

The Whisperers

Like a rotting carcass heaves and festers from the unseen motion of worms, the dead and dying gods roil in their agony, their dreams bubbling to the surface of their great tomb-corpses in a mockery of breath. There they ooze, pearls of divine nightmares that congeal into shape, and crawl down the vast expanses of these Labyrinthine mausoleums to wreak havoc in the Nameless Realm.

The Whisperers are small creatures, no taller than a child of twelve; human-like in the shape of their hands and feet, dog-like in that of their elongated faces and tail, lizard-like in the scaly texture of their skin, they are albino and blind, though their senses of smell, taste and hearing are incredibly acute. They dwell in the darkest recesses of the Underworld, where they are seen as annoying pests or marauding bandits; and in the corridors of the Labyrinth, where they are seen as a dangerous, primitive people that cannot be left unchecked. The Whisperers are drawn to the sounds of metal and the smell of man-made tools; though they have no industry of their own, they steal all crafted objects they can from human ghosts, cladding themselves in a motley of armor pieces of different cultures and time periods, wearing any forged weapon they can find, and decorating their attire with ornaments they do not understand.

Most bands of Whisperers number no more than two dozen individuals; they are federated by happenstance, a desire for survival, and brutal violence - led either by the biggest, strongest of the bunch, or by the most cunning one who slit the throats of his rivals. In such groups they creep along the shores of the rivers of oblivion, attacking Underworld settlement for more weapons, ornaments and pieces of attire. Though they are usually repelled, it is never without the loss of some item to one cunning thief or another; and though most bands are short-lived, a Whisperer who survive long enough to gather a panoply that pleases his vanity creeps back to the confluence of rivers, and to the black tunnels beneath the Underworld itself to join his brethren.

There in the shadow, these blind creatures gather and pronounce solemn oaths and hissing sermons; in the narrowest, most secluded caves and hallways of the Labyrinth, always evading the pursuit of hateful mortwights, gathers the Cult of Whispers. Each one of the dwarfish creatures that compose it was born of a boiling nightmare from the fitful slumber of the great corpse-god they revere; all are agitated by chaotic visions, and an all-consuming desire to answer - what? Broken fragments of questions whose answers have long ago lost any meaning; pieces of sentence, memories of dead races, shards of a name that once called thunder and shaped the land. In their gatherings, the blind creatures croak these pieces of wisdom, they seek answer, and those among them that have survived the longest, whose panoply has the most delightful metallic sound, the most ravishing smell of blood and sweat, take place on pedestals to preach to their people their aberrant gospel, a grotesque religion made of the cobbled fragments of knowledge they each possess.

These cults are not united; the Whisperers form nations of their own, ramshackle troglodytic cities carved into the shifting walls of the Labyrinth. They go to war against one another and against the cities of the nephwrack priest-kings alike; they die in droves in both cases, but this does not matter to them, for theirs is a vision of life twisted and terrifying. To most outsiders who only interact with their skirmishers and roaming youths, the Whisperers appear cowardly and meek, but this is a false conclusion brought by their preference for cunning, underhanded victories. The Whisperers believe that their true self is the shard of nightmare at the core of their being, around which their corpus is but a fragile shell, easily discarded. Should they die, they will dissolve back into the nightmares of the one they call the Great Temple; and in time they will bubble back to the surface and take form again. Thus, they believe, they are the most immortal of all of the Underworld's beings, for they are as eternal as the Great Temple itself.

Whisperer Raider

This individual has not yet earned a name from its prowess on the "surface" - the Underworld proper - and thus is referred to as "spearman," from his weapon of choice. He is wearing a cuirass of rusted iron stolen from the tent of a war ghost on the march, a skirt of black-and-white feathers plucked from the body of a valkure his entire band worked together to bring down, and an obsidian-tipped spear; though its point is enchanted and never breaks, the spearman dislikes it for not being made of good metal, and sometimes shouts curses and insults at it in the night. His band numbers twelve warriors such as him, raiding settlements in the Eastern Underworld; two months ago they took a ghost-child in a raid for amusement, and made her their mascot; they are now known as the Wailers to the villages they harass, for their coming is heralded by the cries of the babe. Since it will never grow up, they will likely eat her when her crying gets tiresome; the spearman looks at the child, and thinks that he would rather not eat her, and has fantasies of striking out on his own with the babe strapped to his back.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Sneaking: 5 dice; Feats of Strength: 4 dice (may attempt Strength 2 feats); Senses: 5 dice (see Senses); Tracking: 6 dice (see Senses)

Appearance 2 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Spear): 10 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 9), carries disease (see Merits).

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Merits

Senses: Whisperers ignore most penalties from blindness, compensating with smell, taste and hearing; they can operate perfectly in the dark. Furthermore, they add two bonus successes to

all Perception-based rolls to notice or follow strong scents; they often carry animal skins filled with putrid oils in order to “tag” their targets for easy tracking.

