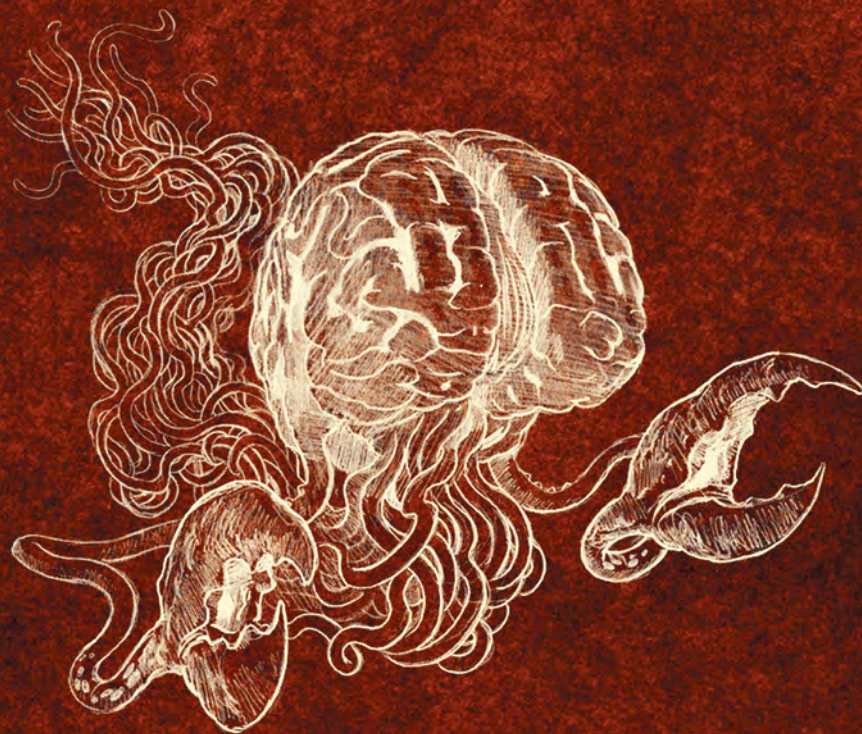


THUNDERSCAPE

THE WORLD OF ADEN



Aden Wildlife Journal

Volume 1

PATHFINDER
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THUNDERSCAPE THE WORLD OF ADEN

THE WORLD OF ADEN ORIGINALLY CREATED BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

Aden Wildlife Journal

Volume 1



Written by Rich Wulf, Chris Koch, & Shawn Carman



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Aden Wildlife Journal - Volume 1

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Introduction

Greetings, readers!

It is my exquisite pleasure to welcome you to the first installment in what I sincerely hope is going to be a long and extremely valuable series of journals detailing the wonderful and terrible creatures with whom we share our homes here in the Known Lands. My name is Danderfall Malcolm, scholar emeritus of the Celestial College in Aramyst and current wildlife consultant for the august Iron Guard of Urbana, and it will be my privilege to be your guide to the fantastic and horrifying for this first installment of Aden's Wildlife Journal.

This journal is intended as an educational resource for anyone and everyone who has occasion to travel during these dark times. Even if the Darkfall had not deposited a seemingly infinite variety of nocturnals upon our land, there are a multitude of dangerous creatures that precede that cataclysm, and knowledge of them can save one's life even when nocturnals are nowhere to be found. This is an endeavor I have considered for some time, and collaboration with a former colleague of mine from Aramyst, Professor Atticus Caesar, currently of Refuge, has galvanized the two of us in an effort to ensure this is a reality. If I might be so brazen, I would caution you about subsequent volumes; my colleague Professor Caesar can be somewhat acerbic and fatalistic in his demeanor. Personally I think he resents the comfortable life I have made for myself as a consultant to the military. I have chosen to ply my trade in Urbana, where I am handsomely repaid and my expertise aids in the survival of thousands. Whereas Professor Caesar, instructor at an obscure academy, has chosen a harsher road where he gains little compensation but sleeps soundly with the knowledge that his noble efforts help probably dozens of survivors throughout the forgotten lands of Aramyst. Such is the life in which we find ourselves!

As I mentioned, I was once affiliated with the Celestial College in Aramyst. Not the ruling body, of course, but rather the academy of learning that bore the same name. I was a professor of biology and zoology, ensuring that I am well suited to this most ambitious task. Professor Caesar is not the only one who has questioned my decision to sell my knowledge to the military, but I prefer to think

that I am saving lives regardless of the politics involved. It is not as if my homeland truly exists any longer. If I make a handsome life for myself in the process, it simply allows me to further my studies, and that is worth the price of my so-called "academic integrity." I deeply mourn the loss of the libraries in Aramyst, but as a great Arastinian playwright wrote several hundred years ago, we cannot return home. Literally, in my case. It's on fire! I'm joking, of course, but if you can't laugh at the immolation of a vast center of learning and culture, what can you laugh at?

Hmm, I think I should stop before this work becomes too maudlin. Let us get to the heart of the matter!

The Ruined Lands of Urbana

A subject of much unpleasant debate between my counterpart and I was how to focus our works. We debated whether or not to base our examinations geographically or perhaps on the type of creature being examined. After some months of increasingly heated correspondence, we finally settled on each journal taking its own measure of how to examine our subject matter. Since I am the author of our inaugural installment, I have chosen the lands of my new home, Urbana.

Urbana is a completely unique environment, unlike anything that has existed anywhere in Aden throughout history. Ten years of constant predation by vast numbers of nocturnals, and even more significantly, due to massive industrialization and the poisoning of the environment that takes place when manite is refined in vast quantities, Urbana is a land cursed by a terrible blight. The creatures that have survived here are especially hardy and as a result, far more dangerous than the indigenous wildlife found in many other regions. It is my hope that the information you will find within this journal will provide you with the knowledge you need in order to survive what is an otherwise completely inhospitable landscape.

Editorial Note

I am Professor Atticus Caesar of the Kixue Academy, the colleague to whom Professor Malcolm has referred (with his customary provincial charm) on numerous occasions. Since he is the author of this first installment (and my apologies for that, but attempting to do my part to save a fallen nation is quite time consuming), the onerous task of editing his work falls to me. I want to make certain that, in the interests of academic integrity, you know that Professor Malcolm's claims are preposterous. He selected Urbana as the subject for this journal, I am absolutely convinced, because it will increase sales in his new homeland. Professor Malcolm values his affluent lifestyle above the rigors of true academia.

The threats that one can encounter in Urbana are born either of a reaction to the environment or to the fears of the people who live in a thoroughly inhospitable place. Prey is not abundant by any measure, and the predators that have survived have adapted to become among the most dangerous creatures found anywhere [Ed. Note: *Except the Burning Coast, of course, where the true enemies of the Darkfall wage their noble war against evil. - AC*]. Within the nation's massive cities, things are very dangerous. Outside the cities, the wilderness is almost instantly lethal to any but the most experienced and skilled travelers. Even adhering to the most well-traveled routes, a random encounter with a pack of shadow cats or, along the coastline, the occasional appearance of mantis warriors can result in the deaths of dozens.

Please, my friends. If you choose to travel in Urbana, heed my words and study this tome carefully [Ed. Note: *And keep your coin-purse safely tucked away out of the reach of its many pickpockets, should you find yourselves in one of its many filthy, overcrowded cities. - AC*]. Take every precaution that you can, and prepare for the absolute worst even as you hope for the best. These are exceptionally dangerous times, and this is one of the most dangerous places in the entire world. Your lives can be ended quickly and without preamble, and we have already lost too many. Every life is precious. Protect yours at all costs.

Additional Resources

No threat exists completely in a vacuum, and there is no subject that can be discussed without touching on a wide variety of other subjects. Zoology is no different. In addition to my formal training and extensive expertise in this area, I take pleasure in my fledgling interest in anthropology. To accompany the stories of creatures that exist here in the deadly outlands of Urbana, I thought perhaps I would also include information about some of the peoples that make this same land their home.

The Goreaux

An often maligned and misunderstood people, the infinitely interesting goreaux have little written history about their race, and perhaps even less about their customs and society. Given that so many of them make their home here in Urbana, I felt it would be of interest to examine some of their more well known traits in greater detail. Toward this end, I have consulted numerous academic tomes and spoken with several of my closest goreaux associates. I hope that the information included will be of interest and use to those of you who find yourselves in Urbana, or simply who find yourselves in need of intriguing scholarly material to take your minds off of the present unpleasantness plaguing our world. [Ed. Note: *"Present unpleasantness." How very quaint. - AC*]

The Salamanders

Aden is blessed with an incredible variety of sapient races, not all of whom have chosen to take part in our greater society, what some arrogantly choose to call civilization. The naga are certainly the most well known such race, but they are hardly alone. There is a race of being that appears native exclusively to the Charred Peaks here in Urbana, more specifically the volcano near the city of Smult, that are comparable in some ways to the naga, and in many ways as large a threat to our existence as the serpent men could ever be. Fortunately for us, there are different layers of their society that may make it possible for us to yet establish relations or at least contact with this highly alien people.

Personages of Note

Whenever I travel abroad in the wilderness to conduct my studies, I make it a point to ensure that I have suitable companions for travel. A knowledgeable guide, a competent bodyguard, a skilled arcanist... such things can be of use no matter where one travels. In my time here

in Urbana, I have had the pleasure of meeting a great many skilled individuals, and it is my great pleasure to share their stories with you, that you might offer them thanks or perhaps hire them for an endeavor of your own. Be certain to mention that Danderfall Malcolm thanks them and recommends them at every opportunity! Perhaps they will give you a discount!

Chapter One - Bestiary

Floating Brain

CR7 - NE Medium Abberation

Init +5; Senses Blindsight 60 ft; Perception +16

Defense

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+5 Dex, +6 Natural)

hp 85 (10d8+40)

Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +8

Defensive Abilities Absorb Magic; Immune mind-affecting effects; SR 20

Offense

Speed Fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee Tentacles +12 (1d6+5) and 2 pincers +13 (1d8+5 and grab)

Special Attacks grab, constrict (2d6+7), magic eating

Statistics

Str 20, Dex 20, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 16
Base Atk +7; CMB +12 (+16 grapple); CMD 30

Feats Defensive Combat Training, Improved Natural Attack (Tentacles), Improved Natural Attack (Pincers), Improved Natural Armor, Weapon Focus (Pincers)

Skills Acrobatics +18, Fly +26, Intimidate +16, Perception +16, Stealth +18, Survival +16

Languages Telepathy 100ft

SQ Magic Eating, Absorb Magic

Special Abilities

• **Magic Eating (Su)** Whenever a creature takes damage from a floating brain's constrict attack, the creature must make a Will save (DC 18) or have its magic eaten by the floating brain. A prepared spellcaster loses one of his highest-level prepared spells (determined randomly) while a spontaneous spellcaster loses one of his highest-level spell slots.

