

ARCADE



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LETTER FROM MATT

This month's issue features a dungeon from Robert J. Kuntz, one of the original TSR D&D developers. This extraordinary event has caused Matt to come out of the woodwork and write this editorial.

Playing AD&D was intense. I believed intensely in the secondary world. Probably the main reason I wanted to GM was that I got REALLY INTERESTED in what was inside the module—the stuff that we, the players, weren't allowed to read. I dunno what I imagined would be in there, but it seemed, from the other side of the screen, to contain deep secrets and mysteries. ANYTHING could be in there!

Have you ever seen an OG dungeon map? They were printed in non-repro blue, a special color architects used, which photocopier manufacturers all agreed not to reproduce with their machines—a kind of 1950s copy protection!

Using that specific tone made the maps look like ... well, like architectural diagrams.

Like REAL PLACES, in other words.

That's why I wanted to get behind the screen—I wanted to learn the secrets of the world! I wanted to see inside the adventure and know what was really happening. I don't know HOW many months I spent sitting in the bathroom (er, not consecutively) reading the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Have you ever read the AD&D version? You should. Or, you should try. It's AMAZING. It's still amazing!

Oh look, here are the magical properties of gemstones, neat! Oh, here's how to use wolfsbane to cure lycanthropy, neat! Oh, here's what holy water is good for, neat!

In other words, it reads exactly like it's describing the rules for how a world works, not how a GAME works and this is the hardest thing to convey to a modern player.

Even the way the text was presented leant it this patina of seriousness, of reality. There was no layout. There was no Macintosh, no Desktop Publishing. Fonts?

What are those?! The whole thing is done in Courier. Everything More Monospace Than Everything Else.

Modern books look amazing. They are more interesting to look at, and they are way easier to read. The information is presented in a much more palatable way. This is important. Remember, presentation is part of design. Those old books were pretty unforgiving on the reader. But that just made it seem LESS like a game and more like ... like an ENCYCLOPEDIA of a WORLD. A world more interesting than this one! We have holy water in this world—but it doesn't do shit!

The creators probably didn't intend for this interpretation to happen. They didn't choose these layout elements because it reinforced the idea of the secondary world as a real place or the books as encyclopedias rather than worlds, but that was the effect, and it was compelling.

The legacy of this style of play is with us today! Look at the articles in this issue! "So Your Best Friend Is A Monster" by [Jessica Marcrum](#) is an article all about taking a cursed creature like a drider or a harpy or a medusa, and returning them to their humanoid form.

That is the kind of article you write when you take those monsters seriously. You have to first imagine them as little stories. Someone, maybe generations ago, is cursed to become a flying vulture-woman, or a black widow-person, or a snake lady. They're not just tiny chunks of game design. They're not just mobs in an MMO. They're people and something awful happened to them and if you cast these spells and use these components, you can fix it. You can make it right again.

That feels very AD&D to me. Reading these articles feels like I'm learning about how the fantasy world works, not how the game works. That's the legacy of those folks from the 70s. They presented their rules, not as a game, but as a description for a world—a world more interesting than this one.

Very appealing to a disaffected teenager listening to RUSH in the infinite suburb.

Et in Arcadia ego,
—MCDM

SO YOUR BEST FRIEND IS A MONSTER

A GUIDE TO UNCURSING THE CURSED

by Jessica Marcrum

Content Warning: This article contains descriptions of gore, mind control, and petrification.

BETTER FOR YOU TO HAVE NEVER BEEN BORN
THAN TO HAVE DISPLEASED US THUSLY.

—MORRIGAN, GODDESS OF BATTLE

While most monsters are born that way, others started as humanoids and had the bad luck to irritate a powerful magician, archdemon, or even deity. Cursed into monstrous forms, these beings are maligned by others for their appearance, their powers, and the supernatural drives imposed upon them. Some live in terror of accidentally passing their curse onto others and hide where only the most obstinate adventurers can find them.

And find them they do. While many of these encounters end in violence, adventurers who instead befriend such a monster may wonder how to remove their curse. Additionally, adventurers who come out worse for wear after fighting a cursed creature—or who simply have a knack for landing on a deity's bad side—may need a solution

themselves! When the *remove curse* spell won't cut it, what is there to do?

So Your Best Friend Is a Monster is a GM guide for uncursing driders, harpies, and medusas and for cursing player characters into these monstrosities.

When running a game with a cursed PC, there are a few key things to keep in mind: Monsters typically have few friends outside of their fellow monstrosities. The average person fears them, shopkeepers are unlikely to do business with them, and temples bar them from entering. Parties traveling with a cursed character are unwelcome in towns and even hunted down by bounty hunters, well-meaning priests, and bored nobles. It is a rare patron who trusts a monster with a quest, and a rarer patron who does not

ON CURSING YOUR PLAYERS

When running any tabletop roleplaying game, safety tools—such as Lines & Veils (developed by Ron Edwards), the X-Card (developed by John Stavropoulos), and Stars & Wishes (developed by Lu Quade)—are essential. Equally important is keeping an open dialogue between players and GM regarding their comfort levels throughout the game. Before a game, be it a one-shot or long-term campaign, have a conversation with your players about everyone's comfort levels regarding character curses. No one enjoys a game disrupted by punitive cursing. Open, safe tables lead to better experiences for all, and curses should be as fun to play as to dole out. For more information on the aforementioned safety tools and to learn about others, please see the TTRPG Safety Toolkit co-curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk at bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit.

MIXED MYTHOLOGIES

The cursed creatures mentioned in this article—harpies, medusas, and possibly driders—are based on Greek and Roman myth. The core rules change these monsters' backgrounds, making it easier to mix and match them with creatures from different mythoi (for example, couatls come from Mesoamerican myth, zombies are rooted in Haitian mythology, and banshees are part of Irish lore). For Greco-Roman-inspired campaigns focused on these creatures, I recommend the *Uncaged Anthology* and *Arkadia*.

Drider Origin. The origin of driders is unclear, but they are likely based on an [illustration of Arachne](#) by Gustav Doré in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Arachne was a weaver so skilled, she boasted she could outweave the goddess of weaving herself, Athena. They had a contest, after which Athena turned her into a spider: she could insult no gods, but would be allowed to weave for eternity. The earliest source of Arachne's story is the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid.

Harpy Origin. While little is known of their origin, harpies appear all over Greek and Roman mythology seemingly as embodiments of the wind's destructive nature. As antagonists and agents of punishment, they snatch both food and people, carrying the latter to the Erinyes. They aren't cursed into their form, they are simply monsters who exist. Modern mythologies often conflate harpies with sirens, supplying them with the beautiful singing voices of the latter and the female face-bird body combo of the former.

Medusa Origin. *Content Warning: Mention of sexual assault in this paragraph.* In Greek mythology, Medusa was one woman, not a race of beings. In early versions, she and her sisters were born as Gorgons, women with wings and hair made of venomous snakes, though only Medusa could paralyze with her gaze. In Ovid's interpretation, Medusa gained her appearance after Poseidon assaulted her in Athena's temple (yes, it's Athena again). Athena cursed Medusa into her famous incarnation and sent a hero to behead her. Feminist reinterpretations view Athena giving Medusa her monstrous appearance as a way to protect herself from further harm. Instructing Perseus to kill her is perhaps, in this version, divine fickleness. In fifth edition, medusas can be any gender, and gorgons are an entirely different creature, likely based on Edward Topsell's *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes* (1607).

seize upon the opportunity for a monster hunt instead. Cursed characters are more powerful and more able to amass loot than the average character, but that means little if their lairs and lives are constantly threatened and their wealth is denied and spurned.

SO YOU'VE BEFRIENDED A DRIDER

As the drow spider goddess' chosen, driders exist as somewhat of a paradox. When a drow is particularly devout and powerful in matters magical or mundane, they are summoned by their goddess to face great tests of strength and faith. Those who succeed are granted boons beyond mortal comprehension. Those who fail are turned into a drider, an image of the spider goddess herself and more powerful than the average drow, yet reviled as monsters by all. A drider is a living representation of divine disappointment, and drow tend to steer clear in case the goddess' ire is contagious.

REVERSE THE CURSE OF SPIDERLEGS

As becoming a drider is a curse from the drow goddess, appealing to the deity and making amends is the most direct way to reverse it. However, gods are notoriously fickle, and adventurers are often proud, so this "easy" method is often complicated. Driders may be unwilling to supplicate to the very power who cursed them.

CREATION OF DRIDERS

To create a drider, the drow goddess wraps the supplicant in blessed spider webbing, stuns them with poison from her fangs, and commands a bound and loyal demon¹ to devour the supplicant's legs up to the torso. (Demons can be bound through the *planar ally* and *planar binding* spells, and *spell scrolls* of these spells are common in temples of the drow goddess.) Through the goddess' munificence, the supplicant survives the excruciating process and transforms into a drider, becoming one with the demon who now serves as the lower half of their body and whose blood flows through their veins.

¹ Demons typically take on the appearance of the archdemon or deity they serve. Demons that serve the drow goddess have arachnidian features, which is why driders have the lower body of a massive spider.

LEARNING THE REVERSAL

A ritual cast by a goddess can't be uncast, merely redirected. By reversing the process of the ritual and providing an appropriate target, characters can redirect the curse to another creature of their choice. Few know of the ritual, however, as many driders find the experience so painful, they forget all but their goddess's face looming over them. Characters who either are driders or who have a religious background can recall fragments of the ritual with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) check. Everyone else must seek out help.

While the drow goddess's high priestesses can't create driders, they know of the ritual and components involved. Characters in good standing with a drow high priestess—whether due to past service with the temple or, in the case of clerics and paladins, the respect given to other members of the clergy—can easily learn of the ritual, but won't procure the components without a little work. Regardless of how friendly with the characters a priestess is, she is unlikely to turn her back on her goddess to help them. Those who previously angered the high priestess or insulted the temple have no access to the priestesses; they must steal sacred texts or consort with the drow goddess' demons, who demand large sacrifices, usually in the form of treasure, for such knowledge.

GATHERING COMPONENTS

To gather the components necessary to reverse the curse, characters must reappropriate them from a temple dedicated to the drow goddess. Temples are typically open all hours of the day, staffed by **acolytes**, **drow**, and **priests**, and led by a high priestess (use the **mage** or **archmage**



stat block, or any drow stat block from the core rules). Characters must either bluff their way in by pretending to be supplicants or initiates with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check or sneak in by succeeding on several DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) checks at various points throughout the temple. (Feel free to use a temple map of your choice.)

Once inside the temple, characters must seek out the ritual's components:

- A bound demon with a minimum challenge rating of 5
- Spider silk blessed by a priestess of the drow goddess
- Drow poison

There is generally a 25 percent chance of finding a bound demon within the temple, though whether or not it chooses to work with the characters is a completely different story. Every demon has its own goals and its own price for working with the characters. Some can be easily manipulated in conversation or bound by magic, while others require a contract and payment or services from the characters. There are always rites of demon binding, including *spell scrolls* of *planar ally* and *planar binding*, within the priestesses' sanctums, along with the other ingredients.

PERFORMING THE RITUAL

Once the ingredients are gathered and the demon is convinced or bound into cooperation, the drider must say a prayer of thanks to their goddess but request that the gift be given to the demon. The demon must be wrapped in blessed spider silk and imbibe the poison, which shouldn't harm them, but they find it unpleasant to taste. The ritual is completed by drawing a stick figure of a humanoid in blood on the fiend's chest to properly represent the shape the character would like to regain.

Performing the ritual correctly requires the characters to succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) group check. If one or more characters performing the ritual is a devotee of the drow goddess, the DC is 12. On a success, the drider performing the ritual transforms into their original form, and the demon involved gains the following actions:

- **Change Shape.** The demon magically polymorphs into a phase spider, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the fiend's choice). In spider form, the fiend retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the phase spider.
- **Hatch (Recharge 5–6).** The demon lays 1d6 eggs, each in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of it. At the end of its turn, a new demon of challenge rating 1 or lower (chosen by the original demon) hatches from each egg. The hatched demons follow the original demon's commands and act immediately after the original demon in the initiative order.

If the ritual fails, see “Ramifications.”

Ritual Variant. Characters who abduct or convince another humanoid to take the place of the drider can perform the same ritual, wrapping the humanoid in the spider silk and feeding them the poison. The demon devours the humanoid's legs as the characters draw a spider in blood on the humanoid's chest. This ritual requires a successful DC

10 Intelligence (Religion) group check to perform correctly, reduced to a DC of 5 if one or more of the characters involved is a devotee of the drow goddess. On a success, the drider returns to its original form and the humanoid becomes a drider. If the ritual fails, see “Ramifications.”

Ramifications. Messing with powers beyond mortal ken can have devastating repercussions. If the characters perform the ritual and fail, the demon becomes unbound from any magic keeping it imprisoned or loyal to the characters. They must rebind the demon if they wish to retry the ritual (and possibly cut a new deal with the fiend or stop it from trying to kill them). If the characters perform the ritual and fail three times, the drow goddess transforms a(nother) character or one of their loved ones into a drider out of sheer annoyance. Characters with a strong connection to the drow goddess (acolytes, clerics, paladins, etc.) can talk their way out of the goddess' wrath with a successful DC 25 Charisma (Religion)² check. On a failure, the goddess resumes transforming someone else into a drider and now has a particular distaste for the character who spoke out against her. Ramifications of a goddess' ire are likely to come up in future campaigns—or immediately through brutal monster attacks, at the GM's discretion. See “Player Characters as Driders” for more information.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AS DRIDERS

Typically only drow are transformed into driders, though none should assume that only drow are capable of fully disappointing or angering their goddess. Any character the drow goddess finds sufficiently irritating or frustratingly mediocre can be transformed into a drider through a ritual (see the “Creation of Driders” sidebar). A character who becomes a drider retains their statistics and abilities with the following exceptions:

- The character sprouts a spider body from their lower half, and their creature type becomes Monstrosity.
- The character gains a climbing speed of 30 feet.
- The character gains a +1 bonus to AC from natural armor.
- The character's teeth are natural weapons, which they can use to make unarmed strikes. If they hit with them, they deal 1d4 piercing damage plus an additional 1d8 + the character's proficiency bonus poison damage, instead of the normal bludgeoning damage for an unarmed strike.
- The character gains the drider's Spider Climb, Sunlight Sensitivity, and Web Walker traits.

² The typical check would be Intelligence (Religion) or Charisma (Persuasion). In this case, however, characters are using their force of personality alongside their knowledge of religion to appeal to the goddess.



SO YOU'VE BEFRIENDED A HARPY

Great elven gods gifted Aria Velathorn with a beautiful voice. But song alone couldn't woo the elf bard's only love. In lovesick anger, she cast a curse upon the same gods who had given her songs radiance. Her spiteful magic backfired, warping her desire for love into an insatiable hunger for flesh and making her the first harpy. Some deities found the new form entertaining and cursed similarly ungrateful subjects into harpies. Ages later, mountain and coastal skies are filled with the singing of harpies luring unsuspecting victims to their bloody ends.

REVERSE THE CURSE OF WINGS AND SONG

Harpies are derived from a combination of misapplied magic and misguided dreams. Creatures transformed into harpies are initially blessed by deities and gifted musical talent, beauty, or charm. The curse takes hold when the gift is not enough, causing the bearer to spite the gods or another object of their affection, rendering their physical form monstrous to match their emotional turmoil. To remove the curse, the harpy must be willing to undertake a quest and find inner acceptance.

FOLLOW THE FIRST HARPY

Characters seeking to remove a harpy's curse must start at the beginning: Aria Velathorn, the first harpy. They must search out her lost remains and craft one of her splendid tail feathers into a quill, which the cursed harpy then uses to pen a new song of hope and renewal. But the path to her resting place is lost, known only in harpy songs and stories. Those who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check recall the circumstances of her curse, though not her final location.

To learn of Aria's location, a character must speak with a harpy and succeed on a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance) check to coax them into revealing the path Aria followed through mountain and coastal ranges. On this journey, characters encounter scores of her descendants, happy to be harpies and thriving in their own communities. These harpies were born harpies, not transformed by the curses of gods, and therefore know no other life. They enjoy their form and the power it gives them.

Eventually, characters arrive at the lair of a **couatl**, Miztin (they/them), who remembers Aria's curse, befriended her, and witnessed her reversing her state through a song of self-acceptance. Miztin is happy to guide other harpies to self-acceptance and has preserved Aria's feathers.

WRITE AND PERFORM

Once the quill is crafted, the harpy must write a song detailing how they've let go of their past. Characters with a musical inclination (typically represented by proficiency in the Performance skill or a musical instrument) can help the harpy craft the song to reduce the DC of the Wisdom (Performance) check by 2 (see below). After writing the song, the harpy must sing it with the characters' help, demonstrating the firm bond between them that defies the monstrosity's past wants.

