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CHAPTER I - CIVILIANS

"From lone hermits to the bustle of the world's most populace cities, the folk you pass by usually are not shattering the expectations of the world around them. Nonetheless, they are unique, each with their own lives, quirks, and ideals for what comes next. Let's introduce you to some, shall we?"
~Sinclair

BAD DAYS

Everyone has bad days, but Bailey's are especially torrential. Their mood directly affects the magical effects of the drinks they tend. Typically, Bailey's drinks will come with fun, whimsical magic like harmless sparks flying from the mouth of the imbibers, but on rough and gloomy days those same cocktails will be visibly duller in color and take on unexpected effects such as illusory spiders crawling out of the drinker's ears. Game Masters are highly encouraged to create their own fun or disturbing effects for each cocktail that Bailey serves.

BAILEY BRIGHTBREW

Stories are often told and shared within a tavern over drinks and good food, but rarely are there stories about the folks that brew and serve those very drinks and dishes. Bailey is the exception. Everyone who's ever had the pleasure to be served by this vibrant gnomish bartender leaves with a unique tale of their encounter. Their hair is a multitude of colors ranging from orange to pink to blue and every color in between. They claim that their hair is entirely natural, and nobody tends to question it. Their personality perfectly matches their bright hair, greeting every new customer with a wide smile and cocktail recommendation.

Bailey is happy to share rumors and gossip with patrons, but will always expect information in exchange. It's believed that any gossip shared with this barkeep will reach new ears, so people should be careful what they do and don't share in their establishment.

Social Encounters

Bailey is keen to share any and all gossip they've heard recently, though they'd be hard-pressed to give the information up for free. This bartender knows how to control a conversation, so attempts at Intimidation (DC 20 to Coerce) and Deception (DC 20 to Lie, Impersonate, or Create a Distraction) are difficult to pull off. They're much easier to talk to directly using Diplomacy (DC 18 to Request or Make an Impression), but the fastest way to get Bailey to open up is to offer gossip and rumors. By sharing information that Bailey didn't already know, the aforementioned DCs will be reduced by up to 5 depending on how juicy the gossip was. Bailey also loves to prove their superiority behind the bar, and will open up to anybody who can beat them in a Cocktail Contest (DC 18 Crafting or DC 15 Alcohol Lore). While behind their bar, Bailey is a 3rd level challenge.

Story Hooks

The following hooks include suggested encounters. These encounters may be a combination of the listed creatures, or a specific selection from within, set to an appropriate difficulty for your party.

The Well

Bailey's most recent shipment of magical ingredients hasn't arrived. Without them, they can't make their signature magical cocktails. The shipment is delivered subtly and under the table since some of these ingredients are exceedingly rare or volatile. The courier has never missed

a delivery before now, and Bailey is worried somebody might've caught wind of their deal.

Suggested Encounter Bandits, Pugwampi, Dryad

Sour Wine

For some odd reason, all of the recent wine shipments have been completely soured. Not a single bottle has arrived that doesn't have an acrid taste to it. All of Bailey's wine comes from the local vineyard and they weren't given any kind of warning or notice that the wine would taste like this. Many of Bailey's signature cocktails use Wine as a base, and they can't serve any of them with a rancid product like this.

Suggested Encounter Ogre, Slime, Invasive Insect Swarm

The Kegs are Alive

Something's gone wrong and needs to be solved immediately! Lock the doors and windows and make sure nobody leaves. There's been a murder in Bailey's tavern and the only people clear of suspicion are the player characters. Anthony took one swig of his ale and dropped dead. Anyone inside could be the killer...but the real killer may be hiding within the products themselves...

Suggested Encounter "Beer" Elemental hiding in the kegs (acts as a water elemental), Assassin among the patrons, Bailey themselves gone mad and poisoned the man's drink away

BAILEY BRIGHTBREW

CREATURE 1

UNIQUE CN SMALL THEY/THEM GNOME HUMANOID

Perception +8

Languages Common, Gnomish

Skills Crafting +6(+8 to craft food and drink), Deception +10, Intimidation +10, Society +9

Str 0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +3, **Int** +1, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +4

AC 17; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

HP 15

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ fist +9 (agile, nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+2 bludgeoning

Colorful Brew Any drink prepared by Bailey Brightbrew has a dash of gnomish magic tossed in. Whenever a creature drinks something prepared by Bailey Brightbrew, roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, harmless sparks fly from the creature's mouth for 1 round. On a 3 or 4, the creature's hair turns rainbow colored for 1 minute. On a 5 or 6, the creature randomly speaks another common language for 1 minute, even if they can't normally speak that language.

Fling ✦ (manipulate) **Requirements** Bailey is holding, wearing or adjacent to a bottle; **Effect** Bailey reaches out and uses their full weight to throw a bottle within reach at a target as a ranged Strike with a +7 bonus. Empty or near empty bottles deal 1d4 bludgeoning damage and have the thrown 20 feet trait. Bottles that are mostly full deal 1d6 damage and have the thrown 10 feet trait. Additionally, when Bailey hits or misses with a filled bottle of spirits, the target and adjacent creatures become soaked in spirits for 1 minute. If they take fire damage during this time they also suffer 1 persistent fire damage.

GNOME-BREWED

Bailey's drinks hold a variety of minor magical quirks, but are by no means exhaustive. make Feel free to make Bailey's brews have even more effects and possibilities, perhaps even mechanically influential ones as rewards for helping them out of a jam.

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RECURRING CHARACTER

While putting Kaylee on the path of the party can be effective, both her personality and the pattern of her story hooks are cliché enough that your players might not take the bait. We suggest introducing Kaylee as simply a cute girl drawing by the well, who can provide some basic directions if asked but doesn't seem important to the story. If one of the party members is of a more uncommon ancestry, she might draw a portrait of them and offer it to them. Once the party has had a few interactions with her and grown attached to her, the story hooks should be far more effective and organic.

KAYLEE ALICE

A precocious child from a small village, Kaylee is known for her kind heart and love of art. Tall even for her age and unusually daring, people tend to mistake her for being older than she is.

Whenever she is not wandering around on the outskirts of town or off on exploration missions with the other kids, she can be found sitting by the well, drawing the adventures of the day. Her sketchbook is filled with drawings of every interesting landmark of the region, animals she had the chance to observe, and several imaginary creatures found only in her imagination. Should a stranger acquire her sketchbook, they could probably draw a fairly accurate map of the region, right before deciding to never venture in the forest ever again.

With her strong sense of adventure, Kaylee is usually the first one to go looking for lost friends or going extraordinary lengths to help others, even at her own risk. Kaylee can also serve as the direct catalyst for a quest, setting the players on the path or someone to rescue. In such situations, she typically ends up in over her head in her attempts to help someone out.

Social Encounters

Being a child, Kaylee responds best to Diplomacy (DC 14, to Request or Make an Impression). Deception (DC 14 to Lie, Impersonate, or Create a Diversion) also works, though with a lower threshold of success. She doesn't appreciate dishonesty, becoming unhappy if she realizes she's been deceived. Intimidation will almost always be met with tears as she does not respond well to threats or aggression, and will generally result in her being too upset to respond clearly or act in accordance with your directions. Winning her over is easiest with displays of art or by showing a genuine interest in her own artistry using Crafting or appropriate Lore skill, reducing the aforementioned DCs by up to 5. Kaylee is a hard 2nd level challenge when competing against her artistic abilities or trying to convince her to take a course of action she disagrees with, which uses her Will and Perception DCs instead of the DCs listed above.

Story Hooks

The following hooks include suggested encounters. These encounters may be a combination of the listed creatures, or a specific selection from within, set to an appropriate difficulty for your party.

The Well

Kaylee has been hearing strange noises coming from the bottom of the well every evening around dusk. Being an imaginative kid and known to daydream, the adults she mentioned the noise to have assumed it to be another one of her fantasies. Despite not being believed the first time, Kaylee still speaks about the noise to whomever wants to hear it.

Suggested Encounter a will-o-wisp or rat snake swarm

Missing Parents

Kaylee's parents have been missing for quite some time. She has been staying with the parents of a friend who took her in since they have mysteriously disappeared. The last they were seen was on the way to the next village for their monthly trip to the market. Secretly, she has been sneaking out of town every night to go investigate; most recently, she found a strange cavern entrance she believes is some sort of monstrous lair.

Suggested Encounter trolls, manticores, or an arboreal reaper

Missing Children

Children have been disappearing for a while and no one has been paying much attention. Not only does Kaylee know something's going on, she knows exactly what. She has been witnessing a few abductions, even following the kidnappers back to their hideout, leading her to get captured herself. Her parents are worried sick and ask for help.

Suggested Encounter a hag with thug underlings, a witch coven, or a phistophilus (contract devil) tricking children into signing their souls away

KAYLEE ALICE

CREATURE -1

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +8

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +4, Athletics +3, Crafting +4 (+8 to make art), Diplomacy +4, Performance +4, Stealth +4

Str -1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +1, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items sketch kit (acts as artisan's tools for drawing and a writing set)

AC 14; **Fort** +3, **Ref** +4, **Will** +8

HP 6

Speed 25 feet

Melee fist +5 [+1/-3] (nonlethal, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4-1 bludgeoning

Eye For Detail (concentrate, verbal) Kaylee has a strong sense of detail as an artist, she can describe things she has seen in good detail, usually taking a minute and granting allies who hear her the ability to make Recall Knowledge checks on the topic without suffering penalties for not having seen the subject.

LITTLE BUT BRAVE

Kaylee may be just a child, but her bravery and adventurousness lead her into places one might not expect her to be. She's not a fool, and knows to keep hidden and avoid a fight, but she'll do what she can to help those better suited to dealing with any dangers she finds.

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CIVILIAN MODIFIERS

MODIFIED CIVILIANS

The following NPCs lack a full stat block, instead acting as a listed type of NPC with their listed alterations. If their level differs from the base NPC statblock, this is their non-combat level in reference to their specialties.

CHANGING A CIVILIAN'S BASE

If you want a civilian to have a different base NPC, feel free to change what their source NPC is. You'll likely want to adopt the higher of their two modifiers for Perception and Will, but otherwise keep the specific modifiers of the unique civilian.

BENJAMIN PROST

Benjamin always had a talent for languages, even from a young age he'd become fluent in most of the core languages. As he grew his family were quick to latch onto this, ensuring that he received the education he needed to further his talents. Becoming a true polyglot he graduated with full honors and continued his studies, researching old, obscure, and dead languages. Despite considering the library his home, he will go out if the need demands it, such as for a unique example of linguistics.

A true master of language Benjamin can speak any tongue and even some that were thought to have no language at all. This has led his skills to be in high demand but as an academic he is resistant to the idea of simple translation work, preferring to stick to his research. Unfortunately with little ability for combat he is often targeted by nefarious people to help further their goals. Despite this Benjamin tries his best to be friendly and affable at all times though when his fear gets the better of him, he tends to cower.

Social Encounters

Being an academic and not one for conflict, Benjamin is very susceptible to Intimidation (with a DC of 15) with coercion working well. This does not engender him as a friend but does make it easier for him to do things he normally wouldn't do, such as function as a translator. This means that he can be used as the translator for a villain who doesn't understand the local language. Giving the players an opportunity to get extra information if they can convince them they are on his side, usually through the use of hidden messages in language.

He reacts well to Diplomacy (DC20) but the range of the things he is willing to do is limited to his academic studies though he can provide quick translations. Being a polyglot he appreciates those with an aptitude for languages so those that can demonstrate multilingual abilities will give you a lot more out of him and even lower the Diplomacy DC's by 2. These DC's can be further lowered if presented with an interesting piece of obscure language. Benjamin is a 15th level challenge when debating knowledge of linguistic studies or other tasks related to identifying and translating languages.

BENJAMIN PROST

CREATURE 10

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male librarian (*Gamemastery Guide*)

Perception +19

Will +15

Languages Polyglot (can speak all languages)

Skills Diplomacy +19, Linguistic Lore +33

Story Hooks

The following hooks include suggested encounters. These encounters may be a combination of the listed creatures, or a specific selection from within, set to an appropriate difficulty for your party.

The Lost Translator

Benjamin has gone missing. They were heading to some nearby ruins that display some unique language that he wanted to study. His escort hasn't been heard from either and concerns are growing as the ruins don't have a safe reputation.

Suggested Encounter Troglodytes, Yellow Musk Creepers, Drow

In Bed with the Devil

Benjamin has found themselves in the services of some very bad people. Fearing for his life he acts as a translator for his captors but has managed to send out a distress message. His captors understand his usefulness though and are not likely to give him up easily, at least until their mission is done.

Suggested Encounter Bandits, Liches, Dragons

Things Better Left Unsaid

After a long bout of research Benjamin has finally managed to find a unique piece of lost literature in a language none can speak. He's translated it and wants to share his findings in a public reading of the literature. However, there's a reason some things are lost and the means to read them are forgotten. What disasters may be unleashed by reading the works aloud

Suggested Encounter Zombies, Nightgaunts, Demons

IQAQA THE FISHERMAN

Well, if it isn't a visitor. Welcome to my own little patch of paradise. The water welcomes and beckons all, and respects those who treat it with the grace and fear it deserves.

Me? Well, I am nothing but a humble fisherman. I'm not sure if you can tell, but I'm not from around these parts. I'm from a long way away, when I was exiled from my pride.

You might be here a while. Come, take a seat...oh? My little green friend? That's Thaddius. He's lived much longer than I have, and I will live longer still. He's got wisdom beyond the greatest sages. I have a knapsack of

greens; feel free to feed him. He'll warm up to you quickly.

Anyway, where was I? Oh yes, how I was exiled. You see, my old pride saw using tools to hunt as dishonorable; cheating, as it were. There's no honor and glory in a hunt unless you do it with your own body, they'd say. They thought it was more pure to dive head-first into the running river and catch fish with your bare teeth.

Respectable idea, in theory. But respect doesn't keep you safe or put food in your mouth. Problem is, water is plenty dangerous. Rapids pulled more than a few of them downstream where we never found them, and when you got alligators in the shallows...

But one day, I saw these halflings sitting by the river, using these sticks with ropes tied to them. They were using them to pull fish from the water. And not just one fish; lots of fish. Every time they threw the string in, they caught a fish on it. It made me think; if they're so weak, why are they getting more fish than we could, with less effort?

I took the idea for a fish-catching pole to my pride; it turned into the straw that broke the camel's back. We traded a few words about the philosophies of our ways, tensions boiled over, and our best warrior got his left eye punctured by a sharpened stick. Sent me on my way calling me a dishonorable coward for doing so; that may be, but I'm a dishonorable coward who still has two eyes.

I decided to move upstream to catch some fish closer to the source. I ended up running into those same halflings; I broke bread with them and expressed my interest in their craft. It turned out they had a mobile commune just up the river. I decided to join them; traveled across the country for a good few years, before we crossed the seas.

I eventually went my own way - no hard feelings or anything of the sort, I just felt it was time to strike out on my own. Been to a lot of places since; caught a lot of fish. Caught a lot more than fish too; shellfish, squid, even learned how to go diving for oysters and pearls. That's when I met Thaddius, and he began passing his years of experience onto me.

The one thing I learnt from it all is this: listening and observing is the most important part of wisdom. There's nothing you won't learn if you don't lend an ear.

I saw too many kin in my pride die to know that our ways were killing us. But that's the problem with people stuck in their ways; they don't want to hear common sense. 'Why live in dishonor when you can die in glory?' I don't agree with their ideals, but more power to them.

Last I heard, most of them did indeed die in glory. I hope that made them happy. I genuinely do.

Uncaring Patience and Wise Nonsense

Iqaqa's personality is essentially a bohemian vagabond from a tribal background. He has no interest in concepts such as a 'schedule' or 'haste.' To him, there is all the time in the world to sit, fish, and contemplate life. If a player sits and fishes with him, he will impart stories of his experiences and life lessons from them. He may not be the most...straightforward in them, going on seemingly nonsensical tangents and obscuring his points in philosophical waxing. But he is not a fool, no; Iqaqa's wisdom should always have a point and purpose to it. Especially one relating to the PC he's gracious enough to spend time fishing with.

IQAQA THE FISHERMAN

CREATURE 2

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM HE/HIM CATFOLK HUMANOID

Male ruffian (*Gamemastery Guide*)

Perception +9; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet
Will +9

Languages Common, Amurrun

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +8, Crafting +4 (+10 when attempting to repair a fishing rod), Fishing Lore +12, Nature +7 (+11 on information about fish and natural sources of water), Survival +7 (+11 when gathering or searching for fish)

Items fishing tackle

THADDIUS - ANIMAL COMPANION

Snapping Turtle (*Bestiary 2*)

Story Hooks

Gone Fishing

The locals speak of a kindly fisherman who lives at the nearby lake. He usually brings hauls to trade, but they haven't heard from him for some time and are concerned for his safety. You travel to the lake, crossing the nearby streams and coming across all manner of freshwater inhabitants in the process...only to find Iqaqa is indeed at his hut. He offers for you to stay for dinner, and cooks his latest haul for you as he soliloquies his tales and wisdom, perhaps even offering more quests.

Suggested Encounters Crocodile, Fen Mosquito Swarm, Giant Toad

Greens for Thaddius

Iqaqa's turtle companion Thaddius is wise, but he's very picky about what he eats. Only certain greens will do, and a recent flood drowned out Iqaqa's vegetable garden where he normally grows these choice plants. To tide Thaddius over while he grows a new crop, Iqaqa asks you to go into the nearby woods to pick some wild plants he knows his companion will be willing to tolerate in the meantime.

Suggested Encounters Assassin Vine, Flytrap Leshy, Hunting Spider

Strangers on the Lake

Strange people have been coming to the lake late at night. Normally Iqaqa doesn't mind people coming to fish on the lake, but these folk are not fishing. They come dumping barrels of a strange substance into the lake; deceased fauna and foul monsters alike are beginning to wash up on the shoreline. Iqaqa wants you to stalk out the strange people, follow them back to where they came from, and stop them from polluting the lake.

Suggested Encounter Bandit, Sewer Ooze, Slime Mold, Ruffian

MANUS—BLACKSMITH

When craftsmen leave a touchmark on their work, they usually use a specific icon or design. Manus, however, leaves a far more literal touchmark on his armaments. Using his obsidian arms, he bends and manipulates the heated metal, leaving imprints of his hands over every inch of the project. He takes great pride in the marks he leaves, forgoing the standards of beauty and appearance in exchange for effectiveness and durability.

Soldiers and mercenaries beg for weapons made by Manus. His craftsmanship has earned him the recognition of many military generals offering copious amounts of wealth in exchange for arming their forces. Manus, however, has no interest in mass producing equipment, and would rather provide adventurers and individuals with unique pieces of armor and weaponry. Those who earn Manus' trust and respect may even have their equipment imbued with Gnosite magic. These armaments are few and far between, and fetch an incredibly high price due to their rarity.

His own Two Hands

Items crafted by Manus are special. Due to his personal touch, any metal item crafted by him permanently

increases its hardness by 1, its HP by 4, and its BT by 2. Additionally, if Manus trusts the person he's crafting a weapon for, he can imbue it with a Property Rune with a level of 8 or less. When crafted this way, this rune does not count toward the item's maximum rune count.

Physical Description

Manus is a hulking Caldera Gnosite. Standing at an imposing 8 feet tall, his dark obsidian skin shines and reflects light. His shoulders are incredibly broad, and most would describe his body as "muscular" even though he has no actual muscles. His eyes are a dull red that flash and seem to move like magma whenever something sparks his interest. He wears little more than a belt to hold his smithing tools.

Social Encounters

Manus is not a social being. He find comfort in his craft and ideally works most of the day without interacting with others. When speaking with Manus, he will typically respond with short, curt sentences which many may infer as rude, but it's simply how he speaks. (DC 20 to Request or Make an Impression) His firm features and lack of social skills make his emotions incredibly hard to read (DC 21 to Sense Motive). His talent at the forge is unparalleled, except by only the world's most talented smiths. He is unimpressed by most standard equipment. Anything weapon or armor higher than item level 6 will get his attention and entice him to speak with players easier, reducing the DC to make an impression by 3. While at his forge, Manus is a 8th level challenge.

MANUS THE BLACKSMITH

CREATURE 13

UNIQUE LN MEDIUM HE/HIM EARTH GNOSITE HUMANOID

Male smith (*Gamemastery Guide*)

Perception +20; low-light vision

Will +10 (+20 when being haggled, DC 30)

Skills Crafting +27 (+29 to Craft items primarily made of metal)

Languages Common, Dwarven, Petran

Resistances fire 7

Environmental Resistance While in the Material Realm, Manus treats environmental heat and cold effects as if they were one step less extreme.

Eternal Rest Manus cannot be resurrected by any magical means, nor can any effect cause them to rise as undead.

Inner Fire ♦ (fire, gnosite, primal) **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** Manus focuses on the intense heat within his core, returning it to its primal state. his exterior cracks to make way for the molten stone within, granting him an additional 1 fire damage per weapon damage die on his unarmed Strikes until the end of his next turn.

Story Hooks

His final Work

Manus feels his time in this body is coming to an end. Perhaps an end to his entire existence. He longs to create one final masterpiece to leave his legacy behind. The players must acquire a rare material for Manus' final work. The material should not be easily acquired and provide significant challenge and

GNOSITES

Gnosites are an ancestry of earthen folk native to the Material Realm. They consistently reincarnate until they reach their final death and move on to whatever comes next for them.

The Gnosite ancestry can be found in *Sinclair's Almanac* on page 9

LANGUAGE CHANGES

With the release of *Rage of Elements*, certain languages underwent a name change prior to the remaster itself. Listed below are the new languages and their old names, these terms are interchangeable. If you are using material from both legacy and remastered versions of Pathfinder 2e, this guide can help you reconcile those changes. Not all remaster changes are reflected here, as they were not available for the OGL via *Rage of Elements*.

Aquan = Thalassic

Auran = Sussuran

Ignan = Pyric

Terran = Petran

ADDITIONAL TRANSITIONS

Additional transitional changes to language and naming conventions are as follows similarly interchangeable with their old terms.

Off-guard has replaced **Flat-footed**

Counteract level and **spell level**

have both had "level" replaced with "rank" to reduce confusion.

Vitality has replaced **Positive** (trait and damage)

Void has replaced **Negative** (trait and damage)

Reactive Strike has replaced **Attack of Opportunity**, but functions identically.

Some **Evil** and **Good** creatures gain the **Unholy** or **Holy** traits, not reflected in this book.

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risk to obtain. The players will likely not be allowed to keep the final product, but might be given a powerful item as a reward.

Suggested Encounter Ankrahv Hive Mother, Purple Worm, Dig Widget,

Testing Weaponry

Manus has crafted new weapons and armors to experiment with a new style of smithing. He wants the Players to field test them. In exchange, he'll let them keep two pieces of equipment they tested. These armaments will all be metal and given the bonuses of Manus' crafting, without the Gnosite rune. Consider giving players weapons above their current level, and raising the threats to accommodate.

Jealous Apprentice

Manus' recent apprentice, Jorge, has struggled to keep up with the workload and instead blames Manus' poor teaching. He's secretly planning to sabotage an important project to sully Manus' name as a craftsman. Jorge plans to hire outside help to steal a powerful greataxe from Manus before it's complete. They may attack directly or they may try to steal it in the dead of night.

Suggested Encounter Bandits, Minotaur Hunter, Ogre Boss

SMILEY

You don't have to ask how Smiley earned his moniker; the lowest hanging fruit of irony was plucked to bestow it upon him. Smiley is an elderly halfling, balding with white hair only around the side of his head, and a frowning, sour expression ever-present on his face.

Rumors ran amok that Smiley was anything but a humble groundskeeper; whenever a person went missing on the estate (which in the world of noble intrigue, happens more than most would think), Smiley was the first suspect, even over the butler or lord's servants. He certainly had the disposition for one, crotchety and reclusive as he was. Some suspected him to be part of an espionage ring, or that he was secretly a retired soldier for an enemy kingdom, feigning amnesty while passing coded secrets to his home country.

The truth is far less glorious, and far more mundane. Smiley is just really, really good at his job, having worked his way up from dish pig to groundsman by dedication and the sweat of his brow.

The garden beds and hedges are always in immaculate condition. He has a knack for repairing even the most specialized and convoluted of work tools; anything short of a wizard's wand, and Smiley would have it ready to go by day's end, working even better than it was before. He's able to move with lightning pace around the estate because he knows every service corridor; indeed, if he were in the wetwork business, he would certainly be the one to know where to hide the bodies.

But why would he? That isn't his job. His job is to keep the estate in tip top shape. That's all that matters, and he'll do it in spite of these thankless nobles and their pretentious wards, damn it. His attitude is merely because he resents the disrespect he gets for such an understated but necessary role.

Smiley knows his worth. Rue the day you push him to his temper, for his vengeance is petty, but fierce. He will not go out of his way to sabotage you, but he will mostly certainly emphasize how worse off you are without his assistance. Hinges in your quarters will go unrepaired for some time, leaving cupboards and windows hanging precariously. Broken glasses? You best get used to reading in blurred vision. And don't even bother asking for help finding your pet cat that's gone for a walkabout; Smiley will walk past it multiple times and not even touch it, let alone return it to you.

He'll leave a morsel of food out for them so they don't starve, though. He's a grouch, not a monster.

SMILEY THE GROUNDSKEEPER CREATURE 1

UNIQUE N SMALL HE/HIM HALFLING HUMANOID

Male farmer (*Gamemastery Guide*)

Perception +7; low-light vision

Will +7

Languages common, halfling

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +5, Crafting +7 (+10 when repairing a mundane tool), Gardening Lore +7, Intimidation +4, Nature +5, Society +5, Thievery +5

Items repair kit, a collection of long and short tools to perform his work (up to 4 bulk)

Story Hooks

Mending More Than Bridges

A young noble visitor needs help repairing a family heirloom he dropped, and Smiley is the only one who can do it. However, a former slight by that noble has left Smiley unwilling to assist. It does not help that the noble is unaware he even slighted Smiley, or what the slight was! You must question the other nobles and estate staff

to find out why Smiley is upset with this particular visitor, and what they can do to make amends.

Suggested Encounters Social encounters and research subsystem

Garden Pests

Smiley is furious; pests have gotten into the estate's flora! After he spent so long trimming the topiaries, too! He's asked you to help deal with the pests so they don't ruin the flora, but do not under any circumstances damage anything! Standing on flower beds and burning or cutting shrubs will get you in trouble..

Suggested Encounters Centipede Swarm, Giant Centipede, Giant Fly

Framed for Murder

There's been a murder on the estate, and Smiley is the prime suspect, as the body was found in his workshop using his tools. Smiley ain't talking when questioned by estate security, but if you manage to loosen his lips by winning his trust, you find out why: one of the other nobles is responsible and Smiley doesn't want to tip them off he knows.. With Smiley's information, you can help apprehend them before their plans reach fruition.

Suggested Encounters Noble, Palace Guard

A MASTER HANDYMAN

Smiley is a tough nut to crack, but getting in his good books will net you a valuable ally. He's a master at repairing damaged items and goods; while he specializes in mundane tools, he'll be more than happy (not that he'd ever admit it) repairing damaged arms, armor, and shields if you're in dire need of it. If you need help fixing something and either lack the skill, need an extra set of hands, or have to do something else while it's getting repaired, ask Smiley for a hand. If he likes you enough, expect him to clear his schedule. Just... don't ask him to smile.

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CHAPTER 2

TRAVELING ENCOUNTERS

"In my travels I've had both the joy and displeasure of meeting some individuals and groups multiple times. Whether by happenstance or design varies, but some people simply will not stay put very long."

~Sinclair

THE FIN SLICERS

Mercenaries for hire, the Fin Slicers are a squad of elite amphibian warriors. Specialized in supply line disruption, they travel from one war to another, selling their services to the highest bidder. The Fins are known to be particularly deadly and efficient, without much consideration for morality or even rules of engagement. Their favored technique is to grind an enemy army's efficiency to a halt, and the end justifies the means. If their analysis shows that starving the population is the most effective way to hurt the war effort, they won't hesitate to attack fishermen, burn warehouses and granaries, and attack food convoys. They make no distinction between civilians and soldiers.

On the rare occasion where the Fins aren't at work, they usually go their separate ways, with no real knowledge (or care for that matter) regarding what the others are doing. They go about their business, waiting for the magical brand they share to start moving and burning, which calls them back to their brutal work.

Modus Operandi

Once a target is acquired and payment has been made, Ola sends word to the other Fins, giving them a rendezvous point across the enemy lines. They start by mapping out the entire region and identifying weak points in an army's logistics. After weeks of intel gathering about the supply chain and methods of operations of the target, they regroup and start their disruptions. The efficiency of their methods isn't as much due to their battle tactics but the subtlety of their work. Carefully spreading their efforts across military supply, fishing expeditions, merchant navals, and intercepting communications, the result of their disruptions may seem like the consequences of a series of unrelated misfortunes. Some empires have suffered from the Fin Slicers' disruption for more than a year without ever suspecting the presence of a squad behind their lines.

Campaign Usage

As a very organized team of experienced fighters, the Fin Slicers are comfortable opposing similarly disciplined and skilled enemies. Favoring ambush tactics, they strike silently, swiftly, and without mercy, most often emerging silently from the water. Each member has a discrete speciality and a precise role to play, and their cohesion as a team allows them to claim victory even when outnumbered or outmatched.

OLA GRIMSCALE

As formidable as she is charismatic, Ola is the face of the Fin Slicers. As a matter of fact, most of their clients have never met any other members of the squad, instead dealing exclusively with her in all matters of logistics and payment. While not the original founder of the squad, Ola is undeniably the one who brought them to prosperity and without her, the other members would probably resume being solitary sellswords for hire, not making nearly as much coin.

POTENTIALLY DEADLY

Even though the encounter budget system would put the Fin Slicers as a moderate encounter for a level 7 party of four, the high level of coordination of the Fins can make the encounter far more dangerous than the average. We suggest using them for a party of at least 8th level or higher, so you can truly use their strategy without fear of instantly killing a vulnerable player character or, worse, risking a total party kill. Choosing carefully which bestiary entry to use as Zluut'klo's bonded beast should provide further fine tuning of the challenge your players will face.

To help your players handle this encounter, providing useful clues as to the Fin Slicer's strengths and weaknesses goes a long way. For example, grant a free Perception check to a player who just got struck with one of Creek's Marking Arrows, or describe Zluut'klo's bonded beast swiftly turning its attention toward anyone approaching the boggard. Allowing the party to witness an ambush from the death squad or talking to a lucky survivor are other alternatives to minimize the element of surprise and let your players prepare for the encounter as best they can.

ROLL OF THE DICE

If you feel like causing a little bit of chaos, add a touch of unpredictability to your encounter by selecting a bonded beast of much higher level for Zluut'klo, which will almost guarantee she loses control of it. The beast being let loose should provide interesting storytelling opportunities and dynamism to combat. Do so at your own risk, as a higher-level beast has a high chance of killing a party member on a lucky critical hit.

IMPRESSIVE LOOT

The members of the Fin Slicers all possess specific magic items, more than your average side-of-the-road encounter or in-travel filler combat. Make sure to take this into consideration when planning your story arc, especially if the Fins aren't the story arc in themselves. If and when the PCs defeat the Fins, they will get their hands on those items, and that might accelerate their accumulation of power in your game.

In combat

Ola is a high-mobility fighter. Her role is to shut down magic users before they get the chance to react to the ambush. Using her magical net to interrupt their first castings, she uses her high mobility to reach them and constrict them, preventing further spellcasting attempts.

OLA GRIMSCALE

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMANOID NAGAJI

Perception +12; low-light vision

Language Common, Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +13, Diplomacy +9, Intimidation +13

Item +1 striking trident, *mage fisher*

Str +4, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +5

AC 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9; +2 to saves against spells

HP 75;

Single Focus As long as Ola has a creature restrained within her tail, she is considered flat footed against melee Strikes.

Speed 35 feet, swim 30 feet

Melee ♦ trident +14 (magical, thrown 20ft), **Damage** 2d8+7

Melee ♦ tail +13 (unarmed), **Damage** 2d6+6 plus grab

Range ♦ net +13 (range 10 ft), **Damage** – (see net item)

Deadly Tangle ♦ **Frequency** once per turn; **Requirements** Ola just used the Grab action; **Effect** The grabbed creature becomes restrained.

Mage Fisher ➤ **Trigger** A creature within range of Ola's net attempts to Cast a Spell; **Effect** Ola makes a net Strike against the creature. On a success, the spell is interrupted. As long as the creature is grabbed by the net, it is stupefied 2. The DC to Escape Mage Fisher is 22.

Constrict ♦ **Requirements**

Ola has a creature restrained with her tail; **Effect** the creature takes 1d12+2 damage.



MAGE FISHER

ITEM 5

UNIQUE MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage Held in 2 hands

A thin yet remarkably solid hemp net with lead weights along its edges, mage fisher was made by a Boggard shaman as a gift for Ola Grimscale. Upon close inspection, some magical runes are woven with black silk directly into the net.

Mage Fisher ➤ **Trigger** A creature within range of your net attempts to Cast a Spell; **Requirements** You are holding Mage Fisher and it is folded; **Effect** You throw the net at the creature, making a ranged attack roll. On a success, the spell is interrupted. As long as the creature is grabbed by the net, it is stupefied 2. The DC to break free off Mage Fisher is 22.

MARSHLAND STALKER

One of the original members of the Fin Slicers, Marshland Stalker is by far the most vicious. Born from a druid banished from his circle for holding somewhat extremist views, Marshland Stalker inherited all the anger and hatred of their creator. Marshland Stalker has no care for riches or luxury. Their involvement with the squad has one and only purpose: killing soldiers who soil rivers and creeks in the name of war.

In combat

Marshland Stalker's role is to immobilize the biggest potential threat while the rest of the Fins eviscerate more vulnerable targets. Grabbing one or two creatures at the time, they enjoy slowly suffocating them, always making sure their eyes are uncovered so they can witness their crew members being slaughtered.

MARSHLAND STALKER

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CE SMALL ANY/ALL LESHY PLANT

Perception +12; low-light vision

Language Common, Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +13, Intimidation +11, stealth +13

Items boots of immobility

Str +5, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

AC 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +9

HP 95;

Speed 25, swim 30

Melee ➤ vines +13 (magical, reach 15 ft), **Damage** 2d6+4 plus improved grab

Improved Grab When Marshland Stalker successfully hits with a vine attack, the creature is automatically grabbed. Marshland Stalker can maintain the creature grabbed or restrained as long as it stays within 15 feet of

the creature.

Drag ➤ Marshland Stalker rolls an Athletics check against the Fortitude DC of a creature they have grabbed or restrained. On a success, they can drag the creature for 10 feet (15 feet on a critical success). On a critical failure, the creature breaks free from the grab.

Boots of Immobility ➤ **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** Marshland Stalker loudly stomps both their feet on the ground, activating the magical boots. For one minute, they cannot move and cannot be moved, tripped, or shoved. To overcome the boot's effect, the creature, spell, or effect attempting to move Marshland Stalker must succeed at an Athletics check of DC22. This effect lasts for one minute and cannot be dismissed voluntarily. If Marshland Stalker are moved in any way, the effect ends immediately.

BOOTS OF IMMOBILITY

ITEM 5

UNIQUE INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage worn shoes

A pair of leather boots with steel soles and cap, the boots of immobility were originally designed by a skiff captain who specialized in going down rapids, during which events she wanted to make sure she would be firmly anchored to her ship.

Activate ➤➤ **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** You loudly stomp both your feet on the ground, activating the magical boots. For one minute, you cannot move and cannot be moved, tripped, or shoved. To overcome the boot's effect, the creature, spell, or effect attempting to move you must succeed at an Athletics check of DC22. This effect lasts for one minute and cannot be dismissed voluntarily. If you are moved in any way, the effect ends immediately.

ZLUUT'KLO

With her thick skin closer to a deep blue than a dark green, Zluut'klo's complexion would indicate some sort of mixed lineage, though no one really bothered to investigate further, Zluut'klo included. Raised and trained to be a shaman, the young boggard found in herself an affinity with beasts and monsters. But her arrogance, in conjunction with the natural superstition of boggards, proved to be a very volatile mix. Constantly trying to bond with beasts far too powerful for her, she exterminated her clan, one loose beast at a time, without ever being challenged for it. It is only by joining the Fin Slicers, who were skilled enough to handle one of her pets gone rogue, that Zluut'klo was able to find some sense of balance in her craft through trial and error.

In combat

Zluut'klo uses her bonded beast as a meat shield, always keeping it on a short enough leash to intercept any threats moving her way. She uses her spells to impede opponents' attempts to flee, retreat, or organize

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VITAMANCY TRAIT

To use an action with the vitamancy trait you must spend a number of Hit Points depending on your level. This is referred to as your vitamancy cost and cannot be mitigated in any way. You can only use one action and one reaction with the Vitamancy trait each round. Actions with the vitamancy trait also have the necromancy trait unless another magical school trait is present.

When an NPC has an action with the vitamancy trait, the appropriate amount is listed in the ability. If you wish to expand a creature or change the level of an NPC, you can adjust using the values found on the Vitamancy Cost table below.

any sort of defense. Every turn, she uses her terrifying vitamancy to empower her bestial bodyguard.

Suggested Bonded Beast

Ghoul Crocodile (4), Giant Hermit Crab (5), Grodair(5), Sea Drake (6)

ZLUUT'KLO

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM SHE/HER AMPHIBIOUS BOGGARD HUMANOID

Perception +15; darkvision

Language Common, Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +9, Intimidation +11, Nature +13

Str +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

Items *Amulet of Transposition*

AC 21; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +9, **Will** +15

HP 95;

Speed 20, swim 30

Melee ✦ dagger +11 (magical), **Damage** 2d4+6

Primal Spontaneous Spells DC 22, Attack Roll +14; **3rd** (1 slot) *slow*; **2nd** (2 slots) *web, dispel magic*; **1st** (2 slots) *magic fang, heal, hydraulic push*

Empower Beast ✦ (vitamancy) Zluut'klo cuts the palm of her hand with a drake's fang hanging by her belt. She loses 13 hit points, and her bonded beast gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls and a +4 status bonus to damage rolls until the beginning of her next turn.

Command Beast ✦ Zluut'klo rolls a nature check to Command an Animal, granting two actions to her bonded beast. In the event of a critical failure, the bonded beast loses the minion trait and becomes hostile to every creature surrounding it, including the Fin Slicers.

Internal Vitality ✦ (concentrate, healing) **Requirements** Zluut'klo has not used Empower Beast this turn; **Effect** Zluut'klo recovers 13 Hit Points, she cannot use Internal Vitality again until after she uses Empower beast again.

Swamp Stride Zluut'klo ignores difficult terrain caused by swamp and bog terrain features.

Zluut'klo's Emblem ✦✦ (teleportation) **Frequency** Once per day; **Requirements** Zluut'klo used an action with the vitamancy trait this turn; **Effect** Zluut'klo swaps locations with a beast or an animal who has the minion trait.

Vitamancy Cost

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
HP	3	5	8	10	13	15	18	20	23	25	27	28	30	31	33	34	36	37	39	40

ZLUUT'KLO'S EMBLEM

ITEM 5

UNIQUE INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage worn

This necklace is made of rune engraved tusk and horns of various creatures tied together with boar sinew. The necklace is imbued with a little bit of Zluut'klo vitamancy magic, allowing you to use a glimpse of its power. You gain a +1 status bonus on checks to Command an Animal.

Activate ➤ (teleportation, vitamancy) **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** You lose a number of hit points equal to your level. You swap locations with one of your minions who has the beast or animal trait.

CREEK

Eternally stuck between the way of the water and the way of the land, Creek has felt like an outcast for as long as he can remember. Unlike most Azarketi who are proud of their lineage, Creek has always felt it to be somewhat of a burden. From his experience, the distrust and marginalization caused by his gills far outweigh the pride he was supposed to feel regarding his unique lineage. It is Ola who finally provided some relief toward his identity struggles. Her attitude toward her unusual physique, her unshakable assurance, and her utter lack of concern regarding any notion of identity freed something in Creek, who aspired to such a simplistic vision of life.

In combat

Creek will always be found in a bird's nest, either hidden in a tree by the river bank, or atop a mast. This position allows him to leverage both his use of the bow and his unparalleled talent for strategy. From his bird's nest, he sees the big picture of the battlefield and identifies priority targets. He then marks them with his bow, whose arrows leave colored trails for his squad members to follow.

CREEK

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HE/HIM AMPHIBIOUS AZARKETI

HUMANOID

Perception +15; low-light vision

Language Common, Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +10, arcane +13, religion +13, nature +13, occultism +13, Lore Warfare +13

Items bow of marking

Str +4, **Dex** +5, **Con** +5, **Int** +8, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

AC 21; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

HP 55

Speed 25, swim 30

Range ➤ bow +15 (magical), **Damage** 2d6+6 piercing

Covering Fire ➤➤ Creek makes two Strikes against a creature with a -2 circumstance penalty. The creature cannot use reactions until the beginning of their next turn.

Quick Recognition ➤ **Frequency** Once per turn; **Trigger** A enemy cast a spell **Effect** Creek rolls a Recall Knowledge skill check to identify the spell.

Marking Arrow ➤➤ Creek marks a target for one of the Fin Slicers. He gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the attack roll. If the Strike hits, the creature becomes marked, identifying them as a high value target for the squad member associated with the arrow's color. The appropriate ally gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls against the marked creature. The mark lasts until the end of Creek's next turn, until he marks a new creature, or until the marked creature breaks the arrow using an Interact action.

Strategize ➤ **Requirements** Creek has a creature marked; **Effect** Creek shouts a directive to one of the Fin Slicers. The target ally uses its reaction to Stride toward a target marked by Creek.

BOW OF MARKING

ITEM 5

UNIQUE INVESTED MAGICAL TRANSMUTATION

Usage held in 1 hand

The shaft of this +1 striking longbow is made from four colored seashells. The bow of marking was crafted specifically for a legendary hunter, known to hunt the sea shore with four saltwater crocodiles. You can bind a creature to the bow by inserting a drop of its blood into one of the colored seashells. When using the bow of marking, you can release an arrow which leaves a trail of colored dust, visible only by the bonded creature and the marked creature. The bow can only be bonded with 4 different creatures at once. You can cleanse the seashell and release the bond by pouring fresh salt water into it.

Activate ➤➤ **Interact** (magical, evocation) You mark a target for your ally to strike. Make a Strike against a creature. If it hits, the creature becomes marked for an ally bonded to the bow. Your ally gains a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls against the creature until the end of your next turn, until you mark a new creature with the bow, or until the marked creature breaks the arrow with an Interact action.

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LANDSLIDERS

Everyone has to start somewhere and this is no truer than with the Landsliders. Starting off as a ragtag group of people looking for work that met in a tavern. They've gone from their humble origins removing the rats from basements to taking on bigger and bigger assignments as their reputation continues to grow. Although preferring to work for money their "leader" Sonica has been known to be convinced to do heroic deeds at substantial discounts.

Otherwise, as a fledgling band of adventurers they have similar issues to everyone else. Landsliders is the latest in a long line of names they've called themselves. This hasn't helped with getting their name out and although their core four has stayed the same, they have had other members come and go. Sometimes under less than good circumstances. Regardless they continue on in their pursuit of becoming adventurers of legend, to have the Landsliders—or whatever name they settle on—to be synonymous with adventure.

That's not to say they haven't had setbacks, failed quests have led to heartbreak and loss and they've had to learn the hard way not to bite off more than they can chew. This has made them some enemies and they'll be the first to admit that because of this there's some places they can't go. Though they refuse to admit that's the reason they stay on the road, Sonica often shouting "shrink before villainy? Never!" Despite their failings, most who know of the Landsliders consider them to be good of heart and reliable enough to give them steady work. Whether they gain the fame they want or not, only time will tell.

Campaign Use

As a traveling encounter the Landsliders mostly act as a friendly face to meet on the road. As adventurers in their own right they hear a lot and will happily pass on any rumors they've heard that they can't take advantage of. Otherwise having learned some lessons about biting off more than they can chew, they're not above asking for help from other adventurers. In this case they can act as assistance for taking on particularly difficult quests.

On the flip side if the Players have a less than stellar reputation it would be easy for the Landsliders to take the part of hunting down the party on the road. Likewise if the players have stumbled upon ruins or some other dungeon to delve they can easily take the part of a rival crew after the same thing. Instead of a direct confrontation moving towards more competition or a

rivalry, though they may challenge the party to a friendly scuffle.

Combat Tactics

As a pretty standard four man band, if combat occurs they will stick to their cliché party rolls. With Fighter striding into a close combat shield raised, while Cleric starts to buff the party, Rogue gets into flanking, and Mage hangs back casting spells. Where their tactics deviate is that they've got to know each other so well that they will often utilize team tactics and maneuvers to get the upper hand in combat. These are similar in design to Teamwork feats and can make for a more dynamic and interesting fight that your players might not be ready for.

SONICA AILAYDA

'Soni' to her friends, she likes to go through life with a happy go lucky attitude and a thirst for the thrill of combat. She grew up in the depths of the Brakenwood to bandit parents and grew up tired of being constantly told to stay in cover by her parents on raids, so she decided to take the cover with her. Breaking the legs off a table and fashioning one of them into a weapon then attaching straps to the remains of the table she waded into her first fight. As much as she loved combat herself she loved using her over-sized improvised shield to help protect her allies even more. Unable to stop her, both parents decided it best to get her properly equipped and trained and after joining them on several raids she was ready to branch off on her own. From town to town traveling she gained a reputation as a thrill seeker and despite her successes she grew lonely and it was out of that desperation that she founded the Landsliders and hasn't looked back.

A heavily scarred woman in heavy armor with a tower shield smiles happily as you approach, resting her warhammer on one shoulder.

SONICA AILAYDA

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +11

Languages Common; three others shared by other landsliders, as best fits your story.

Skills Athletics +12, Diplomacy +10, Intimidation +10

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items full plat, tower shield, +1 striking warhammer

AC 21; Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +8
HP 78

AiLayda's Protection (aura, emotion, mental) 10 feet; Sonica is a charismatic figure and those close to her see her as a bastion of protection. Other members of the Landsliders gain a +1 circumstance to their saves.

Reactive Strike ➤

Shield Block ➤

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ warhammer +14 [+9/+4] (shove), **Damage** 2d8+5 bludgeoning

Landslide Shield While Sonica has her shield raised, other members of the Landsliders can use her as cover. In addition, while her shield is raised and she has used her tower shield to Take Cover she gains an additional reaction that she can only use for Reactive Strike before the start of her next turn.

Terrifying Reveal ➤ **Requirements** Ooron is benefiting from cover from Sonica when she begins her turn; **Effect** Sonica Steps and Ooron may Demoralize as a reaction.

Trained Exclusion While Sonica has her shield raised she is immune to area effects created by other Landsliders. This effect extends to other Landsliders who have used her for the Take Cover action.

SLATER OF THE FOUR

Slater doesn't remember where he came from originally but knew he was in awe of the power of the elements. He says that his first memories of his current life were of watching the liquid fire cooling by the wind as the earth moved around it. Though he knows this now to be a lava flow, to see the elements interact with each other started him on his path. Believing that all the elements, like people, have their parts to play, Slater is never opposed to approaching a given situation with a variety of solutions. Though this can make them somewhat unpredictable, since signing up for the Landsliders he has proven his worth time and time again, delivering both blessings on his comrades and wrath upon their foes.

A Gnosite cleric stands at the ready, one hand clasped around his holy symbol of the elements and a club in the other. The elements themselves seem to curl around him.

SLATER OF THE FOUR

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMANOID GNOSITE

Perception +14

Languages Common; two of the following, as fits your story: Petran, Pyric, Sussuran, Thalassic

Skills Medicine +12, Nature +12, Religion +15

Str +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +2

Items breastplate, club, holy symbol of the elements

AC 20; Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +14

HP 63; Resistances 5 acid

Elemental Swap ➤ (evocation, magical) **Trigger** A Landslider casts a spell that does either acid, cold, electricity or fire damage; **Effect** Slater's ties to his divine powers through the elements allows him to alter the elements in the spells of his friends. Slater can change the type of damage the spell does to either acid, cold, electricity or fire damage.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ club +12 [+7/+2] (thrown 10 ft.), **Damage** 2d6+4 slashing

WOOD, METAL, AND SLATER

Slater's design predates the release of Rage of Elements. He too may be coming to grips with the new elements at his disposal, but otherwise you might add appropriate options for his abilities as he becomes Slater of the Six, with some examples below.

Languages Add Talican and Muan to the list of languages he might know.

Elemental Swap and Elemental Lance

You may wish to overhaul these abilities to more closely stick to the new paradigms in Rage of Elements. However, if you need a quick alteration, add poison to the list of damage types as both wood and metal dabble in the damage type. Additionally, swap the associated trait in as shown below, removing the old traits and substituting the new trait.

Acid = acid & earth

Cold = cold

Electricity = air & electricity

Fire = fire

Poison = poison & metal or wood

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Ranged ♦ sling +12 [+7/+2] (propulsive, range increment 50 ft.), **Damage** 2d4+4 bludgeoning

Divine Prepared Spells DC 21, attack +13; **2nd** *dispel magic*, *remove fear*, *restoration*, *silence*; **1st** *bless*, *command*, *protection*, *sanctuary*; **Cantrip (2nd)** *divine lance*, *light*, *shield*, *stabilize*

Elemental Lance (evocation) Slater draws his divine power from the elements themselves and because of this, is beyond alignment. When Slater casts *divine lance* he can have it do acid, cold, electricity or fire damage instead of alignment damage.

OORON LANDSLIDER

The second one to be brought onto the Landsliders, Ooron is an imposing seven foot tall and well muscled. Although at first glance you would think him to be the heavy hitter for the party, he's actually their infiltration specialist. With an uncanny sense of direction and strangely silent movements, many have been caught off guard by the imposing Bovian, a fact that he is more than happy to press to full fear. While his opponents shiver in fear he creates an opening that he and his fellow Landsliders are more than happy to utilize.

A tall and rather frightening Bovian step from the shadows, his muscles flexing and present underneath the leather armor. Despite the lack of weapons his fists give the impression he doesn't need one.

OORON LANDSLIDER CREATURE 4

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HE/HIM BOVIAN HUMANOID SHADOW

Perception +11

Languages Bovian, Common, Shadowtongue; one other appropriate to your story

Skills Intimidation +15, Stealth +15, Thievery +15

Str +3, **Dex** +5, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items climbing kit, thieves' tools, studded leather armor, +1 striking handwraps of mighty blows

AC 21; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +15, **Will** +11

HP 63

Soni Opening ➤ **Trigger** Ooron is flanking the same creature as Sonica and she gets a critical hit on the creature; **Effect** Ooron may make a Strike against that creature

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fists +14 [+10/+6] (agile, finesse, unarmed), **Damage** 2d6+5 bludgeoning

Sneak Attack When Ooron attacks an off-guard or frightened target he does an additional 2d6 precision damage.

POLLYANNA JOLALAYA

A universalist at heart, Pollyanna is known for her wide breadth of study when it comes to magic. Although an arcane caster she is well versed in the traditions of other

types of magic including divine, occult and primal. A fact that the Landsliders have exercised on many occasions to their advantage. Despite being the most knowledgeable of the group she is still just as eager to mix it up as the others. Her universalist nature means she is just as at home throwing fireballs as she is buffing her allies, cursing her opponents and polymorphing herself. Sonica believes that she's slumming it with them but Pollyanna loves her found family and will do whatever she can to protect them.

A gnomish wizard looks up from her spell book as you approach, despite her harmless appearance the air of the arcane around tells you she is anything but. She gives you a smile as she closes her book.

POLLYANNA JOLALAYA CREATURE 4

UNIQUE NG SMALL SHE/HER HUMANOID GNOME

Perception +11

Languages Common

Skills Arcane +15, Nature +12, Occult +12, Religion +12

Str +0, **Dex** +0, **Con** +2, **Int** +6, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

Items cane (functions as a club), spellbook

AC 18; **Fort** +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +14

HP 45

Arcane Shield ➤ (abjuration) **Trigger** Pollyanna is currently affected by *shield* and a Landslider within 30 feet would be hit by a Strike but has not taken damage yet; **Effect** Pollyanna casts her shield out to help her friends, this does not increase their armor class but it counts as Pollyanna using the Shield Block reaction for the *shield* cantrip on the triggering spell, reducing the damage her ally takes.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ cane +9 [+4/-1] (thrown 10 ft.), **Damage** 2d4+4 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 25, attack +17; **2nd** acid arrow, blur, flaming sphere, touch of idiocy; **1st** burning hands, fear, grease, true strike; **Cantrips (2nd)** acid splash, light, shield, telekinetic projectile

They Know To Duck Her fellow Landsliders are more than familiar with Pollyanna's casting and have trained to avoid the worst of it if they're caught in her magic. When other Landsliders would have to make a save against one of her spells, they treat the result as one better.

THE WANDERING HILL

Few traveling merchants get as much of a warm welcome as that for the Wandering Hill. Billing itself as “the World’s Best Inn on Wheels” they work very hard to keep that reputation. Featuring some of the best drinks from across the land and most comfortable accommodations most people will ever have access to, Joran has built something that is truly a wonder to behold. Utilizing the best magic they could get, the massive structure features a fully equipped bar and restaurant, with several suites and rooms for people to stay in.

Despite the magic that maintains the extra dimensional space on the inside it still needs to be pulled by a team of horses and will often feature as the main part of a larger caravan. Its reputation means that it tends to attract better guards and as such comes with a greater guarantee of safety for those who travel with it. Beyond this, simply having access to its food and drink is enough to encourage people to travel along with it.

Although this reputation means they can attract the best of goods and traders. Joran is determined to ensure that the Wandering Hill makes the journey even to the most rural of villages believing that their position should not exclude them from what they offer, even offering discounted rates to these remote communities. At these times it can offer another essential service, providing medical care to places that normally wouldn’t get it.

Already providing several amenities, it is when it’s completely unpacked and set up that the Wandering Hill becomes stunning. Utilizing a combination of engineering and magic, the inn can unpack several pallets that unfold themselves into cabins that can sleep four people comfortably. In addition to these cabins they have access to two circus sized tents, one is magically enchanted to be fully outfitted as an emergency infirmary and the other as a mess hall, both able to hold more than fifty people each.

Because of this it’s easy to mistake it for a town all of its own and can be intimidating but they tend to be friendly to strangers as long as they don’t make trouble. Joran is well aware of how intimidating it can be and considering that it takes a day to fully unpack he doesn’t make the order to do it unless he feels it’s necessary. Despite this the Wandering Hill remains a welcome sight to all either on the edge of town or on the road.

Campaign Usage

Adventurer’s walk a long road, sometimes in the most literal sense where the distance between destinations can be exorbitantly long. Simply skipping over travel can also feel weak and simply dropping constant combat encounters on the road can get stale. The Wandering Hill exists as another option for an encounter on the road. Just a good way to engage in role-playing with interesting NPCs while also offering your players so rest and relaxation on the road.

Also because of it acting as a traveling tavern it naturally tends to be a hub for rumors, making it an easy throughline for either an ongoing adventure plot or to start players on something new. Between Joran as a bartender hearing everything as people pass through and Derrince acting as a storyteller, the Wandering Hill presents an easy method to deliver exposition of any kind. Additionally with Gillian she can easily pass on

SHORT STATBLOCKS

The members of The Wandering Hill are a collection of civilians like those found in chapter 1. As such they have a base type of NPC and list their alterations. For more information see ‘Modified Civilians’ on page 8.

information about local disasters and other problems that the Hill has seen to offering advice and healthcare if needed.

The NPCs of the Wandering Hill don't have full stat blocks for a reason, they are designed to be non-combat and their levels are provided here more as a reference point for DC's and skill check then to be used for combat. Combat within the Wandering Hill should be treated more in the abstract or not really involve the key NPCs.

Menu

House Wine

Price 1sp

House Ale

Price 1cp

The Hill Reserve A specialty wine brewed by Joran himself, this exquisite wine exclusively available at the Wandering Hill is known for complex aroma and taste known to conjure images of far off locations. **Price** 1gp

The Spirit of the Road This smoky spirit is known for its sweet taste with hints of cinnamon, it goes down smooth with only the slightest of burn to warm you on cold nights.

Price 5gp

Hill Stew Served from a giant stew pot that is kept on the cooker constantly, this delicious stew is made using a genuine soup stone.

Price 3cp

The Wander's Roast Although the meat in this dish changes depending on availability, one thing is guaranteed, this roast is slow cooked to perfection and served with a side of salad gathered from local ingredients.

Price 5sp

Feast Under the Hill Served for an entire table, this scrumptious meal features the best food the Wandering Hill has to offer gathered from across the world. Truly an experience for well traveled.

Price 1gp

Beds

Traveler's Tent It may be a tent but you won't be roughing it. This tent can comfortably sleep two people and includes comfortable and clean bedrolls with blankets for warmth.

Price 5cp

Hill Cabin Don't mistake their size, utilizing extra dimensional magic, these collapsible cabins sleep four comfortably, including a little kitchenette, and storage

for guests.

Price 1gp

Floor Space Just because it's the floor doesn't mean you have to be uncomfortable. With bedrolls provided and the heat being maintained you're guaranteed a good night's rest.

Price 3cp

Comfy Room Taking advantage of the extra dimensional magic of the Wandering Hill these spacious rooms comfortably sleep four and provide much of the amenities you would expect from home.

Price 8sp

The Hill Suite This luxurious suite opens out into a spacious common area with four bedrooms attached. It features an unseen servant to see to your every need and other magical accouterments to make your stay as comfortable and memorable as possible.

Price 5gp

JORAN WYAL

Brewmaster of the Wandering Hill. It is said that Joran was born on the floor of a tavern and couldn't bear to leave it so he decided to take it with him. Although that would eventually become true, Joran's life started off in much the same way as others only to take on an apprenticeship as a brewer as a young adult. The pull of the world proved too much and completing his apprenticeship took his skills on the road.

With a desire to make new and interesting brews from around the world he was pressed with the need to brew on the move. Designing a still he could put in a wagon what started as a personal hobby quickly became a business with one wagon becoming several before evolving into a full train. Selling his wares town to town it started to truly flourish and with his heart never far from the tavern he decided to expand his enterprise hiring a chef and some entertainers to take on the road with him.

Now he travels the world going place to place selling exotic brews he's made along his journeys stopping at farm communities, small towns, and cities alike. For the most part he's welcomed wherever he goes bringing much needed diversions and sometimes even security to under-served communities.

For his part Joran is a relaxed dwarf with brown hair that he keeps short and a long braided beard that he tends to drape over his shoulders. On the road he tends to wear leathers dappled with the numerous spillages and marks of his craft more than enough to protect him from casual blows and the wears of the road. At work as

the Publican of the Wandering Hill he tends to favor dressier linens as expected of a man in his line of work.

Despite his rather benign appearance Joran is a Legendary Brewmaster and it's not uncommon for others wanting to learn the craft and try to find him. To date, although happy to share some of his recipes, he is yet to take on an apprentice. When pressed on this Joran will happily say that the road is his master and it wouldn't make sense for a student to teach a student. Joran is a 15th level challenge when discussing alcoholic drinks, brewing other liquids, or other tasks related to brewing drinks.

A middle aged man stands before you holding a bottle of spirits in one hand and a glass in the other. As he notices you he smiles and offers you a drink.

BREWMASTER JORAN WYAL CREATURE 10

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male barkeep (Gamemastery Guide)

Perception +22

Will +19

Languages Common

Skills Alcohol Lore +25, Athletics +19, Crafting +22 (+26 to brew alcohol), Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +15, Society +19, Survival +19

DERRINCE THE STORYTELLER

Considered by many to be a gifted practitioner of the arcane arts Derrince was born into the household of merchants of no small fortune but unafforded of the true riches of the upper class required by nobility. Often as a young man they would find him with his nose in a book absorbing as much of the information as he could before putting it to practical use. The arcane arts were the focus of his attention to the detriment of most other things but to the delight of his parents.

