



**You can run—  
but you'll only die tired**

Artwork by Phil Longmeyer

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# Beyond the Grave

The legends and lore of the wight, wraith, and mummy

by Tom Moldvay

Artwork by Tom Baxa

*Tom Moldvay has done three previous articles on the world of the undead: "Out of the Shadows," in DRAGON® issue #162; "The Ungrateful Dead," in DRAGON issue #138; and "Hearts of Darkness," in DRAGON issue #126. We welcome him back to our pages with a new installment of his menagerie of horror.*

Wight is a general Germanic word meaning "being" or "creature." Over the years, it increasingly came to be applied to either good or bad spirits, until it came to have a supernatural connotation.

In late Saxon, "unsele wiht" means "uncanny creature." In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer uses the word for dangerous spirits in the phrase, "I crouche thee from elves and from wightes," in "The Miller's Tale." English minister Robert Kirk, in *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies* (1691), talks of seeing the fairies crowding in from all quarters "like furious hardie wights."

Wight is not a word objected to by the elves, for in the fairy rhyme given by Robert Chambers in *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*:

But gin ye ca' me seelie wicht,  
I'll be your freend baith day and nicht.

A "seelie wicht" would be a good wight, a member of the Seelie Court that rules the good fairies. An elf would make objection to being called an "unseelie wicht," an "evil wight" who pays homage to the Unseelie Court of the evil fairies.

Like most things supernatural, wights, in

the course of time, ceased to be viewed as having any good and were seen as strictly evil. Wights became wicked beings that came out of the darkness. As such it was easy to make wights undead creatures. J. R. R. Tolkien used a similar jump of the imagination for the "barrow wight" Frodo runs into in *The Lord of the Rings*.

In TSR's D&D® and AD&D® games, wraiths are essentially more powerful wights. The derivations of the two words are similar. Wight comes from the Anglo-Saxon "wiht"; wraith comes from the lowland Scots (i.e., English-speaking) "warth," which can ultimately be traced back to the Old Norse "vorthr," from "vartha": to ward or guard. Both words are part of the larger British category of folklore. Tolkien recognized the affinity between the words when he used "ring-wraiths" for the horrid beings that ceaselessly hunt for the One Ring.

The word "mummy" is borrowed from the French "mumie," which in turn is derived from the Arab "mumiya," which denotes an embalmed body. The word entered the language as a result of Napoleon's 1798 campaign to Egypt, which created a European—indeed, worldwide—craze for the ancient Egyptians. The undead mummies in AD&D games owe much to the legends surrounding Egyptologists, and even more to certain "B" movies.

While wights, wraiths, and mummies have different derivations, they share one thing in common: the primitive belief that the body somehow lives on inside the tomb. This belief is most clearly seen in early Egyptian burial beliefs.



## It started in Egypt...

In ancient Egyptian belief, there were two main spiritual forms of the deceased, called respectively the *ka* and the *ba*. The *ka* was supposed to dwell in the tomb—more precisely, in the mummified body—and it was the form in which the dead received their funerary offerings.

It seems that the *ka* represented the life-force of an individual. It was created at the time of his birth, remained with him throughout his life, and subsequently lived in the tomb after death. The dead were sometimes referred to as “those who have gone to their *kas*,” and the tomb chapel could be called, “the house of the *ka*.” Ordinary people had only a single *ka* but gods and pharaohs had several.

The importance of preserving the corpse can be seen through the *ka* belief. The more intact the corpse, the better the home for the *ka* spirit. The great pyramids and other tomb structures of ancient Egypt served primarily not as monuments but as houses in which the *kas* spent their afterlife. The richer and more important an individual, the better he wanted his death-home to be, and pharaohs were the most important individuals of all.

Thus it was believed that the dead lived on in the tomb. This belief may have originated in earlier burials, which took place in the desert away from the Nile. The desert dried the corpses and helped preserve them. At the same time, the liquefaction that accompanies corruption would be drained off into the sands. A sandstorm could easily uncover earlier graves, exposing the contents. The Egyptians would chance upon a body that had been buried for centuries and find it better preserved than a corpse left out near the Nile for several days. It is not surprising that a belief arose that the dead lived on in their tombs.

Once such a belief became established, one obvious result was the desire to build the best possible resting place for a beloved family member. Burial chambers grew more and more elaborate. For a time, huge pyramids were built to house pharaohs, who were the sons of the sun god. Such an extensive building effort could not be maintained for long. Later tombs became less grandiose than the pyramids. Still, such tombs, cut into solid rock in the Valley of the Kings, were elaborate affairs.

Pharaohs and nobles could afford elaborate tombs. Others had to settle for simpler graves. Yet every effort was made to ensure the well-being of the dead in their afterlife.

The articles used by the living were included in their death goods. Clothing, tools, weapons, cosmetics, even games were entombed with the dead. Complete meals were laid out to be buried with the corpse for future use. Funerary rites, conducted by priests, insured a continuing supply of the things that made living pleasant.

