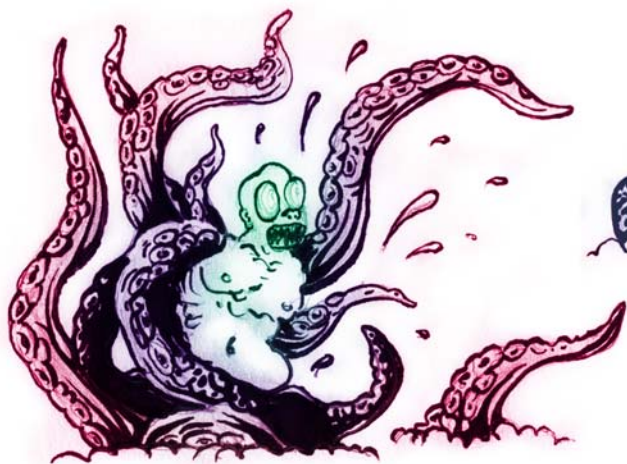


MM 3 a Dungeon World monster manual

# A Market in the Woods

Johnstone Metzger & Nathan Jones





Module MM3

# A Market in the Woods

a monster manual  
for the Dungeon World fantasy role-playing game

by  
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&  
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## Market in the Woods

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# The Death Wolf

Amongst the rare few merchants who traffic in slain and captured gods, there is one customer whose reputation stands above, who is spoken of more highly than all others... the Death Wolf.

The last, lone survivor of a long line of sorcerers, the death wolf is nowhere near as powerful as those who taught its teachers, in ancient days of yore. But they are all dead now, and only the death wolf remains, so who can tell? Few would scoff at its power in this degenerate era beholden to scoundrels and rogues.

# Black, Black Market

When someone deals in goods and services that defy the norms of civilized society—of civilized *human* society, that is—they must frequent markets on the fringes, out in the wilderness beyond the reach of kings and emperors, where one might rub shoulders with thieves and monsters and worse things. Some would worry about this, but not the death wolf. It is one of those “worse things.”

## The Hunger

The death wolf eats petty gods, extraplanar beings, spirits, and other forms of deities. **When it devours a being**, it gains some of that being’s power for a while. Because this is only temporary, the death wolf is always hungry for more. It buys deities offered for sale at the market in the woods (or elsewhere), and it hires adventurers to capture specific deities if they have any interest (and show themselves to be capable).

Targets the Death Wolf is interested in (roll *1d10*):

- 1 **Akladis**, androgynous Drastapurian deity of mold that grows inside books.
- 2 **Cleäksina**, Vetruscan goddess of matricide.
- 3 **Forsan**, patron saint of sylvan poetry in the Southern tradition.
- 4 **Gozmo Zalandros**, wizard-god of decapitation.
- 5 **Khadhrikkam**, Akkarthi goddess of bodily hygiene and public baths.
- 6 **Lepravosia**, Devourer of Thieves.
- 7 **Malgrith**, patron goddess of kidnappers who target children.
- 8 **Solida**, Hyrnacean goddess of metropolitan poetry.
- 9 **Temniphos of the Unblinking Eye**, the one who dwells in depths of cyan.
- 10 **Vodos**, Arkasian god of gaseous emissions.

Some of these targets are much more difficult to take down than others. The death wolf is not interested in advance payments or excuses. It can dispense information about the gods it wants to eat, but nothing more until results happen.



**THE DEATH WOLF**

20 HP 4 Armour

*Hoarder, Intelligent, Large, Magical, Solitary, Stealthy, Terrifying.***Special Qualities:** Immortal, Wizard.

The death wolf is always in possession of stolen powers and abilities. It has multiple faces, in addition to the wolf-like head atop its shoulders. Each of these might possess some odd ability.

**Instinct:** To devour gods.**Attacks:**

- Bite (1d12+5 damage, forceful; close, reach).

**Moves:**

- Cast a devastating spell.
- Cast a scrying spell.
- Cast a spell that transmutes matter.
- Devour a god or spirit.
- Exude fear.
- Travel between worlds.

**Tactics:***If they are annoying and inconsequential:* Slay them.*If they come seeking a favour:* Give them a god to target.*If they have a god or spirit for sale:* Deal with them in a civil manner.*If they must be taught a lesson:* Capture them and leave them on some other plane of existence.**Weaknesses:**

The death wolf is not invincible—though it can resist most forms of harm, there are ways to get through its mystical protections. It is particularly vulnerable to crystal magic, especially when it resonates on the same frequencies as the death wolf's bones.

Roll a d20 one or more times to find the death wolf's powers:

<b>1</b> Animal control.	<b>11</b> Lightning control.
<b>2</b> Cause plague.	<b>12</b> Manipulate darkness.
<b>3</b> Clairsentience.	<b>13</b> Mental blast.
<b>4</b> Create illusions.	<b>14</b> Mind reading.
<b>5</b> Create storms.	<b>15</b> Planar gates.
<b>6</b> Destroy metal and stone.	<b>16</b> Shake the earth.
<b>7</b> Flight.	<b>17</b> Shapechange.
<b>8</b> Ghost summoning.	<b>18</b> Shed skin.
<b>9</b> Hypnotic gaze.	<b>19</b> Telekinesis.
<b>10</b> Invisibility.	<b>20</b> Water control.

## Dirty Deeds

The death wolf can provide payment for gods and spirits delivered, or it can provide favours in lieu of cash.

### Assassination

The death wolf can murder an NPC as payment. It knows who it can best and who it cannot, and may require additional gods to devour in order to achieve the level of power necessary to take out someone particularly powerful.

### Introductions

If someone selling deities to the death wolf needs an introduction to someone who is hard to get to—a secret criminal organization, a deity, or a particular wizard—the death wolf can set up a meet. This meeting can be to work out a truce, negotiate a deal, or for the seller to petition the other party. The death wolf does not set up ambushes for others, however.

### Spells

The death wolf can brew powders and potions, or write scrolls, in exchange for the souls it consumes. The more powerful the god or spirit being offered to it, the more powerful the magic it agrees to give out in exchange. These spells can be in whatever form the purchaser desires—scrolls, potions, etc. The death wolf does not take on apprentices or write spells in another wizard's spellbook, however.

### Travel

While the death wolf does not set up ambushes on request, it can send people to other lands, worlds, and planes of existence. If a seller needs to get somewhere in a hurry, the death wolf can take them there or provide them with a gate.



## The Lair of the Wolf

The death wolf does not spend all its time wandering the planes, attacking and devouring gods. That would be far too dangerous! It maintains a lair in the side of Skull Mountain, living a life of seclusion and study—plotting the downfall of its chosen enemies.

### The Foyer

The **first cavern** inside the death wolf's mountain lair is hidden from view by thick vines and meagre shrubbery. It is full of tiny bonsai trees and abstract stone carvings. Braziers are set in alcoves 20 feet above the ground, but are only lit when the death wolf is expecting company in the form of a customer. There are no chairs or comfortable furniture for such guests to use. The tunnel that leads to the next cavern is rough and uneven, with many small pits where an intruder might break an ankle or two.

### The Laboratory

The **second cavern** has an opening in its roof, and a **giant telescope** has been set up to take advantage of this natural feature. It can see into other worlds, far beyond the stars. You may not like what you see through its lenses, however, so be careful where you look.

This cavern is also very obviously a **magical laboratory**. It is full of strange substances and dangerous chemicals, some of which are strewn about carelessly. Numerous books in languages that do not even exist anymore are stacked against the cavern walls. Not all of them are still legible.

There are also several **humanoid mannequins** here, each dressed in an elaborate, fancy dress. These are commissions the death wolf is working on, but the mannequins still come to life and attack intruders. The dresses each have different magical properties but are as yet unfinished.

### The Putrid Den

The death wolf sleeps in a **charnel pit** of corpse-parts, lounging about in an absolute mess of carrion. Bones snap underfoot, and the air is thick with buzzing flies. It spends a great deal of time asleep, compared to a human, because it often roams the outer planes in a dream-form or via astral projection. This is how it finds its targets, and the chief means by which it hunts them down.





# Earth Keepers

# Merchants of Earth

Often referred to as gnomes or even trolls, the Earth Keepers are actually a type of elemental. They are an industrious race, highly enamoured of trade with other races. They rarely encounter humans, however, more often engaging in commerce with the monstrous races, from the orcs and goblins of the volcanic burnlands to the dark elves and trolls of the forbidding mountains.

Because of their affinity for the ground, they are creatures of two different worlds. **Below the surface**, they can be found working their forges at the mouths of caves, or in caverns deep below, stuffing gold and gems back into the earth. **In the sunlit lands**, they can be found tending their farms—small gardens and livestock pens built in forest clearings. These farms look even stranger because the Earth Keepers build no houses.

They raise small livestock animals and rare herbs to sell to the other races for the precious coins they covet. These are not particularly valuable goods, however, so they have turned to forging armour, weapons, and other ironworks. They are excellent artisans, and command high prices for both their specialty work and their bulk production speeds. They trade these weapons to the enemies of Man, for precious stones, gold, and silver. For they desire to return them to the ground—all save for iron.

The Earth Keepers **despise iron**, and wish to banish it from their subterranean worlds. Though they work with it, they are pained by it, and the only compensation is that they can trade it away to regain what they consider precious.

What their customers do with those arms is none of the Earth Keepers' concern, of course. The monster king might raise armies of orcs and trolls to raid the kingdoms of Men, the bugbears and lizardmen might try, yet again, to pull down the citadels of the elves. It means little to the Earth Keepers. They care naught about the affairs of such mortals. Their concerns are for the earth, and its precious contents.



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**EARTH KEEPER**

12 HP 3 Armour

*Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Planar.***Special Qualities:** Earth elemental.

They do not like to fight people, but if it comes to it, Earth Keepers can be formidable enemies in battle. They are extremely tough, even when their foes wield the dreaded iron.

**Instinct:** To return gems and precious metals to the earth.**Attacks:**

- Charge a foe and knock them over.
- Club (1d6+2 damage, forceful; close, reach).
- Stomp (1d10+2 damage, forceful; hand).

**Moves:**

- Meld with the earth.
- Produce rare herbs and spices.
- Trumpet a call to other Earth Keepers.

**Tactics:**

*If attacked:* Act defensively and counter-attack until the threat is gone.

*If they have gems or precious metals:* Offer to sell them iron and livestock.

*When they leave:* Let them go.

**Weaknesses:**

Earth Keepers are vulnerable to iron, especially cold iron, and they always suffer an additional 1d6 damage from it. They also lack human concepts of justice and vengeance, and so will not pursue a foe that flees. Aside from their desire to rid the earth of iron, they deal only with the threats that are in front of them.

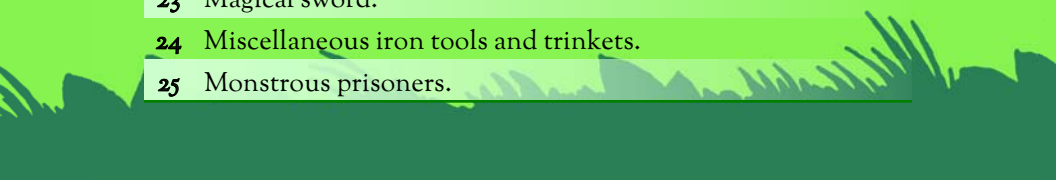
Earth Keepers are also not familiar with the ways of humans and elves, and so may be confused by their tactics and actions. They know dwarves, and are loathe to trust them, since they mine so many good things out of the earth.



## At the Market

Earth Keepers are one of the most common sights at the market in the woods. They regularly show up, trying to sell whatever they have so they can obtain gold and gems.

For each Earth Keeper merchant, roll 1d4 to determine how many wares they carry, then roll 1d40 to determine what each of those wares are:

- 
- 1 Adventuring gear.
  - 2 Cattle
  - 3 Cheap quality armour, and lots of it.
  - 4 Cheap quality weapons, and lots of them.
  - 5 Disinterred corpses.
  - 6 Dogs.
  - 7 Eggs, and lots of them.
  - 8 Fire melons. They look like fruits or squashes. When you squeeze them with hate in your heart and throw them, they burst into flames upon contact with any hard surface.
  - 9 Flowers.
  - 10 Fungus.
  - 11 Grave goods made from iron.
  - 12 Hallucinogenic mushrooms.
  - 13 Healing potions.
  - 14 Herbs and spices.
  - 15 Human prisoners.
  - 16 Iron coins from an ancient empire.
  - 17 Iron filings.
  - 18 Iron ingots.
  - 19 Live poultry.
  - 20 Magical axe.
  - 21 Magical dagger.
  - 22 Magical fruit. A single fig or plum provides a full day's hydration and nourishment.
  - 23 Magical sword.
  - 24 Miscellaneous iron tools and trinkets.
  - 25 Monstrous prisoners.
- 



- 
- 26 Mutagenic spores. **If consumed**, roll 2d6: On a 2, they induce extreme mutations. On a 3-4, they induce minor, cosmetic mutations. On a 5-6, they cause incapacitating illness accompanied by vivid, spiritual visions. On a 7-9, they cause the diner to believe they are mutating inside, for the rest of the day, but it is only irritable bowels. On a 10-12, they make the diner pale and sweaty for a day or two.
  - 27 Nightshade poison. It works whether in liquid form or dried. A weapon coated with this poison deals +1d4 damage each strike, but wears off if it deals 4 damage.
  - 28 Orchid bulbs.
  - 29 Outsider art.
  - 30 Petrifying water (it turns living organisms that are immersed in it to stone).
  - 31 Pirate gold.
  - 32 Poison.
  - 33 Saplings.
  - 34 Soil, which is very fertile.
  - 35 Songbirds.
  - 36 Swine.
  - 37 Tasty foodstuffs.
  - 38 Turtles.
  - 39 Wood chips.
  - 40 Woven baskets.
- 

## Prices

This merchant's asking price is... (roll 1d6 and add +1 for magical wares):

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1 Cheap.	4 Expensive.
2 Fair.	5 Outrageous.
3 Exorbitant.	6+ Reasonable.

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# Flower Goblins

# Between the Trees

Long ages ago, the goblin people were rent asunder by a terrible civil war. Their ancient kingdom, now long forgotten and buried beneath the ground, was split into opposing groups. While everyone knows of the northern communes and the pirate nations of the Goblin Sea, the goblins of the **Deepdell Forest** are relatively obscure. And yet, they are unlike any other type of goblin.

Before the goblins era, the Deepdell grew up around the bodies of two dead gods. **Arketos** and **Gherosin** were called the Twin Combatants in the ancient world because their deadly feud—and their final duel—ended with both dead and crashing down to earth. Although they are still occasionally worshipped, in dark corners of the globe, most of their divine power is slowly leeching out into the soil and the roots around them.

When the goblins arrived, they were no fools—they realized the importance of this power. They saw what it was doing to the plants in this part of the forest. They also saw no reason to fight it, and decided to harness it instead. Over long centuries they have grown accustomed to the forest's strange properties, and learned to master them.

Now, the flower goblins of Deepdell Forest grow strong. They trade with outsiders, they war with their neighbours, and they cast covetous eyes upon the lands outside their forest. The Deepdell is rich in plants of all kinds, but sorely lacking in metals and the bounties of the sea. The flower goblins trade surreptitiously for what they need, looking far and wide for allies that will help them in the future. But the most important thing they want to know right now is how best to conquer and destroy their neighbours, so they will not need to trade, or stay hidden inside the forest.