• **Absorb Magic (Su)** Whenever a spell effect fails to breach a floating brain's spell resistance, the floating brain gains a number of temporary hitpoints equal to the spell effect's level. Temporary hitpoints gained from this ability stack.

Ecology

Environment Underground

Organization Solitary, Pair, or Clutch (4-8)

Treasure Standard

There are many horrible things in the Known Lands these days, many things that are so terrifying that it becomes a struggle to maintain one's sanity in the face of such fear. There are many things, however, that are equally disquieting but for different reasons. The creatures that have been rather unimaginatively named "floating brains" are perhaps the most alien entities that I have ever come across, either personally or in my studies.

As one might imagine from the name, floating brains take the appearance of a disembodied brain that hovers through the air at roughly chest

Floating Brain



height for a normal human male. The brains are quite large, comparatively speaking, measuring roughly two to three feet in length and half that height and width. There are a number of tentacles of varying length that hang beneath these brains, up to dozens of them depending upon the specimen. Most are roughly the size and dimension of seaweed with a pinkish-reddish hue and are used for manipulation. However, these appendages have remarkable strength that belies their appearance. In addition to these tentacles, most floating brains have two additional, larger tentacles, one on each side of its "body", and each tipped with a sharp pincer.

Floating brains prey upon magical ability. They tend to ignore and avoid most other beings unless they come across someone with the ability to manipulate magic. When this happens, they attempt to grapple with the individual and use their tentacles to invade the ears and nose of their prey, attacking the brain directly. They absorb knowledge of magic through a means that no one understands, causing temporary loss of magical ability. In extreme cases of feeding, this loss can be permanent and even result in death. It is, from everything I have been able to ascertain from my limited studies, an excruciating way to die.

Although there is little to determine the origin of these bizarre entities, they are subterranean in nature and I believe they predate the Darkfall. I have not been able to confirm this, but second-hand accounts from several associates of mine, all dwarves, have indicated that although there are limited historical records available predating the relocation of the dwarven people to the surface world, mention of similar creatures appear the racial lore. If true, then these creatures are an ancient threat, thousands of years old, and we should try and determine as soon as possible what has driven them to appear near the surface now, after the Darkfall. Are the two events related? I feel that they must be.

Addendum: I have recently received an alarming report concerning an encounter with a floating brain. For obvious reasons, the creatures are a much greater threat to arcanists of all sorts rather than our more martially inclined compatriots. A recent account, as yet unverified, indicates that either there is more than one kind of these creatures, or more concerning, that they may be adapting to prey upon a wider range of surface dwellers. I find neither of these alternatives particularly comforting, if I am to be completely honest.

Mantis Warrior

CR3 - N Medium Monstrous Humanoid

Init +7; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft; **Perception** +7

Defense

AC 17, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 13 (+3 Dex, +3 Natural, +1 Dodge)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** 4

Defensive Abilities All-Around Vision **Immune** mind-affecting

Offense

Speed 40 ft., **Climb** 30ft

Melee 2 claws +7 (1d8+3/18-20)

Special Attacks Vicious Claws, Pounce, Surprise Attack

Statistics

Str 16, **Dex** 16, **Con** 14, **Int** 7, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 20 (24 vs trip)

Feats Improved Initiative, Dodge

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +10 (+18 in jungle or forest); **Racial** +8 Stealth in forests or jungles.

Languages None

Special Abilities

• **Vicious Claws (Ex)** A mantis warrior's claws threaten a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.

• **Surprise Attack (Ex)** A mantis warrior may take a full round of actions during a surprise round.

• **Pheromonal Communication (Ex)** Mantis Warriors can wordlessly communicate with other creatures capable of communicating by pheromones.

Ecology

Environment Jungle or Forest

Organization Solitary, Pair, Swarm (3-5)

Treasure Standard



Mantis Warrior

Of all the disturbing things I have seen before and after the Darkfall, the creatures we call mantis warriors are among the most inherently disturbing; my sketch does little to convey the sheer intensity of their inhuman nature and appearance. Although the mantis did not appear until after the Darkfall, there are many (myself among them) who believe these creatures may not in fact be nocturnals despite their horrific appearance and behavior. I personally believe that they may be a previously unknown, subterranean race that was driven above ground by the nocturnals. Why would only those who dwell aboveground be a target for their unmitigated evil?

Mantis warriors are clearly insect-like in nature, with a hardened chitin exterior and six limbs, four of which are for locomotion and two for combat or manipulation. They do not conduct themselves in hives, as the ilithix do, but rather seem to operate in smaller groups that, for lack of a better term, have been named swarms. The mantis are voracious carnivores, and much of the reason that they are believed to be nocturnals likely stems from their tendency to attack and kill anyone they see, almost always consuming them afterwards. That and their apparent inability to communicate meaningfully with other intelligent races, whether deliberate or otherwise, has prevented any successful diplomatic contact with these creatures.

Mantis warriors are most often found on the southernmost coast of Kyan, particularly on the islands in that region. They have also appeared in some significant numbers in the Misland Republics, the southern provinces of Yzeem, and even on the coastline here in Urbana. Use extreme caution when traveling in that area.

Mantis Warriors & the Ilithix

While both mantis warriors and illithix possess the pheromonal communication feature, their 'languages' for lack of a better word are not the same. They can communicate some basic ideas ("fear", "food", etc) but not hold conversations. Were either species to take the time however, they could learn the other's pheromonal language, following the normal rules for learning a new language.

Ravenous

CR4 - CE Medium Fey

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision, scent;
Perception +10

Defense

AC 17, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 15 (+2 Dex, +5 Natural)

hp 39 (6d6+18)

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee Bite +7 (1d6+3) and 2 hooves +7 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks Pounce

Statistics

Str 17, **Dex** 15, **Con** 16, **Int** 5, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

Feats Weapon Focus (Hoof), Weapon Focus (Bite), Improved Initiative

Skills Acrobatics +11, Perception +10, Stealth +11;

Languages Sylvan

SQ Feeding Frenzy

Special Abilities

• **Feeding Frenzy (Ex)** Upon consuming the flesh of a slain sentient creature (any creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher) a ravenous becomes flush with strength and vigor, gaining +4 to Strength and +4 to Constitution. This effect lasts for 1 hour per hit die of the creature consumed.

Ecology

Environment Any

Organization Solitary, Pack (3-5)

Treasure standard

Given my previous status as a wealthy and influential member of Aramystian society and my affiliation with the Celestial College [Ed. *Note: By all means, mention this as frequently as possible.* -ACJ], I cannot completely discount the possibility that I may have some negative predisposition against the ferran race due to their history with my country of birth. I like to think this is not the case, but frankly none of us can know our own minds perfectly, can we? Regardless, those who do suffer from a prejudice against the ferrans could very well owe that opinion to the existence of creatures like the ravenous.

Ravenous



We cannot be entirely sure what the origins of the ravenous are. Many believe that they are simple ferrans who have completely surrendered to their most base animal instincts, and certainly the appearance of these creatures makes such an assumption understandable. However, the ravenous also bear a reasonable resemblance to satyrs, so the possibility of a fey origin cannot be dismissed. Given the incredible diversity of the ferran race and the relatively limited range of appearance of individual ravenous (they all bear goat-like features, or so the most common descriptions attest), I find the likelihood that they bear anything but the most tenuous possible connection to ferrans extremely low.

Regardless of their origins, the ravenous are incredibly dangerous. While perhaps not truly intelligent, they are extremely cunning and can adapt to hunting individually or in packs. The real danger they pose, however, is in their incredible, never-ending hunger. The ravenous consume any prey they can catch and kill, up to and including intelligent beings. In truly horrific fashion, they seem to prefer intelligent beings above all other prey. When they kill and consume a reasonable portion of an intelligent being, they temporarily increase their own physical abilities. They do not

appear to gain this benefit for consuming simple animals, which presumably explains their predilection for intelligent prey.

Ravenous are remarkable, if nightmarish, creatures, and I long for the opportunity to study one in greater detail. Unfortunately, it seems to be their way to consume their own dead as well as whatever they managed to kill, and for that reason any that have fallen in battle have been spirited away by their kin, either during the battle or in the immediate aftermath. I have financed two separate attempts to recover a fallen ravenous (specifically not to capture a live one, for I understand the enormity of such folly and the dire consequences that would ensue for bringing such a deadly creature into Mekanus against the law of the Eye), but to date neither has proven successful, much to my disappointment. I have considered additional attempts, but previous efforts have been failures of such magnitude that I fear the already significant expense of such an attempt has been increased the cost far beyond the amount I consider an acceptable investment. Still, should anyone familiar with my desires find themselves in a position to fulfill them, I would be most grateful and, if I may say, quite generous as well.

Shadow Cat

☼ Shadow Cat (Regular)

CR2 - N Medium Animal

Init +7; Senses Low-Light Vision, Scent;
Perception +6

Defense

AC 16, touch 3, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex,
+3 Natural)

hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +2

Offense

Speed 30 ft., Climb 20 ft.

Melee Bite +4 (1d6+3) and 2 claws +4 (1d4+3)

Special Attacks Pack Tactics

Statistics

Str 16, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Base Atk +1; CMB +4; CMD 17

Feats Skill Focus: Stealth, Improved Initiative

Skills Stealth +18, Perception +6; Racial Stealth +8

Languages None

Special Abilities

- **Pack Tactics (Ex)** A shadow cat is considered to be flanking a target that has at least one other shadow cat threatening it.

Ecology

Environment Hills, Mountains

Organization Solitary, Pair, Skulk (3-5)

Treasure None

☼ Nocturnal Shadow Cat

CR3 - NE Large Animal

Init +8; Senses Low-Light Vision, Scent;
Perception +7

Defense

AC 18, touch 3, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex,
+5 Natural, -1 size)

hp 30 (3d8+18)

Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +3; +4 vs. poison,
disease, mind-affecting

Defensive Abilities DR 5/magic

Offense

Speed 30 ft., Climb 20 ft.

Melee Bite +9 (1d8+9) and 2 claws +9 (1d6+9)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks Pack Tactics

Statistics

Str 28, Dex 19, Con 22, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +1; CMB +11; CMD 22

Feats Skill Focus: Stealth, Improved Initiative

Skills Stealth +15, Perception +7; Racial Stealth +8

Languages None

SQ Titan

Special Abilities

- **Pack Tactics (Ex)** A shadow cat is considered to be flanking a target that has at least one other shadow cat threatening it.



Shadow Cat

Ecology

Environment Hills, Mountains

Organization Solitary, Hunt (1 nocturnal shadow cat and 3-5 shadow cats)

Treasure None

The Nocturnal Shadow Cat is a shadow cat with the Nocturnal template (see *Thunderscape*, p. 214).

