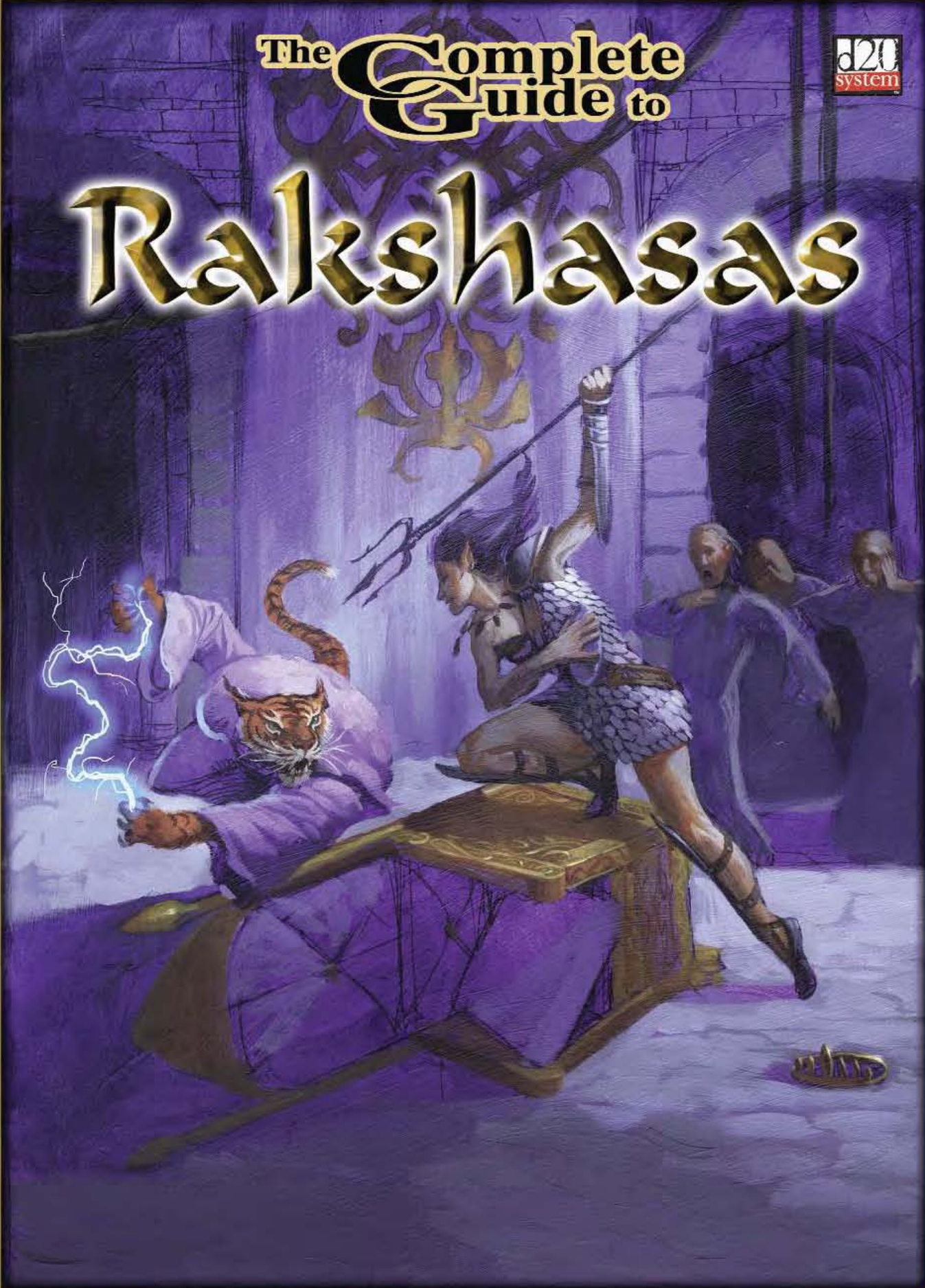


The Complete
Guide to



Rakshasas



The **Complete**
Guide to

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Rakshasas

ANCIENT MYTH AND UNBRIDLED AMBITION IN AN
EONS-SPANNING QUEST FOR POWER

This definitive sourcebook opens the door to a story few mortals can comprehend...

At the dawn of creation, the rakshasa openly ruled all the world. Greatest among them was one called Ravana, acknowledged by even the most egotistical rakshasa as their rightful king. He had been born into the world many times, growing in power with each incarnation, until finally he brought all mortal races under the power of rakshasa.

However, Ravana overlooked one particular mortal hero, who was reincarnated time and again, thwarting Ravana's schemes whenever he appeared. Under the name Ramachandra, this hero finally overcame Ravana's might, and the rakshasa lord was slain.

Rakshasa hold that when they die, they are judged by their great king Ravana. Those who possessed great power and cunning are reborn as even mightier individuals, and the greatest rakshasa will someday return as Ravana. Before his

last battle Ravana foretold that he would be reborn one more time into the world, prepared to enslave it forever — but he also warned that his ancient nemesis would return, wielding a flaming sword and mounted on a white horse as noble as himself.

The Complete Guide to Rakshasa takes you into this world of ancient myth and unbridled ambition in a journey where each adventure is merely one episode in an eons-spanning quest. Become a rakshasa undertaking grand schemes in the hope of returning as Ravana. Hunt Ramachandra in whatever form he may take. Or simply take the reins of power and rule for a century or two...

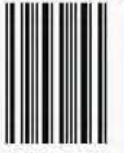
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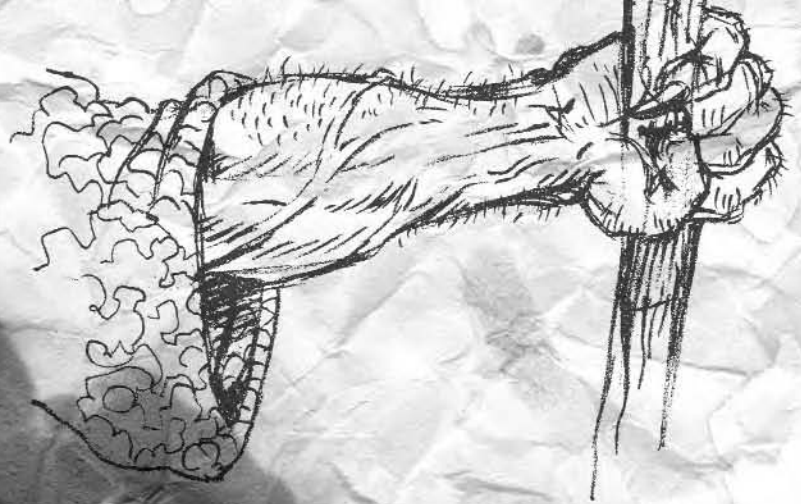
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Anatomy of the Rakshasa

Rakshasas are malicious outsiders native to the material plane.

They are shapechangers, natural sorcerers, and mind readers.



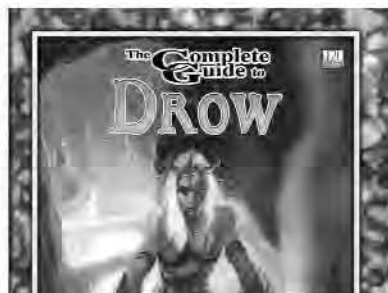
In their natural form, rakshasas resemble humanoid tigers with backward-facing palms.

The rakshasa temperament is lordly and solitary, with a taste for decadence, and they are never happier than when they are bedeviling the mortal races.



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The Complete Guide to Rakshasas

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Special Thanks: Several people helped with this project by playtesting, consulting, or just listening to the author ramble on about corpse-eating goblinoids while they were trying to finish dinner. These brave souls include: Keith Baker, Matt Falduto, Kate Gilbreath, Mateo Salazar, Deidre Shea, Kevin Shea, Bob Sprengeler, Cathy Sprengeler, and Dieter Zimmerman. Thanks to all of them.



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Introduction

Rakshasas are malicious outsiders native to the material plane. They are shapechangers, natural sorcerers, and mind readers. In their natural form, they resemble humanoid tigers with backward-facing palms. The rakshasa temperament is lordly and solitary, with a taste for decadence, and they are never happier than when they are bedeviling the mortal races.

Within your game, the rakshasa makes a wily and dangerous adversary. Many of these creatures are independent troublemakers, spreading fear and confusion with their schemes. Others are masterminds ruling a web of mortal servants and dupes, seeking to gain power and wealth. At their most dangerous, rakshasas are powerful beings who threaten to become gods after centuries or more of reincarnation. An encounter with a rakshasa will always be a mystery story, as nothing about them is what it seems.

This book is divided into five main chapters. The first chapter, Characters, presents information that players and GMs alike can use.

This includes two new classes, two dozen new feats, a template for rakshasa-mortal halfbreeds, and advice on using rakshasas as player characters. The second chapter,

The Rakshasa's Body, outlines the creature's unusual physiology. The third chapter, Conflict, explains how rakshasas operate both in and out of battle. It presents tactics, underlying strategy, and an explanation of the rakshasa's general style as both a PC and an NPC. The fourth chapter, Society, examines how rakshasas live and what they believe. It also contains several adventure ideas. The fifth chapter, Rakshasas And Their Kin, provides game statistics for standard rakshasas and their four main subtypes, ranging from the lowly pisacha to the terrifying asura.

Throughout this work we will use the term "standard rakshasa" to refer to the rakshasa found in the 3.5 MM, including the spells and feats used. Other terms refer to the different varieties presented in this work. A recap of the standard rakshasa stat block can be found on page 43.



Chapter One

Characters

Rakshasas can be used as player characters, and make an interesting addition to a party. The native abilities of a standard rakshasa allow them to perform some of the same functions as sorcerers and rogues, while their invulnerabilities give them an edge in physical combat. These abilities also mean that rakshasas are only appropriate for high-level play, as they are the equivalent of a 14th-level character.

Other rakshasa-themed options exist as well. The yogi class is centered on austerities and knowledge that came from rakshasa mystics long ago. The yaksha, a half-rakshasa half-mortal, is a template that can be added to any humanoid creature. A variety of feats and equipment are available to help rakshasas and their enemies survive.

Finally, two special groups that take an interest in rakshasas are described here. The Order of the Asthra is a mortal sect that hunts rakshasas. Worshiper of Kalki, they use stealth and martial skill to find and slay their ancient enemies. The Order has a unique prestige class, Hunter of the Firstborn, which has unique powers to help in the fight. The Shattered Gate is a loose-knit league of spellcasters and others who seek to banish all outsiders, native or otherwise, and close portals that connect the material plane to others.

Playing a Rakshasa

The standard rakshasa is a colorful and difficult addition to a group of characters. It excels at manipulating other thinking beings, a useful knack when dealing with urban or heavily political settings, but this can easily be used against other characters as well. Its invulnerabilities are impressive, but its innate spellcasting is substantially less powerful than those of its high-level peers who have concentrated on one class. Rakshasas are not necessarily a good fit for every game. However, they thrive in the right setting.

Anyone playing a rakshasa should keep several factors in mind. First, they are lawful evil creatures. A handful of exceptions do exist, but this alignment is bred in them all the way back to the story of Brahman creating the universe. A rakshasa who veers from evil will become a marked being, hunted by its own race for what they see as its bizarre and traitorous behavior. If the rakshasa PC remains lawful evil, all the usual problems of evil characters will come up. Fortunately, as lawful creatures they are better able to cooperate with others, allowing some differences to be glossed over. Rakshasas are long-lived creatures, and one can adapt itself to almost any set of PC ethics for quite a while if it feels that doing so will further its own goals.

Another potential problem is that anyone who recognizes a rakshasa will likely view it as an evil mind-reading shapechanger with a taste for humanoid flesh. This can become awkward. Therefore many rakshasa characters don't reveal their identities

to strangers, and quite possibly not to other PCs. The only time a rakshasa automatically reverts to its natural form is when it dies, so it can keep up a deception for decades at a time. The other characters might never realize that the half-elven sorcerer/monk who has traveled with them for five years is actually a rakshasa – although the other players are probably aware. The same abilities that make a rakshasa such a skilled manipulator allow it to travel undetected among mortals if it wishes.

Finally, a rakshasa character will be most satisfying to someone who enjoys playing a role. Rakshasas are fascinating personalities, given their background and their abilities. Playing one is more fun when it gets to use its powers to the hilt, and that won't happen in a hack-and-slash setting. Anyone who sees the creature's damage reduction and spell resistance as its main selling points will probably be disappointed.

Obviously, anyone can play a character any way they see fit. But for a rakshasa character to feel like what it is, certain personality traits are worth keeping in mind. A rakshasa always tries to be master of its situation, and that includes when it is with a party of player-run characters. This doesn't mean the rakshasa will try to boss everyone else around, but it will make its wishes known and it will be annoyed if those wishes are not followed. Given how subtle rakshasas can be, and the fact that they can *detect thoughts*, they often get their way without upsetting anyone else.

A rakshasa, even one as friendly as a lamb and gentle as a kitten, has been raised in a culture filled with contempt for other beings. This can take the form of blatant insults, but that's bound to annoy other players. With a rakshasa PC, disdain will likely make itself felt in other ways. Perhaps the creature is politely patronizing to NPCs, always surprised when they answer difficult questions or reveal impressive abilities. It could also be that the rakshasa puts on a dour, pessimistic face when it must rely on others to get a job done. If these unfriendly traits are played for their amusement value rather than used as a way to irritate others, they can add a great deal of character.

Which is not to say that a rakshasa PC can't be manipulating the rest of the party and plotting its downfall, of course.

Given these points, the rakshasa best fits into a standard party in the same way a bard does. They have some spellcasting, some stealth, and substantial charisma. With their love of art and performance, many rakshasas are drawn to bardic careers anyway, and the class has a spell list that covers some of the gaps in a rakshasa's abilities. This doesn't mean that rakshasas should become bards automatically, just that they have the same general utility.

In fact, the most common character class picked up by rakshasas is sorcerer. Levels in this class stack with the creature's innate spellcasting ability, allowing them to rapidly increase their power. Sorcerers also usually stay in the rear ranks of a fight, which is where rakshasas prefer to be anyway. Rakshasa



sorcerers tend to have a mixture of spells, with illusion and defensive magic being their strongest suits, and they enjoy having exotic familiars like imps or vargouilles.

The life of a rogue also suits many rakshasas. Already agile and stealthy, they adapt quickly to the demands of the class, and learn to make the most of its possibilities. They usually concentrate on interpersonal skills and sneaking, disdaining all that messy grubbing around with locks and traps.

Rakshasas with a more thoughtful frame of mind can be found following the path of the monk or yogi. Both classes involve discipline and concentration, and both grant unusual powers to their adherents. Of the two, rakshasas are more likely to become yogis, as the training of the monk emphasizes hand-to-hand combat to an extreme that most rakshasa dislike. Many of the yogi's abilities are in fact drawn from ancient rakshasa lore, as described below, so they find it a better match.

Finally, a handful of rakshasas are drawn to the life of a cleric. All rakshasas revere their legendary king Ravana, and they believe that his spirit is as powerful as any god of the mortals. It cannot be argued that Ravana's clerics have the same power as followers of mainstream deities. Some rakshasas instead place their primary faith in Night, the elemental force that spawned them long ago. Clerics of Ravana have access to the Evil, Strength, Trickery, and War domains; Ravana's favored weapon is the longbow (or composite longbow). Clerics of Night have access to the Evil, Knowledge, Magic, and Trickery domains.

Full statistics for a rakshasa as a player character can be found on page 43.

Yakshas

A rakshasa can breed with any humanoid or similar creature, and the results of such unions are called yakshas. Rakshasas prefer to have the most attractive partners available, meaning that races like elves tend to have more yaksha offspring than, say, bugbears. Depending on its plans, a rakshasa might participate in raising its child, either in its true form or in a long-term core identity. A rakshasa who sees no strategic value in a child, and who doesn't wish to take the time to raise it as a loyal henchman, will abandon it to its mortal parent on the assumption that the unwanted youngster will probably die an early death for its strange nature and powers.

The yaksha's inhuman parentage is obvious in its face, which is marked by a feral cast. Wide eyes with vertical pupils, unusual skin coloration, striped hair, and even rudimentary fangs are not uncommon. Roughly 20 percent of them have the backward palms of their rakshasa parents. Some yakshas look like monsters, but often these features combine to give it an exotic and dangerous appearance, especially when coupled with the yaksha's natural charisma. If accepted into mortal society, they often find themselves drawn into the roles their rakshasa parents play, participating in intrigue and games of power. Many of them are drawn to evil, no doubt because their rakshasa parent was steeped in it, but others reject the call of the firstborn. A yaksha can pursue any number of agendas. Often they are mistaken for spirits by the common folk, thanks to their shapeshifting powers.

Creating a Yaksha

"Yaksha" is an inherited template that can be added to any humanoid, monstrous humanoid, or giant (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A yaksha uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to outsider, with the native subtype. Size is unchanged. Do not recalculate base attack bonuses or saves.

Speed: Increase the creature's base speed by 10 feet.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +3.

Special Attacks: A yaksha retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains the following special attack.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A yaksha can use *detect thoughts* as the spell once daily for every four hit dice it possesses. This ability is Charisma-based. Caster level is equal to HD.

Special Qualities: A yaksha has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities:

- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- A +2 racial bonus to the Bluff and Disguise skills.
- Damage reduction 5/magic or piercing (if HD 10 or less) or 10/magic or piercing (HD 11 or more)
- Spell resistance equal to 5+ base creature's HD and character levels (maximum 25).
- Change Shape (Su): Like a standard rakshasa, a yaksha can change its shape to any humanoid within one size category of itself as a standard action. It may spend a number of hours per day in alternate forms equal to its HD without penalty; it does not have to use this time all at once. Maintaining alternate forms beyond this time limit leaves a yaksha fatigued, a condition which will not change until the yaksha returns to its natural form and rests for 8 hours. A yaksha remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the yaksha reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: +2 Dex, +2 Con, +4 Cha.

Skills: A yaksha gains skill points as an outsider and has skill points equal to (8 + Int modifier) x (HD + 3). It does not receive quadruple skill points at first level. Do not include hit dice from class levels in this calculation – the yaksha gains outsider skill points only for its racial hit dice, and gains the normal amount of skill points for its class levels. Treat skills from the base creature's list as class skills, and other skills as cross-class.

Challenge Rating: As base creature +2.

Alignment: Often evil (any).

Level Adjustment: Same as base creature +3.



Yaksha, 5th Level Human Fighter

Medium Outsider
(Augmented Humanoid) (Native)

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 5d10+10 (42 hp) |
| Initiative: | +7 |
| Speed: | 30 ft. in breastplate; base speed 40 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 21 (+3 Dex, +5 masterwork breastplate, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 18 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +5/+8 |
| Attack: | +1 <i>scimitar</i> +10 melee (1d8+6, 18-20/x2) or masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str) +9 ranged (1d6+3, x3) |
| Full Attack: | +1 <i>scimitar</i> +8 melee (1d8+6, 18-20/x2) and masterwork kukri +7 melee (1d4+3, 18-20/x2), or masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str) +9 ranged (1d6+3, x3) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Detect thoughts 1/day |
| Special Qualities: | Change shape, damage reduction 5/magic or piercing, darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 10 |
| Saves: | Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +0 |
| Abilities: | Str 16, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 14 |
| Skills: | Bluff +4, Climb +8 (+5 w/armor), Disguise +4, Intimidate +7, Jump +8 (+5 w/armor), Ride +8 |
| Feats: | Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar) |

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Environment: | Temperate plains |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 7 |
| Treasure: | Standard |
| Alignment: | Often neutral evil |
| Advancement: | By character class |
| Level Adjustment: | +3 |

Younger yakshas are often renegades and free agents. Unable to comfortably disguise their unusual appearances for long periods, they are frequently found roaming from one urban area to another, trading their abilities for whatever reward suits their fancy. They prefer unusual weapons and exotic clothes. Most inexperienced yakshas have more charm than sense, and frequently find themselves needing to escape a crisis of their own making. They make flamboyant if unreliable henchmen, often serving their rakshasa parent's schemes.

COMBAT

Change Shape (Su): Like a standard rakshasa, this yaksha can change its shape to any humanoid within one size category of itself as a standard action. It may spend 5 hours per day in alternate forms without penalty; it does not have to use this time all at once. Maintaining alternate forms beyond this time limit leaves the yak-



sha fatigued, a condition which will not change until it returns to its natural form and rests for 8 hours. A yaksha remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the yaksha reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Detect Thoughts (Su): This yaksha can use *detect thoughts* as the spell once daily. This ability is Charisma-based.

Yaksha, 16th Level Elf Rogio/Brd6

Medium Outsider
(Augmented Humanoid) (Native)

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 16d6 (61 hp) |
| Initiative: | +5 |
| Speed: | 40 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 25 (+6 Dex, +3 natural armor, +4 <i>bracers of armor</i> , +2 <i>ring of protection</i>), touch 18, flat-footed 19 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +11/+10 |
| Attack: | +2 <i>flaming longbow</i> +17 ranged (1d8+2+1d6, x3) or +1 <i>rapier</i> +17 melee (1d6, 18-20/x2) |
| Full Attack: | +2 <i>flaming longbow</i> +17/+17/+12 ranged (1d8+2+1d6, x3) or +1 <i>rapier</i> +17/+12 melee (1d6, 18-20/x2) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |



New Character Classes

YOGI (base class)

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Special Attacks: | Detect thoughts 4/day, spells, sneak attack +5d6 |
| Special Qualities: | Bardic knowledge, bardic music, change shape, damage reduction 10/magic or piercing, darkvision 60 ft., elf traits, evasion, improved uncanny dodge, slippery mind, spell resistance 21, trap sense +3, trapfinding, uncanny dodge |
| Saves: | Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +8 |
| Abilities: | Str 9, Dex 22, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 22 |
| Skills: | Bluff +27, Concentration +9, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +29, Disguise +18 (+20 acting), Gather Information +25, Hide +18, Move Silently +23, Perform (stringed instruments) +15, Perform (oratory) +15, Sense Motive +15, Use Magic Device +21 (+23 scrolls) |
| Feats: | Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Sense Mental Intrusion, Shield Mind, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse |
| <hr/> | |
| Environment: | Temperate plains |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 18 |
| Treasure: | Standard coins, double goods, standard items |
| Alignment: | Often neutral evil |
| Advancement: | By character class |
| Level Adjustment: | +3 |

An older yaksha has undoubtedly learned to use its abilities to the fullest. Although not as powerful as a full rakshasa, the experienced yaksha can make good use of its *change shape* and *detect thoughts* abilities. Such individuals are often found as spymasters, assassins, or undercover agents for various factions. Like their firstborn parents, what they lack in combat prowess is more than made up for with cunning and guile. A high-level yaksha may well engage in the same schemes as a rakshasa, or may devote itself to exposing and eliminating its parent's race.

COMBAT

Change Shape (Su): Like a standard rakshasa, this yaksha can change its shape to any humanoid within one size category of itself as a standard action. It may spend 16 hours per day in alternate forms without penalty; it does not have to use this time all at once. Maintaining alternate forms beyond this time limit leaves the yaksha fatigued, a condition which will not change until it returns to its natural form and rests for 8 hours. A yaksha remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the yaksha reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Detect Thoughts (Su): This yaksha can use *detect thoughts* as the spell 4/day. This ability is Charisma-based.

Spells (3/5/4, save DC 16 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound, lullaby, mage hand, message, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, erase, silent image, undetectable alignment*; 2nd—*enthrall, hold person, suggestion*

In ages past, rakshasa sages mastered many strange arts. Honing their concentration and performing grueling austerities, they imbued themselves with power beyond the rest of their kind. As more mortals fell under their sway, these secrets began to leak out. By the time of Ravana, small sects of mortals existed who passed these powers from generation to generation, becoming known as yogis. Rakshasas have never managed to rid the world of these upstarts who know their timeless techniques, and even today they are found across the civilized lands.

The yogi has two strengths: self-discipline, and the detachment to see things as they truly are. The former allows the yogi to push the limits of what a mortal body can normally do, while the latter helps the yogi pierce illusions and misdirections. The two strands twine together in such a fashion that the yogi can cast spells after a period of deep meditation. In time, the yogi sees the whole material world as an illusion of sorts, one that can be reshaped or even left behind entirely.

On a surface level, yogis are similar to monks. Both train their bodies to perform far beyond the level of others, and both gain powers that seem magical to outsiders. But the monk's physical abilities are flashier and more combat oriented, while her powers largely augment that fighting ability. A yogi is more concerned with the internal than the external, and as a result is not as obviously dangerous. However, the yogi receives enough combat training to take care of himself, and his spells excel at gathering information and protecting the target, making him a surprisingly resourceful combatant. The yogi also has some of the most flexible spontaneous casting available to divine spellcasters.

These abilities allow the yogi to excel in a support position, much as monks (and bards) do. Each yogi sees himself as a student of the universe, continually striving to become as enlightened and free as possible. It therefore falls on him to teach others that freedom, both by sharing knowledge and by example.

Adventures: To a yogi, adventuring is one step in the quest for personal understanding. By facing dangers, he learns what his capabilities are. It also brings him into contact with a variety of thinking beings who can act as either mentors or obstacles. Some yogis are driven by a zeal for doing good, hoping to help their less fortunate fellows, while others wish to master the power of the yogi in hopes that the knowledge and discipline gained will help them rule over weaker beings.

Characteristics: The yogi's key features are his ability to withstand hardship, his selection of divinations and protective magics, and his ability to see through layers of deceit and misunderstanding. Coupled with the yogi's decent combat skill, this makes him an excellent scout or second-tier spellcaster. Yogic abilities are unusual and may seem less dynamic than those of some other classes, but a yogi can almost always support the rest of his group in accomplishing their goals. He is also well equipped



for life as a solo adventurer.

