

The Gongfarmer's Almanac



The 2019 Gongfarmer's Almanac:

A Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG Zine

**Written, Illustrated, Edited and Produced by
the DCC RPG Communities**



MONSTERS & ARTIFACTS

VOLUME 10 OF FOURTEEN BOOKLETS

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The Skin Thieves

By Michael Flaherty

Artwork by Clayton Williams

Imagine an ordinary day in a mundane village. The merchants sell their wares; the laborers toil. The villagers go about their lives just as they would any other day. As of late, for some inexplicable reason, something seems a bit off. Outwardly, everyone appears entirely normal, but there is something different – something wrong. The usually jovial miller is strangely apathetic. The typically stoic stonemason expresses a peculiar whimsy. The children stare vacantly at nothing in particular.

If only this were merely a trick played by a mind wrought with tedium and fatigue. The truth is far more insidious. Within each of these simple folk, a horrible metamorphosis is occurring – a change initiated by the invasion of creatures with inconceivable physiology and unknowable origin. These creatures displace their hosts both physically and psychologically without their victims ever realizing it. They are called the kleptorms. They are the skin thieves.

No one can be certain from where the kleptorms came. Some believe they descended from the firmament with the dust of a falling star, for surely such an abomination could not derive from this world. Others think that the kleptorms were buried deep within the bedrock, trapped, only to be inadvertently unearthed by overambitious dwarven miners. Dwarven refugees recount oozing tendrils squirming through crevices and the gradual but certain decline of their compatriots.

What is known about the kleptorms is mostly conjecture. The following pages detail the three main stages of their life cycle and the effect a kleptorm's growth has on its host.

NASCENT STAGE

Kleptorm (nascent): Init -5; Atk touch +3 melee (paralysis); AC 11; HD 4d6+2; MV 20', swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-area attacks, paralysis (DC 16 Fort, duration 1d8 hours); SV Fort +3, Ref -2, Will Immune; AL C.

In their earliest stage, kleptorms proliferate in calm, tepid waters as colonies of interdependent, microscopic individuals. Such a colony appears as a liquid. Their presence tints the water with an almost metallic sheen. This can easily be mistaken for the shimmering of natural light, or an iridescent algal bloom. Because of this, as well as their ability to move silently through water, swimmers or travelers through such areas may not realize their peril until it is too late. Fortunately for those likely to come across one, a colony does not seek out victims. Most often, a colony simply lies in wait for a victim to succumb to its camouflage.

A kleptorm's touch overstimulates the body, shutting it down for hours. With its victim incapacitated, the kleptorm slinks across the body until it locates and enters an orifice (most often the nose or mouth, as it senses the heat and moisture of the victim's breath and saliva).

Colonies have no standard size. One could be large enough to fill much of a pond, or compact enough to fit in a large puddle. Colonies are indicative of other variant kleptorm forms, with larger colonies providing evidence of more populations or physically massive individuals.

A strike from a conventional weapon has no noticeable effect because of the kleptorm's liquid form. Due to its incomprehensible alien intellect, it is immune to all effects that provoke a Will save.



METAMORPHIC STAGE

Infected peasant*: Init -2; Atk club +1 melee (1d4+1); AC 9; HD 1d4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref -2, Will -4; AL C.

Kleptorm (premature): Init +0; Atk tentacle +4 (1d4+1 plus paralysis); AC 13; HD 5d6+3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infect, paralysis (DC 12 Fort, duration 1d4 hours); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will Immune; AL C.

** This is the stat-block for the peasant from Page 434 of the DCC RPG rulebook with alterations to the attack and damage modifiers, Fort save, and Will save. It is only meant as one example. To quickly create any type of infected NPC from a preexisting template, add 2 to attack, damage, and Fort save, and subtract 3 from Will save. Leave all other stats unaltered.*

Once the kleptorm successfully integrates itself into the host, it commences a terrible transformation. The colony spreads throughout the body and replaces the host's original cells. Eventually, all cellular tissue beneath the host's epidermis will transform into the kleptorm. Only the outer layer of skin will remain as it was. The entire process takes less than a month to complete.

At first, there is no apparent outward change. The infected host's physique and countenance are unaltered. However, the host will also begin to display certain idiosyncrasies that have never manifested before. These will only be subtle quirks initially. Throughout the coming weeks the host's personality deteriorates. Accompanying this is a bizarre sensation similar to malaise, except accompanied by an increase in strength rather than weakness.

As the parasite continues to replace its host, signs of an underlying problem become precipitously apparent. The host's eyes, mouth, and nails display a glossy discoloration. They will drool metallic slime and weep tears of the same sheen. After three weeks, the host's personality is completely broken down as motivation, empathy, emotion, and even speech are lost. The baleful presence within begins to cause increasingly grotesque mutations (consult tables 5-3, 5-4, and 5-5 in the DCC RPG rulebook concerning corruption for

inspiration), at which point the victim's condition can no longer be downplayed.



Premature Emergence



A kleptorm inhabiting a host requires sufficient time to develop into its final form. It will make no effort to present itself during its incubation period. If attacked by a lesser foe, the infected host will aggressively attack the assailant. The kleptorm will flee anything likely to inflict serious harm. An infected host will never fight at a disadvantage.

If a host does experience grievous bodily injury or death, the parasite will have no recourse but to prematurely emerge. A kleptorm that has not completed its development cycle will have an appearance similar to a tangled mass of metallic seaweed dripping with blood, bile, and any other bodily fluids it had not yet assimilated. In this state, it will be unable to survive for long. Its only hope is to begin the kleptorm life cycle anew, presumably with whatever defeated the last host.

The tentacle attack of a premature kleptorm is not particularly strong, but is still capable of inducing paralysis. The paralyzing capability is not as potent as a kleptorm in its nascent stage. Those that succumb to its paralyzing touch are susceptible to infection. The round following paralysis, the kleptorm drapes itself over its

victim and unleashes countless squirming tendrils that wriggle into its soon-to-be new host's exposed orifices.

Due to its incomprehensible alien intellect, a kleptorm is immune to all effects that provoke a Will save. If not slain in battle, a premature kleptorm will perish naturally within 18 hours without a host.

MATURE STAGE

Kleptorm (mature): Init +2; Atk 2 tentacles +8 melee (1d6+2 plus entangle) or proboscis +6 melee (1d8+2 plus poison); AC 17; HD 8d8+3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infect, entangle (DC 16 Strength check to break free), poison (DC 17 Fort or 1d4 Strength + 1 Agility); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will Immune; AL C.

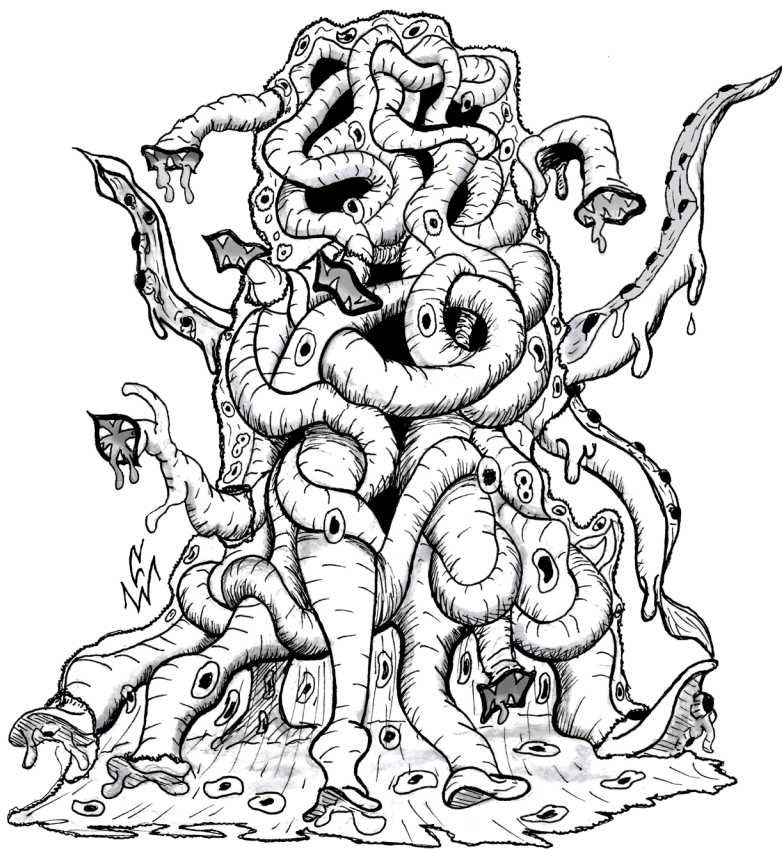
Once the developing kleptorm has transformed all of the host's tissue into its own, it is ready to emerge, much like a butterfly from a chrysalis, but far more ghastly. When the time is right, the kleptorm finds a dimly-lit, secluded location (preferably underground). Once at the nearest suitable place, the host's eyeballs burst from its head, and a tangled, glossy mass of jumbled tentacles and ganglia oozes free from the vacant sockets. Once free, the fully-matured kleptorm seeks out the nearest subterranean water source. The thin outer layer of skin left behind crumples to the ground like a discarded waistcoat.