Unable to afford personal tutelage his parents put him into the best magic university they could afford and although he did well to begin with as the years went by Derrince's performance faltered. Under the immense pressure from his parents, his school, and the weight he put upon himself he slowly got worse before he eventually broke. Burnt out from his studies he returned to his parents only for them to make things worse with their questions. Eventually all of it became too much and he left, hitting the road.

This is where he met Wynal who gave him a drink and a ride wherever he needed to go. The young man had no destination in mind so he just went where the Wandering Hill did. Helping out where he could and eventually beginning to pull his own weight. As the years passed the damage of before healed and although his ambitions of making his parents proud had long since gone his magic returned. With the magic came the stories that had originally inspired him to pursue the arcane, of great wizards and powerful deeds.

Not willing to keep these stories in, he began to share them around the fire at night with whoever would listen. Using his magic to enhance the tales and elevate them to new heights to the entertainment and delight of all who heard them. With Wynal's encouragement he continued to develop this new found gift and after a time it wasn't just the brews and beds that drew people to the Wandering Hill but the tales of Derrince the Storyteller.

Nowadays although he still lends a hand with the day to day activities of the Wandering Hill, Derrince's primary trade is in that of storytelling. Despite that he's also decided to pursue magic more, this time for himself and not for others. Developing magical means to have the stories told without him there, imprinting them into books with illusory arts in hopes of entertaining long after the Hill has departed.

A young human only just in his adult years sits gesturing to a crowd wildly as he tells a story. His gestures creating magical effects and illusions to aid in his tale as he bids you to join.

DERRINCE THE STORYTELLER CREATURE 8

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID

Male adept (Gamemastery Guide)

Perception +19

Will +19

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +18, Athletics +14, Deception +14, Diplomacy +18, Storyteller Lore +18, Performance +21

Storyteller Lore Derrince can use Storyteller Lore to Recall Knowledge about any topic and to Earn Income, but only for those purposes.

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JINKA

Gillian's fast friend and familiar, Jinka seems to do a lot to help her out. From sniffing out injured folk during disasters to helping to cultivate Gillian's magical and medical abilities. Jinka often softly urges or draws Gillian toward more medical knowledge, seeming to prefer it over magical knowledge. It is unclear if Jinka serves a greater power, such as a witch patron, given that Gillian's own magic is so limited.

Regardless the two are nigh inseparable, and Jinka is not one to mince words if they think Gillian is in danger.

GILLIAN

When Gillian was young she was rescued from a wild beast by her pet cat Jinka, long haired moggy. Unfortunately Jinka was injured by the occasion and Gillian, even at a young age she did her best, tirelessly looking after the cat until it was healed and well. This left a lasting impression on Gillian who took to the healing arts as a means to be better at it and to heal those who also are injured by the wilds.

Growing up she came into her magical power, though barely using it she was happy to find that it meant Jinka had stopped aging and had become her familiar. Despite her new found power she never stopped her studies scraping together whatever information and teaching she could. When she learned all she could she left her home to further her studies. It was during these travels that she first encountered Joran.

The Wandering Hill had been attacked by bandits and although they had repelled the attackers the injuries were numerous. Rolling up her sleeves, and with Jinka in tow, Gillian got to work seeing to the injured. Her command of the situation was masterful in execution and identifying her obvious skill was unquestioned, Joran even telling others to follow her lead. Thanks to her tireless efforts the workers of the Wandering Hill made a quick recovery and after a short conversation Joran offered to have her as the caravans' healer. She accepted under the provision that they would do what they could to help the sick and injured wherever they went, something that Joran was all too happy to agree to.

Since then Gillian has traveled with the Wandering Hill as their on-staff medic but also as a doctor to the under-served communities and rural areas that they go to. She'll often ask for nothing in return insisting that Joran pays her enough but every so often she'll ask for knowledge of healing that she has not yet gleaned. Through this she has continued to fulfill her life's mission and has helped the Wandering Hill become a more welcome sight the world over.

A woman stands over a patient seeing to their injuries, a healer's kit slung over shoulder. Her frizzy hair is barely held back by the bandanna wrapped around her head as she returns her tools to their bag.

GILLIAN

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMAN HUMANOID

Female apothecary (Gamemastery Guide)

Perception +20

Will +20

Languages Common, Sylvan, any four others as applicable

Skills Crafting +18, Diplomacy +16, Medicine +21, Survival +18

Primal Innate Spells DC 26, attack +18; **1st** *heal*; **Cantrips (4th)** *guidance*

Master Medic Gillian is a master of medicine and combines her practical knowledge with her minor magic. When she Treats Wounds she treats the results of the check as one step better, in addition she can treat up to four creatures at once, Rolls d10s instead of d8, and adds 10 to the amount healed. Creatures she cares for that are taking the Long-Term Rest activity recover their full Hit Points and reduce the stage of any poison or disease of they are suffering from by 2 stages if they are her level or lower, or she cures it fully if it is half her level or lower. If the poison or disease is virulent, it reduces by 1 stage instead, or 2 if it is half her level or lower.

NINE LIVES TERRY'S CREW

"I'm not sure who said crime doesn't pay, but Terry and his friends seem to be doing just fine"
~ Sinclair

The legend of Nine Lives Terry is much taller than the man, and pretty distant from reality. A natural charmer, he always has the right word to convince people to do what he wants, which is usually to give up their coin. Terry appreciates the simple pleasures of life: good wine, good food, the soft skin of a woman, and a nap in the shade of a tall tree. When he was very young, he realized the lifestyle of a road bandit could offer everything he wanted, but intimidation was not Terry's strong suit by any means. For this he needed friends—scary friends.

In a strange twist of fate, scary friends found him. As he was sunbathing in the grass, he suddenly found himself upside down, hanging by an ankle. Most would have been terrified at the sight of a cyclops, especially while dangling upside down in front of it. But to Crag's surprise, Terry was smiling ears to ears. Without a care in the world, he started blabbering about how great friends they were going to be. Never did he seem to consider his current situation, nor the possibility that Crag might have no interest in being his friend. And yet, inexplicably, friends they became. Terry immediately baptized them "Nine Lives Terry and Brutal Crag," insisting on the necessity of "maintaining a scary image" and "building a legend." Not too long after, Boom Boom Jack accidentally joined them, and their operation was born.

Campaign Use

Terry and his crew are meant to be used in a very classic, traditional ambush style. Brutal Crag stands in the middle of the road, appearing to be working alone, while Nine Lives Terry sneaks up behind the party, waiting for the perfect moment to make a grand and theatrical entrance. Meanwhile Boom Boom Jack remains hidden, waiting for a chance to blow up something. In the case of a party ambush, Terry and his crew try to avoid combat, finding intimidation and demands of surrender much simpler and cleaner.

Alternatively, Terry's gang makes for a great bounty for the party to hunt. His obsession with reputation works wonders when it comes to the surrendering of his victims, but it also makes him much more enticing to capture in the eyes of local authorities.

Trying to ambush the group of bandits can be a nice way to make some coins, build a reputation, or exchange favors with local authorities.

Combat Tactics

If combat occurs, Brutal Crag lives up to his name, targeting horses, wagons, and chariots first to prevent any escape. Terry remains at a certain distance, using his blink ability to stay safe and peppering the enemies with spells. Boom Boom Jack follows a very precise routine of throwing a bomb and sneaking away, with absolutely no regard for potential friendly fire. If the gang ambushes the party, they will try to avoid killing anyone, instead satisfied with incapacitating and looting them. If the party ambushes Terry and his crew, however, all bets are off, and the three bandits will not hesitate for a moment to kill their foes if possible.

NINE LIVES TERRY

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM HE/HIM ELF HUMANOID

Perception +12; low-light vision

Languages Common, Jotun, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +12, Arcana +15, Crafting +12, Deception +12, Diplomacy +10, Intimidation +10, Stealth +13, Thievery +12

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +5, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

Elven Instincts Nine Lives Terry is used to ambush and unexpected combat. He gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks made as initiative rolls. Additionally, if his initiative roll result is tied with that of an opponent, he goes first even if they have a feature that would normally allow them to go first.

Items +1 striking returning dagger, 15 gp

AC 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +15, **Will** +9

HP 69

Dangerous Friends When Terry rolls a saving throw to avoid an effect caused by an ally creature, he treats the result as one degree better. Additionally, Terry takes no splash damage caused by ally creatures.

Speed 30

Melee ✦ dagger +13 (agile, finesse, magical, thrown 10 ft, versatile S), **Damage** 2d4+6 piercing

Arcane Spontaneous Spells DC +22, attack +14; **3rd** (3 slots) *fireball*, *haste*, *gravity well*; **2nd** (4 slots) *blood vendetta*, *blur*, *flame wisp*, *heat metal*; **1st** (4 slots) *burning hands*, *grease*, *jump*, *sleep*; **Cantrips (3rd)** *ghost sound*, *produce flame*, *shield*, *tanglefoot*

Blink ✦ (conjunction, magical, teleportation) Nine Lives Terry disappears briefly and reappears 15 feet away. Terry cannot Blink again until he uses an action with the move or attack traits.

Counterspell ➤ **Trigger** A creature Casts a Spell Terry has

BEDLAM AND BOUNTY

Terry and his crew are wanted criminals "in a dozen kingdoms" according to Terry himself, though the veracity of his numbers may be in question. There is no doubt that where they wander, there is a rise in robbery, destruction of property, and arson. Though Terry tries to keep his friends out of the worst of trouble with this silver tongue and keen eye for an escape, they still leave behind quite the reputation, and often call for a price on their heads.

in his repertoire; **Effect** Terry expends one of his spell slots to counter the triggering creature's casting of the spell in his repertoire. He loses the spell slot as if he had cast the triggering spell and attempts to counteract the triggering spell.

Brutal Crag

No one knows exactly why Brutal Crag chose to join Nine Lives Terry. Most suspect a magical charm of some sort, while others mistake the towering cyclops with a vulgar ogre, assuming him to be too stupid to make a decision on his own. The truth is, Terry amuses Crag. Always ready to crack a joke, tell a good story, and or enjoy one too many drinks, the little elf has shown Crag how to enjoy life. Terry's natural ability with words has also made Crag's bandit life far more lucrative and far less dangerous, something the cyclops truly appreciates despite never admitting it openly. Since the addition of Boom Boom Jack to the group, whom he considers to be in a strange combination of pet and child, Crag has even caught himself being truly happy with his newfound family.

BRUTAL CRAG

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE LE LARGE HE/HIM HUMANOID GIANT

Perception +12; low-light vision

Languages Common, Jotun

Skills Athletics +16, Fortune-Telling Lore +13, Intimidation +12, Survival +12

Str +5, **Dex** 0, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

Items greataxe, hide armor, 10 gp

AC 20; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

HP 94; **Resistance** fire 5

Ferocity 2

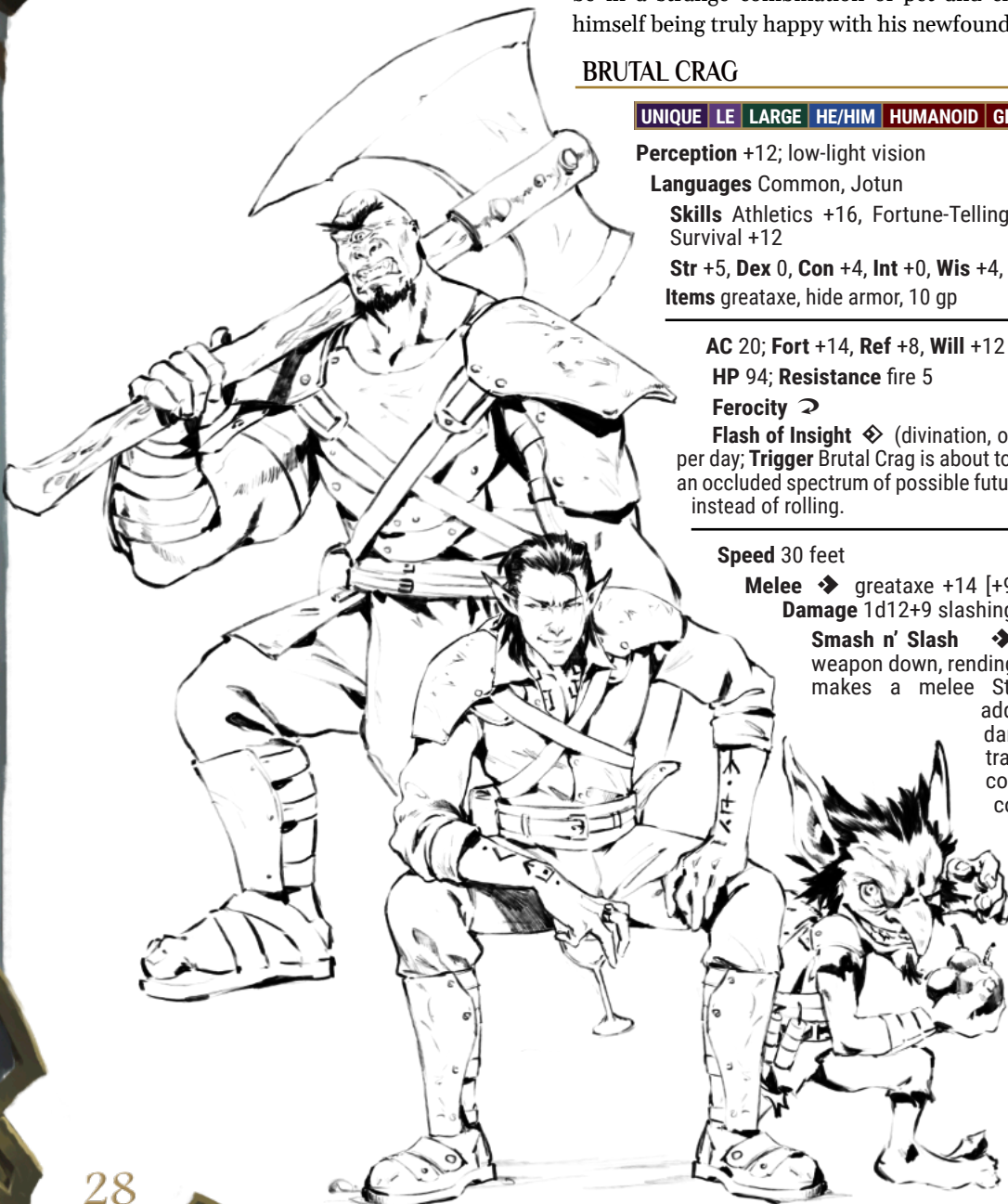
Flash of Insight ♦ (divination, occult, fortune) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** Brutal Crag is about to roll a d20. **Effect** He peers into an occluded spectrum of possible futures. He gets success on the roll instead of rolling.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ greataxe +14 [+9/+4] (reach 10 feet, sweep), **Damage** 1d12+9 slashing

Smash n' Slash ♦♦ (flourish) Crag Brings his weapon down, rending all he can in the process. He makes a melee Strike, the attack deals an additional weapon die of damage, loses the nonlethal trait, and gains the razing trait, counting the additional die. This counts as two attacks when calculating his multiple attack penalty.

Wide Swing ♦♦ (attack, open) Crag lunges and swings his ax in a massive arc, hitting everything in its path. Creatures in a 15-foot cone take 1d12+9 slashing damage (basic Reflex save, DC 22). This counts as two attacks for his multiple attack penalty.



Boom Boom Jack

Boom Boom Jack's nickname is a well-deserved one: he is unpredictable and dangerous, even by goblin standards. Luckily, he is also fairly docile. His introduction to the gang is rather comical, as he joined Nine Lives Terry and Brutal Crag plainly by accident. Part of a goblin raid group, he and his fellow tribesman made the mistake of ambushing the two bandits as they were drunkenly exchanging stories by the fire. What was meant to be a goblin raid turned out to be a bloodbath, as Terry and Crag started a competition of who could kill the most goblins before they fled. Unfortunately for the duo, and very fortunately for Boom Boom Jack, this competition was interrupted by a much more serious threat: a group of mercenaries attempting to bring in the bandits for a hefty ransom. An arrow volley killed most of the remaining goblins, forcing the now sober pair of thugs to take cover behind a large rock. To their great surprise, they were sharing their cover with a grinning goblin, who had elected them to be the winning party to ensure his survival. Boom Boom Jack proudly showed them a bag of makeshift bombs, before tossing explosives left and right, creating utter chaos. Terry and Crag immediately fell in love. The mercenaries dispatched, they gave the goblin a meal, a name, a pat on the back, and Boom Boom Jack was officially the newest member of Terry's crew, despite sharing no common language with either of his compatriots.

BOOM BOOM JACK

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CN SMALL HE/HIM GOBLIN HUMANOID

Perception +12; darkvision

Languages goblin

Skills Athletics +14, Acrobatics +13, Stealth +15, Survival +12

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +5, **Wis** -1, **Cha** +4

Items moderate alchemist's fire (6), 10 gp

AC 21; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

HP 78

Kaboom ⚡ (alchemical, fire) **Requirements** Boom Boom Jack is holding an alchemist's fire; **Trigger** Jack takes fire damage or is critically hit by a Strike; **Effect** One of Jack's bombs goes off, dealing 2 fire splash damage to himself and to each adjacent creature. Jack also briefly catches on fire, but his pyromania keeps him from feeling the pain, he gains resistance 5 to fire until the end of his next turn.

Speed 25 feet; can Sneak at full speed

Melee fist +15 [+9/+5] (agile, finesse, unarmed), **Damage** 1d4+7 bludgeoning

Ranged ⚡ alchemist's fire +15 [+8/+3] (bomb, fire, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 2d8 fire damage, 2 persistent fire damage, and 2 fire splash damage

Boom Surprise ⚡ (manipulate) **Requirements** Joe has an empty hand; **Effect** Joe produces a moderate alchemist fire in an empty hand from questionable ingredients and raw pyromania, he may then Strike with it.

Double Bomb ⚡ (flourish, manipulate) Joe flings two bombs from seemingly nowhere. he makes a moderate alchemist's fire Strike, the second bomb flies wide, dealing 2 fire splash damage in a 5 foot burst from a random intersection 10 feet away from the target.

BALM FOR BURNS (AND SOUL)

Boom Boom Jack is incredibly smart, though utterly uneducated. Terry has come to wonder if his alchemical bombs might not be something a little more unnatural than they appear. He has tried to reverse engineer the bombs, even taking them to alchemists along with the goblin's "reagents" to inspect. They all end up stumped as to how the strange materials are formulated into the explosive vials, leading Terry with the conclusion that either Jack is a genius beyond bound, or somehow warping reality to his whim, which is far more frightening.

Jack enjoys a good blaze, But even he hates tending to burn wounds. Sometimes he goes down to a mud puddle somewhere and comes back with some strange gel made from who-knows-what, and applies it to his burns and those of his allies, it provides quite the soothing relief, if not any actual healing benefaction. Terry and Crag appreciate it all the same, its one of the ways that the goblin shows that he cares, and that's all right with them.

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CHAPTER 3 - HEROES

"The arise of heroes across the lands are unsurprising. As times grow more tumultuous, it is only natural that those with lofty goals and stalwart hearts might find themselves shining among the crowd that huddles together. What really makes a hero, though? Some intangible quality beyond the vagaries of 'good', certainly; one of ineffable description"

~Sinclair

ALTANE TRICALLER

"Now remember pups, altogether, one, two, three"
- Altane rehearsing with a young concordine

Altane grew up in a frontier village and lived much of his life like everyone else in the village, working hard raising cattle during the day, the nights filled with good song, good company, and good fun. It wasn't until one day when he was out tending to his flock that he came upon harpies attacking an injured concordine, a three-headed wolf known for its sonic barks.

The young goblin drove the avian creatures away and rescued the young pup, but during the course of the battle, he learned there was more to his singing than he had thought. His songs countered the song of the harpies as he brought previously unknown, musical magic to bear against them, all of which harmonized with the pained baying of the concordine. That night as he dreamed, he was met by a being who identified itself as a muse and said it had gifted Altane this magic to use as he pleased, so long as he was good to the concordine. When he woke, it was with a new found sense of purpose, and when his new friend Vorta was strong enough to walk on his own, the two set out.

Since then, Altane has become a figure of courage in the face of danger. The goblin never backs down from a fight and can often be heard long before he's seen, singing as he charges into battle while Vorta howls beside him. Often, the sound of their harmony together proves terrifying enough in their own to drive some enemies away. Even if battle is met, the two make for a fearsome combination: the sonic onslaught continues as Altane strikes with his sickles while Vorta bites and howls.

Outside of the field of battle, Altane has a reputation for being happy and pleasant, if a little laid back. Often charming and quite persuasive, it's not unusual for him to be able to convince even the fanciest of establishments to allow him to enter with Vorta by his side. Personally, he sees no reason why animals should be denied the same access as two-legged folk and will do his best to convince others of this. This opinion often highlights his rural upbringing, but it's one he won't back down from.

What has Altane in demand more than anything else is his mastery of rearing and taming concordine, as exemplified by his bond with Vorta. A skill thought lost by many, as soon as this was discovered, he suddenly found himself receiving invites from those who want to use the unusual beasts in combat or simply want a

unique pet. For his part, the secrets of it are Altane's own and not for sale, but he might be willing to pass on the knowledge to those he deems worthy.

Campaign Use

Altane is a heroic figure who, despite his small stature, is never short on courage and power. Often riding into battle astride Vorta, it is not unusual for him to rush headlong in to help others. As such, he makes for a good NPC ally early in a campaign. Should the party need rescuing, Altane can spring from almost nowhere and boost the efforts of the heroes with his bardic abilities.

Likewise, as courageous as he may be, Altane knows when he's outmatched and is always ready to make new friends to help him fight evil when the need arises. Thus, he can serve as a source of quests early in a campaign, recruiting the heroes with the promise of reward and adventure. By contrast, his courage and naivete can get the better of him, and it would not be unbelievable for the bard to need rescuing himself.

Additionally, Altane is one of the few who know how to tame and train concordines. If players are seeking one of these exotic creatures as a companion, the goblin would be an obvious ally to seek out. The secrets of training the canines is well guarded—he will not divulge them easily, however. Likely, he will ask for a favor or service in return for his assistance.

ALTANE TRICALLER CREATURE 5

UNIQUE CG SMALL HE/HIM HUMANOID GOBLIN

Perception +12; darkvision

Languages Common, Goblin, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +8, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +12 (+14 within 10 feet of Vorta), Nature +13, Occult +12, Performance +16

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

Items +1 leather armor, +1 striking sickle, +1 striking shortbow, acoustic guitar (handheld instrument), pouch of concordine treats

AC 21; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +15, **Will** +17
HP 75

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ sickle +13 [+9/+5] (agile, finesse, trip), **Damage** 2d4+8 Slashing

Ranged ♦ shortbow +13 [+8/+3] (deadly d10, range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 2d6+6 Piercing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 19, attack +11; **3rd** haste,

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CONCORDINES

While Vorta is unique, he is a standard representation of a concordine, which would be uncommon instead of unique. These three-headed beasts are difficult to tame, but make for loyal companions to those who can earn their trust.

mind reading; 2nd augury, blur, calm emotions, sound burst; 1st charm, soothe, magic missile, sleep; Cantrips (3rd) detect magic, guidance, prestidigitation, telekinetic projectile

Bard Composition Spells 1 Focus Point, DC 19; **3rd counter performance; Cantrips (3rd) inspire courage**

Pack Harmony Altane's connection to concordines is so strong that when he wishes to Command an Animal that is a concordine, he doesn't need to make a skill check to do so. He must still use an action as normal.

Tricaller Having studied and been around concordines for so long, Altane has picked up the ability to harmonize his spells with his compositions. When Altane Casts a Spell from his spontaneous occult spells he may also cast *inspire courage* as a free action.

VORTA

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE N MEDIUM BEAST

Perception +12; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Common (cannot speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +14, Performance +14, Stealth +9, Survival +12

Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +5, **Int** -3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 20; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

HP 65; **Immunities** sonic

Buck ➤ DC 21

Speed 40 feet

Melee ➤ jaws +14 [+9/+4], **Damage** 2d8+4 piercing

Disorientating Howl ➤➤ (auditory, emotion, mental) The concordine unleashes a harmonized howl in an attempt to disorientate everyone around it. Each creature within 30 feet that can hear the howl must make a DC 21 Will save or become dazzled until the end of their next round. Regardless of the result, all creatures affected are temporarily immune to Disorientating Howl for 10 minutes.

Sonic Bark ➤➤ (evocation, primal, sonic) The concordine directs all three of its heads forward before releasing a harmonized bark of sonic force that deals 5d6 Sonic damage in a 15-foot cone (DC 21 basic reflex save). It can't use Sonic Bark again for 1d4 rounds.

Triple Bite ➤➤ The concordine makes up to three Strikes with different jaws, each against a different target. Each attack counts separately for the concordine's multiple attack penalty, but the penalty doesn't increase until the concordine has made all of the attacks.



CROMWELL THE GRIM GARDENER

Sometimes a person's journey is complicated, the best of intentions on the wrong path can lead to good being done but at great personal cost. When Cromwell saw his homeland under attack, the farmlands of his people burnt, he allowed his rage to get the best of him and unleashed all the magical fury he could muster against those who would harm those he loved. In this he was successful and managed to push them back. Unfortunately for the halfling wizard this was not the end of the assault as the creatures who had attacked were nothing more than a vanguard.

Faced with the prospect of his people being completely wiped out Cromwell took drastic steps to gain the power needed to push them back. Assembling a group of friends to help him, he journeyed to find a lost grimoire containing a ritual of immense power. The trials were immense but they were eventually successful. Grimoire in hand, Cromwell returned triumphant and immediately began preparations to perform the ritual.

When the time came, with the enemy forces at the borders, he was ready and finished the ritual of Cataclysm. Unfortunately such destruction is rarely selective and despite the magic doing exactly as it was intended the cost was great. Though he may have saved the lives of his people, his homeland was destroyed. The pastoral fields and farms he had fought to protect were in ruins, the land would bear no more life.

Consumed with the tragedy of what he had wrought upon his people, Cromwell set out to journey again. This time to appeal to the gods and have the land restored. Unfortunately despite the many years none of his appeals worked, the gods denied him one by one. Until in an act of desperation he went to the god of death and asked if there was something that could be done. To his surprise they agreed but all life comes at a cost. To restore the life of his homeland, his mortal existence would end and it would be his job to protect the grimoire he fought so hard to find.

He agreed to the bargain and his mortality was stripped away leaving him a lich. Taken from the land he had saved he was bound to a secluded valley to live out the rest of his days as a protector of powerful magic items. As time has gone there are those who have sought to defeat him to claim the treasures he holds, assuming him to be an evil lich. Others know the truth however, that he is a good man and a mage with a lot of wisdom to learn from. For his part Cromwell is content to do what he always wanted, to work his field and live his life in peace.

Campaign Usage

Cromwell acts as an almost god-like creature in seclusion, the curse upon him not only keeps him a lich but also binds him to the valley. Although there's more powerful magic users, the simple fact that he was powerful in life and now he is a lich with no soul cage means that he is truly immortal in his own domain. As such if players find themselves in his valley he can assist and act as a place of refuge where they can take advantage of his knowledge. He's happy to share his knowledge but is cagey about giving out info that he feels guests might not be ready for.

On the flip side his appearance is pretty obviously that of a lich, halfling though he may be that fact remains. Those specifically with problems to the undead will find him a challenging but tempting target especially if the heroes have been informed of some of the treasures he guards. He's immortal but it can take days for him to rejuvenate so it can be enough time to plunder his home, though even this is not without its defenses. Conversely the players might simply seek something in his possession and he is unwilling to part with it, either protecting the item zealously or wishing the heroes to prove themselves.

An undead halfling stands amongst a worked and tilled field, plants growing happily. As you approach he summons an old wizard's staff to his hand and raises an eyebrow.

CROMWELL, GRIM GARDENER CREATURE 16

UNIQUE NG SMALL HE/HIM HALFLING UNDEAD

Perception +25; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Draconic, Halfling, Infernal, Necril, Undercommon

Skills Arcana +35, Crafting +32 (can craft magic items), Diplomacy +28, Religion +28, Stealth +26

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +6, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

AC 36; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +28, **Will** +30; +1 status to all saves vs. vitality

HP 270 (void healing, rejuvenation); **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** cold 15, physical 15 (except magic bludgeoning)

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 60 feet, DC 34 (moderate)

Counterspell ➤ **Trigger** a creature casts a spell that Cromwell has prepared; **Effect** Cromwell expends a prepared spell to counter the triggering creature's casting of that same spell. Cromwell loses his spell slot as if he had cast the triggering spell. Cromwell then attempts to counteract the triggering spell.

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Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ staff +30, Damage 3d6+15 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 41, attack +33 (extreme); **8th** *disappearance, maze, power word stun, prismatic wall*; **7th** *energy aegis, power word blind, reverse gravity, spell turning*; **6th** *baleful polymorph, chain lightning, phantasmal calamity, wall of force*; **5th** *banishment, cone of cold, illusory scene, summon dragon*; **Cantrips (8th)** *detect magic, mage hand, message, phase bolt, shield*

Rituals DC 41; *legend lore*

Drain Soul Cage ♦ 8th rank; Cromwell doesn't specifically have a soul cage as his spirit is bound to the valley he lives in. Otherwise this functions as a lich's Soul Cage.

Steady Spellcasting If a reaction would disrupt Cromwell's spellcasting action, he attempts a DC 15 flat check, on a success, his action isn't disrupted.

The Grim Garden (lair) Cromwell's garden is as much a part of him as he is a part of the garden. His will extends out through it, he can treat any square at ground level as the point of origin for any spell he casts. This also grants him precise tremorsense but only while he is in contact with the ground.

The Grim Garden

In his cursed state and exile Cromwell has few in the way of joys, the one he allows himself is his garden. A vast acreage of various plants that he's cultivated is truly a thing of wonder especially without primal magic involved. The truth of the matter is that by having soul infused with the valley itself, the garden responds favorably to Cromwell and assists him in his duties. He has made peace with this but considers it more that the plants are responding well to his love and care.

THE GRIM GARDEN

HAZARD 14

UNIQUE **COMPLEX** **LAIR**

Stealth +30 (master)

Description A well maintained garden filled with fruits and vegetables that Cromwell has meticulously maintained. The garden drawing power from his very soul has taken on a life of its own.

Disable DC 38 Religion (master) to temporarily suppress the soul infused into the garden, DC 38 Arcana (master) to use wards to interrupt the enchantments necessary for a soul cage; three successes are required to disable it.

AC +36; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +22

HP 250, fast healing 10; **Immunities** precision damage; **Weakness** fire 20

The Garden's Bounty ➤ **Trigger** A creature takes a fruit or vegetable from the garden; **Effect** The Grim Garden alerts Cromwell to someone interfering with it. In addition, the creature that took the food must succeed a DC 38 Will save or take a bite, after which they must make a DC 38 Fortitude save with the following effects;

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature becomes stupefied 1.

Failure The creature becomes stupefied 2 and slowed 1.

NEW TRAIT

Lair – A hazard with the Lair trait is tied to a creature, although this is usually a specific unique creature it is sometimes bound to a generic type of creature. Unlike most hazards, these are designed to work in tandem with the creature they are tied to. A lair hazard will specify what creatures can utilize it. An action with the lair trait can only be used if the associated creature spends the listed actions while adjacent to—or inside of—the area of the lair hazard, causing the lair to perform that action immediately unless otherwise specified.

Hazards with this trait do not roll for their initiative, instead they perform any routines at the end of the round. If a hazard with the lair trait has more than one action it can choose, it can only perform one of them on its turn and may never use the same action twice in a row.

Critical Failure The creature falls Unconscious, DC 38 to be awoken from this effect, usually requiring a First Aid action to be taken.

Routine (1 action) The Grim Garden does one of the following actions;

The Garden's Revenge (conjunction) Requirements there are no giant flytraps in the area of the Grim Garden; **Effect** The Grim Garden summons 1d4 giant flytraps (Bestiary 1 pg 160) within 30 feet of Cromwell. The summoned plants can not be adjacent to Cromwell or each other.

The Thieves' Remorse The garden holds the buried remains of many who would try to steal from Cromwell, although they can not rise again they still serve as a warning. Each creature within the lair must make a basic DC 38 Will save or take 8d6 mental damage. On a failure, they are also Frightened 1. On a critical failure creatures treat any skill checks made using stealth or thievery as failures until the end of their next turn.

- **Magic of the Land** The garden empowers Cromwell and his magic to protect the artifacts he is sworn to protect. Cromwell gains the quickened condition and can only use it to Sustain a Spell or Cast a Spell that takes 1 action or less to cast (such as *shield*).

Reset If the Grim Garden is disabled, then it will reactivate on its own after an hour has passed. If it is reduced to 0 hit points instead, then it is disabled for one day. If Cromwell is killed, then it is considered destroyed and can not be reactivated until Cromwell has rejuvenated.

JACK THE RELUCTANT

"Do you know how aasimar come to be? An angel flies around the mortal plane, sees a young farmer's daughter and thinks: mmh, here's my lunch.

Swoops down, all charms and smiles, gives her 7 minutes in heaven, and that's being generous. And off he goes, flies back into the heavens to serve whichever new ridiculous project the gods are up to at the moment. The young lass becomes pregnant. Pregnant with a celestial baby, what a blessing! Ah! Yeah, right. Don't matter how celestial a baby is, ya still gotta feed it. So that poor woman is stuck with an extra mouth to feed, no money, and no idea what to do with that ridiculously good-looking baby. And that baby might look like elf nobility, it's still born on a farm. Gets no education and grows thicker than a mule. Eventually, without fault, couple of clerics show up at the door. Oh they love them aasimar, the clerics. Divine gift and all. And off to religious school goes the angelic idiot. Make him a paladin, make him a religious angelic idiot and find some worthy cause for him to die for. The whole thing's a sham I tell you. Gods, angels, fiends and devils, same twats, different colors.

"Why don't you quit then? Why be a paladin?"

"Well see, son, turns out having angelic blood means having a fiend magnet up your ass. Can't go two weeks without some crazy cult trying to sacrifice you to some apocalyptic deity or some demon from gods know where trying to claim your soul as a trophy. So, you put on the armor and go to work. Heal a couple unsavory diseases around town, kill a few fiends, get the divine powers, stay alive. I'm basically a glorified sandwich board. But as long as you play the part, you get the boons. Gods don't care if you mean it or not, as long as peasants believe it and keep praying, all that matters to them."

For decades, Jack has been delivering this tirade to whomever wants to hear it. How much of this is true, both about his origins or the divine realms, no one really knows. Do gods simply use mortals to forward their own interests? Do angels truly treat the material plane as a playground without a care for consequences, or are they simply oblivious to them? Or is there a greater purpose, a greater design to it all, do the residents of heaven truly care about their faithful worshipers? Theologians could

argue for eternity without finding these answers; as a matter of fact, most do. But one thing is certain: Jack certainly believes it. After 80 years wandering the realms as a paladin, serving the interest of his church, he had long made up his mind about the truth of it all. His disposition toward his role of paladin and his beliefs regarding faith as a concept are not secrets to his fellow clergy consorts either. Some even agree with him: as long as he plays the part, represents the value of the faith, who cares how he feels about it? Most believe the tirades and nonchalance to be nothing but a facade, convinced that deep down Jack knows his cause and divine service to be good and just. The few ones to call him a friend suspect the truth to be somewhere in between. To them, it is undeniable that Jack has a good heart. More than once he has risked his life when no one could have asked him to, not even his church. And while he did it grumbling all the while, he did it without questioning it once. They assume this deep and truly good nature to be the source of his divine favors, suspecting the gods to be unbothered, or possibly even amused, by trivial things such as the beliefs of the reluctant paladin.

To his greatest frustration, all the most significant moments of Jack's life are marked by a new divine gift; a pattern he personally believes to be a cruel and ironic joke of his angelic patrons. The day he was chosen as a squire to begin his paladin training, a halo manifested itself above his head. When he was granted his paladin sword, officially joining the order, his blood turned silver, his eyes golden, and his weapons holy. But the greatest insult was the gift of his wings, which sprouted from his back the day he killed his first fiend. Anyone who might dare mention them gets privy to a long tirade about how cumbersome the wings are, how he's constantly worried of catching a wind draft and falling over, or how much unwanted attention they attract when walking into town.

Campaign usage

Role play intensive

Jack is the embodiment of some fundamental questions about the nature of a fantasy world, and in a roleplay-centric campaign, he can trigger deep questioning, particularly within religious characters, which in turn can lead to some interesting character development. He is perfect to introduce to a character considering a multiclass either away from or toward a religious path,

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A BIT CRASS

Jack's demeanor often leads people to believe he is rude at first impression. However, Jack rarely insults or demeans others, levying his most unsavory statements toward organizations with not-undeserved criticisms—albeit ones often considered taboo to criticize, such as churches. Rather, he speaks candidly and interspersed with the curses and crass colloquialisms shared by the peers of his youth and the common folk he's found more familiarity with over his long life, actively eschewing the "refinement" that his order and the upper class would prefer him to learn.

such as a cleric or champion. Jack can also be a great way to introduce the concept of institutional corruption and setting your players on a righteous path against a twisted church.

Comic Relief

If used in a more lighthearted campaign, Jack can make for very satisfying comic relief. The dichotomy between his flawless angelic features and his thick commoner's accent, his general jaded demeanor, and sarcastic sense of humor can provide for an interesting dynamic with most parties and tables.

When to use Jack

Despite his unusual beliefs and personality, Jack is a standard paladin cause champion for all intents and purposes, and can be used in almost any situation that would call for one. From quest giver to support character or even antagonist if needed, you can take out almost any religious or martial figure from a story and replace them with Jack the Reluctant for a little bit of flare and originality.

JACK THE RELUCTANT

CREATURE 13

UNIQUE LG MEDIUM HE/HIM AASIMAR HUMANOID HUMAN

Perception +23; darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Jotun

Skills Athletics +27, Acrobatic +25 Diplomacy +19, Religion +27 Society +21, Stealth +19

Str +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +1, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +6

Items +1 resilient full plate, +2 striking holy repeating crossbow^{6&6}, holy avenger, lesser sturdy shield

AC 35 (37 with shield raised); **Fort** +27, **Ref** +24, **Will** +23

HP 233

Shield Block ↻

Speed 25 feet, fly 25 feet

Melee ✦ holy avenger +25 [+20/+15] (good, magical, versatile P), **Damage** 3d8+13 slashing plus 2d6 good

Melee ✦ wing +25 [+21/+17] (agile, good), **Damage** 3d6+11 slashing plus 1d6 good

Ranged ✦ repeating crossbow +25 [+20/+15] (repeating, range increment 120 ft., reload 0), **Damage** 2d8+6 piercing plus 2d6 good

Champion Devotion Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 33; **7th** *lay on hands*

Divine Smite ↻ **Trigger** An ally takes damage from a creature, both within 15 feet of Jack; **Effect** The ally gains resistance 15 against the triggering damage. If the foe is within reach, Jack makes a Strike against it.

Holy Avenger Jack gains the additional benefits of his *holy avenger* for being a champion with the paladin cause.

Angelic Frenzy ✦✦✦ Jack Flies up to his Speed in a straight line and makes a holy avenger Strike or a wing Strike against each creature within reach on his path. This applies his multiple attack penalty as normal.

Conflicted Alignment while he acts as a Lawful Good creature at all times and in any context, Jack's true alignment is Chaotic Good. He is immune to chaotic damage, susceptible to Lawful damage and is considered Chaotic for the purpose of any magical implications, such as the detect alignment spell. Any non-magical attempt at determining Jack's alignment, such as a Recall Knowledge or a Sense Motive check, indicates he is of Lawful Good alignment.



JOSEPH TATCH

Abandoned as a baby on the doorstep of a farm, Joseph Tatch was raised in a loving family of human farmers. Either by divine intervention or luck-of-the-draw—though Joseph would definitely claim the former—the family welcomed the young strix, raised him, and cared for him. Despite being a presumed orphan, Joseph had a happy childhood. His fondest memories are of the bedside stories that his dad would recite, specifically one about Vivet of the First Wood, the liberator, a legendary elf from a far away land, who passed through their village decades ago, freeing the region from a tyrannical lord. All his life, Joseph dreamt of those stories and, by the time he was a teenager, he knew what the future had in store for him. He was going to become a warrior, a great one, worthy of fighting alongside Vivet.

Leaving the farm at the age of sixteen, he sought military training and enrolled as a recruit in the capital as a simple city guard. The following years did not provide the expected adventures—far from it, in fact. The average city guard in the capital of a peaceful country does not see much action, if any. Unfortunately, the military training was quite rudimentary and Joseph showed little talent in the arts of war. Becoming painfully aware that city life was doing nothing to further his ambitions, Joseph joined the scouts division of the army, thinking that if he wasn't going to see any action, he might as well see new lands. For a few years, he wandered the country with a squadron from village to village, helping out in any way he could. Their official assignment was simply to secure the area, kill the occasional wild beast causing a ruckus, and clear the roads of fallen trees. Still pursuing his dream, Joseph was always doing extra little things for the locals: he would repair roofs, help dig a well, or participate in the harvest when the season came.

A little before winter, his assignment led him to a small town near the border, where Joseph wandered into a small stone chapel with only one valuable possession: a beautifully painted portrait of Vivet. Joseph recognized her immediately from his father's stories. It was a speechless, admiring strix that Gostog, the priest, found in his chapel. Claiming to have once fought alongside Vivet, the old dwarf offered tea and stories to Joseph, who avidly supped of both. When Joseph's squadron left the village soon after, he did not follow.

Instead, he spent five years under the wise tutelage of Gostog. Joseph learned the arts of war, the secrets of history, and to worship of the goddess of light and redemption. With his priestly training completed, Joseph took to the road in search of adventure, and adventure he found. For the last decade, Joseph has been running from one peril to another, leaving peace and wisdom wherever he goes. His kind nature and strong desire to help others has built a beautiful reputation that, unbeknownst to him, even reached the ears of his aspirational figure, Vivet of the First Wood.

In recent years, Joseph's adventures have taken a new direction. Investigating a mysterious corruption, the priest has been on the trail of a mysterious hooded figure, trying to uncover what nefarious plans they might be concocting. Going from one corrupted land to another, his world has grown darker and grimmer. As sunny country roads gave way to darkened forests, Joseph knew his fairy tale was over. For the first time, the teachings of his goddess weren't theoretical anymore. Joseph now understands what

JOSEPH'S ORIGINS

Joseph's childhood and connection to his adoptive family have never left him wanting of much in the way of familial love. The questions of his origins and lost parentage have never truly haunted him, though at times he does wonder. He believes in the providence of the heavens that he found such a loving family, but knows it is unlikely he was spawned from pure miracle.

Exploring the possibility of additional ties to historical or plot-relevant events that tie to Joseph's unknown parentage can help to deepen his story while granting a great deal of freedom to the GM.

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MEETING VIVET

Joseph is obviously starstruck by Vivet herself. However, while his first meeting with her might find him flustered in admiration, he isn't one to let his excitement get the better of him. Tempered by his own years putting a stop to evil and learning, his expectations are similarly tempered about his personal hero, keeping him from falling to over-expectation.

doing the right thing truly means. This newfound mission is not about reputation or being a good Samaritan. It is about putting everything on the line to stop an unspeakable evil, as well as being willing to sacrifice oneself for the greater good.

Campaign Use

Joseph is the perfect quest giver. His deep desire to be of service and to spread good throughout the world means he is permanently involved in some quest against evil. He never runs out of missions to hand out. For the same reason, Joseph can be introduced in a campaign of any level, either offering tasks he is too busy to handle to a lower level party, supporting a joint mission with a similar level party, or humbly asking for the help of powerful heroes to foil some evil scheme he discovered.

Joseph can also be used in tandem with Vivet of the First Wood in a campaign as a means of introducing the party to her or at least her legends. Seeking to join forces and fight against the unholy hordes in a way that levies the powers and specialties of Joseph, Vivet, and the party best.



JOSEPH TATCH

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMANOID STRIX

Perception +17

Languages common, strix

Skills Acrobatics +14, Athletics +14, Diplomacy +14, Farm Lore +14, Occultism +16, Religion +18, Warfare Lore +14

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +2

Items +1 striking morningstar

AC 25; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +17

HP 98

Rapid Response ➤ **Trigger** An ally is reduced to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** Joseph's priorities always lie with his allies. He Strides or Flies towards the triggering ally, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus to his Speed for this movement.

Speed 25 feet, fly 25 feet

Melee ➤ morningstar +19 [+14/+9] (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d8+6 bludgeoning

Divine Prepared Spells DC 25, attack +15; **5th** *breath of life*, *divine wrath*, *heal* (×3); **4th** *freedom of movement*, *holy cascade*, *remove curse*; **3rd** *heroism*, *neutralize poison*, *searing light*; **2nd** *calm emotions*, *create food*, *darkvision*; **1st** *create water*, *detect alignment*, *disrupting weapons*; **Cantrips** (5th) *divine lance*, *disrupt undead*, *guidance*, *light*, *message*

Divine Rituals DC 25; *atone*, *consecrate*

Channel Smite ➤➤ **Cost** expend a *harm* or *heal* spell; **Effect** Joseph empowers his morningstar with divine energy and strikes down. He makes a Strike dealing an additional 5d8 vitality damage.

L'OTEGA THE DRAGONSLAYER

'Heroes are rarely praised as such before they enter the annals of legend.'

~ Sinclair

An orc with short brown hair approaches. They wear stunning armor forged out of large red scales, and wield an enormous, flaming bastard sword with draconic runes engraved.

L'otega's village was razed by a dragon when they were but a wee child.

They were out playing by the stream when the dragon Korstreliex came and incinerated every hut in the village with a single breath of flame. L'otega hid in the water and waited for the flames to subside before they emerged to find their clan dead.

Orphaned, L'otega was adopted by a group of nearby goblins, who took them in and raised them amongst their people. Though thankful, L'otega's heart yearned for vengeance against Korstreliex, and honed their skills as a warrior to prepare for the day they'd attain justice for their clan.

It wasn't until they were an adult that L'otega came to a coastal village on their travels. As they wandered the town, the people spoke of a benevolent ruler, who offered protection to them in exchange for small favors. To L'otega's horror, they discovered this benevolent ruler was not just a dragon, but it was indeed Korstreliex. Though the town spoke in reverent tones towards their benefactor, it was clear to L'otega these were courtesies; the populace were being watched by draconic spies, and at least one person who dared speak ill of Korstreliex vanished without a trace before L'otega even left.

Knowing where their adversary resided, L'otega began a journey to seek allies. They traveled to nearby towns and found others who had been tormented and lost loved ones to Korstreliex. While their efforts rallying the locals struggled at first, after coming across strong allies who either felt enough hatred for Korstreliex to stand by L'otega, or saw defeating the dragon as a worthy challenge, a small band of would-be dragonslayers formed.

Word of this rabble did not go unnoticed by the ever-vigilant and paranoid Korstreliex. Sycophants and spies caught wind of the orc who dared challenge his might. He sent his own warriors and hired mercenaries to hunt down this would-be adversary, and was delighted when

they felled every one of his servants; perhaps after years, Korstreliex would finally face an adversary who would rekindle the fires of fear in his long-frozen heart.

Their personal conflict began to engulf the entire region. Korstreliex would toy with L'otega, personally skirmishing with them and causing as much collateral damage as possible. Even though they survived every time, the citizens of the region began to resent not Korstreliex, but L'otega, for it was easier to lay blame to a righteous aggressor than an easily placated tyrant. They captured L'otega, handing them over to Korstreliex for punishment.

The day of L'otega's execution came, but before the hangman could sever them at the neck, a crowd gathered outside Korstreliex's mountain lair. No, not a crowd; an army. Inspired by L'otega's vigor, the allies they made along their journeys had rallied the peoples wronged by Korstreliex and decided they would stand with them. L'otega freed themselves during the fight, and took the executioner's blade to strike down Korstreliex himself.

The two clashed as Korstreliex unleashed his rage upon the monster he helped create, but by the might of their rage and the assistance of their allies, L'otega was able to plunge the sword into Korstreliex's neck, and the dragon met his demise.

L'otega was worshiped as a hero of legend, but they never forgot the doubt and betrayal they experienced. Many now praised them for slaying the same dragon they previously offered tribute to, some even the same who sacrificed L'otega to him. Bitter and resentful to these platitudinal cowards, L'otega refuses to act in service of them, instead seeking true companions and worthy friends to fight alongside and for. Few stand in their way, but if they do, they will be standing against an army of loyal companions, not just L'otega alone.

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HOW TO NOT STEAL THE SHOW

L'otega is one of the strongest heroes in this codex. They make for an incredibly powerful ally, but as with any friendly high-level NPC, they risk overshadowing the PCs if used inappropriately. For this reason, you should be very careful when having them enter combat alongside the PCs during the early to mid levels of a campaign. To ensure L'otega (or any other high-level NPC) doesn't steal the show from them, use the following pieces of advice to run them effectively alongside the party:

Have L'otega save the PCs from a powerful adversary once, but do not repeat this; the players may feel shown up, or seek L'otega out to help overcome every challenge. Set up L'otega's strength as something for the party to aspire to, not become dependent on, and make L'otega not readily available to help at the drop of a hat. They've got more important things to worry about! Make sure L'otega is friendly and encouraging to the PCs; never patronizing, smug, or dismissive. Have them celebrate the party's successes; they may see their potential and take them under their wing, even becoming a mentor or close confidant. Their core motivation is seeking strong allies they can trust, after all. If going on a quest or mission together, have L'otega split off from the party so they don't trivialize combat encounters, but don't make the party feel as if they are playing second fiddle or doing a compensatory task. Even if they're facing weaker foes, make sure what they're doing is significant narratively.

L'OTEGA THE DRAGONSLAYER

CREATURE 18

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM THEY/THEM HUMANOID ORC

Perception +30;

Languages common, orc, draconic, goblin

Skills Acrobatics +31, Athletics +35, Dragon Lore +29, Intimidation +33, Warfare Lore +29, Survival +31

Str +7, **Dex** +2, **Con** +6, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

Items +3 greater striking flaming dragonbane bastard sword, +3 greater resilient standard-grade red dragonhide breastplate, 3x javelin

AC 39; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +27, **Will** +30; +1 Circumstance bonus vs. attacks and spells that deal fire damage (AC and Saves, from red dragonhide)

HP 418; **Resistance** 10 physical

Aura of Indomitable Rage Allies within 10 feet of L'otega gain a +3 circumstance bonus to damage on weapon and unarmed attacks, and a +3 circumstance bonus against fear effects.

Reactive Strike ➤

Speed 30 feet

Melee ➤ bastard sword, +35 [+30/+25] (two-handed d12), **Damage** 3d8+24 slashing plus 1d6 against dragons

Ranged ➤ javelin, +30 [+25/+20] (thrown 30 feet), **Damage** 3d6+24 piercing

Felling Leap ➤➤ L'otega jumps in the air up to 30 feet and attempts one melee Strike at any point during the jump; if it hits and deals damage to a flying target, the target falls up to 120 feet. The fall is gradual enough that if it causes the target to hit the ground, they take no damage from the fall.

Immediately after the Strike, L'otega falls to the ground. If the distance they fall is no more than the height of their jump, they take no damage and land upright.

Friendly Toss ➤➤ **Requirements** L'otega is adjacent to an ally and has one or more hands free; **Effect** L'otega picks up an adjacent ally of their size or smaller and throws them to an unoccupied space they can see within 30 feet. Their movement doesn't trigger reactions. The ally ends this movement on their feet and doesn't take damage from the fall. If they end this movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, they can make a melee Strike against an enemy within their reach as a reaction.

Terrifying Roar ➤ (auditory) L'otega unleashes a terrifying howl. They attempt Intimidate checks to Demoralize each enemy within 30 feet; they do not take the penalty for not sharing a language. Regardless of the results of their checks, each creature is then temporarily immune to Terrifying Howl for 1 minute.

Whirlwind Strike ➤➤➤ L'otega attacks all nearby adversaries. They make a melee Strike against each enemy within their melee reach. Each attack counts towards their multiple attack penalty, but do not increase it until they have made all their attacks.

MIRDARA — VIOLENT'S END

*'A dragon is a creature capable of immense destruction.
Mirdara is an exception to this rule.'*

~ Sinclair

Mirdara is an adult bronze dragon who has made a powerful magical pact to never intentionally harm another creature. He is confident in his ability to solve his problems in a more diplomatic way. This is usually quite easy for Mirdara, as he spends most of his hours locked within his private sanctum studying political science, social studies, and moral philosophy. While Mirdara longs for a more peaceful world, he is determined not to pursue it through violent or deceptive means. For now, he is content to act as an advisor to those who seek him and a guardian of the knowledge and books he has acquired. Whether this is due to moral complexities of accidental consequences, fear of losing such a grand collection of knowledge, or simply the desire to stay locked away in his lair is unknown perhaps even to Mirdara himself.

Because of his voracious appetite for knowledge, he is constantly on the hunt for new books, knowledge of current political news, and guests willing to discuss moral philosophy. Mirdara's discussions are lengthy and meticulous. He can go on for weeks on end discussing a single moral conundrum. Any hunters who come for his head end up trapped in his lair for such periods discussing the moral implications of hunting intelligent animals and the trade of life for fame and money. This has one of two effects both of which favor Mirdara. Either the hunter sees the error of their ways and devotes themselves to peace, or they find the discussions so dry, boring, and painful that they never return out of fear of becoming locked in another moral lecture.

Downtime

If you spend at least 1 week with Mirdara actively listening and interacting with his moral discussions, you become trained in diplomacy. If you were already trained in diplomacy you instead gain a +1 circumstance bonus to all diplomacy checks for 1 year.

Plot Hooks

Dragonslayer

There are tales of a dragon living in a cave among the sea cliffs. You have been hired to hunt down and kill this dragon.

On Behalf of Royalty

The royalty seeks a rumored adviser known only as Mirdara for advice on a treaty. You have been sent to find them.

Please, Be Civilized

Mirdara seeks an ancient manuscript and will offer a great reward if you can obtain it without resorting to violence.

Salvation's Beginning

A great battle is about to take place that will surely decimate both sides. You must convince Mirdara to intervene and help you prevent this bloodshed.

Social Statblock

Mirdara is a dragon of reason and logic. He will respond to well-thought-out arguments using Diplomacy and Society checks. However, a knowledge skill such as Arcana, Nature, Occultism, Religion, or relevant lore can also be quite persuasive if they correlate to the topic at hand. You gain a +4 circumstance bonus when appealing with a relevant knowledge check or a logic-based Diplomacy check. However, Mirdara has a deep hatred of Deception, and if he catches a lie he is unlikely to humor any more discussion on the matter. Mirdara disdains abandoning his lair even for matters of great importance; any attempt to convince him to leave his lair requires at least four successful checks before three failures occur. A failed Deception check counts as two failures.

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STICKY SERENITY

Some time ago, Mirdara's was beset by a number of oozes spawned from the sea. Their peace pact has rendered the oozes docile, and they feed them kelp and other vegetable matter to sustain them, acting almost as pets. Though who knows how they would act if Mirdara didn't rake their claws through them every day.

MIRDARA — VIOLENT'S END

CREATURE 14

UNIQUE LG HUGE HE/HIM AMPHIBIOUS DRAGON WATER

Perception +28; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Bovian, Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +23, Arcana +25, Athletics +25, Diplomacy +31, Intimidation +27, Occultism +25, Stealth +23

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +5, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +5

AC 35; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +23, **Will** +28; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 280; **Immunities** electricity, paralyzed, sleep

Peaceful Aura (aura, emotion, mental) 90 feet. Whenever a creature within the aura attempts a hostile action, it must make a DC 33 Will saving throw. The creature is temporarily immune to Peaceful Aura for 1 minute.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success Until the end of the turn, the creature must succeed a DC 5 flat check each time it attempts a hostile action. If the check fails, the action is lost. (this affects the triggering hostile action)

Failure The creature is unable to take hostile actions until the end of its turn.

Critical Failure The creature is unable to take hostile actions for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, it can attempt a DC 33 Will saving throw to end this effect.

Speed 40 feet, fly 140 feet, swim 50 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +29 [+24/+19] (electricity, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d12+13 piercing plus 2d12 electricity

Melee ♦ claw +29 [+25/+21] (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+15 slashing

Melee ♦ tail +27 [+22/+17] (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d10+11 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 34, attack +28 ; **7th** *force cage*; **6th** *create food, true seeing*; **5th** *dimension door, tongues, wall of stone*; **4th** *dull ambition, private sanctum, sleep*; **3rd** *dispel magic, mind reading, slow*; **2nd** *comprehend language, mirror image, resist energy*; **1st** *alarm, hydraulic push, true strike*; **Cantrips (7th)** *detect magic, light, message, read aura, shield*; **Constant** *speaking with animals*

Peace Pact (Curse) Mirdara's pact of peace makes his attacks seem to phase through the target attacking their will instead of their body. Whenever Mirdara would deal damage, it instead inflicts a number of Peace Pact stacks equal to the damage. If the number of Peace Pact stacks ever equals or exceeds a target's total Hit Points, it is unable to take hostile actions. Peace Pact stacks last for 24 hours.

Breath Weapon ♦♦ Mirdara breathes in one of two ways. The dragon can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

- **Lightning** (arcane, electricity, evocation); The dragon breathes lightning in an 80-foot line that deals 8d12 electricity damage (DC 34 basic Reflex save).
- **Repulsion Gas** (abjuration, arcane, incapacitation, mental); The dragon breathes an 80-foot line of repulsive gas. Each creature in the area must succeed at a DC 35 Will save or become fleeing from the dragon for 1 round (or 2 rounds on a critical failure).

Draconic Frenzy ♦♦ The dragon makes two claw Strikes and one tail Strike in any order.

Draconic Momentum When the dragon scores a critical hit with a Strike, it recharges its Breath Weapon.

Water Mastery (arcane, transmutation, water) For up to 60 minutes per day, the dragon, along with allied creatures and vessels within 50 feet, can move at double their normal Speed in water.

VIVET OF THE FIRST WOOD

Born in the wilds of Untarel, Vivet spent much of her childhood playing with the other denizens of the First Woods. Despite nothing of a formal education, she still proved early on to be capable and intelligent. Her natural insight could shame even those with more sophisticated upbringings, something she took an unveiled pleasure in doing as frequently as possible.

Contrary to what one could expect given her natural intellect, Vivet had no interest in the arcane and gravitated toward martial pursuits instead. She found in herself a deep desire to protect her home, as well as a secret appreciation for the thrill of combat. She quickly garnered a reputation as a stalwart defender and a born leader, rising up the ranks in the military of the First Wood.

Her first real trial as a military woman presented itself around her fiftieth birthday. A terrifying abomination started poisoning the land and laying waste to the forest. Many turned their gaze to Vivet to handle the threat. Stepping up to the task, she carefully assembled an elite force she would lead against the beast, advising the higher ranks against a frontal assault. But as she was formulating a plan, Untarel's military ignored her counsel. Their march towards the threat, and near certain death, put Vivet in front of an impossible decision: lay low with her elite forces and wait for the perfect opportunity to strike, sacrificing these poor soldiers, or join the main regiment, and risk losing the battle. Vivet elected to look at the bigger picture and waited until the time was right. Her strategy worked to perfection, and they felled the beast, but of the thousand soldiers of the First Wood's army, merely a hundred survived.

Despite returning a celebrated hero, earning the title of Savior of the First Wood, Vivet came back changed, broken, and ashamed. Turning down the title and promotion offered, she left her home to perfect her training, dedicating her life to mastering the art of slaying unholy creatures. She swore that no others would suffer the cruelty of the lower planes, but more importantly, she swore never to resort to sacrificing a life in the name of victory. Her training and vows as a holy champion serve the ultimate purpose of pursuing her mission.

