COCKATRICE

BY VAIDENON OF HUSTAN, WARDEN OF THE INKHORN FELLOWSHIP

the Cock-Serpent, Dunghill Dragon

> "My grandmother broke every small egg she found in the midden, and said it was against cockatrices. I laughed at her for thirty years. Then I went to Hebon."
>
> — Vaidenon of Hustan, Warden of the Inkhorn Fellowship, Tashal, Morgat 720 TR

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The basilisk, the "King of Stone", is one of the lesser dragonkind that the Ilme say were driven from their homeworld (Dragons 11, 13). Its smaller cousin is the cockatrice, which looks like a cockerel that has gone badly wrong. Heralds know it as a charge on the arms of a few Hârnic knights (Heraldry; Kaldor). Peasants know it as the reason they smash small yolkless eggs found in the dunghill, and I have come to think the peasants know it better.

THE WARDEN'S NOTE

I went to Hebon to see the malt-house where the maltster's ale killed three men. The floor has been scraped and limed and the smell is gone, but the maltster now keeps two ferrets and a cockerel that crows at every hour, and his neighbours have asked the bailiff to do something about the cockerel. I take the maltster's side.

APPEARANCE

A cockatrice is about two and a half feet long, half of it tail. It has the head, comb, wattles, and legs of a cockerel; leathery, bat-like wings; and a scaly serpent's body and tail ending in a barbed tip. Its comb is a three-pointed crest like the basilisk's crown, and its eyes are multifaceted, glowing faintly red in the dark.

KINSHIP WITH THE BASILISK

The cockatrice is not a young basilisk, whatever the market-talk says. Basilisks grow from basilisk eggs, and cockatrices remain cockatrices. Both share a mesmerising gaze, venom, and a peculiar fear of cockerels. The basilisk is heavier, slower and wholly deadly; the cockatrice is small and frightening, but rarely kills a healthy man. The Ilme name both as lesser dragonkind (Dragons 11). *(Inkhorn)*

THE COCK'S EGG

Folk say a cockatrice hatches from an egg laid by a cock in its seventh year and brooded by a toad or a serpent in a dunghill. In truth, a female cockatrice lays small, round, yolkless eggs in warm places, such as dung heaps, compost and malt-house floors, and the heat hatches them in a month. *(Inkhorn)* My grandmother's rule, to break every small yolkless egg found in the midden, is sound advice, and I apologise to her memory.

DISTRIBUTION

Like the basilisk, the cockatrice is a southern creature, commonest around the Venarian Sea and in Azeryan (Dragons 13). On Hârn it is rare, but it turns up in old cellars, vaults, dovecotes and farmyards in the warm lowlands of Kanday, southern Tharda and Melderyn. *(Inkhorn)* One cockatrice in a manor's barns can poison the well and spoil a season's grain before anyone finds it.

HABITS

A cockatrice eats eggs, chicks, rats, and the occasional cat, and it roosts in dark corners. It flies short distances, mostly to drop on prey. Cornered, it fixes its attacker with its gaze, strikes with its beak, and breathes a fetid, poisonous breath. Its droppings and slime foul whatever they touch, though less virulently than the basilisk's (Dragons 13).

WEASELS AND COCKERELS

The weasel is the cockatrice's enemy. It is not held by the gaze, and it kills cockatrice chicks in the nest (the Fellowship; Weasels). The crowing of a cockerel unsettles the cockatrice, which flees if it can (Inkhorn, after the basilisk legend of Dragons 13). Farmers who suspect a cockatrice keep a weasel and a loud cockerel.

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SPECIAL RULES

GAZE (INKHORN, AFTER THE BASILISK)

Range 10 feet and eye contact. The victim tests WIL × 5 (on the cockatrice's MS) or WIL × 4 (CS), or is held motionless for 1d6 minutes (MS) or 3d6 minutes (CS). Weasels are immune. Covering the eyes is −20 to every action.

VENOM AND BREATH

Beak: H3 venom, recovery interval 10 minutes. Breath: once an hour, a fetid cloud at 5 feet; anyone in it tests END × 3 or suffers H4 inhaled poison, recovery interval 30 minutes (Bestiary 2).

COCK-CROW

On hearing a cockerel crow, the cockatrice tests WIL × 3; failure, it flees. It cannot be compelled to stay (Inkhorn).

