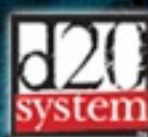


Dark Ladies



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Dark Ladies

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Villainesses in RPGs

Myth, legend, fiction and history are replete with colorful villainesses. In some cases, they just happen to be female. But more often, their gender is melded into their role as an antagonist, and the result is a unique dynamic. Villainesses are, by their very nature, different than villains. The differences are physiological, behavioral, societal and sexual. They present a host of unique opportunities in roleplaying adventures.

For example, here are some archetypes unique to villainesses, along with ways these archetypes can be used effectively in a campaign:

Seductress: Villainesses of legend are most often beautiful yet perilous, like a thorny rose bush or a brightly patterned venomous snake. In a campaign, a villainess use seduction to get into a position of trust, often to learn secret information or catch unawares a victim for assassination. Seduction may also be used to distract a guard, blackmail a wealthy or influential person, or enthrall a lover to gain future favor. Some villainesses seduce men merely to demonstrate power over them. Scenes of seduction between NPCs and player characters need not (and probably should not) be described in detail. If approached seriously and tastefully, such scenes can elicit a sense of betrayal and exploitation and thus deepen the roleplaying experience.

Hag: When not stunningly beautiful, villainesses are usually hideous old hags. No longer capable of creating life within, they become dedicated to destroying that which exists around them. Their bitter or even evil nature is reflected in their appearance. Hags make great hack n' slash enemies because they are essentially monsters; most player-characters will have little compunction against destroying them. However, you may wish to throw in a twist, such as the "evil old witch" who in her youth was driven to madness by a series of miscarriages, and now kidnaps children (and Halfings!) to calm her troubled mind...

Manipulator: While seductresses might manipulate their lovers, this archetype specifically refers to a villainesses who plots and schemes in secret. She may appear to be the meek wife of a baron, but is actually the power-behind-the-throne. She may be an influential member of a craft guild, thieves' guild or wizards' guild, ensuring that the vote goes her way. Or she may seem to be a helpless princess, sending to their doom the gallant knights who come to her rescue. If this sort of villainess is used correctly, they players may go some time before figuring out the identity of their true enemy.

Duelist: Women are physiologically different from man, usually more lightly built and with a different center of gravity. As a result, one would imagine that female combatants would adopt a different fighting style

than men, one that eschews heavy armor and weapons in favor of speed and accuracy. The more skilled the duelist, the more obvious this difference in style might be. A female combatant with the rapier, leather armor and a variety of dexterity-based Feats might be very deadly.

Brawler: Female dwarves and half-orcs may be a physical match for human males, on average. The same goes for atypical human women, who may be tall and muscular (e.g. Amazons, Valkyries) or heavy-set. Such warrior women are capable of wearing heavy armor and wielding large weapons. They are often proud of their ability to best a man; if defeated in a fair fight they may begrudgingly respect the victor or, more likely for a villainess, despise him. In a roleplaying game, there can be shock value in encountering a physically-powerful woman.

Matriarch: Child-bearing is a uniquely feminine ability. Consider this fact when designing and playing villainesses. When the player characters defeat an evil queen, what do they do with her children? What if the secret enemy of the campaign turns out to be one of the mother of one of player characters? If a villainess seduces a player character, a child may be an unforeseen result; if the campaign lasts long enough (or if magical aging is involved), the player character may even have to face his own offspring in combat (a la Mordred to Arthur).

Tyrant: Historically, some female rulers may have felt the need to be extra strict or even harsh so that they might maintain control in a male-dominated world. In any case, vicious and cruel villainesses work well in a roleplaying situation because their brutal nature contrasts with what most of us still think of as feminine traits. Player characters who witness an otherwise charismatic queen punish a clumsy servant or order the execution of all beautiful maidens will likely be shocked and instantly thrown into opposition.

Rival: When a campaign includes a female player character, villainesses can take the role of rival. They may vie for the attention, love or respect of another player character, or for an NPC. Alternatively, they may compete on a more general level, such as for a leadership position in an order of knighthood.

Hopefully, these archetypes demonstrate how female antagonists can be treated differently, yet no less effectively, in campaigns. Countless other suggestions are scattered throughout the characters profiles included in this book.



Anima

Race: Human Ghoul
Class/Level: Sorcerer 8th
Height/Weight: 5'8", 130 lbs
Hit Points: 56
Initiative: +8 (+4 Improved Initiative, +4 Dex)
Speed: 30 feet
Armor Class: 18 (+4 Dex, +2 natural, +2 cloak of the bat)
Attacks: Bite +8 melee, 2 claws +5 melee, or by weapon type +5 melee/+9 ranged
Damage: Bite 1d6+1 plus paralysis, claws 1d3+1 plus paralysis, or by weapon type
Special Attacks: Paralysis, create spawn
Special Qualities: +4 Turn Resistance
Alignment: Chaotic Evil
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +13
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 19

Skills: Animal Empathy +1, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Concentration +3, Craft (Weaving) +3, Escape Artist +5, Handle Animal +1, Heal +3, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +5, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Sense Motive +3, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +2

Feats: **Combat** Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (Bite), Track.

Possessions: *Ring of mind shielding, cloak of the bat, sturdy working clothes, household utensils, farming implements.*

Spell List: 6/6/6/5/3.

0-Level: *Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Ghost Sound, Mending, Read Magic, Resistance.*

1st-Level: *Cause Fear, Change Self, Charm Person, Expeditious Retreat, Jump, Protection from Good, Ray of Enfeeblement, Sleep, Spider Climb, Summon Monster I.*

2nd-Level: *Alter Self, Blindness/Deafness, Darkness, Darkvision, Detect Thoughts, Obscure Object, Scare, Spectral Hand, Summon Swarm.*

3rd-Level: *Halt Undead, Hold Person, Magic Circle against Good, Nondetection, Phantom Steed, Suggestion, Vampiric Touch.*


4th-Level: *Fear, Polymorph Other, Scrying, Summon Monster IV.*

Description

Anima appears mysterious and exotic and almost riveting. Black hair flows halfway down her back, framing a face of huge dark eyes, chiseled cheeks, and full lips. Her skin is tawny from working outdoors in the elements, and her hands while petite and shapely are worn and rough from labor. Her jewelry - flamboyant earrings and a moon-shaped necklace - is oversized and clearly of mundane quality, and her clothing is simply peasants fair, too big and bulky for her small frame.

Anima plays the role of a simple housewife to her farmer husband, Sidi - Nouman, to the hilt. She is courteous,





caring, and shows due deference to the man of the house. This is all a clever act, however, because the real Anima—the woman inside raging to come out—is a violent, sadistic, merciless fiend who takes pleasure in ripping human victims to threads and then feeding upon their flesh.

Background

As a young woman, a child really, Anima was promised to Sidi-Nouman, the son of a local farmer. Her parents were relatively wealthy landowners from a neighboring village, and likely could have found a more sturdier husband for their child but for the stigma that surrounded her. During her mother's pregnancy, raiders attacked their village and she was forced to flee into the night lest she be captured, abused, and sold into slavery. While she escaped unharmed that night, her flight had taken her through a graveyard, where she inadvertently stepped over a grave.

This simple act had cursed her daughter. It is said that if a woman carrying child steps over a grave, the restless spirit of the dead may infiltrate the unborn child and transform it into a ghoul. While this tale is largely passed off as fabricated myth by the more sophisticated and educated classes, people in rural villages still cling to such beliefs and so Anima was born into the world carrying a terrible stigma.

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She grew up relatively normal, but changes began shortly after she reached puberty and had been married off. Anima transformed into a type of human ghoul, with the same base desires and horrible abilities as her undead counterparts, but yet still very much alive. In fact, she found herself to be something of a ghoul queen, with the ability to effortlessly summon and command them.

But Anima was also extremely canny. While every fiber of her being urged her to slay her husband and live free among the desert wastes with her brethren, she knew it was far safer for her to continue the façade of normalcy and make only brief excursions to sate her appetite.

Anima is loyally followed by a loose band of a dozen ghouls. They follow her commands without hesitation and have become, in her presence at least, fairly regimented. They excel at ambushes and demonstrate more tactical acumen than is typical of their kind.

Few are aware of Anima's existence as she leaves no victims alive to tell their tales, so she has no real enemies. Fakhir Bashouk, a road warden tasked with investigating the rash of disappearances along the roads nearby, is the about the only person that she might consider an adversary. An unimaginative man, he suspects nothing more than lawless bandits, and has yet to seriously challenge Anima's secret. Should he get too close, however, he might find himself rudely awakened to the truth.

Motivation and Goals

Anima finds her cover as an innocent and harmless housewife to be extremely useful, and will carefully safeguard it. She does nothing to raise the suspicion of her husband or others in the community, and those who voice concerns about Anima find they fall of deaf ears. When necessary, she quickly eliminates any who have seen through her veil of deceit.

A vindictive soul, she doesn't always kill these troublemakers, instead occasionally opting to polymorph them into barnyard animals. She finds tormenting these beings incredibly amusing, though her enjoyment of the activity does not blind her judgement and Anima will not hesitate to eliminate polymorphed being she feels remains a threat.

She also thrills in the hunt, and rarely does a week go by that Anima doesn't slip out into the desert in search of prey. To ensure her husband remains unaware, she casts sleep on him prior to leaving.

Combat

Anima is a fierce opponent, with both a ghoul's bloodlust and a sorceress' command of magic. She prefers using her claws and bite over weapons, but if confronted in the presence of her husband or other locals, she will use a dagger or other household instrument to defend herself in order to maintain her cover. Only if her secret is revealed or she is in dire straits will she drop the façade and use her preferred weapons.

Her combat tactics are anything but subtle. While lying in ambush for her prey, she will cast spells to prepare the battlefield and increase the abilities of herself and her ghoul associates. After the ambush is sprung, she wades into battle, enjoying the thrill of combat and the taste of warm, fresh blood. She is a ruthless foe, never allowing a victim to escape lest they ruin her carefully maintained cover.

Base of Operations: Anima and her husband reside in a simple farmstead, a walled compound consisting of a small home, stable, and poultry shed. The mud-brick walls and gate provide a modicum of defense against bandits, but provides little protection against a force determined to gain entrance.

Adventure Hooks

1) A young woman, who is also a magician, learns of Anima's true nature and gives Sidi-Nouman a potion to free him of his evil bride. After he splashes Anima with the liquid, she is transformed into a horse, which he keeps as his steed and beats frequently.

Many years later, the PCs hear rumors, folktales really, of a "demon in the guise of a simple farmer". The fiend reputedly keeps a host of stock that are actually travelers magically trapped in the form of barnyard animals, among them a beautiful young sorceress. In attempting

to rescue the maiden and the other prisoners, the PCs inadvertently let lose Anima once more.

2) Fakhir Bashouk is getting suspicious of all the disappearances along the trade road, and his investigation is putting an uncomfortable amount of pressure on Anima. In response, she gets her ghoulish followers to dress up like bandits and attack her own farmstead. With her husband as a witness to the bandit activity in the area and herself with a perfect alibi, Anima hopes to shake off attention to herself and her true nature.

Warden Bashouk hires the PCs to track the highwaymen, perhaps beginning by questioning the latest victims. The ghouls, as per Anima's instructions, purposefully lead a visible trail behind to lead pursuers away from her hidden sanctum, letting it fade away in a rocky canyon. Those who manage to continue tracking the undead past this point will be led to the lair and there uncover the true nature of the bandits. They may also find hints as to the identity of their mistress.



Artemisia

Race: Human
Class/Level: Aristocrat 4th/Fighter 4th
Height/Weight: 5'8", 125 lbs.
Hit Points: 56
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 feet
Armor Class: 18 (+1 splint mail, +3 Dex)
Attacks: Shortsword or Dagger +8 melee,
Shortbow +10 ranged
Damage: Shortsword 1d6+1, Dagger 1d4+1,
Bow 1d6+1
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: -
Alignment: LE
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 17

Skills: Appraise +2, Balance +3, Bluff +3, Climb +2, Diplomacy +5, Heal +2, Intimidate +4, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +3, Knowledge (Geography) +3, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +4, Listen +3, Ride +3, Sense Motive +5, Spot +3, Swim +5.

Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Mobility, Notorious (+4 Intimidate checks; Seafarer's Handbook), Parrying Weapon (wield off-hand weapon as buckler; Seafarer's Handbook), Point Blank Shot, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: *Splint mail +1, short bow +3, ring of swimming*, trireme, trappings that would befit a Queen.

Description

Artemisia is a brave woman noted for decisiveness and a keen tactical and political mind. She is a beautiful woman with the dark complexion typical of Anatolians, tall by Greek standards, and with a haughty, regal bearing that reflects her confidence and determined nature. This woman is pure, rugged Amazon with the hardened body of a professional soldier and the effortless grace of a noblewoman. Artemisia moves her body like a sleek animal, a finely tuned, but dangerous, machine. In addition, she has a manner that allows her to toss a simple alluring look a man's way that's enough to send him reeling, or an icy-stare that causes him to recoil in abject terror.

She is a flirt, a woman who likes men, and as queen Artemisia has her pick of them. But she has raised a guard against becoming emotionally attached to any man, but whether this is a result of pain from the loss of her husband or fear that romantic feelings would undermine her ability to rule effectively as a woman in a male dominated world is unknown.





Background

The daughter of a minor Anatolian nobleman and his Cretan wife, Artemisia hailed from the kingdom of Halicarnassus, in what is now Turkey. She married her monarch, and upon his early death assumed the throne. Her rule was secured by ruthless elimination of rivals, wise administration, and bravery in the face of all threats. Subjects either fear or love her, but all respect her.

When King Xerxes, the murderous autarch of Persia, invaded Greece in the 5th century BC many vassal kingdoms joined his massive army. Among the many petty lords who joined his crusade was Queen Artemisia, hoping to gain the favor of the mighty Xerxes and to expand her influence. A woman with experience in naval warfare, her contribution of five trireme warships was valuable.

Artemisia's fleet proved its worth in the initial naval skirmishes with Greeks, but advised against engaging in the Battle of Salamis, fearing destruction of their fleet against the more skilled Hellenic captains. Despite consistently offering sounder advice than Xerxes' male advisors, the Persia Emperor failed to heed her words and offered battle.

What followed was perhaps the most decisive clash of the Persian War. Artemisia proved her worth as a captain, and single-handedly destroyed several vessels. Among them was the trireme belonging to King Damasithymus of Calynda, with whom she has a personal grudge. Nevertheless, despite her efforts, the battle turned against the Persians. The nimble Greek vessels darted among the larger, more cumbersome Persian ships, which were unable to maneuver effectively in the close quarters of the Bay of Salamis. The Persian fleet fell into chaos. With the war lost, Artemisia sought to extradite herself from the debacle by sailing for open waters, but a lumbering Persian ship blocked the way. Without hesitating, she rammed the larger vessel with her trireme, thereby clearing a path to safety.

King Xerxes, who had been watching the entire affair, was impressed with Artemisia's ingenuity and ruthless decisiveness. His respect for this fine specimen of a woman was only heightened. As a result, when she pleaded with Xerxes to abandon the invasion for lost, he for once listened. Indeed, Xerxes thought so highly of Artemisia that he entrusted his sons to her care for a time.

For their part, the Greeks fear and loath the Queen of Halicarnassus so greatly that they have offered a 10,000 drachma reward for her death or capture.

Motivation and Goals

Extremely proud, Artemisia has a desire for personal power and, recognizing the importance of ties with Persia to this end, seeks to enhance her standing with King Xerxes. This ambition was the primary motivation

behind her offer of military support to Xerxes' invasion of Greece, and there can be no doubt that she hoped to acquire new lands, primarily islands in the Aegean and perhaps her mother's homeland of Crete, for her services. But Artemisia is above all a realistic, never letting blind ambition lead her to take unnecessary risks, as demonstrated by her impassioned pleas to end the invasion lest rebellion in Persia undermine both her rule and that of her principle ally.

She has a longstanding and quite heated feud with King Damasithymus of Calynda, the cause of which is not entirely clear to observers. Needless to say, they hate each other and, as at the Battle of Salamis, will go out of their way to cause each other ill. Artemisia would love nothing more than to kill this man and, adding insult to death, annex his kingdom.

Combat

Artemisia is a brave, skilled, and ruthless leader of men in battle. She particularly excels in naval combat, being one of the more proficient captains of her time. Being named for Artemis, the Goddess of the Hunt, and with her mother hailing Crete, an island known for producing the finest archers in the world, it should be unsurprising that she is exceptionally skilled with the bow. A powerful figure with years of training, Artemisia is only marginally less deadly with a blade.

Base of Operations

Artemisia rules from a fortified palace located atop the cliffs overlooking Halicarnassus. In honor of her beloved mother, she has modeled this expansive building after the infamous court of King Minos of Knossos. It's even rumored to include a subterranean labyrinth complete with bloodthirsty minotaur. Far more than just a residence, however, her palace also combines all the functions of governance. It includes grain stores, a mint, armories and barracks, workshops for artisans, offices for bureaucrats, and a library with copious information on all citizens and many foreigners (thanks to a brutally efficient secret police service).

Equal parts war-machine and palace, her personal trireme is a marvel of naval architecture and the envy of monarchs throughout the known-world. The ram on its bow is sheathed in pure gold, its hull can take inordinate damage without being compromised, and Artemisia's quarters are lavishly furnished. The most impressive quality of the vessel, however, remains a closely guarded secret: clockwork automaton oarsmen, a gift from Daedalus the famed inventor from Crete. Never tiring and boasting strength unmatched by any man, these constructs propel Artemisia's trireme at unrivaled speeds.

Adventure Hooks

1) King Damasithymus II, the son and heir of the monarch killed at Salamis, receives reports that Artemisia is outfitting her fleet to capture Calynda's grain fleet in

an obvious effort to starve the city. Desperate, he hires the PCs to strike against her fleet before it's ready to put to sea and provides them with command of a trireme for the attack. When the PCs arrive at the enemy port, they find Artemisia's fleet defended by a watchtower and stone bastion located on the bluffs above, but there is no sign of the dreaded queen and her flagship. The PCs have to decide how best to attack the fleet. Do they opt for an attack from the landward side, attempt a daring seaborne assault, or infiltrate the port in small numbers? Do they attack against unknown numbers under the cover of darkness or try for a daylight operation that would allow them greater command and control over the fight?

Regardless of how the PCs proceed, at the height of the battle Queen Artemisia returns aboard her powerful vessel.

2) In recent weeks numerous ships in the area around Salamis have mysteriously disappeared. When the PCs are sent to investigate, they discover that a ghostly trireme is haunting Salamis Bay and the surrounding seas, ramming and sinking any vessels unfortunate enough to encounter it. It turns out that the trireme is none other than that belonging to the deceased King Damasithymus, whose specter now commands a crew consisting of skeletal oarsmen and zombie marines.

The haunts are tied to the area, and will not rest until they have revenge against Queen Artemisia. The PCs might opt for the direct approach and attempt to destroy the undead, or perhaps might attempt to give them what-and-who--they want.

Catherine dei Medici

Race: Human
Class/Level: Aristocrat 10th
Height/Weight: 5'1", 140 lbs
Hit Points: 35
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 feet
Armor Class: 10
Attacks: +5 melee, +7/+2 ranged
Damage: By weapon type (typically dagger, 1d4)
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: -
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +10
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 14

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +6, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +7, Knowledge (Arts and Literature) +6, Listen +5, Perform (Dance) +6, Sense Motive +9, Speak Language (French, Italian, Latin), Spot +3.



Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy, Bluff, and Sense Motive).

Possessions: All that she desires!

