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AATHUKKU

Gigantic turtle-like monsters. Despite their appearance, they are no simple animals. Sages familiar with these beasts believe they are kin to a line of ancient dragons that long ago left the mortal realm. They dwell in the deep oceans and numerous island cultures revere them as gods.

AC -2 [21], **HD** 20*** [90hp], **Att** 1 x bite (6d8), **THACO** 6 [+13], **MV** 10' (30') / 150' (50') swimming, **SV** D2
W2 P2 B2 S4 (20), **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 5450, **NA** 1(1), **TT** M x 2

- **AMPHIBIOUS** Can breathe air and water.
- **ATTACK SHIPS** Sometimes try to destroy ships and eat the crew by surfacing below.
- **BREATH WEAPON** 4-in-6 chance per round of breathing a noxious cloud of gas. This attack mimics the effect of the cloudkill spell.
- **IMMUNITY** Unaffected by charm and hold spells.
- **INVISIBILITY** As the spell. **3 x Day**
- **LONG NECK** Can bite up to 15' away.
- **MISTAKEN FOR AN ISLAND** When floating, can be mistaken for a small island.
- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Only harmed by magic.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-4, due to hiding motionless underwater.
- **SWALLOW WHOLE** On a bite attack roll of 20, or 4 or more than the target number required, indicates that a horse-sized (or smaller) victim is swallowed. Inside the aathukku's belly: suffer 3d6 damage per round (until the monster dies); may attack with sharp weapons at -4 to hit; body digested in 6 turns after death.
- **TIP BOATS** 50% likely to emerge under canoes or small boats, tipping them over.
- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.



DESCRIPTION

[REFEREE'S NOTE 1: They are unlikely to reveal themselves directly. They are able to become invisible and tend to surface underneath water vessels. As such, targets may never know what hit them.]

[REFEREE'S NOTE 2: Consider using this description if the PCs encounter the aathukku on land if it is invisible. The general theme is that of a huge, heavy plodding creature that is invisible. What might that experience be like to those in the vicinity?] The earth beneath your feet begins to shake. It is gentle at first. But gradually the vibrations intensify as if some sort of localized earthquake is approaching. Eventually you see plumes of sand exploding upwards from the beach. There seems to be four distinct disturbances in a roughly 30 foot diameter. The weird seismic phenomenon continues its slow, gradual approach but the earth never splits. [REFEREE'S NOTE 3: If the party does not flee, eventually the phenomenon reaches the party and moves no further. Once it reaches their location it goes silent. In the next moment, the aathukku is revealed as it snaps up a party member or a mount.]

[REFEREE'S NOTE 4: Use this if the PCs get to see the aathukku.] You see an enormous reptilian creature, easily 30 feet or more across. It strongly resembles a gigantic snapping turtle. Its shell is covered with innumerable spiky growths. Something about the ornate frills and horns that adorn its head suggest some relation to dragons.

TACTICS

These beings are highly intelligent, but their minds are clouded with age. Imagine them as doddering elders. They will usually approach their prey under an invisibility spell (and possibly from underneath if at sea). Their initial attack will reveal them, generally this will be in the midst of their targets. They will bite targets they are likely to be able to swallow whole. Once they have managed to eat the equivalent of around two horses worth of meat, they will turn invisible and flee. Generally they will make no effort to defend themselves, they will be solely focused on dining and dashing.

LORE

These creatures are known as aathukku. The name is taken from a confederation of island-dwelling tribes off the eastern coast of the southern continent. The tribes revere these titanic magical reptiles as gods. Sages which have gone to the remote archipelago to study the aathukku believe they are cousins to dragons. But at some point in the distant past the species seem to have gone their separate ways, literally and figuratively.

The aathukku still speak the language of dragons but it is an ancient and archaic form. And their manner of speaking complicates communication further as they speak extremely slowly in a hissing, growling bass tone that rattles the organs of those standing nearby. Further still, the minds of aathukkus seem to be addled with age and lost in misty memory most of the time. In their more lucid and animated states they can recount tales from before the times of men. During these stories they speak of dragons far greater than the present ones. They say these ancient cousins long ago flexed their mighty wings and flew into the deepest reaches of the sky, while they, the aathukkus, went into the depths of the oceans.

The aathkkus have forgotten much of their sorcery bit by bit during their millennia long slumbers. But they can still work the spell of invisibility to conceal themselves. They often use their ability to become invisible when they hunt. It seems that aathukku are not evil, but they are predators and often indifferent to the plight of smaller beings. As such while mundane folk are not specifically targeted, they are on the menu.

ECOLOGY

Their span of life is interminable and their ages largely unknown. Aathukkus are mortal, they can be slain, but not by mundane means. They sleep in the depths of the southern oceans. Many of the island-dwelling folk in these regions revere the aathukkus as deities. These folk have recorded the coming and goings of the aathukkus for so long they can predict their re-emergence. Their shamans organize festivals and sacrifices to honor and placate the aathukkus so that their populations are spared.

The reproduction of aathukkus is a bit of a mystery. Sages familiar with the species believe they breed as mundane reptiles do. But, much like their more common draconic cousins they breed very slowly. Presumably aathukkus replace their numbers even slower than dragons.

SEEDS

1.) The PCs have been hired to serve as guards on a merchant vessel. The pay is good and the journey long. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The ship has been commissioned by a treasure hunter of great means. Perhaps he is a high-level adventurer? The treasure hunter is following a map that he believes will lead to fabulous riches. The map leads to a distant island in the middle of the southern ocean where several aathukkus are. Consider, does the treasure hunter know about the aathukkus? Is he aware of the local islanders and their reverence for the titanic beasts? Has he prepared a contingency to pacify the aathukkus should they interfere? Is the target of the treasure hunt the trove of a single aathukku or the combined hoard? Or perhaps, is the expedition aimed at a singular item? Perhaps the item is a potent artifact. If so, are there any further implications for the rest of the world?]

2.) Numerous coastal villages have been wiped out during the past fortnight. The strange phenomenon seems to be moving northward at a regular rate. Local authorities are perplexed but a foreign priest claims to know the cause and may be able to offer a remedy. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Assume that the mysterious foreign priest is native to the island-dwelling culture familiar with aathukku species. Now consider what might this strange dignitary require to appease what he believes to be an aathukku? Furthermore, how would such a person convince the leadership of the afflicted region(s) to provide the resources based on his beliefs. Perhaps that the authorities might consider him hokey and backward? Or perhaps, the priest requests something that is difficult to obtain? Perhaps there is a moral or ethical barrier to fulfilling the request?]

LOOT

Aathukkus are just as fond of gold as their cousins. Their troves grow ever more immense as the aeons pass. Their hoards will always be hidden away in the depths of the oceans, often in the midst of sunken cities.

AKLOTAUR

Enormous, eyeless and skinless beasts. They resemble mundane bovines, such as an oxen in construction. But their fang-filled, slavering maws indicate they are carnivorous and probably some form of predator. They are highly aggressive. Sages familiar with the breed believe the weird animals are extraplanar in origin. Others suggest they are a bizarre alchemical experiment gone wrong.

AC 4 [15], **HD** 5*** [22hp], **Att** 2 × horn (1d12) or 1 × bite (1d10+1d8 acid), **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 150' (50'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 550, **NA** 1d6 (2d4), **TT** Horns and teeth

- **ACID BREATH** All caught in the area suffer damage equal to the aklotaur's current HP. **Save versus breath** for half. Cloud: 40' long, 20' wide, 10' high. The cloud hangs in the air and continues to inflict damage on 1d4 subsequent rounds. Each round the damage is halved. **3 x Day**
- **ACID IMMUNITY** Unharmed by acid-based attacks.
- **AGGRESSIVE** Attack same size or smaller creatures on sight. Chases targets until out of sight.
- **BLINDSIGHT** Can "see" in total darkness; immune to sensory attacks such as blindness or deafness.
- **BONUS DAMAGE ON GREAT HIT** If the aklotaur makes an attack and scores a hit that exceeds its target number by 4 or is a natural 20, the attack inflicts x2 damage.
- **CHARGE** Requires a clear run of at least 20 yards. Horns inflict x2 damage.
- **TRACK BY SCENT** When hungry, will follow a track of blood by scent.
- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.



DESCRIPTION

You see a rather large nominally bovine form in murk of the middle distance. It is indeed quite large and decidedly bullish, you can see long curving horns. Perhaps it is some wayward oxen. You could safely estimate the brutish creature stands eight or nine feet at its highest point. The thing is dense, heavily muscled and disturbingly seems to lack skin. The play of its musculature appears slick and wet as it glistens in the dim light. Clearly this is some unnatural creature and you have yet to even witness its loathsome head. As it mills about, presumably cropping at something on the floor, you catch your first look at the horrific countenance of the beast. It lacks any eyes, or any other visible sensory organs whatsoever. Beneath its great crown of curving horns lies only a huge, fang-filled maw. The brute abomination looks to be tearing large gobbets of flesh from a recently deceased adventurer. As the weird horror of the gruesome tableau settles over you, the creature begins to stir from its meal. It begins to bray in a low, mucus-clotted voice and turns towards your location. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The creature will attack the PCs momentarily. Consider if the party was hiding, and if so what level of concealment or protection do they have. It is an animal and cannot communicate.]

TACTICS

These creatures are merely animals, but they do possess a degree of predatory cunning. If the party encounters more than one, there is a 2-in-6 chance the creatures will have the presence of mind to coordinate attacks to bring down softer targets first. Their opening attack will most likely be a charge into the heart of a target formation followed by a burp of their acid breath. If they encounter stout resistance (and their morale still holds), there is a 3-in-6 chance they will break from melee and withdraw far enough to gain sufficient runway for a charge.

LORE

These strange and horrific beasts are known as aklotaurs. They are thought to be alien to our realm. Without a doubt, they are rather odd creatures. Sages familiar with the gruesome things are of two minds on their origin. The first camp firmly believes the loathsome aklotaur breed hails from some hellish nether realm, likely one so blackened and stygian the thrice-damned things never needed to grow eyes. The second group posits the aklotaurs are sorcerous hybrids of some form. Although even they struggle to explain of what possible value a skinless, eyeless, acid-belching cow could be to even the most demented wizard.

As noted above, an aklotaur is capable of belching a dense cloud of potent acid. The strength of the acid should not be underestimated, it can easily reduce a party of adventurers to naught but a red slurry beneath a tangled pile of bones in mere moments. All the worse, the acid will hang in the air for quite some time, slowly losing its efficacy. Truly it would be prudent to avoid contact with any aklotaur unless you have some defense against this sort of attack.

They are a rather bellicose breed and will pursue any prey until out of "sight". Their method of perception is a bit of a mystery, they appear to navigate and sense their environment quite well despite their lack of eyes or any other visible sensory organs. In fact their behavior indicates they possess a rather keen awareness even being able to track prey by bloodscent. Presumably this could be achieved by sensory organs in their throat.

ECOLOGY

Aklotaur are quite rare. They appear to have no natural habitat in our realm. Sages familiar with the species have records of aklotaur encounters in a wide variety of climates and habitats. While the aklotaur possess no particular defense mechanisms such as armored plates or regenerative ability, they are quite hardy and very aggressive. These two qualities and their considerable capacity for destruction allows them to carve a niche for themselves wherever they happen to appear.

The aklotaur species, although certainly not of mundane origin, does share considerable similarities with such beasts as bison and oxen. The weird things reproduce heterosexually and give birth to live young. However, the calves do not nurse and will be able to feed on meat as soon as they emerge.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: I suggest treating young aklotaur as 2 HD monsters and scaling their damage accordingly.] Young aklotaur will grow rapidly if sufficient meat is available. During this time, the entire herd will be even more aggressive than usual. Curiously all adult aklotaurs in a herd will share a portion of their meat with a calf.

SEEDS

1.) The party overhears a gruesome tale in the tavern one night. The yarn comes from a young bard recently arrived in the hamlet. Apparently, several "horrific cow things" were encountered in the depths of a copper mine in the adjacent mountain range. The miners described them charging out of the darkness. Eyeless horrors with gnashing teeth. As the miners beat the fiends back into the darkness, one of the beasts loosed a nauseatingly loud belch. A few of the miners laughed at the odd spectacle. But their laughter ended very abruptly indeed as those of their number closest to the rude beast began to choke and claw at their eyes. Within moments a half dozen men were reduced to quivering piles of bone and liquefied meat. Those that escaped the cloud of acid fled the scene and sealed the mine. But every now and then, the beasts can be heard hammering at the barrier from the other side. Rumor has it that the beasts are the guardians of an old wizard's trove.

2.) The party is traveling through an isolated, marshy area. In the distance they hear an odd belching sound followed by what might be the lowing of one or more extremely large cattle. A heartbeat later the shrieking of several men in agony fills the air. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Should the party investigate, they see a gruesome mess of half a dozen partially dissolved men being devoured by three aklotaurs. I suggest that whether or not the party chooses to investigate, they will inevitably encounter these aklotaurs. However, I advise using the terrain against the aklotaurs. For example, they sense the party and charge headlong at the group only to become partially submerged in the muck. This would slow the aklotaurs and give the party a chance to flee or ready a defense.]

LOOT

Although these creatures do not build hoards, their horns and teeth can be harvested and sold. The horns and teeth of the aklotaurs are abnormally strong and sharp, they could be used to craft some crude but effective weaponry. Amongst those with a taste for a more savage aesthetic, such items are somewhat prized. Their horns can fetch up to 1d6x10gp each. They usually possess around 30 teeth, each worth up to 1d6gp each.

BLOOD WITCH

Vampiric darkling fey that abduct mortals and drain their blood to sustain themselves. They harvest the seed of mortal males and use it to give birth to myriad monsters, mutants and even undead.

AC 7 [12], **HD** 3+4**** [17hp], **Att** 3 × barbed tresses (1d6+poison), **THACO** 16 [+3], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 150, **NA** 1 (1d4), **TT** E+5000gp

- **AMBUSER** If attacking from surprise, first attack is +4 to hit and inflicts x2 damage.
- **BARBED TRESSES** Long barbed tresses of animated hair in a 10' radius grab and constrict after a hit. Each constricting tress inflicts 1d6 automatic damage per round, plus a -1 penalty to attacks. Additionally, the victim cannot move or cast spells until the tress is severed. Severing a tress requires a hit with a cutting weapon inflicting 3 or more damage. Victims must **save vs. poison** or suffer from a hallucinatory venom as well. A character subject to this poison can cast no spells, make no attacks, automatically fails any saving throws, and suffers a -4 penalty to AC (and cannot use a shield). Males subjected to the venom are also charmed (as the charm person spell). Half of all damage inflicted by this attack heals the blood witch. The effects of the venom persist for 1d4 turns.
- **FAVORED PREY** Prefers males for various reasons. Males will often be incapacitated and taken to the lair of the blood witch.
- **KEEN SENSES** Surprised on a 1. When hungry, will follow a track of blood by scent.
- **MAGICAL POWERS** Each can be used as indicated below:
 - At Will** *charm monster, invisibility, magic missile*
 - 3 x Day** *animate dead, sleep*
 - 1 x Day** *insect plague*
- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Only harmed by magic.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-5, unless target can detect invisibility.
- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.
- **VULNERABILITIES** Takes an additional 1d6 burning damage from silver and iron (not steel). Cannot cross barriers of salt.



