

Witchoil Experiment

Witchoil is perhaps the most commonly-available form of planarite. Unensouled, it can channel the tenebrous and necromantic power of the Bleak Gate. Ensouled, witchoil can infuse a vessel with unparalleled might. Naturally, it is terribly heinous to trap minds and souls in torturous oil-prisons and permanently obliterate them from existence, but some forward-thinking and open-minded antagonists are not about to let some scruples get in the way of arcanoscientific progress and the manufacturing of powerful minions.

While a witchoil experiment is being created, a spirit medium can hear the moans and wails of the minds and souls within the witchoil, who are in indescribable terror. However, this sense is imprecise; in a city, for example, it may merely identify several streets in which a witchoil experiment is being crafted.

A History of Oily Creations

In 395 AOV, over a century before the wayfarer's engine, the Bleak Court fey arcanosmith Melanie Nifelis invented the rusted iron soul-eater engine. It consumed both unensouled witchoil and a much smaller proportion of ensouled witchoil, obliterating at least one soul every few days, generating an immense magnitude of dark and deathly power.

Later, she developed the first witchoil golem, then the first witchoil monstrosity, a mangled animal augmented by a soul-eater engine. Her final invention was the first shadow hound, a mortal humanoid imbued with ensouled witchoil.

Depending on who's telling the story, her designs were stolen by Arroviaan necrotechnologists, bought by faceless conspirators, or recovered by decent upstanding Risuri patriots from a cabal of mad scientists. The techniques were carefully hidden, but ever since, others enthralled by the potential of witchoil have created their own versions of these three witchoil experiments.

Graced by the Glistening Oil

Regional Effects. Sites frequented by witchoil experiments are touched favorably by the Bleak Gate, which protects its children from perceptions and hexes alike. The following phenomena manifest in those areas, and extend across the boundaries of the Waking and its parallel realms:

- Planar portals to and from the Bleak Gate are more common. Planarite manifests around them, particularly witchoil; and afterlife shades seep through, struggling to deliver messages beyond the grave.
- Witchoil experiments have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.
- Curses affecting any witchoil experiments are suppressed.

If all of the witchoil experiments frequenting a site die, these effects end immediately.

Witchoil Golem

Wizards have been weaving magic into inanimate objects to create golems for ages, but the soul-eater engine could animate any body it was placed in, and required less magical expertise than traditional golem construction. The only drawback is that the creator had to be unbothered by tormenting the souls consumed in the engine's witchoil fuel.

Witchoil Golem

Large construct

Armor Class 17

HP 134 (18d10+36)

Speed 20 ft.

Str 20, **Dex** 6, **Con** 14, **Int** 3, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands the language of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 7 (2900 XP)

Traits

Bleak Aura

The golem's attacks smear you with witchoil, drawing you and those nearby toward the Bleak Gate.

The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Some of the golem's attacks can affect a creature with its bleak aura. At the start of the golem's turn, each affected creature and each creature within 10 feet of one of them takes 5 (1d10) necrotic damage.

However, that creature's weapon attacks count as magical for the purpose of harming the golem.

A creature can remove the bleak aura from itself by immersing in water, taking fire damage, or spending an action to wipe the oil off.

Witchoil Ward

The dull etched runes on the golem flare brighter and brighter as you assail it with magic. Their light seems to slow projectiles.

The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects. Ranged attacks against it that originate more than 20 feet away have disadvantage. If those attacks already have disadvantage from being at long range, they automatically miss.

Witchoil Breach

The glowing runes go dark, and then the golem's torso shatters, spraying forth gallons of searing witchoil. The suddenly hollow golem teeters, but catches itself on a mangled forelimb.

When the golem is first reduced to 30 HP or fewer, its souleater engine ruptures in a powerful explosion.

Each creature within 20 feet takes 10 (3d6) fire damage, or half as much if it succeeds a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. Each creature in the area is affected by the golem's bleak aura.