Free Agent Commander

Embracing both her newfound devotion and her extensive military experience, Vivet has made for herself

somewhat of a unique path of life; one of a commander for hire. Unrestrained from the chain of command, uniforms, and nation, she travels the world, offering her services as a military commander against fiendish incursions. She trains and leads soldiers into battle against the forces of pure evil, asking for little payment in return. Her reputation for efficiency and zeal goes so far that any fiend or ally to the the unholy considering an incursion on the material plane had best consider an important question: where is Vivet the Savior at the moment?

Story Hooks

As a crusader, Vivet's main use in a campaign is to assist heroes in a call to action. A capable leader and firm believer in the merits of operating outside the confines of a traditional military structure, she is more than happy to delegate missions to independent parties. This makes her a perfect source of quests for early levels.

Her determination to save lives can also be leveraged in an adventure, for example by having her lead a rescue mission for the party. She might appear as part of a last minute save in a combat that went awry, to interrupt a combat and force a recurring villain to flee, or save the party from a fight they were never meant to win, in order to emphasize the threat of your main villain.

Vivet's high level and potential role as commander make her a great recurring character in your story. In a campaign with a recurring villain, it would be natural for Vivet to aid the party at numerous key moments, as well as in the final confrontation, though you should be mindful of not letting her seize the spotlight. She may be a savior, but she isn't the star of the story!

Alternately, Vivet's goals and those of the heroes might not align, offering a non-antagonist obstacle or source of friction. Though unlikely to antagonize good aligned player characters, Vivet's desire for more direct action against evil can leave her at odds with those who might prefer a more nuanced or subtle approach. In case of conflict, Vivet is always ready to draw her sword but will engage in diplomacy first and foremost. While her demeanor might appear slightly dismissive, she is not arrogant: her actions and decision-making show her willingness to consider she might be wrong.

FOE'S BANE

While Vivet focuses on ridding the world of fiends, protecting those that are under threat by them as her primary goal. She still gladly undertakes missions to safeguard against other unholy or violent foes, such as undead. Her focus is on these supernatural threats, and though fiends are her specialty, she will cross blades with any foul foe that threatens innocent people, regardless of their origins.

VIVET OF THE FIRST WOOD

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM SHE/HER ELF HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +28

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Elven, Sylvan

Skills Athletics +34, Acrobatics +29. Diplomacy +32, Intimidation +28, Nature +28, Religion +32

Str +8, **Dex** +2, **Con** +6, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

Items +2 greater striking mithral shield, +2 resilient half plate, holy avenger

AC 42; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +28, **Will** +33

HP 304; **Resistances** evil 15

Aura of Courage Vivet is unphased by the horrors of her foes and passes this resolve onto her allies whenever she would become frightened, she reduces the condition value by 1 (to a minimum of 0). At the end of her turn all allies within 15 feet reduce their frightened condition by 1.

Axebane ➤ **Trigger** A creature fails a Strike against Vivet with a weapon; **Effect** Her specific training in disarming opponents gives Vivet an opening when creatures miss her. She attempts to Disarm the triggering creature, gaining one degree of success better on the check if the weapon is an ax or polearm.

Glimpse of Redemption ➤ **Trigger** An enemy damages one of Vivet's allies. Both the enemy and ally must be within 15 feet of Vivet; **Effect** Vivet causes her foe to hesitate under the weight of its sins as visions of possible redemption play out in its mind's eye. The foe chooses one of two options:

- The ally is completely unharmed by the triggering damage.
- The ally gains resistance 7 to all damage against the triggering damage. After the damaging effect resolves, the enemy becomes enfeebled 2 until the end of its next turn.

Shield Block ➤ or ♦ Once per round Vivet can Shield Block as a free action.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ holy avenger +30 [+25/+20] (good, magical, versatile P),

Damage 3d8+21 slashing plus 1d6 good

Melee ♦ shield bash +30 [+25/+20], **Damage** 3d4+21 bludgeoning

Champion Devotion Spells DC 34; **8th** (3 Focus Points) *lay on hands*, *litany of righteousness*

Avenger's Vindication ♦ (divine, good, healing, vitality) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** Vivet critically succeeds an attack roll against an evil creature with a holy avenger Strike; **Effect** Vivet regains HP equal to double the evil creature's level.

Divine Command Vivet commands her forces to charge into the fray with divine force as she leads them forth. When Vivet joins an encounter and rolls initiative, she may Stride up to her Speed and make a melee Strike. If the Strike hits and damages an enemy, each ally within 60 feet who saw her hit can use a reaction to Strike or Stride. If they Strike, they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to the attack roll and add 1d6 good damage. If they Stride, they each must end their Stride closer to the creature she hit than where they started.



WILDEYE THE CURSEBREAKER

The ever-vigilant, sometimes paranoid conrasu Wildeye was once a respected member of the Circle of the Green before a falling out ended their association. It's not something they like to talk about, but the rumor says they tried to warn the circle of a creeping disease spreading throughout the land, and that warning was unwelcome. The veracity and details of the story remain vague, and reliable information about Wildeye only starts from the day they took the mantle of Cursebreaker.

Wildeye's life began, as did many others of their kind, as a little sapling, but even from a young age it was obvious there was something special about them. With a keen eye for the primal forces of nature, they were quickly selected to be trained as a druid and to join the esteemed Circle of the Green. They quickly became a well-respected member of the circle, always pushing for the good of nature itself and never for their personal interest. Many thought that Wildeye would be the first of their kind to lead the circle, but an unfortunate event changed their future forever.

It all happened during an assignment. They were sent to a remote village to investigate reports of relentless monster attacks, but by the time Wildeye got there, there was barely a village left. Geared up and determined to kill the beast, Wildeye ventured into the forest, which was where they encountered the corruption for the first time. It was something Wildeye had never seen before: the trees were twisted, the flowers' nectar now poisoned, and the cracked land excreted a thick smog. The corruption had even made its way to one of the primal avatars—an elder guardian spirit—and corrupted it into a puppet to spread the Corruption further. A long and arduous battle followed, and Wildeye nearly perished slaying the beast. Ultimately, the druid triumphed, but this victory was short-lived. Wildeye knew for such a being to exist—for a primal avatar to fall unbeknownst to the druids—meant only one possibility: a traitor amongst the circle.

Upon their return, Wildeye did not get the warm welcome they expected, but was instead greeted with accusations of spreading the corruption to the elder guardian spirit in order to gain influence over the circle. Divination spells were mysteriously unable to show anything conclusive. The circle had no one else to hold responsible and Wildeye had no answers to provide; it had to have been a druid and they were the only one present. The punishment was handed down: Wildeye would be exiled from the Circle. Wildeye had no trouble

accepting this decision, damning the Circle of Green and taking to the road with a newfound purpose: to find the traitor and root out the source of the Corruption.

Betrayed and angry but still believing in the teachings of the circle, Wildeye has been traveling the world, helping the sick and the cursed. Their dedication to the craft has given them a stern reputation of efficiency and perseverance among fellow cursebreakers. For most common folks, they are simply Wildeye, a traveling healer and guardian of nature. Most assume the name is in reference to the constantly darting orb in the center of what would be their face, a singular facial feature often confused for an eye. The truth, however, is slightly more complicated than that. The name Wildeye comes from their inability to use divination magic properly, whereas they owe the quirk of the ever-moving orb to the experience-induced paranoia of being all too often ambushed.

The aeon has few that they call friends, but among them is the wandering cleric, Joseph Thatch, with whom they have teamed up on more than one occasion. Otherwise, Wildeye's reputation keeps most people at arm's length, and their general demeanor does nothing much to alleviate this wariness. However, those who have earned the conrasu's trust find Wildeye a loyal and protective companion.

Never far from their druidic roots, Wildeye still tends toward natural materials such as plant weaves and leathers, having no love for metal. A single exception to this is their prized machete, a gift from a village elder for saving their home from being destroyed by a great evil. Ever prepared, Wildeye is always seen with plenty of pouches packed with various tools and tinctures. Some of these come from their days in the circle, while Wildeye gained others during their travels as a cursebreaker.

Story Hooks

As a traveling Cursebreaker of some renown, there's no end to the trouble and adventure Wildeye can be involved in. They can serve as a great source of information for the party, sending them on the right track. Alternatively, their bad habit of carrying the world on their shoulders can lead them to put themselves in dangerous situations, being a good candidate for a rescue mission. While unlikely to travel with the party

WILDEYE'S MAGIC

While Wildeye is a somewhat standard representation of a druid with the Cursebreaker archetype (*Sinclair's Almanac*). They also have a spell, generally unique to them. Wildeye might be willing to teach other primal casters their *radiant grove* spell as a reward for their help, or as a means to give them an edge when Wildeye cannot be there themselves. If Wildeye actively helps a character Learn the Spell, they get a +2 circumstance bonus to their check.

for extended periods of time, Wildeye can be an ally as long as the party acts as a force for good.

WILDEYE THE CURSEBREAKER

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE NG MEDIUM GENDERLESS AEON CONRASU PLANT

Perception +21

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Skills Arcana +18, Athletics +18, Intimidate +20, Nature +23, Occultism +10, Religion +18, Survival +18

Str +3, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +3

Items +1 striking club, +1 striking machete

AC 27; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +18, **Will** +21

HP 142

Curse Eater ➤ **Trigger** An ally within 30 feet fails, but not critically fails, a save against an effect with the curse trait; **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** Wildeye never allows an ally to suffer under a curse. They level their gaze on the triggering ally, absorbing the curse into themselves instead, immediately attempting their own save against the effect.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ club +16 [+11/+6] (magical, thrown 10 ft), **Damage** 2d6+11 bludgeoning

Melee ➤ machete +16 [+11/+6] (deadly d8, magical, sweep), **Damage** 2d8+11 slashing

Primal Prepared Spells DC +30, attack +22; **5th** *death ward*, *plant form*; **4th** *speak with plants*, *vital beacon*, *radiant grove*; **3rd** *earthbind*, *remove disease*, *searing light*; **2nd** *dispel magic*, *entangle*, *humanoid form*; **1st** *fear*, *heal*, *shillelagh*; **Cantrips** (**5th**) *detect magic*, *guidance*, *read aura*, *stabilize*, *tanglefoot*

Primal Rituals DC 30; *cleansing ritual* (*Sinclair's Almanac*)

Cursebreakers Gaze ➤ Wildeye focuses their eye on a singular person they can see, cowing them into submission. Wildeye attempts to Demoralize the target. This functions the same as Intimidating Glare, but, if the target of the glare has the Curse trait, they treat the result as one degree worse.

RADIANT GROVE

SPELL 3

UNCOMMON NECROMANCY PLANT VITALITY

Traditions primal

Cast ➤➤ somatic, verbal

Range 30 feet; **Area** all squares in a 10-foot burst that contain plants

Saving Throw Reflex; **Duration** sustained up to 1 minute

Compelling nature itself to purify corruption, nearby plant-life springs forth bursting with vitality energy. The area becomes difficult terrain and hazardous terrain. A creature that moves on the ground through the area takes 3 vitality damage for every square of that area it moves into. A creature that ends its turn in the area must succeed at a Reflex save or take 3 persistent vitality damage.

Heightened (+1) The vitality damage and persistent vitality damage each increase by 1.



XIRAYNE — THE NAVAL MAGE

"Naval mages are considered an overly-specialized school by stuffy arcanists throwing stones from their podiums and towers. The soldiers they save from drowning disagree vehemently."

~ Sinclair

You are approached by a mage in blue and teal robes. Their skin is a grayish-blue hue that blends with the sea. Their head is shaved bald, and a purple diamond is tattooed upon their face, which is giving a stern, serious expression.

As the fourth-born heir of an aquatic dynasty sired by King Coh'rih, Xirayne had nothing to lose and everything to prove. Thankfully for them, they felt as much apathy for their emotionally detached, duty-bound family as they felt resentment towards them. To call Xirayne a rebel would be an overstatement, but they were certainly a black sheep of sorts; they took to arcane studies from a young age, and spent the bulk of their time in their chambers researching tomes and formulae. Their introversion would make them miss important formal events, and their lack of tact and decorum would result in bad impressions on important dignitaries when they did emerge for diplomatic summits.

Xirayne's odd behavior was seen by some as sabotage to ensure their father expelled them from the line of succession, but in truth Xirayne was merely more interested in their studies than the political whims of their family. This attitude did not go down well with the royal court, who took Xirayne's indifference as callousness. Nobles in prominent seats saw Xirayne as a disrespectful thorn in Coh'rih's side, and demanded he discipline the ignoble youth. Coh'rih decided to send them to a naval academy on the surface, where they would be taught strict discipline and not simply be allowed to wallow in their room without any responsibility.

This plan ended up backfiring, as not only did Xirayne find life in the naval academy to be a perfect fit; they rose the ranks with flying colors. Their arcane aptitude combined with their unique perspective as an aquatic being allowed them to apply stratagems that had been hereunto unconsidered in conventional naval warfare. Xirayne was inducted into the academy's naval mages before the age of twenty - attaining the order's trademark diamond tattoo upon their face - and had more deployments under their belt than many veterans by the time they turned twenty-five.

While it seemed the situation had worked out in the end and Xirayne had found their place in the world, Coh'rih was not as happy about getting egg on his face. It became apparent that Xirayne was never meant to stay above the surface; rather, the scheming Coh'rih - who saw Xirayne's potential, despite his resentment towards them - was hoping their time at the academy would mold them into a military tactician capable of leading his armies, and give the dynasty a chance to pilfer bespoke secrets the academy and navy may be hoarding for themselves.

To this end, Coh'rih declared by royal decree that Xirayne was to return to the palace, leaving the navy. To the surprise and horror of the admirals, Xirayne refused, saying they would stay in the service of the surface-folk and remain as a military tactician. This ignited a diplomatic firestorm, as Coh'rih threatened to send an army to apprehend Xirayne if they were not handed over without resistance. The navy was about ready to put Xirayne in cuffs and meet these demands, until they revealed their father's ulterior motives for sending them to the academy. Now the admirals had no choice but to side with Xirayne, lest they risk handing military secrets to a power that was looking dangerously towards expansionism.

This was more than just about politicking and state secrets however. In truth, Xirayne had found something else amongst the navy that they never did in their homeland: camaraderie. Though still considered a stiff and far too serious for their own good, Xirayne's tactical genius and ability to support the marine detachments through their mastery of water-based magics earned them lifelong allies who would gladly stand upon the deck of any ship they were acting as point man for. Though they struggled to profess their joy, Xirayne was indebted for finding companions amongst the navy as they were for finding a place to put their talents to use.

In lieu of all this, Xirayne made an ultimatum; if they could repel a force of their father's soldiers while leading a deployment themselves, they would use that as proof of both their allegiance to the academy, and a warning to Coh'rih that they were not to be trifled with. The admirals begrudgingly agreed. To their surprise, not only did Xirayne hold their ground against their father's forces; they routed them and won the battle. Thanks to Xirayne's tactical insight and spellweaving, the marines under their detachment fought just as well upon the waters as the naturally aquatic adversaries beneath them, catching the invaders off guard. Combined with

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AN ALLY FOR NAVAL ADVENTURES

As an NPC, Xirayne is designed to assist PCs going on seaborne adventures. Their spells are chosen with combat on a naval vessel in mind; spells like Water Walk and Water Breathing (made more efficient to use with the Naval Preparations metamagic) are both contingencies to ensure PCs don't fall off a vessel and risk drowning, and for alternate strategies to approach enemy vessels or aquatic foes. Their Wave Rider metamagic is designed to help with mobility. Flavourfully, it was designed by Xirayne as a boarding tool for other ships; even if they don't aid in combat directly, they can use a spell like Crashing Wave to give the party a particularly dramatic entrance to a fight on board an enemy vessel.

the firepower of the naval galleons, the water dwellers were unable to reach land, and were forced to retreat.

This show of force was enough to deter Coh'irh from further incursions, and with the knowledge of his wanting to use Xirayne as an unwitting espionage agent, the navy was able to leverage an indefinite ceasefire. This victory over their father earned Xirayne many accolades, and solidified them as one of the navy's top strategists and spellcasters. Despite this, they know their father will not take his humiliation lightly, and it is only a matter of time before a worse conflict arises, risking their freedom...

XIRAYNE, THE NAVAL MAGE

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE LN MEDIUM THEY/THEM AMPHIBIOUS HUMANOID HUMAN UNDINE

Perception +13;

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Sussuran, Thalassic

Skills Acrobatics +14, Arcana +21, Athletics +16 (+18 when swimming), Crafting +15, Lore: Sailing+15, Medicine +13, Nature +13, Society +15, Survival +13

Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +2, **Int** +5, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items +1 striking dagger, ring of energy resistance - cold (bonded item), spellbook, staff of water (Greater), wand of choking mist

AC 27; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +17, **Will** +20

HP 125; **Resistances** cold 5 (from ring of energy resistance - cold)

Aquatic Counterspell ➤ **Trigger** A creature casts a fire spell; **Effect** Xirayne expends a prepared spell with the water trait to counter the triggering spell. Xirayne loses this spell slot as if you had cast the spell from it. They then attempt to counteract the triggering spell.

Speed 25 feet, swim 25 feet

Melee ➤ dagger, +21 [+17/+13] (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+8 piercing

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 28; **5th** control water x2; **4th** hydraulic torrent x2, water breathing, water walk; **3rd** aqueous orb, crashing wave, feet to fins, wall of water; **2nd** elemental zone, obscuring mist, quench, resist energy; **1st** air bubble x2, hydraulic push x2; **Cantrips (5th)** detect magic, electric arc, gale blast, message, shield, spout

Wizard School Spells DC 28, 2 focus points; **5th** rising surf, pulverizing cascade

Drain Bonded Item (arcane) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** Xirayne expends the power stored in their bonded item. During their turn, Xirayne gains the ability to cast one spell they prepared today and already cast, without spending a spell slot. They must still Cast the Spell and meet the spell's other requirements.

When Xirayne uses this ability, they also regain 1 Focus Point.

Naval Preparations ➤ (metamagic) If the next spell Xirayne casts is Water Breathing, or Water Walk heightened to at least 4th rank, increase the number of creatures you may target up to 20.

Wave Rider ◆ (metamagic) When Xirayne casts certain spells with the water trait, their allies may use the propulsion of the spell to move with it if they are in the spell's area at any pint during its duration or directly between Xirayne and their target. The ally uses their reaction to start riding the spell and move in its direction, when they do so, they do not suffer any negative effects of the spell. The specifics of how each applicable spell works are as follows:

Aqueous Orb The ally balances atop the sphere, moving with it when it moves

Crashing Wave, Hydraulic Push, or Hydraulic Torrent The ally may move away from Xirayne up to the edge of the spell's area or toward its target (including the distance a target may be pushed).

Wall of Water The ally moves up the wall any distance and exits in a direction of their choice up adjacent to the wall.



CHAPTER 4 - LONE WOLVES

"There's safety in numbers, true. Though some do their best work on their own, without the concerns of others to hold them back or the desire to pressure others into their mission. I find this a sensible path, one I myself share most times, brief alliances, friends across the land, but when the time or whim comes, the only companion you need is the road."

~Sinclair

DAICHI - THE IRON RONIN

*"Daichi's directives were clear from their inception:
Watch. Learn. Grow."* ~ Sinclair

A masked samurai in traditional armor approaches on the battlefield, katana ready at the hilt. At first they appear humanoid, but as you observe closer you notice mechanical limbs, and glowing blue lights from where their eyes should be; this combatant is not organic.

Daichi was a prototype for what was to become an army of autonomous warriors. Infused with the spirits and memories of samurai past, Daichi was naturally gifted with the katana and predisposed to strict discipline. However, they were not a static machine with set programming; Daichi's memory banks were designed to interact with the mortal soul giving them life, allowing them a unique capacity for growth of personality and talent. They would not simply become a master samurai, but rather an amalgam of any formidable warriors and styles they would come across.

Before Daichi could even leave the workshop, let alone prove themselves worthy of mass production, assassins killed Daichi's creator. As they went to destroy Daichi themselves—the true purpose for their attack—the automaton's innate memory and training took over, and they handily dispatched the unsuspecting invaders. Left without a master or direction, Daichi took up their original prime directive and left the workshop to wander the land. They wandered town to town, seeking purpose and strong adversaries to learn from.

Since then, Daichi's reputation has preceded them, and they have become feared as an enemy and sought after as a mercenary in their time. While they do not seek senseless bloodshed, their directives did not instill morals in them. They have fought both in the defense of towns and as an agent of bandit lords. They did not discern among their transient masters, so long as they are pointed towards strong foes to learn from.

That said, the noble lineage within their soul sought a higher purpose, though Daichi did not realize what that yearning was. True samurai serve great lords and protect the lands; by contrast, Daichi had no master other than short-lived employers and role-models. As they traveled, Daichi heard stories of 'ronin'; samurai without masters, who inspired a mixture of awe and fear. Of these errant warriors, some were noble defenders who stood vigilant to protect those the feudal lords deemed beneath their watch, while others were brigands and thugs who exploited the weak or sold their

blades for coin to the highest bidder. There was no consistency between one ronin to the next: each stood for their own values, and fought for what they desired over what was imposed upon them from a higher power.

Ultimately, Daichi realized this described their actions exactly, and they had unwittingly consigned themselves to the same path. It made them wonder about their directive. Were they meant to learn and grow to be more than just a great fighter? Did it mean growing as an individual as well? While their resolve and skill did not falter, Daichi spent the many moons wandering the roads contemplating their existence, especially troubled they were not of flesh and blood like their master, or the souls imbued in their core. How did such a fact influence their destiny?

Daichi began learning other arts in an attempt to solve this existential crisis. They spent time in town learning from the locals, asking questions and learning to properly socialize. They took up painting and haiku writing, believing that the arts might help them understand the nature of their soul better. While they made close companions and became surprisingly skilled at these new talents, Daichi was no closer to finding the truth of the matter. To this day, they continue to wander, seeking their own ideals to stand for as a ronin.

Story Hooks

Daichi's role as a wandering errant can be used to start all manner of plot hooks through word-of-mouth, be they friendly or dire warnings. They can fulfill the role of a friendly ally who shows up to help with local issues, a rival who sees the party as worthy adversaries to learn and grow stronger from, or an antagonist aligned with an enemy force.

They would be a great character to engage with in duels, making for a natural subject to develop a heated rivalry with one or more party members.

As a combat-focused character, Daichi's ability to copy and imitate martial feats should be used to build upon their growth, both as a combatant and character. Perhaps they imitate a PC's combat repertoire one fight, so the next time the party sees them, Daichi is now fighting like one of their own, or even a combination of several PCs, using their favorite techniques against them.

Alternatively, Daichi could learn other feats between encounters, allowing a customizable kit that can tell a story of their travels and insights, turning them into a

unique, unpredictable combatant the party won't know how to deal with every time they encounter them.

IMPROVING THE MEMORY BANK

If the party encounters Daichi more than once, including one of the copied skills from the previous encounter in their memory bank is a good way to increase immersion and continuity into your world. When doing so, simply expand Daichi's memory banks to make room for the additional skills learned through previous encounters with the party.

DAICHI, THE IRON RONIN

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE N MEDIUM THEY/THEM AUTOMATON CONSTRUCT

Perception +17; low-light vision

Languages Common, Utopian

Skills Acrobatics +17, Art Lore +14, Athletics +18, Crafting +14, Diplomacy +9, Poetry Lore +14, Society +14

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

Analyze Martial Technique ➤ **Trigger** A creature uses a class or dedication feat that utilizes a weapon or skill; **Effect** Daichi copies the feat to their memory banks, allowing them to use it themselves as long as they meet its prerequisites. Daichi can only have a maximum of three feats copied at a time; if full, adding a new feat to the memory bank replaces another of Daichi's choice.

Daichi's Memory Bank Dueling Parry, Sudden Charge, Double Shot

AC 27; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +16, **Will** +12

HP 120; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 5 (except adamantine)

laijutsu ➤ **Trigger** A creature within reach makes a Strike against Daichi while he is in laijutsu Stance; **Effect** Daichi unsheathes their katana and makes a one-handed Strike with it against the triggering creature. This Strike is made before the triggering Strike is resolved and does not end laijutsu Stance until this reaction resolves.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ katana +18 [+13/+8] (deadly d8, two-handed d10, versatile P), **Damage** 2d6+8 slashing

Melee ♦ wakizashi +18 [+14/+10] (agile, deadly d8, finesse, versatile P), **Damage** 2d4+8 slashing

Ranged ♦ shortbow +17 [+12/+7] (deadly d10), **Damage** 2d6+8 piercing

laijutsu Stance ♦ (stance) **Requirements** Daichi is either unarmed, or wielding their katana in one hand and nothing else in their other hand; **Effect** Daichi sheathes their katana and puts one hand on its hilt. They can use the laijutsu reaction and leave this stance when they move, draw one of their weapons, or let go of the hilt of their katana.

Samurai Diligence ♦ **Trigger** Daichi rolls for initiative. **Effect** Daichi enters laijutsu Stance.

ALTERNATE MEMORY BANKS

Daichi may have a variant set of feats in their memory bank, below are some suggested combinations.

Dual-Weapon Double Slice, Twin Parry, Flensing Slice

Duelist Snagging Strike, Dueling Parry, Duelist's Challenge

Mobile Skirmisher Sudden Charge, Reactive Pursuit, Barrelling Charge

Ranged Double Shot, Parting Shot, Triple Shot

Two-Handed Knockdown, Clear the Way, Positioning Assault

Versatile Quick Draw, Double Shot, Power Attack



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DRAGA THE GUIDE

Everyone has somewhere to go and, if the price is right, someone will always be willing to transport them. Fortunately for poorer travelers, Draga's price is good company and even better stories.

A bovia hailing from the lowlands, Draga grew up with a circle of druids, however, upon coming of age, she decided to see the world. Traveling for many years, she lived off of the land, making many friends along the way, both animal and humanoid. She befriended a pair of giant elks, Honedoo and Shiveek, whose names mean "speed" and "fury" in Bovian, that love traveling as much as her. She makes a habit of accompanying adventurers on their journeys and, as a result, many retired adventurers have either met her or at least know of her.

Once, after a dangerous quest where only Draga was brave enough to act as a guide, a grateful adventurer gifted her with an immaculate ironwood wagon sled affixed with twisted grass harnesses sized for her beloved elk friends. She named the sled Neeshoon, the bovia word for "traveler." With Neeshoon, she can traverse even the most rugged terrain at top-notch speeds without fearing broken wheels or other damages a regular wagon might suffer.

She is almost always willing to take travelers forward on their adventures, if they can grab her attention. While in-person references make their way to her over time, her old friends all know a much faster way. It is said that if you were to find ten birds, at least one would know of Draga's current whereabouts. Send them off with a letter with your request and she is bound to show up the next day. Of course, this story is hyperbole. Those who know her best will tell you that at least 30 birds must be released to succeed in finding her.

Draga does not offer her services for free, but many find her rates more than generous. She deals in tales: the better the story, the more likely she will come to your aid again in the future. Draga simply loves travel and relishes the company of adventurers; luckily many adventurers like her as well. In fact, while she requests nothing, many patrons often offer her souvenirs and other trinkets. She secretly gives these to the children in the towns she passes by, as there's not much room for personal possessions when living on the road. However, if you request a ride from Draga, be certain of your destination. Once she has her mind set on taking adventurers somewhere, she can be very stubborn about changing her route.

Though many years have passed, Draga still practices some druidic magic. Watchful adventurers will notice

her slow down when traveling through particularly wild and beautiful places. She regularly takes time to thank nature for all it has given her, and for the wonderful world she gets to explore and see. Even in battle, a keen observer will notice her utter a small prayer to nature before each swing of her hatchet. Many a bandit's end has begun with an unfortunate encounter with these words, followed by a deadly blow from Draga's weapon of choice.

Story Hooks

Draga provides a great way to make travel interesting. When sending the players to an unexplored and dangerous area and introducing her as a guide, Draga can be a great tool for exposition, giving crucial information to the players so that they can prepare accordingly. An alternative is to make the search for Draga a quest in itself. As she wanders around the world guiding adventurers and temerous travelers, finding her can be challenging, and an interesting puzzle for the party to solve.

Finally, while Draga is not defenseless, combat is not her area of expertise, and her trade can easily put her in dangerous situations where she knows too much and becomes threatened. She might have to duck agents of a kingdom trying to hide a prisoner, or a thieves guild looking for someone on the run. Helping Draga out of such a situation would guarantee her eternal loyalty and friendship, making for a very useful ally for a group of adventurers.

Social Interactions

Draga's charming and friendly nature makes her very responsive to Diplomacy checks, treating most strangers as defacto friends until proven otherwise. But, for someone who would like to make a true friend of Draga, a Performance or Druidic Lore check would be the way to go. You may treat success degrees as one better if you attempt to Make an Impression or otherwise affect her disposition using these skills. However, the impressive Bovian is not easily scared and will not respond to intimidation, making the check a near guaranteed failure.

Draga can also be very stubborn about changing routes or destinations; any attempt to convince her to change plans requires at least three successful checks before two failures occur toward the same purpose.

UNIQUE N MEDIUM SHE/HER BOVIAN HUMANOID

Perception +17;

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnomish, Sphinx, Thalassic; speak with animals

Skills Athletics +15, Medicine +13, Nature +18, Stealth +13, Survival +15, Riding Lore +18

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Animal Speaker Whenever Draga takes the Command an Animal action, she can attempt to command any number of animals. When she does, she attempts a single Nature check and compares it to the DC of all animals she is attempting to command. She must give the same commands to all animals.

Items +1 striking returning hatchet, +1 hide

AC 23; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14

HP 95

Earthen Skin ♦ (earth, primal)
Draga thanks the earth for giving her stability. Until the start of her next turn, Draga gains resistance 3 to physical damage.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ hatchet +17 [+13/+9] (agile, sweep, thrown 10 ft.), **Damage** 2d6+9 slashing

Melee ♦ horn +16 [+11/+6] (shove, unarmed), **Damage** 2d6+7 piercing

Primal Innate Spells DC 21; **3rd** animal vision; **2nd** animal messenger; **Cantrips (3rd)** know direction; **Constant** speak with animals

Fiery Slice ♦♦ (fire, primal) Draga implores the fire to grant her warmth. She makes a melee hatchet Strike that deals an additional 2d6 fire damage.

Nature's Blades (primal, metal) Whenever Draga deals damage with a metal weapon, it overcomes resistances and triggers weaknesses as if it were all varieties of precious metal. This does not grant her weapons the additional properties of these metals.

River's Path ♦♦ (primal, water) Draga thanks the river for guiding her way. Draga Strides twice, ignoring any difficult terrain or movement restriction due to water. If she ends her final movement on the surface of water, she falls into the water immediately.

Verdant Footfalls (primal, wood) Draga does not harm foliage she moves through unless she desires to. She is always considered to be using the Cover Tracks activity in verdant environments.

Zephyr Launch ♦ (air, primal) Draga prays to the wind to push her forward. She throws her hatchet, making a ranged Strike at double her range increment.

UNRESTRAINED ORDER

Draga may not be actively involved with the druids that helped raised her, but she has learned a lot from their teachings and different perspectives on unity with nature. When Recalling Knowledge about the topic of druids, their traditions, or their magic, she treats the DC of the check as 2 lower when using Nature.

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EURA — KEEPER OF THE HAUNTED BLADES

"You again? I don't have time for this. Leave me alone and we'll both walk out of here safe and sound. . . Wait? That sword. . . the distinctive arching in the forte, that reinforced foible forged with differential hardening. Where did you get that? It must be one of the haunted panoply, forged by one of the thirteen unnamed master smiths of the Forgotten Forge! All right, fine, you have my attention,"

- Eura, Keeper of the Haunted Blades

Eura is a stheno (Bestiary 3) wanderer obsessed with an unusual hobby: collecting haunted swords. Typically uninterested in other people, especially those who brag about themselves or try to get her to notice them, Eura has little time for friendships or relationships... at least with other people. But when it comes to understanding the feelings of incorporeal spirits, Eura has been a natural since she was very young. When others try to engage her in conversations, she quietly demurs at first, then firmly and assertively shuts the other person down if they persist in bothering her, using violence when necessary.

In sharp contrast to her quiet ennui toward her fellow mortals, Eura becomes instantly animated, excitable, and even gregarious when encountering a rare sword, especially if the weapon is haunted or otherwise cursed. Eura can talk for hours about swords without stopping, much to the surprise of those who have tried and failed to hold her attention with anything else.

When presented with an opportunity to obtain a new sword for her collection, Eura leaps at the chance. She typically prefers aboveboard methods such as purchasing the sword or acquiring it through dungeon delving, but if those tactics fail to produce results, she is not above stealing or other skullduggery if necessary. Ultimately, she believes not only that haunted swords aren't safe in the hands of others, but also that they are sapient beings who shouldn't be treated as mere possessions, but as friends, in a way that their current "owners" can't possibly understand. To her, this justifies nearly any length to obtain her desired sword, though she tries her best to avoid killing others except as a last resort.

Plot Hooks

Aquisition

Eura can't manage to crack a dangerous dungeon that holds a haunted sword she wants, so she hires the party to help her, agreeing to keep only the sword as her share.

Snake Burglar Mystery

The party must solve a heist wherein a mysterious thief stole a haunted sword from a museum. Eura is the prime suspect, since she tried to purchase the sword a few days before, but the museum refused.

Haunting for an Exorcism

The party or one of their close allies is afflicted by a terrible curse or possessed by a spirit, and they need Eura's knowledge of curses or haunts to solve the problem... but Eura won't help for free, and wants them to track down a sword for her in exchange.

Parting Is Such Sharp Sorrow

After the party gets their hands on a haunted blade, they meet Eura on the road. She initially has an enthusiastic conversation with them about the sword, but if they're unwilling to part with it, a fight breaks out

EURA, KEEPER OF THE HAUNTED BLADES

CREATURE 7

UNIQUE N MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMANOID STHENO

Perception +13; haunt finder, snake search

Languages Celestial, Common, Necril, Petran; speak with snakes

Skills Crafting +17, Curse Lore +17, Diplomacy +13, Haunt Lore +17, Intimidation +15, Religion +12, Occultism +17, Performance +13, Survival +14, Thievery +13

Str +2, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +3, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +4

Items haunted swords

Snake Search When Eura Searches or Seeks, her snakes try to help, rolling a separate Perception check with a modifier of +8 instead of +13. If the snakes notice something, they try to notify Eura, though they are no more intelligent than normal snakes and might have varying opinions on what makes something interesting.

Speak With Snakes Eura can communicate with snakes, including the ones in her hair, and can use Diplomacy to Make an Impression on snakes and Request things from snakes.

AC 25; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +16; +2 circumstance to all saves vs. curses and haunts

HP 92

Haunted Salvation ⤵ (abjuration, fortune, magical, manipulate) **Frequency** once per 10 minutes; **Requirements** Eura possess at least one haunted blade; **Trigger** Eura fails (but doesn't critically fail) a saving throw; **Effect** The spirits within Eura's haunted blades attempt to protect her from harm... though they don't always succeed. Eura rerolls the saving throw and uses the second result, even if it's worse.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ⤵ snake fang +16 (agile), Damage 2d6+6 piercing

Melee ⤵ haunted sword +16 (versatile P), Damage 2d8+10 slashing

Ranged ⤵ haunted sword +18 (versatile P, range increment 50 feet), Damage 2d8+10 slashing

Accursed Haunt ⤵ (curse, necromancy, occult) Eura calls upon one of the spirits haunting her blades, imbuing a haunted sword with a powerful curse. The next time she successfully Strikes a target with a haunted sword before the end of her next turn, the target must attempt a DC 29 Will save against one of these curses at random (roll 1d8).

1. Grave Curse (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
2. Curse of Nightmares (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
3. Theft of Thought (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
4. Slayer's Haunt (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
5. Coward's Roots (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
6. Curse of the Ravenous (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
7. Oath of the Flesh (*Pathfinder Gamemastery Guide*)
8. Eura Chooses

Haunted Swords Eura's blades are haunted by various spirits, which are temperamental and unpredictable but typically assist her during combat by attacking her enemies. She can attempt a Strike with a haunted sword even if she isn't wielding one of her swords, either in melee or as a ranged attack within 50 feet as the spirit flings the sword to attack Eura's enemy; after a ranged Strike, the sword arcs back to float around Eura again. When the spirit is assisting her, her haunted swords always deal 2d8+10 damage, regardless of the sword's physical condition or magical properties, and since the spirit is doing the flinging, her ranged attacks with her haunted swords don't trigger reactions normally triggered on a ranged attack, such as Reactive Strike.

HAUNTED AND INTELLIGENT

As a GM, you might want to introduce Eura along with, or to collect a haunted sword that has plans of its own. Using the rules for intelligent items (*Gamemastery Guide*) to bring one such sword to life in a dynamic that may have it convince you to keep it away from Eura, or even to seek her out.

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INDOS BLADEWIELDER, INDEPENDENT SWORDKEEPER

"I'm no stranger to items imbued with intelligence, I was a stranger to Indos though, never have I met a being more intent on its own autonomy"

No one is quite sure where Indos came from nor are they intent to speak on it. What records do exist however is that Indos was forged with the expressed purpose of being an adviser to their wielder. In truth Indos is a sword, a great sword to be exact, and is very proficient in its own use and is more than capable of giving in depth instruction on unnumbered weapons and combat tactics in general. It's unfortunate then that Indos was the target of a lot of abuse over its existence. From would be warlords who didn't care to look after them to collectors who would not even interact with them.

Speaking to Indos they will tell you that they once spent over a hundred years buried in the mud on a field and there it would have stayed if they had not been unearthed by a farmers plow. They'll also say that this is not unusual for its existence, having also been buried with kings and the treasure horde of more than one dragon. Indos will also be the first to say that this process has caused it to be more and more bitter with the cycle. Despite their extraordinary abilities, under most circumstances, they would require someone to wield them.

However thanks, ironically, to this cycle Indos would finally claim their independence. Their last owner was a collector of magical artifacts and Indos was to be the prize of the collection. So much that they decided to ensure stronger protections to make sure Indos could not be stolen. To do this the collector commissioned the creation of a construct designed specifically to protect Indos, despite being mindless the construct had the single order to protect Indos but by way of its design would draw from the power of Indos as well. It was in this that the collector made a mistake, upon being placed in the construct Indos was able to gain control of it. Upon gaining their independence they went about the process of freeing themselves from their owner and swore to never belong to another ever again.

Since then Indos has been doing the one thing it was always denied, experiencing the world by its own whim. No longer controlled by another they've taken great pains to ensure that they would never have their freedom removed again with several adjustments being made to the construct that Indos controls to make them more secure. Some have attempted to take Indos but the greatsword will not have its freedom taken easily and to date no one has succeeded.

That's not to say Indos is unfriendly. Once assurances are made that their autonomy will not be taken they can become a good friend, in some instances even a teacher. Some have even sought out instruction from the ancient sword and found them to be an exceptional teacher who leans on first hand knowledge and centuries or more of experience. Though they refuse to work with armies as they detest the idea of answering to a higher power whether it be a general or some other noble.

INDOS BLADEWIELDER

CREATURE 12

UNIQUE N LARGE THEY/THEM CONSTRUCT

Perception +23

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +25, Athletics +25, Deception +20, Diplomacy +20, Intimidation +20

Str +9, **Dex** +5, **Con** +5, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Indos Within Like normal swordkeeper's Indos' torso houses a single weapon. In this case however it houses the core blade that is actually Indos. To access the torso chamber it requires four successful DC 36 Thievery checks to Disable a Device to open; on a critical failure, the backlash deals 8d6 force damage (DC 34 basic Reflex save) to the creature attempting the check. If Indos is immobilized, grabbed, prone, or stunned, both DCs are reduced by 2. If Indos is removed, the construct's echoblades vanish. However at the start of Indos' next turn the blade teleports back into the construct and the chamber shuts again unless the wards within the chamber are disabled with DC 36.

AC 32; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +22, **Will** +22; +1 bonus vs controled

HP 335; **Immunities** death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, necromancy, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison

Reactive Strike ➤

Speed 20 feet

Melee ➤ echoblade +26 (magical, reach 10 feet, versatile P), Damage 3d8+15 slashing plus 1d8 force

Melee ➤ fist +26 (agile, reach 10 feet), Damage 3d8+15 bludgeoning

Ranged ➤ echoblade +26 (agile, magical, thrown 30 feet), Damage 3d8+15 Slashing plus 1d8 force

Echoblade Flurry ➤ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** Indos makes two melee echoblade Strikes. If both Strikes hit the same creature, combine their damage for the purpose of resistances and weakness. Apply Indos' multiple attack penalty normally.

Colossal Echo ➤➤ (force) Indos projects a massive echoblade held in all four hands, dealing 12d8 force damage to all creatures in a 30-foot line (DC 30 basic Reflex save). It can't use Colossal Echo again for 1d4 rounds.

Raise Guard ➤ Indos raises an echoblade to protect itself, gaining a +2 circumstance bonus to AC until the start of their next turn.

LOURAN HALOGREY

"I was born a Tiefling and in their attempt to get rid of it they forced an angelic essence inside of me. It didn't work. So I am good, not because of what they did to me, what they forced inside of me. I'm good because I choose to be"
- Louran Halogrey

Louran doesn't speak about his childhood often or the religion that tortured him. What he makes absolutely clear is that at some point in his childhood, in an attempt to remove the fiendish parts of him that caused him to look the way he does, his parents consented to having an angelic essence embedded inside of him. The idea was that in the face of something so good, the evil inside of him would be purged and at least would make him human and at best an aasimar. Unfortunately for his parents it didn't quite work that way, and although the ritual took, it did not remove what they considered to be the demonic taint.

When he was old enough he ran from home and never looked back. He found that the city was far more accepting of who he was and although it wasn't universal he found his niche. Because despite the urging of the angelic presence within him to take the easy way Louran had learned the science of medicine. Choosing to help people regardless, what started as a back alley operation rapidly became a clinic to help the sick and injured.

Despite this he is by no means a pacifist and will often take what little he has learned from his childhood to defend those who can't defend themselves. He is well aware of his shortcomings and is not opposed to sneaking around to do what needs to be done. Killing those who do intentional harm to others is one thing he agrees upon with the holy force within.

It is in these moments and others, the presence within will try to push, to lean upon its power to heal and smite those who do evil. Although Louran will mostly resist there has been more than one instance where it has got the better of him. When recovering from these moments he insists that a little part of him dies, replaced by the angel but he continues to insist he does good not because it tells him to but because it's his choice.

Campaign Usage

Louran primary usage in a campaign is as an inner city healer, should the players need someone to heal them or deal with wounds that are a bit beyond them he's one to go to. Additionally as something of a common place

sanctuary for a lot of people, he tends to accidentally collect rumors. This can function as an additional source of information for the party or even as a quest giver.

With his rather unique upbringing and the work he's been doing since he has left his family Louran is also a wealth of plot hooks. The fact that an angelic essence is inside of him can make him the target of cults who consider him holy or are after the essence for their own purposes. Conversely helping him with his particular curse can also provide ample room for adventure. On the flip side of this with his skills as a doctor he is in high demand and rescuing from people who want to not share his skills is likely.

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BOUND AND BOUNDLESS

Louran's unusual nature as an angelic vessel causes him constant strife. He believes, and very well is good by his own nature, but it never seems to be enough to the celestial bound inside who reckons between good and evil on a cosmological scale too difficult for most mortals to comprehend. Louran is as much a prison as he is a prisoner, and both he and the angel within have been fused on a level that leaves neither a whole being independently, to both their disdain.

A hoof-footed Tiefling stands with a proud look on his face, a pair of back swept horns frame his copper red hair. He wears a doctor's coat showing the signs of wear and tear with an old healer's hit in the other.

LOURAN HALOGREY

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM HE/HIM ANGEL HUMAN HUMANOID

TIEFLING

Perception +19

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, two others as appropriate

Skills Acrobatics +16, Medicine +21, Stealth +18, Thievery +16

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +6, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +4

Items expanded healer's kit, minor elixirs of life (4), moderate elixir of life (2)

AC 26; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +16, **Will** +21

HP 100

First Response ➤ (manipulate) Trigger A creature adjacent to Louran is reduced to zero Hit Points and falls unconscious; Effect Not willing to let an ally fall under his watch, Louran works to keep his allies from dying. Louran can choose to Administer First Aid to Stabilize.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ➤ dagger +18 (moderate) (agile, versatile S), Damage 2d6+8 (low) piercing

Ranged ➤ dagger +18 (moderate) (agile, thrown 10, versatile S), Damage 2d6+8 (low) Piercing

Battlefield Healer ➤ Louran is well practiced in getting into the thick of scuffle to heal the wounded. Louran Strides or Tumble's Through, if his movement finishes adjacent to a creature he may attempt to Treat Wounds on that creature. This usage of Treat Wounds does not trigger reactions.

Angelic Essence ➤➤ (divine, healing, magical) The presence within Louran is powerful and can assist with healing but he is reluctant to use it, lest it destroy more of who he is. Louran may heal a creature within 30 feet for 4d8+32, if he does he must make a Will save. On a failure he is stunned for 1d4 rounds as he wrestles with the angel within. On a critical failure he is immediately reduced to 0 Hit Points and is unconscious but not dead. A Medicine check with a DC of 27 is required to bring him back to consciousness. If this check is not successful within one week, his body burns away with divine light before becoming a balisse (*Bestiary*).

Medical Assurance When Louran sees to a patient he does so with utmost professionalism and skill. When using Treat Wounds in combat, Louran doesn't have to roll a medicine and simply heals the targeted creature for 2d8+15. Once a creature has benefited from this healing they can not benefit from it again for 1 hour.

Sneak Attack Despite his commitment to being a healer Louran is not opposed to using his medical skills to strike somewhere vital. When rolling damage against an off-guard opponent, Louran deals 2d6 additional precision damage.

NICO - THE LABYRINTHINE ARCHITECT

"I met him once. A mishap sent me to the Labyrinth itself and it wasn't long before I was lost. Fortunately, he found me there, and after bringing me out, offered me tea. He truly is a brilliant man, but my conversation with him left me wondering; when does he stop and the Labyrinth begin?"
- Sinclair

Born in the labyrinth caverns favored by his people, Nico showed an early aptitude for architecture and construction. Although not as big or strong as his fellows, his extraordinary gift for navigation kept the others on their toes and left most who followed in his wake hopelessly lost, no matter how adept they were at finding their way through mazes. It was at this young age that Nico discovered his connection to the demiplane known as the Labyrinth and his ability to travel to and from it. These abilities only deepened as Nico grew older, his natural talents expanding more and more, as did his other unusual abilities.

These unique abilities and propensities garnered the attention of King Harku, who had Nico build a prison where he could punish those who opposed him. Nico built him a cunning and magical maze engraved into the stonework before his throne, and gave the king the ability to transport people into it. It was with this triumph that Nico entered the world as a wandering architect, plying his trade and his abilities to any who interested him.

Nico's patrons vary greatly, as do his motivations. His desire to explore his powers and architectural brilliance has led to many people becoming accidentally lost in his creations. For some, it has been by choice: Nico has offered grand treasures to whoever could escape his mazes, and there is no shortage of volunteers. He observes such would-be explorers and applies his insights to his new creations, ever pushing the boundaries of his defensive architecture.

Interestingly, Nico has also gained a following as something of a religious figure. His connection to the Labyrinth has only grown, and many consider his powers to be divine in nature. Nico has refuted this, saying that there is no god of the Labyrinth but rather that the place itself has its own power that has been gifted to him. Regardless, the Labyrinthine Following continues to grow: a collection of architects and wanderers inspired by Nico's work, who have also begun to show similar powers.

Campaign Use

Nico's particular expertise serves as a wealth of information should the players be facing down a nasty maze. Alternatively, he could be the architect of the very maze they are trying to navigate and ingratiating themselves to him is their only way to get around it.

It is also common for Nico to lure people into his various constructs as a way to test them, taking note of what works and what doesn't in order to improve his creations. The rewards for succeeding will always make up for the trouble caused, but riches rarely make up for the time lost to his mind-bending architecture.

NICO THE LABYRINTH CREATURE 14

UNIQUE N MEDIUM HE/HIM BOVIAN HUMANOID

Perception +28

Languages Common

Skills Crafting +31, Diplomacy +25, Lore Mazes +31, Occult +25, Religion +25, Survival +31

Str +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +8, **Wis** +9, **Cha** +4

AC 33; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +22, **Will** +30

HP 190; **Immunities** effects with the extradimensional trait

Maze Aura (occult, transmutation) Nico radiates an aura that makes it difficult to reach him as space around him bends toward the Labyrinth. The area within 30 feet around Nico is treated as difficult terrain.

Lose the Path (mental) **Trigger** A creature moves more than 5 feet in a single action towards Nico within his aura; **Effect** The creature must make a DC 39 Will save, on a failure their movement stops as their sense of direction becomes too disorientated to continue. On a critical failure they are also confused.

Speed 20 feet

Melee (staff) +23 [+18/+13] (two-hand 1d8), **Damage** 3d6+13 bludgeoning

Occult Innate Spells DC 39, attack +23; **8th** *maze* (at will); **7th** *plane shift* (at will, the Labyrinth only)

Spontaneous Occult Spells DC 39, attack +23; **7th** *magnificent mansion*, *reverse gravity* (2 slots); **6th** *mislead*, *repulsion*, *screaming*, *teleport*, *true seeing*, *wall of force* (4 slots); **5th** *banishment*, *false vision*, *hallucination*, *illusory scene*, *prying eye*, *synesthesia*, *telepathic bond* (4 slots); **Cantrips** (7th) *daze*, *detect magic*, *know direction*, *message*

Amazing Communication (divination) Nico's curious power over maze-like structures allows him to communicate to anyone within them. So long as he is in the same structure as another, he can communicate with them as if using message.

Labyrinth Sense Nico cannot become lost in maze-like structures and he never has to make checks to navigate them successfully.

COURT OF THE UNDERKING

Considered one of his proudest achievements, Nico built this maze for King Harku, who asked for something to trap his enemies while also keeping him entertained. What Nico built was truly an amazing achievement. Engraved into an intricate and beautiful pattern in the stonework before his throne is a maze into which the king can send anything using a particular magic item. Additionally the king can cause illusions to appear that show him how those in his maze are fairing. It's not uncommon for him to drop monsters into the maze to chase those trapped.



True Labyrinth

Acting as his focus and a divine symbol to the Labyrinthine Following, the True Labyrinth is Nico's crowning achievement. It represents his control over the demi-plane known as 'The Labyrinth'. For Nico, it is a source of great pride and comfort, one with which he would never part willingly.

TRUE LABYRINTH

ITEM 22

RARE ARTIFACT MAGICAL STRUCTURE

Bulk 10

This miniature diorama of a truly massive and mind bending labyrinth holds countless lost souls, dungeons, and even settlements from those who have abandoned escape. Each *true labyrinth* is unique in design, as is the world within. A creature can claim dominion over the true labyrinth by communing with it for 1 hour. Attempting to do so alerts the most recent previous user of the true labyrinth, allowing them to take action against the new creature. When a creature has dominion over the true labyrinth, they may use its activations. Within the true labyrinth, there is a world all its own: a maze in the loosest sense of the word, layer upon layer of endless repetition and alien design. Somewhere within the true labyrinth lies a nexus: a place that offers an escape to the outside world. Reaching this nexus allows you to exit adjacent to the miniature true labyrinth fully healed, with all spell slots and focus points restored, and immune to its abilities for 1 week. The controller of the *true labyrinth* may enter through its nexus by Interacting with the miniature, but is not restored or immune to its abilities upon exiting. Powerful magic such as *miracle* can attempt a counteract check against the true labyrinth to send a single creature straight to the nexus.

Activate 1 minute (concentrate, divination, magical, scrying) You can focus on the true labyrinth and see either its location and the surrounding 100-foot area for 1 minute or focus on the inside of the true labyrinth, allowing you to explore it as if with a *prying eye* heightened to 10th level and with a speed of 100 feet seeing in front of it, or 30 feet seeing in every direction.

Activate 1 minute (conjunction, concentrate, magical); **Requirements** You are within 1 mile of the true labyrinth; **Effect** You can move an item you are holding into a place you choose within the true labyrinth or retrieve an unattended item from the labyrinth, conjuring it into your hands.

Activate 10 minutes (concentrate, magical, transmutation); **Requirements** You are within 1 mile of the true labyrinth; **Effect** you may alter the labyrinth, changing an area no larger than a 100-foot cube to meet your specifications. You may alter rules of reality in such an area as well at the GMs discretion, such as making gravity relative to a surface or modifying how time works. You may not make it impossible for the true labyrinth's nexus to be reached by redesigning the labyrinth this way.

Activate >>> envision, command (conjunction, magical); **Requirements** You are within 1 mile of the true labyrinth; **Effect** You can target one creature you can see—including through scrying effects—within 1 mile of the true labyrinth. The creature must make a Will Save DC 47 as you command it to enter the labyrinth, the creature can hear your voice within its mind, regardless of its ability to hear or distance.

Critical Success The creature is immune to further attempts to trap it within the labyrinth for 10 minutes.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is pulled into a random, but relatively safe place within the labyrinth.

Critical Failure The creature is pulled into the labyrinth into a section you choose.

Special Any spells you cast while within a mile of the true labyrinth may target creatures, items, or areas within the labyrinth that you can see within it.

Destruction The Labyrinth must be left without a commander or any denizens. After which it is reduced to a mundane diorama.

NYXBLADE THE RAVEN

'Justice is rarely black or white... but even when it is, the question is always whether it is right to take it into your own hands.'
~ Sinclair

Obscured in the dark, you make out a tall man in navy leathers. A cloak of wispy darkness flows from his back, and the top of his face is obscured by a mask akin to a raven.

The local district attorney was found murdered at his desk, blood splattered upon his case files. The corpse of the orphanage matron was pinned above the door of the homestead, mockingly posed in the symbol of its patron deity. The lieutenant of the local watch was tossed into the gutter near the local brothel, stripped down to his undergarments.

Perhaps most disturbing was the postmortem; attempts to commune with the deceased via ritual and séance were met with silence. None understood how this was done, let alone why such upstanding individuals were targeted.

But alongside the bodies was evidence of wrongdoing; the district attorney was taking bribes from local crime rackets that were extorting innocent families. The matron was selling her wards to slavers; abandoned children no-one would miss. And the less that was said about the lieutenant's unsavoury proclivities with the local ladies of the night, the better. All were leading horrid double-lives, using their public personas to turn wary eyes away.

Nyxblade

Along with the evidence was always pinned a single black feather, like that from a crow or raven. The mystery assassin became dubbed 'the Ebon Feather' by the public. Local elves spoke of a legendary assassin known as the Nyxblade who left an identical calling card.

The Ebon Feather's revelations tore the city in twain. Some praised them for exposing the brazen corruption under everyone's noses. Others condemned them as a reckless vigilante who was taking matters into their own hands instead of turning them into authority figures with integrity. And others still knew how deep the corrupt ran; they simply wished everyone would turn a blind eye to it; much easier to accept the world isn't perfect, and inconsistency is more stable than absolute justice.

But questions abounded; who was the Ebon Feather? How were they able to uncover the dark secrets of these public figureheads? A spirit of vengeance summoned by the scorned dead? A hitman hired by enterprising nobles to tie up loose ends?

Illuinon Asteir

In truth, the Ebon Feather's social guise is a mild-mannered government clerk named Illuinon Asteir. A former member of a clandestine unit of elven assassins that was trained in forbidden necromantic and shadow magics, Asteir went into hiding after they were disbanded and the elven lords threatened to erase all trace of their existence. Traveling to a far-off town and entering the local public service, Asteir decided to use his dark gifts to help the suffering, rather than be used as a tool of scheming nobles and their auspices. He took to his role to access official records easily, finding out as much about his targets as possible, hunting those who placed themselves above the law.

As Illuinon juggles his legal responsibilities with his after hours activities, he struggles between his desire for justice and the unadulterated hatred he has for the unjust. The training endured to make him an assassin was horrific, and it takes regular meditation and self-reflection to not let his mind fracture under the strain. For now, he can channel his broken psyche towards just pursuits. But even he worries one day he may take it too far...and with no-one to share his secret and keep him in check, he may reach that precipice sooner than later.

Writing a Nyxblade story arc

Nyxblade intends to present a moral challenge for a party. While he only targets individuals who've committed heinous crimes, his vigilante justice may rub certain characters the wrong way, even if they agree his victims are deserving of punishment.

Alternatively, the party may agree with his methods, and help him track down a mark he is struggling to deal with on his own. In this instance Nyxblade's takes the role of a quest provider, giving both information and objectives to the party towards accomplishing a goal.

Nyxblade's social identity, Illuinon, should be utilized with the degree of secrecy deserving of his efforts. Illuinon should be used to assist the party in gathering information regarding the murders. Discovering Nyxblade's secret identity should be a major effort and

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PERMANENT DEATH OF PCS

Nyxblade only kills those he deems truly abhorrent and past redemption. If Nyxblade engages with the party, he will do everything in his power to escape their presence, or at least take them out non-lethally if he has no choice but to fight.

If for some reason the encounter is to the death, for example at the climax of a long investigation during which the party has decided Nyxblade had to be stopped at all cost, be wary of its Raven of Death ability. Preventing a player character from being resurrected and interacted with can rub players the wrong way. If you feel uncertainty towards it, use the ability, but ignore the second paragraph. After all, Nyxblade probably doesn't feel like the party deserves a permanent death, as they were doing what they thought was right.

surprising reveal, though if the party figures it out quickly, red herring NPCs may help divert attention, but don't string them along too much.

NYXBLADE THE RAVEN

CREATURE 12

UNIQUE CG MEDIUM HE/HIM ELF HUMANOID

Perception +25; darkvision (via *greater goggles of night*)

Languages Common, Elven

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +19, Crafting +19, Deception +23, Diplomacy +19, Intimidation +23, Occultism +19, Society +23, Stealth +25, Survival +18, Thievery +25

Str +2, **Dex** +5, **Con** +1, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items +2 *greater striking wounding dagger*, +2 *greater striking throwing dagger*, *greater goggles of night*, +1 *resilient shadow leather armor*

AC 32; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +24, **Will** +19

HP 165

Social Guise Nyxblade has the social guise of a public servant named Asteir Illuinon (Neutral Good). This otherwise functions as the Vigilante Dedication^{APG} with a DC of 40 to see through his guise.

Terrifying Appearance When Nyxblade becomes noticed by a creature to whom he was previously undetected, the creature must attempt a Will save (DC 29) or become frightened 1 (frightened 2 on a critical failure). Regardless of the outcome, the creature is immune to Terrifying Appearance for 24 hours.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +24 [+20/+16], **Damage** 3d4+11 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

Ranged ♦ throwing dagger +24 [+20/+16], **Damage** 3d4+11 slashing

Sneak Attack Nyxblade deals an additional 3d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.

Occult Innate Spells DC 29; **5th** *blink charge* (x2); **4th** *umbral graft*; **3rd** *vampiric touch* (x2); **2nd** *darkness* (at will); **Cantrips (6th)** *chill touch*

Occult Focus Spells DC 29; **6th** (2 focus points) *dance of darkness*, *shadow jump*

Change Identity (conjunction, shadow) Nyxblade spends 1 minute to change between his two identities; he magically manifests his vigilante weapons, armor, and equipment in place of his civilian attire, or vice-versa. If interrupted, he does not complete his transformation.

If Nyxblade dies, the attire he does not currently have manifested appears in whatever locale he's designated as his hideout.

Mark of the Raven ♦♦♦ (divination) **Requirements** Nyxblade can see the creature they intend to mark; **Effect** Nyxblade designates a single creature as their mark until they die or Nyxblade uses Mark of the Raven again. Nyxblade gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek their mark and on Stealth checks against their mark. Nyxblade's dagger strikes deal sneak attack damage to the marked creature, and he may choose for the extra damage to be void instead of physical.

Quick Draw ♦ Nyxblade Interacts to draw a weapon, then Strikes with that weapon.

Raven of Death ♦♦ (death, necromancy) Nyxblade makes a Strike against a target they've marked with Mark of the Raven. If they hit, the mark takes 6d6 extra damage of the same type as their Sneak Attack, with a DC 31 basic Fortitude save. If the mark critically fails, they die. This is an incapacitation effect. The creature then becomes temporarily immune to this ability for 1 day.