It is widely understood and accepted that an entity cannot surrender to the Darkfall unless it is intelligent enough to make that choice. In other words, simple animals cannot become corrupted, although nocturnal versions of normal creatures are not altogether uncommon, particularly here in Urbana. This has caused some degree of debate on the matter of Darkfall corruption, and one point that contributes to the argument is the strange behavior of the creatures called shadow cats.

Shadow cats are mundane creatures, if somewhat preternaturally skilled. They hunted the once-fertile plains of Columbeys, but the pollution and environmental changes in Urbana have driven them mostly to the mountains and foothills around the Charred Peaks. They are predatory cats, black in coloration, and skilled hunters that will pursue any prey that they perceive as weaker than themselves, which can and often has included incautious travelers. Some years ago, I had a friend who had numerous merchant interests throughout the region. Unfortunately, he was traveling with a relatively small number of defenders and they were attacked by a large pack of shadow cats. Few survived, and unfortunately my friend was not among them.

Shadow cats possess uncanny skill at stealth and ambush, and display remarkable pack tactics. Since the Darkfall, a noticeable sub-group among their ranks has emerged; these particular creatures are slightly larger, more cunning, and noticeably more vicious. The obvious explanation is that these are nocturnals taking the form of shadow cats since there are so many in the region who fear them. These potential nocturnals often take on the role of pack leader, and as a result, shadow cats are a much greater problem now than they ever were prior to the Darkfall.

An interesting note to add with regard to shadow cats: I have a compatriot here in Urbana, a wizard of some significant skill. While he is not a specialist in wildlife or even a specialized summoner, he is fascinated with the notion of using a shadow cat as a familiar. He is paying handsomely for anyone who can bring him

kittens, the younger the better. I pass this information on because it may be of some interest to some of you out there, but please take all necessary precautions and, if at all possible, do not kill any shadow cats if it does not prove absolutely necessary. We have lost enough as it is, I do not wish to add any species to the list of those that have disappeared entirely since the Darkfall.

Smoke Demon

CR 10 - CE Large Outsider (Demon)

Init +8; **Senses** Darkvision 60, Smokesight;

Perception +18

Aura choking miasma (Fort DC 19)

Defense

AC 24, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 20 (+4 dex, +10 natural)

hp 126 (11d10+55)

Fort +11, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11

DR 5/good and bludgeoning; **Immune** electricity, fire, poison, disease; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10; **SR** 21

Offense

Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +19 (1d8+7 plus 1d6 acid and choke)

Special Attacks choke

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

- Constant - *air walk*
- At-will - *obscuring mist*
- 3/day - *stinking cloud* (DC 20), *cloudkill* (DC 22)
- 1/day - acid fog

Statistics

Str 24, **Dex** 18, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 32

Feats Improved Initiative, Toughness, Improved Natural Attack (Slam), Weapon Focus: Slam, Power Attack, Great Fortitude

Skills Intimidate +20, Knowledge: Local +14, Knowledge: The Planes + 14, Perception +18

Languages Abyssal

SQ Choking Miasma

Special Abilities

- **Choke (Su)** When a smoke demon strikes a creature with its slam, it attempts to force the air from the creature's lungs and replace it with toxic smoke. The creature must make a

Fortitude save (DC 20) or become nauseated. If a creature is already nauseated when it fails this save, it instead becomes paralyzed and begins taking 3d6 acid damage per round as the toxic fumes burn its lungs. The creature can make a new fortitude save each round to end either effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

• **Choking Miasma (Su)** The space a smoke demon occupies and all squares within 10 feet are so thick with acrid smoke that even exposure to it is toxic. This functions as a constant *stinking cloud* effect (Fort DC 20 negates), except creatures in the aura also take 1d6 acid damage per round. If choking miasma is dispersed by wind, it resumes one round later.

Smokesight (Ex) A smoke demon ignores all concealment created by smoke or fog.

Ecology

Environment Any (primarily Urbana)

Organization Solitary

Treasure Standard

Smoke Demon



Sometimes new creatures appear and they are given bland, unimaginative names by the common folk before a scholar can properly identify and classify them in a manner suited to scientific investigation. This has become much more common since the Darkfall, I'm afraid, and the so-called "smoke demons" that are known to appear throughout Urbana are one such example. These creatures are nocturnals born of the fears endured by citizens throughout Urbana. These beings appear as skeletons, typically larger specimens like one might expect from a jurak or perhaps even an ogre, wreathed in tendrils of smoke. Some believe they are created from fear of starvation, hence their skeletal appearance, while others believe they are a result of fear of the pollution that has ravaged Urbana since the fall of Columbeby. Personally, I believe that the two are not mutually exclusive, and that these ridiculously named creatures are created from, or sustained by (and remind me some time to share with you my theories of how nocturnals are created and sustained by fear), both fears at once. This might account for their level of power, which is considerable indeed.

Smoke demons are extremely dangerous because of their offensive capabilities, certainly, but they are made far more so by the array of defensive abilities that they possess. Without flesh to be torn by sword, they are resistant to most edged weapons, although their skeletal nature means that this particular advantage can be overcome with a good hammer, mace, or similar weapon. They are remarkably resistant to many forms of damage, however, including fire, electricity, and cold, with less resistance (although still an impressive degree) to many other forms as well. The smoke demons possess a limited range of arcane abilities, and are quite resistant to magic targeting them, which I myself learned in a most calamitous fashion last year during an outing to the ruins of Brisk Station. However, the most significant threat posed by these strange spirits is the one that gave them their name; the miasma of smoke that surrounds these creatures is far more than a simple inconvenience. It is cloying, choking, and deadly in sufficient quantities. The demons use it as cover, blinding their foes, although they appear to be completely unimpeded by it regardless of its thickness. They can force it into the lungs, choking and killing those subjected to it for too long. It has been six months since my encounter with one of these damnable creatures, and I swear, there are some days when I feel as if I can still smell the fetid stench of its smoke upon my person.

Thresher

CR 5 - CE Medium Construct (subtypes)

Init +2; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft, Low-Light Vision, Scent; **Perception** +9

Defense

AC 18, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 16 (+2 Dex, +6 Natural)

hp 59 (6d10+20)

Fort +1, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

DR 5/adamantine **Immune** construct traits

Offense

Spd 40 ft.

Melee Bite +12 (1d6+5 plus trip) and

2 claws +11 (1d4+5)

Ranged Shrapnel +6 (3d8)

Special Attacks Pounce, Shrapnel, Thresh

Statistics

Str 20, **Dex** 15, **Con** -, **Int** 3, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 23

Feats Weapon Focus: Bite, Toughness, Power Attack

Skills Perception +9, Stealth +9 (+13 in urban);

Racial Perception +4, Stealth +4 (+8 in urban)

Languages none

SQ Here

Special Abilities

- **Shrapnel (Ex)** As a standard action, a thresher can fling jagged metal from its body. This is a ranged attack with a 30 foot range increment which deals 3d8 piercing and slashing damage.
- **Thresh (Ex)** Against a prone target, a thresher's natural weapons deal an extra 1d6 points of damage as they come alive with deadly whirling blades.

Ecology

Environment Urban

Organization Solitary, Pair, Pack (3-5)

Treasure Standard

It is an unfortunate reality of modern Urbana that the nation's massive cities have become home to various infestations of nocturnals, the most common and perhaps most insidious of which are the dreaded shankers. Shankers are born of man's fear of sharp things, in my personal opinion, but regardless of their origin, we have recently come to understand that shankers are but the least among a hierarchy of similar creatures, the larger versions of which are thankfully



much rarer. Still, once shanker infestations have become commonplace, as they have in Mekanus, it is only a matter of time before threshers begin to appear.

While shankers are roughly rodent sized or thereabouts, threshers are significantly larger, approximately the size of a large dog or perhaps a wolf. They are less likely to operate in numbers due to their scarcity, but even two or three of these creatures can present a deadly threat to an unprepared individual, and unfortunately many city denizens believe that within the walls of their home they are safe. A particularly large specimen that recently plagued the poorer neighborhoods of Urbana, a creature that the locals had taken to calling Steelclaw, slew fourteen citizens before agents of the Cogswheel Irregulars managed to destroy it.

There are theories (to which I do not subscribe but which I have not entirely discounted either) that there is some manner of progenitor to the shankers somewhere in Urbana. Should this prove to be the case, it seems that this mother/manufacturer is now creating larger specimens as well. I worry that additional, larger creatures of a similar type may be discovered in the not too distant future, and if this proves to be the case, it could result in significant loss of life for people throughout Urbana's population centers.

I previously mentioned a compatriot of mine who possesses an interest in the possibility of strange familiars, most recently his interest in the shadow cats. While odd, this particular interest of his is far more palatable than his previous endeavor, which was to somehow create a smaller version of a shanker that might serve as a familiar. Given the existence of threshers and rumors of even larger specimens, I cannot deny that such a thing might be possible, but the danger inherent in such an attempt fills me with dread. I believe my friend has abandoned this particular attempt for now, but I fear that he may revisit it at a later date, and disaster is the most likely outcome of such a thing.

Chapter Two - Races of Aden

The Goreaux

Since my arrival in Urbana, I have been fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of a number of prominent citizens, many of whom are goreaux. Urbana is home to the largest population of goreaux anywhere in the Known Lands. Having met relatively few of them during my years in Aramyst, I have always been curious about them as a people. Despite the fact that they are among the most prominent and influential of Aden's civilized races, there is very little written about them. I found this quite curious - not just that there was so little information, but there was so little curiosity regarding who, as a people, the goreaux are. Most Adenites, it seems, merely take them for granted. Like a custodian who cleans and maintains a busy household, most seem content to simply let the goreaux do what they will and pay them no mind.

At first, I felt that this was a rude disservice. Many of Aden's most brilliant poets, scientists, mages, and statesmen have been goreaux. To so callously disregard their origins and culture seemed inexplicable. Was this a product of man's cruelty, I wondered? [Ed. Note: *My goodness, the melodrama.* -AC] I know that individuals can be quite pitiless toward the goreaux, often due to their physical resemblance to goblins. But the more I investigated, the more I discovered such specism to be a mere distraction - as most of my inquiries were shut down by goreaux, not men, elves, or dwarves. It seems that many goreaux show an extraordinary indifference to their history - sometimes bordering on hostility.

Further, the goreaux seem to have very little culture of their own, nor do they display any interest in developing any. The goreaux are social chameleons, blending perfectly into the lands in which they make their home. They do not cleave to their own kind as rapacians, dwarves, and juraks do, but live among other races, congregating only in small family groups.

While such indifference may suit a complacent Refuge scholar, Mekanus has taught me to forge my curiosity of sterner stuff. Like a shady figure doing his best to fit in and avoid attention

in the corner of a darkened tavern, I suspected there was much more to the goreaux than there appeared.

