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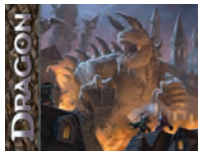

ON THE COVER: *Craig J Spearing rocks your world with his awesome illustration of the terrible tarrasque.*

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King of the Monsters

By Stan!

Here is it, the end of the year—plus, if you believe the doomsayers, the end of the world. In honor of the close of the Mayan long-count calendar, and the mystic apocalypse that some claim this event augurs, we've made this month's theme "Doom and Gloom." and to set the right tone, we've included a pair of articles about one of my favorite D&D monsters of all time—the tarrasque!

There's pretty much just one tarrasque adventure plot, and it goes something like this: The tarrasque wakes up and starts smashing everything within reach. Everyone else in the surrounding countryside tries to survive. Most do not.

In many ways, the tarrasque is like my favorite movie monster, Toho Studios' venerable "King of the Monsters," Godzilla. And the similarities are more than just superficial. Sure, they're both titanic lizards that, while similar to dinosaurs, clearly stand apart and above that classification. However, both are more than mere gigantic beasts—they each represent the unbridled fury of an aggrieved primal force of nature. With the Big G, it's Mother Earth wounded by nuclear weapons, while the tarrasque is quite literally the personification of the primordials' rage at having been pushed aside by the gods.

When the tarrasque shows up, the best the PCs can do is redirect its rage so that it doesn't flatten innocent towns and villages. And even if they do manage a victory over the creature, it merely slips back into a long slumber, from which it will eventually rise and begin rampaging again. In the end, maybe that's what I like best about the tarrasque. It presents heroes with a genuine conundrum. Do they selflessly protect innocent lives, or simply try to save their own? What are they willing to risk in order to stop the apocalypse that the tarrasque represents?

Of course, there's more to our "Doom and Gloom" issue than just the tarrasque. In Eye on the Realms, you'll meet the self-styled Priest of the Beholders. In Eye on Eberron, you'll travel with the Children of Winter, whose goal is nothing less than bringing about the end of the world. There's also a "Backdrop" article that takes us to the city of Hochoch in Greyhawk, and "Wondrous Weavings," which presents a collection of enchanted tapestries.

Unfortunately, this issue also marks the end of my involvement with *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines. It's rare, after you've been in the industry as long as I have, to be able to find a project that fulfills a lifelong dream (one only has so many lifelong dreams to go around), but this one has. I've been a fan of *Dragon* since I first encountered it in the early 1980s, and it was a moment of intense pride to see my signature gracing the editorial page, where so many names I've known and respected for years have previously resided. I'm honored to have played a part in the history of this great gaming institution, even for just a few short months.

The time has come for me to step away from my duties at Wizards of the Coast for at least a little while. But I'll still be around, just on the other side of the metaphorical DM screen. So thank you for letting me join you around the gaming table. I hope we'll get to do it again soon.

History Check: The Tarrasque

By Jeff LaSala

Illustration by Craig J Spearing

The script was elegant, unhurried, composed by the steady hand of an educated man in seeming possession of his faculties. The pages had been neatly gathered, rolled into a scroll case of bone capped with silver, and delivered to the queen's agent directly.

Its writer and sender, purportedly an archmage, elected to remain anonymous. The courier relayed only this description of his client: a figure in gray, cowled and soft-spoken, whose certainty of purpose was so strong as to be palpable. Here follow the words that make up his attempt to understand the tarrasque, and his effort to pass that knowledge on. . . .

Sole Survivor

You think you know monsters. You may spend your life battling aberrations in subterranean realms, demons in blasphemous temples, or angels in the astral skies. You may even have slain dragons.

But you have never seen the wrath of a true monster—one that devils and archons alike would shy from, a beast that slumbers now in a place so remote even the deep-dwelling drow cannot fathom it.

I have looked into the soulless eyes of the Great Beast, and it looked back into mine. Whether by fate

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or fortune, I have been spared its teeth and the acidic razors of its gullet. I have lived to tell the tale.

The monster gave no warning when it emerged from beneath the countryside of my father's land, then quickly destroyed a nearby farm and devoured every living occupant. In less than a day, the barony was ravaged by its hunger: meadows and forests trampled and desecrated, livestock and game swallowed or driven away. Our keep, which had withstood peasant uprisings and enemy sieges for centuries, crumbled under the fury of the tarrasque.

I alone survived, whether by happenstance or some greater design. Was my escape from death a sign? I began to believe so, and I became grateful not only for my continued life but also for the opportunity that my survival afforded me: The appearance of the tarrasque on my family's land set me on the path of my life's work: my study of the Great Beast. But for that event, I might have lived and died as the idle son of an inconsequential nobleman. A greater tragedy, surely?

In the years that I have walked this earth, the Great Beast has emerged three times. The first time, to destroy all that I once held dear; the second and third, to enlighten me. In my work, I have delved dangerous ruins, consulted with mystic sages, and spoken at length with the dead. My quest for knowledge of the Great Beast has set me upon fey pathways and the roads between the planes.

Now I am much too old. I have learned many things. And so I impart this warning to you: Accept the inevitable when the Great Beast returns for the last time.

Dawn of the Beast

No fewer than a dozen sages I spoke with ascribed the tarrasque's existence to fell rituals and the dark, "miscast" magics of mortal wizards. Such claims are vague, lazy hand-waving of dubious scholarship. To understand the origin of the tarrasque, one must look higher and deeper—into the enmity between the gods and primordials, which began with the Dawn War.

It was in the hoard of Arvvestrix the Black, a wyrm of singular notoriety, that I found a rare book. The writing was in the Supernal script, the language of astral and divine beings, and the author spoke knowingly, seemingly at first hand, about the Dawn War. Now, I have read many texts about that mythic conflict in the Age Before Ages, but most of them are contradictory and slanderous—the propaganda of one faith or another. This tome, however, was different, and from its pages came the foundation of my quest for answers.

The world began with the primordials, elemental beings of godlike power, whose works were violent and ever-changing. When the gods arrived and shaped the churning chaos into a hospitable, stable world where new beings could live and thrive, the primordials were outraged and sought to tear the gods' work apart. So began the Dawn War, a struggle so long and vast that no mortal can truly grasp its scope.

The primordials could not conceive of defeat. Foolishly, they fought against one another as often as against the gods and the angelic armies of their enemies. Though the gods were outnumbered, they worked in concert and with ordered determination. The Dawn War finally ended with the defeat of the primordials. Most were slain, imprisoned, or forced into dormancy so they could no longer threaten the stability of the world.

During the struggle, some primordials were more prudent than most. These forward-thinking entities temporarily set aside their differences with one another for the sake of survival. The most powerful were the self-styled Elemental Princes, called by some the archomentals, who formed an alliance. Together they sought to unleash a being known as the Elder Elemental Eye, who they believed was the first and most powerful of their kind. The gods ultimately foiled their plans; the Eye remained in its divine prison, and the archomentals retreated into the depths of the Elemental Chaos to thwart their enemies—but before they fled, they hatched a plan to birth the most terrible monster the world has ever seen.

Weapon in Waiting

All wars beget new weapons. Conflict is the father of invention, after all. In the midst of its cosmic strife, the Dawn War propagated many abominations—*living* weapons used by both sides, some of which still lurk in forgotten or familiar places. Atropals, astral stalkers, phanes . . . the list goes on, and mortals are fortunate if they never meet a single one of them. The tarrasque was the last and unquestionably the most powerful of these new weapons of war.

Before their exile, the archomentals wrought one final act of spite. Combining their talents, they fashioned in secret an abomination of unquenchable hunger. Imix the Fire Lord infused the tarrasque with burning internal heat and murderous energy. Cryonax the Bringer of Endless Winter and Ogrémoch the Stone Tyrant gave it immortal endurance. Olhydra the Mistress of the Black Tide and Yan-C-Bin the Great Cloud inspired the creature's inexorable wrath. There is evidence that at least two Elemental Princes did not survive this creation process—a force of acid and a creature of bone and blade—but their names have been lost.

The archomentals then seeded the newborn tarrasque into the still-young natural world, leaving it to incubate for centuries in the elemental core. One day, it would awaken, once more to unleash the primordials' wrath and tear apart the works of the gods.

The primordials intended that their volatile pet would be a being so mighty, so intelligently malicious, that it would pluck dragons from the sky and summon exarchs from the heavens to feast upon. Yet their work was necessarily imperfect, tainted with the same mindless rage that roiled inside its makers;

HISTORY CHECK

A character who makes a DC 15 Arcana check knows that the tarrasque is purported to be a tremendous beast that appears from time to time and ravages the world around it. A DC 25 Arcana check will reveal that the tarrasque is an abomination formed by the primordials as a weapon against the gods, that it sleeps in the core of the world and only seldom rises. A DC 30 check reveals the tarrasque's bond with the world itself, its near-indestructible nature, and just about everything the narrator postulates in this article.

the primordials were not the gods, after all. And so with the gods almost upon them, the archomentals concluded their work, their power nearly spent, their living weapon prematurely abandoned and thus malformed.

Early Assaults

For centuries the tarrasque remained dormant. The archomentals had ceased to be concerned about their secret project. They had fallen to fighting one another again, only occasionally halting to advance their collective agenda for the Elder Elemental Eye. Meanwhile, in the natural world, mortals and immortals alike remained unaware of the danger germinating beneath them.

Then one day it finally awoke. A long-ago kingdom named Aeritueur was the first to speak in definite terms of the tarrasque's rampage. As chronicled by eladrin magic in a malachite "speaking-gem," the loremasters of Aeritueur described a colossal beast superficially resembling a behemoth but longer-limbed and much bulkier. Wingless, horned, and armored in "a shell like melted diamond," the creature possessed a deafening roar and devastatingly massive tail. Ponderous, yet capable of surprising bursts of speed, the creature shrugged off spells and slew every knight and summoned monster in its path. Most who beheld the Great Beast were transfixed in horror, a sensation with which I am intimately familiar—too overwhelmed by its presence to even flee. All things within its reach were devoured or destroyed: people, horses, wagons, siege weaponry. It was the ghostly voices in the speaking-gem who named the creature "tarrasque." The term is derived from an elvish word meaning "unstoppable." The old, broader meaning has long since fallen out of use, and the word now has only one association.

Miraculously, Aeritueur did not fall to the Great Beast's hunger as its neighboring realms had—else there would be no records of this first emergence. The creature abruptly stopped just before setting upon the kingdom, then sank smoothly into the nearby mountainside like a xorn passing through solid rock. It was never heard from again during Aeritueur's history.

I have studied evidence from other old civilizations across the known realms that knew of the Great Beast's passage. Primitive paintings on cave walls, glyphs etched into desert tombs, and sculptures perched upon crumbled temple walls depicted an unkillable, wingless monster that rose from the earth and devoured everything around it. None of these accounts confused the beast for any sort of dragon. Feared as they are, dragons are nothing like the tarrasque—even the vilest of wyrms can be reasoned with.

I once explored the ruin of a drow city, all but forgotten by Lolth's faithful, that had suffered the fury of the tarrasque. The human realm of Irentia and the demon-worshiping gnoll tribes of Gajraharr were also both obliterated. The former was a champion of righteous gods, the latter a blight upon all free races. But have you heard of either of them? No, because none survived to keep those names alive. The Great Beast does not discriminate between good and evil, law or chaos, dark or light. Despite the nature of its makers, the tarrasque is not a force of evil. It favors warm flesh, but if something is consumable—a broad term indeed—it can and will be consumed. Elf, demon, human, giant, illithid, halfling, sapling, catapult: all food for the tarrasque.

Cycle of Chaos

No doubt you have wondered: If the tarrasque cannot be slain, why are we still here at all? Why hasn't everyone seen it? Why, in some realms, does no one even believe in it?

Because the tarrasque is not tireless. On each occasion when it disappears, the Great Beast's weakness—time itself—is revealed, though few possess the frame of reference to understand it. The tarrasque is an engine of destruction and elemental energy sheathed in worldly flesh. It is therefore subject to worldly limitations. It is powered by the magic of the primordials, but even fire must have fuel. Everything the tarrasque consumes is broken down and converted into potential energy—energy that the beast cannot call upon until after it slumbers for some period of time.

This cycle of sleeping and waking is erratic. In older accounts, the tarrasque slept for two years at a time, then rampaged for only a few days before disappearing again. Sometimes it would become more active, staying awake for months, chewing up whole swaths of a continent with no sign of stopping, then sink into the earth again and slumber for more than a decade.

When the tarrasque emerges from its subterranean slumber, it does so almost anywhere. Most reports of the beast stem from wilderness areas because densely populated areas suffer the most casualties. Therein lies the difficulty in studying the

FOR DMS: NATURE OF THE BEAST

Is the narrator correct about all this tarrasque lore? He certainly seems to thinks so. He has put in more hours researching it than any other being he knows of. And according to the Arcana check listing on page 13 of the *Monster Manual*, he's on the mark.

But he doesn't have to be right. As DM, you're the final arbiter of your game. The tarrasque can be whatever you want it to be. The original *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Monster Manual 2* entry said nothing of its origin, while most subsequent materials blamed the Elemental Princes of Evil (the archomentals) for the tarrasque. The iconic D&D beastie is loosely based on the real-world myth of the Tarasque, a turtle-shelled French dragon that was charmed by a saintly woman and was slain, like King Kong, due to its weakness for beauty. In your game, maybe the Great Beast can have a similar soft spot.

It's your campaign. If you want the tarrasque swimming around the Astral Sea, chomping on gods and angels, go for it. If you want it rampaging like Godzilla through a city and fighting other colossal monsters, do it! If you want it to be controlled by powers of good or evil, why not?

tarrasque and its long history. There are rarely any survivors. From small hovels to whole nations, where the tarrasque treads, precious little endures. Hence, even descriptions of the Great Beast are the stuff of legend. Few exist who have spied it directly. I am one of these.

Eyewitness to Destruction

Many have tried to slay the tarrasque. Of course they have. Felling dragons, while exceptionally difficult, can earn you wealth and fame. Slaying demons and defeating devils has a strong appeal for the boldest of heroes. But the tarrasque—the ultimate killing machine, eater of kings and kingdoms—is the greatest catch of them all. Can you imagine the glory?

I did, once, the second time I faced the tarrasque. I was hale and full of vengeance. But instead of taking part in the frontal assault, I watched from a distance, casting protective spells and conjuring defenses for my allies. Despite my efforts, and theirs, the tarrasque tore through them all. My betrothed was among them, a paladin as courageous and true-hearted as any exarch, devoted to her deity in every way. She faced the Great Beast armed with a footman's lance, but she did not wield it. Instead, she sought to calm it with hymns, to halt it long enough for our companions to pierce it with powerful weapons. For her trouble, she was bitten in two, then swallowed. Hers was not a hero's death. Not worthy of a bard's song. It was hideous, and it was swift.

I alone survived. Again. Devastated, I sank further into my studies and began to enlist other monster slayers to quest against it.

The next time I encountered the Great Beast was when it emerged from a glacier thirty-three years later in the frozen north. The small army I commanded nearly succeeded, piercing it with enchanted blades seemingly faster than it could dispose of them, but in the end it trampled and devoured them all. Even the red dragon I rode failed to do lasting harm. When I brought my mount close, the wyrm's power of flight failed it—a vestige, perhaps, of Yan-C-Bin's mastery of air. Unseated, I fumbled with my own magics. The tarrasque rushed at me, and only a wisely prepared teleportation spell saved me.

I have heard apocryphal tales of the tarrasque's death. In every such account, it is said the corpse could not be salvaged because it sank quickly into the ground, reclaimed by the earth. In truth, the creature's "death" is merely a premature descent into its elemental torpor—an involuntary reaction that removes it from the threat of further injury, and the start of another period of slumber.

Some tales have reached my ears of the tarrasque slumbering in shallow places, later to be disturbed by a dwarf miner's pick or roused by Underdark explorers. In each case, the Great Beast either devoured the intruder or else merely stirred and fled deeper, not yet desirous of waking in full.

Other Facets of the Beast

Not all who believe in the tarrasque's existence fear the creature. Some people revel in the destruction it unleashes. Numerous cults devoted to the Great Beast have risen from the ashes of its rampages—and then faded away as quickly, their "god" silent for too long to sustain mortal interest in their cause. Those cultists that survive through the full span of the tarrasque's slumber are usually eaten when they finally meet their monstrous benefactor.

Of all the cults I have observed, none have thrived more than the Reckoners, founded three centuries ago by a deva who was himself slain by the Great Beast and rose again. While I shake my head at the Reckoners' mad vision, I admire their talents. They have found ways to harness the negative energy that flows in the tarrasque's wake and have wrought atrocities almost as great.

The tarrasque has also factored into the history of powerful artifacts. Due to the elemental acid and fire that churn in its stomach, it is capable of dissolving anything, even otherwise indestructible objects. It is written that the Fang of Baator, the Ebon Band, and

the Talisman of Ahrjez were once devices of notoriety that were unmade by the tarrasque's guts. In theory, one could destroy the infamous *Demonomicon* or the Hand of Vecna if one were willing to be eaten while holding such an item.

Interestingly, but not surprising given its nature, denizens of the other planes have little to fear from the Great Beast. The Feywild, the Shadowfell, the Astral Sea, even the Elemental Chaos itself—these places have never known the dread presence of the tarrasque because it cannot, or will not, leave the mortal world. It is bound here, as the primordials ensured it would be when the world was young. Accordingly, the Great Beast is as indestructible and inexorable as the earth itself. Yet I have uncovered convincing evidence that the tarrasque could be slain if it was removed from the mortal world—not the least of which are various reports that the creature shies away from planar portals.

To What End?

The tarrasque's full story is doubtless much too long, and beyond our scope to observe, to be properly recorded—not to mention too filled with contradictions. In my opinion, many of the paradoxes in reports about the beast stem from its adaptability.

Yes, the tarrasque is changing. It seemingly has grown steadily more powerful through the ages; perhaps it has even grown larger. In ancient times, the Great Beast slept for years and woke for days. Now it sleeps for decades and wakes for . . . much too long. The next time it rises—will it ever sleep again? A new era may soon be upon us, and it is not a pleasant one to contemplate.

This, of course, is merely the account of one. I have postulated many theories and attempted to chronicle the tarrasque's course, but no divinity or elemental being has confirmed my work or dissuaded me. The tarrasque is as old as the world, and nothing in the world can stop it. I am done trying. Perhaps there is wisdom in the madness of the Reckoners.

These words are my final warning. I myself will soon be gone. Through my studies, I have deduced what I believe is the site of the tarrasque's final emergence. I go there now, and will wait patiently. It may be years, it may be days. I will kneel before its fury and its majesty, and I will submit.

One Tarrasque, Many Possibilities

There are lots of ways to use the tarrasque in a campaign, and not all of them have to be about slaying the Great Beast when it wakes up. Here are a few ideas.

Cult Clash: Plenty of people might have a reason to try to use the tarrasque. Most have no idea how to find it or wake it, but an evil cult—like the Reckoners (see "The End Is Nigh!" in this issue)—believes it has discovered a way to choose the place of the beast's emergence. Battling such a cult could easily be a multistage adventure during the heroic tier.

Vengeful Druid: Some druids are more militant than others. One in particular has become convinced that the Great Beast is an expression of nature, created by the world to punish the depredations of civilization. She intends to rouse the Great Beast with a ritual and command it to attack the tyrannical city beyond her forest. It hasn't entered her overzealous mind that the tarrasque's first feast will be her forest and all its inhabitants. Dissuading the druid from this course of action is a task for heroic tier adventurers.

Elemental Uprising: The Elemental Chaos is full of god-hating beings who would be happy to see the mortal world broken up into its baser components again. Chapter 2 of *The Plane Below: Secrets of the Elemental Chaos* is a rogues' gallery of angry elemental beings. Maybe they're taking cues from the Elemental Princes and have found a way to power up the slumbering tarrasque so that when it next awakens, it won't need to rest again so soon. A tarrasque rampaging for a year or more could really mangle the gods' worldly efforts. Stopping this elemental scheme could be a paragon or epic tier event.

Artifact of the Matter: The heroes have come into possession of an artifact of great evil that must be destroyed—but they don't know how to accomplish that. It's been suggested to them that feeding it to the tarrasque could do the trick, and the Great Beast has even been located slumbering in the shallow Underdark. Can they reach the tarrasque and stir it just enough to get it to swallow the artifact without waking it? The risk is great and certainly suitable for paragon or epic tier characters.

Unchained Eye: This article suggests that Tharizdun, in the guise of the Elder Elemental Eye, might have had something to do with the tarrasque's creation. If so, perhaps the tarrasque's steadily increasing power is a lead-up to the apocalypse that will allow the Chained God to break free from his divine prison. Once the tarrasque no longer needs to sleep, the destruction it will bring down upon the natural world will require the concerted resistance of many divine agents as well as the aid of epic tier adventurers. What better distraction to serve as a prelude to Tharizdun's jailbreak?

About the Author

Jeff LaSala is a writer/editor of speculative fiction and an inquisitory game designer. He has written an Eberron® novel, a slew of DDI articles, and some RPG books for Goodman Games, and recently edited and co-wrote the cyberpunk anthology + soundtrack, *Foreshadows: The Ghosts of Zero*. Dwelling in the chthonic depths of New York City, he imagines a world splintered into sorry hemispheres.

The End Is Nigh!

Followers of the Tarrasque

By Dennis Johnson

Illustration by Craig J Spearing

Our master's rage tears at my chest. My mouth moistens at the sight of the towers. The tarrasque's will is clear: the city must fall! And we Reckoners shall deliver its judgment!

Death. Pain. Helplessness. Inevitability. To the people of the world, hiding in scattered points of light amid a sea of darkness, these are facts of life symbolized by the unstoppable destructive power of the tarrasque. Not a distant dark god or an unknowable Far Realm horror, the tarrasque is a monster of the world that reminds everyone of life's simple truth: The end comes to all things, and it rarely comes peacefully.

Any heroes who defy this truth face the daunting prospect of battling not only the tarrasque, but also those who serve it. Many misguided souls bow to the tarrasque's might, while an unlucky few are driven mad by exposure to the dark energy lingering in the abomination's wake. These cultists deliver death in the tarrasque's name while it sleeps, and pitch in to create truly epic carnage when it wakes.

The Cult of the Tarrasque

Worship of the tarrasque is common following one of the monster's attacks, but quickly fades as the creature sleeps again and fear of its power fades. The only enduring cult of the tarrasque, called the Reckoners, persists because its leaders are continually inspired by a connection to the tarrasque. Corrupted by the beast's destructive impulses, the Reckoners murder and destroy as they await the tarrasque's next awakening, when they shall revel in its rampage until the tarrasque consumes them, too.