## Something Interesting

*Arketos was a god of herbalism and the foraging of tundra, aspected to sky and snow, while Gherosin was a patron of smiths and metalworkers, a deity of earth and fire. Neither held dominion over forests.*

**DEMON FLOWER AND STALK RIDER**

10 HP ○ Armour

*Construct, Group, Intelligent, Magical, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Possessed by ghosts (demon flower).

Demon flowers are created by feeding sunflowers a potent brew of dead souls until they become possessed by composite ghost-minds that are utterly insane. Only the stalk riders can control them, and without a rider, the demon flower goes wild, destroying all that it can—including itself.

**Instinct:** To defend and advance goblin territorial claims.**Demon Flower Attacks:**

- Biting mouth (1d8+2, messy; close).
- Pollen cloud (stun damage, area, ignores armour; near).
- Spasms (1d6 damage, forceful, messy; close).

**Demon Flower Moves:**

- Cover ground quickly in a spastic shuffle.
- Wail and keen.

**Stalk Rider Moves:**

- Call other goblins to the scene.
- Control the demon flower.
- Co-ordinate with the other stalk riders into a rough formation.

**Tactics:***When an ambush presents itself:* Attack with the utmost speed.*When there is but one rider left:* Retreat back to goblin territory and report.**Weaknesses:**

The demon flowers can only be controlled by stalk riders. Without their riders, they have no tactics, no intelligence, and no restraint.

### Something Useful

*Although the Deepdell appears to be almost overrun by poisonous animals, not a single creature that lives there has retained this defence. Any game taken in this forest is perfectly edible.*

**GOBLIN GARDENER**

3 HP ○ Armour

*Hoarder, Horde, Intelligent, Magical, Organized.*

The gardens of the Deepdell goblins are a wonder to behold, though few outsiders ever do. Fed by the strange, otherworldly energies of the area, they grow into bizarre forms and develop odd characteristics. The goblins have been able to utilize most of these, and even create new forms of life. All these creations they use as tools to protect themselves from monsters and outsiders, and even to increase the size of their claims. It will not be long before they have the power to march out, beyond the forest even, and become the masters of the other races.

**Instinct:** To increase the riches of goblin society.

**Moves:**

- Brew magical potions.
- Crossbreed plants into new and wondrous forms.
- Grow exceptional crops.
- Summon ghosts and bind them into plants.
- Tend to the plants of the forest.

**Tactics:**

Gardeners do not fight, if they can help it. They have developed many weapons for other goblins to use in war, and prefer to let them do their jobs. If threatened, gardeners will bargain for their lives with whatever they have (as they can always grow more and better plants).

**Weaknesses:**

Like most goblins, gardeners are puny and weak. They thrive due to their cunning and their good fortune to live in a land blessed with dead gods that they can use to their advantage. Outside of their society, however, they are mostly useless.

**GOBLIN WAR SUMMONER**

12 HP 1 Armour

*Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Solitary.*

The war summoner calls forth the spirits of forest monsters, and is possessed by them, becoming a fearsome berserker in combat. The summoner requires the proper mask and costume in order to call forth the proper spirit and not be consumed by it. Only a few goblins are able to master these arts.

**Instinct:** To root out and destroy enemies of the Deepdell goblins.

**Attacks:**

- Spear (1d8 damage, reach).

**Demon Flower Moves:**

- Alert other goblins.
- Summon monster spirit and become possessed.

**Tactics:**

When possessed by a monster spirit, the goblin war summoner gains additional attacks and moves.

**Weaknesses:**

The spirit that possesses a war summoner is tied to the mask they wear. If these become damaged, the summoner may lose control of the spirit. Sometimes this ends the possession, if the spirit has no interest in the material plane. Other times it ends with the summoner marauding violently until dead.

**Spirits****Ironworm spirit:****+3 Armour, forceful.**

- Burrow through the ground.
- Spit acid (1d8 damage, corrosive; reach).

**Owlbear spirit:****+4 HP, divine, loud.**

- Charge a foe (1d6 damage, forceful; near).
- Crush foe in bear hug (1d8+4 damage, forceful, messy; close).
- Screech like a giant owl (becomes terrifying).

**Vampire bat spirit:****+Hungry.**

- Blood-draining bite (1d10 damage; hand, close).
- Fly through the air.
- Sense foes with sonar.

## Encounters

But how do the PCs encounter these goblins, when they are hidden away beneath the leaves of the Deepdell?

### The Drums of War

Demagogues hired at the market in the woods are stirring up trouble in neighbouring kingdoms, encouraging people to attack the flower goblins—all so the goblins can claim they are being wrongfully assaulted when they request aid from their neighbours' enemies. Will the PCs join one of these belligerent expeditions into the woods? What sort of treasures have they been promised? What atrocities are the flower goblins alleged to have committed?

### Forest Outriders

The flower goblins send semi-regular raiding parties and scouting expeditions into the lands that surround them. How do their neighbours respond? Do they allow more and more wandering adventurers to travel these areas? Do they hire unscrupulous mercenaries to defend themselves? Are the PCs in either of these groups? If so, it is not hard to see a fight with some goblins in their future.

### Incognito Ambassadors

War is not the only possible avenue the flower goblins see on the horizon, just the most likely. But there are cultures out there that they could ally with, who will help them carve out an empire. The goblins don't want to tip their hands, however, so they send their ambassadors out in disguise, dressed like merchants, perhaps, or pilgrim travellers.



## Market Merchants

There are deals to be made at the market in the woods, where monsters and humans might brush shoulders and trade away worthless trinkets in exchange for extravagant riches. The goblins send regular caravans of merchants in order to obtain certain ingredients that will make their gardens more powerful. The forest does not provide for everything, after all.

## A Question of Faith

A band of clerics come fleeing out of the woods! They entered the Deepdell on an expedition to find evidence of fallen gods, and perhaps return them to their former glory—or allow their own god to consume the pair's essence. But the flower goblins attacked them savagely! Now they ask for assistance. Will the PCs come to their aid? Or are they, themselves, opposed to the god of these clerics, and their mission?

## Raiding the Homelands

Of course, there are those amongst the human kingdoms who realize the growing threat these goblins pose. Who will join them when they propose direct and violent action? There are fantastic riches to be plundered, no doubt, and evil to be vanquished, if these war-mongers are to be believed. But will you even be able to plunder them? It is no small expedition or skirmish these hawks call for, but vast armies of troops.





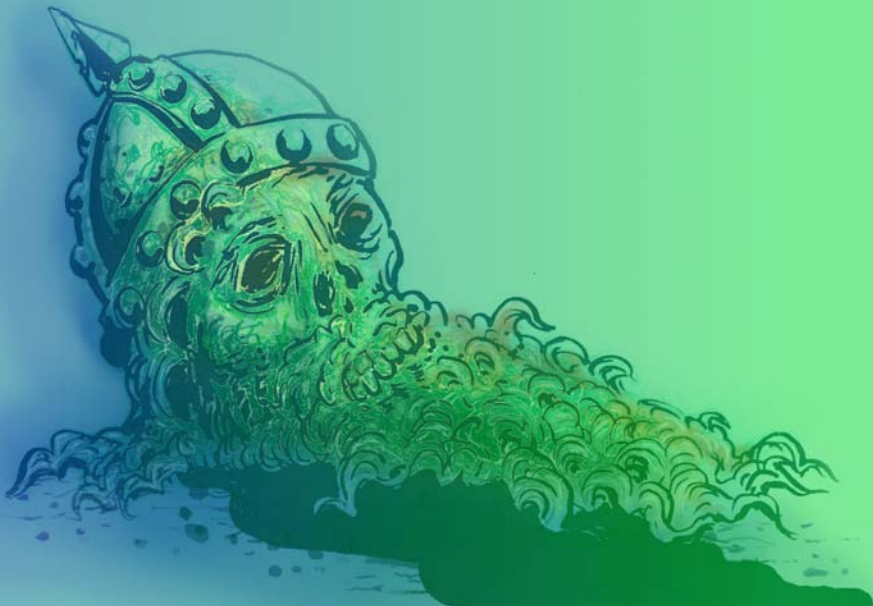
# Grumblesticks

# Grumblesticks

Grumblesticks is a dark, fey creature of the high, wooded mountains. With the head and teats of a sow and the body of a stunted dwarf, she stomps through the trees wearing **heavy iron boots**, swinging a **bloody club** as she goes. She is an evil legend amongst the dwarves. They claim she stalks them in the night, **kidnapping dwarven children** either to eat or in order to keep them in cages and slowly use their body parts in alchemical witchery—all the while feeding them the flesh of their fellow dwarves.

Elves and humans have heard little and less about the legend of Grumblesticks, for the dwarves are reticent to speak of her. The halflings, however, know her all too well, as she stalks their shires in the night whenever dwarves are in short supply. Such is their caution that when halflings who have more smarts than scruples travel through the mountain woods with their valuables, they will buy a dwarven slave to take with them, just in case they encounter Grumblesticks. They know she prefers dwarves, and will be distracted long enough for the halflings to escape. Most unscrupulous halflings who travel *without* any valuables prefer just to buy *parts* of dwarves instead of an entire living specimen.

Whenever dwarves hear the **high-pitched squeals of wild boar** in the woods, they think of the legend of Grumblesticks, snuffling about in the darkness, looking for children to kidnap. And whenever they see a **trail of slime**, they think of her house.



## Encountering Grumblesticks

If the PCs are travelling through lands occupied by Grumblesticks, you might use any of the following scenarios:

- **Mechazzdir**, King of the Quartzhammer dwarves, has offered a great reward to anyone who finds his son, Prince Teyothen, who has gone missing. He suspects the worst—Grumblesticks—but rounds up any outsiders passing through his lands for questioning nonetheless.
- The PCs are **captured by dwarves** of the Quartzhammer clan and thrown in their jail cell, where they encounter Grumblesticks. These dwarves do not quite understand who she is, and think she is a mere trespasser on their lands. Grumblesticks offers to make a deal with the PCs so they can all escape, but once free, she goes right after the dwarven children.
- The PCs **arrive at a dwarven village**, but the inhabitants are very suspicious of them. A group of children have just gone missing, and the adults are not sure whether to blame Grumblesticks or some other outsider for the problem.
- The PCs come across **the Grumblehut**, sitting all alone in the forest. Grumblesticks is not at home, but there are several kidnapped children inside. Soon after the PCs enter the Grumblehut, a troop of dwarves show up and try to get in. They think the PCs are the minions of Grumblesticks.
- The PCs encounter a **search party of dwarves** from the Brightforge clan. They are looking for some of their clan's children who became lost in these woods, but now they have become lost themselves. They are afraid that Grumblesticks is stalking this area, and plead with the PCs for aid.
- The PCs stumble upon a **fight between two dwarven clans**. Brightforge dwarves out looking for their missing children are fighting scouts and soldiers of the Quartzhammer clan, who are unaware of the situation and have no idea that Grumblesticks might be nearby.
- The PCs witness **Grumblesticks kidnapping some dwarven children** in the woods. She finds them easy pickings, as the adults are out fighting a rival clan.
- **When the PCs stay the night at a dwarven village or stronghold**, it is attacked by a rival clan. In the ensuing chaos, they catch a glimpse of Grumblesticks stealing children.

**GRUMBLESTICKS**

12 HP 2 Armour

*Devious, Faerie, Intelligent, Solitary, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Fey creature, Terrifying to dwarves.

Grumblesticks often stomps around the woods in her heavy iron boots. This makes it doubly disconcerting when she hides and becomes deathly silent. She likes to terrorize her prey before taking them back to the Grumblehut, but she can also be fairly efficient when in a hurry.

**Instinct:** To consume the dwarves.**Attacks:**

- Charge foes and knock them down (stun damage; reach, near).
- Spiked club (1d12+2 damage, 1 piercing; close).
- Stomp a foe with iron boots (1d10 damage, breaks gear; close).

**Moves:**

- Hide between the trees.
- Produce alchemical substances with dubious effects.
- Snatch a victim and run.
- Swing club in a whirlwind of blows.

**Tactics:***If they are not afraid:* Stalk them, scare them.*When dwarves are around:* Snatch the youngest.*When the children are protected:* Create a distraction.**Weaknesses:**

Grumblesticks has a severe supernatural aversion to the moon-metal, silver. If she sees (or smells) silver on a group of adventurers, she avoids fighting them outright, stalking them from afar in order to kill them, all the while seething with rage. If silver touches her skin, it burns, and a silver weapon that pierces her skin will cook her insides in a mere heartbeat. Is it any wonder she hates those who wield such weapons?



## The Grumblehut

Grumblesticks lives in a **small thatched hut** in the woods. Unlike the huts of more powerful witches, the Grumblehut does not have legs to move around on. Instead, it slithers along like a slug, leaving a trail of slime in its wake.

Inside the hut, Grumblesticks keeps her vast collection of **alchemical powders and potions**. She also has **three small cages** made of hepatizon bronze, just large enough to keep a dwarf inside of. These cages are magically enchanted so that no dwarf, no matter how skilled, can escape from them, unless Grumblesticks allows it. Anyone else attempting to free a dwarf from one of these hepatizon cages will need to destroy the entire thing, and the hapless dwarf will take 1d6 damage in the process.

The hut contains Grumblesticks' other collections, too, and these consist of shrunken heads, foreign coins, and rare butterfly specimens. She also has more than two dozen different clubs lying around, most of which have spikes on them. There is always a grisly weapon at hand inside her hut.

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### GRUMBLEHUT

20 HP 4 Armour

*Construct, Devious, Hoarder, Huge, Magical.*

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The primary danger posed by the Grumblehut is being imprisoned inside its walls, as it is loathe to give up its contents. Doors and windows fight against letting anything go. But it also has a habit of moving between the material world and faerieland, so even if one does escape, one may be far away from home indeed.

**Instinct:** To imprison.

**Moves:**

- Close doors and windows.
- Crawl to an unknown location.
- Dump objects onto someone attacking Grumblesticks.
- Shudder and shake, knock things over.

**Weaknesses:**

Just like any other slug, the Grumblehut has a strange vulnerability to salt. Indeed, any kind of desiccation causes immense damage to it.



## Clan War

Two clans of dwarves, their mountain strongholds separated by a vast and wooded valley, become rivals due to the meddling of Grumblesticks. By all rights, they should avoid each other, for the Spritewood and the Deepdell lie between them, and they are dangerous places. But what they *should* do, and what Grumblesticks can make them do, are two different things.

The PCs could become involved simply by travelling through the area—suddenly they are being offered a reward for finding missing children, or they are caught between the two warring clans, or maybe they simply encounter Grumblesticks in the woods while she antagonizes the two sides.

**Type:** Rivalry (use cursed places moves).

**Impulse:** To set dwarf against dwarf.

### GRIM PORTENTS

- Children of the Brightforge clan go missing in the woods.
- Brightforge search parties fight Quartzhammer scouts.
- Grumblesticks kidnaps the Quartzhammer clan's young prince.
- Quartzhammer clan lays siege to the Brightforge clan's citadel.

**Impending Doom:** The two Dwarven clans slay each other, while Grumblesticks makes off with their children.

## Cast

- **Dwomy, Gromi, Lomi,** and **Teorkheld**, the young Brightforge dwarves who have become lost in the woods. They found a cave, but there was a bear in it!
- **Grumblesticks**, kidnapper of dwarven children.
- **Mechazzdir**, King of the Quartzhammer dwarves. Slow to anger, but his grudges last long ages.
- **Prince Teyothen**, Mechazzdir's only son. A rather timid boy who is fascinated by the elves.
- **Reyel**, matriarch of the Brightforge clan. She is good with money, but encourages her clan to militarism because of her fear of Grumblesticks.



