



SCOUNDREL'S GUIDE TO THE SCHARDE ISLANDS

Pirates, the undead, even undead pirates haunt the islands of the Nightmare Empire in this GM's resource for Iron Kingdoms: Requiem



SCOUNDREL'S GUIDE TO THE SCHARDE ISLANDS



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INTRODUCTION

Cast your spyglass upon any corner of this vast archipelago and ye'll discover something t' chill the blood an' rattle the bones. The Scharde Islands. Nowhere in all of creation is a place so little understood. Every spur o' rock and jungle-topped atoll hides secrets that're best left undiscovered. But ye'll never run out o' fools who set their sails toward one of those islands, their heads full o' wonder an' treasure. I should know: I've found a fair few o' their ships gutted on a hidden reef or the bones o' the crew who made their way onto an island only t' meet their end at the teeth o' some 'orrible blighted nasty. If ye've pointed your own bow at the Scharde, and no amount o' wise words can alter your course, then at least try t' heed my words. If ye do, ye might yet survive a little while longer. An' if not? Then I'll tip my hat to your bones and have a drink in your memory.

Captain Bartolo Montador

THE VETERAN CAPTAIN AND WARCASTER BARTOLO “Broadships Bart” Montador is one of those rare figures who can skirt the line between legitimate privateering and outright piracy. Across a long and storied career, Broadships Bart has sailed every inch of western Immoren’s coastline and has delved deep into the treacherous Scharde Islands.

Seafaring is a dangerous business, especially for those bold—or foolish—enough to explore the islands off the Broken Coast. In an effort to save a few souls from the briny deep and to deny the necromancers of the Nightmare Empire the corpses they desire, Broadships Bart has gathered a collection of experts to put together a manual of sorts, a guide for scoundrels who make their living on the sea.

The Scoundrel’s Guide to the Scharde Islands contains all-new rules to help you take your games of *Iron Kingdoms: Requiem* to the high seas and into the heart of the Nightmare Empire. These optional rules expand the horizon of your adventures in new and exciting ways with rules for fierce naval combat, perilous nautical hazards, new and powerful magical items, and a crop of new monsters unique to the Scharde Islands.

The material presented within is not mandatory for your games of *Iron Kingdoms: Requiem*, and Game Masters are encouraged to take what they find compelling and leave behind what they don’t. These are options for a richer and more engaging experience in your adventures set in the Nightmare Empire and the surrounding islands. You can choose to use some or all of the following content; they’re more like guidelines than rules, as a famous pirate once said.

Throughout the book, Broadships Bart and his associates will chime in here and there with bits of advice and observations on the topic at hand. A savvy sailor will take those words to heart, since they are the wisdom of those who have survived—and thrived—among the Scharde Islands.

1

NAVAL COMBAT IN THE IRON KINGDOMS



On the sea, your ship is your nation, your home, and all that stands between you and a cold and watery grave. Know your ship, love your ship, and fear for its safety. Whether you go by steam, by sail, or by oar, a well-loved ship will do everything in her power to carry her crew back home again.

—Broadside Bart

FOR MILLENNIA THE PEOPLE OF WESTERN IMMOREN and the Scharde Islands have viewed the black waters of the Meredius as a frontier and a resource. Other lands were out there—a few they could see, and many others they could imagine. These waters provided a place to fish and harvest food, and later a way to move goods and people, but have always held mysteries and dangers that cold, vast, uncaring mistress saw to provide. Soon, as the people of Immoren grew more accustomed to practicing their trades there, they also brought their wars. Rare is the ship these days that does not carry basic armament.

SHIP CLASSES

Ships come in all sizes, referred to “classes” to distinguish them from creature sizes; a tiny ship can still be a Large—or even a Huge—object when compared to a creature. A ship’s class not only determines its size, but also its Armor Class, damage threshold, critical threshold, and base Maneuverability modifier, as well as how many weapons it can bring to bear. Smaller ships not able to withstand much damage but make up for it by being lighter and easier to maneuver. Heavier ships sacrifice maneuverability for thicker armor and increased cargo and weapon capacity.

Tiny. A tiny “ship” is typically called a boat and is often propelled by oars or poles. A rowboat would be in this class, as would a windsail board used by some Scharde Islanders. This size of craft almost never has armament of its own.

Small. Clippers, Ordric caravels, and Satyxis dhoze all fall within this class. Quick and agile, such ships are used for a variety of purposes. Smugglers favor them, as do some merchants, especially on Western Immoren’s rivers. Many pirates favor small ships for their superior maneuverability.

Medium. This class includes warships, ironhulls, and flat-bottomed riverboats that carry passengers.

Large. Military flagships and some Cryxian blackships fall into this class. They are reasonably maneuverable but also can withstand considerable damage and mount impressive weaponry.

Huge. Huge ships include galleons and some Cryxian blackships.

Gargantuan. Very few ships in Western Immoren are in this class—mostly the largest blackships in the Cryxian navy. Cryxian blackships are exclusively wind-powered, with the largest having four or more masts, and make use of weather magic to ensure favorable wind; the rare few ships of this class from other nations, lacking Orgoth propulsion magic, add steam engines to power immense side-mounted paddlewheels and often also sport banks of oars.

Such gigantic vessels serve as the command centers of fleets, often carrying a few small or medium ships for troop deployment and combat with more agile ships, and several tiny ones as lifeboats and landing craft. These ships can have crews of nearly a thousand, augmented by multiple steamjacks for labor or defense.

SHIP CLASS

Ship Class	Length	AC	Damage Threshold	Critical Threshold	Maneuverability	Weapon Batteries
Tiny	Up to 10 ft.	15	5	10	+5	0
Small	11–50 ft.	14	10	20	+4	1
Medium	51–75 ft.	13	15	30	+3	2
Large	76–150 ft.	12	20	40	+2	3
Huge	151–250 ft.	11	20	40	+1	4
Gargantuan	250+ ft.	10	25	50	+0	5



CREW

CREW QUALITY	
Crew Quality	Proficiency Bonus
Green	+0
Trained	+2
Seasoned	+3
Professional	+4

A crew's quality represents their experience and ability. While it can include a mix of mariners with less or more competence, its overall quality represents their average skill. The more experienced the crew, the more efficiently a ship runs.

Some actions require a **crew check**, which is equal to the crew's proficiency bonus unless a specific improvement or effect adds a modifier.

Green. Green crew members are barely a step above landlubbers. They can operate a ship but require more time and effort to fulfill commands. Individual green sailors use the **commoner** stat block during boarding actions.

Trained. Trained crew members know the difference between a marlin spike and a belaying pin. Most crews on the Meredius are at least trained. Trained sailors use the **bandit** stat block.

Seasoned. Seasoned crew members are skilled at the tasks required aboard a ship and use the **guard** stat block in combat.

Professional. Professional sailors are the highest caliber of crew. They use the **veteran** stat block.

OVERLOADED
The overloaded condition is unique to ships and similar vehicles that are carrying cargo in excess of the vehicle's ability to propel it.
If a ship suffers the overloaded condition, its Maneuverability bonus becomes 0 and its movement speed is halved, to a minimum of 1 in a tactical encounter or 1 mile per hour/24 miles per day.

SHIP STAT BLOCKS

The following statistics defines a ship's abilities in game.

BASIC INFORMATION

The following are the basic features of the ship.

Class. The relative size of the ship.

Armor Class. This determines if an attack hits the ship.

Damage Threshold (Critical Threshold). A ship ignores damage that fails to exceed its damage threshold. The critical threshold (in parentheses) measures its susceptibility to severe structural damage.

Hull Points. The amount of damage a ship can take before it is destroyed.

Initiative. Used to determine the initiative order of the ship in naval combat. The total initiative is equal to the ship's Maneuverability modifier. If the ship's pilot is proficient with vehicles (water), the pilot can also add their proficiency bonus to this check.

Crew. Expressed as a minimum and a maximum number of crew or passengers.

Crew Quality. The quality of the crew serving aboard the ship.

Crew Proficiency Bonus. This bonus is determined by crew quality.

Maneuver Check. This check is made to determine the success of ship actions and equals the ship's Maneuverability modifier plus the crew's proficiency bonus.

Speed. An abstracted measure of naval movement.

Travel Pace. How far the ship can travel in an hour and in a day.

Tonnage. Tonnage represents how much weight a ship can safely carry in its hold. A ship carrying more weight than this amount gains the **overloaded** condition.

Damage Immunities. As objects, ships have immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Condition Immunities. As objects, ships are immune to many conditions that affect creatures.

Traits. Describes any special traits of the ship, including its propulsion.

WEAPON BATTERIES

This section details the attacks made by the ship's weapon batteries.

BONUS ACTIONS

This section details any special bonus actions the ship can perform due to crew, upgrades, or other sources.

RANGE AND MOVEMENT

These rules use an abstracted system for movement and range to speed up naval combat.

RANGE

0: Grappled. Ships are adjacent to one another, and crew from either ship can board the other.

1–2: Short. Ships are 50 to 150 feet apart. A few weapon batteries can fire at this range.

3–4: Medium. Ships are 150 to 1,500 feet apart. Most ship weapons can fire at this range.

5: Long. Ships are 1,500 feet to a mile apart. This is the maximum range for most weapons.

6: Distant. More than a mile away, the ships are still within sight under normal weather conditions in the daytime.

MOVEMENT

Each ship has an abstract speed for tactical movement in combat and a travel pace for long-distance voyaging. Because the sea is not entirely predictable, movement in combat usually requires a maneuver check, with failure typically resulting in no progress toward the goal. A failed check might represent a large wave pushing the ship off course, a sudden wind (or sudden absence of wind) impeding movement, a sail tangled, or any number of minor inconveniences.

Travel pace typically does not require these checks, as a crew is assumed to address such setbacks throughout the course of an hour or a day.

MANEUVERABILITY

Maneuverability represents the ability of a ship's commander to harness both the ship's and its crew's capabilities to steer and move it effectively, especially in hazardous conditions.

Maneuver Checks. A maneuver check is required when the ship attempts to perform a maneuver (see "Phase 1: Maneuver and Move"). Roll a d20 and add the ship's maneuver check modifier to the roll.

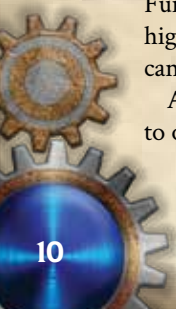
PROPULSION

Seafaring technology both ancient and modern coexists in western Immoren and the Scharde Islands, with steam-powered and sail-driven ships—or hybrids of the two—voyaging near and far.

SAILS

Sails are the most common method of propulsion on the Meredius, where wind is plentiful. Sail power is heavily dependent on wind direction and strength. Ships with sails tend to be taller and therefore more visible at a distance. Further, to get the most out of the wind the crew must climb high into the rigging to deploy and maintain the sails, which can be dangerous.

A ship must have at least one-quarter of its crew assigned to operating the sails in order to move.





A ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour (48 miles per day) when sailing against the wind, and increases by 2 miles per hour (48 miles per day) when sailing with the wind.

STEAM

Steam power provides strong propulsion that does not depend on wind or currents. A coal-fired furnace heats a boiler that typically drives side-mounted or rear-mounted paddlewheels, or underwater propellers.

Although powerful, steam engines are sometimes sluggish to respond and reduce a ship's Maneuverability by 2 while they are its sole source of propulsion.

Steam power requires large amounts of coal, which takes up cargo space. An average steam engine requires 100 pounds of coal each hour to operate. A ship must have at least one-quarter of its crew assigned to operating the engine in order to move.

OARS

A ship's oars, sometimes called "sweeps," are not swift but are useful when the winds are calm and fuel supplies are low.

A ship powered by oars requires a minimum number of crew to operate them. Each assigned crew member can row for 8 hours. For each additional hour spent rowing, the creature must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. The DC increases by 1 for each additional hour after the first. On a failed save, the creature gains one level of exhaustion.

Oars add a +1 bonus to a ship's Maneuverability and do not require wind to provide power. However, ships larger than tiny class require a large number of crew to row and typically have a different primary propulsion system. A ship must have at least one-quarter of its crew (minimum 1) assigned to operating the oars in order to move.



SHIP-TO-SHIP COMBAT

Naval combat works very much like other combat in the game: initiative is rolled, then turns play out with movement and attacks. One important distinction is that naval combat can happen concurrently with individual combat. Ships act as both characters and battlefields, so placing ships into the standard initiative order can drastically slow down game play. Because of this, it is recommended to start each round with all ships taking their actions in initiative order, then have all characters take their turns with their individual initiatives.

Unlike individual combat, ship combat happens in phases that always occur in the same order.

NAVAL COMBAT PHASES

PHASE 1: MANEUVER AND MOVE

Unless a ship is stationary in calm seas and its controller has no plans to move, this phase begins with the ship declaring a maneuver and making a maneuver check. In general, the check DC is 10, but if the controller of the other ship is resisting the declared maneuver, it is an opposed check with a DC of 8 + the opposing ship's Maneuver check bonus.

A ship can take one of the following maneuvers on its turn.

Outrun/Pursue. The ship attempts to increase or decrease distance in relation to another target ship. On a successful maneuver check, the ship moves its speed toward or away from the target.

Outgun. This maneuver positions the ship to better deliver attacks and is always opposed. On a successful maneuver check, add the ship's Maneuver check bonus to the damage dealt by its weapon batteries this turn.

Ram. The intent of this maneuver is to deliver damage to a target ship by sailing directly into it. This check is always opposed.

The ramming ship must start at a range of no more than its speed and ends the maneuver in grappled range. A ramming action works much like hitting an **obstruction**. The ramming ship and target take bludgeoning damage as if hitting an obstacle at 15 ft per round, times the speed of the ramming vessel. The ramming ship deals an additional 1d8 bludgeoning damage per class larger than its target. So a Large Blackship ramming a small caravel with Speed 3 deals 9d8 damage based on its speed plus 2d8 for being two classes larger, for a total of 11d8 damage to the caravel and 9d8 damage to the Blackship.

PHASE 2: ACTION

The ship's action is the primary focus of its crew for the round and is typically handled in a single roll that determines the action's success and effectiveness.

Attack. Make an attack with the ship's weapons, using the crew's proficiency bonus. Make a single attack roll for one of the ship's weapon batteries against the target ship's AC. On a success, roll damage and apply any in excess of the target ship's damage threshold to its hull points.

Board. Some of the crew board a ship in grappled range as others use grappling hooks and other tools to bring the ships' decks together. Crew attempting to board must make a Strength (Athletics) check or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with a DC equal to 8 + the opposing crew's proficiency bonus. On a successful check, the crew boards the other ship. On a failed check, they are repelled.

Stealth. If the ship already has cover, a successful DC 13 maneuver check can block line of sight between it and another ship, fleet, or creature. Ships larger than small class have disadvantage on this check, and huge or larger ships fail it automatically.

Dash. The crew focus their efforts on stoking engines, angling sails, or pushing rowers to move faster. The ship's crew makes a DC 12 check using only their proficiency bonus. On a success, the ship moves 1 closer to or farther from another vessel.

Evade. The crew attempt to avoid attacks against the ship. This requires a DC 10 maneuver check; a success imposes disadvantage on attacks targeting the ship until the start of its next turn.

PHASE 3: BONUS ACTION(S)

A ship's crew can often perform one or more bonus actions on its turn, up to a maximum of five. The number of bonus actions allowed is equal to the crew's proficiency bonus.

Thus, a crew of green quality can take no bonus actions, though they may perform one in place of the ship's normal action. Specialized crew or equipment might grant a ship additional specific bonus actions, but the total still cannot exceed five.

Crew Actions. Various special actions are available to the crew, as detailed in "Crew Actions" below.

Special Loading. Some ship's weapons (such as ballistae) require special loading to be able to attack on the following round.

Attack. The crew fire another battery that has not yet attacked this round.

Spell. An NPC spellcaster casts a spell that affects this ship or another ship.

CREW ACTIONS

During the Bonus Action phase of naval combat, the ship's crew may perform crew actions; if no bonus action is possible, the crew can take an action in the Action phase instead of the normal ship action. These actions typically address damage or an ongoing issue, such as a fire on deck.

Bailing Water/Sealing Holes. The crew use buckets and pumps to remove water from a flooded area and pack holes with materials nearby—often cloth, such as from hammocks—that expand after absorbing water, creating a temporary seal until the ship can be repaired. A successful DC 12 crew check seals holes and repairs damage caused by a hull puncture by 1d6 + crew proficiency bonus, made with advantage if the ship has pumps.

Douse Fire. The crew attempt to contain a fire, requiring a crew check with a DC of 8 + the current number of damage dice of the fire. Success removes one damage die from the

fire, plus one additional die per 5 points the check exceeds the check DC. This check is made with advantage if the ship has pumps.

Jettison Fallen Mast. A fallen mast and its rigging render the area where they fall difficult terrain and cause crew checks to be made with disadvantage. Cutting the rigging and throwing the mast section overboard can clear the area with a successful DC 12 crew check. Use of a crane negates the disadvantage on this check.

Recovery. The crew tend to the wounded, patching up their injuries and getting them back into fighting shape. Each round this action is taken restores missing crew equal to 1d6 + the crew's proficiency bonus, up to the crew maximum.

Repair Hull. Crew use lumber, metal plates, and rivet guns to repair damage to the ship. Each round this action is taken restores lost hull points equal to 1d6 + the crew's proficiency bonus, up to the hull point maximum.

SPECIAL CREW

Crew with valuable skills, such as carpentry and the ability to calculate the firing arcs of cannons, are a vital asset for the function of a ship. The following special crew roles provide unique benefits to certain crew actions.

Master Carpenter. This crew member doubles the crew's proficiency bonus when taking the Repair Hull action.

Master Gunner. Under this crew member's guidance, the ship's attacks add the crew's proficiency bonus to damage. This bonus damage ignores the target's damage threshold.

Surgeon. This crew member doubles the crew's proficiency bonus when taking the Recovery action.

CRITICAL DAMAGE

When a ship takes damage equal to or exceeding its critical threshold, it suffers critical damage affecting its structure. This effectively imposes a condition on the ship, determined by rolling on the Critical Damage table.

Ship Save. Some effects require a ship saving throw and give a DC. The roll is modified only by the crew's proficiency bonus and any ship features that address a given critical damage effect.

CRITICAL DAMAGE

2d6	Effect
2	Hull puncture
3	Fire
4	Crew
5	Main mast
6	Armament
7	Secondary propulsion
8	Primary propulsion
9	Armament
10	Crew
11	Secondary mast
12	Rudder

Each critical damage result and its effects are detailed below.

Armament [Ship save DC 13]. One of the ship's weapon batteries is damaged, reducing the battery's damage by one die.

Crew [No save]. 1d4 crew members, plus one more crew member per target ship's class above small, are slain by the attack.

Fire [Ship save DC 10]. A portion of the ship catches fire, as detailed in the "Seafaring Hazards" chapter.

Hull Puncture [Ship save DC 15]. The attack punches a hole in the ship's hull. If the save fails by 10 or more, or a natural 1 is rolled, this hole is below the waterline. A hole below the waterline causes the ship to take on water, dealing 1d6 damage on Initiative count 20 of each round that bypasses its damage threshold until the hole is sealed. If a ship takes damage equal to or exceeding one-quarter of its hull points this way, its speed is reduced by half and it has disadvantage on maneuver checks.

Main Mast [Ship save DC 13]. The main mast is damaged. If the save fails by 10 or more, a 1 is rolled on the die, or this result occurs again, the mast falls. The loss of one of more masts imposes disadvantage on maneuver checks.

A falling mast also causes the Crew critical damage result.

Primary Propulsion [Ship save DC 12]. The ship's primary propulsion sustains damage and its speed is reduced by one-quarter, cumulative with any subsequent rolls of this effect. A ship whose speed is reduced to 0 this way has its primary propulsion destroyed and suffers additional effects from this table based on its type of primary propulsion (no save): sails (**Main Mast**), oars (**Crew**), steam (**Fire**).

Rudder [Ship save DC 13]. The rudder is damaged, imposing disadvantage on maneuver checks. If the save fails by 10 or more, a 1 is rolled on the die, or this result occurs again, the rudder is destroyed.

Secondary Mast [Ship save DC 14]. A secondary mast is damaged. If the save fails by 10 or more, a 1 is rolled on the die, or this result occurs again, the mast falls (see **Main Mast** above). The loss of one of more masts imposes disadvantage on maneuver checks.

Secondary Propulsion [Ship save DC 12]. The secondary propulsion is damaged and speed provided by this source is reduced by one-quarter, cumulative with any subsequent rolls of this effect. If there is no other propulsion source and this is destroyed, additional effects apply as if the primary propulsion is destroyed.

SINKING AND DESTRUCTION

As a ship takes damage, whether holed by a barrage of cannon-fire or consumed by fire, it runs the risk of destruction.

When a ship's hull points drop to 0, it either begins sinking or is destroyed, as detailed in the following sections.

INSTANT DESTRUCTION

Massive damage can destroy a ship instantly. When damage reduces a ship to 0 hull points, the ship is destroyed if any excess damage equals or exceeds its hull point maximum.

For example, a dinghy with a maximum of 50 hull points currently has 5 hull points. If it takes 55 damage from an attack, it is reduced to 0 hull points, but 50 damage remains. Because the remaining damage equals its hull point maximum, the ship is instantly destroyed in a blast of splinters.

SINKING

If damage reduces a ship to 0 hull points and fails to destroy it, the ship begins sinking. The crew must make a DC 12 crew check at the start of each turn to bail water and shore up holes in the hull. If three of these checks succeed, the crew manages to prevent the ship from sinking and can make further repairs. However, if three checks are failed, the ship slips below the waves and has sunk.

SHIP UPGRADES

Ships can incorporate various improvements to protect vulnerable areas and provide aid in critical damage repairs.

Boiler Plating. Plating the boiler systems with alloys grants a steam-powered propulsion system advantage on saving throws against damage or destruction.

Crane. Assists with moving cargo and aids in replacing or jettisoning damaged masts. The ship must be medium class or larger.

Doctor's Suite. Assists with the recovery of injured crew. When taking the Recovery crew action, you can choose to reroll the die. You must use the new roll, even if it is worse.

Iron Plating. Ships of small class or larger can have their hulls plated in iron armor. This increases the weight of the ship tremendously, reducing its speed and maneuverability in exchange for a higher damage threshold. Ships with iron plating increase their damage threshold by 5, increase their AC by 2, reduce their speed by 1, and reduce their Maneuverability by 1.

Pumps. Aid in bailing water and fighting fire by granting advantage on crew checks.

Ram. A ship fitted with a ram has resistance to damage it sustains while ramming another ship.

Safety Valve. When this is installed on a steam-powered propulsion system, critical damage that destroys this primary propulsion system does not automatically result in fire—an additional save at the same DC is allowed to avoid the effect.



WEAPON BATTERIES

Ship weaponry in the Iron Kingdoms ranges from devices that throw projectiles, such as ballistae and catapults, to cannons and alchemically or magically enhanced armaments.

A weapon battery consists of multiple individual weapons that fire collectively. When attacking, a battery fires all the weapons that make it up. A ship can have multiple batteries, as determined by its class.

FIRING WEAPON BATTERIES

To fire a weapon battery, it must be operated by a required number of crew. The crew make an attack roll using their proficiency bonus to hit. On a die roll of 20, the battery scores a critical hit: in addition to dealing damage, the target vessel's crew is reduced by 1d4 + the attacking crew's proficiency bonus. This reduction represents not only those killed in the attack but also crew who are injured, thrown overboard, or otherwise taken out of action while trying to rescue or aid their fellows.

BATTERY CREW

A weapon battery requires a minimum number of crew to properly load, aim, and fire. However, since a battery represents multiple weapons, it can be operated by fewer crew with a reduced output. If the battery crew falls below half the required number, that battery cannot be operated.

As with ranged weapons in individual combat, the second range is the weapon's maximum and attack rolls at that range have disadvantage.

BATTERIES

The following are examples of typical ship armament, presented in alphabetical order.

ALCHEMICAL PROJECTORS

Cost: 1,000 gp

Crew: 8 (minimum 2)

Range: Short/medium

Damage: 6d6, or 3d6 at half crew

Expensive and dangerous to use, these weapons spray pressurized streams of alchemical substances. The nature of the substance determines the effect it has on an enemy ship. Among the Protectorate of Menoth, burning Menoth's Fury is common, while the vessels of Cryx favor corrosive fluids, and Khador's alchemists have developed a cryogenic fluid that freezes on contact.

An alchemical projector battery deals acid, cold, or fire damage. This damage ignores a vessel's damage threshold.

Misfire (3). These weapons are prone to mishaps, often resulting in harm to their own crew. If the weapon suffers a misfire, reduce the battery's crew by 1.



BALLISTAE

Cost: 500 gp

Crew: 12 (minimum 3)

Range: Short/medium

Damage: 6d6 piercing, or 3d6 piercing at half crew

Ballistae resemble giant crossbows that fire spear-like projectiles. Ancient weapons and not as effective as cannons, they still find use among those without easy access to blasting powder, such as the Idrian pirate crews sailing near the Protectorate of Menoth's coast.

Special Loading. The crew must use an action to reload the weapon; otherwise, it will be unable to fire on the next round.

CANNONS, 12-POUND

Cost: 1,500 gp

Crew: 8 (minimum 2)

Range: Medium/long

Damage: 4d12 bludgeoning, or 2d12 bludgeoning at half crew

For centuries, cannons have been the gold standard of naval weaponry for their relative ease of use and destructive power. The 12-pound cannon is the most common type deployed on large and smaller ships.

CANNONS, 24-POUND

Cost: 3,000 gp

Crew: 12 (minimum 3)

Range: Medium/long

Damage: 6d12 bludgeoning, or 3d12 bludgeoning at half crew

The larger 24-pound cannon batteries require more crew to operate than the common 12-pounders but pack a heavier punch.

CANNONS, 36-POUND

Cost: 5,000 gp

Crew: 16 (minimum 4)

Range: Medium/long

Damage: 10d12 bludgeoning, or 5d12 bludgeoning at half crew

Heavy 36-pound cannon batteries are seen on the largest ships and can obliterate smaller vessels.

CARRONADES

Cost: 1,500 gp

Crew: 8 (minimum 2)

Range: Short/medium

Damage: 8d12 bludgeoning, or 4d12 bludgeoning at half crew

Carronades are powerful, heavy cannons with a short effective range.

LONG NINE

Cost: 1,000 gp

Crew: 4 (minimum 1)

Range: Long/distant

Damage: 4d10 piercing, or 2d10 piercing at half crew

This is a long-barreled 9-pound cannon that is most often used as a chase gun at the bow or stern of a ship. They lack the destructive power of larger weapons, but long nines are ideal for driving off pursuers or launching an opening salvo at distant targets.

BUT CAN'T I JUST SHOOT THEM?

While naval combat rages, it is natural for the players to ask if their characters can individually use their own weapons to target enemy ships and crew members. And the answer is... yes. The naval combat ranges are somewhat abstract, and do not correlate directly to the ranges most PC weapons use. A ranged weapon with a range up to 100 may attack within Range 1, up to 200 Range 2, up to 300 Range 3. Weapons whose ranges exceed 300 feet may strike up to Range 4, which is the farthest range that can be targeted with personal weapons. Also of note is that unless the sea is relatively becalmed, characters unused to shipboard combat may find a ship's swaying disorienting, and should be subject to Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks DC 10 or above to avoid Disadvantage on ranged attack rolls.

SAMPLE SHIPS

This section provides stat blocks and other details for some of the most common ships.

The following sample ships are presented in order of class.

TINY SHIPS

DINGHY

This is a rowboat for traveling short distances, perhaps when fishing along the coast or on a river, or as a lifeboat or launch for a larger ship.

DINGHY

Tiny ship (10 feet by 5 feet)

Armor Class 15
Damage Threshold 5 (Critical Threshold 10)
Hull Points 50
Initiative +5
Crew 1–2, maximum 5
Crew Quality Trained
Crew Proficiency Bonus +2
Maneuver Check +8
Speed (oars) 2 (2 crew; minimum 1)
Travel Pace 4 miles per hour/96 miles per day
Tonnage 100 lb.
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Oars. The ship requires at least one crew member to row the oars for it to move.



WINDSAIL

A smooth wooden board with a sail that a trained rider can use to sail short distances.

WINDSAIL

Tiny ship (10 feet by 5 feet)

Armor Class 15
Damage Threshold 5 (Critical Threshold 10)
Hull Points 50
Initiative +5
Crew 1, maximum 2
Crew Quality Trained
Crew Proficiency Bonus +2
Maneuver Check +7
Speed (sails) 2 (1 crew)
Tonnage —
Travel Pace 4 miles per hour/96 miles per day
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.



SMALL SHIPS

CLIPPER

Small and fast, clipper ships are used by merchants and navies alike.

CLIPPER

Small ship (30 feet by 15 feet)

Armor Class 14
Damage Threshold 10 (Critical Threshold 20)
Hull Points 150
Initiative +4
Crew 20, maximum 35
Crew Quality Trained
Crew Proficiency Bonus +2
Maneuver Check +6
Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 5 crew)
Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day
Tonnage 5 tons
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

12-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage or 13 (2d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

DHOZE

The dhoze is a Satyxis-manufactured ship that complements their fast and deadly style of piracy. Its distinctive lateen-rigged triangular sails strike fear into the hearts of even hardened sailors.

Satyxis crews are almost always of professional quality, and typically include at least one spellcaster.

DHOZE

Small ship (30 feet by 10 feet)

Armor Class 14
Damage Threshold 10 (Critical Threshold 20)
Hull Points 150
Initiative +4
Crew 20, maximum 35
Crew Quality Professional
Crew Proficiency Bonus +4
Maneuver Check +8 (+9 with oars)
Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 5 crew)
Tonnage 10 tons
Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

Oars (Secondary). The oars require at least 10 crew for the ship to move.

WEAPON BATTERIES

12-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage or 13 (2d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

BONUS ACTION

Stir the Wind (Recharge 5–6). The ship's spellcaster calls to the wind to redirect it. Until the end of the next Maneuver and Move phase, the ship is considered to be sailing with the wind and hostile ships are considered to be sailing into the wind.



CARAVEL

Favored by coastal traders and many pirates, the caravel is a highly maneuverable sailing ship that can deliver the goods.

CARAVEL

Small ship (40 feet by 20 feet)

Armor Class 14

Damage Threshold 10 (Critical Threshold 20)

Hull Points 150

Initiative +4

Crew 20, maximum 30

Crew Quality Trained

Crew Proficiency Bonus +2

Maneuver Check +6

Speed (sails) 2 (minimum 5 crew)

Travel Pace 4 miles per hour/96 miles per day

Tonnage 25 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

12-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage or 13 (2d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

MEDIUM SHIPS

WARSHIP

Though designs vary, most nations' naval vessels fall into this category. Formidable three-mast sailing ships, warships often have steam-powered paddlewheels as a secondary means of propulsion and carry a dozen or more cannons.

WARSHIP

Medium ship (50 feet by 20 feet)

Armor Class 13

Damage Threshold 15 (Critical Threshold 30)

Hull Points 300

Initiative +3

Crew 30, maximum 50

Crew Quality Seasoned

Crew Proficiency Bonus +3

Maneuver Check +6 (+4 with steam)

Speed (sails) 2 (minimum 8 crew)

Travel Pace 4 miles per hour/96 miles per day

Tonnage 200 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

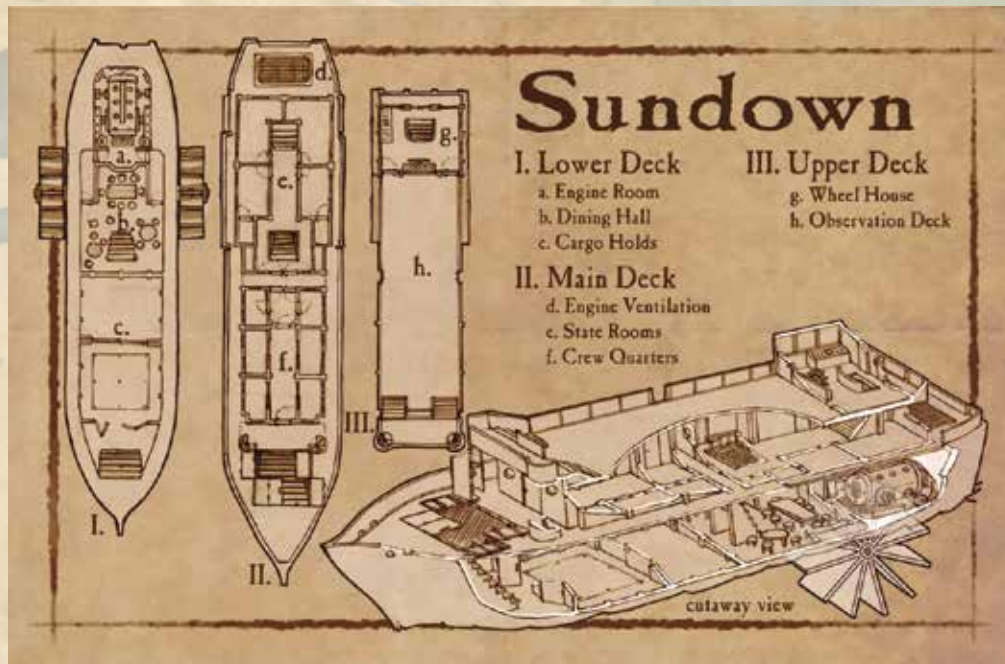
Steam (Secondary). The ship's engine requires coal to operate.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 39 (6d12) bludgeoning damage or 19 (3d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Long Nine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range long/distant, one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) piercing damage or 11 (2d10) piercing damage at half crew.





IRONHULL

Heavy and sluggish, ironhulls' namesake iron-armored structure makes them hard to damage. Their deep draft usually requires their armaments to be on the top deck, where they are mounted as turrets.

An ironhull always has a master gunner crew member.

RIVERBOAT

Riverboats with steam-powered paddlewheels are common on the Dragon's Tongue and Black rivers, and Lake Scarleforth, usually transporting passengers between cities.

Though riverboats typically do not have weapons, they almost always have armed crew members.

IRONHULL

Medium ship (60 feet by 25 feet)

Armor Class 15

Damage Threshold 20 (Critical Threshold 30)

Hull Points 300

Initiative +3

Crew 20, maximum 40

Crew Quality Seasoned

Crew Proficiency Bonus +3

Maneuver Check +3

Speed (steam) 1

Travel Pace 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day

Tonnage 50 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Master Gunner. The ship's attacks add the crew's proficiency bonus to damage. This bonus damage ignores the target's damage threshold.

Steam. The ship's engine requires coal to operate.