DESCRIPTION

A voluptuous and womanly figure stands before you clad in a flimsy and very revealing red gown. She certainly could not be described as "beautiful" or "pretty", but is very attractive nonetheless. She exudes a palpable, magnetic eroticism. Her hair is a long, dense, tangled coal-black mass. It writhes around her shapely figure like some animated mantle. Her eyes are gleaming and golden. They seem to pierce your mind as they glint at you from the shadowed depths of her ebony locks.

TACTICS

A blood witch will rarely make a frontal assault as they are quite fragile compared to some of their offspring. They will instead send their monstrous children to slay and subdue victims. Always assume she has at least 1d6+1 of her children lurking about. If a blood witch must attack in melee, it will be from invisibility and in such a way that its barbed tresses attack will affect as many targets as possible, especially any obvious spellcasters.

LORE

These horrors are known as blood witches. They appear to be some form of parasitic, darkling fey. They lurk in lost places like darkened woods and forgotten, crumbling manses at the edges of civilization. Blood witches abduct mortals for food and labor. They drain blood from them via their barbed animated hair. Their coiling barbed mane is envenomed and induces a drugged state of euphoria and passivity. Males experience the venom as a potent aphrodisiac. They utilize the seed of male captives to birth monsters. A blood witch once satiated will lay an egg that can develop into various aberrant things. Somewhat paradoxically, a blood witch can even give birth to undead.

On their high holy days, when the stars are right, covens of blood witches will gather to perform specific orgiastic rituals to conceive more of their wretched lineage. During these rituals charmed males are utilized and then sacrificed in attempts to conceive further generations of blood witches. It is only on these certain days, that whatever abhorrent angle of existence the blood witches crawl from is in proper alignment to ours. These specific planar intersections are absolutely necessary for the conception.

The lair of the blood witch will always contain several of her aberrant progeny. One should expect to find various mutants, monstrosities and undead. [REFEREE'S NOTE: I recommend utilizing the Dungeon Encounter table. Roll a 1d4 to determine the Level and then generate a monster type according to the table. This may generate multiple monsters at once, that's totally okay. Think of them as twins, triplets, etc. Whatever monsters are generated, be sure to indicate they look odd, malformed, crudely wrought, etc.] All of these monsters will be fiercely loyal to the blood witch and defend her unto death. A youngling blood witch might be found in the lair as well. Any immature blood witch will be heavily guarded.

Although the blood witch appears beautiful, this is a magical glamour conjured by the golden medallion they all wear. Beneath this illusory guise they are emaciated crones with lidless, black, insectile eyes. These creatures are highly magical and immune to most mundane attacks. However they possess a few peculiar vulnerabilities. They are burned by cold iron (not steel) and silver as if they were fire. They are also unable to cross a barrier of salt.

ECOLOGY

These creatures appear as timeless as most fey. They do not age and require little sleep. The only nourishment they require is the blood of mortal beings. There are no males of their kind. Their writhing hair is their main weapon and method of feeding.

SEEDS

1.) A local prince, several retainers and his guard have gone missing during a fox hunt. There had been a growing disturbance within the realm within recent months. But, most thought the few stories here and there about ogres, ettins and minotaurs from the farming folk were just peasant gossip. None had suspected the taint was real or had grown nearly so strong. The wizard of the court has determined that a blood witch entranced the hunting party within the woods. The wizard suspects that the blood witch's holy day of conception is near and that many of the men will likely die in the ritual. The party has been hired to seek out and slay the blood witch. There will be a large additional reward given for the return of the prince as well.

2.) The party finds an abandoned tower set amongst a grove of ancient trees. Night is close and this seems a good place to camp for the night. The party enters and is greeted by a cloying, musty smell. As they enter, there is a boom of thunder and flash of lightning. Soon after a heavy downpour begins. Leaving the tower now seems a very bad idea. After a campfire is kindled, the abandoned tower becomes a cozy refuge from the storm. Once the party begins to rest, a blood witch that has laired here will begin to weave her glamours. If there is a watcher, she will lure them away to feed upon them in more private, intimate surroundings. If she manages to get one victim extracted from the party, she will send in some of her monstrous offspring (monsters such as chimeras, ettins, minotaurs, and ogres) to subdue the remainder of the party for her later usage.

LOOT

As indicated in the statblock [REFEREE'S NOTE: This might seem a bit generous, but remember the blood witch will often have many of her monstrous children lurking about to aid her. So this amount is meant to represent the collected treasure of all the monsters together.]. A flimsy, red dress. A ring of large brass keys (to cages containing captives). A random magical wand. A figurine in the shape of a golden toad (about the size of a fist). Additionally, all blood witches possess an Imago Medallion, this is a triangular, golden medallion that when worn conjures an alluring version of the wearer's perfected form. The wearer will gain +1d6 to reaction rolls. The wearer's eyes will have an obvious and unnatural golden sheen. They will also have some scrolls and spellbooks.

DREADSTRIDER

Extradimensional raiders that can release a devastatingly powerful scream capable of leveling buildings. Many of their powers are rumored to originate from arcane technologies. Their sole purpose in our realm seems to be the acquisition of plunder.

AC 2 [17], **HD** 8*** [36hp], **Att** 2 x halberd (2d10) or 1 x scream, **THACO** 12 [+7], **MV** 180' (60'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (8), **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 2300, NA 1d4 (2d6), **TT** E+5000gp

- **INCORPOREAL MOVEMENT** Moves through solid matter at half speed.

- **KEEN SENSES** Only surprised on a 1.

- **LEAP** Can jump up to 30'.

- **MAGICAL POWERS** Each can be used as indicated below:

At Will darkness, magic missile

- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Only harmed by magic.

- **SCREAM** 3-in-6 chance per round of screaming, releasing a blast of destructive noise.

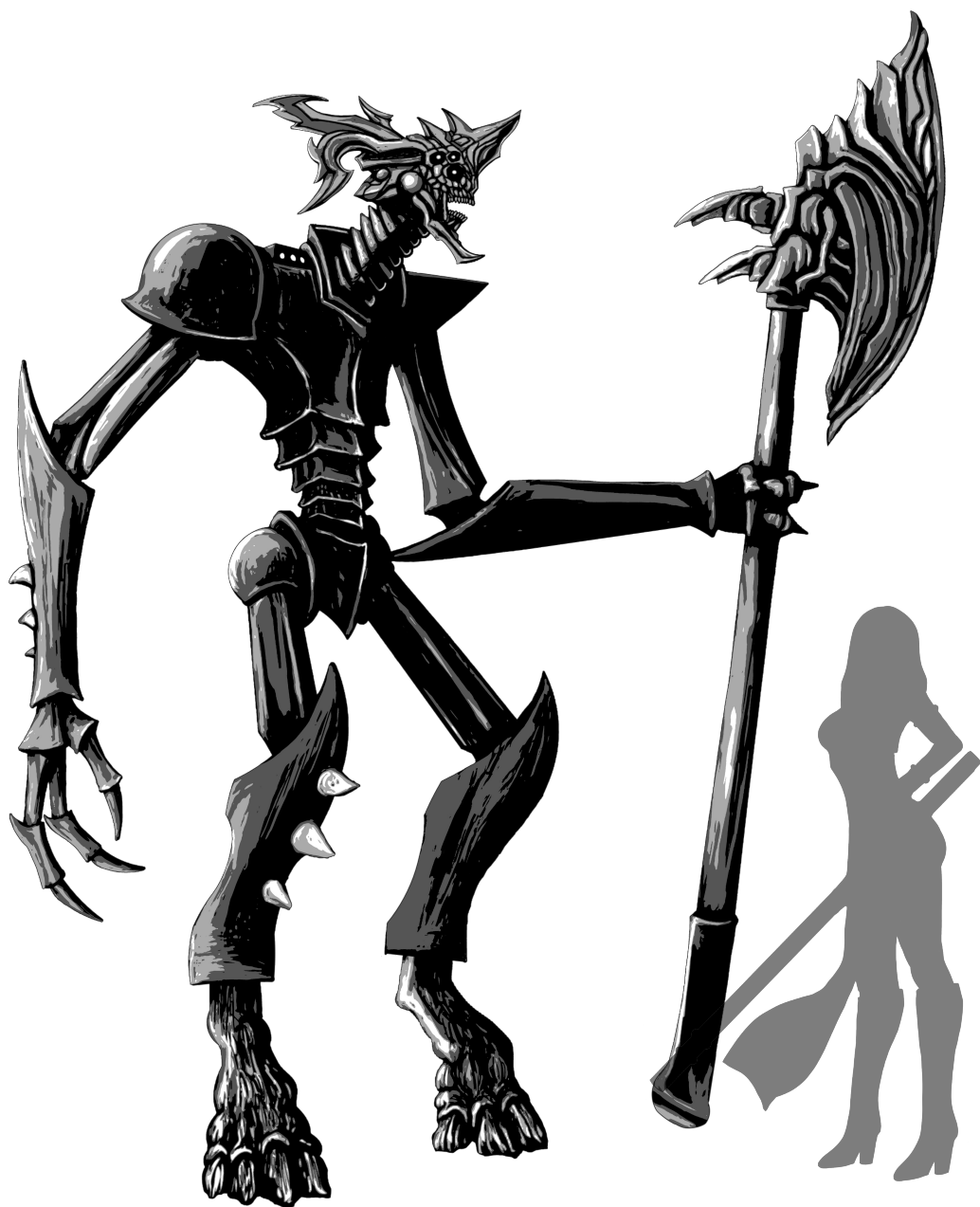
Creatures Within a 100' long cone (20' wide at the end) suffer 2d6 damage.

Deafness Affected creatures are also deafened for one turn. **Save versus spells** to avoid.

Buildings At the Referee's discretion, the scream may also be able to damage objects and buildings (e.g. a single blast might be enough to destroy a simple cottage; a 10' section of castle wall might require three blasts).

- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.

- **WALK ON ANY SURFACE** May cross any surface at normal speed. This includes walls, ceilings and even water.



DESCRIPTION

You see a tall being of generally humanoid form, having two arms, two legs and a single head. It looks to be at least twice as tall as the average human. Where visible, its flesh is a chalky white. It possesses a fearsome and alien visage, having six balefully burning eyes arranged in groups of three on each side of its narrow, angular head. Although wholly alien, something about the strange being's face suggests a skull. Perhaps it is its lipless mouth that reminds you so much of a rictus grin. The being's legs are bestial and semi-hooved, they imply considerable mobility and grace.

It is clad in black armor. The metal of the armor has a peculiar greasy specularity to it. The ambient light slides off its angles in unexpected ways. It seems almost as if a thin, translucent mist clings to the surface of the armor, muting its sheen. Despite the weird occultation surrounding the figure, three bright spots of illumination can be easily seen, adorning one collar of its breastplate. The creature grips an enormous halberd in one of its three-fingered hands. The blade of the halberd appears to be some form of layered silvery material. It looks very organic and does not seem to have been forged but rather grown. Upon closer observation you notice the being's helmet is of similar composition and construction. [REFEREE'S NOTE: It would be very rare for these creatures to attempt to communicate with mundane folk or adventurers. And, if they did try to, they only speak their own language. In any scenario where they might need to communicate, it might be wise to plan for a means of translation.]

TACTICS

Dreadstriders are aggressive and highly intelligent. They prefer to make lightning raids, attacking quickly and quitting the battlefield as soon as possible. They will attempt to attack from cover and concealment whenever possible. Additionally, they will try to engage their targets from unexpected angles. Take this into consideration as dreadstriders can literally walk on any surface and move through solid matter. If their numbers are sufficient, they will coordinate effectively with their kin overwatching each other's advance. Once they acquire their objective, they will withdraw in the same manner.

LORE

These strange and malignant beings are known as dreadstriders. They are alien to our plane, hailing from some unknown extra-dimensional realm. They are raiders and seem to be concerned solely with plunder. They strike swiftly and suddenly, withdrawing just as quickly once they have achieved their objective. The plunder they seek often varies considerably, it might be magic, gold, slaves, etc.

Dreadstriders possess several abilities that aid them remarkably well in their raids. Many of these powers are thought to be derived from the arcane technologies they possess. First of all, they can move through solid matter at will, so even the stoutest walls cannot keep them out. Secondly, they can move across any surface allowing them to climb like a spider as well as walk on water. The combination of these two talents allows the wretched things to emerge from walls, floors and ceilings. Oftentimes they will coordinate with their brethren to attack from multiple angles simultaneously. Additionally, they are incredibly mobile, able to run as quickly as wolves and can leap up to 30 feet with little effort.

Mundane weapons are useless against them and they are exceedingly wary of spellcasters. If they suspect spellcasters are present, they will likely use their darkness spell to obscure their presence and

sow confusion amongst their adversaries. They can cast the magic missile spell to attack from afar. They also possess a potent, eldritch scream. It can deafen, as well as pulp organs and rend matter. Additionally they have keen senses. They are rarely surprised and their baleful gaze can penetrate any form of darkness as well as detect magic, illusions and transmutations.

ECOLOGY

Dreadstriders appear to be mortal beings. They can bleed and die just like mundane folk. However due to their rarity on our plane, much of their ecology is left to speculation. Nothing is known of their diet or reproductive cycle. Vivisections have revealed they possess lungs, so presumably they breathe but can probably hold their breath for long periods of time when moving through solid matter.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: When dreadstriders enter the mortal plane, they do so via something akin to a magic circle conjured by their arcane science. This circle will be invisible to the naked eye but will be revealed via magical effects such as the detect magic spell. The dreadstriders will usually establish a sort of base camp in the vicinity of this magic circle.]

SEEDS

1.) About a fortnight ago, a member of the royal family was abducted from their chambers. A very poorly worded ransom note scrawled in what looks like a child's handwriting was left behind. The letter instructs the family to bring items of great value to a certain location indicated on a crudely drawn map.

[REFEREE'S NOTE 1: The abductee was taken by dreadstriders and is being held for ransom. What items might they demand in payment? Several wagons of gold? Potent magical items? Perhaps a cherished family heirloom such as a Sentient Sword passed down via the line of kingship?][REFEREE'S NOTE 2: The dreadstriders are generally without honor and view most other races with contempt. They are unlikely to kill their captor, but will probably try to rob the PCs if they are able.]

