

REIGN OF WINTER



SZURIEL

SZURIEL (SZUR-EE-ELL) IS THE HORSEMAN OF WAR, LEADER OF THE GREATEST ARMY OF DAEMONS. ONCE A MORTAL PALADIN BANISHED FROM HER FAITH FOR HERESY, SHE WAS DRIVEN BY HER IRON WILL TO AVENGE HERSELF UPON HER BRETHREN, AND WHEN HER VIOLENT SOUL FELL INTO ABADDON, SHE CLAWED HER WAY UPWARD THROUGH THE DAEMONIC RANKS AND SLEW THE PREVIOUS HORSEMAN OF WAR TO TAKE HIS PLACE. LIKE ALL DAEMONS, SHE EMBODIES THE IMPARTIAL TAIN OF PUREST EVIL AND NIHILISM, UNBURDENED BY ORDERED AMBITION OR CHAOTIC FRENZY. SHE AND THE OTHER HORSEMEN PERSONIFY THE GREATEST THREATS TO MORTAL LIFE, AND SHE BEARS AN AURA OF COLD SATISFACTION AT THE INNUMERABLE VIOLENT DEATHS THAT ARE HER LEGACY.

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None know what crime or blasphemy Szuriel committed as a mortal to merit being excommunicated from her church—or even if there was any justification for it other than political maneuvering or a personal vendetta. Regardless of the cause, she cloaked herself in vengeful wrath and amassed an army of bloodthirsty soldiers under her white banner. Using this army to conquer her own homeland, the now-fallen paladin declared herself empress of the realm and demanded that as tribute to her greatness every member of her former faith be crucified—hierophant, priest, and lay believer. As these religious folk fled or went into hiding, she turned her attention to other lands, and the threat of invasion by her armies so frightened the royal families of neighboring kingdoms that they sent dozens of assassins to kill her. One was successful, and in death she was damned to Abaddon, though this was just the start of another chapter in her book of conquests.

Through fate, luck, and skill, Szuriel evaded more powerful daemons who would have consumed her, and survived long enough for the substance of the plane to change her into a true daemon. She began rallying other weak daemons to follow her, ambushing and consuming successively stronger daemons and absorbing their power. Picking her battles wisely, she avoided the attention of the deacons of war and remained independent even as Abaddon was rocked by Lamashtu's invasion and the brief interregnum when there was no Horseman of War. When Ortaro of the Ten Thousand Screams became Horseman of War, Szuriel knew it was time for her to strike.

Ortaro's obsession was trophies from his greatest kills, while Szuriel's obsession was war itself. He reigned only briefly before she led her armies to the Cinder Furnace, engaged his soldiers with her own, and personally struck him down with her ebon-bladed sword. She desecrated his corpse and cast it into the volcanic forges, wishing to keep no trophies of him or reminders of his weakness, and claimed her destined role as Horseman of War.

Like all daemons, Szuriel's goal is the eradication of all mortal life. Her servitor daemons are constantly working at new methods of waging war, including creating new war machines. Though these devices are usually too big to transport to the mortal realm, her daemons may whisper descriptions or leave sketches of these things with mortals to inspire more slaughter. Many technological innovations over the ages may have come from careful

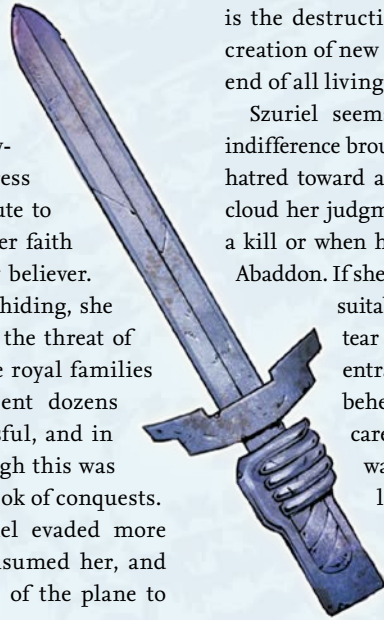
whispers in an inventor's ear, from the secret of forging iron to the creation of the first bows. New magic items, spun out of crushed soulmatter like obscene thread, are left in the mortal realm to tempt the living to acts of great evil or to the summoning of daemons. Szuriel's focus is the destruction of life, and she is not opposed to the creation of new things if their purpose is to accelerate the end of all living things.

