

REIGN OF WINTER



BABA YAGA

IF YOU WANT MY SECRETS, MY MAGIC, YOU MUST DO SOMETHING FOR ME. I HAVE MUCH WORK TO DO, AND YOU WILL DO IT FOR ME," SAID BABA YAGA. "YOU MUST SWEEP MY FLOORS AND COOK MY SUPPER, BUT FIRST YOU MUST GO TO THE HEARTH. THE CAT KNOCKED OVER MY FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER AND IT SCATTERED AMONG THE ASHES. YOU MUST PICK THE GRAINS FROM THE ASH IN THE HEARTH. ONCE THAT IS DONE AND MY SUPPER IS PREPARED, DRAW ME A BATH, AND I'LL THINK ON YOUR WANTS. IF YOU DO WELL, I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU ASK. IF YOU ARE LAZY AND CLUMSY—LIKE THAT PATHETIC DOG IN THE CORNER—I WILL COOK YOU AND EAT YOU."

—FROM AN IRRISENI BEDTIME STORY

BABA YAGA

Around campfires and in front of hearths on cold winter nights, wise grandmothers and favored uncles recite countless tales of a stern and powerful woman. Some know her as the Old Crone, others as Old Knobby Legs. She's often called the Queen of the Witches, but those who are wise call her Dear Grandmother. She is Baba Yaga, and on Golarion, she has an oppressive and violent legacy. But, on other worlds, the foolhardy and the brave seek her for wisdom and magic.

BEGINNINGS

The blizzards across the Pontic-Caspian steppe in what would become southern Russia and Ukraine were particularly harsh in the winter of 65 BCE, though the Sarmatian tribes that wandered across the land did not know the year by that name. To them it was the Winter of Cruel Loss, as over a third of their number perished from the cold or deprivation. It was in that winter that a 10-year-old girl named Yanca disappeared. Her family's band had camped in a hollow between ancient steppe mounds to escape the worst of the weather on the wind-scoured plain, and Yanca and the other children had gone forth to fetch water for the day. This day a new wind had arisen from the north and blanketed the snowy plain in a fog of icy clouds. Yanca and the other children soon became disoriented in the unexpected whiteout, and many panicked and ran back toward the encampment. But young Yanca was confident that she could find her way back after fetching the water and forged on through the haze.

When an unexpected gust of warmer air washed over her, Yanca was both surprised and pleased. Following the warm gusts led her to the edge of a partially snow-filled fissure from which arose billowing steam, and Yanca knew that she had not only found a watering hole but also a comfortable place to wait out the windstorm. As Yanca began the descent into the fissure with her leather bucket, she discovered that the cavern was much larger than she first thought, with most of the fissure covered with a thin crust of icy snow, broken only where the warm drafts from below had melted through. Reaching the bottom, Yanca found a deep grotto surrounding a hot spring. Plant life filled the grotto, flourishing in the steamy moisture rising from the hot spring and sheltered from the harsh winter winds of the steppe above.

As she continued her descent, Yanca noticed crude carvings on the rock walls of the grotto, signs that wanderers from the ancient past had likewise visited this isolated place and considered it sacred. Finally she reached the hot spring at the bottom of the grotto and found a venerable rowan tree, grown giant in its immense lifespan, growing at the edge of the nutrient-rich spring. Young Yanca had just decided to take a quick bath in the luxuriously warm water of the pool—a treat never before

experienced in her short life—when the tree suddenly spoke to her.

Yanca sat with rapt attention as a face formed on the tree and began to relate to her the secrets of the ages of the Earth and its peoples. She listened and lost herself in the wonders that were revealed to her until she suddenly remembered the water she was supposed to fetch. She filled her bucket and climbed out of the grotto, only to discover the formerly snow-swept steppe now covered in the tiny purple and yellow flowers of spring. As a warm southern breeze blew across the plain, Yanca discovered that her family's camp between the ancient mounds was long abandoned. Only then did Yanca notice that her clothing was threadbare to the point of tatters and her hair was long and unruly, as more than 2 years had passed since she had descended into the grotto and listened to the voice of the tree. Her family had moved on long ago and given her up as lost in the storm on that fateful day, merely one more life claimed by the Winter of Cruel Loss.