This transformation is less a return to the harpy's original form and closer to a rebirth, a dedication to a new life happier and healthier than before. The characters must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Performance) group check, though the DC is reduced to 10 if the harpy provides offerings or donations, pledges their faith, or dedicates a song to the deity whose gifts they squandered. On a success, the harpy returns to their original form. If the check fails, see "Ramifications."

Ramifications. Harpies are irritable, hungry creatures; after a failed attempt at cursebreaking, they may attack and eat the characters who failed to help them despite the friendship built over their journey. Even if the curse is successfully removed, the harpy's family may feel that their kin was stolen from them and attack the characters on sight. If the harpy's song includes lyrics that mock the deity who cursed them, the deity may turn an additional character into a harpy or cast an even crueler curse upon the characters as a punishment for undoing their work. See "Quick and Dirty Curse Removal" at the end of this article for how to solve that problem.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AS HARPIES

While the core rules describe harpies as lovesick elves, the elven pantheon is fickle indeed; any character who demonstrates improper thanks for their gifts may be transformed into a winged singer. Characters who use god-given power to cause unnecessary harm are particularly susceptible to this condition. A character who becomes a harpy retains their statistics and abilities with the following exceptions:

- The character sprouts wings and clawed talons on their hands and feet, and their creature type becomes Monstrosity.
- The character's walking speed becomes 20 feet, and they gain a flying speed of 40 feet.
- The character's talons are natural weapons, which they can use to make unarmed strikes. If they hit with them, they deal slashing damage equal to 2d4 + their Strength modifier, instead of the normal bludgeoning damage for an unarmed strike.

- The character gains the harpy's Luring Song action. The save DC for this action equals 8 + the character's Charisma modifier + the character's proficiency bonus. Once the character uses this action, they can't do so again until they finish a long rest.

SO YOU'VE BEFRIENDED A MEDUSA

Unlike their counterparts from Grecian myth, most medusas in the core rules sought out their immortality. Driven by vanity to seek eternal life, youth, and adoration, medusas were mortals who made a bargain without reading the fine print. After a few decades of youth and power, the bill came due: the snake hair, the loneliness, and the petrifying gaze. As punishment for their hubris, or at least their inability to scrutinize a contract, medusas are doomed to live forever without seeing what they love most: their own reflection.

REVERSE THE CURSE OF SNAKES AND STATUARY

A medusa's curse is typically a punishment for a life too well-lived. Derided for vanity, some medusas were cursed by insecure or capricious deities who feared the mortals' burgeoning power. Then there are mortals who made deals with literal or metaphorical devils for eternal life, beauty, and praise. Either way, the life of a medusa is one of eternal loneliness as they petrify or outlive everyone they know, their memories crumbling like dust.

APPEASING A DEITY

With a medusa's power comes a variety of new traits (see "Player Characters as Medusas"). Characters seeking to remove a medusa's curse must first help the afflicted use their new abilities to benefit others instead of self-isolating with their power. A medusa might utilize their skills to improve masonry and stonework, preserve livestock through petrification to last the winter months, or create a discount travel service through a combination of petrification and cargo shipping rates.

Characters must then travel with the medusa to the location where the curse was first enacted and call upon the being who bestowed it. While it is unlikely that the higher power appears, with ample prayer and petitions, they listen. All characters involved in cursebreaking should be prepared to spend at least a week at the location, typically a ruin that contains monsters, hazards, and other dangers.

If they were cursed centuries or even millennia ago, the medusa may struggle to remember the time before they were cursed. The time spent at the location can help them recover some of their lost memories and reconnect them to their past. Characters can help the medusa recover memories by exploring the location and bringing back treasured items from their past: books, weapons, jewelry, and dust-covered trinkets. Additionally, characters who succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check can remind the medusa of their past life.

At the end of the week, the characters can convince the higher power that the medusa changed their ways and learned from their time cursed with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Religion) or Charisma (Persuasion) check. Reduce the check's DC by 2 for each piece of evidence the characters present juxtaposing the medusa's current lifestyle with that of their past. The emphasis must be on how the medusa has changed, and how they use their power to better the world around them, not simply seek profit or glory.

On a success, the snakes fall from the medusa's head and become a *swarm of poisonous*

snakes that act as the medusa's familiars. The medusa's eyes clear, their skin returns to their natural color, and they are once again humanoid. They can finally look their friends in the eye without fear.

Ramifications. The best-case scenario for a failed curse removal is that the medusa remains a medusa. After particularly disastrous petitions (for example, if the medusa hasn't changed or if the result to convince the deity that they have is a 5 or lower), a random character in the party may also be transformed into a medusa. Or the entire party might be, if the deity is particularly chaotic and annoyed.



CONTRACT RENEGOTIATION

For medusas cursed through unwise deals or contracts, the characters must find the entity who bound them. Depending on who made the deal, this could involve summoning an archfiend, seeking out an ancient dragon, or traveling to the dealmaker's home plane and requesting an audience.

Find a Loophole. Characters can attempt to find flaws in the contract itself and prove it is null and void. Every contract, even those made by the most meticulous fiendish lawyers, has a loophole.

While forced renegotiation of a settled deal annoys any dealmaker, the overall temperament of the contract broker varies. Fiends eat contracts for breakfast and are always up to discuss terms in hopes of gaining even more, whereas celestials tend to see a completed deal as exactly that: completed business. Ancient dragons would rather not be bothered. Ever. Regardless of the dealmaker's disposition, they provide a copy of the contract upon request.

A character who examines the contract and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check can find a loophole. Alternatively, they can first observe the dealmaker's behavior, noting what parts of the contract or topics the dealmaker is keen to avoid, with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check. If the character applies this knowledge when searching the contract for loopholes, the DC is reduced to 14.

Suggested loopholes include, but are not limited to:

- The contract is void if the dealmaker dies.
- The contract is void if the dealmaker or the medusa is incapacitated for a year and a day on a plane other than their own.
- The contract is void if ingested.
- The contract refers to clauses not appearing in the contract.
- The contract is undated by the dealmaker.
- The dealmaker neglected to sign their own name.
- The medusa's name is misspelled.

Have a Trial. Characters who tend toward theatricality, or who simply failed to determine a loophole, may instead demand to have a trial on the medusa's behalf. Depending on the location of the trial and the type of bargain made, a variety of creatures may serve as judge and jury. For fiendish contracts, the judge is a powerful fiend (such as an **erinyes** or **marilith**), while the jury is made up of lesser fiends (of challenge rating 2 or lower). When it comes to celestial contracts, an angel is typically the judge (such as a **deva** or **planetar**), while **unicorns** and **pegasi** comprise the jury. Though they dislike company, dragons are loath to outsource their contract negotiations to anyone but other dragons. The oldest dragon in the vicinity who isn't the dealmaker serves as the trial's judge, with young adult dragons acting as jury for a "learning experience."

At the trial, characters must present evidence and arguments on the medusa's behalf for breaking the contract. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check by using powerful rhetorical flourishes or on a DC 20 Intelligence (History) check to provide precedents of other contracts being broken convinces the dealmaker to break the contract. Offering to pay the dealmaker gold, tribute, or gems to overlook the medusa's contract grants disadvantage on the roll with lawfully aligned dealmakers and advantage with chaotic ones.

The characters can also present evidence at the trial. Reduce the DC by 2 for each piece of evidence they present on the medusa's behalf, including but not limited to:

- The medusa didn't understand the contract when they signed it.
- *Celestial and Metallic Dragon Only:* The medusa has inadvertently caused numerous deaths as a result of their current form. Transforming them serves the greater community.
- *Fiend and Chromatic Dragon Only:* The medusa has self-isolated and isn't doing anything interesting with their new form.

After a successful argument, the medusa is transformed (see "Appeasing a Deity"). If the characters fail to release the medusa from their contract, refer to the "Ramifications" section in "Appeasing a Deity," as the characters are left with an angry medusa as well as an annoyed powerful being.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AS MEDUSAS

Anyone who seeks power, beauty, and adoration beyond their means can be transformed into a medusa. Those who seek immortality often make terrible deals with shady characters like archdevils, ancient dragons, demon lords, and capricious deities. Adventurers who are particularly vainglorious or lack sufficient humility in the face of divine power may also be transformed into a medusa to teach them an eternal lesson. A character who becomes a medusa retains their statistics and abilities with the following exceptions:

- The character ceases to age but is not immune to magical aging effects.
- The character's hair transforms into a hissing swarm of poisonous snakes, and their creature type becomes Monstrosity.
- The character gains a +1 bonus to AC from natural armor.
- The character's snake hair is a natural weapon, which they can use to make unarmed strikes. If they hit with them, the snakes deal piercing damage equal to 1d4 + the medusa's Dexterity modifier and an additional 2d8 + the medusa's proficiency bonus poison damage, instead of the normal bludgeoning damage for an unarmed strike. On their turn, the character can make an attack with their snake hair as a bonus action.
- The character gains the medusa's Petrifying Gaze trait. The save DC for this trait equals 8 + the character's Constitution modifier + the character's proficiency bonus.

QUICK AND DIRTY CURSE REMOVAL

So the characters ran into something they shouldn't have and now a god is mad at them? Perhaps they broke open a cursed artifact, drank vampire's blood, or did something else unspeakably foolish? Well, now they have to fix it.

A curse means a quest, but inventing a quest out of whole cloth to account for player shenanigans can be daunting. If you need ideas for a cursebreaking quest, choose from the following options or roll first on the Cursebreaker table and then on the appropriate table to determine what is needed to break the curse, then the cost of the cursebreaker's help or the rarity of a required ingredient.

CURSEBREAKER

d8	CURSE BROKEN BY ...
1	Rare potion
2	Celestial or high priest
3	Hag
4	Archfiend or cult leader
5	Archfey
6	Genie
7	Sphinx
8	Ancient dragon

RARE POTION

d6	REQUIRED INGREDIENT
1	Water from a mountain pool that carries the chill with it when bottled
2	A flower that sprouted where a unicorn bled
3	The sound of a cat's footsteps
4	The teardrops of a ghost
5	The breath of a baby kraken
6	A bottled cloud taken from a desert rainstorm

CELESTIAL OR HIGH PRIEST

d6	REQUIRED PAYMENT/SERVICE
1	A month of service to the cursebreaker's temple of choice
2	A large donation to a charity or temple of the cursebreaker's choice
3	Spreading the word and deeds of the cursebreaker or their deity
4	A test of faith to prove your valor
5	All future great deeds to be done in the cursebreaker's (or their god's) name
6	Conversion or replying to the god's faith and repenting of trespasses

HAG

d6	REQUIRED PAYMENT/SERVICE
1	An undisclosed future favor
2	Delivery of a hag's rival to her (still alive)
3	A physical piece of you: fingernail clippings, strands of hair, blood...
4	The memory you savor most
5	The future safety of someone you love
6	A month of serving as an assistant in matters magical and mundane

ARCHFIEND OR CULT LEADER

d6	REQUIRED PAYMENT/SERVICE
1	Disposing of their nemesis and evidence it was performed painfully
2	Your most painful memory or physical sensation
3	A month of service to the cursebreaker's temple of choice
4	A piece of your capacity to feel love
5	Spreading the word and deeds of the cursebreaker
6	A duel of might or magic to prove your worth

ARCHFEY

d6	REQUIRED INGREDIENT
1	A song or poem no one has ever heard and now no one else ever will
2	Spending a month of fey time in service at court
3	An undisclosed future favor
4	All future glory you gain goes instead to the cursebreaker
5	A piece of what drives you to adventure: passion, anger, lust, etc.
6	Your true name

GENIE

d6	REQUIRED INGREDIENT
1	A pile of gemstones as large as the cursebreaker is tall
2	Dispatching of the cursebreaker's rival by any means necessary
3	An epic song or poem written in the cursebreaker's honor
4	A month of serving as a display of the genie's power
5	A cask of wine brewed from an extinct type of grape
6	A monument to the genie to preserve their legacy

SPHINX

d6	REQUIRED INGREDIENT
1	A complicated riddle unknown to the cursebreaker
2	Passing a test of valor posed by the cursebreaker
3	Passing a test of wit posed by the cursebreaker
4	Passing a test of wisdom posed by the cursebreaker
5	Beating the cursebreaker at a deadly game of wits and whimsy
6	A closely held secret that provides insight into the nature of mortals

ANCIENT DRAGON

d6	REQUIRED INGREDIENT
1	A pile of gemstones, gold, and pearls as large as the cursebreaker is long
2	Defeating the cursebreaker in a debate or riddle contest
3	Destroying the cursebreaker's sworn enemy
4	A neighboring ruler's throne
5	Making the cursebreaker laugh
6	Defeating the cursebreaker in a martial test

FEY OF THE SHADOWFELL

NEW FEY CREATURES TWISTED WITH SHADOW

by Jonathan Connor Self

FEY EMBODY THE MULTITUDINOUS EXPERIENCES OF LIVING CREATURES—FROM JOY AND JUBILANCE TO DESPAIR AND RAGE. THESE NATURE SPIRITS ARE EQUAL PARTS LIFE, EMOTION, AND PRIMAL CHAOS. THOUGH NATIVE TO THE FEYWILD, A PLANE OF BEAUTIFUL AND DANGEROUS WONDER, THEIR ILK RESIDE ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE.

While most fey are associated with whimsy and delight, others personify and feed on negative emotions. These spirits sometimes live in the Unseelie Courts of the Feywild or on the Material Plane, but many are drawn into the Shadowfell, a mirror plane of death, decay, and loss. Here, these fey create their own demesnes, subsisting on the horrible emotions that permeate the bleak desolation of the umbral plane. Just as happy, fickle fey belong in the untamed nature of the Feywild, brooding and vengeful fey are at home amid the despair of the Shadowfell.

This article presents fey creatures that emphasize emotional themes throughout the Shadowfell:

- Tips for incorporating existing dark fey creatures into campaigns
- New creatures to add to your games, inspired by mythology from around the world
- Suggestions for using these creatures not only as foes, but also as allies and patrons

EXISTING FEY IN THE SHADOWFELL

You can easily adjust fey in the game's core rules to fit a Shadowfell game. The following examples can be used as written, or as guides to modify fey for your Shadowfell adventure.

NECRODRYAD

Dryads are fey spirits bound to a tree's life force. While a dryad's bonded tree thrives, the fey is healthy. But when an ancient tree dies of unnatural causes, its spirit passes into the Shadowfell and its bonded dryad turns into a twisted, undead shadow of their former self, clinging to fading memories of verdant glory. These necrodryads assail any unlucky enough to approach the souls of their trees.

A necrodryad uses the **dryad** stat block with the following changes:

- The necrodryad is Undead.
- It has resistance to necrotic damage.
- It can cast *inflict wounds* instead of *goodberry*.
- Its Tree Stride trait allows it to travel between dead trees instead of living ones.

DRYAD MYTHOLOGY

Dryads are nymph spirits of Greek origin. These tree nymphs, called hamadryad, inhabited oak trees and were shy around living creatures. The life of a hamadryad was tied to their tree; if the tree died, so did the hamadryad. Dryads of other trees had other names: dryads of ash trees were called meliae, while those of fruit trees were called epimiledes.

HAG

Known for their cruelty and isolationism, hags are both feared and sought by travelers in the wilderness—depending on whether they’re desperate enough to seek out a hag’s help. Hags are also treated with fear and respect by other “monstrous” creatures for their strong magic, esoteric knowledge, and shrewd minds.

GMs can incorporate hags as they exist in the core rules into games set in the Shadowfell. Even hags who can’t cast *plane shift* might know how to find their way to the Shadowfell from the Feywild or the Material Plane to consort with other monsters. The hag’s method for moving from one dimension to the next could be a powerful plot device for a GM—perhaps the hag obtained a unique magic item or discovered a portal between realms. Whatever magic a hag employs, the heroes can use themselves, but likely at a price.

This article also includes two new, horrific hag options for your games: the red hag and the storm hag.

HAG MYTHOLOGY

Hags are found in myths across Eurasia. From the famous Baba Yaga of Slavic folklore, to Jenny Greenteeth in the tales of the Britons, to Frau Holle in the stories of the Germanic people, to the housoubaba of Japan, hideous women in the wilderness with magical powers are a common trope.

GMs should be aware of the sexism inherent in these stories, but savvy GMs can turn the bigotry on its ear. Hags can be empowered feminists, experts in their fields of interest, and nonconformists who unapologetically reject societal norms in favor of their own interests and advancement. Strive for the players to ask who the real monsters are: the hags or those who shun them.

