

Another Serious Matter

Part 2: The Saga of the Diabolical Grasp

Monstrous Compendium Entries

by Paul Pederson

It's time to rise, go forth, and conquer once again. The Wizards Guild needs your services for another far-flung mission. This tournament is part 2 of *The Saga of the Diabolical Grasp*. It has both a normal tier one through four adventure, along with a high risk/high reward adventure for very capable teams consisting of characters all at least 8th level, who want to risk it all in the pursuit of glory and adventure.

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GITHYANKI

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Astral or Prime Material
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Dictatorship/monarchy
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional to Genius (15-18)
TREASURE:	Individuals R; Lair H
ALIGNMENT:	Any evil

NO. APPEARING:	2-8 (away from lair)
ARMOR CLASS:	Per armor
MOVEMENT:	12, 96 on Astral Plane
HIT DICE:	Per class and level
THACO:	Per class and level
NO. OF ATTACKS:	Per class and level
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Per weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Possible spell use, possible magical weapon
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Average to elite (8-14)
XP VALUE:	Per class and level

LEVEL	DIS/SCI/DEV	ATTACK/DEFENSE	SCORE	PSPS
= HD	per level	All/All	= Int	1d100+150

Githyanki are an ancient race descended from humans. They dwell on the Astral Plane but often leave that plane to make war on other races. They are engaged in a lengthy war with the githzerai. Githyanki speak only their own tongue.

Githyanki are strongly humanoid in appearance. They are of approximately human height but tend to be much more gaunt and long of limb. They have rough, yellow skin and gleaming black eyes that instantly betray their inhuman origins. Like many demihuman races, their ears have sharp points and are serrated at the back. Dress for the githyanki is always an elaborate affair. Their baroque armor and weapons of war are decorated with feathers, beads, and precious metals and gems.

COMBAT: The githyanki have had long years to perfect the art of war. Their very existence attests to their battle prowess. Each individual githyanki has a character class and level from which are derived such things as THACO, Armor Class, spell use, and so on.

CLASS	LEVEL
1-40 Fighter	1-20 3rd
41-55 Mage	21-30 4th
56-80 Fighter/Mage	31-40 5th
81-85 Illusionist	41-60 6th
86-00 Knight	61-80 7th
	81-90 8th
	91-95 9th
	96-98 10th
	99-00 11th

The armor for each githyanki varies according to class. Mages and illusionists have AC 10. Fighters and fighter mages have

varying armor – AC 5 to AC 0 (6-1d6). Knights have AC 0.

Githyanki have Hit Dice according to their class and level, and their hit points are rolled normally. Their THACO is determined per class and level, as well. Fighters, fighter/mages, and knights may receive more than one attack per round, according to their level as a warrior. All other githyanki have one attack per round.

Githyanki knights are evil champions who take up the causes of the githyankis' mysterious lich-queen. Githyanki knights are very powerful and highly revered in their society. They have all of the powers and abilities of a human paladin except these are turned toward evil (e.g. *detect good* instead of *detect evil*, *command undead* instead of turning undead).

The githyanki soldiers use arms and armor similar to humans; however, these are normally highly decorated and over time have become almost religious artifacts. A githyanki warrior would likely show greater care for his weapons and armor than he would toward his mate. Half of the githyanki fighters, fighter/mages, or knights that progress to 5th level receive a magical *two-handed sword +1*, the remainder using normal two-handed swords. Githyanki fighters of 7th level and above are 60% likely to carry a *long sword +2*. Knights of 7th level and above always carry a *silver sword – a two-handed sword +3* that, if used astrally, has a 5% chance per hit of cutting an opponent's silver cord (see The Astral Plane, DMG, page 132). *Mind-barred* individuals are immune to this effect. A supreme leader of a lair (see below) carries a *special silver sword +5* with all the abilities of a *vorpal weapon* that also affects the silver cords of *mind barred* individuals on the Astral.

Githyanki never willingly allow a *silver sword* to fall into the hands of a nongithyanki. If a *special silver sword* should fall into someone's hands, very powerful raiding parties are immediately formed to recover the sword. Failure to recover one of these highly prized weapons surely means instant death to all the githyanki involved, at the hands of their merciless lich-queen.

Githyanki mages, fighter/mages, and illusionists receive all the spells available at their level of experience. Spells should be determined randomly, keeping in mind that they are by nature creatures of destruction – offensive spells preferred.

