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4th edition monster manual 2

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rated it it was amazing Dec 04, 2013 As I write this, I have just finished a Let's Read of the first D&D 4 Monster Manual and Monster Wault in parallel, which took me about one year and four months to complete and a bit more to show up here. This means it's time to start up on the Monster Manual 2!
Published in 2009, this book includes both more varieties of monsters that appeared in its predecessor, and those that are new either to the game or to this edition of it. There's not much in the way of preamble in its text: after explaining the same thing I just did in the previous sentence, it launches into a
description of the stat block format and then goes right to the monster list. Before I do the same, I'm going to use this post to describe some useful information for people unfamiliar with either D&D Fourth Edition, or the conventions I've adopted over time while going through the first Monster Manual
Fourth Edition Encounter Basics While you don't need to be intimately familiar with Fourth Edition D&D to understand my writeups, it helps to know some basic terminology. 4e uses the same level scale for monsters as it does for PCs. Its platonic ideal of a "balanced encounter" is one where the party
faces a group of monsters of the same size and level as themselves. Note that "balanced" here means a fairly easy fight of the sort the PCs can go through several times per day. To make it harder increase either the number or level of monsters, and vice-versa. A "level+1" or "level+2" encounter is
challenging, a "level+3" or "level+4" one are boss battle material. A difference of +5 or greater is one of those situations where the PCs might be better off running away. Levels go from 1 to 30, though some rare monsters meant to be "final bosses" for epic campaigns go a bit beyond that. It's perfectly
possible to have an entire campaign where the party never fights a "balanced", same-level battle. Some monsters are "Elite", which means they are more powerful and are worth two regulars in the encounter building formula. Others are "Solos" and are worth four regulars - but despite the name might not
make for a fun encounter all by themselves. Combat is a team sport! Last and least, a few are "minions" which do less damage and go down in one hit. Four of these are worth a single regular. What this means is that you should never evaluate a monster in isolation. Always assume it's going to be fight
alongside a team of other opponents with complimentary roles and abilities. This is true even for a lot of solo monsters with complex and abilities. This is true even for a lot of solo monsters and HP all
depend on its level and role, not on what type of creature it is like in 3.x. - Skirmishers have baseline stats across the board and abilities that make them highly mobile. - Brutes hit hard in melee and take a lot of killin'. They have high HP, high damage, and reduced AC. - Soldiers are also melee
combatants, but have high AC and tend to have abilities similar to that of a PC fighter, being good at preventing the enemy from targetting their more fragile buddies. - Lurkers have attacks that do a lot of damage but require some setup. A typical lurker will have some sort of "routine" where it makes a big
attack one turn and spends the following turn setting it up again. - Controllers have stats similar to those of a skirmisher, but their abilities are a mix of ranged and melee attacks that also inflict negative conditions on the PCs or shape the battlefield in other ways. - Artillery monsters are fragile and have
lousy melee attacks, but their ranged attacks are stronger and more accurate. When designing an encounter, you're usually supposed to mix and match the roles so that they complement each other. In general you want a "front line" made up of soldiers and brutes, with artillery and controllers hanging
back and providing ranged support, and with lurkers and skirmishers running around the edges trying to get past the PC's own front line. The exact composition of your Team Monster will of course alter this in all sorts of interesting ways. The existence of monster roles means we'll often encounter
monsters with several different stat blocks, which allow you to do something like an "all-bullywug fight" that's still tactically interesting. The Dreaded Math Bugs While the foundation of the encounter design system in 4e was really solid, it took a bit of time for the writers to fine-tune the math. Monsters from
the first Monster Manual generally did too little damage. Elites and Solos also had defenses that were too high, and high-level solos in particular had ridiculously large HP totals. All of this could lead to fights that were both too easy and too long to be fun. In the Monster Manual 2, some of these problems
were fixed: Elites and Solos lost their defense bonuses, and Solos have about 20% less HP than they would have under MM1 rules. Brutes and soldiers also had their accuracy fine-tuned (the former missed too much, the latter were too accurate). From this point on you also start seeing minions with
roles: where a MM1 monster might have been described as a "Level 10 Minion", here you might get a "Level 10 Minion Brute" for example. Role affects a minion's defenses and damage, but not their HP, which is always 1 with a "minions can't be damaged by missed attacks" condition. One problem still
remains: damage is still too low, by an amount that increases with monster level. So a level 1 or 2 monster doesn't suffer from this at all, but a level 25 epic threat will hit like a feather pillow when it should be hitting like a speeding truck. If you're preparing a 4e adventure and you need to fix a MM2 stat
block yourself, the famous Monster Manual 3 on a Business Card post from Blog of Holding has a wonderful summary of the DMG update PDFs that WotC published back in the day. An even guicker fix is to add half the monster's level to all
of its damage rolls, as outlined in this other Blog of Holding post. So, for example, add +5 to all damage rolls for a level 10 monster. This should get you close enough to the "correct" figures. Woo! Time to get to the weird monsters! On the whole, MM2 has a bunch of D&D staples, cool ideas, and several
pieces of really good art. But it also suffers from early 4e creature design, which isn't just limited to damage but also the readability of stat blocks and power design, which can be off and clunky in places. The book also has a surprising amount of reused 3e-era art. I feel like the MM2 is where 4e cracks its
neck back and forth, ready to try some new things, just not quite getting into the knuckle-cracking, stance-stepping, steely-eyed glare of the MM3. It didn't have quite as much, thematically speaking, to prove as the PHB2 and DMG2 did. But more monsters are just the thing for the greedy hands of the 4e
DM. Looking forward to it! Ah, the MM2. As I recall, they upped the damage dealt by monsters across the board, but there were still balance issues, and honestly the end result was a little TOO deadly at least for lower level critters due to the higher damage but same amount of hp. Much easier to tweak
into something well balanced and fun, though, at least on the average. And some very creative new mechanics. Ah, the MM2. As I recall, they upped the damage dealt by monsters across the board, but there were still balance issues, and honestly the end result was a little TOO deadly at least for lower
level critters due to the higher damage but same amount of hp. Much easier to tweak into something well balanced and fun, though, at least on the average. And some very creative new mechanics. I think it was the Dark Sun Creature Collection which had the deadliness outliers. Some of the level 1
creatures could potentially one shot a level 1 non-Defender. -Naxuul Angel The first Monster Manual gave us plenty of lore on this edition's angels, which you can see by reading my first post on them. The Monster Manual 2 brings us a few stronger angels. The Lore Check out my post on MM angels for
the basics of angel lore. The Numbers Since the original post was one of the first ones I wrote on the Let's Read, I hadn't settled on the present structure yet, so I didn't say much about the common traits of angels. Angels are Immortal Humanoids with the Angel keyword, which means they don't need to
eat, breathe or sleep. Though they have no legs, they have a land speed of 8 and a fly speed of 12. They're also immune to fear and have 5/tier Radiant resistance. Their signature trait is Angelic Presence, a passive ability which inflicts a -2 penalty on any attacks against the angel while it remains un-
bloodied. The angels from the Monster Manual 2 start at where the ones from the first book stopped, in terms of power. This means they're all epic level and mostly Large in size. Angel of Authority These are the heralds and mouthpieces of a deity, and tend to handle some of the most important tasks
related to the protection and well-being of a deity's dominion. Your Metatrons, basically. They're Level 22 Controllers with the Leader keyword and 203 HP. They fight with a quarterstaff doing a mix of physical and radiant damage, and shoot lightning bolts (ranged 10 vs. Fortitude) that do lightning
damage and daze for a turn. They can also use their powerful voices for a Majestic Rally (close burst 5 vs. Will). This does a mix of thunder and radiant damage to any enemies caught in the area and hit by the attack, and also weakens them (save ends). A miss does half damage with no riders. Any
allied angels in the area instead gain +2 to attacks for a turn. This is why the keyword is important! Angel of Retrieval Expert trackers, these angels lead squads of divine servitors and agents tasked with recovering stolen relics or kidnapped creatures. In addition to the abilities described in their combat
stat block (below), they're also trained in rituals that allow it to find their guarry and guickly take the squad to it, like Observe Creature and Planar Portal. They're Level 22 Artillery with 162 HP and all standard angel traits except Angelic Presence, plus a teleport speed of 5 and blindsight. As soon as a fight
starts, the Angel will use Hunt the Guilty on an enemy within 10 squares, likely the main kidnapper. This will make all the angels attacks deal extra damage against that enemy. Then it's going to use its flight and teleport speeds to move within reach of the target of the extraction and use Isolating
Displacement on it. The power can be either used on an enemy as an attack (reach 2 vs. Reflex) to deal radiant damage, or on an ally as a non-damaging support ability. In both cases, it teleports the target 5 squares, and teleports the angel to a space adjacen to the target. The idea is to teleport the
target into the midst of the angel's more melee-capable allies, who will either protect it and help it run away if friendly, or beat it unconscious and fire its Angelic Bow (ranged 20/40 vs. AC), which does radiant damage to the target and a smaller amount
to any other enemies adjacent to it. Perfect for disrupting tight formations. Also perfect for disrupting formations is Clear the Way (area burst 3 within 10 vs. Fortitude; recharge 5-6), which deals radiant damage and slides the targets 3 squares. A miss deals half damage and slides 1 square. This could be
used to clear a corridor for ther angel's allies to escape, or to delay pursuers. If forced into melee, the angel of retrieval will defend itself with a short sword that deals radiant damage, though this is clearly a sub-optimal situation. Angel of Light Angels of light are a little different from most of their relatives.
They're the embodiments of a deities subconscious toughts, who form spontaneously in the Astral Sea in their multitudes. Angels of light are driven to enact the thoughts that spawned them, but they'll also readily work for more powerful angels whose dispositions match theirs. Once formed, an angel of
light is an independent individual. There have cases where they end up acting contrary to their originating deity's wishes because the thought was intrusive in the first place. Angels of Light are the only Medium angels in this entry. They're Level 23 Minion
Skirmishers with all common traits discussed above. They fight with angelic glaives that do radiant damage, and when killed explode in a death burst whose text is a bit confusing. I think the intent is that it's a close burst 10 vs. Fortitude that does 10 damage to enemies in the area and heals non-minion
angels for 10 HP. Angel of Supremacy These described simply as "the strongest angelic fighters", they're said to guard the homes of the gods and form the backbone of divine strike forces in serious cosmic conflicts. I can't shake the feeling that Asmodeus was one of these before he rebelled. Angels of
Supremacy are Level 24 Soldiers with 226 HP and all common angel traits. They fight with Reach 3 spears that do a mix of physical and thunder damage, so here's a surprise for PCs who loaded up on radiant resistance. They also have Threatening Reach, which makes them pretty good at restricting
enemy movement. They'll likely start a fight by moving into a chokepoint and casting Astral Brilliance (close burst 3 vs. Reflex; encounter). This deals radiant damage and creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. While inside the zone, the angel's attacks all deal extra radiant damage. Then
they'll attack a particularly troublesome enemy with the Light of Justice (Ranged 10 vs. Fortitude), which deals radiant damage on a hit and marks the target for the whole encounter as an effect. From that point on they can use Summons to Justice (minor 1/round) to pull the marked target 1 square closer
to themselves. Judging by those power names, I think they might have been named Angels of Justice before an editing pass gave them this more sinister name. Archangel This isn't a monster, but a template along the lines of those that first appeared in the DMG 1. It's meant to represent a higher-ranked
angel that might even be the greatest authority in a divine dominion aside from the actual god. The template can be applied to any angel, and add the elite save bonus (+2) and action point. If the angel was already elite, I'd upgrade it to a solo with the
+5 save bonuses and a total of 2 action points. In either case I'd double its listed HP. Then I'd add the template powers: Avenging Strike, which triggers when an allied angel hits 0 HP and allows the angel to shift 2 squares and make a basic melee attack against the slayer. And Overwhelming Presence
(close burst 5 vs. Will; enemies only; encounter) which does radiant damage and stuns for a turn. I would then probably tweak its basic attack so it can be done twice in the same turn, which is common in elite monsters. So, to ammend my speculation, I'm pretty sure Asmodeus used to be an Archangel of
    remacy. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions I like the 4e concept of angels, and so having more of them is cool. Sample encounters in the MM2 are organized a little differently, with one after each stat block instead of all of them being at the end of the entry. The ones we get here are most all
angel teams, made up of a mix from the MM1 and MM2. The notable exception is again the Angel of Supremacy encounter, which has three of them along with a Tormenting Ghost (evil!) and a Deva Fallen Star (super-evil!). This is a reminder that not all angels serve good deities, and that creatures with
"supremacy" in their names are creepy. It's strange... technically, the Great Wheel had a much, MUCH larger array of Celestials, between angels, archons, guardinals and eladrin... yet, at the same time, the World Axis' angels feel like a larger, more fleshed-out "Celestial" race in total. Maybe it's because
they have a very solid and clear archetype they're adhering to, whereas the Wheel's celestials exist in no small part to create a native outsider type for each of the Upper Planes? The Wheel's celestials never really felt very coherent as a meta-whole to me, since they don't really have anything uniting
them beyond simply being "incarnations of good". Not so much that any one of them was bad, but I just didn't think they really filled the "divine servitors" role all that well. I do wish that 4e had found a niche for guardinals, but I liked the subsumption of angels and archons into a single "divine servitor" race,
the eladrin being moved to the Feywild, and the greater focus on angels working for ALL gods rather than just the good ones. Angel of Supremacy These described simply as "the strongest angelic fighters", they're said to guard the homes of the gods and form the backbone of divine strike forces in
serious cosmic conflicts. I can't shake the feeling that Asmodeus was one of these before he rebelled. 4e's the only edition where the "Devils as Fallen Angels" thing really worked perfectly to me. I'd always like to see more equivalents/origins. Like this and Dragon Magazine's Angels of Love. I believe
Erinyes are in this book as well? So it should be interesting to see how they'd match up with the Angels of Vengeance, given their roles. Page 2 One thing separates early 4e monsters from the later ones (especially early vs Monster Vault): different damage type rolls in the same attack. If these angels
were published in MV, the attacks that deal untyped and energy damage would most likely just deal the energy damage in the same attack, whereas a mix on energy types is common. Probably due to how untyped damage (physical
damage) is not a recognized keyword in the rules, so you don't really have creatures that are specifically vulnerable to untyped (weapon) damage. Also, the archangel elite template is horribly undertuned, especially for epic creatures. Epic elites need way more stuff, including light action recovery related
powers or traits. It's more appropriate as a theme (removing the hp doubling) rather than a template to turn a creature into an elite version. ... Though they have a land speed of 8 and a fly speed of 12. Huh, look at that. I never noticed. ... Now I'm imagining 4e angels "walking" like
Muppets bouncing along. I still appreciate the 4e take on angels, because frankly it's super-interesting to go back to the idea that angels are messengers, and might carry messages you don't want to hear (like "all your firstborn sons are dead now"). If anything I'd like devils to hew a little closer to angelic
design, with more explicit (though corrupted) purposes, but it's D&D and it's tricky to set aside classics like "this is a devil that's famous for looking like a skeleton with a scorpion tail" for "this is a devil that is a corrupted angel of inquiry". I've always used devils as the workforce of Hell and therefore filling
the role of messengers to evil gods, whereas demons are outside the whole divine hierarchy; 4e made me question that a little, since angels of terrifying aspect are suddenly taking jobs I'd formerly have given to devils. Which is probably fine, and still thematic. I could probably sit down and write a few
thousand words just talking about how various angelic aspects appear in the service of various gods: what the choir of "angel of retrievals" looks like in the service, for instance, and then talk about their cousin-choir in the service of the god of bloodshed and war. These guys are a
great showcase for building monster theme powers because the themes are explicit. You expect something called an Angel of Retrieval to skirmish and isolate, and that's what it does. You can think about that design and apply similar lessons. It's a very illustrative monster to have first in alphabetical
order. If anything I'd like devils to hew a little closer to angelic design, with more explicit (though corrupted angel of inquiry". The
solution to that would be to have some angels designed to become the devils in guestion. Like Osyluths as corrupted Angels of Death, who even then had gaunt and skeletal appearances: hollow eyed, skull like heads, tattered translucent wings, their bodies trailing off into a tendril of energy that the Angel
uses like a tail -- one that channels the very essence of death inside their victims to feel like poison burning in their veins -- and a mancatcher to prevent escape. You could find them in the service to The Raven Queen, Bane, Torog, and Vecna. Although sometimes even more of the pleasant deities may
need to unleash a harbinger of doom. The solution to that would be to have some angels designed to become the devils in question. Like Osyluths as corrupted Angels of Death, who even then had gaunt and skeletal appearances: hollow eyed, skull like heads, tattered translucent wings, their bodies
trailing off into a tendril of energy that the Angel uses like a tail -- one that channels the very essence of death inside their victims to feel like poison burning in their veins -- and a mancatcher to prevent escape. Yeah, that's an interesting approach. It still leaves angels as something with near-infinite
capacity for diversity and devils still kind of categorized by physiognomy, but if you're going with the default 4e cosmology that's not much of a problem. The devils make sense as more finite, given that they're the fallen hierarchy of one deity, and also how small the Nine Hells are described to be. I feel like
the MM2 is where 4e cracks its neck back and forth, ready to try some new things, just not quite getting into the knuckle-cracking, stance-stepping, steely-eyed glare of the MM3. It didn't have quite as much, thematically speaking, to prove as the PHB2 and DMG2 did. But more monsters are just the thing
for the greedy hands of the 4e DM. Looking forward to it! I just pictured Henry Cavill as a book! (Getting ready to 'reload his arms'.) This was an awesome description! Not only is it incredibly evocative, it is incredibly accurate (IMO) - that, my friend, was on point! Very much an "angel classic," as you
yourself pointed out. They feel somewhat analogous to the Great Wheel's trumpet archons, only more inspired with their built-in leader role. This guy has some interesting lore potential when you look at how similar his function and power set are to the Avenger PC class, which was released in the PHB2
at around the same time. Maybe Avengers get their powers by channeling their gods' angels of retrieval? I love the lore, and what it implies about angelic origins and psychology, but the stats are a mixed bag. The death burst healing other angels is good, as it gets across the idea that these are inchoate
bags of half-formed angelstuff, but the rest is pretty generic. I'd get rid of the the glaive in favor of a reach 1 radiant punch or ranged laser attack, and drop the INT score into the single digits. Make it seem like a feral-proto angel that needs refinement. Lorewise, maybe all angels starts as angels of light,
and are then hammered into something more deliberate and coherent when they receive a god's conscious attention? Much of the busywork of an astral realm might involve wrangling angels of light, in that case. Maybe when gods are distracted or asleep, others sneak over and wait nearby to poach their
newly formed angels of light and turn them to their own purposes before the creator can? So, to ammend my speculation, I'm pretty sure Asmodeus used to be an Archangel of Supremacy. Took the words right out of my mouth. Ankheg Ankhegs appear in AD&D 1st Edition, and they would go on to
achieve minor fame among players because of their lore. The Lore Ankhegs are giant burrowing insects who dig mazelike tunnel networks and hunt by bursting through the ground and snatching surface prey with their huge mandibles. They also have acidic saliva, which they can spray at enemies. These
creatures live in "family units" consisting of a mated pair and a small brood of young. These broodlings are rarely seen on the surface - their parents bring prey to them underground. Other things might also be living in ankheg tunnels, since the creatures don't use all of it as living space. This is the extent
of the lore we get in the MM2, but it was the bits left out that made ankheg's low-key famous. These bits say that ankhegs prefer to dig through soil rich in minerals and organic matter. This means forests, but it also means good farmland. Therefore, these creatures are likely to be found very close to
civilized settlements. I think I saw at least one source that said having ankhegs underground actually improved the guality of the soil. If this isn't true in your campaign, it might very well be a common folk superstition. Even if ankhegs don't enrich the soil, their presence might still act as an extra security
measure against the many other dangers from the wild, assuming the farmers in question can develop some way of avoiding the beasts themselves. If you walk without rythm, you won't attract the worm. Unfortunately, it looks like they cannot be tamed, so farming in ankheg country makes for a very
interesting life. At least it looks like you won't find more than one "family" of ankhegs in a given area. The Numbers Ankhegs are Natural Beasts, with the adults being Large and the broodlings Small. Both have tremorsense and a burrow speed, and are of animal intelligence. Ankheg This adult specimen
is a Level 3 Elite Lurker with 100 HP. It has Resist 5 Acid to protect itself from its own saliva, a land speed of 8, and a burrowing speed to
lie in wait underground until it senses prey passing above. Then it's going to erupt and hit its victims with an Acid Spray (close burst 3 vs. Reflex) which deals immediate and ongoing acid damage and also slows (save ends both). It can do that again it if's bloodied. Next it's going to nab the nearest victim
using a Mandible Grab, which damages and grabs (Acrobatics DC 16 or Athletics DC 14 to escape). It can only grab one victim at once, but Mandible Carry allows it to move normally with a grabbed victim. If the victim struggles too much the ankheg can also Gnaw and Scuttle as a minor action, which
requires an attack roll and does physical damage and ongoing acid damage (save ends) in addition to allowing the monster to shift 2 squares. The ankheg can put a lot of distance between itself and its victim's buddies in a single turn by using a double move and spending a minor action on Gnaw and
Scuttle. Still, if someone does manage to reach it while it has a grabbed victim, it can use claw attacks to fight in melee. Ankheg Broodling Ankheg attacks are fun for the whole family, because you're going to be jumped by Mom and Dad, who will then carry you a ways underground so the kids can come
out and eat. Broodlings are Level 1 Minion Brutes, with the same tremorsense as the adults, a land speed of 6 and a burrow speed of 2 with Tunneling. They have basic claw attacks along with a less accurate and more damaging Mandible Rip that deals some "splash" acid damage to enemies adjacent to
the target on a critical. Brood Swarm gives them a +4 bonus when attacking a creature grabbed by any ankheg. This more than negates the accuracy penalty from Mandible Rip. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions The sample encounter is Level 4: a pair of ankhegs and 6 broodlings plus a rage
drake that was likely their original intended victim before the party came along. My initial impression of anhkegs was that they were just another big bug monster, but the possibility of a setting where ankhegs under your farm fields are just another fact of life makes the more interesting in my eyes. The
section on encounter groups also mentions that sometimes giant ants "take control" of a group of broodlings after they drive their parents away, and I can almost hear David Atenborough narrating that nature documentary. Ah yes, the 'ankheg', the holy grail of 2e druids. That is why the ankheg is not just
'giant ant, but slightly different' to me. That AC 2 armour... man, that was a goal! Obviously, in the 4e approach, that little bit can't be brought in. I am rather impressed how they turned an 'ambush monster' - which, again, in 4e isn't a thing like it was in 2e - into a implicit 'team monster'. The addition of the
broodlings really makes it shine for me. A good point to note also, is that it's mechanics actually allow it to do it's thing. Especially in MM2, there are loads of supercool 'comboes' that just can't work as written... But this one does! So props! And the lore does a very good job of intergrating them into the
world, they're a part of life. A dangerous part - but it still makes internal sense. Agreed that the lore is what makes ankhegs great. They nailed it first try in the 1e MM with that Trampier pic of a farmer fleeing the giant bug erupting out of his kale patch (or whatever). It's a little unusual that this was left out of
4e: we know there are farms in the Nentir Vale, but perhaps an aspect of the points of light approach is that you don't assume there are pastoral breadbaskets anywhere. I've never run a Tremors homage adventure with ankhegs and I have no idea why that is. The mechanics are solid enough to support
that sort of thing. Page 3 Always loved these things. In the region of my campaign world where ankhegs live, I have a thing where farmers lure ankhegs into their fields in the spring just before planting season, and then kill them using a combination of poisoned meat and crossbows fired from watch-
towers. Gives the soil quality a nice boost from the tunneling and early prey-ing. They also have some uses for ankheg would function very differently in Dark Sun. For one, its aesthetic is tailor-made for that world: some otherworldly insect-beast. For two, there's very
little fertile ground left in Dark Sun, so if you see ankhegs you know you're probably on a very valuable piece of real estate. (Well, by "see" I mean "hauled screaming under the surface", you know how it is.) Much like the sandworm in Dune is actually the harbinger of an alien ecology far beneath the
surface, the ankheg isn't seen in true desert; if it looks like wasteland, you might just need to dig a little. Domesticated ankheg probably aren't a thing, but I'm sure that hasn't stopped people from using them either. Ankhegs are considered the epitome of the "Fantasy fuckin vietnam" play style by some. At
least I vaguely recall that from the 3,5 monster manual read on this site. After all it's a giant acid spewer that can emerge from nowhere to chomp on you and melt you when you least expect it and all that. It occurs to me that the ankheg would function very differently in Dark Sun. For one, its aesthetic is
tailor-made for that world: some otherworldly insect-beast. For two, there's very little fertile ground left in Dark Sun, so if you see ankhegs you know you're probably on a very valuable piece of real estate. (Well, by "see" I mean "hauled screaming under the surface", you know how it is.) Much like the
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Athasian ankheas as being a farmland version of a cistern fiend: a magically created animal used to both purify and protect a natural resource important to a Sorcerer King. -Naxuul BG1 had the ranger who explained the ankheas aerate the soil and are coming up for a little extra poundage before winter,
so don't kill too many... ...right next to the farm where a man's son was killed trying to handle them. A little clunky, even if it was a nice gag about ankheg farming ankhegs was a good way to powerlevel and grind cash, at least once you could handle them safely). Never saw
Ankheas fitting in with a the standard world. So I've never used them. Now Dark Sun, perfect. Insectiods are perfect there. I'm about to start a 4e hexcrawl (random encounters and all) so I'm keeping an eye on this thread for inspiration. Picture spoilered because it's a pair of realistic-looking bugs. "Ant,
Giant" is the actual title for the entry. Now that's some old-school naming! Giant ants have been part of the game since the beginning, so this style feels appropriate. The Lore There isn't a lot of mystery to giant ants. They're red ants the size of an adult human. Their colonies can have hundreds of
individuals, and though that's far less than the teeming millions of a mundane anthill, they end up doing a lot more damage due to their larger size. Once a giant ant colony gets going, it will swiftly strip the landscape bare for miles around it. Most ants are classified as "workers", and as the name implies
they handle the actual work of building the colony and keeping it fed. You also have some larger variants that are more specialized for combat, and protect the workers. And each colony has a single Queen who is responsible for laying eggs and perpetuating the hive. Though the queen is unlikely to leave
her chambers once the hive is established, she's guite dangerous and remains active throughout her life. Despite being of animal intelligence, giant ants possess the same instinct for teamwork as their mundane counterparts, which means their colonies are more efficiently organized than many sapient
societies. They communicate by emitting pheromone clouds, and at this scale the chemicals that make up these clouds can actually be harmful to non-ants. Giant warrior ants are notorious for using them as weapons. That bit about "stripping the landscape bare" makes me think giant ants combine the
traits of both army and leafcutter ants. So they'd both hunt other animals directly and cut up the vegetation to serve as bedding for their vast underground fungus farms. If that's the case you do not want a giant anthill anywhere near your territory. The Numbers Most giant ants are Medium Natural Beasts
with queens being Large. They have low-light vision and tremorsense 10, but none of them are trained in Perception. They all have a climb speed equal to their ground speed, though they lack Spider Climb and so can't cling to ceilings. There are several types of giant ant and all of them have some sort of
Frenzy ability, which triggers when another giant and within 10 squares drops to 0 HP. The exact effects vary per stat block, but note that if you have a bunch of tightly packed ants the death of a single one will trigger Frenzy for all the rest. Level-wise they're all early-to-mid Heroic, on par with the
mundane guards and soldiers for most playable peoples. This means fighting the spread of a giant ant colony might be one of the common problems a sapient settlement has to deal with, alongside bandits, stirges, or marauding goblins. Hive Worker The weakest and most numerous ant caste. They exist
to fulfill the functional needs of the colony and aren't much good in a fight, but there are a lot of them. These are Level 1 Minion Skirmishers with ground and climb speeds of 6, and a burrow speed of 2 with Tunneling. They're the only giant ants with a burrow speed. Their only attack is a bite. Their Hive
Worker Frenzy makes them shift 2 squares, so if you kill one the horde immediately moves to fill the gap. Hive Warrior worker expeditions. They're Level 2 Skirmishers with 36 HP and a speed of 8. They attack with a Piercing Bite that does physical damage, and also
does bonus acid damage if the target was already taking ongoing acid damage. The warrior itself can't inflict this, so you'll want to pair it with a soldier, described below. Their Hive Warrior Frenzy clears any mark or curse on them, and allows them to shift 2 squares. Yes, this will make the party warlock
sad. Hive Soldier Stronger and scarier than common warriors, soldiers stay inside the hive to guard it unless the queen directs them to sally forth. They're level 3 Soldiers with 46 HP and speeds of 6. They fight with their Grasping Mandibles that grab the target on a hit. They can use their Acid Sting
against the grabbed victim, dealing both immediate and ongoing acid damage (save ends). Note that this would allow any accompanying warriors to get bonus bite damage against the victim. When a soldier hits 0 HP it's wracked by a Death Convulsion (close burst 1 vs. Reflex) which knocks enemies
prone. Its Hive Soldier Frenzy gives it +2 to attacks for a turn when an ally dies. Winged Drones These flood out of the colony during mating season, ranging far and wide. At the end of the season I guess the males die, and the females shed their wings and burrow to become gueens and form their
colonies. A winged drone is a Level 4 Skirmisher with 55 HP. It has ground, climb, and fly speeds of 8. Its basic attack is an Acid Sting that does immediate and ongoing acid damage, and it can perform a classic Flyby Attack maneuver with it. As we already know, this allows the drone to fly its speed
without drawing opportunity attacks and sting someone at any point along the movement. Its Hive Drone Frenzy allows it to shift 2 squares and use the sting. Once bloodied, the drone can choose to violently shed its wings in a maneuver called **Shredding Wings** (close blast 2 vs. AC), which does high
physical damage and causes it to lose its fly speed until the end of the encounter. Hive Queen Like their subjects, queens are of animal intelligence. However, they have an instinctive drive for expanding their colony and the capability to direct their subjects to go forth and conquer. Queens are Level 5 Elite
Controllers with the Leader keyword. They're size Large, and any other ants In the Presence of the Queen (aura 10) gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage. Their greater bulk makes them slower, so they have a ground speed of 6 and a climb speed of 2. Queens have two basic attacks: a bite and a kick.
