Bestiary:

Dao and Marid

By Doug Hyatt
Illustrations by Milivoj Ceran

Few creatures in the Elemental Chaos inspire more fear and awe than the great genies. From the tyrannical efreets in their City of Brass to the djinns in the Court of Ice and Steel, from the boisterous marids racing over the shining seas to the industrious dao mining deep within the earth, each branch of genie-kind has spawned its own set of myths and legends in the mortal world.

Dao

In the depths of the Elemental Chaos, the avaricious earth genies known as dao vie with each other for wealth and power. Merchants and miners, slavers and soldiers, dao care only for profit, regardless of the suffering of others.

Lore

Arcana DC 25: Spawned in the time of the primordials, these powerful earth spirits carved out a realm for themselves in the stone of the Elemental Chaos. The supreme ruler of the dao, the Great Khan, presides over the Great Dismal Delve, a trading empire comprising smaller kingdoms known as mazeworks, each ruled over by a lesser khan. A mazework consists of numerous tunnels and stone fortresses, of which many portions are accessible only to creatures that have the earth glide trait. The greatest of these structures, the Sevenfold Mazework, contains the Great Khan’s palace and forms the heart of the dao empire.

Selfish and spiteful creatures, dao seek only to increase their own power and wealth, especially at the expense of others of their kind. They mine the extensive natural resources of their realms, mostly gems but also precious metals. In addition, they sometimes venture outside the Elemental Chaos to search for materials they cannot find in their mines. Dao routinely enslave other species, in and out of the Elemental Chaos, to work the mines for them.

Dao are strong channelers of earth energy in the form of force. Some can fire bolts and blasts of energy, or create walls of force inside their elaborate mazeworks. In addition to their combat prowess, dao are masters at shaping stone and moving earth. Dao nobles can duplicate the effects of the Stone Shape ritual (Dragon 405) at will without requiring components.

Encounters

Greedy and selfish, dao ally with other creatures in the Elemental Chaos only if they perceive a great benefit in doing so. Dao have little use for gods and their servants. Their primary interaction with other creatures is to take them as slaves. Their favorites for this purpose among the elemental creatures include xorns, umber hulks, gargoyles, stone titans, bulettes, and norkers. From the mortal realm, dao choose slaves that can survive a hard mining life, such as
Dao maintain a formidable army to defend the khan and deter any threats from other elemental powers, such as efreets or djinns, as well as to quell internal slave uprisings. Dao military forces include heavy infantry, basilisk-riding cavalry, and gem-slinging archers, supplemented by enslaved creatures such as umber hulk siege units, aerial squads of gargoyles, and xorn scouts.

Binding a dao to one’s service is extremely difficult, but a dao might willingly serve a powerful wizard who can demonstrate an opportunity for great financial gain. Rare indeed are such arrangements.

**Dao Blademaster**

The core of the dao’s army is the Heart of All Mountains, elite infantry trained from birth to serve and protect dao nobles. Sergeants choose children from among the common dao and drill them in the art of war from an early age. Unswervingly loyal to their noble masters, blademasters gladly lay down their lives in the service of the Great Khan.

**Dao Blademasters in Combat**

These soldiers fight side by side, forming an immovable line between their enemies and the noble dao commanders they have sworn to protect.

**Dao Gemslinger**

Some dao learn to create crystalline matrices of energy, which they hurl at their foes in great slings. The matrices appear to be gemstones, but without the dao’s will to give them form, they crumble into nothingness. These gemslingers are typically mercenaries, though some serve in the standing armay as elite artillery. They often form the core of slaving missions, using their long-range attacks to incapacitate clusters of enemies.

**Dao Gemslingers in Combat**

A gemslinger usually opens with diamond bonds to hinder its foes’ escape and take some combatants out of the fight temporarily. It then skulks behind frontline fighters to hurl star ruby attacks until diamond bonds recharges. With move as dust and its various modes of movement, the dao can usually escape close combat.
Dao Overseer

Dao mines require many slaves, from humanoid to more exotic creatures. Overseers are minor nobles that maintain order and discipline in the great mazeworks and supervise the operations of the empire. Wielding a barbed whip, an overseer dispenses punishment at the first sign of disobedience. Overseers sometimes serve as bodyguards for merchants and nobles when they leave the Elemental Chaos.

