

Dragon



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How Did We Get into This, and What Are We Going to Do Now that We're Here?

GUEST EDITORIAL BY KIM MOHAN

This issue of Dragon Magazine marks a major step for Wizards of the Coast. With it, we have bid farewell to the world of the print magazine and have entered the arena of electronic periodical publishing. We have activated a new branch of our operation, D&D Insider. We are giving notice to the rest of the electronic publishing industry that we have arrived with a vengeance, with a mission to fulfill.

Those of you who have been around the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS world even longer than I have might recognize the preceding words. That long and elaborate title, and most of the words in that first paragraph, appeared at the start of the editor's column in the first issue of *Dragon Magazine*, way back in June 1976. I've taken the liberty of updating the first paragraph to reflect the new reality of issue number 360, here in 2007, but I left the title alone because it works just as well today as it did back then.

In that column, editor Tim Kask set forth what amounted to a mission statement for the new magazine: again in his words, "to publish the best magazine devoted to Sword & Sorcery, Fantasy, Science Fiction and Role Playing gaming."

It's ironic, and at the same time understandable, how little that mission has changed in the intervening years. *Dragon* has been the best in the business ever since it came into being, through a succession of different versions and editions of the D&D game, through a cavalcade of editors and editorial visions, through the evolution of a hobby that began as a fringe activity and is now woven inextricably into the fabric of contemporary society.

Now the magazine and its readers are entering a new era. If you're reading this, you already pretty much know what the deal is. As for the answers to the two-part question in the title:

How Did We Get into This? Well, I won't belabor the obvious by telling you how electronic publishing works, and I won't waste your time by going into the details of why this new method of magazine delivery is better than shipping printed copies to postal mailboxes and retail outlets. We got into this as a natural outgrowth of the way most information reaches its audience nowadays: Practically every entertainment venue in the modern world now has an online component—D&D and *Dragon Magazine* are no different, nor should they be. Nothing can take the place of playing the game around a table with your friends or flipping through the pages of a printed magazine article, and of course both of those activities will always be possible. At the same time, our ability to reach you through your computer—and your ability to communicate with us, and with other players, the same way—opens up possibilities that no one could have imagined in 1976.

What Are We Going to Do Now that We're Here? The best way I can answer this question is to refer you back to the mission statement that's just as applicable today as it was thirty-some years ago. The people who have produced *Dragon Magazine* over the years have approached the task from different angles, with the benefit of varying levels of technology, but they have all shared the same goal: To do the best possible job of giving the readers what they want, what they need, and what will keep them coming back for more.

Striving to achieve that goal is what has kept *Dragon Magazine* vital and valuable for more than three decades and well over three hundred issues, and it's what will keep us going for untold articles and issues yet to come. The more things change, the more they remain the same.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KIM MOHAN is a former editor of *Dragon Magazine* who remembers the days when pages were made by sticking strips of type down on pieces of cardboard, and really cool-looking headlines were produced by slicing out individual letters from adhesive sheets. He does not remember the days when each subscriber's copy of the magazine was hand-delivered by someone called a mailman, but that might just be because he's getting on in years.

Designing 4th Edition: The Lead Designers Speak Up!

LIVING AROUND D&D

BY ROB HEINSOO

FIRST LEVEL GAMER: ORIGINAL D&D

I got into D&D in 1974 by ordering the original three booklets in the brown box from a wargaming catalog. I was ten years old, living in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and I was the only person I knew who had read the *Lord of the Rings*, much less heard of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.

The D&D combat rules went over my head. I'd never seen a twenty-sided die (or any other die that didn't have six sides), so I jury-rigged a melee system based on the hand-to-hand combat rules from *The Wargame*, a book of Napoleonic miniatures rules my Dad had picked up for me at the Fort Leavenworth book store. Incomplete understanding didn't lessen D&D's impact—I was hooked on roleplaying games for life.

A few dungeon levels later, my family moved to Oregon and I'd figured out the D&D rules, though I still hadn't encountered a d20. That changed when I tried running a dungeon for a couple grad school-age gamers who balked at drawing random numbers out of a blue plastic Chitty-Chitty Bang Bang cup. After recovering from the embarrassment, I branched out from D&D into most of the other early rpgs: *Boot Hill*, *Metamorphosis Alpha*, *Monsters! Monsters!*, *Bunnies and Burrows*, *Knights of the Round Table* from Lou Zocchi, and *The Arduin Grimoire* (more on Arduin later). I didn't make a huge distinction between RPGs and wargames in those days, and my RPG-related thoughts were equally influenced by constant playing of *Melee/Wizard*, *Ogre*, the *Starguard* miniatures game, and a somewhat god-mode fantasy miniatures game I'd created to use all my favorite minis at the same time.

MID-LEVEL ADVENTURES: AD&D

By the time AD&D came out, I had tinkered with enough game systems that I was impatient with AD&D's claim to be the un-modifiable system everyone should be playing with. I was more interested in other rpgs—I only ran AD&D once.

I did play AD&D quite a bit while I was in high school, in a campaign with college friends. The DM was named Joe, I think he still runs games in Eugene, Oregon. Back then he was running modules involving temples and giants. Joe had a particular talent for enabling the spellcasting members of the party to rival the monsters as threats to the PCs' survival.

MISSING AN EDITION

I skimmed through the 2nd Edition D&D rulebook and decided I liked the games I was already interested in a lot more. I didn't see 2nd Edition D&D as an improvement over *Runequest* or *Champions*, so I gave it a miss.

Now skip ahead many years via many other non-D&D game systems.

THE REAL GOOD THING: 3RD EDITION

Third Edition brought me back to D&D. I playtested 3E as part of Jonathan Tweet's Wednesday night gaming group. By this time, 1999, I'd worked at a few game companies. Playing 3E, I was ecstatic that D&D had surfaced ahead of the other RPGs I'd loved. This new edition of D&D didn't hurt my head, it was just fun, and "good for thinking." I could appreciate the design decisions behind the most important features of the game.

Jonathan's Wednesday night game turned into the best RPG campaign of my life, and I was privy to his thoughts as the 3rd Edition rules coalesced into their final form. Before the process was complete, in early 2000, I got hired onto the D&D Worlds Team at Wizards of the Coast. I was at less of a disadvantage than most new employees because I only knew the 3rd Edition system, not the 2nd Edition system that everyone else was having trouble forgetting.

I didn't work on D&D for long. I moved over to the card side of Wizards' R&D department, where I worked on several trading card games before drifting back into the D&D orbit as part of the **Chainmail** minis team. From there I ended up running the **D&D Miniatures** line and designed *Three-Dragon Ante* in my spare time. I'd been playing 3E and then 3.5 all along, as well as running my own idiosyncratic D&D campaign.

And that leads us into the topic for the end of this article: Other than the 3E *Players Handbook*, the D&D book that has had the most influence on the way I think about D&D is *The*



ROB'S OTHER INFLUENCES

I've been an omnivorous gamer, with one odd exception I'll mention at the end of this note.

My favorite non-D&D roleplaying games are *Feng Shui* (a mélange of all Hong Kong action films), *Over the Edge* (conspiracy and fringe play on a polyglot Mediterranean island), and Greg Stafford's world of Glorantha as it appeared in *Runequest* and *Heroquest*. Cults of Prax, a *Runequest* supplement that detailed the religious powers, hierarchies, and myths of a wasteland section of Glorantha, was probably the single most influential RPG product in my life, given that it set me on the path to study anthropology.

Speaking of life influences, I might not have set out on the path of the game designer without Lee Gold's *Alarums & Excursions* fanzine. *Arduin* introduced me to A&E, and A&E's free-ranging RPG conversations and arguments introduced me to most of the people I worked with or for when I first started working as a freelance gamer-guy.

My favorite miniatures games are *De Bellis Antiquitas* (simple twelve-unit ancients warfare, usually abbreviated as DBA) and the *Great Battles of History* series from GMT Games. Yeah, technically the *Great Battles of History* series are board games, but the counters play like minis on a board, so let's call 'em as they play.

Other board games I like best include *Up Front*, *WizWar*, the *Lord of the Rings* cooperative boardgame, *Ingenious*, *Knightmare Chess*, and *Twilight Struggle*. I haven't decided whether GMT's new *Combat Commander* WWII tactical game is going to supplant *Advanced Squad Leader* in my affections; but I hardly ever get around to actually playing ASL, so *Combat Commander* has that in its favor.

The exception to my omnivorous gaming habits? Computer games. I did enough solitaire gaming as a kid, so playing against a computer alone, or even in MMORPGs, is something I can tolerate only for a short time before I spring out of my chair looking for something more creative to do. I prefer face-to-face interaction. I'm aware this could change if I get back to creating computer games, but for now I keep track of electronic gaming by watching other people play. Every couple months I play an hour or two of *World of Warcraft* and about as much *Combat Mission*, but that ain't much compared to the rest of my comrades.

Arduin Grimoire. So much so that the homebrew 3E campaign I ran for years was set in my own version of *Arduin*. And my 4th Edition campaign is headed in the same direction.

THE ARDUIN WHAAA?

Back in the days when **Greyhawk**, **Blackmoor**, and **Eldritch Wizardry** were stapled-together booklets published by TSR and full of strange variant rules for D&D, Dave Hargrave's stapled-together *Arduin Grimoire* was full of even stranger variant rules. Highlights included long lists of random special abilities for dozens of character classes, dangerous critical hit and fumble

tables, ridiculous monsters like the Kill Kittens, a gazetteer to the 666 levels of the Abyss, and bizarrely evocative character classes like Star-Powered Mages.

The *Arduin Grimoire* and its follow-ups (*Welcome to Skull Tower*, *The Runes of Doom*) never claimed to be D&D supplements. Instead, Hargrave and his fans said that *Arduin* was its own game. But you couldn't play *Arduin* without using concepts, rules, character classes, and mechanics inherited from D&D.

It wasn't *Arduin*'s mechanics that made an impression on me. As solid game design, *Arduin* didn't have all that much to offer. But as inspiration for lifting your own fantasy roleplaying game way above the ordinary, *Arduin* rocked. It shaped my concept of how cool D&D should be.

My current homebrew *Arduin* is an interdimensional city ruled by representatives of twelve major races whose roles in the city government are determined every three years by lottery. If the dwarves land the Nexus Diplomacy post while the drow (they prefer to be known as the Silver Folk) are in charge of Urban Defense, you know everyone's going to be in for a rough three years.

Meanwhile, out in the hinterlands, my Arduinian dungeons are terrifying supernatural eruptions that spiral in toward the city, growing stronger and deeper the farther they travel. If a dungeon survives long enough to surface inside the city, it becomes a permanent feature of the landscape. The citizens only have to look up at Skull Tower's red eye sockets to know just how bad that can be, so adventurers are treated as somewhat valuable members of society, so long as they stick to their job of depopulating and looting dungeons and don't get too involved in city politics.

Do these ideas in my campaign have anything to do with the text and background details of Dave Hargrave's *Arduin*? No, not as far as I know. Nor have the rules and mechanics inside the various *Arduin* books penetrated the 4th Edition D&D rules system. But the spirit of wild possibilities that animated the *Arduin* rules has influenced my design perspective while working on 4th Edition. We don't have wacky tables of random abilities for each grouping of character class, but we've got powers and abilities for each class and race that I'm not going to have to doctor-up to fit into my home campaign.

THE TIES THAT BIND

BY ANDY COLLINS

In August of 1981, my life changed forever because of a single birthday present from my Uncle Ralph. I certainly didn't expect it at the time (nor, I'm sure, did Uncle Ralph), but it's safe to say that no single object has ever affected the course of my lifetime as much as that 9"x12" cardboard box with a picture of adventurers busting in on a dragon defending its piles of gold.

Months went by before the first time I actually played the game. Not only was I unaware of anyone else who played the game, I'd never even heard of it (or of roleplaying games in general) before opening up that box. Frankly, a youth of *Monopoly*

and Risk just doesn't prepare you for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. But I was already a diehard fantasy fan, having devoured *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* while classmates were still struggling on spelling tests. So I kept coming back to that little blue rule-book, trying to figure out how you could have a game without a board or playing pieces.

Finally, however, I just decided that we'd stumble through and figure it out as we went along. So one Saturday I sat down to roll up characters with my brother Greg and our friend Kurt, and I led them through the *Keep on the Borderlands*. Those old character sheets have long-since crumbled to dust, but many of the names still linger in my memory: Bard (the character's name, not his class...we didn't have the *Player's Handbook* yet), Garn, Pentegarn, Lester, Krylla...these heroes and many more braved tunnels full of orcs, hobgoblins, kobolds, skeletons, and of course a maze with a minotaur.

I remember that the adventure's rumor chart provided a (false) clue to the characters indicating that the goblins' shout of "bree-yark" meant "Hey, Rube!" which, to a 10-year-old in Olympia, Washington, was just as alien a phrase as it had been in the original Goblin language.

I remember the characters running into a (way out of their league) black dragon somewhere in the wilderness, which they managed to kill by strangling it with a rope wrapped

ANDY'S OTHER INFLUENCES

The #1 influence on my 4th Edition design and development work has been my own D&D campaigns.

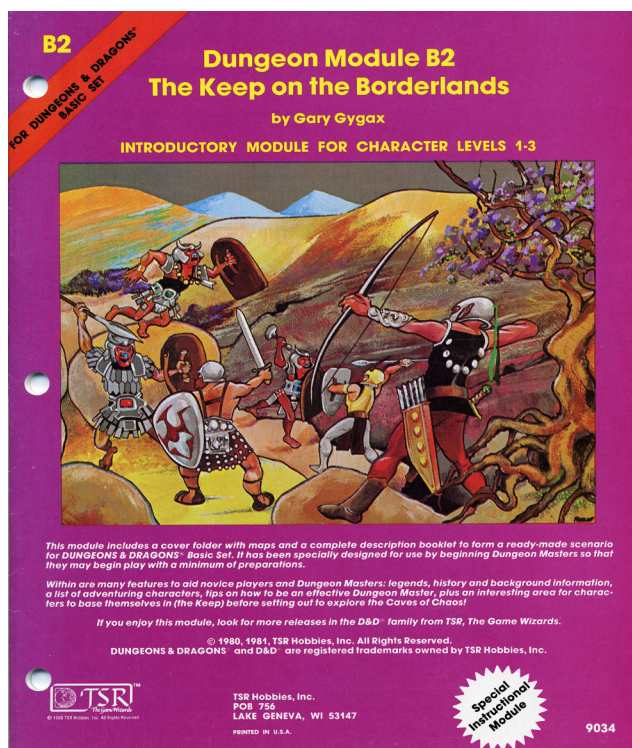
I don't care how good a game designer you think you are. You can't write good games without playing them. And you can't learn what works or doesn't work in D&D without playing the game. I've been playing in and/or DMing an average of three campaigns at a time for the last eight years, and that hands-on experience can't be duplicated by anything else.

I often cite the "thirteen encounters in one day" session from my "Greyhawk Dungeons" campaign as an example of what D&D can be without such strict limitations on daily resources. It became a touchstone for our discussions about character powers, as well as on encounter and adventure design.

Playing in my brother Greg's "Island" campaign, and then in his *Red Hand of Doom* campaign, I learned firsthand how useful the concept of character role can be—and how frustrating the game can be when you try to fight against it.

Most recently, the finale of my *Eberron* campaign featured several encounters that each included ten or more monsters facing off against a half-dozen PCs. Under 3rd Edition rules, these would each have been a 4-hour battle royale. However, after re-imagining the foes with 4th Edition design guidelines for monsters, each fight took less than half that time (and would've been even faster had the PCs also used 4th Edition rules).

Play the game. It's a simple mantra, and there's really no substitute.



around its neck by the two talking ravens they'd encountered earlier...well, it all made sense to us at the time.

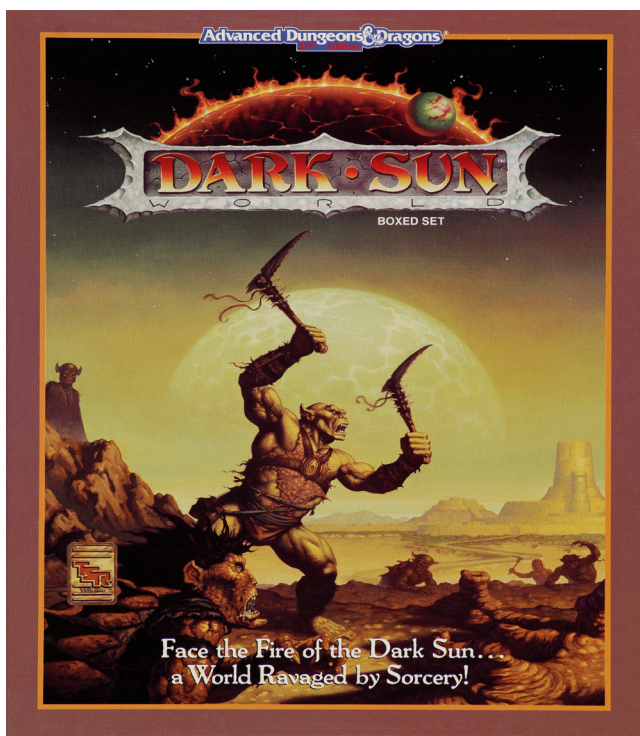
Most of all, I remember 9 hours of the day disappearing without any of us becoming bored, or getting hungry, or maybe even leaving the room at all. Whatever we'd stumbled through was enough to hook me (and my brother) for good.

Kurt played a few more times with us, but ultimately the game didn't quite stick to him the way it did to us. We don't hold it against him...but then, we also don't see him on a monthly basis like we do many of our other childhood friends who still play D&D with us.

Yeah, that's right—I still game with folks who started playing with me 20 years ago (or more). That's one of the benefits of folks staying relatively close to home (and, I'd like to believe, of me running a kick-ass game). Greg, obviously, has been in my game since the beginning—that's more than 26 years now. Brent joined us when we were in 5th grade together (late 1982). Greg recruited Viet and Marc in '83 or '84. I met Dennis in German class in 1987, and Kevin & Scott in '88 or so. (Until I joined WotC eight years later, they were "the new guys.")

While in college I had to "make do" with an entirely new group of gamers, but one of them followed me back home, and now I run a game for Neil, his childhood buddy Brian, his sister Lindsay, and her husband Mike. (That's right, in this game, the woman brings her SO along, rather than the other way around. That's progress!)

Over the past eleven years I've been fortunate enough to work around a whole pile of gamers, so the group's continued to grow steadily. Joe joined us shortly after I started at Wizards in 1996, and Chris not long after that. Jesse was bold enough to join us in '98 or so; at the time he was a lowly editorial assistant with



Dragon Magazine, but I like to think that our little group gave him the confidence to later become my boss. James Wyatt's the latest co-worker to join my now super-sized group (currently spanning three separate monthly games).

I met Gwendolyn through another D&D game; of course, now she plays in my group as well. She's not the only significant other who games regularly with us these days—we've come a long way since grade school—so we also welcome Adrienne and Amber to our sessions.

Obviously, not every player from the old days is still around. Along the way we also had the pleasure of gaming with Charlie, Garon, Kyle, Michael (whose grandfather vouched for us when the Motel 6 in Spokane wouldn't rent to high-schoolers in town for our very first game convention), Dan (who crumpled up his character sheet and threw it across the room when the medusa petrified him—but keep in mind he was only 10 or 11 at the time), Ken (the undisputed master of the deck of many things), and Robert (“Uh-oh, purple worm!”). Over the years, they drifted away socially, psychologically, or just geographically from the core group...but the group itself survived.

The group's played *Greyhawk* and *FORGOTTEN REALMS*, *Dark Sun* and *Dragonlance*, *Planescape* and *Ravenloft*. They've delved into just about every dark hole in the ground, from the *Tomb of Horrors* to the *Slave Pits of the Undercity*. They've battled barbarians and beholders, destroyed demons by the dozen to steal the Wand of Orcus, eviscerated evil elves in Erelhei-Cinlu, and ganked giants of every flavor.

It didn't matter what the game was called—Basic, Expert, Companion, Master, Advanced, 2nd Edition, 2nd-with-Player's-Option-books, 3rd Edition, 3.5, “Andy's D&D/Alternity

hybrid that nobody quite understands but let's keep playing anyway”—it was always D&D, and it was always good.

(OK, except for that D&D Immortals boxed set. I think it was kind of metallic gold, but I've suppressed most of my memories of it. What was up with that thing, anyway?)

And now, we're playing 4th Edition. And it's still D&D, and it's definitely good.

Twenty-six years ago, a simple cardboard box held my future inside. I'd like to think that next year a copy of the *Player's Handbook* will hold a similar secret for some lucky 10- or 12-year-old, and that a quarter-century later, he or she might pen an essay just like this one.

I look forward to reading those words (or perhaps having them beamed directly into my cerebral cortex—who knows?). I'll be 62 by then—but of course, I'll still be running D&D games for all my friends!

NO SCHOOL LIKE THE OLD SCHOOL

BY JAMES WYATT

There's something about a new edition of D&D that stirs up a sense of nostalgia about the old ones. Not so much about the mechanics of the old editions—I, for one, have no desire to return to the days when you couldn't play D&D without reference to attack tables, or THAC0 for that matter. I think it's more about remembering the feelings we had while we played D&D back in the old days.

I started playing D&D in 1979, the summer before I started 6th grade. I still remember the time my buddy's magic-user and my ranger took on Yeenoghu (no DM involved; we shared the responsibility of running the demon prince and his hordes of gnolls). The image of the magic-user blasting Yeenoghu with spell after spell while I stood atop an ever-increasing pile of gnoll bodies has stuck with me through all those years.

I remember the smell of the room in the public library where we played sometimes in high school, and the weird adapted combat tables we used when we played in some room on the campus of Cornell University—in middle school. I remember my first exposure to Second Edition, which I had previously resolved not to buy, and how quickly I was won over by the new look and the new rules.

I started working at Wizards of the Coast a few months before the launch of Third Edition. That was an exciting time, though also a bit frantic as we all pitched in to get the books out the door in time. And this is where I start thinking about the nostalgia factor. People were running 3E playtests using old adventures like *Against the Giants* and *Tomb of Horrors*. I dug out *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth* and used it for a game.

As I worked on 4th Edition, I did a lot of looking back to the old days. When we talked about ability scores, I went back to look at how the first *Player's Handbook* defined them. We shared a lot

of laughs around the department looking back at how absurd the old psionics rules were, and had great fun explaining to one of our younger editors first how THAC0 worked, and then how much of an improvement it was over the previous edition's combat tables. As lead designer of the *Monster Manual*, I frequently looked back at old MMs to see the original design of monsters and how they'd changed over the years.

One of the adventures I kept pulling out was *I1: Dwellers of the Forbidden City*. I have fond—I won't say memories, because I don't remember running it, although the pages of notes stuck between its covers clearly indicate that I did, probably not long after its release in 1981. I have fond impressions of that adventure, probably mostly because it marked the first appearance of yuan-ti.

So one day in a department meeting when we were talking about adventure design, I had a brainstorm. We were talking about what I thought was a really interesting idea: an adventure product that detailed a site in exhaustive detail, and then gave PCs a wide variety of reasons to enter the site and goals to pursue inside. In some ways, *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* is that kind of product: you can go into the castle many times, with different aims in mind, and things will change each time.

But it occurred to me that the *Forbidden City* in which those first yuan-ti dwelled would make a great site for such an adventure. That's really what the first adventure was—it had a main storyline (retrieve the stolen caravan goods and kill the wizard responsible), but then the last two pages of the adventure were other quests that could send you into the city and other ideas for adventures you might have inside. With several different entrances to the city, three main groups of residents,

JAMES'S OTHER INFLUENCES

It's no accident that the site-based adventure model that inspired my plans for the *Forbidden City* campaign sounds a great deal like the instanced dungeons in *World of Warcraft*. I'm playing WoW a lot less than I did for a while, but that is one element of the game's story design that has stuck with me. An instanced dungeon is very much like a D&D dungeon, with a little more realism than the rest of the computer-game world, in that the things you kill stay dead. It's just your party against the monsters, a lot like it is in D&D. (Of course, the main difference is that when you leave an instance and come back, everything is reset to the way it was when you started.)

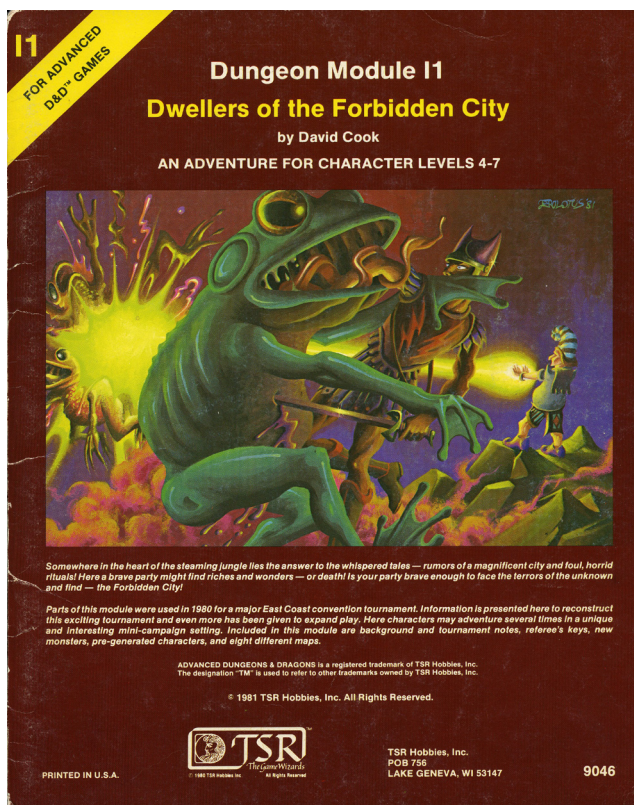
What works well about instanced dungeons in WoW is the quest model. You might spend a while adventuring in the world to pick up a handful of quests that will lead you into Blackfathom Deeps, for example. Then you get a group together and venture in, completing as many of those quests as you can. Inside, you find one or two more quests that lead you back outside the dungeon. Once you leave, you might get some more quests—reasons to go back into the dungeon.

In D&D, that model works even better. When you leave a dungeon and come back, it can change in response to what you've already done. There might be more guards to replace the ones you killed, better prepared for your assault. The mastermind might have moved his secret hideaway, or a new mastermind might have come to take the place of the one you killed. It's that dynamic response to your actions that gives a sense of realism to your D&D adventuring, a sense that your characters occupy a world that works like ours does: Actions have consequences, and you can make a difference.

and mini-dungeons within the ruins, the *Forbidden City* was ripe for that kind of adventure.

So when the department launched into an intensive three-week playtest period in the summer of 2007, I pulled out *I1* and got to work. I had grand visions, but not nearly enough time to implement them. It turned out that three weeks of gaming on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons was not enough to pull off the mini-campaign I had hoped to do. Nevertheless, it held promise, and when I get a full-fledged 4th Edition campaign going in the fall, I'll be pulling out the old adventure again.

There's no school like the old school. The old editions of the game have a lot to teach us about the sheer fun of the game, as well as examples of game mechanics and adventure design to steer far away from. (I haven't, for example, pulled out *EX1: Dungeonland*—the first of two adventures based on *Alice in Wonderland*—for inspiration.)





Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Graz'zt, the Dark Prince

BY JAMES JACOBS
ART BY JASON ENGLE

When first his emerald gaze upon her fell,
His lust arose and quick he snatched the bait.
With demon's tongue he wooed her long and well,
And even after caught could not abate.

Yet soon the Prince beheld his mortal cage;
A prison sure as those in Shattered Night.
And though his thoughts ran red with sterile rage,
He had no choice but serve at her delight.

With demon lord bound deep below the Horn,
The Queen grew strong upon a throne of strife.
The captured Prince grew ever more forlorn—
For naught but death could ever bring him life.

—An unfinished final epic from the late
Eris Deraxian; "Gulling the Dark"

After the fall of the obyriths and their flight to the secret corners of the Abyss, this endless realm of evil and chaos spent an unknown epoch in even greater turmoil than before. For the realm was now without its masters—those few obyrith lords who survived the murderous wrath of the Queen of Chaos, the war with the forces of Law and the Wind Dukes, and the final invasion of the eladrin host into the war-torn Abyss had been forced into hiding and were in no condition to reassert their rule. In their absence, their tanar'ri former vassals fell to war and bickering among themselves. The mantle of Prince of Demons was their prize, and while many powerful demons took portions of Abyssal layers in their race for this crown, few could yet claim rulership over an entire Abyssal layer. For just as a nascent demon lord was poised to conquer such a realm (the final step toward earning the Abyssal crown), his enemies rose up against him and laid him low. Most of the few surviving obyrith lords would remain too weak to reclaim their realms for eons, and thus once-powerful entities such as Obox-ob found themselves forced to bide their time in hiding while they recovered from the grievous wounds inflicted upon them by the Queen of Chaos. Those few who still ruled realms of their own had little interest in claiming the title, for the stink of their defeat was still thick in their minds and they were content to cower in their hidden corners (as did Dagon and Pazuzu) or simply had minds too alien to desire such power (as in the case of Pale Night or the Malgoth). This time of betrayal and ruin

for the demons provided great opportunities, excitement, and murderous joy as well.

During this time many of the legendary deaths and demonic imprisonments occurred. The demon tree Malgarius was laid low by Lazbral'thull and imprisoned. A cabal of seven demon lords led by Ansitif of the Shining Void joined forces to banish the Malgoth from the realms it infected. And on the Wells of Darkness, the demonic prisons swelled with new additions such as Lazbral'thull and Ansitif themselves. Yet not all who fought and betrayed during this era succumbed to treachery, for whenever there is betrayal, there is growth.

As this time of tumult settled over the Abyss, one of those who had otherwise remained apart from the squabble was mysterious Pale Night, an obyrith lord who dwelt in a twisted tower of bone on the 600th layer of the Abyss, a realm maddening enough in its endless mazes to render it relatively untouched by the demon war. Pale Night knew of these squabbles, and she knew that whoever should claim it would become among the most powerful forces in the Abyss. Yet she did not wish to enter the war, and the power afforded a Prince wasn't enough for her. So she beckoned something to her realm to impregnate her, so she could sire her own brood of children to vie for the crown. If one of them could become the Prince of Demons, Pale Night would thus become their Queen.

The exact nature of the entity that Pale Night ensnared and mated with has long been the subject of debate among scholars. Those with their own desires and allegiances invoke names such as Asmodeus, Loki, Set, or even one of the ancient baernaloths, perhaps basing their theories more upon personal prejudice and loyalty than actual evidence. Others maintain that she chose as her mate the patriarch of an ancient race of immortal warriors from an alternate reality. Some hold it was the Abyss itself Pale Night called into her vault. A few ancient and ageless scholars believe that Pale Night was not, in fact, the aggressor in this matter, but that one of the Old Gods themselves, a cosmic entity of a thousand names and crawling chaos, visited Pale Night from his own court at the center of the universe, leaving her impregnated in an attempt to spawn a race of demons who would fulfill unknowable roles in his own dire plans for reality.

What is certain is that Pale Night gave birth to countless monsters and demons when she came to term an unknown age later. Many of her spawn died swiftly, slain by their countless kin or later in the Abyss itself by voracious predators. Very few of them rose in power enough to become demon lords. Scholars who seek to identify Pale Night's unknown mate by the shapes of her children find only further frustration and confusion, for her children are as varied in appearance as they

are in power, and may themselves all have been spawned by different fathers. Lupercio, the Baron of Sloth, is a dark-skinned amorphous creature that shrouds its undulant form in clouds of darkness. Vucarik is humanoid in shape, but his actual features are hidden by the coils of chains wrapped around his frame. Zivorgian, the Lady of Ripe Carrion, is a bloated three-headed abomination, not quite vulture and not quite angel. And Lady Rhyxali has no true body at all.

Yet among all these spawn, only one would go on to greatness. Only one would become powerful enough to be a contender for the throne of the Abyss. Only one would surpass even the boggling power commanded by his obyrith mother.

That child was Graz'zt, the Dark Prince of the Abyss.

GRAZ'ZT, THE DARK PRINCE

He is darkly handsome, this dark prince, an ebon-skinned man nearly 9 feet in height. His slightly pointed ears, yellow fangs, green glowing eyes, and six-fingered hands mark him for the demon he is.

GRAZ'ZT

CR 32

hp 758 (37 HD); fast healing 15; **DR** 20/cold iron, epic, and good

CE Large outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, tanar'ri)

Init +15; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., true seeing; Listen +47, Spot +47

Aura unholy aura (spell-like ability always in effect)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Giant, Infernal; telepathy 300 ft.

