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system

THE
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

MEDUSAS



Ian Sturrock



MEDUSA

human proportions

snakes
connected to
scalp



scaly skin



SHAWNS
2002

The Slayer's Guide to Medusas

Ian Sturrock

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INTRODUCTION

The medusa is most commonly met as a lone figure in a dungeon, with the body of a beautiful woman and her head covered by a veil. “What in the world could that be?” asks the party jokingly, as they pull out their polished mirrors or avert their gazes, having seen through her disguise at once. Sooner or later the Games Master stops using medusas at all, since they can be so easily dealt with, particularly once the party have access to a *stone to flesh* spell to rescue the occasional character unlucky enough to get petrified.

Medusas can be a lot more versatile than that. They are found in all environments, from wastelands and deserts far from civilization, to the very hearts of human cities, but their own culture varies widely according to their location. Those who live among humans reside on a constant knife-edge, never sure when they will be discovered, making lies, disguise and trickery a way of life. The medusas of the wilderness are often a far more savage group, yet with a startlingly similar mindset to their urban counterparts. Games Masters will find this *Slayer's Guide* offers a variety of ways to make better use of medusas, whether as highly organized and effective foes or as ambiguous but powerful non-player characters. A full understanding of what is, in human terms, the decidedly warped medusa mindset can bring a fascinating wealth of detail to any game.

Players will find this guide invaluable, whether they are looking for ideas on how to defeat medusas in combat, or advice on how to avoid being conned by medusa rogues when doing shady underworld deals. Because most medusas love beautiful and valuable items, the rewards for taking them on can be enormous – a subject that should gladden the heart of any player! The dangers in any such undertaking are manifold as medusas are highly organized and often more tactically adept than humans. With the aid of this *Slayer's Guide*, a party of adventurers will be noticeably better equipped to at least try to take on this terrifyingly effective foe and the Games Master will be better equipped to stop them!

THE SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based D20 games, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, societies and methods of warfare. Typically, these will be the races all but ignored by Games Masters and players alike, who feel little fear or concern in going up against such foes and little interest in their society or character. The *Slayer's Guides* can change all that, breathing new life into old enemies.

MEDUSAS – DECEPTIVE AND HORRIFIC PREDATORS

Each *Slayer's Guide* features a single race, in this case the medusa. This book contains a colossal amount of information on medusa physiology, habitat and society, giving you a deep insight into how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Players will learn how medusas behave in combat and how they fit in to the criminal fraternity in cities. Games Masters are presented with a wealth of material to assist with integrating medusas into their campaigns, including detailed descriptions of scholarly studies of medusas and the accounts of those who have faced them and survived. New prestige classes allow medusas to focus on enhancing their serpent heritage, or live disguised as human women, blending almost seamlessly into human society. New feats allow you to tweak their capabilities according to their preferred tactics and lifestyle.

Finally, a complete medusa lair is featured, to be used as an extended encounter, the basis for a complete set of scenarios, or just as an example of how medusas live disguised and partially integrated in human cities.

I always told my partner Brandlo that we halflings should never drink with dwarves. This new cohort of his, Harbold, had a map of the cave system that supposedly concealed the Pangli Diamond – a fabled treasure carved to a perfect likeness of the head of the Dwarf King Pangli – and some scheme to retrieve it. I could not believe Brandlo had fallen for such rubbish again, not after the Green Hound of Budon caper.

Brandlo agreed to go with Harbold the next morning and, against my better judgement, I went with him. I had ridden that path before on occasion with caravans under full guard, as the area has a reputation for brigands, but we saw none. I was sure I'd never seen as many curiously-shaped rocks lying around before though. I pointed one out to Brandlo that looked like the head of a bearded man, but he dismissed the idea.

The cavern itself was black as an ore's tail-end. We trudged on for several minutes in the dim bluish glow of my conjured light, when Brandlo, scouting ahead, spotted a roughly-hewn spear shaft protruding from the wall about five feet up. A sprung trap.

I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. It had been ages since breakfast and looked like nobody else was interested in stopping for lunch. Deeper into the hill we stumbled, Harbold's map warning us of upcoming booby traps. However, all were disarmed or sprung. Then I felt something slither over my foot. Snakes... I hate snakes! They were everywhere, rushing and coiling over one another, all heading deeper into the tunnel.

Brandlo turned a corner and stopped at a crevice. 'What do you see?' demanded Harbold, pushing at him from behind. They fell headlong into the chamber with a clatter. I crawled up to the crevice to watch. The gap gave onto a vast, smoothly-hewn vault, its distant walls polished to reflect the light from the sculpted diamond on the central plinth. Three women, faces shrouded with hoods, looked up from the plinth at the noise.

'You turned up right on time, Harbold,' said one of them and it was then I remembered Brandlo's drunken mutterings of the 'mysterious woman' who had sold Harbold the map. 'I think your head will serve as a counterweight!'

'Not heavy enough', said another, 'Dwarf heads are notoriously empty.'

'Not if they are made of stone!' cried the first, dropping her hood. We all gasped at the monstrosity before us – a medusa! The creature's head full of snakes writhed about her and I caught a glimpse of flashing red as I looked away. Out of the corner of my eye, careful not to look directly at the medusas, I snatched a glance back into the cave.

Two small statues lay where my friends had been. One medusa, wielding a sledgehammer, struck off the Harbold statue's head. Suddenly I understood the nature of the curious boulders we had passed on our way here. They were brigands on the trail, till they met the medusas. The one with the hammer picked up Harbold's head and carefully exchanged it for the similar-sized diamond on the plinth. Not waiting to see what happened, I ran, and didn't stop running until I reached town.

The following day I paid some teamsters with a heavy wagon and a block and tackle to come with me to fetch the statue of Brandlo from the cave. I've been searching this past year for someone willing and able to teach me the magics that might restore my best friend to me...



MEDUSA

PHYSIOLOGY

Medusas have a truly horrifying appearance; their bodies resembling those of beautiful human women in proportion and shape but covered with snake-like earth-coloured scales and topped with a dread visage out of nightmare, a warped and ugly reptilian version of a human head, its hair replaced by writhing serpents. As might be expected from such hideous terrors, their powers match their looks; a gaze that can turn victims to stone and poisonous bites from the serpents. Some slight variation in specimens can be observed, particularly with regard to height and weight, whose range is broadly similar to that of a human female, although every medusa appears to be in prime physical condition, with naturally wiry tone to the musculature. Colouring can vary through yellows, oranges, greys, browns and even occasionally greens and reds, but all with a natural, earthy tone. The red-scaled medusa, for example, will be similar to red clay or ochre in colour. Their scales are not particularly thick but are astonishingly tough and durable, capable of stopping a dagger thrust without discernible injury. Like all reptiles, they shed their skin regularly. They resemble lizards rather than snakes in that they shed only a part of their skin at a time – either a limb, or the torso, or the head, or the serpents.

Several supposed accounts of the anatomy and life cycle of the medusa exist, most notably that of Bax and Glawker, that have obviously been written by ‘scholars’ who have not so much as seen a medusa, let alone studied one. This is understandable enough, given the inherent dangers of any interaction with such creatures, but has led to a great deal of fanciful nonsense being written about them, sometimes enhancing the old legends, sometimes going too far in an attempt to debunk them. Various myths tell of their magical origins; usually it is claimed that their goddess Anath created them. In some stories she made them from beautiful human women, as punishment for their vanity, in others she fashioned them from earth, to embody a living revenge against the men she so hated. Anath’s character and her own background are matters of speculation, even to medusas, so it is unlikely the question will ever be satisfactorily resolved.

It is clear from even the most cursory study of the medusa that, contrary to popular opinion, the creature is no more nor less than a large herbivorous lizard, whose humanoid form is mere coincidence and whose supposedly supernatural ability to petrify is a naturally-evolving defence mechanism no more noteworthy than the combustious digestive tract of the dragon or the unusual height of the giant...

From *The Medusa: A Natural History* by Bax and Glawker, Royal Sages to King Hefflak

Whatever their true origins, it is clear that those origins are entirely supernatural. As magicians have discovered, fresh medusa blood can be used as an ingredient in a variety of magical items, potions and even constructs. Legend has it that the blood that issues from the medusa’s body can be used in life-giving magics, including curative potions and the creation of new magical creatures or constructs, while that from her head or serpents is a deadly poison that can be an ingredient in baleful and malefic magical weapons and the like. Those magicians who have experimented tend to be highly secretive and keep the results of their work a closely guarded secret.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Medusas are carnivorous by nature but do not require a great deal of food. Almost all prefer to hunt for their food, whether using their bows in the woodland, or complex traps and intrigue in the city. It is well known that they love beauty and that this extends to beautiful food, particularly food that has the added thrill of being prey. Some civilized medusas disdain hunting, developing instead a taste for the more sophisticated preparations of meat that can be found in human cities. They often dine at the best inns on fine cuts of lamb, goat or beef.

Many medusas eat humans; they don’t see this as immoral or distasteful in the slightest. Such medusas usually prefer to dine on handsome young males, so that the experience is aesthetic on a visual as well as gastronomic level. It is not unknown for them to invite a lover over for dinner, not so much as hinting he is to be the main course.

Rumour has it that some bigger cities have specialist eating establishments to cater for the gourmet tastes of medusas and a few other intelligent creatures with a taste for human flesh roasted, stewed or sautéed. If such gruesome places exist, none have been uncovered as yet.

LIFE CYCLE AND BREEDING

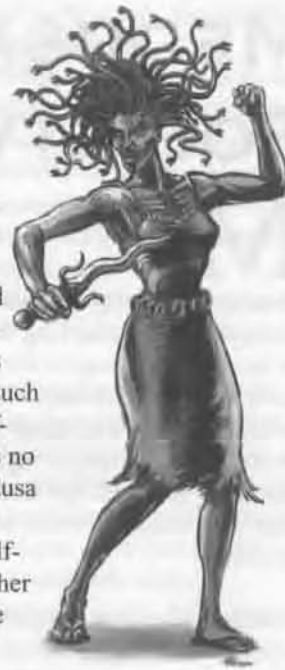
Medusas are extremely long-lived, possibly even immortal. They do not seem to grow weak or become debilitated by age in any way; in fact, they seem to get more powerful and vicious as they grow older. Inevitably, medusas have little time for, or trust of, human scholars, so little is known for certain. It is quite possible that after a certain age they simply vanish far beyond human sight, perhaps deep underground or many leagues from civilization. In any event, their reptilian ability to shed their skins makes it almost impossible to discern their age. Every medusa has the body of a young human woman, albeit covered in scales, however many years they may have been alive.

Their methods of reproduction are also shrouded in mystery but persistent stories claim it to involve a human male, a small male serpent and many bizarre rituals. How much of this is truly necessary, and how much is just tradition, is unclear. Certainly breeding seems to be an unusual occurrence for medusas. Young medusas are a fairly rare sight and it is clear that many medusas never breed at all. Like true serpents, they lay eggs, rather than carrying live young, and it seems clear the process is physically traumatic for the medusa. Medusas are generally very selfish and the idea of risking their lives just to reproduce is anathema to most. Only when they are old and tough enough to be sure to survive laying a clutch of eggs do they begin to feel an urge to do so.

I thought she was just an exotic dancer, writhing around with that python of hers and making eyes at me. I didn't find out the truth until much later, and I can only thank the gods that I escaped her bedchamber with my life.

Cheyn Mordenwood, giving evidence at his trial for Aiding and Abetting the Creation of Dangerous Magical Creatures (later executed by order of Baron Harlsney)

As might be expected, medusas only ever bear female young. Those young are always medusas, despite the involvement of human males in the reproductive process. The only other creatures that medusas appear to be able to breed with are fiends of various kinds. Although scholars classify the offspring of such unions as 'half-fiend, half-medusa', such a phrase is no more meaningful to a medusa than calling an ordinary medusa a 'half-human, half-medusa, bit-of-snake'. If her mother was a medusa, she is a medusa too. Since there are no male medusas, this logic seems to make more sense than that of the scholars, although for clarity we will continue to refer to a medusa whose father was a fiend as a half-fiend/half-medusa.



