Mask* is removed.

Mask of the Oceans: Wearers of good or evil alignment take 6d8 points of damage (DC 13 Will for half) and suffer 2d4 negative levels until the *Mask* is removed.

Regrettably for those who find the *Masks of the Gods*, their blessings are usually short-lived. Even though most users endeavor to keep their *Masks* a secret, rumors and stories eventually filter out, and owners are often besieged by those who would steal the *Masks* for themselves. Not only mortals take an interest in the *Masks*; outsiders and even other gods might want to have these items. And, if they are still around in your campaign, the gods who originally owned the *Masks* want them back and stop at nothing to secure their return.

It is said that a *Mask of the Gods* inevitably brings about its wearer's downfall. While this may not always be true, it is an undeniable fact that no one has ever kept one for more than a few years. Owners seem cursed to be slain, to lose their *Masks*, or to have them stolen. The *Masks*, it seems, retain some elements of their creator's consciousness, and seek always to return to the gods who once wore them. If a player character obtains a *Mask*, it is unlikely that she can keep it for long. In the end, the character may end up facing the trouble that she created without the powers of the *Mask* to help her.

Using the Masks of the Gods in a Campaign

Masks of the Gods most often end up in the hands of movers and shakers in the mortal world. An infamous criminal may obtain the *Mask of the Trickster*, a diplomat uses the powers of the *Mask of the Wise*, a wilderness scout wears the *Mask of the Wild*. Even if these individuals succeed in keeping their *Mask* a secret (no mean feat), they invariably attract attention, along with followers and rivals. In the end, as noted above, they are victims of the powers that the *Mask* grants.

A *Mask* is most likely encountered in the hands of a powerful NPC; they are rarely found without an owner or in a normal horde of treasure. Invariably, the adventurers cross paths with this NPC, and in the end may discover his or her secret. Either the NPC eventually loses the *Mask* and face the consequences, or the PCs end up with it in their possession through theft, inheritance, purchase, or spoils of conflict.

A PC who uses a *Mask of the Gods* likely follows the same path. Though powerful, the *Mask* buys more trouble than the PCs bargained for, as the character's notoriety draws followers, admirers and those who wish to use the character's power for their own ends. Eventually, the secret is discovered, and the PC is pursued by those who want to take the *Mask* for themselves. In the end, one of the gods may even appear and demand the *Mask*'s return, a request that an ordinary player character would be well advised to obey.

Adventure Seeds

The Master

The PCs become friends or guardians of an especially respected scholar, educator or diplomat. His wisdom is enormous, and he is known far and wide for his sage words and advice. Of course, he wears the *Mask of the Wise*, but the wisdom that it brings also makes the PCs' patron understand how foolish it is to rely on such a thing. He voluntarily gives up the *Mask*, giving it to his favored pupil, and bids him use it to learn more of the world and himself. Either this individual is one of the PCs, or someone the PCs would feel inclined to accompany and protect.

The General

The PCs are involved in the final battle against an infamous tyrant or conqueror. In typical heroic fashion, they strike down their foe in a titanic final battle. When the tyrant is slain, the *Mask of War* falls from his face, and the PCs must decide what to do with it. They may decide to destroy it and prevent it from ever being used again, or one of the more ambitious of the party may choose to take it as his own, possibly setting out on his own road of war and conquest. In this case, the PCs who were once his friends may become his deadly enemies.

War of the *Masks*

This is an entire campaign in the mold of such fantasy epics as *The Book of Swords* by Fred Saberhagen. The *Masks* are scattered across the world, but slowly they are being discovered, and ambitious individuals are using them to gain greater power and influence. The PCs are recruited by a cabal of scholars, priests or wizards who see the dangers of the *Masks*, and ask them to hunt down their owners and take the *Masks* away. The *Masks* can then be locked away, destroyed or returned to the gods. The temptations here are obvious, for the PCs themselves may end up taking the *Masks* and using them, to their patrons' dismay. Or they may remain steadfast, finding each of the *Masks* and battling their increasingly-powerful owners. In the end, the gods may intervene themselves, now that their lost *Masks* are at last found again.

Destroying the Masks of the Gods

The *Masks* don't look terribly sturdy, but any attempt to destroy them shows them to be all but indestructible. There are two known ways of destroying the *Masks*; there may be others, but the gods and sages remain silent on this point.

• *Masks* that cause damage to individuals of a given alignment can be destroyed if they are placed on the face of an outsider of that alignment that has 20 or more Hit Dice. The outsider still takes any damage listed and, although this isn't likely to harm an outsider of that power, they are nevertheless loathe to take damage at the whim of a mere mortal. *Masks* that do no alignment-based damage can be destroyed if placed on the face of any outsider with 24 or more hit dice.

• A *Mask* can be destroyed if it simultaneously takes 100 or more points of damage from each energy type (acid, cold, electricity, fire and sonic).

New NPC

The *Mask of the Trickster* is presently in the hands of a deadly person indeed. The woman known as Mortyra Hellshadow was born with the deck stacked against her — the product of an unwilling union between a half-drow mother and a demon father, she spent her earliest years on the streets until finally being seized by the authorities and sold into slavery. As a young woman, Mortyra became the pleasure slave of the master of the city's largest thieves' guild. The guildmaster owned a mysterious *Mask* that he used to enhance his abilities and keep ahead of rival guilds. One night as he slept, Mortyra slew her master with a poisoned dagger and took the *Mask* for herself. Soon she was leader of the great guild, and had become one of the most infamous and deadly assassins in the land.

Today, Mortyra continues to rule over the guild, a legendary thief, ruthless assassin and irresistible seductress even without the benefit of the *Mask of the Trickster*. Mortyra is no fool; she knows the story of the *Masks* and that one day it will be lost to her, and has prepared other options for herself should the *Mask* disappear, including escape routes, safe houses, and guilds in other cities. In the meantime, however, the *Mask* enhances the dangerous skills that she already has, and helps her rule the guild with an iron fist.

Mortyra Hellshadow

Female Half-Fiend Half-Elf Rogue 8/Duelist 4/Assassin 4

Medium Outsider (augmented half-elf)

Hit Dice:	12d6+12 plus 4d10+4 (82 hp)
Initiative:	+15 (+9 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative, +2 Improved Reaction)
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (average)
Armor Class:	30 (+9 Dex, +5 natural, +2 deflection, +4 canny defense), touch 25, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple:	+13/+17
Attack:	Claw +17 melee (1d4+4) or *rapier of puncturing* +19 melee (1d6+6/18–20) or *assassin's dagger* +19 melee (1d4+2/19–20) or masterwork heavy crossbow +25 ranged (1d10/19–20)
Full Attack:	2 claws +17 melee (1d4+4) and bite +12 melee (1d6+2); or *rapier of puncturing* +19/+14/+9 (1d6+6) and bite +12 melee (1d6+2); or *assassin's dagger* +19/+14/+9 (1d4+6) and bite +12 melee (1d6+2); or masterwork heavy crossbow +25 ranged (1d10/19–20)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Death attack, smite good, sneak attack +6d6
Special Qualities:	Canny defense, darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/magic, enhanced mobility, evasion, immune to poison, improved reaction +2, improved uncanny dodge, poison use, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, +2 save vs. poison, smite good, spells, spell-like abilities, trap sense +2, trapfinding
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +27, Will +7
Abilities:	Str 18, Dex 28 (22 without *Mask*), Con 12, Int 19 (17 without *Mask*), Wis 16, Cha 26 (22 without *Mask*)
Skills:	Appraise +6, Balance +23, Bluff +30 (+34 convince another of falsehood), Climb +23 (+25 ropes), Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +28 (+32 convince another of falsehood), Disguise +15 (+17 act in character), Escape Artist +9 (+11 ropes), Gather Information +12, Hide +33, Intimidate +24, Jump +6, Listen +16, Move Silently +38, Open Lock +15, Perform +14, Search +13, Sense Motive +13, Spot +4, Tumble +21, Use Magic Device +16, Use Rope +18
Feats:	Combat Reflexes, Deft Hands, Improved Initiative, Investigator, Lightning Reflexes
Challenge Rating:	20
Possessions:	*Amulet of natural armor +4, assassin's dagger, bag of holding III, boots of elvenkind, rapier of puncturing, ring of protection +2, ring of improved climbing,* masterwork heavy crossbow
Alignment:	Chaotic evil

Assassin Spells Known (4/2): 1st — feather fall, jump, sleep (DC 19), true strike; 2nd — alter self, cat's grace, invisibility.

Spell-like Abilities (half-fiend): 3/day — darkness, poison (21), unholy aura (DC 26); 1/day — blasphemy (DC 25), contagion (DC 21), desecrate, horrid wilting (DC 26), unhallow, unholy blight (DC 22).

Spell-like Abilities (Mask): At will — disguise self; 5/day — enthrall; 3/day — glibness; 1/day — seeming; 1/week — veil.

Orb of the Wight

By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of the Orb of the Wight

Bored by centuries of magical study and unlife as a lich, Ellir Jarville used his powers to carve out a small kingdom. While this contented the lich, at least for a time, neighboring countries viewed his rule as an evil enigma and constant threat. Frequent attempts to thwart his rule and foment rebellion drove King Jarville to do exactly what those around him feared. He began by attacking the smallest neighboring kingdom using an army of both undead and living troops. The swiftness of the battle and great power of his magic in support of his armies stunned everyone.

Alas, his new territories made him even more powerful, and the surrounding nation-states vacillated between negotiating with him, and trying to determine his next step. While they spied on his domain, their fear grew to the point that several nations began to negotiate with each other and build their armies in an effort to stand against Ellir.

Ellir, a brilliant necromancer with centuries of experience, swiftly recognized his armies and territories were too small to compete with the combined might of those around him. While his undead armies didn't need to be fed, they weren't large and could be dismantled if the proper powers were brought to bear. Using one of the wights in his thrall as a subject, Ellir began a series of experiments designed to create an item to help support his armies in the battles he knew would soon come.

In fact, the first attacks occurred shortly before the *Orb of the Wight* was completed. The battle ended in a stalemate, with the remains of undead soldiers and corpses of living troops scattered across the battlefield. The final effort to create the *Orb* came at midnight that fateful night when Ellir made a connection between the artifact and the Negative Energy Plane while standing in the center of the desolate battlefield. Corpses rose as negative energy washed over the field, and the opposing army fled in the face of their own dead companions.

The long hours of work, the spells Ellir poured into the *Orb*, and the direct connection to the Negative Energy Plane finally created a potent item capable of supporting Ellir's armies in the face of almost any combat. His undead creatures could now fight in broad daylight, and opposing clerics rapidly discovered that their spells and abilities had little effect against even the lowliest of his undead soldiers. In addition to the ability to cloak undead from the effects of the sun, Ellir could also raise the fallen soldiers of his enemies to fight their comrades. The effect on morale alone allowed Ellir to conquer a wide swath of land before being opposed in the final Battle of the Orb.

Now faced by some of the holiest paladins and clerics, many possessing potent magic and artifacts of their own, Ellir found himself stopped. The *Orb's* great powers were finally matched as Lord Oakwhite brought the great weapon *Ghost Reaver* into play. As undead minions fell to the spear, Lord Oakwhite finally reached Ellir to engage him in battle, a short-lived combat ending in a disastrous explosion of magic energy as the two artifacts met. The *Orb* and shortspear were cast into the outer planes, while the blast destroyed Ellir, Lord Oakwhite, and a majority of both the undead and living troops nearby.

The *Orb of the Wight* has not been seen again, but many dark necromancers and liches still seek it out. It is said the *Orb* and *Ghost Reaver* are now linked. If one returns to the Material Plane the other, so it is said, is sure to follow. Ellir Jarvile has also remained missing, despite the fact that his phylactery was never found or destroyed.

Studying the Orb of the Wight

Although the roughly spherical, yellow-white form does not appear particularly impressive, it gives off a palpable aura of magic and seems to have an authority of its own. The *Orb* appears to be constructed from melted bone that was somehow heated to extreme temperatures before being bent and fused together into an imperfect, yet smooth ball. Purple lines of energy pulse along the exterior of the ivory *Orb* lending it an ominous air that matches the physical sensation of evil it exudes.

The evil and magical nature of the *Orb of the Wight* is unmistakable to even the simplest commoner. Those spell casters determined to subject the *Orb* to direct scrutiny using divination spells are certain to regret it. The magical nature of the *Orb* is so powerful that using *detect magic*, *arcane sight* or similar spells to study the *Orb* instantly renders one unconscious for 2d4 hours if a DC 35 Fortitude save is failed. Those succeeding are still stunned for 2d4 rounds. Viewing the *Orb* with an



active *detect evil* spell can render one nauseous (DC 25 Fortitude save to resist) for 2d4 rounds.

Powers of the Orb of the Wight

Rumored to cloak the sun and bring darkness to the land, the *Orb of the Wight's* powers are indeed great, though perhaps not quite all-powerful. Undead within range of the *Orb* are protected against negative effects from normal sunlight as well as bright, magical light. The *Orb* does not block the light, it simply renders the undead nearby immune to it. Nearby undead are also immune to turning attempts as the *Orb's* negative energy helps bolster and protect them. The *Orb of the Wight* grants its user increased abilities to create, summon, and control undead of all types

Using the Orb of the Wight

Cloaked in negative energy, the *Orb of the Wight* is so innately evil that only an evil creature can touch it. A good or neutral creature so much as touching the *Orb* must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be struck unconscious for 1d4 hours. Whether or not the save succeeds, they receive 2 negative levels (DC 22 to remove). Evil living creatures do suffer a certain amount of pain and discomfort while holding it, as they become cloaked in negative energy and find themselves unable to heal naturally or magically while holding the *Orb*, or for a period of 1 hour after putting it down. Undead suffer no ill effects at all while holding the *Orb* and gain some additional benefits (see below).

The *Orb* itself is an item of chaos and evil and cares not who uses it, so long as it gets used. It aches to be used for evil, and to create further connections to the Negative Energy Plane. It gladly communicates its abilities to anyone evil enough to withstand holding it. Activating any of its special powers and spells requires a standard action while the user focuses their concentration on the artifact. Spells or abilities normally requiring more or less time to activate still require a standard action.

Constant Powers

The *Orb of the Wight* has several constant powers that are in effect whether or not it is actively being held. It exudes such a powerful aura of negative energy that undead within a 200-ft. radius are immune to any and all turning effects as well as any negative effects or damage from sunlight or bright light of any type.

If the *Orb* is held, it grants the wielder a touch attack inflicting one negative level (DC 25 Fortitude save to

Researching the Orb of the Wight

Very little is known about the *Orb*, or exactly how Ellir Jarvile created it. Certain powerful necromancers have heard about it and some of its powers, but they are unlikely to part with such information. Several groups of paladins and good clerics have some information on the *Orb*, but most of that information involves its use in the Battle of the Orb. Bardic colleges and well-traveled bards might possess some information, but even this information is sketchy. A library with sufficiently old historical texts might also provide a limited amount of information. A Bardic Knowledge, Knowledge (history) or Gather Information check might provide some of the information listed below.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	The *Orb of the Wight* was created by a lich and was destroyed in the Battle of the Orb.
20	The *Orb of the Wight* could create and control undead.
25	Created by a powerful lich to support his army, the *Orb of the Wight* allowed undead to walk in sunlight and protected them from clerics. Good or neutral creatures can be slain by the *Orb* if they simply touch it.
30	The *Orb of the Wight* still exists, but is lost on another plane. If it is returned to the world evil shall again rise.

While the evil of the *Orb* is well known, exactly what happened in the Battle of the Orb remains unclear to most. Any check that does not exceed DC 25 leaves the PCs believing that it has been destroyed. Particularly in-depth research is required to determine that it still exists, usually requiring the use of powerful divination spells.

Trying to locate the *Orb of the Wight* requires high-level divination magic such as a *vision* or *discern location* spell. The *Orb* is so powerful that these spells only give spotty information, such as the general plane of existence that it might be located on, but not exactly where on the plane it might be. A caster using any divination magic in an attempt to locate the *Orb* must pass a DC 35 caster level check to receive even this vague information.

remove). Energy drained from the victim is transferred to the *Orb*, not the wielder. In addition, the *Orb of the Wight* grants its wielder a +4 Dodge bonus to AC. Anyone holding the *Orb* gains the ability to rebuke undead as a cleric of half his total hit dice. If he already has levels of cleric (or another class able to rebuke undead), these levels stack. Thus, a 15th-level evil cleric holding the *Orb* rebukes undead as a 22nd-level cleric. Undead creatures holding the *Orb* gain regeneration 5 as an additional benefit granted by its powerful aura of negative energy.

Activated Powers

Originally designed by Ellir to be a renewing source of spells, the *Orb of the Wight* allows its wielder to cast a number of necromantic spells. While some of the spells can only be cast a limited number of times each day, the *Orb's* connection to the Negative Energy Plane helps recharge it. The wielder can casts the following spells at caster level 20:

At will: *cause fear* (DC 19), *command undead* (DC 20), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 21), *scare* (DC 20).

5/day: *animate dead*, *blight* (DC 23), *contagion* (DC 22), *control undead* (DC 25), *create undead*, *enervation* (DC 22).

3/day: *circle of death* (DC 24), *create greater undead*, *finger of death* (DC 25).

1/day: *wail of the banshee* (DC 27).

In addition to the above powers, once each day the wielder can summon a nightwalker that serves faithfully for a period of 4 hours before disappearing.

Consequences

Anyone acquiring the *Orb of the Wight* and putting it to use soon attracts the attention of greater demons, devils, and even evil gods. It doesn't take long for these greater powers to make their "interest" known to the wielder and begin demanding fealty. Orcus, demon prince of undead, is certain to be one of the first to react. The wielder must tread carefully when making alliances, as he is almost certain to become involved in powerful battles not of his own design.

Living wielders drawing upon the great powers of the *Orb* begin a slow transformation into undead. Continued use of the *Orb of the Wight* slowly transforms a living creature into a free-willed vampire. This transformation begins during the first week, with an increased sensitivity to light and aversion to mirrors. After 1d3 months, the

wielder finds he requires raw meat, or even fresh blood, to continue feeling healthy. After six months of close contact with the *Orb*, a living creature falls into a coma-like sleep lasting for 12 hours after which he rises as a vampire with all of a vampire's special abilities and weaknesses.

Reactive Traits

The *Orb of the Wight's* close connection to the Negative Energy Plane feeds its many great powers, but also represents one of its few weaknesses. A successful *heal* spell cast directly on the *Orb* (the *Orb* uses the saving throw bonuses of its wielder or those of a 20th-level wizard, whichever is higher) severs its connection to the Negative Energy Plane for a period of 3d4 rounds. During this time none of the activated powers of the *Orb* work and all of its constant powers are suppressed. Unfortunately, the caster of the *heal* spell must make a DC 35 Will save or lose all remaining spell casting ability for a full 24 hours, in addition to the normal saves and penalties for touching the *Orb*.

Lesser healing and curative magic simply isn't powerful enough to overcome the *Orb's* connection to the Negative Energy Plane. Anyone attempting such spells still needs to make the same DC 35 Will save or lose all remaining spell casting ability for 24 hours.

All other magic, particularly necromantic magic, cast directly against the *Orb* appears to be either absorbed or negated as purple lights flicker across its surface.

Using the Orb of the Wight in a Campaign

The *Orb of the Wight* is an extremely powerful, evil item that should only be allowed into the hands of a reasonably high-level, responsible party of PCs. It is probably most effective when used as a foil to drive the adventure forward. In the hands of a powerful enemy it can lend a feeling of desperation and nervousness as the PCs must seek powerful artifacts to combat it, as well as knowledge of how they might destroy it before its wielder enslaves entire nations.

A wide-reaching campaign can be designed using both the *Orb of the Wight* and *Ghost Reaver*, as these are competing artifacts capable of destroying each other. Depending upon the campaign style, the most worthy goal of the PCs is the destruction of the *Orb* before it can be put to evil use. Evil PCs, however, might set out to find the *Orb* for their own nefarious plans.

Adventure Seeds

Destroy the *Orb*

A great necromancer — perhaps a new threat, or perhaps Ellir reformed — has set about to conquer the region. He has sent parties into the outer planes seeking to regain the *Orb of the Wight*, to serve as his ultimate weapon. As depression and outright terror strike the surrounding countries, the PCs are asked to seek out and destroy the *Orb* before their foe can acquire it.

This presumes the *Orb* is still lost. If it is lost in your world, make the PCs work to locate it, and work harder to acquire it. Force them to use a great deal of magic and research to track down the *Orb*, which could be on any plane, hidden in a lost dungeon, owned by a powerful creature, lost deep in a dark vault, or any combination of the above. If the *Orb* has been discovered, the PCs might need to protect it from the necromancer's forces while they attempt to discover a way to destroy it.

The Lich Rises

Ellir never reformed because the *Orb* is his phylactery and the massive explosion of energy cast it so far into the outer planes that it wasn't close enough to allow him to reform. Now that it has been rediscovered and returned to the world, he has reformed. His anger and rage drive him to seek out his *Orb* and reacquire it as he prepares a new army with which to turn the world into a wasteland.

The *Orb* could have been returned to the world by the PCs or by some other explorers. If the PCs possess the *Orb* they need to defend themselves from Ellir and his agents while seeking a way to destroy it. If another group or individual has it they must negotiate with them, trying to convince them of the *Orb*'s evil and the need for its destruction.

The Necromancer's Threat

A bold necromancer has finally recovered the *Orb* after spending years of her time researching it and traveling the planes searching. She, like Ellir, discovered her new power drove others to attack her before she could acquire greater strength. So far, the *Orb* has helped her protect her territory and grow in strength.

She claims to seek only peace for her own research and is using the power of the *Orb* to threaten the surrounding lords and barons into leaving her alone. The PCs can be involved either by her as she tries to convince them she is indeed striving for peace, or by the surrounding lords as they try negotiate a reasonable treaty while still seeking a way to acquire and destroy the *Orb*.

Destroying the Orb of the Wight

As a profoundly evil and powerful artifact, it is easy to see why any group of good-aligned PCs would want to destroy the *Orb of the Wight*. An item this powerful can't remain hidden or lost for very long, the only really safe way to eliminate its dark powers is to destroy it. The first method listed here is the one most easily predicted by sages, the other methods require further research and divination magic.

- The *Orb of the Wight* and *Ghost Reaver* are infused with such powerful opposing energies that they can destroy each other. If a single creature brings both of these artifacts into contact with each other on the Ethereal Plane, both artifacts are destroyed instantly

in a cataclysmic release of energy. When brought into contact by one or more creatures on the Material Plane, the same cataclysmic release of energy occurs, but both artifacts are transported to random locations in the outer planes.

• The *Orb of the Wight* gains much of its power from its connection with the Negative Energy Plane, so taking it to the Positive Energy Plane reduces its power. While there, it can be destroyed using a *wish*, *miracle*, or similar powerful spell. When destroyed in this manner there is a cataclysmic release of energy.

• There is a 1% chance that a *weapon of disruption* can destroy the *Orb* if used against it on the Ethereal Plane. Each strike with such a weapon causes a powerful release of energy, striking both the weapon being used and the wielder without a saving throw.

• As described above, a *heal* spell cast directly on the *Orb* (requiring a successful touch attack) severs the *Orb's* connection to the Negative Energy Plane for 3d4 rounds. During this time a *wish*, *miracle*, or *Morden's disjunction* spell can be used to destroy the *Orb*. Although the *Orb's* connection the Negative Energy Plane is severed, the innate energy it possesses is still sufficient to release a blast of energy when it is destroyed.

The *Orb of the Wight* has such a potent amount of negative energy that virtually every attempt to destroy or negate it requires the use of positive energy. Combining these two energy forms creates a cataclysmic explosion of energy crossing both the Material and Ethereal Planes. This wave of energy blasts outward to a radius of 60 feet, doing 40d6 points of force damage (DC 25 Fortitude save for half). Anyone holding the *Orb*, or a weapon used to strike the *Orb*, receives no saving throw.

New Template

An undead creature remaining in control of the *Orb of the Wight* for at least one full year obtains a powerful connection to the Negative Energy Plane, granting it far more power and making it more deadly than normal undead of its type. The following undead lord template can be applied to represent this increased power.

Living creatures must become undead before they can begin acquiring this template. It takes a full year of exposure to the *Orb* after becoming undead to be converted into an undead lord.

Sample Undead Lord

This example uses a 9th-level sorcerer lich as the base creature.

Ssiara, Female Lich Undead Lord, Sorcerer 9

Medium Undead

Hit Dice:	9d12 (hp 108)
Initiative:	+9
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	26 (+2 Dex, +10 natural, +2 armor, +2 deflection), touch 14, flat-footed 24
Base Attack/Grapple:	+4/+4
Attack:	Touch +4 melee (1d8+5 negative energy plus paralysis)
Full Attack:	Touch +4 melee (1d8+5 negative energy plus paralysis)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Spells, fear aura, gaze of horror, paralyzing touch
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 15/bludgeoning and magic, fast healing 5, immunity to cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting effects, turn resistance +8
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +8
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 14, Con –, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 24
Skills:	Bluff +19, Concentration +12 (+16 casting defensively), Diplomacy +9, Hide +10, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +10, Search +12, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +21, Spot +10
Feats:	Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (spellcraft)
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	12
Treasure:	*bracers of armor +2, ring of protection +2*
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	By character class

The figure shuffling forward might well be any old woman. Shrunken and gaunt, she might appear fragile wrapped in her silken robe, were her skin not cracked leather sticking to her bones, nor her eyes aglow with an unholy malice.

Sorcerer Spells Known (Cast per day; 6/8/8/8/5, save DC 17 + spell level): 0 — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st — *change self*, *comprehend languages*, *obscuring mist*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*; 2nd — *darkness*, *invisibility*, *see invisibility*, *scorching ray*; 3rd — *haste*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt*; 4th — *lesser globe of invulnerability*, *shout*.

Creating an Undead Lord

"Undead Lord" is an acquired template obtained through prolonged exposure to negative energy, most likely through possession and control of the *Orb of the Wight*. Obtaining this template requires the creature first be undead. An undead lord uses all of the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted below.

Hit Dice: Undead lords do not gain additional hit dice but they do receive the maximum number of hit points for each hit die they possess. This means that an undead with 5d12 HD has a total of 60 hit points.

Armor Class: An undead lord gains an additional +5 to its natural armor bonus.

Special Attacks: While undead lords retain all of the special attacks they possessed before, they gain the following additional attacks. Save DCs are equal to 10 + 1/2 the undead lord's HD + Cha modifier.

Fear Aura (Su): Negative energy cloaks the undead lord with such a dreadful aura of evil that living creatures of less than 5 HD within a 60-foot radius must succeed on a Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level equals the HD of the undead lord). A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same undead lord's aura for 24 hours. The undead lord can turn this power on and off at will as a free action.

Gaze of Horror (Su): Creatures within a 60-foot radius of an undead lord can be subjected to a special gaze attack. The undead lord must spend a standard action to stare directly into a living creature's eyes. The creature is allowed a Will save to resist the terrible horrors the undead lord plants into its mind. If the save is successful, that undead lord's *gaze of horror* cannot affect the creature for 24 hours. If the creature fails, horrible visions similar to that of a *phantasmal killer* spell assault them. A second Fortitude save must be made, if failed the creature dies from fear. Even if successful, the creature suffers 5d6 points of damage. This is a mind-affecting, fear effect for the purpose of protective spells and abilities.

Turn Resistance (Ex): An undead lord gains +4 turn resistance. If it already possess turn resistance, it increases by an additional +4.

Fast Healing (Ex): Its close connection to the Negative Energy Plane grants an undead lord fast healing 5. If the base creature already possesses fast healing, the two abilities do not stack; use the higher of the two values.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Intelligence +4, Charisma +4.

Challenge Rating: Same as base creature +1.

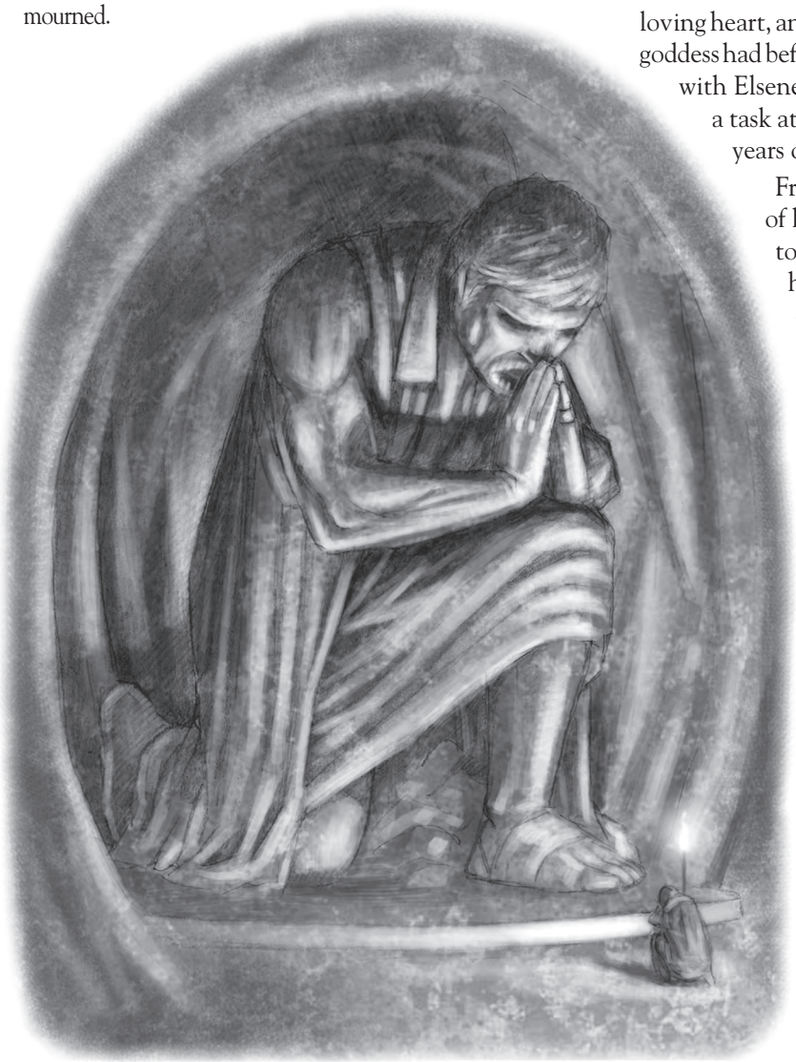
Level Adjustment: +4.

Petrified God

Rastiros
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of the Petrified God

Ages ago, the god Rastiros reigned at the head of a divine pantheon, watching over a nation whose name has been lost to history. (Some suggestion this nation was Arrendra, and that it was the absence of Rastiros in its later years that led to its destruction. See the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan*). While the pantheon boasted a god of the sun, of war, and all the others that seem so universal, Rastiros was the patron of the nation itself, a god of community and culture. He loved his mortal children as few other gods, took his greatest pleasures in their accomplishments. As their civilization flourished, he rejoiced; with its hardships, he mourned.



More than anything else, Rastiros loved to walk among his people, to experience their mortal lives. He would most frequently take on a mortal guise, but on occasion he would announce himself for who he was, and guide his children like a stern but loving father.

It was on one such sojourn that he met an elven maiden by the name of Elseneia.

Elseneia was not the greatest beauty of her community, though she was pretty enough. She was not the most devout, though she honored and revered her gods. She possessed a biting wit and a sharp tongue, and her manners were not refined. Yet Elseneia possessed a kind and loving heart, and she fascinated Rastiros like no mortal or goddess had before. Rastiros found himself utterly smitten with Elseneia. He set out to win her love in return, a task at which he succeeded, though it took him years of wooing.

From that moment forth, Rastiros spent most of his time in the mortal plane. He was wed to Elseneia — by a bewildered but greatly honored priest of his own temple — and dwelt with her as a mortal, departing only to deal with his divine duties when his emissaries and angels could not manage on their own. They produced several children; at Elseneia's request, Rastiros ensured that all of them grew up mortal, with no special powers or responsibilities imposed by their divine heritage. And for many a generation, they were happy together.

Yet not even a god can halt time's inexorable flow. As an elf, Elseneia possessed a lifespan measured in centuries, and Rastiros' own powers extended her life far beyond even that. Eventually, however, the day came where Elseneia closed her eyes in slumber, and never opened them again.

Rastiros was not concerned. He had spent many centuries dwelling with her in her world. Now he would ascend to meet with her in the afterlife, and she would dwell with him forever.

Researching the Petrified God

Only those well-versed in Knowledge (religion) likely know the entire history and capability of the *Petrified God*. Knowledge (arcana) can reveal the existence of the artifact — the information provided at DC 15 — but nothing else. (It cannot even provide the name of the god, as given at DC 10.) Bardic Knowledge can also provide the tale of Rastiros, particularly given its theme of lost love.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	Long ago, a god named Rastiros took mortal form to be with his lover, an elven maiden. Alas, when she died, her soul was lost to him, for she was consecrated to another god. Rastiros disappeared not long after.
15	A great statue, of some long-lost hero or god, is said to exist deep in a mountain cavern. Legend says it can perform almost any feat of magic, if the petitioner has sufficient faith.
20	The statue is enormous, too large to have been carved elsewhere and moved into the cavern. All who would access its power must spend hours, even days, in its presence.
25	The *Petrified God* is, in fact, the lost and grief-stricken god Rastiros, who transformed himself to unfeeling stone when he found himself unable to end his own divine existence. No known power, including the might of other gods, has ever proved able to reverse the effect.
30+	Prayers to the *Petrified God* do not always produce the intended result — especially if the petitioner is a cleric of some other god. (The character also knows one or more of the suggested methods of destruction, as described below.)

Many tales of Rastiros, or of the great statue, are filled with misinformation and supposition. Some of the most common falsehoods are included here.

- Excessive use of the *Petrified God* causes an eventual forced conversion to the worship of some mysterious power. (This is patently untrue. However, constant use of the artifact by a cleric or other divine caster *can* result in a loss of class abilities. This may be the source of the misconception.)
- Rastiros' beloved was taken by a deity of darkest evil, and now suffers eternal torment. If she could be rescued from her hell, she might rejoin Rastiros, who would certainly return from his petrified state. (While Elseneia may not be able to join her husband, she is not damned. She is simply consigned to the afterlife of a different deity in a different pantheon.)
- The power contained within the statue is transferable. A cleric can drain the power from it and carry it with him. (The power within the god is that of Rastiros, and cannot be taken. This misconception likely comes from the fact that any divine caster who spends substantial time near the statue gains certain temporary abilities.)

No mortal mind can comprehend his horror when he returned to his domain, and failed to locate his beloved's soul among its inhabitants.

For years, Rastiros searched the Material Plane, questioned his fellow gods, dispatched angels to investigate the farthest reaches of the multiverse. And at last, he found his answer.

Elseneia's grandparents had not been natives of the nation over Rastiros ruled, but immigrants from a distant land. They brought with them the worship of their own gods, never ceasing their practice, even though their children revered Rastiros and his brethren.

Unbeknownst to her own parents, or even to her, Elseneia's grandparents had, the very day of her birth, consecrated her soul to their own patron deity. All Elseneia had needed do was renounce him, and her soul would have been free to join Rastiros after death, but she had never done so, for she had never known she should.

These foreign gods were not evil; Elseneia was not damned to eternal hell, or any such thing. Neither, however, could she ever return to Rastiros, for he held no influence over another pantheon. To demand her soul could result in war amongst the gods themselves, and even had he been willing to take such a step, none of his fellow gods would stand with him.

Rastiros was beset with grief, a deep sorrow beyond what any mortal could bear. For years, he sought some means of regaining her soul, of rejoining his beloved wife, and for years he failed. His nation grew ugly and decadent, for his grief seeped into the souls of all his worshippers.

Finally, Rastiros knew he could not continue. He could not bear the notion of life without Elseneia, and he knew his constant grieving was harming his people, more so than even his absence would. He resolved that if he could not live with his beloved, he would not live at all.

It is, however, no simple matter to kill a god, even one who wishes to die. Try though he might, Rastiros could find no means of ending his life. He could inflict on himself no injury from which he could not recover. He found few foes potent enough to slay a god, and those who could were beings of such evil that he dared not grant them the power or influence such an act might bring.

In the end, Rastiros decided that if he could not die, he could at least slumber, rendering himself unthinking and unfeeling for all eternity. Under a mystic cloud, so thick that even his fellow gods could not find him, Rastiros ensconced himself in a cavern deep within a great mountain, and turned himself to stone.

Over the course of centuries, Rastiros was largely forgotten. Other gods rose to take his place, the tale of the deity who loved a mortal woman faded, even the nation over which he reigned vanished from the map. The great statue still stands, however, and the slumbering essence of a god still dwells within. Some few have found the great cavern through the years, and the tale of a sculpture with incredible powers has spread. It is said that for those who find the *Petrified God*, all things are possible.

Studying the Petrified God

The *Petrified God* appears to be a humanoid statue of enormous size, built within an enormous cavern in the heart of a great mountain. It kneels on one knee, head bowed in sorrow, hands clasped together as if in prayer to some power higher than even the gods. Even in this pose, it stands over 40 feet from top to bottom. The statue's left heel, protruding behind it, seems to meld with the rock wall of the cavern.

The figure represented appears to be a man of middle years, yet with the sculpted musculature of a warrior half that age. Its eyes are closed, its face lined with a thin beard, squared below the chin. It is clad in sandals, a kilt, and sleeveless robe. An ornate ring, with leaves and vines sculpted into it, adorns a finger of the left hand.

Anyone who enters the cavern of the *Petrified God* hears a noise, at the very edge of audible registers. It is difficult to make out, but careful concentration reveals it to be the sound of a distant weeping. The room, though bare of plant life save for a few vines and molds, smells faintly of flowers and baking bread.

The cavern itself is almost impossibly huge. It is roughly oval in shape, with the artifact standing at one of the narrow ends. It is over 1,000 feet in length, and slightly over half that in width at the center. The ceiling is uneven, ranging from 40 feet to 80 feet high. The cavern is filled with columns, stalactites, and stalagmites. Numerous small passages, at various heights, allow egress from the cavern, leading into various mysterious places in the underground. The cavern's largest entrance is directly opposite the statue.

Detect magic and similar spells reveal a blinding mystic aura, containing every school known; transmutation appears somewhat more potent than the others. *True seeing* reveals a figure of flesh in the same position as the statue.

Powers of the Petrified God

Even in his current state, Rastiros is still a god, still the source of unimaginable divine energies. During his reign, he was one of the most potent deities of his pantheon, and he has lost little of that power in his slumber. As a statue, Rastiros can provide substantial might to divine magics, and his unconscious will is capable of reshaping the world as directed by anyone who practices the proper rites and requests.

Using the Petrified God

Before it can be utilized, the *Petrified God* must be "awakened." Any use of divine energies within the cavern causes the artifact to become active. This includes the casting of any divine spell, or any use of an energy channeling ability — turn/rebuke undead, lay on hands, or the like — by a divine caster. If the *Petrified God* remains unused and untouched for 2d4 days, it returns to a dormant state and must be awakened again.

Once the statue is active, its constant powers function as described below. In order to evoke its spell-casting ability, however, the petitioner must spend substantial time in prayer and supplication to Rastiros. This requires at least six straight hours of prayer, and may take longer. This prayer must be constant; the supplicant cannot stop for more than a few moments at any given time, or he must begin again.

Once the prayer is complete, a flat 75% chance exists that the *Petrified God* functions as the supplicant desired. A divine caster who worships Rastiros gains a +10 bonus to this check, while a divine caster who worships any other deity suffers a –10 penalty. Powers that normally allow rerolling, such as the granted power of the Luck domain, cannot be used on this roll.

If the roll succeeds, the *Petrified God* produces the desired effect, as described under Activated Powers. If the roll fails, the supplicant instead suffers as described under Consequences, below.

Constant Powers

The *Petrified God*'s constant powers are active only when the statue has been "awakened," as described above.

Anyone who spends at least 24 hours in the statue's presence gains fast healing 5. This ability lasts as long the individual remains in the cavern, and for 3d4 hours afterward.

Any divine caster who spends at least 48 hours in the cavern of the *Petrified God* absorbs a small portion of its divine energy. The next 3d4 divine spells that character casts are automatically Maximized or Extended (character's choice). This energy fades after 6d4 hours if it has not already been expended.

Activated Powers

The *Petrified God* has only one true activated power, but it is potent indeed. With sufficient prayer, and a bit of luck, any petitioner can shape the artifact's divine energies to alter the world to his whim.

This takes the form of a *miracle* or *wish* spell, with a functional caster level of 30. If the petitioner requests a use of the *miracle/wish* that does not normally cost XP, the prayer time required is six hours, as described above. If the effect requested would normally require an XP expenditure, the required time doubles to 12 hours. In either case, the petitioner need not spend any of his own experience points.

Miracle and *wish* are truly potent abilities; with the proper wording, the *Petrified God* can produce truly amazing results. The strain on the petitioner is great, however, above and beyond the necessity of praying for many hours straight. Any individual who attempts a second such prayer within one year — whether or not the original one succeeded or failed — automatically suffers the results of a failed check (as described in Consequences, below).

The artifact grants only one *miracle* every three hours, regardless of how many people petition it. So long as this limitation is respected, more than one person may pray at once.

Consequences

The ability to grant *miracles* and *wishes* is a potent draw indeed. Normally, high-level casters cannot do so without giving of their own essence in the form of experience points, and most characters cannot do so at all. Thus, the *Petrified God* is arduously sought by those who know of it.

As always, however, a price must be paid when mortals attempt to meddle in the affairs of the divine. Rastiros' energies are unfocused, and no petitioner can be certain of controlling them. This leads to a chance of mishap any time someone attempts to use the artifact's greatest magics.

Should the dice indicate that the *miracle* goes awry, the supplicant suffers one or more of the following effects. The DM should roll percentile dice and consult the following table.

Petrified God Mishaps

Roll	Result
01–05	Suffer 2 points of Strength drain.
06–10	Suffer 2 points of Dexterity drain.
11–15	Suffer 2 points of Constitution drain.
16–20	Suffer 2 points of Intelligence drain.
21–25	Suffer 2 points of Wisdom drain.
26–30	Suffer 2 points of Charisma drain.
31–35	Lose one level.
36–40	Lose 1d3 most valuable magic items.
41–50	Suffer permanent penalty of –2 to Fortitude saves.
51–55	Suffer permanent penalty of –2 to Reflex saves.
56–60	Suffer permanent penalty of –2 to Will saves.
65–70	Suffer permanent penalty of –2 to AC.
71–75	Sent to a random plane.
76–80	Turned to stone.
81–85	*Geased* to perform some long, arduous, and dangerous task on behalf of a randomly determined non-evil community.
86–90	Character's soul is bound to the artifact. This has no immediate effect, but the character can never be *raised, resurrected,* or *reincarnated* by any means.
91–95	Character instantly *baleful polymorphed* into a random small animal.
96–00	Roll twice on this table.

None of these effects can be reversed or repaired by the standard methods (*remove curse*, *stone to flesh*, *restoration*, etc.) The only sure means of reversing any of these effects is to destroy the *Petrified God*.

Alternatively, these effects can be reversed by a *miracle* or *wish*, but the caster must succeed on a DC 30 caster level check, and must pay the standard XP cost whether or not he succeeds. The *Petrified God* cannot reverse its own mishaps.

Divine casters who worship other gods than Rastiros face an additional hurdle when making use of the *Petrified God*. Most deities are ill amused when their priests call on another god for power, and that is essentially what one does when praying to Rastiros, no matter his current form. A cleric, paladin, or other divine caster who calls upon the activated powers of the *Petrified God* may qualify as violating his own deity's precepts, and thus lose his abilities until he atones.

No mechanical system exists for determining if a divine caster's use of this artifact is a sufficient violation to bring about punishment. The DM is encouraged to take all factors into consideration, such as the degree of desperation — that is, did the character exhaust all other options first? — and the general attitudes of the deity, as a strict god is more likely to take offense than an easygoing one.

Only calling upon the *miracle/wish* ability of the artifact can qualify as a violation. While clerics who hang around the cavern to soak up the divine energies may be viewed somewhat askance by their fellow priests, they are not *actively* calling upon Rastiros,

and are thus unlikely to give offense.

Ambient Effects

The artifact generates a field of sheer divine energies, emanations leaking from the essence within the stone. All divine spells cast within the cavern of the *Petrified God* are automatically Maximized and Extended, with no corresponding increase in level. It is this energy that divine casters may absorb, if they spend long enough in the statue's presence.

Reactive Traits

Any damaging magics cast upon the statue are instantly and unerringly directed back at the caster.

Using the Petrified God in a Campaign

Miracle and *wish* are two of the most powerful and open-ended magics in the game, and there's a reason they're not available until characters can cast 9th-level spells. Similarly, the *Petrified God* is not particularly appropriate for low-level play; except under very controlled circumstances, its potency is unbalancing for such characters. The *Petrified God* is most appropriate for campaigns of mid-level, where characters have no access to *miracle* but its inclusion is not completely overwhelming, or at high levels with characters unable or unwilling to cast the magics and pay the costs themselves.

This does not mean that the artifact *cannot* be used in low-level games. Perhaps finding the means of obtaining a *wish* is the only way for the heroes to stop a threat that is otherwise too powerful for them.

In either case, the quest for the *Petrified God*, and the discovery of its history, can drive an entire campaign. Once acquired, the artifact grants enormous power, even if it is only on an occasional basis. Unlike most other artifacts, which are portable, it can prove difficult to remove the *Petrified God* from the party's possession once they have located it. If the DM needs to do so — perhaps at the culmination of a storyline, after the PCs have already made use of its powers a few times — consider having the cavern occupied by creatures the party cannot face, by a religious cult, or the like. The location of the cavern is left deliberately vague, so DMs can place it wherever they like in their chosen setting; this means they can place around it whatever threats and obstacles they like.

The final quest regarding the artifact might, of course, be the effort to restore Rastiros to his true form. This, too, can drive an entire campaign, and the repercussions are astounding. Is there a place in the current pantheon(s) of the world for a god who vanished ages ago? What sort of changes will his presence wreak on society? For that matter, does he want to be restored, or is he likely to take vengeance on those who somehow manage to return him to life?

Adventure Seeds

Secret Weapon

An enemy of the PCs has acquired an artifact, and is using its power to conquer or destroy. The party must seek out the *Petrified God*, either to use its magics to remove the artifact from the villain's possession, or to wish for the knowledge of a successful means of countering its power.

Consequences

Someone the PCs care for — perhaps one of their own, or a friendly NPC — has attempted to request a *miracle* from the artifact, and has been struck by one of its nastier curses. While the party cannot use the *Petrified God* itself to reverse the curse, they may find themselves forced to use its power to aid them in finding and approaching a being powerful enough to do so.

The Impenetrable Shrine

A cabal of clerics devoted to an evil deity have discovered the *Petrified God*, and set up a shrine to their own master in the cavern. They are not making use of its *miracle* ability, but the constant strengthening of their own magics have made them nigh unstoppable. They are using the cavern as a base to attack others, and must be driven from it if they are to be defeated.

Destroying the Petrified God

The most obvious reason to destroy the artifact is to reverse any curses it may have inflicted on one of the PCs or their allies. Other reasons could exist, however, from wishing to keep it out of an enemy's hands, to restoring Rastiros.

- At least 1,000 people — all of whom must dwell in the same, non-evil-aligned community — must take turns striking the statue with a magic hammer.
- Flood the entire cavern with unholy water or the blood of fiends. If the *Petrified God* soaks in this for a week, it dissolves.
- Return Rastiros to his original state by reversing the self-inflicted petrification. This requires far more than the casting of mere spells, or even the intervention of other deities. Perhaps it requires the presence of Elseneia's soul; a difficult task in its own right, since no surviving history records the identity, or even the pantheon or culture, of the god to whom she was consecrated. If, however, a means of restoring Rastiros to his living form is found, this effectively destroys the *Petrified God* as an artifact.

New Deity

It is entirely possible for characters to portray worshippers, or even clerics, of Rastiros. This is particularly

appropriate if and when he is restored from his petrified form, but this is not the only circumstance under which such a thing is possible. Many clerics worship concepts or ideals, rather than gods, proving that divine magic does not require an active deity to power it. Similarly, someone with sufficient faith in Rastiros could become a cleric, casting in his name but drawing on the power of faith alone, even while Rastiros remains stone.

Rastiros

Intermediate God (Lawful Good)

Rastiros is a deity of community and society, who watches over his mortal children like a loving father. Also like a father, he can be strict and unyielding when circumstances call for it. He is very much a god of civilization and urban environments. He appears as a man approaching middle years, but in excellent physical shape. He wears a beard cut square below his chin, and styles of clothing unseen in many years.

In his prime, Rastiros was actually a greater deity. As he has been largely forgotten over the years, however, his power has waned.

Portfolio: Civilization, community, society, law. Rastiros was the patron of a specific nation long forgotten; at the time, he counted that nation as part of his portfolio.