WEAPON BATTERIES

12-Pound Cannons. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage or 16 (2d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

24-Pound Cannons. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 42 (6d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage or 22 (3d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

RIVERBOAT

Medium ship (60 feet by 25 feet)

Armor Class 13

Damage Threshold 15 (Critical Threshold 30)

Hull Points 300

Initiative +3

Crew 30, maximum 200

Crew Quality Trained

Crew Proficiency Bonus +2

Maneuver Check +3

Speed (steam) 2

Travel Pace 4 miles per hour/96 miles per day

Tonnage 200 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Steam. The ship's engine requires coal to operate.

LARGE SHIPS

BLACKSHIP FRIGATE

Built with stolen Orgoth technology, Cryx's blackships are peerless. With sails always filled by arcane winds, blackship frigates transport the armies of the Dragonfather to strike at high-profile targets at sea.

Blackships always have several spellcasters on board, including warcasters with battlegroups of helljacks. Blackships also add the crew's proficiency bonus to Armor Class.

BLACKSHIP FRIGATE

Large ship (75 feet by 25 feet)

Armor Class 15
Damage Threshold 20 (Critical Threshold 40)
Hull Points 500
Initiative +2
Crew 100, maximum 200
Crew Quality Seasoned
Crew Proficiency Bonus +3
Maneuver Check +5
Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 25 crew)
Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day
Tonnage 350 tons
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Blackship Sails. The ship's speed increases by 1 and its travel pace increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind. A blackship is never considered to be sailing into the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 39 (6d12) bludgeoning damage or 19 (3d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

36-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 65 (10d12) bludgeoning damage or 32 (5d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Long Nine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range long/distant, one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) piercing damage or 11 (2d10) piercing damage at half crew.

BONUS ACTION

Stir the Wind (Recharge 5–6). The ship's spellcaster calls to the wind to redirect it. Until the end of the next Maneuver and Move phase, the ship is considered to be sailing with the wind and hostile ships are considered to be sailing into the wind.

GHOST WARSHIP

Ghostly vessels crewed by undead specters form part of Cryx's naval fleets, and some independent ghost ships roam the Meredius.

GHOST WARSHIP

Large ship (80 feet by 25 feet)

Armor Class 12
Damage Threshold 20 (Critical Threshold 40)
Hull Points 500
Initiative +2
Crew 250, maximum 450
Crew Quality Professional
Crew Proficiency Bonus +4
Maneuver Check +6
Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 65 crew)
Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day
Tonnage —
Damage Resistances slashing, bludgeoning, and piercing damage from nonmagical weapons.
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Death Toll. Each time the ship's cannon attacks deal damage, the ship regains lost crew equal to the damage dealt, up to its crew maximum.

Ghost Ship. The ship is immune to damage from ramming attacks. It can move through objects and other ships but takes 39 (6d12) force damage if it ends its movement in an object.

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 39 (6d12) bludgeoning damage or 19 (3d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

36-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 65 (10d12) bludgeoning damage or 32 (5d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Long Nine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range long/distant, one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) piercing damage or 11 (2d10) piercing damage at half crew.

HEAVY WARSHIP

As long as the Immorese have sailed the Meredius, the Scharde have preyed upon their ships. Heavy warships protect the harbors and patrol the coast.

Heavy warships always have a master gunner and master carpenter crew members, as well as one or more spellcasters and at least one marshalled warjack.

HEAVY WARSHIP

Large ship (150 feet by 30 feet)

Armor Class 12

Damage Threshold 20 (Critical Threshold 40)

Hull Points 500

Initiative +2

Crew 250, maximum 450

Crew Quality Professional

Crew Proficiency Bonus +4

Maneuver Check +6

Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 65 crew)

Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day

Tonnage 400 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Master Gunner. The ship's attacks add the crew's proficiency bonus to damage. This bonus damage ignores the target's damage threshold.

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 43 (6d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage or 23 (3d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

36-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 69 (10d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage or 36 (5d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Long Nine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range long/distant, one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d10 + 4) piercing damage or 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage at half crew.

HUGE SHIPS

BLACKSHIP NECROFACTORIUM

Blackship factory ships, such as the *Exhumation*, serve as floating helljack and thrall factories for the Dragonfather's armies.

Blackships always have several spellcasters on board, including warcasters with battlegroups of helljacks. Blackships also add the crew's proficiency bonus to Armor Class.

BLACKSHIP NECROFACTORIUM

Huge ship (200 feet by 40 feet)

Armor Class 14

Damage Threshold 20 (Critical Threshold 40)

Hull Points 750

Initiative +1

Crew 300, maximum 600

Crew Quality Seasoned

Crew Proficiency Bonus +3

Maneuverability Check +4

Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 75 crew)

Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day

Tonnage 750 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Blackship Sails. The ship's speed increases by 1 and its travel pace increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind. A blackship is never considered to be sailing into the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 39 (6d12) bludgeoning damage or 19 (3d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

36-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 65 (10d12) bludgeoning damage or 32 (5d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Carronades. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range short/medium, one target. *Hit:* 52 (8d12) bludgeoning damage or 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Alchemical Projectors. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range short, one target. *Hit:* 21 (6d6) acid damage or 10 (3d6) acid damage at half crew.

BONUS ACTIONS

Bring out the Dead (Recharge 5–6). The ship's necrofactorium pumps out thralls to replace fallen crew members. Each time the ship takes this bonus action, the ship regains 50 crew, up to its crew maximum.

Stir the Wind (Recharge 5–6). The ship's spellcaster calls to the wind to redirect it. Until the end of the next Maneuver and Move phase, the ship is considered to be sailing with the wind and hostile ships are considered to be sailing into the wind.

GALLEON

Massive ships suited for long sea voyages or war, galleons can carry immense amounts of cargo, cannon, and crew. These ships often serve as the flagships of navies.

Galleons always have a master gunner and master carpenter crew members, as well as one or more spellcasters and at least one marshalled warjack.

GALLEON

Huge ship (225 feet by 35 feet)

Armor Class 11

Damage Threshold 20 (Critical Threshold 40)

Hull Points 750

Initiative +1

Crew 200, maximum 400

Crew Quality Seasoned

Crew Proficiency Bonus +3

Maneuver Check +4

Speed (sails) 2 (minimum 50 crew)

Travel Pace 4 miles per hour/96 miles per day

Tonnage 500 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Master Gunner. The ship's attacks add the crew's proficiency bonus to damage. This bonus damage ignores the target's damage threshold.

Sails. The ship's speed decreases by 1 when sailing into the wind and increases by 1 when sailing with the wind. The ship's travel pace decreases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing against the wind and increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 42 (6d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage or 22 (3d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

36-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 68 (10d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage or 35 (5d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Carronades. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range short/medium, one target. *Hit:* 55 (8d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage or 29 (4d12 + 3) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Long Nine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range long/distant, one target. *Hit:* 25 (4d10 + 3) piercing damage or 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage at half crew.

GARGANTUAN SHIPS

BLACKSHIP FLAGBEARER

The largest class of the blackships, blackship flagbearers such as Skarre Ravenmane's *Widower*, serve as mobile command centers. These floating fortresses are never without a fleet of escorts and often have several small, more maneuverable attack vessels on board and ready to deploy at a moment's notice.

Blackship crews always include several spellcasters, including warcasters with battlegroups of helljacks. Blackships also add the crew's proficiency bonus to Armor Class.

BLACKSHIP FLAGBEARER

Gargantuan ship (250 feet by 50 feet)

Armor Class 14

Damage Threshold 25 (Critical Threshold 50)

Hull Points 1,500

Initiative +0

Crew 400, maximum 1,000

Crew Quality Professional

Crew Proficiency Bonus +4

Maneuver Check +4

Speed (sails) 3 (minimum 100 crew)

Travel Pace 6 miles per hour/144 miles per day

Tonnage 1,000 tons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Blackship Sails. The ship's speed increases by 1 and its travel pace increases by 2 miles per hour/48 miles per day when sailing with the wind. A blackship is never considered to be sailing into the wind.

WEAPON BATTERIES

24-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 39 (6d12) bludgeoning damage or 19 (3d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

36-Pound Cannons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range medium/long, one target. *Hit:* 65 (10d12) bludgeoning damage or 32 (5d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Alchemical Projectors. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range short, one target. *Hit:* 21 (6d6) acid damage or 10 (3d6) acid damage at half crew.

Carronades. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range short/medium, one target. *Hit:* 52 (8d12) bludgeoning damage or 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage at half crew.

Long Nine. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range long/distant, one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) piercing damage or 11 (2d10) piercing damage at half crew.

BONUS ACTION

Stir the Wind (Recharge 5–6). The ship's spellcaster calls to the wind to redirect it. Until the end of the next Maneuver and Move phase, the ship is considered to be sailing with the wind, and hostile ships are considered to be sailing into the wind.



SHIP CARGO GENERATOR

These tables come in handy when you quickly need to determine what lies in the hold of a ship your players have just defeated in combat.

The cargo presented here represents typical trade goods. You can assume that most vessels have sufficient rations, water, and alcohol to sustain the crew, as well as adequate ammunition for the weapon batteries. At your discretion, a ship might lack adequate supplies—after all, misfortune happens often on the Meredius.

RANDOM CARGO

You can randomly determine the cargo of a ship using the following tables. First, find the size of the ship on the Ship Class and Cargo table, then roll d100 to determine how much cargo it carries and what kind.

SMALL SHIP

d100	Common Cargo	Exotic Cargo	Illicit Cargo
01-25	—	—	—
26-30	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
31-35	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
36-40	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
41-45	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
46-50	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
51-60	—	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
61-65	—	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
66-70	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
71-75	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
76-80	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
81-85	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
86-90	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
91-95	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
96-100	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Illicit Cargo table

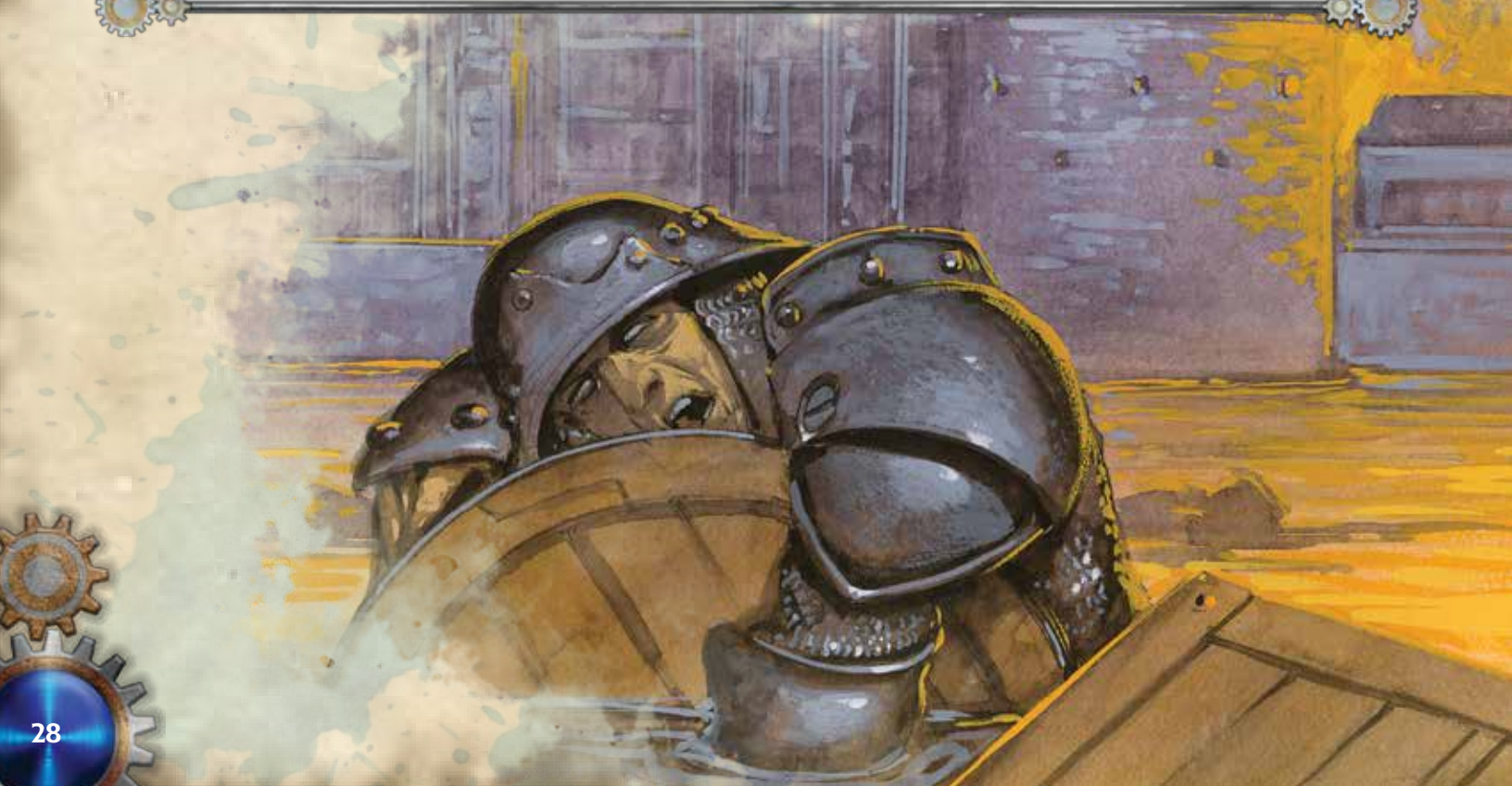
MEDIUM SHIP

<i>d</i> 100	Common Cargo	Exotic Cargo	Illicit Cargo
01-10	—	—	—
15-20	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
25-30	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
31-35	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
36-40	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
41-50	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
51-55	—	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
56-60	—	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
61-65	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
66-70	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
71-75	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
76-80	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
81-90	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
91-95	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
96-100	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Illicit Cargo table



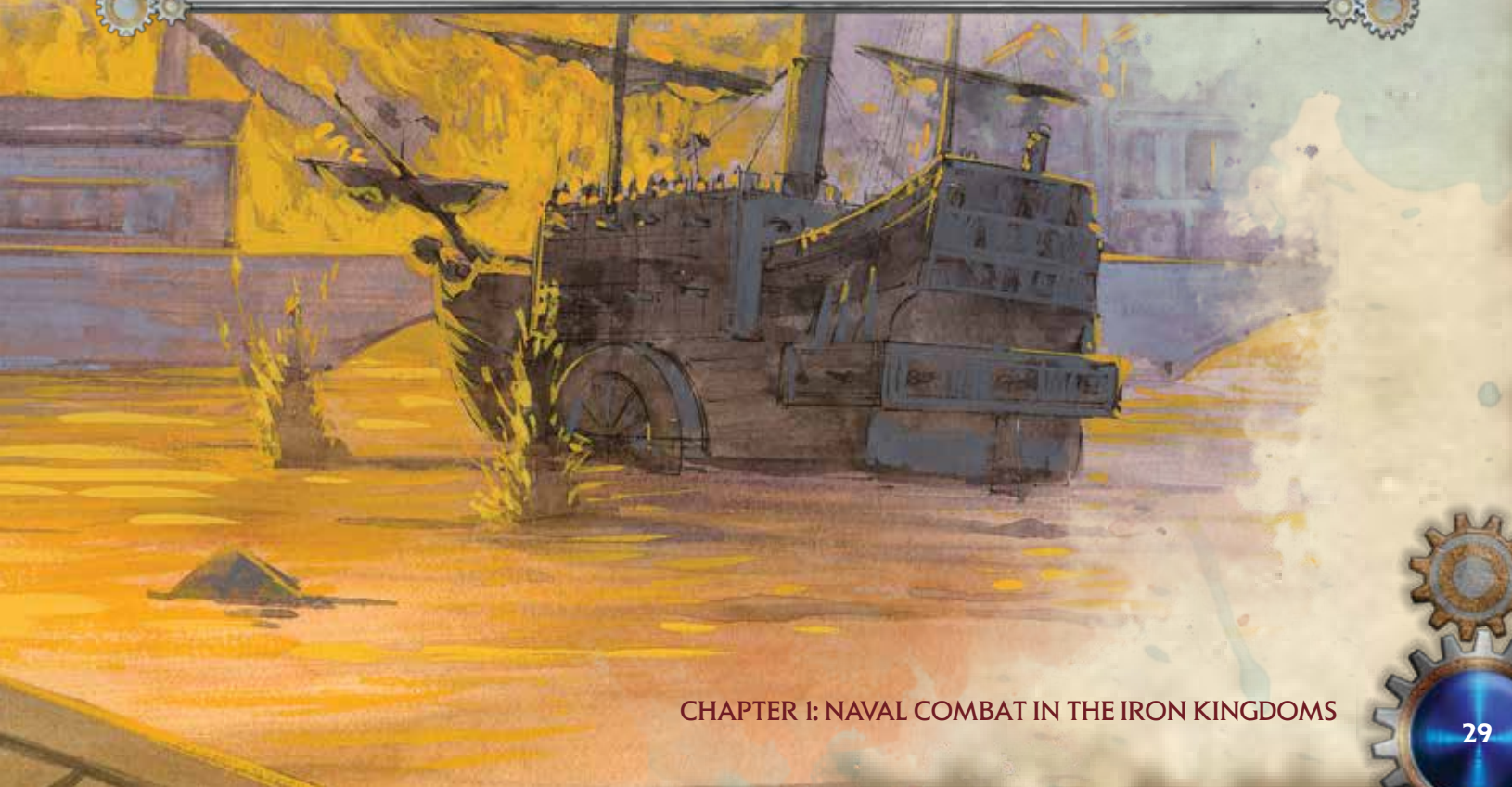
LARGE SHIP

d100	Common Cargo	Exotic Cargo	Illicit Cargo
01-5	—	—	—
6-10	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
11-20	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
21-25	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
26-30	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
31-50	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
51-60	—	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
61-65	—	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
66-70	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
71-75	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
76-80	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
81-85	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
86-90	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
91-95	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
96-100	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Illicit Cargo table



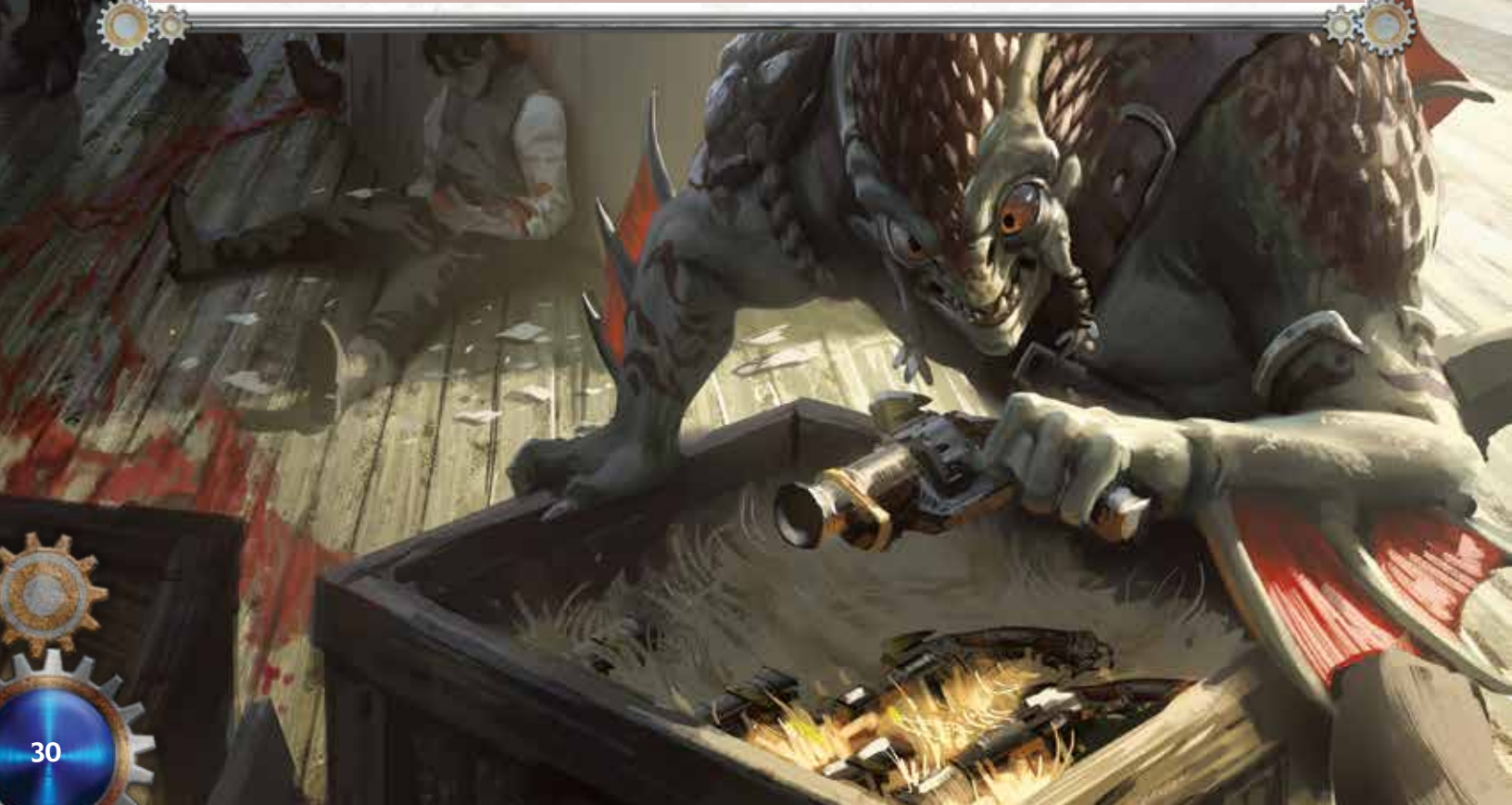
HUGE SHIP

d100	Common Cargo	Exotic Cargo	Illicit Cargo
01-5	—	—	—
6-10	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
11-20	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
21-30	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
31-40	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
41-60	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
61-70	—	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
71-75	—	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
76-80	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
81-85	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
86-90	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
91-92	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
93-94	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
95-96	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
97-100	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Illicit Cargo table



GARGANTUAN SHIP

<i>d100</i>	Common Cargo	Exotic Cargo	Illicit Cargo
01-05	—	—	—
6-15	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
16-20	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	—
21-25	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
26-30	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
31-50	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	—
51-60	—	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
61-65	—	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
66-70	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
71-75	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
76-80	—	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
81-85	—	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
86-90	Roll 1d4 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll once on the Illicit Cargo table
91-95	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d4 times on the Illicit Cargo table
96-100	Roll 1d6 times on the Common Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Exotic Cargo table	Roll 1d6 times on the Illicit Cargo table



COMMON CARGO

d12 Cargo

- 1 2 (1d4) tons of coal worth 100 gp per ton
- 2 2 (1d4) tons of fish worth 50 gp per ton
- 3 2 (1d4) tons of grain worth 20 gp per ton
- 4 55 (10d10) pounds of hooaga/cigars worth 1 gp per pound
- 5 27 (5d10) 40-gallon barrels of cheap wine or ale worth 8 gp per barrel
- 6 22 (4d10) sheep, goats, or pigs worth 2 gp each
- 7 2 (1d4) tons of lumber worth 25 gp per ton
- 8 55 (10d10) pounds of replacement machine parts worth 20 gp per pound
- 9 27 (5d10) 40-gallon barrels of whale oil worth 32 gp per barrel
- 10 2 (1d4) tons of raw ore (such as iron or copper) worth 200 gp per ton
- 11 2 (1d4) tons of salt worth 100 gp per ton
- 12 2 (1d4) tons of stone worth 100 gp per ton

ILLICIT CARGO

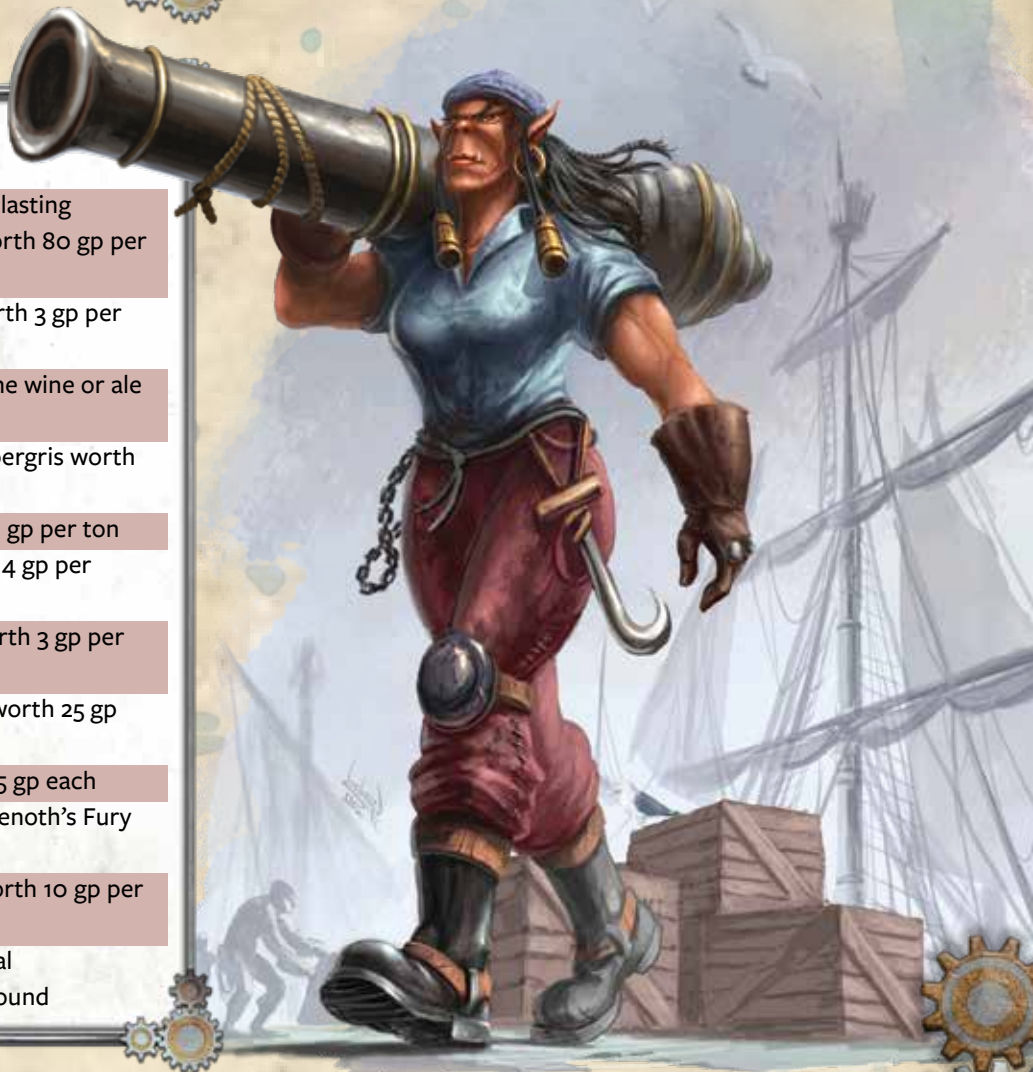
d8 Cargo

- 1 2 (1d4) tons of blighted bones worth 100 gp per ton
- 2 2 (1d4) tons of blighted lumber worth 150 gp per ton
- 3 55 (10d10) humanoid corpses worth 25 gp each to a necrosurgeon or necromancer
- 4 7 (2d6) illicit alchemical ingredients/poisons worth 100 gp each
- 5 55 (10d10) 100 pounds of necrotite worth 6 gp per pound
- 6 2 (1d4) Orgoth artifacts worth 300 gp each
- 7 16 (3d10) humanoid prisoners
- 8 5 (2d4) stolen art objects worth 250 gp each

EXOTIC CARGO

d12 Cargo

- 1 27 (5d10) 80-pound barrels of blasting powder (half black, half red) worth 80 gp per barrel
- 2 55 (10d10) pounds of spices worth 3 gp per pound
- 3 11 (2d10) 40-gallon barrels of fine wine or ale worth 400 gp per barrel
- 4 2 (1d4) 50-gallon barrels of ambergris worth 110 gp per barrel
- 5 2 (1d4) tons of sugar worth 200 gp per ton
- 6 55 (10d10) pounds of tea worth 4 gp per pound
- 7 55 (10d10) pounds of coffee worth 3 gp per pound
- 8 7 (2d6) alchemical ingredients worth 25 gp each
- 9 22 (4d10) exotic animals worth 5 gp each
- 10 11 (2d10) 40-gallon barrels of Menoth's Fury worth 120 gp per barrel
- 11 11 (2d10) square yards of silk worth 10 gp per square yard
- 12 55 (10d10) pounds of mechanical components worth 50 gp per pound







SEAFARING HAZARDS

The Meredius of Caen is a place of wonder and danger. Pirates, raiders, sea monsters, and the dreaded Black Fleet all present threats to travelers. Further, the sea itself is fraught with peril. The three moons—Calder, Laris, and Artis, cause the tides to be unpredictable at the best of times and at the worst, monstrous.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check allows a traveler to recognize an environmental hazard and provide the knowledge of how to mitigate the harm if possible. An additional successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check grants a traveler advantage on saving throws to avoid taking damage from an environmental hazard.

All the features listed below represent average examples of the effect these hazards have on characters. You can make them more or less deadly by adjusting the damage dice, area of effect, and saving throw DCs.

BRING ME THAT HORIZON

When seas are calm, the sight range to the horizon is limited by the curvature of Caen to just shy of 3 miles. Crew with a high vantage point, such as that offered by a crow's nest, can see farther still.

This assumes clear weather conditions free of rain, fog, and heaving waves, all of which modify the visible distance on the sea. Use 3 miles as a rule of thumb for determining how far off a character scanning the horizon for hazards can see them.

BLIGHTED JELLIES

Jellyfish are free-swimming marine animals with umbrella-shaped bells and trailing tentacles. Enormous blooms of blighted jellyfish sometimes infest the waters surrounding Cryx. These collectives (also called “doom blooms”) are normally encountered in 5-foot patches floating just near the surface.

A blighted jelly bloom reeks of death and deals 5 (1d10) necrotic damage to any creature that comes into contact with it. This damage continues at the start of each of the creature's turns until it uses an action to remove or destroy the jelly. The blighted jellies bring rot and decay to nonmagical wood and metal, instead dealing 11 (2d10) necrotic damage to objects of these types.

A blighted jelly bloom is vulnerable to an acid, cold, fire or radiant damage. Each 5-foot patch has 10 hp.

GRAVEYARD OF SHIPS

The decaying hulls of wrecked ships might be the remnants of a naval battle, or victims of violent weather or an attack by a marine monster. A graveyard of ships can comprise a handful of wrecks to dozens, whether quietly rotting away or being dismantled in a salvage operation.

Wrecks caused by warfare or deadly seafaring hazards might be haunted.

HAUNTED AREA

A stretch of coast, a rocky cove, or even an entire region of the sea can become haunted. The most infamous of these haunted regions is the Sea of a Thousand Souls, where the fleets of Tordor battled the ships of the Orgoth in the Battle of the Thousand Sails.

Within a haunted area, undead creatures have advantage on all saving throws. A particularly cursed area might have additional effects. Roll 1d6 or choose from the following table.

HAUNTED AREA

d6 *Haunting Effect*

- 1 Unnatural Darkness.** The area is one degree darker than it should be. If the surrounding area is brightly lit, the haunted area is dimly lit. If the surrounding area is dimly lit, the haunted area is shrouded in darkness. The distance of illumination produced by torches, lamps, and other nonmagical sources of light is cut in half.
- 2 Roiling Sea.** The ocean surges and plummets furiously. The area is considered **rough sea**; in addition, any creature attempting to move on board a vessel must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw each time it attempts to move or be knocked prone. On a result of 9 or less, the creature is thrown overboard.
- 3 Angry Wind.** The air itself seems to scream and cry. The sound is unsettling and distracting. All Wisdom (Perception) checks based on sound are made with disadvantage.
- 4 Ghostly Tentacles.** 1d8 spectral appendages surround the vessel. Each tentacle is Large; though immaterial, it has AC 18 and a Strength score of 22. If a creature enters a space within 5 feet of one, the tentacle attempts to grapple it. A creature that ends its turn grappled by a tentacle takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage. If a creature resists or breaks the grapple, that tentacle ceases to exist immediately. Striking a tentacle with a magical attack dissipates it. The tentacles are otherwise immune to harm.
- 5 Sudden Frost.** This haunted area's temperature drops to 10 degrees below the freezing point of water. Flat surfaces, such as the deck of a ship, are instantaneously covered with frost. When a creature moves on the frosted surface for the first time on a turn, it must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone.
- 6 Spectral Images.** Drifting wraiths, ghost ships, glowing words and symbols, or some other frightful vision floats in the air nearby. A creature that witnesses this vision must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the start of its next turn. Once a creature succeeds on the saving throw, it is immune to the fear effect of that image for 24 hours.



MAELSTROM

Usually appearing in a strait or a channel, but in some cases on the open sea, a maelstrom is a powerful whirlpool. Vessels that come into contact with a maelstrom are in danger of being captured by this horrendous force of nature.

The circular area covered by the maelstrom is rough sea (see that entry), and any creature that starts its turn there must succeed on a Strength saving throw or take bludgeoning damage and be pulled 10 feet toward the center. The DC for the saving throw, as well as the damage dealt, depends on the size of the maelstrom (see below).

2d6	Maelstrom Diameter (Feet)	Save/Check DC	Bludgeoning Damage
2-4	15-30	14	3d6
5-7	40-60	16	6d6
8-10	70-140	18	9d6
11-12	150-300	20	12d6

Vessels whose length is less than the radius of the maelstrom might be drawn in as well. The vessel's pilot must succeed on an Intelligence check to avoid being drawn into the maelstrom at the end of each turn the vessel spends in contact with it. The DC of the check, as well as the damage to the vessel, are identical to those for creatures.

OBSTRUCTIONS

Usually a mere nuisance, sometimes deadly: obstructions of many kinds can make travel at sea hazardous.

Obstructions are often hidden below the waterline and might not be noticed until there is not enough time to change course. Choose a DC for the Wisdom (Perception) check needed to spot an obstruction based on how concealed it is. A moderately concealed obstruction might have a DC of 15 to spot it, while those fully submerged by water might have a DC of 20 or more.

If a vessel strikes an obstruction, both it and the obstruction take 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage for every 5 feet of the vessel's speed at the time of impact. For example, a ship traveling at a speed of 45 feet per round takes 41 (9d8) bludgeoning damage upon impact with a coral reef. The reef takes the same amount of damage. If the obstruction's hit points drop to 0, it is destroyed and the vessel can continue moving (provided it is still capable). If the obstruction is not destroyed, the vessel stops immediately.

Example obstructions are described below.

