

Monster ENCyclopedia: Kraken

This is a series of articles about specific monsters from D&D's history. Each entry takes a look at the origin of one D&D creature, and tracks its appearances and evolution across different editions. For the letter "K" we're taking a look at one the largest and oldest of all D&D creatures—the kraken.

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Origins

The first mention of the kraken in D&D is in 1976, when it appeared in *Supplement IV: Gods, Demigods & Heroes*. That book cites as a source a fantasy novel by A. Merritt titled *Dwellers in the Mirage*, first published in 1932, but the history of the kraken as a mythological creature dates back several centuries earlier than that. *Dragon: Monster Ecologies* references Erik Pontoppidan's *Natural History of Norway* (1752), which describes the kraken as a floating island one and a half miles long. There are even older references in Icelandic literature dating back to the 13th-century in which a kraken-like creature known as the hafgufa is described.



Dragon: Monster Ecologies (2007), from the original by Pierre Dénys de Montfort (1801)

Some of these early descriptions compare the kraken to a giant whale or crab rather than a squid-like creature, but since the 18th century, most kraken myths give it the appearance of an enormous octopus, and it is commonly believed that sailors' sightings of krakens were actually giant squids.

The kraken in *Supplement IV* appears in the section on Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age, the setting of Conan the Barbarian. It is a singular creature, which must be summoned from another dimension by an evil priest. Described as a giant octopus able to live on land, the kraken feeds on human souls. A victim failing a saving throw is drained of all his or her levels. The beast has an armor class of -2, a move of 18", 100 hit points and combat ability equivalent to a 15th-level fighter. This kraken is only superficially the same as later versions, and might be better classified as "Kraken, Hyborian".

1st Edition

The *Monster Manual II* kraken is a potent beast. Not only does the illustration make it look like a very angry squid, it has 20 hit dice and up to 9 attacks. Theoretically, if all of these attacks were to inflict maximum damage, the kraken would do 92 points of damage. In 1st Edition terms, that makes it a deadly threat.

The kraken already has an origin story, or at least an origin legend. As the story goes, at some time in the past, krakens were smaller creatures and lived in shallow coastal waters. They had human worshippers who brought them sacrifices. Following either a natural upheaval or a battle with the forces of good, the remaining krakens retreated to the ocean depths. Limited in number, the survivors grew in size and power. Krakens today lair in submarine caverns at least 1000 feet below the surface. It is rumoured that even now some krakens keep and breed human slaves in their lairs as servants and for food. (Much later, in the *Ecology of the Kraken*, we learn that krakens use the words "meal" and "slave" interchangeably.)



Monster Manual II (1983)

Krakens seek to kill any good creatures and devour anything small enough to be eaten, which given their size, includes most other things. They are aggressive hunters, and capable of attacking ships to drag them down, sometimes keeping any survivors to restock their pool of slaves. They are capable of dragging vessels of up to 60 feet in length beneath the water. Large ships are first dragged to a halt (which usually takes no longer than 10 rounds), and then constricted using the kraken's tentacles. Once the ship is damaged, it begins to take in water, and eventually the kraken will drag it beneath the waves.

There are some unnecessarily complicated rules for combat with a kraken. Different parts of the creature have different armor classes, the body benefitting from a thick shell. The head and the tentacles have the

same AC, but tentacles can be severed with 16 points of damage from sharp weapons. This also frees anyone in that tentacle's grasp. A kraken will retreat beneath the waves if more than two tentacles are severed, or if it is still under attack and already has prey held in four or more tentacles (enough food).

An uninjured kraken has ten tentacles, two of which are covered in barbs and used to rake a target (2-12 damage) and move it towards the kraken's beak, where it can be bitten (5-20 damage). Of the remaining eight tentacles, a maximum of six at once can be used for constriction (2-8 damage on the first round, 3-12 thereafter). The remainder are used by the kraken to anchor and stabilize itself.

Krakens have a swim speed of 3" and are capable of jetting backwards at a speedy 21". This form of locomotion is often combined with the release of a cloud of poisonous ink. Anyone inside the cloud takes 1-4 points of damage per round until it becomes sufficiently diluted (after 2-5 rounds).

Krakens can breathe both air and water, and have an innate power to create a large sphere or hemisphere of *airy water* which lasts a full day. This is useful for keeping slaves alive. They have a small repertoire of other spell-like abilities including *faerie fire* (which lasts eight hours), *control temperature* (40' radius, lasts a day), *controls winds* and *weather summoning* (each once per day). Finally, they can use *animal summoning III* three times per day, but only to summon (and not control) fish.

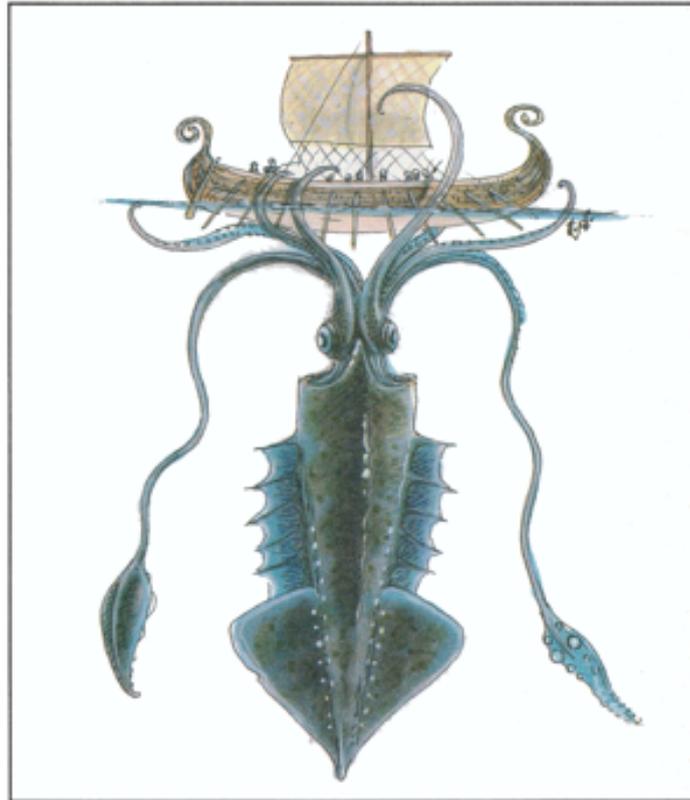
The *Monster Manual II* was the last of the three AD&D monster books to be released, so the kraken does not appear in many 1st Edition supplements. *T1-4: Temple of Elemental Evil* has a pool chamber with a mosaic kraken, but not a real one. The lands of Deepearth, detailed in the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, are inhabited by a massive kraken that has adapted itself to live in freshwater. It has more than fifty slaves (humans, drow, duergar, svirfneblin and even kuo-toa) toiling away to expand its cavern lair.

To Kill a Kraken is a short adventure in *I13: Adventure Pack I*. One of the goals of the adventure is indeed to kill a kraken, but there is a complicated backdrop of political intrigue likely to overshadow the hunt for the beast. The political shenanigans extend into the watery depths, as a powerful mage-vampire is competing with the kraken for dominion over the ocean. The kraken's lair is located in a volcanically active portion of the seabed, as evidenced by lava pillows and sporadic bubbles of steam.

The obligatory listing in *Dragon #93's* pronunciation guide indicates that kraken can be spoken as either KRAY-ken or KRA-ken. *Dragon #114* provides a hit location table for giant cephalopods; attacks from the front hit tentacles 80% of the time and the head 20% of the time, attacks from the side reduce the chances of hitting tentacles to 50% and give a 30% chance of hitting the body instead. An extraordinarily detailed article on ships in *Dragon #116* gives precise numbers for the damage a kraken can do to a seafaring craft (5-10 points of hull damage per round).

2nd Edition

In 2nd Edition the kraken is treated as a very rare form of giant squid found only in deep oceans. It appears as part of the "Squid, Giant" entry in the *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* and again in the *Monstrous Manual*. The kraken gets its first color picture in the *Monstrous Manual*. A longship is shown in the clutches of a kraken, providing a visual sense of scale missing from earlier depictions.



Monstrous Manual (1993)

Changes from 1st Edition include an increase in size to gargantuan (90'+ long) and a fixed number of attacks (9!). The amount of damage inflicted by the kraken's attacks has been beefed up somewhat, with the maximum possible damage per round now sitting at 136 hit points. The raking tentacles now do 3d6 damage (instead of 2d6), its beak does 7d4 (instead of 5d4) and the constricting tentacles do 2d6 damage in the first round and 3d6 thereafter (previously 2d4 and 3d4). It takes slightly more points of damage (18 instead of 16) to sever a tentacle, and the text clarifies that the tentacles' hit points are in addition to the 20 hit dice the rest of the creature has.

Its fighting tactics are the same as before, but a kraken is now only 80% likely to retreat if more than two tentacles are severed, and only 50% likely to retreat if it has prey in at least four tentacles. The kraken's ink cloud is twice as deadly, now doing 2d4 damage per round. It has exactly the same innate magical abilities as it did in 1st Edition.

The *Monstrous Manual* describes the kraken as "one of the most deadly monsters in existence", and their genius level intelligence means that they often end up in control of entire regions of the underwater world. They are such aggressive hunters that tropical islands in the vicinity of a kraken's lair frequently end up stripped of all animal and humanoid life. An ominous twist is given to the origin story of krakens retreating from the shallows to the depths of the sea; it is said that at some point in the future the krakens will rise again.

