

# The Undercroft



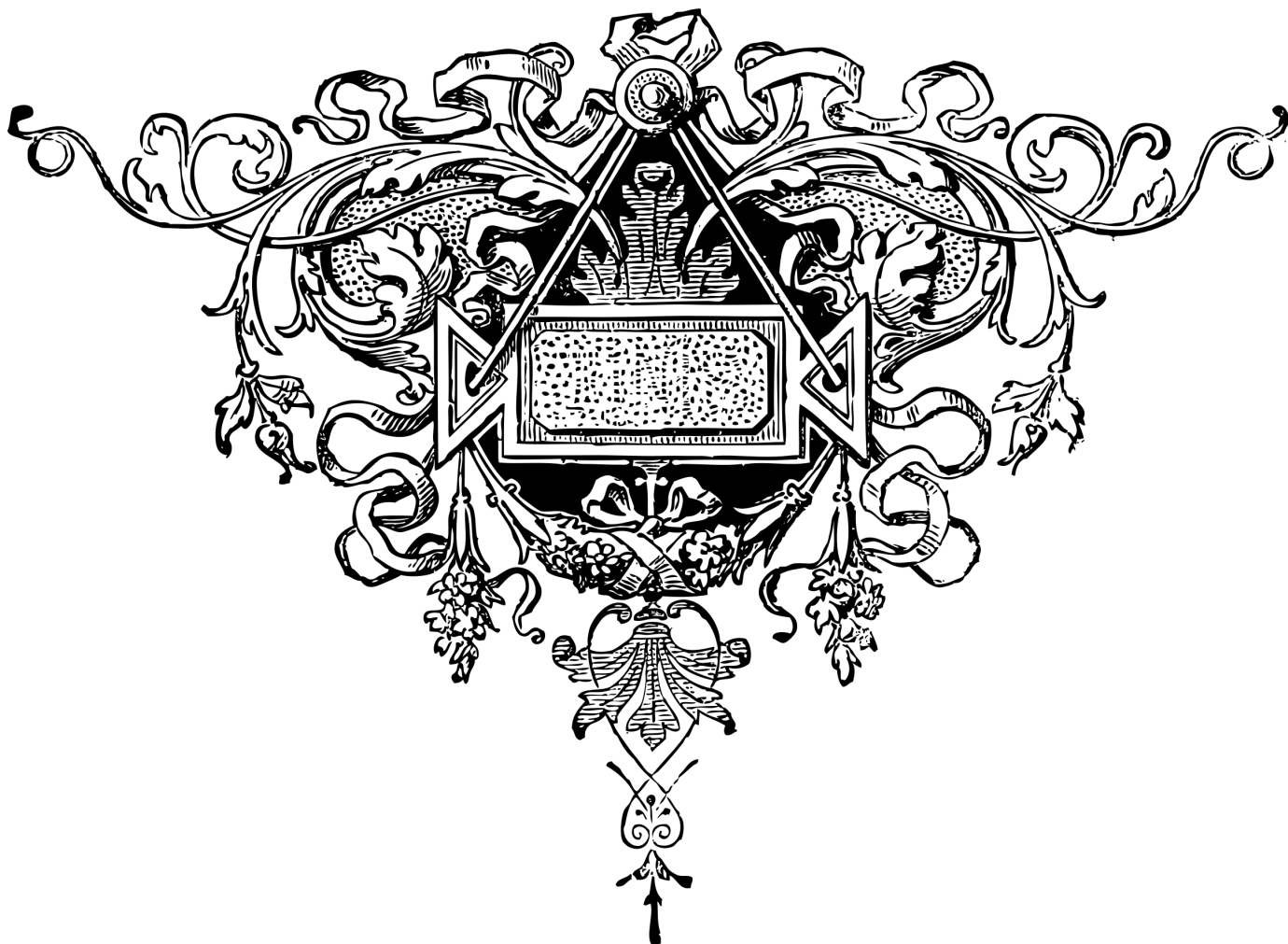




Melsonian Arts Council, 2015

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Published by:





# THE OMNICORN

## AKA THE FREEDOM BEAST

*by Edward Lockhart*

It would be majestic, as it is a well-proportioned steed, were it not bristling with every manner of horn, antler, spine, and violent projection known amongst more natural beasts. It could be a powerful force of revolution, a ceaseless wave of violent emancipation, were it not so narrowly dogmatic in its hatred of authority.

An Omnicorn exists in every unchained wilderness. Through shadowed wood and quiet moor and howling desert, it stalks in paranoid readiness.

Perhaps there is only one, existing simultaneously in many places, ensuring the fever dream of freedom can never truly die. Perhaps, there are many, formed from the projected defiance of unyielding individualists echoing across the wilds. Perhaps it is merely a cruel joke of distant gods, a mockery of the human illusion of autonomy.

Whatever it may be, the Omnicorn is dangerous.

The Freedom Beast stands taller than a man on four jagged hooves. The size and shape of a heavy drestier, its noble form is marred by the myriad of stingers, needles, spines, tusks, and horns bursting through every square inch of its skin.

As frightening as it may appear, the Omnicorn is not malevolent. It is, however, supremely concerned with authority. Authority of any sort is an anathema to the beast. Commands and demands are not merely evil, but disgusting beyond comprehension.