Medusas are reasonably protective of their young for perhaps the first ten to twelve years. At about that point they tend to lose interest. The young are left to fend for themselves and, in most cases, remain together as a covey of their own, with the strongest hatchmate accepted as the de facto leader of the brood. By this point the young will all be able to speak good Common, hunt (in whatever fashion) and disguise themselves as women, at least on a rudimentary level. Their mother sometimes goes back to whatever she was doing before but, in many cases, the maturity of her children seems to signal a new imperative in her, towards savagery and a primal, primitive lifestyle. Many of the most ancient medusas finish their lives as little more than animals, if incredibly powerful and vicious animals.

In situations where the mother dies or is otherwise separated from her brood before they mature, any young that survive to adulthood will usually be almost entirely savage. While exhibiting many of the same attitudes and social structures as those medusas who have been trained by their mothers, they will usually have only a rudimentary, primitive language of their own.

MEDUSA SOCIETY

Many adventurers are surprised when they discover how well ordered medusa society tends to be. After all, this is a race whose lives are frequently dependent on their ability to masquerade as something they are not and who seem to have a total disregard for human law. To a medusa, there is no contradiction. They have no more than an academic interest in human law. Disguise and deception are so deeply ingrained into their culture that most medusas find it astonishing and fascinating that other races don't also practise deceit as a matter of course.

Understanding this apparent paradox is crucial for any who would outsmart or defeat a force of medusas. In many ways, medusas have the best of both worlds. When it comes to combat, they react with precision, using practised and carefully considered tactics, rapidly responding to orders from their leaders. In social interactions, they are highly adaptable, convincing in their lies and willing to promise whatever their listener wishes to hear if it will aid or save the medusa's life.

Medusa society is run by a system of contracts. Although coveys are small, each will have a rigidly

defined structure and every member will know precisely what her function is because everything will be covered by their contracts with one another. Since medusas are lawful creatures, they will abide by their contracts even if it puts their lives at risk. It should be understood that, although contracts are made between equals, it is common practice that a leader will be designated by the terms of the contract. It is rare to see any serious disagreement in a covey as to who should be named leader. The ordinary members of a covey will respect their leader and follow her orders absolutely, but their welfare is in her hands and, if she fails, there are usually terms in the contract for her removal.

It is common for coveys to be composed entirely of hatchmates, although the more civilized medusas are increasingly willing to form coveys from different hatches. In a covey which is all of the same brood, the leader usually emerges early on in their lives and is accepted unquestioningly by her hatchmates from the moment their mother leaves them, or even sooner. Even such close-knit coveys will have a contractual structure, although if the medusas are of the more primitive kind it will be unwritten and perhaps even unspoken.

Dealings with other coveys are also done on a contractual basis, though in many cases the contracts are very short-term. This is common to medusas of all kinds, whenever they come into contact with another covey. In an urban setting, two coveys may agree to divide the city into districts, with each group preying or robbing only their own district or, in some cases, two coveys may be able to assist one another more directly. In the wilderness, coveys will come to similar arrangements with regard to territory and may occasionally make a short-term contract to co-operate with the destruction of a particularly troublesome group of humans.

Conflict between two medusas, whether in the same covey or not, is rare; conflict between two coveys even more so. There are few enough medusas already without them fighting among themselves. Disputes are a little more common, but are rapidly resolved, either according to the terms of whichever contract already binds those in dispute, or by drawing up a new contract all parties can be satisfied with.

Medusas who have a fiend as a father often end up ruling other medusas, and sometimes seem to have inherited the fiend's mania for large-scale



organization, in that they occasionally try to meld together large numbers of medusas into one vast covey. It is very rare that even the most charismatic half-fiend/half medusa will persuade many more than half-a-dozen medusas to agree to a contract to work together on a long-term basis. More commonly, half-fiends work as negotiators and dealmakers, respected and trusted by a large number of coveys and having various contracts with all of them. From such a position, they are often able to build a far more powerful organization than if they had attempted a blatant power-grab.

OTHER RACES

Most of a medusa's dealings with other races are done while the medusa is in disguise. Few would knowingly make an alliance with a medusa, since she could choose to petrify them at any time without warning. In addition, their reputation for trickery and deception makes others still more wary of trusting them to any real degree. A few bold souls will attempt to deal with medusas but, unless they can be accepted as equals, the medusas will have no compunction about lying to them and double-crossing them if it suits them. That said, any medusa that freely agrees to a contract will keep it to the letter.

Any medusa in disguise will feel particularly free to break her word. One of the conditions of equality is that anyone equal to medusas must be able to see them as they truly are. Certainly, if you can't see through her disguise, you are almost always either predator or prey. Even if you know she is a medusa, and wish to arrange a contract between equals, it is not unusual for a medusa to test your credentials by attempting to petrify you. If you are able to resist, you're probably an equal. In most cases, negotiations never get that far, because medusas feel extremely threatened if humans or similar creatures are able to see through their disguises, and generally revert rapidly to primitive combat instincts!

The human criminal underworld is a place where medusas can fit in without too much difficulty. Depending almost entirely on the attitudes of the local criminal hierarchy, they may be well known to be medusas, or their true nature may be known only to the leaders of major gangs or thieves' guilds, or they may feel it best that none should know what they are. Clearly, the medusas' trustworthiness to other criminals will depend largely on whether those criminals know the truth since, as ever, the medusas

will not feel bound by deals made with those who do not know what they are. Of course, the more pragmatic coveys may come to accommodation with the criminal fraternity even if the medusas do not regard the criminals as equals. In this case, the deal will last as long as it is convenient for the medusas (which may be several years) and then end swiftly and without warning.

Medusas and Disguise

Medusas often find it necessary to disguise themselves as humans or other humanoids, whether to attack their opponents unawares or to move among them unknown for other purposes of their own. They suffer the usual -2 circumstance penalty to Disguise rolls when attempting to pass as a creature of another race but there is one additional feature that often gives them away; they have snakes for hair.

The snakes may seem to be an easy enough problem to deal with, since they can be covered up without attracting attention. However, a medusa's snakes are living things, always writhing about and hissing at anyone who comes near. If the medusa wishes to suppress their activity for a while, she must make regular concentration checks to do so, DC at the Games Master's discretion. Typically the DC is 10 in non-stressful situations, so the medusa may be assumed to be taking 10 unless a stressful situation arises. She gets a +2 Circumstance bonus to concentration checks to keep her snakes quiet in particularly cold weather, as the snakes will be sleepy in such conditions. If she ever fails a concentration check to quiet her snakes, the Games Master should apply a +4 bonus to the Spot check of anyone nearby who might see through her disguise.

The guiser prestige class has a couple of different ways to deal with the problem of a medusa's snakes giving her away.

Also with regard to disguise, it should be remembered that the medusa's gaze weapon can be 'turned off' at will. Medusas call this 'dimming' their gaze. In most cases, medusas who are living among humans simply keep their gaze dimmed at all times, since disguises are far more convenient, and chance meetings far less embarrassing, if one is not constantly turning onlookers to stone. With a dimmed gaze, there is no need for a medusa to wear a mask, hood, or veil, other than for disguise purposes.



MINDSET

The keys to understanding the medusa's mindset can be found in three concepts: beauty, predation and equality.

Medusas have a love-hate relationship with beauty. They find it fascinating, wanting to acquire, possess or even create it, but they feel almost as great a joy in destroying it. This is particularly the case when the beauty is a quality of some living thing. In most cases, they would like to see it killed, whether to enjoy a delicious meal, or take it to a taxidermist and treasure it forever, finally perfected. With particular care, they can manage to make one beautiful creature fulfil all three uses. After all, living things have free will, and so cannot be truly possessed until they are no longer living; although occasionally a medusa will keep a beautiful slave alive and tormented until she gets bored, which may take several years. Likewise, if a medusa is thwarted in her efforts to steal a piece of artwork, she may just burn the entire collection down; at least that way she gains some satisfaction from its beauty. Some scholars theorize that, in fact, medusas all hate beauty and are jealous of it, but it seems just as likely that when they destroy an art object they are simply giving in to their more savage, predatory urges.

Medusas have always been hunters. They need meat to exist and can digest no other food. Spending their lives as either predator or prey seems to be responsible for their astonishingly quick reactions in combat. It is also a large part of the reason their relationships with other races are almost entirely based on deception. Such an attitude has always been crucial to them, both to evade their enemies and trap and kill their prey.

The medusas' idea of equality is perhaps the hardest aspect of their mindset to grasp and is bound up with their concepts of prey and predators. Essentially, the world for medusas can be divided into three categories – medusa hunters, medusa prey and medusa equals. In most cases, only other medusas ever get classified as equals. For medusas, anyone who is not an equal has to be deceived and/or killed. They have no way to understand any other relationship with another creature. It should be noted, though, that a medusa's idea of equality simply means there is a potential to work with such a creature. In most cases, civilized medusas will insist on written contracts for any deal but a solemnly and freely-given word will be sufficient if there is no time

or means to create written contracts. Although no deal with a medusa could ever be binding under human law, medusas have an almost reverential respect for the power of the contract, and will expect all parties to treat it with similar reverence, or suffer the consequences.

The urban environment is an unnatural one even to humans and those medusas who are drawn to it are placed in a situation in which their instincts are constantly overwhelmed. Essentially, their entire lives are lived under the noses of a creature, humanity, which is by turns their predator and their prey. It is little wonder that urban medusas often exhibit a paranoia verging on insanity, even in medusa terms.

On average, medusas are a little more intelligent than humans. This should be remembered in any dealings with them, particularly when one considers that a medusa of even slightly above-average intelligence is considerably more intelligent than a typical human. While most medusas conform more or less to the stereotypes listed above, those rare medusas who do not will tend to be of radically different alignment to their kin and are most likely shunned by other medusas.

RELIGION

Medusas found in human habitation can occasionally be found worshipping (or in some cases, pretending to worship) any of the human pantheon of gods. In most cases, though, any medusas that are at all religious continue to revere their own old dark medusa goddess, Anath. Anath is many-faceted, as befits a goddess worshipped by such a varied and unusual race as medusas. She represents beauty and horror, death and life, deceit and order, an apparently contradictory array of qualities that is highly confusing to human scholars who have attempted to study her origins and worship. Her domains for purposes of divine spells are Evil, Law, Death and Trickery.

Most medusas have no particularly strong need for religion, preferring to rely on their own strength and guile and the assistance of their covey than the uncertain support of gods and goddesses. Those who do claim a religion often seem to do so as an affectation, as though testing just how human-like they can become, or as part of some complex status game with their covey.

The petrifying gaze weapon, of course, is rarely used while hunting, unless the medusa finds herself outnumbered by her prey. Bax and Glawker, Royal Sages to King Hefflak, speculated in their ill-informed tome *The Medusa: A Natural History* that the gaze evolved as a defensive measure. I can now offer firm evidence that, in fact, the origin, like that of the medusa herself, is entirely supernatural. I had long been intrigued by rumours of medusas who had more magical power than most, including several adaptations of the usual petrification gaze weapon that, until the writing of this work, have never been documented.

At considerable expense, I was able to hire a group of hunters experienced at capturing live creatures and specializing in unusual hunts. After several false starts, they were able to take captive a medusa of the aforementioned sort and I have been studying it for the last several years. Thanks to a mutually beneficial arrangement with Count Abelard, I have been able to experiment with its feeding patterns by releasing a variety of condemned criminals into the cage complex in which I hold it prisoner. In each case, I observed the proceedings from a protected

anti-magical zone and with the assistance of several mirrors, careful never to even glance in the direction of its cage. It continued to converse with me while killing and consuming its prey and, although for the first few months I had a scribe take note of all its comments, it became clear to me that it was simply attempting a variety of different tactics to persuade me to release it. I have no way of ascertaining if at any point it told me the truth; it seems highly unlikely and, in any event, it was able to petrify my scribe some six months into the experiment.

