

The Dark God

(The God at the End of All Things)

Intermediate/Lesser Power of an Unknown Plane, NE

PORTFOLIO:	Eternal darkness, cold, decay, enfeeblement, paralysis, entropy, exhaustion, slow death
ALIASES:	None (possibly Tharizdun)
DOMAIN NAME:	Unknown
SUPERIOR:	None
ALLIES:	Unknown, possibly none
FOES:	Possibly all other powers
SYMBOL:	Black robe and iron torch
WOR. ALIGN.:	LE, NE, CE

Little is known about the entity known simple as the Dark God, save that it is ancient and ineffably evil. It yearns to end all things, bringing all of existence to a state of darkness eternal. The only saving grace to this power of cold entropy is that it has been imprisoned as long as any can remember, but its touch can still be felt in dark corners of the multiverse, and it is forever struggling against the bars of its lost cage.

No records exist of what race or pantheon spawned this foul being. The few myths that mention it always portray it as an outsider or interloper, and it is only felt through influence rather than direct action. It is clear even in the oldest of these myths that it is imprisoned and not able to act directly. None of these tales say anything about who imprisoned it, or what the makeup of its cage is. Even queries to the oldest powers known go unanswered, showing either a lack of knowledge or a reluctance to share it. Sages have been left to speculate in this absence of solid information, and many hold that the Dark God is a dark shadow of the creation of the multiverse and that for creation to exist so must this shadow. They claim that it will stay imprisoned until the time of the destruction of everything, and its release will herald an end to everything. Other sages scoff at this doom-talk as superstition; in their eyes the Dark God is simply a remnant of some ancient pantheon. They speculate that it was imprisoned by other members of the pantheon who eventually died along with their followers in some forgotten corner of the multiverse. Still others connect it to other strange and abstruse deities, such as the Elder Elemental God. Critics are quick to point out that most of these powers are able to grant spells to their followers, unlike the Dark God, making such connections unlikely. The one connection that cannot be easily dismissed is with the Oerthan power Tharizdun. Both mysterious powers represent an unending cold darkness, and both are imprisoned in unknown locations; as such there is little conclusive evidence to prove or disprove such a connection and many sages speculate the two are one and the same. By contrast, those who hold the two powers are separate entities are searching for a sign of a third imprisoned power of evil that might prove them separate under the rule of threes. Most other creatures aware of the debate hope it can never be proved either way, as that would likely mean one of the powers was released from its prison.

When the Dark God enters myths, it is usually as a shadowy hint or background element that has left an artifact or location of power around which the mythic tales revolve. For example, some elven and dwarven myths describe various younger members or the pantheon or cultural heroes fighting off villains possessing an artifact or imbued with power left over by the Dark God. Some legends hold that the first undead shadows (or their foes the slow shadows) were originally followers of the Dark God who delved too deeply into its secrets and were turned into unliving shadowstuff. These hateful creatures then spread throughout the planes, trying to bring more into their near union with their god. That there are other legends that place their origins elsewhere just shows how little is known about the Dark God. However, these legends often lead sages to speculate that the Dark God is intentionally or accidentally responsible for certain objects or artifacts of great darkness or evil that have mysterious and unknown origins. As a prime example, many sages have concluded that the Black Diamond that corrupted the Queen of Air and Darkness was a tainted item left hidden beneath the earth in the distant past, only to be uncovered by the hapless dwarves who gifted it to Titania's sister.

The one thing known for sure about this mysterious power is that it desires the slow decay and destruction of all things. So long as it has been known, it has been called the God at the End of All Things. Whether this is prophecy or aspiration is unknown. Whatever the case, good powers are

quick to dispatch their followers and servants when a cult dedicated to the Dark God is uncovered, and even among the evil powers, virtually none are willing to openly aid this entropic god.