All githyanki have the natural ability to *plane shift* at will. They rarely travel anywhere besides back and forth from the Astral Plane to the Prime Material Plane. Occasionally githyanki raiding parties venture onto Limbo to strike at the githzerai, but their targets are only wandering githzerai; they have made no organized attempt, thus far, to attack the githzerai city-fortresses there.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: History provides some information on the githyanki – their race is both ancient and reclusive. Sages believe they once were humans that were captured by mind flayers to serve as slaves and cattle. The mind flayers treated their human slaves cruelly and the people harbored a deep hatred toward the illithids. For centuries these humans nursed their hatred but could not summon the might necessary to break free. So they waited for many years, developing their powers in secret and waiting for an opportunity to strike out against their masters. Finally, a woman of power came forth

among them, a deliverer by the name of Gith. She convinced the people to rise up against their cruel masters. The struggle was long and vicious, but eventually the people freed themselves. They had earned their freedom and become the githyanki (which, in their tongue, means sons of Gith).

Githyanki progress through levels exactly as humans do. However, there has never been a githyanki who has progressed beyond the 11th level of experience, and very few progress beyond 9th. When a githyanki advances to 9th level, he is tested by the lich-queen. This grueling test involves survival in one of Lower Planes for a number of weeks. Failure quite obviously results in death. Githyanki that reach 12th level of experience are immediately drawn out of the Astral Plane and into the presence of the lich-queen, where their life force is drawn to feed the ravenous hunger of the cruel demigoddess.

Githyanki dwell in huge castles on the Astral Plane. These ornately decorated castles are avoided by all other dwellers on the Astral, for the githyanki are infamous for being inhospitable to strangers.

A githyanki stronghold is ruled by a supreme leader. This leader is either a fighter/mage of 10th/8th level or 11th/9th level. The supreme leader is the undisputed overlord of the castle with the power of life and death over all who dwell there. A typical leader is equipped with 2-8 random magical items in addition to the weapons described above.

All castles have a retinue of 20-80 knights of 9th level that serve as the supreme leader's elite shock troops. They are fanatically loyal. There are also up to 1,000 githyanki of lesser status.

Githyanki, having the ability to *plane shift* at will, sometimes travel to the Prime Material. These treks across the planes often lead to the formation of underground lairs used to mount surface raids, though their hatred is more often directed against mind flayers. Outside the war with the githzerai, these raids are conducted largely for the perverse pleasure of the kill.

A typical githyanki lair on the Prime Material Plane contains the following:

1 supreme leader	11th-level fighter or 7th/8th-level fighter/mage
2 captains	8th-level fighter and 7th/6th-level fighter/mage
1 knight	8th level
2 warlocks	magics of 4th/7th level
3 sergeants	fighters of 4th/7th level
2 'gish'	fighter/mages of 4th/4th level
20-50 lower levels	determined randomly using the table above, of 1st-3rd level

On the Prime Material Plane, githyanki have a pact with a group of red dragons. These proud creatures act as mounts and companions to the githyanki. When encountered on the Prime Material Plane and outside their lair, a githyanki group typically consists of the following:

1 captain	8th-level fighter
1 warlock	4th to 7th-level mage
5 lesser githyanki	fighters of 1st-3rd level

Such a group usually has two red dragons as steeds, who are

able to transport between four and six githyanki per dragon. The dragons fight for the safety and well-being of the githyanki but do not directly risk their lives, fleeing when the battle is turned against them. Just what the githyanki offer the red dragons in return for these services is unknown.

An interesting aspect of githyanki society is the apparent bond between military leaders and their subordinates. This bond allows a leader to give his men short, almost senseless commands (to human standards) and actually relay complex and exacting messages. Although this has no actual affect during the melee round, it often leads to more effective ambushes and attacks and allows complex military decisions to be relayed quickly.

Ecology: Githyanki have similar ecology to that of humans. However, the Astral Plane does not offer the same type of environments as the Prime Material plane, so their cultural groups are much different. In a society where farmers and tradesmen are unnecessary, more unique, specialized groups have evolved.

G'lathk: The g'lathk, (admittedly nearly unpronounceable by human tongues) are the equivalent of farmers. Due to the barrenness of the Astral Plane, the githyanki are forced to grow food in vast, artificial chambers. They rely upon a variety of fungi and other plants that require no sunlight to grow. The g'lathk are also experts in aquatic plantlife, sometimes tending gigantic water-gardens.