AC 54, touch 36, flat-footed 43; **Dodge** (–1 size, +11 Dex, +11 natural, +7 shield, +16 deflection)

Immune critical hits, electricity, poison, sneak attack

Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 45

Fort +36, **Ref** +31, **Will** +27

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee* +5 *acidic burst bastard sword* +42/+37/+32/+27 (2d6+25 [+41 against good or lawful targets]/17–20 plus 1d6 acid [plus 1d10 acid on a critical hit])

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +37; **Grp** +51

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Disarm, Power Attack

Special Actions fear, summon lamias, summon tanar'ri, tyranny

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 25th):

At will—*astral projection*, *blasphemy*, *charm monster* (DC 30), *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *fly*, *greater*

dispel magic, *greater teleport*, *plane shift* (DC 33), *shapechange*, *telekinesis* (DC 31), *unhallow*, *unholy aura* (DC 34), *unholy blight* (DC 30)

3/day—*dominate person* (DC 30), *quicken greater dispel magic*, *symbol of persuasion* (DC 32), *empowered unholy blight* (DC 30), *veil* (DC 32)

1/day—*trap the soul* (DC 35), *wish*

*10-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 31, Dex 32, Con 42, Int 37, Wis 24, Cha 42

SQ dark grace, item master, tanar'ri traits

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dark Speech*, Dodge, Empower Spell-Like Ability (unholy blight), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (greater dispel magic), Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Balance +15, Bluff +56, Concentration +56, Diplomacy +68, Disguise +56 (+60 when acting), Escape Artist +51, Forgery +53, Gather Information +56, Hide +47, Intimidate +60, Jump +18, Knowledge (arcana) +53, Knowledge (history) +53, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +53, Knowledge (religion) +53, Knowledge (the planes) +53, Listen +47, Move Silently +51, Search +53, Sense Motive +47, Spellcraft +57, Spot +47, Tumble +51

Possessions +5 *full plate* (normally not worn), +5 *heavy fortification heavy steel shield*, +5 *acidic burst bastard sword*

*Dark Speech is a feat from *Fiendish Codex I*. If you don't have access to this book, replace this feat with Improved Sunder.

True Seeing (Ex) Graz'zt is under the constant effect of true seeing, as per the spell of the same name. This ability cannot be dispelled.

Fear (Su) As a free action, Graz'zt can inspire fear (as the spell of the same name) by sneer and word once per round in any target creature within 120 feet. This effect can be resisted with a DC 44 Will save. Creatures normally immune to fear (save for mindless creatures, but including intelligent constructs and undead) can even be affected by this potent attack, although if they fail the Will save they are only shaken for 1d6 rounds. This is a mind-affecting fear ability. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Summon Lamias (Su) Once per day, Graz'zt can automatically summon 2d6 lamias or 1d4 lamia nobles (see *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits*).

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp) Once per day, Graz'zt can automatically summon 2d4 succubi, 1d2+1 glabrezu, 1d2 lilitus, or 1 balor.

Tyranny (Su) Once every minute, Graz'zt can speak with overwhelming authority, commanding those who



would normally not follow his tyrannical orders and punishing those who resist his word. Graz'zt need only speak to use this ability—it's a free action for him, but he cannot utilize any spell-like abilities on the same round he uses tyranny. He can target any one creature within 120 feet and line of sight with tyranny. The target can attempt to resist the tyrannical order by making a DC 44 Will save, but if he fails, he is struck with Graz'zt's mental rage and must attempt a DC 44 Fortitude save, with failure indicating the creature is stunned for 1 round.

A creature that fails the initial Will save must follow Graz'zt's command to the best of his ability, accomplishing the order within 1 minute. Obviously suicidal orders are ignored (in which case the target must save against stunning as detailed above), but orders to murder allies or otherwise take actions against the target's normal ethics must be carried out. If the target fails to accomplish the orders by the end of the minute duration, he must make a DC 44 Fortitude save or take 3d6 points of Wisdom drain as the consequences for failure tear apart his mind.

Alternatively, Graz'zt can use his tyranny to duplicate the effects of a *geas/quest* spell. It's still a DC 44 Will save to resist this use of his tyranny, but this version otherwise functions as the spell of the same name. If Graz'zt uses this version of his tyranny, he cannot use the ability (in either of its uses) again for 24 hours.

Tyranny is a mind-affecting effect. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Dark Grace (Su) Graz'zt's otherworldly presence and force of will grants him a deflection bonus equal to his Charisma modifier (normally +16) to his Armor Class as long as he doesn't wear armor—he can use all shields save for tower shields and retain this deflection bonus. In addition, whenever he strikes a lawful or good target in melee with any weapon, he gains this same bonus on any damage rolls he makes. A lawful and good target does not take double damage from this blow.

Item Master (Ex) Graz'zt can use any magic item, even spell completion items such as wands or scrolls.

Graz'zt is a skilled politician, and when possible he prefers to solve confrontations with diplomacy and deals. Graz'zt enjoys the game of using words and false promises to trick his foes into serving his needs, especially when he can convince them that they have gotten the upper hand. His preference for political solutions and talking his way out of confrontations is in no way born of a need to avoid combat, though, for Graz'zt is among the deadliest demons of the Abyss.

ABOUT THE STATS

The statistics for the CR 32 version of Graz'zt presented here were generated by advancing and adapting his basic statistics from the CR 22 version detailed in *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss*, with a few additional benefits here and there. If your campaign needs an even tougher Prince of Demons, you can advance Graz'zt's statistics even further, either using the method presented in *Fiendish Codex I* or the standard rules for advancing outsiders detailed in the *Monster Manual*.

In combat, Graz'zt does not hesitate to use his spell-like abilities, favoring charm and dominate effects to turn enemies into allies, or unholy blights to weed out lawful and good foes. He utilizes a quickened dispel magic at the start of any combat, attempting to catch as many of his more powerful foes at once, but saves the other two quickened uses for targeted dispels against foes with numerous defensive spells. In the second round of combat, he favors the use of tyranny to order the strongest-looking of his foes to fight by his side while he himself moves into melee to strike the weakest of his foes with his sword. Thereafter, Graz'zt prefers to fight in melee, retreating via teleportation if brought below 200 hit points. Once he recovers, he returns to finish the fight.

GRAZ'ZT'S GOALS

It has been said that, like his triple realm, Graz'zt maintains thrice the number of plots and goals as any one other demon lord. While this may not exactly be the case (Malcanthet certainly has an impressive number of entangled concurrent plans), Graz'zt is certainly among the most scheming and plotting of his kin. Those who seek to particularly insult the Dark Prince have used his love of plots and politics to compare him to an archdevil, or have referred to his triple-realm of Azzagrat as "the Little Hells." Most of those who insult the Dark Prince publicly in such a manner do not survive long, since they are spirited away in equally public venues by shadowy demons, shrieking lamias, or worse.

Although Graz'zt participates in the Blood War, his true interests are closer to home—he is much more comfortable (and skilled) at manipulating, allying with, and betraying his fellow demon lords than anything else, and he has perfected these skills to a point where he is now the only demon lord in the Abyss not only to completely command more than one layer of the Abyss, but to retain command of this triple realm for centuries, despite the fact that he recently spent several years imprisoned on the Material Plane.

Graz'zt's allegiances with other demon lords generally last only as long as the Dark Prince needs them to last, but in a few cases his allegiances are long indeed. The strongest (and



longest) of these ties is with Verin, an incredibly intelligent humanoid demon lord with pale skin, angular features, and no body hair of any kind. His flesh oozes a sort of spiritual slime that unnerves mortals, but otherwise a casual observer might not even recognize him for what he is. Certainly, Verin is the most mild-mannered and easygoing of demon lords, and in his role as Graz'zt's chief diplomat, his silver tongue is at the root of most of Graz'zt's often unlikely alliances. During Graz'zt's recent imprisonment on the Material Plane, Verin took his place as ruler of Azzagrat and successfully defended the triple realm from numerous assaults by other demons. That Verin graciously stepped down from the throne immediately upon Graz'zt's return speaks volumes of his decidedly undemonic nature. Yet Verin is said to have another aspect to his existence, a mirror of his white-skinned incarnation known as Ztefano, an equally brilliant diplomat whose specialty lies not in forming alliances but in promoting schisms and fueling wars.

Other notable alliances include the long-standing ones between Graz'zt and his mysterious sister Rhyxali, Queen of Shadows, and a curious allegiance with the Demon Queen of Fungi, Zuggtmoy. The Queen's Causeway in Fogtown, the "uppermost" third of his capital city of Zelatar, is named in Zuggtmoy's honor, though none understand the true reasons for this, especially given Zuggtmoy's strong ties to one of Graz'zt's

greatest enemies, Demogorgon. And of course, he maintains a cordial alliance with Pale Night, although he visits her realm infrequently.

Graz'zt has even been known to maintain alliances with those who have failed him—the most notable of these being the demon lord Ebulon, who once served Graz'zt as a general. When Ebulon was defeated by Demogorgon and then imprisoned in the Wells of Darkness, Graz'zt sent his armies into the Wells of Darkness in a daring rescue attempt but failed. Now and then, the Dark Prince sends champions into the Wells to attempt rescues, but the humiliation of his initial failure has kept him from making additional massive forays into the prison plane.

Yet despite his numerous alliances, it is for his wars that Graz'zt is best known in the Abyss. He has warred with his brothers Lupercio and Vucarik at times, as well as against countless other demon lords. Once served by the strange patron of the xvart race, Raxivort, Graz'zt now hunts the simpering demigod with increasing frustration. Graz'zt's long-running feud with Malcanthet, Queen of Succubi, is well documented, although the cause of this war is not (many believe Graz'zt attempted to woo the beautiful demoness only to be spurned, but those who postulate this theory within Graz'zt's earshot don't live long thereafter to ponder the repercussions). He has also long warred with Orcus, one of the few demon lords in the Abyss who can match his power. Yet the most notorious of Graz'zt's wars have been against Demogorgon. Often, these conflicts put him in uneasy alliances with Orcus—alliances that invariably erupt in their own confrontations and leave Demogorgon wracked with mirth and delight.

One need only look back over the past few decades for numerous examples of Graz'zt's plots. He lured Waukeen, goddess of wealth from Faerûn, into his city and imprisoned her for years in hopes of replacing her place in that world's pantheon with his own daughter Thraxxia. He deposed fellow demon lord Adimarchus from the Abyss and engineered his imprisonment in the asylum of Skullrot on Carceri. And most recently, he nearly weakened Lolth herself in an attempt to trick her into uniting the demon lords under his leadership. Rumors even hold that Graz'zt is preparing to absorb a Material Plane world into the Abyss, trapping it in the parched realm of the Nerebadian Vast (the desert like 48th layer of the Abyss, bordered on the far side with his sister Rhyxali's realm of Shaddonon, and with whom he has had much aid in preparing the Vast for this eventual capture) and turning it into a fourth kingdom.

And these are but examples of his more blatant schemes. Few living today know, for example, that he fathered his son Athux with none other than Eclavdra, then an up-and-coming priestess of Lolth who was growing increasingly dissatisfied with her role in that priesthood. It was Graz'zt who exposed

Eclavdra to the cult of the Elder Elemental Eye and thus engineered a terrific schism in the drow city of Erelhei-Cinlu that resulted in chaos all the way up through the Demonweb itself. When Eclavdra fled the church of Lolth, Graz'zt was there to accept her again, and even now that the infamous drow priest has returned once again to Lolth's fold, who can say if Graz'zt's plans for her have come to full fruition?

Yet Graz'zt does have one central goal in mind, and this primary goal drives all other goals and all other plans, including his eternal war against Demogorgon for the role of Prince of Demons and his plot to absorb a Material Plane world into the Abyss. This goal is nothing less than uniting all the fiends of the Lower Planes (not just the Abyss) and leading them in an unthinkable army into the Upper Planes to raze them to the very foundations of the multiverse. Every one of Graz'zt's plans, in some way or another, takes him one infinitesimal step closer to this unthinkable goal.

GRAZ'ZT'S CULT

Despite his love of being worshiped and his relatively nondemonic appearance, Graz'zt does not maintain a large cult on the Material Plane. Most of those who venerate him do so alone, seeking his advice in matters more arcane than divine

via methods such as contact other plane or even by daring to summon him to their presence. For countless ages, Graz'zt enjoyed these trips to the Material Plane, for invariably those who sought his aid underestimated him and became little more than tools for the Dark Prince to use in furthering his own goals.

This changed with Iggwilv.

The Witch-Queen had, of course, been drawn to Graz'zt's attention long before she summoned him. She had caught his eye not just with her shapely form and bewitching eyes, but for her ruthless treachery. Here was a mortal woman whose capacity for betrayal and deception allowed her to manipulate powerful wizards and rule nations. Graz'zt never conceived of the possibility that her deceived victims could extend to those as powerful as himself, and when he answered her call to the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth, he found himself imprisoned on the Material Plane by her magic. Yet so potent were Iggwilv's charms and promises that Graz'zt himself fell for her words, and the two became lovers. From this union, nations and gods were born.

Graz'zt realized he had come upon his match in the arena of treachery and domination, and he began to lust for freedom. He played at the subservient minion until Iggwilv faltered in her control. Graz'zt struck, yet even in her moment of weak-



THRALL TO DEMON [VILE]

You formally supplicate yourself to a demon prince in return for a small measure of power.

Prerequisite: Chaotic evil alignment.

Benefit: Once per day, while performing an evil act, you can call upon your demonic patron to add a +1 luck bonus on any one attack roll, saving throw, ability check, skill check, or level check.

Special: This feat can be taken only once. A character who takes this feat cannot also take the Disciple of Darkness or Scion of Sorrow feat. (This feat first appeared in *Book of Vile Darkness* and then later in *Champions of Ruin*.)

VIOLATE SPELL [METAMAGIC]

You transform one of your spells into an evil spell, and the wounds the spell inflicts are tainted.

Prerequisite: Any evil alignment.

Benefit: This feat adds the evil descriptor to a spell. If the spell deals damage, half the damage dealt is vile damage (and can be healed only in an area under the effect of a *consecrate* or *hallow* spell). A violated spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

ness Iggwilv was a potent foe. She managed to slay Graz'zt by expending every spell, artifact, and ally she had at her disposal. She lost her empire, but Graz'zt was banished back to the Abyss for a century while he recovered from his humiliating death and defeat. Iggwilv went into hiding, and it was only when Graz'zt captured and imprisoned her in his Argent Palace that he regained his stolen power, and then some. Iggwilv's time of servitude to Graz'zt was much shorter than his was under her, though, and she escaped not long after being captured. Today, the two have, to a certain extent, come to terms, and they retain a love-hate relationship where each constantly seeks to use the other to gain power in their own domains.

Since his time with Iggwilv, Graz'zt has grown more cautious in his dealings with mortals, and he has encouraged the growth of small cults in the Material Plane. In this way, those who seek his advice instead seek out his priests, invariably lamias or succubi or other alluring temptresses who themselves are no stranger to treachery and deception. Those who are accepted into this cult are known as the Chosen. Graz'zt's clergy is spread throughout dozens of worlds, yet the religion's foundation can be found in the walls of his capital city of Zelatar on the Abyss. Mortals who make the pilgrimage to Zelatar visit the Grand Shrine, a building run by lamia priests, yet the true command of his cult is the Chosen's Tabernacle, a profane cathedral found in the middle realm of Graz'zt's city, Gallenghast. Here, the faith's high priestess, a lilitu demon named Lavendeth (CE lilitu cleric 9) tends to the needs of the cult and to the needs of her lord, for she is currently Graz'zt's

favored consort. Mortals are allowed within the vaunted walls of the Chosen's Tabernacle only as sacrifices.

Apart from Lavendeth, many of Graz'zt's Chosen have gone on to become notable figures in the world themselves. Operating from the small, unassuming rural town of Sobanwych, beautiful Anastasia (CE female human cleric 7) is a classic example of a Graz'zt cultist who has seized control of a settlement from behind the scenes. In the depths of a desert temple called the Home of Darkness, Isha-Denarthun (CE female lamia cleric 6) commands more than five dozen lamias. Audry Lilybrook (CE female human adept 6) leads a double life as Saltmarsh's mistress of the local orphanage and coven leader for a growing cult dedicated to the Dark Prince. And in the vile pirate city of Scuttlecove, Tyralandi (CE female half-fiend nymph ranger 1/thrall of Graz'zt 10) controls the notorious brothel Porphyry House and has become one of the most powerful figures in the city.

The Chosen prefer to sacrifice lawful and good souls to the Dark Prince—paladins and clerics of lawful good deities being a favorite victim. Lesser branches of Graz'zt's church simply seek out and capture these sacrifices alive and sacrifice them on altars, most often by cutting the victim's throat with a sword. The truly faithful among Graz'zt's church know that the Dark Prince prefers living sacrifices. Leaders among his church are expected, once a year, to seek out and befriend a lawful good paladin or priest. They must gain this sacrifice's trust, often by accompanying them on missions for the church. Eventually, this friendship develops into something more, with the cultist of Graz'zt seducing his victim. The cultist manipulates the victim, tricking him into accomplishing deeds that please Graz'zt while working to expose the victim's faith as hollow and meaningless. When such attempts fail, many victims turn on the cultist or commit suicide—either outcome is considered a failure, and if the cultist survives, he must cleanse himself in a ritual known as the Hollow Feast (see below) before the year is out. Only when the sacrifice accepts what has become of him and converts to Graz'zt's worship is the sacrifice considered a success.

One of the most horrific rituals practiced by the cult of Graz'zt is the Hollow Feast. This hideous rite is used under two conditions: when a worshiper of Graz'zt wants to become one of the Dark Prince's thralls, or when a priest fails to convert an intended sacrifice. In both cases, the worshiper to be cleansed is affixed nude to an iron frame by a number of hooks and chains. He is then left to fast for several days, during which time he must recite various sacred prayers to the Dark Prince in which he asks for benediction. Once a day, other cultists visit to give the worshiper a few sips of water, but during this time, the worshiper is allowed no food. Each morning the fast progresses, the hooks and chains that bind him are tightened (inflicting 2d6 points of damage each

THRALL OF GRAZ'ZT

HIT DIE: D6

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Charm	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Spell betrayal +1d6	—
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Dark Charisma +1	+1 level of existing class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Spell betrayal +2d6, summon minor demon	—
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Dark Charisma +2	+1 level of existing class
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Spell betrayal +3d6, spellstrike +1d6	—
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Dark Charisma +3	Bonus feat or +1 level of existing class
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Spell betrayal +4d6, spellstrike +2d6	—
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Summon major demon	+1 level of existing class
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Spell betrayal +5d6	Bonus feat or +1 level of existing class

day), and each evening the worshiper makes a DC 30 Charisma check to determine if he has attracted Graz'zt's attention—he gains a bonus to this roll equal to the number of days that he has been fasting. Once successful, Graz'zt notices and sends one of his minions to bless the worshiper. This minion is typically a half-fiend of some sort. This final segment of the Hollow Feast involves the minion imbibing vials of acid and then kissing the supplicant, during which she passes the acid into the supplicant's mouth. This inflicts 1d6 points of damage on the victim per kiss, who must endure a number of kisses equal to the number of days he has spent fasting before he is deemed “cleansed.” In some cases, when Graz'zt deems that the supplicant needs a particularly harrowing Hollow Feast, he instead sends a succubus to perform the duty, coupling the acid damage with numerous level-draining attacks. Rumors hold of some particularly masochistic cultists partaking of the Hollow Feast for purposes of pleasure alone.

Clerics of Graz'zt have access to the domains of Chaos and Evil. If you use *Fiendish Codex I* in your game, his clerics also have access to the Demonic and Temptation domains—otherwise, replace access to these domains with Knowledge and War. His favored weapon is the bastard sword (clerics who take the War domain gain proficiency with the weapon only as a martial weapon, not as an exotic weapon, and must wield their bastard swords two-handed until they choose to take Exotic Weapon Proficiency with the weapon). Graz'zt's symbol is a black, six-fingered hand.

THRALL OF GRAZ'ZT

The thrall of Graz'zt is a sinister, conniving, and thoroughly evil mistress of evil lore and dark secrets. She uses charm and guile to learn things she should not know—a seductive lore-mistress who depends on subterfuge, not study. She spends her days stealing, seducing, and tricking knowledge and secrets from others.

Wizards, sorcerers, clerics, and bards make excellent thralls of Graz'zt, although it's not unusual for one to multiclass for a

few levels in rogue to enhance her skill at trickery and deception. Thralls of Graz'zt often work in cabals—sinister, secretive organizations that sometimes toil in tandem with assassin or thieves' guilds to aid in managing a city's criminal underworld. The lust for power and knowledge a thrall of Graz'zt has knows no bounds.

This prestige class first appeared in the *Book of Vile Darkness* (pages 68–69). It is presented here, updated and slightly revised for use with the 3.5 rule set.



ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any evil.

Skills: Bluff 2 ranks, Diplomacy 2 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks.

Feats: Thrall to Demon, Violate Spell.

Special: Must be able to cast 3rd-level spells with the evil descriptor

Special: Graz'zt's followers initiate new thralls in a horrific rite called the Hollow Feast, which is detailed above. A thrall-to-be must endure and survive this rite.

Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level): Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Use Magic Device (Cha).

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the thrall of Graz'zt prestige class.

Spellcasting: At 1st level and then every two levels after that (plus 10th level), you gain new spells per day and an increase in caster level (and spells known, if applicable) as if you had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which you belonged before adding the prestige class level. You do not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If you had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a thrall of Graz'zt, you must decide to which class to add each level for the purpose of determining spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Charm (Sp) You can use *charm person* as a spell-like ability at will. Your caster level equals your class level.

Spell Betrayal (Su) Starting at 2nd level, when you cast a damage-dealing spell at a flat-footed target, you deal an additional +1d6 points of damage. The damage dealt increases as you increase in level. Graz'zt grants this ability in the hope that you will convince your enemies that you are their friend, then betray them with a surprise magical attack.

Dark Charisma (Ex) You gain the listed bonus as an enhancement bonus on all Charisma-based checks when dealing with evil creatures.

Summon Demon (Sp) Starting at 4th level, you can summon a demon of 5 HD or less once per day—this ability functions like a *summon monster* spell. Starting at 8th level, you can also summon a demon of 10 HD or less once per day as well. Both of these spell-like abilities function at caster level 15th.

Spellstrike (Su) At 6th-level, you deal an additional +1d6 points of damage when you cast a damaging spell upon a target or targets threatened in melee. At 8th level or higher, this bonus damage increases to +2d6 points of damage.

GRAZ'ZT'S MINIONS

All sorts of demons and beasts serve Graz'zt, but he generally favors the beautiful and the glib over the bestial and the crass. His realm is rife with lamias, succubi, harpies, and lilitus, along with numerous tieflings, cambions, half-fiends, and other creatures that result from the dalliance between such rapacious demons and mortal visitors to the realm. Yet not all of Graz'zt's minions are beautiful—deformed rutterkins serve as the lowest caste of citizen in his city and as the lowest rank of soldier in his army. The magically gifted carnevus demons (offspring of a tanar'ri and a lamia noble; see Expedition to the Demonweb Pits) are particularly favored by Graz'zt because of their arcane power, yet all manner of demon serve in his cults or in the city—hezrous, vrockes, chasmes, and bulezaus in particular.

Graz'zt's armies are similarly outfitted, consisting of platoon after platoon of demonkind. The bulk of his armies consist of tiefling fighters, bulezau infantry, armanite cavalry, rutterkin mobs, and most recently a force of cambion rangers known as the Razor Legion. Deadly in their own right, these cambions wield swords possessed by strange demons known as caligrostopos that infuse the swords they inhabit with potent magic. Graz'zt has engineered an alliance with these caligrostopos, and they make no attempt to fight against their cambion wielders, yet when one of them falls in battle, the caligrostopo manifests a ghostly image of the last creature it slew and uses its weapon with even greater skill than its former wielder. In effect, the Razor Legion is two armies in one. Rumors circulate telling of an entire race of demon-tainted humanoids who owe Graz'zt for their creation. These legendary Vasharans are a race of remorseless murderers, rapists, and despots said to rule a distant realm. It's unclear if Graz'zt did indeed create this reprehensible race—in any event, none of them serve him in Azzagrat. Details on the Vasharans are in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, while details on caligrostopo demons are given below.

Graz'zt's favored minions, however, are his children. Most of Graz'zt's offspring are minor despots, murderers, and monsters that live throughout the multiverse—the Dark Prince is nothing if not fecund. These offspring are relatively minor, and even Graz'zt isn't sure of all of their locations and current well-being. Only a relative few warrant his particular attention, but these few are potent allies indeed. Athux (CE male half-fiend drow fighter 10/blackguard 7) serves Graz'zt today as the commander of his armies, and he was instrumental in the defeat of Adimarchus. To date, Graz'zt has kept the identity of his mother secret, and not even Athux suspects that the mortal ruler of Lolth's multiworld religion, Eclavdra (CE female drow cleric 23), has more in common with him than the color of their skin. Beautiful Thraxxia (CE female human half-fiend

sorcerer 11) was once poised to inherit the divinity cast aside by Waukeen of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and serves her father today as a private assassin. Cursed with a lack of ambition, Arzial (CE male human half-fiend wizard 13) remains one of Graz'zt's least-accomplished children, yet he remains key in his father's plans for his control over the Abyssal barony of Vulderpayne in a remote corner of Pazunia. One of the Dark Prince's most obscure children is Belyara (CE female half-fiend lamia rogue 3/bard 7/arcane trickster 8), who, rumor holds, has recently escaped from being imprisoned by a powerful eladrin conjurer and seeks revenge against her father for allowing her to languish for so long.

Yet all of these children pale in power when compared to Graz'zt's pride and joy, the cambion and demigod Iuz. Conceived during his affair and imprisonment by Igglwyl, Iuz has become a powerful force in his own right and has far exceeded the expectations of both his parents. Now a demigod and the ruler of a vast empire, Iuz has murdered kingdoms, started wars, and slain countless heroes in his relatively short time on Oerth. In time, Iuz may become a lynchpin in Graz'zt's overarching goal to wage war on Heaven, yet for now the Dark Prince is content to let his son rule in his stead over the north-central Flanaess. Rumor holds that Graz'zt seeks to impregnate Igglwyl again in hopes of spawning

another godling to unleash upon a world new to his touch, which could explain why the Dark Prince has been so forthcoming in his talks of late with his one-time mistress and jailer.

CALIGROSTO

A hazy, ghostly woman stands ready for battle. Her eyes glow red, batlike wings unfurl from her back, and a forked tail coils in the air behind her, but her flesh is hazy and indistinct, almost as if she didn't quite exist. The cruel, jagged sword she wields, however, is dangerously solid and real.

CALIGROSTO

CR 6

hp 68 (8 HD); **Reflective DR** 15/bludgeoning and piercing

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, incorporeal, lounmara)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 21, touch 21, flat-footed 16
(+5 Dex, +6 deflection)

Immune acid, electricity, fire, incorporeal traits

Resist cold 10; **SR** 17

Fort +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee +7 *keen greatsword* +15/+10 (2d6+12/17–20) or touch +13 (1d6 Str damage)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm

Special Actions possess blade

Abilities Str —, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 22

SQ fiendish shade, infuse weapon, invisibility, martial prowess

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (greatsword)^B, Weapon Specialization (greatsword)^B

Skills Bluff +17, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +13, Search +12, Sense Motive +13, Spot +13, Tumble +16

Possessions +1 *keen greatsword*

Fiendish Shade (Su) As long as a caligrosto is wielding a weapon, it creates a phantom image of the last creature it damaged, although this incorporeal image is of a fiendish incarnation of the creature duplicated. A caligrosto can only duplicate the image of a creature capable of wielding a slashing weapon, and it remains Medium size no matter what size the original creature was. Once a caligrosto has taken on the shade of an enemy in this manner, it gains a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls and weapon damage





rolls made against that target.

Infuse Weapon (Su) A caligrosto can infuse a magic weapon it has possessed with the keen weapon quality. More powerful caligrostos can infuse additional weapon qualities into their blades. A caligrosto with at least 14 Hit Dice can infuse its weapon with keen and wounding special qualities. The most powerful caligrostos (those with 20 or more Hit Dice) can infuse a possessed weapon with keen, wounding, and vorpal qualities. Infused weapon qualities stack with any existing weapon qualities a weapon may have, but not with weapon qualities of the same name. Thus, a 20-HD caligrosto that possesses a +3 *unholy speed longsword* would be able to infuse it into a +3 *unholy speed keen wounding vorpal longsword*.

Invisibility (Su) A caligrosto is invisible in its natural (nonshade) form when it isn't possessing a blade. This ability is constant, allowing the caligrosto to remain invisible even when attacking. This ability is inherent and not subject to the invisibility purge spell.

Martial Prowess (Ex) A caligrosto is uncannily adept at wielding bladed weapons. Once it has possessed a blade, it is treated as if proficient with that weapon, and as if it had Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization with that weapon type. More powerful caligrostos gain additional bonus feats—a caligrosto with at least 12 Hit Dice also gains Greater Weapon Focus with its currently possessed weapon as a bonus feat. Finally, a caligrosto with at least 18 Hit Dice gains Greater Weapon Specialization with its currently possessed weapon as a bonus feat. Although caligrostos have no Strength score, they use their Dexterity modifier to modify their attack rolls with their possessed weapon, and modify damage with the weapon using their Charisma modifier (in the same manner that Strength adjusts damage with weapons).

Possess Blade (Su) Unlike most lomararas, caligrostos cannot possess living creatures. Their ability to possess is limited to slashing weapons. A caligrosto may attempt to possess any unattended slashing weapon by taking a full-round action (this provokes an attack of opportunity). Against nonmagic weapons, a caligrosto is automatically successful. A magic weapon can make a DC 20 Will save (this save DC is Charisma-based) to resist the possession—if the object succeeds, the caligrosto may never again attempt to possess that particular bladed weapon. Once a caligrosto possesses a weapon, it may come and go as it pleases, taking a move action to enter and leave the blade.

While possessing a sword, the caligrosto is immobile and cannot take attack actions, nor can it be

detected by most effects that detect creatures (such as see invisibility or locate creature). *Detect chaos* and *detect evil* reveal that the possessed weapon has that alignment, but not that a demon lurks inside. *True seeing* reveals the weapon to be seething with coils of what appears to be mist flecked with lightning. The caligrosto can still observe the world around it, but its ability to interact with the world is limited to telepathy.

A creature can wield a caligrosto-possessed weapon as if it were a normal weapon. Often, the caligrosto infuses the weapon (see above) to make it more appealing and more likely that it will be used in combat. It may even use telepathy to try to convince a creature that it is an intelligent weapon—in this case, the caligrosto tries to encourage its new “owner” to attack creatures capable of wielding weapons.

Once a caligrosto-possessed weapon strikes any creature that is capable of wielding it (regardless of the creature's size), the caligrosto can attempt to wrench free from its wielder's grasp and create a fiendish shade of that creature. A caligrosto often tries to convince its wielder telepathically that this is merely a short-lived but potent variant of the dancing quality, hoping to let its wielder allow the effect to occur without resisting. The wielder can attempt a DC 20 Will save to prevent a wielded caligrosto weapon from flying out of her hands to utilize its fiendish shade ability. This save DC is Charisma-based.

Once a caligrosto gets free of its wielder and assumes a fiendish shade, it can remain in that mode eternally. Typically, a caligrosto helps its previous owner defeat the creature before turning on her in hopes of creating a fiendish shade of her, but sometimes a caligrosto can't wait for treachery and attacks its previous wielder as soon as it escapes.

A caligrosto can be forced out of a weapon it is possessing by *banishment*, *dismissal*, *dispel chaos*, or *dispel evil*. When a caligrosto is driven out in this manner, the weapon it was possessing drops to the ground. The caligrosto can attempt to re-possess the weapon on its next action (although if the weapon is magical, it gains a new Will save to resist this new possession attempt as if the demon had never before attempted to possess it). If a caligrosto-possessed weapon is destroyed, the caligrosto is forced out of the weapon and must make a DC 20 Fortitude save to avoid being stunned for 1d3 rounds.

Reflective Damage Reduction (Su) As long as a caligrosto's fiendish shade ability is in effect, it gains DR 15/bludgeoning and piercing. Slashing damage negated by this damage reduction is applied to the creature whose shape is currently being mocked by

the lounara's fiendish shade ability. For example, if a caligrosto's fiendish shade is imitating Lidda, and Krusk strikes the demon with his +3 *greataxe* and causes 25 points of damage, 15 points of that damage are negated and applied to Lidda instead, while the caligrosto takes the 10 points of damage not negated by the damage reduction. Nonmagic weapons cannot harm the caligrosto (due to its incorporeal traits) and thus are not affected by this unusual defensive ability.