Lost in the middle of the steppe with her family long gone and nowhere to turn, Yanca chose the only option that remained to her. She returned to the grotto to sit once more before the rowan tree beside the hot spring. And the “spirit” of the tree—the primordial norn Vigliv—spoke to her once again and began to teach her the greater secrets of the Earth and the universe.

Yanca excelled at the training and after mastering all of the magical knowledge Vigliv could impart, she turned her attention to the ways of ancient witchcraft. When Yanca emerged again from the grotto years later, she was alive with power unknown to most mortals of her world, power that far outstripped even that of her mentor and teacher.

GROWTH

As a mature woman, Yanca set forth from the secret grotto intent to see the world and the wonders it held. For a time, Yanca wandered. She took up with different peoples that would have her in their tribes and communities, and while she lived with them she learned. Yanca also shared things she had learned with the women of the communities, and in turn taught their children. As she traveled for these years, she learned other people's ways and customs, their deities and magic. Most of all she was interested in how different people harnessed magic and shaped the power they held. After leaving the grotto and spending time among the rest of humanity, she came to understand the distinction between divine magic and arcane magic—or rather, how slim that line actually is.

Yanca pondered what it was that made someone great. Was it conquering lands and having people grovel at your boots like the warlords? Was greatness found in solemn study of the world's secrets? Or does the true secret to life lie in the ways of the ascetics and those faithful to their gods? Was the

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real path a simple pursuit of one's goals—and damned be those who got in the way? The norn had taught young Yanca the secrets of magic, but she didn't teach morality.

Having learned to question reality itself, Yanca was a skeptical woman who didn't take anything at face value. She questioned everything and scorned anyone who tried to corner her into what was considered accepted behavior. As her reputation as a witch spread, people sought her out to ask for favors and to share her power. Some chiefs and warlords tried to force her to use her magic through ultimatums or violence, but she always refused. Yanca would not be tamed by those who couldn't find power for themselves. Yanca would do as she pleased.

It was a tumultuous time for Yanca. Though she was brimming with power and confident of her own abilities, she was growing bitter and tired of having the weak endlessly entreating her to solve their petty problems. They were all leeches to her—simple things only there to take. In exchange for her gifts, she demanded more and more to test those who came to her with their desperation and wishes. She asked for land she would never visit. She demanded coffers of gold only to pitch them into rivers. She called for a man to cut off his own thumbs in exchange for healing his lame leg. She asked farmers to slaughter all their goats in return for protection from a wheat blight. She demanded firstborns so that she could eat their tender flesh, and parents gave their children away for fleeting glory and temporary riches. Some say that during this time Yanca gained a wrinkle for every question asked of her and a wart for every favor she deigned to grant. Out of respect and in light of her withering body, the simple folk began calling her Grandmother—or Baba—and among the Rus tribes, Yanca became Yaga. Eventually, Baba Yaga, the mother of witches, disgusted with the way humanity scraped at the feet of the powerful, departed her home world to pursue greater deeds.

WISDOM

Even though Baba Yaga had learned the secrets of immortality as a young woman, she wanted to naturally reach a ripe old age before making that leap. She knew that with age came great wisdom, and she wanted to live out most of her life as a mortal before attaining immortality. She saw it as a challenge, a milestone, and a goal to be reached. Only foolish people grab at things without considering all possibilities—and Baba Yaga was no fool. At the age of 102, Baba Yaga felt her body failing. She had contracted some ailment she couldn't quite heal; she

could feel it growing within her, some malignant part of her own body fighting against her vitality. Realizing she was nearing her end, she finally embraced immortality. Upon gaining eternal life, Baba Yaga's lingering concerns of morality completely slipped away. Now she could do whatever she truly wished.