Description


At 53 years old, Catherine is not aging gracefully. Standing just over 5 feet in height, she is dumpy and rather tired looking. She has thinning white hair, plain features, and pale skin. She looks more like a grandmother than the Machiavellian ruler she is. While she is unremarkable in appearance, there is a strange but definite magnetism about her that allows her to command all but the staunchest of individuals. As queen, she has a considerable fortune at her disposal and dresses impeccably at all times.

Background

Catherine was the last of the direct descendants of Florence's ruling Medici family. She received an excellent education and learned about the harshness of political life early when at the age of eight, she was held as a hostage by factional opponents of her family.

In 1533 her uncle, Pope Clement VII, arranged for her to wed Henry, the second son of King Francis I of France. It was a wedding born of mutual advantage; the





Medicis wanted access to the French inner courts, and the Valois kings desperately needed money.

Three years later, the dauphin died, suddenly thrusting Henry into the unexpected role of heir to the throne. He became king in 1547. Catherine was extremely unpopular at court, but cemented her somewhat tenuous position by bearing children for the king and through apt diplomacy. Yet, she needed every ounce of her political acumen in the years to come.

Henry died in 1559, and her eldest son, King Francis II, died shortly thereafter. Catherine's 10-year old son succeeded to the throne as Charles IX, and when he died in 1574, another brother became king as Henry III. Since her husband's death, Catherine has effectively ruled Europe's strongest nation by dominating her young and inexperienced sons.

France is wracked by religious discord, however, threatening to undermine her rule. The nation was split between the staunchly Catholic royalty and the rural peasants, and the protestant Huguenots, mostly consisting of the urban middle-class. The middle and late 16th century was marred by a series of inconclusive and bloody religious wars. Catherine was conciliatory when it served her purposes, but always concerned by the rising tide of the Protestants and worked tirelessly behind the scenes to orchestrate their destruction.

King Charles IX was a young man and easily swayed. He fell under the influence of Count Gaspard de Coligny, the French Huguenot leader, a charismatic and powerful nobleman opposed by Catherine. With characteristic speed and ruthlessness, she moved against Coligny and attempted to have him assassinated. When that failed, she convinced her son to order the deaths of the Huguenot leaders, many of whom were gathered in Paris to celebrate the wedding of Henry of Navarre (the future King Henry IV) and Marguerite of Valois.

Combat

Catherine will only fight in the most extreme of circumstances. Generally surrounded by numerous courtiers and trusted guards, it's almost inconceivable that she should ever need to. If, in some instance, she finds herself in mortal danger, Catherine will remain calm and attempt to manipulate her attackers. She might offer them something of immense value to spare her life (later reneging on the deal as soon as possible, unless it somehow advantageous to do otherwise), or point out how valuable she is alive as a hostage. A prime tactic is to divide and conquer her enemies individually through strength of will, often setting them against each other to secure an advantage for herself.

Motivation and Goals

Catherine has vast influence and seeks to preserve it for her and her offspring, with unbridled ruthlessness if necessary. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre is but

the most glaring example of her duplicity and cunning. She is a very able diplomat and has preserved good relations with her neighbors, important consideration due to the internal instability of France, by arranging advantageous marriages for her children.

In addition to defending the rights and privileges of royalty, Catherine is a staunch Catholic, which also serves as an impetus that drives her actions. She thus has close ties to the Papacy and commands the respect of the Cardinals within her kingdom. When possible, she acts to expand the power and influence of the Catholic Church, though never at the expense of royal power. Some have suggested she may have been part of an illuminati conspiracy, though the evidence to support such a theory is negligible.

Base of Operations

Catherine spends much of her time in the Louvre, the ancient royal palace on the Isle de Paris. It already houses a fine collection of paintings, thanks to her patronage of the arts, but it is also a fortress and fully garrisoned by at least a full company of troops. In these times of trouble, security is extremely tight and few without impeccable credentials are allowed inside. Similarly, Catherine rarely leaves the Louvre, recognizing that as she ages her cast of enemies only grows larger. Not for nothing has this wily old schemer survived so many years through such turbulent times. There are rumors that Catherine seeks to live forever, and dark experiments to that end are conducted by France's finest scholars in chambers below the palace.

Adventure Hooks

At a set time on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572, Parisian mobs rose up and killed the Huguenot leaders, including Coligny. Despite a royal order to cease, the killing spread to the provinces through September and only ended after an estimated 50,000 Protestants were dead (3,000 in Paris alone). Catherine certainly had a hand in plotting the uprising, and may have secretly encouraged the massacres even after the royal decree-it certainly served her purposes to do so by weakening the opposition.

The following adventure hooks center around this horrific episode in French history

1) An English merchant is being held in the prison of Chatelet for various unspecified crimes. Word spreads like wildfire among the mobs that he was spirited Protestants to safety in England. Enraged, the prison is soon surrounded by swelling numbers of Catholic radicals who demand the merchant be turned over to their justice. With only a handful of guards, the warden is in a precarious position.

This is all taking place as the PCs, acting as agents on behalf of the British government, are preparing to spring the merchant. They've been ordered to masquerade as French officers, commandeer a regiment of troops

garrisoned nearby, break the siege, and convince the warden they are transferring the prisoner to another locale. As if this wasn't complicated enough, Catherine is inspecting the regiment to be "borrowed" that very day!

2) A member of Catherine's court who claims to be a Huguenot sympathizer (who is actually a member of the virulently anti-clerical secret society known as the Children of Solomon) contacts the PCs with an offer of assistance. He claims that Catherine's support of the bloodletting is urged by her personal secretary, Father Maitre. The courtier, feigning concern for the well being of his nation, offers to aid the PCs in infiltrating the palace if they would assassinate Maitre.

In fact, Maitre is a good man who does his best to temper Catherine's excesses, and is a personal favorite of the royal household. His death will be blamed on Huguenot elements, and the cycle of violence will be given new impetus... just as the Children of Solomon desire.

Circe

Race: Half-Fey
Class/Level: Cleric 2nd, Sorcerer 9th, Loremaster 7th
Height/Weight: 5'2", 120 lbs
Hit Points: 34
Initiative: Init +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 feet
Armor Class: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 *ring of protection* +2)
Attacks: +7/+2 melee (unarmed)
Damage: 1d3-1 unarmed attack
Special Attacks: Spells
Special Qualities: Lore, Greater Lore, Loremaster Secrets (secret knowledge of avoidance x 4), cat familiar (+2 to Move Silently checks, Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, touch, speak with master, speak with animals of its type)
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +13
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 18, Wis 8, Cha 22

Skills: Alchemy +10, Bluff +9, Craft (Weaving) +10, Handle Animal +9, Heal +8, Knowledge (Religion) +18, Knowledge (Arcana) +18, Scry +20, Spellcraft (Arcane) +12, Spellcraft (Divine) +12, Swim +10, Wilderness Lore +6

Languages: Common, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Sylvan,

Feats: Brew Potion, Heighten Spell, Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge (Religion)), Skill Focus (Swim), Still Spell.

Possessions: Chiton (draped garment of ancient Greece) pulled in at the waist by a loose belt of shells, *cloak of charisma* +2, *ring of animal friendship*, *ring of protection* +2, *wand of polymorph other*, *potion of neutralize poison*.

Spell List: 9/5/5/4/4/4/3/2/1

0-Level: *Arcane Mark*, *Daze*, *Detect Magic*, *Detect Poison*, *Light*, *Flare*, *Mending*, *Read Magic*, *Resistance*.

1-Level: *Charm Person*, *Comprehend Languages*, *Detect Undead*, *Identify*, *Ray Of Enfeeblement*.

2-Level: *Detect Thoughts*, *Locate Object*, *Misdirection*, *Obscure Object*, *See Invisibility*.

3-Level: *Clairaudience/Clairvoyance*, *Hold Person*, *Suggestion*, *Tongues*.

4-Level: *Detect Scrying*, *Emotion*, *Locate Creature*, *Scrying*.

5-Level: *Contact Other Plane*, *Prying Eyes*, *Mind Fog*, *Rary's Telepathic Bond*.

6-Level: *Analyze Dweomer*, *Legend Lore*, *True Seeing*;
7th- *Greater Scrying*, *Vision*.

8-Level: *Discern Location*.

Description

Circe is a divine beauty, with all of the proportions of a Grecian statue and the grace of a depiction on a red-figure urn. She wears her dark auburn hair in a loose pile, held in place with a coral comb. Stray strands curl about her cheeks and neck.

Background

Circe is the daughter of the sun



god Helios and Perseis, an ocean nymph. Her siblings include Pasiphae (wife of King Minos of Crete), Aëtes (king of Colchis) and Perses (father of the goddess Hecate).

Circe lives upon the island of Aeaea where she wills the time away by turning former lovers into swine, wolves, and other animals by placing “a vile pinch” in their wine.

Well known for her alchemical ability, the sea god Glaucus came to her for a potion with which to beguile the maiden Scylla. Circe fell in love with Glaucus and therefore prepared a cursed elixir that would do away with the competition. Upon drinking the potion, Scylla turned into a monstrosity with six-necks ending in bestial faces that craved human flesh.

At a later date, the hero Ulysses and his crew landed upon Aeaea, and all but Ulysses were turned into pigs. Obtaining a protective herb from Hermes, Ulysses defeated the witch and ordered her, at swordpoint, to release his fellows.

Motivation and Goals

Circe inherits her impulsiveness and whimsy from her parents (traits shared by both Greek gods and fey). She passes time by making lovers forget their past and turning strangers into animals. Her games are not intended to be hurtful or manipulative; she really doesn't have a mind for that sort of thing. She has no ambition beyond her island and her immediate desires.

Circe respects anyone who holds his own against her tricks and wiles. Her favor, once gained, is everlasting. Few mortals will find a better advisor.

Combat

Circe prefers to avoid confrontation. Instead, she employs trickery (drugged food and wine), surprise (quickly zapping opponents with her wand of polymorph other) and seduction. If these ruses fail, she surrenders or flees.

Base of Operations

Circe resides on the island of Aeaea. Her house of cut stones stands in a glade within a dense forest at the center of the island. She has all of the amenities of civilization. Two dryads and two nymphs serve as housemaids.

Wild mountain wolves and lions prowl the perimeter, poor bewitched beasts tamed by enchantment and herbal potions. The wolves will bark excitedly at the approach of strangers, and the lions will follow them closely (often getting under their feet), but neither will attack except by Circe's command.

Adventure Hooks

1) The PCs have been pursuing a slavers' galley, determined to rescue a particular someone out of the

slavers' grasp. They catch up when the slavers put in at a nearby island to repair and re-provision. The battle goes easier than expected. Then the PCs find out why. The captain went ashore with half of his crew. He also took a few of the most valuable prisoners with him to ensure they were not damaged during his absence. But the shore party is long over due. To complete the mission, the PCs must go ashore to recover the last of the captives.

2) The PCs seek help in interpreting a vision, identifying the properties of an artifact, locating a hidden shrine, or discovering the weakness of an seemingly invulnerable arch-enemy. They seek out Circe specifically because of her vast knowledge and mastery of divination magic.

Countess Erzsébet Bathory

Race: Human

Class/Level: Aristocrat 6th

Height/Weight: 5'7", 145 lbs

Hit Points: 32

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 11 (+1 Dex)

Attacks: +4 melee (masterwork dagger of wounding +1), +6 ranged (masterwork whip)

Damage: 1d4+1 masterwork dagger of wounding +1, 1d2-1 whip (subdual)

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +5

Abilities: Str 9, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +6, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +3, Heal +4, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (Local) +6, Knowledge (Nobility) +6, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Ride +5, Spellcraft (Arcane) +4

Feats: Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Whip), Skill Focus (Intimidate), Skill Focus (Knowledge (Arcana))

Languages: Common, Infernal

Possessions: Noble's outfit, jewelry worth 800 gp, *dagger of wounding +1*, masterwork whip, *potion of charisma*.

Description

Erzsébet Bathory has a pale complexion and red hair, often done up in the latest Venetian fashion. Those who first meet her come away remembering her dark, almost animalistic eyes and very white teeth, although the same visitors might disagree as to what was more disturbing, her cold stare or the rare feral smile.

Once a famous beauty, her looks are beginning to fade with age. Where some aging ladies make up for

their diminishing looks with wit and charm, and thereby become even more attractive, Bathory is lacking in such graces. She is coldly formal with her peers and short-tempered with her inferiors. A commoner is little more than a dog to her, and she never misses an opportunity to remind it of this fact. Many visiting nobles have been put off by glimpses of this cruelty and madness beneath the placid masquerade.

Background

Erzsébet Bathory was born in Hungary in 1560. Her family was powerful and wealthy. It was also cursed with more than its fair share of insanity, devil-worship and perversion. One ancestor, portentously, helped Vlad the Impaler gain the throne a century before. Such circumstances boded poorly for young Erzsébet, and nothing interfered with what seems to be an predictable descent into cruelty and madness of her own.

In 1575, at the age of 15, she married Count Ferencz Nadasdy de Nadasd of Fogarasfold (1555-1604), who later became known as the "Black Hero of Hungary". The count was often off fighting the Turks, leaving his young bride to her own devices. This included taking a string of lovers (rumor has it, she bore one illegitimate son); visits to her aunt Countess Klara Bathory, an open bisexual; experimenting with herbal brews, potions, powders and drugs; dabbling in the occult; and amusing herself by punishing her servants.

In disciplining the female servants, Erzsébet graduated from inventive but minor cruelty to formal torture in an underground chamber. At some point, she came to the belief that the blood of young women had the power to soften her own skin, and possibly even extend her life. From 1600 onwards the death rate among her servants increased. Her trusted servants would recruit new girls from the surrounding peasantry, offering the parents small sums of money and the promise of a better life for their daughters. Instead, their fate was one of torture and murder. Their blood would fill the countess' bath, or her goblet.

The current year is 1605. In the last year, she lost her husband to a lengthy and painful illness. She also married off her eldest daughter Anna (age 20) to a powerful count; two surviving children, Katalin (in her late teens) and Pal (age 7), are still at home.

Motivation and Goals

Bathory is motivated by three traits: constant boredom, vanity and cruelty.



To relieve her boredom, she pursues various diversions, from taking new lovers (who she eventually rebuffs in a most hold-hearted manner) to delving into the occult.

To satisfy her vanity, she follows the latest fashions and spends long hours gazing at her reflection in mirrors. Desperate for a means to slow the effects of aging on her beauty, she often falls prey to charlatans peddling "miracle" elixirs (-2 Appraise). Finally, she responds well to flattery, so long as it is cleverly presented (+2 circumstance bonus to Charisma checks, opposed by Sense Motive).

To satiate her cruelty, she punishes her maid servants.

In fact, her growing sadism can be seen as the nexus of all three motivations.

Combat

Bathory will not engage in direct combat. Such exertion is beneath her. Should anyone threaten her person, she relies upon her guards (War1) and servants: Dorothea (Witch 3rd), Johannes (Warrior 2nd), Anna (Thief 1st). Iloona (Commoner 2nd) will act as a human shield and last line of defense, hoping to give her mistress time to escape. Even if all of her servants are dispatched, Bathory remains confident in the safety afforded by her social rank and contacts.

Things are different if her opponents are subdued or immobilized. In such situations, Bathory will either deliver the coup de grace or settle in for a lengthy diversion using her whip.

Base of Operations

Erzsébet Bathory resides in Castle Csejthe, a mountaintop fortress overlooking the village of Csejthe in north-west Hungary.

Besides this physical fortress, Bathory takes comfort in the protection in her social status. The Bathory family is one of the in oldest and wealthiest families in Eastern Europe. Her family includes kings, princes, prime ministers and cardinals. Only a very brave or very stupid person risks alienating or angering the Bathory dynasty.

Adventure Hooks

1) In the city, the PCs pass a posh shoppe displaying fashionable dresses, cosmetics, wigs and mirrors. They remember the expression: "Noble ladies shed skin like snakes" (a response to "Beauty is but skin deep" and

comment on the popularity of powders and wigs). The PCs realize that they could make a healthy profit as middle-men, delivering the latest fashions to isolated noblewomen, such as Countess Bathory. The trick, of course, is in traversing the dark and frigid Carpathian Mountains, inhabited by wolves and worse.

2) Rumors about the horrors in Castle Csejthe finally reach the Hungarian Emperor. He orders the governor of the province (and Bathory's cousin), Count Cuyorgy Thurzo, to investigate these allegations. The PCs are among the soldiers who accompany the count on a midnight raid into Castle Csejthe. There they encounter untold horrors....



Dominica Rayn

Race: Half-Elf Female

Class/Level: Rogue 8th

Height/Weight:

Hit Points: 26

Initiative: +6 (+4 Improved Initiative, +2 Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 12 (+2 Dex)

Attacks: Dagger +6/+1 melee, blowgun +8/+3 ranged

Damage: Dagger 1d4, blowgun 1+ poison

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +4d6

Special Qualities: Evasion, Uncanny Dodge
(Dex bonus to AC, Can't be flanked)

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +4

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 17

Skills: Appraise +5, Balance +2, Bluff +11, Climb +1, Concentration +3, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +1, Disguise +2, Forgery +4, Gather Information +4, Hide +2, Innuendo +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +2, Open Locks +1, Pick Pocket +12, Profession (Innkeeper) +6, Profession (Gambler) +12, Read Lips +3, Search +3, Spot +10, Sense Motive +10, Swim +1.

Feats: Alertness, Card Shark (new feat, see below), Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Pick Pocket).

Possessions: *Dagger +1*, blowgun, vial of giant wasp poison, jewelry worth 500gp (including a tourmaline brooch), *ring of mind shielding*, *stud of the silver tongue* (new magic item; see below), casino/tavern and contents.

Description

Supplanted by a rival as the Gambler Queen in the popular imagination, Rayn is an embittered woman, her psyche barely hinged. She is desperate to regain the notoriety and influence of her youth, and will go to great extremes to this end. A keen and shrewd woman, Rayn is always juggling multiple plots designed to reverse her fortunes.

However, the weight of her ploys and the advances of age give her a tired and weary look, and her hair has completely grayed. Still quite wealthy, she wears fine gowns that help hide the imperfections in her figure brought about by the ravages of time, for she is quite vain and refuses to accept she has lost most of what once had dozens of suitors lusting over. Nevertheless, she retains her ability to bewitch a man; there is something compelling, almost seductive, in her eyes, voice, movements.

At one time arrogant and haughty, some say reckless, she is much more cautious now, gripped by the fear of another failure. Above all, Dominica Rayn hates to lose.

Background

Before losing control of The Wayfarer (a notorious floating casino and inn of ill-repute) to Isabelle Pharo in a legendary gambling match, Rayn had it all. Wealthy beyond imagination, she has a prominent figure in all the right circles, a woman of distinction. She enjoyed the affection of handsome and wealthy men, all vying for her favor, and had a insanely profitable business that kept her living in the lap of luxury. Life was perfect.

But it all came crashing down around her. The same

New Feat

Card Shark

You are a professional hustler and a natural at card games.

Prerequisite: Wis 13+

Benefit: Many forms of gambling, poker chief among them, depend upon a player's ability to mislead their opponents as to the strength of their hand. Characters with this feat gain +4 to their profession (gambling) check while engaged in such a game. A poker face is useful for lying in general, and therefore this feat grants +2 bonus to Bluff checks in other situations as well.

New Magic Item

Stud of the Silver Tongue

This small silver stud looks like an earring, but in fact its magical abilities only become apparent when used in tongue piecing. With it, a character can make a suggestion, as per the spell, once per day per point of Charisma bonus. The target of the spell must make a Will save at DC 14 + the character's Cha bonus.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, suggestion; **Market Price:** 6,000gp

greed and arrogance that propelled her from the streets to the dizzying heights that came with owning The Wayfarer inevitably brought about her downfall. The hulk wasn't big enough for two gambling legends; Rayn had to prove to herself, but more importantly to her patrons and to the pup Pharo, that Rayn was still the master. The stakes: The Wayfarer itself!