Locked as it is in its prison hidden among the planes, the Dark God has little influence on the Prime Material Plane. It is unable to manifest its power or dispatch avatars or send omens to its followers, although it is said its pure evil power does slowly seep through cracks in its prison walls, collecting and concentrating in rare locations or items sacred to it. This seepage is too slight to have any short-term effects, however. Finally, legends speak of rare celestial conjunctions and extremely difficult rituals that temporarily weaken the bonds that bind the Dark God, allowing it to briefly manifest a weakened avatar (far weaker than the full-powered one below) or some other form; luckily, if these legends are true, they are so rare there is no solid record of them ever taking place.

The Dark God's Avatar (Mage 29, Cleric 29)

The Dark God appears as a wraith-like form of human height with an insubstantial body wrapped in a spectral cloak. No face can be seen in the black depths of its hood, but its eyes can be seen as shadows within shadows, holes so dark that they are blacker than black. It glides about completely soundlessly, ready to wrap its icy fingers around the neck of any living creature it encounters. It casts its spells from all spheres and schools, but always uses reversed forms of spells where possible.

AC -7; MV Fl 24 (A); HP 134; THAC0 2; #AT 1
Dmg 3d10 (*chill touch*)
MR 70%; SZ M (6 feet tall)
STR 12, DEX 17, CON 16, INT 19, WIS 21, CHA 1
Spells P: 12/12/12/11/10/9/7, W: 7/7/7/7/6/6/6/6
Saves PPDM 5; RSW 7; PP 8; BW 11; Sp 8

Special Att/Def: The Dark God is as comfortable using magic as it is using its chilling touch in melee. Any creature struck by its touch is chilled to the bone and paralyzed unless they make a successful saving throw versus paralysis at a -4 penalty. On any successive hit, such a creature must make a saving throw versus death or be slain instantly.

In addition to its normal spellcasting, the Dark God may utilize all cold-based spells once per day each. It can cast *imprisonment*, *symbol of insanity*, and *trap the soul* once per day each, and three times per day it may radiate an *aura of enfeeblement* (as *ray of enfeeblement*) to a radius of 30 feet. Twice per day it can cast *enervation* and *blindness*. Finally, all normal and magical light is diminished in its presence; torches flicker low and *continual light* dims, emitting only half the intensity and brightness. In the case of light-based spells, that means saving throws are made with a +4 bonus and all damage is halved. Any lights within 240 yards and line of sight of the Dark God are affected.

The Dark God is immune to all cold-based attacks, as well as paralyzation, poison, and all magical attacks and psionics that require a physical body to affect. It can only be struck by weapons of +3 or better enchantment, and despite its form, it is not undead and cannot be turned.

Other Manifestations

As an imprisoned power, the Dark God is unable to manifest on the Prime Material Plane. However, it is said there are gaps in its prison that allow it to touch its faithful on rare occasions. These touches typically take the form of dark dreams and nightmares with obtuse and confusing messages; it may be that only the mad can truly understand such messages, or even that the messages drive their recipients mad.

It is not known for sure if the Dark God is served by any particular beings other than undead, but its followers widely hold that shadows, shadow fiends, slow shadows, and wraiths are all major servants of their deity. In addition, those cults with a presence on the surface hold that perytons are messengers and heralds of the Dark God's will. Due to its imprisonment, the Dark God is unable express its favor or disfavor at the actions of its priests, although most cultists consider the discovery of black diamonds and any location or item that is believed to hold a connection to their patron as a sign of its will on their lives.

The Church

CLERGY: Clerics, specialty priests

CLERGY'S ALIGN.: LE, NE, CE
TURN UNDEAD: C: No, SP: No
CMND. UNDEAD: C: Yes, SP: Yes

All clerics and specialty priests of the Dark God receive religion (Dark God) as a bonus nonweapon proficiency. As the Dark God is currently imprisoned and unable to answer prayers, its priests are limited to gaining spells of no higher than level 2 unless in contact with a powerful relic or location imbued with a portion of the Dark God's power.