CORAL REEF

Coral reefs are composed of and built by a multitude of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps. They range from Huge to Gargantuan in size. The hit points listed in the table below represent a section of reef that is approximately 20 feet wide and up to 5 feet thick.

ICE FLOE

An ice floe is a large flat slab of floating ice, upwards of 60 feet long at its widest point. Ice floes are most common in the Khardic Sea but can be found in the temperate climes of the Scharde Isles during the colder months.

ROCKY OUTCROPPING

A huge chunk of sediment juts out of the ocean or along the shoreline. Most are flat and squarish, but some outcroppings are long and jagged. Jagged rocks deal piercing damage to objects and creatures that collide with them rather than bludgeoning.

RUINS

These might be remnants of a bygone civilization or the leftovers of a recently destroyed structure such as a pier or a dam. Older ruins are likely made of stone, but more recent ones might be of wooden construction.

SANDBAR

Sandbars are composed of sand, as the name implies. They have resistance to bludgeoning damage from collisions with vessels.

WRECK

The remains of lost ships can sometimes drag other vessels into the depths to join them. Wrecks often are found near other obstructions. Most are made of wood, but some are partially or entirely metal.

Obstruction	AC	HP	Damage Threshold
Coral reef	14	27 (5d10)	—
Ice floe	15	27 (5d10)	5
Rocky outcropping	17	97 (15d12)	25
Ruins, stone	17	32 (5d12)	15
Ruins, wood	15	27 (5d10)	10
Sandbar	10	55 (10d10)	—
Wreck	14	77 (14d10)	10

OMENS AND TABOOS

Sailors can be superstitious, and many believe that certain items, creatures, and occurrences are signs of good or ill fortune. There is often truth to these beliefs. An adventurer can choose to follow or ignore an omen, but most sailors know well enough to heed them and adjust their relationship with landlubbers based on how they react to the signs the sea has granted.

Anyone who disregards an omen or blatantly breaks a taboo has disadvantage on Charisma rolls in subsequent dealings with any sailor who witnesses the transgression.

A few typical omens are described below.

ALBATROSS

Seen as a symbol of good, the albatross is thought to be an omen of bright fortune. Harming an albatross is forbidden, and any who do so are thought to bring misfortune to their crew; such persons are shunned and likely punished severely.

CAT

A cat aboard a ship is a welcome sight to sailors. Cats keep in check the rodents that would otherwise threaten the food supply, damage cargo, and spread disease, and they are natural predators of mischievous gremlins that can damage or even destroy machines aboard a ship. Some crews attribute supernatural abilities to felines, believing them capable of predicting or even controlling the weather. Harming a cat or losing one to the sea is a most dire omen.

RED SKY

In the morning a red sky is a sign that a storm is coming. At night it heralds fair weather.

KLABAUTERMANN

This variety of grymkin can be helpful or harmful. Many ships carry a small carving of a short sailor in yellow with a tobacco pipe and woolen sailor's cap to please the klabauteermann. When the klabauteermann is happy with the likeness, it rewards the crew by doing chores and even saving sailors from drowning. A klabauteermann who has been insulted might sabotage the ship, tearing sails, tangling ropes, and otherwise making the sailors' lives miserable. The klabauteermann is almost always invisible, making itself seen only during the direst of circumstances. If a crew member sees one, that is a sure sign that tragedy will befall the ship.

KLABAUTERMANN

Small fey (grymkin), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 44 (8d6 + 16)

Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

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

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +3, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Tools Navigator's tools +2, Vehicles (water) +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Understands all languages but doesn't speak.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Invisibility. The klabauteermann is invisible unless it chooses to be seen, typically immediately before a calamity.

Innate Spellcasting. The klabauteermann's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, spell attack +5). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *mending, shillelagh, gust of wind, water breathing*

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage

RIP CURRENT

A rip is a strong, narrow current moving directly away from the shore. It occurs near beaches with breaking waves. A creature caught in a rip must make a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success the creature recognizes the direction of the rip and can move at a perpendicular angle to its pull, parallel to shore, to escape. 20 feet of movement in either direction takes the creature out of the current. On a failed check the creature fails to identify the direction of the rip current.

On the creature's turn it must succeed on a DC 25 Strength saving throw or be pulled 1d12 × 5 feet out to sea. At the start of each successive turn, the creature can make an additional Wisdom (Survival) check. If successful it identifies the extent of the rip and can attempt to swim free.

Fighting the powerful current is exhausting. A creature that ends two consecutive turns fighting the current gains one level of exhaustion. Creatures with a swim speed are immune to the effects of a rip current.

SEAWEED

"Seaweed" is a general term for the great variety of plants and algae that flourish in the oceans of Caen. Listed here are some notable examples of seaweed that can be found in the Meredius.

BLIGHTED KELP

A variety of pelagic plants affected by dragon blight, the canopy of blighted kelp floats on or near the surface and clings to objects that interact with it. The holdfast, a rootlike formation, anchors the blighted kelp to the substrate of the ocean. The stalk-like stipe reaches to the seabed.

A creature entering a patch of blighted kelp for the first time on a turn or starting its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the tangling weeds. A restrained creature can use its action to escape, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Patches of blighted kelp can be anywhere from 5 to 500 feet in diameter.

BLUE HENNY

Blue henny is an edible marine plant that grows in floating patches 10 to 50 feet in diameter. A 1-foot-wide patch of blue henny contains a single pound of edible material, which can feed a Medium-sized creature for one day. Blue henny provides the nutrients needed to prevent scurvy.

DEVIL'S WRACK

Devil's wrack is a poisonous marine plant that closely resembles blue henny. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check is required to tell the difference between the two types of plants.

A creature that ingests devil's wrack must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this way the creature takes 1 poison damage at the end of each hour after eating the plant. After taking the damage, the creature can make another Constitution save. On a success the poisoned condition ends.

GRIMWEED

Grimweed is a marine plant that floats on the surface of the water. It is cultivated by islanders to deny access to areas of shore, preventing incursions from landing. Pirate crews sometimes deliberately spread grimweed near the ports of their rivals, where it can be a long-term problem.

One patch of grimweed covers a 5-foot square. If touched by a creature or moving object, the weed explodes into a cloud of tiny, sporelike seed pods that fills a 10-foot cube originating from the plant. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage. A creature that takes poison damage from the grimweed must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become infected with grimweed seeds.

An infected creature's hit point maximum is reduced by 1d4 at the start of each day until cured. At the start of each new day the creature makes another Constitution saving throw. If the save succeeds, the creature fights off the effect of the seeds and is cured. Once cured, the creature's hit point maximum returns to normal after a long rest. If the creature's hit point maximum drops to 0, it dies and a grimweed sprout grows from its corpse. A sprout that is kept in water grows to a 5-foot patch of grimweed in one day.

SHIPS

Seagoing vessels come in all shapes and sizes but have several common features. Nearly all ships rock and sway on the waves, causing all surfaces aboard to be difficult terrain. Creatures with proficiency in Vehicles (water) treat the difficult terrain as normal terrain.

Hazards that can occur aboard a ship include the following.

FIRE

If a fire breaks out aboard a vessel made primarily of wood, the ship takes 7 (2d6) fire damage for each 5-foot area at the start of each round the fire persists. This damage bypasses the ship's Damage Threshold.

If no efforts are made to stop the fire it begins to spread. A fire starts out filling a 5-foot area. At Initiative count 20 of each round the fire persists, it spreads to an adjacent 5-foot area provided the material in that area is flammable. Choose a square for the fire to spread to or roll a d8 and consult the diagram below to determine which direction the fire spreads. Multiple patches of fire spread to unoccupied flammable spaces. Left unchecked, a fire can wreak havoc quickly. A creature can use its action to put out a 5-foot area of fire, either by dousing it with water or smothering the flame.

1	2	3
4	FIRE	5
6	7	8

INFESTATION

Rats, insects, and other vermin are a constant threat to the wellbeing of a seagoing vessel and its crew. Sails, ropes, and other gear can be damaged. Food, and drinking water can be spoiled or consumed.

Rat swarms reproduce rapidly. Within 30 days of infestation, the number of rats aboard a ship doubles. After 30 days a single **swarm of rats** becomes two swarms, two becomes four, and so forth. A swarm consumes 1 ounce of food per day for each hit point it has. Provided there is enough space and food, the rat population continues to increase exponentially unless efforts are made to cull them.

ROUGH SEA

Rough seas arise when heavy winds blow against the tide and generate choppy waves. The surface of a vessel in these conditions is difficult terrain even for experienced sailors. Proficiency in Vehicles (water) does not negate this difficult terrain. Any creature without that proficiency must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw each time it attempts to move or be knocked prone.

SCURVY

A disease caused by the lack of vital nutrients, its symptoms include weakness, fatigue, and soreness of the limbs. If left unchecked the disease causes deterioration of the gums, loss of hair, and bleeding from the skin. Ultimately the illness can cause death from infection or bleeding.

Spending more than 30 days without fresh fruits or vegetables is enough to cause the beginning of scurvy. A humanoid creature suffering from the disease must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of the 30 days. On a failed save the creature contracts scurvy and gains one level of exhaustion. At the end of each additional 7 days without proper nutrition, the creature must succeed on another Constitution save or suffer an additional level of exhaustion. With each successive saving throw the DC increases by 1. After the third failed save (and with each successive failure thereafter) the creature takes 1 point of necrotic damage, and its hit point maximum is decreased by the same amount.

One day of proper diet and rest prevents incurring further saving throws and penalties. Each long rest while the creature has been eating food with plant nutrients (especially citrus fruits, ginger, or green leafy vegetables) eliminates one level of exhaustion and increases the creature's hit point maximum by 1 until the creature reaches its original maximum.

STEAM ENGINES

Many vessels that traverse the Meredius are hybrids of sail and steam. Steam engines are powered by the force generated by steam to push pistons back and forth that, in turn, rotate one or more paddlewheels to propel the vessel. As with a steamjack, steam-powered vessels are reliant upon fuel and flame. Therefore, most ships still have sails for use in times when steam engines are not a viable option. Creatures in the boiler room are subject to the effects of severe heat and dust. A boiler that is poorly maintained or pushed to its limits may burst.

If the Game Master determines that a boiler is in danger of bursting, roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the boiler explodes. Each creature in a 15-foot cube originating from the boiler must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 3d8 thunder damage, 2d8 fire damage, and is pushed 10 feet away from the center of the blast. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much thunder and fire damage and isn't pushed. In addition, unsecured objects that are completely within the area of effect are automatically pushed 10 feet away from the center of the blast. Additionally, when the boiler explodes, the ship itself takes 5d8 thunder damage, 3d8 fire damage, and is no longer able to move by steam power.

SIREN

Sailors speak in hushed tones about the sirens. Never seen, but sometimes heard, they are thought to be the spirits of passengers who died aboard doomed vessels lost at sea. Another theory is that they are rather a kind of sea-spirit, similar to those that haunt the deep marshes and swamps of the mainland. Whatever their origin, the devastation wrought by sirens is irrefutable.

Sirens are usually encountered on starless nights or in heavy fog. At first their call is heard at a distance. Those who have survived describe it as a cross between crying and soulful singing. Some reports claim that the voice offered them their heart's desire.

If a crew is foolish enough to investigate, it might already be too late. All humanoid creatures who hear the siren's call must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, nothing happens and the creature is immune to the song of that siren for 24 hours. On a failure the creature is charmed and driven to move toward the source of the call as quickly as possible. If on board a vessel, the creature attempts to control the vessel and steer it in the desired direction. A creature that fails its saving throw by 5 or more moves toward the source of the call without regard for its own safety, even leaping into the sea or into dangerous terrain to reach the source. At the end of each of its turns a creature makes an additional Wisdom saving throw. If successful the charm ends.; the creature behaves normally and is immune to the song of that siren for 24 hours.

Siren calls almost always occur near jagged rocks or other hidden obstructions that can damage vessels encountering them.

SUNBURN

Life aboard a ship sometimes exposes one to glaring sunlight. Working at midday without proper protection from the sun can lead to sunburn—a painful inconvenience when mild, but potentially very dangerous.

A humanoid creature exposed to direct sunlight for 1 hour without proper protection must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a success the creature's skin is irritated and mildly burned, but it suffers no ill effects. On a failure the creature takes 1 point of radiant damage and is poisoned until it finishes a short or long rest.

Clothing that covers most of the body is ideal for protection from the sun's rays, but under conditions of severe heat it can be impractical. Some Scharde Islanders have taken to covering exposed skin in a paste made from water weeds, rice, and spices. This ointment provides advantage on saving throws to resist sunburn and can be fashioned with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check.

TIDES

Caen has three moons: Calder, Laris, and Artis. The forces produced by these celestial bodies are virtually unpredictable and makes the ebbing and rising of the tumultuous tides of the Meredius Sea difficult to determine. Without a suitable instrument, Intelligence (Nature) checks to predict the tides are impossible. Even with the proper equipment and training, checks to predict tides and weather on the sea are always made with disadvantage.

A dedicated device known as a weatherometer provides advantage on Intelligence (Nature) checks to predict conditions on the sea (thus negating the disadvantage imposed by the moons of Caen).

TSUNAMI

A succession of waves caused by the displacement of gargantuan amounts of water, tsunamis might be generated by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other powerful subaquatic disturbances.

On the open water a tsunami wave travels an average of 500 miles per hour (4,400 feet per round) but is only about 1 foot above sea level. On entering shallow water, such as a harbor, the phenomenon becomes catastrophic. Shoaling causes tsunami waves' speed to drop to 50 miles per hour (440 feet per round), but their amplitude increases exponentially. An average tsunami wave is 30 to 50 feet high. However, there have been reports of waves as much as 1,000 feet above sea level. A tsunami event can cause multiple waves occurring several minutes apart.

A tsunami wave in shallow water is 30 (1d10 × 1d10) feet in height above sea level. A creature struck by the wave must make a DC 25 Strength saving throw, taking 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage on a failed save for every foot of height the wave has, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the saving throw is carried with the wave until it ends. Any structure on land or vessel in shallow water hit by the wave takes the same damage. If a structure drops to 0 hit points, it collapses and potentially damages nearby creatures.

A tsunami wave travels inland a distance equal to 20 × its height in feet unless stopped by a structure large enough to withstand the damage it deals, or a natural landform exceeding its height blocks the path.

UNDERWATER HAZARDS

The depths of the ocean are the biggest natural mystery in the world of Caen. Little has been explored, but with the proper mechanical devices and magic, a daring adventurer could plumb the briny depths in search of incredible wonders—and dangers.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Vision underwater is lightly obscured. Past a depth of 600 feet vision is heavily obscured.

At 3,000 feet below the surface and deeper there is no light. Even creatures with darkvision are blinded unless that darkvision stems from a magical source (such as the *darkvision* spell or the warlock eldritch invocation Devil's Sight). Racial abilities do not count as magical in this context.

Temperatures at the deepest parts of the ocean are intensely cold. Creatures without natural immunity to cold conditions or wearing protective gear suffer the effects of severe cold.

GIANT SHELLFISH

Those who seek sunken treasures tell of enormous bivalve mollusks—some the size of a person or even larger.

GIANT SHELLFISH

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)
Speed 0 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	1 (-5)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons.

Condition Immunities prone

Senses passive Perception 5

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Water Breathing. The giant shellfish can breathe only underwater.

REACTIONS

Snap. When a creature comes within 5 feet of a giant shellfish, it can use its reaction to snap closed. The creature that triggered the reaction must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (2d4) bludgeoning damage and be grappled by the shellfish (escape DC 15). Each time the creature starts its turn grappled it takes an additional 4 (2d4) bludgeoning damage. The giant shellfish can have only one creature grappled at a time.

HELLFIRE ANEMONE

Although they resemble plants, sea anemones are predatory marine animals related to coral and jellyfish. Though their stings are painful and deadly to the small sea creatures they prey upon, most are harmless to humanoids.

One exception is the hellfire anemone. It resembles a colorless cluster of flowerheads resting on the seafloor and is commonly found in tide pools.

HELLFIRE ANEMONE

Tiny beast, unaligned

Armor Class 5
Hit Points 7 (2d4 + 2)
Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	1 (-5)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned, prone

Senses passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Stinging Body. A creature that comes into contact with the hellfire anemone must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure it takes 10 (3d6) poison damage and is paralyzed for 1 minute. On a successful save the creature takes half damage and is not paralyzed. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Water Breathing. The hellfire anemone can breathe only underwater.

ACTIONS

Tentacle. *Melee:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 bludgeoning damage and the target creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure it takes 10 (3d6) poison damage and is paralyzed for 1 minute. On a successful save the creature takes half damage and is not paralyzed. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

THE BENDS

Also known as decompression sickness, the bends are caused by dissolved gases in the bloodstream coming out of solution and forming bubbles. Tissue and blood vessels are damaged by the pressure of the gas, and if enough of it gets trapped in the joints, the bubbles cause excruciating pain.

A creature returning to the surface after a dive of 100 feet or more must make a Constitution saving throw. The DC of the save is 11 + 1 for each 100 feet below the surface the creature is rising from. On a failed save the creature takes 3 (1d6) force damage for every 50 feet it has ascended and has the bends. A creature with the bends is poisoned. After finishing a long rest, the creature can make another Constitution saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

Rising at a rate of 30 feet per minute or slower prevents the bends. Creatures with a swim speed or under the effect of the *water breathing* spell, or a magic item that allows breathing underwater, are immune to the bends.

WATERSPOUT

A waterspout is an intense vortex of water rising out of the sea like a twisting column. The surrounding air violently rotates and connects to the dark clouds above. A waterspout is a cylinder with a diameter determined by the following table. The height of the cylinder is twice its diameter.

The area covered by the waterspout is rough sea, and any creature that starts its turn there must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take bludgeoning damage and be thrown 10d10 feet in a random direction. The DC for the saving throw, as well as the amount of damage dealt, depends on the size of the waterspout. A creature that takes measures to tie itself to a deck still takes damage on a failed save but is not thrown.

A vehicle (water) in a waterspout takes this damage at the start of each of its turns. The vehicle takes damage to each of its external systems: for example, a ship with sails and a sidewheel paddle would take damage to its hull, its sails, and paddle, but not to a steam engine contained within the vehicle.

WATERSPOUT

Waterspout

2d6	Diameter (Feet)	Save/Check DC	Bludgeoning Damage
2-4	15-30	12	2d6
5-7	40-60	14	4d6
8-10	70-140	16	6d6
11-12	150-300	18	8d6

WEATHER

Terrible storms at sea can be devastating. Aside from the normal effects of strong winds, heavy precipitation, and other extremes of the elements, ability checks for navigation are made with disadvantage. Lightning has the potential to cause fires aboard a vessel, and extremes of cold can create obstructive ice floes. Listed below are other hazardous weather conditions to travelers on the seas of Caen.

CALM

The seemingly most harmless scenario at sea could be disastrous if it continues for too long. A calm is a period with little or no wind. Ships that rely on wind power cannot move under this condition. A calm typically lasts for 2d6 hours.

CORROSIVE MIST

Much like the caustic downpours common to the Borderlands region of western Immoren, mists that form around the Scharde Isles sometimes take on acidic properties, either due to alchemical pollution from the factories of Blackwater and Dreggsmouth or from the inherent corruption of Toruk's blight.

Corrosive mist is slower and more pervasive than the destructive precipitation. A creature or object exposed to corrosive mist takes 1 point of acid damage at the end of every minute it remains exposed. A breathing creature that inhales the mist for 1 hour or more must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion. An area affected by corrosive mist is lightly obscured.

FOG

Fog appears when water vapor condenses into droplets or ice crystals suspended in the air. Fog banks can spread over several miles and, depending on their thickness, can render an area lightly or heavily obscured.

2

ADVENTURING IN THE SCHARDE ISLANDS



THE NIGHTMARE EMPIRE OF CRYX churns out hordes of undead to drive an engine of war that rivals any force in western Immoren. Though the mention of its name evokes dread and horror, adventurers yet dare the uncharted seas of the Scharde Islands to uncover their secrets and live to tell the tale of facing their dangers. Adventure awaits anyone who seeks it: heroic battles against nightmarish foes, high seas escapades, dungeon delving in ancient ruins, uncovering a hidden witch coven, raiding a cursed tomb, even raising an undead army to challenge a rival necromancer or political machinations against a lich of unfathomable power.

WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

ACTION drives a story, and characters want to do stuff that interests them!

What do you and your players want to get out of a campaign in the Scharde Islands? If the group wants to explore ancient Orgoth ruins for lost magics, they won't be interested in fighting the oppression and exploitation of the living workers in Lichgate and building a revolution within the Iron Mongers Guild, no matter how awesome that story is to you. Great adventures require buy-in from all involved.

Once you've identified what motivates your characters, you can create stories that match the interests of the group. Create opportunities for them to face encounters and problems that appeal to them the most, whether that is resolving a crisis, investigating a mystery, or taking advantage of an opportunity.

Here are a few common character types and motivations and how they might look in a campaign in the Scharde Islands.

HEROES

Heroes believe in something worth fighting for. They might come to the Nightmare Empire with a purpose or stumble upon it during their rampant do-gooding, whether to help the innocent or destroy the wicked. Even though they might not be able to save everyone or solve every problem, there are plenty of ways to die trying! Some heroes are born of the people who live among the horrors of this land and hold out hope that more is possible than a life and undeath of endless servitude.

A hero might enjoy an adventure where they get to...

- Recover a valuable heirloom from the pirate ship *Grief of the Night*.
- Protect a fishing town's mayor from pirates who want a "change of leadership."
- Rescue the crew trapped in a listing ship before circling brine thralls rip through the hull.
- Protect a village from an assault by deathbound revenants.
- Hunt down and slay the blighted beast that ate the town baker.

EXPLORERS

Explorers are in it for adventure and the thrill of discovery. They don't hesitate to enter an ancient ruin, follow a bloodstained treasure map, delve into the catacombs of Blackwater, eavesdrop on legendary pirate captains, or follow footprints into the festering jungle. Explorers might be questing for something

specific, on their way to somewhere, wandering where the winds take them, or even be on an important mission, but they're always willing to open doors and push buttons. Secrets must be learned, suspicious happenings investigated, mysteries solved, and ancient knowledge uncovered, curses be damned!

An explorer might enjoy an adventure where they get to...

- Investigate a bloodseer facing murder charges after she accurately predicts a gruesome death.
- Figure out what is sickening everyone in a small fishing village on the coast of Blackrock.
- Assist a revenant in tracking down their murderer and the magical blade the killer used.
- Delve into recently uncovered Orgoth ruins in search of lost texts.
- Explore the undersea wreckage of *The Lady's Jewels* with diving gear.
- Find and collect all four Teardrops of Forsaken Promises to unlock the Tomb of the Last Oath.

ENTREPRENEURS

Entrepreneurs focus on accumulating whatever is most valuable to them: money, power, knowledge, followers, property—you name it and someone wants it. Entrepreneurs keep their eyes open for, and even orchestrate, opportunities to acquire their preferred loot or status symbol, and try to turn any situation to their advantage. Motivated largely by greed and often with questionable ethics, such characters range from pirates at one extreme to hustlers and shady merchants at the other, with tomb-raiders and power-hungry arcanists somewhere in between.

An entrepreneur might enjoy an adventure where they get to...

- Follow up on a lead to "acquire" a caravel of exotic goods returning from Konesta.
- Join a game of cards at a tavern with an old treasure map as the stakes.
- Follow a decapitated spirit in noble finery to where its body—and worldly possessions—lie.
- Sneak into an engineer's workshop to acquire experimental mechanical schematics.
- Hire on an overly talkative gang member as a guide, asking many questions to learn of opportunities.
- Enter the gladiator pits as a fighter after a late-night visit to the reigning champ with an "herbal" tea.

Landlubbers 'ave misapprehensions as to the nature of the Schardes. Go far enough inland an' ye'll hear stories about how every island in this chain is nothin' but a haven of the walkin' dead and bloodthirstin' blighted beasts. While that ain't exactly wrong, it ain't exactly right, neither. There be more islands in the chain than ye could count in a 'undred lifetimes, and then more beside. To say they're all one way or another isn't just glossin' over the facts, it's flat denyin' 'em.

*—Master Gunner
Dougal MacNaile*

HOOKS, LINES, AND SINKERS

Here are some detailed adventure hooks to get you started on building adventures in the Scharde Islands, starting from character motivations.

CRISIS!

Crises are problems that need solutions urgently. They're a good way to motivate characters to act right away. You can roll on the Crises table for an adventure suggestion or pick one you like.

CRISES

d6 Crisis

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Floodwaters |
| 2 | Rescue Mission |
| 3 | The Duelist's Code |
| 4 | Becoming Barnacled |
| 5 | Search Warranted |
| 6 | Slash and Burn |

FLOODWATERS

On a small hill of a forgotten island lie the crumbling ruins of a castle in which a pirate king of old ruled atop a pile of stolen treasures. A forgotten cemetery outside the walls is the resting place for the elite guards who patrolled the island and cut down intruders.

Recent flooding on the island has brought their buried corpses floating to the surface after resting peacefully for centuries. Risen as undead by the foul corruption tainting the Scharde Islands, they hold yet to the singular mission and focus they did in life. The ruthless guards continue to patrol the now-inhabited island, mercilessly attacking anyone they see. Villagers from several settlements that escaped notice have gathered in the tunnels underneath the castle, accessible again after a landslide during the flood. A few of the most able-bodied set out into the stormy sea seeking help to lay the guards back to rest. Some villagers have an alternative plan: they are trying to access the fabled treasure room and find a way to destroy the guards.

RESCUE MISSION

A man dressed in garish, brightly colored clothes with an actual feather in his cap is rushing around the docks, beside himself with worry and asking for help from anyone who will listen. He points to an obvious pirate ship heading out to sea from the port, saying his first mate was grabbed and taken aboard. She needs to be rescued before the captors learn her true identity—one of King Baird of Ord's many granddaughters. He is sure she is smart enough not to get found out easily, but how long before the truth is discovered?

He has a ship ready to go, minus a few crew members—he says they left without further explanation—and offers passage to anywhere for those willing to help him; he also trades any goods he has on board. He stresses that time is of the essence.



THE DUELIST'S CODE

In life Lucian Atwater was known for his quick wit, not his quick draw, an unlucky reputation for a duelist. One night after a few clever but underappreciated insults flew across a Blackwater card table, Lucian was challenged to a gunfight. But as he took his first step out the door, he fell with a bullet between the eyes. His restless spirit has roamed that street ever since, cursing the offense against proper dueling etiquette.

A necromancer bearing subtle military insignia has taken an interest in Lucian and is investigating the nearby cemetery. The proprietor of the inn where Lucian was shot says she's heard of necromancers tracking down the lingering spirits of gunfighters and using their hatred and vengeance to transform them into terrifying pistol wraiths. She confides that Lucian wasn't buried in the cemetery, and she's willing to reveal the location of his remains to anyone who promises to put him to rest peacefully.

BECOMING BARNACLED

A well-known side effect of the barnacles of Cullenrock latching on to a person is that the host feels no pain and their skin hardens into a tough outer layer of armor, so some seek these out to augment their fighting capabilities. Others end up encrusted by the blighted and hungry creatures after spending time in an infected area. Either way, the bloodsucking parasites drain the life essence of their host as they cover its body, releasing an intoxicating haze that reduces its willpower to do anything about it.

The trollkin Sculli Hornbender did not intend to become infected with the barnacles, but his natural healing ability has helped stave off the negative effects for some time. However, he is losing the battle and fears he will soon lie down and not get up again, becoming a new site for them to spread from. He is seeking an alchemist, herbalist, or mage who can help, but he isn't going to make it far alone in his condition.

SEARCH WARRANTED

A few pirate ships flying Cryxian colors have anchored not far from the port at Konesta, so ships can't easily get through to the port without coming into their range. The Cryxians let some ships pass without interference. Others they hail down and board—so far none have fought or ran—bringing with them obviously blighted and disfigured beasts. Cryxian military units then conduct a thorough search of the ship, followed by a brief statement read aloud from a scroll to everyone on board, before they depart and let the ship go free. Those who have experienced the harrowing encounter refuse to speak of it.

The Golden Grin is headed to Konesta on business, and the captain is looking to hire a few extra people to help secure their cargo. He states that the *Grin* is light and fast, and he has no intention of being boarded by Cryxian military, a pirate ship, or anyone else. The characters can observe the existing crew stocking up on munitions, alchemical supplies, and good-luck charms.

SLASH AND BURN

Edmonia Asches, a self-styled necrobotanist, is researching increased food production using slash-and-burn agriculture, with necrotite as the fertilizer. Her experiments produce glowing green flash fires across the forests, hillsides, and fields she is working in, noticeable from far out at sea and drawing responses from curiosity to horror.

When approached, Edmonia pleads with conviction that the situation is dire: people are starving to death every day, and she's sure her experiments will provide the answer. Her research is yielding astounding results and she is desperate to keep it going, but she needs more necrotite and can't leave her experiments to go get some. There is a Cryxian watchtower on the island, a couple of Cryxian pirate ships in port, and an old mine shaft at the top of a nearby hill, any of which could be a source. She doesn't care where it comes from and isn't going to ask any questions.

MYSTERY

For explorers, there is nothing quite as alluring as an old-fashioned mystery to solve by investigating places and situations. You can roll on the Mysteries table for a suggestion or choose an option you like.

MYSTERIES

d6 *Mystery*

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Smoke and Mirrors Gambit |
| 2 | The Book of the Lost Words |
| 3 | Mind Mold |
| 4 | Bug Hunt |
| 5 | Black Sails and Bloodstained Waves |
| 6 | Skeleton Fleet? |

SMOKE AND MIRRORS GAMBIT

Mysteria's Marvelous Menagerie is a spectacle of undead abominations, blighted beasts, garish thralls with painted faces, and little stitched-together horrors designed to look like toys come to life, all working in unison to perform a macabre routine. The theatrical show, held in a big traveling tent, involves intricate tricks such as the Flying Acrobat's Twist and the Mime's Reversal, in which the strange crew demonstrates acrobatic stunts, gymnastics, and aerial maneuvers. It is obvious that each creature was collected, built, reanimated, and trained for a specific purpose.

Havisa the Pale, a specter on patrol duty, has been watching the troupe in fascination for a week. She's been secretly practicing the "Squish-Squash, Thump 'n' Stump" dance they are learning for the new Smoke and Mirrors Gambit routine, and she's convinced they're about to pull off something big. She's not sure whether to join them or stop them, and she needs help deciding.

THE BOOK OF THE LOST WORDS

Ashford Hopperton, an explorer of no renown, lucked into the windfall of a lifetime when his ship got blown far off course and ran aground on a small island with pristine ruins undiscovered in the jungle. Back in port he quickly sold, spent, traded, or gambled away everything he had found there, including a strange old tome in a lost language that felt warm to the touch. The book went to the necrosurgeon Seren Nethersoul, who had a disturbingly eager gleam in her eye and muttered continuously to two little stitched-together abominations, saying something like “the Lost Words of Mastery over Blood.” Ashford thought twice about selling to her, but the coin was heavy and his flask was light, so he left the book with an unsettling giggle behind him.

The next morning, Ashford remembered nothing but awoke with the book in his hands and a sinking feeling in his gut. He tried to burn it to no avail, then proceeded to dump it in the sea, rip out the pages, give it away, and even stab it through with a sword—but no matter what, it ended up back with him, unscathed. He’s looking for an escort to help him return the book to where he found it: a pedestal in the middle of balefire braziers standing in the ruins. He’s anxious to get going, because he’s heard Nethersoul and her “pets” are looking for him; as well, the words of the book seem to be sliding out onto his skin and soaking into his blood, turning it black.

MIND MOLD

Phineas Bramble, a singularly focused scholar and mage, has come to Cryx to study the effects of the blight on the jungle. Much to his delight, he has made a bigger discovery than he dared to dream! He found an extensive underground fungal colony spanning the entire island, connecting it in an intricate pattern. Even more fascinating is a bulging mass of fungi in the center of the network that is so twisted and warped from the constant influx of blight that Phineas believes it has become a near-sentient “brain,” gathering information everywhere its network reaches.

Phineas is convinced that consuming even a bite of this fungal brain will grant access to unfathomable knowledge, everything the network has sensed. All he needs is help getting there. He thinks traveling through the burrow-mawg tunnels would be the best approach, but sneaking past the blighted beasts in the jungle and digging down from above might also work.



BUG HUNT

A gruesome sickness called the Strangleblood plague is killing people in a small isolated village, and they've sent for help. The sickness progresses quickly, causing the blood to rapidly expand while the skin and bones disintegrate, until the victim explodes, leaving a bloody mass of unidentifiable guts behind.

A plague doctor of the Brotherhood of the Bloody Shroud, Alcox Ispar, has been treating the afflicted and determined that the sickness originated from the bites of blighted insects. He's narrowed the vector down to three possibilities: sanguine defiler mosquitos, blood scorpions, or blood-bound harvest ticks. He needs someone to investigate the surrounding area and capture specimens of all of three strains of blighted insects if possible so he can develop a remedy. While he is focused on helping people, another visiting doctor has a very different purpose in hunting down the dangerous vermin. Vespra Nox specializes in toxicology and believes that a very effective poison could be crafted from the correct insect. She offers to collaborate and share research with anyone who helps her collect samples.

BLACK SAILS AND BLOODSTAINED WAVES

On the Night of Laris, when the Temptress Moon is alone in the night sky, red and full, even the roughest seas calm for her. On this night, shadowy visions dance upon the still water. After the last Night of Laris, a haggard sailor rowed a dinghy into port. He recounted a tale of shadow-formed Orgoth blackships fighting endless armies of undead near Garlghast, where the final battle of the Orgoth invasion was fought, with the baleful red moonlight glinting off armor adorned with screaming faces.

His ship was ripped apart by cannon crossfire, but he was able to escape with a handful of others. His shipmates were too injured to row, so he left them on a nearby beach and pushed on to seek help. As he left, he saw shadows of Orgoth warriors carrying chests from their ships into a cave opening down the shoreline. He's eager to return and investigate, and rescue his shipmates of course, but he needs help—and a bigger ship with a cargo hold, just in case.

THE SKELETON FLEET?

The treacherous waters of the White Shark Reef have claimed so many ships that the wreckage has borne a new danger. On moonlit nights when the sea claims a ship and her crew, a chill mist settles as the tumultuous tide recedes, and the air fills with creaking and cracking. Splintered and rotting wood, bones, coral, jagged rocks, and shells are propelled to the ocean's surface and fuse into the jagged, skeletal shapes of lost ships. These ghastly forms are driven by the fear and fury of the souls of the sailors who perished here.

