



Chapter One

DERRO

SUNDAY, ROVA 20TH, 4709 AR—PATIENT 23 CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THE FATHER OF HER UNBORN CHILD IS A DEMON. LAST EVENING'S ADDITIONAL EXAMS DID INDEED PRODUCE SCARRING EVIDENCE ALONG THE LOWER ABDOMEN, AND RECENT DAMAGE TO THE BACK OF THE HEAD NEAR THE BASE OF THE LEFT EAR. SHE REFUSES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT, COMPLAINS OF "THE EMPTY MOON EYES THAT WATCH" AND "THE BLUE PIT TO HELL." SHE PANICS WHENEVER SHE IS BROUGHT DOWN TO THE BASEMENTS, AS IF SHE FEARS THE VERY PROXIMITY OF THE GROUND. THIS EVENING I SHALL VENTURE TO THE DISTRICT IN WHICH SHE WAS FOUND, BLOODY AND AMNESIC, AND ASK AROUND. IF I CAN FIND EVIDENCE OF THIS "BLUE PIT TO HELL," PERHAPS I WILL FIND MORE CLUES AS TO THE FRIGHTFUL MYSTERY THAT PUT HER IN MY CARE.

—FROM THE NOTES OF MISSING EGORIAN ALIENIST, AVAKAR SIVANCHI



It is something of an irony that civilization, a result of a society's reaction to the perils and dangers of living in the wild, brings with it new dangers of its own. The concentration of life in such relatively small locations as one finds in the world's towns and cities magnifies many perils present to a lesser degree in lower populations. A single fire that might burn down a house in the rural parts of the world can spread and wipe out an entire district. A sickness that could devastate a family of farmers on a frontier can lance through a tightly packed population with frightening speed. A deadly predator that picks as its hunting grounds an acre of land will find much more to sate its appetite in a city's slum ward than it would along a lonely moor road. And when that predator is a master at hiding, stalking, and snatching its prey, and has developed exacting methods of covering the traces of its presence, a city becomes not a bulwark against disaster but the very catalyst for despair.

Every city is haunted by missing souls—citizens who simply vanish on the way home from a day's work or while out on a mundane errand. Some are lost forever. Others are returned, alive or dead, their bodies and minds changed from their experiences while abducted. And it seems that for every missing person case that reaches a satisfying (if sometimes tragic) conclusion, two more remain forever mysteries without solutions. What then of society's morale should it be learned that, in a horrifying preponderance, the causes of these unexplained vanishings and abductions stem from the same sinister source?

Cities cast shadows into the depths of the earth as surely as their buildings drape alleys in darkness on the brightest day. In the world below, strange creatures dwell and listen and lurk, the perpetrators of so many vanishings—the derros. Even if the sound of the distant thrum of civilization doesn't carry down through the deep and forgotten tunnels, the heavy concentration of life seems to draw these diminutive but sadistic, pale-skinned, vacant-eyed maniacs near. They build their lairs below the sewers and secret ways of society, creating hidden holes to the surface if none exist and using these passages as highways to make secret invasions under the cover of darkest night. Possessed of a hideous familiarity with the fragile pathways of the mortal frame that allow even the smallest knife to cut deep and kill or maim, they snatch the unsuspecting from beds and midnight walks, dragging them down to the blue-litten catacombs of their laboratories below. For these monsters seek not only to sate their lust for pain, but to discover why it is that those who live above can abide the searing light of the sun, their experiments an attempt to discover the source of this unique quality that the derros lack. They do not always kill in the methodic pursuit of this quest, but those they return to the surface are only rarely released with their minds intact. For most, the time spent among the derros persists only as paralyzing night terrors and repressed memories of pain and fear.

ECOLOGY

The derros were not always the deranged lunatics they are today—in fact, they were once among the only denizens of the deepest vaults of the world who were not consumed with cruelty and hatred. In these ancient times, before the first derro emerged from its glowing cavern lair to look with jealousy upon those who lived under the sun's ruinous rays, their kind were known as the pech. Fey emigrants from the First World with strong ties to the Plane of Earth, the pech served even stranger masters as slaves. Under the direction of these now all but forgotten lords known today only as the Vault Keepers, the pech built and maintained immense caverns deep underground, their knowledge of earthcraft and its secrets allowing them architectural wonders that survive even to this day, untold eons after the Vault Keepers fled this world and abandoned the pech to their own fates.