With years of persistent inquiries, my efforts to find the truth eventually bore fruit. I discovered an elder goreaux historian who - after being plied with copious gifts of manite, wine, and rare Yzeemite chocolates - was willing to speak on the origins of his people. This individual requested to remain anonymous, for reasons that shall soon become obvious. Though some may decry the words to come as spurious, I trust my reputation as a scholar speaks for itself adequately that you can trust I would not brazenly transcribe the claims of an untrustworthy source. [Ed. Note: *My personal differences with the author notwithstanding, I believe his academic record of publication clearly supports that this is, in fact, quite true. His account can be accepted without reservation.* -AC]

History

The word "goreaux" is a portmanteau of two words, goblin and royeaux, both archaic terms derived from one of the ancient languages that became what we now know as Lowland. Their meaning is simple: "goblin-king." This is the most startling secret of the goreaux - the rumors are true. The goreaux are not merely related to the goblin races, they *are* goblins. Or, rather, they used to be.

Long ago in Aden's pre-history, races such as giants, goblins, and orcs subjected the lands to their savage rule. In time, dwarves, men, elves, juraks, and rapacians united to cast down their oppressors, breaking their once mighty empires into scattered tribes and chasing them back into the wastelands of the continent.

Though most ancient goblins were as petty, savage, and stupid as their modern descendants, one in perhaps every hundred goblins was born goreaux. While a number of physical differences distinguish goreaux and goblins, the most obvious were their larger skulls and flat teeth (more suitable for an omnivorous diet than the sharp, pointed teeth of a goblin). Goreaux were, as a rule, much more intelligent than goblins and

showed greater talent in the magical arts. Any goblin that was born goreaux became a leader of the goblin nations by birthright.

When the goblin nations fell, many goblins blamed the goreaux but could do little to challenge them. It is here, ironically, that the goblin's inherent stupidity gave them the advantage. While goblins and goreaux were both well aware of Infernus (or so we call the lower realms in the modern age, for what goblinkind may have called them we cannot know) and the demons who resided there, the goreaux were far too intelligent to make pacts with them. Those goblins who resented the goreaux, however, were easily seduced by demonic promises of power and became warlocks. Unprepared for the newfound might of these rebels and their demonic benefactors, the goreaux were cast down.



Goreaux

Goblins & the Darkfall

Since Aden's prehistory, goblins have been ruled by the demons of Infernus, using cruel goblin warlocks as their proxies. In modern times, most of these demons have sworn loyalty to the sinister intelligence behind the Darkfall, taking their goblins with them. As a result, modern goblins work openly with corrupted and nocturnals, either as allies or cannon fodder minions.

Desperate to escape the demons that now ruled their people, goreaux fled toward territory now ruled by their former enemies, the civilized races. The other races put the fate of the goreaux to a vote. In their hour of desperation, the goreaux flattered and cajoled. They promised to serve as humble servants and share the secrets of their fallen empire.

Suspecting treachery, the dwarves denounced these pathetic outcasts. The rapacious, defiant in victory, refused to show mercy to their former enemies. But the promise of knowledge stirred the curiosity of elves. Their humble plight stirred the heroic instincts of men. The vote was tied.

In the end, it was the jurak who decided the goreaux's fate - and they chose to grant them sanctuary. Perhaps they saw some symmetry between the goreaux's plight and their own ancient ties to the orc race. Perhaps they saw the value in such clever minions. Perhaps they were simply merciful. None now living can truly say.

While I am confident that the preceding section is true, I understand that many will discard it as hearsay. What follows, however, is well-recorded and provable as fact. For centuries, the goreaux skulked in the shadows of society, living as beggars, household servants, and or village tinkers. While their cleverness and skill with machinery was well known, they rarely rose to positions of power. As a whole, the other races tolerated and ignored them.

It was not until the Age of Thunder that the goreaux truly claimed an equal place among the other races. Arcimus Thelby, a goreaux apprentice serving at the Celestial College of Aramyst, was the first to discover manite and harness its power. As this new discovery spread throughout Aden, goreaux demonstrated their natural talents

and quickly rose to prominence as the most talented mechamages in Aden. [Ed. Note: *We Aramystians support the claim that Thelby was first to discover manite, although there is some dispute in this regard. We leave it to the reader to educate themselves about such things if they are so inclined.* -AC]

In recent years, their exploits have been slightly overshadowed by those of mankind. For, while the goreaux invented mechamagic, the Thunder Trains and many other such weaponized mechamagical wonders were created by humans.

Goblins and Goreaux

If the origins of the goreaux as I have presented them are true, then what of modern goblins? Why don't we hear of goreaux born to goblin tribes, or goblins born to goreaux? The latter is easily answered. When goreaux mate, they breed true. As for goreaux born to goblins, the answer is more complex. Modern goblins are savage and completely hostile to outsiders, making answers difficult to obtain. Fortunately, I am not easily deterred and my source was well-informed. He pointed me toward a secret order of goreaux known as the Lost Fathers.

According to the Fathers, the infernal demons that now command the goblin tribes demand constant tribute. I'm certain those of you well-versed in the nightmarish appetites of demons already suspect where this is going. When a goreaux is born among the goblins, it is presented to the demons as a tribute. The typical goblin does not even realize these are newborn goreaux, only that they are born 'marked.' Most of these infants are sacrificed in grotesque rituals. The truly unfortunate are spirited away by the tribal demons and never seen again.

As terrible as this seems, this is where the Lost Fathers enter the picture and bring a ray of hope. These secretive heroes see themselves the protectors of all goreaux born among goblinkind. They maintain spies and informants within many goblin tribes. Many of these are merely greedy goblins, their loyalty bought with food and trinkets. Some are Lost Fathers - daring goreaux who file down their teeth and walk among the savages in disguise. I cannot imagine the iron these heroes possess, willing to live among demon-worshippers and killers under constant risk of an unimaginable fate should they ever be discovered.

When the Lost Fathers learn of a newborn goreaux, they spring into action. Sometimes they are subtle, sneaking in to steal a potential sacri-

fice or bribing a greedy goblin to surrender it. Sometimes they are more overt, attacking a tribe in force. Their ends, however, are always the same - rescue any goreaux unfortunate enough to be born in goblin territory, whatever the cost. Due to their actions, many potential sacrifices have been snatched from their untimely fate.

The goreaux call their rescues changelings, an ironic statement upon old wives' tales of goblins stealing human babies and replacing them with their own. While changelings are technically goreaux, their goblin blood is much more prominent. Compared to modern goreaux, changelings are somewhat less intelligent but bear greater capacity for malevolent cunning. At the same time, changelings bear little of the innate capacity for cruelty that defines their parents, and many grow up to become good and noble individuals. Many, in fact, go on to join the Lost Fathers and dedicate their life to rescuing their kin from evil.

Culture and Behavior

As stated previously, goreaux do not endeavor to maintain and develop a racial culture as many other races do. Instead, they largely adopt the cultural mores and traditions of wherever they make their home. Most goreaux regard themselves as citizens of their homelands first, goreaux second. That being said, I have found two consistent elements that could rightly be said to define the goreaux.

First and foremost among these is a sense of ambition. Goreaux define themselves by their personal accomplishments and constantly seek to improve. A goreaux who possesses great wealth and influence may yet see himself as a failure should he allow himself to stagnate for too long. A goreaux is always looking for the next milestone, the next accomplishment, so that he may prove his worth to others and to himself.

Secondly, and most curiously, is a profound sense of self-loathing. Compared to other races, I find that goreaux have a greater propensity for anger, bitterness, and depression. A goreaux who meets with failure tends to complain loudly, dramatically, and at length. Goreaux seem to tend toward conspiracy theories, blaming their failures and shortcomings on a single force of entity. This might be a personal enemy, a rival organization, or simply fate itself. Goreaux have a strong tendency toward jealousy, a jealousy which many choose to focus upon the 'larger' races. (It due to goreaux coincidence that the Lowland word for 'tall' is the same as the word for 'stupid'.)

The dichotomy of pride and self-loathing is, to me, the most intriguing aspect of goreaux behavior. I wonder if, on some level, all goreaux are aware of their savage origins. Perhaps this instinctive awareness eats them away on the inside while simultaneously driving them to prove themselves better than their origins. I cannot say, for I am not a goreaux and have as of yet been unable to find a delicate way to present my theories to one for their opinion.

The idea of marriage for love is alien to the goreaux. Unlike their goblin forebears, goreaux do not possess the drive to mate frequently and indiscriminately. Instead, they see reproduction as a grave responsibility that should be approached with logic and caution. Mated pairs are selected with great care and precision by goreaux arrangers, so that the very best traits can be passed onto offspring. For the goreaux, reproduction is a craft. As we all know, goreaux are peerless craftsmen.

This is not to say that the goreaux cannot love. They can and do, passionately and with their entire being. On occasion, they do fall in love with their mates. Unlike other civilized races, however, the goreaux make no particular association between mating and love. Though they find pleasure in sex as other races do, they do not seek it out with the lusty joy one might find in a human or dwarf.

For a goreaux reproduction and pleasure are simply things one must do. Love, in contrast, is a rare miracle that may or may not ever befall a soul - and this miracle must be embraced. Goreaux believe that though one might feel affection for many creatures or things, each soul only has one true love. A goreaux's love might be his work, it might be a possession, or it may even be a trusted friend.

Relations

As with most aspects of goreaux behavior, a goreaux's prejudices and predilections tend to reflect those of his homeland. In addition to these, goreaux tend to have uneasy relations with dwarves. In some cases this is merely due to professional rivalry between two groups of master craftsmen. In other instances, it is simple specim due to the goreaux's similarity to goblins. If there is a single regret I have in publishing my discoveries, it is that some feckless dwarves may view this volume to justify their ignorant hatred of goreaux, rather than recognize how much the goreaux have accomplished.

As master craftsmen and mechamages, the goreaux have also earned the enmity of the technophobic naga. This feeling is mutual, as the goreaux have little regard for what they deem to be backward savages.

Likewise, goreaux and goblins get along exceedingly poorly. Though few among them know the truth of their mutual origins, there is an innate hatred between these two races that neither seem willing to remedy.

Morality

The ideas of good and evil seem rather simple and puerile by the intellectual standards of most goreaux. As with most civilized creatures, their drives are a great deal more complex. In my experience, I have seen goreaux capable of great good. Among their number are counted talented craftsmen who use their skills only to the benefit of all, without thought of profit. I have also seen goreaux capable of great evil, amoral geniuses who care nothing for the means by which they conduct their experiments, so long as they find what they seek.