I ensured that the creature, which called itself Boucua, had no access to any weaponry. By means of a soporific gas, I was even able to regularly cut away its serpents (it transpires that, like the limbs of reptiles, the medusa's serpents will eventually grow back, even if pruned right down to the scalp the process takes the better part of a year). The only potential food sources it had were the criminals, all of them released live into its cage, occasionally several at a time. In each case it was able to overcome them without petrifying them, using a variety of different tactics, all revolving around the gaze that, used by most such creatures, can only petrify. This including enrapturing them with a gaze similar to that attributed by legend to the vampire, causing them to drop dead on the spot; and creating a variety of apparently sorcerous effects, including damaging magics, all produced by virtue of the gaze alone. In each case, the creature seemed happy enough to dine on the criminals raw, although it was heard on several occasions to complain longingly that it hadn't had a good piece of roast beef in months.

From The Medusa: an Unnatural History by Loremaster Ibbin Stranton.

MEDUSA CLERICS

Clerics of Anath are scarce. Most medusas do not so much worship her as fear her, perhaps paying her their grudging respect as their ancestress. Few feel any vocation as her clerics (and few human religions will have a medusa cleric). After all, medusa life revolves around the covey; there seems little point to most medusas in becoming a cleric, when one's entire flock is likely to be at best three other medusas. Very few medusas feel any need to convert others to religious life, either, which removes another need for clerics. In addition, most are so vain and selfish that the thought of giving up their time to religious activity is anathema to them.

That said, medusa clerics do turn up occasionally; most commonly in the case of half-fiend/half-medusas, who revere various devils and similar entities and see their clerical training as an asset in attempting to build up a powerful organization of

followers. An ordinary medusa who is a cleric will either be a lone missionary preaching the word of Anath, or another evil deity, to other medusas, or a member of a small but devoted religious covey.

MEDUSA DRUIDS AND MONKS

Medusa druids are even rarer than clerics, although a few non-urban medusas follow this path, almost invariably basing their religious practices and magical abilities around snakes and other reptiles. These sinister and savage priests are generally hated and feared by human druids, who consider that such creatures taint and desecrate nature, rather than worship it.

They can often be found in landscapes of blasted woods, petrified forests, stunted ferns or poisoned rivers, surroundings much to their favour, especially with the addition of a few statues.



MEDUSA SOCIETY

Perhaps surprisingly, many medusas find the way of life and the spiritual beliefs offered by the path of the monk to be more suited to them than that of the cleric. This is because most medusas, like most monks, have an inward-looking spirituality; that is if they have one at all.

There do not appear to be any medusa monasteries. Rather, a high-level medusa monk will take on a small number of pupils, as a new covey. These small

groups train their bodies and hone their self-discipline with a pilgrim's life. Once trained, a monk will still have strong contractual and spiritual ties to her teacher but may well join another covey with the blessing of her teacher.

In combat a medusa monk will frequently close on her opponent, waiting until she can grapple or trip them before staring them in the face, ensuring the best possible chance for her gaze attack to succeed.

Twenty years ago to the day it was that we first took her in. I have no need to re-read my journal entry for that time; I remember her as though it all happened yesterday. It seemed a message from the One that the novices found her when they did, just at the crux of the long-running debate I had been having with Master Sheng over the triumph of nurture over nature. Here, I felt, was the perfect subject to prove once and for all that any creature starting on the Path young enough can be brought to Wholeness through hard training and dedication. She was a young medusa, certainly no bigger than a four-year-old human child. Although her serpents hissed and she tried to turn the novices to stone, it was clear that neither weapon was yet effective. Once I took her on as a novice herself, it mattered little if they became so; poisons have no sting for one so far down the Path as I and, as the monastery's master of the Way of the Blind Archer, I had no difficulty training blindfold with her. With Master Sheng's reluctant agreement, I renovated the east wing of the monastery and used that as her training ground, until she was able to mix safely with the other novices.

Sixteen long years later, it seemed that I had been proven correct. Nerisa, as I named her, had been an eager student, the natural lawfulness of her race grasping intuitively for the carefully-honed structure of our Path. At her own insistence, she remained blindfold the entire time she had any contact with the rest of the monastery, although I would have been happy to trust to her highly-developed sense of self-discipline to keep her fearful gaze dimmed at all times. All in all, she was my finest protégé; not the fastest student by any means but, when she learnt something, she did so with such assurance and depth of understanding that I was convinced she knew it as well as I did – certainly she was no more than a step or two behind me on the Path, very nearly ready to be named Master herself. Master Sheng and I continued our debate but it seemed clear to me that I had won it and the monastery's patron, Baron Lagourde, was more than happy with the idea of a trained medusa monk to further enhance his power over the land.

When she did not return from a meditation session in the woods, I found that she had left me a note; it seemed that, although she respected and admired myself and Master Sheng, she was growing tired of dealing with the novices. As her recognition of her own attainment grew, she began to feel strange urges toward them. If she was alone with one, she began to perceive him only as a potential food source; when she was with a number of them, she felt a strong imperative to flee. She took the latter course. I knew then that I had lost the debate with Master Sheng and my only hope was that he was entirely correct; that she would forget her knowledge and her discipline, and become the savage creature she would have grown up to be, had we not taken her in.

Alas, it seems that we were both correct. Baron Lagourde has received a number of reports of a group of medusas who appear to have Ling Ho training, running rampant about the countryside, following no law but their own. She was my pupil and is still my responsibility. I go now to walk the land, blindfold and unarmed, until I can track her down and destroy both her and any she has trained. If she has truly become a Master, the risk she represents is too great. She has merged our own Path with her savage instincts and the strange bonds such creatures have with one another. Nature and nurture in perfect harmony. She is my greatest triumph and my greatest mistake. I must put aside the one, and rectify the other, if I am to bring back the rule of law both to the land and to my soul.

Final entry in the journal of Master Fansen, of the Ling Ho monastery.

HABITAT

Medusas, like the humans and snakes they resemble, can be found almost anywhere in the world. Unlike snakes, they do not appear to be cold-blooded, and so they do not suffer from excessive heat or cold, at least no more than humans do. They do not need an enormous supply of food and are easily capable of killing almost any creature to get what little they require. A medusa is most likely to choose her abode because of personal likes and dislikes, rather than some kind of biological imperative.

Those likes and dislikes often draw her in to the lure of human civilization. Where else but in a thriving commercial centre can she be so near to beautiful works of art, opulent fabrics and the other luxury goods she craves? Where else but in a teeming cosmopolitan city can she so easily pass without comment among the various strange cultures and disparate races that make up the city's population? The city is the natural home of many medusas. It provides them with beautiful objects, places to hide and humans to manipulate or devour. Others prefer to live at the fringes of human settlement near to remote villages they can terrorize or cow into submission.

Many a covey of medusas has forced local peasants to worship them as goddesses. In this case, the medusas often demand the sacrifice of the villagers' most handsome sons and have the local craft workers spend all their time making things of beauty for the medusas' delight. Such a community cries out for a band of noble adventurers to rescue them from the monstrous tyranny of the medusas, but can the villagers' very souls be saved, now they have made deals and accommodations with such creatures?

Finally, medusas can be found beyond the reach of human societies, in the wastelands and wildernesses. These creatures tend to be solitary, hating all company, other than perhaps that of one or two of their sisters. They are self-sufficient and primitive for the most part, revelling in their savage lifestyle as a struggle for survival. Some inhabit the ruinous cities of long-

forgotten nations, surrounded by decaying splendour, eking out their days in a dream-like state of reverie.

LAIRS

It is usual for medusas to maintain several lairs, each in widely separated locations, and always be ready to abandon any lair, even their main one. All lairs will be well defended, often with traps or occasionally with trained snakes and the like. The various lairs are usually also well hidden or camouflaged so as to escape detection.

Only one lair will have real valuables in it—the main lair, usually so well hidden that even the medusa herself rarely visits it for fear of being followed. The main lair of a well-established medusa will be filled with paintings, sculpture and other things of beauty, often of enormous value. Secondary lairs and bolt-holes will be hidden all over the medusa's area, generally with no more treasure than can be stuffed into a bag for a quick exit. Medusas often add traps specifically to destroy the entire lair when desired, usually trapping and killing all their attackers within it.



METHODS OF COMBAT

Medusas are cunning and intelligent opponents, often highly experienced in treachery and deceit. Most try to avoid combat unless it's absolutely necessary in defence of their lives, or their treasure. A few may be found as elite hired killers but only if the rewards are excellent and the risks can be minimized. Because a medusa or covey of medusas will always attempt to establish at least three different lairs, they can afford to treat each lair as disposable.

They always seek to fight on their own terms, generally as the aggressors. This, too, is bound up with their reptilian instincts that all are either predator or prey. When attacking, medusas will use ambush, feigned flight and other deceits against their enemies. Their main aim is to get the conflict over with rapidly and with as little risk to themselves as possible.

COMBAT AVOIDANCE AND RETREAT

The medusa's first impulse, if she has not chosen the time and place of the battle, is to flee, taking careful note of her assailants and trying to slow them down any way she can. If she has any servants or guard creatures, these will be sacrificed to hinder her attackers. At her leisure, she will track the party down and deal with them one by one, particularly if they have plundered anything from her. Even if they only found one of her boltholes with no valuables in it, she will often attempt to hunt them, as they may still be on her trail.

Followers of the Way of Serpents (See the Prestige Class section) on the other hand, often enjoy melee combat and are well suited for it, frequently throwing themselves into combat with wild abandon. Savage medusas may do the same but if they have not petrified a majority of their attackers within a few moments they are likely to attempt to flee. No medusa will fight to the death if she can possibly help it, however wild she may be,

seeking to flee or bargain with her attackers rather than risk her death.

Grappling

A medusa faced with only one opponent will often grapple him, since she is not particularly disadvantaged by a combat in which neither assailant can wield weapons with their hands.

Of course, any medusa can continue to attack with both her gaze weapon and her snakes during a grapple, even when pinning an opponent or herself being pinned. A pinned opponent has a -2 Circumstance Penalty on his Fortitude save to avoid being turned to stone, since the medusa can more easily gaze at him for most of the combat round if she so wishes.



ARMS AND ARMOUR

It is extremely rare to see a medusa wearing armour. Most don't ever expect their opponents to get close enough to start hitting them. If the fight is not of the medusa's choosing, she will flee; if it is of her choosing, she will have it so well planned out that her foes should be dead before they can inflict any damage. The more primitive medusas, who may get involved in melee combat by choice, tend not to have access to crafted armour and will often consider it a point of pride to rely on their natural scales.

Medusas are generally armed with shortbows and daggers, anything much heavier than that would impede their freedom of movement too much. Sometimes those who hunt their own food may have one or two heavier weapons but almost never a two-handed melee weapon. With their high Dexterity, many opt for weapons with which they can take the Weapon Finesse feat, such as short swords or rapiers. As ever, though, the Games Master should bear in mind that most medusas are highly intelligent and adaptable; they will be armed with the most effective weapon they have available, taking into account their capabilities and their plans.

They often take the same attitude with regard to other items of equipment. A sledgehammer, for example, can be very useful for disguising evidence of petrification but can be dropped when combat starts and used once the fight is over.

ON THE ATTACK

A medusa attack will be immaculately planned and timed, devastatingly fast and effective and, at its best, simultaneously highly ordered and extremely flexible. Medusas see nothing to be gained by playing with their food, unless they are in a position of overwhelming strength. If at all possible, they attack with such force and suddenness that all opposition is crushed before it begins. Given their small numbers, this often means they will wait until their prey is separated before attacking. It is not uncommon for a covey of medusas to wait for days at a place their victim often visits alone, so as to ensure this can be done.

Even when attacking, a medusa or covey will be ready to break off and flee at a moment's notice, well aware that prey may turn predator in an instant. Their escape routes will be well planned and scouted

out, perhaps with a trap or two on the way that they can activate to discourage pursuit. This planning has kept many medusas alive when it turned out that their victim was not so defenceless as they'd anticipated, or when the intervention of a powerful bystander left their attack plan in ruins.

