

HISTORY

West of the settled lands, a singular figure haunts the mists of early morning, hunting invading barbarians, bandits, and the oath-bound equally. The Reaper, as he is commonly known, brings violent death to those who stand against him, regardless of their affiliation. While some claim he is mad (and there is a strong chance he may be), all know he is more than a simple human, since a great deal of his body has been modified—he is covered in fine, interlocking metal plates that protect his vital areas.

Although some claim the Reaper has been around for decades, he was first sighted approximately five years ago, west of the town of Emery, just north of the Forged Valley. At the time, a group of bandits attacked a caravan bearing textiles bound for Emery, only to suffer the wrath of the Reaper. He waded into combat with the bandits and killed them to the man. Thinking the Reaper a hero, the caravan's owner approached him and offered to reward him for his service—only to lose his head to the Reaper's fickle wrath, as well.

Since that time, dozens of folks have reported seeing the Reaper, sometimes helping the innocent, other times preying upon those who defend them. Whether or not the Reaper has an agenda, none can really say, since no one that has been close enough to speak with him has lived to tell the tale.

Recently, King Brattlestern has placed a bounty on the Reaper. He is offering the Reaper's weight in gold to anyone that destroys the monster.

RUMORS

- "The Reaper never strays far from Emery, since that's where he's originally from."
- "The Reaper used to be a talented smith who worked for King Brattlestern, but he was punished horribly when he accidentally burned the king's young daughter."
- "The Reaper is a servant of the Thrall Lords and none of his victims are random. He stalks all of them."
- "A powerful wizard created the Reaper when he tried to permanently merge the man's armor with his body. The whole process drove him mad!"
- "The Reaper is an abomination from the North, a punishment to be visited on those who do not keep the Old Faith. Displaying a symbol of the Old Faith will grant you passage if you encounter the Reaper."
- "I once saw the Reaper save a young boy from a river. He laid the boy, still sputtering up water, on the bank. Then, he disappeared into the woods like a ghost."
- "The wizard that created the Reaper was trying to create a powerful, human-like golem. He failed miserably."



SKILL CHECKS

- A DC 15 Knowledge (local) skill check reveals that Father Towden, a cleric of the Lord of Light, once witnessed the Reaper from afar. No one really believes the crazy old priest, however.
- A Knowledge (local) skill check (DC 20) reveals that Emery was once under the care of King Brattlestern. He stopped taxing (and protecting) the border down about a decade ago.
- A Knowledge (history) skill check (DC 20) reveals that the Reaper has been operating in the area for well over a decade, but his first recorded sighting was lost when the old town hall burnt to the ground.
- A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) skill check reveals that the Reaper is a natural creature, specifically a human man. He has been magically augmented, however.
- A DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) skill check reveals that the Reaper is one of the "Iron-Forged," a rare warrior that (either willingly or not) survived the ancient, forbidden "Dirixxian Black Iron Ritual."
- A DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (history) skill check reveals that the Black Brothers of Sutekha, who hail from the Lands of Khem, perfected this ancient rite.



PRESENTS

THE REAPER

WRITTEN BY JAYE SONIA

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

The Reaper was, as the rumors suggest, once a normal man named Augustus. An honorable man with a wife and two children, Augustus lived and worked in Emery until word of his skills reached King Brattlestern, who sent for him and his family. He remained in the king's employ for nearly five years, then something horrible happened. A wicked storm descended on the castle, one none had seen for many years. Most of the castle's staff was moved into the main keep for their safety – Augustus's wife and children among them – only to die that night when a bolt of lightning set the main keep afire. Augustus, who was away with the king at the time, was not there. When he returned, however, he learned of his family's terrible fate.

He cursed the king's negligence and quit on the spot. He returned to Emery and went into mourning, determined never to forge anything again in all of his life.

Word of Augustus's skill had spread, however, and others sought him out. While he refused to work for all who approached him, some would not be so easily snubbed. When Augustus turned away the Black Brothers of Sutekha, they immediately cast a great spell on the man, dominating him. They forced him to work for days, forging the weapons and items they required. And, being cruel followers of a dark god, when they finished with Augustus, they forced him to forge a final set of armor – which they permanently fused to the man's body. When Augustus awoke from the spell, the weight of his life's tragedy was too much for him. He fled Emery and descended into a darker, chaotic world, one his grief and pain easily fed.

Today, he hunts two enemies—those who follow the dark god Sutekha and those who serve King Brattlestern and his descendants.