Alternate Goreaux Racial Traits

✧ **Changeling:** Some such goreaux were infants rescued by the Lost Fathers; some are merely a throwback to their goblin ancestors. Whatever the reason, they possess a goblin's speed and cunning. Such individuals replace the normal ability bonuses for goreaux with +2 Intelligence, +2 Dexterity, -2 Strength. They also increase their base speed from 20 feet to 30 feet and always count Stealth as a class skill. This trait replaces hardy and mechamagic mastery.

✧ **Cunning:** Though all goreaux are clever, some apply their learning to more specialized areas. Select a number of skills equal to your Intelligence modifier. These skills count as class skills. If your Intelligence modifier increases, you may select another skill. This trait replaces keen mind.

✧ **Legacy of Cruelty:** Some goreaux demonstrate eccentricities more appropriate to their goblin ancestors than to their civilized modern kin. These goreaux gain a +1 bonus to attack any enemy that has inflicted damage upon them during within the last day. This replaces keen mind and mechamagical resistance.

The Salamanders

Wherever the earth spits fire, there are salamanders. Throughout Aden's long history there are countless legends of menacing rock creatures rising from the volcanic depths. These beasts of stone and fire are known as salamanders. Though we have long been aware of their existence, salamanders have only become a serious threat since the beginning of the Age of Thunder. Manite veins are notorious for attracting strange creatures of all sorts, and salamanders number among the most deadly.

Salamanders dwell primarily in areas of great heat and flame. Among the scientific community, the matter of salamander sentience has been a subject of some debate as these massive creatures appear to operate according to rage and instinct as much as intellect. Though most common in the Charred Peaks of Urbana, they have also been encountered in the Knuckles of Aramyst. There have also been scattered but unconfirmed sightings in the Sundered Desert. Extreme heat seems necessary for these beings to survive, or at the very least to live a comfortable existence. Perhaps entire cities of these creatures exist in regions far too choked with heat for mortals to survive without the aid of powerful magic. An expedition to discover the truth would be thrilling, but unfortunately the expense and danger of such a journey, especially, in these troubled times makes such a thing highly unlikely.

Fortunately, there are many ways to divine the truth of a given subject. I am proud to say that I and (in an uncharacteristic show of wit) my colleague Atticus Caesar, were among the first to propose that the salamanders were much more than unthinking brutes. Much of this was due to our encounter and subsequent interviews with a lovely creature who wishes to be referred to as Searstone. She is a salamander fiend living in the wilderness outside of Smult, and without her aid compiling the following information would have been impossible.

Physical Description and Life Cycle

Salamanders are easily distinguished by their unique and highly volatile physical appearance. A salamander's physical body resembles nothing as much as living magma (or lava, if you prefer; I have never fully understood the distinction

between the two terms... I fear geology was never my strong suit!). The shape of a salamander's body is reptilian in appearance, like some manner of hybrid of a man and a crocodile. There is little variation between one salamander and the next, at least to my eyes, though salamanders have little trouble distinguishing between one another.

Searstone attests that her people are highly sensitive to heat fluctuations via sensory organs within their snout. Apparently each salamander is recognizable by the aura of heat patterns that emanate from its body - as much as you might recognize an Urbanan by his neatly manicured beard or a Refuge scholar by the unwashed stench of his robes. [Ed. Note: *The man is an insufferable ass.* -AC] Searstone also testifies that these heat patterns can be controlled and sensed by other salamanders, allowing them to communicate over short distances purely via fluctuations of heat too minor for other creatures to detect.

If this is the case, it would certainly explain reports wherein groups of salamanders were said to display startling organization and tactics, seemingly fighting as one without need for words. The miners of Smult have come to greatly fear these creatures for their tendency to ambush without warning and fade just as quickly just as reinforcements arrived.

Salamanders can communicate via sound as well as heat. Their throats contain a complex system of stony organs that can grind against one another to produce a variety of sounds - from a stony, guttural roar to a high-pitched crystalline scream. As a result, these creatures can learn to speak. Many tribes speak a strange dialect of Moltean, which is itself a dialect of Fundamental. Some (such as Searstone) are fluent in a number of languages.

The flesh of a salamander is blazing hot, to the point where they can light wood - or even flesh - ablaze with a touch. A salamander's joints are largely composed of a rubbery red substance that glows like burning magma while the rest of its body is somewhat cooler and darker, resembling obsidian. When wounded, this stony flesh breaks and releases a warm ooze similar in appearance to lava. This serves as blood. When this substance cools upon contact with air, the flesh becomes tough and solid once more. Such injuries often leave bumps and inconsistencies in the surface of the skin. Vain salamanders sometimes attempt to file these irregularities into aesthetically pleasing patterns, permanent mementoes of their past battles.

Scholars have long noted an extreme variation in size among salamanders. The smallest are roughly six feet in height while the largest are up to twenty feet. The popular theory, that the smaller salamanders are offspring of the larger ones, is patently untrue according to our source.

Another theory, originally proposed by Professor Manik ak'Halar of Yzeem, posited that there were two varieties of salamanders. In his observations, he noted the smaller salamanders observing and directing attacks upon a caravan while the larger ones took to the front lines and dealt with foes. He suggested that the smaller salamanders (which he dubbed fiends) were the commanders while the larger salamanders (which he dubbed titans) were the soldiers.

Though this theory was rejected by most (and contributed to the untimely end of Professor ak'Halar's promising career), Searstone has confirmed that it is truth. To her credit, she seems to take little offense in the fact that she is, tech-

nically, a 'fiend.' Either the word means little to a mind disposed toward thermal communication or she is so used to being misunderstood and insulted by mankind that she no longer takes offense.

In truth, there are no salamander offspring as we understand the term. Salamanders are born of the earth. These creatures spring into being deep within volcanic caverns. These locations are sacred to salamander tribes and always rich in manite veins. While newborn salamanders are physically no different from adults, they are born ignorant of the ways of the world and require education from their fellows before they are considered mature. This typically takes two to three years.

As they do not reproduce, salamanders have no natural gender. I found this interesting, as Searstone identified herself as female and had distinctly feminine mannerisms. When I asked her about this, Searstone became grim and silent for a



Salamander

time. At first I feared I had offended her, but when she spoke again, her voice resonated with pride. She said that, were it not for a human woman, she would have died after her exile from the mountain. If it was now her fate to live as a human, then she would live as a woman, to honor the one who had saved her. Who am I to deny her?

Salamanders draw sustenance from stone. Though they prefer to ingest lava, they can also ingest finely ground stone (and can break small stones with their teeth). While they are perfectly capable of ingesting meat and vegetable matter, they draw little sustenance from it. Salamanders do not need water to survive. Though they can drink it without harm, many find the resulting steam annoying and distasteful. That being said, Searstone was quite fond of the taste of wine (the alcohol seemed to affect her just as it does a human) though she liked to mix it with fine sand.

Salamanders require rest, as most living creatures do. When asleep, the glowing fires between their joints dims. To a casual bystander, a sleeping salamander might be overlooked as an unusual rocky outcropping.

As a salamander ages, his glowing joints become brighter and his obsidian flesh takes a gleaming, polished hue. As he proceeds toward middle age, the glow becomes fainter and the black stone becomes pitted and covered in fine cracks. When a salamander dies, its glow fades altogether and its body collapses into a pile of obsidian rubble within hours. (Some enterprising alchemists place great value on such remains, as ghoulish as the idea may be.)

Society

Salamander society revolves around a central tenet. They live to protect the mountain that bore them. They are particularly protective of any jewels or precious mineral reserves within the caves that they call their home, particularly manite, which is sacred to them. Salamander society believes that the mountain is not only their home, but a sentient benefactor creator, a divine spirit that guides them in return for their protection.

Fiends and titans have distinctly defined roles. The fiends are the strategists, craftsmen, and artists while the titans are warriors and laborers. This generally leads to situations where the fiends lead and the titans follow. As Titans seem naturally inclined toward obedience and devotion to the mountain, few of them chafe at this arrangement so long as the fiends treat them fairly.

Among the salamander tribes, certain individuals are born with the ability to 'hear' the mountain. These oracles can only commune while dreaming in areas rich in manite deposits. The song of the mountain grants visions to its oracle, hints of the past and future. Each tribe is led by a council of such oracles. When one is granted a dream, it confers with the others as to its meaning. While most oracles are fiends, a rare few (perhaps one in twenty) is a titan. These oracles frequently possess magical talents as well, which they often use to summon fire elementals to help defend their territory.

A salamander is expected to serve its tribe without question. Most live their lives quietly expanding their tunnels, searching for new mineral veins so that they might better hear the mountain's song. The greatest honor is to give one's life in defense of the mountain. Most salamanders fear those not of their kind. After all, those who cannot hear the mountain are not to be trusted. Unfortunately, their zealous loyalty and territorial nature means that most incursions into their domain are met with violence.

Given the modern age's technological advancements and our growing hunger for more sources of manite ore, more confrontations with these creatures seem inevitable. The Darkfall frequently takes advantage of such situations, offering its aid to the besieged salamanders for a price. This has led to many desperate salamander tribes becoming corrupted, yet another senseless tragedy in the war against darkness.

Though salamander society is complex and inscrutable, in its way, there are three great crimes that can result in what they consider the greatest punishment - exile from the mountain. These crimes are as follows: murder of a fellow salamander, disobedience toward the oracles, and stealing from the mountain. While the first two crimes are rather self-explanatory, the latter required some explanation, which my source was happy to provide. Though salamanders constantly labor to reveal the mountain's bounty, this is done only so that the oracles can better understand the mountain. Treasures such as ore and minerals might be moved so that they can be better defended and accessed by the oracles, but they belong to the mountain. To steal such things for oneself - or worse yet, to give them to outsiders - is the most heinous crime a salamander can commit.

In regards to the third crime, I asked Searstone what the punishment might be for a salamander who used his people's manite to perform

mechamagic. She did not understand my question at first and it took some time to communicate the concepts. When she finally understood, she found the very idea so abhorrent that she concluded the day's interviews, departed our camp in disgust, and did not return for a month.

For a titan, exile is tantamount to death, for these creatures perish quickly outside the volcanic embrace of their home. While fiends (such as Searstone) have a better chance, it is most likely a death sentence for them as well. Most citizens of Aden consider salamanders mindless beasts, or may mistake them for nocturnals. A salamander in exile must be constantly on guard, always ready to rapidly explain itself to the next angry mob.

Relations

I have often been told over the years by both students and clients that I would never use a single word when ten would suffice. Despite this charming personality trait [*Ed. Note: I feel ill. -AC*], I find the salamanders an instance where a single word can sum up the concept of their racial relationships with other groups quite easily: hostile. While individuals, such as Searstone, might find a place outside their tribe, there have been no successful interactions with salamander tribes as a whole. This situation has only degraded since the nation of Columbey gave way to Urbana and its great hunger for manite. The resource-gathering policies of Lord Urbane - which I hasten to add are *essential* for the survival of the Urbanan people and the welfare of many nations - necessitate conflict with the salamanders. And, since the salamanders are not willing to negotiate, the Urbanans are forced to resolve their need for manite in a more direct and violent manner.