Strength Drain (Su) A caligrosto deals 1d6 points of Strength damage with its touch attack. Whenever it deals Strength damage to a target, a caligrosto heals 5 points of damage; if the demon is healthy, it instead gains this healing as temporary hit points.

Caligrostos are perhaps the most sadistic of the known types of lounara—and considering the other three include the nature-razing wrath of the manitous, the corpse-haunting decadence of the dybbuks, and the murder-happy malevolence of the guecubus, this indicates a level of cruelty that some demons might even be shocked at. Spawned in the Dreaming Gulf of the Abyss from the nightmares of a long-forgotten dead god of healing and craftsmanship, the caligrosto come into the world with a red lust for the edge of a blade.

Although incorporeal (and remaining so once they have created a fiendish shade), a caligrosto's weapon remains a physical object and is thus subject to armor. Likewise, while a caligrosto can move through solid objects, they do so only in cases of extreme peril, since doing so forces them to leave behind their weapon and abandon their current fiendish shade. A caligrosto forced to abandon a favored weapon becomes obsessed with reclaiming control of that weapon, and once it does so, its wrath invariably turns upon those who forced it to abandon its blade.

Strategies and Tactics

Once a caligrosto possesses a slashing weapon, it waits patiently for a prospective wielder to take it. After a caligrosto has tasted the flesh and blood of a creature, it tears free from its wielder and becomes fully able to carry on with its remorseless need to cut and slice living flesh from bone, usually starting with its one-time wielder.

Sample Encounter

The most common encounter with a caligrosto (outside of the Abyss) involves it being found as a weapon in a location by prospective wielders, and it prefers to find a home in something that people walk by every day.

A New Weapon (EL 6): An ornate longsword glints on the wall of a duke's keep. Though the sword has a long history with

the duke's family, the current duke prefers to use words instead of weapons to solve problems. Unfortunately for him, he now faces a situation where he has exhausted words and must make a show of might. Will he wield the sword himself, or will he lend it to someone he trusts?

Ecology

A caligrosto is far more likely to possess a weapon in an active shop, forge, or armory than it is to possess weapons in remote hidden treasure caches or abandoned battlefields. These hateful demons live for little else than the thrill of cutting, but powerful demons or other creatures can sometimes convince platoons of caligrostos to serve them as guards or soldiers. As long as a caligrosto legion is allowed to cut and stab on a regular basis, these demons quickly become used to the guarantee of new victims and the security of dwelling in the shadow of a powerful lord.

Environment: As noted above, caligrostos can be found in any environment that would have a slashing weapon, but they prefer to be in those places that have the greatest potential for both wielders and victims (though a wielder can definitely become a victim).

Typical Physical Characteristics: When not possessing a slashing weapon, a caligrosto looks fiendishly similar to the last creature it damaged, though it remains somewhat blurry and ghostly (it is incorporeal as a fiendish shade). If it isn't possessing a blade or in its shade form, the caligrosto is an invisible, shapeless mass.

Alignment: As a demon, a caligrosto has a chaotic evil alignment.

CALIGROSTO LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (the planes) can learn more about caligrostos. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

KNOWLEDGE (THE PLANES)

DC	Result
16	This tanar'ri demon from the Abyss is a caligrosto. When in its natural, invisible form, it often inhabits weapons.
21	A caligrosto is immune to acid, electricity, and fire, plus it is resistant to cold. It has spell resistance, darkvision, and telepathy.
26	A caligrosto in a blade can take the form of the last creature it damaged. Slashing weapons aren't particularly effective against it, and slashing attacks can cause unexpected damage to the being the caligrosto is imitating.
31	Caligrostos can infuse weapons with various qualities, plus they can weaken an opponent by a mere touch. They can be forced out of a weapon by banishment, dismissal, dispel chaos, or dispel evil.

LOUMARA DEMONS

The loumaras are a relatively young race of demons spawned from a layer of the Abyss called the Dreaming Gulf, an empty realm where the lingering dreams and nightmares of a now-forgotten pantheon of gods is slowly being consumed and digested by the Abyss. What the Abyss “excretes” from these dreams are the loumaras, which are bodiless demons with the ability to possess living creatures or objects to carry out their own twisted and evil goals. Their indistinct natures and lack of physical forms have resulted in relative obscurity on the Material Plane, but their presence is well-known on the Abyss.

Loumara Traits: A loumara has the following traits (unless otherwise noted in the creature’s entry).

—**Immunity** to acid, electricity, and fire.

—**Resistance** to cold 10.

—**Incorporeal:** All loumaras have the incorporeal subtype when not possessing a physical body.

—**Possession (Su)** All loumaras can possess physical objects or creatures. The exact kind of object or creature and the nature of its possession ability is noted in the creature’s description.

—**Telepathy.**

Typical Treasure

Caligrostos don’t carry treasure with them—they take the form of slashing weapons instead.

GRAZ’ZT’S REALM

Graz’zt is the only demon lord to have the honor of calling three Abyssal layers his own. While other demon lords may have a controlling interest in neighboring layers (such as Demogorgon’s hold over the Blood Shallows, or Pazuzu’s influence over the skies of Pazunia), only Graz’zt is the lord of three. This triple-realm is known collectively as Azzagrat, and it consists of the 45th, 46th, and 47th layers of the Abyss. Graz’zt’s capital city of Zelatar straddles all three layers, its city walls encompassing Fogtown on the 45th layer, Gallenghast on the 46th, and Darkflame on the 47th. Similarly, Graz’zt’s Argent Palace exists simultaneously within all three of these sections of Zelatar, yet whereas the three sections of the city are all different wards of the same capital, the Argent Palace remains unchanged despite the location of its entrances. The palace is the core of Graz’zt’s kingdom, the lynchpin on which his entire triple-realm is balanced. Were he to lose control of this impressive palace, all three of his realms would suffer a catastrophic shattering.

Fortunately for Graz’zt, the Argent Palace is one of the most well-defended fortresses in the multiverse. Legions of vrock patrol the skies above, and countless horrors infest the dungeons below. The palace itself is built of white stone that Graz’zt

swindled from Mount Celestia. Rumor holds that he not only tricked a city of devas into mining the stone for him, but that he actually convinced them to unknowingly deliver the stone to him here in the Abyss. What became of these devas is best left unsaid.

No fewer than sixty-six towers of ivory, each with its own themes and purpose, grace the palace. Six of the more well-known towers and their contents are detailed in brief below.

The Hundredfold Hall of Silver: The rooms of this tower are lined with mirrors and guarded by a legion of simpering mirror mephits. Graz’zt enjoys visiting this tower during his fits of vanity and pride.

The Lady’s Study: Said to be the only tower to which Graz’zt does not keep a key, the well-appointed laboratories, libraries, and guest rooms within are kept for Iggwilv alone on her visits to Azzagrat.

The Spiral of Storms: The twisting rooms of this tower are given over to violent windstorms, blasts of lightning, torrential downpours, and other tempests Graz’zt has collected and preserved here for his entertainment. It is said he uses the tower as a gauntlet to test new recruits to his inner guard—if they can navigate its chambers and survive, they are granted special favors. The fact that the Spiral of Storms is the lair of vrock, demonically infused air elementals, and insane carnivorous genies makes survival here difficult at best.

The Tower of Doors: This tower is said to contain numerous portals, including one to Arzial’s manor on Pazunia, one to a powerful howling dragon’s lair deep in a cavern in Pandemonium, and one to an iron fortress ruled by one of Graz’zt’s few nondemonic allies, an ultraloth slaver named Zryaznian (NE male ultraloth wizard 14).

The Velvet Realm: Notorious throughout the planes, this tower is swathed in black and scarlet and inhabited by the dark prince’s personal pleasure slaves, chosen from the most beautiful and decadent of succubi, incubi, lamias, humanoids, and other creatures, male and female alike, from throughout the multiverse. One of Malcanthet’s lilitu spies recently infiltrated this harem and seduced Graz’zt. When he discovered the treachery, he murdered all of his consorts and sealed the tower—rumor holds that the undead spirits of the slaughtered consorts now hold court within the Velvet Realm, hoping one day to lure their Dark Prince back for unholy pleasures.

Weal of the Blooded: This entire tower is dedicated to blood and its letting, attended by a cabal of six vampires loyal to Graz’zt (some of the few undead the Dark Prince retains). It’s unclear if the Dark Prince values this tower’s contents for an unknown practical purpose or if its dripping halls are merely aesthetic. Certainly the immense torture chamber, built to resemble a blood-soaked eladrin temple, sees plenty of use after a successful war.

Lethal Locations: Dragons of Eberron

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Whether you're running an Eberron campaign or simply looking for some places of interest to add to your home-brewed setting, you may find one or more of the locations detailed below of use to you in your game. From an eerie city of accursed dead to a location with hidden serpentfolk who have so far kept themselves to themselves (mostly), the sites below can help you give your players some more stories to talk about away from the gaming table.

Each location gives you an overview, some details on any dangers PCs might face on approaching the area, various terrain features, plus descriptions of areas within the location. You can also find random encounter tables in many of the sections.

The material you find here makes use of the information in the three DUNGEONS & DRAGONS core rulebooks—*Player's Handbook* (PH), *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG), and *Monster Manual* (MM), as well as the *Eberron Campaign Setting* (ECS). Throughout this article other abbreviations are often used to denote game elements and other materials that appear in certain supplements. Those supplements and their abbreviations

(when applicable) are as follows: *Draconomicon* (Dr), *Dragons of Eberron* (DoE), *Dungeon Master's Guide II* (DMG2), *Eyes of the Lich Queen* (ELQ), *Libris Mortis* (LM), *Monster Manual III* (MM3), and *Monster Manual IV* (MM4). Although possession of these supplements can enhance your enjoyment of this article, they are not strictly necessary.

THE BLACK WELL

Beneath the desolate landscape of Argonnessen's southern tundra lies a series of labyrinthine caverns whose name was legendary before the earliest histories of the dragons were set down—Khesavuthir, the Black Well. Though its history and dark purpose are long lost, the Black Well remains one of the most sought-after sites in Argonnessen. The legendary Khesavuthir promises lost lore, dark secrets, epic magic—and unspeakable madness to all who seek it.

APPROACH

Fractured tundra broken by wild zones and upthrust plains of razor-sharp rock surrounds the Black Well for nearly a hundred miles in any direction, making an approach by land all but impossible. The sky here is perpetually beset with shadowy storm clouds, though flying creatures take no penalties to movement as a result.



TERRAIN FEATURES

The Black Well has remained hidden for uncounted centuries, and for good reason. Powerful magic infuses the very landscape here, interfering with teleportation magic. Teleportation effects that normally have no chance of failure (such as a *greater teleport* spell) are given the chance of failure of a normal *teleport* spell (PH 292) if their destination lies within fifty miles of the Black Well. For destinations within ten miles of the site, decrease the familiarity of the destination by one category when determining the chance of failure. Teleportation effects that normally have a chance of failure fail automatically within one hundred miles of the site.

In addition to its effect on teleportation, the lingering magic of cursed Khesavuthir plays havoc with the senses. Whether a party approaches by air or ground, the tundra around the Black Well appears to constantly shift and reshape itself. It takes a DC 50 Survival check to locate the Forgotten Gate from a distance of a day's march, and a subsequent DC 50 Survival check to lead a party to it. On a failed second check, a party becomes lost (DMG 86, but add +10 to the DC of the Survival check to determine the correct direction of travel).

Whether a party approaches by ground or air, cold dangers (DMG 302), heat and lava dangers from randomly erupting volcanic vents (DMG 303 and 304), and windstorms (DMG 93) are a constant threat.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

No detailed map is provided for this location. The placement of the following features is at the DM's discretion, as is the composition of guardian forces.

Khesavuthir's Pets: The power of the Black Well has long been a magnet for debased and evil draconic creatures. These now prowl the wasted landscape around the site, feeding on each other and any creatures foolish enough to linger here. A party that approaches within fifty miles of the Black Well (whether by land or air) must check each hour for random encounters on the Black Well Encounters table, below.

A party that approaches the site with any degree of secrecy has the normal 10% chance of an encounter each hour. However, the servants of Khesavuthir have an instinctive mystical connection that aids them in their efforts to keep the Black Well free of intruders. For each wandering monster encounter the party faces, the chance of a subsequent encounter the next hour increases by 5%. A party that leaves the area for 72 hours or longer has its chance for a random encounter reduced to 10% when it next returns.

Sinkhole Shelves: The landscape of wind-etched rock that spreads across the nondescript tundra surrounding the Black Well has been undercut and weakened by the erosion of centuries-old volcanic vents. Each round that a party moves through

these areas, there is a 1% chance per Medium creature in the party that the ground collapses in a sinkhole with a 15-foot-radius bury zone and a 15-foot-radius slide zone (DMG 66). It takes a DC 30 Search check or a DC 30 Survival check to note a sinkhole shelf. (For the purpose of triggering a sinkhole, two Small creatures equal one Medium creature, a Large creature equals two Medium creatures, and so on.)

Guardposts: The Forgotten Gate that leads to the Black Well is surrounded by a number of caverns wherein dwell the site's most devoted guardians. These abyssal drakes (Dr 145) maintain a sleepless watch over land and sky. The low caves from which they scan the surroundings are well concealed (Hide +22), and the drakes are difficult to surprise (Listen +17, Spot +17). Whenever intruders approach within 100 feet of a single abyssal drake's position, it takes to the air, using its breath weapon and frightful presence to drive intruders toward other guardposts where its allies wait to attack.

The Forgotten Gate: Obscured by shifting landscape and shadowy fog, three crumbling onyx archways rise within a series of cinder cone peaks. Seemingly carved of single blocks of stone, these great arches must once have stood more than 50 feet high. Now, only their bases remain, surrounding a perfectly circular portal leading straight down.

The entrance to Khesavuthir was designed for dragons in flight, the shaft dropping some hundred feet before ending in a vast circular chamber. From here, dozens of tunnels lead off at different angles, twisting as they plunge deep within the earth.

Chambers of Shadow: The labyrinthine corridors of Khesavuthir are a seemingly endless web of unmappable passageways and caverns. All are dragon-sized and are subject to the same sense of shifting landscape that affects the surface above the Black Well. This effect does not impede forward movement or a party's ability to explore, but it takes a DC 30 Survival check to successfully backtrack along the same route. On a failed check, a party becomes effectively lost (DMG 86, but add +10 to the DC of the Survival check to determine the correct direction of travel).

These chambers might be home to guardians from the Black Well Encounters table, to artifacts that bestow the half-dragon template or other effects, or to draconic undead or fiends lost here since the Age of Demons.

The Library of Khesavuthir: Among a small number of secretive draconic scholars, it is known that the Black Well was once home to a draconic cult whose members interpreted the Prophecy in ways eventually forbidden by the Chamber. Though knowledge of their beliefs has been lost to history, whispered rumors speak of the cultists drawing great arcane power from blood sacrifice. The transgression that saw the cultists eventually hunted down and destroyed involved the

appearance of dragonmarks among the lesser races—and the cultists' belief that the dragonmarked had been created as fodder for dark rituals of sacrifice and consumption.

The heart of the Black Well lies some three miles beneath the surface, and it consists of an interconnected set of caverns wherein can be found the greatest secrets of the cult. The full extent of those secrets—as well as whatever lore and artifacts the cult abandoned here—is left to the DM's determination.

The Hold of Danazharil: For more than thirteen hundred years, the Black Well has been the lair of the shadow dragon Danazharil (Dr 191). Once a high-ranking leader of the Talons of Tiamat, Danazharil fled the cult centuries before, though he sends his minions on endless missions to keep track of its activities. Now a great wyrm of unparalleled power and malice, Danazharil has designs on taking control of the Talons of Tiamat using the lore and magic of the Black Well. A trio of Io'lokari explorers corrupted by the site's foul power (see the High Cultists encounter, DoE 62) are his eyes and ears within the upper echelons of the cult.

Danazharil relishes the opportunity to destroy those who seek the Black Well's forbidden knowledge. He can move freely through the labyrinth of twisting corridors and caverns, using his shadow blend and create shadows abilities to attack with total concealment as he carefully destroys his foes with tooth

and claw. He uses his breath weapon to strip away the power of any foes who present a serious challenge. Dragonmarked characters and those who outlast their allies in direct combat are given special honor by being left alive—so as to be consumed in the dark rites that were forged here.

BLACK WELL ENCOUNTERS (CHECK 1/HOUR, 10% CHANCE; SEE TEXT)

d%	Encounter	EL
01–20	1d4 wyverns (MM 259)	6–10
21–25	2d6 zombie young adult white dragons (Dr 198)	7–12
26–35	2d6 ice drakes (Dr 154)	9–14
36–45	1d6+6 whitespawn hunter (MM4 158)	10–11
46–55	1d4+4 ambush drakes (MM3 8)	10–11
56–65	1d4 adult white dragons (MM 77)	10–14
66–75	1d4+4 whitespawn berserkers (MM4 158)	11–12
76–80	1d4 hill landwyrms (Dr 170)	11–16
81–85	1d4+4 skeletal mature adult black dragon (Dr 192)	12–13
86–90	1d4 young adult silver dragons (MM 87)	12–17
91–00	1d4 tundra landwyrms (Dr 174)	13–18

THE BURNING BEACH

The traditions of the Seren are a mystery to most. These wild humans have lived below the dragons' talons for thousands of years. The tribes are many, and each has its own unique and





often savage culture. The firebringers have long worshiped the red dragons of Argonnessen as living gods, and they sacrifice their holiest in a baptism of fire to send their smoking souls into the skies, there to dance alongside the dragon lords. They do not always wait until these chosen ones are dead. A willing soul burns bright, they say, and a true devotee of the dragon watches his or her flesh melt without fear. The pyres, wherein these holy ones burn, stand on a mournful stretch of ebon-sand beach below the petrified head of great wyrm red dragon. Though long ago calcified, the dragon's soul is far from departed—in fact its mighty breath produces the flames that burns the firebringers' holy dead, or so the firebringers believe. Every new moon, a holy one (usually a mighty warrior, chief, or shaman) ascends the pyres and looks his stone god in the maw. The holy one then asks for the blessing of fire, and either gout of flame erupt forth to consume him, or the stone remains cold (in this case it is viewed that the holy one's time has not yet come, and they have more work to do before his soul-smoke can ascend).

APPROACH

Hazy black smoke rises off the beach night and day, and it covers the entire stretch of dark sand in an otherworldly pall. This smoke grants concealment to any and all who wander there. The smoke thins to nothing about 10 feet off the ground (thus the raised pyres and prayer platforms are not shrouded in it). The beach is difficult to access by land or sea. Treacherous ridges descend from cliffs above, and the churning shoals smash inbound ships to driftwood and offer up their passengers to a host of coastal predators. A successful DC 30 Swim check is necessary to avoid being raked over razor coral on the way in, and failure results in a character taking 2d6 points of slashing damage per round until she succeeds on the check. A successful DC 30 Climb check is necessary to descend to the remote beach from the 180-foot-tall cliffs above without falling.

A volcano was ground to pebbles here by the eternal onslaught of wind and sea. Now a haze-filled beach of glossy black sand stretches out below crags of volcanic rock. Rising from the sand is a tremendous statue of a dragon's head, and its obsidian toothed maw opens wide. Before the beastly visage stands a stone pyre with a set of carved steps leading up to it. The only sound is the lash of the sea against the shoals and the howl of a haunting wind.

TERRAIN FEATURES

A strange, chalky, black mineral called blackfire grows on the cliff walls behind the Burning Beach. Blackfire is highly combustible, and when heated it explodes into a gout of flame.

Blackfire deposits around the beach make carrying torches dangerous, so anyone moving about the area with a source of flame runs the risk of detonating the unstable mineral (4d6 points of fire damage in a 10-foot-radius blast). If blackfire is added to the material components of any spell that inflicts fire damage, there is a 30% chance the spell inflicts an additional 1d6 points of fire damage.

Blackfire is harvested by the firebringers' shamans and used to make the petrified dragon's head "breathe." In truth the fiery outpouring from its maw results when blackfire is tossed into the magma well roiling deep beneath the beach. An eruption belches out fire very soon after that.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

No detailed map is provided for this location. The placement of the following features is at the DM's discretion.

Forlorn Rift: Below the waves, a deep rift stretches into the darkness of Khyber. Aquatic horrors abound in its depths, but the most common threat is a clutch of chuuls that prowl the upper reaches of the sea crater. Rumor has it that a powerful sea drake king named Kaarlgrun the Usurper makes his home inside Forlorn Rift, but the cantankerous sea dragon has not been spotted for a hundred years.

Smoking Sand Warrens: The smoke that pours from the black sand rises from a nest of vents and dark tunnels. This dizzying network of underground passages serves as a warren for a feral band of magmin led by their chief, Sizzralg (male magmin barbarian 9). The superheated gases in these vents deal 1d6 points of fire damage per round to any creature traversing them.

Bones of the Usurped King: This well-worn sea drake skeleton was once Kaarlgrun's elder brother, the rightful king of Forlorn Rift named Haagbarl, before the younger sea drake's treachery ended his life. According to the firebringers' tales, Haagbarl crawled from the sea and thrashed his last on the Burning Beach while calling upon the stone dragon's head to curse his traitorous younger sibling. Many believe Kaarlgrun's disappearance is the result of Haagbarl's dying devotions to the petrified red dragon.

The Prayer Platform: Every new moon, when a holy one offers to be bathed in the dragon god's breath, a host of firebringers ascends this platform to writhe and chant along with the ceremony. The warriors of the clan engage in self mutilation with burning brands—they scar their arms and chests both to prove their might and supplicate themselves to the red dragon god. Tribal youths are sent to the Burning Beach as a rite of passage, where they must spend 24 hours here alone and sleep on the platform. They often dream of themselves as powerful dragons, kin to their great god. Anyone who sleeps upon this

platform dreams similar dreams and is immune to the frightful presence ability of all dragons for the next week.

The Pyre: This obsidian dais rising 30 feet off the ground is positioned directly beneath the petrified red dragon's maw. When blackfire is hurled into the dragon's magma core, gouts of lava erupt from the maw, showering any creatures positioned here and causing 20d6 points of fire damage (DC 25 Reflex save for half). The fire is presaged by a sputtering sound and a slight tremor on the round before the eruption.

Shaman's Alcove: A passage at the base of the red dragon's neck is a well-kept secret of the firebringer shamans, passed down from father to son. The shamans have always controlled the breath of the dragon from this secret chamber, where they hurl blackfire into the depths before ascending to the top of the dragon's head via the secret stair noted on the map. The eruption usually takes a few rounds to build up.

The current shaman is a twisted, malformed young man named Ulthig. Ulthig is in love with the chief's daughter, but she is promised to a great warrior named Kintergos (and is repulsed by the drooling shaman's deformities in any event). Ulthig has violated the sacred code of his ancestors and now scorches every single warrior who presents himself to the dragon god on the pyre (working his way through the ranks to Kintergos). Unless someone intervenes soon, Ulthig is bound to decimate the entire tribe with his obsession. Besides wiping

out their bravest and strongest, Ulthig's unrelenting eruptions have awakened fell fiery monstrosities long slumbering deep in the magma, whose ire could destroy the firebringers to the last clan member.

BURNING BEACH ENCOUNTERS (CHECK 1/HOUR, 10% CHANCE)

d%	Encounter EL	
01–15	1d6 azers (MM 21)	1–7
16–30	1 dragonne (MM 88)	7
31–45	1d4 large fire elementals (MM 99)	5–9
46–60	2d10 firebringers (ELQ 54, 51)	9
61–75	1 noble plus 4 average salamanders (MM 219)	12
76–90	1 cinder swarm (MM3 29)	13
91–00	2d6 dracotaur ragers (MM3 43)	9–14

THE CAGED CITY OF VREEN

Sentinel pines scrape the sky and deep shadows hide the dragons' darkest secrets in a towering forest on the southern edge of Fang Crater. Thousands of rust-covered iron cages hang from the branches here like grim fruit. Twisting and creaking in the wind, the cages imprison long-dead skeletons, who seemingly scrape at their bars with bony talons. Long ago, as the giants grew to majesty on the far shores of Xen'drik, the trees here ringed the great city of Vreen, a civilization of Sarlonan humans and Aerenal elves





The trees loom close here and stretch up into the boundless sky. The cold wind yields no sound of rustling branches—only the scrape and whine of rusted metal hinges, the clink of old bones, and an occasional piteous moan fill the silence. Shadows dance among the branches like spiders—sometimes sinister and sometimes hypnotic as they flit among the leaves.

thriving in the shadows of dragons' wings. Now all that remains is a hanging, rusted legacy of horror and cruelty.

Invited as guests of the dragon-stewards of Argonnessen, the residents of Vreen lived in a paradise—their godlike hosts provided for every need and satisfied every whim. However, this utopia was a ruse. As the giants rose to might across the sea and twisted Argonnessen's gift of magic into a terrible instrument of cataclysm, the dragons already began to plot the destruction of the titan-kings and the utter erasure of their civilization.

The Du'rashka Tul, also called the madness of crowds, was a mighty curse that when leveled at an entire civilization spelled the doom of a thousand generations and plunged a whole continent into an endless cycle of inescapable savagery. This potent magic took more than mere moments to make, however. Vreen served as the laboratory where the Eyes of Chronopsis shaped this dark curse to perfection. A few years after Vreen was peopled with "chosen" Sarlonan and elven peoples, the dragons began to work their epic power on the remote city, shielded from prying eyes by the great surrounding forest. The people there changed. Fear and mistrust spread like disease. Paranoia shouted down reason, and hatred bloomed in the hearts of the city's denizens. The trials began—terrifying inquisitions to root out "evil" in which the accused were always found guilty and consigned to a slow death in a hanging iron cage. Food for crows and vermin, these starved, insane people twisted far above the ground, their screams echoing through the branches. As the dragons perfected their mighty curse, the city tore itself apart. None survived, and the Eyes of Chronopsis allowed the forest to claim Vreen, either to hide the secrets of their powerful weapon, or to shield future generations from this horrible deed. The rusted cages remain to this day, and even though the curse lingers still and many of the dead prisoners rest uneasily, the promise of the city's unspoiled treasure vaults as well as the arcane secrets of the dragon's curse-crucible draw many intrepid souls to the dark woods—there to hunt gold and power, but most likely finding only paranoia and death.

APPROACH

Overlooking Fang Crater, the old growth forest surrounding Vreen is a place of deep shadows even at high noon. A shroud of nettles and jagged branches scorn the sun, and darkness reigns within. Steely pine needles that pierce even leather cover the

ground, making movement through the forest a delicate process. Rain clouds favor the woods here (perhaps accounting in part for the trees' freakish size) and downpours cascade through the groaning cages hanging within the trees. Rust-tainted rain water often forms blood-red pools on the forest floor.

TERRAIN FEATURES

The Du'rashka Tul flows from the land here like a tide of savage hate and mistrust. The longer one wanders the nettle-floor of Vreen's dark woods, the colder her heart turns. Love flees the soul as it embraces fear and ire instead. For every 6 hours spent in Vreen, a living creature must make a DC 25 Will save. The first failure results in a mounting sense of anxiety and the inability to trust even her closest loved ones and companions. The second failure escalates these base fears to murderous hate, and the person believes that those it travels with are secretly planning to destroy her. The first chance she gets, she launches a preemptive attack. The third failure results in her going permanently insane (as the insanity spell) and assuming that every creature she encounters is a dire foe bent on her annihilation.

The curse aside, Vreen is fraught with demented undead and spellwarped predators. More than a few mad dragons lurk here as well, either driven to distraction while questing for power in Vreen's accursed borders, or drawn here in the throes of some nameless guilt over their ancestors' horrid experiments on the people of the Caged City.

KEYED AREAS

1. Trees of Rust and Woe: These great trees serve as a graveyard of sorts, holding thousands of dead Vreens in their rusted iron cage-coffins, all hanging from the branches. Some red, bone-filled cages hang as low as 5 feet off the ground, and the fingers of their inhabitants clutch at the rusted bars of the cage. In the heights of the branches, hundreds of these cages sway in the strong wind, occasionally snapping free and careening to the earth. Below the trees, broken cages lie strewn upon the ground like rotten fruit. Many of these fallen cages are disturbingly vacant—their skeletal prisoners long gone.

2. Carrion District: One of the only sections of Vreen still standing, this ruined district is a ghost town of half-demolished marble monuments and once lavish estates now caved in by time's crushing hand. In the grips of the deepest paranoia of the curse, Vreen inhabitants ran out of trees and began hanging traitors from the gates of their estates. The cages still hang here today, adorning ruined archways like macabre ornaments. Now this district is the prowling ground of a tremendous charnel hound (MM3 26) made up of dozens of Vreen's former residents. A successful DC 20 Survival check reveals the hound's hunting trails and allows a PC to track the undead menace



to its lair, which is a large carnival for the district's children. This playground of magically powered marble and steel rides has the remains of several children hanging in rusty wrought-iron cages—a testament to the height of paranoia that befell the city.

3. Temple to the Benefactors: Once the people of Vreen loved their dragon-gods and built great temples in their honor, where they offered sacrifices to the Eyes of Chronepsis who provided for them and sheltered them from all harm. One such temple still stands here—a towering tribute of pristine white marble with silver tracery and spires. As the city fell in the grips of madness, the high priest here tore his golden locks from his head, taking his scalp with them, and then gouged out his own eyes with an ear-splitting screech. His wailing never ended. The high priest rose as a deathshrieker (MM3 33) and still stalks the temple grounds.

4. Circle of Truth: In better times, this tremendous amphitheatre was a venue for players, acrobats, and wonders. Then the curse's evil tendrils found their way into the hearts and minds of Vreens, and the amphitheatre, as the largest central gathering place, became the backdrop for the inquisition. These mockeries of justice became the best-attended events in the city as the curse drove people to feed their darkest urges. In later years at the height of the curse, the accused numbered in the dozens

every day, and the average trial lasted a mere handful of minutes. The verdict was always guilty. Now the ruined amphitheatre is haunted by a ghostly court of inquisitors, their victims, and a spectral malingering crowd of leering onlookers. Anyone who ventures here becomes accused and is thrown in with the haggard ghostly prisoners that await their trials. The proceedings are overseen by the former inquisitor, who is now a deranged lich named Penthralos (MM 166). He views any new arrivals as treacherous heretics and accursed traitors doomed to be bound in iron and planted high in the trees to wither and rot.

5. Terrace of Fire: These terraced farms were once replete with a bounty of vegetable, fruit, and grain staples that magically sprung from the earth to provide for all of Vreen's needs. As the curse's hold grew stronger, the people converted these plateau farms to forges wherein they wrought the iron cages of pain. The surrounding crops and trees fueled the hateful flames until these terraces were left desolate. When the forges could no longer keep up with the number of condemned, the "heretics" were fed to the fires. Now in the dark of night, ghost fires still rage on the hearths, and burning effigies (MM 89) wander these terraces moaning out in horrid torment from within their death-flames.

6. Palace of the Caged King: The last king of Vreen was a drooling simpleton of a child who ascended the throne when

his father was condemned to a rusty cage. The power behind the throne at the end was a mad wizard named Karthaxilar, and he still rules here, now a horrid undead (male grimweird wizard 12). Karthaxilar commands a host of blasphemes (LM 85), two grigols (MM3 77), and of course his young liege, now a slaymate (LM 122).

7. Grimgnarl's Cave: An insane great wyrm black dragon, named Grimgnarl, makes his home in this giant subterranean lair. No one is sure why he came to Vreen, but his mind snapped under the strain and he now prowls the ruined city, searching either for power or redemption.

CAGED CITY ENCOUNTERS (CHECK 1/HOUR, 10% CHANCE)

d%	Encounter	EL
01–15	2d10 boneclaws (MM3 17)	7–12
16–30	1 boneyard (LM 89)	14
31–45	2d4 wheeps (LM 132)	13–17
46–60	1 angel of decay (LM 83)	14
61–75	1 sorrowsworn demon (MM3 36)	17
76–90	2d10 spellwarped rocs (MM 215, MM3 162)	12–19
91–100	1 insane very old red dragon (MM 77)	21

THE CHILDREN OF VARSTARYINAX

Among the dragons of Argonnessen, few are as well respected as those who willingly sacrifice themselves to stand guard within the Pit of Five Sorrows (DoE 35). However, while not all dragons accept summary execution at the end of their guard shifts with the same level of dignity, only one is known to have cheated that fate. In a remote corner of the Vast, a complex of caverns dating back to the Age of Demons is the lair of the descendants of Varstaryinax—a black dragon who escaped execution after his sojourn as the warder of Tiamat's prisons.