Dao Overseers in Combat

An overseer begins a fight with local tremor to separate and shock enemies, allowing it to choose the target it prefers. It then keeps prone foes down with double attack and dismaying whip.

Dao Geomancer

Powerful dao nobles are adept at sculpting stone and channeling raw force. Foremost among these are the geomancers, typically minor khans that each rule over a large section of mazework in the Delve (although some serve the Great Khan directly and dwell in his palace). Ambitious and intelligent, dao geomancers pursue advancement for themselves at the expense of everything else. They turn on their own kind readily if they see a chance to increase their influence and resources.

Dao Geomancers in Combat

A geomancer typically hangs back while its servants (dao blademasters or overseers, or slaves of other races) form the front line. It first partitions the battlefield with stonewall eruption, providing an escape route for it and others of its kind. Next it uses earth chains to entrap its foes. Otherwise, it smashes enemies from afar with a stone fist that batters their defenses. If any foe draws too close, it is knocked back by waves of force that radiate outward from the geomancer.
**Marid**

When sailors tell of great spirits rising out of the sea, with silvery blue skin and eyes like shining pearls, they describe marids, powerful water genies and masters of the ocean. Many a tale tells the fate of anyone foolish enough to cross such great creatures, their ships dashed against the rocks by mighty waves or sent to the bottom of the sea in a vicious maelstrom.

**Lore**

Arcana DC 30: Marids roam the great seas of the cosmos in search of excitement and adventure. The Great Padishah rules over the marids with a light hand from her citadel. Marids value freedom and individuality above all else, and they follow only those who lead by example or inspire them through heroic exploits.

Most marids consider themselves to be nobility or, in some cases, minor royalty. Such nobles seldom stay in one place, traveling across the ocean with entourages of courtesans, bards, guards, hunters, lesser nobles, and other servants. Other aquatic creatures often accompany these marids on the journey, from dolphins and whales to hippocampi and giant turtles.

Boisterous and cheerful by nature, marids greatly prize tales and ballads, and they frequently hold storytelling and singing competitions with extravagant rewards for the victors. The winning story typically portrays marids as clever, infallible protagonists who make everyone else look bad by comparison.

Marids also hold contests of arms, such as wrestling bouts or matches between fighters wielding trident and net. In addition, they organize great hunts for formidable prey, such as krakens and aquatic dragons. As with the bardic competitions, the winners are lavished with extravagant prizes, usually pearls, coral, or items of arcane power.

When conversing with a marid, one should display the respect due a superior, never interrupting and speaking only when spoken to. Flattery and displays of obeisance earn the most favorable response. Marids are keen judges of talent, and are readily impressed by an extraordinary storyteller, singer, hunter, or duelist.

**Encounters**

Marids pride themselves on their large and diverse households, and they routinely invite creatures (the more exotic, the better) to be their servants and companions. Such an association is entirely voluntary, since marids greatly value free will. Allies can include intelligent sea creatures such as aquatic elves, tritons, kelpies, and water elementals; fish and mundane aquatic beasts such as killer whales, sea snakes, various sharks, and dolphins; and magical beasts of the oceans.

Marids seldom leave the Elemental Chaos, but when they do, they might ally with any other intelligent creature that shares their goals and showers them with attention, gifts, and flattery. Wizards rarely attempt to bind marids, who make troublesome servants at best, and implacable enemies if they regain their freedom.

**Marid Gladiator**

When marid nobles desire entertainment, they stage a variety of competitions, including armed duels and hunting expeditions. Armed with a trident of red coral and a net woven of seaweed, marid gladiators serve as both champions in duels or as fearless pursuers of ocean prey. Gladiators belong to the lesser marid nobility and depend on the patronage of more wealthy and influential nobles.
Marid Rawun

Marid nobles delight in hearing ballads and stories from traveling bards, called rawuns, particularly when they describe in flattering detail the exploits of those noble patrons. Highly intelligent and charismatic, marid rawuns entertain the greater nobles by endlessly singing their praises. Minor nobles themselves, they also compose epic poems in which marids encounter and outwit other species—especially other genies (such as efereets, which marids despise). Masters of bardic enchantments, rawuns use arcane power to teleport, charm, scare, and incapacitate meddlesome enemies.