Mlar: Not all magic-using githyanki ever attain the power and self-discipline necessary to become wizards. Some use their magical talents in the field of architecture and construction. The mlar are such individuals, focusing their creative energies toward designing and constructing the buildings and structures used in day-to-day life in githyanki society. The mlar have developed their jobs into an art form.

Hr'a'cknir: The Astral Plane has many strange energies moving through it. Some of these energies are obvious to the senses such as heat and light. Others are not so easily observed. There are many psychic and strange astral energies that humans generally cannot sense. As a psychically aware race, however, the githyanki cannot only sense these energies, but can harness them also. The hr'a'cknir are the collectors of those energies. They are similar to the mlar, in that they use innate magical powers to perform their crafts.

Githyanki are hunters and predators. They typically engage in raiding and plundering seemingly for the joy they derive from it. It is likely that the long centuries of enslavement of their race has caused the githyanki to bully those weaker than themselves.

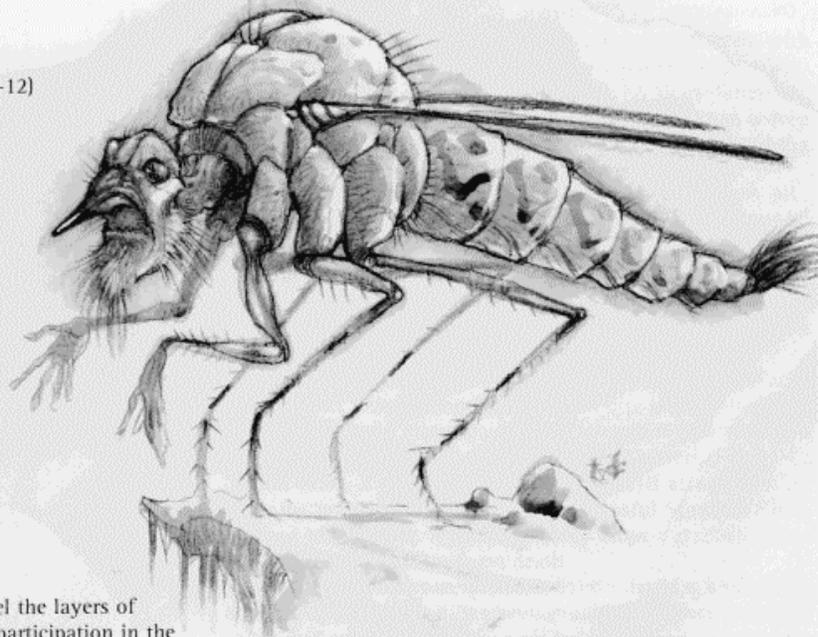
Unlike humans, though, the githyanki never war among themselves. The split of the githyanki and the githzerai (*q.v.*) is the closest thing the gith races have known to civil war. Githyanki never battle githyanki. It is the unwritten rule of gith society and is never broken. This, too, may be an effect of the race's enslavement.



TANAR'RI, GREATER — CHASME

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Abyss
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Group
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to very (8-12)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	-5
MOVEMENT:	6, Fl 24 (D)
HIT DICE:	8+2
THACO:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4/1d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Terror, sleep drone, wounding
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M (7' long)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	14,000



Wretched and horrifying, the chasme travel the layers of the Abyss in search of tanar'ri that evade participation in the Blood War.

The chasme are abominable crosses between human and fly: the body of a giant fly with unnatural human arms in place of forelegs and a vaguely human head. Their mouths are tiny, but their sharp, horn-like noses can bite and draw blood. These creatures can walk on floors, walls, and ceilings as they wish.

Chasme communicate using telepathy.

COMBAT: Anyone viewing a chasme must save vs. spells or flee in terror for 1-4 hours.

The chasme live to fight. Their physical attacks consist of a claw/claw/nose routine. (2d4/2d4/1d4 damage). Claw wounds bleed profusely for 2 hp damage per round until magically healed (*cure light wounds*, etc.).

Chasmes buzz in a rasping voice. Living creatures who hear this drone must save vs. spell or fall into a comatose sleep. Sleeping victims must be splashed with water or vigorously stimulated to wake up. Otherwise, sleep persists for 2d4 hours or until the chasme starts to drain the victim's blood (1d4 hp per round). A creature can be affected by this power only once per encounter.