APPROACH

The home of the Children of Varstaryinax lies deep in the Vast. Like many areas of that untamed land, it is virtually inaccessible except by air. The dominion lords shun this territory, both for the dark magic still operating here and out of revulsion for Varstaryinax's name and his descendants' reputation as fiend worshipers. However, a party seeking the children of Varstaryinax must pass through a half-dozen other dominions first—none of which typically welcome visitors.

TERRAIN FEATURES

The territory claimed by the descendants of Varstaryinax is an arid waste of mountains shattered to rubble by the battles of dragons and fiends. Weather and the hazards of mountainous terrain (DMG 89) are a constant threat to travelers. More dan-

gerous, however, are the widespread pockets of fiendish magic that erupt without warning when approached. Treat these as living spells (ECS 293) of 9th level or higher, but increase spell resistance to 15, increase damage reduction to 10/—, and add the evil descriptor.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

No detailed map is provided for this location. The placement of the following features is at the DM's discretion, as is the composition of guardian forces.

The Shadowland: Even before Varstaryinax was hunted down and slain by the Eyes of Chronepsis, his betrayal of his duty shamed the immediate members of his flight into exile in the Vast. There, they occupied an empty land of shattered peaks and rubble-filled valleys uninhabited since the Age of Demons. The Shadowland now stands as a buffer zone around the fortress that Varstaryinax's heirs have raised for themselves. Young adult black dragons (MM 72 or Dr 202) constantly patrol the area in groups of six or more. They brook no intrusion into their lands, attacking without provocation or warning. Unsubtle opponents, they rely more on direct combat (preferably from the air) than spellcasting. However, the patrols have an exacting knowledge of the locations of the fiendish living spells that dot the area, and they attempt to herd intruders toward them.

The Burning Tower: In the center of the Shadowland, a smooth-walled tower of black obsidian rises nearly a thousand feet from a rocky island set within a steaming lake of acid. In the long centuries after their self-imposed exile, the descendants of Varstaryinax built this place—some say in response to orders given by Varstaryinax's own spirit.

When the tower was near completion, a group of warrior dragons undertook a century-long flight across the Vast to reclaim the bones of Varstaryinax where the Eyes of Chronepsis had scattered them. When the black dragon's remains were laid to rest in the glacial lake surrounding the island, its water turned to a potent acid that now boils ceaselessly. The area around the tower is a nightmare zone of acidic rain and noxious fumes. Creatures not immune to acid who approach by air or ground within 500 feet of the tower take 2d10 points of acid damage per round, and each must succeed on a DC 23 Fortitude save each round or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. Creatures coming into contact with the dripping walls of the tower take 10d10 points of acid damage per round, while creatures who enter the acid lake take 20d10 points of acid damage per round.

The Burning Tower is guarded by a flight of ten adult black dragons (Dr 203). Unlike their younger siblings who patrol the Shadowland, these guardians rely on spell power to neutralize intruders before they get anywhere near the tower itself.

The Warrens: Within the Burning Tower, multiple levels of living space open up around a central flight core that rises to the very top of the fortress. The lingering effect of the atmosphere outside means that creatures within must succeed on DC 13 Fortitude saves or take 1 point of Constitution damage. All such creatures must succeed on a second save 1 minute later or take another 1d4 points of Constitution damage.

Unlike the tower's harsh exterior, the interior is clean and spare, consisting mostly of nesting space, temples, and draconic libraries with works etched on acid-resistant stone slabs. Characters who explore the interior of the tower can note evidence hinting that the residents of this place tend to neutral and good, not evil. Signs can be found that the descendants of Varstaryinax worship Chronopsis, Io, and Tamara exclusively.

None of this knowledge helps improve the mood of the dragons when they discover that their sanctum has been defiled, however, and the residents of the Burning Tower fight to the death against any intrusion. More than a hundred black dragons lair here, including thirty juvenile and younger dragons that fight as ferociously as their elders.

Varstaryinax's Secret: At the top of the Burning Tower lairs the leader of Varstaryinax's children. Arvaslanax is the great wyrm matriarch (Dr 207) of the extended flight, and she alone knows the full truth of her line—Varstaryinax's time in the Pit of Five Sorrows gave him unique insight into the plans

of the Lords of Dust in Argonnessen. Over long centuries, his children have expanded on Varstaryinax's dead knowledge, studying and researching the Prophecy and the lore of the Lords of Dust in complete isolation from the rest of dragonkind. Today, the lore found in the cavernous lair of Varstaryinax's descendants offers great insight to PCs fighting those who would see the rakshasa rajahs restored to power.

In recent years, Arvaslanax has discovered that the Eyes of Chronopsis knew what Varstaryinax had discovered in the Pit of Five Sorrows even before he was hunted down and slain. She knows now that the Eyes of Chronopsis are watching the children of Varstaryinax, hoping that their research bears fruit but afraid that it might lead others to seek dangerous knowledge within Tiamat's tomb.

IO'VAKAS OUTPOST

Io'lokar, City of Knowledge, is perhaps the most unusual location in Argonnessen. A humanoid settlement deep within the draconic free-for-all that is the Vast, Io'lokar is home to warriors, spellcasters, and scholars of unparalleled ability. The bright history of the city had dark beginnings, however. On the empty plain to the east stands the ruin of the city from which Io'lokar was built—Io'vakas, Gate of Knowledge. Centuries before, Io'vakas was razed as a result of the deceit of the



yuan-ti—the same yuan-ti who even today hide within the city's ruins, kept hidden by powerful psionics from the dragons who would destroy them.

APPROACH

A party seeking to explore Io'vakas faces danger on two fronts—the yuan-ti who secretly live there, and who will kill to keep their presence hidden; and the dominion lords of the Vast, many of whom still rage at what the ruined city represents. See Io'lokar on page 40 of *Dragons of Eberron* for more information.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following features correspond to numbered areas on the map. The many smaller yuan-ti outposts that surround the ruined city share similar features and defenses, but only this outpost features the chamber of the Serpent's Mask (see below).

1. The Sounding Sands: The destruction of Io'vakas by the dragons of Argonnessen left the lands around the city a blasted ruin of fire-fused stone. Over long centuries, the yuan-ti have subtly altered the nature of this brittle plain with permanent psionic effects. The ground in a mile-wide strip around the heart of the ruins echoes and amplifies the movement of any creatures on it. This bestows a –10 penalty on Listen checks to creatures in the area, but grants yuan-ti guards in the scout post (see below) a +20 bonus on Listen checks to hear those creatures approaching.

2. Scout Post: A force of six yuan-ti halfbloods (MM 264) led by a pureblood slayer (MM4 184) are stationed here at all times. The yuan-ti guard against any approach across the sounding sands and watch for the passage of creatures in flight. In the case of anything but a casual dragon flyover, two halfbloods reveal their presence in the open, hoping to catch the attention of flying intruders and draw them within range of the area's psionic turret traps.

3. Psionic Turret Trap: The yuan-ti have dotted the ruins with these automated traps (akin to the spell turret traps of DMG2) designed to harry and thwart those seeking to reconnoiter or approach the ruins of Io'vakas. The yuan-ti concealed the traps in shattered statues that reveal a serpentine visage on close examination. It takes a DC 32 Search check to notice a psionic turret trap and a DC 32 Disable Device check to shut it down.

Each psionic turret is programmed to react to all creatures except yuan-ti and dragons within 120 feet, and each can sense those creatures as with a *true seeing* effect. Creatures attempting to teleport into the area of a psionic turret have their teleport diverted some three hundred miles into the Vast in a random direction. Flying creatures are targeted with *mass ectoplasmic cocoon*, while targets on the ground are subject to *ultrablast* or *energy wave*.

Like a spell turret trap, these psionic turret traps have AC 7, hardness 8, and 200 hp. They cast one spell each round in the order given below, and they self-repair 4d8+20 points of damage every fifth round.

Io'vakas Psionic Turret (7th-level shaper powers): *Divert teleport, mass ectoplasmic cocoon, energy wave, ultrablast.*

4. Living Quarters: Yuan-ti guarding the approach to Io'vakas live rough in the ruins, and each outpost consists of little more than sheltered nesting sites surrounding a feeding chamber. Some two dozen halfbloods and abominations (MM 264) occupy the outpost under the leadership of three pureblood slayers (MM4 184) and three abomination cult leaders (MM4 186).

5. Feeding Chamber: This foul stone chamber serves as the yuan-ti's abattoir, meat locker, and mess hall. Additionally, the yuan-ti take no chances on the dragons discovering their presence in Io'vakas as a result of the actions of would-be explorers. Any creatures caught trespassing within the secure perimeter established by the outposts are brought here, interrogated, ritually slain, then eaten so as to leave no trace of their presence.

6. Vault: The yuan-ti place all treasure and magic taken from captured creatures in the special vault adjoining the feeding chamber. The rough walls of the vault are lined with lead so as to prevent detection of the magic stored here, whether by explorers or dragons making casual flyovers of the area. Yuan-ti patrols shun the use of these magic items for the same reason.

In recent years, the presence of secret yuan-ti agents in Io'lokar (see Sura, DoE 48) has allowed the yuan-ti of Io'vakas to clandestinely traffic in those magic items coveted by the folk of the City of Knowledge. However, a wealth of weapons and relics can still be found here, as determined by the DM.

7. Mask Chamber: This chamber is the most well-protected part of the outpost, and it is guarded by six yuan-ti abominations (MM 264). However, all the yuan-ti know that if the dragons ever discover the chamber's existence or the power it grants the serpent folk, Io'vakas would be razed anew and its hidden population destroyed. In the event that intruders gain access to the mask chamber, the yuan-ti of the outpost fight to the death to prevent them from ever leaving.

IO'VAKAS OUTPOST ENCOUNTERS (CHECK 1/HOUR, 10% CHANCE)

d%	Encounter	EL
01–15	1d4+1 Large monstrous scorpions (MM 287)	5–8
16–25	1d4 ambush drakes (MM3 8)	5–9
26–35	2d4 yuanti purebloods (MM 263)	5–9
36–45	1 half-black dragon explorer (4th-level human fighter) (MM 146)	6
46–60	1d4 wyverns (MM 259)	6–10
61–75	2d4 yuan-ti halfbloods (MM 264)	7–11
76–85	1d4 abomination cult leaders (MM4 186)	8–13
86–95	2d6 yuan-ti abominations (MM 264)	9–14
96–00	1d4 yuan-ti pureblood slayers (MM4 184)	9–14



THE SERPENT'S MASK

The power that has helped a yuan-ti enclave survive for generations in Argonnessen is found in one of the non-descript outposts surrounding the ruins of Io'vakas. The Serpent's Mask is a psionic location constructed by the yuan-ti, allowing their scouts and warriors to move unseen under the constant watch of the lords of the Vast and the Eyes of Chronopsis.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the Serpent's Mask by making Knowledge (psionics) checks or bardic knowledge checks at the appropriate DCs.

DC 15: Though the yuan-ti were cast out of Argonnessen long ago, a number of the serpent folk are rumored to have remained behind, using their psionic power to live unseen among the dragons who drove them into exile.

DC 20: High-level magic allows some spellcasters to ward themselves and others against detection by dragons. Whatever psionic power allows the yuan-ti to live in Argonnessen unobserved seems to mimic this effect.

DC 25: Yuan-ti exiles who fled from Argonnessen have spoken of something called the Serpent's Mask—a device that somehow allows the serpent folk to escape the notice of the dragons that hunt them.

DC 30: The Serpent's Mask is not a specific relic but a psionic location—a place from which the yuan-ti draw the power to ward themselves against the senses of the dragons.

Description: The Serpent's Mask is located in a well-protected yuan-ti outpost guarding the approach to the ruins of Io'vakas. A hidden chamber beneath the outpost has walls of adamantine etched with serpentine symbols. In the center of the chamber, a smooth-featured adamantine mask with slitted eyes floats suspended in midair.

Prerequisite: Only living creatures not of the dragon type or the dragonblood subtype can access the power of the Serpent's Mask.

Location Activation: When a creature enters the chamber, whispered voices speaking Yuan-Ti begin to repeat blessings for "Valor in combat against the foes of the serpent folk."

When a creature steps within 5 feet of the hanging mask, it begins to glow with a faint green light. The creature must step up to the mask and place his head within or against it for 1 minute in order to partake of its power. The mask automatically moves into an appropriate position based on the height of the subject creature.

The mask does not activate (though the voices are heard as normal) if more than one person enters the chamber at the same time.

Recharge: The Serpent's Mask can grant its power to ten creatures per day, with no limit to the total number of creatures that can be affected.

Special Ability (Su): Three times per day as an immediate action, a character with the power of the Serpent's Mask can make himself undetectable to dragons. Dragons cannot see, hear, or smell the warded creature, even with blindsense. They act as though the warded creature is not there. A warded creature could stand before the hungriest of red dragons and not be attacked or even noticed. If a warded character touches or attacks a dragon, even with a spell, the effect ends.

The effect lasts for 1 hour or until dismissed. This special ability is otherwise identical to the hide from dragons spell (Dr 113).

Duration: The power of the Serpent's Mask lasts for one month.

Aura: Strong abjuration.

Ability Value: 48,000 gp.



Ecology of the Death Knight

BY MATTHEW SERNETT

ART BY MARC SASSO AND STEVE ARGYLE

“

From the dark into the light,
From the small unto the great,
From the valleys dark I ride
O'er the hills to conquer fate!”

— “Horseman Springing,” Lilla Cabot Perry

None can win the war with death, but losing the war does not mean the combatants have seen their last battle. Warriors who wish to fight beyond the limitations of flesh and blood can seek a forbidden way to steal their souls from fate. The cost of this immortality is death, but the fearless few who pay this price become death's allies. Indeed, death bestows power upon them. Their fleshless bones clad in skins of armor, their brittle fingers clasp weapons with a grip of iron, these knights of death take command of their souls and their destinies. When they charge from the shadowy afterlife into the lands of the living, death knights ride to wage war upon life itself.

HISTORY

The origin of the death knight lies in a period so ancient that only legends can speak of it with authority. Each race has its own version of the story.

For elves, the first death knight was a tragic figure who was tricked into becoming a death knight in order to win his love from the clutches of a rapacious rival. In this version, lies lead the story's hero to death. His rival is not a villain. His lady doesn't truly love him. The wicked fey creature who offers the hero a path to power leads him instead to damnation. After killing his apparent foe and learning the truth of his supposed love, the death knight embraces the flame of darkness in his heart by slaying the lady and turning his grief and rage upon the rest of the world.

To dwarves, the first death knight was a greedy king who could not release his grip on the throne. The king sullied his clan, his kingdom, and the many honored dead who passed on before him by seeking unnatural means of extending his life. Seeing foes and rivals everywhere, he arranged for his children, his relatives, and those who refused his commands to die in battle or exile. With no heirs and no kin, he claimed his throne for eternity by becoming a death knight and transforming his loyal retainers into undead servitors. Dwarven legend says the death knight still sits on his throne and rules over a kingdom of



undead, entombed behind miles of rock by those few dwarves who escaped his reign alive.

Humans relate several competing legends of the first death knight, but all bear a common theme: A man or woman wanted power and received it, and with that dark power, the newly made death knight accomplished its goals. The death knight might have been tricked or cursed, but in these tales the means are unimportant when compared to the ends. Sometimes tragic, sometimes triumphant, these stories teach that great power allows the wielder to achieve great things, even if the price is cursed immortality.

Halfling legend tells what might be the oldest story of the first death knight, and the story is so simple it might be closest to the truth. They say the first death knight arose in service to Orcus, Demon Prince of Undead. The tale's protagonist, a human warrior of considerable skill and renown, was plagued with an unquenchable thirst for vengeance. When denied a position of power he felt was his right, he sought revenge but was denied satisfaction. Bloodied and disgraced, he fled to fell lands inhabited by demons. There he proved his worth to Orcus first by defeating the Demon Prince's minions and then by killing Orcus's enemies. When cultists of Orcus offered the man the power to avenge the slights against him, he readily accepted and became the first death knight.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEATH KNIGHT

The following table shows the results of a Religion check as it relates to death knights.

Religion DC	Result
15	Death knights are skeletal warriors who retain the intelligence and combat skills they had in life. They often lead other undead soldiers in a war against the living.
20	Death knights are warriors who chose to become undead. Often they have a specific goal or vendetta that provoked their transformations, but some simply fear the afterlife so much that they instead choose an eternal living death.
25	A death knight carries its soul in its weapon. This weapon has the power to become ghostly and pierce armor as if it was not there. If you take a death knight's weapon, you weaken the knight. A death knight can also surround itself in a burst of unholy fire that burns the living and wreathes undead in dangerous green and black flames.
30	A death knight's soul weapon weakens anyone else who wields it as long as the death knight has not been destroyed. If you break a death knight's weapon, the knight can restore it with a touch. Death knights bolster nearby undead allies, so it's best to separate the knight from its minions.

BECOMING A DEATH KNIGHT

Those who desire the dark powers of a death knight in death must first perform the proper ritual. Discovering the right ritual to become a death knight can be extraordinarily hazardous. Good-intentioned individuals often destroy copies when they find them, and the most fanatical will kill those who seek its secrets rather than allow knowledge of the ritual to spread. False rituals abound—traps laid for the unwise and unwary by those who seek souls for other dark purposes.

Despite this, working versions of the ritual exist, each with its own peculiar requirements. One ritual might simply demand that the performer sacrifice a loved one, while another might stipulate that the caster must die in battle at the hands of a foe while in a graveyard or tomb. Frequently, the supplicant must have spilled the blood of innocents with the weapon that will become the soul weapon.

The rarity of the true ritual drives many to seek it from a surer source, such as the cultists of Orcus. These vile madmen despise the gods and bow only to Orcus, who they believe will one day make eternal undead of them all. As worshipers of destruction, demons, and undeath, cultists of Orcus can never be trusted . . . but they enjoy seeing destructive undead unleashed upon the world, and few undead can be as dangerous as a death knight. The demands made of supplicants are a mystery, but the rites are terrible enough that even most Orcus cultists avoid this particular fate. Perhaps they do not feel worthy, or maybe, like many, they simply fear death.

Fear of death is a luxury those seeking undead knight-hood cannot afford. Instead, they must seek death out. They must hunger for it. They must embrace death to gain its power. Through death, they become death.

SOUL WEAPONS

The ritual to become a death knight tears the ritual caster's soul from his body and binds it to the weapon used in the ritual. The ritual caster dies as the living parts of the body are consumed in unholy green fire. From that conflagration rise the soulless bones of the living person, guided by an evil intelligence that no longer needs a brain for its vile thoughts and an endless hatred that no longer requires a heart to drive its dark passion.

A soul weapon is similar to a lich's phylactery in that the death knight's soul resides there instead of in its body. But in most other ways, the soul weapon is the opposite of a phylactery. For a lich its phylactery is a weakness that allows its permanent destruction, but the soul weapon is the death knight's greatest strength. A death knight literally wields its soul as a weapon. The soul weapon's strikes burn with death, and at the death

knight's command it can become immaterial, passing through armor and shields to strike at its foes' unprotected flesh.

A death knight need never fear its soul weapon's destruction, for with a thought the knight can restore the weapon to wholeness and unwholesome power. If the weapon is taken, a death knight becomes weakened and distracted, distraught by the loss of its soul and consumed by the need to recover it. However, no other creature can wield a death knight's soul weapon without feeling despair, so few can withhold a soul weapon from a death knight indefinitely.

PHYSIOLOGY

Death knights have no flesh and blood and thus lack the needs of a living body. They are tireless warriors who only desire vengeance, conquest, and other bloody evils. Despite lacking muscle and heart, death knights maintain the strength and vigor they had in life.

Like many of the living dead, death knights can be destroyed by damaging their bodies. Although they feel little pain, enough punishment can break their bones. Unlike a lich, a death knight cannot take refuge in a phylactery, and it does not reform from its soul weapon. When its earthly body is destroyed, a death knight's soul leaves its weapon and travels to whatever dire fate awaits it in the afterlife. None can say with assurance what happens to the souls of death knights. Some death knights might believe they know the fate of their souls, and that knowledge spurs them to maintain their undead existence by any means. For the rest, the afterlife is an intangible and terrifying unknown. If no devil or vile deity seizes a death knight's soul, the knight can expect no quarter when its soul is weighed by the gods.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Those who seek knighthood in death tend to be courageous and ambitious individuals. Either loners or leaders in life, in death they become both, leading lesser undead but isolated from mortal society. A group of death knights might form a cadre of dark riders, but even among such a collusion of evil, one death knight typically assumes leadership over the rest. The most ancient among them might even have been the one to corrupt the rest, creating a society of undeath.

Although on rare occasions a person has been transformed into a death knight through accident, deception, or outside force, most death knights hunted for their undead fate. They might have been motivated by fear of the afterlife, but those who seek to deny gods or devils their souls cannot be considered cowards. Rather, the desire for knighthood in death stems largely from a desire for power. Those who become death knights are often already powerful warriors, so the temptation

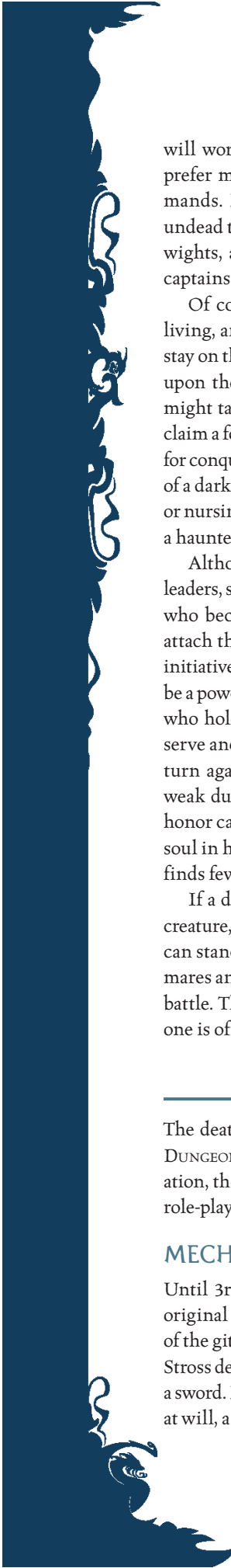


of undeath must offer them something mortality cannot: power unmitigated by age.

Most who turn to death as a means of power are frustrated in life, thwarted in their efforts to achieve their ambitions. Defeat is less tolerable than death, and they are willing to trade flesh and life for the power to avenge themselves or to accomplish a goal. Upon achieving unholy knighthood, such individuals relentlessly pursue the cause of their rage. Continued failure results in greater frustration and anger and drives the death knight to marshal superior forces. Since time has little meaning to a death knight, it might return for revenge generations after those who wronged it are buried and gone. Success provides a death knight only fleeting happiness, for after achieving its goal, a death knight can only look forward to a cold eternity of endless struggle.

Whatever their personalities in life, death knights become brooding and wrathful in death. They carry their souls in their bony hands, a constant reminder of a bargain that cannot be undone. For power to accomplish a single goal, death knights forego all other joys. That choice weighs upon its every immortal moment.

Newly made death knights and those who regret their decision usually act alone, but with time most death knights accept their status among the undead and use it as a tool for power. Death knights can command lesser undead, and though they



will work with dim-witted creatures such as zombies, most prefer minions that can accept and act upon complex commands. In particular, death knights prefer the services of undead that behave like warriors. Humanoid skeletons, battle wights, and sword wraiths serve them well as foot soldiers, captains, and bodyguards.

Of course, death knights are rarely welcome among the living, and as they gather forces about themselves, they must stay on the move or find refuge lest an army be brought to bear upon them before they are ready for battle. A death knight might take command of a ruined castle, or it might raid and claim a fortress from its inhabitants. If the death knight thirsts for conquest, such conquered territory might become the heart of a dark empire. If the death knight is still marshalling forces or nursing anger about a past defeat, the fortress might remain a haunted ruin, a source of dark rumors and whispered tales.

Although the majority of death knights work alone or as leaders, some become followers to greater forces. Death knights who became undead unwillingly or at the behest of others attach themselves to a superior who shows great purpose and initiative. Sometimes this is another death knight, but it might be a powerful undead such as a lich or vampire, or even a mortal who holds influence over the undead. Death knights might serve another for years or even centuries, but most eventually turn against their erstwhile masters, waiting until they are weak due to some loss. A death knight's loyalty and sense of honor can last far longer than any living person's, but with its soul in hand as eternity stretches out before it, a death knight finds few promises worth keeping and morality a farce.

If a death knight makes any long-term connection with a creature, it is most likely to be with a favored mount. Few horses can stand to carry such a horror, but evil beasts such as nightmares and undead mounts willingly carry a death knight into battle. The teamwork necessary for rider and mount to act as one is often a death knight's only source of lasting pleasure.

MONSTER EVOLUTION

The death knight has been making fearsome appearances in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS games for over 25 years. Since its creation, the concept of the death knight has appeared in novels, role-playing games, and computer games.

MECHANICS

Until 3rd Edition, the death knight changed little from its original form as envisioned by Charles Stross (also the creator of the githyanki) for the original *Fiend Folio*, published in 1981. Stross designed the death knight as an armor-wearing lich with a sword. It could cast eleven different spells, including *wall of ice* at will, a 20d6 *fireball*, and *gate* to bring in demon allies. When

the death knight reappeared in 2nd Edition, it lost the *gate* spell but retained virtually every other aspect of its mechanics. The death knight's translation into a template for 3rd Edition gave the lich some space by removing nearly all the death knight's spells, but it didn't really define the death knight as something other than an undead with a fear aura and 20d6 fiery blast.

In designing the death knight for 4th Edition, we originally developed the concept without including any kind of fiery blast or spellcasting. We wanted the death knight to feel more like an undead knight, so we gave it special weapon and shield abilities, an ability that activates when foes flank it, a special mount power, and a melee-oriented fear ability. Development of the concept stripped away some of the complexity, because the NPC that becomes a death knight should have interesting melee powers just like the NPC turned into a lich should have interesting spellcasting powers. The second design also brought back 3rd Edition's abyssal blast and added undead leadership powers. Yet that version of the monster still didn't feel right. It didn't emphasize melee, and it felt too much like a lich because the death knights employed phylacteries.

The final mechanics for the death knight template are easy to use and reinforce the death knight as a significant melee threat. The melee-oriented abilities augment any capabilities the NPC already has, rather than making a DM choose between using a death knight power or an NPC power. The death knight retains its supernatural nature without having abilities that feel like spells, and it can be a great leader of undead without necessitating undead minions. The new soul weapon concept gives the death knight its own space in mechanics and story, bringing new life to this decades-old undead.

APPEARANCE

The death knight has always been an armored warrior with a fleshless head, changing little in basic appearance since its original Fiend Folio depiction. The most significant change came with 3rd Edition's Monster Manual II. There the death knight clearly had green fleshy forearms and appeared to have similarly colored skin on its face. For 4th Edition's depiction, we returned to the classic appearance of the most famous image of a death knight, Keith Parkinson's Lord Soth's Charge. You can see one result of that effort on the cover of this issue.

FAMOUS DEATH KNIGHTS

The first named death knight was Saint Kargoth, introduced in a 1983 *Dragon* article, but the most famous by far is Lord Soth of the *Dragonlance* campaign setting. Here's a primer on some of the death knights D&D has named over the years.

Saint Kargoth: First introduced in *Dragon* and then adopted by the *Greyhawk* campaign setting, Saint Kargoth was a noble



human knight who, along with thirteen fellow knights, became a death knight after being corrupted by Demogorgon. Kargoth was jealous that another knight was chosen to lead the Great Kingdom's knight protectors, and his fury and envy lead him to seek the power of undeath to pursue his revenge. He became a hero to the worshipers of Hextor, hence his appellation as a saint.

Lord Soth: Like Kargoth, Lord Soth was also a great knight, but Soth's transformation into a death knight is a far more twisted tale. Soth's wife gave birth to a monster that was a representation of Lord Soth's soul. Thinking his wife had been unfaithful, Lord Soth murdered her and his child, even though Lord Soth was himself unfaithful to his wife. When his crime was discovered, Lord Soth was spirited away from his execution by knights loyal to him. While besieged with his knights, Lord Soth was informed that he could save the world from a great cataclysm. He left to pursue the quest that would save the world, but he turned back when told lies about his new wife's fidelity. Soth confronted his new wife and their child while the cataclysm occurred, refusing to save them from a fiery death. The fire that killed them engulfed the whole keep, killing Lord Soth and his allies, but the cursed Lord Soth arose as a death knight and his followers joined him in undeath.

Miltiades: Although not specifically referred to as a death knight, a skeletal undead paladin named Miltiades appears in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting. Cursed by Tyr, god of justice, after dishonorably slaying a foe, Miltiades sought to do good even after death. Tyr restored Miltiades to life after suitable heroics.

Vanthus Vanderboren: Vanthus featured as a villain in Dungeon magazine's "Savage Tide" adventure path. Appearing as a human foe throughout the first two adventures, he returns as a half-fiend after visiting the Abyss and being transformed by the Flesh Forge. Following his death at the hands of the PCs, Demogorgon turns him into a death knight, and he bedevils the PCs again only to meet a second death. Upon this second failure, he is transformed into a larva, and the PCs meet him in this lowly form during the last adventure.

SAMPLE DEATH KNIGHTS

Death knights can be used in many ways in a D&D game, as minions of a greater foe or as a main villain. As NPCs with an applied template, death knights have any number of options. Below are a few ideas to inspire you when you create a death knight for your game.

King of Brigadoon: The death knight might be the lord of a roaming fortress that appears at certain times in particular places. The death knight and his minions can threaten the PCs wherever they are, and the haunted ruin of the castle can offer an unexpected opportunity for exploration and



adventure. It might be like Brigadoon (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigadoon>), appearing for a time and then vanishing for years, or perhaps it's like the flying citadel of Dragonlance fame (<http://www.geocities.com/~kitiaria/LancePics/ArtOfDL.jpg>). The Ravenloft setting offers obvious possibilities, but if your players are familiar with Lord Soth's time in that land (http://www.amazon.com/Knight-Black-Rose-Ravenloft-Terror/dp/1560761563/ref=pd_bbs_sr_2/102-8602245-6680940?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1186605666&srs=8-2), you might want to try something different.

Ring Wraiths: In its initial inception D&D borrowed a lot from J.R.R. Tolkien, so consider borrowing a bit more. The ring wraiths, or Nazgûl (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazgûl>), were kings transformed into undead by the corrupting influence of the rings they wore and the One Ring. However they came about, you can arrive at the awesome image of a half-dozen death knight charging across the landscape. Your dark riders might be a legion of evil seeking to bring their brand of justice to the PCs, or they might be the servants of a more powerful master.

The Headless Horseman: The Headless Horseman from Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (<http://authorsdirectory.com/b/sleep10.htm>) could very well have been a death knight. A dejected death knight might become the unseen menace of an area that the PCs frequent. Based on the PCs' actions in the area, the death knight might gain a purpose and abandon random murders in favor of a more strategic effort against the PCs.

King Haggard: Like King Haggard in Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Unicorn), a death knight could be the lord of a desolate kingdom that guards something the PCs need. The death knight might even have mortal servants who are not evil but serve out of a sense of loyalty to the former living knight. Dealing with this minion of evil without unduly harming his misguided followers could present an interesting challenge to players.

The Black Knight: A death knight ably fills the role of a stereotypical Black Knight (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Knight_%28disambiguation%29).

This works best if you disguise the death knight's status as an undead warrior, and the death knight works as an ally of the PCs for a time. Like some of the black knights of literature and legend, the death knight might follow a strict code of honor despite his villainous nature.

Genghis Khan: If you really want the death knight to make an impact on your players, put it at the head of an undead army. Your death knight might be like Genghis Kahn (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genghis_Khan), gathering warriors of the conquered nations into its army as it moves. These warriors might be the dead of the conquered, risen as undead warriors, or even living warriors who believe that serving the death knight offers a better chance of survival than opposing it.

Blackrazor: The adventure *White Plume Mountain* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Plume_Mountain) introduced Blackrazor, a magic sword that stole a character's soul and made him subject to its whims. In your game, you might use Blackrazor or invent a different magic weapon that steals its wielder's soul and transforms the person into a death knight. The magic weapon might be the true villain, with the death knight as its hapless pawn.