It cannot abide any sort of hierarchy: employers, commanding officers, domineering spouses, despotic rulers, and overbearing parents are all equally abominable to the Freedom Beast. The willingness of participants within social structures has no relevance to its wrath.

Any forceful requests or attempts at intimidation occurring in its presence will draw the ire of the creature. Any direct commands will result in terrible



violence, aimed at the one in authority.

An Omnicorn wandering too near a typical village will almost certainly spawn some few tragedies. An Omnicorn stumbling upon an outlying military fort or isolated manor house will breed an immediate massacre.

Though Omnicorns speak all languages, they rarely hold discourse with any but the most extreme individualists. (In this, vagrant adventuring fools stand a better than average chance.) The resultant conversations often begin as philosophical exchanges concerning the nature of free will, but typically devolve. The Omnicorn eventually interrogates all parties about the societies from which they hail.

Should the questionees prove to be insufficiently dedicated to freedom, the Omnicorn will pontificate grandly upon the many evils of hierarchy. Pointedly ignoring all objections or points of logic, the beast will continue its impassioned rhetoric before stampeding dramatically away.

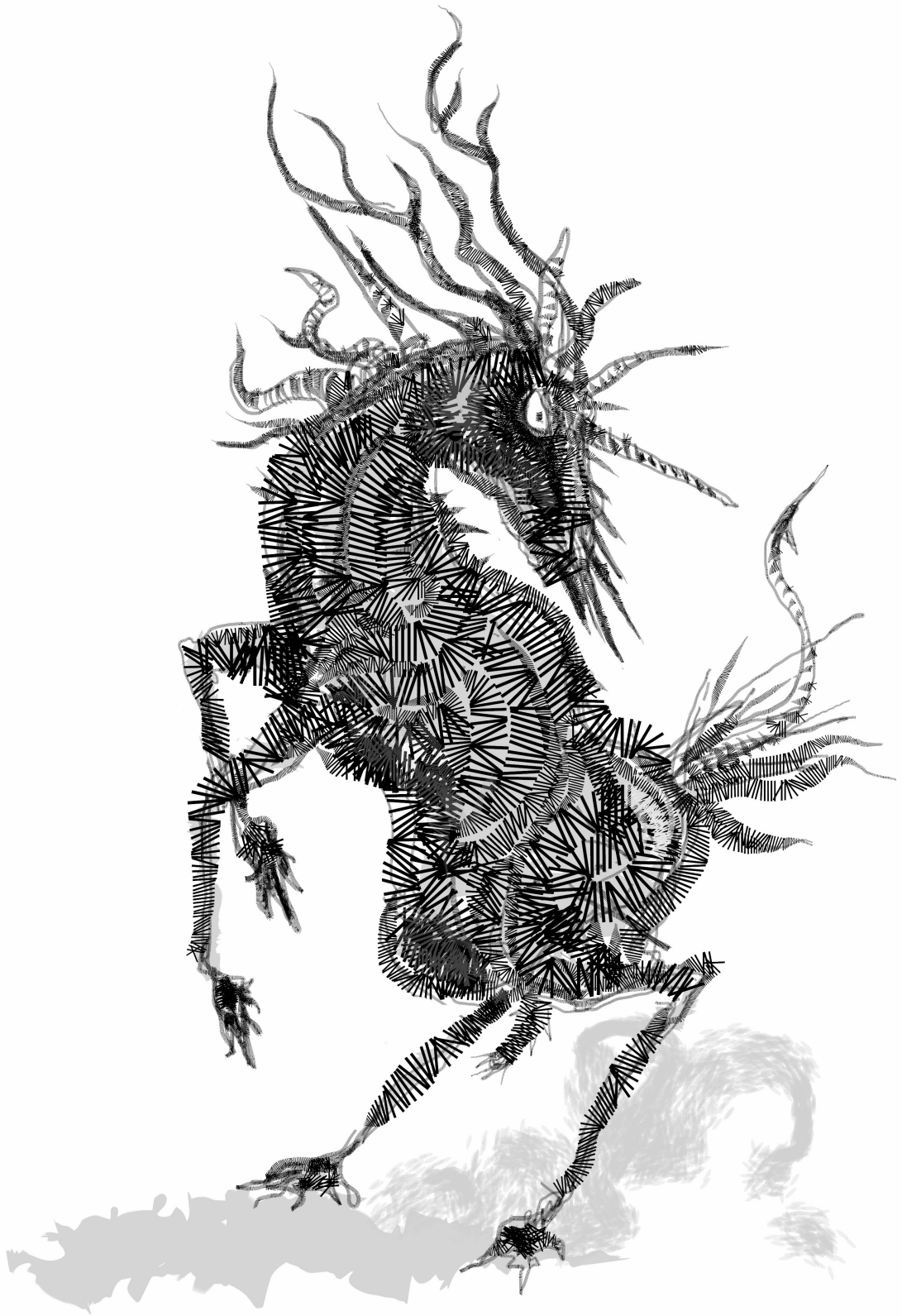
Should the questionees prove to be allies of authority, the Omnicorn will respond with appropriate and sudden violence. Sufficiently independent persons are always spared, even if they chose to attack the Freedom Beast in defence of their companions.

Quiet legends, whispered in radical places, often claim that consumption of Omnicorn blood renders one free from all outside compulsions, magical and mundane. This is quite true.

However, the blood must be freely given. Almost none are capable of meeting the Freedom Beast's expectations for this gift. An impossible (and anarchic) task is almost always requested, and the supplicant had better damned well ask politely (but not obsequiously).