Followers of the Dark God are unknown on most worlds, having gone extinct ages ago, if they ever existed at all. Those few who do exist operate in strict secrecy, knowing that detection will lead to their destruction. Many seek to isolate themselves for protection, only venturing out to capture victims for their foul rites. On rare occasions they manage to ally themselves with other isolated evil cults, each hoping for protection long enough to ensure security before turning on their ostensible ally; obviously, such alliances are short-lived. If possible, they seek to dominate or masquerade as some less obviously dangerous organization, including humanoid tribes or beneficent priestly orders, to better disguise their activities. Only those cults with access to ancient, dark texts, black artifacts, or locations infused with the Dark God's power truly manage to sustain themselves and amass any degree of power. In some rare cases, members of a dying cult manage to achieve lichdom or another undead state, operating or guarding the sanctuary for centuries after their deaths.

Temples dedicated to the Dark God are almost exclusively ancient, ruined structures made of black stone. Strange angular statues delineate the perimeter, instilling a sense of unequity in those who approach. Altars consist of large black stones with a translucent surface under which can be seen carved imagery of faceless individuals entwined with serpents and suffering tremendous pain. Dark curtains and tapestries with the same decorations are common, and the temples are dimly lit with iron torches. If modern cults have access to ancient texts that describe these designs, they will emulate them as best they can. Ancient temples that served as active centers of worship for centuries or that have a number of undead guardians are often imbued with much dark magic. Dark mists and biting cold fill the sanctified area, reducing all forms of light, and many magical traps and curses fill the halls and chambers. In particular, the often have caches of rare black diamonds that are cursed to transform those who would rob these treasures into undead servants of the Dark God. Mortal priests are immune to these effects, and their goals are always to bring about such effects in their own temples.

Cults dedicated to the Dark God usually have widely varied hierarchical structures unless they are ancient or have access to dark liturgical texts that describe the makeup of cults in the distant past. In such cases, novices are known as the Chilled, while full priests are Holders of the Cold Torch. In ascending order of rank, some of the titles used by these cults of the Dark God are Flame of Darkness, Paralyzing Chill, Leeching Cold, Debilitating Darkness, and Enervating Shadow. Specialty priests are known as forerunners. The exact gender and racial breakdown of these cults varies wildly from world to world, although humans make up at least 80% of the clergy. In the rest of the cases, cults typically only contain a single race, so that there are isolated groups of dwarves, drow, orcs, or other races. No consistent breakdown of genders exists, since in some places they follow typical power structures while in other places the dispossessed are drawn to the priesthood and the breakdown runs counter to prevailing norms. Those cults that lack access to ancient texts describing rites and worship practices only contain clerics (75%) and wizards (5%), while in ancient cults, the specialty priests (20%) dominate these other two.

Dogma: Without direct contact from the Dark God, many variations on the cult's dogma exist, although the most common are as follows: order must be dissolved into nothingness and perfection decayed into ruin. Eliminate heat and light, bringing everlasting cold. Minds are to be shattered and sent spiraling into apathy and despair. Secrecy is the only shield against enemies of the Cold Torch, and trust can only be reserved for fellow members of the cult. Hunt for the keys to the Dark God's prison so that all of creation may be unmade. Sow seeds of doubt and antagonism among those who oppose the unmaking so that there is no opposition to the Dark God's triumphant release.

In addition to these tenets, a significant portion of the cult further believe that the release of the Dark God will remake creation and those that aid its release will be put into positions of power. This, and other variations

on the above tenets are typically seen as heretical, and vice versa, and always leads to conflict should two cults meet.