A mature kleptorm's primary objective is furthering the proliferation of its abhorrent species by supplanting any and all others. The most expeditious way to accomplish this is to imbue the water table with its bodily secretions, where new colonies of nascent kleptorms are found.

If pressed into a combat situation, a kleptorm of this stage will attempt to ensnare an opponent in its tentacles. This happens automatically if it connects with both tentacle attacks on one character the same round. Unlike with two-weapon fighting (as described on page 95 of the DCC RPG rulebook), both tentacle attacks are made with a d20 roll. A kleptorm has no primary or off "hand."

Once the monster has grasped its prey, it grows a sharp, needle-like proboscis to inject paralyzing toxins. Repeated injections provide repeated doses with cumulative effect. Once the captured victim is weakened to the point they can offer no resistance, the kleptorm either infects them, or simply devours them if they are deemed an unfit host.

As before, the kleptorm is invulnerable to any action that calls for a Will save.



In Regard to Infection of Player Characters

In combating kleptorms in any of their forms, the likelihood is high that a character will be exposed to infection. The following are some guidelines to keep in mind when dealing with this integral aspect of kleptorm behavior in regard to the players' characters:

- The nascent kleptorm's +3 attack bonus only applies in a combat situation. A character that unknowingly steps on, swims into, or otherwise touches the kleptorm liquid is automatically hit and must succeed at its Fort save or be paralyzed.
- At the judge's discretion, an Intelligence check to spot kleptorm liquid, or a Luck check to avoid accidentally touching it may be made.
- If a player fails their Fort save against paralysis, their character is already infected the following round. Since the kleptorm liquid can move 20' on land, it can easily reach the character's nose and mouth in less than 10 seconds. If another character attacks the liquid, they also attack the paralyzed character.
- Once infected, all hope is not lost – for a while. Each day following infection, the player may make a Fort save as their character's body attempts to combat the malignant being inside. The DC for the Fort save is 11+1 for each day following initial infection. During this intermittent window, the character can be cured, but only through a cleric's divine aid (DC 19 spell check). Once a player fails the daily Fort save, the character's body is no longer able to hold off the kleptorm, which quickly begins to take over. For all intents and purposes, this character is considered dead from a player's standpoint, as the character's mind and body are no longer theirs to control.
- If the judge opts to turn a character lost to infection into an NPC (which could offer an intriguing adventure hook or plot device), refer to the section above on metamorphic kleptorms for stat alterations and ideas about how to role-play an infected character.

SKIN HUSK

Skin husk: Init +1; Atk draining touch +2 melee (1d4 Personality); AC 12; HD 4d6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP mind purge (1/day; +5 spell check), immune to mind-affecting spells, un-dead traits, death throes; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -3; AL C.

The nightmare for the kleptorm's victim does not end when their skin hits the ground. As the creature has no further need of the skin it had been wearing during its transformation, it takes no heed of what becomes of its living cocoon's tattered remains. The takeover of the parasite, though, permeates the skin with a residual malign energy, causing it to reanimate within 1d30 hours of the kleptorm's emergence. The husk is literally that – a walking outer layer of skin. Its empty eye sockets have been widened and torn due to the kleptorm. Peering into them would reveal the interior of the husk to be hollow.

As creatures recalled to life by malevolence, skin husks are considered un-dead, and are therefore susceptible to a cleric's turn unholy ability. When defeated, the remnant dark power that created them is let loose with a disorienting flash of light and a burst of necrotic ash extending outward a 30' radius. The ash affects any living thing it touches. Vegetation becomes blighted. Flesh begins to rot and fall off. Characters must succeed at a DC 13 Fort save or lose 1d4 hp every hour as their bodies decay. Only magical healing can stop this process.

Skin husks are mindless, and are therefore invulnerable to any spell that affects the mind. They do have a will, but it is not their own. Rather, theirs is inexorably linked to the kleptorms that inadvertently created them, and they seek to annihilate the will of any sentient creature not in servitude to their unknowing lords. Such is their devotion that they will purposely venture to areas tainted by the nascent kleptorm liquid and collect it, then feed the kleptorm to those whose minds they've obliterated. Rumors abound of vast subterranean vaults lined with the spiritless bodies of kleptorm hosts, presided over by vacant, hollow men.

Digit Demon

by Zach Starkey

Artwork by Dan Domme

“I heard the folk of Willow Bend had been on edge for days since the miller’s wife was spotted with a bloody bandage covering three missing fingers. When asked of her injury, she coolly explained she had an accident while chopping vegetables. I asked a crone at the edge of town about her story. She just smiled and scoffed at the ‘obvious lie’. She then warned our merchant caravan that the Digit Demon had been summoned, and it would be best to finish our business and be on our way. After learning of the creature’s nature, I took her warning to heart and immediately departed. On my way out of town, I overheard folks gossiping about this tormenting demon and the miller’s wife. They were still trying to work out who could have so riled the lovely youth to summon the creature, and who could be the target of her ire. I wasn’t sticking around to find out.”

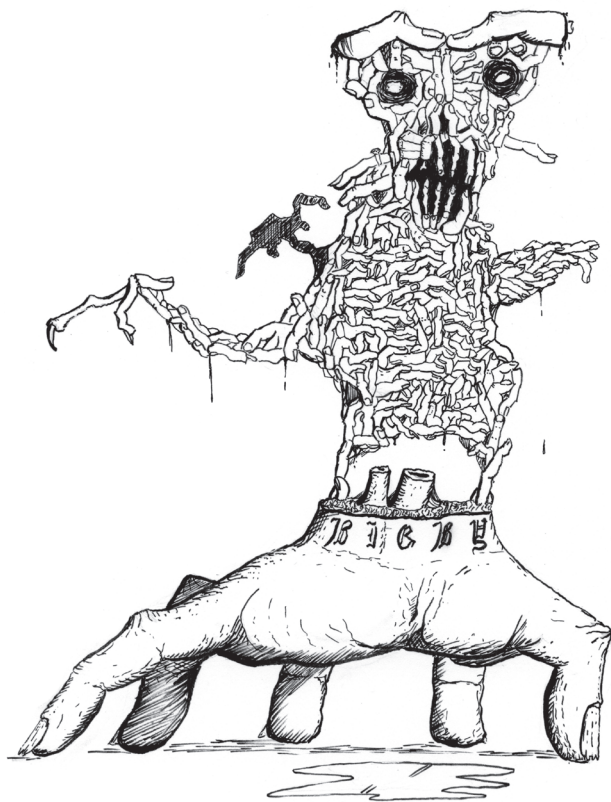
-From the travel diary of Tomlin Hash

Digit Demon: Init +4; Atk Fingernail Slash +6 melee (1d8+5) or Finger Fling +4 missile fire (1d6+3), range 40’; AC 14; HD 6d8+8; hp 32; MV 40’, fly 20’; Act 2d20; SP Shapeshift; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4; AL C.