One final note, it is probably unwise to point out the beast's central irony: the Omnicorn's unquestioning destruction of even the most minor despots is in fact the Freedom Beast imposing its own authority upon the world. This terrible realization alone might be enough to destroy the beast, or give it cause to self-negate.

Nevertheless, an Omnicorn in the throes of an existential crisis could kill an entire province within a matter of weeks...



## GAME MECHANICS

**HD:** 5

**AC:** as Plate

**Attacks:** Trample/Gore for 1d20 damage,

**Special:** *Immunity to Coercion, Too Many Horns.*

**Speed:** twice as quickly as a Warhorse. Requires neither food nor water nor warmth nor air.

### Immunity to Coercion

Omnicorn's cannot be coerced, forced into action, or made to emote by any means: attempts at charm spells, torture, sleep spells, fairy geases, command spells, magical fear, and even the will of god(s) will falter against the Omnicorn's sheer indomitability.

### Too Many Horns

Consult the Following Chart whenever the Omnicorn Damages an Opponent.

#### Damage Roll Special Note

- 1 Acidic Spine** –1 extra point of damage each round for 1d4 Rounds
- 2 Terrible Pain** – -1 on all actions until stinger is removed.
- 3 Poison** – Sv. or Die
- 4 Paralysis** – Sv. or be unable to move for 1d4 rounds.
- 5 Festering Wound** – this damage will not heal until the wound is thoroughly cleaned and debrided. After 2 days without proper treatment, the infection will spread to the blood. The victim will then weaken over the next 1d8 days before a long and painful death.

#### **6-20 Normal Damage**



## **ENCOUNTERS WITH THE FREEDOM BEAST**

Several visibly shaken bandits surround an Omnicorn, unsure of what to do. The Freedom Beast stands atop the pulped remains of their leader, delivering an incoherent monologue about the imagined wrongs of every sort of organization.

The heavy gate of a new wooden keep has been burst inward. Shattered remains of eight fully armoured knights, a dozen men at arms, and six pages lay scattered within. Two surviving servants still hide, whimpering in the root cellar.

Wreckage and bright red blood trail towards a nearby hilltop or mountain. There the Omnicorn wishes to recuperate from its many wounds.

A philosopher and the Freedom Beast stand upon the roadside hotly debating the nature of freedom and violence. The richly attired philosopher maintains emphatically that violence is in opposition to freedom; the Omnicorn, of course, believes loudly otherwise.

Two porters are carefully discussing how to divvy up their gored to death employer's valuables. The two are quite nervous and taking great pains to only ask each other questions and use no imperative sentences. They are aware of the legends of the Omnicorn. What they are not aware of is that the Freedom Beast still surveys them from a heavy patch of brambles.

The Omnicorn hangs its proud head low, crushed under the weight of existential uncertainty. It now knows its central irony, the staggering hypocrisy of its very being. The sad creature is eager to talk to anyone about its new place in the multiverse.

If the Player Characters are unable to resolve its philosophical quandaries, the Freedom Beast stands a 50/50 shot of either attempting immediate suicide or beginning a violent bid to become the very authority it always despised.

If it takes its own life, it will do so by the simple means of bashing its skull repeatedly against any convenient rock. Upon deciding to be a despot, it will attempt to slay the most powerful (to its eyes) character present before demanding everyone that everyone else becomes its slaves. Omnicorns do nothing by half measures.

