

# Threats: Peril of the Gorgon



By Amber Scott



# Threats



# Peril of the Gorgons



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## Threats: Peril of the Gorgons

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"For all the women who have supported me and my career over the years. I couldn't have done it without you."

**Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall**

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# Introduction

Sierra,

*I've returned safely from the world of Pirodan. It's a fascinating place, full of ancient lore and knowledge if you know the right places to look. It wasn't an overly peaceful trip but I'll spare you the details for the moment. When we're all together again I'll tell you and Eugenia the whole story.*

*I've found out quite a bit of information about the bizarre creatures known as Gorgons, enough that I think my patron will be satisfied. I've spent the last few days putting my knowledge together and I've included a copy of my findings with this letter. I hope the messenger I found at the Agora delivers this package to you. I paid him enough.*

*Gorgons are unlike any other creatures I've studied. The knowledge is as terrifying as it is fascinating. I don't think my patron would quite approve of me sharing my information with you, but sisters have to look out for each other, right? I'd hate for either of you to fall prey to these horrible beasts.*

*"Beast" isn't quite the right word, though. Neither is "creature." I don't think a word exists yet that properly describes what they are. Read on. You'll see what I mean.*

*Your loving sister,*

*Min*

## The Many in One

I'd thought my investigations would lead to an orderly, factual account of the creatures known as Gorgons. One section would weigh and measure them. Another would show sketched cross-sections of the creatures' anatomy. I'd clinically discuss their eating habits, societal structures, and birth and death cycles.

Instead I find myself pondering philosophical questions of the most inscrutable depth. What is it that makes an individual their own person? Is it a soul that makes us who we are, or are we collections of thoughts and memories and nothing more?

Such questions are inextricable from the study of Gorgons, for these creatures are both many and one. They have uncountable parts to their hives, yet a single "mind" controls them. When they inhabit a host, they slowly take

over their victim's thoughts and feelings, incorporating their unique spirit into the Gorgon whole.

On one of my trips I encountered a man who had been infested by a Gorgon. On his world he had been a farmer, a steward of the land who cared for his crops and his neighbors. One day he complained of a headache. The next day a swarm of mice descended upon him, climbing through his sleeves and across his head. The farmer took no notice of the mice and stared silently at those who spoke to him, people he had known his whole life, as if he had never seen them before. Then he walked silently into the forest abutting his farmstead and vanished. No one ever saw him again. His farm fell to ruin, his fields lying fallow even now.

This is the power of a Gorgon.

## Two Origins

I'm not able to say for certain where Gorgons come from, but my studies revealed two prevalent theories. All the books I read and scholars I interviewed espoused one theory or the other, sometimes with small modifications or guised in metaphorical talk, but with little variation.

The first theory attributes the first Gorgon to a magical curse. The target of the curse changes from world to world—in some stories the first Gorgon was a beautiful youth, in others it was an arrogant warrior—but in all of them a mortal offended an immortal being and was punished. The mortal was stripped of everything. They lost their physical body, their mind, and even their sense of self. Nothing remained but hunger dwelling in an amorphous, shapeless mass.

The second theory states that Gorgons have always existed, a dreadful race spawned on a world without light. Explorers sailing in vast ships that could cross between stars came upon the dark world and were instantly infested by the Gorgons there. The Gorgons used the ship to return to the explorers' home world and thus spread their influence across all Gossamer worlds.

In the end, all that really matters is that Gorgons are here and they still hunger.

## Dark Heart

It seems simplistic to ask "what do Gorgons want?" when faced with such inscrutable creatures. I believe Gorgons want, on one level, what anyone wants. To survive. They further their existence at the expense of others' lives, no

different than a lion who survives by feasting on the life-blood of a gazelle.

And yet, some might argue that Gorgons do not kill their victims outright. The farmer I mentioned earlier was still alive when he vanished into the woods. A Gorgon is never a single-bodied creature, but a swarm that cooperates with and makes use of its unwilling host. Perhaps in that sense a Gorgon is more merciful than a lion.

Don't give any weight to that argument. Gorgons are worse than simple killers. They hollow out their hosts, stripping them of everything that made them unique individuals. They feast on memory, devouring free will and personality, until nothing remains but another atom of will incorporated into the Gorgon's hive mind. A body might remain, but the person's soul has been murdered.

On another level, Gorgons want to spread their influence. This seems to be driven by a stronger urge than basic survival. A Gorgon might take unnecessary risks to infest hosts when they see an opportunity. They sometimes pass up easier hosts to attack more powerful (and thus more dangerous) ones. It's almost as if Gorgons are looking for particular experiences and powers to add to their being. The motive behind these patterns is yet unknown, but I think discovering what it is that drives the Gorgon race could be the key to defeating them.