The kick targets Reflex, does a bit of damage, and pushes the target 3 squares. The queen's Frenzy allows her to shift 2 squares and use Kick. Once per encounter the queen can create an Acidic Cloud on a Close Burst 4. This creates a zone that moves with the queen. Any enemy caught inside takes 2
damage for each other giant ant that's also in the zone. When first bloodied, the queen issues a chemical Call to Arms that instantly summons four giant ant workers to the fight. They can also spray their pheromones in an Acidic Blast (area burst 3 within 10 vs. Will; recharge 5-6) which does acid damage
and dazes (save ends). Sample Encounters and Final Impressions Giant ants: every other creature is food to them. The sample group is level 1 and has 1 soldier, 2 warriors and 4 workers. Before reading this entry I don't remember
ever seeing much that differentiated giant ants from all the other giant bugs, but their MM2 lore, sparse as it is, has me unusually inspired. Mundane ant colonies can be a major problem to farmers, and the giant version seems to pose even more of an existential threat than a nearby bandit or goblin lair
would. It's weird that the queen ant is something that you might, hypothetically, want to stick in a fight. Their aura makes them pretty good buffers. But if the queen dies the whole colony dies so... Oh, that picture. Those are not Earth ants. The legs are so wrong. It's weird that the queen ant is something
that you might, hypothetically, want to stick in a fight. Their aura makes them pretty good buffers. But if the queen dies to Wikipedia research on real-world ants when writing this entry up. Looks like some colonies have multiple queens! This can mean
"multiple active gueens", or a single egg-laying gueen and a number of "princesses" who are likely waiting for the next mating season. So this gueen stat block can either represent the "final boss" of the colony who's only going to fight as a last resort but who can handle herself just fine, or one of those
multiple gueens depending on how difficult you want to make things for your players. An "ant princess" is probably best represented by the Winged Drone stat block. Page 4 I'll be honest, 4e's Giant Ants always made me super-tempted to try and run a fantasy adventure or mini-campaign based on the
original nuclear nasty movie, "THEM!" I mean one has a human(oid) skull in its jaws. These are very much not Earth ants, no! It seems decades of adventuring have rendered me unfazed by the sight of something holding a humanoid skull. I'll be honest, 4e's Giant Ants always made me super-tempted to
try and run a fantasy adventure or mini-campaign based on the original nuclear nasty movie, "THEM!" You are a gentleperson of taste. It's weird that you might, hypothetically, want to stick in a fight. Their aura makes them pretty good buffers. But if the gueen dies the
whole colony dies so... I seems pretty obvious that she is statted up as the load bearing boss monster of a Giant Ant hive. She doesn't go to the adventurers 
Oh, that picture. Those are not Earth ants. The legs are so wrong. Yeah, that's really weird. Those things have superficial resemblance to a real ant, but aside from the legs, the size increase appears to have stretched their body segments apart and attached them via several extremely thin necks. This
thing looks more gangly than a regular ant. That's a problem, because surprise, square cube law! The ability for an object to hold together is relative to its cross-sectional area; but that area does not rise as fast as its volume, so all things being equal, a larger object is more fragile. This is usually a
criticism leveled at giant ants, around their legs (they are tubes, not bones, and experience such stresses as to require literal diamond knees), and their breathing (ants don't have lungs, and oxygen can only diffuse through their shell via tiny spiracles; they would asphyxiate because this can only
oxygenate several millimeters of tissue). In this case, we have to add the necks to the problem. So obviously these aren't ants but has none of their scale-adjusted drawbacks. My money's on a psionic hive organism. Also... OK, this is complicated.
That's a picture of six ants. Hear me out. We're talking about an organism with psychoportative innards. What the head eats does not pass to the thorax. Instead, it's ported directly to a larger, more efficient digestion caste within the hive. These things are like stomachs the size of elephants, immobile,
insensate, and mostly just interesting parts of the scenery. Nutrients are ported back out to all the hive members, which don't even have much of a circulatory system; the nutrients and oxygen just arrive in the required body parts and are absorbed. Thus, the body parts of the ant don't really need to be in
contact with each other. The "ant" is actually three different castes, permanently linked together along a common nerve trunk. They are vertebrates, but highly adapted. The Head caste have adapted their limbs into antennae and mandibles, and are otherwise mostly sensory organs and chewing muscle.
The Meso caste have two legs (loosely attached to the body, as they don't need large arteries and veins for gas exchange), and a pair of atrophied arms; the related Drone Meso caste use their arms as wings. The Meta caste are four-legged runners; Soldier Metas add acid weaponry. And so on. Most of
the operations of the hive are directed by the Brain caste, which appear like tall fleshy columns and often serve a structural purpose. They also provide the psionic power to link individuals together. This is why most castes have atrophied digestive systems, making way for a large ganglion that hooks them
into the Hive. However, the Queen is still in charge, or more properly the Crown caste, a specialised Head with a heavy brain. Her triple-body is necessary for the hive to live on, so she assumes a very high priority. Because her survival instinct is the hive's survival instinct, her decisions are top priority,
and the hive's actions are usually initiated by her alone. We're seeing a fairly standard deployment: workers, soldiers, queens. But a creative or mature hive might start linking castes in other ways. A Brain on a chassis of two Mesos, looming over the battlefield. A Stomach caste with acid artillery add-ons.
Other specialist organs that are usually just part of the background. Small two-part runners or long five-part dreadnaughts. What else could these things do? Those look like fire ants with slightly exaggerated thoraxes; a quick Google image search shows photos where you can see the thorax is "lobed", if
not guite so extremely, and the front lobe has two attached legs while the back has four. EDIT: Here's a good picture of what I was referring to; Last edited: May 13, 2020 As someone who played a lot of Living Forgotten Realms organised play for 4E, all I can say is fuck the hive gueen. That's one of the
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nastiest low-level monsters I ever encountered. Made for a great fight, and a great story to tell, but seriously; that thing can be horrific. Those legs are positioned wrong and missing a joint each, veah, Unlike the fire ants in Siberys; picture, these don't appear to have multipart thoraxes. Unless those tiny
tail-things are supposed to be weirdly undersized abdominal segments. Also, that skull must be from a malnourished newborn halfling, because those ants are really solid, though. Brutal as all hell, but that's appropriate for ants. The winged alates are probably
never going to get to use their hive frenzy, though, considering their role. Maybe if you happened on a mating swarm, they could be its own mini-adventure hook, actually. "The giant ants are mating, and the last thing we need right now is more of those
damned colonies popping up throughout the region. Go find the nuptial swarm and kill as many as possible." As far as diet goes, I actually think I prefer it if the giant ants are herbivorous/fungivorous. There are enough giant predators already, so a monster that's a threat to agriculture but not directly
aggressive toward people could be an interesting change of pace. I think those "tail things" are just abdomens that are cut off by the positioning of the art. In particular, note how the shadow doesn't match. The picture just has an irregularly-shaped border. Page 5 Archon, Earth Archons in the
4e sense were introduced in the Monster Manual as soldiers created by the primordials to face the angelic legions of the gods in battle. Though some still serve the primordials, others sell their services as mercenaries to other elemental clients. The first MM had stats for fire and ice archons, and this one
brings us three new types: earth, storm, and water. Earth and water archons already made an appearance in our Let's Read because they're in the Monster Vault, but chronologically this is their first appearance in the edition. There are enough stat blocks in here that I feel I can give each type its own
post. We start with Earth Archons. The Lore The basic lore for archons remains the same, as outlined in my post about their first Monster Manual entry (in my blog, in this forum). Earth archons have some extra bits specific to them in this book. Earth archons look like faceless stone humanoids, following
the general archon theme. Their armor and weapons are made of copper-colored metal with crystal and obsidian accents. Their military strategy follows the "patient earth" theme: they attack with slow and inexorable advances, and take the time to occupy and fortify any positions they take as they do so.
The greatest earth archon fortress is Thrak-Harda in the Elemental Chaos, which is ruled by the stone titan King Brakkamul and was built to guard the Diamond, and not the other way around. No one seems
to know why it's so dangerous, but the Dao (cousins of the djinns and efreets) have been obsessed with it for a very long time. The Numbers Earth archons are Medium Elemental Humanoids with the Earth keyword. They have Tremorsense 20 and are immune to disease, poison, and petrification. Their
ground speed is 6 with Earth Walk, which means they ignore "geological" difficult terrain. Earth Archon Ground Rager This archon is a Level 14 Controller with 143 HP and a bunch of earth-bending powers. These start with Ground Liquefaction, an aura (5) that slows any creature without the Earth
keyword that starts its turn inside and doesn't move during it. I guess this is meant to simulate then slowly sinking into shallow guicksand, but as written it also affects fliers. Maybe tendrils of mud reach out to grasp them. In melee, ragers use slams and shoves to fight. The former are basic attacks, and
the later are a bit weaker but push the target 4 squares and knock them prone. Two words: stone sumotori. At range they can attack with a spell called Raging Earth (ranged 20 vs. Reflex) which counts as a basic attack, does a little damage and immobilizes (save ends). Less often they can cause
Ground Eruptions (area burst 1 within 10 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6) which do a bit more damage and knock prone. On a miss, they do half damage and still knock prone. The book says ground ragers are drawn to geologically active areas, so you can expect additional earth-based hazards when fighting
them. Good luck staying on your feet. Earth Archon Seismic Striker The rank and file of earth archon armies is made up of Level 16 Soldiers with 160 HP. They wear plate and wield heavy shields and war picks. They also carry javelins for throwing. Those picks are high-crit weapons that do a mix of
physical and thunder damage. The javelins have range 10/20 and mark the target for a turn on a hit. They can also use a Seismic Stomp (close burst 3 vs. Fortitude) to deal area damage. A miss does half damage. In either case, the targets are knocked prone. This is a good thing for seismic strikers
because the Ground Striker trait makes their attacks stronger against prone targets. Seismic Strikers have a version of the fighter's Combat Superiority trait, gaining a +5 bonus to opportunity attack rolls and stopping the movement of any target they hit with such an attack. As written, the Stomp is not a
"friendly" attack, but I'd definitely make at least other earth archons immune to it. This would allow strikers to stay closer together while still keeping enough distance from each other to lure foolish enemies into the "gaps" in their formation, where they'll be stopped cold by opportunity attacks and knocked
prone by overlapping stomps. Earth Archon Rumblers are shock troops at the spearhead of any attack, which I imagine makes them look like a living avalanche from afar. They are Level 17 Brutes with 204 HP, wearing plate and wielding warhammers. They can use the warhammers either for
basic attacks or for Avalanche Strikes (vs. Reflex), which do less damage but knock prone on a hit. Their Thundering Might trait gives them bonus damage when adjacent to more than one enemy, so they really like to be where the fighting is fiercest. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions We get a
couple of sample encounters here. A level 14 one with a mix of earth, fire and ice archons; and a level 18 one with a troop of assorted earth archons seem to have a stronger theme than the MM archons, and better supported by their mechanics.
Their damage is still low due to the math bug, but other than that they're generally well-built and should be OK to use after a damage update. Forgot how strong the MM2 started off! Angels: pretty cool lore, some interesting mechanical ideas (not quite fully baked in terms of execution IMO) Ankheg:
excellent take, excellent execution. Ants: so, so cool. This makes you want to create a game to use them - what more could there be for a monster creation. Bonus, the Earth Archons really drive the 'combo' aspect of (IMO, the better) 4e creatures I like so
much. Anyone have thoughts on the 'original' v. Essentials take on archons: in the 'original' version, we get many types for each 'kind' and a sense that they tend to be with others of the same 'kind', while in the Essentials version, we get the 'base 4' and a very strong suggestion to use them in concert with
each other. So the problem with the Essentials take is that the mechanics don't actually support using them in concert- like the Fire Archon has the ability to make walls that hurt non-fire creatures, which means he's best used in cooperation with other Fire creatures. But it's also an approach that takes up
a lot less real estate in the book. Archon, Storm Continuing our look at the MM2 Archons entry we arrive at Storm Archon entry and the extra bits from the Earth Archon post remain valid here, and there's a bit more that's specific to them. The Lore These
beings are more or less the opposite of the earth archons, temperament and tactics-wise. They're the Raiders on the Storm, so to speak. They live in floating cities made out of storms in the Elemental Chaos, which are always on the move carried by that plane's winds. Storm archons don't much care
about whatever is under their storms, except when they grow bored and stage massive raids for the fun of it. Their gear is made of silvery or grey metal with a jagged, spiky look. Lightning shaped blades and such. Storm archons tend to associate with storm giants, since both like to hang out at the same
places. The most notable meeting point for the two are the howling black tempests spat forth by the Abyss, which swirl through the Elemental Chaos and beyond. Archons and giants love to ride these storms, whose evil energies make them even more violent and more prone to raiding than usual.
Sometimes they also attract demons who follow and fight alongside them. In less apocalyptic situations, you might also find the archons are Medium Elemental Humanoids with the Air and Water keywords.
They're immune to disease and poison and have 15 resistance to both thunder and lightning. This makes them immune to a storm giant's damaging aura, so they do synergize well. They move by flying with a speed of 8 (hover). Storm Archon Squallshield Wearing plate and wielding a longsword and
shield, these are Level 17 Soldiers with 168 HP. They can surround themselves with a Rain Wall (aura 1) which forces enemies caught inside to make DC 22 Athletics or Acrobatics checks or fall prone. This can knock fliers out of the air. The test itself isn't terribly difficult for a PC of equivalent level, but
the party's couch potato wizard might have a bit of trouble with it. The squallshield's longsword does physical damage and marks for a turn. It attacks at range with Snarling Lightning (ranged 10 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6), which obviously does lightning damage and also marks (save ends). If the attack
hits, enemies adjacent to the target take half damage and are also marked (save ends). After marking one or more PCs, the squallshield can use Pursuing Storm (move action; recharge 5-6) to teleport to a space adjacent to a marked enemy, which grants combat advantage to them for a turn. Mark of the
Tempest means that any marked creature hit by the squallshield is also slowed (save ends). Despite not being Skirmishers, Squallshields can use a combo of Snarling Lightning and Pursuing Storm to bypass the party's front line entirely and stick to a squishy, which will have a hard time running away
because they'll be slowed. Storm Archon Lightning Walker If the soldier was that mobile, imagine what this Level 18 Skirmisher can do. It has 171 HP and all standard traits. Walkers fight with spears, which do physical damage and teleport the target 2 squares on a hit. Hit or miss, the archon itself can
teleport 2 squares. When an enemy enters an adjacent square, it can use Booming Retort as a reaction (recharge 4-6). This hits automatically, causes the enemy to take ongoing lightning and thunder damage (save ends), and allows the archon to shift 2 squares. Once per encounter it can also use a
Lightning Pulse (close burst 2 vs. Reflex), which does lightning damage and allows the archon to teleport 10 squares. Lightning Walkers never stand still, and keep rearranging the party's formation. Trying to surround them leads to mixed results as they can end up teleporting away anyway, and doing
appreciable damage with their Pulse. Storm Archon Tempest Weaver The spellcasters of this lot, Tempest Weavers are Level 21 Artillery with 155 HP and lots of storm control powers. Like all artillery they prefer to fight at range. It helps that their Defensive Squall trait gives them a +2 to AC and Reflex
against ranged attacks. A tempest weaver is likely to open up with its Heart of the Tempest spell (area burst 3 within 20 vs. Reflex; targets enemies; encounter), which slides everyone it hits 3 squares, restrains them, and inflicts both 10 ongoing lightning damage and 10 ongoing thunder damage (save
ends all). The range on this is so long it can be used as literal artillery, before the archon team makes contact with the PCs. Its selective targeting also makes it a good option for after the archon front-liners have engaged. Its most common ranged attack is a Resounding Bolt (ranged 10 vs. Fortitude)
which does thunder damage and ongoing lightning damage (save ends). If the PCs begin closing in, the tempest weaver can try to clear some space with Lightning Blast (close burst 2 vs. Reflex), which does lightning damage and blinds targets for a round. If pressed into melee the archon will be reduced
to using its Storm Touch (melee 1 vs. Fortitude) to do lightning damage... which is actually kind of a decent basic melee attack! Still, its ranged powers are much better in terms of riders. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions We have three sample encounters: one which is all storm archons (level
18), one which has a mix of fire, ice and storm (level 18) and one with 2 tempest weavers, a storm giant, and a thunderhawk (level 22). I like the contrast between storm and earth archons. Though their damage is still a bit buggy, storm archons also follow a clear theme in their mechanical design. Clearly
the WotC staff was following a finalized set of design rules for this book, which wasn't necessarily true for all the monsters in the first MM. I never did get around to using 4e Archons. They seem cool, but there are just so many monsters, and they don't have the sort of charisma of things like giants,
dragons, and demons/devils. I used one of each of the Storm Archons (with adjusted math) as bodyguards for a Storm Titan. The party fought them atop a floating sky castle. It made for a dynamic and harrowing encounter; it was long drop to the sea below. I used one of each of the Storm Archons (with
adjusted math) as bodyquards for a Storm Titan. The party fought them atop a floating sky castle. It made for a dynamic and harrowing encounter; it was long drop to the sea below. Was the sea full of angry water archons waiting with their spears pointed upward? It had better have been. I'll probably be
using archons in heroic tier if I can get away with it. They'd work really well as inhabitants of the architecture underlying the cosmos, which is going to be good stuff for a game involving dungeons that are more... well, gnostic in origin. As usual, archons are thematically on point, interestingly differentiated
and visually a treat -- the only real issue I have is that it's hard to find miniatures for the concept of "vaquely humanform elemental in nifty armor" that aren't crude prepaints. I'll probably be using archons in heroic tier if I can get away with it. They'd work really well as inhabitants of the architecture
underlying the cosmos, which is going to be good stuff for a game involving dungeons that are more... well, gnostic in origin. As usual, archons are thematically on point, interestingly differentiated, and visually a treat -- the only real issue I have is that it's hard to find miniatures for the concept of "vaguely
humanform elemental in nifty armor" that aren't crude prepaints. I mean, you can't have gnosticism without archons! I've found that downgrading paragon monster has the same XP value as a normal monster four levels above it,
and a solo monster has the value of one 8-9 levels above it. Just level it down and add templates, and you have a neat progression of the same archors being tough boss monsters at level 6, recurring elite minibosses at level 11, and common opponents that you can fight groups of at level 15. I prefer
archons to your bog-standard elementals because there's more personality and verve to archons. They work well for whatever you'd use elementals for once you're into paragon tiers, too, so there's a smooth progression of stat blocks. Page 6 I mean, you can't have gnosticism without archons! Yep! I just
have to, probably, rename the elemental archons because I'm using "archon" to describe the equivalent of a "dungeon architect" which in the hierarchy of things okay that's off-topic now. I've found that downgrading paragon monsters into the heroic tier works very well, if you keep in mind that an elite
monster has the same XP value as a normal monster four levels above it, and a solo monster has the value of one 8-9 levels above it, and a solo monster has the value as a normal monster four level 6, recurring elite minibosses at level 11,
and common opponents that you can fight groups of at level 15. And I'm aided by the fact that I genuinely enjoy designing monster stat blocks in 4e, which is absolutely not a universal truth for all games. The lack of, say, an Artillery earth archon will have me reach for an index card and start putting one
together from scratch. I mean, you can't have gnosticism without archons! Having elementals as the gnostic demiurge of the world (foolish creatures trapping divine souls in the material world) would actually be a really interesting angle. Wouldn't be that hard to work into 4e's cosmology either. Having
elementals as the gnostic demiurge of the world (foolish creatures trapping divine souls in the material world) would actually be a really interesting angle. Wouldn't be that hard to work into 4e's cosmology either. I mean...that's probably the rationale behind the choice of names in the first place? In the
Great Wheel cosmology, the angelic lawful good archons are named after the archons from Neo-Platonism, in which the Demiurge was a benevolent creator and his servants (who resided in a seven-part paradise!) likewise. The gnostic sects came later, and recast the demiurge and archons as the
villains of the story who are trying to prevent contact between humans and the true divinity/ies, which is where the 4e archons with their angel-killing and god-repelling agendas get their name. It's sort of like how "daeva" means god in Hinduism, but demon in Zoroastrianism. For all I know they used the
word "archon" because somebody remembered the computer game. But it fits. Elementals as the builders of the world makes a whole lot of sense both via gnostic inspiration and the Elemental Chaos story. Honestly, I'd be perfectly happy if 4e took that the Dawn War started as a labor dispute
between the people who contracted the work (the astral gods) and the actual workers (the primordials). I mean...that's probably the rationale behind the choice of names in the first place? In the Great Wheel cosmology, the angelic lawful good archons are named after the archons from Neo-Platonism, in
which the Demiurge was a benevolent creator and his servants (who resided in a seven-part paradise!) likewise. The gnostic sects came later, and recast the demiurge and archons as the villains of the story who are trying to prevent contact between humans and the true divinity/ies, which is where the 4e
archons with their angel-killing and god-repelling agendas get their name. It's sort of like how "daeva" means god in Hinduism, but demon in Zoroastrianism. That's really cool. This thread and its predecessor have really been making me appreciate the Dawn War cosmology more. It really does fit in
together with it's own internal story, rather than a functioning as a filler for every permutation of alignment. Guess that comes with rebuilding everything from the ground up, taking the bits that work well and leaving out the parts that can't really exist by themselves. I mean, did 4e ever do anything with
Yugoloths as a group? I recall some of the more interesting types being moved into other categories. I mean, did 4e ever do anything with Yugoloths as a group? I recall some of the more interesting types being moved into other categories. Don't believe so, nope. Just turned some into demons or devils
or other rando unrelated monsters. I think 5e's take on vugoloths is a pretty good one, and they actually feel like they'd fit just as well in the World Axis cosmology. They're not "neutral evil incarnate" so much as an interdimensional mercenary company with a bad attitude, which well...like I said, it's very
World Axis. I want to say that yugoloths in 2e Planescape started the whole "mercenaries of the Blood War" concept. You certainly got some of them with actual personalities there (especially the arcanadaemons). The interdimensional mercenary company is a great setting idea, though I think I'd
personally prefer it as something done Threats of the Nentir Vale style, where you get stat blocks for various company members but it doesn't quite invent new monster species. So, for instance, you might have this "Gray Waste Legion" that has ravaasta, yagnodemons, and mezzodemons in it, but it also
has kytons, erinyes, a few angels, a few archons, the like. You still have the basic vicious, mercenary asshole motivation, and plenty of variety, but you don't have to give them a particular speciation origin. I want to say that yugoloths in 2e Planescape started the whole "mercenaries of the Blood War"
concept. You certainly got some of them with actual personalities there (especially the arcanadaemons). Oh, I know. But in 5e, they're *just* greedy mercenaries, and they have a specific origin that has nothing to do with alignment metaphysics, which I think is a major step up from "the neutral evil
exemplar." In the same way that "fallen angels who want to take over the universe" and "corrupted elementals driven to destroy everything by a cosmic tumor" are infinitely better than "the lawful evil exemplar" and "the chaotic evil exemplar." respectively. Have I mentioned that I hate the Great Wheel and
that everything about it is stupid? Archon, Water Finishing our look at the MM2 Archons entry we arrive at Water Archons were literally built
to rule the seas in a military campaign, a task they do very well. They can fight on land just fine, too, and are fond of using rivers and other waterways as a road network which allows them to move through enemy territory almost unoposed and stage raids and invasions from behind their defensive lines.