2.) The party finds itself in a frontier mining settlement. The area was once part of an ancient and forgotten kingdom. The surrounding environs are rich in mineral resources, hence the mining. Additionally, the ruins above and below the surface have attracted adventurers from far and wide. The combination of easy wealth and adventurous spirit has created a sort of raucous, boomtown feel to the place. It is not entirely lawless, but petty crime is rife. It is a perfect place for wild, young adventurers to use as a base of operations hoping to make their first big score. [REFEREE'S NOTE: After a time left to your discretion, the town is attacked by dreadstriders. The dreadstriders are after plunder the townsfolk and adventurers have acquired. How will the dreadstriders go about their work, will it be via raids on shophouses and inns? What might happen if they decide to occupy the town? What structure(s) would they occupy? How would they interact with the folk? Would there be any significant resistance from the citizens or adventurers currently in residence?]

LOOT

Dreadstriders will generally keep any of the loot they have acquired near their base camp (see ECOLOGY). The armor and weapon of a dreadstrider is magical but the PCs will likely not be able to use them. However, they could probably sell it to a wizard quite easily. I suggest a value of around 1000gp each depending on how well the PCs can haggle.

KEDILWYN

Extradimensional predators that prowl the subterranean depths. Their weird eyes emit baleful, eldritch rays that paralyze and blister flesh. Once their prey is disabled they utilize a horrid lamprey-like maw to drain its blood.

AC 5 [14], **HD** 4+2***** [20hp], **Att** 3 x gaze (1d10 + blistering + paralysis) or 1 x bite (1d6 + blood drain), **THACO** 16 [+3], **MV** 150' (50'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 500, **NA** 1d4 (1d6), **TT** U

- **BLOOD DRAIN** Attaches to victim on a successful hit, doing 10 automatic damage per round.
- **CHARM** Targets must **save versus spells** or be charmed: move towards the kedilwyn (resisting those who try to prevent it); defend the kedilwyn; obey the kedilwyn's commands (if understood); unable to cast spells or use magic items; unable to harm the kedilwyn. A character who saves is unaffected for the rest of the encounter. Killing the kedilwyn breaks the charm.
- **CLING** Can walk on walls and ceilings.
- **DAMAGE IMMUNITY** All damage reduced by half.
- **GAZE** Emits a baleful radiation from all three eyes. Each can target one creature within 100'.
 - Blistering** A hit causes painful blistering: -2 to attack rolls for 24 hours. A cure light wounds spell can be used to cure this, instead of restoring HP.
 - Paralysis** Creatures must **save versus paralysis** or be paralysed for 1d10 rounds.
- **REGENERATION** A damaged kedilwyn gains 1 HP at the start of each round, as long as it is alive.
- **TELEPATHY** May communicate mentally within 120'. Those contacted are not compelled to communicate, but the monster will have an empathic sense of their thoughts regardless.
- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.



DESCRIPTION

You spot a hideous abomination in the middle distance. It appears to be a virtual pillar of flesh about two to three times the height of a man. It scuttles about on pointed, insect-like legs. Atop the writhing, undulating column of leprous gray flesh shine three baleful eyes that glow like bullseye lanterns. Their damnable eldritch radiance scours the darkness. Flanking the horrific eyes are six, short tentacular appendages. It seems to be searching for something. As your gaze settles upon the horror, you get a chill up your spine. You feel as if it may have noticed you as well. A moment later it begins to emit an eerie whistle. The melody is very reminiscent of birdsong, but much more complex. You feel at peace and have a desire to approach the strange creature.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: Should one or more PCs fail their save, read the following.] As you draw nearer, you hear or rather feel the creature in your mind. For now, it is not looking at you. It seems to offer comfort and reassurance. A growing feeling of well-being washes over you. But once its gaze turns upon you, you feel a caustic radiation burn into your flesh. It penetrates deep into your marrow. Your skin blisters and your nerves feel as if they are on fire. You find it difficult to move. As the paralysis creeps into your limbs, a lamprey-like maw full of jagged gleaming teeth begins to slowly open on the lowest portions of the creature's fleshy trunk.

TACTICS

They are intelligent and cunning, able to plan and use terrain to advantage. They prefer to attack solitary beings. If several prey are present, they will target stragglers or lone guards. They will attempt to draw their victims in with their mesmerizing whistle before using their gaze attacks. [REFEREE'S NOTE: If ever seriously threatened, these creatures will not hesitate to flee. Remember, they are quite fast. They can also climb walls and cling to ceilings.]

LORE

These loathsome creatures are known as kedilwyn. It is said that the name originally comes from a rural ghost story used to frighten children. In the forgotten farming village where these creatures were first encountered, this name was used to describe the peculiar whistle of the creatures. The whistle used to lure their prey into the darkness, never to be seen again.

Since that time, the abominable breed has become known to scholars of such horrific things. They are believed to be of extradimensional origin due to their bizarre physiology and hunting methods. While they do appear to be mortal and vulnerable to mundane damage, their weird flesh heals quickly and is highly resistant to damage. Sages posit this preternatural resilience is due to the weird vascular structures of kedilwyns. It seems that the innumerable weird lumps of its fleshy trunk are all capable of assuming the role of a heart. And any wounds are sealed via muscular pressure until they heal. Further, they are capable of regeneration.

Although they are intelligent and telepathic, there are no records of meaningful communication with them. Presumably they possess an alien mind that orders reality in ways unfathomable to mundane folk. What communications with them that have been recorded are merely emotional and sensory impressions with no lexis or syntax. They utilize their whistles to mesmerize prey.

The most noteworthy aspect of these weird creatures though, is certainly their damnable gaze. Each of their three eyes emits a penetrating caustic radiation. It will blister flesh and burn nerves, inflicting excruciating pain as well as paralysis. Whilst its prey is paralyzed, a kedilwyn will latch onto them with a lamprey-like maw and drain their blood at an alarming speed.

ECOLOGY

Kedilwyn are an invasive species from another dimension. They prefer the stygian black of the deep earth and only venture above ground at night or exceedingly gloomy days. They are wholly carnivorous. They will drain the blood from prey for immediate sustenance, but also drag the corpse away to pick at its bones later. They are asexual and reproduce via egg-laying. They lay a clutch of several fist-sized eggs quarterly. Their offspring emerge in just a few weeks. Upon emergence they appear totally independent. While immature, they are small and physically weak but still capable of their mesmerizing whistle. This allows them to feed quite easily and grow rapidly. When considered alongside the durability of the wretched things it is easy to understand how they have been so successful on our plane.

SEEDS

1.) The party is on a journey across a barren rocky plateau. When they set camp for the night, a weird unease settles over them. There's nothing concrete that should have so affected their spirits, but nonetheless they find it difficult to rest peacefully. One of the party will disappear from the watch. The party eventually discovers their companion in the bottom of a narrow ravine, unharmed but disoriented. All they can recall is a pleasant whistle and some lanterns shining in the distance. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The partymember was under the influence of a kedilwyn, but fell into the ravine before they could approach the monster. The plateau they are traversing sits atop a vast and deep network of caves. The surface is riddled with a honeycomb-like tangle of twisting tunnels from which various subterranean predators emerge to engage in nocturnal predation.]

2.) In a seedy tavern, the party shares tales with a rogue. As the drinks flow and the lantern oil ebbs, he leans in and whispers of a prize he lost. He tells of a merchant caravan he had infiltrated. His guild had tasked him with gathering intelligence such as the route, any cyphers or passwords and so on. But one night as they traveled through an isolated valley they were attacked by kedilwyn. He barely escaped with his life. He had to hide in the branches of the trees and stop his ears with beeswax to block out their whistles. He says the treasure of the caravan was considerable and is likely still there. He proposes they join him to claim the prize. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The rogue can lead them to where the attack happened. He can warn the PCs of the kedilwyns' wiles and how to avoid them, or at least their whistle. But, is the treasure still there? Also consider, perhaps the rogue is using the party to retrieve the treasure and his guild will ambush them as they journey back.]

LOOT

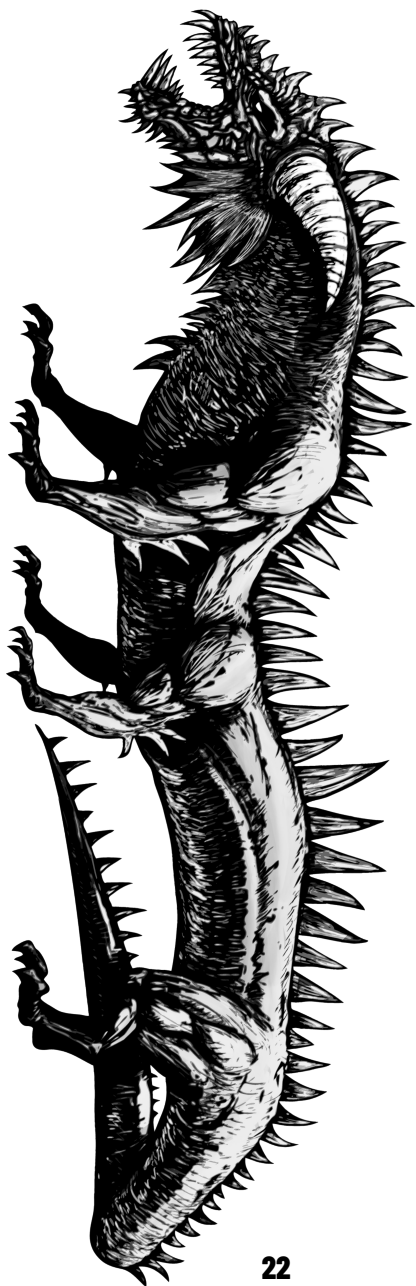
Kedilwyn have little interest in what mundane folk consider treasure. Anything acquired from defeating them will be found in a sort of communal refuse pit where they discard the bones of previous kills once they've been picked clean.

KETHWANI

Hateful reptilian beings from a distant plane. They loathe other sapient life and hide away in the deep earth. Sages familiar with the fiends believe they are kin to dragons and basilisks alike. But their arcane power, capacity for destruction and cruelty far exceeds both. Some rumors posit they have been banished to our realm as a form of imprisonment.

AC 1 [18], HD 8** [36hp], Att 3 × claw (1d4), 1 × bite (2d12), THACO 12 [+7], MV 150' (50') / 300' (100') flying, SV D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (8), ML 10, AL Chaotic, XP 1750, NA 1 (1), TT G+5000gp
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- **DISINTEGRATION GAZE** 3-in-6 chance per round of loosing a ray of incredibly destructive energy. One target within 90' must **save versus death** or die, collapsing into a fine powder. This ability can also be used on inanimate objects, each blast disintegrates roughly a cube of 10'.
- **KEEN SENSES** Surprised on a 1. When hungry, will follow a track of blood by scent.
- **MAGICAL POWERS** Each can be used as indicated below:
 - At Will** *dimension door, invisibility, magic missile, phantasmal force, protection from evil, sleep*
 - 3 x Day** *fire ball, hold person, polymorph other, teleport*
 - 1 x Day** *anti-magic shell, geas*
- **MAGIC RESISTANCE** +4 bonus to all saving throws against magic.
- **TELEPATHY** May communicate mentally within 120'. Those contacted are not compelled to communicate, but the kethwani will have an empathic sense of their thoughts regardless.
- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.



DESCRIPTION

You see a large reptilian creature crawling towards your party. Its construction is generally long, lean and somewhat serpentine. You estimate it is 8 to 9 feet tall at the tallest angle of its shoulders and easily four to five that length to the tip of its scaly tail. Its fearsome visage displays numerous frills and horns that suggest a draconic ancestry. However, unlike a true dragon, this bestial abomination lacks wings. Furthermore, it possesses six limbs of which the front four appear quite dexterous, ending in clawed hands. The mouth of the creature is by far the dominant feature of its loathsome countenance. But despite its bestial mien, a calculating and malevolent intelligence is clear in its cold-blooded stare.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: The creature is capable of communication via telepathy but generally shuns contact with other sapient life and has a particular disdain for mammals. It will likely attack within moments. The form of its initial attack is likely to be dictated by the environment, see TACTICS for suggestions.]

TACTICS

If the terrain allows, the creature will fly upwards as soon as possible, seeking cover or concealment. It will stay within range of its magic missile spell. Its first volley will target obvious spellcasters (favoring magic-users) and those that appear competent archers second. If faced with a formidable defense, it will fall back further still. At this point, if the party is capable of potent magic it will either begin dropping fire balls in the middle of the party or erect an anti-magic shell and fly into melee combat.

If it cannot take to the air, it will use a combination of dimension door and invisibility to harry the party at its edges. The same targets will be prioritized. If the resistance is significant, it will also deploy its fire ball spell and then erect an anti-magic shell. Once the party has been sufficiently weakened (about one third its strength), the creature will move within range of its disintegration gaze to begin mopping up the survivors.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: Its ultimate goal is to eliminate all but one of the party. It will then lay a geas on the lone survivor and send them into the wider world to fetch something. The creature will not hesitate to flee if its life is ever truly in danger.]

LORE

These strange reptilian creatures are known as kethwani. The kethwani are a reclusive and hateful breed. They shun contact with other sapient beings, particularly mammals. This has made study of the things rather difficult. Sages familiar with the scant body of lore attributed to the kethwani species believe they are kin to both dragons and basilisks. Some of these learned folk posit the antecedents of the kethwani are likely extraplanar in origin and this accounts for some of the variations displayed in their physiology from baseline basilisks or dragons. While not wildly divergent, the additional set of limbs and lack of wings as well as their affinity for arcane spellcasting is a bit remarkable. In addition to their not insignificant magical abilities, all kethwani possess the ability to disintegrate matter with their baleful gaze.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: The kethwani themselves have never disclosed their origins to anyone. And, despite records of their presence throughout the Multiverse, no significant data exists as to where or how the

kethwani came to be. But, I suggest they are indeed of extraplanar origin and comprise a threat not just to the mundane mammalian folk the kethwani loathe with every breath, but to dragons as well. The kethwani are just as long-lived as dragons but are far more skilled magically, not to mention their disintegration gaze. If you choose to use the kethwani in your campaign they might represent an interesting faction of nominally draconic entities which you might use to massage traditionally antagonistic foes together against a common and alien foe. Perhaps chromatics and metallics join forces? Or even grander, perhaps dwarves, elves, humans (plus giants and humanoids such as orcs, etc.) come together to defeat an army of all the evil reptilian species that are aligned with a conquering kethwani wizard-king from a distant plane.]

The average kethwani is a significant threat, not only due to their arcane might but also an acute and malicious cunning. While not immortal, they can be slain, the kethwani possess an interminable span of life. A span of life they often fill the acquisition of wealth, power and powerful slaves. A kethwani will rarely be encountered on its own, at least not for long. In fact a kethwani will always have at least a handful of powerful opponents it has bested and laid a geas upon. The kethwani may use its teleport spells to summon them to fight on its behalf. [REFEREE'S NOTE: I suggest a level/HD range of 1d4+4.]