Lancelot and Guinevere: Consider pairing your death knight with an evil partner. Perhaps your death knight is a version of Lancelot who has fallen for an evil Guinevere (<http://www.sir-lancelot.co.uk/Guinevere-Lancelot.htm>), or your Guinevere might be the death knight and Lancelot an evil lord. One might be a vampire or demon who leeches off of the unrequited love of the other. In a dark turn on the Arthurian legend, Guinevere is secretly a vampire or succubus who preys upon the enthralled king while her dark knight Lancelot does her bidding, turning the shining kingdom into a growing blight of darkness and despair.

Infernal Aristocracy: The Dukes of Hell

BY ROBERT J. SCHWALB

ART BY JIM PAVELEC

If there is one overarching theme of the Nine Hells of Baator, it is the notion of ultimate, monolithic tyranny. It is a place where those who have power have it absolutely, where each denizen has a place, a function, and a purpose, and cleaving to that role is more important than anything else. While the divisions that exist in the Nine Hells are key to understanding the interrelations of the baatezu, it is also important to note that as fixed as they are, they are equally porous, allowing those of a lower rank to climb up from the dregs and gain a greater standing within the hierarchy. Constant service, cunning, treachery, and murder are all the tools of advancement and those devils who rule have mastered them all, beating out their rivals and thwarting countless attempts against them.

Fiendish Codex II describes in detail the path of infernal advancement, highlighting the various castes making up the twisted societal norms of the baatezu. While much is written about the differences between the greater, lesser, and least devils, there is yet one more classification that bears—no, demands mentioning. These beings are the dukes of Hell, fiends that are more than the greater devils but less than the archdevils, lacking demesnes of their own and forced into positions of service. In many cases, these dukes are pit fiends, powerful and named versions of the greatest of the

greater devils. Others, however, are unique, baatezu that have their own capabilities, powers, and motives that place them above even the mightiest pit fiends. It is these few, these rare and powerful dukes, that this article explores.

WHAT THE HELL?

After flipping through the pages of this article, you're probably noticing the dukes described here are as powerful or more powerful than the archdevils presented in *Fiendish Codex II*. This is intentional. The archdukes in *Fiendish Codex II* are aspects, manifestations having but a fragment of the archdevil's power. The dukes described here are the real deal. They lack the ability to create aspects and thus when encountered, they are nearly always in their true form.

This said, the Challenge Ratings for these characters, while high, are not much higher than those of pit fiends and many are less than some of the other tough monsters out there—specifically the abominations described in the *Epic Level Handbook*. You should consider the statistics presented in this article to be the baseline. If your campaign features creatures with CRs in the 30s, 40s, or higher, you should advance these devils to make them appropriate adversaries. Simply use the guidelines laid out in Chapter 4: Improving Monsters in the *Monster Manual* and modify the stats according to the desired CR.



OTHER SOURCES

This article references several other sourcebooks. Where a reference is given in the text, it uses a superscript abbreviation. Referenced sourcebooks and their abbreviations are here.

Abbreviation	Reference
CAR	Complete Arcane
CW	Complete Warrior
FC1	Fiendish Codex I
FC2	Fiendish Codex II
PH2	Players Handbook II
MI	Magic Item Compendium
MM3	Monster Manual III
ToM	Tome of Magic

COMMON ATTACK OPTIONS

The Dukes of Hell have one or both of the following attack options.

Aligned Strike: Attacks made by a creature that has this ability are treated as aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Epic Strike: Attacks made by a creature that has this ability are treated as epic for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

MOLOCH THE OUTCAST

A great red-orange skinned giant lurches forward, whipping a scourge through the air. Fiery slanted eyes stare out, unblinking from its bestial horned head, and ropes of slime drip from its toothy maw.

MOLOCH

CR 22

LE Large outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +3; Senses see in darkness; **Listen** +46, **Spot** +46

Languages tongues; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 42, touch 12, flat-footed 39

(–1 size, +3 Dex, +8 armor, +22 natural)

hp 459 (34 HD); regeneration 10; **DR** 15/epic and good

Immune fire and poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 30

Fort +30, **Ref** +24, **Will** +30

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 hellfire claws +41 (1d8+8 plus 1d6 fire and 1d6 against good) and bite +39 (2d6+4) or

Melee *Moloch's scourge* +47/+42/+37/+32 (2d6+8 plus variable fire)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +34; **Grp** +46

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Flay, Great Cleave, Power Attack, aligned strike (evil, lawful), improved grab

Special Actions breath weapon, summon baatezu

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*confusion* (DC 22), *create undead*, *fireball* (DC 21), *fly*, *geas/quest*, *greater fireburst*^{SC} (DC 23), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *limited wish* (fulfill another's request only), *permanent image* (DC 24), *see invisibility*, *suggestion* (DC 21), *wall of fire* (DC 22)

1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 25), *flame strike* (DC 23), *symbol of stunning* (DC 25)

Abilities Str 26, Dex 17, Con 28, Int 15, Wis 29, Cha 27

SQ planar commitment

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Flay^{PH2}, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-like Ability (greater fireburst), Weapon Focus (scourge)

Skills Concentration +46, Diplomacy +45, Intimidate +45, Jump +45, Knowledge (history) +39, Knowledge (religion) +39, Knowledge (the planes) +39, Listen +46, Spot +46, Survival +46 (+48 on other planes)

Possessions *Moloch's scourge*, *amulet of health* +6, *bracers of armor* +8, *gem of seeing*

Tongues (Su) As the *tongues* spell, always active, caster level 20th.

Regeneration (Ex) Silver and good-aligned weapons deal normal damage to Moloch. If Moloch loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1 minute. Moloch can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Hellfire Claws (Su) Moloch deals 1d6 points of fire damage and 1d6 points of unholy damage with his claw attacks. A creature struck by this attack must make a DC 35 Reflex save or catch fire. The flames burn for 10 rounds if not extinguished sooner. A burning creature can use a full-round action to put out the flame (see *Catching on Fire*, DMG 303). The save is Strength-based.

Moloch's Scourge This massive weapon has four flexible metal strands. When swung, they erupt in pale blue flames. *Moloch's scourge* deals up to 20 points of fire damage in addition to normal damage from the weapon. Moloch may divide this extra damage as he sees fit between each attack. He must decide prior to making the attack roll.

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, Moloch must hit an opponent of any size with a claw attack. He may then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he automatically deals bite damage.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-ft. cone, at will, affected creatures become panicked for 10 rounds, Will DC 36 negates. A creature that successfully saves against this ability cannot again be affected for 24 hours. The save is Constitution-based.

Summon Baatezu (Sp) 80% chance to summon 1d3+1 horned devils; 1/day; caster level 20th. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

Planar Commitment (Ex) As an outcast devil, Moloch is teleported 100 miles in a random direction whenever he is exposed to any effect that would force him to leave Avernus.

Moloch is the exiled duke of the sixth layer of the Nine Hells of Baator. Stripped of his title and weakened by betrayal, he is a shadow of his former self.

Strategies and Tactics

Moloch uses tactics learned from his hated demon foes. He casts wall of fire to cut off his foes' retreat and then blasphemy to eliminate his weaker enemies. Once his opponents close with him, he casts quickened greater fireburst and then lashes out with his scourge. Against several foes, he uses his breath weapon to even the odds.

If combat is not immediately necessary, Moloch is not above parlaying with mortals. He's eager to regain his place and has considerable power and fabulous wealth to offer those he encounters, or at least the illusion of such. He makes extensive use of permanent image and suggestion to confuse and mislead those he meets, working to convince them to serve him if possible.

Servants, Enemies, and Goals

Eons ago, when Asmodeus led the dark angels against the hordes of demons spilling forth from the endless depths of the Abyss, he relied on the might of his warriors, of which Moloch was the greatest. A bold and fearless soldier, mere mention of his name sent the tanar'ri wailing with dread for they knew the bite of his loathsome scourge. As a reward for his constant service and tireless hatred of those who opposed him, Asmodeus bestowed unto him the domain of Malbolge. The Lord of Nessus was always the cleverest of the baatezu, so he made Moloch viceroy of Baalzebul, ensuring each would spend time watching the other rather than hatching plots to take Nessus for themselves.

Fitting for one of his rank and station, Moloch took a consort, the dread night hag Malagard. The night hag, ever the cunning witch, seduced Moloch in the fetid pools of pus that infested his demesne and to the chorus of wails haunting the air, Malagard pleased her master, coating his foul form with grease collected from the fiery tombs of heretics and blasphemers. As she worked in the malfeasant ichors, she whispered to him of greatness, goading him onto greater deeds, fueling his pride and ambition, impelling him to reach beyond his station and lay claim to all the Nine Hells. "Moloch," she murmured, her foul breath filling his senses with their intoxicating aroma, "these Hells offer themselves to those with the might and will to take them."

What Moloch did not know was Malagard was treacherous and wicked, cuckolding him with Geryon, then Lord of the Fifth. Geryon urged the night hag to convince Moloch to join Baalzebul's bid for power, to support the ambitious lord in his rebellion against Asmodeus. Sensing Geryon's greater place, as well as a promise of increasing her own station, she did as asked. Her pestilential words worked and Moloch joined the rebellion on her confident promise he could destroy Baalzebul once Asmodeus was removed. Foolish Moloch, seduced by the promise of great power, found defeat, scorn, and anguish for his troubles, for as The Book of Fire records, Asmodeus defeated the uprising and brought down the conspirators.

In the aftermath of the terrible war, Geryon again came to Malagard, beseeching her to urge Moloch to remain defiant, and again, Malagard did as asked. Moloch foolishly stood fast against Asmodeus, and his refusal to bow and scrape enraged the Lord of the Ninth. For Moloch's impertinence, he was demoted and Malagard raised in his place. The night hag's first act in her new role as the Hag Countess was to exile her lover, sending him to the Material Plane, and so he fell in a ball of fire to the realm of those whom he despised.

For centuries, the exiled archdevil amassed a grand army, gathering mortal followers and finding sympathetic soldiers in the Nine Hells. So great were his legions, it seemed that he would be unstoppable and would throw down the Hag Countess and reclaim his former place. This was not to be, for the device by which he would re-enter the Nine Hells, the Stone of Corbinet, was stolen from him and so, leaderless, his armies were crushed beneath the weight of Malagard's superior forces.

Moloch's story did not end with this defeat. Through evil deeds and wicked bargaining, he managed to work his way back into the Nine Hells, insinuating himself into the rabble of devilkin who had all fallen from great heights to toil in the armies of the upstart Bel. He waits and plots, envisioning the day of his final return when vengeance will be his.

Moloch rejoiced at Malagard's fall and subsequent transformation but chafed at the upstart Glasya's ascension, a clear act

of favoritism by the Lord of the Ninth. Moloch currently leads a subversive group of other exiles, working to build a new army to rise up once more and usher in a new era of Hell under his rule.

Moloch has few remaining mortal servants on the Material Plane. Most of his cults are small and fractious, disturbed by their master's long silence. Moloch's cultists have access to the Evil, Fire, and Law domains, but cannot cast spells higher than 3rd level. Moloch's favored weapon is the scourge.

TITIVILUS

There is something compelling about this strange man. You feel a sense of kinship with him despite the black fur of his goat legs, the small black wings sprouting from his back and the twin black horns growing out of the front of his bald head.

TITIVILUS

CR 22

LE Medium outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +8; Senses see in darkness; **Listen** +43, **Spot** +43

Languages tongues, ventriloquism; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 40, touch 19, flat-footed 36; Mark of Dis, Dodge, Mobility

(+4 Dex, +5 deflection, +21 natural)

hp 346 (33 HD); regeneration 10; DR 15/epic and good

Immune fire and poison

Resist acid 10 and cold 10; **SR** 33

Fort +26, **Ref** +22, **Will** +25

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 80 ft. (good); Flyby Attack
Melee +5 silver bastard sword of wounding +47/+42/+37/+32
(1d10+11/19–20 plus 1 Con) or

Melee 2 claws +42 (1d4+4 plus fear)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +33; **Grp** +37

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Vexing Flanker, aligned strike (evil, lawful), epic strike, frightful strike, sneak attack +5d6

Special Actions change shape, corrupting whisper, summon baatezu

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*charm monster* (DC 25), *create undead*, *crushing despair* (DC 25), *greater bestow curse*^{SC} (DC 29), *greater invisibility*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. objects only), *hypnotism* (DC 22), *magic circle against good*, *misdirection* (DC 23), *miser's envy*^{SC} (DC 24), *modify memory* (DC 25), *nondetection*, *persistent image* (DC 26), *sending*, *suggestion* (DC 24)

1/day—*feeblemind* (DC 26), *symbol of sleep* (DC 26)

Abilities Str 28, Dex 19, Con 27, Int 26, Wis 24, Cha 33

Feats Ability Focus (corrupting whisper), Brand of the Nine Hells (Dispat^{FC2}), Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Mark of Dis^{FC2}, Mobility, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*greater teleport*), Vexing Flanker^{PH2}

Skills Appraise +44, Bluff +47, Concentration +44, Decipher Script +44, Diplomacy +51, Disguise +11 (+13 acting), Gather Information +47, Intimidate +49, Knowledge (arcana) +44, Knowledge (history) +44, Knowledge (local) +44, Knowledge (the planes) +44, Listen +43, Sense Motive +43, Spellcraft +46, Spot +43, Survival +43 (+45 on other planes)

Possessions +5 silver bastard sword of wounding, crystal ball with telepathy

Tongues (Ex) As the *tongues* spell, always active, caster level 20th.

Ventriloquism (Ex) As the *ventriloquism* spell, always active, caster level 20th.

Regeneration (Ex) Epic and good-aligned weapons and spells and spell-like effects with the good descriptor deal normal damage to Titivilus. If Titivilus loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1 minute. Titivilus can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Frightful Strike (Su) A creature hit by Titivilus must succeed on a DC 37 Will save or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level 20th). Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected by Titivilus's frightful strike ability for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Change Shape (Su) Titivilus can assume any humanoid or monstrous humanoid form of Large size or smaller as a standard action. Titivilus remains in one form until he chooses to assume a new one. Titivilus reverts to his natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals his natural form.

Corrupting Whisper (Su) As a full-round action, Titivilus may spew a blasphemous torrent of damning words heard by only one living creature within 60 ft. that has an Intelligence of 3 or greater. The target must succeed on a DC 39 Will save or its alignment temporarily shifts to lawful evil for 1d8+1 hours. During this time, the affected creature acts in accordance with its new alignment. Generally, this has no mechanical effect, but creatures bound to a code of conduct are in danger of violating this code. If so, they suffer the penalties as normal, but may absolve themselves of wrongdoing if they are the target of an *atonement* spell.

Summon Baatezu (Sp) 90% chance to summon 1d4+4 erinyes; 1/day; caster level 20th. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

As Dispater's viceroy and ambassador, Titivilus is a powerful duke of Hell.

Strategies and Tactics

Titivilus is careful never to engage in a combat he cannot easily win. To avoid an unnecessary or disastrous confrontation, he resorts to misdirection and a quickened greater teleport.

When presented with a weaker foe, Titivilus carries himself well in a battle, even if he is as cautious as his paranoid master. The viceroy of Dis casts greater invisibility first, and then uses persistent image to create phantasmal walls of iron. Once adequately prepared, he calls upon his dire maidens—a flock of erinyes—to soften up his foes while he hangs back and manipulates his opponents using suggestion, charm monster, and crushing despair. Only when his opponents are on the brink of death does Titivilus engage them in melee combat.

Servants, Enemies, and Goals

For whatever reason, Dispater places great trust in Titivilus. The Lord of the Second allows his viceroy to represent his interests in nearly every matter, so often some believe either that Titivilus is in fact Dispater or that the viceroy has destroyed his master and conceals his treachery behind his smiling mask of gentility.

Given his role in Dispater's court, Titivilus has enormous power and influence, able to send pit fiends fleeing and rouse the armies of Dis with a word. While most fear the viceroy, many despise him, resenting him for his closeness to Dispater. Even though these ruthless rivals would leap at the chance to take Titivilus down a notch or two, they are terrified by the guaranteed reprisals they would face should they fail. The only member of Dispater's court who shows no fear of Titivilus is Arioch the Iron Avenger. This powerful duke serves the Lord of the Second as his enforcer, sweeping over the city on his great black wings and descending on any he suspects of treachery against his master. Titivilus regards Arioch as his peer and treats him as such, though make no mistake: there is

"Part of Titivilus's prominence in the Hells stems from whom he serves. All know Dispater to be a paranoid lord, sequestering himself away behind endless iron corridors, nasty traps, and terrifying minions. He rarely, if ever, leaves his tower, and when he does, it's to descend into his city, Dis. Instead, he relies heavily on Titivilus to see to his interests. This grants this ambitious fiend uncanny responsibility, putting him in charge of far worthier dukes such as Arioch the Avenger and even Dispater's consort Lilis. He is the gatekeeper and those who would treat with the Lord of the Second must deal with Titivilus.

—*The Book of Fire*

not love lost between these two and either would destroy the other if given the chance.

Titivilus has few mortal servants. Those few who do venerate this viceroy of Dis are scribes, theological scholars, and defrocked priests, all of whom work tirelessly to corrupt the sacred texts of the good church with which they are (or were) affiliated. Each errant line offers a chance to lead mortals astray and give the baatezu more bargaining power in their endless search for souls.

BAEL

A tall humanoid creature smiles at you, revealing a wide mouth filled with sharp teeth. Two small bovine horns break through the golden skin of its brow above watery eyes of a matching golden hue. Large pointed ears break through his mane of glorious red hair.

BAEL

CR 23

LE Large outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +3; **Senses** see in darkness, true seeing; **Listen** +45, **Spot** +45

Aura fear (20 ft., DC 36), Brand of the Nine Hells (Mammon)

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 40, touch 14, flat-footed 39

(–1 size, +1 Dex, +11 armor, +4 deflection, +15 natural); 75% chance to ignore extra damage from critical hits

hp 367 (35 HD); regeneration 10; DR 15/epic and good

Immune fire, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 33

Fort +34, **Ref** +33, **Will** +35

Speed 30 ft. in full plate (6 squares), base speed 40 ft.

Melee +4 *huge flaming burst vicious morningstar* +44/+39/+34/+29 (3d6+18/19–20 plus 2d6 plus 1d6 fire) and

bite +37 (1d8+4 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +35; **Grp** +47

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Improved Bull Rush, Mark of Minauros, Power Attack, Powerful Charge, aligned strike (evil, lawful), epic strike, poison

Special Actions change shape, perceive corruption, *summon baatezu*

Combat Gear *ring of telekinesis, rod of negation*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*animate dead, greater dispel magic, greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. objects only), *hellfire storm, invisibility, mass inflict serious wounds* (DC 26), *pyrotechnics* (DC 21, PH 267), *suggestion* (DC 22)

2/day—*air walk, dominate monster* (DC 28), *limited wish* (fulfill another's wish)

1/day—*symbol of stunning* (DC 26)

Abilities Str 26, Dex 17, Con 23, Int 16, Wis 25, Cha 28

Feats Awesome Blow, Brand of the Nine Hells (Mammon)^{FC2}, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (morningstar), Lightning Reflexes, Mark of Minauros^{FC2}, Monkey Grip^{CW}, Power Attack, Powerful Charge^{MM3}, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (suggestion), Weapon Focus (morningstar), Weapon Specialization (morningstar)

Skills Bluff +47, Concentration +44, Diplomacy +51, Disguise +9 (+11 acting), Intimidate +49, Knowledge (arcana) +41, Knowledge (religion) +41, Knowledge (the planes) +41, Listen +45, Sense Motive +45, Spot +45, Survival +45 (+47 on other planes)

Possessions +3 full plate of moderate fortification, +4 huge fiery burst vicious morningstar

True Seeing (Ex) As the *true seeing* spell, always active, caster level 20th.

Fear Aura (Su) At the end of each of Bael's turns, creatures within 20 feet of him must make DC 36 Will saves or become panicked for 10 rounds. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by Bael's aura for 24 hours. Baatezu are immune to this aura. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Regeneration (Ex) Epic and good-aligned weapons and spells and spell-like effects with the good descriptor deal normal damage to Bael. If Bael loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1 minute. Bael can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Dark Blessing (Su) Bael adds his Charisma modifier as a profane bonus to all saves.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 33, 20 points of damage/2d6 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Change Shape (Su) Bael can assume any humanoid or monstrous humanoid form of Large size or smaller as a standard action. Bael remains in one form until he chooses to assume a new one. Bael reverts to his natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals his natural form.

Perceive Corruption (Su) Bael automatically knows the amount of corruption and taint points of any creature he sees. In addition, as a standard action, Bael can automatically discern a creature's alignment unless it's hidden by an *undetectable alignment* or similar spell.

Summon Baatezu (Sp) 85% chance to summon 1d4+2 barbed devils; 1/day; caster level 20th. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

Bael is Mammon's vassal and commander of his 66 companies of barbed devils.

Strategies and Tactics

Like many dukes of the Hells, Bael is reluctant to engage an enemy he's not certain to defeat, preferring to let his legions of barbed devils do the dirty work. When drawn into a fight, he uses *quicken suggestion* to bring other characters into range and then unleashes a *mass inflict serious wounds*. The character that best resists the damage from this spell becomes the lucky recipient of *dominate monster* on the following round, becoming Bael's thrall for the duration of the encounter. Bael considers it a disaster if he has to fight with his morningstar, but that doesn't stop him from using Powerful Charge to hammer into his opponents and splatter any enemy within reach.

Servants, Enemies, and Goals

Bael is one of the greatest generals in the Nine Hells of Baator, and his battle savvy and powerful personality gives him the respect and fame to command sprawling legions of fiends. Bael could be of incredible service on the front lines of Avernus, a fact not overlooked by the Lord of the First or by the more fickle members of the Dark Eight, but for now Bael seems content with his place as Mammon's vassal. If Bael had the ambition, there's little doubt he could rise to become an archduke—some speculate he would have made a more legitimate candidate to replace the Hag Countess than was Glasya. The only thing holding Bael back from claiming his place alongside the other archdukes is that he is not a skilled player in Hell's politics, easily outmaneuvered by his betters, and thus he's been consigned to his place in the shadow of a far less worthy master.

For all those who would advance Bael's place in Hell's hierarchy, the golden general has many more enemies who would exploit or discredit him for their own ends. The greatest hotbed of conspiracy is within Mammon's court itself. The archduke's paranoia and own treachery makes his court a deathtrap for those unaccustomed to intrigue. In effect, Mammon's closest advisors are split between three factions.

In one corner, there's Focalur, Mammon's seneschal, who secretly works with his lover and the archduke's new consort Gwla to maneuver Bael into a position that forces him to overthrow their master. Focalur intends to be the power behind the throne, using Bael as a puppet to advance his own agenda.

Against the seneschal are Caarcinolaas and Melchon, a pair of conniving worms that serve Mammon as his lesser commanders. Caarcinolaas controls 36 companies of barbed devils, while Melchon commands 18 wings of erinyes, those fallen angels who refused to follow Glasya when she left Mammon to pursue her own plans. These rivals detest Bael and plot to murder him and seize control over his legions. In doing so,

they believe they could mount a coup that would overthrow Mammon and give the layer to themselves. Little do they know, they are actually serving Glasya, who wants to destroy her former lover and add his layer to her own.

On the Material Plane, diabolists have often granted greater status to Bael than what he deserves, calling him king of hell and even naming him the head of the infernal powers. Some occultists claim Bael bestowed the gift of the invisibility spell onto mortals, though practitioners of arcane magic categorically deny any sort of infernal taint on one of the most common spells. Bael is represented in artwork as a toad, cat, man, or sometimes a fusion of all three, which is curious as none of things reflect his true, almost bovine, form.

BALAN AND BATHYM

Balan and Bathym were once allies in the court of Belial, lords that awaited the pleasure of their hedonistic master. Now they are rivals and enemies.

BALAN

Charging forward on gray hooves is a giant of a man. Yellow of skin with fierce black brows and a tufted black beard, his face bears an idiotic and drooling grin. His eyes belch small bursts of flames, blazing as

he bellows crude laughter. His legs and forked tail are a bright scarlet and he wears nothing aside from a thick belt of flesh made from the faces of those he's slain.

BALAN

CR 19

LE Large outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +3; **Senses** see in darkness; Listen +35, Spot +35

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 40, touch 12, flat-footed 37; Improved Two-Weapon Defense

(–1 size, +3 Dex, +4 armor, +24 natural)

hp 312 (25 HD); regeneration 10; **DR** 15/chaotic and good

Immune fire, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 29

Fort +28, **Ref** +22, **Will** +26

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +5 *battleaxe* +42/+37/+32/+27 (2d6+18/19–20/x3) and

2 spines +32 (1d8+6 plus poison) or

Melee +5 *battleaxe* +38/+33/+28/+23 (2d6+18/19–20/x3) and

+4 *battleaxe* +37/+32 (2d6+10/19–20/x3) and 2 spines +32 (1d8+6 plus poison)



Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +25; **Grp** +42

Atk Options Mark of Phlegethos, Power Critical (battleaxe), aligned strike (evil, lawful), poison

Special Actions Brand of the Nine Hells (Belial and Fierna; melee touch +38, DC 32), roar, *summon baatezu*

Combat Gear *horn of blasting*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 20th):

At will—*create undead*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater invisibility*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only), *limited wish* (fulfill another), *see invisibility*, *telekinesis*, *wall of fire* (DC 24)

1/day—*transmute rock to lava*

Abilities Str 36, Dex 17, Con 28, Int 19, Wis 24, Cha 30

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Brand of the Nine Hells (Belial and Fierna)^{FC2}, Improved Critical (battleaxe), Improved Two-Weapon Defense^{CW}, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Mark of Phlegethos^{FC2}, Power Critical (battleaxe)^{CW}, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Bluff +38, Concentration +37, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Intimidate +40, Jump +41, Knowledge (history) +33, Knowledge (religion) +33, Knowledge (the planes) +33, Listen +35, Perform (comedy) +38, Sense Motive +35, Spot +35, Survival +35 (+37 on other planes)

Possessions combat gear plus +5 *battleaxe*, +4 *battleaxe*, *belt of giant's strength* +6, *bracers of armor* +4

Regeneration (Ex) Chaotic and good-aligned weapons and spells and spell-like effects with the chaotic or good descriptor deal normal damage to Balan. If Balan loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1 minute. Balan can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 33, 2d6 Dexterity/1d12 Dexterity and 10 points of damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Roar (Su) Once every 5 rounds, Balan can loose a terrible roar as a full-round action. All living creatures within 120 feet automatically become shaken for 10 rounds and must succeed on a DC 32 Will save or become panicked for 10 rounds instead. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Summon Baatezu (Sp) 50% chance to summon 1d8+8 bearded devils; 1/day; caster level 20th. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

Saving Throws Balan has a +5 racial bonus to saving throws (included).

Balan is a duke of Phlegethos and a loyal supporter of Belial.

BATHYM

A black-armored humanoid hisses at you from beneath its great horned helmet. It hefts a black spiked mace that bleeds darkness. Its long black cloak hangs about its shoulders.

BATHYM

CR 19

LE Medium Outsider (baatezu, evil, extraplanar, lawful)

Init +7; **Senses** see in darkness; Listen +34, Spot +34

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Ignan; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 40, touch 11, flat-footed 39; Two-Weapon Defense (+1 Dex, +13 armor, +16 natural)

hp 312 (25 HD); regeneration 10; **DR** 15/good and silver

Immune critical hits, fire, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10; SR 29

Fort +27, **Ref** +22, **Will** +25

Speed 30 ft. in full plate (6 squares), base speed 40 ft.

Melee *Bleakness* +35/+30/+25/+20 (1d8+10) or

Melee *Bleakness* +33/+28/+23/+18 (1d8+10) and

Incisor +33/+28/+23 (1d6+6/17–20)

Base Atk +25; **Grp** +32

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Mark of Phlegethos, aligned strike (evil, lawful)

Special Actions Brand of the Nine Hells (Fierna and Belial; melee touch +32, DC 28), frightful presence, *summon baatezu*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th):

Always active—*detect magic*, *read magic*

At will—*blink*, *confusion* (DC 20), *deeper darkness*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only), *limited wish* (fulfill another's wish only), *pyrotechnics* (DC 18), *see invisibility*, *tongues*, *wall of fire*, *wraithstrike*^{SC}, *veil of shadow*

3/day—*delayed blast fireball* (DC 23)

1/day—*feeblemind* (DC 21), *symbol of sleep* (DC 21)

Abilities Str 25, Dex 17, Con 27, Int 20, Wis 23, Cha 22

Feats Brand of the Nine Hells (Fierna and Belial)^{FC2}, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Mark of Phlegethos^{FC2}, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills Appraise +33, Bluff +34, Concentration +36, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +6 (+8 acting), Intimidate +36, Knowledge (arcana) +33, Knowledge (architecture) +33, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +33, Knowledge (the planes) +33, Listen +34, Search +33 (+35 secret doors), Sense Motive +34, Spellcraft +35, Spot +34, Survival +6 (+8 on other planes, +8 following tracks, +8 underground)

Possessions +5 full plate of heavy fortification, *Bleakness*, *Incisor*, cloak of resistance +5

Regeneration (Ex) Chaotic and good-aligned weapons and spells and spell-like effects with the chaotic or good descriptor deal normal damage to Bathym. If Bathym loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 1 minute. Bathym can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Bleakness Bathym's primary weapon counts as a +3 *good outsider bane heavy mace*. As a swift action, Bathym can automatically dispel any spell or spell-like effect with the light descriptor of 4th level or lower. So long as he wields the weapon, all *dancing lights* and *faerie fire* spells are automatically dispelled. Against a good outsider, his attack and damage modifiers increase by 1 and on a successful hit against such creatures, *Bleakness* deals an additional 2d6 points of damage.

Incisor Bathym's secondary weapon counts as a +3 *keen short sword*. On a successful hit, the weapon channels his poisonous hate (Fort DC 30, 1d10 Con/20 points of damage).

Frightful Presence (Su) Bathym can inspire terror by simply pointing at a creature within 60 feet. This is a free action, but he must have a hand free and he can only use this power once per round. The affected creature must succeed on a DC 28 Will save or become shaken, remaining in that condition as long as they remain within 60 feet of Bathym. A creature that successfully saves against the frightful presence cannot be affected by Bathym's frightful presence for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Summon Baatezu (Sp) 60% chance to summon 1d4+2 barbed devils; 1/day; caster level 20th. This ability is the equivalent of a 9th-level spell.

Bathym foreswore his allegiance to Belial when Fierna attained the throne, and vowed to serve the daughter instead.

Strategies and Tactics

Balan is a ruthless combatant, employing tactics more akin to a demon than he does a devil. In fact, some even call him reckless, for he tends to be incautious in his attacks, flinging himself into the thick of battle with his twin axes and hacking apart anyone that gets in his path. While some might regard this as chaotic, Balan explains that his approach ensures the reign of absolute order—death.

Balan begins with a roar, and then on the following round he charges against the biggest opponent. He prefers to kill demons first, women second, and anything else last. When possible, he uses a full attack each round, becoming a whirlwind of flashing steel.

Balan's arch-rival, Bathym, is far more cunning in battle. He is more cautious, more "devil-like" in his approach. Bathym is

rarely without his steed, Fell Wind (half-fiend cauchemar nightmare) and so he lets his mount do most of the fighting while he harries his enemies using spell-like abilities and inspiring terror in those at whom he points.

When Bathym finally closes on his enemies, he casts blink and symbol of sleep if he hasn't already. In melee, he modifies his attacks with a 5-point Combat Expertise, unless he finds he is not hitting his opponents, at which point he gradually reduces the amount until he does hit.

Servants, Enemies, and Goals

Balan and Bathym were once allies in the court of Belial, lords that awaited the pleasure of their hedonistic master. During the Reckoning, both served their master well, leading his armies against Belial's enemies in his bid to expand his demesne. But as the Book of Fire records, they were defeated, repelled and cast back into the sweltering planes of Phlegethos where they, quivering with fear, awaited the judgment that would befall their master. They knew the cruel justice of the Nine Hells, and watched in terror as Asmodeus destroyed Belial's consort Naomi. Belial scrambled into the shadows, thrusting his daughter Fierna onto his throne to protect himself and divert attention from his role in the wars that ravaged the Nine Hells. Belial's gambit worked and the dreadful gaze of Asmodeus fell to others, but the result of Belial's cowardice divided the archdevil's house. Balan remained loyal to his master Belial, but Bathym vowed his service to Fierna, having long coveted her from the shadows.

Neither Balan nor Bathym have lost much of their status and influence in the Nine Hells. But since both sided with Belial, who ultimately lost in his bid to expand his power, they inherited his enemies, and there's no shortage of fiends who would like to see them eliminated as just one more way of getting back at the shadowy ex-master of Phlegethos.