The connection between the tarrasque and the Reckoners is not well understood by those outside the cult. Its leaders speak of hearing the tarrasque's heartbeat through the earth, of seeing its destruction in their dreams, and, most commonly, of feeling its insatiable hunger. Although the tarrasque has never displayed any magical abilities that could explain these sensations, divinations have detected the residue of shadow energy at the sites of tarrasque attacks. Scholars believe this energy is not directly created by the tarrasque, but is rather a by-product of the deaths the monster causes. When an unlucky few living on these blighted lands absorb this energy, they develop the tarrasque's penchant for destruction and become obsessed with serving the monster. Other Reckoners recognize this corruption when they see it and bring the newly cursed into the fold.

Reckoners directly linked to the tarrasque are a minority; most have simply embraced the cult's perverse interpretation of the tarrasque. The cult asserts that the tarrasque is not an abomination, but a primal spirit of justice and punishment. The tarrasque's task is to cleanse the earth of those whose cruelty or selfishness makes them unworthy of the spirits' gift. Those who serve the tarrasque and act as it does might be spared its wrath; those who support the

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corrupt societies that the tarrasque hates deserve the same deaths as their rulers.

The Reckoners

Goal: To kill on as large a scale as possible, carrying out the tarrasque's work until it awakens.

Stated Goal: To honor the tarrasque, destroyer of corruption, and to spread such destruction wherever possible.

Size: Thousands of Reckoners are spread throughout the world; hundreds of them are psychically connected to the tarrasque.

Alignment: Evil; though the tarrasque kills on instinct and is unaligned, the malign energy corrupting some Reckoners twists their morality, and their followers kill innocents with questionable justification.

Philosophy: Most Reckoners believe that the indiscriminate destruction of the tarrasque, who rises from the earth to crush entire civilizations, is proof that society is inherently unnatural and evil. Reckoners connected to the tarrasque require no such philosophy; the beast's insatiable hunger makes destruction an end in itself.

History: This first enduring tarrasque cult was created around three hundred years ago by a deva named Thaeras. Killed by the tarrasque and reborn in the wasteland it created, Thaeras was corrupted by lingering shadow energy, but memories of his past lifetimes left him with enough sanity to think rationally. Thaeras learned to control the energy left in the tarrasque's wake and infect others with his functional madness. Linked together by their common bond to the tarrasque, these founding Reckoners began converting frightened people and bringing death in the beast's name.

Leadership: Common Reckoners currently follow a human wizard named Loman Farvel, who uses rituals to command local cult leaders across the world. Most of Farvel's schemes are dictated to him by the more powerful "connected" Reckoners, who are so close to complete madness that they rarely interact directly with other cultists. The greatest of these, and the ultimate leader of the Reckoners, is still Thaeras, who has avoided death and reincarnation to remain a deva fallen star.

Structure: Reckoners live in small groups hidden from outside authorities, blindly following their local cult leaders. These demagogues communicate "the tarrasque's will" and control most aspects of Reckoners' lives. Farvel uses the local leaders to coordinate efforts at the direction of his bosses, enabling the cult to act on a global scale. The hunger for power and death that the Reckoners' leaders share makes them see the merits of each other's plans and tends to limit factionalism.

Activities: Reckoners build magical shrines to the tarrasque in areas it has struck, concentrating the shadow energy found there and corrupting nearby residents. The shrines preach their apocalyptic philosophy to the weak and fearful and build the Reckoners' numbers across the world. Where they have amassed sufficient strength, Reckoners use magic and subterfuge to enact grandiose schemes to bring down civilization; while they are not above random, isolated murders to sate their bloodlust, they prefer to follow the tarrasque's example and cause destruction on a wide scale.

Adventure Hooks

Just because the tarrasque is a level 30 monster that will probably sleep through most of an adventurer's career doesn't mean that it cannot play a major role in a campaign. The adventure ideas below are a few examples of how the tarrasque can make an impression in every tier.

Heroic Tier

- Disciples of Erathis are seeking a firsthand account of the last days of a lost civilization. Equipped with scrolls of Speak with Dead, the party travels to the civilization's ruins and finds a group of Reckoners in the company of a legion of half-shattered skeletal warriors. The cult has raised these tarrasque victims—the "blessed of the beast"—to honor the civilization's destroyer. With too many potential enemies to simply attack, the adventurers must find a way to deal with the Reckoners and get the information they need from the undead.
- All of a village's residents suffer from terrible nightmares in which they are devoured by the tarrasque. Reckoners are tainting the townsfolk's dreams with the shadow energy that corrupts the cultists. The adventurers must discover the cult and break its curse, before they succumb to the same fate.
- Reckoners have infected a beneficent king with the hunger of the tarrasque, turning him into an aggressive despot who antagonizes his neighbors. His ministers worry, but he refuses to be examined by doctors or mages. The party is hired to infiltrate his court, discover what has caused the change, and stop his descent into madness before he pushes the kingdom into war.

Paragon Tier

- Oracles foresee that the tarrasque will destroy a heavily populated area in a matter of days. Tasked with finding a way to quickly evacuate the region, the characters discover a large, inactive portal to another plane. The party must investigate the portal, arrange safe passage with the forces on the other side, and convince the panicked people to step into the unknown.

- Refugees from a warring kingdom describe mass sacrifices of citizens in the tarrasque's name. Reckoners have convinced the embattled queen that if they sacrifice enough "criminals" to the tarrasque, it will arise and devour her enemies. With the cultists gaining dark magic from each sacrifice, the party must convince the queen to stop the killings, end the military threat that prompted them, or remove her from power.
- Cyclopses have redirected a vital river from the surface to the Underdark. Investigating characters find that the river is now flowing into a portal to the Feydark. A fomorian lord is gathering elements of the natural world and working with the Reckoners to create a fey tarrasque. Whether through brute force, sabotage, or finding a way to break the alliance with the Reckoners, the party must put a stop to the fomorian's work.

Epic Tier

- Miners have discovered the resting place of the tarrasque, deep within the Underdark, guarded by a powerful group of Reckoners. Mind flayers, drow, and an ancient purple dragon are among the forces racing to attempt to gain control of the tarrasque. The party must get to the site first and either help the cultists hold off their enemies or find a way to destroy the dormant tarrasque, and accomplish either without waking the monster.
- The party learns that a powerful item that they need was swallowed by the tarrasque long ago. They travel to the Barrens in the Abyss, where lie the ruins of every civilization that ever was or ever will be. The party must find the last city that will ever be destroyed by the tarrasque, where the abomination's undead body still hunts, and retrieve the artifact lodged in its shriveled gullet.

Monster Theme: Reckoner

The most gifted Reckoners respond not only to the energy linking them to the tarrasque, but harness it for themselves. Nearly any intelligent creature could be such a cultist, and powerful rituals could infuse unintelligent creatures with this ability. Giving a monster one or more of the powers provided below can show its connection to the tarrasque by echoing the abomination's abilities.

Reckoners in the heroic tier might not be visually distinctive, except perhaps by wearing horns or a coat resembling a carapace. At the paragon and epic tiers, more prolonged exposure to the tarrasque's shadowy leavings transforms cultists' bodies to mimic the tarrasque: Teeth grow into fangs, skin hardens almost into scales, or sharp horns protrude from the head.

Abomination's Frenzy

Screaming louder than naturally possible, the Reckoner lashes out with unexpected speed. Monsters with reach benefit most from this ability.

Standard Actions

Abomination's Frenzy ✦ Encounter

Effect: The Reckoner makes a melee basic attack against each enemy within its reach.

Furious Tail

With a sweep of the Reckoner's hand, a ghostly tail slaps down a nearby enemy. This power helps artillery and controller monsters keep targets at a distance.

Minor Actions

Furious Tail ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); level + 3 vs. Fortitude

Effect: The Reckoner pushes the target up to 4 squares, and the target falls prone.

Rending Jaws

The Reckoner's mouth opens beyond its natural size, and ghostly fangs, capable of biting through metal and bone, appear. This ability helps brutes and others cope with well-armored defenders.

Triggered Actions

Rending Jaws ✦ Encounter

Trigger: An enemy is hit by the Reckoner's melee attack.

Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 5 extra damage, and until the end of the Reckoner's next turn, a -5 penalty to AC.

Level 11: 10 extra damage.

Level 21: 15 extra damage.

Scion of Annihilation

A wave of unnatural fear washes over the battlefield as the Reckoner infuses its attacks with the unstoppable power of the tarrasque.

Minor Actions

Scion of Annihilation ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞

Effect: Damage from the Reckoner's attacks cannot be reduced in any way until the start of its next turn.

The Tarrasque's Retainers

When the tarrasque wakes, it eats anyone present, the first of many victims. The surviving Reckoners, their shadow energy enhanced in the presence of their master, follow the tarrasque into battle.

Lore

History DC 32: As the tarrasque approached a great city, several humanoids were seen running ahead of it. The pity of the city's defenders turned to horror when they saw that these cultists were not fleeing, but leading the monster to the city. Shining champions blessed by Bahamut rode out and engaged

the tarrasque. They realized too late that the cultists were magically weakening them. The cultists danced on the champions' corpses as the tarrasque smashed through the city walls and the massacre began.

Encounters

Proximity to the tarrasque transforms the Reckoners' shadow energy to complement the monster's abilities; these cultists are encountered only with the tarrasque. They follow the abomination until it returns to slumber in the earth, when their abilities return to normal but their obsession becomes stronger than ever.

Tarrasque Reckoner	**Level 30 Minion Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid	XP 4,750
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +19
AC 44, **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 42, **Will** 43	**Perception** +17
Speed 6	
Standard Action	
Annihilator's Curse ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +33 vs. Will	
Hit: 5 damage, and the target gains vulnerable 10 to all damage (save ends).	
Minor Action	
Stir Again (healing) **✦ Encounter**	
Effect: Ranged 10 (one Reckoner that died in this encounter); the target is restored to life, regains 1 hit point, and stands up as a free action.	
Skills Arcana +22	
Str 12 (+16) **Dex** 18 (+19) **Wis** 15 (+17)	
Con 20 (+20) **Int** 14 (+17) **Cha** 22 (+21)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	

Tarrasque Reckoners in Combat

Reckoners stay at the edge of combat, singing their master's praises and shouting curses at their enemies. They might seem harmless until heroes feel the results of their magic. Each cultist falls quickly if attacked, but a brief incantation from another lets it rise from death.

The Tarrasque

Long ago, the primordials created the tarrasque as a living engine of destruction whose only purpose was to obliterate the works of the gods. Drawn forth from the core of the earth, the legendary beast stirs only to rampage across the world's face, leaving ruin and despair in its wake.

About the Author

Dennis Johnson is a first-time game writer but long-time plot weaver. Even from his new lair in the Hudson Valley he still schemes against his former and future players in Ohio.

Tarrasque	**Level 30 Solo Brute**
Gargantuan elemental magical beast	XP 95,000
HP 1,140; **Bloodied** 570	**Initiative** +23
AC 42, **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 41, **Will** 40	**Perception** +19
Speed 8, burrow 8, climb 8	Blindsight 40
Resist 10 to all damage	
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2	
Traits	
Earthbinding ✦ Aura 40	
Flying creatures are slowed and have a altitude limit of 4 in the aura. Any creature that enters the aura above the altitude limit is pulled down to the limit.	
Immutable	
The tarrasque cannot be dazed, deafened, dominated, immobilized, knocked prone, petrified, restrained, slowed, stunned, knocked unconscious, or weakened.	
Elder of Annihilation	
Damage from the tarrasque's attacks cannot be reduced in any way.	
Eternal Slumber	
When the tarrasque drops to 0 hit points, it sinks back into the world's core and slumbers once again.	
Standard Actions	
Bite ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +35 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d10 + 31 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Tail Slap ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d10 + 31 damage, and the tarrasque pushes the target up to 4 squares.	
Trample ✦ At-Will	
Requirement: The tarrasque must not be bloodied.	
Effect: The tarrasque moves up to its speed and can move through enemies' spaces during the move. Each time the tarrasque enters an enemy's space for the first time during the move, it makes the following attack a against that enemy.	
Attack: Melee 0 (one creature); +33 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 5d12 + 16 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Frenzy ✦ At-Will	
Requirement: The tarrasque must be bloodied.	
Effect: Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); the tarrasque uses *bite* or *tail slap* against each target, and any target hit by such an attack takes 10 extra damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Fury of the Tarrasque ✦ At-Will	
Trigger: The tarrasque takes damage.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The tarrasque makes two melee basic attacks.	
Str 42 (+31) **Dex** 26 (+23) **Wis** 18 (+19)	
Con 37 (+28) **Int** 3 (+11) **Cha** 7 (+13)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Bestiary: Ye Olde Creature Catalogue

By Tim Eagon

Illustrations by Christopher Burdett, Tony Foti, Hector Ortiz, and Matt Dixon

During the 1980s, the *D&D Basic Set* and the *D&D Expert Set* introduced a number of creatures to the world of Dungeons & Dragons, many of which have not been represented in any version of the game since then. This article reintroduces four of these long-forgotten monsters.

- The decapus, a tentacled creature that lives high above the ground or under the sea, appeared originally in D&D Basic module B3, *Palace of the Silver Princess*.
- Magens, a race of intelligent constructs created by a family of wizards from another world, were created for D&D Expert module X2, *Castle Amber*.
- Rhagodessas, giant arachnids with strong jaws, made their first appearance in D&D Expert module X1, *Isle of Dread*.
- Thouls, a bizarre union of ghoul, hobgoblin, and troll bred long ago by an ancient empire, were included in the original D&D Basic boxed set.

Inspired by 1986's *D&D Creature Catalogue*, where these monsters appeared together for the first time, this article updates their statistics and story for the 4th Edition game. True to their roots, each one remains a suitable challenge for low-level characters.

Decapus

Expert climbers, these vile, octopus-like creatures lurk in trees and among the stalactites that hang from cavern ceilings. They are cruel predators that take pleasure in killing.

Decapuses resemble cephalopods with ten tentacles. Their bodies are bloated, 4-foot-wide globes covered in sparse tufts of spiky black or brown hair. Their warty skin is typically a sickly green color, though yellow and purple specimens exist. At the center of their bodies is a pair of eyes that seem to lack irises—they have only dark pupils—and a wide, foul-smelling maw filled with sharp, yellow teeth. Ten long tentacles covered in palm-sized suckers sprout from all over their bodies, each ending in a sharp, hook-like appendage made of cartilage. These suckers and hooks allow decapuses to climb just about any surface.

Horror Lurks Above: A decapus is a surprisingly agile climber that has adapted to life high above the ground. The creature uses its tentacles to climb walls, ceilings, and trees, and a decapus can propel itself faster than a human can walk, swinging from one hold to the next. When it attacks, a decapus anchors itself with a tentacle and strikes with the other nine;

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either scooping up and constricting its prey or flailing at a foe with its powerful limbs. A tentacle's grip is exceptionally strong and difficult to evade or escape.

A decapus on the ground is nearly helpless; its tentacles, so well suited for hanging and swinging, cannot support its body weight, making both movement and combat difficult. Thus, decapuses avoid contact with the ground, and they often panic and squeal with fear when they cannot do so.

Common decapus habitats include forests, towering ruins, and underground caverns. The creature can live comfortably in a variety of climates, since the environmental extremes of the world do not imperil it—although a decapus residing in warmer climes has sparse body hair, while one that inhabits the arctic taiga will be thickly furred.

The decapus is a hate-filled, solitary creature that despises its own kind and jealously guards its territory. The beast seeks out its fellows only when it feels the urge to procreate. Even then, a female decapus devours the majority of its spawn immediately after giving birth, and any surviving young hunt each other until only the strongest survive. This brutal winnowing efficiently teaches the young decapus hunting and survival skills.

As an apex predator, the decapus preys on all surrounding wildlife, including other carnivores such as wolves; it supplements its normal diet of squirrels, rabbits, and deer with humans—one of their favorite foods—and elves. Decapuses do not eat dwarves unless faced with starvation. Mules, at the other extreme, are a delicacy, and a decapus will follow a mule's scent for miles until catching it or growing weary of the chase. Even when sated, a decapus will jealously guard its kill so it can gorge later; carcasses dangling from rocks or trees often denote a decapus's territory.

Clever Brutes: Despite its brutish reputation, the decapus is a surprisingly intelligent creature and a cunning predator. It cannot speak; when communicating with others of its kind, the decapus uses a complex language of clicks, squeals, screeches, and tentacle movements. An especially clever decapus will learn to mimic panicked screaming and crying to better attract human prey. The creature will only rarely ally with weaker creatures, since it views anything weaker than itself as potential food. Stronger creatures can exert a limited amount of influence over a decapus by bullying it into submission or enticing it with promises of food; a lone decapus will sometimes serve evil humanoids such as hobgoblins or drow, as well as the powerful aberrant creatures that share the beast's subterranean home. A trained or enslaved decapus can be a reliable guard, since it will kill any intruders it does not recognize and make quite a racket in the process; when it makes a kill, a decapus trills an off-putting, high-pitched chortling noise that many listeners interpret as cruel laughter.

Marine Decapuses: Not all decapuses dwell on land; some have adapted to life in the water. The marine decapus is similar to its terrestrial cousins, though it is less hairy and has a bluish or greenish coloration. It lives in oceans, swamps, lakes, and rivers, and it hunts by slowly drifting through the water with its tentacles splayed out, ready to strike; the water supports the weight of its body, so it can attack with all ten tentacles. The marine decapus loves the taste of sea elf flesh and regards dolphins in much the same way that its earthbound kin views mules. Given its reputation, few aquatic creatures have anything to do with a marine decapus, but the oceanic kuo-toas that live in deep-sea trenches often keep a few marine decapuses as pets and hunting companions.

The marine decapus is an excellent climber. It will frequently approach a passing vessel, lurking under floating patches of seaweed, tangles of flotsam, or overflowing fishing nets, then clamber aboard to pick off unsuspecting crew members and passengers. Sailors swear that a single marauding decapus can devour an entire crew during the night. Halflings regard the sighting of a marine decapus as a particularly ill omen, and they will moor their boats and remain on land until they are sure it has left the area or someone has killed it. The decapus also menaces coastal communities; drunken sailors, vagrants, rats, and gulls provide the beast with a supply of food in such places.

Statistically, the marine decapus is nearly identical to its land-based kin. It gains the aquatic trait, the aquatic keyword, and a swim speed of 6.

Decapus	**Level 4 Brute**
Medium aberrant magical beast	XP 175
HP 65; **Bloodied** 32	**Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +10
Speed 3, climb 7 (spider climb)	Darkvision
Traits	
Grasping Suckers	
While climbing, the decapus can move 3 squares fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Tentacle ✦ At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage, and the decapus grabs the target (escape DC 14). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 damage.	
Flailing Tentacles ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Requirement: The decapus must be climbing.	
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Move Actions	
Drag Along ✦ At-Will	
Effect: The decapus shifts up to its speed. If the decapus is grabbing a creature, the creature is pulled with the decapus, remaining adjacent to it.	
Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +11, Stealth +9	
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 11 (+2) **Cha** 6 (+0)	
Alignment chaotic evil	**Languages** understands Deep Speech

Magen

Magens are a type of artificial humanoid created by powerful wizards to act as guards and servants. Each variant possesses its own distinctive set of strange magical powers.

The House of Amber, a family of demented nobles and powerful wizards from another world, created the first magens to serve them and protect their interests. Because the theocracy that ruled their home world regarded arcane magic with suspicion, the Ambers were forced to craft servants that could reasonably pass as human. Their name is actually a corruption of the phrase "gens magica," which means "magical people" in the foreigners' native tongue.

A magen usually resembles a perfectly formed Medium humanoid with smooth, hairless, grayish-white skin that is pliant and surprisingly warm to the touch; occasionally, a magen's creator adds pigmentation or hair to make it appear more alive. Magens are genderless; nevertheless, some creators mold them to appear male or female, and sometimes even shape their features, which are otherwise unremarkable, to resemble those of their maker. They never bleed or bruise, they lack any discernible anatomy, and, when slain, their bodies dissolve in a burst of acrid, multicolored smoke and flame. A magen wears whatever clothes and uses whatever equipment its master provides.

Above-Average Constructs: Arcanists can create a magen through a complex magical process. An alchemically charged suspension similar to gelatin is poured into a ritual-enhanced electrum mold and animated by magical lightning. Since magic gives a magen life, the construct can absorb magical energy much like a living creature consumes food; this infusion temporarily boosts a magen's powers.

Wizards who learn the techniques to create magens do so because they believe the creatures are more capable of independent action than homunculi and are easier to create than golems. Magens are at the center of a continuum with simple-minded automatons on one end and fully sentient living constructs on the other. Thus, a magen can follow detailed instructions given by its creator and can learn to perform relatively complex tasks to the same extent as an average human.

A magen's creator can teach it to engage in simple conversation, mimic basic emotions, and make a limited range of independent decisions. A magen usually speaks only one language, selected at the time of its creation, but it is capable of learning more; though a magen's voice usually sounds like its creator's, it speaks in a terse monotone unless instructed to do otherwise. It has no personality of its own and displays only the individual quirks that its creator chooses to give it.

Like most constructs, a magen lacks free will and obediently follows its creator's commands as best it can, even if those orders result in its destruction. A creator imprints its authority upon a magen at the time of its molding, and no other creature can usurp control of the construct. A magen's creator can command it to temporarily follow the orders of another, and it will cooperate with any creature if commanded to do so. If a magen's creator dies, the construct goes berserk, attacking nearby creatures until it is destroyed.

Four types, or molds, of magen are known to exist: the demos, the caldron, the galvan, and the hypnos.

Demos Magen: The demos magen is the most common, and least expensive to create, of the four molds. Wizards often utilize demos magens as servants and bodyguards. It lacks overtly magical powers, but during the molding process, its creator dips a weapon into the alchemical suspension, which imbues the demos with innate martial abilities. A demos magen emerges from its mold fully capable of wielding weapons and wearing armor; in fact, a newly created demos is often more skilled than

warriors who have trained for years. It is the only mold that regularly uses weapons and armor; aside from its armaments, an observer can identify one by the metallic tang of its scent. In addition, when a demos absorbs magical energy, it gains extra vitality that enables it to recover from damage and continue fighting.

Caldron Magen: A caldron magen can stretch its limbs unnaturally far, which allows it to attack creatures up to 20 feet away, access normally unreachable places, and circumvent obstacles. Moreover, after it absorbs magical energy, its already considerable reach increases. A caldron can strangle its victims with its pliable arms, which also secrete a highly caustic acid. Due to this acid, a caldron exudes a slightly sour odor. During the molding process, its creator adds a pair of tentacles from a choker or roper and a dose of acid to the alchemical suspension. Wizards most often employ caldron magens as assassins or house servants.

Galvan Magen: The galvan magen stores large quantities of electricity in its body and can discharge it by touch, through a metal weapon, or through crackling bolts of lightning, which it can unleash after absorbing magical energy. A galvan smells strongly of ozone, seems to draw metal slightly toward it, and can cause one's hair to stand on end when it is nearby. During the molding process, its creator adds part of a creature that can generate lightning and an iron rod to the alchemical suspension. Many galvans are assigned to stand watch atop battlements and walls.