In addition to those available to all tanar'ri, chasmes have the following spell-like powers at 8th level of spell use: *detect good* (always active), *detect invisibility* (always active), *insect plague*, *ray of enfeeblement*, and *telekinesis*. Three times per day a chasme can try to *gate* in the following: 2-20 manes, 2-5 cambion, or 1 chasme. There is a 40% chance of success.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: The chasme act as the punishers of the tanar'ri. They travel the Abyss to punish those who do not fight in the Blood War. This punishment is, of course, lingering, painful death.

How the chasme spot Blood War evaders is a mystery. Although tanar'ri as a race are not psychically aware, perhaps these creatures have a psychic power that lets them read the thoughts or emotions of tanar'ri. If this ability extends to non-tanar'ri (a matter for speculation), these monsters would indeed be fearsome opponents.

In return for this duty, the chasme avoid going to the "front lines" to fight in combat formations. Instead they fill those ranks with other hapless tanar'ri. This makes them extremely unpopular among the tanar'ri, who often attack chasme on sight. Only their power and the backing of the true tanar'ri protect the chasme from annihilation.

Note, however, that the destructive activities of the chasme do not affect the war effort, for the fiends of the Abyss are nearly infinite.

ECOLOGY: Chasme reproduce from eggs. Any adult chasme can lay up to 10 eggs per year. Eggs hatch in three months, and hatchlings growing to adults in seven years.

Chasme wings have been used in brews to create *potions of flying*.

YUGOLOTH, GREATER — NYCALOTH

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Lower Planes
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional to genius (15-18)
TREASURE:	Q × 10, X
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING:	1 (rarely 2)
ARMOR CLASS:	-6
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 36 (C)
HIT DICE:	11+22
THACO:	9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 or 1 weapon at +3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8+8/1d8+8 or by weapon +8 (Strength bonus)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Magical axe, bleeding
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spell immunity, +2 or better weapons to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	70%
SIZE:	L (9' tall and broad)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	25,000

Observers and reporters, nycaloths reconnoiter the Lower Planes and observe the Blood War.

Nycaloths look like fiends in their characteristic gargoyle-like appearance. They are hulking, broad humanoids with powerful limbs and wings; thick, light green skin with a leathery texture; and sharp, thick claws that make excellent weapons.

Nycaloths communicate using telepathy.

COMBAT: Nycaloths commonly use giant two-headed axes (2d8+8 damage). Nine out of ten of these axes are magical, though of common variety (+1, +2, etc.). Of the enchanted axes, 20% have a special enchantment (e.g. *vorpal*, etc.). Determine the qualities of special blades randomly. Often (75%) nycaloths use shields as well. Their great strength gives nycaloths take a +3 bonus to their attack rolls.

Nycaloths can attack with two claws (1d8+8 damage each). These wicked claws cause seeping wounds that continue to bleed for 1d6 damage per wound per round until healed magically (*cure light wounds*, etc.).

In addition to those available to all yugoloths, nycaloths also have the following spell-like powers: *command* (3 times per day), *comprehend languages* (always active), *detect invisibility* (always active), *detect magic* (always active), *dimension door* (3 times per day), *dispel magic*, *enlarge* (or its reverse, *reduce*), *fear* (by touch), *invisibility*, *mirror image* (3 times per day), *polymorph self*, *project image*, *read magic* (always active), *reverse gravity* (once per day), *wind walk*, *word of recall* (once per day), and *wraithform* (once per day). Once per day nycaloths can attempt to *gate* in 1-10 mezzoloths, 1-3 dergholoths, or 1 additional nycaloth. The *gate* has a 35% chance of success.

Enchantment/charm spells never affect nycaloths. They are immune to weapons of less than +2 enchantment.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: Nycaloths act in a careful and calculating manner to maximize their personal power and safety. These creatures serve as scouts because they can travel the Lower Planes at will, viewing battles between the baatezu and tanar'i. They report their findings to the arcanaloths, who use the information in negotiating contracts.

Though powerful, nycaloths endure low status because their information goes to profit others, not themselves. Nycaloths are bitter and jealous of the status of the other greater yugoloths. They scheme constantly to increase their status, often bullying lesser yugoloths to get attention. Sometimes they destroy whole companies of mezzoloths and dergholoths in a fit of rage.

ECOLOGY: Female and male nycaloths are nearly identical, impossible for others to tell apart. Mated pairs give birth to three young at a time. These young are allowed to grow for 100 days, at which time they are pitted against each other in a battle to the death. Only the victor is allowed to grow to maturity.

Nycaloths are carnivores, but may have once been scavengers, inasmuch as they prefer rotting flesh to fresh meat.