More than any baatezu, their direst enemies are each other. The upheaval following the end of the Reckoning, as well as Belial's unexpected move to place his own daughter on the throne, forced the dukes to choose whom they would serve. Balan, being the ever boisterous of the pair, followed the archdevil that had long helped him fulfill his unspeakable desires. Bathym, however, went to Fierna. Bathym did this for two reasons. Long had he coveted her, but more important, he believed that by seducing her he could advance his own position and perhaps even claim Phlegethos for himself.

At first, while tension did blossom between the pair, they were at least civil, sending only the periodic dogai after the other. However, the situation deteriorated when Fierna began to assert herself more and more, forcing her father deeper into the shadows. As Fierna grows in strength, so does Bathym act more against his old ally, and soon the pair may very well come to blows.

Neither duke has mortal followers.

Fortress of the Yuan-Ti: The Lost Portals of Castle Serastis

BY ARI MARMELL

ART BY JAMES ZHANG

CARTOGRAPHY BY MIKE SCHLEY

During the course of their exploration of Castle Serastis, headquarters of the Vanguard of Sertrous, the party has the opportunity to travel through several mystical portals. On the other side, they explore a few peculiar environments, engage in challenges beyond the bounds of the fortress, and have the opportunity to thwart several of the Vanguard's endeavors.

As presented in the module, some of the Serastis portals are currently inactive, but there's no reason they have to stay that way. For DMs who wish to add even more variety to the adventure, or who simply want to offer the PCs something to do after the story's conclusion, this article provides the answer. Below are three new locations that characters can reach via the portals in Castle Serastis. Two are combat encounters, while the third is both a magical location and offers a bit more insight into the nature of Sertrous himself.

Of course, DMs not making use of *Fortress of the Yuan-Ti* can still use these encounters, with modification, for their own adventures.

Several of these locations grant action points for use against the Risen King in the final encounter of *Fortress of the Yuan-Ti*.

See the introduction to the adventure for specifics on this particular system of action points.

THE SERPENTS' GRAVEYARD

The yuan-ti are truly alien in their practices, and their methods of burial prove no exception. While the yuan-ti of the Vanguard have abandoned many of the traditions of their race in order to focus their veneration on Sertrous, their burial practices are not among them. Here, in this cemetery for the honored dead, they observe many of the same traditions, and organize their graveyard in the same fashion, as other yuan-ti.

As the PCs arrive, read:

Stepping through the portal, you find yourself between a pair of towering trees, both long dead. Perhaps 50 yards ahead of you, an imposingly steep hill rises like a blister from the earth. From where you stand, you can see at least two stone stairways built into its sides between the compass points. Strange stone shapes, roughly rectangular, lay embedded in the hill in perfect lines, radiating downward from the crown. Atop the hill stands a great sculpture of four rearing cobras with hoods spread. Each cobra stares outward in all four cardinal directions. Several dead trees break the otherwise perfect symmetry of the hill.



When the PCs near the hill, read:

From up close, you can tell that the stone slabs are in fact sarcophagi, several dozen in all. They lay half-buried in the earth, heavy and imposing. The four cobras that make up the sculpture atop the hill boast gleaming rubies for eyes, and their facets catch the light from the harsh sun.

The hill is steep and difficult to climb, but the four stairways are far easier to traverse. Touching any one of the sarcophagi, or attempting to damage the sculpture atop the hill, triggers the tactical encounter.

Depending on the actions of the PCs, this battle could prove fairly easy if they deal with one foe at a time, or it may become overwhelming if they awaken multiple guardians at once. The sculpture atop the hill is enchanted to animate the yuan-ti bodies here as animated objects, but the PCs easily could mistake them for undead.

Treasure: In addition to Qalsarros's possessions (see the tactical encounter), each of the sculpture's eyes is worth 550 gp (for 4,400 gp total).

Action Points: If the PCs destroy at least two of the sculptures' heads, they earn 1 action point.

THE SLAVERS' GROTTO

The Vanguard of Sertrous is not a large sect, and it frequently employs outsiders to perform some of its more distant jobs. This includes, among others, the Iron Ring, a faction of brutal slavers both yuan-ti and humanoid. Their contact in the organization is Zstulkk Ssarmn, a yuan-ti abomination cleric who operates in the dark under-city of Skullport. At the moment, Dolathuzar -- one of the Vanguard's nastier field operatives -- is arranging with four of Ssarmn's slavers for a new delivery. (Thankfully for the PCs, Ssarmn himself is not present.)

The portal through which the PCs travel leads them to a dark grotto along the River Sargauth on level three of the infamous dungeon of Undermountain, some distance from Skullport itself. (See *Expedition to Undermountain* for more details on these locations. The grotto itself is located in the northeastern bend of the Sargauth, where it briefly widens; reference the Sargauth Level map on page 21. Alternatively, if it is more appropriate for your campaign, feel free to substitute some other underground riverside community.)

Note that the yuan-ti, who are perfectly at home in the dark, carry no light sources. The following descriptions assume that the PCs either provide their own light, or can also see in the dark. If neither is the case, of course, they see nothing at all, and you should adjust the descriptions accordingly.

As the PCs arrive, read:

After a flash of electric green lights the area, you find yourself standing upon a rough stone floor at one end of a great cavern. Walls of dark rock rise behind you, moist and dripping. From high above, stalactites dangle, and great pillars join floor to ceiling throughout the cavern. Far ahead you can both hear and see the gradual flow of an underground river.

Your vantage point appears to be a small, high ledge, at the edge of which is a small wood-and-rope framework. Below you is a broader, lower floor, with a natural slope leading down further still to the level of the shore.

Luckily for the PCs, neither the Vanguard nor the slavers put any guards on the portal itself. The notion that an enemy could arrive from Castle Serastis never crossed their minds.

Even once the PCs have dealt with the slavers and the Vanguard troops, they may have a bit of difficulty getting back. Like most portals throughout Undermountain, this one requires a particular key to activate from this side. The key is a simple serpent's tooth, something Dolathuzar carries, but it might take some time for the characters to figure out that they need it.

The corridor opening to the southeast eventually leads to Skullport. Following the river in that same direction also leads to that grim community, while following the river in the opposite direction takes explorers deeper into the Underdark.

Treasure: See the enemies' possessions, as listed in the tactical encounter.



Action Points: By disrupting the acquisition of further slaves and sacrifices, the PCs earn 1 action point.

THE SHRINE OF PRIMAL CHAOS

Beyond this portal, the PCs face a challenge of a different sort. No monstrous guardians and no foul cultists stand to face them. Rather, the party has stumbled upon a nexus of unearthly chaos. On this very spot -- or so some legends claim, anyway -- Sertrous transferred his essence from the Abyss to the Material Plane. Although it might greatly disturb them to do so, some of the characters may be capable of drawing on the power present here for use against the Vanguard itself.

The Shrine of Primal Chaos is a magical location, as described (among other sources) in *Dungeon Master's Guide II* and *Complete Mage*. While helpful, access to these books is not necessary to make use of the location as written.

As the PCs arrive, read:

For an instant, your lights sputter and fade, only to surge back into surprising brilliance. You stand within a twisting tunnel, perfectly smooth, as though eaten out of the stone by a worm of unfathomable size. The rounded floor takes some getting used to, but otherwise poses only mild difficulty.

As the PCs continue onward, read:

Neither your lights, nor your sense of direction, seem to obey the laws of nature in these warped, twisted catacombs. Passageways branch off at impossible angles that are equally as smooth and round as this one. Your illumination constantly dims and expands, as though unsure how far into the darkness it's willing to go.

Although the catacomb indeed seems creepy, the effects are largely atmospheric. No foes wait to attack the party (unless you choose to place some). The complex is impossible to map, due to the chaotic and unnatural nature of the passages, but the PCs will eventually reach their destination regardless. See the various features of the area, below, for more on these details.

Should you choose to add a combat encounter, consider making use of the same random combat effects presented in The Blasted Land encounter in the Appendix of *Fortress of the Yuan-Ti*, to represent the chaotic nature of the area.

TRAVEL THROUGH THE CATACOMBS

These chaos-tainted caves inevitably lead to one of a set number of destinations, regardless of which forks and passages the PCs choose. For every 10 minutes of travel, roll 1d12 and consult the following table. If you roll the same result twice in a row,

roll again. The portal to the Abyss may be completely inactive or not, as appropriate for further adventures in your campaign. (You might consider using this to introduce your PCs to the adventure *Expedition to the Demonweb Pits* if you intend to make use of that module later in your campaign.)

Roll	Result
1-3	No destination, just more passages; check again in 10 more minutes.
4-5	Abandoned yuan-ti camp, with serpentine idols, thousands of years old.
6-8	Shrine of Sertrous (see below).
9-11	Portal back to Castle Serastis.
12	Portal to the deepest layers of the Abyss.

When the PCs arrive, read:

You stand at the precipice of an enormous cavern that appears to have been blasted from the rock by primeval forces. The stone walls are rough and red, as if a scab had formed over a wound in the world itself. A mysterious black blot the size of an elder dragon stains the far wall. It radiates a pervasive cold, felt not on the skin but in the soul.

In the midst of that cavern, an enormous carved natural column resembles a winding serpent that rises up from the earth and goes back down again, twisting around itself until its head sits on the ground beside its tail. Though many of the sculpted details have been lost to time, it still looks real enough to come



FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

Illumination: The area boasts no natural illumination; the characters must provide their own. For each light source, roll 1d4. On a result of 1, it sheds only half as much light as normal; on a result of 4, twice as much. The light is unchanged on a 2 or 3. Reroll at random intervals (or each time you roll on the table, above). This effect occurs in both the passages and the various locations, including the shrine.

Rounded Floor: The rounded floor of the passages adds 2 to the DC of Balance and Tumble checks. Any creature attempting to run or charge across this floor must succeed on a DC 10 Balance check or be unable to do so but it can act normally otherwise.

alive at any moment. The eyes of the idol, like the blot on the wall, radiate a frigid darkness.

The Shrine as a Magical Location

The power of Sertrous, and the reverence of the Vanguard, have imbued the area with substantial magics that his followers can access -- but so too can certain PCs.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about the shrine of Sertrous by making Knowledge (the planes) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

KNOWLEDGE (THE PLANES)

DC	Information Gained
10	This area is clearly a shrine to some terrible reptilian power, possibly of the Abyss.
15	The entity so honored is likely Sertrous, an elder evil that was once an obyrith demon, in the age before ages. The shrine has great power, which likely can be activated via some ritual at the idol.
20	Activation of the shrine's power likely requires a show of devotion, such as placing one's hands in the eyes or mouth of the serpent.
25	As befits a shrine to a creature of primal chaos, the benefits are unpredictable -- and so are the costs for failure.

Prerequisite: Only chaotic or evil characters can access the power of the shrine. Other characters automatically fail (see below) when attempting to activate it.

Location Activation: Any character seeking the benefits of the shrine must strip himself of all magic items and place his hand -- without gloves, gauntlets, or any protection -- inside either an eye or the mouth of the serpent idol. The DM then rolls 1d12, due to the chaotic aspect of the shrine. Characters who are both chaotic and evil gain +1 on the roll. See Special Ability, below.

Any given character may attempt to activate the shrine of Sertrous only once per week, whether he succeeds or fails.

Recharge: The shrine of Sertrous can bestow its power on up to three different people before it's tapped out. Each "charge" recharges itself after 1d6+7 days.

Special Ability (Su unless stated otherwise): The recipient of the shrine's power takes on several aspects shared by Sertrous back when he was an obyrith, a primal demon predating the more familiar tanar'ri. With the exception of the "failure" result, these effects are cumulative. For instance, a character who rolls a 7 gains suggestion, energy resistance, and the bonus against mind-affecting effects and poisons.

A character currently possessed of powers granted by the shrine takes a -2 profane penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks except Intimidate, as the pseudoreal madness of the obyrith becomes faintly manifest in his eyes, his voice, and his mannerisms. Further, he radiates a mild chaotic and evil aura, in addition to whatever alignment auras he might normally possess.

The spell-like abilities have a caster level equal to the character's HD.

You may wish to consider granting these abilities to one or two of the yuan-ti inside Castle Serastis, under the assumption that they visited the shrine themselves in recent days. If the yuan-ti has only one or two of the powers, this shouldn't impact the CR; if the yuan-ti has most or all of them, consider increasing the CR by 1.

Roll	Result
1-2	Failure; character is poisoned (1d6 Con/1d6 Con, DC 16 Fort negates).
3-4	+2 profane bonus on saves against mind-affecting effects and poisons.
5-6	Energy resistance 5 to a random energy type. Roll 1d4 upon first gaining this ability, and again upon awakening each day; a result of 1 indicates resistance to acid, 2 indicates cold, 3 indicates electricity, and 4 indicates fire.
7-8	Suggestion (Sp) 1/day.
9-10	Poison (Sp) 1/day.
11	Serpent's strike: Once per encounter, as a swift action, the character may adjust his stance, plus mystically adjust the shape and flexibility of his limbs, to grant him an extra 5 feet of reach. This effect lasts for 1 round.
12	Cloudkill (Sp) 1/day.

Duration: The spell-like abilities granted by the shrine remain for 1d4+4 days, regardless of how often they are used, and then disappear.

Aura: Strong conjuration and transmutation.

Ability Value: 5,000 gp

THE SERPENTS' GRAVEYARD

Encounter Level Variable; see below

SETUP

Initially, no opponents are obvious amidst the sculptures and sarcophagi of the graveyard.

When the characters first begin climbing the hill or the stairs, read:

The various sarcophagi boast engravings of a monstrous nature, displaying shapes that are part man and part serpent. The air around them is stale and dry, as though the weight of all that stone oppressed the world around it.

When a character first touches one of the sarcophagi, read:

The lid of the great stone casket slides instantly aside! From within, a desiccated, shambling thing, with features both human and reptilian, lunges at you, arms outstretched.

If any character succeeds in a DC 20 Spot check as the sarcophagus opens, read:

Just as the lid slid aside, you noticed a brief flash in the gemstone eyes of the great idol that glares down from atop the hill.

ANIMATED YUAN-TI CORPSE

CR 2

MM 13

hp 31 (2 HD)

N Medium construct

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen -5, Spot -5

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+4 natural)

Immune construct immunities

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** -5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee slam +2 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Abilities Str 12, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

SQ construct traits

Skills Listen -5, Spot -5

TACTICS

While the yuan-ti corpses aren't intelligent enough to make use of any deliberate tactics, their appearance and programming can make them difficult foes. Because they appear to be

undead, clerics may well waste turning attempts against them. In addition, the animated corpses are programmed to gang up on a single foe if multiple corpses are animated at once.

Not all the sarcophagi contain corpses for the sculpture to animate. Each time a character touches a sarcophagi after the first, there is a 50% chance that it contains another corpse, who bursts forth as described above. (Obviously, check only once per sarcophagus.) Further, any time a living being is wounded within 5 feet of a sarcophagus, there is a 25% chance that the splattering blood impacts the stone; if it does, this counts as a touch. Thus, the PCs may wind up facing several of these creatures at once.

DEVELOPMENT

This graveyard boasts a guardian beyond the corpses animated by the great sculpture. If the PCs destroy more than five yuan-ti corpses, touch the sarcophagus marked Q on the map, or attempt to damage the great sculpture atop the hill, Qalsarros awakens and emerges. When this happens, place him on the spot marked Q.

When Qalsarros emerges, read:

The body rising from this sarcophagus wears a mass of pendants around its neck and wrists. Its eyes, yellowed balls as brittle as parchment, glare evilly from scaly flesh grown gray and sunken.

QALSARROS

CR 9

MM 262, BV 185, HH 82

hp 68 (13 HD)

Male corpse creature yuan-ti halfblood archivist 6
CE Medium undead

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +16, Spot +16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Yuan-ti

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19; Dodge (+3 armor, +2 shield, +4 natural)

Immune undead immunities (MM 317)

SR 16

Fort +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +14; +2 against enchantments

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk scimitar +15/+10 (1d6+4/18–20) and bite +9 (1d6+2 plus poison) or

Melee slam +14 (1d6+4) and bite +9 (1d6+2 plus poison)

Base Atk +10; Grp +14

Atk Options Blind-Fight; poison (DC 13, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), produce acid

Special Actions dark knowledge 5/day

Archivist Spells Prepared (CL 6th, 1d20+8 to overcome SR):

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 17), *inflict serious wounds* (+14 melee touch, DC 17) (2), *invisibility purge*

2nd—*fog cloud*, *hold person* (DC 16), *inflict moderate wounds* (+14 melee touch, DC 16), *silence* (DC 16), *spiritual weapon* (+14/+9 melee)

1st—*command* (DC 15), *divine favor*, *faerie fire*, *entropic shield*, *shield of faith*

0—*detect magic*, *guidance* (2), *resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*detect poison* (CL 6th)

3/day—*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 14), *entangle* (DC 14)

1/day—*deeper darkness*, *neutralize poison*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 11, Con —, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 16

SQ *alternate form*, *chameleon power*, undead traits

Feats Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll^B, Skill Focus (Concentration), Spell Penetration

Skills Concentration +17, Decipher Script +14, Hide +8*, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (nature) +12, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +16, Spellcraft +14, Spot +16, Survival +4 (+6 on other planes or in aboveground natural environments)

* A halfblood using chameleon power gains a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Possessions masterwork scimitar, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork heavy wooden shield, wooden holy symbol

Spellbook spells prepared plus 0—all cleric spells; 1—*cause fear*, *comprehend languages*, *curse water*, *doom*, *sanctuary*

Produce Acid (Sp) A yuan-ti halfblood has the psionic power to exude acid from its body, dealing 3d6 points of acid damage to the next creature it touches, including a creature hit by its bite attack. If the yuan-ti is grappling or pinning a foe when it uses this power, its grasp deals 5d6 points of acid damage. The acid becomes inert when it leaves the yuan-ti's body, and the yuan-ti is immune to its effect.

Dark Knowledge (Ex) Five times per day, by making an appropriate DC 15 Knowledge check when facing aberrations, elementals, magical beasts, outsiders, or undead, Qalsarros can make use of one of the following abilities:

Tactics Qalsarros grants his allies +1 on attack rolls against the foe. This bonus increases to +2 if his check exceeds the target by 10, and goes to +3 if it exceeds the target by 20.

Puissance Allies within 60 feet gain +1 on saves against the foe's special abilities. This bonus increases to +2 if his check exceeds the target by 10, and goes to +3 if it exceeds the target by 20.

Alternate Form (Sp) Qalsarros can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (MM 280) as a psionic ability. He uses his own poison for the viper's bite attack.

Chameleon Power (Sp) Qalsarros can change the coloration of himself and his equipment to match his surroundings, granting him a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Skills Qalsarros gains a +2 bonus on Decipher Script and Knowledge (religion) checks due to his levels in archivist.

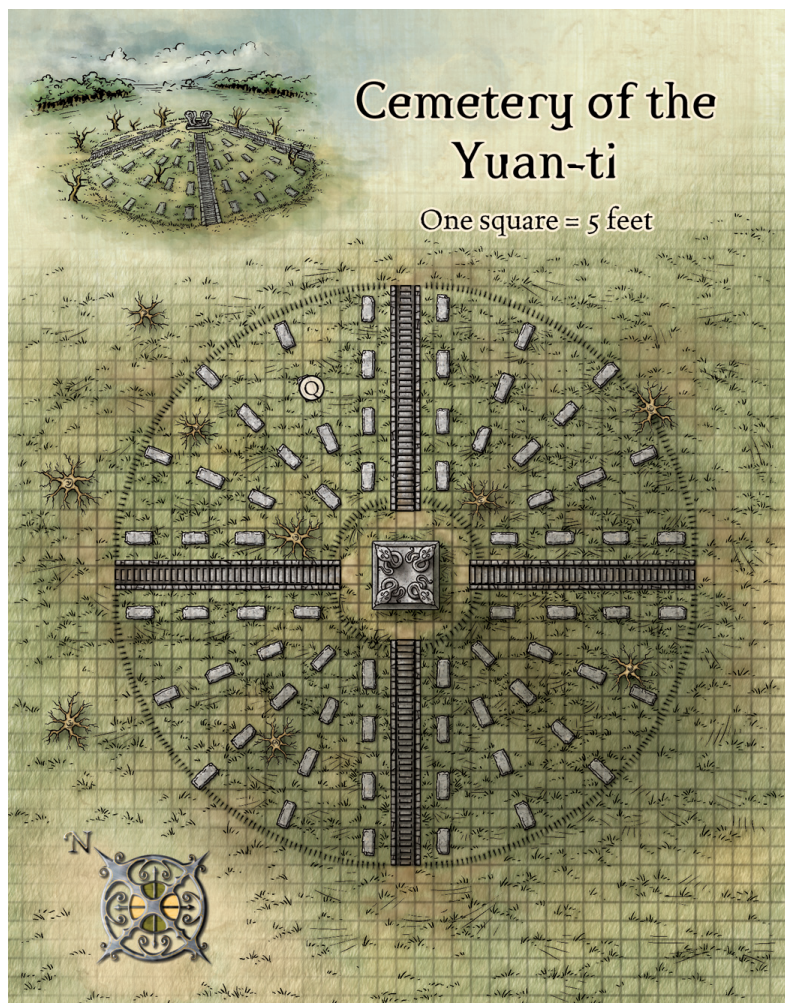
TACTICS

If Qalsarros is awakened by a PC touching his sarcophagus, he emerges immediately. If he is awakened by any other cause, however, he first takes 2 rounds to cast *entropic shield* and *shield of faith* upon himself. Once combat begins, he attempts to close with arcane casters as quickly as possible, hoping to use his touch spells and poison to remove them from the battle swiftly. He attempts to keep the trees and sarcophagi as cover between himself and ranged combatants. If the sculpture is in true danger of being destroyed, however, he throws caution to the winds and fights manically to the death.

CONCLUSION

With the death of Qalsarros, the magic that allowed the sculpture to animate corpses fails. The PCs may destroy the sculpture (and harvest its eyes) at their leisure.

The sculpture is of great importance to the yuan-ti of the Vanguard. If the PCs destroy it, they gain an additional action point to their pool for use in battle with the Forgotten King. Destroying any two of the four serpentine forms is sufficient to gain this benefit.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

Dead Trees: 1 foot thick; AC 4, hardness 5, hp 150, break DC 25; Climb DC 15. A tree takes up 1 square and provides cover to anyone behind it.

Heavy Debris: It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square with heavy debris. Heavy debris adds 5 to the DCs of Balance and Tumble checks, and it imposes a -5 penalty on Move Silently checks. Characters cannot run or charge through heavy debris.

Hillside: The hillside of the cemetery, except for the area immediately surrounding the statue, is considered a steep slope.

Characters moving uphill (to an adjacent square of higher elevation) must spend 2 squares of movement to enter each square of steep slope. Characters running or charging downhill (moving to an adjacent square of lower elevation) must succeed on a DC 10 Balance check upon entering the first steep slope square. Mounted characters make a DC 10 Ride check instead. Characters who fail this check stumble and must end their move-

ment 1d2x5 feet later. Characters who fail by 5 or more fall prone in the square where they end their movement. A steep slope increases the DC of Tumble checks by 2.

Sarcophagi: 6 inches thick (on each side and on top, hollow in the center); hardness 8, hp 90, break DC 38. A sarcophagus provides cover. If a sarcophagus is broken, the squares it occupies become heavy debris. It costs 1 extra square of movement to cross a sarcophagus, and anyone standing atop gains a +1 bonus on attacks against creatures on the ground. A creature can make a DC 15 Jump check to cross a sarcophagus without impeding movement, and a mounted character must succeed on a DC 5 Ride check to keep from being thrown during the jump.

Sculpture: Each of the four serpentine forms has the following attributes: 5 feet thick; AC 3, hardness 8, hp 150, break DC 35; Climb DC 20. The sculpture provides cover. If any of the four serpents are destroyed, it fills the nearest empty square with heavy debris.

Stairs: Characters who attack a foe beneath them gain a +1 on attack rolls for higher ground.

THE SLAVERS' GROTTO

Encounter Level 9

SETUP

The PCs appear just beside the portal on the ledge to the north/northeast. The four yuan-ti slavers begin at the points marked S (two of them on one of the boats). Dolathuzar begins at the spot marked D. The boats occupy the squares marked B.

Because the yuan-ti are some distance from the portal, they may not notice when it activates. Allow each of them to make a DC 12 Spot check; the PCs, and those who succeed on these checks, may act in the surprise round. If, however, the PCs are carrying, or ignite, a light source, or if they make an excessive amount of noise, the yuan-ti notice automatically.

The following description assumes that the party either has light or can see in the dark. If neither is the case, they see only blackness.

When the PCs appear (assuming they have a reasonable light source), read:

Several slender humanoids, with gleaming eyes and flickering tongues, stand about near the shore of the river, while others watch from a rowboat out in the water. A much larger reptilian monstrosity with dusk-gray scales is speaking to them. It appears to be negotiating or arguing with the others.

4 YUAN-TI PUREBLOODS

CR 3

MM 263

hp 18 each (4 HD)

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Yuan-Ti

AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Dodge

(+1 Dex, +3 armor, +2 shield, +1 natural)

SR 14

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk scimitar +5 (1d6/18–20)

Ranged mwk longbow +6 (1d8/×3)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +4

Atk Options Blind-Fight

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th):

At will—*detect poison* (CL 6th)

1/day—*animal trance* (DC 13), *cause fear* (DC 12),

charm person (DC 12), *darkness*, *entangle* (DC 12)

Abilities Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12

SQ *alternate form*

Feats Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Dodge, Improved Initiative

Skills Concentration +7, Disguise +4*, Hide +3, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +4, Spot +4

* A pureblood gains a +5 racial bonus on Disguise checks when impersonating a human.

Possessions masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork heavy steel shield, masterwork scimitar, masterwork longbow with 20 arrows

Alternate Form (Sp) A yuan-ti can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (MM 280) as a psionic ability.

DOLATHUZAR

CR 7

MM 264, MM 146, Dr 166

hp 59 (7 HD)

Male half-deep dragon yuan-ti halfblood

CE Medium dragon

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +12, Spot +12

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Yuan-ti

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24; Dodge (+1 Dex, +3 armor, +3 shield, +8 natural)

Immune charm, paralysis, sleep

Resist cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 16

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +9

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *scimitar* +14/+9 (1d6+7/18–20) and bite +8 (1d6+3 plus poison) or

Melee 2 claws +13 (1d4+6) and bite +8 (1d6+3 plus poison)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +9/+4 (1d8+6/×3)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise; poison (DC 15, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), produce acid

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*detect poison* (CL 6th)

3/day—*animal trance* (DC 16), *cause fear* (DC 15), *entangle* (DC 15)

1/day—*deeper darkness*, *neutralize poison* (DC 18), *suggestion* (DC 17)

Abilities Str 23, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 18

SA breath weapon, poison, produce acid

SQ *alternate form*, *chameleon power*

Feats Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative,

Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +16,



Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Hide +10*, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (religion) +15, Listen +16, Spot +16, Survival +9 (+11 underground)

* A halfblood using *chameleon power* gains a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Possessions +1 *scimitar*, masterwork composite longbow (+6 Str bonus), 20 arrows, masterwork studded leather armor, +1 *heavy steel shield*, pouch containing 18 pp and a handful of snake fangs

Produce Acid (Sp) A yuan-ti halfblood has the psionic power to exude acid from its body, dealing 3d6 points of acid damage to the next creature it touches, including a creature hit by its bite attack. If the yuan-ti is grappling or pinning a foe when it uses this power, its grasp deals 5d6 points of acid damage. The acid becomes inert when it leaves the yuan-ti's body, and the yuan-ti is immune to its effect.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-ft. cone, 1/day, 6d8 flesh-corrosive gas, Reflex DC 15 half.

Alternate Form (Sp) Dolathuzar can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (*MM* 280) as a psionic ability. He uses his own poison for the viper's bite attack.

Chameleon Power (Sp) Dolathuzar can change the coloration of himself and his equipment to match his surroundings, granting him a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

TACTICS

If the PCs initiate combat via ranged attacks or spells, Dolathuzar and the yuan-ti scatter to take cover behind stalagmites, walls, or pillars, and they return fire. (The yuan-ti in the boat row for cover instead.) Dolathuzar saves his breath weapon until he can catch a majority of the party in it, or, alternatively, for a desperate situation. If circumstances permit, the yuan-ti use their ability to become Tiny vipers to hide or take cover while finding optimal positions for a counterattack.

CONCLUSION

Dolathuzar attempts to flee -- either through the portal or the passage to the southeast, whichever is nearest to him at the time -- if all four of the yuan-ti are slain, or if he's reduced to 15 hp. The other yuan-ti attempt to retreat by river, or through the passage, if half are slain and the other two are both wounded.

If the PCs disrupt the arrangements here, they gain an additional action point for use against the Risen King.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

Heavy Debris: It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square with heavy debris. Heavy debris adds 5 to the DCs of Balance and Tumble checks, and it imposes a -5 penalty on Move Silently checks. Characters cannot run or charge through heavy debris.

Illumination: The cave is dark unless the PCs bring their own illumination, since the yuan-ti all possess darkvision.

Ledges: Except where mitigated by the slope or by the ladders, the miniature cliffs between levels are sheer but rough (Climb DC 22). The distance from the northernmost ledge (with the portal) down to the middle level is 10 feet. The distance from the middle level to the bottom (shore) level is 20 feet.

Nonflowing Water: Both the tepid pool in the west and the river -- due to its sluggish pace -- qualify as nonflowing

water. They simply require a swim speed or successful Swim checks to move through, and are considered calm water (DC 10 Swim checks). Characters need a way to breathe if they're underwater; failing that, they risk drowning (see Drowning, *DMG* 304). When underwater, characters can move in any direction as if they were flying with perfect maneuverability. An invisible creature displaces water and leaves a visible, body-shaped "bubble" where the water was displaced. The creature still has concealment (20% miss chance), but not total concealment (50% miss chance).

Rowboats: These 8-foot craft hold two Medium passengers. During combat, the boat can move at a speed of 10 if both passengers row, or 5 if only one rows.

Steep Slope: Characters moving uphill (to an adjacent square of higher elevation) must spend 2 squares of movement to enter each square of steep slope. Characters running or charging downhill (moving to an adjacent square of lower elevation) must succeed on a DC 10 Balance

check upon entering the first steep slope square. Mounted characters make a DC 10 Ride check instead. Characters who fail this check stumble and must end their movement 1d2x5 feet later. Characters who fail by 5 or more fall prone in the square where they end their movement. A steep slope increases the DC of Tumble checks by 2.

Stalagmite: 1 foot thick; AC 5, hardness 8, hp 180, break DC 30; Climb DC 25.

A stalagmite can provide cover. A stalagmite can be pushed over with a Strength check that exceeds its break DC, causing 4d6 points of damage to creatures in the squares that it falls in (DC 15 Reflex for half). A broken stalagmite fills the squares it falls in with heavy debris.

Wooden Freight Platform: The wooden pillars that support the platform have the following qualities: 1 foot thick, AC 5, hardness 8, hp 30, break DC 20; Climb DC 25.

The pulley mechanism allows the platform to rise and drop from the ledge to the ground below. It requires one person turning the winch, and it takes 5 rounds. It can support up to 400 pounds.

Wooden Ladder: 1-1/2 in. thick; AC 6, hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 15; Climb DC 0.



Dragons of Eberron: Dragon Hoards

BY AMBER E. SCOTT

ART BY FRED HOOPER

Dragons in Eberron possess unique cultures and histories that lend them a different flavor than typical fantasy dragons. From the patient and plotting dragons of the Chamber, to dragon spies living in the shadows of Khorvaire, to brash rogue dragons maintaining lairs on Xen'drik, the dragons of Eberron embrace some stereotypes and discard others to create a fresh, exciting facet to the world. It stands to reason, then, that their hoards are similarly unique.

Provided below are twenty-seven sample dragon hoards that a dragon of Eberron might maintain—one each for Challenge Rating 1 through Challenge Rating 27. Each represents approximately triple the expected treasure value of an encounter of that level, as normal for a dragon encounter.

If you use one of these hoards for a creature that doesn't normally have triple standard treasure, reduce the hoard's value accordingly, as given on the table below. For example, the CR 8 hoard is appropriate for a CR 12 dragon with standard treasure, and the CR 23 hoard is used for a CR 27 dragon with double standard treasure.