Day-to-Day Activities: Members of the Dark God's cult see freeing their patron as a matter of paramount importance. They live apart from outsiders in secret communities, all of whom are dedicated in some way towards this goal. Many are researchers, translating and interpreting ancient texts that they believe may hold clues to discovering the keys to their deity's prison, while others hunt down more texts for the researchers to study. The cult also has secondary goals, including identifying sites or artifacts touched by the power of the Dark God and gaining possession of them. As a rule, cult members are paranoid about outsiders, and they will often keep a close watch on neighboring communities and perceived enemies, taking covert actions against them if they feel threatened. Finally, rituals and sacrifices are performed frequently as a means of accruing power they cannot otherwise gain from their imprisoned deity. These often result in magical curses and traps pervading their temple complexes. Ancient cults that consist entirely of undead often become nearly inactive and operate mainly as watchers and waiters, hoping for a sign of their god's release.

Important Ceremonies/Holy Days: The nature of the Dark God's cult means that there are no common or universal ceremonies, although all living cults make frequent sacrifices to their imprisoned patron. The timing and nature of these sacrifices vary widely, although it is widely believed that sentient beings must be sacrificed, usually on a stone altar with sanctified blades, but others utilize drowning or deep pits to take their sacrifices. The most common name for these ceremonies is some version of the Ending. They may be held weekly, monthly, quarterly, or even yearly, but never longer than that, except by fully undead cults which often forgo sacrifices unless a creature stumbles upon their temple complex.

Major Centers of Worship: No widely known holy site is familiar to cults of the Dark God. Individual cults have been known to fight over discovered sites, and of course if other faiths discover such locations, they act quickly to erase them from existence. However, one site of particular power is located on an island in the Sunless Sea deep beneath Haranshire. This island, known as the Island of Shadows, once held an active cell that long ago turned fully undead. Only a handful of buildings remain, as the others have disintegrated with age and the dark enervating power of the site. The undead here are not active, but happily sacrifice any creature who stumbles across their abode.

Affiliated Orders: No martial or monastic orders are attached to the cults of the Dark God.

Priestly Vestments: Black robes are near-universal among all cults of the Dark God, although the exact cut and style vary. Further, all priests carry a black metal rod that looks like it could be used as a torch, although they are never used as such. Many of these items are passed to new members of the cult, and those cults with great age and based at a place of the Dark God's power will often imbue such items with a portion of the location's evil power. In these cases, the rods deal extra cold damage while the robes often protect their wearers against the same. This evil power also enchants a number of other items when the cult focuses it with the proper rituals, allowing them to create enfeebling incense and traps, glyphs of warding, and similar defensive effects. The holy symbol used by the Dark God's cult is typically the iron rod they carry for ceremonies; other cells without access to ancient manuscripts will use a variety of other objects, with amulets showing a cloak and torch being the most common. However, only the iron rods function to channel power from sites and relics that the Dark God has touched.

Adventuring Garb: The insular nature of the Dark God's cults keeps most members from traveling far from their temple complexes; if it cannot be avoided, they prefer to travel incognito. If secrecy is unnecessary, they wear their ceremonial garb and use their black metal rods as weapons, using magical protections if possible to boost their defense. When used by members of the cult, these metal rods weigh 7 pounds, have a speed factor of 4, are size M, and inflict 1d8 points of bludgeoning (type B) damage against Small-to-Medium as well as Large targets. If infused with the power of the Dark God, these rods also deal 2d6 points of chilling damage. Priests must spend a proficiency slot to use these rods in this way; otherwise the rods function as clubs. No outsider may ever take proficiency in these weapons, and in the hands of anyone else the rods operate as simple clubs.

Specialty Priests (Forwerens)

REQUIREMENTS:	Wisdom 15
PRIME REQ.:	Wisdom
ALIGNMENT:	LE, NE, CE
WEAPONS:	All bludgeoning (wholly type B) weapons
ARMOR:	None
MAJOR SPHERES:	All, astral, divination, elemental (all), healing (reversed only), numbers, sun (reversed only), thought, time
MINOR SPHERES:	Charm, wards
MAGICAL ITEMS:	Same as clerics
REQ. PROFS:	Ancient languages (choose one)
BONUS PROFS:	Reading/writing (choose one)