Draconian, Aurak



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any, except water
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (15-16)
TREASURE:	K, L, N, V
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	8
THACO:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 or 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3-10 (x 2) or spell
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells and breath
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+4 bonus to saves
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	30%
SIZE:	M (7' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (15)
XP VALUE:	6,000



Derived from the eggs of gold dragons, Auraks are the most powerful and devious of the draconians. Soft-spoken and cold-blooded, no act of violence is too extreme for an Aurak.

Auraks are seven-foot-tall, sinewy draconians with short tails and golden scales. Small spines grow from the backs of their heads. They have long, sharp teeth and bulging eyes that are either blood red, green, or black. Their bodies emit a noxious sulphur odor, detectable from several yards away. They wear few clothes, aside from the occasional belt or cape. Auraks are the only wingless draconians.

Combat: Auraks experience the agony of their victims as an almost physical pleasure. But they are not impulsive fighters—they strike only after careful planning has minimized all of the risks. Auraks have several natural defenses to frustrate their opponents. They can become *invisible* at will until they attack. They can *polymorph* into any animal their size, three times per day. They can also *change self* three times per day to perfectly imitate any human or humanoid they have ever seen; this effect lasts for 2d6 + 6 rounds. The heightened senses of Auraks give them *infravision* to 60 feet, and the ability to *detect hidden* and *invisible* creatures within 40 feet. Auraks can also see through all illusions.

Though Auraks cannot fly, they move as fast as other draconians on the ground. They also have the ability to cast a *dimension door* spell three times per day at a range of 60 yards.

Auraks have three modes of attack. First, they can generate an energy blast from each hand, causing 1d8 + 2 points of damage at targets up to 60 yards away. When using their *change self* ability, they appear to be using a weapon appropriate to the character they are copying, but they are actually attacking with energy blasts. Second, they can exhale a noxious sulphur cloud five feet in diameter three times per day. Victims caught in the cloud suffer 2d10 points of damage and are blinded for 1d4 rounds (a successful saving throw means half damage and no blindness). Third, Auraks can attack with claws and fangs (1d4/1d4/1d6), though such attacks are seldom used.

Once per day, Auraks can cast two wizard spells of 1st to 4th level. Preferred spells include *enlarge*, *shocking grasp*, *ESP*, *stink-*

ing cloud, *blink*, *lightning bolt*, *fire shield*, and *wall of fire*.

Auraks gain a +4 bonus to all saving throws.

An Aurak's most insidious power is that of *mind control*. Once per day, it can *mind control* one creature of equal or fewer Hit Dice for 2d6 rounds. This ability enables the caster to control the actions of the victim as if it were its own body. The victim can avoid the effects of this ability by rolling a successful saving throw vs. spell. If an Aurak concentrates for a full turn, taking no other actions, it can use its *suggestion* ability; there is no limit to the number of times an Aurak can use this ability.

When an Aurak reaches 0 hit points, it does not die, but instead surrounds itself with green flames and enters a fighting frenzy (+2 bonus to attack and damage rolls). Anyone coming within three feet of the flames suffers 1d6 points of damage, unless a saving throw vs. petrification is successful. Six rounds later, or when the Aurak reaches -20 hit points, it transforms into a spinning ball of lightning, striking once per round as a 13-HD monster to cause 2d6 points of damage. Three rounds later, it explodes, stunning all within ten feet for 1d4 rounds (2d4 rounds if underwater). Those within ten feet also suffer 3d6 points of damage (no saving throw). Items within the range of the explosion must roll successful saving throws vs. crushing blow or be destroyed.

Habitat/Society: Because of their superior strength and exceptional abilities, Auraks are easily adaptable to all environments, though they prefer secluded areas. Auraks live alone or in pairs; larger groups of Auraks are never encountered. Auraks collect treasures as souvenirs of their kills; the value of treasure has little meaning for most Auraks.

Ecology: Auraks have an almost compulsive need to kill; most intelligent races, including other draconians, have learned to avoid them. There are no limits to what an Aurak will eat, though they prefer pearls and small gems. Auraks will consume alcohol, but they are less interested in strong drink than other draconians.

GARMORM

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Astral Plane
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Mental energy
INTELLIGENCE:	Very to genius (12-18)
TREASURE:	V
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1d3
ARMOR CLASS:	4 or 0
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	5-10
THACO:	5-6 HD: 15 7-8 HD: 13 9-10 HD: 11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1d6+5
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d6 + 1d4 per absorbed face
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Mental absorption, spells, magical items
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to psionics
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	25%
SIZE:	L (12' long)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	5 HD: 8,000 6 HD: 9,000 7 HD: 10,000 8 HD: 11,000 9 HD: 12,000 10 HD: 13,000

We are many [snap]
We are one
Now we live [snap]
Never done.