Domains: Good, Hearth*, Law, Protection

Cleric Training: Clerics of Rastiros are often active in the community even before they join the priesthood. They must be devoted to their neighbors, law-abiding, and hard working. Acolytes often learn in groups, with a single experienced cleric educating and training them. While each receives less personal attention that they might if the training was one-on-one, it instills the sense of group camaraderie on which the entire priesthood is built.

Quests: Few of Rastiros' clerics are active adventurers, preferring to remain at home and guide their communities. Those who do embark on quests usually do so for the sake of their home town or city, perhaps to rid the community of some great threat, protect it from invasion, or locate magics necessary for its survival.

Prayers: Most prayers to Rastiros request guidance, rather than any direct activity on the god's part. For instance, they might begin "Rastiros, father of society, aid me in my efforts," or "Great counselor of kings, grant me the wisdom to survive what is to come."

Temples: Most temples to Rastiros are built of stone, and constructed to appear almost more like large houses than places of worship. They contain an inner sanctum, for prayer and ceremony, but also substantial room for living quarters and for outsiders to take shelter during natural disasters or times of war. They are all built inside towns or cities, and usually very near the center.

Rites: Rastiros' followers celebrate and bless community accomplishments. One might be present to bless a newly constructed bridge, while another might lead the faithful in celebration of a new trading agreement that will bring wealth to the town.

Herald and Allies: Rastiros' herald is a half-elf cleric 15/expert 5. His allies are usually lillends or astral devas.

Note: All this information assumes Rastiros' persona has not drastically changed since he entered his petrified state. Should the DM determine that he is still grief-stricken, or enraged at his "rescuers," any of these details — particularly alignment and herald/allies — might change.

New Domain

Unique to Rastiros, at least in the culture that originally worshipped him, the Hearth domain focuses on the safety and security of the home. It is closely linked to Protection, but while that domain revolves around active defense, Hearth has more to do with comfort and passive safety.

Hearth Domain

Granted Power: You may "divide" certain spells among more than one subject. This ability functions only on spells with a range of "touch" that normally work on only a single subject. You may, instead, choose to cast the spell on more than one recipient; all must be willing, and you must be able to touch all of them during casting. You evenly divide the duration and spell effect among the recipients; any remainder is lost. For instance, if you cast *cure light wounds* on two recipients and cure 7 points of damage, each regains 3 hit points. If you cast *protection from energy* as a 10th-level caster, and cast it on two recipients, each gains up to 60 points of resistance (120 divided by 2), for up to 50 minutes (100 divided by 2).

You may never include yourself when dividing spells in this manner. You may use this ability once per day, plus one additional time per point of Charisma bonus.

Hearth Domain Spells

1 **Sanctuary:** Opponents can't attack you, and you can't attack.

2 **Make Whole:** Repairs an object.

3 **Glyph of Warding^{M}:** Inscription harms those who pass it.

4 **Leomand's Secure Shelter:** Creates sturdy cottage.

5 **Morden's Private Sanctum:** Prevents anyone from viewing or scrying an area for 24 hours.

6 **Heroes' Feast:** Food for one creature/level cures and grants combat bonuses.

7 **Refuge^{M}:** Alters item to transport its possessor to you.

Rug of Lords

By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of the Rug of Lords

Lord Gargin White attained his power through hard work and dedication, as well as the timely assassination of anyone in his way. Once he'd acquired a small duchy to compliment his great wealth, he developed a sense of paranoia, so concerned was he that someone would do to him as he had done to others. He used spells to read the thoughts and feelings of his closest advisors, terrified that sooner or later one would betray him. The size of his holdings and number of advisors and employees soon grew to the point that this was impossible to manage any longer.

Ancient tomes turned over by adventurers in his employ gave Lord White the name of a powerful demon from whom he sought counsel. On the demon's advice, Lord White ordered the hair to be shorn from the hundreds of slaves in his pens and given over to the weavers. Then he commanded the weavers to create a beautiful rug for his throne room, woven from the hair of his slaves. Fearing for their lives and freedom, the weavers spun the hair into long, soft threads and dyed them with the most expensive dyes before weaving a massive rug showing intricate patterns of shapes and colors favorable to the eye. Then Lord White combined a final *wish*, and several spells granted by his demon advisor, with his own blood. This concoction imbued the rug with the power to detect any hostile intentions against him, and to slay the person possessing such unkind thoughts.

As with most demons, of course, White's advisor had not told him the entire truth of his creation. The *Rug* functioned as desired, sensing treacherous intent and slaying traitors walking across it, but the magic was twisted. As time went on, even the slightest thought of anger directed against Lord White could result in death. As slaves and advisors fell to the power of the *Rug* for hostile yet idle thoughts, Lord White spiraled into a manic paranoia. Calling his family to him in the throne room, he accused them all of betrayal, with the resulting angry arguments leaving his wife and children turned to dust. Then, Lord White's self-loathing came to the fore and the *Rug* turned him to dust as well.

Those few paranoid rulers that have sought and used the *Rug* over the centuries have suffered similar destruction and desolation, as even loved ones sometimes harbor angry thoughts.

Studying the Rug of Lords

Varying shades of red, purple, blue, and black designs cross through this massive 25 foot square *Rug*. Although none of the designs or symbols on the *Rug* appear to have any particular meaning, the overall design is pleasing to the eye and is very comforting to look at. Abstract motifs along each side wind slowly in on themselves as they move toward the center, where each joins with the others to form another pattern. The patterns draw the eye toward the center quite deliberately, as if designed to entice anyone walking on the *Rug* to its center.

Woven from fine, thin threads, the *Rug* is incredibly soft, supple, and comforting to the touch. The dyes used are clearly of the finest quality, as many of the threads glisten with color all the way to the center of their fibers. Everything about the *Rug* exudes a sense of peace and contentment.

Beautiful to behold, the *Rug* contains potent magic as well. A *detect magic* or similar spell reveals a number of auras along the various fibers of the *Rug*, though no particular aura is associated with a particular pattern or symbol. The most powerful auras include transmutation and divination but all other auras are present as well. The auras are only moderate in strength, though the size of the *Rug* suggests it might hold great power. *Analyze dweomer* allows one to determine how to attune to the *Rug* and exactly what attuning to it should mean.

Powers of the Rug of Lords

The *Rug of Lords* is designed to ferret out traitors, spies, and assassins by somehow predicting their intent based upon their surface thoughts and feelings. When treacherous thoughts are detected, the *Rug* extends a strange green aura around the person thinking them and turns them into dust. Fortunately, the *Rug's* powers are limited to only those actually treading across its beautiful surface.

Using the Rug of Lords

Even if one knows of the *Rug's* great powers, it is difficult to know exactly how to activate it. Learning to activate the *Rug* for a particular individual requires studying it with an *analyze dweomer* or a spell of similar power and ability. Those doing so swiftly learn that a single person

can attune the *Rug* to protect them by uttering the proper words ("Protect me from the dark thoughts and intentions of my enemies.") and slicing their hand to bleed into the very center of the *Rug*. Enough blood must be spilled to cause 4 points of Constitution damage.

The *Rug* can only be attuned to one individual at a time. Once attuned, the person attuned to it can be any distance from the *Rug* and its power remains active. Thus, a king can leave a regent in charge and depend on the *Rug* to ensure his loyalty. If attuned to one person, it cannot be attuned to another until the first person dies.

Constant Powers

The *Rug* constantly senses the thoughts and emotions of those walking across it, searching for anything indicating plans against the person it is attuned to. A creature on the *Rug* receives no saving throw against this effect. The longer the *Rug* remains attuned to an individual, the more sensitive it becomes. Flying over the *Rug* only avoids this power if the individual flies more than 10 feet above it. The only magic helpful in avoiding this effect is a *mind blank* spell.

If the *Rug* is damaged it heals itself, the threads reform and weave themselves together until the *Rug* is whole again. The torn and cut portions of the *Rug* retain all of their powers even before they reform.

Activated Powers

The *Rug* chooses to activate its sole remaining power at its own discretion rather than the command or will of the person attuned to it. When it senses thoughts or feelings against the person it is attuned to, the *Rug* engulfs the person or creature thinking those thoughts in a strange green aura that is the equivalent of a *disintegrate* spell cast by a 20th-level wizard. This deals 40d6 points of damage, unless the individual succeeds at a DC 24 Fortitude save, in which case the *Rug* deals 5d6 points of damage. A creature brought to 0 hp or less by any damage inflicted by the *Rug* is disintegrated, leaving behind nothing but a trace of dust.

Those surviving the magical assault have one round to get off the *Rug* before it can affect them again. The *Rug* affects as many as eight individuals at once, but can only affect each individual once per round.

Consequences

Even the greatest of friends and lovers sometimes get angry at each other and harbor some small piece of resentment, if only for a very short time. The longer a person is attuned to the *Rug*, the more sensitive it becomes to the thoughts and emotions of those crossing it. After three years of attunement, close friends and advisors bearing even the slightest disgruntled thoughts are destroyed. After five years, lovers' quarrels can be lethal. After seven years the slightest self-doubt, self-loathing, or even anger at one's own action can free the *Rug* for a new owner as it *disintegrates* the present owner.



Researching the Rug of Lords

The story of Lord White is popular among bards, an illustrative tale of how deep paranoia can destroy the wealthy as easily as the poor. Some arcane wizards have recorded information about the *Rug* and its curious designs and power. A few religious texts use it as an example of how a corrupt person can destroy or taint everything they touch, even their own lives. Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), and Bardic Knowledge checks can provide the information listed below.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	A paranoid ruler killed his own family and himself while creating a magical *Rug*.
20	The *Rug of Lords* protects rulers from assassins by obliterating anyone who thinks of killing them.
25	Lord White created the *Rug of Lords* out of paranoid fear of assassination and betrayal.
30+	The *Rug of Lords* can sense thoughts and emotions of anyone standing on it. It can also disintegrate anyone standing on the *Rug* if they harbor unkind thoughts, plans, or feelings toward the person owning it.

Any check of DC 19 or lower leads the PCs to believe the *Rug* was made magical by the slaying of a noble family and the trapping of their souls within its fine fibers.

Reactive Traits

Attempts to physically dismantle the *Rug* by cutting it, tearing it, or burning it generally meet with failure as the *Rug* not only heals itself, but when it detects these plans in the surface thoughts of its attacker it simply *disintegrates* them. The *Rug* can otherwise be rolled and moved, though those touching even its edges are subjected to its ability to sense thoughts.

Spells directed against the *Rug* appear to be absorbed into its fibers as the entire *Rug* grows with a sickening green light. Casters of such spells coming within 10 feet of the *Rug* are attacked with its *disintegrating* aura. The only spell other than a *wish* or *miracle* that can affect the *Rug* is a *feeblemind* spell, which renders it incapable of sensing thoughts or feelings for a period of two hours.

Using the Rug of Lords in a Campaign

The *Rug of Lords* can enter a campaign at virtually any level because it doesn't act as a weapon or possess special powers that can easily overcome enemies. It works best in politically motivated campaigns pitting paranoid rulers against each other. Adjudicating "thoughts" and "feelings" on the part of NPCs and PCs alike can be very difficult and requires careful ruling on the part of the DM. Guidelines defining surface thoughts and feelings, as well as possible ways to control them, should be discussed early in the game to alleviate the potential for later problems. The DM should also remember if the *Rug* is not attuned to anyone, and if nobody has cast the spells required to figure out how to attune it, it is essentially nothing more than a valuable decorative item.

Adventure Seeds

The Treaty

The PCs are hired to negotiate a peace treaty with the distasteful ruler of a nearby kingdom. Negotiations are to be held at a table placed on the *Rug*, yet the PCs have already been warned about its magic and must find some way to convince the paranoid ruler to negotiate elsewhere. As several members of his own negotiating party fall victim to the *Rug*, the king accuses the PCs of fomenting betrayal and spying on his kingdom and orders them arrested.

In order to put a halt to the ongoing war, the PCs must not only escape from prison but they must also somehow convince a paranoid ruler that the *Rug* cannot be trusted and that peace is indeed possible.

War of the Guilds

A recent trade war between two merchant guilds has ended with the apparent disappearance of one guild's leaders. The PCs are asked to investigate the disappearances, told only that all of the guild leaders were scheduled to meet in a large meeting room in the guildhall and that, although all of them entered the room, none ever left, yet none has been seen again. A drunken, discredited server claims to have seen one of the guild leaders step on the *Rug* only be engulfed in a green light and disappear. Although investigators claim not to believe him, nobody has chanced stepping on the *Rug* since.

The *Rug* is, of course, the *Rug of Lords* and it is attuned to the master of the rival guild. Knowing that his opponents were meeting to plan against him, he hired some unknowing lackeys to deliver and install the *Rug* in the guildhall, using false papers to convince the few guards that the *Rug* had been ordered by the guild. Learning how he did this, and what can be done about the *Rug*, requires a great deal of time. Meanwhile, thrilled with this use of an unheard-of weapon, the guild master seeks a way to regain the *Rug* so he can have it delivered to other enemies.

Destroying the Rug of Lords

Feeding off paranoia and leading most of its owners to their own disasters, the *Rug of Lords* could easily be seen

as an evil artifact worthy of destruction. Attempting to destroy the *Rug* usually requires getting close enough to it to be subject to its powers. A *mind blank* spell can protect one from having his thoughts and feelings read, but once he tries to destroy the *Rug*, it is certain to strike back.

• A *wish* spell can suppress the magic of the *Rug* allowing people to physically cut and shred it. If the pieces are burned separately, the *Rug* cannot reform.

• If the *Rug* is carried to the Elemental Plane of Fire and cast into the hottest flames, it is burned to a fine ash that can never reform. Carrying the *Rug* with such thoughts on one's mind is almost certain death without the use of *mind blank* spells.

• A *feeblemind* spell cast directly on the *Rug* suppresses its ability to sense thoughts and feelings for two hours. The caster must touch the *Rug* to do this so a *mind blank* spell is suggested to avoid the *Rug's* attack. The *Rug* receives no saving throw against a *feeblemind* spell. Once this ability is suppressed the *Rug* can be carried to the Elemental Plane of Fire, or rolled up and subjected to physical and magical attacks from a distance to break it into pieces that can be separated and burned to prevent it from regenerating.

New Feat

This feat allows one to focus their thoughts and feelings to project only the surface thoughts and feelings they wish to allow someone to read, whether my magic or other means. An assassin with the Clear Mind feat could conceivably cross the *Rug of Lords* and assassinate the person attuned to it without even this potent artifact interfering with them. Developed years ago, record of the techniques used to clear one's mind were discovered by an advisor to a duke attuned to the *Rug*. The advisor thought it prudent to apply these techniques to his own thoughts and feelings.

Clear Mind

You are adept at cloaking your true thoughts and feelings and can fool a variety of magical effects without resorting to magical means yourself.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 13, Intelligence 15, Will save +2

Benefit: You can cloak your inner thoughts and feelings with surface thoughts and feelings of your own choosing. Using this feat requires concentration on your part, and you must succeed at a DC 10 Will save to activate it. This requires a move action, and you must continue to devote a move action each round to maintain it. For so long as the feat is active, you gain the following benefits:

• +2 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks.

• Deliberately deceive anyone using a *detect thoughts* spell or similar magic to examine your surface thoughts and intentions; this requires a successful save against the spell in addition to the normal Will save to invoke this feat.

• +2 circumstance bonus to saves against mind-affecting effects.

You can maintain this feat for a number of minutes equal to your Wisdom modifier, and must wait at least that same amount of time before invoking it again.

Sha'gahr's Bones

By Anthony Pryor

The Tale of Sha'gahr's Bones

Most tales agree that the archfiend Sha'gahr was defeated and slain on the Material Plane over two millennia ago. Some claim that a mortal hero struck the demon lord down, while others say that the fiend was so powerful that the gods themselves were forced to intervene, slaying Sha'gahr's avatar in a titanic battle that shattered whole continents.

Whatever the means of his destruction, Sha'gahr's avatar was defeated, and his spirit was banished, greatly weakened, back to the Abyss. There he was forced to battle a host of enemies who sought to take advantage of his defeat and take his realm for themselves. This war in the Lower Planes dragged on for centuries, but even as he struggled to maintain his powers in his own home realms, Sha'gahr's memory continued to plague the mortal world.

Though his spirit had fled, Sha'gahr's physical body remained behind, infused with the fiend's lingering powers. Sha'gahr's bones were entombed by a group of paladins and good spellcasters, who kept watch lest they fall into the wrong hands. In the end, their efforts came to naught, for a cabal of powerful sorcerers called the Order of the Black Veil succeeded in stealing the bones, and immediately set to work transforming them into exceedingly potent and evil magic items.

The effort took many long years, and the order's foes almost discovered them several times. In the end, however, the order was successful, crafting several artifacts from the bones. With these items at their command, the Order of the Black Veil rose to prominence, becoming the power behind the throne in several kingdoms. This evil alliance grew steadily more dangerous, absorbing smaller nations and spreading its influence throughout the continent. In the end, open warfare broke out with several kingdoms joining together to confront the order.

The resulting war was costly, but in the end the Order of the Black Veil was defeated and most of *Sha'gahr's Bones* were lost. A few items remain in safekeeping today, but the rest are scattered across the known world. Most have heard legends of *Sha'gahr's Bones*, but most consider them to be destroyed or lost forever.

Unknown to the Black Veil's foes, they were aided by a rival secret society, a small group of Sha'gahr's worshippers, who continue to revere the archfiend in secret, and are determined to punish those "blasphemers" who desecrated their master's remains. Today, the Faithful of Sha'gahr continue to search for the bones, and are growing in strength and fanaticism, for they have learned that Sha'gahr has defeated his enemies in the Abyss and now plans to return to the mortal realms to reclaim his lost bones.

Studying Sha'gahr's Bones

Although there are several individual items, all share some common qualities. All are indestructible save through divine power, and resistant to all mortal physical and magical forces. All items are made of heavy, polished bone; some have been modified with the addition of grips, decorative carvings, etched designs, and the like, but the "business portion" of each item is crafted of bone.

A good-aligned character who holds one of the items feels a vague sense of unease and discomfort, though nothing significant enough to impair combat, skills, or other rolls. An evil-aligned user feels a sense of accomplishment, well-being and confidence, though similarly it does not provide any bonuses. When in combat, anyone who wields a weapon made from *Sha'gahr's Bones*, regardless of alignment, feels a savage joy in battle and desire for destruction.

All of the bones radiate strong conjuration when *detect magic* is cast.

Powers of Sha'gahr's Bones

Each of the bones is a separate item with its own powers. Some are minor items, while others are especially powerful. The powers of the individual items are listed below.

Using Sha'gahr's Bones

Each of the items crafted from Sha'gahr's bones has its own conditions for use. Initially, its constant powers can be invoked simply by using the item in its normal manner — wearing the helm or breastplate, donning an amulet, and so forth — as described below. Characters of evil alignment may gain certain other constant powers if the item is used, as listed in the constant power's description.

Researching Sha'gahr's Bones

There are many legends and stories about the bones — some true, some partially true and others entirely false. Adventurers can learn more of the bones by reading ancient texts (the older the better), investigating folk tales or listening to epic songs and poems about the period. Useful skills in this regard include Gather Information, Knowledge (history), Knowledge (demons), and Bardic Knowledge.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	Thousands of years ago, the archfiend Sha'gahr was slain, but his body survived.
20	Sha'gahr's bones were transformed into a number of very powerful weapons and magic items. The bones were guarded by paladins, but stolen by evil sorcerers.
25	There are 12 items made from the bones — helm, mace, longsword, shortsword, wand, bolt, amulet, talisman, glaive, longspear, whip and breastplate Other bones such as the pelvis and bones of the hands and feet may still exist, but were never made into items. Most of the items are more powerful in the hands of evil users.
30+	The items convey various demonic powers to their users, including damage and spell resistance, powerful spells and the ability to summon other fiends to aid the wielder. Learning about the powers of each item requires a separate check. Those who wield these weapons begin an inexorable slide towards evil, then madness.

A number of false tales are also commonly told, and these may be included among the accurate information that the characters discover. Some false tales include:

- If the items are all brought together, Sha'gahr will return to the mortal plane (he is already planning to do so — his physical body was nothing but a tool).
- Anyone who dons or carries all of these items gains all of Sha'gahr's powers and become an archfiend himself.
- The gods will reward anyone who gathers up all of Sha'gahr's bones and destroys them.
- Other demon-lords will pay handsomely for Sha'gahr's bones. (In reality, while most would love to have them, they would only reward the bearer with unending torment. It is just possible, however, that given his fascination with death and undeath, the great demon prince Orcus might actually barter for the bones.)

Activated powers require various triggers to function, including command words or actions by the user. Likewise, these requirements are listed in the Activated Powers section for each item.

Constant Powers

The various *Bones* items have the following constant powers, which sometimes vary depending upon the alignment and class of their users.

Demonskull Helm: Though *Soulreaper* is the most famous of *Sha'gahr's Bones*, this helm is probably the most powerful, as it retains traces of its owners spiritual resonance, and provides a link to Sha'gahr himself. When worn, the helm normally provides a +2 bonus to Wisdom, and provides the effect of *medium fortification*. A barbarian wearing it gains the *medium fortification* effect, a +2 bonus to both Wisdom and Charisma and can rage twice more per day than normal. An evil barbarian, however, gains the most benefits — +4 to both Wisdom and Charisma, the Leadership feat (if he does not already have it), the effect of *heavy fortification* and the ability to rage four times more per day than normal.

Bone Mace: In the hands of an ordinary wielder, the *Bone Mace* acts as a *+3 heavy mace of shock*. If wielded by an individual of evil alignment, however, it becomes a *+4 heavy mace of shocking burst*.

Soulreaper: Normally, this weapon is treated as a *+2 keen longsword*. In the hands of an evil fighter, however, it becomes a *+3 keen longsword of cleaving*, and if wielded by a blackguard, the weapon acts as a *+4 keen longsword of mighty cleaving*. The weapon gains its greatest power when used by a blackguard who is also a fallen paladin, in which case, *Soulreaper* functions as a *+5 keen unholy longsword of mighty cleaving*.

Bloodshedder: This razor-sharp shortsword normally functions as a *+2 shortsword of wounding*. If wielded by an evil rogue, the weapon is treated as a *+3 unholy shortsword of wounding*, and in the hands of an assassin, it functions as a *+4 unholy shortsword of wounding*.

Fearsome Bolt: This item can be shot from any Medium-sized crossbow, and functions as a *crossbow bolt +3* with a power similar to *returning;* after being shot, the bolt returns immediately to the crossbow that shot it (the crossbow must still be cocked to shoot, however). In addition, the



bolt inflicts a random amount of damage on the target. Roll 1d10, and then roll the resulting number of d6 for damage; for instance, a result of 7 indicates the bolt deals 7d6 points of damage on that attack. This damage can be normal damage, or damage of any energy type (acid, cold, electricity, fire or sonic) that the user specifies.

Amulet of Fiend Command: This item allows the wielder to control evil outsiders in a manner similar to a *ring of elemental command*. It has no effect of any kind on non-evil outsiders.

Evil outsiders cannot attack the wearer of the amulet or even come within five feet of him if they are the same alignment. Those of different alignment can attack the wearer, but at a –4 penalty. The wearer can forego either of these protections and instead attempt to *charm* the outsiders (as *charm monster*, Will DC 20 negates). Outsiders who are of the same alignment as the wearer take a –2 penalty to their saves. If the *charm* attempt fails, however, absolute protection is lost and no further attempt at *charming* can be made. If they successfully resist a *charm* attempt, outsiders of identical alignment can then attack the *amulet's* owner, but also at a –4 penalty.

The wearer gains a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws against attacks by outsiders of the same alignment, and a +4 morale bonus on all attack rolls against such creatures. Any weapon he uses bypasses the damage reduction of such creatures, regardless of any qualities the weapon may or may not have.

Abyssal Talisman: This brooch grants its bearer some powers of a demon. Normally, it provides its owner immunity to electricity and poison, and resistance 10 against acid, cold and fire. If worn by an individual of evil alignment, it also conveys DR 10/good, darkvision to 60 feet, and SR 14. An evil wizard or sorcerer who wears the amulet also gains a +4 resistance bonus to all saves. The talisman gains its greatest power when worn by a chaotic evil wizard or sorcerer, however — in this case, the wearer gains DR 20/good, darkvision 60 ft., SR 24 and +4 resistance bonus to all saves.

Magran's Glaive: Normally, this weapon acts as a *+2 shocking burst glaive*, but in the hands of an evil-aligned wielder, it becomes a *+3 shocking burst glaive*. Wielded by a chaotic evil fighter or barbarian, the weapon functions as a *+4 brilliant energy shocking burst glaive*.

Death's Edge: This deadly-looking spear is ordinarily a *returning longspear +3*, but if wielded by an evil ranger or druid, it becomes a *returning longspear of distance +4*. In the hands of a chaotic evil ranger, it gains the *flaming quality*.

Demon's Backbone: Unlike other whips, *Demon's Backbone* inflicts lethal damage, and can damage any opponent, regardless of its armor bonus. It is treated as a melee weapon with 20-foot reach, but does not threaten the area that it attacks. It can be used against foes anywhere within reach, including adjacent foes. Use of *Demon's Backbone* does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Like a normal whip, *Demon's Backbone* can be used to make trip attacks, and gains a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to keep from being disarmed if the attack fails). Medium-sized wielders can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply their Dexterity modifier instead of Strength on all attack rolls with this whip.

Items

This "artifact" is in reality a number of magic items all created from the same source. The items themselves are listed below, along with their appearance and common name. In brief, they are:

Demonskull Helm: As its name implies, the helm was crafted from Sha'gahr's skull. It is covered in dull black metal, its teeth covered in bright mithril, and it is inscribed with silver magical runes. As it was the skull of a Large creature, it easily fits over the head of any Medium humanoid, completely covering the face and allowing the wearer to see through the empty orbits. The helm does not fit creatures of other sizes.

Bone Mace: Crafted from Sha'gahr's right tibia, the mace is easily recognizable as a leg bone, with one end sheathed in an elaborate metal cap. The cap is shining steel, and never grows rusty or tarnished. It is inscribed with Sha'gahr's name written repeatedly in tiny script in several languages, including Abyssal and Infernal.

Soulreaper: Possibly the most famous of the bones, this longsword's blade was made from the archfiend's left femur. Outwardly, it resembles a finely-crafted longsword, with demon faces etched into the hilt and pommel, and a dull black blade. In combat, the blade begins to hum and vibrate, and glows red through tiny cracks throughout its length, like hot coals in a furnace.

Bloodshedder: This shortsword was made from the bones of Sha'gahr's right forearm. Save for the leather grip, it is entirely crafted of bone, sharpened to a razor-thin edge.

Rod of Mayhem: A slender, delicately carved instrument — looking almost more like a wand than a rod — this item was made from Sha'gahr's left ulna.

Fearsome Bolt: The radius of Sha'gahr's left arm was cut and crafted into this crossbow bolt. It looks like a plain bolt, though its shaft is made from bone and its head is gleaming adamantine.

Amulet of Fiend Command: Crafted from the humerus of Sha'gahr's right arm, this small amulet is stained black and carved with images of demonic faces.

Abyssal Talisman: Made from Sha'gahr's left humerus, this brooch is dark red in color and inscribed with dark runes that glow fiery yellow when its powers are used.

Magran's Glaive: Named for its most famed wielder, an orc warlord who carved out a huge kingdom before dying at the hands of his second-in-command, this polearm has a heavy steel shaft and a blade carved from Sha'gahr's left femur.

Death's Edge: A longspear with a black, elaborately carved shaft and a head made from Sha'gahr's right femur, this weapon was believed lost when the Order of the Veil was defeated.

Demon's Backbone: This whip was made from Sha'gahr's vertebrae, with a leather-bound grip at one end and a shiny metal hook at the other. When unrolled, the whip is nearly 20 feet in length.

Lord Akbal's Bane: Sha'gahr's scapulae were combined with magically-reinforced steel and leather to create this breastplate, so-named because it was worn by the late warlord Akbal when he fell into a river during a battle, and most believe that it dragged him down to a watery grave, though his corpse was never found.

With the above exceptions, the weapon normally functions as a *+2 whip*, but the cruel hook on its end causes it to inflict 1d6 points of damage, rather than the standard 1d3. If wielded by an evil-aligned character, it becomes a *+3 whip of shock*. In the hands of an evil rogue, the *backbone* functions as a *+4 whip of shocking burst*, inflicting 1d8 points of damage. Three times per day, an evil rogue who wields the *Backbone* can force its target to make a DC 15 Fortitude save in addition to inflicting normal damage after a successful attack. If the save fails, the target suffers 2d6 points of Constitution damage.

Lord Akbal's Bane: The breastplate normally functions as a *+2 breastplate of moderate fortification*. When worn by an individual of evil alignment, it becomes a *+3 breastplate of heavy fortification*. When worn by an evil fighter it becomes a *+4 breastplate of heavy fortification* and gains improved resistance to cold, electricity and fire. The breastplate gains its greatest power when worn by a blackguard, in which case it functions as a *+5 breastplate of heavy fortification* with greater cold, electricity and fire resistance, SR 19 and DR 10/magic.

Activated Powers

Not all of *Sha'gahr's Bones* have activated powers, and those that do have alignment or class requirements that must be fulfilled before the powers can be used. Most require that the wielder utter the name of Sha'gahr before the power can be utilized — this certainly can call attention to the user, especially if there are members of the Cult of Sha'gahr within earshot.

Demonskull Helm: A non-barbarian wearer of the *helm* cannot activate its additional powers. A non-evil barbarian who wears it can use any of the following spell-

like abilities as soon as he has slain 10 hit dice or more of creatures in a single day.

5/day: *cause fear* (DC 16)

3/day: *scare* (DC 17)

1/day: *fear* (DC 19)

An evil barbarian must slay 15 hit dice of creatures in a single day, but gains even greater spell-like abilities, and can use any of the following once he has slain enough foes.

5/day: *scare* (DC 17)

3/day: *fear* (DC 19)

1/day: *finger of death* (DC 22)

In addition, once per day, an evil barbarian who has slain 20 or more hit dice of creatures during a single day can take on a fearsome visage, transforming into a gore-covered, terrifying guise with glowing red eyes. This effect lasts 1d6 hours. During this time, all creatures within 30 feet must attempt a DC 20 Will save. On a failure, creatures with 4 HD or less become panicked, while others become shaken, both for 4d6 rounds. A creature who successfully saves is immune to that character's fearsome visage for 24 hours.

In all cases, the day in which the character has slain the requisite number of creatures must have occurred since he gained the helm.

Bone Mace: The wielder of the mace may, once per day, on a successful attack roll that drops the target, create a massive explosion of arcane energy that inflicts 10d6 points of electrical damage on everyone except the wielder in a 30-foot radius, as well as knocking them prone. A DC 18 Reflex save halves this damage and avoids being knocked prone. An evil wielder can make this attack 3 times per day.

Soulreaper: In the hands of most wielders, *Soulreaper* gains no activated powers. If the wielder is a blackguard, however, she can take a full round to call upon the name of Sha'gahr and summon the tormented souls of the sword's past victims in the form of 1d4 wraiths. A blackguard who is also a fallen paladin can summon 2d4 wraiths or 1d4 dread wraiths. The summoned wraiths remain for 24 hours. This ability may be used once every two days.

Bloodshedder: When wielded by an evil rogue, *Bloodshedder* gains an activated power similar to that of a *rapier of puncturing* — three times per day, by uttering Sha'gahr's name, the wielder may make a touch attack with the weapon that deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage through blood drain. If the wielder is a chaotic evil rogue, the damage rises to 2d6 points of Constitution damage.

Rod of Mayhem: The rod created from Sha'gahr's forearm can cast several different spells. Each spell consumes 8 charges when cast, and the rod can hold up to 100 charges. However, these charges can be restored using the life essence of those that the rod's powers destroy. Each hit die of creature slain by the rod restores one charge. The rod need not have done all the damage to the victim — it needs only to have inflicted the final, killing damage. The spells that can be cast with this item are: *chaos hammer* (DC 19), *fireball* (DC 18), *inflict critical wounds* (DC 19), *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *magic missile*, *unholy blight* (DC 19). All are cast at 8th level. If all of the rod's charges are expended without restoration, it is rendered useless for 2d6 months, at the end of which time it can be used again with its normal compliment of 100 charges.

Fearsome Bolt: Upon uttering the name of Sha'gahr, the bolt's owner can transform it into a deadly missile once per day. The bolt unerringly strikes its target, forcing a DC 18 Fortitude save. If the target succeeds, it takes normal damage, but if it fails, the target is affected as if by a *disintegrate* spell. Once this power is used, the *Bolt's* other powers cannot be used for 24 hours.

Amulet of Fiend Command: In addition to its ability to command outsiders, an evil user of this item can, once per day, attempt to summon 4d10 dretches or one hezrou with a 35% chance of success, or 2d10 lemures or 1d4 bearded devils with a 50% chance of success. A chaotic evil user can, once per day, attempt to summon 4d10 dretches, 1d4 hezrou or one nalfeshnee with a 50% chance of success or one glabrezu or one marilith with a 20% chance of success. These summoned creatures are under the summoner's control as if *charmed*, but return to their home plane after 24 hours.

Abyssal Talisman: A non-evil wearer of the talisman cannot use its activated powers. An evil user, however, can once per week utter the name of Sha'gahr and be *polymorphed* into a hezrou demon or a bone devil for 1d6 hours. An evil wizard or sorcerer can use the *talisman's* powers to *polymorph* into a nalfeshnee demon or an ice devil for 2d6 hours. A chaotic evil sorcerer can transform himself, once per week, into a balor demon for 3d6 hours.

Magran's Glaive: An evil-aligned wielder can make an attack similar to the Whirlwind Attack feat, attacking all targets within reach. The *glaive's* reach for this attack is doubled to 20 feet. This ability can be used 3 times per day.

Death's Edge: If wielded by a chaotic evil druid, *Death's Edge* can become a 6d6 *lightning bolt* 5 times per day, returning intact to its wielder after each such use.

Demon's Backbone: An evil wielder can activate the whip's powers by invoking the name of Sha'gahr. On the wielder's next attack, the whip automatically hits, wrapping itself around the target's throat or other vulnerable spot, and inflicting 10d6 points of damage. A successful DC 18 Fortitude save halves this damage. The target is considered grappled and continues to take the same amount of damage each round until he succeeds at a DC 16 grapple check to break the whip's hold. Any damage

inflicted by this attack is added as temporary hit points to the whip's user.

Lord Akbal's Bane: Once per day, an evil wearer of the breastplate can cast *protection from arrows* on himself; the power lasts six hours. A blackguard wearing the breastplate can invoke a *globe of invulnerability* on himself, with a duration of 12 rounds, three times per day.

Consequences

The lingering spirit of the demon-lord adheres to these items like a sickening miasma. The *Bones* are all thick with Sha'gahr's evil energies, and using them can tempt their owners down the road of evil.

Owners of any of these items must make a Will save every month the item is in their possession. The DC of this is 13 initially, but increases by 1 every month, regardless of success or failure on previous saves. Failure indicates that the owner moves one step toward chaotic evil alignment. The move is toward chaotic alignment first, then toward evil. Once the item has been removed from the owner's possession, the character may make a DC 15 Will check once per month; if this succeeds, the character moves one step back toward his or her original alignment.

Using Sha'gahr's Bones in a Campaign

As this entry describes a collection of related artifacts, there are myriad ways to use *Sha'gahr's Bones* in your campaign. The easiest is simply to introduce one or two of the items and have them function as high-level magic items, with the above complications, including the temptation to turn their wielders to the path of evil. If the party detects the threat that the *Bones* represent, they can then attempt to destroy the items, but may encounter resistance from the Cult of Sha'gahr or Lord Sha'gahr himself, who wants his lost bones back.

An entire campaign can be dedicated to the *Bones* and their consequences, as well. It may be that various foes of the party have found some of the *Bones* and are using them to aid in conquest, criminal activities, or just general evil schemes. In this case, the party may be recruited to steal or neutralize the *Bones* by the forces of good, and may end up in a race against the Cult of Sha'gahr, who are also seeking to retrieve the bones.

Though the various *Bones* are all powerful magical items, they are not individually as potent as some of the other artifacts in this book. They can be introduced to a mid-level campaign without too much disruption, and may simply function as plot devices to drive your campaign forward. Good-aligned parties should eventually figure out that the *Bones* are very bad things to have around, and try to destroy them or put them out of reach. Neutral or evil characters might be more sanguine about them, and simply use them as high-level magic items. In such cases, the wielder is likely to be further corrupted and end up as a chaotic evil demon-worshipper, and possibly turn against the party altogether, so be sure that the players understand the potential consequences of using the *Bones*.

Adventure Seeds

Demon Lord's Legacy

A number of murders have taken place throughout the kingdom; seemingly unrelated individuals have been slain and their possessions ransacked. Asked to aid in the investigation, the PCs discover that only a handful of items have been stolen — antique weapons or similar objects crafted from bone. In the end, they discover that the victims all possess various *Bones* and are being murdered by Sha'gahr's cult.

If the PCs can determine the location of the other *Bones*, they might be able to prevent more murders and keep the items out of the hands of the cult, but most of the *Bones*' owners are also evil, dangerous individuals. Would it be better for the PCs to simply steal the items themselves and thus keep them out of the hands of evil users? Or should they strike back at the cult to take back the items that have been stolen so far and prevent them from being put to even more evil uses?

The Warlord

An influential barbarian chieftain has found the *Demonskull Helm* and possibly one or more other items as well. The PCs are enlisted by representatives of a merchant's association or alliance of threatened kingdoms to fight the warlord and retrieve the items, and are offered several of the *Bones* themselves to aid in the fight. In the end, the PCs' patrons actually turn out to be members of Sha'gahr's cult, hoping to use the adventurers as cat's-paws in an effort to recover the Helm.

The Return of Sha'gahr

This is actually the framework for an entire campaign. The PCs come into possession of one of *Sha'gahr's Bones*, and are soon attacked by member of Sha'gahr's cult. Upon investigation, they learn the true nature of the item, and are contacted by representatives of the kingdom or a powerful good-aligned god to find and return the other *Bones*. Once located, the bones can be put in safe-keeping or destroyed once and for all.

The PCs must research the other items and locate them, and also deal with the schemes of the cult, who wish to gather the *Bones* for their master. Eventually, the reborn Sha'gahr himself returns, attempting to collect as many of his old bones as possible to restore his old powers. As the campaign progresses, both Sha'gahr and the cult grow more dangerous, possibly conquering entire cities and nations in their quest to recover the bones. The campaign ends with a climatic confrontation between the adventurers and the now-powerful demon-lord.

Destroying Sha'gahr's Bones

Destroying the bones is a difficult job — not even the alliance of good that defeated Sha'gahr was equal to the task. All of the bones that were converted to magic items are still in existence, though some may be lost, hidden or kept under guard.

• A weapon made from the bones can be destroyed by a successful sunder attack by for a +5 *holy* weapon. The hardness and hit points of objects made from Sha'gahr's bones is double the standard values for objects of that type.

• An item made of Sha'gahr's bones can be destroyed if it is drenched in the lifeblood of a good outsider while on one of the Upper Planes.

• The bones are tied to their former owner, and it is said that only the final destruction of Sha'gahr himself can ultimately destroy them. Sha'gahr manifests only in the form of avatars, and can only be truly slain on his home plane, a fearsome undertaking at best.

New Monster

Sha'gahr himself still survives, and is set to return to the Material Plane. Though he is nowhere near as powerful as once he was, he is still a forced to be reckoned with, and should he succeed in reacquiring his bones, he will again become a demon lord on par with other archfiends.

Sha'gahr

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil)

Hit Dice:	16d8+144 (216 hp)
Initiative:	+8
Speed:	40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class:	30 (–1 size, +5 Dex, +16 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 25
Base Attack/Grapple:	+16/+30
Attack:	Bite +25 melee (4d6+10 plus poison)
Full Attack:	Bite +25 melee (4d6+10), 2 claws +23 melee (3d6+5), and tail +23 melee (2d6+5)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Poison, spell-like abilities, *summon demon*, tail slash
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 10/good and cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 20, telepathy 100 ft., *true seeing*
Saves:	Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +14
Abilities:	Str 30, Dex 20, Con 29, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 24
Skills:	Bluff +26, Concentration +28, Diplomacy +30, Hide +13, Intimidate +28, Jump +29, Knowledge (the planes) +23, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Search +23, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +23 (+25 decipher scrolls), Spot +14, Survival +4 (+6 on other planes), Use Magic Device +23 (+25 scrolls)
Feats:	Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bullrush, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack.
Environment:	The Abyss
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	18
Treasure:	Standard coins; double goods; standard items
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	—
Level Adjustment:	—

The creature appears as a muscular, black-skinned humanoid with ferocious, slightly reptilian features. A row of spines runs from the center of its head down its back, and its teeth are long an frightening. Its eyes are deep green, occasionally flickering with yellow light. A heavy, spiked tail coils and twists nervously at its clawed feet.

Once a lord of the Abyss, Sha'gahr made the critical mistake of invading the Material Plane and, like so many others, met with defeat. His mortal body slain, Sha'gahr's spirit was thrown whence he came, where it writhed in torment for centuries before finally regaining demonic form. The dismemberment of his material body stripped Sha'gahr of most of his old powers, but he remained a potent creature nonetheless. Carving out a small domain in the Abyss, Sha'gahr began to once more make his presence known in the mortal world, inspiring the descendants of his old cult, and promising them power if they helped him to return.

Sha'gahr seeks revenge on those who have misused his corpse, and will utterly destroy anyone he finds using *Sha'gahr's Bones*. Whether retrieving the bones will restore his old powers is up to the DM — if nothing else, they will make excellent items for Sha'gahr to give loyal followers as rewards, and an army led by both the archfiend himself and the bearers of *Sha'gahr's Bones* would be a terrifying sight indeed.

Sha'gahr stands 10 feet tall, and weighs over 3,000 pounds.

Combat

Sha'gahr disdains weapons and armor, considering them cowardly — another reason that he so dislikes those who bear *Sha'gahr's Bones*. He prefers melee, but is more than savvy enough to hang back and soften up powerful foes with his mystical abilities.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 27, initial and secondary damage 2d6 Str. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will — *chaos hammer* (DC 21), *confusion* (DC 21), *project image* (DC 24), *see invisibility*, *telekinesis* (DC 22), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *unholy aura* (DC 25), *unholy blight* (DC 21). Caster level 16th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

***Summon Demon* (Sp):** Once per day Sha'gahr can attempt to summon 4d10 dretches, 2d4 hezrou, or 1d4 nalfeshnee with a 50% chance of success, or 1–2 marilith with a 20% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

Tail Slash (Ex): If Sha'gahr successfully hits with his tail attack, the victim must make a DC 18 Fortitude save. If the save is a failure, the target has had a major artery or vein severed, and continues to take 1d6 points of damage due to bleeding each round thereafter, until a *cure* spell or successful DC 15 Heal check is made.

***True Seeing* (Su):** Sha'gahr continuously uses this ability, as the spell (caster level 16th).

Siege Hound of Dhula'zar

The Scourge of Flavia, the Sultan's Pet
By C.A. Suleiman

The Tale of the Siege Hound

Long ago, in the far off Sultanate of Flavia, there lived a monster. No giant or genie, this, nor any of the other foul entities one finds in the tales Flavians tell their children round the fire. No, this monster took the shape of an ordinary man; and indeed, the monster *was* a man… but far from ordinary.

Dhula'zar was the sultan's grand vizier — his most trusted advisor on matters both tactical and mystical. That Dhula'zar was wise, none could argue. That he was a powerful sorcerer, none would dare contend. That the grand vizier was *evil*, however, was a matter of some debate. Certainly, he struck a most imposing, and even unsettling figure: Pale of skin and oddly gaunt for a noble, where most Flavians were duskly complected and round of face, and mostly humorless, with a public persona rivaled only by the sultan's headsman for sheer popularity. Certainly, Grand Vizier Dhula'zar fit the role of sinister counselor to a tee.

But to understand the story of Dhula'zar's mighty construct, one must understand the context in which the wizened vizier lived. During his lifetime, the Sultanate of Flavia knew no peace. More a loose confederacy of cities than a single kingdom, the domain of the sultan was forever beset by a steady cavalcade of would-be conquerors, usurpers and pretenders from cities beyond the "capital," but still inside the boundaries of the sultanate. Few outside his immediate region respected his authority or right to rule — the kiss of death in a culture such as his.

Claiming a desire to put an end to the endless border skirmishes and assassination attempts, Dhula'zar asked the sultan for leave to create a powerful artifact, one that he promised would finally bring peace to the lands of Flavia. Armed with all the resources at both his and the sultan's disposal, Dhula'zar set to work on a project that would take him the better part of a decade to complete.

During this time, even the vizier's family was kept ignorant of his work. Dhula'zar's son, a boy of just 10 summers when the work was begun, had to spend his formative years denied access to his father's laboratory, and therefore to his father. Consumed with his work as he was, Dhula'zar basically missed (among other things) his only son's transition from man-child into man.

Perhaps in an attempt to atone for his absenteeism, the first thing Dhula'zar did when his creation was complete was to invite his son into his laboratory for the first time. There, the elder man revealed the face of the thing that had demanded so much of him for so long: A massive siege weapon formed in the shape of a bloodhound, the sultan's favorite animal and the totemic image of his domain.

After his awe had subsided some, the younger man inquired as to the thing's purpose. At this, the elder smiled and replied, "It is the greatest deterrent this land has ever known."

"Deterrent to what?" came the reply.

"To war."

Dhula'zar went on to explain that his intent was never to put the *Siege Hound* to use in the waging of war, but merely to protect the existing borders and dissuade would-be invaders from thoughts of conquest. His mightiest creation was never meant to step foot beyond the boundaries of the sultan's home region. As if in reply, his son demanded a toast — in honor of the great occasion — and produced a skin filled with the finest wine in all the land. The two men stepped aboard the massive siege engine and drank from the skin in celebration, as father and son.

Moments later, Dhula'zar grasped his throat in agony, the empty wineskin falling to the floor of the construct's interior. And there, on that very spot, the very essence of betrayal and confusion burned into his features, did Dhula'zar die gasping… at the feet of his son: The monster of Flavia.

The scion of the greatest friend the sultanate had ever known then used his father's creation to usurp the throne and declare himself sultan, ushering in the bloodiest era in an already war-torn land's bloody history. Following his death, the *Siege Hound* was lost for a time, only to reappear in the hands of yet another petty tyrant, who used the artifact for similar means… and met similar ends. And so it continued for an age, the *Siege Hound of Dhula'zar* resurfacing every few generations to draw yet another blood-minded conqueror into repeating history.

Studying the Siege Hound

The *Siege Hound of Dhula'zar* appears to be an absolutely enormous canine — it most closely resembles a blood-

hound, should the viewer know enough to be discerning — composed of pointed steel and wood. The metal of its body bears a russet tone, as though in the early stages of oxidization, and wherever its dense wood shows through is dark, near black. Its body length exceeds 120 feet, with a tail that stretches nearly half as long, ending in a spike-covered cylindrical knot. The colossal construct weighs in excess of 800 tons, and its interior (composed of a head/"cockpit" separated by a long, open "belly") can hold up to 30 Large, 120 Medium, 480 Small, or 1,920 Tiny creatures.

Once one has found the artifact, *detect magic* discerns incredibly strong auras of conjuration, necromancy and transmutation magics. *True seeing* reveals nothing of note, at first, but a successful DC 20 Spot check draws the viewer's attention to the massive construct's eyes, which glow an almost invisible trace of red.