They advance like the tides, pulling any enemies who try to escape them. Their gear uses bronze- or brass- colored metal which is often enameled in blues and greens. When moving in force, water archons ride around in ships which are themselves made out of water, shaped by magic. These also work
as submarines, being able to submerge and surface at will and move just as fast in either mode. Not needing air makes the whole process a lot simpler. The Numbers We get three different stat blocks for water archons. All are Medium Elemental Humanoids with the Aguatic and Water keywords. They all
have a swim speed, of course. When a water archon is hit by cold damage, it's also slowed for a turn. That doesn't guite balance out its excellent resistances though. Wather archons have Resist Acid 10, and are immune to disease, poison and all forced movement. Yep, you read that right. They also get
a +2 on saves against the immobilized, restrained, or slowed conditions. I think this might be the first time I've seen a whole class of "Fuck You, Controller" monsters. Water Archon Shoal Reaver These are Level 13 Brutes with 159 HP and all standard traits. Their ground speed is 5 and their swim speed
is 7. They're enthusiastic raiders who fight with **tridents** that do physical damage and inflict a -2 AC penalty on the target for a turn. They can also shoot water harpoons (ranged 5 vs. AC; recharge 5-6) which do more damage than the trident and pull the target adjacent to the archon. You're not running
away so easily! If surrounded they'll use a whirlpool of tines (close burst 1 vs. AC; enemies only; recharges when first bloodied) which does physical damage and causes targets hit by it to suffer 2 damage for each square they move (save ends). A miss halves both the immediate damage and the one
from the condition. Water Archon Tide Strider A surly warrior with big moods and a big spear, the Tide Strider is a Level 15 Skirmisher with 144 HP. Its ground speed is 6, and its swim speed 8. It projects a Body Torrent aura (1) that affects enemies that try to attack the archon in melee, pushing them 1
square whether they hit or miss. Its greatspear is Reach 2, and if the archon has combat advantage against the target, it will knock the target prone. It can use a maneuver called Way of Water (recharge 6) to shift 6 squares and make a spear attack at any point during the move. Having a line of these
behind a line of shoal reavers might make the PCs think they're facing a solid phalanx until the tide striders scatter like, well, water, and shift behind the PC's front line. Water Archon Waveshaper This being is pretty much a water-bender, using a pair of war fans to direct the waters around it. It's a Level 16
Controller (Leader) with 157 HP, a ground speed of 6, and a swim speed of 8. The waveshaper prefers to stay at a safe distance from there. It will bombard the enemy with Geysers (Area burst 2 within 10 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6) which damage, knock
targets prone, and prevent them from using immediate actions for a turn. When things get more chaotic, or while it waits for the geyser to recharge, it will target individual enemies with Dizzying Whirlpool (ranged 10 vs. Fortitude) which does a bit more damage and prevents the target from charging or
shifting (save ends). As a minor action it can use Ocean Call (close burst 10; recharges when bloodied) which allows any allies in range with the Water or Aquatic keyword to shift 3 squares as a free action and gain 10 temporary HP. All water archons have both keywords, of course, and so do a lot of
other interesting monsters. If forced into melee, the archon will use Waveshape as a basic attack that damages, knocks prone, and pushes 1 square. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions When not serving the whims of the primordials directly, water archons work for people with similar appetites for
destruction and a similar preference for watery environments. As long as their masters allow the archons to indulge in both, they'll serve loyally. The sample encounters have troops of archons serving such masters. There's a level 12 encounter where the master is a human pirate, and a level 14 one
where it's an Aboleth Slime Mage from the MM. That last one includes a waveshaper, whose Ocean Call does also benefit the aboleth. I like all of the MM2 archors a lot more from the first book. Their basic mechanics are a lot more functional, though they still suffer from the damage
bug, and their themes shine clearly through all of their stat blocks. It's weird to think of these things using ships. Even ehips made of solid water. If feels like an unnecessary level of complication. Maybe it was just designed as an intimidation tactic. Page 7 It's weird to think of these things using ships.
Even ehips made of solid water. If feels like an unnecessary level of complication. Maybe it was just designed as an intimidation tactic. Unless those ships can also move on land, of course. Just a giant mass of animated water rolling forward and crushing all before it, with a crew of archons making
ranged attacks from on "deck." It depends on whether they're capable of getting tired, I guess. A vehicle would make sense if they are. Also you'd need one to carry siege engines and artillery for your own army or for those of the other archons you're working with. Also, why are the water archons just
randomly Japanese-looking? I like the art, it just sort of sticks out looking at the other archon illustrations. I wouldn't call that "Japanese-looking"; the only thing that stands out is the fans. The rest of their armor has this fins-and-scales motif, but isn't particularly Japanese-looking IMHO. I love 4e monster
design and lore so much....but boy do I hate the idea of ships made of water. It hurts my imagination. Which is fine; it's not like I have to use that idea. But ships...made of water. I like the water ships, honestly, though I picture them as sort of like the archons themselves: water held together in an
approximation of solidity, with forged metallic bits like the archon's armor: plating, figurehead, weapons. It's not massively different than all those fantastic iceberg-ships which are also made of water. At least, as long as you're talking about deploying water archons en masse (particularly if they're
transporting other archons or materiel), I like the ships a lot better than the idea of dozens or hundreds of archons just swimming from place to place. Thing is, though, those ships should be able to move on land. Make it even more explicit that they're for easing transportation, just like all those human
armies use carts and ships even though we're perfectly capable of walking or swimming. The more I spend time thinking about it, the more I love archon gear in general. The mighty elemental forges necessary to create it. The strange half-metal, half-element siege weapons they set up to crack the walls of
an enemy fortress. An archon who's lost a gauntlet and can't really form a hand capable of proper fine manipulation until it gets a replacement. An angel of battle wearing archon gear as trophies. Putting them in armor and giving them weapons is largely a visual gimmick to make them more interesting
than regular elementals, but it really, really does. I love 4e monster design and lore so much....but boy do I hate the idea of ships made of water. It hurts my imagination. Which is fine; it's not like I have to use that idea. But ships....made of water. It's a vehicle that goes on and under water. What do you
call that ? I think Barghests have been in the game since AD&D 1st Edition, though I don't think I have the book in which they first appear. Their exact nature has changed a bit between editions. The Lore If you described a barghest as a "goblin werewolf", you'd get the general idea across while being
almost completely wrong. Barghests are born randomly in goblinoid populations. The event is rare, and usually seen as a blessing from Bane. As a result of this reputation and their own powers, barghests often rise to leadership positions in goblinoid society when they grow up. Barghests are
shapeshifters, and possess two forms: one is a goblinoid (goblin, hobgoblin or bugbear), and the other a wolf-like creature. You can't really mistake them for either normal goblinoids or wolves, though: the creature is merely wolf-like, and the other form always has a specific tell that remains constant
across forms. Locks of white hair or a single discolored eye are common. Barghests aren't particularly vulnerable to silver nor are they affected by the moon. They're fairly smart and in full control of their actions in all forms. And they have psionic powers, which usually manifest as some sort of psychic
vampirism they use to sap the minds and vitality of their foes. The Numbers Barghests are Small or Medium Natural Humanoids with the Shapechanger keyword. They have low-light vision and a ground speed of 6 (8 in wolf form). They can Change Shape with a minor action once per round, and have
different basic attacks depending on what their current form is. They also have some form of harmful psychic power, which varies per stat block. We have two here, both Medium: Barghest Savager This is a bugbear barghest whose love of violence is exceptional even for a bugbear. As a leader, it tries to
incite its troops to perform frequent raids on any soft targets it can find. Savagers are Level 4 Brutes with 63 HP. They fight with a battleaxe or with their wolfish bites, and can perform a Jump Strike (recharge 5-6) with either, shifting 3 squares before and after the attack and doing extra damage. Their
mental powers manifest as the Power Feed ability (melee 1 vs. Will; Encounter; Reliable), usable only in wolf form. This does some psychic damage and allows the barghest to use an encounter or daily power it has seen the target use this encounter. The attack bonus for this will be the same as that of
the monster's other attacks, but damage and other effects will be as if the power had been used by the original PC. This would make the ability worth using on high-damage powers, or those with interesting side effects. When the wizard proclaimed his Sleep spell would end the fight, this was probably not
what he had in mind. The Reliable keyword means the power isn't spent if the attack misses, so odds are the monster will be able to use this successfully at least once. Barghest Battle Lord This hobgoblin barghest has the makings of a legendary general, commanding his troops with great tactical
acumen and preferring to bait his enemies into traps. He's a Level 7 Controller with 82 HP, fighting with a greatsword in humanoid form. The wolf form's bites knock the target prone on a hit, and the greatsword makes the battle lord invisible to the target for a turn. In either form he can use a Psychic Howl
(ranged 10 vs. Will) which does psychic damage, dazes for a turn, and inflicts a -2 penalty to attacks as an aftereffect (save ends). He can also use Life Feed (close blast 5 vs. Fortitude; encounter) in wolf form, which does a little bit of necrotic damage and inflicts 5 ongoing necrotic damage (save ends).
Whenever the targets take that ongoing damage, the battle lord heals 5 HP. So if four PCs are hit the battle lord will heal at the start of each of their turns, totalling 20 HP per round. Once per encounter, as a reaction to being hit by a melee attack, the battle lord can Get Some Distance, shifting 2 squares
away. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions Barghests can be added to any goblin encounter that you think needs an extra kick. The first few times it happens it might catch the PCs by surprise, but it will be interesting to find out if they learn to spot the tells. As mentioned in the lore, barghests will
usually occupy leadership positions in whatever group of goblins they hang out with. I remember barghests had an extremely complicated backstory in previous editions, being fiends from the Neutral Evil plane who happened to be able to shapeshift into goblins and who had a whole complicated hierarchy
back home based on how many souls they had devoured. All of that is gone here, which I think is for the best in the end. Some goblins can just wolf out and break your mind with their psychic powers. It's one of those things that happens. Page 8 There's a kind of simplicity to "basically, goblin werewolves, and break your mind with their psychic powers. It's one of those things that happens. Page 8 There's a kind of simplicity to "basically, goblin werewolves, and break your mind with their psychic powers. It's one of those things that happens.
but not lunar" that I absolutely fell in love with. They can be so folkloric in feel. When running a Ravenloft/Castlevania-style "go fight Gothic horror monsters" campaign, I used a barghest lord as a regional boss/lieutenant to the vampire end-boss instead of the regulation werewolf lord, and it was a lot of
fun figuring out how to make an archetypal werewolf forest more gobliny. Unless those ships can also move on land, of course, Just a giant mass of animated water rolling forward and crushing all before it, with a crew of archons making ranged attacks from on "deck." How very Moorcockian of you We
really liked Barghests. Well, OK, a certain GM that was me loved them, they served quite well to torture low heroic PCs who thought kicking goblin butt was a sport. Turned out it was more of a war... There's a lot of ink spilled about how much of the MM is "savage/evil humanoid #315." I wonder how many
are "evil wolf #75"? One thing I already know we'll see a lot of here is "more variants of a monster that appeared in the Monster Manual". The lore entries for these will be mostly just links to the MM post. There's a lot of ink spilled about how much of the MM is "sayage/evil humanoid #315." I wonder how
many are "evil wolf #75"? In 4e MM specifically? I would say 4e's monsters have a lot more nuance in terms of being more than just 'evil humanoid #12' than most MMs. Not to say that the presentations of goblins, orcs, ogres, etc. is incredibly subtle or anything. Still, look at what 5e did to Gnolls.... In 4e
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primary sources for 4e gnolls: MM1, MM3, and MV? They all depict them like 5e does. You're talking about the one article from Dragon (or Dungeon?) that paints them in a different light—because it's the gnoll culture of a specific region in Eberron. 5e and 4e both treat gnolls as bloodthirsty marauders in
their primary sources. The pattern with the MM1 and MV was that the traditionally non-playable humanoids like goblinoids, orcs, and gnolls were all given descriptions that tended to paint them as universally hostile. All gnolls were Yeenoghu worshippers, all orcs Gruumsh fanatics, all goblinoids
aggressive conquerors at the edge of civilization. The MV, which dedicates more space to lore, tends to double down on this and lean heavily on the use of adjectives like "savage", "brutal", "primitive", and so on. One of the subsection headers in the troglodyte entry was literally "Loathsome Primitives"
Though the specific descriptions varied, their general tone was as described above. Anything about finding non-evil people of those species and interacting with them non-violently was mostly my own speculation. You tended to get more nuanced descriptions in those entries that depicted traditionally-
playable people; dwarves, elves, halflings, humans, gnomes, and so on. These tended to stress that this people was varied in ethical outlook, and could produce both heroes and villains. A notable exception to the "hostile humanoid" pattern, when you only look at the MM1 and MV, were the minotaur
entries. The MM1 describes them as mostly in thrall to the demon lord Baphomet, though it does at least point out non-evil minotaurs were made "playable", is a lot softer and portrays the demon worshippers as a "significant minority" rather than "the
vast majority", also giving more emphasis to describing what non-evil minotaur culture looks like. Satyrs get a similar treatment, with the MM1 entry calling them duplicitous thieves and the Heroes of the Feywild entry being significantly nicer to them. That's sad, but I suppose it harkens back to the 4E
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other usually-evil-humanoid-PC-treatments in the back. They're limited and sparse and don't provide nuance, but I suppose it harkens back to the 4E design principle of making everything more gameable. No reason to devote
pagecount to the pacifist orc farmers because the PCs won't be fighting them -- more stat blocks for Gruumush fantatics! I mean, to be fair I want the Monster Manual to be full of enemy stat blocks, and a disappointing thing about the MM1 is that it didn't have nearly enough statblocks for humans. There's
a big wide range of humans you're going to want to stab, burn, or defenestrate over the course of your career. But yeah, nuance is nice. We could use more of it on principle. Page 9 The MM has stats for gnoll PCs with all the other usually-evil-humanoid-PC-treatments in the back. They're limited and
sparse and don't provide nuance, but they sanction nuance right in one of the big three core books. That's fair, but I think that's due to the 3.5 MM providing entries for creatures like gnolls as characters. The 4e MM1 then continued that tradition. That's fair, but I think that's due to the 3.5 MM providing entries for creatures like gnolls as characters.
entries for creatures like gnolls as characters. The 4e MM1 then continued that tradition. Right, but the fact that 4e branched out from that to Keith Baker's article on gnolls -- which handily led to things like gnolls showing up as serious options in things like independent charop documents -- and 5e
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written as just the typical dnd evil savages, but the goblins and minotaurs were not. Heck, goblins actually got a very large and nuanced official PC writeup alongside kobolds in the 4e Dungeon Survival Handbook, and Hobgoblins got a pretty solid writeup as PCs in Dragon #419. Yeah, I'm not a big fan of
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room floor where it belonged, but still... gnolls were a complete waste of space and they tick me off. I really hope that lore with 6th edition. 6e gnolls will be 7.99$ day one DLC. And of course since 3e onwards, Flinds have been reversed from their original version, where they were the
slightly shorter, slightly smarter, much more lawful form of gnolls -- with metal nunchaku. In 3e they became gnolls but more so (and 4e just called them Havoc Gnolls) but they could have made a good "slightly less demonically crazed" type of gnoll for PCs to come from. To that original question, it is
interesting that I don't care much for countless iterations on there-to-be-evil humanoids and I don't care much for countless iterations on wolves that you are supposed to fight, yet I do like barghests, I don't know if that makes me a hypocrite or not. I think it's because barghests both are a great use of both
tropes at once, and that they make other evil humanoids and canids less necessary. Barghests make goblinoids and wolves look bad without being genuinely representative of either. I imagine both a bugbear PC and a "werewolf" PC would be inclined to go fight a barghest. And heck, if someone wanted
to play a barghest (goblinoid with druidic build/appropriate theme) with the intention of proving they aren't all bad, heck, sounds like a fine PC idea to me. I do like barghests more as "super special goblins with magic shapechange powers" than "werewolf demons who happen to look like goblins in their
humanoid form instead of humans." The former makes goblins and goblin society more interesting, the latter is just another variety of demon. Behir Behirs first appear in AD&D 1st Edition, and are one of the game's many "not-quite-dragon" monsters. The Lore Behirs are giant reptilian creatures with
serpentine bodies, many legs (8 or 12, depending on edition), and innate electrical powers. They're sapient but anti-social and uninterested in the trappings of civilization. They don't even tolerate each other's presence for longer than absolutely necessary. A behir mother will eject her young from the lair
shortly after they're born, forcing them to fend for themselves. Though a behir makes lairs in pretty much the same places you'd expect to find dragons, it accumulates neither treasure nor servants. All it wants is to hunt and be left alone. Like a lot of D&D super-predators it doesn't usually care about the
sapience of its victims, but it can be reasoned with or bribed if you can get it to listen to you. Behirs can communicate both in Common and Draconic. This means that some people try to recruit behirs into service. Though this can end badly if the behir's terms are not met, a successful negotiation will allow
the foolhardy employer to obtain the services of a formidable monster. The Numbers Behirs are Huge Natural Magical Beasts, and have Tremorsense 10 and Resist Lightning 15. They fight with a combination of natural weapons and lightning attacks, which vary per stat block. They're Unaligned, and
have a typical Int score of 7. Behir This represents the typical specimen found in the wild. It's a Level 14 Solo Soldier with 564 HP. Their ground speed is 7, and they have a climb speed of 5. In combat they project a Lightning Storm* aura (5) that causes 5 lightning damage to anyone caught inside. The
behir fights with its claws and bite, both of which are Reach 3 and do the same damage. The claw is a basic attack, and the bite does a mix of physical and lightning damage. It can also Devour a Medium or smaller victim (Reach 3 vs AC), doing bite damage and swallowing it whole. This counts as a
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grab! While it lasts the victim only has line of sight and effect to the behir, and no one else has line of sight or effect to the victim. A creature can escape the grab by the usual means, appearing adjacent to he behir, and can also automatically crawl out of a dead behir as a move action. With a minor
action, the behir can sustain the grab and deal an automatic 15 damage to the victim. Only one victim at a time fits in its gizzard. The monster can also use a Lightning Breath (close blast 5 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6), which does heavy lightning damage and dazes (save ends), and does half damage on a
miss. Its Thunderleg Stomp (close burst 3 vs. Fortitude) does light physical damage and knocks targets prone on a hit. The tactics section says behirs begin by swallowing a squishy even if they have to eat a few opportunity attacks to do it, and then favoring their area attacks unless sorely pressed by a
single character. With a damage upgrade across the board, these tactics are quite sound, since the Stomp becomes a more viable option. Being solo monsters, behirs have a neat initiative trick: they don't roll initiative at all! Instead, Lightning Reflexes gives them three turns per combat round at initiative
counts 30, 20, and 10. This means that the poor swallowed victim might be looking at 45 automatic damage per round if they fail to escape the grab on their own turn. Using that first action on Swallow is definitely a worthy investment. Behir Bolter Whelp A young specimen, not yet fully grown. It's merely
Large, and a Level 8 Solo Soldier with 352 HP and Resist 10 Lightning. It's standard damage is 12, and it should be around 16 with the update. It has a ground speed of 8 and a climb speed of 5. The bolter is going to start the fight by targetting a squishy with Knockdown Rush (Reach 2 vs. AC; minor
action; recharge 4-6), which allows it to charge and knock the target prone on a hit. Then, since this was a minor action, it's going to follow that up with a claw or bite, which work the same as the adult's with smaller numbers and Reach 2. When the PCs inevitably surround it, the bolder will emit a Lightning
Shock pulse (close burst 2 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6 and when first bloodied) which does heavy lightning damage, half on a miss. When hit by a melee attack, it can respond with a claw as a reaction (Rip-Claw Response). Despite being young, the bolter already displays Lightning Reflexes, acting on
initiative counts 20, 15, and 5, so with enough luck on those recharge rolls it can keep bouncing between PCs for a while. Behir Stormsteed This "domesticated" behir was recruited and trained as a mount by storm giants. It's a Level 24 Soldier with 229 HP. It has Resisnt Lightning 15, a ground speed of
8, and replaces the usual climb speed with a Fly speed of 8 (hover). This is explained as the creature having the ability to walk on the lightning it generates. The math bug affects the stormsteed particularly hard since it's an epic creature. You should just about double its damage to fix it. Its basic attack is
a bite that does a mix of physical and lightning damage, and it can also use its Lightning Breath (close burst 3 vs. Reflex, recharge 4-6) to deal lightning damage all around itself. I wonder if that was meant to be a blast. When mounted, the stormsteed can use Ride The Lightning, which grants the rider a
+2 to attack with lightning powers, and allows the steed itself to use Lightning Breath once per turn as a minor action indepentently of the recharge counter. Perfect for storm giants or someone like a bluespawn godslayer. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions We get two sample encounters: a level
8 one with a bolter whelp and three bugbear wardancers, and a level 14 one with an adult, a medusa, and a yuan-ti incanter. If something even remotely looks like a snake, Zehir has an interest in it. Behirs are one of those monsters I never really got into in previous edition. A closer reading of this MM2
entry does give me a few ideas of how to use them, but I still can't say I'm pumped about them. I've always had a special place in my heart for behirs, but it isn't all that deserved. When I got my first set of DnD manuals as a kid, it was in the 3.0 era, and leafing through the monster manual I was just blown
away by an illustration in the early B's. It's easily the best behir art from any edition, and I wanted to play a game including this creature as soon as I saw it. Page 10 The 3e behir art was
by Wayne England. whose 3e era art was atrocious (apart from item pictures), but he improved and some of his 4e era art is fairly good. I think he passed away several years ago. The 5e behir art depicts it as much more serpentine. It's not a bad take either. I adored Lockwood and Sam Wood's work in
3e, but that 3e MM illustration is rather bland and boring compared to the 4e art above IMO. And they all pale in comparison to Erol Otus' original piece for the cover of S4. Wayne England really liked to use straight-on views, and I think that's why I liked his equipment illustrations and hated his monsters. I
do like the behir. It's a fine D&D original -- distinct look, signature electric power, intelligent enough to have a personality, but trending towards being a dick. It conveys a lot of the feeling of fighting a dragon without a lot of the expectations baggage that's accumulated with actual dragons. Heck, it's even
more of a classical dragon in many ways -- something that a local saint might have vanquished without raising all the questions of "then what happened to its hoard?" I'd love to see one animated -- a lightning-crackling drake with a long and sinuous body and a lot of legs would be really interesting to see
in motion, especially with a good studio behind it. I used one in a ruined desert city because the idea of it tracking the PCs, being partially and briefly visible down alleys and between buildings as it races to cut them off, was a visual that I really wanted to try conveying. Right, but the fact that 4e branched
out from that to Keith Baker's article on gnolls -- which handily led to things like gnolls showing up as serious options in things like independent charop documents -- and 5e branched out from that to "you can play a tabaxi or a tortle before you can play a gnoll"? Welp, some changes aren't progress.