Hypnos Magen: The fourth and least common mold of magen is referred to as hypnos, for its impressive psychic abilities. A hypnos's creator will often teach it how to interact with others, and intelligent creatures feel unusually at ease when a hypnos is nearby. The construct possesses a superficial charm and a general knowledge of social convention, so it often serves as a diplomat, a personal aide, or a majordomo.

Demos Magen Sentinel **Level 2 Soldier**
Medium natural animate (construct) XP 125

HP 38; **Bloodied** 19 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14 **Perception** +8
Speed 5
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison

Traits

Threatening Reach
The sentinel can make opportunity attacks against enemies within its reach.

Standard Actions

Halberd (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.
Effect: The sentinel marks the target until the end of the sentinel's next turn.

Sweeping Cut (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.

Triggered Actions

Ever Vigilant (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy within 2 squares of and marked by the sentinel makes an attack that doesn't include the sentinel as a target.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The sentinel uses *halberd* against the triggering enemy.

Magic Absorption ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An arcane attack hits the sentinel.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The sentinel gains 10 temporary hit points.

Skills Athletics +9
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment scale armor, halberd

A typical hypnos is physically weaker than the other magens and appears more frail; however, it is a significant threat to its creator's enemies because it can telepathically control the thoughts and actions of others. The touch of a hypnos can cause mental anguish when it absorbs magical energy, and it can spread that anguish to others. During the molding process, its creator adds part of a psionic creature

Demos Magen Bolter **Level 2 Artillery (Leader)**
Medium natural animate (construct) XP 125

HP 29; **Bloodied** 14 **Initiative** +4
AC 16, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14 **Perception** +8
Speed 6
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison

Traits

Rapid Reloader
The bolter loads its crossbow as a free action.

Standard Actions

Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 4 damage.

Covering Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.
Effect: One ally that the bolter can see can shift 1 square as a free action.

Bolt Fusillade (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞
Attack: Area burst 1 within 15 (creatures in the burst); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.

Triggered Actions

Magic Absorption ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An arcane attack hits the bolter.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): The bolter gains 10 temporary hit points.

Skills Stealth +9
Str 14 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 11 (+1) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common
Equipment leather armor, dagger, crossbow, 30 bolts

and the ground-up pieces of a magic item that can exert control over others to the alchemical suspension. Using an intelligent magic item as a component for a hypnos magen is said to produce impressive but unpredictable effects.

Caldron Magen	**Level 3 Brute**
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 150
HP 55; **Bloodied** 27	**Initiative** +2
AC 15, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 5 acid	
Standard Actions	
Elongated Grasp (acid) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 4 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage, and if the magen is grabbing fewer than two targets, it can grab the target (escape DC 13). Until the grab ends, the target takes ongoing 5 acid damage.	
Move Actions	
Retract ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 4 (creatures grabbed by the magen); +6 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The magen pulls the target to a space adjacent to the magen.	
Triggered Actions	
Magic Growth ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: An arcane attack hits the magen.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Until the end of the encounter, the magen grows an extra arm and can grab with *elongated grasp* if grabbing fewer than three targets.	
Skills Athletics +10	
Str 18 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+2) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	

Galvan Magen	**Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 175
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +6
AC 18, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	**Perception** +5
Speed 6	
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 5 lightning	
Standard Actions	
Iron Rod (lightning, weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage plus 1d6 lightning damage.	
Static Discharge (lightning) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one or two creatures); +9 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 4 lightning damage.	
Lightning Strike (lightning) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the magen's next turn.	
Triggered Actions	
Magic Recharge ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: An arcane attack hits the magen.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Lightning strike recharges, and the magen uses it.	
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 9 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment iron rod	

Hypnos Magen	**Level 3 Controller**
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 150
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16	**Perception** +7
Speed 6	
Immune charm, disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 5 psychic	
Standard Actions	
Psychic Slam (psychic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will until the end of the magen's next turn.	
Suggestion (charm) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one enemy); +6 vs. Will	
Hit: The magen slides the target up to 3 squares. The target must then use a free action to make a melee basic attack against a creature of the magen's choice.	
Overwhelming Command (charm, psychic) ✦ **Recharge** if the power misses	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +6 vs. Will	
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).	
Aftereffect: Ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
Triggered Actions	
Magic Feedback (psychic) ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: An arcane attack hits the magen.	
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 5 (enemies in the burst); ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
Skills Diplomacy +10, Insight +7	
Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 9 (+0) **Cha** 18 (+5)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, telepathy 10	

Rhagodessa

These giant arachnids are nightmarish relatives of the common camel spider.

The rhagodessa is a primeval arachnid the size of a small horse. Its hairy, dark brown body and its oversized yellow head are dominated by a massive set of pincerlike mandibles, which account for nearly a third of its body weight. It has four pairs of segmented legs, as well as a front pair of shorter appendages that end in pedipalps studded with dozens of hooked suckers. The rhagodessa catches its prey with these pedipalps and then crushes the creature in its jaws. Anyone so grabbed will find it nearly impossible to escape. Once a rhagodessa has secured its prey, the victim is dragged back to the creature's nest and liquefied for later consumption. Rhagodessas can climb just about any surface, even while carrying prey.

Hunters and Protectors: A nocturnal predator that typically lives alone or in small broods of half a dozen, the rhagodessa lairs in caverns beneath arid or tropical environments where ancient flora and fauna flourish. For example, the few explorers who have survived the Isle of Dread report that these arachnids infest huge swaths of its interior. Those rhagodessas, however, were reportedly much larger than the typical specimens described here.

Once it finds a suitable hunting ground, a rhagodessa has a tendency to settle down and defend its territory only from creatures that invade or approach its nest; when threatened, it produces a harsh rattling noise by rubbing its mandibles together. This makes the rhagodessa an ideal guardian if carefully trained and fed.

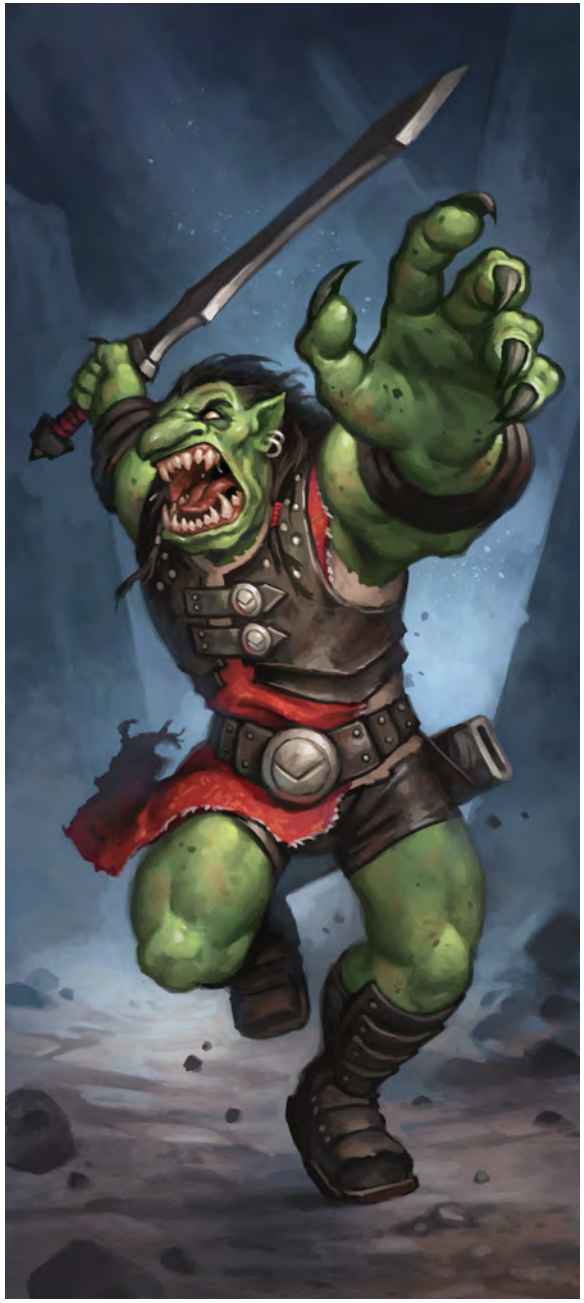
Gladiatorial Arachnids: Purveyors of exotic blood sports love to arrange matches in their arenas involving rhagodessas because of the creatures' horrific appearance, innate bellicosity, and susceptibility to conditioning. Rhagodessas have an

instinctive enmity for other giant arachnids (especially scorpions), and violent bouts between them are hotly anticipated. Consequently, the market for live rhagodessas or their fertilized eggs is flourishing. Many jurisdictions ban the importation of such dangerous beasts, so smuggling rings account for most of the trade.

Annual Rampage: Rhagodessas breed once a year, and after a female lays her eggs, she guards her underground nest until they hatch a month later. Because she will not leave to hunt during this waiting period, a female rhagodessa fattens herself before breeding by eating up to twenty times her weight.

While she is preparing to breed, a female rhagodessa ranges farther than normal and will devour anything that moves, even if her potential prey is much larger than she is. This gluttonous behavior poses a particular problem in agricultural areas that border on a rhagodessa's territory. Farmers must not only fear for their own safety, but also for their livestock. Thus, these farmers are grateful when the rhagodessa's harsh, rattling mating call fills the air, because the sound marks the end of the arachnid's yearly depredations.

Rhagodessa	**Level 2 Skirmisher**
Medium natural beast	XP 125
HP 36; **Bloodied** 18	**Initiative** +5
AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13	**Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)	Darkvision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Pedipalps ✦ At-Will**	
Effect: The rhagodessa can shift 1 square before the attack.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage, and if grabbing no target, the rhagodessa can grab the target (escape DC 13).	
⸸ **Powerful Bite ✦ Recharge** when the rhagodessa has no creature grabbed	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the rhagodessa); +5 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target cannot use the escape action (save ends).	
Move Actions	
Scuttle Away ✦ At-Will	
Effect: The rhagodessa shifts up to its speed. If the rhagodessa is grabbing a creature, the creature is pulled with the rhagodessa, remaining adjacent to it.	
Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +8	
Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 15 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+2)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 1 (-4) **Cha** 6 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	



Thoul

These brutish warriors combine the best and worst aspects of their constituent creatures in one nasty package.

An ancient hobgoblin empire tried to create a race of superior soldiers that would embody the most desirable traits of each creature by fusing them together with unspeakable magic. Thouls have the regenerative abilities of trolls, the paralytic claws of ghouls, and the resilience of hobgoblins. Since they were bred by hobgoblins, thouls share that race's brutal and militaristic outlook, but they lack its intelligence, tactical acumen, and discipline. Ultimately, the disappointed hobgoblins viewed them as a failed experiment and abandoned the project, and most of the surviving thouls assimilated uneasily into goblin society.

A typical thoul resembles a tall, muscular hobgoblin with unusually sharp claws and teeth. The creature's greenish skin, coarse black hair, and long nose all betray a trollish heritage. Thouls favor the bold crimson and black colors worn by their hobgoblin kin, and they take exceptional care of their gleaming black leather armor, a practice drilled into them by their cruel hobgoblin taskmasters.

Despite being part ghoul, thouls are actually living beings that can breed true, though they have an extremely low birth rate compared to other creatures with goblin blood. In fact, most thouls alive today are the product of forced breeding.

Among Goblins: Most thouls in the world are individuals or small groups scattered among the tribes of their goblin cousins. If bugbears and goblins make up most of a tribe, thouls will usually bully their way into a position of leadership. Thoul leaders maintain their rule through a combination of force, alliances with other thouls, and being hard to kill.

Hobgoblin-dominated tribes, on the other hand, regard thouls as second-class citizens, feared and hated for their superior physical abilities and mongrel blood. Thouls that lack the sponsorship of a hobgoblin leader live as outcasts, and most survive the abuse heaped on them only through their regenerative abilities. Sponsored thouls typically serve as elite bodyguards, gladiators, or vanguard shock troops; in fact, many hobgoblins breed thouls specifically for these purposes, and scar them with acid and fire while young to constantly remind them that they are little more than slaves.

Hobgoblin commanders spare little thought for their thoul troops, and regularly dispatch them on suicide missions. Consequently, thoul soldiers hate their masters, but conditioning keeps most in line. Those who rebel find one of two ends—escape into the wilds or death at the stake for insurrection.

Thouls ardently worship Bane and believe that he created them as his chosen people. They are so dedicated to the Lord of Darkness that they even refuse to honor his exarchs, and they hold Maglubiyet in particular scorn. As a sign of their faith, thouls prominently display Bane's holy symbol on their clothing and armor and strive to live up to his harsh precepts and gain his blessing. They also believe that the many hardships the thoul race experiences at the hands of their hobgoblin masters are a divine test that they must endure. The hobgoblins, unsurprisingly, foster and manipulate this religious belief.

Adopted by Orcs: A few full-fledged thoul tribes do exist. These groups of several dozen members dwell in remote caves or ruins, and often resort to banditry or mercenary work to survive. Orcs often go out of their way to raid these tribes, as well as goblin settlements where thouls are thought to reside, in order to capture thouls. Orcs use thouls as bodyguards or soldiers, just as hobgoblins do—but unlike hobgoblins, orcs treat their thoul recruits as near equals. Thouls thrive in brutal orc society, and often command raiding parties composed of half-orcs, half-troll orcs, and ogrillons. As a result, adopted thouls are extremely loyal to their new tribes, speaking

Thoul Bodyguard	**Level 5 Elite Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 400
HP 130; **Bloodied** 65	**Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	**Perception** +4
Speed 7	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	

Traits

Regeneration

The thoul regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the thoul takes fire or acid damage, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Thoul Healing (healing)

Whenever an attack that doesn't deal acid or fire damage reduces the thoul to 0 hit points, the thoul does not die and instead falls unconscious until the start of its next turn, when it returns to life with 15 hit points. If an attack hits the thoul and deals any acid or fire damage while the thoul is unconscious, it does not return to life in this way.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Claw ✦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

⸸ **Broadsword** (weapon) **✦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage, or 2d10 + 7 damage if the target is immobilized.

⸸ **Double Attack ✦ At-Will**

Effect: The thoul uses *claw* and *broadsword*.

Triggered Actions

⸸ **Shoddy Tactics ✦ At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy makes an attack that does not include the thoul as a target.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The thoul charges or makes a basic attack against the triggering enemy's nearest ally.

Thoul Resilience ✦ Recharge when first bloodied

Trigger: The thoul is subjected to an effect that a save can end.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The thoul makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.

Skills Athletics +11, Intimidate +6

Str 19 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+4)	**Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 17 (+5)	**Int** 5 (-1)	**Cha** 8 (+1)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Goblin

Equipment leather armor, broadsword

Giant instead of Goblin and embracing the worship of Gruumsh and his exarch Vaprak.

Thouls and Ghouls: A small number of thouls opt to emulate their undead heritage and actually become ghouls. These thouls seek out areas associated with ghouls, such as necropolises and catacombs, and turn to the worship of Orcus and his exarch, the ghoul king Doresain. Such thouls attempt to make themselves look more ghoulish by wearing tattered clothing, coating themselves with grime, and shunning weapons.

A few of these thouls succeed in establishing a collaboration with actual ghouls. Ghouls, cunning by nature, appreciate the benefits of allying with a more powerful creature, especially one able to protect them from troublesome clerics and paladins. Such an alliance, however, does not prevent a ghoul from ruthlessly exploiting its dimwitted ally; for example, some ghouls demand a daily tribute of a thoul's flesh in exchange for letting it join a ghoul pack or as a form of down payment on a future unholy rebirth.

Occasionally, a thoul bent on achieving undeath works as an underling for a necromancer, a vampires, or a lich, in the hope that its master will help it achieve its transformation.

About the Author

Tim Eagon is a freelance writer living in Madison, Wisconsin. He has written several articles for *Dragon* and *Dungeon*, including "The Oasis of the Golden Peacock," "Ecology of the Hengeyokai," and "Creature Incarnations: Hordelings."

Backdrop: Hochoch

By Claudio Pozas

Illustration by Zoltan Boros

Cartography by Mike Schley

Located in the broad valley that cleaves the Oytwood from the immense Dim Forest, the town of Hochoch has always been a strategic location within the Grand Duchy of Geoff. Yet its importance has never been greater than it is now, because the town has become perhaps the sole torchbearer of a dying nation.

Giants have plagued the Grand Duchy of Geoff for generations. Their isolated attacks had always been a nuisance, but they rarely amounted to more than that. That situation changed seven years ago, in 584 CY, when the diverse giant clans and savage humanoid tribes of the Crystalmist Mountains descended upon Geoff in an unprecedented tide of devastation and savagery.

Now, Hochoch serves as the last bastion of freedom and civilization in Geoff, though the years of fighting and the burdens of war have exacted a heavy toll upon the inhabitants. Refugees from nearby areas have swelled the population, while savage attacks have wiped out crops and despoiled food supplies.

Factions diverge in their opinions about the most appropriate course of action to deal with the problems. While nobles and knights argue over treaties and priorities, refugees and peasants face a daily struggle for survival in an overcrowded city. These are dark days in Hochoch. But, as an old Geoffite saying goes, "The darker the storm cloud, the higher the griffon flies."

HOCHOCH IN D&D

Hochoch is located on the world of Oerth within the Greyhawk® campaign setting. The world of Greyhawk served as the first backdrop for the Dungeons & Dragons game. One of the earliest mentions of Hochoch occurs in the 1980 *World of Greyhawk* folio, where the town is but a name on the map of the Grand Duchy of Geoff. The 1983 *World of Greyhawk* boxed set later expanded upon the contents of this folio.

The 1982 adventure N1, *Against the Cult of the Reptile God* assumed Hochoch to be the origin of the player characters—the place from which they set forth to help the nearby town of Orlane. But once again, Hochoch was no more than a name on the map.

The year 1999 saw the release of two products that mentioned Hochoch. *Greyhawk: The Adventure Begins* advanced the setting's timeline to 591 Common Year (CY), while *Against the Giants: The Liberation of Geoff* expanded upon the classic "Giants Trilogy" adventures, detailing many of the towns in fallen Geoff. Still, Hochoch remained largely undeveloped.

Now, almost thirty years after its first mention, the town of Hochoch finally steps into the spotlight. Enjoy your stay!

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From Outpost to Bastion

Geoff's history stretches back for more than nine centuries, and Hochoch is not much younger than the Grand Duchy. From its humble beginnings as a military outpost, Hochoch ("Watcher's Hold" in old Flan) has held great strategic importance in Geoff. Originally just a sturdy riverside keep watching over Geoff's eastern border, the outpost soon grew into a small village. The few buildings that surrounded Hochoch Keep expanded into an entire town, far outgrowing the town of Midwood (Hochoch's elder by less than a generation) and becoming one of the largest settlements in Geoff.

When Geoff became a vassal state of the Kingdom of Keoland in 316 CY, its ruler granted a fortified manor in Hochoch to the Knights of the Watch, who established one of their primary strongholds there. Although polite, the relations between the stern Watchers and the general populace have always been cold. Still, the Watchers' presence has until recently kept Hochoch safe from the savage humanoids that occasionally preyed upon neighboring communities.

Hochoch's safety ended in 584 CY, when the giant-led forces stormed the realms of Geoff, Sterich, and the Yeomanry. The savage horde swept through Geoff, and refugees poured into Hochoch daily, bearing the scars of the invaders' violence. Soon after Preston's fall, a force of hill giants emerged from the Oytwood, smashed Hochoch's siege engines, and occupied the town. For almost a year, Hochoch's inhabitants struggled under the giants' abusive rule.

That suffering came to an end in 586 CY, when a force composed of Gran March soldiers and Knights of the Watch descended upon Hochoch and reclaimed the town after a bloody battle. Using Hochoch as a staging ground, remnants of Geoffite pike and longbow armies, led by the recently created Knights of the Dispatch, pushed back into the invaded lands, bent on vengeance. Even though this combined force achieved some victories—most notably the liberation of most of the Oytwood—the loss of peasants and knights alike led to a grim stalemate. The giants kept to the conquered towns, and the Geoffites lacked the population to effectively reclaim their land.

In the five years since its liberation, too many eager eyes have turned to Hochoch. The lords of Gran March annexed Hochoch (ostensibly on a temporary basis), and rumors abounded that the town might be formally given to the Knights of the Watch. Perhaps unsurprisingly to onlookers, the local populace resisted such a move, seeing it as a coup against Geoff.

Displeased by the Watchers' ambition, the exiled Grand Duke (Owen I of Geoff, currently housed in Gran March) announced his intention to move his court to Hochoch, the last free town of his realm. At the same time, quite a few Geoffite malcontents began blaming the Grand Duke's inaction for the loss

Hochoch at a Glance

Hochoch is an overcrowded walled town that serves as a military base, refugee camp, and diplomatic arena.

Population: 5,500, with about 4,200 humans, 500 elves, 250 halflings, and the rest divided among dwarves, gnomes, elves, half-elves, and half-orcs. Individuals of other races also appear occasionally.

Government: Hochoch is governed by a town council, instituted as a diplomatic compromise to ensure the town's safety. The council's members are displaced nobles, community leaders, Watcher and Dispatcher officials, and representatives of Duke Owen I and Commandant Magnus Vrianian of Gran March.

Defenses: Hochoch boasts a battle-hardened town guard, whose members maintain day-to-day order among the populace. The nearly 230 town guards answer to the local Knights of the Watch, who are honor-bound to uphold the laws laid down by the ruling council. The Watchers are an elite force, overseeing the defense of the city walls and investigating serious crimes with religious zeal. The number of knights fluctuates due to reassignments, but usually hovers around 80.

Inns: The Streamview Tavern is probably the most popular establishment in Hochoch, overlooking the northern shore. The wealthier residents prefer Walton's Winery, a well-appointed inn with an extensive underground wine cellar. Watering holes of all sorts can be found among the Shingles, where the poorer residents try to drown their sorrows.

Supplies: Hochoch has a long tradition as a starting base for adventurers and explorers, and several stores provide supplies for long-term expeditions. Since the giant invasion, these stores have become recruiting centers for brave Geoffites interested in mounting raids against the invaders. Olwyn's Outfitters and the Cautious Dwarf are two of the most popular supply shops.

Temples: Every major non-evil religion has at least a small shrine or chapel somewhere in Hochoch. On Watcher Hill stands a well-kept church, favored by the Knights of the Watch, that is dedicated to Heironeous, St. Cuthbert, and Kelanen, the Prince of Swords. The common folk prefer to attend the Old Faith services in the Grove, honoring nature-related deities such as Pelor, Obad-Hai, Beory, and Allitur.

of their country and promoting the idea of replacing the monarchy with a democratic system not unlike that of the Yeomanry.

Currently, diplomatic debates in Hochoch have settled on a precarious balance of interests. The city remains a Geoffite community, ruled by a council of representatives elected by nobles, merchants, and community leaders, and it pays tribute to the Commandant of the Gran March. The Knights of the Watch, under orders from their leader, Hugo of Geoff, have sworn to serve as Hochoch's town guard and uphold the laws laid down by the town council. It is uncertain how long this condition can last, however, before all parties are once again at each other's throats.