ECOLOGY

None can truly say where the kethwani originally hail from. Sages believe they migrated to our realm from a distant plane. Once here, they seek out a cavern deep in the earth to create a lair. They seem to be solitary creatures that interact with the rest of the world through magically controlled servants. All evidence currently available indicates they are wholly carnivorous. No records of their method of reproduction or offspring exists, presumably they must return to their home plane to seek out a mate. One line of speculation amongst sages posits the kethwani in our realm are exiles imprisoned here.

SEEDS

1.) The party has somehow discovered a powerful and influential NPC (nobility, clergy, military officer, court mage, guildmaster, etc.) is under the geas of a kethwani. [REFEREE'S NOTE: What plot or task has the NPC been tasked with? Or, perhaps the NPC has been commanded to not take an action. Imagine a king that refuses to sire an heir. Perhaps an archbishop is compelled to leave a tribute of orphans at the mouth of a kethwani cave.]

2.) Across the realm, the most learned of sages are being abducted. Sorcery is suspected as those taken have disappeared from all manner of exotic hermitages from mountain monasteries to desert caverns. Some of the greatest loremasters have been taken from the most secure, barred and guarded libraries of royal courts. [REFEREE'S NOTE: A kethwani has called upon several wizards it has sway over to gather these sages and bring them to its lair. The kethwani wants to escape our realm and plans to use the wizards and sages to devise a means.]

LOOT

Kethwani will often build vast hoards of treasure which they take great pains to hide and secure. As they are highly skilled magicians, I suggest they have 1d4+2 spellbooks in addition to what is indicated in their statblock.

LYQOAH

Large alien beasts with a predatory, leonine aspect. They are in fact a form of advanced golem created by means of the ritual and formulae of long dead archmagi. There are a handful of precious tomes from their ancient and forgotten empire that contain this coveted knowledge.

AC 2 [17], **HD** 5**** [22hp], **Att** 2 x claw (1d6+rending), 1 x bite (2d6+attach) or 1 x tail sweep (1d6+see below), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 180' (60'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 675, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** None

- **ACID** Cannot regenerate damage from this source. The only way to permanently kill a lyqoah.
- **ATTACHING** On a successful bite attack, the mouth locks onto the victim and inflicts automatic bite damage in subsequent rounds. It will not let go until slain.
- **BLINDSIGHT** Can "see" in total darkness; immune to sensory attacks such as blindness or deafness.
- **CLIMBING** Excellent climbers.
- **IMMUNITY** Unharmd by gas and poison.
- **MAGIC RESISTANCE** Their weird physiology grants them a +2 to all saving throws vs. magic.
- **KEEN SENSES** May track by scent. Only surprised on a 1.
- **REGENERATION** Regains 3 HP at the start of each round that it is alive. Severed limbs reattach.
- **RETURN FROM DEATH** If killed (0 HP), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **RENDING** If a victim is hit by both claws in the same round, the lyqoah rends for an extra 1d12 automatic damage.
- **TAIL** May sweep with its tail attempting to knock targets prone. The area of effect is a half-circle with a 15' radius. Prone targets cannot attack that round. **Save versus breath** to avoid.



DESCRIPTION

You see a large eldritch beast. It has a curious leonine aspect in the line and angles of its weird construction. Where a furry mane ought to be, sprouts a ring of thick spikes or perhaps horns. And where eyes and fangs ought to be is instead what looks like a large, serrated beak. The beak juts from the folds of heavy, leathery flesh. The weird thing appears to have no sensory organs, no eyes, ears or nose. The sole feature of its alien face is its horrific, rending maw. The body of the creature is densely muscled and about eight or nine feet in length, a long tail about three times that length trails the abomination. All of its limbs end in long, stout talons. A series of bone spikes also emerge from its forelimbs below the elbow.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: How the monster reacts to the PCs is largely determined by the presence of a master (or lack thereof). See below for further details.]

TACTICS

These creatures possess only a bestial intelligence. However they are predators, so they possess a degree of cunning beyond that of herbivores. They are adept at stalking prey. They will coordinate with their brethren to ambush larger targets, but they are not strictly speaking ambush predators. Such tactics such as chasing prey into a dead end tunnel or cavern are plausible. They might also lie in wait in a particular terrain that would be difficult for prey to flee from. [REFEREE'S NOTE: If their master is present, the creatures will behave quite differently as they will be under telepathic control. If left to their own devices, they will behave in a much more aggressive manner.]

LORE

These alien beasts are known as lyqoah (plural and singular). Sages familiar with the frightening monstrosities believe they are a rare form of golem. Legends say the lyqoah were first crafted as personal guardians by the archmagi of an ancient, nearly forgotten empire. These ancient magi recorded the rituals and processes of lyqoah creation in certain legendary tomes. These tomes are highly sought after by sages, sorcerers, necromancers and alchemists interested in the creation of artificial life.

Rumors suggest the tomes contain techniques lost to the present day science of golem construction. In particular, the tomes detail the summoning of specific spirits from a variety of planes. It is believed that through this technique a more harmonious inhabitation may be achieved by the matching of certain spirits with certain constructed forms. The standard method of golem construction rips an unknown and unwilling spirit from a random elemental plane and forces it to animate a crudely wrought vessel. The same basic principle is applied to creating lesser undead as well. Truly, is it any wonder such beings absent the control of their maker go on murderous sprees. They are most likely hoping to end their virtual imprisonment by provoking deadly retribution.

The lore regarding lyqoah is myriad and fanciful. It is difficult to discern fact from fiction when it comes to the tales surrounding the monsters. Regarding their abilities however, there is little doubt. The lyqoah are quite formidable. First of all, they are terrifically strong for their size and easily capable of tearing mundane folk limb from limb. And once they have bitten into their prey, they lock their jaw until they or

their prey are slain. The body of a lyqoah is incredibly dense. Their bones are like stone. Their eldritch flesh is bloodless, almost clay-like. And they heal at an astonishing rate, the only way to destroy a lyqoah is by total disintegration.

ECOLOGY

Lyqoah are unnatural, artificial beings. They do not require air to breathe. They do not require rest. Nor do they require any food or water to sustain themselves. They do not age and have no actual life cycle. They also do not reproduce. In general they behave as any large feline would. They stalk, pounce and are even somewhat playful. While their maker lives they seem almost like large, domesticated cats. But if they are encountered without a master they are fierce (although as described in the LORE section, they are not prone to self-destructive and wanton violence). Absent a master, a lyqoah will behave as a mundane, natural feline (or similar predator) would. Often they will seek out a forest to construct a lair of some sort. They will even hunt and slay out of instinct if not necessity.

SEEDS

1.) The party has accepted a job from a scholarly NPC interested in acquiring one of the legendary tomes believed to contain the secrets of lyqoah creation. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Will the NPC aid them in their search? If the NPC joins the party, do they have any skills or equipment that would be useful? Does the NPC know where the book is and whether or not it is guarded? What will be the reward for risking life and limb to capture book?]

2.) The party finds themselves investigating the ruins of an old tower in an isolated mountain range. The mountain occupies much of a narrow peninsula extending from the northeastern corner of the continent. The weather is cold and the sky is gray. The place is rumored to have been built by a secretive and powerful wizard nearly a century ago. The wizard has not been seen in decades and is believed dead. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The wizard is indeed long dead. But his pets remain to guard his home. Foremost amongst these are his prized lyqoah (at least two of them). I suggest some other golems and/or undead as well. During their exploration there is a 1-in-20 chance they find one of the rare tomes attributed to lyqoah construction.]

LOOT

Although lyqoah do not build hoards, their bones, horns and teeth can be harvested and sold. The horns and teeth of the lyqoah are incredibly strong and sharp (a bit like sturdy obsidian). [REFEREE'S NOTE: Lyqoah are infused with the energy of the elemental plane of Earth.] These trophies could be used to craft some crude but effective weaponry. Amongst those with a taste for a more savage aesthetic, such items are often prized. Their horns can fetch up to 1d6x10gp each. They usually possess around 30 teeth, each worth up to 1d6gp each. Use your discretion for the value of lyqoah bones. Such trophies would likely fetch at least 50% more if the PCs knew someone that might be interested in the lore surrounding the lyqoah.

MAGMACRAWLER

Amorphous beings originating from the region of overlap between the elemental planes of the Earth and Fire. They construct a body of volcanic glass which they can pilot. If necessary they can exit their obsidian form and move about in their natural shape.

AC 1 [18], HD 4+4*** [22hp], Att 2 x claw (1d8+heat), 1 x bite (1d8+heat), THACO 15 [+4], MV 180' (60'), SV D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), ML 8, AL Neutral, XP 350, NA 1d4 (2d4), TT None

- **BLINDSIGHT** Can "see" in total darkness; immune to blindness.
- **BONUS DAMAGE ON GREAT HIT** If the magmacrawler's claw or bite attack roll hits by 4 or more, or is a natural twenty, the attack does an additional 1d8 damage.
- **CLIMBING AND LEAPING** Skilled climbers; can jump up to 30'.
- **DEGRADES ARMOR** The magmacrawler's claw and bite attacks will slowly destroy mundane armor. Every successful claw or bite from a magmacrawler worsens the target's AC by 1 point.
- **FLAMING BLOOD** If damaged by an edged weapon, emits a spurt of magma: attacker suffers 2d6 damage. **Save versus death** to avoid.
- **HEAT** A magmacrawler emits intense heat. Anything within a 10' radius will take 1d8 damage.
- **IF DEFEATED** 3-in-6 chance enough of its Molten Form seeps into the earth to heal and construct a new body. The time to recover and construct a new body will vary based on the minerals in the area.
- **IMMUNITY** Unaffected by poison. Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g. charm, hold, sleep).
- **MOLTEN FORM** The magmacrawler can emerge from its volcanic glass construct as a pool of animated lava. In this form it loses its claw and bite attacks, it may only attack once with a single blow inflicting 2d6 damage. Additionally its movement is reduced to only a slow, oozing crawl of 60' (20'). In this form it can burrow through nonmagical earth, metal and stone, leaving a fiery tunnel in its wake.
- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Only harmed by magic.
- **VULNERABLE TO COLD** -2 to saves against cold attacks; suffers one extra point of damage per die.



DESCRIPTION

You see a weird and vaguely bestial creature approaching from the darkness. It is fairly large, at least as big as a riding horse. Its form is black, gleaming and lean. It seems to be constructed of sleek, spiky shards of ebon glass. It appears to lack eyes or a nose, in fact the entire top of its head appears to be a raging inferno burning from what appears to be a spiked crown. As it comes more into view you can see that it is semi-bipedal at the very least and seems to move about on all fours due to its exceedingly hunched posture. However, its forelimbs are quite long and end in what seem to be proper hands. These hands end in talons of the same sleek black glass that seems to compose the whole of the thing's weird anatomy. As it moves you notice a piercing, grating, scraping noise which sets your teeth on edge and causes the hairs on the nape of your neck to rise.

[REFEREE'S NOTE 1: Those PCs capable of Infravision (if they manage to squint or somehow see past the plume of flame that burns from within the thing's head) will note the surface temperature of the creature is dangerously hot.] [REFEREE'S NOTE 2: The being is rather primitive but is capable of basic speech. If your campaign includes a language spoken by Elementals, it speaks both the languages of Earth and Fire Elementals. If your campaign does not have these language options, you might rule it sounds like a dialect of Draconic that can only be understood with an Intelligence check. The general motivation of these creatures is to protect their territory. If they can be assured that the party represents no threat, they will likely allow the PCs to pass.]

TACTICS

These beings are somewhat primitive and very territorial. They will usually attempt to communicate with sapient beings before attacking, but if they cannot be understood, they will attack soon after. If there are more than one of them, they will coordinate their attacks to bring down a single opponent at a time, quickly and methodically (trusting in their obsidian shell to protect them). They are not intelligent enough to recognize any obvious spellcasters at the beginning of combat, but will respond in short order to opponents that do them significant damage. If a particular opponent stands out thusly, they will use their Climbing and Leaping ability to bypass any guardians to get at the threat.

LORE

These strange beings are known as magmacrawlers. The name has been attributed to them out of necessity. The beings themselves are capable of speech but are rather prosaic and have no name for their folk. They are alien to our realm but not completely malevolent despite their rather diabolical appearance. They seem to be a somewhat primitive race of beings that somehow migrated to our plane. Sages familiar with the species believe they are what is known as a paraelemental. They originate from a region of overlap between the elemental planes of Earth and Fire. They are something akin to sapient, amorphous blobs of lava. They construct articulated animal-like vessels of obsidian. They can essentially pilot these vessels as vehicles, or perhaps it is better to call them extensions of their own bodies. This allows them to move much faster as well as utilize hands to interact with the environment.

Although their avatars of volcanic glass possess fearsome and lethal claws and jaws, they are not carnivores. In fact, to gain their sustenance they must exit their secondary body to consume ores and minerals. Rumors are whispered that the strange beings have a taste for base metals such as copper

and lead above all others. Although this hypothesis has yet to be tested, many sages are inclined to believe it due to the rather low melting temperatures of these metals. It could be surmised that such molten metals might well provide a relatively easily digestible foodstuff for the beings.

ECOLOGY

Presumably, magmacrawlers are native to an area of overlap between the elemental planes of Earth and Fire. However, this has yet to be verified. The magmacrawlers lack the mental capacity to understand the cosmology of the Multiverse. And those that have traveled the planes have yet to record a meeting with such beings as the magmacrawlers. They appear to be mortal but have vastly different biological processes than the normal folk of our realm. They seem to digest minerals and ore to fuel themselves, and favor softer metals. If their obsidian shell is destroyed, there is a good chance lava elemental within will escape by seeping into the earth. There it will heal and burrow about looking for the proper minerals to rebuild a new shell. It is unknown if they require rest or sleep as we do. Sages familiar with the beings believe they are asexual beings that reproduce by splitting as an ooze or mold might.

SEEDS

1.) The party has been hired as security for a mining company exploratory crew. The company is sending a small crew into an area infamous for volcanoes and the like. Until fairly recently, the area had been rocked with constant volcanic activity. No sane folk would want to go anywhere near the place. However, the mining company has consulted their books and believes the area is now quiet and will remain so for decades to come. In the meantime, they are eager to stake a claim to all the riches disgorged from the geothermal upset. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The area is indeed quiet now and rich in minerals and metals. However, 4d4 magmacrawlers also now occupy the area. The magmacrawlers will not respond well to any sort of mining activity in their territory.]

2.) An elderly sage of great wealth has hired the party to investigate the disappearance of an order of scholars and mages. They journeyed into the mountains to witness the annual eruption of a geyser. Many of them have been making the trek every year for decades. But this time, something seems to have gone amiss. They are a fortnight late to return. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Did they run afoul of some magmacrawlers or is something else to blame for their disappearance? Perhaps they still live?]