Sing of days [snap]
Sing of night
Long to sing [snap]
Show our might.

Join us in eternal song [snap]
Live with us forever strong [snap]
Our choir seeks more of your kind [snap]
Our power grows with each new mind [snap]

— from the Song of the Garmorm
(including the snapping of jaws)

Few sounds are as terrible and wonderful as the Song of the Garmorm sung by the creature itself. A garmorm is a roundish, limbless beast with a huge, tooth-filled maw. This fearsome predator of the Astral Plane is also known as a mindworm or even a faceworm. These odd names derive from the fact that the creature feeds on the mental energies of others, and if a sod's mind is absorbed by the monster, a replica of his face appears in its flesh. These faces press their

way out of the garmorm's body to the extent that the faces can even speak, bite, and possibly cast spells — but mostly, they sing.

The garmorm communicates only through its song.

COMBAT: In combat, the garmorm sings its deadly song. At given portions of the song, the creature snaps its jaws upon a victim, using not only its huge, toothy mouth (which causes 2d6 points of damage) but also the maw of each face protruding from its flesh (which cause 1d4 points of damage each). Garmorm usually have from five to 10 absorbed faces, so they can make from six to 11 (or 1d6+5) attacks.

The song can also incorporate spells if one or more of the faces once belonged to a spellcaster (if determining randomly, there is a 10% chance per head). Only one spell can be cast per round, regardless of the number of spellcaster faces. Each face possesses the full complement of spells it would have memorized or prayed for normally (random determination for a cleric or wizard of level 2d4+1). Even worse, each day the spellcasting faces regain their total number of spells just as if the absorbed berks had memorized or prayed for the day's spells.

If someone absorbed into the garmorm had magical items, the creature can use the powers of those objects as a part of the song. It can't use magical items that require a touch (a *staff of striking*, magical weapons, and the like), but most rings, rods, wands, and many miscellaneous magical items still work. A garmorm usually has 1d4 items; the DM can determine which items' powers are available to the

creature. Only one such power can be used in a round, and only in a round in which the garmorm casts no other spell.

Thus, in one round the garmorm can cast a spell (either from an absorbed spellcaster or an item) and bite with its various mouths, or it can attempt to absorb another victim as described below.

While it sings its horrible song, the garmorm has the potential to absorb the minds of its foes. Every round, the garmorm can target an opponent with its main mouth and attempt to "swallow" the foe, although not in the usual sense. The opponent may make a saving throw versus death magic; if failed, the sod's body is drawn into the beast and instantly dissolves. (Magic resistance may also be applied against this effect.) Then the poor berk's mind becomes one with the garmorm "choir," his face appearing on the skin of the beast. When this happens, the garmorm's Hit Die total increases by one, as does the number of bite attacks it can make each round. Likewise, if the victim had magical items or spellcasting ability, the garmorm can use these as mentioned above. A garmorm can have only up to 10 faces (and HD) at a time, although it continues to absorb victims even after it has reached this maximum. It gains no new HD or attacks from the new additions, but the greedy creature consumes them nonetheless.

MY PEOPLE HAVE MANY
ENEMIES, BUT IT IS THE
GARMORM THAT HAUNTS
OUR WAKING DREAMS.
— PERRIS+R'OLIN,
A GI+HYANKI WIZARD

Interestingly, the garmorm's song seems to be an essential component of the absorption process. Canny planewalkers wise to the danger of the garmorm have taken to equipping themselves with *silence* spells in the event that they encounter one of these beasts. If it cannot sing, it cannot absorb minds or cast spells.

A victim whose mind has been absorbed can be rescued only if the garmorm is slain within 10 rounds after the poor sod was "eaten." If the beast is killed within that time, the berk reconstitutes, mind intact, within the garmorm's belly. At this point, the victim has only 1 hit point and is too weak to free himself – he must be cut out of the garmorm.

However, if the basher isn't freed within 10 rounds after being absorbed, his mind remains within the garmorm for 4d4 weeks as a willing participant in the beast's "collective." After this time, the garmorm loses that sod's Hit Die and bite attack and must find a new victim. No garmorm has ever been encountered with fewer than five absorbed minds – this must be a minimum threshold for the beasts.

