

PATHFINDER

CAMPAIGN SETTING™



MISFIT MONSTERS REDEEMED

Colin McComb, Rob McCreary, and James L. Sutter

The Hall of Shame



ADHERER

Before: Sticky mummies.

Now: The insane result of gruesome experiments on the Ethereal Plane, with wrappings made from their own twisted flesh.



FLUMPH

Before: Flatulent jellyfish.

Now: Cosmic wardens devoted to protecting innocents and warning them about the horrors that lurk between the stars.



DELVER

Before: Tunnel slugs.

Now: Ancient architects left behind by alien masters, turning the entire planet into a cathedral as they wait for the Old Ones to return.



LAVA CHILD

Before: Subterranean humanoids with goofy grins.

Now: Interplanar, elemental-consuming spies with the ability to pass through metal as if it weren't even there.



DIRE CORBY

Before: Crow-men that yell, "Doom! Doom!"

Now: Insane, subterranean predators that cling to chasm walls and hunt their prey with near-suicidal ferocity.



LURKING RAY

Before: The executioner's hood, the trapper, and the lurker above.

Now: One underground, ray-like ambush predator with several forms depending on age and gender.



DISENCHANTER

Before: Blue camels that eat your stuff.

Now: Living weapons in a war between wizards, now set free to search out the magic they devour—including PCs' gear.



TOJANIDA

Before: Aquatic hodgepodes.

Now: Dignified water spirits trapped inside monstrous forms, determined to recover the respect and deference that is their rightful due.



FLAIL SNAIL

Before: Giants snails with maces for faces.

Now: Intelligent, enlightened snails with magic-warping shells, who wander through the Darklands writing epic poetry in their slime.



WOLF-IN-SHEEP'S-CLOTHING

Before: Carnivorous, alien trees with a fluffy bunny lure.

Now: Carnivorous, alien trees that animate the slain bodies of their victims in order to lure larger prey within reach.

MISFIT MONSTERS REDEEMED

A Pathfinder Campaign Setting Supplement

This book works best with the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* and the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*. Although it is suitable for play in any fantasy world, it is optimized for use in the Pathfinder campaign setting.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2	Flumph	34
Adherer	4	Lava Child	40
Delver	10	Lurker	46
Dire Corby	16	Tojanida	52
Disenchanter	22	Wolf-In-Sheep's-Clothing	58
Flail Snail	28		

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EVERYONE DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE

If there's any single aspect of roleplaying that everyone at Paizo loves, it's monsters. From the lowliest orc to the mighty Tarrasque, monsters go a long way toward defining a game or setting. Even before we knew how to game—before we knew there *were* roleplaying games, or that dice could have more than six sides—it was monsters that brought most of us to fantasy, and monsters that kept us there. The dragons, the demons, the centaurs, and the cockatrices—these were the things that made our dreams then, and continue to do so today. It's a love that never gets stale.

Yet it's not a love that's unconditional, or all-encompassing. Because the truth is, some monsters are *dumb*.

As they say, there's a thin line between love and hate, and gamers' mixed relationship with monsters is a classic example. While creatures like dragons or harpies will probably always be cool, even if there's never another word written about them, the same can't be said for some of the

sillier creatures. The carbuncle, for instance, which has the amazing defensive ability of *dying for no reason at all*? The athach, who's just an ugly giant with a droopy third arm coming out of his chest? These are the rejects from the monster team, the creatures always chosen last for the dungeon defense squad, and with good reason. Laughter during a game is fabulous—but not when it's directed at your scary monstrous encounter. Over the years, those monsters that don't make the grade have gathered quite a lot of ill will.

Now let's switch topics for a moment.

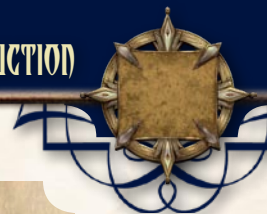
In *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #1, Paizo Creative Director James Jacobs presented a fresh new take on classic RPG goblins, inspired in large part by cover artist Wayne Reynolds's amazing illustration of the little homicidal maniacs (not to mention movies like *Gremlins* and *Lilo & Stitch*). In this new paradigm, goblins were afraid of dogs and horses. They didn't trust writing (which everyone knows steals the words out of your head). They loved fire, and lived in junkyards and trash heaps, cobbling together weapons like dogslicers and horsechoppers out of scrap metal and other rubbish. And most importantly, they sang—weird, twisted little ditties about fire and death that only James Jacobs could have produced.

The Paizo messageboard community loved it. For years, goblins had been seen as just another 1st-level monster, thrown at PCs like cannon fodder and then quickly abandoned in favor of more interesting foes as soon as the party had enough experience. Yet without changing the creature's game statistics in the least, we had managed to put a new spin on a monster and turn something old and tired into one of our most popular and iconic creations.

In that fateful moment, a bold experiment was proposed: What if we could take not one but *ten* classic (and hence mundane and boring) monsters and, by changing only the flavor, make them exciting again?

Thus was born *Classic Monsters Revisited*, a collection featuring such iconic fantasy monsters as trolls and kobolds, orcs and minotaurs—and of course goblins. In the wake of *Classic Monsters'* enthusiastic reception, we immediately set to work bringing to life a whole line of Revisited books, reinterpreting everything from classic RPG-created monsters like the rust monster and otyugh (*Dungeon Denizens Revisited*) to gothic horror creatures (*Classic Horrors Revisited*) to fearsome





dragons (*Dragons Revisited*) and infamous magical items (*Classic Treasures Revisited*). With each book we made, we got a little more confident—one might even say overconfident. And it was at this point, in this vulnerable and intoxicated state, that someone on the messageboards asked a fateful question: is there any monster Paizo *can't* make cool?

Perhaps you can see where this is going.

The idea struck a chord. To take monsters that weren't just boring, but outright *lame*, and try to make them cool again—it was folly, clearly. Some of roleplaying's dumbest monsters had been earning derisive chuckles longer than many of us had been alive, and defeated even some of the hobby's old masters in their attempts at redemption. Yet the concept still hung there, shimmering with potential. To make that book would be the ultimate challenge. Could we do it? Dared we even try?

It seems that we've dared. With *Misfit Monsters Redeemed*, we've endeavored to take 10 of the stupidest monsters in fantasy roleplaying and make them not just interesting, but useful to a GM running a game. Though the initial challenge may have been made in jest, this book is not a joke—it's our sincere hope that, regardless of their checkered pasts, each of the monsters presented in this book will acquit itself with valor, and that we can show you how each particular creature can make sense in your world, and add fun (and fear!) to your game.

Picking the roster of misfits wasn't easy, either—there were so many, and we knew we'd only get one shot at this. Competition was fierce, but the first rule on the table was that if any significant affection for a monster could be drummed up among the staffers involved, that critter would be ruled out as too easy. Many obvious choices fell by the wayside during this initial vetting process. (That poster-child of mediocrity, the carbuncle? It turns out Wes Schneider had never given up on the little guy, and unveiled him in all his reptilian glory in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #31. And the atchach was already scheduled for redemption in the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary II*, where his droopy third arm became something decidedly creepier.)

The debate was fast and furious, but in the end, we had 10 monsters that, for one reason or another, had spent decades sitting at the kids' table, never quite being taken seriously by GMs. These we then turned over to our freelancers, after exacting dire promises that, no matter how daunting it might seem, they would take each creature seriously.

As a final note, we should point out that this book would never have happened had it not been for the avid—some might say zealous or crazed—enthusiasm of certain factions on our messageboards, who for the last year have harangued us mercilessly as part of their campaign to save the endangered flumph. With this book, we can at last say that we've given it our best shot. But have we succeeded?

You decide.

MISFIT ROLL CALL

Below are some of fantasy roleplaying's worst offenders.

Adherer: Traditionally marginalized as a “sticky mummy,” the adherer is brought back to the limelight by Jason Nelson, who explores the creatures' terrifying tendrils and strange relationship to phase spiders.

Delver: The pointless slug-monster of the past is replaced by an earth-moving behemoth of single-minded purpose, riddling the world with tunnels in ancient rebellion against its unknowable masters, courtesy of Colin McComb.

Dire Corby: Few can enter the chasm-rookeries of these iron-muscled crow-men and live, thanks to Rob McCreary, who once more gives vent to the corbies' screams of doom and destruction.

Disenchanter: The blue, trunk-nosed camel that devours your magical gear is back and more useful than ever—to both GMs and PCs—courtesy of arcane naturalist Colin McComb.

Flail Snail: The snail with a mace for a face—four of them, in fact—has won James Sutter over with its wild-magic shell and whirling antennae. But did you know the flail snails also write communal koans in their intersecting slime trails?

Flumph: Perhaps the most ridiculed monster of all time, this gaseous jellyfish has come from the stars to warn you of ancient evils beyond space and time. Presented by Adam Daigle, the flumph has since gone on to inspire actual Paizo employees to acts of spontaneous interpretive dance as an illustration of the unique ritual through which flumphs migrate between worlds.

Lava Child: Smiling idiots no more, lava children are now one of the scariest elemental-eating, metal-penetrating creations the Planes of Earth and Fire have ever seen. And how does Jason Nelson make them that way? Three words: oversized baby head.

Lurking Rays: In a three-for-one deal, Colin McComb unveils the secret truth—that executioner's hoods, trappers, and the infamous lurkers above are all different genders or life stages of the same subterranean, mantalike predator.

Tojanida: Trapped in a grotesque form somewhere between that of a snapping turtle and a crab, the aquatic prisoners of fate known as tojanidas are bound and determined to reclaim both their dignity and their power—and they've chosen Crystal Frasier as their herald.

Wolf-In-Sheep's-Clothing: It's a tree stump with a bunny on it—or is it? The answer is most emphatically “no,” as Colin McComb shows us the inner workings of the horrible, alien creatures that manipulate the corpses of their victims like puppets, drawing further prey within range of their thrashing tentacles and hideous maws.



ADHERER

THE CURIOUS CREATURES KNOWN AS ADHERERS ARE A RACE WHOSE ORIGIN IS A MYSTERY TO MOST. THOUGH OUTWARDLY RESEMBLING MUMMIES, BOUND AS THEY ARE IN LOOSE FOLDS OF DIRTY SKIN SIMILAR IN APPEARANCE TO LINEN BANDS, THEY ARE NOT UNDEAD—BUT NEITHER ARE THEY FULLY HUMAN. TRAGIC VICTIMS OF CROSS-PLANAR CORRUPTION, THEIR MINDS HAVE MOLDERED, AND ALL THAT REMAINS IS A CRUEL CLEVERNESS AND AN INSATIABLE HUNGER. YET THOSE WHO MIGHT PITY THE ADHERERS DO SO AT THEIR PERIL, FOR THESE CREATURES WHO MIGHT ONCE HAVE BEEN HUMAN ARE HUMAN NO LONGER. INSIDE THEIR CORRUPTED BRAINS, THE TENDRILS OF THEIR CAPTIVITY LINGER STILL, FILLING THEM FROM BIRTH TO DEATH WITH THE DESIRE TO SHED BLOOD, TO RAISE DRIPPING HANDS IN A PAEAN TO MASTERS LONG SINCE FORGOTTEN. AND THOSE WHO WOULD BE THEIR REDEEMERS ARE LIKELY TO BE THE FIRST COURSE AT THEIR FEAST.

—PATHFINDER HALISU COUAPI, *THE RESTLESS ONES*



Hunters and herders disappearing by night, children going missing during the day, whole frontier villages mysteriously depopulated—such things are a fact of life in a savage and unforgiving world. Yet not all who vanish in such a fashion are taken by the mundane criminals and villains of their time and place, and not all of those presumed dead by their friends and family are quite so fortunate.

Millennia ago, the phase spiders of the colony known as Yamileh were a small but powerful group with a singular advantage over their brethren: a cunning leader blessed with powerful magical abilities. In her effort to advance the phase spiders' eternal war effort against the xill, the Weavemistress of Yamileh conceived a grand experiment: Rather than hunting for the food they required, her colony could farm it, keeping living captives as a constantly replenishing feast and giving themselves more time to focus on strategy. Unlucky humans, harvested surreptitiously from all corners of the globe, proved a perfect fit. As the phase spiders carried new victims into the Ethereal Plane, the Weavemistress bound them into the ethereal webs of the colony, her peerless control over the ether changing the humans' flesh wherever it touched and making them an inextricable part of her growing menagerie.

In this manner, hundreds of humans were literally woven into the spun ether-web substance of the colony's holdings, with tiny filaments permeating every pore and orifice. Nourished by the same magic that bound them, the humans were bled with numbing monotony, feeding the cave spiders with their vital fluids. Disconnected from the world in the eternal half-light of the Ethereal Plane, with no companions but the alien whisperings of their spider hosts and the muffled screams and moans of their fellow survivors (or new captives brought to the colony to replace those whose bodies failed them), one by one the humans went mad. The phase spiders were without malice or cruelty, but few of their captives could cling long to rationality in the face of the incessant degradations and skittering ministrations of the eight-legged captors who tended them like livestock.

Through unnumbered years, the colony continued to grow, and the humans who endured soon found that they did not age and die as quickly as they once did. The dilated reality of the Ethereal Plane had infused their flesh, with spun ether and skin becoming one. It was only when a skirmish with the xill went poorly and brought the war to Yamileh itself that the phase spiders were forced to abandon their colony—and their chattel. Though many of the phase spiders escaped, their Weavemistress was destroyed. Her final act was the creation of a pyrrhic cyclone of ether that obliterated both her and the opposing forces, but also tore the colony's livestock

loose and scattered them across the planes. Though the surviving phase spiders remembered their leader's lofty idea, none possessed the power to manipulate the ether to bind and sustain humans, and over time all memory of Yamileh's experiment was lost.

Yet the human captives scattered by the ether cyclone were not completely destroyed. Though many met their ends on inhospitable planes, roasted in the Plane of Fire or tortured in the pits of Hell, a few found themselves back on the Material Plane—and possessed of unnerving new abilities. Tendrils of wispy ether-stuff remained fused with their once smooth skin, forming a ragged mass of gauzy strips that hung loosely about them and proved strangely adherent to the dense reality of the Material Plane. These new creatures—for no longer could they reasonably be called humans—also slowly realized that their lifespans had lengthened, and the normal aging that should have taken years now stretched into decades.

Yet with these changes came something else: a hunger like nothing they had ever known, bred into them by the strange sustenance of the Weavemistress. A hunger, not of their own digestive systems, but rather an urge to feed some half-heard and only barely understood longing within the depths of their subconscious—a need to feel the fresh, warm blood of living creatures flowing over their grasping hands and waving tendrils. Whatever longing the prisoners may have had to return to their former lives quickly eroded in the face of that strange, all-consuming directive.

Stripped of their humanity, the adherers embraced their bizarre new forms. And they began to hunt.

ECOLOGY

Adherers are basically humanoid in size and build, though with pallid and hairless skin that hangs loosely on their gaunt bodies. During their captivity, the adherers' physiology was subtly altered, allowing their flesh and skin to engorge and distend—the better to store fresh blood—and their skin retains baggy folds even though their flesh has withdrawn. Even newborn adherers share this trait, as the ethereal filaments permeate even their parents' wombs, weaving themselves into the flesh of the adherers' offspring and ready for use from the moment of birth.

The psychoactive ether-filaments that once bound them to the Yamileh colony have also become inextricably woven into every nerve and organ, and it is principally the filaments' influence—still driving them to acquire blood for their long-dead captors—that leads the crazed adherers to prey on other intelligent creatures. Once an instrument of bondage and subtle life-force manipulation, these ether-filaments now grow from the adherers, weaving

themselves together into cloth-like bands. While adherers' heads usually remain nearly bald, the rest of their bodies are draped and shrouded with these loose-hanging filament bands, creating their mummy-like appearance. These filaments are coated in a faintly damp, flammable residue that has a potent sour stench like curdling milk, a clue to those familiar with them that hidden adherers may be nearby.

Adherer filaments are bonded to the creatures' neural structures, bringing excruciating pain to those adherers who have tried to cut them off. However, the strands also respond to their thoughts, and are incredibly adherent to matter from the Material Plane. It was not long after their escape that hungry adherers discovered the filaments made excellent tools for attaching camouflage to themselves or catching and binding elusive prey. As their filaments frayed and were shed, cannier adherers began to harvest this detritus, weaving it into tools to help them capture others and drain them of their blood. In the moldering recesses of their filament-wracked minds, they strive to carry on the legacy of the captors that once held them, though with a measure of cruelty and relish unprecedented by the phase spiders.

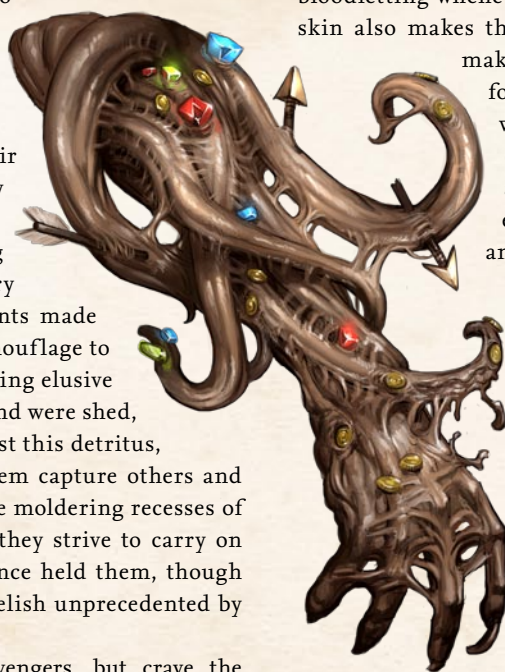
Adherers can survive as scavengers, but crave the sensation of trapping another creature and repeatedly draining its blood. Lacking the expertise or intellect of their captors, however, adherers tend to err on the side of taking too much, so their captives rarely last long. Though adherers occasionally drink the shed blood, more often they simply collect it out of habit, storing it in vats, jugs, and bottles. Those exploring adherer lairs are likely to find many such containers, cold and congealed.

Adherers are male or female, like humans, and procreate in the usual fashion, save that they join their filaments into a cocoon during copulation. They weave similar constructions out of dead fibers to keep their young safe while the parents hunt. While they rarely have the opportunity—as their lust for blood generally overcomes all others—adherers are also capable of interbreeding with humans. The resulting abominations appear human at birth, but quickly change as the ether filaments multiply and spring from their skins. Within less than a year, the children are transformed in both body and mind into infant adherers.

Adherers on the Material Plane have a lifespan approximately twice that of an ordinary human. Young and old must hunt as long as they are able, and those nearing

the end of their lives often seek the most dangerous duties, craving death as an alternative to burdening the nest. Adherer dead are cocooned in their own filaments and woven into the walls of their community.

In combat, adherers naturally gravitate toward melee, where they use their adhesive qualities to crush their opponents to them, binding them in strands of sticky, extruded filaments and leaving them alive for later bloodletting whenever possible. The stickiness of their skin also makes them adept at disarming their foes, making melee weapons a risky option for those facing them. If confronted with enemies who can't be subdued easily through simple grappling and adhesion, adherers are smart enough to slink into the shadows and set up elaborate ambushes.



HABITAT & SOCIETY

The original adherers found their homeworld frighteningly unpredictable after their years of regimented imprisonment. In the moldering depths of their sanity, they dimly remembered their names and homes, and sought to find help from their friends and descendants. Those humans they met, however, saw only staggering, moaning abominations covered in bandages and refuse, stuttering in the inhuman cadences of an alien tongue. Fear and revulsion turned to violent reprisal, and the ether-gauze bands of the adherers proved just as flammable as the wraps of the mummies they resembled.

Fleeing back into dark and wild places, the adherers bitterly realized there was no place for them in human society. Yet this was not merely the result of prejudice on the part of their human brethren—for with every passing moment, the adherers found themselves more and more starved for the release of bloodletting, and needing to appease the obsession of the tendrils in their brains. With primitive malice, they recreated the only society they knew anymore, one of captivity, slavery, and slow consumption. Not blood-drinkers like their arachnid captors, adherers simply consume their bound prisoners one bite at a time, clubbing victims into unconsciousness if their screams grow too loud, but always awakening them on schedule for feeding and bloodletting.

Adherers often choose to live underground or in heavily vegetated terrain, where they can find or manufacture cover and concealing shrouds for their nests and ambushes. Their favored lairs, however, are ruined or



abandoned buildings whose original inhabitants have been exterminated.

Adherers are cruel stalkers and ambushers, with a debased intellect scarcely above that of a particularly clever and ruthless animal. They exhibit a feral cunning in setting up ambushes, but their society is little more than a brutish pack ruled by the strongest, cleverest, or most vicious adherer in the nest. Dominant adherers control breeding in the nest and select the choicest captives for their feasting, sometimes casting out those who would challenge their authority. Those adherers unable to claim power and unwilling to serve beneath the dominant member sometimes voluntarily leave in order to start their own nests (a process that frequently involves restraining their bloodlust long enough to mate with captives and produce a new generation of nestmates). Adherers are constantly driven by their hunger, and even those able to converse with them in Aklo find them barely able to hold a conversation. The only creatures that seem to enjoy the company of adherers are spiders, who sometimes sense an affinity of sorts within them. Some sages speculate that the ectoplasmic secretions of an adherer's filament-bonds act as a pheromone that attracts spiders to them. What is known is that spiders will not attack adherers unless magically controlled, and some adherers have still greater empathic abilities with arachnids.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Adherers make excellent and atmospheric villains, representing an enemy that is both familiar in its near-humanity and yet wholly alien. They can be placed into ordinary cave complexes, tombs, or other adventure locations, but are used to best effect when haunting ruined villages or cities draped with clinging webs and strands. Adherers are cleverer than animals—if only just—and able to set up ambushes, entangling and separating their foes to gang up on lone targets. They can be paired with spiders, ettercaps, and similar creatures, complementing one another's modes of hunting.

At the same time, adherers are only barely sentient, just enough to convey a sense of tragic loss and hunger. Their moaning and chattering might at first appear to be akin to the guttural groaning of zombies, but it should be discernible to any paying attention that it is actual (if alien) speech, with a desperate edge of wanting and pain. The notion of being taken and exsanguinated by a nest of adherers (when their true nature is known) should be plenty to inspire dread, and any sage capable of recognizing the monsters should be able to inform the PCs that a captured NPC ally may face far worse if the adherer is attempting to start a new nest and seeking hosts for its corrupted seed...

Because of their resemblance to mummies, adherers can be used to turn PC expectations on their heads, giving birth to local rumors that lead PCs to stock up on resources to fight undead, only to find them ineffective against the true horrors they face. Still, adherers' vulnerability to fire leaves them open to at least one common mode of attack against mummies, so players who have prepared to fight the undead should be surprised but not completely stymied in their efforts.

TREASURE

Adherers have a modest interest in treasure, valuing it primarily for its utility in luring victims into their lairs. In addition to obviously valuable items such as those bearing jewels or the hint of magic, which tend to make the best bait, adherer nests are often coated with a preponderance of weapons and armor—the leavings of those unfortunate warriors who've striven in vain to wipe out the adherer menace.

Adherers are skilled at weaving, and usually turn this skill to the manufacture of rope bridges, ladders, and other basic structures within their nests, sometimes including basic traps. Certain rare adherers, however, weave their shed ectoplasmic strands into a silken material, working it into simple garments or elaborate macramé decorated with sparkling crystals or coins to catch and reflect the light, reminding them of the glittering and ethereal vastness that was once their home. Once their adherer creator has died, rendering the silk harmless, these clinging garments can be extremely valuable to the right buyer, and silk from an adherer can sell for 10 times the price of the normal variety.

VARIANTS

While it's presumed that all adherers were spawned from the original Yamileh colony on the Ethereal Plane, the cataclysmic storm that spewed them back into the Material Plane deposited them into a variety of environments, which forced them to adapt further in order to survive. In addition, the process of ectoplasmic bonding was not identical for all adherers, and different flesh responded to the Weavemistress's warping effects in different ways, with some of the prisoners becoming almost wholly transformed into ectoplasmic shrouds of their former selves.

Adherer Shroud (+1 CR): Some adherers lost their structural framework as their human tissue dissolved completely, leaving only a shapeless mass of ragged, fibrous swathes in which their frayed consciousness lingers. A shroud appears to be a pile of cobwebs and detritus when still, but when attacking unfurls into a wide, tattered sheet, often forming a crude face from the gaps and rents in the tissue.



ADHERER HIVE MINDS

Some adherer nests have found that by extruding ether-filaments from their brains and connecting them to similar strands from other adherers, or even the strands lining a lair, they can create a simple hive mind. If any adherer in the hive mind is aware of an enemy, all of them are. This means no linked adherer is flat-footed unless all of its linked fellows are. Likewise, if any adherer has pinpointed the location of an enemy, all linked adherers know it. The linking strands can only reach 10 feet (thus, most hive minds are only active in adherer lairs); if an adherer moves farther away from another linked member or the filaments lining its lair, the link is severed and the isolated adherer is dazzled for 1 round by mental feedback from the broken link. The linking filaments can also be attacked and severed (AC 17, hardness 0, hp 2), which has the same effect on a creature. Hive mind filaments are not harmed by area attacks or effects that do not affect objects. A broken link can be reestablished as a free action.

Adherer shrouds share the normal abilities of their kind, but they have a fly speed of 20 (average maneuverability) and gain an additional +4 bonus on Stealth checks. In addition, they gain DR 10/slashing and the following special abilities:

Binding Shroud (Ex): An adherer shroud wraps itself entirely around a target that it grapples. It gains a +4 racial bonus to CMD to maintain a grapple. When an adherer shroud makes a successful grapple check against a grappled target, the target is blinded for the duration of the grapple and begins to suffocate (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 445). If an adherer shroud is damaged while grappling, it takes only half normal damage from the attack, with any remaining damage taken instead by the grappled creature.

Tattered (Ex): An adherer shroud can almost completely unravel itself, allowing it to pass through tiny gaps as if it were in gaseous form. Unraveling or reforming itself is a move action. Even in its normal form it never takes penalties for squeezing through narrow spaces.

ADHERERS ON GOLARION

Adherers dispersed from the ether cyclone that destroyed ancient Yamileh generally reentered Golarion at places where the barriers between planes are thin, whether because of the warping effects of powerful magic or through the presence of teleportation effects and plane-spanning gateways. Some landed amid shamanic mounds in Arcadia, others on the fringes of Garund's Mana Wastes, and still others around natural places of power ranging from Vudra to Casmaron. A few emerged in Osirion, where they were mistaken by many

for the mummies of long-dead pharaohs, and alternately worshiped or hunted and forcibly entombed—some remain trapped there to this day. Many of the adherers emerging from the Ethereal Plane were slain upon their return, either by predators or by watchful protectors who took them for interplanar interlopers with malevolent intentions. In certain remote places, however, they were able to make a safe haven for themselves and survive, if never truly able to thrive.

Adherers have the greatest success in borderland areas, neither so civilized and well traveled that their predations would provoke reprisals, nor so remote and wild that they would be deprived of their humanoid prey. In such places, small nests of adherers have managed to claim a part of the landscape as their own. They have had their greatest success expanding into and creating colonies in areas rife with ruins, both recently fallen lands and areas where the bones of ancient civilizations have long lain unused. This tendency to surround themselves with the shambles of civilization, likely an expression of racial memory and ancestral longing for a sense of place and purpose, is another reason why the wrapping-draped monsters are often mistaken for undead mummies. The ruined province of Virlych in western Ustalav, a landscape abandoned by both the nation that claims it and the denizens of Lastwall and Belkzen, is rumored to host several nests of adherers. With its abandoned hamlets and freeholds, this haunted landscape provides ample territory for adherers to hunt and feast on the wretched wanderers who cross them, with relatively little fear of reprisal.