Each tomb, sarcophagus, or coffin had a

stylized door outline carved into it by which the deceased could leave to pick up offerings, then reenter the tomb. The *ka* could literally walk through stone or wood once the appropriate magic had been performed. Such an action was possible because the deceased was now a spirit and the door was a magical spirit door, not a real one.

At first, grave goods were literal. Baskets of food, whole chariots, favored horses, household slaves, and the like were entombed with rich pharaohs. Such gifts were, of course, expensive. It was impossible to include them in every burial without begging the nation.

Magic came to the rescue. The same grave goods could be included in miniature, or merely painted on the wall. Hence tombs might contain a set of miniature servants or soldiers, miniature boats and chariots, even miniature food baskets. Likewise, the scenes painted on the walls were not for decoration or art, but to magically supply the dead person with goods and services in the afterlife. Thus there would be painted scenes showing the preparation of every stage of food from planting or hunting to the final cooking and serving.

A particular style evolved that concerned itself more with the essence of things than with a naturalistic presentation. A profile included a whole enlarged eye to show how important sight was. A pharaoh was drawn larger than nobles who were, in turn, larger than servants, thus continuing in death the distinctions made in life.

The final stage in the logical progression of the magic was to merely write the items on the tomb wall, or on papyrus lists that could be entombed with the dead. Egyptian writing, which had evolved from pictographs, was itself viewed as magical. To chisel a name, paint it, or merely write it down was not simply to name a person or thing, but to conjure it magically into the presence of the tomb for all time.

Naturally, steps were taken to discourage tomb robbery. Such robbery deprived the dead of goods for all eternity. Some traps were incorporated into the tomb, but the Egyptians relied more on curses, written on the tomb wall. Again, such writing was considered magical, and the effects of the spell would last as long as the markings survived.

No matter how well the Egyptians mummified their dead, bodies could decay. To counter this effect, the priests evoked more magic. Life-size statues were included in the tombs. The *ka* could use these statues as alternative homes. Detailed paintings of the individual and special face masks served the same purpose, as extra homes for the *ka*. As a last resort, the individual's name was carved on rock or otherwise written repeatedly. If there was no place else to go, a *ka* could inhabit the carved or written name.

Thus, the worst curse an Egyptian could

think of was to destroy the statues of a person and to remove his name from every reference. Such an individual would be cursed to wander eternally in spirit form, never to be at rest or enjoy the afterlife.

The second spiritual manifestation of an individual, the *ba*, was usually represented as a human-headed bird. This spirit was thus able to fly from the corpse. It left the body at the time of death and was free to travel. In early beliefs, it rode with the sun god during the day and had to return to dwell with the *ka* at night. In later beliefs, the *ba* journeyed to the otherworldly domain of Osiris to be judged and (presumably) enjoy an afterlife.

## Monster notes

The monster format used throughout this article, while essentially the same as that of the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, does differ slightly. These changes are used:

1. “TREASURE” lists both a percentage (the old “% IN LAIR” value) and a treasure-type letter. For example, “50% A” means there is a 50% chance the monster (if randomly selected) will be in its lair, and it has treasure type A.

2. The subcategory of “Ecology” has been left out since such a category is essentially meaningless when applied to the undead, who contribute nothing to living ecologies.

## Ka

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Desert, rivers, subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or small bands

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Spirit food

INTELLIGENCE: Average to Genius (8-18)

TREASURE: 50% A

ALIGNMENT: Lawful neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-12

ARMOR CLASS: 1

MOVEMENT: 9

HIT DICE: 9 + 6

THAC0: 11

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Fear, spellwriting, curse, statue animation

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Weapon resistances, spell immunities and resistances, spirit doors

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (5'-7')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 14,000

A *ka* is a kind of super-mummy. Once, the *ka* was a noble, king, or pharaoh. After death, the mummified body continued to live on in the tomb as an undead monster. A *ka* is not necessarily evil. It attacks only when its tomb offerings are threatened or when under the control of a cleric. A *ka* looks like a normal mummy—i.e., as a

bandage-wrapped corpse.

- Combat:** Like a normal mummy, a ka possesses supernatural strength that lets its blows do more than normal damage. Instead of a rotting disease, however, a successful hit by a ka imparts a curse upon the victim. DMs may make up their own curses or may use the following table (roll 1d20; all curses last until removed):
- 1-3: *Ill luck.* All future rolls for the cursed individual are -1 on a roll of 1, -2 on a roll of 2, or -3 on a roll of 3.
  - 4-7: *Withering touch.* An arm or leg withers and becomes useless. (4 = right arm, 5 = left arm, 6 = right leg, 7 = left leg; loss of a leg reduces movement by 3).
  - 8-11: *Mutation.* A body part becomes mutated to some other form (8 = a leg, 9 = torso, 10 = an arm, 11 = head).
  - 12-14: *Alteration.* An attribute chosen at random is lowered by -1.
  - 15-18: *Death wish.* Extra damage is received in subsequent attacks. (15 = +1, 16 = +2, 17 = +3, 18 = double damage).
  - 19-20: *Cursed item.* One magical item,

chosen at random, loses its benefits on a 19 (as per *cancellation*). On a 20, the item actually becomes cursed (use the closest appropriate cursed item from the Treasure Tables; hence a *sword* +3 would become a *cursed sword* -2).