Only a few have seen such a horror—or wonder—and lived to tell the tale. Fishers from a nearby island village have seen the ships rise on two occasions and believe they have witnessed a new Cryxian "Skeletal Fleet," a fearsome squadron of ships that can appear wherever the sea reaps a sailor's tomb. Nothing is known about the crew, capabilities, or purpose of these ships. Perhaps it's time someone investigated?

OPPORTUNITIES

The inhabitants of the Scharde Islands are always seeking opportunities, whether for power or profit—often at the expense of others. You can roll on the Opportunities table for a suggestion or choose an option you like.

OPPORTUNITIES	
d6	Opportunity
1	A Second Chance for Miss Glass
2	Who is Holding All the Aces?
3	Fighting for Scraps
4	Anyone Can Sign in Blood
5	A Burden Too Heavy to Bear
6	A Question of Morals

A SECOND CHANCE FOR MISS GLASS

Miss Emeline Glass is a spectral explorer and collector of military insignia. She knows that one of the fancy devices used to call lightning from the sky—a stormcaller—rests on a recently sunk Cygnaran ship. She has no use for the device, but she knows what a valuable find this is. She's willing to part with the knowledge of its location in exchange for a favor.

The ship is deep underwater, off the coast where it was sunk by the Ghost Fleet. Emeline was searching the seabed when the ship sank, and in a fleeting moment became enamored with one of the officers heroically trying to rescue her crew members from the hold of the doomed vessel. Unable to help, Emeline left the scene to avoid seeing the woman meet her inevitable end in the cold embrace of the sea. When she returned to gather insignia for her collection, she couldn't find the sailor's body. She wants to locate and recover it while it's still intact, convinced she can find a way to bring the woman's spirit back and have a chance to get to know her.

WHO IS HOLDING ALL THE ACES?

Finn o' the Fish has a funny story to tell from the *Golden Albatross* last night. A braggart of a treasure-hunter was fresh off a big find. Bad at gambling and worse at reading a room, she'd been losing money at a full card table for hours when she suddenly wailed like a banshee and accused *herself* of cheating! Throwing a stack of aces on the table she screeched that her deck, *this deck*, has special marks on the cards that the aces she was dealt did not! Someone was palming her marked cards and she wanted them back!

The bar erupted with everything from laughter to shouts of murderous rage. She was saved by the barkeep, who tossed a shoddy cloak over her head, snatched her coin purse, and shoved her out the back door with an emphatic "Run!" The punchline, according to Finn, is that the lady is now trying to hire a crew. She says the map to her big score,

a hoard of treasure, is on those cards, and she needs her aces back to retrieve it. Her crew didn't return from the last trip to sea, and she is looking for others to accompany her, with payment on recovery of the treasure. Finn can't stop laughing by the end of his story, but a discerning observer can see that the ace he's casually flicking has subtle markings on its back.

FIGHTING FOR SCRAPS

Zopeth the Carver and Siphos Roheart are young, imaginative necrotechs, both tasked with the never-ending drudgery of creating thralls for Cryx's armies. To break up the monotony, they set up a fighting competition where any necrotechs who choose—and pay an entry fee—can enter their favorite scrap thralls into a grand melee, called a "Heap." The last thrall standing wins the prize purse for its creator, who also gets their choice of any parts left, attached or not.

The only trouble is that Zopeth and Siphon always draw; what begins as an exciting brawl ends with a drawn-out slugfest and no clear winner. They are both searching for an edge in the next Heap and have hefty purses to spend for unique parts (flesh or metal), ideas, or tactics. They are more than willing to outbid, backstab, steal, sabotage, or otherwise manipulate each other's chance in the Heap in the name of a good rivalry, but they won't cross the line and interfere with each other's real work.

ANYONE CAN SIGN IN BLOOD

The sea drakes in the Cullenrock area of the Broken Coast expel an ink when they feel threatened. When harvested and dried properly, the ink turns shades of dark red and deep purple that are impossible to replicate. Fiona the Firestarter, the boss of a Blackwater gang called the Squids, has proclaimed that as a symbol of the Squids' status and wealth, all their paperwork will now be signed only in sea drake ink—preferably purple, though red will do for less important business.

The problem is that the Squids have run out of all shades of purple ink and are dangerously low on reds, and there is a mountain of paperwork to be done: purchase and protection orders, bribes, payroll, tithes to Toruk—the bureaucracy of organized crime never ends. Ashby Tiller and Azula Stone, each in charge of different gang activities and with their own priorities, have posted separate bounties for the special ink. A seasoned whaler eyeing the bounty board muses that a single trip could be lucrative enough to satisfy both needs and then some. One bold enough might play a dangerous game of supply and demand with the desperate pair to yield an even higher reward—assuming one could even find or take on a sea drake.

A BURDEN TOO HEAVY TO BEAR

Legends tell of a ship so treasure-laden even minor waves would wash its decks, and rather than toss any treasure overboard, the captain jettisoned everything else, including rations, dooming the crew as the fickle winds and tides kept them far from any food or safety.

Centuries later a treasure ship crewed by the restless dead sails the seas half-sunk in the deepest part of the ocean far from any islands or landmarks. Its hold bulges with coins and relics from a civilization long lost, intricate jewelry with flawless gemstones, exquisite weapons and armor, precious silks, and items of immense magical power. A few are rumored to have come across it over the years, and the stories all say taking treasure from the fabled ship comes with a heavier weight than any of them were prepared for. A traveling merchant from Konesta, after her fourth glass of wine, speaks of the ship in hushed tones. She says she knows where it is, and that people always tell the story wrong.

A QUESTION OF MORALS

"I hope you putrid, scab-covered, thieving little mud-maggot marauders all get cave rot and choke on stinging witherberry, then get slowly eaten from the inside out by defiler worms while you starve to death!"

—Some guy shoved in a hole

A band of illiterate buffoons who style themselves pirates are just the kind of salt-crustated scoundrels to rush in brandishing swords and guns when they surprised a group of proper ladies and gentlemen on a distant island, preparing for an expedition into a buried ruin. Those dastardly slubberdegullions took the academics and explorers as prisoners, disregarding the lengthy planning and consideration such an impressive expedition necessitates. The inconsiderate oafs set explosive charges next to the intricately etched door the science team had carefully excavated and blew a hole in the wall. With no regard for the precious archeological records and artifacts they had destroyed, the cutthroat hooligans shoved everyone into the hole: explorers, scholars, and even the guy who was hired just to carry stuff.

It would take the coldest of blood to cover the exit and leave these captives tied up in the dark, without so much as a torch, a sword, or a pen between them, laughing and taunting that they could buy their way out with the treasures inside. Anyone who came upon such a scene, a group of obvious ne'er-do-wells lounging in an expedition base camp full of expensive equipment, would probably suspect any reassurances of the legitimacy of their adventuring company. The question is, are the newcomers a band of villainous swine as well, or heroes who have come to save the day?

FRIEND OR FOE?

In a realm as treacherous as the Nightmare Empire, it is hard to know who to trust. The answer is obvious—no one! Circumstances push people together and positive feelings might develop over time, but in the Scharde Islands, where hordes of undead aren't even the scariest things around, those friendships might not hold much water. Conversely, a mutual enemy can unite the strangest bedfellows. When faced with a significant enough threat, unlikely alliances are formed—for a short time, at least.

Adventures in the Scharde Islands provide a great opportunity to present NPCs who aren't obvious friends or foes. For example, as the characters are led into the jungle by a chipper, smiling new friend, are they being taken to the secret meeting spot as agreed on, or are they about to be fed to a blighted gorax?

A simple way to look at NPCs is their **goals**. When those align with the players' objectives, they are **allies**; when they do not, they are **antagonists**. Sometimes a character can be both, or switch between roles over the course of the adventure. Make sure your NPCs have clear goals so that if you get stuck, you can give the players something to react to.







MAKING NEW FRIENDS

The first interaction with an NPC can be an interesting way to generate a memorable impression on the players. This section offers a few possible locations to set a first encounter.

AT SEA

The Meredius is a rough and unwelcoming sea plagued with treacherous terrain and hazards, surface threats too numerous to count, and underwater denizens best left undisturbed. Despite all this, ships filled with soldiers, ne'er-do-wells, fishers, merchants, and adventurers venture out into the roil to face whatever dangers may come.

You can roll on the Meeting at Sea table to generate an unusual first encounter with an NPC, or choose a result you like.

MEETING AT SEA

d6 Meeting

- 1 A gigantic blighted seabird swoops down and carries away a crew member to a cliffside aerie where three other sailors are yelling for rescue.
- 2 A large ship's hull, broken in half against a jagged coral reef and run aground, has been turned into a makeshift fortress by marooned sailors. With looks of horror and fear, they emphatically wave away all who approach.
- 3 Your ship hits an unexpected ice floe covered with decaying bodies—and some unidentifiable figures are heading your way.
- 4 A fisher brags about an ornate key attached to a skeletal hand she hauled up. She offers to guide you to the rest of the skeleton and the treasure chest it's holding, for a price. It's on a nearby shipwreck, guarded by a tatzylwurm.
- 5 A Satyxis vessel towing a Khadoran clipper flags the characters down, offering up the prize for sale, cheap—too cheap. The crew insists it must not be left adrift.
- 6 A woman who travels in a small sloop around the nearby islands can allegedly get anyone new identification papers for a new life, matching any nation of western Immoren. At least, that's what this imposter with papers that match yours says.



IN PORT

Many words can describe Cryx, with its belching factories, bustling docks full of brazen criminals, treacherous back alleys and shadowy corners where the darkest deals are brokered, and the crowded markets where nothing is too gruesome to be sold or bought—but no one ever calls it boring. Cryx also hosts military command and production, as well as the center of worship for the Dragonfather, and even the home of Lord Toruk himself, so anything can happen!

You can roll on the Meeting in Port table to generate an unusual first encounter with an NPC, or choose a result you like.

MEETING IN PORT

d6 Meeting

- 1 Priests of Toruk parade past, singing hymns from the Covenants of Sacrifice, and select a bystander as their next offering to Lord Toruk. The chosen one turns to you for help.
- 2 An ogrun representative from the Iron Monger's Union is looking to source a valuable mineral from the mainland and needs to "convince" a Mercarian League merchant that the deal is a good one.
- 3 The door of a nearby alchemy workshop blasts open and green ooze splatters into the street, dissolving everything it touches as it spreads. The alchemist runs out, crying "There are more inside! They're waking up!"
- 4 A notorious criminal strides down the middle of the street, people hastily clearing a path. The figure points at you and whispers something to a lackey, who pulls out a ledger to record every word spoken between you.
- 5 Your purse was slit. The coins spill into the street and draw a crowd, when suddenly a woman dives from the shadows. Landing on top of the coins, she shouts "Back off, vultures! They're with me!" She is definitely holding the knife that cut the purse.
- 6 A Bloodgorger trollkin has gone into a frenzy, tearing bites out of corpse after corpse being unloaded from a carrion ship and spitting each out in disgust. It turns its attention to you with a wild look, foaming at the mouth.

LONELY PLACES

Amid the scattered islands, along the lost ways, deep in the uncharted wilds, inside ruins long forgotten, and in the mysterious depths of the sea—the lonely places aren't part of the Cryxian military industrial complex. The people, spirits, beasts, and monsters in these secluded places have other concerns that occupy their time and attention.

You can roll on the Meeting in Lonely Places table to generate an unusual first encounter with an NPC, or choose a result you like.

MEETING IN LONELY PLACES

d6 Meeting

- 1 In an abandoned junkyard a whistling mechanic has created several horrifying-looking contraptions from scrap warjack parts. She has put up a "For Sale" sign, but you can't tell what any of her creations could possibly do.
- 2 A ghostly rider racing down the road appears to be yelling something, but their voice is silent. The rider loops back numerous times and repeats the wordless message with emphatic gestures.
- 3 In an island clearing stands a waterfall that feeds a crystal pool of freezing cold water. A spirit behind the waterfall calls out, saying she lost her necklace at the bottom. She also drowned there but is more concerned about the necklace.
- 4 A group of rowdy pirates are having a drunken fest on the sacred grounds of a Molgur tribe, and they are about to get ambushed.
- 5 The groundwater is polluted with alchemical and mining runoff, and nearby ruins have flooded with it. An excavation team is setting up a huge pump system to clear the mess, but someone in the crew is sabotaging it. They need an outsider to investigate.
- 6 You come upon an ancient battlefield littered with bones. A young squire who fell in battle, now a revenant, has sorted the weapons and armor and has been polishing and protecting the armaments. Some look very well made.

FRIENDS AND FOES

This section includes some prebuilt NPCs with additional hooks and information for your adventures in the Nightmare Empire.

VAEREN DREADSKULL, THE DEATHWHISPERER

Vaeren Dreadskull has spent her life studying ancient tomes and consulting powerful arcanists, scholars, and practitioners of lost arts and secret crafts to harness the innate talents she discovered at a young age and become the greatest Deathwhisperer for generations, a natural necromancer specialized in extracting information from the skulls, spirits, and even souls of the dead. She has far surpassed the capabilities of even experienced forensic necromancers. Using advanced techniques, she supplements her spells with strong alchemical concoctions, components of slain creatures, herbal extracts infused with magical energies, physical objects that possess strong auras, and a collection of necromantic tomes and scrolls to pull forth secrets, knowledge, and power from the dead.

It is unknown who Vaeren works for—if anyone—but she is singularly focused on cataloging what she calls “immensely important and sensitive information, known by only a few to have ever walked Caen.” She seems to believe her work is urgent, even though some of the subjects she wishes to “interview” are long dead.

VAEREN IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Vaeren can be a source of regular experience and income. If the characters need to catch up on resources, a skull she needs can be presented as a quick interlude or tacked on to another quest for an easy payday.

Here are a few ideas for implementing Vaeren into your campaign.

Quick Adventure Generator. There’s always another body to fetch! Decide on a problem for the characters to overcome—or roll on the table—choose a location, and pick some stuff to get in the way.

Keep the Party Moving. In a wide-open sea with infinite possibilities, characters can fall into the trap of wandering aimlessly instead of experiencing memorable stories and fun gameplay. Having a clear objective brings focus when needed: Get the sword in a skull in a stone for Vaeren, right!

Episodic Campaigns. Structure a campaign as “episodes” of individual adventures, using Vaeren to start each by sending the characters on a mission and bringing them back. This framing device sets up smooth transitions, downtime opportunities, and a system to recap past adventures and move right into your next session.

Campaign Anchor. With her ability to gain information, Vaeren can serve as an anchor and progress tracker for a campaign. For example, to free a friend who has become a doom reaver, the party must locate a legendary Orgoth artifact. They need five important pieces of information to find and safely navigate the ruins, which Vaeren can give them once they retrieve the sources; perhaps the fifth piece of information reveals a major twist in the adventure.

EMPLOYER OR ADVERSARY

Vaeren Dreadskull is a valuable contact who has a list of job opportunities to further her research. If crossed, though, she could become a powerful antagonist who is hard to hide from for long.

Preparation for each interview keeps her busy, so Vaeren has no time to go out and fetch the skulls of the subjects herself, but she has traded favors with a diviner to locate them all. The easy ones have been collected already; the remainder will require skill, finesse, or perhaps combat prowess. She pays extremely well and has some useful supplies to help ensure success.

Vaeren’s Ledger. Vaeren keeps a ledger of what she calls “those who made bargains in darkness,” the corpses she wishes to interrogate, including information on each individual’s death and location if known. If the characters choose to work for her, you can roll on the Vaeren’s Ledger table or choose a result you like.

VAEREN’S LEDGER

d10	Subject	Location, if known
1	On display on a pike inside the Quay Slayers’ fortress	Cryx, Blackwater
2	Consumed by a black troll	Cryx, jungle
3	A rival necromancer possesses it and has big plans for it.	
4	Stitched into the body of a thrall that left Dreggsmouth on a blackship yesterday	
5	On board the latest carrion ship headed to Cryx, with an eager lineup of corpse-brokers awaiting its arrival	Cryx, Blackwater
6	Locked inside the captain’s quarters in the wreck of the <i>Strumpet</i> on the ocean floor	
7	Tied into the rigging of the Slaughter Fleet ship <i>Howling Doom</i> as a trophy	
8	Embedded in a blackened stone block, with a cursed blade driven into the skull that can’t be removed. The skull won’t come out of the block while the sword remains in it.	Scharde Islands, Garlghost
9	A flock of carrion thralls flew away with it, along with a couple of dozen other skulls.	
10	The entire skeleton was exhumed and made into a skarlock thrall because of its former skills as an arcane mechanik. Master Necrotech Dellamorta has it making runeplates for a special project.	

CALLUM BRACK, THE SPY

Callum Brack makes his living selling secrets. He was recently set up by a rival and given bad intel that he passed along to one of the lich lords of Cryx, leading to a such a costly ambush that the lich lord has devoted his personal attention, and ire, to the matter. He has sent two pirate ships loaded with thralls to redress the grievance and “fetch Brack’s skull to rattle around and see what spills out.”

Finding him before the thralls do is likely the only chance for Brack’s survival. Someone, whether a friend or a bounty hunter, might want to rescue him and discover—or bury—the secrets he knows, or exploit his remaining contacts and skills.

The Unwelcoming Isles and the Secret of the Tides.

Brack has found a hiding place among an inhospitable, isolated, and unmapped archipelago known as the Unwelcoming Isles. The confluence of cold ocean currents, strange tides, and unpredictable, bizarre weather makes travel in this area so challenging that few make the attempt and even fewer return. If the name alone weren’t enough to give pause, the reputation of the Unwelcoming Isles as a changing landscape of ship-smashing jagged rocks, reefs, and mountains makes even a brash captain think twice.

The largest of these isles are covered by pools that change with the tides, or have cave systems above and below the waterline with hidden pathways. Some islands appear only when the tide is low enough. Rumors tell of a cove called the Tideless Haven inside or on top of one of the larger rock formations, completely sheltered from the turbulence of the sea and its many dangers.

The combined forces of wind and water complement and contrast the pull of the moons, urging the tides to the highest and the lowest on record and revealing a few secrets—and

horrors. You can use the Unwelcoming Tides table to determine the conditions of the tides at any given point. You can roll 1d4 to get a result corresponding to low or high tide, or roll 1d8 whenever you want a dramatic shift.

UNWELCOMING TIDES

d4 d8

(Low Tide)

1	1	A chill fog sets in and skeletal hands reach up from the sea, dragging down anything they can reach.
2	2	The water stills, and a gentle voice from below whispers to join it.
3	3	Hundreds of spectral bodies appear under the water, looking upward, faces frozen in horror.
4	4	The ebbing tide reveals a cave entrance on a nearby rocky islet; during low tide the tunnels lead to otherwise inaccessible areas.

d4 d8

(High Tide)

1	5	Flashes of lightning illuminate giant mutated flying fish leaping from the water as they frantically fight each other.
2	6	A swirling maelstrom forms, with an appearance uncannily like an enormous eye staring up into the stormy sky.
3	7	Violent waves intensify, and the pale green, ghostly echoes of ships smashed against the rocks appear, illuminating areas to avoid for safe passage.
4	8	Entrance into a cove high on a mountainous island becomes accessible. The Tideless Haven, a freshwater pool sheltered from the tides, can be reached from this cove when the tide recedes.

The Tideless Haven. Callum Brack has found himself in trouble more times than he’d like to count, so he is especially interested in finding the perfect places to weather out any storm. He was immediately intrigued by the story of a cove with no tide in the midst of an especially inhospitable part of the Meredius, and after several harrowing trips he finally discovered the Tideless Haven. Navigating the tides is never easy, and getting the timing right is at least half luck, but once there Brack can hole up in his personal sanctuary for quite a while.

It’s been well worth the effort: some of his best customers are pirates under any flag, Cryxians, and Schardefolk. All have a reputation for tenacity and brutality, and Brack has come to rely on his favorite hideout more and more.

Callum’s Notes. Callum has compiled a list of “very interesting places to investigate.” Characters who assist him, or pay him for information, can learn about one of these unusual locations.

CALLUM BRACK’S NOTES

The Veiled Holm at the Branch: No new leads, ask around Garlghast again?

City of Skulls: Never ever ever going back there, I don’t care how much she is paying!

The Weeping Shores: Missing something, seemed normal

The Crimsonlock Sanctum: Promising! Key might be a challenge

Borderfail Light: B.R. says the light went green for a few months, dark now

Nettle tide Haunt: Stock up on golden moonglow extract!

Vault of the Forgotten: Someone remembers something. Keep inquiring.

The Village at the End: Contradictory stories about this, is the “end” a time or place?

Isles of Undoing: Would make a good epithet

Petrified Cove: Full of statues, but obviously has a good guardian...

Labyrinth of the Broken: S.W. swears some people come and go without the madness

The Fading Shores of the Last Whisper: Sounds made up?

FACELESS JAKE, THE MUTINEER

There was once a hardworking sailor named Jake, an ordinary third-generation whaler, surviving the best he could in the rough seas and shores of the Scharde Islands. Unfortunately, Jake ended up working for an unscrupulous captain and, a piece at a time, ended up on a fast track toward piracy. The slope was slippery. First it was little things: emptying some nets they didn't set or snaking some else's hunting grounds. Then he progressed to bigger orders: demanding a portion of a catch from a smaller crew, or loading up on more weapons and less fishing and whaling gear.

Recognizing the inevitable outcome, Jake roused the crew members who shared his concern. While the others were "helping" another rig lighten their load, Jake led a charge on the captain, alone on the top deck. What he wasn't expecting was how much the blight had affected the man, twisting his body and corrupting his mind. The captain struck out with razor sharp claws dripping black ichor and raked them across Jake's face, sending him backward over the railing into the Dying Strands.

Stories vary about what happened to the ship and the crew, but most tales speak of Captain Dreadhand and those who followed him into the dark madness of blight and underwent transformation as well. Some accounts even tell of them sacrificing other sailors to an evil monster of the sea as part of a dark pact, gaining gifts and undergoing even more wicked mutations. Notable for the hooked talons they all developed, with the same black ichor as the captain's, they are usually called the Dragon Claws. Captain Dreadhand, the Dragon Claws, and their ship, the *Tendrils of Dread*, have become bywords in cautionary tales of the sea.

Jake most assuredly perished on the shore of the Dying Strands, gouged by the poisoned claw, blistered by the sun, dehydrated and starving, bitten relentlessly by stinging sand fleas while harvester maggots ate the rest of his face. Captain Dreadhand won the fight that day, yet Jake is the one who has become a nightmare spoken of by sailors in hushed tones. Faceless Jake is consumed by a thirst for vengeance that has strayed well into the realm of monstrosity.

Tales say that if Faceless Jake gets hold of a ship's captain he deems corrupt, he drags them into the Dying Strands to experience a string of horrors. Jake is said to come only for those who have the mark of corruption and targets only the captain, taking care not to harm the crew or innocent bystanders. Sailors who are treated badly sometimes take comfort in the idea of a vengeful everyman. Most captains consider talk of Faceless Jake a major offense and absolutely forbid it, lest he be summoned.

Perhaps if a team is organized quickly enough, a captain taken by Faceless Jake might be rescued, but none have yet attempted it.

A PIRATE'S LIFE

The *Elusive Rose* is a fast, maneuverable ship under the command of the infamous Olivia Roisin and her first mate Clifford Thorne, aka "Handsome Cliff." Roisin and Thorne have gained a reputation for getting away with notorious deeds that seem too exaggerated to be real, but just plausible enough to contain a bit of truth. The *Elusive Rose* most often claims to operate as a passenger or light cargo ship, available

THE CREW OF THE ELUSIVE ROSE

The crew of *The Elusive Rose* can stand in for any pirate crew as needed, or provide a backdrop for sea adventures on a passenger ship that only "occasionally" has to deal with business or trouble.

Captain: Olivia Roisin
Commander of the vessel and crew

Ship's Mate: 'Handsome Cliff' aka Clifford Thorne
Sailing master, runs day-to-day operation

Bosun Ropes: Cicily Sparrow
Oversees cables, anchors, sails, rigging, and flags

Master Gunner: Sully Swill, "the Electioneer"
Oversees cannons and powder

Master-at-arms: Belle 'Get Kraken!' Bonney
Maintains combat readiness of crew and armory, issues pistols and blades

Quartermaster: Blood Hag Elsed Ward
Oversees stowage of food, rum, and other supplies; maintains watch; divides spoils

Carpenter: JJ "Timbers" Coon
Maintains hull, decks, and masts

Ship's Pilot: Hildegard Tidecaller
Charts course, oversees the helm

Ship's Surgeon: Ruby Wright
Responsible for the health of all aboard

Sailors: Elton Splinter, Viktor Fane, Seabert, Elma Gloom
Seasoned crew members

Barrelman: Crow's Nest Barney
Stationed in the barrel of the forward mast to help navigate

Swabs: Swabby Nash, Rigs, Croaky the Slug
Inexperienced or injured crew delegated undesirable tasks

Rigging Monkey: Whale-Eye Swales

Powder Monkey: Gun Powder Goldie

Cabin Boy: Carly
Youth working as a supply runner and servant

The *Elusive Rose* has just taken on a new crew member, a notorious young sailor named Reggie Fleming. Olivia is convinced he will bring good luck to the ship, citing "The fifth time's the charm!" but almost every other crew member thinks she is dead wrong.

for explorers and other adventurous folks to charter to destinations of their choice—with only an occasional detour.

Olivia walks a very fine line morally. Handsome Cliff would happily steer them down a darker path, claiming to be the thorn that draws blood on board the *Elusive Rose*, but so far Olivia has kept their business “just this side of Jake.”

Reginald Fleming, the Saboteur. There isn't much to say about Reggie Fleming. Known as “the dirty dog that doesn't drown,” he's either the luckiest man to sail the seas, and a champion swimmer to boot, or he's the unluckiest sailor to ever set foot on deck. He's been on four different ships claimed by catastrophic fates: fire, ambush, powder keg explosion, and vanishing mysteriously—with Reggie as the only survivor. There might be something more sinister going on, but one would never suspect that from his smiling, eager face. That's probably why he keeps getting hired on, even though sailors are a suspicious and superstitious lot.

On the matter of pirates, none of them are your friends. They are thieving, murdering, lying, cheating, backstabbing, ne'er-do-wells who will at best leave you with nothing but scars to remember them by.

That said, there are a few crews to share a round or two or a sea shanty sing-along on the beach, maybe wager a week's pay on a roll of the dice, if you're that kind of fool. But some pirates you never ever want to be alone with or drink what they give you. And don't let them see where you keep your coin!

Speaking of coin, especially if you're going to associate with criminals, keep your eyes out. Someone has certainly marked you an easy target. In a city like Blackwater, newcomers are as much a commodity as anything that gets unloaded on the docks. The dockmaster will tally up your tax and everyone who can will listen in; that's a good time to look into hiring a gang for protection. Some gangs have carved out a name for themselves in Blackwater, like the Quay Slayers, the Admiralty, the Dragon Fish, the Brass Knuckle Boys, and the Black Tooth Fishguts.

The Quay Slayers are the top of the heap, with a large fortress headquarters, and have a lot of influence, but they don't come cheap. On the other hand, the Black Tooth Fishguts are a smelly lot who only crawl out of their hiding places along the water and in the Catacombs to do business. They will lead you around and show you how to avoid trouble, if that's more your style. For a fraction of the price too, but it'll cost you a lot of social opportunities in the city; associating with them is like rolling in the mud and crap with swine—no one wants it tracked in. Good luck; you'll need it.

*Steelhead Captain
Dargen Moorland,
Blackwater Chapter*

BLACKWATER NOTABLES

The following sections present a variety of Blackwater gangs and notable individuals the characters might interact with, as either hirelings, employers, allies, or rivals.

THE CUTTHROAT CASTAWAYS, “THOSE RASCAL KIDS”

Gangs of feral children roam the slums in Blackwater who know their way through the Catacombs and have learned how to avoid all the necrotechs, necrosurgeons, stitchers, and bogrin on the hunt for fresh meat. These kids know the hidden ways to get around and many other secrets too, but getting them to share is a whole other matter. Children might not sound dangerous, but these gangs have learned a thing or two about standing up for themselves, fighting off would-be-assailants, and staying alive. The smartest of them also see the value in strategic alliances.

The Cutthroat Castaways are a small gang of skilled orphans and runaways with a keen eye for opportunities to offer their specialized services. The Castaways have avoided takeover by bigger, tougher kids and the attention of major gangs by obfuscating their identities somehow, perhaps by magical means. People can recognize a Castaway they've met before and remember their interactions, but no one seems to be able to recall significant details, and the kids never get caught. Asking around only turns up a name, a knack, or a notable feature of one of the members. The Castaway Notables table includes a few examples; you can roll randomly, pick one who's suitable, or create your own using these as inspiration.

The Castaways possess a wide variety of skills and knowledge that can add flavor to a scene on the fly. Each has only a single feature that can be accurately recalled; any other identifying details the players remember from an interaction might or might not be accurate. They all seem vaguely familiar, even when meeting “for the first time,” and if asked about details of a previous encounter will answer vaguely with shrugs and statements like “That sounds like it was fun!”

Logically Puzzled. Ballard “the Bug Smasher” is an enforcer for the Quay Slayers in Blackwater who is perpetually on “pest control,” dealing with annoying minor problems. Eager to move up, he wants to catch the attention of the bosses with something significant. Ballard thinks the Castaways are suspicious: somehow this ragtag band of street kids manages to avoid capture, questioning, and even identification so effectively he is certain someone, or something, powerful is behind all their tricks. He's been trying to find out who, but even after “persuasive interviews” and days of observation, the most he could do was create a complicated logic puzzle. “I'm pretty sure Sydney Ten-Toes isn't the kid with the weird shield” isn't getting him far, though. How many are there? Who do they work for? Why can't people remember them? What are they really up to? Where do the little buggers live? He's offering the Quay Slayers' access and protection in Blackwater and “spending money” for anyone who can help solve this puzzle.

CASTAWAY NOTABLES

<i>d12</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Knack</i>	<i>Feature</i>
1	Sly Tony, the Honest	Owed a favor by a low-level member of every gang	Wears goggles with no lenses
2	Little Cricket	Very good liar with a “trustworthy look”	Is actually a gobber
3	Sydney Ten-Toes	Can see in the dark	Has a dark purple mohawk and a knuckle tattoo
4	Bloody Blades, the Enforcer	Knows where to get that	Collects bugs in a jar, won’t say why
5	Mopes the Spider	Has lockpick kit; knows how to use it	Has slingshot, always drawn; ammo varies
6	Kit Razor	Can tie or untie any knot and get out of any cuffs or restraint	Carries a shield with a strange symbol
7	J, the Professional	Has a source for non-blighted fruit, sometimes even free!	Has a pocket watch on a chain; checks time often
8	The Other Twins: Lucky Sam and Jamie the Jinx	Knows a “fair” trader who doesn’t steal or murder on the side	Remarkably clean, even in Smolders or Catacombs
9	Silent Clem, the Viper	Has a secret hiding spot in the market for goods or a person	Pockets full of “important” paper scraps collected all over town
10	Dead-Eye Bobbie Bison	Has a really good disguise, might not be appropriate	Eyes glow with blue light when talking
11	Numbers Noel	A whiz at math and can understand every language	Always has rat “friends” on or around him
12	Ashe, The Unseen Echo	A fair pickpocket who always gets something, but not always from the right mark	Has a stringed instrument handy; busks when bored

Even though Blackwater and its larger setting is dangerous and unsettling, the contrast of a silly quirk or a toothless grin instead of a fanged snarl can create a memorable story moment that draws attention to the nefarious actions of important characters, or provides a little relief from the otherwise bleak environment and the terrible things happening there. These NPCs are presented as gender-neutral and without a lot of physical or racial features, so it is easy to apply the style and flavor that suits your needs.

USING CONTRAST

Adding children into a city like Blackwater can offset the place’s vicious and heartless aspects with a bit of levity, but also enhances the horror by highlighting that there are ordinary people trying to survive among the macabre undead, ruthless gangs, and cruel pirates. Still, you should always be cognizant of the comfort level of your group with vulnerable people as subject matter. Bad things don’t have to happen to the children for their presence to have an impact.

MAMA “MUTTONCHOP” MARTHA, THE BAKER

Mama “Muttonchop” Martha is a well-known and respected baker in the meat market, specializing in savory pies with a side of hot secrets. Martha gets her “meats and receipts” from various employees around town, a group of individuals she handpicks for their ability to do three things: get her secret ingredient, make sure she always has fresh meat for the pies, and keep a low profile.

Martha’s special recipe of one part intelligence network, one part assassins-for-hire, and one part “family-style” business has worked well for close to twenty years, and she has established herself as a prominent feature in the marketplace. No one would dare to call her a gang leader or her very legitimate business a cover for any wrongdoing. Out of vested self-interest, the gang leaders all show Mama Martha respect and don’t interfere with her affairs.

Anyone can sell secrets, and many try, but what makes Martha special is the quality of the merchandise. For an extra fee, her servings of information and sides of gossip come with written receipts that detail evidence to back them up: ledger pages, shipping logs, testimonials, correspondence, and sometimes even signed confessions.

No one knows how many employees Martha has or who they are. From time to time a sign appears outside the shop that says “Hiring, Inquire Within,” but it doesn’t stay up for long. Certain people are avoided for their connection with Martha; are they customers, employees, friends, or do they just really like pie?

Mama Martha’s Minions, Maybe. The following are some of Mama “Muttonchop” Martha’s potential minions. The Blackwater authorities don’t know which—if any—of these personalities are officially employed by Martha.

Individually these characters and others you invent might have friendships or rivalries with the characters, be a source of entertainment and news, serve as allies for an adventure, or are just friendly faces among a crowd of monstrosities. However, Martha and her minions collectively are not quite so friendly. At least some of them are spies and assassins who are completely fine with violence and even cannibalism!

Keeping the full roster of Martha’s employees secret from the characters gives you the opportunity to make the best use of their talents. You can roll on the Martha’s Minions, Maybe table or choose one that suits your needs.