Thereafter, the golem's speed increases to 40 ft., and it gains a climb speed of 40 ft., but it loses witchoil ward.

Actions

Multiattack

The golem makes two attacks.

Witchoil Fist

Black oil leaks from between the joints of its fist.

Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit; reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d8+5) bludgeoning damage and the target is affected by the golem's bleak aura.

Smash Aside

It plows through creatures and hurls objects in its way.

The golem throws an object of up to Medium size, making the following attack.

Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit; range 20 ft., one target. **Hit:** 9 (1d8+5) bludgeoning damage.

Special: Alternately, it can try to shove a Medium or smaller creature, and if it succeeds it throws the creature. If it hits with the attack, the thrown creature takes the same damage.

Technological Weaknesses

Howl of Souls

The psychic energy provokes a cacophonous wail of spirits, trying to break free of the golem's engine that is burning their souls as fuel.

When the golem takes psychic damage, the souls in its souleater engine are briefly empowered, and they fight against the wards holding them in. The golem's bleak aura does no damage on its next turn.

Cold Fragility

When the cold hits the scalding heat of its torso, the metal starts to screech. A hit by the right weapon might shatter it.

When the golem takes cold damage, if any single weapon attack deals 15 or more damage to it in the next turn, this triggers witchoil breach (regardless of how many hit points the golem has) if it hasn't already triggered.

Witchoil Monstrosity

Witchoil monstrosities start as mundane animals which are inhumanely mangled over the course of a horrific surgery. A soul-eater engine is installed amidst its vital organs and linked biomechanically to the entirety of its muscular structure, augmenting the beast with dark and supernatural power.

Contrary to their gruesome appearances and eerie silence, witchoil monstrosities are not actually undead, though it is currently unknown whether these surgically-mutilated abominations are in constant pain. Such is unlikely to concern the dark conspiracies and mad scientists who typically create and employ these disfigured animals.

Below is the **flayed jaguar**, the first type of witchoil monstrosity to have ever been created. Despite its vicious lethality, the design of this dark creature comes with an unusual weakness in the form of its steel chest-plate and command collar. Sometimes those who craft these fleshless felines drape them in illusions to conceal their monstrous appearance, but the stench of witchoil lingers around them like burnt engine grease.

Flayed Jaguar

Medium monstrosity

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 50 ft., climb 40 ft.

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 6, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 7

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +3

Skills Athletics +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities necrotic

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands the languages of its creator
but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Traits

Abnegation (1/Encounter)

If the jaguar fails a saving throw, it can succeed instead. Alternatively, it can expend this to safely pass through conjurations and evocations until the end of its next turn.

Crepusculous and Adumbral

Though clearly a beast of flesh and blood, the edges of its body drift away in wisps of shadow.

The jaguar has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. Its weapon attacks are magical. Magical darkness doesn't impede its darkvision.

Cursed Blood

You stab the jaguar's flayed and unnatural muscles and sinew. Pulsating veins and arteries snap open, and its black blood sizzles and releases a horrid stench where it stains the ground.

Whenever the jaguar takes piercing or slashing damage, it sprays out dark blood. Each creature within 5 feet of the jaguar cannot regain hit points until the end of its next turn.

Additionally, until the end of the jaguar's next turn, each space it moves through becomes contaminated difficult terrain until it is scrubbed clean. Each time a creature enters this contaminated difficult terrain or ends its turn there, it cannot regain hit points until the end of its next turn.

Keen Smell

The jaguar has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

No Escape

You can see the muscles of the skinless jaguar flex as it swipes a claw at your leg and trips you.

If the hits with an opportunity attack, the target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Volatile Existence

When the jaguar is reduced to 0 hit points, it dies. Any of its unensouled witchoil degenerates into regular oil, though its ensouled witchoil can still be gathered up.

Actions

Multiattack

The jaguar makes two claw attacks. If the target is prone, it instead makes two claw attacks and a bite attack.