PHBR11: The Complete Ranger's Handbook lists the kraken as a possible species enemy for a ranger. Even though this choice includes giant squids, it still seems like a rather career-limiting selection. The *Forgotten Realms* accessory *FOR3: Pirates of the Fallen Stars* provides information on the towing capabilities of various creatures. Apparently a kraken is capable of towing a ship with 70 tons of cargo at a towing speed of 1.



Dragon #250 (1998)

The *Deck of Encounters, Set Two* contains a completely vanilla kraken encounter. Disturbed from its slumber by a terrible storm, the kraken happens to attack the vessel on which the PCs are traveling. The kraken will retreat if the storm dies down, only to return the following evening to finish its job of devouring all on board.

Night Below includes a bloated kraken living on the bed of the Sunless Sea. Its lair is located in the remains of a sunken drow settlement, which it shares with a drow banshee. The kraken sometimes visits the nearby Isle of Derangement where it is worshiped by a small group of insane kuo-toa. The kraken finds this amusing, which doesn't stop it from snacking on a worshiper whenever it visits.



Dungeon Builder's Guidebook (1998)

The *Dungeon Builder's Guidebook* includes a kraken in the underwater section of the sample dungeon. The entrance to the kraken's lair is guarded by six saltwater trolls, but after the battle with the trolls begins, several of the ridges running along the chamber floor rise up to assist them. It turns out that they are not part of the stonework, but the kraken's tentacles, extending here from where the creature lies in wait nearby.

3rd Edition

From 1st to 2nd Edition, there was a substantial increase in the kraken's power. This continues in the 3rd Edition *Monster Manual*, but not as sharply. The kraken still has 20 hit dice, but as a magical beast, they are d10s, and it gets a hefty 180 hit point bonus on top of that. That's just a default-sized specimen; krakens can advance to colossal size and an astounding 60 hit dice.

For some reason, the kraken's number of tentacles has dropped from ten to eight, but the creature's attacks follow the same pattern as in 2nd Edition — two raking tentacles, six crushing tentacles and a savage bite. The damage from these has again received a slight boost. Ignoring any critical hits, the theoretical maximum damage per round is now up to 158 points.



Monster Manual (2000)

Some of the cephalopod's special attacks have been simplified to use the rules for grappling. Damage to the tentacles is based on successful sundering attacks, and the constricting arms have fewer hit points than the two raking ones (10 and 20 hit points respectively). The kraken still withdraws from combat if enough of its limbs are severed, but now regrows lost tentacles in 1d10+10 days.

The kraken's ink cloud is no longer poisonous, and simply provides concealment to anyone inside it. The kraken's spell-like abilities have been slightly reduced. It can still *control weather* and *control winds* once per day, but the other spells have been replaced by *dominate animal* and *resist energy*, both of which are more likely to be useful in combat. Krakens can speak both Common and Aquan, and have both darkvision (60') and low-light vision. There is nothing new in the accompanying lore; krakens remain intelligent and cruel rulers of undersea regions where they keep and breed slaves. As previously, they occasionally surface to attack ships and feature in adventures.

There are no substantial differences between the kraken in the 3rd Edition *Monster Manual* and the version in the *Monster Manual v.3.5*. Some of the kraken's skills have slightly different scores, and its favored environment has been refined from "any aquatic" to "temperate aquatic".

Scattered throughout 3rd Edition sources are a few more game mechanics relating to krakens. *Dragon #293* has an article titled *Monsters with Class* which sets out Effective Character Levels (ECLs) for a number of monster races. For those not familiar with 3rd Edition rules, ECLs are a mechanism of balancing player character monsters against normal PCs. Hence a 3rd-level centaur druid (ECL 7) would be balanced in a

party of 10th-level characters. The kraken is listed in the article as having an ECL of 28, so a sneaky kraken thief would be a good fit for an epic-level campaign.

Dragon #300 contains a sealed section promoting the *Book of Vile Darkness*. One of the articles in that section is *The Minions of Darkness*, which presents the deep thrall class. This is a very specialized prestige class, and can only be chosen by someone who has been taken prisoner by a kraken. A kraken picks out exceptional individuals from its slave pools for special treatment. If a slave proves worthy, the kraken marks him or her with sucker wounds that become deep scars. Now a thrall, the slave begins to gain special powers including tentacle-like arms and huge kraken eyes. Deep thralls are used by a kraken to undertake missions on the surface world. While there, they are often forced to hide their facial scars using magic or beneath deep hoods.



Deep Thrall, *Dragon #300* (2002)

The Sea Witch class in *Stormwrack* is specifically noted as suitable for a kraken. A member of this class is a chaotic mage with powers over water and the ability to summon immense whirlpools, exotic creatures from the ocean depths, and even eventually conjure entire phantom ships.

In the variant combat rules in *Unearthed Arcana* the kraken's tentacles are one type of attack that can easily ignore a creature's facing to reach around and make a flanking attack.



Dragon: Monster Ecologies (2007)

The *Ecology of the Kraken*, written by Richard Pett, first appeared in *Dragon #334* and was reprinted in *Dragon: Monster Ecologies* two years later. It offers a few new kraken origin stories. One proposes that evil gods made krakens to keep land-dwelling creatures out of the oceans. Another suggests that aboleths created the krakens. The third, and most intriguing is the story that krakens themselves believe. That they came from the mouth of the Great Unbeheld, a kraken of impossible size who lies asleep in the most remote depths of

the ocean. Only once krakens have enslaved all other aquatic races will the Great Unbeheld arise to flood the world.

For the first time here, we get some insight into kraken reproduction. Once every century or so, instinct drives krakens into a mating ritual they refer to as the Hateful Compulsion. Krakens from vast areas gather in numbers in the deepest oceans. As might be gathered from the name, krakens do not appreciate their instincts overriding their usually coldly calculating minds. Female krakens are driven mad by their compulsions, and frequently tear to pieces the more numerous males. An oily froth of decaying kraken parts and blood washes ashore in black, foul-smelling waves. Impregnation can take months, during which time the male may face a constant struggle to avoid the deadly grip of his deranged mate. The titanic mating battles of the krakens can cause oversized whirlpools and enormous waves. The Hateful Compulsion endures until all of the female krakens have been impregnated, so these environmental effects might recur for months or even years.

Being cunning and calculating beings, some krakens have gone to extremes to avoid participating in this reproductive ritual, including performing physical surgery on themselves, and turning to undeath.



Dragon: Monster Ecologies (2007)

Kraken eggs are large, black, membranous cylinders. They take ten years to hatch, and during this time, many eggs are lost to predators. Once a kraken hatches, it never stops growing. An average kraken is 100 feet long, but some have grown to the size of small islands. A kraken has a distinct head, with huge eyes capable of seeing even in the darkest depths. Eight tentacles attach to its body close to the kraken's huge, curved beak. Two dominant tentacles stretch to 60 feet and are covered in vicious barbs, while the remaining six reach only half that length, and have suckers and small hooks.

They are voracious carnivores, capable of tearing apart and consuming an entire whale as a meal. This means krakens need vast territories. Krakens believe that they have a divine right to rule the seas, and cannot conceive of an ocean without their presence. This leads them to be cautious about putting themselves at physical risk. A kraken might lurk in its deep sea lair for a century, plotting elaborate schemes, and breeding

Krakens in 4th Edition are escapees from the Far Realm at the beginning of time. They sleep beneath the waves for untold ages, waiting to be called. When they emerge they slaughter at will and leave nothing but ruin in their wake. There is no mention of slaves, but these krakens are drawn to settlements of sentient creatures, and the appearance of a sea kraken is frequently linked to cult activity. These cults include aberrant creatures who see krakens as living avatars of the madness of the Far Realm. Krakens hunger for the destruction of all life and the appearance of one is devastating. Seawalls and towers are demolished by the raging beasts, and mighty warships simply vanish. Rare survivors are tormented by visions of the attacks.



Monster Manual 3 (2010)

It is tricky to calculate maximum damage per round for a 4th Edition kraken, because of the wide variety of attack options it has. If the kraken uses *coils of doom*, it can do 42 hp of damage to creatures and 30 hp to a vehicle. If we assume it uses one of its two action points to do the same again, that gives us 84 hp (plus 60 hp to a vehicle). Using two minor actions to *fling* and hurl a *venom bolt*, we can add 46 hp more. That adds up to a maximum of 190 points of damage in one round, including 60 hp of hull damage. Average hit points for the kraken have climbed from 290 hp in 3rd Edition to 432 hp here. An easy detail to miss is that krakens have gained telepathy as a means of communications, with a range of 20. The description doesn't specify if these are eight- or ten-tentacled krakens, but the stat block indicates that they can grab up to eight targets at once.

An honorable 4th Edition mention goes to *Vor Rukoth* for the introduction of a kraken tentacle as a 1 hp minion.

5th Edition

The *Wandering Monster* article [Under the Sea](#) appeared on the Wizards of the Coast website in November 2013. This provided the first glimpse of the 5th Edition kraken's place in the world. They are described as holdovers from the ancient struggles of the gods, brought into the world as weapons and then discarded.

They have either passed the intervening millenia slumbering fitfully in dark lairs, or carving out deep undersea empires for themselves. Enormous creatures, capable of crushing ships and blinding foes with vast ink clouds, krakens only rarely leave the deep waters to wreak havoc on ill fated settlements or servants who have defied their commands.