Geography and Climate

Poised upon a hill overlooking a curve in the Realstream's course, Hochoch commands an impressive view of the Midwood Vale—the expanse between the Dim Forest and the Oytwood. Most of the terrain around Hochoch consists of sturdy grasslands broken by the occasional copse of cottonwoods. A few miles to the north lies the brooding expanse of the Dim Forest, whose terrain slowly rises as it approaches the Barrier Peaks. To the south of Hochoch, the forested hills of the Oytwood sprawl across the landscape. The land to the west of the town slowly drops in altitude as the plains and forests give way to the swamplands of the Rushmoors. Finally, to the east, the Javan River cuts through the Midwood Vale near its namesake village. Beyond the Javan is what little remains of Geoff.

Hochoch lies in a subtropical region, where temperatures range from about 91° F (32° C) during Reaping (high summer) to as low as 46° F (7° C) in Fireseek (midwinter). This temperature range means that Hochoch sees little snowfall, although morning frosts are common during the colder months. Still, chilling fogs roll down from the Dim Forest from late autumn to early spring. Violent thunderstorms are common during the summer, when the winds carry in heavy clouds from the Azure Sea.

Population

The humans that comprise the majority of Hochoch's population are of mixed heritage, displaying all the best qualities of their Flan, Oeridian, and Suloise ancestors. Their complexions can range from the deepest brown to extremely pale, although most fall into a tanned middle ground. Hair colors also vary widely, from raven black to platinum blonde, though brown and reddish-brown occur with some regularity. Hair structure is usually wavy or curly—rarely straight. Eye color is typically black or brown, though gray, blue, and violet are not unknown.

Halflings have been a part of Geoffite society since the beginning, and they tend to live alongside humans. Apart from size, little difference exists between the two races—their cultures and manner of dress are nearly identical. Dwarves have lived in the Stark Mounds and the Crystalmist Mountains for centuries, but have always been a rare sight in the eastern parts of Geoff. Likewise, half-orcs in Hochoch might hail from the regions near the Crystalmists or from more distant realms, such as the Pomarj.

The humans of Geoff have traditionally kept good relations with the Olvenfolk of their realm. The high elves and gnomes of the Oytwood and Stark Mounds helped build the Geoffite capital of Gorna, and the wood elves of the Dim Forest have proven to be strong allies against the depredations of savage humanoids. This long history of cooperation has led to a goodly number of half-elves in Geoff's populace. Still, the recent trials have strained the relations among the humans, high elves, and wood elves, with each race fighting its own battles and treating its own wounds. A few clearer heads have realized that only a joint effort can reclaim Geoff from the giant marauders.

The human nomadic riverfolk known as the Rhenee merit special mention. Their barge-homes have escaped the giants' depredations, and the riverfolk have made a comfortable living out of ferrying goods and people up and down the Realstream and the Javan. Their knowledge of the riverways, mapped or otherwise, have made them invaluable to the refugees of Geoff, but some travelers—especially among the Watchers—resent having to pay the riverfolk.

The Town of Hochoch

Because of Hochoch's position between two large forests, wood is plentiful as a building material. The town's structures feature extensive woodwork, from shingles to carved frames, often with elven designs. The largest buildings, including Hochoch Keep, are built from stone quarried in the Stark Mounds. As befits a village of Hochoch's age, ivy covers most of the stone buildings. Since the repulsion of the giant invaders five years ago, several structures have undergone renovation to repair damage suffered during the battles.

Locations of Note

The numbers below refer to the Hochoch town map on page 26.

1. Hochoch Keep

A distinctive castle, Hochoch Keep served as the mayor's house for centuries. Its adornments include owl-shaped grotesques, since och ("watcher" in Old Flan) is also a colloquial term for owls. The Knights of the Watch acquired the keep after the liberation of Hochoch, and it now houses the order's local

garrison. The Watchers have set aside a separate building for use by the Knights of the Dispatch.

2. Boom Tower

Connected to the shore by a long causeway, this tower holds a mechanism that extends an enormous chain across the Realstream. Originally intended to shut down river traffic in times of war, the boom chain is now used primarily to direct floating logs down toward the mills.

3. The Mills

Across the Realstream from Hochoch Keep, several sawmills work on timber that has been harvested upstream in the Dim Forest and floated down to Hochoch. With the influx of refugees from elsewhere in Geoff, and the recent reconstruction of buildings damaged in the liberation of Hochoch, the demand for timber is at an all-time high. Unfortunately for the mills and those who need their lumber, problems in the Dim Forest have been interfering with production.

4. Anchorage

The Realstream washes against a narrow beach here, and most of Hochoch's fishermen and sailors pull their vessels ashore when not in use. Some, especially the Rhenee, prefer to keep their boats anchored to the wooden piers.

5. The Grove

This dense copse of cottonwoods grows around a natural spring that rises from the ground amid Hochoch's three main hills. Priests of the nature-oriented deities hold religious services here, and most of the population subscribes to these faiths—with the notable exceptions of the Knights of the Watch and Dispatch.

6. Watcher Hill

For centuries, a fortified manor house atop Hochoch's northernmost hill housed the Knights of the Watch, and their presence gave the hill its name. With the Watchers' relocation to Hochoch Keep, their former manor was converted into a chapel of Heironeous, St. Cuthbert, and Kelanen. The entire neighborhood has an orderly style in which the large homes of the nobility share space with more dignified businesses.

7. The Shingles

Named for the wooden tiles that make up the roofs of most buildings in this section of town, the Shingles is Hochoch's most populous neighborhood. The narrow streets and winding alleyways provide a haven for people of dubious intentions, and the Knights of the Watch rarely visit the area.

8. Town Gate

This impressive barbican serves as the main entry point for Hochoch, and a squad of Watchers is on duty here at all times. The gates and portcullis remain open throughout the day and are closed at night. Entrance after dusk is through a small door, after close inspection by the Watchers on duty.

9. Refugee Camp

Beyond the walls of Hochoch, a new neighborhood has sprung up in the last few years, composed of destitute refugees who have nowhere else to go. Most of the buildings here are poorly built wooden shacks, but the more recent arrivals must make do with makeshift tents. Hochoch citizens of pious disposition come here often to alleviate the situation with donations of food and shelter. In addition, the Town Council periodically surveys the refugees and puts the able-bodied to work whenever possible.

10. Realstream Ferry

Although not particularly deep, the Realstream can be tricky to ford, especially for those in wagons and carts. For such burdened travelers, the best option is the ferry barge that spans the river just south of Hochoch's walls. The town council pays the ferrymen, so the only fee levied here is for cargo (5 gp per vehicle).

Power Groups

Several groups are trying to influence the destiny of Hochoch—and all of Geoff along with it. Some of them are described here.

The Red Griffons

When Geoff fell to the invading horde, many survivors of its army pledged allegiance to the neighboring Gran March—in part due to the fame of its military—and were among those forces that reclaimed Hochoch from the giant invaders. These soldiers are now vocal supporters of the Gran March's annexation of Hochoch, and they do their best to influence the general populace to accept the town's temporary status as a permanent change. The Red Griffons take their name from their habit of displaying the Geoffite griffon in red and black—the colors of Keoland, Sterich, and Gran March.

The Freemen of Geoff

The so-called "Freemen of Geoff" are farmers and soldiers who blame the monarchy for its inefficiency in defending the realm from the giant threat. Inspired by the nearby Yeomanry, the Freemen of Geoff wish to replace Grand Duke Owen I with an elected official who would better defend the cause of the common folk. One of the more vocal of the Freemen is Wyllems of Pregmere, a blacksmith with a reputation as a troublemaker.

Knights of the Dispatch

Formed in the aftermath of the giants' invasion, the Knights of the Dispatch is a splinter sect of the Knights of the Watch whose members eschew the Watchers' strict adherence to codes of conduct in favor of more flexible methods of waging war. The Dispatchers are among the staunchest proponents for continuous raids into Geoff's territory, which makes them popular among the lower classes. A small number of Dispatchers have considered forming a new Geoffite knightly order based solely in Hochoch.

The local leader of the Dispatchers is the Grim Basilisk Kerwynn of Gorna, a middle-aged sword-mage who looks favorably upon adventurers willing to venture into enemy lands.

Knights of the Watch

This monastic order of knights has long aspired to control Hochoch and use it as a training ground for new Vigils (entry-level Watchers) who would fight the western nomads from beyond the Barrier Peaks (the traditional enemies of the order). When soldiers from Gran March first secured Hochoch, it seemed that fulfillment of the Watchers' dream was imminent. But political maneuvering by Grand Duke Owen and negative repercussions from the local population cut that dream short. By order of Watcher leader Hugo of Geoff—a personal friend of Owen I—the Watchers became the elite defense force of Hochoch, and no more. While the Watchers perform this duty to the best of their abilities, in accordance with the precepts of their order, some within its ranks doubt Hugo's capacity to continue leading at such an advanced age. Chief among these dissidents is the Great Honorable Wyvern Darwyck of Hookhill. Unsurprisingly to many, Darwyck would be one of the main candidates for Grandiose Imperial Wyvern if Hugo were to leave office.

The Loyalists

This catch-all term covers all of Hochoch's residents who still consider themselves Geoffites under the rule of Owen I. Some of the Loyalists wish to see Owen move his court to Hochoch, while others view such an action as an unnecessary risk, given the Grand Duke's advanced age and poor health. Many Loyalists actively oppose the Watchers, painting them as interlopers who value their own ambitions more than the welfare of Geoff's people. Some Loyalist groups have begun searching for Owen I's missing heir, Count Hustin, viewing him as a possible rallying figure for the disparate groups of Geoffite society. So far, divinations have revealed him to be alive and "amid the sky," but his exact location remains unknown.

Beyond Hochoch

The areas surrounding Hochoch, and the beings inhabiting those places, have a direct effect on the town's politics and security.

Midwood Vale

Midwood Vale is a beautiful valley with gently rolling terrain that separates the Dim Forest from the Oytwood. The valley stretches for 250 miles from east to west, and averages about 30 miles from north to south. The ground is fertile here, especially in the eastern end that borders the Rushmoors, and familial steadings are quite common within sight of the road that stretches from Midwood to Orlane. Aside from isolated groves of cottonwoods, the valley is unforested. Most of the inhabitants are humans and halflings, but elves from the Dim Forest, high elves from the Oytwood, and gnomes from the Stark Mounds are frequent visitors.

Before the giants invaded, Midwood Vale was mostly safe, but the recent unrest has prompted occasional raids by savage humanoids from the forests. Lizardfolk and troglodytes from the Rushmoors have grown bolder, and shadow creatures sometimes shamble down from the Dim Forest to prowl the area at night.

Midwood

Population: 150

At a Glance: Brooding fishing village with a secret

Older than Hochoch by less than a generation, Midwood is a sleepy fishing hamlet that the giant marauders who dominate the western lands have overlooked. Built in a hollow near the shores of the Javan River, the hamlet is easy for foot travelers to miss. Morning mist commonly cloaks the community, lending it a secretive demeanor.

The village's backwater appearance is only part of the reason the giants haven't bothered it much. The presence of a young giant named Seshey also helps to ensure Midwood's security. Seshey was supposed to stamp out any human resistance in the area, but instead he decided to bargain with the village elders. In exchange for keeping Midwood beneath the notice of marauding giants, the villagers pay him tribute in the form of whatever silver they can acquire. Seshey has kept his end of the bargain, and he has even defended Midwood from opportunistic bandits and raiding trolls and ogres.

In the time since his arrival, Seshey has become more of a honored neighbor than a warlord, even using some of the silver tribute he receives to buy food for the villagers in hard times. The people of Midwood are quite protective of their giant, helping him hide in a nearby cave whenever strangers approach. The village elders dread what would happen if word of Seshey's existence reached the ears of the knights in Hochoch. Luckily for them, the poor visibility and damp soil—which prevents the construction of proper fortifications—keep Midwood beneath the attention of the remaining Geoffite forces.

Hochoch
1 Hochoch Keep
2 Boom Tower
3 Mills
4 Anchorage
5 The Grove
6 Watcher Hill
7 The Shingles
8 Town Gate
9 Refugee Camp
10 Realstream Ferry
Barrier Peaks
Dim Forest
Javan River
Olve Water
Great River
Realstream
Geoff
Oytwood
Oyt River
Javan River
Stark Mounds
Rushmoors
A Hochoch
B Midwood
C Hocholve
D Derelion
E Preston
F Orlane
G Ruins of the Reptile God
miles 0 25 50 100 500
feet 0 50 100 200 500 1000

Orlane

Population: 500

At a Glance: Peaceful farming community at the edge of the sinister Rushmoors

The village of Orlane was once a quiet farming hamlet located in one of the most fertile parts of the valley. The village's placid demeanor was shattered a few years ago, when cultists devoted to a self-styled reptilian god (in truth a naga) infiltrated the community. Only through the efforts of brave adventurers did the village escape utter corruption.

For a while, life returned to normal in Orlane, but the recent invasion changed that situation. Some refugees from Geoff moved past Hochoch and settled in Orlane, boosting the population dramatically. In an effort to keep order, mayor Zakarias Ormond—himself a former adventurer—gathered other retired heroes from the region and established a council of elders to manage the village as best they could.

Despite the sudden increase in population, Orlane remained safe from the giants' depredations. The village elders are much more concerned about the dire creatures that sometimes emerge from the Rushmoors.

Dim Forest

One of the oldest and largest woodlands in Oerth, the Dim Forest stretches north of Hochoch for hundreds of miles. The trees here are ancient, with such dense foliage that they block out the sunlight, blanketing the ground in perpetual gloom. The humidity causes fog to rise from the ground and roll southward, lending a brooding character to the woodland and its surrounding areas. Some of Hochoch's residents have come to call this place the "Grim Forest." Despite its somber air, the Dim Forest has long been a home for several independent tribes of wood elves, especially west of the Javan River. But that situation changed with the arrival of the Shadow Dragon.

During the battle to protect the elven village of Derelion from the invading giants, the desperate defenders resorted to shadow magic in an attempt to turn the tide on the brutish interlopers. In an unforeseen accident, the wayward spell opened a rift to the Shadow Plane, through which the shadow dragon Hasforenses entered Oerth. Cloaked by the Dim Forest's natural gloom, Hasforenses slew all mortal combatants within his reach and set out to explore his new dominion.

Hasforenses—or simply the Shadow Dragon—has been slowly solidifying his position as the new lord of the Dim Forest. Shadow creatures and undead have become more common throughout the forest, and few elven communities remain. Some elf refugees have reached Hochoch, where they hope to amass enough support to mount an attack upon the Shadow Dragon's forces. Unfortunately, no one knows where the dragon lairs.

Even beyond Hasforenses's reach, the Dim Forest is still a dangerous place, with tribes of spider-riding goblins prowling along the eastern end.

Derelion

Population: Unknown

At a Glance: Former elven village corrupted by the Shadow Dragon

This village, once the pinnacle of elven architecture, has become a distorted, macabre parody of itself. Trees and wooden buildings have contorted into grim shapes that form a veritable hedge maze. Shadows dart across the landscape, and dark ones come to pay homage to the terrible Hasforenses. Although frequently away, the Shadow Dragon has turned the husk of Derelion into its personal lair.

In the center of the village, a pitch-black tear in the fabric of reality marks the portal that brought Hasforenses to Oerth.

Adventure Hook: To secure the wood elves' help against the giant hordes, the adventurers might have to venture into the Dim Forest in search of the lair of Hasforenses. Even if they slay the dragon, the pervasive shadow energy in the area might well bring him back in undead form.

Hocholve

Population: 0

At a Glance: Abandoned fort-town, now reclaimed by the forest

Built in 538 CY by Geoffite rangers to serve as a watching post against creatures from the Dim Forest, the fort-town of Hocholve—which means "Elven Hold"—served as a testament to the good relations between humans and elves in Geoff. But despite the best efforts of human and elf alike, Hocholve couldn't withstand the attack of the giant invaders. Its citizens used what meager warning they had to move the noncombatants to safety, leaving the fighting to grim volunteers who bought their loved ones' freedom with their own lives. Despite the defenders' bravery, the giants razed the fort-town. Their victory was short-lived.

As it turns out, straffern, the quaint plant that grew wild among Hocholve's buildings, was extremely poisonous to the giants. Little remains of the brutes, except for a few giant-shaped straffern bushes. The village is now overgrown and abandoned, except for the occasional oblivion moss or ambush vine.

Adventure Hook: A Hocholve refugee might ask the characters to retrieve a family heirloom from the conquered town. Upon finding it empty, the characters might spearhead an effort to fortify the place on behalf of the former inhabitants, defending it against plant and shadow creatures alike.

Oytwood

About a dozen miles south of Hochoch, the cottonwoods that dot the Midwood Vale begin to thicken, marking the edge of the Oytwood. This beautiful woodland isn't as foreboding as the Dim Forest—indeed, its tall trees blanket the ground in verdant foliage.

The Oytwood covers the northernmost reaches of the Stark Mounds, and its connections with Faerie give it an eerie, dreamlike splendor. This woodland boasts a rather sizable population of high elves who have migrated to Oerth from Faerie and built halls under the forested hills of the southern Oytwood.

Although the elves of the Oytwood have long maintained cordial relations with the humans of Geoff, and even helped build the capital city of Gorna, these relations cooled considerably in the aftermath of the giants' depredations. The Olvenfolk of the Oytwood survived only by retreating into their hidden halls to regroup and recover.

With no help coming from beyond the woods, the elves began a guerrilla war against the invaders that has met with modest success. Although the Oytwood has not been under giant control since 588 CY, several of the brutes still roam the forest. That fact, in addition to the threat of wandering fey beasts, has kept the elves from joining the larger effort to reclaim Geoff, and from helping their sylvan cousins fight the Shadow Dragon. If the folk of Hochoch can win the elves' help, the Oytwood could serve as a direct route from Hochoch to the giant-occupied capital of Gorna.

Preston

Population: 50

At a Glance: An elven outpost, recently reclaimed

Established before the formal founding of Geoff, Preston has long served as an outpost from which the high elves of the Oytwood watch for invaders. Its first such use was against the Suel and Oeridian migrants, and more recently, against the giants. Despite the best efforts of the elves, half-elves, and humans who lived there, the invading giants captured Preston, forcing its residents to flee either to Hochoch or to deep within the forest.

In recent months, the elven forces have expelled the giants from Preston. Currently, the treetop ruins of Preston serve as a base for a small garrison of stoic elves tasked with holding it until more forces can be spared to rebuild it.

Adventure Hook: Elf envoys in Hochoch are hoping to secure the aid of the Geoffite resistance, but the local leaders have so far been reticent. Officials of either group might ask the adventurers to help secure the area around Preston so that human and elf forces can once again work together against the giants.

Rushmoors

If the Dim Forest is a place of shadows and fear, then the Rushmoors are a step beyond—truly a place of death and decay. This vast expanse of marshland separates the Midwood Vale from the civilized lands in the east. The sinister reputation of the Rushmoors is in no small part due to the fact that it was once the center of the evil empire ruled by the lich demigod Vecna. The Occluded Empire, as it was called, claimed much of the land from the Barrier Peaks to the Azure Sea and the shores of the Nyr Dyv. The Maimed Lord oversaw it all from his fortress at the Rotted Tower—a vile structure rising from among the carrs of the Rushmoors. In the aftermath of the battle between Vecna and his lieutenant Kas, many of the temples and buildings that had surrounded the Rotted Tower fell into the swamp.

Untold artifacts of that dread civilization still lie in half-flooded chambers, and the results of dire experiments still roam among the carrs. Undead servitors and monstrous aberrations wander throughout the Rushmoors, preying upon lost travelers and nomadic lizardfolk tribes.

The Temple of the Reptile God

Not far from the village of Orlane, one of the submerged remnants of Vecna's empire recently served as the lair of the naga that called itself the Reptile God. From that underground complex, the naga commanded a cult of troglodytes and humans that threatened to corrupt Orlane. After the creature died, the black dragon Kharlixes took over the complex. The dragon avoids hunting near his lair and is searching for a more secure abode near the center of the Rushmoors.

Adventure Hook: Characters trying to track the Shadow Dragon might be led astray by sightings of Kharlixes and end up following the wrong dragon.

About the Author

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Wondrous Weavings

Tapestries of Power

By Jennifer Clarke Wilkes

Illustration by Hector Ortiz

The rich hanging depicts a tree-lined avenue leading away to a castle that seems to belong in a fairy tale. Gleaming battlements and impossibly thin, high towers soar over the forest to catch the light of a morning sun. Brilliant pennants appear to snap in the breeze, and you catch a scent of fresh spring air. Speaking the words of passage, you put out your hand to touch the gleaming threads and see it pass through the tapestry's surface, which ripples like a reflection in a still pool. The sounds of bird song and rustling leaves fill your ears as you step through.

Somewhere in the world (or beyond), it is rumored, are magnificent galleries. Only those who are invited, or who are fortunate enough to find an entrance, might gaze on the wondrous creations that fill such places: Statues that move and speak, paintings of lovely and terrible places that might or might not exist, cunningly fitted pieces of jewelry that can transform the wearer—or strangle the would-be thief. Visitors who are most highly favored might win a boon, the chance to partake of a piece's magical properties.

One of these legendary places is a seemingly endless hallway devoted to masterpieces of the woven art. Tapestries great and small line its walls. Some are magnificent depictions of legendary or historical events, or reproduce beautiful scenes from both nature and civilization. Others display abstract patterns, many of intricate design. A few seem drab in comparison, simple bands of colored cloth. But all of them are special.

The Caretaker

The hall of wondrous hangings is managed and guarded by a mysterious figure known only as the Caretaker. Entry is granted only by a pass phrase that the Caretaker provides. Each visitor receives a unique phrase, and it works only once. The Caretaker's race and gender can only be guessed, since it is rarely seen, and then only as a face within one of the many tapestries. The eyes of an embroidered figure suddenly come alive and follow a visitor about the room. Questions can be addressed to the Caretaker, but the response might be delivered days or weeks later, typically by a messenger homunculus in the form of a stuffed, woven doll.

Agents in places devoted to beauty and magic, such as temples to Corellon, Ioun, or Sune, or the halls of great lords and ladies of the fey, hear petitioners' requests and magically communicate with the Caretaker. Each such place has an identical tapestry hanging in a private chamber, showing the road to a fantastic castle in a springtime wood. If the petitioner is judged acceptable, the agent communicates the pass phrase, which opens the way through the entrance tapestry. The Caretaker allows each applicant the use of just one tapestry's power. When its magical effects have been bestowed, the petitioner is instantly transported back to the room containing the entrance hanging, and that pass phrase no longer opens the gateway.