## Gorgon Anatomy

*Author's Note: "Anatomy" might not be exactly the right word to describe a Gorgon's physical makeup. The reader will have realized by now that Gorgons do not fit into neat descriptive pockets. Though they are terrifying creatures, Gorgons have a certain elegance to their design. They're efficient in a way other creatures are not, which is something I admit I admire. -Min*

## Physiology

A Gorgon isn't a single cohesive being. It begins as a cloud of tiny spheres, or spores, so small they can barely be seen individually. Only when grouped together do the spores seem to take on substance and mass. A spore cannot travel more than a few feet from the cloud before it becomes inert and lifeless, and so a Gorgon in spore form is careful to remain in a relatively close configuration.

The means by which a Gorgon controls its individual parts remains a mystery. Magic could be the force holding it together, or it could be electrical impulses, or some other property of the creature not yet discovered. What we do

know is that a Gorgon in spore form is almost impossible to kill with physical damage.

In its immature form, a Gorgon's spores can hover a few inches off the ground and move in an undulating pattern, like a fish swimming through water. The Gorgon can float as high as it likes, though most don't rise above ten feet or so. Strong winds can injure a Gorgon in spore form by blowing away some of its particles, and so Gorgons must be cautious when flying at extreme heights.

Gorgons in spore form can accomplish little. It is a barely intelligent swarm creature that requires a host of substance to attain any real sentience. The next section describes Gorgon hosts.

## Hosts

As I mentioned earlier, Gorgons grow and spread by inhabiting hosts. An immature Gorgon infests a host by growing and forming a multitude of its spores into a swarm of seemingly innocuous animals. The animals then surround the host while a handful of stray spores enter the host's body. The spores enter through any available orifices, including the pores of the skin, and does so with such care that a host may not realize they are becoming infested. Gorgons often target sleeping or distracted individuals to improve their chances of success.

Though a Gorgon can infest a target quite rapidly, they can be interrupted. I heard one story on my travels of a shepherd sleeping in a field who awoke to see a sparkling cloud of fireflies descending on her. The girl jumped up and ran straight to town, where the townsfolk, alerted by her screams, were waiting with torches and weapons. The cloud abandoned its chase and though the shepherd later found "dust" trickling from her ears and the pores of her face (the dead particles of the partially assimilated Gorgon), she suffered no lasting ill effects. *Author's Note: One of the rams in her flock was missing when the townsfolk returned to the pasture, though, and could be seen spying on the town at night from time to time, surrounded by a swarm of blinking fireflies.*

Gorgons generally prefer intelligent, humanoid hosts, though they can inhabit any living, organic creature. It seems likely that a Gorgon's host adds its unique knowledge and experiences to the nature of the Gorgon and so the creature constantly seeks out new and different targets.

A Gorgon's assimilation of its host's knowledge is often a Pyrrhic victory. As the Gorgon consumes its host's mind, the host's intelligence breaks apart. Higher cognition degrades, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, until the host is left a wandering husk. The Gorgon within, having extracted what it can, begins a search for a new host.



On rare occasions, a Gorgon assimilates a host with the power and mental acuity to stand up to the swarm's demands. A true symbiosis occurs with the Gorgon-infested host retaining, even enhancing, its facilities. Such creatures are as dangerous as they are rare. Of their number, Medusa is the most well-known, and rightly feared.

A Gorgon within a host can infest a new host by secreting fresh spores from its existing host and extruding half of its swarm and sending them after a new target. The infestation process works the same way. Most of the time the swarm's animal forms remain the same from host to host, but occasionally some Gorgons' spores and swarm will mutate into a new animal form. During this process the Gorgon cannot stray more than a few feet from the new target until the transformation is complete. At the end of the transformation, the Gorgon chooses which host body to keep. The other is destroyed, its memories and knowledge added to the Gorgon's own.

## A Changing Form

Once a Gorgon has infested its host, the bulk of its spores follow closely in their assumed animal forms. These animal forms cannot revert back to spores, but remain in their distinct (though mentally linked) bodies. You'll remember the farmer I described with the swarm of mice crawling behind and upon him.

## Gorgon Statistics

Gorgons are dangerous foes and extremely difficult to kill. All Gorgons possess the following abilities.

- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point] — The distributed nature of a Gorgon makes it more difficult to kill.
- Self-Healing [1 Point] — A Gorgon can rapidly heal by incorporating a new host into its collective self.
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- Combat Training [1 Point]
- Able to Speak and Reason [2 Points]
- Psychic Resistance [1 Point]

Individual Gorgons may have other abilities based on the host they inhabit. For example, a Gorgon possessing a powerful troll might have enhanced strength, while one inhabiting a forest elf could see in the dark.

The animal forms a Gorgon takes vary by host, implying that the Gorgon's spores can intuit an appropriate form from their host. Perhaps when the few spores trickle into the host's body, they form a limited psychic connection and

glean the proper form to assume. Thus a wandering druid is swarmed by a flock of ravens, or a farmer by field mice, or an aristocratic lady by purring kittens.

With very powerful hosts, the Gorgon sometimes merges with the host's body, becoming a physical whole. Such is the case with serpent-tressed Medusa. The appearance of this extrusion is unique to each host, and occurs infrequently.