Krakens have the power to control the seas and storms and are said to be in the eye of some hurricanes. They can create airy spaces underwater for the benefit of their air-breathing servants, and can summon and command many creatures of the seas. Exceptionally intelligent beings, most krakens are engaged in long-term complex plans to achieve their goals. What those goals are varies greatly from kraken to kraken. Some seek to expand their territory and base of worshippers, others desire only to inflict ruin and destruction on the world. Others build a cult of worshippers around them, to represent them in the seas and on land, and may even aspire to godhood. The relationship between krakens and gods is a troubled one. Although a kraken might ally temporarily with a deity, they long ago shrugged off the burden of allegiance, and cannot be bound to serve a god for long. A kraken is just as likely to work with forces who oppose the gods, such as aboleths or the cults of Elemental Evil. As we'll see below, some, but not all of this lore, was carried over into the 5th Edition *Monster Manual*.

The mechanics for the kraken were playtested in the D&D Next adventure *Dead in Thay*. There, the creature is presented as a “magical simulacrum of a kraken”, which is game-speak for “it’s a kraken but don’t worry about where it gets food”. Comparing the simulacrum to the final *Monster Manual* version, what we have here is lower power (15 hit dice instead of 27), but with a similar set of abilities: *multiattack*, *bite* and *tentacle* melee attacks, a *fling* attack and *lightning storm*. This version was eventually renamed to be a malformed kraken when *Dead in Thay* was reprinted in the 5th Edition *Tales from the Yawning Portal*.



Monster Manual (2014)

In its *Monster Manual* presentation, the kraken is a gargantuan monstrosity with 472 hp (27 hit dice), more than any previous edition. It has a number of special defenses including immunity to lightning, fear, paralysis and non-magical weapons. The kraken is amphibious, so it can breathe in air and water. It ignores difficult terrain and is almost entirely immune to magical or non-magical slowing or restraining effects. It is a *siege monster*, which means the kraken does double damage to objects and structures. It has acute senses, truesight and telepathy. It understands the Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, Primordial languages, but cannot speak.

To estimate the maximum damage the 5th Edition kraken can do in a single round, we'll assume it uses *multiattack* to make three *tentacle* attacks, and then use its legendary actions to create a *lightning storm* and make one *fling* attack, hurling one of the victims of the earlier tentacle attack at another opponent. That gives us 84 points of damage from the tentacles, 72 hp from the two fling victims, and 120 hp for three lightning targets. If we assume the kraken swallowed someone earlier in the fight, we can add the 72 points of damage that poor soul is taking, to get a total of 348 maximum damage per round.

The kraken's ink cloud is poisonous again for the first time since 2nd Edition, doing 3d10 damage on a failed save. It doesn't last as long, dispersing after a single round, and also doesn't influence our damage calculations. As a quick review, we have the maximum damage per round as: 1st Edition - 92 hp, 2nd Edition - 136 hp, 3rd Edition - 158, 4th Edition - 190*, and 5th Edition - 348. By the numbers, the 5th Edition kraken is a tougher opponent than any previous incarnation.

*Assuming one opponent is a vehicle.

Visually, the 5th Edition kraken is quite different, departing from the traditional squid-like form. The kraken's head looks almost reptilian, and it has a toothed maw rather than a beak. Tentacles appear to be attached at different locations along a serpentine body instead of clustered around the mouth. This kraken has ten tentacles. It has a stronger connection to lightning and electrical attacks, perhaps suggesting a link to electric eels.



Monster Manual (2014)

Often 5th Edition leans away from 4th Edition lore, and is more faithful to earlier material. In the case of the kraken, it leans towards. Krakens served as fierce warriors of the gods at the beginning of time. They broke free from servitude at the end of the gods' wars, and have slept beneath the waves for untold ages, waiting to be called forth. The emergence of a kraken is said to make nations quake, destroy ocean trade, and obliterate the greatest achievements of a civilization. Some krakens crawl up rivers to nest in freshwater lakes, destroying everything in their path during their journey. Adventurers might encounter a kraken in the ruins of a lakeside citadel.



Monster Manual (2014)

A kraken's lair is usually a rift or cavern large enough to house sunken ships. As in 4th Edition, there is no mention of the slave holdings of earlier lairs. In 5th Edition, some high-level creatures like the kraken, have lair actions. The kraken's lair might flush foes in a particular direction, or send a deadly charge of lightning through the water. The influence of a kraken is so strong that there are even some regional effects, including altered weather patterns within six miles of the lair, a build up of water elementals, and unnaturally aggressive sea creatures. In 2018, D&D Beyond released [Krakens in the D&D Multiverse](#), a short video in which Mike Mearls talks about the role krakens play in D&D.

The kraken is included in the *System Reference Document*, so is open for use in 5th Edition OGL products. Eagle-eyed readers will notice that numbers in the SRD for the kraken don't quite match the *Monster Manual*. That's because the SRD takes into account the *Monster Manual Errata*, which lowered the kraken's saving throws and attack bonuses slightly.



Deep Scion, Kraken Priest and Sea Spawn, *Volo's Guide to Monsters* (2016)

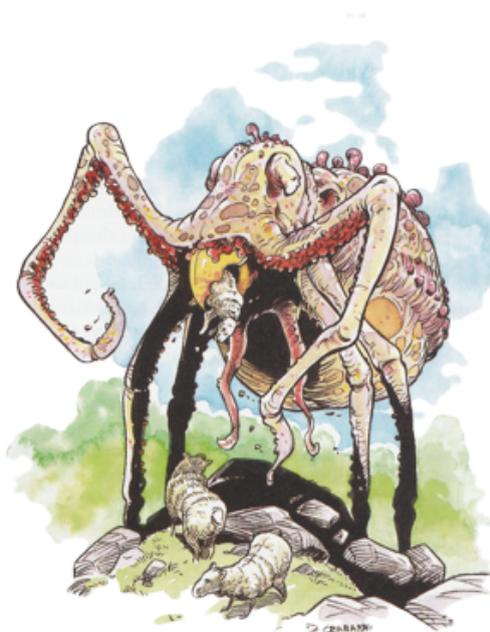
Volo's Guide to Monsters introduces three new kraken-related monsters. The deep scion is an updated version of the deep thrall class from *Dragon #300*, someone abducted from land or lost from a sinking ship, who has been subjected to an ancient ritual by an undersea power—likely a kraken—to transform them into an amphibious, shapechanging killer who will infiltrate itself back into society in order to spy and perform the bidding of its new master. Sea spawn are similar transformations of humanoids into an aquatic form by deep sea denizens. Fish-like in appearance and frequently with some visible indication of piscine anatomy, the sea spawn are tortured reflections of their former selves.

Those who truly venerate krakens are rewarded with the power to serve their patrons as kraken priests. Such priests become amphibious and gain a *thunderous touch* and limited innate spellcasting abilities, including *command*, *create or destroy water*, *control water*, *darkness*, *water breathing*, *water walk*, *call lightning* and *Evard's black tentacles*. Each priest changes in appearance in some way that reflects their master—ink-black eyes or a tentacle instead of a tongue. A kraken is able to take control of its priests, perceiving events as the priest does, and even speaking with its priests' voices.

All three of the monsters from *Volo's* received updates in *Mordenkainen Presents: Monsters of the Multiverse*, changing creature type from humanoid to monstrosity. The kraken priest also got an armor class boost, lost its damage resistance, and gained a *thunderbolt* ranged spell attack, replacing *call lightning*.

Kraken variations

Over the years, a number of kraken variations have surfaced from the depths. The *Planar Handbook* introduces one version of an astral kraken, which looks like a cross between an octopus and an insect. They lurk near color pools and prey on astral travelers. As well as tentacle attacks, these creatures can cocoon victims in a translucent resin and then gradually drain their energy, killing both the traveler's astral and physical bodies.



Astral Kraken, *Planar Handbook* (2004)

The astral kraken in the 4th Edition *Monster Manual 3* is a different, but even more formidable opponent. A horror of the Far Realm, it can materialize from the void, lashing out with tentacles and mental attacks. The kraken's touch can cause madness, and it is capable of dazing large groups of creatures in an instant. It can absorb the psyches of those in its grip and take over minds of those who attempt to strike against it and fail. The *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure *EPIC5-3: Shadow Storm* includes an encounter with two young astral krakens, and there is a brief encounter with one in the *Forgotten Realms* novel *The Crystal Mountain*.

Fiendish krakens are also possible. As early as *Dragon #46* there is a mention of a “devil kraken”, but no details of this creature are given other than its name. The web enhancement for the *Monster Manual v.3.5* provides a

variety of sample half-fiends, including a half-molydeus kraken. The 4th Edition adventure *The Rolling Tomb* in *Dungeon #215* has an abyssal kraken in it. This kraken isn't quite as powerful as the astral kraken, but it packs more of a punch than the ordinary sea kraken. It has a dominating *eye of the deep* attack, an *inky shroud*, and the ability to create an *abyssal tempest*.



Corpse Kraken, *Dungeon #125* (2005)

Krakens can sometimes endure beyond death. As we'll see later, there are undead krakens in both the Birthright and Forgotten Realms settings. *Dungeon #125* features a corpse kraken, under the animated control of a githyanki lich. *Libris Mortis*: contains some sample ghosts, including the ghost of the kraken Narthal, Bane of the Deeps. A different type of ghost kraken features in the adventure *Grasp of Thalarkis* in *Dungeon #203*, along with its ghost tentacle minions. A powerful White Kraken is being hunted by Captain Zagiit in *Dragon #345*. Unusually pale in color, this kraken could perhaps be undead; the Captain swears he killed it nearly 20 years ago.



Ghost Kraken, *Dungeon #203* (2012)

Sandstorm gives us the crawling apocalypse. These are the immortal remnants of ancient wars, when a race called the marru mummified some of the monstrosities of the sea to use as war machines. Some of them roam the desert, others remain dormant in hidden weapon depots, untouched since ancient times. These uncannily kraken-like creatures have an aura of *despair*, and can inflict *mummy rot* using their tentacles.