To the shock of many, Dominica lost, and while it cannot be proven, some suggest Pharo received some "luck" of her own to win, courtesy of Rayn's disgruntled employees. Humiliated, Rayn fled the ship, promising revenge against Isabelle Pharo.

While her myth of invincibility had been shattered and her pride bruised, the loss hardly forced Rayn to beg on the streets for her next meal. Far from destitute, she can draw on a sizable fortune she had stashed away during her tenure as time aboard The Wayfarer. And she still has many contacts in high circles that she can call upon when need be. Few are actually friends, but she has a deep and intimate knowledge of the affairs of many score powerful individuals who she can threaten with blackmail if need be. In short, there is precious little Dominica can't get done when it suits her.



Motivation and Goals

Dominica Rayn is a cunning plotter. She prefers to ally herself with others powerful enough to be of use but subservient enough to recognize her authority. She has a monomaniacal hatred of Pharo, and to this end she will seek out and try to destroy anything Pharo holds dear.

She sometimes lets this hatred get in the way of her true goal of restoring her fortunes and, in particular, regaining control of the Wayfarer. If she can hurt Pharo while bettering her own position—financially or socially—so much the better, but often her obsession with her rival is a distraction that causes her plans to come unglued.

Combat

Dominica is skilled with both dagger and blowgun, both of which she keeps secreted upon her person at all times. A ruthless woman, she is apt to lace either with poison when fighting dire enemies. However, capable as she may well be, one doesn't get to her stature and live as long as she has with enemies so numerous by resorting to combat. In her mind, if things reach the stage where she must defend herself than she has well and truly failed. For dirty work she retains the services of a pair of thugs: Crofter, a man with hollow eyes who stinks of fear, and Alnwick, a shaggy-haired half-dwarf with cracked lips. These cutthroats are simple-minded and loyal, just as Dominica prefers her men.

Base of Operations

Having lost the Wayfarer, Dominica opened a casino/tavern called The Maverick. The name is actually representative of the clientele—rogues and riff-raff, a far cry from the rich and powerful who patronize her former business. The Maverick is run-down and dingy, with broken bottles and broken men littering the streets out front. The sounds of drunken raucousness keeps most honest people away, and most residents of the neighborhood maintain a safe distance lest they come in contact with the rough elements that frequent the dingy joint.

A narrow staircase leads from the ground floor to Dominica's private chambers above. The door at the top of the landing remains locked, and all windows on the second floor are barred. Her valuables are kept in a heavy iron trunk that's bolted to the floor, and arcane locked for additional protection (her tourmaline brooch acts as a "key" for the arcane lock). Upstairs one also finds a small room that has been magically chilled to house her personal collection of wine, for which Dominica has a weakness. Amongst the wine bottles are kept a potion of cure serious wounds and, just in case one needs to make an escape, one of invisibility.

Adventure Hooks

1) The Wayfarer has been burglarized, and Pharo suspects Dominica Rayn of being involved. She therefore hires the PCs to break into The Maverick in

search of evidence to that end.

While Rayn is too smart to keep anything that might prove her guilt on the premises, the characters may uncover some written records of the "dirt" she has on her former patrons. What do the PCs do with this valuable information? Blackmail is a profitable game, but dangerous when one is dealing with individuals of this level of wealth and power. And once it becomes known that the PCs are in possession of this information, efforts will be made to silence them permanently.

2) A patron at The Maverick has been murdered, and the PCs are hired to escort a cleric into the rowdy establishment to question the corpse (using speak with dead). The cleric is visibly nervous around Ryan, fearful even. A few days later the priest is found dead, buried in a riverbank nearby, and suspicion falls upon Rayn. Why was the deceased so nervous around her? The PCs are asked to investigate.

The cleric's fear of Rayn was based on shame, for he lusted after her. No matter the prayer, the penance, the staunch resolve, when he looked at her his blood ran hot. He had once, many years before, given into his passion and ever since he has lived with the fear that she might ruin him by revealing his indiscretions. However, Dominica actually had no part in the death, for it served no end. Instead, it was the same cutthroat who murdered the casino patron, fearing that the cleric would uncover his guilt.

Etelka von Anklappen

Race: Half-Elven

Class/Level: Rogue 2nd/Wizard 4th/Arcanologist 2nd

Height/Weight: 5'1", 140 lbs

Hit Points: 23

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 12 (Dex)

Attacks: +4 melee, +6 ranged

Damage: Short sword 1d6 melee, hand crossbow 1d4 ranged

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +1d6

Special Qualities: Evasion, Bardic Knowledge, Magic Device Mastery (Int bonus as additional modifier to Use magic Device checks; further +2 if she also succeeds at Bardic Knowledge).

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +7

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 16

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +6, Decipher Script +5, Forgery +4, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (Drow Arcana) +9, Knowledge (History) +2, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +5, Speak Languages (Draconic, Goblinoid, Underdark), Spellcraft +7, Use Magic Device +5.

Feats: Empower Spell, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Hand Crossbow), Improved Initiative.

Possessions: +1 spell-storing short sword, cloak of arachnida, periapt of proof against poison, hand crossbow, townhouse and related trappings.

Spell List: 7/4/3

0-Level: *Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Poison, Ghost Sound, Mage Hand, Open/Close, Read Magic, Resistance.*

1st-Level: *Identify, Change Self, Charm Person, Comprehend Languages.*

2nd-Level: *Absorb Verminous Ability* (new spell, see box), *Blur, Charm Vermin* (new spell, see box), *Knock, Locate Object.*

Special: As a result of the failed casting of a dark elf spell (absorb verminous ability; see sidebar) Anklappen has a horrible mutation: the skin on her arms is rubbery and secretes a slimy substance, traits “borrowed” from a monstrous slug. When bare, her sticky arms provide a +5 circumstance bonus to grapple checks. In addition, once per hour she can expel a large amount of slime from her wrists, filling a single square. Creatures moving through this slime must succeed at a Balance check (DC 13) or fall prone. The slime lasts for 1d4 rounds.

Description

Etelka is in her early 30’s. Her dark hair with red glints is secured in a tidy chignon at her nape. Even from a distance her dazzling beauty is apparent. She has wide sparkling eyes, brownish evergreen in coloration, the precise shade of pine trees and wooden glens. In them is a solitary gleam that cannot be disguised—the look of a soul craving power. Among the civilized Etelka wears the latest style of gown, but on expeditions prefers men’s fashions. Even when in the wilds, however, she insists on wearing clean, well-maintained clothes, and as a result is always accompanied by porters bearing her luggage. She walks with an air of aristocracy and claims the title of baroness, but in fact there is no true blue blood flowing through her veins.

Anklappen is a drinker and lacks drive, but also is nosy, competitive, and thrives on one-upmanship. She enjoys avoiding work, but loves taking the credit and riches from it. Though snappish and rude, with precious few principles, she is able to very effectively mask her unseemly countenance at will.

Background

The daughter of a low-level bureaucrat, Etelka grew up on the extreme outer fringes of aristocracy, close enough to see in but barred from entering owing to her birth rank. She knew that she wanted to be a part of that illustrious world, but was all too aware that her options for doing so were extremely limited.

Etelka stole, cheated, and conned her way through



New Spells

Charm Vermin

Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. +5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell works as per charm person, except that it only works on vermin and is not restricted by creature size. It's a favorite spell of the dark elves, useful for dealing with the giant spiders, rats, and monstrous slugs that co-inhabit the subterranean realms.

Absorb Verminous Ability

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: No

Spell Resistance: No

With a successful touch attack, you can absorb from a vermin creature any single special ability. The only caveat is that the vermin cannot be larger in size than you. When necessary, your body will temporarily alter itself to contend with these changes. For example, you might grow powerful mandibles when absorbing a giant ant's Improved Grab ability, or a barbed tail in the case of the Poison attack of a giant scorpion.

Any obvious physical alterations while abhor most good or neutral-aligned people, resulting in a -2 circumstance penalty to any Charisma based skill rolls.

against the nobles for their slights. Again, she sees Drow magic as a means to these ends.

Base of Operations

Etelka splits her time between two residences. She maintains a comfortable townhouse in the city's wealthiest district, close to the court she so longs to be a part of and the libraries that serve as the foundations for her dark studies. The townhouse's most impressive feature is her dining room, where visitors cast a nervous glance at the ceiling. A sheet of bubbling lava dances across the ceiling, crashing restlessly against the walls,

creating sounds and temperatures Anklappen finds soothing. While she claims its merely for show, some claim she can reverse whatever magic it is that allows the lava to defy gravity, causing it to come crashing down upon unfortunate victims.

Her other residence is a cavern complex, the site of her greatest dark elf find, several days ride from the city. She performs most of her more sensitive experiments here, in a chamber that is dimly illuminated by lamps created from firebug carapaces upon which continual flame spells have been cast. Her collection of dark elf spells is kept in a permanently invisible spellbook, which she reads by casting a see invisibility spell. Etelka is quite proud of the dretch she has bound to the complex, a fiend she feels a strange kinship towards. She shows it kindness and allows it freedom, the first of either the demon has ever experienced, and in return the pathetic creature serves her loyally and with affection.

Adventure Hooks

1) Woodsmen are found murdered throughout the woods, though the methods used in the assaults vary—in some cases there is clear evidence of a blade stroke, while in others the cause of death was poison inflicted by a powerful bite. The one commonality is that there are no tracks that might help identify the killer.

While the PCs investigate the rash of murders, Etelka also shows interest in finding the culprit, but for a very different reason. Having acquired a sample of the poison, she's come to believe, correctly as it turns out, that the killer is a drider using the trees to move about and avoid detection. Anklappen wants to forge an alliance with the drider so that she might learn more about dark elves. Can the PCs find it first, or will the two evils find one another and form an unholy partnership?

2) Sirius Silvanus is a wheelchair bound elven arcanologist. While his body may be broken, his mind and wits remain ever able and he continues his work from home, supported by a network of highly placed informants. Sirius has become convinced that Etelka has drow magic in her possession, and is adamant that they are taken from her before they can be put to ill-good.

He therefore hires the PCs to find and recover the fruit of Anklappen's life's labors. If successful, they'll have made a valuable ally in Sirius but also a powerful and intractable enemy in Etelka.



Grand Mistress Velumia

Race: Alicorn

Class/Level: Paladin 10th

Height/Weight: 5'10", 150 lbs

Hit Points: 86

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 40 feet

Armor Class: 22 (+1 Dex, full plate armor +1, large metal shield)

Attacks: Longsword +14/+9 melee, heavy lance +14/+9 melee, short bow +13/+8 ranged

Damage: Longsword 1d8+4, heavy lance 1d8+4, short bow 1d6+4

Special Attacks: Smite Good, Turn Undead

Special Qualities: Detect Good, Divine Grace, Lay on Hands, Divine Health, Aura of Courage, Remove Disease 3/week, Special Mount.

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +7

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 19, Cha 20

Skills: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +3, Heal +6, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +1, Knowledge (Religion) +7, Listen +2, Ride +7.

Feats: Mounted Combat, Ride-by Attack, Spell Penetration, Spirited Charge

Possessions: Heavy warhorse (see below for stats), *full plate mail* +1, large metal shield, *heavy lance* +2, *Spellslash* (+1 keen, spell-storing longsword), shortbow, *potion of lesser restoration*.

Description

Grand Mistress Velumia of the Templar Knights of the Dales looks very much like a large and powerfully built elf, but with a ruddy complexion rather than the typical fair fey skin. Her hair is a rich mane of black, with ears that are larger than that of an elf and vaguely equine in shape, and she has a small silver vestigial horn in the center of her forehead that reveals her half-unicorn heritage. Velumia poses a striking figure in her full plate armor, at once martial and beautiful, her handsome face always wearing a defiant and somewhat fierce expression.

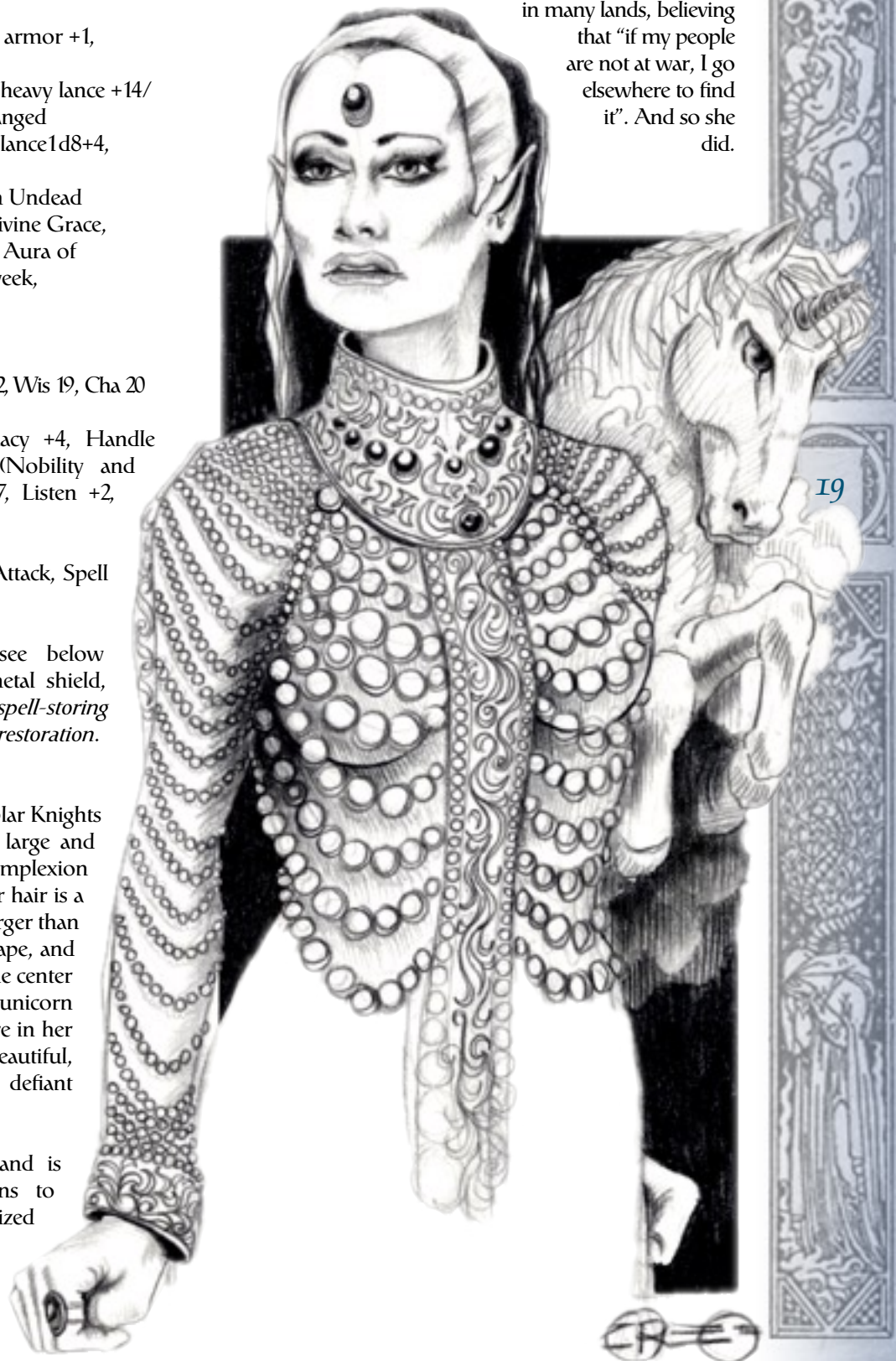
She has something of a temper and is uncomfortable waiting for her plans to unfold; its at these times, characterized by her blowing impatient, frustrated breaths, that her retinue have learned

to give her the widest of berths. Velumia is utterly and totally dedicated to her deity and her cause, and will gladly give her life in her service. However, despite her proud and confident bearing, privately she is self-conscious and unsure of her fitness to further St. Wealhta's ideals on the mortal plane. Pronounced setbacks may cause self-doubt to impair her decisions.

Background

Born to a wealthy landed family, the restless Velumia set out at the age of 18 to explore the world and find glory.

The dashing woman fought in many lands, believing that "if my people are not at war, I go elsewhere to find it". And so she did.





The Order of Templar Knights of the Dales

Centuries ago, while fighting alongside their human allies, elves decided to take the fight to the orcish strongholds located in the rugged hills beyond their forest homes. It was an unusual departure for the traditionally isolationist race, and one which their combatants were generally unsuited for. As a result, the fey gods deigned to couple elves and hill-residing unicorns together to create warriors strong and hardy enough to stand toe-to-toe against the orc hordes in open battle. They succeeded, resulting in the race known as dales alicorns and thereby ensuring ultimate victory.

However vital their role during war, in peace the dale alicorns found life among the elves difficult. Bred for war, for them existence after the battles had been won was tiresome, and because of their hill-unicorn heritage many considered the confines of the forests uncomfortable and even claustrophobic. They longed for the exhilaration of combat and the open spaces of the rugged highlands.

Their existence was made more difficult by the attitude of their elven hosts. They were disdainful of alicorn's bastard heritage, and found them to be crude and warlike brutes. Elves believed that their alliance with humans was nothing more than a brief foray of necessity, and anomaly, and vowed to remain within the protective confines of their forests forevermore. For their part, the alicorns argued the folly in this, advocating an aggressive presence in the world at large and a continued war against evil.

The seething conflict was ripe for exploitation. Velumnia, a leading alicorn knight, convinced her fellows that the elves had been corrupted by fey influences and attempted to lead a coup against the fey monarch. In truth, it was she who had been seduced to evil through her suspicion and hatred. The coup was a spectacular failure, and the alicorns were banished from the forest. Believing in the righteousness of their leader, soon all of Velusia's fellows had embraced darkness. They banded together to form The Order of the Templar Knights of the Dales, dedicated to ruthlessly fighting orcish and goblinoid menaces and to destroying the conservative elements that prevented a complete and final victory against the enemy centuries before, foremost among them the elves.

They are now a bigoted and racist people, confident in their own superiority and shrouded their militant actions in the rhetoric of chivalry. They see all other forms of life as inferior and their needs secondary to their own. In the end, other races are to be eliminated or reduced to serfdom.

It was during one of these conflicts that the mercenary knight was captured and imprisoned. The commanding officer of the gaol, a brutish human named Vorster, delighted in administering cruel and inhumane punishment to the inmates. The beautiful alicorn was singled out for special abuse. Velumnia suffered. Her strength was drained in the mines working a chain gang, and she was tortured for being unable to lift her pick any longer. She felt as though she were dying by inches, but her stoic resolve was noted by her patron, St. Wealhtha. Fortified by divine grace, she survived long enough to effect an escape.

Upon returning home, Velumnia began to climb the ranks of the knightly order. With her deities favor her ascent was swift, so that she became grand-mistress while still a young woman. Her years in prison had hardened her, much to St. Wealhtha's delight. She has seen the worst of humanity and had survived, but now carries an undying hatred of such "barbarian" peoples. More importantly, her time in prison had taught her patience.

As a result, the unholy designs of her patron are advancing with speed and focus.

Motivation and Goals

Velumnia is driven to serve her deity. Her entire existence is devoted to this end, so much so that she would gladly and unhesitantly give her life in the name of St. Wealhtha. Although it is often difficult to find fault with the goals of the Order, the means by which they attempt to accomplish it is another matter. Members of the knighthood believe absolutely that the conservative old-races who helped shape the current world-particularly the elves-are also responsible for what ails it. The only way to be rid of these problems, they insist, is to destroy these races.