Many of these pech grew angry and wrathful in the years following this abandonment, and turned on their kin in increasingly bloody and sadistic civil wars. It isn't clear which of the pech factions first abandoned their deep homes and began the long journey upward in search of a new place to live, but what is clear is that the further they drifted from the deep vaults, the more of this world they became. Just as gnomes have adapted to the world and have lost their deep connection to the First World, the wandering pech found themselves growing weaker and increasingly susceptible to mundane horrors like starvation and thirst. That the tunnels they ceaselessly climbed grew more and more barren further drove the pech to madness, and when it seemed that they must surely perish, for they had no supplies to return home for food or water, they came upon a savior—a pale blue fungus filled with life-giving nutrients and dripping with moisture.

Whether it was their long journey and evolution to be true denizens of this world, the effects of the strange blue fungus known as cytillesh (or "brain mold"), or a combination, the pech had forever transformed. Their bodies grew even lankier, pale and wiry with ivory hair and rough skin. Only in their basic humanoid frame, their white eyes, and their four-fingered hands did any real echo of the pech remain physically apparent—in their minds, no trace remained at all. And when the derros found that, not far above, the caverns opened into the limitless vault of the Overburn and that their flesh blistered and bled under the remorseless rays of the sun, they realized that they had come to their homes.

As centuries wore into eons, the derros spread throughout the upper reaches of the Darklands, yet they never grew numerous. Fecundity is a trait that eludes the derros, primarily because of the mainstay of their diets and the source of their bluish skin. Cytillesh causes brain damage, madness, and an inordinately high number of stillbirths, making the savior of the lost pech also their curse. Today, cytillesh holds an almost holy place in derro society—brain mold is their primary source (in many societies, the only



FACETS OF FEAR

Of all the monsters discussed in this book, the traditions of fear that fuel the derros are perhaps the most recent—for derros embody a combination of mass hysteria with the fear of abduction and unnecessary invasive surgery. Cattle mutilations and alien abductions are a very modern source of terror, one that despite persistent mundane explanations continues to haunt our nightmares. And tying derros to the themes of modern science fiction and horror as one encounters in shows like *The X Files*, movies like *Fire in the Sky* or *The Fourth Kind*, or books like Whitley Streiber's *Communion* isn't as far-fetched as one might initially think.

Although the derro race has been a part of the game for decades (since their first appearance in the first edition of the game in Gary Gygax's classic adventure, *Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*), this was not their first appearance in literature. In the late '40s, *Amazing Stories* featured a series of tales by Richard Sharpe Shaver collectively known as the "Shaver Mystery." In these stories, Shaver claimed to have had contact with a sinister, ancient society of creatures deep underground. The stories were presented in the guise of fiction, but Shaver claimed that they were based on his actual experiences in the underworld, after he supposedly uncovered an ancient language that was the source of all languages on Earth. The creators of this language had long since departed the world, but they left behind their descendants—the rare and human-like "Teros" and the much more populous and deformed "Deros." Shaver claimed he had been imprisoned by the Deros, and that they had dealings with horrific aliens and could travel in spaceships. The deros kidnapped surface-dwelling people by the thousands for meat or torture and wielded strange powers and technology their masters had left behind long ago, and were responsible for many of the world's misfortunes and disasters. The stories were enormously popular, with many writing in to add their own experiences and encounters with the deros, leading to a strange sort of mass hysteria as the lines between fiction and reality blurred. Even after the stories faded from popularity, the myth of the deros persisted.

It's worth noting that the race we've chosen to approximate the role of the "Tero" on Golarion, the pech, also first appeared in the game alongside the derros back in *Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*. Coincidence? Or Dero/Tero conspiracy?

source) of nourishment. They distill mind-altering drugs and poisons from its sap, dry its fibers into tough sheets for use as leather armor or the cords of their aklyses, light their caverns with its glow, and pen their rambling manifestos with brain mold ink. Much of derro society revolves around

the consumption of cytillesh, such that even if the race could shrug off the addiction to the fungus, they would be unlikely to want to change.

Those derros who survive the process of being born grow to maturity quickly, their growth likely enhanced by a diet of the strange fungus. A derro is full grown and ready to take part in raids or experiments by age 9, but can live as long as the oldest human if it doesn't succumb to violence before then.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of a derro's physiology is its violent allergy to sunlight. Bright light, while something of a discomfort for these creatures, holds no terror for them, but the rays of true sunlight can reduce a derro to a stinking pile of scabs, scorched bits of flesh, steaming blood, and dry bones in only a few days. Even exposure of an hour is enough to cause skin to blister and crack and hair to fall out in clumps, almost as if the creatures were suffering from an accelerated form of radiation poisoning.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