Dragon CR	Standard	Double Standard
1	—	—
2	—	1
3	1	3
4	1	3
5	2	4
6	2	5
7	3	6
8	4	7
9	5	8
10	6	9
11	7	10
12	8	11
13	9	12
14	10	13
15	11	14
16	12	15
17	13	16
18	14	17
19	15	18
20	16	18
21	16	19
22	17	19
23	17	20
24	17	20
25	18	21
26	18	22
27	18	23



A total value is given for each treasure hoard in its header line. This figure assumes full normal value for all objects (in many cases, items from the hoard can be sold for only half value by the PCs). Items marked with an asterisk (*) are likely to be used by dragons with an Intelligence score of 6 or higher (smart enough to know what they are and how to utilize them). The gold piece values of individual goods in each hoard are given in parentheses (gold piece values for items are given in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Items from other supplements list the supplement in which they appear in parentheses behind the item along with a page number: *EBERRON Campaign Setting* (ECS), *Explorer's Handbook* (EH), *Magic of Eberron* (MoE), *Races of Eberron* (RE), *Secrets of Xen'drik* (SX), or *Sharn: City of Towers* (Sh).

You can easily swap out items in any hoard as appropriate for your game. Unless you specifically desire to give out more or less than the expected value of treasure for the encounter, any added items should replace items of a similar value.

For lairs with multiple dragons, use the treasure that corresponds to the total Encounter Level of the lair.

CR 1 (183 gp, 7 sp, 3 cp)

Coins: 6,183 cp, 319 sp.

Goods: Red garnet (70 gp).

Items: Glyphbook (ECS 121).

CR 2 (659 gp, 5 sp, 5 cp)

Coins: 10,955 cp, 340 gp.

Goods: Petrified tree branch from the Khraal rain forest (55 gp), 3 large jet beads (30 gp each).

Items: Alchemist's frost* (1 flask) (ECS 121), *potion of cure light wounds**.

CR 3 (2,213 gp, 7 sp, 9 cp)

Coins: 12,629 cp, 1,875 sp.

Goods: Aquamarine (400 gp).

Items: Dragonmark focus amulet set in platinum (+1 caster level, 1,500 gp).

CR 4 (3,289 gp, 2 sp, 1 cp)

Coins: 7,221 cp, 537 gp, 18 pp.

Goods: A 2-foot by 3-foot animate painting of soldiers in plate armor endlessly marching in step while the terrain loops behind them (a DC 15 Knowledge [geography] check reveals that the soldiers march across the border from Aundair into Thrane) (minor illusion, 500 gp).

Items: Tarnished chain shirt, 100-foot silk rope, *wand of cat's grace** (21 charges).

CR 5 (4,836 gp, 7 sp, 9 cp)

Coins: 29,829 cp, 5,335 sp, 350 gp, 81 pp.

Goods: 2 golden yellow topazes shaped like reptilian eyes (500 gp each), a 3-foot by 5-foot wool tapestry depicting the Sharn skyline (425 gp).

Items: Flametouched iron holy symbol of Balinor (ECS 121), +1 *chitin armor* (SX 136).

CR 6 (6,012 gp, 6 sp)

Coins: 9,446 sp, 728 gp.

Goods: Fist-sized orb of amber (120 gp), chunky copper necklace set with squares of tourmaline (a DC 15 Appraise check reveals that the necklace is of dwarven make, likely from the Mror Holds) (650 gp), a glass urn painted with luminescent flowers that give off light like that of a candle flame (minor illusion, 750 gp).

Items: Acid (2 flasks)*, Brelish letter of marque signed but with no name filled in (ECS 121), *potion of lesser restoration**, *ring of protection* +1*.

CR 7 (10,614 gp, 1 sp)

Coins: 6,981 sp, 731 gp, 44 pp.

Goods: Marble set containing 8 white pearls and 1 black pearl (1,300 for the set), an unusual gray quartz crystal the size of a dagger blade (a DC 20 Appraise, Knowledge [psionics], or Knowledge [geography] check indicates that the crystal comes from Sarlona, but it has no magic or psionic properties) (80 gp), silver horn inlaid with lapis lazuli (800 gp).

Items: Masterwork longsword, *essence of the guard* (RE 176).

CR 8 (10,730 gp, 2 sp)

Coins: 7,202 sp, 715 gp, 58 pp.

Goods: Small pouch holding 3 violet garnets (300 gp each), red woolen cloak lined with black silk (50 gp), a set of six silver cups, each marked with the letter 'A' in elegant script (20 gp each), a tattered map showing Shargon's Teeth (an illustration of a fanged maw beside a large 'X' marks the center of the map) (15 gp), portrait of a changeling whose features alter to become a blonde human woman or a bearded male dwarf as the viewer moves (minor illusion, 100 gp), the portrait is set in a filigreed gold frame (250 gp), coral sculpture upon which perches a silver mermaid (280 gp).

Items: *Clear spindle ioun stone**, *rope of climbing*.

CR 9 (13,389 gp)

Coins: 8,420 sp, 757 gp, 82 pp.

Goods: 4 cubes of hematite (10 gp each), 3 chunks of jasper (60 gp each), a black marble globe set with zircons to mirror the night sky (a band of gold wraps around the globe and sparkles with tiny topaz) (3,000 gp), perfectly preserved silver dragon scale the size of a large shield (golden runes spell out in Draconic on the surface of the scale, "Sleep eter-

nally, Adamataxis, and trouble the waking world no more") (250 gp).

Items: A pair of green leather boots ribbed with bone (*boots of elvenkind*), *least ring of master artifice* (MoE 110).

CR 10 (14,760 gp, 2 sp)

Coins: 9,392 sp, 2,376 gp, 285 pp.

Goods: 3 red garnets (110 gp each), black pearl (400 gp), aquamarine (400 gp), fire opal (800 gp), teardrop diamond earrings (2,500 gp), glass box filled with colored sand (whenever someone shakes the box, the sand forms the image of a different dragonmark [minor conjuration, 250]).

Items: Scroll of *repair serious damage*, *potion of aid**, *wand of invisibility* (36 charges).

CR 11 (18,166 gp)

Coins: 2,080 gp, 138 pp.

Goods: Alexandrite (600 gp), dragonfly carved out of amber and set with sapphire eyes (350 gp), 3 pieces of jade engraved to look like playing cards (300 gp each), 5 interlocking cogs made of silver, bronze, and electrum, welded together to form a sculpture (400 gp).

Items: Quiver containing eighteen *screaming bolts*, a ring of twisted twigs carved with images of monkeys (*ring of climbing*), divine scroll containing *barkskin* and *flame blade*, one set of *wizard's manacles* (Sh 171).

CR 12 (23,368 gp)

Coins: 5,748 gp, 567 pp.

Goods: Three sardonyx round-cut gems (20 gp each), rich purple corundum (700 gp), two amethysts (90 gp each), star ruby (1,000 gp), brown velvet robe with bright green satin leaves sewn in clusters around the cuffs and collar (70 gp), bone mask of an elven man's face (inset with jet tiles to enhance its features) (120 gp), bronze statue of a gnome dressed in the manner of a ship's captain and holding a functional compass before him (800 gp).

Items: Mithral heavy shield, two *elixirs of hiding**, *wand of knock* (50 charges), *lesser silent metamagic rod**.

CR 13 (36,593 gp)

Coins: 2,911 gp, 667 pp.

Goods: Six irregular freshwater pearls (10 gp each), two pink pearls (120 gp each), black opal (1,200 gp), granite statue of a dragon with platinum claws with "Property of M.B. d'Jorasco" engraved on the base (a DC 20 Knowledge [nobility and royalty] or Knowledge [local] check reveals that Mala Boromar d'Jorasco, wife of the patriarch of a powerful family, lives in Sharn) (350 gp), life-sized wooden statue of a fastieth dinosaur with jade eyes and a silver harness (1,100 gp), 3-foot tall crystal sculpture

of the Glass Tower that continually collapses and rebuilds itself (minor conjuration, 1,250 gp).

Items: *Disc of absorptive negation* (EH 150), +2 *thundering heavy mace*.

CR 14 (40,273 gp)

Coins: 4,448 gp, 790 pp.

Goods: Moonstone (60 gp), three brown-green garnets (90 gp each), two red spinels (100 gp each), star ruby (1,300 gp), eight-person place setting comprised of glass plates (painted with gold cogs) and gold flatware plus gold-rimmed crystal goblets engraved with the phrase 'hard work yields just rewards' in Dwarven (50 per plate, 375 for the flatware, 75 per glass), painting of a woman dressed in white standing next to a tombstone with her face hidden by her hair (220 gp), articulated steel scorpion statue with an ivory tail stinger (450 gp), mahogany cabinet that continually maintains a cool and dry interior that is suitable for storing perishable items (minor evocation, 2,500 gp).

Items: *Pathfinder shard* (ECS 264), *potion of detect aberration* (ECS), *potion of remove paralysis*, *ring of protection +2**, *wand of mirror image** (30 charges), *belt of fortification* (SX 148).

CR 15 (54,404 gp)

Coins: 10,134 gp, 1,080 pp.

Goods: 6 onyx oval-cut gems (50 gp each), 3 citrines (30 gp each), 4 chrysoberyls (100 gp each), deep blue spinels (400 gp), two white opals (900 gp each), canary diamond (5,000 gp), satin high-heeled ladies' boots with ivory buttons (105 gp), cat-shaped jet brooch with ruby eyes (550 gp), picture of a river of molten lava in an underground tunnel (the picture is always warm to the touch) (minor evocation, 700 gp), silver mirror with stone frame shaped like a headstone (750 gp), soarwood lectern that hovers 3 inches off the ground (1,400 gp), woven area rug depicting a field of flowers that constantly produces a sweet scent (minor conjuration, 1,400 gp), half-melted gold crown set with three intact rubies and one large blue-white diamond (a DC 25 Knowledge [history] or Knowledge [nobility and royalty] check reveals it to be the crown of one of the royals of Cyre) (4,000 gp).

Items: 2 *potions of darkvision*, *potion of resist electricity 10**, scroll of *scorpion tail* (RE)*, scroll of *make whole* and *shatter**, 3 *raven skull rods* (EH 157), *bracers of armor +3*.

CR 16 (83,677 gp)

Coins: 11,697 gp, 616 pp.

Goods: 10 banded agates (10 gp), 6 bloodstones (80 gp), 3 alexandrites (300 gp), emerald (1,100 gp), 5 linen pillowcases embroidered with silk thread with each one displaying the image of a beautiful half-elf woman (130 gp each), silk fan encrusted with rose quartz (220 gp), porcelain decanter

engraved with images of grapes set with amethysts (250 gp), pink crystal mask with no eyeholes (250 gp), ruby heart-shaped pendant with an irreparable crack in it (minor transmutation, 750 gp), blue glass skylight removed from a building (3,500 gp), 2 identical bronzewood statues of satyrs (1,800 gp each).

Items: Mithral shirt, 2 javelins of lightning, ring of feather falling, scabbard of keen edges, +2 rapier, pen of the living parchment (Sh 169).

CR 17 (102,181 gp)

Coins: 14,651 gp, 886 pp.

Goods: 4 chalcedony round-cut gems (20 gp each), 4 amber oval-cut gems (90 gp each), 2 amethysts (100 gp each), 3 violet garnets (400 gp each), fiery yellow corundum (1,000 gp), blue diamond (6,000 gp), gold bracelet set with zircon (90 gp), purple noblewoman's gown with winter wolf pelt trim and matching cape (110 gp), large bronzewood bowl engraved with pictures of strawberries (150 gp), curved black glass plate as large as a serving platter (a DC 20 Appraise check identifies it as the lens from a giant pair of goggles) (150 gp), wool tapestry displaying the interior of a cozy sitting room (the fire in the woven fireplace seems to crackle and flicker) (minor illusion, 180 gp), silver baby's cup engraved with the name 'Felicity' (200 gp), 2 pewter candlestick holders that display fiery Gnome script along their length when lit candles are placed within it (one says "Hearth" and the other says "Home") (250 gp each), a portrait of a bald man with both eyes closed and a third eye opening between them (500 gp), golden pick with an egg-shaped topaz embedded on the point (700 gp), a shield-shaped emerald amulet hung on a mithral chain (1,750 gp).

Items: *Potion of good hope**, *faceted persona* (Charisma attuned) (ECS 264)*, +1 twilight mithral breastplate (EH 154), *staff of illumination**.

CR 18 (123,004 gp)

Coins: 20,799 gp, 1,137 pp.

Goods: 8 white pearls (100 gp each), 6 pink pearls (120 gp each), 3 silver pearls (180 gp each), golden pearl (200 gp), set of six butterflies made of gems in rainbow colors (125 gp each), halfling-sized bamboo vest hung with countless dinosaur teeth (some as large as daggers) (170 gp), black lacquered jewelry box lined with silk (220 gp), blown eggshell from a dragon's egg painted with the design of a weeping red dragon (225 gp), incredibly soft and supple gray cloak (a DC 25 Appraise check reveals that the cloak is made of tanned doppleganger skin) (300 gp), backgammon set made of ivory and jet (400 gp), silver locket that displays a small illusion of a loved one when opened (minor illusion, 500 gp), silver longsword with jet pommel bearing the inscription "For brave service and nobility in the face of certain death" on its blade (500 gp), platinum necklace with settings for 13 gems but only 12 sapphires are present (4,500 gp).

Items: +2 halberd of frost, ring of chameleon power*, rod of the python, dragonmark scepter (RE 173), periapt of Wisdom +6*.

CR 19 (158,611 gp)

Coins: 21,664 gp, 2,219 pp.

Goods: 12 eye agates (11 gp each), 5 citrines (50 gp each), 5 peridots (50 gp each), 3 deep blue spinels (500 gp each), 2 white opals (1,100 gp each), jacinth (6,000 gp), 16 leather book covers, pages neatly removed (20 gp each), set of 6 silver-tipped quill pens (20 gp each), black wool hood trimmed with ivory silk (30 gp), three figurines of fairies with glass wings (80 gp each), clay statue of a shifter which never grows hard and sets (100 gp), deck of cards with woven silk backings and individually painted face cards (120 gp), 4 oak bookcases (120 gp each), model airship with an illusory elemental ring (minor illusion, 220 gp), giant-size cask of brandy (300 gp), silk tapestry depicting angels soaring in Syrania (2,200 gp), green marble fountain carved with images of sahuagin battling merfolk, its dry, exposed pipes sticking from beneath it (3,500 gp), piano with keys made from maelephant tusks (6,000 gp).

Items: Rhino hide, ring of improved jumping*, robe of stars, vulkoor's headdress (SX 147).

CR 20 (188,739 gp)

Coins: 31,209 gp, 3,790 pp.

Goods: Jewelry box (80 gp) holding 12 identical star rose quartz gems (50 gp each), 3 chrysoprase oval-cut gems (60 gp each), 3 large chunks of coral (100 gp each), 2 black star sapphires (1,000 gp each), 3 large electrum rings set with jet (140 gp each), platinum hair comb designed to look like a gladiola (300 gp), silver sculpture of a hand with six fingers (400 gp), portrait of a rakshasa reclining in luxury on a pile of silk pillows (a shadowy figure watches the rajah from a corner) (1,200 gp), necklace of three woven gold chains set with tiny rubies (1,250 gp), painting of a elven man studying an apple intently (1,500 gp), silk tapestry depicting a man with ragged stumps where wings would go and who is impaled on the spire of a tower (1,500 gp), bedframe with manacled posts made of targath (2,000 gp), silver diadem set with a perfectly round diamond (2,800 gp).

Items: Armbow (ECS 268), ectoplasmic armor (ECS 264), *potion of greater magic weapon* +3 (oil)*, *potion of magic vestment* +3 (oil)*, *helm of teleportation*.

CR 21 (257,043 gp)

Coins: 32,714 gp, 4,133 pp.

Goods: Wicker basket (10 gp) holding 8 large white opals (800 gp each), 6 iolites (50 gp each), 8 sardonyx square-cut gems (40 gp each), 2 violet garnets (600 gp each), star ruby (1,300 gp), 62 books on various subjects (each one stamped with "Property of the Library of Korranberg") (10 gp each), pair of pink silk

slippers with feathered toes (80 gp), a mummified kobold (100 gp), orange glass lantern engraved with hummingbirds (200 gp), inanimate but fully assembled Karnathi skeleton in plate armor (2,200 gp), 22 bottles of wine in consecutive vintages (100 gp each), a sandstone pyramid 3 feet tall that is engraved with cryptic glyphs (3,000 gp), purple crystal block the size of a chest with an engraved screaming face floating in its center (4,000 gp), black marble platform set with an alchemical silver and ruby summoning circle (6,000 gp).

Items: *Winged shield*, +2 *axiomatic heavy mace*, *staff of frost**, *wand of lightning bolt* (5th) (50 charges)*, *soarsled* (Sh 171).

CR 22 (264,942 gp)

Coins: 33,462 gp, 3,971 pp.

Goods: 10 lapis lazuli round-cut gems (7 gp each), 2 chrysoberyls (110 gp each), 5 alexandrites (600 gp each), 2 sapphires (1,200 gp each), 6 ivory dice with gold pips (20 gp each), bronze anklet set with tiny padlocks (50 gp), set of 6 china teacups (each one painted with the image of a dryad) (100 gp each), washbasin in which any water placed ripples constantly with a musical sound (minor transmutation and illusion, 500 gp), gold tiara set with chips of pink diamond (500 gp), blue dragonhide quiver stitched with silver thread (600 gp), set of platinum scales topped with a coin-shaped topaz (1,000 gp), white marble altar inlaid with an alchemical silver flame (2,000 gp), four-poster bronzewood bed with green silk vines wrapped around the bedposts (2,600 gp).

Items: *Medallion of thoughts**, *pearl of the sirines*, +2 *mind blade gauntlet* (RE 175), *elemental axe* (SX 148), *manual of quickness in action* +3.

CR 23 (266,158 gp)

Coins: 33,634 gp, 5,532 pp.

Goods: 8 rubellites (80 gp each), 7 pink pearls (100 gp each), 2 violet garnets (400 gp each), 2 star rubies (1,400 gp each), pink diamond (5,000 gp), silver bracelet set with pink tourmaline (250 gp), gold toe-ring (150 gp), bright red wooden spice rack complete with twelve jarred spices (25 gp), green leather floor-length cloak trimmed with gold feathers (75 gp), green glass bottle that lends the flavor of apples to any liquid placed within it (minor transmutation, 80 gp), red velvet bench (the type set in lightning rail cars) (175 gp), lacquered wooden box inlaid with rose marble that contains a stationery set and a gold fountain pen (250 gp), obsidian giant-sized book cover wrapped with a locking bronze band (450 gp), twelve portraits of dragons (six of a gold dragon and six of a black dragon) in different stages of development (150 gp each), and one empty picture frame identical to the other twelve (50 gp), 6-foot-wide slab of white marble curved as if removed from a larger sphere (1,300 gp), solid platinum bow inlaid with tiny citrines and strung with a purple silk thread (2,200 gp), diamond-encrusted platinum

monocle (2,500 gp), life-sized female porcelain mannequin with gold silk thread for hair and black star sapphires for eyes (dressed in a blue silk gown embroidered with gold thread and set with rubies in the bodice) (3,400 gp).

Items: +2 *ghost touch light steel shield*, 2 *potions of rage**, 3 *potions of water breathing**, *ring of minor spell storing**, *bracers of armor* +7, *necklace of the phantom library* (EH 152), *greater essence of the scout* (ECS 269).

CR 24 (322, 919 gp)

Coins: 36,052 gp, 6,180 pp.

Goods: 12 moss agates (6 gp each), 10 chrysoprase oval-cut gems (30 gp each), 6 amber square-cut pieces (70 gp each), 4 deep blue spinels (500 gp each), large chunk of byeshk (5,000 gp), large fishbowl (15 gp), 6 palm-sized gold stars (45 gp each), 8 casks of mead stamped with identical runes (a DC 30 Decipher Script or Knowledge [local] check identifies the rune as the family symbol of a werebear matriarch and her shifter offspring, who live in the Towering Wood in the Eldeen Reaches) (50 gp each), 4 granite planters carved to resemble coiled serpents (125 gp each), glass shield painted with a luminescent flame (minor illusion, 125 gp), exquisitely carved chestnut mandolin with silver strings (380 gp), large painting in a brass frame showing a factory (three warforged heads roll by endlessly on an animated conveyor belt; someone has written, "Minath, Tread, and Ferrous," on the frame) (minor illusion, 450 gp), topographical map of the local region carved from an immense slab of basalt (500 gp), ruby apple with golden stem and emerald leaves (1,500 gp), wall hanging of woven wires (gold, silver, and mithral) that resembles a giant dragonmark (a DC 20 Knowledge [arcane] check identifies the wall hanging as a Mark of Finding) (1,600 gp), darkwood chest with teak panels on the sides that are illustrated with amber monkeys and ivory elephants (2,800 gp), black marble bust of a medusa (each of her snakes possesses jade eyes) (3,300 gp), area rug embroidered with the image of an ancient forest (two elves in flowing robes stand in the forest, hands linked, and white paint transforms their faces to skulls) (4,600 gp), densewood and adamantine throne with orange velvet upholstery and an enormous yellow diamond embedded in each arm (8,500 gp).

Items: +2 *flaming halberd*, +2 *composite* (+2 Str) *longbow of speed*, *potion of greater magic fang* +4 (oil)*, *rod of splendor*, *arcane scroll of disintegrate and flesh to stone**, *cloak of resistance* +5*, *arquis tel-lora* (SX 145), *Cannith goggles* (MoE 109).

CR 25 (370,430 gp)

Coins: 37,137 gp, 6,287 pp.

Goods: 22 hematites (8 gp each), 9 azurites (13 gp each), 4 iolites (60 gp each), 4 sardonyx oval-cut gems (60 gp each), 3 deep green spinels (100 gp each), 2 clearest bright green emeralds (7,000 gp each), large sandstone cube engraved with images of

scorpions (45 gp), 2 quartz cubes that hum when placed within 1 foot of each other (minor illusion, 75 gp each), visored helmet (steel with gold piping) badly scorched (75 gp), 8 pristine standards hanging from densewood poles (a DC 20 Knowledge [history] or Knowledge [nobility and royalty] check identifies them as two-hundred-year old standards from Aundair, Karnath, Lhazaar Principalities, Cyre, Q'barra, Thrane, Valenar, and Zilargo) (100 gp each), wooden ship's figurehead of a merman holding an adamantite triton that is encrusted with barnacles (125 gp), six chairs upholstered with dinosaur hide (a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that all chairs were upholstered from a single hide from a battlesaur titan) (150 gp each), five sets of white silk sheets (200 gp each), fountain pen tipped with a topaz that emits light equal to that of a candle (minor illusion, 250 gp), painting of an egg-shaped silvery monolith in the middle of a red desert (250 gp), platinum collar sized for a human neck that is studded with sapphires and attached to a 10-foot-long gold chain (2,500 gp), a constructed but deanimated iron golem (10,000 gp), enormous dragon skull with silver-plated horns and blue-white diamonds for eyes (14,000 gp).

Items: +4 studded leather of greater shadow and greater silent moves, +3 Riedran crysteel rapier (ECS 127), staff of frost (40 charges)*, mask of misplaced aura (Sh 170)*.

CR 26 (413,666 gp)

Coins: 40,997 gp, 6,881 pp.

Goods: 15 azurites (8 gp each), 32 malachites (10 gp each), 14 tiger eye turquoise oval-cut gems (16 gp each), 12 carnelians (40 gp each), 12 jasper square-cut gems (50 gp each), 10 zircons (50 gp each), 10 chrysoberyls (90 gp each), 9 jet oval-cut gems (100 gp each), 9 golden pearls (110 gp each), 8 aquamarines (400 gp each), 6 violet garnets (500 gp each), 6 golden yellow topaz square-cut gems (700 gp each), 6 emeralds (1,000 gp each), 5 black opals (1,100 gp each), 5 black star sapphires (1,200 gp each), 2 star rubies (1,600 gp each), 2 canary diamonds (5,000 gp each), 2 brown diamonds (6,000 gp each), jacinth (7,000 gp), silver chain strung with 12 silver pearls (1,400 gp), onyx brooch in the shape of a spider (250 gp), pair of bone earrings studded with moonstones (150 gp), pair of rose gold earrings in the shape of flowers (125 gp), heavy gold ring set with a single bloodstone

and marked with the seal of a Karnathi noble family (800 gp), sapphire and alchemical silver engagement ring engraved with the phrase "To my dearest Margana" (one of the sapphires is missing from its setting) (1,000 gp), platinum and topaz necklace (1,500 gp), ice-blue diamond amulet engraved with a mace and the symbol of the Sovereign Host (a DC 10 Knowledge (religion) check identifies it as a holy symbol dedicated to Kol Korran) (2,000 gp), red silk turban hung with gold chains and diamond teardrops (2,500 gp).

Items: Ring of blinking*, ring of shooting stars*, ring of protection +4*, ioun stone (pearly white spindle)*, pearl of power (5th-level spell)*, gem of seeing*.

CR 27 (533,305 gp)

Coins: 42,415 gp, 7,236 pp.

Goods: 6 red spinels (80 gp each), 9 pieces of jade (90 gp each), 8 amethysts (100 gp each), 7 alexandrites (600 gp each), 20 violet garnets (600 gp each), 4 star rubies (1200 gp each), 2 pink diamonds (5,000 gp each), clearest bright green emerald (8,000 gp), robe made of hides from various animals stitched together and fastened to a yak-hide cloak (125 gp), large oil painting of diminutive yellow humanoids bowing to a shining gold dragon (800 gp), gold burial mask with blue crystal eyes (1,000 gp), large ceramic urn decorated with ivory tiles and embedded pearls (the lid is carved to resemble a white dragon's claw) (1,300 gp), silver flute with diamond mouthpiece (2,000 gp), hollow silver statue the size and shape of a human man (has amethyst eyes) (2,700 gp), an intact and functional galleon with sails removed and stowed belowdecks (a DC 30 Knowledge (history) check reveals the ship to be the one which carried Lhazaar across the sea) (40,000 gp).

Items: +3 giantbane shifting blood glass longsword (SX 147), potion of barkskin +5*, rod of rulership, divine scroll of summon monster VIII and greater planar ally*, robe of arcane might +6 (EH 153), tracker mask (RE 176), orb of storms, bowl of commanding water elementals*.

Confessions of a Full-Time Wizard

by Shelly Mazzanoble

HOW SHELLY GOT HER GAME BACK

I got lucky in 5th grade. No, not that kind of lucky—it was 5th grade! I got lucky in the teacher lottery the day I found out I was in Mrs. Dancy's class. Everyone loved Mrs. Dancy, especially kids who were not lucky enough to be in her class. Mrs. Dancy could teach math like no one's business. She made a game out of learning our multiplication tables by using flash cards and pitting classmate against classmate to see who could answer fastest. And she was always up for a round of Mum Ball—the game where you sat on your desk, beamed a big, red kickball at one another while keeping your trap shut. I get it now. This was a ploy to have some peace and quiet for the teacher, but to us it was a blatant show of adoration. Mrs. Dancy loved us, and we loved her.

Sometime before Christmas we got terrible news. Ms. Troy, our principal, came to class, which was terrifying in itself. She had severe black hair and red lips and went so far as to paint a mole on her upper lip. Very Madonna, even before Madonna (and yes, some of us grew up in a time when there was NO Madonna! Can you imagine?)

Anyway, on this fateful date, Ms. Troy came to tell us Mrs. Dancy was not going to be our teacher anymore. As of tomorrow. Tomorrow? There wasn't time to learn short division, let alone process in our nine-year-old heads why we were being abandoned. Mrs. Dancy sat behind her desk, nodding along with Ms. Troy's words. Was she upset? Did she want to leave? Would there be a party?

I don't know. Maybe she was fired. Or clinically insane. Maybe she won the lottery and couldn't wait to ditch our sorry butts to live the high life in Belize. It didn't matter. We burst out crying.

Mrs. Dancy had just taught me Life Lesson #1:

Things change. (Or as I now call it, Nothing Gold Can Stay, after learning the same lesson about a year later from Robert Frost by way of Ponyboy Curtis in *The Outsiders*.)

I continued to cry the whole way home. Past the little shop my friend pilfered Bazooka gum from, through the shortcut I was usually too paranoid to take, into my front door, past my mom, and under the covers of my pink canopy bed. Mom was baffled. Did dating disasters happen to 5th graders?

I could barely get the words out.

"We were supposed to make the longest construction paper chain in school history!"

"Mrs. Dancy drew names from a hat for kickball so nobody felt last picked."

"I was supposed to turn ten in her class! I already picked out my outfit!"

Mom wasn't nearly as devastated. In fact, she burst out laughing which made me cry harder. Not only was I losing my beloved multiplication table sensei, my mother was a block of ice. I'd never make it to sixth grade with this kind of nurturing.

Life Lesson #2: Build a bridge and get over it. (Thanks, Mom.)

Mrs. Dancy didn't run off to Belize. She ran off to the mall where I bumped into her around Christmas. She seemed happy, if not a bit burdened under the weight of her shopping bags. She

asked how I was doing, was I looking forward to the holidays, and how was school? School? The nerve! Never have I felt so betrayed. And she was wearing jeans!

A couple months later I turned ten in Mr. Mohan's class. My birthday fell on the same day we had to take the dreaded Standard Aptitude Test—a test to determine if we were even worthy of being tested. In an effort to untaint the day, Mr. Mohan declared it Dress-Up Day. This was his attempt to teach Life Lesson #3:

Look your best on the outside, and you will protect your inside.

I wore an emerald green mini-skirt with purple leg warmers. Mage armor for the fifth-grade soul. Mom brought in a sheet pizza and two mortifying cartons of orange juice when all the cool kids were drinking soda. Mr. Mohan said he loved orange juice. We played Mum Ball every day at 2:00. I got an A in Math.

And then, over two decades since Mrs. Dancy abandoned me, I lost another primary figure in my life—my first and only Dungeon Master. It still stings.

It was Teddy who taught me how to roll up a character and fire a magic missile. He was genuinely proud when I leveled and took great pride watching me flip through the *Player's Handbook* and choose my new spells. Without Teddy we were just minis on Formica. We were unemployed adventurers, trust fund slackers, with nothing better to do than spend our gold pieces at the local ale house and reminisce about the good old days when pain in the ass Lady Elaydren would send for us after finding herself in another "uh oh" situation.

We missed Teddy but we were itching to play. We'd see one another and stick out our bottom lips and whisper, "I miss D&D." We'd be in meetings together and commiserate because it was Monday at 3:30 and we knew where we should be. We'd lapse into remember when's while waiting for a fresh pot of coffee in the kitchen. Remember when that giant gorilla ambushed us in the ziggurat? Ah, to swing a bastard sword again. And although it felt like a betrayal to Teddy's memory, we had no choice. We put the call out for a new Dungeon Master.

"7 unruly, unfocused PCs ISO of Dungeon Master. Must be willing to answer a lot of questions varying from, 'Where are we again?' to 'Who was your favorite cast member from *The Outsiders*?' Must be into sound effects and won't get ruffled when we kill your NPCs for sport. Super crunchy autocrats need not apply."

Do DMs exist in a secret society? Is there a support group? Do they have a covert hangout like the clubs in airports for super premier airline members? Perhaps our reputation preceded us because the offers weren't exactly rolling in. I pictured Teddy gathered among his fellow peers, nibbling on cashews and sipping miniature bottles of Pepsi while lamenting how he came up with three brilliant encounters only to have us get stalled over the decision to kick down the secret door or keep walking. Maybe Teddy was happy to be rid of us and did what so many of our parents only

threatened—pull the car over and leave us on the side of a dirt road. I was supposed to get to 10th level in his game!

Life Lesson #4: Don't take things for granted. (Even a D&D game when you work at Wizards of the Coast.)

About a month ago word came back there was interest. We were thrilled but skeptical. Who was this guy? Did he have experience? Did he know about us? Does he know who Ponyboy and Sodapop are? He did. In fact, our new prospect was, dare I say, excited about our group. And he was no slouch in the DMing department. Not only was he experienced, he studied under the dry erase of Mr. Super-DM-himself, Chris Perkins. Were we worthy? Was this some kind of final exam for a Dungeon Protégé? Before he can earn his stripes as true master he must make us focus. Make us finish three encounters per session. Rough us up a little. Make us call him master.

I didn't care why he was doing it. I was just glad to be playing again. But I have to admit I was nervous. Teddy understood me. He was even sort of charmed by how much I loved Astrid. And although he didn't favor her, he didn't exactly go after her in a dark alley with an axe. What if this new DM was different? No! I don't want to be roughed up!