Marid Rawuns in Combat

Marid rawuns channel the music of the ocean, a siren song that can entrance and frighten their enemies. A rawun typically opens with dizzying dirge, then retreats behind the front line. From a position of safety, it relies on rawun’s command to turn its foes against one another. If enemies surround the rawun, it uses haunting tone to scare them away. When engaging a single opponent, the marid uses its sword to teleport the interloper within reach of an ally or into a wavecaller’s waterspout form.

Marid Stormbringer

A spinning mass of wind and waves, thunder and lightning, known only as the Vortex, connects the realm of the marids with that of the djinn. Although djinn savor the realm’s atmosphere, a few intrepid marids brave the journey into the djinn kingdoms, where they learn the art of calling massive storms. These stormbringers serve as instruments of vengeance on the rare occasion that another species dares to cross the marid nobility. Fierce and cold-blooded, a stormbringer exhibits little of the joyful nature of its fellow marids. Although it takes no pleasure in bringing destruction to the enemies of the

Marid Gladiators in Combat

A gladiator engages enemies on the front lines, swinging its net in a wide arc to trip up many opponents at once. Once it has ensnared a foe, the gladiator strikes with its trident. Even from a distance, the gladiator is dangerous, luring its enemies closer with an enchanting glare that snares fish and humansoids alike.
Great Padishah, the stormbringer performs its duty with brutal efficiency.

### Marid Stormbringers in Combat
Marid stormbringers summon spinning vortexes of wind and water, thunder and lightning. The marid initiates hostilities by bringing forth a maelstrom. Fighting far from the front lines, it fires a forked stormbolt in each round when maelstrom does not recharge. If a combatant engages it, the stormbringer’s stunning field entraps the foe, preventing it from striking while the marid moves away.

### Marid Wavecaller
Sailors recount tales of great genies summoning huge whirlpools and towering waves that plunge hapless vessels to the bottom of the sea. Greatest of the marid nobility (usually minor padishahs second only to the Great Padishah), these wavecallers possess absolute mastery over all bodies of water. Nomadic by nature, wavecallers wander the seas with an entourage of lesser marid nobles, including rawuns and gladiators. The haughty wavecallers expect absolute loyalty and obedience from all they encounter. Others shower them with compliments and flattery in an appeal to their massive egos.

### Marid Wavecaller

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<tr>
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### Waterspout Form (polymorph)  At-Will

**Effect:** The marid and its equipment transform into a waterspout, ending any effect on the marid. In this form, the marid cannot attack, but it is immune to damage except fire damage. It is also immune to forced movement, as well as to being immobilized, restrained, and slowed. No attack that fails to drop the marid to 0 hit points can stop its movement in this form. In addition, the marid can move through openings of any size without squeezing, it can enter other creatures’ spaces, and other creatures can enter its space. While in this form, when the marid enters a creature’s space, or a creature enters the marid’s space, the marid slides the creature up to 3 squares as a free action. Until the marid takes a minor action to reassemble humanoid form, it remains in waterspout form. The marid cannot reassemble humanoid form on the same turn in which it took waterspout form.

### Tidal Dispersal  Encounter

**Trigger:** The marid is hit by an attack.

**Effect (Immediate Interrupt):** Close burst 10 (allies in the burst); each target shifts up to its speed as a free action. The marid uses waterspout form.

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stormy seas. A wavecaller deals savage attacks with its falchion, focusing on targets granting it combat advantage. If it needs to, it can fire a concentrated water jet from its hand to momentarily blind a foe and gain the advantage.

About the Author
Doug Hyatt is the author of "Gond’s Way: Artificers of the Realms" in Dragon 403 and “The Crafthouse of Inspiration” in Dungeon 194. He is a computational biologist living in Tennessee.

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