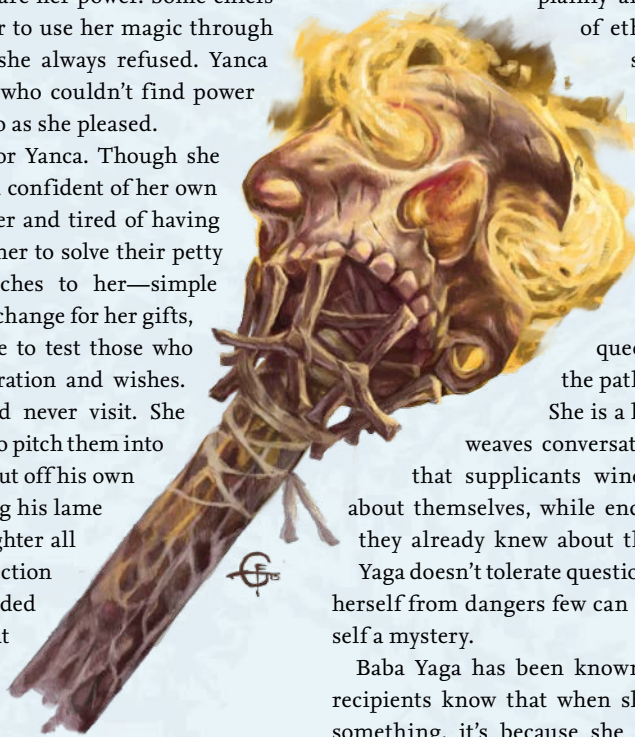
Throughout her years, Baba Yaga has become a bitter and foul crone, but as far as she cares she sees things plainly and clearly without concern of ethics. Nothing is up to her standards. Nothing anyone can do is good enough. The strongest heroes and the darkest evil are all somehow flawed under her crooked gaze. She treats demigods the same as shepherds, and spews curses at milkmaids and queens alike. None dare step in the path of Baba Yaga.

She is a liar and a yarn spinner. She weaves conversations around themselves so that supplicants wind up revealing everything about themselves, while ending up knowing less than they already knew about their original queries. Baba Yaga doesn't tolerate questions about herself, insulating herself from dangers few can fathom by keeping her own self a mystery.

Baba Yaga has been known to grant boons, but wise recipients know that when she allows someone to have something, it's because she desires it to be so. Greed almost always compels her gifts, not kindness or love. She knows that power corrupts and always tests those who seek it, delighting in watching how it debases those who grab at the power she grants without thinking first. Baba Yaga herself does not lust after power, nor does she lord it over others. Though she enjoys her own personal realms of influence, she mostly prefers to be left alone, and is always annoyed when strangers still come to her with requests.

Although Baba Yaga has long held the potential to grant spells to followers and perhaps even ascend to divinity, she never even considers such things. The last thing Baba Yaga wants is a multitude of voices whining prayers to her every minute of the day. That's just more people asking her for things. Being on the threshold of divinity keeps her on fair footing with a number of archdevils, demon lords, and other influential denizens of the Great Beyond. Most see no threat from her and are constantly delighted in the stories she brings from the various worlds she visits on the Material Plane.

Baba Yaga dislikes the politics and predictability of the Great Beyond, however. Though she has long since become



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more than just a simple human, she is still primarily interested in mortal worlds, and prefers to travel the nearly limitless lands of the Material Plane. As with her legacy on Golarion and her home world of Earth, knowledge of Baba Yaga lingers where most sentient humanoids dwell.

THE THRICE-TENTH KINGDOM

After Baba Yaga created her *Dancing Hut* and began exploring other worlds and the Great Beyond, she decided she wanted a world of her own that she could sculpt as she wished. She knew that the First World was a primer to the rest of mortal creation and that it had a place in her people's lore as a world between worlds. She also knew that the First World was mutable to those with sufficient power, and it was there that she decided to build her kingdom. Baba Yaga was well beyond her five hundredth year when she traveled to the First World in her hut and staked her claim at a distant edge of a roiling landscape. With arcane might and her indomitable will, she stabilized the realm, calling it to order in an idyllic image of the Russian steppes in simpler times.

The Thrice-Tenth Kingdom is a wide plain dotted with thick forests at the foot of a spine of majestic mountains. Uncanny fey dart through the gloomy woods and strange ogres wage war among the mountain peaks. Even stranger creatures come out when the sun sets and the ever-changing moon races across the night sky. Inky black beasts that shred flesh from bone hunt unfortunate pixies too distracted to find shelter for the night. Philosophical herds of elk and deer roam the steppes on quests for enlightenment. Talking birds bicker with each other in aerial matches of wits and wing, and even the wriggling worms in the rich soil have their say, for the seemingly idyllic surface conceals sinister truths. Below the earth here, vast caverns stretch forever, echoing with screams and pleas for help. In some, a low moan goes on forever, only altered in pitch by sorrowful pauses.

