GIANT VERMIN

BY VAIDENON OF HUSTAN, WARDEN OF THE INKHORN FELLOWSHIP

Spiders, Centipedes, Beetles, Wasps, Ants, and Leeches; and the Underworld

> "A Khuzan miner of Azadmere once told me that the dark below the mountains is not empty, it is merely quiet. Then he told me what makes the quiet. I slept badly in Azadmere."
>
> — Vaidenon of Hustan, Warden of the Inkhorn Fellowship, Tashal, Morgat 720 TR

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Below Hârn are caverns, mines, ruins, and the tombs of every age, and in them live things that do not live above: spiders as wide as a cart wheel, centipedes as long as a man, beetles that strip a corpse in an hour. The Fellowship treats them as natural creatures, and every one in this entry is of our own describing. *(Inkhorn)* They breed true, so they are not Ivashu. Ilviran scholars insist they are Ilvir's early work; students of the Earthmasters think them relics of an age when such creatures were common. Gargun eat them, and the Khuzdul hate them.

THE WARDEN'S NOTE

The silk is real. I have held a length of "dwarf-cloth" in a Tashal mercer's back room: grey, cool, very strong, and sold to me at a price that would have bought a horse, which I did not pay. The mercer would not say where it came from. When I said "a spider", he laughed rather too heartily and put it away.

WHERE THEY LIVE

Giant vermin live in the underworld environ (core: Campaign 2): caves, mines, ruins, and tombs. They favour deep, damp, undisturbed places, and they come up only at night or near entrances. Many live alongside gargun, who eat them and are eaten in turn. Khuzan miners of Azadmere seal off galleries where they find centipedes. Web-weavers and giant wasps live nearer the surface, in old forest and ruins (Inkhorn).

CAVE SPIDER

A pale, long-legged spider with a body as big as a dog and a leg-span of eight feet. It hunts by feeling vibrations through its threads, which line its tunnels, and it carries paralysed prey back to its lair alive. Its bite paralyses and then kills. A brood-mother, twice the size, guards a nest of eggs and young in the deepest chamber.

WEB-WEAVER

A smaller, hairy, banded spider that strings great webs across forest paths, ravines, and the doorways of ruins. A man who walks into one is held. The web-weaver waits for its catch to tire and then bites.

GIANT CENTIPEDE

A flat, red-brown centipede six feet long, fast, and savage. It hunts rats, gargun young, and anything that sleeps. Its poison claws cause agonising pain, and a man bitten may be unable to fight. It climbs walls and ceilings and drops on its prey.

CARRION BEETLE

A black, armoured beetle three feet long, with jaws like shears, which lives on the dead. It swarms where corpses lie: in tombs, battlefields, and gargun refuse-pits. Carrion beetles defend a feeding site but rarely hunt the living. They are kin to the scarabs that infest the tombs of Dalkesh and Beshakan (Morvrin 6).

GIANT WASP

A wasp two feet long, black and amber, that hunts alone. It stings to paralyse, then lays an egg in its victim. Its paper nests hang under the roofs of ruins and the eaves of cave mouths, and a nest holds 1d6 adults.

GIANT ANTS AND ANT SWARMS

Giant ants as long as a man's arm live in colonies of hundreds in deep sand-floored caves and dry hills. Workers forage in bands and drag back anything they can kill. Red ants of the ordinary kind but immense number sometimes pour through a cave or a ruin as a single moving carpet, stripping everything living in their path. Fire and water turn them.

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GIANT LEECH

In flooded passages, cave pools, and deep fen, the leeches grow to three feet. A giant leech fastens on a wader or swimmer and drinks until it is pulled off or salted. For ordinary leeches, see Fish (Dangers in the Water).

THE FELLOWSHIP'S UNDERWORLD ADDITIONS

The Underworld table itself belongs to the HârnMaster 3 core rules (Campaign 13), and the reader should use it there. To make room for the creatures of this Physiologus, the Fellowship narrows Columbia's ranges and adds the rows shown below, with two new subtables, 17 (Giant Vermin) and 18 (Undead). Every other result keeps its core wording and order, filling the remaining numbers. Rows marked Columbia+ are core results that now also include our creatures.

SPECIAL RULES

VENOM (BESTIARY 2)

Cave spider: H3, recovery 1 hour, paralytic (Inkhorn): instead of spreading on a reduced Infection roll, the victim is paralysed for the recovery interval. Brood-mother: H2. Web-weaver: H4. Centipede: H3, and the pain forces a Shock roll at once. Giant wasp: H3, paralytic as the spider's. Giant ant: H5 (formic sting).