# Kirreskalds



# Outlanders

Where these curious creatures came from, no one can say for sure. They moved into their mountain forests only a few centuries ago, but have guarded them zealously ever since. Outsiders are only allowed to enter their sacred valley when they come seeking prophecy, for the Kirreskalds are adept at the arts of divination. They do not sell these services cheap, however, and they also rob intruders before removing them from their lands. It is clear to their neighbours that they are avaricious collectors of various types of valuables, though what, exactly, they are after has remained a mystery.

But they cannot stay so isolated forever. Just to the south of them lies the Spritewood and Deepdell forests, Skull Mountain, and multiple feuding dwarf clans. And in the midst of them all, there is the market in the woods. If there is one everlasting, pernicious power that the market has, it is to draw into its networks all that lies around it. Without the protection of the market, neighbours are vulnerable to the depredations of the market's monstrous patrons. The humans would know this, if they bothered to investigate the numerous monster attacks upon their villages, but the Kirreskalds already know. So they send their own merchants to trade.

## Something Interesting

*The Kirreskalds are known to use poison darts to immobilize and capture their foes. They are said to be true connoisseurs of poisonous substances.*

**KIRRESKALD**

6 HP 1 Armour

*Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Masked.

The Kirreskalds resemble humanoid squirrels, with hairy bodies and big, bushy tails, though their hands and feet are human. Not a single one is ever seen without an elaborately-carved wooden mask on its face. Nor are they ever far from their spears and blades, which have a faint residue of magic about them.

**Instinct:** To hoard prophecies.**Attacks:**

- Spear (1d8 damage, 1 piercing; close, reach).
- Thrown spear (1d6 damage; near).

**Moves:**

- Ambush a foe by throwing spears.
- Block magical effects with mask.
- Foresee a foe's intentions.
- Hide in the forest.
- Paralyse with poisoned spear tip.
- Recite the text of a prophecy.
- Scamper up a tree into the canopy.
- Trigger a cleverly-hidden trap.
- Whistle for reinforcements.

**Tactics:***If outnumbered:* Flee to areas protected by traps.*If they come seeking prophecy:* Name a price, then negotiate.*When they trespass on sacred grounds:* Paralyse them, rob them, remove them.**Weaknesses:**

Kirreskalds are irredeemably greedy. Even when they know there is danger, or a trap, they pursue riches and treasures, or whatever types of goods they need for divination.

### Something Useful

*The Kirreskalds will not attack you if you enter their woods carrying a red flag. Instead, they will approach to negotiate a deal.*

## Divination

The Kirreskalds have the power of divination, though they do not show their exact mechanisms to outsiders. They have waiting rooms full of smoke and incense and mystical mandalas. Prophecies are delivered either written in ink on papyrus, or by a conjured spirit that speaks in the supplicant's language.

For a price, the Kirreskalds can perform some or all of the following feats:

- Determine the secret intentions of a specific person.
- Discover someone's (or something's) true name.
- Find out who your greatest enemy is and what threat they pose to you (or someone else).
- Identify the name, nature, and origins of a magical item.
- Intercede with the gods on your behalf.
- Locate a great and secret treasure.
- Locate the cure for any ailment.
- Spy on someone now, or see their doings in the past.

All agree their price is steep, however. A deal is arranged on the outskirts of the Kirreskalds' sacred lands, before the supplicant is permitted entry. None have ever been cheated in this deal, but not everyone has been made happier as the result of their prophecy.

Still, determining the exact price of a prophecy without actually negotiating with the Kirreskalds is next to impossible. Accounts of what they want all differ, and rumours run wild with speculation. Perhaps one of these is true:

- They are searching for a massive epic of ancient poetry, most of which has been lost to history and, oddly, lies just beyond the magic of divination.
- They desire magical items, which they destroy.
- They desire rare books, especially spellbooks.
- They hoard demons inside of bottles, and always seek out more.
- They require a still-living human child. Or an elf.
- They require the hand of a thief, hanged at a crossroads.
- They require the internal organs of fantastic beasts.
- They want large amounts of gold, in coins or not.

## Thieves

When the Kirreskalds attack and paralyse their foes, they also rob them, before dragging their bodies away from sacred land. But the things they steal seem to change all the time, to hear the rumours tell it.

Roll 1d8 to determine what the Kirreskalds want this time:

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- 1 They remove several fingers, but do not sever them normally. These removed fingers remain alive, as if still attached, until they are used for some strange ritual purpose. The wounds caused by this severing do not heal normally.
  - 2 They steal clothes, and it has been rumoured that homunculi have been seen wearing these stolen clothes, masquerading as the original owners.
  - 3 They steal weapons and re-sell them at the market in the woods, to compete with the Earth Keepers.
  - 4 They take all the books they can find for their extensive libraries.
  - 5 They take any adventuring gear and use it for a secret mining project.
  - 6 They take food. During the winter, food is hard to come by in the frozen mountain valleys where they dwell.
  - 7 They take magical items and sell them to unscrupulous wizards in exchange for thag weed.
  - 8 They want only gold, and leave everything else.
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Kirreskalds might also trade their services for these kinds of items, but since they want to keep most of their operations a secret from the outside world, they prefer to steal some of the resources they need.

## Whispers

Rumours about these newcomers abound, as much as concrete facts are scarce. Perhaps one of the following stories is actually true? Choose or roll 1d12:

- 1 Actually a gang of thieving wizards labouring under a powerful curse, the Kirreskalds are condemned to an immortal existence selling prophecy. They are trying to find ways of reversing the curse, but so far nothing has worked.
- 2 Most of their prophecies are tailored to sow chaos and discord in the surrounding kingdoms. Once these polities begin to collapse, the Kirreskalds intend to expand outward, increasing the extent of their sacred lands.
- 3 Once they were regular squirrels, but a powerful wizard turned them into people. Disgusted by his tyranny, they rebelled, they took the wizard's magical masks and created their traditional costume.
- 4 The Kirreskalds are but the dreams of a dying god, who (like many divine beings) inflicts his delusional notions of cosmology upon the people of the material world. If they were natural beings, they would make more sense.
- 5 The Kirreskalds are rebels and vigilantes from another world, where everyone looks like them. They wear those masks to hide their identities, because they are using this world to carry out revolutionary activities and restock their supplies, all under the cover of stealth.
- 6 The real Kirreskald is not the living body, but the mask. If you wear one of their masks, you will gain magical powers, but you will also be transformed into one of them, and once you do, there is no transforming back.
- 7 The soil of their mountain valley has birthed them out of nothing, as a form of protection from men and orcs. There are no elves to do this work here, so the forest must create a different sort of guardian.
- 8 Their prophecies are less the work of real magic, and more the result of their peculiar relationship with time. Unlike other societies, the Kirreskalds travel backwards through time. Our future is something they have already experienced, and what they fear is the point at which they were destroyed—or what we think of as their arrival.



- 9 Their prophecies often include new technologies and magical techniques, because they are attempting to slowly introduce a host of advanced material cultures into the world that are already common on some of the astral planes and the worlds of dreams.
- 10 They are attempting to collect a complete prophetic record of the past, present, and future through divination. This costs a lot of money in sacrifices, which is why they work for hire. If they are given better sacrifices, or information that leads to more effective prophecies, they are exceedingly grateful.
- 11 They used to be people, not squirrels, and the wizard transformed them into beasts. They were able to rebel after they donned the wizard's masks, which gave them humanoid characteristics and intelligence. Without their masks, they will revert back to being animals.
- 12 This prophecy business is just a front. Their real purpose is funding a war against tyrannical cephalopods and their dragon-riding minions on the astral plane. Everything they buy or steal goes toward their conquest of the stars. They are currently in negotiations with the Red Skull Mercenary Company.







The  
Lich Sorceress

# Dead Tongues

“My name is not important,” she purrs, when you ask. Everyone calls her the lich sorceress, or the market necromancer—or even “that dead woman with the cat”—but there’s old stories going around about her, too. Was she, perhaps, Ilessa, queen of the Northern Marches, who reigned here, a thousand years ago? Was she daughter to the merchant prince Kielbarro, himself the bastard spawn of the Mad Emperor? Or is she the last, lone survivor of that ancient nunnery, so deep inside the woods, that was a blackened, overgrown husk even before recorded time?

There is no proof that any of those stories are true, but really, does it matter? If you need what she can offer, you’ll find her at the market in the woods, just like all the other important people hereabouts.

They’ll tell you not to bring up necromancy around her. This is good advice. Don’t go see her as an emissary of another necromancer. Don’t brag about your own necromantic magics. Don’t say you’re friends with a death conjurer. She hates the other undead. She hates people who control the undead. If you’re good at fighting the undead—or wizards—she might have a job for you.

They’ll tell you not to do business with her, because it’s too dangerous, or she’s cursed. This is hogwash. Everything is dangerous, everyone is cursed. If you need a new sword arm or a companion brought back from the Gates of Death, she’s the one, if you can afford it. A damn sight more polite than most other wizards, too, if you ask me.

But if you find her out in the woods at night, away from the market, you best be careful. Just like other wizards, she doesn’t take well to strangers interfering with her business. She’s got a buried tower up near that old tomb on Ash Bluff, and no time for visitors. Just because you spoke with her in the market, doesn’t mean you’re friends.

## What She's Buying

The lich sorceress is principally interested in three things. **Firstly**, she hates all other undead. She pays adventurers to get rid of them, especially if they are making a nuisance of themselves near her domains. If another powerful undead creature starts a feud with her, she does not hesitate to hire pawns in order to retaliate.

**Secondly**, she also hates it when other creatures mess with her business. She roams certain sections of the woods, and has a buried tower on Ash Bluff next to her brother's tomb. Powerful meddlers she takes care of herself, immediately, but if her lands are invaded by hordes of weaker creatures—goblins, humans, or troglodytes, for example—she hires killers to root them out. Otherwise, the job is just too time-consuming for her.

And **thirdly**, she is always in the market for harvested components of magical creatures. Dragon hearts, faerie gullets, the horns of unicorns—anything from which sorcerous power can be extracted. She might have her eye on specific creatures roaming the woods, or farther afield, and hire adventurers to hunt those creatures specifically. She pays fair wages for these components, too. She is not stingy like some other powerful wizards, though she is no more tolerant of treachery.

## What She's Selling

If you have a **missing limb or body part**, the lich sorceress can replace it for you. She uses dead parts brought back to life, attaching them to your body. Of course, this means she can always find you, wherever you go, and maybe even use the replacement part's senses. But she won't tell you this. If you come into conflict with her, you might find yourself defying the danger of her controlling the new limbs she gave you. But if you're not worried about those kinds of consequences—or completely ignorant of them—a simple quest or two, or a great, big bag of money, should put you right in her books.

If you need a **companion resurrected**, that's a little more expensive. She won't be able to control your companion the way she controls replacement limbs, but she will always know where they are, and she can reverse the resurrection whenever she wants—effectively returning them to the grave. She won't tell you any of this either, but she will ask for more money, or more favours.

**LICH SORCERESS**

16 HP 3 Armour

*Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Solitary, Terrifying.***Special Qualities:** Sorceress, Undead.

In a fight, the lich sorceress is both brave and vindictive. She is not afraid to plunge into close combat, hewing about with her bloody sword. She has her amoebic cloak to protect her, a cat to aid her, and a great many spells that give her power over life and death.

**Instinct:** To hoard arcane power.**Attacks:**

- Death blast (1d8+1 damage, forceful, ignores armour; near).
- Sword (b[2d10] damage, messy; close).

**Moves:**

- Cast a necromantic spell.
- Outmaneuver a foe at swordplay.
- Send an undead homunculus to spy on a foe.
- Show her terrifying face.

**Tactics:**

*If outclassed:* Create a distraction, retreat, and counterstrike from a better position.

*If they intrude upon your brother's tomb:* Kill them, turn them undead, and bury them still conscious and aware.

*If they prove to be good providers of magical components:* Allow them to use your reputation to their advantage in other arenas.

*If they want a job:* Test their honesty first.

*If threatened:* Attack brutally and overpower foes.

**Weaknesses:**

The lich sorceress is undead, and so she is vulnerable to the same divine powers that all the undead are vulnerable to. Though she is called a lich, she does not store her life essence in some secret location—having her ashes scattered to the winds or her head buried at a crossroads is enough to destroy her forever.

Psychologically, she is very much attached to her brother's tomb. Although she stores many of her most valuable treasures there, she becomes preternaturally enraged when intruders try to gain access to it for more sentimental reasons.

## Amoebic Cloak

The cloak she wears appears to be some kind of mucus-like amoeba. When stretched, it becomes translucent. When clumped together, it appears to be purple. It has a hood that hides the lich sorceress' ghastly, ruined face, and is extremely resilient, providing 3 Armour to its wearer.

It also leeches the life from those who wear it, if they are alive. Each day (or fraction thereof) a living creature wears it, they lose 1d6 points from their Constitution score, temporarily. Each full day they do not wear the amoebic cloak, they regain 1 point of Constitution. If the wearer's Constitution score is ever reduced to zero, the cloak consumes them. Constructed beings, the undead, and other non-living creatures are unaffected by this power.

## Boots of Silence

The tall boots she wears make no sound, no matter what surface they tread upon. They also do not leave any trace of their passage over un-living materials. They still break and flatten grasses, and they cannot stop their wearer's weight from impressing into the ground, but they never leave a legible boot print in dust, dirt, or sand. Along hard stone floors, they can move without a trace.

## Flaming Skull

She also has a skull that is perpetually wrapped in magical flames. If left alone too long, it returns to its original plane of existence, but until then, it provides heat and light without consuming fuel. Anything it touches for more than a moment catches fire. If it cannot burn, the fire disappears after a few moments. Otherwise, the fire spreads. Most creatures unfortunate enough to be set alight must find some way to extinguish themselves if they want to avoid being consumed by fire entirely.

## Camindor, Cat Familiar

When the lich sorceress was young and still alive, she became involved with a **nameless wizard** who sought after immortality in planes of existence beyond the astral sea. Together, they roamed the multiverse, conquering kingdoms and laying waste to their enemies. But when this nameless wizard came under the influence of **the demon Salxrizan**, the lich sorceress turned against him.

Unlike him, she was not so vain to spurn the undead arts. Life without end was, and still is, more important than petty considerations like beauty and the adoring gaze of meaningless human eyes. As her flesh rotted away, the wizard's heart grew cold toward her, and the demon's grip on him grew stronger. As much as she tried to ameliorate the growing rift between them, she could sense the impending conflict between them becoming inevitable.

### Demon vs. Demon

To increase her power, the lich sorceress tied herself to an arcane familiar—the horned cat, **Camindor**. With his soul amplifying her own magic, she was able to seal her corrupted lover inside his own tomb, ridding the world of Salxrizan forever. Camindor, a cunning and mischievous being, was happy to intrigue against another arcane being, especially for his own benefit (though this was not, by any means, a *requirement* to gain his aid).

Since then, Camindor has remained the lich sorceress' constant companion. He has his own goals and interests, naturally, but for now is content to follow where she leads and assist her to victory against her enemies. Together, they war upon wizards and the undead, discover new secrets long hidden from the world, and occasionally loiter upon the nameless wizard's tomb, near the town of Kielhafen, wrapped in the haze of nostalgia.