Szuriel seems cold and emotionless, but this is an indifference brought on by immortality and a slow, genocidal hatred toward all living things. She does not let emotion cloud her judgment, but does feel elation when she makes a kill or when her plans bring a large number of souls to Abaddon. If she has time during a battle or feels it would be suitably intimidating to her foes, she may casually tear out an opponent's heart or feast on its living entrails. She has no mercy and will just as easily behead a crying child, a mourning widow, or a career soldier—she is not a proponent of just war, but of the slaughter necessary to turn all living things into cold meat. In one battle, she may quietly strike down her enemies and dispatch the wounded; in another, she may crucify or draw and quarter any prisoners in order to draw out, humiliate, terrify, or sicken those who dare oppose her. She is both the cruel beauty of war and the ugly truth that war is a hideous, destructive thing that cares not about guilt, innocence,

right, or wrong; it merely exists to kill on a scale impossible for a single being. She is war as a force of nature, a relentless tide of death that washes over the living to whittle away at their numbers or surges forth to bury them in an unexpected rush. She is a murderer of multitudes, whether good or evil, chaotic or lawful, snuffing out mortal lives to make room for sweet oblivion.

The Horseman treats her servants (mortal and otherwise) as disposable tools, using them until they break and replacing them with new ones. The daemons expect no less, having arisen from the hordes of mewling souls that appear on Abaddon every minute of the plane's timeless, eclipse-illuminated day. She shows them no affection, and expects them to perform the tasks she gives them without complaint. She doesn't care whether they resent, fear, or love her, only that they do as they are told. Most mortal worshipers view themselves as agents of the apocalypse, loathing and hating their own mortal existence, but bearing it like a necessary burden they must overcome by enacting Szuriel's will.

Szuriel's true appearance is that of a 20-foot-tall angelic being with ivory skin, flowing golden hair, a flawless



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~SZURIEL

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mighty body clad in silk, and majestic raven-black wings. Unlike the celestials she superficially resembles, however, her form also has elements of horror. Her eyes are mirrored and black as onyx, constantly weeping blood and leaving trails down her face. In the rare times when she smiles, she reveals a mouthful of jagged razor-sharp fangs, like a shark or ancient dragon. Her black sword, *Lamentation of the Faithless*, is said to be the corrupted blade of a forgotten celestial, and is a grim token borne by every Horseman of War. She is rarely depicted in art, for the mortals who serve her are more interested in destruction than creation, but may be painted on a banner or flag as a tall white female figure with an upright black sword. Also called the Angel of Desolation and the Seraph of Devastation, Szuriel by her very form makes a mockery of archons and angels—creatures she studied well during her mortal life as a paladin.

Szuriel's power is not suited for subtle manifestations in the material realm such as images in mirrors or blood dripping from weapons. Her relationship with mortals is exploitative and pragmatic, and she has no interest in small signs of her pleasure or displeasure—if a worshiper pleases her, she continues to grant it power, and if it displeases her, it quickly dies at the hand of a daemon, an ally, or an enemy. When she (or an authorized servant) enters an agreement with a mortal, the particulars are lax and informal, but always include a proviso that she (or her servant) may send daemons to supervise and observe the mortal's actions—which allows her to send an assassin to eliminate the worshiper if she finds it necessary. If she wishes to humiliate that worshiper and set an example for others, she sends a single cacodaemon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2*) to tear out the mortal's throat while it sleeps.

Szuriel is neutral evil and her portfolio is war. Her weapon is the greatsword, and her symbol is a black sword held upright in a pale hand. Her domains are Evil, Fire, Strength, and War. Her worshipers are any folk who glory or profit in war—mainly evil soldiers, mercenaries, arms dealers, looters, and warlords. Szuriel's priests are usually clerics, inquisitors, rangers, or souldrinkers (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Book of the Damned, Vol. 3 34*), but many oracles (particularly of bones or metal) and antipaladins also pay her homage. Some evil black blade magi likewise see her as their patron, and their strange blades resemble her own.

