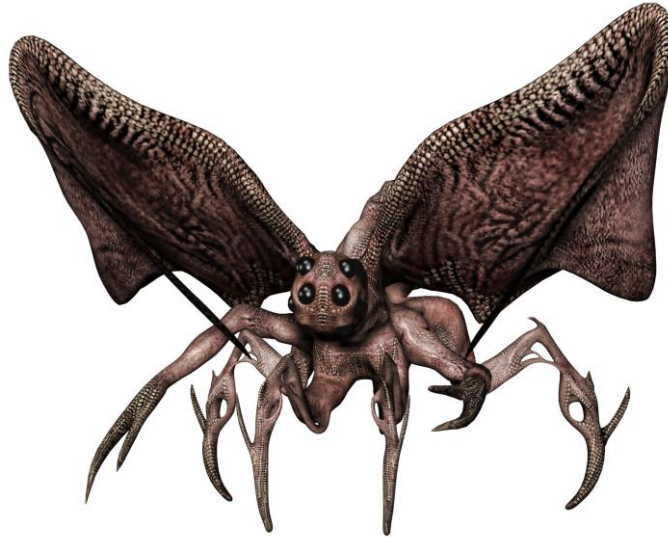


THE NAZHGHAD

MAJOR PATRON

By Paul Wolfe



The Nazhghad?

On the banks of the eastern branch of the River Rgene, the mounds of the jeh, insect-men of alien intelligence and ingenuity, reach hundreds of feet into the sky. These mud and paper cities rival those of the greatest human kings and thousands of jeh build them ever higher.

The murmurings of the Nazhghad drive the jeh priest-kings to build and harvest and conquer, but the entity itself is an enigma. Said to lurk beneath the Thousand Foot Spire, a jeh mound that scrapes the tropical sky, escaped slaves speak of the power of the entity -- that its low buzzing "voice" pervades jeh colonies. Some murmur that other slaves, those specially chosen by the priest-kings, have entered into the entity's service and left the colonies, presumably as agents in other regions of the Piretis that the jeh and their god covet.

Though only rumored, the ritual required to bond to the Nazhghad is closely-guarded and is said to only be performed by the priest-kings deep below the Thousand Foot Spire. Other methods, arcane and dangerous, may also exist.

What is not known is that the Nazhghad is several generations removed from a biological weapon brought to the Piretis Jungles from across the stars and imprisoned by an entity called AKAS. The Nazhghad knows that its nemesis seeks to either capture and imprison, or destroy it, but has as yet not gained enough power to take on AKAS directly. Beneath the Thousand Foot Spire, however, the Nazhghad builds its power to the eventual goal of returning to its ancestors' homeworld and complete the cycle for which it was created.

INVOKE PATRON CHECK RESULTS:

NOTE: Any time the Nazhghad is invoked, the caster must make a Will Save (DC 5+invoke level) or suffer a patron taint. For instance, if the caster makes a Spell Check in the 12-13 range, the save DC is 6, in the 14-15 range, the DC is 7, etc.

12-13	The Nazhghad sends thousands of biting flies to infest a caster's enemy for 1d3+CL rounds. The swarm affects one living creature and is unaffected by all armor, but is repelled by magical protection. The victim must make a Fortitude save or be so distracted by the swarm that he or she can only move at up to double speed. The victim likewise takes a -1d to all Reflex saves during this time.
14-15	The caster's skin hardens with a flexible chitin similar to a roach providing protection equal to leather armor. The effect lasts for 1d3+CL rounds. Note that normal armor-related penalties and conditions apply.
16-19	As 12-13, but the swarm affects a 10' radius. Note that the shape of the swarm may be controlled by the caster.
20-23	As 14-17, however, the caster's skin hardens with a flexible chitin similar to a tiger-striped beetle providing protection equal to scale mail armor. The effect lasts for 1d7+CL rounds. The flexibility of the chitin inflicts the armor penalties and conditions of studded leather armor.
24-27	The Nazhghad sends 1d3+CL giant beetles to serve the caster. These creatures respond to the caster's commands and remain in the caster's service for 1d4+CL rounds. Note: Have the caster roll 1d3 on the "beetle table" in the core rulebook to determine the type of beetle summoned.
28-29	The caster's skin hardens providing protection equal to half-plate armor. The effect lasts for 2d3+CL rounds. The armor penalties and conditions of scale mail apply.
30-31	The caster is immediately transformed into a humanoid beetle of vicious appearance. Simply viewing the caster prompts a Will Save (DC 15+CL). Those that fail flee from the scene as fast as possible for 1d8+CL rounds. The caster in beetle form has AC 20 and may attack with two clawed and spiked hands (+CL attack, 1d6+CL damage). In addition, once per round (as a separate 1d16 Action Dice) the caster may choose to spit a sticky acidic glob. This attack causes 1d3 damage per round for 3 rounds unless scraped off (requiring a full round by the victim). The caster may cast spells, manipulate items and otherwise perform any other actions he or she could normally perform. The effect lasts for 1d6+CL turns, though the caster may transform into his or her normal form at any time.
32+	As above, but the effect lasts for 1d3+CL days. During this time, the caster may transform between his or her normal form and beetle form at will, with a successful Will save (DC 15). On each failed Will save, the caster is inflicted with a patron taint.