Farther east, adherers are rumored to be found in small clusters throughout the Hold of Belkzen, where their predations on unwary orcs go generally unnoticed and unanswered, save to drive particular tribes and warbands out of their territory. Adherers prefer the closeness of folded, rugged hills and tangled forests, and these the bordering mountains of Belkzen have in abundance. Some adherers even make their way northeast across the frontier and into the southern reaches of the Worldwound, though most adherers who venture far into that realm become the prey of more powerful creatures.

Still other adherers find homes in the wide and untamed forests of the River Kingdoms and the fractious lands of Brevoiy and Galt, where there is enough prey to sustain them but no effective central power able to mount an organized campaign to eradicate them. From the border forests of Sevenarches and Kyonin to the Iobarian steppes, these lands offer a wealth of unoccupied dwellings, the residue of failed settlement schemes or border wars, in which adherers can hide and build their nests.

ADHERER

This pallid humanoid creature is wrapped in wispy strips of skin, with bits of detritus and a sour stink clinging to it as though it were freshly emerged from a refuse pit.

ADHERER

CR 3



XP 800

LE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 natural)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5

DR 5/—; SR 14

Weaknesses vulnerability to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee 2 slams +7 (1d6+3 plus adherence and grab)

Special Attacks grab

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 11

Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 19

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +10, Craft (traps) +3, Craft (cloth) +5, Perception +5, Stealth +11; Racial Modifiers +2 Craft (cloth), +4 Stealth

Languages Aklo

SQ adherence

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate or underground

Organization solitary, gang (2–5), or nest (6–12)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Adherence (Su) A creature striking an adherer with a manufactured weapon must make a DC 14 Reflex save; failure means the weapon is stuck to the adherer and cannot be used to make attacks. Freeing a stuck weapon from an adherer requires a successful grapple check. If the adherer moves away, the wielder must release the weapon or make a successful grapple check to hold onto it; otherwise, the weapon is pulled from the wielder's grasp (a locked gauntlet gives the wielder a +10 bonus on this check). Striking an adherer with natural weapons or unarmed attacks allows the adherer to immediately attempt to grab the attacker. Up to four Medium or smaller creatures can become stuck to a single adherer.

Adherers do not gain the grappled condition when creatures are stuck to them. An adherer can use its grab ability on creatures up to one size category larger than itself. Its adhesive has no effect on stone. Throwing boiling water on an adherer or dealing at least 10 points of fire damage to it reduces the save DC and grapple CMD of the adherence ability by –4 for 1 minute. *Universal solvent*

and alchemical solvent weaken the filaments, freeing everything stuck to the adherer and preventing it from using its adherence ability for 1 hour. The strands lose their stickiness 1 hour after the adherer dies. An adherer can release anything stuck to it as a free action. The save DC for this ability is Constitution-based.

Adherers look vaguely like embalmed and mummified corpses wrapped in dirty linen, but are in fact something else entirely. Transformed by hideous processes on the Ethereal Plane, their bodies are riddled with tiny, adhesive strands that can stick to anything, allowing the adherers to bind their enemies' weapons and capture living creatures for their depraved, blood-draining rituals. Though once human, adherers have forgotten all traces of humanity, and now hunt their former kindred with gleeful abandon.





DELVER

"ONE MONTH AGO, MY TEAM CAME UPON A TUNNEL COMPLEX IN GRANITE THAT SHOULD NOT, GEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, HAVE EXISTED. IN ALL MY YEARS OF CAVING, I HAD NEVER SEEN ITS LIKE. THE ROCK SHOWED NEITHER THE WEAR ONE WOULD EXPECT FROM EROSION, NOR DEPOSITS FROM THE WATER. WE THOUGHT WE HAD DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW. WHAT WE FOUND WAS AN ANCIENT BEAST THAT Poured OUT OF THE WALL IN A GIGANTIC, OOZING MASS.

"THE SLIME ON THIS MALIGN THING DEVoured OUR WEAPONS, SWORD AND AXE. THE BEAST PURSUED US THROUGH THE CAVERNS UNTIL WE COULD SEE DAYLIGHT, SMASHING MEN TO PULP. OF THE TWENTY IN OUR TEAM, ONLY SEVEN MADE IT THROUGH THAT NARROW SHAFT.

"I HAVE ALWAYS SAID THAT THE STONE WAS MY LIFE, BUT THAT DAY I DISCOVERED THAT LIFE IS INDEED DEARER TO ME THAN CAVERNS AND GEMS. I WILL NOT ENTER THE DEPTHS AGAIN."

—TORVUS ALKAR, FORMER GEOLOGIST

To surface-dwellers, stone and earth are often the essence of safety and stability, their unchanging nature used as a metaphor for the stolid and the sensible. Yet below civilization's very feet, strange creatures lurk in the darkness, twisting and reshaping the world to their alien specifications. With eldritch powers beyond imagining, these presences carve cavernous kingdoms for themselves, raising new races to sentience in their blind world of silent stone.

The all-powerful and mysterious master race that created the monstrous creatures called "delvers" by humans has long since departed, leaving the delvers behind as a living legacy. Cave slugs forcibly evolved into engines of construction designed to hollow out new realms for their lords, the delvers now follow their own mystical obsessions, burrowing through the earth with incredible power and speed and leaving a warren of tunnels in their wake. Though delvers possess no magic, their flesh is corrosive to nearly every material that humanoids possess. Also commanding a fierce intelligence and the strength to crush boulders to dust, delvers are slow to anger but terrible when riled.

Though delvers are not particularly malicious, they sometimes come into conflict with other races over their pressing desire to consume metallic ore. Once worked, metals hold less appeal for delvers, but when consumed in their natural state, different ores create a variety of powerful, intoxicating effects much sought after by the delvers. Even trace amounts of ore are enough to produce an effect when consumed in sufficient quantity, giving rise to the popular perception that delvers eat stone indiscriminately. This gluttony is the primary reason why most miners take a dim view of the strange slug-beasts, as few can stand and fight against the rage of a gorging, intoxicated delver feeding on an ore vein.

Still, so long as a significant distance is kept, the sight of a delver is not necessarily cause for alarm, as the creatures have little interest in attacking others save out of self-defense. Some canny adventurers have even made temporary alliances with the intelligent beasts, offering vast amounts of raw minerals and metals in exchange for guidance or service, whether it be directions to a specific site (for delvers see much in their wanderings) or even a custom-built tunnel to reach it.

ECOLOGY

The first delvers were created by an unknown race for two reasons: to hollow out magnificent subterranean chambers and tunnels for their masters and the other servants, and to disarm or destroy any creatures who dared stand in their way.

To those ends, the delvers' creators wrought exceedingly well. Taking inspiration from the body of a cave slug,

they created a supple creature covered in a highly acidic mucus that could dissolve rock and adapt quickly to new kinds of materials. This protein slime from the delver's rocky skin also acts as active camouflage, so that the rare delver who's overmatched by an enemy or lying in wait for an intruder can withdraw into a hastily dug hideout and remain unseen. Water can wash the slime away; otherwise, it continues to burn after the initial touch, horribly corroding and blistering whatever it clings to. If a delver is attacked, its slime protects the creature by dissolving its attacker's weaponry. Only those immune to acid can consider themselves safe from the delver's slime, and even they must still contend with the delver's powerful pseudopods. While the delver can move without the aid of its pseudopods, these long tendrils are also coated in acidic ooze and assist in scraping rock down from the walls, enlarging tunnels and caverns and shaping them with remarkable dexterity. In combat, these appendages also act as fearsome bludgeons of tremendous strength.

The delver's body is largely compressible. Although it cannot stretch a great distance, it can compress its enormous bulk into a very small space, granting it the ability to seep through cracks and holes only 5 feet wide. This allows the delver to enter small spaces and enlarge them from within, as well as to survive the crushing weight of rocks dislodged by its passing. The delver has no skeleton, and instead maintains its shape through the gaseous by-products of the chemical stew that constantly churns throughout its body. The delver can also choose to exude a lesser form of acid from its tentacle-like pseudopods that merely softens stone rather than destroying it, assisting the delver in creating chambers of specific shapes and sizes.

The delver subsists entirely on the metals, minerals, and microscopic organisms that it sloughs off stone with its acid, turning solid rock into a slurry that it then absorbs through its mouths, which take up much of its underside. Hundreds of rings of tiny cilia underneath the delver aid it in movement, anchor it to the tunnel floor it creates, and sweep minerals into its ever-hungry series of orifices. The delver's mouths are a series of small pores that absorb the granules into its body, where its stomach begins the process of converting the slurry into the mucus that dissolves the rock around it. The minerals it eats alter the appearance of both its slime and its flesh, and thus the delver often changes color to match its habitat within a few hours of burrowing through a new location.

Delvers wander according to their own indecipherable logic, but visit water sources regularly, as they require liquid to maintain the viscosity of their slime. If they do not refresh themselves within a month of their last



immersion in water, they lose their protective coating. Any water-based liquid will suffice to renew them for a month's time, though their presence fouls the water for some time afterward. Stories have emerged of fallen cities with delver-sized holes in the city's baths, marking the place where the creatures emerged for a brief time. In some accounts, the city residents unwisely attempted to resist, resulting in a city crumbled into pits and canyons, inhabited by only a few mad hermits, and cave-dwelling wildlife nesting in the darkened holes of the cliff walls.

Delvers are extremely attuned to vibrations in the ground, and they can pinpoint the location of creatures moving through or across rock and earth anywhere within 60 feet, regardless of how many feet of solid rock might separate them. Their special sensory prowess also allows them to find fault lines and hair-thin cracks in the stone.

Delvers reproduce asexually, depositing five to 10 eggs on the shores of an underground river and then departing; they can repeat this process up to three times over the course of their 300-year lives. They do not hold any parental feelings or duties toward their young, nor do they protect them. As a result, delver eggs and young are highly prized by those knowledgeable about such things; if caught within the first few weeks, the impressionable young creatures can be raised and trained for a variety of roles, though most eventually shake off their training and abandon their masters to roam the deeps in answer to some unconscious and instinctual draw.

Delvers can travel miles deep within the crust, and even their undisturbed wanderings can prove hazardous to nearby races. In the past, delvers have broken through into magma-filled chambers deep beneath the surface, opening old lava tubes and awakening dormant volcanoes. Others permanently weaken the bedrock of mountains, trigger avalanches onto alpine towns, and even foster earthquakes in areas already prone to such shocks. While all of these are generally presumed to be accidental by-products of the delvers' wandering, some whisper that such disturbances are in fact deliberate, the result of evil machinations by either the delvers or some hidden hand that guides them.

All delvers love metal, and in general the purer the deposit of ore, the better its taste. Part of this attraction is due to the flavor of the stuff, but an even greater part revolves around the fact that metal acts as an intoxicant to delvers, like fine wine or a pleasurable drug. Delvers love copper, silver, and gold, but prefer iron most of all, with a heavy vein sending them into a debauched rapture that perhaps only rust monsters or xorns can truly understand. Though delvers frequently look down their proverbial noses at worked metal—the heating and tempering cause it to grow stale—most aren't above

sneaking a bite of such things when they're proffered... or even when they're not. More than one adventurer has met his end when a starved delver, kept away from metal and driven mad by lust for it, has devoured the humanoid's metal armor without worrying about the messy fate of the humanoid inside it.

Even worse than the addicts are the rare delver war-beasts, juggernauts capable of burrowing through any defenses and sending warriors flying with deadly, corrosive whips of their pseudopods. Some such creatures are the result of manipulation and mind control by powerful spellcasters, or years of training by the cruel masters of subterranean menageries. Others are the result of a specific mixture of metals and minerals so potent as to drive the delvers insane with rage and lust, either administered intentionally by others or accidentally ingested in the course of a delver's normal grazing. Some guess that a few of these may even be of a different breed altogether, a sect of delver society created by their long-lost progenitors with the specific goal of defending their realm and purging the surface world of undesirables. Whatever the case, the result is the same: devastated towns and cities, fleeing spelunkers, and terrorized mountaineers. When their minds have been set in this mode, delvers become ruthless and unresponsive. Even the offer of metal is unlikely to elicit mercy; more often, they simply take what they want and move on. This combat fugue can last for hours, months, or years, and for most civilized races confronted with an enraged delver, the best recourse is flight—a desperate, headlong race for safety. For when a delver has its mind set on destruction, little can stand in its way.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Delvers are by their natures solitary creatures, rarely interacting with others of their kind. As the primary pursuits of delvers are the creation of new tunnels and the discovery of rare metals to devour, an abundance of the creatures means a rapid weakening of the rock around them and a quick exhaustion of whatever ore the stone has to offer. Recognizing this, delvers tend to distribute themselves far and wide, and may even clash over rights to a given territory (though most delvers are far too reasonable to attack their own kind unless in the throes of ore-lust).

While exceptionally intelligent, even by the standards of human sages and arcanists, delvers have goals that prove incomprehensible to most humanoids. For while humans generally presume that it's the delver's hunger for metal that drives them, only those who carefully study the great creatures understand that the intoxication provided by the metals is not sought merely for its pleasant effects, but also as an important

component in the religious rites around which delvers' lives revolve.

Every delver is, at heart, a mystic with a deeply ingrained racial memory and desire. After their abandonment by their alien progenitors in the dim mists of prehistory, the delvers were left with a slowly developing sentience, but no sense of purpose—building machines without a blueprint. Over time, they came to believe that their abandonment was a test created by their former masters, and they devoted themselves completely to fulfilling their obvious destiny as the greatest builders and architects the subterranean world had ever seen. Some pursue this mastery out of rage, desperate to show up their arrogant creators. Others do so out of a belief that, when they've finally perfected their art, their masters will return to lift them up to yet another plane of existence. Regardless of their differences in faith, all delvers work toward a single goal: turning the stone and earth of their world into a single, interconnected palace of tunnels and caverns.

Rather than having a centralized plan and careful organization, the architect-prophets of the Darklands operate by leaving their minds open and receptive to whims and chance, which they see as signs of a plan built into their very consciousness. If asked why it tunneled in one direction rather than another, a delver might speak of “reading the stone” or “sensing the will of the masters,” or might simply refuse to question its own seemingly random decisions. (And in fact, though most delvers can speak several languages in a groaning, phlegmatic tongue, few bother except in cases of extreme need.)

In the same way that some shamanistic humanoid tribes use sacred drugs to aid in vision quests, delvers allow themselves to become intoxicated by metals in order to open their minds to the plan of the ancients. This pursuit of aesthetic perfection also helps explain why delvers don't build themselves great cities or organize in a more traditional society. To them, the world itself is their city, with tunnels its streets and caverns its palaces, and further organization is counterproductive when each

delver can best pursue its destiny by wandering alone and listening for whispers of the creators' hidden plan.

Delvers are generally indifferent to others of their kind, and they rarely attack each other unless they are maddened by an overindulgence of metals (in which case the sober delvers attempt to avoid the enraged member while it's “in the grip of the masters”). They do not mind the incursion of humanoids—whether good or evil—into their tunnels, provided the infiltrators' use does not significantly alter the tunnels' layout. Upon occasion, a more sociable delver has been known to converse with other creatures, especially if it believes they may have something to offer it (such as a specific metal or mineral that it's unable to forage for itself or take by force, or potential information about their lost masters). If the reward is great enough, delvers may agree to serve an underground city of pechs, svirfneblin, or similar creatures for a time, cutting defenses in the stone and aiding the creatures during raids on nearby enemies—though the latter usually requires the petitioners to explain how this furthers the delvers' interest in carving the world's stone to their own specifications. Most dwarves, duergar, and other mining creatures find delvers to be a terrible threat to both their homes and their industry, and either attack or avoid them accordingly.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Though they only rarely emerge above the surface, seeing the world of light and air as completely without interest or application to their tunnel-digging mandate, delvers are a danger well known to those races and adventurers that spend significant time underground. PCs in the know might recognize delver territory by the perfectly formed tunnels crisscrossing one another at apparently random points, and they might either avoid the area for fear of upsetting its powerful residents, or else use the network of tunnels as a convenient highway through the subterranean deeps.



Delvers can play numerous roles within a campaign. Some might be simple adversaries, metal-maddened monsters that attack the PCs in a blind rage or smash their way into a strategically important mine or subterranean holding. Perhaps a given delver has taken issue with the humanoid who have inhabited and expanded a particular tunnel complex (thus destroying the artistic perfection of the delver's existing tunnels), or simply sees a dwarven fortress as an obstacle to be burrowed through and reworked into a proper delver creation. A delver might be responsible for vast natural disasters, such as terrifying urban sinkholes or the draining of a key reservoir into subterranean tunnels. A delver could even be a prophetic herald of its long-forgotten masters, preaching of their imminent return to retake all the kingdoms beneath the earth.

At the same time, delvers can be valuable resources. An adventuring party might be forced to bargain with a delver in order to gain access to its tunnels, or to learn the location of a hidden, subterranean hoard or realm visited by the delver during its long history. On rare occasions, a delver might even be persuaded to help create fortifications or defend a location, and a delver subjected to mind control makes a nearly unstoppable siege-breaker. Of course, most delvers retain a high opinion of themselves (and a comparatively low opinion of others), so anyone seeking to bargain for such services may have to work quite hard to find something the delver values more than time spent digging its tunnels. And while intimidation and mind-control are both viable options, a character who attempts such an action and fails may find himself needing to avoid subterranean environs for the rest of his life, lest the delvers catch up with him and punish him for his presumption.

VARIANTS

As a created race, delvers have remained remarkably static in their evolution, save for a steady increase in their collective intelligence. It may be that the lack of speciation (or even cultural differences) over the millennia of their existence is the result of guidelines hard-coded into them by their former masters, or it may simply be that the delvers are correct in their assumption that theirs is the perfect form for a burrowing creature.

Whatever the truth, any two delvers are remarkably similar, with only slight differences in coloration and size to tell them apart. The only exceptions to this rule are those delvers pushed to madness by their metallic intoxication. These berserk delvers gain either the ability to rage as a 1st-level barbarian once per day or the continual effects of a *confusion* spell, and sometimes both. The duration of this madness depends upon the delver's level of intoxication, as adjudicated by the GM.

TREASURE

Delvers do not typically collect treasure, and their vagrant lifestyle usually leads them to abandon all possessions that can't be easily worn or carried with them (with exceptions being items such as *ioun stones*, which follow along of their own accord). Typical delvers would much rather have knowledge, especially information related to architecture or the nature of their departed masters, than any physical object.

DELVERS ON GOLARION

On Golarion, delvers were originally created by the Vault Keepers of Orv in the deepest reaches of the Darklands. There, they helped the mysterious architects of that subterranean realm build their hidden chambers—vast, sealed caverns like terrariums in which the Keepers ran strange experiments beyond human understanding, transplanting creatures from the surface world and beyond. After the Keepers' disappearance, the delvers were left masterless along with the Keepers' primary slave race, the earth spirits known as pechs. Though the two races have since gone their own ways, instincts left over from this ancient time keep delvers from harming pechs under any circumstances, and it's believed that the two may still work together upon occasion, deep within Orv and away from the prying eyes of other races, striving at monumental tasks left for them by the Keepers.

Today, delvers can be found underground nearly anywhere on Golarion. Though sightings are relatively rare, and almost always come from mining concerns and other subterranean dwellers, reports available in the Inner Sea region indicate that the deep-burrowing delvers have few limitations in their far-ranging wanderings. Near Rahadom, in the Napsune Mountains, a massive network of delver tunnels has recently been uncovered unusually close to the surface, in places running just a few feet below the sand and stone. In the Terwa Uplands, near the Shackles, reports of delver attacks have rocked local mining villages—yet the rich veins of ore, as well as the significant proportion of indentured servants among the miners, keep the operation going regardless of grisly casualties.

On Avistan, delver activity appears to be on the increase in the Aspodell Mountains between Cheliox and Andoran, where Chelish sappers carving a secret (and later abandoned) route into Andoren territory recently encountered a deposit of delver eggs, which they sold for a large bounty to unknown parties. The sappers themselves later disappeared, but not before rumor of their sale got around, and questions still remain as to whether the men were removed by House Thrune, the Eagle Knights, or their unnamed patrons—or by the delvers themselves.

DELVER

This fleshy, slug-like creature has two long pseudopods that end in lumps of hard, callused flesh, and its whole body sizzles with acidic slime as it slides forward through melting stone.

DELVER

CR 9



XP 6400

N Huge aberration (earth)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.;

Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+4 Dex, +11 natural, -2 size)

hp 138 (12d8+84)

Fort +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +10

DR 5/piercing or slashing; **Immune** acid

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., **burrow** 10 ft.

Melee 2 slam +16 (2d6+9 plus corrosive slime)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks corrosive slime

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 19, **Con** 22, **Int** 15, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 34 (can't be tripped)

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness

Skills Intimidate +10, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +17, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Perception +21, Sense Motive +16, Stealth -8 (+0 in rocky areas), Survival +17;

Racial Modifiers +8 in rocky areas

Languages Aklo, Terran, Undercommon

SQ compression, sculpt stone

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground

Organization solitary

Treasure none or incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Compression (Ex) A delver's boneless body can squeeze through spaces that would normally exclude anything larger than a Medium creature; it does not need to make Escape Artist checks to pass through such spaces. When it squeezes through a 5-foot opening, its speed is reduced to 5 feet until it passes completely through.

Corrosive Slime (Ex) The delver's skin is covered in an acidic slime that it uses to dissolve stone and defend against enemies. The slime deals 2d6 acid damage to flesh, 4d8 damage to metal, or 8d10 to stone or crystal. If the delver hits with a natural attack or grapple, it automatically adds its slime damage, and the slime continues to deal 2d6 damage per round for the next 2 rounds. Armor or clothing worn by a creature grappled by a delver takes the same amount of acid damage unless the wearer succeeds on a DC 22 Reflex saving throw. A quart or more of water can wash away the slime. Any weapon that strikes the delver takes

slime damage, as does a creature grappling or attacking the delver with natural weapons (both Reflex half DC 22). The saves are Constitution-based.

Sculpt Stone (Ex) A delver can secrete a weaker form of its slime from its tentacles that momentarily softens stone rather than destroying it, allowing the creature to reshape up to 25 cubic feet of stone as if using *stone shape* as a 15th-level caster. This ability has no effect on stone that is protected against acid. It can use this ability at will.

Delvers are enormous gastropods covered with corrosive slime and designed for burrowing through stone. Fifteen feet long and weighing several tons, they are most commonly encountered deep below ground, particularly near underground water sources. Surprisingly intelligent, these juggernauts exist to tunnel, surviving off metals—which they find intoxicating, and sometimes maddening—and leaving behind smooth, 10-foot-diameter passages.





DIRE CORBY

"THE TUNNEL ENDED AT A PRECIPICE OVERLOOKING A VAST UNDERGROUND CREVASSE, WHICH DISAPPEARED INTO IMPENETRABLE DEPTHS BELOW AND UNIMAGINABLE HEIGHTS ABOVE. BEFORE I COULD MOVE, JARASTA WAS PLUCKED FROM THE LEDGE AND HURLED SCREAMING INTO THE DARKNESS. IN THE DWINDLING FLICKERS OF THE PALADIN'S TORCH, WE COULD SEE SHADY FORMS CLINGING TO THE ROCK WALLS—MUSCULAR, WINGLESS BIRD-MEN WITH FEATHERS AS DARK AS THE SUBTERRANEAN ABYSS THAT SPAWNED THEM. AS THEY FELL UPON US, I FLED BACK INTO THE TUNNEL, CHASED BY THE SHRIEKING CRIES, WHICH TO MY TERRIFIED EARS SOUNDED LIKE NOTHING SO MUCH AS 'DOOM! DOOM!', FORETELLING THE FATE OF MY LOST COMPANIONS..."

—FROM THE JOURNALS OF KIVIL MOON-EYE,
SOLE SURVIVOR OF JARASTA FIREHAND'S ILL-FATED
DARKLANDS EXPEDITION

Dire corbies are a race of bipedal birdmen who inhabit the deep tunnels and caverns of the Darklands, far below Golarion's surface. While resembling oversized, humanoid crows, dire corbies are wingless, and instead possess powerful arms and grasping hands tipped with razor-sharp claws. Though flightless, dire corbies are exceptional climbers, able to scale sheer cliffs with surprising agility, and can leap great distances, propelled by their powerful, taloned legs. They often cling to walls or ceilings above well-traveled tunnels, leaping into the midst of unsuspecting travelers to wreak havoc and destruction.

Dire corbies are utterly without fear, even of death, throwing themselves blindly into the dark across chasms of unimaginable depth or gleefully engaging enemies who far outmatch and outnumber them. Once battle is joined, dire corbies fight with maniacal tenacity, continuing to rend their foes with their talons long after they themselves should have fallen from their wounds.

Although intelligent, dire corbies have little use for communication or commerce with other races. Xenophobic in the extreme, dire corbies are hostile to almost all other living creatures, viewing them as competitors or enemies. If a creature is small enough or weak enough, it is prey, and if it is too big or too powerful to hunt and eat, it is an enemy to be avoided or fought until one side is utterly defeated. Disturbingly, dire corbies don't seem to care whether they're the ones who perish. No one knows why dire corbies act this way—perhaps untold years in the cruel caves and tunnels of the Darklands have forced them to compete in this way for food and living space, or perhaps the same curse they believe took their wings so long ago also took their sanity, afflicting them with some sort of racial madness. Whatever the cause, few creatures, if any, have ever befriended a dire corby, and the guano-covered bones of those who have tried litter the cavern floors beneath corby rookeries. This intolerant disposition has won the corbies a reputation as dark as their feathers, and most Darklanders consider dire corbies fierce and tenacious pests to be eradicated wherever possible.

ECOLOGY

The exact origin of dire corbies is unknown, but most scholars believe them to be a degenerate offshoot of some ancient, winged progenitor race. Much as the drow retreated into the Darklands and grew apart from their elven forebears, it is believed that dire corbies ventured into the subterranean world for some forgotten reason, and in the tight confines of underground tunnels subsequently lost their ability to fly and devolved into the savage race they are today. Obvious comparisons can be made between dire corbies and the tengu race, but beyond similarities in appearance, the two species share no common language,

culture, or even abilities. Some Darklands scholars have postulated that dire corbies might be related to harpies, sirens, or kuchrima lamias, while others claim they were created by the drow. Another theory holds that dire corbies are the cursed spawn of Pazuzu, Demon Lord of Winged Creatures and the Sky, banished to the Darklands and stripped of their wings for turning their backs on their demonic patron.

Whatever their origin, dire corbies are roughly human-sized, averaging about 5 feet tall and weighing between 125 and 150 pounds. With rare exceptions, dire corbies have black feathers, black beaks, and black hands and feet. Dire corbies reach maturity in only 2 years, and can live for up to 25, though few reach such an advanced age.

Though they possess intellects and hands capable of using tools or weapons, dire corbies usually forgo the use of such devices. They favor their claws in combat, relishing the feel of their talons ripping through flesh and the hot spurt of fresh blood on their feathers. If absolutely necessary, a dire corby will craft a crude tool for a specific purpose, but invariably discards it once it has served that purpose. Dire corbies possess no industry beyond the crafting of crude jewelry or fetishes out of feathers, bone, and skin.