The garmorm has the ability to remain on the Astral Plane and still attack foes on planes that touch the Astral (it perceives both planes simultaneously). Unless the victims have the ability to see into the Astral Plane, these attacks are always made with surprise. Fighting the astral garmorm requires a magical item or spell; to a nonastral body, the garmorm is essentially invisible and its AC drops to 0. Bashers tell tales of friends being devoured right before their eyes by an invisible force. These may be tales of the garmorm – especially if the stories allude to a mysterious song heard from far away.

Lastly, all garmorm are immune to psionic attacks and powers.

НАВПАТ/SOCIETY: The garmorm's a creature of intense hunger, intense loneliness, and intense evil. Selfish in the extreme, it absorbs and feeds upon the minds of others for its own gain.

Though sometimes found with others of its kind in small groups, the garmorm is more likely to keep to itself. The reason for this lies in its argumentative and irritable nature. Even the multiple faces of a single garmorm sometimes quarrel or express exasperation with one another.



Riding the waves of thought in the Astral, grazing on the plane's background energy like a terrible bovine beast, a garmorm never willingly leaves its plane of origin. It will, however, happily feed on poor sods on the Prime or the top layers of the Outer Planes who wander too near its corresponding Astral location.

Garmorm are hated enemies of the terithran of the Ethereal, although no one knows exactly why –

or how – two races that should never have met could develop such an enmity.

On very rare occasions, individual garmorm have even been known to form alliances with a githyanki, although no one knows what benefit either creature gains from the seeming partnership.

ECOLOGY: Garmorm feed on the minds of any sentient being. They reproduce in an asexual manner not entirely understood, but which seems to involve budding off some of the absorbed minds into a new garmorm.

This concept has the graybeards wondering how much of the beast is simply the garmorm itself, and how much is the minds that it absorbs. The faces of those absorbed, and the song they sing, seem to indicate that they are more than happy with their new situation. Those freed from the belly of the beast have no memory of what occurred within. No one seems to know the whole dark.

Once they've slain the beast, canny bashers know to open up the innards of a garmorm, because some of the magical items used by the absorbed sods within it can still be found and used. (As above, magical items last 4d4 weeks within the creature's body.) Generally, a perceptive planewalker can recover at least two good, working devices. Considering the dangers of the Astral, every little bit helps.

TANAR'RI, GREATER — GORISTRO

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Abyss
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	B, C
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	-2
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	20
THACO:	1
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 and 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	6d4 + 6/6d4 + 6 and 5d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells, stamp, hurl boulders
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immunities, regenerate, +1 or better weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	60%
SIZE:	H (21-24' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	23,000

Collectively known as goristroi, these huge tanar'ri can be found on nearly any plane of the Abyss, for they are adaptable and much desired by the rulers of the place to serve as engines of destruction. Abyssal lords and powers are able to command the goristroi and keep them serving as guardians, enforcers, siege engines, and so on. The hulking goristroi are too stupid and bestial to do more than carry out their orders, and thus their status never reaches that of the true tanar'ri.

Goristroi are vaguely reminiscent of giant bears, although their shoulders are broader, their visages a nightmarish cross between bison and human, and their hands and feet disproportionately large, splayed, and humanlike. Their arms are extremely long, like an ape's. Individual colors vary from dark brown through sickly greenish yellow to a peculiar purplish gray.

COMBAT: The attack mode of these monsters consists of two clubbing smashes with their long and very powerful arms for 6d4 + 6 points of damage each. Each is equal to a crushing blow, so material struck must be saved for. In addition, these brutes can make a stamping attack against any 6 feet tall or shorter opponent within 10 feet of them for 5d8 points of damage. They hurl boulders as cloud giants (240 yard range for 2d12 points of damage).

In addition to standard tanar'ri abilities, goristroi have the following spell-like powers, which they can employ one at a time, one per round, at will: *detect invisibility*, *detect magic*, *fear* (as a wand, by gaze), *levitation*, and *spider climb*.

Even the lowliest of goristroi can be harmed only by +1 or better magical weapons. All of them are immune to cold, fire, poison, and poison gas. They regenerate 1 hit point per turn. They have infravision to 360 feet.

