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620-28364000-001-EN  
ISBN: 978-0-7869-5838-2



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# Monsters of the Vale

The Nentir Vale is a region of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® world that Dungeon Masters can plunder for their home games. This frontier realm can serve as a foundation for any DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign. In this book, you'll find a codex of monsters and villains to throw at the heroes as they explore every nook and cranny of the Nentir Vale or, by extension, your home campaign setting.

Each entry in this book includes information about how to use the monsters in the story of your DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign. Most of the entries mention locales within the vale, but if your campaign uses a different setting, you can easily adapt the story material to suit your needs. Accompanying the story material are statistics blocks representing various threats, including unique villains and monster variants. The villains and monsters span a variety of roles and levels, allowing you to use this material throughout much of the heroes' adventuring careers.

This product includes tokens you can use to represent the monsters in encounters, plus a poster map that depicts four different locations: a boulder-strewn wilderness, an underground throne room, a shoreline camp, and a town hall. Each of the monster entries in this book can be paired with one or more of the maps; occasional sidebars provide examples of how to use a particular map for an encounter with the creatures in that section.

## DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ESSENTIALS™ PRODUCTS

This book is designed for use with the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ESSENTIALS line of products. It follows the same format as the *Monster Vault™* boxed set and assumes familiarity with the Nentir Vale region, as described in the *Dungeon Master's Kit* boxed set. It also makes reference to the *Rules Compendium™* game supplement, which gathers and codifies the complete 4th Edition game rules.

You do not need any of the abovementioned resources to use *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale™*. The monsters and villains presented in this book are fully compatible with the *Player's Handbook®*, *Dungeon Master's Guide®*, and *Monster Manual®* core rulebooks. If the statistics blocks format looks new to you, it's because the format was updated in the *Monster Manual 3* rulebook and used in all subsequent books. The updated format, explained on the following four pages, is designed to make it easier for Dungeon Masters to run monsters in combat.

ZOLTAN BOROS & GÁBOR SZIKSZAI





# MONSTER STATISTICS BLOCKS

Monster statistics are presented in a format designed to be easy to use and reference. This section describes the typical components of a statistics block.

## Name

Each statistics block begins with the creature's name. Villains have unique names, while most monsters have names that include the general name of the monster type plus an additional descriptor, such as "crested felldrake" or "Frost Witch harpy."

## Level and Role

A monster's level and role are tools for you to use when building an encounter. The *Dungeon Master's Kit* explains how to use these tools.

**Level:** A monster's level summarizes how tough it is in an encounter. Level determines most of the monster's statistics as well as the experience point (XP) award the PCs earn for defeating it.

**Role:** A monster's role describes its preferred combat tactics, much as a character class's role suggests tactics for characters of that class. Monster roles are artillery, brute, controller, lurker, skirmisher, and soldier.

A monster might have a second role: elite, solo, or minion. Elite monsters and solo monsters are tougher than standard monsters, and minions are weaker. For the purpose of encounter building, an elite monster counts as two standard monsters of its level, a solo monster counts as five, and four to six minions count as one—four at heroic tier (levels 1-10), five at paragon tier (levels 11-20), and six at epic tier (levels 21-30).

In addition, a monster might have the leader subrole, indicating that it grants some sort of boon to its allies, such as a beneficial aura.

## Size

A creature's size determines its space as well as its reach. A creature might have a greater reach depending on the characteristics of its body.

Monster Size	Space	Typical Reach
Tiny	$\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}$	0
Small	$1 \times 1$	1
Medium	$1 \times 1$	1
Large	$2 \times 2$	1 or 2
Huge	$3 \times 3$	2 or 3
Gargantuan	$4 \times 4$ or larger	3 or 4

**Space:** This is the area (measured in squares) that a creature occupies on the battle grid.

**Reach:** Typically, the reach of a creature using a melee attack power is the same as the range entry of that power. If you need to determine a creature's reach for some other purpose, such as for a grab attack or an attempt to pick up an object, refer to the table above.

Even if a creature's reach or melee range is greater than 1, the creature can't make opportunity attacks against targets that aren't adjacent to it.