When killed in this way, attempts to communicate with the targeted creature, return it to life, turn it into an undead, or otherwise disturb its afterlife fail unless the effect's counteract level is higher than 6, or originates from an artifact or a deity.



ROSTYN — THE GRAVEKEEPER

"Let me be clear, the living will die, the dead will rot, the rot will grow, the growth will be life. What puts you above any of this?"

- Rostyn the Gravekeeper

Rostyn lost their parents at a very young age, their father to war, their mother to plague before they can remember. For better or for worse it started them down a long path towards a life dedicated to death. Even early on in life they felt the pull and as an orphan found themselves drawn to the local church and cemetery. Begging with the aging priest of the temple, Jordis, they began to work there under his watchful eye.

Because of the advancing age of the priest the majority of the work Rostyn was set to was the maintenance of the church and its grounds, the most momentous of which was the graveyard. Jordis' age and his general disinterest in the graves had left it practically abandoned and in disrepair. Despite the challenge, Rostyn took to their work and over the course of several years restored the graveyard. It gave them a sense of peace to clean the stones and remove the weeds, but there was something deeper at work.

This was not lost on Jordis who had continued to watch the child as they grew and slowly but surely began to teach the child the ways of the Gravekeeper. For surely the god that watched the living also watched the dead, and although Gravekeepers were fewer in number, they were just as necessary. If the dead weren't looked after they would grow restless and it was the duty of the Gravekeepers to ensure the dead would not rise. Rostyn took to their training with an unforeseen aptitude, they had a natural talent, and it wasn't long before they were looking after the funerary rites of the local people.

Then came a day when figures began to appear on the horizon, approaching town. These were not bandits or a conquering army but the restless dead; the minions of a necromancer come to raid the graveyard for more corpses. The militia was few in number but Jordis and Rostyn were ready to assist in the defense of the town. Jordis was not as young as he once was and fell to the undead hordes as the battle waged on. In this moment Rostyn did what others thought impossible, taking control of the undead and turning the horde against itself.

With the battle won, Rostyn went back to their duty, not just as undertaker but as a Gravekeeper; doubling down on their training, driving them towards mastering

their power over the undead, all while staying true to their training. To whatever end, good or evil, Rostyn now understands the power of the dead and they intend to use it.

Campaign Purpose

Though Rostyn the Gravekeeper mostly serves as a source of information on the matters of the dead, the afterlife, and as a healer. Their knowledge of the undead is particularly frightening to many and they can recite many of the rituals to raise the dead from memory. If the players need information on specific undead, Rostyn can easily be used as a source of reliable knowledge. They also have the ability to bring the dead back to life, though they rarely use it and refuse regardless if the dead have been left for too long. This gives them a ready utility for the party and a quest giver for the game master, should the need arise.

However, their habit of using mindless undead to assist them in their mission makes them an easy target for the misled and zealous. Whether it's an ignorant mob convinced they are a dread necromancer or some other deception, Rostyn does little to disperse any of these notions and will defend themselves if they feel the need. In combat they will mostly use their mindless undead to attack, assisting their minions with magic. If engaged in combat they will happily stand toe to toe with combatants, after all, their shovel is more than just a tool. However they will never kill a living creature and should they bring someone to 0 Hit Points they will always prioritize casting *stabilize* on them. Rostyn is an 18th level challenge when debating knowledge of the undead or other tasks related to identifying the effects of undeath.

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A human in thick layers of rough travelers leather stands before you. They keep their hood up to obscure their features. A silvered shovel in one hand, a lantern in the other.

ROSTYN THE GRAVEKEEPER CREATURE 12

UNIQUE N MEDIUM THEY/THEM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +25

Languages Common, Necril; two others as is relevant

Skills Athletics +22, Intimidate +25, Religion +28, Undead Lore +36

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +4, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +2

Items +2 striking standard-grade silver shovel (functions as a dwarven war axe), +2 resilient breastplate

AC 32; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +19, **Will** +27; +2 bonus to saves vs. spells or effects from creatures with the undead trait

HP 215; **Resistances** vitality 10, void 10

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ silvered shovel +26 (magical, sweep, two-handed d12), **Damage** 3d8+12 slashing

Divine Innate Spells DC 32, attack +24; **6th** animate dead, raise dead; **5th** banishment, breath of life; **4th** dimensional anchor, talking corpse; **3rd** bind undead, sanctified ground; **Cantrips (6th)** detect magic, disrupt undead, divine lance, stabilize

Ritual DC 28; **6th** create undead

Lore of the Undead Rostyn's knowledge of the undead is second to none and their expertise is such that they can use it to readily help their allies. Whenever Rostyn successfully uses Recall Knowledge on a creature with the undead trait, they grant all allies within 30 feet a +2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls against that creature for 1 minute.

Undead Alignment Despite their nature, Rostyn's ability to call upon divine power allows them to damage the undead regardless of whether they are good or evil. When Rostyn casts *divine lance* against a creature with the undead trait, the spell's damage is vitality instead of the normal damage type and it gains the benefits of a *ghost touch* rune.





CHAPTER 5 - ORGANIZATIONS

"Is there anything so impressive as the ability for people to set aside difference and come together? The sum of one's parts almost always pale in comparison to the whole. Look no further for proof of this thesis."

~Sinclair

THE TINY FURIES

"Nobody embodies the term 'death from below' as frantically as the Tiny Furies. This team of small barbarians may seem amusing, even adorable for some, but I have seen the buzzing swarm of carnage they create."
~ Sinclair

Known for their brutality and fearlessness, the Tiny Furies make the perfect hire for those who need to sabotage an operation or create a chaotic diversion. However, counting on them for stealth operations or a surgical strike tends to bring unintended consequences, as each member of this group is as clumsy and volatile as they are effective.

History

The Tiny Furies were founded by Ribbin Kneecapper, a young halfling of controversial reputation. Born and raised in the slums of a very prosperous but unequal city, Ribbin refused to accept his seemingly meek fate. He was determined to defy the stereotypes accompanying his diminutive size and humble origins, and become a respected figure that inspired fear and admiration rather than pity and disgust. To fulfill his ambitions, he assembled a troupe of sellswords: people of similar situation and stature, hungry for riches and excitement. Together they built a reputation as the fiercest mercenary guild of the city. It didn't take long for everyone to see that this ragtag group of small warriors was also one of the most chaotic forces the underworld had ever conceived.

Philosophy

The Furies' official purpose is to improve the smaller citizens' quality of life. Their headquarters provide work, a home to live in, and a new family for others of their size. Loot is distributed equally among those who participate in missions and the injured receive the best care available. However, their messy ways and some of the members' unmatched greed have done very little to help the Furies' reputation or employability outside the guild. Nevertheless, so far they have proven to be an effective source of refuge and empowerment, one that brings wealth to those willing to fight for it.

Operations

Contrary to popular belief, not all mercenaries take just any work. After a few dozen spy and intrigue missions ended in disaster, the Tiny Furies limited their activities to contracts requiring less finesse and more excitement. Playing to their strength, this guild specializes in gang fights, bodyguarding, and sabotages, or, as they would cynically call it, "engagement and countermeasures." Their chaotic ways, lack of subtlety, and generally blunt and simple demeanor keep them away from contracts involving assassinations and political machinations. They do, however, have a taste for wreaking havoc in the upper city and wealthy neighborhoods. They have been known to waive their fees on occasion for a contract that would bring joy to their heart.

The Ticking Shelf

The Tiny Furies' headquarters—also known as the Ticking Shelf—is an ironically huge house just outside the noble district. While the exterior looks like a traditional mansion, the insides are truly unique. The common area has been converted into a functioning tavern, with its customary noises and smells, while simultaneously being fully decorated with the most opulent and extravagant details the higher echelons of the city would find extremely tacky. Each Fury has its individual room, but most spend their time in the makeshift tavern, smoking, drinking, dancing, and throwing axes into their mostly destroyed "venting wall." Anyone visiting the Shelf can feel the deep camaraderie and affection the Furies have for each other, even or especially in the middle of one of their many brawls.

Below the ground floor lies a basement perfectly equipped with training tools, sparring equipment, and a dozen boxes of healer's tools. Should things go south, the house can be easily converted into a fortress, nigh impregnable and capable of withstanding a siege of several months.

Potential Story Arcs

Death to the Furies

The Tiny Furies' rapid growth has not gone unnoticed, and even less so the damage they cause every time they accept a contract. As a response, rumor says someone is planning to start a guild war to take down the Furies and

dissolve their organization. If you need a story arc to allow your players to make some new allies, or if you are looking for a way to introduce the different power players of your city, a guild war or an assault on the Furies might be a great opportunity.

The War Within

Ribbin's blind ambitions have put the Furies in danger more than once, and Gruum is always on the lookout for the moment the halfling's interest will stop aligning with the Furies' own. Knowing full well this will start an internal war, the old goblin is trying to avoid it at all cost. But if it comes between betraying his old friend or the Furies, Gruum won't hesitate for a second. If your players have built a strong connection with one or many members of the Furies and you are looking to add tension in your campaign, an internal war within the Furies promises to bring your story in unexpected directions.

Boss, We Blew Up the Wrong Building

Due to the Furies' infamously chaotic practices, collateral damage happens more often than not. Everyone in the guild knows that, eventually, they will accidentally make an enemy for themselves by destroying or endangering the interest of a bigger fish in town. Whoever the wronged interest is, a conflict like this can shake the city and stir up even more chaos. Placing your players in this uncertain situation in the wake of a major incident should prove entertaining for all involved.

Members

While all members of the Tiny Furies are small individuals who identify as raging barbarians, each of them has a different role in the organization and a unique way to approach encounters. The organization's hierarchy is as follows:

Member	Role in the Organization	Unique Tactics	Level
Ribbin Kneecapper	Leader, negotiator	Diplomacy, aid in battle	9
Gruum	Second in charge, trainer	Morale boosting, intimidation	9
Lykisky	Elite member	Multi-target	8
Nemves Bonehead	Elite member	Single target control	8
Razzi & Nilin	Advisor and leadership	High priority target	11
13 protégées	Hirelings	Ganging Up	5-7

Ribbin Kneecapper

"Never have I seen someone so determined to achieve their goal, nor would I have ever suspected so much hate could be found in such a small body. It is an impressive thing to witness, truly."

~ Sinclair

As leader and founder of the Tiny Furies, Ribbin Kneecapper is a very opinionated halfling, and not without reason. Where he grew up, most members of his ancestry stuck to their peers due to a lack of interesting alternatives. Those who didn't spend their days clam diving, cleaning sewage and chimneys or smuggling would eventually find themselves down and out. And Ribbin would have none of it.

While still very young, Ribbin was determined to be taken seriously and climb his city's social hierarchy until he lived on par with the most wealthy figures in the region. He started by joining mercenary groups left and right and making a name for himself. What he lacked in height, he made up for in ferocity. Wielding his famous two-handed warhammer, he gained a reputation of being one of the most relentless bounty hunters operating in the region.

It wasn't until the day he met Gruum in the middle of a raid that a plan started to form in Ribbin's mind: an army of small furious warriors forming a guild that would become a force to be reckoned with.

Allegiance

Ribbin's loyalty is to his cause above everything else. The Furies are a very close second. Ribbin will stop at nothing to protect his fellows from outside threat and feels a deep sense of responsibility for them, but besides Gruum and Rasinoa, none would call him a friend. His obsessive nature constantly pushes him to strive for more, do better, and go bigger. This drive runs so deep it sometimes makes him cold, calculating, and disconnected from the real world.

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RIBBIN'S HAMMER

Ribbin's +1 *striking earthbreaker* is blunted, lacking the versatile P trait, though it is not as functional as another earthbreaker of its type, it is incredibly durable, having a Hardness of 8, BT of 16, and 32 HP. How it became so hard is a matter of mystery, but Ribbin often makes bets that he can break any other hammer with his own, proving their steel fails before his own.

Encounter Tactics

Ribbin tends to favor diplomacy over violence whenever possible unless his mission requires an "engagement." While in combat, the brave halfling remains in the front line, striking down his enemies and offering support to his teammates with his quick Aids. If things start looking grim for his team, he goes full-on as his last resort. He moves so fluidly between rage and icy calm because of his greatest ability and great secret: he is always in a state of rage, one that he controls with staggering willpower.

RIBBIN KNEECAPPER

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE NG SMALL HE/HIM HALFLING HUMANOID

Perception +18

Languages Common, Gnomish, Goblin, Grippli, Halfling, Ysoki

Skills Athletics +20, Diplomacy +16, Society +20, Stealth +18, Survival +18

Permanent Rage Ribbin is permanently raging as long as he is conscious. Whenever he wakes up, or regains consciousness, he gains 13 temporary Hit Points. His melee Strikes deal an additional 5 damage and he has a permanent -1 penalty to his AC. Despite raging, Ribbin can still use actions with the Concentrate trait.

Str +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +6, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Items +1 *striking earthbreaker*, +1 *striking thundering hand crossbow*, 20 bolts

AC 26 (rage accounted for); **Fort** +21, **Ref** +18, **Will** +15 (+4 vs emotion effects)

HP 182 (+13 temporary HP)

Halfling Luck ♦ (fortune, halfling) **Frequency** once per day; **Trigger** Ribbin fails a skill check or saving throw; **Effect** He can reroll the triggering check, but he must use the new result, even if it's worse than his first roll.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ *earthbreaker* +19 [+14/+9] (shove, two-hand d10), **Damage** 2d8+18 bludgeoning (rage accounted for)

Ranged ♦ *hand crossbow* +17 (range increment 60 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 2d6+9 piercing plus 1d6 sonic

Raging Charge ♦♦ (flourish) Ribbin Strides twice. If he ends his movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, he can make a melee Strike or attempt to Shove that enemy.

Gruum

"Goblins don't grow hair?! Yeah, go ahead and tell him that, see what happens".

Despite being second in command of the Tiny Furies, Gruum doesn't quite understand Ribbin's goal. Not that he isn't smart enough, but the goblin typically discards concepts like recognition and influence as a fool's errand. Instead, he values camaraderie and enjoyment, and nothing fulfills him more than victory in battle and a grossly heavy bounty afterwards. Nevertheless, this

lack of understanding doesn't get in the way of his responsibilities as second in command; he lets Ribbin handle the details.

Gruum's primary job is to train the other Furies and enforce discipline and respect within the organization, and he's doing a terrible job at it. While he does command respect among the younger recruits and inspires them in battle, he himself lacks any notion of order or methodology. This often turns coordinated operations into gruesome, improvised battles, and if it wasn't thanks to his raw strength and imposing personality, the guild's coffers would not be as filled as they are now.

Despite all this, Gruum has a great sense of intuition and empathy, making him great at guiding others when life seems unbearable. These skills likely result from taking care of his many siblings after the passing of his parents. The fact that the Tiny Furies—a group of hot-headed, violence-hungry misfits—live and work together without killing each other is a testament to this wisdom. And it is this same wisdom that allows him to keep Ribbin's aspirations in check.

Allegiances

Gruum's allegiance is often torn between Ribbin's ambition and the good of the Furies. Well aware the Furies would be aimless and penniless without their leader, he is also painfully wary of the day the halfling's crazy ideas bring his newfound family to ruin. Until then, he advises, he orders, and he fights. This strange position of authority has led many to believe Gruum to be the true leader of the Furies, an argument with which Gruum wholeheartedly disagrees.

Gruum holds a particular affection towards Nemves, whose undying loyalty toward the Furies as a family warms his heart. Although he would never admit it openly, Gruum deems the ysoki as a viable candidate to lead the Tiny Furies if need be.

Encounter tactics

Gruum's favorite outcome is to crush his enemies whilst sharing the glory with his fellow Furies, so he often begins combat commanding allies and inspiring them to charge with his Battlecry. Against larger or highly-mobile foes, he usually sticks one of his axes into their body to move along with them. Unlike Ribbin, this mad goblin has no issues with entering his rage and rushing into the fray until the fight is over.

GRUUM CREATURE 9

UNIQUE LN SMALL HE/HIM GOBLIN HUMANOID

Perception +18, darkvision

Languages Common, Goblin

Skills Acrobatics +20, Athletics +18, Intimidation +20, Performance +18

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +3, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +6

Ready to Help Gruum is quickened, but can only use his extra action to prepare to Aid. His attempts to Aid grant a +3 circumstance bonus on a critical success.

Items +1 striking battleaxe (x2)

AC 27 (26 while raging); **Fort** +18, **Ref** +21, **Will** +15

FAST AND FURIOUS

The Tiny Furies are quick to act but Gruum makes sure they are quick on their feet too, the unorthodox training regimen of the team has led their charging at his behest to be fueled by a "move it or lose it" attitude, where their bodies are the things they risk losing. In truth, Gruum's antics and 'obstacles' would never prove dangerous enough to harm them, but if they knew that, they might not buckle down and run!

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(UN)LUCKY CHARM

Lykisky is surrounded with a baleful aura, while most people wave it away as an uneasy feeling due to his fiendish heritage, many find it to be proof that he is some sort of bad luck. Animals also generally dislike the aura, acting out in an attempt to distance themselves.

Those that get to know him eventually stop noticing the sensation, even Nilin, though it took the lion longer to become accustomed to Lykisky than any other member of the Tiny Furies. They tend to feel more like Lykisky is good luck in a fight as the odds swing in the Tiny Furies' favor and away from their foes.

HP 182 (+13 temporary Hit Points while raging)

Speed 30 feet, climb 30 feet

Melee ✦ battleaxe +19 [+14/+9] (sweep, twin), Damage 2d6+15 slashing (+5 while raging)

Battlecry ✦ (auditory, emotion, mental) **Trigger** Gruum rolls initiative or an ally drops to 0 HP; **Effect** Gruum inspires himself and all allies who can hear him to move faster in battle, granting them a +10-foot status bonus to their speeds for 1 round.

Cling ✦ **Requirements** Gruum's last action was a successful Strike against a Medium or larger creature; **Effect** Gruum hangs onto the target of his Strike. If it moves while Gruum is attached, he can choose to move with the target. The target is released if Gruum doesn't move with it, at the start of Gruum's next turn, or if the target successfully Escapes (DC 28).

Rage ✦ (concentrate, emotion, mental) Gruum taps into his inner fury and begins raging. For 1 minute or until he falls unconscious, he gains 13 temporary Hit Points, takes a -1 penalty to AC, deals 5 additional damage with his melee Strikes, and can't use actions with the concentrate trait (except Seek) unless they also have the rage trait. After exiting rage, he can't Rage again for 1 minute.

Raging Intimidation While raging, Gruum's attempts to Demoralize gain the Rage trait, and he doesn't take a penalty for not sharing a language with his targets.

Twin Chop Gruum treats any axes of the same type as if they had the twin trait while holding one in each hand.

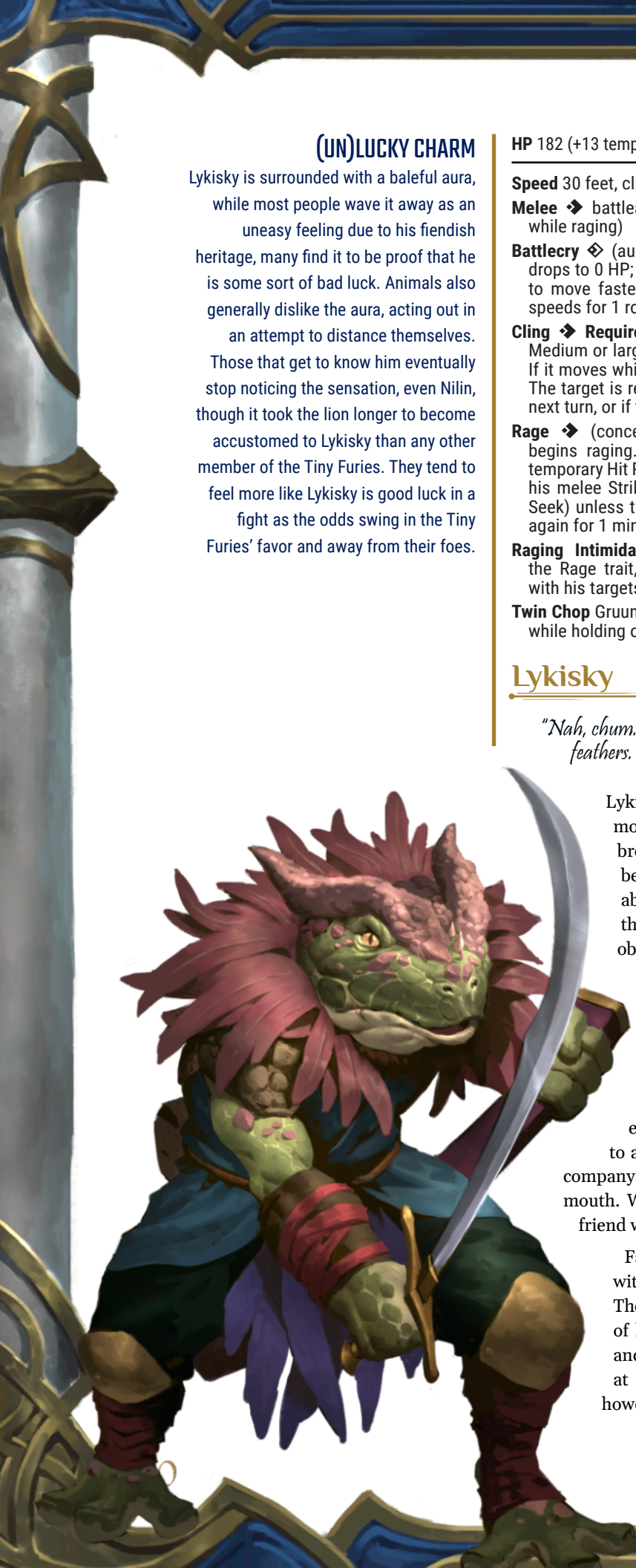
Lykisky

"Nah, chum. Don't care what the rat told you, ya can't touch the feathers. You can sure go grab his tail tho."

Lykisky is part gripli, part tiefling, all safety hazard. Like most gripli, he was born in a village amongst the eggs of his brothers and sisters, but as time passed, his fiendish features began to grow more evident, which led to many questions about his fiendish parentage. With no one willing to raise their hand and take full responsibility, the other villagers felt obligated to raise the tadpole, but it didn't take long for them to ostracize him. It seemed as if something malefic was keeping everyone from treating the little frogfolk right.

With little other option, Lykisky quickly latched onto their fear and hatred, turned to drink, and became an aggressive creature. He lashed out against the community that rejected him, giving the village enough excuse to exile him. He bounced from village to town, then to a city, and finally to the Furies' original slum, keeping the company of no one except a falchion almost as thirsty as his own mouth. Whether or not he realized that his true desire was for a friend was, at the time, unknown.

Fate intervened one night when he got into a fight with Nemves of the Tiny Furies in an alley behind a bar. The two of them went at it for half an hour, neither capable of knocking the other one out. Eventually, tired of fighting and slowly sobering up, Nemves invited Lykisky for a drink at the guild house. Lykisky never left. His integration, however, wasn't as immediate nor as complete as Nemves', as



he struggled to find a sense of belonging even among this band of misfits.

Allegiances

Although he gained a reputation for being a fierce warrior even amongst the cadre of the Furies, Lykisky's close bond with Nemves has not gone unnoticed. He would die for Nemves. Although he appreciates the comforts afforded by the guildhall and the understanding extended to him, his abusive upbringing has left him untrusting, preferring close friendships to loose group associations. If it came to choose between Nemves and the Tiny Furies, Lykisky would not hesitate for a second, and he would single-handedly fight every one of his erstwhile allies if his rodent friend asked.

Encounter Tactics

Favoring the falchion in combat, Lykisky's strikes tend to begin quick and decisive with wide sweeping arcs. As the battle rages on, he might switch to more reactive maneuvers: striding, shoving, and launching powerful, punishing blows against anyone who dares harm his dear Nem—that is, his friends. Finally, his sole presence debilitates his foes so long as he stays close to them, though he doesn't fully understand why.

LYKISKY

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE CN SMALL HE/HIM GRIPPLI HUMANOID TIEFLING

Perception +18, darkvision

Languages Common, Halfling, Grippli

Skills Alcohol Lore +16, Athletics +18, Acrobatics +16, Intimidation +18, Performance +16, Survival +16

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Items +1 striking falchion, leather armor, bottle of rum (2 gp)

AC 26 (25 while Raging); **Fort** +16, **Ref** +19, **Will** +13

HP 166 (+12 temporary Hit Points while raging)

Malicious Presence (aura, emotion, mental) 10 feet. Lykisky unwillingly emanates an aura of distress that only those close to him can overcome. When a creature enters or starts its turn in the aura, it must attempt a DC 24 Will save. On a failure, it takes a -1 status penalty to attack rolls and skill checks for 1 round. On a critical failure, the status penalty is -2. Creatures that are helpful towards Lykisky (such as the Tiny Furies) are immune to this effect.

Don't You Hurt Him! ➤ **Trigger** An enemy Lykisky can see damages Nemves; **Effect** Lykisky Strides toward the triggering creature. If the creature was already within his reach, Lykisky may Strike it instead.

Speed 25, climb 15

Melee ➤ falchion +19 [+14/+9] (magical, forceful, sweep), **Damage** 2d10+9 slashing (+5 while Raging)

Melee ➤ horns +20 [+15/+10] (finesse, shove, unarmed), **Damage** 2d8+9 bludgeoning (+5 while Raging)

Ranged ➤ javelin +20 [+15/+10] (Thrown 30 ft.), **Damage** 2d6+9 piercing (+5 while Raging)

Rage ➤ (concentrate, emotion, mental) Lykisky taps into his inner fury and begins raging. For 1 minute or until he falls unconscious, he gains 12 temporary Hit Points, takes a -1 penalty to AC, deals 5 additional damage with his falchion, horns, and javelin, and can't use actions with the concentrate trait (except Seek) unless they also have the rage trait. After raging, he becomes fatigued and can't Rage again for 1 minute.

Sweeping Steps ➤➤➤ Lykisky Steps or Strides, then Strikes an enemy within melee range, then Steps, then Strikes a different enemy within melee range.

Nemves Bonehead

"You would not believe the size of the rat I just saw!"
~ A drunkard on King's street

Like most ysoki, Nemves's life began as part of a big family, of whom he was far and away the biggest member. And although his size alone would not have been sufficient to overcome the communal and inclusive nature of the ratfolk society, his short temper and sudden outbursts of rage turned him into an outcast and a threat to the community. Even while surrounded with his many siblings and other kin, Nemves felt lonely, at permanent odds with his peers, and never really understood.

Feeling unwelcome and unwanted, he left the nest at a young age, hoping for a better life, but the outside world proved a disappointment in this regard. The big ysoki ended up living as a street thug, an obvious path for a strong and angry brawler without home or family. When he wasn't racketeering or collecting debts as a hired muscle, he found himself drinking and fighting in bars. That was until Gruum found him lying in a dark alley, surrounded by attackers with clubs and knives.

Looking at his state of drunkenness, Gruum expected Nemves to perish and was getting ready to jump into the fray, but he stopped dead in his tracks. The oversized rat brawled through those thugs as if they were children. Impressed by his natural ferocity and strength, Gruum knew Nemves was born to be a Fury, and so brought him that very night to the headquarters. Two days later, Nemves had his own room, was taking guild work a week after that, and has considered the Furies his one and only family ever since.

Allegiances

Nemves has an unwavering loyalty toward the Furies, even to those he doesn't get along with. For Nemves, the

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I SMELL A RAT

Nemves' ability to communicate with rodents has proven strangely invaluable to the Tiny Furies. Often being directed into tight spaces, where most people don't fit, thus where vermin thrive, Nemves is able to "ask the locals" what they might find around, not only helping but also sometimes lost or hidden treasures, some worth a fair bit in their own right, or worth something to the right people.

Furies are a family, and that means their bond goes beyond personality or friendship. Thanks to them, he learned to control his anger—at least until weapons are drawn—and became a more cheerful and friendly person. He feels a very strong kinship with Lykisky, due to their very similar upbringing and introduction to the guild. When the need arises, Nemves will defend the Furies at all costs, even if he has to rebel against its own leadership.

Encounter Tactics

Nemves fights like a typical cage fighter. A proficient wrestler, he charges up to an opponent, holds onto them, and shreds them with his claws. However, he's also a very intelligent ysoki: even if his rage seems to throw him in random directions, he's a very deliberate warrior. Fighting alongside the Furies, he tends to position himself between his most vulnerable allies and ranged enemies to obstruct clear shots, and also targets high-mobility enemies to ensure his friends are not being flanked.

NEMVES BONEHEAD

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE CN SMALL HE/HIM HUMANOID RATFOLK

Perception +16; low-light vision

Languages Common, Goblin, Ysoki

Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +18, Survival +18, Warfare Lore +16

Str +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +4, **Int** +6, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Ratspeak Nemves can communicate with rodents, he can ask questions of them and receive simple answers as well as being able to use Diplomacy without penalty, even if they do not share a language.

Items +1 striking bladed gauntlet, +1 breastplate

AC 27 (25 while Raging); **Fort** +16, **Ref** +19, **Will** +13; +1 status vs. poison

HP 166 (+12 temporary HP while raging)

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ bladed gauntlet +21 [+17/+13] (agile, finesse, magical, free hand, Modular B or P or S), **Damage** 2d4+11 slashing (+2 with Rage)

Sudden Rage ✦ (concentrate, emotion, mental) **Trigger** Nemves rolls initiative or begins his turn; **Effect** Nemves taps into his inner fury and begins raging. For 1 minute or until he falls unconscious, he gains 12 temporary Hit Points, takes a -1 penalty to AC, deals 5 additional damage with melee strikes (or 2 with agile strikes), and can't use actions with the concentrate trait (except Seek) unless they also have

the rage trait. After raging, he becomes fatigued and can't Rage again for 1 minute.

Ground and Pound ✦ Nemves Strikes a prone creature and makes an Athletics check to Grapple it. This counts as two attacks for the purpose of calculating his multiple attack penalty, but it doesn't increase until he's finished both attacks.

Stay Here ✨ **Trigger** A creature tries to exit a space in Nemves' reach; **Effect** Nemves attempts to Grapple the triggering creature. On a success, the creature's movement is disrupted.

Takedown ✨✨ (flourish) Nemves Strides twice. If he ends his movement within melee reach of at least one enemy, he can attempt to Trip that enemy.

Rasinoa "Razzi" & Nilin

"The damn cat is twice her size, still grovels when she gets mad. Tells me all I need to know, really."
~ Gruum

One of the original founders of the Tiny Furies, Rasinoa is one of its rare members who wasn't born in the lower city. Her family was once a renowned clan of beastmasters, putting themselves at the service of various nobles in town to care for their exotic pets. While never owning any titles of nobility themselves, they were held in high esteem by the members of the upper city, and lived a comfortable life. Unfortunately for them, the wealthy trend of owning exotic kennels passed like a season, replaced by other ostentatious displays of wealth. Out of work, Razzi's clan decided to take their services elsewhere; they liquidated their assets and moved to another city, hoping to find new patrons for their unique skill set. Rasinoa, however, felt like the situation was a good opportunity to explore other venues of life, and elected to stay behind. As a departure gift, the clan left her the only asset that wasn't liquidated: the large mansion that once was the family house, the Ticking Shelf.

As the daughter of a respectable beastmaster clan, Razzi versed in the arts of social etiquette but prefers the company of wildlife to people. Growing up, her closest friend, Nilin, was a dire lion she had raised. Now on her own and determined to find work that would both keep her close to her roots and accommodate the presence of a massive lion, she became a monster hunter for hire, collecting bounties slaying beasts local authorities were either too scared or unable to handle themselves. This provided good money, little human interaction, and long stretches of time out in the wild, granting her a life she was quite satisfied with.

Through her bounty hunting activities she met Ribbin, a then-young halfling full of ambitions and an impressive warrior, who needed someone to help track down a bounty of his own. They ended up forming a strong friendship and from then on, whenever Razzi was back in town, the two of them would spend hours drinking and conversing in one of the Ticking Shelf's salons. During these talks, she developed a strong admiration for the young man. She couldn't care less about Ribbin's ambitions and desire for recognition. Having grown up in a respected family of halflings, she could hardly relate with his claims of injustice toward their people. But seeing this much conviction and passion in someone, something she had never felt so intensely herself, was inspiring to her. When Ribbin

showed up one evening in company of an ill-mannered goblin with a tall red mohawk and revealed his ambition to create a guild of mercenaries for the shorter folks of this world, she couldn't help but be charmed. She gifted both her mansion and her reputation to the endeavor, and further pledged to be available whenever the Furies truly needed her. Many years later, she is a well-known member of the Furies as well as a respected beastmaster, and her rare appearances at the Ticking Shelf are always cause for celebration and festivities.

Allegiances

Rasinoa's allegiances are quite unclear. She cares more about the Furies than their cause, valuing the band of miscreants bringing new life to her ancestral home. And while her bond is undeniably stronger with Ribbin, she puts far more trust in Gruum's judgment, knowing all too well which of the pair has more of a level head. If conflict between them were ever to occur (an eventuality she suspects to be likely), she doesn't quite know where she would side, hoping to be able to take the situation at face value and remain objective when the time comes.

Encounter Tactics

Razzi's combat methods are typically those of a hunter. Focusing on priority targets, she and Nilin observe the battlefield and wait for the opportune moment before jumping into the fray. Once engaged, they flank and rip their targets apart before retreating to find a new target.

RASINOA

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE CN SMALL SHE/HER GNOME HUMANOID

Perception +20; low-light vision, scent 30 feet (imprecise)

Languages Common, Gnomish, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +23, Crafting +23, Medicine +21, Nature +23, Society +20, Survival +21

Str +3, **Dex** +7, **Con** +5, **Int** +7, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +5

Items +2 striking hatchet, greater acid flask (x5), chain shirt

AC 31 (30 while Raging); **Fort** +21, **Ref** +24, **Will** +18

HP 201 (+16 temporary Hit Points while raging);

Together Now When Rasinoa and Nilin both roll Initiative, they use the results of Rasinoa's initiative check, choosing to have Nilin be immediately after Rasinoa in initiative.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ hatchet +22 [+18/+14] (agile, sweep, thrown 10 ft.), **Damage** 2d6 + 10 slashing (+5 when raging)

Ranged ✦ hatchet +26 [+22/+18] (agile, sweep, thrown 10 ft.), **Damage** 2d6 + 10 slashing (+5 when raging)

Ranged ✦ acid flask +26 [+21/+16] (acid, alchemical, bomb), **Damage** 3d6 persistent acid and 3 acid splash

Hunt Prey ✦ Rasinoa designates a creature she can see, hear, or that she is Tracking as her hunted prey for 1 day.

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QUEENPIN

Though Rasinoa doesn't really think of herself as the heart of the Tiny Furies, she plays a subtle, passive role in keeping the group as cohesive as possible. The Ticking Shelf, home of the guild, is under her name. While none think she would expel them from it, there's always the consideration that she can tell any member to beat it if she is truly brought to that end. It would take something extreme for Rasinoa to banish a member, generally leaving membership and access in the hands of her trusted friends, Ribbin and Gruum. She has no interest in being the judge of others when she isn't as present and involved as they are. Though she occasionally butts heads with younger, upstart members that don't show the other members the respect they deserve.

CONSTANT COMPANIONS

Nilin has been with her for as long as he can remember. Warm and kind, she knows where the itch is and digs in when she finds it. He remember the days when he was cold, shivering in the hot summer. She was there. She gave him water and kept him company even when the other two-legs left. After that, she was never far. She's his sister. He is bigger. He has to protect her, but she is a clever hunter. She taught him how to hunt better and they do it best together. Especially hunting big monsters, sneaky monsters, and mean two-legs. Rasinoa first found Nilin in her family's kennels, sick with a fever. The last of his siblings, heartbroken by the loss, she stayed with him and nursed him back to health. The lion cub was weak then, and before she knew it, they were inseparable. Using the teachings of her family, she trained Nilin. Over the years he's become a fierce and loyal companion, and the two are a deadly pair in a fight; even more so on a hunt.

She gains a +2 Circumstance bonus to Seek and Track checks against her hunted prey, as well as ignoring the penalty for making ranged attacks in her second range increment against them. She may have only one hunted prey at a time. If she uses Hunt Prey again, the new creature becomes her hunted prey.

Partnered Rage ➤ (concentrate, emotion, mental) **Trigger** A Tiny Fury rages within 30 feet of Rasinoa; **Effect** Rasinoa's years with the Furies have had an influence on her. She Rages; For 1 minute or until she falls unconscious, she gains 16 temporary Hit Points, takes a -1 penalty to AC, deals 5 additional damage with her hatchet, and can't use actions with the concentrate trait (except Seek) unless they also have the rage trait. After raging, she becomes fatigued and can't Rage again for 1 minute.

Command Nilin ➤ (auditory) Rasinoa directs Nilin, her lion. Nilin follows Rasinoa's commands perfectly, and she is treated as having readied to Aid him for any skill check or Strike. Rasinoa may use Nature to determine the outcome of the Aid check, granting a +3 circumstance bonus on a critical success.

NILIN

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE N LARGE HE/HIM ANIMAL

Perception +24; low-light vision, scent 30 feet (imprecise)

Languages Understands commands given in Gnomish or Sylvan, ignores other languages; can't read or speak

Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +22, Intimidation +20, Stealth +23, Survival +21
Str +5, **Dex** +7, **Con** +5, **Int** -4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

AC 30 (29 when raging); **Fort** +18, **Ref** +19, **Will** +18

HP 231 (+14 temporary Hit Points when raging)

Together Now As Rasinoa.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ➤ jaws +19 [+14/+9] (magical), **Damage** 2d10+17 piercing (+5 while raging)

Melee ➤ claw +20 [+16/+12] (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d6+17 slashing (+2 while raging)

Companion's Ferocity ➤ (concentrate, emotion, mental) **Trigger** Nilin sees Rasinoa Raging; **Effect** Until Rasinoa is no longer raging Nilin deals 5 additional damage with his melee Strikes (or +2 on agile strikes), takes a -1 penalty to his AC, gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidation, gains a +5-foot bonus to his Speed, and gains 14 temporary Hit Points.

Precision Training Nilin deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to creatures frightened by Roar or that are off-guard.

Roar ➤ Nilin attempts to Demoralize a foe within 30 feet that he can see or hear by roaring at them. This check does not suffer penalties for not sharing a language. Against creatures that are Rasinoa's hunted prey, Nilin gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the check.

Tandem Tactics Nilin throws Rasinoa's enemies off-balance when she creates an opening. Whenever Rasinoa deals damage with a Strike to a creature within Nilin's reach, he attempts to send them off balance. The creature must succeed a Reflex DC 28 or become off-guard until the start of Rasinoa's next turn.

Trained Mount If Rasinoa or another trusted creature mounts Nilin, they become quickened, they may only spend this action to use Command an Animal on Nilin (or Command Nilin, if it is Rasinoa).



CHAPTER 6 - VILLAINS

"Dastardly, that's what they are. Villains aren't 'all bad', but they certainly aren't all that good. With everything they've done to earn their reputations, I think they deserve the title. Of course, it's a matter of opinion to some; one person's hero might be villain to another, and vice-versa. I tend to think these folk more than measure up, however."

~Sinclair

ALFRED RHAN — PUNISHING PHILOSOPHER

Orphaned in a skirmish between dwarves and his own kin, the fledgling ogre Alfred Rhan was raised by a dwarven woman who protected him and took him in as her own. Mathide, whom he would refer to as his mother, raised him on the outskirts of town, where his swift growth and strength was an asset, but his appetite proved a challenge for even a talented hunter like his mother. After an incident where he accidentally harmed a dog that was harassing a young man, the townsfolk, who barely tolerated his presence, formed a mob to put an end to him. Alfred fled at his mother's behest while their house was burned and she was dragged away. The young ogre escaped mostly by chance, falling off an embankment amid the woods near his home and rolling, unconscious, into an abandoned wolf's den where he lay unnoticed for a time.

For years after that, Alfred wandered, rarely finding a friendly face, but always endeavoring to do good the way he felt his mother did. Eventually, he made friends and

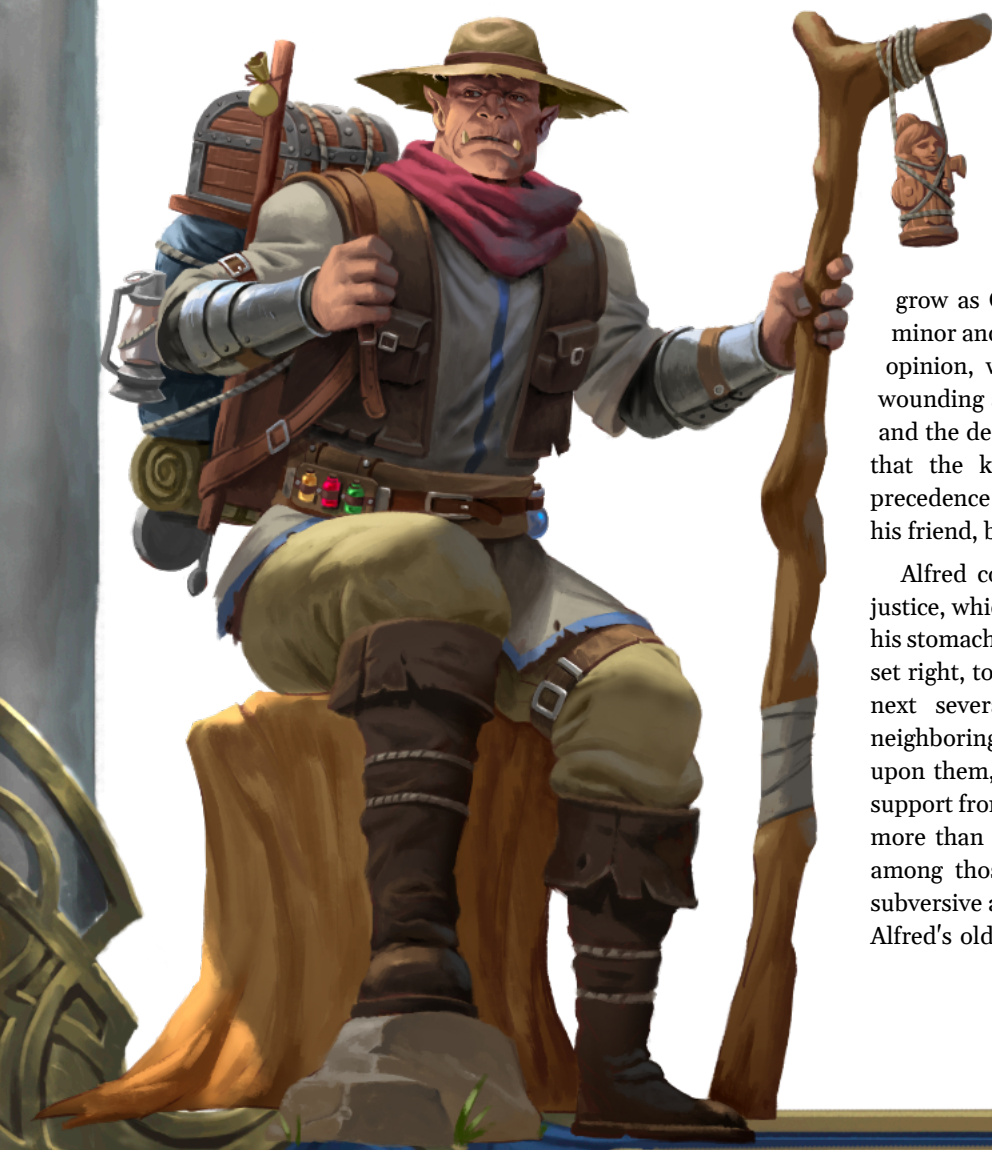
even found a small town that would accept him, learning from both his personal experiences and from others. As the years went on, the one question that gnawed at his soul grew harder to ignore: "What happened to mother?" In time, as he grew tired of a quiet life in town and this nagging question pushed him forward, he began to obsess, becoming melancholic in a recursive spiral of horrible pessimism and wishful optimism.

He called on an old friend, Oswald Burminger, to help him make the trip back home and see what had become of his mother. Owing to the ogre's tendency to grow lost in thought, Oswald had long ago given Alfred the moniker "Philosopher" but often shortened it to "Philo" in conversation. Since Turrip was known not to be friendly to ogres in general, Oswald went into town to ask around while Alfred camped on the outskirts, using the same cave he had hidden in as a youth. Oswald's news was not good: Mathide had been killed the very night that Alfred fled. Alfred, who in his years had become

contemplative and cool-headed, began to weep in acknowledgment of a fear he'd had for so long. Before he could fully process what Oswald had already told him, though, more news came: the people found most responsible for her death were tried and punished. A small seed of vengeful curiosity bloomed in Alfred, and he insisted on more information. Beneath his cool demeanor, seething anger began to

grow as Oswald iterated how each had suffered only minor and short-term consequences which, in Alfred's opinion, was utterly unjust. "If the punishment for wounding a dog is the exile of the one who wounded it and the death of their parent," he asked, "how is it fair that the killers of a mother be spared with such precedence for their dignity?" Oswald tried to comfort his friend, but hours of grief and rage would follow.

Alfred could not abide the indignity and failure of justice, which stained his optimism and left a cold pit in his stomach. He convinced Oswald to help him see things set right, to bring justice to this corrupt place. Over the next several months, Alfred and Oswald went to neighboring settlements and impressed this wrongdoing upon them, ushering people into action and garnering support from those who were empathetic. Alfred wanted more than justice, however, he wanted revenge. From among those who joined him, he gathered the most subversive and violent. While this following marched on Alfred's old home, he and his secret band stayed back.



He explained this reticence under a pretense of keeping things calm. During the protest, Alfred and his chosen few crept through Turrip, with Alfred himself hiding in a stolen cart. They rounded up each of those responsible for his mother's death, keeping them quiet with threats of violence and promises of safety with cooperation. The next day, Oswalt found their bodies mangled and crushed in the burned-out ruins of Alfred's childhood home, with no indication of where Alfred or his fellow murderers had gone.

Nowadays, Alfred wanders from place to place, taking solace and comfort wherever he might be accepted and advocating for kindness and equality for peoples perceived by the local community as "monstrous". Between his advocacy and travels, sometimes Alfred catches wind of a severe injustice, especially punishment he deems too light for a heinous crime. Starting a new cycle of incitement of protest or revolt in the local people or surrounding communities before seeking those that will help him to serve just deserts upon those he deems as guilty.

Using Alfred in a campaign

The moral ambiguity of Alfred makes him suitable for many types of campaigns, from traditional do-good adventurers to more morally flexible mercenary parties.

While perfectly suited for a classic "search and destroy" low-level quest, Alfred can also be used for a much longer story arc. This might take an investigative form, where the player characters try to uncover the identity of a violent murderer, or for a "bring peace to the region" style of story, where they attempt to reconcile the community and Alfred by pacifying him or bringing him to justice for his crimes.

To set up a more investigative narrative, you can use the rumors listed below as a starting point to build the mystery and let your players take it from there. To build a conflict resolution arc, consider bringing in an additional NPC to interact with the players and drive the narrative. Bounty hunters or zealous law-makers are great characters to use in this context. This additional NPC might be on the trail of the mysterious vigilante, oppose Alfred on principle as a monster, advocate for Alfred's ostensible goals of integration into society, or have a different goal altogether. Depending on their motivation and perspective, they might operate in line with or oppose the party's interest, and their allegiance may shift as Alfred's activities come to light.

Alfred's intentions are generally good in concept, he wants people to be treated like any other despite their differences in appearance and ability, though such

transitions may lean toward the extreme when he posits some "monsters" as people, clashing of prejudice, history, and culture make it difficult and sometimes bloody. He isn't a fool, but he is an idealist, his past endeavors have not always ended in peace, and sometimes even exacerbate the tensions between townsfolk and those Alfred advocates for. He finds conviction in his successes, however, leading to the rise of social equity, fairness, and the downfall of corruption. His own implacable fury in the face of those he views as the source of the problem is something he grapples with, but ultimately tends to falter to. The party can attempt to dissuade him from more violent actions against those in power, either by exposing them, or talking him down, which is incredibly difficult.

Rumors

Those seeking to learn more about Alfred after meeting with him or hearing about him can attempt to Gather Information.

DC 10 He's an ogre that stands on a crate outside town (or wherever he might be allowed in town), shouting about how people should be nice to monsters.

DC 15 The player finds someone who has spoken or listened to Alfred at some length. Colored by their own outlook, the source shares their thoughts about the finer points of his arguments.

DC 24 The player hears that Alfred came from another town, and that he wasn't welcome there anymore. On a critical success, they learn the reason is that he led some sort of revolt there.

DC 30 Despite Alfred's attempts to keep his history quiet, the player finds someone who, either fearing reprisal or out of approval for his vigilantism, has kept silent thus far. They tell of the horrific murder (or justified punishment, as Alfred sees it) of people from another town. A critical success will also inform the player of the deeds of those killed and of Oswalt or another friend, who is searching for Alfred.

MEMENTOS

Alfred is a practical man, rarely keeping more than he needs to make his own way on his person. However, he is also sentimental about several people he's met along the way, as well as his departed mother. A carefully whittled statuette of his mother in dwarven style dangles from his walking stick, both an ever-present reminder of her love and care, and of what was taken from him.

Various other knick-knacks, gifts, and trinkets line his vest, bag, and pockets, reminders of friendships and allies left behind, victories celebrated, and tyrants vanquished.

ALFRED "PHILO" RHAN

CREATURE 6

UNIQUE N LARGE HE/HIM HUMANOID GIANT

Perception +17 (+21 to Sense Motive and against Lie); darkvision

Languages Common, Dwarven, Jotun

Skills Athletics +15, Diplomacy +23, Deception +20, Society +13, Stealth +13, Survival +15

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

Items +1 *striking staff* (walking stick), adventurer's pack, explorer's clothing; (all items are size Large)

AC 23; **Fort** 14+, **Ref** +11, **Will** +21

HP 120

Appeal ♦ (auditory, linguistic) **Trigger** Alfred is about to roll initiative in an encounter he did not instigate against at least one hostile creature he is aware of that shares a language with him; **Effect** Alfred attempts to diffuse the situation or gain a moment to escape, he may roll Diplomacy for initiative. If this causes Alfred to be first in initiative, he may Stride or Step as a free action at the start of his first turn.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +17 [+12/+7] (magical, reach 10 feet, two-hand 1d8), **Damage** 2d4+10 bludgeoning

Melee ♦ fist +17 [+13/+9] (agile, finesse, nonlethal, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d4+10 bludgeoning plus Vigilant Grasp

Crushing Conviction ♦ (attack) **Requirements** Alfred has a creature grabbed or restrained; **Effect** Alfred deals 2d4+10 bludgeoning damage (DC 25 basic Fortitude save) to a creature he has grabbed or restrained. On a failure, the creature must hold its breath as he squeezes the air out of them until it Escapes or the end of Alfred's next turn, whichever comes first.

Vigilant Grasp ♦ **Requirements** Alfred has both hands free and his last action was a successful fist Strike or he has a creature grabbed using this action; **Effect** The target creature is automatically grabbed until the end of Alfred's next turn or until it Escapes, whichever comes first. Alfred uses both hands to maintain this grab and to keep his quarry silent. The creature grabbed this way must succeed a DC 5 flat check to use any actions that require it to speak—such as casting a spell with verbal components—or the action is lost. Using Vigilant Grasp extends the duration of the grabbed condition until the end of Alfred's next turn if he already has a creature grabbed.

PEACEFUL RESOLUTIONS AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Alfred can be stopped peacefully by convincing him to give up on his vengeful ways. If the party is working against him in a hostile manner, the DC to make this Request is 36. The DC is 33 if a close friend sides with the party (such as Oswald). It is easier to convince Alfred if the party plays on his reason and empathy outside of a hostile situation (DC 31 if indifferent, 29 if friendly, and 27 if helpful). Alfred always treats the attempt as being one step closer to helpful if a close friend helps the party. Any attempt to convince Alfred to turn himself in suffers a -4 circumstance penalty. Alfred is a 9th-level challenge when debating societal justice or other diplomatic tasks.

BARIST MYLAR — VILLAGE MAYOR

Some people never leave the small town where they were born, with most not having an opportunity to escape due to a lack of resources and others frozen in place by a fear of change. But, some choose to remain so that they can seize power.

From an early age, Barist Mylar saw weakness in his village's elder. The old man was too happy to coast through life and do very little for his people. As Barist grew, so did his bitterness towards the elder, however, he chose to bide his time, learning, planning, and nurturing a following among his fellow malcontents in the village.

When he came of age, Barist made his move. He gathered his followers to remove the elder from his position as mayor of the village. To their surprise, when they stormed his house, the old man simply smiled and announced his immediate retirement. There would be no fight, no challenge. If Barist wanted the job so badly, the mayor was happy to hand it over, especially since his insurrection had already proven him capable of leading people.

The circumstances of the mayor's abdication twisted and turned within Barist, who had expected the man to fight rather than give up. In his first act as mayor, he exiled the old man, who once again didn't contest the decision, simply gathering his things and leaving before the morning sun rose. The mayor's passivity twisted his bitterness further, it galled him to think such weakness had been allowed to fester for so long. Turning his anger upon the village, Barist rewarded his followers richly while the rest of the village were punished for their inaction against the old ineffectual mayor.

Many years have passed since then and the village has fallen into a state of grim resolve. Assurances of loyalty and compliance placate Barist, and the village knows that this is all he cares about. This has created a breeding ground of corruption because his inner circle has leeway to do as they please so long as they bow to Barist in the end. Despite all this, he has learned when to smile and signal that all is well in the village, such as whenever someone from the capital visits. Barist is quick to ensure such representatives are well looked after and given gifts to ensure that they don't investigate things more closely. The villagers know that if they speak up, their words would be dismissed before facing severe punishment once the travelers are gone.

Life goes on for the village, much as it always has. Beneath the surface, however, the people know that the village has been poisoned by Barist's cruelty, with many

bearing the bruises and scars of the mayor's punishments. The rumors of his cruelty to the disloyal grow with every passing day and with them, a nostalgia for the old mayor's apathy.

Campaign Usage

Barist makes for a good early villain, in particular if the players start in a village where he could be the mayor. He is more than happy to manipulate those he can into working for him and ensuring their loyalty. Willing to do keep his position by any means necessary, should Barist think players are a threat to his power, he will attempt to get rid of them as quickly as possible.

Although Barist is presented here as a village mayor, he is representative of many kinds of institutional evil, such as various levels of government and societal leadership. With a little reflavoring, Barist can be put in charge of a larger settlement or any other small social group and produce similar results for your game.

Story Hooks

Save Our Town

An old man has arrived in town from a small village, saying that it has been taken over by an evil man and that he fears for the residents who remained behind.

Fear and Punishment

Something is rotten in the village of Valleyton. The villagers bear scars and bruises but refuse to say where they come from. Should anyone ask too many questions, the guards for the village come calling.

An Inconvenient Story

A village mayor (Barist) has a mission for an intrepid group of adventurers to rescue a villager who has become lost in the forest. Suspicions mount when the mayor warns them not to believe anything the villager has to say, especially those accusing him of abuses of power.

Combat Usage

Barist is not a fighter and never had the talent for magic. He is, however, very charismatic and is more than happy to exercise his cruelty on others. As such, he is rarely caught by himself in dangerous situations but often relies on his loyal followers to protect him. Should he

INSTITUTIONAL EVIL

Several villains in this book are presented not so much as mustache-twirling evil but more insidious villains: the kind that forces themselves into a position of power and does whatever necessary to maintain it. It's the kind of evil that may very well be legal in most instances, yet just feels wrong. These are people who abuse their power, not for some lofty ambition to rule the world but simply because they have carved out their niche and wish to maintain it. Oftentimes, they will be the leader of a group that does their bidding, are ostensibly weak themselves, and only lash out directly when cornered.

feel the need, Barist is not above draining the village coffers to hire mercenaries to secure his position. Letting others do the bulk of the work, he will support them with his abilities while taking advantage with flanking to do sneak attack damage.

A stern human stands before you with graying hair, a cane stands by his side, obviously for show, twisting under his grip as he grinds its end into the ground.

BARIST MYLAR

CREATURE 5

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +15

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

Skills Deception +16, Diplomacy +13, Intimidation +13, Society +13, Stealth +12, Thievery +12

Str +1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +0, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +5

Items +1 striking dagger, fine clothes

AC 21; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

HP 55

Protect Me! ➤ **Trigger** Barist is the target of an attack that he is aware of and has an ally adjacent; **Effect** He uses the Take Cover action using the adjacent ally as lesser cover.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +13 (thrown 10ft, versatile S), Damage 2d4+6 piercing

Unruly Mob ♦ (auditory, emotion, mental) Barist commands his allies to attack those who would bring his plans to an end. All of Barist's allies within 30 feet may use a reaction to either Strike or Stride.

Sneak Attack Barist deals an extra 1d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.



THE CARPENTER

*"Funny how quickly life can turn around
sometimes, isn't it?"* ~Sinclair

Once a simple halfling filled with grandiose ambition, Merras, often known as "the carpenter", practiced his craft in the slums. He wore his heart on his sleeve, always offering his services at low cost to the less fortunate: he built free cribs for new parents, for instance, and shared tools with other artisans of the neighborhood. But every night, lying in his bed, the Carpenter dreamt of doing more—of changing the world. His nights were filled with fantasies of ridding the city of its criminals and making the slums a better place to live. Alas, his physical prowess were nowhere near the height of his ambitions, and he lacked the power to make his dreams come true.

On a gloomy evening, as he was working on a piece of furniture for a couple of newlyweds, an overly excited goblin walked into the shop, waving around a menacing looking yet strangely hypnotizing sword. The goblin requested a custom case to contain the ominous blade, which he planned to offer to someone as a gift. After a long and tedious conversation, featuring the words "beautiful" and "present" more often than one would think possible, the goblin left the sword, a deposit, and a foul smell as he skipped away. The carpenter, a little scared of the blade, placed it carefully on a shelf out of sight and closed up shop, never suspecting his life was about to change forever.

The very next morning, his new patron's body was found in an alley, brutally mutilated. Later that evening, someone broke into his shop. Panicked and taken by surprise, the Carpenter grabbed the only weapon he could think of: the goblin's blade. After a short graceless battle, the intruder found himself at the wrong end of the sword, dead. As the thief drew his final breath, the carpenter felt invigorated. The nose broken during the struggle fixed itself, the pain in his swollen jaw dissipated and his year long arthritis vanished.

Through this death, the Carpenter's life changed forever, now tied to the cursed weapon. The Bloodthirster's blade made him feel powerful, confident, and full of vitality, but also hungry for blood, urging him to feed it at any cost. And so began his crusade. The carpenter by day became a vigilante by night. Using the few coins kept in his life savings, he bought himself shoddy leather armor, and every day after sundown, he would patrol the shadowy street. Residents of the slums

celebrated and criminals whispered in fear of the exsanguinator. The carpenter proceeded to rid the slums of its criminals, draining one life after another. No one was safe: from the lowly racketeering thug to the feared thieves guild, all ultimately found themselves at the end of the Bloodthirster. Within a year, the lower city was clean, and people lived unafraid for the first time anyone could remember.

But from his success arose an unforeseen issue: the carpenter was running out of victims to feed the blade. And so the Bloodthirster started feeding on him. At first, the carpenter let it happen, thinking it was a small price to pay for the power granted to him. He figured crime would resume eventually, providing for a new source of victims. And he was right: crime did return, in the form of a new group of thugs that claimed dominion over the city slums. Excited and a little desperate, the carpenter donned his shoddy armor and went hunting. That night, he learned two crucial lessons: ghouls make for dangerous opponents, and they do not bleed. His resolve remained unshaken, however, and he resolved to drive the undead thugs out of town. But he wouldn't be able to feed the blade in the process, making the task considerably harder.