Reflections

Like almost any other creature with a supernatural gaze weapon, the medusa is immune to its own gaze, and indeed to that of other medusas. It is also well known that gaze weapons lose their power if reflected – one can stare at the visage of a medusa in a mirror quite harmlessly, and those who expect to battle such creatures sometimes practise at fighting while observing their sparring partner in a mirror. What is less well known is that many medusas hate to see their own true faces in mirrors. Although such a sight will have no particular supernatural effect, it may send the medusa into a senseless rage or even cause her to flee in terror at the reminder of how ugly she is. As might be expected, those medusas who disguise themselves as humans are much less prone to this effect, since many of them use mirrors to apply their make-up. It is up to the Games Master how much of an effect, if any, seeing her own reflected face will have on any particular medusa.



ROLEPLAYING WITH MEDUSAS

As depicted in this *Slayer's Guide*, medusas offer one of the most fascinating and deadly challenges imaginable to any party. They are naturally powerful and can enhance that power by following almost any character class, including the new prestige classes presented here. They are intelligent, work together extremely well, and they almost always have an escape plan for any situation. Any party that just kicks the door in and expects the medusas to stand there and be hit is in for a shock, doubly so several days later when the creatures that fled start tracking them down, one by one, and killing them.

The main things to take note of when designing a medusa covey are the nature of the contracts used by the group (particularly the role each medusa plays in the group), the general purpose of the group and its plans for combat and combat avoidance. Medusas rarely work with other creatures as the risk of accidentally petrifying their allies is always present but, occasionally, they will have charmed or coerced cannon fodder.

Saving Throws

All medusa gaze weapons, even the variants that some of the prestige classes found here can provide, are based on the standard saving throw, with a DC of $10 + \text{the medusa's hit dice or level} + \text{the medusa's Charisma bonus}$. Occasionally, these will be Will saves rather than Fortitude saves, as noted in the text, but the DC is always the same. It is referred to as the standard medusa gaze weapon DC.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

Medusas can be found as members of almost any character class or prestige class, within reason. The two prestige classes presented here are intended to be used sparingly and occasionally, to create something of a surprise for the party and to show them a new facet of medusas. They should not be over-used – it's quite a shock for players to meet a 5th level medusa wizard for the first time, let alone a high-level medusa rogue/sorcerer/guiser.

Medusa Names

Since most medusas know at most half-a-dozen other medusas, they have little need for surnames or family names, although occasionally urban medusas will follow the human fashion and take a surname based on either the name of their covey or gang, if it has a name; or their mother's name, or a nickname or descriptive name they create for themselves. Of course, a medusa attempting to pass as a human will have at least one human name she uses regularly, and may have a variety of human names, one to match each persona and each disguise. The more wild medusas have no need for more than one name.

Example Names Include:

Medha
Adaney
Temisa
Cybesa
Aorenno
Gepis
Elura
Trusea
Steia

THE GUISER

Medusas who follow the path of the guiser have chosen to try to integrate into human society as much as possible, just as though they were human females. Inevitably their view of human society is extremely warped and this is reflected in the special abilities gained by guisers, which are based on the idea of woman as subtle, deadly and treacherous.

Many medusas that become intrigued by art treasures and similar valuables find themselves on the Way of Women so as to more easily gain access to the objects of their desire. They strive to be as adaptable as true human women and so have learnt all manner of useful powers, including one they borrowed from their more primitive cousins the serpentines. These new abilities are largely concerned with disguise and with modifications to the gaze weapon which allow them to operate with greater subtlety and effectiveness in urban situations. Guisers always have some prior experience as a wizard, sorcerer, or similar arcane spellcasting class, and continue with their arcane studies, if a little haphazardly, as they follow the path of the guiser.

Guisers are essentially jacks of all trades, with a little trickery and a lot of magic – just what is needed to

survive and prosper in the big city. Their main advantages come from their abilities in disguise. Far more than most medusas, they are able to blend with ordinary folk, even for extended periods of time. Many live out their whole lives in human cities.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify to be a guiser, a medusa must fulfil the following requirements:

Race: Medusa

Spellcasting: Ability to cast the *change self* spell, and at least one Enchantment or Illusion of 2nd level.

Disguise: Ten or more ranks of Disguise skill.

Bluff: Ten or more ranks of Bluff skill.

Class Skills

The guiser's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the guiser prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Guisers are proficient in all simple weapons and shortbows (normal and composite). They are not proficient in any type of armour or shields. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Spells per day: A guiser continues training in arcane magic as well as gaining her new class features. When each new guiser level is gained, the medusa also gains spells as though she had just risen by a level in an arcane spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She gains no additional benefits of rising a level in that class, such as metamagic feats. If the medusa had more than one arcane spellcasting class before she became a guiser, she must decide which class to add a level to for the



purposes of determining spells per day, new spells and caster level. Guiser levels are never added to spellcasting levels of classes which use divine magic.

Quiescent Serpents: At 1st level, the medusa has very much more control over her serpents than most, and gains a +4 bonus to all Concentration checks to keep her serpents quiet and motionless.

The Siren's Gaze: The gaze of a 2nd level guiser may be used to charm or seduce a male character, rather than petrify him. This is a free spell-like ability that may be used instead of turning the character to stone. He must make a Will save (standard medusa gaze weapon DC) or be affected as by a *charm person* spell. There is no limit to the number of times this ability may be used each day.

Expert Guising: From 3rd level onwards, guisers gain a +2 Competence Bonus to all Disguise skill checks.

The Terrible Gaze: A guiser of 4th level or higher has an additional power to her gaze – any who make the Fortitude saving throw against being turned to stone must make a further Will save (standard medusa gaze

weapon DC) to avoid suffering the effects of a *fear* spell. This is a free supernatural ability that is in use whenever a medusa's gaze is undimmed.

Torpid Serpents: At 5th level the guiser gains the special ability Torpid Serpents. The medusa may, as a move-equivalent action, cause her serpents to fall asleep. They remain in this state until she rouses them (as another move-equivalent action). While her serpents slumber, she does not need to make a Concentration check to keep them quiet and motionless.

The Sibyl's Gaze: At 6th level, the Guiser gains the power to tell another their fortune by looking into their eyes, instead of the usual petrification power. At the medusa's discretion, this can be either the equivalent of a *divination* spell for the benefit of the character concerned, or a vision of the character's death. In the latter case, the victim must make a Will save (standard medusa gaze weapon DC) or die of a massive heart attack where he stands. The Sibyl's Gaze is a spell-like ability that may be used only once per day.

Forked Tongue: This ability, gained by guisers at 7th level, is identical to the 4th level serpentine ability of the same name. Most guisers disguise their forked tongues by one means or another, rather than displaying them with pride as the serpentes do.

The Witch's Gaze: At 8th level, any time another character fails a save against the medusa's gaze, she may cast one of her spells (as gained by being a sorcerer, wizard, or other arcane spellcaster) at them as a free action, instead of turning them to stone, at her option. This spell succeeds automatically with no

further saving throw. The medusa does not need any spell components or gestures other than the gaze but must fulfil all other requirements for casting the spell. That is, a sorcerer must have the requisite Charisma to cast a spell of that level, know the spell itself, and have a spell of that level remaining to be cast; a wizard must have prepared the spell, etc. There is no limit to the maximum number of times the medusa can use the Witch's Gaze each day, other than the usual limit by level on the number of spells she may cast. If the spell would usually require a touch attack roll or ranged touch attack roll, no such roll need be made (the target having failed its saving throw is sufficient).

The Slow Change: A guiser of 9th level or better has a new, subtle weapon in her arsenal – she may choose to have her petrifying gaze attack work slowly, often over a week or more. This is astonishingly intimidating to the victim, who will generally do whatever she asks in exchange for her promise to halt the process. On first failing his Fortitude save, a small patch of flesh, usually on one limb, turns to stone – perhaps one hand or foot. Each day thereafter, he must make a further Fortitude save (standard medusa gaze weapon DC). A failure results in the entire limb turning to stone – if a leg, he can do no more than crawl; if an arm, he cannot run and cannot attack with that arm or anything held in it. Each day after that, he must make another save or be fully petrified. The medusa may halt the process at any time, but it cannot be reversed without a *stone to flesh* spell or similar. If the medusa is killed before the victim is entirely petrified, again the process stops but is not reversed. The Slow Change may only be used once per day.

The Guiser

Class Level	Base				Special	Spells per day
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Quiescent Serpents	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	The Siren's Gaze	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Expert Guising	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	The Terrible Gaze	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Torpid Serpents	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	The Sibyl's Gaze	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Forked Tongue	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	The Witch's Gaze	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	The Slow Change	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	The Great Guise	+1 level of existing class

The Great Guise: The Great Guise is the ultimate achievement of any guiser. She can *change self* three times per day. This is a spell-like ability. It is treated as the 1st level arcane spell of the same name, except that the duration is up to six hours, as the medusa desires – she can change back to her true appearance at any time. The illusion is a little more complete than *change self*, too – it even affects the sense of touch, and Will saves to recognize it as an illusion may only be made by those who come into close and prolonged contact with the medusa. Even then, the Will save is made at a –2 penalty.

SERPENTINE

Those medusas who feel a close affinity with their reptilian heritage often follow the path of the serpentine, sometimes known as the Way of Serpents. They are often solitary hunters in the wilderness, although occasionally a well-disguised serpentine will be found in an urban area, perhaps acting as muscle for a covey of more civilized medusas.

Serpentines are powerful and versatile in combat, learning a fighting style specifically geared towards making maximum use of the snakes that endlessly writhe in place of their hair. In addition, they use their own sinewy bodies to great effect, their scales thickening like those of mighty wyrms and their limbs twining round their foes in a deadly constricting embrace. The more advanced serpentines learn to milk the venom from their serpents, coaxing it off their fangs and into vials, so as to use it to smear their arrows or melee weapons. This can be a severe shock to an unprepared party, expecting to easily survive a hail of arrows fired by a medusa!

As serpentines grow older, it is said they spurn the company of other intelligent creatures, even that of their own kind. Preferring to cavort with the snakes and lizards they so resemble, they begin to withdraw further and further into the wilderness, their instincts growing ever more primal. These ancient medusas are rarely sighted, and best avoided when they are; but for those willing to track such a creature to its lair, the rewards are likely to be rich indeed. Even serpentines still love beautiful and valuable objects of all kinds and the older ones may have had several hundred years to collect their hoards.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To follow the Way of Serpents, a medusa must fulfil the following requirements:

Race: Medusa

Base attack bonus: +9

Feats: Weapon Focus (snakes)

Class Skills

The serpentine's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Hide (Dex), Move Silently (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the serpentine prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Serpentine are proficient in all simple and martial weapons and shields but are not proficient in any type of armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Serpent's Touch: At 1st level, the serpentine's snakes become faster and more independent, capable of striking out at any who come too near. This is identical to the feat Combat Reflexes, with the additional attacks being usable only by the medusa's serpents, not by her hand weapon or gaze attack. If the medusa also has the Combat Reflexes feat, the extra attacks of opportunity from Combat Reflexes may only be used with her hand weapon or gaze attack.

Worm Scales: At 2nd level, the serpentine's scales become thicker and harder, granting her a further +2 to her natural AC (for a total natural AC of +5). At 8th level, she gains another +2 AC (for a total natural AC of +7).

Serpent's Guard: A serpentine of 3rd level and above can no longer be outflanked, as her snakes see all around her and can react to attacks all around her. Attempting to outflank her provokes an immediate attack of opportunity from the snakes.

Forked Tongue: The tongue of a 4th level serpentine splits and lengthens, like that of a serpent. Her sense



of smell becomes much more acute (+2 bonus to Spot anyone within 60'). In addition, she gains a supernatural ability to lie convincingly (+2 bonus to all Bluff checks).

Serpent's Embrace: The embrace of a serpentine of 5th level or above is much feared. Like a huge constrictor snake, she is able to wrap her entire body around a foe if she successfully grapples them. This gives her +2 to all grapple checks and allows her to do d6 normal damage with a grapple, plus any strength bonus as usual.

Venom Milking: From 6th level, the serpentine learns to milk the venom from her serpents. She can do this at most once per day. Each milking takes one hour to do and yields 2d6 doses of venom, which can then be smeared on the medusa's arrows or melee weapons. Typically, a medusa with this power will be armed with 2d4 poisoned daggers and 3d6 poisoned arrows at any time.