Born of intense jealousy, hatred, and malice, the Digit Demon is an assassin called upon by spurned lovers, resentful wizards, and any who seek the ultimate resolution to a personal grievance. It is a grotesque assemblage of the severed, sacrificed fingers of those imploring its aid. This anthropoid stands at around three feet tall, and though being eyeless, it perceives the world perfectly within 120’. Despite being removed from their original hosts, its scores of grimy fingers continuously grow unnaturally straight fingernails. These provide the Digit Demon with an array of razor-sharp weapons. Its arms are tipped with dagger-length fingernails, used to rend and flay its targets (Fingernail Slash, melee +6, 1d8+5 dmg). On a critical melee strike, the target’s skin is completely torn away around the hit

area, dealing an extra 1d6 dmg. The creature also strikes at range by throwing one of its sharply adorned digits at great speed (Finger Fling, missile fire +4, 1d6+3 dmg). On a critical ranged strike, the finger dagger impales the target, pinning it in place for one round and dealing an extra 1d4 dmg.

The Digit Demon is summoned to strike a single target of the summoner's choice, usually tormenting the victim before delivering the finishing blow. It prefers stealthy strikes to open combat, and will flee before combat begins if discovered by a superior opponent. To avoid detection and to infiltrate structures, the Digit Demon can Shapeshift by sliding its fingers into new positions. This allows it to slip through small spaces (no less than the width of a finger) and reassemble on the other side. The demon's oldest fingernails have grown to over two feet in length and form crude wings when arrayed on its back. These are ideal for flying short distances through forest canopies and urban rooftops to better stalk its prey.



RINGS

Many of the summoners' sacrificed fingers hold rings of significance and sentimental value. If a party manages to corner and slay the Digit Demon, their reward will be a bounty of rings of various quality and origin. The Digit Demon is likely to have 5d7 rings scattered throughout its form. Judges are encouraged to introduce a cursed ring or two for the party's trouble.

ENCOUNTER SEEDS FOR THE DIGIT DEMON

You do not find the Digit Demon; it finds you.

- While traveling through a village, a beautiful maiden rushes up to the party. In a frenzy she begs the group to protect her from some demon that has been summoned to torment her over false accusations of adultery.. The party can try to intercept and defeat the creature or find out who summoned the creature and attempt to reverse the summoning.
- The party has enraged a fledgling wizard who is too weak to take them on directly. He thinks he can take them on if he thins their numbers with the help of the demonic assassin.
- A member of the party has offended a powerful or desperate lover. Perhaps this party member (you know the one) was overly amorous just prior to skipping town or made pillow promises they never kept. Whatever the case may be, this character is now the target of a Digit Demon.

Gadgols

Writing and Artwork by SGT Dave

Gadgols are evil flying vermin native to the rocky mountainous caves bordering the dark forest of Ethop. Gadgols take great joy in smashing against tree trunks. Their poison wounds trees and vegetation until the plant life droops and dies. Their secretions are toxic to all flora, including items made of wood or vegetation.

The size of a small bat, these inky black beasts travel in swarms of 20-200. A gadgol resembles a formless, oozing void carried through the air on a pair of jagged, leathery wings. They are all but extinct from the Forest of Burzee, or any other land under the protection of wood nymphs.

Gadgols are deathly afraid of wood nymphs and flee at the sight of them. However, the lands where the machinations of man have chased away the nymphs are ripe for the gadgol's poisonous touch.

Secretions may be milked as a corrosive against vegetation. Due to their small size, only a few (1d4) drops can be squeezed from each individual Gadgols. causing 1d4 acid dmg to vegetation per drop.

Gadgol: Init +4; Atk charge +4 melee (1 pt. plus special); AC 15; HD 1d3; MV 40' flying; Act 1d20; SP tree killer (automatic 1d4 acid dmg to all vegetation, trees, plants, crops, even hemp and wood items); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will -3; AL C.



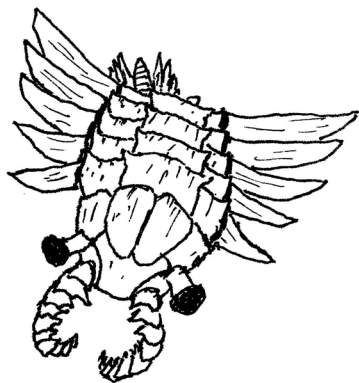
Fossil Anomalies

By Ian Zebarah Shears

Artwork by Colin Mills

Below is a bestiary of bizarre animals from Earth's ancient seas replete with special abilities to catch your players by surprise for your DCC RPG and MCC RPG games. Although historically some of these animals were smaller in size, the creatures provided here are scaled up "giant" versions, reaching the size of an adult human, or larger. Each creature entry presents paleontological information for chronological context of just how long ago these oddities existed and information for how they may be incorporated into adventures. Most would fit well in any aquatic adventure and blend seamlessly into the Cretasus campaign setting detailed in the setting conversion "Dinosaur Crawl Classics" found in the Goodman Games 2017 GenCon Program Guide. Of course, judges are always encouraged to use their imaginations, tweaking these creations to their needs; perhaps un-dead versions lurk in the trenches deep below the known seas or mad wizards have created giant, seafaring vessels in the likeness of these monsters?

Anamolocarid: Init +5; Atk chomp +7 melee (2d6+3); AC 16; HD 5d8; MV swim 60'; Act 1d24; SP infravision 100', stealth predator, schizocroal eyes; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; AL N.



Terror of the Cambrian Period seas (551 mya), this "abnormal shrimp" silently trails behind its intended prey, using its large eyes to track it from afar. This giant variety is especially fond of humanoids who stray into its territory while pearl diving, where it approaches from behind and sucks them into its weirdly shaped maw. It has also been known to leap out of the water, knocking late night dock workers into the sea.

Anamolocaris gain +1 on stealth checks while swimming silently to ambush unsuspecting characters and on any perception checks. Because of its oversized, multifaceted eyes, this killer shrimp can see in utter darkness. However, it is susceptible to being blinded by certain spells and very bright lights (-1 penalty to attacks in bright lights).

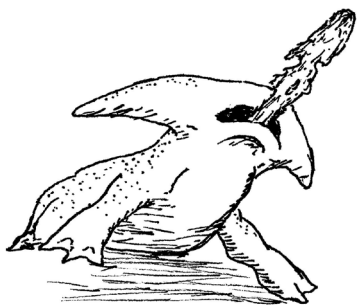
Deinosuchus: Init -2; Atk bite +10 melee (2d6+5); AC 16; HD 12d8+3; MV 50'; Act 2d20; SP fury, swallow whole; SV Fort +6, Ref -2, Will +2; AL N.



This monstrous crocodile thrived during the late Cretaceous Period (80-73 mya). This creature reaches lengths of 35' in length and is found along coastal seaways, laying in wait along the water's edge for anything edible.

Not used to being attacked, a deinosuchus will become enraged once struck for damage. It will

focus its attacks against a creature that deals the most damage to it each turn. If its subsequent bite attack hits the creature that wounded it, the creature is gripped by its massive teeth. On the following turn, as its jaws begin to compress forcefully (the grappled target takes an additional 1d6 damage automatically unless it escapes), the target must make a Ref save to avoid being cast into the monster's mouth and swallowed, taking 4d6 damage each successive turn until they are able to cut themselves free by inflicting 20 points of damage to the stomach (AC 10).

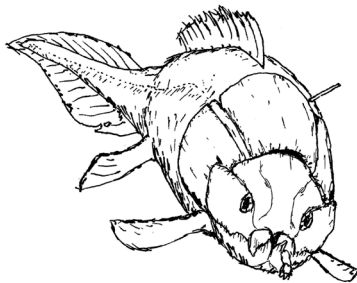


Diplocaulus: Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8+3); AC 12; HD 2d8+4; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP mud spray; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1; AL N.