As a result of her brutal imprisonment, Velumnia holds a special hatred for humanity and considers them little better than animals. Even the most noble-born human is treated with thinly veiled disdain, though she works hard to rein in her spite lest it blind her to Wealhtha's will. Nevertheless, the torture inflicted upon her by Vorster is enthusiastically returned upon any human prisoners in her care, and one day the gaoler himself will feel the pain of revenge.

Combat

Velumnia is widely held to be the pinnacle of chivalry. While she is skilled with the bow, this weapon is better suited for hunting than war. Instead, she prefers to wield the lance and longsword in devastating mounted attacks, well aware that few indeed are the individuals who can stand before a charge of heavy cavalry. Velumnia prefers to capture nobility and fellow knights, both as a sign of class solidarity and to hold them for ransom, but she extends no such courtesy to common enemies. Indeed, she'll put an entire village to the sword while sparing the

lives of the defending knights.

While brave and always ready to throw her knights against an enemy in a headlong frontal charge, no one should think for a moment Velumia lacks tactical sense. Indeed, she always ensures reserves are at hand to exploit the gap made in the enemy by the heavy cavalry, and flanking maneuvers by auxiliary light cavalry are employed to cut off retreat where possible. She also knows the value of good intelligence and siege warfare, and has dedicated much resources to expanding both within the Knights of the Dales.

Base of Operations

Somewhere among the expanse that is The Dales is an impenetrable rose thicket that stands 30' high and measures over 100 meters across. There is but one apparent means of entering the thicket: following a stream that winds its way through the thorns. One must take care to never to walk upon the stepping stones that protrude from the glistening water, for anyone who so much as wets the seem of his cloak will find ...

The stream emerges in a sunlit glade far too large thicket. It measures five miles in diameter, containing a fine tower and monastery belonging to the Knights of the Dales, as well as farmlands that can clearly support the needs of the inhabitants. The knights, of course, have no

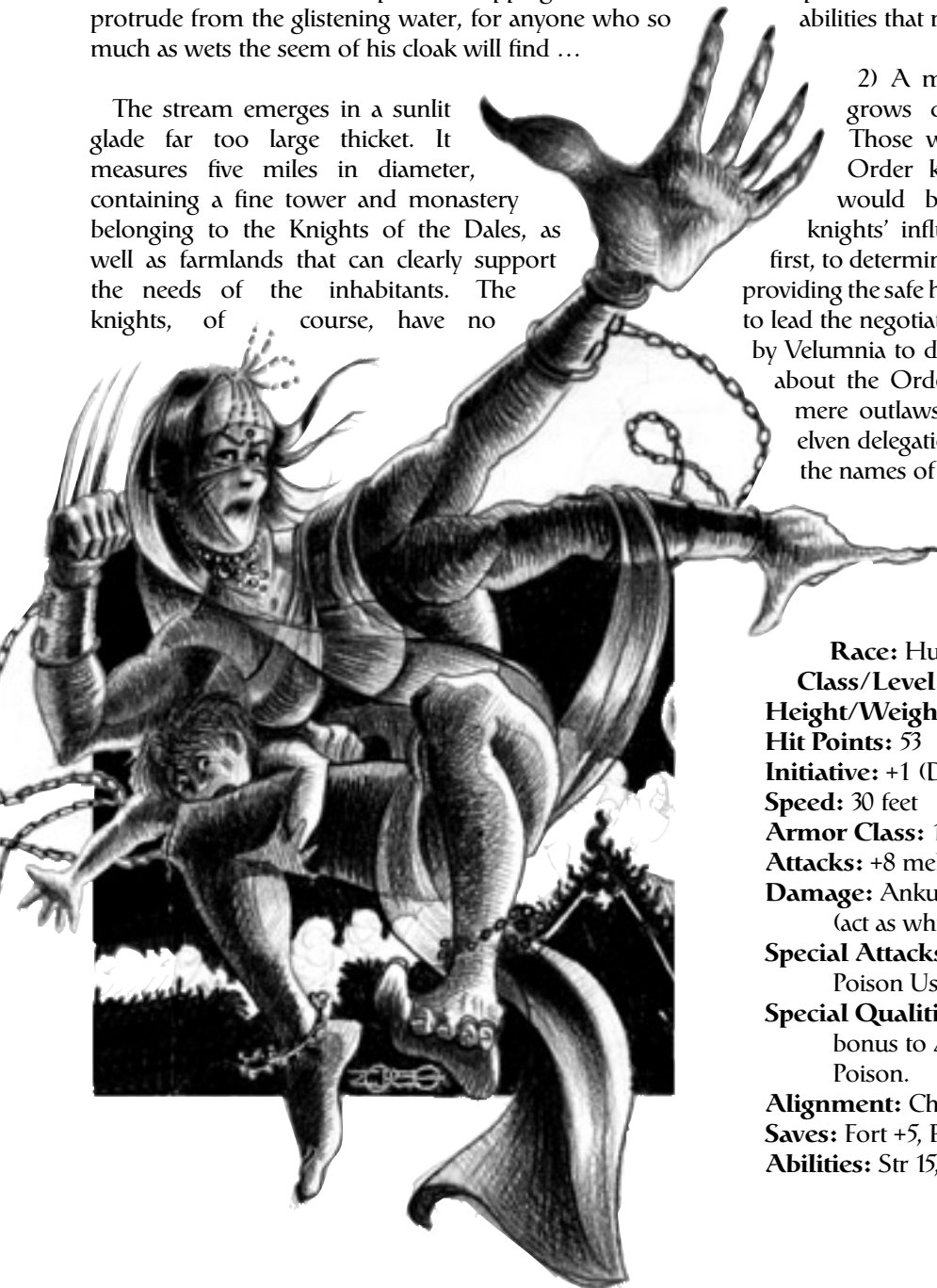
need of gingerly following the waterway to come and go. For them, the thicket parts way, forming a tunnel that seals behind them.

This secret glade is the heart of the Order, and of Saint Wealhta's power. Should it be destroyed, both will be all but eliminated as serious threats.

Adventure Hooks

1) The characters are being doggedly pursued by Velumia and a contingent of her Knights of the Dale for perceived crimes—perhaps the PCs associated with half-orcs or allowed goblinoid noncombatants to survive after a raid on their lair. They are forced to take refuge in a farming village and join the locals to blend in, hoping the knights will eventually grow tired of the chase and go away. However, the lot of a peasant farmer is hard, and besides helping with the manual labor they must help fend off predatory beasts, combat a disease, and put out a barn fire—all without demonstrating abilities that may blow their cover.

2) A member of the Knights of the Dale grows disillusioned and wants to defect. Those who suspect the true nature of the Order know that luring away a member would be invaluable in undermining the knights' influence. But she insists on a meeting first, to determine whether the elves are serious about providing the safe haven she requests. The PCs are tapped to lead the negotiations. In fact, this is an elaborate ploy by Velumia to draw out those who know too much about the Order. A squad of sergeants, posing as mere outlaws, attack and attempt to capture the elven delegation; captured PCs will be tortured for the names of those they work for.



Velumia

Race: Human

Class/Level: Rogue 6th, Assassin 4th

Height/Weight: 5'7", 125 lbs

Hit Points: 53

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 11 (+1 Dex)

Attacks: +8 melee, +8 ranged

Damage: Ankus 1d6+4 melee, chains 1d4+2 ranged (act as whips)

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +5d6, Death Attack, Poison Use

Special Qualities: Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked), +2 Save versus Poison.

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +3

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 8



Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +3, Climb +4, Craft (Chains) +6, Disable Device +3, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +4, Hide +9, Intimidate +3, Jump +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +5, Ride +3, Search +4, Spot +5.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: Skeletal elephant mount, +2 *ankus*, *ring of regeneration*, chains and manacles.

Description

Hatira is a woman of Indian extraction, with dark skin and darker hair and eyes. Approaching middle-age, she nonetheless looks much younger and her body is graced with hard muscles. Her thick, dark hair is generally pulled haphazardly into tail at the back of her neck. She walks barefoot with a fluidity and grace that belies her powerful stature, wearing the traditional headscarf of her people and white robes often stained with the blood of her victims. Most revealing of her demonic nature are her four arms ending in clawed hands, from which dangle chains and manacles used to secure kidnapped children.

Having lost her children to disease many years ago, she is a sorrowful and embittered woman. Indeed, after all the nights sent cursing the gods for taking her babies away, there is probably little humanity left in her. More demon now than woman, she is a bloodthirsty killer who delights at spreading disease and stealing children. Yet, even now as her humanity slips, there are times when she thinks she sees her brood in the face of children or even halflings, causing her momentary pause, and her dreams are haunted by the last disease-raddled days of her babies and she still hears their dying cries. It's an eternal torment that drives her reign of terror.

Background

If adversity and poverty are, as the saying goes, "the mother and father of character", then by rights Hatira should be a paragon of virtue. Events conspired to make her anything but.

She was born to a serf in the throws of destitution, and even as a young child she was thrown to work to help support the family. At the age of 15 she was forced into marriage with an abusive and ignorant man. Hatiri was admired by the men of the village for her beauty and for her ability to outwork her slacker husband, driving the jealous man to beat her brutally.

The only glimmer of hope in her life were the children that were born of this unhappy marriage. They represented an outlet for her kindness and a source of the only love she had ever known, and were therefore doted on constantly. She thanked the gods for their blessing.

A disease ravaged her village, and while most

New Monster

Skeletal Elephant

Huge Undead

Hit Dice: 10d12

Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 17 (-2 size, +9 natural)

Attacks: Slam +15 melee, 2 stamps +10 melee; or gore +15 melee

Damage: Slam 2d6+9, stamp 2d6+4; gore 2d8 +14

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Trample 2d8+14

Special Qualities: Undead, Ribcage

Saves: Fort 21, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 10, Con -, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6

Feats: Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organization: Solitary, or herd (6-30)

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral Evil

Advancement: 11-21 HD (Huge)

Combat

The skeletal elephant is a massive, intimidating beast that scatters any who stand before it. It can be trained to perform rather elaborate tasks, and because of its relative high intelligence, in combat it can be trusted to fight of its own accord or serve as a mount.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Ribcage: The skeletal elephant's ribcage is often used to imprison captives. It can spread open and retract to allow up to three medium or six small sized individuals to be held securely within. Squeezing between the ribs requires a DC 30 Escape Artist check. The bones have Hardness 5, Hit Points 15, Break DC 18

healthy adults recovered from the illness many of the undernourished children lacked the strength to fend it off. Among the victims were Hatira's three infants. Devastated by the apparent cruelty of the gods, she began to question their motives and blasphemed against them. Thus began her slow descent into the embrace of the infernal lords.

Among those the grieving mother blamed was her

New Weapon

Ankus

Used by riders to control their elephant mount, an ankus also makes a formidable weapon. It's about 3' long, with a wooden shaft that ends with a sharp spike and hook made of metal.

It provides +1 to the wielders Strength for the purpose of resolving Trip attempts, and adds +3 circumstance bonus to Ride and Handle Animal rolls involving elephants.

Size: Medium; **Damage:** 1d6; **Critical:** x2;
Weight: 3 lb; **Type:** Piercing/Slashing.

husband, who had kept his children malnourished while he kept himself comfortably fed. One night, while he slept, she killed him. The villagers were willing to overlook this transgression, because her husband was after-all a less than desirable human being, but they were less willing to forgive her kidnapping of several local children. When the bodies were recovered in a pit dug beneath the floor of her hovel, they showed signs of abuse and neglect; Hatira, her mind snapped, no longer had any concept of how to care for young ones.

She barely escaped with her life. Slowly, Hatira began a transformation into the horrid demon she is today. She continues to steal children from mothers more fortunate than she, attempting desperately to create the family she can never have. Its not long before these babies are dead too, either of neglect or abuse, from her prodigal appetite for human flesh (she particularly enjoys the tender flesh of infants), or as sacrificial victims to her demonic masters.

Hatira had seen her fair share of blood and cuts-along with a broken arm, cracked ribs, sprained ankles, and flesh torn from her back with rope. Eventually, she grew desensitized to it, and later still came to view it as a mark of her strength to survive. To inflict hideous injuries upon her male opponents gives her much pride, and for a time she can drown her pain in the blood of her victims.

Combat

Hatira is a ruthless fighter who revels in the gore and senseless violence of combat. She typically attempts to immobilize a foe by enslaving him in manacles, after which time she can leisurely torture and kill her prisoner. She uses her ankus to trip as well as to injure. That said, Hatira always bears in mind that "her children need their mother", and always seeks to preserve herself for their sake. She will therefore seek any advantage, and will flee in a fight decidedly turns against her.

Fearsome though she may be, Hatira still chooses to

steal into villages and towns under the cover of darkness in pursuit her youthful prey. She's not a coward, merely prudent. Besides, striking mysteriously under the cover of darkness only adds to the fear she wreaks, and hence to her legend. That's almost as important as the tasty morsels she secures on her raids.

Motivation and Goals

Hatira is a fell, thoroughly reprehensible creature without any redeeming qualities. She is a twisted and evil mockery of all that is good in womanhood. Men are slain with bloodthirsty delight, children are either ravenously feasted upon or sacrificed to whatever dark deity she reveres, and disease is callously spread through hapless villages, all part of her continuing efforts to ensure others experience the misery that was her life.

In her tormented mind she wants a family again, but her actions suggest otherwise. She is an irrational being that operates on base instincts—much like an animal—rather than coherent thought. So while she may kidnap infants in the hopes of becoming a surrogate mother, it's not long before she destroys her dream by killing them. Perhaps her dark lord intends this to be the case for all eternity, as a means of ensuring the Hatira remains a loyally destructive force.

Base of Operations

A small wooden hut leans wearily against a limestone face. The hut is a simple affair that reflects Hatira's impoverished existence. The walls are covered in tapestries made from the flayed skin of kidnapped children, cleverly hiding (DC 15 Search) the entrance to a cave that lies beyond. A pit trap is located just within (CR 2; 3d6 damage from fall of 30 feet (no attack roll necessary); +1d4 spikes for 1d4+3 points of damage per hit (+10 melee); Reflex save (DC 20); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20). The cave eventually opens up into a large cavern where numerous small cages, just large enough to hold small-sized creatures, dangle from the ceiling. Some are empty, some hold emaciated and tortured children being held in preparation for sacrifice, while still others hold the skeletal remains of prisoners Hatira simply forgot about and which died a slow death from starvation.

Adventure Hooks

1) Hatira has stolen into another village and kidnapped a child. But this time she's the victim, and it's up to the PCs to save her!

The infant taken is a cursed child known as a konaki jiji (treat as a full-strength vampire that also drains the special abilities of its victims), a monstrosity that feeds upon the life essence of victims. Because of this, the child was to be put to death before its abduction. Now, the village priests urges the PCs to recover the konaki jiji for they fear that if it should drain Hatira's dark energy it would become more powerful still, a night-unstoppable creature of pure evil.



2) The PCs are instructed to escort the queen, her family and retinue to her estates in the north. Among the retinue is a friar who serves as steward to the estate. One night he steals bedevils the PCs by tainting their drink with hallucinogens, so that when Hatira attacks they are in no shape to offer resistance. The infant heir is kidnapped and the friar it seems is killed, for nothing remains but a bloody tunic.

The inevitable investigation by the PCs leads to corruption in the highest tiers of power. The friar yet lives, having faked his own death. His betrayal was at the behest of the king himself, who wanted the queen's son-but rumored not to be his own-eliminated quietly. Worshipping the same dark deity as does Hatira, the friar saw the she-fiend as the answer to his problems.

Kerbela

Race: Half-Ogre

Class/Level: Expert 4th/Rogue 2nd

Height/Weight: 6'2", 245 lbs

Hit Points: 37

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 11 (leather apron)

Attacks: Tongs or fleshing knife +7 melee

Damage: 1d6+3 tongs or 1d3+3 fleshing knife
(see below for details)

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +1d6

Special Qualities: Evasion

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +5

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Alchemy +6, Appraise +2, Bluff +4, Craft (Tanning) +11, Intimidate +5, Move Silently +4, Use Rope +2.

Feats: Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Tanning).

Possessions: Leather apron (acts as leather armor), tongs (size: large; damage: 1d6; critical: x2; type: bludgeoning), fleshing knife (size: small; damage: 1d3; critical: x3; type: slashing), fully stocked tannery.

Description: Kerbela is a great ugly boar of a woman, with hulking muscles, rolls of sagging flesh around her waistline, and an almost porcine face. A sinister grin reveals a snaggle of broken and yellowed teeth, and her head (not to mention large parts of her body) is covered in thick, mat of coarse black hair. She stands almost 6'2", even though her body is stooped due to a misshapen spine. A tanner by trade, Kerbela wears thick gloves and an apron at all times (and often little else!). While the brain-addling sight of the semi-naked ogress should be

enough to turn all comers away, her skill at her chosen trade keeps people coming to her abode. Some, those with beautiful complexions, never leave, becoming a pair of fancy gloves or expensive boots of the unsuspecting.

Kerbela is a woman who relishes her trade. The only thing she enjoys more than tanning is ale, for which she has an insatiable appetite and a seemingly boundless resistance. She is a cheerful if crude woman, though this hides a dark and murderous heart all-too willing to kill in the pursuit of new hides (she prefers fey creatures or humanoids) to work.

Background

Somewhere in the rugged wilds a decade ago, a roadwarden and his posse tried to pick up the trail of a lone renegade reported to have murdered a family of settlers and skinned them head to toe. The assailant had not been positively identified, but the attack had all the trademarks of half-ogre bandit Grettia Boartooth. The posse reached a rocky stream and her trail vanished. That was the last sign anyone would ever see of the feared bandit.

She cast aside her Grettia Boartooth name forever, quietly taking up the name Kerbela and settling down as a tanner on the outskirts of a small farming community.

She was born some 30 years ago, the product of a forced union between an ogre male and a captive human female. Her mother died in childbirth and was therefore raised by her savage father, with all the harsh realities of life as a raider. She never quite fit in with the tribe, however, and was bullied due to her "small" stature. It was therefore perhaps inevitable that she should upon adulthood strike out on her own.

The life of a raider was all she knew, and so Grettia turned to banditry and thuggery. Her prowess at hiding and eluding pursuers earned her grudging respect but her legend, such as it was, was tarnished by her ruthlessness. The number of people she murdered and skinned could not be satisfactorily ascertained, but they certainly numbered into the dozens.

But perhaps tired of constantly running, Grettia eventually gave up the life she had known for the entirety of her life. With her accumulated loot she built herself a tannery and assumed the name Kerbela, shrouding herself in a cloak of respectability. But if one can mask her past, she cannot deny her true self. Kerbela remains the same cold-blooded killer she has always been, and still enjoys skinning victims as much as ever. Now however she's far more circumspect about her ways, and the hides she collects from her murders are turned to profit by tanning and selling them to unsuspecting leatherworkers.