Crawling Apocalypse, *Sandstorm* (2005)

Frostburn implies that ordinary krakens are perfectly capable of defending the iceberg city of Icerazer, but for a version adapted specifically to cold environments, *Knowledge Arcana #8* provides a polar kraken. White in color, this variety has power over the ice and a strangely captivating song.

A construct version of the kraken appears in *Lord of Madness*. An elder eidolon is a creation left over from a previous epoch. These krakens are mindless automatons that continue to follow ancient instructions even after eons, but they are difficult to fight and enjoy significant immunities to magical attacks.



Elder Eidolon, *Lords of Madness: The Book of Aberrations* (2005)

The *Lost Laboratory of Kwalish* has another construct version of a kraken, known as a clockwork kraken. It is only large in size, but has eight independently functioning tentacles. A lava kraken with molten tentacles is encountered in the 5th Edition adventure *CCC-ODFC02-02: Palace of the Efreeti*. The 2019 [Extra Life](#) adventure *Infernal Machine Rebuild* features the crazed artificer Thessalar. One of his creations is the

thessalkraken. This is slightly smaller than an ordinary kraken, and has a jagged-toothed maw that constantly drips acid.

Kraken gods

The intermediate god Panzuriel, the Writhing One, the God of the Unseen Depths, favors krakens. *DMGR4: Monster Mythology* notes that a kraken head is sometimes used as Panzuriel's symbol, and his avatar has the ability to summon krakens. The Great Unbeheld from the kraken origin story in *Dragon #334* is often considered to be a favored child of Panzuriel. Panzuriel's herald is a 50 hit dice kraken known as Tirbitus. Corrupted by Panzuriel's twisted influence, Tirbitus has only one swollen, red eye surrounded by countless tentacles.

The *Ecology of the Kraken* suggests that the few krakens who don't worship Panzuriel turn to Tharizdun. It also suggests that Tharizdun might insidiously be growing his kraken followers by causing some brood-mothers to devour their whole clutch. This drives the mother utterly insane and any kraken witnesses have a strange tendency to turn to the God of Madness. The adventure *The Styes* in *Dungeon #121* includes a fiendish kraken known as the spawn of Tharizdun. *The Styes* was updated for 5th Edition and reprinted in *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, where the spawn of Tharizdun is simply referred to as a juvenile kraken.



Spawn of Tharizdun, *Dungeon #121* (2005)

In the *Monster Manual IV*, krakens sometimes worship Tharizdun in another form, as the water aspect of the Elder Elemental Eye. Olhydra is an archomental, one of D&D's original Elemental Princes of Evil, and herself a follower of the Elder Elemental Eye. *Dragon #285* notes that Olhydra commands krakens. Her coral keep in the Elemental Chaos is guarded by a hungry kraken (*Dungeon #199*). The 5th Edition *Monster Manual* agrees that some krakens are allied with Olhydra, and use her cultists to enforce their devious plans.

Fiendish Codex I confirms that some krakens venerate Dagon, Prince of the Depths. *Dragon #349* goes further, suggesting that krakens are perhaps Dagon's staunchest minions on the Prime Material Plane. In *DDAL07-17: Cauldron of Sapphire*, Dagon's aspect manifests as a fiendish kraken.

Less amicable is the kraken's relationship with Demogorgon. The *Manual of the Planes* includes krakens in the list of residents of the Brine Flats in the 88th layer of the Abyss, and the *Fiendish Codex I* implies that these

krakens serve Demogorgon. According to *Dragon #357*, one of the Prince of Demon's long term goals was the subjugation of the world's entire population of krakens. Demogorgon has abandoned this plan only because krakens make poor minions.

Also worth mentioning under the heading of "Kraken gods" is Worshipful K'thurall. He is a kraken worshiped as a god by the people of remote St. Telers. To the outside world the islanders appear to have quaint traditions honoring the spirits of the sea, but secretly they are the loyal Brood of Worshipful K'thurall. They sacrifice a dozen men and women lured from the outside each year in the Drowning Man ceremony. The kraken dines both on the flesh and the souls of these sacrifices, which has turned him into a soul eater (a prestige class from the *Book of Vile Darkness*). K'thurall has the ability to transform sacrifices into drowned undead.

The cult of K'thurall is detailed in *Dragon #334*. When the *Ecology* article was reprinted in *Dragon: Monster Ecologies*, a statistics block for K'thurall was added. He is presented as a 35 hit dice advanced elite kraken, but this version is inconsistent with the article, as it does not include any levels of the soul eater class.

Krakens and other monsters

Many of the kraken's interactions with other creatures are defined in terms of what it is willing to hunt, and occasionally, what hunts it.

The *Monster Manual II* mentioned that krakens battle even large sperm whales and usually win. They also hunt lesser cetus (*Dragon #248*), ramfish (*Stormwrack*), and giant moray eels (*Night Below*). Giant moray eels will also sometimes attack a kraken, as will vurgens (*MC3: Monstrous Compendium Forgotten Realms Appendix*) and sea serpents (*Dragon #345*). There are even some land-based predators capable of carrying off a kraken, including the Zakharan roc (*Land of Fate*). The Zakharan kraken (see below) eats whales, giant squid, octopi and even zaratan (*Dragon #198*).

According to *Dungeon #199*, marids organize great hunts for formidable prey such as krakens. *ALQ4: Secrets of the Lamp* confirms this, adding that hunters of every race are allowed to compete in events organized by the Padisha of the Citadel of Ten Thousand Pearls. The marid practice of hunting krakens might be in retaliation for ancient ills; *Sea of Fallen Stars* reveals that krakens destroyed the Marid States thousands of years ago.

Krakens do not get on with the giant nautilus (*Dragon #193*), the gargouille (*Dragon #248*), or the hamaguan (*Psionic Bestiary: Hamaguan*). *Stormwrack* suggests that the aventi may have been forced to abandon their great city by krakens, while *Dragon #139* notes that a searechter (marine spectator) might choose to live in an abandoned kraken lair. *Fizban's Treasury of Dragons* mentions a centuries old conflict between an ancient bronze dragon and a kraken.

The *Ecology of the Kraken* informs us that creatures like sahuagin, scrag and sea hags sometimes worship or pay tribute to a kraken in return for aid or protection. These relationships are tenuous, and may simply be a precursor to complete domination of the followers' race by the kraken. *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* notes that sahuagin are fond of hunting and eating kraken, although this conflicts with the more subservient relationship between the two creatures presented in other sources. In *Sea of Blood*, the sahuagin have a captive kraken; although it is one of unusually low intelligence they are only able to maintain control over it by keeping it well fed.

Krakens sometimes have less hostile relationships. The kraken lurking in the ruined temple in *Deep Horizon* has reached an uneasy truce with nearby beholders, and in *Dragon #182* krakens can be found guarding the lairs of sea linnorms. Salt wiggles (*MC7: Monstrous Compendium Spelljammer Appendix*) enter into alliances with krakens. Aboleths are respectful towards krakens. *Lords of Madness* notes that an aboleth city might try to woo a kraken as an ally but will not try to enslave one against its will.

One of the chapters in *Elder Evils* is an adventure titled *The Leviathan*, which we've covered previously in the Monster ENCYclopedia entry for the [ixitxachitl](#). At the end of this adventure, the heroes face the Aspect of the Leviathan, a colossal aberration of terrifying power. This being has not one, but three krakens as henchmen.

Morkoth may be related to krakens. According to *Sea of Fallen Stars*, the triton word for morkoth is "kraknyth" or kin of kraken. The kraken and morkoth languages are also said to be related, and the *Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* notes that alliances between the two creatures are not unheard of. In *CCC-BMG-MOON13-2: Monsters of the Deep* a morkoth is raising a juvenile kraken named Lazarauug.

Kraken parts

A single dried sucker from a kraken's tentacle is the material component for the *blackwater tentacle* spell, from *Stormwrack*. Kraken ink is used to scribe some masterwork and magic items, according to the *Player's Handbook II*, as well as used for some scrolls (*Dungeon #133*). In *Storm King's Thunder*, King Hekaton's bed has a mattress made of kraken hide stuffed with roc feathers.

Krakens and magic

Dragon #165 notes that sea-priests use a spell called *water devil* in place of *dust devil*. This spell is particularly effective in dispersing the kraken's ink cloud. The same article indicates that when cast by sahuagin, a *heroes' feast* spell might include kraken tentacles, leading support to the idea that the sea devils will eat kraken given the opportunity. *Dragon #220* includes the kraken in the list of sea monsters that can be called using the *monster summoning VIII* spell. Using the *Player's Option: Spells & Magic* rules for monster casting levels, krakens are treated as 20th level casters.

According to the *Ecology of the Kraken*, spells like *control water*, *transmute rock to mud*, and *move earth* could be useful when trying to trap a kraken on land. Krakens themselves usually use their own *resist energy* spell to resist electricity, according to the *Ecology* article, and if they have spellcasters as slaves, they may also be covered by long-lasting defensive spells like *mage armor*, *protection from arrows*, or *shield other*.



Dragon: Monster Ecologies (2007)

For someone desiring the tentacles of a kraken, there is the *lash of the kraken* spell from *Dragon #334*. This spell, available to druids, wizards and sorcerers, transforms a limb into a barbed-covered kraken tentacle, which can be used to attack and to grapple. *Stormwrack* presents the more powerful *doom of the seas* spell, which allows a high-level druid to summon a fiendish kraken as a servant for a few rounds. The spell comes with a detailed statistics block for the kraken known as the Doom of the Seas.