As noted in the statistics above, goristroi gain 6 hit points per hit die in addition to whatever is rolled, giving each hit die a range of from 7-14 instead of the usual 1-8. Goris-

troi that have 140-160 hit points are 21 feet tall and can only be hit by magical weapons of +1 or better. Those with 161-200 hit points are 22 feet tall, and are also hit only by +1 or better weapons. If a goristro's hit points fall in the range of 201-240, the beast is 23 feet tall and is hit only by +2 or better weapons. The largest goristroi have 241-280 hit points, are 24 feet tall, and are hit only by +3 weapons or better.

FROM THE THIRD VOLUME OF *DECEPTIONS AND STRATAGEMS*, BY THE PIT FIEND MELLAGORUS:

Though the lumbering goristroi are excellent at climbing sheer stone faces and though these assaults can break our fortifications, such strategies also present us with an opportunity to destroy the beasts. Their powerful clawed fingers can make handholds in sheer stone, but their enormous size makes them vulnerable to falls, and they suffer twice the damage a smaller creature might from a fall. The goristroi are especially afraid of *Bigby's forceful hand*, *dig*, *fly*, *levitation*, and other spells that can push them off the heights to be broken on the rocks below or, even more amusingly, onto the weapons of their fellow tanar'ri. Weak-minded goristroi are also vulnerable to spells such as *cause fear*, *fear*, *symbol of fear*, and *repulsion*, which drive them off walls. For all these reasons, arcanaloth are the best countermeasures to employ against goristroi assaults on an entrenched position on the height. Fools though they are, tanar'ri commanders rarely order a goristro over the walls unless the situation is desperate or a diversionary attack has drawn off most of the defenders. Take this as a sign of weakness and counterattack.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: Usually solitary, goristroi are only important among their kin because of their ability to absorb damage and to mete it out. They are stupid and otherwise limited in power, unable even to *gate* in other tanar'ri. The vast majority of goristroi encountered are in the service of some Abyssal ruler, blindly carrying out their duties assigned to them with complete fanaticism. There is never a question of retreat or morale when dealing with these brutes, though the threat of long falls can induce paralysis on the field of action. In all other respects, they always continue to follow their given commands until completion or death occurs.

In the Blood War the goristroi serve as siege engines and rallying points for lesser tanar'ri, much as elephants do among some prime-material worlds. A goristroi citadel is a platform strapped to the creature's head and shoulders like a helmet. The tanar'ri carries this citadel as a lesser creature might carry a knapsack; it hardly seems aware of it. The fortification usually provides excellent cover (-7 to AC) for two to four riders, depending on the size of the goristroi.

AGAIN FROM MELLAGORUS' *DECEPTIONS AND STRATAGEMS*:

Goristroi citadels are dangerous and best kept busy with cannon fodder and inferior troops, but if they can be broken the lesser troops surrounding them are usually routed. The best way to accomplish this is to harry a goristro from two directions. The retarded behemoth will

turn from one attack to the other, unconscious of the fact that its rapid movements are shaking and battering the creatures within the citadel to death. At this point flying troops such as abishai can take the citadel and slay the goristro by a surgical strike to the neck with axes, polearms, and cleavers.

Goristroi ruled by an Abyssal lord or power always wear some symbol of servitude, such as a collar, an arm or wrist band, or an implanted symbol. Such devices typically have the power to convey telepathic commands to the wearer as well as serve as tracking devices should the masters wish to know the whereabouts of their servants. Without direct command or supervision, goristroi tend to wander off on destructive rampages of their own direction and desire.

Goristroi do not breed naturally. They are carefully mated by their owners after extensive negotiations, eventually resulting in a single young. The goristroi are carefully watched throughout the entire process, for fear of foul play by the other side, such as an attempt to slay these valuable beasts. Generally, the terms are that the owner of the male goristroi gains the female

young, and the owner of the mother is entitled to the male young produced. These young grow to maturity within five voracious, screaming years. This allows the lucky owner to breed further young on his own, albeit inbred ones. However, abductions, infanticide (if the young is the wrong gender), and even outright purchases of the live young are fairly common. Under no circumstances are the parents allowed to have any influence on the young goristro.

Goristroi are predators that make no distinction between various types of prey. They eat anything that moves, even among their own kind, devouring lesser tanar'i when their dim minds believe no one is watching. They are exclusively carnivorous, unable to eat vegetable matter even if no other food is available. If forced to go without living or recently slain meat, goristroi wither and die within two weeks, so tanar'i commanders usually sacrifice lesser troops for the sake of keeping their citadels going. Goristroi flesh is itself poisonous if ingested, so not even powerful planar creatures or pack hunters like trolls and armanites attack them.