One heinous act she finds amusing is to drown

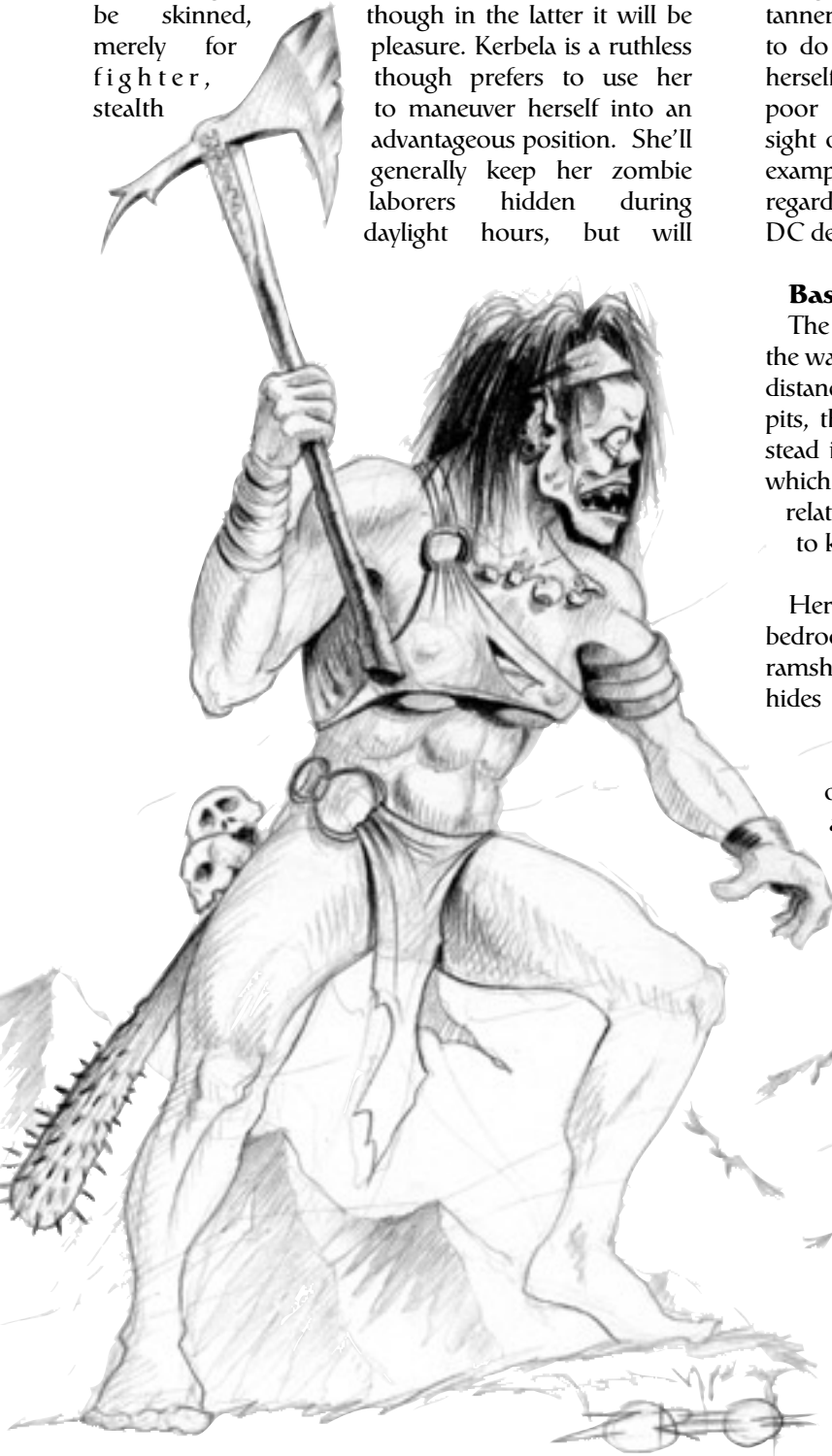
victims in a special alchemical concoction she's stumbled upon. The corpses remain in the liquid for several months, emerging later as zombies with extremely tough skins (+2 natural armor). Thanks to her ring of undead control, these zombies her command and serve as excellent laborers.

Combat

Against creatures with hides worthy of tanning (fey creatures, humanoids with Cha 13+, and some exotic monsters), Kerbela fights with her tanning tongs, useful for subduing foes and bludgeoning them unconscious without damaging the skin. Otherwise, she uses with her fleshing knife.

be skinned, merely for fighter, stealth

In either case, defeated foes will be skinned, though in the latter it will be pleasure. Kerbela is a ruthless though prefers to use her to maneuver herself into an advantageous position. She'll generally keep her zombie laborers hidden during daylight hours, but will



summon them if in dire danger.

Motivation and Goals

Kerbela has no overriding goals, and is motivated solely by her bloodthirsty fetish for skinning victims. Tanning is merely an outlet for her violent tendencies, allowing her to engage in her sick passion without drawing undue notice, as well as providing her a stable and comfortable income. Oddly enough, she finds herself taking as much pride in her tanning techniques as in the manner in which she skills. Kerbela's begun to wonder if she's growing soft in her old age.

Eager to maintain her image as a humble, if talented tanner, Kerbela will deny her murderous impulses if to do otherwise would serve to cast suspicion upon herself. Most of her victims are dregs, wanderers, or poor individuals unlikely to be sorely missed. The sight of a prized hide (a unicorn or a beautiful elf, for example) will make it very difficult to contain herself, regardless of the danger of exposure (Willpower roll, DC determined by creature's Charisma).

Base of Operations

The tannery and home is located on a hill, from which the walls of the nearby town can just be discerned in the distance. A second, smaller hill is home to the tanning pits, the smell from which can be overpowering. Her stead is surrounded by rolling, lightly wooded land in which local farmers raise cattle. Kerbela maintains good relations with her neighbors, but they are wise enough to keep their distance most of the time.

Her home is a simple affair, with a main room, bedroom, and cold cellar. The tannery is a large, rather ramshackle building that includes a warehouse where hides and finished leather are stored, a smokeroom, a slaughter/cleaning room, and a cool basement (accessed by stair or chute from outside) where bark and other tanning substances are stored. Kerbela's zombie's hide down here during daylight hours.

Adventure Hooks

- 1) A wealthy, if perhaps eccentric rogue asks Kerbela to create a suit of leather armor for him from the hide of a troll. The prestige and added protection aside, he thinks it would be just dandy to have a set of threads that mend themselves of damage. For her part, Kerbela's all too happy to oblige and hires the PCs to track down and slay a troll. The catch is that she needs the entire body (taking the hide is an art) and in good condition.

When they return, the characters may notice some clues as to Kerbela's nature. Perhaps they see a corpse floating in the tanning solution, catch glimpses of her shambling assistants, or



Tanning

The hides are brought either in a fresh state from animals that had only very recently been slaughtered, or when imported from afar, dried and salted. Hides are scraped to cleanse them of any small portions of flesh or fatty matter that may be adhering to it, and, to loosen hair and skin, were suspending in a closed chamber (called a smoke house) heated by a smoldering fire. When the hair and epidermis is sufficiently softened up they are scraped off by knife.

Next, hides are prepared for tanning by steeping them for a few days in a pit containing a solution consisting of one part sulphuric acid mixed with five hundred parts water (Alchemy DC 12). Called "raising", this made the pores more susceptible to action of the subsequent tan.

Oak bark is most commonly used to supply the tanning substance, creating good leather of light color. Other, more exotic items are used to make leather of different coloration and texture.

The actual tanning is a time intensive procedure that might take months. Hides and powdered bark (or other tanning substance) were laid in alternate layers in tan pit, which is then filled with water. The water is be drained periodically and fresh bark added if necessary until the desired color was had.

When the process of tanning is complete, hides were hung in a shed and allowed to dry. While they are drying, they were compressed by beating to give them firmness and density. This complete, the new leather was ready for shipment to the leather workers.

find her burning what really look like bone fragments. The PCs had better watch against being over curious, lest they become some ones' boots.....

2) The PCs are on the trail of Chad'osch, an orc renegade-Kerbela's half-brother- wanted for a string brutal slayings. The hunt brings them near to the tannery, where the trail suddenly disappears (thanks to clever efforts by Kerbela to eliminate the tracks) While she may have turned her back on her orc tribe, she cannot do the same to Chad'osch, the only one among her people who treated her as an equal. She has therefore agreed to shelter him.

PCs who insist on pressing the issue must face a cutthroat ex-bandit and her zombie henchmen, in addition to the original target. On the plus side of the ledger, there's still an outstanding warrant for her arrest, and an accompanying 2,000 gp reward.

3) The characters are in a town near to Kerbela's tannery when they are attacked by a cutthroat wearing magical leather armor. In the melee that ensues, the assailant is killed and his unique armor damaged. Stamped on the armor is Kerbela's tannery symbol, leading them to surmise that she could effect the necessary repairs.

If the PCs seek her assistance, Kerbela will inform them that the repairs will take about a week. During the negotiations, she takes an interest in the hide of an elf or character with 14+ charisma, thinking it would make a fine set of gloves (if no character fits that criteria, she'll instead target a dwarf, whom she dispise). The deranged tanner will send some of her zombies into town to try and capture the subject of her interest, but they are under strict orders not to damage the victim lest the hide be ruined. If the PCs survive the encounter, they may be able to track the zombies back to their master

Lady Kamcha

Race: Elf

Class/Level: Ranger 5th

Height/Weight: 5'10, 125lbs

Hit Points: 33

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 14 (Leather Armor, +2 Dex)

Attacks: Bow +7 ranged, Kamcha + 8 ranged, Short Sword +6 melee

Damage: Bow 1d8+1, Kamcha 1d2+1, Short Sword 1d6+1

Special Attacks: -

Special Qualities: Track, Favored Enemies (Humans, Goblinoids), Elven Traits

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +4, Heal +2, Hide +5, Jump +1, Knowledge (Nature) +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Ride +3, Search +1, Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +3.

Feats: Deadly Lashes (new feat), Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (kamcha).

Description

Lady Kamcha stands in a slightly bowlegged stance, looking assertive without losing an ounce of femininity. Years on horseback have kept her hips slim and her stomach flat. A practical and sturdy sleeveless reveals strong, tanned arms and emphasizes her long, slender neck. Her eyes are narrowed and her mouth perpetually tight, creating an expression of wariness, or perhaps watchfulness. She studies people carefully, the way she would a wolf in the middle of her path. Her years as a diplomat taught her how to submerge her emotions



New Feat

Deadly Lashes

In your hands, a whip becomes a lethal weapon

Prerequisites: Base Attack Bonus +2, Weapon Focus (Whip)

Effect: When using a whip, or derivative weapon (like the kamcha), you may choose to deal normal damage rather than subdual damage.

New Weapon

Kamcha

This strange weapon hailing from the Ottoman Empire is essentially a small whip. The handle is made of wood or bone, or more rarely metal, and is often ornately carved and richly decorated. A strong lash of leather or cord is secured to the end. A kamcha is often used to drive beasts of burden (providing +1 to Handle Animal or Ride checks), or to intimidate slaves or soldiers (+2 to Intimidate checks). Of course, the weapon also has utility in combat, though it is too small to trip opponents as one would with a normal whip.

Size: Small; **Cost:** 1gp; **Damage:** 1d2 (subdual); **Critical:** x2; **Range Increment:** 10ft; **Weight:** 3lb; **Type:** Slashing.

behind a businesslike façade; she called on those lessons to help her concentrate on her new mission after the death of her husband.

Background

Lady Kamcha is the hard-charging leader of a band of Elven irregulars who have taken it upon themselves to protect their sylvan home from incursions, going so far as to lead preemptive strikes against human farmers and woodsmen who would exploit the resources of the forest. Kamcha is in fact not the real name of this feared woman, but rather a nickname given to her by her enemies and which she embraced for the fear it inspires.

She was once a minor princess and an emissary sent to work among the humans. She learned of their ways, and came to despise and fear their callous disregard for the natural balance in their drive for expansion. Forests were leveled and hills mined bare in the name of advancement.

War spelled the end of her idyllic existence, destroying her life in way that only war can. When human settlers began pressing for access to the riches of Kamcha's home forest, she was sent to negotiate the matter. Unwilling to come to an agreement, woodsmen began to cull the trees for timber while settlers anxiously awaited an opportunity to till the soil. Clashes between human and elf were inevitable. Kamcha's husband was killed in one of these skirmishes, his body strung from a tree as dire warning against further resistance.


Something inside her chest crumpled that day, like an old wagon driven against a sturdy stonewall. The ache in her chest had swollen to agony, leaving nothing but a dark void that could only be filled by hatred. Lashed by the pain, her life as she knew it stopped dead.

The Elven King quickly signed a treaty that gave in to the human demands, giving up vast swaths of forest to be plundered by humans. Old and enfeebled, with his people greatly outnumbered, the king saw no other alternative.

Kamcha, and others like her, saw the treaty as an unbearable humiliation. Instead of heeding the grim warning delivered in the form of her husband's savaged body, she gathered about her other likeminded souls and formed a band of irregular cavalry with which to fight back. She excelled in this capacity, due to her natural leadership ability terrain and her skill as a rider—she's perhaps more at home on a saddle than on her own two feet. However, she and her band of "patriots" have undermined the peace between the Elvish and Human nations, and have thus been labeled outlaws by both.

Combat

Lady Kamcha is a master of light cavalry skirmishing. She and her troops hit hard and fast, then melting



back into the protective embrace of the forest canopy. The bow is her most lethal tool, though her weapon of choice is the small whip for which she is named. In melee combat she generally fights with two weapons, a short sword and her kamcha.

She likes to set ambushes if the terrain allows, attempting to lure enemies into a cunningly concealed pit trap or deadfall. A patient warrior, she is willing to wait until her prey find themselves in difficult terrain before attacking; striking while troops are fording rivers or are embroiled in thick brush are favorite tactics.

Her irregulars are responsible for horrible excesses against enemy soldiers and noncombatants alike. She likes to take one prisoner from every engagement to torture over the ensuing days and weeks, until they finally succumb to her whips' lashes.

Motivation and Goals

Kamcha is uncompromising in her quest to provide security to her homeland. In truth, her war is founded on equal parts patriotism and revenge, and she has been fighting for so long now that she can't even remember what it was like to live in peace. Frankly, she finds the prospect of peace a frightening proposition. She's gotten used to hating humans and unleashing her pent up anger against members of that species. Therefore, and also because of her natural suspicion of humans in general, Lady Kamcha will undermine any negotiated peace and will settle for nothing except complete, unconditional victory. The sheer inequality in numbers suggests this goal may be unattainable and that the war may therefore drag on indefinitely.....perhaps that's what Kamcha wants.

In the meantime, she seeks to kill as many of the enemy, man, woman, or child, as she can. She never kill enough or cause enough pain to fill the angry wound in her soul that was struck the day her beloved was killed.

Base of Operations

Lady Kamcha and her band live in a fortified and concealed longhouses built into the canopy of Crown Oak. This rare form of tree looks as if it were a copse of up to two-dozen oaks, when in fact it is a single plant with "shoots" growing from a massive, central root system. Access to the elven tree abodes is through a staircase in a hollowed out shoot; the stairs ascend clockwise so as to interfere with the sword arms of intruders. The entrance is magically hidden, protected and concealed by a copse of oaks, and barred from the inside. Descending below the surface one finds Kamcha's personal demesne, a warren of tunnels weaving through the massive roots, all of which are prison cells holding her playthings.

Adventure Hooks

1) The PCs are passing through a sylvan forest when they are attacked and captured by elves under orders from their king. Taken before the monarch, who is

clearly suspicious that they may be agents of the human interlopers or the renegade elves under Lady Kamcha, the characters will have to convince the court of their innocence. If they successfully assuage the king's fears, the PCs will be asked to help him with a little matter (perhaps as demonstration of their goodwill or to avoid punishment for trespassing on elven lands).

They are asked to deal with both Lady Kamcha and the Human settlers who encroach upon the forest. The PCs can opt to take a direct approach by attempting to eliminate both headaches, or may try to mediate some sort of amicable settlement between the interested parties. Perhaps during negotiations a horde of orcs pour down from the nearby hills, forcing the three groups to act together to survive.

2) The characters are passing through Lady Kamcha's domain when they are captured by her band of rogues. She offers to spare their lives if they perform a mission for her, under the watchful guise of a half-hill giant enforcer named Little Edgar. If the characters seem particularly untrustworthy, she may insist on collateral to insure their good behaviour-perhaps a valued item, henchman, or even one of the characters themselves. The PCs are to deliver a supply of Sassone leaf residue to a cell of half-elves operating in a nearby city, as a prelude to a campaign of assassinations designed to cripple the human leadership. Along the way they'll have to avoid human patrols, the curious inspectors at the city gates, and thugs who attempt to mug them.

The characters may faithfully complete the mission and be done with Kamcha, or they might seek the easiest way free of their obligation. Some characters may even decide to betray Kamcha by leading her enemies into her territory, especially after they learn of the unsavory nature of the cargo they carry.

Mata Hari

Race: Human

Class/Level: Aristocrat 4th/Rogue 4th

Height/Weight: 5'10", 140 lbs

Hit Points: 38

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

Armor Class: 11 (Dex)

Attacks: Kris +7 ranged, Dagger +6 melee

Damage: Kris 1d4

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +2d6

Special Qualities: Evasion, Uncanny Dodge
(Dex bonus to AC)

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +4

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 17

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +2, Bluff +7, Decipher

Script +4, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +2, Forgery +3, Gather Information +6, Heal +1, Innuendo +6, Knowledge (Geography-East Indies) +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +3, Perform +7, Pick Pocket +2, Read Lips +3, Search +4, Sense Motive +5, Spot +4, Tumble +2.

Feats: Dodge, Seductive, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

Possessions: Jewelry with hidden compartments for documents, fashionable clothes, kris (see sidebar for details).

Description

Mata Hari is past her prime as far as her infamous and controversial dancing career is concerned. The life of a dancer is short, and she had started late. Now, at 40 years of age, her sleek muscles have begun to lose their tone, she put on some weight so that she is now not as lithe and flexible as she once was, and her act has lost its freshness. Many of her competitors are younger, prettier, and quite frankly better dancers. Yet Mata Hari is still a beautiful woman cloaked in a shroud of mystery that only makes her that much more alluring. Men twenty years her junior are all too often enraptured by her, falling hopelessly under her spell.

Hailing from Holland, a country known for fair-skinned, blue-eyed and blond people, she was noticeable even as a child for her thick black hair, tanned complexion, and black eyes. Indeed, many whispered she had East Indian blood in her veins. She stands 5'10" tall, allowing her to look men in the eye on an equal footing, which while an inconvenience as a young woman searching for suitors now suits her just fine. When performing wears scanty attire, otherwise enjoys the height of fashions.