While hags are often portrayed as monsters, they’re still intelligent beings with their own motivations and abilities that could be useful to adventurers—if the characters can convince a hag that an alliance would be mutually beneficial. A hag is no doubt cruel and terrible at times, but they can also be relatable and even admirable at others.

To help turn hags into story “movers” rather than story obstacles, consider the following questions:

- What is the hag’s name? What was their life like prior to hagdom? Did they choose to become a hag, or was it forced upon them, and what impact might that have upon their psyche?
- What are their motivations? Are some of the hag’s goals congruent with those of the characters? What might the hag demand in trade for their assistance?

- What abilities does the hag have that are helpful outside of combat? For example, a red hag has extensive knowledge of history, health, and magic items. A storm hag could hold off an entire fleet of enemy ships if the characters can convince them to do so.
- All hags have their roots in humanity. Keep that origin close to the surface when portraying them. Perhaps the hag has a soft spot for dogs or cats. Perhaps they keep art pieces of their loved ones from long ago, or maybe they still look after their family’s welfare from afar.
- Remember that a dark truth or a hidden truth is still a truth. An encounter with a hag could reveal issues a hero is repressing or ignoring, giving that character a profound opportunity for growth. Discuss such opportunities with your players and if they are willing, roll with it! Create a safe space with players before using hags in this manner, but, if done in collaboration with the player, hags can provide an impetus for character development that heightens the story.

RED HAG

Ten feet tall, skeletally thin, and crimson-faced, a red hag gains her power from feasting upon the flesh of the dead. Her spells cause sickness, which, in turn, leaves her ample bodies to feed on. The touch of her serrated tongue on exposed flesh causes bleeding that can only be stemmed with magical healing.

Red hags form covens like others of their kind, but these relationships often become adversarial as the sisters fight over the choicest victims. In times of desperation, brave adventurers seek out red hags for their knowledge of cures to curses and diseases. While a red hag has little patience for intrusion, she may entertain such requests if the petitioner offers a worthy trade, such as a powerful item, news of plague and suffering in far-off lands, or livestock of exceptional breeding.

Tactics. The red hag has a particular diet and, given the opportunity, feeds her hunger in combat with adventurers. Surrounding herself with mobs of undead minions, she targets the physically weakest character with the *contagion* spell, then attacks them with her claws and tongue.

Red Hag Mythology. The red hag is based on the Japanese myth of the housoubaba. Folklore says this spirit caused smallpox outbreaks to feast upon the corpses.

RED HAG

Large Fey, Typically Neutral Evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 135 (18d8 + 54)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 150 ft.

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

SAVING THROWS Wis +5, Cha +8

SKILLS Arcana +6, Medicine +5, Nature +6, Survival +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common, Primordial, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +4

Blow Over. Creatures within 10 feet of the hag when she moves while flying must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone, and open flames within 10 feet of the hag are extinguished. A creature can only be affected by Blow Over once during a turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hag makes three Claw attacks. She can replace one Claw attack with a Lick attack.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Lick. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. Each time the hag hits the wounded target with this attack, the necrotic damage dealt by the wound increases by 7 (2d6). The wound closes if the target receives magical healing.

Inflict Wounds. Melee Spell Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d10) necrotic damage.

Spellcasting. The hag's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She can cast the following spells, requiring no components:

3/day each: *blight, eyebite*

1/day each: *animate dead, contagion*

STORM HAG

A storm hag is a powerful fey who embodies the raw destructive power of a monumental storm. In her natural form, the hag is the heart of a massive tempest that stretches for miles. She delights in haunting remote lakes and wetlands, lulling victims into complacency with a beautiful song before unleashing deadly weather that sinks ships and drags sailors into the frigid depths.

When interacting with mortals, a storm hag often takes the form of a hideous woman with pale green skin and teeth, jaundiced eyes, and sharp facial features. Her disturbingly long arms can extend even farther to slash foes with wicked claws.

Tactics. The storm hag is as much a force of nature as a creature, and her behavior in combat reflects this quality. She begins her approach by using her Beautiful Song

ability and then dramatically turns violent when she casts *storm of vengeance*. With her exceptional reach, the hag targets her foes from above with her Ice Claws attack. If attacking a vessel, the hag targets the ship exclusively unless its crew puts up a defense, at which time the storm hag pummels defenders and siege engines (such as catapults, trebuchets, and cannons) with Ice Claws and Pummeling Wave instead.

If defeated outside her lair, a storm hag returns to her Shadowfell cave to slumber for seven years. Heroes can undertake a quest to the Shadowfell to destroy the storm hag once and for all.

Storm Hag Mythology. In American mythology, the storm hag was a monstrous woman who lived in Lake Erie, thought to be responsible for the many shipwrecks in that area. Maritime losses along the Pennsylvania coast have been attributed to the storm hag as recently as 1942.

STORM HAG

Gargantuan Fey, Typically Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 23 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 492 (24d20 + 240)

SPEED 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover), swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	21 (+5)	30 (+10)	21 (+5)	22 (+6)	27 (+8)

SAVING THROWS Con +17, Int +12, Wis +13

SKILLS Insight +13, Intimidation +15, Performance +15

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES lightning, necrotic, poison, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

SENSES truesight 300 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Primordial, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 23 (50,000 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +7

Air Form. The hag can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. She can move through a space as narrow as 5 feet wide without squeezing.

Humanoid Form. The hag can take the form of a Medium human. While in this form, she loses her damage immunities and resistances, condition immunities, Air Form trait, and flying speed. She gains a walking speed of 30 feet and can walk across any liquid surface—such as water, acid, mud, snow, quicksand, or lava—as if it were harmless solid ground.

Immortality. The hag cannot be killed on the Material Plane. If reduced to 0 hit points, the hag is magically transported to her lair on the Shadowfell where she slumbers for 7 years before reawakening. She is immune to any effect that would age her, and she can't die from old age.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the hag fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The hag has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The hag's weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Beautiful Song. Creatures within 1 mile of the hag that can hear her must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or be magically charmed by the hag for 1 hour. If the hag makes an attack or casts a spell that damages another creature, a charmed creature becomes frightened and the charmed effect ends for it. A creature charmed or frightened by the hag's Beautiful Song can repeat the sav-

ing throw at the end of its turns, ending the condition on itself on a success. If a creature successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the creature is immune to the hag's Beautiful Song for the next 7 years and 1 day.

Ice Claws (Air Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 31 (6d6 + 10) slashing damage plus 21 (6d6) cold damage. The speed of a creature hit by this attack is reduced to 0.

Paralyzing Claws (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6 + 10) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the condition on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. The hag's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 23, +15 to hit with spell attacks). She can cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *call lightning, dispel magic*

3/day each: *ice storm, wind wall*

1/day each: *plane shift, storm of vengeance*

Pummeling Wave. The hag summons a crushing wave of water that is 120 feet long and 30 feet wide. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 23 Strength saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A nonmagical object in the spell's area that isn't being worn or carried also takes the damage. Unsecured objects and Medium or smaller creatures that fail the saving throw are pushed 60 feet away from the hag.

REACTIONS

Disrupt Magic. When a creature within 60 feet of the hag that she can see casts a spell of 3rd level or lower, the hag disrupts the spell's magic and it has no effect.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The hag can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The hag regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Claws. The hag makes an Ice Claws or Paralyzing Claws attack.

Sink Ships. The hag makes an Ice Claws attack against a sea-faring vessel. If the attack hits, it is a critical hit and ignores any damage threshold the vessel has.

Spellcasting (Costs 2 Actions). The hag casts a spell with a casting time of 1 action.



A STORM HAG'S LAIR

Storm hags make their homes deep within the earth of the Shadowfell, in caves that look out on ancient lakes long since dried up on the Material Plane. A storm hag's presence causes the barrier between the Material Plane and the Shadowfell to weaken, allowing travelers to unintentionally step between them. Many mortals who make this mistake are never seen again, falling victim to the hag or other denizens of the tenebrous plane.

Within her deep lair, the storm hag crafts the most amazing glass baubles and sculptures, using lightning to twist sand into elaborate shapes. Many of these art pieces have oracular abilities and can be used as arcane foci or scrying devices. She rests upon a bed of kelp and moss, content in her isolation. The hag sleeps here for seven years if she is ever killed on the Material Plane, and when the hag awakens from this slumber, she seeks revenge.

Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the storm hag takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the hag can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The hag fills her lair with fog that lasts until the start of initiative count 20 on the next round. While the fog remains, all areas of the lair are heavily obscured for all creatures except the storm hag.
- The hag chooses up to three creatures she can see within 120 feet of her and attempts to disorient them with crystalline patterns in the walls of her lair and refracted light in glass baubles. Each target must succeed on a DC 20 saving throw or be affected as if by the *confusion* spell until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- Spatial perception warps, disorienting creatures and scattering them in different directions. Each creature the storm hag chooses within 60 feet of her must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or use its reaction (if available) to move its speed in a random direction, stopping only if it encounters an impassable obstacle such as a wall. Use the Warped Perception table below to determine the direction a creature moves, rolling separately for each creature.

WARPED PERCEPTION

d8	DIRECTION
1	North
2	Northeast
3	East
4	Southeast
5	South
6	Southwest
7	West
8	Northwest

Regional Effects. The region containing a storm hag's lair is warped by the creature's chaotic and destructive presence:

- The area within 6 miles of the lair is beset by storms with strong winds or heavy precipitation, which can come without warning and last for days, causing extreme damage and flooding.
- There are signs of impending weather phenomena within 1 mile of the hag's lair at all times, including sudden wind or temperature shifts.
- Domesticated beasts within 1 mile of the lair are easily frightened and often flee instead of following commands.

If the hag dies, these effects end immediately.

FOMORIANS

Fomorians were once statuesque giants with their own potent magic, living deep beneath the surface of the earth. During an ancient war, elven fey laid a curse upon all fomorians, warping the giants into creatures with twisted forms and hideous visages. In shame, the fomorians fled to the corners of the multiverse, including the Shadowfell, where they plot revenge against the fey who cursed them.

You can make the fomorians in the core rules more of a threat by increasing the saving throw DCs of their actions or giving them the Spellcasting trait. A fomorian theurge is provided in this article as an example.

FOMORIAN MYTHOLOGY

In ancient Celtic folklore, fomorians are a race of supernatural beings often depicted as godlike embodiments of destructive natural forces. They were the enemies of the Tuatha Dé Danann, another group of supernatural beings that eventually evolved into the fey of Irish myth.

GMs should be thoughtful about how they portray fomorians, as monstrous portrayals of disability are harmful to marginalized communities. In addition, remember that ugly doesn't equate to evil.

FOMORIAN THEURGE

The fomorian theurge wields magic against their fey enemies, bargaining with powerful forces (such as elementals, titans, and dark fey) to augment its intellect and command devastating elemental magic. Fomorian theurges take leadership and advisory roles in fomorian society, using their magical talents to inspire—or bully—their people.

To design the fomorian theurge, spellcasting traits from warlocks and wizards were added to the existing fomorian stat block, as well as additional hit points to reflect their increase in power. The theurge's creature type was also changed to Fey to reflect how the bargains it made have affected its physiology.

Tactics. While other fomorians charge into battle, the theurge prefers to support allies with spellcasting. They begin by using Baleful Gaze, then target the creature affected by their gaze with damaging spells. Unlike many spellcasters, the theurge doesn't fear melee attacks because of their Elemental Nimbus ability, which they will use even if the effect might harm allies.

FOMORIAN THEURGE

Huge Fey, Any Alignment

ARMOR CLASS 14 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 149 (13d12 + 65)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Cha +8

SKILLS Arcana +5, Intimidation +8, Investigation +5, Perception +10, Persuasion +8, Stealth +4

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

LANGUAGES Common, Giant, Primordial, Undercommon

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +4

All-Seeing Eye. When they aren't incapacitated, the theurge can't be surprised. As an action, they can view any location within 1 mile of them. While viewing a location that isn't in the theurge's immediate vicinity, they can't see their immediate vicinity.

Magical darkness doesn't impede the theurge's darkvision. In addition, they can see a faint aura around any visible creature or object that bears magic, and learn its school of magic, if any.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The theurge makes two Staff attacks, or makes one Staff attack and uses Baleful Gaze once.

Staff. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 16 (3d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (theurge's choice).

Baleful Gaze. The theurge focuses their hate and anger on another creature within 60 feet of them that can see them. The creature must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 33 (6d10) necrotic damage and becoming poisoned until the end of its next turn on a failed save, or taking half as much damage and not becoming poisoned on a successful one.

Command Elementals. The theurge speaks words of power to compel Elementals to serve them. Each Elemental within 30 feet of the theurge that can hear them must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by the theurge for 10 minutes. While charmed, the Elemental obeys all the theurge's commands to the best of its ability.

Spellcasting. The theurge's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). They can cast the following spells:

3/day each: *cone of cold*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*

BONUS ACTIONS

Misty Step. The theurge can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space they can see.

REACTIONS

Elemental Nimbus. When the theurge is hit with a melee attack, they can surround themselves with a halo of elemental energies. Each creature within 10 feet of the theurge must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. The theurge selects the damage type from the following list: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder.



NEW FEY CREATURES

Whether they bring weal or woe, an encounter with the fey should be memorable. This is especially true for fey native to the Shadowfell; as embodiments of loss, despair, and other unpleasant feelings, these fey allow players to explore heavy emotional themes and might even add a little whimsy to an otherwise sullen location. There are many more horrifying fey out there than appear in this article, and you can use the examples here to design your own terrifying creations.

BOGIE

The bogie (also called a boogeyman, boogie monster, or boogie woogie) is the embodiment of nightmares. Their appearance varies from moment to moment, but those targeted by a bogie's Terrify action can identify that bogie upon sight regardless of the form they take. A bogie feeds off the fear of their victims; rather killing their prey, they often savor the victim's terror for weeks or even months at a time. Bogies are typically found in urban environments, particularly in crowded living spaces—or even in closets and under beds.

TACTICS

A bogie often attacks from hiding, targeting a creature who looks inexperienced or uncertain. They use their Terrify ability until a target fails its saving throw, then harry the same creature with melee attacks. However, bogies are innate cowards who prefer to feed on helpless targets and flee combat when they know they can't win.

BOGIE MYTHOLOGY

Tales of bogies and similar monsters are found in many cultures, often used by adults to frighten children into good behavior. Bogies are typically described as masculine or androgynous monsters that punish people for misbehavior, though their appearance varies from story to story. In modern family media, they're often portrayed as cute "monsters" instead of sinister terrors.

BOGIE

Medium Fey, Typically Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 67 (9d8 + 27)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Con +6

SKILLS Intimidation +7, Perception +4, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +9

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES radiant

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Sylvan; telepathy 30 ft.

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Incorporeal Movement. The bogie can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. They take 5 (1d10) force damage if they end their turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bogie uses Terrify, then makes two attacks with their claws.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Terrify. The bogie chooses one creature within 30 feet of them that can see the bogie. The bogie's form changes,

embodying the greatest fear of their target. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the bogie for 1 minute. A creature frightened in this way can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turns, ending the condition on itself on a success. If the bogie targets a creature with Terrify while another creature is affected by it, the effect ends for the previous target.

If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to any bogie's Terrify for the next 24 hours.

Shadow Shift. The bogie enters the Shadowfell from the Feywild or Material Plane, or leaves the Shadowfell and enters the Feywild or Material Plane. When using Shadow Shift to leave the Shadowfell, the bogie's destination must be a confined space just big enough for them to fit inside (such as within a closet, under a bed, or inside a trunk).

Spellcasting. The bogie's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). They can cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *vicious mockery*

3/day: *detect thoughts*

BONUS ACTIONS

Marked for Death. The bogie chooses a creature they can see within 90 feet of them and magically marks the target as their quarry for 1 minute. Whenever the bogie hits the target with a weapon attack, they deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Scare to Death. The bogie deals 14 (4d6) psychic damage to a creature within 30 feet of them that they can see that is frightened by their Terrify action.



FACHAN

The fachen is a fey creature of jealousy and violence, with fearsome magic that can cause a victim's heart to stop. With a single leg that it hops upon, a single arm that sprouts from its chest, and a single eye centered in its massive head, the fachen is a terrifying sight. Fachans are terribly jealous of their flying fey kin who seem to move so freely and easily. Fachans often attack flying creatures out of spite, even innocent ones such as songbirds and butterflies.

Though fachans usually live in isolation, they don't do so by choice. They crave love and attention, and often cast *disguise self* to assume the appearance of guileless humanoids (such as children) to infiltrate a town and enjoy society. However, enjoyment soon becomes sharp jealousy as the fachnan realizes how much they don't have. When the ruse inevitably fails, the fachnan violently lashes out and the community drives them away, back to isolated misery.