A Gorgon's swarm is always comprised of animals of the same type, though small individual variations occur between members of the swarm. The size of a swarm depends on the size of the creature the Gorgon imitates, as well as the density of the original spore cloud. The farmer might have a swarm of hundreds of field mice following him, while the aristocratic lady has only four kittens by her side.

One animal from the swarm can travel a short distance from the host, usually around 50 feet. If the animal travels any farther, it becomes inert and collapses into a pile of dust. The Gorgon experiences everything each member of the swarm does, so in this way the Gorgon can use one of its animals as a spy, to scout ahead or eavesdrop on conversations.

Losing an animal by extending it too far doesn't harm the Gorgon physically, but reduces its size. If the Gorgon is separated to the point where all its swarm creatures are lost, the Gorgon itself dies. This usually kills the host, unless the infestation was in its very early stages.

Gorgons are notoriously hard to kill. If even one of the swarm creatures survives and escapes, it retains the essence of the Gorgon and can slowly regenerate until it resumes its original size. Each Gorgon takes a different amount of time to regenerate, based on its size, age, and strength. The average Gorgon takes about a month to regenerate. Smaller, younger Gorgons can regenerate in half that time, while larger, older Gorgons take several months, or even up to a year.

## Gorgon Psychology

*Author's Note: This section is the least well-documented of my notes. Information on what Gorgons look like and how they act is fairly available, but to get inside their thoughts is a dangerous process. I've done my best to report all the facts I have and limit my speculation, though it's difficult to resist. Gorgon society must be a weird and wonderful thing, with everyone's thoughts humming together in perfect accordance. Think of it—no dissent, no misunderstandings, no anger or regrets. It seems like a very peaceful, enlightened experience. -Min*

## Containing Multitudes

Though a Gorgon is an entity made up of many individual parts, it has but one consciousness. All of the minds the Gorgon has infested over its lifetime exist within the creature, but folded into one cohesive mind. No one knows if individual "souls" can assert themselves in a Gorgon collective from time to time, or if every trace of individuality is ruthlessly stamped out.

The only dissension a Gorgon experiences is when it infests a new host. The host can attempt to fend off the Gorgon's influence for a time, struggling desperately to retain their identity. During this period of struggle the Gorgon can be ejected, but a Gorgon's first act after infestation is to take over the physical functions of its new body. The host becomes a prisoner of their own mind, unable to ask for help while the Gorgon slowly assimilates their individuality. As mentioned before, the end result is a base creature, with no trace of the original host left. Memories, personality, and intelligence are lost. The Gorgon and the host become one.

## Meeting of the Minds

Some sort of Gorgon society undoubtedly exists, though the exact nature of the society remains undetermined. Gorgons usually live and operate alone, but gather from time to time. Such gatherings are kept highly secret and no outsiders are permitted. Two Gorgons meeting by chance will stop to converse, either through their hosts or via the silent communication that only Gorgons can share.

Some researchers theorize that all Gorgons are really one Gorgon, different aspects of the same massive individual mind. When Gorgons gather, it may be to share information gathered from different hosts to all the other Gorgons at the meet. This would allow the Gorgons to gain knowledge more quickly together than any one Gorgon could gather alone.

Gorgons who retain some intelligence are willing to speak with members of other races so long as it serves their needs. Some of these advanced Gorgons work as spies and assassins, taking over host bodies that will grant them access to sensitive areas. Other advanced Gorgons work for researchers, infesting a host with critical knowledge that the Gorgon then sells to their patron. Gorgons have a reputation for being fair partners and break their agreements only under the direst of circumstances, which makes them valuable partners—if one can be located.

# Gorgons of the Gossamer Worlds

*Author's Note: Though Gorgons exist in countless forms, during my research I identified three specific advanced Gorgons known to many of the most powerful individuals of the Grand Stair. These Gorgons may be receptive to conversation but should, nevertheless, be approached with caution and respect.*

## Medusa

Medusa is perhaps the best-known Gorgon, for she has inhabited the same general form for decades: A young woman with olive skin, dark eyes, and a mass of writhing snakes for hair. Numerous legends have sprung up around Medusa, including the persistent myth that she can turn people to stone with a gaze. There are no lifelike statues surrounding her place of residence, but it's true that she is a deadly assassin for hire.

Medusa can often be found near the Agora, though she comes and goes at a whim. Messages left for her in the market eventually find their way to her. She is willing to meet with potential clients but chooses jobs based on her own preferences, not money or the promise of material rewards.

### Medusa as an Ally

Medusa rarely forms actual alliances with anyone, though she can temporarily join forces with others if it serves her purpose. If one of these temporary alliances helps Medusa achieve her goal and she considers the people involved reliable, she's willing to join with them again (if it suits her needs). Though Medusa is a businesswoman and generally trustworthy on missions, there's always the tension that she might infest one of her allies without their knowledge.

### Medusa as an Enemy

Medusa makes a fearsome enemy. She's an aged and experienced Gorgon and she's honed her combat skills to an unparalleled degree. If she takes a contract to kill someone, she doesn't rest until her mission has been fulfilled. However, if a client lies to her or misleads her during the negotiation of the contract, and that fact later comes to light, Medusa can quickly turn on her former partner.