Alignment: As discipline and detachment are the two pillars of a yogi's abilities, chaotic characters are not able to follow this path. Lawful individuals often excel at the former, and neutral ones the latter. A yogi can have any alignment along the good-evil axis; their techniques were developed for evil purposes by rakshasas, but many of the first-born's most devoted enemies are yogis themselves.

Religion: Most yogis consider the entire cosmos to be an object of worship, and many of the remaining ones fancy themselves supreme beings. Neither group produces many churchgoers. That said, yogis are well aware of the existence of higher powers and will often pay them some kind of homage. Some yogis believe that in time, with enough dedication and concentration, they too will ascend to the level of the gods, or even beyond it.

That belief goes hand in hand with the notion of reincarnation. No yogi is required to believe in it, but many do. The discipline practiced in this life is, to them, a sacrifice made in hopes that the next incarnation will be even closer to whatever their ideal happens to be.

Background: The knowledge of a yogi's ways is imparted by a teacher of some kind. Usually this teacher is an older yogi, often one who takes on a handful of young pupils in hopes of furthering their enlightenment (and perhaps his own). If enough yogis dwell in the same area, they might run an academy devoted to maintaining and expanding their art, taking on students of all ages who have the right dedication.

A handful of yogis claim to have developed their abilities in a different way. They say that spirits of the cosmos, be they gods or monsters, imparted the knowledge of a yogi's ways to them. Such wild yogis are shunned by their more conventional brethren, for fear that this knowledge is somehow tainted.

Races: The first yogis were rumored to be human, and humankind produces most members of this class. Dwarves have a small but solid yogic tradition, as it plays well into both their disciplined natures and their hardy frames. Some half-elves and half-orcs take up the yogi's path, seeking greater knowledge of themselves through introspection, and a handful of gnomes have adopted the practices as well. Elves and halflings are generally too free-spirited and impulsive to stick with the yogi's ways.

Few of the nonhuman races have the discipline to follow a yogi's teaching either. Hobgoblins, coming from a more structured society, have been known to become yogis. Such individuals often concentrate on the defensive aspects of their power and



act as second-line troops, supporting fighters in combat. A handful of the githzerai are rumored to have broken away from their culture's strong monastic tradition and established a small yogic academy somewhere on the outer planes.

Other Classes: A yogi usually gets along with others, understanding that everyone must find their own path to enlightenment. They especially enjoy the company of monks, clerics, and druids, all of whom have interesting insights on the nature of existence. The paladin's crusading zeal is dramatically different from the yogi's pursuit of awareness, and often the yogi will be frustrated by what he sees as the paladin's insistence on forcing others to follow a particular code. Bards, with their flashy style and love of attention, have a much different style of problem-solving than yogis do, which can lead to clashes. But the biggest contrast is between a yogi and a barbarian. To a yogi, the barbarian's wild rage and impulsive behavior is the farthest thing possible from ideal, and the two classes often have cool relations. Yogis have no particular response to other classes.

Role: A yogi makes a tenacious combatant, and his durability is an asset when combined with his unusual powers. His spell selection is heavy on abjuration and divination, so he is also good at scouting out an encounter and setting other characters up to carry the day. However, his understanding of the nature of reality also gives him access to a handful of powerful offensive spells. The yogi makes an excellent adviser and coordinator, and often has obscure knowledge that turns out to be useful.



GAME RULE INFORMATION

Yogis have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Constitution is vital for a yogi, as it supports the Concentration skill which is necessary for many of a yogi's abilities to function. Intelligence and Wisdom are helpful for many of the yogi's other skills, and Wisdom also influences the yogi's spellcasting ability.

Alignment: Any nonchaotic.

Hit Die: d8.

CLASS SKILLS

The yogi's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Concentration (Con), Decipher Script (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Listen (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the yogi.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A yogi is proficient with all simple weapons, along with several weapons that have become a traditional part of yogic training. These include the battleaxe, discus, flail (light and heavy), handaxe, longbow, shortbow, and trident. Yogis are proficient with light and medium armor.

Spells: A yogi can cast divine spells, which are drawn from the yogi spell list on page 10. However, his alignment may restrict him from casting certain spells opposed to his moral or

ethical beliefs, as with other divine spellcasters. A yogi's divine focus must be part of his daily meditation ritual, usually as something he focuses on to clear his mind.

To prepare or cast a spell, a yogi must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The DC for a saving throw against a yogi's spell is 10 + the spell level + the yogi's Wisdom modifier.

A yogi must choose and prepare his spells in advance. This requires an hour of meditation and exercise every day. One component alone is not enough; for a yogi to harness his inner power, he must be physically alert as well as mentally prepared. Time spent resting has no effect on whether a yogi can prepare spells. If a yogi fails to get his required daily meditation and exercise, he can cast the spells he has already prepared, but cannot get new ones that day.

When the yogi's spell table indicates that a yogi receives 0 spells per day, he gains only the bonus spells he would be entitled to based on his Wisdom score.

Spontaneous Casting: A yogi's remarkable self-control is reflected in his spontaneous casting ability. When desired, a yogi can "lose" a stored spell to cast a spell of a lower level from the yogic spell list, with certain restrictions. First, the spontaneous spell must be at least two levels lower than the spell being sacrificed, and it must belong to the same school (and subschool, if any). Second, the yogi must succeed at a Concentration check (DC 15 + level of the desired spell). If the check fails, the sacrificed spell is gone from the yogi's mind but the spontaneous spell is not cast.

Yogic Focus: Many of a yogi's abilities come from his blend of concentration and detachment. Once per day per yogi level, he can draw on this inner well of power to perform mar-

The Yogi

| Level | BAB | Fort | Ref | Will | Special | Spells: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|------------|------|-----|------|------------------------------------------------------|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | Yogic focus, breath control, centered strike, spells | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | +1 | +3 | +0 | +3 | Endurance | 3 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | Austerity, see false face | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Hardihood, spontaneous casting | 3 | 2 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5 | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Diehard, supreme concentration | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | +4 | +5 | +2 | +5 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | +5 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Insight | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | +6/+1 | +6 | +2 | +6 | Know falsehood | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | +6/+1 | +6 | +3 | +6 | Unravel magic | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | +7/+2 | +7 | +3 | +7 | Austerity | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | - | - | - |
| 11 | +8/+3 | +7 | +3 | +7 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - |
| 12 | +9/+4 | +8 | +4 | +8 | Find weakness | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | - | - |
| 13 | +9/+4 | +8 | +4 | +8 | Improved hardihood | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | - | - |
| 14 | +10/+5 | +9 | +4 | +9 | Inviolable body | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| 15 | +11/+6/+1 | +9 | +5 | +9 | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | - | - |
| 16 | +12/+7/+2 | +10 | +5 | +10 | Unfettered sight | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | - |
| 17 | +12/+7/+2 | +10 | +5 | +10 | Levitation | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - |
| 18 | +13/+8/+3 | +11 | +6 | +11 | | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | - |
| 19 | +14/+9/+4 | +11 | +6 | +11 | See ethereal | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | - |
| 20 | +15/+10/+5 | +12 | +6 | +12 | | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | - |



velous deeds. A yogi who is denied his chance to meditate and exercise only gets one ability per two yogi levels (minimum 1) until he resumes his normal regimen. Each yogic ability requires both a minimum yogi level and a minimum number of ranks in the Concentration skill. If the yogi lacks the required number of Concentration ranks, he cannot use that ability until he gains the needed ranks.

Centered Strike (Su): A yogi with 3 or more ranks in Concentration can hit his target without being misled by feinting and dodging. As a standard action, a yogi may use this ability to make a single attack which treats the target as if flat-footed – it loses the benefits of Dexterity and Dodge bonuses to AC. Note that the target is not flat-footed to other characters.

See False Face (Su): A yogi of 3rd level or higher with at least 6 ranks in Concentration can tell when someone is disguising their appearance. While this ability is in effect, the yogi can study individuals for signs of disguise. Each round, the yogi can use a standard action to designate one person or creature he can see and make a Concentration check (DC 15 + target's Charisma bonus). If the yogi succeeds, he is aware of any disguises, spells, or shape-shifting powers that the target is using, although he does not automatically know what the target really looks like. A yogi can also use this ability to hear when someone is mimicking a voice or animal call. This ability is active for a number of rounds equal to the character's yogi level.

Supreme Concentration (Su): A yogi of 5th level or higher with at least 8 ranks in Concentration can use his intense focus to help him perform a skill. This ability allows the yogi to make a Concentration check instead of a regular check for any one physical skill (i.e. one based on Str, Dex, or Con) that requires one round or less to execute. Thus a yogi could use Concentration in place of Jump, or could substitute it for Move Silently over a short patch of ground.

Know Falsehood (Sp): A yogi of 8th level or higher with at least 11 ranks in Concentration can sense lies. When activated, this ability allows the yogi to *discern lies* as the spell for a number of rounds equal to double his yogi level.

Unravel Magic: A yogi of 9th level or higher with at least 12 ranks in Concentration can fortify himself against all magic. When used, this ability grants the yogi spell resistance equal to his yogi level + his ranks in Concentration for a number of minutes equal to his yogi level. This does not stack with other forms of spell resistance; the one that confers the greatest benefit is used.

Find Weakness (Su): A yogi of 12th level or higher with at least 15 ranks in Concentration has mastered the art of striking an opponent. As a full-round action, the yogi may make a single attack as if it were a touch attack, ignoring his target's natural armor bonus and the like. To activate this ability, the yogi must first make a Concentration check (DC 10 + target's total AC). If the check fails, this use of find weakness does not work but it still counts against the total number of yogic focus abilities allowed per day.

Unfettered Sight (Sp): A yogi of 16th level or higher with at least 19 ranks in Concentration can see reality as it is. When activated, this ability grants the yogi *true seeing* as the spell for a

number of minutes equal to double his yogi level.

Levitation (Sp): A yogi of 17th level or higher with at least 20 ranks in Concentration is able to lift himself from the ground with a mere thought. The yogi may *levitate* himself as the spell as a move action, but with a base speed of 60 feet. This ability lasts for a number of minutes equal to his yogi level. Once activated, the yogi may use it or not as he sees fit, but the duration passes whether he floats or not.

See Ethereal (Su): A yogi of 19th level or higher with at least 21 ranks in concentration has achieved one of the greatest marks of detachment – he can see into the ethereal plane. As a standard action, the yogi can make a Concentration check (DC 30). If successful, he can now see the ethereal plane, just as ethereal creatures can see into the material plane. The yogi's vision extends 60 feet into the ethereal, making it look like a gauzy overlay on top of the normal world. All ethereal creatures and activities are obvious to him. This effect lasts for a number of minutes equal to his yogi level. If the initial Concentration check is failed, this use of see ethereal does not work but it still counts against the total number of yogic focus abilities allowed per day.

Breath Control (Ex): The first lesson every yogi learns is to control his breathing. A yogi can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to four times his Constitution score (twice as long as a normal character). He also gains a +4 bonus to any Fortitude save involving gases, vapors, or odors.

Endurance: A yogi gains Endurance as a bonus feat at 2nd level.

Austerity: At 3rd level, a yogi gains an Austerity as a bonus feat. The yogi may choose the Austerity of Cold, Austerity of Fire, Austerity of Lies, or Austerity of Pain, even if he does not meet the prerequisites of the chosen feat. (See page 12 for these new feats.) At 10th level, he gains any Austerity he wishes as a bonus feat, as long as he has any Austerities that are among its prerequisites; he does not need to meet any other prerequisites.

Hardihood (Ex): Starting at 4th level, the yogi has an uncanny degree of control over his body. If he makes a successful Fortitude save against a Fort-based attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, he instead takes no damage.

Diehard: At 5th level, a yogi gains Diehard as a bonus feat.

Insight (Ex): The greater a yogi's understanding of reality, the stronger his discipline. Starting at 7th level, the yogi adds his Wisdom modifier to every Concentration check he makes. This ability can only be used if the yogi has a positive Wisdom bonus. He continues to add his Constitution modifier as well.

Improved Hardihood (Ex): At 13th level, a yogi's self-discipline results in an improved ability to endure pain and mistreatment. In addition to the effects of the hardihood ability, he now only takes half damage on a failed Fortitude saving throw. This ability only functions against attacks with a numerical value, like poison; it is no use against powers like a gorgon's petrifying breath weapon.

Inviolable Body (Ex): In time, a yogi's control of his body grants him enhanced control of his mind and reflexes. At 14th level, he gains a bonus equal to his Constitution modifier (if any) on all saving throws, not just Fortitude.



YOGIC SPELL LIST

0 Level: *Detect magic, guidance, know direction, mage hand, mending, message, read magic, resistance*

1st Level: *Bane, bless, cause fear, comprehend languages, deathwatch, disguise self, divine favor, endure elements, entropic shield, feather fall, identify, protection from chaos/evil/law/good, remove fear, sanctuary*

2nd Level: *Align weapon, bear's endurance, calm emotions, detect thoughts, find traps, make whole, owl's wisdom, protection from arrows, resist energy, rope trick, see invisibility, shield other, status, zone of truth*

3rd Level: *Arcane sight, bestow curse, dispel magic, fly, haste, keen edge, locate object, protection from energy, remove curse, suggestion*

4th Level: *Discern lies, divination, imbue with spell ability, lesser planar ally, locate creature, fire shield, freedom of movement, shadow conjuration, spell immunity, tongues*

5th Level: *Break enchantment, commune, dismissal, mark of justice, righteous might, scrying, sending, shadow evocation, spell resistance, telekinesis*

6th Level: *Greater dispel magic, find the path, forbiddance, legend lore, mislead, planar ally, true seeing, wind walk, word of recall*

HUNTER OF THE FIRSTBORN (prestige class)

The Order of the Asthra has been in existence for uncounted centuries (see page 18). In that time, it has developed a remarkable set of techniques for hunting and killing rakshasas. The most effective of these abilities have been carefully shared among the group's elite members, passed from one worthy candidate to the next. But not every member of the Order becomes a Hunter of the Firstborn. To qualify, an initiate must demonstrate iron resolve, total trustworthiness, and a willingness to sacrifice his life for the Order's mission. Individuals who meet these standards share in knowledge that is said to come from ages before mortal races ruled the world.

The warlike classes – barbarian, fighter, ranger, paladin – are the most common Hunters. Rangers in particular find the abilities of a Hunter to be a logical extension of their own training. The yogi and the monk also have backgrounds that are compatible

with the Hunter's combat skill. But rogues and bards often make excellent Hunters as well, finding their stealth and charisma an invaluable asset when tracking rakshasas through the urban environments they hide in. Most clerics associated with the Order are followers of Kalki, who is not widely worshiped elsewhere, and they see the way of the Hunter as a way to fulfill their mission. Other clerics, druids, sorcerers, and wizards do not often become Hunters as the techniques of this class are quite different from their normal skills, particularly since their quarry has strong resistance to magic.

The abilities that a Hunter possesses are useful for more things than just hunting rakshasas. Hunters are skilled combatants, trained in a wide variety of weapons. Their abilities also help them fight a wide variety of shapeshifters and evil outsiders. Although no Hunter forgets his primary mission, they can be found with others who seek to expose and defeat any powerful supernatural being.

A more complete history of the Order can be found on page 18.
Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Hunter of the Firstborn, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Skills: Knowledge (history) 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (discus) (see page 16)

Special: To receive training as a Hunter, a character must be an initiate of the Order of the Asthra. Furthermore, the Order's traditions dictate that only a character who has delivered the killing blow to a rakshasa may take up the path of the Hunter.

CLASS SKILLS

The Hunter of the Firstborn's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are features of the Hunter of the Firstborn prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Hunter is proficient

The Hunter of the Firstborn

| Level | BAB | Fort | Ref | Will | Special |
|-------|-----|------|-----|------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | +0 | +0 | +2 | +2 | Keen senses +1, Rebound |
| 2 | +1 | +1 | +3 | +3 | Pierce disguise* 1/day |
| 3 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +3 | Strike with purity* 1/day |
| 4 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Reveal the charm* 1/day |
| 5 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Keen senses +2, Rebound |
| 6 | +4 | +2 | +5 | +5 | Training: +1/day to a * ability |
| 7 | +5 | +2 | +5 | +5 | Tear the mask* 1/day |
| 8 | +6 | +2 | +6 | +6 | Training: +1/day to a * ability |
| 9 | +6 | +3 | +6 | +6 | Keen senses +3, Training: +1/day to a * ability |
| 10 | +7 | +3 | +7 | +7 | Training: +1/day to a * ability |



with all simple and martial weapons. In addition, he is proficient with light and medium armor.

Keen Senses (Ex): A Hunter constantly trains himself to examine his surroundings and the people around him, always looking for a hint of rakshasa influence. As a result, he gets a +1 competence bonus to his Sense Motive and Spot skills. This bonus also applies to any attack bonus when in combat with a creature in the natural form of a rakshasa or rakshasa subtype (including other creatures who have changed shape to appear like rakshasas). This bonus increases to +2 at 5th level, and +3 at 9th level.

Rebound: At 1st level, the Hunter receives the Rebound feat with the discus for free, thanks to extensive training with that weapon. At 5th level the Hunter gains this feat with the discus again, permitting another bounce.

Pierce Disguise (Su): The Hunter's intense training allows him to penetrate disguises, as well as shapeshifting abilities such as a rakshasa's *change shape*. Once per day he can choose to make an opposed Spot check against another creature, as if attempting to see through a disguise. The Hunter gets a +10 bonus to the check, but cannot take 10 or 20 on it. If the target is not disguised, the Hunter recognizes that the individual is in their true form. If the Hunter succeeds against a disguised target, he not only sees through their disguise but he knows the type of disguise used – mundane, spell or spell-like ability, or supernatural power. The Hunter also realizes the approximate age of an individual with the timeless body power of a monk or druid.

Strike with Purity (Su): Devoting himself to battling a nearly invulnerable foe, the Hunter learns how to bypass damage resistance. Once per day he can attempt to strike a target, either with a weapon or unarmed, and ignore all damage reduction it might possess. This is a full-round action. The Hunter declares his intent before making the attack roll. If successful, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 25 + the number of levels the Hunter has in this class) or take full damage from the attack.

Reveal the Charm (Su): Rakshasas often use enchantments to manipulate the people around them, so Hunters developed an unusual tactic in response. Once per day a Hunter can channel his willpower and touch an individual, giving that person a free saving throw against every enchantment, psionic, and mind-affecting power currently influencing their behavior. This is a full-round action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. The person



touched immediately makes saving throws against all effects that modify their behavior, using either their Will save bonus or that of the Hunter, whichever is higher. If an individual does not wish to be affected by this power, the Hunter must make a touch attack against them.

Training: Different fellowships of the Order use different strategies in their pursuit of rakshasas, and each Hunter trains in a unique way. At each level where a Hunter gains training, he may choose one of the powers marked on the table with an asterisk (*). The Hunter may use this power an additional time per day.

Tear The Mask (Su): Once per day a Hunter may attempt to force a target out of any alternate forms and into its natural shape. Creatures like rakshasas who use *change shape* are affected, along with individuals using abilities like *alter self* and *polymorph*. This is a full-round action that is treated as an unarmed strike. If the attack is successful, in addition to regular damage the target can be forced to drop any magical or supernatural disguises and resume its normal form. The target must make a Will save (DC 25 + the number of levels the Hunter has in this class) or automatically return to its natural appearance. It can subsequently return to alternate forms as its powers permit.



New Feats

Most of the feats below are available to any character or creature. Those marked with the Shapeshifter designator are only available to individuals who can change their shape. This generally restricts their use to creatures like rakshasas who have mental control over their physical appearance, but an individual under the effects of spells like *alter self* can also use these feats with the GM's permission.

Several feats listed here are Austerities. Gaining these feats is not intended to be a simple process, as they make the possessor resistant to common forms of attack and misdirection. In addition to meeting any prerequisites, a character wishing to gain an Austerity must meet other conditions as specified by the GM. For example, to learn the Austerity of Fire a character might have to regularly expose himself to increasingly large flames, from candle to bonfire, finally spending a week in meditation with a lit brazier balanced on his head. Austerities can also involve regular maintenance at the GM's option – a character wishing to keep the use of his Austerity of Fire, for example, might have to go through the procedure described above once a year.

ALIGN ATTACK [GENERAL]

You can imbue one attack per day with chaotic, lawful, good, or evil energy. The attack type is selected when this feat is chosen, and must match the possessor's own alignment.

Prerequisites: Wis 13, BAB +3, alignment matching the feat's orientation

Benefit: When you choose this feat, assign one of the four alignment descriptors above to it. Once daily, you can designate an attack as having that alignment. Generally this is useful for overcoming a creature's damage resistance.

AUSTERITY OF ACID [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist acids and corrosives.

Prerequisites: Con 15, either Austerity of Cold or Austerity of Fire. You must also have spent at least six months learning to withstand acid.

Benefit: You gain limited resistance to damage from acid and corrosives. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 25). If successful, ignore the first 5 points of damage. This stacks with other forms of protection from acid.

AUSTERITY OF COLD [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist cold and ice damage.

Prerequisites: Con 12, Concentration 1 rank. You must also have spent at least six months learning to withstand cold.

Benefit: You gain limited resistance to damage from cold-based attacks. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 20). If successful, ignore the first 5 points of damage. This stacks with other forms of protection from cold.

AUSTERITY OF ELECTRICITY [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist the effects of electricity.

Prerequisites: Con 15, either Austerity of Cold or Austerity of Fire. You must also have spent at least six months learning to withstand electricity.

Benefit: You gain limited resistance to damage from all forms of electricity. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 25). If successful, ignore the first 5 points of damage. This stacks with other forms of protection from electricity.

AUSTERITY OF FIRE [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist fire and heat damage.

Prerequisites: Con 12, Concentration 1 rank. You must also have spent at least six months learning to withstand fire.

Benefit: You gain limited resistance to damage from flame and heat. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 20). If successful, ignore the first 5 points of damage. This stacks with other forms of protection from fire.

AUSTERITY OF ILLUSION [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to see through illusions.

Prerequisites: Wis 18, Spot 5 ranks, Listen 5 ranks, Austerity of Lies. You must also have spent at least twelve months training all of your senses.

Benefit: When confronted by something you suspect to be an illusion, you may make a Concentration check (DC 20) to gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against it. Your connection to reality also grants you an automatic +4 to saving throws against illusions with the shadow subtype.

AUSTERITY OF LIES [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to detect lies.

Prerequisites: Wis 14, Concentration 1 rank. You must also have spent at least six months speaking only the truth.

Benefit: You can make a Concentration check when interacting with someone else (DC 15). If successful, you gain a +4 on all Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks against that individual during this encounter. Your target also has a -2 to any attempt to use Intimidate or Sleight of Hand against you for this time. However, if you tell a lie during the encounter at any point after making the Concentration attempt, you lose this bonus immediately. Only one use of this feat is permitted during an encounter, regardless of how many other characters are involved.

AUSTERITY OF PAIN [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist mild pain and injury.

Prerequisites: Con 14, Concentration 4 ranks. You must also have spent at least six months learning to withstand all forms of physical injury.

Benefit: You gain limited resistance to damage from physical attacks, such as weapons. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 20). If successful, treat the attack as if you had damage reduction 2/-. This stacks with other forms of damage reduction.



New Feats

General Feats

Align Attack
Combat Concentration

Daunt Outsider
Flat of the Blade¹

Incarnation
Meditation

Rebound¹
Sense Mental Intrusion
Cloud Thoughts

Shield Mind

Prerequisites

Wis 13, BAB +3, alignment orientation
Concentration 1 rank, BAB +1

Cha 12, cast 4th level divine spells
Weapon Focus, BAB +8

–
Concentration 5 ranks

Dex 14, Weapon Focus
BAB +2, Concentration 1 rank
Concentration 8 ranks,
Sense Mental Intrusion
Concentration 6 ranks,
Sense Mental Intrusion

Benefit

Attack of indicated alignment 1/day
Dodge bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity
Cause outsider to be shaken
Attack with alternate method at half damage
1/day bonus to skill or weapon attack
Concentration check to reduce sleep or spell preparation time
Throw weapon with a rebound
Awareness of mind-affecting powers
Will save to resist being targeted with mind-affecting powers
+2 to save to resist *detect thoughts*

Austerity Feats

Austerity of Acid

Austerity of Cold

Austerity of Electricity

Austerity of Fire

Austerity of Illusion

Austerity of Lies

Austerity of Pain
Austerity of Sonics

Austerity of Suffering

Prerequisites

Con 15, Austerity of Cold or Fire, special

Con 12, Concentration 1 rank, special

Con 15, Austerity of Cold or Fire, special

Con 12, Concentration 1 rank, special

Wis 18, Spot 5 ranks, Listen 5 ranks,
Austerity of Lies, special

Wis 14, Concentration 1 rank, special

Con 14, Concentration 4 ranks, special
Con 15, Austerity of Cold or Fire, special

Con 18, Austerity of Pain, special

Benefit

Acid resistance 5 with Concentration check (DC 25)
Cold resistance 5 with Concentration check (DC 20)
Electricity resistance 5 with Concentration check (DC 25)
Fire resistance 5 with Concentration check (DC 20)
Concentration check (DC 20) to receive save bonus against illusions, +4 save vs. shadow illusions
Bonus to Diplomacy and Sense Motive with Concentration check (DC 15)
DR 2/- with Concentration check (DC 20)
Sonic resistance 5 with Concentration check (DC 25)
DR 5/- with Concentration check (DC 30)

Shapechanger Feats

Extra Head

Extra Limbs
Permanent Extra Limbs

Shifter's Armor

Shifter's Strike

Wings

Prerequisites

Int 12, ability to change shape

Str 12, ability to change shape
Extra Head, Extra Limbs, or Wings

Ability to change shape

Ability to change shape

Dex 12, ability to change shape

Benefit

Can grow extra heads after shapechanging
Can grow extra limbs after shapechanging
Permanent use of extra appendages, and use is improved
Trade Dexterity for natural armor when changing shape
+4 attack bonus within one round of changing shape
Gain wings when changing forms

¹ A fighter may select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats.