**CAMINDOR**

16 HP ○ Armour

*Devious, Intelligent, Magical, Planar, Solitary, Small, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Demonic, Magical familiar.

The horned cat Camindor lives to break up relationships, to turn brother against brother and wife against husband, to rend families apart, and poison friendships. This psychic anguish is the bread and butter that nourishes his body. If Camindor were to cease from antagonizing humans, he would starve and his terrestrial body would die. The lich sorceress has little or no concern for the lives of mortal humans, and so his schemes are usually beneath her notice.

**Instinct:** To turn people against each other.**Attacks:**

- Gore with horn (1d8 damage; close).
- Poison spit (1d4 damage, causes weakness, ignores armour; reach).

**Moves:**

- Create minor visual illusions.
- Implant hypnotic commands into the mind of a weak-willed sleeper.
- Lay an annoying trap.
- Lend power to the lich sorceress.
- Slink around silently.
- Throw snippets of speech into other peoples' conversations.

**Tactics:***When bored:* Find people to bother.*When the enemy is strong:* Attack them by stealth and intrigue.*When the enemy is weak:* Let them think they can win, then disappoint them.*When the lich sorceress requires it:* Lend aid, and find a path to victory.**Weaknesses:**

Camindor has two principle weaknesses, both of which make the other worse. First, he is perpetually curious, just like a domestic cat. His power and arrogance makes him an annoying busy-body, and his natural cunning makes it hard for him to fall into a trap—but not impossible. When he feels secure, his guard drops, and he can be lured away from the lich sorceress into a vulnerable position.

His second weakness is his arcane connection to his mistress. It is possible to affect the lich sorceress with magic through Camindor, and vice versa. In this way, Camindor can be turned from a valuable asset into a dangerous liability.



The  
Market  
in the  
Woods



# Shadow Traders

No one remembers exactly how it started, or if they do, they don't care enough to speak of it. Not that it matters. These days, the secret market in the woods near Kielhafen is both an institution and a closely-guarded secret. Why, you ask? It is the only market where all kinds of humans and monsters alike meet and trade their goods. Wizards ply their trade, mercenaries offer services, and the enemies of mankind outfit themselves with weaponry.

There is no one group that runs the market, declares it open for business, or enforces its rules. There are, instead, many of them—groups like the **Kirreskalds**, who live nearby, and the **earth keepers**, who must travel very far indeed sometimes just to sell their iron implements. Others include the mysterious **mung mung merchants**, the **Royal College of Sorcery** (though definitely not publicly), and more than one underground crime syndicate.

Some powerful individuals also lend their weight to the maintenance of order and commerce in the market. Both the **death wolf** and the **lich sorceress** are regulars in good standing with their fellow merchants, known for mediating disputes and defeating outside interlopers who might want to close the market down. When notables like these enforce the rules of the market, lesser beings have a tendency to accept its legitimacy even more readily. And even when they break those rules, they inevitably unite all the other merchants against them, again strengthening the market's code of conduct.

## The Rules

There are **three principles** that everyone who supports the market follows, and everyone who wants access would be smart to keep in mind.

### 1. Nothing Is Free (Everything Costs)

The rest of the world might be a free-for-all, a battlefield where the strong exploit the weak, but the market has no tolerance for thieves of any stripe. If you take what you want without paying for it—without engaging in the commerce that the market exists solely to facilitate—the other market goers will quickly turn against you.

The flip side to this rule, however, is that buyers expect reasonable prices. You can't charge an arm and a leg just because

you're the only one who showed up with arms and legs for monsters to snack on, or they start to become irate. Likewise, if you think you can use the market's dangerous mystique to fleece newcomers with shoddy goods, you'll quickly find the other merchants fleecing you of your skin to set up a new snack cart. At the very least, those more powerful than you will start to take what they want from you and pay you what they think is reasonable, instead of what you ask for.

## 2. Buy, Sell, or Get the Fuck Out

There is no room for enemies in the market, only buyers and sellers (and those who accompany them). You can't fight here, unless you want to fight the whole market at once. That goes for routes to and from the market as well. Sure, you might get ambushed and robbed on your way there, if you're far enough away, and the woods nearby, on the other side of the mountain, are infested with thieving Kirreskalds and violent flower goblins. But these woods, the ones around the market, are free of bandits all year 'round.

Because there's no enemies, you might have to put up with seeing things you don't like. All types frequent the market, even slave traders and monsters who eat human flesh in front of everyone. They won't eat you, unless you've been sold to them, but you can't stop them from bring they're own lunch to work. That's not cool.

This rule doesn't mean you're always perfectly safe, however. The market's not a zoo, it doesn't welcome sightseers, and no one likes their goods cased out while they're trying to conduct some business. If all you came for is the skinny on your competitors, no one wants you around. Spies and gawkers alike will get what's coming to them.

## 3. Sell It Like You Mean It

If you're going to sell stuff at the market, the other merchants expect you to be at least somewhat professional. Get yourself a tent, have your wares displayed, and make sure to set up where buyers can find you. If you sell at night, invest in some lamps—not everyone can see in the dark.

But selling also means you need to pitch in to help run the place. Thieves don't stay away all by themselves, and disruptions are commonplace. It takes the market's merchants working together to defend it, and they expect other sellers to carry their own weight.

If you have been told that what you need can only be obtained at the market in the woods, there's nothing else to do but go and see if you can get it there.

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**When you ask around the market for something in particular that is illegal, magical, or rare,** roll+CHA. **On a 10+**, you get the information you need to find it. **On a 7-9**, you get a lead but you need to pay for the information first (nothing is free, remember?). **On a miss**, one or more rivals who also want what you're looking for find out about you.

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And if you're quite taken by the market and want to participate more fully, or you find yourself in possession of something you... really shouldn't have, you might want to consider not just buying, but selling at the market, too.

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**When you bring interesting goods to sell at the market,** roll+WIS. **On a 10+**, you find someone willing to pay a fair price, or maybe even a generous one. But can you put aside your differences long enough to make a deal? **On a 7-9**, several people are interested, but aren't inclined to pay as much as you want or are competing with each other in a bad way. **On a miss**, your goods are not welcome here.

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Or you can, of course, simply show up and hope there's something there that you can both use and afford. You might end up making the trip in vain—or worse, getting yourself in trouble. For some people, the risk is worth it.

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**When you browse the market for something interesting,** roll+INT. **On a 10+**, you find something pertinent to one of the GM's upcoming grim portents, they'll tell you what it is. **On a 7-9**, you find something related to one of the GM's grim portents that has already happened, and you're under pressure to buy it. **On a miss**, the denizens of the market take you for a spy or a sightseer.

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## Customers

- **Bandits**, flush with stolen coin.
- **Black Thomas**, a thief and highwayman, looking for magic that will turn him invisible.
- **Centaur**s with human heads seeking a way to drive the centaurs with slug-like heads out of their territories.
- Cult **assassins** in search of new and exotic poisons.
- **Dwarven brewers** looking for something that will give their beers the edge over the popular Elven wines that make up the bulk of their competition.
- Escaped **slaves** looking to spend their former master's money.
- **Foreign revolutionary**, in search of troops and weapons.
- **Halfling leatherworkers**, in search of exotic hides.
- **Hocksteen** the butcher, on an errand for his brother, an alchemist.
- **Librarian** with a wealthy patron's generous donation.
- **Lobster people** at war with a witch who lives in a swamp.
- A **magistrate** in search of truth serum.
- Nihilistic **death worshippers** looking to experience the most holy form of existence: total obliviation.
- A **noblewoman** who has overcome her fear of monsters to be here because she wants to hire them to rescue her husband from his kidnapper—who is the king!
- **Ogres** in search of innocent children to eat.
- And old, wizened **sorceress** in robes of grey, come to buy magical ingredients, including masks from the Kirreskald artisans.
- A polymorphed **mermaid** buying fire that burns underwater.
- Quartzhammer **dwarves**, with gems to trade for magic weapons.
- A **servant** of Lothar Nabramios, looking for a counterfeiter to reproduce some masterwork paintings.
- **Sprite collectors** trying to buy medicine with some gold they stole off a dying adventurer.
- **Talking animals** in search of expensive books.
- A **vampire queen** in search of ways to enhance the darkness.
- A wealthy, arrogant **doctor** looking for secrets of life and death.
- A **widow**, in search of a necromancer.
- The young **dauphin** of a foreign land, whose kingdom was destroyed in a revolution, has brought his magical heirloom in the hopes of raising an army.

## Merchants

- **Alchemists** with dangerous explosives and firearms. They are eager to offer demonstrations to prospective customers.
- Brightforge **dwarves** selling captured goblins who were not ransomed by their clans.
- **Cannibal lobotomists** selling the dreams and thought-forms of their fellow tribesmen's brains.
- **Changeling courtesans**, appealing to all patrons of the market.
- A charlatan **seer** who claims his prophecy is more reliable than that of the Kirreskalds.
- **Cultists** of the bat god Glaksigul, selling charms and stolen property, raising funds so they can build a secret temple.
- **Dark elves** who seek to trade their magical crystals for monster slaves.
- An **entomologist** with a vast collection of foreign butterflies. She is saving magical specimens for her regular customers.
- **Gargoyles** with stones of many types and powers.
- **Gnoll shipwrights** selling magical vessels that fit inside bottles when not in use.
- **Gnomish drug dealer**, usually unconscious.
- Heretical **priests** who traded their god for the rights to sell the death wolf's scat to wizards and alchemists.
- **Kobolds** carting around an ancient city's forgotten treasures.
- A **lens grinder** who can show you what lies on the other side of reality.
- **Living shadows** with a cart full of ice that never melts.
- A **manticore** purveyor of gastronomic delicacies.
- **Minotaur** pegasus breeders.
- **Owlbear** haberdasher.
- **Orcish mercenary representatives**, trying to steal business away from the Red Skulls.
- **Serpent folk** who trade in desert delicacies.
- **Sprite collectors** attempting to sell dirt mixed with the Grumblehut's slime trail.
- The **swamp fisherman** who pulls up magical items from a lost civilization along with his crayfish.
- **Thag weed farmers** hawking bottled dreams and space jams.
- **Thaumaturgists** with surplus inhalants, looking for fume addicts.
- **Trolls** selling stolen dragon eggs in order to help pay off their kingdom's debt to the Red Skull Mercenary Company.
- A **zookeeper** looking to get rid of an unruly mass of limbs.



## Things for Sale

- Ancient crown.
- Antikythera mechanism.
- Bells of silence.
- Black cauldron.
- Bone china.
- Boots made of elfskin.
- Bottle of good absinthe.
- Box full of fog.
- Brass head.
- Carrier pigeon.
- Carnivorous tree branches.
- Cloak of invisibility.
- Cold fire.
- Compressed forest.
- Coral golem.
- Cube of slime.
- Dark stout beer.
- A dead god's blood.
- Deck of prophetic cards.
- Dragon armour.
- Face of disguise.
- Fancy carpet.
- Fearsome helmet.
- Flaming sword.
- Glass arrows.
- Glowing rock.
- Golden orrery.
- A hand of glory with six fingers on it.
- Heathen idol.
- Horn of Jericho.
- Human teeth.
- Immortal fish.
- Impervious feathers.
- Invisible net.
- Jellyfish.
- Jewelled water pipe.
- Knife made of stone.
- Kraken skull.
- Lightning-thrower.
- Liquid amber.
- Living human eyes.
- Lost ancient comedy.
- Magic rope.
- The mask of a Murdered.
- Metal horse.
- Mummified phallus.
- Musical automaton.
- Orb covered in mouths.
- Orcish pillow book.
- Painting of the Devil.
- Petrifying water.
- Pickled walnuts.
- Poison dust.
- Pottery vases.
- Powdered goblin hearts.
- Protective tent.
- Red salt.
- Ring of adhesion.
- Royal throne.
- Saturnian wine.
- Scrimshawed ivory tusk.
- Serpent homunculus.
- Shield of magical protection.
- Silk spiders.
- Skeleton key.
- Skin of a lion.
- The soul of a minor deity, inside a jar held closed by a trapped enchantment.
- Spellbook.
- Spicy fish sauce.
- Still-beating heart.
- Stone monolith.
- Stuffed cockatrice.
- Tasty meat pie.
- Ulfire gemstone.
- Unicorn semen.
- Unsmelted ore.
- Vorpall blade.
- Whirlwind in a bag.





The  
**MURDERED**



# The Art of Murder

**Decades ago**, the Spritewood was plagued by a rash of sorcerous banditry. A **coven of wizards** made their hideout among the ancient trees and perpetrated a string of horrible murders. They kidnapped people from surrounding villages and sacrificed them to the horned god, presumably in exchange for magical power. Several members of this conspiracy were found and killed in a critical battle beneath the **Inland Cliffs**, but the sheriff could find little trace of the others, once their crimes had been discovered.

They have disappeared, but of course they have not been idle. The detritus of their activities is scattered all across the outskirts of civilization. The souls of those they murder in the name of the horned god are raised a year and a day later in the form of animalistic humanoids. Each of the Murdered bears a suffocating, **horned mask**, the instrument of their death, which the wizards remove before abandoning the corpse. The shaggy body grows out of this mask, and the new creature becomes a monstrous beast.

The last vestige of humanity left in the Murdered is their tendency to decorate their masks. The rest of their behaviour is savage and belligerent. Sometimes the wizards abandon them to their fate when they must leave an area quickly, but other times they use them as guardians of specific locations—for the Murdered will never attack the ones who killed them. Any other humans are fair game, however—for once they have risen from the grave, **the Murdered becomes the murderer!**

## Something Interesting

*Although the magic that creates the Murdered draws upon the horned god, there is no indication of worship or prayer, in any way, shape, or form, in this magic.*

**MURDERED**

10 HP 1 Armour

*Construct, Group, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Undead spirit.

The Murdered are usually stationed in a particular area, and they wait until intruders arrive. They attack as a group, preferring to leap on an enemy from above when they have the advantage of surprise, or headbutt an enemy prone and attack them on the ground when they do not. They will also make good use of pits and stairs.

Their bodies are full of **boiling blood**, which spurts forth in great gouts when they are cut open. This blood can cause burns or blindness if a foe is struck by it. When a Murdered is killed, the body quickly rots away, but the mask remains.

**Instinct:** To murder.**Attacks:**

- Claws (1d8 damage, 1 piercing; close).
- Knock a foe down with a headbutt.

**Moves:**

- Ambush a foe from above.
- Skilfully tear apart a blinded or prone foe.
- Spurt boiling blood into a foe's eyes when wounded.

**Tactics:***If they are all on their feet:* Knock them down.*If they intrude on the lair:* Attack quickly by surprise.*If they leave:* Let them go.*When they are prone:* Attack without mercy.**Weaknesses:**

Because their magic stems from the horned god, the Murdered are vulnerable to magic that binds, controls, or limits animals and the natural world, even spells that would not otherwise affect creatures that appear similar to them.

### Something Useful

*Protoplasmic simulacrums of the flesh of those killed by the Murdered ascend to the horned lands and can be summoned by the god's worshippers—or by a skilled sorcerer.*

## Kielhafen

One year ago, there was a shocking series of murders in the woods around the village of Kielhafen. Several wizards were seen, but never captured. As soon as the PCs arrive in the village, the mayor's house is burgled, and some strange masks are stolen.