MARTHA’S MINIONS, MAYBE

d6 Potential Minion

- 1 **“Three-Sheets” Shay Shackleton.** A dockworker who has worked at the Blackwater Docks longer than most have been alive, Shay has access to shipping records, loads and unloads a lot of cargo, and “accidentally” drops a crate occasionally to see what’s inside. Shay spends most nights drinking and gambling at the Rusty Anchor or the Golden Albatross. A keen observer might wonder how Shay stays intoxicated carrying an empty tankard all night.
- 2 **Zaros Fang, Alchemist.** A sign outside a ramshackle shop in the Smolders reads: “Phantom Humors: Alchemicals, Mutagens, and Toxins.” On a smaller sign below: “Testing Grounds for Modified Toxicogenics: Subjects Wanted, Inquire Within.”
- 3 **Frankie Lemon, Butcher.** Frankie works at the butcher stall across from Martha in the market, frequently telling jokes and finding reasons to walk over to the pie shop. The attention makes Martha blush. Frankie claims no ulterior motive, but “just likes her smile.” A knife expert, Frankie works very quickly.
- 4 **Lottie “the Hammer” Buckle, “Mechanik.”** Lottie carries a locked toolbox and a big hammer, and wears oversized coveralls caked in grease and grime. No one can actually recall seeing Lottie fix any ‘jacks, engines, or other machines—or even open the toolbox. When a machine goes haywire, breaks, or needs a little extra care, Lottie doesn’t volunteer and is suddenly busy elsewhere.
- 5 **Moonie “No Money” Marbles and Cheatin’ Cass, Professional Swindlers.** This pair of fraternal twins change their names and looks as often as some people change their clothes. Most folks that know them—for good or ill—just call them the “Eel Twins” or “the one with the red hair and the other one.” They have pulled every con in the book and invented new ones. The only reason they aren’t swimming with the fishes of Belken Bay is because Mama Martha has a special place in her heart for the twins and treats them like her own—sometimes affectionate, sometimes with tough love, but always fiercely protective.
- 6 **“True-Story” Brickjaw, the Bouncer.** Brickjaw works at the Unnatural Traveler, an inn by the Blackwater docks, and keeps rowdy pirates and sailors from destroying the place but doesn’t care what they do to each other. Brickjaw enforces two rules: hands off the employees and payment before service. Brickjaw operates a side business buying and selling good-luck charms.

MIDNIGHT, THE LOYAL COMPANION

Midnight is a spectral dog who can manifest in many different canine forms, but once she has shown herself to someone, she will always appear the same way. When examined closely, a shifting pattern of stars like the night sky seems to shine through her faint green glow.

Midnight might first be noticed watching from afar, for centuries of interacting with those not of her kind has taught her that not all are friendly, and there are plenty she just does not care to spend time with. Over the centuries of her existence she has gone by many names, but if the characters have a way to communicate with her, she indicates that she thought her very first name, Midnight, was a good one.

Midnight always has something that she wants to show the party or help with, but she might not always share their priorities. To determine what she wants, roll on the Midnight's Request table or choose a request you like.

MIDNIGHT'S REQUEST

1d6 Request

- 1 Midnight follows spectral footprints to a dirt mound, urging someone along, and there digs frantically but to no effect. Someone who helps can uncover a small chest buried there. As soon as it is opened, Midnight grabs a Cygnaran accumulator from the chest and starts prancing around with it in her mouth, tail wagging.
- 2 She is guarding someone who has clearly died, and she is very distressed. She appears to be asking for help and warning people away at the same time. If anyone does get close, a vengeful spirit rushes forward to attack.
- 3 Passing through camp on the trail of something, Midnight sniffs the ground and stops to smell the air. She checks a torn cloth on a tree branch, continues on to the entrance of a dark cave, then points.
- 4 Midnight is walking with a limp and has what appears to be a giant thorn or sharp stick through her paw. Of course, it's incorporeal like she is, but she clearly wants help removing it. Yet she also seems reluctant to let anyone get close enough to examine it.
- 5 She has taken a liking to the party and seems to want to tag along. Every evening she brings back a bone and insists you keep it; close inspection reveals each is from a different body part.
- 6 Leading the party to a hidden spot under a rocky overhang or behind a massive tree, Midnight indicates they can listen in on an important, secret meeting. Meanwhile she lies on her back like she wants a belly rub.

Once the characters have helped Midnight solve her problem, she becomes a loyal friend who comes and goes as she pleases but would never betray them. If she trusts them enough to be close, they can see that she has a key ring around her neck with an assortment of incorporeal keys of different shapes and styles.

MIDNIGHT'S KEYS

Wondrous Item, rare

The spectral keys around the ghostly hound's neck can unlock all manner of mundane, mechanical, and arcane locks.

Anyone Midnight considers a loyal friend can interact with the keys on her collar. Otherwise, the keys are spectral and intangible. A character can spend an action to search through the keys to find one that can unlock any nonmagical lock. If a door is secured by the *arcane lock* spell, using one of Midnight's keys suppresses the spell for 1 minute.

After using one of Midnight's keys, they all fade from existence and reappear only at the following midnight.

ISLAND GENERATOR

There are countless unique islands among the Scharde Islands and the expanses of the Southern Reach, ranging from tiny bars of sand that seldom emerge from the pounding waves of the Meredius to islands large enough to support whole communities. Exploring the Scharde Islands and the Meredius can be a rewarding—if dangerous—prospect.

The following tables allow the Game Master to randomly generate an island for whenever the adventuring company decides to drop anchor and do a bit of exploring. If contradictory results are made (such as a barren, rocky island being rich in lumber), simply reroll or choose another result. Alternatively, the Game Master may choose to make the contradiction work by blending two seemingly incongruous concepts.

SIZE AND TYPE

The Scharde Islands come in a vast variety of sizes. You can randomly determine the size and type of an island by rolling on the Island Size and Island Type tables.

ISLAND SIZE

d8 **Size**

- 1 The island is a sandbar or reef that barely rises above the surface.
- 2 The island is approximately a quarter of a square mile.
- 3 The island is approximately half of a square mile.
- 4 The island is approximately 1 square mile.
- 5 The island covers approximately 10 square miles.
- 6 The island is approximately 100 square miles.
- 7 The island is over 500 square miles.
- 8 The island is massive with a landmass measured in thousands of square miles.

ISLAND TYPE

d6 **Type**

- 1 A tidal island more visible at low tide but submerged during high tide. It might be connected to another landmass by a land bridge that is only apparent at low tide.
- 2 A barrier island that has one side much higher than the other with a leading face that is shaped by the pounding of the waves.
- 3 An island formed by volcanic action. The island has a large central peak, which may have an open or active volcanic caldera.
- 4 A coral island with a broken outer ring of land surrounding a calm, central lagoon.
- 5 A jungle-covered low island with a deep, boggy interior.
- 6 A rocky island with looming cliffs of jagged rock.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

A small island may have only one unusual geographical feature, which you can determine randomly by rolling on the Geographical Features table, while a larger island might have several, which you can determine by rolling on the table multiple times.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

d8 **Feature**

- 1 A central plateau that rises 2d10×10 feet above the surface of the island and covers 1d10×10 percent of the island's area.
- 2 A river runs through the island, carving a deep ravine across the island's surface.
- 3 A steep cliff with a roaring waterfall that crashes down on jagged rocks.
- 4 A series of caverns that twist beneath the surface of the island.
- 5 The shore of the island is sandy, but the interior is littered with colorful stones of all shapes and sizes.
- 6 The center of the island is a dry basin that floods during the rainy season.
- 7 The island is covered with blackmire pits.
- 8 A volcano hidden among the rocks or trees seethes at the heart of the island. Roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the volcano will erupt.

OCCUPANTS

Myriad beings make the Scharde Islands their home. Roll on the table below to determine the dominant inhabitants of a given island.

ISLAND OCCUPANTS

d10 **Occupants**

- 1 The island never had occupants, its population has died off, or it has been abandoned.
- 2 The island is an occasional stopover for smuggler crews from the mainland, who hide out from naval patrols here.
- 3 The island has a population of Molgur that were displaced from the mainland centuries ago.
- 4 Blighted trollkin have laid claim to the island.
- 5 A community of gobbers, tired of living in the shadows of taller folk, have settled here.
- 6 Human Schardefolk live here, either in service of or attempting to avoid Lord Toruk.
- 7 An enclave of ogrun dwell here, far from the mountains of their brethren.
- 8 The island is populated entirely by the undead.
- 9 Gatormen have claimed this island as their own.
- 10 Croaks and bog trogs share this island in an uneasy truce. Each group suspects the other intends to break the truce at any moment.



WILDLIFE

The ecosystems of Caen are varied and unique, and nowhere is this more apparent than the Scharde Islands. The table below should inspire you when creating islands for players to explore.

ISLAND WILDLIFE

d8 Wildlife

- 1 This island is oddly devoid of wildlife.
- 2 This island contains no native mammals or lizards but is home to a wide spectrum of avian life. Rats seem to be the only exception to the rule.
- 3 This island has the normal variety of wildlife that would be expected for the climate.
- 4 This island is crawling with creatures. When using encounter tables, double the quantity of creatures encountered.
- 5 This island is dominated by insects that are significantly larger than normal.
- 6 This island has no irritating insects or any dangerous creatures. It is practically a paradise.
- 7 This island is dominated by massive reptiles such as crocodiles, snakes, and lizards.
- 8 A true monster island. This island is inhabited solely by large and dangerous creatures such as tatzylwurms or spine rippers. There is likely a particularly enormous and powerful specimen that rules over all the rest.



RESOURCES

Some islands serve as nothing more than a location to wait out a storm or to hide from pirates or the authorities. Others are rich with materials, natural and otherwise.

SIGNIFICANT RESOURCE

d8 Resource

- 1 **Trees.** The forests of this island yield plenty of lumber.
- 2 **Salt.** The island contains a shallow lagoon that is flooded annually with seawater. When it evaporates during the dry season, the remaining salt is ripe for harvesting.
- 3 **Plant life.** The island contains useful plants in abundance—fruit trees, root vegetables, cotton, tobacco, or other favorable plants grow here.
- 4 **Game.** A population of animals that could be hunted for food and sport or potentially for domestication resides on this island. This may include fowl, wild pigs, horses, giant tortoises, or many others.
- 5 **Menoth's Fury.** The many blackmire pools on this island are perfect for the refinement process needed to generate this valuable fuel.
- 6 **Necrotite.** This island was once the scene of a massive amount of slaughter; it's likely many battles occurred here over several centuries. This has caused the ground to be rich in necrotite ore.
- 7 **Fruit of the sea.** The geological structure of this island provides a haven for a bounty of sea life, including fish, mollusks, crabs, and shrimp.
- 8 **Mineral wealth.** This island is rich in gems or useful metals such as diamonds, emeralds, gold, silver, or iron.

QUIRKS

Most islands are mundane (at least as much as any location on Caen can be). If you wish to add a spark of mystery and magic to an island, roll on the table below.

ISLAND QUIRK

d8 Quirk

- 1 The entire island is an infernal locus. Infernal creatures seem to boil out of the shadows and are hostile to any creatures they encounter.
- 2 A combination of blight and Caen's ley lines intersect on the island. Time on the island moves at a different rate from the outside world. A visitor to the island could spend a day here only to find a year or more has passed in the world at large or vice versa.
- 3 The island seems to absorb sound. Normal conversations sound like whispers; shouts sound like regular speech. Footsteps are almost entirely silent, and the tides themselves are eerily quiet. Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks based on hearing are done at disadvantage.
- 4 The island constantly rocks and sways like the deck of a boat at sea. The entire surface is difficult terrain to anyone unaccustomed to life at sea.
- 5 A mystical fog shrouds the island. No changes in the wind can shift the mists, and the island is totally concealed from view if at sea.
- 6 The scale of this island is immense! Trees are twice the usual size. Cliffs and boulders tower over explorers who traverse the island. All native creatures are at least one size category larger than normal (use the giant variety of standard creatures).
- 7 Something about the atmosphere of this island is hostile to life. Each day a non-native creature spends here, it must remove one from its hit point maximum. Hit points lost in this way cannot be regained until the creature takes a long rest away from the island.
- 8 The island was once occupied by the Orgoth. Buried under its surface lies a complex of forgotten chambers and corridors, home to abandoned relics, traps, and the skeletal remains of those who once lived here.



3

TREASURES OF THE NIGHTMARE EMPIRE



Death and plunder. Plenty of each to be found around here. The mechanics and necrotechs always think they've created something new and clever. But give me some proper treasure. Real magic litters the reaches of this world. Just have to look in the right places. Old magic. Old as the Orgoth. Old as the isles. Old as the seas themselves. Always seems to be another ancient Orgoth artifact uncovered. Always some new shiny gem blessed by the gods for the bold to behold. So many stories. Well, you can keep your stories, as long as you understand that I'll be keeping that loot. Now hand it over!

Captain Rahera

THE SEAS ARE VAST AND THE ISLANDS UNCOUNTABLE. While the necrotech laboratories conjure up dark and terrible technologies, there remain items of true power scattered across the Scharde Islands. Some were left behind by the Orgoth, some imbued by infernal entities, and some grew out of the blight of the Dragonfather. Others seem born from adventurous exploits, blessed by gods and powers unknown in sheer awe of the brazen spirit of those who sail these waters. This chapter contains a selection of new magic items and relics found in the Scharde Islands and the Nightmare Empire.

MAGIC ITEMS

These magic items are presented in alphabetical order. Each entry includes the item's category, rarity, and magical properties.

BLIGHTED EYE

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This medallion is carved with the symbol of an eye and has been crafted from dark wood that is saturated with the blight of Toruk. Attuning to the medallion withers your body over time but lets you hear the whispered foresight of the Dragonfather. When you focus, you can see dangers a split second before they occur.

While attuned to this item, you can take the Dodge action as a bonus action.

On the first new moon after attuning to this medallion, and each new moon thereafter, you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. If you fail, your hit point maximum is permanently reduced by 5. If you succeed, this reduction is instead just 1. You cannot end your attunement with this item unless someone casts a *remove curse* spell on you. Once you've ended the attunement with this item, your hit point maximum can be restored only with a *greater restoration* spell.

BLIGHTED GAUNTLETS

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

These black leather gauntlets were crafted from the hide of a beast that succumbed to Toruk's blight and empowered by arcane rituals designed to summon the strength of a dragon.

While you are attuned to and wearing these gauntlets, your Strength score is 24. It has no effect if your Strength score

was already 24 or higher.

Additionally, when you use an attack to shove a creature, the target can be any size. If you succeed, you can throw the creature up to 20 feet and it lands prone.

On the first new moon after attuning to this medallion, and each new moon thereafter, you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. If you fail, your hit point maximum is permanently reduced by 5. If you succeed, this reduction is instead just 1. You cannot end your attunement with this item unless someone casts a *remove curse* spell on you. Once you've ended the attunement with this item, your hit point maximum can be restored only with a *greater restoration* spell.

BLIGHTWINE

Potion, rare

Distilled from blighted fruit and bottled in volcanic glass, this wine is dark red to the point of being almost black. Blightwine is enjoyed by true believers of Toruk, and drinking it is considered both an honor and test. It is believed that those who are truly blessed by the Dragonfather will remain unharmed while the unworthy are destroyed by the blight. Each bottle contains enough wine for 10 glasses.

When you drink a glass of *blightwine* you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Creatures with a blighted essence have advantage on this save. Failure means you take 1d4 necrotic damage and become blight-poisoned (*Iron Kingdoms: Requiem*, page 237). If you succeed at the saving throw, you take no damage and do not become blight-poisoned. Instead, your body is filled with incredible power and you gain advantage on all ability checks for 24 hours.

Drinking just one sip of this wine still requires a saving throw to resist the necrotic damage, but there is no risk of becoming blight-poisoned and no benefit for succeeding at the saving throw.

True *blightwine* is quite rare, but there is a thriving trade in bootleg blightwine. Usually, drinking fake blightwine results in taking necrotic damage but offers no other danger or benefit. Only the very brave or very foolish delight in drinking false blightwine to prove their strength and resilience.

Characters who are immune to poison are not immune to blight poison.

BLOOD BLADE, BATTLETHIRST

Weapon (any dagger or sword), rare (requires attunement)

When a blade has drunk the blood of many foes in combat, blood magic can sometimes infuse it into a blood blade.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. While attuned to it, as a bonus action, you can cut yourself with the blade and let it drink your blood. If you do, you lose 5 hit points and the blade becomes empowered for 1 minute, drawing out more blood from creatures you strike. While it is empowered, this weapon deals an additional 3d6 necrotic damage to any creature you hit with it, provided that creature has blood.



BLOOD BLADE, CONSECRATED

Weapon (any dagger or sword), rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

Over the course of hundreds of rituals and sacrifices, a sacral blade sometimes becomes consecrated by the powerful blood magic it has helped to invoke, gaining permanent magical power that aids in rituals and spellcasting.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. While attuned to it, as a bonus action, you can cut yourself with the blade and let it drink your blood. If you do, you lose 5 hit points and the next spell you cast this turn is empowered. You have advantage on any attack roll required by the spell. If the spell requires a saving throw to resist, any creatures affected by it have disadvantage on their saving throws against it.

BOOK OF SECRETS

Wondrous item, very rare

This simple leatherbound journal bears no title and seems wholly unremarkable. Opening it only reveals several hundred blank pages. However, any attempt to write in it fails. Ink and other stains sink into its pages and vanish.

In truth, this book creates a direct connection to an infernal curator who guards its secrets and answers the questions of whoever uses it, while pushing them ever further toward achieving the curator's goals.

Each *book of secrets* has a unique command word tied to it upon its creation. If you speak the book's command word, it reveals all the writing within. Additionally, you can write questions in the book to seek the advice and knowledge of the book's curator, as if you had cast the *commune* spell.

To write in the book, you must use blood. Any other form of ink vanishes immediately, never to appear again. The blood used must be your own, and each question you ask causes you to lose 3 hit points. If you ask questions using any other blood, the only response is "The blood must be your own." Answers appear on the page written in dark blood. Both the questions and the answers remain on the page and can be read again later.

These books are prized by not only infernalists but also smugglers, crime lords, and arcanists who value keeping their secrets and don't mind selling a bit of their souls to get an edge on the competition. Upon the death of its owner, a *book of secrets* often finds its way into the hands of someone else who craves its wealth of infernal knowledge, necromancy spells, and other valuable arcane secrets.

BRUTAL BLADE

Weapon (greatsword), rare

Red runes glow along the blade of this black steel greatsword. It has a flat tip, a wide blade, and an extended hilt with iron spikes protruding from both sides. Such weapons are a boon to anyone who can wield them, but they are particularly favored by Cryxian ogrun.

You can make an opportunity attack with this magic weapon against any target creature that moves while within your reach (not just leaving your reach). Creatures that take the Disengage action still do not provoke opportunity attacks from you.

Once per round, on your turn, if an attack you make with this weapon drops the target to 0 hit points, you can immediately make an additional attack with it against any other target creature within your reach.



DEAD-EYE PATCH

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This black leather eyepatch has infernal runes sewn into it. Stories say several dozen were made for the favored underlings of the pirate lords. Time, battle, and piracy have scattered them about the Nightmare Empire, so it is not uncommon for a pirate, upon defeating an opponent with an eyepatch, to try it on—just in case.

While wearing this eyepatch, you can focus your vision through it as a bonus action. When you do so, your eyes cloud over with inky blackness and you begin to see through the eye covered with the patch (even if that eye could not normally see). Choose one of the following two benefits:

Barrel Sight: Your vision homes in on targets viewed down the barrel of a gun. You gain advantage on ranged attacks with any firearm.

Truesight: You gain truesight with a range of 120 feet.

Whichever benefit you choose lasts for 1 minute. After this, your eyes remain clouded for 1 additional minute; you are blinded during this time.

DEATH WAIL ARMOR

Armor (full plate), very rare (requires attunement)

Created by the Orgoth for their strongest warriors, this blackened full plate armor is adorned with a screaming face in its chest plate. A warrior clad in it could wade into battle alone and singlehandedly devastate dozens of enemies.

While wearing this armor, you gain a +1 bonus to AC, and you know and can use the *thaumaturgy* cantrip.

While attuned to this armor, as an action, you can offer up some of your life energy to it, causing the face to scream a horrible death wail. You lose 10 hit points and cast the *circle of death* spell (save DC 17) centered on yourself. You are immune to the effects of the spell. If this hit point loss would cause you to drop to 0 hit points, you die immediately and the spell deals maximum damage. You cannot regain hit points lost in this way until you have finished a long rest. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you have regained the hit points you lost to activate it.

EXECUTIONER'S AXE

Weapon (greataxe), very rare (requires attunement)

Arcanists can bring out the power in an axe that has killed hundreds of people. Some of these axes have wrought havoc on a battlefield, wielded by powerful Scharde ogrun warriors. Others have been used for public executions. Either way, the magic activated in these axes causes them to seek out the necks of your enemies.

Attacks with this weapon score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. While you are attuned to and you score a critical hit with this weapon, it deals an extra 10 slashing damage.

This weapon has no benefit on attacks against a creature that has no head.





GRASPING LACERATOR

Weapon (lacerator), very rare

The steel of this weapon is stained red with blood and imbued with powerful blood magic that makes it twist and grasp upon command.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. Additionally, you can use this weapon to make grapple attacks using the weapon's reach. You can make Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to perform such attacks and on rolls to prevent a creature from escaping the grapple instead of Strength (Athletics) checks.

As a bonus action, you can command this weapon to grind a creature grappled by it. The grappled creature takes 2d6 slashing damage.

Whenever you move a creature grappled by this weapon, and every time it fails an attempt to escape, the creature takes 1d6 slashing damage.

INFERNAL SMOG BELCHER

Weapon (ogrun battle cannon), rare (requires attunement)

This ogrun battle cannon is black with glowing green runes along its side. Unlike the typical smog belcher wielded by black ogrun, it has been infused with infernal power to spew clouds of foul arcane magic.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, the weapon has 4 charges. As an action, you can expend 1 charge to cast either *stinking cloud* (save DC 15) or *fog cloud* as a 3rd-level spell; both have the appearance of greasy black smoke.

The weapon regains 1d4 charges daily at dawn. If it is out of charges, it seizes up and cannot be fired normally until it has regained at least 1 charge.

While you are attuned to this weapon, you have immunity to poison damage and are immune to the poisoned condition.





INQUISITOR'S LANTERN

Wondrous item, rare

Placing the head or skull of a Medium or smaller creature in this iron lantern allows you to burn the creature's soul in a green necromantic fire and learn information from it. This has the same effect as the *Speak with Dead* spell except that you know if the creature is lying. If you remove the head before you ask your fifth question, the soul survives and can pass on. If you ask all five questions, the soul is destroyed.

LUCKY COIN

Wondrous item, very rare

This gold coin has a screaming face on one side and a scorpion's tail on the other. It is believed to be enchanted by a mischievous infernal that likes to bend luck.

The coin has 1 charge. As a bonus action, you can flip this coin. If it does not have its charge, you immediately fall

prone and take 1 bludgeoning damage. If it does have its charge, that charge is expended and you are granted good or bad luck. Roll 1d20 to determine the result.

1: You have disadvantage on all attacks, ability checks, and saving throws for the next minute.

2–10: You have disadvantage on the next attack, ability check, or saving throw you make within the next hour.

11–19: You have advantage on the next attack, ability check, or saving throw you make within the next minute.

20: You have advantage on all attacks, ability checks, or saving throws you make for the next hour.

The coin regains its charge daily at dawn.

MASK OF UNDEATH

Wondrous item, very rare

Sometimes it is useful to move about undetected among the undead. An iron lich might say things around a mindless thrall that aren't meant for the ears of the living. A *mask of undeath* is commissioned by and created for only the most brazen crime lords, willing to risk everything for the right secret.

When not worn, a *mask of undeath* looks like the face of a skull with runes carved into it. While wearing the mask, you look, sound, and smell like a risen thrall. You appear undead to all divination magic, you have darkvision with a range of 60 feet, and you are immune to poison damage and have immunity to the poisoned condition.

Additionally, this mask has 2 charges. While wearing the mask, if you take damage that would reduce you to 0 hit points, the mask expends 1 charge and you drop to 1 hit point instead. The mask regains 1 charge at sunset each day. If you expend the mask's last charge, it is destroyed.

SCOUNDREL'S BAG

Wondrous item, very rare

Golden stitching is the only thing that marks this simple leather bag as anything special. As an action, you can put your hand in this bag and think of a coin you have held before that is made of copper, silver, or gold. When you do, the bag fills with 500 of those coins. They are real, physical coins that can be removed from the bag and spent as normal, although they can be detected as magic.

The coins remain in existence until you command the bag to fill again. Each time you do so, all previous coins the bag created vanish from existence, no matter how far from the bag they are.

Everyone who finds a scoundrel's bag thinks they've got it made. Limitless money. And they think they're clever. They'll play it smart. Stay on the move. Won't get too greedy. Won't cross a black ogrun named Grella who'll rip a man's legs off when her money vanishes, like my friend No-Legs Maloni. He says if you find one you should take your 500 gold, bury the bag, and hope no one refills it for a hundred years. I say if you're gonna rob someone, stare them in the face while you're doing it.

Captain Rahera

SHIELD OF GNAWING FEAR

Shield, rare (requires attunement)

This black steel shield made by the Orgoth bears the terrible visage of a screaming face full of sharp teeth. In battle, the eyes of this visage glow with an eerie green light.

While wielding this shield, you can use a bonus action to command it to make a melee bite attack against a target creature within 5 feet of you. It makes this attack roll with a +7 bonus. On a hit, the target takes 1d8 + 4 piercing damage.

While attuned to and wielding this shield, you can use an action to cause it to instill fear in others. The face on the shield growls and its eyes glow. All creatures in a 15-foot cone originating from your space must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened until the start of your next turn. A creature that was damaged by your shield's bite attack this turn has disadvantage on this saving throw.

Once a creature has successfully saved against this effect, it is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

SHIPSTONES

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

There is power in plunder. Whether it's the favor of the gods, the machinations of an infernal, or the raw power of belief, a particularly precious jewel or stone gained through derring-do sometimes turns out to be a true charm of luck. Or at least, so the sailors say. A *shipstone* is a magical gem or precious stone that can be worn and attuned to for a wondrous benefit, just like an amulet. What makes this stone special is that it can also be affixed to the masthead of a ship and grant a benefit to an entire crew.

To grant its benefit to a ship, the *shipstone* must be permanently affixed to a carved or painted masthead where it can sparkle in the sunlight or moonlight, often in the eye of a sculpted creature. The masthead must be a decorative one worth at least 200 gp. Affixing the jewel properly takes 2 hours of skilled labor by a shipwright, woodworker, or other appropriate craftsperson. Only one *shipstone* can be attached to a masthead at a time. Attaching multiple *shipstones* to a masthead renders them all inert until they are removed.

Once a *shipstone* is affixed to a masthead, any member of the ship's crew can attune to the jewel and gain its benefit while on board or within 100 yards of the ship. This attunement takes at least 1 hour and is usually in the form of an initiation ceremony, a raucous celebration, or quiet contemplation of one's duties on the ship.

Stories abound of dozens of different *shipstones* with different effects, but four types are most commonly believed to exist.

Luckbringer. This is a shimmering translucent gem, such as an opal or moonstone, usually found in treasure acquired through a daring escape, a death-defying feat, or an act of utter foolishness.

While you are attuned to and carrying this jewel, whenever you make an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw, you can choose to roll an additional d20. You

can do so after you roll the die but before the outcome is determined. You choose which of the rolls to use.

You regain the use of this ability when you finish a long rest.

While this jewel is affixed to the masthead of a ship and you are a crew member attuned to it, you can reroll any 1 rolled on an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw you make. You must use the results of the second roll.

Blood Drinker. This vivid red gem, such as a red ruby or garnet, is usually acquired in treasure won through a vicious skirmish, a brutal raid, or a deadly duel.

While you are attuned to and carrying this jewel, you gain a +3 bonus to damage on the first melee attack you hit with each round. The damage is of the same type dealt by the weapon you used.

While this jewel is affixed to the masthead of a ship and you are a crew member attuned to it, you gain a +2 bonus to damage on the first ranged or melee attack you hit with each round.

Fortunata. A sparkling yellow gem, such as a topaz or citrine, a *fortunata* is usually found in treasure gained through a big gamble, a bold negotiation, or a flamboyant masquerade.

While you are attuned to and carrying this jewel, any time you acquire gold through plunder or adventure there always seems to be a bit more than expected. The morning after you find or steal any amount of gold, you discover 1d12 additional gold coins among those you gained.

While this jewel is affixed to the masthead of a ship and you are a crew member attuned to it, you find an additional 1d10 gold coins among your belongings on board the morning after any day where treasure worth at least 50 gp has been added to the ship's cargo hold.

Storm Eye. This is a deep blue gem, such as a sapphire or lapis lazuli, usually found in treasure won by boarding an enemy ship, swimming beneath the waves, or braving a terrible storm.

While you are attuned to and carrying this jewel, you have advantage on saving throws against non-magical wind, thunder, lightning, and water effects, and you can hold your breath for 15 minutes.

While this jewel is affixed to the masthead of a ship and you are a crew member attuned to it, you gain advantage on all ability checks and saving throws made while on the ship during a storm or while navigating sea hazards.

SPYGLASS OF DISTANT SHORES

Wondrous item, very rare

These extremely rare spyglasses are of uncertain origin, but the screaming faces along their sides cause most scholars to believe they are of Orgoth make. Once given as gifts to trusted captains of the Black Fleet, many have been lost or stolen by enterprising pirates.

This spyglass has two different crystal lenses at its end that can be raised or lowered: one yellow and one blue. When the yellow lens is in place, you can see as if with the *see invisibility* spell. When the blue lens is in place, you

can see through up to 1 foot of wood, dirt, rock, or metal. When both lenses are down, you can think of a location, person, or object. The spyglass shows you the fastest route to the object as a thread of silver light. This function of the spyglass works only while aboard a vessel or while standing in seawater.

SPYGLASS OF OBLIGATION

Wonderous item, very rare

Powerful crime lords use these devices to keep track of people working for them or who owe them a great debt. Carved of blackened bone, this spyglass has a dial in the center with seven chambers that can be opened and shut. Each chamber is big enough to hold a drop of blood (or a small piece of flesh or bone from a creature that is undead or otherwise without blood).

When a chamber that holds a drop of blood or tissue is clicked into place, the spyglass allows you to view the creature the sample was taken from. This viewing is as if you cast *scrying*, except the creature gets no saving throw to resist the effect and you can only see the creature, not hear it.

SOUL-GATHERING SWORD

Weapon (any sword), very rare (requires attunement)

When you hit with an attack using this magic sword, the target takes an extra 1d6 necrotic damage.

This sword can absorb and store the soul of someone it kills. While you are attuned to it, if it is empty and you drop a creature to 0 hit points with an attack from this sword, you can use a reaction to immediately kill that creature and draw in its soul. While the sword holds a soul, a line along the blade glows with an eerie green light. With a command this soul can be released from the sword to go free or be stored in a soul cage.

While the sword holds a soul, its extra necrotic damage increases to 2d6 and it cannot gather any more souls.

WEAPONS OF THE ENEMY

Magic items in the Nightmare Empire are often created with the aid of dark powers, vile lich lords, wicked necromancers, or priests of Toruk. They are rarely the sort of magic a good person would seek out. Still, the vicious and the cruel are not the only people who use these items. Living in this land isn't easy. Anyone hoping to defy the evils lurking here will face questions that don't have easy answers. Is it fair to steal if you're only stealing from a pirate? Is it okay to harness a soul if that soul belonged to a contemptible person? Are principles more important than survival? Sooner or later, an adventurer must stand over the terrifying weapon of a fallen enemy and make a choice: destroy the horrible thing or use it to destroy something even more horrible.

SOUL-CAGED ITEMS

Cryxian soul cages capture souls as they escape the body to be burned as fuel for spells or various necromantic devices. However, some souls are too powerful (and too valuable) to simply consume. The souls of highly trained warriors, skilled thieves, or powerful spellcasters are sometimes stored in small soul cages built into weapons or other useful items. Instead of burning up quickly, these souls power a single magic item indefinitely and imbue a person attuned to the item with some of the proficiencies and talents they had in life.

Ally Power. Most of the time, the soul in an item is angry or despairing at being trapped forever. However, if it can be compelled to cooperate, it can give more of its knowledge to a person attuned to it. A person attuned to a soul-caged item gains the items' ally power if they have spoken to the soul and convinced it to cooperate.

Speaking to the Soul. Each soul-caged item houses a single soul of a powerful person, but it is not an intelligent item. Such an item cannot talk to or influence the person using it. Still, anyone attuned to a soul-caged item can feel some part of the will and memory of the soul within, surging through and granting benefits as the item is used.

An unintended side effect of this connection is that a person attuned to an item can choose to communicate with the soul trapped within. Once per day, a person attuned to a soul-caged item can ask one question of the soul. The soul can answer only questions about how it is feeling or what it wants, and communicates the message in feelings and images, or very short answers. It is not a conversation. The question can also be an offer or a bargain.

Getting a soul to cooperate, and thus gaining its ally power, usually involves offering to use the item to accomplish a goal the soul desires or offering to free the soul after a set time. Any such offer must be something that can be accomplished in less than a year. A soul will never cooperate again with a person who has broken the agreement.

Freeing Souls. The soul cages in these items were not designed to reopen. The only way someone can free the trapped soul (whether holding up their end of a bargain or just because they want to see the soul at peace) is to destroy the magic item.

SOUL-CAGED ASSASSIN BLADE

Weapon (shortsword), very rare (requires attunement)

The hilt of this black steel shortsword holds the soul of a highly skilled assassin who failed to carry out their mission, imprisoned by either their angry employer or their vengeful intended victim.

While attuned to and wielding this sword, you are proficient in Stealth and gain the Sneak Attack feature as if you were a 1st-level rogue. You can use this feature only on attacks with this sword. If you already have Sneak Attack, the extra damage from that feature does not increase.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this sword and convince the soul inside to cooperate, your extra damage when using Sneak Attack with it increases to 4d6. If you already have Sneak Attack, you choose whether to use your own extra damage or the extra damage provided by the sword, not both.

SOUL-CAGED BARD HURDY-GURDY

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This ornate red hurdy-gurdy has carved finger bones for keys and a soul cage inside its handle. It contains the soul of a skilled bard whose performance dared to mock a powerful crime boss or lich lord.

While attuned to and holding this instrument, you are proficient with the hurdy-gurdy and Performance checks to sing along with it. Additionally, you know the *vicious mockery* cantrip. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this cantrip, and you supply the verbal component by playing and singing a mocking tune on this instrument.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this hurdy-gurdy and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you have the following spells always prepared: *charm person*, *calm emotions*, and *hypnotic pattern*. You must still have the spell slots available to cast these spells. Charisma is your spellcasting ability when you cast them, and you provide all verbal, somatic, and material components by playing a tune on this instrument and singing along.

SOUL-CAGED GRIFTER CHARM

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

A soul cage is hidden inside a bejeweled charm that hangs from this golden necklace. It contains the soul of a con artist, two-faced politician, or another gifted liar. Usually they are trapped because they picked the wrong person to scam or broke a promise to someone vengeful and powerful.

While attuned to and wearing this necklace, you are proficient in Deception and Persuasion.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this necklace and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you gain the use of the *friends* cantrip.

SOUL-CAGED INQUISITOR GAUNTLET

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This ornate steel gauntlet has a jeweled soul cage embedded in the back of the hand and contains the soul of someone zealously devoted to their deity and religion, such as a fallen Menite cleric or paladin.