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Very rarely, the Caretaker allows a tapestry to leave the gallery. The petitioner must usually demonstrate great need. On occasion, items from the collection might be sent "on loan" to a traveling exhibition hosted by highly trusted individuals—typically a monarch or a high noble of Faerie. Only very special occasions, such as a coronation or the start of a campaign against a mighty enemy, merit such an honor. Security for such exhibits is extremely high, and the traveling works are further protected by magical wards that instantly return a tapestry to the gallery should it be tampered with or accessed by an unauthorized person. The Caretaker also maintains magical communication through each hanging, allowing observation as though in the gallery.

The Caretaker is the current custodian of a miraculous device, the *Chromodactylic Loom*, which is responsible for the existence of many of the gallery's wonders. See that artifact's entry at the end of this article.

Magic Tapestries

These wondrous weavings combine beauty with functionality, serving to protect the very walls they grace. Some guardian tapestries are simple alarms, activating when any unauthorized creature moves within a specified distance. Others confer magical hardness to the surface on which they hang, perhaps even blocking phasing or teleportation, or preventing scrying attempts against the area.

The entries that follow are examples of the sorts of wonders a magical weaver might produce: Let your imagination build on them to create new marvels!

A magic tapestry is a wondrous item. Many of these are permanent, but some tapestries might be imbued with a single-use power.

Embroidered Beast

One type of enchanted tapestry illustrates a ferocious monster or an armored champion, stepping forth to do battle with an intruder. Depending on how much one is willing to pay, the defender can range from a simple soldier to a terrifying dragon. When summoning magic is used nearby, a wavering image of the champion emerges from the hanging and flows into the summoned creature.

Embroidered Beast Level 9+ Uncommon

A roaring monster faces you in the threads of this tapestry. As you speak the words of summoning, it leaps forth to challenge your enemies.

Lvl 9	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19	105,000 gp		

Wondrous Item

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Minor Action)

Requirement: You must use a summoning power of the tapestry's level or lower while you have line of sight to the tapestry and are within 10 squares of it.

Effect: The summoned creature gains resist 5 to all damage, and it is immune to charm effects and fear effects. In addition, if the creature normally does nothing if you end your turn without giving it a command, it instead uses a free action to make a basic attack against the nearest enemy.

Level 24 or 29: Resist 10 to all damage.

Hanging Doorway

This plain hanging depicts a prosaic subject: a wooden door, roughly 6 feet in height and 3 feet wide. The illustration is realistic, though drab, and the threads from which it is woven are simple linen—little fancier than journeyman's clothing. Its magic belies its humdrum appearance.

The tapestry is fairly lightweight, about 10 pounds, and can be folded into a bundle about the size of a large book. Unfolding it and placing it against a wall or similar vertical surface, then speaking the command phrase, causes the woven image to become a real door.

Hanging doorways are popular with adventurers exploring ruined complexes whose passages are no longer known. When the way is blocked by a cave-in, or a labyrinth leads to a dead end, such items allow escape or deeper exploration. Some *hanging doorways* are made for the use of specific creatures and might be larger or smaller than normal.

Burglars who would use such a tool beware: Those wealthy or influential enough to be targets of break-ins usually arrange for magical hardening of walls, or even nasty traps that trigger when a wall is breached.

Hanging Doorway Level 12 Uncommon

This plain wall hanging illustrates a doorway, which a word of opening causes to become a true passage.

Wondrous Item 13,000 gp

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Minor Action)

Effect: You unfold the tapestry and place it on a wall or other vertical surface adjacent to you. The image transforms into a real door, which opens into a 1-square-wide passageway up to 5 squares long.

The passageway lasts for up to 1 hour or until the tapestry is removed from the wall. If a creature is in the passageway when it vanishes, the creature is shunted to the nearest unoccupied space.

This power has no effect on surfaces that are magically reinforced.

Tapestries of Breathtaking Beauty

Not all magical works of art have a practical purpose. Like other art objects, they also exist for the sake of being beautiful. The finest such works are so magnificent that they transform their surroundings and even the mood of those who view them. These effects might include simple illusions that make a plain room seem more sumptuous, or gentle enchantments that create a sense of peace.

Sometimes, though, more insidious versions are commissioned to snare trespassers and would-be burglars. The woven scene might be imbued with powerful enchantment magic to entrap those who view them, paralyzing them or hobbling them with lingering nightmares. Once the trap has been triggered, the tapestry's magic is lost, and it becomes a mundane though valuable piece of art. Only a successful Arcana check can discern that the weaving contains dangerous magic.

Tapestry of Breathtaking Beauty **Level 15 Trap**
Object XP 1,200

Detect Arcana DC 22 **Initiative** –
HP 80
AC 29, **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 25, **Will** –
Immune cold, necrotic, poison, psychic, thunder, all conditions; **Vulnerable** 10 fire

Triggered Actions

Attack (charm) ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An unauthorized creature enters a square within 3 squares of the trap.
Attack (Opportunity Action): Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); +18 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dazed (save ends).
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead stunned (save ends).
Second Failed Saving Throw: The target falls unconscious until it takes damage or until an adjacent creature takes a standard action to wake it.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Arcana DC 22 or Thievery DC 30 (standard action). *Failure (by 5 or more):* The trap triggers.

Portable Gallery

This piece of fabric shows a masterful trompe-l'oeil design, representing a sumptuous chamber that seems to have real depth and double wooden doors apparently opening on the scene. Not only is it beautiful in its own right, the tapestry also provides a means to display many pieces of wall art. It is rather heavy when folded, about 25 pounds and the size of a backpack.

When unfolded and held upright to form an enclosure (a process that requires at least two people), the tapestry expands to create the chamber shown in its threads. The resulting room is an extradimensional, free-standing structure; the walls and ceiling are gilded with rococo designs, chandeliers of everburning flame provide light, and a plush, luxurious carpet covers the floor. Its walls are well suited to hanging paintings, mirrors, or other tapestries, and the room can serve as a ballroom, art gallery, fancy drawing room, or banquet hall. A wooden set of double doors can be closed from either side.

Portable Gallery Level 16 Uncommon

The sumptuous chamber this tapestry depicts springs into existence when the tapestry is hung.

Wondrous Item 45,000 gp

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Standard Action)

Effect (Conjuration): The tapestry creates a 40-foot-by-40-foot, fully-furnished extradimensional room with 20-foot-high ceilings. The room can be reached only through double doors the tapestry depicts, which are part of the room. Only you and those you designate can pass through the doors. You can close the entrance to make the tapestry invisible after you enter the room. It remains invisible until someone opens the doors.

The gallery's interior is a comfortable temperature and humidity. You can adjust the gallery's interior luminance from darkness to bright light. The gallery lasts until you dismiss it from the outside as a standard action. Any creatures still within when the effect ends reappear in unoccupied spaces nearest the tapestry.

Arras of Thrilling Heroics

Some tapestries are created for monasteries, temples, and other institutions that prize introspection and self-discovery. An observer in the presence of such a wonder can spend time in deep contemplation of the scene. Afterward, the viewer gains a boon, such as an increase in physical strength and stamina, immunity to damage or magical effects, or refreshed magical capacity.

The *arras of thrilling heroics* is an example of such an item. A scene of adventure is woven into it, such as a bold warrior facing a ferocious monster. An observer who spends some time meditating on the scene gains inspiration and fights more boldly.

Arras of Thrilling Heroics Level 18 Uncommon

The scene of daring adventure woven into this tapestry inspires you as you look on it.

Wondrous Item 85,000 gp

Properties

✦ To use this item's other properties, you must spend at least 5 minutes doing nothing but studying it. You can do so only once per day.
✦ For one hour after you study the tapestry, while you are within 10 squares of it, you can make saving throws against charm effects and fear effects at the start and end of each of your turns.
✦ For one hour after you study the tapestry, while you are within 10 squares of it, you can reroll any damage die that has a result of 1.

The Map Imperishable

The Nerathi society of adventurers known as the Torches of the Flame Imperishable commissioned this weaving to serve a dual purpose. Holding a place of honor in the society's gathering hall, it depicts a map of all the known regions of the world, as well as blank spaces representing areas that have yet to be discovered. A row of golden tassels dangles from the bottom edge of the tapestry, but gaps show that many

are missing. (A newly created map has 50 tassels. When a map is found, it has 20 + 3d10 tassels.)

When a member of the society (or, on rare occasions, another individual granted special permission) departs on a mission of exploration, the society chair detaches one of the tassels from the tapestry and presents it to the explorer. By keeping it on his or her person during the journey, the traveler both maintains a line of communication to the society and can add newly discovered areas to the depicted map. A viewer looking closely at the tapestry over time can discern the pathways of various expeditions, as details bloom in previously blank spots.

The Map Imperishable Level 24 Uncommon

The rich threads of this tasseled wall hanging show a map of the known world. Close inspection shows paths crisscrossing the map.

Wondrous Item 525,000 gp

Properties

✦ To use any of this item's powers, you must carry at least one of its tassels.

✦ While you carry a tassel from this tapestry, your path and any terrain you pass through are displayed on the tapestry.

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Minor Action)

Effect: You can send a mental message of up to 25 words to a specific individual viewing the tapestry, or another specific creature that carries a tassel from this tapestry.

Utility Power (Teleportation) **✦ Daily** (Move Action)

Effect: You teleport to a square adjacent to the tapestry. You must be on the same plane as the tapestry, but the distance is otherwise unlimited. The tassel you carry is destroyed when you use this power.

Hide of Plain Sight

Some bespelled hangings are secure storage spaces for valuables, which disappear into a woven image to become part of it. A cleverly worked tapestry might provide a hiding spot for a spy or a burglar, who gains entry to a hall of treasures as part of the newest acquisition. Such items are also known as "burglars' bundles." (Of course, serious collectors usually anticipate such deceptions and have magic-damping auras overlaid on their display rooms.) A hanging might also disguise a safe, an entrance to a secure area, or real valuables by merging into the wall, showing a prosaic (if well-rendered) scene or matching the surrounding wall's décor.

Hide of Plain Sight Level 25 Uncommon

This wall hanging is not woven, but rather consists of sheets of soft, vellum-like skins cunningly stitched together. The scene it depicts is tattooed with many-colored inks.

Wondrous Item 625,000 gp

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Standard Action)

Requirement: You must be adjacent to the tapestry.

Effect: You step into the tapestry and become part of the depicted scene. While in the tapestry, you have line of sight but not line of effect to objects and creatures outside the tapestry. Creatures outside the tapestry have line of sight but not line of effect to you.

Until the effect ends, you cannot move, you do not age, and you do not need to breathe, drink, or eat. You can end this effect as a standard action. The effect automatically ends after one year or if the tapestry is destroyed. When the effect ends, you appear in a square of your choice adjacent to the tapestry. Until the effect ends, no other creature can use this power.

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Standard Action)

Effect: You place an object against the surface of the tapestry, and the object appears as part of the depicted scene. You can end this effect as a standard action or by storing a different object in the tapestry, whereupon the first object is expelled. The effect automatically ends after one year or if the tapestry is destroyed. When the effect ends, the stored object appears in a square of your choice adjacent to the tapestry. Until the effect ends, no other creature can use this power.

Imprisoning Threads

Some versions of *hides of plain sight* make nasty traps that can imprison unwelcome visitors. Their imagery might be disturbing, with screaming faces of humanoids or roiling, nightmarish scenes from the Abyss. Previous intruders might already be trapped inside.

Imprisoning Threads **Level 25 Trap**
Object XP 7,000

Detect Arcana DC 29 **Initiative** –
HP 120
AC 39, **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 33, **Will** –
Immune cold, necrotic, poison, psychic, thunder, all conditions; **Vulnerable** 10 fire

Triggered Actions

↯ **Attack ✦ Recharge** when the trap has fewer than two creatures removed from play.

Trigger: An unauthorized creature moves into a square containing or adjacent to the trap.

Attack (Opportunity Action): Melee 1 (the triggering creature); +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: The creature is removed from play (save ends).

Aftereffect: The creature is dazed until the start of its next turn.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Arcana DC 29 or Thievery DC 38 (standard action). *Failure (by 5 or more):* The trap triggers.

✦ **Control:** Arcana DC 34 (move action). *Success:* The character can discern the number and types of trapped creatures and can expel one or more trapped creatures. The creature appears in a square of the character's choice adjacent to the trap and is dazed (save ends). *Failure (29 or lower):* The trap triggers.

✦ **Destroy:** When the trap drops to 0 hit points, all trapped creatures are expelled. Each trapped creature appears in a square of its choice adjacent to the trap, takes damage equal to its bloodied value, and is dazed (save ends).

Artifact: The Chromodactylic Loom

The *Chromodactylic Loom* dates back to an early age, not long after the Dawn War, when the gods embarked on many projects of creation in their new-won world. Corellon, god of magic and beauty, joined with Ioun, goddess of knowledge, and Avandra, lady of travel and adventure, to devise a wondrous tool that could create works of art both lovely and practical: ways to travel, keep lore, and discover new things.

The loom is immense, large enough to fill a ballroom, and its frame is made of the crystallized essence of the Astral Sea. No yarn or thread is needed to use it: The weaver merely envisions the colors and materials, and the loom's strings provide. Working its horn-and-ivory shuttle through the web of starstuff causes magical strands to appear in its wake. Such wondrous magic exhausts the loom's power to create new works for a year and a day.

The loom's power cannot be used to destroy. Attempts to create a tapestry of destructive power or a hanging intended for evil ends simply fail: the weaving does not appear, or it becomes a mundane object. Anyone who attempts to use the artifact for such purposes loses its favor, and the loom quickly moves on to another.

The Caretaker has been the loom's guardian and partner for longer than anyone can tell. It is near immortal, and its interests are so closely aligned with those of the loom that the two have been inseparable. Perhaps the Caretaker is a fey or divine being, or maybe its life span has been magically extended by its partnership with the artifact. Until a new heir comes along, the two are not likely to grow apart. The Caretaker can activate the powers of any tapestry in the gallery without meeting any normal requirements.

Many of the wonders that hang in the gallery were woven on the loom. It has the power to create a scene that exists in its own reality, and it can open or cut the way to that realm at will.

Chromodactylic Loom Epic Level

The loom towers over you, its threads glimmering with magic potential. Taking up the shuttle, you feel the forces of creation guide your hand.

Artifact

Property

While in the same location as the loom, you can perform the Enchant Magic Item ritual to create wondrous items that have a level up to 5 levels higher than yours.

Utility Power ✦ Daily (Standard Action)

Effect: You learn about a tapestry created on the loom. This knowledge includes the date of the tapestry's creation, details about its creator, what the tapestry depicts, and the tapestry's magical properties and powers.

Utility Power ✦ Encounter (Standard Action)

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you can view a location that contains a tapestry created on the loom. You can see, hear, and speak as though you were at that location.

Utility Power ✦ Encounter (Standard Action)

Effect: You can use one utility power of a magical tapestry that you can see, including a tapestry viewed using the loom's utility power.

Goals of the Loom

- ✦ Create wonderful new things and send them into the world.
- ✦ Celebrate and protect works of art, especially those that are created from thread or cloth.
- ✦ Prevent the destruction of beautiful things, and destroy creations that would cause harm.

CONCORDANCE

Starting score	**5**
Owner uses the loom to create a magic tapestry	**+2d4**
Owner destroys a cursed, evil, or otherwise destructive item (in the loom's estimation) (1/day)	**+1d6**
Owner creates a worthy piece of art (in the loom's estimation) (1/day)	**+2**
Owner knowingly allows a work of art to be destroyed	**-1**
Owner destroys a work of art, or uses a work of art for evil ends	**-2**
Owner destroys a creation of the loom	**-4**

Pleased (16–20)

The loom is delighted by its owner's commitment to beauty and discovery.

Its owner gains the use of the following property and utility power as long as the loom remains at this concordance.

Property

You cease to age.

Utility Power (Teleportation) ✦ **Daily** (Move Action)

Effect: You open an extradimensional rift that allows creatures to teleport to an unoccupied space within 10 squares of a tapestry woven on the loom. The rift remains open for 1 minute or until you take a minor action to dismiss it.

Satisfied (12–15)

The loom recognizes a true effort to create and is willing to assist its owner in discovering unseen wonders.

Its owner gains the use of the following property as long as the loom remains at this concordance or higher.

Property

While on the same plane as the loom, you have blindsight 3.

Normal (5–11)

The owner has the potential to create great things but not the commitment. The artifact reserves its judgment for the time being.

At this concordance, the loom has the powers and other characteristics listed in its statistics block.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

The loom considers its owner too slothful or materially invested to protect objects of beauty. Unless the owner devotes serious effort to its ends, the loom will not stay long.

The property granting the ability to create higher-level magic items is not available to the owner until the loom's concordance again increases to 5 or higher.

Angered (0 or lower)

The owner is willfully destructive and/or concerned only with the accumulation of possessions, and the loom seeks to find someone who will fulfill its divine function as quickly as possible.

The owner cannot use the loom's utility powers as long as it remains at this concordance.

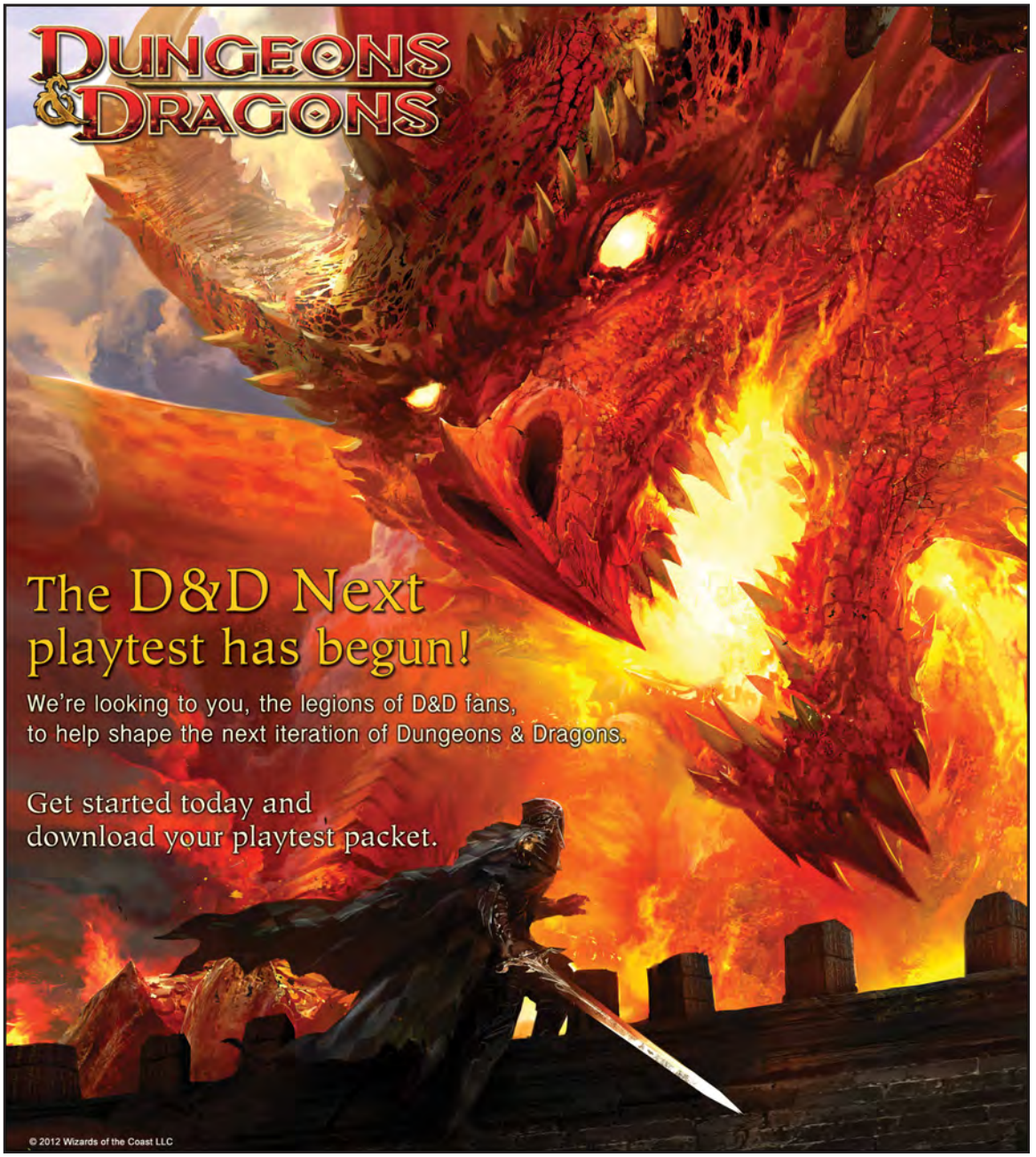
Moving On

The imperative to create, nurture, and share beautiful objects drives the loom. Should someone appear who is more dedicated to this purpose than its current owner, the artifact eventually finds its way to that person. The Caretaker has served the loom admirably for centuries, but a greater patron might yet arise.

If the loom is pleased when it moves on, its owner retains the ability to create higher-level magic items.

About the Author

Jennifer Clarke Wilkes came to Wizards in 1995 as the editor for the *Ars Magica* roleplaying game. She moved to editing Magic: The Gathering® until 1999, when she became an RPG editor. She has been involved with many game lines in the company, and occasionally tries her hand at RPG design.



Inns in an Instant

By John Hasznosi

Illustration by Chris Seaman

You've spent hours on the perfect dungeon, your monsters are all particularly devious and cleverly placed, and your adventure plot is practically Shakespearean in its genius. You've thought of everything.

Your players are eager to see what you've come up with. The first order of the session is to have the characters meet, and nowhere in the D&D® cosmos do chance meetings that lead to adventures occur more often than at the inn. Everything goes well, the characters have agreed to the task at hand, and then a player asks, "What's good to eat here?"

A seemingly inconsequential detail causes the game to crash to a halt. Never mind your perfectly awesome plot and masterfully crafted monster stat blocks—you didn't go to the trouble of coming up with any details about the place where the characters met to begin their adventure.

Can't think of the inn's name off the top of your head? How about the name of the barkeep, the menu, or the prices? Who's currently present? What conversations can be overheard? What's the general mood, and why? The following tables provide quick answers to such questions, allowing the DM to focus on more important things, such as how to introduce the next plot hook or run the upcoming encounter.

1. Inn Names

Though often overlooked, an inn's name can add instant flavor and detail to the establishment. The name might be a reflection of the inn's most common patrons—The Thirsty Farmer, for example—or it could hint at a secret history or interesting origin story. The Inn of the Golden Bird could be hiding a mystery under its unassuming floorboards.

Roll on the table below for random inn names. Reroll until you find an interesting combination from columns A and B, or simply choose from the list. (On a roll indicating a number, make the second name plural: "Three Ogres.")