### Description & Cast

After the old mayor was driven out of office for failing to solve the crimes, the present mayor, Hallerad Neems, moved to Kielhafen from a neighbouring village to take over the office, and has proved popular.

Two months ago, several small groups of adventurers arrived in town over the span of two weeks. They have heard that there are monsters or evil wizards—or monsters and evil wizards—in the woods nearby. So far, they have found nothing and done nothing except get into a few fistfights and spend their money.

About one month ago, an alchemist named Hocksteen arrived in Kielhafen. He says he has come for rare herbs and flowers he has read about, that are supposed to grow in this area. He has a degree from a university far away that no one has ever heard of.

When did the PCs arrive in Kielhafen? Just now. What did they come here for?

- **Hallerad Neems:** The mayor of Kielhafen.
- **Hocksteen:** One of the murderous wizards, he is posing as an alchemist to gain information.
- **Jaxon Cho:** Kielhafen's sheriff, he killed two of the wizards that were discovered a year ago.
- **Markis:** A sickly, pot-bellied wizard with black mustachios. He is fanatically loyal to Sarline.
- **Rhea:** Olive-skinned and sultry, she is the youngest of the wizards, and the most treacherous.
- **Sarline:** Over a hundred years old and swathed in grey robes, she leads the coven of wizards.
- **Zarlak:** A hulking wizard who was exiled from his home and delights in tormenting others.

## Stakes

- Can the PCs harness the other adventuring parties in the village?
- What will they decide to do when Hocksteen's true nature is revealed?
- Who gets the masks if the Murdered are defeated?
- Will the PCs assist the sheriff when he needs it most?

## Return of the Wizards

But the wizards have already returned. Hocksteen the alchemist is one of them, though he was never seen during the events of last year, which is why no one recognizes him. They murdered villagers and sealed their souls into the magical masks of the horned god. It takes one year and one day for the Murdered to rise from the grave (as it were), so the wizards have come to collect before that happens.

**Type:** Coven (use Arcane Enemy moves).

**Impulse:** To kill for selfish purposes.

### GRIM PORTENTS

- The masks are stolen from Mayor Hallerad's house.
- Sheriff Jaxon Cho asks for back-up to investigate the old stone fort.
- Hocksteen the alchemist begins poisoning villagers who suspect the truth.
- The coven commit a series of murders at their hotel.
- The coven unleashes the Murdered upon Kielhafen.

**Impending Doom:** Impoverishment of Kielhafen as most villagers leave in fear or despair.

## The Adventurers

The other adventuring parties who have arrived in the village have caught word of the coven's other, more recent murders in the local area. No one else has thought to compile information from the various disparate settlements in this area, but rumours have begun to spread. They have been greatly exaggerated, of course, and some of these newcomers believe there are dragons and other fanciful creatures around here. Some even talk about a market where these monsters gather and exchange goods.

## The Alchemist

Hocksteen takes an interest in the PCs, just like he takes an interest in each of the adventuring parties in the village—he wants to know the opposition. If he thinks someone is about to learn the truth, he offers to sell them magic potions, and then poison them.



## The Burglary

The mayor's house is robbed as soon as the PCs arrive in Kielhafen. If Hallerad, at some point, trusts the PCs, he tells them he had some strange masks that he found almost a year ago, while he was moving his possessions. He locked them up in a cabinet in his house, always meaning to get them checked by a wizard at the closest college of wizardry, but he was always too busy. He didn't want to show them to the alchemist who just showed up because Hocksteen has what he calls "a fake degree." They were among the things that were stolen, so now he has no chance to find out what they are.





## The Sheriff

Jaxon Cho thinks the wizards might be hiding out in an old stone fort in the forest. He tells the PCs, but if they don't accompany him to check it out, he winds up dead himself. The coven isn't setting up shop in the woods, only burying some of their stolen treasure in the old fort, and leaving the Murdered there to guard it. They are actually staying in a posh hotel two miles in the opposite direction from Kielhafen.



## The Stone Fortress

The wizards are hiding out in an old stone fortress in the woods, but in this ancient land full of ancient ruins, all is not what it seems.

### What is the secret of the stone fortress?

- The diary of a man who claims to be transforming into one of the Kirreskalds lies mouldering in an old bureau.
- The Earth Keepers have detected iron in the fortress and sent a party to retrieve it.
- The ghost of Black Thomas appears and pleads with you to take revenge on the creature who stole his body and his identity.
- In the basement there is a shrine to the goddess Khadhrikkam, that leads to her divine realm.
- A Kirreskald mask, but no Kirreskald.
- The lost crown of the Quartzhammer dwarves, hidden away inside a niche in a crumbling wall.
- A man died of his wounds in this fortress, with special seeds developed by the flower goblins in his possession, and no one has discovered him. They avoid his room because of the stink.
- The physical body of the bat god Glaksigul lies dreaming beneath the fortress.
- A stash of incense and mystical mandalas, woodblock prints on high-quality papyrus.
- There is a clear trail leading away from the fortress all the way to the death wolf's lair. None of the wizards have yet thought to follow it.
- Those adventurers are right—there *are* dragons!





# The Rainbow Knights

Though they refuse to work together, and are even openly antagonistic to each other, the adventurers known as the rainbow knights all share a common history. They were once members of the chromatic guard, an elite unit of the Red Skull Mercenary Company. But each became dissatisfied or disillusioned with the company for some reason, and left.

Leaving the Red Skulls on bad terms is not a good way to live a long and peaceful life. But these knights have survived the mercenaries and their attempts at vengeance. They are no mere warriors! They are the best of the best.

**THE GREEN DEATH**

16 HP 3 Armour

*Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Solitary.***Special Qualities:** Demonic servants, Magical items.

When she was young, the knight now known only as the Green Death was hideously burned and left for dead. She had studied the rudiments of demonology, however, and was able to conjure a demon to save herself. Several deals later, and she had not only regained her strength but transformed into a fearsome warrior as well. She vowed to take revenge upon the world and all the beautiful things within it, feeding the demons that gave her back her life.

Although the Red Skulls valued her fighting prowess and magical powers, she had a fundamental disagreement with them on a single point—they did not cause enough chaos and destruction for her liking. She betrayed those who employed the Red Skulls one too many times, simply in order to kill, and so they turned on her. She killed seven other members of the chromatic guard and left to become an independent operator. Now the company rues the day they ever hired her in the first place.

**Instinct:** To destroy what is beautiful and strong.**Attacks:**

- Demon-haunted spear (1d12+2 damage; close, reach).
- Metal-clad fists (1d10 damage, forceful; hand).

**Moves:**

- Conjure green mists made of poison.
- Push foes over.
- Speak in demonic tongues.
- Summon demonic imp.

**Tactics:**

*When fighting:* Attack from the high ground, go for the weakest foe first, show them no mercy.

*When socializing:* Never be nice.

**Weaknesses:**

The Green Death has few allies. The occasional employer, the occasional demon—that's about it. She doesn't make allies easily, either, at least not with trustworthy folk. Where will she turn when the demons demand their final payment?



## Magic Weapons

At least some of the fearsome prowess of the Green Death stems from her use of arcane implements to amplify her natural skill. Like any other object, they can be stolen, though none who have tried so far have yet succeeded.

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**When you attack with the spear of the Green Death**, you may deal +1d6 damage if you also take -1 forward to aid, help, or influence others socially in any way.

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**When you study someone closely while wearing the mask of the Green Death**, the GM will tell you one way in which they are better than you.

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**When you wear the armour of the Green Death**, you gain +2 armour against attacks made by good or lawful beings.

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## Rumours

**If you ask around at the market in the woods**, you might learn a few things, like...

- A **dwarven merchant**, newly arrived at the market, has hired the Green Death to be his personal bodyguard, because he has the soul of a god trapped inside a bottle, and is afraid the **Death Wolf** will come for it. Hire one death to thwart another, as the old proverb goes.
- The **famous explorer Lemarus** is mounting an expedition into the lands of the flower goblins—or trying to, at least. The Red Skulls refused to accompany him, so he hired the Green Death, but other members of his party have been hard to come by.
- The Green Death **sold a previous comrade** to the Kirreskalds, in exchange for a prophecy, and that comrade's family wants him back. They are willing to pay handsomely for his safe return, but will the Green Death look unfavourably upon his would-be rescuers?
- Supported financially by the Red Skulls, the **Thaumaturgy Crew** is out hunting for the Green Death, to put an end to her once and for all, and they are looking for additional members on a temporary basis. Is this your chance to experience what it's like to adventure at the elite levels, and risk everything for fame, glory, and riches galore?

**THE GOLDEN SUN**

12 HP 3 Armour

*Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized, Solitary.***Special Qualities:** Entourage, Magical items.

Theladrin Leonar is nobody special, really. But he has golden armour that never breaks, a magical mace he calls Sunbeater, and a few medallions that defend him from harm, and that makes him the usual centre of attention. The Red Skulls booted him out for being a “puffed-up popinjay,” and his ego has been smarting ever since.

**When you deal damage with Sunbeater,** deal +1d4 damage. If you deal more damage than a foe has HP, the excess damage is dealt to someone else, the GM says who.

**When you wear the Phoenix Medallion,** you are immune to normal fires, and magical fires deal 1d6 fewer points of damage to you.

**When you wear the Eagle-Eye Medallions,** they alert you to any attempt to use magic upon you, revealing the source of such magic, and give you the ability to resist the magic through the force of your willpower.

**Instinct:** To be admired.**Attacks:**

- Sunbeater (1d10 damage; close).

**Moves:**

- Call upon the entourage for help.
- Convince someone to be admiring.
- Look flashy.

**Tactics:**

*In battle:* Fight to show off, not to get into danger.

*Out of battle:* Brag and strut.

*When they are too strong:* Lament your retreat, but claim it is wisdom.

**Weaknesses:**

Without his gear, he is no better than the commonest fighting-man. Even with his gear, because it is made of metal, he is still vulnerable to lightning.



**THE VERMILLION TERROR**

12 HP 3 Armour

*Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Solitary, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Lightning-fast knives, Silent armour.

He might be one of the best fighters around, but the Vermillion Terror's arrogance is so staggering, almost no one can stand to tolerate him for any stretch of time. When he opens his mouth to talk it is only to belittle others, and brag of his own abilities. You might think he'd learn, but no. His inner well of contempt for others is bottomless.

For a while, he stayed silent, and worked for the Red Skull Mercenary Company, bringing fame and glory to their name. But alas, once he became vocal about tactics and strategy, they could take it no longer. Since he turned his back on their castigations, he has only gotten better, and faster, and even more loud-mouthed, though these are not always bad traits for a mercenary assassin to have!

**Instinct:** To be remembered.**Attacks:**

- Quick knives (1d10 damage, ignores armour; close).

**Moves:**

- Berate and insult someone.
- Brag and boast (but never tell an outright lie).
- Cut magic in half with his knives.
- Move like lightning.
- Move silently in his magic armour.

**Tactics:***If they are an easy target:* Take them on in public.*If they are a powerful enemy:* Take them out secretly, but leave a token of the Vermillion Terror on their body.*If they offer glory or money:* Take the contract and do it right.**Weaknesses:**

The Vermillion Terror always tries to avoid tangling with demons. They can see into his soul and it scares him. Even so, he has an ongoing feud with the Green Death, and will put aside this fear if it means her demise. He must still be the one to kill her, though. He will not consent to allowing another the satisfaction.



**THE VIOLET KNIGHT**

14 HP 2 Armour

*Divine, Intelligent, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Berserker, Blessed by the bat god.

Contrary to the fearsome appearance of his armour, the Violet Knight is possessed of a fairly calm and even disposition. His disagreements with others generally stem from his worship of the bat god **Glaksigul**, mainly in that he does not value the lives of those outside the tiny cult. He is also adamant about sacrificing things to this god, so he might continue to receive its blessings.

His other problem is that he is a berserker. In battle, his even keel disappears. He prefers to work on his own, so he can attack anyone he wants without getting guff for it later—or he works with strangers so he won't care if they get hurt. This inevitably leads to him working with people he doesn't like, so he also doesn't like to work with them for very long. But he likes fighting more than anything except his bat god, and the bat god smiles upon him when he fights, so he tends to sell his services as a mercenary to anyone who can pay. As long as they have someone to fight.

**Instinct:** To worship the bat god.**Attacks:**

- Dagger (1d6 damage, hand).
- Sword (1d10 damage, messy; close).

**Moves:**

- Call down the blessings of the bat god.
- Detect foes with superhuman hearing.
- Go berserk.
- Summon a swarm of bats.
- Use sonar to navigate in the dark.

**Tactics:**

The Violet Knight has no use for tactics. He simply goes berserk, wildly attacking anything and everything in his path.

**Weaknesses:**

Aside from his most obvious weakness, that of being a berserker, the Violet Knight is also more vulnerable to the influence of other deities. Their curses are more effective, their blessings less beneficial. He rejects help from clerics devoted to other gods.





## In Chiropteran Caves

Deep underground, in the caves below Skull Mountain, the bat god stirs. The Vermillion Knight is not the only minion of this creature, though it desires many, many more. As it stirs from its eons of slumber, its mind sends out the call to worship...

...and is answered by humans eager to believe in something more, an authority higher than they—a god that is dark and full of subterranean mystery. These zealots long to dance around underground fires, their shadows flickering to and fro. They want nothing more than to give themselves over to the darkness below the earth.

### GRIM PORTENTS

- Strange omens accompany the bats as they fly through the night.
- Rumours of giant vampire bats percolate throughout the region.
- The Vermillion Knight creates his own cadre of bat-devoted knights.
- Hunters claim to have killed a giant were-bat, but produce only a human body.
- Conflict erupts between the bat knights and the were-bat hunters and spills over into the market in the woods.
- Other denizens of the woods choose sides—“pro-bat” or “anti-bat.”
- Bat worshippers overrun local towns, burning and looting, enslaving the survivors.
- The conscript army of the bat god marches against the cities of men.

**Impending Doom:** Bat worship becomes endemic in the kingdoms of man, and underground bat cults flourish. Try as they might, the authorities cannot stamp them out.

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**When you swear allegiance to Glaksigul the bat god,** choose one or two of the following gifts:

- Your arms may stretch into bat-like wings.
- Your hearing becomes acute enough to give you sonar.
- Your mouth can drink fresh blood, healing you of 1d4 damage.
- Your skin becomes matted in fur, giving you +1 armour.

**If you forsake the bat god,** it removes both its gifts and the parts of you augmented by those gifts.

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The  
Red Skull  
Mercenary  
Company

When your soldiers prove insufficient, when your armies are shattered by fearsome beasts or the humanoid hords... if you still have money, there remains to you always: a path to victory!

The Red Skull Mercenary Company will fight anyone, anywhere, as long as the price is right. Do you need wizards? Or warriors? Are your enemies holed up in cities, or giant fortresses? Fear not! The Red Skull Mercenary Company is famed across this land and so many others for its merciless siege engines! In addition, we have a plethora of experienced soldiers, magnificent mages, and skilled assassins. We can conquer any battlefield - FOR YOU!

# Victory for Hire

A highly successful fighting company, the Red Skulls will work for nearly any employer, be they human, god, or monster. They desire only to live out their days surrounded by obscene wealth or to die in battle and dwell in Elysium forever. Their leaders have cultivated a sizable organization of considerable variation, truly an organizational feat. Their representatives travel to conflict-torn areas offering their services, and can be found milling about in most major marketplaces of the world, especially the market in the woods.