TACTICS

A fachen is a terrifying opponent. They begin combat by targeting a creature with *Stop Heart*. If the creature fails its saving throw, the fachen then casts *fear* to scare away that creature's allies. The fachen uses subsequent turns to finish off the dying target, attacking wildly with their spiked chain. However, a fachen will always ignore tactical moves in favor of attacking a flying creature.

FACHAN MYTHOLOGY

The fachen is a nightmare of Irish and Scottish folklore, but similar creatures exist in Yakuts tales as well. Also called Peg-Leg Jack and the abaasy, the fachen was fiercely territorial and took innocent-looking forms, especially that of a small child, to scout new targets in human society.

FACHAN

Medium Fey, Typically Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 78 (12d8 + 24)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

SKILLS Athletics +5, Intimidation +2

SENSES passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Common

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +2

Hopping. The fachan has disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws to avoid being knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fachan makes two Morningstar attacks or two Spiked Chain attacks.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Spiked Chain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the

target must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the fachan can choose one of the following additional effects:

- If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the fachan can't grapple another target.
- The target is knocked prone.

Spellcasting. The fachan's spellcasting ability is Constitution (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). They can cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *fear*

3/day: *disguise self*

Stop Heart (Recharge 6). The fachan targets one creature within 60 feet of the fachan that can see them and has a beating heart. That creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or drop to 0 hit points. On a successful saving throw, the creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Jaunt. The fachan teleports 30 feet to an unoccupied space they can see.

LUBBERKIN

The lubberkin, lob, lubber fiend, lurdane, or Lob Lie-By-The-Fire is a spirit of intoxication. Lubberkin look like eleven-foot-tall, fur-covered humans with fluffy tails. While they initially act friendly and welcoming, lubberkin seek to corrupt the pure of heart with excess. A lubberkin might be kind on a whim, helping a family clean their home for a saucer of milk, but these fey are more often found haunting places where the devout reside, such as monasteries and temples. The lubberkin tempts residents with excessive drink to deal with sorrows, initiating their inevitable decline into debauchery. An established lubberkin often turns temples into a hedonistic cult serving their desires.

Before introducing a lubberkin into your game, be sure to talk with the players about the legends and themes surrounding these monsters. Alcoholism, excessive drinking, and cults are sensitive topics that could be unpleasant or disturbing for your players.

TACTICS

The characters might encounter a lubberkin after delving into their home and dealing with the creature's personal cult—but no matter where they find one, a lubberkin is a formidable foe. In combat, a lubberkin prefers to direct cult members to harry foes while they use Sniff of the Stuff to intoxicate physically powerful characters. Lubberkin also prefer not to kill their enemies; instead, they enjoy indoctrinating defeated foes and inducting them into their cults.

LUBBERKIN MYTHOLOGY

The lubberkin is a creature of English folklore similar to the brownie of Scotland, the Slavic domovoi, and the Scandinavian tomte. Lubber fiends appear in wo, S.R. Crocket, Juliana H. Ewing, and others, as well as some popular comics and video games.

LUBBERKIN

Large Fey, Typically Neutral Evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 136 (13d10 + 65)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Con +8, Wis +4

SKILLS Athletics +9, Perception +4

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lubberkin makes two Fist attacks.

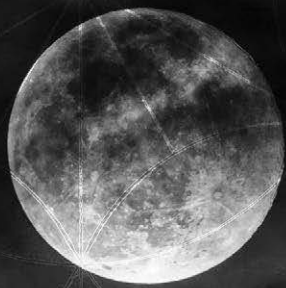
Fist. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 23 (5d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Sniff of the Stuff. The lubberkin takes a swig of alcohol, then sprays it in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks and spend its action lamenting perceived regrets and loss, sobbing uncontrollably. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Spellcasting. The lubberkin's spellcasting ability is Constitution (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). They can cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *lesser restoration*, *prestidigitation*, *purify food and drink*

1/day each: *animate objects*, *create food and water*



THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES

TWO ENCOUNTER-INDUCING NIGHTMARES

by Carlos Cisco

When we drift off to sleep, we rarely think of the measures we have in place to guard us. The blanket that warms our body. The door lock that keeps the outside out. Your friend on watch who is definitely not distracted by their personal demons and surely succeeds on every one of their Perception checks. Yet even with those measures in place, we find ourselves victims of invasion—nightmares, intrusive thoughts and memories, regrets, sleep paralysis trapping us in our bodies while our minds race. This article takes these invasions and turns a simple long rest into a terrifying ordeal that makes adventurers think twice about resting in that “probably unhaunted inn.”

This isn't about punishing your players for seeking rest, but rather a tool to transform what is usually a mechanical necessity that rarely pushes the narrative forward into something existentially terrifying with consequences beyond exhaustion and missing spell slots.

The following encounters are designed to be dropped into your game and are designed for characters of levels 7 to 9.

THE GLASS GHOST

EVERY TOWN HAS AN ELM STREET.

—FREDDY KRUEGER

A supposedly haunted inn offers prizes to adventurers brave enough to stay an entire night. Rumors say the prize is a mysterious magic item. But more deadly than the overnight stay are the dreams that haunted the survivors after.

BACKGROUND

Every town has an inn like this—a quiet one on the edge of town, or one out of the way, nestled in alleys and hidden from view. The Helm Street Inn was once a hub for professional vagabonds, raucous adventurers, and the occasional murderous drifter. You know the type.

A day of inclement weather wracked this discreet inn some time ago. Some say a thunderstorm. Others say a storm of sand. That detail isn't important, but what it drove through the door is.

The Glass Ghost, a strange and confused being made of glass, immediately set the room on edge. They kept to themselves and neither ate nor drank. As the guests' drinks set in and the night wound down, the Glass Ghost approached a sleeping patron. With one touch, the Glass Ghost went rigid, entering a trance. The sleeper moaned softly, then roared in anger. The sleeper's companions assumed the worst of this ... whatever it was. They grabbed their weapons and laid waste to the Glass Ghost until its fragile form finally cracked.

Soon the rest of the inn joined in, while the innkeeper merely watched. Doing nothing. Helping no one. The pa-

trons beat the Glass Ghost until the traveler was nothing but grains of fine, multicolored sand.

The anger and pain this strange being felt while the patrons shattered them carried their restless spirit back into the Astral Plane, giving them new unlife as an unkillable, dream-based revenant. The Glass Ghost could now enter victims' dreams and attack, harming their physical bodies while stalking their unconscious minds.

One by one, those murderous adventurers were found dead in their rooms the next night, peppered with shards of glass, sand spilling from their open wounds. Only the innkeeper who allowed the murder remained. No one knows exactly what happened, but the innkeeper disappeared the following morning; most assume they shared the same fate.

This inn still operates to this day. The new ownership embraced the unfortunate mishap to create a “haunted inn” experience. Can you stay the whole night? If so, you walk away with a prize and your breakfast is free. According to rumor, *most* adventurers do enjoy a free breakfast and some shiny new coin. But those that do rarely stay another night. Anywhere.

At least, this is what the locals tell the characters if asked about the inn. The true story is much, much darker.

KEY NPCs

To know the game, one must know the players. No one is more central than Mari Elena, the innkeeper—the one who witnessed the events that night, and with much more hiding under the surface than one might assume.

MARI ELENA

Neutral Evil, Half-Elf, 75, She/Her

Mari Elena is cunning, devious, and not at all what she appears. She witnessed the shattering of the Glass Ghost, as she was the proprietor of the original inn. She presents as a dark-skinned half-elf dressed in garb just a shade too nice for a busy innkeeper. Her distinct silver earring pierces the lobe and connects with a chain to the helix of her ear. She is a wolf in sheep's clothing—or rather, a dragon in innkeeper's clothing.

In reality, Mari is an opportunistic, paranoid, and gregarious **young red dragon** named Mahlinchex'thra, who found that business acumen and real estate investment came much more naturally to her than raiding and pillaging. With barely any effort, her unorthodox hoard grows. Her *earring of shape-shifting* (see below) allows her to talk freely among those she views as lesser beings, disguised as her latest persona, which is currently Mari. Greedy and vain, the dragon has left a wake of aliases, misdirects, and chaos behind her; the misfortune of others does nothing to



move Mari, something she hides well when she opens her next business venture with a smile.

The Glass Ghost's murder was an opportunity for Mari to create yet another turnkey operation ... if she played her cards right. When the Glass Ghost came for her the next night, she assumed her true form, using momentary surprise and a bit of surreptitious intimidation to propose a pact—or, as she presented it, an investment opportunity. She would create a “haunted inn” and challenge proud adventurers to stay the night for a reward. While the contestants slept, the Glass Ghost could enter their unconscious minds and haunt them night after night, harming them in their dreams until they perished. The Glass Ghost could slake their thirst for the blood of adventurers in an endless loop, while Mari in turn could keep her life (and whatever valuables are left on the bodies of dead adventurers).

Despite their hatred for Mari, the Glass Ghost was smart enough not to tangle with a dragon and took the bargain. After coming to agreeable terms, Mari used a draconic binding ritual to seal the pact. They have been tenuous business partners ever since. It's a good deal for them both, even if one is consumed by hatred and the other by paranoia.

This isn't the first Helm Street Inn Mari set up with the Glass Ghost, but it is the only one currently in operation. Dozens of towns have been subjected to a Helm Street Inn, and when questions eventually lead back to Mari (or whatever alias she has donned), the dragon uproots and moves somewhere else—yet another reason for her not to carry liquid assets. Mari is smart enough not to keep a large hoard around and has decentralized her money across various investment portfolios, real estate, and overseas banks.

Personality Trait. “Everything has a use and a place. It's about finding both.”

Ideal. “You can't enjoy your wealth if you can't secure your health.”

Bond. “Despite how nervous he makes me, I admire the work ethic of the Glass Ghost.”

Flaw. “My plans are flawless and my designs airtight.”

INCISE, THE GLASS GHOST

Chaotic Evil, Sand Speaker, Undead, They/Them

A native of the Astral Plane, the Glass Ghost, whose real name is Incise, is a humanoid formed of living glass and sand who can enter the dreams of others (see the sand speaker ancestry in *ARCADIA 3's The Dream Kin* by Justice Ramin Arman for more information)—or they were in their previous life.

Now, they exist only in the dreams of others, but they are still capable of great harm and violence. Incise is a dream-based revenant bent on exacting harsh revenge

EARRING OF SHAPESHIFTING

Wondrous Item, Rare

While wearing this earring, you can use an action to magically polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid that has an ancestry and appearance of your choice, or back into your true form. You revert to your true form if you die. Any equipment you are wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (your choice). In a new form, you retain your statistics except for your size and creature type.

against all adventurers. Unlike the smooth, blown-glass look that most sand speakers have, their form is cracked, sharp, and jagged, their hand formed into a cruel claw. Cursed by their bargain with Mari to murder again and again, the Glass Ghost is weary but unable to free themselves from this unending cycle of blood and nightmares.

Yet some days they don't want to be freed from this. In all the dreams wherein Incise assaulted adventurers, not one person asked how they could help them. To Incise, that's the most damning indictment of adventurers of them all.

Incise uses the **Glass Ghost** stat block at the end of this encounter. They are nearly impossible to truly kill; if encountered in a dream and destroyed, Incise simply takes a week to reform and continue their attacks. See “Dream Warriors” for information on truly stopping Incise.

Personality Trait. “Existence is agony unending. Delighting in violence makes it less so.”

Ideal. “The only good adventurer is a dead adventurer.”

Bond. “Someday I'll be free of Mari.”

Flaw. “I can't stop killing people. I don't want to.”

ENCOUNTER BREAKDOWN

This encounter takes place over an indeterminate amount of days, and the following breakdown can serve as a guide as to how it may play out:

1. The characters learn about the Helm Street Inn and a prize for adventurers who stay the night (see “Nightmare on Helm Street”).
2. The characters arrive at the Helm Street Inn and meet the innkeeper, Mari Elena. She relates the story behind the Helm Street Inn and the Glass Ghost (see “Helm Street Inn”).

3. During their stay at the inn, the characters have their first nightmare of the Glass Ghost and the revenant curses them (see “First Nightmare”).
4. The next morning, the characters collect their prize and continue whatever adventure they may have (see “Next Morning”).
5. The next time the characters take a long rest, the Glass Ghost attacks (see “Second Night”). Characters can become marked by Incise during this nightmare; if marked during subsequent rests, they are thrust into dreams where the Glass Ghost attempts to kill them (see “Dream Warriors”).
6. If the Glass Ghost is destroyed, the characters must find a way to end this curse before the ghost reforms and attacks again. Whether they get the information from the Glass Ghost or not, the logical next stop is back to the inn and confront Mari (see “New Nightmares”).
7. If the characters confront Mari, she negotiates first, but won’t hesitate to defend herself when it becomes clear that she created only one solution to their problem: her death (see “Confronting Mari”).

NIGHTMARE ON HELM STREET

There are several ways to hook the characters into Helm Street Inn’s “haunted inn experience.” In a large city, they might find flyers posted around the city with different clever advertising slogans:

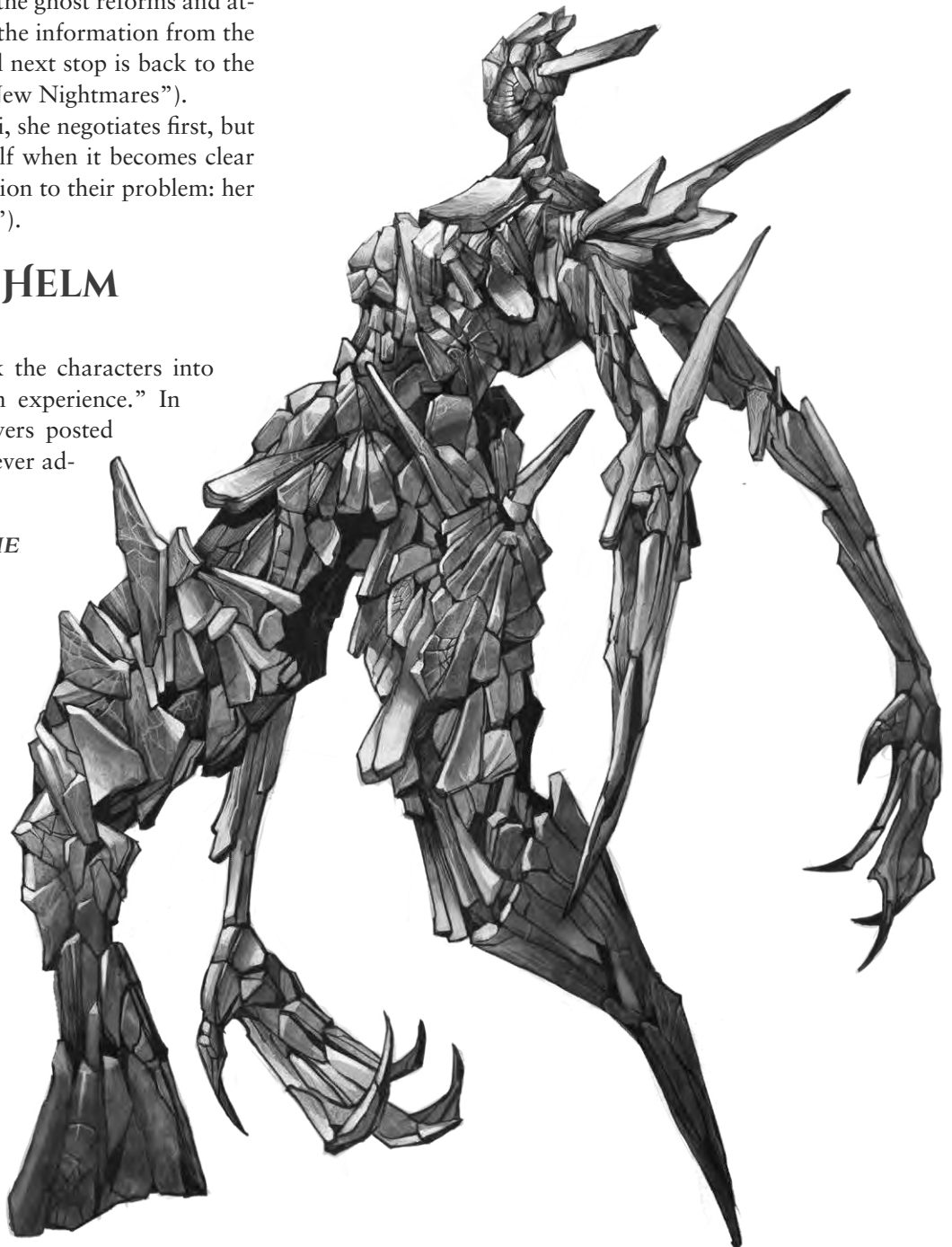
*CAN YOU SURVIVE THE
NIGHT?
PRIZES FOR ALL WHO
DARE!
WHO IS THE GLASS
GHOST?*

In a small town, Helm Street Inn might be the only establishment that caters to “their types” (adventurers). No matter where in the world the characters are, every settlement has a Helm Street Inn ... or will eventually.