Morality

It is difficult to gauge the ethics of any people who exist in a society so alien to our own. Good and evil are preposterously oversimplified terms, after all. [*Ed. Note: I humbly suggest anyone embracing this notion come to Refuge and struggle against the hordes hostile salamanders on our doorstep. Quite enlightening. - AC*] Regardless, in the eyes of those who encounter them most often, the actions of the salamanders paint them as unquestioningly hostile and, yes, perhaps even evil.

Adventurers

Unfortunately, it is exceptionally rare to find any fiend that has separated from his people, rarer still to find one that survived the attempt to integrate into Aden's society. In fact, other than Searstone, I have heard confirmed tales of only two others. I have consistently heard rumors of others, but there is no way to know if this is merely gossip or if there is fact behind it. I have never heard of any fiends who have survived exile into Aden - or who wished to make the attempt.

Of the aforementioned individuals I mentioned, one is a mute warrior-for-hire and part-time bandit that makes his home in the Rhanate, and the other is a fixture in the port city of Balaquim in Yzeem. The latter is also a habitual liar of astonishing proportion, so essentially neither of these individuals can offer any further information about the greater salamander society, which is a tragedy that cannot be overstated. Perhaps if the mute and Searstone could be united, he might use their kind's unique thermal language to share his secrets, but in this dangerous age such an ambitious undertaking seems impossible.

Names

Salamander names consist of two elements, a pattern of heat and a pattern of syllables that, when combined, describe the individual. Some exiled fiends, aware that their fleshy allies cannot reproduce thermal language, accept the purely verbal component of their name as a sort of nickname. Others (such as Searstone) find the separation of the two so unnerving that they invent a new name altogether. The following examples are of the former variety, as the latter sort could be literally any name one could imagine. Many involve some manner of fiery imagery.

Male Names: Takk, Harg, Malk

Female Names: Grel, Karella, Ferra

Salamander Titan

A hulking figure stands before you, a reptilian behemoth forged of black stone and pulsing lava. Just as you struggle to comprehend what sort of mad sculptor would create such a horror... it moves.

CR 6 - XP 2,400

LE Large outsider (elemental, fire, native)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8

Defense

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 77 (8d10+32)

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5

Special defenses smoke breather;

Immune elemental traits, fire; lava walk

Weaknesses vulnerable to cold

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +12 (1d8+5 plus burn), bite +7 (1d6+5 plus burn) or large masterwork trident +13 (2d6+7 plus burn), bite +7 (1d6+5 plus burn)

Ranged masterwork trident +8 (1d8+5)

Special Attacks burn (1d8 DC 18)

Statistics

Str 20, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6

Base Atk +8; CMB +14; CMD 25

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Vital Strike

Skills Climb +13, Perception +8, Stealth +5 (+9 in rocky environments), Survival +8 (+12 in rocky environments); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Survival in rocky environments

Languages Firespeech, Moltean

SQ fire dependency, firespeech

Special Abilities

• **Burn (Ex)** A salamander titan deals fire damage in addition to damage dealt on a successful hit in melee. Those affected by the burn ability must also succeed on a Reflex save or catch fire, taking 1d8 damage for an additional 1d4 rounds at the start of its turn. A burning creature can attempt a new save as a

full round action. Dropping and rolling on the ground grants a +4 to this save. Creatures that hit a salamander titan with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take fire damage as though hit by the burning creature and must make a Reflex save to avoid catching on fire. A salamander titan can apply the burn effect to any metal weapons it wields in melee.

• **Fire Dependency (Ex)** A salamander titan is dependent on extreme heat. When exposed to temperatures below 80° F (26° C), it must make a Fortitude save once per hour (DC 15+1 per previous check) or take 2d8 points of nonlethal damage. This damage increases to 3d8 (with a save every 10 minutes) in conditions below 32° F (0° C). If this subdual damage exceeds the salamander titan's current hit points, any additional damage done by this effect is lethal damage. Spending ten minutes within a large fire or huddled with at least six other salamander titans will negate this effect for thirty minutes, but only in temperatures above 32° F (0° C).

Any damage inflicted by this effect cannot be recovered until the salamander titan returns to an environment of extreme heat (above 80° F). Immersing oneself in lava will immediately heal all damage done by this effect.

Salamander titans may use the Survival skill to gain bonuses to fire dependency saves as if they were a severe weather effect.

• **Firespeech (Ex)** A salamander titan may use thermal fluctuations to communicate soundlessly to all creatures with the firespeech ability within 100 feet. Areas of extreme cold (below 32° F / 0° C) reduce this range by half.

• **Lava walk (Ex)** A salamander titan can walk on lava as if it were a solid surface, or pass through lava as if it had the earthglide ability.

• **Smoke Breather (Ex)** A salamander can breathe normally in smoke or volcanic fumes. Their vision is attuned to smoky environments, allowing them to ignore concealment due to smoke, fog, or similar effects within 30 feet.

Ecology

Environment volcanic mountains

Organization solitary or pack (3-8) led by 1-2 salamander fiends

Treasure standard, plus masterwork trident

Salamander Fiend

Salamander fiends are the thinkers, planners, and spies of salamander society. As such, they are better equipped than their titan brethren to survive outside their natural habitat. Their greater adaptability and smaller size makes them potentially suitable as player characters.

- **Physical Description:** Salamander fiends are noticeably smaller than their racial kin, but have the same general proportions and appearance.

- **Society:** Salamander fiends are extremely rare outside of their reclusive and xenophobic tribes. Those few encountered in Aden are either prisoners of war, traitors to their tribe, or exiled criminals. Ironically, salamander fiends are likely to regard another of their kind with disdain, as they cannot help but wonder what failure or weakness led their counterpart to be cast from his mountain.

- **Relations:** As might be expected, salamander fiends are very slow to trust others. However, the loss of their home can also make them desperate for acceptance, leading them to be extremely loyal to those who accept them and show them kindness.

- **Alignment & Religion:** Salamander fiends who still serve a tribe do so with unflinching loyalty. Exiles, on the other hand, are more inclined to selfish and erratic behavior. Naturally this varies from individual to individual, and those fiends who fall in with good company can become quite selfless and heroic.

- **Adventurers:** Salamander fiends are relatively rare. Most are exiles, guilty of some crime against their tribe. Others might be prisoners, taken after a tribe's destruction and forced into a life of slavery or mercenary work. Others still could be former spies who found the world outside the mountain too intriguing and never turned back.

Salamander Fiend Racial Traits

+2 Intelligence, +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity: Fiends are cunning and hardy, but their stony flesh limits their mobility.

Type: Salamander fiends are outsiders with the native subtype.

Medium: Though fiends are thickly built, they are still Medium-sized creatures and receive no bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Normal Speed: Fiends have a base speed of 20 feet, due to their mass and ungainly stature.

Darkvision: Fiends can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

Salamander Vital Statistics

Age

Adulthood: 2 years
Starting Age: +1d6 years
Middle Age: 100 years
Old: 200 years
Venerable: 300 years
Maximum Age: +10d10 years

Height and Weight

Base Height - 6 ft.
Base Weight - 500 lbs.
Modifier - 3d6 in.
Weight Modifier - X 10 lbs.

Natural Attack: Salamander fiends possess a natural bite attack that inflicts 1d4 damage. This is a secondary weapon.

Fire Resistance: Salamander fiends possess fire resistance 5.

Firespeech (Ex) A salamander fiend may use thermal fluctuations to communicate soundlessly to all creatures with the firespeech ability within 100 feet. Areas of extreme cold (below 32° F / 0° C) reduce this range by half.

Fire Sensitivity: While not as vulnerable to cold as titans, salamander fiends are much more sensitive than other creatures. They are affected by cold environments (see *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*, Chapter 13) as if the temperature was 40° lower than normal. A fiend can negate this affect with *endure elements* or by carrying at least one torch-sized flame in contact with his body.

Slow Burn: As a full round action, a fiend can cause the heat within his body to intensify. After doing so, the fiend's body glows with the intensity of a torch for one hour and does 2 fire damage to all objects the fiend touches (and adds this damage to natural attacks, unarmed attacks, and melee attacks with a light weapon). While this ability is in effect, the fiend gains cold vulnerability. A fiend can end this affect prematurely as an additional full round action.

Volcanic Link: A salamander fiend who has not been exiled from his tribe possesses a salamander titan's fire immunity, smoke breather, and lava walk abilities while within one mile of his home volcano.

Alternate Salamander Racial Traits

You may replace the default salamander fiend racial traits with any of the following racial traits.

✦ **Shimmering:** Your natural radiance is particularly bright. You continually shed light equal in radiance to a torch, which can only be negated by covering your entire body. When using the slow burn ability, your light radius is doubled and you inflict 1 additional fire damage (this stacks with the benefits of the Volcanic Grasp feat). This trait replaces darkvision.

✦ **Smokewalker:** You have retained some of your original ability to see through dense smoke. You ignore concealment penalties due to smoke and fog within 20 feet. This trait replaces slow burn.

✦ **Obsidian Flesh:** Your flesh is tougher than normal, but your heat is lesser as well. You gain a +1 natural armor bonus to AC, but the range of your firespeech is halved. This trait replaces slow burn.

New Spells

Firespeech

School transmutation; **Level** druid/entomancer 1, mechamagic/sorcerer/wizard 1, ranger 1, thunder scout 1

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target creature touched

Duration 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell**

Resistance yes

This spell confers a salamander's firespeech ability upon the recipient, allowing them to communicate soundlessly using only thermal energy. All creatures within 100 feet who also possess firespeech can understand this communication, and the recipient can understand any such creatures.

If the target already possesses the firespeech ability naturally, the range at which it can receive and transmit messages is doubled.

The range of this ability is halved in any environments of extreme cold (below 32° F / 0° C).

Firespeech, Communal

School transmutation; **Level** druid/entomancer 2, mechamagic/sorcerer/wizard 2, ranger 2, thunder scout 2

Target creatures touched

This spell functions as firespeech, except you divide the duration in 10 minute intervals among the creatures touched.

New Feats

Goreaux Tinkerer

A goreaux never stops tinkering... not even on himself.

• **Prerequisite** goreaux

• **Benefit** You gain one minor golemoid implant of your choice. You are considered a true golemoid, and gain a steam reserve equal to your Intelligence modifier (if you have or gain a steam reserve from another class ability, this grants +1 steam point instead). The save DC of any effects related to this implant is equal to 10 + 1/2 your level + your Intelligence modifier. Once per day, you may spend two steam points and an hour tinkering on this implant to exchange it for another, as per the golemoid's interchangeable parts class ability.

Note: Due to their inherent affinity for mechamagic, this implant does not affect the goreaux's lifespan.