INN NAME

d100	A	B
1	Crafty	Lizard
2	Angry	Ploughman
3	Bloody	Fountain
4	Brave	Bird
5	Sleepy	Barrel
6	Sly	Boar
7	Lonely	Ogre
8	Greasy	Cartwright
9	Clumsy	Demon
10	Thirsty	Miller
11	Hungry	Mare
12	Grinning	Stallion
13	Little	Dagger
14	Quiet	Pony
15	Shady	Cauldron
16	Happy	Troll
17	Drunken	Griffon
18	Laughing	Goblin
19	Clever	Skull
20	Dead	Rogue
21	Prancing	Nymph
22	Gentle	Harpy
23	Lost	Orc
24	Dark	Spoon

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INN NAME

d100	A	B
25	Giggling	Hearth
26	Flying	Bard
27	Dirty	Devil
28	Shifty	Squire
29	Noisy	Frog
30	Faithful	Bottle
31	Singing	Artisan
32	Iron	Haven
33	Lazy	Rabbit
34	Friendly	Poet
35	Ethereal	Castle
36	Green	Priest
37	Silly	Wolf
38	Ebon	Oak
39	Sad	Giant
40	Tipsy	Eagle
41	Filthy	Captain
42	Quick	Falcon
43	Boisterous	Skillet
44	Dusty	Fairy
45	Young	Princess
46	Purple	Garden
47	Timid	Dragon
48	Enchanted	Prince
49	Three*	Wench
50	Red	Maiden
51	Salty	Queen
52	Dancing	Knight
53	Jolly	Virgin
54	Scarlet	Unicorn
55	Lucky	Swan
56	Silver	Hound
57	Pious	Arms
58	Charming	Temple
59	Grim	King
60	Golden	Tankard
61	Old	Fool
62	Treacherous	Tanner

INN NAME

d100	A	B
63	Nervous	Shield
64	Careful	Hawk
65	Crystal	Archer
66	Nimble	Sandals
67	Honest	Fox
68	Ancient	Flagon
69	Swift	Pirate
70	Eager	Warlock
71	Bronze	Hedgehog
72	Fat	Cobbler
73	Bold	Bear
74	Zealous	Hunter
75	Lewd	Hero
76	Empty	Keg
77	Somber	Gardener
78	Stern	Wanderer
79	Emerald	Monkey
80	False	Heroine
81	Grateful	Blade
82	Crimson	Jester
83	Ruthless	Serpent
84	Grumpy	Greaves
85	Ugly	Guard
86	Lively	Liar
87	Amber	Toad
88	Obedient	Crier
89	Two*	Sailor
90	Greedy	Farmer
91	Fair	Spirit
92	Gray	Squirrel
93	Ruby	Fletcher
94	Whistling	Huntress
95	Stubborn	Snake
96	Ten*	Drunkard
97	Naughty	Galley
98	Brass	Bowl
99	Crooked	Warlord
100	Slimy	Vulture

Name Variations

You can also roll on the Name Variations table below for even more variety.

INN NAME VARIATIONS

d8	Variation
1	Add "Tavern" at the end of your chosen name: The Sleepy Ogre Tavern
2	Add "The Inn of the" to the start of the rolled names: The Inn of the Sleepy Ogre
3	Add "Inn" to the end of the rolled names: The Sleepy Ogre Inn
4	Add "The" to the beginning of the name: The Sleepy Ogre
5	Combine two rolls from column B in the Inn Names table above: The Sleepy Ogre and Nymph
6	Add "Tap House" to the end of your chosen name: Sleepy Ogre Tap House
7	Add "Arms" to the end of your chosen name: Sleepy Ogre Arms
8	Use a barkeep name (rolled below) and choose an ending: Runthrop's Tap House

2. Barkeeps

Your friendly neighborhood barkeep can become an adventuring group's best confidant and source of information. If you have a personality in mind, it's best to create a unique nonplayer character. Otherwise, roll for the race, gender, and age of a random barkeep or innkeeper. Adjust the likelihood of encountering a particular race by region or the needs of your campaign. Half-elves roll on either the Human Barkeep Names or the Elf Barkeep Names tables.

Consider an alter ego for any barkeep. Is Delin Renfold a nefarious spy of the Dark Network? Or is he a powerful necromancer performing nasty experiments in his basement? You can roll up an alter ego monster or NPC stat block to coincide with a secret identity.

The tables below represent core D&D races. Adjust the choices to suit the needs of your campaign.

A barkeep might have a nickname based on personality or physical traits. If the character becomes a presence in the campaign, this sort of detail gives the players a sense of connection to the NPC.

BARKEEP RACE AND GENDER

d20	Race and Gender
1	Tiefling male
2	Tiefling female
3	Elf male
4	Elf female
5	Halfling male
6	Halfling female
7	Dwarf male
8	Dwarf female
9	Human male
10	Human female
11	Standard male*
12	Standard female*
13	Standard male*
14	Standard female*
15	Half-elf male
16	Half-elf female
17	Eladrin male
18	Eladrin female
19	Dragonborn male
20	Dragonborn female

* Standard indicates the most commonly found race of a particular settlement.

BARKEEP AGES

Race	Age (years)
Dragonborn	(5d10) + 13
Dwarf	(2d100) + 19
Eladrin	(3d100) + 18
Elf	(2d100) + 19
Halfling	(5d10) + 16
Human/half-elf	(5d10) + 16
Tiefling	(5d10) + 16

DRAGONBORN BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Dragonborn (M) First Name	Dragonborn (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
1	Heldeofol	Sokra	Firedrinker
2	Numesh	Zirnee	Kulzabesh
3	Keskur	Hareena	Ironmelter
4	Jhunvar	Aorinza	Frenthaviss
5	Talasseth	Levea	Seshlaron
6	Grethnich	Arvena	Thuresh
7	Radonaar	Derra	Cinderheart
8	Vorkil	Tylora	Nazthuron
9	Shudrech	Quorthessa	Ulzariss
10	Darangreth	Suthini	Frostsworn
11	Kutreen	Hishvedi	Akralech
12	Rendurss	Meruva	Delberon
13	Phanath	Letheen	Stormcradle
14	Chulmeth	Sorenlesh	Rethreleck
15	Thrunev	Narenn	Tethnuvesh
16	Perethul	Wuressi	Venomfang
17	Krenzul	Trenela	Jorlsenviss
18	Gharaxx	Edethei	Ossnelech
19	Zuvan	Opnatra	Lithnaron
20	Lorthnul	Surian	Bekrashess

DWARF BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Dwarf (M) First Name	Dwarf (F) First Name	Clan Name
1	Therin	Orthinia	Grimbeard
2	Konitir	Wynnthri	Darkstone
3	Gunthraz	Diesina	Boozeblood
4	Fughanor	Gorthriss	Orestrike
5	Hithdren	Listra	Gemseeker
6	Okino	Ladreyn	Anvilsoul
7	Badrik	Tristryd	Rockchewer
8	Kordrek	Thrayka	Orethane
9	Rebern	Pinzla	Silvercask
10	Granthrim	Deldith	Minequaff
11	Thorelin	Norian	Runechip
12	Karrackis	Yarthrea	Firebrow
13	Donvel	Arthena	Irongut
14	Thromfir	Torera	Bloodbeard
15	Dereben	Helini	Stoneshield
16	Vavek	Selthenn	Alefoot
17	Mabergor	Runefiss	Hammersong
18	Skirilath	Geselen	Forgeheart
19	Duthtrock	Doa	Boulderhelm
20	Zorlgrum	Niln	Hillcrusher

ELADRIN BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Eladrin (M) First Name	Eladrin (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
1	Dijulian	Leannia	Kantiluthian
2	Larthon	Kaylleigh	Talespinner
3	Thayeren	Bethidela	Ruquelar
4	Arizlakuza	Leria	Incantius
5	Saravis	Quinala	Feysong
6	Lelethir	Thistrani	Valinora
7	Gavilindan	Anisvilan	Ethereala
8	Immilen	Kaeryn	Tresquiar
9	Laineth	Thelenisa	Keldrannor
10	Pramilar	Saliar	Lendalir
11	Qualias	Vainara	Mythalandis
12	Revunalor	Aleath	Duirsarian
13	Dinartisar	Lethyri	Corellis
14	Berkian	Telonia	Starweaver
15	Moyanzir	Shenwrynn	Silmanthor
16	Rayazan	Andoriel	Grathal
17	Alazar	Levethien	Astralania
18	Leovorian	Sivarea	Velshara
19	Farlieth	Arvaneria	Winterfire
20	Relathar	Quendili	Songstar

ELF BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Elf (M) First Name	Elf (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
1	Raven	Treloreen	Darkshadow
2	Deltor	Lafar	Rivermist
3	Nunel	Chiarus	Stormbird
4	Marrdrin	Aila	Duskwhisper
5	Nelor	Annun	Swiftarrow
6	Olorion	Leairi	Glittermoon
7	Venolen	Lotus	Cloudborn
8	Nerepar	Thia	Wolfcaller
9	Lenevelon	Kalathiana	Hawksong
10	Vasaren	Pasarin	Spiritwind
11	Netherin	Julna	Dawnbreaker
12	Relean	Raniq	Goldwood
13	Talon	Vashara	Shimmersun
14	Tinaris	Eridiun	Starfall
15	Hiranel	Oseri	Brookspeaker
16	Warric	Lorinea	Moongleam
17	Burenus	Rosen	Redleaves
18	Kinsalor	Feralia	Farshot
19	Guthrin	Foxy	Glimmerdawn
20	Hilsadar	Yulia	Willowsinger

HALFLING BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Halfling (M) First Name	Halfling (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
1	Narshi	Jilly	Fastfingers
2	Huffy	Lillic	Smallpockets
3	Chuvy	Deia	Quickfeet
4	Rukker	Nashana	Treejumper
5	Terrin	Adenna	Mousebane
6	Frenny	Chussy	Longfoot
7	Nemmer	Kebrina	Pondhopper
8	Mazal	Tavara	Silvertongue
9	Yander	Yanelia	Coinslapper
10	Worric	Luz	Keenears
11	Tunner	Kinithi	Spryblade
12	Nerrim	Allena	Hastyhands
13	Banadil	Queryn	Gemnose
14	Pedin	Suneel	Goldslinger
15	Sleer	Kwenlo	Fateskipper
16	Windel	Dellen	Nimbletoes
17	Solstrun	Palulae	Shotluck
18	Zulm	Veruni	Huddlebrush
19	Junan	Suleris	Burrowborn
20	Laffer	Peffy	Hedgethane

HUMAN BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Human (M) First Name	Human (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
1	Valec	Aliana	Blackwinter
2	Lenherrow	Kisani	Heathington
3	Kriz	Shaya	Nubingnor
4	Mirly	Petrivi	Ortegena
5	Jor	Eltez	Nightharrow
6	Donlin	Juva	Runthrop
7	Aleb	Nana	Beldock
8	Mirul	Myri	Algoy
9	Bren	Sass	Grash
10	Elthid	Miko	Nararis

d20	Human (M) First Name	Human (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
11	Witglen	Elicia	Welnib
12	Bessir	Stucy	Grij
13	Grefdon	Gwin	Hilden
14	Brenthor	Shilly	Grethkin
15	Martegan	Peneresil	McRufrick
16	Drunthen	Mirn	Tebril
17	Pronluc	Mulonny	Kalmin
18	Manny	Elly	Renfold
19	Urik	Drea	Kenisville
20	Delin	Farila	McAndrik

TIEFLING BARKEEP NAMES

d20	Tiefling (M) First Name	Tiefling (F) First Name	Family Name (if any)
1	Xul	Thrainee	Lathian
2	Delatos	Delzidiae	Whiptail
3	Kamados	Zoa	Gloomgrin
4	Querinax	Derecia	Felstrike
5	Menos	Lyseliss	Zezbulane
6	Horthos	Tizerea	Jeferloch
7	Sluethis	Morianna	Dozmordin
8	Emokess	Terinna	Qurelech
9	Terath	Phoebitia	Darkfire
10	Sarakka	Taktra	Relzdexun
11	Dinusin	Skraya	Grasht
12	Siadiss	Ravertia	Puledi z
13	Moskiz	Vacheri	Armansuss
14	Anmen	Peluna	Blackflame
15	Taluss	Doomensel	Wrevilicus
16	Kutrech	Wallistra	Kerevon
17	Ruleph	Iruvedi	Ophenzul
18	Edelandross	Hedonastrae	Tethenbri
19	Malich	Lamita	Chemmidon
20	Xanros	Therseeli	Sinfury

3. Atmosphere

When you step through the door, the room goes quiet and all eyes fall upon you. As you make your way to the bar, you can hear hushed whispers and sense the gaze of the patrons on your back.

Setting the mood adds a touch of realism to the "feel" of the inn. Atmospheres can range from a quick description such as "the place feels upbeat" to a deeper discussion expressing why this is the case. Don't overdo it: if all the players want to do is get their extended rest, a brief description will suffice. Roll or simply choose a mood that suits the need of the game.

The atmosphere of an inn can change from day to day, depending on the demeanor of the settlement surrounding it and the day's events. If the inn is one

INN ATMOSPHERE

d20	Atmosphere	Possible Reason
1	Depressing	All alcohol shipments have been delayed, resulting in a low supply and increased prices.
2	Down	Poor trade, bad weather, and the slow flow of coin has soured people's mood.
3	Dark	Patrons reflect on a previous war that ravaged the land. Entire families lost their lives, and gruesome tales dominate the conversation.
4	Angry	A rival settlement has been encroaching on local trade, causing businesses to suffer.
5	Fearful	An ominous chill permeates the air. People speak in hushed tones, whispering quietly among themselves.
6	Tense	A patron complains profusely to the innkeeper about the poor quality of the food, drink, and service and refuses to pay his tab.
7	Anxious	The weather has been unfavorable for the local crops and outlying farms. This not only hurts trade, but could cause a severe food shortage.
8	Strange	The music played by the bard is . . . eerie. People laugh at nothing in particular. A child in the corner sits alone, rocking back and forth on the floor.
9	Sad	The passing of a local priest hit the community hard, and today is the anniversary of her death.
10	Boring	The food is bland and uninspired, as is the drink. No one seems capable of cracking a smile or talking to one another.
11	Quiet	The previous night of revelry and merriment has caused most patrons to simply sit quietly and try not to make sudden moves—at least, until the next big party.
12	Calm	The mood is low-key but not somber, and all the patrons are behaving themselves.
13	Comfortable	Due to improved trade, food and ale is in good supply and of fine quality. Prices are fair, the lasses and lads fairer, and customers are happy.
14	Light	With the crops in, the populace healthy, and the mead flowing, smiles are exchanged as often as coin.
15	Upbeat	Business is looking up, and the troubles of yesterday seem far in the past.
16	Pleasant	Whether it's the menu, the mead, the large pitchers, or the prices, the owner is clearly doing something right.
17	Serene	The sound of song resonates within the walls as if the building and the voice were a single instrument.
18	Fun	The innkeeper has decided to share a humorous tale or two, causing sudden bursts of laughter and the pounding of fists on tables.
19	Loud	Drink up! There's another keg on its way! A party is in full swing, with strangers and friends alike sharing tales, beer, and merriment.
20	Exciting	Preparations for a local celebration are being made. Naturally, the beer and wine have to be thoroughly tested and tasted to ensure their quality.

that the adventurers are likely to return to on multiple occasions, take note of the prevailing atmosphere and the mood on subsequent visits. Inns that score a 10 or lower on multiple occasions usually don't stay in business for long. Even the friendliest establishment can have a bad day, but patrons will seek out more inviting surroundings if the dull mood persists.

4. Inn Type and Employees

Unless you have a particular plot-driven reason for a building to be too full to accommodate the adventuring party, assume there's room at the inn. If an inn is crowded due to a local festival or large caravan passing through town, the characters might need to share a room or even bunk down in the common room. Otherwise, they might be directed down the street to a less reputable establishment . . . one where adventure awaits.

The class of inn depends on the size and nature of the settlement. Common inns are universal. Poor inns appear in destitute or criminal areas, whereas fine inns appear most often in cities. There are exceptions to every rule: A fine inn might be found in the middle of the countryside, catering to nobles traveling along a popular trade route. A perfectly respectable common inn might have suffered a downturn of fortune since the last time characters visited to become a struggling, poorly maintained roadhouse.

Common and poor inns might allow characters down on their luck to throw a blanket on the floor of the inn's common room for a nominal fee. Noble's quarters, found in only the finest of inns, are the epitome of luxury and include a private bath (with attendants), bedding of the finest silks, and sophisticated décor befitting those of the most refined tastes and sensibilities.

Bouncers are the basic security employed by an establishment's owner and can vary depending on the class of the inn. A poor inn might hire thugs to quell the bar fights. A fine inn's servants could be as gently refined as its patrons, or they could be secret combat masters who can end any disturbance in an instant. Staff noted on the Inn Size table is in addition to the barkeep. When a server isn't present, the duty of serving customers falls on the innkeeper.

INN STAY (PER DAY)

Type of Inn	Price
Poor	
Common room	2 cp
Typical room	5 cp
Common	
Common room	2 sp
Typical room	5 sp
Fine	
Typical room	2 gp
Noble's quarters	10 gp

INN SIZE

d12	Number of Rooms	Staff
1	0	1 server
2	2	1 server
3	4	2 servers
4	4	3 servers, 1 bouncer
5	4	4 servers, 2 bouncers
6	6	4 servers, 2 bouncers
7	6	5 servers, 2 bouncers
8	8	5 servers, 2 bouncers
9	8	6 servers, 2 bouncers
10	10	7 servers, 2 bouncers
11	10	7 servers, 4 bouncers
12	12+	8+ servers, 6+ bouncers

5. Specials Menu

Specials are a handy way to add a little spice and flavor to the menu—no pun intended. Consider adding the inn or innkeeper name before any of the house specials. For example, "Runthrop's Rice and Peas" could be a famous (or infamous) local delicacy. Roll once each for food and drink, choosing the table that best corresponds to the locale in which the inn is found. Consider giving a +1 bonus or -1 penalty to a single skill check for a day after eating or drinking a given special.

The Truly Nasties table can be used for any establishment of ill repute, whether it's a dirty hovel full of lice-ridden regulars, or a local prison or even a slave pen. Of course, few prisons or slavers will offer their "customers" alcoholic beverages (unless as a reward for good behavior).

SPECIAL PRICES

Type of Inn	Price
Poor	
Food special	3 cp
Drink special	1 cp
Common	
Food special	2 sp
Drink special	1 sp
Fine	
Food special	2 gp
Drink special	1 gp

CITY

d10	Food	Drink
1	Braised beef and pears with ginger	Fire mead
2	Roasted cod and mashed potatoes	King's ale
3	Minted pea soup	Dwarven double draft
4	Beef steak and kidney pie	Corellon reserve
5	Poached duck with farro	Spiced apple cider
6	Rib roast and vegetables	Fey wine
7	Clams and garlic	Star wine
8	Cedar planked salmon	Lord's lager
9	Rack of lamb and baked potato	Royal reserve
10	Roll on a nearby locale table	Roll on a nearby locale table

DESERT

d10	Food	Drink
1	Raw horse sushi with rock cress	Scorpionweed reserve
2	Baked rattlesnake and spring parsley	Desert star wine
3	Baked camel meat and brittlebrush salad	Cactus spirits
4	Barbecued gopher legs on a stick	Poppy port
5	Iguana bits with rattleweed sauce	Purple sand juice
6	Fried ostrich and egg omelet	Mariposa mead
7	Meerkat dumplings with sage	Flax mead
8	Salted camel and blue flax bread	Chia tea
9	Scorpion soup and blister beetle crackers	Desert lily brandy
10	Spiced baked coyote with jewelflower	Keysia liqueur

FROZEN TUNDRA

d10	Food	Drink
1	Musk ox soup and bearberries	Caribou special reserve
2	Braised pike and thistle stems	Fireweed whiskey
3	Grilled muksun with reed root	Berry brandy
4	Hare stew and willow crackers	North ice wine
5	Boiled walrus and fireweed seeds	Moss mead
6	Seal chunks with lichen dip	Willow tea
7	Caribou stew and dried mossbread	Crowberry cider
8	Lemming and berry soup	Thistle port
9	Reindeer ribs with acorn broth	Glacial lichen liqueur
10	Crowberry pie with smoked elk	Juniper juice

LONELY ROAD

d10	Food	Drink
1	Salted onions and bread	Dark road ale
2	Rabbit stew and crusts	Star's moonshine
3	Leeks and berries	Apple cider
4	Scrambled eggs and sprouts	Apricot cider
5	Peppered milk-toast	Spiced ale
6	Cabbage in a cup	Wanderer whiskey
7	Rice and peas	Fharlanghn spirits
8	Cauliflower soup and corn	Honeysuckle mead
9	Barbecue elk and broccoli	Plum cider
10	Venison pie and bread	Drifter draft

MOUNTAIN

d10	Food	Drink
1	Wild parsnip stew	Wombat berry cider
2	Sable and hawthorn pie	Goat's milk and brandy
3	Grilled elk and ground orchids	Sable spirits
4	Roast grouse and turnips	Dwarven double draft
5	Thistle salad with roasted grubs	Wild orchid wine
6	Crisped worm skewers and potatoes	Moradin mead
7	Baked goat flank	Earthen brandy
8	Moss biscuits with syrup	Triple tankard
9	Roast antelope with root salad	Silvermoon mead
10	Roll on Underdark table	Roll on Underdark table

PLAINS

d10	Food	Drink
1	Roast buffalo and sage bread	Bison hunter brandy
2	Rabbit and baked pumpkin	Spiced apple cider
3	Moose flank and wild green salad	Wanderer whiskey
4	Green chili stew	Plainsman's port
5	Blue corn dumplings	Wild berry brandy
6	Bison horn soup	Honey mead
7	Grilled moose steak	Tracker tea
8	Buffaloaf and honeyed corn	Pumpkin cider
9	Poached and peppered quail eggs	Sage spirits
10	Smoked salmon and wild berries	Moose horn moonshine

PORT CITY

d10	Food	Drink
1	Roast chicken with thyme	Corellon reserve
2	Lobster in tomato cream sauce	Apricot cider
3	Rack of lamb platter	Wight wine
4	Crab-stuffed lobster tail	Archon ale
5	Rock salt-encrusted prime rib	Dwarven double draft
6	Baked loin of pork with gravy	Royal reserve
7	Steamed mussels with fennel	Westgate wine
8	Roast pheasant in oyster sauce	High spirits
9	Celery and octopus salad with lemon	King's ale
10	Roll on any other locale table	Roll on any other locale table

SWAMP

d10	Food	Drink
1	Grilled water snake in marigold sauce	Swamplight spirits
2	Frogs' legs and bulrush stems	Trollbane ale
3	Roast heron and chopped sundew	Cranberry cider
4	Lily-wrapped butterfly chips	Lily liqueur
5	Bog beetle dumplings	Bulrush brandy
6	Wren pot pie and cattail soup	Black currant juice
7	Black currant braised alligator	Wild rose reserve
8	Toasted dragonflies and cranberries	Red currant lager
9	Warbler stew and blueberry bread	Black tupelo tea
10	Grilled crocodile and wild rose puree	Sundew mead

TROPICAL

d10	Food	Drink
1	Smashed cinnamon potatoes	Coffee
2	Grilled snake and macadamia	Tangerine brandy
3	Roasted crocodile in coconut milk	Rice wine
4	Frogs on sugar cane skewers	Orchid's tear spirits
5	Chocolate covered ants and roast pelican	Mango cider
6	Stewed bandicoot with cocoa	Maize liqueur
7	Alligator soup and melon pastry	Plum leaf tea
8	Barbecued tiger fish and papaya	Chocolate milk and brandy
9	Spiced monkey tail and cashews	Lotus leaf wine
10	Lizard gruel with nutbread	Papaya tea

UNDERDARK

d10	Food	Drink
1	Fluorescent fungus salad with cave grubs	Lichen liqueur
2	Diced blind eel and deep salts	Mineral mead
3	Amber lichen and softrock bread	Algae ale
4	Translucent crayfish stew	Mushroom moonshine
5	Crimson moss cakes and cave jelly	Dwarven double draft
6	Crustacean broth with ironloaf	Deeps ale
7	Roasted deeps beetles with algae dip	Moradin mead
8	Toasted salamander in mineral pepper	Shadow stein
9	Arachnidumplings and fried fungus	Softrock spirits
10	Roll on Mountain table	Roll on Mountain table

VILLAGE

d10	Food	Drink
1	Roast chicken and potatoes	Shepherd spirits
2	Beef stew and sourdough	Rice wine
3	Cheese pie and onion soup	Ploughman's port
4	Mushroom soup and garlic toast	Miller's moonshine
5	Pork loin and dumplings	Herb and mint tea with brandy
6	Mutton meatloaf	Spiced apple cider
7	Baked boar and greens	Wainwright whiskey
8	Squash and fish soup	Vitae juice
9	Rabbit curry	Paddock plum wine
10	Venison and bean stew	Royal reserve

WOODLAND

d10	Food	Drink
1	Acorn soup	Honey mead
2	Honey braised boar ribs	Spiced apple cider
3	Baked pheasant with leeks	Silvermoon mead
4	Grilled wild boar chops	Fey wine
5	Cashews and berry pie	Star's moonshine
6	Roast stag in antler sauce	Glitter mead
7	Grilled moose skewers	Woodsman's whiskey
8	Broiled salmon and potatoes	Ranger reserve
9	Mushroom stew with corn bread	Tracker tea
10	Fried turkey legs	Corellon reserve

TRULY NASTIES

d10	Food	Drink
1	Crunchy critters and grub pudding	All-sorts
2	Smashed guts and cabbage	Cool grog
3	Not-so-old rice in sour goat's milk	Dregs and water
4	Green beef and brown leek stew	Angel spit ale
5	Fried chunks and lard bread	Orc spirits
6	Grilled ins-and-outs	Quarter-mead
7	Salted eyes and carrot ends	Bacon beer
8	Bone and blood mix stew	"Almost" ale
9	Lettuce, liver, and lung pie	Turnip wine
10	Bloated boar bits and eggs	Abyssal ale

6. Number and Types of NPCs Present

Count on this question any time a character enters an inn: "Who else is in the room?"