AUSTERITY OF SONICS [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist the effects of powerful sonics.

Prerequisites: Con 15, either Austerity of Cold or Austerity of Fire. You must also have spent at least six months learning to withstand sonic damage.

Benefit: You gain limited resistance to damage from sonics. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 25). If successful, ignore the first 5 points of damage. This stacks with other forms of protection from sonic attack, but it does not provide a benefit against attacks like the harpy's song.

AUSTERITY OF SUFFERING [AUSTERITY]

You have trained to resist great pain and injury.

Prerequisites: Con 18, Austerity of Pain. You must also have spent at least twelve months learning to withstand all forms of physical injury.

Benefit: You gain enhanced resistance to damage from physical attacks. When injured by such an attack, make a Concentration check (DC 30). If successful, treat the attack as if you had damage reduction 5/-. This replaces the effects of the Austerity of Pain, and stacks with other forms of damage reduction.

CLOUD THOUGHTS [GENERAL]

Your mind is nearly invisible to powers like *detect thoughts*.

Prerequisites: Concentration 8 ranks, Sense Mental Intrusion.

Benefit: You are permitted a Will save whenever someone

targets you with a power that involves interacting with your mind, as outlined in Sense Mental Intrusion. The DC is the usual DC for that attack. If you succeed, the individual cannot target you with that use of their power. Furthermore, they are unaware of their failure unless they have another way of targeting you (such as a rakshasa using *detect thoughts* while looking directly at you). If you fail the Will save, you still receive whatever normal save applies for the attack.

COMBAT CONCENTRATION [GENERAL]

You can focus on one opponent, reducing their ability to hit you with attacks of opportunity.

Prerequisites: Concentration 1 rank, base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: During your action, designate one opponent. If that opponent attempts an attack of opportunity against you, but you have more ranks in Concentration than their base attack bonus, you get a +2 dodge bonus to your AC.

DAUNT OUTSIDER [GENERAL]

You can drive outsiders back with the force of your will.

Prerequisites: Charisma 12, ability to cast fourth-level divine spells.

Benefit: You momentarily channel your divine energies at the essence of an outsider you can see within 60 feet. This is a full-round action that can be performed once per day. To daunt the target, make opposed Charisma checks. If you succeed, you have disrupted the outsider's essence, leaving it shaken (-2 to attacks, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks) for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier.

EXTRA HEAD [SHAPESHIFTER]

You can take on a form with an extra head.

Prerequisites: Int 12, ability to change shape as with the *change shape* power or *alter self* spell.

Benefit: Any alternate form you take can have more heads than usual. This decision must be made when first assuming the new shape. For every head past the first (or second, in the case of two-headed creatures like ettins), you gain a +1 bonus to all Listen, Search, and Spot checks (to a maximum +5). If you have three heads, you reduce your enemy's flanking bonus against you to +1. If you have four or more heads, you cannot be flanked while you are conscious. Your intelligence and personality is shared across all heads; you gain only a physical manifestation of a head, not an additional consciousness.

Special: This feat can be taken multiple times. Each time you take the feat, you can generate one additional head when you change shape.

EXTRA LIMBS [SHAPESHIFTER]

You can take on a form with two extra arms, two extra legs, or one of each.

Prerequisites: Str 12, ability to change shape as with the *change shape* power or *alter self* spell.

Benefit: Any alternate form you take can have extra limbs as noted above. This decision must be made when assuming the new form. Extra arms can be used in combat for one attack each,



although standard penalties apply to individuals without the Multiattack or Multiweapon Fighting feats (as described in the MM). Extra Limbs serves to meet the prerequisites for those feats, even if your standard form does not have three or more arms. Each extra leg possessed by a form increases its base land speed by 5 feet.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, but the Strength prerequisite increases by one each time.

FLAT OF THE BLADE [GENERAL]

Choose one type of melee weapon you are proficient with. You can inflict any of the three damage types when wielding that weapon; alternate damage types will not cause as much injury. This feat cannot be used with unarmed attacks, grappling, or natural weapons.

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus with chosen weapon, base attack +8.

Benefit: Before making an attack roll, you can declare that you are doing damage of a different type (bludgeoning, piercing, slashing) than the weapon's default. Your attack will only do half damage, not including extra damage from sneak attacks and the like, representing the difficulty of using a weapon in this unorthodox fashion.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take this feat, it applies to a new type of weapon.

INCARNATION [GENERAL]

You can draw on the power of a past incarnation to help you in this life. Choose one skill you possess or weapon you are proficient with. This feat improves your ability with it.

Benefit: You have learned to listen to a part of your soul that remembers your past lives. Once per day, this feat grants you a bonus with the selected skill or weapon, one that your previous self mastered. You must decide to use Incarnation before rolling. If it is a skill, you get a +8 bonus to the roll. If it is a weapon, you get a +4 attack bonus to your next attack roll with that weapon; this feat can be taken for spells that involve an attack roll. Incarnation can enhance class-based abilities, such as a bard using Perform for bardic music. This feat must be taken multiple times for subcategories of skills like Perform and Craft.

Special: You may select this feat more than once, choosing a different skill or weapon each time.

MEDITATION [GENERAL]

Your meditative skills can reduce the amount of sleep you need each night, or the time needed to regain spells.

Prerequisites: Concentration 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can make a Concentration check once per day to either halve the amount of sleep you need, or halve the time needed to prepare spells. This does not affect the elven trance. Reducing sleep is DC 15, while halving spell preparation time is DC 20.

PERMANENT EXTRA LIMBS [SHAPESHIFTER]

Extra appendages gained through the Extra Limbs, Extra Head,

or Wings feats become a permanent part of your body, granting bonuses.

Prerequisites: Extra Head, Extra Limbs, or Wings.

Benefit: Your base form now has full use of Extra Head, Extra Limbs, or Wings, meaning that it has these added appendages. Your control over them is also improved. Each extra head now grants a +2 to Listen, Search, and Spot, and there is no maximum to this bonus. The combat penalty for your extra arms, if you lack Multiattack or Multiweapon Fighting, is reduced by 2. Each extra leg now adds 10 feet to your base speed rather than 5. Wings now increase your fly speed by 20 feet from your form's base speed, and you have good maneuverability. If you choose, you can still use your shapechanging abilities to disguise your extra appendages.

REBOUND [GENERAL]

Choose a thrown weapon you are proficient with, excluding bola, net, and melee weapons in a size category larger than light. You can hurl it in such a way that it will bounce once, either increasing your attack bonus or causing the weapon to land out of your target's reach. You may take this feat multiple times, choosing a different thrown weapon each time.

Prerequisites: Dex 14, Weapon Focus with chosen weapon.

Benefit: When you throw the chosen weapon, you may bounce it off a surface near your target, cause the weapon to bounce off your foe, or some combination of both. Up to five bounces can be made. For every range increment the weapon travels, it must make at least one bounce for this feat to take effect. Rebounding a thrown weapon requires appropriate vertical or near-vertical surfaces such as walls, trees, or tower shields – living targets do not count. Making an attack using this feat is a full-round action, regardless of the number of bounces involved.

A rebound grants you a bonus to your attack roll. For every bounce the thrown weapon takes, you get a +1 circumstance bonus (maximum of +5), reflecting the trouble your target has dodging your unpredictable projectile.

Alternately, you can use this feat to make your weapon rebound away from your target. After a successful strike, the weapon rebounds to a point of your choosing within one range increment of the target. Returning a weapon to your hand requires the weapon to make at least two bounces on its return trip, as well as a Dexterity check (DC 20) for you to actually catch it. Otherwise the weapon lands within 5 feet of you in a random direction.

Special: You may take this feat more than once. If you take it with a different weapon, it permits you to make rebound throws with that new weapon. If you take this feat with the same weapon more than once, it permits you to make an additional bounce when throwing that weapon. The bonus to attack rolls from bounces still cannot exceed +5.

SENSE MENTAL INTRUSION [GENERAL]

You feel the presence of other minds in your own, including the use of powers like *detect thoughts*.

Prerequisites: BAB +2, Concentration 1 rank



Benefit: If another character uses a spell, spell-like ability, or supernatural ability that affects your mind, you notice it. This does not tell you the type of intrusion, nor does it indicate the source. Powers that trigger this ability include most enchantment magic, all abilities with the mind-affecting descriptor, and all psionics that involve direct mental interaction.

SHIELD MIND [GENERAL]

Your mind is particularly difficult to read.

Prerequisites: Concentration 6 ranks, Sense Mental Intrusion

Benefit: If anyone attempts to read your mind with a power like *detect thoughts*, you get a +2 bonus to all applicable Will saves. If you succeed, the individual trying to read your mind gets a false impression. They will detect ordinary and unremarkable thoughts from you, finding nothing unusual to indicate their failure.

SHIFTER'S ARMOR [SHAPESHIFTER]

Your natural armor bonus increases in your current form, reducing your Dexterity.

Prerequisites: Ability to change shape as with the *change shape* power or *alter self* spell.

Benefit: When assuming a form, including reverting to your original one, you can increase your natural armor bonus up to +4, reducing your Dexterity by the same number of points. This decision must be made when assuming the form. While the denser musculature and thicker bones provided by this power are not visually obvious, they do reduce your land speed by 5 feet, and your swim and fly speed by 10 feet.

SHIFTER'S STRIKE [SHAPESHIFTER]

You can shift forms suddenly, allowing you to surprise foes in melee combat.

Prerequisites: Ability to change shape as with the *change shape* power or *alter self* spell.

Benefit: You have learned to use your shapeshifting ability to disguise your hand-to-hand attacks, through methods like altering the placement of your arms or the length of your claws. If you make a melee attack within one round of changing shape, you gain a +4 circumstance bonus to your attack roll. This bonus is negated if your target cannot be caught flat-footed, as such a person is not easy to surprise.

WINGS [SHAPESHIFTER]

You can take on a form with wings, allowing you to fly.

Prerequisites: Dex 12, ability to change shape as with the *change shape* power or *alter self* spell.

Benefit: Any alternate form you take can have a pair of wings. This decision must be made when assuming the new form. The wings grant a fly speed matching the form's base speed and average maneuverability. If the alternate form already had wings, these extra wings increase your fly speed by 10 feet.

New Items

Several unusual items can be found where rakshasas are, either in their possession or in the hands of those who oppose them. The discus is a new exotic weapon, amitra is a new minor artifact, and the rest are magical items.

Discus: A discus is a metal disc the size of a small plate, with a hole in the center to make it easier to grasp. The discus is an exotic ranged weapon designed to be thrown at opponents, and using it as a melee weapon results in a -4 penalty regardless of proficiency. Cost 10 gp; Dmg (S) 1d4; Dmg (M) 1d6; Crit x3; Range increment 20 ft., Weight 3 lbs., Bludgeoning.

Amitra: This thick milk-colored liquid looks unremarkable, but it is actually an extremely potent drink. Rakshasa legends say that amitra (also known as soma) was formed at the beginning of creation as an elixir of immortality, but was stolen from the early asuras by the beings who became the gods of mortal races. A steady diet of amitra is believed to grant eternal and ageless life, but the substance is very difficult to locate. The method of creating it has long since been lost to the mortal world. One drink of amitra has several beneficial effects. Some are instant, others are permanent, and those with a duration last for 2d6 days:

- Acts as the spell *greater restoration* (20th level caster).
- Acts as the spell *heal* (20th level caster).
- The drinker regains one point each of Str, Dex, and Con that have been lost to natural aging. This effect is permanent.
- Any magical or supernatural aging affecting the drinker is instantly canceled and its effects immediately disappear.
- For the amitra's duration, the drinker gets a +6 bonus to all saves against negative levels, ability score loss, and all necromancy spells.
- For the amitra's duration, the drinker is under the effects of the *bear's endurance* spell.
- If the drinker is a spellcaster, for the amitra's duration they cast spells as if they had 3 more levels in one spellcasting class they possess. This includes the number of spells per day, but it does not affect the number or level of spells known by a bard or sorcerer.
- Once the amitra's duration expires, the drinker suffers withdrawal. The shock of losing this semi-divine power leaves the character sickened for 1d3+1 days. (A sickened character suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.)

Strong conjuration [healing] and transmutation, CL 20th.

Amulet of the Rakshasa's Eyes: If taken while fresh and enchanted in a particular way, a rakshasa's eyes can be used to create an amulet that pierces illusions and disguise. Such a talisman looks like what it is, a pair of mummified eyes, but the person who wears it openly will spot details that others miss, gaining a +2 competence bonus to all Spot and Search checks. This can be a boon to anyone hunting a rakshasa, although the amulet is also sure to draw the ire of any rakshasa who recognizes it.

Faint divination, CL 5th, Craft Wondrous Item, either *detect evil* or *detect thoughts*, Price 1,200 gp.

Bladed Mace: This +2 *heavy mace* is covered in unusual



spikes and small protruding blades. It grants the Flat Of The Blade feat to a wielder proficient with any kind of mace.

Moderate evocation, CL 8th, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Flat of the Blade, Price 10,312 gp.

Blazing Eye: A large eye-shaped ruby on a golden circlet, this item is warm to the touch. When worn on the forehead, it allows the bearer to use one *scorching ray* per round as a 6th-level caster as a standard action. However, the elemental fire spirit bound to this item has a chance of breaking free when it is overused. If this item is used more than three times in one 24 hour period, the wearer must make a Will save after each use (DC 15 + number of uses past the third). If the Will save is failed, the wearer is compelled to continue using the circlet's power against all creatures within its 40 foot range until they are all gone or destroyed. After this frenzy, the ruby disintegrates and the circle loses all its power.

Moderate conjuration [fire] and evocation, CL 9th, Craft Wondrous Item, either *summon nature's ally IV* or *summon monster V*, Price 9,500 gp.

Chariot of Arjuna: This small stone carving looks like two horses pulling an empty chariot. Once a week, the possessor can speak a command word and cause this statuette to become a full-sized chariot pulled by celestial heavy warhorses. The chariot and horses remain for one hour. The horses respond to the verbal commands of whoever called them into being, provided that person is driving the chariot; two other people can also ride along. The chariot moves up to the horses' maximum speed regardless of terrain, as the rider commands, and can also fly at that speed with good maneuverability. It provides 20% cover for those riding inside. As a standard action, the driver can cause the chariot to glow with blue flame, granting those inside the use of *arcane sight* and inflicting 2d6 heat damage on anyone making melee attacks against the chariot's occupants. If either horse is slain, the chariot reverts to its statuette form and cannot be reactivated for a week. The mighty hero Arjuna was said to be a contemporary of Ramachandra.

Strong transmutation, CL 15th, Craft Wondrous Item, *fly*, *true seeing*, Ride 1 rank, Price 25,000 gp.

Conch of War: This shell produces a mighty note when blown like a horn. If held by a person with at least one rank in any Perform skill, it can produce a tone that heartens those who hear it. This ability can be used once per hour and it replicates the bard's *inspire courage +1* ability with a duration of 5 rounds. However, if used by an outsider it only affects other outsiders, and if used by any other type of creature it does not affect outsiders at all.

Faint enchantment, CL 3rd, Craft Wondrous Item, Perform (any) 1 rank, Price 1,800 gp.

Discus of Revelation: If this *+1 discus* strikes a creature that is under the influence of a shape-altering power such as *change shape*, that creature must make a Will save (DC 20) or immediately revert to its natural form. If the wielder can cast 3rd level spells, once per day they can also cause the discus to act as the targeted dispel function of *dispel magic* when it strikes. This must be declared before the attack is rolled.

Moderate transmutation, CL 5th, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disguise self*, *dispel magic*, Price 5,310 gp.

Fire of Insight: This stubby red candle seems to have *continual flame* cast on it. Once per day, a spellcaster who must prepare spells can focus on the candle and regain a spell that has been used. The user must meditate uninterrupted for 3 minutes per level of the desired spell (1 minute for a 0-level spell), then make a Concentration check (DC 15 + twice the level of the desired spell). If successful, that spell is prepared again just as if it had not been cast.

Strong transmutation, CL 16th, Craft Wondrous Item, caster must be able to cast 9th level spells, Price 72,100 gp.

Parasu, Axe of Heroes: *+2 holy battleaxe of bane* (evil outsiders); ALLG; Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 10; Speech, 60 ft. darkvision and hearing; Ego score 12.

Lesser Powers: *detect magic* at will, 10 ranks in Spot (+12), *zone of truth* 3/day.

Personality: *Parasu* has a haft of dark wood and a blade covered in worn runes. It also has a history that goes back to the days when Ravana ruled the world, at least to hear it talk. The axe is a grim and suspicious weapon, dedicated to killing evil outsiders; it particularly hates rakshasas. *Parasu* is dedicated to the freedom of mortals and can be a useful ally, but it sees rakshasa influence everywhere. If it can, it will direct its wielder into combat against rakshasas, evil outsiders, and even people it distrusts. It also has a residual dislike of bards and artists, as they are often found in the service of rakshasas.

Moderate enchantment, CL 15th, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *holy smite*, *summon monster I*, creator must be good-aligned, Price 70,410 gp.

Rakshasa Blood: Like *amitra*, rakshasa blood can enhance a spellcaster's power. The blood must come from a freshly-killed rakshasa, and it requires at least a soup-bowl-sized draught to take effect; the blood's power fades within 10 minutes of the creature's death. No particular treatment or magic is needed to create this item, although mixing the blood with strong red wine will allow the blood to keep its potency for up to a week. Once consumed, the blood fills the drinker with unholy power, causing them to cast all spells as if they had 1 more level in the relevant class. It also taints the drinker with evil, causing all their spells to take on the evil descriptor. This effect lasts for one hour. Drinking rakshasa blood is an innately evil act, and can have dire consequences for paladins and other holy people.

Dim aura of evil for 1d6x10 minutes.

Veena of Trickery: The veena is a long-necked stringed instrument, not unlike a mandolin. The infamous Ravana was said to be a master of the veena, and this item allows the wielder to emulate a fraction of his power. Whenever it is being played, it grants the wielder a +2 circumstance bonus to any Bluff or Diplomacy check. Several other supernatural abilities can be used if the wielder makes an appropriate Perform (string instruments) check:

- *Ghost sound* or *prestidigitation* (DC 10); at will. Save DC 10.
- *Daze monster* or *minor image* (DC 15); 2/day total. Save DC 12.
- *Dominate person* (DC 25); 1/week. Save DC 14.

Moderate enchantment, CL 10th, Craft Wondrous Item, bardic music class feature, *charm person*, Price 3,750 gp.



Special Organizations

Two different organizations do battle with rakshasas, although for different reasons. The Order of the Asthra is sworn to destroy the firstborn wherever they dwell. They share the rakshasas' belief in reincarnation, and they hope to clear the way for Kalki's rebirth. The group known as the Shattered Gate is not opposed to rakshasas specifically, but they seek to rid the material plane of all outsiders, native or otherwise. The Shattered Gate sees non-mortal creatures as a dangerous threat to the stability of life itself, and so they attempt to close all passages connecting this plane to others.

The Order of the Asthra

Long ago, the mortal hero Ramachandra overcame the rakshasa king Ravana in battle. Those who tell stories of Ramachandra remember him as an archer without peer, which is true. But they often forget that he had mastered another weapon, the metal discus known as an asthra. This is the weapon he used to deal the killing blow to Ravana. The Order of the Asthra has kept this ancient story alive, and they still teach the use of the asthra to their initiates. They are also the greatest mortal experts on rakshasas, knowledge they have gained over endless centuries of hunting the creatures and being hunted in return.

The purpose of the Order is to kill rakshasas, expose their allies, and remove their influence over mortals. According to their teachings, the Order was founded by Ramachandra's personal guards shortly before the climactic battle with Ravana, and they swore a mighty oath that no rakshasa would ever do harm to their master. They kept Ramachandra from injury, save for the wounds he suffered in defeating Ravana, for the remainder of his long life. Many rakshasas survived that battle as well, and they burned with the desire for revenge, but all were defeated. Through the entirety of his life, his new guards swore the same oath that their forebears had.

Even after Ramachandra died in his old age, his guards felt bound by their promise. Believing that someday Ramachandra would be reborn as Kalki, the white horseman whose flaming sword would purify the world, the guards saw it as their duty to root out all rakshasas before the creatures could find and harm their master's new incarnation. Unnumbered generations have passed since then, and they have refused to give up the hunt.

In time they came to call themselves the Order of the Asthra, taking pride in the now archaic weapon that they still carry. Parents taught their children the Order's ways, and worthy outsiders were invited to learn its secrets. As the age of Ravana's terrible rule vanished from memory, fewer and fewer heeded the Order's call to arms. But a handful of them stayed true through all the years, pursuing an enemy whose ageless power and cunning have thwarted many great heroes.

Today the Order numbers less than a thousand, so far as is known, operating in small bands scattered across the known world. But they all swear the same oath, to protect their lord and by extension all mortal beings from the shapeshifting outsiders.

Goals

The Order of the Asthra wishes to destroy all rakshasas and remove all trace of their activities. They see the danger and corruption that surround a rakshasa, and they work to destroy everything associated with the creatures. Their secondary goal is to prepare for the incarnation of Kalki, protecting him from harm and assisting him in cleansing the world of Ravana's taint.

Organization

Once the Order had a powerful central command structure, with training facilities and storehouses of lore. But those days faded as the fear of rakshasas vanished from daily life. Now the Order consists of small fellowships, rarely more than ten members apiece. Each fellowship has great freedom to pursue its mission however it wishes.

Within a fellowship the most senior member is the leader, called a Guardsman whether male or female. This is not necessarily the oldest, but the one who has been in the Order longest. Other members are known as initiates. Some Guardsmen lead by discussion and consensus, while others are harsh dictators. As long as the fellowship is hunting rakshasas, its fellow branches of the Order don't interfere. A Guardsman has total control over the direction of his fellowship.

On occasion several fellowships will arrange a meeting. Not unlike the rakshasa Conclave, this meeting usually takes place in a large city that's celebrating a festival or some other special occasion that draws unusual strangers. The fellowships will meet to compare notes and discuss tactics, tracking the activities of particular rakshasas and displaying any trophies they have acquired. If a disagreement arises, a majority vote of the Guardsmen present decides the matter. Such meetings are as secret as Conclaves, for fear that rakshasas would arrange a mass assault if they discovered one.

Membership

The Order is an invitation-only affair. They were infiltrated by rakshasas more than once in the past, and some of their members have been tempted into betrayal. Each Guardsman is responsible for locating and recruiting new members, although most fellowships allow all initiates to weigh in on a prospective inductee.

Qualities the Order looks for are determination, fearlessness, combat skill, and a willingness to make great sacrifices in the fight against evil. Cruel or greedy individuals will be passed over, as they are too easily lured by the rewards a rakshasa can offer. If a possible candidate is found, members of the fellowship will shadow that person for a time, watching their behavior and gauging their skill. Any magic available will be employed to determine the candidate's mental fitness for the task ahead. Most fellowships set a high standard for new members.

If a candidate meets that standard, the Guardsman will approach them and explain the basics of the Order. Those who



show interest are invited to join, with the warning that the work is dangerous and travel is frequent. A candidate who accepts is known as a novice, swears to the Order's oath, and immediately begins learning the use of the asthra along with the Order's lore. Once a novice helps a fellowship thwart or kill a rakshasa, they become an initiate. An initiate who delivers the death blow to a rakshasa is eligible to become a Hunter of the Firstborn, as described on page 10.

Membership in the Order is considered for life. Should someone leave the life behind, they won't face dangerous retribution, but their former fellowship will often shun them in the future. Ex-members have betrayed the oath that has kept the Order alive for ages. They are also a security risk, as they have knowledge that rakshasas very much want. People who quit the Order often find themselves running into their old fellowship, now keeping a watchful eye on them even as they pretend to ignore each other.

Methods

In days gone by, the Order was a militant organization that made open war on rakshasas and their servants. Now they face a more subtle foe, and they have adapted. Every initiate is capable of holding their own in combat, at least with mortals, but the Order's greatest weapon is stealth. Knowing that rakshasas take great care to infiltrate and control governments and other large organizations, the Order draws little attention to itself.

Members of the Order are always looking for news, sifting through travelers' tales and bards' songs for evidence that points to a rakshasa's schemes. They know the warning signs as well as anyone – political chaos, missing artists, individuals acting as if enchanted. Once they suspect a rakshasa is present, at least two initiates are sent to the scene to begin investigating. Many fellowships are nomadic, all traveling from one suspected rakshasa's home to the next, but even those who remain in one place use multiple agents to begin investigating. It increases the chances of one initiate returning.

In their targeted location, members of the Order take on simple disguises and begin to assess the local power structures. Some will claim to be mighty adventurers or sages, but most members of the Order pretend to be stableboys, goosgirls, tinkers, and the like. Such people are usually beneath the notice of a rakshasa, and they are often placed to hear interesting gossip. They also have an easy time finding jobs that give them access to the corridors of power, or at least knowledge of the back doors.

The Order has ways of determining whether a person is what they appear to be, and while these methods aren't infallible, they help the Guardsman decide if a rakshasa is present. Unless the Guardsman gives the order, a fellowship is forbidden to take hostile action, for fear of harming a mortal by mistake. But if the Guardsman is satisfied that a rakshasa is present, the fellowship acts swiftly.

Their first goal is to destroy the rakshasa, and they will stalk it until it is alone and vulnerable. The Order has no qualms about killing one in its sleep. They also wish to undo the harm the rakshasa has done, and if time permits they will reveal the rak-

shasa's plots to such locals as they trust, going so far as to redistribute treasure that the rakshasa has seized for itself.

But these concerns are secondary to the matter of eliminating the rakshasa from this world. A fellowship strikes with as much surprise as possible, attacking a rakshasa from all sides and with every weapon available.

It would be easier in many cases to simply foil the rakshasa's plans and thereby drive it away, but leaving such a creature alive violates the Order's oath. This doesn't send a small fellowship into suicidal combat with an asura (a greater rakshasa, described on page 48), but it does mean that all their energy will be focused on finding a way to kill that asura, and they will foil its schemes if they can in the meantime.