Right, 4e doesn't have, in the MMs, a radically different spin on humanoids than other editions (which are all uniform in considering most of these races to be inalterably evil opponents). It does present an option to play EVERY ONE of them as a PC however, and an alignment system that is less
significant and mechanically constraining. Then WotC goes right on into depicting several of these races as potential PCs with actual support and detailed writeups that talk about non-evil PCs, some right in a PHB. All the subsequent material reinforces this idea of humanoids and 'semi-humans' as being
potentially varied individuals with more complex cultures which include potential 'heroes'. I don't know a lot about 3.x, maybe it was similar in its stance, but classic D&D humanoids were sub-par evil-only (or at least expected to be evil) characters. Playing a half-orc in
AD&D was a crippling disadvantage, and that isn't even saying anything about an actual orc, for which no core book even acknowledged the possibility. 5e may not be some extreme radical departure from the 4e MM in most cases, but they are much more hostile to humanoid PCs in general. The game
seems to be back to allocating them only to 'team evil' unless you use 3PP content or roll your own stuff, or at least ignore what the game's many "not-guite-dragon" monsters. The Lore Behirs are giant reptilian creatures with
serpentine bodies, many legs (8 or 12, depending on edition), and innate electrical powers. They're sapient but anti-social and uninterested in the trappings of civilization. They don't even tolerate each other's presence for longer than absolutely necessary. A behir mother will eject her young from the lair
shortly after they're born, forcing them to fend for themselves. Though a behir makes lairs in pretty much the same places you'd expect to find dragons, it accumulates neither treasure nor servants. All it wants is to hunt and be left alone. Like a lot of D&D super-predators it doesn't usually care about the
sapience of its victims, but it can be reasoned with or bribed if you can get it to listen to you. Behirs can communicate both in Common and Draconic. This means that some people try to recruit behirs into service. Though this can end badly if the behir's terms are not met, a successful negotiation will allow
the foolhardy employer to obtain the services of a formidable monster. The Numbers Behirs are Huge Natural Magical Beasts, and have Tremorsense 10 and Resist Lightning 15. They fight with a combination of natural weapons and lightning attacks, which vary per stat block. They're Unaligned, and
have a typical Int score of 7. Behir This represents the typical specimen found in the wild. It's a Level 14 Solo Soldier with 564 HP. Their ground speed is 7, and they have a climb speed of 5. In combat they project a Lightning Storm* aura (5) that causes 5 lightning damage to anyone caught inside. The
behir fights with its claws and bite, both of which are Reach 3 and do the same damage. The claw is a basic attack, and the bite does a mix of physical and lightning damage. It can also Devour a Medium or smaller victim (Reach 3 vs AC), doing bite damage and swallowing it whole. This counts as a
grab! While it lasts the victim only has line of sight and effect to the behir, and no one else has line of sight or effect to the victim. A creature can escape the grab by the usual means, appearing adjacent to he behir, and can also automatically crawl out of a dead behir as a move action. With a minor
action, the behir can sustain the grab and deal an automatic 15 damage to the victim. Only one victim at a time fits in its gizzard. The monster can also use a Lightning Breath (close blast 5 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6), which does heavy lightning damage and dazes (save ends), and does half damage on a
miss. Its Thunderleg Stomp (close burst 3 vs. Fortitude) does light physical damage and knocks targets prone on a hit. The tactics section says behirs begin by swallowing a squishy even if they have to eat a few opportunity attacks to do it, and then favoring their area attacks unless sorely pressed by a
single character. With a damage upgrade across the board, these tactics are quite sound, since the Stomp becomes a more viable option. Being solo monsters, behirs have a neat initiative trick: they don't roll initiative at all! Instead, Lightning Reflexes gives them three turns per combat round at initiative
counts 30, 20, and 10. This means that the poor swallowed victim might be looking at 45 automatic damage per round if they fail to escape the grab on their own turn. Using that first action on Swallow is definitely a worthy investment. Behir Bolter Whelp A young specimen, not yet fully grown. It's merely
Large, and a Level 8 Solo Soldier with 352 HP and Resist 10 Lightning. It's standard damage is 12, and it should be around 16 with the update. It has a ground speed of 5. The bolter is going to start the fight by targetting a squishy with Knockdown Rush (Reach 2 vs. AC; minor
action; recharge 4-6), which allows it to charge and knock the target prone on a hit. Then, since this was a minor action, it's going to follow that up with a claw or bite, which work the same as the adult's with smaller numbers and Reach 2. When the PCs inevitably surround it, the bolder will emit a Lightning
Shock pulse (close burst 2 vs. Reflex; recharge 5-6 and when first bloodied) which does heavy lightning damage, half on a miss. When hit by a melee attack, it can respond with a claw as a reaction (Rip-Claw Response). Despite being young, the bolter already displays Lightning Reflexes, acting on
initiative counts 20. 15. and 5. so with enough luck on those recharge rolls it can keep bouncing between PCs for a while. Behir Stormsteed This "domesticated" behir was recruited and trained as a mount by storm giants. It's a Level 24 Soldier with 229 HP. It has Resisnt Lightning 15, a ground speed of
8, and replaces the usual climb speed with a Fly speed of 8 (hover). This is explained as the creature having the ability to walk on the lightning it generates. The math bug affects the stormsteed particularly hard since it's an epic creature. You should just about double its damage to fix it. Its basic attack is
a bite that does a mix of physical and lightning damage, and it can also use its Lightning Breath (close burst 3 vs. Reflex, recharge 4-6) to deal lightning damage all around itself. I wonder if that was meant to be a blast. When mounted, the stormsteed can use Ride The Lightning, which grants the rider a
+2 to attack with lightning powers, and allows the steed itself to use Lightning Breath once per turn as a minor action indepentently of the recharge counter. Perfect for storm giants or someone like a bluespawn godslayer. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions We get two sample encounters: a level
8 one with a bolter whelp and three bugbear wardancers, and a level 14 one with an adult, a medusa, and a yuan-ti incanter. If something even remotely looks like a snake, Zehir has an interest in it. Behirs are one of those monsters I never really got into in previous edition. A closer reading of this MM2
entry does give me a few ideas of how to use them, but I still can't say I'm pumped about them. This was one of the earliest attempts to produce a Solo action economy that actually worked. It is almost overkill in that respect, though it does realistically expect that a strong Paragon party will probably lock
out at least one of the Behir's turns each round, on average. Heck, you better if you expect to win! It still lacks a real "get out of jail free" card though. I think it would be worth giving them something like an "exchange an AP to remove one condition or effect". A fun little aside from the behir as a constructed
solo - it has three turns (good idea!), but then you see the timidity-reflex: it only has a single action on each of those turns! The fun bit: they are almost complety unafected by [dazed]! Always found this funny! idrkw... On Barghests: There's been frequent disagreement on whether barghests are
monsters that feed on goblins or monsters that goblins look up to. On Behirs: I like behirs, but I always feel like they're missing one more thing. A relationship to another creature, an ability more unique than lightning breath, some utility they can perform, a strange personality trait. Something that would
create situations that are only possible through the presence of a behir. 5e may not be some extreme radical departure from the 4e MM in most cases, but they are much more hostile to humanoid PCs in general. The game seems to be back to allocating them only to 'team evil' unless you use 3PP
content or roll your own stuff, or at least ignore what the game says. The very first major rules supplement for 5e was focused on fleshing out and playing monstrous characters. On Behirs: I like behirs, but I always feel like they're missing one more thing. A relationship to another creature, an ability more
unique than lightning breath, some utility they can perform, a strange personality trait. Something that would create situations that are only possible through the presence of a behir. How about the way they hate dragons? Like, hate. Haaaaaaaaate. AM levels of hate. Evil Midnight Lurker said: How about
the way they hate dragons? Like, hate. Haaaaaaaaate. AM levels of hate. Given the Zehir theme in one of the sample encounters, and Zehir and Tiamat's feud, it's possible they're his work. Some form of corruption or mockery of Blue Dragons, in a serpentine form, but utterly contemptuous and hateful
towards them. Page 11 The 5e behir art depicts it as much more serpentine. It's not a bad take either. Yeah, it's more reminiscent of the 2e AD&D version. Different, but also cool. I adored Lockwood and Sam Wood's work in 3e, but that 3e MM illustration is rather bland and boring compared to the 4e art
above IMO. And they all pale in comparison to Erol Otus' original piece for the cover of S4. We'll have to agree to disagree on the 3e behir. That S4 one is awesome, though in a very different way. It's either blown up a size category since then, or this one is a juvenile, though. No way is that thing bigger
than Large, and not even the bigger end of Large. On Behirs: I like behirs, but I always feel like they're missing one more thing. A relationship to another creature, an ability more unique than lightning breath, some utility they can perform, a strange personality trait. Something that would create situations
that are only possible through the presence of a behir. It's funny. The "hates dragons" bit in the lore aside, behirs look and fight like they could just be another breed of Dragonspawn. A Bluespawn Scuttler, or whatever. I've only used behirs in a campaign once, but I think I found a good niche for them. It
was a heavily primal/shamanic leaning setting. Behirs were the larval form of the mighty Thunderbird. When they reach full size, behirs climb up onto mountaintops during a storm and let the lightning strike them over again, providing energy for the final transformation. A sideguest of that
campaign involved the weather of the region being fucked up because of disarray among the local spirits. Many juvenile behirs had been dropped off across the area by passing thunderbirds, but there were SO many of them that in addition to being a major local monster threat, they were spreading the
lightning around too thinly and stunting each other's growth. The PC's had to kill all but one of the mature behirs in the land so that it could transform, and then there'd be a local demigod kindly disposed toward them who could fix the weather. On Behirs: I like behirs, but I always feel like they're missing
one more thing. A relationship to another creature, an ability more unique than lightning breath, some utility they can perform, a strange personality trait. Something that would create situations that are only possible through the presence of a behir. Well... there's hookahs. You could always extrapolate
the "Caterpillar" encounter from the Dungeonland module which featured a disguised behir is actually a hint about how behirs have a fondness for smoking, and will do whatever it takes to get their claws on rare tobaccos and herbs and drugs. More seriously, what if they supplement their diet by bug-
zapping birds, especially in large groups? A behir moves in, the local bird population starts to drop or evacuate, throwing things out of whack and making everything "too guiet," It's not a sustainable way to feed yourself, since it'll drive away the birds before long, but what does a behir care, anyway? Plus
since behirs don't build hoards like dragons, maybe they might wind up moving around more often, intercepting migration patterns as they go. As an aside, both the barquest and behir originate in Celtic myth and folklore, though the former is much better known. Ironically, while the Celtic behir is
associated with lightning, its more in the context of speed than electricity--its supposed to be a really fast and deadly serpent. As an aside, both the barquest and behir originate in Celtic myth and folklore, though the former is much better known. Ironically, while the Celtic behir is associated with lightning,
its more in the context of speed than electricity--its supposed to be a really fast and deadly serpent. Poison is a major theme too, but that didn't make it into D&D for some reason. Isn't the Celtic Barghest more of a type of haunting? Like a poltergeist? Poison is a major theme too, but that didn't make it
into D&D for some reason. Isn't the Celtic Barghest more of a type of haunting? Like a poltergeist? Depends when you hit it; early on it was a variety of fairy dog, but later on it become merged with a lot of other Black Dog archetypes and assumed a more spectral assumption (which happened to a lot of
fairy creatures honestly: its not clear sluagh were always assumed to be ghosts). As for the poison--I suspect the lightning it. Poisonous lightning! ...I swear that there's actually monster and/or PC powers in 4e with that exact same combination of damage types. I
think maybe it was a Sorcerer spell from Arcane Power? But I can't name them off the top of my head. I don't remember seeing the "lightning and poison" combination in a monster, but it is perfectly rules-legal and is a "nice" thing to do to your PCs since I think very few of them are going to be able to
resist both at once. I don't remember seeing the "lightning and poison" combination in a monster, but it is perfectly rules-legal and is a "nice" think very few of them are going to be able to resist both at once. Yeah, I tend to let players reflavor to adapt powers and such, so if
you wanted a specific type of PC where poison lightning made sense, then fine, do it. There's also things like Arcane Admixture. Page 12Beholders appeared in the first Monster Manual, and I covered them here. The Monster Manual 2 brings us a few more varieties, including some that also made it into
the Monster Vault. Each of the three beholder varieties here gets its own bit of lore, so let's combine that with their numbers below. As before, beholders are Aberrant Magical Beasts. They have All-Around Vision and Darkvision, and a variable fly speed with hover capability. In general their attacks consist
of a very weak bite and a whole bunch of thematic ranged attacks from their eye stalks and central eye. Beholder eye rays are Ranged, but don't provoke opportunity attacks. Beholder Gauth This one appeared in the Monster Vault, and so we discussed them a bit here. Gauths are the least of their kind,
but they're still as unpleasant and power-hungry as any beholder. Their relative weakness means they often don't end up on the top of whatever evil org chart they join, and so they are constantly scheming to rise in its ranks. They're the most Starscream-like of beholders. Gauths also like to capitalize on
the fearsome reputation of their larger relatives, so people who don't know better might confuse them for the more dangerous varieties. I already covered the Monster Vault version of gauths in the post on MM1 beholders. The Monster Manual 2 is pretty much identical, except it suffers from the damage
bug and has a remarkably weak bite. Just use the MV stats for this one. Beholder Eye of Frost A counterpart to the MM1's Eye of Flame, this is a beholder with a great affinity for elemental ice. It prefers to dwell in very cold climates in the world and Elemental Chaos, where it keeps company such as ice
archons, frost giants, and oni. Since eyes of frost aren't that much stronger than these other ice monsters, they often end up in the same narrative position as gauths, scheming to gain the power and respect they feel is due to them. Eyes of Frost are Large and have a fly speed of 6. They're Level 14 Elite
Artillery with 222 HP. When first bloodied they coat themselves in Ice Armor, increasing their AC and Fortitude by 2 for the remainder of the fight. Their bite is super weak: 2d6 damage. You'd need to triple this to get it in line with the new math. Much more interesting are the eye beams. The Central Eye
(Ranged 8 vs. Reflex; minor action 1/round) weakens on a hit (save ends). If a target weakened by this power would become immobilized instead, and this lasts until they're no longer weakened! The Eye of Frost has access to 3 Eye Rays, and Eyes of the Beholder allows it to use
one of them as a free action against any enemy that starts its turn within 5 squares of the beholder's rate of fire. The rays
have Range 10. and have the following effects: 1. Freeze Ray: vs. Fortitude, deals cold damage. 2. Telekinesis: vs. Fortitude, deals less cold damage than the freeze ray but also deals ongoing cold damage and immobilizes (save ends both). Cold resistance on
the PCs will go a long way towards making the eye of frost less dangerous, though its control effects will still be a problem. Beholder Eye Tyrant who dove into the Abyss in search of the Shard of Ultimate Evil wielded by Tharizdun. Though the
creature never found the shard, it nevertheless emerged from the experience infused with all sorts of demonic energies, which increased its power and warped its body and mind. This stat block could represent that individual or one of its descendants, or perhaps another beholder who thought he could do
it better. Eyes of Chaos are still guite capable of concocting complex schemes and directing armies of underlings... only now those underlings tend to be demons more often than not, and those schemes end up having widespread destruction and bloodshed as either their main goals or as desirable side
effects. This twisted thing is Large, and Level 25 Elite Artillery. It has a pretty impressive fly speed of 8, which makes it a lot zoomier than your average beholder. The bite is once again nothing to write home about, despite all those lovely teeth. The Central Eye (Ranged 20 vs. Fortitude) has the traditional
antimagic/enervation effect that forbits the target from using encounter or daily powers until the end of the beholder's next turn. After that we get the six eye rays, all Ranged 10: 1. Telekinesis: vs. Fortitude, does physical damage and slides 6 squares. 2. Blinding: vs. Reflex, does physical damage and
blinds (save ends). 3. Confounding: vs. Will, does psychic damage, slides 6 squares, and dazes (save ends). 4. Maddening: vs. Will, does psychic damage and forces the target to move its speed away from the
beholder by the safest route possible. 6. Teleporting: vs. Reflex, does physical damage and teleports 10 squares. The usual Eyes of the Beholder trait means anyone starting their turn within 5 squares of the beholder gets hit with a random eye ray. When the monster is first bloodied it releases a Ripple of
Chaos that allows it to target every enemy within 5 squares with a random eye ray and then teleport 6 squares. I kinda want to make a random roll even for the standard-action eye rays with this critter. For all the randomness, though, it seems the eye ray effects are actually a bit less exciting than those of
a "normal" beholder, since there are no sudden death effects here. Beholder Ultimate Tyrant If you manage to talk to the Ultimate Tyrant, it will tell you that it has the most valid of reasons for hating all other beholders: they're a bunch of posers. They were born in the world or otherwise went native, but
the Ultimate Tyrant is part of the original generation that came directly from the Far Realm and still keeps its connection to that place. Depending on the particulars of your campaign it might even be the original beholder. If not, it's at least among the first to arrive in the world. Perhaps the only creature that
might dispute its claims of OG-ness is the Gibbering Orb. The Ultimate Tyrant is Huge, and a Level 29 Solo Artillary menace with 1080 HP. This can even make it suitable as a final boss for a campaign that ends in the mid-epic levels. Its fly speed is 8, again making it a lot faster than the MM1 beholders.
The damage for all of this beholder's attacks is guite low, and should likely be at least doubled. There's the basic bite, and there's the central Eye (Ranged 30 vs. Fortitude; minor action 1/round) does no damage but dazes and slows on a hit (save ends both). This
worsens to a full Stun on the first failed save. A miss still slows the target (save ends). Eyes of the Beholder works as usual, and Spasmodic Rays makes it so the beholder attacks every enemy within 10 squares with an eye ray when it's first bloodied and again when it dies. The eye rays themselves are
quite scary. Instead of simple ranged attacks, all of them are Area Burst 1 Within 10, and they still don't provoke opportunity attacks. If the standard Eye Tyrant is a slow-moving battleship, the Ultimate Tyrant is a hyper-mobile orbital laser cannon. 1. Madness: vs. Will; does psychic damage and forces the
target to make a basic attack against its nearest ally. 2. Unraveling: vs. Fortitude; does physical damage and 10 ongoing damage (save ends). The first failed save causes an additional 1d10 damage; the second an additional 2d10; the third causes an additional 3d10 and automatically ends the effect. So
if you fail all of your saves, you'll be taking a total of 6d10+30 damage over those three turns. 3. Withering: vs. Fortitude. Does immediate and ongoing necrotic damage (save ends), with the first failed save also weakening the target. There's a (save ends) after the weakening effect, so I'm guessing that's
a separate save from the ongoing damage. 4. Burning: vs. Reflex. Does immediate and ongoing fire damage, and a -2 penalty to saves
until the end of the beholder's next turn. 7. Petrifying: vs. Fortitude. Causes slowness (save ends), which worsens to immobilization (save and with petrification with the second. Petrification is permanent until cured. 8. Disintegrate: vs. Fortitude. Physical damage, and ongoing
15 physical damage (save ends). There's also an ongoing 10 damage after-effect, so in practice passing that first save only reduces the ongoing damage a bit. 9. Attraction: vs. Reflex; -5 penalty to all defenses, and at the start of the target's turn the beholder pulls it 2 squares (save ends). There's also a
2 penalty to defenses as an after-effect (save ends). 10. Repulsion: vs. Reflex. -2 penalty to Reflex, and at the start of the target's turn the beholder pushes it 6 squares (save ends). As an after-effect, the target gets pushed 3 squares in the same way (save ends). Though the Ultimate Tyrant only has one
outright deadly effect among its ray selection, it has a few other very interesting effects: the increasing ongoing damage from Disintegrate, and the first instances I've seen of ongoing forced movement! It bears repeating that all of these are area
attacks. Yes, even the free-action ones from Eye of the Beholder and Spasmodic Ray. This thing is an army-killer. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions We get a total of four sample encounters here. - Level 5: A gauth, 2 barghest savagers, and a goblin underboss. The gauth is likely the leader
here, making the goblins think it's a fully powered beholder. - Level 13: An Eye of Frost, an oni mage and two wyverns. What haunts the cold mountain at night. - Level 24: An Eye of Chaos and a Chaos Hydra. That enough chaos for you? - Level 29: The Ultimate Tyrant and 2 Slaughterstone Hammerers.
What if the kaiju teamed up with the giant robots? I love beholders and it's always good to have more. The Eye of Frost feels weirdly limited in what it can do, like its fiery counterpart in the first MM, but the Ultimate Tyrant is an absolute unit. Page 13 And again, that's probably because whoever created the
behir was still thinking in part about the Celtic monster, which pretty much is a serpent of some stripe (though like most such creatures (barring the afanc) its described vaguely enough you could read a number of differing images into it). Oh, I'd say it's got the action economy it needs- it gets two free
action area attacks any time anyone starts their turn within 5 squares of it, and then two more area attacks a single target attack on it's own turn. It does need anti-condition capabilities, but I daresay that anyone DMing for a mid-to-high epic party in 4e has either gotten comfortable with adding those in or
has made their peace with their Solos getting locked down. Although it is immune to petrification for some reason. It isn't a matter of 'gotten comfortable', an epic party will simply lock this baby down on round 1 and that will be the end of the story. At epic, without anti-denial traits, monsters are just fodder
Even after all the orbizard nerfs, you can still stunlock a solo once a day for at least several rounds. Admittedly, the secondary eyes will still get in some action even if the beholder is stunned, but unless this guy has a lot of support, that won't save his bacon. I remember the bad things that happened to
vanilla MM1 Orcus OOTB, not a pretty sight! It would be unusual to see a basic solo without anti-denial even get in a single attack at mid-high epic. That was typical with the Orcus fights I know of/saw, there was a stunlock at the start of round one, Orcus was dead by the end of round 2, start of round 3.