Serpent's Kiss: At 7th level, the serpentine's snake venom becomes significantly more potent, whether delivered directly by the snakes, or milked by the medusa and used to coat her other weapons. Its initial damage rises to 1d10 temporary strength, and its secondary damage to 2d10 temporary strength.

Serpent's Gaze: The snakes of a 9th level serpentine acquire the legendary serpent's ability to fascinate and bewitch onlookers. This is an additional gaze weapon that affects all within 30' of the medusa, even if they are behind her (the usual effects of averting the eyes or blindfolding can counter this – see *Core Rulebook III* p. 9). Any who meet the snakes' gaze must make a Will save (standard medusa gaze weapon

DC) or be Dazed (as the 1st level Arcane spell) for one round.

Serpent Companions: At 10th level, the Serpentine gains 4d6 Medium-Size Vipers and one 8HD Gargantuan Viper as followers. These are not intelligent, but will understand and obey simple commands. If killed, they will be gradually replaced at a rate of one per week. All snakes acquired with this ability are immune to the medusa's gaze.

MEDUSA FEATS

Hard Venom

A few of the oldest medusas, steeped in alchemical lore and with incredible control over their own bodies, can imbue their serpents' venom with terrifying supernatural power.

Prerequisites: Age 150 years or more, Wis 15+, Con 15+, ten or more ranks in Alchemy, ten or more ranks in Concentration.

Benefit: The medusa's snakes' venom now has the following effects – initial damage: Paralyze for 2d6 rounds (saving throw as per usual for medusa poison); secondary damage: Petrification (saving throw as per usual for medusa poison). This damage is instead of the usual damage to strength.

Snake Trance

Prerequisites: Cha 14+

Benefit: Any medusa with the Snake Trance feat may attempt to entrance any reptiles she meets. This is a spell-like ability that works in exactly the same way as the 2nd level bard/druid spell *animal trance*, except that it only works on reptiles. It may be used at will.

The Serpentine

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Serpent's Touch
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Wyrms Scales (+2 AC)
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Serpent's Guard
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Forked Tongue
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Serpent's Embrace
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Venom Milking
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Serpent's Kiss
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Wyrms Scales (+2 AC)
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Serpent's Gaze
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Serpent Companions

Snake Whispers

The sight of a medusa covered in snakes, hissing in her ears and writhing all over her, is deeply unnerving to most onlookers. What most do not realize is that the snakes bring the medusa news and whisper gossip to her.

Prerequisites: Cha 16+, Int 13+, Snake Trance

Benefit: Any time anything new happens in the area, such as a party of adventurers traipsing through the forest or asking the village's citizens about their mysterious veiled prophetess, the medusa may make a Gather Information check with a bonus of +4. This ability to communicate with snakes does not make them any more intelligent than usual, so they may be very literal in reporting what they saw. Snakes that bring the medusa information will not fight for her or otherwise serve her (unless there is some other reason for them to do so, such as if they were among the snakes drawn to her by her achieving 10th level as a serpentine or if she has charmed them in some way).

The Calling Eyes

The medusa with the Calling Eyes feat has a fascinating quality to her every movement that pulls the attention of all around her to her eyes. This is particularly enhanced when she is dancing.

Prerequisites: Cha 15+, eight or more ranks in Perform

Benefit: As a free action, the medusa may do a swaying, writhing, snake-like dance at any time, making a Perform skill check to see how effective this ability is. Anyone attempting to avert eyes (see *Core Rulebook III*) must make a Will save (DC = the medusa's Perform check) each round or instead look directly at her. The medusa's swaying dance can be done at the same time as her normal movements and attacks – some observers believe it even enhances such attacks.

The Subtle Call

Prerequisite: The Calling Eyes, Cha 17+, 12 or more ranks in Perform

Benefit: This is an enhancement of the Calling Eyes. The eyes of the medusa who has mastered the Subtle Call exert their fascination even on those who cannot see any part of her body, such as those wearing blindfolds or shutting their eyes (see *Core Rulebook III*); they must make a Will save (DC = the

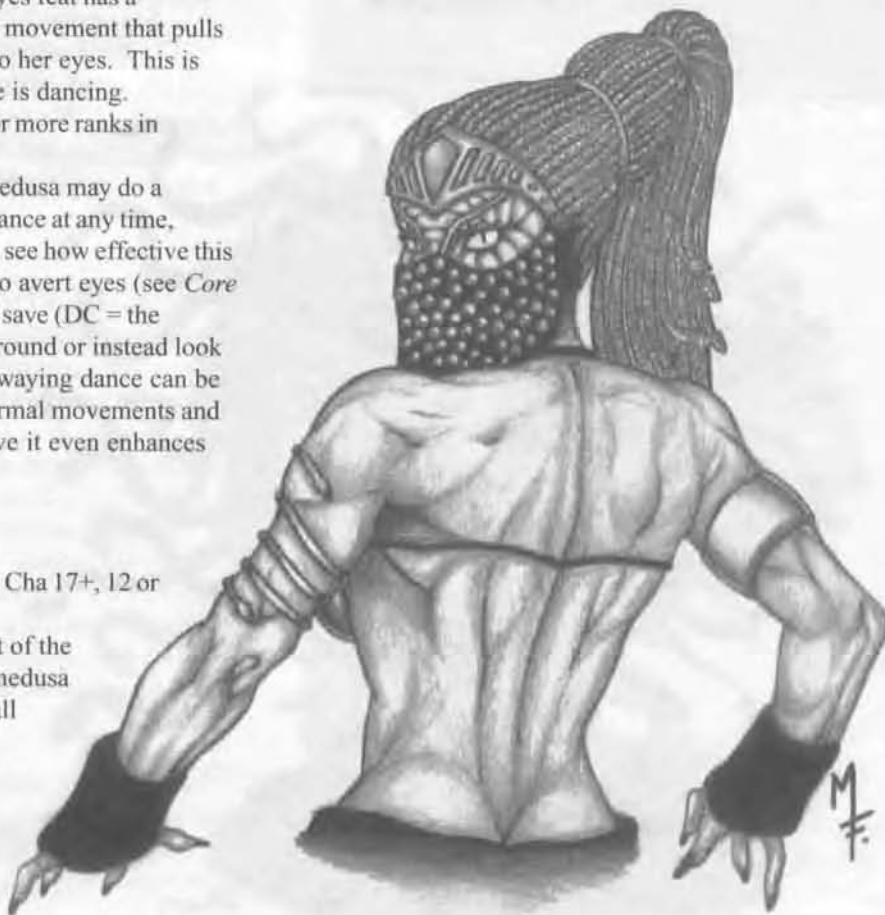
medusa's Perform check) or instead look directly at her, even if that means pulling off the blindfold to do so. Like the Calling Eyes, the Subtle Call only works when the medusa is doing her swaying dance.

The Dreadful Gaze

The oldest medusas have an even more vicious and dread power to their gaze than most.

Prerequisite: Medusa aged 200 years or more, Attack bonus +12

Benefit: Any character turned to stone by the Dreadful Gaze can only be restored by means of a *wish* spell, rather than a mere *stone to flesh*. Even a *wish* will not be enough if the character has been petrified for more than a day, because the Dreadful Gaze turns its victims to a soft, sandy stone that soon begins to crumble away to a fine dust. If that occurs, returning the character to normal takes two *wishes* – one must be used to reassemble the statue and the second to restore it to flesh.



SCENARIO HOOKS AND IDEAS

Medusas are best used against parties of 6th level and higher, especially in a combat encounter. They are all tough and, because they are capable of gaining character levels, an experienced covey of them can still be a challenge even to a high level party. Several of the following adventure ideas can be adapted for lower level parties, especially if the party is sensible enough to handle the situation with brains rather than brawn.

Medusas can perhaps be used to their fullest in an urban setting, as many of the following scenarios reflect, but the rest of this book has plenty of ideas that should give you food for thought if you want to run wilderness or dungeon encounters with medusas. Perhaps the most important thing to bear in mind,

wherever your party encounter medusas, is that medusas can be just as intelligent as humans and just as likely to have contingency plans for every eventuality. We're not dealing with cunning-but-stupid humanoid here; the leader of a group of medusas will often be highly intelligent and more than capable of using whatever magical or mundane resources they have available.

STOP THE SMUGGLERS

Depending on their general reputation with regard to the law, the players are approached by either the head of a smuggling ring or the local harbourmaster. They must break up another smuggling ring, which is responsible for buying up much of the output of local artists and craftsmen and sneaking it out of the city by boat. Of course, it turns out the rival smugglers are a covey of medusas, hoarding the best of the art in their secret hide-out on a tiny island just off the coast.

UNSUITABLE LIAISON

The party are contacted by a noblewoman whose son has vanished. She knows he was romantically involved with 'some woman from the wrong side of town, probably thieving scum'. She had tried to convince him to break off the relationship, and that was when he disappeared. She knows her son's lover's name, and the area she lives in, but no more than that. If the party can bring him back, he can be married off more appropriately to the daughter of another noble family. Of course, it turns out that his lover is a medusa.

THE GRANITE LIFTERS

A notorious and powerful medusa has taken a terrible toll on the local human village for many years, turning all of their most heroic folk to stone. The villagers will pay the party well to defeat the medusas in combat and



to bring back the statues that were once their loved ones.

GUARD DUTY

The city's richest art collector has just acquired a number of rare bronze sculptures of the heroes of times past. He offers the party a substantial fee to guard them in his large town house for a week, while he catalogues them and shows them off to a number of his noble friends, both on private visits and at a large masked ball he plans to throw at the end of the week. After this, the party will escort the wagons carrying the collection to the collector's bank vault. Inevitably, such a collection will attract a number of would-be thieves, including at least one medusa in disguise at the ball.

BRING ME THE HEAD OF THE AMBER GOBLIN

A rich art collector, possibly the same one who employed the party in the Guard Duty scenario, asks them to steal a fabled piece of amber sculpture, 'The Gurning Goblin', from the treasure vault of the city's ruler. They can keep any other treasure they find there, so long as they give their patron that one sculpture. He will provide them with a map of the vault and some information as to its defences. In addition to guards, traps, tricks and the like, the party will need to contend with a medusa and her human minions who are intent on stealing the same sculpture.

I WANT BLOOD

A noted local alchemist and loremaster is offering a sizable bounty for fresh medusa corpses. They should be killed by bludgeoning weapons or spells only, so as to keep all the blood in the body, and must be brought to him within twenty-four hours of death – he will use magical means to ensure he isn't cheated. He wants the corpses for their blood, so as to experiment with its uses in the creation of magical creatures and various alchemical processes. If he succeeds with his experiments, this could begin a whole new adventure, as the party have to deal with the consequences of various bizarre magical monsters running rampant through the city.

NO HEART OF STONE

The party have recently been performing various urban capers involving stealing gems, jewellery and other valuables from the richer inhabitants of the city. Over time, they develop an excellent working relationship with one of the best fences of stolen goods in town, a strikingly beautiful and magnetically charismatic woman. One of the party is particularly struck by her and she seems to take a strong interest in him that he finds hard to resist – the best candidate for her affections is a fairly innocent, good-aligned character, played by a good role-player. In reality, she is a disguised medusa, very well connected in the city and very useful to the party. If she becomes involved with one of them, and he discovers her true nature, all sorts of dilemmas begin to appear – does he talk about her secret with the rest of the party? Does he risk jeopardizing their highly-profitable professional relationship? Does he believe her to be irredeemably evil because of her race? Of course, it is always possible she has him under her spell by the time he even starts wondering.

THE LOST CITY

A scholar of vanished civilizations recruits the party to go in search of the lost city of an ancient human culture, reputed to contain a variety of fascinating ruins. After a long and difficult trek through all manner of unforgiving terrain, they may find the lost city. A few of its human inhabitants remain, though they have long since reverted to savagery. Their leaders are a covey of ancient but somewhat deranged medusas, who cannot bear to think that their home city is no longer the capital of a great empire. They live, half-dreaming, in ruined spires, waited on by their barbaric subjects and still surrounded by the decaying treasures of what was once a powerful and wealthy nation.