HELM STREET INN

When the characters take the bait, they find a quaint but kitschy two-story inn. The inn’s outside has the following notable features:

- Backlit stained glass windows project multicolored lights onto the street.
- A tiny bit of colorful sand spills out of cracks and crevices in the cobblestone walls.
- The air feels just a little bit dryer around the inn.
- The sign art portrays a cracked helm with an adorable ghost peeping out from behind it.



Inside is another matter. The front door opens into a small tavern with three tables, a bar, and these other notable features:

- The macabre theme has been taken a little too far: the walls and ceilings are adorned with curios and objects that “once belonged to” (but probably didn’t) evil wizards, cursed warriors, and notorious serial killers. It’s the kind of place where servers would be adorned in *flair* if the inn were staffed.
- The displayed objects include a bloodied greatsword with a machete-like blade, a rusty scythe, a jagged kitchen knife under a mask made of humanoid skin, a marionette with blades for hands, and a silver orb with blades jutting out of the sides.
- A small window opens into a tiny kitchen behind the bar where unseen servants (per the spell of the same name) prepare a middling (at best) menu.
- A small but ornate chandelier made of blown glass. If a character stares at it long enough, it sways like it might be shifting. But it’s not. Or is it? The sand contained in the chandelier is what remains of the Glass Ghost’s corporeal form. If the Glass Ghost is freed of their pact (see “New Nightmares”), the chandelier shatters.
- An owlbear-skin rug. This is actually a **rug of smothering**.
- A large, ornately adorned chest inlaid with dozens of silver question marks. It has a hole large enough to reach your hand in. The box cleverly disguises an open *bag of holding* and is the mystery box used to reward adventurers who stay the night (see “Next Morning”).

GHOST STORY

When Mari notices the characters, she knows that they’ve likely heard of the Glass Ghost, but she happily spins them a yarn if they haven’t, revealing the information in the “Background” section up to the disappearance of the innkeeper. If asked how she acquired the inn, Mari says she bought it on the cheap in a foreclosure sale. While she regales the characters with the sordid tale, she omits any details about her true nature, her relationship with the Glass Ghost, and that she was the innkeeper during Incise’s slaying.

A character who succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check can tell that Mari omits some details, but if confronted, she shifts the conversation and attempts to sell a timeshare vacation keep on the coast until the characters relent. If asked about the prize, Mari explains that anyone who can sleep the whole night upstairs wins a mystery item at breakfast the next day (proudly stating, “which, I might add, will also be free!”). If asked about this business operation (how could it be profitable?), she claims that this is not a huge moneymaker, but she has other real estate investments that keep this passion project afloat. She just loves themed establishments.

FIRST NIGHTMARE

If the characters agree to stay, they are given keys to their rooms, which have luxurious down pillows and thick blankets. When they have all fallen asleep, read the following:

Each of you dreams of a vast desert of scintillating, colorful sand. No matter which direction you walk, you always seem to be cresting the top of the same dune. When you stare out across the prismatic expanse, you see something in the heat waves ... someone approaching. Then you wake.

During this dream, Incise connects to the characters and can henceforth enter their minds whenever they sleep. When the characters wake, they cough up clouds of multicolored sand, a sign that this curse is in effect and the Glass Ghost has infiltrated the collective subconscious of the party.

ELVES DON’T SLEEP

There’s a good chance you have an elf or another non-sleeper in the group. You can go one of two routes here. First, you can handwave the rules so that the elf experiences the above dream during their trance. Alternatively, if you prefer a challenge, Mari enacts her backup plan. She has every confidence in the Glass Ghost, but she knows that confidence comes from preparation and contingency.

On the first night after their stay, Mari sends her owlbear-skin **rug of smothering** to deal with anyone who didn’t sleep. If multiple adventurers opted out of sleeping or remain unmarked, Mari sends up to three additional **rugs of smothering**, but never sends more than the number of unmarked adventurers. These additional rugs appear as normal rugs, and the owlbear rug is clearly the ringleader.

NEXT MORNING

At breakfast, Mari feigns dismay as she pulls the mystery box off the shelf, places it on the bar, and asks, “Who’s first?” The characters can draw from the box, rolling 1d12 and taking the item rolled on the Mystery Box table below. If a character rolls a prize that a previous character received, have them roll again until they generate a new result. If a character opted out of sleeping or didn’t sleep for biological reasons, Mari pulls the box away. “Tsk tsk. The deal was to sleep the night.” Mari holds fast to this wording.

If asked about the sand, Mari replies, “Woke up with a mouthful of sand? You got off easy. He can be much scarier when he wants to be.”

The breakfast, like food at most themed restaurants, is dubious at best.

SECOND NIGHT

After the characters leave the inn, the Glass Ghost enters their dreams whenever they take a long rest. The default setting for these dreams is the desert of multicolored sand, but you can modify the dream to take place in locations with emotional resonance for the characters. It’s a dream. Go wild.

The first time the characters rest after sleeping in the inn, they dream of the Glass Ghost chasing them. While they all have the same dream, no character can see or interact with the others in the dream. Each character can choose to flee or confront the Glass Ghost:

- A character who flees must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the character outruns the Glass Ghost but gains a level of exhaustion when they wake up that can’t be removed until the Glass Ghost is reduced to 0 hit points. On a failed save, the Glass Ghost catches up to the character and slashes

them with claws of glass. The character gains a level of exhaustion that can’t be removed and loses 1d6 hit points and their hit point maximum is reduced by the same amount until the Glass Ghost is reduced to 0 hit points.

- If a character confronts Glass Ghost, the revenant slashes the character with glass claws. The character loses 1d6 hit points and their hit point maximum is reduced by the same amount until the Glass Ghost is reduced to 0 hit points.

Characters who confront the Glass Ghost or who fail their saving throw while fleeing awake with glass shards sticking out of their body, which indicates they are marked (see “Dream Warriors”).

DREAM WARRIORS

After the characters experience their second nightmare with the Glass Ghost, they continue to encounter the revenant in their dreams whenever they sleep during a long rest—only this time, characters may be able to make a stand and see one another. Again, this encounter’s default setting is the desert of multicolored sand, but the GM is free to set this nightmare anywhere with emotional resonance for the party. Remember ... it’s a dream. Go nuts.

MYSTERY BOX

d12	MYSTERY BOX PRIZES
1	A factory reject <i>potion of healing</i> that appears normal. When a creature consumes the potion, it regains 2d4 + 2 hit points and is blinded for 1 minute.
2	A +2 <i>dagger</i> . The character who pulls this item from the box cuts themselves and takes 2 (1d4) slashing damage. There are bloody fingerprints on the blade that won’t wipe clean.
3	An <i>immovable rod</i> that only works once. Once it is made immobile, it can’t be deactivated.
4	An <i>eversmoking bottle</i> that only spews sulphuric red smoke.
5	A very dim <i>gem of brightness</i> . It has 1 charge left.
6	<i>Gauntlets of ogre power</i> made from the preserved fists of an ogre. They make the wearer’s hands oversized, but otherwise have no abnormal effects.
7	A <i>hat of disguise</i> . Bits of hair and scalp remain stuck to the inside of the hat.
8	A <i>necklace of fireballs</i> with two beads remaining. It’s unwearable as a necklace, as the chain has been snapped.
9	A +1 <i>mace</i> . It looks burnt and partially melted, but it is functional.
10	A <i>cloak of protection</i> . A brightly colored shoulder wrap with three jagged slashes running down the back, tattering the end. The cloak is still caked in blood.
11	A <i>shield of missile attraction</i> . There are multicolored, unbreakable glass shards stuck in the shield.
12	A <i>potion of fire giant strength</i> .

GLASS GHOST

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 90 (12d8 + 36)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +8, Int +3

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES bludgeoning

DAMAGE RESISTANCE piercing, slashing

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, paralyzed, stunned

SENSES darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Common

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Discorporation. When the Glass Ghost drops to 0 hit points or dies, their dreamform is destroyed but their essence travels back to the Astral Plane, and they can't enter dreams or use actions. After 1 week, the Glass Ghost gains a new dreamform, regaining all their hit points and becoming active again.

Evasion. When subjected to an effect that allows a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the Glass Ghost takes no damage on a successful save or half damage on a failed one, provided the Glass Ghost is not incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Glass Ghost makes two Glass Claw attacks.

Glass Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 14 Charisma saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. The attack deals an extra 7 (2d6) piercing damage if the Glass Ghost has advantage on the attack roll or if the target is within 5 feet of one of the Glass Ghost's allies.

Shard of Glass. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 60/120 ft., one target. **Hit:** 11 (2d10) force damage. The attack deals an extra 14 (4d6) force damage if the Glass Ghost has advantage on the attack roll or if the target is within 5 feet of one of the Glass Ghost's allies. On a hit or a miss, the shard explodes, and the target and each creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (4d6) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Fear Themselves. The Glass Ghost can conjure a copy of themselves in an unoccupied space within 30 feet of them. Additionally, the Glass Ghost can swap places with a copy within 30 feet of them. Each copy has the statistics of the Glass Ghost, except it has 1 hit point, AC 18, can't take villain actions, and lacks the Glass Ghost's traits, Multiattack action, and Shard of Glass action. Each copy acts immediately after the Glass Ghost in initiative.

REACTIONS

Dream Logic. When the Glass Ghost or one of their copies is hit with a melee attack, the Glass Ghost can swap places with another creature they can see within 30 feet of them. The target takes the damage instead of the Glass Ghost.

VILLIAN ACTIONS

The Glass Ghost has three villain actions. They can take each action once during an encounter after an enemy creature's turn. They take villain action 1 during the first round of combat, villain action 2 during the second, and villain action 3 during the third round.

Villain Action 1: One, Two, I'm Coming for You. The Glass Ghost conjures multiple copies of itself. One copy appears within 5 feet of each creature within 60 feet of the Glass Ghost. Additionally, as part of this action, the Glass Ghost can swap places with one of the copies.

Villain Action 2: Kill for Me. Each creature within 5 feet of a copy of the Glass Ghost must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be briefly possessed by the copy. The copy disappears and forces the possessed creature to use its movement and action on its next turn to move toward the possessed creature's nearest ally and target it with a weapon attack or cantrip that deals damage. If a copy is adjacent to more than one target, the copy targets the first creature in initiative order that isn't already possessed. At the end of the possessed creature's next turn, the copy reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the possessed creature.

Villain Action 3: It's Prime Time. Each remaining copy of the Glass Ghost explodes in a burst of astral sand, dealing 7 (2d6) psychic damage to each creature within 10 feet of it except for the Glass Ghost and destroying the copy. Each creature struck by the sand must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be outlined in shimmering sand. Until an outlined creature exits the dream, any attack rolls against it have advantage if the attacker can see it, and it can't benefit from being invisible.

Characters who woke up with glass in their wounds from the “Second Night” encounter with the Glass Ghost are marked. Marked characters can see each other in shared dreams featuring the Glass Ghost. Additionally, they no longer automatically wake when the Glass Ghost harms them. Any wounds incurred in this dream space appear on and affect their physical bodies. The characters carry any equipment they normally carry, including weapons, armor, consumables, and essential spell components. The **Glass Ghost** attacks these characters, taking full advantage of their villain actions to do as much damage as possible. The Glass Ghost attacks spellcasters and unarmored characters first before moving on to bulkier targets. They fight with abandon; Incise knows full well that if their glass form is dispatched, they simply return in time. A character exits the dream when Incise is reduced to 0 hit points, or if all marked characters are reduced to 0 hit points, unconscious, or dead.

A character who is not asleep notices their unconscious marked friends in distress and can use an action to attempt to wake a marked dreamer, allowing the dreamer to make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the dreamer is trapped with the Glass Ghost. On a success, the dreamer wakes up, but they don’t gain the benefits of a long rest and any damage they took from the Glass Ghost can’t be healed until the Glass Ghost is reduced to 0 hit points. A marked character can use an action to fall unconscious and enter an encounter with the Glass Ghost the next round.

Unmarked characters continue to have the dream under “Second Night” until they are marked or the Glass Ghost has been defeated. If such a character becomes marked, they must finish a long rest before they can join a combat encounter with Incise.

If a character confronts Incise and asks how to free them, Incise openly curses Mari’s name, saying this torment ends with her death but that the pact prevents Incise from wrenching the life from her bones herself. While the characters can’t convince Incise to stop, they can destroy Incise’s dreamform and use the weeklong recovery gap to confront and dispose of Mari, freeing Incise and themselves from this curse.

If the characters defeat Incise, the nightmare isn’t over. While the Glass Ghost reforms, nightmares of Incise’s brutal slaying at the original Helm Street Inn haunt the characters until the revenant returns, stronger than they were before (see the “Tempered Glass” sidebar).

TEMPERED GLASS

Characters may feel confident that one bad night a week won’t really change the course of their adventures—but they would be wrong. Each time Incise is destroyed, they reform stronger, like tempered glass. When they reform, the Glass Ghost’s proficiency bonus increases by 1 and their Glass Claw attack deals an extra 1d6 damage. These bonuses are cumulative and apply to Incise’s copies, as well. Repeated slayings only make Incise an unstoppable killing machine.

NEW NIGHTMARES

Even if the characters dispose of the Glass Ghost in a dream, their worries are far from over. After regenerating, the Glass Ghost pursues the characters until they free the revenant from this cycle. To free Incise, the characters must find a way to end the pact Incise made with Mari by killing her or convincing her to end the pact. If confronted, Mari attempts to flee, seeking shelter at one of her many lavish investment properties.

CONFRONTING MARI

If she is unable to flee or the characters track her to one of her other homes, Mari negotiates before resorting to combat, offering the deed to the inn in exchange for her life and claiming that ownership of the inn grants control over the Glass Ghost. This is, of course, a desperate lie. A character who succeeds on a DC 19 Wisdom (Insight) check sees the dragon’s deceit. If pressed with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check, Mari gives the characters a deed to a keep in a remote location. The keep, if the deed is secured, is somewhere remote—a forest, a mountain range, or a cliff overlooking the coast. Wherever it is, it has a stunning view, but it needs a ton of work to restore it to any semblance of livability. It’s a fixer-upper. Both it and the inn could present an opportunity to take advantage of the Stronghold rules in *Strongholds & Followers*.

If the characters try to convince Mari to break the pact with Incise, there is no set DC for this. As far as Mari is concerned, ending the pact is akin to committing slow suicide, as the Glass Ghost will come for her as soon as they’re freed. A very compelling argument or trade must be made to convince her, something that carries the weight and magnitude of a dragon’s life. So ... not cheap. Mari is drawn to offers such as legendary magic items and ownership of resource-rich land—things that hold a value not easily calculated, but that either increase her power or passively generate wealth. This isn’t an easy sell, as Mari

has no desire to die at the character's hands *or* the Glass Ghost's.

The adventurers are, of course, free to not kill anyone. But that might not be the healthiest long-term choice for them.

If negotiations fail and she can see no escape, Mari changes into her true form to inflict whatever damage she can until she finds an opening to flee. If the characters thoroughly search the inn, they find 1,000 gp stashed in various places and a portfolio detailing Mari's various holdings, including account numbers at a half dozen prestigious banks all around the world. Unfortunately, they

are coded behind six Draconic ciphers. A character who makes a successful DC 20 Intelligence check decodes one document. If a character speaks Draconic, they can add their proficiency bonus to the check. If they successfully decode a document, choose or roll for the document decoded on the Mari's Holding's table. Once a document is decoded, remove it from the table, ignoring and rerolling the result if it comes up again.

Incise's Freedom. If Incise is freed from their pact with Mari, their spirit can finally move on. The Glass Ghost sheds their need for vengeance and goes to an eternal rest.