One of the best-known early amphibians from the late Carboniferous up to the late

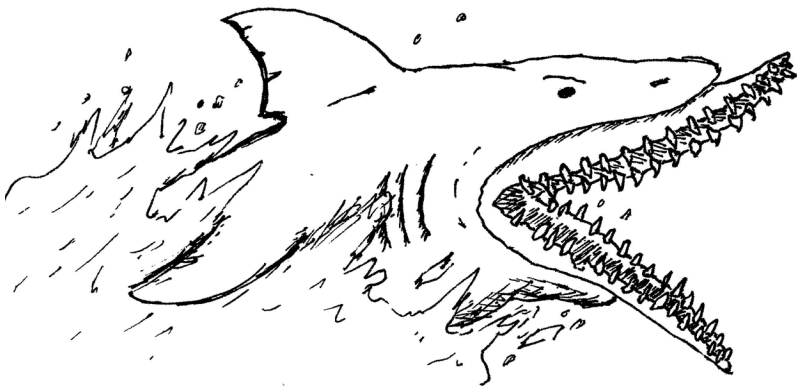
Permian Period (306-255 mya) diplocaulus is recognized instantly by its boomerang shaped head and lizard shaped body. It prefers to hide in mud, quicksand, or bogs and spit a stream of superheated mud at its prey, which deals 4d6 damage to prey failing a DC 12 Fort save.

Dunkleosteus: Init -1; Atk tremendous bite +12 melee (1d16+7); AC 24; HD 7d8+6; MV swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP armor killer; SV Fort +10, Ref -2, Will +3; AL N.



A giant, armored fish covered in thick bony plates that was prolific during the Devonian Period (358 mya), it is truly an example of evolutionary adaptation to win the arms race. Its mouth sports a set of bladed teeth that act like a set of tin snips when encountering armored prey.

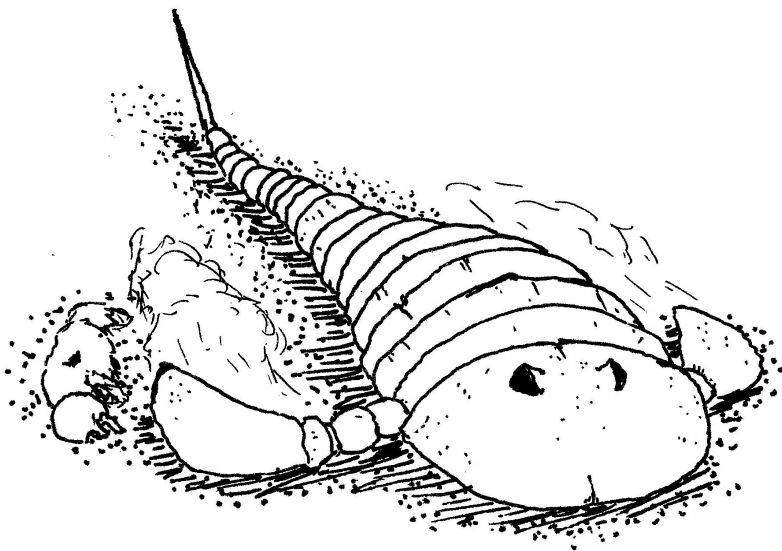
Anyone wearing armor bitten by a dunkleosteus has their armor's effectiveness impaired. The AC bonus of their armor is permanently lowered by 2; this reduction does not affect the armor's fumble die and is a cumulative effect. A piece of armor which has its bonus dropped to an AC bonus +0 or below is considered utterly ruined until repaired in some way (either by the mending spell or by an armorer).



Edestus: Init +3 Atk bite +12 melee (1d14+6); AC 14; HD 10d8; MV swim 40'; Act 1d24; SP extend maw; SV Fort +6, Ref -3 Will +3; AL N.

An early shark that reigned from the late Devonian Period up to late Carboniferous Period (407-300 mya). What sets this beast apart from standard sharks is that its maw is shaped like a pair of pinking shears. It is capable of extending its mouth up to 10' catching unwary prey by surprise.

Edestus are known to shear through the hulls of wood vessels to feed themselves. It is fortunate that their flesh is soft and rubbery, making them relatively easy to drive off with harpoons.



Eurypterid: Init +3; Atk claws +3 melee (1d6+2) or stinger +5 missile fire (1d12+4 plus paralysis); AC 20; HD 7d8+4; MV 30' or swim 40'; Act 3d20; SP stinger; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Commonly known as “sea scorpions”, the eurypterids first appeared during the Ordovician Period and went extinct during the mass extinction event at the end of the Permian Period (467-251 mya), jokingly known as “the big die” as 90% of animals went extinct at this time.

This giant arthropod is roughly 8' in length and is known to climb out of the water for short periods to snag prey along beaches and shallows. This creature can be found lurking around shipwrecks and docked fishing vessels, waiting eagerly to snatch unwary adventurers!

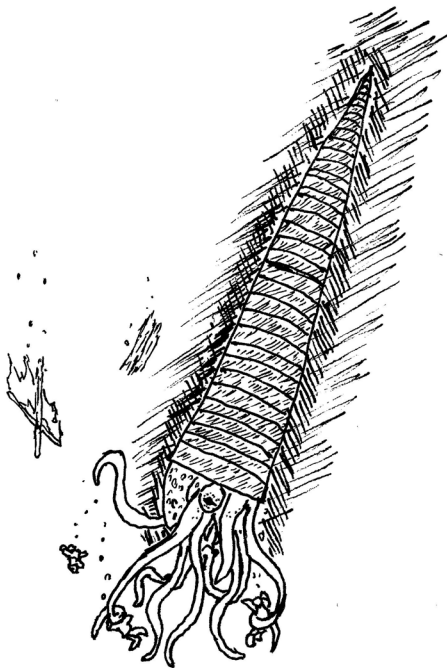
Sea scorpions prefer to focus all their attacks on one target. Each round, they may attack twice with their claws; additionally, if both claws hit, they get a free stab with their venomous tail stinger (the victim must make a DC 17 Fort save to avoid becoming paralyzed for 1d5 turns).

Giant Orthocone: Init+5; Atk tentacle +5 melee (1d10) or bite +8 melee (2d8+3) ; AC 20; HD 20d8; MV swim 60'; Act 10d20; SP suckers; SV Fort +8, Ref +0 Will +0; AL N.

The giant Orthocone was a predatory ammonoid cephalopod with a long, elongated cone shaped shell found during the late Ordovician Period up to the early Silurian Period (470-440 mya). Reaching lengths of 36' from edge of tentacles to the rear tip of its cone, this shelled squid is a voracious carnivore. It can direct each tentacle to

attack a separate target.

A tentacle latches on to its prey after it hits; those struck are grabbed and will be dragged to the mouth of the creature within 2 turns. This is the only way the giant orthocone may target a target with its bite. A suctioned target must make a DC 18 Str check to tear the tentacle off.



Opabinia (1d3+2 in a group): Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8+5 plus grapple); AC 12; HD 2d8+3; MV swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP snab; SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Will +0; AL N.

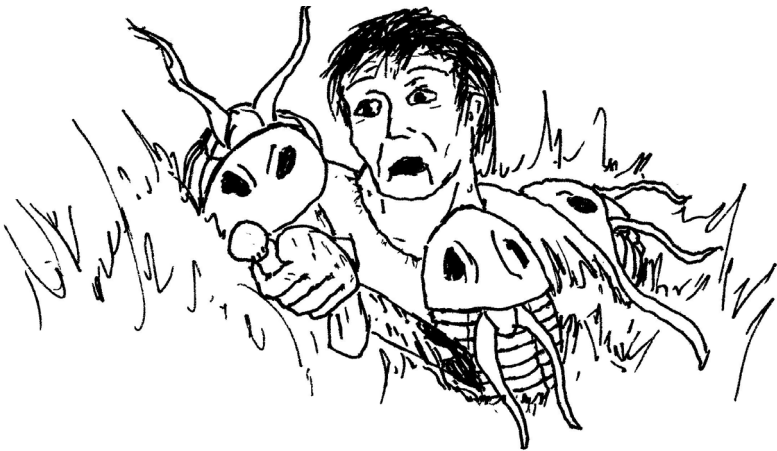


Opabinia is a weird, weird animal. It existed during the middle Cambrian Period (505 mya). What separates this creature from most sea monsters is that it has a long proboscis ending in a dangerous claw that is used to pluck prey off of low boats and from beaches. A character hit by its bite must make a Ref save with a DC equal to the opabinia's attack roll. Failure means the opabinia has "snabbed" the target and each round thereafter grapples the same target for an automatic 1d5 points of damage.