## Powers and Abilities

- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Divine and Understand True Name [5 Points]
- Total Incorporation [4 Points]
- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point]
- Self-Healing [1 Point]
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- Combat Mastery [4 Points]
- Able to Speak and Reason [2 Points]

## Artifacts and Creatures

*Bronze Girdle* [16 Points] — Whatever her outfit, Medusa always wears a girdle of linked bronze plates, each one an oval roughly two inches across. Each plate is engraved with a scene of battle or an image of a fantastic monster. The girdle warns Medusa when danger threatens her, and allows her to traverse the Grand Stair.



- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Search Through Worlds [4 Points]
- Confers Power on Wearer - Search Through Worlds [10 Points]

*Viper* [ 5 Points] — On missions, Medusa carries a curved bronze dagger with a razor-sharp edge and a hilt set with three glimmering pearls. She uses the dagger, which she calls Viper, to carry out her contracted assassinations. Viper is a dagger of unusual power and can sometimes destroy doorframes, window panes, even armor with a single thrust.

- *Deadly Damage* [4 Points]
- *Contains Cantrip* [1 Points] — Fracture

## Objectives

Medusa's objectives are inscrutable to most. She uses her abilities to seek out powerful targets and kill them, thus learning more about their natures. Her work also takes her to any number of Gossamer worlds. Medusa is more receptive to missions that allow her to face enemies or travel to worlds she has no previous experience with. She then takes her knowledge back to other Gorgons at meets to share.

## Cragmordan

On the world from which Cragmordan's host body hails, the locals know him as “the mountain that came to life.” Rock troll tribes had lived in the mountains for generations, a reclusive and nonaggressive race with deep ties to the land. All rock trolls are large, but Cragmordan was enormous, towering over even the largest members of his tribe. One day Cragmordan ventured toward the peak of the mountain to forage and went missing. For an entire moon's cycle he was gone, and when he returned it was with a strange light in his eyes and crystalline insects crawling on his rocklike hide. Cragmordan soon left his tribe to live a solitary life in the mountains, and travelers entering his domain rarely return.

## Cragmordan as an Ally

Cragmordan is one of the more alien Gorgons and has little interest in other beings, save to absorb them into himself. If someone persuades Cragmordan to assist in a mission, the Gorgon may agree but assists silently and ruthlessly. He isn't the type to go back for a fallen companion or to make a sacrifice for the greater good.

## Cragmordan as an Enemy

His reclusiveness keeps Cragmordan from gathering many enemies, though some of the weaker races on the world fear his strength and would like to see him deposed. Some of the rock trolls fear Cragmordan as well, though their awe of him keeps any rebellions from forming. If Cragmordan considers someone an enemy he will attack on sight, using his powerful fists to pummel them into paste.

## Objectives

Cragmordan's Gorgon sees the value in having entire rock troll tribes at his command. Their loyalty can be used in time to further the Gorgon race's agenda. He's most receptive to individuals who offer to help or bolster the tribe in some way, and will occasionally ally with someone in exchange for weapons or supplies for the rock trolls. Cragmordan's impressive strength is his most valuable asset, but he sometimes works as a guide to lead travelers through the mountains.

## Powers and Abilities

- Psychic Resistance [1 Point]
- Divine and Understand True Name [5 Points]
- Partial Incorporation [2 Points]
- Resistant to Normal Weapons and Firearms [2 Points]
- Self-Healing [1 Point]
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Able to Speak and Reason [2 Points]
- Double Damage [2 Points]

## Allies

*Partisan Support* [3 Points] — Cragmordan is considered something of a divine being among the rock troll tribes. Some of the rock trolls believe he's the incarnation of the spirit of the earth, others think he was chosen by some powerful being to gain special powers. The rock troll tribes support Cragmordan unconditionally and will obey his commands, though he rarely issues any.



## Nathaniel Iglehart

A recent arrival on the Grand Stair, Iglehart was a wanderer and explorer, using his newfound powers as a Warden to venture into dozens of new worlds. One of his trips, however, did not go as planned. Iglehart returned to the Grand Stair a hollow-eyed version of his former self, swathed in a heavy, hooded robe. His mind seemed broken by whatever he'd experienced through the Door and now he can be encountered in dark corners of the Grand Stair, lurking on landings and mumbling to himself.

Though Iglehart appeared to be nothing more than a common adventurer, he was actually an acolyte in a cult devoted to the worship of unknowable, alien beings that lived beyond the stars. His psychic struggle with the Gorgon that infested him destroyed his sanity and, in the end, he believed his body was being taken over by one of these alien gods. That belief transmitted to the Gorgon when it absorbed him and has left him a strange, paranoid, unbalanced creature.

Iglehart is accompanied by a swarm of glistening indigo beetles, their carapaces shimmering like oil. The gentle

click of the beetles surrounds him wherever he goes. On the rare occasion that he pulls back his hood, he displays a mask of flowing beetles that covers his face entirely, save for his mad, gleaming eyes.