It took him a week to resort to killing an innocent civilian, rationalizing that the life of one would be outweighed by the good he was doing. It took him a month to realize the blade's thirst could not be quenched by a single life a day, let alone would a single life allow it to address his nightly injuries. By the end of the summer, the carpenter was killing as many civilians as he was killing ghouls, and many more than the ghouls killed themselves.

Today, if you spend an evening in a tavern of the slums, you will quickly learn that citizens fear two things: the governing ghouls syndicate, and the killer of the slums, the exsanguinator.

Campaign Uses

While the Carpenter is relatively low level, he can be made into a high level villain simply by increasing his proficiency to murder without leaving clues (using DC per level allows the investigation to scale in difficulty with the party). This villain can provide a story arc for a campaign at any level. Once the identity of the murder discovered, the apprehension of the Carpenter should pose little difficulty to a party of moderate level or higher.

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THE CURSE LIVES ON

If your players decide to execute the Carpenter or to deliver him to the authorities, you might also introduce the Bloodthirster to your campaign. Do so with extreme caution. The Bloodthirster can provide rich and interesting storytelling options, but can also lead to PC death, campaign derailment, and more importantly, conflict among the players. Whether it's through vigilantism, hunting potential foes, or a string of murders, the cursed player will be required to take a life daily. Such a plot element can be sensitive in many ways and easily derail a campaign.

Once the Carpenter's identity is discovered, the party might elect to either release him from his curse, deliver him to the authorities, execute him on sight, or any combination of these options.

Possible Clues

When searching for clues regarding The Carpenter's actions during a murder, you can use the suggestions below. Most Entries other than Perception checks are Recall Knowledge. Alternatively you can implement higher DCs appropriate to the party's level as a means of imbuing the mystery without staying on par with The Carpenter himself.

- The crime scene has traces of wood dust - Perception DC 19.
- The same wood dust was found near the body of a murdered wererat - Perception 21.
- The victim has been completely drained of its blood - Perception or Medicine DC 19.
- The blood drain was not done by a vampire - Perception or Religion DC 21, Undead Lore DC 19, or Vampire Lore DC 17.
- A rumor in town speaks of a tortured goblin around the same time as the first victim - Society DC 19 or Gather Information DC 13.
- Word in the underworld claims the wererats are on high alert, looking for the exsanguinator - Society DC 24, Underground lore DC 21, or Gather Information DC 22.
- The killer's victim were all known to be shady or questionable characters - Society DC 21 or Gather Information DC 20.

THE CARPENTER

CREATURE 4

UNIQUE CE SMALL HE/HIM HALFLING HUMANOID

Perception +11; keen eyes

Languages Common, Halfling

Skills Athletics +10, Deception +8, Intimidation +8, Stealth +12, Thievery +12, Crafting +8

Str +5, **Dex** +5, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +2

Keen Eyes The Carpenter gains a +2 circumstance bonus when using the Seek action to find hidden or undetected creatures within 30 feet. When he targets an opponent that is concealed from him or hidden, reduce the DC of the flat check to 3 for a concealed target or to 9 for a hidden one.

Items *Bloodthirster*, leather armor

AC 21; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +14, **Will** +8

HP 70

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ bloodthirster +14 [+10/+6] (agile, finesse, magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d6+5 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed damage

Critical Drain (necromancy) When the Carpenter critically hits using the *Bloodthirster*, the creature also becomes drained 1.

Life Syphon ♦ (necromancy) **Requirements** the carpenter's last action was a successful hit against a creature; **Effect** the creature becomes drained 1 (or drained 2 if it was a critical hit) and the carpenter regains 8 Hit Points. He only regains these Hit Points if the creatures drained value increased.

Dread Striker Frightened creatures are off-guard to the carpenter.

BLOODTHIRSTER AND DOWNTIME

If the Bloodthirster falls into the hands of a player character, downtime can become an issue. Left unfed, the blade will feed off the PC and kill them, reducing their maximum Hit Points every day, whether the wielder gained Hit Points through draining others or not. The simplest way to handle this swiftly and efficiently is to roll a check with a hard DC for every week of downtime. If the player elects to hunt big game, have them roll a Nature check, if they attempt to do some vigilantism, a Stealth check, so on and so forth. On a success, the player gains 2 maximum Hit Points, on a failure, they lose 2 maximum Hit Points. Critical success and critical failure grant and remove 3 points respectively.

In case of downtime lasting several months, we suggest rolling once per month and increasing the HP gained or lost by 1, for a maximum of 4 on a critical roll.

If the Bloodthirster's curse is lifted, you lose any additional maximum Hit Points granted by the blade. If your maximum Hit Points have been reduced by when the curse is lifted, you regain them at a rate of 2 per day.

BLOODTHIRSTER

ITEM 10

RARE **NECROMANCY** **CURSED**

Usage 1 hand; **Bulk** L

This black *+1 wounding striking shortsword* is covered in seemingly organic red veins. When in contact with blood, the veins along *Bloodthirster* start pulsing and faintly glowing, emulating a beating heart pumping blood through it.

When you critically hit with *Bloodthirster*, if the target is susceptible to the persistent bleed damage, it becomes drained 1 and you recover Hit Points equal to double your level (maximum 20) if the creature increased its drained value this way. This drained value does not increase on further critical hits. If you have access to *Bloodthirster's* critical specialization, you may choose the sword specialization or this effect, not both.

The *Bloodthirster's* curse fuses with your vital essence the first time you kill a creature with it. While fused, you feel the hunger of the blade, which starts feeding on your life force, slowly draining you and sending a clear message; feed it or it will feed on you.

The first three times in a day you kill a living creature with a level higher than 2, your maximum Hit Points increases by half the creature's level. Every morning, during your daily preparation, you lose a number of maximum Hit Points equal to your level. The blade cannot grant you more than three times your level in additional maximum Hit Points at any given time, but it can drain all of your Hit Points, killing you immediately if you reach 0 maximum Hit Points.



CYGNI — CURSED RED STAR

CONTENT WARNING — SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Among any number of other attempts to feel alive again through connections, libations, and adrenaline hunting, Cygni is prone to overconsumption of various substances. You may wish to limit this exposure in your game and focus more on her social pressure, thrill seeking, or finding a way to bring her some peace in her inevitable pseudo immortality or putting her to her true rest.

Stumbling through death with more whimsy than she ever did in life, Cygni Scuti Westerlund believes in one thing: having fun. Much of her early life is a mystery, but she started garnering attention from both mortals and those beyond when various cults of sensation, hedonism, and epicurean taste all started to unwittingly share a particular half-elven acolyte. Cygni, owing to her silver tongue and unerring confidence made waves in each, receiving blessings from the faithful. These blessings, whether working in tandem with unexpected results or due to the personal interest of a more powerful being led to her return from death not long after she first starting to gain notoriety. Cygni has suppressed many of her memories since her death, but the nature of her demise is one she has never shared, if she can indeed recall it at all.

Her first resurrection was confusing and stressful, she sought comfort through distraction and companionship, surviving from the sensations that seemed to flair to near-life proportions during the most intense of moments. Cygni is driven by the next experience, be they cheap libations that always seemed to work better when sharing among others, the adrenaline-pumping exaltations of danger, or the moments of most profound emotional contact with a companion. Cygni shies from the latter, burned too many times by the loss of someone close, usually due—directly or indirectly—to her own actions. Her own undeath is somewhat of a mystery to her, she doesn't know why, but has become accustomed to the fact that she just does not stay dead, which only emboldens her. However, she has learned her weaknesses, she avoids handing out her full name as it holds power over her and can harm her just as painful memories of her past can weaken her and cause her soul to lament its return to the world, resisting the call to her next rejuvenation.

Cygni frequents taverns, bars, clubs, and anywhere where the nightlife is active. A master of building quick, shallow, but intense relationships and pushing people beyond the normal bounds of their comfort for her own short-term experiences, the weakest will in the crowd is her go-to for fun and consumption, encouraging them to try new things, but rarely urging the cautions that those things should pair with. Her aim is rarely, if ever, to actively cause harm but she often loses sight of other's well-being, pushing her companions to the edges of their limits so that she can share in their sensation and feel the way she did when she was alive. This often leads to over-consumption, exhaustion, and even death in those she has clung to. Usually by this point, Cygni will already be impaired by whatever sensation she was chasing and her attempts to save the unfortunate soul who helped get her there are not always successful. Despite the bodies she leaves in her wake, she never slows down much, and actively trying to hamper her fun can draw her ire. Cygni is not murderous by nature, but is extremely capricious, frightening and stalking people she dislikes, using her foolhardy confidence and lack of mortal fear to push the envelope until she feels like the score is settled, sometimes causing severe trauma to those who persist against her. Somewhat paradoxically, if she becomes comfortable with a companion's presence, she begins to unveil her true and similarly tries to push the person past the brink; half in a desire to frighten the prospective friend away before she causes them real

harm and half hopeful that she will find someone who will stay with her, truly accepting her even at her worst.

CYGNU SCUTI WESTERLUND

CREATURE 9

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM SHE/HER UNDEAD

Perception +18; darkvision, denseseeker

Languages Common, Necril

Skills Athletics +17, Acrobatics +20, Cult Lore +19, Diplomacy +21, Deception +21, Intimidation +23, Medicine +17, Occultism +17, Religion +15, Stealth +20

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +7

Denseseeker (divination, detection, occult) Cygni can sense the nearest location where living creatures are willingly exposing themselves to ingested poisons, but not the distance.

AC 27; **Fort** 18+, **Ref** +16, **Will** +21

HP 192; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison; **Resistances** physical 10 (except slashing); **Weaknesses** hedonist's weakness

Hedonist's Weakness Cygni can choose to ignore her immunity to poison for ingested poisons when exposed to one. When she exposes herself to an ingested poison that another creature within 30 feet is suffering the effects from, she can choose to automatically fail her save so long as the creature is suffering a stage more severe than she is.

Painful Memories (emotion, fear, mental) If a creature brings up a painful memory for Cygni, use actions to call her full name, or casts *agonizing despair*^{APG} on her, she must attempt a Will save DC 33. If a creature spent 2 or 3 actions saying her full name, she takes a status penalty to her save equal to the number of actions taken. She cannot be affected by the same memory or by the same creature saying her full name for one day.

Critical Success Cygni shrugs off the strain and is unaffected.

Success Cygni takes 1d8 mental damage and if she is destroyed in the next day she adds 1d4 days to the time it takes her to re-form.

Failure As a success, but she takes 2d8 mental damage and adds 2d4 days to the time it takes her to re-form

Critical Failure As a Success, but she takes 4d8 mental damage and adds 4d4 days to the time it takes her to re-form

Unending Party (divine, necromancy) When Cygni is destroyed, she re-forms from unhallowed earth after 2d4 days within 1 mile of the nearest settlement fully healed. She can only be permanently destroyed by becoming content with her existence and abandoning her hedonism willingly or by learning the truth of her death and accepting it.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claws +17 (finesse, void), Damage 3d6 void damage

Suprise! ♦♦ (emotion, fear, mental, visual) Cygni, performs a frightful display of body-horror; popping off her head, breaking ribs through her chest, opening her mouth so wide it rips, etcetera. One creature Cygni chooses within 30 feet must succeed a Will save DC 29 or be frightened 1, frightened 2 on a critical failure.

Siphon Sensation ♦♦ (emotion, enchantment, mental, occult) **Frequency** Once per round; **Effect** Cygni latches onto a living creature she has grabbed or restrained, drawing their senses into her. The embraced creature is overcome by a euphoric feeling and becomes stupefied 1 for 1 round. If Cygni chooses, the creature takes 3d8 mental damage and Cygni gains temporary Hit Points equal to the damage dealt. Regardless of if she deals damage, the target must attempt at a DC 28 Will save against the effects of *synesthesia*.

THE PARTY NEVER ENDS

Cygni's unknown source of undeath is almost certainly extremely traumatic to her emotionally, its suppression being a major reason she persists, like a physical ghost, unable to pass on.

She makes the most of it, her denial causing a hungry pit in her soul that she feeds with endless reveling and thrill seeking. This makes her an easy introduction to any exciting event, as her sense of self preservation is relatively poor after learning of her apparent immortality.

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ESSILA THE MINDTHIEF

CAUTION AND SAFETY

While manipulation is a natural narrative hook for Essila, be aware this kind of behavior could be inappropriate at tables with players who may be triggered by emotionally manipulative tactics such as stalking and gaslighting. If you do not wish to venture in these waters, we suggest you use the alternative story hooks.

"Memory is simultaneously a precious, yet fickle thing."

~ Sinclair

From a distance, you see a beautiful violet-skinned human in a stunning black dress. As you get closer, however, you notice how disheveled her attire and hair are, and her expression betrays a terrifying insanity.

The daughter of a night hag and a gifted telepath, Essila's destiny was always to be bound to the memories and thoughts of others. Though she lacked her mother's propensity for dreamwalking, her ability to see memories combined with her inherited psychic potency granted her a unique talent she discovered while "playing" with her mother's victims at a young age: the ability to steal thoughts.

Upon learning this, Essila's mother put her to work, taking people's most prized thoughts and holding them for ransom. Though Essila's talents only allowed her to take fragments of memory, a choice cut of information—a loved one's face, the code to a safe box containing a precious artifact—was plenty enough to coax people to part with their life savings... or something dearer.

As hags are wont, though, her mother's love was conditional, and began to pale in comparison to the abuse heaped upon Essila, despite being the lodestone of their operation. Fed up, Essila decided to return the favor by incapacitating her mother, slowly stripping her of her memories, one fragment at a time. By the time Essila was done, her mother couldn't even remember how to speak.

Essila's first act upon leaving her mother was to travel to a nearby port city, break into the house of a wealthy couple, and steal their memory of its location, leaving the owners to wander the streets lost. From there, she rebuilt her mother's operation for her own benefit, staying undetected by strategically erasing her presence from the memories of authorities and rivals.

For some time, Essila lived in the lap of luxury, indulging in debauchery and hedonism, but while she filled her pockets, her soul remained empty. She longed for true connection: a real, reciprocated relationship. She ruminated on stolen recollections of loved ones and shared moments, wanting to experience them herself.

Over time, Essila became addicted to such memories. Her riches grown hollow and insubstantial, she became obsessed with finding genuine companionship instead. Unfortunately, Essila's antisocial behaviors were not conducive to forming healthy bonds, which her newly obsessive nature did nothing to improve. She resorted to stalking or using contrived coincidence to get close to others, scaring most of those unfortunate enough to attract her attention.

Her despair slowly turned into frustration and she made a fateful decision: if no one would fall for her of their own volition, she would make them. She began abducting people, removing all memories of their partners, then their friends, then their family, until she had them all to herself. But this veil of lies could only last so long. Her habit of removing

every argument, every undesirable moment, or every disagreement from their memory, only to replace them with lies and manufactured stories, eventually caught up with her. Eventually, the lies reached a critical mass, and her victims would inevitably threaten to leave. In a rage, she shattered their minds completely, and hauled them onto ships and carriages that would take them far away, where their loved ones would never find them. Then, she would go seek out a new victim, desperately hoping they would finally, finally be the one to stay with her forever...

Story Hooks

Seeding in Essila by having her steal a PC's memory and growing attached to them is a natural way to work her into the narrative. Once she grows attached, she stalks the target of her attachment, and her antisocial behavior will naturally lead to conflict. For example, she might attempt to separate the player from the party, or create dissent among them. This way of handling Essila is more suited for a roleplay intensive campaign, as it may take some time and finesse to achieve the desired outcome.

Alternatively, Essila can simply be an agent working in the employ of someone paying for her services, or seeking to acquire one of the party's belongings for herself. You can rely on her profession and skills to build your story rather than her personal journey.

Since killing Essila restores all stolen memories to their original owners, you can use this as a plot hook. If she is in possession of important information that needs to be reclaimed, either by stealing crucial information from the party as they receive it, or by employing the party to retrieve an important memory for a patron of some sorts.

ESSILA THE MINDTHIEF

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM SHE/HER CHANGELING HUMAN

HUMANOID

Perception +24; Low-Light Vision

Languages Common; telepathy 60 feet

Skills Arcana +18, Deception +24, Intimidation +20, Occultism +21, Society +19, Stealth +18, Thievery +22

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** +5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

AC 29; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +19, **Will** +22; +2 circumstance bonus against sleep and effects that cause or alter dreams

HP 184

Advanced Telepathy Essila is a master of probing and altering minds. She does not need to use somatic and verbal components when casting mind probe or mind reading and creatures critically succeeding on their Saving Throw get a success instead.

When Essila casts modify memory, she may modify up to 1 minute of memory whenever she Sustains the Spell,

instead of the usual 6 seconds, up to a maximum of 50 consecutive minutes.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ✦ claw +22 [+18/+14] (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d6+10 slashing damage

Occult Innate Spells DC 30; **6th** *feeblemind*; **5th** *dream council*, *mind probe* (x3); **4th** *modify memory* (x3), *nightmare*; **3rd** *dream message*, *mind reading* (at will); **2nd** *paranoia*; **1st** *mindlink* (at will); **Cantrips** (6th) *daze*, *message*

Steal Memory ✦ (enchantment, mental) Frequency One per turn Requirements Essila's last action was to Cast mind reading or mind probe Effect Essila attempts to steal a thought from her victim. The creature rolls a DC 30 Will save. Damaged minds are more difficult to manipulate through this ability; the creature gets a circumstance bonus to the roll equal to twice their stupefied condition.

Critical Success The creature becomes immune to Steal Memory for 24 hours.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature forgets a prepared spell, a known spell or a feat of Essila's choice and becomes stupefied 1.

Critical Failure As failure but the creature becomes stupefied 2.

Return Memory ✦ (enchantment, mental) Essila returns a memory she's stolen to a creature; she must be within 30 feet of the creature and be able to see it. The creature receives a brief flash of the memory as it re-enters their consciousness. If the creature is aware that Essila is performing the action, they can attempt a DC 30 Will saving throw to refuse the memory. Essila can only give memories back to their original owner.

STEAL MEMORY OUTSIDE OF ENCOUNTERS

When using Essila's Steal Memory ability outside of an encounter, the roll gains the secret trait and the character is not aware of the missing information until they try to use it for the first time, finding themselves incapable of remembering it.

Additionally, Steal Memory can be used to steal non-combat information, like the name of a person, the precise detail of an acquaintance's face or a crucial bit of information like a passphrase or the location of a building.

FULMINADOS — THE STORM LANCER

"Hell hath no fury like a lover scorned... especially if that lover is imbued with the raw power of the elements." ~ Sinclair

With a peal of lightning and cacophony of thunder, a being in sapphire blue armor—electricity arcing between its plates—descends from the sky and shatters the ground beneath them, a spear dug into the point of impact.

Fulminados had no love for the surface world. Raised in the sky cities above the easterly oceans, he looked at the mortals who walked the land as primitive and lacking potential. His people were scions of the air, innately capable of fantastic magics and in tune with nature itself. To Fulminados, the surface races were less than ants; they were worms beneath the dirt, toiling and serving their purpose, but completely uninspired and beneath the notice of his people.

When the genie lords of the Elemental Planes declared their intent to subdue the Material Plane, Fulminados simply saw the emerging Confluence as an opportunity for his own auspices. Already an accomplished soldier of the Sky Sultan's Guard, he realized offering his lance arm to the genies would allow him to rise even further above his station and become nobility.

When he proved his worth and ascended to become Faiz the Thunderous's champion - imbued with the power of a roiling storm, augmenting his already potent skills with magical enchantments - he was introduced to the other elemental champions who would represent the planes of earth, fire and water. It was Daphnea, the Cleanser of the Tides, who took his eye, and the two entered a romance.

During his bonding with Daphnea, she would recount stories of mortals and their disdain for the ocean; hunting its inhabitants by staking mermaids and harvesting native fish to extinction. Some unscrupulous beings would even pollute the waters with toxic runoff, both natural and magic.

These stories lit a fire within Fulminados' soul; he realized how fortunate he was that most mortals were too lacking to venture into the sky and taint the airways as they did the waters. He no longer simply felt patronizing dismissal to surface folk. No; he was beginning to despise them, and saw them as barbarians unable to respect nature itself. In his eyes, the

Confluence was no longer just a war by ambitious genies to assert their dominance. It was an imperative to all elementally-affiliated peoples to protect their heritage from those who would disrespect and destroy it.

Fulminados became one of the most feared generals of the Confluence. When storms gathered and oceans roiled, sailors began to fear his presence. Few survived his assaults, but those that did spoke of a bolt of lightning descending from the heavens that tore ships asunder, arcing between them and shattering their sails. Daphnea admired his dedication to her people, and promised once the war was over, they would unite and create an unstoppable dynasty in the new elementally-ruled Material Plane.

Unfortunately this was never to be; heroes of the surface felled the genie lords and their champions one by one, including Daphnea. Upon learning of his beloved's death, Fulminados' soul became consumed completely by hatred. His mind was lost to anger; he became a being of pure instinct and fury now, seeking only to destroy the surface folk who killed those he loved.

Fulminados was the only champion of the Confluence who was never felled, but with the war over and his master long dead, his anger became aimless and entropic. Still imbued with the powers the Thunderous granted him long ago, Fulminados acts as a vengeful vanguard of the oceans his beloved once fought for, striking down ships that transgress the storms he rides.

FULMINADOS

CREATURE 15

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID SYLPH

Perception +27

Languages Common, Sussuran, Thalassic

Skills Acrobatics +29, Athletics +30, Intimidation +26, Nature +26, Society +22, Survival +26, Plane of Air Lore +22

Str +8, **Dex** +7, **Con** +4, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

Items +3 greater striking shocking thundering mithral fauchard, +2 electricity-resistant greater resilient mithral half-plate

AC 37; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +29, **Will** +27

HP 275; **Immunities** electricity, sonic

Reactive Strike ➤

Lightning Discharge ➤ (electricity, evocation) **Trigger** A creature hits Fulminados with a melee weapon or unarmed attack, or a melee spell attack; **Effect** The triggering creature takes 3d12 electricity damage with a DC 35 basic reflex save.

Speed 35 feet, 35 fly

Melee ➤ fauchard, +30 [+25/+20] (deadly d8, reach, sweep, trip), **Damage** 3d10+10 piercing plus 1d6 electricity and 1d6 sonic

Sky Dive ➤➤ Fulminados leaps into the air and dives at a foe. He flies up 20 feet straight up into the air if he is not already flying. Regardless of whether he flies up or is already airborne, he then flies in a straight line to an empty space on the ground within his fly speed.

If a creature is adjacent to the space Fulminados lands in, he may make a melee strike against that creature. If he critically succeeds this strike, the target is knocked prone.

Storm Surge ➤➤ (evocation) **Requirements** Fulminados is holding his fauchard; **Effect** Blessed by the genie lord Faiz the Thunderous, Fulminados' fauchard can unleash the power of the storm. Choose one of the following effects. After using one of these effects, he cannot use Storm Lance again for 1d4 rounds.

- **Lightning:** Fulminados turns his weapon into a penetrating spear of lightning. A 60-foot line of electricity is released, starting from Fulminados. All creatures in the line take 8d12 damage with a DC 35 basic Reflex save. This gives the action the electricity trait.
- **Thunder:** Fulminados drives his fauchard into the ground and a calamitous burst of thunder is unleashed in a 20-foot emanation around him. All creatures in the emanation take 14d6 sonic damage with a DC 35 basic Fortitude Save. In addition, on a failure, the creature is deafened for 1 round, or for 1 minute on a critical failure. This gives the action the sonic trait.
- **Wind:** Fulminados spins his fauchard in front of him, creating a mighty gale that blows in a 30-foot cone. All creatures in the cone (including the attacked creature) take 10d8 bludgeoning damage with a DC 35 basic Fortitude Save. In addition, on a failure, the creature is knocked back 5 feet from Fulminados. On a critical failure, the creature is knocked back 10 feet and falls prone. This gives the action the air trait.

Swipe ➤➤ Fulminados makes a wide, arcing swing. He makes a single melee Strike and compares the attack roll result to the AC of up to two foes, each of whom must be within his melee reach and adjacent to the other. Roll damage only once and apply it to each creature he hits. A Swipe counts as two attacks for his multiple attack penalty.

If he's using a weapon with the sweep trait (such as his fauchard), its modifier applies to all his Swipe attacks.

A FORCE OF NATURE

Fulminados is a very straightforward villain. He is not a being who seeks a particular long-term goal. Affiliated with the elements, he is both a figurative and literal force of nature, and should be treated as such as an adversary.

Due to his strength, Fulminados will not likely be beaten until later in any campaign he appears. However, this can be used to seed him in early, having him appear to wreak destruction that can set the players on a path to finding a way to bypass or defeat him. Have him appear during a torrential storm at sea as described in his backstory, charging down from on high and destroying a ship or even a fleet of ships entering a domain he patrols.

Do not have him target the players directly to avoid risking him killing them; rather, use his destruction as the impetus for other events. You can have the players engage with environmental hazards as a skill challenge, such as avoiding falling ship masks or trying to catch themselves on pieces of flotsam and jetsam while in the torrential waters.

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HOS'TAMAR — THE CORRUPTED ONE

Not all those who take to evil are forced into it, some choose the path and the power it offers. Such is the way for Hos'tamar who took the Corruption willingly, to become its vessel. Once upon a time he was a Druid of the highest circle; well respected and well connected. Very outspoken against the march of civilization, he saw every inch of nature forfeited to towns and cities as a failure of the druids who were charged to protect nature.

Out of frustration he began to speak out against the Circles, suggesting they do something about the march of civilization. Pushing past diplomacy to “violence without limit”, a concept he suggested to say that every tool that they had should be used to return things to nature, no matter how outwardly abhorrent they may be. Having gathered a significant amount of goodwill over a long time he was able to spread his ideas without answer from the higher ranking members of the Circle.

Eventually he found his solution. It's unsure where he found the Corruption or how it took root in him but what is known is that by the time he was found out it was too late to stop. The lands that he was charged with protecting had become a breeding ground for the seeping curse, many of the settlements in the region having already fallen to it, becoming foul servants of the newly styled Corrupted One. From there he has begun to spread his power across the world.

Although the druids who stood by and let it happen have refused to acknowledge their part in it, the rest of the world has taken notice of the threat. In the surrounding areas the question of what to do about the corrupted lands and their leader are being asked. With the taint upon the lands themselves open warfare seems unlikely but even sending a small force to kill the Corrupted One looks doomed to fail with how deeply entrenched he has become.

That hasn't stopped people from trying and reports coming back from the survivors who have encountered the Corrupted One are startling. Many of them reported an ability to appear at will anywhere within his realm and his influence even seeping into the minds of individuals. Fortunately Curse Breakers have found that vitality energy seems to weaken him and the Corruption itself leading to the current plan of inching back the Corrupted Lands. Unfortunately the Corrupted One has begun to be sighted outside of these lands causing fear to spread more than the curse itself.

Campaign Usage

Hos'tamar represents a clear threat not just direct but existential, unlike other villains when they occupy an area, the Corrupted Ones influence extends to the land and to the people. Early on this lends to campaigns of intrigue, where players might not be sure who is influenced by the Corrupted One and who is not. As a curse mostly involved in being insidious in its proliferation, it makes it easy to serve as a motivation for earlier villains and NPC's. As the campaign proceeds it becomes easier and easier to detect the Consuming Curse of Corruption so it starts to bend towards pushing back against it.

In addition if, as a GM, you want to introduce Consuming Curses, using the Corrupted One and its minions is an easy way to do it if you don't want to do more obvious ones such as by using a Werewolf. If you do, a campaign can easily become a race against time as the players try to find out how to get rid of it before it takes them. Striking out against Hos'tamar is an easy way to present as a potential cure as in many ways he is the originator.

Likewise it should be noted that although we provide his name here, much of the menace around his character comes from the almost exclusive use of his title. Everyone of his followers and minions are not allowed to use his name even if they know it, and most truly don't, so questioning them will not give the results the players may be after. Discovering his true name should be treated as a triumph for the players and give the players something of an upper hand in their fight against him.

A scowling elf with pulsing purple veins regards you with a cocked head, as they begin to gather corrupting energy into their hand for a spell.

HOS'TAMAR

CREATURE 12

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM THEY/THEM CURSE ELF HUMANOID

Perception +25

Languages Common

Skills Arcana +22, Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +22, Nature +25, Occult +28, Religion +22

Str +4, **Dex** +5, **Con** +4, **Int** +9, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +5

AC 30; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +22, **Will** +27

HP 165 (regeneration 10); **Immunities** curse, void; **Weaknesses** vitality 10

Corruptive Vengeance ➤ (curse, necromancy) **Trigger** Hos'tamar takes slashing or piercing damage; **Effect** Hos'tamar's connection to the corruption fills their entire being causing those who pierce their flesh to be exposed to the corruption. Creatures affected by this ability take 4d6 void damage with a basic Will save (DC 28), those that fail on this save are also afflicted by the Consuming Curse of Corruption (*Sinclair's Almanac*).

The Corruption Can Not be Stopped Even when killed and destroyed the corruption won't let its most prized servant be gone for long. Unless the area upon which they died is cleansed of the corruption within an hour of their death, Hos'tamar will resurrect upon another area of corruption in 1d6+1 days with full Hit Points. If Hos'tamar's soul is captured, or otherwise prevented from resurrecting, the corruption attempts to make a counteract check with a +30 bonus when it tries to resurrect them, and once every 1d4 days thereafter until it counteracts the effect.

Vital Vulnerability Despite being a living being, Hos'tamar takes vitality damage as if they were an undead due to their corruption. If an effect would both heal living creatures and harm undead, they take the damage first, then heal for the appropriate amount.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ staff of corruption +20 (two-hand d8), **Damage** 3d4+8 bludgeoning

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 36, attack +28; **6th** *dominate*, *spirit blast* (2 slots); **5th** *abyssal plague*, *black tentacles*, *shadow siphon*, *summon entity** (4 slots); **4th** *confusion*, *globe of invulnerability*, *phantasmal killer*, *suggestion** (4 slots); **3rd** *blindness*, *paralyze*, *slow*, *vampiric touch** (4 slots); **Cantrips** (**6th**) *chill touch*, *daze*, *guidance*, *shield*
(*Signature spell can be cast from a higher level spell slot)

Corrupting Spell ➤ (curse, metamagic, necromancy) If the next spell Hos'tamar casts targets one creature or more they are exposed to the Consuming Curse of Corruption.

Corrupted Control (curse, mental) Hos'tamar's control over the corruption allows them to better take control of those affected by it. Creatures with the Consuming Curse of Corruption have add the misfortune trait to Will saves against mental spells or effects from Hos'tamar.

Void Eruption ➤ (flourish, lair, necromancy, transmutation) Hos'tamar gestures to a single target within 30 feet causing the corrupted land beneath them to erupt with void energy for 5d8 void damage (DC 32 basic Reflex).

KILLING HOS'TAMAR

Hos'tamar's regeneration has no standard means of deactivating it. However, effects that specifically deactivate any regeneration can still disable theirs. Additionally, using death effects or applying the doomed condition to Hos'tamar also allows them to be killed either instantly with a death effect or from their dying value as regeneration prevents them from increasing their dying value beyond 3, but doomed 1 will cause them to die at dying 3.

STOPPING THE CORRUPTION?

The Corruption Can Not be Stopped ability of Hos'tamar allows them to resurrect pretty much indefinitely at the GM's discretion. This is something that should be used sparingly. Although a returning bad guy is an established trope, doing it too often runs the risk of being annoying to the players and taking away from a well earned victory.

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Lair—Corrupted Land

Presented here is the Corrupted Land, this is representative of the kind of area that would surround Hos'tamar. That said this is designed in such a way as to be able to be used as a hazard to be dealt with whenever interacting with the Corruption. This may prove to be a little too much for a low level party so we would suggest using an appropriate DC for the level of the party should it become relevant.

CORRUPTED LAND

HAZARD 10

RARE **COMPLEX** **LAIR**

Stealth +30 (expert)

Description The land distorted, most of the natural life either dead or corrupted into a twisted visage of what it was.

Disable Occultism DC 27 (master) to disrupt the corruptive energy, or Religion DC 27 (master) to cleanse the land enough to stop the corruption's power temporarily; three successes are required to disable it.

AC +30; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +16

HP 180, fast healing 10; **Immunities** mental, precision damage; **Weaknesses** vitality 20

Disrupted By Life The corrupted land is able to take vitality damage as if it were an undead or haunt.

None May Hide from Corruption ➤ **Trigger** A creature enters the lair; **Effect** The lair sends a mental alert to Hos'tamar so long as they are within 100 miles of the lair. In addition, the lair becomes difficult terrain to anyone who does not have the Corruption Consuming Curse.

Routine (1 action) The corrupted land does one of the following actions;

III-Health (healing) The only sickness the corruption will accept is itself. The highest level creature with the Consuming Curse of Corruption may choose one of the conditions it is currently affected by and reduce it by 1.

Acid of Corruption (necromancy, void) The corrupted land begins to eat away at those within to feed the Corruption. Each creature within the lair not affected by the Consuming Curse of Corruption must take 5d6 persistent void damage (basic Fortitude, DC 33).

Corrupting Wave The corrupted land moves and shakes threatening to move everyone in the vicinity. All creatures in within the lair must succeed a DC 33 Fortitude save or be moved 5 feet at the command of the highest level creature with the curse of corruption in the lair. On a critical failure this distance increases to 10 feet. This is forced movement.

Reset If the corrupted land is disabled, then it will reactivate on its own after an hour has passed. If it is reduced to 0 hit points instead, then it is disabled for one day. If it is disabled by using vitality energy or is affected by a spell such as *sanctify* then the Corrupted Land does not reactivate by itself.



JUDGE STACY OLANOR

Born to a wealthy family, well connected to the nobility of the city, life for Stacy Olanor was set to be good. Showing an early interest in law and order her parents set her numerous tutors who ensured the young lady was well educated. A brilliant student, she excelled in her studies and under the guidance of her parents was taught how to navigate the circles of the upper crust of the city. She was also instilled with a disgust for those considered to be lower than her on the social ladder, being taught that they were in such a position because of personal failings not the circumstances of their birth.

This would be an opinion that she would carry forward through her education, even as she apprenticed under some of the greatest legal minds of the city. Detached from the greater sections of society her expressions of the law came from the purely academic and others from the upper strata of the city. With this skewed vision of justice, she began to view the law as a measure to protect the rich and powerful and to keep those beneath in line and orderly. When she finally became a Judge she became feared for her judgments, often being lenient on those with deep pockets while delivering swift and vicious justice to those simply trying to survive.

The truth of her injustice wouldn't come until a crime lord was brought before her. On the one hand they were beneath her, a member of the lower classes worthy of scorn and punishment, but on the other they were rich and powerful. Surely an exception could be made for someone who had done so much to drag themselves up from the depths of poverty. Despite their crimes, the sentence they passed down was lenient to the point of a joke among some. Didn't help that the crime lord went to great lengths to prove their wealth and power to Stacy.

Just like that she was in the pocket of the crime lord, giving them the same treatment as others of the nobility. Keeping them and those that worked for them safe from any meaningful punishment. This new part of her reputation now well known amongst the underworld, the most powerful and evil of the city knew that, for a price, Judge Stacy Olanor would keep them safe from true justice.

Campaign Usage

Stacy Olanor is symbolic of high levels of institutional corruption and evil. In her mind she does not consider herself to be evil but to be doing what is right by what

she believes. A lot of the time this type of thinking is not harmful but in cases where these beliefs hurt the downtrodden and vulnerable this thinking is not only evil but can be actively harmful to those people. In her case Stacy feels that those who have money and power are to be protected above everyone else and that the law exists to serve them.

In regards to a campaign Stacy could easily exist as a means to frustrate the party, especially if they have aligned themselves with those who do not have the means to protect themselves from the people Stacy serves. Her job and her connections means that she can easily have the heroes thrown in prison or level other legal punishments. Remember she serves as a representative of corruption and exposing this could easily back her into a corner.

A woman stands before you in legal robes, looking down on you in both bearing and expression.

JUDGE STACY OLANOR

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE LN MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +19

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven

Skills Deception +16, Diplomacy +21, Intimidation +21, Society +21

Str +1, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

AC 26; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +15, **Will** +21

HP 135; **Weakness** chaos 8

Aura of Order (aura, divine) 10 feet, DC 26, Stacy radiates a lawful aura, she gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC and to her saves against creatures or effects with a chaotic alignment.

Injunction ➤ (mental) **Trigger** An enemy damages one of Stacy's allies, and both are within 15 feet of her; **Effect** The triggering creature must choose one of the following options:

- The ally is unharmed by the triggering damage.
- The ally gains resistance 5 to the triggering damage. After the damaging effect is applied, the triggering creature becomes stunned 1.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ gavel +18 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+8 bludgeoning

Divine Prepared Spells DC 26, attack +18; **4th** *dimensional anchor, divine wrath*; **3rd** *blindness, circle of protection (chaos), heroism, zone of truth*; **2nd** *deafness, dispel magic, silence, spiritual weapon*; **1st** *bane, bless, command, sanctuary*; **Cantrips (4th)** *daze, divine lance, shield, sigil*

Proclaim Judgment ➤ (auditory, concentrate) Stacy passes judgment on either bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage granting all of her allies within 30 feet a +2 status bonus to AC against attacks that deal the chosen type of damage until the start of her next turn.

KING REGAN OF THE HYPERBOLIC WOOD

"Fey have no concept of morality. As such, the line between malice and jest can appear quite thin to us mortals. That is the problem with truly wicked fairies; the depths of their depravity are never certain until the moment that malice is revealed." ~Sinclair

Born a serf to a fey court, Regan spent their days frolicking the ever-shifting woods with their friends, playing games and pulling pranks on one-another. However, Regan was not particularly quick-witted or clever; to their unscrupulous peers, this made them an easy target.

Regan's victimization culminated in a 'prank' where three of their friends lured them to a forest outside their realm, and set it alight with Regan lost amongst it. Suffocating on the smoke, Regan lost consciousness and was separated from their friends.

When Regan awoke, they found themselves lost in unfamiliar woods, shrouded in ephemeral mist. Every turn seemed to lead to a new clearing, and turning back did not lead to where they came from. Such magical dislocation was not unusual for fey realms, but as this forest was foreign to Regan, they did not know its esoteric secrets.

Soon after first getting lost in these woods, a booming voice called out:

'Dear servants, this is the unscrupulous knave who dared to immolate my precious woodlands! Have at them! Bring them to justice, by order of your king!'

Regan braved the woods for what must have felt like years, possibly even decades. They spent days running from creatures the king ordered to hunt them specifically. They would fall into pools that would suffocate them to the point of drowning, before parting only to give them enough air to breathe before receding and drowning them again. They spent a few years polymorphed into a tree, as which they were nested upon by birds and pissed on by wolves. A pair of lost lovers even carved their names into Regan's bark.

As the forest looped for the umpteenth time, Regan decided they were done running. They turned themselves over to the king's guards, and begged for an audience to prove their innocence.

Within the king's royal court, Regan made a spirited plea to the king, Dorieann, arguing their innocence and begging to be let go to return to their own corner of the fey world.

There was a stern look on Dorieann's face, and for a brief moment Regan considered they would be heard out...and then the king burst into raucous laughter.

Of course Dorieann knew Regan did not set the forest fire; they knew the whole time. They have absolute divination over their entire realm, and could see exactly who committed it. What they also saw was exactly what Regan's friends saw in them: that they were gullible. Stupid.

Weak.

The perfect fool for their own amusement.

Something broke in Regan at that moment. A feeling unlike any other stirred from their gut and they realized something: they weren't weak or stupid. They had spent decades wandering these dangerous woods and survived. They had run and hid and endured and fought and even killed when necessary. They were cunning. They were strong. They were nothing like what Dorieann and their friends accused them of.

What had been holding them back was not weakness. It was kindness.

In their fit of laughter, Dorieann was distracted, helpless, and unsuspecting; the perfect opportunity for Regan to walk over and snap their neck. Taking their crown and sitting upon their throne, the woods and the magic of its king became Regan's by right.

Regan's first act was to missive his home realm and summon the three friends who left them to the fire all those years ago. Surprised to see Regan ascend to the king of a realm, the fey friends were unsure the reason their foolish former comrade had invited them. Was this another blunder; a misguided attempt at forgiveness? Or perhaps they had finally gained some cunning and a sense of humor?

Indeed, Regan had become more cunning and developed a sense of humor, but they had developed something else along with them: a sense of irony.

They trapped one friend in an enchanted painting, where they were chased by foul monsters. Another was turned into an ornamental fountain statue, water perpetually flowing out their mouth. The last became a topiary bush, from which grubs and flies would pick from.

Now it was their turn to suffer under a 'practical joke'.

An Ephemeral Domain

King Regan's realm is a fey forest enchanted to trap anyone who steps foot within it. A party's attempts to find their way out with survival checks should always be met with failure; it should be an almost impossible task. To escape requires either appeasing or defeating King Regan themselves.

King Regan will toy with their captives, making them loop the same paths multiple times, or lulling them into a false sense of security with beautiful scenes before turning them vicious or setting beasts or fey servants upon them. King Regan themselves may leave the confines of their palace to stalk their victims personally, using their invisibility spell to stay out of sight while casting spells or peppering their quarry with arrows that will cause confusion or paranoia.

KING REGAN

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE CE TINY THEY/THEM FEY SPRITE

Perception +22; low-light vision, Hyperbolic Omniscience

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +24, Deception +25, Intimidation +25, Nature +21, Society +22, Stealth +24, Survival +21

Str -1, **Dex** +6, **Con** +1, **Int** +3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +6

Items +2 *striking rapier*, +2 *striking shortbow*, *Crown of the Hyperbolic King*

AC 33; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +24, **Will** +22 ; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 140

Hyperbolic Omniscience King Regan sees all in their domain. This acts as a *clairaudience* and *clairvoyance* spell, except they can see and hear anywhere within the domain they rule over. This otherwise acts as their mundane senses; they cannot see invisibility or hear sounds that are magically silenced. They can also perfectly navigate their own realm without any skill checks.

The King's Mist King Regan can cast *obscuring mist*, *stinking cloud*, and *solid fog* at will, but they can only have one of these spells active at a time. Casting of any of those spells will cause any previous casting to vanish.

Speed 15 feet, fly 50 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword, +23 [+19/+15] (agile, finesse, magical, versatile P), **Damage** 2d6+11 slashing

Ranged ♦ shortbow, +23 [+18/+13] (deadly d10, magical, range increment 60 feet, reload 0), **Damage** 2d6+11 piercing

Primal Innate Spells DC 30; **6th** *baleful polymorph*, *flesh to stone*; **5th** *cloudkill*, *glimmer of charm*; **4th** *invisibility* (at will), *solid fog* (at will; see The King's Mist); **3rd** *oneric mire*, *stinking cloud* (at will; see The King's Mist), *wall of thorns*; **2nd** *entangle*, *faerie fire* (at will), *glitterdust* (at will), *obscuring mist* (at will; see The King's Mist); **1st** *noxious vapors* (at will); **Cantrips** (**6th**) *bullhorn*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *puff of poison*

The King's Pixie Dust ♦ (manipulate) King Regan has bespoke pixie dust, carefully enchanted to inflict terror and pain. They sprinkle it onto one of their arrows. If they hit a creature with that arrow before their next turn, the arrow inflicts one of the following special effects instead of dealing damage. Each effect depends on the target's DC 30 Will save. On a critical hit, the target treats its save result as one degree worse.

- **Confusion** (emotion, enchantment, mental) The creature suffers the effects of a 4th-level confusion spell.

- **Nightmare** (illusion, mental) The creature suffers the effects of a 4th-level *nightmare* spell. King Regan may only use this on a creature that's already asleep, and may not target them with this effect again until after the creature wakes up. If King Regan so chooses, they may have creatures affected in a 60-foot proximity experience a shared nightmare. Any creatures sharing their nightmare with a creature or creatures that have a worse save result, treat their save as one degree worse.

- **Paranoia** (illusion, mental) The creature suffers the effects of a 2nd-rank *paranoia* spell.

CROWN OF THE HYPERBOLIC KING

ITEM 11

UNIQUE DIVINATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 1,400 gp

Usage worn headgear; **Bulk** L

This majestic crown, made of intertwining silver branches, is a symbol of Lordship over a particular fey realm. You gain a +2 item bonus to nature checks. When you invest in the crown it changes sizes to suit you.

A fey who invests in this crown and sits upon King Reagan's throne after they are slain is crowned king of the realm. While in the realm, they gain Hyperbolic Omniscience and may use The King's Decree. If they do not return to the throne once every 100 years, the crown vanishes and appears on the throne to be claimed by another, and that creature may never be crowned king again.

Activate ♦♦ command, envision; **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** You cast *banishment* as a 5th-level primal spell with a DC 30 save. You can cast it on any creature regardless if they are on their home plane or not; if they are banished, they are transported to the domain ruled by the crown's owner instead of their home plane.

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KOBIEL THE FALLEN

Kobiel, formerly known as the monadic deva Aniela, is the result of one of the most tragic stories there is; a story of love. Aniela was an angel of unbelievable beauty, even by divine standards, and a fearsome warrior. Stationed at the border between the world of the living and the many worlds of the dead, she prided herself on providing safe passage to more than a million souls to their afterlife. But even angels are flawed: Aniela longed desperately for love, and often fell for a pretty smile or charming words.

The story of the eternally heartbroken angel made its way to the most dangerous ears possible: a succubus. Niimah, like many succubi, was devious, ambitious and cunning. Eager to get in the good graces of a pit fiend in hope of charming him into submission, she saw in Aniela a perfect opportunity. Bold and brazen, Niimah did not even bother to change form when she approached the angel, instead presenting herself as misunderstood and repentant, simply trapped in her ways. Within days, she had wrapped Aniela around her finger, as the lonely angel had fallen madly in love with the demon. With the pretext of seeking a long-lost love, it took Niimah but a month to be granted access to the river of souls. This tale wasn't entirely false, as the best lies are made of truth after all: the seductive demon was looking for the soul of a powerful warlord, whose demise she had orchestrated from the comfort of his bed. After trapping the soul into a gemstone, she left a devastated Aniela with a victorious laugh. The warlord's soul ended up in the hands of the pit fiend, who twisted the soul into a cornugon and sent him to the material plane to wreak havoc.

Duped by a demon into failing her mission, Aniela was banished from the heavens in complete disgrace. Broken and humiliated, Aniela roamed the planes aimlessly for nearly a century. In that time, humiliation became anger, and her endless errands found purpose: vengeance against all who had wronged her. Her wings turned black, her soul darkened, and horns sprouted from her skull. The monadic deva was no more, and Kobiel the Erinys was born. But one thing remained of her former beauty: her golden angelic eyes, which would ever remind her of what she once was, and of all that was taken from her.

With her newfound purpose, Kobiel traveled through the depths of hell in search of Niimah. Finding her former lover comfortably sitting at the side of a powerful pit fiend, she pledged loyalty to both. Finding an opportunity for blissful irony, Niimah convinced the

tyrant devil to put Kobiel at the service of the cornugon so intrinsically tied to her demise.

The irony wasn't lost on Kobiel, whose new disposition allowed her to appreciate her twisted fate fully. She became a great general for the forces of hell, leading armies of fiends to victory throughout the planes. Embodying her new devilish nature to the fullest, Kobiel cared for nothing but her own power. She collected the souls of those she defeated at every occasion, slowly replacing the army granted to her by the tyrant devil. Rather than shepherd them to a final reward, she bound these souls by contract or by shackles, forcing them to recognize but one master: Kobiel herself. As her army grew, so did her power, and her features evolved to match: her wings lost their feathers in favor of the leathery skin so typical of devils, and a long barbed tail, uncharacteristic of erinys but quite common among greater devils, grew from her lower back. Her ascension in the strict hierarchy of hell had begun...

Story Hooks

Kobiel provides numerous story opportunities for both good and evil parties. Kobiel may be beyond redemption, but many would consider putting an end to her torment a merciful act. She serves as a wonderful villain to defeat at the end of a long war campaign against the forces of hell. Alternatively, she can be the trigger for a war between hell and any plane, leaving your players caught in the crossfire.

Kobiel can also be a rare opportunity to oppose a non-evil party to the forces of heaven. Many angels remember the former glory of Aniela, and would go as far as considering her redeemable. These angels see the murder of Kobiel as an act to be punished, having permanently closed any chance of redemption for the fallen angel. By having the party fight and kill Kobiel without any knowledge of who she is, her origin can be unraveled to them after the fact, leaving them to deal with the situation.

If you favor a subtler approach, Kobiel is always in search of new souls to enslave, usually through hellish contracts, and she is not above using her tragic origin story to convince people to help her out, for them to later realize they have been duped, as she was so long ago.

KOBIEL, THE ERINYS

CREATURE 12

UNIQUE LN MEDIUM SHE/HER DEVIL FIEND

Perception +24; greater darkvision, true seeing

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 60 feet

Skills Acrobatics +23, Deception +25, Diplomacy +25, Intimidation +28, Religion +22, Stealth +23

Str +6, **Dex** +6, **Con** +6, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6

Items +1 returning striking spear, +1 resilient breastplate

AC 33; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +25, **Will** +19; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 200; **Immunities** fire; **Resistances** physical 10 (except silver), poison 15;

Weaknesses good 10

Speed 25 feet, fly 40 feet

Melee ♦ flaming spear +26 [+21/+16] (evil, fire, magical, thrown 20ft), **Damage** 2d6+15 piercing plus 1d6 evil and 1d6 fire, 1d10 persistent fire damage on a critical hit.

Melee ♦ tail +25 [+21/+17] (evil, magical, reach 10 feet, agile), **Damage** 2d8+12 bludgeoning plus 1d6 evil, 1d6 fire, and Improved Grab

Divine Innate Spells DC 32; 5th *dimension door*; 4th *dimension door* (at will), *divine wrath*, *retributive pain*; 3rd *fear* (at will); **Constant** (6th) *true seeing*

Rituals DC 32; 3rd *infernal pact*

Flames of Fury Any weapon Kobiel holds gains the effects of a *flaming* rune while she holds it.

Golden Tears ♦ (divine, enchantment, mental) Kobiel begins to weep tears of golden light as the memory of the angel she once was superimposes itself over her devilish form in the minds of those around her. Creatures within 60 feet must attempt a Will save (DC 32) as her celestial origins show the good she is capable of. Good aligned creatures take a -1 circumstance penalty to their save against this effect. Regardless of the outcome, the creature becomes immune to Golden Tears for 24 hours.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature has its convictions on who they are fighting shaken. Until the end of their next turn, the creature suffers a -1 status penalty to attack and damage rolls against Kobiel and she does not trigger reaction from them.

Failure The creature's doubt stays in their hand, as a success, but the status penalty is -2.

Critical Failure As a failure, except the effect lasts for 1 minute.

Army of Hell ♦♦♦ **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** Kobiel calls forth troops to aid her in battle. She summons up to 5 devils, each adjacent to a different enemy within 60 feet. These devils must be no higher level than 4 levels below the foe they are adjacent to or 11th level, whichever is lower.

BREADTH OF CHALLENGE

Kobiel can be used as a challenging encounter from levels as low as 8th, and as high as 14th though we do not suggest using her Army of Hell ability unless the encounter budget is a severe threat or lower, as this ability immediately increases the threat level by one step.



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KUZON — BLAZING FIST BOSS

The passion of those who refuse to let circumstance come between them and what they want burns brightly within Kuzon. It's a flame that has burned for as long he can remember growing up in the streets of Celdain.

In the poorest parts of the city, there was no place for orphans but they clung together, trying to keep each other safe and fed. Kuzon grew slower than other children due to his elemental heritage, but his determination swelled at a rapid pace. Between fortunes both good and bad, the band of children changed over time, growing and shrinking. Kuzon had one constant, the boy he would come to call his brother, a thin but sharp kid called Cross. Cross protected Kuzon, teaching him how to take what he needed, get places they weren't wanted, and do all of it unnoticed. Kuzon was a hothead, however, and his penchant for getting into fights often led to Cross dragging him out of trouble, which eventually resulted in Cross being gravely wounded doing so. After the children clumsily sewed up Cross's wounds and set him to mend, Kuzon vowed not to let his own weakness get Cross hurt again. He pushed his body and abilities to their limit, lifting, climbing, fighting, and learning to call on the fire in his blood with his anger. By the time Cross was back up and at it, Kuzon had already gained several new scars along with greater strength in both body and conviction.

His growth from child to juvenile left Kuzon lagging behind his peers in apparent age, but not in status. With Cross's wits and his decisiveness, the precursor to the Blazing Fist was formed. They carved out a small swath of turf in the streets they called home, taking up residence in a decrepit failed tavern. Within the first year, the group decided Kuzon would serve as the defacto leader, and he surrounded himself with people he felt he could trust as advisers and friends. Years passed, with more victories and conquests than losses, and the Blazing Fist left a scorched path smoldering through the gangs and criminal syndicates they challenged. But Kuzon himself would change in this time, going from teen upstart feared by all who crossed him to a far more considerate criminal and benefactor. A multitude of smaller events, advice from those closest to him, and his own blooming sense of worldliness would make him not only a conqueror but a protector as well.

Now roughly 30 years old but still appearing in his early 20's, Kuzon knows how to use both his charm and intensity to get what he needs for himself and his people, as well as keep trouble in his turf down. He doesn't suffer fools and is swift to exact his infamous brand of fury and violence upon those who break his rules. He offers only

a single warning in most cases. Most of the day-to-day running of his turf is actually handled by his lieutenants, but when a serious threat approaches or he feels he needs to get a message across himself, he will make an appearance. His strongest statements are dramatic and cause even those who look up to him to shudder in fear. From merciless beatings of enemy gang members to the public torture executions of those who dare harm his people, Kuzon makes sure there is no doubt of what happens if you cross him the wrong way.

Feared by the general populace, enemy gangs, and even the city's own corrupt guard, Kuzon's turf is rarely violated outside of direct retaliation. The people within it broadly praise him for the guardianship and support he provides, though he certainly has detractors who see him as an unpredictable tyrant prone to brutal violence at the slightest misstep. By his rule, however, no one goes hungry, cold, or without at least a meager place to rest their head. So long as each person does what they are able to help in the collective providence of the turf, whether through goods, services, or more niche applications, the Blazing Fist does all in its power to provide.

Kuzon's empathy for the destitute and unwanted does not go unnoticed and attracts people of such descriptions to his turf. His acceptance of anyone who keeps to his rules, even as they may fluctuate, has built a powerful and loyal syndicate, as well as a population loath to turn on him under any circumstance. Like many such bases of operation, the Blazing Fist hideout isn't truly hidden but openly on display as a business. The front is a seedy tavern and club, but the complex behind it is a more substantial array of housing, meeting places, confounding alleys, illicit workshops, and fence-houses where the real business takes place.

Campaign Use

Kuzon fits a variety of narrative structures that can take place in or near the city in which he takes residence, ranging from singular arcs to campaign-long intrigue. Local government, rival criminals, or those close to people who he has harmed may want to see him destroyed in one fashion or another. Most commonly, they may seek to stop him muscling in on their own spheres of influence. Kuzon himself may employ the party for matters criminal or legitimate that take place outside of his turf, or assist him in exactly the kind of expansion his adversaries fear.

While somewhat unpredictable in the moment, Kuzon's overall purview leads to a more organized and

communal micro-government under his control. He listens to his advisers (especially Cross), and is amenable to compromise among various perspectives. Such deal-making could give the party a diplomatic means of interfering in not only Kuzon's plots, but those of the rest of the city as well, creating a gateway to further adventure or intrigue.

The moral ambiguity of the Blazing Fists organization, under the control of Kuzon, can serve many roles in a campaign. The gang generally consists of thugs, bandits, and other lesser criminals most appropriate to the party's current ventures.

KUZON

CREATURE 14

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HE/HIM IFRIT HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +25; darkvision

Languages Common, Goblin, Pyric, Undercommon

Skills Athletics +30 (+32 to High Jump and Long Jump), Deception +28, Diplomacy +25, Intimidation +30, Society +24, Stealth +23, Thievery +23, Underworld Lore +28

Str +8, **Dex** +3, **Con** +7, **Int** +4, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +8

Items +2 greater striking spiked gauntlet (2), boots of bounding, healing potion (greater), invisibility potion

AC 33; **Fort** 29+, **Ref** +21, **Will** +24

HP 320; **Resistances** fire 14

Reactive Strike ➤

Flamekissed Kuzon treats environmental heat effects as if they were two steps less severe.

Short Fuse ➤ **Trigger** Kuzon takes damage or a creature he attempted to Demoralize in the last minute takes hostile action against him or his allies; **Effect** Kuzon uses Scorching Wrath.

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ spiked gauntlet +29 (agile, free-hand, magical), **Damage** 3d6+15 piercing

Blazing Flare ♦♦ (arcane, evocation, fire) Kuzon unleashes his inner fire, causing nearby blazes to erupt spectacularly. All creatures and objects suffering from persistent fire damage in a 30-foot emanation take 6d8 fire damage (basic Fortitude save DC 34).

Living Furnace ♦♦ (arcane, evocation, fire) Kuzon's elemental nature resonates with nearby metal. Creatures wearing metal armor or wielding metal weapons within a 15 foot emanation take 5d6 persistent fire damage (basic Fortitude save DC 34). Affected creatures cannot end this persistent damage unless they end their turn more than 10 feet away from Kuzon or are no longer in contact with metal armor or weapons. A creature can drop its burning weapon to gain one degree of success better on its save if it is not also wearing metal armor.

Scorching Wrath ♦ (arcane, evocation, fire) Kuzon fills his gauntlets with vicious heat, causing his melee Strikes to deal an additional 2d6 fire damage and 1d8 persistent fire damage until the end of his next turn, after which his gauntlets only deal an additional 2 fire damage for the next minute, or until he activates Scorching Wrath again, whichever comes first.

Searing Embrace ♦ (fire) **Requirements** Kuzon is benefiting from Scorching Wrath and his last action was a successful Grapple; **Effect** The grabbed creature takes 5d6 fire damage and 2d8 persistent fire damage (basic Fortitude save DC 34), if they are restrained they instead take 7d6 fire damage and 3d8 persistent fire damage. This persistent fire damage cannot end as long as Kuzon has the creature grabbed or restrained.

MORALITY OF A MOBSTER

Kuzon's sense of morality is one derived from a sense of right and wrong that, while violent, is driven by a stilted sense of justice within him. He does not suffer the abuse of those under his protection, nor the most vulnerable of society. It is his own ambition—as well as his methods of righting perceived wrongs—that make him someone to be feared and treated with caution.



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MAESTRO FERDINAND

"Make them dance, Ferdinand, for me, for the end that will come."

"For you my muse, anything. Strike up the band! I dedicate this Requiem to Oblivion herself!"

A prodigy and savant of magical prestige, Ferdinand was raised under the various auspices of wealthy patrons who found his talents entertaining. Ferdinand went through most of this in a daze, almost absent in his activities. Even as he took up the baton as a conductor, his skills were phenomenal but lacked passion, which those who enjoyed his art couldn't help but notice.

This all changed one fateful night. After a performance executed perfectly but without fanfare, he went home to his lonely apartment. With nothing but a piano and the morose knowledge of the life without passion set before him, he set himself to end it all. This is when he was visited by the Requiem of Oblivion; the muse applauded his skill but told him that they could give him the passion he sought. All she asked is that he help her bring the universe to its final crescendo. Finally faced with something to ignite the passion for his art, he agreed.

Stepping out into the night with a new purpose, Ferdinand wandered the city without an obvious destination and ended up in one of its many darkened alleyways, accosted by ruffians intent on mugging him. It was then he heard the voice of his muse: "make them dance" the muse seemed to call. With a terribly joyful smile, he drew his conductor's baton and otherworldly music played.

The next time he took to the stage, Ferdinand was drenched in blood as he gave the performance of his life to the uproarious applause of the crowd. With his greatest triumph achieved, Ferdinand continued to reach greater and greater heights, empowered by the Oblivion and protected by his wealthy patrons. No one can dispute his talent, but as the body count rises and the rumors grow in his wake, people are starting to question whether he's worth the collateral damage.