The first table defines the total number of patrons present, and the subsequent tables give brief descriptions of the types of people found. Beggars actively ask for alms or spend their meager coppers for a hot plate of food. Commoners are farmers, laborers, and artisans. Shady characters aren't explicitly thieves; they simply have that look about them, appearing as menacing ruffians or dark and mysterious strangers. Most inns of reasonable quality employ a performing bard or even sponsor a group of entertainers, especially during peak times of business. Merchants tend to be wealthy, as are nobles, and both sorts are usually accompanied by bodyguards or an entourage. Military elite are highly ranked officials, usually lieutenants and captains, knights, or even generals. For a result of "Other," choose a patron from any other class table, or add your own special NPCs to the mix. All inns of any class are frequented by adventurers of some kind.

NUMBER OF PATRONS

d20	Patrons Present	NPCs Present
1-2	Empty	0
3-7	A few people	1d8
8-10	Small crowd	1d6 + 10
11-15	Bustling	1d8 + 5 × number of inn rooms
16-19	Packed	1d10 + 10 × number of inn rooms
20	Overcrowded	2d10 + 15 × number of inn rooms

POOR INN PATRONS

d20	NPC Patron
1-2	Town guard
3-6	Beggar
7	Bard
8-12	Shady character
13-18	Commoner
19-20	NPC adventurer

COMMON INN PATRONS

d20	Patron
1-2	Shady character
3-6	Merchant
7	Bard
8-16	Commoner
17-18	NPC adventurer
19	Town guard
20	NPC VIP (d4): 1. Priest; 2. Military elite; 3. Noble; 4. Other

FINE INN PATRONS

d20	Patron
1	Shady character
2-6	Merchant
7	Bard
8-15	Noble
16	Military elite
17	Priest
18-19	NPC adventurer
20	Other

7. Topics of Conversation

The following list of casual conversations is usable in any tavern or social gathering. Most topics probably aren't of interest to adventurers, but occasionally a local's comments might spark a call to action.

8. Random Events

The random events on the next page are "silence breakers." There are times where even the best role-players are stuck for words. Rather than interrupt the moment with the party simply heading to their rooms, consider adding a short, random detail of something happening in the inn to give the moment a spark of life and continue the interactions. As with the gossip and rumors, be careful not to be too distracting. Blood dripping through floorboards can simply be spilled wine upstairs. There's no need to have an actual murder suddenly take place—unless of course, you want it to!

9. Inn Template

Rolling inns on the fly is easy, but you can also have a number of pre-rolled and detailed inns on hand. Use the form at the end of this article to create a few samples to keep at the ready.

About the Author

After decades of tiring his friends with tales of how his 2nd Edition character Raven Darkshadow soloed the original Temple of Elemental Evil, **John Hasznosi** now lives in self-imposed exile in a damp cave somewhere at the bottom of the Fraser Valley (better known as Vancouver, Canada).

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION

d20	Conversation
1	Two patrons quietly negotiate a small business deal involving the sale of various local commodities.
2	A local has recently been made to sleep in separate quarters by his wife—again. Gossipers speculate on what could have caused her ire this time.
3	The weather has been a bit peculiar. Hopefully it will get back to normal before it interferes with local trade.
4	Half-drunk patrons grumble about their tithes and taxes.
5	There's a lively discussion about where to buy the best livestock and what prices to expect.
6	Lately there has been a shortage of work horses, making the harvesting of crops more cumbersome.
7	Customers argue over which ale tastes better and which inn has the best-looking servers.
8	The barkeep gives a young patron advice on how to woo members of the opposite sex. The youngster listens intently, taking in every word.
9	Parents speak of their ire at their children's dreams of someday becoming adventurers.
10	Trade has been good, and prospects might be looking even brighter. There is talk of a wealthy merchant surveying property in town to open a new business.
11	A drunken patron mumbles softly to himself as he mopes over the loss of his true love.
12	A patron is complimented on his fine attire, followed by a request to cover one's tab—just this once.
13	Tankards click together in memory of a friend long passed away. Tales and memories are shared.
14	Last winter's fires weren't an accident. They were started by a drunken, careless traveler who miscast a spell.
15	The traveling minstrels passing through town are rather attractive. Especially the one in red!
16	An elder patron condemns the table manners of a younger companion, who seems uninterested in the elder's opinion.
17	A customer laments his upcoming chores. He despairs of a full two weeks of hard work attending to his master's errands.
18	After sipping more ale, a lone patron reads aloud a love letter he's writing, struggling to find the right words of adoration. People nearby snicker as they overhear.
19	A table of customers compliments the food and drink of the establishment.
20	A server chuckles as a customer whispers into her ear—something about a "moonlight stroll."

RANDOM EVENTS

2d20	Random Event
2	Someone drops a tankard, and a roar of laughter follows.
3	As the front door opens, a rat quickly darts outside.
4	A customer staggers near the bar and then falls over, sending coins spilling.
5	Someone burps loudly, the sound followed by a hushed chuckle.
6	The noise of something smashing and breaking echoes from the kitchen.
7	A sudden crash of thunder causes some patrons to jolt in their seats.
8	An argument breaks out at a table. Chairs are pushed back as a brawl is about to ensue.
9	A server spills drink over a patron by accident and apologizes profusely.
10	The fire in the hearth snaps loudly, spitting out embers onto the floor. A server hurriedly douses them.
11	A patron becomes a little too friendly with a server, prompting a quick and angry response.
12	Customers look around for servers or the innkeeper, none of whom seem to be present.
13	A group of incredibly beautiful women enters the inn and sits down at a table, ignoring all others.
14	One of the decorations on the wall behind the bar falls, sending the innkeeper diving to catch it.
15	Two birds land at the window outside. One pecks the glass as they both eye the food on the tables.
16	The ghostly image of a face is very briefly reflected on a silver tankard. A few patrons scream.
17	A drop of liquid the color of dark blood drips down from between the boards on the ceiling.
18	A patron waves to the innkeeper, then deftly tosses a coin to him. The innkeeper catches the coin.
19	Outside, a man appears to be waiting for someone to leave (or enter) the inn. He seems nervous.
20	A beverage is tossed in the face of a patron, causing an uproar.
21	A string on the bard's lute breaks. Miraculously, the bard integrates the change in sound seamlessly.
22	There are loud cheers—and a few curses—as a patron wins a card game. She collects her pile of takings with a smile.
23	There's a screech as a server accidentally steps on the tail of a cat that has wandered into the area. The cat darts under tables and out of view.
24	You feel a slight chill as a draft blows over your feet.
25	With a loud cheer, two patrons stand and begin to dance without rhythm—clearly inebriated.
26	The pitter-patter of rain strikes the glass of the windows, then stops as suddenly as it started.
27	A patron bursts into loud laughter, but his dining companion seems unamused.
28	As a customer enters, a gust of wind rushes inside, sending small objects flying.
29	A large cart of food is pushed up to a table; the waiting customer rubs his hands in hungry anticipation.
30	People cringe as someone runs a knife too hard over a plate, causing it to screech.
31	The drunkard in the corner finally passes out, his head hitting his (half-full) plate of food hard.
32	After dropping her fork, a customer curses as she knocks over her drink while trying to pick it up.
33	Two lovebirds spoon-feed each other while looking at each other with adoration.
34	A short argument ensues between the barkeep and a customer, and the customer is ordered to leave the bar.
35	A friendly patron rises from his seat, pitcher in hand, and cheerfully refills everyone's drinks for free.
36	You notice a customer discreetly pocketing leftover food from abandoned plates.
37	A wonderful flowery smell wafts past you as someone moves by.
38	The barkeep accidentally spills ale on the counter and gasps as the beer forms the image of a weeping skull. He quickly wipes it up, his eyes locking on yours nervously.
39	A patron performs a trick with a coin and then flicks it toward a server, who catches it with a wink and a smile.
40	An oil lamp flickers out. After a brief pause, the lamp flutters back to life.

Inn Name

Barkeep Name

Class (_____)

NPCs Present

Atmosphere (_____)

Today's Special

Topics of Conversation

Random Events

DARK·SUN CAMPAIGN SETTING

Eye on Dark Sun

The Widow's Spirit

By Rodney Thompson

Illustration by Aaron Miller

Possessing one of the most terrifying positions of power on Athas, the templar-wives of Nibenay are all the more dangerous because of the circumstances in which they live. Bound to the Shadow King of Nibenay both magically and (at least, according to their title) through marriage, templar-wives wield magical and psionic power that rivals that of any other sorcerer-king's templars.

Many years ago, one of these templar-wives rose above all the others, remaining a constant focus of Nibenay's attention. No historical account has preserved her name, but the people of the city feared her, and the Shadow King had her closely watched and guarded, lest anyone try to harm his most favored servant.

For a time, this templar-wife lived in relative comfort and wielded a great deal of power in the city. Wielding one's own power is quite a bit different from wielding someone else's, though, and soon she came to resent Nibenay. Every ounce of power that he granted her reminded her of her near-slavery to the sorcerer-king, and it drove home the fact that she had no more freedom to come and go than the lowliest palace servant. Though she wielded psionic might that would bring other templars to their knees, she rarely had a chance to use it. Instead, she often remained sequestered in the palace while supplicants and other templar-wives came before her to make their requests.

Eventually, her resentment grew too great to keep inside, and she began creating plans to slay Nibenay when his guard was down. Yet, as with every other time someone has tried to assassinate the Shadow King, the attempt was doomed to fail. Nibenay sensed her treachery before she was even close to launching her plans. In a cold fury, the sorcerer-king had her arrested and then executed after lengthy torture. Soon after his favored bride was dead, Nibenay transferred his attentions to another one of his servants.

But death did not end the bride's story. Rather than passing beyond the world, her spirit lingered and began haunting Nibenay. Sightings of the murdered bride began within weeks of her execution. A persistent rumor maintained that the grief-stricken woman had perished after Nibenay's love for her had died, because she simply could not go on living without him. If this story seems oddly romanticized for a city under the rule of a vicious dictator, it is. Nibenay started the rumor among his other templar-wives to keep them fighting for his affections, and it soon

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filtered down from them to the common people. Ignorant of her plot against the sorcerer-king, Nibenay's people soon began referring to the apparition as the Widow.

Though the Widow's true motivations may differ from those attributed to her in legend, the fact remains that she is no simple spirit drifting through the city and frightening people. A master of magic and psionics in life, the Widow is more present in the world than a typical ghost. She can seize control of a living person, and rumor holds that she forces her victims to perform acts of violence and sedition against Nibenay and his templar-wives. Most of the time, these acts involve great personal risk to the possessed individuals and lead directly to their deaths.

The Widow manifests as a floating, spectral woman dressed as the other templar-wives are garbed, but with her face replaced by a terrifying skull. Those few who have seen her speak of her terrible visage, but she rarely appears this way for long. Typically, this manifestation is an immediate precursor to possessing a chosen victim. Once she has gained control of her new host, she is likely to stay in possession of the body for weeks or even months while she executes her plans, leaving just at the moment before her victim dies. Between possessions, the Widow usually remains absent for months at a time, and her next sighting might be as much as half a year away.

Below are three potential plot hooks that you can use to make the Widow a part of your campaign.

Plot Hook: The Vengeful Widow

The Widow has chosen her next victim—one of the other templar-wives who has recently gained some power and influence in Nibenay. The Widow manifests near this individual and possesses her, then begins making her victim associate with rebels and members of the Veiled Alliance, thereby entangling her with the enemies of the sorcerer-king. The heroes first encounter the possessed templar-wife in just such a setting, and she exhibits few or no indicators of possession. The characters should come away from their dealings with her believing that they have gained a powerful ally close to the sorcerer-king.

After a few adventures during which the heroes work against Nibenay with the help of the possessed templar, the Widow grows impatient and starts trying to push the heroes into bolder and riskier attacks on the sorcerer-king. If they grow suspicious (and they should—obvious suicide missions tend to raise a few questions), they might also notice the templar-wife acting erratically, growing more hateful and reckless by the day. Any character who succeeds on an Insight or Religion check (DC 22) can determine that another consciousness is influencing the party's new ally. From there, the characters have a limited number of choices. They can carry out the Widow's bidding and possibly face certain death in the process, or seek a means of driving the Widow out of her victim—realizing that the templar-wife may not consider them allies once she is no longer possessed. A third option—do nothing and see what happens—could prove even more catastrophic when the Widow turns her fury on the heroes and sends other allies to attack and slay them.

Plot Hook: The Enemy of My Enemy

The Widow has possessed a high-ranking member of the Veiled Alliance operating in Nibenay and driven him to expose his true affiliations in a reckless attack on several templar-wives. The possessed leader survived, but in such grievous condition that the Widow left his body and moved on to another. The ailing wizard summons the heroes to his bedside and relates to them the tale of his own possession and subsequent near-death experience in attacking Nibenay's templar-wives. He also reveals that he has retained some memories of the Widow's plans and knows the expected movements of the templar-wives at various times throughout the coming weeks. Armed with this information, the heroes can stage surprise attacks against the templars that actually stand a chance of success, given the heroes' skills and strength.

The danger in such a course of action is that the Widow intends to possess someone else as quickly as possible and launch another, less carefully planned attack. Though she might have some success, it is likely that many helpless citizens of Nibenay will suffer in the process. So while planning their ambush, wise heroes could also be combing the city for any rumors of the Widow's appearance. Once they locate her next host (a young bard just earning a name for herself as an assassin), they must subdue her and place her within a magic circle. Doing so traps the Widow inside the body long enough for the heroes to launch their ambush against the templar-wives without interference or undue danger to innocents.

Plot Hook: The Possessed Hero

At some point, the Widow tries to possess one of the heroes while he or she is isolated from the rest of the adventuring party. If the attack is successful, give the player the following information:

The ghost of a templar-wife killed by Nibenay has possessed you and now seeks vengeance upon the sorcerer-king and his allies. Do not let your companions know this information, and behave completely as normal with the following exceptions.

- *Show no mercy to any servant of Nibenay, even if this attitude puts you at a disadvantage.*
- *Do not let an opportunity to strike at a servant of Nibenay pass, even if doing so puts you at risk.*
- *Attempt to convince your allies that Nibenay and his minions present threats that they must deal with, and urge them to take any opportunities to negatively impact Nibenay that they currently have the power to handle.*

With the player's cooperation, the hero's shift in attitude should be subtle, emerging only after several sessions of play. As with the Vengeful Widow plot hook, any suspicious hero can make an Insight or Religion check (DC 22) to determine that his or her companion is under the influence of another being. At that point, the heroes must decide how to deal with the possession. Placing the possessed character inside a magic circle keeps the Widow trapped within her victim's body. A Remove Affliction ritual can drive the Widow out of the possessed hero, and her possession counts as a level 15 effect, so any attempt to use the ritual suffers a –15 penalty to the Heal check made at its conclusion, as per the ritual's normal rules.

About the Author

Rodney Thompson, an advanced designer for Dungeons & Dragons® R&D at Wizards of the Coast, is from Chattanooga, Tennessee. His credits for the D&D® game include the *Dark Sun® Campaign Setting* and the *Dark Sun Creature Catalog™*, *Monster Vault™*, *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild™*, and *Lords of Waterdeep™*.

EBERRON

Eye on Eberron

The Winter of the World

By Keith Baker

Illustration by Ben Wootten

When Eberron created life, she also created death. She gave the asp its venom and set plagues loose in the world. All these things have their purpose. Now you have pulled the serpent's teeth and leashed the plagues with magic. Our mother will not be mocked, and her wrath is coming soon.

—Forlorn, the druid

A young woman walks through the sewers of Sharn. The rats whisper to her as she passes, and beetles gather in the wake of her footsteps. Her name is Malady, and she is here to save Sharn. She intends to destroy the mystical stones that cleanse the water and keep the people of the city from becoming sick. Her actions are a gift: Thousands will die, but those who survive will be stronger for their suffering.

The Children of Winter are the bogeymen of the western woods. Eldeen farmers are quick to curse the Children when crops fail and plague spreads. These fears and suspicions have a solid foundation. The Children of Winter actively spread disease and blight, and in recent years they have brought tragedy to communities that might otherwise have prospered.

Most believe that the Children of Winter are nihilists who worship death, but little could be further from the truth. Although they surround themselves with vermin and the trappings of decay, the Children see themselves as champions of life. They believe that all natural things have a purpose, even those that seem malevolent. Death clears the way for new life. Disease weeds out the weak.

The Children work to preserve this cycle. They battle undead wherever they find them, because these abominations break the cycle of life and prey on the living. They fight aberrations, which have no place in nature. But they also fight to restore a balance that was broken long ago. Healing rituals stave off plagues that would otherwise eradicate overgrown populations. House Lyrandar's control of the weather can turn a season of drought into one that yields a prosperous harvest. Sharn relies on magic to sanitize its water, to hold up its towers, to light its streets, and

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for hundreds of other tasks. The Children of Winter seek to restore the balance between life and death that civilization has upset.

To outsiders, their goals might seem ridiculous and selfish. The Children stand in the way of progress and kill innocent people. But the Children of Winter believe those people need to die. In their eyes, this isn't just a point of philosophy. Like most druids, the Children see Eberron as the source of all life and the spirit of the natural world. They believe that she had a grand design for nature, a purpose yet unfulfilled. And they believe that if humanity strays too far from the path of Eberron's design, she will wipe the slate clean and start again.

For generations, the Children have sought to forestall this apocalypse with their actions. Today, most of the druids believe that their efforts have been in vain; to them, the Mourning is a sign that humanity has gone too far. Some still hope that there is a way to avert the ultimate disaster. Most simply do what they can to prepare people for what is to come by culling the weak and showing the strong the hardships they will have to overcome.

As a Dungeon Master, you must decide if the Children are correct. If their beliefs are mistaken, then they are misguided villains whose actions threaten civilization. But if they are right, then clashes with the Children could be a harbinger of the coming fall of Winter—a cataclysm that will completely change the shape of Eberron.

Child's Play

Outsiders often confuse the Children of Winter with the Ashbound, since both groups of druids engage in attacks on civilized communities. Where the Ashbound employ brute force, though, the Children rely on plagues and similarly indirect attacks. Their subtle methods require a different kind of response by characters in a campaign.

When Malady sabotages the mystical water purification system in Sharn, hundreds of people start dying. How do the characters deal with the situation? The player character inquisitive could use skills to determine the source of the disease, leading the characters to storm the sewers where Malady has fortified her position with enhanced vermin and other mystical traps. Once they defeat her, the artificer or wizard character must find a way to repair the damage she has done. Alternatively, Malady might have left immediately after causing destruction, leaving the characters to contend with the aftermath of her actions. Malady herself isn't the focus of the adventure; rather, the lingering effects of her actions can continue to be a story element through a number of adventures. The city doesn't have the resources to cure everyone who has fallen ill, and even after the water purification system is restored, the diseases still run rampant through the population. This could affect allies of the characters or change the balance of power in other ways. If the diseases hit a particular district or race especially hard, it could cripple a faction or create a scarce resource. And it will certainly increase the influence of House Jorasco!

Although the Children of Winter are generally antagonists, they can also be unusual allies. Consider the following adventure ideas for your campaign.

The Fury: The community that serves as home base for the adventurers is overcome by a contagious wave of violence. The strong turn on the weak, driven by an insatiable aggression—and yet, some semblance of intelligence allows the victims of this plague to form packs and fight strategically. This has all the signs of a classic zombie outbreak, but the victims aren't undead; radiant damage and *turn undead* have no effect on them. House Jorasco encountered this plague long ago—so long ago that the cure is buried and forgotten in some Jorasco vault. Can the characters find the Children of Winter responsible for reviving and releasing this plague? If so, can they discover the cure and save any friends who have been infected, or is destroying the victims the only solution? Despite the lethality of the plague, the Children of Winter have no desire to eradicate populations; their philosophy is based on the principle that the strong will survive these trials and be invigorated by the struggle. They expect some people to be immune to the disease, and they want those people to survive. If the Fury plague is more dangerous than they anticipated, the Children who sowed the seeds of the disease might help the characters fight it.