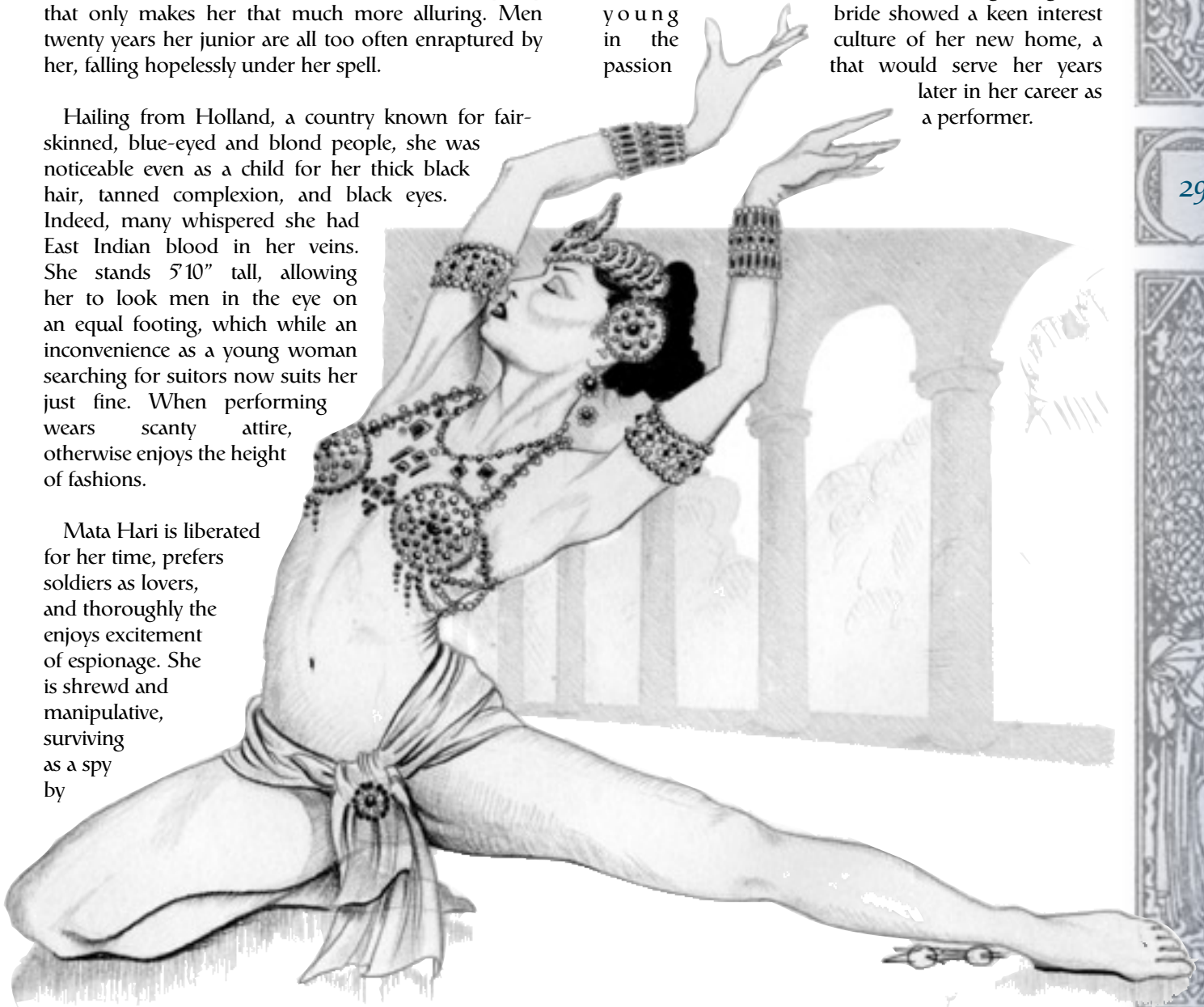
Mata Hari is liberated for her time, prefers soldiers as lovers, and thoroughly enjoys excitement of espionage. She is shrewd and manipulative, surviving as a spy by


her wits and looks more than by any extraordinary skill, but she is also deceptively intelligent with a skill for languages and foreign cultures.

Background

The woman whose name would become synonymous with seduction was born Margeretha Geertruida Zelle in Holland in 1876. Her family was extremely wealthy, her father a prosperous hat merchant. Even as a young schoolgirl she loved flamboyant clothes and had a certain flair for the dramatic. Indeed, she would spend hours regaling her friends with fabulous, and entirely fictional tales about her life and family background.

Bad investments threw her father into bankruptcy while Margeretha was a young teenager. The family moved to the city slums, a jarring reality check from the carefree life of luxury they enjoyed previously. With no suitors due to her height and poor background, and with few career options open to women, Margeretha answered an ad to join a colonial officer, Captain Rudolph MacLeod, in the Dutch East Indies. They wed and settled in Java. From the beginning, the young bride showed a keen interest in the culture of her new home, a passion that would serve her years later in her career as a performer.





It was not a happy union, however. He was a drunkard and womanizer who all too often abused his young wife, especially when she inevitably attracted the attention of young, single officers. When they returned to Europe in 1905, she was granted a divorce and headed to Paris to begin a career as an exotic dancer.

Margeretha was no more. In her stead was Mata Hari (literally “eye of the dawn” in Malay), a mythical oriental princess whose mother was a temple dancer who died giving birth to her. According to the tale she wove, Mata Hari had been raised in the temple of her god Shiva and was consecrated to his service. When she debuted in 1905 in Musee Guimet, Mata Hari became an immediate sensation, wowing men with her seductive and liberated act, and dancing her way into the hearts and wallets of officers, men of industry, and politicians all across Europe.

A decade later, as a dancer whose star is fading fast, most of her money comes from being a courtesan rather than as a dancer. However, she still tries to keep a toehold in the world of entertainment, if for no other reason than as a cover for her newest vocation: spy.

World War One broke out a year ago, in 1914. Shortly thereafter, Mata Hari found herself performing in Berlin when she met and began a torrid affair with a German officer. She was soon recruited as a spy for the Kaiser, seducing and drawing information from French officials in government and the military. She is known by her handlers as agent H21.

Motivation and Goals

Espionage is a game to her, a thrilling distraction from a life that lacks any drama now that her dancing career is all but over, and she therefore is not the hardened agent that many make her out to be. Mata Hari is afraid of being out of the spotlight she so loves, and craves the excitement that has been hers since she began performing a decade ago. The thought of no longer being Mata Hari, the adored Oriental Princess, and

simply becoming Margeretha, the middle-aged and unwed commoner is truly frightening. As a result, she is increasingly willing to take greater risks to maintain her mystique and importance. In a very real sense, she'd rather die than become a has-been.

To be sure, the desire and need of money plays a certain role in her decision-making. Being Mata Hari is expensive, after all—the finest clothes, exotic jewelry, the best hotels and restaurants. Underlying her actions is a deep-seated insecurity and a need to be needed. That's why many of her lovers are several decades younger than herself. These men would be the age of her deceased son, and through them she is able to express her motherly instincts. It also true, however, that these men are naïve and inexperienced, making the seduction and withdrawal of secrets all the easier.

Combat

Seduction is Mata Hari's weapon of choice, which she wields with precision worthy of the most experienced warrior. She despises violence (perhaps the result of her husband's abuse) and it's doubtful she's ever harmed, let alone killed anyone. However, she likely received some self-defense training in Germany's spy school, was exposed to firearms while being married to captain Sinclair, and became familiar with the Malay Kris while in the East Indies. As a result, if necessary she is capable of defending herself.

Base of Operations

Mata Hari moves around a fair amount and doesn't have a place she would truly call home. She always stays in expensive hotel rooms, often remaining in the same room for several months at a time before uprooting again as her whims or tours dictate. Mata Hari rarely spends her nights alone, and will occasionally stay at the home of lovers (provided they're single, of course). Unbeknownst to her, she is often under surveillance by German and French agents, as neither side is entirely sure of her loyalties. There's a good chance anyone coming or going from her abode will be noticed and

New Feat

Seductive

Through good looks, personal magnetism, flaunting your assets, and skillful flirting you are able to bewitch members of the opposite sex.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, Diplomacy 3+

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus to all Charisma-based skills when dealing with the opposite sex. In addition, given time (1 week per Will bonus of the target), this can translate into a further +2 bonus to Gather Information rolls through “pillow talk”. Only one person at a time can be seduced in such a fashion.

New Weapon

Kris

The traditional knife of the East Indies and Malay Peninsula, the kris is distinctive with its wavy-blade. The blade widens to one side of the hilt at its base, providing extra protection to the hand and increasing its utility as a parrying weapon (when fighting defensively as a full attack action, you gain a +3 dodge bonus to AC instead of the standard +2).

Size: Small; **Cost:** 5gp; **Damage:** 1d4; **Critical:** 19-20/x2; **Range Increment:** 10 feet; **Weight:** 1 lb; **Type:** Piercing.

their presence noted, unless specific precautions are made.

Adventure Hooks

1) Winter, 1915. The PCs pull the body of Isabelle de Marson, a young, beautiful, and talented exotic dancer from the freezing Seine River. The police arrive and quickly proclaim it suicide or a drunken accident, without so much as acknowledging the rope burns on her legs and arms. This was no suicide or accident; it was cold-blooded and premeditated murder.

British Intelligence wants the PCs to investigate. Why is British Intelligence so interested in the death of a simple dancer? They're convinced the Paris "entertainment" industry is awash in German spies seducing French officials, and Marson was a valued British source looking into the matter. Find the killer, and the whole web of deceit will unravel.

The PCs guide through the red-light district will be none other than Mata Hari, whose espionage ties the British are as yet unaware of. But can they succeed with a German spy watching and reporting on their very movements?

2) British Intelligence wants to turn Mata Hari as a double agent, but the problem is she's gone missing. The PCs are tasked with finding the spy. But how do you find someone who may not want to be found? Has she been captured by the Germans under suspicion that the French want to turn her, has her handlers ordered her to lay-low for a while, or has something else entirely happened to her?

The characters will have to go undercover and infiltrate Mata Hari's last known location-the infamous Moulin Rouge-to discover clues as to her whereabouts. The question is, can any of them dance or sing to save their lives, because in the world of espionage the stakes may well come to that.

Monika Bares

Race: "Dispossessed" Human
Class/Level: Expert 3/Rogue 1/Cleric 3
Height/Weight: 5'6", 95 lbs
Hit Points: 40
Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)
Speed: 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+6 natural)
Attacks: Bite +8 melee, and 2 claws +4 melee or dagger +4 melee/ranged
Damage: Bite 1d6, claws 1d4, dagger 1d4
Special Attacks: Hunger Pangs, Blindness/Deafness (cleric ability; 2x per day as 5th-level cleric).
Special Qualities: Undead, Scent
Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +9

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con -, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 14

Skills: Appraise +5, Climb +4, Concentration +5, Craft (Brewing) +5, Forgery +4, Hide +14, Innuendo +3, Knowledge (Local) +6, Knowledge (Religion) +8, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +6, Pick Pocket +14, Search +4, Spot +11

Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Run, Weapon Focus (Bite)

Possessions: Tattered clothes, walking stick, begging bowl.

Domains: Chaos, Death, Evil.

Spell List: 4/3+1/2+1.

0-Level: *Cure Minor Wounds, Guidance, Purify Food and Water, Resistance.*

1st-Level: *Bane, Cause Fear, Entropic Shield, Protection from Good.*

2nd-Level: *Death Knell, Desecate, Zone of Truth.*

Description

Monika Bares looks like any one of a number of street waifs you litter the slums of any major city, clinging to the fringes of life by begging and stealing. She is painfully thin and emaciated, obviously malnourished and ill. Her dark hair is stringy and ill-kept, falling haphazardly from a bun at the nape of her neck. Monika is always clad in ragged and dirt encrusted clothes; an old shawl covers her head and shoulders, her dress is of poor quality and in ill-repair, and she wears nothing on her feet save for holed stockings. All her meager worldly possessions-a begging bowl, a staff to lean her weary body upon, and a hidden dagger to ward away street-predators-are carried on her body.



Dispossessed

Medium-Size Undead

HD: 3d12 (19 hp)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 feet

AC: 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural)

Attacks: Bite +4 melee, 2 claws +0 melee

Damage: Bite 1d6, claw 1d3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Hunger Pangs

Special Qualities: Undead, Scent

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +2

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 8, Con -, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +10, Move Silently +7, Spot +6

Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Focus (Bite)

Climate/Terrain: Any urban or underground

Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (3-6)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Chaotic Evil

Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium-size)

The dispossessed is a savage predator that roams the slums of large cities. They are not picky about what they prey upon, as long as its meat; anything from rats to humanoid beings to corpses is fair game. As they are slow and rather ungainly, they tend to hide among shadows and in dark recesses to ambush their victims.

They are undead coming from among the ranks of the starving, homeless masses found in city slums. Desperate for food, for shelter, and for protection from those who would exploit them and their families, these poverty-stricken beings find death to be no comfort from their travails. Dying forgotten in some alleyway or gutter, they soon rise again, hungry for vengeance against the society that ignored their plight.

Dispossessed look like painfully thin humanoids, their bodies emaciated and malnourished. They are invariably dressed in rags and are covered in dirt, a nauseating odor of death cringing to the air around them.

Combat

A dispossessed lurks in alleys or darkened doorways and lashes out at passing victims. Due to its natural camouflage and incredible patience while lying in wait, the beast receives a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks. A dispossessed usually bites its chosen victim and then allows it to flee. The undead then stalks its bitten prey, waiting for the wound to fester and weaken the victim so it can be attacked and killed at its leisure.

Hunger Pangs: The bite of a dispossessed is liberally bathed with the fiend's filthy saliva; a bite victim must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or be infected with crippling hunger pangs. Those who fail the save suffer 1d6 points of subdual damage and are fatigued. As hours pass, the victim increasingly finds himself weakened by growing discomfort and starvation; each hour for the next 1d4 hours the character must make additional Fortitude saving throws (DC 15) or suffer additional 1d6 points of damage and 1 point each of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. Whether or not the initial save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that dispossessed's hunger pangs ability for one day.

Create Spawn: In most cases, dispossessed devour their prey. Occasionally, however, the creature is unable to do so and the bodies of humanoid victims killed by hunger pangs lie where they fell. These corpses rise as dispossessed themselves in 1d4 days, unless a protection from evil spell is cast upon it before that time.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Background

Appearances aside, Barees is not a feeble and pitiable character. She is in fact a cult leader for Egestes, the female goddess of poverty, and as such is a commands dark powers beyond the comprehension of normal man. And she's dead.

Monika Barees was born over a century ago to an impoverished family, barely eking out an existence in the city slums. Her parents died from illness brought on by malnutrition while she was still an adolescent; they had literally forfeited their lives to ensure Monika remained fed. Misfortune led her to become an angry, disenchanting youth who ran with gangs and resented the rich.

Her life was seemingly turned around when she found the gods. Through them she saw a sliver of hope for the future, and with the guidance of priests Monika turned her life around. They provided an education and helped her secure an apprenticeship with a master brewer. In a few short years, after saving enough money, Monika opened her own brewery. It was small and served mostly to the lower-class establishments, but it was a source of immense pride for the young woman.

Then disaster struck. The brewery burnt to the ground, and Monika lost everything. Impoverished, once again

cast out onto the streets, she began to blame everyone for her fate. The church and their gods, for providing false hope; the rich for their cutthroat competition, and success at the expense of her own; and the government for the high taxes that forced her to work from an unsafe old warehouse and which left her with no savings with which to restart her business or to even survive.

Monika died in a gutter a few years later, broken by years of abusing the bottle and crippled by malnourishment, angry to the end at the perceived injustice inherent in the system. Egestes brought her back from beyond the grave as a servant of her will, seeing in the angry woman the perfect tool to spread her demonic message. Monika has been the leader of Egestes' cult in the city for almost five decades, forging it into a true influence among the lower classes.

Motivation and Goals

Monika, like her patron, preys upon the desperate souls that reside within the poverty stricken slums. These poor are wanting in all the necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, healing, protection from those who would seek to exploit them, and most importantly hope. Monika promises that she can deliver these things through her deity, if only the downtrodden would forsake the true gods and instead offer themselves to Egestes. Countless numbers have done so.

Monika seeks to lift the crushing burden of poverty only so far as to demonstrate the power and magnanimity of her dark lord. To ease their suffering would free the poor of their reliance upon Egestes, thus losing the goddess her followers. Instead, followers are kept bound to the cult for their very survival, and few are willing to sacrifice their meager comforts to free themselves even after the true nature of their deity becomes apparent.

After she has indoctrinated new recruits, Monika begins to issue tasks that must be completed before their just rewards can be had. At first, followers are asked to perform minor duties (such as watching enemies or delivering messages), but as the individual comes further under Egestes' power the task becomes increasingly evil in nature... including murder.

For her part, Monika is far more than simply a recruiter. She runs the everyday operations of the cult and seeks to increase its influence throughout the city. For that to happen, she must expand the pool of recruits by undermining the economy of the community, sapping the wealth of its rulers and their institutions and by extension limiting their ability to alleviate the suffering of the masses, and finally fomenting disenchantment with the existing order. She juggles many plots to that end, clearly relishing her machinations.

Combat

Monika can rarely be even remotely linked to the

dastardly plots she conceives, and so she remains perceived as a harmless and benevolent woman who has dedicated her life to alleviating the suffering of the poor. Therefore, few have any reason to raise a weapon against her in anger, just as she prefers. When she needs someone killed and a dangerous mission performed Barees will send her followers rather than get her own hands dirty. She's far too smart to reveal her true nature—either as the high priestess of a demon or as an undead fiend—save in the most extraordinary of circumstances.

However, if directly confronted with a threat to her existence or that of the cult she will not hesitate to destroy the enemy herself. Her claws, spell-casting abilities, and Blindness/Deafness and Hunger Pang attacks are lethal when used in tandem during combat. Frighteningly, she knows.

Base of Operations

The temple of Egestes occupies a derelict warehouse and, as befitting the goddess of poverty, is sparsely furnished. The worshippers kneel upon the floor in prayer, and the few acolytes share a Spartan communal chamber. As high priestess, Barees enjoys slightly more extravagant accommodations, but her rooms are still far from lap of luxury. She has few material possessions beyond simple furnishings, and a few books. During special ceremonies, stolen valuables—such as coins and luxury items—are thrown into a large fire pit to be consumed by holy flames, an offering to Egestes for her patronage.

Of course, these items are not actually destroyed. The flames are magical, and while very real to organic tissue are completely harmless to non-living material. Items thrown in and deposited in a treasure vault located in a secret complex located below the temple, to be used later to fund Egestes' foul plans. This underground complex, which only the high priestess is aware of, is the real heart of this dark religion. From chambers down here Monika Barees plots the ascendancy of her deity and weaves the various threads in her web of deceit. These rooms include a private temple and meditation chamber, lavishly decorated personal quarters, and an extensive library. Secret tunnels lead into the sewers and various points throughout the city.

Egestes doesn't like transgressors on her holy ground. With the exception of Monika, anyone entering the secret temple must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer a permanent loss of 1d4 points to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution.

Adventure Hooks

1) The city is in a state of crisis. A deepening financial recession meets head on with the failure of the harvest, sending grain prices skyrocketing. The winter is one of the coldest in memory, adding to the discomfort among the poor. Now the city is gripped by food riots and looting, with bands of starving peasants turning to brigandage.



While the unrest looks to be little more than a spontaneous outburst of pent-up frustration, there are those who believe a hidden puppet master is pulling the strings. The PCs are hired to investigate these concerns, and must complete their investigation before the army on its way to put down the insurrection arrives.

Monika Barees is indeed the puppet-master behind the violence, but she has insulated herself from the affair so well that the PCs are unlikely to ever know of her involvement. Instead, they face her proxy: Markat, a formerly wealthy physician who believed imaginary enemies among were persecuting him and has thus embraced revolutionary ideals. He is known as "the rage of the people".

2) Barees has discovered a pack of were-rats living in the sewers and has brought them into Egestes' fold. Masters of crafting cunning new diseases, these lycanthropes now serve as loyal agents of the Goddess of Poverty. They're mission is to create a more potent strain of red ache that only targets specific bloodlines—namely those of the city's most powerful and influential rulers. To that end, the were-rats have been kidnapping members of noble, merchant, military, and guild families to serve as test-subjects.

The PCs are sent to investigate these disappearances and, among the filth-riddled sewers, stumble upon a plot that might destroy the city itself.

Feats: Combat Casting, Expertise, Improved Critical (Sickle), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Weapon Focus (Sickle)

Possessions: *Cloak of resistance +3, keen sickle +1, dust of illusion, potion of heroism, figurines of wondrous power (golden lions)*

Spell List: 6/6/5/4/3/2

0-Level: *Cure Minor Wounds, Detect Poison, Know Direction, Light, Mending, Read Magic.*

1-Level: *Entangle, Faerie Fire, Invisibility To Animals, Magic Fang, Obscuring Mist.*

2-Level: *Barkskin, Charm Person Or Animal, Chill Metal, Warp Wood.*

3-Level: *Greater Magic Fang, Meld Into Stone, Poison, Snare.*

4-Level: *Dispel Magic, Quench, Rusting Grasp.*

5-Level: *Atonement, Hallow.*

6-Level: none (limited by Wisdom score of 15)

Description

Morgan is a tall, slim woman apparently in her mid 30s. She has jet black hair and dark eyes. When practicing magic, blackness spills from the irises to fill both sockets, and a field of stars seem to twinkle deep within. The woman is beautiful, but also rather aloof and manipulative.