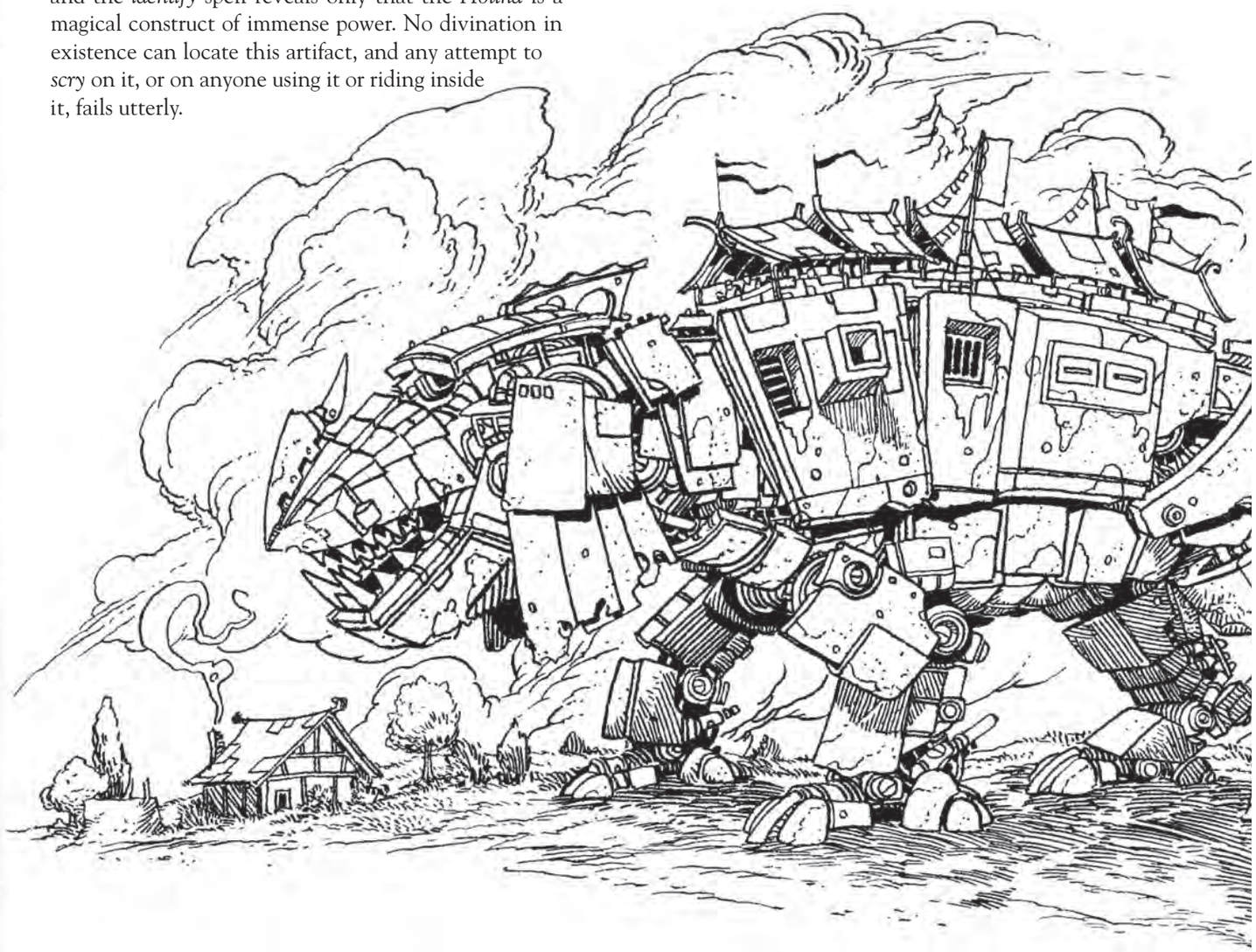
Other divinations are all but fruitless when directed at or about the *Siege Hound*. Spells such as *detect evil* reveal absolutely nothing, as though the spell itself was at fault, and the *identify* spell reveals only that the *Hound* is a magical construct of immense power. No divination in existence can locate this artifact, and any attempt to *scry* on it, or on anyone using it or riding inside it, fails utterly.

Powers of the Siege Hound

The source of many legends in and of itself, the *Siege Hound* has reached nearly mythic status in and around the lands of Flavia, and were it not for the copious evidence it left behind, many would doubt that it ever really existed at all. The bulk of its power comes from its composition — the *Hound* is one of the most devastating siege weapons ever constructed — but it does have a number of other abilities that its master can call upon, which go hand-in-hand with its primary use.

Using the Hound

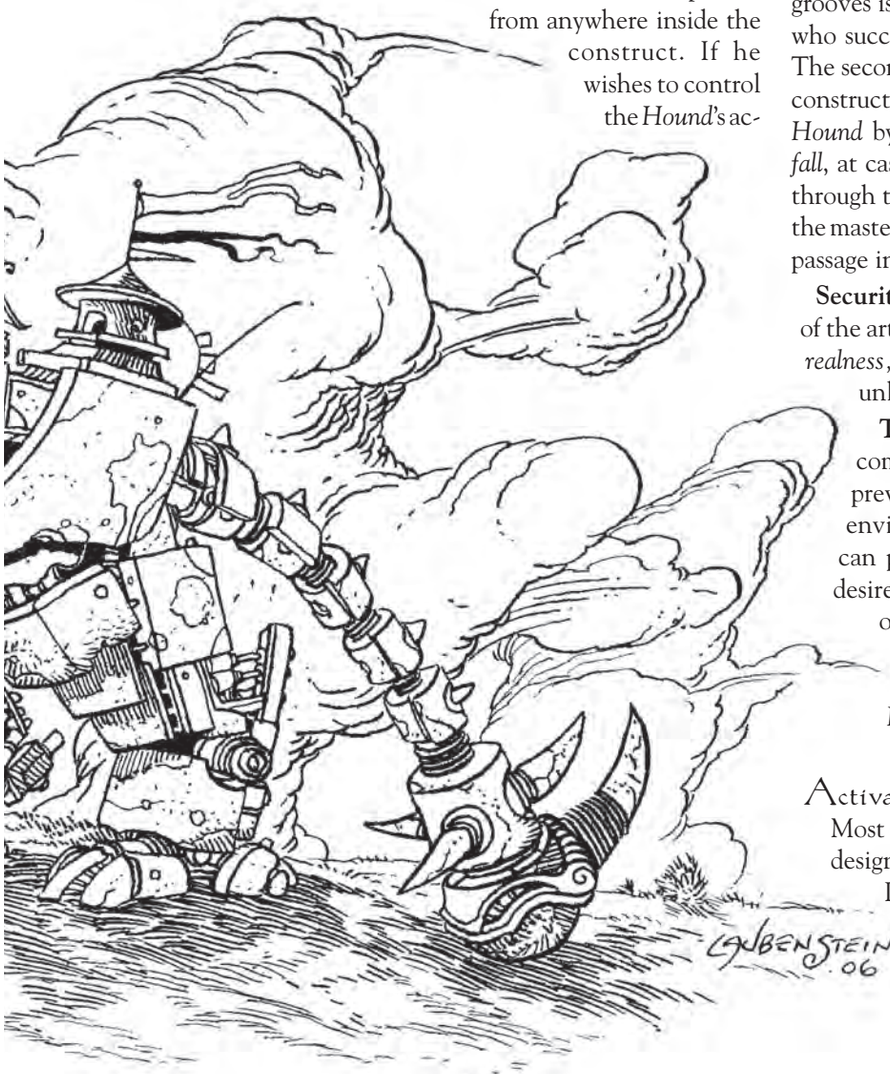
Few who encounter the *Siege Hound* realize just what it is they're getting into (both literally and figuratively). This artifact is much more than an ordinary(!) colossal construct, for the enraged essence of its betrayed creator still haunts the mountain of wood and steel which became his tomb. Dhula'zar's tortured soul now animates his greatest creation from beyond the grave, giving it even an greater power, intelligence… and purpose.



Technically, all the *Siege Hound* requires in order to operate is a master; a driven owner whose bloody will might be done by means of the construct's might. While the artifact is without a master, any sentient being can sit in either of the two bound leather chairs that sit within the construct's head, one behind each quartz-like eye, and command the construct to ambulate. A full 24 hours after this initial activation, the artifact is considered bonded to such an individual, who thereby becomes the *Siege Hound's* master.

The *Hound* itself plays the largest role in determining who its new master will be. For a machine of its size, it is remarkably difficult to track down (thanks in part to its ability to *teleport*), and has a tendency to draw precisely the sort of master it likes. To wit, a worthy master is likely to come across the construct with its tail to the ground and its aft door ajar, as though waiting to be boarded (see below for more on means of entry). By contrast, an unwanted would-be master finds the *Siege Hound* most uninviting, with tail aloft and no hint displayed as to how to board or operate the machine.

Once inside the artifact, the master can command any of the *Hound*'s activated powers from anywhere inside the construct. If he wishes to control the *Hound*'s actual movements, he must do so from within the "cockpit" in the head.



Constant Powers

Aside from the traits listed below, the *Siege Hound* has a number of powerful magics in effect that pertain to its inherent design and structural integrity.

Clarity: The massive construct's quartz-like eyes are, for all intents and purposes, twin *gems of seeing*. Anyone looking out through them perceives everything as though operating under the effects of a *true seeing* spell. Thus may the master see through darkness and illusion, notice secret doors, and attack targets under the effects of *blur, displacement, polymorph* and similar effects.

Entry: Only two means of ingress may be found on the *Siege Hound*. Both are magical portals similar in effect to a *phase door*, each measuring 5 feet by 7 feet. The first is located just above the base of the tail, at the back of the artifact. The top side of the tail is fitted with grooves, allowing those who step onto it while its knot rests on the ground to walk up the tail to the door. Seeing these grooves is difficult (DC 25 Spot check), and even those who succeed see no method of entry from the outside. The second such door is located on the underside of the construct, mid-way along its "belly." Anyone leaving the *Hound* by means of either portal is affected by *feather fall*, at caster level 20. Those inside the *Hound* can see through these doors as though they were glass, and only the master may activate the *phase* effect, thereby allowing passage into or out of the artifact.

Security: No creature or object can enter the interior of the artifact by means of *teleport, dimension door, ethereal ness, gate* or any other such means of conveyance unless the master wishes it.

Temperance: The interior of the *Siege Hound* is comfortable and well-lit, regardless of any outside prevailing conditions. Ventilation is perfect, and no environmental effect, be it wind, gas, rain, or other, can penetrate to the interior without the express desire of the artifact's master. In addition, the interior of the hound is mystically stabilized to mitigate the deleterious effects of inertia. Thus do those within remain on sure footing even while the *Hound* flails about in combat.

Activated Powers

Most of the *Siege Hound's* power comes from its very design; it is an exceptionally mighty weapon of war. It does have a few activated powers, however, each of which may be called on by the master's silent act of will alone.

Eyes of Woe: Three times per day, the master of the *Siege Hound* can command the

Researching the Siege Hound

Outside the lands of Flavia, the legend of Dhula'zar's *Siege Hound* is a cautionary tale, at best, and usually little more than a campfire myth. Those in and around the sultanate know better, however, and can research the truth of the mighty artifact's history. The *Siege Hound* has spawned many stories, mostly apocryphal, but detailed histories of the sultan's time contain some useful data.

Anyone with Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge may attempt to research the *Siege Hound*. Specific truths about the artifact are most difficult to learn.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The grand vizier to a sultan in a bygone age crafted a siege weapon so potent that it brought to ruin everyone with whom it came into contact.
20	The *Siege Hound* was the creation of a mighty sorcerer named Dhula'zar, who lived just long enough to die inside it. Since then, the artifact has turned up in the hands of several war-mongering tyrants, all of whom met bloody ends.
25	The *Siege Hound* is rumored to curse all those who seek to control it, driving them to destroy everything they hold dear by giving them what they want.
30+	Part of the *Siege Hound's* power rests in the fact that it is nigh impervious to magic and to all but a specific type of physical damage. (The character finds a reference to it being damaged only by magically-imbued, adamantine weapons.) The artifact is almost impossible to destroy. (Provide the player with one or more of the methods of destruction given below.) Those who employ the *Siege Hound* in the destruction of life and property are irretrievably doomed to an early grave.

The purposes and powers of the *Siege Hound* are largely self-evident, so most any misinformation about it usually has to do with its long history and/or with the nature of the "curse" that falls upon its masters. Quite a few stories link the *Siege Hound* to the *Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan*, as both are mighty engines of war that often bring disaster upon their users. In truth, the two artifacts function in very different ways, to very different purpose, and have little in common beyond the superficial — though it is feasible (albeit it very unlikely, given the distances involved) that Dhula'zar was partly inspired by a tale of the Juggernaut.

A few of the more amusing and enduring rumors are as follows:

• The *Siege Hound* is actually a "living" construct, and the reason it turns its masters into such warmongers is because it "feeds" on the souls of those it destroys in the heat of battle.

• The magical and mundane blueprints for the *Siege Hound* were bestowed upon Dhula'zar by means of an infernal pact he made. Thus, a fiendish entity resides in the massive construct, ensuring the downfall of those who would be its master.

• In order to destroy the *Siege Hound*, one must first gain control of it and then command the construct to destroy him, after which the construct will crumble to dust. (In the event that the DM uses the "direct ancestor" method of destruction — see below — this rumor is close to truth but not actual truth, as even then, not just any master can destroy the artifact in this manner, but only a direct descendant.)

construct's gem eyes to surge with power, letting loose a massive charge that sends electric death coruscating between multiple opponents on the battlefield. This effect is mechanically identical to a *chain lightning* spell (caster level 20th; DC 25 Reflex save for half), and requires one standard action.

Howl: Once every 1d4 rounds, the *Siege Hound* can let loose a hideous baying noise, similar in style to the howl of a true bloodhound. The sound itself is horrid, sounding like nothing so much as a deafening cacophony of agonized human voices, tearing through the area like a hurricane. The artifact usually has to choose to either howl *or* use its attack routine, but not both. Should the construct be *hasted*, however (see Immunities and Resistances, below), it can howl as a move-equivalent action, allowing it to also attack physically in the same round. All creatures within 100 feet of the hound (but not inside it) when it howls must make a DC 32 Fortitude save. Those who fail suffer 10d6 points of sonic damage, and are stunned for 1 round and deafened for 4d6 rounds. A successful save negates the stunning and halves both the damage and the duration of the deafness. Loose objects within

range are treated as though hit by a *shatter* spell (caster level 20). If the *Hound's* master instructs it to focus the howl at a particular object, not only does the damage ignore any hardness, but the *Hound* receives the usual Strength check (with a +16 bonus due to size) to see if the howl "breaks" the object completely (see Breaking Items, *PHB*, p.167).

Soldier's Feast: The owner of the *Siege Hound* can conjure up supplies with which to nourish himself and any others the body of the construct might hold. Three times per day, he may invoke an effect identical to a *create food and water* spell (caster level 20th), except that the food and water appear with and upon a long, narrow table that stretches nearly the length of the construct's interior. When the meal is over, or at any point thereafter, the master may dismiss the table, as well as the many chairs, plates, and cups that arrived with the supplies.

Consequences

Once a sentient being has claimed the *Siege Hound* for his own, he begins to grow obsessed with the very essence of conquest, and seeks to use the artifact to wage violent, bloody war. While a given master might initially have honorable intentions (most often the legitimate defense of a homeland against foreign invaders), the appetite for conquest is never sated so long as one retains ownership of the artifact. In the earlier example, the master will feel compelled to advance into enemy territory even after the immediate threat is beaten back.

This trend continues until one of three things happens: 1) The master dies; 2) the artifact is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points; 3) there is nothing left to conquer. Regardless of which occurs, the *Siege Hound* reacts by vanishing in an instant, leaving everything and everyone in it behind (and over 40 feet in the air!). As there is always more territory to conquer, the first two circumstances are by far the most common. Usually, the master is slain while beyond the artifact's protection, but in a few cases, the artifact has been reduced to 0 hit points in combat, whereupon it vanished, leaving the startled master dangling in mid-air — and dead shortly thereafter.

Using the Siege Hound in a Campaign

Given its power, the *Siege Hound* will likely see use only in high-level or high-powered campaigns. It's certainly possible for a weaker villain to acquire the artifact, but so long as he takes care not to leave it at the wrong time, he'll pose much too high a challenge for any PCs of equivalent level. Presented below are a pair of adventure ideas, one of which suggest an effective means of using the artifact in a low-level campaign.

Adventure Seeds

The Mouse That Roared

A villain of otherwise meager capabilities has happened upon the current location of the *Siege Hound*, and word of his intentions has spread to one of his primary rivals. This rival approaches the PCs wearing a mask of good, and asks them to prevent the artifact from falling into the hands of such "villainous scum." In reality, he aims to secure the artifact for himself. The characters must uncover the truth, and if they are too late, subsequently contend with the monster they've enabled.

Sins of the Fathers

A man who claims to be the last living descendant of Dhula'zar approaches the PCs with a curious story: He claims that he has uncovered the means by which his forebear's evil might be cleansed at last from the earth, but that he needs help in locating the artifact. Is the man who he claims to be? And if so, is he really seeking out the *Hound* in order to destroy it, or does he want to keep it for himself, and in so doing, reclaim his birthright as the conqueror of his people?

Destroying the Siege Hound

Although once a simple if powerful tool, the *Siege Hound* is now a sentient entity of evil, and worse still, practically indestructible. It has powerful damage reduction that can only be overcome by very specific items, and like other constructs, is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. Unlike most constructs, however, it is even immune to magic that does not allow spell resistance, and even potent spells like *miracle* and *wish* only grant physical weapons the capability to bypass its damage reduction for 1 round/level of the caster. And even when it is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer, the artifact vanishes instantly rather than being destroyed. For all intents and purposes, the following methods are the only possible means of destroying the *Siege Hound* for good.

- The easiest but also the riskiest method of destruction is to draw the *Siege Hound* into the area of a *dimensional lock* spell, where it can be destroyed without fear of it disappearing before the deed is done. Doing so is risky for two reasons: First, both the *Hound* and its master become aware of the presence of the *dimensional lock* from the moment they enter, and so must be prevented from leaving the area through traditional means. Second, destroying the artifact in this manner neither frees nor contains Dhula'zar's essence, which will emerge to dominate a nearby host upon its vessel's destruction (see below).
- A direct descendant of Dhula'zar must gain control of the artifact and bring it to the very spot where Dhula'zar was betrayed, on the anniversary of his death. The descendant must then command the *Siege Hound* to kill him, and allow it to do so. If he does, the artifact must obey, and upon the

death of the descendant, the *Siege Hound* releases one final howl and then explodes, as detailed below.

• Somehow discern the location of the place where the artifact will go when next it "dies" (i.e., uses its Self-Preservation ability; see below), and then send it there by force. When the construct arrives, a *hallow* spell in the area briefly prevents the construct from reconstituting its form. In that moment, cast *soul bind* to pull Dhula'zar's essence from the *Hound*, resulting in the destruction of the artifact.

As a rule, if the *Siege Hound* is somehow reduced to 0 or fewer hit points while simultaneously prevented from using its Self-Preservation ability, it lets fly one final Howl (see above, but treat as though a Maximized spell effect) and then explodes in a storm of steel and splintered wood. Anyone within 100 yards of the *Hound* when it shatters is diced by shrapnel, dealing 22d6 points of damage (DC 32 Reflex save for half) that ignores all spell resistance and damage reduction (except DR X/—).

To make matters worse, those who survive this explosion are subjected to an additional assault. Unless special pains have been taken (such as *protection from evil* spells), anyone who suffers damage from the artifact's explosion must then make a DC 32 Will save or suffer an effect similar to a permanent *magic jar* spell, as Dhula'zar's newly freed essence attempts to take over. If multiple characters survive to fail this Will save, Dhula'zar's essence picks the most powerful among them to inhabit (the others suffer no ill effect from failing their Will saves, and indeed, will never be consciously aware that anything else occurred). The chosen character's soul is shunted into the largest piece of the shrapnel that assailed him, though Dhula'zar himself may be unaware of this fact. If all characters succeed on their Will saves, or if no sentient beings are within range at that moment, Dhula'zar's soul is utterly — finally — annihilated forever.

Dhula'zar's essence only partly survives within the *Hound*. The victim of this possession takes on the personality and alignment (lawful evil) of the ancient mage, but retains all his own abilities and attributes.

Stats for the Siege Hound

As an artifact, the *Siege Hound* possesses abilities that can be called forth on command, as outlined above. Yet the monstrous machine is also technically a construct, one of the mightiest ever crafted. The statistics provided below do not, of course, take into account the tactics or capabilities of any passengers aboard the *Hound*.

The Siege Hound of Dhula'zar

Colossal Construct

Hit Dice:	44d10+80 (520 hp)
Initiative:	+0
Speed:	60 ft. (12 squares)
Armor Class:	50 (–8 size, +38 natural, +10 deflection), touch 12, flat-footed 50
Base Attack/Grapple:	+33/+68
Attack:	Bite +45 melee (4d8+19 plus 2d6 electricity/19–20)
Full Attack:	2 bites +45 melee (4d8+19 plus 2d6 electricity/19–20) and 2 claws +42 melee (4d6+9 plus 2d6 electricity/19–20) and tail slap +42 melee (4d6+28 plus 2d6 electricity/19–20)
Space/Reach:	30 ft./30 ft.
Special Attacks:	Charged hull, crush, tail sweep, plus artifact abilities as listed above
Special Qualities:	Construct traits, damage reduction 15/adamantine and magic, fast healing 10, immunities, resistances, scent, self-preservation
Saves:	Fort +15, Ref +15, Will +17
Abilities:	Str 48, Dex 10, Con —, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 6
Skills:	Balance +15, Jump +40, Listen +22, Spot +22, Survival +20
Feats:	Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Critical (claws), Improved Critical (tail), Improved Overrun, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Tail Sweep Knockdown, Track, Weapon Focus (bite)
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Unique
Challenge Rating:	23
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always neutral evil
Advancement:	—
Level Adjustment:	—

The thing before you is almost too large for your mind even to comprehend. It stands as a great hound, larger than a dragon, constructed of black wood and sharp metal edges. Its eyes gleam in the light, and the ground trembles beneath its tread.

The *Hound* is a weapon of war, and though it possesses its own intellect, it rarely makes that fact obvious, behaving in almost all respects as another mindless construct. The *Hound* cannot speak or communicate directly with its master.

Combat

The *Siege Hound* is intelligent enough to negotiate even complicated battle scenarios without guidance, but typically allows its master to direct its motions. When used as a siege weapon proper, the artifact uses its Howl ability (see above) whenever capable of doing so, until the enemy's defenses are breached, whereupon it charges through the breach, laying waste to anything it encounters. Against multiple individual opponents, the massive

construct prefers to rely on its crush and tail sweep attacks, to better maximize the efficiency of its attacks. Unless it finds reason not to, the construct makes liberal use of its Power Attack feat, typically subtracting 25 from its attack rolls and adding 25 to damage rolls.

Charged Hull (Ex): The exterior of the *Siege Hound* is supercharged with electricity, and audibly thrums with its power. Any creature engaging it in melee suffers an additional 2d6 points of electricity damage per strike, and grappling with it (or climbing on it) inflicts 2d6 points of electricity damage per round. The artifact's master is immune to this effect, and can turn it on or off as a free action.

Crush (Ex): The *Hound* can make a crush attack by leaping up and landing upon foes; this requires a full-round action. The crush effects an area the full size of the artifact — that is, 30 ft. by 30 ft. All Large or smaller opponents within this space take 4d8+28 points of bludgeoning and piercing damage, and must succeed on a DC 41 Reflex save or be pinned. Whether the save is made or not, targets remain in the same space due to the size differential. Pinned characters cannot move and take a –4 penalty to Armor Class, but are not helpless. On its turn, a pinned character may try to escape by succeeding in either an opposed grapple check (as a melee attack) or an Escape Artist check (as a standard action). On its turn, the *Siege Hound's* master may choose to maintain the pin or release pinned creatures. If he opts to maintain the pin, he makes a single grapple check opposed by grapple checks made by each pinned creature. Those who win this grapple check take no damage, while those who are bested suffer full crush damage again. If the controller decides not to maintain the pin, he can make the artifact act normally, without regard to the creatures that share its space (since they are at least three sizes smaller than it is). The construct must succeed on a DC 52 Jump check in order to crush Large opponents if it has no running start.

Tail Sweep (Ex): During a tail sweep attack, the construct's master chooses half of the area it threatens with its tail slap attack — a semicircle with a radius of 40 feet. All Medium and smaller creatures within the area are targeted at once. Affected creatures take 3d8+28 (plus 2d6 points of electricity damage), or half that amount if they make a successful DC 41 Reflex save. Due to its Tail Sweep Knockdown feat, all creatures who fail their saving throws are knocked prone.

Immunities and Resistances (Ex): The *Siege Hound* is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. A magical attack that deals no fewer than 15 hit points of electricity damage grants the mighty construct a *haste* effect for 3 full rounds, and causes its Charged Hull ability to maximize (meaning it inflicts 12 points of damage rather than 2d6) during that time. A magical attack that deals fire damage heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. The colossal artifact is, of course, immune to elemental attacks of a mundane nature (as well as to the *haste* spell proper). Despite its appearance, the artifact is immune to all rust attacks, whether magical or otherwise, be it the touch of a rust monster or a *rusting grasp* spell.

Self-Preservation (Ex): Should the *Siege Hound* suffer an attack that would reduce it to 0 or fewer hit points, the entire artifact disappears in an instant, leaving any passengers behind in the process. Since most passengers tend to ride inside the "head" or "belly," this means they suddenly find themselves in the air, 40 feet off the ground. (A subsequent fall inflicts 4d6 points of damage.) When the artifact abandons its owner in this way, it does so for good, and will never again reenter his service, not even if he finds a way to relocate the thing. Where and when the *Hound* reappears (*if* it reappears) is entirely up to the DM.

Skiff of the Ferryman

Dead Man's Barge, Charon's Skiff
By Ari Marmell

The Tale of the Skiff of the Ferryman

Although it makes no claim to consistency with actual mythology, the following tale uses traditional names out of Greek myth for the sake of familiarity. The DM is encouraged to change any or all of them as necessary to fit the tale more smoothly into the religious myths of her own campaign setting.

In the earliest of ages, when the first race of man was new and even the gods yet ignorant of some of the ways of the world, death first came among the populace. And with the first death came the birth of mortality itself, the notion of a finite lifespan with something more to follow in another world. The gods had anticipated this, for they knew that only they were eternal, but they did not truly *understand* it. In a realm deep beneath the earth, so far from the heights of their home on Mount Olympus that distance became meaningless, they set aside a place for these souls, and they named that realm Hades after the god who would reign over it.

But the gods did not understand the limits of the mortal soul. As an ever-greater number of lives ended, the souls of the departed wandered the material world, ignorant of the paths they must take to reach the shores of Hades. The gods heard the laments of the dead, and the cries of the living who encountered their deceased loved ones. And to Hermes, their messenger, they assigned the task of guiding the lost souls to the banks of the River Styx, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Yet Hermes could not cross the Styx, for he was not permitted to enter the territory of the god Hades without express consent. The dead lined up along the banks of the Styx, in endless lines and hundreds of rows deep, and wailed at the heavens. Some tried to go back; most of these grew lost on the way, for the path to the Styx is twisted and harrowing, but some indeed returned home as ghosts. Others attempted to swim the mystic waters of the Styx, and were lost beneath its inky surface.

For many a year, the plight of the dead went unheeded. There was one among mortals, however, who heard their cries. His name was Charon, and he was the world's greatest hunter, unsurpassed until many ages later, when Orion would walk the earth. It is said that the hunter Charon could hear the voices of fish swimming in a stream, spot a garter snake among a full-grown field of wheat, or track the footsteps of a spider across bare rock. And so could he, and only he, hear the calls of the souls from the distant Styx, and watch them as they walked their futile path on Hermes' heels.

Long years passed, and Charon ignored the plight of the dead, for he had on his mind other and more immediate concerns. Eventually, however, the hunter began to grow old. He was not yet weak, not yet helpless, but he was perhaps less swift than once he was, his arrows slightly less sure. And then, facing his own inevitable end, Charon determined to learn what sad fate awaited him in the afterlife, and to take what steps he could to counter it.

Charon traveled one end of the world to the other, seeking a means to increase his own already astounding senses to rival the gods themselves. Eventually, he came across the Graiae, the three old sisters whom Perseus would visit in a later age, during his quest for Medusa's lair. As that famous hero did after him, Charon stole from the hags their one eye. Adding their vision to his own, Charon saw sights no mortals could possibly comprehend. Lurking by a nearby gallows until the next execution, he watched as Hermes collected the soul of the condemned, and he tracked the flying god across the sky itself, until he arrived at the banks of the Styx.

Swiftly, he determined that it was the river itself that barred the dead from Hades. He set a foot in the waters, and felt a deep tug at his flesh and soul, the presence of things in the black neither fish nor animal. Scrambling back upon the shore and gliding through the crowd of the assembled dead, the hunter strode along the bank until he found a mighty cypress. Though he carried only his bronze hand axe, Charon's muscles were not yet dulled by age, and after many hours of flying splinters, the black and twisted tree toppled to the shore. He set to, then, with hammer and blade. Days past, as the intangible dead looked on, until finally Charon slid the newly made skiff into the murky waters of the Styx. Instantly the wailing spirits surged toward the boat, but the hunter pushed off from the shore before they could attempt to board.

Even as he approached the far shore of the Styx, Charon could feel the weight of divine presence pressing down on him, for none other than Hades, Lord of the Dead, awaited him on the other side. In a cold and emotionless voice that seemed to reverberate from deep within the

earth, the god spoke to Charon, congratulating him on his ingenuity. "We have been watching," Hades told him, "my brothers from on high, and I from below, to see if any mortal soul would overcome the hurdle you found before you. You are the first, and you are yet among the living. You shall return, then, and spend your remaining days among the living telling them of your feat here today. Then shall they know how to cross the Styx, and others will come and build ships for the dead. The living shall ferry the dead, that they know what is to come in the life that awaits, and that they may spend their last moments with those they love."

Charon did, indeed, return with word of his accomplishment. Yet he offered not his tale for free, but demanded in his pride that those who would learn of his feat must pay, and grant him the homage he felt was his due. And so did he pass his last years, extorting coins from the living that he might tell them how to grant rest to the dead.

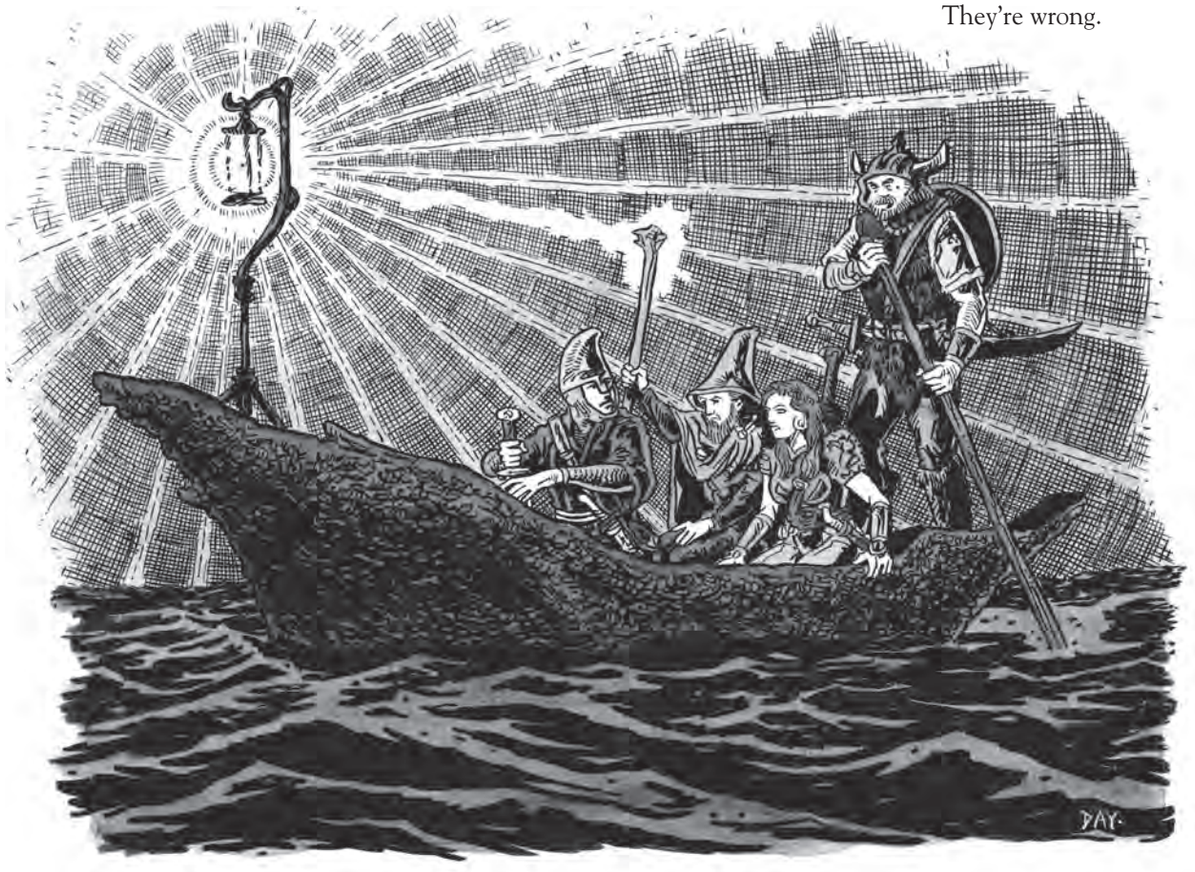
When at last Charon's time finally came, and he laid down in his bed for his final sleep, Hermes did not come to him. The great hunter waited, for days upon days, and still his guide did not come. Finally, Charon's spirit made its own way to the banks of the Styx, for he had been there before and he never forgot a path. There Hades himself stood upon the bank. All the other skiffs made by the living for their dead loved ones were shattered upon the shore, or slowly sinking into the Styx. Only Charon's own skiff, the very first, bobbed slowly in the currents. Charon stared at the Lord of the Dead, as Hades handed to him a long and slender pole.

"You did not as you were bidden," Hades told him, no anger in his voice but merely cold disdain. "What you were commanded to reveal, you hoarded for the promise of gold. From this day forth, so long as mortals live and die, you and you alone shall serve as ferryman to the dead. You shall never know rest, nor succor, not in Hades, not in Elysium, not in the mortal realm. You shall stand not on solid ground, but only upon the rocking boat, and you shall know no world but the Styx."

Thus did Charon become the Ferryman of legend, his only purpose to carry the souls of the dead across the Styx. Yet Hades was perhaps not as precise in his pronouncement as he might have been, for still does Charon, in his frustration and his spite and his pride, demand payment from the souls of the deceased, and those who cannot pay yet stand stranded on the banks of the Styx.

A very few particularly thorough scholars, however, cannot help but notice that the various myths of Charon speak of a barge large enough to carry a dozen souls, or more. Yet detailed variants of this tale suggest the skiff Charon carved with his own hands was less than half that size. Most of these sages assume the legends are simply inconsistent, as legends tend to be, and that the discrepancy has no greater meaning behind it.

They're wrong.



Researching the Skiff of the Ferryman

Anyone with the slightest bit of religious or philosophical expertise has likely heard of the Ferryman, in whatever form he takes in your campaign. Only a few know that his original skiff has its own powers, however, or that the Ferryman has long since abandoned it for a larger craft. The following information is available through the use of Knowledge (religion). Knowledge (the planes) and Bardic Knowledge suffice as well, though this adds +5 to the DC.

DC	Knowledge Available
5	The Ferryman shuttles the souls of the dead into the afterlife.
20	The Ferryman was a mortal hunter who discovered how to cross into the afterlife and tried to sell the secret to others. He was punished with an eternity of ferrying the dead across the Styx.
25	The character knows all the details presented above (or whatever details fit the campaign world), except for the last bit about the potential existence of two skiffs.
30+	The Ferryman's first skiff yet drifts aimlessly on the waters of the Styx. It can appear on any coast, on any bank, and at any pier. Travelers can use it to traverse the planes, but the skiff doesn't always go where it is steered.

Knowledge of the *Skiff* itself (as a separate entity from the boatman) is so rare, little misinformation has had the opportunity to spread. Still, a failed roll might make the character believe only one skiff exists — this is, after all, the common belief — or that only the dead can set foot on the barge.

Studying the Skiff

Casual study reveals the *Skiff* to be a small craft of relatively mundane build. Clearly crafted from a single large piece of wood, it has a flat bottom and high sides. The rear of the craft is slightly raised, providing a spot for the boatman to stand. A small hole in the raised portion offers a spot to place the pole, where it stands until needed. The wood of the *Skiff* is exceedingly dark, almost black. The coloring appears natural, not painted, and is actually the result of being steeped in the waters of the Styx. The wood is worn smooth near and below the waterline, and rough at the upper edges, but it is impossibly sturdy. In fact, though it floats like normal wood, it offers a sensation of strength and mass to the touch, as though made of something far heavier.

The *Skiff* smells faintly musty, like any wooden vessel left overlong in the water, with just a hint of a more pervasive, earthy smell. While the scent is not specifically one of rot, it carries a reminder of death and is disturbing on a fundamental level.

When viewed under the auspices of *detect magic*, the *Skiff* emits an overwhelming aura of conjuration, with elements of necromancy. Under normal circumstances, the *Skiff* cannot be detected by any other divination spells. If the caster is unusually close to death, however, other divination spells function perfectly, enabling these individuals to find the *Skiff*. In this instance, "close to death" means one of the following:

- Undead.
- At 0 hit points or below.
- Currently suffering a number of negative levels, due to necromantic or death effects, equal to one-half or more of the character's total Hit Dice.

The dead (including undead) can sense the presence of the *Skiff* within one mile. Any corpse spoken to via *speak with dead* knows of its presence within this radius, even if this is knowledge the individual did not have when alive.

Powers of the Skiff

While the *Skiff* has some unusual traits, its only true "power" is to transport its passengers across the waters of the Styx — and across the boundaries between worlds.

Using the Skiff

The *Skiff of the Ferryman* works just like a normal boat of its type. One individual stands on the raised area at the back, and pushes the boat along with the long pole. The pole is 10 feet long, but the magic of the artifact allows it to function in deeper waters, as described below. In bodies of water too deep for the pole, the *Skiff* can be rowed, but the passengers must supply their own oars.

Passengers who attempt to use the *Skiff* without a destination in mind are in for a rather nasty shock. See below.

Constant Powers

The *Skiff* remains relatively stable, no matter how violent the water or how vicious the wind. Casters need not make Concentration checks when casting aboard the vessel. Furthermore, every passenger in the *Skiff* is protected from attack by any creature in the water below it, so long as they do not lean over the sides. Limbs extended from the water are prevented from crossing onto the boat as if by an invisible wall, and hurled weapons bounce off that same mystical barrier. Should any passenger extend a limb over the side, however, or launch any sort of attack at the aquatic creatures, the protection fails for *all* passengers for 24 hours. Further,

this protection does not function against flying creatures, or attacks launched from shore.

Activated Powers

The powers of the *Skiff* are activated through simple use. One individual stands in the back and begins poling the vessel through the water. While the pole is only 10 feet long, its magic allows it to function in water up to 30 feet deep, as though it was mystically extending itself. In deeper water, the passengers can row, but a single individual must still stand in the back, with the pole in the water, for the *Skiff*'s magic to function.

Put simply, the *Skiff* has the power to travel between worlds. It can transport its passengers to alternate worlds of the Material Plane, or to the Lower or Upper Planes. This journey takes days, but the precise length of time varies based on starting point and destination. The first 1d12 hours of the journey, and the last 1d4 hours, appear relatively normal (for the plane in question). That is, the surrounding waters and coastlines appear typical for the sort of world or plane the *Skiff* is leaving or entering. The intervening journey, however, takes place along the distant and uncharted lengths of the Styx, as described below.

Obviously, the *Skiff* can only take its passengers to a location that sits alongside the water, be it ocean, river, or even a lake that does not seem to connect to any other bodies. If they wish to travel inland, they must dock the *Skiff* and travel overland — and hope the *Skiff* remains when they return.

The individual manning the pole must make a Knowledge (the planes) check at the start of the journey. (The DM may wish to make this roll in secret). Success indicates that the *Skiff* reaches its intended destination. For the results of a failure, see Consequences, below. Note that unlike normal skill checks, a roll of a natural 1 on this check is always a failure, and a natural 20 is always a success.

Use the following chart to determine travel time, cross-referencing starting point and destination. The number in parenthesis indicates the DC of the Knowledge (the planes) check.

The above, obviously, assumes that your campaign makes use of the traditional model of the planes. If it does not, the table can be modified to more accurately fit your world's cosmology. For instance, to continue with the familiar tropes of Greek mythology, you might substitute Hades for the Lower Planes, and Elysium (even though it was, technically, a subset of Hades) for the Upper.

Once a journey is complete, the same pilot cannot active the *Skiff* again for 48 hours.

Consequences

Mortals were not meant to steer the Ferryman's vessel, and none can do so without some risk of accident. If the Knowledge (the planes) check to guide the craft fails by 5 or less, the would-be pilot is simply incapable of leaving his starting world, and cannot try again for 48 hours. If the roll fails by 6 or more — or if it fails on a natural 1 under any circumstances — the *Skiff* does indeed leave the world, but it does not take the passengers where they wanted to go. In the case of such a mishap, the *Skiff* always takes them to the Lower Planes. (If their destination was one of the Lower Planes, it takes them to the wrong one.) This, obviously, can prove disastrous for even the most powerful of individuals, let alone an unprepared or relatively weak party.

For every 24 hours the *Skiff* is left moored to a dock (or otherwise unused), a 5% cumulative chance exists that it simply vanishes, washed away by the planar currents of the Styx. If it is dragged up onto the shore, no chance exists of it disappearing on its own — but it also does not function as a planar transport until it has spent 24 hours back in the water.

Reactive Traits

The *Skiff* seems immune to most magics. Any spells that cause direct harm, or would normally change the artifact's shape or structure — such as *warp wood* or *polymorph any object* — simply have no effect. When subject to *Morden's disjunction*, or similar magics that can specifically affect arti-

	Material Plane	**Lower Planes**	**Upper Planes**
Material Plane	1d3 days (14)[1]	2d4 days (12)	3d6 days (20)
Lower Planes	2d4 days (12)	1d3 days (10)[2]	5d6 days (30)
Upper Planes	3d6 days (20)	5d6 days (30)	1d3 days (10)[3]

[1] This indicates the time and difficulty to travel from one "alternate" Material Plane to another.

[2] This indicates the time and difficulty to travel between the various Lower Planes, such as between Hell and Hades, or between multiple layers of the Abyss.

[3] This indicates the time and difficulty to travel between the various Upper Planes.

facts, the *Skiff* instantly vanishes, swept away by the currents of the Styx. (If anyone is aboard at the time, this either adds an extra 2d2 days to their travel time, if they were already on a journey with a successful roll, or is treated as a mishap and sends them toward the Lower Planes, if the *Skiff* was not currently on a planar journey.)

Using the Skiff of the Ferryman in a Campaign

Because it is primarily a means of planar conveyance, the *Skiff* can function in almost any sort of campaign. Lower-level characters are less likely to be able to make the necessary rolls, and are in the greatest danger if they find themselves in the Lower Planes, so DMs should introduce the artifact to low-level campaigns only if they have a particular contingency in mind. (Perhaps the DM has an adventure he wants to run in which the PCs are forced to do a service for a devil who will prove to be a major villain at higher levels. A mishap with the *Skiff* provides just the opportunity, for the PCs may be forced to accept the fiend's aid to escape.) At higher levels, it provides opportunity for planar quests without the need for PCs to possess such abilities themselves.

Adventure Seeds

Dead Men Tell No Tales

The PCs discover that some piece of information they need — perhaps an ancient secret, or the true name of some demon, or even just the location of another artifact — is known only to a single soul. The individual is long dead, and prior attempts at *resurrection* have failed. Perhaps he simply has no desire to return to life, or maybe some other entity, a god or a fiend, has some hold on his soul. The PCs must travel to the Outer Planes, seeking his soul among the various afterlives, and perhaps freeing him from whatever holds his soul, so that they may ask him their question. Of course, even assuming he's willing to help, they still have to go make use of that information…

Follow the Leader

An enemy of the PCs, or perhaps a wanted fugitive, has obtained the means to travel between worlds, and only a party with their own ability to plane-shift can pursue him. Perhaps the PCs must acquire the *Skiff* to track down their foe, or perhaps it is the NPC who has the *Skiff*, and the PCs are pursuing him by other methods. In either case, the heroes must embark on a series of planar quests before finally tracking their nemesis down.

Destroying the Skiff

The *Skiff* is not a particularly dangerous artifact, except to those who try to use it and fail. Still, PCs may feel the need to destroy it, if only to prevent others from accidentally finding themselves stranded on the Lower Planes. Because the *Skiff* is immune to most damage, and capable of fleeing those spells that can harm it, only a few means of destroying it exist.

- Return to the *Skiff* to Charon, and somehow convince him that it must be destroyed, as opposed to merely set adrift once more. Charon can sink the vessel by striking it with his staff.
- The *Skiff* can be damaged, and even destroyed, by the same small axe Charon used to carve it in the first place. This requires a difficult quest, as even Charon no longer knows where the weapon is, and as it was not inherently magical, no easy way to detect it exists.
- It must be boarded by the souls of four dead gods, at which point it breaks apart and sinks beneath their spiritual weight.

New Transitive Plane: The Styx

The River Styx is, in many respects, a world unto itself. A sluggish but powerful river, it ranges from half a mile to a mile in width, and from 15 to 30 feet deep in most areas. The Styx flows through a realm largely stripped of life. The sky is gray, darkening and lightening only slightly in a mockery of day and night. Color seems leeched out of the world. The water is black, the sands and soil of the shore shades of gray and brown. Strange animals glare with hostile eyes from between gnarled and twisted trees of unrecognizable nature. Most such journeys are relatively safe, but the DM should not be afraid to throw in the occasional encounter with warped animals, depraved outsiders, or hideous aberrations.

The Styx has few discernable weather patterns. The skies are always cloudy, and occasionally a chilling rain falls, accompanied by brisk winds; but these downpours seem to occur without warning, and never increase to anything resembling a true storm.

While the river itself seems to flow at a fixed rate, travel times are inconsistent. A journey from one plane to another may take one day the first time, and three the second. The Styx connects the Material Plane, the Lower Planes, and the Upper Planes. Reaching the Upper Planes always requires traveling upriver, while reaching the Lower Planes requires traveling downriver. This is true regardless of starting point. The Material Plane is between the two; that is, upriver from the Lower Planes, and downriver from the Upper Planes.

Most scholars have heard of the Styx, and it is not incredibly difficult to research. A DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check reveals most of the information presented here.

- Infinite: The Styx never ends; travelers moving up- or downstream pass through other worlds, but they

never locate either a source or a mouth of the river itself. Travelers who leave the river and move parallel to it face seemingly limitless rolling planes of dark earth and dead trees. No matter how far they travel, however, the Styx is only one or two rises away when they turn around.

- Normal gravity.
- Normal time.
- Alterable Morphic.
- Mildly Evil-Aligned.
- Limited Magic: Spells that require access or allow access to other planes — such as the various *summoning* spells, any *teleportation* spell, *plane shift*, and the like — simply do not function on the Styx. The only way into or out of the plane is to follow the river itself.

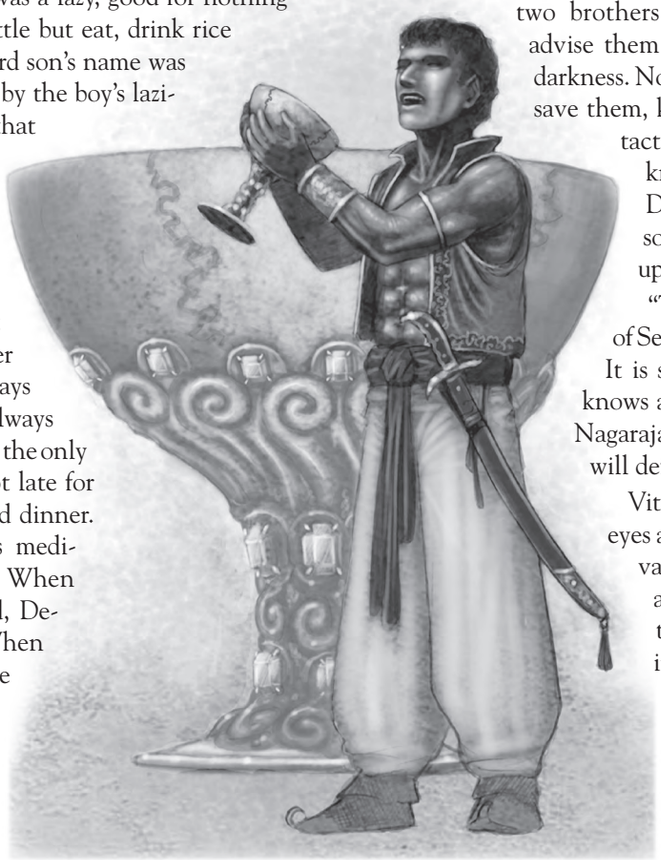
Skullcap of the Nagaraja

The Mudra of Fury, The Vessel of Wrathful Clarity, Devarjuna's Cup
By G. Holochwost

The Tale of the Skullcup of the Nagaraja

During the reign of the eighth Shi Emperor of Man, the empire had fallen into chaos. The Emperor's magistrates had grown decadent and corrupt, warlords ruled the distant places with cruelty and violence, and the thousand teachings of the great sages had become ridiculed or forgotten. It was in this age of quarrel that the Warlord Panga Zu had taken hold of the Opal City and practiced black alchemies to extend his life and secure his power. Panga Zu was a bitter being, selfish and heartless, consumed by his ego and guided by the Lords of the Endless Black.

In a neighboring village, not far from the walls of the Opal City, there was a fisherman who had three sons. His first son, Vitri, was a born warrior, strong and tough. His second son, called Udithra, was a scholar, prudent and educated. His third son was a lazy, good for nothing layabout that did very little but eat, drink rice wine, and sleep. This third son's name was Devarjuna. So frustrated by the boy's laziness was the fisherman, that he sent him far the east to live with the monks that made their home in the forest.