While Iglehart's adventures began when he discovered his power as a Warden, his connection to the Grand Stair is slowly eroding. As the Gorgon consumes him, his power weakens, and he will soon be left a wandering husk trapped on the Stair.

### Attributes

**PSYCHE** — 20 Points

**STRENGTH** — Superior Rank

**ENDURANCE** — Superior Rank

**WARFARE** — Average Rank

### Powers

*Warden of the Grand Stair* [10 Points]

*Umbra Mastery* [50 Points]

*Divine and Understand True Name* [5 Points]

*Resistant to Normal Weapons* [1 Points]

*Self-Healing* [1 Point]

*Double Vitality* [2 Points]

*Superior Stamina* [1 Point]

*Combat Reflexes* [2 Points]

*Able to Speak and Reason* [2 Points]

*Psychic Resistance* [1 Point]

## Artifacts and Creatures

*Amulet of the Eye* [4 Points] — Iglehart wears a silver amulet shaped like an eye around his neck. This is the symbol of the alien gods he worships and it manifests several protective abilities.

- *Psychic Neutral* [2 Points]
- *True Name is Warded* [2 Points]

## Domain

**The Space Beyond [4 points]:** Iglehart has a personal domain, claimed before his madness and infestation. The Space Beyond is a vast darkness filled with purple mist, where tentacles seem to writhe just out of sight. Iglehart's connection to the Space Beyond is already disintegrating, and soon he will lose access to his domain altogether as the Gorgon consumes him.

- *Personal Domain* [1 point]
- *Restricted Access* [2 points]
- *Control of Contents* [1 point]

## Allies

*Mentor* [2 Points] — Iglehart still communicates regularly with the head of his cult back on his home world. Since his transformation, Iglehart has only sent messages back to the cult and avoided visiting the group in person. Iglehart's mentor and cult leader, Cassandra, has grown concerned over the disjointed and sometimes incomprehensible missives and is trying to find out what exactly happened to her protégé.

## Stuff

*Bad* [+2 Points]

## Iglehart as an Ally

Iglehart is too unbalanced to serve as a consistent companion. Even if he agrees to work with another person, his fractured mind causes him to behave erratically. He might support his companion one minute and then

turn on them the next. When stealth is called for, Iglehart could break down and begin gibbering and screaming.

## Iglehart as an Enemy

Iglehart's paranoia means he believes everyone is an enemy. His inability to trust alongside his significant power makes him dangerous, but his madness makes him believe that most people on the Grand Stair could crush him in an instant. Thus he lurks in the shadows, plotting horrible deaths for people that he never attempts to bring to fruition.

## Objectives

Iglehart's Gorgon knows something is wrong. The sick brain of its host has somehow corrupted it and it simultaneously wants the help of other Gorgons while knowing that to share thoughts with others could spread the sickness. As time goes on the Gorgon's nature continues to fracture and it may eventually seek out other Gorgons and share its experiences with them regardless of the risk.



# Manifestations of the Many

*Author's Note: It seems prudent to confess that I actually spoke to a Gorgon when researching this section. It was the only way to get reliable information, despite the danger. The Gorgon I spoke with was remarkably forthcoming and assisted me greatly. I can't believe I was ever afraid of these creatures. -Min*

## Gorgon Powers

Though Gorgons appear alien and unknowable to other races, the powers they manifest are similar to other powers known in Gossamer worlds. The way a Gorgon uses its power, though, may seem bizarre. Someone who has no knowledge of Gorgon powers might think a Gorgon has mysterious, never-before-seen abilities, when in truth the Gorgon simply applies a common power in an uncommon fashion.

In general, Gorgons cannot use greater powers, such as Warden of the Grand Stair, even if their host possessed such powers. As the Gorgon consumes its host, the host's cognitive and supernatural abilities degrade to the point where greater powers are lost. Some Gorgons retain greater powers for a short time but eventually its consumption of the host destroys its ability to use these powers.

Exceptionally powerful Gorgons, such as Medusa, retain the ability to use more moderate powers, such as sorcery or icons. Gorgons may also develop unique abilities based on the powers their host once possessed. An Umbra master overtaken by a Gorgon may lose the Umbra power, but gain the ability to shift their shape as an echo of their former power. These secondary abilities don't always manifest in a Gorgon, but when they do, they always relate somehow to the former powers of the host.

**Possessing a Host.** When a Gorgon manifests as a swarm and surrounds a potential host, it begins the process of connecting with the host's psyche and possessing the host's mind. The Gorgon must contact the host's skin (or skin analogue, such as a carapace or hide), so protective gear (such as a sealed environmental suit) or certain spells or powers (such as an Eidolon Master's ability of physical fortification) can potentially block the Gorgon. The potential host might also notice the Gorgon approaching and choose to attack or escape, which is why a Gorgon will often wait for a host to be asleep or distracted before making its move.

## Psychic Defense

This is the manner by which a Gorgon attaches to an unsuspecting host. This is a special ability reserved for Gorgons only, to reflect their alien hive mind psyches. In general, a Defensive power cannot and should not be used offensively by player characters or other creatures.