A creature that has a melee attack with a range of 0 must occupy at least 1 square of the space of its target to make the attack.

## Origin

A monster's origin—aberrant, elemental, fey, immortal, natural, or shadow—describes its place in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* cosmology. See the glossary for information about each origin.

## Type

A creature's type—animate, beast, humanoid, or magical beast—summarizes some basic facts about its appearance and behavior. See the glossary for information about each type.

## Keywords/Race

Some monsters have keywords that further define them. These keywords represent groups of monsters, such as demon, devil, dragon, and undead. See the glossary for information about monster keywords. This part of the entry might also include a monster's race if its race is not included in the monster's name.

## XP Value

The experience point award for defeating this creature is given beneath its level and role.

## HP/Initiative

The monster's maximum hit points, bloodied value, and modifier to initiative checks are on the top line of its statistics.

## Defenses/Perception

All four defense scores are on the next line, along with the monster's Perception modifier (often used at the start of an encounter).

## Senses

Some monsters have special senses, such as darkvision or tremorsense. Any such senses are noted below a monster's Perception modifier, and these terms are defined in the glossary.

## Speed

A monster's speed represents the number of squares it can move when taking a move action to walk. If a monster has alternative movement modes, such as fly, climb, or swim, that fact is noted in its "Speed" entry. Special modes of movement are defined in the glossary.

## Immune

If a monster is immune to a damage type (such as cold or fire), it doesn't take that type of damage. If a monster is immune to a condition or another effect (such as the dazed condition or forced movement), it is unaffected by that condition or effect. If a monster is immune to charm, fear, illusion, poison, or sleep, it is unaffected by the non-damaging effects of a power that has that keyword.

Immunity to one part of a power does not make a monster immune to other parts of the power. For example, a thunder power deals no thunder damage to a creature that is immune to thunder, but the power could still push the creature.

## Resist

Resistance means a creature takes less damage from a specific damage type. For example, if a creature has resist 5 fire, the creature takes 5 less fire damage whenever it takes that type of damage.

**Against Combined Damage Types:** A creature's resistance is ineffective against combined damage types unless the creature has resistance to each of the damage types, and then only the weakest of the resistances applies.

For example, if a creature has resist 10 lightning and resist 5 thunder and an attack deals 15 lightning and thunder damage to it, the creature takes 10 damage, for the resistance to the combined damage types is limited by the lesser of the two resistances.

**Not Cumulative:** Resistances against the same damage type are not cumulative. Only the highest resistance applies. For example, if a creature has resist 5 cold and gains resist 10 cold, the creature has resist 10 cold, not resist 15 cold.

## Vulnerable

Being vulnerable to a damage type means a creature takes extra damage from that damage type. For example, if a creature has vulnerable 5 fire, the creature takes 5 extra fire damage whenever it takes that type of damage.

**Against Combined Damage Types:** Vulnerability to a specific damage type applies even when that damage type is combined with another. For example, if a creature has vulnerable 5 fire, the creature takes 5 extra damage when it takes ongoing fire and radiant damage.

**Not Cumulative:** Vulnerabilities to the same damage type are not cumulative. Only the highest vulnerability applies. For example, if a creature has vulnerable 5 psychic and then gains vulnerable 10 psychic, the creature has vulnerable 10 psychic, not vulnerable 15 psychic.

## Saving Throws

Some monsters have bonuses to saving throws. A monster adds its bonuses to its saving throw result to see if an effect ends.

## Action Points

Elite and solo monsters typically have action points they can spend to take extra actions, just as player characters do. Unlike characters, a monster can spend more than 1 action point in an encounter, but only 1 per round.

## Traits

The Traits section includes characteristics of the creature that are **not** powers. Many traits are always in effect, such as regeneration or the ability to deal extra damage on certain attacks. Others can be turned on or off, such as an aura or a benefit for a creature's mount or rider.

## Aura

An aura power creates an aura, which is a continuous effect that emanates from a creature. It's denoted by a special icon (☼), and the aura's size is noted to the right of its name. Unless noted otherwise, an aura uses the following rules.