In the center of the deepest forest is a fanciful castle wrought of silver and glass called the Witchspire, where an empty throne sits in the grand central chamber. Baba Yaga never asked for the Witchspire. Her minions, brought here from a thousand worlds, built it in honor of the Queen of Witches, but as Baba Yaga has never cared for opulence or overt political power, she eschews the seat set for her. In fact, when Baba Yaga visits the Thrice-Tenth Kingdom, she more often than not still stays within her sanctum in the *Dancing Hut*.

BABA YAGA ON GOLARION

As the people of Earth lost interest in arcane magic and turned toward their various bickering gods, Baba Yaga looked to some of the other worlds she had visited for a better place to practice her magic and perhaps instruct

others in the same way. On Golarion Baba Yaga found a good fit for her needs. Upon first arriving on the planet, she kept her *Dancing Hut* secreted away in the forests of Iobaria and spoke to no one other than the fey of the world and the occasional visiting centaur. Before long, however, her reputation for potent magic spread. It was then that the Iobarian warlord Kostchtchie visited Baba Yaga and demanded she make him immortal. As a twist to his rude ultimatum, Baba Yaga transformed Kostchtchie into a deformed giant and plucked out a portion of his soul, which she hid in an artifact called the *Torc of Kostchtchie*. The defeated warlord fled to the Abyss to lick his wounds, eventually becoming a demon lord. To this day, Kostchtchie still hates Baba Yaga and vows revenge—something he has yet been able to achieve.

Once rid of Kostchtchie, Baba Yaga began the construction of Artrosa in the nearby Deeprun Crevasse. This massive monument depicts the triple goddess aspect and gives insight into Baba Yaga's influence and background. Soon after shaping Artrosa with her powerful magic, Baba Yaga left Golarion for several hundred years, only stopping in from time to time to check on her legacies and to make sure her servants were doing as they should.

When Baba Yaga returned in 3313 AR, she came with a plan. She gathered an army of giants and fey and descended from the Winterwall Glacier with conquest in mind. She chose a land not unlike the northlands of her home world, and in less than a month she subjugated its people and carved out the nation of Irrisen. Crowning her daughter Jadwiga queen of the newly built realm, Baba Yaga set about completing a series of portals to plunge the nation into an eternal winter. When this task was complete, she left Golarion again, but she has returned once every 100 years to remove each royal daughter from the throne and replace her with another, a cycle that has remained unbroken for 1,400 years.

Baba Yaga considers Irrisen an experiment in power, one that at first held her interest greatly. However, as time wore on and the subjugated Ulfen were unable to muster the power to overthrow her daughters' rule, Baba Yaga grew bored. She was baffled why so few—neither her daughters, nor the oppressed citizens—rose up to break this chain of tyranny. After the reign of her first few daughters, Baba Yaga only returned to Golarion when it was time to crown a new daughter queen. It was this boredom with Irrisen, and her lack of attention on her experiment there, that led to Baba Yaga's entrapment at the hands of Queen Elvanna and Rasputin. Nevertheless, Baba Yaga is somewhat proud of Elvanna for her attempted coup, considering it by far the most ambitious rebellion since her ninth daughter Tashanna's uprising—not that Baba Yaga believes that it ever had a chance of succeeding.

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THE QUEEN OF WITCHES

Baba Yaga's stat block is presented below, and makes use of rules from *Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures*. More information about the *Dancing Hut of Baba Yaga* can be found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Artifacts & Legends*.

BABA YAGA

CR 30
XP 9,830,400

Female venerable advanced human witch 20/archmage 10
(*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, *Pathfinder RPG Mythic Adventures* 14)

NE Medium humanoid (human, mythic)

Init +19; **Senses** *arcane sight*, *darkvision* 60 ft., *see invisibility*; **Perception** +27

DEFENSE

AC 51, **touch** 31, **flat-footed** 46 (+13 armor, +5 deflection, +5 Dex, +11 insight, +7 natural)



hp 782 (20d6+710); **regeneration** 20

Fort +30, **Ref** +27, **Will** +35

Defensive Abilities hard to kill, mythic saving throws, unstoppable; **DR** 10/epic and good; **Immune** ability damage and drain, charm and compulsion effects, death effects, disease, energy drain, petrification, poison, and all forms of madness; **SR** 35 (arcane only)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Baba Yaga's besom* +17/+12 (1d6+7)