PATRON TAINT: THE NAZHGHAD

The insidious Nazhghad warps all it touches.

NOTE: When patron taint is gained, the caster begins to hear the low-level hum and click of the Nazhghad as it speaks to the caster. Other than a slightly distracted look on the caster's face in moments of rest, this has no other effect.

Roll	Result
1	The continual strain of transformation by the Nazhghad causes the caster to slowly transform into an insect. The first time this result is rolled, each time the caster invokes the Nazhghad, some comparatively minor physical property of an insect remains. For instance, the caster may be left with antennae, multi-faceted eyes, or the like. The effects of this are left to the Judge, but the transformation should be fairly easily concealed, and when revealed, should certainly cause unease in those dealing with the caster. The second time this result is rolled, any time the caster casts a spell, the caster's skin darkens to a rich woody brown and becomes tough and more rigid for the duration of the spell. The caster is protected, as if by leather armor, and suffers all the Armor Check penalties and takes a Fumble Die of d8. The third time this result is rolled, the caster's head transforms into that of a giant cockroach. The caster is still able to function as before, but likely becomes outcast from polite society. The fourth time this result is rolled, the caster completes the transformation into a giant cockroach. The caster maintains his or her intelligence, ability to speak, and can even cast spells, but is otherwise a bug the size of the caster.
2	Vermin of all types are attracted to the caster. The first time this result is rolled, each time the caster casts a spell, he or she is surrounded by a cloud of biting flies for 1d3 hours. Though the caster is unaffected, those within 10' suffer continually. The second time this result is rolled, insects, bugs, worms, and other disgusting vermin seem to continually follow the caster, falling from his or her clothing, jumping from the hair, and squirming out of the ground wherever he or she stops for more than a few minutes. The third and subsequent times this result is rolled, the caster attracts a giant vermin of some kind. The creature follows the caster wherever he or she goes, though it does little else. It will fight to defend itself, but will not serve the caster in any useful capacity. The effects of subsequent rolls are cumulative, as additional "servants" join the caster. If the insect follower is killed, another appears to replace it after 1d6+CL days.
3	The caster is infested with parasites. The first time this result is rolled, the caster is mildly infested with some parasite that lasts for 1d3 weeks. This may be skin mites that cause irritation and slight sickness, lice, intestinal worms, or the like. The infestation does not cause any other effects, but is contagious and resists magical and mundane healing. The second time this result is rolled, the caster is riddled with parasites that squirm out of sores on the body, fall from the mouth while speaking and leaping from the caster's hair to infest those nearby. Little can be done to conceal the fact that the caster is infested and the Judge can decide how this affects the caster's interactions with regular folk. The third time this result is rolled, the caster receives a more serious infestation in his or her guts. Aside from the physical effects typical of such an infection, the caster experience intense pain anytime a spell is cast, causing the caster a -1d to Spell Checks that can only be mitigated by spellburn. Any attempt to heal the infestation causes intense pain for 1d4 hours and a -1d to all Action Dice.

4	The Nazhghad demands sacrifice. The first time this result is rolled, the caster is compelled by the low frequency humming and clicking of the patron to provide a living sacrifice. This sacrifice must be conducted in an area where vermin may feast on the disabled, but still living body – the creatures are drawn to the sacrifice by means of the caster’s ritual. The caster cannot cast spells until the sacrifice is completed. The second time this result is rolled, the caster must offer the sacrifice daily to regain access to spells. The third time this result is rolled, at least once a month, the caster must sacrifice an intelligent/humanoid creature, in addition to other daily sacrifices.
5	The call of the master draws the caster to pilgrimage. The first time this result is rolled, the caster must make a pilgrimage to the nearest shrine to the Nazhghad. The details of the shrine are left up to the Judge, but should comprise a week’s worth of travel. Once there, the caster must remain in meditative reverie with the patron for 24 hours. The second time this result is rolled, the caster must make a pilgrimage to the secret temple of the Nazhghad under the city of Ugama. As before, the details are left up to the Judge, but the travel should comprise a month’s worth of time. Once within the temple, the caster must spend a full week in meditative reverie with the patron. The third time this result is rolled, the caster must make a pilgrimage to the very heart of the Thousand Foot Spire in the Piretis Jungles. Here, the caster must bring at least three living, intelligent beings to be sacrificed and remain in a meditative reverie with the Nazhghad for 40 days and 40 nights. When this pilgrimage is completed, the caster may learn the rumored “third spell.” Until any of these pilgrimages are completed, the caster suffers a -1d to all Spell Checks that can only be mitigated with spellburn.
6	The Nazhghad compels its servants to conquer in its name. Each time this result is rolled, the caster is compelled to carry out a mission critical to the success of the Nazhghad. This is left up to the Judge, but may include assassination of an important person, smuggling jeh or their agents into an enemy area, stealing critical information or artifacts or the like. The first mission should comprise no more than a week’s worth of effort, while subsequent missions require progressively more time and complexity. Each mission should likewise reveal the caster as an agent of a foreign power to ever more powerful persons in the area, drawing investigations, counter agents, revenge, and the like.