**Fills an Area:** The aura fills each square that is both within a specified range of the creature and within line of effect of it. An aura 1 affects each square adjacent to the creature, for example. A creature is normally unaffected by its own aura.

**Unaffected by the Environment:** The aura is unaffected by environmental phenomena and terrain, although blocking terrain blocks an aura. For instance, an aura of fire is unaffected by an area of extreme cold.

**Overlapping Auras:** If auras overlap and impose penalties to the same roll or game statistic, a creature affected by the overlapping auras is subjected to the worst penalty; the penalties are not cumulative. For instance, if a creature is affected by three overlapping auras that each impose a -2 penalty to attack rolls, the creature takes a -2 penalty, not a -6 penalty.

**Deactivating an Aura:** A creature can take a minor action to deactivate or reactivate one of its auras.

**Death or Unconsciousness Ends:** A creature's auras end immediately when it falls unconscious or dies.

## Action Type

A monster's standard, move, minor, and nontriggerred free actions are organized by action type.

## Powers

A monster's powers are presented under their respective action type in order of frequency of usage, from at-will to recharge to encounter powers.

### Icon/Type

The name line of an attack power includes an icon (if applicable) that represents the power's type: melee (♣), ranged (♠), close (♠), or area (♠).

A basic attack has a circle around its icon, denoting a melee basic attack (♣) or ranged basic attack (♠).

### Usage

A monster power is usable at will, once per encounter (or rarely once per day), or it recharges in certain circumstances.

**Recharge** [d6][d10][d20]: The power has a random chance of recharging during each round of combat. At the start of each of the monster's turns, roll a d6. If the roll is one of the die results shown in the power description, the monster regains the use of that power. The power also recharges after a short rest.

**Recharge if/when . . .**: The power recharges in a specific circumstance, such as when the monster is first bloodied during an encounter. The power also recharges after a short rest.

## Requirement

Some powers have a precondition that must be met for a monster to use the power.

## Attack

A monster power that has an attack roll is usually an attack power. Sometimes an "Attack" entry includes special information about a component of that entry.

### Type and Range

A power's type and range are given first on the power's "Attack" entry. The types are melee, ranged, area, and close. Each type has rules for range and targeting, detailed in the *Rules Compendium*.

### Targets

In parentheses after the attack type and range is information that describes which or how many creatures a power targets.

## Attack Bonus/Defense

Usually, the last element in a power's "Attack" entry is the monster's attack bonus and the defense the power targets.

## Hit

This entry describes what happens to each target that a monster hits with a power's attack.

## Miss

This entry describes what happens to each target that a monster misses with a power's attack.

"Half damage" in this entry refers to rolled damage. Roll the damage specified in the "Hit" entry and deal half of that damage to each target the monster misses. "Half damage" does not apply to ongoing damage or any other damaging effects in the "Hit" entry.

## Effect

Anything that appears in an "Effect" entry occurs when the monster uses the power, whether or not it hits with it. Some "Effect" entries include range, type, and target information.

## Secondary Attack

Some powers allow a monster to make secondary attack. A "Hit," a "Miss," or an "Effect" entry tells you if a monster makes a secondary attack. Unless otherwise noted, the attack type and the range of a secondary attack are the same as the power's, and the secondary attack doesn't require a separate action. As with normal attacks, the target of a secondary attack is identified after the attack's type and range.

## Sustain

If a power has a "Sustain" entry, the monster can keep part of that power active by taking a specific type of action before the end of each of its turns. A monster can't take the sustaining action until the turn after it uses the power. The entry's name specifies the action type that must be taken—most often minor, move, or standard. See the *Rules Compendium* for more about sustaining powers.

## Aftereffect

An aftereffect automatically occurs after another effect ends. In a power description, an "Aftereffect" entry follows the effect it applies to.

A target is sometimes subjected to an aftereffect after a save. If that save occurs when the target is rolling multiple saving throws, the aftereffect takes effect after the target has rolled all of them.