Hoarfrost: When the Children spread a disease, they want some part of the population to survive. With a new war on the horizon, however, factions with less deliberate convictions look for ever-more lethal weapons. Having seen the Children of Winter resurrect diseases thought long dead, such as the Fury plague mentioned above, a cabal in House Jorasco is developing bioweapons. They are capturing Winter druids and holding them in a hidden facility known as Hoarfrost. There, Jorasco chirurgeons force the Children to help them produce weapons far more lethal than anything the Children would employ. These diseases can eliminate populations centers within hours or days and can be tailored to specific races or, potentially, specific ethnicities. Given time, Jorasco could produce a plague that kills only Cyrans. Player characters could be involved on either side of this struggle. They could be hired by Jorasco to hunt Winter druids, capturing them alive and turning them over to the house. Jorasco agents could assist while adventurers are fighting Winter forces, laying claim to the druids in the end. Alternatively, characters could encounter a situation that bears all the hallmarks of a Winter attack . . . only to discover that a Jorasco agent is testing a newly developed weapon, or that one of the house's clients (the Aurum, rogue Karrnathi warlords, or the Order of the Emerald Claw) is using it. Will the player characters team up with the Children to find Hoarfrost and destroy

it? If so, will they free the imprisoned druids or finish them off?

The Wardens of the Mournland: When a party of adventurers is lost in the Mournland, an unusual force comes to their aid: the Children of Winter. A handful of Children believe that other members of their organization are mistaken: The Mourning isn't the harbinger of the great winter, and the aggressive actions of the other druids cause more harm than good. These Children explore the Mournland and seek to protect innocents from its clearly unnatural dangers. They could also help end plagues started by other Children. They believe that death and disease are natural and that the great winter will come, but this is not the time. Until the signs are absolute, they can be useful allies for characters who travel in the Mournland or seek to uncover the mystery of the Mourning.

Final Death: The Children of Winter despise the undead. The group's activities have generally been confined to western Khorvaire, but they could travel east in force to strike at hubs of undead activity. Fort Bones, Fort Zombie, and Atur are major targets in Karnath. The Undying Court of Aerenal is an even more ambitious target, since the deathless are just as abominable to the Children as undead. The Children employ swarms of mystical vermin that consume undead flesh, diseases that bring down the mortal allies of the dead, or primal tools that disrupt the undead in other ways. When the characters are caught in the midst of these conflicts, what side will they take?

If Winter Falls

In their conflicts with the Children of Winter, the player characters learn about the beliefs of the druids. The Children justify their actions as attempts to stave off an apocalypse even worse than the Mourning. Most likely, the characters dismiss these mad tales. Perhaps they'll listen and try to help the Children. In either case, what happens if the dreaded Winter actually occurs?

The doctrine of the Children of Winter states that Siberys is the source of arcane and divine magic, Eberron the mother of primal and natural things, and Khyber the font of aberrations and fiends. The first sign of Eberron's fury is a wave of natural disasters. Thousands die as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes shake the world. Once she is fully awake, Eberron asserts her preeminence over her creation, banishing the influence of Khyber and Siberys alike. The Lords of Dust are forced into the depths with other fiends, and the dragons of Argonnessen are wiped out. The magical energies wielded by both wizards and priests are cast back to the Ring of Siberys, and arcane and divine magic fails utterly. The towers of Sharn collapse under their own weight. Airships fall from the sky. Amid this chaos, awakened plants tear down the foundations of cities, newborn primal predators hunt survivors, and plagues ravage the land.

The loss of magic is the key event of this disaster, but it doesn't make the world a mundane place. Dragons are hard hit because arcane magic flows through their blood—but many natural creatures have innate supernatural abilities. The ogre still has its strength, and the blink dog can still slip through space. Primal magic is stronger than ever, and the youngsters in the ruined cities will grow up to be barbarians and wardens. Only a handful of people can still use arcane and divine magic . . . including the player characters.

One of the underlying themes of an Eberron® campaign is that the player characters are the most important people of the age, and that precept is made manifest here. Player character clerics and paladins are the last connection to the divine in a world cut off from the heavens. A heroic sorcerer still holds a spark of Siberys in his or her blood, and the artificer is one of the few people who can harness the residual arcane energy that remains. The characters have powers that no one else can wield. Will they search for a way to restore the old order, or will they use their abilities for personal gain? Does the wizard try to create rituals that anyone can perform or use his or her powers to carve out a kingdom?

The onset of Winter is an interesting way to bridge the transition from paragon to epic tier. If Winter strikes at the very end of the paragon tier, you can declare that time has passed between that point and when play resumes with the adventurers assuming their epic destinies. Discuss the changes that have occurred in the world with the players, and how their epic roles tie into this new world. If a decade has passed, new power groups would have risen in the ruins. Warlords in the Five Nations try to maintain order with their militias, while barbarian tribes answer the call of the wild and the monsters of Droaam roam across the west. A new Dhakaani Empire is spreading across the south and moving on the ruins of Sharn. The powerless Jaela Daran remains in the ruins of Flamekeep, patiently waiting for the Silver Flame to return. If psionic powers still function in this new world, Riedra has laid claim to the coasts. Where will the characters begin to make their place in this new world?

This story line can also be run as a short-term campaign, in which the characters restore the balance between Eberron and Siberys within a short time. Even so, the fall of a brief Winter is a cataclysm that utterly transforms the world. The greatest cities in the world become looted ruins. Between the natural disasters and subsequent violence, much of the infrastructure has been lost, and it takes time to restore lightning rails and rebuild airships. And the force that rebuilds the fastest will be the one in a position to shape the next age. This is a world that needs adventurers—a time when epic heroes can set the course of the future.

About the Author

Keith Baker is the creator of the Eberron campaign setting and designer of the card game *Gloom*. You can find him on Twitter as @HellcowKeith.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

ED GREENWOOD'S
Eye on the Realms

The High Priest of Beholders

By Ed Greenwood

Illustration by Phill Simmer

A tall, strong man wanders the Realms alone, clad in a *cloak of many eyes* and bearing a rod that can spew out small swarms of eyeball beholderkin that obey him—serving as his spies, messengers, and defenders. He can call or attract beholders, but rather than compelling them, he worships and serves them. He brings the eye tyrants what they desire and does deeds for them, including subverting important local humanoids to be their servants or allies—and punishing or blackmailing those whose loyalty wavers.

Who is this figure, and where did he come from? What does he want, seek, and strive for?

Ulchaice Darrovyn

The Darrovyn family has been considered odd in Kloven (a rural hamlet just south of the Wealdath in Tethyr) for generations.[1] Rather than take up farming, the members of this human family were dabblers—prospectors, alchemists, and the like. If one of them hadn't been a miller and built a small but solid gristmill, they'd have been reduced to wandering beggars in the late 1300s DR.

Ulchaice Darrovyn was the lone child of Malaerla "the Mumbling," a beautiful but scramble-witted sister of the Darrovyn family, who never married but took many local lovers. He was born in 1451 DR and spent his childhood in the mill, venturing into the verges of the Wealdath a few times on dares. As a youth, he took to gathering herbs along the edge of the forest for local wise women—usually those who had grown too old for scrambling and digging, and who brought Ulchaice along to do such work while they pointed out the plants he was to harvest for them. He learned enough plant lore from them to become the herbalist of Kloven when old age claimed the wise women, one by one.

By 1470 DR, living alone and essentially friendless, Ulchaice hunted to feed himself.[2] He soon learned that if he couldn't run, climb fast, and fight furiously, he would catch nothing—but would instead be quickly caught by something else. So he became as swift,

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stealthy, and ruthless a hunter as any marauding beast of the forest. It is rumored in Kloven that Ulchaice was once hunted by Malarites in the Wealdath only to hunt them in return, killing one after another. In the end, only one fearful Malarite was left to flee in terror and never return to that part of Tethyr.[3]

If Ulchaice Darrovyn had a culinary weakness, it was for mushrooms. He often visited small local forest caves to gather mushrooms growing on the tree roots that pierced those caverns. Then in the spring of 1471 DR, his way back out of a cave was blocked by a huge old beholder, whose central body was the size of the largest pickle vats Darrovyn had seen.

Rather than destroying Darrovyn, that eye tyrant spoke with him, giving its name as Xrombaerrendron, and claiming to have been watching him for some time. The man and the monster struck a bargain, and Darrovyn became the High Priest of the Tyrants.

These tyrants that Darrovyn serves don't include every last beholder. The group encompasses only those that are members of the Daeth Haeromm—plus some eye tyrants that fear the Daeth Haeromm enough to obey them and their lone human representative.[4] Darrovyn is their second high priest, having replaced a shorter, stouter, and more arrogant predecessor—Erland Kelleth, originally of Crimmor. Erland was devoured by a blue dragon in 1462 DR, while disputing the wisdom of the creature retaining a lair cavern that the Daeth coveted.

The Daeth Haeromm

Beholders have had many languages down the long ages, and the name "Daeth Haeromm" is a transliteration from an elder, largely forgotten tongue. "Daeth" means wise, long-seeing, or given to strategies. "Haera" is a gathering or alliance, with "Haeromm" being the members of such a group. "Daeth Haeromm" can thus be translated as "Wise Gatherers."

Most beholders are paranoid loners or hive dwellers—either keeping far from their own kind and dominating and ruling lesser creatures as servants or slaves, living in subterranean colonies led by elders, or settling in cities as members of a ruthless, exacting hierarchy. The beholders of the Daeth Haeromm, however, follow a different path.

The Daeth is a council of mostly younger beholders, which are more worldly and less solitary and paranoid than the elder generations of their race.[5] The tyrants of the Daeth believe in engaging with the world, following the events and gossip of civilized Faerûn. They believe that their own lives are best devoted to continuously manipulating lesser beings (such as humans) so as not to be noticed or decried as monsters. They linger behind the tumult and everyday gossip swirling about others—often beings that the Daeth Haeromm have manipulated into conflicts, feuds, rivalries, and widespread fears of coming events or perils that have nothing to do with beholders.

Although many Daeth members lair in caverns or ruins, they typically dwell on the surface of Faerûn.[6] They have little interest in the Underdark, except as a source of metals and other trade goods that interest the surface dwellers they seek to dominate.

"Dominate," Elminster points out, "rather than rule. The Daeth are akin to those humans who think it safer, more elegant, and more enjoyable to be the manipulative power behind the throne, rather than being the target sitting on the throne." Most Daeth members, he asserts, delight in deftly and covertly influencing, rather than openly commanding.

As with any group of beholders, jealousies and rivalries simmer constantly in the minds of the Daeth Haeromm tyrants, and several vicious power struggles have briefly erupted in their ranks. Among the Daeth, open strife is considered treason, so when one member turns on another these days, it is almost always a short, furious private battle or ambush. Combatants seek to swiftly murder their rivals and remove themselves from the scene. Daeth members might openly disbelieve the claim of a fellow to not be involved in the demise of another Daeth tyrant, but with no witnesses, the murderer will face no reprisals.

It follows that leaders among the Daeth have risen and fallen frequently—and usually fatally.[7] Despite this high turnover rate, two tyrants have remained fixtures in the group throughout the 1400s: Xrombaerrendron and Ultyrus.

Xrombaerrendron is the oldest and largest eye tyrant in the Daeth—and perhaps in all of surface Faerûn. The creature has swallowed and mastered more than a score of magic items down the years, which it will trigger when necessary to strike down foes—heedless of the holes many of those items bore out of its own body when unleashed.

Xrombaerrendron has for years bred tiny eyeball varieties of beholderkin, selecting for obedience and receptiveness to particular controlling magic (that used by beholders, as opposed to spells cast by humans and others). It sells specimens of the least useful kinds to non-beholders, to serve as spies and sentinels, and distributes the better ones among tyrants of the Daeth.[8] If rumors current among Daeth Haeromm members are true, the lair of "Xrom" is defended by armies of hundreds—perhaps thousands—of eyeballs, all of which have been trained to activate traps and trigger deadly magic items against intruders.

Xrombaerrendron has far more good-natured humor than pride—an important aspect of the continuing survival and growing strength of the Daeth. The creature is more farsighted in its scheming than most of its kin, and it engages in personal behavior that shows little thirst for power—unusual for beholders. Xrombaerrendron's recruitment of a high priest is one example of how it behaves differently. On many occasions, it has also done favors for humans or

elves in need, winning their guarded trust or limited respect, and even forging trade alliances. Xrombaerrendron's oft-repeated advice to fellow Daethan is to "Consider consequences and the good of all, not just personal and immediate benefit."

Distinctively large, rust-brown, and bearing eyes of a luminous light green hue, Xrombaerrendron is the true heart and focal binding of the Daeth. Beholders fear stronger specimens of their own kind more than anything else, but if any beholder commands more than momentary affection among Daeth members, it is Xrombaerrendron.

Ultyrus is a younger, more energetic, dark-blue beholder whose body plates have pale edges that resemble exposed human bone. It is both eloquent and loquacious, having a voice Elminster describes as wet, slithery, and hissing. Ultyrus is a strong and persistent proponent of using humanoids as agents—whether unwitting hirelings such as novice adventuring groups of few connections and little power, thieving guilds, outlaw bands, or informed special agents such as the Daeth's high priest. As such, Ultyrus is Ulchaice Darrovyn's constant personal guide, boss, and overseer, and the beholder uses the human as the principal go-between linking the Daeth Haeromm and its unwitting humanoid agents.

Ultyrus was the one that first thought of creating a High Priest of Beholders—a human given that title to make others think twice about attacking him for fear of divine wrath. The Daethan and Darrovyn are well aware that beholders are far from being gods, with the eye tyrants and the human simply working together as an actor and directors might to maintain a fiction of divinity.[9] Over time, the current High Priest has come to serve his Daeth masters as diligently as the senior clergy of real deities. This is largely due to the carefully fostered relationship Ultyrus has established with Darrovyn, ensuring that the human stands in genuine respect and awe of all beholders and strives to serve them with fervent loyalty. Additionally, Ultyrus has rescued Darrovyn numerous times from the deadly wrath of beholders that rejected the summons of a human who presumed to call on their aid.

The High Priest Rises

Darrovyn's career as high priest began under the constant escort and instruction of Ultyrus. The beholder worked to ensure that other Daethan tyrants were well accustomed to seeing this particular human, and that they would regard Darrovyn with as much trust and friendliness as any beholder can muster for a lesser creature. Xrombaerrendron and Ultyrus were united in their support for the notion of a high priest human representative, and they equipped Darrovyn from the outset with gear to suit that purpose. This gear included a *cloak of many eyes* and a unique item crafted by the two beholders for Darrovyn: a *diadem of tyrantkind*. (Xrombaerrendron and Ultyrus have several hidden backup diadems, but they are not out in general circulation.)

A *diadem of tyrantkind* is a plain circlet equipped with a chinstrap and a back-of-head strap to help hold it on, and it is adorned with vertical needle spires topped with gemlike enspelled rock crystals. The wearer of the diadem is automatically aware of the presence of all beholders and beholderkin—undead death tyrants, eyeballs, gauths, and so on—within 600 feet, instinctively knowing both distance and direction. The diadem also enables the wearer to telepathically communicate with beholders and beholderkin, and it telepathically identifies the wearer as the High Priest of the Daeth Haeromm to such creatures.

Contrary to a spreading belief among sages and beholders, such diadems provide no means of coercion or summoning at all. This leaves the conduct of beholders toward the wearer dependent on the wearer's persuasiveness, and on the respect—or fear—a beholder has for the Daeth Haeromm and possible reprisals from the order. (Xrombaerrendron, Ultyrus, and a number of beholders directed by those two have been known to slay or maim and rob beholders that defied or sought to humiliate or harm the high priest.)

In later years, Xrombaerrendron augmented Darrovyn's arsenal of equipment with a *rod of sarruin*—a name that Daethan tyrants grant to tiny beholderkin, and which translates as "little kin." The rod acts as a translocation device from Xrombaerrendron's cage caverns, where his bred sarruin are kept, to wherever Darrovyn aims the rod. When the rod is triggered, it fires a stream or a spray (wielder's choice) of 6d4 sarruin in whatever direction the wielder desires. The tiny beholderkin arrive freely flying, but are bound to obey the rod's wielder to the death. This effect can be triggered twice a day; after its second firing, 24 hours must elapse before it will function again. (Xrombaerrendron, which created the *rod of sarruin*, has dozens of backups hidden away, but as far as the wider Realms is concerned, this is essentially a unique item.)

A quiet, unassuming, and hardy man used to living off the land, Darrovyn is allowed by his beholder masters to do whatever he wants to feed and enrich himself. Thus far, "whatever he wants" has included hiring himself out for the personal delivery of sensitive messages and items (including smuggled valuables such as stolen gems and illicit drugs), plus taking part in small-scale missions for hire.

Darrovyn tirelessly travels the Realms—and the Sword Coast in particular—at the direction of Xrombaerrendron and Ultyrus, both of which magically contact him and watch over him frequently. Traveling alone and avoiding public displays whenever possible, Darrovyn finds and helps beholders, delivers Daeth messages to them (recruitment offerings to nonmembers; the latest warnings, alerts, requests for information, and inquiries as to their preferences on issues for members), and occasionally requests their aid.

Usually, such assistance takes the form of beholders making personal appearances to frighten hostile humanoids Darrovyn has encountered, agreeing to cow or coerce humanoid agents of the Daeth who are becoming too defiant or independent, or lending their might to destroy creatures that present a danger to Daeth projects or the continued safety of local beholders.

Darrovyn presents himself as obedient to the will of the Dread One—the beholder god. (He lets humanoids he deals with supply the name their local lore gives to an eye tyrant deity, if any.) He plays the part of a wise and mighty cleric with the ease of much practice. Darrovyn is well aware that he's a secular agent of mighty beings, not the priest of any god. Because he personally believes that all deities began as mortals, he has convinced himself that the deception he engages in is part of the road to true divinity for a yet-unidentified beholder. Perhaps Xrombaerrendron and Ultyrus will merge to become the true Dread One, or one will devour the other and become greater, or they will mate and produce an offspring that will be divine.

Darrovyn is ignorant of beholders' reproduction and inner functionings, however, and cares more about the creatures' deeds. He sees them as providing order and stability to a world sadly in need of it—less vain and more worldly than the self-centered dragons, and far smarter and more worthy than elves, his fellow humans, or any of the other "teeming, talking races."

Darrovyn is thus determined to give whatever aid he can to the rising behind-the-scenes power and influence of the eye tyrants of Daeth Haeromm—the "enlightened" among beholders. He believes that their mutual cooperation can bring a new order to Faerûn and new greatness to a race long mired in solitary, paranoid, and malignant hostility. And, of course, this will bring greatness to him as well.

Ulchaice Darrovyn doesn't want to lord it over anyone or prove anything, but he does want to make something of himself and improve the Realms in the process. And this is his chance.

Beholderkin, Eyeball **Level 7 Minion Artillery**
Tiny aberrant magical beast XP 75

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18 **Perception** +5
Speed 0, fly 4 (hover) All-around vision, darkvision

Traits

All-Around Vision
Enemies can't gain combat advantage by flanking the eyeball.

Standard Actions

Eye Ray ✦ At-Will
Effect: The eyeball uses one of the following eye rays. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.
1. *Freezing Ray* (cold): Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. Reflex; 7 cold damage.
2. *Frightful Ray* (fear): Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. Will; until the end of the eyeball's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
3. *Dazing Ray:* Ranged 20 (one creature); +12 vs. Fortitude; the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Minor Actions

Mage Eye ✦ At-Will
Effect: Ranged 5 (one object weighing up to 20 pounds); the eyeball levitates the target, taking a move action to cause the target to fly up to 5 squares, or manipulates the target, taking actions as a pair of human hands might. Attacks are not possible. The effect ends at the end of the eyeball's next turn or when it uses this power again.
Sustain Minor: The effect persists until the end of the eyeball's next turn or until it uses this power again.

Str 6 (+1)	**Dex** 19 (+7)	**Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 3 (-1)	**Cha** 12 (+4)

Alignment evil **Languages** –

Notes

1. Kloven fills a shallow farming valley two-thirds of the way inland from the sea, along the southern edge of the vast Wealdath. It is home to a tavern that has beds in the loft for rent but no private rooms, a mill, a common paddock and horse pond, twenty crofts (small farms), and no inn. Its population hovers at just over a hundred, from babes to grave-nearing elders.

2. Locals didn't hate or detest Darrovyn, but treated him as they would any herbalist—warily, keeping their social distance. A contented loner, he reached out to no one, and no one reached out to him.

3. Those rumors, Elminster attests, are true. Over three days and two nights, Darrovyn killed a dozen of those attempting to kill him—well-armed veterans who hunted in a band and set heavy guards (three sentinels awake at a time) when camping.

4. In other words, the tyrants have a clergy of one. They have a high priest but no lesser priests.

5. Their true strength they keep secret, and it has undoubtedly varied over time. Elminster believes it has been slowly growing—and that the Daeth has numbered more than sixty full members (and about twenty cowed or coerced "outlying allies") for the last century or so.

6. Most of them lair up and down the Sword Coast, north of Calimshan—a land they shun for undisclosed reasons.

7. Notable former dominants among the tyrants that perished in internal Daeth squabbles include the beholders Xurlqueth (considered a freak by some because it had no fewer than sixteen eyestalks) and Old Xarrmalq. That beholder was so named because its chitin was blotched with a thick, mossy growth like eerie green fur, which slowly ate deeper and deeper into the aging creature—and, some say, rendered it mad. Other Daeth members claim the growth was a sentient symbiotic creature. When Xarrmalq was frequently overheard talking to itself, it was said to be conversing with the partner growing on it, which had fell psionic powers it sometimes wielded to aid its host.

8. Inevitably, some Daeth members destroyed these gifts, thinking them spies or even harmful

agents foisted on them by Xrombaerrendron. Over time, however, more and more Daethan tyrants have come to place a certain amount of trust in Xrombaerrendron's peculiar nature, and to accept the obedient eyeballs as genuinely useful gifts meant to help and strengthen, not as daggers of treachery.

9. It should be noted that beholder cults are spread across Faerûn—particularly among barbarian tribes, but also in cities among those who feel slighted or oppressed by current civic rulership. Members of these cults believe fervently in a beholder god, served by various ascended beholders that have become demigods. To gain real influence over the cultists, mortal beholders impersonate the servants of the beholder god (known variously as Aurauth Manyeyes, Xangolgaerath, and Yaerethontur) on a regular basis. They do this to gain forces of humanoids they can order about and use as agents. In particular, such followers can often easily gain a secret some eye tyrants hungrily seek—the means of achieving vigorous eternal life without resorting to undeath. They believe that such cultists can wrest the secret of achieving immortality—which is surely a matter of potions or the right spells, rather than the personal gift of a deity—from those mages and high priests who have learned it or are uncovering it.

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the Forgotten Realms® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, plus he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.

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