# MEZZO-WORM

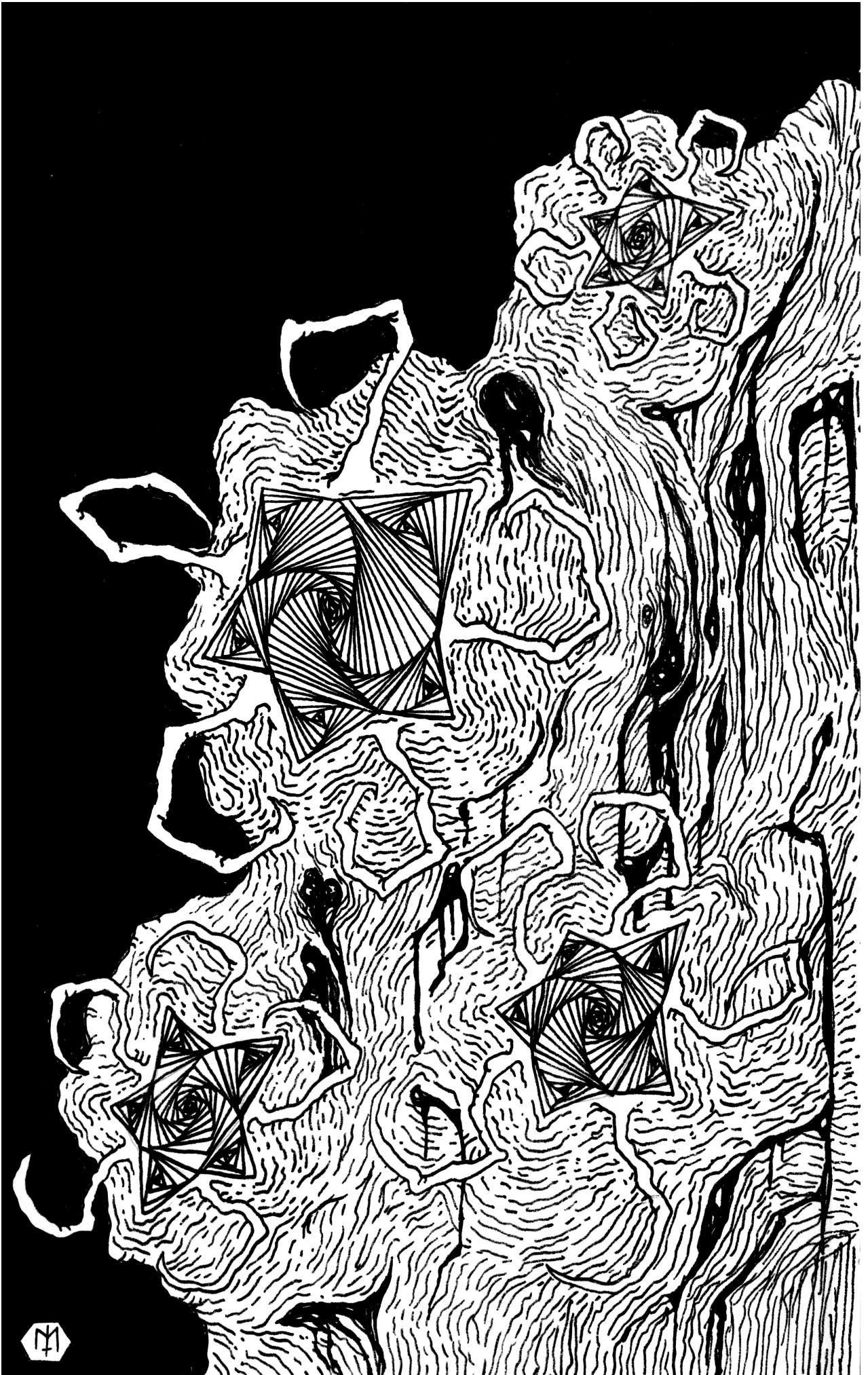
by Luke Gearing

*“We had been wandering the tunnels for four days – judged by the burning of lantern oil – when it happened. There was no warning, no sign of what had found us. The passage ahead burst open, and it slithered out. The body was pus-yellow and purple, shifting in the lantern light like an oil of disease. Roger vanished beneath its bulk, and it slid back into the hole it emerged from. Roger never knew what happened. I hope.”*

The wound-in-the-wall. The hole taller and wider than a man stands, from which reeks the stench of reality rotting away. **[Long-dry wells amidst empty houses.]** Blackness resides within, drinking light, granting glimpses of darkly glittering walls. **[Cavernous wine vaults echoing with the merriment above.]** No tool-markings mar these impossible tunnels – they are the mark and the home of the Mezzo-Worm. **[Dank, forgotten cellars.]**

Entering the tunnels, the cold of the abyss wraps around you. Bones ache. Sound which should echo endlessly seems almost stifled, constricted by the near-solid darkness entwining you. **[The highest rooms of towers.]** No breeze blows, although the tunnels twist more madly than the fiercest cyclone. The stuff of the walls is hard, nigh-unbreakable. **[Tombs unseen.]** Chipping away at the tunnel walls reveals nought but more of the not-quite stone. Clerical magic cannot reach you here, and spells of summoning are horrendously effective and uncontrollable.

Eventually you will cross another tunnel and wander ‘til the end, or else find the exit on the other side of the original tunnel. **[Smashed burial chambers stripped of movable wealth.]** This can take weeks of travel. Emerging, you will find yourself elsewhere entirely. All of possible time and space is connected by this hideous tangle of tunnels dug by the terrible Mezzo-Worms. They dig endlessly, aimlessly, eyeless bulk tearing through any barrier.



Some will meet fellow travellers in these tunnels. Add your favourite encounter tables to the one below, and combine with the description.

**d4** Like normal, but...

- 1** [table 1 result] but utterly, hopelessly lost. They no longer care.
- 2** [table 2 result] but wearily travelling a route they have mastered.
- 3** [table 3 result] but running break-neck fast towards you, fleeing the Worms.
- 4** [table 4 result] but shivering with religious ecstasy – some may even worship the Worms.

If you are unlucky, you will encounter a Worm before you find an exit. It will not be in the tunnel, but dig through from any direction, its maggoty body painted in bruise and infection, a chaos of injury, undulating and squirming. The front is the only fixed feature – an endlessly fractal blackness tinged with dire red stars for a mouth, surrounded by mantis-arms scraping and shovelling inwards. Even when slain, the arms continue their movement, almost mechanical in their repetition. It is utterly silent, and has no smell. When struck, only an opaque greyness oozes forth, the sound of tearing wet leather.

## **MEZZO-WORM**

**HD:** 14

**AC:** Impossible to miss

**Morale:** No concept of morale, fleeing, feeling, thinking, language, history, geography or time

**Move:** As runaway train

### **Special**

**CONSUME** – Save vs. paralysis to avoid the arms and being consumed by the maw. Leave the game. You have been destroyed utterly. After consuming d4 times, the Worm will leave.