In their madness, the derros as a race have become obsessed with the sun—and with those creatures above who dwell in comfort under its rays. The driving racial goal of the derros is to discover what it is about the surface races that their own bodies lack—experiments with cytillesh deprivation or inflicting similar photogenic allergies upon surface dwellers have to date met with failure. Certainly, the race's endemic madness hurts their chances at progress, as progress by any derro conclave is quickly forgotten by its mad offspring. Yet still the derros toil on, ever driven to abduct new stock for their increasingly horrific experiments. They know their numbers pale in comparison to the denizens of the Overburn, and so are stealthy about those they take. They prefer to abduct only those whose presence won't be missed, focusing on prey found along waterfronts or in slums of the surface cities they invariably dwell below. On occasions when they need to return an abducted victim (either to test the results of their experiments in the world above or because of a fear that a victim allowed to go missing long enough for allies to notice might draw too much attention), the derros use mind-altering poisons to erase their victims' memories. When such unfortunates return to their homes, they often wake in unusual locations, disoriented and sometimes bearing strange aches or unusual scars (remnants of invasive surgeries hastily patched up by magical healing) and with patches of missing memory often stretching into several hours. Frightening and confusing, the long-term results of a derro abduction can be nightmares, personality changes, and even eventual madness—an insidious side effect of the creatures' attempt to keep their workings secret from the world.

Other strange occurrences can also be attributed to derro activity. Livestock mutilations are sometimes the result of derro hunting parties that steal out at night to procure exotic



meats for their platters or raw materials for their experiments, or might only be the derro version of a relaxing trip to the countryside after a particularly grueling week of work. In some places, folks tell fantastic tales of derros using strange circular flying machines to secure a vantage point from above to spy upon their victims, or rumors of derros with the ability to transfer their minds into the minds of human victims in order to live human lives for a day or a year. It is likely these tales are the result of hysteria—yet the derros are a creative and intelligent race infused with a heavy dose of insane insight, and it would be foolish to discount every tale one hears about them.

The derros are isolationists even among the other races of the Darklands, keeping to themselves and eschewing trade with races like the duergar or troglodytes. When a derro enclave finds itself in need of something it cannot provide, its first inclination is to take what it needs from its neighbors. In this regard, the derros generally look to nighttime raids of the surface above.

Derros need a constant source of new experimental stock, and are thus drawn to caverns below large surface cities—as a result, they are generally able to procure anything they need from these raids, targeting specific warehouses, merchant halls, or whatever happens to contain the objects of their desire.

Most non-derro denizens of an enclave are slaves. Morlocks and mongrelmen are the most common slaves found in derro society, simply because their flesh is not deemed edible by derros. Members of other races who find themselves captured by derros typically have only a short amount of time as prisoner, ending up on a derro platter, lightly cooked and seasoned with brain mold spores. Derros are consumed by a constant mental storm of new theories and ideas for their sadistic torture-experiments, and as such usually have little time for religion. Most derro enclaves leave matters of spirituality and faith to one or two priests—these derros invariably turn to a demon lord for enlightenment. Lamashtu is a favorite, for her association with madness and deformity, but other demon lords that derros favor include razor-lipped Andirifkhu, pustulant and fungoid Cyth-V'sug, master necromancer Orcus, or murderous and sadistic Shax.

Derros live in settlements known as enclaves—typically networks of caverns filled with traps and guardians along the outer edges, with derro living quarters and laboratories in the heart of the maze-like warrens. Their leaders are invariably known as magisters despite their actual class and training (typically alchemists, sorcerers, or rogues). In large enclaves, a triad of magisters sometimes shares responsibility of leadership, but this is somewhat rare—derros are nothing if not paranoid and quick to murder their kin for perceived conspiracies.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Derros are an excellent race to use for an urban campaign that has ties to the Darklands. Whereas most of the races of the underground world are isolationists with little contact with the surface world (like the drow or duergar) or tend to dwell in remote regions when they do establish lairs in the upper reaches (like troglodytes or vegpeygymies), derros almost always select caverns under large cities as their homes. A derro enclave can feature numerous tunnels that wind up through the dark to connect with sewers, basements, and dungeons, often without the owners of such locations even knowing their homes have become the doorstep to a hideous horror from below.