MARI'S HOLDINGS

d6	MYSTERY BOX PRIZES
1	The account number to a notoriously secure bank in a coastal metropolis on another continent. The account contains 300 pp, 2,000 gp, and 5,000 sp.
2	The deed to a keep in a remote location of the GM's choice. It's a real fixer-upper, and possibly haunted, but could be a stronghold for the characters if they clean it up.
3	Titles to sculptures and paintings that are on display in museums in six different cities and worth a total of 3,500 gp. They're bound in a contract that prohibits release until the beginning of the new year, where that contract to display is up for negotiation.
4	Titles to a block of land in a major city on which low-income housing is built. The folk who reside there are behind on their payments and would have been in danger of eviction by Mari. There are notes about a meeting to discuss it with a local magistrate two weeks from now.
5	The title to what is effectively a strip mall in a major city: three densely packed shops, where an alchemist, a blacksmith, and a tinkerer all pay Mari rent.
6	The deed to a gem mine, along with a contract with the Diamond Delvers, a gnomish mining company. The company missed their last check-in after they requested mercenary aid to overcome some ... challenges. Judging by the correspondence, Mari refused.

HYPNAGOUGIC HAUNTINGS

DON'T LET IT IN!

—SAMUEL, THE BABADOOK

Nasty amorphous aberrations native to the Astral Plane, hypnagougs are a plague to sleepers the world over. For individuals, they're nearly always fatal. For adventuring parties, or any large group of people sleeping close together, these literal nightmares unleash something much, much worse. Unfortunately for them, and everyone else, they have no natural food source in their native plane. To feed, they anchor a portion of themselves in the Material Plane, drinking deep of the dreams and nightmares of sapient beings until they've absorbed enough energy to rip their way into reality.

Only when made flesh can this abomination truly feed, leaving naught but blood and tears in their wake, amassing strength as they feast. Their hunger is endless. The aberrations only retreat when forced into a proverbial corner, intelligent enough to know when they've been bested.

ENCOUNTERING A HYPNAGOUG

A hypnagoug strikes when an individual or group is resting. Adventuring parties that encounter one are forced into asymmetrical combat as the sleepers fight a war of attrition with the hypnagoug on its home turf while anyone on watch must prevent the hypnagoug from draining the sleepers' life force.

Once a hypnagoug has gorged itself, it tears out of the Astral Plane. It has little interest in dispatching the rest of the group, smart enough to know that any bad luck could send it packing. Before fleeing, it attempts to bring one or more of the sleepers along with it to snack on later. Hypnagougs left to their own devices continue to prey on sleepers, though their methods become less surreptitious and cumulatively more ... garish.

It is best to avoid letting this thing onto the Material Plane to begin with. Fortunately, there is a way to prevent its entrance, but only for those smart enough to keep someone perceptive on watch. These awake heroes stand a chance of containing the monster if they can coordinate with their sleeping allies, who have their own role to play, even if it's one of attrition.



The characters don't need to be the target. Uncovering a hypnagoug in a populated area could be a race against time as it grows in strength. Hypnagougs that have had multiple nights to feed are nearly impossible to slay. A feast full of drunken louts would make an excellent target, as would a one-room family home—anywhere the creatures might find multiple sleepers clustered in a small area.

SLEEPERS

When a hypnagoug's anchor breaks through into the Material Plane, it creates a special aura that thrusts unconscious creatures into a liminal space between sleep and dream. They can see everything within the 30-foot aura, including other sleepers in their astral forms, but nothing beyond this area. Instead of the hypnagoug's Material Plane anchor, they see the creature's full, horrifying form. While feeding, the hypnagoug can't take actions, except through its anchor. When the sleepers first "awake" in this liminal space, read the following text:

Your eyes flutter open. Everything around you, in eerie grayscale, shifts at the borders of your perception. You see your body lying in repose below you. Your companions similarly stand as ethereal spirits above their corporeal bodies. In the center of all, a huge, amorphous form wraps tightly around itself like a nightmarish cocoon. Corded muscles ripple under oily, shifting, umbral skin. And eyes. So many eyes. And whispers pleading from a thousand different voices all crying out for release. Whatever this is, it is a literal nightmare to behold.

AWAKE

For those lucky enough to be awake when a hypnagoug arrives, the solution is simple: remove the source of food. If all sleeping creatures are removed from the Soporific Aura, the anchor retreats into the Astral Plane and the encounter is over. Damaging the anchor until it retreats is also a viable option.

THE ANCHOR

While technically an appendage of a larger creature, the anchor does not share hit points with the hypnagoug. When it appears in the Material Plane, the anchor always takes the form of something ... odd, such as an ornate vase in the middle of a wooded campsite, a half-eaten loaf of bread sitting on the nightstand, or a book appearing just outside your bedroom door. It can appear as anything, but whatever it is ... it ain't right.

HYPNAGOUG ANCHOR

Tiny Aberration, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 117 (18d4 + 72)

SPEED 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Con +7, Wis +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, force, piercing, psychic, slashing

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, paralyzed, stunned

SENSES blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Soporific Aura. Unconscious creatures within 30 feet of the anchor can't be awoken by any means. A creature that attacks the anchor while within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or fall unconscious.

An unconscious creature within 30 feet of the anchor has its spirit leave its body and enter an astral state between sleep and waking. A creature's spirit can see everything within 30 feet of the anchor, including other spirits of unconscious creatures and the full form of the hypnagoug, but is blind beyond this radius. On an unconscious creature's turn, its spirit has a movement speed of 0 and can only take one of the following actions:

- **Forced Reentry.** The spirit attempts to reenter its body. The creature rolls a d20. On a 15 or higher, the creature wakes and must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or take 7 (2d6) psychic damage and have its speed reduced by 10 feet for 1 minute. If the creature is currently tethered by Energy Sap the DC for the Charisma saving throw against Forced Reentry is 17.

- **Lucid Defenses.** The spirit attempts to psychically bolster itself against the hypnagoug's Energy Sap. The creature rolls a d20. On a 12 or higher, the creature adds 1d4 to its next saving throw against the hypnagoug's Energy Sap made within 1 minute. On a 20, in addition to the previous effect, the creature gains advantage on the save.

- **Whispers from Beyond.** The spirit communicates a twenty-five-word message to a creature within the anchor's Soporific Aura that is not unconscious. After receiving the message, the target must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or take 2 (1d4) psychic damage.

ACTIONS

Energy Sap. The anchor attaches a translucent tendril of energy to an unconscious creature it can see within 30 feet of it. This tendril remains attached to the unconscious creature until it wakes up, dies, or is moved further than 30 feet from the anchor.

When the anchor uses this action, each creature attached to a tendril must succeed on a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or suffer 1 level of exhaustion. Additionally, each creature attached to a tendril is pulled 20 feet straight toward the anchor.

REACTIONS

What's Underneath. When creatures suffer a total of 10 levels of exhaustion from the hypnagoug's Energy Sap within 1 minute, the hypnagoug tears open a portal between the Astral and Material Planes large enough for its full form. The hypnagoug anchor is replaced with a hypnagoug, and the portal closes behind the hypnagoug.

Astral Retreat. When the anchor takes damage that would reduce it to 0 hit points or there are no unconscious creatures within 30 feet of it, the anchor can retreat fully into the Astral Plane.

HYPNAGOUG

Huge Aberration, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 126 (12d12 + 48)

SPEED 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Con +7, Wis +6

SKILLS Athletics +7, Intimidation +5, Stealth +3

DAMAGE RESISTANCES force, psychic

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, paralyzed, prone, stunned

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Extreme Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the hypnagoug has disadvantage on all attack rolls and saving throws, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, and takes 7 (2d6) radiant damage at the start of its turn.

Flesh Bindings. When the hypnagoug passes into the Material Plane, the tendrils from its anchor's Energy Sap become fleshy, moist tentacles. Each creature that was attached to a tendril is grappled (escape DC 14) by the hypnagoug's tentacles and its spirit is returned to its body. While grappled, a creature is fully cognizant, but is paralyzed and restrained until separated from the tentacle.

A creature grappled this way gains a level of exhaustion at sundown each day, and the hypnagoug gains temporary hit points equal to 5 x the total number of exhaustion levels gained that day by creatures affected by its Flesh Bindings.

Additionally, when the hypnagoug is hit with an attack, it reduces the damage from that attack by an amount equal to the number of creatures currently affected by its Flesh Bindings. If a creature dies while grappled, its corpse remains in the hypnagoug's tentacles, but the hypnagoug gains no benefits from it.

Each tentacle is 10 feet long and has an AC 14, 15 hit points, and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. When a tentacle is destroyed, the creature grappled by it is freed.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the hypnagoug fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Pound of Flesh. If the hypnagoug has 5 or more creatures under the effects of Flesh Bindings, the hypnagoug has advantage on all ability checks and saving throws.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hypnagoug makes one Soporific Touch attack for each creature affected by Flesh Bindings and uses Flesh Tether.

Soporific Touch. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) psychic damage. On a hit, the target must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or immediately fall unconscious until the end of their next turn, the sleeper takes damage, or someone uses an action to shake or slap the sleeper awake.

Flesh Tether. A moist, quivering tendril of flesh lashes out from the hypnagoug to grab the face of a creature the hypnagoug can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or become subject to the effects of Flesh Bindings.

Let Me In. While on the Astral Plane, the hypnagoug pierces the veil into the Material Plane and places its anchor there, or it leaves the Material Plane and enters the Astral Plane.

REACTIONS

Shifting Nightmare. The hypnagoug halves the damage it takes from a weapon attack made against it, provided it can see the attacker.

VILLIAN ACTIONS

The hypnagoug has three villain actions. It can take each action once during an encounter after an enemy creature's turn. It takes villain action 1 during the first round of combat, villain action 2 during the second, and villain action 3 during the third round.

Villain Action 1: Lend Me Your Face. The hypnagoug weaves aberrant magic around it, changing the forms of the bodies tethered to them, decentralizing the creature and making it harder to strike. This action mimics the effect of a *mirror image* spell, with the number of duplicates equal to the number of creatures affected by Flesh Bindings. If the hypnagoug has three or more duplicates, it must roll a 6 or higher to change the attack's target to a duplicate. When a duplicate is struck, the illusion surrounding it dissipates, revealing the tethered creature. Attacks targeting the hypnagoug's tentacles are unaffected by this action, as they are not duplicated by the effect.

Villain Action 2: Tentacular Spectacular. The hypnagoug violently spins the bodies connected to it in a vicious circle. Each creature within 10 feet of the hypnagoug must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. For each creature affected by the hypnagoug's Flesh Bindings, increase the DC by 1. On a failed save, a creature takes 5 (1d10) damage for each creature affected by Flesh Bindings and is knocked prone. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone. Additionally, each living creature affected by Flesh Bindings takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage. The hypnagoug can then move up to its speed.

Villain Action 3: Runaway Delusion. With consumption as its prime directive, the hypnagoug has no will or need to stay and fight and seeks to escape. The bodies the hypnagoug carries in its tentacles are pressed into the facsimile of legs as the creature leaps and sprints away on its amalgamated appendages. The hypnagoug moves up to 100 feet in a straight line. It can increase this movement by 20 feet for each creature affected by its Flesh Bindings. When the hypnagoug uses this action, it loses its flying speed, but gains a walking speed of 40 feet plus an additional 10 feet for every creature affected by its Flesh Bindings. This effect lasts until the following dawn.

The Dimensions of Dowda

An magic item to master
by Robert J. Kuntz

Editor's Note: This article is written using the rules for the first edition of the game by Robert J. Kuntz, a game designer who has been working since 1973. His credits include the original *Deities & Demigods*, so it was a no-brainer to have Rob work on an article for the first edition of the game.

If you'd like to run Rob's encounter in the fifth edition of the game for 7th-level characters, you can find a conversion guide at the end of the article. But I encourage you to seek out the older rulebooks and give this adventure a try as written.

You have entered the realm of the bizarre that lurks at the edges of magic, the strange, and the unknown! No. It's not the *Twilight Zone*. But it's not far from its borders.

You have taken your first major step into that uncanny borderland by encouraging the characters to find, master and employ (and in so doing uncover the mysteries of) *Dowda's Lantern*.

But this is no mere artifact. It's also an ongoing experiment, a conduit to other dimensions, a testing ground, and home to its creator, Dowda the Magnificent!

GM INFORMATION

The characters learn the following information as they patch together clues and rumors about Dowda and his lantern. Most of it can be discovered after several sessions with sages of abstruse lore. Alternatively, you can provide this information to the characters when they find the lantern to kick off the adventure:

Long ago, a mysterious artificer known as Dowda the Magnificent pursued a self-created arcane science he called "dimensional continuity." Other information concerning him is exceedingly scarce, since he disappeared from historical record soon after crafting the lantern that bears his name. Some arcane historians speculate that this legendary device was in fact his ultimate creation, following a string of other magic items he had fashioned.

Dowda indeed mastered "dimensional continuity." He created seven artifacts with the lantern being his last, if not final, endeavor. The lantern is in fact the "capstone," so to speak, of an experiment that linked six of the magic items he had previously created to the lantern. Upon its completion, Dowda retreated to his dimensional sanctum atop the lantern, which appears from the outside as an opaque white dome. There he continues his experiments while silently encouraging and monitoring the use of his magic items.

This is a "living" artifact. All inter-linked matter concerning this ongoing experiment is manifested from within the artifact and its conjoined dimensions!

USING THE LANTERN

GMs should determine when, where, and under what campaign conditions *Dowda's Lantern* comes into play. A few guidelines for introducing the lantern:

- Dowda was a 14th-level wizard when he created the lantern. The base challenge level is equal to his own.
- Discovering the lantern should be an adventure in itself, and not just one of the battle-oriented kind. Diligent research and hunting down clues related to it should be prerequisites to its discovery.

- Other powerful beings might also seek Dowda's lantern and the knowledge it holds. This allows each GM to sculpt a specific, relational history about it. This, in turn, provides departure points for introducing accumulating story matter into your campaign.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The lantern's 18-inch-high, 12-inch-square body is made of highly burnished brass. Each of its four faces consists of a slotted frame encasing a different-colored pane of tinted glass—red, blue, yellow, and green. Inscribed in a small, delicate script along the top of each frame are these words:

"FOR THE ONE MASTER: Touch and Utter in the Common Tongue."

The lantern's upper surface gradually rounds off to become hemispherical and has affixed to it at two opposing edges a lockable brass swivel-handle. An opaque, 2-inch-high dome of white glass 6 inches in diameter is centered on the artifact's top surface. Next to this protrusion is a keyhole.

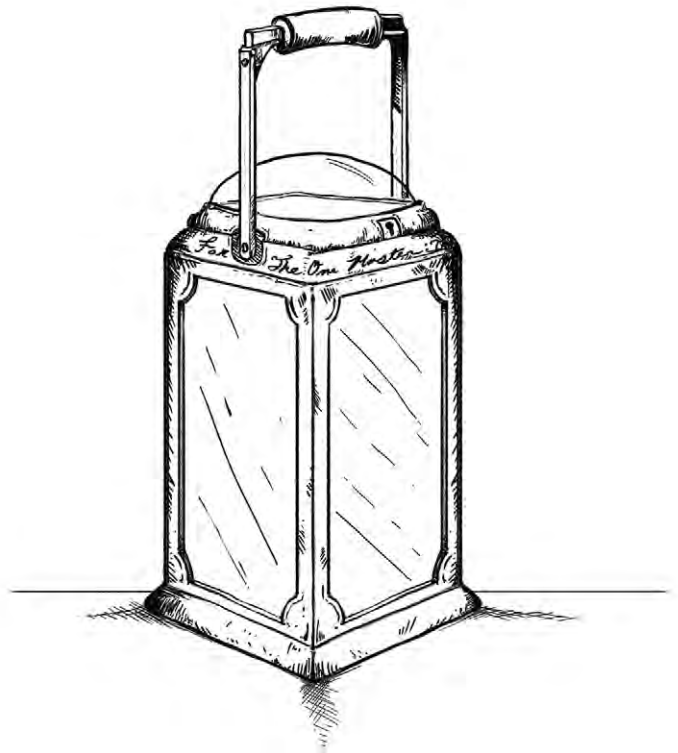
ENTERING THE LANTERN

"Entering the lantern" means having one's mental presence projected into it as part of a temporal and mental fugue state.

Entering the lantern is accomplished by touching one of its four glass panes while at the same time saying that pane's color in the common tongue (see above for the inscription regarding this). Doing so triggers the fugue state, and the creature appears inside the lantern at the appropriate area on the Ether Lantern map (1A through 1D).

Note that a creature can enter the lantern only through a pane that hasn't yet been activated. For details about using activated panes, see "The Lantern's Powers."

Only one creature at a time can enter the lantern. That creature must face and defeat a spirit eye to gain the corresponding



lantern power from Dowda's spirit form at map location 2 (also see "Mastering the Lantern").

Upon successfully gaining a power, the creature returns to its former location outside the lantern. For that creature, no time has passed, no damage was sustained, and no loss of spells or other possessions has occurred!