The Ultimate Tyrant will get in a few automatic shots, and MAY get a turn, but nothing else as-written. Last edited: May 24, 2020 Yeah, that's what I mean. I'm saying that most people who've DMed 4e long enough to have an epic level party are gonna be well aware of that issue, and have either given up
on making solos threatening or have scribbled 'immune stunned' or something to that effect at the top of so many Solo's stat blocks that they don't even think of it as a house-rule anymore. Like how nobody runs MM1 epic monsters without fixing their damage. Like, it's not like MM1 had any Solos with
meaningful anti-denial. I find I have to give even the MM3 Solos better anti-denial than they're written as having. The Ultimate Tyrant is better than most is that respect, because most of his action economy is based on free actions. Indeed, it has the attacks it needs to fight a whole party, it's just lacking a
bit in control resistance. Something like the dragon's "auto-save at Initiative+10" or outright immunities to some of these conditions would greatly improve its effectiveness. And of course not even the sample encounter actually uses a lone Ultimate Tyrant - it has two epic-level constructs with it. One of the
things people playing 4e realized very quickly is that seeing "Solo" on the stat block doesn't mean you must use the monster by itself. Yeah, that's what I mean. I'm saying that most people who've DMed 4e long enough to have an epic level party are gonna be well aware of that issue, and have either
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with meaningful anti-denial. I find I have to give even the MM3 Solos better anti-denial than they're written as having. The Ultimate Tyrant is better than most is that respect, because most of his action economy is based on free actions. I agree, it is far from being the worst. I think most MM3-grade Solos
are actually fairly good, though it varies and highly depends on the scenario, and the party they go up against. There are really kind of deeper issues with solos/Epic anyway, which the 4e rules aren't really well-adapted to solve. Epic really doesn't work that well within 4e's basic paradigm if you treat it as
iust "heroic with bigger numbers". It really needs a different approach, and that is much more open-ended and narrative. The MM pattern of containing creatures wholly within a statblock just cannot do that justice. Still stat blocks are a starting point, and they should certainly provide a mechanical means
to introducing the story elements. I think the Ultimate Tyrant is a pretty good story, and you can definitely extrapolate on a lot of what it has pretty easily (what happens when multiple eye rays hit you, what sorts of fun rituals does it know, etc.). Indeed, it has the attacks it needs to fight a whole party, it's
just lacking a bit in control resistance. Something like the dragon's "auto-save at Initiative+10" or outright immunities to some of these conditions would greatly improve its effectiveness. And of course not even the sample encounter actually uses a lone Ultimate Tyrant - it has two epic-level constructs with
it. One of the things people playing 4e realized very quickly is that seeing "Solo" on the stat block doesn't mean you must use the monster by itself. Right, but at epic particularly, you need to really inject a lot of story into 4e encounters. Stat blocks are great tools, really great, but great art isn't made by
coloring inside the lines as they say. I would imagine an ultimate capstone encounter with this creature as being something like showing up at the Living Gate, tossing on the final shard, precipitating an instant cataclysmic conflict between the PC's shardmind allies, while the gate opens, and... Complete
with PCs sacking their own artifact grade gear to reach apotheosis in the decisive instant, etc. It is instructive to go read some of Pemerton's session descriptions from Epic Tier on one of his campaigns. He is especially skilled at that kind of thing, is a decent example. This kind of thing just takes a
statblock as a launching place. In that sense I don't have a problem with the Ultimate Tyrant (or the Behir really, you need to really inject a lot of story into 4e encounters. It feels like you're moving the goalposts a bit, since
this discussion started out talking about the Ultimate Tyrant at a purely mechanical level. You do indeed need to inject a lot of story in all encounters at all tiers of play - that's the whole point of adventure design. I myself have been inserting speculations about what sort of story could lead to encountering
each monster in the lore sections for all my monster posts in this Let's Read. It feels like you're moving the goalposts a bit, since this discussion started out talking about the Ultimate Tyrant at a purely mechanical level. You do indeed need to inject a lot of story in all encounters at all tiers of play - that's
the whole point of adventure design. I myself have been inserting speculations about what sort of story could lead to encountering each monster posts in this Let's Read. I think the "solo monsters shouldn't actually be solo especially at high levels" argument is a much
better defense of this statblock. I think solo monsters can work solo even at epic, but they just need more traits and powers to overcome powerful conditions. Immunity is boring and awful. The best ones are things like inflicting the same condition back on the party, or downgrading the condition, or
receiving an extra attack or action from the condition. Or just having the condition take out one of the solo's many actions (MV dragons). Yeah... I'd say for the epic First Beholder? Your status effects should only affect a single eye stalk, all of which fight independently. So you can stun-lock their Petrifying
Eye or whatever, but that's it. Page 14 Yeah... I'd say for the epic First Beholder? Your status effects should only affect a single eye stalk, all of which fight independently. So you can stun-lock their Petrifying Eye or whatever, but that's it. hehehe, that isn't bad. Of course another option would be to play on
the original 1e Beholder and make each eyestalk a CREATURE, essentially (in AD&D each eyestalk has hit points, an AC, etc.). That would kind of obviate some of the problems of being a solo, of course then the beholder wouldn't technically BE a solo anymore, at least mechanically... hehehe, that isn't
bad. Of course another option would be to play on the original 1e Beholder and make each eyestalk a CREATURE, essentially (in AD&D each eyestalk has hit points, an AC, etc.). That would kind of obviate some of the problems of being a solo, of course then the beholder wouldn't technically BE a solo
anymore, at least mechanically... That's pretty close to how I've usually run solos, with multiple limit breaks that reduce their number of actions for the rest of the
encounter. Yeah, there has been a bunch of designs like that back in the day. Closest WotC really got was Lolth. Bullywugs are frog-
people who claim they were created by the original primordials, not by the gods, and that by living lives of cruelty and violence they can reincarnate as slaads. They also believe the world itself hates them, which they sense as a constant paranoid feeling that everyone is out to get them. And indeed,
nature itself seems to breathe in relief when a bullywug is slain in combat. Bullywug culture places no value in conservation: they move into an area (preferrably a swampy one) and exhaust its resources as quickly as possible. Anything they can't use they might very well end up destroying. When there's
nothing left, they might resort to cannibalism. Because of this behavior, and possibly because of the divine curse alluded to above, bullywug territory eventually becomes a barren and dismal echo of what it once was. By the book, they're typically Chaotic Evil with an Int score of 6 and speak Primordial. As
I mentioned several times in the past, I'm not really a fan of Universally Evil Humanoids, so I'd say it's possible for there to be bullywugs who aren't Captain Planet villains and who can coexist more peacefully with their neighbors. Who knows, maybe they could be the diplomatic bridge between the
humans over in the fields and the lizardfolk deeper in the swamp. The Numbers Bullywugs are Medium Natural Humanoids with the Aquatic keyword, which allows them to breathe underwater and gives them combat bonuses while submerged. They have ground speeds of 6 with Swamp Walk, ignoring
swamp-flavored difficult terrain. They also have Swim speeds of 4. The bullywug signature abilities all come from that divine curse. Rancid Air is an aura (2) which causes enemies to become weakened until the end of their next turn if they spend a healing surge while inside. Nature's Release triggers
when the bullyway is killed by a critical hit, and restores a handful of HP to their slaver. Our theoretical non-evil froggy people would lack either of these traits, Bullyway Mucker This Level 1 Brute with 34 HP likely makes up the rank-and-file of a bullyway force. It wields a spear in combat, and has a Bully
trait that makes it cause extra damage to prone targets. It can make targets prone with Bullywug Rush (melee 1 vs. Fortitude; recharge 5-6), a charge attack that deals more damage and knocks the target prone. A miss here deals 3 damage to the Mucker and knocks it prone. I'm starting to feel sorry for
it. Bullywug Twitcher This is a Level 2 Skirmisher with 34 HP, who fights with a Javelin either in melee or at range. Once per encounter the twitching intensifies and it can perform a Spasmodic Hop, ending any marks on it, shifting 4 squares, and making an enhanced javelin attack at the end that also
inflicts a -4 attack penalty on the target for a turn. This power is Reliable, which means it's not spent if the attack misses. On the other hand, the Twitcher has no other special movement powers. So ironically, it becomes less mobile once it lands its special attack. Bullywug Croaker A weak and flabby
specimen that uses its remarkably bad breath to make up for its lack of strength. It's a Level 3 Minion Brute that attacks with claws and with a Foul Croak (Close Blast 2 vs. Fortitude) that does poison damage. Bullywug Mud Lord A spellcaster that makes me think that whole business about emulating
slaads being a path to power might have some truth to it. Much smarter than the average bullywug, mud lords often end up in leadership positions, and they have absolutely no gualms about sacrificing their pathetic underlings to ensure their own survival. They're Level 3 Artillery with 39 HP. Their ranged
spells all cover an area, and appear to be more vomited than cast. Fiery Croak (area burst 1 within 20 vs. Reflex) does fire and thunder damage, and Electric Reflux (close blast 3 vs. Reflex; recharge 6) does cold and lightning damage, half on a miss. Neither of these attacks are selective. In fact, if they
include at least one ally in their area, Necessary Sacrifices grants the mud lord a +2 attack bonus. Okay, this dude isn't pathetic, he's despicable. Sample Encounters We have two here: - Level 1: 1 bloodthorn vine, 2 croakers, 2 muckers, and a twitcher, - Level 6: A mud lord, 3 twitchers, 3 ettercap fang
guards and 1 ettercap webspinner. It's unclear whether the vine or the ettercaps are working with the bullywugs or not. Their lore doesn't make me think they'd probably be in conflict with any other sapients who live in the same swamp as them. If you want to set up a
good old-fashioned swamp crawl where the PC can meddle with several factions, a bullywug-goblin-kobold-lizardfolk four-way conflict is an excellent starting point. Much older, they were in the Fiend Folio. And bullywugs were in the animated series as much as, if not more, than orcs. Mud Lords must not
understand slaadi at all. They aren't in it for the power, they are in it for the fun. Even if you aren't into the ironic inversion of "killing frogs is good for the ecosystem", they have some interesting stat blocks that are neatly repurposed for all kinds of unnatural enemies. That combo of dampening healing and
then reducing healing on death is great for Baby's First Mad Wizard Creating Horrible Abominations Adventure, for instance. I remember using them in a game early on, but not with bullywug lore -- they were more of a one-off weirdness encounter in a sewer adventure. (I never named them, but they had
a tendency to have a familiar croak: "bullybullybully wuuuuuug". Never really tried to go all in with frog-people as a rule, though. If you're trying to limit the number of humanoid species you have in a game, they're an easy first cut. Be interesting to see what a setting with frog-people instead of, say, elves
or goblinoids would be like -- you could still have something like the grippli/bullywug divide for variety. I like the primordial origin for them, and think it'd be neat to tie into some other humanoid types as well, creating a grouping of Primordial Races, who although still perfectly normal creatures, still take a
more alien viewpoint from the divinely created ones. Lizardfolk would be another obvious member of this coalition, and Gnolls may once have been too, before Yeenoghu became corrupted into a Tanar'ri. What people take for the bullywug's destruction, is actually them making the land more balanced --
to their point of view at least. They look dry land and wet seas and it pains them to see things unnaturally separated. Bullywugs think of fields as others would a desert, especially since farmers deliberately get rid of tasty grubs and other things that would feed on their enslaved plants. To a bullywug, the
world isn't right unless it's mixed, hence their love of swamps. You have water and earth, mixed together. You have plant and animal life everywhere for the taking. Death brings new death. Eventually even earthmotes form, as air and earth mix together. Fiery vents of gas pop up in the
boggy mud, and tar pits lie to trap the unaware. To the divine races, this is an abomination, something that destroys inhabitable lands. To the bullywug, it's the most natural way of life. I like Bullywugs because I find saying the name amusing to me I always assumed that bullywugs were basically a
reference to the unnamed race of elder creatures of lb, from the Lovecraft story "The Doom Which Came to Sarnath." Though in all fairness they were associated with a swamp and described as rather batrachian in basic appearance. They would definitely scan as 'wrong'
I would think. This would be a good role for Bullywugs, a race which was raised up by the Primordials as part of an ecosystem and civilizations which existed at the very beginning of the world. Ones which the 'godly' races mostly wiped out during/after the Dawn War, in an age only, at best, dimly
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remembered. Things like the Yuan-Ti could also fall into this category, though in their case Zehir seems to have adopted them. In any case, 'lb' could still exist, somewhere, perhaps in the Abyss or the EC, or at least its survivors. They don't forget, and they are coming back! Bokrug, their 'god' would of
course make a good Primordial too. I like Bullywugs because I find saying the name amusing to me I feel like there are two takes on 4e bullywugs here that don't necessarily mesh well. You've got your swamp-dwelling frogfolk who are coded as enemies, to go with the plains-dwelling hyenafolk and the
mountain-dwelling pigfolk (orcs) and so on. All well and good; D&D has a not-always-proud history of animal-people, and there are lots of ways to interpret "frogfolk." But then you've also got your unnatural abominations against all that is right and good, creatures so foul and unwholesome that reality itself
breathes a sigh of relief when one is slain. That's a cool and compelling concept! But . . . they're frogs. They're just frogs. Why does the face of That Which Little Timmy Dropped Down The Back Of His Sister's Dress? Frogs are some of the most innocuous
critters out there. The dichotomy means that neither side work for me. Page 15 I suspect the "unnatural frog things" can be handed off to Lovecraft and Tsatthogua. I kinda ended up rationalizing it as a consequence of that whole slaad mysticism thing the lore alludes to. Slaads are the perfect organism,
and if you emulate them in all things, you can ascend to slaadhood. Abandon logic; abandon causality; consume and destroy if the fancy strikes you; bring entropy to all that surrounds you. It's a horrible doctrine. Its details make no sense. Its results are inconsistent. But they exist! The doctrine works. And
when it does its followers become like slaad tadpoles buried in the flesh of the world, metaphysically speaking. It takes a little longer for the slaadish elemental powers to manifest, but that also happens sometimes. And who knows, maybe some of those slaads out there in the Chaos used to be mortals
once. It would make as much sense as any other slaad fact ever does. The corollaries of this are that not all followers of the Path of the Slaad are bullywugs, and that bullywugs, and th
possibly because I watched the D&D cartoon as a kid, or because they remind me of the hopping Deep Ones in The Shadow Over Innsmouth. But generally just because I'm kinda sick of kobolds and goblins, and the idea of hopping mad frog-people greatly amuses me. One of the few times I got to run
4e I did a loose adaptation of B4 set in the jungles of Eberron's Xen'drik, and replaced the humans (?) inside with bullywugs, and had more primitive bullywugs.
Tsatthogua. Yeah, it's worth noting that the Bullywug's god in earlier editions, Ramenos, was very similar to Tsathogua in laziness. (And who existed in 4e, mentioned in the Demonomicon as a dead primordial) This would be a good role for Bullywugs, a race which was raised up by the Primordials as
part of an ecosystem and civilizations which existed at the very beginning of the world. Ones which the 'godly' races mostly wiped out during/after the Dawn War, in an age only, at best, dimly remembered. Things like the Yuan-Ti could also fall into this category, though in their case Zehir seems to have
adopted them. If the Yuan-Ti were associated, it may have been under Merrshaulk's banner. Another earlier edition god, he had a realm in the Abyss; and mentioned as a servant of Zehir and as a demon in various 4e supplements. He could be another warped primordial to tanar'ri who fell in with Zehir
later. I have nothing useful to add, but the talk of bullywugs reminded me of this, which has become a bit of a running joke in my local group of late: glass. Yeah, it's worth noting that the Bullywug's god in earlier editions, Ramenos, was very similar to Tsathoggua in laziness. (And who existed in 4e,
mentioned in the Demonomicon as a dead primordial) Huh, and that does sound like maybe it is a sort of reference to Bokrug is like exactly that I can recall. If the Yuan-Ti were associated, it may have been under Merrshaulk's banner.
Another earlier edition god, he had a realm in the Abyss; and mentioned as a servant of Zehir and as a demon in various 4e supplements. He could be another warped primordial to tanar'ri who fell in with Zehir later. I remember Merrshaulk, it is stolen from Elric, where it is an elemental animal lord of
lizard kind, IIRC. I had forgotten it was mentioned in 4e at all. I also agree, Bokrug/Ramenos is probably related to, or cognate with, Tsathoggua, though that is really just purely pulling something out of thin air. I always thought of HPL entities are more in the realm of powerful demons anyway, at least the
'Dream Cycle' ones of that ilk. Powerful, but closely related to our reality, unlike the greater Outer Gods that are more like Aberrations. Huh, and that does sound like maybe it is a sort of reference to Bokrug, although it is hard to say. It was never really stated what Bokrug is like exactly that I can recall.
Bokrug is portrayed as a "bearded water lizard" in Chaosium's works, but that's Chaosium, so who can really say how accurate that is - they basically invented the appearance for a lot of Lovecraft's monsters, since the books themselves rely on such abstract textual depictions as a key part of their
identity. Bokrug is portrayed as a "bearded water lizard" in Chaosium's works, but that's Chaosium, so who can really say how accurate that is - they basically invented the appearance for a lot of Lovecraft's monsters, since the books themselves rely on such abstract textual depictions as a key part of
their identity. Bokrug was definitely referred to as a water lizard in the original story, so that much is accurate. However, I don't think these bullyways are based on Bokrug and the Ibbans, mostly because those guys didn't do anything wrong. Certainly nothing to elicit the loathing of nature. All they did was
get murdered by humans because they were ugly, then take justified if admittedly tardy revenge against them. I have the feeling that even Lovecraft intended our sympathies to be with the Ibbans. And he's Lovecraft. There was a more genuinely vile but also more obscure race of frog-like beings in the
mythos, although their name escapes me. I believe that they were some relation to the tcho-tcho. Well, I suppose this is an improvement for bullywugs from the days that they followed Wastri the Hopping Prophet -- you know, the Greyhawk guy who wanted to massacre all nonhumans... like the
bullywugs. But the 4e lore just seems randomly assigned: the supposedly-created-by-primordials race was the Genasi. Elemental people =/= frogheads. And the Slaad connection comes across as a hail mary attempt to explain why the Slaadi are all frog-men. I mean, everyone was wondering why the
Slaadi are all frog-men, but "because bullywugs" doesn't actually contribute anything useful to that answer. Now, if you say that Slaadi randomly all became frog-men became unnatural because of that contamination, that might be interesting. Page 16 Aren't
cane toads a major ecosystem disruption in Australia? It feels like this is riffing off that. And I mean, what *does* feel logical as a race of ecological destroyers? Apart from "humans"? Ah ves. the dread bunnymen, despoilers of the wilds. (Cat. Dogs and Rats all have too many existing associations associations associations.)
Raksha, catgirls, werewolves, wererats...) Srsly, I don't think there's the slightest chance they could have sold "the cute-and-cuddly-like-you-beloved-pets animal-people are the captain planet villains". My money would be on people instantly wanting them to be good-guy PC options. Sure, we're getting
objections here to evil frogpeople, but I think it'd've been worse with anything cuter. Well, I suppose this is an improvement for bullyways from the days that they followed Wastri the Hopping Prophet -- you know, the Greyhawk guy who wanted to massacre all nonhumans... like the bullyways. No, Wastri
approves of frog people. They can be servant races in the new world order. Aren't cane toads a major ecosystem disruption in Australia? It feels like this is riffing off that. And I mean, what *does* feel logical as a race of ecological destroyers? Apart from "humans"? As Nate MI implies, think of New
Zealand, where until the second millennium, there were no native mammals, (Excuse the two species of bats, please, They are shy and do not mind if you ignore them.) Instead, the ecosystem was dominated by dinosaurs of the avian variety, including many flightless species such as the kiwi (a kind of
long-nosed badger bird that lays eggs a third its own weight) and the moa (effectively a dinosaur), as well as predators specialised for the conditions, such as Haast's Eagle, which hunted moa. Humans introduced tagalong species like rats, cats, rabbits, dogs, pig, deer, and Australian possum. All of them
exist in the wild, and all of them have an impact. Rats and cats and possums can climb trees to get at birds and their eggs. Dogs can find those nests that sit on the ground. Rabbits are a hopping disaster area, destroying ground cover, preventing regrowth, and rendering whole landscapes an eroded
wasteland. The extinction of the moa (and conversant extinction of Haast's Eagle, which couldn't adapt to hunting humans fast enough) may have altered the nature of the forests themselves: without large animals to graze and push through the foliage, the bush grows thicker. Pigs and deer fill something
of a similar role as large foragers, but nobody knows if they're doing a great job, and as invasive and sometimes dangerous species they are (like most of these animals) on the shoot list. This is pretty much the poster child of "I don't care if it's cute, we have to kill it or multiple species will go extinct.
again". Ah yes, the dread bunnymen, despoilers of the wilds. There is a Tanith Lee short story, "Sirriamnis" in her collection The Gorgon and other beastly tales that basically has a wererabbit-as-vampire-seductress. The character is not at all cute and cuddly. Of course, it's an adult NSFW and not-safe-
for-gaming story that wouldn't really be appropriate for D&D (hey, it's Tanith Lee!). But you can definitely sell beloved pets as not at all cute and cuddly. (not so, phobic me.) As Nate MI implies, think of New Zealand, where until the second
millennium, there were no native mammals. (Excuse the two species of bats, please. They are shy and do not mind if you ignore them.) Instead, the ecosystem was dominated by dinosaurs of the avian variety, including many flightless species such as the kiwi (a kind of long-nosed badger bird that lays
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have an impact. Rats and cats and possums can climb trees to get at birds and their eggs. Dogs can find those nests that sit on the ground. Rabbits are a hopping disaster area, destroying ground cover, preventing regrowth, and rendering whole landscapes an eroded wasteland. The extinction of the
moa (and conversant extinction of Haast's Eagle, which couldn't adapt to hunting humans fast enough) may have altered the nature of the forests themselves: without large animals to graze and push through the foliage, the bush grows thicker. Pigs and deer fill something of a similar role as large
foragers, but nobody knows if they're doing a great job, and as invasive and sometimes dangerous species they are (like most of these animals) on the shoot list. This is pretty much the poster child of "I don't care if it's cute, we have to kill it or multiple species will go extinct. again". I live in New Zealand
(and darn straight Moa were dinosaurs... I'm a pretty tall guy, but the stuffed giant moa in the museum towers over me by about a metre, and those talons are huge). Rats, cats, rabbits, dogs? Still cute. Yes, we have pest control going on for them, but we don't mythologize them as malicious destroyers.
They're not bad animals, they're just in the wrong places to do what they do without hurting our precious native flora and fauna. Apparently it works better from a distance, but from close up it's... just the way things are. And I mean, what *does* feel logical as a race of ecological destroyers? Apart from
"humans"? I mean, D&D's tendency to use "race" as a strict gimmick for a campaign role isn't so much rooted in logic as it is in simplicity. Bullywugs are ecological destroyers because frogs look weird and sound funny and swamps are gross and unsanitary. Or something. I dunno, this is also the game
where gnolls were brutally male-dominant and kept their females as slaves because Gygax thought hyenas were ugly and therefore a good pick for generic "savage" evil. I think it's funny to posit frogs as ecological destroyers because locally people have had a number of "oops"es when they tried wiping
out mosquito populations and managed to get rid of the frogs as a side effect, which of course knocked another couple of dominoes over. Since the ecosystem, to me it's sort of like having a species of canary-humanoids that lurk in
mines and brutally murder dwarves and other miners. Aren't cane toads a major ecosystem disruption in Australia? It feels like this is riffing off that. Yeah, I definitely read bullywugs as toads, not frogs. And like any Australian, I know the only good toad is a dead toad. (...that someone else had killed, 'cos
I'm actually terrified to the point of phobia of them.) Page 17 I concur with many of the above comments. These are cool stats for a really despicable and unnatural enemy, but...frog people? Why? "Nature's Release" is especially puzzling in this context. It's a really cool idea, that the world itself is
rewarding you for ridding it of these monsters, but...the setting contains elementals that want to destroy and remake all of creation without remaking it, and Far Realms invaders who want to turn physics inside out so that it tastes better. And, out of all these
nature-obliterating, deeply inimical to life as it currently exists factions, the only ones who get this trait are fucking bullywugs? Last time I ran 4e, I took Nature's Release away from the froggies and gave it to demons. The tougher the demon, the more healing you get for killing it. The bullywug
signature abilities all come from that divine curse. Rancid Air is an aura (2) which causes enemies to become weakened until the end of their next turn if they spend a healing surge while inside. Nature's Release triggers when the bullywug is killed by a critical hit, and restores a handful of HP to their
slayer. Our theoretical non-evil froggy people would lack either of these traits. On the other hand, I feel like Rancid Air is appropriate for poisonous frog or toad people, regardless of their alignment. The fact that it only effects their enemies definitely makes it seem less like a curse and more like a defense
mechanism too. Once again, these traits and powers would be a much better fit for many of the World Axis' other minions of cosmic evil than they are for Boss Froggy. I'm thinking devils or diabolical cultists in particular fit the theme of "Neccessary Sacrifices." It's almost a low-level aping of the Pit Fiend's
ability to turn lesser devils into living bombs. It might also work for drow, since they're likewise all about violently exploiting those under your authority. Sample Encounters We have two here: - Level 1: 1 bloodthorn vine, 2 croakers, 2 muckers, and a twitcher. - Level 6: A mud lord, 3 twitchers, 3 ettercap
fang guards and 1 ettercap webspinner. The first group are the minions of a swamp-dwelling hag coven. They've tasked the bullywugs with keeping their garden well cared for, which includes feeding people to the vine. The second is a territorial battle between frog people and spider people. If you're going
with the default bullywug lore, then the ettercaps are likely to be the more reasonable of the two. If not, this could be an opportunity to talk them down and improve your relations with both tribes. The part I find the strangest is that an ability called Vile Croak (That's it right?) causes poison damage.