As with mummies, the mere sight of a ka may cause *fear* and *revulsion* in any creature. A save vs. spells must succeed or the victim will be *paralyzed* with fright for 1-6 melee rounds. There are no bonuses to the die roll.

A ka can be harmed only by magical weapons, which do only half normal damage. *Sleep, charm, hold, cold, poison, paralysis, polymorph, and electricity* do not harm it. It suffers only half damage from fire or holy water. A *raise dead* spell turns a ka into a normal human (of 10th-level fighting ability) unless the ka saves vs. spells.

A ka has a limited magical ability. A word written by it has the force of a *command* spell. It takes a full round to inscribe such a word. Characters need not see the written word for the spell to take effect.

The ka is able to fragment its spirit.

These spirit fragments can inhabit special magical stone statues within the ka's tomb. Treat these statues as stone golems. A ka can inhabit 1-4 statues at a time. If the ka's mummified body is destroyed, its will lives on in the statues. Inside a statue, however, a ka no longer possesses its *curse* or *magical writing* powers, and it may be affected by forms of attacks to which the mummified body is immune. Note that the ka has no power to activate any other statue but those in its tomb.

A ka may also walk through special spirit doors carved into stone or wood or painted on a wall when the body was buried. A ka could walk through a spirit door carved into rock, attack the party, then retreat back inside its tomb.

A cleric has the same chance to turn a ka as he does a vampire.

**Habitat/Society:** A ka was once a living ruler. It still retains some friendliness toward character races, especially members of its own race and nation. Thus a human ka has an affinity for humans, a dwarven ka for dwarves, etc. This affinity is even stronger if, in the DM's opinion, the ka and character share the same cultural background.

If no attempt is made to steal its tomb treasures, a ka may be placated by showing it reverence and giving it additional grave goods. Such goods may vary from simple food to elaborate treasures. At the DMs discretion, a ka that has become placated may be asked questions that require simple yes-or-no answers. The greater the offerings, the greater the knowledge such a ka may impart.

Wealthy individuals are usually buried alone. A ka is, hence, generally encountered as a solitary creature. Sometimes, however, many graves are crowded into one tomb to discourage robbers. In this case, the tomb is shared by a related group of kas.

### Grettir and the ghost of Glam

In *Grettissaga*, a tale from Iceland, another kind of undead corpse walks the earth. Grettir, known as the Strong, was a man during Viking times who came to be outlawed for killing too many men in a blood feud. He spent most of his life as an outlaw until he was finally slain. His exploits, while historically based, contain a strong element of supernatural legend. Grettir's story was retold by succeeding generations and finally written down during medieval times:

There was a man in Iceland, named Thorhall Grimsson, who had difficulty keeping shepherds. Some were injured and others could not finish their work, for some evil being stalked the pastures. So Thorhall hired Glam, a big strong man. Glam feared nothing, but he was often disliked for his strong temper.

Glam commenced his work as a shepherd. He had a loud, hoarse voice. He



abstained from mass, had no religion, and was stubborn and surly. Everyone hated him-but he lost no sheep.

The time passed 'til the eve of Yuletide. Glam was warned that, out of reverence, it was not proper to eat on the day before Yule. He demanded food anyway. When he had eaten, Glam went out.

It was very dark. There was driving snow, the wind was howling, and it became worse as the day wore on. In the evening, Glam did not return. Only after the violent storm passed could people search for him.

On the track above the valley, the searchers found Glam. The stones and earth were torn up all about from a violent struggle. Glam was dead; his body was black and swollen to the size of an ox. The people believed that the evil spirit that had been slaying sheep had also slain Glam. Glam was too heavy to drag to the church, so he was rolled into a nearby gully and covered with a cairn of stones.

It was not long before men became aware that Glam was uneasy in his grave. Many men were attacked. Some were severely injured; others were struck senseless and lost their wits. At night, the walking corpse would try to break into houses. Soon Thorhall's cowherd was slain by the ghost. The panic was great; the district was in a grievous condition.

A foreigner named Thorgaut then came to Thorhallsstad as a shepherd. He did not fear Glam's ghost, and he laughed at the stories. One day Thorgaut went out to the sheep and did not return. The men found his body on top of Glam's cairn. Thorgaut's neck was broken, as was every bone in his body.

Glam became worse than ever. People fled the district. Thorhall's steading was almost deserted. Livestock left behind was killed by the restless spirit.

Grettir the Strong then rode to Thorhallsstad, where he was welcomed, Grettir said he wished to spend the night in Thorhall's stead if the *bondi* permitted. Thorhall said he would indeed be thankful to Grettir for staying there.