If a creature is defeated while battling a spirit eye, the same event occurs: The creature does not die but reappears outside the lantern just as described above. But the creature is spiritually shaken from its negative experience: it moves at half speed, attacks and defends at -2 , and can't cast spells or utilize powers requiring complex verbalizations (GM option). The creature must rest for a number of minutes equal to 60 minus its Con score to regain its equilibrium, ending the effect.

MASTERING THE LANTERN

Only one creature can master the lantern. The creature that kills the first spirit eye and thereby gains the first of the lantern's powers is thereafter considered the "presumptive master" by Dowda. Only that creature can now enter the lantern to secure its remaining powers.

However, if 30 days transpire and the presumptive master has made no further progress in mastering the lantern during that time, Dowda resets the spirit eyes and the mastering process begins anew. The previous presumptive master can no longer use any of the lantern's powers, as these are wiped from the creature's memory. The mastering process also begins anew if the previous presumptive master perishes before, during, or after mastering the lantern.

Mastering the lantern occurs when the creature enters the fourth and final unactivated pane, defeats the last spirit eye, and receives the fourth and final power from Dowda's spirit form at map location 2.

Upon receiving the final power, the character **does not** reappear outside the lantern! Instead, this circumstance triggers several events:

- Dowda's spirit form and his throne (see map location 2) disappear from the dais.
- On the dais appear six iron keys (see "Six Iron Keys and Six Iron Doors") encircling one brass key, the latter being the *lantern key*.
- Map location 3 is secretly activated.

LANTERN KEY

A creature can't exit the lantern after receiving its fourth power unless it possesses the *lantern key*. Upon claiming the key, the character reappears outside the lantern. The lantern cannot be reentered as in past instances, since it has now been mastered—there are no more guardians to defeat or powers to gain. However . . .

If the *lantern key* is inserted in the keyhole on the outside of the lantern and turned 180 degrees clockwise, a two-way dimensional gate is activated. This act permanently locks the key in place as part of the lantern's extended function; and the creature that mastered the lantern and any allies within 30 feet of the master immediately receive a telepathic communication: "Well done! Do come for tea at twelve high before keying the six low!"

GM Note: This is a cryptic message from Dowda inviting the party to map location 3.

Thereafter any creature touching its glass panes instantly enters or exits the lantern. Lastly, the previous temporal and mental fugue state is avoided. Real time and circumstances now march onward even for creatures that physically enter the lantern.

THE LANTERN'S POWERS

Anytime a rule below refers to the lantern's master, this can be either the lantern's master or its presumptive master.

The four spiritual manifestations that can be summoned by utilizing the lantern's powers have the following characteristics in common:

Each manifestation is summoned by touching the appropriately colored glass pane while pronouncing in the common tongue the pane's color. Each pane's power can be invoked once per week; and these powers can be used only on the Material Plane or within the lantern's demiplane.

During a manifestation's service, it maintains a telepathic link with the lantern's master and will, if asked, communicate its own powers and limitations.

A manifestation is immune to all attacks except for powers or spells that could dismiss their spiritual forms. If subjected to such an effect, the manifestation saves as a 14th-level wizard. If the master of *Dowda's Lantern* is killed after a manifestation has been summoned, the manifestation disappears.

A manifestation can't enter the lantern. If one is summoned to appear outside the lantern and the lantern master subsequently enters the lantern or a plane other than the Material Plane, the spirit manifestation disappears.

Only one manifestation can be present at any given time. Summoning a second nullifies and dispels the first.

RED PANE (NANTAZ)

A swirling fiery mass streaks forth from the pane and quickly consolidates its form in midair to a 10-foot-diameter hovering and pulsing ball of flame. The light produced by its reddish-yellow flames equals that of a *continual light* 10-foot radius.

This is Nantaz, a lesser spiritual manifestation of fire. Nantaz serves for as many 10-minute intervals as its master has Intelligence points, i.e., if the master has an Intelligence of 14, Nantaz serves for 140 minutes. It follows the master while floating along at 12 feet per turn.

Nantaz continually absorbs heat, reducing the effect of fire on creatures that are nearby. Anyone within a 25-foot radius of Nantaz saves vs. fire attacks at $+2$ and reduces fire damage by 25%.

Nantaz can be commanded to hurl itself as a 12th-level *fireball* for maximum damage, range 12 feet. However, this act ends Nantaz's service, and it disappears.

BLUE PANE (ALHUU)

A variable number (26–50) of ethereal white bats with faded blue highlights appear in a 25-foot radius around the lantern's master. There they begin circling. While circling, they maintain their speed and location in relation to the lantern master when the master moves. These creatures are eerily silent. They can't be seen by beings lacking the ability to perceive the ethereal. This does not include the lantern's master, who is always aware of the bats' presence.

This is Alhuu, a lesser spiritual manifestation of air. Alhuu serves for as many 5-minute intervals as the master has Intelligence points, i.e., if the master has an Intelligence of 14, Alhuu serves for 70 minutes.

Alhuu's role is primarily defensive. The lantern master and the master's allies gain the following benefits while in contact with Alhuu's 25-foot-radius formation:

- Solid missiles (darts, arrows, bolts, daggers, javelins, spears, etc.) of up to $+3$ magical are deflected
- The immunities and abilities conferred by a *necklace of adaptation*
- $+2$ Dexterity bonus

Alhuu can be commanded to produce a sonic screech (no save, affects enemies inside Alhuu's 25-foot-radius formation) that causes as many points of damage to each target as there are summoned bats. This act dispels the summons, and Alhuu disappears.

YELLOW PANE (ZEKKEZ)

An ethereal yellow snake with slight patches of green mottling appears. It is 10 feet long and has solid gray eyes with no pupils. Upon closer inspection, its constantly undulating body surface appears to be endlessly segmented, as if a million smaller parts have joined together to form a living and morphing being. It emits an acrid odor in a 100-foot-radius area about it that drives away all forms of reptiles (normal, summoned, and gigantic).

This is Zekkez, an ancient lesser spiritual manifestation of primordial ooze. It remains near the master at all times while moving at 12 feet per turn. Zekkez serves for as many 10-minute intervals as the master has Intelligence points, i.e., if the master has an Intelligence of 14, Zekkez serves for 140 minutes.

The lantern master and the master's allies gain the following benefits if they remain within a 50-foot radius of Zekkez:

- +3 AC bonus
- +2 Constitution bonus
- Regeneration of 2 hit points per round

Zekkez can be commanded to spit a ball of acid, range 6 feet, that bursts in a 10-foot-radius area for 8–64 points of acid damage (save vs. poison for half). However, this act ends its service, and Zekkez disappears.

GREEN PANE (QUULPAU)

An 8-foot-tall figure resembling an amalgam of a human and a tree appears. Its head is that of a human with long red hair, emerald eyes (the left one yearning and the right one piercing), and slim purplish lips. The rest of its body is that of a tree—a very ancient and unrecognizable one—with thick bark partially covered with aged lichens and mosses. On its few branches grow broad green leaves etched with red veins. Two wooden hands, humanlike in shape, sprout from stout branches near the top of the body. The figure is supported by a base composed of a ringlet of twisted roots, and it emits a heavy sigh while examining its surroundings.

This is Quulpau, a lesser spiritual manifestation of the primeval forest. It remains near the master of the lantern at all times while moving at 18"/turn (on soil) or 12" (on other surfaces). Quulpau serves for as many 5-minute intervals as the master has Intelligence points, i.e., if the master has an Intelligence of 14, Quulpau serves for 70 minutes.

The lantern's master and the master's allies gain the following benefits if they remain within a 25-foot radius of Quulpau:

- +2 AC bonus
- +2 to saving throws including magic
- +20% bonus to hit points (these hit points are removed first when damage occurs)
- 25% reduction in damage taken from these element-based attacks: fire, air, water, earth, ice, or vapor

Enemies within a 25-foot radius of Quulpau draw its ire. It immediately unleashes the *forest's wrath* within that area, a debilitating poisonous curse (save vs. poison at –3) that causes 1–12 poison damage/turn for 2–7 turns, usable once per summons.

Quulpau can be commanded to use its eyes as a combined attack to produce awe in a single target (equivalent to a 14th-level *power word stun* but with double the hit point ranges/target). This act dispels the summons, and Quulpau disappears.

INSIDE THE LANTERN

Relate the following description in full only after a character defeats the first spirit eye encounter:

The area comprising the lantern's internal dimension is immense. Space has expanded, or else you have shrunk! The once tiny (by comparison) glass pane is now gigantic in height, its top edge out of sight far above you. The burnished brass interior is thick and rough, like a fortress wall. The vast space seems at times nearly infinite and at other times possibly measurable. A bright light with no visible source permeates the entire interior.

The lantern's internal space magically shifts in volume (as often as and to what extent the GM desires). The floor-to-ceiling height can wildly vary from 1,000 to 2,000 feet at any given time. Its width can likewise vary from 500 to 1,000 feet. This effect means that correctly mapping the interior is impossible, since space here doesn't function according to known physical laws.

Dowda controls this extradimensional space and has stabilized a portion of it (the areas represented by map locations 1–3) to accommodate those beings attempting to master the lantern

1. MAP LOCATIONS 1A–1D

Upon touching one of the exterior glass panes and speaking its related word ("red," "blue," "yellow," or "green"), the creature is magically transported to a 20-foot-wide corridor "ahead" (the character may choose an arbitrary compass point direction but otherwise has no immediate knowledge of true north). The glass pane that was touched (now of incalculable height and about 20 feet wide) is immediately behind the creature. Within seconds, the spirit eye for the appropriate color appears out of thin air at the other end of the corridor and attacks. See "Spirit Eyes" for the monster's stat block.

1A. RED PANE ENTRY CORRIDOR

Ambient Eye (Red Pane) – SZ M; AC 2; MV 12; HD 12; hp 70; #SA 1; Dmg 2d10 fiery whirlwind; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons, immune to fire of lesser than divine, dragon, or planar realm beings in origin; AL N; XP 3,550.

1B. BLUE PANE ENTRY CORRIDOR

Cloudy Eye (Blue Pane) – SZ M; AC 3; MV 18"; HD 13; hp 75; #SA 1; Dmg 2d8 airy vortex; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons, immune to mind powers/spells lesser than divine, dragon, or planar realm beings in origin; AL N; XP 3,650.

1C. YELLOW PANE ENTRY CORRIDOR

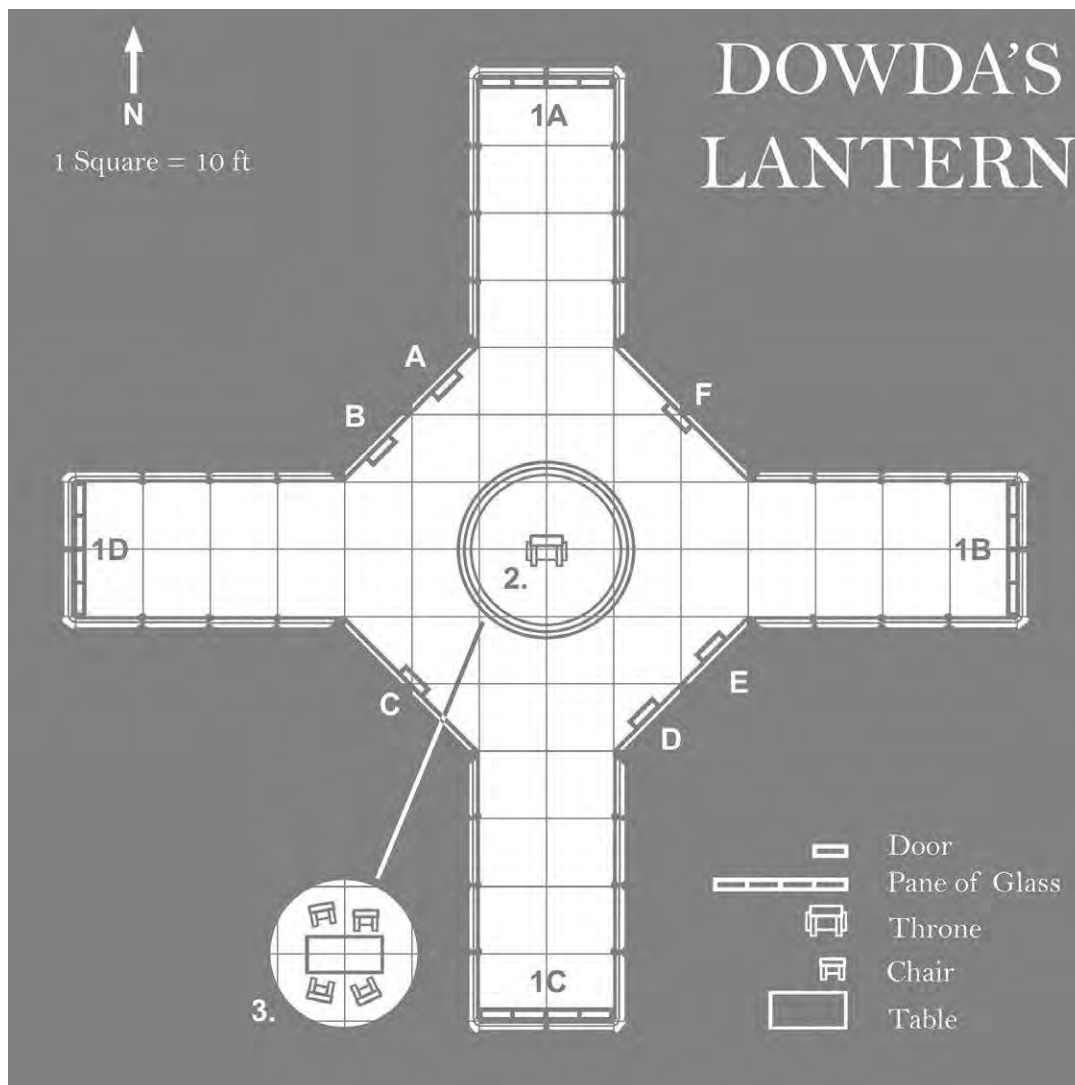
Viscous Eye (Yellow Pane) – SZ M; AC 3; MV 12"; HD 14; hp 80; #SA 1; Dmg 3d6 acidic barrage; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons, 25% damage only from physical attacks by lesser than divine, dragon, or planar realm beings in origin; AL N; XP 3,750.

1D. GREEN PANE ENTRY CORRIDOR

Glaucous Eye (Green Pane) – SZ M; AC 0; MV 12"; HD 15; hp 85; #SA 1; Dmg 2d12 poison shroud; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons, immune to poison of lesser than divine, dragon, or planar realm beings in origin; AL N; XP 3,850.

2. DAIS WITH ENTHRONED SPIRIT

Centered upon a 30-foot-radius white marble dais in the center of the lantern is a semitranslucent wooden throne embellished



with silver inlays depicting various-sized eyes. Sitting on the throne is a ghostly, gray-haired man dressed in white robes. His blue eyes display an odd eagerness as you approach.

This ghostly image of throne and man is Dowda's spirit form projection. It is unassailable; and the figure doesn't react if attacked or communicated with. Its only purpose is to provide the presumptive master of the lantern with the lantern's powers.

If the presumptive master defeats a spirit eye and subsequently approaches to within 10 feet of the throne, Dowda's spirit form smiles and waves its right hand to indicate completion. The appropriate power is granted to the presumptive master, who then reappears outside the lantern with that knowledge. When the fourth and final power is granted, other events occur as noted in "Mastering the Lantern" (q.v.).

Anyone approaching the dais after the *lantern key* has been engaged notices a narrow beam of light striking it dead center. The beam's source is far above floor level and out of sight (see map location 3).

2A-2F. IRON KEYS AND LANTERN KEY

After Dowda's spirit form and his throne disappear from map location 2, six iron keys and one brass key appear upon it. The iron keys form a rough circle about the central brass key, which is the *lantern key*.

SIX IRON KEYS AND SIX IRON DOORS

Each 5-inch-long iron key (2A–2F) is linked to a corresponding iron door (A–F) on the map. The doors are not openable until a creature receives the proper instructions from Dowda at map location 3. Each door serves as a dimensional conduit to the magic item symbolized on each key and door. Passing through a door immediately and safely teleports those doing so to a dimensional realm as noted hereafter.

(Editor’s note: The exact nature of the other dimensions and their associated occupants and magic items are for the GM to decide, though we may expand on these ideas in future issues of *ARCADIA*.)

Iron key A has an engraved dagger on its shaft corresponding to door A’s inscription. This conduit leads to Dowda’s magic item-dimension inside the *Dragon’s Head Dagger*. The dagger is held by the barbarian chieftain Clowfyst.