## Failed Saving Throw

Sometimes an effect changes as a target fails saving throws against it. The new effect, specified in a “First Failed Saving Throw” or a “Second Failed Saving Throw” entry, takes effect after the target fails a saving throw against the previous effect at the end of the target’s turn. A few effects also specify something that happens on “Each Failed Saving Throw.” This is a new effect that is repeated whenever a target fails a saving throw against the effect during the end of its turn.

An effect doesn’t change if the creature fails a saving throw against it at a time other than the end of its turn.

## Special

Any unusual information about the use of a power appears in this entry. For example, some powers can be used as basic attacks, which is noted in a “Special” entry.

## Triggered Actions

This section contains powers that have triggers. These powers have a few entries that other powers don’t.

### Trigger

A trigger defines when a monster is able to use a power. A monster must still be able to take the power’s required action and meet any requirements.

### (Action)

A triggered power’s action type is given in parentheses at the start of its “Attack” entry or its “Effect” entry. The type might be an immediate reaction, an immediate interrupt, an opportunity action, or a free action. Some powers require no action to use; they simply occur in response to a trigger.

## Skills

The skills section of a monster’s statistics block includes only trained skills or skills for which the monster has an unusual modifier. A monster’s Perception modifier isn’t repeated here, even if Perception is trained.

## Ability Scores

A monster’s six ability scores are included toward the bottom of its statistics block. Following each score in parentheses is the adjusted ability score modifier, including one-half the monster’s level, which is useful whenever the monster needs to make an untrained skill check or an ability check.

## Alignment

A monster’s most typical alignment is noted in its statistics block. The *Rules Compendium* contains information on the various alignments.

## Languages

This entry gives the languages that a monster can speak and understand. An individual monster might know additional languages, such as Common or the languages of its companions. See the *Rules Compendium* for more information about the languages of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS world.

## Equipment

A monster’s “Equipment” entry notes important items a monster is carrying. A monster might carry equipment that is not noted here. Equipment that is unimportant to a monster is left for the Dungeon Master to decide.

If a character gains a monster’s equipment, he or she can use it as normal gear. A character does not gain the powers that a monster uses through a piece of equipment.

A piece of equipment that player characters use does not necessarily have the same properties for monsters. For example, a greataxe has the high crit property, but a monster using the item does not benefit from the property unless otherwise noted in its statistics.

## Healing Surges

Monsters have healing surges. However, few monsters have powers that let them spend healing surges. The number of healing surges a monster has is based on its level: 1–10, one healing surge; 11–20, two healing surges; 21 or higher, three healing surges.

Because they rarely come into play, healing surges are not included in a monster’s statistics block.

# THE NENTIR VALE

When the human empire of Nerath was at its height about three hundred years ago, the Nentir Vale stood as the northernmost extension of that great realm. Would-be settlers navigated the Nentir River through a trackless swamp or forged their way through a thick forest that separated this area from the rest of Nerath. At the end of their journey, they came upon a pocket of rolling grassland and light woods more than a hundred miles wide and ringed by mountains and forests—a frontier area that held both promise and peril for those who braved it.

Several settlements sprang up in the area. Foot paths between these outposts of civilization turned into well-traveled roads, and most of the towns flourished over the next two hundred years or so.

Then, nearly a century ago, chaos and ruin came to the Nentir Vale when an orc horde called Clan Bloodspear swarmed down out of the mountains to the northwest. By this time, the empire of Nerath had begun to crumble, and the hardy souls of the vale got no help from the south.

Before the Bloodspear War was over, much of the Nentir Vale had been ravaged. When the orcs finally withdrew, they left behind a broken and battered land. Now, for the second time in its history, the vale is a destination for those of stout heart and great prowess—adventurers who seek to turn this near-wilderness once again into a place where peaceful folk can forge a life for themselves.

## The Vale Today

Though the Nentir Vale is not under immediate threat of another large invasion, the area still has more than its share of monsters, evil gangs, and otherworldly dangers. Most of the communities that sprang up during the vale's brief heyday are still present, but greatly reduced in population and influence. Between these points of light lie vast tracts of untamed land and ruined outposts dating back to before the Bloodspear War.

The following sections serve as a summary of the vale's significant features, with emphasis on areas that are associated with the monsters and villains in this book.