THE LOST LOVE

A letter arrives, addressed to the most prominent member of the party, whilst they are in between adventures. The sender explains that she has a great love for a woodsman, however she fears to reveal herself to him lest he find her so repulsive he would flee in terror. Her reason for sending is that she has heard the party have some skill in solving problems and desires their aid. The sender is, of course, a medusa, though a druidic one, who genuinely does feel affection for the woodsman. Whether it can be at all reciprocated is another matter.



SFINEY'S GANG

Sfiney's gang is a covey of three mid- to high-powered medusas, Sfiney herself and her cohorts Methis and Urila. They have various human allies and henchmen but their main business is theft, not combat, so they have no great need for muscle other than to protect their lairs. Sfiney's gang are specialists, stealing items of low bulk and high value. Anything that appeals to them, they keep. Goods that do not meet their high aesthetic standards get sold for day-to-day expenses and to buy more bulky objects of beauty. Most of the stolen goods they buy and sell are dealt with by another covey of medusas, a smuggling gang known as the Lapiz Cabal.

The three of them tend to eat at good inns, or occasionally Sfiney will go out herself to buy cooked meat for the three of them and take it back to whichever lair they are using. Their main lair has no cooking facilities, so if they do decide to eat human flesh for a change they tend to do so in their dockside house, or go hunting from their wilderness cabin.

So as to get maximum use out of her spells, Sfiney and her covey tend to go to sleep late in the afternoon and rise in the middle of the night, since the best time for burglary is long after midnight. One of her favourite tricks is to cast *rary's telepathic bond* immediately before they sleep, because its long duration means they will still have an hour's use out of it on waking. Most of their robberies are planned to take less than an hour from leaving their lair to returning home. So, if encountered on a job, it can be assumed that the three of them are in constant telepathic contact. They are extremely well practised in working as a tight-knit team while the *rary's telepathic bond* is in use so, to all intents and purposes, they can think and act as one, even when widely separated by distance. This is also the first spell Sfiney casts if she has any hint that their lair is under attack. It greatly increases the efficiency of the gang both in combat and in robbery but, more importantly, it allows them to know precisely when it is time to retreat, even if they are spread out from one another physically.

METHIS AND URILA

These two are very much part of a team with Sfiney. The three of them are hatchmates and there is nothing that could induce any of them to betray another. All of them are expert at thievery, with very high stealth-oriented skills, and each also has a specialty with which to support the rest of the team. The only area the group as a whole is a little deficient in is healing but they very rarely get involved in stand-up fights anyway. All three are practised at passing for humans, though Sfiney is undoubtedly the best and serves as the main point of contact the group have with the human underworld.

Methis: [6th HD medusa]/7th level rogue; the safe-cracker and trap-disarmer of the crew, with very high Open Lock, Pick Pocket, Disable Device, Search, Spot and Sense Motive skills.

Urila: [6th HD medusa]/6th level monk; the group's expert climber and acrobat, with great Balance, Climb, Tumble and Swim skills.

THE LAIRS

The Belfry

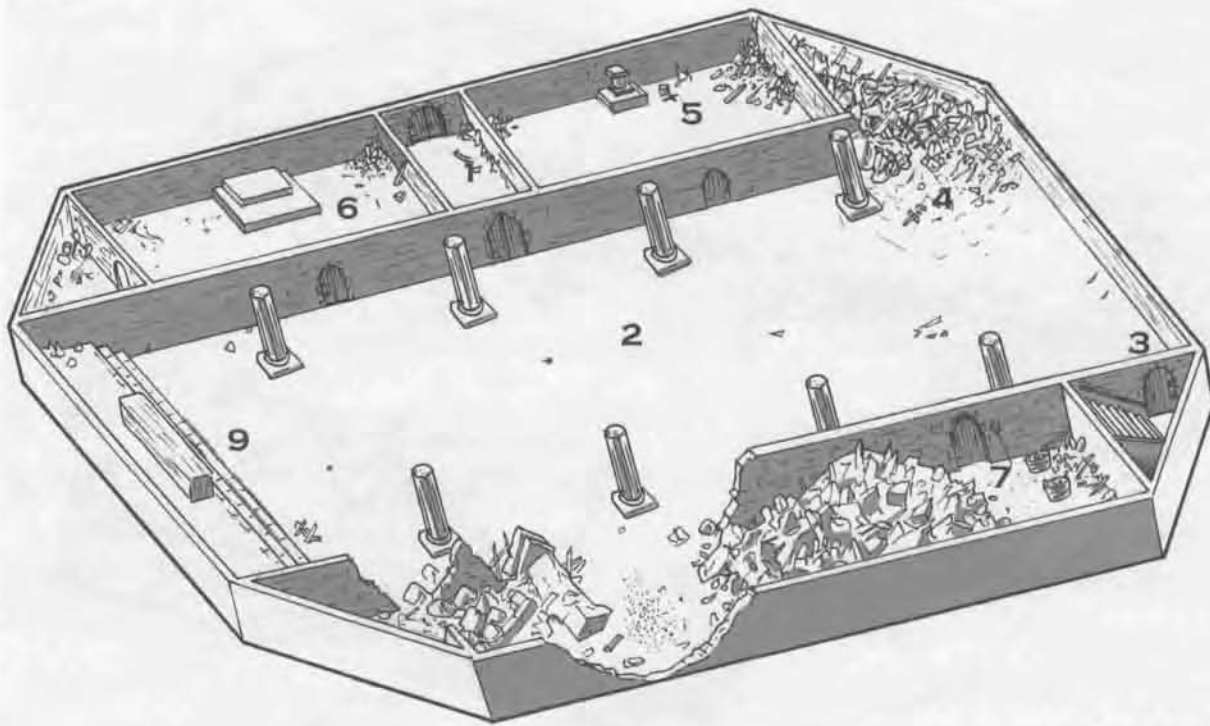
The group's main lair is in the belfry of a long-abandoned temple, between the temple district and the slums. It is a large but unremarkable building, well constructed of thick stone and with a reputation for being haunted among the few people who are even consciously aware of its existence.

Occasionally, inquisitive children from the slums try to explore it, and are frightened off by Sfiney's *dancing lights* or *ghost sound* cantrips. Less often, a minor new religion may spring up and its priest examines the possibility of renovating the temple. So far, the gang have been able to murder any such covetous priests or otherwise discourage their attentions but they are aware that their home has value, even if the value is small, so they are resigned to the fact that they will likely have to abandon it eventually.

Room Key

1. Entrance Hall

The outer double doors are kept locked by the gang, but are in quite poor repair – DC 25 to pick the lock, or treat as good wooden doors with 12 hp remaining for purposes of breaking down. If Sfiney is in residence, entering the entrance hall will trigger her silent *alarm*



spell that she always casts in the centre of area 2. She will always investigate if her *alarm* is triggered; usually by casting *clairvoyance* on area 2. If she thinks the party are a serious threat (which is very likely, if there are more than six of them or if they have expensive or obviously magical gear), she will immediately put her escape plan into action (see sidebar); if not, she will cast *Rary's telepathic bond*, and the medusas will come down the stairs to the north balcony (area 10), ready to fill the intruders full of arrows (and *fireballs*, *colour sprays* etc). If the intruders just look like local scavengers, she will try to frighten them off with cantrips to make them think the temple is haunted.

2. Main Temple

Clearly at one time this was intended to be a grand room – it is large and has a very high ceiling, extending up to the top of the next floor, with long balconies (areas 10) visible along the side walls. Eight great pillars support the arched ceiling. It is empty of furniture save for the altar (area 7) – the pews and similar items have been filched for firewood generations ago. Like the rest of the ground and first

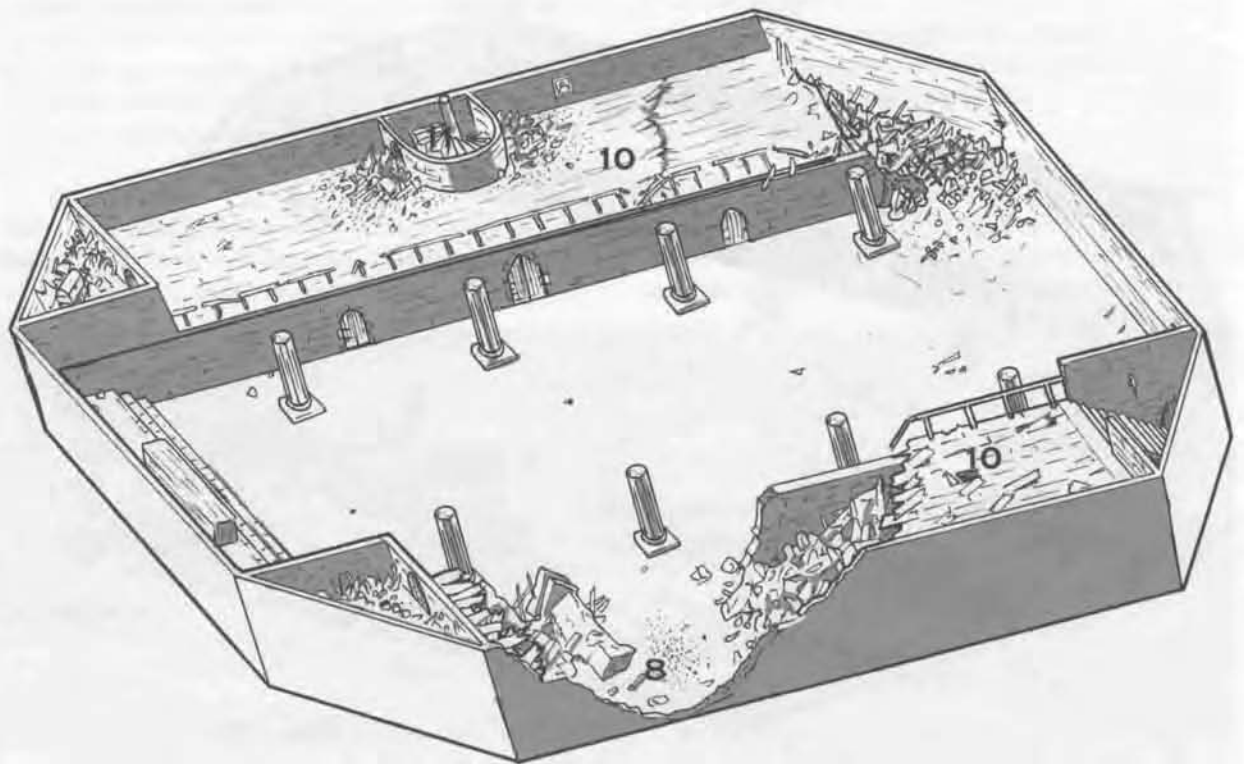
floors, the floor of the main temple has a fair bit of random, valueless junk strewn about it. Rats make their nests in the garbage but will scurry away from any intruders.

3. Door to South Stairway

This leads up to the south-east balcony on the first floor (area 10). Although the staircase is in fair condition, the balcony beyond it has largely collapsed into the pile of rubble (area 8). There was once a route up to the belfry from here but that too is now rubble.

4. Ruined Stairwell

The stairs up to the first floor have collapsed and are now little more than a heap of rubble. Both Methis and Urila can climb that route with ease (DC: 15 to climb), but if Sfiney has a *spider climb* to spare, she often uses that and lets down the rope ladder stored at 4A for the other two. In many cases, one or other of them will be in the lair anyway, in which case the rope ladder can be let down. The rope ladder is coiled under an old blanket.



5. Private Temples

6. Store Rooms

7. Kitchen

These contain nothing but rubbish – a couple of damp and rotted holy books from a forgotten religion and some broken musical instruments in the temples, and heaps of ordure and rotten food in the storerooms and kitchen.

8. Rubble

At some point this side of the temple must have been struck by lightning, or a siege engine, or powerful magic. The roof and part of the wall are collapsed into rubble, along with much of the south balcony. It is possible to scramble over the rubble to enter the building this way instead of through area 1, but doing so will still set off Sfiney's *alarm* spell if she is present (see area 1 for details). Any character with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Survival check (DC 15) to identify reptile droppings on the top of the rubble heap, which is directly below the ledge used by the gang as a privy (area 15).