A Gorgon's Psychic strength is determined by its Psychic Defense score, per the Creature/Artifact Quality description in the core book. This quality confers the defensive bonuses of the Psychic Defense score as listed in the core rulebook in addition to the following levels, which is one reason Gorgons are so difficult to detect.

- **Psychic Resistance [1 Point]** This level confers the equivalent of Superior Rank Psyche.
- **Psychic Neutral [2 Points]** This level confers the equivalent of Paragon Rank Psyche.
- **Psychic Barrier [4 Points]** This level confers the equivalent of a numbered Rank, usually near the bottom of the Attribute ladder (to be determined exactly where by the gamemaster).

Once the Gorgon has made contact with the host, if it is able to overwhelm the host's psyche it begins to bond. The host has a limited amount of time to expel the Gorgon before they are controlled and ultimately consumed by it, usually no longer than a few hours.

A Gorgon can only infest a living, organic creature. Objects, automatons, computer systems and the like are immune to possession by a Gorgon.

**Diving and Understanding True Names:** Some Gorgons have the frightening ability to divine a creature's True Name. The Gorgon doesn't extend its will onto the host, but instead suffuses every cell of the host, learning everything it can about the body it now inhabits. In time, the Gorgon understands the host on such an intimate level that the host's True Name becomes apparent. During this time, the host may not even know they've been infected (if the Gorgon joined the host while they slept, for instance).

Like the Invocation power of the same name, it takes a variable amount of time for a Gorgon to divine its host's True Name. For ordinary people or beasts, the process takes about a day. For more powerful individuals or creatures on a scale with most Gossamer Lords the process takes from several days to a week. For truly impressive beings, it takes weeks or even months for a Gorgon to discern the host's True Name, and any being so powerful would undoubtedly recognize and expel the Gorgon before they could be compromised.

For most Gorgons, learning a host's True Name is irrelevant. By the time the Gorgon learns the host's True Name, the host has been reduced to a base state by the infestation and will soon be discarded. However, exceptionally powerful and intelligent Gorgons, the frightening boogymen of legend, sometimes accept contracts to infect a creature and learn its True Name. It then sells the information to the creature's enemies for money or information.

A powerful Gorgon might also infest a host just long enough to learn its True Name, then move on to another host, leaving the initial host relatively intact. The first host might not even realize they have been infected. If, in the future, the Gorgon's current host is destroyed or the Gorgon is endangered, it may return to the initial host and immediately possess them without needing to infect them first. This can be an important contingency for Gorgons of this power.

### Divine and Understand True Name [5 Points]

This ability functions as per the Invocation abilities of the same name, as described in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* core book, page 35.

This Invocation ability is very similar to two Invocation Talents introduced in Rite Publishing's *The Long Walk: Life on the Grand Stair* supplement. Gorgons have an easier time Divining and Understanding True Names. This is due to the Gorgons' alien swarm psyches, and should not be a general rule for player characters or other creatures and beings.

**Bodily Modifications.** The process of a Gorgon's domination is a painful and confusing time for the host. The Gorgon's psychic domination leaves the host aware but unable to control their actions. They become a prisoner in their mind, helplessly watching as their thoughts are ravaged and corrupted.

Once the host's thoughts have been dominated, a secondary process sometimes occurs. Some Gorgons possess the ability to reshape the host's body (for example, sprouting from the host's scalp in a multitude of hissing snakes). Doing so marks the host as unmistakably alien, though the physical transformation can be hidden through mundane or magical means. For example, Medusa can hide her serpent hair beneath a hood or a magical illusion.

Creating physical modifications in the host's body has two potential benefits. If a Gorgon integrates itself completely in the host's body, such as the case with Medusa, it can no longer be killed by scattering its swarm's components. If the Gorgon partially integrates itself with the host, creating

some physical changes but keeping swarm animals as well, it extends the range to which it can send its swarm animals before they disorporate.

### Partial Incorporation [2 Points]

This ability allows a Gorgon to partially meld with its host, creating a physical mutation that reflects its swarm form. For example, a swarm that takes the shape of a flock of birds may include a physical mutation of feathers growing from the host's scalp. A Gorgon with this ability may send its swarm creatures up to 100 feet away from its host. Destroying all the swarm creatures kills the Gorgon.

### Total Incorporation [4 points]

This ability allows a Gorgon to completely meld with its host. The Gorgon loses all swarm creatures, instead manifesting as a physical mutation. The Gorgon can only be killed by destroying its host form. A Gorgon cannot possess both the Partial Incorporation and the Total Incorporation powers.

## Defenses Against Gorgons

Though Gorgons are powerful and insidious creatures, they are not undefeatable. Ordinary mortals normally stand no chance against a Gorgon, but powerful individuals may have the ability to defeat them. Several different defenses exist against Gorgons, and Gorgons can be expelled from their hosts so long as the host has not been entirely corrupted.