These days, Ferdinand occupies an interesting place within society. His sponsors know full-well about his activities, but his victims tend to be those that the elite can easily ignore or write off. This makes his performances something of a forbidden delight: they know his sins, which only make the experience better for him and for them. Rumors have begun to circulate that people are even being provided for the maestro and his

muse so as to make the process cleaner. The only one who relishes the kill more is Ferdinand, and he is more than happy to indulge their preferred entertainment.

Description

Standing at around 3 feet before his awakening, Ferdinand had fading pastel hair and possessed a rather reserved style of appearance and dress. Since then, his hair has become a violent red while he wears the attire expected of a conductor and a maestro. His accessories, though quite colorful, are grisly reminders of his activities outside of his music, which he would argue are entwined.

Story Hooks

As powerful in his own right as he is, Ferdinand makes for a good mid-campaign fight foreshadowing more shadowy powers. For all his pomp and bluster, he does not have much ambition beyond his music and his muse. Conversely his muse, the Requiem of Oblivion, is more mysterious and vague in their motivations and could make for the true target of an adventure, with Ferdinand merely serving as the vessel.

Additionally, considering the vague connection between him and the muse, it's entirely possible that one of his previous patrons will hire adventurers to sever the connection and return him to who he once was. Whether Ferdinand wants that or not is another question entirely.

Combat Tactics

As a bard, Ferdinand is designed in such a way as to have minions working with him, such as overly zealous fans or security hired to protect him. As such, although he plays the part of the named NPC, he is very much in the support role, enhancing and buffing his protectors to get the most out of them, while also weakening opponents. At the same time, his Conductor of the End ability inflicts continuous damage to foes.

Additionally, although Ferdinand can be used as a standalone fight, an exciting two-stage boss fight might lead to a battle against the Requiem of Oblivion, who steps in avenge their fallen vessel. If you want to do things this way, keep in mind that the muse is meant to be fought alone—any surviving minions who fought alongside Ferdinand should flee or become catatonic in horror at the muse's appearance.

MAESTRO FERDINAND

CREATURE 10

UNIQUE CE SMALL HE/HIM GNOME HUMANOID

Perception +22

Languages Common

Skills Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +22, Occult +19, Performance +25 (+27 in a concert hall)

Str +1, **Dex** +5, **Con** +3, **Int** +7, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +8

AC 27; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +19, **Will** +24

HP 130; **Resistances** Sonic 10

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ conductor baton +17 (agile), **Damage** 3d4+10 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ dissonant chord +17 (magical, range 40 feet, sonic), **Damage** 3d4+10 sonic

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 33, attack +25; **5th** *crushing despair*, *synesthesia*; **4th** *confusion*, *dimension door*, *resilient sphere*, *suggestion*; **3rd** *haste*, *hypnotic pattern*, *mind reading*, *paralyze*; **Cantrips (5th)** *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *shield*, *telekinetic projectile*

Bard Composition Spells 3 Focus Points, DC 33; **5th** *counter performance*, *inspire heroics*; **Cantrips (5th)** *dirge of doom*, *inspire courage*, *inspire defense*

Conductor of the End ♦ (auditory, aura, manipulate, occult); Frequency once per hour; Effect Ferdinand begins to conduct an orchestra that to begin with, only he can see, but will start to appear as spectral shapes take up their positions. This activates his Aura which has a 60-foot emanation. An enemy that enters or ends its turn within this aura must attempt a basic DC 33 Fortitude save or take 4d6 sonic damage, creatures who critically fail this save are also deafened for 1 round but can continue to be affected by this aura. This aura continues until the start of his next turn. However he may choose to Sustain this effect each round, increasing the duration until the start of his next turn.

The Apocalypse Crescendo ♦♦♦ **Requirements** Ferdinand has sustained Conductor of the End for 3 rounds; **Effect** Instead of sustaining, Ferdinand can choose to end it as he conducts the orchestra to build to a crescendo before falling into supernatural silence, the quiet of the void when all things have ended. All creatures within 120-feet of him must make a Will save with the following effects.

Critical Success Creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 2d6 mental and 2d6 sonic damage and is frightened 1.

Failure The creature takes 5d6 mental and 5d6 sonic damage, is frightened 1, and confused.

Critical Failure Like the end of the universe, so too must they end. The creature must attempt a Fortitude save; if the target fails, it dies. On a successful Fortitude save, they suffer the same effects as if they had simply failed the check. This effect has the incapacitation trait.

THE APOCALYPSE CRESCENDO

Although the effects of this ability are presented here and certainly powerful, we encourage GMs using Ferdinand to treat it with campaign-changing gravitas. The intention of this ability is to end the universe and although the Maestro is not capable of pulling it off fully, the effects should still be devastating outside the purely mechanical. Being affected by the spell causes lingering trauma and lasting harm to the world itself. Additionally, it should be noted that Ferdinand is affected by this as well, this is intentional and he is ready to end when the music falls into the final silence.

AVATAR OF THE REQUIEM

As suggested in the combat tactics for Ferdinand he can be used as a two stage boss fight, in lieu of using a stat block for a different creature entirely which might not be reflective of a Muse you can instead use the following ability;

Avatar of the Requiem ♦ Trigger

Maestro Ferdinand is reduced to 0 hit points; **Effect** The entity known as the Requiem of Oblivion possesses his body, destroying it, and allowing it to partially manifest, entering the following battle form for 1 minute:

- **AC** 23
- **Resistances** all damage 10 (except force, ghost touch, or vitality; double resistance vs. non-magical)
- 65 temporary hit points
- Darkvision
- **Large** size
- **Fly speed** 30 feet
- **Ranged** ♦ +25 (magical, range increment 60 feet, sonic), **Damage** 3d8 sonic
- It may still cast prepared spells.

Due to the unstable manifestation of this battle form, once the duration has expired the avatar disappears with a sudden silence, the danger now over.

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MARATOSK OF THE THOUSAND TEETH

During one of his many phases of experiments, Hoonordel was obsessed with the idea of improving dragons. After all, what greater achievement than to take nature's fiercest predators and make it better? Using his connections and spending all the resources at his disposal, he managed to obtain a dozen dragon eggs upon which to experiment. His work was exhaustive: countless days spent studying, numerous nights spent working out his formulas.

Unfortunately, of the dozen dragons only one remained viable enough to hatch; Maratosk. It began life looking like most wyrmlings, but as it aged rapidly, a number of mutations began to appear, true to Hoonordel's designs. Despite the many precautions he had taken to maintain containment until Maratosk was ready, he did not foresee the extent of the dragon's cunning. The predator's instinct would not be denied, and Maratosk escaped. Impressed with his creation, Hoonordel declared the experiment a success and left the creature to its own devices, as it claimed a lair and territory of its own.

In its isolation, the dragon continued to mutate and change, the alchemical and magical changes continuing their terrible work. Mixing with the already potent draconic essence, the alteration made Maratosk far more dangerous than other dragons, at the cost of the majesty normally associated with such creatures, twisted into something truly aberrant. Moreover, Maratosk's corrupting influence had begun to spread out to the wilderness surrounding its lair, mutating it into a mockery of nature.

Since then, many have tried to slay the dragon, with no avail. The accounts from the survivors speak of a dragon-shaped creature with a mouth split down the center of its neck, ringed with teeth able to open so wide it could devour en masse. Refugee villagers who fled the region remember vividly the sound of its screeches as it pierces the sky, its three wings obscuring the moon at every flap.

Vague Description

Maratosk operates best when it is not described in comprehensive detail. Even if an observer manages to resist its frightful presence, share only a few striking images, such as its vertical mouth and multiple limbs, and let players fill in the blanks. The horrific is most effective when it captures the imagination, and keeping

descriptions brief will aid in connecting the mechanics to the concept.

Campaign Use

For the most part, Maratosk is an uncomplicated monster. It doesn't have the intelligence to communicate properly, despite its cunning, and is far too aggressive to be captured or tamed. As such, it works best as a standard monster hunt. The real nuance to Maratosk is to consider why the players oppose it. Although the most obvious reason would be for the safety of the area, there are those who would look at Maratosk with pity and want to end its tortured existence. Others would be more concerned about its effect on the wilderness; those with a close connection to the primal world would feel its pain and want the mutant dragon destroyed.

In a campaign with Hoonordel acting as a nemesis, Maratosk also makes for a good final stepping stone before taking on the scientist himself. The opportunity to examine one of his most "successful" experiments would be a wealth of information for those wanting to know more about his terrible methods.

"...It wasn't sulfur, it was rot, like burning garbage or a swamp on a hot day. It choked our throats and burned our eyes. The worst was the silence. You could smell it, almost feel its presence but hear it coming? I know none of this makes sense, but if you were there, you would understand. I couldn't even describe the beast to you. Even when looking at it, you can't quite tell what it looks like, as if your eyes didn't want to take it in. There is nothing natural about that thing and the sooner someone kills it, the better."

- excerpt from a report on the first failed hunt of Maratosk

Combat Tactics

At heart Maratosk is a hunter and an ambush predator. Instead of simply striking out from the darkness, much like a spider it will wait for its prey to delve as deeply as possible into its lair. In the dragon's way it will wait for as many of its auras to take effect before striking where it can also take advantage of the hazards of its lair.

Additionally considering its aggressive nature, Maratosk is designed as a solo encounter with the aid of

its lair hazard. If you want the encounter to be slightly easier then removing the included hazard will do better than simply applying the weak template to it.

MARATOSK OF THE THOUSAND TEETH

CREATURE 16

UNIQUE CE HUGE AGENDER/IT ABERRATION DRAGON

Perception +30; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages Common, Draconic (cannot form sentences)

Skills Acrobatics +25, Arcana +26, Athletics +33, Deception +29, Intimidation +29, Stealth +27 (+31 within the Aberrant Horde)

Str +8, **Dex** +5, **Con** +6, **Int** +1, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +5

AC 38; **Fort** +30, **Ref** +26, **Will** +28; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 350; **Immunities** paralyzed, sleep

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 35

Terrible To Behold (emotion, fear, mental) Creatures affected by Maratosk's Frightful Presence or otherwise frightened treat Maratosk as being concealed.

Speed 50 feet, burrow 30 feet (lair only), fly 150 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +33 (magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d12+14 piercing plus Improved Grab

LIKE FLIES TO FLESH

Maratosk's inclinations as a predator resemble those of trap and ambush insects, such as spiders. It knows that hunters will come, that they will seek to slay the monster not yet seen. It leaves clues, trails, and tracks back to its lair where they become caught in its wicked web of rot and decay. It tempts with glory, sometimes even with objects that would-be slayers desire, giving a false sense of security to those who will be devoured by Maratosk and its lair alike.

The lair itself has a patient instinct, waiting much like Maratosk, until the prey is deep within before springing its trap

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Melee ➤ claw +33 (agile, magical, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d8+14 slashing

Melee ➤ tail +31 (magical, reach 20 feet), **Damage** 3d10+14 bludgeoning

Melee ➤ wing +31 (agile, magical, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d10+14 bludgeoning

Constrict ➤ 2d10+12 piercing, DC 37

Breath Voidflame ➤➤ (arcane, evocation, void); The dragon breathes a blast of necrotic flame that deals 17d6 void damage in a 50-foot cone (DC 39 basic Reflex save). Creatures that critically fail their save take 1d8 persistent void damage as the flames catch, these flames are not suffocated by water or a vacuum. It can't use Breath Voidflame again for 1d4 rounds.

From The Gullet Due to its unique physiology, Maratosk can still use its Breath Weapon even if it has a creature grabbed in its mouth or has swallowed someone. Creatures grabbed by Maratosk's jaws or that have been swallowed whole treat their saves against its Breath Weapon as one step worse.

Quick Swallow ➤ **Trigger** A creature it currently has grabbed with its jaws succeeds its Escape check; **Effect** Unwilling to let a meal go Maratosk immediately attempts to Swallow Whole against the triggering creature.

Swallow Whole ➤ (attack) Large, 2d10+12 void damage, Rupture 32

The Aberrant Hoard

Maratosk has a version of the hoarding instinct to which most dragons are prone. Whereas most dragons will gather wealth or treasures of some kind, the mutant dragon gathers the grisly and altered remains of the creatures it maims or kills. This detestable sight which the dragon will happily rest upon is the focal point of its lair, and its corruption is where the changes to the land around it begin. This foul and altered mass is obedient to Maratosk and will do whatever it can to protect and aid the aberrant dragon.

THE ABERRANT HOARD

HAZARD 16

UNIQUE COMPLEX LAIR

Stealth +36 (master)

Description A gruesome amalgamated pile of trophies and treasures collected by Maratosk spread across its lair, pulsing with sickly void energy.

Disable DC 42 Occult (master) to sever the connection to Maratosk cutting it off from its power, or DC 42 Religion (master) to suppress the void energies by calming the tortured nature of the horde; three successes are required to disable it.

AC +39; **Fort** +33, **Ref** +25

HP 300, fast healing 10; **Immunities** precision damage; **Weakness** vitality 20

Caught in the Snare ➤ **Frequency** once per minute; **Trigger** A creature enters or ends its turn in the lair; **Effect** The lair sends a mental alert to Maratosk so long as it is within 100 miles of the lair. The lair animates, attempting to capture its prey. Each creature within the lair must attempt a DC 41 Reflex save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature treats the area as difficult terrain.

Failure The creature is grabbed until it Escapes (DC 41).

Critical Failure As a failure, except the creature becomes restrained instead of grabbed.

Routine (1 action) The Aberrant Hoard does one of the following actions or nothing;

- **Healing Horde** (healing) **Requirements** Maratosk is within the lair; **Effect** The horde gives of itself to restore its master. The Aberrant Horde loses 50 HP and Maratosk gains 50 HP.
- **Aberrant Pulse** The horde lets loose a pulse of sickening void energy. Each creature other than Maratosk within the lair takes 10d6 void damage (basic Fortitude DC 39). On a failure, they are also sickened 1.
- **Rising Horde** The horde rises up to protect Maratosk if it is within the lair, granting it standard cover until the end of the next round or Maratosk moves to a new location, whichever comes first.

Reset If the Aberrant Horde is disabled, then it will reactivate on its own after an hour has passed. If it is reduced to 0 Hit Points instead, then it is disabled for one day. If Maratosk is slain, then it is considered destroyed and can not be reactivated.

NEW TRAIT

Lair – A hazard with the Lair trait is tied to a creature, although this is usually a specific unique creature it is sometimes bound to a generic type of creature. Unlike most hazards, these are designed to work in tandem with the creature they are tied to. A lair hazard will specify what creatures can utilize it. An action with the lair trait can only be used if the associated creature spends the listed actions while adjacent to—or inside of—the area of the lair hazard, causing the lair to perform that action immediately unless otherwise specified.

Hazards with this trait do not roll for their initiative, instead they perform any routines at the end of the round. If a hazard with the lair trait has more than one action it can choose, it can only perform one of them on its turn and may never use the same action twice in a row.

MOOGAN THE MOUNTAIN SHAKER

"The ground shook. No, not just the ground, but the walls and ceiling. It seemed the whole world rumbled. This is not uncommon when living underground. Others go about their business after the quakes cease. However, I am nervous, and rightfully so. For I know what causes the mountain to shake. My father has told me the tale of Moogan, the giant under the mountain."

- the diary of Erit Stonebuckle

Most cave giants stay near the surface, but Moogan was not like most giants: he was never satisfied threading the shallows and despised the light of the sun. One day, he ventured deep into the caverns of the largest mountain he could find, intending never to return. Like an enraged zealot, he fought his way down, down, down, through dwarves and orcs alike. Many fell before the mighty giant and in response the mountain shook, choosing Moogan and opening a path to its heart. As he passed, the path closed behind him, sealing the way. Since then, he has abided within the heart of the mountain for hundreds of years.

Moogan will not let his presence be forgotten, however. He has learned the mountain's secrets. He and the mountain have become one and they must be respected, and that is why Moogan shakes the mountain. It is a reminder to all who inhabit it; "Do not take the mountain for granted or Moogan will come for you and should the mountain send him, he will show no mercy."

Moogan retains the impressive stature, long arms, and thick dark fur of other cave giants, but his connection to the mountain has changed him profoundly. His fur is lined with jagged rocks protruding from his skin, while a large chunk of the mountain orbits him like a satellite. Upon his hands he wears the Heart of the Mountain: gauntlets formed of the earth itself and hardened with the pressure of the unbearable weight of the mountain into a weapon that causes the earth itself to tremble. If you ever have the misfortune to face Moogan, beware the mountain, for it too will come to his aid.

Few have called down the wrath of Moogan over the years, but many have heard the tales. Some see him as a guardian, others a menace. Outside of the mountain, he is a fairytale for young dwarves, orcs, and other mountain-dwelling folk alike. Many suspect Moogan is nothing less than a force of nature at this point, and his greatest power is the fear embedded in the minds of those living within the mountain. The fear that if anyone ever delves too deep, Moogan will be waiting for them.

Plot Hooks

- Moogan is on the rampage! The party must discover who is disrespecting the mountain and stop it before Moogan destroys everything!
- The treasure the party seeks is deep within the mountain. Be it by stealth or force, they must get past Moogan to find it.
- The party have heard of a mighty pair of gauntlets wielded by a powerful giant living deep within a mountain.

NO KING OF THE MOUNTAIN

Moogan does not see himself as some sort of ruler of the mountain, but more as a person of solitude. He has befriended the mountain itself, their spirit and essence bonding as he became its guardian. The mountain rarely feels a sense of suffering; erosion, burrowing, and the shifting of earth itself are all natural to the mountain, but some can push it too far. Of anything else, the mountain dislikes the feeling of being built upon, a cottage, shack, or even a modest house go unnoticed, light and little different in the mountain's view than fallen trees and the natural cycle of life and death on its surface. Stone buildings, castles, forts, and mass constructions though, these draw the mountain's ire, and thus Moogan's.

Often the shaking alone is enough to topple these structures, and long since have people grown superstitious of building with stone or building large in the area, though they don't truly know the reason, just that the quakes will come, and if the offending structures survive; Moogan will too.

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MOOGAN THE MOUNTAIN SHAKER CREATURE 15

UNIQUE N HUGE HE/THEY EARTH GIANT HUMANOID

Perception +23; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 120 feet

Languages Jotun, Petran

Skills Athletics +33, Intimidation +27, Mountain Lore +24

Str +9, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** -2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

Items *Heart of the Mountain* (gauntlets x2), sack with 5 rocks

AC 35; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +23, **Will** +25

HP 340

Catch Rock ➤

Light Blindness When first exposed to bright light, Moogan is blinded until the end of their next turn. After this exposure, light doesn't blind Moogan again until after it spends 1 hour in darkness. However, as long as the he is in an area of bright light, he's dazzled.

Mountain Shield The mountain itself is Moogan's ally. A large chunk of the mountain orbits around Moogan like a shield. This shield has 120 Hit Points. Each time a creature successfully Strikes Moogan, they must attempt a DC 11 flat check. On a failure, the attack first damages the shield. If reduced to 0 Hit Points any remaining

damage is applied to Moogan.

Stalagmite Growth (aura, conjuration, earth, primal) Stalagmites rapidly grow around Moogan. In a 15-foot emanation, the ground becomes difficult terrain and hazardous terrain. A creature that moves on the ground through the area takes 4 piercing damage each time it enters an effected space. These stalagmites crumble to dirt as Moogan moves away from them.

Speed 50 feet

Melee ➤ gauntlet +30 (agile, free-hand, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d6+25 bludgeoning

Ranged ➤ rock +28 (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 3d12+17 bludgeoning

Contact Quake ➤ (earth) Moogan slams their gauntlets on the ground, sending out shockwaves in a 60-foot emanation. All creatures in the area are off-guard for 1 round. Moogan can't use this ability again for 1d4 rounds.

Collapse ➤➤ (earth) **Requirements** there is an earthen or stone ceiling for Moogan to collapse within 120 feet; **Effect** The mountain attempts to aid Moogan by causing part of the ceiling to come crashing down. The ceiling collapses up to 120 feet away in a 20-foot burst. Creatures within the burst must attempt a basic Reflex saving throw DC 33 or take 10d12 bludgeoning damage. Moogan can't use this ability again for 1 minute or until his Mountain Shield is reduced to 0 Hit Points, whichever comes first.

Earthly Momentum Moogan recharges its Collapse and Contact Quake ability on a critical hit with a gauntlet Strike.

HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN

ITEM 15

UNIQUE ARTIFACT EARTH EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage worn on 2 hands; **Bulk** L (2)

This pair of +2 *greater striking gauntlets* are the famous weapons of Moogan the Mountain Shaker, a mighty cave giant that lives under the mountain. These gauntlets are formed by and of the earth itself, hardened with the pressure of unbearable weight to such a weapon that the earth itself trembles. While wearing both of these gauntlets, you always know the direction to the mountain where they were formed while you are on the same plane. You must wear both gauntlets in order to activate them.

Activate ➤ interact; **Effect** You slam the gauntlets on the ground, sending out shockwaves in a 10-foot emanation. All creatures in the area are off-guard for 1 round. You can't use this ability again for 1d4 rounds. If you critically succeed on a Strike with the Heart of the Mountain, you recharge this ability.

Activate 1 minute (interact); **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You create a large shield of rock that rotates around you for up to 8 hours. This shield has 60 Hit Points. Each time a creature successfully Strikes you, they must attempt a DC 11 flat check. On a failure, the attack first damages the shield. If reduced to 0 Hit Points any remaining damage is applied to you.

Destruction Melt the Heart of the Mountain in a crucible powered by the sun.

SKURM — KING OF THE SLUMS

"I once held court with the so-called King of the Slums, for he had an item of some import to trade with me. It did not come cheap but I did get the book—the smell it carried, however, was free."

~ Sinclair

At a young age, Skurm was imported to the slums to perform the only duty expected of his species: disposing of trash in the sewers. Skurm didn't know anything of the world above and didn't care for it. All he knew was the territory he claimed and an interminable existence devouring the refuse of the city.

This changed when a human happened upon his territory, asking for sanctuary from the city guard. Typically, such a request would be ignored unless they could provide tantalizing garbage, and all the human had to offer was themselves. To Skurm, garbage is garbage, so he accepted the meal.

Skurm was about to eat the human, then the guards arrived and he ate them instead, leaving him without an appetite but with a human. He quickly grew fond of the creature, who he called Junket. Talking to it, Skurm learned that there might be more like this human that would take the same protection deal. These humans reasoned that it was better to be the treasured garbage of a monster than the hunted refuse of a city that abandoned them.

On this principle, Skurm built an empire beneath the streets by gathering all the people the city threw away to work for him, and expanding his territory one piece of garbage at a time. At first, the city had no opinions on the matter—as long as the work was being done, they didn't care—then that all changed when Skurm started to charge for his garbage disposal services. The armed response was quick and decisive, but ultimately failed when the city guards were confronted by an army of Skurm's own creation, built out of the people the city threw away.

A deal was eventually struck and a symbiotic and equitable relationship formed, making Skurm's empire unassailable. The city above has become the cleanest in the world while below, Skurm deals with the trash, in the form of objects or people. Now the self-crowned king of the slums, he rules the sewers of the cities, a labyrinthine series of tunnels where his eyes and ears are everywhere.

Always ready to kill those who annoy him, Skurm has a fearsome reputation, even among those he protects. Many have come to learn of his brutality first-hand, as

he devours those who displease him or throws them to the other denizens of the sewers for his entertainment. Those desperate enough can come to him for a favor or to make a deal, but the king will always claim his tribute.

Description

Although he resembles the vast majority of otyughs, Skurm has grown larger and his muscles are significantly developed. His spines and teeth have sharpened as well. Though he doesn't care much for clothing, Skurm has selected a couple of choice rags to adorn himself with. He enjoys wearing his prized trash as clothing, which he will have stitched into patchwork clothing to drape across his body, like a coat or a cape.

Campaign Use

As a slumlord, Skurm could be used as a villain and an early level obstacle in the way of the heroes, however, he also makes an interesting non-antagonistic patron. Sitting atop an empire that gathers secrets and treasures of all kinds to its coffers, Skurm has a lot to offer and is more than willing to share in return for services that will grow his kingdom. If they aren't careful, however, it would be easy for the heroes to find themselves in too deep with the king of the slums, owing more than they anticipated and facing Skurm's wrath if they don't deliver.

A dubious figure of significant power, it would be easy to set Skurm up as the villain for a series of city adventures. Taking down his far-reaching empire would not be easy because the city has a vested interest in keeping Skurm on his throne. Furthermore, considering how many people rely on him for their continued existence, defeating the otyugh is complex and not as simple as the heroes making their way through the sewers to slay a monster. Not that Skurm would make that easy either.

SKURM — KING OF THE SLUMS CREATURE 6

UNIQUE NE HUGE HE/HIM ABERRATION

Perception +13; Darkvision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +18, Intimidation +11, Secrets Lore +13, Society +13, Stealth +11 (+14 in lair)

Str +7, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +2

AC 24; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +11, **Will** +14

HP 120; **Immunities** disease

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SECRETS IN THE SEWERS

Skurm and his "army" make up a vast network, which all filters back to the slum king himself. He may not be the brightest among those in the sewers and slums, but few can test how much he knows. Using Secrets Lore to Recall Knowledge gives Skurm a chance to know just about any rumor, secret, or tidbit outside of his sphere of influence—though mostly pertaining to the the city and slums—acting as the chance that he has already heard this information from his constituents.

There are no secrets from the King of the Slums, or so he says. With the knowledge he holds, the city above should be thankful that he lacks the cunning to use it well.

Trash Block ➤ **Trigger** Skurm is the target of an attack that he is aware of and has an ally within reach of his tentacle Strike; **Effect** Skurm snaps up the triggering ally and uses them as a shield. He gets a +2 circumstance bonus to his AC against the triggering attack. If the attack still hits, the damage halved and applied to both the shielding ally and Skurm.

Stench (aura, olfactory) 40 feet. A creature entering or starting its turn within the aura must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be sickened 1 (plus slowed 1 for the same duration on a critical failure). On a success, the creature is temporarily immune to the sickened and slowed effects of this stench for 1 hour. Regardless of the save, while within the aura, creatures take a -2 circumstance penalty to saves against diseases. Skurm's stench is due to the offal and refuse that he wallows in, so cleaning him thoroughly (with create water and sufficient scrubbing, for example) deactivates the aura, while a sufficiently plugged nose allows an individual to avoid exposure to the stench.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ➤ jaws +17, **Damage** 2d6+9 piercing plus filthier fever

Melee ➤ tentacle +17 (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 1d6+9 bludgeoning plus Improved Grab

Ranged ➤ trash toss +17 (brutal, range increment 20 feet), **Damage** 1d6+9 bludgeoning

Constrict ➤ 1d6+9 bludgeoning, DC 24

Filthier Fever (disease); The sickened and unconscious conditions from filthier fever don't improve on their own until the disease is cured.

Saving Throw DC 22 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no ill effect (1d4 hours); **Stage 2** sickened 1 (1 day); **Stage 3** sickened 1 and slowed 1 as long as it remains sickened (1 day); **Stage 4** unconscious (1 day); **Stage 5** dead

Reposition ➤ Skurm attempts to move all creatures that he has grabbed into other spaces within the reach of his tentacles, rolling a single Athletics check and comparing the result against each creature's Fortitude DC. On a failure, the creature remains in place, and on a critical failure, the creature is no longer grabbed. Skurm can do this with Medium or smaller allies without having to grab them first or making an Athletics check.



SOD — THE CHAMPION OF THE SUN

*'You'll never find a more loyal friend than Sod.
Just... don't let him sing. Seriously, DON'T let him
sing.'*
~ Sinclair

For many adherents, the call to service comes from a deep and intrinsic place in their being. Sometimes it takes a significant, often traumatic experience to awaken to this call. Others are born with it, knowing from youth that they will one day achieve great things to make the world a better place.

For Sod, none of this was the case. He simply heard there was a deity of fire, and he decided that's what he wanted to do the rest of his life.

Sod had been a pyromaniac since he was a young child. He was his village's self-assigned firestarter. This was not a role anyone in the village had bestowed upon him, nor was necessary. So unnecessary, in fact, Sod was prone to starting fires when they were not required. This inevitably led to him making a pyre that burned out of control, resulting in most of the village burning down.

Exiled, Sod wandered the land, seeking odd jobs to make ends meet. Unfortunately, his penchant for fire continued to get him in trouble, leaving a literal blaze of destruction in his wake as he accidentally set fire to inns, taverns, barnyards, and ships. This culminated in his stint as the flame keeper for a gladiatorial arena; he one day overfilled the ritual lantern that signaled the start of the games with alchemical oil. It seeped down to the audience seats and caught the wooden frames of the coliseum.

As the attendees fled, the arena's guards caught Sod and prepared to try him for reckless destruction of property. However, as they prepared to haul him off, the ritual lantern emitted the sigil for the Goddess of the Sun. At first they thought it was a prank or trick of the light, but it was not until after the blaze had subsided were they approached by adherents of the goddess. It had turned out the arena's manager had been paid off to rig the fights by a cult of fiendish worshipers he was in league with. Upon discovering Sod was the one who lit the flame that started the blaze, the adherents decided this was not an act of negligence, but of serendipity willed by the goddess herself. They offered to take Sod in as an acolyte of the goddess, to which he agreed...so long as he got to continue indulging in his love of fire.

Sod took some time to reign in. His love of fire often overshadowed the more poignant teachings the clergy

tried to instill in him. The priests and priestesses had to train Sod out of his desire to start a fire at any opportunity, but they were able to temper his desires with one simple promise: if they were called to serve, the need for flame would be inevitable.

Sod's worth was not proven until a fire one day broke out at the temple. At first, the clergy assumed it was his doing, his pyromaniac tendencies finally getting the better of him. However, it became apparent it was not Sod's fault; in fact, it was the cultists who were racketeering the colosseum, seeking revenge on the Goddess' followers for thwarting their plans.

As the fires began to rage out of control, Sod began channeling the power of the goddess, preventing it from spreading and turning it back onto the cultists. When the clergy witnessed this, they were in awe and asked Sod how he managed such a feat that even their most skilled priests and pyromancers couldn't. Sod's answer surprised them.

"Well, you all Sod's friends! Sod didn't want to see friends get hurt!"

With his loyalty exemplified, Sod has become a renowned champion in service of the Goddess of the Sun. Wielding her favored scimitar and donning a suit of heat-resistant armor, he has since become an enthusiastic—if sometimes overbearing—paragon of the clergy.

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FIRE AND FRIENDSHIP

As a champion, Sod is designed to be a front-line defender. His focus in combat is to aid in the defense of allies; use this to ensure that he is not stealing the show from your players, but rather defending them or empowering them to succeed with their own strategies. Use his reactions to reduce damage they take, and the Kindle Flame metamagic when they cast their own spells to give them a chance to set things alight!

He may show up in stories where his magic will either be advantageous against foes weak to fire - such as plant or ice-themed creatures - or when his ability to grant fire resistance or magically contain fires will be useful.

SOD, THE CHAMPION OF THE SUN

CREATURE 11

UNIQUE CG SMALL HE/HIM GOBLIN HUMANOID

Perception +18;

Languages Common, Goblin, Orc

Skills Acrobatics +20, Athletics +21, Crafting +16, Diplomacy +22, Religion +17

Str +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +5

Items +2 striking flaming scimitar, +1 resilient full plate, moderate sturdy shield (Hardness 15, HP 156, BT 78), holy water (4)

AC 31 (33 with shield raised); **Fort** +24, **Ref** +21, **Will** +18

HP 210; **Resistance** 10 fire

Flaming Indictment ➤ **Trigger** An allied creature is damaged or takes a harmful effect by a hostile creature, and both are within 15 feet of Sod; **Effect** Sod rebukes a transgressor with a burning condemnation. The allied creature gains damage resistance 15 against the triggering effect, and the hostile creature takes 2d6 persistent fire damage.

Shield Block ➤

Shield Ally Sod's shield is blessed by a divine ally, increasing its hardness by 2 and its HP and BT by half while he wields it. These numbers are included in its statistics listed with his items.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ➤ flaming scimitar, +23 [+18/+13] (sweep, versatile P), **Damage** 2d6+10 slashing plus 1d6 fire

Ranged ➤ javelin, +22 [+17/+12] (thrown 30 feet) **Damage** 2d6+10 piercing

Divine Innate Spells DC 27, attack +19; **4th** wall of fire; **3rd** fireball; **2nd** resist energy, scorching ray; **Cantrips (6th)** produce flame

Champion Devotion Spells 2 Focus Points, DC 27, attack +19; **6th** dazzling flash, fire ray

Bless Flame ➤ Sod converts a vial of holy water he's holding into a vial of blessed fire. This gives the vial the effects of a Greater Alchemist's Fire bomb, but it has the divine trait instead of the alchemical trait. As the fire is divinely blessed, it ignores half the resistance to fire on any creatures it damages.

The vial must be thrown before the end of the turn, or it turns back into holy water.

Contain Fire ➤ (abjuration) Sod extinguishes a live flame. Choose a flame source within 5 feet. If the flame is mundane, it extinguishes a 10 foot square of the fire source immediately. If the flame is magical, Sod must make a counteract check (+17 counteract modifier) against the effect, which ends the effect on a success regardless of its size.

Kindle Flame ➤ (evocation, metamagic) Sod stokes a magical flame to be stronger. If Sod's next action is to cast a spell with the fire trait that deals damage and has no duration, the dice size of any fire damage rolled increases by one.

He may alternatively use this as a reaction when an ally within 30 feet casts a spell with the fire trait, granting that spell the same effect. He may not use this reaction if he used this as an action on his previous turn.

Sod's Sermon ➤ (auditory, linguistic, mental) **Frequency** Once per turn; **Effect** Sod sings praise to the Goddess of Flame, though his...choice of words are somewhat confounding, especially to religious scholars. Creatures within 30 feet of Sod must succeed a DC 27 Will saving throw or become stupefied 1, or stupefied 2 on a critical failure. Creatures with any proficiency in religion take a -2 circumstance penalty to their save.

Regardless of the result, affected creatures are immune to this ability for 1 minute.

TALAS THE COLLECTOR

Once a powerful mage in the king's court, Talas was turned into a vampire against her will, like many before her. Being pragmatic, she saw this transformation as nothing but trading one master for another, and so she did what she knew best: serving her own interest while pretending to serve her master. She gave her sire every reason to praise her intelligence, ruthlessness, and loyalty, but in truth, his new spawn was much smarter and ruthless than he ever suspected, and far less loyal than he believed. For centuries, she plotted and schemed in secret, plotting against encumbering clan members, secretly making new vampires, and accumulating wealth, power, and influence. In her ultimate act of betrayal, she hired a renowned vampire hunter to dispose of her unsuspecting sire once and for all. Vampires betraying their clan is not the most unusual thing, far from it. It is an integral part of the sanguine dance that is the vampiric hierarchy. But Talas took a different route. The games of pretend social power were of no interest to her anymore. Creating just enough vampiric spawns to serve her needs, she acquired a large castle on a far remote land and retired from the world.

The burden of freedom

This newfound freedom brought Talas something unfamiliar to most vampires; an existential crisis. She had wealth beyond measure, eternal undeath, incredible power, both literal and metaphorical ... and absolutely nothing to do with it. And so, out of boredom, she did what she knew best, she studied. Anything and everything. Already a master of the arcane, she perfected her craft before moving on to alchemy, theology, and occultism. Her spawn, servants, and hires made sure to keep her library well-supplied in new and increasingly rare pieces of literature. It is through these offerings that Talas found an ancient tome describing a unique and fascinating process: soulforging, the bonding of one's soul to an armament. Talas became obsessed by this source of endless study and unimaginable power wrapped in black leather. For the first time in a century, it was time to hunt again.

Talas started tricking mortals into giving her their souls, using various stratagems like devilish contracts and unbreakable oaths, but this process proved far too slow for her ambitions. Using her wealth and knowledge, she devised a way to harvest souls at a terrifying rate. Talas created a soul emerald, something similar to a lich's soul cage, altered to fit her needs.

Where regular lich soul cages can only contain one soul for an unlimited amount of time, Talas's soul emerald can contain an unlimited quantity of souls for a limited period of time. Within the span of one year following the creation of the soul emerald, the entire region surrounding her castle was devoid of a single living soul—literally.

Using Talas in your campaign

Talas is a perfectly suited villain for an entire story arc, complete with lesser challenges and an army of minions. Undead creatures roam around her castle while a number of vampire guards reside inside the castle itself. Her soul harvesting provides plenty of reason for a group of heroes to attempt to take her down, and the secrets of soul magic provide a useful hook as well.

If your party needs a slightly more selfish motivation or you want to involve Talas as a short episode as part of a greater campaign, her infamous collection of artifacts present plenty of opportunities to push the party into her nets. Between her Soul Emerald, various experiments and the plethora of soulforged armament exposed in her basement, Talas makes the perfect target for a raid to recover an item or another.

TALAS THE COLLECTOR

CREATURE 13

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM SHE/HER VAMPIRE UNDEAD

Perception +25; darkvision

Languages Common, Draconic, Necril, plus one regional language

Skills Acrobatics +22, Arcana +30, Athletics +19, Crafting +24, Deception +27, Intimidation +24, Occultism +24 Religion +24

Children of the Night (divine, enchantment, mental) As vampire mastermind (*Bestiary*)

Items +2 resilient breastplate

Str +4, **Dex** +5, **Con** +5, **Int** +8, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +5

AC 33; **Fort** +20, **Ref** +23, **Will** +26

HP 195, (coffin restoration, fast healing 10, void healing); **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyze, poison, sleep; **Weaknesses** vampire weaknesses; **Resistances** physical 10 (except magical silver)

Coffin Restoration (divine, necromancy, negative) As vampire mastermind (*Bestiary*)

Mist Escape ♦ As vampire mastermind (*Bestiary*)

Speed 25, climb 25

Melee ♦ soulbound longsword +24 [+19/+14] (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 3d8+14 slashing

Ranged ♦ soul anchor +24 [+19/+14] (magical, thrown 15 feet, tethered), **Damage** 3d6+11 bludgeoning

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THE GREEN EMERALD

Talas' green emerald is treated and still functions as a regular lich's soul cage, except the emerald empties itself at the end of every week, sending the souls wherever they would have normally gone at the moment of their death.

SOUL COLLECTION

We recommend using Soul Collection early on in combat, and to inflict partial doomed conditions initially, giving time to the player to understand the mechanics at play and act accordingly. It can be very easy for Talas to kill a player and capture its soul within the first two rounds of combat without them having the time to realize the danger that the anchor poses.



Arcane Prepared Spells DC 35, attack +27; **7th** energy aegis, tempest of shades^{SoM}, vampiric exsanguination; **6th** feeblemind, flame vortex, flesh to stone, slow, unexpected transposition^{SoM}; **5th** cloudkill, cone of cold, fireball, lightning bolt; **4th** morass of ages^{DA}, vampiric maiden (x2), wall of fire; **3rd** blindness, gravity well, haste, stinking cloud; **2nd** blur, kinetic ram^{DA} (x2), invisibility; **1st** fear (x2), ray of enfeeblement, kinetic ram; **Cantrips (7th)** chill touch, detect magic, gouging claw^{SoM}, tanglefoot, warp step^{DA}

Create Spawn (divine, downtime, necromancy) As vampire mastermind (*Bestiary*)

Dominate ♦♦ (divine, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, visual) As vampire mastermind (*Bestiary*) except the DC is 31

Drink Blood ♦ (divine, necromancy) As vampire mastermind (*Bestiary*) except when Drinking Blood, Talas regains 20 HP.

Manifest Soulforged Armament ♦ (concentrate, conjuration, divine, extradimensional) Talas summons her soulbound longsword and soul anchor to her hands. These weapons refuse to be wielded by creatures other than Talas and they vanish if she is destroyed.

Soul Anchor ♦♦ Talas makes a Strike with her soul anchor against an enemy within 15 feet, sinking it deep within the soul of its target. If the Strike hits, the creature's soul becomes attached to the anchor and is held in place, even if the creature moves. The creature is under the effects of a dimensional anchor spell. Additionally, for each 5 feet the creature moves away from the anchor, or if the anchor is moved away from the creature, it takes 5 void damage. The creature may attempt to Escape this effect, using their Will save instead of the normal checks available (DC 33). Talas cannot move further than 15 feet from the anchor while it has a soul pinned, if she stops holding the soul anchor, the effect ends.

Soul Drag ♦ **Requirements** Talas has a soul anchored with Soul Anchor; **Effect** Talas draws the soul anchor towards her, pulling at any tethered souls. A creature whose soul is attached to the anchor must attempt a Will save (DC 33).

Critical Success Talas pulls the anchor and soul 10 feet towards her. If she is adjacent to or wielding the anchor, she can move 10 feet with it.

Success As Critical Success, but the movement is limited to 5 feet.

Failure The anchor does not move.

Critical Failure The soul is freed from the anchor. The anchor moves 10 feet towards Talas.

Soul Collection ♦♦ **Requirements** Talas is wielding both her anchor and her sword and has an anchored soul at least 5 feet away from its host; **Effect** Striking down with her soulbound longsword, Talas severs the connection between soul and host. The creature's doomed value increases by 1 for each 5 feet increment separating it from the anchor. If the creature dies from Soul Collection, its soul becomes trapped in the green emerald inserted in Talas's chest.

Turn to Mist ♦ (concentrate, divine, transmutation) Talas turns into a cloud of vapor, as the *gaseous form* spell, or back to her normal form. She loses fast healing while in *gaseous form*. She can remain in this form indefinitely.

TORDEN OXBREAKER

Some people are born with a drive for cruelty and violence that can't be explained away. Torden is one such individual. A natural bully originating from a small provincial town, he grew bigger and stronger than all of his peers. From a young age, Torden leveraged his size advantage and natural cruelty to get his way and, when that wasn't enough, never hesitated to use a weapon. This caught the eye of a local crime boss who equipped and trained him in exchange for his service as an enforcer.

As the crime lord's muscle, Torden did well enough, yet his thirst for violence drove him to kill rather than practice restraint, no matter the orders. The crime lord could not abide his protege's approach, but would not waste an opportunity for coin by disposing of him wastefully. In exchange for a finder's fee, he arranged for Torden's recruitment into a roving mercenary band, washing his hands of the effective but troublesome enforcer. Torden was in his element: a bully for hire, at home in battle. Equipped with the thickest plate they could smith and a sword too great for most men to wield, Torden dominated as a storm of destruction.

He earned his title of Oxbreaker in a scuffle with bovia Peacekeepers. Disarmed of his prized sword and deserted on the field of combat, Torden fought the Peacekeepers with only his gauntlets. He killed the entire squad of bovians, found those who abandoned him to die and executed them for their cowardice. To placate his wrath, the leaders of his band rewarded Torden with an enchanted black blade of cold iron. He called the weapon Trudy.

None can stand against Torden in hand-to-hand or escape Trudy, a retreating back only spurs him into more violent action. His worth on the battlefield now impossible to dispute, he often takes on work alone, as he considers his allies a liability; their cowardice might dilute his reputation. Torden takes on the work of bodyguard and soldier alike, working for anyone regardless of ideology. He doesn't care so long as he is paid and is allowed to kill with impunity.

Never far from his bully roots, Torden delights in using his hands to crush the bones of those he deems weak before killing them. In particular, he is known to single out casters, loudly boasting that magic is a crutch that betrays weakness. In truth, his deepest fear is that magic will be the only thing that beats him, so Torden prioritizes slaying magic-wielders in combat.

Campaign Use

Torden is neither a planner nor a mastermind by any stretch of the imagination. His desire to be always at the center of the violence—to claim the first kill—means he does little more than rush from fight to fight. Barely restrained at the best of times, he nevertheless knows enough to follow orders, in particular of those who pay him. Even then, however, he is known to lose his patience quickly, especially when obedience would interrupt his grisly work.

Torden is best used as a tough minion of a more powerful foe, either playing the part of bodyguard, assassin, or possibly the mid-boss himself for a campaign. He can command others quite easily through intimidation or violence, so grouping him up with weaker soldiers is an easy prospect. That said, as a violent bully, Torden can be tricked and with little moral compass to speak of, he can also be bribed outside of combat if the price is right.

In Combat

As a heavy armor fighter who relies on strength and aggression, Torden strides into combat at the forefront, heedless of any strategy or tactics beyond getting in first and swinging. If Torden cannot immediately reach the melee, he takes advantage of the throwing and returning enchantments on his sword to soften up foes before his arrival. Once in melee, he truly comes into his own, toying with his opponents by demoralizing them before using his fist and headbutt. When he reaches half his hit points, he switches to using Trudy to truly begin the slaughter.

Up against casters, Torden heads toward them in his own brutal way, taking the time to smash opponents as he goes, taking advantage of his Iron Kiss and Tosser abilities to get people out of his way. Once in close combat with a caster, he'll grapple to lock down their magic before using his fist and headbutt attacks to finish them off.

A mountain of a man in heavy plate armor smeared with blood and a sword as long as he is tall strides towards you, ready to strike, ready to kill.

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TRUDY

Trudy is a greatsword of unique make, like other weapons made of cold iron it can be upgraded to higher grades by paying the difference in material costs.

While it bears a returning rune, most people lack the absurd strength needed to hurl such a blade with great force as Torden does. The rune can be transferred to another weapon, or maintained, allowing it to return when thrown as an improvised weapon.

TORDEN OXBREAKER

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +13

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +21, Intimidate +18

Str +8, **Dex** +2, **Con** +7, **Int** +0, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +3

Items +1 full plate, trudy (+1 striking returning low-grade cold iron greatsword)

AC 30; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +13, **Will** +11

HP 175

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 30 feet, DC 23

Reactive Strike ➤

Speed 15 feet

Melee ➤ trudy +22, (magical, versatile P) **Damage** 2d12+15 slashing

Melee ➤ fist +20 (unarmed), **Damage** 2d8+10 bludgeoning plus grab

Melee ➤ headbutt +20 (unarmed), **Damage** 2d8+10 bludgeoning plus knockdown

Ranged ➤ sword toss +18 (magical, thrown 20, versatile P), **Damage** 2d12+15 Slashing (returns as per *returning* rune)

Grab ➤

Iron Kiss ➤ **Requirements** Torden has a creature of his size or smaller grabbed or restrained; **Effect** Torden takes advantage of the grabbed creature to use his headbutt to knock them down. He makes a Strike with his headbutt, on a success the target is also knocked prone.

Knockdown ➤

Tosser ➤ **Requirements** Torden has a creature of his size or smaller grabbed or restrained; **Effect** Torden throws the creature in his grip. He Shoves the grabbed creature with a +2 circumstance bonus to the check, breaking the grapple in the process, this forced movement ignores difficult terrain.

Deathbringer Torden revels in the kill, nothing spurs him on like seeing the light leave someone's eyes. When Torden reduces a creature to 0 Hit Points, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls until the end of his next turn.



CHAPTER 7 - NEMESSES

"There are few individuals in the world worth their own myths and legends, fewer still that are young to the world. Their stories however, are meant to be told, and I assure you, many eyes are cast to see how these tales will take shape, how they might end, and what challenges they might face. So tell me, are you the heroes of the story, or their nemeses?"

~Sinclair

DO'RE'NI - THE INEVITABLE NIGHT

"And by that dawning light they thought themselves saved, the onslaught of the night dispelled. Then, with horror, they watched as the dawn was swallowed by darkness flowing over it like the drowning ocean. A lone figure stood on the horizon and at the sight of it their blood screamed in terror."

- Second Hand Account of the Fall of Featherholm

Origins

Born of the ancient Elves of old, Trevor was like many of his peers at the time, content to while away the days in idle pursuits. Devoid of any real ambition he was content to simply take what was offered and to live his life that way. Even in idleness though he started to formulate his own ideas coming to think of others as lesser beings made to serve him. However these days of basking in the light of the moon couldn't last forever and when the first dawn came he knew those days were done. Instead of accepting it as many others did, he turned his back on the light and took as many with him as he could down beneath the earth.

Unfortunately for the idle noble the caverns were not as welcoming as he had been expecting and without the light of the moon and stars to guide him and his fellows it wasn't long before they became lost. Most of those who had joined him originally attempted to return to the surface despite his protests. They had quickly realized that Trevor did not know as much as he spouted to know and feared for their lives if they stayed. As time went on these fears were confirmed, as the number of his followers dwindled so too did their food. As starvation began to overtake them Trevor's lack of empathy for others took a dark turn as he became convinced that his followers should die so that he may live.

It was in those dark caverns lost and plunged in darkness that he began to kill them off one by one to appease his appetite. But with each life taken his hunger only grew and changed, no longer satisfied with the paltry rations only the blood of the living could sate him and each time he feasted his form became only more terrible. The dark deeds that he did cursed him, changing him to become a more deadly hunter, a vile creature perfected to hunt the living. And as the years continued timelessly in the dark his mind became twisted, his pride joined with bitterness to blame the dawn for the monster he became. It was then that he

decided that he would do what he should have done all those years ago and stop the dawn from ever returning.

Legend

To those living beneath the surface Trevor—now known as Do're'ni, his true name all but forgotten—is a boogeyman, a story told to children to keep them close and to warn them away from the ancient caverns. The fact that these stories have proven true more than once has aided in their infamy but for the most part the denizens beneath are left alone. The exception of course being those elves he sees as the ones who betrayed him and to those who cross his path are never seen again.

In the light however his legend is treated with far more fear, even his accidental progeny known as the vampires are wary to keep him at bay a primal fear ensuring they know the danger he represents. Trevor has discovered the means to banish the light and even the rituals to swallow the dawn. Rumors of this being proven time and time again in village after village continue to circulate. Of nights that never end and naught left behind but bloody corpses and the feral spawn his actions create.

Those few survivors tell of an amulet he wears that allows him to turn light to darkness and a ritual performed as the dawn begins that drowns it out in starless night. The light of day always returns in time but one thing has become obvious; he is perfecting his foul rites and it's only a matter of time before he truly brings the final and inevitable night.

Structure

To suggest that there is a structure under Do're'ni would be, to say the least, a vast overstatement. The creature, though possessing its own intelligence and drives, has little interest in organizations or in commanding them. That is not to say that organizations have not sprung up around him, a creature of such power is bound to draw in those who desire it—even a small part of it—for themselves. As such more often than not those that follow Do're'ni are likewise barely organized and rarely have much connection to one another mostly composed of loose cults or sects dedicated to the Inevitable Night. The exception to this is the umbralbeasts, creatures born in the space of his terrible power, warped animals that possess the terrible hunger Do're'ni himself. These follow his commands and he is more than happy to have the creatures at his beck and call.

Cult of Evernight

Of all the loose followers of Do're'ni, the ones that strike the most feat are the Cult of Evernight. Unlike many others that consider their vampiric master to be a figure of worship and adoration, the Cult of Evernight considers him to be a weapon. They share his goal to bring about an endless night and return the world to a time where no light shone. Most members of the cult are those with the ability to see in the dark, either possessing darkvision or other senses that don't require light. To them the goals of the first vampire won't impact them and they only have to gain from it. They are aware of the creatures' ignorance of them though and go about their work by paving the way for Do're'ni. Making sure the vampires' goals go unresisted, using what power they have gleaned from Do're'ni to aid his efforts, even creating umbralbeasts to serve him.

Umbralbeasts

Born of the night and darkness Do're'ni brings, the umbralbeasts are terrible to behold. A reflection of the Inevitable Night, the beasts are primal in appearance, conjuring up visions of the world's birth when such creatures stalked the night and taught people to fear. Although most of the first born are brought forth from animals in his presence, that is not the only way as they can grow and reproduce as any animal. In recent years this has led to terrifying upticks in their presence in areas where the nights are longest with reported sightings being delivered by survivors. They also share the vampiric lust for blood and much of the strength seen in other vampires. Fortunately all umbralbeasts share an allergy to sunlight and are even dazzled by particularly bright light in general. Because of this and their association with other vampires there are those that hunt them with the hope of finding some means to destroy the Inevitable Night once and for all.

Public Perception

For the most part, the vast majority of people don't even know who Do're'ni is, not even a feature in most legends and tales; he is treated more in the abstract. Stories of the end times when night falls for the final time are, for the most part, referring to him. Likewise when people refer to the first vampire it is in reference to him. The reasoning for this erasure from history is unknown but it is believed to be intentional, either by organizations intent on his destruction or by the vampires themselves who feel it best that their origin is lost to antiquity.

Those who have a vague idea of who Do're'ni as, treat him as a fairy tale to scare children. That creatures dwell

in the darkness that would take them forever and that they should never stray too far from the light. These tales vary greatly depending on the ones who tell the story, however the most common ones come from the First Wood where Do're'ni is spoken about as a creature that haunts the darkest parts of the wood. For those who tell this story, the truth of the matter is mostly lost on them.

Legends and Stories

Despite the best efforts of those to keep Do're'ni out of the history books, legends and stories cropping up are as inevitable as the night he would bring. Because of this, sometimes they won't refer to him at all, despite his part in the events.

The Morrowheights Massacre

In the town of Morrowheights they didn't know what happened when night fell suddenly in the middle of the day, any attempts to light lanterns or torches proved to be pointless. Lost in the dark the townsfolk didn't know what to do and began to call out to each other but slowly as the night crept on more and more voices went silent. When the morning finally came on that long night many regretted the dawn as the sight that greeted them was far more terrible. Most of the townsfolk had been silently slaughtered in the night, their wounds rough, like they had been torn into by wild beasts. Those who remained began the grisly work of burial but when night fell, and not all the corpses had been dealt with, the dead began to rise. The few to survive had fled in fear of another night and spoke of ineffective lanterns and a winged beast that haunted them until they found safety.

The woes of Morrowheights were not over as when champions were sent to investigate they found the town bathed in an unnatural darkness and crawling with strange vampiric undead. They were able to destroy the undead but the town was lost. Efforts to consecrate it failed and although daylight returned to the town, whenever night came the dead would rise again and again as ghosts and specters. After several failed exterminations, a quarantine was placed on the town while other possibilities were explored. Morrowheights remains devoid of the living. Those unfortunate enough to be there when night falls still hear the screams that were silenced on the night of the massacre, the dead giving voice to what the Inevitable Night denied them.

The Beast of the Weeping Tree

It's known that sometimes creatures from when the world was young still exist, in the unexplored corners where folk still have not ventured. Many remain

undiscovered, though the lost may find them. Such was the Weeping Tree, a lone weeping willow set apart in its own clearing deep in the Briarwood. When the unlucky travelers happened upon it they found the first of what would be known as the umbralbeasts resting in its shadow as night fell. Needing a place to rest for the night and fearing what the creature would do they killed it as it slept. At least they thought they did.

As night fell they heard the rushing of wings and saw a vaguely humanoid shape with expansive wings landed by the creature. Fearing the consequences of what they had done they tried to flee but the creature they thought they killed rose and charged them as the winged figure watched.

Campaign Use

Chasing the Night

Vampirism has a long history with many stories about its origin and there are some who suggest that with Do're'ni's destruction the curse would be ended once and for all. Campaigns with this as a focus would be going through the slow process of uncovering clues to their whereabouts as they deal with those that would stop them. For the most part this would be a skills-based campaign where players would be involved in investigations and roleplaying. Combats would mostly happen as a result of a major leads being uncovered and would mostly be

those trying to prevent the players from achieving their objective. To keep this from becoming stale for the players, remember that not all those trying to stop them would be vampires, the Cult of Evernight has many members and they aren't above using their connections to ensure the inevitable night happens. In these kinds of campaigns Do're'ni would be less of an active threat and more of an objective for the players to progress towards.

A New Dawn

In this campaign Do're'ni has already been successful and the world or at least a large section of it has fallen into eternal night. For the players this means a world of survival and struggle as they are constantly hunted by umbralbeasts and other creatures of the night. Though this is similar in a lot of ways to the previous type of campaign, in this Do're'ni is a lot more of an active threat and the goal is a lot more direct, to bring back the light. Because of this combat will play a lot bigger role in the campaign as their fight for survival would be very literal. Despite this, try to make sure that their enemies are more than creatures of the night. The players will not be alone in the fight for survival and because of that it wouldn't be unusual to put the players up against all sorts of people and creatures.

Empire of Blood

For a differing take on a Do're'ni-focused campaign, you can approach the idea of everyone being vampires. Do're'ni cares nothing for the vampires that he created, generating a definite sense of animosity amongst the vampires that have established their own structures. Many vampires know the potency of the first vampire's blood and it is suspected that those who partake will be granted great powers. In this campaign players will not only be on the hunt for Do're'ni but would also have to deal with the machinations of other vampires. This should allow players to engage in intrigue and combat with other vampires and their own servitors.

Low Level

As starting adventurers, Do're'ni should be a concern but not present, casting a long but subtle shadow. Players should be dealing with the aftermath of encounters in which he, his followers, or his progeny have had a hand. Primarily at low



levels a lot of it should involve research and battling creatures such as the undead and umbralbeasts, though low level cultists are also appropriate. What is important is to start driving the fear, reverence, or other facets of Do're'ni as early as possible. He is a powerful, primordial, terrifying vampire and should be treated as such.

Mid Level

Advancing in level, players will be dealing more and more with the undead and in particular: vampires. There are plenty of variants to use as you see fit, Do're'ni is the eldest and those derived from him are many and varied. This will also help to keep the campaign from getting stale as the players continue their pursuit of him. Similar to low level adventures you can also use other undead and vampiric creatures to keep things from getting stale. Investigations at this stage will start to have more importance and risk to them as foes and allies alike will be keeping a closer eye on the party.

High Level

Getting closer to Do're'ni the players will be starting to separate themselves from the lowly minions and those trying to attain his power. They may have some greater vampires to deal with but for the most part the beings that can be reasoned with dwindle. At this level the players should be dealing with primordial forces—the reasons those who first walked the world were afraid of the dark. That terror and feeling of isolation as they start to grope in the dark for answers should be an ever present feeling as if Do're'ni is starting to close in on them just as they are closing in on him. Downtime activities at this point should be based around preparing themselves to deal with him.

Building Encounters

Considering his affinity for them, it's very easy for encounters to get very repetitive with a lot of undead and vampires being used, despite the variety therein. Given the ubiquity of undead's common weaknesses, there's a risk of the players getting bored with a lack of variation. To combat this and keep things fresh we suggest you mix it up with other creatures such as fiends and aberrations.

Regarding fiends: evil tends to draw in evil and fiends are usually unbothered by darkness, so they make for an easy ally of a cult or a vampire. With some crossover in weaknesses, but mostly deviating from what undead are weak against, there is synergy but also enough spice to mix combat up. Fiends can also be a great source of information—though they may ask a price for their

knowledge—making it possible for the players to learn of things beyond mortal ken.

During Combat

Do're'ni is a terrifying opponent both in the combat and in narrative. His Primal Terror Aura strikes fear into anything capable of feeling it, and even ranged attackers aren't safe with his impressive fly speed. He prefers to isolate his prey, separating them from the group or singling out anyone who is alone.

From an environmental standpoint darkness is key, the darker it is, the more powerful the first vampire is and he will not fight in daylight. Because of this, sources of light are considered a bigger threat than the players themselves and snuffing out those lights should be a priority. With his fly speed, environments with plenty of verticality and places to perch from should be kept in mind, with multiple paths for players to reach them.

AMULET OF THE FIRST NIGHT ITEM 23

UNIQUE ARTIFACT INVESTED MAGICAL

Usage worn; Bulk L

The blue crystal of this amulet never seems to shine. You gain greater darkvision and while in areas of darkness you gain a +4 item bonus to Deception, Intimidation, and Stealth as well as to damage rolls against creatures in dim light or darkness.

Even when not invested, the amulet suffers no light in its presence, within a 20-foot emanation non-magical light sources are automatically extinguished, and it attempts to automatically counteract any light effect in this emanation with a +37 counteract bonus when it enters the emanation or is made within the emanation.