WEBS (INKHORN)

Anyone who walks into a web (Awareness −20 to see it in dim light) is held: a Tangle (Bestiary 2) at −20. Breaking free takes a STR × 2 roll, or cutting with a blade (1d3 rounds). Fire burns a web in a round.

ANT SWARM (INKHORN)

Each round within a swarm, a creature takes 1d3 strikes against an Ignore defence at 2p, to random locations. Armour protects at −2 (the ants find the gaps). A swarm is attacked as one creature: each blow that hits kills 1d6 × 10 ants, and it disperses when reduced to a quarter of its size. Fire or deep water drives it off.

GIANT LEECH (INKHORN)

Once its bite hits, the leech stays fastened. Each minute it costs one Fatigue Level. Salt or flame makes it let go; tearing it free is a minor wound.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS

- Ilvir: Ilvirans claim giant vermin as Ilvir's early work, which they call "first drafts" (Inkhorn).
- Khuzdul: the dwarves seal galleries where giant vermin are found, and will not reopen them (Inkhorn).
- Morgath: Morgathians keep carrion beetles in their crypts to clean bones (Inkhorn).

FOLK TALES

The Grey Gallery

A Khuzan miner of Azadmere broke into a gallery hung with grey silk from floor to ceiling. He walked back out slowly, he said, without touching a thread, and the gallery was walled up that day. The silk is still sold, at a great price, as "dwarf-cloth".

The River of Ants

Gargun fleeing out of a cave mouth in the Rayesha were seen running into a party of Kaldoric soldiers, who thought themselves attacked. They were not. The ants came out behind the gargun.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- A mine has broken into a cave system; three miners are missing and there are threads across the shaft.
- A Khuzan merchant wants giant-spider silk and pays well for it.
- A tomb's treasure is guarded only by a sea of carrion beetles, which are very hungry.

ENCOUNTERS

Underworld (core Campaign 13, the Fellowship's extended below), Giant vermin. The Fellowship proposes that a result of "Giant vermin (subtable 17)" be resolved on this table:

D100	RESULT
01–20	Cave spiders (1d3)
21–30	Web-weaver (near an entrance; else cave spider)
31–45	Giant centipede (1d2)
46–60	Carrion beetles (2d6; where dead lie)
61–70	Giant leech (flooded passages; else centipede)
71–78	Giant wasps (near an entrance; else beetles)
79–85	Giant ants (2d6 workers)
86–95	Ant swarm (a river of red ants)
96–00	Brood-mother spider in her nest

Wilderness, near cave mouths and ruins at night: 1 in 20 creature results is a web-weaver or giant wasps.

RUMOURS

RUMOUR	TRUTH	WHERE
The miners broke into a cave full of grey silk, and three of them never came out.	open	Azadmere, Kaldor mines
Ants as long as your arm live under the Rayesha.	partly	Kaldor, Tharda
The tomb robbers were found picked clean in an hour.	open	anywhere with old tombs

ECONOMIC DATA

ITEM	PRICE	SOURCE
Cave-spider silk (a full lair's worth)	2d6 × 50d	Inkhorn
Centipede venom (for poisoners, illegal)	30d a dose	Inkhorn
Carrion beetle shell (for kurbul-like armour)	10d each	Inkhorn

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UNDERWORLD: THE FELLOWSHIP'S ROWS (USE WITH CORE CAMPAIGN 13)

1D100	RESULT	SUB	SRC
49–52	Reptiles: snake/dragon/basilisk/cockatrice	13	Columbia+
53–58	Giant vermin	17	Inkhorn
59–64	Ivashu (incl. Jenny Greenteeth in flooded passages)	15	Columbia+
71–74	Undead	18	Inkhorn
75–76	Ogre or giant-kin (caves; Ivinian sea caves)		Inkhorn
77	Construct: golem (chantries, sanctums, Earthmaster sites)		Inkhorn
78–79	Lycanthrope den (asleep by day; awake at Yaelah)		Inkhorn
85–86	Flooding or bad air (the Fellowship: a Swimming or END×3 roll)		Inkhorn
97–98	Remains of earlier explorers (gear, a map, a warning)		Inkhorn

Core results not shown (tracks, residents, wilderness, gargun, ethereals, cave-in, getting lost, loss of equipment, mutiny, slime, other) fill the gaps in their printed order; see Campaign 13.