Dire corbies are omnivorous, but prefer a diet of fresh meat. They are not picky, however, and are perfectly happy to feed on carrion if it is available. Dire corbies normally subsist on rodents, bats, cave fishers, and other giant vermin, but even intelligent races, such as *svirfneblin*, *duergar*, or other humanoids, are viewed as prey if they venture into a flock's hunting grounds. Corbies supplement their diet with subterranean fungus, particularly in lean times when living prey is scarce.

There is little physical difference between male and female dire corbies—females are slightly smaller, and have smaller feet and a shorter beak, but are every bit as strong, fierce, and insanelly xenophobic as males. Female plumage is identical to that of males.

The only major difference between the dire corby sexes is demonstrated once a year, during the breeding and nesting season. Males fight over breeding rights with the choicest females, and while such combats are usually ritualistic in nature, fights to the death are not unknown. Females lay clutches of three to six eggs, which incubate for about 3 weeks before hatching. Dire corby chicks are cared for solely by their mothers; fathers take no part in raising their offspring. As soon as chicks are able to walk and climb, usually after about a month, the fledglings are unceremoniously driven from the nest to fend for themselves.

While not normally cannibalistic toward other adults, dire corbies are disturbingly fond of eating their own eggs. Males in particular often raid nests to steal fresh eggs, sometimes forming gangs to team up on a lone nesting female. While most of the gang distracts the female, one or two males sneak

DIRE CORBY DOOMSINGERS

Some dire corbies are able to use their natural screeching call to much greater effect than their fellows. Known as doomsingers, these corbies possess higher Charisma scores (no penalty to Charisma, instead of the usual -2) and take levels in the bard class. Dire corby doomsingers gain a +2 racial bonus on Perform (sing) checks, while dread corby doomsingers gain a +2 racial bonus to the save DC of their screech of doom ability. Doomsinger bards may take the following alternate class ability.

Doomsong (Sp): As a standard action, a doomsinger may expend 1 round of his bardic performance to cast *cause fear*, *lesser confusion*, or *hideous laughter*, or 2 rounds of bardic performance to cast *rage* or *scare*, even if the bard does not know these spells. These are spell-like abilities that function with a caster level equal to the bard's class level. This ability replaces the bardic knowledge ability.

into the nest and make off with her eggs. Once the eggs are in hand, the males squabble with each other, often resulting in injury and broken eggs. This tendency to devour their own unborn young may be one reason dire corbies are not more prevalent in the Darklands.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Dire corbies roost in huge rookeries of up to 60 adults in large, open caverns. Corbies live in individual hollows dug in the cavern walls, containing nests of dried fungus and bones lined with feathers. These nests are not personal—a dire corby wishing to rest or eat in private simply finds an unoccupied nest and uses it for as long as needed, vacating that particular nest when it is done. The only exception to this is during nesting season, when a female corby claims a particular nest as her own, defending it against any other corbies, especially males, until her eggs hatch.

The walls and floors of dire corby rookeries are streaked with thick deposits of eye-wateringly pungent guano, and the air is filled with the raucous cries and screeches of the corby flock. Some alchemists and wizards are known to pay good coin for dire corby guano for use in alchemical extracts and other concoctions, but gathering such components is a dangerous (and stomach-turning) proposition.

Dire corbies have little social organization. They roost together for mutual protection, but seldom have leaders who preside over an entire flock. Large flocks divide into smaller hunting flocks of up to 10 individuals for easier hunting, but these are temporary gatherings. Dire corbies are smart enough to realize the value of cooperative hunting, but once prey has been felled, the corbies in a hunting flock fight among one another over the choicest bits.

These hunting flocks are usually led by the strongest members of a flock, who often possess class levels,

particularly in barbarian or fighter. Barbarians are most common, as a dire corby's natural disposition lends itself well to a barbarian's rage. Such powerful corbies naturally assume what leadership positions a flock possesses, usually by bullying weaker members as the urge takes them. This "leadership" rarely manifests itself, however, beyond claiming the best portions of a kill or the most desired breeding partners.

The exception to this organization (or lack thereof) are those flocks containing dread corbies, a larger and stronger variety of the normal dire corby (see Variants on page 19). By virtue of their strength, dread corbies often rise to positions of power within a flock. They choose the best nests and most desirable mates, and claim the choicest kills and treasure for themselves. They may even organize war parties against enemies of the flock. Because of the fractious nature of dire corby society, however, this leadership is of a very personal nature, and regular corbies soon resort to their usual squabbling when out of sight (or reach) of their "leader." As dread corbies are barely more intelligent than their lesser fellows, few dread corbies ever manage to truly unify a flock. Most give up trying before too long, and simply use their greater abilities to gain better spoils for themselves.

Occasionally, other creatures may take command of a dire corby flock or rookery and impose some sort of order on the otherwise chaotic birdmen. Most of these non-corby leaders are at least bird-like in some respect, which helps them overcome the corbies' ingrained xenophobia, and rule by force over their corby subjects. Harpies, cloaklers, and even some demons, particularly vrocks, have all been noted as leaders of dire corby flocks.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Dire corbies are best used as recurring opponents in a Darklands campaign. A party might first encounter a small hunting flock, but as they draw closer to the dire corby rookery, they encounter more and more of the creatures. If the characters flee or otherwise avoid a flock, they find that the dire corbies are unwilling to let fresh prey escape so easily and chase them relentlessly through unlit tunnels. Even relatively powerful parties can be harassed repeatedly by dire corby hunting flocks making hit-and-run attacks, hoping to wear the PCs down in a war of attrition. And for every dire corby who falls, there are always more eager to replace them.

GMs can also play up the fearless, almost suicidal nature of dire corbies. A well-placed *fireball* might decimate a hunting flock, only to make the survivors throw themselves at the PCs with greater ferocity. A party that thinks itself safe from the flightless corbies across a wide chasm might find that the creatures launch themselves across the gap regardless. And for every half-dozen who fall to their deaths, perhaps one or two actually make the jump, forcing the PCs to deal with crazed, slashing bird-men suddenly in their midst.

TREASURE

Dire corbies don't normally collect treasure for their own use and, as they are uninterested in commerce, they see little use in collecting treasure to trade with others. The hunting grounds of a dire corby flock, or the floor beneath a rookery, are usually littered with the remains of past kills. Those adventurers with patience (and a firm grip on their gag reflexes) can frequently find items of value ignored by the corbies among the corpses of slain intelligent creatures.

Nevertheless, corbies are intelligent enough to recognize valuable objects, and sometimes deign to take choice items back to their lairs. They are especially attracted to shiny, glittering objects such as gems or jewelry, or anything that gives off light (such as an item with a *light* spell cast on it or a glowing magic sword). Dire corbies are particularly fond of rubies, and can spend hours staring into a ruby's crimson depths, making strange cooing noises.

A dire corby nest often contains several such shiny objects (though there is as much a chance of finding worthless colored glass as there is of discovering valuable gemstones). A particularly intelligent and powerful dread corby might even possess a masterwork or magical weapon, though it most likely carries the weapon only as a status symbol, relying on its own claws in combat.

VARIANTS

Several varieties of dire corby are known to exist.

Dread Corby: Said to be the spawn of harpies and dire corbies, dread corbies are bigger, stronger, and faster than their dire corby kin. Equally fearless, dread corbies possess enough intelligence to sometimes use weapons, usually crude javelins. In addition, dread corbies possess a terrifying shriek, possibly inherited from their harpy mothers, that evokes paralyzing fear in those who hear it. Dread corbies usually occupy positions of leadership within dire corby hunting flocks or rookeries, either through the deference of their lesser kin or by bullying their way to the top. Dread corbies are 6 to 7 feet tall and weigh close to 200 pounds.

To create a dread corby, add the advanced creature simple template to a dire corby. A dread corby is immune to fear, and has a ranged javelin attack (attack +5 ranged, 1d6+3 damage) and the following special quality:

Screech of Doom (Su): Once per day, a dread corby can loose a horrible shriek that terrifies its opponents. The dread corby can target one creature within 30 feet. This target must make a DC 12 Will save or be frozen in fear, cowering for 1d6 rounds. Any other creatures within 100 feet must make a DC 12 Will save or be frightened for 1d4 rounds. Those who make the save are shaken for 1 round. Dire corbies and dread corbies are immune to this effect. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Ghost Corby: Occasionally, a dire corby is born with no color to its plumage. Stark white, with glittering red eyes, these albino corbies are known as ghost corbies. Despite being smaller and weaker than normal corbies, ghost corbies manage to hold their own in the flock by virtue of being significantly smarter than their kin, as well as through the unusual ability to turn invisible. When hunting, they lie silently and invisibly in wait, seeming to appear out of thin air to take their prey by surprise. Fortunately, ghost corbies are more sensitive to light than their brethren, and can be driven off with displays of bright light. Some dire corby flocks view ghost corbies as dead corbies returned to life, and treat them with respect and awe. Other flocks see them as abominations and kill them on sight. Ghost corbies are smaller than normal dire corbies, standing just under 5 feet tall and weighing about 120 pounds.

To create a ghost corby, add the advanced creature simple template to a dire corby. Ghost corbies have light sensitivity, sneak attack +2d6, a +4 racial bonus on Stealth checks, and *invisibility* as a spell-like ability 1/day (CL 2nd, concentration +1).

Ghoul Corby: Dire corbies who feed solely on carrion have been known to succumb to ghoulish fever and be reborn as undead ghoulish corbies with a hunger for living flesh. Ghoul corbies appear as emaciated dire corbies with jagged beaks and dull, grayish feathers that are often missing in patches. They gain a bite attack that deals 1d6 points of damage, and a ghoulish channel resistance, disease, and paralysis abilities (DC 12). Afflicted with a gnawing hunger, ghoulish corbies often return to their home rookeries in search of fresh meat. A single ghoulish corby can wipe out an entire rookery, spawning in its place an undead rookery. But something in the xenophobic mind of dire corbies changes in undeath and prevents ghoulish corbies from working together, such that an undead rookery usually destroys itself before the disease can spread. Nevertheless, rumors tell of "civilized" Darklands ghouls keeping hunting flocks of ghoulish corbies



DIRE CORBY RELIGION

Dire corbies have no organized religion, but individual rookeries sometimes venerate a particular deity. These rookeries maintain rudimentary shrines to their patrons, and often express their faith by carving and worshiping elaborate scrimshaw totems made out of polished dire corby skulls, but even then, “worship” is mostly a matter of placating a deity with occasional offerings or sacrifices, rather than a practice involving any sort of regular, organized ceremonies.

Examples have been found of dire corbies worshiping Lamashtu, Rovagug, Urgathoa, and Zon-Kuthon, but veneration of demon lords is much more common. Even though dire corbies have no wings, Pazuzu is a popular demon among their kind, as is Baphomet, Demon Lord of Beasts. Successful hunting flocks sometimes venerate Shax, Demon Lord of Murder, and dire corby rookeries near troglodyte settlements have even been known to worship Zevgavizeb, Demon Lord of Troglodytes and Caverns. In some cases, dire corby “gods” are nothing more than the scrimshaw skulls themselves, placed atop crude bodies of bone, skins, and feathers.

For some unknown reason, corby shrines are tended solely by female dire corbies. While many of these “priestesses” gain no spells, some few are adepts, or more rarely, actual clerics or oracles. Occasionally, dire corby witches make pacts with demon lords or other otherworldly powers, usually taking bats as their familiars.

as pets, much as human hunters might keep a pack of dogs. A ghoul corby is a CR 2 creature.

Winged Corbies: Wingless corbies are the norm, but reports occasionally surface of dire corbies with wings. Whether these specimens are naturally born throwbacks to that remote time when all corbies possessed the power of flight, the offspring of unholy unions with other winged creatures of the dark depths—such as cloaklers, bats, or demons—or the product of magical experimentation (such as drow fleshwarping) is unknown. Winged corbies usually inhabit vast subterranean caverns that give them room to fly, but have been reported aboveground as well, stealthily winging through nighttime skies. A winged corby has the same statistics as a normal dire corby, but its climb speed is replaced with a fly speed of 40 feet (average maneuverability), and it has the Fly skill (+5) instead of Acrobatics.

DIRE CORBIES ON GOLARION

Dire corbies primarily inhabit the Darklands region of Sekamina, though small flocks (perhaps exiled from larger rookeries) have been reported in Nar-Voth and even Orv.

The Endless Gulf: The most well-known rookery of dire corbies in Sekamina is located in the Endless Gulf, a vast, supposedly bottomless chasm. The dire corby rookeries of the Endless Gulf actually form a sort of “super-rookery” of hundreds, if not thousands, of individual corbies. These flocks are said to be ruled by a queen from the lands above, an ancient harpy crone named Nevaki who has mated with the dire corbies to hatch several deformed daughters in the lightless cavern. Though flightless like their savage dire corby fathers, Nevaki’s “princesses” have still inherited their mother’s captivating song.

The Midnight Mountains: One of the largest vaults in Orv, the Midnight Mountains lie at the bottom of the Endless Gulf. A small rookery of dire corbies makes its home in this vault, under the leadership of the highly charismatic and intelligent (for a corby) **Trekaalk** (CE male half-fiend dread corby cleric of Pazuzu 7). Believed to be an exile from the Endless Gulf, Trekaalk claims to be the son of Pazuzu himself, sent to Golarion to return the dire corby race to the worship of his father. He preaches to his flock that the demon lord will return the corbies’ wings to them in exchange for their faithful worship and sacrifice. To this end, the dire corbies regularly raid nearby settlements of mongrelmen, morlocks, and troglodytes for sacrifices to their demonic patron. Trekaalk dreams of spreading his message to all the dire corbies of the Darklands, but new converts are rare so deep in Orv, and his flock continues to dwindle, preyed upon by gugs and other warring races of the Midnight Mountains.

Tower of the Rook: One of the few dire corby flocks on the surface world inhabits this crumbling tower in the nation of Nidal. This flock came up from the Darklands and found the shadow-haunted eaves of the Uskwood to its liking, taking up residence in a ruined tower of black stone deep in the wood. The dire corbies only venture forth at night, running stealthily through the trees hunting game and occasionally raiding isolated hamlets. Nidalese peasants give the tower a wide berth, and even though more than one village has lost residents to the shrieking “night-birds,” the albino druids of the Uskwood seem strangely reluctant to clear the tower of its current inhabitants.

The Tunnels of Ghostly Claws: These tunnels outside the svirfneblin city of Dwimovel are said to be haunted by invisible clawed arms that snatch unwary travelers and pull them into the rock. Unknown to the deep gnomes, these “ghostly claws” are actually a small flock of albino ghost corbies who have taken up residence in the tunnels. But as tales of the haunted tunnels have spread, the corbies have found their supply of fresh meat dwindling. Now one of the flock’s members, a doomsinger with a talent for mimicry, lurks near more frequently traveled passages making plaintive cries for help in hopes of luring unsuspecting rescuers down the tunnels.

DIRE CORBY

This creature looks like a humanoid crow with oily black feathers, glittering eyes, and a sharp beak. In the place of wings, it instead has two muscular arms, ending in sharp claws as hard as rocks.

DIRE CORBY

CR 1



XP 400

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 15 (2d10+4)

Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3

Defensive Abilities ferocity

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +3 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks leap, rend (2 claws, 1d4+1)

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +2; CMB +3; CMD 14

Feats Blind-Fight

Skills Acrobatics +10, Climb +13, Perception +6, Stealth +5;

Racial Modifiers +8 Acrobatics, +2 Perception

Languages Aklo

ECOLOGY

Environment any underground

Organization gang (2–5), hunting flock (1–3 dread corbies and 5–10 dire corbies), or rookery (1–10 dread corbies and 10–50 dire corbies plus 1 barbarian or fighter of 3rd to 5th level per 10 adults)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Leap (Ex) A dire corby can perform a special kind of pounce attack by jumping into combat. When a dire corby charges, it can make a DC 20 Acrobatics check to jump into the air and land next to its enemies. If it makes the Acrobatics check, it can make a full attack (two claw attacks, plus a rend attack if both claws hit) against foes in reach.

Dire corbies are subterranean predators who resemble humanoid crows with muscular arms and fearsome talons. Though they make their cliff-side homes on the walls of underground chasms, where they climb and leap with death-defying agility, they are most frequently encountered in the tunnels where they wait to ambush prey, leaping down from the ceiling to rend and tear.

Dire corbies are intelligent, but have little use for society outside of the rough, squabbling pecking order of the rookery, whose social order is little better than that of the mundane birds the corbies resemble. Along with the insane, near-suicidal savagery with which the corbies launch themselves into

combat, the flightless bird-men of the Darklands are best known for their terrifying screeches, the often prophetic songs of doom and destruction capable of unsettling even the most robust and competent Darklands explorer.

A typical dire corby stands 5 feet tall and weighs between 125 and 150 pounds, with little difference between males and females save that the latter tend to be slightly smaller (though no less deadly). In addition to being savage predators, enjoying the mad rush of taking on intelligent prey even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, dire corbies are also notorious cannibals when it comes to their young, and a mother dire corby must carefully defend her eggs lest a flock of male corbies from the same rookery descend on her nest and devour the unborn children in a flurry of yolk and blood. This ultimately counterproductive tendency only further supports the impression most races have of dire corbies as dangerously unbalanced beings, and may explain why the creatures remain relatively rare.





DISENCHANTER

"THE LOCALS HAD TOLD THE TRUTH, ALL RIGHT. THE STRANGE CREATURE LED US STRAIGHT TO THE TREASURE CHAMBER. CARVUS WENT FOR THE GOLD, YET THE BLUE CAMEL-THING PAID IT NO ATTENTION, JUST HOOTED AND TROTTED ON TO A LITTLE ALCOVE IN THE WALL—AND AT LAST I UNDERSTOOD WHAT IT HAD BEEN FOLLOWING.

"THE IDOL WAS MAGNIFICENT. IT DIDN'T SIT IN THE ALCOVE, BUT FLOATED, EYES GLOWING AND SURROUNDED BY A NIMBUS OF COLORS. DISTANT SINGING FILLED THE ROOM AS THE CREATURE PLUCKED THE STATUE OUT OF THE AIR WITH ITS PREHENSIBLE NOSE. IN MY MIND, I WAS ALREADY WRITING THE STORY OF OUR DISCOVERY.

"THEN THE IDOL'S EYES DARKENED, AND THE COLORS FADED. AS I WATCHED, THE ENERGY SURROUNDING THE STATUE FLOWED INTO OUR GUIDE'S TRUNK. AND IN THAT MOMENT, I KNEW WHY THE VILLAGERS HAD LAUGHED."

—ADRIAN TALLANBAR, TALDAN PATHFINDER

Magic is a cornerstone of adventuring. Without it, the most powerful wizard is just an old man with a walking stick, and not even the most confident fighter turns down a magical weapon unless she has to. While few explorers and soldiers begin their careers with any great stores of magic, as they grow in notoriety, they tend to acquire more and more magical items, eventually coming to rely on them as much as they do on their mundane tools or their own abilities.

Thus it is that a gentle creature like the disenchanter is one of adventurers' most feared opponents. Though not malicious, the disenchanter constantly hungers for, and draws its sustenance from, the very magical power that gives most adventurers their edge. The presence of a disenchanter instantly changes the nature of a battle, often forcing travelers to drastically change their tactics, relying solely on their wits and the strength of their arms.

It should be emphasized that the disenchanter means no harm, yet it may be precisely its oblivious nature that makes it such a threat. A disenchanter is a social animal that seeks out the company of others, even members of other species. So long as those others do not possess magic to tempt its hunger, it's often content to travel with humanoids as docilely as a half-domesticated horse or camel, and can even be encouraged to guard them at night. If it is treated well, a disenchanter may remain with travelers for long stretches, seeking both their goodwill and whatever scraps of magical essence they might feed it. This camaraderie, however, inevitably ends as soon as it senses stronger magics, at which point it gallops away to seek out and devour the source of the magical emanations.

Standing more than 6 feet tall and 8 feet long, and weighing approximately 1,600 pounds, the disenchanter is a gangly, knobby creature, with broad, flat feet capable of supporting its weight across a variety of terrain types. Its toes are splayed with retractable nails, allowing it to grip surfaces that might otherwise be a challenging climb. When at rest, the disenchanter looks like it would trip over its own blue-skinned and furry legs if it tried to move too fast, but appearances can be deceptive. When it runs, the thin and slightly translucent disenchanter moves with a sudden grace, the soft beats of its footfalls not quite matching up with the rhythm of its moving legs, almost as if it were shifting magically through the intervening space, and its churning feet were merely a formality.

The disenchanter's body resembles that of a blue-furred camel, with a hump, a shaggy pelt, and a coarse mane that extends the length of its spine. Its strange skull sports a pair of expressive, camel-like ears, but its most striking feature is its prehensile trunk, which is constantly in motion and whose bell-shaped end is able to suction onto things or bend at numerous places to grasp and manipulate objects. Like an elephant, the disenchanter uses this trunk

to sniff the air and handle items; it also uses its trunk to draw sustenance into its body.

All disenchanters exude a strong aura of magic, though this magic is unformed and holds no hint of a particular school. To those sensitive to magic, the air about a disenchanter shimmers and twists, as if it contained raw, chaotic power that it could shape at a moment's notice. For the most part, however, disenchanters do little to harness the power they absorb for sustenance, though some theorize that their aura may represent latent abilities that disenchanters have forgotten how to use—or is simply a lure designed to attract other beings with strong magic, thus helping the disenchanter hunt.

ECOLOGY

Though the specifics of the parties involved change from region to region, and depending on the speaker, most sages and biologists agree that disenchanters are a created race, given life and sentience by a wizard or cabal of immense arcane power. A common thread in most of the legends dealing with disenchanters is that the beasts were created first and foremost as a magical weapon with which one nation could wreak mayhem on the magically empowered army of another. The fact that this theme repeats so often, and in nations whose local mythologies otherwise have little to do with each other, does much to reinforce its feeling of truth, and in fact, it's possible that the basic idea may have been perpetuated by the racial sense-memories of the disenchanters themselves.

Disenchanters often seem to come from nowhere, stepping through walls and from behind trees, hunting magic. They go where the magic leads them—and when the magic has utterly gone from a swath of territory, the disenchanters move on, often following the trail of a wizard or some other source of magical power. Disenchanters deprived of magic rarely starve to death; instead, they simply disappear, folding back space and walking through to places unknown—other realities, perhaps, or secret places behind the worlds. Whether or not the disenchanters know where they're going when this happens is unknown, as few humanoids can manage any real communication with the creatures, and so far no one has come forward with a well-supported theory.

Despite their physical resemblance to camels, disenchanters do not appear to have more than a passing affinity for desert terrain, and in fact can be found in all sorts of environments, even underground. They do not den or establish lairs, preferring instead to roam freely in their search for food. As with any creature's relation to its food source, disenchanters are more common where magic is more common or naturally occurring, and less so where magic is scarce, yet even in the most magic-rich environments, a disenchanter is a fortunately rare

sight. Clever adventurers and other intelligent creatures sometimes use the disenchanter's deep desire to remain near magical sources to hunt for treasure troves and other such magical hordes, and the general wisdom among those familiar with such creatures is that if there's a disenchanter in the area, the location probably warrants a thorough investigation.

When their food disappears, disenchanters must go hunting, and in some places magic proves rare indeed. Thus, like camels, disenchanters have evolved a food supply they can carry with them, from which they can draw sustenance in times of hunger. That source is the disenchanter's hump—once full, this hump can sustain the animal for nearly 2 weeks before it must feed again. The hump is composed of magically infused and concentrated fat; when the disenchanter is forced to rely upon it, the hump shrinks until it becomes little more than a fold of loose skin atop the creature's back.

Though exact estimates are difficult, given that disenchanters tend to disappear when deprived of food (and even attempting to starve an intelligent creature is an evil action), most experts agree that even one minor magic item per week is enough to sustain a disenchanter, though not without significantly depleting its hump. Still, all disenchanters act under a constant compulsion to eat beyond their capacity, merely exuding the extra power they take in as part of their hazy magical aura, or spraying it at enemies in a devastating blast of raw power. It is a rare disenchanter that can hoard or ration magical items, even knowing that it may be about to face famine, though cursed items are poisonous to disenchanters, and they will avoid such foods even if starving. The only sort of normal magical items the disenchanter does not instinctively devour is headgear. Before the disenchanter begins to eat, it first places any headgear it finds atop its own head and waits expectantly. Upon rare occasions, the item's effect is pleasing to the creature (often inexplicably so), and it continues to wear it. More often, it waits for a few seconds and then flings the item to the ground in apparent anger, draining it into uselessness.

To protect one's treasures from a disenchanter, the first step is to secure them someplace where it's difficult for the creature to reach them. Simply hiding them within a tightly closed backpack, for instance, is sufficient to stymie the animal for a time, as the disenchanter's power drain ability cannot reach through thick fabric. Thus, even tying magic items into a blanket with a complex and thorough knot is an effective defense for a time. Unfortunately for a disenchanter's targets, however, the creature's prehensile trunk can lift more than 200 pounds, and the beasts have been known to move protected hoards to their own safe places, where they can try to outguess and undo knots and locks at their leisure. As with a rust monster, the simplest way to escape a disenchanter with one's items intact is to

drop a weak or less valuable item, then move quickly to get more powerful items out of the disenchanter's sensory range. Few creatures want to fight for food when there's an easier meal available, and the disenchanter is no exception.

In general, disenchanters remain largely unmolested by natural predators. While monstrous predators may occasionally target the creatures, they tend to do so only in the absence of other choices; those who have tried disenchanter meat report that it is gamey, powerful, and seems to rot on the tongue. Though some intelligent creatures eat this flesh out of the belief that doing so will impart some measure of the beast's magical properties—or simply refuse to see the intelligent quadrupeds as anything more than herd animals—most societies that interact with the gentle disenchanters understand the fundamental innocence of the beasts and abhor such killings. More often, disenchanters are slain as a result of a frantic humanoid's attempt to defend his property. Casting *dispel magic* on a disenchanter harms it and depletes its hump by a week's worth of food, enraging it to the point of attempting to murder the spellcaster responsible.

Though theoretically as intelligent as a human child, disenchanters have no spoken language or obvious desires outside food and companionship, and hence are often treated as mere beasts by intelligent humanoids. While the disenchanters can use their trunks to make noises—fierce trumpeting or mournful hoots—their actual language is one of empathy and shared sensory perception. When two disenchanters wish to share an idea, they place their strange snouts next to each other and puff out a tiny, iridescent cloud of magic that induces a type of synesthesia, transmitting a sensory memory of a smell, color, or feeling. Sometimes these are literal—the scent of an enemy, or a feeling of warmth and comfort—and other times they're more abstract, such as a vague impression of heat to represent the army that sweeps over a plain like wildfire. To disenchanters, the nuances of such momentary visions are immediately clear, but members of other races who receive such a hallucinatory message often report feelings of confusion and nausea, though children have a much easier time understanding the creatures than adults. Outside of their strange scent language, disenchanters can also rub their humps against trees, rocks, or other large objects, leaving a faint magical aura recognizable to other disenchanters.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Disenchanters are inherently social creatures, yet their need to feed on magic, a relatively scarce resource, means that in many nations, disenchanters are forced to split up and live solitary lives, thus reinforcing their desire to bond with other types of creatures for companionship. The more abundant the magic in a region is, the more often disenchanters band together, and the closer they venture

to the dangers of civilization. When disenchanters appear together, it is usually as a mated pair, or less frequently as a mated pair and one or two calves.