Activate—And Day Shall Become Night ◆◆◆ (darkness)

Frequency once per day; **Requirements** it is currently daytime or you are in an area of darkness created by And Day Shall Become Night; **Effect** You hold the amulet aloft, blotting out the sun, plunging a 1 mile radius area into darkness until the next dawn and sunset pass beyond the veil of your artificial night. This darkness is pervasive, causing all light sources to shed only dim light. Only 10th-rank light effects are capable of shedding bright light in this darkness, first needing to succeed a counteract check to do so (counteract DC 49). Success allows the light effect to proceed unhindered for 1 round but does not end And Day Shall Become Night. Critically succeeding unhinders the effect for its full duration. If And Day Shall Become Night is used within the same area again before its duration ends, the radius of the darkness increases by 1 mile.

Destruction The amulet of the first night can only be destroyed by sending into the heart of the a star or by a god of the sun focusing their divine will on it while it is in their grasp.

EVERLASTING NIGHT

Do're'ni has discovered that the *amulet of the first night* can synergize with a *dread ambience* ritual. Anyone who also discovers this, or extracts the information from Do're'ni can add the following paragraph to the And Day Shall Become Night activation of the *amulet of the first night*:

You may use And Day Shall Become Night at the culmination of a *dread ambience* ritual, if the ritual is a success, the duration of And Day Shall Become night becomes the duration of the ritual, and the area of the ritual becomes the area of darkness created by And Day Shall Become Night. Using And Day Shall Become Night again in this area only expands the area for the duration of the new use of And Day Shall Become Night, after which it recedes to the area covered by the combined activation and ritual.

With this knowledge, Do're'ni is able to create pockets of long-lasting and even eternal night wherever he goes, but he must gather the materials to do so in a lasting manner, giving him a reason to take more than just the blood of those he hunts, potentially hinting to the players if he has ulterior motives for attacking a particular place.

THE AMULET'S POWER

Do're'ni's damage and skills are calculated without the +4 item bonus from the amulet, remember to refer to the *amulet of the first night* and make sure you are giving Do're'ni its benefits when appropriate. He is intended to be fought in a dark situation beneficial to him, so a place where he is unable to benefit from the amulet places him at a distinct disadvantage where he might attempt to flee instead of fight.

DO'RE'NI THE INEVITABLE NIGHT

CREATURE 23

UNIQUE CE MEDIUM HE/HIM ELF UNDEAD VAMPIRE

Perception +40; greater darkvision, lifesense⁸² (imprecise) 100 feet

Languages speaks all languages; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +44, Athletics +42, Intimidation +41, Occultism +38, Religion +40, Stealth +46, Survival +43

Str +9, **Dex** +11, **Con** +8, **Int** +6, **Wis** +10, **Cha** +8

Items *amulet of the first night*

AC 48; Fort +35, Ref +40, Will +37

HP 360, regeneration 20 (deactivated by Light Vulnerability); **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, sleep; **Resistances** physical 20 (except magical silver); **Weakness** light vulnerability 25

Primal Terror (aura, emotion, fear, mental) Regardless of whether they can see him or not creatures within 30 feet of Do're'ni are frightened 1 and can not reduce their frightened condition below 1 while within his aura.

Snuff Out the Light ➤ **Requirements** Do're'ni is within the *amulet of the first night's* emanation; **Trigger** A creature in Do're'ni's reach attempts an action or activity that causes bright light or has the light trait; **Effect** Do're'ni Strikes the triggering creature. On a success, in addition to regular damage the source of light is subject to a counteract check with a counteract modifier of +39 (rank 10). On a failure, the amulet attempts to counteract the light normally. This is a darkness effect.

Light Vulnerability Do're'ni's greatest enemy will always be the light. In areas of bright light or daylight, or when he takes damage from a light effect, until the end of his next turn he loses his regeneration and his attacks no longer do void damage. He takes 120 damage when he begins his turn in an area of such light or an additional 25 damage if a light effect deals damage directly to him.

Speed 30 feet, climb 20 feet, fly 60 feet

Melee ➤ claw +42 [+37/+32] (agile, finesse, reach 5 ft., unarmed, void), **Damage** 4d8+17 piercing plus 1d12 void

Melee ➤ jaws +40 [+35/+30] (reach 5 ft., unarmed, void), **Damage** 4d10+17 piercing plus 1d12 void plus 1d12 persistent bleed

Rituals DC 46; *dread ambience*^{80M} (Do're'ni needs no secondary caster or secondary check as long as he has the *amulet of the first night*)

Death Drop ➤➤ Do're'ni can Fly twice, making an attempt to Grapple at any point during this movement. If successful he can continue to move with the grabbed or restrained creature. Do're'ni can release the creature as a free action at any time.

Eclipsing Shield ➤ Do're'ni brings his wings up and around himself to protect him from damage and light. Until the beginning of his next turn, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to AC, becomes immune to light vulnerability except against daylight, he can Take Cover in his wings to gain a +4 circumstance bonus to AC, he can no longer fly, and he treats all creatures as being concealed from him.

Void Empowerment The necrotic power of his strikes don't just wither the bodies of his victim but also empower him. Any void damage Do're'ni does with his Strikes becomes temporary Hit Points. These temporary Hit Points last until he enters an area of dim or brighter light.

Vitamancy Quickening ◆ **Trigger** Do're'ni's turn begins; **Effect** Do're'ni's terrible power enables him to push even his powerful form beyond its limits. Do're'ni can choose to reduce his current Hit Points by 50, if he does, he becomes quickened for this turn, gaining an additional action. He can only use this quickened action to Climb, Fly, Stride, Step, or Strike.

HOONORDEL — THE MAD GENETICIST

Mad scientist, obsessed with improving life to perfection, Hoonordel has been releasing mutated monsters in the wild for decades, moving from one lab to another, not by fear of being discovered, but simply because he needs new fauna and flora to experiment with.

Origins

Hoonordel is born a simple orc. Growing up among his peers in a tribe, he was not remarkable in any way. He wasn't the strongest or the smartest and he would have lived and died without anyone truly noticing if it wasn't for a raid gone wrong. The leader of the raid, ambitious and looking to impress the elders, pushed the expedition a little too deep underneath the ground, trying for a village of Duergar instead of the usual dwarven mining colony. Glory and riches, they found not, but instead a raid party of Drow hunting the region. Making quick dismissal of the orc pitiful resistance, the drow took the survivors back home, to sell to the highest bidder.

Hoonordel was sold to a noble but eccentric drow, obsessed with the process of fleshwarping driders, who saw the perfect candidate for his new experiment. Hoonordel went through a long and painful process. Even he doesn't remember for how long, nor his name before the transformation. But he came out of it reborn. His half lizard body made him faster and stronger. To the greatest surprise of his creator, Hoonordel came out of the process grateful. This level of success pushed the mad drow ego, encouraging him to push the experimentation further. Then came the mouth, to make him a better hunter. Then the hands, to make him more versatile and dexterous. Piece by piece, he was building the perfect creature. The process was painful, and not always successful, but Hoonordel was willing and resilient, pushing through it. Eventually, enthused by the gratitude of his new creation, decided to make him smart. Really smart. The orc, or what was left of it, was thinking with a newfound clarity, understanding concepts beyond what he could even grasp before. The mad drow educated him, treating him no more as a creation, but as an apprentice. He taught him the art of fleshwarping, alchemy, and even some rudimentary arcane magic. And Hoonordel was learning quickly, with curiosity and engagement. One day a rival drow house raided their palace and Hoonordel's honorary father died defending his home. The aberration, filled with rage, slaughtered soldiers and even nobles of

the invading house as if they were mere inconvenience, but sadly too late to save the family. Being alone once more, and knowing he was unsafe in the drow city, he gathered the necessary to start a new laboratory and left.

Hoonordel established himself a new laboratory on the surface to pursue his experiments. He didn't quite know for what purpose for a long time. All he knew was, he was mediocre, and now he wasn't. His ultimate goal became very clear the day he found an injured kid stuck under a fallen tree. The poor catfolk kitten was bleeding and struggling, too weak and young to free itself. Hoonordel rescued him and brought him back to his laboratory. What ensued in his eyes was divine glory, in the eyes of anyone else, an horrific scene. The catfolk came out of the laboratory a deformed, crazy and mindless beast, running wild and terrorizing the region. And Hoonordel knew this was his mission. He was going to save the world from weakness and mediocrity. If only he could find a way to fleshwarp the whole world, to bring power and strength to everyone, like his creator had done for him.

Personality

Hoonordel is unexpectedly pleasant to be around. While his appearance can be quite off putting and his voice a bit jarring, once one has gotten over it, Hoonordel's remarkable intelligence and undeniable passion for science and philosophy make him a great mind to converse with. However, his completely skewed (or absent) moral compass, and him being convinced he understands something no else does, can make him quite difficult to argue with. A pleasant conversation with Hoonordel can quickly turn into a physical altercation, which quite often ends with the arguing party waking up in a vat of chemicals with an extra limb.

Building a Campaign

The concept of a Hoonordel campaign, regardless of the style of campaign you elect to play, is intended to be one of mystery. Strange creatures are appearing in various regions, all causing death and destruction, and it is the party's role to find out where they are coming from, who is creating them and why. All this ultimately leads to Hoonordel himself, for a final confrontation.

One constant of each arc should be the presence of one of Hoonordel's laboratories, either currently occupied by Hoonordel, completely independent, or abandoned. The discovery of said laboratory should

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mark the end of the arc, and provide the necessary clues to move onto the next one.

To better transition from one arc to the other, the party should be changing locations, seeking the next laboratory, and a Hoonordel story assumes the party to arrive in a location where problems are already rampant, rather than the story developing due to their actions. It has to be implied and felt that if the party had not shown up, the region or village would have fallen into desolation.

During character creation, advise players against making poison focus characters, as most of the significant encounters of a Hoonordel campaign are likely to be immune to poison, or at least, resistant to it.

Story Arc styles

The following styles of story are suggestions of how to build a story arc and help you bring the desired atmosphere to it. The styles of story arcs are written in the suggested horror, going from mysterious horror to the final confrontation with the Mad Geneticist, but with a little creativity and enough planning, story arcs can be written in any order of styles, or even keep the same style of campaign all throughout the story.

Horror

Horror arcs are using a plethora of Mutants, to create a Lovecraftian atmosphere. Whether a series of failed experiments released into the wild, or the offspring of a powerful mutation, the region is infested with nightmarish creatures.

An important thing to establish is how terrifying the new reality is for the residents of the region. Fantasy worlds are often already filled with scary creatures, and common folks might be used to the harsh reality of life. Hoonordel's lasting effects in a new region brings the horrors to a whole new level. Farmers are scared to harvest their field, merchants to export their goods and hunters to venture into the woods. Each excursion out of town should result in an encounter with mutated creatures and dread and fear should be felt.

In a horror arc, Hoonordel takes a much more secondary role. If used as an introduction arc, they should not be aware of his existence until the first laboratory is found. If used later in the arc, the urgency of the situation locally should keep the party occupied and worried, relegating the hunt of the Mad Geneticist to a secondary priority.

In a horror arc, almost all encounters should be of severe challenge rating or higher. No combat against

mutants should be trivial and players should consider twice if they want to engage in combat or avoid it.

Investigation Arc

Investigation arcs do better using one mutated creature per story arc. Start by revealing the consequences of the creature's presence in the surroundings, leading the players to investigate it. Identifying, finding and hunting the creature is by far the better part of the adventure rather than fighting the Mutant in itself.

In the investigation arc, Hoonordel is the center of the story, but still rather absent from it. The party should connect the dots, understand the notion of the big picture very early in the arc, and the clues should be numerous. Red herrings will help make the investigation harder, and planning your clues ahead of time should make for an interesting puzzle for the party.

Meeting with Hoonordel

Meeting with Hoonordel is an arc that we suggest using not more than twice during a campaign. The arc can be used for many different purposes, like introducing Hoonordel to the party, as a final confrontation arc, as the arc introducing the final encounter -if you are not using Hoonordel as a final encounter- or even as an introductory arc to your campaign, if you want to play around with the idea of granting mutations to your players.

A story arc featuring Hoonordel front and center can use any type of Experimental Phase, but can function very well without a Perfected Creation, using the Mad Geneticist himself as the final encounter.

EXPERIMENTS

The following paragraphs offer three different adjustments to build mutated creatures and allow you to build your story arcs. As opposed to story arcs styles, we strongly recommend changing templates for each story arc, as repeating the same ones more than once will most likely lead to a repetitive play-style and feel.

Each Phase entry gives the tools to build your own mutated creatures, as well as an example of a Perfected Creation, meant to be the final encounter of the arc, the guardian of the laboratory and the pillar around which to build your arc.

Basic Templates

When creating mutants in your story arcs, we suggest using very simple templates like animals, simple beasts or basic humanoids. The abilities and modifications on creature's template can lead to conflicting themes or over-saturated stat blocks. We suggest using the various abilities to make unexpected monsters out of rudimentary enemies. If an adjustment increases a creature's Hit Points, reference Table A—1: Hit Point Basics.

Table A—1: Hit Point Basics

Starting Level	HP Increase
1 or lower	10
2-4	15
5-19	20
20+	30

Powerful Monsters

This line of experiment was quite simple; increase physical might. Improving physical characteristics is both the easiest, and usually the most visually impressive result of fleshwarping and alchemical augmentation.

The powerful monster arc is perfect for a first story arc. It features simple monsters, with increased physical stats. They offer simple straightforward combat : find the creature, kill the creature. It will however sell the beans about the presence of creatures being artificial in nature, as any Recall Knowledge check can identify the original creature, making the notion of alchemical modification just one logic leap away. For this reason, the powerful monsters can also be used as a closing arc if you intend to maintain the mystery until the very end. The story itself should be engaging enough at this stage to make up for the more simple nature of these monsters.

Monster Benefits & Modifications

Powerful Monsters are often unintelligent creatures, whether animals, beasts, mindless creatures or even occasionally mindless undead. You can make an existing creature into a powerful monster by completing the following steps. Increase the creature's level by 1 (minimum level 1), give it the mutant trait, and change its statistics as follows.

- Increase the creature's AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws (except Reflex), and skill modifiers by 1.
- Increase the damage of Strikes and other offensive abilities by 1. If an ability can be used only a small number of times (such as a dragon's Breath Weapon), increase the damage by 2 instead.
- Increase the creature's HP by the amount listed on Table A—1: Hit Point Basics.

Powerful Monster Abilities

Powerful monsters gain two abilities from the list below. You can add more than two abilities if you wish to make an especially tough powerful monster, but you might need to weaken it in some other way to avoid making it too powerful. These abilities use the statistics for its adjusted level, instead of improving with the previous adjustments.

Enlarged The creature becomes Large. If it's already Large or larger, it increases by 1 step (to a maximum of Gargantuan) and gains a +2 bonus to melee damage rolls.

Physical Alteration One or more limbs or special organs granting the creature an associated unarmed attack and an additional listed ability.

Tentacle - Melee ♦ tentacle +(high to hit) (agile, reach 10ft); **Damage** low bludgeoning damage plus grab

Swipe ♦♦ the creature makes a wide swipe using two or more of its tentacles, hitting everything in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area takes damage equal to the tentacle attack damage (basic Reflex, High spell DC). This counts as two attacks for the creature's multiple attack penalty, but it does not increase its penalty until after Swipe resolves.

Spines - Ranged ♦ spines +(moderate to hit) (range increment 30 feet); **Damage** moderate piercing damage.

Spine Volley ♦♦ The creature flings two spines, targeting either two different creatures or a single creature. If the creature targets two different creatures, these creatures must be within 10 feet of one another, and it makes a separate Strike against each; this counts as only one Strike for the creature's multiple attack penalty, and the penalty doesn't increase until after both attacks. If the creature fires both spines at the same creature, it makes a single Strike. If the attack hits, it deals the damage of a single spine, but the target is pinned in place, rendering it immobilized. A creature that succeeds at a Athletics check with a high spell DC for the powerful creature's level (attempted as a single action) can pull the spine free. A powerful creature can hurl no more than 12 spikes in 24 hours.

Extra Legs - Melee ♦ hoof or foot +(high to hit), **Damage** moderate bludgeoning damage.
The creature's Speed increases by 10 feet.

Chest Maw - Melee ♦ bite +(moderate to hit), **Damage** high piercing or bludgeoning damage, plus grab.

Swallow Whole ♦ (attack) (The same size as the creature), low damage appropriate the creature (usually acid or bludgeoning), Rupture value equal to double the creature's level (minimum 2)

Resilient The creature gains resistance to physical damage depending on the creature's level adjusted level; 5 if 7th or lower, 10 if 8th through 14th, or 15 if 15th or greater.

Stench (aura, olfactory) 40 feet. A creature entering the aura must succeed at a Fortitude save (high spell DC-2) or be sickened 1. On a success, the creature is temporarily immune to the sickened effects of this stench for 1 hour. Regardless of the save, while within the aura, creatures take a -2 circumstance penalty to saves against diseases.

Perfected Creation

The final mutation, and often closing combat of the arc, features four of the abilities listed above, increases its level by 2 instead of 1, increases its statistics by 3 instead of 1 (or 6 instead of 2) and increases its Reflex saves by 2 and doubles its increase to Hit Points.

Example Megaprimatus - chest maw, resilient, spines

POWERFUL MEGAPRIMATUS CREATURE 10

RARE N GARGANTUAN ANIMAL MUTANT

Perception +18; low-light vision, scent (imprecise) 30 feet

Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +22

Str +7, **Dex** +2, **Con** +5, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +2

AC 29; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16

HP 190; **Resistances** physical 10

Speed 40 feet, climb 30 feet

Melee ✦ fist +24 [+20/+16] (agile), **Damage** 2d8+13 bludgeoning

Melee ✦ jaws +24 [+19/+14], **Damage** 2d10+13 piercing

Melee ✦ chest maw +21 [+16/+11], **Damage** 2d12+13 plus grab

Ranged ✦ spines +21 [+16/+11] (range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 2d8+8 piercing

Mangling Rend ✦✦ The powerful megaprimatus makes two fist Strikes against the same target. If both hit, the attack deals an additional 2d6 bludgeoning damage, the target is off-guard, and the target takes a -20-foot status penalty to all Speeds until the end of its next turn.

Terrifying Display ✦✦ (auditory, emotion, fear, mental) The powerful megaprimatus beats its chest in a terrifying display. Creatures within 50 feet must attempt a DC 30 Will save. While a creature is frightened by this ability, it is off-guard to the powerful megaprimatus.

Critical Success No effect and temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is frightened 1.

Critical Failure The creature is frightened 2 and fleeing until the end of its next turn.

Swallow Whole ✦ Gargantuan, 2d10+6 bludgeoning, Rupture 20

Spine Volley ✦✦ The powerful megaprimatus flings up to two spines from its back, targeting either two different creatures or a single creature. If it targets two different creatures, these creatures must be within 10 feet of one another, and it makes a separate Strike against each; this

counts as only one Strike for the powerful megaprimatus' multiple attack penalty, and the penalty doesn't increase until after both attacks. If the horrendous gorilla fires both spikes at the same creature, it makes a single Strike. If the attack hits, it deals the damage of a single spike, but the target is pinned in place, rendering it immobilized. A creature that succeeds at a DC 29 Athletics check (attempted as a single action) can pull the spike free. A powerful megaprimatus can hurl no more than 12 spikes in 24 hours.

Intelligent Monsters

Intelligent creatures are Hoonordel's attempt at fighting loneliness. Unfortunately for him, creatures have the bad habits of having thoughts and opinions. Not necessarily willing to deal with this fact, he gave up very quickly on this line of experiment.

An intelligent creature story arc is intended to be used as a central arc. Intelligent Monsters created by Hoonordel's retain their agency and personalities, allowing you to create NPCs of any type of allegiance regarding their unfortunate creator. If the players are struggling to unravel the mystery that is Hoonordel, or long for a little respite from the tension and the horror, you can use an Intelligent Monsters arc to shift the tone of your campaign and provide the players with some good exposition from one of his victims.

Alternatively, if you want to maintain the tension throughout this arc, you can use a single perfected creation, working as a criminal mastermind or a hidden threat. Either by staying hidden in plain sight using magic and alchemy to remain anonymous, or by working in the shadows, manipulating various agents, a Perfected Intelligent Monster can make for a great investigative story arc.

Monster Benefits & Modifications

You can make an existing creature into an intelligent monster by completing the following steps. Increase the creature's level by 1 (minimum level 1) and change its statistics as follows.

- Increase the creature's AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws, and skill modifiers by 1.
- Increase the creature's Intelligence modifier by 2 or to +2 (whichever is higher) and its Wisdom and Charisma modifiers by 1 or to +0 (whichever is higher). Increase skill bonuses according to this change for those that would utilize these modifiers.
- Add up to two languages that the creature can understand (minimum 1 understood language). If the creature is incapable vocalizing, it may write or

use other methods of language (such as sign language)

- Increase the damage of Strikes and other offensive abilities by 1. If an ability can be used only a small number of times (such as a dragon's Breath Weapon), increase the damage by 2 instead.
- Increase the creature's HP by the amount listed on Table A—1: Hit Point Basics.

Intelligent Monster Abilities

Intelligent monsters gain one ability from the list below. These abilities use statistic for its adjusted level, instead of improving with the previous adjustments.

Linguist The creature can speak Common, plus two other languages of your choice and high proficiencies in three skills of your choice.

Spellcasting The creature gains a high bonus for Arcana, a spellbook, and can prepare arcane spells as a wizard of its level with a moderate or high spell DC and spell attack bonus, gaining 1 fewer slots per rank than normal. It also gains an ability matching one metamagic feat among the following of which its adjusted level meets or exceeds: Widen Spell, Reach Spell, Silent Spell, or Quickened Casting.

Alchemy The creature gains a high bonus in Crafting, a formula book, the Quick Alchemy alchemist feature, with reagents appropriate to its level. Abilities identical to the following feat options: Far Lobber and Quick Bomber or Poison Weapon and Sticky Poison. It gains a bomb ranged attack (moderate or high to-hit, damage appropriate to the bombs used).

Devise a Stratagem ♦ **Frequency** once per turn; **Effect** The creature assesses a foe's weaknesses in combat and uses them to formulate a plan of attack against its enemy. The creature chooses an enemy it can see and rolls a d20. If it Strikes the chosen creature later this round, it must use the result of the roll it made to Devise a Stratagem instead of rolling. It makes this substitution only for the first Strike it makes against the creature this round, not any subsequent attacks.

Perfected Creation

A Perfected Intelligent Monster should be a mastermind of strategy and have its own motivation and ambitions. The party might have met, or even have built a relationship with the creation. To make a perfected intelligent creature, increase its level by 2 instead of 1, its modifiers by 3 instead of 1, or by 5 instead of 2 (with minimum scores of +5 Intelligence and +3 Wisdom and Charisma if they would be lower), give it an additional 2 skills with a moderate bonus, double the increase to its Hit Points, and triple the increase to damaging abilities, AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws, and skill modifiers. You may select a second monster ability as well.

Example Vruk & Thorg (each head has different features and personalities) Vruk (dismissive ettin

spellcaster): Spellcasting; Thorg (enthusiastic ettin alchemist): Alchemy

VRUK & THORG

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE CE LARGE SHE/HER GIANT HUMANOID MUTANT

Perception +19; low-light vision

Languages Common, Draconic, Goblin, Jotun, Orcish

Skills Athletics +19 Arcana +18 (Vruk), Crafting +18 (Thorg), Intimidation +13

Str +6, **Dex** -1, **Con** +4, **Int** +5, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +3

Independent Brains Each of the ettin's heads, Vruk and Thorg, rolls its own initiative and has its own turn. Neither head can Delay. At the start of a head's turn, that head gets 2 actions and 1 reaction. Each brain controls one of the ettin's arms, but both can move the legs. Any ability that would sever an ettin's head (such as the vorpal weapon property) doesn't cause the ettin to die if it still has its other head, but does cause it to lose the turns, actions, and reactions of the severed head, as well as all the abilities tied to the severed head. Mental effects that target a single creature affect only one of the ettin's heads.

Items flail, spellbook, formula book, leather armor

AC 24; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15

HP 150

Reactive Strike ➤

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ flail +19 [+14/+9] (disarm, reach 10 feet, sweep, trip), **Damage** 2d6+13 bludgeoning

Ranged ♦ bomb +18 [+13/+8] (range increment 30 feet), **Damage** (varies by bomb)

Prepared Arcane Spells (Vruk) DC 26 Spell attack 18 **6th** chain lightning; **5th** hallucination, cloudkill; **4th** confusion, enlarge; **3rd** earthbind, fireball; **2nd** invisibility, obscuring mist; **1st** fear, magic missile; **Cantrips (6th)** detect magic, gale blast, gouging claw, light, presitdigitation

Quickened Casting ♦ (Vruk) **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** If Vruk's next action is to cast a cantrip or spell that is 4th level or lower, reduce the number of actions to cast it by 1 (minimum 1 action).

Alchemical Formulas (Thorg) **5th** acid flask (moderate), alchemist fire (moderate), tanglefoot bag (moderate)

Far Lobber (Thorg) Thorg has a range increment of 30 feet with their bombs instead of 20 feet.

Quick Alchemy (Thorg) ♦ Thorg creates a single alchemical item from their formula book (see rules for Alchemical Formulas). This item has the infused trait, but it remains potent only until the start of the Thorg's next turn.

Quick Bomber (Thorg) ♦ Thorg can use Interact to draw a bomb, then Strike with it.

Psychic Monsters

At one point, Hoonordel developed an obsession with psychic abilities. His experiments on enhancing psychic features led to many a strange and dangerous creature.

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PIECEMEAL'S FLESH GRAFTING

Like other umasi^{B3}, Piecemeal can spend 10 minutes grafting the flesh of other living or recently dead humanoids onto their body, attempting a DC 20 Medicine check with the effects of Treat Wounds.

This is the only method by which they may restore their Hit Points. It's possible that Piecemeal became such a powerful psychic being by grafting parts from Hoonorde's other experiments, consolidating their power, and potentially even their memories and consciousnesses.

Monster Benefits & Modifications

Psychic Monsters are not always very intelligent, sometimes even being barely sentient. You can make an existing creature into a psychic monster by completing the following steps. Increase the creature's level by 1 and change its statistics as follows.

- Increase the creature's AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws, and skill modifiers by 1. Then lower the creature's Fortitude save to be equal to its lowest save if it wasn't already.
- Increase its Intelligence or Charisma modifier by 2 (or to +2 if it would be lower).
- Increase the damage of Strikes and other offensive abilities by 1. If an ability can be used only a small number of times (such as a dragon's Breath Weapon), increase the damage by 2 instead.
- It gains resistance to mental damage equal to its level.
- Increase the creature's HP by the amount listed on the table.

Psychic Monster Abilities

Psychic monsters gain two abilities from the list below. You can add more than two abilities if you wish to make an especially powerful psychic monster, but you might need to weaken it in some other way to avoid making it too powerful. Any granted abilities use statistics of a creature of its adjusted level, instead of applying the increases found above.

Emotional Caster The creature can cast *soothe* and *agitate*^{G&M} once per day as occult innate spells. If the creature is at least level 5, it can cast *crisis of faith* once per day and if it is at least level 13, it can cast *inexhaustible cynicism*^{SoM} once per day; each of these spells are innate occult spells with a high save DC and spell attack modifier.

Kinetic Shield ♦♦ **Frequency** twice per day; **Effect** The creature shrouds itself in a kinetic shield, redirecting damage in a psychic explosion. The shield has a number of Hit Points equal to twice the creature's level and damage is dealt to the shield instead of the creature as long as the shield has remaining Hit Points with any excess damage passing onto the creature. When the kinetic shield reaches 0 Hit Points, it unleashes a wave of psychic energy in a 20-foot emanation, dealing 1d4 mental damage per two levels of the creature (basic Will, high spell DC)

Mind Read ➤ (occult, mental) **Frequency** twice per minute; **Trigger** An enemy creature would make a Strike or Casts a Spell that would affect the creature; **Effect** The creature reads the mind of its opponent, gaining a +4 circumstance bonus to its AC or its saving throw. The triggering creature is aware of this prediction and can decide to take a different action instead, negating the bonus.

Psychic Blast - Ranged ♦ psychic blast (high or extreme to-hit) (concentrate, mental, range 30 feet), **Damage** Moderate mental damage (low if extreme to-hit).

Stupefy ♦♦ (mental) A creature within 20 feet must succeed a Will saving throw against a high spell DC or become stupefied 1 for 1 minute (stupefied 2 on a critical failure).

Perfected Creation

To create a Perfected Psychic Monster, increase level by 2, triple its increase to its AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws, skill modifiers, and damaging abilities, increase its Intelligence or Charisma by 5 instead of 2 (or to +5 if it would be less), double its increase

to Hit Points, grant it immunity to mental damage, and give it three of the abilities above.

Example Piecemeal (disturbed psychic umasi⁸³) kinetic shield, psychic blast, stupefy.

PIECEMEAL CREATURE 8

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM THEY/THEM ABERRATION HUMANOID

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common

Skills Athletics +18, Intimidation +12, Medicine +17, Stealth +16, Survival +13

Str +5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +6

Items wooden shield (Hardness 5, HP 12, BT 6) with +1 shield spikes, +1 blowgun (10 darts with harvester poison)

AC 26 (28 with shield raised); **Fort** +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15; +2 status to all saves vs. poison

HP 139 (immortal flesh); **Immunities** disease, mental damage

Immortal Flesh Piecemeal can't heal or recover HP in any way except their flesh grafting techniques (see sidebar pg. 37). However, despite being a living creature, they don't take damage from either vitality or void damage.

Shield Block ➔

Speed 35 feet

Melee ✦ claw +20 [+16/+12] (agile), **Damage** 2d6+11 slashing

Melee ✦ shield spikes +21 [+16/+11], **Damage** 1d6+11 piercing

Ranged ✦ blowgun +20 [+14/+9] (magical, range increment 20 feet, reload 1), **Damage** 3 piercing plus harvester poison

Ranged ✦ psychic blast +20 (concentrate, mental, range 30 feet), **Damage** 2d8+9 mental

Consume Organ ✦ (manipulate) **Requirements** Piecemeal is adjacent to the corpse of a Small or larger creature that died within the last minute; **Effect** Piecemeal harvests and consumes a vital organ from the corpse, gaining 15 temporary Hit Points and a +1 status bonus to attack and damage rolls for 10 minutes. They can gain this benefit only once from any given corpse.

Kinetic Shield ✦✦ 16 Hit Points, 8d4 mental damage (basic Will save DC 26).

Harvester Poison (nonlethal, poison) **Saving Throw** DC 24 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d6 poison damage (1 round)

Stupefy ✦✦ Will DC 26

Elemental Infusion Arc

Hoonordel became fascinated with the elements and how some creatures can manipulate them. Wanting to experiment, he started binding elementals to creatures from the material plane, creating some unstable elemental Mutants.

To build an Elemental Infusion arc, we recommend creating a series of all types of elemental infusion, and have them at the ready. With a little experience, you can even pick bestiary creatures and assign them energy types and abilities on the fly, making for a very varied encounter range. Don't be shy to play with the creature's reaction to their new nature either; some creatures will embrace their newfound elemental powers, being grateful to Hoonordel for its gifts. Unintelligent creatures might be confused by the presence of the energy within them, making them erratic and unpredictable, or make for a potential sympathetic reaction from the party. Other creatures with a stronger sense of identity might be furious at the way their base nature was twisted against their will, making them possible allies for the player characters. This arc is an ideal middle arc, where the group is now aware there is foul play and intent behind the presence of the mutations. The Elemental Infusion retaining their intelligence, agency and personality post transformation, many may act as NPCs more than encounters, helping the plot move forward.

Elementally Infused Creatures

To create an elementally infused creature, select a creature from the bestiary and choose one of the following energy types : acid, cold, electricity, fire, poison, bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing (if you choose a physical damage , you may choose the air, earth, water, wood, or metal trait to be associated with the damage).

- Increase the creature's AC, attack bonuses, DCs, Perception modifier, saving throws (except Reflex), and skill modifiers by 1.
- Increase the damage of Strikes and other offensive abilities by 1. If an ability can be used only a small number of times (such as a dragon's Breath Weapon), increase the damage by 2 instead.
- The creature gains resistance to the damage associated with its infused elemental trait equal to its level +2 (minimum 2)
- The creature gains weakness to sonic based on its adjusted level; 5 if 7th or lower, 10 if 8th through 14th, or 15 if 15th or greater.
- Increase the creature's HP by the amount listed on the table.
- Give the creature the associated elemental trait if applicable.

Elemental Monster Abilities

Elementally infused creatures are volatile and varied; they gain two of the following abilities. You can add more than two abilities if you wish to make an especially tough powerful monster, but you might need to weaken it in some other way to avoid making it too powerful. The abilities below gain the trait corresponding to the elementally infused creatures infused element using statistics based on the creature's new level instead of using adjustments listed above.

Bomb When the creature dies or is destroyed, it deals limited use area damage of its energy type in 20-foot emanation (basic Reflex or Fortitude save, high spell DC).

Elemental Aura (aura) Creatures that enter or start their turn within a 5-foot emanation of the creature take damage equal to half of its level (basic Reflex or Fortitude, moderate spell DC).

Elemental Breath ➤➤ The creature breathes out a 30-foot line or a 15-foot cone dealing limited use area damage (basic Reflex or Fortitude, high spell DC) matching their infused element. The creature may not use Elemental breath again for 1d4 rounds. At 4th level and every 2 levels thereafter, increase the size of the cone by 5 feet.

Elemental Strikes The creature's Strikes deal 1d6 additional damage of its infused elemental type.

Hurricane Blast ➤➤➤ (air, evocation, magical) All creatures in a 10 foot emanation are pushed back 10 feet, or are forced to move to move 10 feet clockwise or counterclockwise. Each creature must attempt a Fortitude save (high spell DC). On a success, it avoids being moved, and on a critical failure it falls prone in addition to being moved. Creatures with the air trait are immune. This is forced movement. At 6th level and every 4 levels thereafter the emanation and distance moved increase by 5 feet. The creature must have the air or water traits infused to select this ability.

Toxic Cloud ➤➤ The creature breathes out or exudes a cloud in a 10-foot emanation of acrid vapor dealing unlimited use area damage matching their infused element (basic Fortitude high spell DC). The creature's infused element must be acid, poison, metal, or wood to take this ability.

Transmutive Strike ➤➤ (incapacitation, magical, transmutation) The creature makes a melee Strike against a creature within reach. If successful the target must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (high spell DC) or become slowed 1 (or slowed 2 on a critical failure). Further failed saves against calcification increase the value of the slowed condition. Once a creature's actions are reduced to 0 by calcification, that creature becomes petrified turning into a material associated with its infused elemental trait. If the creature isn't petrified, the slowed conditions end once 1 minute passes without the creature failing a save against calcification. The creature must have the earth, wood, or metal traits from their elemental infusion to have this ability, its remains can be used to cure up to 4 creatures of this petrification.

Perfected Creation

To create a perfected elementally infused creature, increase its level by 2 instead of 1, choose two elements

to infuse instead of one and grant it three abilities, double the increase to its Hit Points, increase the changes to its statistics by 3 instead of 1 (or 6 instead of 2), increase its Reflex save by 2, and grant it immunity to both types of damage associated with its infused elemental traits. If an ability deals damage, the creature may choose one of its elements each time it uses the ability otherwise listed as "elemental".

Example Charcoal viper vine^{B2} (fire and slashing wood); bomb, elemental Strikes, elemental breath.

CHARCOAL VIPER VINE

CREATURE 15

RARE N LARGE FIRE PLANT WOOD

Perception +25; low-light vision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

Skills Athletics +30, Stealth +27

Str +8, **Dex** +5, **Con** +7, **Int** -4, **Wis** +5, **Cha** -3

AC 36; **Fort** +29, **Ref** +27, **Will** +25

HP 310; **Immunity** fire, wood **Resistances** poison 15; **Weaknesses** sonic 15

Cold Vulnerability When exposed to a cold effect, the viper vine is overwhelmed by lethargy, becoming slowed 1 for 1d4 rounds.

Elemental Bomb (fire or wood) 20-foot emanation, 16d6 elemental damage, basic Reflex DC 36

Speed 20 feet

Melee ➤ jaws +30 [+25/+20] (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+14 piercing plus 3d6 poison, plus 1d6 elemental

Melee ➤ vine +30 [+26/+22] (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d10+14 bludgeoning plus 1d6 elemental and Grab

Captivating Pollen ➤ (enchantment, incapacitation, mental, poison) The viper vine releases a 60-foot emanation of invisible pollen that stays in the air for 5 rounds unless dispersed by a moderate or stronger wind. Each creature that enters or starts its turn in the area must attempt a DC 36 Will save or be captivated. The viper vine can't use Captivating Pollen for 1d4 rounds.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected and is temporarily immune to Captivating Pollen for 24 hours.

Success The creature is sickened 1.

Failure The creature is fascinated, and it must spend each of its actions to move closer to the viper vine as expediently as possible while avoiding obvious dangers. If a captivated creature is adjacent to the viper vine, it stays still and doesn't act. It ceases to be fascinated if it's no longer in the pollen aura at the end of its turn.

Critical Failure As failure, plus the creature is stupefied 2 for 24 hours.

Constrict ➤ 3d8+8 bludgeoning, DC 36

Elemental Breath ➤➤ 45-foot cone, 16d6 elemental damage, basic Reflex DC 36.

Building your story arcs

To build and prepare your story arcs, we suggest you build your perfected creation first. The creatures and abilities chosen for the perfected creation should guide

the creation of any additional Mutant and help set the tone of your story arc.

Example If you decide on a mutated giant spider making people vanish in the woods for your powerful monster arc, apply the perfected adjustments to your spider. From there, you select the tone of your arc such as a horror arc, having infested the woods with her spiderlings. Use weaker spiders as spiderlings with the non-perfected template but picking from among the same abilities. Select a location for Hoonordel's lab, most likely the spider's lair. Prepare a battle map if needed. You can also see an the framework for lair hazards on page 89 to add some extra intricacies.

HOONORDEL

CREATURE 22

UNIQUE NE LARGE HE/HIM ABERRATION MUTANT

Perception +36; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +33, Arcana +42, Athletics +37, Crafting +45, Medicine +45, Nature +42, Occultism +42, Stealth +35

Str +10, **Dex** +6, **Con** +10, **Int** +11, **Wis** +6, **Cha** +8

Multidextrous Hoonordel is considered as having a hand free even when wielding a two-handed weapon, holding objects, or while climbing.

Items +2 *major striking greataxe*, alchemist's tools, bag of alchemy (contains 20 assorted alchemical items), breastplate, formula book, portable alchemy lab

AC 47; **Fort** +39, **Ref** +35, **Will** +37; +2 circumstance vs. inhaled effects

HP 436; **Resistances** poison 20, mental 20

Artificial Lungs Hoonordel can hold his breath for ten minutes. Actions that normally would normally expend the entirety of his air (such as speaking) reduce his duration by 1 minute instead.

Speed 40 feet, climb 40

Melee ♦ tail +37 [+34/+29] (forceful, reach 10 feet, trip), **Damage** 4d12+18 bludgeoning plus Push

Melee ♦ greataxe +39 [+36/+31] (sweep), **Damage** 4d12+18 slashing plus Hoonordel's Gift

Ranged ♦ bomb +39 plus the bomb's item bonus (usually +3) [+36/+31] (bomb, range increment 20 feet, splash), **Damage** varies by bomb

Instinctive Leap ♦ **Frequency** Once per turn; **Effect** Hoonordel can Leap up to 20 feet in any direction. He may leap onto a vertical surface which he immediately clings to with his Climb speed.

Hoonordel's Gift (incapacitation, poison)
Saving Throw DC 44 Fortitude; Maximum Duration 1 minute; Stage 1 paralyzed (1 round); Stage 2 drained 1 and paralyzed (1 minute); Stage 3 drained 2 and paralyzed (1 minute)

Alchemical Formulas major blight bomb, major bottled lightning, major frost vial, major necrotic bomb, major tanglefoot bag

Quick Alchemy ♦ The Hoonordel creates

a single alchemical item from their formula book (see Alchemical Formulas). This item has the infused trait, but it remains potent only until the start of Hoonordel's next turn.

Quick Bomber ♦ Hoonordel can use Interact to draw a bomb, then Strike with it.



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LILIANA - THE BANDIT WARLORD

On a seemingly eternal warpath, Liliana and her army of mercenaries are a grave threat to the established gentry. Once, she was dismissed as a mere bandit; the leader of yet another clan of warriors in the wastelands. Now, her empire greedily devours country after county, tearing down the wealth and power of landed lords and uplifting the common folk. Wherever she goes, death and bloodshed follows, and from the ashes of destruction, a prosperous and peaceful nation grows.

Origins

Born from a marilith and a hobgoblin, Liliana was destined to become a great leader. Raised within a society of warriors in the desert, her childhood was as harsh as one could expect. Fighting among kids was common in these streets, if not encouraged, and by her fourth birthday she was no stranger to brawls and scraps. The summer of her sixth birthday, she was sent to training camp far out in the wasteland, as per the customs of her clan, where she very quickly distinguished herself from the other would-be warriors. Liliana stood out not by any particular talent, but by her dedication, focus, and determination. Always the first one on the field and the last one in the barracks, she was relentless, determined to achieve martial perfection. Whenever she was not training, she was fighting with another recruit, as her overachieving personality had made her an outcast among her peers.

But things took a different turn once she was assigned to a squad. After six long years of drills, combat training, and forced marches under the sun, she was an accomplished warrior, ready to take on the dangers of the wastelands. Assigned to border protection, Liliana would spend weeks on end out in the desert, tracking down predators and hunting parties from neighboring territories crossing the border.

Now living in close quarters with nine other men and women, all of them older and more experienced warriors, Liliana had no choice but to do something she had never bothered with in the past: pay attention to others. This led her to two realizations that would shape the woman she would become. First, her squad leader was utterly incompetent, and more importantly, a coward. Her illusions that rank equated to merit shattered, and she became sickened by traditional military structure. Second, her new brothers in arms, all hardened veterans, showed no contempt for her unusual

determination, but rather admiration and respect. They quickly became family to her, and while they showed her the value of easing up—of sharing a drink by the fire or a little rest under a tree on a hot afternoon—she inspired them to become better fighters, to take their training more seriously, and to perfect their craft.

Unfortunately for her commanding officer, as the bond with her squad grew, so did her insubordination. Her contempt for his cowardice was unveiled, and she would commonly ignore any order she deemed unworthy of consideration, invariably followed by the rest of the unit. This dynamic carried on for nearly three years until one day, during a routine border patrol, the squad discovered an unusual group of intruders on their land. Made up of twelve heavily armed warriors and four wargs, this was a war party—a raid group looking to pillage and plunder. To no one's surprise, the squad leader called for a retreat, which sent Liliana into a rage. Avoiding large predators or forgiving trespassing hunters was one thing, but ignoring a war party was utterly unacceptable. Anyone killed by this raid party would be blood on Liliana's hands and those of her squad. She violently expressed her opinion, but apparently her commanding officer could easily live with blood on his hands, so long as it wasn't his own.

The argument was abruptly interrupted when the head of her commanding officer rolled off his shoulders. The largest member of her unit, a towering minotaur, had simply and cleanly decapitated the coward. Without a word, without a look, all unanimously agreed: Liliana was the new squad leader. To this day, the bards still talk about the bloodbath that followed. Without a single casualty suffered, Liliana and her squad eviscerated the raid group in a matter of minutes.

At the capital, they were received as heroes. The official story: the squadron had discovered and handled a serious threat to the clan, tragically losing their esteemed leader in the process. The truth was an open secret, however, and many secretly celebrated a squad deposing their incompetent officer in favor of a more suitable candidate. Well aware of this fact, the city council saw in Liliana an immediate threat. A sixteen year old insubordinate novice earning the loyalty of experienced warriors was a danger they could not ignore. They elected to handle the situation in perfect military fashion: by promoting her and sending her far away to die in foreign lands.

This news was received with great applause. Finally, a deserving leader was climbing the ranks. The

folk organized a large banquet in Liliana's honor, to the greatest displeasure of the upper ranks. The celebrations went on for three consecutive days, during which Liliana received many pledges of allegiance, marriage proposals she bluntly declined, and gifts of all sorts. Even Liliana's mother, whom she had never met, made an appearance. The imposing yet seductive marilith brought gifts as well: an enchanted necklace and an abyssal bison calf named Baastri. Unmoved by the maternal gesture but appreciative of the value of these gifts, Liliana swore to never part ways with either.

Unfortunately for the powers that were, Liliana would come back victorious from her raids without fail. Even more worrying, she often came back from her raids with more soldiers than she left with. Mercenaries and warriors from all over the region, having heard the tales of the legendary captain, traveled from far and wide to join her ranks. Every time she returned victorious from her increasingly dangerous quests, riding her impressive flaming bison, her war banner floating in the wind, her reputation and influence grew. Desperate and anxious, the city council took action: they hired a skilled assassin to deal with the issue. This mistake would be their last. The very same night, Liliana could be seen walking the streets of the city, dragging the bloodied body of the assassin, weapon in hand, in direction of the city hall. As she reached the steps of the building, not a single guard lifted a finger to stop her.

Within two years of her ascension, there was not a single village in the region that did not proudly wave Liliana's war banner. One territory at the time, she united the region into an empire, then turned her eye to conquest. Leading her impressive army of mercenaries, bandits, and warmongers, she began her expansion, showing no intentions to stop.

Personality

Despite her impressive ascension to power, Liliana stayed true to her roots as a dedicated warrior. Her nights might be occupied by banquets, lovers, or bare knuckle brawls, they are nothing but distractions. Her one true love and joy is the battlefield.

Most who have had the chance to carouse alongside Liliana describe her as a blunt and honest woman; a bit rough around the edges, but quick with a laugh and generous with her drinks. The ones who truly know her—the ones close enough she would call a friend—tell a different story. The story of a focused, determined, rigorous, and willful soldier. These few select individuals also know all the suppositions about her military campaign are wrong. Liliana does not conquer land by

ambition or ideology, nor is her crusade holistic or moral. She wages war simply because she knows and enjoys nothing else. Her rule is harsh but just and honest, which does not come from any moral belief but from a deep sense of responsibility to honor the brave men and women who fought to defend their home against her invasion. She has no interest in power for its own sake but perceives her reign to be the price to pay for the privilege of waging war, no more, no less.

While being an honorable person, showing respect and grace to those she deems worthy of it, Liliana can be outright cruel. Not only does she believe cowardice and greed deserves to be eliminated from the world, she actually enjoys watching those she considers unfit to live suffer before their demise. This strange dichotomy in her personality leads her to commit actions which may seem unpredictable, like publicly dismembering an enemy general who dared surrender his city to her without a fight, but healing, feeding, and releasing an assassin who attempted to slit her throat, so long as she did not beg for her life.

The Mercenary Empire

Liliana's reign is a ruthless but fair military regime following a single dogma: life is not deserved but earned. Growing up in the harsh wasteland, where survival requires hard work, she has learned to recognize the value of hardship and to despise those who would usurp the precious resources needed for their survival. Her regime applies this philosophy to the fullest. No titles of nobility are awarded or recognized, while the ruling class of conquered lands are executed, their wealth seized, and their opulent residences burned to the ground. Thievery, racketeering, and fraud are punished by death, and military ranks hold no authority over civilians. The raiding of civilians is strictly forbidden, as well as pillaging of any kind, at the exception of palaces, mansions, castles, and city halls.

Military Structure

The military structure of Liliana's band of mercenaries is a very unusual one. Squads of soldiers are considered independent entities, and promotions are given from the bottom, rather than from the top. Squad members decide on a commanding officer to lead them into battle, whose only qualification must be earning their respect. Squads are then organized into factions, whose leader is determined by the officers of each squad to answer directly to Liliana's generals. These generals are in charge of logistics more than anything, allocating

regions or fronts to factions, an action similar to removing a leash from a dog in many ways. The spoils of war are divided evenly within the squad or faction responsible for taking a city, with officers getting nothing more than the privilege of choosing first among rare items. This strange compromise between organized legions and guerrilla warfare makes it incredibly hard to organize a counter offensive against Liliana's troops, as a squad's position is unpredictable and yet always close to potential reinforcements.

The Enforcers

The flexible structure of Liliana's armies would make it impossible to stick to her counterintuitive rules of engagement regarding looting and occupation of newly conquered territories if it wasn't for her enforcers. Led by officers hand-picked by the warchief herself, these select groups of elite warriors are in charge of enforcing her will among the troops. The enforcers investigate, assess, and execute the culprits of any infringement of the rules. Any abuse of power, inequitable distribution of riches, unauthorized looting, or misconduct of justice is met by a swift and often public death.

The Peacekeepers

The Peacekeepers are the newest military branch of the mercenary empire. As time passes, life within newly conquered territory regains a sense of normality and with it, crime and corruption returns. The Peacekeepers serve as investigators in charge of rooting out potentially problematic agents within the general public. More often than not, Peacekeepers spend their time keeping an eye on guild leaders and larger enterprise owners, ensuring they don't use their positions to accumulate wealth or influence.

Like the Enforcers, the Peacekeepers are all personally selected by Liliana herself, often by having shown rigorous morality or proven to be incorruptible in one way or another.

Public Perception

The public perception about Liliana's unending campaign is a varied one. Those who resist her conquest speak of the bison-riding demon in terror, telling stories of mass murder and merciless bloodshed. Depicted as a cruel and cold blooded monster, Liliana is said to be the physical manifestation of evil itself. Soldiers who survived an encounter with her forces speak of the ruthless nature of their tactics, while their nightmares are fueled with public executions of their commanding officers.

Ask a mercenary flying her colors, however, and you will hear the story of a legendary warchief—an invincible warrior who leads her army head first on the battlefield, rewards might and courage, and punishes cowardice and greed. Due to the structure of her military apparatus, even the lower ranks hold every officer in high esteem, a feat thought to be impossible by any military entity.

The most interesting opinions regarding Liliana often come from the citizens of her newly conquered lands. Of the ones still alive, most testify of the improved lives they enjoy under the reign of the bandit warlord. The harvests, weapons, and equipment she needs to feed her troops are never taken by force but bought and paid for, bringing financial prosperity to farmlands and small towns. The spoils of war she offers her troops are plenty enough to attract would-be criminals into the ranks of the army, while the public beheadings of thieves dissuade cowards who consider racketeering civilians rather than honestly earn a coin. Her military regime has made road bandits now a thing of the past, making commerce safer and more prosperous.

Legends and Stories

Like those of most such figures, the legend of Liliana the bandit warlord is accompanied by a plethora of tales ranging from the mundane to the fantastic. These stories are told universally across the realms, although often heavily altered by the perspective of the storyteller.

The Burning Tower

The most notorious of these stories tells of an army general defending an outpost attacked by Liliana herself. After having sent his men to the front lines knowing they would get slaughtered, he locked himself in a tower with his officers, cowering in fear. Once the outpost was conquered, Liliana offered a chance to the officers: if they surrendered their general, she swore not a single blade would strike. The officers immediately opened the door, offering their general. Liliana was already disgusted by the cowardice of the officers for avoiding battle, and watching them surrender their commander simply added insult to injury. True to her word, not one man hidden in that tower was struck by a blade. She simply locked the officers inside the tower and set fire to it. The general, whom she deemed responsible for promoting these cowardly officers in addition to abandoning his troops in battle, was thrown into the warg enclosure for the entertainment of her soldiers.

The fall of Zarachas

The fall of Zarachas is by the far the most mysterious of stories surrounding Liliana. Only a few elements of the tale are undeniable and refuted by none. One day, in the midst of her eternal crusade, Liliana saddled her loyal flaming bison and headed north. She took no rations nor escort, and offered no explanations. Two weeks later, she rode back into camp with an enormous white dragon's head dragging behind her steed. Tied to Baastri's saddle, two bags of holding contained the dragon's hoard. Stories say the celebrations lasted three days all across her empire.

"Why did Liliana risk her life to kill Zarachas? Even I can't say for sure. Some say her crusade was in desperate need of funds, others claim she did it to bolster her reputation. Local tribes are convinced she did so to protect them from the ire of the beast. Personally, I think none of these things ever even crossed her mind. I think she simply did it for the hell of it . . . Quite the woman, really."
~ Sinclair

The Independent City of Kalesh

Among the mercenary empire stands one independent city, free from the warlord's reign. The city of Kalesh is in no way remarkable, and is easily mistaken for any other fortified city in the region. And yet, it was granted full autonomy and immunity by Liliana herself. Back when the bandit chief and her troops first besieged Kalesh, it was expected to take three days, at most, for the city to fall. Two weeks later, the gate had not been breached, none of the mages defending the walls had fallen, and they had suffered fewer casualties by a factor of ten. Impressed by the resilience and vigor of the city's defenders, Liliana issued an offer: should the warriors of Kalesh agree to join her army as a factionless squad, the siege would end immediately. The officers and soldiers of Kalesh knew the siege couldn't last forever, and that eventually the walls would fall, but still they unanimously refused the offer within the hour. They held the siege for an additional month—a feat nearly unbelievable given their circumstances. When the city finally fell, Liliana gave the order to stand down. A city with leaders and soldiers this brave and united would not suffer any unnecessary casualties. She granted Kalesh the status of free city under complete self governance without any further interference from her or her warriors. She provided the necessary gold to rebuild the city walls and went on her way.

Building a Campaign

Liliana and her crusade are designed to be the core of a war theme campaign. Regardless of which side your party operates from, whether they act as soldiers in an army or as independent agents, if your adventurers are in the vicinity of the bandit chief, so is war. But where its theme is fairly unidimensional, a Liliana campaign offers significant diversity in style and genre.

The first session of play is crucial in determining the type of campaign you intend to run, and some key elements might help organically inform the direction you and your players decide to venture.

Military Campaign

In a military campaign, the players likely begin as part of an army defending their nation from the evil invasion of Liliana and her mercenaries. In order to build a military style campaign, the suggested pattern is a linear ascension, with the party starting as low ranking members of the army fighting standard soldiers and gaining ranks and level as they defeat officers of the mercenary troops until they ultimately face Liliana herself. This style of campaign often takes a "good versus evil" structure and the standard progression of heroic fantasy.

To set the party on the path of a military campaign, we suggest starting the first session with the party defending against an assault. By making Liliana's mercenary forces the aggressor, you can imply the righteousness of opposing the invasion, while simultaneously granting the players their first heroic victory, thus setting them on the path of becoming legends.

To build your encounters, a healthy balance between combat against enemy troops and wild creatures will be important to avoid becoming repetitive (more on encounter building below). It is also suggested to prepare statblocks and personas ahead of time for 1) a squad leader, 2) a faction leader, and 3) a general for the party to face. Many NPCs found in the final book can make for suitable candidates to fill these roles. Making these officers recurring encounters will help keep continuity throughout the campaign. We suggest using the squad leader between levels 4 and 6, the faction leader between 9 and 11, the general between 16 and 18, and finally facing Liliana to close the campaign. Making Liliana a recurring character, following the guidelines found below, should help keep the thread and the tension between story arcs against her officers.

Mercenary Campaign

In a mercenary style campaign, the players find themselves part of Lilitiana's army. While the format can resemble a military campaign, with the party instead siding with the bandit warlord against an oppressive monarchy, a mercenary campaign can take a very different turn. The freedom of operation granted to Lilitiana's troops can offer a wider variety of adventures than a battlefield-centric story.

When building a mercenary campaign, take a more quest-based approach to your campaign, sending the party through various missions, such as infiltration, escorts, investigations, or priority target eliminations. These operations can lead the party to climb the ranks of the mercenary army, from squad leader to general, but they can also lead the party on the path to becoming enforcers or peacekeepers, keeping order within the empire.

To send your players on the path of a military campaign, we suggest making your players part of an assault on a city whose walls just fell. Once the city is taken, grant your players a generous loot, and have their squad leader assign them a new mission. The familiar mission-reward pattern should set the players' expectations right about the style of campaign you are running. At some point, elevate them to their own squad, possibly following the success of a difficult mission. In this way, you can demonstrate Lilitiana's unusual means of promotion, where respect for one's abilities is more important than experience.

Building encounters for a mercenary campaign follows the same basic rules of encounter building as any standard campaign. The somewhat encapsulated nature

NOT INHERENTLY EVIL

A mercenary campaign does not require the party to be evil. By making the surrounding countries truly oppressive to their citizens, abusing the power granted by their titles, or by taming down a little the savagery and selfishness of the mercenaries, Lilitiana's crusade can appear truly just and right, especially for neutral or chaotic characters. Alternatively, sending the party on the path to become enforcers or peacekeepers and punishing mercenaries who elect to loot civilians can allow the players to lean on either their lawful or good alignment.

of the missions and story arcs allow for any type of encounter. In order to diversify your campaign, it is recommended to include missions which cannot be resolved solely by combat, like discreet infiltration or scouting a path forward for the squad to march on.

Facing Lilitiana

If you plan on having the party face Lilitiana despite being part of her mercenaries, the simplest way is to play off the motives of your players. If Lilitiana starts losing her war, she might grow tyrannical, removing the moral component to justify her actions. One of her generals or perhaps her marilith mother might attempt to take her place, enticing the party into a coup attempt. In the event of a more morally ambiguous or self-serving party, the players might simply desire to overthrow Lilitiana in order to seize her power for themselves.

Sandbox Campaign

A sandbox Lilitiana campaign uses the war as a setting, rather than its core. By placing your players anywhere near a contested border, you can use the effects of the war as a motivator, a trigger, an obstacle, or an opportunity for the party. Sandbox campaigns are varied and personal, but here are a few tips and key points to keep in mind.

Try and keep the conflict morally neutral. By exposing the party to both sides of the war, allowing them to witness justice and cruelty on both sides, you should be able to help the players feel a sense of agency, prompting them to build an opinion based on their own moral compass. By doing so, you introduce nuance to the game and limit the risk of developing a Manichean, black and white story.

Expose your players to every side of the conflict. The nature of sandbox campaigns offers a chance for your players to get a bird's eye view of the world you crafted. Exposing them to civilians, soldiers, and commanding officers of both warring nations should help your players stay engaged and curious about your story.

Finally, try to make sure the world around your players is moving forward, with or without their involvement. By occasionally moving territory lines, or by changing the occupying force of a city between two visits from the party, the war will feel real and the world immersive.

Building a campaign without Lilitiana

If the setting of a mercenary empire is appealing to you but the idea of your party facing the warlord herself is not, the event of Lilitiana's death can touch off a

compelling campaign. The integrity of her army, prosperity of her empire, and the well-being of her conquered citizens relies entirely upon her. In the event of her demise, the military structure providing near autonomy to the squads, the absence of proper law enforcement and justice system in favor of a few independent agents trusted to wield their power honestly, and the absence of local authorities of any kind would create a power vacuum of unprecedented scale and magnitude.

To build a campaign setting in this manner, simply open the story with the death or disappearance of Liliana. Then divide a large piece of land into four territories occupied by four factions and their leader, and you are off to the races. A high-level combat wherein a group of heroes defeat the warlord can make for a great session zero and provide some context to the events. While removing Liliana from the story removes the moral quandaries her empire are meant to instigate within the players, a power vacuum campaign offers the chance to tell a story of unforeseen consequences and the possible terrible ramifications of a seemingly heroic act, like putting an end to a conquering warlord.

Low Level

At low level, Liliana should be a distant figure. Keeping her out of reach of the players, physically and/or socially, will establish her importance and provide a sense of direction to the story. We recommend introducing Liliana as early as the first or second session, either as a leader, an antagonist or a significant world event. The player characters should feel how powerful she truly is to establish her as a force to be reckoned with and an element which cannot be ignored.

Mid Level

This is a good time to start introducing your party to Liliana herself. They aren't powerful enough to be a challenge for her, but their efforts have probably accumulated enough stories by now to catch her attention. There are many ways to introduce the warlord to the party. If the players are on her side of the conflict, a private meeting to convey a promotion or a celebration banquet after a victory would be organic events. In the event of the party opposing her, the party being captured or a parlay prior to a battle are easily arranged. This is a good opportunity to show how much Liliana's personality, her respect for strength and her hatred of cowardice.