3.) A mage with a deep interest in the elemental planes has been studying the lore regarding magmacrawlers. The mage wishes to find some magmacrawlers and communicate with them. He has hired the party to serve as his bodyguards. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The mage seems competent, but it might be more interesting if his knowledge is flawed. Perhaps he addresses the magmacrawlers in the wrong language? Perhaps the destination is inaccessible to beings that lack climbing gear or flight?]

LOOT

Although magmacrawlers generally do not retain wealth or build hoards. If you are feeling generous, you might allow them to have a cache of several large gemstones. If you are feeling whimsical, you might even allow the PCs to trade base metals such as copper for these large gemstones.

MUCKWRETCH

Disgusting and malicious creatures. These stunted little humanoids hide beneath the stinking mud alongside rivers. They lure their prey close via illusions and other trickery. Once their targets are exposed, they drag them beneath the water. Sages familiar with the nasty things believe they were once mortal children and have been transformed by some darkling fey magic.

AC 7 [12], **HD** 3+3**** [16hp], **Att** 2 x claw (1d4+grapple), 1 x bite (1d8+poison), **THACO** 16 [+3], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 175, **NA** 1d4 (2d4), **TT** C

- **AMBUSER** If attacking from surprise, first attack is +4 to hit and inflicts x2 damage.
- **AMPHIBIOUS** Can breathe air and water.
- **GRAPPLE** Claws grab and restrain after a hit. Human-sized or smaller targets must succeed on a **save versus paralysis** or be grappled and suffer an automatic 1d4 damage per round. Victims are unable to move or cast spells until passing the saving throw. Grappled targets are automatically bitten on its next turn. Victims that fail their saving throw by 4 or more are pulled under the water.
- **FIRE AND ACID** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill a muckwretch.
- **IMMUNITY** Immune to gases and poisons.
- **MAGICAL POWERS** Each can be used as indicated below:
 - 3 x Day** phantasmal force, silence 15' radius, ventriloquism
 - 1 x Day** hallucinatory terrain
- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Only harmed by magic or silver.
- **POISON** Those that fail their **save versus poison** are blinded. The condition can only be relieved via magical means.
- **REGENERATION** Regains 1 HP at the start of each round that it is alive. May regain HP even faster by eating flesh. For every 1 HP of fresh meat it recovers 2 HP. Severed limbs reattach.
- **RETURN FROM DEATH** If killed (0 HP), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1–4, due to hiding motionless underwater or beneath the mud.



DESCRIPTION

[REFEREE'S NOTE: I suggest using this description after the monster fails a surprise roll versus one of the partymembers but another will be surprised. In other words, the monster appears from the mud behind an unsuspecting partymember but one of their companions sees the creature.] You see a stooped, long-armed, diminutive humanoid emerge from the stinking muck of the riverbank. It has long, ragged pointed ears. Stinking mud clings to its dense, powerfully built form and the flesh beneath the muck is a deep green. Its hair is long, black and matted, framing a haggard angular visage. Its eyes are sunken and burn with a baleful orange phosphorescence. As horrid as the wretched being's face is, its mouth is somehow worse. Its thin wrinkly lips are incapable of covering the meshed mass of long thin, needle-sharp fangs. It is difficult to say whether the bared teeth express a smile or grimace. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The creature does not communicate and will drag a target into the water as soon as possible.]

TACTICS

These creatures rarely leave the immediate vicinity of a body of water, usually a river. Typically they will lure their targets to them via various magical tricks. Oftentimes the prey will be led into simple traps such as pits of sloppy mud and the like. Or perhaps they may use their powers of illusion to disguise a ruined bridge so that the unwary may fall directly into the rushing water beneath. In addition to their various illusory conjurations, they can also use the ventriloquism spell to lure victims closer. And once their prey is caught, they can cast a spell of silence to muffle their cries for help. These creatures always prefer to ambush prey and will avoid a direct confrontation. In fact, should they fail their attempt at ambush, they generally flee beneath the water at the nearest opportunity. However, if they do manage to achieve a surprise attack they will attempt to drag their victims under the water as well.

LORE

These creatures are known as muckwretches. Sages familiar with the loathsome breed say the horrid beings are a sort of curse wrought by darkling fey upon the lands of men. The first muckwretches are said to have appeared in a distant and accursed kingdom a century or so past. The kingdom fell into damnable ruin after a devastating plague. As the common folk succumbed to the virulent pestilence their children somehow remained unharmed. Left alone to fend for themselves, many of them felt a call to go to the nearest river. And it was there in the stinking, corpse-filled rivers of that dying kingdom that a fey witch from the Unseelie Court worked her foul magic upon them. She offered them a new home beneath the waves and wrought them anew, transmogrified into their current loathsome state.

Muckwretches have lost any of the humanity they once possessed. Any vestiges of compassion and empathy have been washed away by the sorcery that warped them. The main pursuit of their loathsome lives is filling their ravenous bellies with the flesh of the innocent and unwary.

Their eldritch transformation has granted them some skill at sorcery, mainly the sort of spellcraft associated with misdirection, illusions and obfuscation. They can breathe both air and water, further their weird metabolism grants them immunity to toxins (airborne or otherwise). Their flesh also possesses a supernatural vigor, being proofed against mundane forces save for silver. Additionally they can regenerate from mortal injury, even returning from supposed death. The only sure way to end them is total disintegration via sorcery, acid or fire.

It is wise to avoid melee combat with them. Despite their small stature, they are densely muscled and surprisingly strong. They can overpower a full-grown man with little effort. Once they have grappled a victim, they pull them under the water to drown them. Their bite is a fearful thing as well, not only will it remove a sizable chunk of flesh, but can cause a blinding sickness as well. Only magic can cure it.

ECOLOGY

Muckwretches are no longer truly mortal. Sages posit they are now something akin to twisted nature spirits. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the necessities of their survival. It is generally believed they no longer age, presumably this may be attributed to the same unnatural vigor that allows them to survive grievous injury. They cannot reproduce naturally, the only way more muckwretches are made is via the accursed magic of the same darkling fey that first created the abominations.

SEEDS

1.) The party has picked up an ornate, hand-held mirror from a recent haul. The sort of mirror that a woman of status might have in her collection. The mirror detects as a potent magic item. When activated, a gorgeous woman appears within the reflection. She appears surrounded in a mist. She speaks to your mind, her voice is cool and ethereal. It evokes a dreamy vignette of a moonlit night and silver bells tinkling in a gentle wind. She will offer "wisdom" to the user in the form of visions.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: The woman in the reflection is a fey hag from the Unseelie Court disguised as a beautiful woman. Of course the party will not know this. She offers to answer any questions asked of her. Essentially the mirror will function as a crystal ball with ESP capable of casting the contact other plane spell once a week. The mirror can be used by anyone. However, every question asked and answered represents another child corrupted and transmogrified into a muckwretch.]

2.) The PCs find themselves in a small fishing village. They are in need of a rest and the place has a serviceable inn with a tavern downstairs. It certainly isn't much, but it will do for a night or two. On the evening of their final stay, a weird fog rolls in off the river. Out of doors it is difficult to see your hand in front of your space. The eldritch vapor also creeps into homes and shops a bit. Its cold, weird touch is full of death and decay. Other than the weird fog, everything seems normal. But when the mist clears, half of the children are missing. The folk of the village plead with the adventurers to help them find their kids. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The children have been lured into the river and transformed into muckwretches. The transformation may be reversed with the dispel magic or remove curse spells. If the transformation is not reversed before the fortnight is out, only a polymorph other spell can return the child to human form. But, their personality henceforth will be warped and evil.]

LOOT

As per the statblock. Muckwretches will build a hoard they keep secreted near their preferred hunting grounds. Usually in a murky cave which can only be accessed from underwater. Should the party discover the lair of a muckwretch, there is a 4-in-6 chance some sort of scrying device or other means of communication attuned to the realm of the Unseelie Court is also present.

RENDSCRAG

Large brutish humanoids with three eyes that burn like hot embers in the sunken pits of their eyesockets. Some have likened the monsters to minotaurs or demons due to their long, curving horns, but they are kin to neither. In truth, they are enigmatic extraplanar entities with some ancient connection to mundane giantkin.

AC 4 [15], **HD** 8**** [36hp], **Att** 2 x fist (1d6+grapple+rending) or 3 x eyebeams (1d6+heat metal), **THACO** 12 [+7], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (8), **ML** 10, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 3400, **NA** 1(1), **TT** D, N, O

- **EYEBEAMS** When a rendscrag hits with this attack (up to 200'), it can continue to do damage with it on subsequent rounds without an additional to-hit roll. Additionally, if the character is carrying any metal it becomes blazing hot. The first round it merely heats up, giving the PC a chance to discard it without harm [REFEREE'S NOTE: Although metal armor might be more difficult to remove at your discretion.]. On the second round, it causes 1d6 damage, on the third it causes 1d8, and on the fourth round it causes 1d10.
- **GRAPPLE** Grabs and restrains after a successful fist hit. Human-sized or smaller targets must succeed on a **save versus paralysis** or be grappled and suffer an automatic 1d6 damage per round. Victims are unable to move or cast spells until passing the saving throw. Grappled targets are automatically struck with three eye beams on the rendscrag's next turn.
- **INVISIBILITY** As the spell. **3 x Day**
- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Only harmed by magic.
- **RENDING** If a victim is hit by both fists in the same round, the rendscrag rends for an extra 1d6 automatic damage.
- **SCROLL USE** Can utilize cleric and magic-user scrolls.



DESCRIPTION

You see a huge, squat humanoid suddenly appear. The being has dusky blue flesh, long curving horns and three eyes that glow like burning coals. It speaks to you in the common tongue, but its mastery of your language is minimal. The brute seems to be demanding some treasure before it will allow you to pass. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Use your discretion regarding the tribute, it might be content with a bag of coins or a valuable gem. If the party resists or attempts to wriggle out of the demands, the creature will grapple an NPC (perhaps even a mount) and then burn them with its eyebeams in a show of force. If the creature slays the NPC it does not care.]

TACTICS

These beings are quite intelligent, but they lack subtlety. Often they will attack from invisibility and then grapple a foe before burning them with their eyebeams. If they encounter significant resistance, they will turn invisible again and quit the battle. But they will tend to lurk about, perhaps appearing later in the night to attack or steal whilst the party slumbers. [REFEREE'S NOTE: These creatures are particularly vengeful. If an individual did them harm or foiled their machinations, that individual is likely to be a future target for ongoing harassment and violence. Use your discretion. Perhaps a bribe of significance might be enough to remedy the monster's wounded pride.]

LORE

These strange beings are known as rendscrag. Rumor has it they are so named because of their ability to rend a man limb from limb with their bare hands. Additionally they can blast devastating rays of heat from their three abominable, hellish eyes. The sound of these destructive rays is said to be a loud "scrag". And hence, in the delightfully pragmatic way of the common folk, the weird monsters were so named.

Sages familiar with rendscrag uniformly agree the fiends are an extraplanar race. But, their realm of origin remains a mystery. Planar travelers claim to have encountered rendscrag across the Multiverse. Rendscrag tend to be solitary or leaders of lesser monsters, they are rarely encountered with others of their own kind. If more than one rendscrag is present, there will be endless feuds as they jockey for dominance. Wherever they are encountered, their motivations appear to be solely more wealth and power.

Rendscrag have a marked penchant for bullying those weaker than themselves. When they do occupy a position of leadership it will always be of a motley crew of evil and sadistic creatures that the rendscrag has cowed into submission. Often these gangs are composed of lesser giants and their kin, namely ettins, hill giants and ogres. Some sages have noted the language of rendscrag is a near dialect of the language of giants. This has led to some speculation that rendscrag might actually be a magical, extraplanar offshoot of the giant race somewhat akin to ogre magi.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: Although rendscrag are not capable of casting spells per se, they can make use of magic-user and cleric scrolls. As such, I suggest they have at least three randomly determined scrolls. Additionally they should always have at least two scrolls which aid them in evading capture. You might even see fit to give them a spellbook which they could utilize essentially as a portfolio of scrolls.]

ECOLOGY

Rendscrags are still considered mysterious by those sages and loremasters that make a study of such creatures. While not exceedingly rare compared to some such eldritch monstrosities, they are extremely tight-lipped about their origins and society. They also go to great lengths to avoid capture. It is widely assumed due to their somewhat close association with the lesser giants, that they form similar societies and possess similar life cycles. However, it is also widely assumed that they are quite long-lived due to their inherently magical nature and resistance to mundane damage. It is quite likely they measure their lives in centuries. No young or female renderscrags have yet been cataloged.

SEEDS

1.) The party has accepted a job from a merchant organization. They will be tasked with the investigation of a recent spate of devastating raids on their caravans. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Keep in mind, the party is not being asked to protect the caravan, but rather to find out who or what is behind the raids. So, how might they complete their task? Perhaps they travel with the caravan in disguise? Perhaps they travel in stealth via a parallel route all the while keeping a close eye on the caravan? Eventually they will discover a highly organized band of giantkin (e.g., ettins, ogres, hill giants, etc.) are conducting the raids. But they have some sort of magical assistance that bolsters their efforts with spells such as haste, invisibility and sleep. For example, imagine half a dozen ogres waiting along the road under cover of invisibility or massmorph ready to pounce. Their boss is a rendscrag that will be reluctant to expose himself unless his minions are encountering stiff resistance. If the rendscrag does reveal himself, he will take great pains to eliminate any witnesses.]

2.) A good and wise wizard has been kidnapped from his tower in the countryside. The local folk are greatly distraught as the wizard had aided them on numerous occasions during times of disaster, famine as well as numerous raids from the foul humanoids that plague the region. The local lord has little or no interest in the villager's plight, but the people have pooled their resources to raise a modest reward. They also offer the party a sturdy home and their own plot of land in their village. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The abduction was arranged by a rendscrag's gang. The rendscrag believes the wizard will be able to provide him with a steady supply of scrolls.]

LOOT

Rendscrags will often build vast hoards of treasure which they take great pains to hide and secure. On their person, they will always have a few magic items to help them evade capture. These items may be something as simple as scrolls or potions that would obscure their form or facilitate a quick escape. [REFEREE'S NOTE: As mention in LORE, you might see fit to give a rendscrag an entire spellbook to utilize as a collection of scrolls.]

ROTWOLF

Sorcerous abominations probably wrought from dire wolves and likely other more malignant creatures. These frightful beasts are cunning and ravenous. Their bite carries a germ that infests the flesh and leads to a progressive, festering rot. The nature of the rot is magical and difficult to cure.