Volcanic Grasp

Your flaming touch is deadly.

• **Prerequisite** +9 base attack, salamander fiend, slow burn racial ability

• **Benefit** The damage inflicted by your slow burn racial ability is increased to 1d4. Targets affected by your slow burn must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + 1/2 your level + your Constitution modifier) or burn for 1d4 damage for 1d3 rounds, as per the burn monster ability.

Chapter Three - Personages of Note

Great things cannot be accomplished alone. This may not have been true throughout recorded history, and indeed many accounts of great men and women who have shaped the world in the past have indicated that they had very little in the way of support, but in modern Aden, a man must rely upon his comrades if he is to have any hope of achieving his ends. I may have unearthed a remarkable amount of lore in my day, true, but none of it was accomplished alone, and I never would have survived to any of the seventeen published tomes accredited to me. [Ed Note: *While I find my colleague somewhat insufferable, I will freely admit his body of published work is both large in size and significant in its accomplishments.* -AC]

Any endeavor in the wilderness, which presumably is the purpose of your reading this particular work, requires that an individual call upon skilled comrades to aid in the process. Some prefer to consider such individuals employees or hirelings, but I myself have always preferred to call them my comrades. I pay them, of course, but I find that it fosters an excellent working relationship if you do not patronize or talk down to those who are going to be watching your back while you are at the mercy of all manner of terrible monstrosities.

Eleuth Erian

CR 17 - Male goreaux mechamage 11 / oracle (mystery of lore) 7

CG small humanoid (goblin)

Init +0; Senses; darkvision 60 ft. Perception +24

Defense

AC 33, touch 22, flat-footed 27 (+6 shield, +6 Cha, +1 size, +5 deflection, +5 natural)

hp 153 (11d6 + 7d8 + 72)

Fort +14, Ref +16, Will +20

Special defenses goreaux combat training, mechamage resistance

Offense

Speed 20 ft.

Melee masterwork dagger +12 (1d4)

Ranged +5 pistol +16 (1d8+6)

Mechamage Spells Typically Prepared (CL 11th, concentration +18)

0-Level (at will) - *dancing lights, everheat rune, prestidigitation, read magic*

The Cogswheel Irregulars

As should be obvious from my writings, I spent the majority of my time within Mekanus, the largest and most diverse city in the world of Aden. There is more than enough to keep me busy here most of the time, I should say! I do still make expeditions from time to time, but only when the potential for learning [Ed. Note: *Or profit.* -AC] is exceptional. When I am within Mekanus and have need of skilled associates for hire, I often turn to the organization known as the Cogswheel Irregulars.

The Irregulars were founded by a group of concerned citizens from all walks of life within Mekanus, and they have special dispensation to train and employ agents who possess rudimentary status as law enforcement officials. The leaders of the organization are principled men and women with the finest of intentions, and they offer as much training and oversight as possible, ensuring that the vast majority of their agents are skilled, competent individuals who work to fulfill their contracts to the best of their ability. When I find myself in need of assistance, I have never been disappointed with the Irregulars, even when the matters in question have been of a decidedly delicate nature. (If you ever meet me in person, ask me about my experiences in miniaturized habitats for ursax and I will tell you quite the story!)

1st Level (6/day) - *crafters' fortune* (x2), *grease*, *mend construct*, *protection from evil*, *unseen servant*

2nd Level (6/day) - *construct servant*, *extended mage armor* (x2), *glitterdust* (x2), *make whole*

3rd Level (6/day) - *dispel magic*, *fly*, *haste*, *repair construct* (x2), *seek thoughts*

4th Level (4/day) - *direct golem*, *empower golem*, *false life*, *greater*, *stoneskin*

5th Level (3/day) - *rapid repair* (x2), *teleport*

6th Level (2/day) - *construct servant V*, *fluid form*

Oracle Spells Known (CL 9th; concentration +15)

0-Level (at will) - *create water*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*, *spark*, *stabilize*, *virtue*

1st Level (8/day) - *bless*, *cure light wounds*, *divine warning*, *entropic shield*, *identify*, *know the enemy*, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*

2nd Level (8/day) - *aid*, *consecrate*, *cure moderate wounds*, *levitate*, *make whole*, *minor image*, *protection from evil*, *communal*, *tongues*

3rd Level (5/day) - *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *locate object*, *searing light*

Statistics

Str 10, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 25, Wis 13, Cha 22
Base Atk +10; CMB +9; CMD 19

Feats Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Expanded Arcana, Extend Spell, Extra Revelation, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus Transmutation, Spell Specialization (Rapid Repair), Theurgy

Traits Cosmopolitan Education (+1 Spellcraft and counts as class skill), Magical Knack (+2 oracle caster level)

Skills Appraise 5 (+15), Craft (machinery) 18 (+30), Craft (sculpting) 5 (+17), Disable Device 18 (+30), Fly 5 (+8), Heal 10 (+14), Knowledge (arcana) 18 (+28), Knowledge (dungeoneering) 5 (+15), Knowledge (engineering) 18 (+28), Knowledge (history) 18 (+28), Knowledge (local) 5 (+15), Knowledge (nature) 5 (+15), Knowledge (planes) 5 (+15), Knowledge (religion) 5 (+15), Perception 18 (+24), Use Magic Device 18 (+27),

Languages Arcadian, Earthtongue, Eastern Common, Fundamental, Giant, Lowland, Sylfanic, Vanoran, Western Common

SQ call minion (distress, intercede), golem minion, hardy, keen mind, improved tinkering,

mechamagic mastery, oracle curse (haunted), oracle revelations (focused trance, mental acuity, sidestep secret, think on it), permanent *arcane sight*

Equipment +5 mithral buckler, +5 pistol, *amulet of natural armor* +5, *belt of mighty constitution* +6, *cloak of resistance* +5, *engineer's workgloves*, *eyes of the eagle*, *handy haversack*, *headband of mental prowess* (Int and Cha +6), *mask of a thousand tomes*, *orb of utter chaos*, *ring of arcane signets*, *ring of protection* +5, *masterwork dagger*, *masterwork crafting and thieves tools*, *countless scrolls and wands*, *numerous golems*, *spellbook that contains all 0-level mechamage spells as well as the following spells: (1st level) comprehend languages, crafters' fortune, dancing lantern, detect undead, enrage constructs, erase, golemguard, golemspeak, grease, jury-rig, mage armor, mend construct, protection from evil, repair vehicle, see alignment, snapdragon fireworks, true strike, unseen servant, (2nd level) break object, construct servant, detect thoughts, detonate golem, glitterdust, golemrunes, make whole, pilot's guile, resist energy, steambreaker, stoke the flame, stone call, whispering wind, (3rd level), arcane sight, construct servant II, daylight, dispel magic, displacement, fly, Golemsight, Golemwrack, haste, repair construct, seek thoughts, (4th level) construct servant III, direct golem, empower golem, false life, greater, golembane, helldrifter, remove curse, stoneskin, true form, (5th level) break enchantment, construct servant IV, golembreath, overland flight, permanency, rapid repair, soothe construct, teleport, transmute mud to rock, unbreakable construct, (6th level) bestow brilliance, construct servant V, fluid form, getaway, rebuild minion, and the following mechamage writs: durable, elemental, enchanted, gazing, gigantic, impervious, magical, mighty, potent, reinforced, steadfast, steed, swift, talented.*

Eleuth's Rock Golem Minion

N Large construct

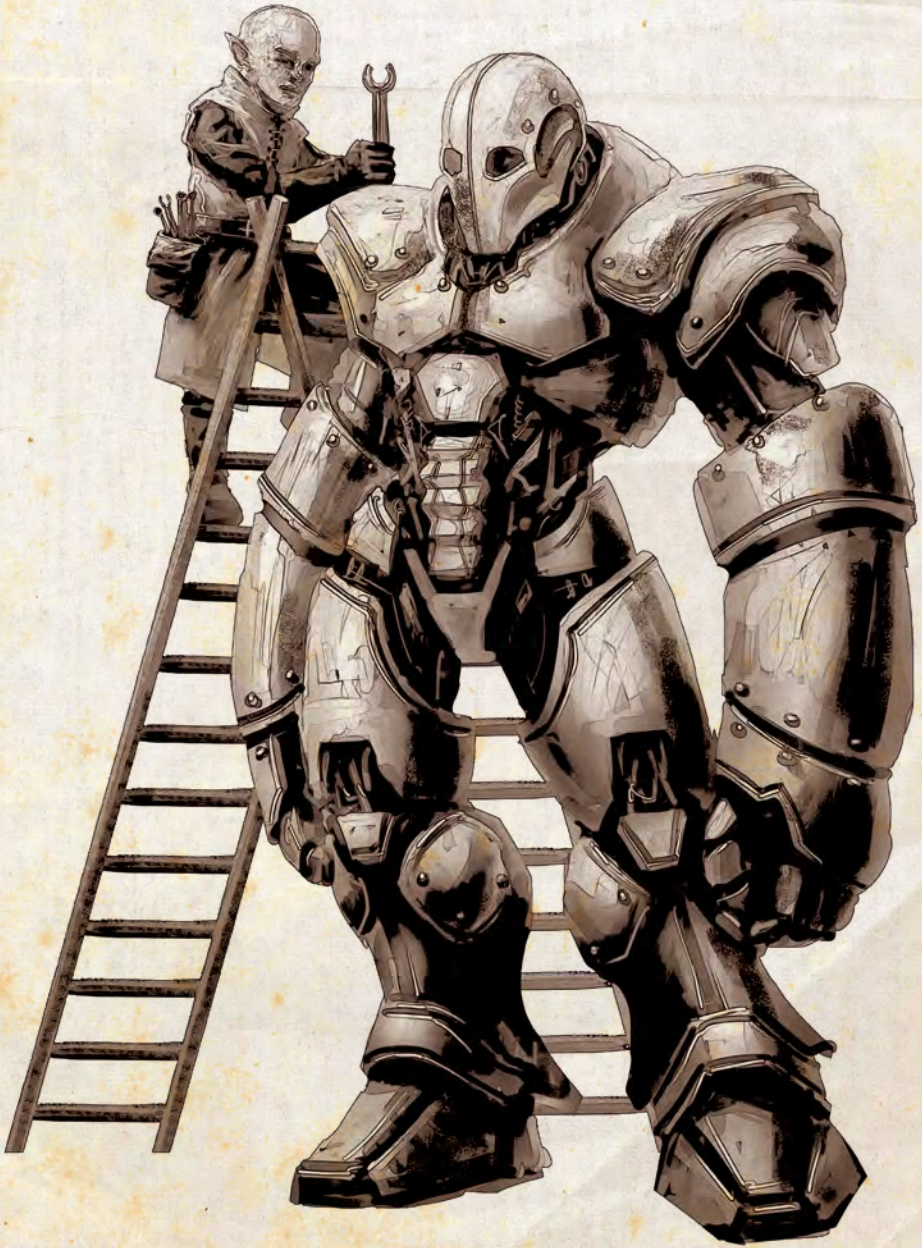
Senses darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +11

Defense

AC 23, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 23 (+2 armor, +0 Dex, -1 size, +5 deflection, +7 natural)

hp 74 (9d10 + 29)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3



Offense

Speed 40 ft.