High Level

Around 15th level is a good time for your players to start planning to take Liliana down. There are plenty of ways a party can tackle this issue: a full frontal attack, a more subtle assassination attempt, or some combination of both. If they have risen to high rank in her army, they might plan a coup to take over, or decide her ambitions have gone too far and she must be stopped. If the party has been opposing her for long enough or caused her a significant setback (such as defeating one of her generals), she might decide the players are too big a thorn in her side and the time has come to handle the situation herself. Having her come after the party can help build tension and give your players a sense of urgency to deal with the situation.

Building Encounters

A Liliana campaign can become very repetitive encounter-wise if you aren't careful. Even when trying to diversify its content, a group of mercenaries is still a group of mercenaries. We suggest using a few simple solutions to remedy the situation. Beast taming is a very common practice among the mercenaries' army, and so is unleashing a powerful creature in a territory and just letting it rampage throughout the region. This allows you to pick almost any creatures available to you and throw it at the players without breaking immersion or campaign logic.

The second point to remember is that, despite the region being at war, the wilderness is still a dangerous place. Sometimes clearing the region of a ferocious beast is a more pressing matter than the battlefield. Wild creatures may even interrupt an encounter, attracted by the sound of combat, making for a three-sided conflict.

Finally, it is implied that the mercenary empire spreads across several lands, and your party being sent to varied fronts makes a good deal of organic sense in the story. This should allow you to use diverse climates, terrain, and regions to change up your bestiary selections and your battlemap design.

Combat tactics

While always surrounded by her most loyal followers, Liliana will never send her troops ahead of her. Quite the opposite: she will always be leading the charge, riding on her loyal partner Baastri. We recommend using 2 level 18 NPCs alongside her (most likely two of her generals). At least once per turn, she will use an ability to empower her bandits, command Baastri to move and Strike, and

make a Strike with each of her weapons with any remaining action.

When selecting the generals to accompany her in battle, remember that both Liliana and Baastri are resilient and powerful front liners. Favoring more mechanically diverse generals with some spell casting, ranged options or high mobility combat style should help keep the combat engaging, and avoid the common “big bags of Hit Points” issue.

If Baastri is killed before her, Liliana goes berserk and whoever kills him will suffer her wrath until they are dead and in pieces. Use all three actions to either Stride towards the culprit or Strike them, ignoring every other party member.

Items

FEARMONGER

ITEM 20

UNIQUE MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

This +3 major striking fearsome whip made from a dark steel chain was part of Zarachas' hoard. It has a reach of 5 feet longer than a normal whip, has a damage die of 1d6 instead of 1d4, does not have the nonlethal trait, and whenever it deals damage to a frightened creature, it increases its frightened value by 2, to a maximum of 4.

DREAD'S FANG

ITEM 20

UNIQUE MAGICAL MENTAL

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

This +3 major striking greater flaming longsword seemingly crafted for a giant was in fact made personally for Liliana to complement Fearmonger. Whenever it deals damage to a frightened creature, the creature takes additional mental damage equal to 1d8 per the target's frightened value.

SKIN OF ZARACHAS

ITEM 20

UNIQUE MAGICAL

Usage worn armor; Bulk 2

This +3 major resilient high-grade white dragonhide breastplate has been crafted directly from the head of Zarachas, an ancient white dragon. While wearing the Skin of Zarachas, you gain cold immunity and a breath weapon activation.

Activation ♦♦ command (arcane, cold, evocation); Frequency Once per day; Effect You breathe a cloud of frost that deals 16d6 cold damage in a 30-foot cone (DC 36 basic Reflex save).

Liliana & Baastri

LILIANA, BANDIT WARLORD

CREATURE 22

UNIQUE CN MEDIUM SHE/HER HUMANOID HOBGOBLIN

TIEFLING

Perception +36; darkvision

Languages common, goblin, jotun, abyssal

Skills Acrobatics +42, Athletics +45, Diplomacy +37, Intimidation +45, Nature +45, Society +37, Survival +42

Str +10, **Dex** +4, **Con** +10, **Int** +6, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +7

Items Dread's Fang, Fearmonger, skin of Zarachas

AC 48; **Fort** +42, **Ref** +34, **Will** +32

HP 536; **Immunities** cold, fear

Commander's Rage (aura, emotion, mental) 100 feet. All creatures in the aura gain a +2 circumstance bonus to attack rolls, +4 to damage rolls and a -1 penalty to AC.

Don't Die On Me (auditory, manipulate) Frequency once per day; **Trigger** Baastri would be reduced to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** Liliana shouts, calling on Baastri's eternal loyalty for his mistress, allowing him to push onward. He doesn't fall unconscious and regains 50 Hit Points.

Frightful Presence (aura, emotion, fear, mental) 90 feet, DC 43

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ fearmonger +41 [+36/+31] (disarm, finesse, magical, reach 15 feet, trip), **Damage** 4d6+26 slashing plus terrifying lash

Melee ♦ dread's fang +41 [+36/+31] (magical, versatile P), **Damage** 4d8+26 slashing plus 1d6 fire, dread's bite, and 2d10 persistent fire on a critical hit, ignores resistance to fire damage.

Baastri's Charge ♦♦ (flourish) **Requirements** Liliana is riding Baastri; **Effect** Liliana pushes her loyal steed to charge forward. Baastri Strides once, igniting the area he passes through under his flaming hooves. Until the beginning of Liliana's next turn, these spaces are hazardous terrain and a creature that moves through it takes 10 fire damage for every square of that area it moves into. Liliana can make one Strike with Fearmonger and one Strike with Dread's Bite at any point during Baastri's movement.

Breath Weapon ♦♦ (arcane, cold, evocation) Frequency Once per day **Effect** Liliana breathes a cloud of frost that deals 16d6 cold damage in a 30-foot cone (DC 36 basic Reflex save).

Dread's Bite (necromancy, void) Whenever Dread's Fang deals damage to a creature, it takes additional mental damage equal to 1d8 per the target's frightened value.

Gang Up ♦ (auditory) Liliana commands her bandits to focus on a single target. Up to two allies within 30 feet of her use their reactions to Stride toward the designated creature.

On Your Feet! ♦ (healing, necromancy, vitality) **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** Liliana touches her necklace, unleashing a wave of vitality energy around her. Liliana's allies within a 120-foot emanation regain 50 Hit Points and gain a +1 status bonus to Will saves and attack rolls until the beginning of her next turn.

Rallying Cry ♦♦ (auditory) **Frequency** Once per day; **Effect** Liliana calls out to her bandits and pushes them to give their all in combat. All allies within 30 feet that can hear her gain 25 temporary Hit Points.

Terrifying Lash (emotion, fear, mental) A frightened creature damaged by fearmonger increases its frightened value by 2, to a maximum of frightened 4. On a critical success the target becomes frightened 1 if it was not already frightened. It cannot reduce their frightened condition below 2 until the beginning of her next turn.

BAASTRI

CREATURE 20

UNIQUE CE LARGE HE/HIM BEAST FIEND FIRE MINION

Perception +30; darkvision, scent (imprecise) 60 feet

Languages goblin, abyssal, (cannot speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +38, Athletics +41, Intimidation +28

Str +10, **Dex** +6, **Con** +7, **Int** -3, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

AC 44; **Fort** +36, **Ref** +33, **Will** +30

HP 452; **Immunities** fire; **Weaknesses** cold 20

Speed 45 feet

Melee ♦ horn +38 [+33/+28] (magical), **Damage** 4d8+22 piercing plus 3d8 fire

Melee ♦ hoof +38 [+34/+30] (agile, magical), **Damage** 4d6+20 bludgeoning plus 3d6 fire

Scorching Earth ♦♦ Baastri stomps the ground violently, shattering the earth in a 20-foot emanation. Each creature touching the ground in the area must attempt a DC 42 Reflex save or fall prone and take 3d10 bludgeoning damage and 3d10 fire damage. The area becomes difficult terrain for any creature other than Baastri.

Trampling Charge ♦♦ Baastri charges and tramples everything in his path. He Strides up its Speed in a straight line, dealing 4d6+20 bludgeoning and 3d6 fire (DC 42 basic Reflex save) to any Medium or smaller creature in its path.

SWITCHING STYLES

Even if you started a Liliana Campaign electing to follow a specific style, it is possible your party pushes to go in a different direction, or you might feel like changing things up a little bit along the way. Shifting campaign style is an easy task in this setting. Simply use a transition point, like the party getting captured, the party becoming defectors and changing sides, or even the unsuspected death of Liliana, to transition toward a new style of campaign. From there, simply follow the guidelines provided for the new style and move onward.

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MIKAEL - THE AEON OF PROVIDENCE

It is said the road to hell is paved with good intentions, yet Mikael could be proof the road to heaven is no better. The myths of its destructive rampage made me realize what the gods deem as 'sin' may in fact just be what gives meaning to mortal life, and they perhaps judge us too harshly from high upon their golden spires.

Origins

When Mikael was created in the workshops of the gods, only the most masterful of craftsmanship would suffice for their vision of it. Its arms and armor were forged of golden adamantite alloyed with divine righteousness; its glow would never be dimmed even by the most consuming of darkness. Its mind was infused with the training, stratagems, and memories of a hundred-thousand of the greatest celestial warriors, and its moral compass tempered by every edict, every verse and chapter of the sacred codex. To ensure its mandate would be followed to the letter, they borrowed the designs of the inevitables from the law-abiding aeons; beings of pure order who did not deviate from their assigned mission.

It should have been a perfect construct; nay, a perfect being. A warrior of unparalleled strength and talent, devoid of petty sin and vice. It would become a weapon of righteousness, and guardian of all that was good.

It should have been perfect.

Instead, when it was sent to act as a herald and protector of the just, its lofty standards proved impossible for almost any mortal to reach. Staring into the souls of the theurges who summoned it, Mikael found them unworthy in its prime directive of an existence devoid of evil. They were purged before they could even request absolution of their enemies; a clergy that worshiped Mikael's creators were its first victims.

The gods quickly realized their 'perfect' creation was maladjusted beyond their most outlandish concerns.

Mikael's expectations for mortalkind were completely untenable; it expected uncompromising perfection, and every being it judged was found wanting, from the pettiest of crooks to the most righteous of paladins. It rampaged across the mortal plane, bringing divine righteousness and destruction in its wake. Cities burnt and entire populations were wiped out in mere minutes.

The gods attempted to intervene, ordering Mikael to cease its assault and return to the heavens at once.

This presented a contradiction to Mikael: why would its own creators - the beings who bestowed its purpose - order to stay its hand against the impure beings it was created to purge? To protect the sinful unto itself was a sin. Were its own creators beings of sin themselves? Mikael defied its masters' orders and turned against them, deigning them to be no better than the failed mortals it was created to purge. Though powerful, Mikael was able to be subdued, not without great struggle and at the expense of many of the gods' most powerful servants. Rather than destroying it, however, the gods chose to seal it in a demiplane in the far corners of the universe; a golden city in which it would reside forever. A veritable vault for their most shameful creation.

Mikael became one of the greatest stains upon the legacy of the gods. In time, the events of Mikael's purge fell to history and then myth; more of a divine boogeyman than a real event. The gods were more than happy for this interpretation to perpetuate.

Those who heard the stories of Mikael questioned why the gods would create a being so cruel and uncompromising that it would slay the very people it was sworn to protect, let alone why they would merely seal it instead of destroying it in wake of its rampage. Some speculated they couldn't; it was forged so perfectly with an indestructible body and soul, that it could not be feasibly disassembled. Others suspect ill intent from the gods; that they are keeping Mikael intact in case they too deem mortalkind irredeemable and need it purged, or that they did intend to unleash Mikael, but simply did so too soon; that they are biding their time before they release their ultimate engine of destruction upon the world.

While speculation raged upon the earth below, the outer planes were in disarray with thunderous quarrel. The gods blamed the aeons for Mikael's failings, furious that their designs led to such widespread destruction. The aeons were perplexed at these claims; in their cold and absolute logic, Mikael did exactly what it was intended to do. It was not their fault the gods gave such stringent commands to a being designed to follow its orders so perfectly. This fallout led to centuries of the heavens and the axiomatic planes refusing to interact, blaming each other for the failings of their mutual creation.

As for Mikael itself, it sits chained in its prison, pondering endlessly why the gods would condemn it for performing the exact work they wanted it to. The only conclusion it can come to is the gods themselves are impure beings unable to live up to their own lofty standards, or perhaps they felt too much compassion for the imperfect beings that when the moment came to lower the guillotine, they couldn't bring themselves to see their demise.

When Mikael escapes - and it knows it's only a matter of when, not if - it will turn its divine justice upon its own creators along with the mortal world, for daring to protect the sinful beings they created it to purge.

Personality

Despite the fact Mikael is a forged construct, it is still organic and sentient. Its design is based on the lawful aeons - specifically inevitables - that reside in the planes of order, and has the capacity for independent thought as they do. The gods knew a being of automated behavior and rote learning would not be truly capable of making the determinations and having the capacity for adapting to battle a perfect adjudicator and warrior would.

However, much like any aeon, its prime directive is still the core of its being. It views the world through the lens of its ingrained edicts, interpreting them as absolute and that those who don't meet their standards as sinners deserving of finality. Unfortunately for most of existence, that is most sentient beings; its standards are too stringent for any soul to meet. In theory it would defend those it deems pure and virtuous with its life, but it has yet to meet a being who meets those impossible standards.

Mikael's view of the world could be summed up as 'complete disgust.' Its feeling towards mortals is less hatred and more akin to a disease that must be purged. The few times it speaks to one it treats them like a bitterly disappointed parent, pointing out their myriad personality flaws, and how they contribute to the moral degradation of the lives and societies around them. Nothing is good enough for Mikael's judgment; it views only the worst in people, even if they are otherwise decent and virtuous.

Arguing and rebutting Mikael is nigh-impossible, assuming you can halt its advance long enough to engage in parlay. Even pointing out contradictions in its condemnations will just result in fallacious justifications that ultimately come down to its gods-granted jurisdiction and rigid adherence to their edicts. In the

end, Mikael is an uncompromising being, driven by cold logic that is consistent, but uncaring and unappeasable. Conversation with it will tend to be unproductive and frustrating. It is a weapon first and foremost; any appearance of sentience and willingness to discuss belies its singular goal of moral absolution.

Building a Campaign

When it comes to building a campaign around Mikael, it is important to consider its intended narrative design as a 'sealed threat in a can', not an omnipresent arch-villain with nuanced motives, personal wants, or even an army of dedicated followers it gives orders to. Mikael is straightforwardly an engine of the apocalypse, and will rain indiscriminate destruction on the world once unleashed.

Instead, the most important consideration is motive, but not for Mikael itself - no, its motives are straightforward and immutable. Instead, you want to consider the motives for other characters. You have to think about what kind of person would unleash a weapon of apocalyptic destruction on the world, be it willingly or unwillingly. It's very easy to make a one-note villain who wants to destroy the world, or a hapless fool who doesn't understand the power they're unleashing, but Mikael's place as a mistake of the gods opens up a lot of opportunities for unique nuances that other similarly-motivated antagonists may not have.

Rather than giving ideas for campaign formats to use Mikael in, here are some ideas for the kinds of antagonists who would be seeking to unleash it, and how to form plots around them.

Misanthropic Resentment

Mikael is the perfect tool to be utilized by someone who wishes to purge the world of mortal life, but it is important to consider why someone would wish for that to happen.

The obvious answer would be someone who resents everyone else; a misanthrope who holds nothing but contempt for other living beings. While your standard-grade antisocial character would probably not have the lofty capacity to unleash Mikael, someone of great power who holds such a view could do so. Consider a villain such an archfiend of the lower planes; perhaps they wish to purge all life on the mortal plane because it disgusts them, and unleashing a destructive engine of the gods would be an added layer of irony to rub salt in the wound. Conversely, they could be a high-ranking fallen angel who knows of Mikael, and wishes to see it released

because they've lost complete faith in the gods and their creations.

For such a campaign, one of the ways to build the themes is to show the worst of people through actions such as betrayal, sadism, and how such behaviors harm others. Have heroes be proven to be charlatans or secretly corrupt, tainting their virtuous reputation, and maybe even have the PCs themselves confronted with their own moral failings.

Tread lightly as such a campaign could become too cynical or touch on themes your players may not feel comfortable with, but if done well it can help them sympathize with why a villain would want to unleash a being like Mikael. Ensure that the campaign never gets so dark that the players feel compelled to join forces with such a villain, and prove to them that mortal kind is not in fact beyond redemption, or at the very least that they are not deserving of complete genocide.

Extremist Sects

Though the churches of the gods speak of Mikael as a sort of boogeyman who is more myth than fact, there are those who see its absolute judgment as the truest reflection of the gods' intent for mortality. These 'true believers' would act as a splinter sect of a major faith, worshiping Mikael as a deity unto itself.

It is likely these zealots would view everyone else with contempt, as an antagonist in the Misanthropic Resentment storyline would. However, unlike that plot hook, worshipers of Mikael would likely see themselves as morally pure and above others, foolishly believing that releasing Mikael would result in the death of everyone but themselves, with them would be spared. In the wake of its apocalypse, they would repopulate the world, becoming leaders for a new people who would be spared of sin.

Of course, such a notion is sheer conceit. In Mikael's view, they would be no less tainted than those they judge, if not more so; their spite, resentment, and hubris would be condemned as sin of the highest order. Should such a group succeed in releasing Mikael, it is likely they would be its first victims as they attempt to sing praise to and curry its favor (which will no doubt be a cathartic moment for the players if they've been dealing with them for the whole campaign, even if the resultant outcome is undesired).

Folly of the Gods

The lies about Mikael were born out of denial as much as concerted effort; while the gods were happy to allow them to proliferate, the truth was that followers simply

did not wish to accept they were fallible. To do so would be to admit their divinity may not be as all-encompassing as they thought.

Having the gods show interest in keeping the truth about Mikael hidden - and long term preventing its release - is a potent plot point in such a narrative to emphasize the elements of their fallibility. They could send celestial envoys to the party, seeking to guide them to stop those that would reveal the truth about Mikael. Of course, these envoys would omit important information, if not outright lie to ensure the truth is not revealed to the party, which would generate conflict when the truth comes out. If things escalate and tensions become irreparably damaged, servants of the gods themselves could become recurring enemies. They may try to stop the party if they become intent on spreading the truth, or simply acting as damage control if they feel the party's actions are making things worse. Alternatively, if you want to take such a plot hook to its logical conclusion, you could have it that the gods are indeed malicious in their motives, and their whole reason for containing Mikael instead of destroying it is to eventually release it once again. This would require the proper setting to do so, as such a twist would have drastic ramifications for the foundation of your worldbuilding, but in this case Mikael could act as a perfect final boss, with its defeat acting as a warning against the gods or even thwarting their plans entirely.

An Ambitious Weapon

At its core, Mikael is a weapon. If one could wield such a weapon for their own purposes, they would be an unstoppable superpower.

If you have a ruthless tyrant or ambitious power-monger as a primary antagonist, they could take an interest in the 'myth' of Mikael and its apocalyptic strength. In finding there is legitimacy to the stories, they could covertly seek Mikael's prison and concoct a plot to try and control it, using it to further their goals of conquest and control.

Whether they succeed or not is up to you; much like the Extremist Sects storyline, their attempt to control Mikael could end up too ambitious for their own good, with them failing and meeting their demise as it's released. Alternatively, they could actually succeed and have Mikael become the cornerstone of their military might. In this kind of story, you could have Mikael enter the plot earlier than usual and have their use as a weapon be a major ongoing plot point; the campaign could become about trying to wrest control of Mikael from its captors, attempting to reseal it or even finding a way to destroy it.

If you want a twist on this plot, you could have Mikael's enslavement being the entire impetus for the campaign from level 1, with a grand tyrannical power already on the warpath or ruling the world using Mikael as their arm of enforcement. The campaign would revolve around the consequences of such a power being an omnipresent threat, trying to find a way to stop or destroy Mikael so the empire is finally vulnerable.

Other Nemeses

Mikael could in fact serve as a capstone event for a campaign using one of the other nemeses within this codex. While the bulk of their campaigns would still utilize the formats provided for those characters, an event could occur to bring Mikael into their stories, be it slowly seeded in over time, using one of the plots for it listed here, or as a sort of 'final arc' story that could end with a clash of two powerful characters.

Do're'ni

While Do're'ni himself would likely not take an active interest in Mikael, you could work Mikael in as a desperate solution for a group seeking to stop him, particularly if you run with a plot where Do're'ni's already succeeded in bringing eternal night. You could utilize rival organizations attempting to set the two against each other, with a group that worships Mikael (such as those in the 'Extremist Sects' storyline) attempting to release it in a war against the Cult of the Evernight.

A clash between Do're'ni and Mikael would be akin to two forces of nature converging, rather than hated enemies consciously seeking to destroy one-another. If the party is caught between the two nemeses, guide them to playing them against each other, or use Mikael and Do're'ni clashing as a peripheral element in a battle primarily against their supporting forces.

Liliana

With Liliana as a powerful tyrant and unstoppable warrior herself, Mikael may be a tempting solution for her adversaries to consider. This can be framed as either the party being ignorant of Mikael's true nature and unleashing its destruction unwittingly, or being in the know and trying to stop it before another one of Liliana's adversaries unleashes it upon the world.

While Liliana herself would admire Mikael's power and view a fight with it as a worthy challenge, it is unlikely she would actively seek it out herself to use or fight. A conflict with both Liliana and Mikael as pieces on the board could have the party split between both, even caught in a conflict between them. This could make

for a particularly spectacular final battle. Alternatively, Liliana could lose the bulk of her army to Mikael, which may be an impetus for an uneasy alliance with the party, choosing to cut her losses and stop Mikael before the entire world is purged. The aftermath could have Liliana farewell the party amicably with the intent of rebuilding her empire from scratch, or result in a denouement to defeat her once and for all after the impending threat of an apocalypse is dealt with.

Sebastian Polik

A vault is effectively a challenge to a thief, and a hidden deific weapon is perhaps the ultimate prize for a master thief.

Sebastian would be a prime villain to use for a 'control Mikael' plot; not only is he a cunning mastermind with grand ambitions, but his knowledge of magical artifice is a logical justification for how he would be able to figure out ways to secure and control Mikael.

He is no fool, though; Sebastian would be smart enough to realize a being such as Mikael is not to be treated flippantly, and would glean enough from both its history and the circumstances of its imprisonment that there is good cause for caution and scrutiny. Attempting to brave a vault forged by the gods themselves is daring enough, but he would be thorough in his research and preparation in how to subdue Mikael once obtained. He would likely secure the vault first - turning it into a base of operations - and leave Mikael in its chains, trying to figure out ways to compel the construct without risking losing control.

If Sebastian does succeed in his plans, you could have the final arc of your campaign be him using Mikael to become the most powerful figure in the criminal underworld - if not the world itself - culminating in a climactic showdown where Sebastian controls Mikael against the party.

Low Level

With certain exceptions (such as a superpower controlling it in the 'An Ambitious Weapon' plot hook), it is unlikely Mikael will be a front and center threat for most of a story written around it, if that is even made apparent from the get-go. Your players will probably not confront it at lower levels (unless you are feeling particularly vindictive against them and want a short, anticlimactic campaign). Instead, use the lower levels to seed in hints of Mikael's existence in the world; circulate the myths surrounding it. Have its name mentioned as a footnote as part of an otherwise throwaway Recall

Knowledge check, or present a stone mural of its legendary rampage at the end of an early dungeon.

Mid Level

By the mid levels, the primary antagonist who seeks to release Mikael should be made front-and-center of the narrative, and the focus of the party's efforts revolving around their actions. While you don't have to necessarily reveal their end goal as the release of Mikael yet, you should at the very least continue to seed plot points relating to Mikael. One way to do so without constantly name-dropping Mikael itself is to have the churches of the celestial gods become getting more involved in the conflict, attempting to aid the party; this will create interesting conflict and drama when the truth of Mikael comes to the fore.

High Level

By higher levels, it should be made apparent what the goal of the antagonists is, and the threat of Mikael's return be the primary impetus for the party's drive to stop them. It is around these levels you will likely consider having Mikael be released; you may simply choose to have the moment of its unshackling be the campaign's climax and let that be the final battle against it, but it might be more effective to show a display of its destructive power by having it unleashed upon the world. If you do, consider how you want to do it in a way that doesn't instantly kill a party too low level to face it, nor have the campaign turn into a repetitive slog of Mikael purging various parts of the world while the party chases it. You will probably want only a few sessions at most of Mikael wreaking havoc - likely in major locales and/or ones the players are intimately familiar with now - before attempting to come to a resolution.

Building Encounters

There are two primary ways you will likely encounter Mikael: sealed in its vault, or on the loose while rampaging across the world.

Vault Encounter

Mikael's vault is a golden chamber with four chains attached to it. As long as these chains are binding Mikael, its strength is contained.

If you want the set piece encounter with Mikael to take place in here, have it so those aspiring to release it only partially succeed.

Mikael's Last Contingency: Finality

The truth about Mikael's imprisonment has to do with one final contingency installed by its creators: the Finality. In the event of Mikael's imminent destruction, it enters an impenetrable stasis and begins charging a cataclysmic release of energy that when unleashed, will level a landmass the size of a small country. The gods foolishly thought that should Mikael face a power capable of destroying it, only a truly apocalyptic solution would suffice to defeat that threat in turn. Alas, they did not consider they and their mortal worshipers could be that threat. In their arrogance, they didn't devise a countermeasure to disable the self-destruct mechanism, for they never considered they would need one.

The fact a countermeasure has not been developed since Mikael's imprisonment begs the question of 'why not?' The answer lies in the continued hubris of the gods: as the aeons were integral in Mikael's design, they are the only beings with the requisite knowledge to alter its physiology. But as the gods have refused to entreat with them after their 'failure' to have Mikael meet their specifications, there are none who have access to it that can successfully stop Mikael from unleashing Finality.

Numerous alternative solutions were considered; the most widely-considered was unleashing Mikael upon the lower planes and letting it run rampant, allowing it to slay hordes of fiends in a kamikaze rampage before it was destroyed, slaying thousands more in its death throes. However, the constant concern of it being captured and corrupted by an archdemon or devil was too prevalent a thought; as powerful as Mikael was, it was still no match for the chthonic gods, and the last thing the celestial gods needed was their own strategy turned against them.

However, the player characters may consider either of these options to stop Mikael. The first is to find a way to disable Finality. This will allow a completely safe way of ending it without causing catastrophic collateral damage. The second is to find a way to turn its self-destruct mechanism on an enemy. This method would be more morally dubious and has the risk of causing unexpected destruction, but if there is a powerful enemy that needs destroying, it's possible you can use Mikael to kill two birds with one stone.

In the first instance, the players would need to entreat with the aeons and gain their assistance in developing a countermeasure. A simple override key is all that is necessary, activating it as you would any magic item once the countdown begins.

If the players choose to utilize Mikael as a directed bomb, they could attempt to simply lure it to the region

they want decimated. However, if doing so would be difficult, the players might wish to find a way to stop it and then teleport it to where they desire.

MIKAEL

CREATURE 24

UNIQUE LE HUGE GENDERLESS AEON INEVITABLE

Perception +39, greater darkvision, true seeing

Languages all languages

Skills Acrobatics +40, Athletics +45, Intimidate +48, Religion +42, Survival +42, Utopia Lore +40

Str +11, **Dex** +6, **Con** +9, **Int** +6, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +13

Items Aegis (Hardness 20, HP 80, BT 40), Luster, Purity

AC 50 (52 or 54 with shield raised or cover taken); **Fort** +41, **Ref** +38, **Will** +46

HP 504, regeneration 20 (deactivated by chaotic); **Immunities** vitality, void; **Weaknesses** chaotic 20

Reactive Strike ➤

Finality At the precipice of defeat, Mikael enters its final contingency: mutually-assured destruction. When it reaches 0 Hit Points while its regeneration is deactivated, it instead remains at 1 hit point and becomes immune to all damage, effects that would cause forced movement, and it can take no actions; no effects can override these immunities. It then begins charging an enormous burst of divine energy. After 1 minute, it unleashes an apocalyptic explosion, dealing 25d6 fire damage in a 500 mile emanation. This damage ignores all hardness, immunities, and resistances. Structures bear the brunt of the force, taking 300 damage instead and if a barrier cannot survive the blast, the emanation is not blocked by that barrier. Mikael immediately dies once this explosion is released.

Speed 30 feet, 60 fly

Melee ♦ Purity +42 [+37/+32] (fire, magical, shove, two-hand d10), Damage 4d8+20 bludgeoning plus 1d6+1d4 fire and 4 fire splash

Melee ♦ Luster +42 [+37/+32] (good, magical, reach 10 ft.), Damage 4d8+20 piercing plus 1d6 good and 1d4 fire

Range ♦ Luster +37 [+32/+47] (good, magical, thrown 60 ft.), **Damage** 4d8+20 piercing plus 1d6 good and 1d4 fire

Divine Innate Spells DC 48; **10th** *fated confrontation, flame strike, gate, indestructibility, miracle, rip the spirit, weapon of judgment*; **9th** *blink charge* (at will), *deity's strike, dispel magic* (at will), *energy aegis* (at will); **8th** *discern location* (at will), *divine armageddon* x3, *inner radiance torrent* x3, *plane shift* (at will); **6th** *spirit blast* (x3); **4th** *dimension door* (at will); **Constant (8th)** *true seeing*; **(5th)** *tongues*; **(4th)** *freedom of movement*

Apollyon Flight ♦♦♦ Mikael flies in a straight line up to twice its fly speed and unleashes a volley of righteous beams. All creatures in a 10 feet of any space it entered during this movement takes 7d10 good damage (DC 48 basic Reflex).

Four-Armed Mikael has four arms. It can wield multiple weapons at once in them; most of the

FINALITY'S DESTRUCTION

If Mikael's Finality explosion were to go off, it is no mere blast that could be stopped by the meager constructions of mortals. All but the most resilient of structures would be reduced to rubble or ash immediately, and even mountains would be eroded, if not destroyed. For many miles around Mikael, there would be a massive crater and the rest would leave only the ruins of a now dead civilization. There is no honor or glory in standing one's ground against finality, only death and ruin.



time, it will use two hands to hold its warhammer *Purity*, one to wield its spear *Luster*, and one to wield its tower shield, *Aegis*.

Moral Absolution Mikael treats all other creatures as if they are evil and chaotic for the purposes of damage and effects, except for mindless constructs. It may choose good as one of its alignments it can deal alignment damage with even though it is not of good alignment itself. It is still only treated as lawful evil for the purpose of damage dealt to it.

Weapon Bound Mikael is spiritually bound to its weapons and can wield them more efficiently than others. As a single interact action with the transmutation and teleportation traits, it may call any of its weapons to a free hand, regardless of where it is and who is wielding it. In addition, the DCs for their abilities are equal to its spell DC instead of their usual values, and it may activate them as often as it wants, but if it uses an activation that has exhausted its frequency, it is slowed 1 for 1 round.

AEGIS

ITEM 22

UNIQUE ABJURATION ARTIFACT DIVINE MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 4

This golden tower shield (Hardness 20, HP 80, BT 40) stands as tall as the gates of paradise, and glows with its divine light. *Aegis* recovers 1 Hit Point per hour on its own. You gain resistance 15 to evil and void damage while it is raised. *Aegis* resizes to suit its wielder.

Activate Interact; **Frequency** Once every 10 minutes; **Trigger** You raise *Aegis*. **Effect** A blinding light emits from *Aegis* as you raise it. You cast a 10th-rank dazzling flash with a DC 46.

Activate Interact; **Frequency** Once per hour; **Prerequisite** You have *Aegis* raised; **Effect** You charge forward with *Aegis* raised, pushing foes who stand in your way. Stride in a straight line up to twice your Speed; you may also Fly if you have a fly speed. If you run into a creature in the line, make an Athletics check to Shove. On a success, the creature is moved with you to the end of your Stride, and then shoved back the distance based on the result of your Shove check against them (10 feet for a critical success, 5 feet for a success). If you run into multiple creatures, you roll a Shove check against them as well, pushing them as well on a success. On a failure, your movement is halted and any creatures you've succeeded against are pushed the requisite distance from where you stopped. Each extra Shove increases your multiple attack penalty, but it does not increase until after this activity is complete. When shoving multiple creatures this way, the GM determines what spaces the end up in when the movement stops.

Destruction *Aegis* can only be destroyed using a hammer forged by the gods; Mikael's own warhammer *Purity*, for instance. Once broken apart, the pieces must be thrown into a lava pit in the lower planes, where they will lose their magic and melt into slag. Keeping the shards in close proximity allows the shield to recover 1 Hit Point after 1 minute, reforming if not utterly destroyed.

LUSTER

ITEM 22

UNIQUE ARTIFACT DIVINE EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

This +4 major striking brilliant holy returning spear has a shaft of pure light. The spear's damage dice is d8 instead of d6, its thrown range is 60 feet instead of 20, and uses martial weapon proficiency instead of simple. The weapon glows with the perpetual effect of a 10th-level light spell.

Activate Interact; **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** You hoist *Luster* and take aim at a distant foe you can see, make a thrown attack with *Luster* ignoring any penalties due to range and with no limit on the maximum distance of the strike. Afterwards *Luster* returns to your hand.

Activate Interact (good) **Frequency** once per hour; **Effect** You throw the spear and it turns into a piercing beam of pure light. Every creature in a 100 foot line takes 10d10 good damage (DC 46 basic Reflex save). The spear then reappears in your hand.

Destruction *Luster* must be used to Strike a celestial of at least 20th level and land a blow that reduces it to 0 Hit Points. This kills the celestial creature immediately as if the Strike had the death trait, and then the spear's glowing shaft disintegrates into harmless light particles that fly away.

PURITY

ITEM 22

UNIQUE ARTIFACT DIVINE EVOCATION MAGICAL

Usage held in 1 or 2 hands; Bulk 1

This +4 major striking brilliant flaming holy warhammer is inscribed with runes written in the celestial tongue. It has the two-hand d10 trait, in addition to its other traits. When you Strike a creature with this weapon, you deal 4 fire splash damage to the target and adjacent creatures, *Purity*'s wielder and good aligned creatures are immune to this splash damage. *Purity* resizes to suit its wielder.

Activate envision; **Frequency** Once per day; **Trigger** You critically succeed a melee Strike against a creature; **Effect** You unleash a massive explosion emanating from *Purity*, casting a 9th-rank *fireball* (DC 46). Instead of a burst, the area of the spell is a 30-foot emanation from the triggering creature. The wielder of *Purity* and creatures of good alignment are unaffected by the spell.

Destruction *Purity* must be used to break the chains binding a powerful abomination, fiend, or undead of level 20 or higher. As the final blow is struck that frees the creature from its bindings, *Purity*'s head and haft shatter with the chain, destroying it.

SEBASTIAN POLIK - THIEF OF MAGIC

"How a man this vile and cold managed to be perceived as a hero of the people is beyond me. My few interactions with Sebastian have left me feeling soiled, and I thank the gods I found Balate to recover whichever artifacts I might need so I can cross this petty thief off my contact list for ever."

~Sinclair

Origins

A human born of the streets, no one expected anything from Sebastian. A skinny young man with nothing to his name, the life of a street urchin and petty thief was set before him. Not content with that life, he set his sights on a bigger score, one that would set him for life, a wizard's grimoire. Obsessively he planned the theft until it all came to fruition and he was successful.

Holding the grimoire in his hands he couldn't help himself and began to study its contents. To the young man magic was new, strange and mostly abstract. He was drawn to the strange symbols and patterns, the promises of power he saw in them. The wizard's station was so much higher than his own and if Sebastian could master the book he would gain that power.

His brilliant mind focused on the task he worked to recreate all he could in the abandoned places of the city. Piecing together spells and rituals from the diagrams as best he could the actual power eluded him. No one had taught him to read, so as much as he could replicate the symbols and steal the components the actual instructions were lost on him.

It all came to a head when the wizard finally found him alone in a warehouse where Sebastian had covered every available surface with the contents of the grimoire. Though impressed with the boy's ability to recreate it this was vastly outweighed by his desire for his grimoire to be returned to him. Exercising his power the wizard tossed Sebastian around with spells taking his frustration out on him, taunting the boy as he did. In desperation Sebastian tried to make good on the threats but couldn't. Defeated and injured he had nothing left within him but to cry.

As he cried the wizard taunted him one more time "you will never be a wizard boy, you lack the spark of magic." With a wave of his hand the wizard took back his grimoire and then with another erased all of Sebastian's work. The wizard's mistake was that Sebastian's tears

were not of pain or sorrow as he thought, but of frustration.

The wizard was found dead ten years later, frozen and naked in the snow on the other side of the world. An investigation would find that the wizard was the victim of a teleportation circle with his manor stripped bare of all his belongings.

Personality

Sebastian is a master manipulator, and worse, he is well aware of this. More than happy to use the people around him to further his ends, Sebastian will often come off as pleasant and a fast friend only to abandon those he no longer has a use for. His passion is for magical items and his mind is forever bent on increasing his collection of more and more powerful items.

Few know him on a personal level but most in his employ are aware that he has a sister, with whom he shares an uneasy and rather impersonal relationship. Despite this he treats his subordinates well, if disposable. Many who have been in his employ for a long time have come to know the secret to longevity is to continue being useful and making peace with the fact that to him, you are just another tool. Fortunately he treats his tools well.

Honor to him is something, like most things, a tool to be used. If it is useful to be thought of as honorable, then that is how he'll appear and for him it works the other way as well. In this he shows one of his most dangerous personality traits, that of an emotional and social chameleon. This makes his true emotional trait inscrutable to most and makes his motivations and goals even harder to decipher.

Legend

To most Sebastian Polik is the subject of papers and gossip, a thief that targets the rich and powerful. In truth his motivations are not so noble, his childhood left him with a taste for magic and having mastered the use of magical items sought more and more powerful ones. It was usually just that they were in the hands of the rich.

Pursued by people the world over Sebastian continues to succeed in heist after heist. Museums, vaults, other planes, burial chambers, sacred sites, it doesn't matter to him. Neither do the people who he hires to assist in his schemes, often leaving them to be

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captured or worse, as he escapes with another stolen item.

Those who have managed to corner him have found he doesn't go down easily. His mastery of magical items makes him not only hard to keep in one spot, but gives him an arsenal of tools he is more than happy to use to ensure his escape. Favoring teleportation magic and sigil circles, more than one group have thought that they'd captured him only to find themselves trapped.

The Mystic Network

Though Sebastian himself is self-serving he is smart enough to know that a network of subordinates to call upon is important for his schemes to succeed. From bribed up nobles and judges to an army of informants and henchmen, Sebastian continues to not only evade the law but also keep himself protected. Once again, he pays well and it's not unusual for people to seek out being recruited into his criminal enterprise.

Those in the good graces of this network have a ready means of gaining information and sometimes access to contacts most are locked out from. As his main concern is the acquisition and trafficking of magical items these contacts tend to specialize in those items and it's not unusual for magic users to make up a good amount of his organization. Whether he is jealous of their innate ability with magic or not is unknown, which is intentional, as it keeps them scared of him.

The Senders

Named after the *sending* spell, this group of individuals act as the information network for Sebastian. While most spy networks will utilize mundane means of moving information around the Senders almost exclusively use magic. This specialization not only makes them adept at most magical means of communication, utilizing telepathy and divination, but also at keeping this network secure. Most means of magical eavesdropping fail and often those trying will find themselves visited by the more aggressive members of the Senders.

The Guild of Hammers

"When you have a nail, we have a hammer"
~Guild of Hammers colloquialism.

One of Sebastian's more lucrative side projects, the Guild of Hammers was formed as a ready means to supply muscle when he needed it. As his network grew

and his schemes became more wide ranging his need to constantly have them at his beck and call decreased. To stop them being idle, he began to hire out the members to those who could afford it. Sometimes the reimbursement is purely financial, sometimes in exchange for information and other things. Of worthy note when speaking of the Guild of Hammers is that they tend to give employment to people who would usually struggle because of legal problems, whether current or in the past. As honorable as this may be perceived, it's unintentional, people in those situations just have a tendency to say yes to what most people wouldn't.

Legends and Stories

As a thief with a long and storied history, it's not unusual for his exploits, exaggerated or not, to become the stuff of legends. From daring heists to unexpected political power plays, Sebastian has done it all. Although these are sometimes treated with disdain, there are those who swap these tales in whispered voices as if Sebastian is a hero to look up to. Either way he doesn't care as long as it serves his goals.

The Great Airship Heist

An example of his skills even from early on in his career, Sebastian had been hired to steal an experimental engine used for an airship. Not having the resources that he would have later on he opted to steal the engine mid-flight, as docked the airship had far too much security. Awaiting for the race to begin, Sebastian managed to teleport onto the airship mid race and despite resistance was able to teleport the engine away before escaping via the use of a *snappleaf* talisman. It's not known how much he was paid for the engine but it was more than enough to kickstart the rest of his career.

The Stolen City

Perhaps one of his most audacious crimes ever committed was Sebastian's theft of the wandering city of Balayo. The city, built on the back of one of the wandering colossi, was known for being unassailable and Sebastian was hired to steal whatever it was that allowed the leaders of the city to control the colossus. Not wanting to turn down the challenge and curious about it himself he took the job. He achieved the heist through a simple trap, preparing years in advance he awaited the city and stepping into his trap it was transported to a demiplane he had set up previously. The city captured in a lightless plane with no way to get supplies he ransomed it back to the leaders to get what he had been hired to do. What happened, from that

point till the six months later when it reappeared is the subject of rumor. What is known is that the city had new leadership and Sebastian had disappeared.

The Taken Halo

Perhaps what the strangest stories surrounding Sebastian was the situation that was his one attempt at retirement. Having found himself in control of a thieves guild, he took it upon himself to steal perhaps the most unattainable of items, an angel's halo. The exact details of how he achieved this is unknown but it involved the marriage to the leader of a necromancer cult by the name of Cordette to turn the city into a necropolis and annoy the church enough to declare a crusade. Through some clever political maneuvering that surprised many, Sebastian managed to position the army of a neighboring city between himself and the oncoming crusade. Convinced the army was sent to stop them the crusaders tore through the army leaving the defeated soldiers in their wake. By the time the church and the crusade had realized their mistake, Sebastian was already behind the archangel who had been summoned to lead the crusade. Then as the rituals binding it to the material plane began to break, he took a hold of the angel's halo as it was pulled back to heaven leaving the thief with his prize. Having pulled off the theft, the halo in his possession, and in control of what was now a powerful necropolis and a thankful neighbor, Sebastian made the announcement that he would be retiring to focus on his new position. It didn't last...

Building a Campaign

Benefactor or antagonist, Sebastian's exploits make him perfect as the financier of a less than morally good party or as someone to pursue in his wake as he steals artifact after artifact.

In Pursuit of the Thief

The most obvious campaign to pursue involving Sebastian is of course the one in which you're trying to apprehend him. His reputation is such that he has no shortage of enemies and despite his best efforts they continue to pursue him. Likewise, he doesn't consider the ownership or meaning behind the items he takes and so it might be just another prize for his collection; to others it can be an important historical artifact of great cultural significance. Direct confrontation with the man will have him retreat to the shadows once more, so sending a team to take him down makes more sense. This kind of campaign favors a more good-aligned party because although he may be seen as a folk hero to some

his thefts have led to widespread tragedy more than once. Conversely considering the price on his head Sebastian makes for a tempting target even for those with not so good intentions.

Due to the network of informants at his command, setting the party on this kind of campaign would require them to have some sought of benefactors. Not having one would lead to a quick end at the hands of the Guild of Hammers unless the party had significant resources of their own. To begin with though this kind of campaign it's best to start with a retrieval of a stolen item, something of significance to the local area that vastly outweighs any magical power it might have. This will set the party on the idea that Sebastian is a petty thief, exceptionally good as he may be, uncaring of the ramifications of his actions. For this first adventure though it's best if Sebastian is not present but his presence should be felt, those holding the item won't back down because the only thing they fear more than their own deaths is Sebastian's displeasure.

Building encounters in this kind of campaign should be a series of foiling robberies and retrieving stolen artifacts. A good balance between skill based investigation and combat against Sebastian's network should make up the bulk but with the magical items and artifacts at their disposal it would not be unusual to throw summoned creatures at the heroes (such as elementals and other extra planar creatures) to mix things up. As for the actual combatants the majority of the Guild of Hammers are warriors not known for their subtlety, they aren't hired to think but as the name suggests to hit things that they're told too. That's not to say there isn't variety amongst them but keep in mind they are mostly glorified sellswords. As for the Senders, in combat they play an interesting part as they are casters specializing in divination and enchantment. Not known for their outright aggression in combat they are more inclined to use the magical items in their possession or empower whoever is hired to guard them. It's a good idea to name a couple of the members of both groups as leaders so as to give the players something to pursue throughout the campaign on a smaller perspective to that of Sebastian.

With that in mind, every victory should lead them closer and closer to Sebastian. Not just in means of confronting him directly but in his connection to the crimes the party foils. To begin with having him largely disconnected should be fine with many degrees of separation but as the heroes close in the degrees of separation should lessen to the point where they are interacting with thefts that he is directly involved with, even if he escapes in the final moments. This will help

with a feeling of progress amongst the party but more to the point Sebastian is a frustrating enemy to deal with and giving the party some wins will help with those frustrations.

Flustered and Frustrated

It can get to the point where the players will get a bit too frustrated with the constant shell game Sebastian is prone to put people through. GM's should be conscious of this and when it starts to get to that point don't be afraid to let the players succeed. Let him be captured and arrested, he has methods to escape regardless with either bribes to high ranking officials or escapes from the inside of a prison. Be careful with this as well, as overusing it can also lead to frustrated players, a good balance is important. Using new ways of avoiding accountability for Sebastian will keep the players on their toes and reveal the breadth of resources at Sebastian's disposal, and avoid the feeling of rinse and repeat that comes with reusing the same story arc resolution every time. As always check in with players and try to make sure everyone is having a fun time.

Hammers for the Nails

From the other side of things, Sebastian's network provides an opportunity for enterprising young adventurers who don't like to think about what they're sent to do. Either as members of the Guild of Hammers, sent by the Senders, or as outside contractors there's plenty to be done and to be stolen. It's not unusual for those in the employ of the network to be sent tomb raiding to investigate or retrieve lost treasures. Being sent on these kinds of missions is quite generous, the Network may only want one item from an entire treasure horde, leaving the players to do with what they want with the rest. Lots of success leads to attention from those higher up the chain and even to Sebastian himself and what might start off as interim contracts can lead to consistent work, for better or ill.

For this kind of campaign it should be combat based dungeon crawls and skill based heists but all very mission based with the players being sent to grab specific items. This lends well to variety as you can have the players sent practically anywhere to achieve these missions and with changing environments and opponents. The Network has the resources to send them anywhere, they just need the people to do it. As mission based adventures tend to be pretty straight forward in terms of roleplay most skill based checks outside of the missions will mostly lend towards looking into the places and things they are being sent to do.

As their successes mount however you can change who they get their missions from quite easily and should be a sign of the increased trust the organization has in them till eventually they are receiving missions from Sebastian himself. When it gets to this point Sebastian is, for the most part, a good boss. Those he finds useful he treats well and as discussed earlier ensures they are well looked after. This will give the party a sense of progression separate from loot and levels. Ending these kinds of campaigns can be tricky but having them joined by Sebastian on a grand heist to retrieve an item and cement his power and, by extension the party, can act as a significant achievement. Likewise having them face down a powerful enemy poised to take down their boss could grant them untold favor and riches setting them up for life.

Hammer Toss

Despite how gregarious it might appear for players in the kind of campaign where they are working for him, he will toss aside people if he feels like he needs to. A last minute betrayal or setting up the players to take a fall especially at higher levels is always an option. Such a twist can lead to changing the tone of the adventure as players could quickly turn to wanting revenge against the man who betrayed them so GM's considering this should be aware of this. That said who better to bring him down then someone he has already been deep within his organization.

The Other Team

Rumors of Sebastian's exploits are plentiful, but what if that's all they are? Surely he can't be the master thief the stories claim him to be. Maybe it's time to take him and his precious Network down a couple pegs. In this kind of campaign the party is pitted against Sebastian not in a way to take him down but to supplant him. If not to prove that the party is a better team of thieves than to take over as being in charge of his organization.

Adventures in this kind of campaign will mostly have the players performing infiltrations, scouting, intelligence gathering, and heists. Finding out what he might want and taking it before he can. This will result in a lot of heist offs where the party may be trying to steal something at the same time as a team sent from Sebastian. This means that it will be light on combat as the focus will be on roleplaying and utilizing skills to succeed. That said, direct conflict with the Guild of Hammers is assured, even if they get ahead, and learning to get around the Senders will be an early goal. So combat will be present, if a bit lighter.

Something to keep in mind with this is that a lot of this will be very spy vs spy with a priority on intrigue and having to navigate the underbelly of society as a means to get to Sebastian. As such those on the more lawful side of alignments will struggle as a lot of it will come down to the old adage of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. Some of the friends they will find in this way are not to be trusted and many of them will turn on the party, so betrayal from allies is something to keep in mind.

Low Level

When at lower levels Sebastian might not necessarily be unknown to the party and like stated earlier he can act as a patron for the party. Until they prove themselves, he treats most people as below his worry or even as tools. Once they have proven themselves, it’s entirely possible that he will start to take an interest in the players. If he does, have them have a meeting with him, he knows his way around people and will happily speak with them and come off as charming and affable. Even using him as the means with which they are rewarded such as him gifting the players low level items from his own collection. When going against him Sebastian will be mostly a ghost, players aren’t worth his attention and will be constantly left well in his wake dealing with the aftermath of his actions.

Mid Level

When players start to reach the midpoint of a campaign involving Sebastian it’s advised that he’ll be starting to more closely assess the players. Figuring out who they are and what they are capable of, if he can’t bring them to being of use to him he’ll start to make moves to bring them down while keeping his own hands clean. If they are working for Sebastian, continuing to push them to more and more difficult heists and other missions with members of his own organization being able to call them out as no return missions. If working against him, he’ll often begin to figure out ways to frame the players, getting them to be found guilty and removed as a problem in a way that is largely disconnected from him.

High Level

When working with Sebastian at high levels the players will be getting their orders and missions directly from him if not already. He’ll of course recognize their ability but will be keeping a wary eye on them and privately questioning their motivations. When working against Sebastian, the players will certainly be on his radar and taking them out will be quickly rising to the top of his priority list, especially if he has an upcoming heist that

he feels the players will interfere with. More to the point he’ll become more evasive and pinning him down will require a monumental effort on the side of the players. Sebastian has a lifetime or more of experience evading capture and he won’t be bested easily.

Sebastian might also come up as a potential ally when dealing with another nemesis, his abilities make him well suited to infiltrating or gathering information on other nemeses, as well as his arsenal being well suited to surviving a confrontation with ones such as Mikael or Hoonordel that might otherwise overwhelm someone of his strength. Make no mistake however, he will want something, and the price for his services is never low.

Building Encounters

The first thing to understand about Sebastian in any combat situation is that he always has an escape plan and with the magical equipment at his disposal his methods of escape are extremely hard to get around. Teleportation and plane shifting are common methods of escape and even walking through walls. Doubling down on this, in a direct confrontation, Sebastian will rarely fight alone, employing minions to interfere and to assist in his escape. These will take the form of minions he has paid or those he has summoned through magic but the priority of their tactics should always be to facilitate Sebastian getting away.

The second part has a lot to do with his information gathering and his magical arsenal. If Sebastian is caught in a direct confrontation, it can be sure that he knows who he is going up against, including all their weaknesses and strengths. As such, although we have provided some items that he is known for using, we encourage you to pick items that will target the heroes he is going up against. Don’t be afraid to equip him with wands and staves that have spells that will surprise them. Additionally if he has the time to prepare for the encounter he will have also prepared his environment, trapping it with magical hazards and potentially *glyphs of warding* as he has done before. Finally he’s not afraid to kill but he’s also not one to relish it, he is calm, clinical and more concerned with saving himself then taking down an opponent. He may suffer a risk if the potential reward is great enough however, using his minions to stall the party while he attains whatever artifact it is that he is seeking.

STOLEN BOONS

Sebastian has helped to ensure his own survival by stealing from some of the most powerful people in the multiverse.

An experimental elixir that Hoonordel was working on, mixed with a little protean trickery permanently allows Sebastian to instinctively move his vital organs out of harm's way. Of course, the alchemist isn't even aware that Sebastian was ever close enough to steal his experiments.

Perhaps more impressive though, Sebastian has stolen the voice of a powerful psychopomp, which he has bound to his soul, making him immune to magic that would immediately smite him and send him on his path to judgment in death.

SEBASTIAN POLIK

CREATURE 22

UNIQUE NE MEDIUM HE/HIM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +43; greater darkvision (*eyes of passage*)

Languages Common, 8 other Languages appropriate to the campaign, and a secret language he shares with his followers and contacts.

Skills Acrobatics +37, Arcana +45, Athletics +37, Diplomacy +37, Deception +41, Occultism +43, Stealth +45, Society +42, Survival +37 Thievery +45

Str +7, **Dex** +9, **Con** +8, **Int** +10, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +9

Perfect Trick Item Despite not having any magic of his own Sebastian has an uncanny gift for using magical items of all kinds. When using a magic item Sebastian uses Trick Magic Item as a free action automatically succeeding the skill check required. Sebastian's spell DC for tricked items that require a spell DC is 42, and spell attacks with such items are made with a +34 bonus.

Scrivener Sebastian can Craft arcane and occult magical scrolls by copying spells from spellbooks and grimoires using Arcana or Occultism instead of Crafting. If he makes a scroll from a spell stored in a grimoire that would be affected by the grimoire's magic, the grimoire's special effect is applied to the scroll as well.

Wand Retainer When Sebastian overcharges a wand, he automatically succeeds the flat check to keep the wand from being destroyed.

Items +3 *major striking dagger* (x2), *dagger* (x4), *eyes of passage*, *the shadow dancer's coat*, *the haunted bracers*, *vest of blasphemy*, *wand of dimension door* (5th), *wand of false life* (9th), *wand of heal* (8th); At least 4 other magic items of up to 20th level appropriate to the situation, half of which should be consumables.

AC 48; **Fort** +36, **Ref** +43, **Will** +39

HP 392 (plus 31 temporary Hit Points from *false life*); **Immunities** death effects, good, precision

Reactive Strike ➤

Diviner's Bane (arcane, magical) Sebastian, through a great deal of exploitation is under the constant effects of a 9th rank *nondetection* spell, if this spell is counteracted, Sebastian can resume it ten minute exploration activity with the concentration trait.

Opportune Spell ➤ **Trigger** A creature within Sebastian's melee reach is affected by a spell from one of his allies; **Effect** Sebastian Strikes the triggering creature, if the creature failed its save against the spell or was the target of a successful spell attack, they are off-guard to this Strike.

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +41 [+37/+33] (agile, finesse, versatile P), **Damage** 4d4+17 slashing

Ranged ♦ dagger +41 [+37/+33] (agile, finesse, thrown 50 feet, versatile P), **Damage** 4d4+17 Slashing

Mine Now Sebastian is known for his skills as a thief, in particular when it comes to magical implements. When attempting to Disarm a grimoire, staff, scroll, or wand he uses Thievery instead of Athletics, and treats successes as critical successes. Sebastian may Steal from creatures that are on guard—even in combat—though doing so is two actions instead of one. He may attempt to Steal a grimoire, staff, scroll, or wand even if its bulk is not negligible.

Quick Implement ♦♦ Sebastian draws a scroll, staff or wand and then casts a spell from that item as long as the spell takes two actions or less to cast.

Sneak Attack Sebastian deals 4d6 extra precision damage to off-guard creatures.

Spellbound Surprise (mental) Sebastian always weaves a little slight of hand and trickery into spell-work. Whenever Sebastian Casts a Spell from an item, creatures that fail their saves against the spell (or that he succeeds a spell attack roll against) are off-guard against him until the end of their next turn.



A Master Thief's Tools

Much of what Sebastian has stolen over the years has been at the bequest of others either for favors or for profit. However there have been some items in his collection he has chosen to keep, not simply as trinkets and trophies but as additions to his tool kit. Although these are by no means the only ones he has access to, the four listed here are common to his kit and most often equipped. Below are some rarer and unique items Sebastian has attained, though he is often equipped with all manner of wands, scrolls, staves which he has others charge for him, and more esoteric items.

The Shadow Dancer's Coat

Taken from the corpse of an assassin sent to kill him, Sebastian immediately took to the coat learning its abilities quickly. He may not be an assassin but many of their tools work just as well for a thief.

THE SHADOW DANCER'S COAT ITEM 17

RARE **CONJURATION** **EVOCATION** **MAGICAL** **SHADOW**

Price 15,000 gp

Usage worn shoulders; **Bulk** L

This darkened coat looks nondescript in full light but as the light dims it seems to gather the shadows around it, this grants the wearer a +3 item bonus to Stealth checks as well as concealment in dim light—even against those with low-light vision or darkvision—and are invisible while in darkness. If you use a hostile action while invisible in darkness, this invisibility ends and you do not become invisible in darkness again for 10 minutes.

Activate ♦♦ command; **Frequency** once per minute; **Requirements** You are in dim light or darkness; **Effect** you cast the *shadow jump* focus spell without needing to expend a focus point.

The Haunted Bracers

At one point Sebastian was told that those he killed would forever haunt him. He took that to heart and had a pair of bracers made to contain the souls of those that die by his hand. Their spirits haunting the throwing knives held within and unwittingly doing his bidding, empowering them.

HAUNTED BRACERS ITEM 12

UNCOMMON **EVOCATION** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL**

Price 1,800 gp

Usage worn bracers

Daggers held within the *haunted bracers* gain the effects of a *returning* rune and increase the range of their thrown trait to 50 feet in addition to any other runes and traits the dagger may have. Due to the spiritual nature of these enhancements, any bonuses to AC that would apply against

spirits or undead—such as the effects of a *consecrate* ritual treat undead as anathema—apply to attacks made with daggers enhanced by the *haunted bracers*.

The Vest of Blasphemy

Sebastian's "retirement gift" from a craftsman of dubious origin is made from the hide of celestial beasts and the skin of angels tanned dark. The quality is immaculate, and few would discern its materials without a great deal of research or familiarity.

VEST OF BLASPHEMY ITEM 20

RARE **ABJURATION** **INVESTED** **MAGICAL**

Price 70,000 gp

Usage worn armor; **Bulk** 2

Custom made for Sebastian after he attempted retirement and replicated rarely by vile crafters, this +3 *greater resilient leather armor* is made from the remains of celestial creatures. An act so blasphemous angels are repelled by it and fiends find themselves powerless before the angelic attire. The *vest of blasphemy* prevents all attempts to detect the wearer's alignment and makes them immune to alignment based damage regardless of the source.

The Eyes of Passage

Sebastian once sponsored a promising young artificer who had ideas that he knew would serve him well. Her magnum opus were a set of spectacles that could pierce solid objects, and make one ignore their presence on occasion. She still works for the master thief in secret, even now.

EYES OF PASSAGE ITEM 12

RARE **DIVINATION** **TRANSMUTION** **MAGICAL**

Price 2,000 gp

Usage worn eyepiece; **Bulk** L

Stolen on one of his many heists, these black tinted, circular glasses grant the wearer a +2 item bonus to perception checks, greater darkvision, and also limited ability to see and walk through walls.

Activate ♦ envision; **Frequency** once per minute; **Effect** you see through a surface no thicker than six inches as if it were transparent. This sight cannot pierce adamantite or lead, regardless of thickness and is brief, allowing you to Seek once using sight alone and see any obviously apparent details.

Activate ♦♦ envision, interact; **Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You peer through a solid surface within 10 feet that is no thicker than 6 inches, you may then Stride through the surface as if it were ephemeral provided there is no adamantite or lead barring your path. You may Climb, Fly, or Swim instead as appropriate to pass through the surface, provided you are able to take that action.

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