## **D10 MISCELLANIES OF THE TUNNELS**

- 1** A stone egg. Warm, shot through with onyx. It will hatch into a copy of the first to touch it in a day. The copy has all memories but is embittered by being brought into existence.
- 2** A dropped leather pack. It contains the travelling journey of a master poet, written in Arabic, 4 golden coins of foreign mint and a yellowed dagger.
- 3** A small silver ring with a note attached – “Ring of Tiger Protection”. It is worth about 25sp.
- 4** 12 specimen jars. Most contain the upper-front-left tooth of a human, and has a name written on the note attached. Some are empty, and each bear the name of a party member upon the note.
- 5** A puddle of black blood. Wiping some on your skin allows you to hear what it has to say.
- 6** A rusted iron spike that destroyed constructs utterly, removing all animating energies.
- 7** Trephination drill. It is brand-new.
- 8** An attempt at mapping the tunnels on animal hide. 1-in-6 at being accurate for this area. The craftsmanship is at Neolithic levels.
- 9** A magnificent stag, with all flesh and bone removed – a walking collection of nerve, vein and organ. The antlers remain.
- 10** A leather pouch containing d20 sparks. Teased out, they will burn whatever they first contact outside of the bag.

# DECOHERENCE WIGHT

*by Ezra Claverie*

Elves exposed to the blast of a necrobaric bomb during the Late War died slowly, as their nervous systems became hosts for ravenous alien life. This colonial anti-organism, the Decoherence Wight, now comprises three parts: an animate corpse; a swarm of undead flies, midges, and beetles; and a Decoherence Polyp. The Wight's insects sap the life-energies of prey; the Wight also manipulates entropy at a distance, causing the pre-emptive decoherence (i.e. chemical and mechanical decay) of things that would injure it.

Some fourteen centuries ago, when the united forces of the Eight Clans and the Turtle Folk overran the Elven garrison protecting Her Majesty's Western Shipyard and Submarine Pens, the ranking officer made a desperate gamble: he detonated against the invaders an untested "Necro-Autonomizing Radiation Weapon." Whether or not the tactic proved decisive remains unknown to historians, but the Western Shipyard fell. After the close of hostilities, the area came under the interdiction of the Treaty of Decolonization. For fourteen centuries, if anyone from the Eight Clans ventured to the Shipyard, they did not return to speak of it; if any Elves violated the Demarcation Line, they did not publish their trespass. Now the ruins of the Shipyard bulk silent amid a jungle that hesitates to reclaim them. Among the Forest People, hunters bold enough to defy shamanic injunctions against visiting the place tell of dark figures that lurch among the ruins at dusk, leaving slimy footprints and sickening those who venture near "the Cairns of the Mucus Fiends" (as these pygmies call the ruins).

The Decoherence Wight resembles a corpse in black putrefaction, swarming with flies. A pale mass, its texture between an acrochordon and a beached jellyfish, surmounts the figure; this mass glows faintly. The latter is the Decoherence Polyp that animates the Wight. It has grown throughout the host's nervous system, until it grew too large for the spinal column and skull.



Roll d20 for its presentation.

- 1-5** Polyp bulges upward through split cranium
- 6-9** Polyp dangles through an external acoustic meatus
- 10-13** Polyp bulges from an eye socket
- 14** Polyp has grown through both eye sockets, then grown together
- 15** Polyp droops through burst occipital bone
- 16** Polyp extends downward from sinuses; maxilla absent
- 17** Polyp extends downward through palate; mandible absent
- 18** Calvarium and orbits absent; polyp surmounts ruined and eyeless skull
- 19** Skull absent; polyp flops on chest (1-3) or back (4-6)
- 20** Skull absent; polyp surmounts spinal column, bulging from between vertebrae

Roll d6+1 for the Hit Dice of a Decoherence Wight.

- 2** Elf child
- 3** Elf woman
- 4-6** Elf soldier
- 7** A mighty Decoherence Polyp, outgrowing its host body, has colonized a weaker fellow, and the polyp now bridges two skulls; two Elf corpses shuffle together

A Decoherence Wight's proximity lowers the air temperature, causing midday to feel like dawn, and night to feel subterranean. Any fires within a hundred feet [thirty meters] of a Wight burn lower, as the Wight drinks their energy. (These effects obtain regardless of intervening obstacles.)





Decoherence Polyps preserve carrion to help them search for prey. Despite their appearance, Decoherence Wights exude only a faint stench of putrefaction, thanks to the Polyp's subversion the normal processes of decay.

Decoherence Wights hide from the sun, because direct sunlight overloads their metabolism. They move slowly, always acting last in a round, except against those enervated by their swarms (see below). When an attacker tries to strike a Decoherence Wight, roll normally to hit. A miss means nothing extraordinary. However, if the roll indicates a hit, then the weapon suffers pre-emptive decoherence: wooden helms rot; bowstrings snap; hilts fall to pieces. Weapons permanently or temporarily enchanted (e.g. Blessed by a priest) are immune. (At the Referee's discretion, metal weapons may be restored to working order by a Tinkering check, possibly at some penalty to hit.)

Flasks of oil and other combustibles explode prematurely into unctuous black smoke. The attacker must Save versus Breath Weapon or lose d4 Hit Points. The propellant of a firearm misfires; the shooter must Save versus Breath Weapon or lose one Hit Point.

Enchanted weapons that succeed in striking a Wight cause normal damage, but only if the die roll on its high side (e.g. 4-6 on a weapon that causes d6 damage).

A Wight's undead swarm can alight on a human-sized target at a radius of up to fifty feet [15 meters] distant, no hit roll required. The target must Save versus Breath Weapon.