9. High Altar

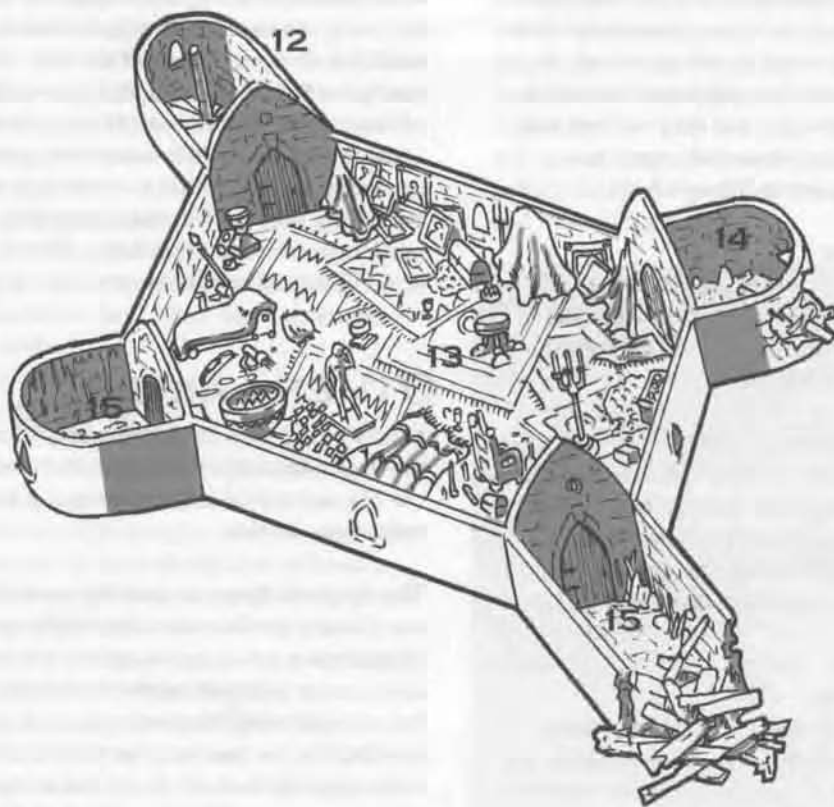
A wooden structure, decayed and splintered and covered in mouldering cloth, the altar is not useful for anything other than concealment. The only reason it was not looted for firewood years ago is that it is too heavy and bulky to carry easily.

10. Balcony over Main Temple

These wooden balconies overlook area 2. The rails are 4 ft. high and also made from wood. The northern balcony is fairly structurally sound. On the other hand, the remaining fragments of the southern balcony are highly unsafe – a character who walks on them and weighs more than 140 pounds, including equipment, will cause them to collapse (DC 15 reflex save to jump back onto safe footing, or else fall 10 ft. onto the ground floor).

11. Stairs to Belfry

More rubbish is heaped around both sides of this doorway. The medusas have been careful to ensure the rubbish is much like that in the storerooms but



just underneath the top layer of rotted priests' robes and old wood are several pieces of dry wood and paper and six flasks of oil, three on each side of the door. The door itself is protected by a *fire trap* spell (d4+9 damage), which, if it goes off, will ignite the oil and rubbish, setting fire to both the balcony and the stairwell within a matter of seconds. As might be expected, all three medusas are attuned to the *fire trap* and will not set it off by opening the door.

12. Stairs from First Floor

These stairs lead up from area 11. The door at the top is old but quite solid (treat as a good wooden door), but Methis has fitted a new lock to it (DC 30 to open). Each medusa has a key to the door.

13. Belfry

The second floor (belfry) is filled with the booty of twenty years spent stealing the most beautiful objects the covey could find. Cloth-of-gold, cloth-of-silver, silk, velvet and satin adorn the walls and ceiling, several layers thick. The floors have hand-

woven exotic rugs covering the finest carpets. Every piece of furniture is a carefully carved masterpiece in unusual timber and precious metal. All around can be found pieces of sculpture and paintings by some of the most famous and celebrated artists the city has seen over the last few centuries. Immaculately crafted jewellery glistens on almost every surface. A trail of pearls leads to a small heap of diamonds. It is more of a nest than a home, though; no sane human could want to live in a place like this. Weigh it in at the local pawnshop, maybe, but not live in it. The concentration of so much splendour in one room may seem languid and sumptuous to Sfiny's gang, but it's a little overwhelming, almost garish; as though the occupants want people to think they have taste, when in fact they have no idea.

Of course, the goods in the belfry could set up an adventuring party for life. The medusas loved them for their own sake and will destroy them with glee if they think anyone else might get them (see the sidebar Sfiny's Escape Plan). If a fire does take hold of this room (either spreading from the *fire trap* in

area 11, or started deliberately by the medusas) the fabrics and paintings will be ablaze in seconds. It is likely that some goods could be salvaged from the flames, but only the partially-melted precious metals (to a value of about 2500 gp) and the jewellery and gems (worth hundreds of thousands more, but probably leaving the place in Sfiney's bag).

14. East Storeroom

The door to this room is locked (DC 25 lock). The room itself is empty but there is a 2' ft wide hole in the east wall, leading directly onto the roof of the building (above the Main Hall).

15. Ruined Stairwell

The door has another DC 25 lock. The wooden stairs that once formed an alternate route up to the belfry have long since collapsed, and the ledge that is all that remains of the landing now has a crude wooden privy built atop it, directly above the pile of rubble (area 8).

16. West storeroom

This has another DC 25 lock. Much of the roof is missing and, as a result, the room is inhabited by a small family of bats.

SFINEY'S ESCAPE PLAN

The medusas will be reluctant to abandon their haul, but they will do so with barely a second thought (other than 'what a pretty bonfire all that finery makes') if they think their lair is seriously threatened, or if they meet stiff resistance in defending it from the balcony. They will attempt to damage their attackers as much as possible but escape will be their first priority. Sfiney's *teleport* spell can take a total of 450 pounds with her, which is enough to get all three of them away, along with their gear and a fair few of the choicest valuables (all the gems and jewellery) from the room. That is certainly their favoured escape route; they will teleport to one of their other lairs (all of which Sfiney knows well), probably the sewer bolthole or the wilderness cabin (since anyone who knows about the belfry probably knows about the dockside house too). Before leaving, Sfiney will throw a couple of vials of alchemist's fire on the valuables they cannot carry. If Sfiney is somehow prevented from using the *teleport* spell, the group will split up, Sfiney casting a *fly* spell and going out through the hole in the roof of area 16 then flying

west, Methis climbing out through the hole in area 14 and using the rope ladder to get down the east wall, and Urila dropping down off the edge of area 15 (using her Slow Fall monk ability) and fleeing south off the rubble. In this case, Sfiney will attempt to assist the others in their escape too, perhaps by providing *stinking cloud* to cover one and *improved invisibility* cast on the other, depending on how much time she thinks they have. They will meet up again in the sewer bolthole and start to plan their revenge.

OTHER LAIRS

Sfiney's gang also has a two-storey terraced house in the dockside area, a bolthole in the sewers beneath the city and a wilderness cabin many hundreds of miles from the city.

The dockside house is used for conducting business, transferring goods to the Lapiz Cabal and so on. Methis has worked hard to make it very secure (DC 30 locks and a variety of mechanical traps), but Sfiney has avoided using magical traps on it so as to avoid spoiling the *fire trap* surprise at the belfry. She will still use spells such as *alarm* and *arcane lock* when the group are conducting particularly important business there. Only highly trusted associates of the gang are aware of the house; dealings with others are always done at a neutral location, often in the dockside area again. Several of the other inhabitants of the street are given regular payments by one of Sfiney's associates to keep an eye on the house, whether or not the medusas are present there. Of course, these people have no idea of the true nature of the house's owners. The Lapiz Cabal moor their boats and have a warehouse building close by.

The sewer bolthole is very basic, with several weeks' supplies of preserved meat but very little in the way of home comforts. It is very well protected, with *fire traps* and the like, as Sfiney reasons that the group is in big trouble already if they have to use this place. They will use it to lie low if attacked elsewhere, spying on their enemies and trying to work out if they should leave town or fight back on their own terms. If they ever need to get out of the city quietly, they can do so from here, by way of the Lapiz Cabal's small sewer-boats.

The wilderness cabin is extremely isolated, again very well defended (including with *fire traps*), and highly

unlikely to come into play. The gang keep it as an absolute last-ditch hideout and as a place to go for a change from the city. They will always *teleport* here, so the distance is no problem to them.

USING SFINEY'S GANG

The gang are an important but little-known part of the underworld life of the city. Many thieves and smugglers will have heard of a capable all-female gang of art thieves but few will have an idea as to how to go about contacting them. Fewer still have any clue as to the gang's true nature and powers. They are perhaps best introduced into a campaign very gradually, with characters at first hearing of them through rumour.

If the party is composed of that rarity, law-abiding adventurers, a murder mystery may be the best way to have them come into contact with Sfiney and her group. One of the three may have become a little careless, and petrified or poisoned the wrong victim (perhaps the son of a prominent noble family), in which case, the party are contracted to find the killer. Or a particularly important and valuable art piece may be stolen, perhaps even a magic artifact that is also an object of great beauty, and the party are tempted by the reward for its return. Of course, the gang stole the piece (or bought it from the Lapid Cabal) and the trail, if the party can follow it, leads to the belfry or dockside house.

The classic twist on such an investigative adventure is to use it for a less law-abiding party who have been caught at crimes of their own; the stolen object (or murder victim) is of such import that the authorities offer the adventurers their freedom in exchange for the party tracking down the gang and bringing them to justice; perhaps encouraged to do so by *geas* or *quest* spells. If you do not want to use one of the above ideas, a criminal-oriented party may end up dealing peacefully with the gang, probably through intermediaries to start with. A rogue character may even be sent by his superiors in the Thieves' Guild to

carry a message or package to the gang. Eventually, they may come into conflict with Sfiney, either through an underworld double-cross or gang war, or simply by putting two and two together and realizing just how much the gang's accumulated treasure must be worth, given the amount of time they have been in business. On the other hand, they may find doing business with the gang to be more profitable and less risky than attacking them.

SFINEY

Sfiney is a little over a hundred years old, but looks to be in her mid-twenties when made up to look human. She's extraordinarily intelligent, even for a medusa, and will prove very difficult to defeat in any meaningful sense. At the first sign of trouble, she and her covey will flee, doing as much damage to their attackers en route as is possible without exposing themselves to any serious risk. Like most



medusas, she constantly covets items of beauty but she at least has the sense to recognize this potential weakness in herself (if not the willpower to overcome it). Wary of being tricked by humans, she knows that Methis is an even better judge of character than Sfiney herself, and so will ensure that Methis is present (or at least watching from hiding) at any deals that may take place. The two will sometimes break off a discussion so that they can converse or, more often, string out a negotiation over some time, allowing them to investigate the other party and ascertain as much information about them as possible.

The spells listed as 'typical' are the ones she generally has if she's not doing a raid; a good mix of offensive, defensive and general use magic, designed largely to aid any defence of, or retreat from, one of their lairs. If the group are carrying out a robbery – and every time they do so, it is planned out to the tiniest detail – she tends to carry a lot more divinations, along with illusions and a few offensive and defensive spells. She will 'case' any planned target extensively many days before they carry out their plan, again using her divination spells such as *scrying*, *arcane eye*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, and *locate object*. On the day of the robbery she will once again visit the location to be certain that nothing has changed before putting her plan into operation.

Sfiney

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

[6th level Medusa]/3rd level Diviner/6th level Guiser

Hit Dice: 6d8+9d4 (53 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 Natural)

Attacks: Shortbow +13/+7 ranged; or dagger +12/+7 melee, snakes +7 melee

Damage: Shortbow 1d6; or dagger 1d4+2, snakes 1d4+2 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft.

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 21), poison (Fortitude save DC 17), Quiescent Serpents, The Siren's Gaze, Expert Guising, The Terrible Gaze, Torpid Serpents, The Sibyl's Gaze

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +11, Will +11

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 19, Wis 11, Cha 18

Skills: Alchemy +10, Appraise +12, Bluff +18, Disguise +21, Gather Information +7, Hide +13, Move Silently +17, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +20, Spot +8

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Expertise, Silent Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus: Evocation

Challenge Rating: 16

Treasure: Potion of *cure light wounds* x2, Scroll of *change self* x 2, scroll of *expeditious retreat*, scroll of *improved invisibility*, scroll of *mage armour*, *lens of detection*, 1 flask alchemist's fire, 3 tindertwigs, 1 tanglefoot bag.