Devarjuna was the worst disciple the abbot of the monastery had ever seen. His robes were always wrinkled, his head was always scruffy and unshaven, and the only things Devarjuna was not late for were breakfast, lunch and dinner. When the other monks meditated, Devarjuna slept. When the other monks worked, Devarjuna day-dreamed. When the others prayed in the temple, Devarjuna was nowhere to be found. Nonetheless, Devarjuna was tolerated because his heart was good and he always *intended* to do the things he neglected. It was because his heart was open, that Devarjuna, after much reprimand and discipline, became one of the monastery's most talented monks. And although Devarjuna learned to meditate and become a skilled calligrapher, it was the arts of unarmed combat that he mastered above all else.

It was thirty years later when Devarjuna returned to his village and could barely recognize it. What was once a small fishing village had become a battered place of war, strewn with bulwarks and towers of crude construction. The village of Devarjuna's birth had been forced to take up arms against the Warlord of the Opal City, Panga Zu, who wished to subjugate or slay all who stood in his way. It was Devarjuna's own brothers, he soon learned, that lead the villagers in revolt against the dark warlord. But alas, simple peasants could not hold long against the trained raiders of Panga Zu.

So, knowing no other course, Devarjuna's two brothers had summoned him to advise them in their final moment of darkness. No sword or arrow that could save them, knew Vitri. No strategy or tactic that could wind the day, knew Udithra. And though Devarjuna, too, knew of no solution, he would not give up hope.

"The Sutras speak of a King of Serpents in the distant south. It is said he is benevolent and knows all secrets. I will go to this Nagaraja and learn the secret that will defeat Panga Zu."

Vitri and Udithra rolled their eyes at the brother. Perhaps Devarjuna had learned nothing at the monastery? Nonetheless, Devarjuna set out in search of the Victorious Secret.

After many days of travel, Devarjuna found himself lost in the jungles of the south. He had no

food and no fresh water. The plants were poisonous and to eat of animals would violate his holy vows. At the brink of despair, Devarjuna sat down in a clearing to clear his mind. It was at this moment that a beautiful woman appeared to him.

"Oh, noble monk," she addressed him, "What do you seek in this far away land?"

"I seek the Victorious Secret for the good of my home and the good of my brothers.", spoke Devarjuna, his voice cracked and trembling from exhaustion and hunger.

"Oh, child of virtuous lineage, give up this quest. It is foolish and ill-thought. No single man can know the Victorious Secret; it is for the gods alone."

Devarjuna saw into the woman's heart and knew that she was no woman at all. The monk leaped to his feat and, setting aside his fear, attacked the demon as she took her true form. With her many arms and snakelike body the creature and the monk did battle for almost an entire day, until Devarjuna, covered in her demon's blood, stood victorious.

At that moment, the smell of sweet flowers came from all around him and the shimmer of green and gold moved through the shadows. In moments, Devarjuna was in the presence of the Nagaraja and his sons and daughters.

Prostrating himself before the King of Serpents, Devarjuna waited expectedly.

"What is it you seek?" spoke the Nagaraja.

"My brothers and village are faced with a great evil, Oh Lord of Emptiness. It is said that in the vessel of your wisdom resides the Victorious Secret."

The Nagaraja grew silent and Devarjuna grew worried. But after a time, the Serpent King spoke.

"Oh good monk of clear mind and heart, listen to the Victorious Secret. Just as you have pierced the illusion of the demon's guise, so will the nectar of Victory pierce the tyranny that you and your village now face."

It was then that the Nagaraja conjured a silver kukri from nothing and placed it in Devarjuna's hands. Devarjuna was then instructed to cleave off the top of the demon's head and etch it with the mantras of his faith and the secret sigil of the Nagaraja. When the inscriptions were finished, the letters blazed for a brief moment and then vanished. The cup, once made of black demon bone, now shined like the illuminated halo of the enlightened ones.

"Fill the cup with the milk of a white cow and it shall be like Victory on the lips of your kinsman. The milk will flow till you have no need of it and this nectar will grant the strength and bravery your people need to defeat the tyrant that oppresses you."

So, it was the cup that Devarjuna returned to his village and presented the cup to his brothers. With much apprehension, Udishra brought forth a pitcher of milk and filled the cup. When he drank the milk, a winning strategy appeared in his mind. When Vitri took of the milk, he became strong and fearless, undaunted by the armies of Panga Zu. Then, one after the next, the villagers came and took of the milk and became warriors of great skill and power. Thanking his brother, Udishra lead his army to the Opal City and defeated the forces of Panga Zu.

Udithra was then made ruler of the Opal City, and his brother Vitri was made general of its armies. Devarjuna, however, returned to the eastern forests and reshaped his order with his own wise teachings. After many years of teaching, Devarjuna achieved enlightenment and ascended into the skies as a beam of scintillating light.

Studying the Skullcup of the Nagaraja

The *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* appears to be a golden bowl, mounted on a stout gem-encrusted stem and base etched with arabesques and swirling stylized wind glyphs. Upon further inspection, the bowl portion is revealed as the arch of a skull, somewhat larger than human. The *Skullcup* is quite heavy for its size and always feels slightly damp when handled. When filled with a white cow's milk, it blazes with a platinum nimbus of radiance and the milk is transformed into a shimmering, honey-like nectar.

If viewed through *detect magic*, the *Cup* emanates overwhelming auras of abjuration and transmutation magics. The *Skullcup* resists all alignment-detecting magics.

Powers of the Skullcup of the Nagaraja

The *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* is a potent magical crucible that transmutes the milk of a white cow into a powerful arcane nectar that temporarily conveys exceptional strength, dexterity and constitution, as well as an immunity to fear and other mind-affecting effects.

Using the Skullcup of the Nagaraja

In order to activate the powers of the *Skullcup*, a lawful good being must fill the it with the fresh milk of a white cow during daylight. The cow must be of sacrificial quality (at least 150% of its normal gold piece value) and milked no less than an hour before the artifact is filled. Once activated, the nectar in the *Skullcup* remains good for an hour, or until the sun sets, whichever comes first. The *Skullcup* only holds enough for a single individual to drink, so multiple users must bring additional milk.

Constant Powers

The *Skullcup* conveys no constant benefits. Its magic is only evident when activated under the proper conditions.

Researching the Skullcup

Most do not believe the *Skullcup* exists. The story surrounding the *Cup* is believed to be a religious parable concerning the penetration of cowardice through the elimination of ego (symbolized by the beheading of the deceptive demon). However, though poetic, the *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* is real and powerful artifact. Disciples of Devarjuna's monastic order are the best source for information about the *Skullcup*. Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) checks can be made to reveal more details about the *Skullcup's* origins. Knowledge (arcana) rolls can be made to reveal the powers of the *Skullcup* (though these should be of extremely high difficulty considering the rarity of such information).

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* was created by a long-dead monk, at the advice of the King of Serpents, to aid his beleaguered village.
20	The *Skullcup's* tale and that it is capable of making armies undefeatable. The character knows the entire tale, as presented above.
25	The character has possibly read references to the Sutra of Devarjuna and has learned of the artifact's ability to produce a potent potion that conveys martial might.
30+	The character has a working knowledge of the hidden scriptures of Devarjuna's order and know that a white cow's milk must be poured into the cup by a righteous man (of lawful good alignment) during the daytime. The nectar conveys strength, speed and fortitude, as well as immunity to fear and mind-affecting spells.

If a Knowledge check failure is particularly severe, the character has heard one of the dark, inaccurate versions of the *Cup*'s story which could lead them to make their own cup from the skull of a Marilith (which will be a lot of work, and possibly death, for nothing), fill the cup with crystal clear water or the blood of a sacrificed cow, or fill the cup with the blood of the Nagaraja (a near impossible feat as the Nagaraja is a master of nothingness, and is only found when he wishes to be found).

Activated Powers

Anyone drinking the *Skullcup's* nectar gains the following benefits.

- *Bear's endurance*.
- *Bulls strength*.
- *Cat's grace*.
- *Fox's cunning*.
- Immunity to fear and fear-based effects.
- Immunity to mind-affecting effects.

All effects have a duration of 5 hours.

Ambient Effects

Even when empty, the *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* radiates a spiritual aura that is readily felt by devotees of Devarjuna's order. All monks of Devarjuna's order who are of lawful good alignment receive a +4 to saving throws against fear and other mind-effecting effects, spells, and spell-like abilities.

When full of nectar, the *Skullcup* radiates light, as *daylight* cast by a 14th-level wizard.

Reactive Traits

The *Skullcup* is immune to all destructive spells and can not be *teleported*.

Using the Skullcup of the Nagaraja in a Campaign

The *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* can be placed into most mid- to high-level campaigns. Beyond that, the cup is a versatile plot point. It can be the object of a quest to fortify an army of good against impossible odds, it could be the lynchpin of an uprising of vengeful monks, or it could be the object of an initiatory test for a prodigal monk. Regardless, the cup has enormous power and should not be left in the possession of the PCs for long. Having the powers of such an object at one's fingertips could wildly unbalance many campaigns.

Adventure Seeds

The Stolen *Cup*

A fallen student of Devarjuna Monastery has stolen the cup and started his own faction of monks. The fallen student, named Gudravaj, has tricked many of the good monks in the service of the monastery into performing the chalice's ritual for him so that he can empower both the misled monks and evil mercenaries in his service. With the power of the *Skullcup*, the traitor forces are seemingly invincible.

The characters, who may be disciples of the monastery, are charged by the abbot to get the *Skullcup* back. To do so, the heroes must infiltrate Gudravaj's stronghold and fight the *Skullcup*-blessed minions of Saint Devarjuna's corrupted disciple.

Brother's Vengeance

While visiting the governor of a small farming province, a prominent teacher of the order of Devarjuna is

assassinated. The assassins, a group of cultists pledged to the undead monstrosity, Jubawa Muru (who was once a General of Warlord Panga Zu) are behind it. However, the undead general's servants stage the murder to appear as if it were committed by the governor's own men. As fate would have it, this turn of events results in the monks declaring war on the government as well as the local militia.

The PCs must learn of the diabolical plot, then enlist the aid of someone from the monastery. The party must seek out the assassins and learn the identity of their leader. The campaign ends in an epic battle between the party and Jubawa Muru protected by a contingent of his elite guard.

Destroying the Skullcup of the Nagaraja

Because of its ability to empower an army, the *Skullcup* could very likely be targeted for destruction by anyone who faced such an army. It is also possible that the *Skullcup* could fall into the wrong hands and empower a force of great evil that would seek to destroy the land. In any case, the *Skullcup of the Nagaraja* can only be destroyed as follows.

- Filling the cup with the blood of tears of a black dragon of immeasurable years (great wyrm).
- Devarjuna must be returned to physical form, and then shatter the *Skullcup* with a single strike.
- Slay every guardian naga, and toss the artifact upon the funeral pyre of the last one slain.

New Feat

Devarjuna's order developed new meditations and techniques under his teachings, and while the holy monk is long gone, many of his discoveries remain.

Mind-Clearing Strike

You are trained in the special technique of Devarjuna's order and have learned to sooth with your strikes as well as cause harm.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Wis 15, Improved Unarmed Strike, base attack bonus +7.

Benefit: You must declare that you are using this feat before you make your attack roll (thus, a failed attack ruins the attempt). Mind-Clearing Strike calms the emotional state of a subject, as if she was targeted by both *remove fear* and *calm emotions*, as cast by a cleric of your level. The target is entitled to a save against the *calm emotions* effect (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + your Wis modifier). Additionally, when dealing a Mind-Clearing Strike, you may opt to do only a single point of damage. Creatures immune to critical hits or mind-affecting effects are immune to this ability. Mind-Clearing Strike is considered a supernatural ability.

Special: A monk may select Mind-Clearing Strike as a bonus feat at 6th level, even if he does not meet the prerequisites.

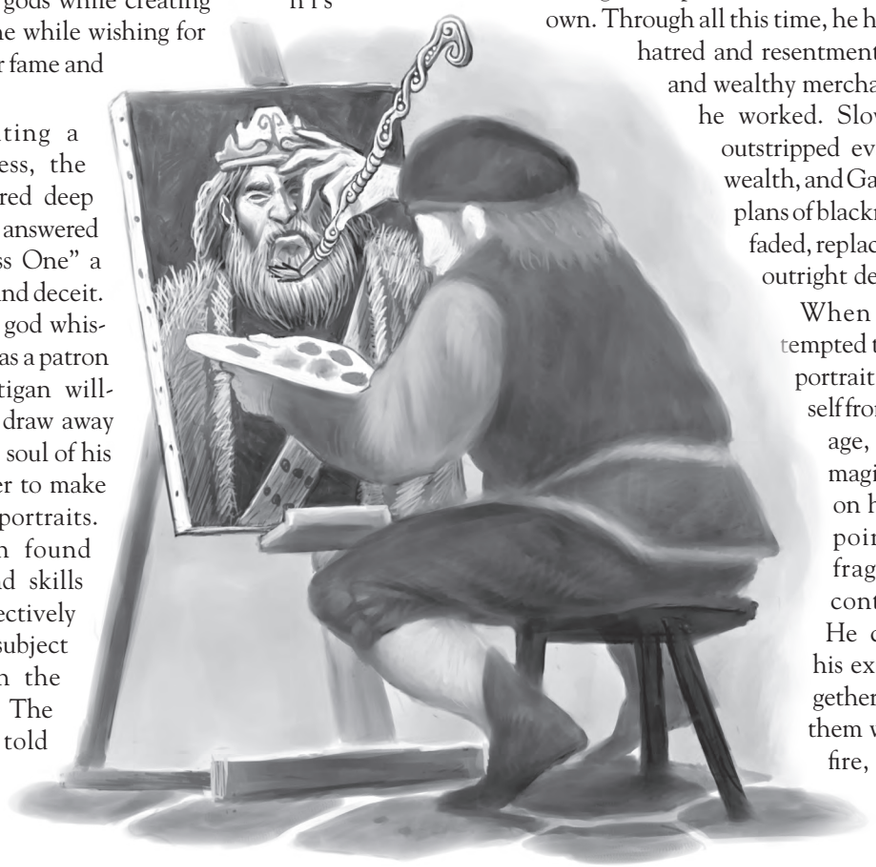
A character who selects this feat may attempt a Mind-Clearing Strike a number of times per day equal to his monk level, plus one more time per day for every five levels he has in classes other than monk.

Soul Brushes of Gartigan

By Patrick Lawinger

The Tale of the Soul Brushes of Gartigan

After years of creating astounding paintings and sculptures for the wealthy, and generally earning little money for himself, the master artist Gartigan touched a darker part of his life. Known as emotionally unstable and volatile, Gartigan was prone to outbursts of rage or humor while painting and this prevented him from obtaining business from the wealthiest and most important clients. Although his great skill was widely recognized, his low birth and unappealing features made him an "undesirable" at high society functions. Though his skills were great, it was unlikely so many of his fine paintings and sculptures would still exist in so many private collections if he hadn't found a new diabolical way to gain power and wealth. Realizing he must find a way to calm himself, Gartigan began chanting quiet prayers to dark gods while creating his paintings, all the while wishing for a path to greater fame and wealth.



While painting a dowager duchess, the prayers murmured deep in his mind were answered by "the Faceless One" a god of trickery and deceit. Convinced the god whispering to him was a patron of artists, Gartigan willingly agreed to draw away a portion of the soul of his subjects in order to make more lifelike portraits. Gartigan soon found his brushes and skills combined so effectively that part of his subject was imbued in the painting itself. The Faceless One told Gartigan that the subjects of his paintings would be excited at the notion of slowed aging, and would ignore the possibility that the paintings could be used to harm them. Spells or direct damage on such paintings could easily drive their subjects mad.

Gartigan began a clever campaign to paint members of every major noble and merchant family he could, describing the benefits of each painting while omitting the possible downsides. Proving his claims took some time, but once he was believed, his prices went up — particularly because he claimed that for the magic to truly work, he needed to paint *two* portraits, one for the purchaser, and one to "keep safe." Gartigan's plan was to acquire paintings of all the major noble and merchant families, then blackmail them through the power his additional portraits commanded over their souls.

As his wealth and popularity grew, Gartigan was invited to the parties and events he once envied, and even managed to purchase a small mansion of his own. Through all this time, he harbored a secret hatred and resentment for the nobles and wealthy merchants with whom he worked. Slowly his hatred outstripped even his growing wealth, and Gartigan's original plans of blackmail and threats faded, replaced with plans of outright destruction.

When Gartigan attempted to paint his own portrait to protect himself from his advancing age, he found this magic did not work on himself. At that point, Gartigan's fragile emotional control shattered. He collected all of his extra portraits together and bombarded them with alchemist's fire, burning them beyond recognition and, he hoped, killing

all portrayed. While he did indeed bring great harm to those he painted, he did not fully understand the magic of the paintings or how best to use them. His actions were, however, enough to drive a generation of young noblemen into madness, fomenting a bloody civil war. It was a war Gartigan himself never witnessed, as he himself was consumed in the fire.

Somehow his brushes survived, and have seen use by a few extremely skilled artists. Any artist recorded to have used the brushes for a lengthy period of time has gone slowly mad, and the *soul paintings* created with the brushes have seen use in a variety of vile schemes, much the joy of the Faceless One.

Studying the Soul Brushes of Gartigan

The three *Soul Brushes* differ only in the size of their heads: one fine, one medium, and one thick. Smelling of oil and paint, each *Brush* is made with simple, smooth oak stained dark with sweat and grime, and bristles of silver hair. The bristles are soft and supple, yet firm enough to hold their shape and pristine in their cleanliness. Paints and dyes are easily washed from the bristles, even when they stain the wood. The only thing separating these *Brushes* from any other high-priced painter's implements is the unmistakable sensation that they belong together and have an aura of great antiquity.

The *Brushes* make a soft, whispering hiss as they spread paint across canvas or wood, a sound that is oddly pleasant and inspiring. Unlike many potent items, these *Brushes* don't seem magical in the least. At the same time, they possess an aura of age and a taint of malice, making them seem uncomfortable in some hands.

Intensive study with various divination spells helps reveal the *Brushes* do indeed have a magical nature. A *detect magic* reveals only a somewhat confusing mixture of vary faint magic, while *arcane sight* helps separate out faint auras of illusion, conjuration, and necromantic magic. *True seeing* provides the greatest revelations, exposing the *Brushes*' powerful combination of illusion and necromantic magic as well as the fact that these auras are shielded by divine magic.

Powers of the Soul Brushes of Gartigan

Very little is understood about the *Soul Brushes*, or how they perform their peculiar magic. When used by a skilled artist to paint a portrait of an individual, the *Brushes* gather and preserve a portion of that person's life essence within the picture itself, creating what is known as a *soul painting*. Strangely, this somehow helps preserve the subject of the painting, preventing her from feeling the effects of advancing age. Alas, the *soul painting* also becomes a window into her soul, making it so that anyone with the painting in their possession has a much easier time using magic spells on the subject.

Researching the Soul Brushes of Gartigan

References to the *Soul Brushes* are obscure and difficult to interpret because very few have understood their power, or even how they came into being. Created through direct divine intervention as a means to corrupt and defile the world, the *Soul Brushes* defy easy gathering of knowledge. Only the rarest and most traveled bards have heard about the *Brushes*, let alone their power. Some record of Gartigan, and the paintings he created, do exist, and several sages have written passages dealing with the *Soul Brushes*. Only the largest of libraries might contain such informative passages. The *Soul Brushes* themselves have passed through numerous hands, often disappearing and reappearing in odd places with no fanfare or record. A very few wizards have recorded their magic studies of these strange items, with their tomes hidden in the most obscure arcane libraries.

Most individuals run across the *Brushes* without having any idea what their power or history might be. The following information can be gained with a successful Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) check. Bardic Knowledge checks use this table as well, but a Bardic Knowledge check receives a +5 bonus.

DC	Knowledge Available
20	The extremely wealthy can help preserve their youth by having their portraits painted with magic brushes.
25	The *Soul Brushes of Gartigan* can be used to create a "*soul painting*" that preserves its subject's youth and vitality.
30	*Soul paintings* created by Gartigan had evil intent. They actually contained a part of a person's soul and could be used to harm them.
35+	Portraits created using the *Soul Brushes of Gartigan* keep one young while opening one up to possible magical manipulations. Once made, a *soul painting* is extremely difficult to destroy without hurting its subject.

Most tales describing the power of the *Soul Brushes* include the preservation of the youth of their subjects. While many of those people suffered tragedies at some time, most attribute their misfortune to vanity and greed.

Using the Soul Brushes of Gartigan

Although created with evil intent through the intervention of a dark god, the *Brushes* themselves are not inherently evil. Despite their strange power, the *Brushes* do not make their user a better artist. Paintings created using the *Brushes* have no power whatsoever unless the artist has at least 12 ranks in Profession (artist), Craft (painting), or a similar skill used to paint a portrait. Paintings are also limited in that the subjects must willingly pose for the painting and be the main subject, or subjects, of the painting.

A skilled artist must use the *Brushes* several times before learning of their true powers. As the artist begins a third painting with the *Brushes*, she begins to sense the purpose and abilities of the artifacts. The following night, the Faceless God presents itself as a god of art and creation and comes to the artist in her dreams, telling her that paintings created with the *Brushes* help preserve their subjects from aging, while giving the person in possession of a painting power over its subjects. The artist is then encouraged to benefit from this knowledge in any way she can.

Constant Powers

In skilled hands, the *Soul Brushes* can be used to create "*soul paintings*," described below. These paintings have special properties that make them extremely valuable and potentially dangerous. The *Brushes* regenerate when torn or broken and are always found together. If the *Brushes* are separated they somehow come together again, even if placed into closed, sealed containers.

Consequences

Many claim that the greatest artists already skirt the edge of madness, and that the slightest touch can force them over the brink. Artists using the *Soul Brushes* for more than a year begin to experience violent mood swings, and soon become known for being almost unintelligible while painting as they mumble strange poems and words under their breath. After several years the artist becomes prone to violent outbursts and acquires a reputation for being "a bit mad" rather than simply "eccentric."

After five years, if she has survived this long, the artist becomes paranoid, certain that everyone is out to destroy her. This paranoia leads her to do whatever she can to "stop" her imagined attackers, particularly if it involves using one of the paintings created with the *Brushes*.

Using the Soul Brushes of Gartigan in a Campaign

The *Soul Brushes of Gartigan* present an interesting artifact to use in a campaign. Although powerful in their own way, their power does not easily lend itself to use in combat and is unlikely to unbalance a campaign in that respect. Some ways to abuse the *Brushes* could be discovered in a campaign that involves a great deal of role-playing and politics, but the required ranks in a particular skill to actually use the *Brushes* helps prevent the PCs from doing this until they are at least 9th level. These limitations mean that the *Brushes* can be introduced into a campaign at virtually any level.

The *Brushes* work best as a device to drive adventure and intrigue in a more political and role-playing heavy campaign. Paintings created by the *Brushes* can also be used as a subject of adventure, politics, and even blackmail. At extremely high levels, the PCs might even want to begin investigating how the *Brushes* were granted their strange power, necessitating travel to other planes.

Adventure Seeds

Politics and Paintings

Almost all of the nobles and merchants in a small city have acquired a strange form of madness and confusion. Some simply don't act like themselves. Others are suddenly prone to violence or strange fits of madness, in which they give away money and possessions and then demand its return. The PCs are asked to investigate by a local lord or merchant house because trade with the city is rapidly grinding to a halt.

A disgruntled young noblewoman started painting friends and family several years ago when she was married to a much older Lord, one with more interest in trade and politics than her. As her skill grew, she found the paintings she created gave her a small modicum of power over their subjects. Using a few scrolls and her minor magical talent as a sorceress, she has manipulated people throughout the city as a form of entertainment. Some of the scrolls and spells she has used have had unintended results, much to her chagrin, and she has done her best to hide any involvement in the recent strange events.

Investigating this requires putting a number of different factors together. First, the PCs must find a link between the "mad" individuals, possibly tracking it down to the fact that all have had portraits painted recently. This is quite likely to require the use of divinations. Then they must look at some of the paintings and notice the magic on each one. Finally, they need to track down the *Brushes* and discover a safe way to destroy the paintings without damaging their subjects. During their investigation, the PCs can run across all manner of strange secrets held by the nobles and merchants and are almost certain to ruffle a few feathers.

Brushes? What Sort of Treasure is This?

While exploring, the PCs come across a lead box gilded in gold and decorated with many strange symbols. Within

they discover a set of three brushes resting on a bed of soft velvet. The brushes have a faint aura of magic, but nothing else to hint at why someone would go to such trouble preserving and hiding them. Curious PCs are almost certain to try to determine what the brushes are, and if they are worth anything.

Showing them to various sages reveals little information until they finally come across someone that seems to know something about them. As they discover more about Gartigan and the *Brushes*, they learn that a number of people are interested in acquiring the *Brushes*, though certainly not for entirely altruistic reasons. Some might even believe the *Brushes* are worth killing for.

Now, This is the Life …

An unscrupulous artist has discovered the *Brushes* (possibly having purchased them from the PCs), and learned of their power. He has been selling his "special" paintings to the wealthy, using them to charm his customers before turning the paintings over so that he can demand much higher payment. He generally flees before the spells wear off, but several nobles and merchants have learned how they were duped and are afraid of the power the paintings, and the *Brushes*, might represent. The PCs are hired to learn more about the *Brushes* and put an end to the artist's foul plans.

The Portrait

One of the PCs, or an NPC close to them, begins acting strangely soon after having their portrait stolen. Understanding the character's strange actions requires learning of the painting's connection to the character, followed by a great deal of research into how to solve the problem. Once the characters understand what is going on, they still need to recover the stolen painting.

Destroying the Soul Brushes of Gartigan

Although not necessarily evil, the *Brushes* have often been put to evil use and were created with dark intentions. The PCs might decide that the world is safer without the *Brushes* in it. While the *Brushes* are easily broken, and the bristles torn out, the divine magic surrounding them causes them to reform in 1d10 days. The three *Brushes*, if separated, always seem to come together again.

Successfully destroying the *Brushes* requires completely destroying them or eliminating the magic that causes them to re-form.

- The *Brushes* can be broken by ordinary means and then subjected to a carefully worded *wish* or *miracle* to put an end to their magical nature.
- *Disintegrating* the *Brushes* and separating the resulting dust in lead containers prevents the *Brushes* from reforming.
- Cast into the magma of the Elemental Plane of Fire, the *Brushes* burn to such a fine ash that they never re-form.

New Minor Artifact

While the *Soul Brushes* are the source of the power, the true damage they cause is in the form of those paintings they create, minor artifacts in their own right.

Soul Paintings

Portraits created using the *Soul Brushes of Gartigan* acquire unusual properties due to the trapped portion of the person's essence. All such portraits are clearly painted by artists of exceptional skill, and are extremely valuable based upon that alone. Each portrait also provides special benefits and drawbacks to the person depicted as described below.

Benefits

Vanity is a driving force for many people, particularly as they begin to age. A soul painting slows the physical aging of its subject in both appearance and physical attributes. A person can gain this benefit from as many as three *soul paintings* before they have surrendered so much of their essence that the *Soul Brushes* can no longer draw any more. *Soul paintings* do not make a person younger, but they do extend the amount of time it takes to enter the next age bracket by 10 years per painting. For example, a 20-year-old human with three *soul paintings* does not attain the physical attributes or appearance of "middle-age" until they reach 65 years of age (consult the Vital Statistics section of Chapter 6 in the *Player's Handbook*) whereas a 36 year-old human, who is already middle-aged, who has three *soul paintings* made won't attain the physical attributes or appearance of "old" until reaching the age of 83.

Soul paintings do not change the natural time of death; they only prolong a person's physical appearance and attributes.

Drawbacks

Soul paintings possess a fraction of a person's essence, making them a "window" into the soul. The subject of a *soul painting* can be attacked with certain mind-affecting spells through the painting, without being anywhere near the caster. In addition, they suffer a –4 circumstance penalty to all saving throws against mind-affecting spells cast through the painting. Some spell effects do not come into play until the caster is actually in the presence of the target of the spell (see below). Some spells and their possible effects are listed below as a guideline to help adjudicate spells cast through *soul paintings*; the DM should feel free to add others at his discretion.

Charm person: The saving throw is made when the spell is cast on the painting; the effects don't come into play until the subject and the caster are in the same room.

Confusion: Immediate effect.

Crushing despair: Immediate effect.

Dominate person: The saving throw is made when the spell is cast on the painting; the effects don't come into play until the subject and the caster are in the same room.

Feeblemind: The spell takes effect over a period of one hour, after which the spell is at its full effect.

Insanity: Immediate effect.

Mind fog: Immediate effect.

Rage: Immediate effect.

Additionally, some spells directly attacking a person's essence based on alignment or nature can profoundly affect the target. A successful casting of *dispel good*, *dispel evil*, *dispel chaos*, *dispel law*, *chaos hammer*, *order's wrath*, *unholy blight*, or *holy smite* against the painting deals 5d6 points of damage to the subject of the painting and instantly ages them 10 years. This eliminates the magic of the painting, turning it into a normal, though well-done, portrait.

Destroying a Soul Painting

The magic of a *soul painting* comes from the trapped essence of the person it portrays. If a painting is destroyed through fire or other mundane means without taking any other precautions, the subject of the painting must succeed at a DC 18 Will save or go mad, as per the *insanity* spell. Regardless of their success, the subject of the painting instantly ages 10 years.

The only way to safely destroy a *soul painting* is to use a *limited wish*, *wish*, *miracle*, or similar spell to release the essence trapped in the painting. The subject of the painting returns immediately to her natural, physical age, and the painting loses all other powers.

New Deity

While DMs should feel free to replace the Faceless One with a trickster god form their own campaigns, they might consider incorporating him into the pantheon, or perhaps as the last remnant of the pantheon of an older, now forgotten culture.

Faceless One

Lesser God (Chaotic Evil)

The Faceless One is a god of lies, trickery, and deceit, who delights in bringing about the downfall of others by playing to their vanity and greed. Sexless, faceless, and virtually unheard of in most circles, the Faceless One boasts few clerics. Thus, it has taken to claiming the worship of all who resort to trickery and deceit, and who do not profess worship of some other god. True worshippers of the Faceless One consider it an insult to use honesty to acquire that which could have been taken through trickery or outright theft.

Predominantly worshipped by thieves, bards and assassins, the Faceless One is usually depicted as a robed figure, of indeterminate sex, wearing a hood over its face. Its holy symbols consist of a small silver representation of a hooded mask hanging from a chain.

Portfolio: Assassins, treachery, betrayal, deception.

Domains: Evil, Luck, Trickery.

Cleric Training: While the Faceless One has blessed a few exceptional assassins and liars with its powers, most of the Faceless One's clerics fall into the faith through trickery and deceit. Clerics cut off from their god due to their own treachery or failures are often noticed by the Faceless One and ever so gently invited into its service. The Faceless One, who delights in their downfall and final conversion, fools others into abandoning their gods, leaving them no other options.

Quests: Followers of the Faceless One have a bound duty to bring about the downfall of pious paladins and clerics of other faiths through deceit and betrayal. Those that don't fall to more "civilized" techniques should be slain. Holy artifacts and weapons must also be corrupted wherever and whenever possible. Some followers have been known to cloak their true faith and hire groups of holy adventurers to help them acquire some hidden sacred artifact, only to betray the hirelings and leave with the relic once it is discovered.

Prayers: The Faceless One depends more on actions than prayers from those that already worship it. At the same time, anyone directing prayers or wishes towards betrayal or murder can attract the Faceless One's attention and be granted a wish or a prayer. Anytime such a prayer is answered, there is always a hidden, twisted price to be exacted at some time in the future.

Temples: There are no temples to the Faceless One, yet every bar, inn, or alley where dark secrets are traded and malicious plots hatched is a holy place to those of true faith. Some of the Faceless One's clerics build massive inns and taverns in which they readily trade information. Such locations are usually marked by small statues or paintings of a cloaked, sexless figure displayed somewhere near the main entrance.

Rites: The Faceless One's rites involve celebration of great heists, betrayals, assassinations, or deceptions that involved a large number of the Faceless One's faithful servants.

Herald and Allies: The Faceless One sends a 25-HD glabrezu demon as a herald. Allies include succubi, glabrezu and mariliths.

Relics: *Soul Brushes of Gartigan*, *rod of wonder*.

Soulblade

Nok'thys, Purifier
By Michael Gill

The Tale of the Soulblade

Note: As written, this artifact makes heavy use of psionics and the soulknife class. DMs not using psionics in their campaigns should feel free to modify the artifact to instead make use of magic, and to create its own blade rather than relying on the soulknife's mind blade.

Few creatures are as feared, or as widely loathed, as the phrenic scourge (reference ***The Iconic Bestiary: Classics of Fantasy*** from **Lion's Den Press**, or see below). Writhing, alien horrors from realms undreamt of by sane minds, they dwell in the darkest depths of the earth and in the shadows of high society, manipulating those whom they find useful, feeding on those whom they do not.

Legends of some worlds, however, tell of a time when the scourges dwelt not in the dark places, but ruled openly over lands depraved and twisted by their powers. The humanoid races were as less than slaves, bred only for physical labor, food and breeding stock.

The scourges, so far as observers can tell, seem of a like mind, with little in either behavior or appearance to differentiate one from the next. Yet abruptly, at the height of their dominance, there arose among the scourges a group who focused their powers differently than the others, a group called Dethichru — or, in as close as the Common tongue can translate, soulknives. None with a humanoid mind can guess at the thought patterns of so alien a being, so sages cannot say for certain why this order appeared as it did. Was it an effort by the phrenic scourges to battle back against those nations who resisted, or those slaves who rose up? Was it simple experimentation with the race's mental prowess? Or was it something else entirely, something that occurred for nothing sane creatures might recognize as motivation?

One among the Dethichru, experimenting with materials and magics as alien as the scourges themselves, created what is known even today as perhaps the greatest weapon of this long-lost empire. Called *Nok'thys*, or *Purifier*, it enhanced the unique Dethichru ability to create blades of pure psionic energy to unforeseen heights. However, it wasn't until the artifact's creator took part in crushing a massive slave uprising that the true power of the *Nok'thys* was seen.

As the battle swelled around him, the Dethichru scourge raised the *Nok'thys* toward the sky, his mind blade expanding into a pillar of white light that lanced upward. The psionic bolt pierced the heart of the sun, causing the sky to erupt in flame as the sun's intensity grew to a sheer red brilliance, washing over the face of the world. Every living creature who stood in the daylight, everything over which the sun shone, was struck down as if by the scourge's own mind blade. Corpses and ash covered half the world, and the remainder slowly starved.

Nok'thys was left amongst the dead, for none knew where to find it. From there, it eventually found its way into the hands of battlefield scavengers, and eventually to other planes and



Researching the Soulblade

The orders of soulknives maintain comprehensive records of the *Soulblade*, though they have long forgotten its true purpose. Although it might be difficult to deal with the phrenic scourges directly, their sages are sure to have much information about this artifact including its ultimate purpose. A Knowledge (psionics) or Bardic Knowledge check should allow PCs to uncover some information about the *Soulblade*.

DC	Knowledge Available
15	The *Soulblade* is a powerful weapon held by the soulknives, a psionic martial order.
25	It is said that the *Soulblade* increases the power of a soulknifes's mind blade, a unique psionic blade available only to that order. The artifact is only given to champions of the order.
30	The *Soulblade* once belonged to the phrenic scourges. It is said to draw upon the very essence of the wielder in order to amplify to power of her mind blade. This drain upon her essence can have a negative impact, if used for too long a time.
35	A wielder who employs the *Soulblade* too often finds it warps her very soul, eventually transforming her into a monstrous creature of nightmare, somewhat like the phrenic scourge itself.
40	While it is true that the *Soulblade* can enhance one's mind blade by drawing energy from one's soul, it is actually able to evoke a similar process on a much larger scale. In the hands of a phrenic scourge, it is possible that whole regions may be left barren and lifeless through this artifact.

Tales about the *Soulblade* often fail to indicate that the item is actually an artifact. Indeed because psionic items are so rare and unique, many outside the order of soulknives would see the *Soulblade* as a simple psionic weapon and fail to recognize its larger importance.

other worlds. The weapon's true purpose has been lost over the years, but it is rumored to have been passed through the ages by the soulknives, the myriad of psionic traditions whose origin lie with the Dethichru order.

Studying the Soulblade

The *Soulblade* appears to be the bladeless handle and crossguard of a large sword, approximately 18 inches in length and composed of a smooth, lightweight, and clear crystal. Set into the handle where a blade would normally emerge is a large flawless star ruby, flush with the surface of the hilt. There is little other adornment.

Though the *Soulblade* would appear unusable to most warriors due to its smooth grip, its crystalline nature, and most obviously, it lack of a blade, close examination of the weapon reveals that it never slips or slides in a closed grip, and that the crystal is extremely resilient. The hilt may be grasped and wielded with either one or two hands.

When the *Soulblade* is grasped by a soulknife who calls forth a mind blade, the entire artifact seems to glow with power, radiating a soft white light. In addition, the mind blade changes to a blood crimson hue as it erupts from the ruby in the hilt, appearing sharper and more deadly.

The *Soulblade* appears to the *detect psionics* power to have a moderate aura of psychokinesis.

Powers of the Soulblade

The *Soulblade* draws upon the wielder's soul to enhance the power of her mind blade. Thus, the artifact is generally useful only to soulknives.

Using the Soulblade

To activate the lesser powers of the *Soulblade*, a soulknife need only call forth her mind blade while gripping the artifact. She must call forth a single mind blade, although it can be of any mind blade type normally permitted by her soulknife level. The artifact changes the mind blade to a deep crimson color, greatly enhancing its inherent abilities.

Although none have activated the greater world-destroying capabilities of the *Soulblade* in millennia, the phrenic scourges may yet remember the artifact's secrets. Truly attuning to the *Soulblade* requires eight hours of ritual meditation, the specifics of which are a jealously guarded secret of the phrenic scourges. This makes it unlikely that any but the phrenic scourges can activate the greater powers of the artifact, though it is possible that other races possessing psionic ability are capable of doing so.

After the *Soulblade* is attuned, its most destructive power may be activated by a soulknife wielder spending one hour in uninterrupted concentration in broad daylight. During this process, the soulknife can feel the *Soulblade* depleting her energy and draining her soul. She can't help but realize that this process will kill her, and indeed, the soulknife wielder must willingly sacrifice her life in order to invoke this greater effect. A soulknife who sacrifices herself in this way is irrevocably lost, her soul spent to further the destructive ends of the artifact.

Constant Powers

Whenever the *Soulblade* is used to enhance a mind blade, the soulknife is considered four class levels higher for the

purposes of her psychic strike, her mind blade enhancement powers, and her mind blade enhancement bonus. If this bonus brings her effective level above 20, continue to increases these ability bonuses at the same progression rate. For instance, her mind blade enhancement ability reaches +5 at an effective 22nd level, her psychic strike +6d8 at 23rd level, and her mind blade enhancement bonus +6 at 24th level. Also, while using the *Soulblade*, a soulknife may activate her psychic strike ability as a free action rather than a move action. Unlike her normal mind blade, a soulknife may not throw a mind blade enhanced with the power of the *Soulblade*.

If the soulknife has performed the lost ritual allowing her to reach a greater attunement with the *Soulblade*, the bonuses to her effective level for her class abilities are doubled to +8 levels.

Activated Powers

The *Soulblade*'s single, catastrophically destructive activated power allows it to enhance the energy output of a sun in the same manner as it does a mind blade. When this power is activated, the sun turns a deep crimson and emits a deadly energy over every portion of the world currently exposed to daylight. All creatures immediately suffer damage as if they had been struck for maximum damage by the soulknife's mind blade, including psychic strike damage. While creatures exist who can survive this damage, the vast majority of non-monstrous living beings are slain utterly by this effect. Only those deep underground, within absolutely light-proof rooms, or on the other side of the world where night still reigns, are unharmed. Of course, many who survive this catastrophe wish they had not, as few worlds can survive the horrific damage, famine, and plague to come.

Consequences

The *Soulblade* draws from the soul energy of its wielder in order to function. Whenever the wielder's mind blade is called forth through the *Soulblade*, the wielder takes a point of Constitution damage. This draining is not obvious to the wielder, as while the mind blade is active, the character is overcome by the rush of raw power granted by the hilt. The DM should therefore keep track of the character's Constitution damage, indicating when dramatically appropriate (usually outside of combat when the mind blade is not active) the character's frailty and reduced stamina. This damage may be healed normally, but a character reduced to zero Constitution is instantly slain. Such a slain wielder rises again in 2d4 rounds, as a tentacled horror (described below), a mindless servant of the phrenic scourges that seeks only rampant destruction. It is rumored that phrenic scourge wielders do not suffer this slow wasting.

Only living creatures may wield the *Soulblade*. Creatures immune to Constitution damage cannot activate it.

When the activated power of the *Soulblade* is triggered, it immediately and irrevocably slays its wielder.

Reactive Traits

The *Soulblade* was meant to reveal few secrets to the enemies of the phrenic scourges, and therefore it reacts quite poorly to most divinatory magics. When spells such as *legend lore* or *analyze dweomer* are cast upon the *Soulblade*, the caster must make a DC 25 Will save or be driven mad, as an *insanity* spell. Even if the save is successful, the divination produces little information except perhaps a deep and abiding connection to the phrenic scourges. All other magics seem to simply fade away as they attempt to affect the *Soulblade*, as magic recoils from its touch.

Using the Soulblade in a Campaign

Campaigns focusing around the *Soulblade* most often become quests to prevent it from falling into the hands of the phrenic scourges (or other horrific beings), who might use it to ravage the world. The heroes might wish to destroy it, or return it to the reclusive order of soulknives. This sort of campaign should begin at the mid-levels, though it might progress to a higher level campaign as the stakes become larger and the world is threatened with destruction. Generally, the *Soulblade* should be used in a campaign world with at least a moderate level of psionics, unless the DM wants to emphasize the strange and unique properties of the artifact.

The *Soulblade* itself is not particularly unbalancing and can be handled by mid-level PCs, although its disadvantages can be quite onerous if wielded often by a soulknife. The DM should emphasize the fact that this artifact is continually sought by the phrenic scourges, who stop at nothing to recover one of their most powerful and ancient weapons.

Adventure Seeds

The Inheritance

A PC soulknife (or NPC soulknife closely associated with the PCs) has been entrusted with the *Soulblade*, an item that has been protected by his dwindling order for centuries. Warned only to use it sparingly and protect it from the "scourge," the soulknife might not realize the potential of the item with which she was entrusted. Coincidentally, at some point the soulknife's adventures will take her into a city infested by the phrenic scourges, who easily detect their ancient weapon.

This course of events causes the PCs to be pursued by the phrenic scourges and their mind-controlled servants. The PCs must figure out what they are after, determine the true origin of the *Soulblade*, and decide where to proceed from there. They could decide to destroy the weapon, an epic quest in its own right, or return it to relative seclu-

sion, perhaps on a separate plane. However, as long as the phrenic scourges know that the weapon exists on the world, they make a concerted effort to seek it, eventually drawing upon their most powerful warriors and psions.

Visions of Doom

A PC cleric, as well as any NPC clerics of major faiths throughout the city, receive horribly visions of flaming death and massive destruction. Filled with a sense of dread, the high priests of the affected faiths attempt to commune with their gods, only to be driven insane by some malicious outside force. Catatonic, the affected priests occasionally experience a brief respite of lucidity wherein they scream that the "scourge will devour the world with flame."

The PCs may get involved, either hired by an affected church or driven to participate due to the visions of the party cleric. Their first task is to learn the nature of the threat, which may be accomplished through consultation with scholars or perhaps by hearing the ranting of the crazed priests and discovering an increase in activity among the phrenic scourges. Prodded onward by the visions, the PCs must track down the phrenic scourge wielder of the *Soulblade* before it uncovers the ritual needed to activate the weapon and smite the world in a fiery rain. Finally they must find a way to destroy the artifact, lest the phrenic scourges recover it.

The Hidden Horror

The PCs are contacted by a wealthy but reclusive patron who asks them to recover a stolen heirloom from a group of thieves. The thieves control a monstrous guardian that must be bested to acquire the item, the *Soulblade*. Actually, the thieves are a small group of soulknives who were guarding the hilt when one of their members succumbed to its curse, becoming a tentacled horror. Unable to defeat the creature on their own, they sealed it off with the artifact. Unfortunately, the horror's presence has alerted the phrenic scourges that the *Soulblade* is in the area, and one of them, in the guise of their employer, has hired the PCs.

The PCs must discover the truth of the matter, choosing whether or not to fight the soulknives and return the artifact to their employer. If they choose to betray the phrenic scourge, they must help the soulknives defeat the tentacled horror and discover a way to hide or destroy the *Soulblade* to keep it away from the scourges.

Destroying the Soulblade

Although there are a myriad of reasons that the characters might wish to destroy an ancient weapon of an alien race designed to destroy whole worlds and civilizations, the task proves quite challenging. Made to survive even solar fire, the *Soulblade* is immune to most magics, and it is only vulnerable to a few, well-hidden banes.

- The first phrenic scourge soulknife, a truly ancient being that has taken on a quasi-deity status, must be slain through the use of the *Soulblade*.
- The *Soulblade* must be thrown into one of the dark and alien suns in the horrific, mad reality from which the scourges originally come.
- The *Soulblade*'s invoked power must be activated on the Elemental Plane of Fire or the Positive Energy Plane. Drawing upon the infinite nature of the plane will burn out and destroy the artifact.

New Monsters

The phrenic scourges are a horrific, psychic race of beings truly alien to mortal minds. Tentacled horrors, mindless beasts created through overuse of the *Soulblade*, are massive creatures that instinctively serve the scourges.

Note that if your campaign makes use of different alien or Lovecraftian beasts from other worlds and possessed of great psionic ability, you might choose to use them in place of the phrenic scourge.

Phrenic Scourge

Medium Aberration

Hit Dice:	8d8+8 (44 hp)
Initiative:	+3
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares), burrow 15 ft., climb 30 ft.
Armor Class:	16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple:	+6/+6
Attack:	Tendril cluster +9 melee (1d8 plus implant)
Full Attack:	2 tendril clusters +9 melee (1d8 plus implant)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Implant, psionics, sap will
Special Qualities:	Compress, damage reduction 5/bludgeoning or slashing, spell resistance 25, telepathy 100 ft.
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +9
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 17, Cha 15
Skills:	Bluff +10, Climb +8, Concentration, +14, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Hide +11, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (any) +12, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Sense Motive +7, Spot +11
Feats:	Iron Will, Skill Focus (Concentration), Weapon Finesse
Environment:	Underground or temperate planes
Organization:	Solitary, pair, brood (3–5), or hoard (3–5 plus servants, in any combination of duergar, gnolls, troglodytes or similar humanoids)
Challenge Rating:	8
Treasure:	Double standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement Range: By character class
Level Adjustment: +8

This horrific being stands as a human, but is clearly nothing of the sort. A dark and tattered robe only partly covers a body that appears to be formed entirely of squirming, writhing tendrils in hues of off-white, corpse-gray, and sickly purples and blues. Lengths of these tendrils hang from its sleeves as hands, while others make up a visage that cannot, in any sense of the word, be called a face. It steps forward with a shambling, yet somehow graceful, gait.

The so-called phrenic scourge is a walking nightmare, a writhing horror with an inhuman appearance and alien thought-patterns utterly incomprehensible to humans. They view other sentient creature as nothing more than slaves and breeding chambers, and they have assimilated entire communities in the distant wilds, and deep beneath the earth. They maintain order with their psionic abilities, turning even the most rebellious subjects into loyal thralls.

Even the race's true name — the ochthichthuruch — is almost unpronounceable by humans. The phrenic scourge is made up entirely of thin tendrils, ranging in length from six inches to four feet, clustered around a tiny core that serves as the creature's nerve center. They prefer to hold themselves upright, maintaining a vaguely humanoid shape through muscular control. Whether this is simply a cultural tradition on their part, or actually a physiological imperative, is unclear. Most scourges prefer to garb themselves in dark robes. With the hoods and sleeves pulled low, it's possible for a scourge to briefly pass itself off as human, at least from a distance.

A phrenic scourge usually stands anywhere from 5 to 6 feet in height, though it's capable of changing its overall dimensions. It weighs roughly three-quarters as much as a human of the same height. Phrenic scourges speak their own language, Common, and Undercommon, but they prefer to communicate telepathically. A phrenic scourge can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Combat

Phrenic scourges prefer to hang back out of melee, battering foes with their psionic abilities, or sending thralls to fight in their stead. When facing weaker or lone foes, however, they close and attempt to lash the victim with their tendrils, in hopes of implanting him with larvae and breeding a new scourge.

Compress (Ex): Although they normal stand as humanoid, phrenic scourges are not bound to that form. By shifting and relaxing their tendrils, they can thin themselves out, or flatten themselves into a mass of writhing limbs no thicker than a snake. As a full-round action, a phrenic scourge can pass through a space as narrow as two or three inches in one dimension, as long as it's at least a foot or more in the other dimension. For instance, a scourge could fit through a hole that was two inches by 14 inches, but not one two inches by four inches.