Iron key B has an engraved war hammer on its shaft corresponding to door B’s inscription. This conduit leads to Dowda’s magic item-dimension inside the *Bellows Hammer*. The hammer is held by the duergar lord Wymicresh.

Iron key C has an engraved flute on its shaft corresponding to door C’s inscription. This conduit leads to Dowda’s magic item-dimension inside the *Fulsome Flute*. The flute is lost at sea in the sunken wreck of the merchant ship *Bedlam*. It is guarded by its former owner’s ghost, Felmina the Bard.

Iron key D has an engraved longbow on its shaft corresponding to door D’s inscription. This conduit leads to Dowda’s magic item-dimension inside the *Longbow of Lament*. The longbow is held by Jaslin, a self-proclaimed Queen of the Sylphs.

Iron key E has an engraved wand on its shaft corresponding to door E’s inscription. This conduit leads to Dowda’s magic item-dimension inside the *Widdershyns Wand*. The wand is entombed with the necromancer Vozzert.

Iron key F has an engraved staff on its shaft corresponding to door F’s inscription. This conduit leads to Dowda’s magic item-dimension inside the *Starburst Staff*. The staff is held by a sorceress known only as Beckon.

3. DOWDA’S WELCOME

This encounter isn’t activated or accessible until the lantern is mastered and the *lantern key* is engaged. In the latter instance, a narrow light originating here beams down upon the dais at map location 2. Anyone touching the light causes the dais to rise at an incalculable but ever-increasing speed. It stops 20 feet below an opaque, white glass ceiling about 1,500 feet above floor level.

The light disappears! And the dais is now appointed with a rectangular table and plush chairs; and the table has a wine decanter and many filled crystal goblets adorning it! Sitting at the table’s head is a gray-haired, middle-aged man dressed in white robes marked with several crisscrossing black lines. His youthful, bemused expression and dazzling blue eyes suggest an eccentric personality.



This is Dowda, the chaotic neutral “wizard,” in person. If attacked, he disappears and is never seen again. His mind can’t be read nor his motives discerned through any known power, spell, or ability.

He motions to the chairs. “Do sit, and enjoy the wine. I’m fresh out of tea.”

He introduces himself. “They call me ‘The Magnificent.’ You can call me Dowda. But what’s in a name? Well! Let me regale you!”

A strong gale force wind temporarily lashes the table just before a now consternated Dowda dispels it with a wave of his hand.

“Ahem! Now to the matter before you.”

He continues speaking after sipping some wine. “You’re adventurers. And capable ones, since you’ve gotten this far.” He pauses for rejoinders but pushes past any by exclaiming, “Well. The adventure’s afoot!”

Just then an ectoplasmic cord extends from his robe. Attached to it is an ethereal foot. He dispels the image with a disdainful wave of his hand. “Bah!”

“I must be going.” He reaches beneath the table and pulls forth *Dowda’s Lantern* and an object resembling a trowel. Setting them on the table, Dowda says, “You’ll be needing these!”

Dowda stands and while looking about him as if he’s forgotten something, murmurs, “It’s all explained in the paper.”

Dowda vanishes just as many pieces of foolscap as there are characters fall to the table! The dais begins its descent and arrives seconds later at map location 2.

Upon examination every sheet of paper contains the same writing and is titled “INSTRUCTIONS.” Just above the title is a hastily penned postscript: “And don’t ask me how I got the lantern into the lantern!”

SPIRIT EYES

	Ambient	Cloudy	Viscous	Glaucous
FREQUENCY:		<i>All are summoned, do not occur naturally</i>		
NO. APPEARING:	1	1	1	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2	3	3	0
MOVE:	12"	18"	12"	12"
HIT DICE:	12	13	14	15
% IN LAIR:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
TREASURE TYPE:	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS:	0	0	0	0
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	0	0	0	0
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	<i>See below</i>	<i>See below</i>	<i>See below</i>	<i>See below</i>
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	<i>All are hit only by +2 or better magic weapons</i>			
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>
INTELLIGENCE:	<i>Exceptional</i>	<i>Exceptional</i>	<i>Exceptional</i>	<i>Exceptional</i>
ALIGNMENT:	N	N	N	N
SIZE:	M	M	M	M
XP VALUE:	3,550	3,650	3,750	3,850

Spirit eyes are ectoplasmic servants summonable by Dowda. They appear as different-colored, 5-foot-radius, floating eyes (note separate entries for each below). Every spirit eye has an ethereal and extensible energy strand attached to it that links back to Dowda and allows him to see what they see.

Dowda maintains total control of the eyes' spiritual states. He can mentally command them at great distances, immediately recall them, or even remanifest them in different guises and for different purposes. They move by a form of enhanced levitation.

These creatures have been summoned to guard the four glass panes of *Dowda's Lantern*. They immediately attack anything entering through the panes during the lantern's mastering process, using the special attack described below at a rate of once per turn. They are never present after the lantern has been mastered. If killed, a spirit eye disappears without a trace.

Ambient Spirit Eye (Red Pane Guardian): This eye's special attack is a fiery whirlwind in a 5-foot radius about it, causing 2d10 fire damage to all within the area, no save.

Cloudy Spirit Eye (Blue Pane Guardian): This eye's special attack is an airy vortex in a 10-foot radius about it, causing 2d8 concussion damage to all within the area, no save.

Viscous Spirit Eye (Yellow Pane Guardian): This eye's special attack is an acidic barrage in a 10-foot radius about it, causing 3d6 acid damage to all within the area, no save.

Glaucous Spirit Eye (Green Pane Guardian): This eye's special attack is a poison cloud in a 5-foot radius about it, causing 2d12 poison damage to all within the area, no save.

CONCLUSION

What adventures might Dowda have for the characters? What do his instructions mean? These details are for you to decide. One thing is clear: the adventure is far from over.

CONVERSION GUIDE

You can use the material in this article for the fifth edition of the game with the following conversions:

- You can use the optional "Party Enters the Lantern" rules below to have all the characters enter the lantern.
- Replace the rules for being defeated by a spirit eye in the lantern in "Entering the Lantern" with "Defeat in the Lantern" below.
- Replace "The Lantern's Powers" with "Fifth Edition Lantern's Powers" below.
- Use the stat blocks in "Fifth Edition Spirit Eyes" for the spirit eyes.

- The lantern is an artifact that requires attunement. In order to become the lantern's master or presumptive master, a creature must attune to the lantern first.

PARTY ENTERS THE LANTERN

For some groups, splitting up the characters isn't a lot of fun. You can use these optional rules to have the characters enter the lantern together.

When a creature attuned to the lantern enters it before it is mastered, that creature can choose to bring any other creatures touching the lantern inside. Those creatures also enter the fugue state. Inside the lantern, the number of spirit eyes that appear equals the number of other creatures that entered the lantern minus 1 (minimum one spirit eye). If two creatures enter the lantern, one spirit eye with 80 hit points appears.

If the spirit eyes are defeated, the creature attuned to the lantern gains the powers of the pane it entered through.

DEFEAT IN THE LANTERN

When a creature that isn't a spirit eye is reduced to 0 hit points in the lantern, it reappears outside the lantern. If the creature attuned to the lantern is defeated, it is spiritually shaken from its negative experience and gains a level of exhaustion and all other creatures that aren't spirit eyes reappear outside the lantern (but don't gain exhaustion).

FIFTH EDITION LANTERN'S POWERS

Anytime a rule below refers to "you," it refers to the creature attuned to the lantern. The four spiritual manifestations that can be summoned by utilizing the lantern's powers have the following characteristics in common:

- You can use an action to summon a manifestation by touching the appropriate colored glass pane while speaking aloud the pane's color.
- After being summoned, a manifestation remains for 1 hour before disappearing.
- Once a pane's power is used, it can't be used again until 1 week has passed.
- These powers can be used only on the Material Plane or within the lantern's demiplane.
- During a manifestation's service, it maintains a telepathic link with the lantern's master and can communicate its own powers and limitations.

- A manifestation is immune to all damage and conditions and magic that would change its form. If targeted with magic that would send it to another plane, such as the *banishment* spell, the manifestation can make a saving throw using your ability bonus. On a failure, the manifestation is dismissed and its effects end. A successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 17) also dismisses the manifestation and ends its effects.
- If you die after a manifestation has been summoned, the manifestation disappears.
- A manifestation can't enter the lantern. If one is summoned to appear outside the lantern and you subsequently enter the lantern or a plane other than the Material Plane, the manifestation disappears.
- Only one manifestation can be present at a time. If you summon a manifestation, any others disappear.

RED PANE (NANTAZ)

When you summon the manifestation from this pane, a swirling fiery mass streaks forth from the pane and quickly consolidates into a Large ball of flame that hovers in midair, pulsing gently. The manifestation sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

This is Nantaz, a spiritual manifestation of fire. It remains within 5 feet of you while on the Material Plane.

Nantaz continually absorbs heat, reducing the effect of fire on creatures that are nearby. You and creatures you choose within 30 feet of Nantaz are resistant to fire damage.

As an action, you can command Nantaz to hurl itself up to 120 feet and explode in a 20-foot-radius sphere. Creatures in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14d6 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This act ends Nantaz's service, and it disappears.

BLUE PANE (ALHUU)

When you summon the manifestation from this pane, a Gargantuan swarm of ethereal white bats with faded blue highlights appears in a 30-foot radius around you and begins circling. The swarm maintains its speed and location in relation to you while on the Material Plane.

These bats are eerily silent and can only be seen by you and by creatures that can see into the Ethereal Plane. This is Alhuu, a spiritual manifestation of air.

You and creatures you choose within the area of the swarm gain the following benefits:

- Your AC increases by 1.
- You have advantage on Dexterity saving throws.
- Ranged weapon attacks against you have disadvantage.
- You can breathe normally in any environment, and you have advantage on saving throws made against harmful gases and vapors (such as the *cloudkill* and *stinking cloud* spells, inhaled poisons, and the breath weapons of some dragons).

As an action, you can command Alhuu to produce a sonic screech. Creatures of your choice within the swarm must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 6d10 thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This act ends Alhuu's service, and it disappears.

YELLOW PANE (ZEKKEZ)

When you summon the manifestation from this pane, a Large ethereal yellow snake with slight patches of green mottling appears. It is 10 feet long and has solid gray eyes with no pupils. Upon closer inspection, its constantly undulating body surface appears to be endlessly segmented, as if a million smaller parts have joined together to form a living and morphing being.

This is Zekkez, an ancient spiritual manifestation of primordial ooze. It remains within 5 feet of you while on the Material Plane.

Zekkez emits an acrid odor that keeps all Beasts that are reptiles (dinosaurs, lizards, snakes, etc.) from getting within 100 feet of you.

You and creatures you choose within 30 feet of Zekkez gain the following benefits:

- Your AC increases by 2 as your skin becomes covered in hard scales.
- You have advantage on Constitution saving throws.
- You regain 2 hit points at the start of your turn as long as you have at least 1 hit point.

As an action, you can command Zekkez to spit a ball of acid that bursts in a 10-foot-radius sphere within 90 feet. Creatures in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 8d8 acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This act ends Zekkez's service, and it disappears.

GREEN PANE (QUULPAU)

When you summon the manifestation from this pane, a Large figure resembling an amalgam of a humanoid and a tree appears. Its head is that of a humanoid with long red hair, emerald eyes (the left one yearning and the right one piercing), and slim purplish lips. The rest of its body is that of a tree—a very ancient and unrecognizable one—with thick bark partially covered with aged lichens and mosses. On its few branches grow broad green leaves etched with red veins. Two wooden hands, humanlike in shape, sprout from stout branches near the top of the body. The figure is supported by a base composed of a ringlet of twisted roots, and it emits a heavy sigh while examining its surroundings.

This is Quulpau, a spiritual manifestation of the primeval forest. It remains within 5 feet of you while on the Material Plane.

You and creatures you choose within 30 feet of Quulpau gain the following benefits:

- Your AC increases by 2 as your skin becomes covered in tree bark.
- You have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- Your hit point maximum and current hit points increase by 10.

As an action, you can command Quulpau to magically poison a creature within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 6d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Quulpau can use this feature once, and can't use it again until after this summon ends.

Also as an action, you can command Quulpau to attempt to awe a creature that can see it within 30 feet of Quulpau. The target must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, becoming stunned for 1 minute on a failed save, or becoming poisoned for 1 minute on a successful one. A creature stunned or poisoned in this way can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turns, ending the condition on itself on a success. This act ends Quulpau's service, and it disappears.

FIFTH EDITION SPIRIT EYES

You can use the following stat blocks for each spirit eye.

AMBIENT SPIRIT EYE

Medium Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Int +2, Wis +2

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Damage Resistances blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Ignan but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Fire Aura. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the eye takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

Magic Resistance. The eye has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spell Immunity. The *banishment* and *polymorph* spells have no effect on the eye.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eye uses Fire Crash twice.

Fire Crash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Burning Teleportation. The eye chooses one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. That creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 10 (3d6) fire damage and is teleported to an unoccupied space the eye can see within 60 feet of the eye. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage and as isn't teleported.

REACTIONS

Puff of Smoke. When a creature gets within 5 feet of the eye, the eye can teleport to an unoccupied space that it can see within 30 feet.

CLOUDY SPIRIT EYE

Medium Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Int +2, Wis +2

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities lightning, poison, thunder

Damage Resistances blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Auran but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Magic Resistance. The eye has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spell Immunity. The *banishment* and *polymorph* spells have no effect on the eye.

Thunder Aura. Any creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the eye takes 3 (1d6) thunder damage and is pushed 5 feet away from the eye.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eye uses Lightning Tentacle twice, each of which it can replace with one use of Fling.

Lightning Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) lightning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The eye has two tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

Fling. One Medium or smaller object held or creature grappled by the eye is thrown up to 30 feet in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

REACTIONS

Quick Zap. When a creature grappled by the eye ends the condition with a successful Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, the eye can deal 3 (1d6) lightning damage to the creature.

GLAUCOUS SPIRIT EYE

Medium Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Int +2, Wis +2

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Resistances blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Terran but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Magic Resistance. The eye has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spell Immunity. The *banishment* and *polymorph* spells have no effect on the eye.

Toxic Aura. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the eye must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eye uses Poison Crash twice.

Poison Crash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) poison damage, or 10 (2d6 + 3) poison damage if the target is poisoned.

Shrouded Eyes. The eye chooses one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute. A blinded creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turns, ending the condition on itself on a success.

REACTIONS

Poison Burst. When the eye takes damage, each creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) poison damage.

VISCOUS SPIRIT EYE

Medium Elemental, Unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Int +2, Wis +2

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Damage Resistances blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses truesight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Aquan but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Acid Aura. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the eye takes 5 (1d10) acid damage.

Magic Resistance. The eye has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spell Immunity. The *banishment* and *polymorph* spells have no effect on the eye.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eye uses Hurl Acid twice.

Hurl Acid. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) acid damage.

Acid Spurt. The eye squirts a glob of acid at a creature within 5 feet of it. The creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 7 (2d6) acid damage and is vulnerable to acid damage until the end of the eye's next turn. On a success, the target takes only half the damage and isn't vulnerable to acid damage.

REACTIONS

Viscous Goop. When a creature hits the eye with a melee weapon attack, the eye can squirt viscous goop at the creature. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the goop for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the condition on itself on a success.

RESOURCES

DOWDA'S LANTERN

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202201/DowdasLantern-111ppi-Grid.png>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202201/DowdasLantern-111ppi-NoGrid.png>



JESSICA MARCRUM also known as angrynerdgirl, is a social worker and silver ENnie winner who dreams of crushing the patriarchy and recycling the rich. She has created numerous games and supplements including the *Book of Seasons* and *Dumpster Fire*, as well as contributing to publications for Cubicle 7, Hit Point Press, MCDM, and Onyx Path. Jessica can be contacted on Twitter @Miss_Jess03, on Twitch at www.twitch.tv/angrynerdgirl, and via her website at www.jessicamarcrumwrites.com.



JONATHAN CONNOR SELF

Therapist, creative, fundraiser, streamer, proDM, activist, bard—Connor is a hugbear and a force for inclusivity in gaming and creative spaces. Connor is the President of D8 Summit Charities, a 501c3 dedicated to helping events support quality local causes. Connor's recent works include *DRW-16 Uprising* and *The Red City* available on DMs Guild. Connor can be contacted directly on Twitter at @TheHealerDM or by e-mail at jonconnorself@gmail.com. Links to Connor's work, writings, and interviews can be found on his webpage, thehealerdm.carrd.com.



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ROBERT J. KUNTZ

Still going after nearly 50 years in the hobby and 100 published titles. As a creator I'm just getting started! Some day "they" might even give me a golden-dragon watch even though I'd settle for a good bottle of champagne.

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