While attuned to and wearing this gauntlet, you are proficient in Intimidation and Religion.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this gauntlet and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you can use a reaction to avenge yourself against anyone who has dealt you damage, as if you had cast the *hellish rebuke* spell (save DC 16). After you have used this ability three times, you cannot use it again until you have finished a long rest.

SOUL-CAGED MAGE WAND

Wand, uncommon (+3), rare (+4), very rare (+5) (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This iron wand holds the soul of a powerful spellcaster, often a defeated wizard or sorcerer, but sometimes a druid or cleric.

A soul-caged mage wand has a proficiency bonus of +3, +4, or +5, depending on the magical power of the soul captured inside it. Regardless of what kind of spellcasting the soul performed in life, this wand can help any spellcaster attuned to it.

While attuned to and wielding this wand, you can choose to use the wand's proficiency bonus instead of your own when making spell attack rolls.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this wand and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you can also use its proficiency bonus instead of your own when determining the saving throw DC for spells you cast.

SOUL-CAGED MARINER BELT

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This sturdy belt is made from woven rope with a small soul cage in the buckle that contains the soul of an experienced sailor.

While attuned to and wearing this belt, you are proficient in Athletics and Perception and proficient with vehicles (water).

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this belt and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you become very adept at swimming and gain a swim speed of 30 feet.

SOUL-CAGED RESEARCHER GOGGLES

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

These dark-tinted goggles are made from lenses fitted into the eye sockets of the upper part of a human skull, strapped with leather and worn like a mask. A soul cage affixed to a hole carved into the forehead of the skull holds the soul of someone proficient in magical research.

While attuned to and wearing these goggles, you are proficient in Arcana and Medicine.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to these goggles and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you gain a better understanding of creatures' vital organs and weaknesses. Your weapon attacks targeting creatures of the beast type score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

SOUL-CAGED SHAMAN STAFF

Staff, very rare (requires attunement)

This ebony staff is carved with the images of animal skulls. A small soul cage affixed to its top glows faintly green and holds the soul of a powerful shaman of the Devourer Wurm.

While attuned to and wielding this staff, you know and can cast the *shillelagh* cantrip. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for it.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this staff and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you have the following spells always prepared: *entangle*, *pass without trace*, and *call lightning*. You must still have spell slots available to cast these spells. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for them.

SOUL-CAGED THIEF GLOVES

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

These leather gauntlets have intricate boning that runs over the top of the wrist and fingers and a small jeweled soul cage on the wrist of the right-hand glove. When the gloves are being used, a wisp of greenish energy flows from the jewel as the soul does its work.

While attuned to and wearing these gloves, you are proficient with thieves' tools and in Sleight of Hand.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to these gloves and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you can double your proficiency bonus for any ability check when using thieves' tools or Sleight of Hand.

SOUL-CAGED WARRIOR SWORD

Weapon (any sword), uncommon (+3), rare (+4), very rare (+5) (requires attunement)

A soul-caged sword is imbued with the soul of a skilled fighter, often a fallen bodyguard but sometimes a worthy adversary. These weapons are crafted for favored underlings who have yet to master the blade but show promise.

A soul-caged sword has a proficiency bonus of +3, +4, or +5, depending on the martial prowess of the soul captured inside it.

While attuned to and wielding a *soul-caged sword*, you are proficient with it and can use the sword's proficiency bonus instead of your own for attacks with it. This proficiency bonus can be used only on attacks with the sword and no other attacks or checks, even those made while wielding the sword.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to the sword and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you gain the soul's fighting style. Dueling is typical for most soul-caged swords, but they can use any fighting style from the fighter class that the GM chooses.

SOUL-CAGED WIZARD CIRCLET

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This silver circlet is adorned with emeralds and a small soul cage on the forehead that houses the soul of a powerful wizard, usually a battle mage or warcaster who fell to the forces of Cryx.

While you are attuned to and wearing the circlet, you know the *acid splash* cantrip. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for it.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this circlet and convince the soul inside to cooperate, you have the following spells always prepared: *magic missile*, *invisibility*, and *fireball*. You must still have spell slots available to cast these spells. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for them.

SOUL-CAGED PERSONALITIES

Certain soul-caged items contain unique personalities who offer improved benefits in return for specific conditions.

SOUL-CAGED KABARA

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This silver necklace has a thick chain and an ornate amulet that looks like a glowing green eye. It contains the soul of a legendary traveler named Kabara who is said to have traveled so long that they learned to do just about everything. Because of Kabara's particular conditions for cooperation, this item is usually not found but is given by the previous owner fulfilling their obligation. Still, not every owner keeps their word and not every journey goes as planned. Sometimes Kabara gets

lost for an age or two waiting for a suitable candidate.

While you are attuned to and wearing this amulet, you can add half your proficiency bonus to any ability check you make that doesn't already include your proficiency bonus.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this amulet and convince Kabara to cooperate, choose one skill or tool. You become proficient with that skill or tool and double your proficiency bonus on ability checks with it. Each time you finish a long rest you can choose a different skill or tool proficiency (but only one at a time).

Unlike most souls, Kabara enjoys being inside their amulet and has no desire to go free. Kabara will cooperate with almost anyone under two conditions. First, you must name a goal you are trying to accomplish that requires travel. Second, you must agree that after you accomplish this goal or six months have passed (whichever comes first) you will give Kabara to someone interesting at a location that is at least 100 miles away from where you first obtained the item.

SOUL-CAGED SAVENYX

Weapon (trident), legendary (requires attunement)

This brutal trident has small skulls hanging from it and a soul cage affixed where its three jagged blades protrude. It contains the soul of Savenyx, a vicious Satyxis warrior who preferred tridents to the traditional lacerator. Even imprisoned in this weapon, Savenyx enjoys the thrill of battle and the warm splash of blood from her defeated foes. The weapon usually passes to a new wielder who defeats its previous owner in battle.

While you are attuned to and wielding this trident, you are proficient with it and gain the power to rage twice per long rest as a 1st-level barbarian. If you have the Rage class feature without this weapon, it grants you an additional use per long rest and adds a +1 bonus to your extra damage while raging.

Ally Power: If you are attuned to this trident and convince Savenyx to cooperate, your proficiency bonus on attacks with this weapon is +6 while you are raging. In addition, while raging you can make one additional attack with it as a bonus action on each of your turns.

Savenyx desires only battle and carnage. Being freed from the soul cage is of no interest to her. Instead, she cooperates only as long as you agree to and continue to meet her conditions. First, you must kill a creature with the trident at least once a week. Undead, constructs, and beasts do not count for this requirement as they do not satisfy her bloodlust. Additionally, she stops cooperating if you ever flee or fall in battle. To her, a situation counts as battle only if you have made at least one attack. If you have and you attempt to leave while there are enemies left to fight, or if you drop to 0 hit points at any point, she is disgusted by your cowardice and lack of skill, and no longer grants these benefits.

RELICS

Relics are ancient, unique, and incredibly powerful magic items. Terrifying Orgoth artifacts, weapons infused with the blight and might of dragons, and items wrought from the void by horrifying infernals, relics in the Nightmare Empire are almost always created through the influence of dark powers. Although they convey incredible power to anyone who wields them, relics almost always come with a price.

Relics are old, dangerous, and might kill you if you're not careful. But so might the world, so might the sea, so might the hordes of undead that roam these places. In the blighted isles, you seek power or you get ground beneath it.

Captain Rahera

DAIMONION

Weapon (longsword), legendary (requires attunement)

This jagged longsword has a glowing yellow-and-red eye at the base of its blade that swims and darts about, looking out from both sides of the blade. The eye once belonged to Lich Lord Daeamortus. Lich Lord Asphyxious defeated Daeamortus, then warped his body and caged his soul within a powerful weapon, forcing him to serve the very enemy who had defeated him.

When Asphyxious left Caen after the Claiming, rumors spread that he did not take this vile weapon with him. If it has been left behind in this world, though, its location remains unknown.

Daimonion is a soul-caged weapon imprisoning the soul of Lich Lord Daeamortus, who is angered at his plight and vengeful toward those he believes have wronged him. He will cooperate if he believes you either will help reconfigure his soul into a phylactery so that he can be reborn as a lich or you seek to kill any other lich lord, especially any allied with Asphyxious.

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

While you are attuned to this weapon and your attack with it scores a critical hit or drops a creature to 0 hit points, you can use your reaction to cast a spell of 3rd level or lower that you know or have prepared. This spell must have a normal casting time of 1 action or 1 bonus action. When you do this, you cast the spell without expending a spell slot.

Ally Ability: If you are attuned to this weapon and convince Daeamortus to cooperate, you gain the knowledge of 1 necromancy spell of your choice from the wizard spell list. This spell can be of any level and is always considered prepared by you. When you finish a long rest, you can choose a different necromancy spell.

You can cast this spell once without expending a spell slot. If you do, *Daimonion* goes dormant for 24 hours and you are no longer attuned to it.

BONE CLEAVER

Weapon (shortsword), legendary (requires attunement)

This thin, bone-white blade is the devastating sword of Captain Rahera, Terror of the Wailing Sea. Few people stung by the sword of this mercenary warcaster and pirate have lived to tell the tale, but those who did report that it slices through the air with surprising speed and that even a small cut causes bone-deep agony an opponent won't soon forget.

When you damage a creature with this magic weapon, it is stunned until the end of your current turn. When you score a critical hit on a creature with this weapon, that creature must make a Constitution saving throw against a DC equal to the damage dealt by your attack. Failure means the creature is stunned until the end of your next turn.

While you are attuned to and wielding *Bone Cleaver*, when you take the attack action, you can make an extra melee attack with it as a part of that action. To do so, you must move at least 10 feet on your turn before you take the extra attack.

Oh, is that what they say? The power's in the sword? Not in my Blood Axe? Or how about in my own arm? You sure the power is not just in me, you pock-marked picaroon? No? Well, I'd hate to leave you lingering with doubts. Why don't you come take a closer look?

Captain Rahera

BLOODWYRM

Weapon (dagger), legendary (requires attunement)

Bloodwyrms was one of the sacral blades of Skarre Ravenmane, leader of Satyxis and Captain of the Black Fleet. This dagger is ornately curved with a jagged flare near the hilt and a brass spike on its pommel.

Like other blood blades, its repeated use in blood magic (as well as being washed in the blood of countless foes) imbued this blade with incredible power. *Bloodwyrms* thirsts for the blood of enemies, drinking deeply and granting benefits to its wielder.

Stories abound of Skarre having lost *Bloodwyrms* and regained it in a variety of ways. It might have been taken from her by the warcaster Victoria Haley, or she might have had to sacrifice it while escaping the collapse of the Temple of Garrodh. But other stories say that she has the dagger still, or that it was lost but not gone for good. Whoever finds it and wields it would be a formidable foe indeed.

This magic weapon deals an additional 2d4 piercing damage to any target it hits. The first time each round you damage a creature with this weapon, you gain 3d4 temporary hit points.

While you are attuned to this weapon, as an action you can cut yourself with it to spray corrosive blood on all creatures



in a 30-foot cone originating from you. If you do, you lose all temporary hit points granted by *Bloodwurm* and creatures hit by the blood take acid damage equal to the temporary hit points you lost, or half as much damage with a successful DC 17 Constitution save. When you do this, you can expend and roll up to 5 Hit Dice (adding your Constitution modifier to each die roll as normal) and add the results as additional acid damage for this effect. You lose 2 hit points for each Hit Die added this way.

KELIVOR'S LAST GASP

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This amulet consists of a fractured moonstone the size of an ogrun's fist hanging on a heavy iron chain. The moonstone glows with a faint blue light and is all that remains of the shattered phylactery of Iron Lich Kelivor.

Kelivor was a powerful but pompous and foolish necromancer who boasted that he was mightier than the Dragonfather himself. Despite ascending to immortality as an iron lich, he died before the age of 30 at the hands of Lich Lord Divinitus. In the end, the only thing notable about Kelivor was that some part of his power seemed to persist despite the destruction of his phylactery. Stories disagree on whether this lingering power was a side effect of some secret spell cast by Kelivor or an everlasting torment devised by Divinitus.

While attuned to and wearing this amulet, you gain resistance to necrotic damage and the save DC of your necromancy spells increases by 1.

In addition, when you cast a necromancy spell that requires concentration, you can choose to have this amulet sustain the spell for you. The spell will last its full duration without any need for you to concentrate on it. You can use the amulet to sustain a necromancy spell even if you are currently concentrating on a different spell. The amulet can sustain only one spell at a time this way.

There is no mind or will left of Kelivor in the stone, just an echo of his incredible necromancy. Still, some bits of his learning linger in the stone and seep out erratically as spell knowledge you can possess for a limited time.

After you finish a long rest, roll 1d6 and choose a necromancy spell from the wizard spell list of a level equal to

the number rolled. You know this spell and have it prepared until you finish another long rest. In addition to being able to cast this spell with your own spell slots, you can use the amulet to cast it once without using a spell slot. If you do, the amulet goes dormant and you gain none of its benefits again until you have finished a long rest.

SIX DEMON CHEST

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

There's much disagreement about the group of infernals known as the Six Demons and this legendary chest they inhabit. One story says they were a group of six umbral reavers all sent to assassinate the same powerful and clever rogue, who tricked them and trapped them in the chest. Others say they are curators who decided to work together and share in the harvest of souls. The chest, these stories claim, is merely the vessel they use to spread their will in the world.

What the stories do agree upon is that the chest makes whoever possesses it six different kinds of unstoppable. While you are attuned to it, you cannot speak to the infernals directly but receive flashes, visions, and memories that are not your own but seek to nudge you toward death and chaos. The chest instills a thirst for power in the possessor—and perhaps for the infernals as well.

The metal bracings on this wooden chest are covered in spikes, and the lock looks like a horned infernal with glowing green eyes. Upon attuning to it, you hear mental whispers from the infernals introducing themselves, offering power in exchange for blood, and sending images of conquering your enemies or achieving your greatest goals. On any day you are imbued with power from this chest, the infernal empowering you sends occasional flashes that urge you toward using violence and honoring its name in thanks for its gift.

This chest has 1 charge, which it regains daily at dawn. As an action, you can place your hand on the infernal lock and expend the charge. When you do this, the lock bites you and sucks some of your blood. You lose 5 or 10 hit points (your choice). Then the chest opens and imbues you with one of its six infernals' powers. The infernal power continues to affect you until the chest regains its charge at dawn the next day.



If you choose to lose 5 hit points, roll 1d6 to randomly select the infernal. If you lose 10 hit points, you choose which infernal empowers you.

1. *Sarthranar the Single-Minded*: One of your ability scores of your choice becomes 30. All your other ability scores become 8.
2. *Tironath the Quickening*: Your Wisdom score becomes 8. You add double your proficiency bonus to initiative checks and can make an attack with a ranged or finesse weapon as a bonus action on each of your turns.
3. *Ogdreth the Edge of Death*: Your Constitution score becomes 8. As long as you have at least 1 hit point, you regain 1d6 hit points at the start of each of your turns.
4. *Kolrikoth the Secret Keeper*: You cannot speak. You add double your proficiency bonus to any Intelligence ability check you make, even if you are not normally proficient. Additionally, once before dawn the following day you can perform a 10-minute ritual in which you cut yourself and lose 10 hit points. If you do, you gain knowledge as if you had cast the *legend lore* spell.
5. *Ulruch the Wary*: Your Dexterity score becomes 8. You gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) rolls and gain truesight with a range of 60 feet.
6. *Ogamun the Shifter*: Your Strength score becomes 8. As an action, you can change your body as if you had cast the *alter self* spell. You can do this any number of times during that day, and maintaining your altered form does not require concentration.

SPEAR OF SKARLETHOK

Weapon (spear), artifact (requires attunement)

This spear looks like a long, sharpened bone, but the occasional pulse of green energy that ripples along its length belies its magical nature.

The spear is actually a bone from the dragon Skarlethok, one of the first of Toruk's children to be killed. Skarlethok's and Toruk's battle raged across a remote isle filled with vibrant flowers and lush forests. The battle tore on for weeks, destroying most of the vegetation, scarring the earth, and transforming the verdant island into a mud-strewn, acid swamp. The Dragonfather took Skarlethok's athanc but left the rest of the great dragon's body to sink into the mire. Long after, a treasure hunter recovered a single bone of Skarlethok from the island. It had been honed by the acid into a razor point and infused with blight, acid, and the vengeful spirit of the defeated dragon. It proved to be a powerful weapon, treacherous both to its wielder and their enemies.

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. This spear has 15 charges. When you hit with an attack from this spear, you can choose to expend all current charges (you cannot expend fewer). The spear deals an additional 1d8 acid damage per charge you expend (DC 22 Constitution save for half). The spear regains 1 charge per hour.

While you are attuned to this spear, you are immune to acid damage and have advantage on all attacks against creatures that you know worship or serve Toruk.

Attuning to this spear also afflicts you with blight from Skarlethok. Once per week, while you are attuned, you must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. Success means you resist the effects of the blight. Failure means your body warps, growing some scales and bony protrusions and permanently reducing your Dexterity by 1. Also, you are filled with bloodlust that prevents you from sleeping until you have killed a creature that worships or serves Toruk.

The scales and bones grown by the blight give you natural armor. While wearing no armor, your armor class is 10 + your Dexterity bonus + the number of times you've failed to resist the blight. If your Dexterity is reduced to 0 from the blight, you die.

You cannot end your attunement with the *Spear of Skarlethok* unless someone casts *remove curse* on you. Ending your attunement stops any further effects from its blight but does not restore lost Dexterity or remove any growths.

SWORD OF SEVEN WINDS

Weapon (scimitar), legendary (requires attunement)

The blade of this legendary scimitar has many strange and swooping curves, and it is said to have belonged to many buccaneers throughout the ages. It was first wielded by the ancient pirate lord Threnodax, whose daring exploits and ruthless cunning trapped the seven winds. The stories vary on whether these winds were ancient spirits of nature drifting on the seas or infernal powers who lost in battle to Threnodax.

What the stories do agree on is that when the pirate lord was defeated by Toruk, he went out in a storm of vengeance and the blade vanished from sight. Since then it has popped up over the years, appearing to worthy rogues, spirited explorers, and daring pirates. It's said to come to a brave soul who yearns more than anything to live a life of adventure and freedom.

No matter who it appears to, the scimitar always passes on in the same way: vanishing as its wielder inflicts a terrible storm upon their enemies.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you wield this scimitar, a soft wind blows upon you from the south at all times.

This scimitar has 7 charges. While attuned to and wielding it, you can use an action to expend 1 charge to summon one of the seven winds of your choice and benefit from its effect.

Blasting Wind: Cast the *gust of wind* spell (save DC 15).

Quickwind: Cast the *haste* spell.

Roaring Wind: Cast *thunderwave* as a 3rd level spell (save DC 15).

Slashing Wind: For the next 1 minute, you can make melee attacks with this weapon with a reach of 30 feet. You can make an attack as a part of the action you use to summon this wind.

Trade Wind: Choose a sailing vessel. Wind blows in its sails for the next 8 hours, doubling its normal speed.

Updraft: Cast the *fly* spell.

Warding Wind: Cast the *wind wall* spell.

Any spell cast with the scimitar lasts its full duration and doesn't require concentration. However, you can have only one wind summoned at a time. When you summon a wind,

the effects of the previous wind end immediately. Once you summon a particular wind, you cannot summon that wind again until the scimitar has regained at least 1 charge.

The scimitar regains 1d6 + 1 charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, instead of summoning the chosen wind, the sword vanishes forever and you cast *storm of vengeance* (save DC 19).

THREE MOONS PRISM

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

This crystal deck prism glimmers with a faint silvery light. It is ancient, last seen in the hidden vault of the Pirate King Moorcraig before Toruk destroyed him for refusing to bow to the Dragonfather.

This prism must be inserted in the deck of a ship above a room containing a map. When sunlight shines through the prism, it merely provides nice illumination for the room below. When moonlight shines through, it creates an illusion of waves and tides cast upon any map below it. While attuned to and using this prism with a map of the sea you are currently traveling through, you gain advantage on checks made with navigator's tools and vehicles (water). Additionally, your ship can travel at double its normal speed.

The true power of the prism is revealed when all three moons are full and shining through it. On such a night, the prism reveals upon any map of the sea below it the locations of hundreds of ley lines in the Scharde Islands where standing stones emerge from the water, creating areas large enough to encompass an entire galleon. Sailing between these standing stones with the prism in place allows your ship and everything on it to travel along the ley lines, teleporting to any one of the other standing stone sites in the Scharde Islands and the Continental Corridor.

This teleportation doesn't attract the attention of infernals, but it is still dangerous. You must guide your ship between the standing stones at just the right angle and just the right time. Finding one of these sites near your ship takes 1 minute and a DC 20 Wisdom check made with navigator's tools. Failure means you must travel at least 1 mile from your current location before you can try to find another one.

Once you've located one of these sites, you must make an Intelligence check with Vehicles (Watercraft). The result of check determines where you emerge.

Intelligence

Check Total

Emergence Point

20+	The intended location
15	A random sea location 5 miles away from where you intended
10	A random sea location 50 miles away from where you intended
9 or less	A random sea location 100 miles away from where you intended, and only on the next full moon of Calder



4

THRALL CREATION



THE MOST WIDELY PRACTICED NECROMANTIC PROCESS is the use of complex runes to give motion and mobility to the dead. Thrall runes are glyphs of great power derived from Telgesh that represent necromancy in its most straightforward form. Like mechanika runes, thrall runes can have many different effects, depending on the skill and imagination of their crafter and the time spent inscribing them. The simplest thrall requires only a few rudimentary runes, whereas more powerful creations might have sophisticated inscriptions covering every square inch of their forms.

To create a thrall, a necromancer needs to assemble the required body parts and then carefully inscribe the runes upon the bones and flesh. Most thralls require a complete set of bones, generally human, that are mixed and matched from any number of rifled graves as required. A “fresh” thrall is not necessarily better than one crafted from aged bones, or vice versa: only the runes matter. For some necromantic processes, the type of corpse and the condition of the body or its history are relevant, but such requirements are beyond the scope of the most common methods of animation. Animating a body has no impact on its soul, which has usually already departed.

Different methods exist for applying the runes. Painting them on a basic thrall is quick and easy, but complex creations take considerably more work. Bones are etched and then filled with pigment; flesh is stitched together and tattooed. In all cases, the more permanent the medium, the better.

CRAFTING THRALLS

Once a necromancer has procured the tools, a corpse, and a private location in which to operate, the work of creating a thrall can commence. A clandestine place to work undisturbed is of vital importance. Not only can distractions be disastrous to such painstaking craft, but outside the Nightmare Empire necromancy is also highly illegal. If caught, its practitioners are certain to face execution in every civilized land in western Immoren.

THE CORPSE

The necromancer must first ensure the corpse is intact, at least with regard to the desired type of thrall. Most thralls created for labor or defense must have a pair of arms and legs, but this is not always the case. Cryxian necrosurgeons are particularly skilled in their dark craft, manufacturing thralls barely recognizable as having once been human. All thralls must have a head or skull.

If the corpse is not in one piece, the necromancer needs to stitch, brace, bolt, or otherwise see to its assembly. Once complete, the animating energies of thrall creation hold the creature’s form together. However, the process of inscribing the thrall runes requires an intact working surface. Some thralls are so complex that they must be inscribed in stages and concentric layers. When faced with such a challenge a necromancer might prefer to work piecemeal, completely rendering the runes on the innermost parts before attaching the rest, then moving to the next most difficult location, and so on.

Following thrall creation, the body takes on supernatural qualities. Its flesh becomes increasingly taut and leathery, but it also dramatically increases in strength and durability. Natural decay is arrested, and after a few weeks any stench of putrefaction is reduced to a musty, sickly odor.

Certain types of thralls require a particular kind of corpse. The majority use humanoids, but more complex or unusual thralls can require other raw materials.

NECROMANCER’S KIT

The creation of thralls requires a full surgical kit used in conjunction with specialized tools of the trade. In addition to a selection of saws, knives, needles, and drills, a necromancer must also have etching tools, special pigments, oils, heavy waxed cord, scales, organ extractors, and other implements. Such kits appear harmless in and of themselves, though the Order of Illumination might wonder why a cobbler needs a fine set of mortician’s saws and scales. An assembled kit is easily identified by anyone familiar with the art of necromancy.

It is impossible to craft a thrall without a necromancer’s kit. A necromancer’s kit can be used as a healer’s kit and costs 50 gp.

INSCRIBING THRALL RUNES AND RUNE POINTS

Once the corpse has been suitably prepared, the necromancer is ready to begin the painstaking process of inscribing the animating runes. The time this process takes and its difficulty depend on the complexity of the thrall being created. The complexity of thrall runes is measured in **runes points**, as with mechanika. The more complex the thrall, the higher its rune point value.

Rune points take into account both the type of thrall the necromancer is attempting to create and any desired upgrades. For example, a thrall warrior (3 rune points) with the Rune-Hardened upgrade (1 rune point) has a rune point value of 4.

To create thrall runes, a character must have proficiency with a necromancer’s kit and the ability to cast 3rd-level spells.

The length of time required to create a thrall depends on its total rune points. Each rune point requires 8 hours of labor spent applying runes, meditating on the work, and coaxing the thrall into unlife.

Once the required time has passed, the necromancer makes an Intelligence check using a necromancer’s kit to determine success. The DC of the check equals 10 + the thrall’s total rune point value. If the check succeeds, the thrall begins its unlife. If the check fails, the necromancer must carefully and painstakingly correct the inscriptions. After another 8 hours of laborious refinement, the character can attempt this check again. If the second check is a failure, the work is irreversibly flawed and the corpse cannot be animated as a thrall.

Once completed, a thrall exists until it is destroyed. A completed thrall cannot have additional runes added to it.

THE COSTS OF INSCRIPTION

Though not standardized among necromancers, the rare inks used in inscribing thrall runes are invariably expensive. These inks include alchemical solutions imbued with distinct arcane qualities, ash from supernaturally active battlefields or gravesites, distilled bodily fluids, or traces of rare metals. The more complex the thrall's runes, the more the necromancer should expect to pay for the appropriate inscribing inks.

See the **Thrall Creation Cost** table for the rune points and costs associated with thrall creation.

THRALL CREATION COST

Rune Points	Cost
1	10 gp
2	50 gp
3	100 gp
4	250 gp
5	500 gp
6+	500 gp + 375 gp per rune point over 5



CARING FOR AND COMMANDING THRALLS

Thralls are thought of as mindless, but this belief is not entirely true. Most thralls entirely lack self-will and have no desires other than a persistent urge to harm the living. Left to their own devices they simply stand in place, potentially indefinitely, and have no physical needs. The animating process largely halts or at least greatly slows most aspects of decay. Thralls do not fall apart simply from the passage of time, although they can suffer damage and eventually collapse when their physical integrity is lost. Once destroyed, a previously animated corpse usually cannot be animated again, although in some cases repairs can be made by replacing lost or shattered body parts.

Some aspects of the deceased are thought to persist as an indelible imprint on their remains. These characteristics can serve a variety of necromantic processes. For thralls, the animating runes establish a basic pattern of behavior but also exploit deeply imprinted conditioning to facilitate its functioning. For example, bodies retain persistent ability to move, walk, maintain balance, use their hands, and so on. Regardless of the state or lack of physical sense organs, thralls are aware of their surroundings and can see and hear to a similar degree as the living. Even in total darkness, thralls inherently sense living beings and can move directly toward them.

The combination of this lingering imprint and animating runes allows a thrall to understand basic spoken orders and act as bid by its creator. More complex functionality is artificially endowed by the runes employed in a thrall's animation. The complexity of the thrall determines the scope of the tasks it can perform. The simplest thralls are extremely literal and cannot exercise judgment in processing commands but can perform rudimentary labor, including digging or moving heavy objects.

Advanced thralls can make complex decisions and demonstrate qualities that suggest a personality. Most still lack inherent motivation and exhibit only superficial indications of anything resembling individuality, such as posture, mannerisms, and responses to orders. Advanced thralls can be empowered to speak and relate messages.

Death magic is inherently inimical to life, and most thralls naturally seek to do violence against the living. This tendency suits them well as warriors and guardians. Thralls can be instructed not to attack certain individuals and might have limited ability to distinguish friends from foes, although obvious markings might be necessary to avoid accidents. For example, a simple thrall might not be able to tell two people apart but could be told not to attack anyone wearing a red armband.

Simple thralls require short and direct commands, and most cannot remember more than one or two orders at a time. More advanced thralls can be given long-term

objectives and layered orders that include contingencies. As a general rule, necromancers do not entrust vital and complex tasks to thralls, which perform best under direct supervision or with extremely simple tasks, such as an order to kill anyone other than the necromancer who enters a room.

A thrall is friendly to its creator and obeys that person's commands. In combat, the thrall shares its creator's initiative count, taking its turn immediately afterward. The thrall can move and use its reaction on its own, but the only action it takes on its turn is Dodge unless its creator uses a bonus action to command it to take a different action, or if it has a thrall rune that allows it to do so.

If its creator is incapacitated, a thrall can take any action of its choice.

THRALL TYPES

The simplest thralls are relatively easy to create, but they are poor combatants and can follow only basic instructions. More complex thralls have greater combat ability and can be imparted with rudimentary intelligence. Some necromancers are so skilled they can instill artificial personalities in their thralls, but they do not affect the thralls' readiness to obey orders.

A typical thrall uses one of the following stat blocks and applies its creator's proficiency bonus (PB) where stated. These can be adjusted with qualities from runes as well as any equipment.

A thrall's type determines its initial rune point value. See the **Rune Point Value** table below.

NONHUMAN THRALLS

Necrosurgeons and necrotechs do not limit themselves to humanoid corpses when making thralls. At the GM's discretion, a character can create any of the following, provided there is an appropriate corpse to do so: carrion thrall (1 rune point), blood hound (2 rune points), or brine thrall (4 rune points).

See Chapter 5: Bestiary for stat blocks of these new thrall types.

RUNE POINT VALUE

<i>Thrall</i>	<i>Rune Points</i>
Risen	1
Warrior	3
Lieutenant	4
Skarlock	5

SKARLOCK THRALL

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 85 (10d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Thrallspeak, speaks the language of its creator

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. The skarlock thrall is a 2nd-level spellcaster that needs only verbal and runic components to cast its spells. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 8 + PB, +2 +PB to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. A skarlock is imbued with the ability to cast spells by its creator, drawn from its creator's repertoire. Cantrips (at will): The skarlock knows four cantrips known by its creator.

3 1st-level slots: The skarlock knows three 1st-level spells known by its creator.

Spell Slave. If a skarlock thrall is within 60 feet of its creator, it can cast a spell its creator is able to cast. To cast the spell, the skarlock must have an available spell slot of the appropriate level.

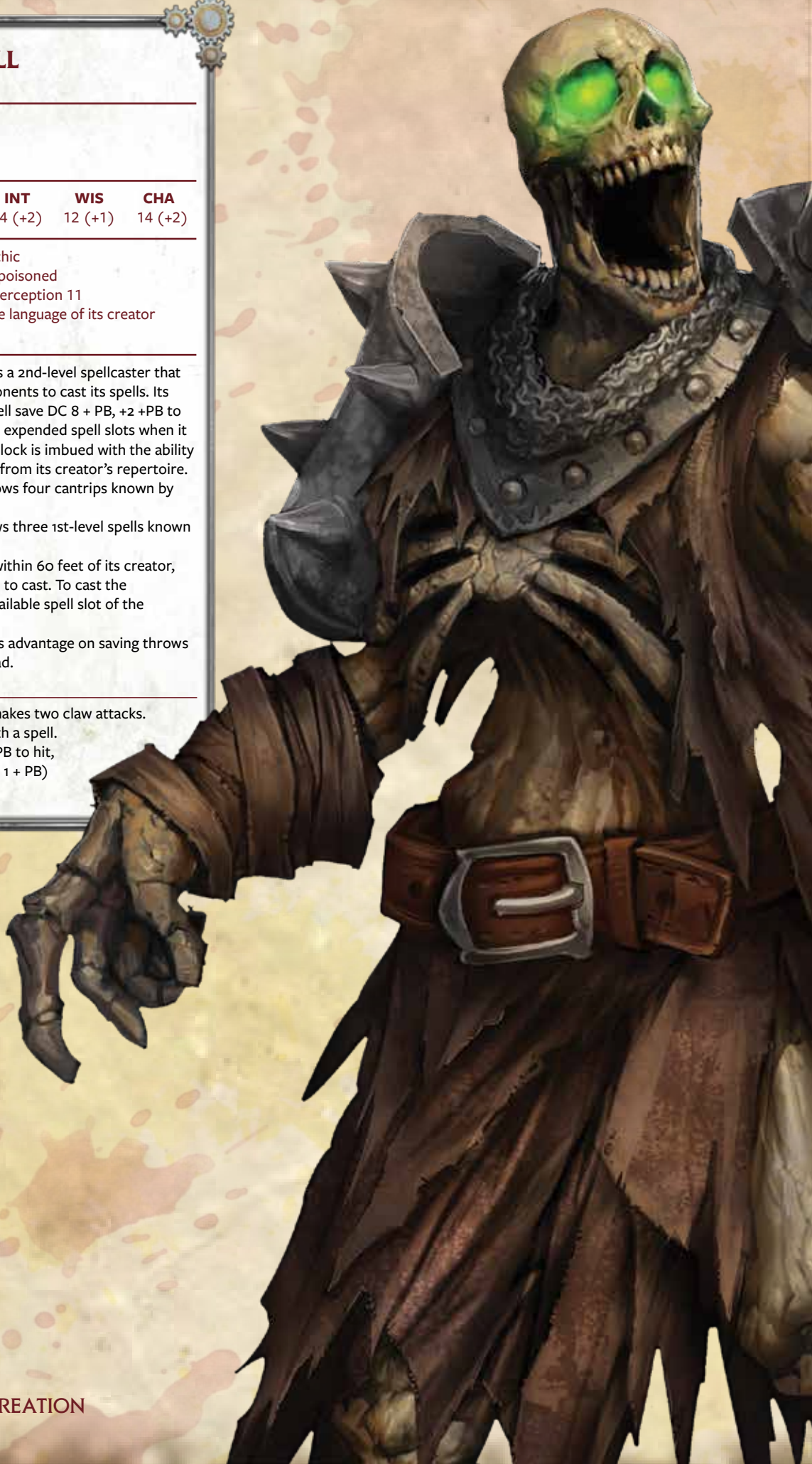
Turn Resistance. The skarlock has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The skarlock thrall makes two claw attacks.

It can replace one of its attacks with a spell.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* -1 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 - 1 + PB) slashing damage.