Once every 5 years, however, all the disenchanters in a region gather en masse. How they send their signals and what tells them where to meet remains a mystery, though it's suspected that certain disenchanters—perhaps those whose intelligence has been sufficiently enhanced by magical items to let them take further advantage of their own arcane power—may have developed some sort of mental communication, a call that reaches through reality to draw their kind together. It is well known that during these great gatherings, even disenchanters chained or otherwise held captive often disappear without a trace. Many befriended (or, some would say, domesticated) enchanters return to join their non-disenchanter companions within a week or so, acting as if they had never been gone at all. These convocations are presumed to be for the purpose of finding mates—and certainly many mating pairs result from them—yet whether more is discussed in this teeming herd of tentative snouts and puffed magic than simple procreation is unclear.

Disenchanters mate for life, and depending on the food source, produce one or two calves every 3 to 5 years. The young grow into maturity quickly, reaching their full size in only 2 years. They remain with their parents until they have reached their full growth, and strike out on their own shortly thereafter, the first time food grows short. Disenchanters do not appear to recognize their families once they have left, and occasionally children from the same parents will mate or struggle over food.

For the most part, disenchanters are kind and gentle creatures, powerful but capable of delicacy, depending on their mood and the presence of magic. Male disenchanters, however, do not get along well with one another. They preen and display for females, and sometimes engage in nonlethal battles with other males for supremacy.

In most cultures, the appearance of disenchanters is cause for either quiet curiosity or an extermination program, depending on the level of magic owned by those they encounter. The more magic is integrated into the everyday workings of life, the greater the threat disenchanters pose, and the situation is made all the more volatile by the tendency for further disenchanters to converge on such an area, drawn across the miles to find the source. They often seem to appear from nowhere, summoning others with their presence alone. Better to eliminate the threat, people say, than to suffer an infestation, though those who count themselves as good and righteous may have difficulty dispatching the beasts once it becomes clear how fundamentally gentle and intelligent they are.

In cultures where wizards and sorcerers are a threat and magic is a plague, some villages have been known to keep

disenchanters as pets and mascots. Barbarians might use them to ward off wizards and those who would gain an unfair advantage through the use of magical items rather than physical and mental prowess, or a king might employ one along with his food tasters to ensure that no guests at the gala have smuggled in dangerous magical items. And as the legends point out, disenchanters are also naturally disposed toward serving in combat against magical enemies, with some kingdoms still raising disenchanters from birth, training them as war animals and carefully steering them toward the enemy lines to counter dangerous spellcasters.

As long as those who feed them do so without abuse, disenchanters don't care about the race of their masters. Svirfneblin have been known to herd disenchanters into drow cities to sow conflict, and a dryad with a few friendly disenchanters might discover that the neighboring magical kingdom no longer encroaches upon her wilderness.



CAMPAIGN ROLE

Though their distinguishing characteristic is almost always their hunger for magic, disenchanters are capable of a wide variety of campaign roles.

As foes, disenchanters can terrify even the most stalwart party as they charge in, noses twitching, to devour the party's most important magical items. Even if the group isn't already familiar with the creatures, watching a scroll worth hundreds of gold pieces crumble to dust under the disenchanter's snuffling caress should be enough to panic most parties and send them running, and a castle that relies heavily on magic for defense (or structural support!) may find its walls literally crumbling under the onslaught of several hungry disenchanters employed by the opposing army.

Yet those qualities that make the disenchanter fearsome can also make it an asset. For parties without a great reliance on magic, a friendly disenchanter can help them carve through otherwise well-guarded enemies, or lead them straight through a dungeon or battlefield to the powerful magic items they seek, acting as a self-willed dowsing rod. A befriended disenchanter may fight to defend its humanoid allies, and a warrior who eschews magic might even manage to convince one to act as a formidable mount.

Whether led by an invading army, a vengeful druid attempting to force a magical society to reconnect with the land, or rival artificers' guilds harnessing the creatures for a war of economic attrition, guided disenchanters provide a threat to the richest and most powerful residents of a world—sometimes for good, and sometimes for ill. When staging an encounter with a disenchanter, a GM might want to emphasize that the creatures are intelligent, neutral, and generally friendly, making their systematic slaughter something that should weigh heavily on good characters' consciences, and perhaps encourage the party to find alternate, creative ways to defuse the situation—or at least create moral quandaries ripe for roleplaying.

TREASURE

While stories circulate of disenchanters wearing magical circlets and diadems, disenchanters rarely carry treasure. Instead, to those with the ability to befriend or capture them, disenchanters are themselves a sort of treasure with a wide variety of uses. At the most base level, the fat of a well-fed disenchanter's hump can bring up to 500 gp from an unscrupulous wizard or alchemist seeking to understand the secrets of the creature's ability, providing the specimen is less than 2 days dead. Yet most who seek to acquire the aid of a disenchanter understand that it's most valuable alive. In addition to its value as a weapon against magic-heavy foes, or as a living dowsing rod that invariably leads its companions to expensive magical items, a disenchanter also has the ability to press some of its stored magical power into an item in a temporary effect similar to the

spell *magic weapon*. Though disenchanters themselves have never been known to wield the weapons they enchant in this manner, their willingness to enchant them for their friends or masters is both a valuable asset in battle and an indication that the delicate disenchanter, for all its oblivious innocence, may have a deeper understanding of the workings of magic than most sages would believe.

VARIANTS

Due to the nature of their diet, disenchanters appear in a variety of breeds. The most common (though still rare) variants are those that devour magic primarily from a single school of magic. Their adherence to this diet, whether by choice or circumstance, often shifts their appearance dramatically, and grants them supernatural abilities not available to ordinary disenchanters.

DISENCHANTERS ON GOLARION

Originally created by the wizard Nex as a weapon in his constant war against Geb, and later adopted by both sides before finally being turned loose to pursue their own ends, disenchanters are extremely rare, but can be found in disparate locations all across Golarion. They appear most frequently on Garund in areas of high magic, or else in lands nearly drained of it, where they mop up the last remnants of spells within the area. The Mana Wastes that lie between Nex and Geb host by far the highest population of disenchanters, who wander through its barren and blasted landscape slurping up the strange and wild magical emanations that spontaneously occur as a result of Nex and Geb's ancient war. On those occasions when they wander outside the borders of the Wastes, disenchanters are invariably driven back into their territory, captured, or killed on sight by the local authorities of Geb and Nex, who know all too well what a rampaging disenchanter can do to a magic-rich society.

In nearby Alkenstar, engineers and alchemists sometimes seek to befriend or train disenchanters into service to the magic-dead city, but generally have little success, as the creatures do not respond well to the nonmagical environment of the microstate. Still, the gunmarshals do not fire on the disenchanters that roam outside the gates to the Mana Wastes, and encourage their presence whenever possible, as an added defense against any magic users who might one day seek to do the city harm.

Disenchanters are occasionally seen wandering the deserts of Qadira and Osirion, though these disenchanters often fade quickly from mortal sight. Local legend holds that they were ill used here at some point in the past, and that their primary concern is hunting for the magics of the dead that lie beneath the shifting sands. They are also sometimes found in the cold wilds of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, where barbarian tribes use them as protection, or near the Worldwound, where they grow fat on its festering energy.



DISENCHANTER

This blue-furred creature sports an elephantine trunk and a camel-like body. The air around it seems to shimmer with magical potential, and it gazes around with doe-like, intelligent eyes.

DISENCHANTER

CR 3



XP 800

N Large magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

DR 5/magic

Weaknesses vulnerable to dispel magic

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee trunk +7 touch (disenchant), 2 hooves +2 (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.; 10 ft. with trunk

Special Attacks disenchant, power spray

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +3)

Constant—*detect magic*

3/day—*magic weapon*

1/day—*dimension door*

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 17, **Con** 14, **Int** 5, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22 (26 vs. trip)

Feats Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Escape Artist +5, Fly +0, Perception +9, Stealth +0

Languages none

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary, pair, or family (2 adults and 1–2 calves)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disenchant (Ex) A disenchanter can use its trunk to make a melee touch attack against a target's worn, held, or carried magic item in an attempt to drink the item's magic. The disenchanter makes a caster level check (+4) opposed by the target's Fortitude saving throw. If the check succeeds, the disenchanter drains the item's magic, rendering it nonmagical. To determine which of a target's magic items is affected, use Table 9–2 on page 216 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* (though a disenchanter never uses this ability on a headband or similar head-slot item unless it has first tried to wear the item). Disenchancers may instead target specific visible items, in which case they generally target the most obvious items. Artifacts are immune to this ability. A disenchanter's disenchant only works against objects it can touch, and even a thin layer of cloth effectively protects items.

Power Spray (Su) Once per day, a disenchanter can release a 20-foot cone-shaped burst of raw magical energy through its trunk. Creatures in the cone take 4d6 points

of damage (Reflex half DC 14). Creatures immune to magic effects that allow spell resistance (such as golems) are immune to this ability.

Vulnerable to Dispel Magic (Ex) A disenchanter targeted by *dispel magic* takes 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6, Fortitude half). *Greater dispel magic* functions similarly (maximum 20d6 damage, Fortitude half). This effect also destroys 1 week's worth of the magical food stored in the creature's hump.

The disenchanter is a blue-furred animal that resembles a single-humped camel with a prehensile trunk. It can sense magic, which it consumes for sustenance. When it finds a magic item, it suctions on with its trunk and drains the item of power in a few seconds, storing this power in its hump. Disenchancers are social creatures, and often seek the companionship of other intelligent beings, making excellent mounts and trackers for treasure-hunters. A typical disenchanter is 8 feet long and weighs 1,600 pounds.





FLAIL SNAIL

"JAKOB PICKED UP A ROCK AND THREW IT, STRIKING THE SNAIL BETWEEN ITS FEELERS WITH A SOUND LIKE SPILLED PORRIDGE. THE BEAST FLINCHED BACK INTO ITS SHELL, AND JAKOB LAUGHED. IN EERIE SILENCE, THE OTHER SNAILS TURNED TOWARD HIM.

"I WOULDN'T," I SAID AGAIN, BUT JAKOB DARTED CLOSE AND STRUCK THE SNAIL'S SHELL. THE CREATURE'S TENTACLES BEGAN TO WHIRL, YET TRY AS IT MIGHT, IT COULDN'T MOVE FAST ENOUGH TO CATCH HIM.

"THEN IT HAPPENED. CIRCLING AROUND, JAKOB CROSSED THE CREATURE'S SLIME TRAIL AND STOPPED, BOOTS GLUED TO THE STONE. HIS EYES GOT WIDE, AND HE REACHED DOWN TO UNTIE THE LACES, BUT THE SLIME STUCK HIS HANDS. FROM ALL AROUND CAME THE WHISTLE OF MACES AND THE SLOW SUCK OF THE CREATURES' OOZING RUSH.

"JAKOB WAS A FOOLISH BOY, BUT IT WASN'T RIGHT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. IT WASN'T RIGHT AT ALL."

—DARYK UNDERMILL, DWARVEN MINER

Of all the bizarre creatures that haunt the caves and crevasses of the subterranean world, the flail snail is one of the strangest. As slow for its size as its diminutive cousins, the flail snail fears little from underground predators, thanks to its nigh-impermeable armor and the powerful, mace-like pseudopods that give it its name. Yet the most curious trait of this docile Darklands denizen lies in the singular properties of its shell, which not only defends the creature against magic, but is capable of warping spells and flinging them back at their caster.

Slow and easily avoidable due to their telltale slime trails, flail snails tend to be peaceful unless actively threatened or approached too closely. At these times, the sedately waving tentacles on the creature's head become an intricately woven blur, the horn-like growths at their tips whistling as they're flung with terrific force by long strands of muscle. Each swipe of these biological flails is capable of staving in a man's chest, and though most creatures have plenty of time to retreat, those who press their luck or run afoul of the flail snail's mucilaginous secretions come out the other side as a red smear on the cavern floor.

The average flail snail stands 8 feet high at the top of its shell and 12 feet long, though the highly elastic nature of its flesh allows it to stretch out much farther. When threatened by an opponent not easily dispatched by its whirling tentacles, the flail snail can retract its entire body into its massive spiral shell, plugging the opening with its four rock-hard flails. These shells are frequently streaked with bright colors in patterns that differ between individuals; older snails tend to have larger shells with more elaborate markings, some of which may appear to resemble runes or symbols. Adult flail snails can weigh several thousand pounds, yet thanks to their slime they still manage to cling perfectly to the stone floors, walls, and even ceilings where they graze, feeding their prodigious bulk on fields of fungus, mold, and vermin. Though they have occasionally been known to consume carrion and the corpses of creatures they kill, this is generally believed to be due to lack of discrimination rather than malice, with the snail simply eating whatever it passes over out of habit.

ECOLOGY

Physically, flail snails differ from their lesser kindred only in their size, magical shells, and powerful antennae. Movement is achieved via a single enormous foot that takes up most of the underside of the snail's body and pulls it along by expanding and contracting in muscular ripples aided by slimy secretions. Most of the snail's day is spent eating with the help of a radula, a long ribbon of tongue studded with thousands of tiny tooth-like structures that act like a rasp, scraping organic matter from the stone and shredding it into pieces for digestion. The constant need to eat leads the snails to migrate frequently, either alone

or in slow-moving colonies called routs, and any cavern or dungeon with sufficient organic matter growing on the walls is prime real estate to a flail snail, regardless of what any other inhabitants might think.

Like other slugs and snails, the tentacle-like protrusions on the flail snail's head are its primary sensory organs, with the top pair sensing light and the lower providing the sense of smell and handling most tactile and fine manipulation duties. Both pairs can be retracted up to the horny growths at the end, and regrow in a month if lost. Even without these sensors, the snail can still move about reasonably well, as its suction with the ground allows it to sense its surroundings via tremors in the rock. This is especially useful since striking out with its powerful flails leads to them being easily damaged in combat.

Though the flail snail's shell gets the most attention from adventurers and scholars, its slime trail is even more important to its defense and daily life. Like many other gastropods, the flail snail's slime comes in two types: thin and slippery or thick and sticky. Both are effective at stopping those seeking to invade the snails' territory, and allow the snails enough suction to climb walls and ceilings without faltering. Mixing the two even allows the snails to create a sticky rope capable of suspending them in the air, lowering themselves or climbing back up with astonishing ease.

Flail snails are born from clutches of up to 30 eggs stuck to cavern walls or buried beneath interesting objects (such as altars or lost treasure hordes). Fully hermaphroditic, flail snails begin their courtship ritual by extruding long, chitinous spears that they stab into each other's flesh, injecting hormones signaling their intent. They then climb as a pair to the highest point available and begin copulating, lowering their entwined bodies on a massive rope of slime and hanging there for hours or days until mating is finished, at which point they may be forced to gnaw off their own reproductive organs in order to separate. Both individuals then lay egg clutches, and the hatchlings—which start out already shelled, the size of a human's hand—are raised by the community, with no concept of lineage or heredity. Any flail snail sensing a hatchling in danger instantly rushes to its defense, regardless of personal peril. Matings happen sporadically and may be tied to available food sources, though the fact that flail snails appear to be able to live for hundreds or thousands of years makes reproduction a relatively rare occurrence. Under duress, flail snails have even been observed to retract into their shells and go into long periods of hibernation, making it possible that some of the snails currently active are far older than anyone realizes.

Of course, no discussion of the flail snail's ecology would be complete without mention of its shell. A magnificent spiral construction several inches thick, the flail snail's shell grows slowly over time, generated by an organ on the

SNAILSHELL ARMOR

Many adventurers exposed to the magic-warping effects of the flail snail's shell have grasped the obvious benefits of turning a harvested shell into armor. Unfortunately for them, the process of turning a shell into armor while retaining even a modicum of its unique magical properties requires painstaking work by a high-level spellcaster, without which a broken shell quickly loses its abilities. What's more, the composition of the shell makes it extremely difficult to cut and shape, as any force capable of breaking through is likely to shatter the shell into a thousand pieces, making fine detail work almost impossible. Still, certain master smiths and spellcasters have occasionally been able to fashion magical breastplates out of the snails' shells, with an entire shell necessary to craft a single piece of armor. A shell used in this manner counts toward 10,000 gp of the armor's construction cost, though simply selling the shell on the open market brings a significantly lower price, as few item crafters are interested in undertaking the arduous process without a guaranteed buyer.

SNAILPLATE

Aura strong abjuration; **CL** 14th

Slot armor; **Price** 36,000 gp; **Weight** 30 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This breastplate made from the shell of a flail snail functions as a +1 *reflecting breastplate* (even though that shield property cannot normally be added to armor). Once per day, the wearer can cause a spell targeted at him to reflect back at the caster, exactly like *spell turning*. At the GM's discretion, the wearer can instead expend this one use per day to roll on the flail snail's chart, randomly warping the spell in question.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *spell turning*, one flail snail shell; **Cost** 18,000 gp

snail's back known as its mantle, which in turn is fed by metals and minerals scraped in tiny amounts from the stone and ingested as part of the snail's diet. The wide array of substances used to produce the shell appears to be at least partially responsible for the whorls of color and strange patterns that cover it, though the fact that these often glow after being targeted by magic suggests other factors as well.

Exactly how the shell manages to reflect magic has long baffled scholars, who have put forth numerous theories. Some suggest that it's due to the ingestion and combination of various magically reactive metals used in the shell's construction. Others posit that the shell is a focus for the snail's own magical energies, and that by

the whim of gods or evolution the snail has been restricted to using its powers in a retributive manner, an example of perfect natural balance. Still others maintain that the snail's shell resonates with magic like a bell, acting as a sort of magical tuning fork whose vibration scatters the waves of energy. Perhaps the most compelling argument is that it's not the shell's composition that is key, but rather its shape. This theory holds that the flail snail shell has evolved in a perfect golden spiral, a shape long significant to arcanists and engineers, and that this shape manages to draw magic down into its center and then expel it again in a new direction, like a whirlpool or tornado.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

With their slow, ponderous movement, flail snails are often written off as dumb beasts by faster-moving races, afforded the same cautious respect as a bull in a pasture but otherwise ignored. This casual disregard is a mistake, however, for behind the flail snail's slug-like exterior lies an alien intelligence and thousands of years of racial history.

Flail snail intelligence is not humanoid intelligence. Most civilized humanoids tend to value speed and inference in their decision-making, traits born of an evolution as soft, delicate things in a world of powerful predators. As a creature of ultimate defense and slow movement, the flail snail has none of the same needs. Instead, its own unique brand of consciousness is correspondingly slow and placid, prone to the absorption of vast amounts of information rather than any need to process or leap to conclusions. A typical human who managed to communicate with a flail snail might well find the conversation dull, with the snail viewing every thought and detail as separate and unrelated from the others. Yet those monks or other scholars used to such things might recognize in the snail's koan-like observations a certain Zen poetry hinting at deeper revelations—and indeed, if enlightenment is judged by perfect calm and inherent peace of mind, then the meditative flail snail may yet have the advantage over humanity. Certainly their lives are more pastoral, free from war and the other “advances” of civilization.

Though they have no spoken language, flail snails communicate using two different means, both completely silent. The first, an elaborate sign language of waving tentacles, is primarily used for communicating immediate needs, warnings, and other messages that are quickly picked up and passed through the rout. The second and more in-depth form of communication is a complex chemical writing system encoded within the snail's slime.

Every flail snail has its own unique chemical signature that makes its slime trail immediately recognizable to other snails. Within its trail, each snail records a running dialogue of its thoughts, observations, and memories in a complex interaction of scents that can linger on the stone

long after the slime has dried to dust. Other snails can read this dense stream of information and edit it with their own trails, creating a vast, interwoven cultural narrative that at once contains the snails' greatest art and the sum of their collective history. Together, the slime trails of two dozen snails weave epic tales worthy of any philosopher-poet.

Flail snails do not build structures or cities—perhaps because of their lack of fine manipulators, or merely because they've transcended such impulses—and instead roam the Darklands singly or in vast troupes, eating their fill, sleeping a few hours a day, and recording their endless songs in the glistening slicks of their passing.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Flail snails are perfect monsters to shake up subterranean adventures, especially for parties heavy on spellcasters. With their magic-warping shells, the snails add an element of randomness that can be fun and surprising for both GM and players, and force parties into new strategies.

Because of their slow speed and ability to make vast swaths of ground almost impassable, flail snails make better guardians than active predators. Perhaps someone has hidden a powerful magic item or spellbook in the center of flail snail territory, knowing that those most likely to hunt for it—spellcasters—will have the hardest time breaking through the flail snails' lines. And even those parties without a strong magical component are likely to balk at adhesive mucus and 2,000-pound snails dropping toward them from a great height on ropes of slime.

Flail snails are intelligent, and hence cannot be used as animal companions, but they can make great allies for other subterranean creatures. Mites, with their love of vermin, might relish riding slowly into combat on the armored back of a flail snail, and kobolds used to riding slurks might appreciate the snails' ability to travel across floors and ceilings with equal ease, helping to set up traps and ambushes. Nor is the use of flail snails restricted to evil races—having little concept of good or evil themselves, the snails are equally likely to ally with *svirfneblin* or other deep-dwelling races. If a PC has the patience for it, a snail might even make a fun and unusual PC mount, though it should be noted that the snail's shell does little to protect its rider, and anyone hoping to cling to the snail while upside down on the ceiling had better fashion some sort of harness, or else secure herself with snail slime.

TREASURE

Flail snails see little need for treasure, or even personal possessions, as their homes, weapons, and armor are all directly attached to their bodies. At most, a flail snail's territory might contain items dropped by slain trespassers, and more artistic individuals occasionally affix colored gems to their shells with their sticky slime (though the

majority consider this a desecration of the shell's natural beauty). More than any physical object, flail snails value knowledge, history, and poetry, all gained and shared through their ascetic meanderings, and creatures capable of deciphering either of their means of communication might learn a great deal from the slow philosophers.

Yet when people speak of treasure and the flail snail, they inevitably speak of the shell. The armored spirals are a fundamental part of the snail's exoskeleton, removable only after death, and many adventurers seek them out to harvest their magic-warping wonders—a practice which gives some snails a justifiably low opinion of humanoids. Removing a shell from a deceased snail is messy work, after which the looter must still find a way to carry several hundred pounds of shell out of the snail's subterranean home. As the center of the shell seems to be the focus of the magic, it's possible for a character with heavy tools or weapons to break the shell down to only the 50 pounds necessary for crafting armor and other magical pursuits, but doing so carries a 50% chance of destroying the shell's powers completely. A functional flail snail shell can sell to a master smith or item crafter for up to 800 gp, though the flail snail's intelligence makes hunting its kind a morally dubious act.

VARIANTS

Despite its outward similarities to creatures like the giant slug or giant leech, the flail snail represents a divergent branch of evolution; neither of those distant relatives possesses the intelligence or magic-warping abilities that make the flail snail so unique. Already exceptionally rare,



ALTERNATE SHELL EFFECTS

Presented below is an alternate, expanded table for the result of a spell successfully warped by a flail snail shell.

Roll	Effect
1–8	Spell misfires. For the next 1d4 rounds, the caster must make a DC 15 concentration check to successfully cast spells.
9–18	Spell misfires. The creature nearest the flail snail is affected as if the spell had been cast on it.
19–26	Spell fails. Nothing happens.
27–34	Spell rebounds on the caster (as <i>spell turning</i>).
35–39	Caster is incapable of seeing the target snail, as if it were invisible, for 1d10 minutes. This is a mind-affecting effect.
40–44	Caster is incapable of seeing other party members, as if they were invisible, for 1d10 minutes. This is a mind-affecting effect.
45–47	All creatures within 30 feet are surrounded by <i>faerie fire</i> for 24 hours.
48–51	A <i>gust of wind</i> blows from the snail to the caster.
52–56	Caster's thoughts are projected to all creatures within 30 feet of it for 24 hours, as if the others had cast <i>detect thoughts</i> .
57–59	Spell manifests as a weasel or another small animal, which runs away.
60–62	Spell reflects from the snail at the caster in the form of a <i>lightning bolt</i> (70 feet long, 5 feet wide, 6d6 damage, Reflex DC 15 half).
63–67	Spell summons a hostile spider swarm (1–40 on d%), Small earth elemental (41–80), or octopus (81–100) that attacks all non-snail creatures.
68–70	<i>Darkness</i> spell, 30-foot-diameter hemisphere, centered on the caster.
71–74	Caster's skin changes to a bright color, returning to normal over the course of 2d10 days.
75–79	Caster is targeted by <i>irresistible dance</i> .
80–84	Illusion of caster's greatest loved one appears and implores caster to stop attacking.
85–88	Caster or random ally is polymorphed into a random familiar-type animal (<i>Bestiary</i> 131–133).
89–92	Barrage of strange objects (such as old boots) hits every non-snail creature within 30 feet for 2d6 bludgeoning damage (Reflex half DC 15).
93–96	Shell colors whirl, affecting all creatures attacking the snail with <i>hypnotism</i> , with the directive to cease their aggression (Will negates DC 15).
97–99	Random attacker is charmed into defending the flail snail for 1 hour (Will negates DC 15). This is a mind-affecting effect.
100	Caster is polymorphed into a flail snail (Will negates DC 15) and refuses to attack other snails.

the flail snail's only known variants are almost identical versions that roam the surface world individually or in pairs, or those water-breathing aquatic versions that live deep under the sea or along rocky, turbulent coastlines.

FLAIL SNAILS ON GOLARION

On Golarion, flail snails are most commonly found underground, populating every layer of the Darklands, though they tend to choose remote regions away from other creatures. Of the rare surface-dwelling variety, many nations have stories, but only the isolated and sea-swept cliffs of western Garund have any significant populations. There it's possible to find towering cliff faces covered with slowly moving snails, busy cleansing the stone of salt-loving lichen or consuming the contents of coastal tide pools. Rumor has it that the floor of the Arcadian Ocean holds more flail snails than all the layers of the Darklands combined, especially clustered around geothermal vents, but the vastness of the sea makes this impossible to verify.

For most of recorded history, spelunkers and miners who encountered the reclusive snails believed them to be unintelligent beasts. It wasn't until the Pathfinder Society published the findings of famous naturalist Adrian Klum in 4552 AR that scholars across the region were made aware of their error. While traveling through the Darklands, the Pathfinder and her party ran across a rout of snails, and Klum—deaf since birth—recognized the waving tentacles that her colleagues interpreted as threat displays for what they were: a kind of sign language. Immediately shifting the focus of her studies, Klum lived among the snails off and on for more than 2 years, cataloguing their beautiful and almost impossibly complex language, even managing to communicate clumsily through the use of homemade prostheses. Though she eventually ended her research and retired to Absalom, Klum's treatise *The Voice of Silence* remains the foremost authority on flail snails.

How the flail snails evolved to possess magical shells is the subject of much conjecture. Some note the similarities between the snail's reflective shells and that of the terrible Tarrasque, suggesting the snails may have grown from pieces broken off that beast in its rampage across the Inner Sea region in –632 AR. Others whisper that the snails, traveling throughout the Darklands, made their way to the prison of the Rough Beast himself, oozing along its outer shell and gradually being twisted by energies emanating from within. Though popular with those miners driven away from rich lodes by the snails' herding, these tales hold little weight with scholars, as the snails obviously lack the malice of Rovagug's spawn. Indeed, the gods and flail snails appear to have little use for one another, though Shelyn looks on them kindly for their devotion to scent-based epics, and monks of Irori familiar with Klum's treatise occasionally seek them out to gain enlightenment from their silent koans.

FLAIL SNAIL

This enormous snail has a brightly colored shell and four tentacles on its head, each tipped with a mace-like growth. The tentacles wave in menacing patterns as it slowly oozes forward.