SUBTABLE 17: GIANT VERMIN (INKHORN)

1D100	RESULT
01–20	Cave spiders (1d3)
21–30	Web-weaver (near an entrance; else cave spider)
31–45	Giant centipede (1d2)
46–60	Carrion beetles (2d6; where dead lie)
61–70	Giant leech (flooded passages; else centipede)
71–78	Giant wasps (near an entrance; else beetles)
79–85	Giant ants (2d6 workers)
86–95	Ant swarm (a river of red ants)
96–00	Brood-mother spider in her nest

SUBTABLE 18: UNDEAD (INKHORN)

1D100	RESULT
01–30	Grave-wight pack (Grave-Wights)
31–55	Gulmorvrin (1d6; a Morgathian 1 in 5)
56–65	Dalkeshi gulmora (Morgathian temples; else gulmorvrin)
66–75	Amorvrus at its resting place
76–85	Ghost: damned soul or revenant (Ghosts)
86–92	Hobsire (manor cellars and mills only; else ghost)
93–00	Drowned dead (flooded crypts and sea caves; else ghost)

THE FELLOWSHIP'S ADDITIONS

- Giant vermin as natural, breeding creatures of the underworld: cave spider and brood-mother, web-weaver, giant centipede, carrion beetle, giant wasp, giant ant, ant swarm, giant leech
- Venom, webs, swarms, and leeches
- The extended Underworld table and subtables 17 (Giant Vermin) and 18 (Undead)

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: the HârnMaster 3 core rules (Campaign 2–3 and 11–14: the Underworld environ and table, subtables 10 and 13–16), Columbia Games' *Bestiary* (Venomous Bites or Stings; Tangle Attacks; Grave-Wights; Morvrin 6: scarab beetles), *Ivashu* (#4611) and *Earthmasters*; Fish (Leeches), in this Physiologus.

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STAT BLOCKS

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CAVE SPIDER

Habitat: Caves, mines
Height: 8′ leg-span
Weight: 80 lb
Diet: Carnivore
Lifespan: 10–20 years
Group: 1d3
Size: Small/d4

ATTRIBUTES

12 Str	08 Eye	02 Int	12 End
12 Sta	06 Hrg	06 Aur	18 Mov
• Dex	12 Sml	12 Wil	
16 Agl			

SKILLS

60 Initiative
55 Awareness[1]
95 Climbing
75 Dodge
80 Stealth
60 Bite 4p *(venom H3, paralytic)*
[1] Awareness: tremor sense

ARMOUR

B3 E4 P3 F3 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

01–12 Head
13–44 •Leg
45–62 Thorax
63–00 Abdomen
• Odd = Left, Even = Right. The Fellowship plan (arachnid): Head = Head; Leg = Leg (a severed leg is lost, the spider fights on); Thorax = Thorax; Abdomen = Abdomen.

- Walks on walls and ceilings.
- Lines its tunnels with threads.

BROOD-MOTHER SPIDER

Habitat: Deep caves
Height: 14′ leg-span
Weight: 300 lb
Diet: Carnivore
Lifespan: 50+ years
Group: 1 (with young)
Size: Medium/d6

ATTRIBUTES

20 Str	08 Eye	03 Int	18 End
18 Sta	06 Hrg	08 Aur	14 Mov
• Dex	12 Sml	15 Wil	
13 Agl			

SKILLS

60 Initiative
60 Awareness
90 Climbing
60 Dodge
70 Stealth
65 Bite 7p *(venom H2, paralytic)*
50 Leg 4b

ARMOUR

B5 E6 P5 F4 GAC 2

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Cave Spider.

- Guards a nest of 2d6 young (as cave spiders, STR 6).

WEB-WEAVER

Habitat: Forests, ravines, ruins
Height: 4′ leg-span
Weight: 30 lb
Diet: Carnivore
Lifespan: 5–10 years
Group: 1
Size: Small/d4

ATTRIBUTES

07 Str	10 Eye	02 Int	09 End
10 Sta	06 Hrg	05 Aur	16 Mov
• Dex	10 Sml	11 Wil	
15 Agl			

SKILLS

55 Initiative
55 Awareness
95 Climbing
70 Dodge
75 Stealth
55 Bite 3p *(venom H4)*

ARMOUR

B2 E3 P2 F2 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Cave Spider.

- Webs (Inkhorn).