When about a third part of the night had passed, Grettir heard a loud noise. Something was around the house, riding above the hall and kicking the wood with its heels. This went on for some time when the sound came down toward the door. The door opened and Grettir saw Glam, bloated and black, with an enormous ugly head like a goblin.

Grettir sprang under the ghost's arms, seized it around the waist, and squeezed Glam's back with all his might. Glam managed to wrench free. The monster sought to flee, but Grettir prevented flight. A fight raged up and down the hall, benches flew, and everything was scattered. Glam, with a desperate effort, forced Grettir to the porch.

Grettir changed tactics and loosed his hold on the monster. Glam was not prepared for that; he reeled backward and

tumbled hind-foremost out of the door, tearing away the lintel with his shoulder and shattering the roof.

The monster turned its eyes at Grettir and stared. The sight of Glam in the moonlight made Grettir's heart sink. Grettir could tell that Glam possessed more malignant power than any creature the hero had ever faced.

Then Glam spoke: "You shall possess only half the strength and firmness of heart that were decreed to you because of this night's battle. Henceforward there shall fall upon you exile; your deeds will turn evil and your guardian spirit shall forsake you. You shall be outlawed, and your lot shall be to dwell ever alone."

The faintness that had come over Grettir left him. He drew his sword and cut off Glam's head. Then he and Thorhall set to work and burned Glam to cold cinders, bound the ashes in a skin, and buried them far from the haunts of man or beast. Yet, in the years to come, Grettir found that the curse of Glam would, indeed, unfold.

## Angreden

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, especially sub-arctic and subterranean

FREQUENCY: Rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or small bands

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Nil

INTELLIGENCE: Average

TREASURE: 20% B

ALIGNMENT: Any evil

NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-16

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 4 +4

THAC0: 14

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6 + 2

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Enfeeblement, fear

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (5'-7')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 1,400



An *angreden*, based on Middle-English form, would mean "the state or condition of anger" or "filled with anger." An *angreden* is the walking corpse of an individual who died under a curse, or who was so filled with hatred and anger in life that he refused to lie still in his grave. An *angreden* has a blackened, bloated body with a huge, oversized head.

**Combat:** An *angreden* is considered to have 18 Strength, so it gets a +1 to attack and +2 to damage in combat, which has already calculated into its statistics. Its touch acts like an *enfeeblement* spell. Victims of a successful hit must make a save vs. spells or temporarily lose 25% of their Strength scores (fractions rounded down). The gaze of an *angreden* acts as a *fear* spell. An *angreden's* attacks are unsophisticated, being physical attacks with a club or hand-held rock.

An *angreden* is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold, poison, paralysis, and death magic. A *raise dead* spell destroys it. A cleric has the same chance to turn an *angreden* as he does a *wight*.

**Habitat/Society:** An *angreden* has trouble getting along with everyone, even after death. It is often solitary but may sometimes band with others for protection. Such bands are a snarling, quarrelsome lot.

An *angreden* may be lawful, neutral, or chaotic, but will always be evil. It exists only to vent its insensate rage at the world. It delights in harm for its own sake and, when not killing, will try to smash everything in sight.

**Note:** Strictly as a plot suggestion, DMs may wish to give an *angreden* the power to *curse* before being destroyed. Such a *curse* acts as a prophetic utterance, unless it is lifted with a *remove curse* spell. For example, an *angreden* might tell a character: "Horses will die under you" and that character would be unable to ride a horse until the curse was lifted. If an *angreden* is given a curse, the XP Value becomes 2,000 instead of 1,400.

## The breaking of the burial mound

*Gests pattr Bardarsonar* (The Saga of Gest Bardson) is more of a fantasy told around a warm fire than a tale based in history. In it, the hero Gest breaks into a barrow mound and confronts the undead king Raknar:

At that time (A.D. 995-1000), King Olaf Tryggvason was ruler of Norway. On Christmas Eve, the king was sitting on his high-seat and the whole court was present, each man in his own seat.

When the men had been drinking for some time, a man walked into the hall. He was tall and evil-looking, with dark skin, flashing eyes, a black beard, and a broad nose. This man wore a helm on his head, a

shirt of ring mail, and a sword at his belt; he had a gold necklace round his neck and a thick gold ring on his arm. He walked up to the king's high seat. People were greatly amazed at this sight. No man greeted the stranger.

This man stood before the king for a while, then said: "I came here thinking that I would at least be offered some hospitality by such great and noble men. I'm going to be more open-handed than that, for I shall offer possession of these fine things I am wearing now to the man who dares come and fetch them from me."

Thereupon, the man went away, and an unpleasant smell spread through the hall. Many men fell unconscious and half-dead. All the watchdogs died, except for the king's dog, *Vigi*, and Gest's dog, *Snati*.

The king said, "Who do you think he can be, Gest, this man who came in here?"