PATRON SPELLS: THE NAZHGHAD

The Nazhghad grants two unique spells, both of 3rd level. The third spell, alternately called the *Ritual of Ignition* or the *Burn of the Stars*, is rumored to be a powerful ritual that may only be cast by a horde of servants to the Nazhghad along with a multitude of intelligent humanoid sacrifices. The results of the ritual are unknown, but it is believed to allow the Nazhghad to return to the world of its ancestors.

Level 3: Controlling Infestation, Summon Nazhillions

Level ?: Ritual of Ignition/Burn of the Stars (rumored)

SPELLBURN: THE NAZHGHAD

The Nazhghad demands sacrifice from its servants. The more sacrificed, the more “blessings” the Nazhghad bestows.

Roll	Spellburn Result
1	The caster enters a nightmare-like reverie with the Nazhghad. During this fit, the caster acts normally, though part of his or her mind is engaged with terrible visions of a world ruled by the vilest vermin imaginable; masters of all other life. The visions manifest as lost Strength, Stamina and Agility, as the caster cannot seem to concentrate on physical feats. While the lost physical attributes heal, the visions continue any time the caster is generally at rest.
2	The caster enters into a bargain with the Nazhghad. The caster may take up to 6 points of spellburn, which do not immediately impede his or her physical abilities. If the caster performs a <i>patron bond</i> ritual on another intelligent living creature within a week, the physical ability points are not lost. However, if the ritual is not performed, the caster permanently loses half of the points taken and temporarily loses double the remaining points (assigned by the Judge).
3	Strangely shaped eel-like worms (similar to the Phasilio, but finger-length) squish out of the ground at the caster’s feet and slide up his or her legs attaching like deathly-white leeches. This action drains the caster of the chosen amount of ability damage. As the points heal, the creatures drop off one-by-one.
4	The murmurings of the Nazhghad become too much. The caster takes Personality damage equal to double the spellburn points desired. All of these points are available to cast the next spell, but the caster becomes incapacitated with a variety of manias until the Personality points are healed. At the end of this time, the caster must make a Will save (DC 5+points burned) or be tainted by the Nazhghad.

CONTROLLING INFESTATION

Level: 3	Range: Touch	Duration: 1d4+CL days	Casting time: 1 turn	Save: Fortitude
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The caster performs a short ritual that infests an area with tiny, self-aware insects. These creatures infect living things, causing the infected to carry out specific tasks before being consumed.

NOTE: The caster can choose any spell result less than the result rolled.

Manifestation: Other than the trappings of the ritual, there are no outward signs related to this spell.

1	Lost, failure, and patron taint.
2-11	Lost, failure.
12-15	Failure, but the spell is not lost.
16-17	The caster calls into being a swarm of insects visible only as a vague mist. These creatures collectively infect one medium-sized living creature (or smaller). The creature receives a Fortitude save, and if the check succeeds, the creature feels nauseous for the next 24 hours (-1d to all Action Dice). If the check fails, the creature becomes deathly ill for 4 hours (incapable of any actions) and then emerges from the fit under the complete control of the caster for the duration. During this time, the creature follows the caster's instructions to the letter, though it takes a cumulative -1d penalty to all Action Rolls per day after the first, as it is consumed from the inside by the mites. At the end of the duration, the creature makes a second Fortitude check (DC=Spell Check+Days Infected). On a failure, the creature dies and is quickly consumed by the insects, which then disperse. On a success, the creature survives, but suffers a Patron Taint and is considered bound to the Nazhghad forever. The affected creature is considered "neutral" to any attempts by the caster to deal with it.
18-21	As above, but the swarm affects all medium or smaller creatures in a 10' radius.
22-23	As 16-17, but the swarm affects one large creature or smaller.
24-26	As above, but the swarm affects all large creatures (or smaller) within a 30' radius.
27-31	As 22-23, but the swarm affects one huge creature or smaller.
32-33	As above, but the swarm affects all huge (or smaller) creatures within a 60' radius.
34-35	As 27-31, except that at the end of the duration, if the creature survives, it continues to serve the caster until death.
36+	As 32-33, except that at the end of the duration, any creatures that survive, continue to serve the caster until death.