AC 6 [13], **HD** 4+1*** [19hp], **Att** 3 x claw (1d4), 1 x bite (2d6+poison), **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 180' (60'), **SV** D10
W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 350, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** None

- **AMBUSER** If attacking from surprise, first attack is +4 to hit and inflicts x2 damage.
- **CLIMBING** Excellent climbers.
- **FEAR OF FIRE** ML 8 when attacked with fire.
- **FIRE AND ACID** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill a rotwolf.
- **POISON** Any damage inflicted via the rotwolf's bite can only be healed by natural means. Those that fail their **save versus poison** develop a rotting disease that reduces STR, DEX, CON, CHR and HP by 1d4 points per day until cured. The condition can be relieved via a remove curse or cure disease spell, but the damage must be healed naturally. Apply the same amount of HP healed to ability score reductions.
- **RAVENOUS** Attack any moving creature.
- **REGENERATION** Regains 1 HP at the start of each round that it is alive. Severed limbs reattach.
- **RETURN FROM DEATH** If killed (0 HP), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-3, due to stealth.



DESCRIPTION

You spot a large, wolfish shadow skulking about in the middle distance. The beast must be quite stealthy to have gotten so close without notice. The details of its angular form are obscured by the darkness, but it appears to be at least as big as a horse. Its horrid eyes burn with a baleful orange phosphorescence. As you take notice of it, it appears to have noticed your attention as well. It growls at you in a weird, low-pitched cackle. The same odd vocalization is soon echoed from another pool of shadows to the rear of your formation.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: The beast the party has sighted will attack in short order. But, I suggest having the party check for surprise as they are attacked from their flank or rear by one of the beast's unseen packmates.]

As the beast charges forward, you note its ebon black coat. It possesses six legs, all of which end in long hooked claws. The claws seem an odd fit for a wolf and might look more appropriate on a bear or jungle cat. Its teeth are bared in a terrifying display of serrated bone. The teeth seem specifically designed for the savaging of flesh beyond the scope of merely feeding. The longest of its fangs curve outwards like scimitars or hooks. As it draws near the moist heat of its rank, putrescent breath is almost nauseating.

TACTICS

These creatures are savage and ravenous, but they are also ambush predators. They usually skulk about their prey awaiting an opportunity for a quick kill. But once they attack, they are not likely to flee. If more than one are encountered, they will coordinate with their packmates to bring down softer targets first. [REFEREE'S NOTE: If threatened with fire, they will have a ML penalty and will be much more likely to flee.]

LORE

These creatures are known as rotwolves. Sages familiar with the wretched things believe the rotwolf is a sorcerous hybrid. The dominant aspect of the loathsome creatures is probably a wolf, likely a dire wolf. But some characteristics of the rotwolf are far from lupine. Perhaps they might be more akin to coal-black dire foxes mixed with bears and hyenas. Their weird vocalizations could be attributed to a fox or hyena antecedent.

Their extra set of legs is a bit harder to explain. Some sages have suggested that perhaps even some sort of insect or reptile essence might be swirling around the mad biology of a rotwolf. They do, after all, have a venomous bite. And it is wise to avoid that bite at all costs, for it not only causes intense agony but also transmits an eldritch germ which rots flesh (hence their name). And, the damage inflicted by the horrid bite cannot be healed magically. Only time and rest can restore those bitten by a rotwolf. However, those that succumb to the rot are essentially cursed and must seek magical aid to prevent their body from decaying away.

The flesh of a rotwolf heals very quickly, allowing them to recover from even mortal wounds in short order. The only way to truly end them is through fire or acid. The rotwolves are keenly aware of this and will usually think twice when confronted with an organized force wielding fire.

ECOLOGY

Rotwolves are voracious carnivores. Their appetite for flesh far exceeds that of any mundane predators. Presumably this is a consequence of their regenerative ability. They are wholly unnatural creatures with no true life cycle. They live until they are slain, which is a difficult task to say the least. And they are asexual, essentially all clones. They reproduce by literally tearing their own kin to bits and scattering the pieces, forcing the sundered limbs and viscera to grow a new body. A pack of rotwolves can rapidly increase their numbers via this method, afterwards they are even more aggressive than usual. Thankfully they do not reproduce in such large numbers very often.

SEEDS

1.) A mad wizard in the vicinity of the pleasant little village the party is resting in has recently acquired a single rotwolf. About a fortnight ago the fool decided to vivisect his new pet and now he has five rotwolves. The wizard had managed to keep the original rotwolf under control via a combination of spells (primarily sleep and charm monster). But the new generation is more unruly and he suspects might even be somewhat resistant to his magic. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The rotwolves will soon break free and eat the wizard. Afterwards they will attack the nearby village. At your discretion, you might see fit to offer some clues to the PCs about strange goings on. Some examples might be rumors from folk that deliver food to the wizard's tower. Or perhaps the wizard or his apprentice stumble into the village afflicted with the strange rotting malady caused by the bite of a rotwolf. If you're anxious to get things rolling, you might just have them attack peasants in the streets whilst the PCs are carousing in the local tavern.]

2.) The party are wandering in a gloomshrouded, nightmarish forest. The forest is nestled deep in a mountain valley, hence the excessive gloom. At some point they will be stalked and attacked by rotwolves. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Consider why the party is in the forest. I suggest they are searching for a location associated with dark, ancient magic. Perhaps the lost tower of a mad wizard? Perhaps the area was blasted with some form of magical disaster? Maybe there is some cult activity?]

3.) A powerful and vile goblin wizard-king has somehow acquired rotwolves to serve as mounts for an elite corps of wolf-riders. [REFEREE'S NOTE: How did the goblin wizard-king acquire the rotwolves? Did he make them himself? Did he have a more skilled wizard construct them for him? How do the goblins keep the rotwolves under control?]

LOOT

None, as per the statblock. [REFEREE'S NOTE: At your discretion, you might decide they are cunning enough to use a few trinkets as bait.]

SHAMBLER FUNGUS

An infectious alien spore that kills and reanimates mammals. It uses the shambling, reanimated husks of its victims as vehicles to spread its vile contagion. Although the reanimated cadavers resemble zombies, they do not spring from necromantic magic. However, they are still vulnerable to the turn undead ability of clerics. This has led to much speculation about the origins of the alien spore.

AC 9 [10], **HD** 1-1*** [3hp], **Att** 2 x claw (1d3+spores), **THACO** 20[-1], **MV** 30' (10'), **SV** D14 W15 P16 B17 S18 (NH), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 1175, **NA** 1d12 (1d12), **TT** None

- **AMBUSER** If attacking from surprise, first attack is +4 to hit and inflicts x2 damage.
- **HIVE MIND** Has a shared awareness with other shambler fungus hosts in a 3 mile radius; if a single shambler fungus host is encountered there is a 50% chance of 3d4 others arriving within 2d6 rounds.
- **IF KILLED** Explodes releasing a cloud of spores within a 20' radius; each victim within the area must make a **save versus poison** or suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls for 1d4 turns. Victims that fail their saving throw by 4 or more fall unconscious for 2d6 turns. Additionally those in the area of effect may also become infected with shambler fungus spores (see below).
- **SPORES** Each victim must make a **save versus poison**; if failed, the spores penetrate and infest their flesh, causing death in 1d4 hours unless a cure disease spell is applied. Additionally, victims that fail their saving throw by 4 or more fall unconscious for 2d6 turns.
- **UNDEAD** Make no noise, until they attack. Immune to effects that affect living creatures (e.g. poison). Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g. charm, hold, sleep). Any mammal slain by shambler fungus spores or the attacks of a shambler fungus host will return from death as a shambler fungus host in 1d4 turns. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Use your discretion when making shambler fungus hosts out of various creatures. As a rule of thumb I would suggest dividing HD, MV, etc. by 3. They are really only vehicles to spread the taint of the spores so they need not be especially fast or powerful.]



DESCRIPTION

[REFEREE'S NOTE: This assumes the party encounters the threat via a human host. But feel free to use any other mammals. For example a pack of wild dogs or a swarm of rats.] You see a gaunt humanoid figure stumbling towards you. Its flesh is withered and desiccated. Numerous brightly colored fungal growths have riddled its flesh. Its mouth hangs agape as it stumbles forward at a feeble pace. It seems insensate but somehow aware of your location. As it draws near, its arms reach for you and its claw-like hands begin to grab at the air convulsively. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Mind the distance between the party and the creature. If it manages to close within 20 feet and is slain, its cloud of spores may affect the PCs.]

TACTICS

These creatures are merely vehicles for the spores which infest their flesh. However, their shared awareness will draw more of the loathsome things to swarm the party. Or, you might simply have them block exits. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Every shambler fungus host is a potential infection bomb with a 20 foot radius. Try to imagine where they might simply wait for the party. Perhaps a few bracket the PCs from the opposite ends of a tight corridor. Maybe the party is exploring the back of a cellar when a few of these things emerge from beneath the stairs. What if some sadist locked an infected host inside a treasure chest as a form of trap?]

LORE

These silent shambling horrors are often mistaken for zombies, but they are not spawned by necromancy. No, these macabre things are birthed from an alien spore that fell to our plane about a decade hence. As the story goes, a falling star crashed near a mining community in the far north. When the locals went to investigate, they found a hot black rock the size of a cart. They also spotted what appeared to be a vein of gold in its crust. So they let the rock cool, then two stout men took their picks to it. It was hard going at first, but once they had cracked the black shell they did indeed find gold. A layer of the stuff several inches thick all along the interior of the crust.

And so, having found gold, they dug deeper. They discovered the deeper they dug that most of the stone was composed of a stinking, fibrous matter. Some compared it to a dead tree, others to a rotten mushroom. But their greed compelled them to dig deeper still. Soon one of the picks punctured a bladder in the core of the thing and plumes of black spores burst from it. Those in the vicinity took to coughing. Some lost consciousness.

All that were there fell ill. At first the malady only seemed to weaken some, others fell into a deep slumber. All of the infected were dead within hours. The sheriff insisted the bodies be gathered in one building. It was there that he observed the corpses, believing something more malign to be afoot. As he watched, the corpses began to shrivel. Almost immediately strange fungal growths began to run riot in their dead flesh. Puffy purplish bladders, vine-like growths, and long thorns emerged within less than two hours. He was transfixed at the horror of the scene.

Recognizing a contagion, he called for oil and torches and set the building alight. Those that watched the building burn that night, say they saw the dead stumbling around in the blaze. By the morning, nothing but ash and charred bone remained. After the macabre events, they noticed a creeping silence

in the surrounding woods over the next few days. Before the week was out infected woodland creatures began to approach the town.

The folk fled with what they could carry. Few survived. The lord quickly dispatched a taskforce to burn the forests and purge the taint. So far, the effort seems to have been effective. But none who know the story will return to that accursed land. Sages familiar with the event posit certain ill omens in the heavens indicate this was not an isolated incident. They believe more of the rotten black stones will fall and perhaps already have.

ECOLOGY

These shambling cadavers are desiccated husks an alien fungus has colonized and reanimated. Curiously, the spores only affect mammals. They exist solely as vehicles to spread their infectious eldritch spores. Once the spores have infected a host, they quickly kill them and drain the fluid from the soft tissues of the body. The fluids are used to fuel the rapid development of fungal growths throughout the host. The musculature remains but becomes withered and leathery, just barely sufficient to enable movement. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Although these disgusting abominations are not the product of necromancy, they are vulnerable to the turn undead ability of clerics. This has led to considerable speculation regarding the origin of the spores and the fallen stars that bring them.]

SEEDS

1.) A royal feast is nigh and the huntsman has returned with a large boar. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Unfortunately the boar was recently infected with shambler fungus. The beast had not yet begun to show symptoms but will spread the contagion to anyone that eats its flesh. Is there a reason for the party to be at the feast or in the vicinity? Perhaps the huntsman knew of the taint and betrayed the king? Perhaps the huntsman included the party in his plot? Clever adventurers of questionable morals might take advantage of this gruesome happening. Before the sun rises the next day, the whole palace could be infected. The king and his court would be mindlessly shuffling the corridors with all their finery intact and the treasury unguarded. If the PCs happened to relieve the recently restless dead of their jewels, who would know. For as the saying goes, dead men tell no tales. But how might they avoid the contagion themselves?]

2.) Returning from a quest, the party stops in one of their favorite hamlets for some much needed rest and a few pints of ale. However, the settlement seems abandoned and an eerie silence hangs over the place. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The town was infected with shambler fungus a few days ago. All were infected, their husks are now prowling the surrounding woodlands trying to infect wildlife. It is likely the PCs will encounter the infected if they leave now, but perhaps they might have a better chance of escape on horseback. If they stay in town overnight, they will get a decent rest. And they could rob the place with impunity. But when they leave their shelter the next morning they will find the streets full of the infected. There is also a 2-in-6 chance they will encounter active (infectious) spores as they explore the deserted shops and homes.]

LOOT

None. The fungus has no concept of wealth.

SKURGE

Large reptilian monstrosities. Thought to be kin to lizardmen and troglodytes, these loathsome horrors tower above even the largest specimens of those races. They are generally encountered in arid environments where their camouflage allows them to better ambush prey.

AC 3 [16], **HD** 6**** [27hp], **Att** 2 x claw (1d6), 1 x (1d6+poison) or 1 x tail (2d6+see below), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 180' (60'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 1175, **NA** 1 (1d4), **TT** Lx3

- **AMBUSER** If attacking from surprise, first attack is +4 to hit and inflicts x2 damage.
- **IMMUNITY** Unaffected by charm, hold, and sleep spells.
- **KEEN SENSES** May track by scent. Only surprised on a 1.
- **POISON** Debilitating but not deadly, **save vs poison** or fall unconscious for 2d6 turns.
- **ROLLING CHARGE** 2-in-6 chance per round of curling into a spiky, armored ball and rolling over prey at its full speed. Inflicts damage equivalent to the skurge's current HP in a 10' wide line up to 180'. **Save versus breath** to avoid.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-4, due to camouflage and stealth.
- **TAIL** May sweep with its tail attempting to knock targets prone. The area of effect is a half-circle with a 20' radius. Prone targets cannot attack that round. **Save versus breath** to avoid.



DESCRIPTION

A large, reptilian creature about three times the height of a man silently emerges from the rocky terrain. The creature possesses a considerably effective camouflage and noticing it was only a matter of luck. As it slowly creeps forward its movements are perfectly silent.

The scene is uncanny considering the size of the thing. A row of long spiky growths runs from the top of its head down to the middle of its back. The majority of its body is covered by thick, overlapping scales. These scales run the whole length of the creature's body ending at a long, barbed tail. But its limbs are bare of these scales, presumably to facilitate fast and silent movement.

In its totality, the creature is quite reminiscent of a very large, partially bipedal pangolin. But this is no simple beast, the malevolent cunning of its mind is clearly visible in its murderous glare and the sadistic smile of its gaping, fang-filled maw. [REFEREE'S NOTE: If the creature realizes it has been spotted, it will immediately use its rolling charge.]