Diseased Bite: Whisperers consume horrible fruits and roots that grow in their lightless cities as treats, leaving their maws festering with liquid sickness; their bite can infect ghosts as it would humans, and humans must roll at Virulence 4 to avoid infection.

Dark-Dwellers: The corpus of a Whisperer is a thin shell of reality, not fully cohesive; under the light of the sun or moon, they suffer one point of aggravated damage per round until dissolution. As such, the rare times they appear in Creation, they remain confined to the darkest tunnels of the underground.

Whisperer Priest

N'dchuck lords over a parish of a thousand of her kind with hissing sermons whose words enthrall her listener; rumors among her flock have it that she has lived in this incarnation for more than ten years, a rarity for her race. Crippled in one leg, she limps along, supporting herself on a staff of wrought iron; she is most often seen hunched over under the weight of her apparel, feathered tassels and silver necklaces rippling around her gaunt figure, with only the barest glimpse of the bronze armor beneath. She wears a pendant in which a single eyeball has been set in a Labyrinthine iron socket; through it, she sees like mortals do. Legend has it that she wrestled the secrets of necromancy from her great nemesis, the Magistrate of Ashen Rivers; with it she wrought a great, hidden temple beneath the rivers, where her people worship her like a goddess. The sole purpose of her existence as she sees it is to conquer the two weaker parishes above hers, and to unite their strength to conquer the Magistrate's great canal-city that sits on the shores of oblivion. To this purpose, she will make her ragtag bands of raiders into a true army.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal notes: 30

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command: 7 dice; Mad sermons: 7 dice; Feats of Strength: 4 dice (may attempt Strength 2 feats); Senses: 8 dice (see Senses); Tracking: 8 dice (see Scent)

Appearance 4 (Hideous, except to other Whisperers), Resolve 4, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Bronze Sword): 8 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Iron Staff): 7 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 9), carries disease (see Merits).

Combat Movement: 3 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0

Merits

Cult 2: An underground city of a thousand Whisperers gather in their fanatical praise of N'dchuk, the Sighted Mother, the Wresler of Sorcery.

Senses: Thanks to her eye-pendant, N'dchuk is not actually blind; while she still does not suffer from darkness penalties, she also adds one success to all sensory rolls when in light. Furthermore, she adds two bonus successes to all Perception-based rolls to notice or follow strong scents.

Diseased Bite: Whisperers consume horrible fruits and roots that grow in their lightless cities as treats, leaving their maws festering with liquid sickness; their bite can infect ghosts as it would humans, and humans must roll at Virulence 4 to avoid infection.

Dark-Dwellers: The corpus of a Whisperer is a thin shell of reality, not fully cohesive; under the light of the sun or moon, they suffer one point of aggravated damage per round until dissolution. As such, the rare times they appear in Creation, they remain confined to the darkest tunnels of the underground.

The Eye: Rarely, the sorcerer-priestess will bequeath her necklace to a faithful and capable servant for a time; this allows her to see through the eye, and communicate mentally with the wearer, though she cannot compel them in any way. Once per year, she may spend one Willpower to summon the pendant back to her if it seems like it is about to be lost.

Offensive Charms

Spiteful Curse (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): Designating a victim with the tip of her staff, N'dchuk hisses a pronouncement of doom in a tongue forgotten by all but her people; she rolls 11 dice against that individual's Resolve. On a success, the next attack intended to kill them will gain two successes on its attack roll.

Staff of Decay (5m, Supplemental, Scene-long, Decisive-only, Essence 2): Channeling necrotic Essence through her iron staff, N'dchuk gathers a bubble of green-black energy at its tip, which is released if she hits her target, inflicting to the body part it touches the full corrosion of ages, skin wrinkling and drying and rotting until it turns to dust. N'dchuk's player must choose which part is targetted upon declaring the attack; if it inflicts damage, all actions using this body part suffer a -3 penalty for the rest of the scene, then a -1 penalty until all damage from the attack is fully healed. This Charm may only be used once per scene, but is reset by dipping her staff in the blood of a fallen opponent, a miscellaneous action.

Torrent from the Black River (1wp, Simple): This is a necromancy spell. Gathering the sorcerous motes to use it takes N'dchuk three turns; once per scene, using her spell through a stunt allows her to reduce this duration to two turns; once per scene, making a sacrifice of a living creature or a sentient ghost as a miscellaneous action that cannot be flurried furthermore

reduces this duration by one turn. Flowing darkness raises around N'dchuk, surrounds her, then rushes to engulf her enemies, dissolving flesh and soul through the terrible power of oblivion. This is an undodgeable **decisive** attack applied in a line against enemies out to medium range, wide enough to strike all opponents within one range band of its center. It has an attack roll of 12 dice, a raw damage of (3 + extra successes) or (7 + extra successes) against battle groups; battle groups also suffer a -2 penalty to Defense against this attack. It does not reduce N'dchuk to base initiative. Most "soft" organic equipment, such as furs, clothes and leather armor, are destroyed by this spell.