FLAIL SNAIL

CR 3



XP 800

N Large magical beast

Init -1; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., scent, tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18 (-1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities warp magic; **Immune** poison; **Resist** fire 20

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee 4 slams +7 (1d6+3)

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

Special Attacks mucus

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 8, **Con** 14, **Int** 5, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 17 (can't be tripped)

Feats Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +15, Perception +6, Stealth +0

Languages Flail Snail (sign language, slime writing, cannot speak)

SQ mucus, retraction, slime rope, suction, warp magic

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary, pair, or rout (3-30)

Treasure shell worth 800 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Mucus (Ex) As a free action, a flail snail can excrete a trail of mucus which covers its space and lasts for 10 minutes. This mucus comes in two types: slimy and sticky. Slimy mucus covers the squares with the effects of a *grease* spell. Sticky mucus covers the squares with the effects of a *web* spell. Both effects are DC 14. The saves are Constitution-based. Flail snails are immune to this mucus. Both types of mucus can be burned away as per the *web* spell.

Retraction (Ex) A flail snail can pull its fleshy parts back into its shell as a swift action, increasing its natural armor bonus by +6, but it cannot move or attack while retracted. It can return to normal as a free action.

Slime Rope (Ex) A flail snail can turn its mucus into a rope-like strand up to 60 feet long, and can use this rope to hang itself and up to 1,000 extra pounds from the ceiling indefinitely, or to lower itself safely at a speed of 20 feet per

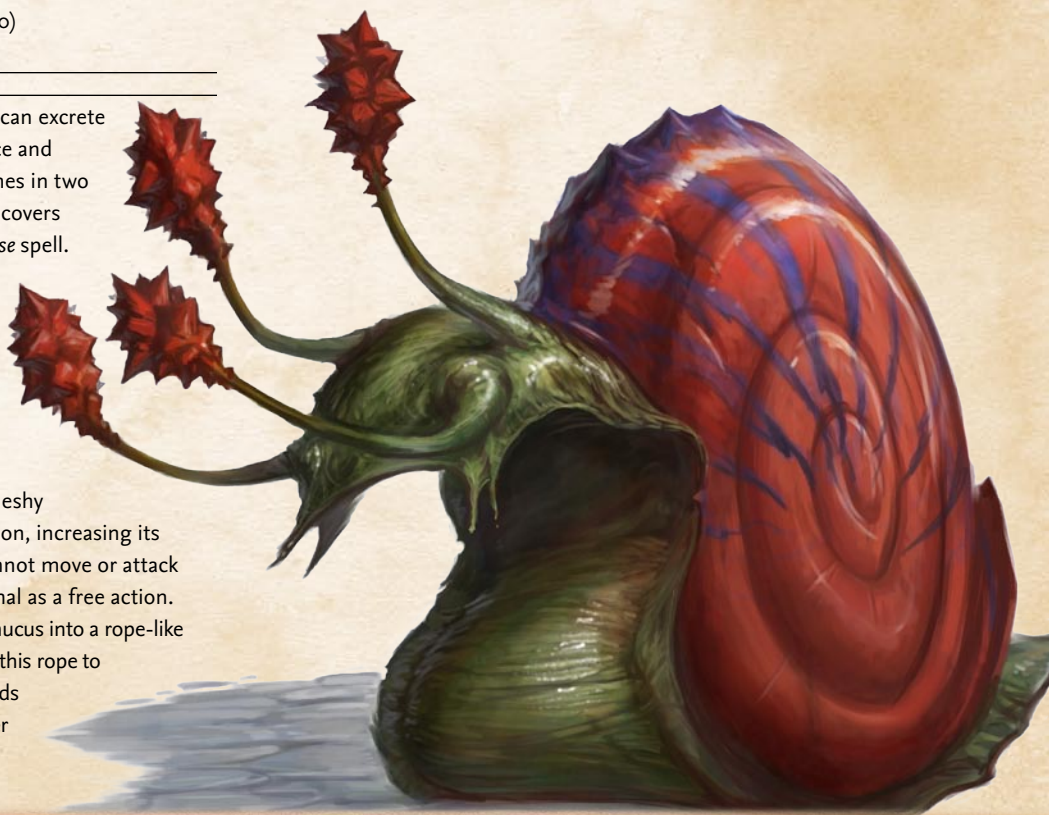
round. It can climb back up this rope at a speed of 10 feet per round. Once the snail breaks contact with the rope, the slime decomposes in 1d4 rounds, after which it cannot be used by the snail or any other creatures. While the slime rope exists, other creatures can climb the rope with a DC 20 Climb check.

Suction (Ex) A flail snail's foot adheres to surfaces so well that its 10-foot climb speed applies even on perfectly sheer surfaces and ceilings, with no chance to fall off unless the foot is actively pinned and peeled away as part of a grapple.

Warp Magic (Su) Anytime a spell targets a flail snail, there is an 80% chance that it produces a random effect instead of affecting the snail. Only spells that directly target the flail snail are warped; area effect spells are not affected. If a spell is warped, roll 1d10 and consult the following table.

- 1-3 Spell misfires. For the next 1d4 rounds, the caster must make a DC 15 concentration check to successfully cast spells.
- 4-6 Spell misfires. The creature nearest the flail snail is affected as if the spell had been cast on him.
- 7-9 Spell fails. Nothing happens.
- 10 Spell rebounds on caster (as *spell turning*).

Flail snails are intelligent gastropods that subsist on fungus, mold, and vermin, though they may attack larger creatures in self-defense. Known for their magic-warping shells, flail snails roam slowly through subterranean caverns writing great epics in their slime trails.





FLUMPH

"IN THE HOUR WHEN DARKNESS FADED, THE STRANGE, MOON-PALE CREATURE FLOATED INTO VIEW. MY HAND REACHED INSTINCTIVELY FOR MY STARKNIFE. FLOATING CHEST HIGH, THE CREATURE TWITCHED ITS EYESTALKS, AND ITS WRITHING TENTACLES SLIPPED ASIDE TO REVEAL SPIKES DRIPPING WITH TRANSPARENT SLIME. THE HISS SURROUNDING THE HORROR'S DISC-LIKE BODY DIMINISHED, AND IN A WEIRD, UNDULATING VOICE, THE THING ADDRESSED ME.

"MINDA RAMEY, YOUR PEOPLE ARE IN DANGER. IF YOU WOULD HELP THEM, YOU MUST COME WITH US IMMEDIATELY."

"I AM NOT NORMALLY IN THE BUSINESS OF ACCOMMODATING ABOMINATIONS, BUT I HONOR MY RESPONSIBILITIES. IF THERE WAS EVEN A CHANCE THE CREATURE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH, THEN THERE WAS NO CHOICE TO MAKE. I STEPPED FORWARD AND TOOK ITS OUTSTRETCHED APPENDAGE IN MY OWN."

—MINDA RAMEY, SPHEREWALKER OF DESNA

Strange and enigmatic creatures, often feared for their bizarre appearances, flumphs live a difficult life, constantly attempting to warn intelligent species of horrors from other worlds, only to find themselves shunned by the very creatures they hope to enlighten.

Filled with altruistic urges to warn fellow sentient beings of the sinister things lurking in the folds beyond space and time, flumphs' pleas often fall on deaf ears. Taking their common name from the rhythmic air exchange keeping them aloft, flumphs keep small families in hidden places across those planets where they make their homes, ready to lend a hand in defeating any horrors from the cosmic depths and beyond that might invade these placid worlds.

In their own language, flumphs are known as *oiv'hass*. While naturally shy and cognizant of their alien appearance, flumphs attempt contact with anyone willing to listen to their stories and heed their apocalyptic warnings. Most adventurers encountering these creatures find them frightening and mark them as enemies, and so flumphs often take great pains to appear unaggressive. Despite their bizarre nature, they only seek audiences with benevolent and intelligent creatures so they might prepare them to respond to the threats from afar.

When hunting or forced to aggression, flumphs attack by dropping down onto foes to pierce them with hollow spikes of cartilage or by slapping at them with their tentacles. The physical damage from their tentacles is minimal. However, their strange physiology causes them to produce an acidic slime that coats their wriggling bodies. This slime causes a burning pain in those struck, and prolonged contact dissolves minerals and organic matter.

Flumphs are consummate observers, lurking just outside of humanoid communities and watching the movements of the creatures they are bound to protect. Most sages familiar with the flumphs agree that these creatures hail from beyond this world, and may have arrived through gates used by ancient, magical empires to visit other planets. In fact, the truth is much stranger: when it comes time to reproduce, flumphs sometimes send their durable seeds flying toward other worlds, carrying with them the burden of enlightening the local populace about the celestial threats that loom at the universe's edge.

ECOLOGY

A flumph resembles a pallid disk trailing dozens of writhing tentacles and hollow, needle-sharp spikes, almost like a flattened jellyfish. Its pale skin is nearly transparent in direct sunlight, and atop its domed body stand two eyestalks holding unblinking eyes with dark, horizontal pupils like those of a goat. Normally reaching up to 3 feet in diameter, the flumph weighs only 15 pounds, with most of the weight accounted for by its rigid spikes and tough tentacles. The flumph's tentacles grow slightly longer than

the width of its body, allowing it to reach entirely across its own width. These tentacles are as agile as human fingers, and when used in groups can manipulate objects as easily as human hands do.

Except when sleeping or feeding in their homes, flumphs constantly float in midair, their highly specialized method of flight allowing them to hover motionless when desired. As flumphs float through the air, they create a low, vibrating hum as thousands of pores like spiracles or stomata take in and release air in tiny jets, keeping the creatures aloft. A complex tracheal system maintains this gas exchange throughout the creatures' bodies, also aiding in their ability to deliver a noxious defensive spray of foul gasses and aerosolized acid at range. Though they float through the air, rarely touching the ground, flumphs are reliant on water for their life cycle, developing from larvae in an aquatic environment. Because of Golarion's relatively thin atmosphere, adult flumphs rarely grow beyond 3 feet in diameter, but the flumphs themselves insist that on worlds with denser atmospheric gasses, their size can double or even triple.

Though most flumphs encountered on Golarion are from local family groups that have reproduced in the same area for generations, flumphs also have the ability to spread their seed across entire solar systems, gravitating toward gas giants or the moons surrounding such celestial bodies. In both cases, flumph reproduction is a communal affair, with dozens of flumphs contributing their genetic material. Almost like the pollination of plants, flumphs generate a seed that grows as more material is added. Eventually this translucent seedpod grows dense and heavy and must be submerged in a deep body of water or some similar liquid, or sometimes even be driven deep toward a gaseous planet's core where pressure is high. As time passes, the seed pod begins breaking down, releasing larval flumphs. Anywhere between four and 32 larvae spawn from each seed pod. After spending a year in larval form, flumphs emerge from their dense or aquatic home and begin their final stage, living in the air (or less dense regions of a gaseous plane). In ideal conditions, with plenty of food and an agreeable environment, a flumph can live for a hundred years or more.

When a group of flumphs decides that it's time to send young to another planet—either to warn its inhabitants of impending disaster or to escape local dangers, such as the destruction of habitable regions—the ritual known as the Seeding begins with polite but weighty debate, to ensure that all involved understand the sacrifices being made. Few seeds cast into the trackless void of space ever reach another world, let alone a habitable one, and to send one's own unborn children away to face the very real possibility of eternal, frozen stasis between the stars is at once a joy and a terrible burden for the parent group.

Once the opening formalities of the Seeding are complete, the flumphs enter into the normal exchange

of genetic material required to create one of their egg-like seeds. Rather than place the completed seed in water, however, the flumphs then begin the second stage of the debate, in which they compete for the honor of bearing the seed, citing both their personal achievements and their lack of responsibilities and dependants left on the home world. The winner, chosen by acclaim, carefully wraps up the seed in all of its tentacles. The rest of the community then forms a platform beneath the chosen member, sometimes several flumphs deep, and begins ascending as quickly as their strange flight allows, bearing the seed-holder aloft.

Taking turns, the Seeding flumphs carry the Honored One straight up as high as they can, until the atmosphere begins to get too thin and cold for them to safely continue. At this point, the supporting flumphs give a ragged cheer of encouragement and fall away, leaving the Honored One—who's been conserving its strength—to rocket up into the atmosphere.

This last, solo ascent is both difficult and dangerous, and most scholars believe that the relatively high success rate of the Honored Ones hints at latent magical abilities that are unlocked only by the thin atmosphere. Ice forms on the flumph's tentacles, and its respiration slows to almost a crawl, yet its speed continues to increase. When at last it seems it can rise no further, having reached the end of both the atmosphere and its stamina, the Honored One begins to spin. Faster and faster it rotates, until at the moment of maximum acceleration it unfurls its tentacles and flings the precious seed upward, with all its strength. Sped on by the flumph's momentum (and perhaps the collective power of the flumphs' mental energy), the seed is able to break free of the planet's gravity well and sail off into the blackness of space, while behind it the flumph who delivered it falls back to earth, completely exhausted. While this process is not necessarily a suicide mission, it's common for Honored Ones to be too tired to pull up and arrest their fall, instead lancing straight into the ground, where their fragile bodies burst upon impact.

For the seed pod, sent off alone into the cosmos to help prevent creatures of the outer darkness from establishing a foothold on any planet, the journey is just beginning. Each seed is made of a durable, fibrous husk, and while most of the protective layer dissolves or is blown away in the

journey, the seed's generative forces allow the larvae within to hibernate in the cold of space indefinitely until it either is destroyed by colliding with a star or inhospitable world or finally splashes down into a warm sea or lake where it can successfully germinate.

After quickening and hatching to release the flumphs' aquatic larvae, each looking somewhat like

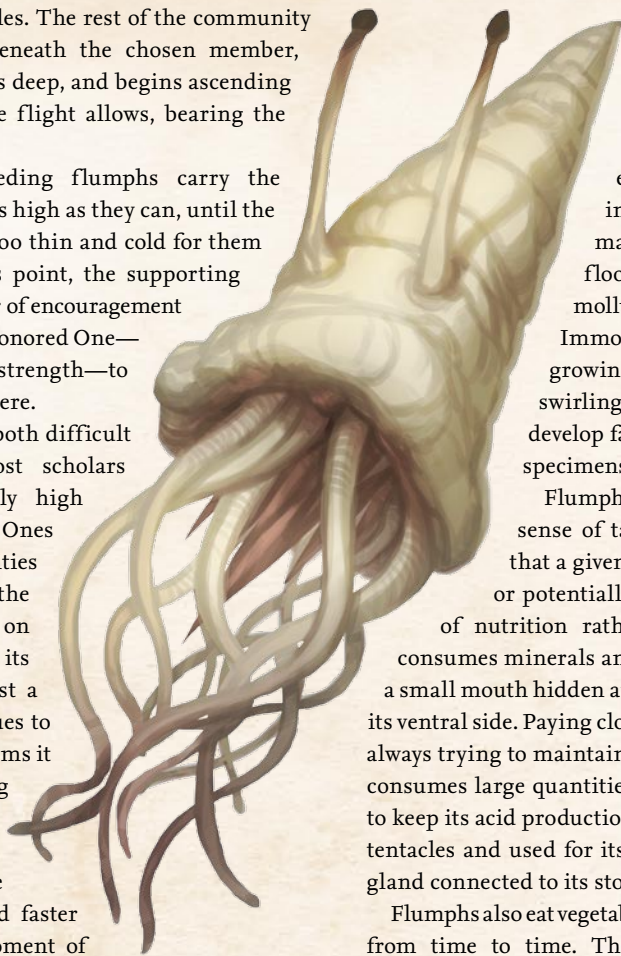
a bizarre cuttlefish mixed with a grub, the seed pod begins to dissolve into jelly in the water, eventually leaving no evidence of its existence. Sometimes especially large seed pods landing in calm waters dissolve their materials on the ocean or lake floor, attracting corals, crustaceans, mollusks, and other bottom feeders.

Immobile aquatic creatures and plants growing in these areas tend to form swirling geometric fractal patterns and develop far different coloration than other specimens of their kind.

Flumphs have no sense of smell and little sense of taste beyond a vague impression that a given material is nutritious, inedible, or potentially poisonous. Eating for the sake of nutrition rather than enjoyment, a flumph consumes minerals and organic matter, feeding it into a small mouth hidden among the spikes and tentacles on its ventral side. Paying close attention to its physiology and always trying to maintain a chemical balance, the flumph consumes large quantities of salts and alkaline materials to keep its acid production in check—the acid covering its tentacles and used for its noxious spray forms in a thick gland connected to its stomachs.

Flumphs also eat vegetable matter and hunt small animals from time to time. They prefer small, warm-blooded animals when they hunt, and delight in chasing bats and flying squirrels. Particularly brave flumphs hunt badgers, weasels, and dogs, but leave cats strictly alone because of a taboo whose origin remains unknown. When eating, a flumph secretes acid, digesting most of the food outside its body. It then uses its tentacles to draw the resulting sludge to its mouth, some also being absorbed by the openings in the tentacles or sucked in through the hollow spikes.

Flumphs require little sleep, and achieve sufficient rest even while leaving half of their minds awake indefinitely; yet as a race, they relish dreams and can sometimes sleep for weeks or even months (perhaps hearkening back to an ancestral memory of the long hibernation between the stars). Some isolated communities of flumphs sleep in highly regulated patterns, seeking enlightenment from their dreams by sleeping for short periods, then waking



and relating their dreams to an interpreter, only to return to another sleep cycle.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

On the ancient world where flumphs first originated, these misunderstood creatures served as heralds of their elder gods, deities so old and far off that humans have forgotten them. Naturally docile and protective creatures, they serve the greater good, aiding kind and sentient creatures in an eternal fight against horrors that should not be.

Flumphs understand that their appearance is alien to humanoids, and since many humanoids react violently to bizarre creatures, they tend to keep their communities hidden. In seaside caves, caverns containing underground lakes and rivers, and even below populated cities, flumphs live out their lives ever vigilant of threats from beyond. When they catch wind of a potential incursion, either in their mystic dreams or by watching the stars for telltale signs, the creatures generally send an emissary to make contact with a civilized race, often lurking on the fringes of a community and observing the populace before picking the most accepting person to approach.

Flumphs communities maintain a rigid structure. Every flumph knows its part and preserves order within the community, acting as hunter, interpreter, laborer, or provider as need determines. Flumphs see nothing wrong with this automatic designation, and see outsiders with unpredictable and self-serving natures as strange. Always eager to help, flumphs constantly offer assistance to other races they befriend. Since most members of a given flumph generation within a community stem from the same seed pod, they have a strong sense of family, seeing their brothers and sisters as parts of their own being.

Flumphs find great pleasure in making pacts and upholding them. Most conversations with flumphs end with small oaths or agreements. While such accords may seem to be nothing more than the outcome of polite conversation and social chitchat, flumphs take great pride in staying true to these arrangements, and expect the same of their conversational partner.

Many flumphs practice a form of complex cave painting. They mix pigments pulled from their environment and dissolved in their acidic secretions in order to paint intricate swirling patterns with their tentacles. These patterns are repeated on successively smaller scales, with each repetition a perfect, miniature copy of the whole picture. Flumphs focused on their dream culture claim these fractal patterns show a “wholeness” in the universe, with the minute identical to the vast.

Dreams are very important to flumphs. They compile complicated interpretations of various dreams in exacting detail. Using these interpretations of their nocturnal hallucinations, they dictate their courses of action, use the

things they learn to correct behaviors deemed inferior, and of course watch for signs of impending danger from dark and alien forces. This rigid system of interpretation leaks into their understanding of their waking life as well. Flumphs believe strongly in omens, and many times their community interpreters steer the group’s actions according to seemingly trivial events. A flock of grackles suddenly taking flight from a willow tree can be interpreted as a reason to abandon a previously chosen course of action, while three lizards sunning themselves on a rock means the group will find a generous deposit of salt in the following days. Flumphs pay great attention to the stars and their movements across the sky, weaving a complex zodiac into their folklore. Yet for all their focus on the cosmos, flumphs growing up on a given planet generally know few facts about the other worlds of the heavens, retaining only an instinctual understanding of the Seeding and a history that mixes dreams and astrology with actual information.

While most flumphs are good-natured, a small percentage who succumb to various terrestrial diseases are driven to insanity, developing a unique psychosis. These renegade flumphs seek out planetary gates on their world in order to draw forth the very alien horrors that their cousins hope to thwart.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

As good-aligned creatures, flumphs fill the role of allies most aptly. Their long lives allow them to acquire encyclopedic knowledge of strange lore regarding aberrations and secrets of the worlds beyond. Flumph sages can instruct PCs in ways of defeating cosmic threats, or even lead a group of adventurers to planetary gates leading to worlds of wonder or madness. If a campaign delves into the esoteric realm of dreams, a flumph interpreter can guide the PCs on a dream quest, revealing the omens of their nighttime journeys, or taking them into the strange corners of the dreamlands where fantasy and reality collide. With the aid of a skilled dream interpreter, PCs might even learn possible outcomes for their actions as if learning the result from an *augury* spell.

Though generally pacifistic, preferring to hide from interlopers instead of engaging them, flumphs also have a strong chivalrous streak, and can’t stand to see good creatures killed when the flumphs’ own assistance might be enough to turn the tide. Many communities observed by flumphs never even realize that they’re under surveillance until something suitably dire—a shepherd attacked by wolves or a child about to become prey for a tribe of goblins—causes the flumphs to break their cover and charge to the rescue, floating up over the attackers and then stabbing downward with their acidic spikes. Player characters might never fight against a flumph themselves unless the creature is cornered, defending its community

from aggressors, or greatly wronged by the PCs. Even then, the creatures first attempt to repel their attackers, either with words or their disgusting stench.

Alternatively, a GM could pit a group of low-level PCs against a cult of deranged flumphs who have fallen to a rare disease that is corrupting their sanity. An insane flumph could also control a group of goblins, mites, or human cultists hoping to carry out a horrid summoning, or a whole community of infected flumphs could serve as minions for a larger, more violent cosmic horror.

Finally, should the PCs get past their initial revulsion at the strange and aromatic creatures, flumphs might actively seek their aid and succor, convincing the PCs to help them in defending their community from the usual cosmic horrors—or from the same xenophobic townsfolk the flumphs are trying to watch over and protect.

TREASURE

Though flumphs see little value in conventional treasure, many of their communities stockpile valuable items collectively as they stumble across them, knowing that gold, gems, and magic items can be extremely useful in convincing nearby humanoid settlements to respond positively to the flumphs' overtures. Individuals within a flumph community share everything, the most important commodity being food. With their strange diet, flumphs gather minerals they harvest from the ground or acquire in subterranean expeditions, dissolving them with acid before returning to the surface. Salt—usually harvested from the sea shore—is the most common mineral flumphs require, and the creatures occasionally find their communities raided for this trade good. Alchemical tomes sometimes list flumphs as a ready source for ingredients, both in their stores and in the fabric of the flumphs' bodies themselves. An unscrupulous sage or alchemist willing to boil down and refine the corpse of a flumph might extract as much as 200 gp worth of rare components.

Flumphs hold a great fondness for rings, seeing the circle as a symbol of wholeness. Though they rarely seek out treasures in a mercenary fashion, flumphs may accept rings in trade, happen upon them in dungeons, or even take them from defeated foes. Flumph elders and community champions sometimes sport half a dozen rings, both magical and mundane.

VARIANTS

Flumphs are remarkably similar in appearance, showing variation primarily via any trappings of their class levels. Highly motivated, flumphs explore a number of classes, yet typically shy away from those focusing on combat. Flumph society demands hunters and protectors, so those flumphs excelling in physical prowess often choose the paths of rangers and paladins, or occasionally monks.

Some flumphs learn to tune the complex respiration that keeps them aloft into eerie, lilting songs. These flumph bards also serve as dream interpreters and keepers of a community's oral history, sometimes using dreams to tap into stories of their ancestors from faraway worlds.

Though many flumphs of a worshipful bent feel reverence for the vague, half-remembered gods of their past, the star-spanning dream-weaver Desna is by far the most popular deity for flumph clerics. When pursuing arcane magic, flumphs favor force spells, telekinesis-like effects, and effects that tilt the field of combat to their advantage. Flumphs developing into sorcerers typically have the aberrant or destined bloodline.

A flumph's first year of life is spent in larval form deep within warm seas and lakes. To represent a larval flumph, use the young simple template, add the aquatic subtype, and change the creature's fly speed to a swim speed.

FLUMPHS ON GOLARION

Most flumphs on Golarion devote their lives to opposing the strange and alien consciousnesses of the Dark Tapestry, the cold spaces between the stars. They generally form colonies near bodies of water, rarely reaching arid areas or lofty mountains. In their small communities, they keep hidden and vigilant, waiting for the time when they must face their eternal foes. Below are a few particular regions where flumphs are known to dwell.

Sodden Lands: Stories leaking out of the Sodden Lands claim a colony of flumphs live in a series of caves stretching in a long network between the towns of Hyrantam and Kokutang. This area, plagued by aberrations, once saw the entire flumph population rise up against an incursion. Ever since then, the various flumph communities—and even a few humanoid ones—have begun to regularly visit and trade with each other.

Varisia: At the mouth of the Falcon River, a group of flumphs makes its isolated home. Here, in a network of shallow caves alongside the rocky cliffs, flumph dreamers sleep for years, waking only long enough to eat and relate their nocturnal visions to their interpreters.

Nidal: Even more out of place than usual, a community of flumphs makes its home just outside of Nisroch. Citizens of the shrouded city report seeing a trio of flumphs floating through the back alleys. This trio seeks to spread a warning of impending doom, but also runs an underground railroad, freeing slaves in the city and ushering them to safety.

Liavara: Though not technically on Golarion, this gas giant contains the greatest concentration of flumphs in Golarion's solar system. These creatures and their even stranger alien companions maintain colonies on the planet's many moons, as well as on neighboring Bretheda, keeping a vigilant eye turned toward Aucturn.

FLUMPH

This human-sized and disk-shaped creature floats in the air like a jellyfish. Beneath it, numerous tentacles hang down around several long spikes that jut from the creature's center. Above the flattened body rise two long eyestalks terminating in eyes like those of a goat.

FLUMPH

CR 1



XP 400

LG Small aberration

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)**hp** 9 (2d8)**Fort** +0, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5**Resist** acid 10

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)**Melee** sting +5 (1d4 plus acid injection)**Special Attacks** acid injection, stench spray

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 13**Feats** Weapon Finesse**Skills** Diplomacy +2, Fly +18, Perception +7, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +12**Languages** Aklo, Common

ECOLOGY

Environment any land or underground**Organization** solitary, pair, or colony (4–16)**Treasure** standard (including body worth 200 gp in rare component elements)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Acid Injection (Ex) When a flumph strikes an opponent with its spikes, it injects a burning, irritating acid that deals 1d4 points of acid damage immediately and another 1d4 points on the round after the attack. The target can end the acid's effects by submerging the wound in water for a round or by being treated with a DC 15 Heal check. A creature grappling or swallowing the flumph takes this acid damage automatically every round it maintains this contact.

Stench Spray (Ex) A flumph can spray a 20-foot line of foul-smelling liquid once every 1d4 rounds. This spray functions like the stench universal monster ability, except it only affects creatures struck by the spray, which must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or be sickened for 5 rounds. The save DC is Constitution-based. Alternatively, the flumph can concentrate the spray on a single target within 5 feet—if the target fails its saving throw, it is nauseated for 5 rounds; otherwise, it is sickened for 1 minute. The odor from this spray lingers in the area and on all creatures struck for 1d4 hours, and can be detected at a range of 100 feet (creatures with the scent ability can smell it at double this range).