Gest replied, "I've not seen him before, but I've been told by my kinsmen that there was once a king, called Raknar, and I think that I recognize him from their accounts. But that king was buried in Helluland at Raknar'sloda."

Then King Olaf Tryggvason said, "This is my request to you, Gest: that you should fetch those fine treasures."

Gest made ready for his journey. The king gave him 40 iron shoes, all lined with down. He found a Christian priest to go with Gest, a man named Jostein. The priest was highly esteemed by the king, yet Gest had little liking for the man, for Gest still followed the old faith of his ancestors.

The king said, "The priest will give you the finest proof of courage at a time that matters most to you."

"Then he might as well come," said Gest.

The king gave Gest a one-edged sword and said it would bite if there was need. And the king gave Gest a candle and said it would light up of its own accord if it was held up in the air. "For it will be black in Raknar's mound," said King Olaf. "But don't stay there any longer once the candle is burned out—you must take heed of this."

Gest and his men sailed north along the coast all the way past Halogoland and Finnmark as far as Hafnsbota. Then they turned west and sailed until they reached the uninhabited parts of Greenland. By then winter was coming on, so they spent the winter there.

In spring they left there, each man carrying his own provisions. At first they went along the coast, going west-southwest; then they went across country. At first there were glaciers, then great fields of lava. Then they put on the iron shoes that the king had given them. But there were 40 shoes and 21 men, including Gest. No iron shoes had been provided for the priest. Without them the man's feet would be burned open when walking over the lava.

"So now come here, priest," said Gest, "and sit yourself on my pack."

The priest did so. Then Gest walked

ahead and walked most sturdily. They went on for three days, then the lava-field came to an end and they came to the sea. A large island lay off-shore there. A long, thin reef ran out to the island; this was dry at ebb-tide. When the men went out to the island, they saw a huge burial mound.

Gest set his men to work breaking away into the mound by day. By evening they had broken an opening into the mound, but by next morning it had grown together as before. They broke it open again the second day, but by morning it was closed again.

After a third digging, the priest kept watch over the hole. He sat there all night, and he had holy water and a crucifix with him. When time wore on toward midnight, he saw Raknar. Raknar bade the priest come with him, and he would reward the priest with fine gifts.

The priest answered nothing and sat quietly as before. Many extraordinary creatures appeared to him. Some tried to scare the priest, others tried to trick him. Jostein took no notice, no matter what wonders he saw or however savagely these fiends behaved. Toward sunrise, all these wonders vanished away.

The men lowered Gest into the mound. It was a 50-fathom drop to the floor of the mound. Gest had the one-edged sword, the king's gift, belted around his waist. He carried the candle in his hand, and it lit itself as soon as he reached the bottom.

Gest could now see all around the mound. He saw the ship *Slodi* and 500 men in her. Gest then climbed up on the ship and saw that all the men had been on the point of rising to their feet when the candlelight fell on them; none of them could now move. Still, their eyes blinked and their nostrils flared. Gest drew his sword and cut off all their heads, and the blade bit as if it were cutting water.

Then Gest went in search of Raknar. He found an opening going deeper into the ground, and there he saw Raknar sitting on a chair. The undead king was horribly evil to look at. A foul stench was there, and it was cold, too. A chest full of money stood open under Raknar's feet; he had a necklace around his neck, and a thick gold ring on his arm. He wore a coat of mail and had a helm on his head and a sword in his hand.

Gest went up to Raknar and greeted him respectfully, as a king should be greeted, and Raknar bowed his head in answer.

Gest said, "It is true that you are famous. I've come a long way to visit you in your home. You will surely let me have a good reward for my errand, and give me those fine treasures you have. I shall spread the tale of your magnificence far and wide."

Raknar bent his head toward Gest, with the helm on it. Gest took the helm, then stripped Raknar of his coat of mail. Raknar made it all easy for Gest. Gest then took all Raknar's treasures away from him, except the sword. When Gest took hold of this, Raknar sprang to his feet and threw him-

self at Gest. By then the candle, the king's gift, had burned right out.

Then Raknar turned into such a troll that Gest was quite overpowered by him. Gest thought he could see his death for certain. The dead men from the ship also rose to their feet. Gest called upon Bard, his father, who had great power against every type of troll. Bard came, but he accomplished nothing. The dead men kept Bard away from his son.

Then Gest made a vow to Him who had created heaven and earth, that he would accept the Christian faith King Olaf preached if he escaped alive out of the burial mound. Gest also earnestly invoked King Olaf, that the king might aid him. Thereupon Gest saw King Olaf come into the mound with a great light. All the dead men sat back down when bathed in that light. At this sight, Raknar was so troubled that all his strength ebbed out of him. Gest pressed so hard that Raknar fell over backward. Then Gest cut off Raknar's head with the sword the king had given him. The whole task now ended, King Olaf vanished from the mound.

Back atop the mound, while these won-

ders were happening, the men became so upset and frightened that they all ran mad, except for the priest. He never let go of the rope and hauled Gest out of the mound, along with all the treasure. Then the two of them went to where the men struggled with each other. The priest sprinkled holy water over them, and they recovered their wits at once.