Apparently the frog is croaking such toxicity to you that it literally causes poison damage. Foul Croak, yes. I interpreted that as really bad breath. Hmm that's the mundane explanation. But a comment so toxic it physically hurts still sounds way too
funny to not use. Foul Croak is an attack vs Fort, so that sounds much more like a physical thing rather than mental mockery. Could be that the foul croak is some kind of magical invocation that directly poisons the target. Bokrug was definitely referred to as a water lizard in the original story, so that much
is accurate. However, I don't think these bullywugs are based on Bokrug and the Ibbans, mostly because those guys didn't do anything to elicit the loathing of nature. All they did was get murdered by humans because they were ugly, then take justified if admittedly tardy revenge
against them. I have the feeling that even Lovecraft intended our sympathies to be with the Ibbans. And he's Lovecraft. There was a more genuinely vile but also more obscure race of frog-like beings in the mythos, although their name escapes me. I believe that they were some relation to the tcho-tcho. I
don't recall another such race, but it could well exist... The people of Ib were definitely unnatural, they are described as having "come down from the Moon in ancient times" or some similar statement. I don't disagree that HPL wanted us to feel like the Doom was justified though. At the very least messing
with ancient races and otherworldly idols is a sure recipe for disaster! They should have known better, lol. But I did feel like the idea was that the Ibbites were felt to be unnatural or vile in some way and thus exterminated, due to some otherworldly origin. When I first read about Bullywugs, way back in
AD&D days. I immediately thought of the Sarnath story. They are really the only monster for which this 'wrongness' is strongly described, and even given mechanical effect. Well, maybe a few things like gibbering mouthers could be argued to have a sort of similar thing going, but they are DEFINITELY
unnatural, whereas the Bullyways seem more subtly off. Of course we would have to dig up the author of the FF entry to know what it was really based on. I wonder what they were thinking when they gave Bullyways 'Rancid Air' and 'Foul Croak'? Did someone actually believe that D&D needed more slick
evil humanoids that were extremely stinky? We already had Troglodytes, and hardly anyone used them! Like we were all sitting around thinking "Stinky frog-people, you say? Tell us more!" Page 18 I don't recall another such race, but it could well exist... I looked them up, and the ones I'm thinking of are
the miri nigri. Amphibian spawn of chaugnar faugn, apparently. I don't think they played any role in inspiring these, though. They're crazy obscure, "Nature's Release" is especially puzzling in this context. It's a really cool idea, that the world itself is rewarding you for ridding it of these monsters, but...the
setting contains elementals that want to destroy and remake all of creation, demons that just want to destroy all of creation without remaking it, and Far Realms invaders who want to turn physics inside out so that it tastes better. And, out of all these nature-obliterating, deeply inimical to life as it currently
exists factions, the only ones who get this trait are fucking bullywugs? Most of those things already have rivals and enemies. Maybe Bullywugs don't have an opposing force or otherwise seem too innocuous so something in the world is trying to generate that enemy with some incentives. Or maybe there
is no actual reason for them to that bad, because they aren't. Some dark power is essentially framing the bullywugs and creation, it fights back.
Instead, they're going to get creation to destroy itself, inch by inch, while feeling good about doing it. I looked them up, and the ones I'm thinking of are the miri nigri. Amphibian spawn of chaugnar faugn, apparently. I don't think they played any role in inspiring these, though. They're crazy obscure. Huh,
veah. I never heard of them. and I have the nick Abdul Alhazred... Chaugnar Faugn I remember, but I have a suspicion these are more of an invented by other writers and then referenced indirectly by HPL, maybe even in a backwards way, like the Tcho-Tcho were only LATER associated to 'Miri Niri',
something like that... Anyway, it is a nice little dusty corner of the mythos! Most of those things already have rivals and enemies. Maybe Bullywugs don't have an opposing force or otherwise seem too innocuous so something in the world is trying to generate that enemy with some incentives. Or maybe
there is no actual reason for them to that bad, because they aren't. Some dark power is essentially framing the bullywugs and creation, it fights
back. Instead, they're going to get creation to destroy itself, inch by inch, while feeling good about doing it. lol. cute. So, I do like the idea of Bullywugs as being cursed, and it would even be amusing if they were an ENEMY of something, like aberrations, and got cursed for it. Now they're down to their last
remnants, but once they were proud allies of the shardminds, fighting the good fight! The bad guys ran a really good disinformation campaign on them though! I wonder what they were thinking when they gave Bullywugs 'Rancid Air' and 'Foul Croak'? Did someone actually believe that D&D needed more
slick evil humanoids that were extremely stinky? We already had Troglodytes, and hardly anyone used them! Like we were all sitting around thinking of smelly toads and marsh gases. And trogs are Underdark denizens. You use
bullywugs very early (super low levels) in regular wilderness locale adventures, and trogs a bit later when you start featuring the Shallows of Underdark. I don't recall another such race, but it could well exist... The people of Ib were definitely unnatural, they are described as having "come down from the
Moon in ancient times" or some similar statement. I don't disagree that HPL wanted us to feel like the Doom was justified though. At the very least messing with ancient races and otherworldly idols is a sure recipe for disaster! They should have known better, lol. But I did feel like the idea was that the
Ibbites were felt to be unnatural or vile in some way and thus exterminated, due to some otherworldly origin. When I first read about Bullywugs, way back in AD&D days, I immediately thought of the Sarnath story. They are really the only monster for which this 'wrongness' is strongly described, and even
given mechanical effect. Well, maybe a few things like gibbering mouthers could be argued to have a sort of similar thing going, but they are DEFINITELY unnatural, whereas the Bullywugs seem more subtly off. Of course we would have to dig up the author of the FF entry to know what it was really
based on. The Ibbians were only "unnatural" in the sense that they came from somewhere else, Also, they were never described as being foul-smelling, and they had an advanced civilization including massive stone cities, which bullyways have never been described as having. Aside from looking froglike
and being disliked by humans, I really am not seeing any connection. I wonder what they were thinking when they gave Bullywugs 'Rancid Air' and 'Foul Croak'? Did someone actually believe that D&D needed more slick evil humanoids that were extremely stinky? We already had Troglodytes, and hardly
anyone used them! Like we were all sitting around thinking "Stinky frog-people, you say? Tell us more!" I've always interpreted it as bullywugs and troglodytes being two branches of the same species. Just describe the trogs as a little less reptilian and a little more amphibian. Centaur Centaurs are
inspired by Greek myth, in which they were The Worst (with rare exceptions). They've been in D&D since at least the days of BECMI, which even had a supplement that made them playable. The Lore Fourth Edition centaurs are a good deal nicer than their mythological counterparts. Their culture
venerates nature in its wilder aspects, and they have an extensive martial tradition. In other words: they're quite rowdy and love a good fight. Kord and Melora are a lot more popular with them than Corellon, who is otherwise the go-to fey deity. I don't know if the lore of the primal spirits had been finalized
at this point, but centaurs also work great as primal spirit worshippers. Centaurs like to live in areas that contain vast plains or steppes, but they like to build their settlements on hills or inside caves. The combination gives them a defensible position surrounded by clear sight lines all around, and also gives
them the large space they need to run around and to grow their food. Centaurs are not typically evil, but they're territorial, mistrustful of strangers, and hate people who despoil nature. Dealing with them peacefully requires careful diplomacy that begins beyond arrow range. The prospective ambassador
should spend great effort making their approach both obvious and obviously non-threatening. Once the centaurs recognize you for a friend, though there are some in the world bordering elven forests. Centaur
law is simple, and most crimes carry banishment and exile as their punishment. Exiled centaur criminals could easily end up working with other villains. The Numbers Centaurs are Large Fey Humanoids, with low-light vision and a ground speed of 8. They have two signature abilities. The first is that their
basic attacks do an extra die of damage when used in a charge. The other is a reaction called Quick Kick, which allows them to make a free kick attack against an enemy who moves into a position that flanks the centaur. Centaur Hunter If this was a PC, it would be a Twin Strike-spamming ranger.
Hunters are Level 12 Artillery with 96 HP and all standard centaur traits. They fight with cinematic horse archer tactics, using their superior mobility to keep away and fire on the move. Their main ranged attack is Lightning-Fast Arrows (range 25/50 vs. AC), a standard action that allows them to shoot
twice. Though each individual arrow has low damage, the two combined almost line up with MM3 math. Alternatively, they can use a Charge Arrow (ranged 25/50 vs. Fortitude) to do a bit more single-arrow damage, push the target 3 squares, and knock it prone. I'd say it's not worth it unless the target is
near a cliff or the hunter has melee buddies that would benefit from a prone enemy. Once per encounter the hunter can speed up even more and deliver a Triple Shot (ranged 25/50 vs. AC), making three attacks whose individual damage is a bit higher. If someone does manage to engage the hunter in
melee, it can defend itself with a bastard sword... but it doesn't really need to, since the Close-Combat Archer trait makes it not provoke opportunity attacks from the targets of its shots. Centaur Ravager The most likely melee buddy for the hunter, this is a barbarian-type. Ravagers are Level 12 Brutes with
150 HP and all standard centaur traits. They fight in melee with their bastard swords, and they can use a Berserk Rush (melee 1 vs. Fortitude; recharges when first bloodied) to do even more damage on a charge, push the target 2 squares, and knock them prone. When first bloodied, they also use Brash
Retaliation, a free action attack that does high damage and pushes the targets 2 squares. All of this suggests shock cavalry tactics: charge, fight in place for a bit, then move away and charge again. Though I guess ravagers have no problem staying in the thick of it either. Centaur Mystic A wise primal or
divine spellcaster, the mystic takes a priestly role in centaur culture and advises the community on its duties towards nature and the spirits. In combat they use plant- and earth-themed magic. Mystics are Level 13 Controllers with 132 HP and all standard centaur traits. They wield Reach 2 guarterstaffs
which also acts as implements for their magic. The mainstay here is Rootwhip Staff, a melee spell that targets Reflex and does the same damage as a basic staff attack, but also slides the target 3 squares and slows it (save ends). The mystic's ranged options are big guns with limited ammo: Ancestral
Chargers is a Close Blast 5 that presumably summons ancestors spirits and has funky mechanics. It targets both Fortitude and Will: you make a single attack roll against both defenses. If the attack beats the target's Will, they take high psychic damage; if it beats the target's Fortitude they're knocked
prone and pushed 2 squares. This spell recharges when a friendly centaur within 10 squares drops to 0 hit points, which implies the recharge comes from summoning their recently departed spirit for one last strike. Biting Earth (Area Burst 2 within 10; recharges when first bloodied) creates a zone that
lasts for a turn and can be sustained with standard actions. The biting earth zone immobilizes all enemies within. These enemies can choose to take 3d8 damage to save against the effect as a free action. There's no regular save, so if the enemy doesn't want to take damage they're stuck in place while
the zone lasts. When the zone is sustained, the mystic can choose to move it up to 3 squares. Once per encounter they can also use Mystic Resonance (minor action), which affects all allies within 10 squares. It heals them for 10 HP and allows them to roll a save. Looks like you want to open with
Ancestral Chargers here, and then use Biting Earth to try and hold the PCs in place for the ravagers and hunters to do their stuff. Centaur Fey Charger Fey charger Fey chargers are significantly more powerful than the other centaurs we saw up until now, being better fighters and having a host of storm-themed
powers. This would fit a warden or a paladin of Kord. They're level 18 Soldiers with 172 HP and all standard centaur traits. They wear mail and carry a shield in addition to the traditional centaur bastard sword, none of which slows them down. They can fire Stabs of Lightning (ranged 10 vs. Reflex) do to
lighthning damage at range while closing in, but the main event is the melee. Once an opening presents itself they close in with a Thunder Charge, a strong attack that does a mix of physical and lightning damage and carries a secondary Close Burst 2 attack that targets Fortitude, does thunder damage
knocks prone and marks for a turn. Once engaged, their sword attacks mark for a turn, and they can use Thunder Hooves (melee 1 vs. Fortitude) as a reaction to attack anyone who ignores the mark and do thunder damage to them. Centaur Campaigner A legendary commander and champion of the
centaur people with decades of military experience. The campaigner is a Level 25 Soldier (Leader) with all standard centaur and a good deal of supernatural wind- and storm-themed abilities. It wears plate, and carries a shield and a longsword. The bonus charge damage of the longsword attack is
thunder, and the Campaigner is all about that glorious impossible charge. Its Light Hoof trait allows it to ignore all difficult terrain, and Sky Bound (at-will free action) allows it to fly for the duration of its next move, though it must land at the end. If that isn't possible the centaur will gently float down to the
floor, so it doesn't take fall damage but you might say its momentum gets kinda ruined. When the campaigner's charge hits it can use Three Thunder Assault to allow two allies within 10 squares of itself to charge as a free action. These charges deal a bit of bonus thunder damage as well. Combine this
with other centaurs (maybe even other campaigners), and you have an instant massive cavalry charge! Once engaged, Shock Trooper gives the campaigner a small bonus to damage while it's adjacent to more than one foe. It can also use a maneuver called Hoofed Tornado to perform strong attacks on
all enemies in a Close Burst 1, knocking them prone on a hit and marking them for a turn as an effect. This recharges when it's first bloodied. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions Centaurs might be found as members of most fey-themed encounter groups, working alongside elves, eladrin, satyrs,
and so on. I imagine the nastier sort of centaur might also work alongside shady customers such as banshrae, hags, or fomorians. For some of those you might want to do some level adjustment either of the centaurs themselves or their associates. If you want your party to meet centaurs early, knocking
10 levels from the centaur hunter, ravager and mystic would be a good start, making them early-heroic NPCs/enemies. The sample encounter we get is Level 23: a centaur campaigner plus two eladrin ghaeles of winter mounted on fell wyverns. I like these centaurs! They can be either friend or foe
depending on how they're treated, and in any case the PCs might find a way to talk to them instead of fighting right away. They're exactly what I look for in a NPC humanoid species. Their stat blocks also work well at giving the impression of a people for whom infantry tactics and cavalry tactics are the
same thing. You make centaurs sound pretty cool. Frankly I just never got around to even really looking at them in 4e. I don't think I'd ever knock them down further than upper heroic, unless I gave them the elite/solo boss treatment. A creature the size of a horse that can use weapons and intelligent
tactics like a person should darned well be as scary as that description makes it sound! Always liked centaurs as both friends and opponents for PC's. The lore that 4e gives them basically makes them nicer orcs (in fact, the main difference there might just be down to them worshiping a god of honorable
combat instead of a god of all combat. They might even be Kord's favored people, just as the orcs are to Gruumsh). I imagine that centaur mercenaries are the face of warfare in much of the feywild. Honestly, they'd make a great PC race themselves for a start-at-paragon campaign. Centauuuuuuuuuuussl
I'm always a fan of the weirder fantasy races, and centaurs fall into that for me. These stat blocks are a lot of fun. It's interesting to see them at low-to-mid-paragon. It suggests that these might be something you encounter in the Feywild rather than in the wider world, since that's when you're supposed to
start exploring other planes. Regardless, a lot of fun in these blocks. Page 19 I would not make them low level standard creatures either, if I wanted to feature them in early heroic. That'd only serve to turn centaurs into yet another heroic tier enemy (or ally/neutral, as the case may be). Having them be
powerful fey creatures makes them more interesting and gives them a more grounded place in the wider world. They're from the Feywild, associated with the plane's factions to some degree. That can help influence how you end up using them in the adventure. When I suggested making them low-Heroic.
I was thinking about a cliche starting situation where vou'd have the Human Town and its fields bordering the Dwarf Hold over on the forest. All of them are inhabited by PC or PC-adjacent people whose "warrior" stat locks are all on the low end of Heroic to
emphasize that they're not defenseless but that they need Heroes to deal with threats that are out of the ordinary. You could easily stick a centaur town at the edge of the elven forest, and in that case it would make sense to make the centaurs low-Heroic as well. If they're off in a more remote and
dangerous region of the world, or in the Feywild, then making them mid-to-high Heroic or their original Paragon spread makes more sense. Really, the best reason to have low-heroic centaurs is if you're setting up a scenario where they're theoretically feasible PCs on top of everything else. (Yes, I played
Shining Force back in the days of the Genesis, shut up.) Sadly, although 4e is great at a lot of permissive approaches to nonstandard PCs, it just straight-up interacts with Large PCs badly thanks to those close burst rules. So high-heroic and paragon is a solid approach for 4e, though like anything not
locked in stone. Awfully tempted to pair centaurs up with gnolls as a couple of steppe cultures in a mutual defense arrangement. I like the Scythia/Persia tense relationship between a steppe region that forcefully resisted being assimilated into a neighboring empire, and centaurs would definitely contribute
to one of the reasons that the empire was repelled. Awfully tempted to pair centaurs up with gnolls as a couple of steppe cultures in a mutual defense arrangement. I like the Scythia/Persia tense relationship between a steppe region that forcefully resisted being assimilated into a neighboring empire, and
centaurs would definitely contribute to one of the reasons that the empire was repelled. Or centaurs serving as auxiliaries in your Minotaur/Roman Empire. Admittedly, centaurs would look real good in mock-Roman kit, but the Scythian
parallels of utterly disdaining the less mobile Imperial infantry blocks are just too tasty for me personally to pass up. (The minotaurs are the auxiliaries in this particular setup, having been forcibly assimilated when the bugbear empire brought the right tool to level the labyrinthine defenses around their
capital. I'm looking to disrupt both Tolkienesque Familiarity and The Usual Traditional D&D Monocultures with this campaign.) Really, the best reason to have low-heroic centaurs is if you're setting up a scenario where they're theoretically feasible PCs on top of everything else. (Yes, I played Shining Force
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Or you could make it that centaur PCs in 4e start as Medium creatures, or at least only generate reach as Medium creatures whilst taking up space as Large PC you have to take their racial Paragon Path. Or you could make it
that centaur PCs in 4e start as Medium creatures, or at least only generate reach as Medium creatures whilst taking up space as Large ones as one iteration of their 5e stats does, and to become a full-fledged Large PC you have to take their racial Paragon Path. There are knock-on effects beyond reach.
Your close bursts and auras cover literally more squares despite extending no farther from you -- going from having 8 adjacent squares to 12 with an aura 1, for instance. You're straight-up harder to flank by most anything other than skirmishers who can shift multiple squares or teleporters. You can more
effectively block chokepoints from monsters who can't move through PC spaces (which is most of them). Even a standard reach weapon gives you four more squares of possible targets. Some of these advantages are pretty minor, but going up to Large means you get all of them at once because that's
how the grid works. A Large PC would change the dynamics of a lot of encounters in a lot of ways even if the player isn't optimizing (and there are many clever tricks for those who are), and most paragon paths aren't that game-changing in their passive bonuses. Heck, most epic destines save that level
of change for the end rather than the beginning. I love 4e. It's my D&D of choice. But it isn't the game I'd choose for big ol' centaur PCs. There's too much precision in the way the grid combat works. Now, always-Medium guadrupeds like bariaur, those would work great. They're not doing Large PCs in 5e
either. Medium centaurs, medium minotaurs. You just add other rules to make them feel bigger, like carrying, reach, etc. In fact, there's a couple of
different takes on Centaurs in 5e that I've seen so far. The official version from first Unearthed Arcana and then Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica is Medium with Powerful Build, then there's Midgard 5e's version (takes up space as a Large creature, can only wield weapons as if it were a Medium creature)
then there's the Odyssey of the Dragonlords version (straight up Medium), and technically there's the Centaur Phaedran from Arkadia, which is also Medium with Powerful Build. There's an argument for making centaurs Medium-sized instead of Large. Basically look at Przewalksi's horse, the only
remaining breed of undomesticated horse. It's smaller than the animals we're used to picturing, being a good deal stockier and tougher than our bred-for-a-purpose animals. It's not unreasonable that if evolution had any say in how centaurs developed, they'd end up the size of Przewalksi's horses, with
their human halves having proportions closer to a Halfling than a Human. Page 20 then there's Midgard 5e's version (takes up space as a Large creature, can only wield weapons as if it were a Medium creature), This honestly makes the most sense to me. I mean, even if horses are Large, a centaur's
human half is human-sized, right? And human-sized arms can only exert so much strength, even if the character is a horse from the waist down. This honestly makes the most sense to me, I mean, even if horses are Large, a centaur's human half is human-sized, right? And human-sized arms can only exert so much strength, even if the character is a horse from the waist down. This honestly makes the most sense to me, I mean, even if horses are Large, a centaur's human half is human-sized, right? And human-sized arms can only exert so much strength.
exert so much strength, even if the character is a horse from the waist down. Yeah, I have to admit, I really like this mechanic myself and I basically use it as the basis for 5e centaurs or any other "tauric" PC race in my 5e settings. Of course you can argue that's generally getting the worst of both worlds.
They should still get full carry and pull strength, along with horse speed. There are knock-on effects beyond reach. You're straight-up
harder to flank by most anything other than skirmishers who can shift multiple squares or teleporters. You can more effectively block chokepoints from monsters who can't move through PC spaces (which is most of them). Even a standard reach weapon gives you four more squares of possible targets.
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most paragon paths aren't that game-changing in their passive bonuses. Heck, most epic destines save that level of choice. But it isn't the game I'd choose for big ol' centaur PCs. There's too much precision in the way the grid combat
works. Now, always-Medium quadrupeds like bariaur, those would work great. I heard all these things, but you know what? It really didn't matter. Yeah, being large is equivalent to several mediocre feats, which is nothing too shabby, but then 4e gives away some stuff that is almost better, like being able
to pick any stat for your hit point bonus, as a background element (a give away basically). Also, being large isn't always an advantage! What happens when you have to squeeze? That can happen quite a lot, like at pretty much every door... Nice how you don't get invited into anyone's living space either!
The point is, in practice this wasn't really much of an issue, certainly not in the campaigns I ran. Maybe in a game that is just nothing but one-after-another steel cage death match style combat encounters, then MAYBE, assuming the GM isn't savvy enough to punish you for being big half the time! The
point is, in practice this wasn't really much of an issue, certainly not in the campaigns I ran. Maybe in a game that is just nothing but one-after-another steel cage death match style combat encounters, then MAYBE, assuming the GM isn't savvy enough to punish you for being big half the time! Eh, you can
run a heavily roleplay-focused game and still dislike offsetting combat advantages with out-of-combat disadvantages, or the idea that the GM's job is to "punish" choices. One of the reasons I like 4e in the first place is its disinclination to engage with either of those tactics. Last edited: May 30, 2020 Eh.
you can run a heavily roleplay-focused game and still dislike offsetting combat advantages with out-of-combat disadvantages, or the idea that the GM's job is to "punish" choices. One of the reasons I like 4e in the first place is its disinclination to engage with either of those tactics. I don't think that needing
to squeeze, having more problems with getting cover, having more frontage than a normal character (although this usually does not come up in 4e's combat dynamic), not being able to climb well (for centaurs), etc are strictly out of combat disadvantages though. I think large creatures may have been
more likely to be adversely affected by difficult terrain too. They are just uncertain combat disadvantages. OTOH, if you consider the ideas that "they would be harder to flank" there's kind of a contradiction IMO - if the enemies have enough spacing that you
need the bigness to hit a target, then they are sufficiently spaced that they will be able to flank. Of course, I think one actual problem with large centaurs as PCs is that the benefits of being large like blocking spaces, better close bursts, and such that people have mentioned push centaurs towards a super
tank role, when the idea of centaurs and some of the limitations on barding and their arm coverage seem to want them to be more cavalry that wants to do passing attacks without getting stuck in. Having a rear horse half doesn't seem like it should be big advantage for someone wading into the enemy.