### Cairngorm Peaks

Acting as a buffer between the vale and the savage creatures of the Stonemarch to the north and west, this mountain range provides a modicum of shelter while also serving as a hotbed of monstrous activity.

Perhaps most significantly, the green dragon Vestapalk makes his lair in these crags, and the kobolds of the Greenscale tribe hunt the foothills and the neighboring terrain under the dragon's aegis. The kobolds know enough to stay out of the high mountains, which are the domain of the fearsome perytons and the bizarre aberrations known as mooncalves.

The denizens of the Cairngorm Peaks will be the first to know if—most would say when—the orcs of Clan Blood-

spear decide to emerge from the Stonemarch and again brutalize the Nentir Vale.

### Dawnforge Mountains

Orcs are not likely to come pouring out of the mountain range at the eastern end of the vale. That said, the Dawnforge Mountains are no less dangerous than the Cairngorm Peaks, with many of the same races of monsters lurking in both places.

These mountains also hide dragons—foremost among them the three-headed monstrosity that calls herself Calastryx. The dragon is slumbering, still affected by a curse placed on her centuries ago, but fears are growing stronger that her reemergence is near. Like Vestapalk far to the west, she too has a tribe of kobolds that are fanatically subservient to her. The Emberdark kobolds can hardly wait till Calastryx wakes up, and they actively work to make that happen.

### Fallcrest

A hub for travel throughout the Nentir Vale, Fallcrest stands at the intersection of the Nentir River and the vale's two major trade routes. The town guard does a capable job of protecting the populace from raiders that emerge from the surrounding wilderness, but the biggest threats to Fallcrest's welfare might come from within the town itself.

One such threat is the Fell Court, a band of outcast tieflings that have gained a foothold in Fallcrest thanks to the subterfuge of their leader, Melech Ambrose. Melech's dream is to take control of the town and use that success as a springboard to spread the tieflings' influence throughout the vale.

At the same time, a gang of miscreants known as the River Rats are carving out their own realm in Fallcrest's lower-class districts, and their leader also has designs on expanding the organization to other communities.

### Gray Downs

This area of fog-shrouded low hills serves as the principal headquarters of the Gray Company, loyalists of old Nerath that dedicate themselves to finding magic items and other treasures lost when the empire fell. The leaders of the Gray Company, including at least one self-proclaimed heir to Nerath's fallen throne, seek the most-powerful relics of the lost empire—the enchanted Sword of Nerath and the fabled Threefold Crown that signifies the pact that the ancient emperors made with the Feywild, the Shadowfell, and the natural world.

Treasure hunters and explorers find the Gray Downs covered with burial mounds dating back to ancient times when primitive humans lived and hunted here. The hill clans are gone, but their spirits live on, guarded and shepherded by the undead creatures known—for good reason—as hounds of ill omen.

**The Sword Barrow:** Near the center of the Gray Downs sits the most renowned of the uncounted burial mounds that dot the area. Explorers who approach the



place might be accosted by the Barrowhaunts, a band of former adventurers who delved into the Sword Barrow and didn't come back alive.

## Harken Forest

In this expansive wooded area along the vale's southern edge, any tree might conceal a threat—or danger could come from the tree itself, if it happens to be one of the treants that watch over the deep forest. The Harken treants are bitter enemies of their counterparts in the Winterbole Forest.

Allied with the Harken treants is a group of elf druids who call themselves Harken's Heart. Laboring under an ancient curse, the druids are effectively trapped within the forest, and they spare no effort in their attempt to protect it.

The western part of the forest, near the Witchlight Fens, is the stomping grounds of the Daggerburg goblins. Raiding parties emerge from the woods to ambush and assault travelers and settlements as far away as Harkenwold.

The northernmost arm of Harken Forest is the temporary headquarters of the Hunter Spiders. This group of drow was stranded on the surface years ago when the tunnel back to their home city of Erelhei-Cinlu collapsed. They have reason to believe that concealed in this area of the forest, which they call Spiderhaunt Thicket, is another passage back to the Underdark. Until they find it, the drow guard their adopted territory against intruders.