## Rates

Escort through dangerous territory: 60 coins per day.

Human mercenary: 10 coins per dungeon delve.  
35 coins per month on campaign.

Ogre mercenary: 15 coins per dungeon delve.  
50 coins per month on campaign.

Wizard mercenary: 20 coins per dungeon delve.  
80 coins per month on campaign.

Escort through dangerous territory by a squad of Red Skull mercenaries, including at least one wizard and a dozen fighting-men, costs 60 coins per day.

Chromatic guards, engineers, and siege engines cannot be hired individually. They are part of Red Skull regiments, which cost thousands of coins per day to hire.

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**When you negotiate with a Red Skull representative, roll+CHA. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1:**

- The Red Skulls agree to collect intelligence for you.
- You get a discount, one-quarter off.
- You may hire a member of the chromatic guard along with five other mercenaries.

**On a miss,** the Red Skulls dismiss your offer and make fun of you behind your back.

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**CHROMATIC GUARD**

6 HP 3 Armour

*Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Prestigious rank.

The most elite soldiers of the Red Skulls form a special company of multi-coloured knights. Their vibrant and colourful armour shows their high station to everyone on the field of battle, allowing their own troops to rally around them while at the same time encouraging enemy champions to face them and die on their blades.

There is only ever one guard of a single colour, though the Red Skulls allow similar colours with different names (azure and turquoise, emerald and jade, umber and yellow, purple and violet, crimson, ruby, and russet, etc). Indeed, the various shades of red are most common, accounting for nearly half of all guards, and are often claimed immediately after the former guard of that colour has died.

**Instinct:** To defeat the foes of the Red Skull Mercenary Company.**Attacks:**

- Glimmering sword (b[2d8] damage; close).

**Moves:**

- Call for reinforcements.
- Disarm a foe.
- Lead soldiers into battle.
- Rally broken troops.

**Tactics:**

Chromatic guards are generally good fighters, leaders, and tacticians but not always the best strategists. They fight enemy champions whenever they get the chance.

**Weaknesses:**

No one gets to this position in the Red Skulls without being both ambitious, which often leads to arrogance. While the chromatic guard give their lives to defend their positions and their superiors, if give the chance, they also charge headlong into almost any dangerous fight.

One of the company's more serious problems also stems directly from this elite unit. There are a number of bitter, ex-members still operating who have grudges against the Red Skulls. While most of their mercenaries either retire happy or die trying, some of them have started rival mercenary companies, or even pursued vendettas on their own. Those who remain in the chromatic guard are zealous and loyal, however, and will often pursue these rebels, in order to gain more prestige by eliminating them.

**ENGINEER**

3 HP 1 Armour

*Devious, Hoarder, Horde, Intelligent, Organized.*

The Red Skulls originally made their reputation through their use of elaborate siege engines, not on the strength of their soldiers. Indeed, the leadership and administration still consists mainly of engineers, both humans and goblins. They do not limit themselves if someone has the right skills, employing dwarves and gnomes, and even stranger creatures, like giant spiders, to build their merciless engines of destruction.

**Instinct:** To create engines that destroy.

**Moves:**

- Build a bridge.
- Dig a tunnel.
- Direct a siege engine.
- Repair a siege engine.

**Tactics:**

*When captured:* Surrender and offer a ransom.

*When cornered:* Call for help and stall the enemy for as long as possible.

*When protected by a siege engine:* Work for maximum destruction.

*When pursued by foes:* Lead them into a trap.

**Weaknesses:**

Engineers are by far the least martial units of the whole company. They fight wars with their machines, not with their bodies or their spells! They can't really put up a fight without an engine, and their engines can't run without engineers.

**Something Interesting**

*Fighting for the ogres, the Red Skulls defeated the trolls, but did not exterminate them.*

*There are still trolls out there, in the shadows, who hunger for vengeance.*

## Special Engineer Abilities

### Dwarf moves:

- Smell gold.
- Work a smithy forge.

### Gnome moves:

- Build an innovative siege engine.
- Produce gadgets and gizmos.

### Goblin moves:

- Prepare the torture chamber.
- Set a vicious trap.

### Human moves:

- Build a sturdy siege engine.
- Create fire and burning liquids.

### Spider moves:

- Assemble complex clockwork devices.
- Spin a web.

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## SIEGE ENGINE

*Construct, Huge, Solitary, Terrifying.*

In addition to having one or even two siege weapons attached to them, these engines also contain numerous engineers, soldiers, and wizards, just waiting to cross the enemy's fortifications via bridge and ladder.

### Attacks:

- Boiling oil (1d10+5 damage, burning, messy; close).
- Flying rock (1d10+3 damage, forceful; near, far).
- Giant arrow (1d10+3 damage, 2 piercing; far, very far).
- Ram (b[2d10]+5 damage, forceful; close).



## Something Useful

*The Red Skull leadership loathes and fears magic that invades and controls the mind. They never associate with or employ those who possess such abilities.*

**TROLL-SLAYING OGRE**

14 HP 1 Armour

*Group, Intelligent, Large.*

Almost twice as tall as a normal man, the soldiers sent to serve with the Red Skulls by the ogre kingdom are not its best and brightest, not by a long shot. These soldiers are mostly obedient, but often very stupid or just not cut out for the soldiering life. Though not very greedy, they still feel they are underpaid.

**Instinct:** To smash foes!

**Attacks:**

- Battle axe (1d8+3 damage, forceful, messy; close, reach).
- Crushing grasp (1d6+5 damage; hand).

**Moves:**

- Climb over high walls and other obstacles.
- Eat several weeks worth of food in one sitting.
- Hurl something hundreds of yards away.
- Push and hurl foes away in all directions.
- Walk for days.

**Tactics:**

*When confused:* Try to figure something out, slowly. Or just attack something.

*When given orders:* Do orders.

*When not given orders:* Attack!

**Weaknesses:**

The ogres have publicly stated that the Red Skulls were a bargain at twice the price, while hiding the fact that they ran out of money before their war with the trolls was over. The Red Skulls defeated the last of the trolls anyway, and now many ogres work for the company. Not all of them are very happy about it, and some are even willing to overlook things that might be detrimental to the company's chances of success.



**WIZARD**

12 HP ○ Armour

*Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized, Solitary.*

Every regiment of Red Skulls has at least one wizard, who would think of taking to the field without one? Though not always reliable, they are often seen as a form of insurance—you never know when the enemy is going to suddenly produce some sort of arcane attack, and if you don't have someone there to deal with it, you'll wish you did.

**Instinct:** To make easy money throwing spells around a battlefield.

**Attacks:**

- Battle magic (1d10 damage; near and either close or far).

**Moves:**

- Call soldiers to defend them.
- Cast a minor scrying spell.
- Cast a spell that replaces honest work.
- Counter another wizard's spell.

**Tactics:**

*When they can be seen:* Throw magic down upon them.

*When they get close:* Flee to a safe distance, then use magic again.

**Weaknesses:**

Though Red Skull wizards are trained in battle magic, they are by and large a cowardly lot, ill-prepared to fight with arms. This job is seen as an easy way to make money by a certain type of callous, thrill seeking student of the arcane.

Roll a d12 for what kind of battle magic a wizard uses:

<b>1</b> Acid arrow.	<b>7</b> Frost beam.
<b>2</b> Blinding flash.	<b>8</b> Heat ray.
<b>3</b> Crystal shards.	<b>9</b> Invisible force.
<b>4</b> Entropic influence.	<b>10</b> Lightning bolt.
<b>5</b> Exploding earth.	<b>11</b> Poison cloud.
<b>6</b> Fireball.	<b>12</b> Sickening darts.





# Sprite Collectors

# Wretched of the Earth

In Moreau County, poor people who have no other options become sprite collectors, scouring the swamplands at night for magical sprites, which they capture and sell at the secret market in the woods. While the prices commanded by the captured sprites can be surprisingly substantial, the work is dangerous and has harsh consequences. The swamp is haunted by wild animals, by witches, by thaumaturgists looking for subjects to experiment on, and—worse yet—by monsters, raised from beneath the waves or coming shambling down the mountain, summoned by those very same witches.

But monsters and thaumaturgists are not the only dangers. The arcane nature of the swamp and its fae inhabitants causes the sprite collectors to become stunted and deformed over time, twisting into inhuman shapes. Sometimes they disappear suddenly, in the swamp at night. Others say they haven't really disappeared, just transformed into animals because they just failed to quit before it was too late.

Civilized people shun the sprite collectors, reviling them as disgusting mutants. At the market in the woods, they know where they stand, despite the many strange and monstrous creatures that buy and sell there. Everyone knows the sprites are valuable, and the collectors are treated accordingly. The market offers a respite from the persecution these collectors usually face.

Sprite collectors usually organize themselves into small bands. The lone wolf is at a distinct disadvantage, hunting beneath the trees at night. Some of these bands adorn themselves with fanciful names, and a few have colourful reputations for charity or violence. Sometimes gangs of sprite collectors will hire themselves out as mercenaries, fighting for local crime bosses, when street brawling and extortion are less dangerous than their normal line of work.

In the end, though, it is a thankless job. Dying of drink at a young age or bleeding out in the gutter are the usual ways a sprite collector goes if they manage to not end up lost to the swamp. Rare is the one who gets out with a fat purse and their humanity intact!

**SPRITE COLLECTOR**

6 HP ○ Armour

*Group, Hoarder, Intelligent, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Mutant.

Normally, sprite collectors band together into small groups. Rarely are they solitary, for the swamp is too dangerous. Neither are they particularly violent, though they do what they can to protect their catch if they are attacked for it. Some groups are known to be thieves and are avoided by the others.

**Instinct:** To stay alive.**Attacks:**

- Weapon (1d4 damage; close).

**Moves:**

- Ambush a foe in the swamp.
- Capture sprites.
- Hide.
- Run away.

**Tactics**

Sprite collectors all have their own techniques to get sprites, but most have to make up their fighting tactics on the spot, or through trial and error. None of them have it down like professionals do.

**Weaknesses**

Sprite collectors are poor. Usually the only reason they work this job is because they have no other prospects. Most villages drive them out, and they have no political voice in this area.

## Templates

Not all sprite collectors are the same. Those with particular specialties have additional skills. Crew leaders, dead-enders, long-term survivors, veterans, and those possessed by demons all have their own special characteristics added to the base stats above.

**CREW LEADER***Organized.***Instinct:** To overcome by a clever plan.

- Bribe a local official.
- Call upon another swamp dweller for a favour.
- Organize a gang of sprite collectors.

Running a crew of sprite collectors is like herding cats. This business is so competitive, it breeds backstabbers and ratfuckers like rotting meat breeds flies. You need to be clever and savvy to gather some of them together in order to work together. This profession is full of nihilists.

**DEAD-ENDER**

**Instinct:** To challenge fate and spit in Death's eye.

- Charge into a trap.
- Fight like a wild animal (1d6 damage; close).
- Take a risk.

Just because you can't win doesn't mean you can get out. Or quit. Some collectors just let their rage build up until they can't take it anymore and they stop caring about getting out at all.

**LONG-TERM SURVIVOR**

*Devious.*

**Instinct:** To minimize risks and survive.

- Avoid a swamp danger.
- Bargain like a pro.
- Save loot in a secret cache.

Some sprite collectors are just natural-born survivors. Even after they've lost their humanity altogether, they still want to live well. And they can, too, if they work hard enough—because they know how to do this job the right way. Not like these other losers.

**POSSESSED**

+4 HP, +2 armour.

*Devious, Divine, Solitary.*

**Instinct:** To spread corruption.

- Shrug off mortal wounds.
- Spout "divine" prophecy.
- Summon infernal powers.

When you work within the sphere of malevolent arcane influence, sometimes you get burned, and burned real bad.

**VETERAN**

+1 armour

**Instinct:** To make money.

- Attack a foe as a group (1d8 damage; close).
- Capture a foe with nets and ropes.
- Knock a foe into the water.

More than just a survivor, the veteran knows how to work with other long-term sprite collectors, and how to come out on top by doing so. Don't mess with a crew of veterans—they know how to defend what's theirs.

## Mutations

The life of a sprite collector takes a heavy toll on one's humanity. If the PCs decide to try their hand at catching sprites, in order to make a bit of coin, use this custom move:

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**When you encounter sprites in the swamp**, roll+CON. **On a 10+**, you can feel the arcane energies in the air around you, but you can shake off any ill effects other than goosebumps. **On a 7-9**, you feel weird: take -1 forward or mark corruption. **On a miss**, mark corruption.

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If they spend downtime collecting sprites as a way to survive—or to gain more mutations in some perversely inhuman quest—use this, much simpler, move instead:

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**When you spend a month living as a sprite collector**, gain 1d6 corruption.

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Whenever you have 5 corruption marks, you immediately erase all your marks and gain a new level of mutation. Roll 1d12 to see what area of your body is affected:

<b>1-4</b> Arms.	<b>9-11</b> Legs.
<b>5-6</b> Body.	<b>12</b> Other.
<b>7-8</b> Face.	

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**When you gain your first level of mutation**, roll to see what kind of animal you begin transforming into. Each time you gain an additional mutation, roll 1d6 to see if it is the same animal type or a different one:

- |   |
|---|
| <b>1-2</b> New, random animal. This feature combines with the other mutant features you already have. |
| <b>3-5</b> Original animal type.  |
| <b>6</b> Random animal type that you have previously manifested.                                      |
-

## Mutated Arms

**Level One:** Your hands begin to resemble those of the animal, but are still fundamentally human. Your manual dexterity is unaffected.

**Level Two:** Your entire arms begin to resemble those of the animal, especially the skin, but still work like human arms.

**Level Three:** Your arms are now half-way between those of the animal and those of a human. If the animal has worse manual dexterity than a person does, so do you.

**Level Four:** Your arms are now almost exactly like those of the animal, but might be better-proportioned to the rest of your body.

**Instead of advancing to level five,** roll a different area to mutate.

## Mutated Body

**Level One:** Your post changes and you gain some cosmetic features of the animal on your chest or back.

**Level Two:** Your torso resembles that of the animal but still functions like that of a human.

**Level Three:** Your torso is almost exactly like that of the animal.

**Level Four:** Both your torso and the skin all over your body is like that of the animal.

**Instead of advancing to level five,** roll a different area to mutate.

## Mutated Face

**Level One:** Your facial features resemble that of the animal, though you still look like a human.

**Level Two:** The most prominent features of the animal's face (beak, giant ears, snout, etc) are now present on your face.

**Level Three:** Your face looks almost exactly like that of the animal, though you can still speak like a human.

**Level Four:** Your face and head are almost exactly like that of the animal, and you are unable to make human sounds or even think like a human anymore.

**Instead of advancing to level five,** roll a different area to mutate.



## Mutated Legs

**Level One:** Your feet begin to resemble those of the animal, but are still fundamentally human. You have no problems walking or playing sports.

**Level Two:** Your entire legs begin to resemble those of the animal, especially the skin, but still work like human legs. Getting properly fitted for shoes and boots costs double the normal price.

**Level Three:** Your legs are now half-way between those of the animal and those of a human. You may experience some difficulty in the way they function.

**Level Four:** Your legs are now almost exactly like those of the animal, but might be better-proportioned to the rest of your body.