TACTICS

These creatures are not simple beasts despite their appearance. They are sapient and cunning predators capable of planning as well as tool use. They mainly rely on stealth and ambush to get close to their prey. But once combat is joined they do not shy from melee. Often they will open their attack routine with a rolling charge. Once their prey is softened up and likely scattered a bit, they will sweep with their tail focusing the attack on an area occupied by obvious spellcasters. If faced with significant resistance, they will flee to gather more of their wretched kind and plot a more organized strike which may include crude traps such as falling boulders or spiked pits.

LORE

These gigantic, reptilian creatures are known as skurges. It is not known where or how they acquired their name. Sages familiar with the loathsome breed believe they are kin to the mundane lizardmen and troglodytes that most folk of the realm know and revile. However, the skurge race is somewhat lesser known due to their preference for the arid deserts of the southern continent. In fact, sightings of skurges outside of the southern continent are few and far between. And, they have been attributed to sorcerous meddlings rather than any sort of natural migration.

Skurges are quite intelligent, at least when compared to other such reptilian humanoids. Their language is a dialect of the lizard man tongue (allowing the two races to communicate with relative ease). And they also speak the language of dragons. It is not uncommon to find skurges allied to blue dragons and similar beings that prefer the same dry climates. Skurges, prefer to work alongside other reptilians exclusively as they view other species as food or slaves.

Skurges are not to be trifled with, as noted previously they are indeed quite intelligent despite their bestial mien. And, while they tend to be solitary hunters, they will coordinate with others to overcome formidable prey. They have a variety of adaptations that aid them in their predatory role. First of all, they are extremely stealthy for such large creatures with exceptional camouflage (in their preferred terrain). Secondly their armor provides them considerable defense, but also allows them to curl into

large, spiky balls and roll over their targets. And their long tail provides a reliable means of smashing prey as well as knocking them off their feet. Lastly, they have a debilitating venom that can render victims unconscious for up to two hours.

ECOLOGY

Skurges prefer dry, rocky deserts and plains. It is in these environments they gain the most advantage from their camouflage. Due to their cold-blooded, reptilian physiology they prefer warm temperatures. They are absolutely carnivorous and highly territorial. They tend to make their lairs in caves, but have been known to excavate considerably large warrens beneath the surface. They have a life cycle similar to that of mundane reptiles, they are heterosexual egg-layers. They do not form pair bonds and the young are left to fend for themselves. A female usually lays a clutch of a dozen or so eggs every year. Skurges can live to be up to three centuries but reach their full size by their second decade and grow no further.

SEEDS

1.) The party finds themselves crossing an arid desert plain. The scene is one of blasted, cracked earth from which the occasional animal skeleton or rock formation emerges. [REFEREE'S NOTE: At some point in the journey, one of the PCs, a mount, a wagon, etc. falls into the warren of a skurge through a thin part of the desert floor. I suggest that the skurge not be home at that time, and that when rescuing their friend the party sees a glint of the skurge's treasure. It's quite likely they, being typical players, will stuff their pockets with the skurge's precious gems and flee the scene as soon as possible. But, at some point the skurge will become aware of the theft and begin to stalk them.]

2.) On a trek across a bleak desert, the party happens across a virtual pillar of stone. The stone pillar is about eighty feet in diameter and nearly five hundred feet tall. Despite the height, the surface looks easy enough to climb and there is a cave at the top of the pillar which would provide some shade and shelter. [REFEREE'S NOTE: If your players are reluctant to explore the cave, you might see fit to give them a strong motivation such as being chased by a horde of orcs, goblins and the like. If they are chased up the rock formation by some threat, make sure that the threat does not pursue them up the rock. You might also use a massive storm brewing on the horizon to motivate them.] The cave at the top of the formation has an opening of about ten feet and is a single chamber about the entire diameter of the pillar (eighty feet). With a bit of searching, the party will soon discover this is the lair of some rather large beast. There are several skeletons strewn about, and there is a concealed pit full of valuable gems. [REFEREE'S NOTE: I suggest at some point during or soon after their exploration of its lair, the skurge returns. There is debris for the PCs to hide beneath but the skurge has a keen sense of smell, which will make things interesting. Additionally, if they attempt to flee, they must climb down the rock formation (possibly during inclement weather).]

LOOT

Although skurges recognize the value of coin and other treasures, their hoard will primarily consist of gems. Sages familiar with skurges claim that the great lizards will actually barter with their reptilian kin, trading away gold and silver for the precious gems they covet.

VAHLK

Weird, hulking, chimeric abominations. They are rumored to have been created by a mad wizard in a distant land. Since the death of their master they have increased their numbers and migrated deeper into the continent.

AC 5 [14], HD 5***** [22hp], Att 2 x claw (1d8), 1 x bite (1d8), 1 x tail (1d8), or 1 x gore (2d6), THACO 15 [+4], MV 180' (60'), SV D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), ML 11, AL Chaotic, XP 850, NA 1d4 (2d6), TT T

- **CHARGE** Requires a clear run of at least 20 yards. Gore attack inflicts double damage. Targets are shoved 10' and knocked down, also they cannot attack that round. **Save versus paralysis** to avoid the knockdown.
- **CLIMBING AND LEAPING** Skilled climbers; can jump up to 30'.
- **GRAB AND BITE** +2 bonus to bite attacks, if a claw or tail attack hits.
- **GRAPPLING** Grabs and restrains after a successful claw attack. Human-sized or smaller targets must succeed on a **save versus paralysis** or be grappled and suffer an automatic 1d6 damage per round. Victims are unable to move or cast spells until passing the saving throw. Grappled targets are automatically struck with a torso maw bite on the vahlk's next turn.
- **KEEN SENSES** Only surprised on a 1.
- **MIRROR IMAGE** If a vahlk is successfully attacked, it automatically casts the mirror image spell on itself. It can never have more than four illusory duplicates at any time. If any duplicates survive the combat, there is a 1-in-20 chance they become new, independent vahlk.
- **MUNDANE DAMAGE IMMUNITY** Can only be harmed by silver weapons or magic.
- **RAVENOUS** Attack any moving creature.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-3, due to stealth.
- **TORSO MAW** On an attack roll of 20, or 4 or more than the target number required, the vahlk is able to make an additional bite attack with the gigantic maw in its torso. This bite attack inflicts 2d8 damage.
- **TRUESIGHT** Vision is unimpeded by darkness of any kind. Can detect magic, illusion, invisibility and polymorph on sight.



DESCRIPTION

You see a weird, hulking, chimeric abomination in the middle distance. It looks like an unholy hybrid of wolves and apes with the antlers of a stag. Its decidedly lupine visage is lipless and skull-like. Its eyes are featureless, glistening black orbs. It also possesses numerous vaguely reptilian features such as a long forked tongue and a weird, forked tail. Its head, limbs and tail are adorned with frills or perhaps barbs. And most freakish of all is the gaping, fanged maw that occupies the center of its torso [REFEREE'S NOTE: The creature will make no attempt to communicate and will attack immediately.]

TACTICS

Vahlks are highly aggressive and cunning but have primitive, and somewhat bestial minds. They are little better than wolves or apes in this regard. However, they are stealthy and competent ambush predators. If there are sufficient numbers of their vile kin, they do possess the ability to coordinate their attacks. They may even be capable of using terrain to their advantage in simple ways. For example, they are quite capable of herding their prey into a cave, ravine, etc. from which there is no safe route of egress. They might also have the presence of mind to place some shiny bait in a woodland clearing while they lurk in the trees overhead, eager to pounce. However, even basic traps such as concealed pitfalls are thankfully beyond their ken. Vahlks are extremely mobile for such hulking creatures and will put this to good use. They prefer to run on all fours and will usually enter combat with an attempt at goring a target with their antlers. Usually their charge will stun the prey after which the vahlk will tear at them with tooth and claw. Once combat is joined, they are ferocious combatants.

LORE

These weird creatures are known as vahlks. Sages familiar with the bestial creature believe they were created by a mad wizard in a distant land. However something went horribly awry when the wizard endowed the vahlk with their innate mirror image spell. In granting them this ability he also inadvertently gave them a means of reproduction (see ECOLOGY). Not soon after the beasts became too numerous and quite disobedient. There are rumors that the wizard kept a very detailed record of all aspects of the experiment, including his slow wasting death in his tower as he grew too frightened to leave his magically protected sanctum.

Vahlks are extremely dangerous in melee, they possess numerous natural weapons they can employ. It would be prudent to avoid close quarters fighting with them. In addition to their considerable offensive potential, vahlks extremely athletic. They are as fast as wolves, can leap up to 30 feet with little effort and climb most natural surfaces ease. Their weird eldritch flesh cannot be damaged by mundane means, save for silvered weapons. They also possess preternaturally keen senses that can penetrate any darkness as well as detect magic on sight. Additionally any successful attack on a vahlk triggers a Mirror Image spell, lending it an additional layer of defense. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Due to the vahlks' superb vision, they can automatically detect their kins illusory duplicates.]

Since the death of their creator, they have greatly increased their numbers and spread deeper into the continent. Many kingdoms have dealt with the infestation in various ways. So far the only reliable solution has been massive damage from a magical source, such as the fire ball and lightning bolt spells. In rarer examples the kingdoms have employed various specialists such as teams of mages with wands of fire ball. One tale tells of a king actually managing to gain the assistance of a gold dragon.

Vahlks are sapient, but they are extremely primitive and savage. They are only capable of basic tool usage. They possess their own language primarily consisting of howls, shrieks, growls and gestures.

ECOLOGY

Vahlk are wholly unnatural creatures wrought from the mutagenic energies of raw chaos. They owe their existence to eldritch sorcery and strange alchemy. Nothing about their life cycle remains untainted by the weird magic that spawned them. They seem to be mortal but do not appear to age. They must breathe and rest. They are constantly ravenous. And, they reproduce asexually. This method of reproduction is purely magical and purely random. In any instance where the vahlk's mirror image ability is triggered, there is a 1-in-20 chance that any undamaged duplicate becomes another independent vahlk.

SEEDS

1.) The party is recruited to go questing for the notes of the wizard that created the vahlks. [REFEREE'S NOTE: Will their employer reveal that there are likely dozens of vahlks still prowling the area around the old wizard's tower? If so, how much knowledge will the employer reveal?]

2.) A wizarding school has hired the party to capture and bring them a vahlk. They want to study one of the beasts in captivity. They are especially interested in the vahlk's arcane manner of reproduction. [REFEREE'S NOTE: What knowledge does the school possess? How accurate is it? Can they offer some item(s) that might aid the party? If so, what form might these items take? Perhaps some magic items that might paralyze, polymorph or shrink the vahlk as well as some sort of container to imprison it once it's been disabled?]

LOOT

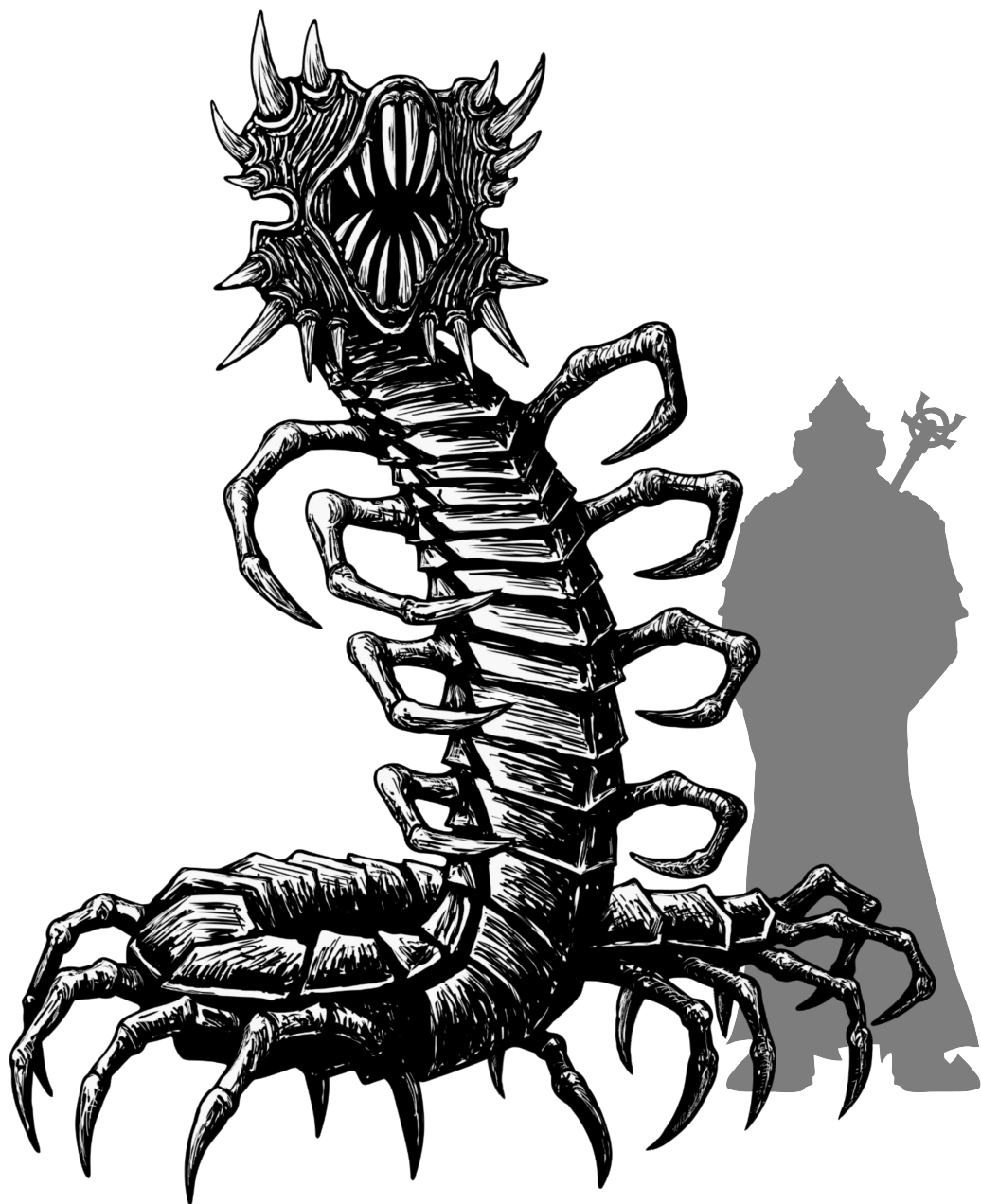
Vahlks have no real interest in collecting any treasure. They are barely even capable of tool use. But their minds are cunning enough to recognize the value of shiny things as bait. I suggest their treasure be represented by an item or two of value equivalent to that indicated in their statblock but rather than a few coins, it might be particularly shiny metal object. Perhaps a well-made and burnished piece of armor, a silver platter, a holy symbol taken from a recent kill, etc.

YASHL

Cunning pack-hunters. They are generally only encountered in the subterranean realms. They possess many features uncommon to mundane beasts. Many sages familiar with the wretched things believe they originate from another plane.