Her faith arises in small pockets on many worlds, especially where war has been going on for generations and both sides have lost hope or forgotten the original reasons for the conflict. For example, many crusaders fighting at the Worldwound are worn down by the endless battles and futility of their actions; slowly their hearts and souls have turned from lofty goals to the grim acceptance of eternal

war and the need to eradicate their enemies at any cost. Her worshipers are murderous, nihilistic, and pragmatic. They may work alone or with other like-minded believers, keeping their allegiance secret under the guise of a higher purpose, or welcoming their minions into the cult of Szuriel with hidden initiations—by this method they can create a complete cult cell that can present an acceptable, if martial, face to the public.

Szuriel is uninterested in the content of mortal pleas and prayers, though they gain her attention. If the mortal is of no consequence to her and is invoking her name for protection (such as a soldier praying to live through a battle or someone praying for a lover to return from war), she may ignore the plea or use this connection to send a daemon to claim the mortal's soul. If the mortal can be of use to her, she may answer those prayers with a visitation from a daemon, who may offer power in exchange for swearing loyalty to the Horseman. There is never a guarantee that the daemon won't turn on the mortal after a time or in response to some secret agenda by Szuriel, and countless mortals have believed daemonic assurances of safety in these agreements, only to be surprised—first, when the daemon tears them apart, and again, when their souls meet a similar fate in Abaddon. The trappings of worship are irrelevant to her, so there is no consistent method of prayer, offering, or sacrifice among the church, though individual daemons may create their own rituals to amuse themselves, especially ones that pervert or blaspheme mortals' previous beliefs or prayers.

Szuriel loathes anything that promotes families, as marriage frequently leads to procreation, which means more souls and delays the daemon's victory over mortal life. A worshiper who has a spouse or children may be encouraged to sacrifice them or put them in harm's way as a test of loyalty, or they may die in unfortunate accidents or at the hands of enemy soldiers. She is equally callous toward orphans and others who have suffered because of war, and it is common for mortals in her service to execute noncombatants and those who surrender, as they are all just grist in the soul-mill of Abaddon.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

Szuriel despises mortals and courts no priests, nor does she require temples built in her name. However, mortals often feel the need for such things, and thus they build them according to their own aesthetics. One temple to Szuriel may be a stone fortress overlooking a road connecting two warring realms, another may be a macabre tower of bones and weapons taken from a battlefield, and yet another may be a conquered temple of Iomedae with its icons inverted and draped in bloodied shrouds. Shrines are simpler and likewise vary in particulars; a shrine could take the form of a pile of skulls topped with an upright sword, a lonely banner

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planted at a battlefield, or a ring of stones around a mass grave or place of genocide. Any site that is or was the location of a deadly battle may be claimed by a priest as a temple or shrine, whether or not there is a permanent structure there.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

Szuriel has no dogma but war. She has no approved or forbidden means of waging war, and leaves her priests to their own devices as they attempt to determine how best to serve her. Many worship her out of a lust for power or in desperate need of some advantage over their adversaries. Those who squander her magic on wealth or pleasures of the flesh quickly fall out of her favor and are either slain by their daemonic advisors or crushed under the boots of an opposing army—only the pursuit of mortal war and conflict mollifies her ire, and only for a while.

A powerful worshiper may remain useful for a long time if he has the means to bring many daemons to the mortal world, though this is no guarantee of any favors once that usefulness comes to an end. Most priests think they can outlive or outsmart their daemonic patron, but she cannot lose; her reach is long and her patience is infinite, and should they somehow escape her grasp, they will still succumb to Charon eventually. A realistic priest hopes that excellent service will be rewarded in Abaddon with immediate conversion into a daemon or at least a quick, merciful death at the claws and teeth of her immortal servants. Most realize their role to promote war, and expect no mercy if they fail.