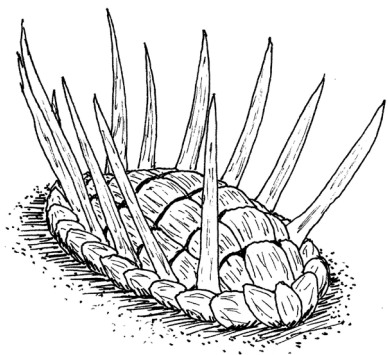
Opabinia are known to prefer salty and sweet junk food and will happily collect it from PCs that are carrying it, leaving them unharmed after finding the treats (they drop the grapple in favor of leaving to eat the sweets) but with less food for the road. In the MCC RPG, Opabinia Manimals have been found in communities along the coastlines of heavily irradiated areas. Opabinia manimals have a cluster of 5 eyes in the center of their face, and a proboscis ending in a claw where the mouth would be. Their actual mouth is located beneath their chin. Opabinia Manimal PCs gain a +1 bonus to foraging-related rolls in shoals and along beaches.

Trilobite Swarm: Init+6; Atk swarming bite +2 melee (5 plus venom); AC 12; HD 4d8; MV swim 40'; Act special; SP bite all within 20' x 20' space, half damage from non-area attacks, venom; SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL N.

Trilobites are well known through the fossil record, existing from the Cambrian Period up until the Permian Period mass extinction event (521-251 mya). These armored arthropods are scavengers and mainly subsist on anything they find on the seafloor. Something has riled them up and in this state they can strip flesh in seconds. This swarm consists of several different species of trilobite, occupies a 20' X 20' space and inflicts its bite damage automatically each round to every creature within that space. Any creature bitten must make a Fort save or lose 1d3 Stamina from their deadly venom. Swarms take half damage from any attack that is not an area effect (i.e., swinging a sword is not nearly as effective as launching a fireball into the swarm).



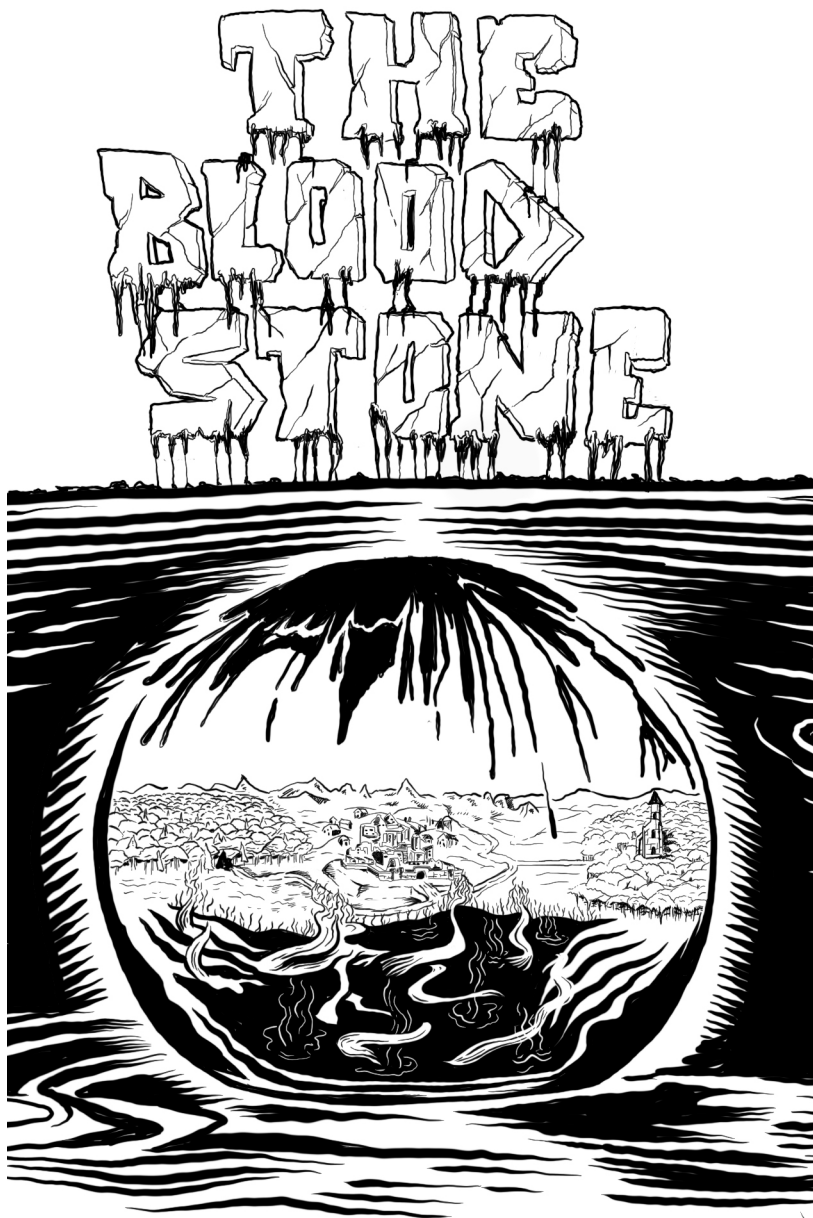
Wiwaxia: Init +0; Atk needles +2 missile fire (1d8, range 20'); AC18; HD 1d8+3; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP needles, yea gods!, the needles; SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Will +0; AL N.



Wiwaxia appeared during the Cambrian Period (520 mya) and look a lot like modern chitons, a group of soft bodied mollusks roughly elliptical in shape. The difference is that wiwaxia are covered in a sheath of large, dangerous spines. This giant variety, likely through magical tampering or radioactive exposure, are capable of firing

these needles in all directions simultaneously, showering all threats within a 30' radius (a successful DC 15 Ref avoids any damage). Anyone striking a wiwaxia in melee must also make the same save to avoid being impaled.

Considered a delicacy in some coastal regions, these animals fetch a premium price by discerning gastro-enthusiast clients. The texture is described as smooth, yet crunchy, and the flavor mild, with complements of coconuts and ginger. There are even rumors of aquatic elves raising them as livestock.



A Magic Item for use with DCC RPG

By Nick Labonte

Illustrations By Shawn Brewer

Antediluvian empires crafted legendary artifacts that enabled them to communicate over incredible distances through twisted magics and blood sacrifices. Wizards used them to spy on their rivals, generals could command their troops from the safety of their castle, and kings used them to rule. The Bloodstone is one such artifact, likely the last of its kind. When inert, The Bloodstone resembles a fortune teller's crystal ball with a dark red mist swirling within. The Bloodstone floats when placed in a pool of water. If three drops of blood from the same being are then dropped into the water, the mists will clear, potentially showing the user a glimpse of their target. Roll a spell check and refer to the following table:

Bloodstone Results

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1 | The mists clear, showing the Bloodstone's user. An unknown enemy is watching them and knows their exact location! |
| 2-11 | Failure. The mists refuse to clear. The Bloodstone is inert and cannot be used until the next sunrise. |
| 12-13 | For a minute, the Bloodstone shows the world through the eyes of the target. The image is too blurry to read words or spot other minute details, but the user can get a general idea of what's happening. |
| 14-17 | For 5 minutes, the Bloodstone shows the world through the eyes of the target. The user can spot small details that can give them a general idea of the target's location and what it is doing. |
| 18-19 | For 10 minutes, the Bloodstone shows the world through the eyes of the target. The user can spot small details that can give them a general idea of the target's location and what it is doing. Additionally, the user can read anything the target is looking directly at. |