**Instead of advancing to level five,** roll a different area to mutate.

<b>1</b>	Acidic saliva.	<b>16</b>	Long tongue.
<b>2</b>	Adhesive touch.	<b>17</b>	More limbs.
<b>3</b>	Albinism.	<b>18</b>	New sensory organs.
<b>4</b>	Allergies.	<b>19</b>	Pouch.
<b>5</b>	Antennas or eye stalks.	<b>20</b>	Prehensile feet.
<b>6</b>	Bioluminescence.	<b>21</b>	Radula.
<b>7</b>	Carnivore.	<b>22</b>	Shedding.
<b>8</b>	Chameleoline skin.	<b>23</b>	Shell.
<b>9</b>	Cilia.	<b>24</b>	Slimy skin.
<b>10</b>	Double jointed.	<b>25</b>	Small size.
<b>11</b>	Hallucinogenic.	<b>26</b>	Spore production.
<b>12</b>	Herbivore.	<b>27</b>	Strange colouration.
<b>13</b>	Hemophilia.	<b>28</b>	Strange scent.
<b>14</b>	Large size.	<b>29</b>	Venom.
<b>15</b>	Light sensitivity.	<b>30</b>	Weird interior organs.

## Animals

Roll 1d100 to determine what type of animal your mutations resemble:


<b>1</b>	Albatross	<b>32</b>	Eagle
<b>2</b>	Alligator	<b>33</b>	Eel
<b>3</b>	Anteater	<b>34</b>	Elephant
<b>4</b>	Antelope	<b>35</b>	Ferret
<b>5</b>	Archaeopteryx	<b>36</b>	Fish
<b>6</b>	Armadillo	<b>37</b>	Fox
<b>7</b>	Axolotl	<b>38</b>	Frog
<b>8</b>	Baboon	<b>39</b>	Gecko
<b>9</b>	Badger	<b>40</b>	Goat
<b>10</b>	Bat	<b>41</b>	Gopher
<b>11</b>	Bear	<b>42</b>	Gorilla
<b>12</b>	Beaver	<b>43</b>	Grasshopper
<b>13</b>	Beetle	<b>44</b>	Hagfish
<b>14</b>	Buffalo	<b>45</b>	Hawk
<b>15</b>	Bullfrog	<b>46</b>	Hedgehog
<b>16</b>	Cat	<b>47</b>	Hippopotamus
<b>17</b>	Centipede	<b>48</b>	Hornet
<b>18</b>	Chameleon	<b>49</b>	Horse
<b>19</b>	Cockroach	<b>50</b>	Hyena
<b>20</b>	Coral	<b>51</b>	Ibis
<b>21</b>	Coyote	<b>52</b>	Iguanadon
<b>22</b>	Crane	<b>53</b>	Jackal
<b>23</b>	Crocodile	<b>54</b>	Jaybird
<b>24</b>	Crow	<b>55</b>	Leopard
<b>25</b>	Cuttlefish	<b>56</b>	Lion
<b>26</b>	Deer	<b>57</b>	Lizard
<b>27</b>	Dinosaur	<b>58</b>	Lobster
<b>28</b>	Dog	<b>59</b>	Lynx
<b>29</b>	Dolphin	<b>60</b>	Mantis
<b>30</b>	Dove	<b>61</b>	Mink
<b>31</b>	Duck	<b>62</b>	Mongoose

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<b>63</b> Monkey	<b>82</b> Salamander
<b>64</b> Moose	<b>83</b> Scorpion
<b>65</b> Narwhal	<b>84</b> Skunk
<b>66</b> Newt	<b>85</b> Sloth
<b>67</b> Nudibranch	<b>86</b> Slug
<b>68</b> Octopus	<b>87</b> Snail
<b>69</b> Orangutan	<b>88</b> Snake
<b>70</b> Owl	<b>89</b> Spider
<b>71</b> Parrot	<b>90</b> Squirrel
<b>72</b> Peacock	<b>91</b> Starfish
<b>73</b> Pig	<b>92</b> Swan
<b>74</b> Platypus	<b>93</b> Toad
<b>75</b> Prawn	<b>94</b> Turkey
<b>76</b> Pterodactyl	<b>95</b> Turtle
<b>77</b> Puffin	<b>96</b> Vulture
<b>78</b> Rabbit	<b>97</b> Walrus
<b>79</b> Raccoon	<b>98</b> Weasel
<b>80</b> Rat	<b>99</b> Wolf
<b>81</b> Rhinoceros	<b>100</b> Wombat

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Thaumaturgy  
Crew

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**BASHA**

6 HP ○ Armour

*Intelligent, Magical, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Never sober.

As a handsome, golden-haired youth, Basha dreamed of joining the Royal Hussars, but his family sent him to the College of Wizardry instead, for a profitable career and to keep him out of the war.

But he was drafted anyway. In the engineering corps he saw crowds become rivers of melting flesh in cities on fire. He walked past harvests ruined by magical frosts and whole regiments of peasants turned completely black with frostbite scattered across them. Unharmful through most of it, he finally burned his face besieging a castle weeks after the peace treaty was signed because the duke that led his troops didn't feel like he was finished yet.

Now he runs with the Thaumaturgy Crew, vacillating between remorse for the cruelty these callous adventurers inflict on innocent people and trying to prove his worth by outdoing his comrades. He wears bandages on his face because the alchemical fumes irritate his burns, but he never complains. It's a living, and living is better than dying, even when it's drowning at the bottom of a bottle.

**Instinct:** To take what he wants from those who have more.

**Attacks:**

- Spiked crowbar (w[2d8]+2 damage; close).

**Moves:**

- Brew potions.
- Conjure fire.
- Get drunk.

**Tactics:**

*In a fight:* Go crazy, scream and yell.

*When consciousness returns:* Have a drink or three.

*When danger looms:* Have a few more drinks and get ready.

**Weaknesses:**

Basha does not have the heart for adventure. He needs alcohol or stronger stuff in order to be violent. At the same time, he feels obliged to do whatever Winston orders him to do. He never shirks or runs unless he is all out of liquid courage, but that courage makes him careless and wool-headed, too.



**COEMENWELL**

6 HP 1 Armour

*Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Strange wizardry.

He used to have dreams of making a difference, of discovering things that amazed people, of having medals pinned to his chest. But these days, Coemenwell's pretty tired of it all. He's not a cruel man, and he doesn't get off making other people suffer, but the people he works with do, and he doesn't have the fire in his belly to care anymore. If this is what it takes to make enough coins to rub together, so be it. None of those other people are paying him a wage, they just look down at their noses at him and his weird magic. They can go to hell.

**Instinct:** To take what he can get, and fuck everyone else.**Attacks:**

- Brass knuckles (w[2d8]+2 damage; hand).

**Moves:**

- Defeat magical barriers, using special tools.
- Disassemble a trap, using special tools.
- Produce powders that reveal what is hidden.

**Tactics:***When a job needs doing:* Be workmanlike about it, and get it done.*When they are wealthy:* Stand up to them, show them who's boss.**Weaknesses:**

Coemenwell is very sensitive when it comes to how society perceives him. When he works his magic, his eyes glow red and his skull extends into a cone shape, which is why he wears a tall cowl. This was considered a flaw in his technique, and he was seen as a freak by his peers and mentors. His job prospects in the private sector suffered as a result.

When it comes to the wealthy—or even the middle classes—he has a definite chip on his shoulder. The only thing that gets him excited these days, other than a massive pile of treasure, is the chance to give his arrogant betters their comeuppance.



**DOCTOR MORMIIS**

6 HP 1 Armour

*Devious, Intelligent, Magical.***Special Qualities:** Blind, Psychic sight, Scarred.

When they made him the subject of their alchemical experiments, it didn't hurt any less just because he had volunteered for it. At some point, he decided it should stop. So it did. But what if they kept their secrets? He couldn't let that happen! So he took their eyes away, the things they had probed him with, the things they peered into his insides with. And that was a revelation to him.

In order to see with greater psychic clarity, he took his own eyes out as well. They never gave him his degree, but he took it from them all the same. Now he is a doctor, a transmuter of substances, a true philosopher. Now he is the one performing experiments! What fun! It is all such an amusing turn of events. Who could have predicted this? Toro, perhaps, but that is funny all on its own.

**Instinct:** To study the psychic effects of pain and horror.**Attacks:**

- Scalpel (1d6 damage, 2 piercing; close).

**Moves:**

- Conceive of intricate tortures.
- Dictate alchemical treatises for Winston to transcribe.
- Laugh maniacally.
- Perceive the psychic otherworld.
- Sense a foe's weakness.

**Tactics:***When their aura is notable:* Study their reactions, use torture.*When they have something valuable:* Assist the Thaumaturgy Crew in obtaining it.**Weaknesses:**

To deal with the pain he was subjected to, Doctor Mormiis reimagined himself as merely a cold instrument. Human connections are beyond him now, though he understands he needs to work with Winston in order to continue experimenting. But without Winston, he has no one to protect him from the authorities, because he does not know how to hide from them.





**LISELLE**

6 HP 1 Armour

*Cautious, Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Alchemical addiction.

Liselle never wanted to be popular, or celebrated, or different. She just wanted people to leave her in peace. She got her doctorate from the College of Wizardry without ever making much of an impression, or raising anyone's interest. Most of her instructors mistook her for a man. Many people still do. She doesn't care.

She also doesn't mind having to associate with other arcanists, even though they tend to attract a lot of attention. The real problem is that they guard their successes jealously, never letting anyone else share in the spoils. The Thaumaturgy Crew isn't like that. They have hubris and incompetence in equal measures, so when they reach too far, Liselle is there to pick up the pieces—and make the money—without having to face the dangers.

**Instinct:** To pick clean the bodies of the rash and the foolhardy.**Attacks:**

- Burning potion (1d8 damage, ignores armour, messy; close, reach).
- Knife (1d6 damage; close).

**Moves:**

- Brew potions.
- Encourage others to act rashly.
- Lurk inconspicuously.
- Steal something small.

**Tactics:***When a fight breaks out:* Hide behind someone else.*When something is dangerous:* Get someone else to do it.*When they fall:* Loot the bodies.**Weaknesses:**

Liselle is only comfortable acting in a support capacity. She refuses to take point on anything, and if she cannot find someone else to do it, she takes off. She hates taking risks herself. That's what other people are for.



**MISTER PRYCE**

6 HP ○ Armour

*Intelligent, Magical, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Magical items.

Even in a crew full of fuck-ups, Mister Pryce stands out as the deathwish burnout extraordinaire. He has decided he's too old to ever retire, so he's going to leave this world in a blaze of fury, and it shows. This world refuses to appreciate his genius, and he's tired of it. Now he lashes out, and he's been getting away with it, too, thanks to his magical items.

He likes to look like a rich man, because he never was, and is prone to murdering wealthy people he meets in order to avail himself of their clothes and other possessions. He has no idea how to actually act like someone with money, maintain his own appearance, or interact socially with people in a civilized or dignified manner.

**Instinct:** To take what he wants from those who have more.

**Attacks:**

- Head butt (1d8 damage, forceful; hand).
- Heat ray (1d8 damage, ignores armour; near).

**Moves:**

- Brew alchemical potions.
- Cackle and monologue like a maniac.
- Find a way out.
- Use a magical item.

**Tactics:**

*When a fight breaks out:* Blast everything with the ray!

*When their numbers are truly overwhelming:* Take the hat's advice and get out alive.

*When they have something nice:* Take it away!

**Weaknesses:**

Mister Pryce has poor impulse control. He wants to crush his enemies like bugs, even though his hat keeps telling him when to run away. He wants to take things from the rich, even though it gets him into trouble and he doesn't know what to do with them once he has them. He hates being mocked and taunted. It is simplicity itself to lure him into a trap.



Mister Pryce owes the success of his late-career self-destruction spree largely to his possession of a **pair of magical items**. Without these, he would have been captured by the local authorities a dozen times over and hanged for his crimes. But he has a **magical hat** that allows him to escape from them, and a **magical staff** that allows him to work his alchemy, and makes him an attractive hire to someone like Winston, the Thaumaturgy Crew's leader.

## Dysonian Horn Hat

The **arcane lenses** attached to the horn hat allow the wearer to see clearly to the edge of the horizon, as well as enlarging tiny objects so they can be thoroughly examined. The insides of the hat also sharpen the wearer's mental abilities, pattern recognition, and flight responses, giving them additional insight into the nature of their own situation. It is not only good for studying objects!

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**When you closely study something while wearing the Dysonian horn hat**, in addition to any other questions, you may always ask the GM "how do I get out of this situation?" and the GM will tell you. Take +1 forward if you act on the answer.

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Because the Dysonian horn hat is made of the **bones** of some ancient beast, it also acts as head protection. Any attack or accident that targets the head is deflected harmlessly, as long as it is solid and not made of something like acid or lightning.

## Palsargian Eye Staff

The eye on the end of this staff is actually a **hollow glass sphere** that only appears to be an eye. It blends and cooks alchemical ingredients placed inside it, so that Mister Pryce may perform experiments in the field, without needing to carry lab equipment around.

The eye also emits **red-hot rays** of burrowing energy. Mister Pryce has become skilled at using this power, but any who take the staff from him may not have such an easy time of it.

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**When you command the Palsargian staff to emit its deadly eye rays**, roll+INT. **On a 7+**, you may deal **1d10** damage to any one target, but **on a 7-9**, the ray also affects another target of the GM's choice. **On a miss**, you lose control of the staff.

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**TORO**

10 HP 1 Armour

*Intelligent, Magical, Stealthy.***Special Qualities:** Alchemically altered, High as a kite, Prophetic visions, Superhuman strength and speed.

Toro learned the alchemical arts from her father, but she never wanted a wizard school degree. Who needs a piece of paper when you can get high and see other worlds? They tried to keep her in the world of the waking—tedious men, old and preaching or young and desirous of her hand. She once recalled their boring words and the proper responses, but no longer. After all, who needs a life when you can get high and see other worlds?

Now she lives in a world of perpetual magic, the visions all around her. The past, the present, the future—who can say which is which now? How many times did she see Mister Pryce kill that merchant? Which was real, which a vision, which a memory? She saw it happen once, she knew it would happen again, that's how it works. They wore the same clothes, too, or they do now. Did they always? Did they ever? *Are these people even real?*

**Instinct:** To push this drug trip as far as it will go.**Attacks:**

- Dagger (1d8+2 damage, 1 piercing, forceful, messy; close).

**Moves:**

- Brew vapours.
- Move like lightning, silent as the night.
- Leap over barriers and obstacles.
- See possible futures.

**Tactics:***When danger appears:* Look for a way to challenge it.*When a fight starts:* Go straight for the enemy leader, never pause, always attack.*When they die in a vision:*

Consider them dead.

**Weaknesses:**

In addition to superhuman abilities, the constant exposure to powerful alchemical fumes has distorted Toro's sense of reality. She is constantly performing odd rituals—counting objects like the vampires of legend—and making bizarre pieces of art.



**WINSTON**

6 HP 2 Armour

*Cautious, Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Magical, Organized.***Special Qualities:** Alchemically altered, Psychic powers.

When Winston discovered the market in the woods, he realized the massive untapped potential there. He could open up new markets for alchemical ingredients that weren't restricted by human morality. He could obtain substances no other human had access to—substances that the rich would pay handsomely for. All he needed was a crew to help him out, so he rounded up the bottom of the barrel. His crew represents the broken shards of wizardry, those who couldn't make it in society. Maybe they can succeed outside that cage.