Implant (Ex): The tips of a phrenic scourge's tendrils constantly die and regrow, much like a human's fingernails. In any round in which the scourge successfully strikes the same victim with both tendril attacks, the tip of a tendril breaks off in the flesh and begins to burrow, unless the victim succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save. The larva burrows through the host, following its nervous system until it reaches the brain. This takes 1d4+1 rounds, causing 2d4 points of damage per round. When the larvae reaches the brain, the subject dies instantly. At any point in this process, the larvae can be destroyed with *remove disease* or *heal*. This power does not function against constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, or undead, and is not instantly fatal to foes with multiple heads.

Note that any creature with natural regeneration or fast healing resists the effects of the implanted larva. The larva is not expelled, but neither can it proceed to the brain. It does continue to cause damage every round, however, as it tries to burrow (assuming the damage it causes exceeds the fast healing or regeneration, of course). This continues until the larva is destroyed, as above, or until 2d10+1 rounds have passed, at which point they die on their own.

Psionics (Sp): At will — *charm monster* (DC 17), *deep slumber* (DC 16), *detect thoughts* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 16), *teleport*. Effective caster level 9th. The save DCs are Intelligenc-ebased, due to the scourge's psionic nature.

Sap Will (Sp): This psionic attack manifests as a 20-ft.-radius sphere, which the scourge can center anywhere within 30 ft. (A common tactic is to center the ability on itself, as a scourge is immune to its own sap will ability.) Anyone caught in this sphere must succeed on a DC 18 Will save or lose the will to act for 3d4 rounds. They may defend themselves if attacked, but may not initiate any action. They lose any Dexterity-bonus to Armor Class. Phrenic scourges often use this power to take out groups of enemies at once, or to hunt for victims they can make into slaves or breeding chambers. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell. The save DC is Intelligence-based.

Phrenic Scourge Society

Phrenic scourges do not form cities of their own race. Rather, they insinuate themselves into existing communities, both underground and on the surface. They begin by making the community's leaders into thralls, and then spread out among the populace. More than a few communities have been conquered by the ochthich-

thuruch, without any outsiders the wiser. Once they have assimilated a community, the scourges often direct them to war against other communities, in hopes of expanding their territories.

In the center of any conquered community, the phrenic scourges maintain a literal stable of humanoids intended entirely for breeding purposes. The scourges mentally enslave every one of the community's inhabitants, as soon as they exist in sufficient numbers to do so.

The ochthichthuruch's breeding cycle is simple and invasive. The larvae formed by their tendril tips burrow through the host to the brain. The brain is instantly slain, and then slowly consumed as the larva grows. Once the brain is entirely digested, the growing scourge starts to feed on the rest of the host's body. This entire process requires roughly a month; after this time, the (presumably rotting) body suddenly erupts with tendrils, bursting open. The new scourge crawls from the shattered body and stands upright, fully intelligent and in possession of all its racial abilities. Sages postulate that the scourges actually consume the memories and intelligence of the subject, as well as the physical aspects of the brain. Because their thought processes are so alien, the scourge cannot access the victim's specific memories, such as identity or class abilities, but it does obtain general knowledge, such as the basic facts of the world. This allows the young scourge to function until it first makes telepathic contact with another member of its species; doing so instantly transfers the remainder of the knowledge it needs.

Although they have an innate desire to dominate other creatures, phrenic scourges do not normally struggle with one another. They are very cooperative amongst themselves, and seem to possess the first rudiments of a hive mind.

Phrenic Scourges as Characters

Phrenic scourges almost always advance as psions, sorcerers or wizards. Phrenic scourge characters possess the following racial traits.

- +6 Dexterity, +2 Constitution, +8 Intelligence, +6 Wisdom, +4 Charisma.
- A phrenic scourge has a base land speed of 30 feet, a burrow speed of 15 feet, and a climb speed of 30 feet.
- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Racial Hit Dice: A phrenic scourge begins with eight levels of aberration, which provide 8d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +6, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +2, Ref +2, and Will +6.
- Racial Skills: A phrenic scourge's aberration levels give it skill points equal to 11 x (2 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Bluff, Concentration, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (any), Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.
- Racial Feats: A phrenic scourge's aberration levels give it three feats.
- +3 natural armor bonus.
- Special Attacks (see above): Implant, psionics, sap will.
- Special Qualities (see above): Compress, damage reduction 5/bludgeoning or slashing, spell resistance equal to 25 + class levels, telepathy 100 ft.
- Automatic Languages: Common, Ochthichthuruch, Undercommon. Bonus

Languages: Abyssal, Draconic, Dwarven, Gnome, Goblin, Infernal,Terran.

- Favored Class: Psion (or wizard, if the psionics rules are not being used).
- Level Adjustment: +8.

Tentacled Horror

Huge Aberration

Hit Dice:	16d8+48 (120 hp)
Initiative:	+6
Speed:	40 ft. (8 squares), swim 20 ft.
Armor Class:	18 (–2 size, +2 Dex, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple:	+12/+34
Attack:	Tentacle +20 melee (2d6+10)
Full Attack:	6 tentacles +20 melee (2d6+10)
Space/Reach:	15 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks:	Constrict (1d8+10), improved grab, soul drain
Special Qualities:	Psionic vulnerability, damage reduction 5/bludgeoning or slashing
Saves:	Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +9
Abilities:	Str 30, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 1
Skills:	Listen +9, Spot +9, Swim +21
Feats:	Ability Focus (soul drain), Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	10
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil

Before you stretches out a horrible mass of writhing, slime-covered tentacles. You can see no central body, only tentacles tracing blasphemous and chaotic patterns. Abruptly, the tracing ceases midair, and the tentacles begin to glow with a faint black luminescence.

Essentially mindless, soulless monstrosities, tentacled horrors are all that remains of those soulknives unfortunate enough to succumb to overuse of the *Soulblade*. Their bodies, bereft of a soul by the artifact, quickly succumb to the taint of the phrenic scourge, taking on an aspect

of their alien form and mentality. Tentacles horrors live only to destroy and feed upon the vital essence of sentient creatures. Their once mighty ability to channel psionic energy now allows them to draw such energy from others. Though these beasts are physically very powerful, they are extremely weak-willed and phrenic scourge are able to direct them against their enemies with little effort.

Combat

Tentacled horrors do not understand complex strategy. They simply seek to grab an opponent and feed from his vital energies while smashing any others with their tentacles.

Constrict (Ex): A tentacled horror deals 1d8+10 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability a tentacled horror must hit an opponent of any size with a tentacle attack. It can the attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

A tentacled horror has a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks.

Psioinc Vulnerability: Tentacled horrors are very weak-willed and susceptible to psionic commands. They receive a –4 Will save penalty against any psioinc, mind-controlling powers.

Soul Drain (Su): If an opponent is successfully grappled, the tentacled horror may choose to siphon a portion of that creature's essence into itself. The opponent must make a DC 21 Will save or suffer 1d4 points of Constitution damage. An opponent reduced to 0 Constitution in this way is slain, only to rise again as a tentacled horror after 2d4 rounds. A tentacled horror may only soul drain one opponent it has grappled at a time. The saving throw for this ability is Constitution-based.

Skills: A tentacled horror has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Una's Shield

Una's Doom, The Sundered Shield, The Shield of the Rings
By Rich Burlew

The Tale of Una's Shield

Lo, come forth and hear the tale of Una the Compassionate, struck down by her own guilt and fear. Let none who hear my words refute the wisdom of the gods as she did, lest they suffer the same fate.

In days of old, there was a paladin whom men called Una, "The One", a warrior of unsurpassed strength and virtue. Known throughout many lands, she waged a tireless crusade against the evils that walked openly among mortals in those days: demons, vampires, and other dark creatures too terrible to have been named in human speech. She fought well, and was never once tempted by the unholy promises such abominations offered when they felt the grip of righteousness closing around their fetid throats.

As Una grew in power and fame, she attracted three brave souls who wished only to serve her and help as they were able. While each was far weaker than the mighty Una, they had skills and talents the paladin herself lacked, and complimented her raw fury in battle. The first was a stout warrior named Lytton, trained well in the ways of woodcraft and tracking. The second, a cunning scout named Dakin, was a master of stealth and infiltration, gathering intelligence on Una's enemies before she struck. The third and final aide was Quennel, a young wizard who assisted Una with all things magical, often countering and dispelling the foul magics of her demonic prey. With their help, Una was able to vanquish far greater evils than she had on her own.

The day came when Una struck down a demon of such unholy power that the world itself had stood on the verge of oblivion before its Abyssal forces. (A few unreliable tales claim that this was the demon lord Sha'gah; see *Sha'gah's Bones*). While few knew of their feat, Una and her squires had literally kept the fabric of the world from unraveling at the demon prince's command. Seeing her act on behalf of the forces of Good, and knowing that she would continue to hunt down and destroy the minions of Evil, the gods themselves chose to descend from on high and give Una a gift: a holy shield of unparalleled magical strength. *Una's Shield* protected the paladin from nearly all afflictions and ailments, bathing her in a holy glow when its protective force was most needed.

And so Una and her allies continued to fight against evil, with Una now bearing her divine aegis. But shortly after she took possession of the *Shield*, a fight with a blue dragon began to raise doubts in Una's mind about the *Shield*. When the beast spewed its lightning breath upon her and her friends, she escaped all harm, while her allies were horribly scorched. Young Quennel was slain, forcing Una to seek a priest powerful enough to raise him from the dead.

"What use is this shield," she thought, "if it cannot use it to protect all of my allies? Am I not the most powerful among us four? Should I not require the least degree of protection, not the greatest?"



These thoughts occupied her mind more and more as they fought ever greater fiends. Increasingly, she escaped from a battle unharmed while one or more of her allies was laid low by enemy magic. When a mad lich slew all three of her companions before succumbing to Una's sword, she was overcome with grief and anger. She threw down her shield and cried out to the gods, "Why have you cursed me so? That I should live in safety while my friends suffer? Were that I had the power, I would cleave this shield apart and protect all of us!"

To her surprise, the gods answered. Speaking with a dozen voices as one, sound erupted from all sides of her. "Take care, paladin," the voice of the gods rumbled, "You are the keystone; without you, your friends will fall." But rather than take the warning to heart, Una felt that the gods now taunted her.

She gathered the bodies of her friends and returned to her homeland, feeling betrayed. But before employing a priest to resurrect them, she sought out the land's most powerful wizard — a mysterious mage known to us only as the Rivener. Tearstained and shaken, Una brought the Rivener the *Shield*, and asked that he divide it into four artifacts of equal power. The mage studied the *Shield* — and Una — carefully. While he was not the paladin's enemy, he was a devotee of balance, believing that all things, Good and Evil, must exist in equal parts. He knew that Una had upset that balance greatly, and he saw an opportunity to right what he saw as a great injustice.

"I can split your shield, paladin," the Rivener said, "but it will never be as powerful apart as it is united. Such is the nature of its magic." Una thought for but a moment, then bid the mage to work his spell. The Rivener's incantation took 30 days and 30 nights, but when the last word was spoken, he struck the *Shield* with his staff and it split apart into a small buckler shield and three magical rings. Una thanked the wizard for his task, and gathered up the artifacts.

When the priest of the city breathed new life into each of Una's allies, she was there to greet them, smiling. She presented each with one of the three rings, telling them how this would be the last time they must return from death, for their new rings would shield them from harm. Armed with their new artifacts, the quartet embarked on a new adventure into the subterranean depths.

Many months passed as Una and her allies traveled deep into the bowels of the world, further than any surface dweller had ever journeyed and returned alive. There, they fought dark armies and unholy legions that thrived hidden from the sun. The battles grew more difficult, and Una often found herself injured after each skirmish, but in her mind she felt justified. After all, now all four were shouldering the burden of injury equally.

After a long campaign, Una and her allies found themselves facing a half-demon aberration of unsurpassed power. As Una fought, she watched each of her friends struck down in turn. The rings she had given them, while powerful, were not enough to ward off the fell curses of the beast. She knew she needed to defeat the creature if she was to return her friends to life, but she too found that the buckler she now wielded was not enough. The horrid thing's tentacles snaked around her, crushing her within her armor. She realized with sick horror that she was about to die.

Researching Una's Shield

Basic knowledge of *Una's Shield* is fairly easy to obtain; many churches of Good deities (particularly those with a lawful bent) still teach the story of Una's fall as a lesson in hubris to prospective paladins and other holy warriors. A Knowledge (religion) can uncover the story above (DC 10), but a Bardic Knowledge check will prove more useful in uncovering the details of the shield's actual powers and drawbacks.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	The tale of Una as related here.
20	The *Shield* and all three *Rings* are crafted from pure mithral, engraved with a linking ring motif. Some tales maintain the artifacts might be combined to reform *Una's Shield*, but the veracity of this claim is debatable. It is known that the complete *Shield* possesses far greater powers than its component items have separately.
25	While the Churches deny it, the *Shield* and the three *Rings* have definitely been seen since Una's fall, and they can (and have) been reassembled into *Una's Shield* from time to time. However, ever since it was sundered, the artifact resists being fully assembled.
30+	In addition to providing protection from many forms of evil magic, the *Shield* is capable of creating a nigh-impenetrable holy aura around a warrior who holds it firmly in defense. When used in this manner, the bearer is immune to most forms of attack. Unfortunately, the *Shield* seems to have absorbed Una's remorse as she died. Those using it seem stricken with the same guilt and concern for their allies' health.

A few false tales of the *Shield* exist as well. Some suggest that the component parts of the artifact were corrupted by Una's pride and are now items of evil, or that the spirits of the deceased heroes reside within the *Shield* and the *Rings*, waiting to possess any who would wield them.

"We warned you, paladin," the voices of the gods whispered in her ear. "If you had remained safe, you could have defeated the evil herein and returned home to raise your friends from the dead, as you have so many times. But you forsook the protection we bestowed upon you, and now, as you are struck down, your allies and you will remain here, dead forever, your tomb unknown to all." In her last moment, Una wept, for she knew that in her presumption she had slain her dearest friends.

And thus Una died, and as the gods said, no one knows where her final resting place lies, nor what became of her shield and the three rings that accompanied it. Some say that were they found by a soul of righteous intent, they could be reunited into an artifact of supreme power, but there is no way to know.

All that can be said for certain is that defying the will of the gods, even with good intent, can only lead to dismay and ruin. So ends the tale of Una the Compassionate.

Studying Una's Shield

Wherever it might be found, *Una's Shield* is always disassembled into its component artifacts: the *Shield of the Rings* and three matching *Rings of the Shield*. The *Shield* appears as an ancient but well-maintained mithral buckler, with an elaborate motif of linked rings making its way around its circumference. The most notable feature is a small round hole in the very center of the shield, sized perfectly to fit a typical magic ring. The three *Rings* are also fashioned from mithral and are engraved with the same linking rings imagery around their surfaces. Each one bears a different inscription on its interior that names one of Una's three squires: "Dakin," "Lytton," and "Quennel." The *Rings* are otherwise indistinguishable from one another.

As *Una's Shield* is assembled it becomes larger, taking on the size and shape of a light shield when the first *Ring* is added, then growing to heavy shield with two *Rings*, and finally a tower shield with all three. As it grows, the linking ring decoration becomes more elaborate, eventually filling the surface of the completed *Shield* with a beautifully complex pattern of links and knots.

The completed aegis literally thrums with holy power, threatening to break apart if the wielder cannot keep control of it. The *Shield* shudders and vibrates constantly, making it difficult to wield effectively.

All four components of *Una's Shield* register strong abjuration when viewed with *detect magic*. The completed artifact registers overwhelming abjuration magic, as well as strong divination and enchantment. In addition, each of the separate magic items radiates a faint aura under *detect good*, while the completed *Una's Shield* registers an overwhelming aura. Grasping any one part of *Una's Shield* counts as having seen or touched any of the other parts for purposes of spells such as *locate object* or *discern location*.

Powers of Una's Shield

Una's Shield is an artifact of almost unparalleled defensive power — when it's in one piece. Individually, the *Shield of the Rings* and the *Rings of the Shields* each focus on one sort of protection. While the assembled *Una's Shield* is difficult to maintain, it is possible for the bearer to only partly assemble the shield and benefit greatly from its defensive power by customizing which areas of protection are most crucial.

Using Una's Shield

The *Shield of the Rings* and the three *Rings of the Shield* are easily activated; merely wielding them as normal objects of their type bestows their full compliment of powers upon the user. Combining them to form *Una's Shield*, however, is more troublesome. Each of the *Rings* needs to be inserted into the center aperture of the *Shield*, one at a time as a standard action. When the first *Ring* is added (it does not matter which is added first), it is absorbed into the metal and the *Shield* increases in size. However, the artifact begins to magically repulse the remaining two *Rings*, making it increasingly difficult to actually insert them into the *Shield*'s center slot. Adding the second *Ring* requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. Success only increases the repulsive effect; a DC 30 Strength check is required to force the third and final *Ring* into place. Once this is done, the *Shield* grows until it forms *Una's Shield*.

Una's Shield does not want to stay together. The magical forces that split the mighty artifact into four lesser items changed the fundamental nature of its power so that it no longer can exist easily in its native state. The wielder must grasp the *Shield* tightly at all times, lest it fly apart into its component items. Every round, the wielder must consciously hold the *Shield* together by making a Concentration check (DC 5) as a free action. If the wielder is subjected to any environmental effect that would normally force a Concentration skill check for spellcasting or skill use — such as violent motion on the deck of a ship or being entangled — the DC for maintaining *Una's Shield* is equal to the normal DC for the distracting event +5. Taking regular damage does not increase the Concentration DC, though continuous damage (such as from an *acid arrow* spell) does. If the wielder tries to cast, concentrate on, or direct a spell while wielding *Una's Shield*, the level of that spell is also added to the shield's Concentration DC for that round.

Should the wielder fail the Concentration check, the *Shield* falls apart. The three *Rings* are expelled from the *Shield*, falling to the ground with a clatter and leaving the wielder carrying the basic *Shield of the Rings*. If the wielder is unable to take this free action required to make the Concentration check — *held*, put to sleep, petrified, etc.

— the *Shield* also breaks apart. Even if they are physically capable of holding on to the shield, the wielder must remember to do so, meaning that a *dominated* or *confused* wielder is very likely to simply release their grip. Likewise, dropping or putting down the artifact voluntarily also causes it to fracture back into the *Shield of the Rings* and the three *Rings of the Shield*.

Constant Powers

Without any of the rings inserted, the *Shield of the Rings* is a mithral *+2 light fortification buckler*, with one additional power. If a magical ring — other than one of the *Rings of the Shield* — is inserted into the *Shield's* center opening, the wielder can utilize its power as if he or she were wearing it on his or her own finger, in effect allowing the wielder to wear one more ring than usual. However, only one ring may be held in the slot at once, and the *Rings of the Shield* cannot be added to the shield unless the other magic ring is removed first (a move action if attempted during battle).

Each of the *Rings of the Shield* grants a different power, as Una attempted to protect each of her allies in a way most befitting what she saw as their inherent weaknesses. Wearing *Lytton's Ring of the Shields* grants a +3 insight bonus to Will saves and immunity to being nauseated, stunned or sickened. *Dakin's Ring* gives the wielder a +3 insight bonus to Fortitude saves and immunity to fear. *Quennel's Ring* provides a +3 insight bonus to Reflex saves and immunity to poison.

As each of the three *Rings* is added to the *Shield of the Rings*, the *Shield* absorbs it wholly, leaving the center hole free again for a different ring to be inserted. The *Shield* also gains the magical power of any *Ring of the Shield* so assimilated, granting it to the *Shield*'s wielder as if he was wearing the *Ring* himself. After the first *Ring* is added, the shield grows into a mithral *+3 medium fortification light shield*, further expanding into a mithral *+4 heavy fortification heavy shield* when two *Rings* have been incorporated. When the last *Ring* is added, *Una's Shield* stands as a mithral *+5 heavy fortification tower shield*, which, as a result of absorbing the *Rings*' power, further grants a +3 insight bonus to all saving throws and provides immunity to fear, poison, and being nauseated, sickened, or stunned. However, once complete, the center hole disappears and cannot be used to house another magical ring.

Activated Powers

When fully assembled, *Una's Shield* grants its wielder a number of divine powers. Knowledge of these powers is granted automatically when the *Shield* is completed, and the wielder need merely will these powers to activate as a standard action (unless noted otherwise).

At Will: *prayer* (free action), *protection from evil*, *status*.

3/day: *shield other*.

1/day: *banishment* (DC 19), *holy aura* (DC 21).

The *Shield* also has the power to allow the wielder to take a unique defensive stance. If the artifact is used as total cover (as it is a tower shield) and the wielder takes a total defense action, the *Shield* glows with a bright divine light equal to a *daylight* spell. A supernatural wind swirls around the bearer, howling with holy power and acting as a *wind wall* encircling the wielder's space. The shield provides a superior degree of cover, granting a total cover bonus of +8 to AC and +4 to Reflex saves, as well as effectively granting improved evasion to the wielder. The bearer also gains immunity to sleep, paralysis, and death effects, and is no longer subject to ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. Finally, the shield automatically casts *begone* (see below) as a 15th level cleric (but using the bearer's Wisdom score).

However, this increase in protection magic comes at a cost. *Una's Shield* resists the full usage of its power, vibrating and pulsing wildly in an attempt to break apart. The DC of the Concentration check required to hold the *Shield* together cumulatively increases by 5 during any round this defensive stance is taken. Thus, assuming no other distractions, the Concentration DC rises to 10 on the first round of the stance, 15 on the second, 20 on the third, and so forth. Forced to reveal the complete scope of its divine might, the *Shield* continues to resist even if the stance is abandoned; the Concentration check DC only slowly returns to normal, decreasing by 1 every round until it once again reaches 5.

Consequences

Una's Shield has an unfortunate tendency to amplify feelings of guilt, especially with regards to one's allies and their well-being. The bearer begins to feel that her own safety and health are not as important as that of those around them, and even turns down magical healing unless her friends are fully healed.

When wielding *Una's Shield*, the bearer must make a DC 40 Will save or refuse any spell that cures hit point damage unless all of her allies are undamaged. A new saving throw is allowed in any round in which someone tries to cast such a spell on the wielder. The caster of such a spell can attempt to subject the *Shield's* wielder against her will, but must make a touch attack roll to do so — and even then, the wielder must attempt to resist the spell by making the appropriate saving throw and, if applicable, by keeping spell resistance raised.

Likewise, the wielder also refuses any spell that removes a harmful status condition unless none of her allies suffer from a condition of equal or greater spell level. For example, the wielder refuses to have deafness (caused by a 2nd-level spell) removed if an ally is petrified (equivalent to a 6th-level spell).

This effect is present, though weaker, even when the *Shield* is not fully assembled; for each *Ring* missing from the *Shield*, the wielder gains a +10 bonus to her Will save to resist the guilt. Further, any ally wearing one of the separated *Rings of the Shield* is not considered for purposes of determining which allies are fully healed or incapacitated.

This feeling of guilt can also manifest itself in other ways. Bearers have been known to volunteer for suicide missions so their allies do not need to go, give up a fair share of treasure, and otherwise bend over backwards to keep others from harm. At the DM's discretion, the wielder might need to periodically make a Will save to avoid giving in to these emotions. All feelings of guilt emanating from *Una's Shield* are mind-affecting effects, but due to the artifact-level nature of their power, magic that blocks such effects or renders the target immune are not effective in stopping them. Only creatures immune by virtue of their creature type or lack of an Intelligence score can resist the emotions spawned by the *Shield*.

As an artifact of great holy power, the mere touch of the completed *Una's Shield* burns those of evil alignment. Evil creatures attempting to wield *Una's Shield* suffer 4d6 points of damage per round; this damage is added to the DC of any Concentration check made to hold the *Shield* together, making it very likely that an evil wielder drops the artifact and causes it to split apart.

Using Una's Shield in a Campaign

Because *Una's Shield* is modular, it can be introduced into a campaign piecemeal without wrecking the balance of the game. Each piece is relatively weak by itself; while certainly no PC will turn their noses up at the items, neither are any of them of earth-shattering power. Thus, it is possible to allow the party to gain possession of one of the *Rings of the Shield* very early in the campaign and slowly learn about the remaining pieces as the story unfolds. Only when the *Shield* and more than one *Ring* are gathered together does the artifact start to take on exceptional power — and even then, that power comes at a cost. Few characters are proficient in the tower shield, and of those, fewer still likely have many ranks in Concentration. Thus, the completed *Una's Shield* becomes a weapon to be wielded in special battles, to be utilized for as many rounds as the character can hold on to it, then abandoned for more conventional tactics.

Una's Shield could be introduced as a means to successfully combat an evil foe of seemingly unstoppable power; perhaps it is rumored that only a warrior bearing the *Shield* could survive a fight with the archvillain of the campaign. It is possible that the villain might be introduced long before the first hint of *Una's Shield* comes into play. Alternately, finding the *Shield* might be the end in itself, especially if the heroes are too weak to be able to wield the artifact with any great success.

Adventure Seeds

The Great Relic Hunt

The church of a Lawful Good or Neutral Good god approaches the party with a quest of some theological significance. One of their members has stumbled upon the *Shield of the Rings* in a crypt in a far-off land, and the temple's leaders have decided that *Una's Shield* should be reunited to serve as a sign to the faithful in these dark times. As the party has shown their resourcefulness before, the task is offered to them.

The three *Rings of the Shield* are scattered across the globe, buried in undisturbed dungeons of increasing deadliness. Should the party be turned from the path, they are harassed by a rival party of treasure hunters who seem to be on the trail of the same artifacts. Wherever the party goes, these rivals seem to be just a few steps behind. While not overtly evil, this other team is extremely disrespectful and infuriating to the heroes, hopefully causing a true competition to develop.

As the story unfolds, it turns out that the "enemy" party was not hired by an evil force that seeks to destroy the shield, but by a Chaotic Good church that *also* seeks to use *Una's Shield* as a symbol of their faith's power. In fact, it is revealed that the *Shield of the Rings* was specifically allowed to fall into the first church's hands so that they would hire a party of adventurers that could do all the dirty work while their team cleaned up. In the end, the removal of the last *Ring* from its resting place causes an ancient demon to be awakened that forces both parties to work together using the completed *Shield*.

Prophecy of the Sundered *Shield*

The heroes discover one of the *Rings of the Shield* in a random treasure hoard. When they return to the city, they find themselves under constant attack by azure-clad rogues who answer to a secret organization known simply as the Doom.

Upon further investigation, the heroes discover that the Doom is a cult that seeks to bring back the very demon prince that Una first defeated to earn her shield — and that prophecy states that only the bearer of *Una's Shield* can stop his rise to power. The heroes follow clues to track the Doom back to their headquarters, eventually breaking the cult's power and seizing the *Shield of the Rings*. Unfortunately, they discover that the rogues were only one of three allied cults awaiting the demon prince's return: The temple of an evil god who craves destruction holds one of the other *Rings of the Shield* in their unholy tabernacle, while a hidden island is the home to a secret cabal of wizards possessing the third.

Once both groups have been dispersed, the heroes learn that the leaders of all three guilds have already left to begin the final summoning of the demon prince to this world. With the completed but unreliable *Una's Shield* in

their grasp, the heroes travel to the arctic wasteland at the very top of the world, and the massive temple built there to open the path to the prince's thrice-damned prison. If they can hold on to the *Shield* and keep its power intact, they might have a chance to defeat his summoners — or, if they arrive too late, the demon prince himself.

Destroying Una's Shield

Una's Shield is perhaps the easiest artifact in existence to break; merely releasing its straps causes it to fly apart into four pieces. However, if a more permanent end were sought, one would have to gather all four pieces and embark on one of the following quests.

• Feed the three *Rings* and the *Shield* to the aberration that killed Una and her allies, deep below the surface of the world. Of course, as the creature normally feeds strictly on sentient beings, the only way to do this is to arm four poor souls with the artifacts and allow them to be devoured. It is likely that the beast would then have to be killed afterwards in order to retrieve the items, since its normal digestive process would take years to complete. Since the artifacts were exposed to this beast's unholy stomach acids once before, a second exposure should weaken their magic enough to be destroyed as normal magic items would (by *Morden's disjunction*, for example, or sheer physical force).

• Have the high priest of each of the gods who first gifted the shield to Una cast *atonement* on each of the four pieces. The exact gods involved will vary by campaign, and might include the entire Good pantheon. Such priests will no doubt each require the PCs perform some quest of their own, to earn such a boon. When all relevant priests have cast the spell, the magic items lose the ability to combine into *Una's Shield*, and can be destroyed as any magic item would be.

However, it is far more likely that heroes will want instead to reform the artifact permanently into *Una's Shield*. This is a far trickier task, and requires one of the following tasks be undertaken.

• Slay the original Rivener, an ancient wizard of terrible power who has extended his lifespan by unnatural magic (male human wizard 40, neutral). Once the wizard is dead, the three *Rings* and the *Shield* must be wrapped in hair cut from his head and struck with his staff. This should cause the pieces to fuse once more into *Una's Shield*.

• Assemble *Una's Shield* in the physical presence of one of the original gods who gifted it to Una. Theoretically, this shows the god that the wielder was more worthy than Una was, and results in the removal of the magic that keeps the artifact separated into four parts.

Should *Una's Shield* be reunited permanently, the *Shield* remains in its completed tower shield form indefinitely, no longer requiring any Concentration checks to maintain control of it. The latent guilt effect, unfortunately, cannot be dispelled or suppressed; Una's loss and shame over her actions have permanently altered the *Shield's* magic, and not even the gods can atone her if she never forgives herself.

New Spell

One of *Una's Shield* signature powers is its potent defensive stance, which includes this unique spell for breaking up massed troops. Una used this spell to drive back hordes of lesser foes so she could make her way to the leader. Once the spell is witnessed in action, it should be possible for a cleric to request it from his deity. Arcane casters must research it normally, however.

Begone

Evocation

Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 free action

Range: Personal

Area: All enemies within a 15-foot burst, centered on the caster

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell creates an invisible forceful thrust outwards in all directions with a single word, knocking your foes away from you in all directions. This force initiates a bull rush against each foe in the area, using a single caster level check (with your Wisdom bonus added) as the force's Strength check. The force moves with each foe as well, pushing them back 5 feet if successful and an additional 5 feet for every 5 points by which the check succeeds. Flying creatures suffer a –4 penalty to their Strength check to avoid being pushed.

This spell has an additional effect on any creature grappling or pinning the caster. The creature must make an immediate grapple check against the same caster level check. If the grapple check fails, the grapple is broken. The creature must then make an additional check against the bull rush effect above or be pushed in a random direction away from the caster. Note that every creature grappling the caster must make their grapple check separately, making this a very effective spell when grappled by multiple smaller creatures assisting one another.

Casting this spell is a free action, like casting a quickened spell, and it counts toward the normal limit of one quickened spell per round. As a result, it may be cast while being grappled without need for a Concentration check.

World Tree

The One Tree, The Axis Tree, The Tree of Life, countless others
By Rhiannon Louve

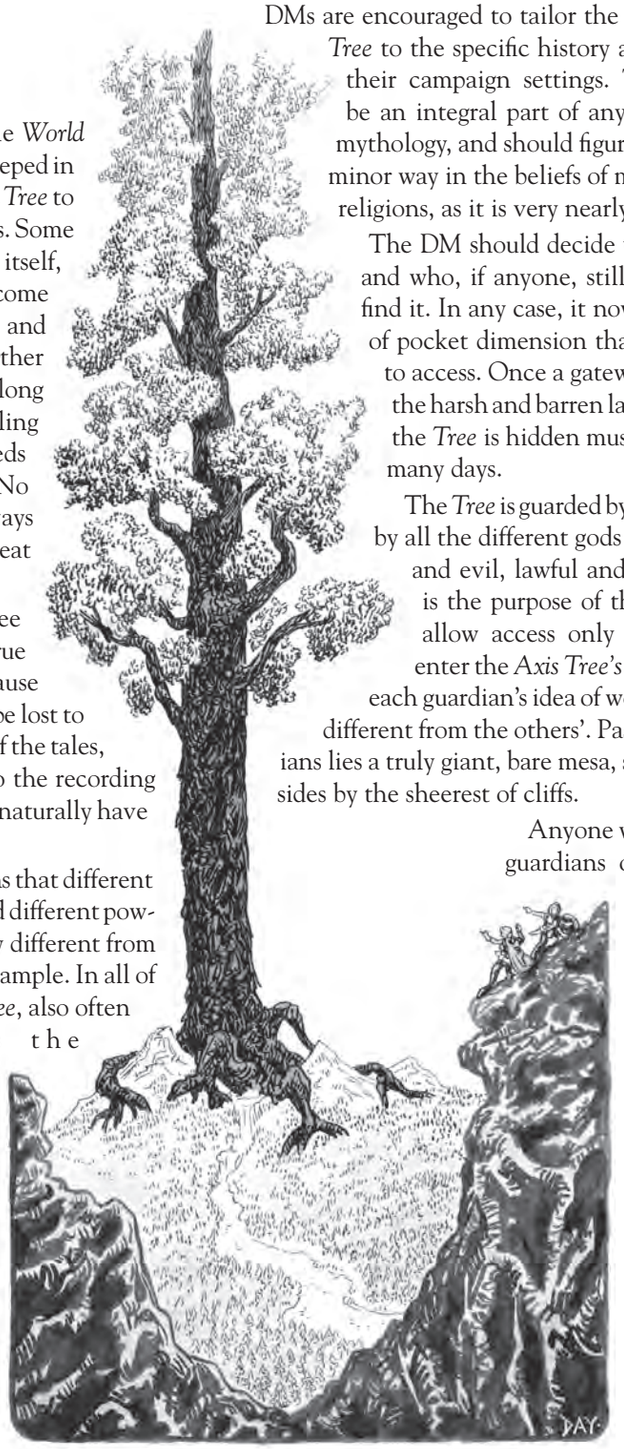
The Tale of the World Tree

Many legends and tales speak of the *World Tree*, all of them ancient, vague and steeped in myth. Some peoples believe the *World Tree* to be the first tree ever planted by the gods. Some believe this first tree was once a god itself, punished or willingly sacrificed to become the source of all plants, that animals and people might have food and shelter. Other cultures say that the *World Tree* existed long before anything else, and that the falling of its leaves and the spreading of its seeds gave birth to all else that followed. No matter the tale, the *World Tree* is always treated with respect, as a thing of great power and significance.

Whatever its origins, all peoples agree that the *World Tree* is very old. If its true tale is unknown, this is doubtless because its first sprouting was so long ago as to be lost to sapient recollection. Indeed, in most of the tales, the *Tree* predates all mortal beings, so the recording of its history by mortal cultures would naturally have been problematic.

Another legend of the tree maintains that different aspects of this ancient living thing hold different powers. The properties of its seeds are very different from the powers inherent in its fruits, for example. In all of these legends, the sap of the *World Tree*, also often named the Blood of the *World Tree*, is the most potent part.

Finally, most legends of the *Tree of Life* agree that at some point in human history, evil people found the tree and tried to harm it or to use its vast power to harm the earth. To keep this from ever happening again, the gods, dragons, elementals or fey (depending on the myth) worked a great magic and hid the *Tree* from mortal kind. No legend speaks of where it may now be found.



DMs are encouraged to tailor the tale of the *World Tree* to the specific history and mythology of their campaign settings. The *Tree* should be an integral part of any world's creation mythology, and should figure in at least some minor way in the beliefs of many major world religions, as it is very nearly a deity in itself.

The DM should decide who hid the *Tree* and who, if anyone, still knows where to find it. In any case, it now exists in a kind of pocket dimension that is very difficult to access. Once a gateway is established, the harsh and barren landscape in which the *Tree* is hidden must be traversed for many days.

The *Tree* is guarded by creatures chosen by all the different gods of creation, good and evil, lawful and chaotic alike. It is the purpose of these guardians to allow access only those worthy to enter the *Axis Tree's* presence, though each guardian's idea of worthiness is vastly different from the others'. Past all these guardians lies a truly giant, bare mesa, surrounded on all sides by the sheerest of cliffs.

Anyone who wins past the guardians of the gods may discover that the huge mesa itself is hollow and can only be entered through the open top. The *Tree of Life* stands within this great natural-rock fortress, surrounded by a small, paradisiacal oasis, full of all manner of natural living things.

Researching the World Tree

Learning a few tales of the *World Tree* is easy. Nearly every bard or temple priest knows some legend or myth in which it makes an appearance. Religious or educated characters of all kinds may very well have grown up hearing tales of the *Axis Tree*. Large libraries typically carry multiple texts that refer to this great tree, and might even contain scholarly works comparing and contrasting the various contradictory legends and discussing at length the metaphorical and psychological significance of the *One Tree* as a myth or religious icon.

As a general rule, any character with Bardic Knowledge or at least one rank in Knowledge (arcane), or Knowledge (religion) has at least heard of the *World Tree*. However, only religious characters are likely to believe it really exists, and even these may see it as a metaphorical religious concept rather than a real tree.

Finding any more useful information about the *World Tree*, such as how to find it or specifically what the various products of the tree can do, is much more difficult. An old monastery in some distant land might have preserved the knowledge for generations, but the monks would only willingly reveal such information to those they knew to be chosen by the gods for some great purpose. A mad seer might have divined real information about the tree, but deciphering her bizarre ramblings might prove the work of many long adventures.

Researching the *World Tree* is always a long adventure in itself. The specifics of that adventure should be tailored by the DM to fit the specific campaign. Characters must be determined, persistent, and worthy before they can hope to find or use any part of the *World Tree*.

DC	Knowledge Available
5	The character knows one or two legends containing the *World Tree*.
10+	Character's level of success determines how many different tales containing the tree or its products that a character knows or has heard
25	Character knows the tree is real and can begin to sort fact from legend (some description of what the tree is *not*, but little knowledge of what it *is*).
30	The character knows the specifics of some, but not all, of the parts of the *Tree*.
35	The character knows who hid the *Tree* and why; the DM should decide which of the various suggestions presented above are accurate, or create his own.
40+	The character knows where to begin his search for the *Tree*, and might even know some of the creatures guarding it.

A character's goal in seeking information on the *World Tree* affects what rolls constitute failures and which are successes. A character seeking only a few tales is successful on any result over 5. However, a character seeking true and factual data on the real *World Tree* is considered to have failed on any result under 25. On any failed roll, a character may believe an inaccurate legend of the *Tree* to contain factual information. Alternatively, the character may be convinced that the *Tree* was never real at all.

Studying the World Tree

Experiencing the *World Tree* begins long before a character can see it. Within a few days' journey of the *Tree*, one begins to sense the nearness of something ancient, powerful, and awe-inspiring. Next, within a few leagues of the *Axis Tree*, one begins to smell it. When in bloom or bearing fruit, the *Tree* smells lightly sweet and very wholesome, a delightful and heartening smell. At other times, the wholesomeness remains, but with a rich, earthy tang, like crushed herbs. Despite the pleasantness of the scent, the *Tree's* magical aroma is so powerful that characters can sometimes be uncomfortably overwhelmed by the sensation.

Soon after smelling the *World Tree*, those approaching it begin to hear the constant low rustle of its leaves or branches. At first, this sounds like the natural movement of any other tree, but whenever a listener's attention drifts, the whispering takes on other forms. Some characters may hear beautiful music. Others hear rich voices laughing or speaking in some unknown tongue. Always, when a character *tries* to hear the true sound of the *World Tree*, it sounds only like a tree. At close quarters, the movement of the *One Tree's* branches is nearly as loud as the roar of an ocean.

Finally, a character comes into sight of the *Tree* itself. The *Tree of Life* is, above all, heartbreakingly beautiful. Many

fall to their knees upon first viewing it. It is taller than any other living tree and bigger around than all but the greatest of castles. Its lowest branches are nearly a thousand feet up the enormous trunk. In shape, the tree grows much like an oak, with twisting branches spread wide and many gnarled, exposed roots. The wood is so dark it is almost black, and the leaves are usually a vivid emerald on top and shining silver beneath. Before they fall, they change to bright scarlet with golden undersides. The blossoms are a blue so intense they almost hurt the eyes, and the fruit resembles an iridescent, shimmering peach.

The spell *detect magic* cannot function within 20 miles of the *World Tree*. Its magical aura is so powerful that it blocks a spellcaster even from detecting other magics in the *Tree's* vicinity. Under the shadow of the *World Tree's* branches, casting *detect magic* causes the caster great pain, so intense is the divine magic it exudes. Parts of the *Tree*, if carried away from the *Axis Tree's* aura, do not detect as magical at all, though they may continue to look magical to the naked eye, and they retain their various potencies. The *World Tree* cannot be detected at all by any other form of divination.

Parts of the World Tree

This "artifact" is also the source of a number of artifact-like magical items. The specific products of the *World Tree* are described in more detail below, but in brief:

Bark of the World Tree: The bark of the *World Tree* is thick and rough. On the outside, it is a rich and loamy shade of brown, so dark as to be almost black. If pried from the tree, a piece of bark is just over an inch thick, and the inner surface is a shimmering gold in color. In weight and texture, the bark is much like ironwood. A masterwork or magical metal prying tool and a DC 30 Strength check are both required to remove an approximately 1-foot-square piece of bark from the trunk of the *One Tree*.

Blossoms of the World Tree: These blue blossoms are blindingly lovely. Staring at them has been likened to staring at the sun, and many onlookers are forced to look away and shield their eyes. In other respects they resemble a blue cherry blossom, the size of a human hand. They feel like ordinary flowers to the touch, and their smell, like their beauty, can be overpoweringly lovely. The blossoms of the *World Tree* can be picked from a branch with a DC 15 Strength check, though a DC 15 Dexterity check is also required to break the stem without crushing the flower. Near the end of the *Tree's* blooming season, petals may also be gathered from the ground around the *World Tree's* base. If characters arrive at exactly the right time, there can be as many as 10d10 x 1000 petals available for the taking on the ground among the *World Tree's* roots.

Fruit of the World Tree: Shimmering and opalescent, this fruit looks like nothing so much as a large peach carved out of some magical, polished gemstone. Its colors range from yellow to pale orange to pink, but with prismatic twinkles of all colors when it catches the light just right. Each fruit is the size of a large cantaloupe. The fruit smells nearly as lovely as the flower, but the scent is milder. Once fully ripe, a fruit of the *World Tree* can be picked with a mere DC 5 Strength check, and at the right time in the *Tree's* cycle, as many as 10d10 x 10 fruits can be gathered from the ground at its base. The fruit can only be cut or bruised with magical materials, but once sliced open, its texture and taste are akin to what a peach would be like in the most perfect of all heavens.

Leaves of the World Tree: So marvelous is the *World Tree* that each leaf is a wonder all its own. Emerald and silver or ruby and gold, depending on the season, their beauty puts to shame the precious gems and metals the leaves resemble. A leaf of the *World Tree* is wide and teardrop-shaped, approximately twice the size of a human palm. The leaves smell tangy and earthy like a mixture of fresh herbs. Picking a green leaf requires a DC 20 Strength check followed by a DC 10 Dexterity check to keep from harming the leaf in the process. After the red leaves have fallen, up to 10d10 x 100 can be gathered from around the *Tree's* base.

Sap of the World Tree: By far the most powerful of the many products of the *World Tree* is its sap. Though nearly impossible to harvest in large quantities, due to the *Tree's* great strength and resilience, a very small amount of sap does seep out here and there between breaks in the bark. In color, the sap is so dark as to appear black in most light, but with the sun shining through it, it can be seen to be a deep, translucent burgundy. In texture, the sap is somewhat like amber, but oddly pliable, like clay. It is not at all sticky and retains a silky smooth surface area no matter how it is worked or stretched. It also produces no scent whatsoever until it is burned. A DC 20 Strength check is required to break a piece of sap away from the wood that produced it. Far beyond mere physical perception, however, the sap has a magical and psychic presence that most find extremely uncomfortable. Characters feel as if the sap is sifting through their souls and judging them. This feeling intensifies horribly whenever the sap comes in contact with a character's bare flesh, but most who come near the sap are instinctively loathe to touch it.

Seeds of the World Tree: Nestled within each fruit of the *World Tree* lies a single large pit, the size of a halfling's fist. These golden pits resemble peach pits, just as the fruit resembles a peach, and with the same opalescent sheen. Cracked open with masterwork or magical metal prying tools (DC 25 Strength check), the pits contain the seeds of the *World Tree*. Unlike the seeds of an ordinary plant, these seeds cannot grow into new versions of the same tree that bore them. Rather, every pit contains seeds to a different kind of

plant. The seeds do not appear to be magical or in any other way out of the ordinary, save that they are all large, healthy, and perfect. Any given pit may contain a seed to any one natural plant from any part of the world or any time period in the world's history or future.

Wood of the World Tree: Beneath the *Axis Tree's* dark, rough bark lies its wood, also sometimes called in legend the *Flesh of the World Tree*. When exposed, it is bright and clean, a tan so pale as to be nearly white, shining as if polished and subtly flecked with gold. Uncut, the wood is so smooth as to feel slick and wet to mortal fingers. The wood is warmer than ordinary wood to the touch, but it is harder and tougher than even adamantine, and thus nearly impossible to harvest.

Powers of the World Tree

The *World Tree's* powers typically relate to life, particularly the creation and healing of living things; and to wisdom, particularly self-comprehension. As the *Tree* innately tied to the seasonal cycle of time, it does have some time-related powers as well.

Using the World Tree

The Tree: No legend speaks of the *World Tree* having any specific use to which it can be put, outside the purpose for which it was originally created. The *Tree of Life* creates life. By its very nature, it breathes life-force into the world (some say into all the worlds) the way other plants create oxygen, and the *Axis Tree's* seeds give birth to growing plants, that all things may find food and shelter. However, the tree follows a life cycle like other plants, and those wishing to harvest from the tree must follow this cycle in order to find what they seek.

The *World Tree* follows an eightfold cycle, similar to the annual stages of many other fruit trees. Instead of lasting for half a season, however, the stages of the *World Tree's* cycle last approximately 64 years each. Thus, when the *Tree* still resided in the physical, mortal realm, only the rarest and most long-lived of humans ever saw more than two stages of the cycle in their lifetimes. DMs should tailor the *Tree's* cycle to fit the needs of the specific campaign.

Barren Stage: In this stage, the tree bears no leaves, blossoms or fruit, and exudes very little sap. This is the easiest time to harvest bark or wood from the tree, as both are slightly more brittle than usual (+2 to all relevant checks). Small, bare, twig-like branches can sometimes be snapped off whole in this season, for use as magical wands and the like.

Budding Stage: When the *World Tree's* new leaves first begin to bud is also when the sap flows most freely. Those wishing to collect sap will find more of it oozing through the *World Tree's* bark during this stage of the cycle than any other.

Spring Stage: Once most of the new leaves have grown in, the flowers of the *One Tree* begin to form tiny, beautiful buds as well. The leaves of the *World Tree* are more difficult to harvest than usual in this season (–3 to all relevant checks), but they are at their most potent power (double their area of effect).

Blooming Stage: This is the least useful stage in which to harvest magical items from the *World Tree*, but the tree is said in legend to be at its most beautiful during this stage, such that it would inspire worship in all but the most hard-hearted of mortals.

Summer Stage: While the fruit of the *World Tree* is still ripening on the branches, the flowers fall to earth in the form of thousands of sapphire-bright petals.

Ripening Stage: Once the fruit is ripe, it falls to the earth. This is the best time for harvesting both the fruit and the seeds of the *World Tree*.

Turning Stage: After the fruit is gone from the branches, the leaves of the *World Tree* begin to turn from green to red. Though again, not a particularly good time for harvesting from the tree, this stage's beauty is rivaled in all the universe only by the same tree in full bloom, so say all the tales.

Fall Stage: When all the leaves have changed to red, they fall to earth, making this stage the easiest time to harvest the leaves, though their powers are less potent in this state (3/4 area of effect).

The Bark: Usually used in armor and other protective items, the bark of the *World Tree* can be shaped in high temperatures, almost like metal. It bends at the same temperature as iron, but it can only be worked by magical tools. It never melts down like a true metal, always retaining its basic texture, regardless of how it is bent or stretched. Only heavy shields, helms, and heavy armor can be made of the bark of the *World Tree*. It is too thick and heavy for medium or light armor.

The Blossoms: Kept in clean water, blossoms or petals from the *World Tree* remain fresh and beautiful for seven to nine years. Throughout this time, their perfume remains equally potent. Their other powers and uses are described in more detail below, but in brief:

- The blossoms may be dried for use in *incense*, a process which requires daily supervision and zero exposure to moisture for a period of up to 25 years.
- The blossoms, when steeped in any non-magical, liquid poison for a decade or so, make a powerful painkilling and hallucinogenic *medicine*.
- The blossoms may be boiled in the happy tears of new mothers and then brewed into a heady *perfume*.
- The blossoms may be brewed into a wine along with the blood of eight infants to make a deadly *poison*.
- The blossoms make a fine *tea* when brewed in well-water from a monastery.

The Fruit: Like the blossoms, fruit of the *World Tree* remains good for seven to nine years. It is ingested for full effect, and it can be kept good for much longer periods in the same ways that any other fruit can. It can be dried, canned, jellied, baked into breads or pies, fermented into wine and so forth. In general, such preserving techniques halve the fruit's power but preserve the fruit for as many years as an ordinary fruit could be preserved days by the same means (thus, if banana bread stays good for a week, *World Tree* fruit bread would last seven years). Once cut open, the fruit can be chopped or eaten like any other fruit, but before the first damage is done to the fruit's shining outer skin, only magical items can be used to cut or even bruise it.