- 20-23 For 30 minutes, the Bloodstone shows the world through the eyes of the target. The user can spot small details that give them a good idea of the target's location—as long as they've been there before—and what it is doing. Additionally, the user can read anything the target is looking at, sense the target's current emotions, and hear nearby sounds.
- 24-27 For an hour, the Bloodstone shows the target and its immediate surroundings (up to a 10 ft radius) clearly enough that the user can confidently determine the target's general location—as long as they've been there before—and what it is doing. Additionally, the user can read anything near the target, sense the target's current emotions, and hear nearby sounds.
- 28-29 For 2 hours, the Bloodstone shows the target and its immediate surroundings (up to a 10 ft radius) clearly enough that the user can determine its location and what it is doing. Additionally, the user can read anything near the target and sense the target's emotions or one surface thought. The user can also hear nearby sounds.
- 30-31 For 6 hours, the Bloodstone shows the target and its surroundings (up to a 15 ft radius) clearly enough to determine its location and what it is doing. Additionally, the user can read anything near the target and sense the target's emotions or one deep thought. The user can also clearly hear nearby sounds.
- 32+ Until the next sunrise, the Bloodstone shows the target and their complete surroundings (for example, an entire building if inside). The image is clear and crisp, allowing the user to easily spot landmarks that can help them discern the target's exact location, even if they've never been there before. The user can clearly read anything around the target. The user can sense the target's emotions, as well as reading its deepest, darkest secrets. The user can easily follow any conversation happening near the target.



The Head of Aharise

by Michael Harrington

Artwork by Bobby Jackson

Through countless ages, those who would seek power and riches have sought the living but not living head of Aharise Sorceress Queen of the Fallen Realm of Enor. To them all, the Head of Aharise proved to be their undoing. Despite their universal doom, the Head of Aharise remains an object of aspiration for those foolish enough to think they can wrest control of it.

Tales recorded by mad scribes say the wizened head can be found bound in mystical iron bands inside a black lacquered and brass inlaid box, surfacing time and time again in market places of the bizarre and in the treasure vaults of damned kingdoms. There the Head waits patiently, as it has for ages, for its next owner. And to be free.

Opening the Box

The box looks to be nothing more than a small, intricately lacquered square container made of black wood inlaid with intricate designs of brass. When the designs on the box are touched, they move as if they are made of clockwork gears.

Any PC who attempts to open the box with a Personality score of less than 13 will become **enslaved** unless they make a DC 20 Will save. (see description below).

PCs who attempt to open the box with a 13 or higher Personality must make a DC 13 Will save. If the PC succeeds they will intuitively know the pattern to open the box. As a PC touches the patterns in the correct way, the patterns shift and move and the box transforms enlarging and rearranging itself until the box is an approximately 12'x12'x12' cube. If the PC fails the save they are **enslaved** as above.



When the box finally becomes the 12'x12'x12' cube a pair of doors appear on one side of the cube and slide open revealing the wizened head.

The Head

When the doors of the box open to a new owner, the head appears wizened with wisps of gray hair, bound in thick iron bands on which are engraved strange curving glyphs of some unknown language that seem to squirm like worms when examined closely. Thick iron nails protrude from all around the head. Its mouth is sewn shut.

Shortly after the box is opened, the head's snakelike eyes snap open and glare at the feckless opener. If the opener is enslaved, then the Judge should take the appropriate action with the PC, such as having the player surrender the PC to become an NPC or allowing the player to roleplay using the enslavement section below as a guide.

If the PC is not enslaved, they will hear the head whisper in their mind the ritual that is needed to bond the head to them. This ritual will take 1 day and involves allowing the head to drink some of the PC's blood. Thereafter the PC can use the head's powers.

Once the ritual is complete the head will take a more youthful appearance, its flesh filling out and becoming seemingly supple and youthful.

Enslavement

Characters that fail their will save when initially opening the box and viewing the Head, or through use of the boons of the Head, become enslaved.

Enslaved characters desire to possess the head above all others - they will kill to possess it. Characters will not willingly stop using or allow others to use the box - dying to keep others at bay.

Characters will obey the head in all things - feeding it blood to strengthening it to achieve its true goal - uniting itself with its body on in the dark tower of Myrdin located in Fallen Enor, believing this goal to be theirs and that they are working toward absolute power.

Obviously, judges will have control over the PC at this point - but there is one final hope for the character. The use of powerful magicks or divine intervention can break the enslavement.

Magical Boons

The head has several magical powers that may be used. Each time that a PC invokes the powers of the head, a DC 15 Will Save must be made or the PC will lose one permanent point of Personality. This Personality loss is the gradual loss of the user's will and mind to the Head (see **Aharise's Love**).

If a PC is reduced to 0 Personality points, they become **enslaved** to the head.

A boon is invoked by feeding human or demi-human blood to the head. The amount of blood required is equal to 1d3 hp of damage (roll for each boon). Some boons can be Spellburned to increase their efficacy (see Spellburn for effects).

Scry (can be used unlimited times per day)

A PC may use the head to scry people and places by biting their lip to draw blood, kissing the head and staring deep into its eyes. The scry power works as per the highest-level spell roll of Wizard Sense in the **DCC RPG** rulebook. When scrying the user can automatically understand the language of the spied upon creature or person. The user will also be able to read languages that someone being spied upon is reading.

Judges can use the Wizard Sense manifestations in the **DCC RPG** rulebook or create their own.

Prophecy (can be used once per day)

A PC can ask the head one question about the future. The answer will be enigmatic but truthful. Judges should determine how much detail to reveal.

Spells (can be used once per day)

The following spells are cast on behalf of the user as a fifth level caster. They function as the listed spell, with the user rolling for spell effects and subject to misfire and corruption as per the **DCC RPG** rulebook.

In addition, a user can Spellburn to increase the spell effect roll.

1. Demon Summoning
2. Animate Dead
3. Lockerman's Unerring Hound
4. Vermin Blight

Aharise's Love

The use of the head produces a rush of euphoria in the PC using it. Like a drug addiction, long term or frequent use of the head incurs a cumulative Will Save penalty.

Each time one of the boons of the head is used, the PC must make a DC 15 Will Save or permanently lose a point of Personality. If spellburn is used to enhance a power and the character fails their will save, the PC will lose an additional 1d3 points of Personality.

As the character loses Personality, they become more and more obsessed with the head, not letting it out of their sight or possession, sleeping with it, whispering to it etc.

This will eventually result in enslavement if the character continues to use the head and slowly and loses points of Personality.

When a character's Personality drops below 13, roll 1d4 and consult the following table each time the head is used.

1d4 Effect

- 1 The user immediately seeks to use another boon of the head, thereby triggering another Will Save. This could lead the character into a spiral leading into eventual enslavement.
- 2 The user must immediately make another DC 14 Will Save or permanently lose a point of Intelligence. A character reduced to 0 intelligence goes mad and is enslaved.
- 3 The user must make a DC 14 Will Save or gain a taint (see **The Taint of Aharise**).
- 4 The user must make a DC 15 Stamina Save or pass out for 1d4 rounds. Upon awakening, the user must make a DC 12 Will Save or immediately attempt to use the head again.

Taint of Aharise

When user of the head indicates that a PC should take taint, roll 1d4 and consult the below table. When a user has received all four taints there is no need to roll anymore if taint is indicated. Instead, if the character is still alive, use the minor corruption table in the DCC RPG rulebook.

1. The user is compelled to daily engage in frenzied behavior, such as binge drinking or gluttonous eating. If the user does not engage this behavior within one day, there is a cumulative 1-point loss of Stamina until this need is satisfied. In addition, the user loses one permanent point of Personality.
2. The user is compelled to drink or bathe in humanoid blood daily. If the user does not engage this behavior within one day, there is a cumulative 1-point loss of Stamina until this need is satisfied. In addition, the user loses one permanent point of Personality due to the vile behavior.
3. The user is compelled to mutilate their body daily. They must daily cause 1d4 in damage to their body or lose a cumulative 1 temporary point of Stamina until this need is satisfied. In addition, the user loses one permanent point of Personality due to scarring.