**Harkenwold:** A cluster of small villages along the White River, the Harkenwold consists of independent settlements that have come together under the banner of

Baron Stockmer. The barony has drawn the attention of the Iron Circle, an army of mercenaries from a city far to the south. The band's leader, Lord Vhenyik, sees Harkenwold as a vulnerable spot where he and his soldiers can gain a foothold for an eventual invasion of the entire vale.

The Gravelstokes, one of the Nerath Empire's most prestigious families, rose to prominence by perfecting the art of assassination. Today, what's left of the family is sequestered in an unassuming mansion in the Harkenwold area while they prepare to regain their lost influence by once again offering their murderous services to the highest bidder.

## Lake Nen

The largest body of water in the Nentir Vale, Lake Nen stretches for nearly fifty miles across the southern edge of the Winterbole Forest. The eastern end supports the nearby village of Nenlast, whose residents ply the waters for fish that they trade with the dwarves of Hammerfast and other groups.

The shoreline of the northwestern end of the lake is part of the dominion of the Frost Witches, an eclectic group of magic-users who pay homage to the evil elemental prince Cryonax. The witches wield the power of cold to brutal effect, whether recruiting new members into their fold or kidnapping innocents. Although small groups of Frost Witches might be encountered anywhere within the Winterbole Forest, the largest concentration resides in the headquarters along the lake's edge that the group calls Cold Camp.

Adventurers who explore the lake shore might come upon a band of dragonborn, part of the group known as Dythan's Legion, as they search for clues to the location of an ancient Arkhosian enclave believed to be in this area. Legatus Dythan and his troops are determined to see the dragonborn empire restored to its former glory.

## Lake Wintermist

The fog that blankets Lake Wintermist is a year-round phenomenon, belying its name. The lake is inhospitable for most creatures, but those that thrive in frigid climes, such as white dragons, can be found here in abundance.

From time to time, someone passing through this area might come across an angry troll—or perhaps even a pair of them. The twin troll brothers Hurly and Burly both lair in caves not far from the lake—despite the fact that they can't stand each other. When they get into one of their family feuds, anyone who crosses their path could become a target of their rage.

## Moon Hills

This cluster of rugged terrain between the Nentir River and the King's Road is not rife with monsters and other villainous types, thanks mainly to the proximity of Fallcrest and the vigilance of its town guard. But there are threats in this area.

The people of Fallcrest tell stories about the Dark Drake of the Moon Hills, a sinister reptile that leads a pack of other evil drakes. These tales get more and more dramatic in the retelling—even though few claim to actually have seen one of the creatures.

The hills also occasionally play host to terrors that wander out of either the Witchlight Fens or the Harken Forest, including goblins, lizardfolk, giant spiders, and other random monsters in search of new prey.

## Ogrefist Hills

Partially framing the western edge of the vale, this area has few redeeming qualities in the eyes of those who know of the place or have visited there.

Somewhere in these hills hides the mouth of a tunnel leading up from the Underdark that the drow known as the Hunter Spiders used to reach the surface. When the tunnel collapsed a mile underground just a few years ago, the Hunter Spiders became stranded in the vale. It's not known whether the tunnel could be reopened from this side.

A detachment of the corps of dragonborn known as Dythan's Legion is active here, exploring rumors that a remnant of the old Arkhosian Empire lies somewhere in the caverns beneath this area.

The mysterious Temple of the Yellow Skulls, nestled among the rugged hills, might be the most infamous location in the area. The ancient temple is rumored to be the depository of powerful magic relics known as the Yellow Skulls.

## Old Hills

In days long gone, the first human settlers in the Nentir Vale made their homes in this region of rolling hills. Today, the area is firmly in the grasp of the vicious Blackfang gnolls.

Slavishly devoted to the demon god Yeenoghu, the gnolls emerge from their burrows in the hills to kill or waylay travelers. Many of their captives are taken underground and sacrificed in the Well of Demons at the center of the gnolls' many-chambered lair.