But I know this guy. He's nice. He has dimples and two sweet dogs. He likes to cook and uses Aveda hair products. Could someone who smells like rosemary and mint be that vindictive? Well, if you think someone who runs around the building in all his perfumed and dimpled glory, shouting, "YOU'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!" and writes things on his blog like "I can't wait to slaughter the little piggies! TPK here I come!" (or something to that effect—I may be paraphrasing) is vindictive, then yes, it's possible.

Then one day he snuck up on me in the parking lot and warned, "not to get too attached to my new character."

"Why?" I asked. (I've got -8 in Streetwise, okay?)

"Because she's going to die."

Oh!

Teddy never said my character was going to die. . .

Despite New Dungeon Master's bullying, we were still excited to play. Now when I saw various members of my group we'd announce in salutation, "We're playing D&D again!" I even took myself shopping for new supplies—mechanical pencils, erasers that smelled like the fruit they were shaped like. I had yet to roll the new set of dice I got at Gen Con. I even bought a new notebook figuring I might wind up in therapy from all these dead characters and it might be helpful to pinpoint where all my issues began.

The air was scented with fresh herbs and dry erase markers when I entered. New DM was busy writing notes on the board. He has nice handwriting, I notice, but no! This man wants to kill me! I won't be fooled by pretty hair and nice penmanship!

When the rest of the group showed up, New DM welcomed us (ha!), tells us he's excited to be playtesting with us (ha!), and wants us to know this is serious business and we should all treat it as such (huh?) This is not so much a game as work. Our opinions are impor-

tant and we should be vigilant and articulate with our feedback. Scott pretends to stick a pencil in his eye. Adam begins taking notes. Marty mouths, "this sucks" and I fire off a magic missile. We're all on the verge of suddenly remembering a meeting we're late for, when New DM blares, "Just kidding! I made brownies!" and shoves a 9 x 13 nonstick pan of gooey goodness onto the battle grid. Homemade brownies?

Two hours with New DM flies by. We're high on sugar and marshmallow and already planning the food fest for next Tuesday. Be gone Kashi and snap peas! You're no longer welcome here! New DM lets us refer to the "bad guys" as frat boys. He made faces to illustrate the drake's slow, painful death. He did sound effects for a mace hitting a shield (schwiiaiiiiing!) And much to New DM's dismay, no one died. Good thing, because I already love my new temporary character. This may be the fourth edition of D&D, but it's the second edition of Shelly because something weird was going on. My Dungeon Master is gunning for my whole party and yet I don't feel the need to take my mini and run of the playmat. I want to keep playing if for no other reason than to spite New DM. Hear that, New DM? Talk to the burning hands!

I ran into New DM in the stairwell a few days ago.

"Your character is going to bite it," he promised.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I said. "You're all talk." Hey wait. Who said that? Who is this mysterious, trash-talking, slapdash roleplayer?

New DM laughed. "You're not supposed to get attached to your character. It's a playtest, you know."

"But I like Tara," I said. "I don't want her to die."

"Too bad," New DM answered. "She's going bye-bye."

And then like a charging orc, it hit me. New DM's faux antagonizing is what's making this fun. He's giving us a reason to invest in our characters, to strategize, to keep coming back. He's giving us a villain—himself—sacrificing his cute dimples in order to give us something to hate. He doesn't want to kill us. He wants to keep us.

But still, I want my character to make it. "If Tara survives one more game, will you make us more brownies?"

New DM stopped mid-step and pondered this. "Okay," he finally said.

Life Lesson #879: That which does not kill you makes you brownies.

Now I just need to plan my outfit. In case Mr. Mohan was right about Life Lesson #3, Tuesdays are officially Dress-Up Day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shelly Mazzanoble had a memorable fifth grade. Some highlights included purchasing an entire Smurf village, getting grounded for wearing dangly earrings, and acquiring an acid wash Guess jean jacket she later had the guitar player from Poison autograph (8th grade was a good year too.) She continues to seek guidance from Ponyboy Curtis and still insists she will marry Sodapop some day.

THE CORE MECHANIC

BY MATT SERNETT

Grab a d20. Roll high.

That's the basic rule of 4th Edition just as it was in 3rd Edition, but the new edition puts that mechanic more solidly in the core of the game than ever.

Ever faced one of those life-or-death saving throws? Hours, weeks, or even years of play can hang in the balance. It all comes down to that one roll. There's drama in that moment, but it's drama you didn't create, and you don't want.

That's gone in the new edition.

Have you played a spellcaster and been a little envious of the excitement of other players when they roll critical hits? Have you wished that you could do that for your spells?

You can in 4th.

Have you ever had some confusion or miscalculation about your normal AC versus your touch and flat-footed AC?

You won't have to worry about it.

If you want to know whether or not you succeed in doing some action in 4th Edition, you grab a d20 and try to roll high. Just as in 3rd Edition, you add a modifier to that roll from your character sheet, and you check for any extra bonuses or penalties from the situation or from your allies. The key difference in the new edition is what you roll for and what you add.

The standard defenses remain (AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will) but now they all work more like AC. When a dragon breathes fire on you, it attacks your Reflex and deals half damage if it misses. The DM rolls a d20, adds the dragon's modifiers, and asks you what your Reflex score is. The dragon might roll a 1 and automatically miss no matter how much tougher it is than you, but there's also the frightening possibility that it will roll a 20 and deal double damage.

Folks familiar with the new Star Wars Saga system will recognize this concept, but it's evolved a bit to better suit D&D. In 4th Edition, when a creature only needs to touch you to deliver an attack, it targets your Reflex. When you're surprised, you grant combat advantage, but you don't need to look at a special AC on your sheet—the normal number works fine. When a pit suddenly opens up beneath your feet, you make a check to jump out of danger, but if a crossbow trap fires an arrow at you, it the bolt attacks your AC.

What we mean when we talk about streamlining the system is this: making design decisions that make learning and using the game less difficult, while keeping the system just as robust. And making it more fun as the result.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of 4th Edition, the editor-in-chief of Dragon Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for Men's Health Magazine, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry. He feels very lucky to now be employed as a creative/world designer for Gleemax. Hail the bottled brain!

WHAT DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT MEANS

The Design & Development article series premiered on the D&D website back in September 2005, and has been a staple ever since. With the approach of 4th Edition, and our designers and developers focused on the new edition, this column will be the primary vehicle for 4th Edition coverage. We'll not only give you peeks at what's forthcoming, but also the "how" and "why."

Keep in mind that the game is still in a state of flux, as refinements are made by our design and development staff. You're getting a look behind the curtain at game design in progress, so enjoy, and feel free to send your comments to dndinsider@wizards.com.

D&D COSMOLOGY

BY RICHARD BAKER

Secret worlds and invisible domains surround the world of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Godly dominions, elemental chaos, shadow kingdoms, and faerie realms are all part of the world. Most mortals know little of these things, but heroes are a different matter. Heroes often find that adventure calls them to distant and strange dimensions indeed.

The closest of these alternate worlds is the Feywild, or the realm of faerie. It is an “echo” of the mortal world, a parallel dimension in which the natural features of the lands and seas are arranged in much the same configuration. If a mountain stands in a given place in the mortal world, a similar mountain stands in a corresponding place in the Feywild. However, the Feywild is not an exact reproduction. Built structures and terrains are not copied in the faerie realm, so a valley dotted with farm fields and towns in the mortal world would simply exist as untouched, unsettled woodland in the Feywild.

The Feywild’s many vistas can catch your breath with beauty, but the Feywild is far from safe. Heroes visiting to Feywild might encounter:

- A mossy forest glade where evil druids spill the blood of hapless travelers over the roots of the thirsting trees;
- The tower of an eladrin enchanter;
- A fomorian king’s castle in the dim, splendid caverns of the faerie Underdark; or
- A maze of thorns in which dryad briarwitches guard an evil relic.

Just as the Feywild is an echo of the natural world, so is the Shadowfell. However, the Shadowfell mimics the mortal world in a different manner. The Shadowfell is the land of the dead, where the spirits of the deceased linger for a time in a dark reflection of their previous lives before silently fading beyond all ken. Some undead creatures are born in the Shadowfell, and other undead are bound to it, but some living beings dwell in this benighted realm.

Like the Feywild, the Shadowfell also reflects the mortal world imperfectly. Towns, castles, roads, and other objects built by mortal kind exist in the Shadowfell about where they should be, but they are twisted, ruined caricatures. The shadow echo of a thriving seaport in the mortal world might be a dilapidated, desolate port whose harbor is cluttered with the rotting hulks of shipwrecks and whose busy wharves are empty except for

a few silent and furtive passersby. In the Shadowfell, heroes might venture into:

- A necromancer’s tower;
- The sinister castle of a shadar-kai lord, surrounded by a forest of black thorns;
- A ruined city swept by long-ago plague and madness; or
- The mist-shrouded winter realm of Letherna, where the fearsome Raven Queen rules over a kingdom of ghosts.

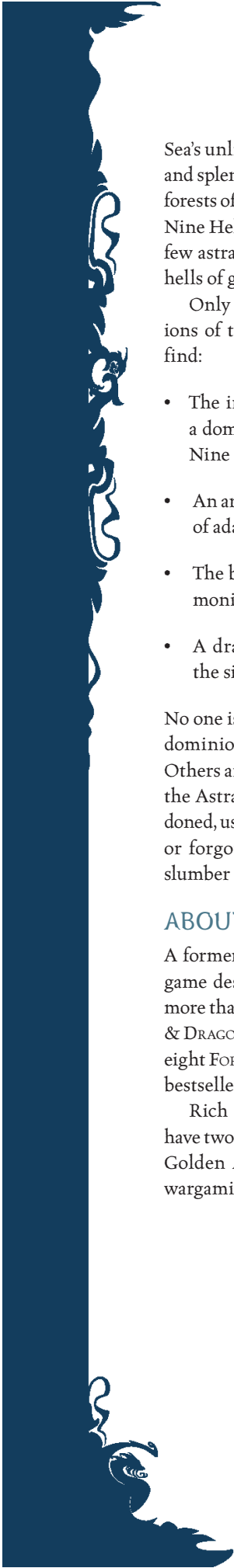
All of the cosmos is not tied to the mortal world as closely as the Feywild or Shadowfell. The natural world was created from the infinite expanse of the Elemental Chaos (or Tempest, or Maelstrom), a place where all fundamental matter and energy seethes. Floating continents of earth, rivers of fire, ice-choked oceans, and vast cyclones of churning clouds and lightning collide in the elemental plane.

Powerful beings tame vast portions of the chaos and shape it to their own desires. Here the efreeti City of Brass stands amid a desert of burning sand illuminated by searing rivers of fire falling through the sky. In other places in the Elemental Chose, mighty mortal wizards or would-be demigods have erected secret refuges or tamed the living elements to build their domains.

Elemental creatures of all kinds live and move through the Elemental Chaos: ice archons, magma hurlers, thunderbirds, and salamanders. The most dangerous inhabitants are the demons. In the nadir of this realm lies the foul Abyss, the font of evil and corruption from which demonkind springs. The Abyss is unthinkable vast—thousands of miles in extent—and in its maw swirl hundreds of demonic domains, elemental islands, or continents sculpted to suit the tastes of one demon lord or another. Within the Elemental Chaos, heroes might explore:

- The crystalline tower of a long-dead archmage;
- A grim fortress monastery of githzerai adepts;
- The diseased Abyssal continent where Demogorgon rules amid ruined temples and bloodthirsty jungle beasts; or
- A vast polar sea lit only by the cold glitter of icebergs and flickering auroras, in which the frozen stronghold of a frost giant warlock lies hidden.

One final extradimensional realm touches on the mortal world: the Astral Sea. If the Elemental Chaos is the manifestation of physicality, the Astral Sea is a domain of the soul and mind. The divine realms, the dominions of the gods, drift within Astral



Sea's unlimited silver deeps. Some of these are realms of glory and splendor—the golden peak of Mount Celestia, the verdant forests of Arvandor. Others belong to dark powers, such as the Nine Hells where Asmodeus governs his infernal kingdom. A few astral dominions lie abandoned, the ruined heavens and hells of gods and powers that have fallen.

Only the mightiest of heroes dare venture into the dominions of the gods themselves. In the Astral Sea, heroes may find:

- The iron city of Dis, where the devil Dispater rules over a domain of misery and punishment in the second of the Nine Hells;
- An artifact guarded by race of cursed warriors whose castle of adamantine overlooks the war-torn plains of Acheron;
- The black tower of Vecna, hidden in the depths of Pandemonium; or
- A dragon-guarded githyanki fortress, drifting through the silver sea.

No one knows how many astral dominions there are. Some dominions, such as the Nine Hells, are the size of worlds. Others are no larger than cities, rising like shining islets from the Astral Sea. Several dominions have been ruined or abandoned, usually because the gods who made them were destroyed or forgotten. What sorts of treasures—or perils—might slumber in such places, only learned sages could say.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former officer in the US Navy, Richard Baker has been a game designer since 1991. He has written or contributed to more than 70 game products, including 3rd Edition *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* and *Axis & Allies Miniatures*. He is also the author of eight *FORGOTTEN REALMS* novels, including *The New York Times* bestseller *Condemnation*.

Rich married his college sweetheart, Kim, in 1991; they have two daughters, Alex and Hannah. Rich's interests include Golden Age SF, military history, hiking in the Cascades, wargaming, and the Philadelphia Phillies.

YOUR SCARY NEW FRIEND: THE WARLOCK

BY ROB HEINSOO

The warlock wasn't part of the adventuring party we originally pictured stepping out of the first 4th Edition Players Handbook. As you might expect, the original party included most all the incumbents, with sorcerers and bards alongside wizards and monks.

But the warlock was in our thoughts. Coming out of Complete Arcane, the class's chief innovation had been its eldritch blast ability, which provided unlimited arcane firepower round after round after round. After some initial shock, everyone admitted that the warlock's eldritch blast didn't break the game. The class's ability to maintain relevant arcane attack power, instead of running out of finite resources like a wizard, had a great deal of influence on our early thoughts about 4th Edition. We understood that the warlock didn't have to be the exception. All of our classes might be improved by having abilities they could count on all day long.

Fast forward a couple of drafts into the future. We'd started understanding that our power-rich approach to the classes meant that we almost certainly wouldn't be launching with every class we might want to. Our understanding of the party roles indicates that the sorcerer and the wizard might very well be standing on each other's toes and pointy hats. Then, once we saw the concept art Bill O'Connor provided for tieflings, we knew that we had to commit to including tieflings as a PC race, rather than just hopeful it would work out (more on that in a future Design & Development column).

And what class would tieflings naturally gravitate to? A class that acquired scary powers by negotiating , pacts with shadowy, infernal, or feral patrons? That worked for us. But what we didn't know at the time was how dramatically the warlock class would improve as we progressed through design. Of all the classes, the warlock has made the greatest strides from its initial concept to its final execution. In truth, we've been aided by the fact that the class doesn't have a weighty existing legacy. There aren't thousands of D&D players who have a solid and well-reasoned idea of exactly what a warlock's powers should accomplish. Whenever we came up with something cool and flavorful, we felt entirely free to try it out -- instead of qualifiedly free, as we often felt with several other classes.

Tieflings begin with a backstory of splintering betrayals and stolen power. Warlocks carry on with a fundamental choice of a pact with one of three varieties of supernatural patron. I'm leaving the specific pacts out of this, but I will say

that the pacts provide direct benefits when you send an enemy you've marked to their afterlife reward; your patrons show their gratitude by giving you a Boon of Souls. And when you play a warlock, you have the tools to put your enemies away. Rather than relying only on eldritch blast, you'll also have an arsenal of curses (send enemy directly to hell for a round, then bring them back in more pieces), conjurations (maws -- connected to beings that remain thankfully off-screen -- materialize to chew your enemies), and movement powers (teleport and turn invisible, anyone?) to get you out of the trouble you're surely going to get yourself into.

From the perspective of lead designer, it's easy to see when a class is working out. I just have to notice the ease with which the designers and developers create cool mechanics for it. The warlock is feeling no pain, in contrast to her future enemies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rob Heinsoo was born in the Year of the Dragon. He started playing D&D in 1974 with the original brown box. More recently, he designed Three-Dragon Ante, Inn-Fighting, and a couple incarnations of the D&D Miniatures skirmish system. He's the lead designer of 4th Edition and captains the D&D mechanical design team.

ENCOUNTER DESIGN IN 4TH EDITION D&D

BY MIKE MEARLS

The encounter serves as the basic building block of a D&D adventure. In the old days, DMs used their experience, judgment, and sense of drama to build encounters. The 3rd Edition of D&D gave us challenge ratings and encounter levels. They were great tools, but they assumed that the party fought only one monster. In 4th Edition, we're doing things a bit different. We're shifting to a system that assumes a number of monsters equal to the number of characters. This change has a few major implications for encounter design:

Superior Accuracy: Before we can talk about encounter design, it's important to note that while 3rd Edition's CR system is a useful measuring tool, it isn't always an accurate one. A monster's AC, hit points, special attacks, and damage all combine to determine its level. In the old days, we relied on a designer's best guess to fit a creature into a CR. While designating a creature's level is still an art, designating a creature's level now has more science behind it. By creating robust progressions of attack bonus, damage, and AC, level has become a much more accurate and robust measure of a monster's power. This step is critically important, as it now allows us a lot more accuracy in determining the threat an encounter presents.

More Monsters: Rather than pick one monster, you now select a group of critters. The interplay between monsters is a little more important in design. In 3rd Edition, you had to turn to significantly weaker monsters to put a pair or more creatures into a fight. Unless the monsters had significant advantages in working together, an individual character easily outclassed an individual monster. In 4th Edition, an individual creature has the AC, attack bonus, and hit points to remain a threat during a fight.

Monster Roles: Monsters have roles that define the basics of how they fight. The role functions in only the broadest terms. It dictates a few basic measures of a monster but describes, rather than proscribes, how its abilities work. The real strength of a role is that it gives designers a few basic targets to shoot at it in design, ensuring that every monster we make fits in with the rest of the creatures in the whole game. For instance, monsters that are good at ranged attacks love to have a beefy wall of brutes in front of them to hold back the adventurers. Roles allow you to focus in on the right monster for the encounter and spot obvious combinations.

Hazards: Traps, hazards, dangerous terrain, and other complications have a clearer place in the battlefield. The 3rd Edition of D&D gave us one "monster unit" to play with. In other

words, the game assumed that the encounter consisted of four PCs against one monster. If you had five PCs, you had to figure out how to get 1.25 "monsters" into the encounter. Even worse, that system had to express traps, hazards, and other dangers as full monster units. It was difficult at best to mechanically represent something that was never meant to stand alone.

In 4th Edition, each monster represents only a portion of the encounter. That makes it much easier to design green slime, pit traps, whirling blades, fountains that spray acid, and crumbling stone walls. One such hazard can simply take the place of one monster, leaving you with three or four monsters in the encounter. Since monster level is a more rigorous measure of power, we can turn those measures and scales around and use them to create environmental hazards, traps, set pieces, and other interesting tactical twists.

Putting it All Together

What does all this mean for encounter design in 4th Edition? When you build an encounter, you can begin from a several different premises. You can start with a cool monster, find creatures that make good "teammates" for it, and run with that. For instance, you've always wanted to throw a medusa at the party. Looking at her stats, abilities, and role, you can then pick out other creatures that make her a tougher nut to crack. Of course, you could always throw a couple medusas at the characters and have a little sculpture party.

Alternatively, you can start with a basic idea of how you want the encounter to proceed, pick out monsters based on level and role, and throw that at the party. Let's say that the party wizard hasn't had sufficient trouble thrown his way recently. Ranged attackers always make life difficult for spellslingers, so you can pick out a few of them based on role. To keep the fight busy, a monster with a lot of abilities to hinder and slow down PCs fits the bill. As a cherry on top of this anti-wizard sundae, you can finish the encounter with a lurker who hides from the party, sneaks past the fighter, and springs from the shadows to chop down the caster. The key here is that, without knowing exactly which monsters to use, you have an idea of which types of critters you want.

How you fit hazards into an encounter is perhaps the most important aspect of encounter design in the 4th Edition, and it brings us to the third way you can build encounters. You can now more easily add dynamic elements to an encounter and account for cool special effects, hazards, and traps. Those elements are, in mechanics terms, equal to a monster. They fit seamlessly into the encounter design and XP rules by taking up one creature's slot. If you want to throw in more hazards, simply reduce the monster count and increase the number of hazards present in the encounter.



If you're like me, and you read too many comics and watch too many movies for your own good, you like to pull out set pieces and crazy terrain to throw at the party. A swaying rope bridge battered by howling air elementals fits under the encounter building system. A burning building that collapses around the PCs as they fight the evil hobgoblin wizard fills a similar role, as does a bizarre altar to Vecna that randomly teleports characters around the room. Hazards, traps, and other dangers simply fill in for one or more creatures in a fight.

By expanding the tools and making them work well together, 4th Edition presents a more robust, flexible, extensible, and exciting set of encounter tools. If the 3rd Edition's presentation of CR was the first step to taking some of the mystery out of encounter design, the 4th Edition builds on that core to produce a more accurate tool, along with additional uses for that tool.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Mearls is found only in subterranean places, as he detests sunlight. He is greatly evil and considers the bulk of humanity (and its kin) as cattle to feed upon. He speaks only his own arcane language and several other weird tongues -- purportedly those of terrible races of things which dwell in regions of the subterranean world far deeper than mankind has ever ventured.

THE D&D PANTHEON

BY JAMES WYATT

The family of gods for 4th Edition is a mix of old and new. You'll see familiar faces like Corellon, Moradin, and Pelor, and some new faces as well, like Zehir, Torog, and Bane.

Yes, Bane.

Before I explain what the FORGOTTEN REALMS god of tyranny and war is doing rubbing shoulders with Pelor, let me say a bit about our thinking when we created a pantheon in the first place.

There was a time when the team working on "the world" of D&D thought we could get away with creating general rules useful to clerics regardless of which pantheon existed in the campaign, and then presenting a variety of fictional and historical pantheons for DMs to adopt or adapt as they saw fit. I believe it was Stacy Longstreet, the senior D&D art director, who pointed out that this solution would leave us in a bit of a bind.

When we wanted to put a temple in an adventure, what god would it be dedicated to? We could make Generic Evil Temples™, but that would sap a lot of the flavor out of our adventures, and rob us of specific plot hooks and story lines based on the portfolios and histories of these gods.

When we wanted to illustrate a cleric in one of our books, what holy symbol would the cleric hold? Again, we could rely on a stable of generic symbols (maybe the Zapf Dingbat font?), but at the cost of a lot of flavor.

We ended up creating a new pantheon. At first, we used some of the gods from 3rd Edition as placeholder names—we thought we'd come up with new names for [Pelor] the sun god and [Moradin] the god of the forge. Ultimately we decided that using some familiar faces was preferable to giving our players a whole new set of names to learn. Besides, if a god looks like an elf and took out the orc-god's eye like a certain well-known elf god, why not call him Corellon?

Corellon: So the elf god is a good example of a god who kept his well-earned place in the D&D pantheon. But "the elf god" shouldn't be taken to literally. Sure, he's often depicted as an elf or an eladrin, and many eladrin in particular revere him. But he's equally popular among human wizards, and even dwarves who practice the finer arts are prone to offering him prayers. One of our goals with the new pantheon was to loosen the tight associations between gods and races that has in the past led to the creation of whole pantheons full of elf, dwarf, orc, and goblin deities. Corellon is still associated with elfy things like arcane magic and the Feywild, and he still hates Lolth and the drow. But his appeal is a little broader now.

Bahamut: Here's another example of a familiar, draconic face showing up in a somewhat new light. Maybe it was the Platinum Knight prestige class in Draconomicon that did it, but something convinced me a long time ago that Bahamut was a much cooler god of paladins than Heironeous ever was. Like Corellon, Bahamut's not just for dragons any more. He's the god of justice, protection, and honor, and many paladins of all races worship him. Many metallic dragons revere him as well, thinking of him as the first of their kind. Some legends about Bahamut describe him as literally a shining platinum dragon, while others describe him as a more anthropomorphic deity, who's called the Platinum Dragon as a title of respect. Exhorting his followers to protect the weak, liberate the oppressed, and defend just order, Bahamut stands as the exemplar of the paladin's ideal.

Bane: Here's another god whose placeholder name just stuck, despite some reservations. We wanted an evil war god in the pantheon, and without Heironeous, Hextor didn't make a lot of sense. We wanted the kind of heavily militaristic god whose temples you might find among non-evil societies who have spent long years at war, as well as among hobgoblins. We wanted a god who embodied just the sort of tyrannical dictatorship that Bane stands for in the FORGOTTEN REALMS. We started calling him Bane as a placeholder. He went through a number of different, unsatisfying names. Finally, someone said we should just call him Bane. So Bane he remained.

Like chocolate and peanut butter, we think Bane and Bahamut are two great tastes that taste great together. Does that mean you have to use them in your 4th Edition game? Of course not. But we think that, when you see these gods in action in our core books and adventures, you'll agree that they belong in their new places of honor in the pantheon of the D&D game.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Wyatt is the Lead Story Designer for D&D and one of the lead designers of D&D 4th Edition. In over seven years at Wizards of the Coast, he has authored or co-authored award-winning adventures and settings including the *EBERRON® Campaign Setting*, *City of the Spider Queen*, and *Oriental Adventures*. His more recent works include *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft*, *Cormyr: The Tearing of the Weave*, and *The Forge of War*. His second *EBERRON* novel, *Storm Dragon*, is in stores now.

ZOMBIES!

BY CHRIS SIMS

Shambling, mindless corpses are getting all gussied up for 4e. Although it might be hard to believe that something as simple as an animated carcass needed an overhaul, with ample influences in movies and video games, the designers knew the zombie was an ideal guinea pig for applying the new monster philosophy. So they set about keeping the zombie simple to run, but they gave it a clear role and made it feel more like the zombies from the big screen.

Every 3rd Edition D&D player thinks of a zombie, at best, as a tough bag of hit points that can take a beating. At worst, the zombie is seen as a really slow fighter or grist for the turn undead mill. Unfortunately, a Large or smaller 3e zombie really required a weapon to be scary on the damage-dealing side, and they were a lot easier to take out than any movie zombie.

Rethinking the zombie required harkening to the zombie in popular culture while maintaining the D&D elements that make undead cool. Zombies move slowly, dragging their lifeless feet, and it takes a heck of a blow to kill one, so tough is right. But zombies don't pick up weapons, even convenient ones. They tear you apart with their bare dead hands. They overwhelm you with numbers, drag you down, and eat you.

The new zombie is a brute with just enough reasoning power to know who to kill. It's easy to hit—zombies don't dodge—but it's rotten body just soaks up blows that would kill a living creature. You had better be hitting the zombie hard every time, or it'll just keep coming. If you manage to hit it really hard, say with a critical hit or a power that deals hefty damage, you might just take the creep out in one fell swing.

That's right. I did say, "critical hit." The zombie is vulnerable to that now, which is sweeter a head shot in any zombie flick.

If you're a player, take a moment right now to thank the merciful designers that turn undead is still in the game. That power doesn't send the zombies running off to gods knows where, but if it doesn't turn them to putrid dust, it does hold them at bay. Believe me—you don't want zombies close to you. Even though they won't come wielding greataxes, zombies can take your head off with their vicious slams. The bigger the zombie, the uglier the thump. And when zombies swarm you, some of them are going to grab you, maybe even pulling you to the ground. That's not the place to be when the dead come knocking.

As a DM, you don't have to worry about creating the gnoll zombie or the orc zombie. The one set of Medium zombie statistics should do you fine. The players won't know the difference, except by virtue of your descriptive talents. They should

be most worried about the pummeling their characters are taking anyway.

At appropriate levels, a fight against zombies should look more like a horror movie scene. Protagonists have to maneuver to keep away from the possibility of devastating damage while trying to cut their way through a relentless wall of dead flesh. The players get a thrill when a zombie goes down to massive damage, and the DM gets the satisfaction of using a monster that lives up to popular expectations.

It's a whole new game, even from the very bottom of the undead barrel. Now, if we only had a few zombies that added some spice to the basic shambling corpse recipe. I'll dig some of that up for next time.

ZOMBIES TOO!

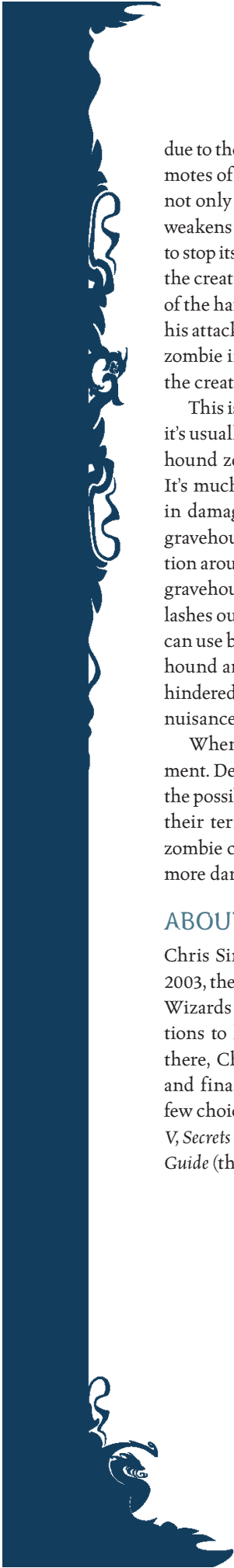
The simplest monsters are cooler in the new edition of the D&D game, and zombies are no exception. But even though they're soulless animated corpses, zombies don't have to be dead simple. The 4th Edition designers threw the new zombie a bone, coming up with a few ways that everyone's favorite corpse creatures can function in the game to give more chills and kills.

To this end, in the Monster Manual, three exotic zombies appear. The first is the chillborn zombie, the coldness of the grave given just enough volition to be bent on murder. The corruption zombie is a paragon of rot with a great throwing arm. The final new zombie is the gravehound zombie.

That list might spark some preconceived notions about what these undead do. All three possess the implacable resilience of regular zombies, but each comes with an added spin. You might expect easy clichés and predictable performances, but the ideas behind these new breeds of zombie aren't dead on arrival.

A chillborn is cold, but it's not merely an icy zombie. Whatever accursed rites or foul maledictions gave a semblance of life to the chillborn made it even tougher than normal, its body and mind hardened by the freezing hand of death. Life-sapping cold streams from the creature, and the more chillborn zombies in a group, the deeper the freeze. As might be expected, the remorseless fists of the chillborn deal some cold damage, but when a chillborn strikes you, you just might freeze in place, still able to fight back but unable to flee the biting aura the zombie exudes. All chillborn deal more damage to immobilized victims, and your inability to maneuver certainly benefits anyone relying on the chillborn to provide a defensive front line.

One such creature that requires such a line of defenders, although probably provided by something other than the chillborn, is the corruption zombie. This creature is so tainted that its body constantly exudes putrid flesh. It tears off chunks of its own rotting body to hurl at its foes, leaving itself unharmed



due to the supernatural nature of its tissues. If one of its thrown motes of corruption strikes you, however, you're in trouble—not only does the gobbet hurt you, but the unclean flesh also weakens you. Your instincts might dictate charging the zombie to stop its ranged attacks. But the stink of death is so strong near the creature, so sickening, that it can overwhelm the fortitude of the hardiest warrior, slowing his movement and enfeebling his attacks. If you can stand the smell, pressing the corruption zombie into melee might be an effective way to put an end to the creature.

This isn't true of the gravehound zombie. So named because it's usually created from the corpse of a sizeable dog, the gravehound zombie is a melee monster like many other zombies. It's much faster than normal zombies, and its bite makes up in damage what it lacks in accuracy. The real problem with gravehounds is that their bite causes continuing decomposition around the wound. That trouble can persist even after the gravehound is destroyed. When the gravehound goes down, it lashes out one final time. If it hits you, its jaws lock. Until you can use brute force to open the death grip, you have to drag the hound around and deal with the decay its teeth cause. Being hindered like that during a battle can be more than just a minor nuisance.

When you're playing D&D, you want exciting entertainment. Defeating these exotic zombies is all the more satisfying, the possibility of horrible death all the more threatening, given their terrifying abilities. They set a great precedent for the zombie category's future expansion, and the prospect of even more dark fun.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Sims started out working for small d20 companies in 2003, then landed a freelance editor gig for Wizards RPG R&D. Wizards finally got annoyed enough by his constant applications to hire him as the Duel Masters editor in 2005. From there, Chris wheedled his way into RPG R&D as an editor, and finally became a story designer after masterminding a few choice assassinations. His credits include *Monster Manual V*, *Secrets of Sarlona*, *Rules Compendium*, and the *Eberron Survival Guide* (thanks, Logan!).