The Leaves: The leaves of the *World Tree* can be used fresh for full potency or dried for half potency. Kept in water, leaves of the *World Tree* will stay fresh as long as 15 to 20 years. Drying them is similar to drying the blossoms, described above. Their power is activated by boiling them in purified water. Approximately 100 fresh leaves (or 200 dried leaves) must be boiled at a time for maximum effectiveness.

The Sap: The sap of the *World Tree* must be burned like an incense resin, with fire started by magical means. One dose of the sap of the *World Tree* requires a fist-sized lump of the resin.

The Seeds: To access the seeds of the *World Tree*, one must pry open the surrounding shell with a masterwork or better metal prying tool. The seeds within can then be used in two ways. If planted in hallowed or unhallowed soil and watered with holy or unholy water, any seed will grow well in any climate under any conditions, with varying magical results as described below. Alternatively, the seeds can also be treated exactly like non-magical seeds of whatever species of plant they happen to represent, in which case, if properly planted and cared for, they will grow into particularly fine and productive, if ordinary, specimens.

The Wood: The only substance strong enough to carve into the wood of the *World Tree* is magically enhanced adamantine. All other tools, regardless of enchantment or quality, dull or break before the wood is even marked. Even with enhanced adamantine, to remove even the smallest of branches from the *World Tree*'s mighty limbs requires one to overcome the wood's hardness of 25. Wood of the *World Tree* has 50 hit points per inch of thickness.

Constant Powers

The Bark: The bark has the weight, hardness, and hit points of iron or steel. Any armor or shield made from the bark has an innate enhancement bonus of +2. This does not stack with any additional magical bonus added to the armor, though *World Tree* bark armor does qualify as masterwork quality for the purposes of creating magic armor. In addition, bark of the *World Tree* does not burn at any temperature and grants fire resistance, cold resistance, and electricity resistance of 5 (for shields) or 10 (for armor). Wearing bark of the *World Tree* also grants the user Spell Resistance 10 and Damage Reduction 10/magic.

The Blossoms: There are many possible constant powers for the blossoms of the *World Tree*, depending on how they are prepared. In general, a full dose of any of the following substances requires 1,000 petals-worth of blossoms.

Incense: Dried and prepared as incense, the blossoms of the *World Tree* aid in meditation. Within 100 feet of the incense burner, every 15 minutes of meditation grants a cumulative +1 enhancement bonus to a character's Wisdom ability score (maximum +8) for a period of 8 hours. *Incense of World Tree* blossoms burns at a rate of approximately 1 "dose" of incense per hour.

Medicine: Anyone administering this medicine to an injured, sick, or poisoned subject gains a +15 circumstance bonus on all Heal checks involving that individual for the next 24 hours. One in ten people who take the medicine gain a permanent point of Wisdom; any single person can only receive this bonus once, regardless of the number of doses taken.

Perfume: Used as a perfume, the blossoms create a powerful aura of benevolence and virtue. The wearer gains an effective +10 bonus to his Charisma ability and an additional +5 bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy. Each dose of the perfume lasts one full day.

Poison: Fermented into a poison, the blossoms of the *World Tree* are particularly noted for their near-universal effectiveness. Even creatures normally immune to poisons, such as undead, are susceptible, though they gain a racial bonus of +5 to the Fortitude save. Constructs remain immune. The poison has the following traits: Ingestion; DC 24 Fortitude save negates; initial damage 3d6 Wisdom; secondary damage 1 Wisdom drain.

Tea: Tea brewed from the blossoms of the *World Tree* acts to cure both temporary and permanent Wisdom damage and to remove all adverse mental conditions from the drinker, such as *confusion*, *daze*, *feeblemind*, or *insanity*.

The Fruit: Each 1/4 of a fruit of the *World Tree* (or 1/2 if preserved in some manner) acts as a *heal* spell and a *true seeing* spell, both cast by a 20th-level druid. After eating fruit of the *World Tree*, a character becomes immune to poison and disease for 1d100 days.

The Wood: In addition to being stronger than adamantine and immune to fire, wood from the *World Tree* is intelligent and aware of its surroundings. It communicates empathically and understands most spoken and written languages.

Activated Powers

The Leaves: When boiled in purified water for at least 20 minutes, the power inherent in the leaves is activated.

As the steam from the boiling leaves rises into the air, a vast area around the pot (base radius 8 miles) is affected as if by the Enrichment version of the spell *plant growth*. In addition, for one full year, all water sources within this same radius are continuously affected as if by the spell *purify food and drink*, so that every stream, pond, spring or well in the vicinity produces only pure, drinkable water. Both spells are cast as if by a 20th-level druid. These powers can only be used once per batch of leaves, though after completing the spell, the boiled water and leaves together make an excellent and delicious base for soup.

The Sap: Assuming the sap does not attempt to kill them first (see below), all those inhaling the overpoweringly delicious fumes of the sap as an incense gain the ability to travel back in time to a specific instant. All characters inhaling the sap's fumes together must agree on the instant to which they wish to travel. If there is any disagreement, nothing happens at all.

Though the sap appears to burn while this power is in effect, characters transported through time find they still have the sap with them in the past, entirely unburned. Burning this lump of sap (and no other!) is the characters' only way of returning to their own time period when they have finished their task.

Characters transported into the past are not recognizable as themselves to their past selves or any of their loved ones. They resemble themselves superficially (race, size, coloring, age, sex) but appear otherwise as entirely different people. This helps to protect the characters from various types of paradox. If characters change a part of the past that leads to one of them dying in the past or never having been born, the power of the sap protects them from ceasing to exist, but they lose all their memories of the parts of their past that have been destroyed, even if this leaves the character with total amnesia. These memories have ceased to exist and cannot be restored to the character by any means.

Once back in their proper time, characters who have not lost their memories remember both the original past they actually lived and the "new" past that they have helped to create.

The Seeds: Planted in hallowed soil and watered with holy water, the seeds of the *World Tree* grow, at a normal rate of plant growth, into particularly large and beautiful versions of whatever type of plant they represent. Climate and care have no effect on this growth whatsoever. The seeds must simply be planted in the hallowed soil and watered once with holy water; from then on the innate magic of the seeds does the rest. If this plant bears fruit or vegetables, any full meal made from this plant acts as a *cure light wounds* spell after being ingested. If the plant is of a non-edible variety, it projects an aura of *bless* in a 50-ft. radius at all times (allies, for the purposes of this effect, include anyone of good alignment and anyone who loves plants). Either spell is cast as if by a 10th-level cleric.

Planted in unhallowed soil and watered with unholy water, the seeds of the *World Tree* grow, at a normal rate of plant growth, into particularly twisted and unsettling versions of whatever type of plant they represent. Climate and care have no effect on this growth whatsoever. The seeds must simply be planted in the unhallowed soil and watered once with unholy water, and from then on the innate magic of the seeds does the rest. If this plant bears fruit or vegetables, any full meal made from this plant acts as an *inflict light wounds* spell after being ingested. If the plant is of a non-edible variety, it projects an aura of *obscuring mist* in a 200 ft. radius at all times, and it looms in the mist, threateningly. Either spell is cast as if by a 10th-level cleric.

The Wood: This intelligent wood does have a few powers that it can activate on its own. Most notably, wood of the *World Tree* can cast *wood shape* on itself at will. It cannot use this power on other wooden objects, and avoids using the power even on itself, as it finds the effects to be painful. However, because it has no limits on how often it can cast this spell on itself, it can even employ *wood shape* for such things as limited locomotion via the creation of temporary limbs, though at a rate of one step per standard action; this power does not allow it to move quickly. Three times per day, wood of the *World Tree* can also employ the spell *mage hand*. Both spells are cast as if by a 20th-level druid.

Consequences

The Blossoms: A few of the methods for preparing the blossoms of the *World Tree* come with possible negative consequences to the user.

Medicine: One in ten users of the blossoms as a medicine lose a point of Wisdom. This loss is permanent, and cannot be reversed by any means. Any single individual can only suffer this effect once, regardless of the number of doses taken.

Perfume: The power of the blossoms, combined with the innocence of a new mother's happy tears, force a character to develop a loving and friendly outlook on the world. For the duration of the perfume, the character must make a DC 15 Will save to harm any living being, either through physical or magical means. They must attempt this save each round they wish to take a harmful action.

The Fruit: Anyone eating more than one slice of the fruit of the *World Tree* within an eight-hour period falls immediately into a deep, supernatural sleep for at least 24 hours. At the end of the 24-hour period, the individual may attempt a DC 25 Fortitude or Will save (their choice) to awaken. If the save fails, they may try again in 48 hours; then again 96; and so on, with the interval doubling each time. While asleep, the character does not age and does not require food; treat as the *temporal*

stasis spell in this regard, though the character can still be harmed by outside forces.

The Sap: The sap of the *World Tree* is not alive or sentient in any usual sense of the term, but it nevertheless has the ability to judge those around it, deciding for itself whether or not they are worthy to make use of its power. Those that it deems outside its proper purpose, it kills.

DMs should tailor the sap's specific motivations to their particular campaigns, but the sap's chief concern is always plant life and the natural world. Any purpose at odds with the protection of all natural living things is not one that the sap will support. In addition, the sap punishes either hubris or stupidity with equal indifference. It is neither good nor evil but the physical form of a great and terrible power.

Should the sap decide that some characters in the range of its burning scent are unworthy of its power, these characters are affected as if by the spell *wail of the banshee*, cast by a 20th-level wizard.

Ambient Effects

The Tree: Nearly all of the *World Tree's* powers are simply the result of its existence. The *World Tree* is said to be the source of all life. In theory, no reproduction or healing could ever take place without the ambient effects of the *World Tree* upon all of reality. It is up to the DM whether this is factually true in a given campaign. Perhaps the *Tree* is only responsible for the reproduction and healing of living plants, or perhaps it is no longer connected to the rest of the world's life cycle. It may have helped to create the world initially, but now it is just an impressive magical tree. The needs of a specific campaign setting must dictate the level of the *Axis Tree's* involvement in maintaining the physical, natural world.

In addition, the *World Tree* inspires awe in all who see it. Anyone coming into sight of the *World Tree* must fall to their knees in a moment of reverence for its great beauty and power (approximately 5d10 rounds). Characters wishing to resist this effect may attempt to do so with a DC 30 Will save.

Anyone wishing harm to the *World Tree* is struck with fear at her own audacity. Such a character may make a DC 30 Will save. Failure indicates that the character is panicked for 4d6 rounds. On a successful save, the character must still succeed at yet another Will save, this one DC 35, to actually force herself to take action that may harm the *World Tree*. The *Axis Tree* automatically heals damage done to it at a rate of 20 hit points per round.

Anyone casting *detect magic* beneath the branches of the *World Tree* must make a Fortitude save, DC 15, or fall unconscious for 2d4 rounds in reaction to the overwhelming flood of magic.

The Blossoms: Though they smell delightful, the scent of fresh blossoms of the *World Tree* is overwhelmingly distracting. Each blossom smells so good that it is difficult to do anything but sit quietly and enjoy the scent for hours on end. For each blossom, creatures within five feet of the flowers suffer a cumulative –1 distraction penalty (max –5). Precautions may be taken to eliminate these effects by dampening the scent, such as plugging one's nose or depositing the flowers in a scent-proof container like a *bag of holding*.

In addition, a character can temporarily blind himself while staring at the bright flowers. It is easy enough to look away and avoid these effects, however, and most characters instinctively do so. Anyone deliberately staring at the blossoms for more than three straight rounds goes blind for 1d4 minutes. They do not continue to shine in darkness without some other light to reflect, however, and so cannot be used as illumination. They are always half as bright as the brightest light within direct line of sight from their position.

All of the above ambient effects are true only of fresh blossoms of the *World Tree*. Once preserved in any of the ways listed above, the blossoms of the *World Tree* cease to have any ambient effects whatsoever.

The Fruit: Like the blossoms of the *World Tree*, the fruit smells very good. The scent is not quite as intense, however, so 10 times as much fruit are required to incur the same distraction penalty.

The Sap: Sap of the *World Tree* is inanimate and is not intelligent in any way that ordinary mortals could hope to understand. However, in the presence of sap of the *World Tree* one cannot help but feel watched. It is an uncomfortable and all-encompassing feeling.

Due to the sap's discouraging but nevertheless sobering influence, all characters of whom the sap disapproves should be given multiple chances to back out or reconsider before unleashing the sap's potentially deadly power. Indeed, most characters should end up wanting to put themselves as far from the sap as possible. Its unspoken criticism is less comfortable to some than many forms of torture. This power requires a great deal of excellent roleplaying from all involved, as well as a fair amount of sensitivity and insight on the part of the GM. It should be introduced to a game with great caution.

The Wood: Wood of the *World Tree* is intelligent and aware of its surroundings. Though it is not technically enchanted (unless someone chooses to enchant it), any item carved from wood of the *World Tree* has a Wisdom and Charisma of 18, an Intelligence of 10, and an Ego of 20. If enchanted, new Ego points provided by magical powers and abilities do not stack with the item's innate Ego. Wood of the *World Tree* can communicate empathically with one person at a time (no more than three different people in a minute) and can understand

spoken and written communication in all humanoid languages. Wood of the *World Tree* is always neutral in alignment. Its chief concern is the safety and well-being of the natural world, but it also tends to have a warped and very earthy sense of humor.

Reactive Traits

The Tree: As far as any mortal has ever been able to determine, the *World Tree* is totally impervious to all ordinary magics. Arcane magic, divine magic and psionics simply do not seem to work on it, whether it is a direct target or simply in the area of effect. The magics appear to interact with their environments the same way they always do, but the *Tree* itself remains entirely unaffected, as if nothing at all had happened. The various products of the *World Tree* do not retain this immunity once removed from the *Tree*.

Using the World Tree in a Campaign

This artifact is intended only for very high level or even epic-level campaigns, and always in only the most earth-shaking of story arcs. Though the *World Tree* is very much like an inanimate object, it should also be treated as being very much like a deity.

It is also recommended that the parts of the *World Tree* not be made available to characters outside a plotline involving the *Tree*. These objects are nearly impossible to obtain, and some are so powerful that those few who manage to acquire some have probably only done so because they have a dire need to use the items themselves. Thus, a character who has never been to the *World Tree* and has no context for its breathtaking power and immensity, should not have a sarcastic quarterstaff made from its wood, and so on. The items produced by the *World Tree* make for much more powerful and interesting tales when told in the context of their source.

Adventure Seeds

A Second Wind

A major war wages between the forces of good and evil. The PCs have just assisted in a major battle wherein they helped to drive away the enemy forces from the battlements, but at a very great cost. The armies of light are decimated, and their leaders are dead or dying. It seems that the forces of good have achieved victory, but at a horrific cost.

Then, just as the dead are being cleared from the battlefield, the enemy army reveals that it was only feigning retreat. Evil's most powerful forces have not as yet appeared on the battlefield, and the devastated armies of good have absolutely no chance of victory against such foes. The fate of all reality hangs in the balance, and it would appear that evil is sure to win. In desperation, an old priest tells the PCs the legend of the *World Tree* and charges them to find it and return with aid as quickly as they can.

When the PCs (after however many adventures seem appropriate to the DM) finally arrive at the *World Tree*, they find it in its Ripening stage and are able to gather vast amounts of the fruit with which to heal the armies of light and its dying leaders. In addition, PCs may bring back bark for magical defenses, leaves and seeds to help restore the land after the war is over, wood for weapons, or possibly even sap to go back and change some major mistake made by the armies of light.

Destroying the World Tree

In general, only particularly evil beings intent on destroying all life would have any desire whatsoever to destroy the *World Tree*. It does no harm to anyone, and its destruction, if the legends are to be believed, would wreak major havoc on the world.

One possible scenario in which a sane mortal might wish to destroy the *World Tree* is if the tree had somehow become diseased and was warping all life in its illness. Perhaps the PCs need to kill the old, ailing *Tree of Life* so that a new, healthy sapling might be planted in its place.

If the DM deems that the *World Tree* is no longer the source of all reproduction and healing for the world, but simply a powerful remnant of the world's creation, other reasons for destroying the tree might exist, such as to stop it from falling into the wrong hands or to free the god who was originally imprisoned in the tree as part of its creation.

In any case, there it only one known way to destroy the *World Tree*.

- To destroy the *World Tree*, one must pour a small amount of blood from each and every one of the gods in a circle around its roots. This leaves the *Tree* vulnerable to magic for a single day, though all its other defenses remain intact. Characters may come up with many ways to kill the *Tree* with magic in less than 24 hours.

If the DM adopts the *World Tree* into the mythology of the campaign setting as the source of life that makes all reproduction and healing possible, then as soon as the tree is destroyed, all seeds and fetuses die, and no healing or healing magic of any kind functions at all. Any damage done to any living thing is permanent until all things died, or the *Tree* is somehow restored or replaced.

DMs are encouraged, however, to interpret the destruction of the *World Tree* in the way that best suits their specific campaigns and settings.

Appendix A: The Chosen One

By Anthony Pryor

The Tale of the Chosen One

Throughout history, many lands and peoples speak of a *Chosen One*, a champion of justice and freedom whose destiny is to set the people free, defeat a fearsome foe or destroy a great threat to civilization. This is the tale of a single *Chosen One* — others surely exist, each with his own story, but the tale of Terita Moonbringer is one of the most famous.

Born in troubled times, Terita was the daughter of a humble family in a small village. Her kingdom was ravaged by plague and besieged by enemies. Despair gripped the land, and many claimed that the gods had abandoned the people.

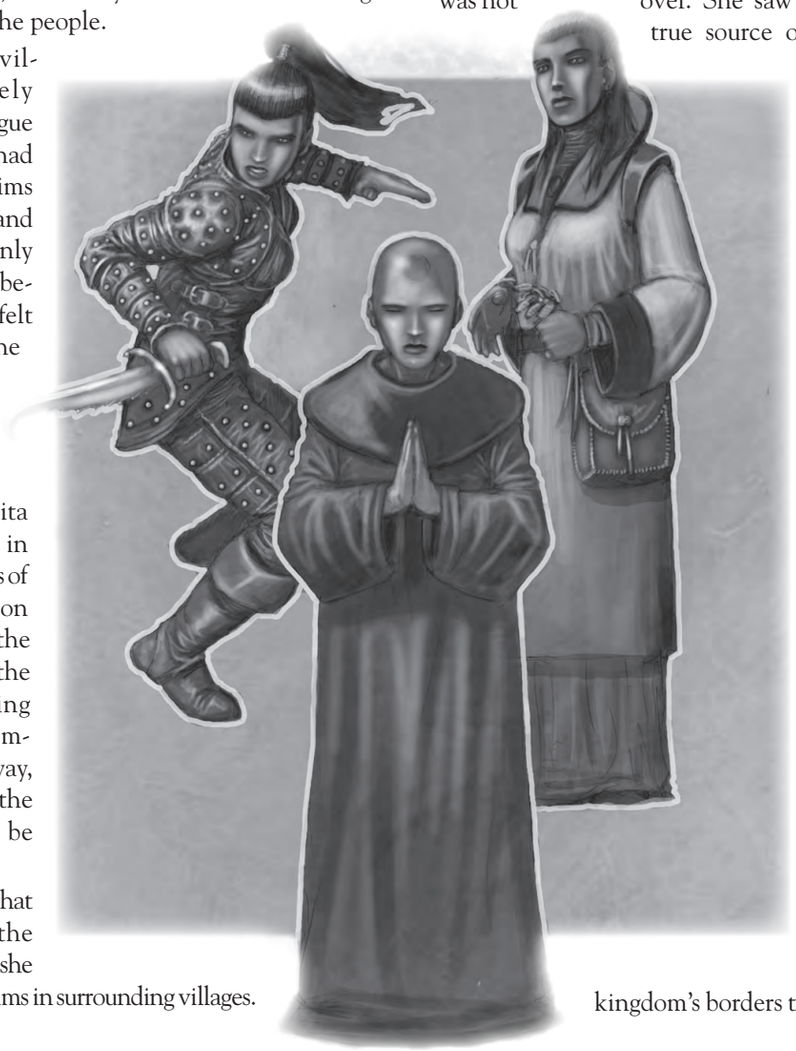
Though her village was largely untouched by plague and war, Terita had seen many victims passing through, and all knew it was only a matter of time before the village felt the ravages of the outside world.

One day, while gathering berries with her mother, Terita beheld a vision in which the goddess of healing called upon her to go among the people, healing the sick and bringing hope to the commoners. In this way, the goddess said, the kingdom would be saved.

And so it was that Terita became the *Chosen One*. First she healed plague victims in surrounding villages. Her fame grew, and many came to her, begging to be healed. When she healed the leader of a group of adventurers, they became her protectors, and aided Terita in her labors.

Soon the flood of suffering victims became more than Terita could manage alone, and her companions began to search for a cure that could be given to many. The kingdom's enemies took notice of her, and sent their agents to disrupt Terita's work and do her harm, but with the aid of her companions, Terita survived all attempts on her life.

Slowly, Terita's efforts pushed back the plague, and at last her companions discovered a cure, which was soon distributed throughout the kingdom. But Terita's work was not over. She saw in a dream that the true source of the contagion was a circle of plague demons summoned by the wizards of a rival kingdom. The demons were busily concocting a new plague that would sweep the kingdom and undo all of Terita's work.



Worse still, unknown to the wizards who had summoned them, the plague demons had no intention of halting their plague at the borders of Terita's kingdom — they were demons after all, and it was their intention to transform the entire world into a mortal version of their infernal realm.

Terita and her companions journeyed beyond the kingdom's borders to seek out and destroy

Researching a Chosen One

When given the task of serving or protecting a special individual, or when a friend or party member begins to manifest strange powers, the PCs may wish to investigate further and discover the true nature of these abilities. A Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge check yields the following facts.

DC	Knowledge Available
10	In times of trouble, a *Chosen One* often arises to serve the gods on the Material Plane.
20	This individual is often of humble origins, but manifests considerable power when serving the gods.
25	Each *Chosen One* manifests powers appropriate to his chosen destiny.
30+	*Chosen One*s can fall from grace and be punished by the gods, or their powers can be taken or lost in a number of ways.

the plague demons. All knew they would likely not return, but as the *Chosen One* and her guardians they knew also that their lives were secondary to Terita's destiny.

The fight against the demons was terrible, and much of the rival kingdom was devastated in the mayhem. In the end, Terita and most of her companions perished; only a lone bard emerged to tell the story. To this day the tale is repeated throughout the kingdom, and Terita's memory continues to inspire and guide.

The Chosen One in Your Campaign

The *Chosen One* is somewhat different from other artifacts in this book, as it is actually a person or other living creature, rather than an object or item. Consequently, it is presented in different format: The *Chosen One* is actually a template that can be added to any character. The *Chosen One* can be a righteous fighter for good, a mystical agent of the gods, or even a merciless conqueror who uses his granted powers for evil and destruction. As with any artifact, the *Chosen One*'s exact role in the campaign is up to the DM.

The DM has two choices for bringing the *Chosen One* into a campaign. The *Chosen One* can be an NPC, in which case the player characters can act as the protectors, agents or followers, or even as the *Chosen One*'s bitter foes. The *Chosen One* could be the PCs' patron, providing them with resources, advice and wisdom, or dispatching them on missions. Or the *Chosen One* could be an innocent whom the PCs must defend against the forces that would destroy her.

The *Chosen One* can also be a PC. While this can make for an especially epic campaign, care should be used in deciding who receives the honor and how it will be used. A *Chosen One* PC has advantages over his companions, and the DM must be wary lest the other PCs simply become "supporting characters" while the campaign's "real" hero gets all the glory. This can be remedied by giving the other PCs their own powers and abilities that the *Chosen One* does not have, but this might end in an overpowered campaign that collapses of its own weight. A PC who is blessed (or cursed) with *Chosen One* status also has many new responsibilities and drawbacks, and as such the role may not be as desirable as it first seems. Be ready to play the drawbacks as well as the advantages, but not to the point where you pull the *Chosen One* out of the game, or force him to commune with the gods while the others are out slaying dragons.

The paths listed here are examples; creative DMs can design others, especially if rival *Chosen One*s are desired. Most of the paths in this chapter are geared toward good-aligned *Chosen One*s, but evil *Chosen One*s can easily be created using the existing paths as a guide.

Powers of the Chosen One

The *Chosen One* has a number of distinct abilities that depend upon his or her life path. The status of *Chosen One* works somewhat like an acquired template, as described below.

The Chosen One's Path

The *Chosen One* selects one of several different paths, based upon the role that he is to play in the campaign. Each path grants the *Chosen One* various powers as he rises in level, and also imposes certain penalties and responsibilities that grow in importance and difficulty as he becomes more powerful.

The exact path that a player character *Chosen One* takes can be determined by the player (in which case the DM may have to make modifications to the campaign based upon the *Chosen One*'s destiny), by the DM (in which case the path is imposed on the character without any choice or say in the matter) or as a result of mutual discussion and agreement. Needless to say, in the case of NPC *Chosen One*s the DM has considerably more flexibility.

The paths are listed below, along with powers gained at each level that the character earns after gaining the *Chosen One* template. This is based on total class levels; the precise classes that make it up are irrelevant. (A level of "0" indicates that the character gains that power as soon as he becomes a *Chosen One*, without the need to gain any additional levels.) The term "*Chosen One* levels" refers to the number of levels the character has gained after becoming the *Chosen One*.

Each path lists appropriate alignments and character classes. The DM should use these as guidelines and not as hard-and-fast rules, for twisting the rules can lead to very unusual and exciting game play. A fighter who takes the path of peace, or a lawful good cleric who takes the path of war, for example, both have the potential to create highly nuanced characters who will find their two roles often in conflict, but must choose a way between them.

Finally, each entry lists a general destiny that the *Chosen One* must fulfill. This varies by campaign and character, of course, and can be selected, modified and otherwise altered by the DM. The *Chosen One*'s life must be dedicated to the pursuit of this destiny, and many of the powers listed below can only be used when pursuing the destiny. Ignoring a *Chosen One*'s destiny too many times may result in dire consequences, not the least of which is the revocation of *Chosen One* status (see below).

Path of Healing

The hands of a king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known.

—J.R.R. Tolkien, The Return of the King

Chosen Ones who take this path devote themselves to curing the ills of both the people and the land. They typically appear in times of plague or famine, or if some terrible spiritual ailment troubles a kingdom — moral decay, banditry, violence, poverty or tyranny. They have the ability to heal the heart, the mind and the soul as well as the body. The path of healing is most appropriate to clerics and monks; wizards and sorcerers may also choose this path. A rogue or fighter-type can choose this path for an especially challenging experience. *Chosen Ones* who take the path of healing are almost always of good alignment.

Level	Power
0	Hands of a Healer 1
1	Healer's Blessing
2	Touch of Health 1
3	Hands of a Healer 2
4	Healer's Heart
5	Healing Song
6	Hands of a Healer 3
7	Touch of Health 2
8	Healer's Spirit
9	Hands of a Healer 4
10	Breath of Life, Touch of the Divine

Hands of a Healer: In addition to any normal complement of healing spells, the *Chosen One* can heal wounds by touch. He can do this a number of times per day equal to his Wisdom or Charisma bonus, whichever is higher. Initially, this functions as *cure light wounds*. At the third level after gaining *Chosen One* status, this functions as *cure moderate wounds*. At sixth level, it functions as *cure serious wounds*, and at ninth level, it functions as *cure critical wounds*.

Healer's Blessing: Beginning one level after become the *Chosen One*, a healer can pass on resistance to damage and disease to one individual per day. With a touch, he grants the subject a +4 divine bonus to Fortitude saves, and Damage Reduction X/evil, where X equals the healer's *Chosen One* level. The blessing lasts for 10 minutes per *Chosen One* level.

Touch of Health: Beginning at the second *Chosen One* level, a healer can cure disease with a touch, as per the paladin's *remove disease* ability, twice per week. At *Chosen One* level seven, the ability can be used four times per week.

Healer's Heart: At fourth *Chosen One* level, the healer can restore another's healing spells with a touch. Any cleric, paladin or others with healing spells or spell-like abilities such as *lay on hands* has these spells restored and replenished as if they had not been cast or used that day. The *Chosen One* can do this once per day.

Healing Song: Once per day, starting at fifth *Chosen One* level, the healer may call upon the gods and powers of healing, and with her song may restore the healing spells of all those within range. All clerics, paladins and others with healing spells or spell-like abilities within 100 feet, and who can hear the *Chosen One*'s songs, have these spells restored and replenished as if they had never been cast. Conversely, all *inflict* spells prepared by those within hearing of the *Chosen One*'s song are discharged as if cast and can only be recovered normally. Those out of hearing or those who cannot hear the song are immune to this ability.

Healer's Spirit: Once per day, starting at eighth *Chosen One* level, the healer can restore ability damage as per the *greater restoration* spell. This ability requires a touch.

Touch of the Divine: Once per day, by touch, a tenth-level *Chosen One* can remove all curses as per *remove curse*, as well as removing all negative spell effects on a target.

Breath of Life: Once per week, the healer may cast *resurrection* as a spell-like ability.

Destiny

The world is normally full of healers; it is only under extreme conditions that a *Chosen One* emerges who walks this path. Such a *Chosen One* is often faced with a great plague or wave of sickness that threatens and entire nation or people. This sickness can be spiritual or emotional as well as physical — perhaps a nation lies in the throes of despair or is caught up in a bloodthirsty desire for conquest. Regardless, it is the *Chosen One*'s duty to cure the sickness, and with the help of the gods, he must pursue this cure regardless of cost. Actions that do not promote

cures or good health for the *Chosen One*'s people may result in penalties from the gods, or may strip the *Chosen One* of his powers altogether (see below),

Path of Peace

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

—Psalm 46:9

War-torn lands and those ravaged by civil conflict or lawlessness are the most likely to see *Chosen One*s who follow this path. They have the ability to stop conflict and let combatants see the world through new eyes, often bringing understanding and mercy to realms that know only blood and destruction. A *Chosen One* who follows the path of peace fights only reluctantly and tries not to kill. Again, clerics and monks are appropriate to this path, as are rangers or druids who are determined to use their powers to keep the land at peace; other classes such as fighter and paladin can take it as well, especially if they have seen enough bloodshed and wish to bring and end to it all. As might be expected, *Chosen One*s who follow the path of peace are almost always of good alignment.

Level	Powers
0	Aura of Peace DC 12
1	Fearless 1
2	Calming Presence
3	Aura of Peace DC 15
4	Fearless 2
5	Peacemaker
6	Aura of Peace DC 18
7	Fearless 3
8	Master Diplomat
9	Aura of Peace DC 20
10	Peace of the gods

Aura of Peace: The *Chosen One* radiates peace and nonviolence. Any creature of Intelligence 3 or higher who attempts to make an attack or cast an offensive spell within 10 feet of the *Chosen One* must make a DC 12 Will check. The DC rises to 15 at three *Chosen One* levels, to 18 at six levels, and to 20 at nine.

Fearless: At the first *Chosen One* level, the peacemaker gains a +4 to all saves against fear or fear-based effects. The bonus rises to +6 at fourth *Chosen One* level, and to +8 at level seven.

Calming Presence: At second *Chosen One* level, the very presence of the peacemaker aids in keeping peace between warring factions. The *Chosen One* receives a +10 competence bonus to all Skill checks intended to influencing NPC attitudes in pursuit of her destiny.

Peacemaker: As of fifth *Chosen One* level, any creature of Intelligence 3 or higher within 50 feet of the *Chosen One* must make a DC 15 Will check or be incapable of making any attack rolls or casting offensive spells for 1d4 x 10 minutes. (Any time the creature is attacked or threatened, it is entitled to a new save to break the effect.)

Master Diplomat: At eighth *Chosen One* level, the peacemaker receives a +10 divine bonus to all Diplomacy checks made to aid in the cause of peace.

Peace of the Gods: At tenth *Chosen One* level, the peacemaker can stop entire battles. Once per week, the *Chosen One* can radiate a vast aura of peace. Anyone within one mile of the *Chosen One* must make a DC 25 Will save, or become unable to make any attack rolls or cast an offensive spells for 2d4 hours. (Any time a subject is attacked or threatened, it is entitled to a new save to break the effect.)

Destiny

The peacemaker has dedicated herself to ending conflict and violence. Such a *Chosen One* is selected by the gods when terrible wars ravage a nation or world, requiring supernatural aid and inspiration to end. *Chosen One*s who walk this path must seek peaceful resolution of conflicts; if forced to fight they endeavor to inflict only nonlethal damage, and kill only if absolutely necessary. Being the companion of a peacemaker is especially difficult, for sometimes violence is the only way to keep the peacemaker alive in the face of ruthless, evil or unreasonably violent enemies. A peacemaker who kills unnecessarily; who aids one side against another in armed conflict; or uses her powers for personal gain, to aid in escaping justice or to help in the commission of evil acts is punished by the gods.

Path of War

The tragedy of war is that it uses man's best to do man's worst.

—Harry Fosdick

Sometimes war is inevitable, when an innocent kingdom cries out for a champion, or when the oppressed rise up against tyranny. At other times, it is simply the result of the whim of a warlord or the wrath of a god. In any case, the *Chosen One* who follows the path of war is invariably at the forefront, leading armies in bloody conquest, or heroically defending a desperate homeland. This path is one of the most treacherous, for a *Chosen One* can easily become a champion of evil and ruin. *Chosen One*s who walk this path are exemplary leaders, strategists and warriors — fighters, paladins and other martial types excel, as do warrior-priests and even rogues. From time to time other types will take this path; a monk may lead a peasant revolt or a wizard may lead vast armies of conquest as he seeks greater power or glory for his gods.

Level	Power
0	Warleader 1
1	Battle Rage 1
2	Weapon Master 1
3	Master Tactician
4	Warleader 2
5	Battle Rage 2
6	Master of Battles
7	Weapon Master 2
8	Warleader 3
9	Battle Rage 3
10	Warlord of the Gods

Warleader: The *Chosen One* is a skilled leader and tactician. He can aid his allies in battle by passing on orders in the same fashion as a bard's *inspire courage* ability. The bonus provided is +1 at zero *Chosen One* levels, +2 at level four and +3 at level nine.

Battle Rage: Starting at 1st *Chosen One* level, the warlord can rage as a barbarian a number of times per day equal to his Strength bonus.

Weapon Master: At second *Chosen One* level, the warlord gains a +2 competence bonus with one specific masterwork or magic weapon. If the weapon is lost, the *Chosen One* must select a new one; the bonus returns after 1d4 weeks. The bonus rises to +4 at *Chosen One* level seven.

Master Tactician: At third *Chosen One* level, the warlord becomes a master of small unit tactics, and can aid his companions by suggesting maneuvers and weaknesses of the enemy. Once per day, the *Chosen One* can address a group of up to six allies for ten minutes uninterrupted, after which members of the group receive a +2 competence bonus to all attacks for the next 10d4 minutes. This ability can be used once per day.

Master of Battles: If in command of a group or army, a warlord of sixth *Chosen One* level can aid them in combat. If the *Chosen One* can address the group for one hour uninterrupted, he can pass on battle plans that grant all who hear him a +1 competence bonus to attacks for the next 1d4 hours. This ability can be used once per week.

Warlord of the Gods: At tenth *Chosen One* level, the warlord has become one of the most celebrated conquerors in memory. His divinely-inspired powers can intimidate entire armies. Once per week, the *Chosen One* can make an Intimidate attempt against an army or group of 50 or more foes. The intimidate check is made against the modified level of the group's leader (see "Intimidate" in Chapter 4: Skills of the *PHB*) or if there is no clear or official leader, against the group member with the highest modified level. If the check is a success, the group immediately retreats, fleeing at best speed for 1d4 hours.

Destiny

To the *Chosen One* who walks the path of war, there is only one way to solve conflict: with the sword, or at very least the threat of the sword. He rises up when a people demand conquest, or when a nation or race is threatened by violence and war. All of the *Chosen One*'s actions must be in pursuit of this goal, whether it is the liberation of a repressed people or the destruction of rival nations.

Diplomacy and subtlety are not in the warlord's nature, and his companions are usually also skilled warriors who believe that only strong action and violence can defeat their foes. Some, especially those of good alignment, may regret the bloodshed and violence, but all know in their souls that there is no other way. A *Chosen One* who chooses this path must pursue conflict and loses his status if he ever grows weary of bloodshed and seeks other alternatives.

Path of Vengeance

Nothing is more costly, nothing is more sterile, than vengeance.

—Winston Churchill

Injustice is everywhere, even in lands that claim to be lawful. Everywhere that the innocent are victimized, or where a man or woman falls to treachery, the *Chosen One* can rise up and wield the weapons of violence and revenge. Even more hazardous than the path of war, the path of vengeance almost always ends in blood and tragedy, and all too often the avenger realizes that he has become the thing he hates most. Rogues and other chaotic types often take this path, often as a result of a mighty oath or call to the gods for justice. Their powers can be turned against individuals — crime lords, corrupt kings, arrogant nobles — or against entire institutions or kingdoms. No matter who merits vengeance, however, the *Chosen One* stands ready to be the instrument of justice.

Level	Power
0	Hand of Vengeance +2
1	Relentless +1
2	No Mercy
3	Irresistible
4	Hand of Vengeance +4
5	Relentless +2
6	Nowhere to Hide
7	Undying Justice
8	Hand of Vengeance +8
9	Relentless +3
10	Divine Avenger

Hand of Vengeance: The *Chosen One*'s visage and manner become fearsome and threatening, at least to those who stand in the way of vengeance. The *Chosen One* may add a +2 divine bonus to all Intimidate checks made in pursuit of her destiny. The bonus rises to +4 at *Chosen One* level 4 and +8 at level 8.

Relentless: At first *Chosen One* level, an avenger's ceaseless pursuit of her destiny adds to her ferocity in combat. All attack rolls made in combats related to the avenger's destiny gain a +1 divine bonus. The bonus rises to +2 at *Chosen One* level five, and +3 at level nine.

No Mercy: When in pursuit of her destiny, an avenger of at least second *Chosen One* level may add a +2 bonus to all damage rolls. This is a voluntary bonus, and the *Chosen One* need not add it if she does not want to. It cannot be added to nonlethal damage rolls.

Irresistible: At third *Chosen One* level, the avenger grows even more terrifying. While in pursuit of her destiny, the avenger's foes must take a –4 to their modified level against the *Chosen One*'s Intimidate checks.

Nowhere to Hide: At sixth *Chosen One* level, an avenger gains a +4 divine bonus to all Listen, Spot and Search rolls when used in pursuit of her destiny.

Undying Justice: At seventh *Chosen One* level, an avenger cannot easily be slain when in pursuit of his destiny. If in combat directly related to her destiny of vengeance, the *Chosen One* can continue fighting normally until reduced to –10 hit points, as per the Die Hard feat.

Divine Avenger: If slain in pursuit of her destiny, an avenger with ten *Chosen One* levels returns to life in 1d6 days, as per the *raise dead* spell. Alternatively, the DM may also decide that the *Chosen One* returns as undead — a ghost or other spirit — with her original alignment and powers intact.

Destiny

An avenger is born in the wake of a terrible crime or injustice. Perhaps an entire nation or race was massacred. Perhaps only a single innocent was slain. Regardless, the avenging *Chosen One* takes up the cause and pursues those who committed the crime, even beyond the bounds of death if need be. The avenger's actions must advance the cause of revenge in any way possible; those avengers who waver or hesitate in the pursuit of vengeance often find their powers reduced or taken altogether.

Path of Wisdom

As irrigators lead water where they want, as archers make their arrows straight, as carpenters carve wood, the wise shape their minds.

—Buddha, *The Dhammapada*

Those who follow the path of wisdom are enlightened individuals who wish to pass their knowledge and skills on to others. In this way, the light of divine inspiration can be shared with the world at large, and help to combat the darkness of ignorance and fear. Those who follow the path of wisdom are almost always of good alignment. Some *Chosen Ones* live in isolation, deep in the wilderness, where disciples must make long and arduous journeys to visit them; others wander the land, doing good and seeking greater enlightenment, while still others live in public places such as palaces and mighty temples, where the great and the mighty seek their advice and guidance.

The path of wisdom is most often traveled by clerics, monks and other ascetic types. Members of other character classes such as paladins, who are dedicated to good and justice, or arcanists who value learning and wish to share their gifts with others, have also been known to take this path.

Level	Power
0	Divine Light 1
1	Enlightened 1
2	Inspire Disciple
3	Insightful
4	Divine Light 2
5	Enlightened 2
6	Beatific
7	Enlighten Disciple
8	Divine Light 3
9	Enlightened 3
10	Apotheosis

Divine Light: The *Chosen One* gains a +2 divine bonus to all skill checks made in pursuit of her destiny.

Enlightened: At first *Chosen One* level, the prophet can gain special insight into the task at hand. After meditating for 1d4 minutes, the *Chosen One* gains a +2 insight bonus to all rolls in one specific skill for the next 1d4 hours. The bonus rises to +3 at *Chosen One* level five and +3 at *Chosen One* level nine. She may only have one such bonus at any given time

Inspire Disciple: Through instruction, a prophet with two *Chosen One* levels can aid in another's endeavors. The *Chosen One* makes a roll to aid another, as normal, but the bonus provided by this roll is +4 instead of the normal +2.

Insightful: Once per day, a prophet with three *Chosen One* levels can look at an issue and gain a deeper understanding of the problem, providing a substantial skill check bonus. After meditating for 1d4 minutes without interruption, the *Chosen One* can add a +20 insight bonus one specific skill check, made by herself or by an ally.

Beatific: A prophet with six *Chosen One* levels gains some of the wisdom of the gods. Once per day, after

meditating for 1d4 x 10 minutes, the *Chosen One* gains a +4 divine bonus to Wisdom for 1d4 hours.

Enlighten Disciple: Once per day, a prophet with seven *Chosen One* levels can, through instruction and example, aid another in the use of skills and talents. The *Chosen One* must speak with the subject for 1d4 minutes uninterrupted. For the next 1d4 hours, the subject gains a +4 competence bonus to all skill checks.

Apotheosis: Once per week, a prophet with 10 *Chosen One* levels can gain godlike insight and inspiration. For 1d4 hours, the *Chosen One* gains a +10 divine bonus to all rolls except damage rolls.

Destiny

The pursuit of wisdom is, in many ways, its own destiny, and those *Chosen Ones* who pick this path walk it gladly. This *Chosen One* must seek out knowledge and wisdom and, whenever possible, share it with others. While mortals always thirst for wisdom and enlightenment, it is in times of great doubt and spiritual malaise that prophet arises. Dark forces often oppose this *Chosen One*, and it is only through the advancement and sharing of wisdom that they can be defeated. At times, *Chosen Ones* abandon this path voluntarily, seeking to live in the world and experience its wonders. At other times, these *Chosen Ones* may grow cynical or become corrupted by what they have learned. In such cases, the *Chosen One* may lose any or all of his powers, but often the *Chosen One* simply accepts such things as inevitable.

Path of the Champion

The brave love mercy and delight to save.
—John Gay

The champion is the mortal hand of the gods themselves, seeking out their deities' enemies and acting on their behalf. A champion has dedicated himself to the cause of his patron god or gods, and can therefore be of any alignment, from the purest good to the blackest evil. As a direct servant of the gods, clerics and paladins most commonly take this path, but on the opposite end of the scale, such diverse wicked individuals such as blackguards and assassins also serve the gods as their champions. Fighters, barbarians and rangers often carry out their gods' will as champions. More rarely, rogues, monks and bards serve as champions as well.

Level	Power
0	Righteous +1
1	Power of Faith
2	Hand of Light/Darkness 1
3	Aura of Glory
4	Righteous +2
5	Hand of Light/Darkness 2
6	No Surrender
7	Flame of Grandeur
8	Righteous +3
9	Hand of Light/Darkness 3
10	Champion of the Gods

Righteous: Driven by the power of righteous faith, the *Chosen One* gains a +1 to all attack rolls while doing the will of his god or gods. The bonus rises to +2 at *Chosen One* level four, and +3 at level eight.

Power of Faith: A champion of first *Chosen One* level gains a +4 divine bonus to Will saves made in pursuit of his destiny, or in direct service to his gods.

Hand of Light/Darkness: Once per day, a champion with two *Chosen One* levels can channel the power of his gods, creating the equivalent of *daylight* (for those of good alignment) or *deeper darkness* (for evil alignment) for 10 minutes per *Chosen One* level. At *Chosen One* level five, the duration becomes one hour per *Chosen One* level. At level nine, the effect includes *magic circle against good* or *evil* as appropriate.

Aura of Glory: Once per day, a champion of at least third *Chosen One* level can surround himself with a nimbus of divine power that provides all allies within a 20-foot radius with a +4 divine bonus to all Will saves. The effect lasts for 10 minutes per *Chosen One* level.

No Surrender: As a champion of the gods, at sixth *Chosen One* level, he gains greater strength when faced by multiple foes. When outnumbered by three-to-one (or more) in melee, the *Chosen One* gains an extra attack at his highest bonus, and the Cleave feat if he does not already have it. If outnumbered by six-to-one or more, the *Chosen One* gains two extra attacks and the Great Cleave feat if he does not already have it.

Flame of Grandeur: A champion with seven *Chosen One* levels can surround himself with an aura of divine energies that effects all allies within 20 feet. This functions as *break enchantment* and *restoration*. He can use this ability once per day.

Champion of the Gods: At tenth *Chosen One* level, the character is now truly a champion, inspired and filled with the power of the gods. Once per week, the champion can remove all negative and permanently drained levels, restore all permanent ability damage and lost hit points, cure all disease and *break enchantment* on his subject, which can be either himself or any target whom the *Chosen One* touches. This subject then gains a +2 divine bonus to all attack rolls, saves, ability checks and skill checks for 1d4 hours.

Destiny

The champion is the god's agent in the mortal realm. In general, champions serve either one god or group of gods that share the same goals and alignment. The champion's

destiny is simply to follow the will of the gods, and in that his is possibly the most varied and flexible of the *Chosen Ones*' roles. The champion's destiny demands that when the gods call, he responds. The call may come in many different forms — a dream, an omen, a mysterious visitor, or even a direct command from on high. The *Chosen One* may be commanded to find a lost artifact, to rescue one of the faithful, defeat a terrible enemy, or anything else in service of the gods. The *Chosen One* who receives such guidance must obey as efficiently as he can, lest the gods punish him with removal of his powers (see below).

Penalties

Being the *Chosen One* is one of the most difficult tasks that a mortal can undertake — being a servant of destiny can exhaust a soul and even destroy a life — and many is the mortal who has given her life to serve destiny. The powers a *Chosen One* gains are often more than offset by the obligations and demands of the *Chosen One*'s path.

The penalties and requirements of each path vary depending upon the god or destiny that the *Chosen One* follows. The following are merely some possibilities for events that might occur to hinder a *Chosen One*.

• Should the *Chosen One* ever fail to uphold the tenets and requirements of his path before having achieved her destiny, she not only loses this *Chosen One* abilities, but also suffers two negative levels. The character may regain her *Chosen One* abilities, and eliminate the negative levels, by receiving an *atonement* spell from a cleric of her deity, and completing the assigned quest. Should the character wait more than four months before seeking *atonement*, however, the negative levels result in actual level loss (no save), and the powers of the *Chosen One* are lost forever. See below.

• Word of the *Chosen One*'s fame spreads, and the common folk begin to flock to the *Chosen One*'s location, begging for assistance, healing or guidance. Others wish to serve the *Chosen One* as guardians, warriors, protectors or disciples. More appear as the *Chosen One* rises in level, far more than an individual *Chosen One* can help or accept. Eventually, the *Chosen One* must turn away followers, and in the process possibly transform would-be followers into enemies, who may then turn to the *Chosen One*'s foes or rivals.

• The *Chosen One* gains enemies as she advances in level, such as local leaders who are jealous or fearful of the *Chosen One*'s power and popularity, and send their agents to assault or kill her. Even if the *Chosen One*'s companions and protectors succeed in fending off the initial assault by their foes, there are sure to be others: more powerful rulers, priests of rival gods, demons or devas, and — when the *Chosen One* is of high level — the gods themselves, who cannot allow their rival deities' agents to succeed. In short, the *Chosen One* has enemies, and these enemies grow more powerful as she advances.

• The physical demands of being a *Chosen One* take their toll. Each time the *Chosen One* gains a level, she must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + the number of *Chosen One* levels the character has). Failure causes the *Chosen One* to age one age category, suffering the physical penalties but gaining none of the mental benefits. A given *Chosen One* can suffer this effect only once.

• The *Chosen One* may need to take time to commune with the gods or contemplate her destiny. Periodically, the DM may determine that the fates or the gods decree that the *Chosen One* take a pilgrimage or similar spiritual journey to a distant location to receive guidance or special enlightenment. The journey is likely to be arduous for both the *Chosen One* and her companions, but failure to complete the journey may result in losing *Chosen One* status.