Morgan favors velvet gowns of midnight black and silver jewelry of Celtic design, such as armbands, torques and rings. When traveling or disguised, she wears a black hooded cloak, the cut of the hood and hem suggesting a raven.

When taking a wild shape, she prefers that of a normal or dire raven.

Background

Morgan le Fey is the daughter of Arthur's mother Igrene and her first husband Garlois, the Duke of Cornwall, and thus Arthur's elder half-sister.

Rumor claims that Morgan was sent off to a nunnery to learn black magic. This is just the first in a series of half-truths that have helped alienate Morgan from the heart of the kingdom, and encouraged her to take up the mantle of "Evil Enchantress." In fact, Morgan manifested the Sight very early on. Her mother, a good pagan, sent Morgan to live with a sisterhood of priestesses who inhabited a secluded and enchanted isle. There she learned the ways of divine magic and what lore of the druids still remained. Over the years, Morgan rose to become the leader of this sisterhood. As such, she is the earthly manifestation of the Morrigan, a goddess of birth and death, and the strife that fills that time between.

Morgan has since married King Uriens of Gorre and bore him a legitimate heir, Owain. She continues to take lovers, as is the pagan custom.

Morgan le Fey

Race: Human

Class/Level: Druid 11th, Aristocrat 4th

Height/Weight: 5'10", 155 lbs

Hit Points: 95

Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 feet

Armor Class: 10

Attacks: +13/+8/+3 melee (*keen sickle +1*)

Damage: 1d6+1 *keen sickle +1* (Crit 18-20)

Special Attacks: Spells

Special Qualities: Animal companion (raven), nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, venom immunity, wild shape (5 times/day, tiny- to large-sized animals), woodland stride

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +14

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +13, Heal +6, Hide +4, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (Nobility) +8, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Knowledge (Nature) +6, Perform +4, Read Lips +7, Ride +4, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft (Divine) +6, Wilderness Lore +6

Languages: Common, Draconic, Druidic, Giant, Sylvan

Motivation and Goals

Morgan is dedicated to protecting the sacred places of the ancient Celts – megaliths, barrows, groves, fairy rings and ley lines. While her efforts are mainly focused in Britain, she also concerns herself with sites elsewhere in Europe.

Through a series of events, Morgan has come to be an enemy of King Arthur's court. At first, she tried to work through her rancor for Arthur, rancor that stemmed from his father's deceitful seduction of her mother. She was even a friend to Guinevere. However, her attraction towards Lancelot changed to jealousy and hatred when he spurned her affections in favor of championing Guinevere. Partly out of spite, and partly to heal her wounded soul, Morgan took a cousin of Guinevere (named Guiomar) as a lover. When the affair was discovered, Arthur banished her for adultery. This – Arthur's judgment based on Christian values, overruling the sexual customs of their Celtic heritage, was the final straw.

Combat

Though Morgan does not engage toe-to-toe, she does get into the thick of battle. Usually, she sends a lover or her magical golden lions into battle, and then hampers and hinders their opponents via spells.

Morgan maintains a huge network of spies and allies. Constantly plotting and planning, making and breaking alliances as it suits her, playing one enemy off another, she is perhaps more dangerous out of combat, when she has time to nurture her schemes into deadly fruition.

Base of Operations

Morgan has a number of places of refuge. As Queen of King Gorre, she often resides in the so-called Castle of Maidens (by Edinburgh, Scotland).

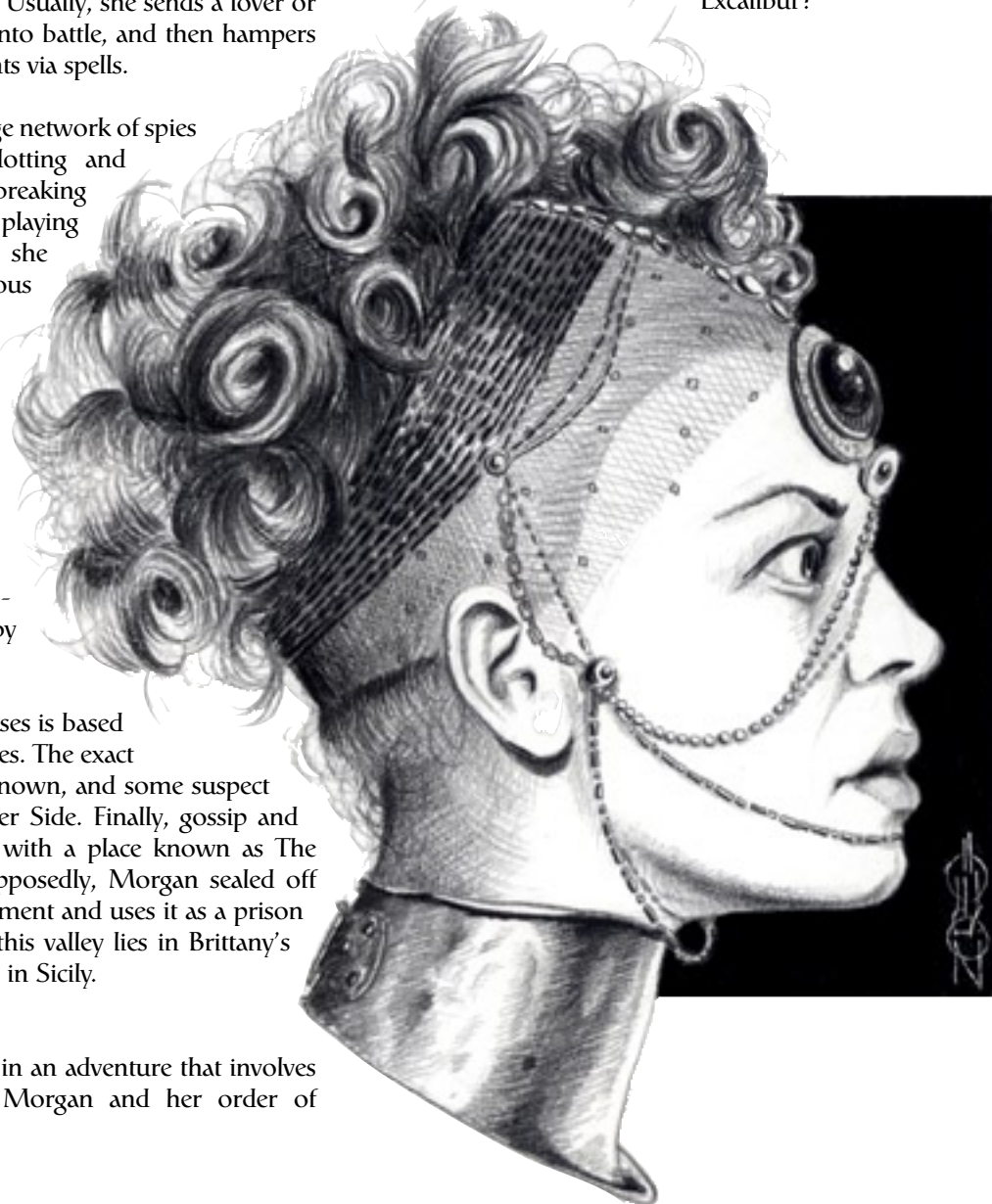
Her order of enchantresses is based in Avalon, the Isle of Apples. The exact location of this site is unknown, and some suspect it exists partly in the Other Side. Finally, gossip and rumor associate Morgan with a place known as The Valley of No Return. Supposedly, Morgan sealed off this lush valley by enchantment and uses it as a prison for her lovers. Some say this valley lies in Brittany's Forest of Paimpont, others in Sicily.

Adventure Hooks

1) The PCs are engaged in an adventure that involves a site that is sacred to Morgan and her order of

enchantresses. Perhaps they must travel a ley line to reach a distant battle in time, enter a dungeon beneath a barrow mound to defeat an ancient spirit that has cursed its descendants with bad luck, or acquire a fey treasure from the Other Side to impress a stubborn King enough that one of them can marry his daughter. Any despoiling or misuse of such sacred sites will bring the PCs into conflict with the enchantresses. Additionally, Morgan may have her own secret reasons for opposing the PCs.

2) One of the PCs is seduced (or charmed) by a beautiful and mysterious woman. She asks that he and his companions to attend a tournament in her honor and best a group of robber knights who previously held her captive in a most unchivalrous manner. To aid them, she gives them a magic sword, suits of silver platemail, and potions of heroism. During the tournament, the rivalry between PCs and robber knights culminates in a heated melee against the robber knights. It soon becomes clear that the fight is to the death. Do the PCs find out in time that these "robber knights" are actually King Arthur and his champions, tricked into unmarked armor by another of Morgan's deceptions, and that the magic sword one of them wields is actually Excalibur?



Pizza

Race: Halfling
Class/Level: Expert 6th/Crime Boss 4th
Height/Weight: 3'8", 93 lbs
Hit Points: 45
Initiative: +7 (+4 Improved Initiative, +3 Dex)
Speed: 30 feet
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, Ring of Protection +2)
Attacks: +9 ranged (hand crossbow),
+6 melee (stiletto)
Damage: 1d4 hand crossbow, 1d3 stiletto.
Special Attacks: Hand Crossbow, Sneak
Attack +1d6,
Special Qualities: Larcenous Followers,
Weekly Income, Killer Rep +2.
Alignment: Lawful Evil
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +10
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 14

Skills: Appraise +12, Bluff +8, Decipher Script +2, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +5, Forgery +5, Gather Information +10, Hide +4, Innuendo +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Local) +10, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Pick Pocket +3, Profession (Merchant) +9, Search +4, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Use Magic Device +6.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Appraise).

Possessions: Ring of Protection +2, Stiletto of Blending (new magic item, see below), Staff of Charming (looks like a silver-capped walking stick).

Description

A rotund halfling woman of middling age, Pizza speaks in a cultured manner that betrays her fine upbringing, but her voice could etch even the finest gnome glass. Many people who meet her begin questioning early on how to stop the never-ending flow of words, but with Pizza there isn't much chance of that. Slovenly, she seems barely capable of standing for more than a few minutes before she must recline upon one of her ever-present sofas. Her hands end in red-painted talon-like nails, and her faded blue eyes always seem somewhat glazed over, the result of the hallucinogens she is so very fond of experimenting with.

Pizza likes to bully and threaten those weaker than herself, and works hard to unearth information that she might use to bribe or intimidate her enemies. Pizza reveals herself to be a pathetic coward when the tables are turned and she no longer has her goons to protect her, however.

Background

If one were to conjure up an image of the typical ruthless gangster, Pizza would be his diametric opposite. Don't be misled, however. She is just as greedy and unsavory

as next racketeer, but she chooses to mask herself and her activities in a veneer of legitimacy and refinement. Pizza hails from a wealthy halfling family, members of whom have been elected village lord-mayors for several generations. She grew up wanting for nothing, and with her fathers backing, set out to make her own fortune in trade. As with most things she sets her mind to, Pizza succeeded in spectacular fashion.

A successful merchant and financier who ran a more or less legal business empire until recently, Pizza has become a major player in the underworld since the demise of the reigning crime lord. Some whisper that the diminutive merchant, known as the robber-baroness in some circles, may have had something to do with the mysterious death.

While her holdings, both criminal and legitimate, are fairly extensive, the jewel in her crown is undoubtedly Xport, one of the nations largest shipping firms and auction houses dealing in anything that might be considered collectible, from magic items and spell components, to rare art and slaves. Of course, Xport takes a hefty percentage of all sales, and while many may suspect that the company is run by organized crime this allegation has yet to be proven by the law.



There's a reason why the watch hasn't made any attempts to investigate the allegations of wrongdoing: Not only does Pizta own Xport, but she also controls, through bribes, intimidation, and blackmail the city in which it's located. She takes a sizeable cut from all enterprises operating in town, everything from taverns and houses of ill repute to craftsmen and merchants. Even the street thugs that habitually shake down unwary prey in the dark passages accept her suzerainty.

Motivation and Goals

Pizta's goals are quite simple, self-preservation and the accumulation of wealth. She is unconcerned with power in and of itself, but recognizes that the fulfillment of her primary goals often depends on the acquisition and judicious use of power in its various forms. For example, while she is patently uninterested in running a city, Pizta finds it convenient for her business interests to control all of those who ostensibly wield the political power in the city.

Information. That's where real power lies. With it, you can unlock a man's greatest secrets and thereby control him like a marionette. Information, therefore, is vital to success in every endeavor. So while her company deals with every commodity imaginable, it is information that Pizta personally prizes most.

Combat

Pizta prefers not to get into combat, and very rarely has to. She spends most of her time within the safe confines of her manor, usually only venturing out in disguise or under heavy guard. Her goons provide a welcome first line of defense, and she enjoys using them for their intimidation value: "nothing like a good roughing up of the competition as a prelude to negotiations", as she likes to say.

Should her goons not offer enough protection, she'll attempt to turn the tables using her Staff of Charming, or cover a retreat (through one of the myriad secret doors in her home) with her hand crossbows. If unable to flee, she'll feign terror, begging for her life and attempting to secure her freedom with valuables. All the while Pizta is lulling her enemies' defenses and luring them close enough to gut them with her stiletto.

When this last, desperate attempt fails she will truly begin to grovel and snivel. She offers her assailants the world and more to spare her life.

Base of Operations

Pizta splits her time between a suite above the Xport offices and a lavish townhouse located the city's most posh neighborhood. Both are well protected by guards and magical wards, and feature numerous secret passages that afford her convenient escape opportunities. Her doorman rarely admits anyone without an appointment, though someone hinting at possessing of some obscure information ("If your master is uninterested in the wreck

New Weapon

Stiletto

Stiletto's are small, thrusting knives with long, thin blades and small hilts. The blade is designed to penetrate between chinks in armor (or between ribs to damage vital organs). Deadly and easily concealable, stilettos are favored weapons of assassin.

Size: Tiny; **Cost:** 4gp; **Damage:** 1d3; **Critical:** 18-20/x3; **Range Increment:** 10ft; **Weight:** 1 lb; **Type:** Piercing.

New Magical Item

Stiletto of Blending

This +1 magic weapon changes coloration to blend with its surroundings, thereby adding +5 to a character's Hide skill. In addition, if it is drawn and attacked with it in the same round, the character automatically catches his target flat-footed (only for the purposes of this one attack). This sneak attack only works once per combat, as opponents quickly become aware of the danger they face.

Caster Level: 4th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor; **Market Price:** 500 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb.

of the Daimyo, I'll just be on my way") may gain access with a successful Diplomacy/Bluff check.

Her townhouse is home to an impressive collection of records. Pizta maintains a library of books, scrolls, ancient manuscripts, and other forms of writing covering every conceivable subject. She never makes this facility available to others; after all, information is most valuable when it's known by few.

Adventure Hooks

1) Pizta recruits the PCs to find the Laszlo Manuscript, an ancient tome of arcane knowledge that has been stolen from her. The reward she offers is astounding in keeping with the value she places in this artifact. She relates that burglars recently raided one of her town-homes and took the book, and were later found murdered-without the Laszlo Manuscript. One of Pizta's underworld contacts recently informed her that an elf in possession of a book matching the Manuscript tried to secure passage out of town aboard a ship, but was refused by the captain. She is therefore confident the artifact remains within the city limits.

When the PCs catch up with the item, the elf turns out to be a Lore-Guard, an elven spy-mage tasked with



keeping dangerous magic out of the hands of those who would use it for ill. He explains his cause and pleads for the PCs to aid in his escape by returning to Pizzta with a forged copy of the Manuscript. The choice before them is clear: retrieve the book and thereby garner thousands of gold pieces and the goodwill of a powerful merchant as reward, or serve an altruistic purpose that sees little gain and incurs the risk of angering Pizzta if the forgery is uncovered.

2) Soon after the PCs open up shop in town a gang of thugs in the employ of Pizzta rob their facilities (alternatively, the shop in question may belong to family or friends). Immediately thereafter, they are approached by a gentleman representing Pizzta who “sends his employers regrets that such lawlessness goes unpunished in the city,” and who offers “to extend to them, at a reasonable price, protection from the ruffians that claim the streets as their own”.

If the PCs refuse, the attacks continue and increase in intensity. The representative returns to see if events have caused them to reconsider his employers “most gracious offer”. If the PCs still seem reluctant, he invites them to discuss the matter with Pizzta and her home, where they see first hand the fate-now a very unique statue (thanks to a flesh to stone scroll)- of the last unfortunate to refuse her protection. It should become clear that dealing with Pizzta is a cost born by all who elect to seek to run their business from her city.



Possessions: Dagger, 1d4 alchemists' fire grenades (disguised as various gaudy baubles), *Ring of Mind Shielding*.

Description

A dwarf of average height and build, with a swarthy complexion and an unkempt bowl of thick black hair, Sethia is an unassuming individual. She has none of the royal bearing of her father and half-brother, and has always been awkward in cultured and refined situations. She has a lean body and a dangerous smile, which causes some men to find her distracting and perhaps interesting, but Sethia is far from attractive, even for a dwarf. She wears fine clothes as befits her station, but they seem ill-fitting, almost as if they instinctively know she is not worthy of them. And yet, it would be unwise to underestimate her based upon her appearances, as she is a cunning and ruthless schemer whose ambitions are limitless.

Background

Despite being the elder by several years, control of the Kanul Mining Guild, with its exclusive rights to the mineral-rich hills of Shiar, was not transferred to Sethia on the death of her father Lord Abathai Kanul. She was passed over in favor of sister Lorna, presumably because she was an illegitimate child. While she was accepted and even loved by Abathai, as an illegitimate offspring she was never seriously considered as a potential heir to the family fortune. It simply was not done in the circles of nobility.

Sethia Kanul

Race: Dwarf
Class/Level: Expert 1st /Rogue 3rd.
Height/Weight: 4'0", 110 lbs
Hit Points: 20
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 feet
Armor Class: 10
Attacks: Dagger +2 melee, Alchemists Fire Grenade +2 ranged
Damage: Dagger 1d4, Alchemists Fire Grenade 1d6
Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +2d6
Special Qualities: Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
Alignment: Chaotic Evil
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills: Alchemy +3, Appraise +6, Bluff +7, Climb +1, Diplomacy +2, Disable Device +4, Forgery +3, Gather Information +2, Hide +2, Innuendo +3, Intimidate +1, Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering)+4, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Open Lock +1, Profession (Miner) +4, Search +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff)

Abathai thanked the gods that fate had played out as it had when blind ambition and unscrupulous morals began to manifest in his eldest daughter. He shuddered at the thought of Sethia running Kanul Mining. When Sethia began to advocate forging closer ties with certain political factions within the country, thereby threatening the delicate neutrality that had brought the family unprecedented wealth, Abathai and Lorna realized they would have to watch her activities closely. Years passed, Abathai died, and yet there was no overt move made by Sethia to usurp control. Lorna let down her guard. It was a fatal mistake. She had underestimated her half-sister's guile and patience.

The factions Sethia had been courting were reeling after failed power plays, and their leader promised Sethia untold rewards for bringing the wealth of the Shiar Hills into their fold. With her sister distracted by trade negotiations, Sethia struck. There was an explosion while Lorna were inspecting a mining tunnel with various visiting dignitaries, killing the head of the Kanul Mining Guild. Sethia played the grieving sister for all of about two minutes, then stepped in and ruthlessly consolidated her position the new Lady Kanul.

Since that time, she has expanded the guild's power and prestige and added to her own personal wealth by a series of underhanded and often illegal dealings. Sethia prides herself on being an equal opportunity businesswoman; it doesn't matter who the client is, one being gold is as good as the next.