Other rumors concerning an evil older series of ruins spring up from time to time concerning the Old Hills. These tales, always told in whispers, speak of the ancient necropolis of Andok Sur. The place, if it exists at all, is said to be holy to the followers of Orcus. The ruins of the city of the dead, according to the rumors, are buried beneath the oldest section of the Old Hills.

**Raven Roost:** An old estate house known as Raven Roost Manor sits on a piece of prime land just north of the Harken Forest. The place is almost impossible for someone to approach without being seen—and that's just how the Raven Roost bandits like it.

The manor has recently been taken over by a group of criminals and cutthroats under the new leadership of a trio of shadar-kai. The bandits have a reputation for cruelty and mercilessness that extends far beyond the area in which they practice their grisly trade.

**Fiveleague House:** This large inn along the Trade Road near Hammerfast is a popular resting place for travelers heading to or from the vale's larger communities. Anyone of obvious means who's headed to Fallcrest might attract the attention of Barton, the human who runs Fiveleague House. Barton in turn gets word to the Raven Roost bandits, and he earns himself a cut of any valuables the bandits acquire thanks to his tips.

**Trade Road:** This dwarf-built highway is the most heavily traveled thoroughfare in the vale—which means it carries enough bounty to support more than one gang of thieves. Merchants and pilgrims who manage to avoid the notice of the Raven Roost bandits still have to contend with the Wolf Runners, a widely feared band of humans and wolves that work together in an uncanny fashion along the length of the Trade Road.

**Thunderspire:** The tallest natural spire in the vale, Thunderspire Mountain lies on the southern fringe of the Old Hills. Its top forever encased in a raging storm, Thunderspire is a majestic sight, even without considering what lies within its depths.

The Mages of Saruun control the caverns beneath Thunderspire Mountain that, centuries ago, made up the minotaur city of Saruun Khel. In a grand plaza called the Seven-Pillared Hall, the mages and their acolytes provide a place for natives of the Underdark to barter goods with surface-dwellers. All the while, the mages continue to seek out more of the artifacts and treasure left behind by the minotaurs.

Beyond the relative safety of the Seven-Pillared Hall, however, curious explorers can run into bandit gangs,



gnoll tribes, undead, and various denizens of the Underdark that aren't as congenial as those encountered within the purview of the Mages.

## Winterbole Forest

This vast woodland defines the northern boundary of the Nentir Vale. It is home to a multitude of monsters and villains, among which a few stand out as the would-be masters of their domain.

The white dragon Bitterstrike holds sway over a large part of the forest. Several of the Winterbole's denizens, most notably the Tigerclaw barbarians and the Frost Witches, pay fealty to the dragon. They keep her pacified and help her when she demands it, but none of them are truly and honestly on her side.

Even a dragon with an army of vassals could not hope to control the entire forest—and in fact the Tigerclaw barbarians consider themselves the real power to be reckoned with in the Winterbole. This wide-ranging band of humans and shifters claims to be descended from a great primal spirit, from which they draw their fighting skill and their determination.

The Frost Witches are not nearly as numerous as the Tigerclaws, but their desire for domination is no less strong. Clenderi, the witches' leader, would like nothing better than to convince Bitterstrike to join their cause in service to Cryonax.

The coniferous treants of the Winterbole Forest contribute some of their ranks to the cadre of Bitterstrike's vassals, and they typically stand with the dragon when it

becomes necessary to put down an incursion into the forest by humanoids. But their true enemies are the treants of the Harken Forest. These two groups harbor an enmity that dates back to the time when the two forests were a single expanse of green that covered nearly the entire vale.

## Witchlight Fens

The marsh that spreads out from both banks of the Nentir River is territory coveted by few intelligent creatures, for one principal reason: Shadowmire.

As elusive as he is deadly, this black dragon considers the Witchlight Fens his realm, and most of those who enter the swamp are not interested in contesting that claim. (They might, however, be looking for the secret location of his lair.)

The lizardfolk of the fens manage to live in harmony with the dragon, and some of the Witchlight lizardfolk tribes have come to worship him.

Near the eastern edge of the fens, where the wetland merges with Harken Forest, the lizardfolk of the Mistkiller tribe frequently skirmish with bands of Daggerburg goblins that make forays out of the forest.