Melee 2 slams +19 (2d6+8)

Ranged 2 eyebeams ranged touch (2d6)

Special defenses construct traits, DR 3/ adamantine, evasion

Current Writs (Loyalty 10)

enchanted, gazing, gigantic, impervious, magical, mighty, reinforced, steed, swift, talented

Statistics

Str 26, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 20

Feats Power Attack

Skills Perception 11 (+11)

Languages Arcadian, Earthtongue, Eastern Common, Fundamental, Giant, Lowland, Sylfanic, Vanoran, Western Common

SQ Share spells

Equipment *ring of protection* +5

The purpose of this ledger is to introduce you, valued readers, with individuals who could potentially be of great service to you. My associate Eleuth is valuable, of that there can be no doubt whatsoever; my only hesitation in acquainting you with him in this manner is that, quite frankly, his talents are so prodigious that very few can hope to afford to purchase his expertise, even if only briefly. Eleuth is a mechamage of incredible skill, but I consider him a polymath due to his extensive expertise in areas of so-called divine magic in addition to his prodigious arcane abilities.

Eleuth was born to skilled mechamages and inherited much of his parents' prowess. He has confided in me that he was raised largely by servants and spirits conjured by his parents' magic. I tell you this not because his personal background is any of your (or my!) business, naturally, but because he is a man possessed of unique social skills and tendencies, so please take that into consideration if you choose to solicit his services and do not be offended by his eccentricities. I assure you, his brilliance is well worth any oddities one must endure to benefit from his company.

To be clear, I am recommending Eleuth as a resource due to his prodigious mechamagical abilities. However, I would be remiss if I did not mention that his previously mentioned divine abilities are significant as well. Unfortunately, they seem to be a subject of some contention with Eleuth, and he is unlikely to discuss them save

to express himself via a number of strange half-riddles and leading questions. My friend seems to enjoy evoking a strong sense of mystery in everything he does, and again, this is merely part of the price one has to pay to secure the talents of such an individual.

Searstone

CR 5 - Salamander fiend ranger (guide) 6

CG Medium humanoid (salamander fiend)

Init +8; **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft; **Perception** +6

Defense

AC 16, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 13

hp 51 (6d10+18)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3

Special defenses fire resistance, fire sensitivity

Offense

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *longsword* / +1 *short sword*
+7/+2/+2/-1 (1d8+3/1d6+3)

Ranged longbow +9/+4 (1d8)

Ranger Spells Prepared

(CL 3rd; concentration +4)

1st Level - *resist elements, speak with animals*

Statistics

Str 14, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

Base Atk +6/+1 **CMB** +8 **CMD** 15

Feats Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Skill Focus (Stealth), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting

Traits Folk Magic (*endure elements* 1/day, CL 1), Reactionary (+2 initiative)

Skills Handle Animal +6, Heal +7, Knowledge (Nature) +7, Perception +6, Ride +6, Stealth +12, Survival +7

Languages Firespeech, Moltean, Western Common

SQ slow burn

Equipment +1 *longsword*, +1 *short sword*, masterwork studded leather armor, longbow with 20 arrows, ranger's kit

If you ever find yourself in need of an expedition somewhere in the wilderness of the Charred Peaks (and if you do I am truly sorry for whatever grave misfortune led you to such dire circumstances), I cannot be clear enough about this next point: you must hire a guide if you re

to have any chance whatsoever of survival. Even in a real as deadly as Urbana, the Charred Peaks stand out as one of the most threatening, and to delve into them without a knowledgeable guide is tantamount to suicide, perhaps even murder if you take other ill-informed individuals with you. Obviously there are a number of skilled guides available for hire in the city of Smult, but the very finest can be contacted through intermediaries in Rose.

I cannot begin to express the level of skill that Searstone possesses; her talents are so astonishing that they seem much more like supernatural abilities than merely a gift for moving unseen and unheard. Regardless, she appears to be intimately familiar with the entirety of the Charred Peaks as well as the wildlife found there, including what local plants are edible. On one expedition, my men and I lost our provisions in a cackler attack, but Searstone rather easily provided us with local roots and other flora I could not immediately identify. Some of it was quite tasty! I actually grow some tubers she introduced me to in my local garden here to supplement my diet.

Searstone is extremely reserved, as is common with her people, but she does warm up after some time. Once you have proven that you trust and value her counsel and her skills, she will become more open with you; more so than the money you will pay her, this is her true reward, I think. Keep in mind, however, that she is extremely cautious about who she works with, and for good reason; there are many in Urbana who do not distinguish between outcast salamanders and their kin in the volcano of Smult, and who might be inclined to kill her on sight simply because of her race. It is a tragedy, but such is the world in which we find ourselves.

Tairis

**CR 7 - Half-Elf bard (arcane duelist) 5/
gunslinger 3**

CG Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +12

Defense

AC 22, **touch** 16, **flat-footed** 17 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +2 dodge, +1 deflection)

hp 47 (8 HD; 5d8+3d10+8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +5; +2 vs. enchantment, immune to sleep

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *longsword* +10/+5 (1d8+4/19-20) or *dagger* +8/+3 (1d4+2/19-20)

Ranged masterwork pistol +10/+5 (1d8/20) or masterwork pistol w/deadly shot +8/+3 (1d8+4/20)

Special Attacks bardic performance 20 rounds/day (distraction, fascinate, inspire competence +2, inspire courage +2, rallying cry)

Bard Spells Known

(CL 5th; concentration +8)

0-Level (at will) - *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

1st Level (5/day) *disguise self*, *feather fall*, *grease* (DC 14), *vanish*

2nd Level (3/day) *bladed dash*, *blistering invective* (DC 15), *mirror image*

Statistics

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 16

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 24

Feats Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Deadly Aim, Dodge, Extra Grit, Gunsmithing, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +7, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (engineering) +7, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (history) +5, Perception +10, Perform (Sing) +12, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Spellcraft +10, Stealth +7, Use Magic Device +12

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

SQ arcane bond (*longsword*), deeds (*deadeye*, *gunslinger's dodge*, *gunslinger initiative*, *pistol-whip*, *quick clear*, *utility shot*), *elf blood*, *elven immunities*, *grit*, *keen senses*, *multitalented*, *nimble*

Equipment +2 *longsword*, +2 *mithral chain shirt*, masterwork pistol (4) with 20 bullets, *ring of protection* +1, adamantine bullets (4), backpack, dagger, gunsmith's kit, hemp rope (50 ft), powder horn with 20 doses of black powder, silver bullets (4), sunrod, waterskin, 20 gp

The last time I saw my friend Tairis, he was performing in a simple tavern in the coastal city of Tellai, far to the south of my new home in Mekanus. I suspect that unless something drastic has changed in his habits, you wouldn't find him there now; he simply does not remain in one place long enough to put down roots. It is his belief that, in the world of Aden after

the Darkfall, inspiration is in short supply, and he best serves his fellow man by traveling and sharing his stories with others. I find it difficult to disagree with any part of that philosophy, quite honestly.

I have had occasion to work closely with Tairis on several different occasions, and I have learned to appreciate all of his many skills. From what he has revealed in his songs, he was part of a wealthy merchant family prior to the Darkfall, but he lost his family and his fortunes in the fall of Columbey and the rise of Mekanus. His stories make it sound as if he was something of a hedonist prior to the Darkfall, but his sharp mind clearly indicates he was a student of higher learning at some point, and his incredible talent with firearms strongly indicates he has had no shortage of opportunities to defend himself since the nocturnal hordes came to Aden.

Regardless of his other skills, however, Tairis's most important contribution to any effort is his incredible knowledge of lore. His stories, while embellished for the purposes of entertainment, are all steeped in local legends and personal experience. While many of his songs are based upon his own exploits against the nocturnals,

Thekk Stonewarden

CR 4 - Male dwarf fighter (crossbowman) 5

LG Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +4; **Perception** +1

Defense

AC 20, **touch** 16, **flat-footed** 15 (+3 Dex)

hp 37 (5d10+10)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Offense

Speed 15 ft.

Melee masterwork dwarven waraxe +7 (1d10+2)

Ranged +1 heavy crossbow +12 (1d10+4)

Statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 19, **Con** 14, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +5 **CMB** +7; **CMD** 21

Feats Crossbow Expert, Deadshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Weapon Focus (Heavy Crossbow)

Traits Folk Magic (*shield* 1/day, CL 1), Reactionary (+2 initiative)

Skills Appraise +3, Climb +7,

Craft: Brewing +10, Handle Animal +5,

Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +8,

Knowledge (Engineering) +8, Profession:

Brewer (+5), Ride +10, Survival +8, Swim +7

Languages Dwarven, Eastern Common, Western Common

SQ bravery +1 (bonus to Will saves vs. fear)

Equipment +1 heavy crossbow (including 5 tangle bolts and 1 screaming bolt), masterwork dwarven waraxe, +1 kikko armor, amulet of natural armor +1, belt of inherent dexterity +2, masterwork artisan's tools (brewing)

Sometimes the most important thing one can have on any expedition outside the city is a strong sword arm. Granted, if you do not know where you are going, you are as good as dead, and if you do not possess the knowledge you need in order to overcome a foe for whom steel is insufficient then there is little that can be done, but the sheer number of threats one will face that can simply be defeated by a powerful warrior will overshadow everything else. Toward that end, I never leave the city without a number of great warriors to accompany me, regardless of my destination.

Although it is difficult to tell from his name, and he certainly doesn't wish to discuss his past in any significant detail, Thekk Stonewarden is a dwarf of, I believe, Carraway descent. He has no discernible accent, but I have rarely seen anyone as gifted with a crossbow as Thekk outside of that nation's boundaries. He is not only a skilled marksman but he is gifted with other weapons as well, most notably the traditional weapons of his people, the axe and the hammer. Having him at my side has always put my mind at ease tremendously, as I know that I can depend upon him

Thekk is valuable for other reasons as well. Despite that his race has a general reputation for being a dour people, Thekk is a remarkably jovial sort. He brings good humor and cheer to virtually any situation, and on more than one occasion I have heard him bellowing good-natured laughter even while fighting for his life in the wilds of Urbana. To be fair, however, he is somewhat overly fond of drink, which is another negative stereotype often associated with his people, and while he can be counted upon not to overindulge, he is an amateur brewmaster of some skill, and will often inadvertently lead other members of the party to overindulge without realizing it.

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