THRALL LIEUTENANT

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 9 (or as appropriate for worn armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +3 + PB

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Thrallspeak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Bonded Proficiency. The thrall's proficiency bonus is equal to its creator's at the time of its creation.

Martial Aptitude. The thrall is proficient with medium and heavy armor, and with simple and martial melee weapons.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the thrall to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the thrall drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The thrall lieutenant makes two melee attacks with its claws or a weapon it is wielding.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4 + 3 + PB piercing damage.

RISEN THRALL

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con 3 + PB

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Thrallspeak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Bonded Proficiency. The thrall's proficiency bonus is equal to its creator's at the time of its creation.

Pack Tactics. The thrall has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thrall's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the thrall to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the thrall drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4 + 1 + PB piercing damage.

THRALL WARRIOR

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con 3 + PB

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Thrallspeak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Bonded Proficiency. The thrall's proficiency bonus is equal to its creator's at the time of its creation.

Martial Aptitude. The thrall is proficient with medium and heavy armor, and with simple and martial melee weapons.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the thrall to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the thrall drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The thrall warrior makes two melee attacks with its claws or a weapon it is wielding.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4 + 3 + PB piercing damage.



THRALL RUNES

A necromancer can weave a number of refinements and unnatural traits into thrall runes during the creation process. These upgrades add to the rune point value of the thrall being created. New upgrades cannot be added to a thrall after the creation process is complete.

THRALL RUNES

Rune	Rune Points
Artificial Intellect	2
Channeler	3
Dark Power	2
Death Burst	2
Ghostly	3
Grave Chill	3
Guardian	2
Killer	2
Language	1
Lockstep	1
Preternatural Awareness	1
Rune-Hardened	1
Rune-Powered	1
Speed in Death	2
Walking Spell	1 + spell level

ARTIFICIAL INTELLECT

Thralls have limited awareness, but specialized runes elevate a thrall's intellect above its baseline.

The thrall's Intelligence and Wisdom scores each increase by 1. Additionally, the thrall gains proficiency with one skill or tool its creator is proficient with.

CHANNELER

Arcane runes scribed into the flesh and bones of a thrall allow it to become a vessel for the arcane power of its creator. These runes are seldom wasted on simple thralls, being most often employed on more complex and powerful creations.

The thrall becomes a channeler for its creator's spells (see "Channeling" on page 175 of the core rules). Each time it channels a spell, the thrall takes 1d6 radiant damage per slot level of the spell it channels.

DARK POWER

A necromancer can infuse the inks used to create a thrall's runes with a bit of their own magic to make the thrall into an arcane assistant.

While the thrall is within 60 feet of its creator, its creator makes saving throws with advantage to maintain concentration on spells.

DEATH BURST

A thrall can be imbued with runes that cause it to violently explode on the moment of its destruction, showering a wide area with a spray of gore and sharp fragments of bone.

When the thrall dies, each creature within 10 feet of it must make a Dexterity saving throw with a DC equal to 10 + the thrall's Constitution modifier, taking 7 (2d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

GHOSTLY

Working runes of spectral magic into a thrall allows it to move like a disembodied spirit, passing through walls and enemies as if they were barely there.

The thrall gains the Incorporeal Movement trait: it can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. The thrall takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends a turn inside an object.

GRAVE CHILL

The cold touch of the grave worked into arcane runes causes the air around a thrall to freeze unnaturally.

Other non-thrall creatures other than the thrall's creator treat the area within 10 feet of the thrall as difficult terrain unless they are immune to cold damage. A non-thrall creature other than the thrall's creator that touches the thrall or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) cold damage.

GUARDIAN

Guardian runes make a thrall fiercely protective of its creator and creator's allies. The thrall willingly hurls itself in the way of attacks intended for one of these individuals, no matter how dangerous.

The thrall gains proficiency with shields if it does not already have it. When a creature the thrall can see attacks a target other than it that is within 5 feet of it, the thrall can use its reaction to become the target of the attack instead. The thrall must be wielding a shield to use this reaction.

KILLER

Killer runes infuse the thrall with an unquenchable desire to destroy its creator's opponents, causing it to fly into a frenzied and reckless assault.

At the start of its turn, the thrall can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls it makes that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

LANGUAGE

Thralls can communicate in Thrallspeak, the language of the created dead. Some necromancers desire their thralls to be able to speak with others, whether to communicate information or intimidate mortals.

The thrall can read, write, and speak an additional language. This language must be known by the necromancer who created it.

LOCKSTEP

A thrall imbued with these runes moves with martial precision to create a defensive wall against assault.

The thrall gains proficiency with shields if it does not already have it. When a creature the thrall can see attacks a target other than it that is within 5 feet of it, the thrall can use its reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll. The thrall must be wielding a shield to use this reaction.

PRETERNATURAL AWARENESS

The runes grant an unnatural awareness to the thrall. This animalistic instinct does not confer any additional intellect but allows the thrall to notice potential foes with great ease.

The thrall gains proficiency in Perception and has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

RUNE-HARDENED

The runes toughen the thrall. Its skin becomes denser, with a texture similar to that of boiled leather or hard wood.

The thrall gains a +1 bonus to AC, and its Constitution increases by 1.

RUNE-POWERED

Runes of power along the thrall's body increase its strength.

The thrall gains a +1 bonus to Strength and proficiency in Strength saving throws.

SPEED IN DEATH

Thralls are not known for being swift, but runes of speed etched into the flesh and bones can make up for typical undead sluggishness.

The thrall's walking speed increases by 10 feet, and its Dexterity increases by 1.

WALKING SPELL

An uncommon addition to some thralls is working the arcane runes of a spell into the thrall runes to turn the thrall into a vessel for a spell.

The spell increases the thrall's rune point value by the spell's level, to a maximum of 5 (5th level). Cantrips do not require additional rune points. The spell must be known by the thrall's creator and requires a melee spell attack to be valid, such as the *shocking grasp* cantrip.

The thrall can cast the spell once. It regains the ability to cast the spell each day at dawn.

THRALL UPGRADES

Necromancers of the Nightmare Empire have gone far beyond the creation of simple undead. By augmenting the animated corpses with necrotite-burning furnaces, steam fists, and other machine parts, they transform simple thralls into more powerful tools: mechanithralls.

Necrotechs happily reinforce dead flesh and bone with metal plates and rods. The artificial parts, sinews, and mechanical improvements can hold a corpse together efficiently. Mechanical augmentations might include boilers powering piston fists, skulls and spines anchored to pneumatics, and conduits for fluids to keep the flesh supple. The runes required to create such upgrades require much more time to ensorcel upon the putrefying flesh of any thrall-worthy corpse.

Integrating these upgrades is often done at the time of the thrall's creation but can be performed at any time. The **Thrall Upgrades** table lists the cost and weights of common thrall upgrades.

THRALL UPGRADES

Upgrade	Cost	Weight
Armored Flesh	10 gp	6 lb.
Augmented Vision	25 gp	1/2 lb.
Bile Cannon	75 gp	7 lb.
Clockwork Heart	25 gp	1 lb.
Integrated Weapon	Varies	Varies
Leg Pistons	20 gp	12 lb.
Necrotite Bomb	100 gp	4 lb.
Necrotite Furnace	50 gp	15 lb.
Spider Limbs	120 gp	35 lb.
Steam Fists	20 gp	4 lb.

INSTALLING THRALL UPGRADES

To install a thrall upgrade, a character must first successfully create a thrall as described previously in this section. Then, after purchasing or crafting the desired upgrades, they must spend at least 8 hours integrating the upgrades. At the end of that time, the creator makes a DC 12 Intelligence check with tinker's tools or a mechanic's toolkit. The DC increases by 1 for each additional thrall upgrade after the first.

If the check is not successful, something has gone wrong. The thrall's creator must spend another 8 hours assessing and modifying the integration and then attempts the check again. If this second check fails, the thrall is destroyed, but any upgrades can be recovered and used in another thrall.

RECOVERING THRALL UPGRADES

Cryxians are avid recyclers. Those who create mechanithralls loathe leaving useful components on the battlefield just because they happen to be bolted into the flesh of a thrall that has fallen in combat.

A character can attempt to salvage an upgrade from a destroyed thrall. To do so, the character must have access to the thrall's corpse and tinker's tools or a mechanic's toolkit. Removing an upgrade takes 1 hour and a successful DC 12 Intelligence check made with tinker's tools or a mechanic's toolkit.

If the check succeeds, the character extracts the upgrade and can install it in a new thrall. If the check fails, the upgrade has either been damaged beyond use or was rendered inoperable in the attempt to remove it.



ARMORED FLESH

Metal plating bolted through the flesh and onto the bones of a thrall provides it with an extra measure of protection.

A thrall equipped with this upgrade has a +2 bonus to AC.

AUGMENTED VISION

Some thrall makers integrate simple necromechanical eyes into their thralls, whether salvaged from destroyed helljacks or crafted for this specific purpose. Mechanical lenses grant the thrall enhanced vision.

A thrall equipped with this upgrade increases the range of its darkvision to 120 feet.

BILE CANNON

A bile cannon pumps corrosive sludge out of the thrall's body, providing it with a short-range but effective weapon. It has a range of 20/40 feet and deals 9 (2d8) acid damage. Each time the thrall fires its bile cannon, its hit point total is reduced by 2 (1d4) hit points.

CLOCKWORK HEART

Many mechanithralls have clockwork hearts that pump alchemical preservatives and putrescent bile through their bodies. The intended purpose of the heart is to keep the rotting flesh intact, but it can also serve as a secondary weapon. When the thrall's flesh is punctured, a jet of toxic fluids spews out against those unlucky enough to be nearby.

If a thrall with this upgrade takes slashing or piercing damage, each creature within 5 feet of the thrall must make a Dexterity saving throw. The DC of the save is 10 + the thrall's Constitution modifier. A creature takes 5 (1d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

INTEGRATED WEAPON

Thrall makers do not always have the best choice of corpses to work with. Some are missing limbs, and not every necrotech has the resources on hand to construct replacements.

A thrall can have a simple or martial melee weapon integrated into its body. The weapon must be one-handed or versatile and cannot have the heavy property. The thrall does not need to be proficient with the weapon to use it, but most thrall makers reserve this upgrade for their warriors and lieutenants to get the most effectiveness out of their creations.

The cost and weight of an integrated weapon are the same as the weapon's basic cost and weight.

LEG PISTONS

Drawing on the steam power of a necrotite furnace, a mechanithrall's movement speed is greatly enhanced.

A thrall equipped with leg pistons increases its walking speed by 10 feet. It must have a functioning necrotite furnace to use this upgrade.

NECROTITE BOMB

Thralls are often the initial wave of an assault. To amplify the chaos and damage they inflict, some thrall makers pack necrotite-infused bombs into the thralls' ribcages.

When a thrall equipped with a necrotite bomb drops to 0 hit points, each creature within 10 feet of it must make a Dexterity save with a DC of 10 + the thrall's Constitution modifier or take 7 (2d6) fire and 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

NECROTITE FURNACE

A necrotite furnace is fundamental to the creation of a mechanithrall. The necrotite it burns provides power for any necromechanical or traditional machine components on the thrall's body.

A necrotite furnace operates for 12 hours on 5 pounds of necrotite.

SPIDER LIMBS

A common upgrade for larger, bloated thralls, this spiderlike configuration of four or more metal limbs can bear a heavier weight. The additional limbs also grant a measure of protection against being knocked over, as they shift and accommodate for one that's damaged or missing.

A thrall equipped with this upgrade can move through nonmagical difficult terrain without penalty and gains immunity to the prone condition. It must have a functioning necrotite furnace to use this upgrade.

STEAM FISTS

Heavy metal fists are the most common weapon used a functioning in mechanithrall fabrication. Built in pairs, steam fists replace a thrall's claw attack and deal 1d8 + Strength modifier + PB bludgeoning damage.

A thrall must have a functioning necrotite furnace to use this upgrade.

MECHANIKA RUNES AND STEAM FISTS

Steam fists are innately mechanical devices, powered by a mechanithrall's furnace. Some necrotechs choose to further augment a thrall's fists with mechanika runes (see "Mechanika Runes," page 209 of the core rules), adding unique effects or elemental damage to the thrall's strikes.

Steam fists can have up to 3 rune points of additional runes inscribed. Additional runes must be appropriate for melee weapons.

While the thrall's furnace is operational, it can produce enough charges for the thrall to use additional runes once. At the start of the thrall's turn, roll a d6. On a roll of 5 or 6, enough surplus energy is produced for the thrall to use its runes again.

5

BESTIARY



Sharks, sea drakes, dragon fish... you'd think the Meredius would be bad enough with just those looking to eat you when you take a dip in the brine, but oh no. No. Cryx wasn't content to leave things there. No, instead you've got half-rotten creatures with smokestacks coming out of their backs, undead birds that swarm your decks and eat the rigging, and worse.

Captain Bartolo Montador

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, YOU'LL FIND INFORMATION about many of the unusual beasts that adventurers can encounter in a campaign set in the Scharde Islands and the Nightmare Empire, including monsters that hunt the seas and islands, strange creations of mad necrotechs, and powerful undead warriors that are the backbone of Cryx's military might.

WHAT IS A DISEMBODED SOUL?

Several creatures in this section interact with the disembodied soul... but what is it?

The soul of a living creature leaves its body on death. For many creatures, particularly humanoid ones, the soul lingers in the mortal plane, Caen, for a short time before passing over to Urcaen, the realm of spirits and gods. Others, notably the Dhunian peoples (bogrin and gobbers, farrow, ogrun, and trollkin) return to Dhunia to be reincarnated after death.

Most souls linger for a short time, measured in hours. Others, more reluctant to pass on, can linger for days or even weeks.

BANES

The void. A razor-thin yet infinite realm lying between the physical world of Caen and the intangible world of Urcaen. It is a place of unfathomable torments and darkness, worse even than the hellish dominion of the Devourer Wurm in the spirit realm. Those spirits that are pulled into its infinity are remade by their experience into something far darker, colder, and more alien than even the infernals themselves.

Professor Viktor Pendrake

Some darkness never goes away, no matter what the stories might say, and banes are a testament to ancient blasphemies. Their existence is a profane clue that Cryxian necromancers have unlocked dimly understood horrors, as if connected to some force beyond Caen that thrives on extermination.

Occasionally the dead neither linger on Caen as restless spirits nor make the passage to Urcaen. There is a crack between these realms, a fissure of timeless void, and the few wayward souls that fall in experience a singular form of endless torment. Still able to peer through the murky veil separating them from the true realms of Caen and Urcaen, they seethe with hatred and longing and become consumed by destructive lust.

Banes are cunning undead warriors inscribed with countless runes and sigils of their dark rebirth, versatile and deadly soldiers among the more mindless undead. Wickedly proficient at killing, they host a darkness that both permeates their being and seeps into the world of the living. Few scholars know the means by which these potent creatures are created, and only the most depraved masters of necromancy can begin to understand the nature of the malignant power from whence they arise.

Born of Darkness. Banes are enshrouded in a preternatural aura that is utterly inimical to living flesh, reaching out hungrily to choke the living. From within, their eyes display a malevolent glimmer that reveals a hateful intelligence.

Murderous Glee. The foul creatures delight in slaughter, seeking any opportunity to sow death. Sometimes they can even be heard whispering to each other in ancient tongues, as if coordinating a plan of attack. They march into battle with the discipline and inexorable confidence that only soldiers with no fear of death can possess.

Undead Nature. A bane doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

BANE RIDERS

Some bane warriors form the cavalry of Cryx, riding on thrall steeds. These undead mounts have the same stats as a warhorse, with the addition of immunity to the poisoned condition and poison damage, and the bane's Incorporeal Movement trait.

BANE WARRIORS

For a soldier, jumping at shadows is at best laughable and at worst cowardice, but some truly dark things are rightly feared. Fell creations of blasphemous runes and animated bones, bane knights are unhallowed vessels of evil summoned from the void.

The same accursed process that creates these fearsome creatures also binds to them a cold fury; fueled by chthonian magic, bane knights are anathema to the living. These unnatural warriors draw strength from those who strike at them, brutally punishing their foes while advancing relentlessly across the battlefield.

Accompanied by a foul wind and a charnel stink, bane knights glide across the battlefield amid blood and death. They wield their shadow-forged lances with inhuman precision, cutting down any obstacle in their path. Adding to their implacable advance, bane knights can become fully spectral for a short time, allowing them to pass through any barrier to reach their victims. Terrifying tales recount exhausted soldiers returning to the relative safety of their trenches only to be slain without warning by bane knights emerging from the walls around them.



BANE WARRIOR

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dexterity +4

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Thrallspeak, speaks the language of its creator

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bane hits with it (included in the attack).

Incorporeal Movement. The bane can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Turn Resistance. The bane has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Void Shroud. While within 10 feet of a bane, non-undead creatures regain half as many hit points as normal when they regain hit points.

ACTIONS

Bane Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d12 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

BANE KNIGHT

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dexterity +4

Skills Perception +2

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Thrallspeak, speaks the language of its creator

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bane hits with it (included in the attack).

Incorporeal Movement. The bane can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Turn Resistance. The bane has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Void Shroud. While within 10 feet of a bane, non-undead creatures regain half as many hit points as normal when they regain hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bane knight makes two bane lance attacks.

Bane Lance. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d12 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.





BANE LORD TARTARUS

Bane Lord Tartarus is both an insidious weapon and a fearsome general delivered to the mainland centuries ago by the lich lords of Cryx. His essence is linked to the same great void of darkness bleeding death into Caen, inimical to all life, for which all bane thralls and bane knights serve as conduits. He cannot deny the unholy impulses of this energy and the runes binding him to unliving flesh, and he calls his host to join him in one slaughter after another. Only a few beings on Caen fully understand the nature of the force permeating Tartarus and those of his kind. Lich Lord Tenebrous was the first lord of Cryx to master the secrets of piercing this inexplicable realm and contact those lost to its void. Studying ancient texts recovered from the ruins of Morrdh, he was able to bring the tormented spirits back and encase them in rune-carved bone. Some souls are particularly resonant with bane energy and retain their own identity and power, while others are driven solely by energies of annihilation. Tartarus is one singularly potent soul, recovered and reborn by artifice into something truly unholy.

Nearly three thousand years ago, a Molgur chieftain named Horfar Grimm led a doomed attack against a great wall called the Shield of Thrace. It was one of the last great battles of the Molgur against Priest-King Golivant, and in its aftermath the Molgur were shattered. Grimm was captured by the Menites and tormented for a month before being thrown on the flames in rituals to expunge the Devourer-taint. As his flesh burned, Grimm's soul raged and lashed out. It was too powerful to be contained yet permanently scarred and disfigured by Menite rites. His weighty soul fell through the rift but did not reach Urcaen, languishing instead in the void. There it became something *other*. Past memories were erased in his unending suffering.

Over two thousand years the soul that was to be Tartarus writhed in this hellish state until discovered and called from the void by Tenebrous. The lich lord bound the spirit into the stitched-together remains of several unearthed and defiled warrior-kings to become a unique necromantic masterpiece. Encased in rune-inscribed armor and given the unholy axe *Rivener*, Bane Lord Tartarus now rules over and dominates all bane thralls in service of the Dragonfather.

Tartarus has wandered the shadows of western Immoren for centuries, lurking in cursed forests, the dark caverns below mountains, and swamps where the forgotten dead lie deep below the murk. He has brought forth his vassals and pulled other potent souls from the void to give them bodies, armor, weapons, and purpose. Because his own essence provides a continuous conduit to the void, the bane lord spurns the taxing and time-consuming rites to create these bane warriors. Whereas lesser necromancers must inscribe complex runes upon the remains of warriors to imbue them with the spirits of the void, Tartarus need only cut down the living and cast their souls into the abyss for a brief moment. Almost effortlessly the hate-fueled abomination consigns his enemies to an eternity of tormented service to himself, the void, and Cryx.

BANE LORD TARTARUS

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +9, Wis +7

Skills Perception +7

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Thrallspeak, Scharde Tongue, Molgur

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Tartarus hits with it (included in the attack).

Incorporeal Movement. Tartarus can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. He takes 5 (1d10) force damage if he ends his turn inside an object.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Tartarus fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. Tartarus's body turns to dust when he drops to 0 hit points, and his equipment is left behind. He gains a new body after 1d10 days, regaining all his hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 200 miles of the location at which he was destroyed. Tartarus immediately seeks out his axe, Rivener, and instantly knows its location regardless of the physical distance to it.

Turn Immunity. Tartarus is immune to effects that turn undead.

Void Shroud. While within 10 feet of Tartarus, non-undead creatures regain half as many hit points as normal when they regain hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Tartarus makes three Rivener attacks.

Rivener. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d12 + 3) slashing damage plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage. Attacks made with this weapon are magical.

BANE WITCH AGATHIA

Once regarded as both prisoner and oracle, Bane Witch Agathia is one of the more unusual weapons in Cryx's arsenal. In life she was valued for her insight into the occult, and the tragic circumstances of her death only increased her worth to the dark lords of the Nightmare Empire. Now more pawn than queen, Agathia has begun to assert her will, and she might yet find a way to choose her own fate.

For decades Agathia resided in the solitary watchtower at Hell's Hook overlooking Cryx's barren southern coast. She was imprisoned for having betrayed her former master, Lich Lord Daeamortus, in her dogged pursuit of occult knowledge. Judging her too valuable to be slain outright, the lich lord cast her soul into the depths of the void to wander endlessly between worlds. A host of thralls attended her motionless but living form, and on those rare occasions when Cryxians

BANE WITCH AGATHIA

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 187 (22d8 + 88)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +9, Wis +7

Skills Arcana +10, Stealth +8, Perception +8

Damage Resistances cold, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Thrallspeak, Scharde Tongue

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Focus Manipulation. Agathia and her bonded steamjacks can use any of the following abilities:

- **Attack Bonus.** Spend 1 focus point after making an attack with a bonded mechanical weapon to have advantage on the next attack roll made this turn.
- **Damage Bonus.** Spend any number of focus points after making an attack with a bonded mechanical weapon to deal an extra 1d8 weapon damage for each focus point spent this way.
- **Extra Attack.** Once each turn, spend 1 focus point to make an additional attack when taking the Attack action.
- **Reduce Damage (Agathia Only).** Spend 1 focus point to reduce damage taken by 5. (This ability can be used each time damage is taken).
- **Shake It Off.** Spend 1 focus point to have advantage on a saving throw.

Incorporeal Movement. Agathia can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

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

Rejuvenation. Agathia's body turns to dust when she drops to 0 hit points, and her equipment is left behind. She gains a new body after 1d10 days, regaining all her hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within the walls of Hell's Hook, the lighthouse at the north end of Cryx.

Spellcasting. Agathia is a 20th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). Casting a spell requires Agathia to spend a number of focus points equal to the spell's level. She has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *arcane bolt*, *light*, *sense cortex*, *true strike*
1st level: *bleed*, *conceal cortex*, *detect magic*, *fog cloud*, *shield*
2nd level: *infernal machine*, *seize gears*, *misty step*, *shatter*, *parasite*

3rd level: *counterspell*, *dark fire*, *hellfire*

4th level: *spectral steel*, *stygian abyss*

5th level: *death knell*, *chasten*, *shadowmancer*

Steamjack Control. Agathia can be bonded to up to five steamjacks. Each of Agathia's bonded steamjacks gains 2 focus points at the start of its turn if it is within 80 feet of Agathia.

Turn Immunity. Agathia is immune to effects that turn undead.

Void Shroud. While within 10 feet of Agathia, non-undead creatures regain half as many hit points as normal when they regain hit points.

Warcaster. Agathia has 8 focus points and a control range of 80 feet. She regains 4 focus points at the start of each of her turns, to a maximum of 8.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Agathia makes two Death's Kiss attacks. She can replace one of these attacks with a spell.

Death's Kiss (+2 greataxe). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d12 + 5) slashing damage plus 22 (4d10) necrotic damage. Attacks made with this weapon are magical.

Shadowfall (1/Day). From her time in the void, Agathia learned mastery over darkness itself. She can create shadows so dark they serve as holes in reality, enabling her army to vanish from one place and reappear in another to take her enemies completely by surprise. Agathia and friendly construct and undead creatures within her control range become heavily obscured until the start of Agathia's next turn and gain the benefit of her Incorporeal Movement trait. At the start of its turn, a friendly construct or undead creature in Agathia's control range can teleport to an unoccupied space within 30 feet of its current position that it or Agathia can see.

came to her tower seeking advice on otherworldly matters, her consciousness returned briefly to speak scraps of truth veiled by riddles. After the fall of Daeamortus, Agathia was forgotten and her tower abandoned. The thralls that attended her soon fell apart, and her body died not long thereafter.

While searching for useful salvage, servants of Lich Lord Tenebrous found Agathia's body in the tower's inner chamber. Tenebrous took a personal interest in her condition. By plumbing the depths of the void he found and recovered her soul, discovering her mind was remarkably intact despite her time in that hellscape. The foremost expert in such matters, the lich lord reunited Agathia's soul with her unliving flesh, creating a uniquely powerful bane. She returned as a shadow of death, retaining great insights from her time in the void. Her mind had been fractured and reshaped, and now Agathia moves through the world like a sleepwalker, coming fully awake only in the midst of battle. She remains connected to her past only by fleeting memories she finds difficult to interpret.

Tenebrous prizes Agathia's unusual perspective on the world and the way her transfigured mind interprets arcane mysteries. He covets the secrets buried within her memories. Bound to the lich lord's service, Agathia plunders tombs and sacred grounds in the pursuit of lost and ancient lore, bringing him treasures to add to his vast repository. Unknown to Tenebrous, Agathia's memories have begun to return, and she has taken a secret interest in unearthing the mysteries of her past. The lich lord's trust has enabled her to operate with minimal oversight, a fact she has exploited to extend her missions abroad and visit sites of her own choosing. On more than one occasion she has convinced her master to send her on expeditions more beneficial to her research than to his.

Though Agathia remains a potent oracle, her sense of time has become fractured, and it is not always possible for the bane witch to tell whether the visions revealed to her are glimpses of the future or remnants of her forgotten past. She might fly into fits of rage or sink into feelings of hopelessness that shatter her stoic demeanor, though she is careful to conceal these outbursts from her master. Tenebrous is as yet unaware of her personal interests and growing autonomy. As slivers of her memory return, Agathia's silent disobedience grows, and while she continues to give her master the valuable relics she obtains, she is not above examining them for herself first, seeking pieces of a key to unlock her mind.

Battle Group. As a commander in the Cryxian army, Agathia is seldom encountered alone. When designing an encounter that includes Agathia, she should be in command of between 2 and 5 warjacks and an escort of 3 to 8 Bane Warriors.



BLACK TROLL

Black trolls are the most despised of all their kind, undead abominations that are a twisted mockery of other trolls. Trollkin especially revile black trolls, who their legends claim are born of a tainted bloodline and thus depend on drinking the blood of others. All black trolls are solitary creatures that live only for torment. They raid troll and human settlements alike, murdering and pillaging as they go.

Fratricidal by Nature. In combat, black trolls are shifty and clever. They try to isolate opponents, slaying them one by one. They take great pleasure in slaughtering the living members of their own kind, which in turn rise as new black trolls. The only strains that seem unaffected by this are the pygmy trolls and trollkin—though that fact does little to dissuade black trolls from attacking the blighted trollkin of the Scharde Isles.

Feculent Decay. A black troll, despite its regeneration, is in a constant state of decay. Necrotic flesh sloughs from its body only to be regenerated moments later, and the troll's entire body appears made from a noxious soup of rotting meat.

Undead Nature. A black troll does not need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

The black trolls of the Scharde Islands comprise two forces in opposition that maintain a seemingly perfect balance: regeneration and rot. Their bloodlines have been irreversibly marked by the blight of Toruk, and they exist in a state of constant decay and regrowth. It would be a pitiable existence, if the black trolls were not such merciless and bloodthirsty creatures.

Professor Viktor Pendrake



BLACK TROLL

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 157 (15d10 + 75)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +9, Con +8

Skills Perception +3

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Festering. A creature that touches the troll or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) necrotic damage.

Regeneration. The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

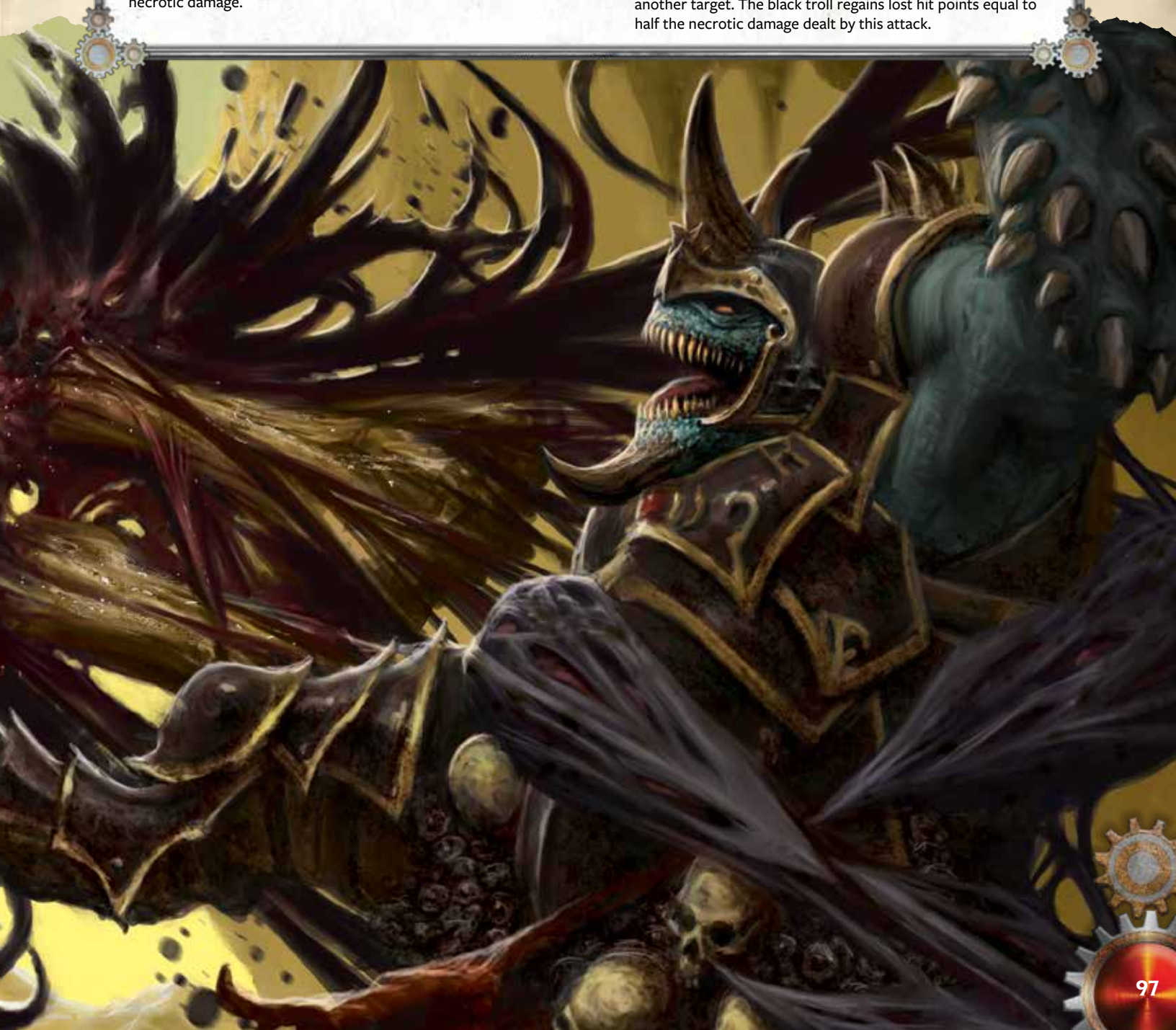
Troll Bane. Any hit with a physical attack made by a black troll against any other species of troll negates their regeneration until the start of the black troll's next turn. Any troll (excluding pygmy trolls and trollkin) killed by a black troll rises as a black troll within 1d10 days. The black troll has no control over this spawn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The troll makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

Touch of Corruption. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d8 + 1) necrotic damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns, and the black troll can't grapple another target. The black troll regains lost hit points equal to half the necrotic damage dealt by this attack.



BLIGHTED INSECT

Don't talk to me about mosquitos. After half an hour marching through the swamps of the Schardes, you'll be begging—no, praying to get chewed on by some regular Bloodsmeath Marsh mosquitos. The blighted bastards out on the islands don't just want your blood—they want it to hurt the whole time they're drinking it.

Captain Bartolo Montador

Colonies of biting, stinging insects make their homes across the fetid swamps and jungles of the Scharde Islands. The Dragonfather's blight makes these infestations far more dangerous than the common pests of the mainland: they grow to incredible size and possess blight-augmented venom that causes flesh to swell to the point of bursting within moments or turn necrotic and ooze off their victims.

Blight Vectors. Most of the pestilent insects of the Scharde Islands feed on blood. This is dangerous enough on its own, but those who survive an attack by them often begin to suffer the residual effects of blight. Some colonies of these insects have carried Toruk's gift far beyond the region, spreading it among the inhabitants of distant islands.

Menagerie of Miseries. Like most wildlife of the Scharde Islands, the insects of the region are fundamentally and unpredictably changed by Toruk's touch. Whole colonies might manifest similar alterations, but it is just as likely that individual members show their blighted gifts in uniquely horrifying ways.

CUSTOMIZING BLIGHTED INSECTS

The blight of Toruk manifests in unanticipated forms, and the blighted fauna of Cryx also vary drastically, not merely within a species but also among individuals. To customize a blighted insect, roll once on the **Primary Features** table and then once on the **Secondary Features** table (or choose one option from each) and add those features to the basic creature's stat block. When applying features to a swarm, the whole swarm benefits from them.