As the men made ready to leave, the ground began to shake. The sea rose all along the reef in such crashing breakers the island was nearly flooded. The men could no longer find the reef, so Gest sent his dog Snati out to find it. But the dog could not stand against Raknar's magic and drowned. Gest thought this the greatest loss he had suffered.

Then Jostein the priest went forward, crucifix in hand, sprinkling water upon the waves. The sea divided itself so the men could cross dry-shod to the mainland.

Gest brought all the fine treasures to the king and told King Olaf all that had happened. Gest was then baptized, as he had vowed to do in Raknar's mound.

The following night after Gest had been baptized, he dreamed his father Bard

came to him and said, "You did wrong when you abandoned your faith, which all your forefathers had held. Because of this, you shall lose both your eyes."

Then Bard touched his son's eyes, causing such a severe pain that both eyes burst. At this, Gest died, still wearing his baptismal garments. King Olaf thought this the greatest loss.

## King-wight

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, usually subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary, but may have followers

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET! Carnivore (living beings)

INTELLIGENCE: Exceptional (15)

TREASURE: 50% A

ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -1

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 12 +23 (77 hp)

THAC0: 4

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2 by weapon type or 1 by touch

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8 + 5

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Energy drain, wight control, spellcasting, earthquake, magical items

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some weapons and spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (6' - 7')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 30,000

A king-wight was once a powerful evil king. When he died, he became undead, continuing to rule the ranks of the walking dead. His death is often voluntary, a self-sacrifice made to gain a prolonged existence.

A king-wight looks like a well-preserved corpse. At nighttime, in artificial light, it can even be mistaken for a living being. It wears its favorite armor and carries its favorite weapons, and is often decorated with expensive jewelry. While a king-wight can appear almost alive, the stench of the grave follows it and gives it away.

**Combat:** A king-wight fights much the same after death as it did in life. It wears **chain mail +3** and wields a **sword +2** (any type possible). A king-wight was an exceptional human and continues to have excellent attributes even in death. Its attribute statistics are: S 18/50, D 17, C 16, I 15, W 13, Ch 15 (to undead only). These scores and the magical items are already calculated into the king-wight's statistics.

When it becomes undead, a king-wight gains many special abilities. A successful attack can drain two life levels from a victim, as per a vampire. Any victim completely drained of life points by the king-wight becomes a full-strength wight under



the control of the king-wight.

A king-wight also has the ability to cast *spectral force* and confusion spells, one spell per round, without limit. It can *teleport* once per day, but only to or from its barrow home. When the king-wight is destroyed, the action causes an earthquake (as per the clerical spell, at the 14th-level of effect), centered on the king-wight's body, in 4-16 rounds. Since a king-wight is often encountered in its underground barrow, such an earthquake can be especially deadly.

A king-wight is so powerful that any individual of a level lower than the king-wight must make a saving throw vs. spells or flee in panic from *fear*. The following spells or attack forms have no effect on a king-wight: charm, sleep, enfeeblement, *polymorph*, cold, electricity, insanity, and death magic. A *raise dead* spell turns the king-wight into a normal 12th-level fighter unless a saving throw vs. spells is made.

A cleric attempting to turn a king-wight

should use the "special" column. A king-wight can be harmed only by magical weapons.

**Habitat/Society:** A king-wight retains its court, even after death. It is often surrounded by its faithful warriors, who were turned into wights by the king-wight and remain under their master's control. A king-wight encountered in its barrow usually controls 4-32 normal wights.

A king-wight delights in tricking the living. It often travels to someone's abode to flaunt its treasure and tempt heroes into searching out its lair. A king-wight may appear gracious and hospitable at times, but such appearances are illusory. In reality, the king-wight hates to give up any part of its hoarded treasure and tempts heroes only as a ploy to trap them in its underground barrow, to either slay the heroes by the sword or turn them into wight slaves.

## Wraith-king

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, often subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary, may have following

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

DIET: Carnivore (living beings)

INTELLIGENCE: Genius (17)

TREASURE: 50% H

ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -5

MOVEMENT: 12/36 if riding

HIT DICE: 15 +27 (95 hp)

THACO: -1

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2/1 by weapon type, or 1 by touch

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1ds + 10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Energy-drain gaze, wraith control, spellcasting, magical items

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some spells and weapons

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 20%

SIZE: M (6'- 7')

MORALE: Champion (15-16)

XP VALUE: 32,000

Wraith-kings were once powerful individuals who so feared death that they made unholy bargains with an evil god. Each individual believed he was gaining immortality, but was instead turned into an undead monster. The body of a wraith-king has faded away completely. Inside the form of its armor, one can see only two hateful red burning eyes.

**Combat:** A wraith-king fights much as it did in life. It wears *plate armor* +3 and wields a *sword* +4 (any type). It is considered to have exceptional attribute statistics (S 18/00, D 18, C 17, I 17, W 15, Ch 17 (to undead only)). These magical items and attribute scores are already calculated into the wraith-king's statistics.