Dragon #334 recommends *helms of underwater action* and *potions of water breathing* as useful when planning to fight a kraken, as well as devices which assist in escaping, such as a *cape of the montebank*, a *cloak of etherealness*, or a *ring of freedom of movement*. The conch shells used by tritons to summon marine animals have no effect on krakens, according to the *Monstrous Manual*.

There are many kraken-themed magic items in D&D. One of the cards of the variant *totem deck of many things* from *Dragon #271* is the kraken card. The first waterborne craft set foot on by someone who has drawn the kraken card sinks in 1d4 days. The *Notched Spear* detailed in *Weapons of Legacy* provides *concealment of the kraken*, by producing a dark cloud mimicking the kraken's ink spill.



Krakentooth Trident, *Stormwrack* (2005)

Stormwrack details the mighty *krakentooth trident*, seven feet in length with the ability to shock those it impales, and the *purpleheart kraken*, a living figurehead that can be animated to reach out to hold fast an enemy ship.

The Trench of Lopok is named for the locathah word for kraken, and the weapon known as *Kayas the Krakenscourge* has slain more than twenty krakens emerging from the depths of the trench. It is a unique two-blade sword resembling a spear. It is made from razor-sharp Jhimar coral, which despite its delicacy, is nearly unbreakable. *Kayas the Krakenscourge* is described in full in *Dragons of Faerûn*.



Kayas the Krakenscourge, *Dragons of Faerûn* (2006)

In the *D&D Encounters* series adventure *War of Everlasting Darkness*, there is a potion salesman in Silverymoon offering a variety of dodgy beverages, including a Kraken potion. Imbibing this potion causes a character to temporarily sprout a kraken tentacle from his or her body. The 5th Edition adventure *CCC-TRI-07: Beneath the Moonsea* revolves around a relic known as *Kraken's Tear*. This item is able to abate the wrath of Umberlee, the Queen of the Depths although exactly how it does this is not clear.

The only way to destroy the *Akmon*, the hammer of Purphoros, an artifact detailed in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros*, is to coat it in clay from the Mire of Punishment and for the encased hammer to then be swallowed and digested by a kraken.

Dragon #340 has a couple of articles referencing krakens. *Bazaar of the Bizarre: Items of the Zodiac* includes a *kraken's bracelet*, which resembles interlinked tentacles and provides a boost to the wearer's knowledge skills, as well as a twelve-sided *wyvern's die*, which includes a skill-boosting kraken face.



The Kraken constellation, *Dragon #340* (2006)

The article *Astrology in D&D* doesn't deal with magic, but horoscopes and fortune telling. One of the constellations featured is the kraken. Someone born under the sign of the kraken tends to have a wide network of contacts and associates, and views life as an elaborate game. Also not quite a magic item in the traditional sense, *Magic of Incarnum* includes the *kraken mantle* soulmeld. This grants exceptional swimming abilities, the ability to deal extra damage to grappled opponents, and the ability to breathe in water.

Ghosts of Saltmarsh reveals that when a kraken dies and its body lies rotting on the ocean floor, the ground absorbs the decaying creature's supernatural energy. This creates a stain called a kraken's grave. Any creature swimming close to the marked area risks disturbing the grave, which causes a tendril of lightning to strike, causing 3d6 lightning damage and giving a change of blindness for 2d4 hours.

Al-Qadim

The article *Campaign Journal: Scimitars against the Dark* in *Dragon #198* presents a horror-themed spin on the Al-Qadim setting. The sample campaign in the article is for seafaring adventurers, and is built on escalating conflict with pirates and slavers, culminating in a confrontation with a great kraken. At the end of the article, there is a *Monstrous Compendium* entry for the Zakharan kraken. This is an albino version of the ordinary kraken, with more hit dice (25) but some slightly weaker tentacle attacks (the two barbed ones do 2-16 damage and the others 2-12). The uncanny resemblance between this illustration and the 5th Edition kraken suggests that this version may have been used as a reference for the kraken's most recent incarnation.



Zakharan Kraken, *Dragon #198* (1993)

Cities of Bone details Ur, the Great Squid. Ur is a highly intelligent kraken who masterminded the draining of the Jacinth Sea, turning it into the Sea of Salt, in order to create its vast subterranean lair. The opportunity to make Ur a Zakharan kraken is missed, and the Great Squid is just an ordinary kraken.

Birthright

The Birthright setting has both krakens and the Kraken. The lands of Cerilia are populated by powerful beings known as awnsheghlien. They rule over considerable domains, wield significant power and hunger for more. Each awnsheghlien is a unique being, and the Kraken is just one of many. Nonetheless it is the second largest of all of them, and possibly also the most ancient. Its behavior is animalistic, although some say it is exceptionally intelligent. The Kraken resides beneath the island of Krakenstaur in the Krakennauricht. It gets a detailed write-up in *Blood Enemies: Abominations of Cerilia* and the Krakensaur is mapped in *Havens of the Great Bay*.



The Kraken, *Blood Enemies: Abominations of Cerilia* (1996)

The Kraken makes a guest appearance in TSR's collectible card game *Spellfire*. Card #25 of the *Birthright* expansion for the game is titled "The Kraken Attacks!". The artwork on the card is recycled from *Blood Enemies*.

Legends of the Hero-Kings makes it clear that the setting also has ordinary krakens. During an ocean voyage, the adventurers encounter a summoned kraken, which is in a foul mood precisely because it doesn't appreciate being summoned. Later in the adventure, the slain kraken returns as an undead creature. (Even if the adventurers didn't kill the kraken earlier, it still comes back undead, having been punished for failing to kill them.) So terrifying is its appearance now that it may induce panic for 2d8 rounds. Being undead also gives the kraken tentacles that can impale targets.



Legends of the Hero-Kings (1996)

Blackmoor

Dave Arneson's *Blackmoor* includes krakens on the coastal encounters table, and *The Dungeons of Castle Blackmoor* details Uzu-Kul, an ancient kraken with potent magical abilities. The deity Mwajin (detailed in *Dave Arneson's Blackmoor: The First Campaign*) carries a longspear made of a kraken's bones.



The Dungeons of Castle Blackmoor (2006)

Council of Wyrms

In the *Council of Wyrms* boxed set, the kraken is listed as a potential random encounter for the temperate sea coasts around Io's Blood Isles.

Dark Sun

Athas has deserts, not oceans, so krakens do not feature in the Dark Sun setting. However we know from *Dungeon #184* that they lived there once, since greater silt elementals take on the physical forms of legendary aquatic krakens, as if compelled to do so by Athas itself.

The silt seas of Athas are also home to a great elemental power known as the Dust Kraken. Called Ul-Athra or the Mouths of Thirst, it is worshiped by elemental cultists. The silt horrors that roam the seas of sand are said to be the spawn of the Dust Kraken, according to the 4th Edition *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*. In the adventure *Revenge of the Marauders* in *Dungeon #183*, the heroes must prevent the raider lord Yarnath the Skull from unlocking the arcane secrets of Ul-Athra.

Dragonlance

A strong contender for the most bizarre kraken encounter in D&D history is the one in *Gnomes - 100, Dragons - 0*. Here, the adventurers are flung (literally) into an encounter with three amazons. After some chit-chat or combat, someone notices the enormous kraken in the ocean nearby. Fortunately, it can be killed with one shot from the spaser (steam-powered laser) which is conveniently located on the beach near some rockets and submarines. All of this takes place in a chamber inside Mount Nevermind.



Gnomes - 100, Dragons - 0 (1987)

DL15: Mists of Krynn creates some doubt about krakens being native to the setting. It includes an encounter with one on Ansalon's northwestern coast, but indicates that Takhisis has imported the kraken from another dimension, implying that they are not native. Belying that, the kraken is included in the encounter tables in the 2nd Edition *MC4: Monstrous Compendium Dragonlance Appendix*, and in the *Fifth Age* version of *Dragonlance*. They are also mentioned in an article on *The Dimernisti* in *Dragon #250*.



Fifth Age: Dramatic Adventure Game (1996)

Krakens are mentioned in several 3rd Edition Dragonlance sources, including *Dragons of Spring*, *Bestiary of Krynn, Revised* and *Holy Orders of the Stars*, which notes that a kraken is the herald of the god Zeboim. *Price of Courage* includes a run-in with a kraken along the Goblin Coast. *Dragons of Krynn* mentions an ocean-dwelling “kraken-like” monster called an abyss lurker, which first appeared in the novel *Dragons of Time*. They can be found in the World Gash region of the Courrain Ocean, east of Ansalon.

The Dargonesti, a Dragonlance novel, has another contender for the most bizarre kraken encounter. The lead characters begin their adventure magically transported to a remote island. They explore a cave, only to discover that it is a kraken’s “blowhole” and the kraken unceremoniously dumps them into the ocean. Given that krakens (until now) haven’t had blowholes, this is an impressive feat. The novel *The Great White Wyrms* has a brief, but more conventional kraken encounter. A kraken plucks a member of the crew from a ship before being repelled by magic.

Eberron

Steel krakens, detailed in *Five Nations*, are essentially warforged krakens, constructed by Cyrans to defend their coastline. Since the Mourning, many of these creatures have abandoned their orders and now roam the southern shores of Khorvaire freely.



Steel Kraken, *Five Nations* (2005)

Krakens have a strong connection to the House Lyrandar, and appear on the House seal. Some think that Lyrandar heirs have the potential to become immortal krakens, remaining in the depths of the sea to guide their descendants with dreams and visions (see *Dragonmarked*). If called to do so, these lurking krakens may even arise to ensure Lyrandar dominance over the seas, at least according to the 4th Edition *Eberron Campaign Guide*.