And even in Shining Force games where centaurs are mostly knights, their stat lines still generally don't make them the tankiest against combat attacks (but they are usually better v spells than the super tanks), and they're fast, but much more affected by terrain than some characters - they were actually
slower in some terrain than sluggish foot troops. That's not how difficult terrain and movement is going to work in DnD. OTOH, if you consider the ideas that "they get more squares on a close burst" and "they would be harder to flank" there's kind of a contradiction IMO - if the enemies have enough
spacing that you need the bigness to hit a target, then they are sufficiently spaced that they will be able to flank. Sometimes it's "we're holding the enemy shoulder-to-shoulder and I can hit four of them with my close burst instead of three", or "there's two squares between those two trolls and I
can hit them both without actually standing between them." Modest benefits, but consistent. I feel pretty confident that a reasonably clever player would get benefits more regularly than they got disadvantages, unless the DM started plotting specifically to counter the player. I figure when a DM has to
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regularly design to take one particular PC into account, or set up social encounters that exclude them to "make it fair", that's a good sign that PC ain't balanced. Whether the DM is fine with that or not varies, of course. I think one actual problem with large centaurs as PCs is that the benefits of
being large like blocking spaces, better close bursts, and such that people have mentioned push centaurs towards a super tank role, when the idea of centaurs and some of the limitations on barding and their arm coverage seem to want them to be more cavalry that wants to do passing attacks without
getting stuck in. Having a rear horse half doesn't seem like it should be big advantage for someone wading into the enemy. And even in Shining Force games where centaurs are mostly knights, their stat lines still generally don't make them the tankiest against combat attacks (but they are usually better v
spells than the super tanks), and they're fast, but much more affected by terrain than some characters - they were actually slower in some terrain and movement is going to work in DnD. Which also touches on the idea that centaurs that are meant to
move like horses should -- if we're going for "the most plausible representation" -- get another pretty dramatic advantage. Being able to go up to Speed 7 is a significant quality of life upgrade; a centaur that moves as fast as a horse would start faster than that. Boy, that's meaningful. Of course, you can
say that the horse-sized centaur is actually slower than a horse for reasons, but that adds to the reasons that I don't think 4e is a great system for showcasing full-sized centaur PCs while maintaining that level of balance it got famous for. Eh, you can run a heavily roleplay-focused game and still dislike
offsetting combat advantages with out-of-combat disadvantages, or the idea that the GM's job is to "punish" choices. One of the reasons I like 4e in the first place is its disinclination to engage with either of those tactics. Yes, it is a general idea that you don't balance good vs bad traits, because it often
doesn't work well. Taken to an extreme however it isn't a good policy either. It is perfectly OK, and later 4e materials seem to acknowledge this, to provide PCs with some things they are better at, and some things they are not so good at, based on race. As long as this isn't taken too far it actually opens
the game up more and is overall a good thing. Take the Pixie for example, it has a limited flying capability. It is also tiny. These two things provide some advantages (all from the tiny part). Overall you can still play any class as a Pixie, but it is a really nicely flavorful choice of PC
that slightly bends the rules, and is overall maybe a bit stronger than, say, Human. A Centaur PC as a straight-up large creature, speaking from experience, falls into a similar category. Sure, being big is great when you want to take up extra space on the map, but there's a LOT of times you would like to
take up LESS space. It is hard for other PCs to not hit you with AoE attacks, or get around you to flank, or avoid YOUR bursts, etc. These things matter! Squeezing is actually a HUGE issue. Look at any set of maps, lets take Kobold Hall as a random example that everyone can check out (if you have a 4e
DMG, which I presume most of you do). Where is the advantage of being big here? Area 1: you cannot get across, or you could risk jumping
the pit. I see no advantage to being large here at all... Area 2: You cannot avoid the traps, at all. You cannot hide behind the sarcophagi. You're going to have to take it on the chin to close with the kobolds, or else sit back and play artillery again. Noticing a pattern yet? Area 3: Again you have a problem
with cover, so your best choice is to rush ahead here. Presumably a large creature can reach directly to the platforms and attack the kobolds, so you have finally got some payoff for your bigness, except the bad guys can simply step back from the edge, and you cannot get up to them without squeezing.
again. This tactic would also make you definitely target #1, maybe not a good thing... Area 4: Here I think you MIGHT only be slightly disadvantaged! There's a couple spots where you could be trapped by the boulder, but you can also reach the chief's ledge without climbing (though again the kobolds can
move back to the back of the ledge if they want). Some of your tactical bigness advantages might play out here, maybe, depending on how things play out, but its unlikely they'll really do much for you. Area 5: I'd say this is where you have the least disadvantage for bigness, but against a single solo
enemy I also don't see any advantages for you. Maybe, just maybe, if the dragon were hovering at 2 squares altitude you would be the one that could hit him (barring reach weapons in other's hands), but I don't see why that would be a likely scenario. Overall, there's simply nothing to be gained from
bigness. It is a VERY edge-case type of advantage, and most of the situations where it could play out, some other tactic would work just as well, so you really haven't gained much, if anything, overall. OTOH the disadvantages pop up constantly. This is what we found in actual play, large PCs were just a
PITA to run. They didn't get any real measurable benefits that made them stronger, but they were constantly working around their bigness getting in the way, losing out on clear tactical opportunities that a medium PC would get. AT BEST it is a wash. Frankly, I would not encourage Centaur large PCs
unless the game was intended to cater to them (like a party of Centaur knights with squishies riding them, gallumphing across the plains). I was at one point playing around with the idea that centaurs aren't large, but must occupy two spaces. They'd be treated as Large for squeezing and for being
targeted, affected by terrain and area effects from either space that they occupy, and enemies can target them in either space that they occupy. It would have removed the weirdness with Large as the basis for Bursts and Auras, at least. Maybe given them a few small advantages like when being Bull
Rushed. Not sure what else might have gone wonky with some of the more obscure rules applications, though. The goal would have been to get the effects of being a Largish centaur down to a short list of bullet points as to how they interact with specific rules, akin to what Warforged get for being Living
Constructs. Page 21 Occupying two squares introduces a whole host of issues in a system that doesn't use facing rules. That's why 3.0 had wonky rules interactions—it didn't have a combat space for big creatures but instead used facing for them, except that the rest of the combat rules didn't use facing
at all! For example, do you need to shift to move the other square, even though the rules assume you turn around in your space freely (no facing)? Monstrous centipedes have been in the game since the beginning, and are based on real-world animals. Let's see what 4e makes of them. The Lore I only
recently realized D&D centipedes aren't as fantastical as I always thought. There are thousands of real-world centipede species, and the ones I was familiar with were pretty small and generally not dangerous to people. However, some species can reach up to 30cm (a foot!) in length, and have a
poisonous bite that might cause fever and chills in people. It's possible for someone to be allergic to centipede venom, and in that case their bite can cause anaphylatic shock. So the only fantastical thing about the D&D centipede in early editions of the game was the fact that its venom was always save-
or-die. Its size was realistic, and so was its venom in later editions when it became less deadly. Of course, the game also had truly giant centipedes which were entirely fantastical, and this remains true here. Centipedes can be found in woodlands, caves, and lots of other environments. They're ferocious
predators and aggressive enough to attack much larger creatures if they feel threatened. The larger specimens are of a scale large enough to see humanoids as potential prey, too. Despite all this aggressiveness, it seems lots of sapient creatures are able to keep them as pets and guard animals. I
suspect magic might be involved. Centipedes are particularly popular pets for Torog worshippers, who consider them sacred. The Numbers Centipedes are Natural Beasts of varying size. The game gives them Darkvision, though it might be more accurate to give them blindsight instead. The authors didn't
consider a single foot-long centipede to be a worthy threat, so we get stats for a swarm of them and for a giant specimen. Centipede Swarm This Medium swarm is a Level 2 Brute with 44 HP. It has ground and climb speeds of 6, with Spider Climb (which allows them to cling to ceilings). It has all standard
swarm traits, taking half damage from melee and ranged attacks, and 10 extra damage from close and area attacks. Its Swarm Attack aura (1) deals 3 automatic damage from melee and ranged attacks, and 10 extra damage from close and area attacks. Its Swarm Attack aura (1) deals 3 automatic damage from melee and ranged attacks. Its Swarm Attack aura (1) deals 3 automatic damage from melee and ranged attacks.
assume multiple swarm auras stack! An enemy adjacent to a single swarm will take 5 damage at the start of their turn. An enemy adjacent to 2 of them would take 14, or 7 if the auras don't stack. The swarm's basic attack is a Swarm of Mandibles (vs. Reflex), which deals a little bit of physical damage,
which increases by 1 with each adjacent centipede swarm. A hit also deals ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends). If the enemy is already taking ongoing poison damage, they're weakened (save ends). If the swarm is hit by an area or close attack, their Survival Instinct causes them to shift 3 squares as a
reaction. An interesting monster: despite being a brute, its attack is kinda weak. Most of the damage comes from the swarm aura, particularly if you assume multiple centipede swarm auras stack. You'll never encounter just one swarm either - there should be at least two in the group to enjoy those cool
exponential bonuses. More than two might be pushing a bit, though. Centipede Scuttler A proper giant, this is a single Medium individual. It's a Level 4 Skirmisher with 51 HP and both ground and climb speeds of 8. Can't run away from it. Its bite targets AC and does a little more damage than the swarm's,
but has the same riders. Against a weakened creature (which likely got that way from its venom) it can Feed, dealing roughly triple the damage of a basic bite. As an at-will move action, the Scuttler can, well, Scuttle, which allows it to shift 4 squares. When it shifts into an ally's space while scuttling, that
space doesn't count as one of the 4 squares. Be sure to give it lots of buddies when building the encounters and Final Impressions We get two encounters: - Level 4: 1 ankheg, 2 bloodthorn vines, and 2 centipede swarms. What rotten luck that all of them would be hanging out next to
each other. - Level 5: 2 scuttlers, 1 gnoll huntmaster, 2 gnoll marauders. So they keep more than hyenas as pets. I liked the old save-or-die centipedes and these feel properly scary as well, while also being distinct from all the other giant creepy crawlies. Scuttle is an interesting ability - if you have a chain
of allies, the centipede can use them as a bridge to cross the battlefield. Yup. Coat the floor in swarms, and add a couple of Scuttlers to run around on top of them. Just check to see if any of your players have a phobia beforehand... The book is actually seriously lowballing the potency of centipede
venom. Sure, there are spider and scorpion species that are dangerous, but centipede bites are much more consistently awful across nearly the entire clade. I quess with this many different "giant venomous bug" monsters to stat out, they decided to focus on the speed and reflexes aspect of the centipede
and leave the "unusually strong poison for its level" niche to something else. Actually, prehistoric centipedes could be QUITE monstrous. I believe some were up to several meters long! These would be a fun monster for the good old 'land that time forgot' (and boy is time forgetful!). While you're dodging T.
Rex, you MIGHT not be watching where you're stepping... Actually, prehistoric centipedes could be QUITE monstrous. I believe some were up to several meters long! These would be a fun monster for the good old 'land that time forgot' (and boy is time forgetful!). While you're dodging T. Rex, you MIGHT
not be watching where you're stepping... Arthropleura is more a Permian / Carboniferous beastie, but those considerations of time difference longer than the span between dinosaurs and is has never bothered D&D, so... have a video of human interacting with such a gribly. Arthropleura is more a Permian
/ Carboniferous beastie, but those considerations of time difference longer than the span between dinosaurs and is has never bothered D&D, so... have a video of human interacting with such a gribly. Oh, yes, I know, ERB-style lost worlds don't run on distinctions between the Paleozoic and the
Mesozoic... Chaos Shard The Lore In any edition of D&D it's easy to get obsessed with its fiend taxonomy, but there are always some creatures that end up slipping through its cracks. Take chaos shards, for example. They form spontaneously at the edges of the terrible maelstrom that exists at the
border between the Elemental Chaos and the Abyss, when the energies of those two planes clash in a particular way. These crystalline entities are sapient, violent, and cruel. Since they don't have any biological needs to distract them, they're quite content with roaming around and blasting everything they
see with elemental energies. I imagine they give preference to targets that can scream and suffer. Despite having themes tied to the Abyss, being Chaotic Evil, and even having variable elemental resistance, these things are not demons. They do have some sort of metaphysical connection to the Shard of
Pure Evil at the bottom of the Abvss, though. Legend has it that the most powerful chaos shards are splinters of that legendary blight upon the universe. Some wizards trap chaos shards for use as power sources, which I bet is not at all dangerous or likely to result in death and suffering. The Numbers We
get a handful of stat blocks for shards covering from the mid-Heroic to the mid-Paragon tiers. All are Medium Elemental Magical Beasts. They have Darkvision, immunities to disease and poison, and a variable elemental resistance similar to that of demons. They're all Artillery monsters, and their
movement is fairly slow, though they do fly. Most are strongly aspected towards a specific element, and have damaging auras that get a bit stronger if their enemies are suffering from some condition. Storm Shard This Level 4 Artillery shard has 44 HP and aspected towards lightning and thunder. Its
ground and fly speeds are 3, and it projects a Static Storm aura (2) that deals 3 lightning and thunder damage to those enemies caught inside. This rises to 5 if the enemy is immobilized. They have the standard senses and immunities, and their variable resistance is 5 and can be switched once per
encounter. They fire Shock Bolts (vs. Fortitude) that do some lightning damage and "strongly incentivize" the target to move: if they don't end their next turn at least 4 squares away from their current position, they take lightning damage roughly equal to triple that of the initial attack. If forced into melee, the
shard attacks with Thunder Strikes (vs. Fortitude) which deal thunder damage and knock the targets 3 squares, and deafens them (save
ends). A note on damage types: the expression "lightning and thunder damage" above denotes an attack with a single damage roll that is of both types at once. Targets use the smallest of their relevant elemental resistances against this damage. In this specific example, someone with Lightning
Resistance 10 and Thunder Resistance 5 would subtract only 5 from the rolled damage. Someone that resists only one of the component types takes full damage. Death Shard spected towards necrotic energies, Death Shards are Level 8 Artillery with 71 HP. It has all the standard traits including
Variable Resistance 5 (1/encounter), and also Necrotic Resistance 10. Its speed is 3. This thing projects a Death Shadow aura (2) that deals necrotic damage to enemies caught inside, which increases if the enemies are slowed. It fires Death Bolts (ranged 10 vs. Fortitude) that deal necrotic damage and
slow (save ends). In melee, it cuts you with a Razor Shard, a regular basic attack dealing physical damage. It's a bit less volatile than the Storm Shard, but still dangerous: when hit by a critical, it reacts with a Critical Fracture (close burst 2 vs. Fortitude), which deals necrotic damage and weakens. If the
death shard resists damage (i.e., if it's hit with something covered by its resistances), all of its attacks deal extra damage until the end of its named Life to Death, Flame Shard These Level 12 Artillery monsters have an even 100 HP and are a bit more literal about this whole artillery
business than most of their compatriots. Their speed is 4 and their variable resistance 10 (switchable twice per encounter). The flame shard's main ranged attack is Flame Burst (area burst 2 within 10 vs. Reflex) which is basically like an at-will fireball, though its damage is rather low. In melee it stabs
people with a Burning Shard that does fire damage, and it projects a Heat Wave aura (2) that deals fire damage and inflicts a -2 penalty against ongoing fire damage. When killed they explode in a final attack that's much like a Flame Burst centered on themselves, and which also does ongoing fire
damage (save ends). Prismatic Shard Living proof that "Radiant" doesn't always mean "Good"... it can also mean "evil disco ball"! These are Level 16 Artillery monsters with 123 HP. To the standard list of shard immunities they add an immunity to radiant damage, making the party's divine characters ver
sad. Their variable resistance is 10 and can be switched four times per encounter. Their aura (2) is named Prismatic Corona. It does radiant damage and inflicts a -2 penalty to all saving throws during made during the affected enemy's turn. All of the Prismatic Shard's attacks do radiant damage. The
melee Prism Flare (vs. Reflex) has nothing else going on for it. The Iridescent Bolt (ranged 20 vs. Will) also blinds for a turn. Its Flashing Colors (close burst 3 vs. Will; minor action) do no damage but daze (save ends). And the Prismatic Shatter (close burst 3 vs. Will) attack it uses when it dies also blinds
(save ends). Sample Encounters and Final Impressions As I said before, chaos shards don't have frail organic bodies to worry about, so they can live solely for the fun of seeing people explode from their elemental blasts. They hang out with creatures who are equally appreciative of this highly refined
form of entertainment, including slaads, demons, and certain types of Internet troll. They can also be summoned and controlled through elemental magic, which makes them popular with certain spellcasters. The sample encounters are: - Level 7: 2 death shards, a bloodseep demon, and 2 evistros. - Level
17: 1 prismatic shard, 3 blue slaads, and 1 green slaad. Chaos shards fulfill the important mechanical niche of providing artillery support for demons and slaads, since these monster types are all about melee and tend to lack ranged firepower. They also further confuse the taxonomy of "things from the
Abyss", something which I'm finding more and more interesting as I progress through these monster books. Could combine a Prismatic Shard with some manner of sound themed monster and have them be buddies. Could form an evil disco band of doom with that. Page 22 These get a "meh" from me.
Floating chunks of rock that shoot lasers just doesn't inspire me. I'm also not a fan of the Shard of Evil to begin with. IMO it's one of the weakest bits of the World Axis setting. I do appreciate that the Death Shard is decorated with cute little skulls, as if it's got a supervillain symbol like some sort of Captain
Planet theme-baddie. I do appreciate that the Death Shard is decorated with cute little skulls, as if it's got a supervillain symbol like some sort of Captain Planet theme-baddie. That's how you know it's really evil. You know how Monster Manuals are always filled with various monsters culled from published
adventures, like the Expedition To the Barrier Peaks monsters in the original AD&D MMII? The chaos shards feel like that to me. They might fit really well as critters in a specific adventure showcasing their shardiness with some shardy villain and his shardy plot, but they're a little flat as a general
cosmological fixture. Chaos Shards are just "yet another monster." Honestly when D&D trots out YET ANOTHER entire classification of monsters, to go with the 100's, neigh 1000's that already exist, I wonder if it wouldn't be better to just go back and add more depth to something that already exists. I'll go
against the grain: I really like these guys. I've found them naratively useful: 'why is it bad to use elemental souls to power X or Y? Well, they are sentient, and can become like these guys.' But, if I'm being honest, the main reason is the Lightning Shard - I love (of a deep and everlasting love) that "you
should probably move" attack. (With the bonus of it being of the very few: "do X or suffer Y" that really offers a significant choice.) Hit the [Fighter] that one with some critters that [slow] for extra viscerate hate. So many options that will elicit those sweet,
sweet, groans of player agony. I love them. I used Chaos Shards when I wanted to give the party some shard-like magic items as a reward. (It's been so many years, I can't remember what the item was.) The campaign was set in the Elemental Chaos, so I was on the lookout for lots of element-themed
enemies. I wouldn't use them all the time, but it was fun to run something totally different where even the most D&D-savvy players didn't know what to expect. Unfortunately the campaign died right after that, so the treasure never was used. I'll go against the grain: I really like these guys. I've found them
naratively useful: 'why is it bad to use elemental souls to power X or Y? Well, they are sentient, and can become like these guys.' I like that, also it conjures the image of undead elementals. Like when you slay an elemental, you end up with a crystalline shard of elemental matter. You channel enough
necromantic energies through it, you wake up one of these guys. I also like these guys. I also like these guys. I feel like they sell the 'alien environment' angle of the Elemental Chaos better than standard elementals do, since we're all pretty used to those guys by now. And it's the one of the only monsters designed to live on the
boundary between the Abyss and the Elemental Chaos, which gives it a nice little built-in niche. I don't particularly care for the idea of an direct connection between them and the Shard of Evil- I feel any splinters of the Shard that exist should either be pretty deep into the Abyss or have spawned their own
mini-Abysses, and shouldn't just be hanging around the edge of the Abyss- but that's easy to dismiss the Sages jumping to conclusions. Cockatrices and basilisks are based on the same vague lump of medieval folklore about an animal that can turn you to stone. The
exact name, description and proportion of snake/lizard/chicken traits this animal has varies in each specific story. D&D, of course, turned each possible name for the same thing into a totally different monster. They've been in the game since at least the days of BECMI. The Lore Cockatrices are bird-like
monsters whose bite can turn a victim to stone. Unlike a lot of other deadly creatures, though, they don't actually seem to be predators. Their petrification powers are a defense mechanism, which they will use while trying to run away from whatever enemy threatens them. So yeah, you could say
cockatrices are a bit chicken. Still, cockatrice lairs tend to have the little statue gardens common to petrifying monsters, all likely made from predators who thought they could handle it or from innocent creatures who had no idea whose lawn they were stepping on. I imagine careful adventurers can just
avoid the area entirely if they see the statues, though there are reasons they would seek it out instead: the freshly plucked feathers of a cockatrice can be used to brew a potion that undoes petrification if applied within 24 hours. A single dose requires a whole cockatrice's worth of feathers, which in turn
likely requires killing the beast. Cockatrices are themselves immune to petrification, which makes them good pets for medusas. The book also says other reptilians, like lizardfolk and yuan-ti, also make use of them. They're definitely easier to handle than a basilisk. The Numbers We only get a single state
block here, so let's get right to it. Cockatrice This is a Small Natural Beast and a Level 5 Skirmisher with 63 HP and low-light vision. It's immune to petrification as discussed earlier, and has a ground speed of 4 and a flight speed of 6 (clumsy). As a reminder, the Clumsy keyword means the creature has a
-4 to attacks when using that movement mode. The cockatrice's basic attack is its bite which is kinda weak but triggers a secondary attack vs. Fortitude. A hit there does no damage and slows the victim (save ends). This worsens to Immobilized on the first failed save, and to "permanent until cured"
petrification on the second. If an enemy moves adjacent to the cockatrice it can use Buffeting Wings (recharge 4-6) as an interrupt, which allows it to bite the triggering enemy and shift 3 squares. ## Sample Encounters and Final Impressions Given their low level, cockatrices are likely to be the first
petrifying monsters a party encounters. They're simple, but their main attack is scary enough to make up for that. They could be made into higher-level threats if, in addition to leveling them up, you made them more mobile and gave them an extra special attack. The sample encounter is Level 5: 2
cockatrices and a trio of lizardfolk using them as attack animals. Page 23 As far as I know both cockatrices and basilisks are based on the same vague lump of medieval folklore about an animal that can turn you to stone. The exact name, description and proportion of snake/lizard/chicken traits this
animal has varies in each specific story. D&D, of course, turned each possible name for the same thing into a totally different monster. The "turn you to stone" thing is also basically D&D. Folklore basilisks/cockatrices were more renowned for being ridiculously poisonous. As in "so poisonous if you kill one
with a lance from horseback the poison goes up the lance, kills the rider, and kills the horse for good measure." I like cockatrices, though I'm a little split on them. Part of me loves them as killer chickens, often of tremendous size (borrowing inspiration from miniatures). Another part of me likes to make
them more raptor-like and have them be terrifying snake-tailed, petrifying falcons for terrifying falconers who like statue gardens. The Dragon's Dogma setting has an interesting variant. Its cockatrices are related to Griffons, so they're huge guadrupeds with bird bits. But instead if being lion-eagle
blends, they're hyena-vultures who can produce a cloud of petrifying gas. I like that, also it conjures the image of undead elementals. That's a concept that's been played around with more than once. Behold the desiccator, the reanimated remains of a water elemental that died of dehydration I always like
the cockatrice as a genuine folkloric monster, and a pretty weird one at that. Somehow, I've never actually used one in a game; I should remedy that. Of note: there's a surprisingly grim epic fantasy novel with barnyard animals as the heroes, and a cockatrice as the Big Bad. That's a concept that's been
played around with more than once. Behold the desiccator, the reanimated remains of a water elemental that died of dehydration I can't take the dessicator seriously, since its existence implies that a water elemental has enough of a physical body to remain after all the moisture has been removed, which
goes against everything I know of water elementals. Maybe if it was an incorporeal? Believe it or not, the seguel is even more depressing. I understand there's a third book, but I've never read it. Everybody dies, but they're safe in Heaven from the now hopelessly corrupted world. I'd put that in spoilers,
but frankly I believe that people's lives will be just a little bit better if they don't read the third book. The Lore As we saw back in the Colossus entry for the Monster Manual, colossi are at the top of the tech tree for traditional constructs, and only gods and near-divine spellcasters have the power to create
them. They're the kind of thing that was used as a weapon in the Dawn War. Well, here we learn that the gods weren't the only side of that war that could make colossis. In the post linked above, I made a reference to the giant monsters from the Shadow of the Colossus game. The primordial colossus
we're looking at here fits them much better than the godforged variant from the first Manual. Most primordial colossi were created at the time of the Dawn War, and being as ageless as their creators they still exist today. Some roam the planes seeking to fulfill the orders of their long-gone masters, but
others lie dormant looking for all the world like shattered ruins or broken parts of the landscape. When someone approaches them, they rise and smash the intruder. The magic that goes into a primordial colossus is a little wilder and less controlled than the one that goes into the god-forged variant. The
principles behind it are such that a primordial colossus might be created by accident in any event that causes the release of a massive amount of elemental energy. This includes the awakening or destruction of a mighty elemental being. It's also possible for an epic spellcaster to acquire and perform the
ritual to create one of these constructs. The Numbers Once again we get a single stat block here, so let's get right to it. Primordial Colossus This baby is a Huge Elemental Animate with the Construct keyword, and a Level 29 Elite Brute with 640 HP. It's immune to disease, fear, poison and sleep, and has
a Variable Elemental Resistance 15 switchable 3 times per encounter. Its ground speed is 10. Primordial colossi really lean into that mechanic for composite energy damage. They have an Elemental Presence aura (5) that deals 15 damage of the "acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder" type to anyone
caught inside. You need resistance to all five types in order to not take full damage from it. Their basic slams do physical damage, but they likely prefer to use a Colossal Slam maneuver (close blast 3 vs. AC), which does the same damage over an area and triggers a secondary attack vs. Fortitude that
does a bit of extra five-type elemental damage. When an enemy moves adjacent to the colossus, it can use a Reactive Kick as a reaction, targetting Fortitude, doing a good bit of five-type damage, pushing the target 4 squares and knocking it prone. This recharges once the colossus is first bloodied.