Bite

Every inch of the jaguar's bared skull is visible to you as the beast clamps down. It is a wonder that this creature is not actually undead.

Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d12 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a prone Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 12), and the jaguar cannot bite another target until this grapple ends.

Claw

Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Technological Weaknesses

Witchoil Heart

A steel plate is bolted directly into the ribcage of the poor creature, and black witchoil pumps across it in pulses, like the beating of a heart.

If the jaguar's speed is 0, a creature within reach can spend an action to attempt a DC 13 Strength check to remove the steel plate covering the jaguar's heart. On a success, the jaguar takes 10 points of damage at the start of each of its turns, and the next attack that deals damage to the jaguar kills it.

Command Collar

A creature that grappling the jaguar can grab its collar and spend a bonus action to speak, "Obey," then attempt a DC 13 Charisma check to subjugate the jaguar. On a success, for 1 minute, the jaguar is charmed by the creature that subjugated it and obeys that creature's verbal or telepathic commands, though it will defend itself if attacked, ignoring any commands. The charm lasts for one minute.

If the subjugation attempt fails, the creature can try again, assuming it's fine getting mauled in the meanwhile.

While the jaguar is charmed, the character who charmed it can remove the witchoil heart, or can safely open it to refill it with ensouled witchoil. If a character does so, the jaguar becomes loyal to the character for a week.

Shadow Hound

Shadow hounds are not actual dog-like creatures, but rather mortal or fey humanoids infused with ensouled witchoil through a dark ceremony. Often these beings are victims transmuted against their will, but some rare few volunteer for the transmogrification. The ritual leaves their skin flayed, but they cloak themselves in impenetrable, angular shadows. Only by banishing the shadow can the hound be truly harmed.

Shadow Hound Killer

Medium humanoid (any species)

Armor Class 15

HP 75 (10d8+30)

Speed 30 ft.

Str 13, **Dex** 20, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 13

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Various

Challenge 5 (450 XP)

Traits

Abnegation (1/Encounter)

If the killer fails a saving throw, it can succeed instead.

Alternatively, it can expend this to safely pass through conjurations and evocations until the end of its next turn.

Crepusculous and Adumbral

Though clearly a beast of flesh and blood, the edges of its body drift away in wisps of shadow.

The killer has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. Its weapon attacks are magical. Magical darkness doesn't impede its darkvision.

Actions

Claw of Shadow

His fingers are like pitch black blades, infinitely sharp.

He swipes his hand, and though he doesn't touch you, blood erupts from your skin, and cold pours into your flesh.

Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit; reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d8+5) piercing damage.

If the target is a living creature and it takes any damage from this attack, its life is linked to the Bleak Gate, and it bleeds copiously, feeling a terrible chill. While linked this way, it cannot heal hit points. Additionally, it takes 10 (3d6) cold damage at the start of each of its turn. Its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken.

The link lasts until the creature ends its turn in a brightly lit area, or until a creature spends an action and makes a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check to stanch the bleeding.

Bonus Actions

Hide in Shadows

The killer casts *darkness*, then becomes invisible if it is in area of dim light or darkness, and it remains invisible until it attacks, enters a brightly lit area, or takes radiant damage. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma.

Reactions

Draw the Black Veil Shut (1/Encounter)

He snarls in pain, his voice clearly human despite his monstrous form. Then the world goes completely dark.

When an attack damages the killer, it uses *hide in shadows* and then teleports 30 feet to a location it can see.

Technological Weakness

Hideous Reveal

Light burns away the man's matte black skin, revealing for a moment raw muscle and sinew and weeping rivulets of blood.

Whenever the killer takes radiant damage or either enters or ends its turn in a brightly lit area, it becomes visible if it previously hid with *hide in shadows*. Additionally, until the end of its next turn it loses its damage resistances, and cannot use *hide in shadows* or *draw the dark veil shut*.