Alignment: Lawful evil

Spells in Book: All 0th level, except *disrupt undead*; 1st level: *alarm*, *hold portal*, *detect secret doors*, *Identify*, *change self*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armour*, *spider climb*; 2nd level: *arcane lock*, *colour spray*, *locate object*, *summon swarm*, *see invisibility*; 3rd level: *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *flame arrow*, *fireball*, *fly*; 4th level: *fire trap*, *arcane eye*, *scrying*, *improved invisibility*; 5th level: *rary's telepathic bond*, *teleport*

Spells Memorized (typical): 0th level: *detect poison*, *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *detect magic*, *read magic*; 1st level: *alarm*, *change self*, *hold portal*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armour*, *spider climb*; 2nd level: *arcane lock*, *colour spray* x 2, *locate object*, *summon swarm*, *see invisibility*; 3rd level: *clairvoyance*, *flame arrow*, *fireball* x 2, *fly*; 4th level: *arcane eye*, *improved invisibility*, *scrying*; 5th level: *teleport*, *rary's telepathic bond*.

Familiar: Horpa; snake (viper); Tiny magical beast; HD 15; hp 26; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 15 ft, climb 15 ft, swim 15 ft; AC 23; Attack +16 melee (poison, bite); Face/Reach 2" ft by 2" ft / 0 ft; SA Poison; SQ Scent, grant Alertness, improved evasion, share spell, empathic link, touch, speak with Sfiney, speak with snakes; Alignment LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2; Skills: Balance +11, Climb +12, Hide +18, Listen +8, plus Sfiney's skills; Feat Weapon Focus (bite)

Alfredo's life had been transformed, these last few months. Sure, he was still living in his tiny attic studio, but he now had regular food, money to buy paints and canvas, and even the promise of an exhibition at Duke Hanter's palace. And Martha, the wealthy arts patron who had helped him with all those things, had promised him she would have even better news for his career at the dinner party she was throwing tonight.

She had been enormously demanding, though. She bought every one of his paintings, as a matter of course. He did not dare to mention to her that he wanted a wider market, now that his work seemed to be becoming accepted and recognized. And she'd been so angry with him when he was seeing Saishey, saying that the girl was a distraction from his vocation. In some ways maybe it was for the best that Saishey had vanished a couple of weeks ago – she'd always been a fickle one, Saishey had, and so he was not entirely surprised. Probably gone to sea, like she'd always said she wanted to. He'd still been heartbroken, of course, but he'd channelled all his grief into his work, as Martha said he should. He was pleased with the new direction he was taking— he felt that the loss of his lover had lent a darker intensity to his paintings, although Martha had hummed and hawed a little at his recent work.

Martha greeted him at her door with a dainty kiss on each cheek, as ever, and led him in to the parlour. Her two sisters were there already, chattering away about some new artist one of them had 'discovered'. They nodded to him, maybe a little more distant than usual. Martha tugged at his wrist impatiently, "You must come through to my own studio, dearest, I have a little project I've been working on there myself, and I'd simply love to hear your professional opinion on it, before we eat."

Her own studio? He had not even been aware she was an artist. Probably a typical rich dabbler. Still, he would be polite, make all the right appreciative noises, however gauche her work might turn out to be. She led him in to what looked more like a workshop than a studio, and had him sit in a chair by an odd box-like contraption. "I call this piece 'Human Drama'; lean forward," she said, sliding the box part of the thing down over his head. The inside of the box was lit by a couple of tiny candles, and looked rather like a very small theatre, what with that little curtain along the back 'wall'. He heard her moving about in the room, running some water. What was she up to? Sounded like she was washing her face, or was that part of the 'performance' too?

Martha was ready; her make-up and wig were gone, and the device was all set up. She moved a lever on the side of the box, and the great blade swept forward in one swift movement, cleanly severing Alfredo's head. Quickly now, she thought to herself, pulling aside the curtain and gazing at the dying head in the box. Perfect. She'd caught him just before consciousness slipped away, and the expression of mingled arrogance, agony and shock on the handsome young grey marble face was better than she'd dared hope for. Beautiful, and hers forever. Martha was so glad she'd hit on this method of petrifying just the head – men's bodies are unremarkable things for the most part, far more trouble than they are worth to store as statues. She allowed herself a few moments of satisfaction, then called through to the parlour, "Another great piece of Human Drama! You must come and see the look on his face, girls, and then maybe we can heave dinner onto the work-table and start jointing it."



MEDUSA REFERENCE LIST

Medusas are almost as versatile as humans, and so this reference list cannot be anything more than a starting point. It is intended more for occasions when the Games Master throws a wandering medusa into another adventure, than for scenarios where the medusa is the focus of the action. In most cases the Games Master will be better served creating new and unique medusas for the party to interact with. However, this list covers most of the typical classes and experience levels that will be encountered in both urban and wilderness settings, so it can be used with the scenario hooks in this book as well as for random encounters.

Leader of a Powerful Covey

Half-Medusa, Half-Fiend

Medium-Size Outsider (Evil, Lawful)

[6th HD Medusa]/9th level Cleric

Hit Dice: 15d8+30 (97 hp)

Initiative: +5 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft, fly 30 ft (average)

AC: 19 (+5 Dex, +4 Natural)

Attacks: Two claws +14 melee (or dagger +14/+9/+4 melee), bite +9 melee, snakes +12 melee; or shortbow +17/+12/+7 ranged

Damage: Claw 1d4+2; dagger 1d4+2; bite 1d6+1; snakes 1d4+1 and poison; shortbow 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 21), poison (Fortitude save DC 19), divine spells (domains Death and Magic), turn or rebuke undead, spell-like abilities, darkvision 60', immune to poison, acid, cold, electricity and fire resistance 20

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +14

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 18

Skills: Bluff +13, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +15, Scry +15, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +13, Spot +12

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse (snakes), Snake Trance, Snake Whispers

Challenge Rating: 18

Treasure: Double standard

Alignment: Lawful evil

Spells: (spell DC 13+ Spell Level): 0th level: *create water*, *inflict minor wounds* (x2) *mending*, *read Magic*, *resistance*; 1st level: *bane*, *cause fear*, *divine favour*, *doom*,

endure elements, *entropic shield*; 2nd level: *augury*, *death knell*, *identify*, *shatter*, *spiritual weapon*, *summon monster II*; 3rd level: *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *speak with dead*, *stone shape*; 4th level: *death ward*, *lesser planar ally*, *summon monster IV*; 5th level: *circle of doom*, *plane shift*.

Spell-like abilities: (DC 14+spell level) *Darkness* 3/day, *desecrate*, *unholy blight*, *poison* 3/day, *contagion*, *blasphemy*, *unholy aura* 3/day, *unhallow*, *horrid wilting*, *death touch*

Serpentine

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

[6th level Medusa]/3rd level Ranger/6th level Serpentine

Hit Dice: 6d8+9d10+30 (105 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 17 (+2 Dex, +5 Natural)

Attacks: Shortbow +17/+18/+7 ranged; or scimitar +16/+11/+6 melee, handaxe +16 melee, snakes +15 melee

Damage: Shortbow 1d6 and poison; or scimitar 1d6+3 and poison, handaxe 1d6+3 and poison, snakes 1d4+3 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 18), poison (Fortitude save DC 19), track, favoured enemy: Humans +1, serpent's touch, serpent's guard, forked tongue, serpent's embrace, venom milking

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +9

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13

Skills: Bluff +8, Climb +6, Disguise +8, Move Silently +15, Spot +11, Hide +10, Wilderness Lore +9

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (snakes), Improved Critical (scimitar), Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush

Challenge Rating: 16

Treasure: Double standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Guiser

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

[6th level Medusa]/4th level Sorcerer/3rd level Guiser

Hit Dice: 6d8+7d4+13 (57 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 Natural)

Attacks: Shortbow +11/+6 ranged; or dagger +9/+4 melee, snakes +6 melee

Damage: Shortbow 1d6; or dagger 1d4, snakes 1d4 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 19), poison (Fortitude save DC 17), quiescent serpents, siren's gaze, expert guising

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +13

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 16
Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +13, Concentrate +8, Disguise +15, Gather Information +7, Hide +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Move Silently +8, Sery +6, Spellcraft +12, Spot +7
Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse (snakes), Dodge, Extend Spell, Scribe Scroll

Challenge Rating: 14
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Spells per day: Known (7/5/3/2); Cast (6/7/7/5); Dc 13+ spell level
Spells known: 0th level: *daze, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, arcane mark, read magic*;
 1st level: *hold portal, mage armour, identify, magic missile, change self*; 2nd level: *arcane lock, fog cloud, locate object*;
 3rd level: *fireball, fly*

Savage Medusa

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

[6th HD Medusa]/6th level Ranger

Hit Dice: 6d8+6d10+12 (72 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 Natural)

Attacks: Longbow +15/+10/+5 ranged; or rapier +13/+8/+3, dagger +11/+6 melee, snakes +10 melee

Damage: Longbow 1d8; or rapier 1d6, dagger 1d4, snakes 1d4 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 18), poison (Fortitude save DC 17), ambidexterity and two-weapon fighting when unarmoured, track, favoured enemies: Human +2, Elf +1

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +5

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 14

Skills: Bluff +10, Disguise +10, Hide +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +13, Spot +13, Wilderness Lore +5

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse (snakes), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (rapier)

Challenge Rating: 13
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Spells: *pass without trace*

Urban Medusa

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

[6th HD Medusa]/4th level Rogue

Hit Dice: 6d8+4d6+10 (51 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 Natural)

Attacks: Shortbow +12/+7 ranged (or +10/+10/+5 using rapid shot); or dagger +9/+4 melee, snakes +7 melee

Damage: Shortbow 1d6; or dagger 1d4, snakes 1d4 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 17), poison (Fortitude save DC 16), sneak attack +2d6, uncanny dodge, evasion

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +12, Will +5

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +15, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +15, Move Silently +16, Pick Pocket +12, Sense Motive +3, Spot +16

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Finesse (snakes)

Challenge Rating: 11
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Adult Medusa

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 6d8+6 (33 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 Natural)

Attacks: Shortbow +8/+3 ranged; or dagger +6/+1 melee, snakes +3 melee

Damage: Shortbow 1d6; or dagger 1d4, snakes 1d4 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 15), poison (Fortitude save DC 14)

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +6

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +11, Disguise +11, Move Silently +9, Spot +10

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse (snakes)

Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Young Medusa

Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30ft

AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 Natural)

Attacks: Shortbow +5 ranged; or dagger +3 melee, snakes +0 melee

Damage: Shortbow 1d6; or dagger 1d4, snakes 1d4 and poison

Face/Reach: 5 ft by 5 ft / 5ft

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze (Fortitude save DC 13), poison (Fortitude save DC 11)

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 14

Skills: Bluff +8, Disguise +8, Move Silently +8, Spot +6

Feats: Weapon Finesse (snakes)

Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil



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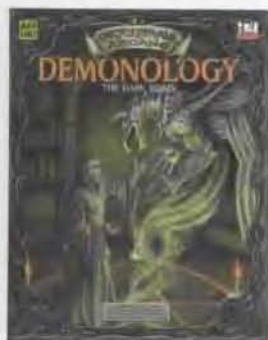
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THE
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TO

MEDUSAS

Deceptive and Horrific Predators

The medusa is most commonly met as a lone figure in a dungeon, with the body of a beautiful woman and her head covered by a veil. 'What in the world could that be?' ask the party jokingly, as they pull out their polished mirrors or avert their gazes, having seen through her 'disguise' at once. With this book the jokes won't last long.

Medusas are no longer a simple encounter in the dungeon; from their covens, to desires and goals, the Slayer's Guide to Medusas peels away the legends and tall tales of this dread creature, to reveal the depths of their deceit and cruelty.

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