Equipment

The only item universally found with the Order is the discus, which they often call an asthra. The basic asthra is a slender metal disc the size of a small plate, with a hole in the center wide enough for three fingers. This weapon is grasped with one hand, thumb along the outside edge and fingers in the center, and hurled at enemies with a sideways motion. Legend says that such weapons were common in ancient days, but no race or culture now makes any wide use of them, although yogis learn their use as part of their training.

Members of the Order usually carry piercing weapons. They prefer to be equipped with armaments that can potentially bypass a rakshasa's damage reduction. Simple weapons like spears and crossbows are most common, but exotic choices like the pick and the halberd are not unheard of. The trident, traditionally a weapon carried by Ramachandra's guards, is regularly used by members of the Order with martial training.

Insignia

Given the danger they face from rakshasas, the Order doesn't use visible insignia very often. The closest thing they have is the asthra itself, which is an unusual-looking weapon, so it is not carried openly. An asthra is slender enough to slip into a sack or backpack, and that is usually where it travels.

If a more formal occasion should arise, such as the recognition of a new Guardsman by his fellowship or the marriage of two initiates, the Order reverts to its martial roots. Members wear their best armor and brandish their weapons, paying homage to their origin as Ramachandra's guardians. At such times they will display the Order's crest, the image of an upright longsword wreathed in yellow flame, all on a crimson background. Each Guardsman has a small pennant or other piece of cloth with this image, kept carefully tucked away for special occasions.

Training and Abilities

The obvious first lesson taught to new members of the Order is how to wield a discus. It is a clumsy weapon at first, and novices don't usually get their own asthras. Once a novice becomes an initiate, the group provides a personal asthra. Many groups have an extra asthra handy, as membership in the Order is not the safest career to follow and a person's possessions are



taken by their fellow initiates after death. Should another asthra not be available, they will find a weaponsmith who does custom work and have one made. First, however, they make certain no rakshasas are in the area.

Stealth is also a major part of the Order's training. They need to hide themselves from the watchful eyes of their prey until they are ready to strike, and they must learn to counter the secrecy that rakshasas shroud themselves in. This encompasses both physical stealth like moving without being heard, and social stealth like disguise and misdirection.

Belief in Kalki is an essential part of the Order. While initiates are not forced to worship him, many of their fellows will. Many of the Order's clerics are followers of Kalki, who is not widely worshiped otherwise. Clerics of Kalki have access to the Fire, Good, Protection, and War domains. Kalki's favored weapon can be either the longsword or the discus.

The Order's lore extends back to the early days of the world, or so they claim, and many curious things are found in it. Interested members will be able to learn about those times long ago. This knowledge covers more than just the war with Ravana; a host of ancient stories and secrets thought dead have been passed from one generation of the Order to the next.

Campaign Use

Any game that involves rakshasas could include one or more fellowships of the Order. They are invaluable allies to anyone at cross-purposes with the firstborn, able to help unravel their schemes, and if necessary to help slay them. More than that, the Order is a way for the GM to show players the history of the rakshasa. Like all thinking monsters, the rakshasa is a far more interesting foe if players understand why it does what it does. Members of the Order can give players and characters both all the information they need to understand their enemy.

Used in this fashion, the Order will only make itself known when a rakshasa is suspected. While individual members have interests outside the endless hunt for rakshasas, they are always moving on to the next target, rarely having time to catch up with old friends and swap stories. On the other hand, the presence of any Order members will become an instant warning that the firstborn are at play nearby.

Another option is having a campaign centered around the Order. Fellowships accept all types of people, and power is less important to them than mindset. Characters of all classes, races, and levels could potentially join or even start a fellowship if they were willing to carry out the demands of its oath.

This kind of game would obviously have a sharper focus than a series of ordinary kick-in-the-door dungeon crawls. Characters will likely be on the move, simultaneously tracking their enemies and staying ahead of them. In addition to not putting down geographical roots, the characters will have trouble trusting strangers, as anyone could be a rakshasa or in the service of one. Indeed, a game like this will probably have many more rakshasas than a standard campaign world.

It also has its own rewards. The party will have a definite goal, however unattainable it may prove. The suspicion that they must often treat outsiders with has a mirror image, in that the

bonds of loyalty between the PCs and their allies will be nigh-unbreakable. Players will also have the knowledge that their characters' actions are making a positive difference in the game world, ridding it of a horrible monster one tiger-headed corpse at a time. In time, perhaps they really can usher in the incarnation of Kalki, leading the mortal races to a better future.

The Order can also serve an opposite function. In a game where rakshasas are little to no threat, the Order becomes a band of dangerous and misguided vigilantes. Their activities are carried out under darkest secrecy, and their path is drenched in blood needlessly spilled.

To use the Order as antagonists, or even outright villains, change their attitude toward their fellow mortals. Anyone who serves a rakshasa, or whose actions benefit the creatures in some way, is treated as violently as rakshasas themselves. Even people who are unknowingly helping rakshasas will be brutally punished for it.

For an added gritty element, perhaps in such a game there are no rakshasas at all. In this case, the Order is best kept to a handful of fellowships, even just one. Led by paranoid and delusional souls, they have decided to rid the world of a menace that doesn't exist outside their minds. This fits best in a sharp-edged game, where right and wrong are mixed together and morality matters less than being quick on the draw.

The Shattered Gate

Less secretive than the Order of the Asthra but equally enigmatic to those outside it, the Shattered Gate is devoted to isolating the material plane from other realms of existence. Even the ethereal plane and plane of shadow, which coexist with our own reality, raise the ire of this group. They are also dedicated to banishing or otherwise eliminating all outsiders from the material plane, including native outsiders like rakshasas.

The Shattered Gate was founded by a fallen paladin named Khorliss. Having given in to the temptations of a demon, he was stripped of his powers by his angered deity. Khorliss could have repented and then regained his status with *atonement*, but instead the loss of his divine spark infuriated him. Hot-tempered to begin with, he became an enemy of his former church, preaching its wrongs and working for its ruin.

As he fumed and argued, though, a more profound change was happening. As he later described it, "One morning I woke up and I realized I was still alive. Really and truly alive. I lost everything I wanted, I felt the wrenching pain when the gods withdrew their favor from me, I was broken and humiliated. And yet I lived. Nothing the gods or their followers had done could stop me. The sunrise was still beautiful, wine still tasted sweet, and I needed the gods no more than a grown man needs his mother's teat."

With this colorful declaration, Khorliss resolved that he would no more battle the church. Instead, he decided, he would turn his attention to the gods who ruled it and the fiends who opposed it. No longer would mortals be their playthings, having to leave their destinies in the hands of beings whose immense power was matched by their lack of concern. Perhaps such



beings were beyond his abilities to battle directly, but like any skilled warrior, Khorliss realized that he could defeat this superior foe if he could control its movements. The Shattered Gate was born.

Over time it has grown to encompass a few dozen individuals who are directly involved in the group's activities. Khorliss was a charismatic recruiter, and by the time he died, the organization had momentum of its own. As the key members are all powerful individuals, often high-level spellcasters, they also have access to large numbers of allies and contacts who can assist them.

Goals

Seeking a world free of outsiders and extraplanar creatures, the Shattered Gate works for nothing less than closing every single path between the material plane and all other realms in the Great Wheel of the cosmos. They also wish to banish or destroy all creatures that inhabit these places or move freely between them.

To accomplish this, the group hunts for gates and portals of all kinds, then closes them. If that isn't possible, they make them as hard to use as possible. Creatures from other planes are sent back to where they originated, and native outsiders like rakshasas are either banished to other universes or killed outright. Magic that can breach planar barriers is destroyed, and those who use it are put on notice that the Shattered Gate will pursue them if they persist.

Certain types of native outsider pose a special problem for the Shattered Gate. Aasimar and tieflings, as well as extraordinarily powerful monks, are technically the sort of creatures that the group wishes to remove from the material plane. However, the planetouched are no more able to tap into other dimensions than any other mortals, so they are generally left alone unless they begin actively trying to get in touch with their heritage. Powerful monks are another matter, but such individuals are quite rare and often very secretive. They are also able to give the Shattered Gate and its agents as much trouble as they can handle, so the group again gives them a wide berth as long as the monks in question confine their voyaging to meditation.

Within the group, two different philosophies compete for dominance. The Khorliss faction, as they are known, want to remove outside influences from this plane. Often disdainful of the divine nature of gods, they see extraplanar beings as uncaring meddlers who use mortal lives as toys. In their minds, the Khorliss faction are performing a noble service.

The other subject, smaller and stranger, call themselves the Clockmakers. Their concern isn't fairness or freedom but cosmic balance. As the Clockmakers see it, planar travel is a violation of natural order that will eventually cause all realms of existence to collapse into chaos. The factions often spar over philosophy, but they usually work together on Shattered Gate business.

Note that the group's mind is not made up on the realms that overlap the material plane. These transitive planes – the ethereal plane, the plane of shadow, and potentially the astral plane – have few inhabitants and are often useful in spellcasting. The group's idealists wish to be sealed off from them as well, but



more pragmatic members argue that these are really just demiplanes, little more than reflections of the material plane.

Organization

The Shattered Gate is similar to a club; it just happens to be composed of powerful and eccentric people, many of them with an adventuring background. They have a formal structure, with a Council Of The Keys making strategic decisions and allocating resources. The Council is elected from the general membership, and it can assign members to task forces with specific goals.

Membership

Members are accepted into the Shattered Gate if they show interest in the group's goals, pending the approval of the Council. Members participate to the limits of their enthusiasm for the project, and they can quit with no repercussions. On this level it's a very straightforward society. However, the massive scope of their goals and the tremendous powers that members contend with mean that only high-level characters will be taken seriously if they wish to join. Other individuals are welcome to help, but to become a voting member they will have to find a way to impress the Council.

Many members of the Shattered Gate have backgrounds similar to Khorliss. Disgruntled or abandoned members of religious orders are drawn to the Khorliss faction's goals. Interestingly, many of them still have the ability to cast divine spells, leading to speculation that either some of the gods support the group's goal or the gods are afraid to anger them further.

Others come from the odd backwaters of arcane research. Specialized conjurers and abjurers make up most of this group, as their magics are most helpful. Evokers and necromancers, whose powers often draw on the energy of other planes, are rarely interested in the Shattered Gate's work, and some conjurers violently oppose it.

Methods

The Shattered Gate has a vast and variable array of powers, depending on its current membership. Their methods depend on who is willing to undertake a task, as well as the nature of that task. Destroying a scroll known to have *plane shift* inscribed on it is a straightforward problem, involving either just buying the item or sending agents to take it from its owner. Closing a particular portal to the outer planes, however, could be a massive undertaking that requires months of research, several custom-designed spells, and a band of adventurers willing to risk the wrath of the multiverse's most powerful inhabitants. A story arc like that could be a small campaign in itself.

Ironically, the Shattered Gate's methods are often as capricious and heavy-handed as those of the gods Khorliss decried. They see their mission as paramount, and while they prefer to have the cooperation of others, they will ride roughshod over anyone they consider an obstacle. They are not cold-blooded killers, but often the Council's agents end up acting as thieves and thugs.

At times, the business of the Shattered Gate is best conducted from another plane. Some dimensional portals can only

be closed or destroyed from the other side, and at times the group needs a person or item that has left the material plane with no hope of returning soon. This creates a philosophical schism among the membership.

As a rule, Clockmakers are opposed to planar travel for any reason. They see it as pulling all of creation closer to a day of ultimate chaos. The Khorliss faction, with its crusading spirit, is more willing to dispatch small groups of agents throughout the cosmos, provided that they have specific objectives to achieve and they aren't gone long.

Equipment

Members of the Shattered Gate are notable for what they don't equip themselves with – items that open onto other dimensions, or draw their power from such places, are avoided when possible. Some individuals take this prohibition more seriously than others. Nobody devoted to the Shattered Gate's business would use a *brazier of commanding fire elementals*, for example, as drawing beings from the elemental planes is exactly the sort of thing they are trying to prevent. But fierce arguments have been waged about such adventuring staples as the *bag of holding*, with members going so far as to write lengthy manifestoes about whether the space inside such a bag is technically another plane of existence.

Agents of the Shattered Gate are more practical, especially mercenaries and other hired help. They use whatever tools are needed to get the job done, and because the Council is composed of powerful individuals, these agents have access to a great many things.

Insignia

The symbol of the Shattered Gate is an arched pair of columns, climbing to meet at a keystone, with waves of energy playing in the center. The stone is broken in half, and the columns are crumbling. Many members wear a brooch or pin with a miniature version of this symbol, while others have it emblazoned on their vests and tunics. Members of the Council have it as a watermark on the parchment used for official business.

Members of the two factions also have symbols of their own. The supporters of Khorliss use the insignia of a broken sword, often within the gate itself, to symbolize their founder's rejection of his paladin background. Clockmakers use a trio of intricately laced gears, generally as a pin on a cloak or lapel. Many such gears are designed to turn smoothly with a tiny lever.

Training and Abilities

Knowledge of the planes is essential to Shattered Gate business, as is knowledge of their inhabitants. All members learn how the realms of existence interact, how creatures and energy move between them, and how to identify extraplanar intrusions.

They also learn a surprising amount of history. Creatures like rakshasas, which are native to the material plane but outside the normal order of its existence, often have roots that are far older than the mortal races. Zealous members of the Shattered Gate, wishing to remove all extraplanar taint from this plane, will research such foes very thoroughly in hopes of finding ways



to destroy them more efficiently.

Most individuals who get involved with the group are already seasoned professionals of some kind, often spellcasters or adventurers. Their agents are also drawn from the ranks of people with lives outside the Shattered Gate's activities. Although many of the group's members are highly dedicated, it isn't a lifestyle, and so the core training is limited to those things necessary to pursue its ultimate goals.

Campaign Use

The Shattered Gate is an excellent background organization for groups of all sorts. Its obvious use is with high-level games, where planar travel is more a fact of life and outsiders are frequently encountered. Depending on the situation, the Shattered Gate can be an invaluable ally or an implacable annoyance. They will be more than happy to help repel an invasion of demons, for example, but they will be just as opposed to a party trying to summon a god of healing. A great deal of obscure and forgotten lore can be found in their vaults, some of it apocryphal and dangerous, all of it fascinating.

Less powerful characters can also get involved in Shattered Gate activities. An obvious option is having the characters be hired as agents working on Shattered Gate business. Many of the things the Shattered Gate wants are within the realm of ordinary adventurer activities. If they perform their initial assignment, they might be offered more work down the road. This is a good way to introduce the group as a presence in the background of the game world, without requiring players to take a stand on its mission.

A campaign can center around the Shattered Gate and its goals. Players can all be involved in the group's activities, either as members and allies of the Council or as adventurers on per-

manent retainer. Such a game can be a wild blur of travel and combat, always moving from one portal to the next in pursuit of a rogue outsider or plane-hopping mage. It can also be a thicket of philosophical questions and group politics, as characters decide how far to follow the Shattered Gate's agenda.

Regardless of the character levels in this kind of game, it offers a chance to involve the characters in almost any kind of story a GM desires. The activities of the Shattered Gate draw a great deal of attention, both on the material plane and beyond it. While much of this attention is negative, there are bound to be other beings scattered around the cosmos who feel the same way for reasons of their own.

The Shattered Gate can also be a band of dangerous and bizarre enemies. Their minds closed to the cosmos, these ruthless and powerful individuals seek to cut off the material plane for reasons known only to them. Although some of their actions are good, ridding the world of monsters and fiends, who knows what they will do once they have isolated the mortal world from all other places? Just as many NPCs are bound to violently oppose the Shattered Gate's activities, the players can also treat the group as an antagonist, one bent on imposing its own rules across the material plane regardless of other creatures' wants and needs.

The description above assumes that the Shattered Gate has been in existence for some time, long enough for its brash and energetic founder to have been claimed by death. The organization can also be used at an earlier point in its development, when Khorliss is still rallying others to his cause while trying to stay one step ahead of angry churches and vengeful outsiders. The group will have less power and therefore fewer rewards for those who assist it, but for some players the excitement of rallying around such a world-spanning cause is reward enough.

Chapter Two The Body of the Rakshasa

Rakshasas are native outsiders, from the same plane as the mortal races but composed of a different essence. A rakshasa is formed of ignorance and darkness – their lore says they were created from the ignorance of Brahman, the creative force of the universe, and born of the night. Their souls and their bodies are a single unit, whereas mortal races have a soul distinct from the body. Rakshasas have many of the same physical needs and limits that mortal races do, but they also have innate powers that outstrip their “newborn” rivals.

Notes on Native Outsiders

Like other races from the material plane, rakshasas must sleep, breathe, and eat. They prefer meat. Like the cats they resemble, rakshasas are carnivores who enjoy their food freshly killed, and they take a particular delight in the flesh and organs of sentient beings. That said, they can eat anything humanoids can. Indeed, many rakshasas have cultivated palates that would make any gourmet weep for joy. They are sensual creatures, and food to them is a source of pleasure as much as a physical need. This also leaves them vulnerable to poisons, and a wise rakshasa will watch its chef carefully.

A rakshasa doesn't need as much sleep as a human, usually slumbering four hours a night. They are capable of sleeping upright if desired, allowing them to simulate the elven trance. They sleep very peacefully, like the proverbial log. Even while unconscious, a rakshasa maintains any form it has assumed rather than reverting to its natural appearance.

Rakshasas age rapidly after birth, reaching adulthood in a year or less. At this point they stop physically aging altogether. They are *nearly* immortal, as are most other outsiders. Rakshasas of advanced age have been reported, with gray-white fur and signs of



Alternate Forms

Rakshasas change shape the way a fighter changes weapons – always shifting to the one that’s best for the job. A rakshasa could go through dozens of appearances in pursuit of its goal, or it might stick to one long-term identity, but either way this power is innate to its being. The change is fluid and instantaneous, allowing a rakshasa to become someone else in the blink of an eye.

As they are born with the *change shape* power, rakshasas are intimately aware of its perks and limitations. They can become any sort of humanoid, from halfling to bugbear. This ability is primarily used for disguise. When impersonating a specific individual, rakshasas and other shape-changers get a substantial bonus to avoid detection: +10 to all Disguise checks.

The change is primarily external. Regardless of form, a standard rakshasa retains most of its game statistics – hit points, ability scores, saving throws, and so on. *Change shape* is primarily useful for infiltration and misdirection, not combat, and few common humanoids have abilities that a rakshasa can imitate. One exception is the troglodyte, whose awful stench can be replicated when a rakshasa is in that form. However, the chances that a rakshasa would wish to do so are slim, both because the stench ability is not very powerful and because it would involve becoming a hideous-looking creature that excretes foul musk, something well beneath a rakshasa’s dignity.

Taking the form of an aquatic elf, merfolk, or locathah grants a rakshasa the ability to swim as if native to the water. It also permits them to breathe water. This can be handy for waterborne escapes, assuming the rakshasa matches the form to the terrain. A locathah has legs while merfolk only have fish-like tails, but the locathah cannot breathe air whereas merfolk can.

Certain feats allow rakshasas and other shapechanging creatures to stretch the boundaries of their power. This includes adding or subtracting limbs, radical changes in size, and so on. Details are provided in the Feats section.

Backward Palms

In their natural forms, all types of rakshasas have hands that curl outward rather than inward. They are the only creatures whose palms are on the top of their hands, and they take a certain pride in it. As rakshasa lore has it, they were the firstborn children of creation, and they believe that their hands curl outward as a symbol of that status.

However, it occasionally proves to be a weakness. Rakshasas are accustomed to grabbing and holding things differently than other races, and a rakshasa using its *change shape* might revert to that behavior. When a rakshasa in another form isn’t paying attention to its surroundings, generally because of a substantial distraction like a threat to its own life, it might attempt to pick something up with the back of its hand. This is very difficult to notice by accident, as it looks like ordinary clumsiness; a Spot check against DC 30 is called for. However, anyone who specifically watches for this only has to meet a DC of 20.



physical decrepitude, but such a creature would only be more dangerous. Like dragons, rakshasas grow in power as they grow older, but eventually they *can* die of age. Rakshasas believe that this is because they were denied a share of amitra, the divine drink, when the world was still being formed.

As a native outsider’s soul is effectively the same as its physical form, some of its body parts are innately magical, at least once they are removed from such a creature’s corpse. Such parts can be used as focuses for powerful spells or necessary components for rare magic items, at the GM’s discretion. This is not necessarily true of non-native outsiders, as their essence is tied to a different plane of existence. In the case of rakshasas, their eyes can be turned into minor magic items and their blood can enhance spell-casting. More information on amitra and on these creations is available on page 16.



This is by no means an automatic problem for rakshasas. They are accomplished shape-changers, and spend much of their lives in other forms. But an enterprising party can make use of it, trying to surprise a suspected rakshasa and watching for the tell-tale backwards grab.

Reproduction and Yakshas

Rakshasas breed like ordinary mammals, with a gestation of roughly 10 months followed by live birth. The cub is inevitably born alone; rakshasas do not have twins, much less larger litters. And at least in recent times, even one cub is a rarity. Although rakshasa history tells of a time when they had unnumbered young, childbirth is uncommon among them now. Two theories explain why.

The first and more prominent idea is connected to their belief in reincarnation. Only a certain number of rakshasa souls exist, the thinking goes, and most of them are already living in the world. In order for a new cub to be born, an older rakshasa has to die. Rakshasas are a nearly immortal race, so the problem gets worse over time.

If a rakshasa wants to be a parent, then, it often starts by sizing up other rakshasas to find one it can kill. Choosing a target is a complicated business. The ideal victim is a rakshasa who is weak enough to eliminate with minimal risk, but still powerful enough that it bodes well for the child's future. Rakshasa reincarnation assumes that a good life will be rewarded with a better birth, so prospective parents want to choose someone close to their own status.

The second theory is held by rakshasas of a more mystical mindset. Rakshasas were born from the ignorance of Brahman, creator of the cosmos. In order for more rakshasas to come into the world today, the theory says that mortal ignorance must grow as well.

In the dawn of time this was not a problem. The earliest races knew little of the world around them, and rarely understood or trusted each other. This allowed rakshasas to flourish. However, as the ages passed, different groups of mortals came to respect and rely on each other. Even worse, they developed scholars, sages, and seers. The more that mortals understood about the world and their place in it, the fewer rakshasas that could be formed.

The answer, as proponents of this theory see it, is to spread ignorance. Confusion and fear are their stock in trade, and they plot to undermine mortal knowledge whenever possible. As uncertainty grows, they hope their numbers will as well.

Regardless of their difficulty reproducing among themselves, rakshasas are capable of mating successfully with mortals. Any rakshasa-humanoid coupling has a small chance of producing offspring who possess some traits of their outsider parent. These creatures are called yakshas.

A yaksha has a difficult path in front of it. Many rakshasas have no interest in their half-mortal children, treating them with stony indifference at best. In fact, a rakshasa is likely to track down and kill any such offspring that it discovers, for fear that the child will someday become a threat to it.

Yakshas do have a place in the rakshasa caste system, albeit the lowest one, and so some of them are raised by their immortal parents. This is scarcely a better fate than being hunted. Such children are snatched away from mortal society and schooled in the malevolence of their parents. They learn that they are the inferiors of any rakshasa type, but superior to every mortal born. A yaksha brought up this way often becomes a lieutenant to its parent's schemes, always struggling to earn a place in their affection.

Yakshas themselves can mate with mortals. Any children produced are considered planetouched, similar to tieflings. The primary differences are that their unusual features have feline undertones, not demonic, and they can use *disguise self* once per day.

Rakshasa Subspecies

The standard rakshasa, with tiger-like head and backward palms, is not the only kind in existence. Four other types exist in numbers great enough to merit consideration. The weakest of them pose little challenge for seasoned adventurers, while the greatest could strive with the gods themselves.

First are the pisachas, lowest of all rakshasa-kind. At a distance one might mistake a pisacha for a common goblin, for they are roughly the same size and build. But a pisacha's arms are proportioned like a human's, where the goblin's arms are longer. A pisacha is also hairless, potbellied, and gray-skinned. They have wicked claws and sharp teeth, and their eyes burn with an unholy hunger in their dog-like faces. They have little ability to change their shape, but as they primarily inhabit graveyards and remote wastelands, they also have little need of it.

Above the pisachas in the caste hierarchy are the panis, spirits of air and malice. A pani looks somewhat like an elf, with slender frame and long limbs – at least when it is visible. Where other rakshasas can change their shape, the pani can turn into a wisp of cloudy air, resembling a puff of smoke or a heat shimmer. Their features are gaunt and skeletal, with a slightly avian face featuring wide eyes and a protruding nose.

The warlike grahas are the rank below standard rakshasas. A typical graha's appearance can be hard to determine, as they are often layered in armor taken from fallen foes, but they are built along the same frame as hobgoblins or sturdy humans. They have wild hair and wilder eyes, and their coloration resembles a battlefield. Their skin is red as blood, eyes and hair colored gray like tempered steel, and mouths full of bright white fangs. A graha can also change its shape to resemble anyone it has killed.

Most powerful of all rakshasas are the asuras. Their appearance is in many ways unremarkable, as an asura simply looks like a larger and stronger rakshasa. A much larger rakshasa; asuras stand more than 10 feet tall, allowing them to look down on ogres. They are also the most versatile shapechangers of the entire breed.



Chapter Three

Conflict

Rakshasas fight dirty. Although they possess senses of honor and justice, these sentiments only apply to others of their kind, and then only within the limits of their caste system. Mortals are assaulted with the full weight of rakshasas' magic, invulnerability, shapechanging, mind-reading – and that's just when a rakshasa chooses to fight directly. They prefer to use other beings as their pawns, setting elaborate schemes in motion that lead their enemies to destroy each other, without anyone suspecting rakshasa involvement until it's too late.

