

VILLAIN SPOTLIGHT

Jaxi the Blightgunner

The swamps of Chokewater have always been filled with death and decay. Its fetid waters stink, and a mixture of rot and foul vegetation permeates the air with virulent gases that can induce hallucinations, stifle the lungs, and catch aflame. Worse yet is that deep within its rotting fens there lurks a foul, nebulous intelligence hostile to all outside life. Sixteen years ago the situation deteriorated even further when a fallen mercenary, left for dead after a brutal battle, struck a bargain with the fell power in the swamps and truly turned them into a place of nightmares. Now they are the domain of Jaxi, the Blightgunner of Chokewater, and she is explosive, poisonous death to any who would enter her corrupted and fiercely protected lair.



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Background

Jaxi (“YOK-see”) Marancinax was once a successful mercenary. One of the officers in a company called the Gray Fangs, she led her squad of dragonborn soldiers with efficiency and tactical brilliance. They operated mostly as scouts and infiltrators, penetrating behind enemy lines to gather information or to sow terror and chaos—and they were brutally effective at their job.

That all changed in the Third Battle of Ranzfel. Jaxi’s unit had a simple mission: to make sure a supply train moving through Chokewater, the site of the Second Battle of Ranzfel, never made it out the other side. Her team accomplished their mission, crippling and trapping the supply column in the swamp, but the combination of the rotting casualties from the previous battle and the new violence awakened something ancient and terrible in the swamps.

Eight horrific days of fighting followed as the darkness within the swamp, Jaxi’s forces, and the defenders of the supply column waged a vicious three-way battle. No quarter was asked, and none was given. Nearly everyone on all sides involved in the fighting perished and Jaxi, badly wounded, slipped into unconsciousness. She awoke some time later, surrounded by corpses and the remains of the supply train she and her unit had attacked. As she picked through the wreckage and corpses she became aware of a dark, predatory presence in the swamp, along with an understanding that it would grant her power if she would stay and become the new guardian of its home.

With her unit dead and her home on the other side of a hostile army, Jaxi accepted the offer.

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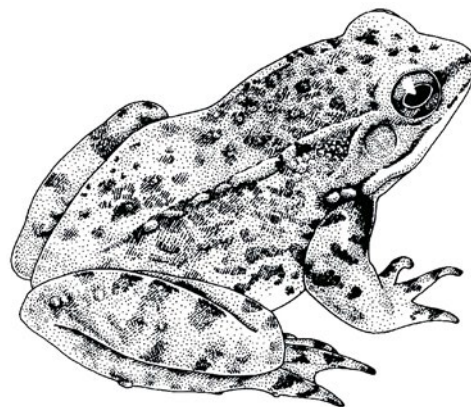
Description

Jaxi is a physically-imposing, muscular dragonborn of black dragon heritage. Her face is even more skull-like and fearsome than is normal, and she has a palpable aura of malevolence to her. The left side of her body has several patches of paler scales—burn scars she received in her days as a mercenary—and when she uses her magic, glowing crimson veins appear across her scaly skin.

She wears old half-plate armor from her mercenary days, dressing in browns and greens to better blend into her environment. Over time she has modified several pieces of equipment to better suit the environment she inhabits, and thick tendrils of thorny vines cross her armor and body. The dark power she draws from the swamps doesn’t like her use of metal armor and firearms very much, but she has forced the two opposed techniques together by sheer force of will (and at some personal cost) to create a lethal combat style that is uniquely hers.

Motivations

Jaxi has two primary motivations: keep her power and find some way to get out of Chokewater. Though she finds swamps comfortable thanks to her black dragon heritage, she has often pondered how much more effective she could be as a mercenary with her newfound magical abilities. The fens, on the other hand, want interlopers slain, and Jaxi excels in the role of murderous guardian even if she doesn’t always do so with gusto.



Resources and Tactics

As an adversary Jaxi draws upon her tactical talent, military training, and marksmanship, the vast number of corpses and military supplies still left in the swamp after two dreadful battles (including a significant amount of gunpowder), the fens of Chokewater itself, and the twisted druidic magic she draws from the swamps--and much to the dismay of her foes she is adept at combining these resources in unpleasant ways. One of her favorite methods is to send **zombies** to confront intruders, setting up the encounter so it happens in a cloud of swamp gas that puts living foes at a disadvantage from the hallucinations and choking effects. If the undead win the confrontation so much the better, but if they are losing she fires a shot at one with a nail bomb stuffed into its torso, detonating the incendiary device to trigger an explosive chain reaction in the swamp gas. She also has camouflaged kegs of gunpowder in various locations where her enemies need to bunch up or travel over some narrow walkway, and can detonate them with shots from hidden positions.

Jaxi herself isn't all that nasty in a straight-up fight, especially against a coordinated group, but with some planning and the right circumstances she can pose a real challenge. Any time the PCs are in her swamps, they should be wading through muck (treating the ground as difficult terrain), attacking with disadvantage or holding their breath from the swamp gas, fighting off **zombies**, **alligators of all sizes**, and **piranhas**, dealing with buried explosives, and desperately searching for the sneaky sniper that keeps taking potshots at them and using druidic magic to lock them down in dangerous locations.

Bomb Zombie

Jaxi has emptied out the chest cavities of several **zombies**, stitching them back up with barrels of gunpowder and nails inside. When one of these undead is killed with fire damage or if she hits it with a rifle shot, the zombie detonates, dealing 7

(2d6) piercing damage and 10 (3d6) fire damage to any creatures within 10 feet. A creature may halve this damage with a successful DC 15 Dexterity save. About one out of every four zombies in Chokewater is so augmented, and Jaxi has built up about 150 zombies in total (spread around the swamps in groups of 5–15).