Success indicates nausea and weakness; until the victim escapes the swarm's radius, he or she always loses initiative (even to the Wights themselves).

Failure indicates that victim collapses, overwhelmed with nausea and weakness, prompting the Wight to approach, so that it can lean against the victim.

In both cases, the target contracts Decoherence Fever (see below).

The touch of a Decoherence Wight costs d6 Hit Points per round, as the victim suffers ulceration and desquamation externally, and hemolysis internally. On a roll of six, the victim also suffers necrosis under the Wight's touch; these

lost Hit Points will never heal. (At the Referee's discretion, Wight necrosis may cause a different impairment). For every six Hit Points the Wight costs a victim, it gains one; for every six Hit Points it gains in this way, it gains one Hit Die. The Wight's appearance does not improve.

Anyone touched contracts Decoherence Fever (see below). Anyone reduced to zero Hit Points by the Wight's touch decomposes with preternatural speed, soft tissues liquefying in d20 hours, bones disintegrating soon after.

Decoherence Wights have no mind to affect with spells, but they can be Turned. Their temporal and entropic powers render them immune to harm by mundane fire. Only attacks by cold and saltwater prompt a Decoherence Wight to check Morale.

Cold-based attacks cause double their normal damage to a Wight. Saltwater thrown on a Wight costs it d6 Hit Points per gallon, although the attacker must make a Saving Throw versus magic or find means of delivery (e.g. bucket, sluice, and so on) rendered inoperable by pre-emptive decoherence. Immersion in salt water costs a Wight d20 Hit Points per round, and emits billows of noxious vapour. Exposure to sunlight overloads Wight's metabolism. After d6 minutes of exposure, it will cease efforts to find shelter, and its Polyp will shrivel. After another d6 minutes, the Polyp and its filaments throughout the host body detonate in a necrobaric blast. Anyone within twenty feet [six meters] of the detonating Wight loses 3d6 Hit Points, and they must Save versus Poison or die a week-long death by necro-autonomizing radiation poisoning. Anyone slain by this radiation rises as a Decoherence Wight. (Ordinary earth, stone, and metals do not shield against necro-autonomizing radiation.) This blast detonates any other overloaded Decoherence Wights in its radius.

Anyone outside the blast wave but still within one hundred feet [thirty meters] of the detonating Wight loses d6 Hit Points and contracts Decoherence Fever.

Decoherence Fever sets in at the first dusk after exposure, and it renders the sufferer feverish and unable to sleep for more than d12 minutes at a time. If the sufferer rests (i.e. no labour, travel, fighting, or study), then the sickness passes in three days. If the sufferer eschews rest, he or she must Save versus Poison each day or lose d8 Hit Points to the Fever each day during its three-day period. (At the Referee's discretion, a person dying of Decoherence Fever rises as a Decoherence Wight.)

# ORCOIDISM & SUBHUMANITY

by Daniel Sell

From the moment they appear, damp and oily on the birthing bed, onlookers can tell that is isn't the child they had expected. What should be plump and pink is taugt and grey, and what should be a hearty wailing is a screeching through sharp teeth, squealing like a poorly stuck pig even the farmer would leave the barn for, his wits in tatters. Haunted looks are exchanged while the mother asks, "*What of my baby? What of my baby?*". In a just world the father or a responsible uncle would take the child out to the field and leave it for the crows, but sometimes, against all rational thought, the beast is kept and raised. In this document I intend to examine the harm such an act inflicts, not just on the family or wider community, but the world at large, and, it is hoped, convince those intent on sparing the creatures of the selfish cowardice of the act.

## **A TAXONOMY OF THE SUBHUMAN**

It is uncertain what causes orcoid births, few commonalities exist between incidences and one family who spawns an orc is no more likely to spawn another than anyone else. Many scholars posit that a mother's exposure to carnal thoughts and irksome fumes are responsible, but I say that is alchemical tosh with no founding in factual observation. Rather it is a cruel and indiscriminate curse borne by mankind since our founding. The orcoid is at our very core, a panther in the night of our genetic past, come to hound and nip at the heels of civilisation, driving it to wearied collapse. One needs only look at a wide enough sampling of the benighted folks who bring these creatures into the world: they are tired, old and frail. Those who sit outside of this observation have proven to be most often suffering from more subtle and likely most malignant weaknesses of the spirit.

A cursory physical examination of the orcoid discovers pronounced musculature piled upon a broad and overburdened frame, the density and bulk of which only becomes more pronounced as it ages, and atop this, and most conspicuous of all traits, is a head lacking in all facial variety; all orcoids,

regardless of heritage and environment, have pointed features quite unlike our own: jagged needle-like teeth, wide, sagging eyes, a sharp tapering of the ears, flat pig noses, and shallow chins, all framed by the pallid hair and skin of a corpse.

We are all familiar with the clichés of the orc, of wanton brutality and depravity, yet even more familiar will their parents be, having experienced these not as fireside gossip but facts of child rearing. Of course, they will protest that their progeny is different, and indeed it may appear so for many years, however the truth of its nature will out; by the 8th year the concupiscent fog of adolescence will have descended and even its misguided parents can deny it's degeneracy no longer. Violence, you see, is their only response to mundane stress – avarice, fornication and hunger their only motivations, all other facilities for coping with the rigours of life are absent in the orcoïd, allowing little control of their stunted emotions. Their human mothers, who they may appear to love much as any child would, risk childish tantrums turning into brutal assaults, powerless in the face of the prodigious strength of the subhuman spawn. However, I concede that it is possible an individual orc may not be overtly malicious, indeed, its clannish instincts may be easily, and often is, confused with human feelings of love, but this is pure anthropomorphous projection. Indeed, they have little control over their ever devolving impulses, possessed only by a cunning instinct for self-preservation leading to the imitation of familial fondness. Be assured that this state will not last.