**Instinct:** To keep the crew together.

**Attacks:**

- Mental hammer (1d6+2 damage, forceful; near).

**Moves:**

- Brew alchemical potions and vapours.
- Contact wealthy buyers for alchemical products.
- Hatch a clever plan.
- Lay a hidden trap for foes.
- Move an object from afar by telekinesis.
- Psychically alter the substance of matter.

**Tactics:**

*When the crew falls apart:* Urge and cajole them back together.

*When the enemy is too strong:* Get an exit strategy and use it.

*When they have alchemical ingredients:* Take their stuff, by hook or by crook.

**Weaknesses:**

Winston's mask is the source of his powers—or rather the vaporous alchemies he puts inside it are. As a side effect of these fumes he is always huffing, he is prone to throwing childish tantrums. He knows about this problem but cannot control it. The problem he has that he does not realize is that his entire sense of self-worth is tied up in being the leader of the Thaumaturgy Crew. He is trying to surpass this achievement by summoning a demon, a risky proposition at best.



## Winston's Demon

Selling foraged alchemical regents has not been the cash-cow Winston had hoped it would be, even when combined with the occasional robbery. He has decided to gain power the old-fashioned way: through demonology!

An old manuscript containing a ritual showed him what ingredients he needs to perform the ritual. The other crew members have been convinced to follow this plan through a combination of bribes and deceptions. Not all of them know what the ritual will summon.

**Type:** Thieves' Guild (ambitious organization).

**Impulse:** To take shortcuts to power.

### GRIM PORTENTS

- Winston finds old manuscripts in the local church archives.
- Urns full of mummy dust go missing from the alchemist's shop.
- A foreign merchant is found murdered in Townhaven, the morning after arriving.
- The Thaumaturgy Crew openly attacks Doctor Kellad's house so they can break into his basement and dig up the woman buried there four hundred years ago.
- Winston presides over a magical ritual in the Spritewood.

**Impending Doom:** Winston summons the demon Salxrizan, and it is free to roam the material plane unfettered.

### Cast

- The alchemist.
- **Doctor Kellad**, local homeowner.
- **Jaxon Cho**, local sheriff who tries to stop the crew.
- The Thaumaturgy Crew.

---

**When you perform the ritual to summon Salxrizan, roll+INT. On a 10+, choose one:**

- Salxrizan must perform two favours and is then freed from bondage, able to roam the material plane at will.
- Salxrizan must perform a single favour before being banished back to whence it came.

**On a 7-9, Salxrizan must perform one favour and is then free. On a miss, you get no favours and no protection from the demon.**

---

## The Reign of Salxrizan

This shapechanging corpse-demon has a plan for the hamlet of Townhaven, but it is not a very subtle one. In the dark of night, it raids a few homes and kills the inhabitants, turning one or two into zombies so they can pretend everything is still normal in front of the neighbours. It wants a human cult to help it undertake the project.

**Basha** runs away and tries to warn people. This is not that easy, because he also tries to drown himself in alcohol. He can't warn anyone when he's passed out in the gutter.

**Coemenwell** goes along with it until he sees a chance to escape. Then he returns to the Thaumaturgy Guild and rats the rest of his crew out to the bosses, urging them to take action, though mostly because he wants to avoid suffering repercussions of any kind.

**Doctor Mormiis** and **Toro** both swear allegiance to Salxrizan in exchange for visions of the infernal planes. Neither care much for temporal power, so their loyalty cannot be bought this way—but the promise of knowledge is something they cannot refuse.

**Mister Pryce**, on the other hand, is all about the power. He does anything the demon tells him to do, as long as he gets to harm people more affluent and successful than he is.

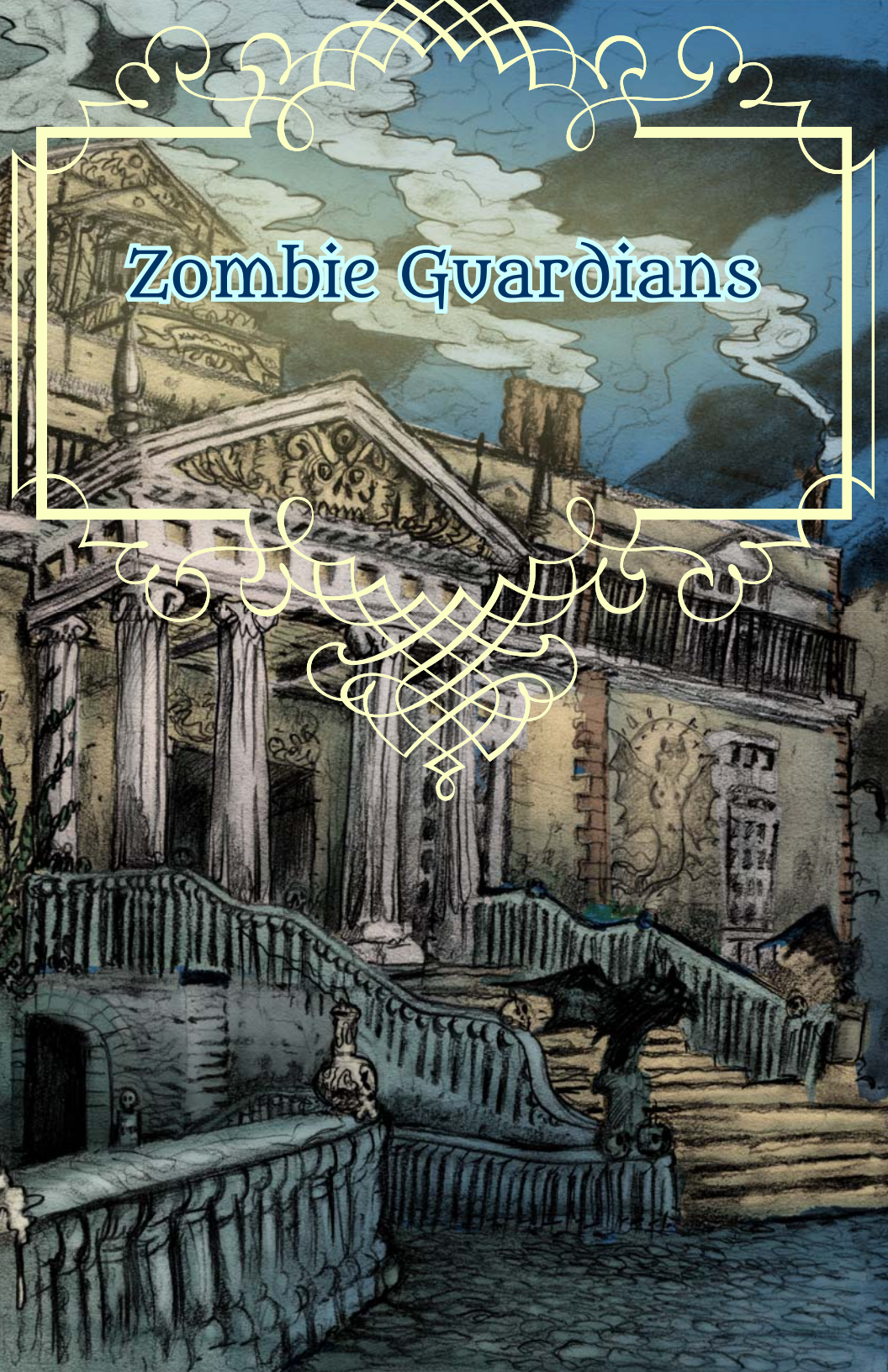
Unlike the rest of the crew, **Winston** must flee for his life. Having asked the demon for a favour and tried to bind it to his will, he earns its undying enmity. He cannot even trust the rest of his crew, as they either abandon him to his fate or join the demon against him.

As for the demon **Salxrizan** itself, even once summoned, it is still tied to Almohad's tomb and cannot leave the local area. The Spritewood and its mountain are not enough for it, with or without the market in the woods, so it works to ensure its own freedom.





# Zombie Guardians



# The Mansion

Everyone speaks of **Lothar Nebramos**, the cruel and vindictive—and ridiculously wealthy—merchant of iron, slaves, and stolen land, in tones that are equal parts awe struck and resentful. He has few friends but many allies, and even more enemies, even though he destroys them as quickly as they pop up.

Lothar lives in a fabulous mansion—the **Zubinhall**, he calls it—full of riches and wealth beyond wealth. Thieves the world over dream of breaking in, but few have ever managed it successfully. Lothar spends fortunes on magical defences, especially since the Red Fox made off with his prized sculpture (a forest nymph carved from Saturnian alabaster). Rumour has it he has been travelling to the secret market in the woods to consort with the Cerulean Necromancer. Who would dare to cross someone so dangerous?

**Black Thomas** would, and he wants your help. Would you join him? He proposes a raid on the Zubinhall, even as Lothar Nebramos is away—at the market in the woods, even—that will make all who participate rich beyond imagination. He has a fence lined up, someone who knows many wizards who desire what arcane trinkets Lothar has hidden away. And every thief worth his salt knows what to do with mundane gold and jewels.

---

## LOTHAR NEBRAMOS

12 HP ○ Armour

*Devious, Hoarder, Intelligent, Organized, Solitary.*

**Special Qualities:** Extremely wealthy, Magical defences.

---

Lothar is not a great fighter, but he is sure to employ those who are.

**Instinct:** To take what is valuable.

### Attacks:

- Attack dog (1d10+2 damage; close, reach).

### Moves:

- Appraise goods.
- Command guards to attack or seize goods.
- Let loose the attack dogs.
- Offer a bribe.

### Tactics:

*If they can be cowed by authority:* Purchase authority.

*When they are thieves:* Buy vengeance and enjoy it.

*When they have something valuable:* Scheme to obtain it.

---

**When you join Black Thomas' raid**, roll+WIS. **On a 10+**, you've come prepared. Choose one from each list below:

- You brought a charm against ghosts. As long as you wear it, the angry dead will pass you by in preference for others.
- You brought a small pouch of powdered black lotus, Thomas' drug of choice—or rather, the monkey he can never kick.
- You brought a vial of holy water, guaranteed by the priest who supplied it to destroy the undead.

**On a 7-9**, you made sure to ask around. Choose one:

- You discovered the source of Black Thomas's debts (the GM will tell you).
- You found out who Lothar's neighbours are (the GM will tell you).
- You learned what time Lothar should be returning (the GM will tell you), even though Black Thomas did not.

**On a miss**, Black Thomas puts you on point and you accept. You're among the first into Lothar's mansion on that dark, moonless night, and only when you get inside do you finally realize that you have no idea what's in here...

---

## Questions

- How do you know Black Thomas? Who vouched for him/you?
- Who do you know in this area and why are you reluctant to get in touch with them?
- Who do you know personally that has run afoul of Lothar Nebramos?
- Why did you swear never to pull another heist in this region? What brought you back into The Life here?

**Black Thomas borrowed money in order to...** (roll 1d8):

---

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> buy drugs.         | <b>5</b> learn psychic powers. |
| <b>2</b> buy magical items. | <b>6</b> marry a courtesan.    |
| <b>3</b> exorcise a demon.  | <b>7</b> pay a ransom.         |
| <b>4</b> hire an assassin.  | <b>8</b> spend it gambling.    |
- 

**What are *your* debts from?**

## What Lurks Inside

Once inside the Zubinhall, thieves find that they are not alone with Lothar's many riches. He has left someone behind to greet them. It calls out in hushed tones: "How can I help you?" "Please come in." "Are you in need of refreshment" "Allow me to take your coat."

---

### ZOMBIE GUARDIAN

20 HP 2 Armour

*Construct, Large, Magical, Solitary, Stealthy, Terrifying.*

**Special Qualities:** Undead.

---

The four ghouls sprouting from the torso of the gigantic reptile are unfailingly polite, beckoning a visitor inside the mansion, asking to take their coats, if they desire refreshing beverages, etc. But when they get within grasping range, they tear into flesh and rend through bones. The reptilian legs trample intruders to dust.

**Instinct:** To destroy intruders.

#### Attacks:

- Rend and trample (b[2d10]+3 damage, forceful; close, reach).

#### Moves:

- Beckon politely.
- Grab a foe and tear into them with ragged nails.
- Offer refreshments.
- Trample a foe underfoot.

#### Tactics:

*If they are guests of Lothar Nebramos:* Ignore them.

*If they intrude into the mansion:* Attack and destroy them.

*If they look like they are about to intrude into the mansion:* Beckon them inside, then attack them.

#### Weaknesses:

This guardian is tied to the Zubinhall by sorcery. It cannot leave the house, even to pursue fleeing intruders. Using long-range weapons or magic against it from the outside can be highly effective.

---

**After being wounded by the zombie guardian, roll+CON. On a 10+, your wounds are not infected. On a 7-9, your wounds become inflamed and you suffer another 1d8 damage, unless you receive proper healing immediately. On a miss, you have contracted grave rot. These wounds will not heal until you find a cure.**

---

When slain, only the reptile body of the zombie guardian dies. The four ghoulish humanoids attached to it grow legs and separate, becoming zombie revengers.



## Revenge Upon the Living

When the zombie guardian is defeated, only the reptilian part of it is slain. The four humanoid attached to it become independent, free to revenge themselves upon the living!

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### ZOMBIE REVENGER

12 HP ○ Armour

*Construct, Intelligent, Magical, Solitary, Stealthy.*

**Special Qualities:** Undead.

---

The revengers have much the same abilities they did when they were attached to the reptile body (they still cause grave rot), but now they have a renewed sense of purpose, and each has its own modus operandi to pursue.

**Instinct:** To revenge itself upon the living.

**Attacks:**

- Claws and teeth (1d10 damage; close).

**Moves:**

- Offer assistance, advice, or pleasantries.
- Rend the flesh of a foe and devour it.
- Speak like a living person.

**Tactics:**

Zombie revengers still retain aspects of the personality they had in life, only it is twisted and deformed by the magic of undeath. It uses whatever shreds of humanity it has left to lure people toward it so it can kill them.

**Weaknesses:**

The sun shines its judgment down upon the undead and they cringe away from its divine wrath. Zombie revengers try to stay out of daylight as much as they possible can. The light upon their bodies causes them pain and is highly distracting. They would rather stay inside or operate under the cover of night instead.

## The Butler

This revenger chooses a wealthy house, much-visited by others. It breaks in, slays the inhabitants, and waits for guests. It poses as the butler and ushers arrivals in, entertains them to enjoy some refreshments, and tries to take their coats—and then it takes their lives. As the revenger is still a ghoul, it is not a very convincing disguise.

## The Critic

This revenger stalks artists, poets, and other creative types. It will show up at a studio in the middle of the night and be politely critical of the artistry on display. It will start critiquing anything that happens around it, as it draws nearer to a victim. Even in the midst of a fight, it makes disparaging remarks about being so *very* disappointed with its victim.

## The Pastor

This revenger stalks back alleys in the night, looking for drunks, ne'er-do-wells, and other sinners. It offers them confession and absolution from the shadows, hiding its rotting face behind charity and polite conversation. If the unfortunate victim goes to it, they are never seen alive again.

## The Victim

This revenger sneaks off into the darkness to wait for passers-by. When the living approach, it cries out, pleading and whispering for help. When approached, it attacks. But even in the midst of lethal violence, it continues begging and pleading. “Please help me, I’m trapped. I lost my dog. My son is injured and I need to get him to a healer. If they find me, they’ll kill me, I need to hide.” These words mean nothing.

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# The End.