Secrets of Xen'drik includes a kraken as a potential encounter en route to Stormreach. *City of Stormreach* hints that dragons and krakens battled during the Age of Demons, and gives the krakens a similar role in manipulating the powers of the deep as the Lords of Dust play on the surface. Some of Eberron's sahuagin serve krakens, while others violently oppose them. *City of Stormreach* also introduces Zlotharkis, a half-fiendish kraken said to be behind the recent increase in kraken activity in the Thunder Sea. By a strange coincidence, no Lyrandar vessel has been targeted so far, and it is suggested that if there is any truth to the legends of the link between House Lyrandar and krakens, Zlotharkis could be Lyran himself.

The *Explorer's Handbook* includes an encounter with two krakens creating severe weather. Travelers' tales (in *Dragons of Eberron*) speak of krakens near the continent of Argonnessen. Finally, according to *Dragon #410*, the waters around Farlnen in the Bloodsail Principality are home to zombie krakens.



Exploring Eberron (2020)

The 5th Edition book *Exploring Eberron* dives into the origins of krakens in more detail than previously. Born in the Age of Demons as children of Khyber, the krakens went into hiding to avoid becoming the next target of the alliance that defeated the fiends. They are spread across all of Korvair's oceans, each one controlling its own domain. Although they usually avoid working together to avoid attention from the dragons of Argonnessen, they do still occasionally make allegiances with one another. A group of five krakens cooperated to bring down the civilization of the sahuagin tens of thousands of years ago.

There is a stat block for a juvenile kraken (huge in size, with a mere 207 hit points) in the *Adventurers League* scenario *DDAL-EB-14: From Dust*.

Forgotten Realms

Krakens can be found in many waters of the Forgotten Realms, including the Lake of Dragons to the south of Cormyr (*Elminster's Ecologies*), the Alamber Sea, coasts of Aglarond and the waters of Thay (*Spellbound*). *Lands of Intrigue* mentions a kraken dwelling in the center of the island of Irphong, one of the Nelanther Isles, and another (rumored) in the Lake of Steam.

There are at least three krakens in the depths of the Moonsea. An ancient kraken named Varklothan is mentioned as sleeping there in *CCC-BMG-HULB04-2: Voices from the Deep*, while *CCC-MWGF-01: The Constellation* features another. This one goes by the name of The Constellation, but it is described as “an ancient creature resembling a cross between a kraken and an octopus” so it is not clear if it is a pure kraken or not. A juvenile kraken named Lazarauug features in *CCC-BMG-MOON13-2: Monsters of the Deep*. This adventure includes the possibility that Lazarauug consumes a deceased morkoth and uses the necrotic energy from the corpse to metamorphose into an adult kraken.



CCC-MWGF-01: The Constellation (2019)

There is a fiendish kraken dwelling in the Lake of Shadows beneath the Dagger Hills (*City of the Spider Queen*). It isn't clear if the kraken being worshiped by the kuo-toa in the 5th Edition *Adventurers Guild* scenario *CCC-HATMS02-03: A Vile Wake* is the same one. It is named Koshkash, but its kuo-toa followers call it by a variety of titles, including “the Ever-Eating”, “the Hungering Maw”, “the Bottomless Stomach”, “the One Who Shall Consume Us All”, “the Divine Chewer of Meat and Bone and Other Things”, “the Devourer in the Dark”, “the Supreme Belly”, “Hallowed Be His Maw”, and even “Because, Hey, Everyone Has to Eat”.

According to *Empires of the Shining Sea*, a kraken has recently awakened off the coast of Calimshan. This creature appears to have been building up large numbers of armed forces for several years. *Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark* mentions Cephalopolop, a renegade kraken that wields power quietly within the city of Sloopdilmonpolop, the City of Pools. Krakens reside in the Darklake (*Silver Marches, Underdark*). At least one kraken is magically compelled to defend the island of Evermeet (*FOR5: Elves of Evermeet*).

The ruins of Ascarle on Trisk's north shore are home to a kraken known as Slarkrethel. This particular kraken has many allies, including an illithid, a band of nereids and a tribe of merrows. As well as the bountiful slaves it keeps submerged in its lair, Slarkrethel has also enslaved the people of Trisk, and forced them to create the Kraken Society, a nefarious spy organisation spanning the north. Slarkrethel and the

Kraken Society feature in several Forgotten Realms products (*FR5: The Savage Frontier*, *The North*, *Villains' Lorebook*, *Skullport*, *Cloak & Dagger*, *Lords of Darkness*, *Storm King's Thunder*) and novels (*Tangled Webs* and *Dawn of Night*).

Slarkrethel was born in 151 DR, the Year of the Kraken, and became Umberlee's seraph in 1358 DR. *Lords of Darkness* lists Slarkrethel as a 20th-level wizard, as well as Chosen of Umberlee. The deepest reaches of Waterdeep Harbor are known as Umberlee's Cache after the accumulated tributes dropped into the depths by sailors in thanks of safe passage. They are guarded by krakens (at least one of them undead, according to *Powers & Pantheons*) and other dangerous creatures. According to *Volo's Guide to Monsters* the residents of the Purple Rocks are fanatics dedicated to Slarkrethel and they become sea spawn when they reach old age.



Tribute Gatherers in Umberlee's Cache, *City of Splendors: Waterdeep* (2005)

The Kraken Society and Slarkrethel play a significant role in *Storm King's Thunder*. The ancient kraken seeks to rekindle the ancient war between the giants and the dragons. To this end, the kraken's agents captured the storm giant king Hekaton and slew his queen. Towards the end of the adventure Slarkrethel gets directly involved in events, it has the statistics of a kraken with *legendary resistance* and a dizzying array of spells added. Slarkrethel is treated as a 20th level caster.

According to *Sea of Fallen Stars*, krakens have less influence in the underwater realm of Serôs than might be expected. Storm giants and merrows continuously hunt kraken, and keep their numbers low. There has not been a significant Serôsian kraken since Xisal the Blue Kraken, last seen during the Tenth Serôs War. There have been recent rumors of sightings of a possible offspring of Xisal.

The Legacy of Deep Death is a temple of Myrkul on the bed of the Sea of Swords. According to *Faiths & Avatars*, it is guarded by a variety of undead sea creatures, including at least one kraken. Undead krakens also play a significant role in the novel *Undead*, one of *The Haunted Lands* trilogy. The ancient kraken Gethshemeth features in the novels *Plague of Spells*, *City of Torment* and *Key of Stars*; she is missing three tentacles as a result of an encounter with the Shou monk Raidon Kane. In the unusual cosmology of the 3rd Edition Forgotten Realms, krakens inhabit the Fated Depths (*Players Guide to Faerûn*).

There is an albino kraken in *The Threat from the Sea* novel trilogy. In the first book, *Rising Tide*, the wereshark Iakhovas gains control over the kraken, most likely using his magical abilities. He puts the kraken

to good use in *Under Fallen Stars*, to intimidate the sahuagin community that had held it captive while he challenges their king. The short story *Fire is Fire* in the *Realms of the Deep* anthology tells the story of an aquatic attack on Waterdeep which includes a fight between a kraken and one of the city's famous Walking Statues. Rivalen Tanthul, high priest of Shar, uses magic to dominate a kraken named Ssessimyth in the novel *Shadowbred*. He continues to use the creature as his servant in *Shadowstorm*.

In the adventure *The Akriloth* in *Dungeon #79*, the mer-city of Voalidru is in the clutches of the kraken Qol'in'taroq. Qol'in'taroq is 100 feet long. Its ventral surface is midnight blue, fading to a dark green on the dorsal surface. Just in case fighting a kraken isn't enough of a challenge, Qol'in'taroq is also a ninth-level cleric.

In the 4th Edition *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, the balance of power between aboleths and krakens has swung in the favour of the aboleths. Xxiphu, the floating city of the Abolethic Sovereignty, terrorizes the Sea of Fallen Stars. Freshly awakened from an age-long slumber, these aboleths have taken control of populations of krakens, morkoths and kuo-toa and modified them to suit their needs. Known as "unfettered" krakens, those that guard Xxiphu and serve the Sovereignty have the ability to fly and breathe air indefinitely.

The genasi city of Brassune was destroyed by unfettered krakens roughly fifty years ago. An unfettered kraken guards the Court of Meiriona in the High Moor. Groups of kraken hunters with colorful names offer their dubious services for hire in the harbor districts of Westgate. *SPEC3-3: Dance of the Sun and the Moon* has a variation of the kraken called a Humboldt kraken. This is an unfettered kraken with jagged claws protruding from each of the suckers on its tentacles.

In *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*, the Sons of Alagandar are raising a plaguechanged kraken as a potential weapon against New Neverwinter. This creature seems to have been reduced to animal intelligence by the effects of the Spellplague. Adventurers participating in the *D&D Encounters* adventure *Lost Crown of Neverwinter* have a run in with this kraken, or at least its tentacles.

Game of Thrones

Over the years, *Dragon Magazine* has featured D&D articles on many settings not owned by TSR/WotC. From *Dragon #307*, we know that krakens occur in Westeros. Specifically, giant krakens are rumored around Pyke. It is suggested that there exists a magical horn capable of summoning the beasts.

Greyhawk

Kraken are found on Oerth, although they are not common. According to *From the Ashes*, krakens inhabit Jeklea Bay in the Azure Sea. One of these krakens is named Slash Eye and is in possession of a magic item known as the *orb of the wyrmkim* (*Dragon #230*).

Deep sea kraken have attacked ships in the Solnor Ocean (*Ivid the Undying*). The Sinking Isle is jointly controlled by sahuagin and krakens (*Greyhawk Adventures*). Schoffmund the Strong of the Suel barbarians defeated the kraken of Grendep Bay (*Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*).