In Combat

Although they disdain physical combat, rakshasas are well equipped to survive it. They are not masters of fighting, but their many supernatural abilities often let them live to scheme another day. They are also competent spellcasters, thanks to their innate connection to the material plane. When possible, they maneuver their enemies to fighting on terrain of the rakshasa's choosing, ideally an area that has several concealed traps and escape routes.

Damage reduction is one of the two major components in a rakshasa's defenses. Rakshasas came into being before the rest of the universe, so they are highly resistant to being harmed by most things in it. The only things that overcome their damage reduction are piercing weapons such as spears and arrows that are good-aligned (usually only possible with magic). Other weapons that strike a rakshasa simply pass through it, as if striking a pool of water, usually leaving no wound. Rakshasas use this to the full advantage, using *detect magic* to identify and avoid potentially dangerous weapons while letting others strike them harmlessly. For example, a rakshasa being confronted by a squad of city guardsmen might wade into the ineffectual blows of low-level warriors, laughing as their spears and swords fail to even tear its clothing; it will react much more cautiously to the squad leader who carries a magical bow.

The other major defensive component is spell resistance. Again, their ancient origin grants rakshasas near-immunity to most spellcasters, as the race was formed while magic was still new to the universe. Even seasoned wizards and clerics have trouble overcoming this ability – an average 10th-level caster has only a 20% chance of affecting a rakshasa. These two supernatural abilities make the rakshasa very hard to hurt without careful preparation, and therefore give it an advantage when it attacks by surprise.

Although they can claw and bite, most rakshasas prefer to use their innate spellcasting in combat. A few revel in physical conflict, and some even seek out magical weapons and armor, but in the main they realize that many other beings are stronger and hardier. Creative spell use narrows this gap. A rakshasa with

the standard spell array has a few offensive options, notably *magic missile* and *M.'s acid arrow*, but their greatest strength is spells that confuse and defend. *Suggestion* and *charm person* are useful against certain enemies, especially rogues or melee combat classes. *Silent image* and *invisibility* can mislead enemies, *shield* and *mage armor* make it even harder to hurt a rakshasa, and *haste* is excellent for both defense and escape.

All types of rakshasa are faster than usual for their size, and they put this to good use. It allows them to stay farther from melee combat, which most rakshasas are happy to do, allowing them to use their spells more freely. Grahhas are somewhat of an exception to this, often wading into a fight with their halberds for a round or two, then drawing back and pelting foes with arrows while they attempt to catch up with it, using their Quick Draw to switch weapons as needed.

Changing shape in combat rarely proves useful unless the rakshasa has had time to prepare for its foes. In that case, suddenly shifting into the form of an ally or loved one can distract enemies, possibly convincing them to stop fighting if the rakshasa can present a plausible cover story, like a curse. Even the hardest-hearted mortal will pause before beheading his wife.

Detect thoughts is very useful if combat is imminent, as it lets the rakshasa estimate the number of enemies, gauge how clever they are, and perhaps even sense their battle plan. Once a fight starts, the information gained is usually outweighed by the distraction of concentrating to maintain it.

Rakshasa Tactics

A rakshasa approaches combat very differently if it's starting the fight than if someone else attacks it. In the first case a rakshasa tries to finish off its foes before they even have time to draw weapons, while in the second it will often retreat and disappear, biding its time until it can surprise the foolish ones who dared anger it. In all cases, a standard rakshasa relies heavily on its spells.

When on the offensive, a rakshasa favors tactics that quickly incapacitate and demoralize its foes. Fear is as potent a weapon as any spell the rakshasa has in its arsenal. If it has time, it will study its targets' tactics and history, looking for ways to blunt their strengths and exploit their weaknesses. Rakshasas are most effective when fighting at range, and when attacking they prefer to ambush their enemies on terrain that hampers movement. In an urban setting, this can mean attacking foes who have wandered into a dead-end alley, or lurking on a low rooftop and blasting them once they pass by.

Here is a typical round-by-round breakdown for a standard rakshasa:

Prior to combat: Scout out the area. Locate at least two escape routes. Use *detect thoughts* to assess enemies' priorities.



Shortly before battle, cast *bear's endurance* and *mage armor* for protection. If foes are easily distracted, use *message* to lure one or two away from the scene. Use *invisibility* before getting into position. Cast *haste* and *resistance* immediately before ambush, if doing so won't alert enemies.

Round 1: Use *suggestion* to convince a weak-willed melee fighter to attack one of his allies, preferably a spellcaster, claiming that the companion is actually an evil shapeshifter. If no suitable target is available, use *M.'s acid arrow* on the most dangerous spellcaster. This attack will hamper the target for three rounds.

Round 2: If first *suggestion* worked, use it again to persuade a second target that the first target is actually the evil shapeshifter. Otherwise, unleash *magic missile* at the weakest target, targeting them with all four missiles.

Round 3: Cast *M.'s acid arrow* at an injured target who is not under *suggestion*. By now any remaining foes will realize they are under attack.

Round 4: Unless foes are closing to melee range, use *magic missile*, again concentrating on one target. If foes are approaching, use *invisibility* and find a new position.

Round 5: Assuming a safe position, repeat round 1. For variety, try casting *suggestion* on a spellcaster, telling them to use powerful area-affect magic. A rakshasa is much more likely to emerge unscathed from a fireball than most of its enemies are.

A rakshasa who didn't expect a fight will have a very different approach. Certain enemies are too weak to bother with, as they lack weapons or spells capable of overcoming the defenses of the firstborn, in which case a rakshasa will coolly stride through them until it can use *invisibility* and get away. More dangerous foes will be avoided if possible, through a combination of *detect thoughts* and *invisibility*. If a standard rakshasa is forced into combat, this is a typical round-by-round breakdown:

Round 1: Use *suggestion* to persuade a tough-looking attacker to protect the rakshasa from its comrades.

Round 2: Cast a full barrage of *magic missile* at anyone who gets too close. Otherwise use *invisibility* and look for an escape route.

Round 3: If escape is possible, cast *haste* and get away. If not, and if opponents seem able to overcome rakshasa immunities, cast *mage armor* or *shield* to provide maximum protection. If opponents have not overcome immunities yet, use *M.'s acid arrow* against a less dexterous attacker.

Round 4 onward: If still in combat attempt to retreat, using *invisibility* and *haste* as time permits. Against foes who can see invisible targets, make liberal use of *change shape* instead. If retreat is not possible, either surrender or use *suggestion* to persuade an attacker to defend you from its murderous cohorts. Continue attempting to retreat by any method available.

Fighting Alongside Allies

Few rakshasas enter physical combat alone. If preparing for a skirmish, they recruit as many mortals as necessary to win; *charm person* and *suggestion* are useful here, and rakshasas usually have networks of servants and allies they can draw on for

assistance. In such cases, the rakshasa prefers to lead from the rear. After all, what better role for mortal beasts than to protect one of the world's firstborn from harm?

Rakshasa tactics depend heavily on circumstance. Most rakshasas have one or more bodyguards, mortals who have been conditioned to sacrifice their lives for their master's sake. Some rakshasas are so vain that their bodyguards risk life and limb to save them from even mild discomfort or inconvenience like muddying their boots. These individuals stay close to their master unless specifically ordered otherwise.

Beyond that, a rakshasa's minions could be anywhere. Rakshasas seize any advantage they can, including camouflaged combatants, terrain advantages, snipers, poisons, and surprise attacks. The best fight, they believe, is one the opponent didn't know was coming.

Given these factors, the rakshasa likes to have a mixture of strong and sneaky allies. The strong ones exist to protect the rakshasa from harm; ideally they will be so intimidating that nobody starts a fight with them in the first place. If a fight should come, their first task is to defend their master, and their second is to make a brutal display. Servants whose main asset is strength will be outlandish and intimidating, provided the rakshasa has no overwhelming need for them to blend in. Two-handed weapons, spiked armor, and exotic decoration are favored.

This also draws attention away from a rakshasa's more subtle allies, just as the creature wishes. A rogue's sneak attack can be more devastating than a greatsword's critical hit if delivered by a skilled hand. While the colorful brawlers are making a bloody mess up front, the rakshasa's quiet servants are prowling around (and above and below) the scene, waiting for an opening to finish off the toughest enemies.

Although rakshasas are competent spellcasters, they often have mortal magic-users on hand to supplement their own power. Given their artistic leanings, rakshasas have a preference for bards, particularly since the latter are so versatile. Few of their spells cause direct damage, but they are excellent for enhancing allies and misleading enemies. Bards also have access to useful communication spells, which makes it easier for a rakshasa's unit to coordinate their strikes.

Other arcane spellcasters might be found in a rakshasa's service. However, divine ones rarely are. Druids don't often cross paths with a rakshasa, unless one is driven to leave its preferred territory for the other's favored haunts. Druids are also uninterested in the material and political riches that rakshasas use to reward their favorites.

Clerics pose a different set of problems. Their magics are useful for divination and combat, but their allegiance is obviously given to their god. As rakshasas despise mortal gods, this can be troublesome to them. A rakshasa working with a mortal cleric will treat the cleric as one of two things – an untrustworthy ally or the lowest of its servants. It depends on the cleric's own innate power.

An exception is made for mortals who preach the faith of Ravana. They are naturally subservient to rakshasas anyway, and rakshasas appreciate it when mortals acknowledge the inferiority of their own deities.





One common safeguard taken by rakshasas is controlling the weapons used by its servants. Specifically, a rakshasa will try to remove piercing weapons from their armaments. This isn't entirely possible, as the best ranged weapons do piercing damage, to say nothing of the versatility of a dagger in one's boot. But most of a rakshasa's minions will carry a slashing or bludgeoning weapon as their primary implement of mayhem, eliminating a possible threat to their master's safety. Anyone knowingly hunting a rakshasas will be equipped with piercing weapons, but that's no reason to let subordinates get dangerous ideas.

Rakshasa Armies

On rare occasions, hundreds or even thousands of rakshasas have gathered together to form an army. This requires a leader of astonishing charisma and a specific goal, so aside from the fabled Ravana only a handful of the mightiest asuras have even attempted it. Rakshasa armies are surprisingly disciplined, with squads of soldiers organized into companies, each under the command of a mighty spellcaster. The sophisticated rakshasa caste system keeps rebellion to a minimum, although plotting and politics are common off the battlefield.

Even the infantry in such armies are equipped with excellent armor and weapons, all masterwork if not magical. Rakshasa troops are responsible for their own armament, and these vain creatures try to outshine each other. They are expected to fight in melee, using their spells to augment their own prowess. Units of archers and cavalry, composed of particularly skilled or notorious rakshasas, serve their traditional roles; these postings are a matter of honor and status as much as they are combat prowess. The spellcaster commanders support their troops where possible, but they rarely enter the front lines unless a prominent enemy champion is available.

No rakshasa army has massed in living memory, as far as is known. In the past, the bards say, they have been called together for grand purposes like enslaving all lands on a given continent or destroying suspected incarnations of Kalki. Of course, their shapeshifting powers are as useful for infiltrating armies as for sneaking onto a king's council, and it could be that many of the world's armies are infested with rakshasas serving their own long-term goals. Such creatures will almost certainly have entered the upper tier of commanders, both for the many perks

and because no rakshasa wishes to take orders from mortals.

However, a strong-willed leader could perhaps convince a handful of other rakshasas that acting as a military group was in their best interest. Such a company would serve as high-paid mercenaries, dangerous and not entirely trustworthy. Their spells and invulnerabilities would make them invaluable to most commanders as shock troops or an elite bodyguard, positions that grant them access to many easily-read minds as well as fertile ground for shapeshifting intrigue. No rakshasa would become a sword for hire simply for the payment, after all. A unit like this, numbering four to twelve rakshasas, would also be a first line of defense against an enemy army's best heroes (such as a player character party).

Defeating a Rakshasa

Without good preparation (or better luck), most characters will be hard-pressed to subdue or kill a rakshasa. The spell *align weapon* is invaluable in this regard. If a group sets out to hunt a rakshasa, they will want to have this spell handy. Piercing weapons are also essential, as other kinds of weapon simply pass through a rakshasa because of their ancient protections. Bows and crossbows are the preferred weapons of the Order of the Asthra, a group dedicated to cleansing the world of rakshasas, because they combine piercing damage with superior critical hit potential.

Critical hits are the salvation of an unprepared party. Without the right weaponry, an ordinary blow has almost no chance of hurting a rakshasa. A well-timed critical, however, can rout even the most confident one. Weapons that combine high damage with an extended critical chance are the best way of striking back: longswords, light or heavy crossbows, and many two-handed weapons are ideal. Bolas and nets are also good choices, as damage reduction doesn't block trip attempts or entangling attacks.

One tactic that works well is grappling. Much of a rakshasa's protection comes from natural armor, making them easy to target with touch attacks. While most such attacks will fail in the face of a rakshasa's other defenses, the creatures have no easy way to escape being grabbed. They are not particularly strong, and more than one rakshasa has been overpowered in this fashion and taken prisoner, even by characters much less powerful than itself. Rakshasas are aware of this risk – it is a primary



reason they avoid melee combat – and will neither forget nor forgive mortals who overcome them in this fashion.

Two other physical attacks, neither of which does direct damage, can also harm a rakshasa. One is fire, which most adventurers have easy access to. Damage reduction is no use against energy attacks, and while an average torch is not a lethal weapon, it will still threaten a rakshasa who previously believed itself untouchable. The other option that bypasses damage reduction is poison, which is less easily available. It can be quite effective, though, even with the rakshasa's impressive hardihood. Just remember that a poisoned weapon must first get past the creature's formidable damage reduction to deliver its venom.

Mortal spellcasters will be stymied by their enemy's spell resistance, so the best choice is magic that doesn't directly target a rakshasa. Augmenting allies so they are better physical combatants is a good step. Using spells like *sleet storm* or *spike stones* to hamper the rakshasa's movement can be useful, although they can be problematic for allies too. Summoned creatures are not subject to spell resistance, although damage reduction poses the same problems for most of them as for player characters.

Summoned celestials are an exception, if armed properly, as their attacks are innately good-aligned. Most parties facing a rakshasa have the potential to summon a lantern archon or a hound archon, either of which can overcome a rakshasa's damage reduction (provided the hound archon is willing to put aside its greatsword for another weapon). But rakshasas are nearly impervious to low- and mid-level magic, and spellcasters who have defeated them report that the best tactic is often just hitting the creature with a blizzard of offensive power and hoping enough of it gets through.

Even if a brave band manages to injure a rakshasa, the creature will prove hard to kill. Rakshasas are not fools, and they firmly believe in living to fight another day. They have several ways of escaping a losing battle. First, they can run faster than most player characters; a standard rakshasa will be able to *haste* itself for an added boost. Such a rakshasa will be able to use *invisibility* as well, and all rakshasas are adept at moving silently, so once you lose sight of a rakshasa it may be gone forever (or at least until it returns for its revenge). A rakshasa on its home territory will try to have access to hidden ways out.

Worse still, in the urban areas many of them prefer, innocent bystanders are everywhere. Less sophisticated creatures might threaten to harm them unless pursuers give up the chase, but a rakshasa prefers to simply *change shape* and walk among them. Alert characters might still spot their quarry by its wounds or any distinctive ornamentation, but rakshasas are cunning enough to simply wrap cloaks around themselves in such straits.

A rakshasa on the run will attempt to use *detect thoughts* to track its most dangerous pursuers' progress, although the power's 60-foot range is a little close for an injured rakshasa's liking. On the other hand (and there's always another hand when dealing with these creatures), not many adventurers would expect their quarry to circle around and stick close to them, so more confident rakshasas might actually end up changing shape and volunteering to search for themselves.

This circumstance often leads to the creature's foes splitting up, which could allow a clever rakshasa to quickly exact vengeance on one or two enemies. Adventurers in this position are warned to be cautious in accepting the help of mysterious strangers with cloaks drawn tightly...

Out of Combat

Rakshasas would rather talk than fight, as it gives them a better chance of getting what they want without drawing mortal ire. They are excellent actors, and play their chosen roles to the hilt. Detecting one in disguise is difficult even for people who know what to look for, and all but impossible to notice accidentally. More than one ruler has been unpleasantly surprised to discover that their longtime bodyguard or most trusted adviser, who has eaten at their table and sat on their councils for many a year, is actually a rakshasa. Such discoveries often come just before a change in rulership.

A rakshasa in its natural form either feels that it has nothing to hide, or that it has nothing to fear. In either case, the creature's natural confidence and disdain for mortals is obvious. Raised to believe they are the rightful masters of all creation, they can no more conceal this attitude than a paladin can conceal his righteousness. Even if a rakshasa is bound and moments away from death, it will attempt to take control of the situation with a mixture of threats, promises, and an unswerving belief that it will overcome the mortal beasts who have only momentarily inconvenienced it.

Beyond this, all rakshasas have their own personalities. Some are imperious, others devious, still others have a rough sort of honor when dealing with lesser beasts. A rakshasa lord in his palace will be very different than a wandering one who wishes to strike a deal with a band of adventurers. They might not be able to hide their amused contempt at the antics of inferior races, but this won't stop them from talking peaceably under the right circumstances.

Conversations With a Rakshasa

When possible, rakshasas try to be the center of attention. This might seem to conflict with their secretive nature and powers, but in most fantasy settings it's easy to combine the two. The mysterious bard with hood pulled low, the wild-eyed witch who tells cryptic fortunes, the peddler from a land beyond the edge of the map – a rakshasa would happily become any of them rather than a stodgy courtier or filthy beggar. Their superior attitude, combined with their lust for physical comforts, draws them to flamboyant disguises.

A rakshasa disguising itself as someone else will have its cover story worked out in great detail, a natural consequence of its desire to outwit mortals. Even if caught in a lie or mistake, it will continue its bluff, simply adding another layer of untruth to bridge the gap. Like all con artists, rakshasas know people will believe almost anything if they think they can profit from it. Their stories are often full of half-promised rewards that will



come to those who do what the rakshasa asks.

In their natural forms, rakshasas are arrogant and imper- turbable. It takes extraordinary circumstances to convince a rak- shasa that it is not the master of its situation, or at least to make it display that knowledge. They love to talk: taunting their ene- mies, revealing secrets once thought well-guarded, even just dis- coursing on local and world history. Once a rakshasa is revealed, willingly or not, it is usually happy to expound upon its superior place in the cosmic hierarchy and the many reasons that its mortal foes will fail.

Rakshasas also keep their own word, at least the letter of it. They are careful in their promises, but even if they have given their word to mere mortal beasts, they feel obliged to follow through. As the natural lords of creation, they carry a certain amount of responsibility, at least in their own minds. This does- n't prevent them from lying, either in disguise or in their natural forms. But once a rakshasa makes a promise, it will fulfill it. As most rakshasa promises to mortals involve the humiliation and injury of those same mortals, this is rarely a crisis of conscience.

Carrying Out Their Schemes

While there is no typical rakshasa plot, their schemes do have several common features. A rakshasa makes liberal use of its *change shape* ability, often assuming several different guises to carry out different tasks. One such guise will be its core iden- tity, the form in which it spends the most time. This persona will be among the rich and powerful, whether one of their number or just an invaluable associate, and will often have a mysterious or exotic background. Many core identities are performers or trav- elers. More subtle rakshasas will avoid revealing their spellcast- ing ability, the better to surprise their enemies.

Rakshasas delight in manipulating other creatures, prefer- ably cajoling them into their own ruin. Indeed, they will often complicate their own plans in the hope of baffling and harming their targets all the more. This increases the risk of failure, but it suits the playful spirit that rakshasas have when tampering with mortal lives. After all, failing to achieve a short-term goal like stealing the king's priceless scepter may well be worth it, if your revealed plot plants suspicion and fear between the king and his heirs.

That said, most rakshasa schemes are intended to reach a particular outcome. Given their long lives and cunning minds, these plans can be set in motion months or even years before they will come to fruition. An exhaustive list of rakshasa plots is impossible, particularly since they often layer many smaller ones inside a grand plan, but several common themes are found among them.

First, rakshasas never dirty their hands when a mortal can be made to do so. Often these are simple pawns, bribed or black- mailed into their actions. Others are enchanted, providing a more pliable servant and suiting the rakshasa's taste for ruling over lesser creatures. This also leaves the rakshasa with scapegoats, which are useful whether a plan succeeds or fails. They take a particular delight in using noble and virtuous mortals as opera- tives, including paladins, certain monks, and powerful clerics.

Doing so not only proves the innate worthlessness of mortal beliefs (as the rakshasa sees it), but it neutralizes a possible threat.

Even with mortal dupes to serve it, however, a rakshasa likes to be close to the center of the action. They take calculated risks to observe their schemes unfold, because they don't quite trust lesser beings to get the details right. For example, while a blackmailed low-level monk goes about gathering up her monastery's sacred scrolls from their hiding places, the jaunty minstrel who's just visiting for a fortnight might actually be her rakshasa master in disguise. If the monk should succumb to her conscience and inform the head of the order of her actions, the rakshasa can pluck that fact from her mind and change plans.

This proximity also allows rakshasas to gloat. Although they are methodical and clever planners, they revel in the failures of their targets, and will take calculated risks to get a good view of them. A success is even sweeter when you can see the blissful ignorance and panicked confusion of your targets. At times a rakshasa will sacrifice the secrecy of its current scheme for the satisfaction of revealing its true form to its enemies and seeing their shocked expressions. This assumes that the rakshasa feels confident of its own physical safety.

And usually rakshasas do, as an important part of their scheming is having contingency plans. Such plans aren't an exercise in fear or uncertainty, as rakshasas are supremely confi- dent in everything they undertake. More than anything, they are a result of immortality. A rakshasa with time on its hands will dream up alternate forms for its plots to take, and as a result they are prepared for many of the possible disruptions that can come.

On a related note, rakshasa plots are often designed to be discovered, at least in part. They realize that nothing relaxes a foe more than believing they have vanquished the threat. Not only does this disarm the target's suspicions, but it provides a chance to watch that target handle a challenge. Information gained this way can be used to fine-tune the real scheme, mak- ing it harder for the victim to escape when the jaws close.

Finally, never forget that rakshasas are supremely malevo- lent. Underneath the gloating and the scheming, there beats a heart fueled by its hatred for all mortal life. Rakshasas will hap- pily pluck the finest fruits mortal society has to offer, then poi- son the tree. The success of a plan is enhanced by the amount of pain it inflicts on the mortals around it, and even a failed plot will be remembered happily if it spread harm widely enough.

A rakshasa's approach to its goals is like an arrow with a barbed head. It should be sharp enough that the victim will never notice when it first strikes. By the time they realize they've been hurt, they will be bleeding past the point of survival. Any attempt to remove the arrow will simply cause the barbs to tear more flesh, fixing nothing and intensifying the pain. As the world fades from the victim's eyes, the last thing they should see is the rakshasa's face grinning hungrily.



Outwitting a Rakshasa

The best way to survive a rakshasa's plotting is to never get caught in it at all. However, short of living in a cave on a deserted island, this can be difficult. Rakshasas take on a bewildering number of identities in pursuit of goals that are anything but clear, making it hard to even discover the nature of the plot, much less escape or thwart it. Anyone dealing with rakshasa schemes is advised to keep their thoughts guarded and their allies in sight.

Discovering that a rakshasa is present makes a good first step. Although spotting them is difficult, other means are available. A rakshasa's magic resistance doesn't make it immune to divinations, from the common *detect evil* to the mighty *true seeing*. The former will indicate the presence of strong evil, although it doesn't inform the caster of the rakshasa's true nature. The latter does show the rakshasa's true form, at least to the recipient of the spell. *Detect thoughts* is also useful for ferreting out a target's true identity, provided the target can be made to think along the correct lines.

Mundane means can also be used to determine that a rakshasa is around. Their constant intrigues and colorful schemes will likely catch someone's attention. The skills Gather Information and Sense Motive can help determine likely suspects. Rakshasas have a certain style, even when they are operating under strict secrecy. Characters who know what to look for, as indicated above, will have a better chance of determining whether the duke's mysterious new councilor is really a rakshasa or just an art lover with a strange skin condition.

Whatever a rakshasa wants, it will probably use several feigned personas to get it. This can be helpful in tracking down the creature's core identity. If a variety of odd strangers are all circling around someone powerful or something valuable, it might just be one rakshasa trying multiple approaches. Careful shadowing, coupled with investigating backgrounds, can determine whether several people are just masks worn by one creature.

A handful of specific plots are also hallmarks of the rakshasa. Attacks on holy people, or attempts to undermine churches and monasteries, are typical maneuvers of the firstborn. The same is true for schemes revolving around white horses or flaming swords; these may well indicate the presence of a rakshasa who fears the incarnation of Kalki. And plots that would destroy significant amounts of mortal knowledge or erode mortal trust, with no other obvious goal, are often the work of rakshasas. Those who believe that an increase in mortal ignorance will lead to the birth of more rakshasas will forsake the pursuit of power in favor of this aim.

Once a rakshasa's hand is seen in the midst of its many plans, the best step is to secure one's own alliances. This can be as complicated as mobilizing a major city's thieves' guild, or as simple as a quiet plan among companions. A rakshasa's greatest strength is often its ability to turn mortals against each other, and it will certainly use any social or political methods it has to disrupt those who pursue it.

Does this mean that loners have the best chance of outwit-

ting a rakshasa? Not often. Although solo operators are not at risk of being duped by a rakshasa using *change shape* to simulate a particular friend, the world is full of strangers who could also be disguised rakshasas. The firstborn are also keenly aware of vibrations along the webs that compose their schemes, and they will be quick to determine when a lone individual is on their trail. Someone acting alone might not have friends who could betray them, but they certainly don't have friends who can cover their backs and help share watches through the night. Anyone acting alone against a rakshasa will quickly learn that a rakshasa doesn't act alone in response.