GIANT CENTIPEDE

Habitat: Caves, mines, ruins
Height: 6′ long
Weight: 40 lb
Diet: Carnivore
Lifespan: 5–8 years
Group: 1–2
Size: Small/d4

ATTRIBUTES

09 Str	05 Eye	01 Int	11 End
12 Sta	06 Hrg	04 Aur	16 Mov
• Dex	12 Sml	12 Wil	
15 Agl			

SKILLS

55 Initiative
45 Awareness
80 Climbing
60 Dodge
70 Stealth
60 Bite 3p *(venom H3; Shock roll)*

ARMOUR

B4 E5 P4 F3 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

01–12 Head
13–45 Forebody
46–85 Hindbody
86–00 Tail
The Fellowship plan (segmented (centipede, leech)): Fore and Hind Body = Thorax and Abdomen.

- Drops from ceilings (+10 to attack).

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CARRION BEETLE

Habitat: Tombs, battlefields
Height: 3′ long
Weight: 60 lb
Diet: Carrion
Lifespan: 2–3 years
Group: 2d6
Size: Small/d4

ATTRIBUTES

11 Str	04 Eye	01 Int	13 End
15 Sta	06 Hrg	03 Aur	08 Mov
• Dex	18 Sml	13 Wil	
08 Agl			

SKILLS

35 Initiative
40 Awareness
30 Dodge
50 Mandibles 4e

ARMOUR

B8 E9 P8 F5 GAC 3

STRIKE LOCATIONS

01–14 Head	51–68 Thorax
15–34 •Leg	69–00 Abdomen
35–50 •Wing	

• Odd = Left, Even = Right. The Fellowship plan (insect): Wing = Arm (a wingless insect rerolls Wing as Thorax).

• Wingless kind: reroll Wing as Thorax.
• Defends a feeding site; rarely hunts.

GIANT ANT (WORKER)

Habitat: Deep caves, dry hills
Height: 2′ long
Weight: 15 lb
Diet: Omnivore
Lifespan: 1–2 years
Group: 2d6 (colony hundreds)
Size: Very Small/d3

ATTRIBUTES

06 Str	06 Eye	01 Int	09 End
10 Sta	06 Hrg	03 Aur	14 Mov
• Dex	16 Sml	12 Wil	
14 Agl			

SKILLS

50 Initiative
50 Awareness
55 Dodge
70 Climbing
55 Mandibles 3e
45 Sting 1p *(venom H5)*

ARMOUR

B3 E4 P3 F2 GAC 1

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Carrion Beetle.

• Wingless worker: reroll Wing as Thorax.

GIANT LEECH

Habitat: Flooded caves, deep fen
Height: 3′ long
Weight: 20 lb
Diet: Blood
Lifespan: 5–10 years
Group: 1–3
Size: Very Small/d3

ATTRIBUTES

05 Str	03 Eye	01 Int	10 End
14 Sta	04 Hrg	03 Aur	02 Mov
• Dex	14 Sml	12 Wil	06 Swim
06 Agl			

SKILLS

30 Initiative
40 Awareness
80 Swimming
30 Dodge
70 Stealth
50 Bite 1p *(fastens)*

ARMOUR

B3 E1 P1 F4 GAC 0

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Giant Centipede.

• Fastened: −1 Fatigue Level a minute; salt or flame releases it.

GIANT WASP

Habitat: Ruins, cave mouths
Height: 2′ long
Weight: 10 lb
Diet: Carnivore
Lifespan: 1 year
Group: 1 (nest 1d6)
Size: Very Small/d3

ATTRIBUTES

04 Str	15 Eye	01 Int	08 End
09 Sta	08 Hrg	04 Aur	04 Mov
• Dex	12 Sml	10 Wil	40 Fly
18 Agl			

SKILLS

65 Initiative
60 Awareness
85 Dodge
65 Sting 2p *(venom H3, paralytic)*
40 Mandibles 1e

ARMOUR

B2 E2 P1 F1 GAC 0

STRIKE LOCATIONS

As the Carrion Beetle.

• Lays an egg in a paralysed victim: the larva hatches in 1d6 days (Physician to cut it out).

ANT SWARM

Habitat: Caves, ruins (south)
Height: a carpet 20 yards wide
Diet: Everything
Group: 1 swarm

ATTRIBUTES

• Str	• Eye	• Int	04 Mov
• Sta	• Hrg	• Aur	
• Dex	• Sml	• Wil	
• Agl			

SKILLS

0 Dodge
Swarm[1]

[1] Swarm: 1d3 × 2p a round, armour −2

ARMOUR

None natural; as worn

STRIKE LOCATIONS

None. A swarm is attacked as one creature: each blow that hits kills 1d6 × 10 ants; the swarm disperses when reduced to a quarter.

• Ant Swarm rules (Inkhorn).
• Driven off by fire and deep water.

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