### Cantrips

Some Cantrips have proven effective against Gorgons. For example, *Focus* boosts a creature's Psyche, which may be enough to repel a Gorgon's possession attempt (per the High Psyche section below). *Pain* when cast on a creature in the process of becoming infested by a Gorgon, temporarily ejects the Gorgon from the host's body. The Gorgon can try to assimilate the host again when the pain subsides, but the host can use the temporary respite to flee, defend themselves, or kill the Gorgon. Other Cantrips may prove useful, if a caster is creative (or lucky).

### Eidolon Mastery

*Perceiving the Eidolon.* An Eidolon Master can spot a Gorgon lurking within a host by using the ability to perceive the Eidolon. Just as a Master can see disease or malignancy within a person, they can also spot the dark distribution of a Gorgon within someone's form. Spotting a Gorgon is the first step in destroying it.

*Physical Fortification.* An Eidolon Master can fortify their

physical form to resist infestation by a Gorgon. Though maintaining the physical fortification is difficult, an Eidolon Master can usually bolster their forms long enough to escape from a Gorgon (or long enough for the Eidolon Master's allies to destroy the Gorgon).

*Sanctification of the Eidolon.* An Eidolon Master who has been infested by a Gorgon can manifest this power to evict a Gorgon from their body or the bodies of others, though doing so requires more time and effort than purging a simple infection.

## High Psyche

A creature with a Psyche more powerful than the Gorgon's is able to resist a Gorgon's possession attempt. If the creature is conscious, they are aware of the Gorgon's possession attempt and can expel the Gorgon. Some beings with quite powerful psyches are even able to detect a Gorgon's possession attempt when they are unconscious or asleep.



## Invocation

*Conceal True Name.* As with the Invocation power, it takes a Gorgon four times as long as normal to divine and understand a True Name that has been concealed.

*Ward True Name.* If a creature's True Name has been warded, then a Gorgon suffers the effects of the spell trap when it attempts to divine the creature's True Name.

## Sorcery Spells

*Death.* This is a risky spell to cast on a Gorgon, as it can cause damage to the host, but if the Gorgon has not yet completely overtaken the host's body a Death spell will kill it.

Hosts with Superior or higher-ranked Endurance will experience severe pain, while those with Average-ranked Endurances will require at least a week to recover from the debilitating effects of the Death spell.

*Mind Touch.* If a sorcerer casts this spell and overcomes the target's Psyche, the sorcerer can tell if the creature is infested by a Gorgon and, if so, how far along the transformation is.

*Psychic Ward.* A creature within a magical circle is protected from Gorgons who lack the Psyche strength to cross the barrier. Once the ward fails, though, a Gorgon is free to pursue the target within.

# Postscript

*P.S. After having reviewed my notes you might wonder at the risks I took simply to learn more about this fascinating race. I assure you, dear sister, it was worth it. The knowledge I have gained is extraordinary. I'd very much like to share it with you in person. I know I wasn't going to return home until summer, but I've decided to come back right away. Can you track down Eugenie and make sure she knows to come home as well? I'd like to see you both. We have so much we can learn from each other.*

- Min

## Appendix: Quests and Mysteries

The following section provides four adventure hooks that gamemasters can use to design adventures involving Gorgons.

### The Compromised Heir

*My Lords and Ladies. Your names have come to me through trusted channels, and I am in dire need of aid. I beseech you to meet me at my palace in Overlath where I can explain more fully. Your actions could save an innocent life...*

A messenger contacts the player characters with an invitation from Rillareneth, a sorceress of moderate power and political influence. She maintains a medieval-style marble palace in the pastoral domain of Overlath and has a reputation as a fair and intelligent Lord.

If the characters follow the messenger back to Overlath, Rillareneth welcomes them but shows signs of shock and fatigue. Her only child, a young man named Darius, vanished while hunting several days ago. Rillareneth is in the midst of delicate negotiations with a Gossamer Lord (of the gamemaster's choosing) and cannot search for Darius herself. She asks the characters to look for him.

The characters can trace Darius's movements into a nearby forest. His trail leads through the brush and after encounters with dangerous local beasts, the characters find Darius unconscious and feverish at the bottom of a gully, his leg broken and scalp matted with blood. He tells the characters his horse spooked and threw him into the gully, where he's lain ever since. His faithful hunting hounds, three in all, have guarded him since his fall.

In truth, the Gossamer Lord with whom Rillareneth negotiates arranged for Darius to be accosted and infested by a Gorgon, manifesting as Darius's loyal hounds. Even now the creature works to overtake Darius's thoughts, though it will be two days yet before the transformation is complete. After that, the Gorgon will use Darius to gather information on Rillareneth's position and report back to its client, allowing the Gossamer Lord an unfair advantage. The characters must discover the presence of the Gorgon and find a way to evict it before Darius is lost.

Darius's original hunting hounds were killed and their bodies hidden by the Gorgon that now impersonates him. Members of the court could notice a difference in the hounds' appearance and behavior, which could set the players on the right trail.