Come from distant stars to protect the world from cosmic horrors, flumphs are jellyfish-like creatures who float in the air and hunt with acidic spikes growing from their undersides. Gentle at heart, flumphs understand that their appearance is often terrifying, and thus conceal themselves and observe neighboring settlements from afar, only revealing themselves when absolutely necessary.

Flumphs float and speak via a constant flow of air through tiny pores in their white bodies, emitting a rhythmic puffing whenever they're aloft. Typical flumphs weigh 15 pounds and are 3 feet across. Flumphs deeply revere dreams, seeing them as omens and portents. While they normally mate and reproduce on the world of their birth, flumphs occasionally engage in a ritual called the Seeding, in which seed pods are flung into outer space in order to provide other planets with guardians.





LAVA CHILD

O GODS, WHAT SECRETS! THOSE YOU HOLD, BEYOND THE HEARTS OF MORTAL MEN,
IN ANCIENT MOUNTAINS, CAVERNS OLD, THAT CREATURES OF THE DARK FOREFEND.
WITH SAVAGE TEETH AND CLAWS OF FLAME,
THE CHILDREN OF THE EARTH LAY CLAIM;
THROUGH SHIELD AND ARMOR, FLESH AND BONE,
THE SAVAGE CHILDREN TEAR AND REND.

AS CARAHAN, WITH SILVER SWORD, DID BOLD DESCEND THE FIREPIT STAIR,
THERE ROSE A TUNNEL, SMOOTHLY BORED, THAT GLITTERED IN THE POISONED AIR.
AND FROM THE DEPTHS, THE VOICES WEPT,
"TURN BACK AND YOU'LL BE SPARED,
"FOR SWORD AND SHIELD, THOUGH DEFTLY WIELD'
"SHALL BE AS GHOSTS TO CREATURES THERE."

—DIRAIS CHEMAN,
THE LAY OF CARAHAN

Crafted in secret by the cunning magic of the earth genies known as shaitans, lava children are born of the shifting, molten border between the elemental planes of fire and earth. They were created as the perfect spies and scouts for the shaitans in their tumultuous and often hostile dealings with the fire-born efreeti genies. Though the lava children proved able in their vocation, perfectly suited to surviving in the Plane of Fire and those volcanoes and other fiery regions on the mortal world where efreet most often lair, the fire genies quickly grew wise to the scheme, and were easily able to dispatch the relatively weak lava children when they became troublesome. Thus the children's utility steadily lessened as the generations wore on, and over time the children's masters lost interest in their obsolete creations. In the absence of leadership, the strange minions of earth and stone began slowly to understand their own nature and independence, venturing out of their molten lairs and into the greater world beyond, to consider what they might become.

Lava children are a created race, woven from spirits of fire and earth and bound into their strange, diminutive forms by ancient shaitan genies. Their bodies are stunted but strong, their oversized heads adorned with perpetual smiles that are far too wide and terrible to behold. In these strange bodies, gifted with a number of unusual powers—such as the ability to glide through the earth, or the bizarre ability to completely ignore metal in all its forms—the lava children were able to slip silently through the molten borderlands where efreet and shaitans met and quarreled, always watching and waiting, gathering information to help their crafters remain on the right side of any deal.

Yet with the efreet's unraveling of this trick and the lava children's subsequent abandonment by the shaitans, life changed for them. Without the constant direction of their masters, the long-suppressed elemental spirits bound within the lava children began a discordant chorus of their own, and it was not long before many masterless lava children began questioning their purpose, giving up the ingrained need to watch for and report new possibilities. They became proselytes of independence, seeking out and gathering to themselves other lava children set loose from physical or spiritual bondage to their uncaring masters.

Uncertain what role they have to play in the world, lava children today gather in isolationist, subterranean communities called cysts. Some are content to contemplate their purpose in quietness, but others are all too curious about what it might mean to take action rather than constantly watching, and these strive to become masters instead of servants.

ECOLOGY

Lava children are bizarre-looking creations of molded stone, which ancient magic causes to appear and function

like raw-pink flesh, growing and changing as the lava child ages. Though their bodies are relatively unremarkable, shaped like wiry, muscular humans and weighing 400 to 500 pounds, their heads are the disturbing, oversized heads of babies, with mouths that open far wider than they have any right to. Despite its stony nature and delicate appearance, their flesh moves and feels more like dry leather, flexible despite its hardness.

Lava children are generously proportioned regardless of their apparent gender, with broad shoulders. They rarely wear clothes, but when they do, they wear loose drapes or skirts woven from the same flexible, stony fibers that form their fine, patchy hair. A lava child's fingers end in long nails as keen-edged as obsidian shards.

For many, however, the true horror of a lava child rests in the feral, idiot grin of its infant face. Even when speaking in their sonorous, slightly mad voices, lava children's mouths do not move, and their eyes only rarely bother to focus, instead taking in everything through peripheral vision. Only when eating, reproducing, or fighting do the jaws of a lava child stretch wide, opening the aperture to the furnace that burns within them. Lava children consume organic matter, normally incinerating what they take in completely and producing no waste but an occasional trickle of ash and smoke from their mouths or nostrils.

Most lava children appear to be male, but gender is an irrelevant concept to lava children and refers only to their appearance. Lava children treat one another as siblings, and their means of reproduction is in no way akin to that of typical humanoids. Originally, the monstrous magma-dwellers were birthed through the elder sorceries of the shaitans from the essence of elementals of earth and fire sacrificed to the project. These unfortunate elementals were summoned and mesmerized into a euphoric trance, and in their bliss were utterly torn apart, their essences flowing through narrow channels to fill stone molds. There the essences were blended with molten stone and left to cool and cure, the strange rites at work drawing forth the vital sparks of the elementals to give form and life to the molten rock within. When the molds were cracked open, the shaitans beheld the truth of their creation: though they'd meant to craft a race that was strong, solid, and capable, the conflict between the earth and fire magic—the latter of which they had significantly less experience with—left their creations literally half-baked, with bizarre, infantile visages. Still, it quickly became clear that despite their hideous appearance, the lava children were still perfectly capable of fulfilling their roles, and the shaitans put them to work.

While their masters ruled their lives, lava children knew no other way that their kind might reproduce. As spies were destroyed in the line of duty, their numbers

were replaced by bored shaitans using the same effective but inelegant processes. After their abandonment (or liberation, depending on who's telling the story), lava children found themselves unable to recreate those ancient rites, facing a future of dwindling into extinction—which, indeed, is what their creators had assumed would happen. The lava children grew increasingly distraught, calling upon spirits of earth and fire to lend their wisdom to solving the problem. At last, in a rage at the line's imminent extinction, a particularly powerful lava child chieftain attacked one of the unhelpful elementals, devouring it whole—and in doing so discovered the solution to all their troubles.

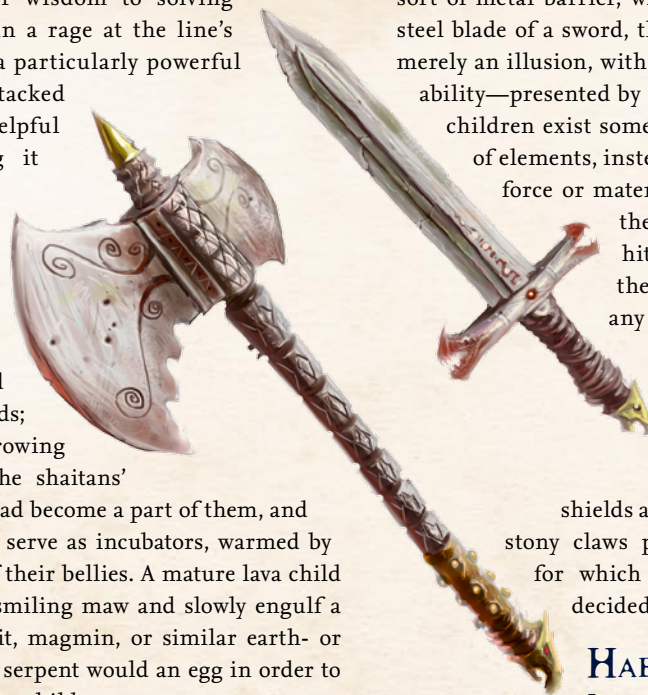
For the lava children found that they had not merely been created in those earthen molds; in the process of growing and forming within the shaitans' crèches, those crèches had become a part of them, and their very bodies could serve as incubators, warmed by the perpetual flames of their bellies. A mature lava child had but to distend its smiling maw and slowly engulf a small elemental, mephit, magmin, or similar earth- or fire-based creature as a serpent would an egg in order to begin gestating a new lava child.

After 2 months of carrying a trapped elemental within its distended belly, a "parent" lava child regurgitates its offspring—a smaller, near-duplicate of itself. While the shaitans made many designs for the lava children, each lava child can only beget offspring after its own likeness, with slight variations based on the elemental creature consumed to provide its genesis. A new lava child must consume massive amounts of organic material, converting it into a type of compacted ash that forms the body mass beneath its strange skin, and growing to maturity in 6 years.

Lava children have a lifespan similar to a human's, but as they age, their ashen internal substance starts to break down and be consumed by their internal fires. Minerals leach away, leaving them to appear pale and washed out in comparison to other lava children, and their skin hangs loose as their bodies shrink once more to a childlike size. Few lava children meet their final end from old age, however, as those reaching this advanced stage are often taken by the other lava children and ritually consumed—sometimes willingly and sometimes not—in order to be reborn as a new lava child, in a sort of symbolic

reincarnation which nevertheless destroys the consumed lava child's personality and memories.

Perhaps the strangest part of a lava child's physiology is its unusual relationship with metal. For reasons unclear to even their shaitan creators, and perhaps having something to do with their unusual blending of earth and fire, lava children are incapable of interacting with metal. Instead, when lava children meet any sort of metal barrier, whether it's a wall of iron or the steel blade of a sword, they pass through it as if it were merely an illusion, with no adverse effects. This bizarre ability—presented by some sages as evidence that lava children exist somehow outside the normal palette of elements, instead embodying some sort of new force or material—was a pleasant surprise to their creators, who immediately hit on the trait's utility in allowing the lava children access to virtually any hardened redoubt. In addition, though individual lava children are no match for most seasoned adventurers, their ability to shrug off metal weapons and reach straight through steel shields and armor to tear flesh with their stony claws presents a terrifying challenge for which most humanoid warriors are decidedly ill prepared.



HABITAT & SOCIETY

In some ways, lava children are children in fact as well as in name. In the wake of their long enslavement, they are prone to testing the limits of their freedom, acting on impulse or curiosity. Though they sometimes show moments of tender caring—often at inappropriate times, perhaps caressing the hair of a human they've just slain—lava children's interactions with other creatures are filled with the naive, unthinking cruelty of a child desperate to express its own power over others. Lava children are susceptible to suggestion, but can be as stubborn as stones if they feel they're being manipulated. They are imitative of others, but at times are almost bizarre in their disregard for convention. As an independent race and culture, they've only recently begun taking early steps into full maturity, with one of the few constants being that lava children are intensely private and do not react kindly to intruders visiting their territory.

Upon attaining their freedom, some lava children on the Material Plane retreated deep underground, where they dwell in the company of magmin, mephits, thoqqua, and similar near-elemental creatures. Most lava children, however, are loath to venture too far from

the surface world and shallow caves where they have lived for so long, most often settling in geologically active regions. Though lava children cannot abide the touch of water, some cysts have sojourned through the stone of the seabed to congregate on small volcanic islands, isolated from other sentient life that might seek to manipulate or destroy them.

Lava children prefer community to solitude, especially when following a strong leader. Though they prefer to follow their own kind and are extremely mistrustful of those who would seek to lead them, they are ironically also easily cowed when obviously outmatched, and any leaders with an affinity for earth and fire (and sufficient power) can sway lava children into following them. Even for newly birthed lava children, the habit of servitude is deeply ingrained, and they are quick to give their obedience and respect, often using their earth glide and immunity to metal on behalf of their masters to sneak into places they're not meant to be, such as strongholds or bank vaults. Lava children's most common masters, however, are not outsiders to their race, but particularly strong and talented lava children, especially ones who have learned the secrets of magic.

Lava children are isolationist and often cruel, but not xenophobic. Humanoids living near a lava child cyst, such as a tribe of humans living at the base of an inhabited volcano, are sometimes aware of the lava children's presence, and may offer tribute to assuage their wrath. Lava children relish this respect and dominion—even if their requests are often little more than symbolic, as they have no actual use for food, gold, or human virgins—and may embellish the fiery powers at their disposal, though those who anger or ignore them discover that their burning wrath is all too real.

Lava children are not deeply religious, as their slavery and inelegant creation process has left them somewhat suspicious of faith in a higher power. They know of the gods, but offer them little love beyond the occasional veneration of deities representing fire, earthquakes, and volcanoes (or leading other races in worship of such beings, while subtly altering the message to shine reflected glory upon the lava children). Lava children have introduced many rituals into cultures they have touched, including firewalking across hot coals, fire dances with blazing poi and torches, fire-breathing, and even sacrifice via volcano.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Lava children can be used as an alien culture uncovered in the course of PC exploration, or as menacing foes anywhere that volcanic activity is present. They are strange and dangerous creatures, curious about outsiders but prone to lapse into violence if bored or threatened.

They interact in unusual ways with the volcanic tunnels or ruined cities in which they make their homes, as they are able to pass through metal bars and gates and traverse lava or other normally impassable barriers. Particularly tricky lava children might serve as living (and manipulative) religious idols that PCs may at first identify as golems of some sort.

Lava children can work well in concert with elemental creatures of a similar nature—especially if those others are enslaved or otherwise made deferential to the lava children—but are also uniquely suited to serving as minions of more powerful creatures, in particular those with ties to the elements of earth and fire. PCs may encounter members of a remote culture who call upon their “gods” to save them from the outsiders, or a valuable vault with a cyst of lava children left behind as guardians by some greater power.

TREASURE

Because of their metal immunity, lava children rarely keep metal items as treasure, save for occasional items offered as tribute. Lava children prize heat-resistant gemstones and carvings of stone, bone, and obsidian. While lava children typically fight with claws and teeth, rare champions utilize weapons and armor made of stone, bone, or dragonhide. Lava children may keep wands, rods, and the like, activating them with Use Magic Device, but potions and scrolls rarely survive in the conditions where lava children tend to live. However, alternate types of these items may be found, such as graven clay tablets or carved stone wheels used as scrolls, or potions sealed within natural bubbles inside lumps of metal ore (through which lava children can thrust their faces in order to lap up the magical concoction).

VARIANTS

Because of their strange means of reproduction, lava children have branched out over the generations into a number of distinct variations. Below are some of the most common.

Chieftains (+1 CR): The most important of all lava children variants are the chieftains, those exceptional lava children who employ magic and rhetoric to inspire or browbeat their cystmates into obedience. Lava children chieftains are visually indistinguishable from ordinary lava children, but often bear several innate magical abilities passed down from parent to offspring in what the chieftains (sometimes referred to as priests, though not necessarily affiliated with a deity) claim are a physical manifestation of their right to lead. Divine right or otherwise, lava children chieftains are most likely to lead from the rear, using their lava channel ability to heal lava children and other elemental creatures commanded

into their service, while simultaneously unleashing their spell-like abilities to defend their cysts or make war upon those who fail to show proper deference. For reasons not entirely understood, lava children chieftains are much longer-lived than ordinary lava children, with a lifespan similar to that of dwarves. Lava children chieftains have the advanced creature template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294) and the following abilities:

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +7):

At will—*faerie fire*

3/day—*pyrotechnics* (DC 15), *stone shape*

1/day—*contact other plane* (earth or fire elemental plane only), *summon nature's ally III* (creatures with earth or fire subtype only)

Lava Channel (Su): Three times per day, a lava child chieftain can channel volcanic energy to produce an explosion of molten rock, which functions like the channel positive energy ability of a cleric, except that it heals 3d6 points of damage for creatures with the earth or fire subtypes and does 3d6 points of fire damage to all others.

Lava Form (Su): A lava child chieftain can shift between its solid body and one made of molten rock as a standard action. In lava form, the chieftain gains the elemental subtype, and its claw attacks add +1d6 fire damage. Any creature grappling or striking the lava form with natural weapons or natural attacks takes 1d6 points of fire damage. It can remain in this form for up to 5 minutes per day; this duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be used in 1-minute increments.

Behemoth (+1 CR): This rare caste of warrior lava children was designed by its creators for espionage missions into especially dangerous regions. Though most behemoths succumbed to the high mortality rate that came with following their creators' orders, a few managed to survive and breed. Lava children behemoths have the giant creature template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 295) and Improved Bull Rush as a bonus feat. They gain the following special attack.

Tremor (Ex): Once per day as a standard action, a lava child behemoth can slam its fists to the ground to create an earth tremor. The behemoth makes a trip attempt against all adjacent creatures. This action does not provoke an attack of opportunity and the behemoth is not at risk of being knocked prone. Multiple behemoths can cooperate to affect a larger area; as long as each behemoth uses this ability at the same time and is adjacent to at least one other behemoth using this ability, the affected area increases by 5 feet in all directions.

Youths and Ancients (–1 CR): While mature lava children are Medium-sized, they are smaller at both the beginning and the end of life. Newborn lava children are already the size of halflings, and grow quickly to full size within 6 years. At the opposite end of life, the venerable lava

children past 70 years of age lose their strength and mass as their bodies slowly wither. Both youths and ancients use the young creature simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 295); the latter also apply venerable age modifiers (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 169).

LAVA CHILDREN ON GOLARION

Lava children on Golarion are most common in those desert regions where genies are more prevalent, such as Thuvia, Osirion, Qadira, and Katapesh. Though most lava children seek to avoid contact with any variety of genie—naturally fearful of being enslaved by the more powerful elemental spirits—these regions are those where the lava children were most commonly sent during the days when they were still minions of the shaitans, and hence where they feel most comfortable and familiar. In these nations, lava folk tend to gravitate toward mountains with smoldering volcanic hearts in the Barrier Wall and the Zho ranges, where they sometimes surface to toy with humanoids and other weaker creatures, then delve deep to escape the eye of the shaitans (or, worse, the efreet they once plagued).

Outside of these desert regions, lava children are rare, yet they have still managed to spread far and wide, following active lava tubes beneath the surface or burrowing down into molten rock in the planet's depths, only to follow a different upwelling of magma into a mountain range thousands of miles away. As a result, though sightings remain rare, lava children can potentially be found in almost any volcanic region, on any continent, with even some of the undersea volcanoes around fallen Azlant playing home to a few cysts. Those adventurers who venture into a draconic lair in an active caldera, or deep into the dwarven forges at a volcano's core, would be wise to keep an eye out for the gliding, misshapen profiles of lava children ready to pounce and burn in a petty quest for dominance. And of course, the majority of lava children still make their home in the Inner Sphere, breaching and diving in the molten seams of stone where the planes of fire and earth meet and mingle.

Lava children are simultaneously employed and despised by other fire and earth creatures. Lava children chieftains can often use their volcanic channeling to command the allegiance of lesser creatures, but even those under their dominion fear the very real possibility of being swallowed by the lava children and made into one of them. Lava children cysts that encroach too close to efreeti holdings in Katapesh and Qadira are often rooted out as a matter of principle, though the fire genies have also been known to enslave lava children in order to make use of their channeling ability in battle, using the lava children to heal themselves and their fiery minions.

LAVA CHILD

This squat, clawed humanoid is hunched and pink-skinned, with an oversized head. Its face is that of a fanged and insane human baby, and its mouth opens far wider than it should.

LAVA CHILD

CR 3



XP 800

N Medium monstrous humanoid (earth, fire)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 30 (4d10+8)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Immune earth magic, fire, and metal

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold and water

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.

Melee 2 claws +6 (1d4+2), bite +6 (1d4+2 plus 1d6 fire)

Special Attacks magma throwing, rend (2 claws, 1d4+3)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 17

Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack

Skills Bluff +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +1, Knowledge (nature) +2, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +8

Languages Common, Draconic, Ignan, Terran

SQ earth glide

ECOLOGY

Environment volcanic underground

Organization solitary or cyst (2–40)

Treasure standard (no metal, double gems)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Earth Glide (Ex) A burrowing lava child can pass through stone, dirt, metal, lava, or almost any other sort of earth as easily as a fish swims through water. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole, nor does it create any ripples or other signs of its presence. A *move earth* spell cast on an area containing a burrowing lava child flings the creature back 30 feet, stunning it for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 15 Fortitude save.

Immunity to Earth Magic (Ex) A lava child is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance and has the earth descriptor.

Magma Throwing (Su) A lava child can cough up a ball of magma into its hand as a move action. It remains hot as long as the lava child holds it, but cools to the ambient temperature 1 round after it is released. A lava child can throw a

magma ball as if it were a flask of alchemist's fire, or add its damage to one successful claw attack. It can use this ability a number of times per day equal to its Hit Dice. On any round in which the lava child remains partially immersed in molten stone and does not leave it, it may scoop up a handful as a move action and then throw it as if using this ability, but that action does not count toward its daily limit.

Metal Immunity (Su) Lava children ignore the presence of metal and are able to pass through it as easily as air. They are immune to metal weapons, and their attacks ignore any AC bonus (including enhancement bonuses) from metal armor and shields.

Vulnerability to Cold and Water (Ex) Spells and effects with the water or cold subtype inflict +50% damage against lava children (though these vulnerabilities do not stack—effects that are both cold and water still deal only an additional +50% damage). Splashing a lava child with at least 1 gallon of water inflicts 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Immersion in water causes lava children to take 2d6 points of damage per round and affects them as a *slow* spell while they remain submerged.

Lava children are ill-tempered creatures created by shaitan genies. Shaped like stunted humanoids with the hideous heads of fanged infants, they prefer to reside in volcanoes. Typical lava children are 5 feet tall and 450 pounds.





LURKING RAY

"THERE CAME A CHORUS OF RUSTLING AND CHIRRUPING, HIGH SQUEAKS AND LOW GRUNTS THAT HIT THE OUTER EDGES OF MY HEARING. HOW COULD I NOT AT LEAST LOOK TO SEE WHAT IT WAS? TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE COUNTER TO BOTH MY NATURE AND MY SACRED VOWS AS A SEEKER OF MYSTERIES.

"THE SOUNDS STOPPED A MOMENT BEFORE I ROUNDED THE CORNER, CUT OFF AS IF THEY HAD NEVER BEEN. THERE WAS NOTHING IN THAT CAVERN—IT WAS PERFECTLY STILL, DESPITE THE FAINT SCENT OF ANIMAL SWEAT AND THE SUBTLE ODOR OF DECAY. AN ALMOST PERFECT ILLUSION... UNTIL I SAW THE BAREST FLAP OF MOVEMENT ON THE FLOOR, AS OF PAPER CAUGHT BY A ROGUE BREEZE. I STARTED TO BACK AWAY, AND THEN THE WALLS AND FLOOR ERUPTED, AS IF THE ROOM ITSELF WERE TRYING TO DEVOUR ME.

"WHICH, OF COURSE, IT WAS."

—PATHFINDER TOLSON JHENNAK

The eerie caverns and caves of the Darklands are a natural breeding place for strange and twisted horrors, yet even among the menageries of the deep, lurking rays are among the most unnerving predators, feared as much for the unexpectedness of their attacks as for the bloody aftermath. These creatures—both the infant form known as the executioner's hood and its parents, the male lurker above and female trapper—infest the dark corners of the world, feeding on the weak and unwary. Lurking rays are ambush hunters that prove devastatingly effective in their element, attacking with speed and surprise, wrapping themselves thoroughly around a victim, and choking the life from it before beginning to feed.

Though they take several forms and grow from the size of a large handkerchief to measure dozens of feet across during the course of their lifespans, all lurking rays bear certain similarities. Their leathery skin is smooth to the touch, but can raise irregularities to mimic their surroundings and change color to blend easily with stone, earth, and wood. Their bodies are pure muscle, malleable and flexible, and able to wrap around a thin wand as easily as a boulder. They do not react mindlessly to external stimuli, but rather strike when the moment is right. Their primary method of attack is to deprive their victims of air by choking, squeezing, or simple suffocation.

Most lurking rays are no more intelligent than animals, spending most of their lives as masses of instinct and hunger, striking from the shadows and then withdrawing. The adult males of the species—the lurkers above—never rise above these base instincts, existing only to feed and breed. The female trappers, however, do gain sentience over the course of their lives... and the purposes to which some bend their will can be devastating.

Lurking rays are solitary, and males must often travel long distances to find mates. The female trappers are largely sedentary, especially once they breed, maintaining their position until all of their young have left the nest to seek their own hunting grounds.

ECOLOGY

No one knows how the lurking rays first came to be, and even divination spells are strangely silent on the subject. Their resemblance to manta rays (at least when unfurled and on the move) would seem to indicate an origin in the sea, yet close comparison of the creatures' internal structure reveals that any similarity between lurking rays and the gentle giants of the sea is skin deep. Some think the rays may have come from the Dark Tapestry, riding down on the back of a falling star—this explanation is as viable as any other, for the lurking rays either cannot or will not explain their history.

A lurking ray starts its life in a juvenile form often called an “executioner's hood” because of its bag-like shape and the distinctive markings on its back that resemble eyeholes. It measures roughly a foot long as it hangs from the ceiling, and weighs about 5 pounds; when prey wanders below it, the young ray drops down and envelops the creature's head, suffocating and eventually dissolving and digesting it. During this stage of its life, the lurking ray is extremely susceptible to alcohol, which breaks down the chemical bonds in its skin—it loses this vulnerability as it ages. As it grows, the creature also changes shape: males grow and develop into a shape most resembling a manta ray, while females become squarer and more slab-like, growing up to a foot thick. The males find their way to the ceilings, attaching themselves with suckers and tiny tendrils they can release at a moment's notice, while the females move to the floor, where they achieve their full growth. Both lurkers above and trappers can grow to be 15 feet from tip to tip (though able to stretch up to 30 feet wide if necessary); males can weigh nearly 500 pounds when fully fed, and females up to 2,000.

All lurking rays are carnivorous, preferring the adrenaline-charged tang of living flesh, though they can also subsist for a time on the minerals they absorb through their tentacles from rocky surfaces. Males are less capable of subsisting on minerals, however, and hence have evolved to hunt more actively. While they are poor fliers, lurkers above are excellent gliders, and can drop from a ceiling and silently float more than 100 horizontal feet over the course of a few vertical ones. The strong acids in lurking rays' stomachs digest any organic material they devour. Nonmagical armor, weapons, lanterns, and other metal items lose much of their integrity in this process, and must be resmelted and reforged before they are usable. Magical items usually suffer no such ill effects.

Trappers use their digestive acids to create a space beneath their body in the floor, allowing them to settle more fully. The underside of a trapper is a dank, warm place, with gooey, viscous materials dripping from the creature's pores and writhing, prehensile tentacles; while executioner's hoods are growing underneath their trapper parent, the trapper drools half-digested organic material from these pores, turning this space into a nutrient-rich soup. The muscles of the trapper's body allow her to control her upper body so that it remains flat even when filled with victims.

The trapper's mouth is located in the center of her body, and she thus prefers to wait until her prey is near the center of her mass to strike. This both prevents easy escape and simplifies her eating. Her maw, toothed like a shark's, is thin and lipless, nearly undetectable until one is atop it... and by then, it's often too late.

Although the lurker is not intelligent and generally retains the shape of the manta ray, the female trapper has a cunning

mind. She can analyze threats and choose her victims, and her muscular structure allows her a greater control over her shape and appearance. Though not as versatile as a mimic, she can change the texture on her surface to reflect the surrounding area, and can even create a protrusion that, from a distance, appears to be a treasure chest or some other desirable item in order to lure intelligent prey.