At the same time, a rakshasa will have done its best to infiltrate any power structures that are related to its goals, giving it ample warning if someone attempts to raise the alarm about its activities. Convincing large groups to band together against a rakshasa is generally useless – by the time the city guard has been called out to search for it, for instance, the rakshasa's spies in the officer corps have given it plenty of notice. The best way to challenge a rakshasa at games of intrigue is with a small group of people who trust each other in life-or-death situations. Not coincidentally, this describes most adventuring parties.

Adventurers are also most likely to have access to spells and abilities that protect against a rakshasa's powers. By the time a group of PCs can take on a standard rakshasa, their saving throws against illusion and enchantment are substantially above the norm. Certain classes, like the monk and the yogi, are particularly resistant to the styles of magic a standard rakshasa uses. Seasoned adventurers are also more perceptive than average, making it easier to pierce a rakshasa's disguises. Finally, they are more likely to evade a rakshasa's *detect thoughts*, allowing them to plan without the creature divining their intentions.

A final advantage enjoyed by small groups is that they know each other well. Even when reading minds, a rakshasa in disguise is bound to make mistakes while impersonating a specific person. This makes it difficult for a rakshasa to infiltrate and mislead such groups, much less play on their greed and generate mistrust between them.

At times violence will solve the problem, but often it will only get the characters in deeper trouble. Two different styles can be used to take on a rakshasa at the game of wits. Mortals with time and charisma might try to work their way into power structures, just as the rakshasa has done. This gives a broad perspective on the rakshasa's goals and alliances, and it also provides access to many of the same tools that the rakshasa will use. It also takes a great deal of time, particularly for individuals who are outside their home turf. Most rakshasa plots will have gotten underway before any player characters arrive on the scene, putting PCs at a serious disadvantage.

The faster method is to cut through the shadows and confront the rakshasa directly. This is best done when the rakshasa is away from its strongest allies. Not only will it be isolated from possible sources of help, but it might be willing to acknowledge its true nature, making it somewhat easier to deal with.

In fact, a rakshasa away from prying eyes and in its natural form is particularly susceptible to one of the best tactics that its enemies can use – playing on its ego. The firstborn are as regal



in defeat as in victory, and some of them can be persuaded that their current schemes are far too petty. Surely, this line of thought goes, the natural lords of creation can find targets more worthy of their attention than whatever they are doing now. Younger rakshasas in particular can be flattered into giving up on their projects, or at least into giving away crucial details.

Older and wiler rakshasas won't fall for such easy tricks. But they are willing to listen to alternate proposals. Clever mortals can strike deals with a rakshasa, limiting its activities or even persuading it to leave an area's inhabitants alone entirely. Of course, this requires that the mortals have something the rakshasa wants.

One possibility is that the adventurers in question agree to assist the rakshasa with some task, most likely one that doesn't involve harming or exploiting other mortals. Perhaps the rakshasa will cease destabilizing the monarchy in return for assistance in entering the Cursed Tomb of Tharax-Tor, or for information leading to another rakshasa it despises. But even if a rakshasa agrees to such a deal, it will seek to subvert it, sticking to

the letter of the arrangement rather than the spirit. Anyone wishing to bargain with a rakshasa had best be an excellent negotiator.

Simpler deals can be made; if mortals threaten a rakshasa's treasures, they'll get its attention. This approach is favored by holy people and crusaders, who have no desire to talk terms with creatures as malevolent as rakshasas. Sometimes the simple threat of exposure is enough. If a group can remove the veil of secrecy from a rakshasa's activities, perhaps revealing its true nature, even the wiliest firstborn will consider leaving town.

This isn't always possible, especially if the rakshasa has had enough time to cover its tracks. But it still probably has things it values, ranging from jewelry to fine mansions to the famous sculptors it keeps on retainer. Rakshasas are not a sentimental race, but their pride and greed often mean they grow attached to their possessions. If mortals present a credible threat, rakshasas will often retreat in return for being allowed to keep the things they desire.

Chapter Four

Rakshasa Society

While rakshasas are classified as solitary creatures, this is not literally true. They rarely live together, much less cooperate with each other, but they are drawn to other sentient beings. Indeed, although they would never admit it, rakshasas need other thinking creatures in order to be content with their own existence. As a result, rakshasas are almost always found in mortal society. This chapter explains how they act both with mortals and among themselves.

What They Believe

To understand rakshasa behavior, begin with their origin story. As rakshasa sages tell it, all of existence started with a solitary being they call Brahman. The great creative force of the universe, Brahman began to form the cosmos by first taking his own ignorance, forming it into a god, and casting it aside. He then began to contemplate how the many worlds should take shape.

But as he thought, the god he had discarded grew stronger. In time this god became Night. While Brahman contemplated, Night spawned the first living creatures – the rakshasas. Wild and hungry, the rakshasas found Brahman and surrounded him, threatening to consume him utterly. Brahman pleaded for his life, pointing out that unless he continued his work the rakshasas would be alone in the darkness forever. But they continued to howl for his flesh, only relenting when he agreed to give them immense lifespans, innate power, and great invulnerability to harm. They then sat in the darkness and waited for Brahman to finish his creation, plotting all the while to rule it.

When this creation was young, some rakshasas say, their race cooperated once with those beings that mortals now call gods. They worked together with the raw stuff of existence to acquire a divine liquid called amitra, which grants great power to those who drink it. But the gods cooperated with each other while the rakshasas were lost in squabbling, and so the gods stole all the amitra for themselves and became immortal.

Nonetheless, rakshasas see themselves as the natural lords and rulers of all existence, firstborn of all beings and rightful masters over everything. Even deities are below them. An ancient saying, taught to all cubs at birth, goes: *Before knowledge, there was ignorance. Before day, there was night. Before gods, before mortals, there were rakshasas.*

This is not to say that rakshasas ignore status and rank; far from it. It's just that rakshasas put themselves at the top of the pyramid. Even the least ambitious rakshasa sees itself as the rightful monarch of all mortals who cross its path, and those with the grandest dreams are plotting to displace the gods themselves. Many castes are found within rakshasa society, surrounded by a hedge of complicated rules and sly exceptions, but few mortals will ever discover them.

That's because mortal beings lie well outside the boundaries of this system. In the mind of a rakshasa, mortals are chattel, not particularly different from cattle or swine. Clever and occasionally troublesome swine, to be sure, but still more akin to possessions



than peers. When multiple rakshasas are operating within the same territory, they will often create elaborate agreements marking out which one of them has control over which interesting mortals.

Another fundamental part of the rakshasa mindset is a belief in reincarnation. Rakshasas hold that when they die (an infrequent occurrence), they are judged by their great king Ravana. Those who possessed great power and cunning are reborn as even mightier individuals, while those whose lives did not please Ravana come back as lesser spirits like pisachas and panis. It is inconceivable to a rakshasa that it might truly die and never return.

This belief encompasses mortals. Although they are lesser forms of life, their souls will also be returned to existence in time. According to rakshasa theology, this happens so that rakshasas will always have access to favored playthings, as well as the opportunity to continually revenge themselves upon hated enemies. It is also worth noting that in this system, rakshasa souls and mortal souls are entirely separate. No matter how pathetic a rakshasa might have been, it cannot be condemned to a mortal life, and not even the most clever and malevolent mortal can ascend to any level of rakshasa existence.

Ravana, The Once and Future King

Finally, like many other races, rakshasas hearken back to a lost golden age. As their stories tell it, the dawn of creation was in fact their age to openly rule all the world. Greatest among them was one called Ravana, acknowledged by even the most egotistical rakshasa as their rightful king. He had been born into the world many times, growing in power with each incarnation, until finally he was a being of absolute strength and terror. Under Ravana's mighty leadership, all mortal races were brought under the power of rakshasas. In time Ravana even managed to trick most of the mortals' gods to enter his service as well. For unnumbered centuries, rakshasas made the world their plaything.

However, Ravana's rule was destined to end. He was the mightiest of all rakshasas, having demanded immunity to almost every form of harm. But he overlooked one particular mortal hero when receiving this boon from Brahman and the gods. This hero was reincarnated time and again, thwarting Ravana's schemes whenever he appeared. Finally, as Ravana was closing his grasp around the last few creatures who resisted his rule, this hero was born into the world one more time.

Under the name Ramachandra, this hero battled Ravana's allies and armies, overcoming them every time with his lethal archery and iron courage. Ramachandra also had a wife, the most beautiful mortal woman ever born, and Ravana stole her while her husband was away at war. The furious hero rallied all remaining free mortals and led an assault on Ravana's island stronghold. What followed was a battle that lasted years and filled the oceans with blood, but finally Ramachandra's bowmanship overcame Ravana's might, and the rakshasa lord was slain. Terrified, his servants and children fled, and mortal and god alike were free of them.

Not surprisingly, many rakshasas suspect they are the rein-

arnation of Ravana, particularly the powerful asuras. They hope to grow in power and cunning, to the point where they have the world-shattering might Ravana once possessed. In fact, before his last battle Ravana foretold that he would be reborn one more time into the world, prepared to enslave it forever with his wickedness. However, he also warned that his ancient nemesis would return.

No longer Ramachandra the archer, this reincarnated mortal will be called Kalki and wield a flaming sword. Mounted on a white horse as noble as himself, Kalki will make war on the rakshasas one last time. If Ravana saw how this battle would end, he didn't say, but rakshasas believe that one of these timeless foes will slay the other and usher in an age ruled by his kind. The rakshasas know who they want the winner to be.

To that end, they hunt Kalki. Whether or not a mortal is known by that name doesn't matter; rakshasas are themselves familiar with the advantages of disguise. All rakshasas, regardless of caste or kind, take notice of mortals riding white horses and carrying flaming swords. When one is discovered, the rakshasa will put its plans on hold and attempt to destroy him. Or her – Kalki is thought to be male, but rakshasas don't take chances in this matter.

If a rakshasa doesn't feel it can succeed in an outright attack against a potential Kalki, it will try to find another way to eliminate him. Hired assassins and subtle poisons are perennial favorites. Sometimes less direct measures are called for, particularly against someone known to be a strong and hardy fighter. Rakshasas are masters at ruining others' reputations, and if they cannot find a way to kill a possible Kalki they will still try to cut him off from friends and supporters. This is one of the rare areas where rakshasas will cooperate, at least to a limited extent. All rakshasas wish to see Kalki weakened or eliminated before his confrontation with Ravana; this is countered somewhat by the fact that each rakshasa would like all the credit for killing Kalki.

Gods of the Rakshasas

Rakshasas have trouble accepting the existence of beings more powerful than themselves. Even if confronted with such a creature, almost all rakshasas will attempt to manipulate it for their own ends. Not surprisingly, they don't worship the gods followed by mortal races. To a rakshasa, these "gods" are nothing more than reincarnated mortals with ideas above their stations.

But one individual does command widespread respect, even adulation, from all rakshasa-kind: their great king Ravana. Although he was slain eons ago, rakshasas believe his spirit is still whole and waiting for its chance to return. Until then, it watches over its kingdom and grants favor to those it deems worthy.

This is not a faith with organized churches. Rakshasas practice it quietly to themselves, one of the few things in an ordinary rakshasa's life that is either subdued or introspective. As stated, many rakshasas hope to discover that they are Ravana's final incarnation, and they therefore treat their greatest kinsman with a respect they lack in almost every other sphere. Even the most



decadent sensualist among them will pause from time to time and meditate upon his great ancestor.

A handful of rakshasas go so far as to dedicate themselves to Ravana rather than themselves. They become clerics of this dreadful spirit, spreading their message to their kin and not incidentally hoping to strengthen their personal connections to him. They perform rituals aimed at hastening Ravana's return, and keep alive the ancient hymns to him that are no longer known in mortal languages.

These clerics also act as judges among rakshasas when needed, arbitrating property disputes and settling questions of ownership and parentage. These cases are not common, as rakshasas prefer to resolve matters themselves through trickery and mortal pawns, but when they do occur these clerics are seen as the only trustworthy judges – especially if they have been bribed to issue the right ruling.

Ravana has mortal worshippers as well, although not any great number. In a land ruled by rakshasas, or a church infiltrated by them, Ravana might be elevated above other gods and openly deified. However, this is a dead giveaway to rakshasas' enemies, and only one who felt supremely secure would attempt it. Also, for every rakshasa who wishes to impress the awful majesty of Ravana more firmly on mortal minds, there's at least one who wouldn't want Ravana's spirit disturbed by mortal bleating. In regions where rakshasas are anything other than undisputed masters, this faith is found in the shadows.

Even so, some mortals do practice it. Occasionally a rakshasa will teach its servants the fundamentals of its belief, or a particularly inquisitive spellcaster will cast one divination too many. It could even be that Ravana himself reaches directly to mortals at times, although rakshasas do not wish to believe it. Although the teachings are largely unchanged, mortal followers of Ravana do see a special place for themselves once Kalki is finally defeated. Such mortals can become clerics in Ravana's service, wielding some of the same powers as their immortal counterparts. Rakshasas even have a special term for those who follow this faith, signifying the thread of respect for Ravana worshippers that runs through their general contempt for mortals: "those who are eaten last."

One other being is worshiped among rakshasas, although not nearly as widely as Ravana. The rakshasas known as Austere Ones give allegiance to Night, their original parent. More of a force than a person, Night is still capable of granting power and favors to those who venerate it. Rituals for this god are solitary and performed in darkness. They often involve spreading confusion and fear among mortal minds; followers of Night seem to act more randomly than other rakshasas. This is a false assumption.

The worship of Night springs from the rakshasas' creation story. As this faith sees it, rakshasas maintain their power and longevity because mortals are ignorant. If mortals continue to mistrust each other and fear the darkness, rakshasas will grow stronger. Rakshasas on this path are more contemplative than many of their kind, and are as likely to become monks or yogis as they are clerics. The worship of Night in this fashion is not taught to mortals, nor practiced among them.

What Rakshasas Want

The things that interest a rakshasa are sublimely intangible and grossly sensual; they are not creatures who dwell on a middle ground. Almost all rakshasas seek a life of comfort, with unnumbered pleasures at arm's reach. At the same time, they are driven to have those things that cannot be touched – power and respect call to them, and they are tremendously fond of art in all its forms. This dichotomy drives them through their long existences.

Pleasure is something rakshasas feel entitled to. After all, should the lords of creation not enjoy the fruits of it? The underlying contempt that rakshasas feel for mortals doesn't stop the creatures from appreciating the good things that mortal society has to offer. Rakshasas see themselves as being above physical labor, but they are more than content to take the products of mortal beasts.

This sensualism has its roots in the long lives of rakshasas, as well as their innate powers. After a few dozen years, daily life can become dull and repetitive; several hundred years simply magnify the problem. Momentary bursts of pleasure and novelty are a welcome diversion for the immortal. The same impulses that drive them to complicated and flamboyant schemes lead them into sensory indulgence – a need to master all facets of existence, and a desire to show off.

Power, then, is just a route to greater pleasure for some rakshasas. However, most others see power as a worthwhile end in itself. Although the ordinary rakshasa seeks out pleasure (if any of them can be considered ordinary), it keeps its mind on higher things, disdaining those of its brethren who wallow in it too long. In the rakshasa cosmology, those who forsake the intangible entirely will not do well in their next incarnation.

Many of them therefore seek to gain power over others, gaining the respect of their peers and spreading fear among their inferiors. The game of thrones and kings is one of their favorite pastimes. Some rakshasas seek to rule directly, while others prefer to be the power behind the scenes. The former group is smaller, but some of the most powerful rakshasas are found in its ranks. Once a rakshasa is secure in its position, it may even reveal itself to its subjects and rule openly, confident in its ability to survive all challenges.

Those who prefer to rule in disguise rarely aim for control of a kingdom or other large area of ground. Instead they take control of guilds, churches, and the like. This allows them greater freedom to run events from behind the scenes if they wish, acting as a valued adviser for a series of puppet leaders. Although they don't hail from the desert, rakshasas would have no trouble fitting into the classic role of evil grand vizier. They enjoy watching mortal puppets dance unknowingly.

Of course, such manipulation still must take place on a suitably grand scale. No rakshasa would be content taking control of a small province's blacksmithing guild, unless it was the first step in a much bigger plan. A rakshasa gains some amusement out of controlling mortals, and can while away an evening playing with the people in an inn's common room, but it won't be satisfied for long. They prefer to be in charge of large groups, to



gratify their egos as well as provide a staging area for even bigger plans.

However, a handful of rakshasas take a radically different approach to the problem of wearisome eternal life. Rather than dabbling in mortal politics and endless power plays, they focus their formidable energies inward. Other rakshasas don't understand why these members of the firstborn race would rather meditate and contemplate the universe when they could be indulging themselves, but they keep a healthy distance. This group of rakshasas, called Austere Ones by their kin, often wield powers unlike other rakshasas.

The focus and discipline underlying their existence is similar to that of the yogi. At times the Austere Ones will even take up one of these paths to further their inner understanding. An Austere One's ultimate goal is the same as a standard rakshasa's – becoming the master of all the world – but they attempt it through controlling themselves rather than controlling mortals. Their path to power is the opposite of their kin's, involving grim discipline and self-denial. Such practices are collectively called austerities, giving rise to their name. Some austerities are also practiced by the yogi and others following the path of contemplation.

It is important to remember that underlying all rakshasa actions, hedonistic or devoted, is an awful malice. Just because a given rakshasa is devoted to the music of a particular singer, or has spent the last 50 years standing on a mountaintop and considering the universe, does not mean the creature is any less malevolent.

Typical Schemes

No two rakshasa plots are the same, but they often use certain means to get certain things. Details for some specific schemes are presented in the section on adventure ideas, but the following section contains general ideas that illustrate the rakshasa mind.

Whatever their type, rakshasas have a sense for beauty. Many of their plans involve acquiring something or someone attractive, which they will display as a demonstration of their influence to other rakshasas. Some of them even appreciate beauty for its own sake, collecting art and jewelry, perhaps even becoming patrons to mortal artists of exceptional skill. Although they despise mortals as a class, rakshasas are willing to admit that certain rare individuals show notable talent and grace.

Dealing with beauty, then, involves separating it from its current owner. Many rakshasas have enough wealth to simply buy what they want, but while they occasionally take that straightforward path, the challenge of tricking someone into giving up what they own is hard to resist. A rakshasa might assume the guise of an art expert or expatriated noble, someone who understands aesthetics but isn't likely to be swayed by them, and attempt to convince the owner that their treasured possession is actually a cheap fake. Another ploy involves pretending to be a powerful mage who needs the item in question to cast a mighty spell, or perhaps the wizened master of a thieves' guild seeking to pay off a debt.

Even more satisfying to the rakshasa mind is convincing others to acquire the thing of beauty on their behalf. Again, rather than simply hiring minions to steal jewelry and art, a rakshasa will use its innate powers to spin an irresistible story. For example, a rakshasa who seeks to add an exquisite jade dragon to its collection might arrive at the wealthy owner's house in the guise of a priest from exotic lands. The rakshasa arrogantly demands the dragon, claiming to need it to cast a mighty curative spell for a foreign king. If the owner agrees, the rakshasa has scored an easy victory. If not, the rakshasa approaches local adventurers in disguise, explains its plight in more humble terms, and beseeches them to help the ailing king by acquiring the jade. With luck, the rakshasa will not only get the carving it desires, but drive a wedge between two sets of powerful mortals.

More serious plots are set in motion when the goal is power, either temporal or mystical. While a rakshasa likely won't stoop to killing someone who owns a painting it desires, it has no qualms about using lethal methods against a troublesome chamberlain or sage. Power in any form is worth great risk.

Rakshasas enjoy the pursuit of temporal power – that is, influence over politics, institutions, and people. Although it can be deadly serious business, it is also a game that they have spent centuries practicing. Their actions in this arena often betray a sense of malevolent playfulness. Individuals and power structures will be manipulated to greater and more unusual lengths by a rakshasa than by an ordinary mortal schemer.

Rakshasas prefer being in the middle of their power struggles, both because they don't trust their mortal henchmen and because they enjoy watching their foes fail. In a climate where its mortal rivals are not adept at intrigue, a rakshasa will become everyone's friend. A rakshasa can pick up useful knowledge with its *detect thoughts* ability, but useful information comes much faster when you are the confidant of the person you seek to discredit and destroy. Smiling all the while, rakshasas in these situations place their traps carefully and then encourage their targets to walk right in. In general, a rakshasa won't bother with lesser assistants when its targets are so willing to be misled.

When mortals are more suspicious, as in a king's court or the upper tiers of a mighty guild, the rakshasa knows that only fools will trust it. Having little use for fools, the rakshasa becomes a master of secrets, someone that nobody trusts but everybody needs. These situations are when rakshasas often resort to establishing several different identities, the better to infiltrate their rivals' organizations. They also use more mortal assistants and informants in these cases, both to extend their own reach and because it would draw attention if they didn't.

For example, a rakshasa wishing to eliminate a king and put his more pliable son on the throne might be the son's personal magician. It would actively seek to control the son's courtiers, as well as several key members of the father's inner circle. In the disguise of a foreign mercenary, the rakshasa would befriend the captain of the king's personal guard; the guise of a befuddled back-alley apothecary might allow it to influence the king's physician. Meanwhile, hired rogues would steal important documents from the king's closest advisers so the rakshasa could discredit them and perhaps get its magician identity onto the king's council.



Solitude

A rakshasa's search for mystical power encompasses both strengthening its own abilities and acquiring magic items. Some of the methods above can be used, but the forces keeping the rakshasa from its goals are often well-equipped to recognize it for what it is, so alternate approaches are frequently needed. A rakshasa plotting to control something magical faces a wider range of problems than when simply subverting a merchants' guild, so there are few hard and fast guidelines.

Mortal dupes are essential when a rakshasa seeks a supernatural resource that it cannot simply take. Whether they are persuaded or hired, a band of adventurers can often overcome threats that a rakshasa doesn't care to face. Ideally, such a group will defeat the resource's guardians but be badly wounded in the process, allowing the rakshasa to step in, kill its hirelings, and claim the reward for itself while leaving no witnesses to its involvement.

One goal unique to rakshasas is worth noting – they hate mortal religion and seek to undermine its practitioners. This has to do with their quest for godhood, as well as their long-standing grudge against mortal deities for stealing amitra in the beginning of time. Rakshasas of all types look for ways to infiltrate churches, corrupt holy people, and discredit faith.

Although they are not technically considered fiends, rakshasas frequently tempt mortals with offers of pleasure and power. This serves a greater purpose than demonstrating once more how superior the race of rakshasas is. It serves to separate mortals from their gods, particularly from good-aligned deities. If the offers are generous and widespread, there is the chance that an entire branch of a faith will find itself looking to the rakshasa rather than to the being they once worshiped.

Just as good, to a rakshasa, is turning a holy person from their chosen path. A rakshasa who discovers an exceptionally pure paladin or dedicated monk will derive great satisfaction from finding ways to lure him away from his goals. Once that link to the divine is broken, it cannot be restored, and the deity has lost a useful servant.

Even the followers of evil gods are at risk from rakshasas. They bear the same malice toward gods of darkness as those of light, and are just as happy to steal belief from either. In fact, those who worship evil beings make easier targets for a rakshasa's promises, as they are more likely to be swayed by greed.

Finally, rakshasas often pursue the goal of revenge. With their long lives spent embroiled in one plot after another, they make many enemies. Whether such a one is a fellow rakshasa or a cunning mortal, they can be sure that they have not been forgotten.

A revenge scheme is only worthwhile to a rakshasa if it has some element of poetic justice. The target must be reminded of what they did, and the fate that befalls them should reflect it. A mortal who stopped a rakshasa from poisoning the king twenty years ago might be invited to a feast, only to discover upon his return that his whole family has been poisoned. A rakshasa who lured away another's prized bard might be cursed so that the sound of music torments her. At times a rakshasa will settle for simply killing its target, but they certainly prefer to serve up their vengeance with a flair.

Rakshasas avoid each other, unless they want something. Two or more rakshasa-sized egos have trouble dwelling in the same space. Their racial caste system also keeps certain rakshasas apart as a result of parentage, achievement, and the like. As a result, while they are often surrounded by servants and victims, they are considered solitary creatures.

One reason for this is that rakshasas have trouble keeping secrets from each other. They are as susceptible to the *detect thoughts* power as anyone else; a standard rakshasa has roughly a 50% chance of reading a peer's mind each round. For creatures who thrive on secrecy and confusion, this is an awful risk to take.

Rakshasas also share the territorial instincts of the felines they often resemble. They have trouble cooperating because each one wants to be in charge. Their caste system has many ranks, categories, and types of authority, but in the end every rakshasa thinks he or she can use it to advance themselves. A rakshasa's station is not fixed, and ambitious individuals can advance themselves with the right mixture of cunning and achievement. They want to avoid their competitors. Meanwhile, rakshasas closer to the top have no desire to deal with power-hungry underlings.

Finally, they are solitary creatures because they have little concept of family. A newborn rakshasa cub is cared for by one parent, almost always the mother, only until it reaches adult intelligence and power. As this point comes within a year or two of birth, they don't have long to form familial bonds. Parents take a certain pride in the achievements of their children, but these children very quickly become competition. Rakshasa relatives might work together against a threat from others of their kind, but it's by no means an automatic response.

Most rakshasas are quick to pick up on signs that another of their kind is in their territory – servants acting suspiciously, colorful strangers meddling in everything, unexpected assassination attempts. These can also be the warning signs that a band of adventurers is present; the response is identical. The rakshasa native to the area in question will try to find and neutralize the interloper.

The politest and least lethal actions come from rakshasas at the ends of the power spectrum. Those who feel vulnerable will attempt to come to an arrangement that satisfies everyone, giving some ground in return for safety. Despite their contempt for mortals, weak rakshasas are willing to sacrifice dignity if they think it will stave off a threat. Asuras and others who think they are beyond harm won't want to waste their time with insignificant invaders, preferring to buy them off and send them on their way.

But most rakshasas are somewhere in the middle, and their response is rarely honest negotiation. All the means at their disposal are turned toward identifying the interloper and then figuring out its goals. In addition to its innate powers, a rakshasa will use methods like bribery and spies, especially if it isn't openly demonstrating its identity. Once the intrusive force has been figured out, a rakshasa looks for ways to eliminate it.