SUMMON NAZHILIONS

Level: 3	Range: Touch	Duration: Varies	Casting time: 1 round	Save: None
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Tapping into the omnipresent “voice” of the patron, the caster calls forth the “children” of the Nazhghad – insectoid horrors spawned in the bowels of the Thousand Foot Spire.

Note: It is believed that there are other spawn of Nazhghad. It is likewise rumoured that the jeh are in some way descendant from either the Nazhghad or the patron’s ancestors.

Manifestation: Other than the trappings of the ritual, there are no outward signs related to this spell.

1	Lost, failure, and patron taint.
2-11	Lost, failure.
12-15	Failure, but the spell is not lost.
16-17	The caster summons 1d6+CL Aptera. These creatures appear out of a cloud of vile smoke and attack the caster’s enemies at the caster’s direction for 1d3+CL rounds. At the end of the duration, the creatures become free-willed, though may be treated with at the discretion of the Judge.
18-21	As above, but the Aptera remain for 1d7+CL rounds. At the end of the duration, the creatures are 50% likely to attack any random creature, including the caster, in the area and just as likely to wander off.
22-23	The caster summons 1d3+CL Phasilio. These creatures appear at random in a 60’ radius from the caster and are under the control of the caster for 1d7+CL rounds. At the end of the duration, the creatures become free-willed, though they may be treated with at the discretion of the Judge.
24-26	As above, but the Phasilio remain for 1d10+CL rounds. At the end of the duration, they are 50% likely to attack the caster and 50% likely to wander off.
27-31	The caster summons 1d4+CL Aptera and 1d3 Phasilio, which remain for 1d6+CL rounds. In all other respects, they mimic the results of 16-17.
32-33	As above, but the creatures remain for 1d10+CL rounds. At the end of the duration, they are 50% likely to attack the caster and 50% likely to wander off.
34-35	As above, but the caster summons 1d8+CL Aptera and 1d6+CL Phasilio.
36+	Either an Aptera (60%) or a Phasilio (40%) is summoned and serves the caster for 100 days. If the creature is slain, another (roll the percentages again) appears in 1d30 days. At the end of the 100 days, the creature is free-willed and may be treated with at the discretion of the Judge.

Aptera (Nazhilion): Init: +4; AC 16; MV 30’, Jump 100’; HD 4d8; Atk Grab +6 melee (none); Bite (1d6, infestation); Act 1d20; SP: Infestation; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +2; AL C.

Aptera appear to be demonic flea-like creatures about the size of a halfling. They are semi-intelligent and understand, but do not speak, most languages. In combat, the creatures leap great distances, grabbing and adhering to their prey before delivering a painful bite. If the aptera hits with its grab, the victim is considered grappled and can attempt an opposed STR check against a 1d20+4 to escape. If the aptera is still adhered to the victim on the next and subsequent rounds, it delivers its bite and may cause an infestation in the victim.

Infestation: The aptera injects thousands of tiny mites into its victim with every bite. The victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or suffer from an infestation which manifests 1d3 days later. On a successful save, the affected creature feels nauseous for 1d4 days (-1d to all Action Dice). On a failure, the victim slips into a coma for 1d4 days. Upon awaking, he or she receives a second Fortitude save (DC 14). On a failure, the victim receives patron taint and is permanently bonded to the Nazhghad. Until the final save, the condition can be cured as a disease, but requires 4 “dice” on the cleric’s Spell Check.

Phasilio (Nazhilion): Init: +4; AC 16; MV 50’, Swim 60’; HD 8d8; Atk Bite +9 (1d8+3, constriction); Act 2d20; SP: Constriction; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +4; AL C.

Phasilio are 6’ long and very fast eel-like creatures, armored with thick white chitin plates. Their heads are cobra-like, though they lack visible eyes and have large mouths crowded with small but sharp teeth. In combat, the creatures bite their prey and then constrict their slimy bodies around their victims. Those successfully struck by a bite are considered entangled by the creature, and can attempt to escape with a successful STR check against a 1d20+8. If the victim fails the check, the creature can either inflict a free bite or constrict the victim for 1d6 damage. Phasilio are semi-intelligent and can understand, but not speak, most languages.

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