Motivation and Goals

Sethia is interested primarily in two goals: increasing her holdings and expanding her power into the political arena. In truth, these are interconnected, for the only reason she has any political value is because of her wealth. In addition, as one would expect of a dwarf, she is determined to revenge herself among those who wronged her, specifically those individuals who sought to block her entry into the halls of power. Patient and utterly cunning, She's willing to take her time to achieve her revenge however, planning the event (be it murder, blackmail, or other) so that she might take advantage of the ensuing fall-out to further her primary goals.

Sethia is an extremely forward thinking individual, and whereas in most regards she's unwilling to take any significant risks, this is not true of her business dealings. Impressed by any new piece of technology or emerging market, Sethia throws herself recklessly at any opportunity in absolute certainty that it will pan-out. So far her hunches have been correct, but here lies one of her few weaknesses for all it would take would one or perhaps two hasty decisions based upon faulty assumptions to bring down her entire empire.

Combat

She excels at conducting clandestine operations, and is fearless in her execution of these plots. Excelling

at coordinating "accidents" to eliminate rivals, or outmaneuvering foes in politics, Sethia is nonetheless out of her element when directly confronted with violence. Despite her success, Sethia has little flair for tactics beyond political machinations. She relies upon her guards for protection, and if given time can call upon the retinue of her political allies, but she herself has little of the legendary dwarven stoicism and bravery. She'll defend herself with dagger and alchemists' fire grenades, but only as a last resort.

Base of Operations

The Kanul mining empire has long been managed from a castle built into the side of a precipitous cliff. Thanks to the family's well-known excellence at engineering, it is solidly fortified and well-defended with traps. It occupies a series of caverns that were once collectively known as The Sarcophagus, a place where ancient humans interred their dead. While the practice has died out centuries before the Kanul's took possession, many humans still fear the place and those that reside within. Sethia's personal chambers are illuminated only by the glow of hundreds of glowing stones embedded in the darkened ceiling to create the impression of a night sky. These stones are worth 50gp apiece, which should provide an idea as to the extent of the Kanul fortune.

Adventure Hooks

1) There are rumors of strange lights and mysterious disappearances in the hills nearby, causing no small amount of fear and apprehension in the nearby villages. With rumors of spectral avengers spreading like wildfire, the PCs are sent to investigate the unusual goings-on. While in the hills they happen upon representatives of Kanul Mining burying coldiron ingots, in anticipation of a sale to a goblin warband. Sethia desires the untapped timber resources of Wild Wood, but her negotiations with the elves have been to date fruitless and she has grown tired of their intransigence. She has therefore struck a deal with a goblin band, offering to sell them coldiron in exchange for their services in staging attacks against the elves. Kanul hopes to either drive the elves into her arms seeking aid in the fight against the goblins, or have them eliminated outright. She'd be equally pleased in either event.

With the PCs bearing witness to the shady deal, Sethia's followers attempt to eliminate them (of course, Sethia has staged the deal so that she has plausible deniability, claiming that some of her men were acting of their own accord and without her knowledge).

2) A small valley in the mountains is suddenly flooded and buried beneath a watery blanket 30 feet deep. The dwarven mine is flooded and all feared dead. A small and relatively unprofitable mine, no one seems overly concerned by it's loss. Except for one dwarf, who begs the PCs to investigate and offers to pay them with a nugget of pure spellcease, and ore that nullifies magic.



The dwarves had recently stumbled upon a vein of this extremely valuable ore in their nearly played out copper mine. Sethia wanted the mine but the dwarves refused to sell, so the scruples woman hired a hill giant to build a dam that would flood the valley. She's now mining the ore using the raised corpses of the drowned miners, weighed down with ankle irons to enable them to work in the water-filled caverns. PCs will have to contend with the zombie miners and their sea hag overseer, free several miners trapped in air pocket that is rapidly running out of oxygen, and defeat the stone giant guarding the dam.

Sycorax

Race: Sea hag
Class/Level: Wizard 9th
Height/Weight: 8'2", 400 lbs
Hit Points: 64
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 feet, swim 40 feet
Armor Class: 15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks: +9/+4 melee (2 claws), +9 missile (net)
Damage: 1d4+3 claw, * net (special)
Special Attacks: Horrific appearance (Su), evil eye (Su), spells
Special Qualities: SR14, water breathing (Ex), toad familiar
Alignment: Chaotic Evil
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +14
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +6, Concentration +11, Craft (Net-making) +10, Escape Artist +8, Hide +6, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Spellcraft (Arcane) +6, Spot +10, Use Rope +7.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Aquan, Auran, Giant

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Net), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Craft (Net-making)), Silent Spell, Weapon Focus (Net)

Possessions: Ragged scholar's outfit, *ring of elemental command (air)*, masterwork net, arcane scrolls (*imprisonment*, *summon monster V*, *summon monster VIII*), *Keoghtom's ointment*, spell books

Spell List: 4/5/5/3/2/1

0-Level: all.

1st-Level: *Endure Elements*, *Obscuring Mist*, *Protection From Elementals* (similar to protection from evil, but affecting elementals), *Summon Monster I*, *Feather Fall*.

2nd-Level: *Fog Cloud*, *Resist Elements*, *Summon Monster II*, *Whispering Wind*.

3rd-Level: *Fly*, *Hold Person*, *Lightning Bolt*, *Magic Circle Against Elementals* (similar to magic circle against

evil, but affecting elementals), *Protection From Elements*, *Stinking Cloud*, *Summon Monster III*, *Wind Wall*.

4th-Level: *Airwall* (arcane version of the divine spell), *Bestow Curse*, *Contagion*, *Solid Fog*, *Summon Monster IV*.

5th-Level: *Cloud Kill*, *Control Winds* (arcane version of the divine spell), *Hold Monster*, *Summon Monster V*.

Description

Sycorax is a hideous hag, apparently older than Death and clearly uglier than Sin. Wrapped as she is in layers of ragged clothing, it is difficult to determine her true form. However, one might notice that her head and hands are disproportionably large, her arms a bit too long. In fact, Sycorax is bent double with age and envy, and would easily stand 9' tall if she could straighten her crooked spine.

Sycorax usually shuffles about with her face down. This is a blessing, for those who look upon her face, skin pale and scaly and slightly translucent, like the belly of a fish; eyes watery and yet burning with an inner flame, usually fall ill within days, are bedridden for weeks and, if they recover at all, are never quit the same.

Background

Sycorax hails originally from Algiers, where she gained a reputation for foul magic. Bad weather, sickened livestock and other misfortunes were all attributes to her. Whether true or not, she was eventually brought to trial on multiple counts of witchcraft. The magistrates had argued passionately about her punishment -- some favoring hanging, others burning, until they discovered she was with child. Though the father was likely an incubus (for who else would couple with such a hideous hag), the locals laws were quite clear on the matter. She could not be killed. So instead, Sycorax was exiled to an anonymous island in the Mediterranean.



Since then, she has increased in power, assembling a collection of elemental and demonic servants to do her bidding.

Motivation and Goals

Above all else, Sycorax desires occult knowledge and power-through-knowledge. She is obsessed with unlocking the secrets of creation, and thereby gaining power over heaven and earth. Fortunately, her obsession outstrips her aptitude. To compensate, hordes arcane scrolls, spell books, and magic items.

Sycorax sends out her summoned servants to spy out the holds of passing ships. If the cargo is desirable, she calls up foul weather to sink the vessel, and salvages whatever washes ashore.

Combat

Sycorax attempts to make quick work of vulnerable opponents (alone and/or poorly armed) by closing quickly and pulling them against her filthy bosom, in an attempt to silence, smother and crush. To scatter the faint-hearted, she might single out one of them for horrible treatment -- such as being gutting by her steel claws, or violently shaken until their spine snaps.

Against a more concerted foe, Sycorax first summons one of her spiritual servants (Summon Monster). While the enemy is thereby engaged, Sycorax withdraws to a defensive position (treetop, high ground), from whence she can cast further spells with less chance of interruption. Sycorax prefers to cast a series of summonings in an attempt to overwhelm, and then augment her forces with the occasion area of effect spell.

Sycorax will use renewable magic (e.g. memorized spells, wands) before one-shot magic (e.g. scrolls and potions) due to her covetousness and the difficulty in obtaining replacements.

Sycorax draws much of her power from the foul south wind (long believed to carry foul vapors). When the wind blows from the south, she gains a +2 bonus to attacks, armor class, saving throws and the DC of her spells. When the north wind blows, she falls into a malaise: the same rolls are instead penalized by -2. When the wind blows from any other direction, or is calm, her stats remain unchanged.

Base of Operations

Sycorax lives out her exile on an anonymous island in the Mediterranean. The island is pock-mocked with earthy caves and watery grottos, dank fens and dark groves. It is further scared by piles of boulders, often leaning together or stacked to form crude shelters. Whether these are natural or the work of ancient inhabitants remains a mystery

Sycorax maintains a number of crude huts and caves across the isle, which she moved between depending

on the season and her whim. She also has dozens of secret stashes of supplies and treasure, salvaged from shipwrecks.

Adventure Hooks

1) Periodically, the PCs are contacted by a mysterious patron seeking scrolls and spell books. They never see this individual, who whispers from behind concealment. Acquiring these items may involve theft or traditional dungeon romps; the patron always pays well. Then one day they catch a glimpse of their patron (accidentally or intentionally). Yet all they see is a flutter of papers being carried into the air on a gust of wind. What nature of being is this? Where does it take the magic items? (Note: the patron an Air Mephit called Ariel, enslaved to Sycorax. It is of course returning to Sycorax's island.)

2) The PCs are traveling by ship when a storm gathers. So swift and so violent is the tempest, it cannot be natural. Dangers include being washed overboard by wind or wave, or getting struck by lightning. The ship is driven aground; the PCs wash up on shore. Do they try to summon passing ships with a bonfire (and thereby attract the attention of Sycorax of Caliban)? Do they discover one of Sycorax's stashes -- and therein a possible means of escape (e.g. leaky rowboat, potion of fly, scroll or water walk)? Or do they free Ariel from its imprisonment in the trunk of a tree, and earn from the grateful air mephit the reward of being carries home on the winds?

Appendix

Enchanted Beast-hide Armor

In a world of magical beasts, it is inevitable that enterprising craftsmen would devise a method for preserving the special properties of their hides in order to make enchanted armor. This is not an easy process, and thus requires a master tanner and master armorsmith.

The Process

Step 1: Acquire the appropriate number of pelts

Generally, it is assumed that adventurers will hunt the creatures themselves during an adventure.

After tanning and trimming (see Step 2 below), a hide furnishes enough raw materials to create one suit of armor one size category smaller than the source creature, two suits two size categories smaller, four suits three size categories smaller, and so on. Thus, a huge hide will supply enough material for one large suit, two medium suits or four small suits. A large hide creates one medium-sized suite or two small suits. One medium-sized hide is enough for a small suit, but two such hides



are needed for a medium-sized suit. Four small hides are necessary for a single medium-sized suit.

If the PCs choose to peddle in untreated pelts (hiring NPC hunters to do their dirty work, or alternatively selling the pelt to a tanner), assume that a pelt is worth roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ the value of the final product, divided by the number of suits of medium-sized armor that can be created from a single hide. Thus a winter wolf pelt is worth 720 gp, whereas a hellhound pelt is worth 360 gp. The pelt from a behir is worth 1266 gp because two suits of medium-sized armor can be made from a single hide, each suit worth 1900 gp.

Step 2: Cure and tan the hide.

Once enough pelts are acquired, a tanner begins the process of cleaning, tanning, drying and trimming. Use the Craft (Tanning) or Craft (Leatherworking) skill. The process of preserving the magical properties of a hide is more difficult than traditional tanning. Generally, the difficulty is: 10 for animals, beasts and aberrations; 15 for magical beasts (including dragons); and 20 for otherworldly beasts (outsiders, elementals). For unusual hide (scales, armor plating), add 2 to any of the above-listed difficulties.

If the skill check succeeds, the hide retains its magical properties. Otherwise, it loses its natural enchantment and should be treated as normal, non-magical material (but still suitable for armor). If the check fails by 5 or more, half of the material is ruined. The tanning process takes one year, irrespective of rolls.

Assume that the treated hide is worth $\frac{2}{3}$ the value of the final product.

Step 3: Create the armor.

Once the hides have cured, a craftsman can construct the armor. Different hides are suitable for different types of armor. Most can be made into either leather armor or hide armor, depending on thickness. A few unusual hides provide protection equivalent to scale mail or banded mail. Note, however, that this armor is still organic, not metallic, and should be treated as such for purposes of resisting special attacks (e.g. a rust monster's touch or chill metal spell).

The craftsman makes an Armorsmith skill check, DC 12 for leather armor, 13 for hide armor, 14 for scale-equivalent or 16 for banded-equivalent. The amount of time required to craft the armor uses the rules presented in Core Book I (Craft skill) but is based upon the value of an un-enchanted version of the same armor. A failed craft check (by 5 or more) will ruin half of the raw materials. The craftsman must also make a masterwork component, DC 20. Again, the time taken is per the standard rules.

The final value of the armor and magical properties is listed in the accompanying table. The Armor Descriptions section below describes a typical suit of armor of each type.

Armor Descriptions

Ankheg: Composed of thick, interlocking plates of brown chitin -- alternately pitted and barbed -- this armor provides protection equivalent to banded armor.

Basilisk: This armor resembles brown scalemail. It has fringes of sharp spines running along the outside of the arms and legs and up the back.

Behir: When burnished, this banded armor flashes a range of colors from violet to ultramarine as light plays across its surface. The behir's horns are attached as forearm spikes (treat as spiked gauntlets).

Celestial Bison: This armor appears to be normal leather armor, although finely made and fitted with platinum clasps and buckles. However, clerics, paladins and outsiders perceive that the wearer is surrounded by a halo of light.

Chuul: This armor is crafted of orange and black carapace.

Cloaker: Part of this ensemble is normal black leather armor. The cloaker component is a voluminous greatcloak (including claw-shaped clasps) and separate cowed mask that covers the upper part of the face and head.

Cockatrice: This supple leather armor is pale gray, the surface the chest tooled to display outline of a Cockatrice.

Crocodile: This scale armor is grey-green from head to waste, with light gray arm pieces and leggings.

Displacer Beast: To true seeing, this leather armor somewhat resembles velvet, as it is covered in a short coat of blue-black fur. To normal vision, it resembles a shimmering distortion of light, like heat-haze.

Dragonne: This armor resembles golden scale mail.

Elephant: This thick hide armor is gray and wrinkled.

Ethereal Marauder: This hide armor is mottled blue, including jackboots and thick gauntlets.

Fiendish Shark: This hide armor has a gray-colored, abrasive surface. Its black buckles are made from star iron.

Gargoyle: Though this armor is designed like leather armor (single layered and form-fitting), it is treated as hide armor due to its stiffness and resilience. It includes

Table: Enchanted Armor

Pelt	Hide Size	Armor Type	Tanning DC	Armor Value	Properties
Ankheg	L	Banded	12	1900 gp	Acid Endurance: absorbs first 5 points of acid damage per round
Basilisk	M	Scale	17	1200 gp	+2 save vs Petrification
Behir	H	Banded	17	1900 gp	Electricity Endurance: absorbs first 5 points of electricity damage per round
Celestial Bison	L	Leather	20	4160 gp	Spell Resistance 5; protection from evil as a 1st level cleric, 1/day
Chuul	L	Banded	12	1400 gp	+2 save vs Paralysis
Cloaker	L	Leather	10	660 gp	+5 circumstance bonus to Hide checks when in shadows and darkness
Cockatrice	S	Leather	15	5160 gp	Repell vermin as a 7th level druid, 1/day
Crocodile	M	Scale	12	700 gp	Ignore subdual damage
Displacer Beast	L	Leather	15	4160 gp	Displacement spell, but only 10% miss chance (1/4 concealment)
Dragonne	L	Scale	17	1200 gp	Sonic Endurance: absorbs first 5 points of sonic damage per round
Elephant	H	Hide	10	5165 gp	Repel serpents as a 7th level druid, 1/day (per repell vermin, but affects snakes, couatl, naga and yuan-ti)
Ethereal Marauder	M	Hide	15	1165 gp	Gauntlets can strike ethereal creatures, with no miss chance; armor protection against Wraiths
Fiendish Shark	L	Hide	20	4165 gp	Spell Resistance 5; protection from good as a 1st level cleric, 1/day
Gargoyle	M	Hide	17	4165 gp	Damage reduction: 5/+1
Gorgon	L	Banded	17	4400 gp	+4 save vs Petrification
Hell Hound	M	Leather	20	2160 gp	Fire Endurance: absorbs first 5 points of heat damage per round; -2 to saves vs cold
Hyena	M	Leather	10	2160 gp	Detect Undead, at will
Lycanthrope	M	Hide	15	4165 gp	Damage Reduction: 5/silver
Owlbear	L	Hide	10	1165 gp	Barbarian Rage: 1/day, but only if wounded to 1/2 HP or less
Pegasus	L	Leather	15	2160 gp	Detect good and detect evil, at will
Rhinoceros	L	Hide	10	2165 gp	+10 bonus to avoid being grappled
Rust Monster	M	Hide	10	1165 gp	+10 bonus to Search checks metallic treasure; nullified by nearby metal
Sea Lion	L	Leather	10	660 gp	Water tight; ignore subdual damage for cold water; +2 bonus to Fortitude check vs water pressure
Shadow Mastiff	M	Leather	15	1160 gp	+10 circumstance bonus to Hide checks when in shadows and darkness
Unicorn	L	Leather	15	2160 gp	Heal +10 (self only)
Winter Wolf	L	Leather	15	2160 gp	Cold Endurance: absorbs first 5 points of cold damage per round; -2 to saves vs heat
Wyvern	H	Scale	17	3200 gp	Emotion (hate only) per 5th level bard, 1/day



a horned helm. If the wearer stands still, he resembles a crudely carved stone statue.

Gorgon: This glossy-black banded armor is inlaid with silver runes and sweeping designs. It comes with an ornate horned helm.

Hell Hound: This leather armor is dull, charcoal black, fastened at the seams with brass rivets. When exposed to extreme heat, faintly-glowing red-orange splotches play across its surface.

Hyena: This tanned leather armor includes a bone breastplate and hyena skull helm. The bits of bone, claws and teeth that jangle from the trim can be unnerving rattle, but also make it difficult to sneak (-2 circumstance penalty to Sneak checks).

Lycanthrope: Most commonly created from werewolf or werepanther hide, the key component of this armor is a full-length cloak made from a complete hide. Leather breastplate, greaves and pauldrons protect the rest of the body. (Special Note: since a lycanthrope reverts to human form when killed, the creature must be skinned alive to recover the hide.)

Owlbear: This hide armor is deeply tanned, with fringes of yellow-black feathers along the outside of the sleeves and leggings. It includes a heavy fur cloak. The creature's beaked skull is converted into a bone helm.

Pegasus: This pale grey leather armor has a fringe of feathers along the sleeves.

Rhinoceros: This is thick, gray hide armor. It has heavy shoulder, elbow and knee padding.

Rust Monster: This lumpy hide armor consists of a rust-red breastplate and yellow-tan greaves and pauldrons.

Sea Lion: This green-black leather armor is form-fitting and flexible. It covers the entire body except for the face and is designed to be completely water-tight. It comes with detachable flippers and a facemask that use thin sheets of transparent mica as lenses.

Shadow Mastiff: This leather armor is pitch-black, completely absorbing light. The wearer resembles a living shadow.

Unicorn: This white leather armor includes supple gloves and stylish riding boots. Ivory buttons complete the look.

Winter Wolf: This armor consists of leather jack and leggings (both pale blue-gray), and includes a thick wool cloak trimmed in white fur.

Wyvern: This armor resembles slightly-tarnished scalemail.



GODS or FOES?

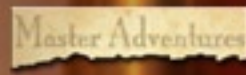
Dark Masters

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