Trappers are soundproof, able to create seals against any surface so that potential prey is not distracted by the sound of victims struggling against the young feasting beneath her. While this may be an excellent hunting mechanism, it does nothing to address the fact that trappers are organic creatures, and the muffled sound of one's footfalls when walking atop a trapper should be an immediate clue that something is amiss. As a result, trappers have evolved to mimic appropriate noises and can cast sounds in nearly any direction; when settling into a new home, a trapper creates a cacophony of sounds up and down the audible spectrum so that she can catalogue the ambient noise and create a background of appropriate sounds to fool her prey.

A fine sensory network covers the entirety of a lurking ray's body. Though these senses do not exactly correspond to human senses, they act as darkvision, vibration sensors (both on the floor and in the air), and olfactory centers. They can detect scent trails more than a week old to find the optimal passages for securing potential victims, and wandering lurkers have been known to track prey for days.

Lurking rays fear light and open spaces, and almost never see sunlight or smell fresh air. Those that conquer this fear become even more of a menace, as this freedom allows them a range unthinkable to their subterranean kin.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Born of eggs spawned in lightless caverns, protected by their all-covering mother, infant lurkers spill forth in batches of 20 to 30 at a time. Upon hatching, they are translucent, crawling lumps of protoplasm, yet within a week, nourished by the regurgitated matter that drips from their mother's underside, they attain a darker hue, and begin to move quickly. Their mother no longer provides half-digested streams of food to them; instead, she drops small, cave-dwelling creatures—dead at first, then living—so that the young can practice wrapping themselves around their prey. The prey grow steadily larger and more dangerous, until the mother decides that the young are strong enough to fend for themselves. Trappers nurture all immature lurking rays in their vicinity, whether male or female, and help protect the young from juveniles and lurkers above.

After a month, the young executioner's hoods climb the sides of their mother's wallow and spread out through the nearby environs, sensing the scent trails of others of their kind and moving to new, untainted hunting grounds, where they hang from the ceiling, scraping off minerals with which

to feed themselves and dropping onto live prey. Along the way, these small creatures eat and are eaten by the other denizens of the darkness, including adult males—lurkers above are cannibals. They generally only eat adolescent males, however, and instead herd immature females toward their own lairs, so that the females will be nearby when they're ready to mate. Only a few lurking rays survive to adulthood.

Those that survive establish new hunting grounds. The males climb to the ceiling and become “lurkers above,” gaining the ability to fly (though most prefer to glide, as their ascents are awkward, flapping affairs). Females stake out a patch of ground or floor and begin dissolving it with their powerful stomach acids. When the lurkers above have matured enough, they begin to seek out others of their kind to breed. The female devours the male to fertilize its eggs, and the cycle begins again.

Female lurking rays are keenly intelligent, yet their personalities and philosophies are rudimentary at best. Instead, almost all of a trapper's powerful brain is taken up with memory storage. A trapper has a near-perfect remembrance of any sensory detail it has encountered in its life, from the texture of a given stone to the whining voice of a hobgoblin meal several years ago. These memories are used to help the creatures blend more perfectly into their surroundings. What little cognitive power is left over allows them to piece together the languages of other creatures around them, and to simulate a spoken language despite having none of their own. Trappers who have been sated with gifts of food have occasionally been known to communicate with humanoids, and some have traded services with nearby colonies of underground dwellers. These are always relationships of convenience. Once such a bargain has been struck, trappers usually encourage other lurking rays to move quietly into position, ready to strike when the trapper releases a wave of scent. Such bargains may last for months, during which the trapper and its young protect the entries to the city in exchange for the lives of any invaders.

Executioner's hoods can be caught and tamed, and sometimes earn their name as a torture device employed by evil nobility. Those that escape usually destroy the households of their masters and flee to more hospitable environs, such as sewers or abandoned houses.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

On their own, any of the three varieties of lurking ray can be fun one-shot encounters, catching the party by surprise. Yet when all three are combined, it's possible to turn an easy trick into a full campaign.

The primary desire of lurking rays is to feed, reproduce, and expand their territory. As a result, they make perfect candidates to infest old ruins, dungeons, or city sewers, perhaps moving into a previously safe area and preying on the innocent inhabitants. You might have the PCs stumble

across a series of unexplained murders in which the victims' heads were dissolved, only to later discover that the attacks are the work of a clutch of executioner's hoods. Alternatively, a trapper might be attempting to help her young overcome their natural aversion to sunlight, the better to prey on the surface world. A trapper's intelligence might allow her to be bribed into guarding a particular treasure or location—while plotting an inevitable betrayal—or a group of lurkers might infest a city in an attempt to mate with the captured trapper at its heart. Whatever the situation, lurking rays are best used as ambush creatures, striking from darkness.

TREASURE

Lurking rays have no concept of value beyond food and territory. Executioner's hoods leave their victims' remains and belongings where they fall, and can often be tracked by the trails of their victims. Lurkers above and trappers make an effort to keep their hunting grounds clear of debris that might frighten away prey, but occasionally leave something shiny on the floor, having discovered that humanoids will frequently stop to examine such an item.

VARIANTS

The most common variant of the lurking ray is the aquatic lurker below. When in motion, the lurker below is almost indistinguishable from a manta ray, and creatures that live near shores, reefs, or the bottom of the sea may fall prey to it. The lurker below has the aquatic subtype and a swim speed of 40 feet rather than a fly speed, but is otherwise identical to a lurker above. The aquatic trapper anchors itself to reefs, and sprays its young into the open water rather than protecting them. She creates lures resembling food or treasure that she jerks forward on invisible strands, guiding creatures into range of her toothy maw.

Up to 5% of lurking rays are hermaphrodites that can self-fertilize, though they reproduce less often and in smaller batches than their single-gendered kin. This variety lacks light sensitivity and has no fear of open spaces, allowing it to encroach into more pastoral settings, establishing lairs in hillsides near towns and cities.

Of the lurking ray's variants, none are worse to behold than the Great Mothers. These are trappers that have grown to incredible size and lived for a hundred years or more. In some cases, these behemoths trace their routes back to where they were spawned, then track their mothers' paths, and so on back to a quasi-mystical place where other trappers are gathered. They then proceed to pool their memories and experiences, attempting to rise above their individual sensations into an all-knowing, malicious godhead. A Great Mother is a trapper with the advanced creature and giant creature simple templates (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294–295).

LURKING RAYS ON GOLARION

Lurking rays are generally found in underground settings like the Darklands, where they cluster around habitations and trade routes. Some drow and svirfneblin communities create temporary alliances with the creatures, while others vow war on the monsters. Still others—generally less intelligent creatures—create cults around the trappers, offering sacrifices in exchange for some degree of safety.

Executioner's hoods can sometimes be found in cities, especially those with subterranean dungeons or ties to the Darklands. Their use in assassination or torture is popular with twisted governments, especially that of Cheliax, where the creatures' masters keep them in line with bottles of strong spirits. The creatures are occasionally available for sale in the chaotic marketplaces of Kaer Maga in Varisia, though whether these are imported or harvested from the strange chambers of the Undercity is unknown. In eastern Avistan, lurking rays are sometimes seen in the ancient tunnels of Taldor, and as far north as New Stetven, and are also acknowledged perils in the sewers of other major cities, such as Absalom, Korvosa, and Pangolais.

Of late, there has been a significant increase in lurking ray attacks in and near Garundi cities such as Manaket, Totra, and Katapesh, and some adventurers in these regions fear that their presence may be expanding, though what's causing this current flurry of activity is unknown.



LURKING RAY

Lurking rays are actually a single species that takes three distinct forms: the juvenile executioner's hood, the adult female trapper, and the adult male lurker above.

LURKING RAY

N aberration

SQ amorphous

ECOLOGY

Environment underground

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amorphous (Ex) Lurkers above and trappers are immune to precision damage (like sneak attacks) and critical hits, and can move through an area as small as one-quarter their space without squeezing or one-eighth their space when squeezing.

Smother (Ex) When the creature grapples a target, it forms an airtight seal around its prey. A grappled target cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components, and must hold its breath (see Suffocation, *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 445).

EXECUTIONER'S HOOD

This bag-shaped creature is dark gray, with two darker splotches that look like eyeholes in a hood. Inside its opening, pale tentacles writhe and teeth coated in viscous slime gnash.

EXECUTIONER'S HOOD

CR 2

XP 600

N Tiny aberration

Init +1; **Senses** blindsense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., scent;

Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 size)

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Immune sleep effects

Weaknesses light sensitivity, vulnerability to alcohol

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 5 ft.

Melee slam +3 (1d4 plus grab)

Space 2-1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks engulf, constrict (1d4), strangle

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 3, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0 (+4 grapple); **CMD** 10 (can't be tripped)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Climb +8, Fly +5, Perception +8, Stealth +13

Languages none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Engulf (Ex) Though it is a Tiny monster, the hood can drop onto the head of a Medium or smaller creature as

a standard action. If the hood's attack succeeds, it can immediately make a grapple check to grab its target and constrict. The hood's crawling tendrils wrap themselves tightly around its victim, seeking entry into the creature's ears, nose, and throat, making it difficult to remove. Any attacks against the hood deal half damage to the hood and to its grappled target inside.

Strangle (Ex) A grappling executioner's hood entirely covers its opponent's head with an airtight grip. A creature that is grappled by the hood cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components and must hold its breath (see Suffocation, *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 445) unless it doesn't speak or breathe through its head.

Vulnerability to Alcohol (Ex) Strong alcohol harms the hood. Every quart poured on it causes 1 point of damage. Four quarts of alcohol incapacitates it and forces it to release a grappled target.

LURKER ABOVE

What looks at first like a stalactite unfurls into a shape like a manta ray, sailing silently downward with his rasp-like mouth wide.

LURKER ABOVE

CR 7

XP 3,200

N Huge aberration

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., scent;

Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 18 (+1 Dex, +10 natural, -2 size)

hp 85 (10d8+40)

Fort +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +9

DR 10/piercing or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)

Melee slam +15 (3d6+15 plus grab)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (3d6+15), smother

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 12, **Con** 19, **Int** 2, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +19 (+23 when grappling); **CMD** 30 (can't be tripped)

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Climb +18, Fly +0, Perception +13, Stealth +8 (+16 in rocky areas); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth (+12 in rocky areas)

Languages none

TRAPPER

The stone floor ripples and shakes as a toothy, gnashing maw opens in its center, and then the edges of the room curl up and inward to reveal an underside of wriggling tendrils and fetid digestive juices.

TRAPPER

CR 8

XP 4,800

N Huge aberration

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., scent; Perception +25

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size)**hp** 123 (13d8+65)**Fort** +10, **Ref** +5, **Will** +11**DR** 10/piercing or slashing; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10**Weaknesses** light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., climb 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor)**Melee** slam +17 (3d6+15 plus grab)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** constrict (3d6+15), smother

STATISTICS

Str 30, **Dex** 12, **Con** 19, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 13**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +21 (+25 when grappling); **CMD** 32 (can't be tripped)**Feats** Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth), Toughness**Skills** Climb +18, Fly +0, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +15, Knowledge (local) +15, Perception +25, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +19 (+27 in rocky areas); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth (+12 in rocky areas)**Languages** Aklo, Common, Undercommon

Lurking rays are strange ambush predators that make their homes in the Darklands, preying on the creatures that dare to walk through their tunnels. All lurking rays begin their lives as the strange, flopping larvae known as executioner's hoods, then gradually mature into either the enormous and canny female trappers, or the gliding hunters known as lurkers above. Though somewhat similar in appearance to conventional stingrays or manta rays, lurking rays in fact seem to represent their own unique branch of subterranean evolution—or arcane experimentation. Executioner's hoods are roughly a foot long and weigh 5 pounds, whereas adult lurkers above and trappers can grow to be 15 feet wide, with males weighing 500 pounds and females up to four times that.

Executioner's Hood: These adolescent rays are shaped roughly like hoods (hence their name), and drag themselves awkwardly about with their thin tentacles. Once an executioner's hood finds a suitable hunting ground, usually a cavern or dungeon room, it hauls itself out to the middle of the ceiling and hangs there as a shapeless pod of flesh. When suitable prey walks beneath it, the young ray drops, attempting to engulf the creature's head and

suffocate it, after which the ray can slowly dissolve the meat at its leisure.

Lurker Above: Lurkers are the mindless males of the species, and follow much the same tactics as executioner's hoods, save that as they age they gain the ability to stretch themselves wide and glide with both speed and silence, and can even fly by awkwardly flapping their flesh. They typically disguise themselves as stalactites on cavern ceilings, shifting their coloration and texture to match the surrounding terrain.

Trapper: Female lurking rays, known as trappers, are the masterminds of their race. Too large to fly (and often gravid with wriggling young), the intelligent trappers dig themselves depressions in the floor of a chamber and then lie in them, changing their coloration and texture perfectly to blend with the rest of the floor, and sometimes even creating protrusions in the shape of items they know to be valuable to their prey creatures. When a lulled individual steps onto the trapper's back, the ray twists itself up around it, smothering and beating it senseless before drawing it into its maw for slow digestion. Though quite intelligent, even by human standards, trappers devote almost all of their mental faculties to perfectly remembering every sensory detail about their surroundings, in order to make their chameleon-like disguise all the more cunning and difficult for their prey to resist.



TOJANIDA

"THOUGH MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE CREATURE OF THE NARIAN SPRING WAS OVERALL FAVORABLE, I AM LEFT PROFOUNDLY CONFUSED BY THE EXPERIENCE. DESPITE ITS FEARSOME APPEARANCE, THE CREATURE PROVED GREGARIOUS, AND REGALED ME FOR SEVERAL HOURS WITH TALES OF ITS TRAVELS. MORE, IT SEEMED TO TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN MY RECORDING OF THE DISCUSSION.

"WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG, I CANNOT SAY. ONE MOMENT WE WERE DISCUSSING THE HISTORY OF ITS KIND, AND THE NEXT IT WAS CHARGING THROUGH THE SHALLOWS, CLAWS SAVAGING MY LITTLE CANOE, WHICH I HASTILY ABANDONED IN FAVOR OF THE SHORE. FOR A MOMENT I FEARED IT WOULD FOLLOW ME, AND THEN JUST AS SUDDENLY THE MADNESS PASSED. APOLOGIES WERE EXCHANGED, AND I MADE MY GOODBYES. ON MY HONOR, I KNOW NOT WHETHER TO CALL THE BEAST A BAD HOST, OR MYSELF A BAD GUEST."

—IRYEANA SOVIK, PARANATURAL STUDIES IN VARISIA, VOL. III

Primordial creatures from the dark recesses of history, tojanidas are tangled masses of madness and willful ignorance sealed inside formidable shells. Once a proud race of elementals, these frequently misunderstood beings are bound by ancient pacts to their strange and crab-like forms, transformed from magnificent and noble creatures into self-serving hedonists. Yet snatches of greatness still lie buried deep within the racial memories of these shelled wanderers. Beneath their juvenile search for sensation, the subconscious desire to reclaim their lost honor and glory drives tojanidas to seek out others and pass along their stories, awe them with their combat prowess, or acquit themselves with great valor. For though the tojanidas have lost much—their memories, their sense of purpose, and even their original physical forms—they remain adamant that no one will ever rob them of their dignity.

Aquatic outsiders native to the Plane of Water, tojanidas lack both the patience of water elementals and the capriciousness of marids. Instead, they are living embodiments of water's reluctance to be contained. The iconic shells and strange appendages that make them so formidable also serve as biological prisons, and tojanidas' spirits chafe at these restrictions and long for a racial memory of mutability and ultimate freedom. This limitation constantly tugs at their minds, driving some individuals to madness, and even the most optimistic of these strange beings curse their beautiful carapaces even as they shield the creatures from attack.

Tojanidas pass along fragmented memories to their offspring at birth. These half-forgotten images hint at former greatness, filling every tojanida with a sense of entitlement and pride to match the vainest human nobles. This mindset also contributes to a racial boredom and ennui; tojanidas constantly thirst for new sights, experiences, and culinary discoveries. Modern tojanidas ply the waters of the planes alone or in small clutches, seeking out anything to momentarily stimulate or delight them in the face of a thousand generations' memories.

Though native to the Plane of Water, tojanidas are nomadic and journey wherever water flows, from the stygian depths of Hell to the gentle lapping shores of Heaven, and even to the waterways of the Material Plane. In their quests for new experiences, they sometimes partner with other outsiders or powerful mortals, though such alliances crumble when the tojanidas' inherent laziness and egotism rise to the surface. More commonly, a tojanida ingratiates itself into an isolated community by feigning importance as a divine messenger. There it wallows in whatever extravagance its patrons offer until it grows bored or the beleaguered hosts chase it off. In the end, even other tojanidas often tire of their kindred's arrogance, and groups commonly fracture or exile members over minor disagreements.

ECOLOGY

History fails to record either the origins of the tojanidas or the crime that warranted their racial imprisonment, but it's generally believed that tojanidas began as a noble and powerful race of aquatic outsiders on the Plane of Water, beings with a physical form as free and manipulable as water itself. Some even suggest that the tojanidas may have begun life as a clan of marids. Whatever the impetus—whether punishment for a transgression, the loss of a wager, or a willing penance—the first tojanidas are believed to have been rounded up by marid pashas and bound within the bizarre, shelled form they now bear, which is somewhere between that of a snapping turtle and an immense crab. Trapped in a single physical form, no longer able to disperse into the surrounding water or create works of art with their bodies, the newborn tojanidas were filled with rage and despair. This in turn the marids used to their advantage, unleashing their armored creations upon their enemies as frontline siege-breakers in a now-forgotten war, after which they turned their living war engines loose to make their own way in the world. Even the tojanidas' vaunted racial memory reveals nothing more about this time; the era of the tojanidas' downfall is scoured clean from the species' memory, leaving them with little more than an abiding distrust of genies.

Most tojanidas measure roughly 6 feet in length and weigh a healthy quarter ton. The flesh on a tojanida's flippers and beneath its shell is firm and rubbery, like that of an octopus, but its turtle-like beak and terrifying pinchers are both formed from huge slabs of steel-hard chitin. Their eyes, equally spaced around their armored bodies, give them a strange, 360-degree view of their surroundings that makes them almost impossible to sneak up on; those who seek to challenge them are advised to approach from directly above or below, where the creatures have something of a blindspot. The tojanidas' notorious shells, though often compared to those of turtles or crabs, are in fact as varied in their shape as the tojanidas are in personality, and sometimes seem eerily reflective of their residents' temperaments. The shells of aggressive or violent tojanidas often develop the ridges and barbs of a snapping turtle's shell, while the most sedentary blossom into smooth, bubble-domed crab shells. The farthest-flung examples of the race even exhibit conch-like swirls and spines, or the suggestion of a nautilus's spiral. Like those of turtles and crabs, a tojanida's shell grows from its body and contains several key bone structures that make removing it by force invariably fatal to the resident. In addition to two lobster-like pinchers protruding from apertures to either side of its stumpy head and parrot-like beak, a tojanida also has two pairs of paddle-like flippers. All of these appendages can be quickly withdrawn into the tojanida's shell for protection.

Ironically, the formidable defenses that allow tojanidas to live lives dedicated to luxury and hedonism also propagate a species-wide laziness that often prevents them from achieving their goals. Though tojanidas eat for the joy of it, ancient magic woven into the creatures' shells at the time of their ancestors' imprisonment provides the creatures with all the basic necessities for survival. In addition to protection and sustenance released directly into the creature's bloodstream when no other food is taken in, the tojanida's shell even provides rudimentary entertainment to its inhabitant in the form of simple patterns of light and color that manifest on the shell's interior surfaces, a display which would barely interest a human outside of infancy, but which can keep a tojanida engaged for long periods. Many young tojanidas perish by growing apathetic and literally withdrawing into themselves, eventually drifting into the elemental depths, never to be seen again. When the outside world grows dull, or an encounter shatters its confidence, even a mature tojanida may withdraw into its shell for weeks at a time.

Despite their magical ability to sustain themselves—or perhaps in rebellion against it—tojanidas greedily devour any new sensory stimulation, especially the flavors and textures of exotic foods. Most feed whenever possible, if only to relieve boredom. Frequently losing interest in meals they've had before, tojanidas are always on the lookout for new culinary experiences, which sometimes causes problems when their tastes run to the crops or flesh of intelligent creatures. The few substances a tojanida can't digest completely are either immediately vomited up or are broken down into tiny particles by the creature's gut and used to feed the creature's supply of defensive "ink," which it uses to muddy the water when in need of a quick getaway.

Fully hermaphroditic, tojanidas mate freely with any other members of their species, and occasionally with those outside it. Their coupling defines whirlwind romance, as tojanidas fall in love within minutes, and their grandiose desires and imaginations turn mild attraction into legendary passion. Little keeps an infatuated tojanida from its mate, and this emotional investment can turn horrific if the attraction is one-sided or the tojanida becomes enthralled with a non-tojanida incapable of reciprocating. These same strong feelings invariably doom the relationship: insensitivity and miscommunications become heart-rending betrayals and lead to violence or empty threats of suicide. By the time the egg-sack forms 6 months later, the parents have invariably parted ways.

An egg-sack contains up to two-dozen leathery, apple-sized eggs. Rather than hatching completely, the eggs slowly harden, developing into the young tojanidas' shells while the embryos inside quicken into fully formed,

miniature tojanidas. Parents pass on a mishmash of their memories to their offspring in lieu of raising them, and abandon the young once the egg-sack is thoroughly concealed. Despite being invested with a lifetime's experience, young tojanidas don't develop sentience for nearly a decade. Until then, they cluster together for protection and speak in a continuous, gargled stream of nonsense words and phrases. These so-called "chattering swarms" are considered a nuisance on the Plane of Water, and make easy prey for predators.

Upon reaching sentience, juvenile tojanidas quickly grow to adult size over the course of several years. Tojanidas grow continuously throughout their lives, and elders are double or triple the usual girth. The average specimen lives for a century or two, but rare individuals—often with shells cracked or damaged over the years—can sometimes be far older.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

The defining feature of tojanida behavior is their driving need to alleviate boredom. Inheriting a thousand generations' memories leaves little for an individual to accomplish or experience that it can't already recall. Many sate this emptiness through travel and indulgence, seeing the great sights of the planes and feasting on whatever exotic treats they encounter. Food and other physical sensations occupy much of their interest, as even the memory of a good meal can't compare with the act of eating one.

Anyone observing a tojanida's interactions with other creatures would be hard pressed to tell that the race's relevance in the Outer Planes passed long ago. Layer upon layer of pageantry and unnecessary drama come with every tojanida interaction, and flattery, backhanded compliments, and feigned offense transform even mundane conversations into swirling operas. These theatrical productions inject some amount of interest and entertainment into the perpetual boredom with which every tojanida grapples.

This constant improvisational theater makes tojanidas surprisingly sophisticated conversationalists, despite social skills stunted by their weird sense of propriety and desire to give every interaction the "proper" pomp and circumstance. They easily pick up the undercurrent of a conversation or spot lies, and delight in toying with such insights like a sadistic cat might tease a mouse. Nothing delights a tojanida quite so much as clever wordplay that leaves a rival fumbling and confused. Conversely, the shelled creatures hate having their own words turned on them, and a sound rebuttal may provoke grudging respect or outright violence.

Because so much of their shared misery is due to their long racial memories, tojanidas have developed a curious reverence for ignorance and forgetfulness. Ostensibly, tojanidas who have yet to experience something or who regularly forget things have the opportunity to

experience more new events, and hence live happier lives. Tojanidas envy this quality enough that their social jockeying sometimes involves feigned ignorance, and some members even seek out memory-altering spells or drugs, or form strangely protective attitudes toward senile old beach hermits.

Tojanidas sometimes form into groups (known as clutches) of up to five individuals, though most spend long periods traveling alone. With their love of drama, they happily ally with more powerful creatures. Krakens and brine drakes sometimes count tojanidas among their forces—the creatures' long memories and usefulness in a fight compensate for their flightiness. They serve such masters as scouts or armored shock troops, but truly shine as heralds and negotiators. Their boisterous natures and ability to read others grant a flare for the dramatic that any megalomaniacal monster can appreciate, and those in service long enough often discard their legendary egotism in favor of tying their self-worth to their masters' reputations, becoming groveling sycophants of the first order.

Unless clearly overmatched, tojanidas prefer to lead rather than follow. Many dabble with cults and secret societies, posing as messengers from the gods or terrible ancient spirits so they can wallow in the attention and wealth the position provides. Such scams may last years before the locals learn the truth or the tojanida grows bored and wanders off. Tojanidas care little about valuables for their own sake, instead squandering what resources they have on exquisite foods and luxurious lifestyles. Adventurers penetrating a coastal cult's stronghold might be shocked to discover the cult's obscene "god" is actually a tojanida soaking in a pool of expensive wine and tended by the hands of a half-dozen masseurs.

A rare few members of the species claim to have recaptured those insights torn from the racial memory, recalling the true glories of the tojanidas' past and the vile treacheries heaped upon them by marids. These tojanidas, who sometimes refer to themselves as living legacies, turn the stereotype of their kind on its side, caring little for the day-to-day thrills and fixations of their immature kin and focusing instead on long-term plots and carefully cultivated networks of spies and allies. They claim that forbidden knowledge flows through flesh, and practice vile blood magic and cannibalism. Some kidnap their uninitiated brethren and force-feed the young tojanidas "enlightened" flesh cut from the captor's own body to stir dormant memories. They revile "the Circumscription," as they refer to the shells placed upon their kind, and pursue the goal of "the Abrogation"—a method to forever cut themselves and their offspring free of the shells—with a religious fervor.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Tojanidas' need for stimulation leads them to fill many roles in their lifetimes. Though not particularly inclined toward combat unless threatened or offended, tojanida enemies are fearsome when roused, and prove excellent masterminds for a low-level party taking on a local cult or exploring a coastal dungeon, as well as perfect go-betweens or local commanders for more powerful aquatic threats. Tojanidas' speed underwater makes them prime candidates for exciting chase scenes or races, in which the creatures may resort to any tactics to win or escape. When they occasionally settle down, tojanidas lair in hazardous environments, such as thermal vents or acidic pools. They can even cross short distances on land, and may lair in an isolated pool deep within an ancient temple or other grandiose structure. Tojanidas obsessed with recovering their racial memories make for especially violent and chaotic underwater encounters, and some gain levels in the sorcerer class or ally with clerics of terrible, insane gods.

Tojanidas also make for engaging roleplaying encounters. They may work as a powerful outsider's bard or jester, verbally sparring with newcomers to the court, or they may embrace the lost glory of their race as obnoxious, spoiled brats. Some widely traveled tojanidas act as savants in possession of esoteric knowledge from their own experiences or buried deep within their racial memory.

As guides to locations such as underwater ruins or the secret holes between the Material Plane and the Plane of Water, tojanidas are unparalleled. Few races travel the planes' aquatic reaches as extensively in a single lifetime, and every tojanida has multiple lifetimes' experience to draw upon. Employing one, however, requires the players to keep its interest piqued and soothe the outsider's fickle ego. Groups unprepared for a tojanida's unique



personality may find themselves stranded in distant and unpleasant spaces of a remote plane, or have their flesh sampled (perhaps even apologetically) in the tojanida's search for new cuisine.

TREASURE

Nomadic tojanidas value experience and consumable goods more than physical wealth. Most carry what treasures they accumulate in the crevices of their shells, in the form of rare wines and expensive spices—and inevitably eat through whatever fortunes they earn. Still, fast and easy routes to power appeal to them, and most don whatever magical accessories they can make use of with their bizarre physiology. Tojanidas frequently collect potions, as much for their flavors and narcotic potential as for any magical effects. Elemental gems are especially prized, as they afford tojanidas the authority over water elementals they believe they deserve.