Special Attacks archmage arcana (wild arcana), channel power, coupled arcana, energy conversion, forceful will, hexes (agony [20 rounds], cackle [swift action 2/day], cauldron, child scent^{UM}, cook people^{UM}, death curse, evil eye [-4, 21 rounds], scar^{UM}, life giver, slumber [20 rounds], witch's hut^{UM}, vision), mythic hexes, mythic power (23/day, surge +1d12), mythic presence (DC 28), reverse scrying, sanctum, throw spell

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 20th; concentration +38)

9th—*dominate monster* (DC 37), *foresight*, *gate*, *time stop*^{MA}, *wail of the banshee* (DC 37), *weird* (DC 37), *wish*^{MA}

8th—*binding* (DC 36), *quicken dimension door*, *maze*, *quicken phantasmal killer* (DC 36), *polymorph any object* (DC 36), *stormbolts*^{APG} (DC 36), *symbol of death* (DC 36)

7th—*control weather*, *finger of death*^{MA} (DC 35), *greater teleport*, *heal*^{MA}, *jolting portent*^{UC} (DC 35), *terraform*^{MA, MA}, *temporary resurrection*^{UM}

6th—*quicken blindness/deafness* (DC 34), *chain lightning*^{MA} (DC 34), *disintegrate*^{MA} (DC 34), *eyebite* (DC 34), *greater dispel magic*, *slay living* (DC 34), *true seeing*

5th—*baleful polymorph*^{MA} (DC 33), *break enchantment*^{MA}, *dominate person*^{MA} (DC 33), *feeblemind* (DC 33), *greater forbid action*^{UM} (DC 33), *major curse*^{UM} (DC 33), *smug narcissism*^{UM}, *steal power*^{MA, MA} (DC 33)

4th—*bestow curse* (DC 32), *charm monster* (DC 32), *confusion* (DC 32), *dimensional anchor*, *ice storm*^{MA}, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*^{MA}, *terrible remorse*^{UM} (DC 32)

3rd—*cackling skull*^{UM} (DC 31), *dispel magic*^{MA}, *fireball*^{MA} (DC 31), *fly*, *haste*^{MA}, *lightning bolt* (DC 31), *protection from energy*, *suggestion*^{MA} (DC 31)

2nd—*anticipate peril*^{UM} (DC 30), *glitterdust* (DC 30), *mad hallucination*^{UM} (DC 30), *mirror image*^{MA}, *miserable pity*^{UM} (DC 30), *pox pustules*^{MA, APG} (DC 30), *touch of idiocy*, *web* (DC 30)

1st—*beguiling gift*^{APG} (DC 30), *bungle*^{UM} (DC 30), *charm person* (DC 29), *disguise self* (DC 29), *feather fall*, *fumbletongue*^{UM} (DC 30), *magic missile*^{MA} (2)

0 (at will)—*daze* (DC 28), *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Patron fate (see page 75)

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 20, **Con** 26, **Int** 46, **Wis** 24, **Cha** 32

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 36

Feats Accursed Critical^{UM}, Accursed Hex^{MA, UM}, Brew Potion^B, Extra Hex^{APG}, Extra Path Ability^{MA, MA}, Greater Spell Penetration,

Improved Familiar, Improved Initiative, Mythic Paragon^{MM, MA}, Mythic Spell Lore^{MM, MA}, Quicken Spell, Spell Penetration^M, Split Hex^{UM}, Split Major Hex^{UM}, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +15, Appraise +23, Bluff +26, Craft (alchemy) +22, Craft (woodworking) +22, Diplomacy +21, Escape Artist +25, Fly +23, Heal +25, Intimidate +36, Knowledge (arcana) +41, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +38, Knowledge (engineering) +38, Knowledge (geography) +38, Knowledge (history) +41, Knowledge (local) +38, Knowledge (nature) +41, Knowledge (nobility) +38, Knowledge (planes) +41, Knowledge (religion) +38, Perception +27, Ride +13, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +41, Stealth +25, Survival +11, Use Magic Device +34

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Giant, Ignan, Infernal, Iobarian, Polish, Russian, Sarmatian, Sylvan, Terran, Triaxian; *tongues*

SQ amazing initiative (+10), component freedom, contingency, crafting mastery, enduring armor, exceptional stats, forceful presence, hut familiar, immortal, legendary hero, long-lived, mythic spell power, permanent spells, Queen of Witches, recuperation, true archmage