Killing the other rakshasa (or whatever the threat turns out



to be) is an option, but given the many invulnerabilities they enjoy, it's rarely the first step. Exposing the stranger is one possibility, assuming he has a secret to hide or is keeping a false identity. Embarrassment will also work, if the stranger's goals seem social or political in nature. Being caught with the wrong barmaid can end that sort of intrusion, as can a wretched costume for the grand masquerade ball. On a more bare-knuckles level, threats and blackmail will drive off many individuals, perhaps if backed up by one or two physical attacks. If all these options are exhausted, then the resident rakshasa will look for a way to slay its target.

Conversely, a rakshasa who enters another's territory will use many of the same methods to get what it wants. If it knows that another of its kind has claimed the area, it will be careful to avoid detection (unless being noticed somehow furthers its plans). Any knowledge of the 'native' rakshasa will be used to hinder its spies and subvert its power. As stealthy and manipulative creatures, rakshasas take pleasure in invading each others' territory and leaving without being caught. When possible, they seize trophies or leave markers behind to secure bragging rights later. Rakshasas on the move are always looking for telltale signs that one of their kin controls a certain region. The attitude of the populace is one clue, and their religion is another. Rakshasa influence is often felt in religion and politics.

To stop these small incursions from becoming full-scale wars, rakshasas often enact alliances and border pacts with each other. While such deals are often full of loopholes, they allow rakshasas to further their goals with less interference from each other. As rakshasas have their caste system and racial sense of honor, they rarely commit these deals to paper. Doing so would be admitting that the participants couldn't remember what they had agreed to, and would also provide their mutual enemies with evidence of their presence, to say nothing of showing the boundaries of their power.

That said, it should be noted that rakshasas are thought by scholars to dwell in warm marshlands. This perception is not entirely wrong; it just greatly underestimates the number of rakshasas in urban society. Rakshasas in their natural forms are found in wetlands and swamps more often than in other places, ironically enough, because that's where they go to avoid other creatures.

If nothing else, warm marshes are not friendly places. This definition encompasses stinking swamps and potentially even claustrophobic jungles. Visitors and invaders are put off by the festering climate, the dangerous terrain, and the risk of disease. The native life forms are also unfriendly, ranging from leeches and stirges to the oldest black dragons.

Rakshasas also feel a certain affinity for this kind of terrain, awful as it may be. They claim to have existed since before the world itself was formed, and therefore rakshasa sages say they were present before land and water had been separated from each other. Swamps are the most primal terrain available, so rakshasas retreat there when they wish to drop their many disguises and be reminded of their ancient origin.

It could also be that rakshasas are connected to these unforgiving regions because a handful of their greatest individuals

have come from there. The legendary Ravana founded his long-ago kingdom within a swamp, and the original Austere Ones practiced their early rites in similar terrain.

The Conclave

However, even with all these mechanisms for solitude, rakshasas need (and even want) to gather with each other at times. They have information to exchange, mortals and other possessions to trade, boasts to make, and mates to secure. Small rakshasa gatherings take place from time to time, as arranged by interested parties, but these rarely involve more than a dozen participants. The only large gathering of rakshasas is known among them as the Conclave.

It happens every decade or two. The Conclave doesn't keep a regular timetable, as rakshasas don't want their enemies to detect a pattern in their activities. Nor does it happen at a recurring location. The rakshasas at the top of the hierarchy arrange it each time – asuras are involved, as are standard rakshasas who wield a great deal of worldly power. At times a few Austere Ones will take an interest, and other rakshasas don't want to risk excluding them. Messages are sent and secret meetings are arranged, and when enough of them agree, the word is sent out to rakshasas everywhere.

The timing of the Conclave is haphazard. Like any consensus-driven process, it takes a while for agreement to form. But the location of each Conclave is worth noting, because while it doesn't happen in the same place twice, it always happens right under the noses of mortals.

Conclaves take place in the largest cities of the world, during a major festival or pilgrimage that would normally bring many travelers to town. Rakshasas attend in disguise, either alone or accompanied by their most trusted mortal servants. While the citizens and their guests go about their normal festive affairs, the rakshasas secretly make contact and conduct their own business. As many as 300 rakshasas will be in attendance, representing all stations of their kind that can change shape; having lesser kinds around, particularly pisachas, is counterproductive.

Rakshasas delight in having their most important meetings occur out in the open, evading the eye of mortal society while secretly shaping its direction. Major rakshasa strategy is decided here – who to subvert, where to cooperate, how to undermine enemies. Possible incarnations of the dreaded Kalki are discussed, and powerful rakshasas reward or punish those who deserve it. On those occasions where a significant number of Ravana's priesthood attend, fiendish rituals are enacted in the dead of night.

Less world-shattering events happen as well. This is a chance for rakshasas to show off for each other with little fear of reprisal. Those with an artistic inclination will demonstrate it, with soaring rhetoric or impromptu performances on the veena, the instrument beloved by Ravana himself. The finest clothing and brightest jewelry will be worn whenever the rakshasa's disguise permits it. Slaves and servants of the highest caliber will be displayed as a sign of their master's might and judgment in mortal flesh.



Revenge and jealousy also have their place at the Conclave. Rakshasas have many scores to settle, and they never forget grudges. Open violence against each other is frowned upon, for fear of drawing mortal attention. But other forms of vendetta are common. Possessions are stolen, servants are killed, and the reputations of mortal disguises are ruined. For many rakshasas, this is one of the two real reasons to attend a Conclave. While the most important members of their kind are discussing weighty issues, petty rivalries are springing up around them like weeds.

The other real reason is to find a mate. While rakshasas are not romantic creatures, they enjoy the companionship of their equals. Even the cleverest and most fiery mortal pales next to the wit and depth of their own immortal kind. The general flag of truce at a Conclave provides rakshasas with a rare chance to seek each other out without either losing face or risking their lives. Once the Conclave ends, they return to looking out for themselves at all costs, but for a week or two they can flirt with the kind of overt passion that would normally be too obvious and crude for their refined tastes.

While great pains are taken to keep the Conclave secret from the mortals around, elements of it will leak out into the general population. Festivals and the like always draw exotic strangers, but having dozens of disguised rakshasas in attendance can lead to truly spectacular displays of both power and finery. If nothing else, having all these rakshasas around will make it difficult to get top-quality rooms at the finest inns.

It will probably also cause an increase in the number of unexplained corpses and the disappearance of valuable art from the area. Rakshasa grudges are being acted on, and the creatures will also take any opportunity to acquire interesting new treasures. Any mortals possessed of spectacular talent or breathtaking beauty run the risk of being acquired as well. Particularly religious rakshasas will deface temples and assault mortal priests. Any of these activities can alert would-be heroes that something unusual is happening in the neighborhood.

Doing something about it is difficult, however. Even figuring out that hundreds of rakshasas are visiting a mortal city is a large task, as the creatures take pains to conceal their true nature. And whether someone realizes the true scope of the Conclave or only thinks a handful of rakshasas are in the area, it will be nearly impossible to convince local authorities to do anything about it. Rakshasas plan the Conclave well in advance, and will take up to three years to prepare their chosen meeting place. By the time they all come together, they will have infiltrated and neutralized the local power structure to the greatest possible extent. To make certain that nobody in authority will lift a finger to interfere with the doings of these mysterious strangers, the full range of rakshasa manipulations will be used: bribery, persuasion, threats, blackmail, and enchantment.

These mortals won't be told that a giant rakshasa meeting is happening, of course, but they should get the message that any strange events are none of their business. If necessary, a few rakshasas will even impersonate local officials and members of the constabulary for the duration of the Conclave. This unglamorous but necessary duty is usually foisted off on rakshasas who would rather pursue their own agendas, and locals might notice the tem-

porary change in their mayor's attitude. This in turn can lead adventurers into the middle of Conclave politics, although they might never realize the extent of what's happening around them.

Becoming Gods

The ultimate goal of rakshasas is power, and the most desirable kind of power comes through reincarnation. A wily *pani* might have influence over great mortal kings, but it still ranks below even the poorest standard rakshasa in their caste system. While this isn't an iron-clad guarantee of status – rakshasas respect wealth and influence, regardless of the owner – it still rankles. All rakshasas know that Ravana will someday return, and he will not be reborn from one of the three lower classes. Some are content to dwell in the bottom castes, hoping that a lifetime of wickedness and cunning will be rewarded in the end, but many hope to ascend.

On the other hand, rakshasas are not suicidal. Even the most meager one of them has powers beyond the scope of mortals, and ageless years to improve their lot. As their theology says that one's current life dictates how impressive one's next incarnation will be, rakshasas are always clawing their way toward a more powerful existence in the here and now, on the theory that it will be repaid tenfold when they return. Only the most extraordinary *asura* might voluntarily seek out death, and even then other rakshasas would see this as mad folly. All rakshasas are competing for the same limited pool of power in the mortal world, and unless one is already the unchallenged ruler of all creation, this incarnation's work is not yet done.

Aside from the dream of becoming Ravana reborn, rakshasas share another aspiration. They wish to displace the gods worshiped by mortals. For some this goal is the logical end of their quest for mystic power, for others it means the unquestioning loyalty of mortal beasts. In every case it reflects the fact that rakshasas see mortal deities not as supreme beings worthy of reverence, but as particularly potent rivals.

As explained elsewhere, rakshasas often attempt to discredit religions and destroy their practitioners. This is more than an expression of annoyance. By cutting the ties between believers and gods, rakshasas hope to weaken those gods. Some rakshasas wish to replace those gods in mortals' eyes, while others simply want revenge.

A rakshasa dedicated to achieving godhood has a long road ahead. Even with their near-immortality, a rakshasa could well die of old age before mastering the obscure and arcane secrets needed to transcend this level of existence. Those rakshasas who intend to reach it in this life frequently end up among the *Austere Ones*, constantly attuning themselves to the rhythm of the universe. In time, they hope to adjust that rhythm, drawing power from across the cosmos and channeling it into themselves.

Other rakshasas, not wanting to forgo all the pleasures of existence, instead seek to augment their own inner power. The world is full of mighty spellcasters and potent artifacts, and surely a rakshasa who controls enough of them can find a way to storm the gates of divinity. Alternately, infiltrating and controlling churches might provide a way to trick or trap a deity into



giving up its power. Such a game would have much higher stakes than an ordinary rakshasa plot, making it a good fit for the creature who has grown bored with its mortal toys.

The details of such matters are best left in the hands of individual GMs, who know the background theology of their campaigns. But whatever the path, the powerful asuras have certainly traveled a great deal of it. If the rakshasas' tales are true, they have vied with the gods before, and an adventurous GM could give them a second chance at it.

Relations with Others

While it is easy to say that rakshasas disdain all mortal beings, their actual feelings are more complex. They despise some more than others, and regard a few as being almost like the lowliest and most pathetic rakshasa – high praise indeed. Moreover, certain other races will cross the rakshasas' path often enough that their relationships are worth examining.

Dragons, particularly the black wyrms that inhabit marshlands, command respect from all but the bravest rakshasas. Although the two races' plans rarely overlap, rakshasas keep a wary eye on any possible draconic interference. A dragon old and clever enough to get involved in a rakshasa's business is also powerful enough to resist a rakshasa's powers, and likely wealthy past the point of bribery.

Young dragons are another matter, as they lack the rakshasa's cunning or charisma. A rakshasa will be quick to make deals with dragons who have not yet reached adult status, should the chance arise. This is most likely to happen with black dragons, as they dwell in the swamps that rakshasas occasionally retreat to.

Black dragons are also among the least intelligent of dragons. Although they are by no means idiots, they can be outsmarted by a clever rakshasa, particularly before they reach mature adulthood. This is a two-edged situation for the rakshasa. On one hand, it makes it possible to manipulate the dragon, which is always a handy thing. On the other, it increases the chance that the dragon will not hold up its end of the bargain as expected, particularly given the black type's chaotic streak. A rakshasa who dwells in the marsh will probably have made deals with any resident dragons to divide up territory, paying tribute through gritted teeth if necessary.

Nagas have an ancient connection to rakshasas, as the lore of both creatures mentions alliances and conflicts between the two that other races have forgotten. Each of the four main naga sub-races has a different relationship with rakshasas.

Dark nagas, like dragons, command a certain amount of respect. Their innate spellcasting is as formidable as a rakshasa's, and they have similar gifts at scheming and conniving. They are also entirely immune to mind reading, neutralizing one of the rakshasa's most valuable weapons. A rakshasa finding itself in the company of dark nagas will be happy to strike a deal, at least for a time. Both races seek wealth and mortal prey, and their shared abilities let them gather both more efficiently.

Rakshasas have a more standoffish relationship with spirit nagas. The foul-smelling foul-tempered serpents are difficult to

reason with, much less threaten or bribe. Their marshy domain sometimes overlaps with a rakshasa's swampland retreat, in which case the rakshasa will try to drive the spirit naga away. When possible, the rakshasa will send minions to drive the spirit naga away and then watch from cover nearby, as the naga's *charming gaze* makes battle with it an unpredictable affair.

The clever and benevolent guardian nagas are a group that rakshasas would rather avoid, but the reverse isn't true. Rakshasa evildoing is exactly the sort of thing that guardian nagas wish to combat. A clever rakshasa will simply prevent the naga from becoming aware of its presence, often by maneuvering other evildoers into angering it. This has the dual bonus of eliminating either the naga or a set of rivals.

Water nagas and rakshasas have little interest in each other. They dwell in different territory and enjoy different pursuits. Aside from their shared racial stories, they have little to talk about.

Two members of the race of demons will at times interfere with rakshasa schemes. The towering glabrezu and tempting succubus both seek the ruination of mortals, which can conflict with the rakshasa's desire to do the same thing. Demons might be content with the knowledge that someone else has led a given mortal astray, but rakshasas are fiercely territorial about the matter, and they resist interference from outsiders.

These conflicts come about when the rakshasa and the demon have targeted the same mortal, whether because of the individual's known virtue or their potential for doing harm to others. Upon detecting demonic interference, the rakshasa will first try to strike a bargain. Some demons are willing to enter a competition for the mortal's fate, particularly succubi. Rakshasa are not particularly threatened by succubi, as the latter are poor fighters and rarely interested in worldly intrigue. Aside from their kisses, they pose little threat. If the rakshasa cannot reach an arrangement with a troublesome succubus, it is willing to use bluster and force to drive it off, unless the succubus has powerful allies.

Not so with the glabrezu, which is a massive and powerful fighter. A rakshasa has little ability to threaten them, so if a deal isn't worked out, the rakshasa will usually retreat from the situation. If the rakshasa knows enough about the glabrezu, it might attempt revenge once the demon's attention has shifted elsewhere. A common form of rakshasa vengeance is helping the mortal in question escape the glabrezu's bargain, one of the rare times a rakshasa will seem helpful.

Another race of outsiders whose interests overlap with rakshasas are the lillends. These visitors from another plane have a fondness for art and beauty, and often visit the material plane in pursuit of both. At times they wind up competing with a rakshasa for access to one of these treasures, or perhaps feuding with a rakshasa who has taken it away from them. Lillends, like rakshasas, hold grudges for centuries.

The lillend is a dangerous foe for a rakshasa. Lillends are stronger and faster, and they can fly. Their innate goodness combined with their preference for short swords means that a rakshasa's damage reduction is useless against them. In a fair fight, a rakshasa will be hard-pressed to defeat one.

But rakshasas don't fight fair, and if one knows that a lillend



is on its trail, it will find other ways to victory. Chief among them is to simply *change shape* and wait for the lillend to become distracted or leave entirely, as lillends have no special way to detect a disguised rakshasa. Outside of competing over art and artists, the two races don't see each other often, as lillends shun the crowded mortal cities where rakshasas dwell.

Not so with doppelgangers, whose innate abilities allow them to play the same games that rakshasas do. The two races see each other as highly dangerous rivals. Doppelgangers have their own racial agenda, as described in the Complete Guide To Doppelgangers, and the mind-reading rakshasas have the potential to expose it. Rakshasas, for their part, find doppelgangers too hard to manipulate and too easy to lose track of.

Like many cutthroat enemies in the world of intrigue, members of the two races therefore ally themselves when they cross paths. Each one is very good at ferreting out the other's secrets, so they prefer to simply adopt the posture of peace, even cooperating on small tasks. Meanwhile, each is undoubtedly trying to expose the other to the mundane creatures around, in hopes of getting proxies to eliminate its competition. A rakshasa would likely win in a straight fight against a band of doppelgangers, but neither one is foolish enough to take that risk.

But conflict often comes to such a relationship. When it does, success is usually determined by who has the best spy network. Rakshasas and doppelgangers frequently seek control of the same institutions, and while doppelgangers are often content to let other beings defeat them today in order to set up an ambush tomorrow, this is less useful against the mind-reading rakshasa.

In turn, a rakshasa who suspects that doppelgangers are about will treat them the way it treats rivals from its own race – luring them into the open where they will be found and slain by others. If necessary, a rakshasa will simply abandon its scheme for a few years, returning when it has amassed enough force to expose and destroy a doppelganger infestation. With any luck, the rakshasa and its allies will be treated as heroes by the populace, giving it greater freedom to resume its own schemes.

Rakshasa Subtypes

Each of the four main rakshasa variants has its own culture and society. The information above applies to all rakshasa types, except as noted, but their different powers and desires lead to the changes described below.

The pisachas dwell at the very bottom of rakshasa hierarchy, and their more powerful kin want little to do with them. Forced to band together for protection against stronger rakshasas, pisachas are the only subtype found in any numbers at a time. This can be an unfortunate discovery, as they are ill-tempered monsters with a taste for the flesh of corpses.

Pisachas live in packs at the edge of the civilized world, with little regard for clan or status. They are occasionally bullied into the service of more powerful rakshasas, but they are of little use at warfare and less at intrigue, so as a rule they operate on their own. This doesn't mean that other rakshasas ignore their less sophisticated brethren, though. Woe will come to the ogre mage or medusa who thinks it has found a band of useful ser-

vants in the wilderness – pisachas are still part of the rakshasa family, above the commands of mortals, and other rakshasas will punish any who try to enslave them.

Power among the pisachas comes from strength and animal cunning. Whoever can lure the most prey and win the most fights will command the respect of others. They are reasonably intelligent creatures, but the lives they lead don't reward thoughtfulness. Few pisachas aspire to anything more than their current state of affairs, meager as it may seem. A handful of allies, the screams of terrified mortals, and some fresh corpses to eat are usually enough to satisfy them.

The elusive panis are more refined than their goblin-sized cousins. A pani is solitary and nomadic, wandering the land and playing little tricks on mortals. The fact that these tricks often lead mortals to ruin doesn't bother the pani at all. They delight in mortal failure, just as their larger kin do.

As a result, panis are usually found near mortal towns. They grow bored more easily than other kinds of rakshasa, and move from place to place in search of people who are not prepared for their little games. If panis encounter each other, they will stop and share boasts of their own cleverness, seeking to tell the best tale before moving on after more victims.

Sometimes a pani will enter the service of a more powerful rakshasa, acting as a spy and messenger. They are useful in both capacities, but their restless nature makes them unreliable servants. As they have less interest in material wealth than their kin, it can be difficult to keep them interested in the task at hand. Some larger rakshasas have gotten around this by employing two or three panis at a time, inspiring them to compete with each other for bragging rights.

The warlike grahas are also solitary, although at times several of them will band together for a particularly brutal battle. A graha is possessive of its mortal playthings, though, and few of the creatures can abide being around each other for more than a brief campaign. The competition and backstabbing distract them from what they truly enjoy, which is spurring mortals on to feats of carnage.

Normally grahas dwell at a small remove from mortal society, often following the movements of armies and mercenary companies. But they are lawful and status-minded creatures, and at times they too serve the will of greater rakshasas. A squad of grahas makes an exceptional bodyguard or strike force, and in lands where rakshasas rule openly, they are often military commanders.

Among the grahas, status is earned by killing mighty warriors, or driving those warriors to their deaths with madness. As a graha can take the form of its victims, assessing one's kills is a simple affair. They also collect treasure, but while they have some taste for art, their favored possessions are fine armaments.

Asuras, the mightiest of all rakshasas, are definitely solitary. Many of their lesser kin go their entire lives without encountering an asura. At least, without knowing that they've met one – asuras will often inspect their lesser kin in disguise, looking for both useful servants and potential rivals. They take reincarnation seriously, and are quite willing to advance someone's next incarnation by cutting their current one short.

This typifies the lordly attitude shared by all asuras. Whether they seek worldly power or concentrate on honing their



spirits, an asura is the most regal member of a race that already sees itself reigning over everything. Like all emperors, they believe their tastes are excellent and they expect their whims to be obeyed without question.

Asuras dwell wherever they wish. Many are found at the heart of mortal society, pulling its strings and feasting on its excesses while maintaining any number of disguises. Some, particularly those who see themselves on the verge of manifesting as Ravana, rule empires directly while wearing their true faces. At the other extreme, the most grim and fearsome Austere Ones are asuras who have forsaken the normal paths to power in favor of bending the universe itself to their will. Any place that one is found, an asura will be the center of all activity.

Adventure Ideas

Rakshasas can be inserted into many different adventures, given their malleable forms and their love of intrigue. In all cases, any rakshasa the players encounter is pursuing its own agenda, whether it is the primary foe or just a supporting character. Rakshasas enjoy multi-layered plots, particularly ones that involve corrupting or betraying mortals. They also usually maintain at least one mortal identity, adding a layer of surprise. Players caught up in a rakshasa's plot will likely not know what they are dealing with at first, and might never discover it at all.

The White Horseman: Two rakshasas working independently from each other are trying to kill a possible incarnation of Kalki. The action takes place in a medium or large urban area, during a large festival or tournament. People from all over have arrived to sell their wares, trade news, and participate in games and contests. Many notable warriors are in attendance, including man named Hanuman. A great fighter from far away, he wields a flaming sword and rides a magnificent white horse reputed to be as clever as a wizard's familiar.

One rakshasa has been tracking this warrior for some time, wanting to corner and kill him publicly for the status such an act will confer. The other lives in the festival city, unknown to the first one. The local rakshasa wants to destroy the mortal as well, but is also looking for a way to remove the rival permanently. It becomes aware of its out-of-town kinsman when, on the first day of the festival, one white horse at each major inn and stable is found with its throat slashed – a warning from the traveling rakshasa to the possible Kalki incarnation.

Complicating things further, the famous warrior is actually someone else. Hanuman has a son who looks similar and has the same first name, and his son arrived here early with the horse. Father and son are members of the Order of the Asthra, and young Hanuman is here alone because his father was delayed by a particularly tricky rakshasa hunt. Suspecting that at least one rakshasa is following him, the son is pretending to be his father in hopes of drawing the creature out and killing it. Unfortunately, the son is not nearly the warrior his father is, but instead is a low-level cleric of Kalki who carries a longsword enchanted with *continual flame*. He hopes to stay alive long enough for his father to catch up with him.

The PCs can get involved in a variety of ways. Perhaps one

of their horses is slain, or perhaps they thwart an early assassination attempt on young Hanuman. The local rakshasa might even hire them in disguise, pointing them toward its traveling rival. This adventure can introduce players to a great deal of information about rakshasas, as Hanuman will be happy to share the Order's information with anyone who can help him root out the creatures trying to kill him and his father.

Little Old Peddler: PCs are pack rats, always collecting strange odds and ends from across the campaign world and then forgetting about them. One such item happens to be something that a rakshasa wants for its own purpose. The nature of the item isn't important to the rakshasa's plot, but ideally it will be something interesting enough for the PCs to keep around without being so useful that they take it everywhere.

One day a stranger arrives at wherever the PCs live (and therefore where they store their things). Oddly garbed and speaking with a foreign accent, he explains that he is a wandering peddler who deals in odd and magical items, and that he has heard the PCs might be interested in such things. This is really a rakshasa in disguise, traveling the region looking for the item in question. He has a handful of minor and unusual items to sell or trade, but what he really wants is details about the adventure that led the PCs to the item he's after. Once he's satisfied that they are likely to have it, he concludes his sales and leaves.

Shortly thereafter, the rakshasa assumes another disguise and hires a pack of low-level rogues to burgle the PCs' home base while they are there. The PCs should discover and interrupt this break-in, dealing with the perpetrators however they see fit; this is what the rakshasa hopes for. Once the PCs have dealt with the rogues, the rakshasa disguises himself as one of the PCs (or even better, as a trusted cohort or follower) and murders someone in a loud or public way, preferably someone connected to the burglary attempt. While the PCs are off trying to clear that mess up, the rakshasa will break into their base himself and hunt for the item he wants.

While the rakshasa could probably have bought or traded for the item, this sort of complicated scheme is exactly the kind of minor plotting the firstborn enjoy. Everyone involved will be confused as to what's really happening, several mortals might get hurt or even killed, and if done right nobody will realize what the rakshasa is after until it's too late. The creature plans to leave the area before anyone can figure out who and what it was, but if PCs manage to find and confront it, the rakshasa will be more than happy to explain everything before making its escape. After all, outsmarting someone is twice as fun if you can see the look on their face when they figure it out.

Sing In Me, O Muse: Jendri is a bard of great beauty and greater talent. She has attracted the attention of many admirers, but the one who has her favor is a prosperous local merchant and patron of the arts. This merchant is secretly a rakshasa, one who has been involved in the area's affairs for some time. He was taken with Jendri the first time he met her, and has put a great deal of effort into winning her over.

Unfortunately, a lillend has also become a fan of Jendri's work. The outsider has taken up residence nearby, and she and Jendri have become fast friends. Fascinated by the lillend's tales,



Jendri is considering leaving the area and resuming the wandering life. This doesn't please her rakshasa suitor.

Even worse, a powerful local mage is a member of the Shattered Gate. While he doesn't realize that his acquaintance the merchant is actually a rakshasa, he does know that the lillend has no place on this plane. His attempts to find and banish the creature are threatening to drive Jendri away and expose the rakshasa.