PRIMARY FEATURES

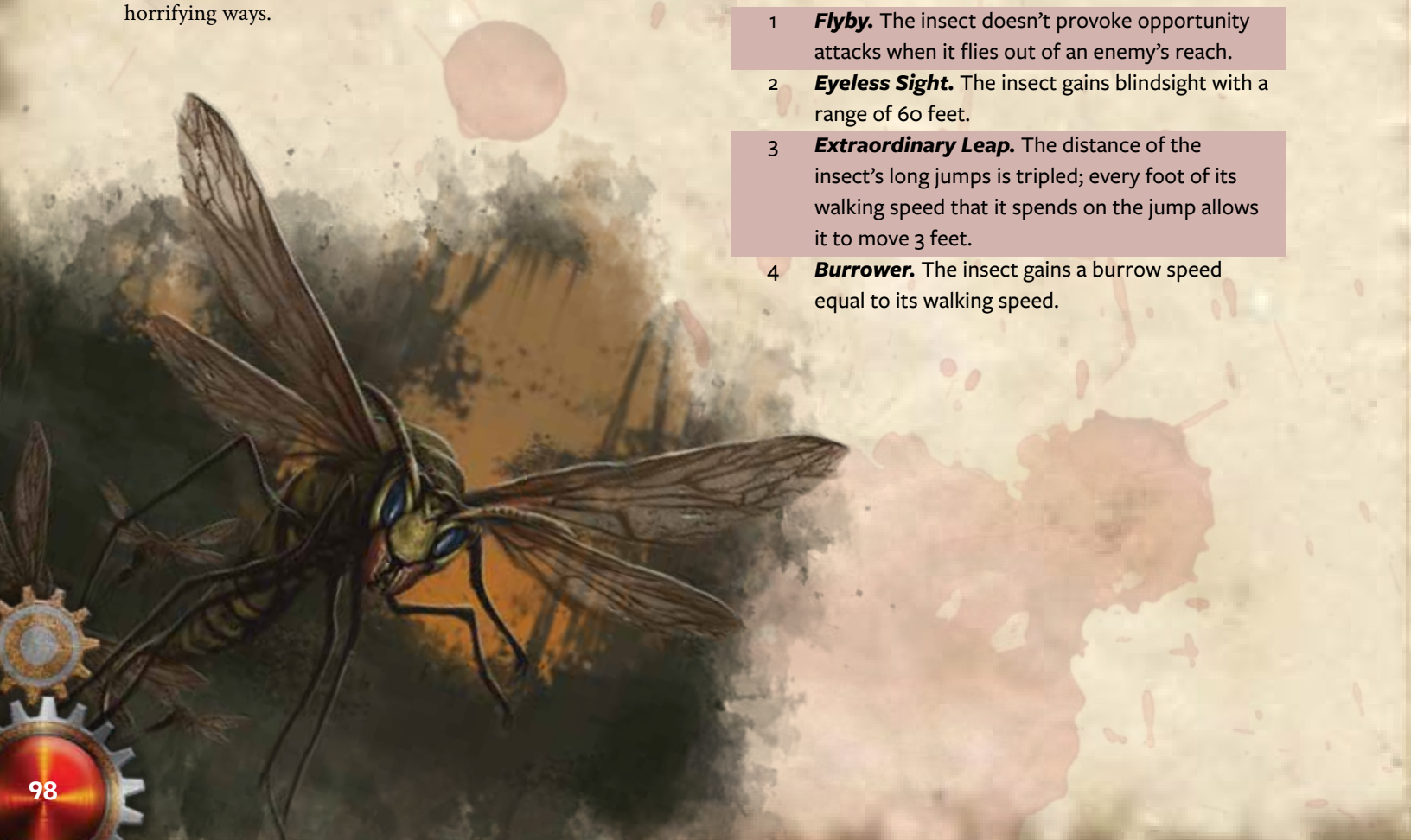
d4 Feature

- 1 **Potent Venom.** A creature poisoned by the insect's bite regains half as many hit points from healing and rests while it remains poisoned.
- 2 **Blood Frenzy.** The insect has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.
- 3 **Blood Feed.** When the insect damages a non-construct, non-undead creature with its bite attack, it regains hit points equal to half the piercing damage dealt.
- 4 **Pack Tactics.** The insect has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the insect's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

SECONDARY FEATURES

d4 Feature

- 1 **Flyby.** The insect doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.
- 2 **Eyeless Sight.** The insect gains blindsight with a range of 60 feet.
- 3 **Extraordinary Leap.** The distance of the insect's long jumps is tripled; every foot of its walking speed that it spends on the jump allows it to move 3 feet.
- 4 **Burrower.** The insect gains a burrow speed equal to its walking speed.



BLIGHTED INSECT

Small beast (blighted), unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)

Speed 15 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Avoidance. If the insect is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Spider Climb. The insect can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) poison damage. If this poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

SWARM OF BLIGHTED INSECTS

Large swarm of small beasts (blighted), unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d10 + 12)

Speed 15 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Avoidance. If the swarm is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Spider Climb. The swarm can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Small insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (4d4 + 3) piercing damage, or 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage if the swarm has half its hit points or fewer. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 22 (4d10) poison damage. If this poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.





BLIGHTED BEAST

The Scharde Islands are home to a vast array of wildlife found nowhere else in the world. Geographically isolated from the mainland, almost none of these creatures have ever appeared there and are known only by the inhabitants of the countless islands off the Broken Coast.

Variety Beyond Counting. If these creatures were not unusual enough to the mainlanders of the Iron Kingdoms, they are made even more bizarre by the pervasive effects of Toruk's blight. The blight seeps across the Scharde Islands, more concentrated the closer an isle is to Cryx and the heart of Toruk's domain. The creatures dwelling on such islands, and particularly within Cryx itself, are remade in infinite varieties as the blight twists and alters their physiology. Under the corrupting influence of Toruk, some of these creatures are scarcely recognizable as members of their species. Any attempt to classify them would be as difficult as it is pointless: they have become so altered that it is impossible to know what creature they once might have been.

Built Blight Tough. Despite individual variations, the wildlife of the Scharde Islands shares some common aspects. These creatures are prone to aggression and predatory behavior—even ones that might have once been plant-eaters. Their bones are unnaturally dense, hardened by blight. Many grow vicious fangs or tusks, horns, and thorny protrusions from their hides.

BLIGHTED CHARGER

Chargers are large, predominantly land-dwelling creatures. They are powerfully muscled, and most have large horns or antlers to gore prey. In some Scharde communities, these beasts are used as irascible but mighty beasts of burden.

BLIGHTED LEAPERS

Leapers are agile predators most often compared to the crag lions and other great cats of western Immoren. Stealthy creatures that stalk their prey, leapers attack from ambush with a sudden pounce.

BLIGHTED WALLOWERS

Large and ungainly, wallowers are found in the blighted waterways and lagoons of the Scharde Islands or rolling in the muddy waters of inland swamps. These creatures typically have large tusks to impale anyone clumsy or unfortunate enough to come within reach.

Have you ever wondered where all those skulls, tusks, and horns on Cryxian 'jacks come from? So did I until I took a trip out to Blackwater. In the Meat Market there, I saw a butcher's paradise of huge, weird critters, all cut up. Looked to me like they'd set some of the nastier looking skulls aside for the necrotechs. The rest of the creatures they were frying up with onions.

Captain Bartolo Montador

CUSTOMIZING BLIGHTED BEASTS

The blight of Toruk manifests in unanticipated ways, and the blighted fauna of Cryx also vary drastically, not merely within a species but also among individuals. To customize a blighted beast, choose a core creature (blighted charger, blighted leaper, or blighted wallower); roll once on the **Primary Features** table and then once on the **Secondary Features** table (or choose one option from each) and add those features to the basic creature's stat block.

PRIMARY FEATURES

d8 Feature

- 1 **Bladed Hide.** At the start of each of its turns, the beast deals 5 (2d4) piercing damage to any creature grappling it.
- 2 **Blight-Scaled.** The beast gains resistance to piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.
- 3 **Death Burst.** When the beast dies, it explodes in a burst of blighted meat. Each creature within 10 feet of the exploding beast must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- 4 **Regeneration.** The beast regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the beast takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the beast's next turn. The beast dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.
- 5 **Stench.** Any creature other than a blighted creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the beast must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of the creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the stench of any blighted creature for 1 hour.
- 6 **Blood Frenzy.** The beast has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.
- 7 **Magic Resistance.** The beast has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- 8 **Strange Anatomy.** The beast's anatomy is unlike that of any normal creature. A critical hit scored against the beast becomes a normal hit.

SECONDARY FEATURES

d8 Feature

- 1 **Amphibious.** The beast can breathe air and water.
- 2 **Eyeless Sight.** The beast gains blindsight with a range of 60 feet.
- 3 **Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the beast can take the Hide action as a bonus action.
- 4 **Wriggling.** The beast can enter a space large enough for a Medium creature without squeezing.
- 5 **Standing Leap.** The beast's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.
- 6 **Sure-Footed.** The beast has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.
- 7 **Spider Climb.** The beast can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
- 8 **Aggressive.** As a bonus action, the beast can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

BLIGHTED CHARGER

Large beast (blighted), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Charge. If the beast moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 3 (1d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage.

BLIGHTED LEAPER

Large beast (blighted), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Pounce. If the beast moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the beast can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

BLIGHTED WALLOWER

Large beast (blighted), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Hold Breath. The beast can hold its breath for 1 hour.

Lagoon Monster. While submerged in water, the beast has advantage on attack rolls targeting creatures that do not have a swim speed.

ACTIONS

Tusk. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

BLOOD HOUND

On battlefields across western Immoren and the Scharde Islands, corpses in all different states of dismemberment serve the necrotechs and necrosurgeons of the Nightmare Empire. Where possible these corpses are fashioned into humanoid mechanithralls, bile thralls, and the like, but some bodies can provide only a handful of useful materials.

In these instances, the dark engineers of Cryx turn to other sources of body parts, as is sometimes seen in the horrifying human-horse fusions known as soulhunters. Blood hounds are another such creation, combining human remains with those of wolves, mastiffs, or other four-legged creatures.

Blood hounds are swift, disposable weapons in the arsenal of the Nightmare Empire. Packs of them spread chaos ahead of the main force or stalk the countryside to pick off wandering prey. Their strange cries, a mixture of a wolf's howl and the pained screeching of a human, are a baleful warning that the forces of the Dragonfather draw near.

Firebox Reliance. A foul necrotite furnace powers a blood hound's body. A blood hound requires necrotite to function and will become inert and insensate if its supply of the death-tainted coal runs out. These fireboxes require refueling (roughly 1 pound of necrotite) every 12 hours.

Necrotech Nature. A blood hound doesn't require food, drink, or sleep. Its furnace requires necrotite and air to function.

Say what you will about the Cryxians, but they are a resourceful bunch. Sometimes people don't die in handy, intact ways that would make it convenient for the necrosurgeons, but that never stopped them. Why waste a good torso or set of legs from a human when you've got a pile of dog bits, maybe the tail of a gator, and some extra-sharp teeth lying about?

Professor Viktor Pendrake

BLOOD HOUND

Medium undead (necrotech), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +1, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. The blood hound has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the blood hound's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Iron Maw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

Hit and Run. After hitting a creature with an iron maw attack, a blood hound can use its reaction to immediately move up to its walking speed. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

BRINE THRALL

Insane necrotechs dwelling in the coastal communities of the Nightmare Empire sometimes luck into the half-consumed corpses of predatory sea creatures that wash up on the shores of their islands. Hauling the crab-infested bodies into their workshops, they go about retrofitting them with necrotite furnaces, replacing rotted fins with bits of bonejack hull, and outfitting their creations with augmented jaws filled with grasping pincers, whirling saws, or anything else the creator has close at hand.

These aquatic constructs act as a kind of living minefield that prowls the waterways of the Scharde Islands to ensure against unwanted visitors. When an intruder's vessel comes too close to its creator's island, the creature waits patiently until longboats hit the water, then launches a sudden and frenzied assault, knocking sailors into the water where it can drag them deeper and maul their bodies.

Take a Deep Breath. Like all necrotech thralls, these creatures are reliant on burning necrotite to function. Thus they must breach on occasion, opening louvered vents along their bodies to allow fresh air to reach their furnaces. If not, the flame that keeps them functioning would smother and all the work and material of their creation would be lost to the crushing deep.

Firebox Reliance. A foul necrotite furnace powers a brine thrall's body. A brine thrall requires necrotite to function and will become inert and insensate if its supply of the death-tainted coal runs out. These fireboxes require refueling (roughly 20 pounds of necrotite) every 96 hours.

Necrotech Nature. A brine thrall doesn't require food, drink, or sleep. Its furnace requires necrotite and air to function.

BRINE THRALL

Large undead (necrotech), unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 115 (11d10 + 55)

Speed 0 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Blood Frenzy. The brine thrall has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Siege Monster. The brine thrall deals double damage to objects and structures.

Watertight Furnace. The brine thrall needs to surface at least once every 4 hours to prevent its necrotite furnace from being extinguished.

ACTIONS

Threshing Jaws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the brine thrall can't attack another target.

We were creeping south through Barrel Branch to avoid some reavers we'd spotted lurking north of Blackrock. I'll never make that mistake again. Something ripped our hull open from stem to stern. We thought we'd hit a reef. We were wrong. Sixty of us went into the water, where that thing was waiting. Four of us made it out. It almost seemed to be alive until it swam up on you. Then you saw its eyes, white, dead eyes, and the blades spinning where its teeth ought to be...

Captain Bartolo Montador





CARRION THRALL

Sailors know to keep an eye on the sea birds when navigating the Scharde Islands. Some might be gulls that can lead you to a safe shore during a storm, but out there they are just as likely to be a damned scylla flock, or worse, a pack of carrion thralls. If it's thralls on the wing, you're in for a whole new kind of trouble, because their makers are seldom far behind...

Captain Bartolo Montador

CARRION THRALL

Small undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 14 (4d6)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Finisher. The thrall's melee attack deals one extra die of damage (1d6) against any creature that doesn't have all of its hit points.

Flyby. The thrall doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

ACTIONS

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

There is no raw material that the necrosurgeons of Cryx cannot modify to serve the Dragonfather and his agents. Flocks of carrion thralls, blotting out the sky with mechanically strengthened wings, are frequently the forerunners of a full Cryxian onslaught. These little necromechanical creatures, simple to create and animate, have persisted in the shadows of the Nightmare Empire for generations, and despite substantial breakthroughs in thrall production, they continue to prove their utility both as spies and as harrying troops on the battlefield. Difficult to distinguish from wild birds at a distance, they offer Cryxian generals crucial reconnaissance on enemy unit movements and deployments. These miniature thralls can work for lengthy periods of time, making them ideal sentries to guard Cryx's hidden strongholds on the mainland and to provide a powerful early warning system to guarantee the Cryxian presence goes undiscovered by regular patrols.

Carrion thralls keep in constant motion throughout a fight, darting down to rip at their foes' eyes and exposed skin before rapidly soaring out of reach. Their thrall runes, along with their predatory tendencies from life, make them exceptionally lethal against injured adversaries. Cryxian generals used carrion thralls in large numbers in the aftermath of the kingdoms' conflicts, taking advantage of this inclination as well as their speed and simplicity of production to spread horror and agony among the remaining enemy warriors. The resources necessary to construct these thralls are little in comparison to the devastation wreaked by their attacks.

Firebox Reliance. A foul necrotite furnace powers a carrion thrall's body. A carrion thrall requires necrotite to function and will become inert and insensate if its supply of the death-tainted coal runs out. These fireboxes require refueling (roughly half a pound of necrotite) every 36 hours.

Necrotech Nature. A carrion thrall doesn't require food, drink, or sleep. Its furnace requires necrotite and air to function.

DRAGON KNIGHT

Damned souls in Skell who worship in the Black Temple sometimes receive visions they claim come from the Dragonfather himself. They allow themselves to be entombed in armor forged with the ashes of Toruk's blight and tempered on the banks of the Scalesflow River, worked with foul runes by the Church of Toruk. Those who wear these walking coffins are the dragon knights, the most corrupted and devout mortals who serve the dragon.

Professor Viktor Pendrake

Many of the Dragonfather's most devout warriors number among the intelligent undead—but not all. Across the Nightmare Empire are those who choose to serve the Dragonfather in life and, when their frail mortal forms finally succumb to age and the ravages of blight, eternally thereafter.

These are the dragon knights. They dwell as close to the city of Skell as possible, where the falling flakes of blighted ash coat their flesh and seep into their tissues. The gifts of Toruk manifest as rampant tumors, twisted bodies, and minds shattered by their proximity to the first and greatest of dragons.

Entombed in Hellwrought Iron. Dragon knights compensate for their failing bodies with suits of necromechanical armor powered by refined necrotite. Modeled after the Man-O-War of Khador, but tailored to the sensibilities of Cryxians, these armored battle suits render them something between predatory helljacks and the heaviest thralls of the Nightmare Empire.

Once such devoted mortals make the decision to wear the black armor of their knighthood, the choice is permanent. The armor is grafted onto their flesh and bound shut, preventing them from ever removing it—and even if they could, death would happen soon after. The necromechanika that powers their hellwrought armor takes over for failing organs and decaying flesh, its structure compensating for bones that have turned chalky and fragile. Within these suits of powered armor the dragon knights are terrifying in battle and unshakeable in their devotion, but the bodies that guide them are feeble things that have wasted away almost to nothing.

Service Even in Death. It is not commonly known that many of the oldest dragon knights are centuries dead. They are not, however, undead as are the iron liches or other unliving servants of Toruk. Instead, the armor they wore in life resonates with a whisper of the warrior-spirit who once wore it, an unthinking machine of death and devastation guided by the echo of a broken mind. Within these silent knights, only dust and bones remain.

DRAGON KNIGHT

Large humanoid (blighted), neutral evil

Armor Class 21 (necromechanical armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Constitution +6

Skills Intimidation +2

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Scharde-tongue

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Blight Conduit. Runes inscribed in the knight's armor allow it to channel the spells of Toruk's servants. The knight is a channeler for a friendly caster's spells from the necromancy school of magic.

Hellwrought. The knight's heavy necromechanical armor provides it with a damage threshold of 10. A single attack or effect that deals less than this amount does not damage the knight. The armor requires a load of 10 pounds of necrotite or 20 pounds of coal and 8 gallons of water for 5 hours of general use or 1 hour of combat. If the armor does not have power, the knight's base speed becomes 0.

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

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

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The knight makes three blood cleaver attacks.

Blood Cleaver. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage plus 5 (1d10) necrotic damage.

Miasma of Desecration (2/day). The dragon knight releases a cloud of corruptive energy that fills a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on it. Other non-construct, non-undead creatures in the sphere must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.



IRON LICH OVERSEER

The last battle against the Orgoth took the full force of the Nightmare Empire, and even then, it almost was not enough. The tens of thousands of thralls, hundreds of iron liches, and even the lich lords that were sent to destroy the defenders of Drer Drakkerung suffered casualties that would have been catastrophic for any other nation on Caen. The Cryxians simply looked at the bits and pieces that were left behind and said "Okay, but what can I make out of this?"

Professor Viktor Pendrake



IRON LICH OVERSEER

Large undead (necrotech), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +6

Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Perception +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages any languages it knew in life plus up to three other languages

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Jack Marshal. The iron lich overseer is proficient in marshaling steamjacks.

Drive: Void Shroud. The overseer can marshal a steamjack under its control to grant it an aura inimical to life. Until the start of the overseer's next turn, any non-undead creature within 10 feet of the steamjack cannot regain hit points.

Firebox Vulnerability. The overseer requires necrotite to function. It requires refueling (roughly 5 pounds of necrotite) after every 12 hours of normal activity or every 6 hours of strenuous activity. If not refueled, it suffers one level of exhaustion each hour, bypassing its normal immunity to exhaustion. The overseer can't be killed as a result of exhaustion but becomes stunned at level 6 until its firebox is refilled and lit.

The firebox fails when completely submerged in water or any other liquid. The overseer is stunned when its firebox is unlit.

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

Reconstruction. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed overseer can have a new body built. Building a new body requires 5,000 gp in materials and 1d10 days. After gaining a new body, the overseer regains all hit points and becomes active again.

Special Equipment. The overseer has a fell spear and three empty soul cages.

Spellcasting. The overseer is a 10th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The iron lich overseer has the following wizard spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *chill touch*, *message*, *poison spray*, *ray of frost*

1st Level (4 slots): *shield*, *thunderwave*, *whipping winds*

2nd Level (3 slots): *curse of shadows*, *darkness*, *ray of enfeeblement*

3rd Level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *hellfire*, *speak with dead*

4th Level (3 slots): *blight*, *confusion*, *void gate*

5th Level (2 slots): *breath of corruption*

Three Heads. The overseer has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, deafened, and stunned. It can maintain concentration on two spells at the same time, but if it fails a saving throw to maintain its concentration, then it loses concentration on all spells.

Turn Resistance. The overseer has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The overseer makes two fell spear or mechano-claws attacks. It can replace one of these attacks with a spell.

Fell Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

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

Consume Souls. As an action, the iron lich can consume 1 Hit Die of souls from its soul cage to replenish an expended 1st level spell slot.

REACTIONS

Soul Cage. If a living creature with a soul dies while within 15 feet of the overseer, the overseer can use its reaction to capture the soul in one of its soul cages. Each soul cage can contain only a single soul of a creature with up to 10 Hit Dice.

An iron lich overseer exists to extend the will of its masters and their machines beyond their ordinary reach. Liches draw on the vitality of the souls they harvest to fight with terrible ferocity. The overseer slowly turns as the battle unfolds, each of its three faces surveying the enemy as it unleashes volleys of arcane destruction, all the while delivering mental commands to the helljacks that follow it to war.

Crisis is Another Word for Opportunity. The first overseers were created in the aftermath of the annihilation of Drer Drakkerung, when the Orgoth warwitches unleashed unparalleled destruction upon the Cryxian army. The lich lords left no tool to decay, no matter how badly damaged. This included powerful necromancers who had suffered massive physical and mental trauma but were not entirely destroyed. Because of their unique skills and arcane talents, a method was found to preserve them.

Triplets of Evil. The restructured liches are composite beings with a single body and a unified consciousness. The restoration process ensures some degree of cooperation between these competing personalities, and in time they merge into a single mind—undeniably insane, but with heightened awareness as well as amplified cognitive and arcane powers. Following the success of these initial experiments, the lich lords began using the consciousness-blending process to punish effective but willful servants.

Firebox Reliance. A foul necrotite furnace powers an iron lich's body. An iron lich requires necrotite to function and will become inert and insensate if its supply of the death-tainted coal runs out. These fireboxes require refueling (roughly 5 pounds of necrotite) every 12 hours.

Necrotech Nature. An iron lich doesn't require food, drink, or sleep. Its furnace requires necrotite and air to function.

SKARLOCK THRALL

Skarlock thralls are insidious creatures of blackest sorcery. Linked to their warcasters by bonds so powerful they can act in their masters' stead, skarlocks move against enemies with confidence born of a hateful intelligence that shines from their eye sockets.

Unique beings, skarlock thralls possess extensive personalities and agendas. More than any other constructed thrall, skarlocks retain the memories and lore they gained during life in addition to knowledge absorbed during the inscription of their animating runes. A dense inlay of dark

sigils blackens their bones and desiccated flesh, instilling tremendous necromantic power and sorcerous potential into their physical forms.

From its very fabrication, each skarlock is inextricably bound to its master and is incapable of disloyalty. As part of the bonding process, skarlocks become conduits for the unique arcane abilities of their warcasters, who often send them forth to unleash this power from a distance. Lesser minions make every effort to appease the creatures, knowing that each represents the eyes and ears of a malevolent and powerful master.

Undead Nature. A skarlock doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.



SKARLOCK COMMANDER

Relentless and devoid of passion but clever enough to be unpredictable, skarlock commanders serve as vital intermediaries between Cryx's generals and its teeming hordes of mindless thralls, driving those lesser creations like a knife into the vital organs of opposing armies. Under the protection of the commanders' necromantic powers, the ranks of mechanithralls reach their full potential.

Intricate runes carved into flesh and etched upon bone by necromancers make the skarlock commanders among the most complex thralls of Cryx. While lacking true self-will, these advanced thralls possess a cold intelligence as well as unwavering devotion exceeding any mortal commander's. They have no need of valor, for their dedication is crafted into their very being.

Each commander carries a fell spear, an accursed weapon crafted in the charnel forges of Cryx, and wields potent magic. As they lead the march across the field, the commanders tear free the souls of those overtaken by their thralls, each victim fueling another blast of dark magic to drive the masses of fetid flesh and machine deeper into the heart of enemy lines.

Undead Nature. A skarlock doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

CUSTOMIZING SKARLOCK THRALLS

Skarlocks are purpose-built and can take on a wide variety of functions for their creators. Combined with their retained memories and personalities, each skarlock is a unique individual.

Consider giving a skarlock an existing background and its benefits, or you can use the following tables.

SKARLOCK NAMES

Names: Aurux, Crebius, Malius, Puparis, Servus, Vermisus

SKARLOCK PERSONALITY TRAITS

d4 Personality Trait

- 1 If there are two solutions to a problem, I always find a third.
- 2 Time has no meaning for the undead—unless you're me. I always keep a tally of how long tasks take to complete.
- 3 When I have a little bit of authority, I like to let people know about it.
- 4 I was built to serve and will do so to the best of my abilities.

SKARLOCK IDEALS

d4 Ideal

- 1 **Power.** I seek great power in my master's name. (Evil)
- 2 **Freedom.** I cannot act against my master, but once they are destroyed, I can choose my own path. (Chaotic)
- 3 **Obedience.** I was created to serve. (Lawful)
- 4 **Knowledge.** I finally have the time to learn everything there is to know. (Neutral)

SKARLOCK BONDS

d4 Bond

- 1 I must know the fate of the family I had in life.
- 2 I will prove to my master that I am more than a common runner of errands.
- 3 I will destroy a rival skarlock my master favors.
- 4 I will find any occult knowledge I can to grow my master's library of the occult—and thereby my own as well.

SKARLOCK FLAWS

d4 Flaw

- 1 I am constantly afraid my master will destroy and replace me.
- 2 I see the negative outcome in everything.
- 3 I obsess over perfecting my tasks so much that they take twice as long to complete.
- 4 I seek the approval of those who hold higher station than me.

SKARLOCK SKILLS

Skills below include the skarlock's ability modifier and proficiency bonus.

d4 Skills

- 1 Perception +3, Stealth +4
- 2 Deception +4, Insight +3
- 3 Arcana +4, History +4
- 4 Investigation +4, Persuasion +4

There is no servant on Caen as loyal as the undead toadies of the Nightmare Empire. They are physically incapable of going against the wishes of their creators, no matter how much sedition they might harbor in their hearts. In return, they get to carry out the whims of their masters until they are destroyed or, more often, replaced with something better.

—Professor Viktor Pendrake

SKARLOCK THRALL

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Thrallspeak, speaks the language of its creator

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Special Equipment. A skarlock thrall carries a soul cage.

Spellcasting. The skarlock thrall is a 2nd-level spellcaster that needs only verbal and runic components to cast its spells. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. A skarlock is imbued with the ability to cast spells by its creator, drawn from its creator's repertoire. The following spells are typical examples of those imbued by a Cryxian necromancer the skarlock knows.

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *chill touch*, *message*, *shocking grasp*

1st-level (3 slots): *hellish rebuke*, *charm person*, *silent image*.

Spell Slave. If a skarlock is within 60 feet of its creator, it can cast a spell its creator is able to cast. To cast the spell, the skarlock must have an available spell slot of the appropriate level.

Strength of Death. After using the Consume Souls action, the skarlock gains advantage on melee attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Turn Resistance. The skarlock has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The skarlock thrall makes two claws attacks. It can replace one of its attacks with a spell.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 2 (1d6 - 1) slashing damage.

Consume Souls. As an action, the skarlock thrall can consume 1 Hit Die of souls from its soul cage to replenish an expended 1st level spell slot.

REACTIONS

Soul Cage. If a living creature with a soul dies while within 15 feet of the skarlock, the skarlock can use its reaction to capture the soul in one of its soul cages. Each soul cage can contain only a single soul of a creature with up to 10 Hit Dice.

SKARLOCK COMMANDER

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d8+30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Thrallspeak, speaks the language of its creator

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Bolster Undead. Unless the skarlock commander is incapacitated, it and undead creatures of its choice within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against features that turn undead.

Special Equipment. A skarlock commander carries a fell spear and a soul cage.

Spellcasting. The skarlock commander is a 4th-level spellcaster that needs only verbal and runic components to cast its spells. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. A skarlock is imbued with the ability to cast spells by its creator and must be drawn from its creator's repertoire. The following spells are typical examples of those imbued by a Cryxian necromancer the skarlock knows.

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *chill touch*, *message*, *shocking grasp*

(4 1st-level and 2 2nd-level slots): *curse of shadows*, *darkness*, *doom spiral*, *hellbound*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *web*

Spell Slave. If a skarlock is within 60 feet of its creator, it can cast a spell its creator is able to cast. To cast the spell, the skarlock must have an available spell slot of the appropriate level.

Strength of Death. After using the Consume Souls action, the skarlock gains advantage on melee attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The skarlock commander makes two fell spear attacks. It can replace one of its attacks with a spell.

Fell Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d8 - 1) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, or 4 (1d10 +1) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage if used with two hands.

Consume Souls. As an action, the skarlock commander can consume one or more Hit Dice of souls from its soul cage to replenish expended spell slots. Consuming 1 Hit Die replenishes a 1st-level spell slot, and consuming 2 Hit Dice replenishes a 2nd-level spell slot.

REACTIONS

Soul Cage. If a living creature with a soul dies while within 15 feet of the skarlock, the skarlock can use its reaction to capture the soul in one of its soul cages. Each soul cage can contain only a single soul of a creature with up to 10 Hit Dice.



SOUL TRAPPER

They might look like the more dangerous skarlock thralls, but these creatures are greedier than a Carre Dova tax collector. Rather than gold, it is souls they covet—often to the point of their own downfall. I've seen one go charging into a barrage of broadside fire in an effort to pluck the spirit of a recently departed sailor.

Captain Bartolo Montador

Every soul that escapes the Nightmare Empire in its battles is seen as a wasted opportunity. Unsatisfied with this inefficiency, the lich lords tasked the Cryxian necromancers with devising a thrall that shared the insatiable hunger of its masters. The necromancers answered with the soul trapper.

The soul trapper treads the front lines with both eagerness and desperation. The thrall continually wrests souls of the recently departed from the air, its limbs darting here and there like the workings of a manic threshing machine. It crams its stolen harvest into prepared chambers functioning as soul cages within its body, where the trapper becomes their keeper until they can be transferred to other, mightier entities.

Avid Collectors. The runes carved upon the undead flesh within the soul trapper's carapace imbue the creation with an incessant need to gather as many souls as possible, seeking to ease a hunger that never relents. Once the thrall claims souls, they are soon seized by its superiors, leaving it nothing but a sense of emptiness and craving. The screams of tormented souls can be heard echoing from its ribcage long after they have gone. Despite being driven mainly by its insatiable appetite for fresh souls, the soul trapper possesses intelligence superior to that of most thralls, which makes it self-sufficient—and all the more treacherous.

Firebox Reliance. A foul necrotite furnace powers a soul trapper's body. A soul trapper requires necrotite to function and will become inert and insensate if its supply of the death-tainted coal runs out. These fireboxes require refueling (roughly 5 pounds of necrotite) every 12 hours.

Necrotech Nature. A soul trapper doesn't require food, drink, or sleep. Its furnace requires necrotite and air to function.

SOUL TRAPPER

Medium undead (necrotech), alignment

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands the languages of its manufacturer but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Soul Shroud. While it is carrying a soul, the soul trapper can take the Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Additionally, while carrying a soul, the soul trapper can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 2 (1d4) slashing damage. If the soul trapper is carrying a soul, its claws attack deals an extra 3 (1d6) necrotic damage.

Soul Transfer. The soul trapper targets one friendly creature it can see that can collect souls within 30 feet of it and transfers any souls it is carrying to the target. The soul trapper can choose to transfer some or all of its carried Hit Dice of souls to the target creature.

REACTIONS

Soul Vessel. If a living creature with a soul dies while within 15 feet of the soul trapper, the soul trapper can use its reaction to capture the soul as though with a soul cage. It can contain souls of living creatures up to 30 Hit Dice.





WRAITH ENGINE

The wraith engine is more than just a machine. It is a graveyard of tortured spirits bound into a metal-and-bone prison that carries the corruption of the void with it wherever it goes.

Professor Viktor Pendrake

A wraith engine is a malevolent intellect tied to devilish machinery. It lurches across the battlefield, accompanied by the clatter of grinding steel and the ceaseless howling of the discarnate dead imprisoned within its frame. Untethered from a stable, coherent shape, the engine alternates between ghostly and physical forms, spreading death and misery across the enemy ranks. Those who do not run are mowed down like wheat by a scythe, their souls harvested to power its heinous mechanism. Tortured, fractured spirits are locked for eternity into its construction. It exudes the power of the tomb; an echo of the nothingness appears in its presence, strengthening the phantom dead that trail in its shadow. Its malignancy saps the physical world's life, corrupting the flesh of those who come too close.

The wraith engine is the culmination of centuries of necromantic research and refinement. Lich Lord Tenebrous has stood at the forefront of these efforts, never hesitating to coerce and threaten the most brilliant and depraved minds of the Scharde Islands to labor on his private projects. In the wraith engine they created a terrible machine that draws power from refined necrotite and from the malevolent energies of the void.

From Many, One. Cryxian necrotechs ritually sacrifice hundreds of living victims in the creation of a wraith engine, binding the spirits within the machine's numerous components. The mechanism is etched with blasphemous binding runes, amalgamating the spirits into a collective machine intelligence loyal to its Cryxian masters.

A Foot in Both Worlds. As this apparatus powers up, it oscillates between the physical world and the nightmare of the void. The mere presence of a wraith engine wounds living creatures, and the raw energies of the void roiling around the machine weakens their resilience. Its mindless thirst for death can never be slaked, so its masters keep it chained until it can feast unhindered on the field of battle.

Firebox Reliance. A foul necrotite furnace powers a wraith engine's body. A wraith engine requires necrotite to function and will become inert and insensate if its supply of the death-tainted coal runs out. These fireboxes require refueling (roughly 50 pounds of necrotite) every 12 hours.

Necrotech Nature. A wraith engine doesn't require food, drink, or sleep. Its furnace requires necrotite and air to function.

WRAITH ENGINE

Huge construct (necrotech), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 190 (20d12 + 60)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Void Shroud. While within 10 feet of the wraith engine, non-dead creatures cannot regain hit points.

Immutable Form. The wraith engine is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith engine can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Unhallowed. While within 60 feet of a wraith engine, allied undead creatures gain +2 AC against ranged attacks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wraith engine makes three scything blades attacks.

Scything Blades. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Void Phase. The wraith engine enters the void from the physical world, or vice versa. It is visible in the physical world while it is in the void, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything in the physical world while it is within the void.

REACTIONS

Soul Bondage (Recharge 6). The wraith engine chooses a target living humanoid that drops to 0 hit points within 10 feet of it that it can see. The wraith engine pulls that target inside its torso and imprisons it there. A creature imprisoned in this manner has disadvantage on death saving throws. If the creature dies while imprisoned this way, the wraith engine immediately recharges this ability. Additionally, at the start of its next turn, the wraith engine expels the slain creature as a bonus action, and the creature becomes a machine wraith (Monsternomicon, page 120). A wraith engine can imprison only one creature at a time.

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