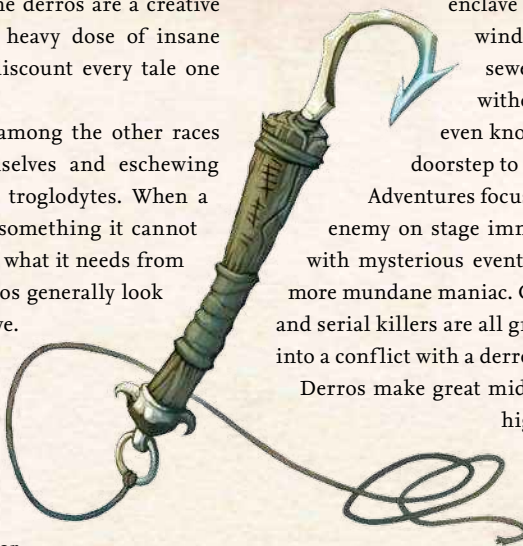
Adventures focusing on derros should not bring the enemy on stage immediately. Instead, present the PCs with mysterious events that could well be the work of a more mundane maniac. Cattle mutilations, missing persons, and serial killers are all great “cover stories” that can develop into a conflict with a derro enclave.

Derros make great mid-level foes; they have an unusually high number of Hit Dice for a humanoid race, and when you start to stack class levels on a derro, he can quickly grow into a powerful foe. It can be fun to have a long investigation into a sinister case of missing memories culminate in a horrific basement battle against a single derro. With their skill at stealth and their ability to use *darkness* and *ghost sound* at will, a derro can single-handedly “haunt” an old house. The PCs might track the clues left by a serial killer or an abduction to an old decrepit house rumored to be haunted, only to find that the house is in fact a front for an entrance to a derro enclave.

KNOWN DERROS

The most infamous of derros are generally their magisters. Yet when a lone derro gets separated from his society (either as a result of being the lone survivor of a cleansing raid from enemies or, perhaps more distressingly, after being exiled from his enclave for crossing some unknown extreme that even other derros might blanch at), these loners can make for incredibly dangerous foes. An example of each of these types of derros are presented here.

Mirgik: Whereas most derros are quite chaotic in their mannerisms, sometimes a derro emerges with the capacity to organize her thoughts and maintain well-laid plans. In many ways, these derros who manage to focus their evils are the most dangerous of all. Mirgik is one such magister, the leader of the derro enclave of Kmlin-Bru, the second largest derro settlement under Avistan. Located deep beneath the dungeons of an ancient dwarven Sky Citadel, Mirgik has formed a powerful alliance with Primarch Bremovir of Galt. Using





DERRO WEAPONS

The derros use several signature weapons designed to incapacitate foes for easy capture, but also enjoy using weapons that make clean slashing wounds that do not overly damage tissue on the mass scale that large bludgeoning weapons tend to do. Listed below are four of the more unusual weapons utilized by derros—all derros gain proficiency in the use of these weapons for free.

Aklys: The aklys is a short throwing club, usually of wood or bone, attached to a 20-foot-long cord. Most aklyses feature short iron hooks as well. An aklys has a maximum range of 20 feet, allowing the user to retrieve the thrown aklys as a move action after it has been thrown. Some derros wield aklyses drilled with holes so that, when thrown, they make eerie whistling sounds that can alert nearby derros of danger.

Crystal Chakram: Shaped and carved from quartz or stranger subterranean crystals, these circular throwing discs have jagged razor-sharp edges. When a crystal chakram strikes a foe, the weapon shatters into tiny sharp fragments; if it misses, there is a 50% chance the chakram shatters when it hits the ground or another solid object; otherwise it can be retrieved and used again. A crystal chakram is treated as ammunition for the purpose of creating magic weapons.

Fauchard: This polearm is similar to a glaive, being a curved blade affixed to the end of a pole. Unlike a glaive, though, the cutting edge of a fauchard is along the concave side, causing the blade to resemble that of a sickle or scythe. The resulting weapon is more awkward to utilize (and as such is an exotic weapon), but its increased threat range over a glaive and the ability to trip foes make it a dangerous weapon in the hands of a skilled user.

Injection Spear: The design of this insidious weapon, often stolen by surface races like gnolls or troglodytes (invariably resulting in lesser, one-use variants), allows the wielder to inject targets with poisons, drugs, or potions. The hollow head of an injection spear contains a reservoir that can contain up to five doses of liquid. When the head pierces flesh, a pressure-sensitive valve injects a single dose into the target. An injection spear is somewhat awkward to use; those without proficiency can wield it as a spear, but cannot use it to inject targets.