AC 4 [15], **HD** 2+2**** [11hp], **Att** 1 x bite (1d10+poison) or 1 x constriction (2d4) or 1 x oil spray (see below), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 180' (60'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 65, **NA** 1d6 (2d6), **TT** None

- **AMBUSER** If attacking from surprise, first attack is +4 to hit and inflicts x2 damage.
- **BLINDSIGHT** Can "see" in total darkness; immune to blindness.
- **CLING** Can walk on walls and ceilings.
- **CONSTRICTION** Inflicts 2d4 automatic damage immediately and on each subsequent round. MV is halved. 1 penalty to attacks and are unable to cast spells. **Save versus paralysis** to escape.
- **FAST REFLEXES** +2 bonus to initiative. If they have initiative, they can dart away without the opponent being able to counter-attack.
- **IMMUNITY** Unaffected by charm, hold, and sleep spells.
- **OIL SPRAY** There is a 3-in-6 chance the yashl sprays an oily chemical irritant. **Save versus breath** or be blinded for 1d4 rounds. Those that fail their save by 4 or more are blinded for 1 hour and take 1d4 damage. 90' cone.
- **POISON** A wracking, bone-deep agony. **Save versus poison** to resist. Those that fail may move or attack, but not both for 1d6 turns. If the target fails by 4 or more they are paralyzed for this duration instead.
- **STRENGTH IN NUMBERS** Packs of 4 or more yashl have ML 10. If the pack is reduced to less than 50% of its original size, this morale bonus is lost.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-4, due to camouflage and stealth.
- **VENTRILOQUISM AND MIMICRY** Can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful **save versus spells**. The yashl may make their voice appear to come from any location or source (e.g. a statue or animal) within 60'.



DESCRIPTION

You see a long, segmented chitinous form scuttle across the ceiling and disappear into a pool of shadows. The thing was fast, very fast and you only caught a glimpse of it. Your impression was of something akin to a huge centipede or similar insectile creature. The thing was easily 10 to 12 feet long and as broad as a human. If you listen closely you can hear the soft clatter of something in the darkened corner it fled to. [REFEREE'S NOTE: If the party comes within range, the creature will spray them with its irritant. If they hesitate, it will use its ventriloquism and mimicry to distract them. For example, it may project a child's scream from outside the scene. Soon after the creature will attempt to escape. If successful it will return later with some of its kin.]

TACTICS

These creatures are not simple beasts despite their appearance. They are cunning predators that mainly rely on ambush as well as hit and runs. They are quite capable of planning and coordinating their attacks with others of their kind. While not especially craven, they will avoid a combat in which they must face superior numbers. If it is a single yashl, or a group smaller than that of their quarry they will plot and coordinate to separate their targets so they can be more easily picked off. Oftentimes they will use their ventriloquism and mimicry skills to distract or scatter prey. They may also use their blinding irritant spray to disable a group and then drag one of their number away.

LORE

These weird creatures are known as yashl. Sages familiar with the species believe they are an extradimensional invasive predator that gained access to our plane somewhere in the weird, deep vaults of the subterranean realm. They seem supremely adapted to such an environment and thankfully tend to stay below ground. They are quite successful as a species, but it is difficult to estimate their numbers as they are very reclusive.

No record of communication with a yashl exists so many sages question their sapience. However they do display a rather high degree of intelligence in their ability to coordinate with their kin to plot ambushes and raids. Additionally they can use their ventriloquism and mimicry abilities to imitate human speech. Although they appear to merely repeat phrases in a parrot-like fashion.

Yashl are fast and stealthy, able to scabble across walls and ceilings in the blink of an eye. They will always seek out a darkened nook or cranny to hide in. When they attack, they usually begin by spraying a cone of some caustic chemical from the fanged hood ringing their mouth. The irritant causes a temporary blindness due to excessive tearing and mucus production, this usually lasts for a minute or less. But an unlucky few may have a stronger reaction leaving their eyes swollen shut for about an hour. The same irritant they spray is also concentrated in their saliva as a potent venom. The venom causes extreme pain, especially in the joints which can last up to an hour. Like their irritant spray, a few unlucky souls may have a more severe reaction and be paralyzed with agony for the duration.

ECOLOGY

Yashl are horrific alien beings from another plane, they seem sapient but show no indications of a language, culture or society. It must be stated though, yashl are a very reclusive species and therefore

little of certainty can be said on the fiends. They appear to mortal beings but have evolved to develop some rather unusual biological traits. First, they lack anything resembling sensory organs as we know them and yet have no problems navigating their environment. Sages familiar with the yashl believe they may breathe through small holes in their chitin. Many of these sages also posit the yashl communicate via some form of pheromones they excrete in the oil irritant they produce. Vivisections of yashl have revealed that beneath their chitin is a dense honeycomb of rubbery cartilaginous proteins forming a sort of endoskeleton (highly unusual for invertebrates). They appear to lack anything resembling a proper brain and instead have large clumps of neural tissue distributed throughout the entire length of their bodies. Presumably this distributed network of dense nerve clusters is what grants them immunity to certain types of mind-affecting magic such as charm, hold and sleep spells. This same unusual nervous system may also explain the speed and reflexes of the beasts. They appear to be entirely carnivorous. A single study suggests they are hermaphroditic egg layers. The eggs are laid in small clutches of three or four and often hidden in narrow caves, crevasses, etc.

SEEDS

1.) The party finds themselves in a deep underground delve. Once they strike camp and kindle a fire, a moaning, staggering figure approaches the light of their fire. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The reaction of the party is key here. They may end up killing the stranger out of misplaced caution. The stranger is a fellow adventurer and the lone survivor of his own party. His face is red and swollen. Thick ropes of snot flow from his nose. And his eyes are nought by tear-choked slits. The fellow is in agony the movement of any of his limbs causes him to choke back sobs. Over the course of an hour the swelling will subside and the man tells of how his party was ambushed by large centipedes. Unfortunately for them, the scuttling things turned out to yashls. Perhaps he can share some useful information with the party.]

2.) As the party is enjoying a drink in their favorite tavern of the capital city, they overhear some disturbing rumors. A rash of kidnappings has been occurring in seedier wards of the city of late. The disappearances tend to be from areas adventurers usually frequent. Many of the bar patrons have a tale or two of their own companions being taken. Others recount some sort of drug being slipped into their food or drink, luckily they had friends nearby to watch over them. [REFEREE'S NOTE: A powerful wizard has been employing some less than savory agents to abduct people. People from out of town who will not be missed. The wizard has constructed a maze in the bowels of his tower and the kidnapped are fed into it a few at a time. By means of his arcane craft the wizard has created a dimensional rift that allows all manner of weird beings to cross over into our realm. The wizard monitors the maze by magical means, studying the strange creatures that stalk the folk in his maze. He is very excited to see how the yashls that recently scuttled into his maze behave.]

LOOT

Although yashl have no concept of wealth, it seems they have recognized its potential use as bait to lure in prey. In such cases, the yashl are likely to leave something obvious and shiny in a difficult to reach location. A place that would inconvenient human prey, such as in the limbs of a tree or on a ledge 20 feet up. The idea is that the prey attempts to climb to reach the bait allowing the yashl to scabble out from hiding and gain take advantage of their predicament.

ZAGOG

Weird predators from some alien realm. They lack any sort of solid skeleton and have no teeth. To consume their prey they squirt it with a powerful acid and then suck up the slurry that remains. They are adept flyers and swimmers. Sages have suggested their ability to fly is due to a native psionic ability to levitate.

AC 6 [13], **HD** 2+2**** [11hp], **Att** 1 x grapple (1d4), 1 x acid squirt (1d4+see below), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 180' (60') swimming / 180' (60') flying, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 65, **NA** 1d6 (2d6), **TT** None

- **ACID SQUIRT** Squirt acid at a target up to 30' away. Inflicts 1d4 damage per round until washed off or the victim dies. **Save versus breath** for half damage.
- **AMPHIBIOUS** Can breathe air and water.
- **BLINDSIGHT** Can "see" in total darkness; immune to blindness.
- **HIVE MIND** has a shared awareness with other zagog in a 3 mile radius; if one is encountered, there is a 75% chance of 1d6 more arriving in 1d6 rounds.
- **RUBBER-BONED** Blunt weapons do no damage to the zagog (magical bonuses do count towards damage).
- **GRAPPLING** Grabs and restrains after a successful attack. Human-sized or smaller targets must succeed on a **save versus paralysis** or be grappled and suffer an automatic 1d4 damage per round. Victims are unable to move or cast spells until passing the saving throw. Grappled targets are automatically struck with an acid squirt on the zagog's next turn.
- **PSIONIC STUN** 2-in-6 chance per round of loosing a cone of psionic energy: end 10' wide, 50' long. **Save versus paralysis**. The effect lasts for 1d6+3 rounds.
- **SURPRISE** On a 1-4, due to stealth.



DESCRIPTION

You see a strange airborne thing moving over the surface of a river. It is roughly the size of a human but extremely thin and reedy. As you watch the thing a bizarre mixture of fascination and revulsion washes over you. It is difficult for your mind to grasp what your eyes are seeing. It seems like some mad hybrid of an octopus and a bat, or perhaps a manta ray. The whole of the thing is very snake-like, with a long tail ending in some sort of webbed, membranous fin stretched across a series of tentacles. The center mass or torso of the thing has large, bilateral wings of similar construction to the tail fin. A long neck emerges from the torso and ends in three tentacles placed in a radial symmetry around what must be its mouth. From its head to the base of its tail runs a series of triangular fleshy growths.

It pauses from time to time and simply hovers, oddly reminiscent of a fish in water. When it begins moving again it spins its weird tail in a vaguely corkscrew motion to provide it a slow, lazy propulsion. From time to time it will flap its weird tentacle wings to put on a considerable burst of speed. As you watch the spectacle of the odd creature, it abruptly gains elevation and then hovers motionless. In the next moment it dives into the water, quick as an arrow and re-emerges with a large fish gripped tightly in the coils of its long tail. Slowly the creature rolls onto its back and brings the fish closer to its belly. At the same time its weird tentacled head moves closer as well. Moments later the creature coughs out a green mist onto the fish. The fish then spasms as its flesh and bones dissolve into a pink slurry on the creature's belly. Then the creature begins to suck up the liquefied fish.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: This particular creature will not trouble the PCs at the moment. It is busy pulling fish from the river. However, there are likely others of its weird kin lurking in the woodlands along the riverbank.]

TACTICS

These creatures are animals but they are predators, so they do possess a certain cunning. They prefer to use psionic stun attack from hiding and then emerge to vomit acid on their paralyzed prey. They are reluctant to go after any human-sized or larger prey they have not stunned, unless they have superior numbers. If they outnumber larger prey they will attack and grapple their prey (preferably wrapping their wings around its head to silence any cry for help). Human-sized prey would usually require two of the creatures per target. Larger than human-sized would require more, use discretion as they are somewhat cowardly animals. If they encounter particularly stiff resistance from an air-breathing animal and they are near a body of water, they may attempt to drag the prey under the waves and drown it.

LORE

These weird creatures are known as zagog. They are predatory animals from another plane that somehow entered our realm. Sages first learned of the beasts from planar travelers that have encountered the zagog several times. Apparently zagog are a growing threat across many planes as of late. What it is that makes the zagog so successful as an invasive species is a bit of a mystery.

Sages and explorers familiar with the wretched things attribute the success of the zagog to a variety of traits. While they are not particularly fierce or intelligent, they are quite adaptable and work in concert. Their acid attack is also quite potent. And, their weird rubbery bodies seem immune to blunt trauma.

They possess some innate psionic abilities, albeit rather crude ones. They can stun minds with a short-ranged cone of telepathic force. And they have enough telekinetic ability to levitate themselves.

ECOLOGY

Zagog are freakish alien animals from another plane. They are mortal beings but have evolved to develop some rather unusual biological traits. First, they are completely amphibious, able to survive comfortably on land or underwater. In addition to being excellent swimmers they can also fly. They lack any bones or teeth, instead their skeleton is composed of a dense honeycomb of rubbery cartilaginous proteins. They are innately psionic to a small degree but seem to lack anything resembling a proper brain. Presumably their cognitive functions are spread throughout the nerves running through their entire pseudo-skeletal system. Studies have revealed they are hermaphroditic egg layers. The eggs are laid by the dozen in dense clutches on land and in the water. Once they hatch, the young zagog are independent; they can instinctively hunt and will coordinate with their peers to bring down larger prey.

SEEDS

1.) An eccentric nobleman has contracted the party to procure him several zagog eggs. He plans to raise them in his menagerie. He can offer a map to find the beasts. The bounty is 50gp per egg returned.

[REFEREE'S NOTE: The eggs are said to be quite tiny. An adult could easily hold three in one hand.]

2.) A massive infestation of zagog is plaguing a nearby, coastal fishing village. At first the creatures were few in number and only reduced the fish stock. Now that they have spawned, their numbers are so great that the folk are loath to leave their homes for fear of being carried away. Rumors are the disaster was precipitated by the mad sorcerer that lives in a cave up the coast a bit.

3.) A thieves' guild has organized an expedition to retrieve some of the rare ivory found in zagog nests (see LOOT for further details). The PCs have been hired on as muscle to protect the thieves as they collect the ivory. The party will be entitled to a 30% cut with a minimum payment of 150gp each.

4.) A hireling recently acquired a zagog hatchling as a pet. Presently the baby zagog is smaller than a mouse. The hireling has not told anyone about the new pet. The baby zagog has some loyalty to the hireling but it is hungry. When the hireling sleeps, the zagog hatchling slips out of its pouch and hunts. There is a 1-in-6 chance every night that it attacks a sleeping partymember (it coughs acid on them while they sleep). The acid does one point of damage. But it will continue to damage until washed away with a full skin of water. [REFEREE'S NOTE: The hatchling will flee before they awake fully.] There is a chance the baby zagog will attract others of its weird kin (see its HIVE MIND feature for more details).

LOOT

Although zagog have no concept of wealth, it's been said that if one can discover their nest it may be filled with spheres of a creamy striped and speckled ivory. These stones are exquisite and of rare beauty. [REFEREE'S NOTE: I suggest 2d6 spheres per nest. Each worth 1d4x50gp.] Sages familiar with the zagog believe this rare ivory is in fact a form of excrement produced by the digestive process of the zagog. It is something akin to a pearl but also an owl pellet. Apparently a zagog will occasionally disgorge this concretion of calcium and various other elements.

APPENDIX:

MONSTERS BY

HIT DICE

HD1 SHAMBLER FUNGUS

HD2 YASHL

ZAGOG

HD3 BLOOD WITCH

MUCKWRETCH

HD4 KEDILWYN

MAGMACRAWLER

ROTWOLF

HD5 AKLOTAUR

LYQOAH

VAHLK

HD6 SKURGE

HD8 DREADSTRIDER

KETHWANI

RENDSCRAG

HD20 AATHUKKU

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