• The *Chosen One* may be required to do penance for not strictly following her destiny. This may mean that one of the *Chosen One*'s powers is removed until a quest is fulfilled, a spirit or servant of the gods may be sent to harass or urge the *Chosen One* to follow the right path, a series of tests or trials, or the like.

Becoming a Chosen One

There are several ways that a *Chosen One* can be created. Some are better suited to PCs than NPCs, and they should be adapted to the DM's campaign world as deemed appropriate.

A *Chosen One* may be born and progress through *Chosen One* levels as he gains levels normally. In such cases, the *Chosen One*'s powers may be applied to an individual of humble origins, such as a commoner, warrior or adept. Such individuals are best played as NPCs, with the PCs as their protectors. A PC who is born as a *Chosen One* of course gains normal player character levels, and must deal with *Chosen One* status from the very beginning of the campaign.

Alternately, the gods, the fates or whatever power orders the universe may call upon an ordinary mortal to be their *Chosen One*. This may be the result of an especially heroic or villainous act by the new *Chosen One*, or perhaps the *Chosen One* has inherited the mantle from an ancestor or predecessor. In this case, *Chosen One* status can be conveyed after the character has gained normal levels, and need not be imposed at character creation. This origin is suitable for both PC and NPC *Chosen Ones*.

The Chosen One's Destiny

As noted above, each path that a *Chosen One* walks includes a destiny; upon the completion of this destiny, the *Chosen One* need no longer follow her path. Often the completion of her destiny results in the *Chosen One*'s death — as a vessel for the gods' will, the very act of fulfilling her decreed fate unleashes such forces that the *Chosen One* cannot survive. In other cases, the *Chosen One* survives, but without her powers, since her mission is complete. In either case, the *Chosen One*'s purpose is at an end, and the gods no longer need her.

A *Chosen One* who does not follow her destiny faithfully risks losing her powers. This can include misusing powers, using them for personal gain, using powers in opposition to the gods' goals, or totally ignoring the requirements of the *Chosen One*'s path. In such cases, one or more powers may cease to function, usually at especially inconvenient moments. Extreme cases of negligence may result in *Chosen One* status being revoked altogether, either temporarily or permanently. Those who lose *Chosen One* status permanently may face curses from the gods for their failure.

Adventure Seeds

Protectors

A distraught mother appeals to the PCs, as her child has been kidnapped, and no one will help her. A good-aligned party likely cannot resist such an appeal, but things become complicated when the child is rescued and proves to have unusual powers. A vision or visitation reveals to the PCs that the child is indeed the *Chosen One*, and that the PCs are now her protectors, expected to keep her safe from harm as her destiny is fulfilled.

Slayers

The PCs' kingdom is at war, but things are not going well. Armies are refusing to fight and even — horror of horrors — surrendering without a fight. The PCs are sent to investigate, and discover that the fearsome *Chosen One*, agent of the gods of peace, has intervened to stop the war and now stands in the way of their nation's objectives! Loyal to the end, and perhaps believers in the righteousness of the war and their country's cause, it is now their task to stop the *Chosen One*, by force if necessary.

Appendix B: Random Artifact Creation

by C. Robert Cargill and Ari Marmell

While we certainly hope that you've been inspired and intrigued by the many artifacts presented, we're DMs ourselves, and we know full well that nothing works better in your campaign than something you've created yourself. (And we also know that nothing irritates a DM quite so much as trying to spring a surprise artifact — or monster, or plot point — on the party, only to discover that one of your players has already read that entry.)

So we've got you covered. This appendix provides you nothing less than a system and series of charts designed to aid you in constructing your own artifacts.

That sounds like a tall order, and indeed it is. Each artifact is unique. You can't just slap a few extra "plusses" and spells on a magic item and call it an artifact. Artifacts are so much more than that; they're a rich history, an odd but (usually) logical combination of abilities, and downsides that put their awesome powers into perspective. The simple truth is, no series of tables can *fully* create an artifact for you.

What we can do, though, is build you a skeleton, leaving you free to come up with the "flesh" — that is, the fun stuff like the specific details — without worrying about the basics. Everything that follows, while certainly extensive, should be considered only the tip of the iceberg. If you've gotten halfway through rolling a random artifact, and suddenly the idea crystallizes in your mind's eye, allowing you to complete it with ideas of your own and without rolling another die or consulting another chart… Well, that's perfect. That's the sort of inspiration we're hoping to provide.

So, let's walk through it.

Step One: Determine Your Artifact's Form

You'll start by rolling on Tables 1 through 4, to determine the basic physical form of your artifact. Is it a sword? A boat? A spyglass? A hearth? An eyeball?

Step Two: Determine Your Artifact's Focus or Theme

Table 5 suggests a "theme" for your artifact, a unifying concept that ties many of its powers together. You'll use this theme when determining spell-like abilities, below, and you might want to alter other rolls to match, as well.

Step Three: Determine Your Artifact's Origin

Was your artifact crafted by an ancient archmage, or used to slay a god? Does it predate creation itself? You'll obviously want to fill in the details to fit your own campaign world's history and mythology, but Table 6 definitely gives you the place to start.

Step Four: Determine Your Artifact's Benefits

Many artifacts offer boosts to armor class, attacks, abilities and skill checks. Table 7 and its sub-tables determine if yours does as well.

Step Five: Determine Your Artifact's Spell-Like Abilities

Few artifacts fail to offer their wielders access to at least some magics, and that's what this step accomplishes. Table 8 and its many (many, *many*) sub-tables can provide you almost any combination of spell-like abilities from the core rules.

You'll note, however, that *atonement*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, and *wish* do not appear on these lists. Given the whole purpose behind *atonement*, it is simply inappropriate to hand out as a power for even as mighty a magic item as an artifact; and *wishes*, as the most powerful magics in the game, should really remain the purview of the DM — or at least an artifact's *major* powers.

You may also note that these random tables do not include any of the new spells introduced elsewhere in this book. We wanted you to be able to use this appendix as written, without necessarily having to include other new and optional material that you might not otherwise want to use. You can, of course, add any of the new spells to your artifact if you should choose to do so.

Step Six: Determine Your Artifact's Major Power(s)

This is the bread and butter of artifacts, the purpose behind their entire existence. Artifacts may grant a variety of powers, but rare indeed is the relic that doesn't have some truly impressive primary ability, the rationale for its creation.

Its also where these charts are going to prove least helpful. Oh, we have plenty of suggestions for major powers, all of which would make for fantastic artifacts. But in truth, the possibilities for major powers are infinite, and should be determined by a combination of the artifact's history, its place in the campaign world, the intentions of its creator, and — most importantly — the needs of the campaign. Even if you're doing everything else "by the book," you should feel absolutely free to modify the primary powers as needed.



You'll use Table 9 to determine the power itself, and Table 10 to determine how often it can be used.

Step Seven: Determine the Downsides to Your Artifacts

Every artifact has a downside. It may be some hideous curse that transforms its user into a mule, or something as simple as the fact that only certain races can use it. All these are determined here, on Table 11.

The material here often makes reference to a "precipitating event." This refers to the circumstance under which a curse or catastrophe manifests. For instance, many of the curses require the wielder to make regular saving throws. Does he have to make such a save for each day that passes when the artifact is in his possession? When he activates its major power? When he activates *any* of its powers? If the artifact can cause a *meteor swarm* to rain down in a 5-mile radius, does that happen only if the user fails a check to activate the major power, or does it happen every time the artifact is brought near someone of a certain alignment? You should decide this when creating the artifact. We didn't provide a random chart for this, since it's so heavily dependent on what the curse or catastrophe is, and how severe you, as the DM, want to make it.

Many of the saving throws are cumulative until failed, and then reset. What this means is this: Suppose the save for an artifact's curse starts at DC 24. If the character makes it the first time, it's DC 25 the next time, DC 26 the time after that, and so forth. Once he fails, however, it resets to 25 and the process begins again.

Determining DCs

And speaking of save DCs, how do you decide on such things for your artifact? Simply enough, make use of the following.

• To determine an artifact's caster level and "Charisma," roll 1d20+15, and take the same number for each. (The artifact doesn't really have a Charisma score, of course, unless it's an intelligent item. This is just to give you the saving throw DC modifier.)

• The save DC against any spell-like ability of the artifact is 10 + Charisma modifier + spell level. Thus, if an artifact has a Charisma of 23, a *fireball* (3rd-level spell) cast from that artifact has a save DC of 19.

• The save DC against other abilities (including many major powers) is 10 + 1/2 caster level + Charisma modifier. Thus, that same artifact — which has a caster level of 23, as well as its Charisma — is 27.

Some Examples

Just to make sure it's all clear, let's follow two DMs — we'll call them Brian and Laura — as they create some artifacts.

Example One

Brian starts on Table 1, and rolls a 47. This sends him to Table 2: Standard Artifacts. A roll of 86 takes him to Weapons; 64 sends him to Common Melee Weapons; and 36 gives him a longsword.

Right off the bat, Brian decides to move off the chart a little. His last adventure involved a paladin's search for a *holy avenger*, and frankly Brian doesn't want another sword-based quest. He's going to stick with a weapon, but he decides instead to roll on the Uncommon Weapons Table. He winds up with a trident, something that's never seen use in his campaigns before, and decides to go with it.

Before he goes any further, Brian decides to determine the artifact's caster level and Charisma. Rolling a d20 and adding 15, he gets 24.

Time to determine the artifact's theme, on Table 5. Brian gets a result of 8; an air-themed trident seems odd, but hey, "odd" isn't always a bad thing.

Step three is determining the artifact's origin on Table 6. The result is 1, "accidental exposure to another dimension." Brian decides that the *trident* was a normal magical weapon before it became an artifact, and was lost for thousands of years on the Plane of Air, where it absorbed some of the ambient magics.

Step four is to determine benefits, so Brian moves on to Table 7. Since the trident is a weapon, it automatically has the powers of a magic weapon in addition to whatever is rolled here (as per the footnote on that table). Shifting briefly to the *DMG*, Brian rolls the dice and determines that the *trident* is a *+3 shocking burst* weapon. Well, that makes sense, since air is associated with electricity, so he decides to run with it.

Now, rolling on Table 7, Brian gets a 41. Looks like the *trident* is going to grant some combat bonuses in addition to its +3. Moving on to Table 7–C, Brian rolls 14. The *trident* grants its wielder +1 on attack rolls, meaning that when someone is fighting with the artifact itself, it's +4 to hit and +3 to damage.

Brian didn't roll any resistances, but he decides the artifact's developing theme really ought to grant some electricity resistance. He settles on resistance 10; tough, but not overwhelming.

Step Five, spell-like abilities. A roll of 98 gives him *two* rolls on the chart. These are 22 and 71, so the artifact has 1d4 minor spell-like abilities (1/day each), and 1d4 medium spell-like abilities (also 1/day each). Because of the artifact's theme, Brian moves down to the Air spell-like abilities tables.

His d4 tells him he's got 1 minor ability, and 2 medium abilities. He rolls a 19, for *fog cloud*, as his minor; and a 29 and 61, for *call lightning storm* and *control winds* as his medium.

Okay, time for Step Six. Brian hits Table 9, for major powers, and rolls a 10. He's not sure that the ability to control other creatures fits with his growing image of the *trident*, but he rolls on the Creature Type table just to be sure. He gets an 85. Lawful outsiders doesn't seem to make sense, but what about air-based ones? Brian decides to keep the individual control power after all, but changes the focus to outsiders with the air subtype. His roll of 74 on Table 10 tells him the power is usable three times per day.

Finally, time to check downsides, on Table 11. Brian rolls an 88. Ouch! Catastrophe *and* personal consequence or restriction. Brian takes one look at the Table 11–C, and doesn't even bother to roll. The idea of the *trident* causing the occasional uncontrolled *call lightning storm* is too good to pass up. He decides that the catastrophic *lightning storm* occurs any time the wielder rolls a natural "1" while combating an outsider of any sort.

He does roll on Table 11–D, though, and gets a 77. That result indicates that creatures of a randomly determined type covet the artifact. Going back to the Creature Type table, Brian rolls 43. Elves? Why would elves want this artifact? He thinks of rerolling, but then it occurs to him. Perhaps the *trident* was an elven weapon, and it was a famed elven adventurer who lost it on the Plane of Air. Now that it has grown so powerful, its magics call to those who once owned it, driving them to commit acts they otherwise might not in their efforts to get it back.

And there it is. From a series of die-rolls, Brian has created *Cloud-Splitter*, a potent but not overwhelming artifact that will form the basis for his next series of adventures.

Example Two

Let's turn to Laura now, and follow her through the same process. Determining the artifact's general form on Table 1, Laura rolls a 64, sending her to Table 3: Portable Artifacts. A result of 9 tells her that the artifact is a bottle. She rolls d20+15 to determine its caster level and Charisma, and winds up with a whopping 32! This is going to be a potent device…

According to the 60 she rolled Table 5, the focus of Laura's artifact is law; and her roll of 20 on Table 6 tells her that it was crafted by accident while its creator was trying to make something else. She's still not sure what to make of this combination, and so goes on without deciding anything about it just yet.

Moving on to Table 7 to determine the artifact's benefits, she gets a roll of 80, sending her to the skill bonus chart. A roll of 32 tells her that the bottle provides a bonus of +3 to one skill. She decides tentatively on Sense Motive, since that seems to have lawful connotations.

She gets 54 on Table 8 for determining spell-like abilities, which means she's got 1d4 minor, three times a day each. The d4 comes up 4.

Well, there's only four minor spell-like abilities on the Law charts, so she just decides the artifact has them all: *align weapon*, *detect chaos*, *magic circle against chaos*, and *protection from chaos*. She moves on to the artifact's major power.

A 49 on Table 9 tells her the artifact's power is item creation. She decides that it works by pouring liquids into it, and transforming them into potions. She rolls a 9 on Table 10, suggesting the major power can only be used once a week. That seems limited to Laura, so she rolls again, and this time gets 94. Five times a day seems more in line with an artifact of this power.

She rolls a 66 on Table 11: Downsides, indicating both a curse and a personal consequence or restriction. She winds up with a 75, or susceptibility, on the curses table. Rather than roll for the specifics, she decides that the user is susceptible to poisons, due to the artifact's power of transforming fluids around and within it.

Moving, finally, to the personal consequences table, she rolls a 79, suggesting that evil creatures gain two negative levels when wielding the artifact. Good idea, wrong alignment. She changes it to chaotic creatures, to match the artifact's lawful leanings.

Looking back over it, she has a lawfully-aligned bottle that creates potions. Okay, she decides that it was created by a powerful priest, who was attempting to create a potion of *mark of justice*. If this could be fed to criminals, they could be forced to abandon their unlawful ways. Unfortunately, in his efforts to break the rules of magic by trying to create a potion of so high a level spell, he wound up with something else entirely.

Step One: Determining the Artifact's Form

Table 1: Artifact Form

d%	Form
01–50	Standard (roll on Table 2: Standard Artifacts)
51–80	Portable (roll on Table 3: Portable Artifacts)
81–100	Large/Non-portable (roll on Table 4: Large/Non-portable Artifacts)

Table 2: Standard Artifacts

d%	Type
01–09	Armor or Shield (roll on Table 2–A: Armor and Shields)
10–17	Cloak or Cape (roll on Table 2–B: Cloaks and Capes)
18–25	Eyes (roll on Table 2–C: Eyes)
26–33	Feet (roll on Table 2–D: Footwear)
34–42	Glove or Gauntlet (roll on Table 2–E: Gloves and Gauntlets)
43–51	Head (roll on Table 2–F: Headwear)
52–59	Neck (roll on Table 2–G: Neckwear)
60–68	Ring
69–76	Robe, Vestments, or other garb (roll on Table 2–H: Garb)
77–85	Rod or Staff (50% chance of each)
86–95	Weapon (roll on Table 2–I: Weapons)
96–100	Artifact takes multiple forms (such as a pair of matched daggers, or an armor and shield set); roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional forms if this result occurs more than once.

Table 2—A: Armor and Shields

d%	Type
01–04	Banded mail
05–12	Breastplate
13–16	Buckler
17–24	Chain shirt
25–28	Chainmail
29–36	Full plate
37–44	Half-plate
45–48	Hide
49–52	Leather
53–56	Padded
57–60	Scale mail
61–68	Shield, heavy, steel
69–72	Shield, heavy, wooden
73–80	Shield, light, steel
81–84	Shield, light, wooden
85–92	Shield, tower
92–96	Splint mail
97–100	Studded leather

Table 2—B: Cloaks and Capes

d%	Type
01–10	Animal skin
11–45	Cape
46–80	Cloak
81–90	Coat
91–100	Shawl

Table 2—C: Eyes

d%	Type
01–10	Blindfold
11–20	Domino mask
21–33	Eye patch

34–46	Goggles
47–61	Mask
62–74	Monocle
75–87	Spectacles
88–100	Veil

Table 2—D: Footwear

d%	Type
01–08	Anklet
09–38	Boots
39–63	Sandals
64–71	Slippers
72–91	Shoes
92–100	Toe ring

Table 2—E: Gloves and Gauntlets

d%	Type
01–20	Bracelet
21–30	Bracer (single)
31–40	Bracers (matched pair)
41–55	Gauntlet (single)
56–70	Gauntlets (matched pair)
71–85	Glove (single)
86–100	Gloves (matched pair)

Table 2—F: Headwear

d%	Type
01–12	Crown
13–17	Earring (single)
18–22	Earrings (matched pair)
23–32	Hairclip or hair-tie
33–44	Hat
45–55	Headband
56–66	Helmet
67–78	Hood
79–90	Tiara
91–100	Wig

Table 2—G: Neckwear

d%	Type
01–12	Amulet
13–23	Cameo
24–34	Choker
35–45	Collar
46–56	Cravat
57–67	Locket
68–78	Necklace
79–89	Pendant
90–100	Scarf

Table 2—H: Garb

d%	Type
01–20	Robe
21–40	Tabard
41–60	Tunic
61–80	Vest
81–100	Vestments

Table 2—I: Weapons

d%	Type
01–70	Melee, common (roll on Table 2–J: Common Melee Weapons)
71–90	Ranged, common (roll on Table 2–K: Common Ranged Weapons)
91–100	Uncommon (roll on Table 2–L: Uncommon Weapons)

Table 2—J: Common Melee Weapons

d%	Type
01–04	Dagger
05–14	Greataxe
15–24	Greatsword
25–28	Kama
29–41	Longsword
42–45	Mace, light
46–50	Mace, heavy
51–54	Nunchaku
55–57	Quarterstaff
58–61	Rapier
62–66	Scimitar
67–70	Shortspear
71–74	Siangham
75–84	Sword, bastard
85–89	Sword, short
90–100	Waraxe, dwarven

Table 2—K: Common Ranged Weapons

d%	Type
01–14	Ammunition (50% arrow, 30% bolt, 20% bullet)
11–15	Axe, throwing
16–25	Crossbow, heavy
26–35	Crossbow, light

36–39	Dart
40–41	Javelin
42–46	Shortbow
47–51	Shortbow, composite (+0 Str **Bonus**)
52–56	Shortbow, composite (+1 Str **Bonus**)
57–61	Shortbow, composite (+2 Str **Bonus**)
62–65	Sling
66–75	Longbow
76–80	Longbow, composite
81–85	Longbow, composite (+1 Str **Bonus**)
86–90	Longbow, composite (+2 Str **Bonus**)
91–95	Longbow, composite (+3 Str **Bonus**)
96–100	Longbow, composite (+4 Str **Bonus**)

Table 2—L: Uncommon Weapons

d%	Type
01–03	Axe, orc double
04–07	Battleaxe
08–10	Chain, spiked
11–12	Club
13–16	Crossbow, hand
17–19	Crossbow, repeating
20–21	Dagger, punching
22–23	Falchion
24–26	Flail, dire
27–31	Flail, heavy
32–35	Flail, light
36–37	Gauntlet
38–39	Gauntlet, spiked
40–41	Glaive
42–43	Greatclub
44–45	Guisarme
46–48	Halberd
49–51	Spear
52–54	Hammer, gnome hooked
55–56	Hammer, light
57–58	Handaxe
59–61	Kukri
62–64	Lance
65–67	Longspear
68–70	Morningstar
71–72	Net
73–74	Pick, heavy
75–76	Pick, light
77–78	Ranseur
79–80	Sap
81–82	Scythe
83–84	Shuriken
85–86	Sickle
87–89	Sword, two-bladed
90–91	Trident
92–94	Urgrosh, dwarven
95–97	Warhammer
98–100	Whip

Table 3: Portable Artifacts

d%	Type
01	Abacus
02	Acorn or pinecone
03	Antler or horn
04	Arm or leg bone
05	Bag, pouch, or sack
06	Bedroll or pillow
07	Bell (tiny)
08	Book, librum, or tome
09	Bottle
10	Bridle or saddle
11	Broach or clasp
12	Candlestick
13	Cauldron (small)
14	Chess set
15	Chest (tiny) or lockbox
16	Coin
17	Comb or brush
18	Compass
19	Deck of cards
20	Dice
21	Doll
22	Domino
23	Dominos (set)
24	Dragon claw
25	Dragon scale
26	Drawing or painting (small)
27	Drinking horn
28	Drums (small)
29	Ear
30	Egg (facsimile)

31	Egg (real)
32	Eyeball
33	Fan
34	Feather
35	Finger
36	Fishhook
37	Flask, canteen, decanter, or waterskin
38	Foot
39	Gear (from a machine)
40	Gem or jewel
41	Globe
42	Goblet or chalice
43	Hair (wig)
44	Hand
45	Hand Mirror
46	Head (decapitated)
47	Heart
48	Horseshoe
49	Inkwell
50	Key
51	Lamp, lantern, candelabra, or torch
52	Length of chain or manacles
53	Lock of hair
54	Lockpick
55	Magnifying glass
56	Map
57	Marbles
58	Music box
59	Nail or spike
60	Needle or pin
61	Orb (crystal/glass)
62	Orb (stone)
63	Pot or pan
64	Prism
65	Quill
66	Quiver
67	Rabbit's foot (or other animal paw)
68	Razor
69	Religious or holy symbol
70	Rib
71	Rope
72	Scabbard or sheath
73	Scale or balance (small)
74	Scepter
75	Scroll
76	Seal or stamp
77	Shell
78	Skin or hide
79	Skull
80	Skull (facsimile)
81	Spittoon
82	Spool of string, twine, or yarn
83	Spyglass
84	Statuette (tiny) or figurine
85	Stone (tiny)
86	Stringed instrument
87	Stuffed animal (toy)
88	Stuffed animal (trophy, small)
89	Teeth (full set)
90	Thimble
91	Tool (hammer, pick, shove, tongs, crowbar, etc.)
92	Tooth
93	Towel
94	Tribal fetish
95	Utensil (such as fork or spoon)
96	Vial
97	Walking stick or cane
98	Weapon, broken (a hilt, a length of blade, etc.)
99	Whistle
100	Wind instrument

Table 4: Large/Non-Portable Artifacts

d%	Type
01	Altar
02	Anchor
03	Anvil
04	Archway
05	Barrel
06	Bas relief
07	Basin (stone)
08	Bath
09	Battering ram
10	Bed
11	Bell or gong (large)
12	Bones of famed dead beast (Gargantuan or larger)
13	Bookcase
14	Brazier

15	Bridge
16	Bush, hedge, or plant (non-tree)
17	Cage
18	Cannon
19	Cask
20	Castle
21	Cauldron (large)
22	Cave
23	Celestial machinery
24	Chandelier
25	Chest
26	Coffin
27	Column or pillar
28	Corner stone
29	Cottage, house, or shack
30	Cradle
31	Diabolical machinery
32	Door
33	Executioner's block
34	Fire pit
35	Fireplace
36	Forge
37	Fountain
38	Furnace
39	Gallows
40	Gate
41	Gondola, raft, or rowboat
42	Gravestone or headstone
43	Grindstone
44	Grove, clearing, or fairy ring
45	Hanging tree
46	Harp
47	Heavy/enormous tome
48	Jail cell
49	Labyrinth or hedgemaze
50	Large kettle drum
51	Lightning rod
52	Loom
53	Mausoleum or crypt
54	Mirror (large)
55	Mural
56	Oven or stove
57	Painting (large)
58	Pedestal
59	Pool
60	Rug (large)
61	Sarcophagus
62	Scales or balance (large)
63	Ship (Colossal)
64	Ship (Gargantuan)
65	Ship (Huge)
66	Siege engine (ballista, catapult, etc.)
67	Stall or kiosk
68	Standing stone circle
69	Statue (Colossal)
70	Statue (Gargantuan)
71	Statue (Huge)
72	Statue (Large)
73	Statue (Medium)
74	Statue (Small)
75	Stone (Huge or larger)
76	Stone (Medium or Large)
77	Stuffed beast (Large or lager)
78	Summoning or protective circle
79	Sundial
80	Table
81	Tapestry
82	Temple
83	Throne
84	Torture device
85	Totem pole
86	Tower
87	Trap
88	Tree
89	Urn (large)
90	Wagon
91	Wall
92	Wardrobe
93	Waterclock
94	Waterfall
95	Well
96	Wicker man (or other large effigy)
97	Windmill
98	Window (normal)
99	Window (stained glass)
100	Worktable

Step Two: Determine the Artifact's Focus or Theme

Table 5: Focus or Theme of Artifact's Powers

d%	Focus
01–04	Abjuration
05–08	Air
09–12	Chaos
13–16	Conjuration
17–20	Destruction or war
21–24	Divination
25–28	Earth
29–32	Enchantment
33–36	Evil
37–40	Evocation
41–44	Fire
45–48	Good
49–52	Healing
53–56	Illusion
57–60	Law
61–64	Mental enhancement or powers
65–68	Nature
69–72	Necromancy
73–76	Physical enhancement
77–80	Protection and defense
81–84	Transmutation
85–88	Transportation and travel
89–92	Water
93–96	Weather (Does not have its own chart; consider powers from both the air and water categories)
97–100	Artifact has multiple Focuses (such as a combination of alignments, or two different elements); roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional Focuses if this result occurs more than once.

Step Three: Determine the Artifact's Origin

Table 6: Origins

d%	Origin
01–04	Accidental exposure to another dimension
05–08	Accidental exposure to magical energies
09–12	Blessed by a god
13–16	Crafted as a gift to royalty
17–20	Crafted by accident while its creator was trying to create something else
21–24	Crafted by beings or gods who existed before the creation of the current multiverse
25–28	Crafted for the exaltation of a god or ideal
29–32	Crafted to aid a hero in a quest
33–36	Crafted to aid a villain in his schemes
37–40	Crafted to defend a city, kingdom, region, or people from an invasion or specific threat
41–44	Crafted to kill or destroy a specific target, or aid in genocide or war
45–48	Cursed by a god
49–52	Hails from another dimension or world
53–56	Infused with the spirit of a powerful person who died with it
57–60	Once owned by a god
61–64	Present or involved with a cataclysmic event
65–68	Present or involved with the birth of a legendary monster
69–72	Present or involved with the birth or ascension of a god
73–76	Present or involved with the death of a god
77–80	Present or involved with the death of a legendary hero
81–84	Present or involved with the death of a legendary monster
85–88	Present or involved with the death of a legendary villain or despot
89–92	Side-effect of the creation of the multiverse
93–96	Slowly gained power during generations of use by a particular bloodline or sequence of heroes (or villains)
97–100	Slowly gained power during years of taking lives or proximity to death

Step Four: Determine the Artifact's Benefits

Table 7: Benefits

d%	Focus
01–20	Artifact grants no benefits of this Type
21–27	Ability Bonus (roll on Table 7–A: Ability Bonuses)

28–35	Armor class Bonus (roll on Table 7–B: AC Bonuses)
36–42	Combat Bonus (roll on Table 7–C: Combat Bonuses)
43–49	Damage reduction (roll on Table 7–D: Damage Reduction)
50–57	Immunities and resistances (roll on Table 7–E: Immunities and Resistances)
58–66	Mimics other item of its Type[1]
67–73	Saving throw Bonus (roll on Table 7–F: Saving Throw Bonuses)
74–80	Skill Bonus (roll on Table 7–G: Skill Bonuses)
81–87	Spell resistance (roll on Table 7–H: Spell Resistance)
88–92	Other class-based benefits (roll on Table 7–I: Class-Based Benefits)
93–100	Artifact grants multiple Bonuses; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional Bonuses if this result occurs more than once.

[1] Using the treasure charts in the DMG, roll a major magic item of the same type as the artifact. (For instance, if the artifact is a longsword, roll for a magic weapon. If it is a cloak, roll or select from the various magic cloaks in the wondrous items section.) This artifact duplicates the powers of that item, as well as possessing its own abilities. Note that all artifact weapons, armors, and shields have this trait without needing to roll for it.

Table 7—A: Ability Bonuses

d%	Bonus
01–08	+2 to Strength
09–16	+2 to Dexterity
17–24	+2 to Constitution
25–32	+2 to Intelligence
33–40	+2 to Wisdom
41–48	+2 to Charisma
49–52	+4 to Strength
53–56	+4 to Dexterity
57–60	+4 to Constitution
61–64	+4 to Intelligence
65–68	+4 to Wisdom
69–72	+4 to Charisma
73–74	+6 to Strength
75–76	+6 to Dexterity
77–78	+6 to Constitution
79–80	+6 to Intelligence
81–82	+6 to Wisdom
83–84	+6 to Charisma
85	+8 to Strength
86	+8 to Dexterity
87	+8 to Constitution
88	+8 to Intelligence
89	+8 to Wisdom
90	+8 to Charisma
91–100	Artifact grants multiple Bonuses; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional Bonuses if this result occurs more than once.

Table 7—B: Armor Class Bonuses

d%	Bonus
01–05	+1 natural armor
06–10	+2 natural armor
11–14	+3 natural armor
15–18	+4 natural armor
19–21	+5 natural armor
22–24	+6 natural armor
25–26	+7 natural armor
27–28	+8 natural armor
29	+9 natural armor
30	+10 natural armor
31–35	+1 insight
36–40	+2 insight
41–44	+3 insight
45–48	+4 insight
49–51	+5 insight
52–54	+6 insight
55–56	+7 insight
57–58	+8 insight
59	+9 insight
60	+10 insight
61–66	+1 deflection
67–72	+2 deflection
73–77	+3 deflection
78–82	+4 deflection
83–86	+5 deflection
87–90	+6 deflection
91–93	+7 deflection
94–96	+8 deflection
97–98	+9 deflection
99–100	+10 deflection

Table 7—C: Combat Bonuses

Note that these are all insight bonuses

d%	Bonus
01–10	+1 attack and damage
11–22	+1 attack
23–32	+1 damage
33–40	+2 attack and damage
41–50	+2 attack
51–58	+2 damage
59–64	+3 attack and damage
65–72	+3 attack
73–78	+3 damage
79–82	+4 attack and damage
83–88	+4 attack
89–92	+4 damage
93–94	+5 attack and damage
95–98	+5 attack
99–100	+5 damage)

Table 7—D: Damage Reduction

d%	Bonus
01–05	5/adamantine
06–10	5/chaotic
11–15	5/cold iron
16–18	5/epic
19–23	5/evil
24–28	5/good
29–33	5/lawful
34–43	5/magic
44–48	5/silver
49–50	5/—
51–53	10/adamantine
54–56	10/chaotic
57–59	10/cold iron
60–61	10/epic
62–64	10/evil
65–67	10/good
68–70	10/lawful
71–76	10/magic
77–79	10/silver
80	10/—
81–82	15/adamantine
83–84	15/chaotic
85–86	15/cold iron
87	15/epic
88–89	15/evil
90–91	15/good
92–93	15/lawful
94–97	15/magic
98–99	15/silver
100	15/—

Table 7—E: Immunities and Resistances

d%	Bonus
01–05	Acid resistance 5
06–09	Acid resistance 10
10–12	Acid resistance 15
13–14	Acid immunity
15–19	Cold resistance 5
20–23	Cold resistance 10
24–26	Cold resistance 15
27–28	Cold immunity
29–32	Disease immunity
33–37	Electricity resistance 5
38–41	Electricity resistance 10
42–44	Electricity resistance 15
45–46	Electricity immunity
47–51	Fire resistance 5
52–55	Fire resistance 10
56–58	Fire resistance 15
59–60	Fire immunity
61–62	Immune to death effects
63–65	Immune to enchantments
66–69	Immune to fear
70–71	Immune to mind-affecting effects
72–73	Immune to nonlethal damage
74–76	Immune to paralysis
77–78	Immune to sleep
79–83	Poison immunity
84–88	Sonic resistance 5
89–92	Sonic resistance 10
93–95	Sonic resistance 15
96–97	Sonic immunity
98–100	Artifact grants multiple resistances or immunities; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional resistances if this result occurs more than once.

Table 7—F: Saving Throw Bonuses

Note that these are all enhancement bonuses

d%	Bonus
01–10	+1 Fortitude
11–20	+1 Reflex

21–30	+1 Will
31–38	+2 Fortitude
39–46	+2 Reflex
47–54	+2 Will
55–60	+3 Fortitude
61–66	+3 Reflex
67–72	+3 Will
73–77	+4 Fortitude
78–82	+4 Reflex
83–87	+4 Will
88–90	+5 Fortitude
91–93	+5 Reflex
94–96	+5 Will
97–100	Artifact grants multiple saving throw Bonuses; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional Bonuses if this result occurs more than once. If you wind up with two Bonuses to the same save, keep the highest and reroll the other.

Table 7—G: Skill Bonuses

Note that these are all competence bonuses

d%	Bonus
01–30	+2 to one skill
31–55	+3 to one skill
56–70	+4 to one skill
71–80	+6 to one skill
81–85	+8 to one skill
86–90	Artifact allows its user to take 10 on one skill, even when stress or distractions would normally prevent him from doing so.
91–100	Artifact grants multiple skill Bonuses; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional Bonuses if this result occurs more than once. If you wind up with two Bonuses to the same skill (unless one of them is the ability to take 10), keep the highest and reroll the other.

Table 7—H: Spell Resistance

Determine spell resistance by rolling d20+15. Then consult the following table to determine if the spell resistance has any unusual restrictions.

d%	Features
01–40	SR functions normally
43–47	SR function against all spells except those of a certain school (roll 1d8)
48–54	SR function only against spells of a certain school (roll 1d8)
55–61	SR functions against all spells except those cast by creatures of a certain Type (roll on the table in the Creature Types sidebar)
62–68	SR functions against all spells except those of a certain descriptor (acid, air, chaotic, cold, darkness, death, earth, electricity, evil, fear, fire, force, good, lawful, light, mind–affecting, sonic, water)
69–75	SR functions only against arcane spells
76–82	SR functions only against divine spells
83–89	SR functions only against spells cast by creatures of a certain Type (roll on the table in the Creature Types sidebar)
90–96	SR functions only against spells of a certain descriptor
97–100	Artifact grants SR with multiple quirks; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional restrictions if this result occurs more than once. If you wind up with two contrary restrictions, reroll the latter.

Table 7—I: Class-Based Benefits

d%	Bonus
01–03	Air Domain Granted Power
04–06	Bardic Knowledge (as bard of wielder's level)
07–09	Bardic Music (as bard of wielder's level)
10–12	Bonus Feats (1d4, as determined by DM)
13–15	Death Domain Granted Power
16–18	Destruction Domain Granted Power
19–21	Earth Domain Granted Power
22–24	Evasion
25–27	Favored Enemy (roll one creature on Creature Types table, Bonuses as ranger of wielder's level)
28–30	Fire Domain Granted Power
31–33	Improved Evasion
34–36	Improved Uncanny Dodge
36–39	Lay on Hands (as paladin of wielder's level)
40–42	Level-based and Wisdom Bonus to AC (as monk of wielder's level)
43–45	Luck Domain Granted Power
46–48	Plant Domain Granted Power

49–51	Protection Domain Granted Power
52–54	Rage (as barbarian of wielder's level)
55–57	Rebuke Undead (as cleric of wielder's level)
58–60	Slow Fall (as monk of wielder's level)
61–63	Smite Chaos (as paladin of wielder's level, but for alignment)
64–66	Smite Evil (as paladin of wielder's level)
67–69	Smite Good (as paladin of wielder's level, but for alignment)
70–72	Smite Law (as paladin of wielder's level, but for alignment)
73–75	Sneak Attack (as rogue of wielder's level)
76–78	Strength Domain Granted Power
79–81	Travel Domain Granted Power
82–84	Turn Undead (as cleric of wielder's level)
85–87	Uncanny Dodge
88–90	Water Domain Granted Power
91–93	Wild **Shape** (as druid of wielder's level)
94–96	Woodland Stride (as druid)
97–100	Artifact grants multiple benefits; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional **Bonus**es if this result occurs more than once. If you roll this result more than three times, or roll more than one ability from the same class, ignore all the results from this table and add the gestalt feature to the artifact's major powers (as an additional major power, not a replacement for the ones rolled later).

Step Five: Determining the Artifact's Spell-Like Abilities

Table 8: Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–20	The artifact grants no Spell-Like Abilities
21–40	1d4 minor Spell-Like Abilities, each 1/day
41–55	1d4 minor Spell-Like Abilities, each 3/day
56–60	1d4 minor Spell-Like Abilities, each 5/day
61–75	1d4 medium Spell-Like Abilities, each 1/day
76–85	1d4 medium Spell-Like Abilities, each 3/day
86–89	1d4 medium Spell-Like Abilities, each 5/day
90–94	1d4 major Spell-Like Abilities, each 1/day
95	1d4 major Spell-Like Abilities, each 3/day
96–100	Artifact grants multiple Spell-Like Abilities; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional restrictions if this result occurs more than once. Once you have rolled this result once, reroll any further results of 01–20.

Table 8—A: Minor Abjuration Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Alarm
04–06	Arcane Lock
07–10	Dispel Magic
11–13	Endure Elements
14–16	Entropic Shield
17–19	Explosive Runes
20–22	Fire Trap
23–25	Glyph of Warding
26–28	Hide from Animals
29–31	Hide from Undead
32–34	Hold Portal
35–37	Magic Circle against Chaos
38–40	Magic Circle against Evil
41–43	Magic Circle against Good
44–46	Magic Circle against Law
47–49	Nondetection
50–52	Obscure Object
53–55	Protection from Arrows
56–58	Protection from Chaos
59–61	Protection from Energy
62–64	Protection from Evil
65–67	Protection from Good
68–70	Protection from Law
71–73	Remove Curse
74–76	Remove Fear
77–79	Repel Vermin
80–82	Resist Energy
83–85	Resistance

86–88	Sanctuary
89–91	Shield
92–94	Shield of Faith
95–97	Shield Other
98–100	Undetectable Alignment

Table 8—B: Medium Abjuration Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–04	Antilife Shell
05–08	Antimagic Field
09–12	Antiplant Shell
13–16	Banishment
17–22	Break Enchantment
23–26	Dimensional Anchor
27–30	Dismissal
31–34	Dispel Chaos
35–38	Dispel Evil
39–42	Dispel Good
43–46	Dispel Law
47–52	Dispel Magic, Greater
53–56	Forbiddance
57–60	Freedom of Movement
61–66	Globe of Invulnerability
67–70	Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser
71–74	Glyph of Warding, Greater
75–78	Guards and Wards
79–82	Morden's Private Sanctum
83–86	Repulsion
87–90	Spell Immunity
91–96	Spell Resistance
97–100	Stoneskin

Table 8—C: Major Abjuration Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–06	Cloak of Chaos
07–12	Dimensional Lock
13–18	Freedom
19–24	Holy Aura
25–30	Imprisonment
31–37	Mind Blank
38–43	Morden's Disjunction
44–49	Prismatic Sphere
50–55	Prismatic Wall
56–62	Protection from Spells
63–68	Repel Metal or Stone
69–74	Sequester
75–80	Shield of Law
81–87	Spell Immunity, Greater
88–94	Spell Turning
95–100	Unholy Aura

Table 8—D: Minor Air Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–08	Call Lightning
09–16	Feather Fall
17–25	Fog Cloud
26–33	Gaseous Form
34–42	Gust of Wind
43–51	Obscuring Mist
52–59	Protection from Energy (electricity only)
60–67	Resist Energy (electricity only)
68–75	Shocking Grasp
76–83	Stinking Cloud
84–91	Whispering Wind
92–100	Wind Wall

Table 8—E: Medium Air Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–12	Acid Fog
13–25	Air Walk
26–37	Call Lightning Storm
38–49	Cloudkill
50–62	Control Winds
63–74	Mind Fog
75–87	Solid Fog
88–100	Wind Walk

Table 8—F: Major Air Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–34	Control Weather
35–67	Elemental Swarm (air only)
68–100	Whirlwind

Table 8—G: Minor Chaos Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–16	Align Weapon (chaos only)
17–33	Chaos Hammer
34–50	Detect Law
51–66	Entropic Shield
67–83	Magic Circle Against Law
84–100	Protection from Law

Table 8—H: Medium Chaos Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–50	Confusion
51–100	Dispel Law

Table 8—I: Major Chaos Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–34	Cloak of Chaos
35–67	Insanity
68–100	Word of Chaos

Table 8—J: Minor Conjuration Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Acid Splash
04–06	Create Food and Water
07–09	Create Water
10–13	Cure Light Wounds
14–17	Cure Moderate Wounds
18–21	Cure Serious Wounds
22–24	Delay Poison
25–27	Fog Cloud
28–30	Glitterdust
31–33	Grease
34–37	Mage Armor
38–40	Mel's Acid Arrow
41–43	Mount
44–46	Neutralize Poison
47–49	Obscuring Mist
50–52	Phantom Steed
53–55	Remove Blindness/Deafness
56–58	Remove Disease
59–61	Remove Paralysis
62–64	Restoration, Lesser
65–67	Sepia Snake Sigil
68–70	Sleet Storm
71–73	Stinking Cloud
74–76	Summon Monster I
77–79	Summon Monster II
80–82	Summon Monster III
83–85	Summon Nature's Ally I
86–88	Summon Nature's Ally II
80–91	Summon Nature's Ally III
92–94	Summon Swarm
95–97	Unseen Servant
98–100	Web

Table 8—K: Medium Conjuration Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Acid Fog
04–06	Cloudkill
07–09	Cure Critical Wounds
10–11	Cure Light Wounds, Mass
12–13	Cure Moderate Wounds, Mass
14–16	Cure Serious Wounds
17–19	Dimension Door
20–22	Evar's Black Tentacles
23–24	Fire Seeds
25–27	Heal
28–30	Heroes' Feast
31–33	Insect Plague
34–36	Leomand's Secret Chest
37–39	Leomand's Secure Shelter
40–42	Major Creation
43–45	Minor Creation
46–48	Morden's Faithful Hound
49–51	Planar Ally
52–54	Planar Ally, Lesser
55–57	Planar Binding
58–60	Planar Binding, Lesser
61–62	Plane Shift
63–64	Raise Dead
65–67	Restoration
68–70	Solid Fog
71–73	Summon Monster IV
74–76	Summon Monster V
77–79	Summon Monster VI
80–82	Summon Nature's Ally IV
83–85	Summon Nature's Ally V
86–88	Summon Nature's Ally VI

89–91	Teleport
92–94	Wall of Iron
95–97	Wall of Stone
98–100	Wall of Thorns

Table 8—L: Major Conjuration Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Creeping Doom
04–06	Cure Critical Wounds, Mass
07–09	Cure Serious Wounds, Mass
10–12	Drawmiij's Instant Summons
13–15	Elemental Swarm
16–18	Gate
19–21	Heal, Mass
22–24	Incendiary Cloud
25–28	Maze
29–31	Morden's Magnificent Mansion
32–34	Phase Door
35–37	Planar Ally, Greater
38–40	Planar Binding, Greater
41–44	Refuge
45–47	Regenerate
48–51	Restoration, Greater
52–54	Resurrection
55–57	Shambler
58–60	Storm of Vengeance
61–64	Summon Monster VII
65–68	Summon Monster VIII
69–72	Summon Monster IX
73–76	Summon Nature's Ally VII
77–80	Summon Nature's Ally VIII
81–84	Summon Nature's Ally IX
85–87	Teleport Object
88–91	Teleport, Greater
92–94	Teleportation Circle
95–97	Trap the Soul
98–100	True Resurrection

Table 8—M: Minor Destruction and War Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Bane
11–20	Divine Favor
21–30	Inflict Light Wounds
31–40	Inflict Moderate Wounds
41–50	Inflict Serious Wounds
51–60	Keen Edge
61–70	Magic Weapon
71–80	Rage
81–90	Spiritual Weapon
91–100	True Strike

Table 8—N: Medium Destruction and War Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–07	Blade Barrier
08–15	Blight
16–22	Cloudkill
23–30	Disintegrate
31–37	Divine Power
38–45	Flame Strike
46–53	Harm
54–61	Inflict Critical Wounds
62–69	Inflict Light Wounds, Mass
70–77	Inflict Moderate Wounds, Mass
78–85	Magic Weapon, Greater
86–92	Righteous Might
93–100	Slay Living

Table 8—O: Major Destruction and War Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–16	Destruction
17–33	Implosion
34–50	Inflict Critical Wounds, Mass
51–67	Inflict Serious Wounds, Mass
68–83	Morden's Sword
84–100	Storm of Vengeance

Table 8—P: Minor Divination Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Arcane Sight
04–06	Augury
07–09	Clairaudience/Clairvoyance
10–13	Comprehend Languages
14–17	Detect Animals or Plants
18–21	Detect Chaos
22–25	Detect Evil
26–29	Detect Good
30–33	Detect Law

34–37	Detect Magic
38–40	Detect Poison
41–43	Detect Secret Doors
44–46	Detect Snares and Pits
47–49	Detect Thoughts
50–52	Detect Undead
53–56	Discern Lies
57–60	Find Traps
61–63	Guidance
64–66	Identify
67–69	Know Direction
70–72	Locate Object
73–75	Read Magic
76–79	Scrying
80–83	See Invisibility
84–87	Speak with Animals
88–90	Speak with Plants
91–93	Status
94–97	Tongues
98–100	True Strike

Table 8—Q: Medium Divination Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–07	Analyze Dweomer
08–14	Arcane Eye
15–21	Commune
22–28	Commune with Nature
29–35	Contact Other Plane
36–42	Detect Scrying
43–49	Divination
50–55	Find the Path
56–62	Legend Lore
63–68	Locate Creature
69–75	Prying Eyes
76–81	Rarey's Telepathic Bond
82–87	Scrying, Greater
88–93	Stone Tell
94–100	True Seeing

Table 8—R: Major Divination Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Arcane Sight, Greater
26–30	Discern Location
31–40	Foresight
41–55	Moment of Prescience
56–75	Prying Eyes, Greater
76–100	Vision

Table 8—S: Minor Earth Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–16	Magic Stone
17–33	Meld Into Stone
34–50	Protection from Energy (acid only)
51–67	Resist Energy (acid only)
68–83	Soften Earth and Stone
84–100	Stone **Shape**

Table 8—T: Medium Earth Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Flesh to Stone
11–20	Move Earth
21–30	Passwall
31–40	Spike Stones
41–50	Stone Tell
51–60	Stone to Flesh
61–70	Transmute Mud to Rock
71–80	Transmute Rock to Mud
81–90	Wall of Iron
91–100	Wall of Stone

Table 8—U: Major Earth Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–20	Earthquake
21–40	Elemental Swarm (earth only)
41–60	Phase Door
61–80	Repel Metal or Stone
81–100	Transmute Metal to Wood

Table 8—V: Minor Enchantment Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Aid
04–06	Animal Messenger
07–09	Animal Trance
10–12	Bane
13–15	Bless

16–18	Calm Animals
19–21	Calm Emotions
22–24	Charm Animal
25–31	Charm Person
32–34	Command
35–37	Confusion, Lesser
38–40	Crushing Despair
41–43	Daze
44–47	Daze Monster
48–50	Deep Slumber
51–53	Dominate Animal
54–56	Enthrall
57–59	Geas, Lesser
60–62	Good Hope
63–65	Heroism
66–68	Hold Animal
69–71	Hold Person
72–74	Hypnotism
75–78	Lullaby
79–81	Prayer
82–84	Rage
85–87	Sleep
88–90	Suggestion
91–93	Tashaa's Hideous Laughter
94–96	Touch of Idiocy
97–100	Zone of Truth

Table 8—W: Medium Enchantment Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–09	Charm Monster
10–17	Command, Greater
18–26	Confusion
27–35	Dominate Person
36–43	Feeblemind
44–51	Geas/Quest
52–59	Heroism, Greater
60–67	Hold Monster
68–75	Mind Fog
74–83	Modify Memory
84–91	Song of Discord
92–100	Suggestion, Mass

Table 8—X: Major Enchantment Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–09	Antipathy
10–18	Binding
19–27	Dominate Monster
28–36	Hold Monster, Mass
37–46	Hold Person, Mass
47–55	Insanity
56–64	Oto's Irresistible Dance
65–73	Power Word, Blind
74–82	Power Word, Kill
83–91	Power Word, Stun
92–100	Sympathy

Table 8—Y: Minor Evil Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Align Weapon (evil only)
11–20	Animate Dead
21–30	Bane
31–40	Contagion
41–50	Curse Water
51–60	Death Knell
61–70	Desecrate
71–80	Detect Good
81–90	Magic Circle Against Good
91–100	Protection from Good