A number of kraken variations have appeared in *Living Greyhawk* adventures. A half-water elemental kraken is detailed in *BDK6-09: To Bleed or Die*, and a flying kraken in *COR8-04: Bridge Over Svartjet*. Gaaree'eeki and

Varchulanga are two half-fiend krakens, from *NMR5-05: Winds of Change*. A spellwoven kraken named Sieg features in *VTFIN7-02: Ley of the Land*.

The 5th Edition adventure anthology *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* features more than one kraken. What was previously (in *Dungeon #121*) called the spawn of Tharizdun is now simply a juvenile kraken; it is, however, still a fearsome opponent. The story of the Warthalkeel Ruins is also recounted. The residents of Warthalkeel worshiped a kraken named Vaalastroth, but were converted to follow Procan, god of the sea. Furious at this betrayal, Vaalastroth destroyed the cliffs below the settlement, sending Warthalkeel tumbling into the waters below.

Historical Reference

Articles on dinosaurs in *Dragon #112* and later in *Dragon #176* suggest that the kraken could be an exotic encounter for a Mesozoic or Paleozoic setting. Krakens are suitable both for viking campaigns (*HR1: Vikings Campaign Sourcebook*) and encounters in ancient Greece (*HR6: Age of Heroes Campaign Sourcebook*).

Jakandor

Krakens can be found in the oceans surrounding Jakandor, according to *Jakandor: Island of War*.

Kara-Tur

The *Kara-Tur* boxed set mentions krakens offshore from the fishing village of Min Loh, and the 3rd Edition *Oriental Adventures* also lists the kraken as a suitable creature for the setting. However, it is really the krakentua that steals the limelight here.



Krakentua, top left *OA2: Night of the Seven Swords* (1986), top and bottom right *OA7: Test of the Samurai* (1989) and bottom left *MC6: Monstrous Compendium Kara-Tur Appendix* (1990).

First mentioned in *OA2: Night of the Seven Swords*, the krakentua is a gargantuan (80 feet tall) demon spirit with a humanoid body and a kraken-like head. It is a 50 hit dice creature with seven tentacles. It can strike with tentacles (1-4 damage), fists (4-40) or with katanas held in its tentacles (1-10).

The *Kara-Tur* boxed set mentions that a krakentua rules over the Isle of Gargantuas. This krakentua plays a significant role in the adventure *OA7: Test of the Samurai*. She lost her reproductive tentacle (see below) in a battle with a pan lung (coiled dragon) and her quest to recover the missing tentacle is a major plot point and the reason for the adventurers' interactions with her during the adventure. Although krakentua are listed as chaotic evil in alignment, in *Test of the Samurai*, the heroes' relationship with her is not antagonistic, and more of an uneasy alliance.

The krakentua gets a full-page *Monstrous Compendium* style entry in *Test of the Samurai*. This entry is reprinted (with new art) in *MC6: Monstrous Compendium Kara-Tur Appendix*. Krakentua are described "among the most fearsome creatures of all of Kara-Tur". Like krakens, krakentua are enthusiastic slavers. Males have 10-50 slaves, while females can accrue up to 1000. They keep these forces enslaved largely by fear of retribution. They do not keep any treasure. Of genius-level intelligence, krakentua can converse in any of the languages used by the creatures of Kara-Tur. They are vegetarians, favouring cherries and cherry tree milk, usually supplied by slaves.

They can breathe and are equally at home in water or air, with a movement speed of 18 on land and 12 while swimming. Female krakentua are able to hover in the air, gaining a limited form of flight (movement 12). Bizarrely, this process leaves a trail of dead octopi. Apparently this form of flight is powered by the life forces of octopi that the krakentua gates in from the ocean as she moves. After ten hours of flight, the krakentua must return to the water for a full day to recharge.

Physically, a krakentua stands 80-100 feet tall. A kraken's head with red eyes and black pupils above a chitinous beak balances incongruously atop a humanoid body wearing luxuriant and colorful silk robes. The skin of a krakentua is dark green, cold and leathery, with pores that constantly emit a crimson cloud of mist. Each of the seven tentacles extends nearly 20 feet from the krakentua's head, and are as capable of wielding tools or weapons as a human hand.

Male krakentua are much weaker than females. They typically have only 200-250 hit points, while females have around 350. Males have a variety of attacks: tentacle whips (1-4 damage), tentacle crushes (1-10 damage), katanas or wakizashis held in tentacle, fist blows (1-10 damage), trample (1-100 damage), spitting cherry milk up to 100 feet (this blinds for 12-72 seconds), or belching a 50 foot diameter red mist cloud (this does 1 hit of poison damage). Females do more tentacle damage (1-8 whip, 2-12 crush) and have a number of magical abilities in addition to all the attacks available to males. They continually have *ESP*, *clairaudience*, *detect lie*, *detect evil* and *detect good* operating. A female krakentua can induce lifelike dreams in intelligent targets, allowing her to imprint on them so that she can locate them again later. Creating dreams is a strenuous process for the krakentua, who can spend no more than one hour a month doing so.

The krakentua reproductive cycle is asexual, with the eighth tentacles of a female functioning as a reproductive organ. Once a female reaches 1000 years in age, her eighth tentacle breaks off and sinks to the bottom of the ocean. The detached tentacle forms 1-4 buds each of which grows into a 30 foot diameter pod before hatching into a new krakentua.

The Grand History of the Realms notes that thousands of years in the past, rampaging krakentua razed the Imperial City of Inupras. The Cult of Demogorgon has been blamed for the presence of the spirit creatures.

Kingdoms of Kalamar

For the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting, krakens are the most common sea monster features in sailors tales (*Salt and Sea Dogs: The Pirates of Tellene*). According to *Zoa: Citadel of the Bay*, there are rumors of krakens appearing south of the Butterfly Islands.

Divine Masters: The Faiths and Followers of Tellene suggests that the creature known as G'Tiru of the Trench may be the source of many references to a mythical Kraken god. Said to lair in the deepest parts of the Kalamaran Sea, it has not been sighted in several human lifespans.

Lankhmar

The adventure *LNA3: Prince of Lankhmar* includes an encounter with a kraken. It attacks the boat the adventurers are traveling on, en route to Ilthmar.

Mystara

The Known World's kraken is first detailed in *AC9: Creature Catalogue*. It is a very large kraken, with a body over 150 feet long, and each of ten tentacles reaching 750 feet! Although they usually remain deep in the sea, these krakens have been known to pose a danger even to low-flying creatures on the rare occasions they surface. When they do so, they resemble a greenish-blue mass of kelp.



AC9: Creature Catalogue (1986)

It turns out that the Basic D&D version is a late contender for most powerful kraken. It has 64 hit dice, and can potentially make ten tentacle attacks, each doing up to 42 points of damage, plus an 80 point bite attack. That totals 500 points of damage in a round, capping even 5th Edition's record of 348. Basic D&D steals the title! The ink of this kraken is not harmful, but there is a lot of it. If the kraken loses five or more tentacles in combat, it releases a 1000' x 1000' cloud of ink, which blinds everything within it.

The kraken is reprinted in *DMR2: Creature Catalog* with the same stats and artwork, but with a bonus kraken-in-action picture.



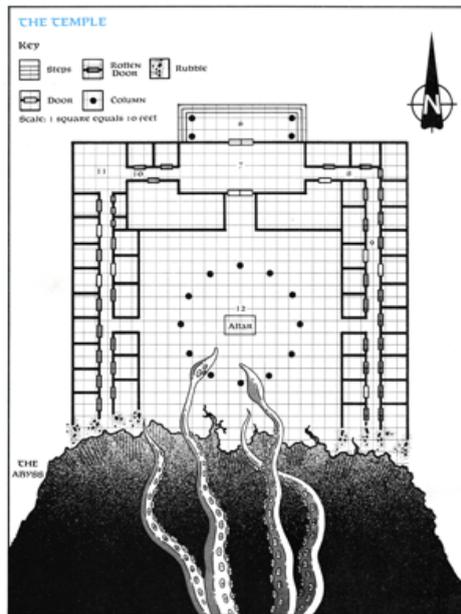
DMR2: Creature Catalog (1993)

GAZ7: The Northern Reaches mentions a kraken who is an occasional threat to shipping in Northland waters. An article in *Dragon #171* mentions a sea dragon named Thundar who lairs in a fossilized kraken. The 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium Mystara Appendix* lists the kraken in the encounter tables for temperate and tropical saltwater depths.



PC3: The Sea People (1990)

The adventure *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* in *PC3: The Sea People*, culminates with the rescue of Hamish McGregor. Hamish is a refugee from the surface world, and he is about to be sacrificed by a devilfish matriarch in order to awaken a kraken. Unless the heroes fail to stop the ritual, only the kraken's tentacles participate in the combat. Even then, the kraken strikes its own *ixitxachitl* followers, and not the PCs unless the DM is feeling mean.



PC3: *The Sea People* (1990)

Planescape

Hidden in the introductory text for demons in the *Monster Manual II* is the first indication that krakens inhabit planar realms. In this case, the “liquid plane ruled by Dagon”. The 1st Edition adventure *H4: The Throne of Bloodstone* also mentions krakens living in the Abyssian Ocean.

By the time Planescape was a setting, krakens were more pervasive. According to *Planes of Chaos*, on the oceanic second layer of Arborea there are reports of enormous kraken in the waters of Caletto. Along with gigantic sea serpents, krakens guard the rocky island that is home to the Gates of the Moon on the plane of Ysgard. The briny depths of Gaping Maw, one of the layers of the Abyss, are ruled by krakens, ixitxachitl, and their lord Demogorgon.