Almost anyone can bring the PCs into the action. Jendri might be an old friend of theirs (or perhaps the rakshasa is interested in a PC bard). The rakshasa might try to maneuver the PCs into driving the lillend away, or perhaps use them directly against the Shattered Gate mage in hopes of gaining access to information about the group's activities. For that matter, the mage is likely looking for a group of agents who can help him drive the lillend away and close up whatever portal it uses to travel to this area.

Graveyard Shift: The cleric of a remote temple has a problem. Situated on the edge of the wilderness, she's accustomed to dealing with the occasional wandering monster or restless spirit. But now her little graveyard is being invaded by ghouls and ghosts that she can't turn. Perhaps, she asks, the PCs could help her?

The problem she faces isn't undead at all. Instead, a pack of pisachas have wandered into the area and discovered the graves under her care. They are lairing nearby, coming after the corpses whenever they get hungry. The creatures have a mean streak, and enjoy taking on the forms of deceased locals so they can wander around and terrify villagers and farmers. Even herd animals aren't safe, as the pisachas do their best to poison water troughs and wells. Divine might won't solve the problem, but something else needs to fix it before the creatures move from minor mischief to something worse.

Whispers on the Wind: A pani has gained influence over a town's chief constable. The creature uses its powers to find crimes and read wrongdoers' minds, then with its *message* ability it whispers the details to the constable while he's alone. This has resulted in a remarkably crime-free town.

But the pani's goals aren't pure and just. It is also poisoning the constable's mind, filling him with secrets and lies about the people around him. He has forsaken friends and family, placing his trust in the little whispers that seem to know so much about what's going on. The pani is turning him into a short-tempered and paranoid man, driving him to harsher measures in pursuit of phantom enemies. Either the whole town will come under the rigid grip of the constable's delusionary law enforcement, or he'll be drummed out of his job and nobody will be left to defend the people. Either way, the pani is happy.

Then the PCs enter the picture, either traveling through the area or perhaps returning to their once-quiet hometown. The pani recognizes the threat they pose, and immediately starts turning the constable against them with every scrap of information it can think of. Clever characters might realize that something unwholesome has influence over the guardian of law, but how will they find and stop the most elusive kind of rakshasa?

Knife in the Back: A graha is looking for some impressive new trophies. Disguised as one of its recent kills, the creature happens across the PCs while they are involved in other busi-

ness. Impressed by their prowess, it decides to add them to its collection.

Not being foolish, the graha doesn't launch a frontal attack. Instead it tries to convince the PCs that it's a fellow adventurer, a warrior possessed of mysterious and helpful powers, someone they'd like to travel with. This will give it a chance to survey them up close before it decides whether to acquire their likenesses.

Assuming they don't reject their would-be friend, the graha will in fact make itself useful for a time, fighting alongside them and using its powers to help overcome obstacles. However, at a key moment it will suddenly reveal its true nature and turn on them. Given the graha's love of battle, it won't be content to simply cut their throats in their sleep. Instead the creature will wait until a particularly pitched battle, one that leaves several individuals in a badly wounded state, before reverting to its natural form and revealing its intentions.

The graha might even work with a partner of its own kind. One would take on a mortal form, and the other would keep its monstrous appearance and terrorize the area, hoping to draw interesting challengers. The disguised graha would lead adventurers to its comrade, then backstab them once battle was joined.

Long Live the King: Asuras engage in schemes that can take decades to come to fruition. One such plot is the quest for a mighty artifact, an heirloom of a powerful line of royalty. An asura desires this object as another step in its quest for godhood, but she cannot simply take it. Not only is the artifact widely recognized, but its magic only works for the rightful monarch. So, knowing that patience is often rewarded, the asura many years ago took on a disguise and became a minor member of the retinue of a lesser noble in the royal court.

Over time, she has worked her way up in status, to the point where she is now one of the monarch's personal sorcerers. Finally having a position of direct influence, she has begun undercutting and eliminating her rivals. One person is slandered, another accused of fomenting rebellion, a third mysteriously poisoned. The asura is rapidly winnowing out the monarch's circle of confidants and allies, and is poised to eliminate the rightful heirs. Her plan is to convince the monarch that she is more trustworthy than the heirs, then get into the official line of succession.

Once that is accomplished, all she has to do is eliminate everyone between herself and the monarch, ending by removing the monarch and ascending the throne. Once there she can claim rightful ownership of the artifact, using its power to become an even greater menace.

As with any royal intrigue, this allows a great many entry points for PCs. The asura has had decades to plan its endgame, and while the players might not be something it has specifically prepared for, it will attempt to counter their threat quickly and indirectly. Depending on circumstances, the asura might be interested in running the kingdom itself, whether in disguise or in its true identity. It might also be happy to disappear once it has the artifact, leaving a badly damaged power structure riddled with distrust. This adventure could also be transplanted to any large power structure, such as a world-spanning church, a renowned bardic college, or even the circle of chief druids.



Chapter Five

Rakshasa and Their Kin

Several different creatures are considered rakshasas, both among themselves and by sages who study this curious lore. But the three lesser breeds are given names of their own, signifying their lesser place in the caste system, while name of the mighty asuras comes from an ancient word meaning “gods.” The creature most commonly considered a rakshasa does indeed call itself that, as they believe themselves to be most like the original firstborn children of Night.

This standard rakshasa is presented first, followed by its subtypes from weakest to greatest. All kinds of rakshasa share several abilities: resistance to damage and spells, the ability to read thoughts, some degree of shapeshifting, and an animalistic cast to their features. Innate magical ability is also common to them. All types but the lowly pisacha can use spells or spell-like abilities, and the pisacha possesses a venom that makes it a surprisingly dangerous foe. They are also skilled to some degree with the Concentration skill, due to the firstborn’s focus on self-improvement through enhanced focus.

While the standard rakshasa can be used as a player character, its various subtypes are not equally suited to such use. The asura’s level of power makes it impractical, just as a titan or high-level celestial is awkward to play. Other subtypes are rigidly tied into the rakshasa hierarchy, making them unwilling or simply unable to spend large amounts of time fraternizing with mortals.

RAKSHASA

Medium Outsider (Native)

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 7d8+21 (52 hp) |
| Initiative: | +2 |
| Speed: | 40 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 21 (+2 Dex, +9 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 19 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +7/+8 |
| Attack: | Claw +8 melee (1d4+1) |
| Full Attack: | 2 claws +8 melee (1d4+1) and bite +3 melee (1d6) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Detect thoughts, spells |
| Special Qualities: | Change shape, damage reduction 15/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 27 |
| Saves: | Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +6 |
| Abilities: | Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 17 |
| Skills: | Bluff +17*, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +17 (+19 acting)*, Intimidate +5, Listen +13, Move Silently +13, Perform (oratory) +13, Sense |

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feats: | Motive +11, Spellcraft +11, Spot +11 Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge |
| Environment: | Warm marshes |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 10 |
| Treasure: | Standard coins; double goods; standard items |
| Alignment: | Always lawful evil |
| Advancement: | By character class |
| Level Adjustment: | +7 |

In its natural form, a rakshasa looks like a humanoid tiger, tall and lithe with a beastly head and a coat of striped fur. A closer look at a rakshasa reveals that the palms of its hands are where the backs of the hands would be on a human.

A rakshasa is about the same height and weight as a human. Rakshasas speak Common, Infernal, and Undercommon.

COMBAT

In close combat, which a rakshasa disdains as ignoble, it employs its sharp claws and powerful bite. Whenever possible, it uses its other abilities to make such encounters unnecessary.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A rakshasa can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 18th; Will DC 15 negates). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spells: A rakshasa casts spells as a 7th-level sorcerer.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/5; save DC 13 + spell level): 0 – *detect magic, light, mage hand, message, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue*; 1st – *charm person, mage armor, magic missile, shield, silent image*; 2nd – *bear’s endurance, invisibility, M.’s acid arrow*; 3rd – *haste, suggestion*.

Change Shape (Su): A rakshasa can assume any humanoid form, or revert to its own form, as a standard action. In humanoid form, a rakshasa loses its claw and bite attacks (although it often equips itself with weapons and armor instead). A rakshasa remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the rakshasa reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Skills: A rakshasa has a +4 racial bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks. *When using *change shape*, a rakshasa gains an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If reading an opponent’s mind, its circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks increases by a further +4.

RAKSHASAS AS CHARACTERS

Rakshasa characters possess the following racial traits.

- +2 Str, +4 Dex, +6 Con, +2 Int, +2 Wis, +6 Cha.





- Medium size.
- A rakshasa's base land speed is 40 feet.
- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Racial HD: A rakshasa begins with seven levels of outsider, which provide 7d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +7, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +5, Ref +5, and Will +5.
- Racial Skills: A rakshasa's outsider levels give it skill points equal to 10 x (8 + Int modifier). Its class skills are Bluff, Disguise, Listen, Move Silently, Perform, Sense Motive, and Spot. A rakshasa has a +4 racial bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks, and it can gain further bonuses by using *change shape* (+10 on Disguise checks) and *detect thoughts* (+4 on Bluff and Disguise checks).
- Racial Feats: A rakshasa's outsider levels give it three feats.
- +9 natural armor bonus.
- Natural Weapons: Bite (1d6) and 2 claws (1d4).
- Detect Thoughts (Su): The save DC is 13 + the character's Cha modifier.
- Spells: A rakshasa character casts spells as a 7th-level sorcerer. If the character takes additional levels of sorcerer, these levels stack with the rakshasa's base spellcasting ability for spells known, spells per day, and other effects dependent on caster level. A rakshasa character likewise uses the sum of its racial spellcasting levels and class levels to determine the abilities of its familiar.
- Special Qualities (see above): *Change shape*, damage

reduction 15/good and piercing, spell resistance equal to 27 + class levels.

- Automatic Languages: Common, Infernal. Bonus Languages: Sylvan, Undercommon.
- Favored Class: Sorcerer.
- Level adjustment +7.

PISACHA

Small Outsider (Native)

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 2d8+2 (11 hp) |
| Initiative: | +1 |
| Speed: | 30 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +2/-2 |
| Attack: | Bite +3 melee (1d4) or light pick +2 melee (1d3/x4) |
| Full Attack: | Bite +3 melee (1d4) or light pick +2 melee (1d3/x4) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Spit poison |
| Special Qualities: | Change shape, damage reduction 5/good or magic or piercing, darkvision 60 ft., detect thoughts, spell resistance 13 |
| Saves: | Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4 |
| Abilities: | Str 10, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11 |
| Skills: | Climb +2, Concentrate +3, Disguise +4*, Hide +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +6, Survival +3 |
| Feats: | Weapon Finesse |
| Environment: | Warm hills |
| Organization: | Solitary, pair, or gang (3-8) |
| Challenge Rating: | 2 |
| Treasure: | 50% coins; standard goods; 50% items |
| Alignment: | Always lawful evil |
| Advancement: | 3-6 HD (Small) |
| Level Adjustment: | +2 |

Hunched over, with its potbelly and vaguely doglike face, the small form of a pisacha might not inspire fear at first glance. But these creatures are fierce fighters, far more resilient than their appearance suggests. Pisachas prowl the fringes of humanoid habitations, always searching for a supply of their favorite food – corpses that have been seasoning below ground for a few months. Some incorrectly suppose that pisachas are connected to ghouls, but aside from their choice of food and their evil dispositions, the resemblance is strictly superficial. Pisachas will also eat fresh kills. This diet has given them a poisonous spitting attack, as well as foul breath.

A pisacha is keenly aware of its position at the bottom of the rakshasa hierarchy, denied the use of impressive powers and forced to obey a hunger for rotting flesh. They will serve their greater kindred out of fear, but every pisacha is looking for that



great and wicked deed that will advance it from its lowly state in its next incarnation. Even so, they are part of the firstborn, and they have the same disdain for mortals (at least the ones they think they can defeat). Pisachas gather together more often than other rakshasas, seeking to augment their effectiveness with numbers.

They also have their kind's fondness for gems and artwork. An attacking pisacha might be hunting for food, or it might just want to seize the victim's baubles. In the latter case, the creature might be willing to bargain, even sharing information if it feels it is getting the better part of the deal.

Pisachas speak Common.

COMBAT

A solitary pisacha will trail its prey, waiting to surprise a lone individual. When pisachas operate as a group, they use pack tactics, surrounding their targets and trying to divide their defenses. They are not subtle combatants, although multiple pisachas will aim their poisonous spit at the same target. Many pisachas attack with their doglike fangs, but some use the hefty pickaxes that are so useful to a determined grave robber.

Spit Poison (Ex): Contact, Fortitude DC 12, initial damage 1d3 Con, secondary damage 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based. A pisacha can spit this yellow goo once per day; treat it as a ranged touch attack with a +1 attack bonus, range of 30 feet, and no range increment. Pisacha venom is a product of its diet and becomes inert seconds after leaving the creature's body, although some alchemists seek the creature's venom bladder for their own uses.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A pisacha can use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 10th; Will DC 12 negates) three times daily, for no more than 1 minute each use. Not having the powerful minds of their larger kin, pisachas can only detect the presence or absence of thinking minds, not their number or any surface thoughts. They use this ability to scout for enemies and sense ambushes. This ability is Charisma-based.

Change Shape (Su): A pisacha can assume the form of any humanoid creature whose corpse it has eaten a majority of, provided that individual was within one size category of itself, or revert to its natural form; either is a standard action. This ability can only be used once a day, lasting for up to one hour at which point the pisacha automatically reverts. This change in form cannot be dispelled, but a *true seeing* spell will reveal the creature in its natural form. Pisachas use this ability to confuse their enemies, or to lure hapless individuals away from safety.

Skills: A pisacha has a +2 racial bonus on Disguise. *When using *change shape*, a pisacha gains an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks.

PANI

Medium Outsider (Native)

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 4d8+4 (23 hp) |
| Initiative: | +7 |
| Speed: | 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect) only in vapor form |
| Armor Class: | 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13, in vapor form 13 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +4/+4 |
| Attack: | Claw +4 melee (1d4) |
| Full Attack: | 2 claws +4 melee (1d4) and bite -1 melee (1d6) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Detect thoughts, spell-like abilities |
| Special Qualities: | Damage reduction 10/good or piercing (good and magic or piercing and magic in vapor form), darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 20, vapor form |
| Saves: | Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +5 |
| Abilities: | Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 15 |
| Skills: | Bluff +10*, Concentration +4, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +2 (+4 acting)*, Gather Information +4, Hide +14, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +14, Search +4, Spot +7 |
| Feats: | Improved Initiative, Iron Will |
| Environment: | Warm forest |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 5 |
| Treasure: | No coins; standard goods; standard items |
| Alignment: | Usually lawful evil |
| Advancement: | 4-9 HD (Medium) |
| Level Adjustment: | +3 |

The pani is a spirit of air and foolishness, one that delights in goading or deceiving mortals into all sorts of dangerous situations. They are built similarly to elves, but with longer limbs and a gaunter frame. The face of a pani has wide eyes and a hooked nose, giving it a faintly avian cast, an appearance enhanced by its long tapering claws. As rakshasas go, they are chaotic creatures, more prone to breaking free of their kind's hierarchy in pursuit of their personal mischief, but they are still lawful in the greater scheme of things. This doesn't divorce them from the desire for a better incarnation, but it does reflect an intense enjoyment of their powers of manipulation. At times more powerful rakshasas will use a pani as a messenger and spy, but such relationships rarely last.

A pani will live in seclusion near or even among mortals, using its stealth and vapor form to observe how its neighbors live – and more importantly, what they want. The creature takes delight in convincing mortals to follow their baser impulses, to say nothing of employing its spell-like abilities to use them like a child plays with rag dolls. Although panis have the same needs





and loves as other rakshasas, including fine art and good food, their chief joy is convincing people to enter their own ruin. They will stay in an area as long as they feel safe, driving one person after another toward shame and even death.

One side effect of this interest is that panis are experts in local culture, history, and mystery. If a pani can be reasoned with, it might share that knowledge in return for something it would value. This could be a finely cut gemstone, knowledge of the constable's weakness for strong drink, or even permission to give a brave (and foolish) adventurer just one suggestion.

Panis speak Common and Undercommon.

COMBAT

Combat is not a pani's strength, and it will usually assume its vapor form and retreat once the violence begins. In combat, it makes maximum use of its spell-like abilities to turn its enemies against each other, clawing at targets that it doesn't think can hurt it in return.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A pani can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 13th; Will DC 14 negates). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Vapor Form (Su): Rather than turn into other humanoid forms, a pani can change itself into a translucent mist, giving it greater resistance to injury and allowing it to fly. This works like the spell *gaseous form*, except that the creature's flight speed is as noted above, and it still has the use of its spell-like abilities

that don't require speech. In this form, a pani can be mistaken for a heat shimmer or a ghost.

Spell-like Abilities: At will – *message*; 3/day – *charm person*, *daze*, *obscuring mist*; 1/day – *cause fear*, *suggestion*. The Will DC to resist these abilities is 14. Caster level 5th; the save DC is Charisma-based.

Skills: A pani has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. *If reading an opponent's mind, a pani's circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks increases by a further +4.

GRAHA

Medium Outsider (Native)

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 6d8+18 (45 hp) |
| Initiative: | +1 |
| Speed: | 40 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 20 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +6/+9 |
| Attack: | Masterwork halberd +10 melee (1d10+5/x3) or bite +9 melee (1d6+3) or masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str bonus) +8 ranged (1d6+3/x3) |
| Full Attack: | Masterwork halberd +10/+4 melee (1d10+5/x3) or bite +9 melee (1d6+3) or masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str bonus) +8/+2 ranged (1d6+3/x3) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Detect thoughts, spell-like abilities |
| Special Qualities: | Change shape, damage reduction 5/good and piercing, darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 22 |
| Saves: | Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +6 |
| Abilities: | Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14 |
| Skills: | Bluff +6*, Climb +12, Concentration +5, Disguise +8*, Intimidate +11, Jump +12, Listen +5, Spot +10 |
| Feats: | Power Attack, Improved Sunder, Quick Draw |

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Environment: | Warm plains |
| Organization: | Solitary, pair, or war band (3-6) |
| Challenge Rating: | 7 |
| Treasure: | 50% coins; 50% goods; double items |
| Alignment: | Always lawful evil |
| Advancement: | 7-12 HD (Medium) |
| Level Adjustment: | +5 |

The most warlike of all rakshasas, grahas even bear the coloration of their favorite pastime. With blood-red skin and metallic hair and eyes, they present a frightening sight even without their typically fierce armament. However, a graha is rarely found without its armor and weapons. These creatures live for battle and slaughter, following armies and hounding champions in



hopes of increasing the carnage. They have a deserved reputation for spreading insanity among warriors, as well as being fiercely boastful.

Where other rakshasas manipulate mortals with promises of riches or pleasure, grahas prefer to use martial prowess as a lure. Their spell-like abilities allow them to enhance warriors, and a graha will often disguise itself and then offer to boost a mortal in combat. Once the mortal has amused the graha sufficiently, it will suddenly withdraw its magical assistance and leave the mortal to face its remaining enemies on its own.

Other grahas prefer to simply spread confusion and weakness around a battlefield, targeting one prominent fighter after another. A graha will even enter combat with mortals willingly, something most rakshasas disdain or fear. A graha is equipped to survive, even thrive, in melee combat, and they take pleasure in killing any foolish mortals who think they can trade blows with the firstborn.

Although they share their kindred's distrust of each other, at times a group of grahas will work together in a war band, allowing them to spread more misery across a battlefield. This is most likely to happen during a clash of armies or other large combat action. Particularly powerful standard rakshasas or even asuras may have a personal guard of grahas, although such a company of guards had best be watched closely for fear of ego-driven clashes.

Grahas speak Common.

COMBAT

A graha doesn't fear either melee or ranged combat, and it uses the best armament available. At the same time, a graha isn't a fool, and it will attempt to cripple its enemies with its spell-like abilities before closing. If it has the chance, it will use *touch of idiocy* to reduce its enemy's judgement and willpower and *ray of exhaustion* to leave them too tired to fight.

The equipment listed in the statistics block above is typical for a graha, but alternate choices abound, particularly for a graha attempting to assume a specific disguise. Grahas enjoy collecting magic weapons and armor, and if it has such items it will certainly use them in combat. In dire straits, a graha will simply bite enemies with its daggerlike fangs, but it sees such contact as beneath its dignity.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A graha can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 15th; Will DC 13 negates). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Change Shape (Su): A graha can assume certain humanoid forms, or revert to its own form, as a standard action. In addition to the usual limits on this ability, a graha is restricted to the forms of mortals that it has personally killed. Among grahas, these alternate forms are considered trophies. When the creatures gather, they will often take turns assuming the forms of their victims and describing their deaths in excruciating detail. In humanoid form, a graha loses its bite attack (although it almost always equips itself with weapons and armor instead). A graha remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the graha reverts to its natural form



when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form

Spell-like Abilities: At will – *magic weapon*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *true strike* (usable on others, with a range of touch); 3/day – *bull's strength*, *touch of idiocy*; 1/day – *rage*, *ray of exhaustion*, *slow*. The Will DC to resist these abilities is 15. Caster level 5th; the save DC is Charisma-based. Unlike the spells of the same name, the graha can cancel any of these effects at will as a free action, provided the recipient is within 100 feet. It may do this once per round.

Skills: A graha has a +2 racial bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks. *When using *change shape*, a graha gains an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If reading an opponent's mind, its circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks increases by a further +4.



ASURA

Large Outsider (Native)

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hit Dice: | 15d8+150 (217 hp) |
| Initiative: | +8 |
| Speed: | 50 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 32 (-1 size, +8 Dex, +15 natural), touch 17, flat-footed 24 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +15/+25 |
| Attack: | Claw +21 melee (1d6+6) |
| Full Attack: | 2 claws +21 melee (1d6+6) and bite +16 melee (1d8+6) |
| Space/Reach: | 10 ft./10 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Detect thoughts, spell-like abilities, spells |
| Special Qualities: | Change shape, damage reduction 25/good and piercing, darkvision 120 ft., spell resistance 37 |
| Saves: | Fort +21, Ref +19, Will +20 |
| Abilities: | Str 22, Dex 27, Con 30, Int 25, Wis 28, Cha 30 |
| Skills: | Appraise +13, Bluff +36*, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +25, Disguise +36 (+38 acting)*, Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (history) +25, Knowledge (religion) +25, Listen +27, Move Silently +26, Perform (oratory) +28, Perform (string instruments) +28, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +16, Spot +27 |
| Feats: | Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Negotiator, Still Spell, Wings |
| Environment: | Warm marsh |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 19 |
| Treasure: | Double coins, triple goods, double items |
| Alignment: | Always lawful evil |
| Advancement: | 16-45 HD (Large) |
| Level Adjustment: | - |

Standing 10 feet tall or more, the asura is the most physically impressive rakshasa. Where their lesser kin have standard features, each asura looks different from all others. Most have exaggerated and monstrous appearances, with wild eyes and gnashing tusks framing sharp animalistic faces. Despite their frightful features, asuras are extremely intelligent and can be very charming. They all share the backward palms common to their race.

An asura is almost never found in its natural form, as these consummate schemers are usually involved in decades-long intrigues among mortals. Asuras delight in manipulation, but they also have broader goals. Everything an asura does, from the grandest flourish that brings down a kingdom to the regular visit with a streetcorner fishmonger, is calculated to achieve something more.

All asuras share the same ultimate ambition. Fierce believers in reincarnation, each asura wishes to ascend to godhood itself. Every asura harbors the secret hope that it could be

Ravana reborn, the ancient king of the mortal world and enemy of Kalki. Many asura plots are designed to advance this ascension, both by controlling sources of mystical and temporal power and by eliminating possible rivals. For this reason, asuras never work together willingly. Each one would spend most of its time undercutting its rivals rather than pursuing its schemes. In the end, Ravana will only be reincarnated once.

Asuras speak Common, Infernal, Undercommon, and four other languages of the GM's choice. These languages are usually used to enhance an asura's secret identities.

COMBAT

Like the standard rakshasa, an asura dislikes melee combat. They are not strong fighters, considering their power level, and they will use their spells and abilities to make such confrontations unnecessary. An asura will almost certainly have a broad network of henchmen and servants who can take care of such matters for them.

An asura's natural weapons, as well as any weapons it wields, are treated as lawful-aligned and evil-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Unlike most other native outsiders, an asura's connection to the outer planes is strong enough that it manifests in the creature's attacks.

Detect Thoughts (Su): An asura can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 27th; Will DC 22 negates). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex): Asuras are immune to any form of mind reading.

Spell-like Abilities: At will – *charm monster, dispel magic, legend lore, locate creature, true seeing*.

Spells: An asura casts spells as a 15th-level sorcerer.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/9/9/8/8/8/8/5; save DC 20 + spell level): 0– *arcane mark, detect magic, light, mage hand, message, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance, touch of fatigue*; 1st – *mage armor, magic missile, protection from good shield, silent image*; 2nd – *bear's endurance, eagle's splendor, invisibility, locate object, M.'s acid arrow*; 3rd – *fly, haste, lightning bolt, suggestion*; 4th – *bestow curse, crushing despair, greater invisibility, scrying*; 5th – *cone of cold, contact other plane, dominate person, persistent image*; 6th – *chain lightning, greater dispel magic, geas/quest*; 7th – *insanity, greater teleport*.

Change Shape (Su): An asura can assume the form of any humanoid, monstrous humanoid, or giant between Small and Huge size, or revert to its own form, as a standard action. In many such forms, an asura loses its claw and bite attacks (although it often equips itself with weapons and armor instead). An asura remains in one form until it chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be dispelled, but the asura reverts to its natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals its natural form.

Skills: An asura has a +8 racial bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks. *When using *change shape*, an asura gains an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If reading an opponent's mind, its circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks increases by a further +4.