Table 8—Z: Medium Evil Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–20	Bestow Curse
21–40	Create Undead
41–60	Dispel Good
61–80	Unhallow
81–90	Unholy Blight

Table 8—AA: Major Evil Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–33	Blasphemy
34–66	Create Greater Undead
67–100	Unholy Aura

Table 8—AB: Minor Evocation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Burning Hands
04–06	Call Lightning
07–09	Chaos Hammer
10–12	Consecrate
13–15	Continual Flame
16–18	Dancing Lights
19–21	Darkness
22–24	Daylight
25–27	Deeper Darkness
28–30	Desecrate
31–33	Divine Favor
34–36	Faerie Fire
37–39	Fireball
40–42	Flame Blade
43–45	Flaming Sphere
46–48	Flare
49–51	Gust of Wind
52–54	Helping Hand
55–57	Invisibility Purge
58–60	Leomand's Tiny Hut
61–64	Light
65–67	Lightning Bolt
68–70	Magic Missile
71–73	Produce Flame
74–76	Ray of Frost
77–79	Scorching Ray
80–82	Searing Light
83–85	Shatter
86–88	Shocking Grasp
89–91	Sound Burst
92–94	Spiritual Weapon
85–97	Tensor's Floating Disk
98–100	Wind Wall

Table 8—AC: Medium Evocation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–04	Bigsby's Forceful Hand
05–08	Bigsby's Interposing Hand
09–12	Blade Barrier
13–18	Call Lightning Storm
19–22	Chain Lightning
23–26	Cone of Cold
37–30	Contingency
31–34	Divine Power
35–38	Fire Shield
39–42	Flame Strike
43–46	Hallow
47–50	Holy Sword
51–56	Ice Storm
57–60	Imbue with Spell Ability
61–64	Otluke's Resilient Sphere
65–68	Sending
69–72	Shout
73–76	Sympathetic Vibration
77–80	Unhallow
81–88	Wall of Fire
89–92	Wall of Force
93–100	Wall of Ice

Table 8—AD: Major Evocation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–04	Bigsby's Clenched Fist
05–08	Bigsby's Crushing Hand
09–12	Bigsby's Grasping Hand
13–16	Blasphemy
17–21	Delayed Blast Fireball
22–26	Demand
27–30	Dictum
31–35	Earthquake
36–40	Fire Storm
41–45	Forcecage
46–49	Holy Word
50–53	Implosion
54–58	Meteor Swarm
59–62	Morden's Sword
63–67	Otluke's Telekinetic Sphere
68–72	Polar Ray
73–76	Prismatic Spray
77–81	Shout, Greater
82–86	Sunbeam
87–91	Sunburst
92–96	Whirlwind
97–100	Word of Chaos

Table 8—AE: Minor Fire Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–06	Burning Hands
07–12	Continual Flame
13–19	Endure Elements
20–25	Fire Trap
26–32	Fireball
33–38	Flame Arrow
39–44	Flame Blade
45–50	Flaming Sphere
51–56	Flare
57–61	Heat Metal
62–69	Produce Flame
70–75	Protection from Energy (fire only)
76–82	Pyrotechnics
83–88	Quench
89–94	Resist Energy (fire only)
95–100	Scorching Ray

Table 8—AF: Medium Fire Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Fire Seeds
26–50	Fire Shield
51–75	Flame Strike
76–100	Wall of Fire

Table 8—AG: Major Fire Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–20	Delayed Blast Fireball
21–40	Elemental Swarm (fire only)
41–60	Fire Storm
61–80	Incendiary Cloud
81–100	Meteor Swarm

Table 8—AH: Minor Good Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Aid
11–20	Align Weapon (good only)
21–30	Bless
31–40	Bless Water
41–50	Bless Weapon
51–60	Consecrate
61–70	Detect Evil
71–80	Magic Circle Against Evil
81–90	Prayer
91–100	Protection from Evil

Table 8—AI: Medium Good Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–20	Dispel Evil
21–40	Hallow
41–60	Holy Smite
61–80	Holy Sword
81–100	Remove Curse

Table 8—AJ: Major Good Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–50	Holy Aura
51–100	Holy Word

Table 8—AK: Minor Healing Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–14	Cure Light Wounds
15–28	Cure Moderate Wounds
29–42	Cure Serious Wounds
43–56	Delay Poison
57–70	Remove Blindness/Deafness
71–85	Remove Disease
86–100	Restoration, Lesser

Table 8—AL: Medium Healing Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–11	Cure Critical Wounds
12–22	Cure Light Wounds, Mass
23–33	Cure Moderate Wounds, Mass
34–45	Heal
46–56	Neutralize Poison
57–67	Raise Dead
68–78	Remove Curse
78–89	Restoration
90–100	Stone to Flesh

Table 8—AM: Major Healing Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–16	Cure Critical Wounds, Mass
17–32	Cure Serious Wounds, Mass
33–48	Heal, Mass
49–64	Regenerate
65–80	Restoration, Greater
81–96	Resurrection
97–100	True Resurrection

Table 8—AN: Minor Illusion Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–06	Blur
07–12	Color Spray
13–18	Disguise Self
19–23	Displacement
24–28	Ghost Sound
29–33	Hypnotic Pattern
34–38	Illusory Script
39–44	Invisibility
45–49	Invisibility Sphere
50–54	Leomand's Trap
55–59	Magic Mouth
60–65	Major Image
66–70	Minor Image
71–75	Mirror Image
76–80	Misdirection
81–85	Nystul's Magic Aura
86–90	Silence
91–95	Silent Image
96–100	Ventriloquism

Table 8—AO: Medium Illusion Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–05	Dream
06–10	False Vision
11–15	Hallucinatory Terrain
16–20	Illusory Wall
21–25	Invisibility, Greater
26–30	Mirage Arcana
31–35	Mislead
36–40	Nightmare
41–46	Permanent Image
47–52	Persistent Image
53–57	Phantasmal Killer
58–63	Programmed Image
64–68	Rainbow Pattern
69–73	Seeming
74–78	Shadow Conjuration
79–83	Shadow Evocation
84–89	Shadow Walk
90–95	Veil
96–100	Zone of Silence

Table 8—AP: Major Illusion Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–11	Invisibility, Mass
12–22	Project Image
23–34	Scintillating Pattern
35–45	Screen
46–56	Shades
57–67	Shadow Conjuration, Greater
68–78	Shadow Evocation, Greater
79–89	Simulacrum
90–100	Weird

Table 8—AQ: Minor Law Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Align Weapon (law only)
26–50	Detect Chaos
51–75	Magic Circle Against Chaos
76–100	Protection from Chaos

Table 8—AR: Moderate Law Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–33	Dispel Chaos
34–66	Mark of Justice
67–100	Order's Wrath

Table 8—AS: Major Law Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–50	Dictum
51–100	Shield of Law

Table 8—AT: Minor Mental Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Calm Emotions
11–20	Command
21–30	Confusion, Lesser
31–40	Detect Thoughts
41–50	Eagle's Splendor
51–60	Fox's Cunning
61–70	Hold Person
71–80	Hypnotism
81–90	Owl's Wisdom
99–100	Suggestion

Table 8—AU: Medium Mental Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–09	Command, Greater
10–17	Confusion
18–25	Crushing Despair
26–34	Dream
35–42	Eagle's Splendor, Mass
43–50	Feeblemind
51–58	Fox's Cunning, Mass
59–66	Hold Monster
67–75	Nightmare
76–83	Owl's Wisdom, Mass
84–92	Sending
93–100	Telekinesis

Table 8—AV: Major Mental Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Demand
26–50	Hold Person, Mass
51–75	Insanity
76–100	Suggestion, Mass

Table 8—AW: Minor Nature Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–04	Animal Messenger
05–08	Animal Trance
09–12	Calm Animals
13–16	Charm Animal
17–20	Detect Animals or Plants
21–24	Diminish Plants
25–28	Dominate Animal
29–32	Endure Elements
33–36	Entangle
37–40	Goodberry
41–44	Hide From Animals
45–48	Hold Animal
49–52	Magic Fang
53–56	Magic Fang, Greater
57–60	Pass without Trace
61–64	Plant Growth
65–68	Reduce Animal
69–72	Repel Vermin
73–76	Snare
77–80	Speak with Animals
81–84	Speak with Plants
85–88	Spike Growth
89–92	Summon Swarm
93–96	Tree Shape
97–100	Wood **Shape**

Table 8—AX: CMedium Nature Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–07	Animal Growth
08–14	Antilife Shell
15–21	Antiplant Shell
22–28	Blight
29–36	Command Plants
37–44	Commune with Nature
45–51	Giant Vermin
52–58	Insect Plague
59–65	Ironwood
66–72	Liveoak
73–79	Repel Wood
80–86	Transport via Plants
87–93	Tree Stride
94–100	Wall of Thorns

Table 8—AY: Major Nature Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–16	Animal Shapes
17–33	Animate Plants
34–50	Control Plants
51–67	Creeping Doom

68–83	Shambler
84–100	Transmute Metal to Wood

Table 8—AZ: Minor Necromancy Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–04	Animate Dead
05–08	Bestow Curse
09–11	Blindness/Deafness
12–14	Cause Fear
15–17	Chill Touch
18–21	Command Undead
22–25	Contagion
26–28	Curse Water
29–32	Death Knell
33–35	Deathwatch
36–38	Disrupt Undead
39–42	Doom
43–45	False Life
46–49	Fear
50–52	Gentle Repose
53–55	Ghoul Touch
56–58	Halt Undead
59–62	Inflict Light Wounds
63–65	Inflict Minor Wounds
66–69	Inflict Moderate Wounds
70–73	Inflict Serious Wounds
74–77	Poison
78–80	Ray of Enfeeblement
81–83	Ray of Exhaustion
84–87	Scare
88–91	Speak with Dead
92–94	Spectral Hand
95–97	Touch of Fatigue
98–100	Vampiric Touch

Table 8—BA: Medium Necromancy Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–05	Blight
06–10	Circle of Death
11–15	Create Undead
16–20	Death Ward
21–25	Enervation
26–30	Eyebite
31–35	Harm
36–40	Inflict Critical Wounds
41–45	Inflict Light Wounds, Mass
46–50	Inflict Moderate Wounds, Mass
51–55	Magic Jar
56–60	Mark of Justice
61–65	Poison
66–70	Slay Living
71–75	Symbol of Fear
76–80	Symbol of Pain
81–85	Symbol of Persuasion
86–90	Symbol of Sleep
91–95	Undeath to Death
76–100	Waves of Fatigue

Table 8—BB: Major Necromancy Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–06	Astral Projection
07–11	Clone
12–17	Control Undead
18–23	Create Greater Undead
24–29	Destruction
30–35	Energy Drain
36–41	Finger of Death
42–47	Horrid Wilting
48–53	Inflict Critical Wounds, Mass
54–59	Inflict Serious Wounds, Mass
60–64	Soul Bind
65–70	Symbol of Death
71–76	Symbol of Insanity
77–82	Symbol of Stunning
83–88	Symbol of Weakness
89–94	Wail of the Banshee
95–100	Waves of Exhaustion

Table 8—BC: Minor Physical Enhancement Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Bear's Endurance
26–50	Bull's Strength
51–75	Cat's Grace
76–100	Jump

Table 8—BD: Medium Physical Enhancement Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Bear's Endurance, Mass
26–50	Bull's Strength, Mass
51–75	Cat's Grace, Mass
76–100	Tensor's Transformation

Table 8—BE: Major Physical Enhancement Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–100	Iron Body

Table 8—BF: Minor Protection Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–05	Alarm
06–10	Arcane Lock
11–15	Barkskin
16–20	Blur
21–25	Calm Emotions
26–30	Death Ward
31–35	Displacement
36–40	Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser
41–45	Glyph of Warding
46–50	Hold Portal
51–55	Invisibility Purge
56–60	Mage Armor
61–65	Protection from Arrows
66–70	Protection from Energy
71–75	Resist Energy
76–80	Resistance
81–85	Sanctuary
86–90	Shield
91–95	Shield of Faith
96–100	Shield Other

Table 8—BG: Medium Protection Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–05	Antilife Shell
06–10	Break Enchantment
11–15	Death Ward
16–20	Dimensional Anchor
21–25	Dismissal
26–30	Globe of Invulnerability
31–35	Glyph of Warding, Greater
36–40	Guards and Wards
41–45	Leomand's Secure Shelter
46–50	Morden's Private Sanctum
51–55	Repulsion
56–60	Spell Immunity
61–65	Spell Resistance
66–70	Stoneskin
71–75	Wall of Fire
76–80	Wall of Force
81–85	Wall of Ice
86–90	Wall of Iron
91–95	Wall of Stone
96–100	Wall of Thorns

Table 8—BH: Major Protection Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–14	Mind Blank
15–28	Prismatic Sphere
29–42	Prismatic Wall
43–57	Protection from Spells
58–72	Refuge
73–86	Sequester
87–100	Spell Immunity, Greater

Table 8—BI: Minor Transmutation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01	Align Weapon
02–03	Alter Self
04	Animate Rope
05–06	Barkskin
07–08	Bear's Endurance
09	Bless Water
10	Bless Weapon
11	Blink
12–13	Bull's Strength
14–15	Cat's Grace
16	Chill Metal
17	Command Plants
18–19	Darkvision
20	Diminish Plants
21–22	Eagle's Splendor
23	Enlarge Person
24	Entangle

25	Erase
26	Expeditious Retreat
27–28	Feather Fall
29	Flame Arrow
30–31	Fly
32–33	Fox's Cunning
34–35	Gaseous Form
36	Glibness
37	Goodberry
38–39	Haste
40	Heat Metal
41–42	Jump
43	Keen Edge
44–45	Knock
46–47	Levitate
48–49	Longstrider
50	Mage Hand
51–52	Magic Fang
53	Magic Fang, Greater
54	Magic Stone
55	Magic Vestment
56–57	Magic Weapon
58	Magic Weapon, Greater
59–60	Make Whole
61	Meld into Stone
62–63	Mending
64	Message
65	Open/Close
66–67	Owl's Wisdom
68–69	Pass without Trace
70	Plant Growth
71–72	Purify Food and Drink
73	Pyrotechnics
74	Quench
75	Reduce Animal
76	Reduce Person
77	Rope Trick
78	Sculpt Sound
79	Secret Page
80	Shillelagh
81	Shrink Item
82–83	Slow
84	Snare
85–86	Soften Earth and Stone
87–88	Spider Climb
89	Spike Growth
90–91	Stone **Shape**
92	Tree **Shape**
93	Virtue
94	Warp Wood
95	Water Breathing
96–97	Water Walk
98	Whispering Wind
99–100	Wood **Shape**

Table 8—BJ: Medium Transmutation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–03	Air Walk
04–05	Animal Growth
06–08	Animate Objects
09	Awaken
10–12	Baleful Polymorph
13–14	Bear's Endurance, Mass
151–6	Bull's Strength, Mass
17–18	Cat's Grace, Mass
19–21	Control Water
22–24	Control Winds
25–26	Disintegrate
27–28	Disrupting Weapon
29–30	Eagle's Splendor, Mass
31–32	Enlarge Person, Mass
33–35	Fabricate
36–37	Flesh to Stone
38–39	Fox's Cunning, Mass
40–42	Giant Vermin
43–44	Ironwood
45–46	Liveoak
47–48	Morden's Lucubration
49–51	Move Earth
52–54	Overland Flight
55–56	Owl's Wisdom, Mass
57–59	Passwall
60–61	Polymorph
62–63	Rarey's Mnemonic Enhancer
64–65	Reduce Person, Mass
66–67	Reincarnate
68–70	Repel Wood
71–72	Righteous Might
73–74	Rusting Grasp
75–76	Spellstaff
77–78	Spike Stones
79–80	Stone to Flesh
81–83	Telekinesis

84–85	Tensor's Transformation
86–88	Transmute Mud to Rock
89–91	Transmute Rock to Mud
92–93	Transport via Plants
94–96	Tree Stride
97–98	Wind Walk
99–100	Word of Recall

Table 8—BK: Major Transmutation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–07	Animal Shapes
08–14	Animate Plants
15–21	Changestaff
22–27	Control Plants
28–34	Control Weather
35–41	Ethereal Jaunt
42–47	Etherealness
48–53	Iron Body
54–59	Polymorph Any Object
60–66	Reverse Gravity
67–73	Shapechange
74–80	Statue
81–87	Temporal Stasis
88–93	Time Stop
94–100	Transmute Metal to Wood

Table 8—BL: Minor Transportation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Expeditious Retreat
11–20	Feather Fall
21–30	Fly
31–40	Jump
41–50	Levitate
51–60	Longstrider
61–70	Mount
71–80	Phantom Speed
81–90	Spider Climb
91–100	Water Walk

Table 8—BM: Medium Transportation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Air Walk
11–20	Dimension Door
21–30	Dimensional Anchor
31–40	Freedom of Movement
41–50	Overland Flight
51–60	Plane Shift
61–70	Teleport
71–80	Transport via Plants
81–90	Tree Stride
91–100	Wind Walk

Table 8—BN: Major Transportation Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Astral Projection
11–20	Dimensional Lock
21–30	Ethereal Jaunt
31–40	Etherealness
41–50	Gate
51–60	Phase Door
61–70	Reverse Gravity
71–80	Teleport Object
81–90	Teleport, Greater
91–100	Teleportation Circle

Table 8—BO: Minor Water Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–10	Chill Metal
11–20	Create Water
21–30	Endure Elements
31–40	Fog Cloud
41–50	Obscuring Mist
51–60	Protection from Energy (cold only)
61–70	Resist Energy (cold only)
71–80	Sleet Storm
81–90	Water Breathing
91–100	Water Walk

Table 8—BP: Medium Water Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–20	Cone of Cold
21–40	Control Water
41–60	Ice Storm
61–80	Otluke's Freezing Sphere
81–100	Wall of Ice

Table 8—BQ: Major Water Spell-Like Abilities

d%	Spell-Like Abilities
01–25	Control Weather
26–50	Elemental Swarm (water only)
51–75	Horrid Wilting
76–100	Polar Ray

Step 6: Determining Your Artifact's Major Powers

Table 9: Sample Major Powers

While all these tables should be taken as samples and guidelines, rather than concrete rules, this is even more true of the major powers. Every artifact is unique, and should be specifically designed to fit both its own history, and the needs of the campaign. If one of these powers fits well enough, fantastic, but never hesitate to tweak or even completely replace these results, even if you've decided to go "by the book" on everything else.

d%	Major Power
01–05	Animation
06–07	Control, Area
08–11	Control, Individual
12–14	Devastation
15	Divinity
16–21	Enhancement
22–26	Environmental Domination
27–30	Fortune
31–33	Gestalt
34–37	Healing
38–39	Identity Stealing
40	Illusory Metamorphosis
41–44	Imprisonment
45–47	Invulnerability
48–51	Item Creation
52–57	Limitless Ability
58–60	Monstrous Gestalt
61–63	Omniscience
64–67	Polymorphing
68–70	Possession
71–74	Shapeshifting
75–77	Slaying
78–81	Summons
82	Time Travel
83–85	Transformation
86–89	Travel
90–92	Weather Domination
93	Wish
94–95	Wonder
96–100	Artifact grants multiple major powers; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional powers if this result occurs more than once.

Animation: The artifact animates either dead bodies (75%, as per *animate dead*), or inanimate objects (25%, as per *animate objects*). When activated, it instantly affects all corpses or Medium and smaller unattended nonmagical objects within range. The range is a burst, with a radius equal to 1d% x 10 feet. (Thus, a roll of 57 indicates a range of 570 feet.)

Control, Area: The artifact generates a *dominate monster* effect, as the spell. It instantly effects all creatures of the appropriate type who enter a given radius of the artifact while it is active and wielded. To determine the extent of this area, roll 1d6+6 and multiply the result by 10; this is radius of the area in feet. Roll on the Creature Types table, to determine the type of creature affected.

Control, Individual: The artifact generates a *dominate monster* effect, as the spell. This requires a standard action to target, but has unlimited use. Role on the Creature Types table, to determine the type of creature affected.

Devastation: The artifact can unleash a devastating effect, such as a cone of sound or a storm of terribly destructive energies. The precise shape and energy type should be chosen as is appropriate for the artifact's theme, or rolled on the tables below, but always deals 1d6 points of damage per the artifact's caster level (Reflex half).

Table 9—A: Devastation Shapes

d%	Shape
01–05	Burst, 50 ft.-radius (centered on any target point in line of sight)
06–10	Burst, 50 ft.-radius (centered on artifact)
11–15	Burst, 100 ft.-radius (centered on any target point in line of sight)
16–20	Burst, 100 ft.-radius (centered on artifact)
21–25	Burst, 200 ft.-radius (centered on any target point in line of sight)
26–30	Burst, 200 ft.-radius (centered on artifact)
31–35	Column, 50 ft.-radius, 100 ft. high (centered on any target in line of sight)

36–40	Column, 100 ft.-radius, 200 ft. high (centered on any target in line of sight)
41–45	Column, 200 ft.-radius, 400 ft. high (centered on any target in line of sight)
46–50	Cone, 50 ft.
51–55	Cone, 100 ft.
56–60	Cone, 200 ft.
61–65	Gaze attack, 25 ft.
66–70	Gaze attack, 50 ft.
71–75	Gaze attack, 100 ft.
76–80	Line, 100 ft.
81–85	Line, 200 ft.
86–90	Line, 400 ft.
91–95	Touch
96–100	Artifact grants multiple destructive shapes; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional shapes if this result occurs more than once.

Table 9—B: Destruction Types

d%	Type
01–05	Acid
06–10	Bludgeoning
11–15	Chaotic Divine
16–20	Cold
21–25	Eldritch (pure arcane energy)
26–30	Electricity
31–35	Evil Divine
36–40	Fire
41–45	Force
46–50	Good Divine
51–55	Lawful Divine
56–60	Negative
61–65	Piercing
66–70	Positive
71–75	Psionic
76–80	Slashing
81–85	Sonic
86–90	Unaligned Divine
91–95	Undefined
96–100	Artifact's destructive powers combine types; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional types if this result occurs more than once.

Divinity: The artifact transforms the wielder into a demigod, but only so long as the artifact remains in her possession. She gains the following abilities.

- Maximum hit points per Hit Die.
- +30 to all natural movement rates.
- +2 divine bonus on attack rolls, ability checks, skill checks, saving throws, and AC.
- Immunity to ability damage, ability drain, acid, cold, death effects, disease, disintegration, electricity, energy drain, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, petrification, poison, polymorphing, sleep and stunning.
- Fire resistance 7.
- Spell resistance 34.
- DR 15/epic.

Enhancement: The artifact enhances one or more of the wielder's abilities to truly prodigious levels, adding 1d10+10 to that ability for as long as the artifact remains in his possession.

Environmental Domination: The wielder can literally reshape the world around her. She can use *blight*, *control plants*, *control water*, *earthquake*, *fabricate*, *move earth*, *plant growth*, *polymorph any object* (unattended inanimate nonmagical items only), *soften earth and stone*, *stone shape*, *transmute metal to wood*, *transmute mud to rock*, *transmute rock to mud* and *wood shape*. Any or all of these effects can be combined into a single use of this ability.

Fortune: The artifact brings the wielder great luck. Each time he activates this power, he may reroll any single roll he makes for 24 hours, or any roll he failed in the past round (even if this means "rewriting" a round's-worth of history).

Gestalt: The bearer of this artifact gains the class abilities and spellcasting (but not hit points, base attack bonus, saves, or skill points) of a particular class, determined at artifact creation, equal to the level of their own character level. These abilities are in addition to, not replacements for, any class abilities the character already possesses. If the character bearing the artifact already possesses those abilities, they gain no benefit from this power.

Healing: The artifact can cure entire communities of their afflictions. It can cast any of the powers on the healing spell-like ability tables, affecting every creature within a burst surrounding the artifact. The burst's radius equals 1d% x 10 feet.

Identity Stealing: The artifact allows the wielder to usurp the appearance and identity of a targeted creature of the same type. He gains an ability similar to gestalt, but adopts the target's class abilities, spellcasting, extraordinary, spell-like, and supernatural abilities. He also gains the target's skill ranks whenever they are superior to his own, and knows most of what the target knows. (The wielder must make a DC 20 Intelligence check to access any truly obscure information, such as events that occurred to the target many years ago.) Only one identity can be stolen at a time.

Illusory Metamorphosis: The artifact can turn a subject into an illusion. The victim still appears to be present,

and can make any sounds she could normally make, but she cannot affect (or be affected by) any other being, magic, or force. She is, essentially, an utterly helpless phantom.

Imprisonment: The artifact is designed as a prison for a great being. If the trapped being has spell-like abilities, the bearer can force it to use them on his behalf. Roll on the Creature Type table to determine the type of being the artifact can imprison, then choose a specific monster (or monsters) as appropriate.

Invulnerability: This power makes the wielder completely immune to all damage for a brief period of time. (This may be rounds, minutes, or even hours, depending on how powerful the DM wishes the artifact to be.)

Item Creation: The artifact aids in the creation of magic items. It may be able to create only a specific type of item (75%), such as an anvil that enchants any weapon forged upon it; or it might aid in the creation of all magic items (25%), such as a powerful wizard's laboratory. The artifact might either halve (75%) or eliminate (25%) the XP cost to create such items.

Limitless Ability: The wielder of the artifact may use a specific ability at will, without limit to the number of times the power may be accessed. This applies to either a minor spell-like ability (75%), a medium spell-like ability (22% chance), or a major spell-like ability (3% chance).

Monstrous Gestalt: The bearer gains all the extraordinary, spell-like, and supernatural abilities of a particular monster. Roll on the Creature Type table to determine the type of monster, then choose one as appropriate.

Omniscience: The character gains permanent *true seeing*, as well as a +20 bonus to Listen, Search, Sense Motive, Spot, and all Knowledge checks.

Polymorphing: The wielder of the artifact can transform other creatures. He might be able to choose the form at will (20%), or the artifact might transform the target into only a specific creature, determined at artifact creation (80%). Roll on the Creature Type table to determine the type of monster, then choose one as appropriate. The wielder can reverse this effect at will.

Possession: The wielder of the artifact can use *magic jar* at will.

Shapeshifting: The wielder of the artifact can transform himself. He might be able to choose the form at will, as per *shapechange* (20%), or the artifact might transform him only into a specific creature, determined at artifact creation (80%). Roll on the Creature Type table to determine the type of creature, then choose one as appropriate. The wielder can reverse this effect at will.

Slaying: The artifact can cast any *contagion*, *poison*, or any *inflict spell*, affecting every creature (except the wielder) within a burst surrounding the artifact. The burst's radius equals 1d% x 10 feet. This artifact might function on all creatures (25%), or only on specific creature types (75%). Roll on the Creature Type table to determine the type of creature.

Summons: The artifact can summon an incredibly powerful being, either when the wielder wishes it (75%), or only when the wielder is in danger (25%). Roll on the Creature Type table to determine the type of monster, then choose one as appropriate. The creature should have a CR roughly equal to the artifact's caster level. The wielder can dispel the creature at will, and it follows his commands to the best of its ability.

Time Travel: The bearer can travel through time. This is an extremely subjective power, and the DM must give careful though to how he wants it to function.

Transformation: The bearer gains a template. This may last only so long as he retains possession of the artifact (80%) chance, or may occur and become permanent the first time he activates its major power (20%).

Table 9—C: Transformation Templates

d%	Template
01–16	Celestial
17–32	Fiendish
33–49	Half-Celestial
50–66	Half-Dragon
67–83	Half-Fiend
84–100	Lycanthrope

Travel: The artifact allows the wearer to travel between locations or worlds. This might function as a spell (75%), or might appear to require an actual journey, but one that doesn't take as long as it should or would otherwise be impossible (25%). This otherwise functions much as *greater teleport*, without the need to be familiar with the target destination.

Weather Domination: The bearer can use *control wind* and *control weather* at will.

Wish: The artifact grants *wishes*.

Wonder: The artifact possesses a variety of totally random powers. The DM should prepare a chart of 20 or more powers, selected from all the options presented in this appendix (except other major powers). The precise effect of the artifact is rolled randomly each time it is activated.

Table 10: Frequency of Major Power Use

If the results on this table conflict with the major power selected (such as limitless ability), the major power trumps the Frequency table.

d%	Frequency
01–05	Less than 1/week
06–15	1/week

16–50	1/day
51–85	3/day
86–95	5/day
96–100	Unlimited

Step Seven: Determining Your Artifact's Downsides

Table 11: Downsides

d%	Downside
01–25	Curse (roll on Table 11–A: Curses)
26–45	Catastrophe (roll on Table 11–C: Catastrophes)
46–70	Curse and Personal Consequence or Restriction (roll on Table 11–A: Curses, and on Table 11–D: Personal Consequences)
71–90	Catastrophe and Personal Consequence or Restriction (roll on Table 11–C: Catastrophes, and on Table 11–D: Personal Consequences)
91–100	Curse, Catastrophe and Personal Consequence or Restriction (roll on Tables 10–A, 10–C, and 10–D)

Table 11—A: Curses

d%	Curse
01–05	Afflicted
06–10	Alignment shift
11–15	Bonded artifact
16–20	Charisma drain
21–25	Constitution drain
26–30	Dexterity drain
31–35	Evil twin
36–40	Intelligence drain
41–45	Lunacy
46–50	Misfortune
51–55	Plague carrier
56–60	Racial hatred
61–65	Ravages of age
66–70	Strength drain
71–75	Susceptibility
76–80	Touch of death
81–85	Transmogrification
76–90	Wisdom drain
91–95	Word is bond
96–100	Artifact's bestows two curses; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional curses if this result occurs more than once.

Afflicted: The bearer contracts a randomly determined disease. (See "Diseases" in Chapter Eight of the *DMG*.) You may attempt Fortitude saves each day to avoid taking damage, and you may cure yourself of any damage taken through spells such as *remove disease*, but you can never rid yourself of the disease completely. Every day, no matter how many days have passed without damage, you must attempt to save. Even characters normally immune to disease, such as paladins, are susceptible, though they gain a +5 bonus to their saving throws.

Alignment Shift: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, he moves one "step" toward one particular alignment. The DM should decide what this alignment is when creating the artifact. For instance, an artifact with an evil theme, and many destructive powers, might drive its bearer toward chaotic evil.

Bonded Artifact: Once worn, wielded or held, the artifact bonds with its user. The character may never rid himself of the artifact. If the artifact is held rather than worn, it may be worn on the person (as in a scabbard) or kept in a bag, but may never leave the owner's possession while he is still alive. If dropped, it reappears in the owner's hand. If the character attempts to use a similar item (such as drawing another sword in place of a bonded sword), the artifact mystically takes its place.

Charisma Drain: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, she suffers one point of Charisma drain. This drain cannot be cured by any means so long as the artifact remains in her possession.

Constitution Drain: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, she suffers one point of Constitution drain. This drain cannot be cured by any means so long as the artifact remains in her possession.

Dexterity Drain: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, she suffers one point of Dexterity drain. This drain cannot be cured by any means so long as the artifact remains in her possession.

Evil Twin: The artifact creates an exact duplicate of the wielder, who comes into existence in a random direction, and at a distance of 1d% x 10 miles. If this places the duplicate in a hostile environment, he appears in the nearest safe environment. This duplicate is identical to the wielder in all respects, including equipment (other than the artifact itself), but possesses an alignment diametrically opposed to the wielder. (If the wielder is neutral, the duplicate is neutral evil.) This duplicate desires nothing more than to kill what it considers to be its doppelganger and will attack the character on sight. It can always sense the general direction and distance to the wielder. Only one such duplicate can exist at a time, but should the first be slain, a new one appears the next time the precipitating event occurs.

Intelligence Drain: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, she suffers one point of Intelligence drain. This drain cannot be cured by any means so long as the artifact remains in her possession.

Lunacy: The wielder goes insane. Any time she is faced with combat or any stressful situation, she must attempt a Will save. If she fails, she is affected as if by a *confusion* spell for 1d% minutes. If she succeeds, she need not roll again during that particular situation, but if a new stressor appears, she must roll a new save.

Misfortune: Four times per day, the DM can call for a reroll on any successful attack, save, or check, and the character must accept the worst of the two rolls. Furthermore, misfortune seems to follow the character everywhere. He is mistaken for murder suspects, targeted by robbers, steps in horse manure, and the like.

Plague Carrier: The character does not appear to get sick, but potentially transfers a disease to any living creature she touches. Determine the disease randomly from Chapter Eight of the *DMG*, but use the artifact's default save DC to determine the chance of anyone catching it. All these diseases are spread by contact, no matter their normal method. The character cannot be cured of his plague by any means while the artifact remains in his possession.

Racial Hatred: Roll a particular creature type on the Creature Type table, rerolling any result that indicates a creature type uncommon to the campaign. All members of that race develop an instinctive hatred for the character. They always begin interaction with an attitude of hostile, and in combat prefer to attack the wielder over anyone else. The wielder suffers a –15 penalty to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Gather Information checks made against members of that race.

Ravages of Age: Each time the precipitating event occurs, the character must attempt a Fortitude save. If he fails, he instantly ages to the next age category, suffering all the penalties but gaining none of the benefits. This save gets cumulatively more difficult until it is failed, and then resets.

Strength Drain: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, she suffers one point of Strength drain. This drain cannot be cured by any means so long as the artifact remains in her possession.

Susceptibility: The character becomes particularly vulnerable to a particular attack form. He takes double damage (be it hit point, ability damage, or the like) from such attacks, and suffers a –5 penalty to all saves against it. Use the following table to determine the attack form to which he is susceptible.

11—B: Susceptibility

d%	Damage
01–10	Acid
11–20	Cold
21–30	Disease
31–40	Electricity
41–50	Fire
51–60	Negative Energy
61–70	Physical (weapons, natural weapons, etc.)
71–80	Poison
81–90	Sonic
91–100	Artifact's bestows two vulnerabilities; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional susceptibilities if this result occurs more than once.

Touch of Death: Any time the character touches another living being, he must roll a number of d6 equal to his Hit Dice. If the total exceeds the hit points of the creature touched, the creature drops dead. This ability cannot be turned off, and it does not require flesh-to-flesh contact, so wearing gloves or gauntlets does not prevent it from occurring.

Transmogrification: Each time the precipitating event occurs, the character must make a Fortitude save. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. When she has failed a number of saves equal to half her Hit Dice, she transforms into a monster (the type of which is determined at artifact creation). Roll on the Creature Type table to get the general type, rerolling any roll that results in a standard PC race for the campaign, and then choose the exact monster type accordingly. This is a total transformation, including

mental capacity and alignment, and cannot be halted or reversed so long as the artifact remains in the character's possession. Once the transformation is complete, nothing shy of a *wish* or *miracle* can reverse it even if she loses the artifact. The DM may wish to consider instituting a number of "steps" to the process, such as slowly decreasing the Intelligence but increasing the Strength of someone transforming into an ogre.

Alternatively (20% of the time), the character slowly transforms into stone, a tree, or a similar inanimate object, rather than a monster.

Wisdom Drain: The bearer must make a Will save each time the precipitating event takes place. The save DC cumulatively increases by 1 until the save is failed, then resets. Each time the character fails this save, she suffers one point of Wisdom drain. This drain cannot be cured by any means so long as the artifact remains in her possession.

Word is Bond: The character is absolutely incapable of lying. If she claims she will do something, she *must* do it, no matter how the circumstances might change. Failure to pursue the activity results in a cumulative penalty of –1 to *all* checks for every day that passes. This penalty cannot be overcome in any way until the character resumes the task or rids herself of the artifact. If the penalty exceeds her Hit Dice, she dies.

Table 11—C: Catastrophes

To determine the radius of the catastrophe, first roll d%. A result of 01–75 indicates an area measured in feet; a result of 75+ indicates a result measured in miles. To determine the radius in feet, roll d% x 10. To determine the radius in miles, roll 1d10. In no case is the wielder immune to these effects.

d%	Catastrophe
01–04	Animate dead (all corpses in area, uncontrolled)
05–08	Antimagic field
09–12	Blight
13–16	Blizzard (combine ice storm and sleet storm)
17–20	Call Lightning Storm
21–24	Chain Lightning (begins with wielder, than "bounces" as normal to the limit of the range)
25–28	Circle of Death
29–32	Cloudkill
33–36	Creeping doom
37–40	Darkness
41–44	Earthquake
45–48	Elemental swarm (random element, uncontrolled)
49–52	Gate
53–56	Heat wave (ambient temperature rises by 4d20+60 degrees)
57–60	Hurricane (see "Storms" in Chapter Three of the DMG)
61–64	Incendiary cloud
65–68	Mass plane shift (affects the entire region encompassed in the area of effect)
69–72	Meteor swarm
73–76	Negative energy wave (combine enervation and unhallow)
77–80	Nightmare (any creature who fails its save but is still awake suffers the effects the next time it sleeps)
81–84	Plague (all creatures in area subject to contagion)
85–88	Silence
89–92	Storm of vengeance
93–96	Sunburst
97–100	Weird

Table 11—D: Restrictions and Personal Consequences

d%	Restriction/Consequence
01–03	All NPC encounters begin one "step" nearer hostile than normal while the character possesses the artifact
04–06	Artifact deals 1d4 points of Charisma damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
07–09	Artifact deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
10–12	Artifact deals 1d4 points of Dexterity damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
13–15	Artifact deals 1d4 points of Intelligence damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
16–18	Artifact deals 1d4 points of Strength damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
19–21	Artifact deals 1d4 points of Wisdom damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
22–24	Artifact deals 3d10 points of damage to the wielder when its major power is activated; this can be healed normally
25–27	Artifact functions for anyone but a member of a randomly determined race

28–30	Artifact functions for anyone except those with a randomly determined alignment
31–33	Artifact only functions for a wielder of a randomly determined alignment
34–36	Artifact only functions for a wielder of a randomly determined race
37–39	Artifact only functions for characters with an available companion "slot," such as a wizard with no familiar or a druid with no animal companion
40–42	Chaotic creatures gain two negative levels while wielding the artifact
43–45	Character cannot cast arcane spells while wielding artifact
46–48	Character cannot cast divine spells while wielding artifact
49–51	Character cannot cast spells while wielding artifact
52–54	Character is constantly fatigued while wielding artifact
55–57	Character is slowed while wielding artifact
58–60	Character is stricken blind while wielding artifact
61–63	Character is stricken deaf while wielding artifact
64–66	Character is stricken mute while wielding artifact
67–69	Character suffers –2 penalty to Fort saves while wielding artifact
70–72	Character suffers –2 penalty to Ref saves while wielding artifact
73–75	Character suffers –2 penalty to Will saves while wielding artifact
76–78	Creatures of a randomly determined **Type** covet the artifact, and take any actions necessary to acquire it
79–81	Evil creatures gain two negative levels while wielding the artifact
82–84	Good creatures gain two negative levels while wielding the artifact
85–87	Lawful creatures gain two negative levels while wielding the artifact
88–90	Neutral creatures gain two negative levels while wielding the artifact
91–93	Wielder gains daylight sensitivity
94–96	Wielder must provide some sort of fuel (blood, tears, magic items, etc.) to power the artifact
97–100	Artifact bestows two restrictions or consequences; roll twice on this chart, and continue rolling additional consequences if this result occurs more than once.

Random Creature Types

A lot of these powers require the DM to randomly determine the type of creature to be affected. To save you the trouble of flipping constantly back to the *DMG*, we've recreated the relevant table here.

d%	Creature Type
01–05	Aberrations
06–09	Animals
10–16	Constructs
17–22	Dragons
23–27	Elementals
28–32	Fey
33–39	Giants
40	Humanoids, aquatic
41–42	Humanoids, dwarf
43–44	Humanoids, elf
45	Humanoids, gnoll
46	Humanoids, gnome
47–49	Humanoids, goblinoid
50	Humanoids, halfling
51–54	Humanoids, human
55–57	Humanoids, reptilian
58–60	Humanoids, orc
61–65	Magical beasts
66–70	Monstrous humanoids
71–72	Oozes
73	Outsiders, air
74–76	Outsiders, chaotic
77	Outsiders, earth
78–80	Outsiders, evil
81	Outsiders, fire
82–84	Outsiders, good
85–87	Outsiders, lawful
88	Outsiders, water
89–90	Plants
91–98	Undead
99–100	Vermin

Appendix C: Compiled Mechanics

This book provides a great many new mechanics, including spells, monsters, magic items, feats, and the like. Most of these can be used independently of the artifact in whose entries they appear, but it can often prove a hassle to find what you need. The last thing any DM or player wants is to hold up the game while flipping furiously through the book, assuring her fellows gamers "I know I saw it in here *somewhere*…"

Hence, this appendix. Here, we've provided you quick page numbers and other references to find all this material, thus making it all much easier to use.

Feats

Standard Feats

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit	Page
Clear Mind	Int 15, Wis 13, Will save +2	Gain bonuses and resistances to many means of sensing your thoughts and intentions	220
Dominant Partner	Wis 13, must possess an intelligent item or a familiar	Gain bonuses to Sense Motive and Will saves made against your bonded companion	185
Intercepting Strike	Base attack bonus +1	Set piercing weapon to receive a charge	137
Korridar's Insight	Int 13, must be taught by Korridar	Gain bonuses to Bluff, Intimidate, and Sense Motive against a long-studied subject	186
Mark of Abhasana	Dex 15, sneak attack, evil alignment	Gain bonuses to poison use and Bluff checks	118
Mark of Rava	Cha 15, ability to cast *detect thoughts*, lawful evil alignment	Gain bonuses to enchant good creatures and to Disguise checks	118
Mind-Clearing Strike	Dex 13, Wis 13, Improved Unarmed Strike, base attack bonus +2	Calm the emotions of a target with a strike	245
Necromantic Surgery	Ability to cast *gentle repose*, Heal 15 ranks	Perform surgery and grafts on living or dead creatures	94
Pearl-Touched	Good alignment, must chant activating phrase while touching the *Golden Pearl*	Add bonus to any check or save once /day, and gain bonus to save against evil spells	141

Item Creation Feats

Feat	Prerequisite	Benefit	Page
Craft Magic Fare	Brew Potion, caster level 3rd	Create magic food	164

Magic Items

Weapon Special Qualities

Quality	Price	Page
Discreet	+1 bonus	page 26
Impartial	+1 bonus	page 26
Mournful	+2 bonus	page 26
Synergy	Varies; see source	page 100

Wondrous Items

Item	Price	Page
Dragon robes	10,000 gp	page 122

Minor Artifacts

Item	Page
Robes of Mol-Tet	page 9
Soul Paintings	page 249
Sword of Greenrock	page 128

Spells

New Bard Spells

6th–Level Bard Spells

Oracular Haze [M, F]**:** You and your companions cooperate to gain information comparable to a *vision* spell. (page 14)

New Cleric Spells

3rd–Level Cleric Spells

Neutral Ground [M]**:** Designates location as neutral. (page 168)

4th–Level Cleric Spells

Begone: Thrust foes away from you in all directions. (page 263)

6th–Level Cleric Spells

Fiendish Infusion [M]**:** Grant subject many benefits of the fiendish template. (page 192)

9th–Level Cleric Spells

Tidal Wave: A large wave of water damages all creatures and structures in a coastal area. (page 152)

New Druid Spells

3rd–Level Druid Spells

Neutral Ground [M]**:** Designates location as neutral. (page 168)

Monsters and NPCs by Challenge Rating

CR	Monster/NPC	Page
1	Stoneborn wolf (sample stoneborn creature)	page 157
5	Worm-eaten	page 113
6	Air sprite	page 132
8	Phrenic scourge	page 254
10	Kit Jors	page 30
10	Tentacled horror	page 256
10	Toarisk's undying hatred	page 48
11	Pepper golem	page 180
12	Ssiara (sample undead lord creature)	page 209
14	Time golem	page 68
17	Teina, the Ice Queen	page 74
18	Sha'gahr	page 227
20	Mortyra Hellshadow	page 204
22	Aas-Sesq-a (sample living stone creature)	page 105
22	Barrat Sûn, Night's Emperor of Unat-Fer	page 90
23	Siege Hound of Dhula'zar	page 234
24	Dauzenth, Tempter of Mortals	page 85
24	Juggernaut of Shaddar Khan	page 174

8th–Level Druid Spells

Chariot of Fire: You call forth a fiery chariot and horse to carry you and your allies. (page 152)

9th–Level Druid Spells

Tidal Wave: A large wave of water damages all creatures and structures ina coastal area. (page 152)

New Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

4th–Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Evoc **Begone:** Thrust foes away from you in all directions. (page 263)

5th–Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Abjur **Spell Stasis** [M]**:** Generate a field that prevents the casting of arcane spells. (page 44)

6th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Evoc **Infusion** [M]**:** Regain one daily use of a spell-like ability you have previously spent. (page 44)

Trans **Fiendish Infusion** [M]**:** Grant subject many benefits of the fiendish template. (page 192)

8th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Conj **Rend Space:** Gain ability to *dimension door* as a standard action within the area, while preventing other forms of teleportation. (page 40)

Div **Oracular Haze** [M, F]**:** You and your companions cooperate to gain information comparable to a *vision* spell. (page 14)

Other Material

Name	Nature	Page
Black, the	Demi-plane	page 145
Faceless One	Deity	page 250
Hearth	Domain	page 216
Lucky Bastard	Prestige class	page 198
Mystic	Base class	page 57
Rastiros	Deity	page 215
Styx, the	Transitive plane	page 240

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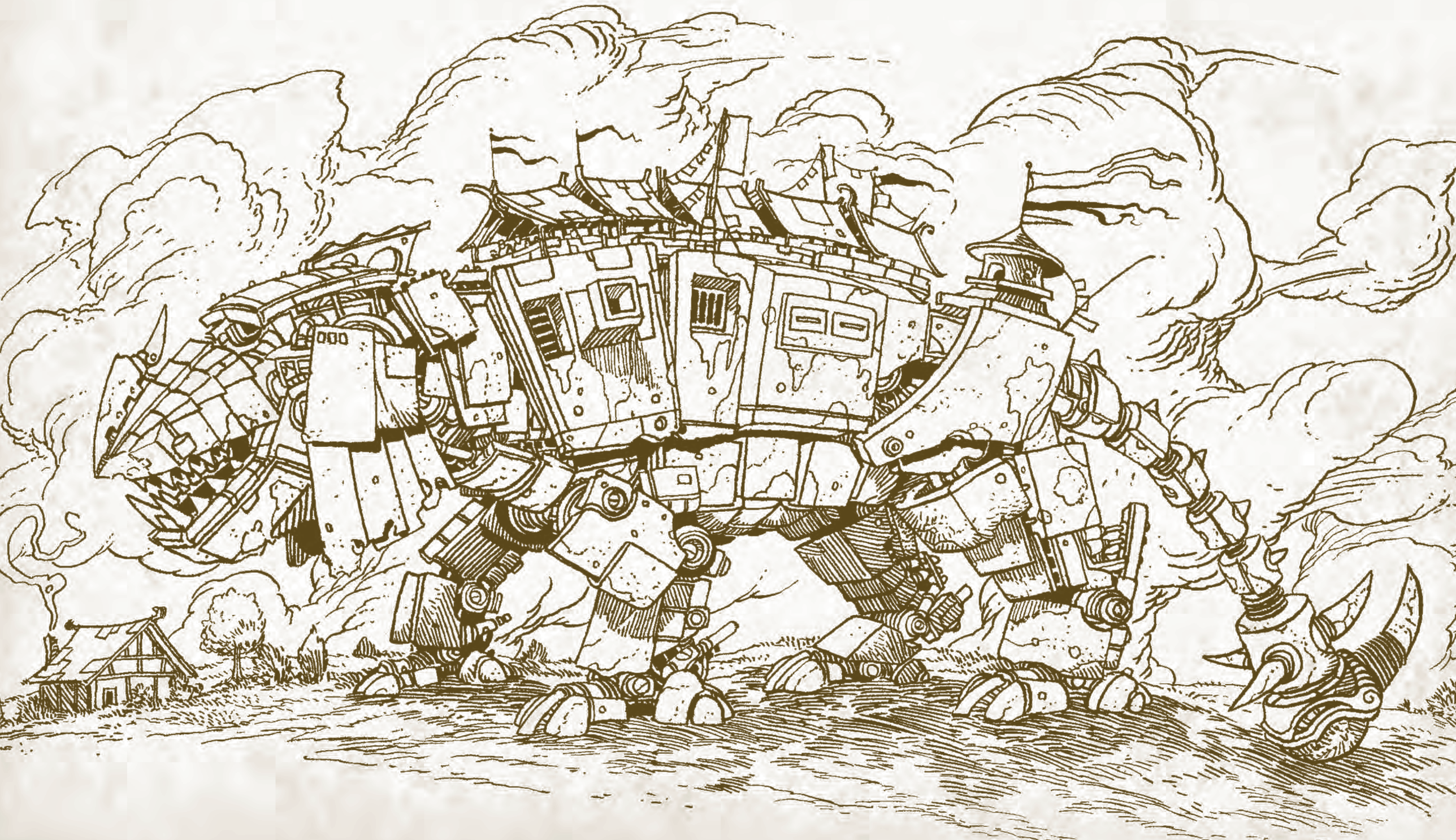
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