A wraith-king can drain life levels by gaze alone at the rate of one level per round for any one victim within clear view in a 30' range (the victim must save vs. death ray each round to avoid this effect). Any victim completely drained of life levels becomes a full-strength wraith under the control of the wraith-king.

A wraith-king can cast either a *permanent illusion* or *programmed illusion* once per round, without limit. It can also cast a *mass charm* spell once per day. All spells are cast at the 15th level of ability. A wraith-king is so powerful that any individual of a level lower than the wraith-king must make a saving throw vs. spells or flee in panic from *fear*.

The following spells or attack forms have no effect on a wraith-king: *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, cold, electricity, insanity, and death magic. A wraith-king can be harmed only by magical weapons with at least a +2 bonus, and even these weapons do only half damage.





A wraith-king is even more powerful than a lich. A cleric of level 9-13 has a chance to turn a wraith-king on a roll of 19 or better. A cleric of level 14 + has a chance to turn a wraith-king on a roll of 16 or better. Because a wraith-king's undead power comes directly from a god, a raise dead spell will not affect a wraith-king.

**Habitat/Society:** A wraith-king lives in an eternal state of anger and hatred. Having been tricked by an evil god, the wraith-king hates the living and seeks, whenever possible, to convert them to undead to increase the wraith-king's following. Even when not guarding its hoarded treasure, a wraith-king seeks out the living to punish them for the anguish it feels. It especially delights in using illusions to trick and tempt the living.

A wraith-king is, however, cautious. It considers itself immortal and, hateful as its undead state is, it nonetheless cherishes its unlife. It will flee if an attack appears to be going against it.

When encountered in its tomb/lair, a wraith-king has control of 4-24 wraiths. When not encountered in its tomb, a wraith-king is likely to be riding a nightmare (see the *Monstrous Compendium*).

**Note:** Because wraith-kings are so powerful and so rare, it is suggested that a DM use them sparingly. A wraith-king became undead as the act of an evil god, so a good or neutral god often aids a cleric confronting a wraith-king. Such aid may take the form of a special magical item that protects the cleric or the entire party from some of the wraith-king's malign powers. An entire campaign, including visions, communion with a beneficent god or goddess, and the search for an appropriate undead-destroying magical item, can be built around a quest to destroy a single wraith-king.

## Vartha

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any  
 FREQUENCY: Very rare  
 ORGANIZATION: Solitary  
 ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any  
 DIET: Nil  
 INTELLIGENCE: High (13)  
 TREASURE: Varies  
 ALIGNMENT: Any  
 NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-12  
 ARMOR CLASS: 0  
 MOVEMENT: 12  
 HIT DICE: 9 +18 (63 hp)  
 THACO: 7  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2, by weapon type  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d4 + 5  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Spellcasting, magical items  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunity to some spells  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil  
 SIZE: M (5'-7')  
 MORALE: Fearless (20)  
 XP VALUE: 18,000

Vartha means "guardian spirit" It is one of the few undead that are not necessarily malign. A vartha is a guardian spirit in many senses. It can be a spirit conjured or cursed to protect a specific area or treasure. It can also be a spirit that appears to aid a character in times of need. Lastly, it can be a spirit sent to hunt down wrongdoers. A vartha does not share the generally gruesome appearance of the undead. It looks like a newly dead corpse, after the body has been treated by a mortician.

**Combat:** A vartha has high attribute scores (S 18/75, D 16, C 16, I 13, W 17, Ch 15). It wears *partial plate armor +2* (AC 2) and wields a *morning star +2*. The magical items and attribute scores have been calculated into the vartha's statistics.

While it is undead, a vartha should otherwise be treated as a fighter-cleric with the following clerical spells, each of which can be cast at the rate of one spell per round, once each per day: *bleed*, *command*, *detect evil*, *light*, *remove fear*; *sanctuary*; *augury*, *detect charm*, *hold person*, *know alignment*, *silence 15' radius*; *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *locate object*, *remove curse*; *detect lie*,

*tongues*; *commune*.

A vartha can be of any alignment. One of evil alignment may have the reverse of appropriate spells (e.g., *curse* instead of *bleed*).

A vartha is not affected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold, electricity, poison, or death magic. A *raise dead* spell returns it to life as a 9th-level fighter/9th-level cleric. If the vartha serves anyone involuntarily, it need not make a save vs. spells against the *raise dead* spell, and the spell automatically works. The chance for a cleric to turn a vartha is the same as the chance to turn a spectre.