PLOT HOOKS

- While passing through Emery, the PCs notice the squire of Sir Sard's (a knight of Brattlestern's court) putting up a "wanted" poster in the local tavern. King Brattlestern is tired of the Reaper's wanton violence and is offering "the monster's weight in gold" for its destruction.
- Al-Ashaba, an old wizard from Khem (and secretly a follower of Sutekha) is looking for adventurers to seek and rescue an old ally who he claims has gone mad. He's willing to pay the PCs handsomely if they can safely rescue his old "friend." (In truth, he wants to use the Reaper to test darker magic).
- A merchant, bloody and near death, wanders into the local tavern while the PCs are enjoying a pint. When the bartender rushes to aid the man, he sputters up blood and drops a broken, steel-like claw. The locals immediately gasp and start to recount tales about "The Reaper."

SLAYER'S GAUNTLET

The slayer's gauntlet is similar to a spiked gauntlet, but is crafted so that the fingers of the gauntlet extend outward, forming long, razor-like claws. Unlike its primitive cousin, the slayer's gauntlet has fully articulated fingers, which allows the wearer to move the claw-like fingers independently. Unlike normal spiked gauntlets, the extended claws on slayer's gloves make manipulating small or fine objects more difficult. As a result, slayer's gloves impose a -2 penalty on all precision-based tasks involving that particular hand (such as disabling a trap).

Exotic Weapon

Light Melee	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Crit
Slayer's Gauntlet	75gp	1d4	1d6	19-20
Range	Weight	Type	Special	
melee	1.5 lbs	S	—	

THE REAPER

CR 10
XP 9,600
Male human fighter 6/ranger 4
CN Medium humanoid (iron-forged)
Init +4; Senses Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 15, f at-footed 23 (+8 armor, +4 Dex, +4 natural, +1 deflection)
hp 98 (10d10+34)
Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +3 (+2 vs. fear); +4 bonus on saves against mind-affecting effects
Defensive Abilities bravery +2; DR 5/cold iron; Resist fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.
Melee +1 fire-forged steel slayer's gauntlet +15/+10 (1d6+6/17-20) or +1 frost-forged steel slayer's gauntlet +15/+10 (1d6+5/17-20) or mwk shortsword +15/+10 (1d6+2/19-20)
Special Attacks favored enemy (followers of Sutekha +2), weapon training (close +1)

TACTICS

Before Combat The Reaper suffers from violent delusions, but always studies his targets to ensure he's not killing those he believes are innocent.
During Combat The Reaper always stays close to his enemies in combat. He makes liberal use of Step Up and Strike, especially against clerics or arcanists.
Morale The Reaper is in pain and welcomes a violent death.

STATISTICS

Str 15, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10
Base Atk +10; CMB +12; CMD 27 (29 vs. bullrush, 29 vs. grapple)
Feats Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (slayer's gauntlet), Following Step, Improved Critical (slayer's gauntlet), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Step Up, Step Up and Strike, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (slayer's gauntlet), Weapon Specialization (slayer's gauntlet)
Skills Bluff +2, Climb +7, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +2, Handle Animal +5, Heal +8, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (geography) +3, Knowledge (nature) +3, Perception +7, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +4, Stealth +7, Survival +4, Swim +4
Languages Low Common
SQ armor training 1, combat styles (two-weapon combat), favored terrain (forest +2), hunter's bond (Narr the hawk), maddened, track, wild empathy +4
Combat Gear +1 fire-forged steel slayer's gauntlet, +1 frost-forged steel slayer's gauntlet, mwk shortsword, potion of cure light wounds, potion of invisibility
Other Gear +2 agile breastplate, ring of protection +1, winter clothing, 50 ft. hemp rope, backpack, (2) torches, 28 gp

THE IRON-FORGED

While most warriors welcome the protection that armor provides, not all who wear it do so willingly. In the ancient lands of Khem, where magic trumped the most skilled swordsman, whole bands of seasoned warriors were forever fused with their armor, creating a class of fighting men that were as deadly as they were mad. Those who survived the painful process became the iron-forged.

Creating an Iron-Forged Creature

Iron-forged is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal humanoid (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

An iron-forged creature uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted below. Do not recalculate the creature's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, saves, or skill points if its type changes.

CR Same as the base creature +1.

Alignment Any chaotic (most become evil).

Size and Type The size and type remains unchanged.

Armor Class Because it is fused with a variety of arcane, metal plates, the iron-forged gain a +4 bonus to their natural armor. Additionally, they gain DR 5/cold iron.

Abilities The process of fusing the iron-forged with their armor strengthens their bodies, but forever mars them. Iron-forged gain a +2 bonus to their Strength and Constitution scores, but suffer a -2 to penalty to their Charisma score.

Special Qualities An iron-forged creature retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following special qualities.

- **Maddened (Ex)** The process of creating an iron-forged warrior drives most mad. This madness grants them a +4 bonus against mind-affecting effects.
- **Resistance to Fire (Ex)** An iron-forged creature is gains Resist Fire 5.

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