Simple Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
<i>One-Handed Melee Weapon</i>								
Aklys	5 sp	1d4	1d6	×2	10 ft.	3 lbs.	B and P	Max range 20 ft.
Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Weight	Type	Special
<i>Two-Handed Melee Weapons</i>								
Fauchard	14 gp	1d8	1d10	18–20/×2	—	10 lbs.	S	reach, trip
Injection Spear	60 gp	1d6	1d8	×3	—	8 lbs.	P	injection
<i>Ranged Weapon</i>								
Crystal Chakram	20 gp	1d4	1d6	18–20/×2	—	2 lbs.	S	—

magic to appear as an attractive torturer and jailor, Mirgik has deceived the Primarch into thinking she is little more than the keeper of the massive underground prison known as the Dread Dungeons, a place where Primarch Bremovir can ensconce his enemies and various political prisoners and never worry again about their plots against him. Of course, these prisoners are little more than a steady and controlled supply of experimental stock and exotic food for the derro of Kmlin-Bru, and should she wish, Mirgik could organize the increasing number of lobotomized lunatic-thralls of the Dread Dungeons to mount a devastating assault on the world above.

Zyregek: Zyregek didn't survive a raid on his home, nor was he exiled by his magister. This violent and dangerous monster is a murderer among his own kind, a cannibal and sadist who quenched his thirst for pain by secretly slaying and then feeding on the bodies of his brothers and sisters in the small enclave of Voord under Ustalav's capital city of Caliphass. By the time the other derros of Voord found Zyregek out, he was able to hunt and murder them all before they had a chance to kill him.

He built a throne of their bones and now stalks the streets of Caliphass by night, seeking children, halflings, or gnomes that he can kidnap for his ever-consuming desire to surgically craft a bride and queen for his empty enclave. To date, his hideous attempts to turn a victim into a derro queen have failed, and he has gorged on their bodies and added their bones to his ever-growing throne.

DERRO POISONS

Derro create a unique poison from their favorite fungus.

CYTILLESSE EXTRACT

Type poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 18

Frequency 1/hour for 8 hours

Effect victim loses all memory of events that took place in the previous hour and cannot form new memories for 8 hours; these lost and prevented memories might return later as dreams, and can be returned with a *restoration* or *heal* spell;

Cure 2 saves. **Cost** 800 gp



SAMPLE DERRO

Presented here is a sample derro magister, a female sorcerer that represents the lower end of what one might expect to find leading a derro enclave. A derro magister like Evehxa is unlikely to be encountered on her own—she surrounds herself with loyal derro bodyguards or keeps close a charmed minion selected from her enclave's experimental stock to whom she may have taken a liking.

EVEHXA, DERRO MAGISTER

CR 8

XP 3,200

Female derro sorcerer 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 70)

CE Small humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 16, flat-footed +7 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +2 natural, +1 size)**hp** 70 (9 HD; 3d8+6d6+36)**Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +14**SR** 14**Weaknesses** susceptible to sunlight

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.**Melee** +1 *aklys* +11 (1d6)**Ranged** +1 *aklys* +11 (1d6)**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with melee touch attacks)**Special Attacks** bloodline arcana (increase polymorph subschool duration by 50%); sneak attack +1d6**Derro Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 3rd)At will—*darkness*, *ghost sound* (DC 16)1/day—*daze* (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 18)**Bloodline Spell-Like Ability** (CL 6th; +10 ranged touch)9/day—*acidic ray* (30 ft., 1d6+3 acid damage)**Spells Known** (CL 6th; +10 ranged touch)3rd (4/day)—*hold person* (DC 19)2nd (7/day)—*alter self*, *invisibility*,
*see invisibility*1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 17), *enlarge person*, *hypnotism* (DC 17), *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*o (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 16) *detect magic*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *message***Bloodline** aberrant

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 18, **Con** 18, **Int** 14, **Wis** 5, **Cha** 22**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 17**Feats** Arcane Armor Training, Brew Potion, Derro Magic, Derro Magister, Eschew Materials, Weapon Finesse**Skills** Craft (alchemy) +14, Heal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Perception +6, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +17**Languages** Aklo, Common, Terran, Undercommon

SQ long limbs, madness, poison use

Combat Gear cytillesh extract (2 doses); **Other Gear** +1 leather armor, +1 *aklys*, handy haversack, ring of protection +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Madness (Ex) Derros use their Charisma modifier on Will saves instead of their Wisdom modifier, and are immune to insanity and confusion effects. Only a *miracle* or *wish* can remove a derro's madness. If this occurs, the derro gains 6 points of Wisdom and loses 6 points of Charisma.**Poison Use (Ex)** Derros are not at risk of poisoning themselves when handling poison.**Vulnerability to Sunlight (Ex)** A derro takes 1 point of Con damage after every hour it is exposed to sunlight.