4. The user becomes obsessed with torture, deriving an unnatural pleasure from it. To satisfy this obsession, the user must torture, kill or cause extreme pain to another creature daily or lose a cumulative 1 temporary point of Stamina until this need is satisfied. The user loses one of permanent Personality.

Five Antediluvian Artefacts

by Ari-Matti Piippo

Artwork by Joni Kesti

Below are described five antediluvian artefacts of strange provenance, along with rules for both DCC and MCC. Their background is set in the forgotten past, and as such integrating them into either system should be easy enough.

THE VESPIDAR BRACE

"Clearly of biological origin, this odd chitinous object is shaped vaguely like a bracer covered in strange knobbly protrusions and ending in an elongated spike. Both the spike and the inside of the bracer-object are covered in sickly-hued crystalline formations, which awaken and become vaguely luminous when the object is worn by a sentient being."

Description

Originally designed for the alien physique of the antediluvian wasp-men, of whom barely any mark remains upon the face of the known world, the Vespidar Brace is a tool for controlling and managing unruly slaves. The unnamed empire of the forgotten wasp-creatures was largely built on the slave labour of other sentient races; the most advanced of which were well capable of rebellion and resistance against their insectoid masters. The inhuman design of the Vespidar Brace speaks of this history. The weapon is ill-suited for use by mammalian arms as it was originally created for use with the arthropod forelimbs of the wasp-men. Despite its bulky and incompatible design, the weapon can be utilized by non-insect wielders as well, although with often painful consequences. The weapon draws its power from the life-force of its wielder, which was not an issue for the rapid regenerative qualities of its inventors but may pose a challenge to differently evolved wielders.

Abilities

The Vespidar Brace has the following effects and utilities. When initially equipped, the Vespidar Brace binds with its user, locking on to their arm painfully and extending biofilaments into their muscles. Removing it causes 1d8 points of both hit point and STA damage as the tendrils are ripped out, or requires that a successful *Remove curse* spell be cast on the wielder.

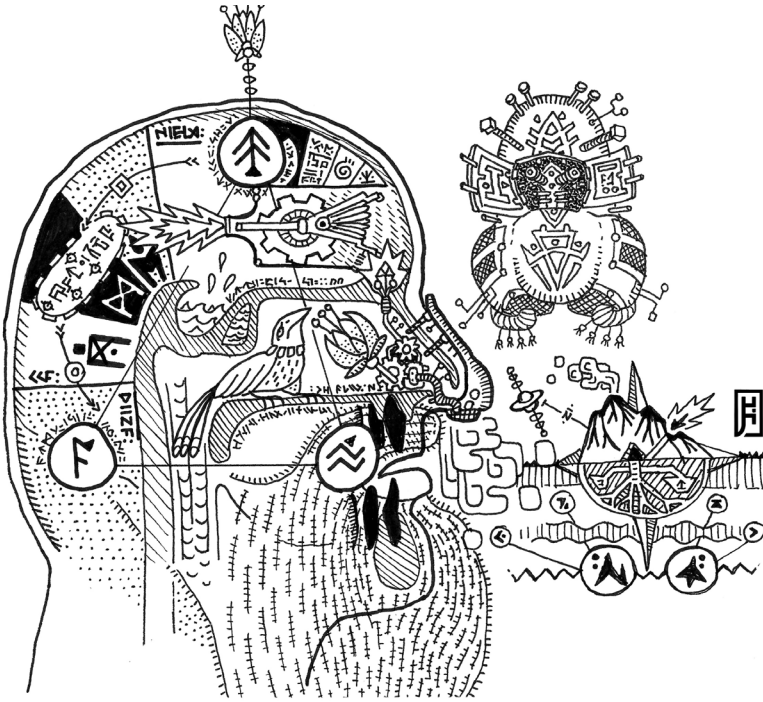
Once bound with the Brace, the user becomes instinctually aware of its abilities, and can use it as if it was a part of their body, rolling all attack rolls with it on their usual action die and missile attack bonuses. The Vespidar Brace causes 1d5 energy damage on a successful hit, and forces the target to roll a Fort save against the attack roll.

The first failed save causes confusion and pacification, reducing the target's action dice by -1d and causing all saving throws against mental effects and spells affecting the mind to automatically fail. A second failed save causes the target to become paralyzed. The paralysis lasts until they succeed on a Will save against the attack roll result. Finally, a third failed Fort save causes the target to suffer from a compliance lobotomy: the target's Intelligence score is immediately reduced to 1; such targets are extremely simple as reflected by their attribute score, but perfectly compliant towards those wielding the Vespidar Brace.

There is a downside however: each attack attempt made with the Vespidar Brace causes 1d3 points of hit point damage to its user, regardless of whether the attack hits.

MCC addendum: As the item is barely recognizable as weapon, treat the Vespidar Brace as a *Tech level 5* weapon with a *Complexity modifier 3*. The weapon has a range of 40', requires line of sight and cannot pass through force fields. It is powered by the user's life force, as described above.

THE ZORTEEN NEUROZYGOTE



"Delvers of forgotten ruins sometimes discover ancient vials of excellent artifice, which appear to contain floating spores or particles, which glow and become excited when the vial is disturbed. When opened these particles disperse and disappear, although some who have encountered such objects claim to have become far more dextrous and fortunate after such occurrence."

Description

A Zorteen Neurozygote is the last remnant of an ancient interdimensional invasion fleet and consists of microscopic dropships containing a meme-like parasite from a conceptual dimension not far from our own. The dropships are essentially sarcoforming vessels sent to our reality ages ago to transform its sapient dwellers to resemble the inhabitants of that strange land.

Abilities

The Zorteen Neurozygote functions in the following fashion. When found, the zygote-swarm is inert within an imprisonment container fashioned by the ancient. It becomes animate should the vessel be disturbed, but will only infect nearby sentient creatures if the vessel is opened or broken. A liberated Neurozygote chooses its host semi-randomly, based on a Luck check: all sapient creatures near the zygote-swarm should roll Luck checks, and the highest roller is infected, with the caveat that only Luck checks of 5 or more are counted for this purpose.

Once the Zorteen Neurozygote has picked a host, it begins to sarcoform its vessel. The initial stage begins immediately, making the carrier ambidextrous (allowing them to dual wield weapons with only a -1d on their attack rolls, among other situational benefits the Judge may see fit to apply). The second stage takes effect once the host has proved themselves to be capable of survival and happens at a juncture chosen by the Judge. After the character has survived a suitable crisis-moment, they gain the ability to regenerate their Luck at a rate of 1 point per day (or 1 point more than they would otherwise) and can share their Luck with other characters at a 1-to-2 basis. After this the sarcoforming proceeds to the tertiary stage: the character starts to become smaller and begins to take on childlike features appropriate to their species. The tertiary stage is additionally marked by increased evasiveness and desire for a comfortable, hidden life (ultimately, the effects of this transformation are left up to the Judge's discretion and may include changes to the carrier's attribute scores or demeanor).

Finally, should a Zorteen Neurozygote choose a halfling as a host, it immediately recognizes the effects of previous sarcoforming efforts on the shell, and proceeds to the pre-programmed tertiary stage. The halfling starts to become pale and skinny, and its eyes become pronouncedly black and almond shaped. The character must transfer points equal to twice their character level from each of their physical attribute scores to their INT, PER and LCK (this effect increases upon level up so that an additional point is transferred upon each level up). Should this effect reduce any of the character's attributes to 0, then the sarcoforming is unsuccessful, and the subject perishes.

MCC addendum: The Neurozygote functions as above. Should it choose a pure strain human as a host, it will proceed to the quaternary stage usually restricted to halving hosts once the primary, secondary and tertiary stages of sarcoforming have been completed. Item has no tech stats as activating it simply requires one to break the vessel.