## **THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY**

Let me state it in no uncertain terms: It is strongly advised that orcoïd children be euthanised. Were it so easy as the layman's acceptance of an educated man's words, but all too often's the case of misguided motherly sentiment preventing such mercies. Let me explain the tremors of your love.

If circumstances are strictly controlled, if outside influences, surprises, strangers and stressors are kept to a minimum, the subhuman may lead an acceptable approximation of normal life. However, this normality requires the constant vigilance of an entire community, they must speak softly, move slowly and shower the beast with love in order to maintain and enforce the sublimation of it's base behaviours. It walks a narrow ridge above a bottomless pit of rage and can topple with the lightest breeze.





*Example specimen purchased live from a farming community in the vicinity of Kine Gather. Pictured is a frontal view of the post vivisection head exhibiting typical features. Approximate age of nine years.*

Through my extensive studies and dissections I have concluded that the source of their rage and key to controlling them is an inherent need for a barbaric, clannish social order. Through the constant reinforcement of social standing and expectations one may contain the beast. This is demonstrated in the few small communities that have managed to raise the orcoïd amongst them; without exception they are firm and consistent with the creatures, who are aware of their position in society and accept it. Difficulties arise when the orcoïd ages and gains confidence; challenges to the social order may no longer be contained with resort to the rod.

## **A TRANSIENT CURE**

A sympathetic community may, instead of tearing it from its mother's teat and euthanising it on the cold hard ground, set it loose beyond the border stones. Once separated from the civilising influence of society orcoïds give in to their base nature, becoming morose and bitter, prone to fits of wild rage. At the edge of the world those orphan creatures gather, forming tribes to fend off a merciful death. A tribal hierarchy inevitably develops, of the strong upon the weak. For us this seems bestial, but for the orcoïd it soothes and gives order to their chaotic lives. Indeed, when the balance is disturbed, when a strong member dies or joins, it resolves explosively with males fighting over their place in this parody of society.

They have a justifiable reputation for being vehemently onerous from the moment they mature, and they carry and indulge this habit into the wild. Out beyond the reach this symptom of our own humanity perpetuates uncontrolled for indeed, the orcoïd is no mule, they breed true readily; given normal circumstances, within a decade a single mating pair may spawn a tribe numbering in the hundreds. Yet more sinister and adding further layers of distorted irony, 1 in 100 children born to orcoïd parents are physically human. These "half-orcs" typically stay with the clan, fighting, rutting and continuing on as any other subhuman. However some of them set themselves apart and seek to rejoin their human ancestors, to hide their origin as fruits of blighted loins. A truly chilling prospect.