### The Quartzine Echo

*I've heard you're always on the lookout for interesting trinkets. Assuming I got that right, you might want to check out the wooden door with the amethyst bits growing out of it. You can find it if you look hard enough, right? You might find what's on the other side mighty interesting...*

The characters learn the location of a lost artifact, the Quartzine Echo. Legend tells that anything whispered into the purple gemstone echoes within its depths for eternity. By listening to the Quartzine Echo, the musings and secrets of Gossamer Lords long dead, or perhaps those of powerful sorcerers or even a Dwimmerlaik. A character who concentrates on listening to the Quartzine Echo hears a whispered fragment, which could lead to another adventure, reveal the location of a hidden treasure, or simply be a meaningless phrase. The Quartzine Echo can be used in this fashion once per day.

The Quartzine Echo rests within a mountain shrine at the top of a jagged peak in the world of Mosun. Mosun is a world marked by thousands of massive mountain ranges crisscrossing each other and contains some of the rarest gems, minerals, and ores in existence. It's also home to living storms, whirlwinds of lightning that pose a challenge even to seasoned adventurers.

When the characters begin their ascent, they encounter a tribe of rock trolls led by the Gorgon Cragmordan. If the characters treat the rock trolls with respect, they can secure Cragmordan's aid as a guide to lead them to the mountain shrine. Without the Gorgon's aid, the journey is full of peril and danger, from rock slides to giant eagles to living storms.

The characters are not the only band in search of the Quartzine Echo, though. A rival Warden named Aleeris,

an experienced and dangerous warrior with a band of likeminded followers, also seeks the artifact. If the characters ally with Cragmordan, Aleeris and her followers take a band of rock trolls hostage and attempt to trade them for the Quartzine Echo when the characters descend. If the characters don't ally with Cragmordan, Aleeris convinces the Gorgon that the characters are actually looking for a weapon with which to destroy the rock trolls. The characters must quickly prove the truth before Cragmordan crushes them.

## Through The Many-Windowed Door

*You've seen many wondrous places, I'm sure. But there's always more to discover, always more to see. Now I've heard of a Door, a Door set with thousands of windows, each one a stained-glass scene in miniature. Beyond that Door lies a place unlike any you've ever seen...*

An adventurer contacts the Characters asking to hire them as partners in an expedition. The adventurer, a young man named Veron, is not a Warden but is fascinated by other worlds and wants to explore as many as possible. He's heard of a fantastic land full of creatures and riches not to be found anywhere else. He wants to partner with the characters and use their experience and ability to open Doors to explore the land. In exchange, he'll show them the way to the Door. If asked, Veron says he learned of this world's existence from the Gorgon Ashloress in the Agora.

Veron did, in fact, learn of the Many-Windowed Door

from Ashloress, but he did so when their minds touched and they shared information. Veron is a Gorgon as well, his swarm manifesting as a band of small lizards that nest in his clothes and backpack. Ashloress consumed the knowledge of the Many-Windowed Door but lacks the interest to pursue its mysteries herself. Veron has the interest but lacks in ability. Hence his desire to partner with a stronger team, keeping his true nature hidden from the characters.

Beyond the Many-Windowed Door is a strange world that seems to be an infinite series of chambers. There is no sky or land, just room after room. Some chambers are large enough to hold entire castles and armies, while others are barely small enough for a single person to squeeze through. Long corridors connect these rooms. In the "center" of this world is an enormous spherical chamber, the lair—or perhaps prison—of an ancient dragon.

Even with the characters' help Veron could never defeat a dragon, but if he gets close enough he may be able to infest it. Depending on his relationship with the PCs, Veron may confide in them and ask them to distract the dragon while he infests the creature. Or he may try to persuade the characters to leave without him, or even try to sacrifice them to the dragon in order to get his chance.

If Veron does infest the dragon with the help of the characters, he finds himself at the mercy of the dragon's incredibly powerful Psyche. Veron is all but destroyed as he battles with the dragon's will. During the brief battle, the characters can try to make off with some of the dragon's treasure, try to kill the creature, or even try to aid it in some way. It could prove a valuable ally, though Ashloress eventually wonders what happened to Veron if he never returns.



# Lords of GOSSAMER & SHADOW

*“Gorgons are unlike any other creatures I’ve studied. The knowledge is as terrifying as it is fascinating.”*

The Many in One. This is often a term used to describe Gorgons, the multi-bodies creatures that roam the Grand Stair, and make their homes on countless Gossamer worlds.

Within these pages, a young world-traveling scholar shares her notes on what she has discovered about the mysterious and dangerous Gorgons. Learn about the physiology and psychology behind these hive creatures and how they choose and inhabit a host. Discover the startling powers inherent to the unique make-up of the Gorgons, and how best to counteract them with cantrips, spells, or one of the major powers of Eidolon or Umbra.

Threats: Peril of the Gorgons also includes new rules, powers, story hooks, and sample Gorgons to threaten, aid and terrify your Gossamer Lord players.

Written by Amber Scott (*Trail of the Hunted*, the CLIQUE playset for the *Weave Storytelling game*, *Chronicle of the Righteous*, *Baldur’s Gate: Siege of the Dragonspear*, etc.)