THE GOLDEN NOSE

"A legendary artefact of obvious arcane craftsmanship, this gilded prosthetic proboscis is said to have been a gift to a great mountain king from a clan long since disappeared from the face of this plane. The Golden Nose is rumoured to give its wearer transcendent senses and a preternatural ability to sniff out secrets, lies and magic."

Description

The Golden Nose is just that, a golden nose of dwarven proportions. It is an arcanotech artefact created by a clan of dwarves which left the surface of this plane to travel the stars within their mountain vessel. It represents the clans first foray into nasalogic implantation, a science lost to this world as its architect reached for the pit of the sky above.

Abilities

As a nasalogic implant prototype the Golden Nose has the following utilities. Applying the implant requires the user to wear it upon their nose. The implant system included within is rudimentary but automated, causing 1d5 points of permanent Personality reduction when applied, and requiring a *Remove Curse* spell or the removal of the nose to unattach from the recipient. Note that removing the implant still leaves the wearer's nose a ribboned, bloody mess and further magic may be required to restore their former appearance.

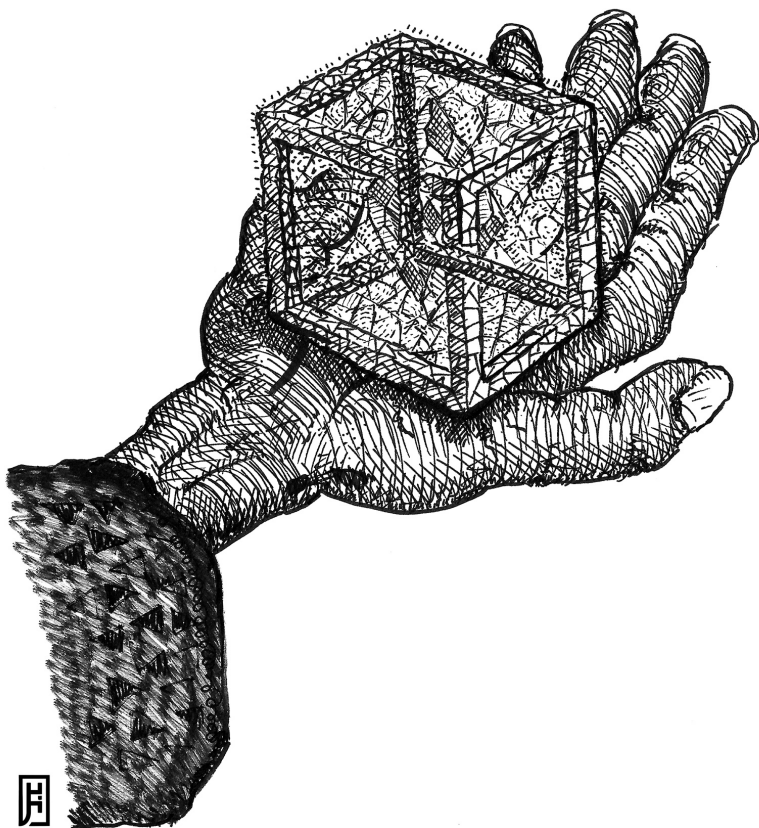
When a non-dwarf wears the nose, they gain a similar ability to the fabled dwarven sense of smell: they can sniff out concentrations of valuables such as precious metals and jewelry up to a range of 150', with a reduced range of 50' for smaller concentrations down to a single coin.

When worn by a dwarf, the implant unlocks its full potential: the dwarven wearer doubles the range of their innate olfactory sense, can now pinpoint magic as well as valuables, and gains the ability to sniff out deception unless the liar rolls a successful DC 25 Will save.

MCC ADDENDUM: The artefact functions as above, with a *Tech level 4* and a *Complexity modifier 4*. Additionally, artefact grants the wearer +10 on mutation check rolls for *Extra senses* and *Empathy*.

THE BOREAL HYPERCUBE

"Arcanists and those dealing in the business of the impossible value these rare crystalline cubes above all else. The chip-like, cubical crystals within are said to be capable of modifying the strands of probability. However, strange misfortune seems to follow those who would abuse the power held within."



Description

The Boreal Hypercube is a rare remnant of the ancient culture of Hyperborea. The sorcerer-kings of that vaunted kingdom harnessed the power of eldritch probabilities and numerical sciences from beyond to stave off the Doom threatening their civilization. The crystalline cubes were a tool for this meddling with the real, and can be used to great effect by those in the know.

Abilities

The Boreal Hypercube has the following utilities to those willing to toy with fate.

The Boreal Hypercube may be invoked in one of two ways. Primarily, the user may utilize its reality-altering mathomancy to cause any roll they make to become a success at the lowest possible result. Alternately, a user may apply the Hypercube's power to amplify their own fortune, causing a point of Luck spent to count as +10 for one roll. This effect can only be used once per roll and does not compound with a Luck die or any other Luck multiplier effect.

After the cube is used, the user gains a doom point. A doom point may be used at any time by the Judge to cause any roll made by the user to become a fumble as the Doom of Hyperborea follows their deeds.

Additionally, the Three Fates and other deities and patrons fond of the rightful execution of the skein of fate will harbour ill will towards the user. This may have unprecedented repercussions ultimately left to the Judge's discretion.

MCC ADDENDUM: Artefact functions as above, but is also integrally connected to an ancient proto-AI, which may represent one of the patron AIs described in the rulebook, or be its own entity entirely; this is left to the Judge's discretion. The item has a *Tech level 5* and a *Complexity modifier 8*.

THE NEARTANE SUIT

"A strange half-suit of armor crafted from what appears to be black, glistening rock and carved with sleek, spiraling sigils of forgotten meaning. Oddly, there are no eye holes or straps to wear the item, and it seems that any protection the suit might offer is limited to the frontside of its wearer."

Description

In the distant past of the elven kingdoms, a tribe of usurpers rose against the King, bringing war and destruction from their cold abodes in the north. For their transgressions, they were cast down and cursed and the shape of their crimes expunged from the annals of the elves. In fact, even their own memory was altered to hide their atrocities and these suits of armor are the only thing that hints at the horrible magics of the past. Each Neartane Suit is powered by the souls of 64 different types of fae bound into it at the time of creation. The suit itself is crafted from black obsidian which feels freezing to the touch. The sentient piece of equipment thrums at the touch of living flesh, and will eagerly encompass anyone willing to fit it upon their person.

Abilities

The Neartane Suit expands to encompass its wearer, seemingly growing to fit around their body. It feeds its wearer's senses with environmental cues — essentially, anything the wearer sees, hears, smells and so on is filtered through the exo-suits sensory magics. As such, it grants the wearer a bonus of up to +10 to all saves as it can filter out unwanted effects and magics to some extent. The suit grants its wearer an armor class of 10 and can provide assisted targeting to both melee and ranged attacks up to a to-hit bonus of +5. The suit communicates with its wearer through speech, but will attempt to hide its true nature as long as possible, often telling contradictory lies depending on which of the 64 fae is interviewed at any given time.

The downside of all this is that the suits abilities are powered by 64 fae souls, all of which have been driven insane by their aeon long imprisonment within the exo-suit. Whenever there is a stressful situation or an opportunity for mischief, the suits spirits will either mislead or force the wearer towards their death. The souls can reduce the wearer's statistics whenever they please with the same range as they may increase them, causing up to a -10 to the character's AC, up to a -10 penalty to any of their saves, and an up to a -5 penalty to any physical action. The suit usually bides its time until its wearer is in danger, and then unleashes its maleficent mischief without warning.

Should the suit be worn by an elven character they may be able to tame its demons, either through very difficult Ego checks (DC 32) or by promising the imprisoned fae their liberty, which requires undertaking a dangerous quest of the Judge's devising.

MCC ADDENDUM: The 64 techno-demons imprisoned within the suit may claim to be whatever they choose, but the functionality of the armor remains the same. Treat the item as *Tech level 5*, *Complexity modifier 2*, as it desires to be worn, and is willing to aid the user. The object requires no power, has 80 hit points and cannot be repaired if broken.

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