# OLD SIGVOR

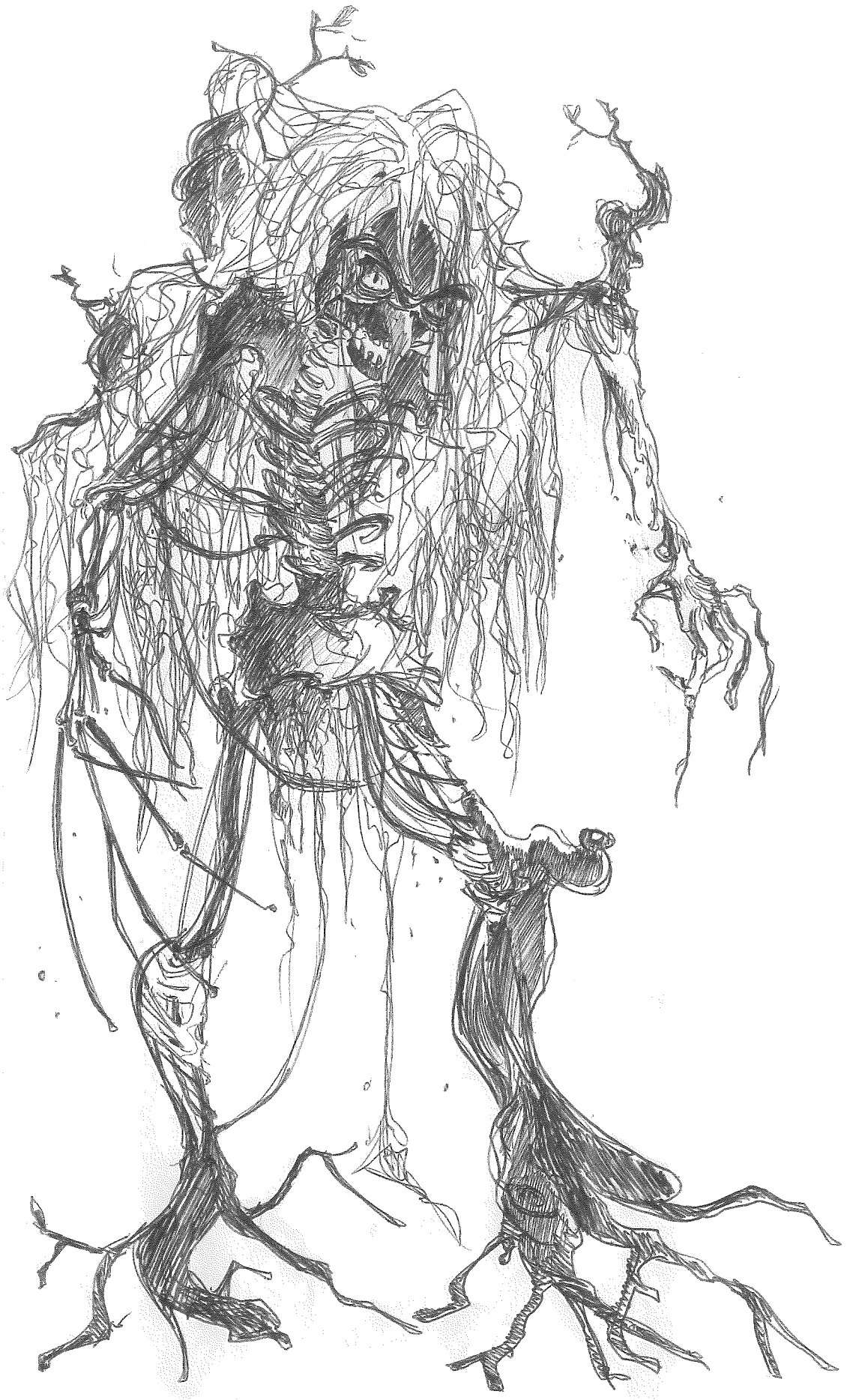
*by James Holloway*

People say Old Sigvor was a witch. People say Old Sigvor prayed on moonless nights to an old tree that grew alone and crooked in the forest. People say that if you go into the woods alone Old Sigvor will get you. People are usually a stupid lot, but in this case they're right.

Some people say she was wounded in love; some people say living alone in the woods just got to her after a while. Some people say it wasn't her choice; what is certain is that Sigvor carved runes into a tree and coloured them with her blood, then cut the same runes into her own flesh and laid down against the bole to sleep. As she slept, the blood nourished tender shoots that pushed their way eagerly into the cuts she'd made in her skin.

Now Sigvor's hut lies empty, its hearth cold and her trinkets and talismans covered in cobwebs. Sigvor herself roams the woods, sometimes standing immobile for days until prey comes within reach of her lashing branches. Sometimes she becomes enraged and goes on a rampage, especially when people from the village threaten her home.





Sigvor resembles a hard, black tangle of branches on which the body of an old woman is stretched like a canvas. Her eyes still stare redly from her face, but her hair is twined with leaves and shoots and her bones are dark, glossy wood. She creaks and cracks as she moves, heavy gnarled boughs flexing with each step.

Sigvor can still think, although she is mad with pain and her sense of self is fractured; on a day-to-day basis, she experiences nothing except hate and a few dim memories. Unfortunately, one of the memories is of the ritual that allows her to hybridise more of these unearthly plants with human hosts.

## **OLD SIGVOR**

**HD:** 4 (17hp)

**AC:** 14

**Morale:** 9

**Move:** 80'

**Attack:**

*Clumsy Punch* 1d6

*Whiplike Branches* 1d4/1d4

Sigvor never has her movement reduced by wooded terrain, no matter how dense. She can see in darkness – or, more accurately, detect her prey by sensing the vibrations in the forest floor as it moves.

If Sigvor hits with both her whiplike branches, she may choose to leave them attached and begin to force them under her victim's flesh. The victim must make a saving throw versus Paralysis; if successful, she may yank the tendrils out or attack them to sever them. Removing the vines by hand inflicts 1 point of damage. If the saving throw is unsuccessful, the target is paralysed for one round while the tendrils burrow deeper. On each subsequent round, she may roll again to attempt to remove the branches. However, for each additional round, tearing them out inflicts an additional point of damage: on the second round it causes 2 damage, on the third round 3 damage, and so on.

Cutting the branches breaks the paralysis; however, removing them after the fight will still inflict the same amount of damage as pulling them out while still attached would have.

Once the branches have wormed and crept into the target's body for six turns, the paralysis becomes indefinite. At this point, Sigvor will usually try to pick up the victim and drag them off for hybridisation.

By applying certain magical formulae and a small blood offering to the strange trees that grow in her grove, Old Sigvor can grow one of them into a human subject. The process takes about 24 hours, during which the human is paralysed; by the time it is over the alien vegetation is firmly bonded with the victim's tissue – and the victim is quite mad. If the process is interrupted, however, Remove Curse or lengthy, careful surgery can reverse the effect.

None of the hybrids Sigvor creates are as successful as she was; although her human body has been almost completely replaced, Sigvor has a malign, cunning intelligence. By contrast, the lesser hybrids she creates with her ritual alternate between dull passivity and unreasoning fury.

## **HYBRID**

**HD:** 2 (9hp)

**AC:** 14

**Morale:** 10

**Move:** 80'

**Attacks:**

*Jagged splinter-claws* 1d6/1d6

Sigvor is useful to the grove because her rudimentary magic allows her to create hybrids. However, once the grove has enough hybrids for its sinister purpose it will have no further use for a hybrid with the potentially dangerous capacity for independent thought. When this happens, she will be killed and used to nourish the new hybrids.