**Habitat/Society:** Vartha vary in motivation. A vartha guarding its own treasure may have voluntarily become undead through greed. A vartha forced to guard a treasure not its own may be under a curse or commanded by a more powerful being. A vartha sent by the DM to help a character may be that character's guardian spirit, perhaps an ancestor. A vartha hunting down a wrongdoer may have been a marshal in life, continuing its mission after

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## The MARVEL®-Phile

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down from the mountain in search of food. While the Glop rampaged through the town, the painter encountered the old man at the castle and demanded an explanation. The old guy admitted that he was a scientist. He discovered the statue and the paints in the castle, along with a parchment that revealed their unearthly origin and the method for reviving the alien beast. The scientist hoped to uncover the Glop's motives before the monster's "comrades" arrived to wake him themselves.

The Glop returned to the keep at that moment, trapping the two humans inside. In a fit of *braggadocio*, the alien boasted that he was an advance scout from a warlike race, sent to Earth to spy on the inhabitants. In time, his fellows would arrive and revive him. Much to his chagrin, though, the humans had already done that and now his mission was ruined. As the Glop prepared to ground the meddling mortals into bone dust, the painter hit upon a desperate plan. He hurled a large can of turpentine at the Glop, which washed away the alien's oozing skin and returned him to his statuelike state once more. There wasn't time for congratulations, though. The villagers, enraged by the monster's attack (and toting torches and pitchforks, as outlined in the *Complete Transylvanian Peasants' Handbook*), stormed the castle and blew it up. The Glop and the unusual paints were buried beneath the shattered keep.

**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:** The Glop is short on subtlety, but long on rage. He will wade into a fight with little provocation, attempting to crush whatever obstacles the despised mortals set in his path. He is prone to throwing large objects, and Judges working him into a scenario should be familiar with the rules for Blunt Throwing attacks detailed in the *MSH Advanced Set's Players' Book*.

Since the castle's destruction in the early 1960s, no one has bothered to sift through the ruins to confirm the Glop's demise. Because the body was never seen, it would be safe to assume he survived somehow and is ready to be unleashed upon the hapless denizens of the MARVEL UNIVERSE once more. Moreover, the Glop's comrades have yet to make their appearance on Earth, so a scenario centering on their arrival would be a natural; explaining why these higher beings left an immobile scout/observer in an isolated Transylvanian castle is optional.

### Rewriting history

In his search for foes worthy of battling the Hulk, Xemnu the Living Titan uncovered a conspiracy. The American government, Xemnu claimed, was covering up the multitudinous invasions that plagued the world in the late 1950s and early 1960s, blotting out the names of Diablo, Groot, and the Blip from the history books. I don't know about that, but scholars of the Marvel age of monsters should note that some of the towering titans have undergone subtle changes since their first appearances. For example, in his original outing, the Glop was known as the Glob. And the living alien statue on Easter Island was known as Thor, not Thorg. Apart from the trademark reasons, I suppose the name changes make some continuity sense too. "What's that?" says Spider-Man. "There's a battle in Central Park between Thor and Magneto? Or is that Thor and Magneto? And which Magneto is it, anyway—the guy with the bucket on his head or the old monster?"

The most interesting of these updates has resulted in the birth of a new hero, a guy who is still popping up in comics regularly: Doctor Druid. The origin of this occult master, printed in *Weird Wonder Tales* #19, is actually a slightly redrawn origin story for an old character named Dr. Droom! Then, two issues of *WWT* later, Dr. Druid tells a tale in which he discovers Gorgilla, the Monster of Midnight Mountain, but that, too, is a re-touched story (with Dr. Droom's, er, Druids head replacing that of the tale's true hero, a blond scientist named Scotty). Hmmm.

Maybe Xemnu was right after all. Could Goom and his dreaded son Googam be working through the government to blot out the memories of their monstrous rivals? What about the Living Colossus and Fin Fang Foom? Why have they escaped this revision of history with reputations intact? I'd say it's time for you to mobilize all truth-loving heroes in your campaign so they can restore the real history of the MARVEL UNIVERSE—or at least slug it out with a giant slime beast or two.

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## Beyond the Grave

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death. Vartha do share one personality trait: They are all highly motivated, even driven, whatever their purpose.

### Summoning/controlling undead

The summoning and controlling of certain types of very powerful undead, particularly mummies, is a common theme in literature and movies. The DM may wish to allow evil (and some neutral) clerics to summon some kinds of special undead from afar, then control them. The power would require a special ceremony and would depend on the availability of the proper kind of undead. Finally, the cleric would have to maintain concentration to control the undead similar to a mage controlling an elemental.

It is suggested that the cleric gain the power only when his 1d20 roll to turn the appropriate kind of undead becomes less than 10. Some appropriate kinds of undead, and the clerical level at which they could be summoned and controlled, would be: skleros\* (8), angreden (5), callicantzari\* \* (5), skotos\* \* (6), mummy (8), lesser colossus\* \* (8), vrykolakas\* \* \* (8), vartha (9), ch'ing shih\* \* \* (9), and ka (14).

\* See "Out of the Shadows," in *DRAGON* issue #162.

\* \* See "The Ungrateful Dead" in *DRAGON* issue #138.

\* \* \* See "Hearts of Darkness" in *DRAGON* issue #126.

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