Staying away does you no good, since it can throw Primordial Stones (Ranged 20 vs. Reflex) that do only a bit less damage than the slam and have a secondary area attack (Close Burst 5 vs. Fortitude) which does that sweet five-type damage. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions The two sample
encounters have primordial colossi guarding ancient ruins alongside other similarly powerful apotropaics: - Level 26: 1 primordial colossus, 2 great flameskulls, 1 slaughterstone hammerer. - Level 27: 1 primordial colossus, 1 primordial naga. Maybe an epic adventure centered on Far Realm opposition
could have some horrible aberrant secret guarded by both godforged and primordial colossi - something so terrible the gods and primordials actually joined forces to protect. Mechanically, I find those Big Balls of Elemental Damage in the colossus' stat block to be a lot of fun. It's so hard to resist you'd get
the same result by just using straight physical damage, but describing it this way reinforces the elemental nature of the creature... and you get to see the look on your players' faces as you announce they took acid, cold, fire lightning and thunder damage. In retrospect, I'm a little surprised that there are
colossi in each of the edition's first two Monster Manuals, and neither of them is a big nasty made-of-corpses homage to the Colossus of Ylourgne. I mean, that thing's right on the cover of X2: Castle Amber. I would have thought they'd have homaged it pretty quick. I'm not a super-fan of the mixed
elementals of 4e, but I like this guy. There's something about his general purpose and Sufficient Largeness that makes him feel like he should be kicking up a bunch of elemental effects of various nature. He feels like a proper boss fight in many ways, which is why it's surprising that he's an elite -- but
then again, upper epic. We fight colossi here. I really want these things to be kaiju-sized, but that might be too big for a singular fight. Huge is almost kaiju-sized, I think. It's on the scale of an elephant or a T-Rex. Gargantuan creatures are proper giant monsters. You could increase the size of colossi to
Gargantuan without much trouble - they'd be a bit stronger because their auras would have a larger area, but it's not a big difference for someone who's already Huge. Or you could have one or two of these Primordial Colossi leading the Tarrasque around on a leash. Page 24 A gargantuan colossus
should be a solo, not an elite. There could be a gargantuan solo colossus-like stat block somewhere in 4e's various products. Maybe in an issue of Dungeon. Evil Midnight Lurker said: Everybody dies, but they're safe in Heaven from the now hopelessly corrupted world. I'd put that in spoilers, but frankly I
believe that people's lives will be just a little bit better if they don't read the third book. So Walter Wangerin Jr succombed to hopelessness in the end? Ah well, The Book of the Dun Cow was a pretty interesting mix of elements from Norse Mythology (all dressed up as farm animals), common English
Folklore, maybe a bit of Wicca, and all with a sort of slightly mutant christianoid metaphysics. Its tone certainly doesn't match at all with D&D! OTOH I wouldn't be surprised if someone created an RPG based on playing out that sort of story. I suppose there are several which could handle it, maybe a
variation of FATE (the FATE core gamelet where everyone is a god has some elements that could be adapted to this sort of a game). I feel like there's a use-case for Colossus as elites; use them as epic-tier Golems, essentially. Lackeys and bodyguards for those 500-year old uber powerful archmages
and what not. But a Mid-epic Solo Colossus is definitely something we could use. The "problem" with [Colossi]-type foes is that they really shouldn't be handled with the traditional combat engine. A creature that's too big to fight should be... well too big to fight! Luckly we do have the tools in 4e to model
these, sadly, they were never really explored by WotC... As to this Colossus in particular - it gets a very heartfelt "meh..." from me. There's nothing me on the mechanical side, and if I have to rebuild the entire thing, I consider it a fail. So yeah... meh. The "problem" with [Colossi]-type
foes is that they really shouldn't be handled with the traditional combat engine. A creature that's too big to fight! Luckly we do have the tools in 4e to model these, sadly, they were never really explored by WotC... As to this Colossus in particular - it gets a very heartfelt
"meh..." from me. There's nothing here that's grabbing me on the mechanical side, and if I have to rebuild the entire thing, I consider it a fail. So yeah... meh. I think it isn't 'meh', it is a good starting point. These are some ancient nasties that you find and now you know you've reached the site of the epic
battle which raged 10.000 years ago. Where is the artifact? Well, what you're referring to, the 'super large' type foes, which you model as maybe entire encounters, or perhaps even more than one encounter, come next. The hero reaches for the Horn of Change which will blow the call to arms for the Dusk
War, and as soon as his fingers touch it, THE MOUNTAIN STANDS UP! But yeah, WotC didn't really try to create that kind of thing, but the tools are all there. I'm sure, if you go back to circa 10+ years ago on EnWorld you will find threads on this subject. What was that guy's name, Rusty something?
There are a couple of them out there that wrote up articles on building really massive 'creatures'. At the very end even WotC sorted of hinted at the idea. I forget what book it was in, but there's something about a monster the size of a planet, one of the 'stars'. Anyway, the real trick is coming up with the
best way because there are so many possibilities. Couatl Couatls are inspired by Aztec mythology and have been in the lore of Eberron, and I guess this entry brings that to their generic depiction. The Lore Couatls are sapiented by Aztec mythology and have been in the lore of Eberron, and I guess this entry brings that to their generic depiction. They were given a significant role in the lore of Eberron, and I guess this entry brings that to their generic depiction.
winged serpents widely known for their great virtue, wisdom and power. They have opposed demons and other servants of evil since ancient times. All of this is true, but it's not the whole truth. It's less widely known that couatl righteousness can end up crossing the line into self-righteousness. Each
individual tends to have specific plans that they pursue with single-minded dedication, and being convinced of their own rectitude they tend to not see people who get in the way of those plans with good eyes. Those plans are never actually evil, of course: they're stuff like protecting a village or other region.
pushing a mortal along a destined path, sealing a planar breach, or preventing one from opening in the first place. Still, it's very possible for a bunch of the wider picture to get in the way of a couatl's plans and draw the creature's wrath. Ancient legends say that couatls were
born of the world's first light, and that they fought alongside the gods during the Dawn War. They were supposedly responsible for binding a great number of powerful and dangerous creatures in the world or in other planes, and a lot of those mysterious plans have something to do with keeping those
creatures bound. In Eberron, if I'm not mistaken, couatls are the ones responsible for binding the demonic Lords of Dust in the distant past, and their magic have a lot to do with the deepest secrets of the Silver Flame. Couatls have the innate ability to travel from any plane to the Astral Sea in 10 minutes,
arriving at a random location or at a teleporation circle they know. They can likely also use standard rituals to travel from the Sea to elsewhere. The Numbers Couatls are Large Immortal Magical Beasts with the Reptile keyword. They have a ground speed of 6 and a flight speed of 8 with Hover. And they
also have two signature traits: Radiant Absorption makes it so that when a couatl takes radiant damage, its own attacks deal 5 extra radiant the immobilized and restrained conditions both at the start and end of their turns.
This applies even when the conditions would end after a set time instead of being (save ends): in that case, the start-of-turn save could terminate the condition early. The two stat blocks we get here are Unaligned, which I guess is what you get when you combine "opposes evil" with "is a smug snake".
Couatl Cloud Serpent Cloud Serpents are Level 18 Artillery with 135 HP and all standard couatl traits. They prefer to fight by shooting lasers and lightning from above (and far away). This most often takes the form of a Sky Bolt (Ranged 20 vs. Reflex) which deals lightning and radiant damage. If the
opposition clusters together they'll use Snaking Arcs (Area Burst 3 within 20 vs. Reflex), which is a little weaker but covers an area. It recharges once they're first bloodied. If an enemy manages to get close to them they can use a Reach 2 bite, which is a bit weak but deals ongoing poison and radiant
damage (save ends). Even their venom is shiny! They can also push the interloper away with Hurtling Coils (Reach 2 vs. Fortitude, minor action 1/round), a non-damaging attack that pushes targets 2 squares and knocks them prone. Couatl Star Serpent Star Serpents are Level 15 Elite Controllers with
286 HP. They're a lot more fond of melee combat than their cloud serpent cousins, and love to use constricting attacks. Their bite is the same as the cloud serpent cousins, and love to use constricting attacks. Their bite is the same as the cloud serpent's.
1/round) do a bit of damage and grab. Grabbed targets grant combat advantage to the star serpent, and it can move them without needing to make Strength tests like the standard grapple rules say. There's no state limit to the number of grabbed victims; in theory, the whole party could be wrapped in the
serpent's coils. The escape DC is 27. The couatl can Constrict (vs. Fortitude; minor action 1/round) a grabbed target, dealing decent physical damage and dazing them for a turn. The star serpent also has two magic encounter powers: Purifying Scream (close burst 5 vs. Will) does psychic damage and
also stuns the target for a turn if it's taking ongoing fire, poison or radiant damage. Couatl Radiance grants the creature the insubstantial and phasing traits and allows it to shift 8 squares. The goal here is to pass through as many allies and enemies as possible: every ally the couatl passes through
regains 15 HP and can spend a healing surge; every enemy suffers an attack vs. Will that, on a hit, deals both immediate and ongoing fire and radiant damage. This nicely sets them up for a Purifying Scream. Sample Encounters and Final Impressions Couatls can be found hanging out with other
creatures that share a similar desire to oppose or quard against evil. They might also engage in a bit of smug snake realpolitik and work alongside shadier allies with the goal of thwarting a worse evil. The book gives us two sample encounters: - Level 14: a star serpen, 3 deva knights-errant, and 1
phoelarch warrior. - Level 20: 2 cloud serpents, 2 marut executioners, 1 marut prosecutor. I like couatls! This more ambiguous portrayal of them gives me plenty of hooks to hang plots from, which I can't say was something the purely Lawful Good version did. I know this is going against the stated purpose
of the stat blocks, but I really like wingsnek realpolitik not as an excuse to fight them, but as an excuse to have some extraplanar force of good actively pushing scenarios into play instead of just hanging back and saying "the Balance forbids us to interfere with mortal's free will to choose their destiny blah
blah blah." They'd make an excellent reveal as the true form of/force behind that kinda dodgy patron who seems to have a lot of irons in the fire. Or you could fight them, sure, but I think as a force of actual intrigue they'd be a wonderful guiding influence for a heroic tier and then there can be brawls in
paragon when your patron crosses a line or your patron's rivals show up to cross a line themselves. I feel obligated to point out that 4e Couatl society is fleshed out in more details in the Secrets of the Plane Above splatbook. I know this is going against the stated purpose of the stat blocks, but I really like
wingsnek realpolitik not as an excuse to fight them, but as an excuse to have some extraplanar force of good actively pushing scenarios into play instead of just hanging back and saying "the Balance forbids us to interfere with mortal's free will to choose their destiny blah blah." They'd make an
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crosses a line or your patron's rivals show up to cross a line themselves. Couatls wouldn't be the first entry where the stat blocks would work best as allied NPCs than as enemies. They wouldn't.
Honestly, I think D&D has always been at its best when monsters are things that you might wind up allied with instead of exclusively strange and frightening things beyond the ken of the usual clusters of xenophobic villages. It's such a catch-all kitchen sink of fantasy tropes anyway that having things like
"the guy paying you so much to guard his carayans is an ogre mage that doesn't want to have to set down his hookah and deal with this himself" emphasize the color of the world. Page 25 They wouldn't, Honestly, I think D&D has always been at its best when monsters are things that you might wind up
allied with instead of exclusively strange and frightening things beyond the ken of the usual clusters of xenophobic villages. It's such a catch-all kitchen sink of fantasy tropes anyway that having things like "the guy paying you so much to guard his caravans is an ogre mage that doesn't want to have to set
down his hookah and deal with this himself" emphasize the color of the world. I definitely concur, it also prevents a stagnation of perceived "medieval" worldbuilding even when it wouldn't make any sense in such a world. Couatls wouldn't be the first entry where the stat blocks would work best as allied
NPCs than as enemies. The fleshed-out culture mentioned by V VoidDrifter actually includes reasons why PCs might end up in combat with their allied NPC couatl. Couatls won't take "no" for an answer when they want someone working for them, and see nothing wrong with a little tough love combat to
make prospective "friends" (i.e., minions) accept what the couatl wants. It's set up for the couatl being an ally/patron to the PCs initially, then once their level rises closer to its level and they're chafing at its demands, they have a bit of a rumble to emphasize that they're independent operators now. Yeah, I
think 4e Couatls work pretty well. You could easily have them as pure enemies too "Your kingdom must fall, because it will soon be corrupted and lead to the founding of a dark Empire if not!" queue battle scene "You have one last chance snake, help us lift the curse from the king and all will be well. Oh,
so you choose DEATH!" They are just that pig-headed, such conflicts are inevitable as the perfect becomes the enemy of the good. Also worth noting is that apart from giving normally allied/good monsters excuses to pick fights with PCs, a sometimes overlooked advantage of 4e for getting to use those
stat blocks is how easy it is not to kill something you fight. "You want my help, prove your worth by beating me up first" is a bit of a cliche, but it's totally enabled in-game. I like that a lot better than "well, it's not human-shaped, you're gonna have to kill it eventually or this stat block goes to waste." Yeah, I
use the term "kill" a lot when summarizing stat blocks but the text is always "reduced to 0 HP". That doesn't necessarily have to mean death. You could set it so an enemy reduced to 0 HP yields in the fiction, and so on. There was a much bigger move in 4e towards making even nominally 'good' monsters
potential enemies. This was also rather obvious in Draconomicon 2: Metallic Dragons. Partially this was so there wasn't any 'dead space' in all the monster manuals, but I really don't mind abandoning the more rigid aspects of alignment. Yeah, the books do a good job of giving reasons for PCs to fight
creatures that would normally only appear in non-combat scenes. And as I read them, I also find myself trying to do the reverse: find reasons to feature monsters that used to be always hostile as allies or neutral parties you can talk to*. *: Except demons and devils. Fuck those assholes. Yeah, the books
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do a good job of giving reasons for PCs to fight creatures that would normally only appear in non-combat scenes. And as I read them, I also find myself trying to do the reverse: find reasons to feature monsters that used to be always hostile as allies or neutral parties you can talk to*. The capacity to do one enhances the capacity to do the other. If elves, unicorns, and faerie dragons can be assholes, gnolls and bugbears carry less "we need someone to fight" baggage and can become neutrals or allies. *: Except demons and devils. Fuck those assholes. And even then I'd argue that if angels are capable of falling, fiends are capable of rising. It's just way harder and therefore less common. (plus, A'kin) Technically A'kin the friendly fiend was neither a Demon nor Devil. So, still, fuck those assholes. I can kinda see a story where you have a fiend of some sort who wants to find redemption, and it's something no one thought was possible. From among the monsters we've seen so far in this Let's Read and the previous one, I'd sav Demons and Devils are about the only kind of monster there this "big deal redemption" storyline would really work. What annoys me about the books when it comes to sapient humanoids and magical beasts, is that they tend to act like "big deal redemption" storylines belong with them, and that is the tendency I usually find myself trying to reverse. Page 26 And even then I'd argue that if angels are capable of falling, fiends are capable of falling, fiends are capable of rising. It's just way harder and therefore less common. (plus, A'kin) ... Are there fallen Angels in 4E? There's Evil Angels, but 4E changed the nature of angels. An Evil Angel isn't fallen, it's just serving an Evil god. Demons and Devils, at least in 4E, aren't free-willed beings born into terrible circumstances; they're manifestations of chaos and evil and despair. I genuinely don't know if it's capable for them to change their nature enough to be redeemed. ... Are there fallen Angels in 4E? There's Evil Angels, but 4E changed the nature of angels. An Evil and despair. I least in 4E, aren't free-willed beings born into terrible circumstances; they're manifestations of chaos and evil and despair. I genuinely don't know if it's capable for them to change their nature enough to be redeemed. So, I totally go down the reject-the-cosmology-and-substitute-your-own path, but I seem to recall that the devils' point of origin was that they were celestials who rose up against and slew their god, in pretty much a classic "fall" narrative except that the rebellion worked. Also, 4e demons feel less like manifestations of chaos and evil than they do in every other edition where "chaotic evil" isn't just an alignment, it's a very bad place in the metaphysics. At any rate, I think it can be suggested that couatls aren't so ineffable that they're incapable of falling -- and they're closer to a manifestation of "good" than angels are -- so, y'know. Alignment feels less sticky to me in this edition than it does in any other AD&D, with probably only the three-part alignment of B/X and BECMI being less solidly prescriptive. Which isn't to say that I would use a potential fiend's redemption as a Moral Trap for PCs who assume there's at least something they can kill on sight. That would be gross GMing. Rather, it's the sort of thing that I think would be most likely to happen if the PCs wanted it to happen and started putting in the work. If 4e PCs can kill gods and create a universe without, say, avarice -- and there's an adventure path that ends that way -- they ought to be able to pull off a redemption arc for any type of critter if they're feeling it. ... Are there fallen Angels in 4E? There's Evil Angels, but 4E changed the nature of angels. An Evil Angel isn't fallen, it's just serving an Evil god. Demons and Devils, at least in 4E, aren't free-willed beings born into terrible circumstances; they're manifestations of chaos and evil and despair. I genuinely don't know if it's capable for them to change their nature enough to be redeemed. In 4e the devils are fallen angels. Asmodeus was one too, but revolted against his god, killing him and seizing his power. The angels were changed into devils due to this crime, and there's an article on Succubi which gives the equivalent Angel of Love that they were before they fell. On the other hand, I still think it'd be neat if Devils and Angels were even more indistinguishable. Give Bahamut some Lawful Good Pit "Fiends" for servants! ... Are there fallen, it's just serving an Evil god. Demons and Devils, at least in 4E, aren't free-willed beings born into terrible circumstances; they're manifestations of chaos and evil and despair. I genuinely don't know if it's capable for them to change their nature enough to be redeemed. Yes. Fallen Angels were introduced to 4e's Cosmology in the Book of Vile Darkness. Devils are "Corrupt" Angels, having murdered their patron god and been cursed by He-Who-Was, resulting in their various monstrous forms and their being sealed in Baator. Fallen Angels are angels who survived when their patron god was killed, which left them very, very loopy, homicidally obsessed with avenging their fallen patron, and basically the multiverse's ultimate wildcards. In the 4e cosmology, I don't think that a "redeemed" Devil would return to being an Angel. 4e Angels are so subsumed by their angelic role that they're literally faceless; in addition to whatever metaphysical changes being endeviled caused, they probably have too much of a personality to go back to faceless servitors of a role. You'd probably get something that's still fairly devilish, adjusted for whatever amount of Good = pretty that you feel comfortable with in terms of changed appearance. Maybe their Fire keyworded powers become Radiant, or something. "Redeemed" 4e Demons probably become something like a primordial-aligned Elemental. Probably just as destructive if only incidentally. There is a 4e redemption cycle built-in, though: Devas & Rakshashas. That seems because of something imposed by the Primal Spirits, not an inherent cosmological effect as from the murder of He Who Was (for Devils) or from the Seed of Evil (for Demons). That might mean that if a Deva/Rakshasha wants out of its redemption cycle, it can actually go and punch something to make that happen. Devils and Demons don't seem to have that option. Missed the colossus discussion when it happened, but I have totally run combats with colossal monsters in dnd 4e and had it work wonderfully. What I did: put some tokens on the battlemap to represent the thing's feet. Then I took another, smaller grid (you can also just box off a corner of your main one, if you only have one) and drew the shape of the creature's body on it. With the vulnerable head and chest squares outlined. Every time the big guy moved, it basically made a free attack against anyone in a square it was moving its feet into (vs reflex, on a miss you move to an adjacent square, on a hit you take damage and are knocked prone and kicked into another square of the monster's choice; I described this as it kicking/grazing the character. I only described it actually succeeding at STEPPING ON them when it reduced someone to 0 hp this way). Creature has a mountain of hp, and damage reduction. If you can fly or teleport, getting onto its back is easy. If not, you have to run up to its foot and make an Athletics check. On the monster's turn, anyone on its back has to roll Acrobatics (or use a clever workaround) to not get shaken off. Attacks made from a square adjacent to its vitals autocrit and bypass damage reduction. It worked amazingly well. Used this colossal monster several times in the final phase of the campaign, and the players didn't get bored of it. Especially when I had small, flying enemies added to the mix who would try to protect the big boys, and then in the penultimate battle when I basically stole the ending of Half Life 2 ep 2 and had a bunch of these kaijus attack a fortress and the PC's had to take them all down before they could batter down the inner walls. The big monsters had a bunch of fliers and crawlers on their backs defending them, and the PC's had low level human and orc infantrymen to back them up who they could use their high level powers to help climb up onto the colossi to help do damage. Granted, these were giant crab/spider type monsters, so using their backs and heads as a mini-battlemap was pretty easy to manage. I don't think it would work as well for a humanoid colossus, at least without some further tweaking. Last edited: Jun 13, 2020 In the 4e cosmology, I don't think that a "redeemed" Devil would return to being an Angel. 4e Angels are so subsumed by their angelic role that they're literally faceless; in addition to whatever metaphysical changes being endeviled caused, they probably get something that's still fairly devilish, adjusted for whatever amount of Good = pretty that you feel comfortable with in terms of changed appearance. Maybe their Fire keyworded powers become something like a primordial-aligned Elemental. Probably not much of a difference in terms of how they act: maybe less malicious, probably just as destructive if only incidentally. There is a 4e redemption cycle built-in, though: Devas & Rakshashas. That seems because of something imposed by the Primal Spirits, not an inherent cosmological effect as from the murder of He Who Was (for Devils) or from the Seed of Evil (for Demons). That might mean that if a Deva/Rakshasha wants out of its redemption cycle, it can actually go and punch something to make that happen. Devils and Demons don't seem to have that option. The 4e Ecology of the Succubus article says that succubi who pursue redemption can transform back into Angels of Love, but A: those were unusually independent even before Asmodeus deceived them, and B: the lore of that article seems like the author didn't quite understand the differences between the World Axis and the Great Wheel. Sure! Of course they could also just be different forms of the Angels of Supremacy from earlier. Especially as back in 1e they used to carry "an ancus-like weapon" which I've always assumed to be an ankus/elephant goad.

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