Chokewater Gas

The gas of Chokewater is infamously vile. A creature that starts its turn inside the gas or enters into its area must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw and a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. When a creature fails the Wisdom saving throw, it has disadvantage on attack rolls until it escapes from the gas. Failure on the Constitution saving throw causes the creature to start suffocating until it escapes from the gas. Creatures immune to poison automatically succeed on these saving throws. Additionally, the gas is highly flammable. When any flames are exposed to the area of the gas—whether fire damage or open flames—it triggers an explosion that deals 10 (3d6) fire damage to creatures in a 10-foot radius, removing gas from that area for the next minute.

Hooks

Trying to take anything at all out of Chokewater draws Jaxi's wrath, but sometimes something is so important that these risks must be taken anyway. Perhaps the swamps contain the cure for a terrible plague or a vault with a powerful artifact that the PCs need to retrieve.

While she's never been particularly nice, Jaxi isn't terribly happy in her situation and isn't motivated by sadism or spite, but the will imposed upon her by the dark entity that dwells in Chokewater. Of course if adventurers try to help her break away they'll have to fight the evil of the swamps to do so—should she be freed from its control, over time she will gradually revert to her old lawful neutral alignment.

Out of the algae-covered stagnant water rises a cloaked figure draped in vines and dressed in tarnished half plate with a rotted black cloak hanging from her shoulders. The skull-like visage of a black dragonborn glowers from beneath her hood as she aims a rifle in your direction.

JAXI, BLIGHTGUNNER OF CHOKEWATER

MEDIUM HUMANOID (DRAGONBORN), LAWFUL EVIL

Armor Class 17 (half plate)

Hit Points 97 (13d8+39)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +5, Wis +7

Skills History +5, Perception +7, Stealth +9

Damage Resistances acid, fire

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 22

Languages Common, Draconic, Druidic

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Amphibious. Jaxi can breathe air and water.

Druidic Heretic. Jaxi can wear metal armor and still use her spells.

Eldritch-Eyed. Jaxi is able to read lips. In addition, her vision is not impaired by murky water, fog, magical darkness, or swamp gas while she is within the swamps of Chokewater.

Medium Armor Expert. Jaxi does not have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks from wearing medium armor, and she adds +3 from Dexterity instead of +2 when she is wearing medium armor.

Spellcasting. Jaxi is a 13th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared from the druid's spell list:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, druidcraft, poison spray, produce flame,*

1st level (4 slots): *entangle, fog cloud, longstrider*

2nd level (3 slots): *flaming sphere, pass without trace, spike growth*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, dispel magic, plant growth*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, control water*

5th level (2 slots): *antilife shell*

Spore Powder. Whenever Jaxi uses a firearm to make one or more ranged weapon attacks on her turn, creatures within 5 feet of her must make a DC 14 Constitution save or be poisoned until the start of her next turn.

Superb Aim. Jaxi ignores half cover and three-quarters cover when making a ranged weapon attack, and she doesn't have disadvantage when attacking at long range. When Jaxi makes her first ranged weapon attack in a turn, she can choose to take a -5 penalty to her ranged weapon attack rolls in exchange for a +10 bonus to ranged weapon damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Jaxi attacks twice.

Saber. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) slashing damage.

Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) magical piercing damage.

Acid Shot (20). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) magical piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage.

Fanged Shot (10). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) magical piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage. Jaxi regains hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

Toxic Breath (Recharge 4-6). Jaxi exhales poisonous acid in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) acid damage and 10 (3d6) poison damage, and be poisoned for 1 minute. A creature that succeeds on the saving throw takes half damage and is not poisoned.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Jaxi takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- + Jaxi casts a spell of up to 2nd level or higher.
- + A popping gas bubble explodes with poisonous acid. This action is identical to her Toxic Breath attack but originates in any square within 30 feet that she can see.
- + Jaxi summons a patch of Chokewater gas that fills a 30-foot radius sphere.

Trait: *I don't much care about looking or smelling nice any more. Living in a swamp for 16 years will do that to you.*

Ideal: *Survival—I do what I must so I can keep living. If that means you die, so be it.*

Bond: *Better to serve the swamps than die here. Chokewater can hurt me, but it can't make me give up who I am.*

Flaw: *I will do this **my** way.*

Magic Items

After Jaxi is defeated or if the adventurers negotiate a peaceful resolution, they may acquire one or more of the following magic items from Chokewater.

Acid Bullet Recipe

Wondrous item, uncommon

Using this set of notes, you can undertake a 1 hour process that imbues up to 10 pieces of ammunition with corrosive energies that remain for 24 hours. Doing so consumes a source of strong acid (like an acid flask) and 10 gold worth of other materials.

Once imbued, on a successful hit the ammunition deals an extra 7 (2d6) acid damage.

Drypowder

Weapon (rifle), rare (requires attunement)

This unremarkable-looking rifle never misfires and keeps its powder dry even when fully submerged. You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, it never needs to be reloaded.

Thorncase

Armor (half plate), rare

This tarnished half plate can be worn by a druid—but it exacts a price. Whenever you cast a druid spell while wearing this armor, you take necrotic damage equal to the spell's level as the armor sprouts thorns that dig into your flesh. This damage cannot be prevented, reduced, or redirected in any way unless you are immune to necrotic damage. In addition, while wearing *Thorncase* you cannot use the Wild Shape feature. 🐉