Gear *amulet of natural armor* +5, *apple of eternal sleep*^{UE}, *Baba Yaga's besom* (see page 62), *belt of mighty constitution* +6, *bracelet of second chances*^{UE}, *cackling hag's blouse*^{UE}, *corset of dire witchcraft*^{UE}, *ebony fly figurine of wondrous power*, *gem of seeing*, *Grandmother's basket* (as a *portable hole*), *Grandmother's shawl* (as a *cloak of resistance* +5), *grim lantern*^{UE}, *hat of disguise*, *haunted shoes*^{UE}, *headband of alluring charisma* +6, *hexing doll*, *orb of foul Abaddon*^{UE}, *pearl of power* (5th level), *ring of elemental command* (fire), *ring of freedom of movement* (slotless), *ring of protection* +5; in addition to the gear listed here, Baba Yaga has access to a wide variety of other magic items that she can use at the GM's discretion.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Contingency Whenever Baba Yaga is attacked, she is affected by *mislead*.

Exceptional Stats (Ex) Baba Yaga was born a perfect specimen of humanity. As a result, her ability scores were generated using 25 points, rather than using the standard 15 point buy used to create most NPCs. Additionally, Baba Yaga has much more gear than an NPC of her level would normally have. These modifications increase her total CR by 2.

Forceful Presence (Ex) Baba Yaga adds her Charisma modifier as an insight bonus to her Armor Class and on all of her saving throws. In addition, Baba Yaga uses her Charisma score as well as her Constitution score when calculating hit points. This ability increases her total CR by 1.

Hut Familiar (Ex) Baba Yaga built her *Dancing Hut* using a combination of the witch's hut hex and the sanctum mythic path ability, and over time expanded the artifact's powers to its present state. The *Dancing Hut of Baba Yaga* serves as Baba Yaga's familiar, and replaces the normal witch's familiar ability. Baba Yaga's life is forever intertwined with her

NEW PATRON

The norn Vigliv sparked Baba Yaga's pursuit of magic and ever since fate has been her patron. Witches hoping to follow in Baba Yaga's footsteps often select this patron.

Fate: 2nd—*doom*, 4th—*anticipate peril*^{UM}, 6th—*helping hand*, 8th— *blessing of fervor*^{APG}, 10th—*greater forbid action*^{UM}, 12th—*contingency*, 14th—*jolting portent*^{UC}, 16th—*maze*, 18th—*wish*.

Dancing Hut and parts of her essence reside within it. As long as the hut exists, this special connection grants her 300 bonus hit points, DR 10/epic and good, and regeneration 20. This ability increases her total CR by 1.

Immortal (Su) Baba Yaga has hidden her death to make herself even more difficult to kill. This functions as the base mythic ability (*Mythic Adventures* 13), but Baba Yaga always returns to life 24 hours later, regardless of how she is killed. In order to permanently kill Baba Yaga, her death must be found and released back into her body, at which point she can be killed with a coup de grace or critical hit made with an artifact.

Long-Lived (Ex) Mystical arcane powers, mythic abilities, and complex arcane rituals have extended Baba Yaga's life. She gains the +3 bonus to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores for having lived beyond venerable age, but she doesn't gain the penalties to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution resulting from this advanced age. Baba Yaga's supernaturally empowered life grants her complete immunity to ability damage and drain, charm and compulsion effects, death effects, disease, energy drain, petrification, poison, and all forms of madness (including confusion effects and *feblemind*). This ability increases her total CR by 1.

Permanent Spells Through the use of *permanency*, Baba Yaga is constantly under the effect of the following spells: *arcane sight*, *darkvision*, *read magic*, *see invisibility*, and *tongues*. Baba Yaga has also devised a way to inscribe symbol spells upon her person. Baba Yaga has permanent *symbols of death* (DC 36) magically inscribed on the center of her chest, between her shoulder blades, upon the crown of her head, and on the soles of her feet. Only a few great beings have knowledge of the symbols' passwords (each symbol has its own unique phrase), and even fewer significant personalities have been attuned to the symbols.

Queen of Witches (Ex) As Queen of Witches, Baba Yaga knows all witch spells, as well as all sorcerer/wizard spells. Baba Yaga also has knowledge of many other spells that she has researched. Many of these are arcane versions of divine spells. In addition, Baba Yaga can create artifacts, and has done so to great extent, the greatest of which is the *Dancing Hut of Baba Yaga*.