VARIANTS

Though already rare and bizarre, the tojanida family is home to several variants that are rarer still.

Chattering Swarm (CR 4): Packs of nonsentient, larval tojanida are nuisances and pests in the Plane of Water, but present a genuine danger to the unprepared Material Plane sailor or explorer. Use the stats for a crab swarm (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 50), but change the type to “outsider (extraplanar, water),” reduce base speed to 10 feet, and increase swim speed to 40 feet. The swarm's constant, nonsensical babbling increases the difficulty of any concentration checks within 50 feet by +4.

Young (CR 4): A tojanida's physical growth is tied directly to its emotional and intellectual development. Juvenile tojanidas are distinguished both by their smaller size and their curious, clinging personalities. Apply the young creature simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 295).

Elder (CR 7): Tojanidas who survive their first century or so grow to immense size. Even more so than standard tojanidas, elders are likely to gather cults or underlings around them. Elder tojanidas have the advanced creature and giant creature simple templates (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294–295), and many have levels in the sorcerer class (elemental bloodline).

Living Legacy (CR 5): The rediscovery of its lost heritage fills a tojanida with a level of control and dignity otherwise unseen among its kind. Such a creature gains a +4 racial bonus on Bluff, Intimidate, and Knowledge (planes) checks. It also gains the change shape ability (aquatic animal or magical beast, *beast shape III*), though obvious remnants of their shells remain regardless of their chosen form (such as a shell on a dolphin's back, armored plates on an eel, and so on), revealing the tojanida's true nature to anyone who knows what to look for.

Ishian (CR 5): An ancient line of tojanidas nests in the demon sea of Ishiar. Tainted black in both body and mind, Ishian tojanidas fanatically worship Dagon and serve as his attendants and as heralds to his mortal worshipers. They believe that the Shadow in the Sea spawned their race eons ago and sealed them within their shells as punishment for some great failing, but that he will eventually release them once they make amends. Individuals of this Abyss-tainted breed have the fiendish creature simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294). An Ishian tojanida's ink cloud is acidic. Underwater, creatures in the ink cloud take a number of points of acid damage equal to the tojanida's Hit Dice; above water, the acid deals 1d6 hit points per Hit Die of the tojanida (a successful Reflex save halves the damage and avoids the ink's normal blindness effect).

TOJANIDAS ON GOLARION

Tojanidas often find themselves in the strangest corners of Golarion, from the deepest and most primordial Mwangi marshes to the fetid lakes of the Worldwound or the open seas off the coasts of Avistan and Garund. These extradimensional tourists sniff out the cracks between worlds and wander most anywhere water flows. The longstanding tradition of tojanida exploration on Golarion stretches back millennia, and as such, they occasionally appear in mythology, though rarely in a directly identifiable form. The ancient Vudrani epic *Puranhala Adhini*, for instance, includes the “tortoise” character who whispers false adulations into the foolish young king's ear, and many halflings in southern Avistan still pass along the fable of the “scarlet sea snail” who takes boastful children on wondrous journeys none of their friends believe. While determining for certain whether these mythical figures were tojanidas or something else entirely is practically impossible at this late date, questioning a tojanida's word on such matters is a quick way to turn a simple exchange into a bloody lesson on proper conversational etiquette.

One particular site on Golarion fascinates tojanidas: the massive storm known as the Eye of Abendego. For reasons unspoken even to the closest of allies, the eternal hurricane holds an immense allure for the creatures, who travel there to mate and bask in its turbulent waters. If made to answer honestly, many tojanidas would be forced to admit that they themselves don't know what it is about the hurricane that draws them there specifically, save for a strange feeling of rightness and tension, as if they were waiting for something imminent and magnificent. Beyond this, few can give any information, save those few who note a strange resonance between the motions of the wind and waters and the swirls of color inside their shells.

TOJANIDA

This creature resembles a cross between a turtle and a crab, with flippers instead of legs, a snapping beak, and two chitinous pinchers. Beady eyes stud the circumference of its body.

TOJANIDA

CR 5



XP 1,600

N Medium outsider (extraplanar, water)

Init +1; Senses all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 51 (6d10+18)

Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3

Immune acid, cold; Resist electricity 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., swim 90 ft.

Melee bite +9 (1d6+3), 2 claws +9 (1d6+3)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; 10 ft. with tentacle (see below)

Special Attacks ink cloud

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 9

Base Atk +6; CMB +9; CMD 21 (29 vs. trip)

Feats Blind-Fight, Dodge, Power Attack

Skills Bluff +5, Escape Artist +10, Knowledge (planes) +9, Perception +14, Perform (act) +5, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +7, Survival +7, Swim +11; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

Languages Aquan

ECOLOGY

Environment any aquatic (Plane of Water)

Organization solitary, pair, clutch (2–5), or cult (1 tojanida plus 2–12 humanoid followers)

Treasure standard (drinks, food, gems, potions)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

All-Around Vision (Ex) A tojanida sees in all directions at the same time, giving it a +4 racial bonus on Perception checks. A tojanida cannot be flanked.

Ink Cloud (Ex) A tojanida can emit a 30-foot-radius sphere of ink once per minute as a free action. The ink provides total concealment in water, and persists for 1 minute. If used out of the water, the jet of ink is a line 30 feet long, and creatures in the area must make a Reflex save (DC 16) or be blinded for 1 round. The DC is Constitution-based.

Tojanidas are bizarre natives of the Plane of Water that resemble crosses between monstrous crabs and enormous snapping turtles. Originally elemental beings of water, possibly related to marid genies, tojanidas were bound into their current forms long ago for unclear reasons,

and no longer know how they might eventually return to their pure and formless state. Determined to preserve their pride, the grotesque tojanidas ply the waters of the planes seeking hedonistic pleasures—especially culinary ones—and the adoration of other races. Loquacious when addressed with the proper respect, they make excellent heralds and emissaries for more powerful beings, and often enjoy posing as such even when operating on their own. When riled, however, tojanidas make fearsome opponents, nigh-unstoppable juggernauts with snapping jaws and clacking pinchers.

Adult tojanidas are roughly 6 feet long, and weigh several hundred pounds. When threatened, a tojanida can retract its limbs most of the way into its shell, which is an irremovable part of its body. The ring of eyes completely encircling the tojanida's shell along its equator makes the creature extremely difficult to catch by surprise, though it does retain small blind spots both directly above and directly below its body. While tojanidas adore eating, as they find flavor and texture to be two of the most fascinating senses, they don't actually need to consume food, instead drawing sustenance directly from the magic of their shells. Blessed (or cursed) with extremely long racial memories, tojanidas wander the oceans and lakes of innumerable worlds, attempting to find unusual physical pleasures or conversation capable of distracting them from the insufferable ennui and apathy born of remembering their ancestors' experiences. Though the tojanidas themselves may not appreciate the burden of memory, adventurers and scholars can sometimes make good use of a tojanida's recalled lore.





WOLF-IN-SHEEP'S-CLOTHING

"WE WERE THREE DAYS IN, HOT ON THE TRAIL OF THE SCZARMI THAT DONE TAKEN ABE JELSON'S HORSES AND YOUNG ERNESTINE'S HONOR. WHEN THE PATH FINALLY OPENED ONTO A CLEARING, IT WAS TRAMPLED AND BLOODY, AND MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS THAT THEY'D FOUGHT AMONGST THEMSELVES. THEN I SAW THEIR LITTLE CAMP DOG IN THE CENTER, SITTING QUIET ON AN OLD STUMP. LOUKIN MOVED TOWARD IT.

"'CAREFUL, LOU,' I CALLED.

"'AW, BIL, IT'S JUST A LITTLE—'

"THEN THE ROOTS SPRANG UP AROUND HIM IN A WHIRLWIND, SNAPPING HIS LEGS LIKE TWIGS. IN THAT STUMP, A MOUTH OPENED UP. THERE WAS A SCREAM, AND THEN BLOOD—BLOOD LIKE A CYCLONE.

"I RAN, AYE—IT AIN'T WHETHER A MAN RUNS, BUT RATHER IF HE COMES BACK. AND WHEN I RETURNED, IT WASN'T THE LITTLE DOG SITTING ON THAT STUMP NO MORE, BUT LOU HIMSELF..."

—"BIG BIL" HAVERSTRONG, NIRMATHI SHERIFF (RET.)

Some predators find their prey by hunting, tracking, and devouring. Others wait passively for prey to fall into their clutches. Yet perhaps the most disturbing are those that actively lure their prey, using their victims' own desires against them. From deep-sea angler fish with their bioluminescent appendages to carnivorous flowers with irresistibly lethal pheromones, the animal kingdom is full of such predators. Yet few can match the sheer versatility and deadly effectiveness of the strange creature known as the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing.

No one knows how or when wolves-in-sheep's-clothing first arrived, or from where precisely. Some believe them to be the denizens of other worlds, brought across the dark gulfs between stars in enormous vessels. Others say they come from a reality behind the conventional one, or from distant planes where strange gods yet walk. In truth, few enough people even know of this strange creature's existence, let alone its origins—for those who stumble across the lure of a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing rarely make their way back home to tell the tale. Perhaps in the land of their birth, wolves-in-sheep's-clothing are simply another part of the ecosystem, their tricks widely understood by their prey, and thus rendered no more dangerous than the great predators of our own forests and jungles. Yet here, where their tactics remain strange and novel, the wolves-in-sheep's-clothing have found a land ripe for the devouring. And devour it they will.

ECOLOGY

Upon first glance, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing appears to be a worn tree stump with many of its roots exposed, and often with a small creature resting upon it. Close examination, however, reveals the truth—that the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is in fact not a plant, but rather a bizarre aberration that chance or deliberate machinations have shaped into something alien that camouflages itself well among the living things of the forest. Its primary roots are actually powerful, sinewy tentacles, with two smaller, vine-like roots that emerge from either side of the stumpy body terminating in unblinking eyes that look like flower buds; these latter are frequently wrapped around nearby trees or plants to avoid detection. When its prey has been securely seized, a nearly undetectable slit in the stump's side opens to reveal a mouth with rows of serrated teeth and a prehensile tongue.

While the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing relies on its powerful tentacles to seize and hold its prey, its long tongue is extremely dexterous, and accomplishes most of the creature's fine manipulation, including scraping captured victims against the sharp teeth within the creature's mouth. The rows of teeth themselves rotate side to side in alternating directions on ropy pieces of gristle, so that the victim's flesh and bones are thoroughly shredded before

the meal reaches the creature's stomach. It absorbs this slurry effortlessly and quickly; its stomach acid is powerful enough to dissolve organic material in short order, but has no effect on metals or stone. These items it deposits into a dug-out hollow beneath its body, often changing location when this hollow becomes full. Yet the most notorious aspect of a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is not how it eats, but how it captures its food in the first place.

When it first establishes itself in a new area, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing seeks out a suitable clearing near a path or well-used game trail, sometimes trampling down the undergrowth to create one if necessary. Once this is completed, the creature settles itself in the middle of the clearing, halfway burying itself in the ground and holding itself perfectly still so that it resembles nothing more sinister than an old tree. Though constantly hungry, a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can hold this pose for days, waiting for a small creature to pass by. Once one does—often an unsuspecting squirrel, mouse, or bird—it lashes out with its tentacles, easily killing the creature, but attempting to do so without undue harm to the creature's form.

It's then that the true strangeness begins. Setting the deceased creature atop its stump-like body, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing begins to extrude extremely fine, worm-like tendrils up out of the bark beneath the corpse. These burrow through the corpse with disgusting rapidity, growing up through its limbs and spreading out until the creature is thoroughly riddled. Using these tendrils, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing then begins to roughly animate the creature as a puppet, literally pulling strings to make it approximate the creature's normal behavior. Though it cannot move off the stump's surface, this seemingly vulnerable animal acts as a lure for larger predators, which the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing then kills and devours, continuing this process until the original lure decays too badly and must be replaced, or until the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing decides to "trade up" and animate a larger creature, in the hope of attracting bigger prey.

Wolves-in-sheep's-clothing make their homes exclusively in forests, as their tree-shaped disguise is a permanent feature of their physiology rather than an active camouflage that can be changed. The older a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing grows, the grayer its trunk becomes, making the creature look ever more weathered. It blends more thoroughly with its surroundings, and chooses its prey more carefully, often gaining a taste for intelligent prey, which provide more of a challenge than small forest predators or dull, unobservant livestock. An adult wolf-in-sheep's-clothing has a trunk roughly 3 feet in diameter, with tentacles that can stretch up to 15 feet beyond that, and weighs several hundred pounds, though there are rumors of massive versions resembling the stumps of redwoods or sequoias, and capable of animating much larger corpse lures.

Small animals are not the only things that wolves-in-sheep's-clothing use as lures. Smart enough to recognize when intelligent creatures assign obvious value to certain items, such as weapons or other objects that prey creatures employ or obviously guard while in the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing's presence, older wolves-in-sheep's-clothing sometimes gather such objects from their victims and attempt to use them as lures. Yet while this tactic is sometimes useful to those aged individuals interested only in intelligent prey, most wolves-in-sheep's-clothing scorn the practice as impractical, since such lures are useless for catching the vast majority of creatures that wander by, and even greedy humanoid tend to be suspicious when they come across a jeweled sword just sitting on a tree stump in the middle of nowhere.

The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is perfectly capable of assessing threats. If a party traveling nearby seems too powerful for it, it retracts its tendrils from its corpse lure and remains quiescent until the threats have passed beyond its reach. Likewise, as creatures capable of going weeks without food when necessary, wolves-in-sheep's-clothing are perfectly willing to let small prey pass them by if they believe that something larger or more satisfying is just around the bend. Though given individuals sometimes develop a preference for one prey type over another, the only consistent trend guiding a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing's feeding habits is its tendency to slowly grow dissatisfied with unintelligent prey as it ages, relishing the challenge and triumph of taking down those who think themselves the top of the food chain (and sometimes consuming them slowly to draw out the victory). With no natural predators—something that lends credence to the idea that the creatures may originally have come from another world—wolves-in-sheep's-clothing can live for several decades before gradually losing interest in hunting, spending longer and longer periods of time in dreamless slumber, and finally giving up and expiring, allowing their wood-like flesh to decompose (ironically drawing the carrion-eaters of the forest back with one final lure). On rare occasions, however, individual wolves-in-sheep's-clothing seem unusually immune to this racial torpor, and instead live for hundreds of years, growing steadily larger until their bodies finally give out or—as is more common—they finally tackle a creature capable of dispatching them, ending their reigns of terror in a flurry of snapping branches and sap-like blood.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is a solitary creature in the wilderness, and requires no interaction with any of its kind to find fulfillment. Even its reproduction is solitary, and should two wolves-in-sheep's-clothing meet while attempting to find suitable hunting grounds, the result

is an enraged territorial flailing and a keening scream so high that most humanoids cannot hear it, though small animals with better senses flee before it. This screech is the creatures' only concession to communication—despite its intelligence, they have no interest in attempting to make intellectual or empathic contact with others, and even regular exposure to language is not enough to interest them in the medium. Theirs are truly alien minds, and this reluctance to organize or communicate leads some to wonder how the wolves-in-sheep's-clothing managed to reach their current world from the distant and mysterious origins, and lends credence to the belief among scholars (and, according to mind-reading magic, among wolves-in-sheep's-clothing themselves) that all such creatures in this world stem from the same individual forebear.

When a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing decides to reproduce—usually after a decade of life, and following a particularly large meal—it does so by “budding,” extruding a small polyp from the top of its stump that carries all the necessary genetic information and instructions to create a perfect copy of its parent. This small, glistening red mass, roughly the size and shape of a large berry, is then hidden within the body of the next lure the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing captures and animates. Instead of attacking the next predator that comes by, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing withdraws its tendrils and allows the corpse to be eaten, transmitting its seed to the creature's gut. This process is repeated several times over the course of an individual's life.

Once an infested lure has been eaten, the seed hibernates for a time in the host's gut, drawing sustenance like a tapeworm (see the Reproduction sidebar on page 62). When it reaches a large enough size (an intestine-filling mass weighing almost a pound), the young monster sends tendrils through its host's body, seeking control of the nervous system. It replaces the eyes of the host with its own, and directs it to the nearby wilderness. There the host clears a space for the monster to grow in, after which the parasite explodes from the stomach of its carrier, killing the victim in the process and turning the resulting corpse into its first meal. Nestled in a mound of gore, the juvenile wolf-in-sheep's-clothing sends its tendrils into the ground to thicken into proper root-tentacles, and its flesh hardens into its new, stump-like form. These deadly hitchhikers quickly grow in size over a space of a few months, and possess all the basic instincts and rudimentary racial memories necessary to immediately begin crafting their own lures and preying on passersby in the style of the creatures' parents.

Though not sociable in any sense of the word, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing has been known to work in conjunction with lesser local monsters and animals to lure more powerful prey into its clutches. After establishing itself in an area, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing begins to learn the habits of the local fauna. If any of these appear to be capable

of learning and are the chronic victims of larger creatures, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing waits for both victim and hunter to pass nearby during a frantic forest chase. As the predator enters the monster's area of influence in search of the prey, the wolf-in-sheep's clothing snatches up both creatures, devours the predator, then releases the would-be prey. Even some normally unintelligent animals are capable of understanding the benefits of this relationship, resulting in the prey creature luring other predators close to the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing and taking refuge beneath the thrashing tendrils. Of course, this arrangement only works so long as the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing doesn't tire of eating the same predators over and over; when it does, it's likely to devour the smaller creature and take the larger one as its new lure, or find something else altogether to animate.

Wolves-in-sheep's-clothing may look like trees, but their flesh is far less flammable than wood. When threatened by forest fires, either natural or targeted, the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing thrashes out embers that fall near it and uses its powerful roots to dig a shelter for itself. Once it has created a deep enough hole, it covers itself with dirt and waits for the inferno to pass by. If too much of the surrounding area has been devastated, it relocates. Otherwise, it adjusts its coloration, smudging itself with charred wood and fallen branches to blend into the surroundings.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

In most campaigns, a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is a single-use monster—once your party has been fooled by it, they're unlikely to fall prey to its tricks anytime soon. Yet this isn't necessarily a bad thing. Rather than casting the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing aside, GMs should consider that having a monster they only plan to use once gives them an opportunity to make a truly memorable encounter. If the fighter spends the rest of his life flinching and drawing his sword at every squirrel perched on a tree stump, so much the better.

When considering the placement of a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing encounter, there are many options. Though the creatures live exclusively in forests, that doesn't mean that a wandering-monster-style encounter set along a forest path or road is the only option. Ambush comes in many forms—perhaps the creature is part of a menagerie in some weird and twisted circus, the lurking menace responsible for driving all the game (and some of the residents) from a nearby farm town, or the craggy stump with the perching crow standing just outside the door to the haunted house. Maybe it's even a treasured emplacement in a decadent sultan's garden of death—should the PCs reach the far side, they'll achieve riches beyond their wildest dreams, but the aristocrats watching from the balcony are counting on the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing that

defends the exit to handle any heroes who deal with the garden's more obvious threats.

Yet even once the element of surprise is taken away, a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can still potentially be useful, its inclusion adding all the more impact if the PCs are familiar with the creature. Perhaps an evil nymph has dominated one of them and turned it into her throne as both a show of her power and a convenient way of dealing with those supplicants who displease her. Maybe it's responsible for the death of a child's pet or wizard's familiar, and the worried parties are now anxious to recover their apparently still-living comrade from the top of the stump—without hurting the “animal,” of course. Or maybe the top of the creature's stump has been carved with a map to some important location, or carefully hollowed out into a hidey-hole, and the PCs must figure out some way to get close enough to the furiously thrashing creature to read the map or recover the embedded object. The possibilities are far broader than one might think.

TREASURE

Though the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing does not acquire any particular type of treasure, if it remains in an area long enough, it hollows out a depression under its base to conceal the indigestible remnants of its previous victims. Thus, depending on the strength and age of the monster,



REPRODUCTION

A wolf-in-sheep's-clothing reproduces via a parasitic process in which another creature is tricked into consuming one of the creature's seeds, then fosters the seed within its gut for days or weeks before finally exploding in a shower of gore. This method accomplishes several key tasks: incubating and protecting the fragile young until it's large enough to defend itself, providing nourishment for the growing creature both before and after its grotesque birth, and ensuring that young are carried a reasonable distance away from the parent's territory, having hitched a ride in the guts of its victim. Upon certain rare occasions, generally when they've begun preying exclusively on intelligent victims who are too wary to consume a half-rotted lure, wolves-in-sheep's-clothing have been known to grab their victims and force the seeds directly down their throats (with a successful pinning during a grapple). Only magic or a gruesome surgical removal process can extract the young wolf-in-sheep's-clothing from its host before its time.

treasure might include anything from a battered tin mug and spoon from some unfortunate prospector hoping to sit and eat his lunch, to a huntsman's dagger and horn, to the magical sword of a great warrior not quite quick enough to avoid the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing's deadly tentacles.

VARIANTS

The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing is a strange creature, little studied by scholars because of both its relative scarcity and the fact that by the time explorers recognize one, it's often too late for them to escape and report on their find. Still, enough encounters have made it into record books and fireside tales that those in the know generally recognize two distinct types: the standard adults, and the engorged elder monstrosities.

Normal wolves-in-sheep's-clothing can animate Tiny or smaller creatures with their lures, yet as they age and grow older, their ability to animate larger and larger lures grows correspondingly. Ancient wolves-in-sheep's-clothing with centuries to increase in size and perfect their art have been known to grow large enough to animate grown humans or halflings, and rumors exist of enormous individuals—grotesque giants of the forest—capable of animating still larger creatures. The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can only create corpse lures from creatures at least two size categories smaller than itself (so a Huge wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can animate a Medium or smaller creature, and so on). For information on advancing the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing by increasing its size, see the Monster Advancement appendix beginning on page 294 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*.

WOLVES-IN-SHEEP'S-CLOTHING ON GOLARION

Wolves-in-sheep's-clothing are thankfully rare on Golarion. Though they are always found in forests, the specific climates of the forests don't seem to matter, and reports of "killer trees" have surfaced in locations as disparate as the deep wilderness of Nirmathas, the Verduran Forest of Taldor and Andoran, and the steamy jungles of the Mwangi Expanse. In the last of these, it's rumored that certain local villages have come to revere the creatures as avatars of vengeful nature spirits, and honor them with sacrifices of slaves, prisoners, and travelers. The elven holdings of Kyonin are completely bereft of wolves-in-sheep's-clothing, and kept that way by roving patrols of elven rangers who see the creatures as cloaked abominations. It's only in the elven forest's gnarled and twisted southern reaches, known as the Tanglebriar, that a few such creatures still exist, guarding the borders of Treerazer's demonic domain.

In general, wolves-in-sheep's-clothing thrive when near enough to civilization to prey on the intelligent creatures they most favor, while still far enough into the hinterlands to avoid an organized response. As a result, the wooded lands of places like the River Kingdoms or Galt's Boarwood are particularly choice areas for the creatures to settle.

On Golarion, it's generally assumed that wolves-in-sheep's-clothing come from the fey realm of the First World—and indeed, creatures closely matching that description are sometimes found near breaches, the verdant-energy-spewing portals between the Material Plane and the First World. Yet the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing's status as an aberration—the antithesis of all things natural and fey—seems to contradict that theory. Many fey scholars believe that the wolves-in-sheep's-clothing, instead of originally stemming from the First World, actually have an origin out among the stars, where the cosmic monstrosities of the Dark Tapestry created them to seek entry into the fey realm. As the First World earns its name from being a "world behind the world"—the rough draft on which reality is based—its strange reaches represent a limitless new reality for the old ones of the starless voids to enter and taint with their madness. What part the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing could play, particularly without significant intelligence, is anyone's guess, yet the theory remains the best one yet: that the wolves-in-sheep's-clothing are not trying to escape the First World, but to worm their way inside and await further instructions.

As a result of this theory, most fey who understand exactly what they're looking at have an instant revulsion for wolves-in-sheep's clothing, and go out of their way to run the creatures out of their territory or destroy them altogether. Druids tend to be even less fond of the aberrations, seeing in their tree-like form a mockery of everything natural.

WOLF-IN-SHEEP'S-CLOTHING

A small forest animal sits motionless atop a worn stump—until the wood peels open into a maw of sharp teeth, and flailing tentacle roots erupt from the earth, some bearing blinking eyes.

WOLF-IN-SHEEP'S-CLOTHING CR 8



XP 4,800

N Medium aberration (shapechanger)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+11 natural)

hp 97 (13d8+39)

Fort +9, **Ref** +6, **Will** +10

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., burrow 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d6+3), 8 tentacles +12 (1d4+1 plus grab)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (15 ft. with tentacles)

Special Attacks constrict (tentacle, 1d4+2), implant, pull (tentacle, 5 ft.)

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 10, **Con** 17, **Int** 6, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +12 (+18 grapple); **CMD** 22 (can't be tripped)

Feats Great Fortitude, Greater Grapple^B, Greater Weapon Focus (tentacles), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (tentacles)

Skills Climb +11, Disguise –1 (+11 lure), Knowledge (nature) +7, Perception +15, Sense Motive +9, Stealth +9; **Racial Modifiers** +12 Disguise (lure only)

SQ corpse lure

ECOLOGY

Environment any forest

Organization solitary

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Corpse Lure (Ex) By setting the corpse of a slain creature atop its stump and riddling it with small, extruded filaments, a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can crudely maneuver the corpse, manipulating it like a puppet. The corpse cannot leave the stump or perform complex actions, but is instead used to lure larger prey within range of the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing's tentacles. The largest corpse a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can manipulate in this fashion is two size categories smaller than itself (thus Tiny creatures for a Medium wolf-in-sheep's-clothing).

Implant (Ex) By tricking a creature into eating a corpse lure containing a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing seed, or by forcing the seed down a creature's throat as a successful pin attack while grappling, a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing can infest a living

creature with its own parasitic offspring. Unless the creature is able to make a DC 19 Fortitude save, this seed gestates and becomes a self-aware creature that slowly steals nourishment from its host before finally exploding free of its host's gut. The parasite can be cut free of the host's intestines with a DC 25 Heal check, which takes 1 hour and deals 3d6 slashing damage regardless of success or failure.

Wolf-in-sheep's-clothing egg: ingestion; *save* Fort 19; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Con damage until host reaches 0, then 3d6 damage as parasite bursts free; *cure* surgical removal of egg (Heal DC 25, dealing 3d6 slashing damage whether successful or not). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing's racial bonus to disguise applies only to its ability to disguise itself as a tree stump and its corpse lure as a still-living creature.

The wolf-in-sheep's-clothing appears at first to be little more than a tree stump sitting in a clearing, perhaps with a small animal sitting atop it. Only when a predator comes close does it become clear that the small animal is in fact long dead, given false life by tendrils springing up through its form, but by then it's too late, as the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing drags the would-be hunter into its waiting maw.

Wolves-in-sheep's-clothing lure their true prey close by killing smaller creatures and animating them. Though intelligent, they see little need for the company of others, and slaughter all who enter their domains. During reproduction, they place strange seed-eggs inside their lures and either allow unfortunate creatures to devour the rotting carcasses or force the eggs down the throats of warier victims. Either method leads to sickness as the wolf-in-sheep's-clothing egg slowly gestates, then bursts forth horrifically.



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