In some cases, a priest founds a cult on her own without any direct input from a daemon. These priests tend to be the most fanatical, and create or discover blasphemous knowledge on their own, based on pure intuition of the daemonic powers or scraps deliberately left by the Horsemen and their servitors. These self-trained priests tend to be misguided and deluded, focusing more on the rewards of serving Abaddon than the harsh realities of this fealty. Some of these priests, though, may be skilled preachers and see their primary role as converting nonbelievers to the cause, with moves to stir up conflict only happening once the priest has a large enough base of followers.

Despite no encouragement to dress a particular way, most priests favor wearing red clothing and a black cloak with a feathered motif. Some paint tear-streaks on their faces with blood or (if unafraid to flaunt their loyalty) tattoo them. They favor weapons with the *unholy* weapon special ability, or paint their blades black so they can be used as unholy symbols for spellcasting.

HOLIDAYS

The Angel of Desolation has no interest in honoring specific days of the year—the only day she longs for is the one when the last mortal expires and its soul appears in Abaddon to be devoured. Informally, mortal worshipers of Szuriel mark



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any eclipse as a day of worship, celebrating with the sacrifice of enemy prisoners of war. Any battle occurring during an eclipse is believed to have Szuriel's favor, and her priests are especially reckless with their magic during such times, believing that anyone slain under these circumstances—enemy or ally—is greatly savored by the Horseman of War.

COMMANDMENTS

Szuriel has no interest in great speeches, though among mortals a few sayings are common.

Be the Tide of Steel: Put the impure to the sword, butcher infidels, and slay heretics. Any who do not worship Szuriel deserve death. This belief conveniently ignores that the Horsemen wishes the death of all mortals, even those who worship her.

Paradise Despite Any Crime: Those who die in war are guaranteed a favored place in the afterlife, regardless of what crimes they may have committed or the rightfulness of their cause. This promise alone (especially when spoken by a daemon or a charismatic priest) is often enough to convince a desperate soldier or mercenary to worship Szuriel, despite all evidence that this sort of bargain is false.

HOLY TEXT

The Seraph of Devastation has no holy book. To her, creating inspiring words for mortals to follow is like writing love letters to a cesspool—pointless and a distraction to her real work of fomenting conflict. Instead, mortals are simply told to wage war and send souls to Abaddon in whatever manner is the most expedient. Some of her rare eloquent priests may pen their own ideas about war and oblivion, but as these mortals eventually die and are consumed, their works are usually lost to decay and time. Many tomes written by spellcasters describe methods of summoning and binding daemons (though any “binding” is fragile at best), and worshipers of Szuriel sometimes use these books as holy texts.



RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Szuriel's goals of slaying all mortals in the multiverse puts her at odds with most gods, as her actions target their worshipers. Lamashtu bears a grudge against the Horseman of War for turning back her invasion of Abaddon, and she longs to use Szuriel's body to birth hideous demonic offspring. Asmodeus has his own agenda for corrupting and claiming mortal souls, and objects to her wasteful consumption of these resources. Of course, she is allied with the Horsemen of Death, Famine, and Pestilence, though they disagree on the best method to destroy all mortal life. Three gods have especially important relationships with Szuriel.

Gorum: As the god of war, Our Lord in Iron has a strange rivalry with the Horseman of War. On one hand, the god supports any endeavor that encourages battle. On the other hand, Szuriel's fatalistic outlook draws worshipers from him, especially those too weak-willed to endure the fatigue of frequent or tragic battles. His role is to stoke the hearts of mortals so they embrace the glory of war with enthusiasm and bloodlust, whereas Szuriel wants mortals to accept oblivion and a cold, murderous intent. As with Gorum's interactions with all deities, he is sometimes an enemy and sometimes an ally to Szuriel—but unlike in his occasional battles with divine powers, he takes conflict with the Horseman personally.