Krakens sometimes threaten Selkies’ Grotto, a realm hidden on the ocean layer of Thaliasia in the plane of Elysium. The residents of the island paradise of Portico revere a being known as the Great Shelled One. In *Planes of Conflict*, a legend is told that when a great kraken that lives in the depths of the Thalasian sea awakens and battles the Great Shelled One, Portico will be destroyed.

The role of krakens as planar inhabitants continues to be emphasized after the Planescape line ended. The 3rd Edition *Manual of the Planes* and *Stormwrack* both note that krakens can be found in the Elemental Plane of Water and the *Manual of the Planes* also includes krakens as Abyssal residents. The 4th Edition *Demonomicon* suggests that sailors lost at sea occasionally stumble through portals to Absym, and to eventual death in the grip of a sea kraken guardian. The 5th Edition *Adventurers League* scenario *DDAL-DRWEP04: Tears Among the Stars*, includes stat block modifications for a planar kraken, including *legendary resistance* and 20th-level spellcasting abilities.

Ravenloft

According to *Ravenloft Gazetteer: Volume III*, krakens are found in the domain of Mordent. A kraken attack is described in the Ravenloft novel *Dance of the Dead*, but this kraken is an illusion, designed to hide the true nature of the ship’s attacker. In addition to krakens, krakentua may also be encountered in Ravenloft, according to *MC10: Monstrous Compendium Ravenloft Appendix*.



Soul-Kraken, *Neither Man nor Beast* (1995)

The adventure *Neither Man nor Beast* has a soul-kraken, a great ghostly creature that roams the Sea of Sorrows. It keeps the heads of its victims impaled on the ends of its tentacles.

Spelljammer

The water world of Thalassa, detailed in *SJR4: Practical Planetology*, includes krakens as inhabitants.

Theros

The krakens inhabiting the world described in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* are each bound by a sea lock. This is a magical effect that limits the range of the kraken and prevents it from raiding populated areas. Occasionally a natural disaster such as a seaquake causes a sea lock to break, releasing a kraken from its imprisonment. Theros also has a special type of kraken, the nadir kraken. These are the most powerful of the krakens, each of which is a unique being. The release of such a kraken from its bonds is a civilization-ending event. It is said that the sea god Thassa controls the krakens and the sighting of one close to shore is a sign of her displeasure.



Nadir Kraken, *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* (2020)

One example of a nadir kraken is presented in detail in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros*. Tromokratis has an effective total of 809 hit points. Its base hit points are only 409, less than a normal kraken, but reducing this total to zero doesn't kill the beast. Instead, it cracks open Tromokratis's carapace to reveal four pulsing red-purple hearts embedded in blubber and muscle. Each of these hearts has an additional 100 hit points and all four must be destroyed to permanently kill this titan.



Tromokratis, *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* (2020)

Mythic Odysseys of Theros also presents the legend of Arixmethes, a kraken so titanic that generations of humans built a city on its back, believing it to be one of the Dakra Isles. When the kraken awoke from its deep sleep, its throes destroyed the city and all its residents. Arixmethes has since returned to its lumber, still carrying the ruined city on its back.

Zendikar

The krakens lurking in the depths of Zendikar's oceans are closer to storm giants than they are to ordinary krakens (*Plane Shift: Zendikar*). They are huge humanoids with two arms, one of which has a bony claw and the other ending in a writhing mass of tentacles. It has a head encased in a horned shell, and another huge shell on its back. Dozens of tentacles protrude from its mouth, and a third cluster of massive tentacles in the place of legs. They spend much of their lives in isolated contemplation but from time-to-time they emerge to wreak havoc on ships or coastal settlements.



Plane Shift: Zendikar (2016)

Miniatures

Until relatively recently, there had never been an official D&D kraken miniature produced, likely because of the cost of producing something to scale from metal. With the advent of plastic miniatures, there are now a selection of painted and unpainted krakens to choose from, all of them (so far) made by WizKids.



D&D Icons of the Realms: Kraken and Islands (2018), picture from [MinisGallery](#)

First to be released was the *D&D Icons of the Realms: Kraken and Islands* set. This is a full-sized kraken, but it cheats by having only the head and tentacles protruding from the water, each of these being a separate miniatures. Released the same month was figure #12 in the *D&D Icons of the Realms: Monster Menagerie 3* set, a kraken priest, as detailed in *Volo's Guide to Monsters*.



Kraken Priest, *D&D Icons of the Realms: Monster Menagerie 3* (2018), picture from [MinisGallery](#)

More recently, a juvenile kraken was released as figure #33 in the *D&D Icons of the Realms: Boneyard* set.



Juvenile Kraken, *D&D Icons of the Realms: Boneyard* (2021), picture from [MinisCollector](#)

If you prefer a kraken that you can paint yourself, both the adult and juvenile krakens are available unpainted as part of the *D&D Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures* line. The adult kraken uses the same mold as the pre-painted *Kraken and Islands* set, but the juvenile appears to be a new design.



D&D Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures: Juvenile Kraken (2021), picture from [WizKids](#)

Computer games

In the Gold Box game *Gateway to the Savage Frontier*, the adventurers are hired by agents of a kraken in the city of Yartar. Later, they are sent back to the city to destroy the kraken base.



Gateway to the Savage Frontier (1991), image taken from [Giant Bomb](#).

Kraken names

Arixmethes, Bastyreth, Cephalopolop, the Constellation, Eye of Sekolah, Gaaree'eeki, Gethshemeth, Ithkarsus, Khalk'ru, Koshkash, K'thurall, Lazarauug, Narthal, Qol'in'taroq, Sieg, Slarkrethel, Slash Eye, Ssessimyth, Stormfront, Tharlarkis, Tirbitus, Tromokratis, Ur, Uzu-Kul, Vaalastroth, Varchulanga, Varklothan, Xisal, Zlorthakis.

Comparative statistics

							
Edition	Original D&D	BECMI	AD&D (1st Edition)	AD&D 2nd Edition	D&D 3.X Edition	D&D 4th Edition	D&D 5th Edition
Source	Supplement IV: Gods, Demi-Gods & Heroes	AC9: Creature Catalogue	Monster Manual II	Monstrous Manual	Monster Manual (v.3.5)	Monster Manual 3	Monster Manual
Size			L	G (90'+ long)	Gargantuan	Gargantuan	Gargantuan
Type					Magical Beast (Aquatic)	Aberrant magical beast (aquatic)	Monstrousity (titan)
Alignment		Chaotic	Neutral evil	Neutral evil	Usually neutral evil	Chaotic evil	Chaotic evil
No. Appearing		0 (1)	1 (75% in lair)	1	1	Solo	
Armor Class	-2	0	5/0	5/0	20	17	18
Hit Points	100	64 Hit Dice plus tentacles	20 HD	20 HD	20d10+180 (290 hp)	432 hp	472 (27d20 + 189)
Speed	18"	Swimming 240' (80')	Swim 3" (21" jet)	Swim 3, Jet 21	Swim 20 ft.	6, swim 10	20 ft., swim 60 ft.
Abilities		Morale 10	Int Genius +	Int Genius+ (19-20+) Morale Fanatic (18)	Str 34, Dex 10, Con 29, Int 21, Wis 20, Cha 20	Str 23, Dex 22, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 19	Str 30, Dex 11, Con 25, Int 22, Wis 18, Cha 20
Senses					Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision	Perception +15, Darkvision	Truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Saves		Fighter: 36			Fort +21, Ref +12, Will +13	Fort 26, Ref 22, Will 22	
Attacks	As 15th Level Fighter	1-10 tentacles/1 bite	2 and 4-6 and 1	9	2 tentacles +28 melee, 6 arms +23 melee, and bite +23 melee	2 crushing tentacles +15 vs. AC, and devourer of ships +13 vs. Fort.	3 tentacles attack +18, or a bite attack +18
Damage		7-42 per tentacle/8-80	2-12 (x2), 2-8 (x4-6), 5-20	3-18 (x2), 2-12 (x6), 7-28	Tentacle 2d8+12, arms 1d6+6, bite 4d6+6	Tentacles 2d8+5 and grabbed; vehicle damage	Tentacle 3d6+10, bite 3d8+10
Special Attacks	Soul drain	Cloud of ink	Constrict, ink cloud, spells	Constrict, ink cloud, spells	Improved grab, constrict, ink cloud, spell-like abilities	Wavewrack, Fatal Plunge, Fling, Venom Bolt, Vengeful Constriction	Fling, Lightning Storm, Legendary Actions, Lair Actions
XP		28,000	16,900 + 30/hp	14,000	CR 12	2,500	Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)
Treasure		50% 10-60 x 1000 gold 50% 10-40 x 1000 gold 50% 10-40 x 1000 electrum 50% 1-100 x 1000 silver 25% 3-24 x 1000 copper	50% 10-40 x 1000 gold 40% 2-8 x 1000 gold 50% 1-20 x 100 platinum 50% 10-60 x 100 platinum 30% 5-20 gems 55% 4-32 gems 25% 1-10 jewelry 45% 1-12 jewelry 35% any 4 maps or magic, plus 1 scroll 40% 2-8 potions Additional treasure in lair	50% 2-20 x 1000 gold 50% 1-10 x 1000 platinum or electrum 30% 3-18 gems 25% 1-6 art objects 35% any 5 magical items 2-20 gold 10-60 platinum or electrum 2-8 gems 1-3 art objects 1-8 potions Additional treasure in lair	Triple standard		

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