SLIME

Its slime poisons food and water: H4 if ingested, recovery 30 minutes, as the basilisk's (Dragons 13), but only for a day.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS

- Larani: knights bearing the cockatrice in their arms take it as a sign of a slain monster or a vigilant guardian (Heraldry).
- Peoni: Peonian priests bless middens and malt-floors against it at Nuzyael (Inkhorn).
- Ilvir: Ilvirans count it among the lesser dragonkind and do not claim it (Inkhorn).

FOLK TALES

The Malt-House at Hebon

A Kandian maltster's floor began to smell like a charnel-house and his ale killed three men. His boy, sent to look, was found stiff and staring in the corner. A weasel-man from the market killed the creature with his ferret and two cockerels, and was paid in ale (Inkhorn tale; Hebon, Kanday).

The Seventh-Year Cock

Every Hârnic grandmother knows that a cock in its seventh year lays an egg, and that the egg must be thrown over the house roof without breaking, or a cockatrice hatches. No grandmother has ever been seen to do it.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A manor's pigeons and fowl are dying, the well water is foul, and the dairy maid will not go into the old cellar.
- An alchemist wants a live cockatrice and pays 200d; he says he can make gold of it as men make gold of basilisk ashes (Dragons 13).
- Small, round eggs are being sold at a fair as "cock's eggs", a charm for luck.

ENCOUNTERS

Reptiles (Campaign 14, subtable 13), 97–99 "Wyvern/Ilme (as applicable)", in southern lowland farmland and towns. The Fellowship proposes that a result of "Wyvern/Ilme where neither is applicable" be resolved on this table:

D100	RESULT
01–70	Cockatrice (1)
71–90	Cockatrice nest (1 adult, 1d3 chicks)
91–00	Basilisk (Dragons 13)

Underworld (the Fellowship's extended) "Reptiles" in cellars and vaults: 1 in 6 a cockatrice.

RUMOURS

RUMOUR	TRUTH	WHERE
Someone found a cock's egg in the midden; break all small eggs.	partly	Kanday, Tharda, Melderyn
A cockatrice turned a man to stone in a cellar in Coranan.	partly	Tharda
Basilisk ash and copper make gold.	false	anywhere

ECONOMIC DATA

ITEM	PRICE	SOURCE
Cockatrice (dead, for an alchemist)	40d	Inkhorn
Cockatrice (alive)	200d to a buyer, illegal in most towns	Inkhorn
A trained weasel or ferret for ratting	24d	Inkhorn

THE FELLOWSHIP'S ADDITIONS

- The cockatrice as a creature: lesser dragonkind, related to but distinct from the basilisk
- Its gaze, venom, breath, slime, cock-crow bane, weasel immunity, and eggs
- Distribution, tales, prices, and encounter additions

Everything else follows HârnMaster 3 and the Columbia Games articles cited, which the Fellowship commends to every reader.

CREDITS

Writer: Vaidenon of Hustan. Set down by Lesli of Bifel and his homunculus, Claudin.

Sources cited: Columbia Games' *Bestiary* (Dragons: the Lesser Dragons and the Basilisk; Weasels; Bestiary 2: venom), *Heraldry*, *Kaldor* (knightly arms) and the HârnMaster 3 core rules (Combat; Physician).

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STAT BLOCKS

COCKATRICE

Habitat: Cellars, farmyards, dovecotes (south)
Height: 2′ 6″ (length)
Weight: 8 lb
Diet: Carnivore (eggs, chicks, rats)
Lifespan: Unknown
Group: Solitary (or a nest)
Size: Very Small/d3

ATTRIBUTES

04 Str	15 Eye	04 Int	08 End
09 Sta	12 Hrg	14 Aur	12 Mov
• Dex	08 Sml	10 Wil	20 Fly
14 Agl			

SKILLS

60 Initiative	75 Dodge
55 Awareness	50 Stealth
50 Gaze[1]	Breath[1]

55 Beak 2p *(venom H3)*
40 Tail barb 1p
[1] Gaze: see Gaze; Breath: H4, once an hour

ARMOUR

B2 E2 P1 F2 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

01–12 Head	63–78 Abdomen
13–22 Neck	79–90 •Leg
23–45 •Wing	91–00 Tail
46–62 Thorax	

• Odd = Left, Even = Right. The Fellowship plan (winged biped): Wing = Arm; Leg = Leg; Tail = Tail.

- Flies in short drops (Fly 20).
- Cock-crow: WIL × 3 or flees.
- Weasels are immune to its gaze.

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