Urgathoa: The Pallid Princess's divine realm is in Abaddon, within Szuriel's territory. Granted this territory long ago by the daemons, the goddess respects the borders they established for her. Urgathoa takes no actions against Szuriel or the watchful daemons motionlessly observing just beyond her realm, nor does Szuriel wage war against Urgathoa, her followers, or souls destined for the goddess's realm. The two entities have not communicated with each other in any way for decades, though their supernatural minions may trade information across the border. The main benefit to the daemons is the ability to study a goddess in her own realm, which may allow for some insight should the gods invade

Abaddon or if the daemons need to attack another deity. In the mortal realm, the two faiths are coolly tolerant of each other, and some worshipers of Urgathoa ally themselves with daemon cults for easy access to freshly killed bodies.

Zyphus: As with Urgathoa, the Grim Harvestman's realm lies in Abaddon—in fact, it's contained entirely within Urgathoa's domain. He has similarly maintained a wary peace with the daemons for ages, and his servants mostly keep to themselves (especially as Urgathoa's realm is a buffer between his own and the daemons).

NEW SPELLS

Several daemonic spells appropriate to Szuriel are presented in *Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (including several spells used to summon specific daemons). Her priests also have access to the following spells.

BLACK SWORD OF WAR

School necromancy; **Level** antipaladin 3, cleric 3, ranger 3, sorcerer/wizard 3 (Szuriel)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, F

Range touch

Target piercing or slashing manufactured weapon touched

Duration 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless, object); **Spell**

Resistance yes (harmless, object)

The target weapon turns a glossy black color and deals bleed damage if it deals hit point damage to a creature. The amount of bleed damage is equal to 1/2 your caster level (maximum bleed 5).

BLOODY TEARS AND JAGGED SMILE

School necromancy; **Level** cleric 2, sorcerer/wizard 2 (Szuriel)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range personal and see text

Target you and see text

Duration 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw none; **Spell Resistance** yes

Your eyes turn black and weep blood, and your teeth become jagged fangs. You gain a bite attack (1d3 points of damage if you are Small, 1d4 points of damage if you are Medium). You gain a +4 profane bonus on Intimidate checks and on your spell DCs for spells with the fear descriptor. You perceive creatures as if using *deathwatch*.

SERVITOR DAEMONS

Szuriel's daemons are usually paler than those serving other Horsemen. Some decorate their faces with blood to resemble her bleeding eyes, or wear masks made of hardened soul-stuff that resemble her grinning face.

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Szuriel's priests can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster III

Cacodaemon (evil)

Summon Monster IV

Fiendish urdefhan (evil)

Summon Monster V

Genthodaemon (evil) (see page 86)

Nightmare (evil)

Some give these masks to mortals as a reward for prayers, offerings, or services, but some are actually cacodaemons temporarily shaped into mask form. These latter daemon-masks may whisper advice to mortals, silently observe what the mortals see (with the intent of reporting back to Abaddon after a time), or wait until the mortals are vulnerable and slay them.

Szuriel rarely grants additional powers to her daemons, preferring they seize such things from other beings or learn how to craft new abilities into their own flesh.

PLANAR ALLIES

In addition to the deacons and other major servants named in *Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, Szuriel has a few specific daemon servitors whose names are known to mortals and who quickly respond to requests for aid. More information about her Daemonic Harbinger, Zelishkar the Bitter Flame, can be found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Bestiary*, including full stats.

Gothus-Re: This ceustodaemon ranger claims to have once been a pharaoh's general who sought to serve his master as a living mummy. Convinced by his daemon advisor during his mortal life that the ritual of mummification would work only if he died by his own hand, he hung himself and awoke in Abaddon as a daemon. Now he obeys Szuriel by convincing mortal officers and soldiers of the merits of suicide missions. A mortal who summons him is likely to gain his aid if the mortal has another creature kill itself when the demon appears.

Valak With Itching Fingers: This urdefhan wizard is infused with daemonic power and works as an archivist and researcher in Szuriel's war-forges. He teaches forbidden magic to mortal spellcasters and crafters, and has been known to provide magical weapons to mortals loyal to Abaddon, though these weapons have been known to turn on their wielders if left idle for too long. He is inclined to assist mortals only if enemy prisoners are executed in his presence.