A number of ruins related to the ancient empire of Bael Turath can be stumbled upon by those who explore the depths of the swamp. Some of these have been occupied by newer groups, including lizardfolk and goblin tribes, but others are so mysterious and have such an air of malignance as to drive all but the most desperate or deprived from their presence.

# ABYSSAL PLAGUE DEMONS

Alien entities from a dead universe, plague demons have the same chaotic and destructive nature as demons from the Abyss deep within the Elemental Chaos. Unleashed upon the natural world, they are a virulent infection that spreads like wildfire through a parched forest.

A ritual undertaken in ancient times released the exarchs of the demon lord of a dead universe, a universe where the demon lord succeeded in conquering its Abyss but also inadvertently destroyed the planes around it. Brought to the natural world, these exarchs planned to establish the Abyssal plague, unleash hordes of plague demons, and open the way for their demon lord to step into this existence.

Heroes of the age stepped forward to disrupt the ritual, and the threat of the plague demons seemed to have been dealt with. Recently, however, one of the exarchs escaped from its ancient prison, and the demon lord found a host in the natural world.

Now the Abyssal plague has ignited a fever that burns throughout the land. Plague demons of various forms have begun to appear, threatening civilized settlements across the Nentir Vale. The very touch of a plague demon can pass along a debilitating disease that can lead to death or even transformation in rare cases. The alien disease is capable of turning humans and other natural creatures into plague demons.

All plague demons so far observed share certain physical characteristics. A crimson crystal substance, either in liquid or solid form, is somehow incorporated into each plague demon's body. The crimson substance contains strands of silver and flecks of gold, and it appears as either an oozing liquid or as hard as an armored shell. The substance might manifest as veins of pulsating liquid crystal running between armored plates or undulating from cracks in the skin, solid crystal protrusions, or even crystalline weapons emerging from limbs.

Plague Demon	Level 5 Minion Skirmisher
<b>Chaos Hound</b>	
Medium elemental beast (demon)	XP 50
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +7
AC 19, Fortitude 18, Reflex 17, Will 15	Perception +3
Speed 8	Darkvision
<b>TRAITS</b>	
<b>Pack Attack</b>	
The plague demon's attacks deal 2 extra damage for each other plague demon that is adjacent to the target.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Bite (disease)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage, and the plague demon can shift 1 square. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts Abyssal plague (stage 1).	
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 16 (+5) Wis 12 (+3)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 5 (-1) Cha 10 (+2)
Alignment chaotic evil	Languages –

Plague Demon	Level 5 Minion Soldier
<b>Chaos Footsoldier</b>	
Medium elemental beast (demon)	XP 50
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +6
AC 21, Fortitude 19, Reflex 17, Will 15	Perception +7
Speed 6	Darkvision
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⊕ <b>Grabbing Claws</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 15) if the plague demon has no creature grabbed.	
↓ <b>Bite (disease)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the plague demon); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts Abyssal plague (stage 1).	
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 14 (+4) Wis 11 (+2)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 7 (+0) Cha 10 (+2)
Alignment chaotic evil	Languages –

## Abyssal Plague Level 8 Disease

Those infected by this disease slowly develop oozing sores, blisters, and growths that appear as crimson crystal laced with veins of silver and flecks of gold. The crystal can be in either liquid or solid form.

**Stage 0:** The target recovers from the disease.

**Stage 1:** While affected by stage 1, the target exhibits sores and growths across 10 percent of the body and loses a healing surge.

**Stage 2:** While affected by stage 2, the target has sores and growths over 50 percent of the body and loses a healing surge. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex, and is slowed.

**Check (Stage 1 or Stage 2):** At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.

11 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.

12-15: No change.

16 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

**Stage 3:** While affected by stage 3, the target has sores and growths over 90 percent of the body. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex, and is slowed. In addition, the target becomes increasingly disoriented and chaotic as the demonic nature of the disease takes hold.

**Check (Stage 3):** At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 3.

11 or Lower: The target dies.

12-23: No change.

24 or Higher: The target transforms into a plague demon chaos beast.