- Forwerens can be any race capable of becoming a priest, although most are human.
- Forwerens are not allowed to multiclass.
- Forwerens may select nonweapon proficiencies from the wizard group without penalty.
- Forwerens may cast cold- and ice-based wizard spells as defined in the Limited Wizard Spellcasting section of “Appendix 1: Demihuman Priests” of *Demihuman Deities*.
- Forwerens can cast *blindness* (as the 2nd-level wizard spell) once per day.
- At 3rd level, forwerens can cast *weakness* (as the 2nd-level wizard spell) once per day.
- At 5th level, forwerens can cast *suggestion* (as the 3rd-level wizard spell), with an accompanying visual illusion if appropriate, once per day.
- At 7th level, forwerens can cast *ray of enfeeblement* (as the 2nd-level wizard spell) once per day.
- At 9th level, forwerens can cast *wall of ice* (as the 4th-level wizard spell) once per day.
- At 12th level, forwerens can conduct a ritual that transforms them into a lich-like state of undeath and all lesser followers into various other undead forms (including a variety of unique types). This ritual may take months or years to succeed, and typically requires the sacrifice of one intelligent creature per cult member. To even research this ritual requires 1d10 x 1000 gp, plus 100 gp per cult member, and takes 3d4 months to determine the procedure. Success is determined with a saving throw versus death; if it is failed, all members of the cult are instantly turned into shadows.

Dark God Spells

In addition to the spells listed below, priests of the Dark God can cast the 1st-level priest spell *frost fingers*, detailed in *Faiths and Avatars* in the entry for Auril.

1st Level

Dispel Light (Pr 1; Abjuration)

Sphere:	Sun
Range:	60 yds.
Components:	V, S
Duration:	Instantaneous
Casting Time:	4
Area of Effect:	30-ft. cube
Saving Throw:	None

This variation of the *dispel magic* spell neutralizes *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*, *light*, *continual light*, and similar spells. The method used to determine how well the magical light resists being dispelled is the same as for *dispel magic*.

For the purposes of this spell, a *continual light* spell is treated as an enchanted item; if the *dispel light* is cast on the exact spot or item upon which the *continual light* has been cast, it dispels the light normally (assuming the *continual light* spell's resistance is overcome), but if it is cast only on an area illuminated by a *continual light* spell (and not the source of the light itself), the *dispel light* eliminates magical light in the area of effect for 1d4 rounds.

Dispel light has no effect on nonmagical light. Casting the spell on an area lit by torches or lanterns yields no measurable effect.

2nd Level

Freezing Arrow (Pr 2; Conjuratn/Summoning)

Sphere:	Elemental Water
Range:	120 yds.
Components:	V, S, M
Duration:	Special
Casting Time:	5
Area of Effect:	1 target
Saving Throw:	Special

By means of this spell, the priest creates a magical arrow that speeds to its target as if fired from the bow of a fighter of the same level as the priest. No modifiers for range, nonproficiency, or specialization are used. The arrow has no attack or damage bonus, but it inflicts 2d4 points of freezing damage from supercold liquid (with saving throws for items on the target); there is no splash damage. For every three levels that the caster has achieved, the freezing liquid, unless somehow neutralized, lasts for another round, inflicting another 2d4 points of damage each round. So, at 3rd–5th level, the freezing liquid lasts two rounds; at 6th–8th level, the freezing liquid lasts for three rounds, etc.

The material components for this spell are a vial of water, powdered snowdrop petals, and holly berries.

Shadow Spray (Pr 2; Invocation/Evocation, Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere:	Sun
Range:	60 yds. +10 yds./level
Components:	V, S, M
Duration:	1 rd./level
Casting Time:	4
Area of Effect:	6-ft. radius
Saving Throw:	Special

This spell employs energies from the Demiplane of Shadow. Upon casting this spell, the priest causes a multitude of ribbonlike shadows to explode outward from a selected point within range. Anyone caught within the *shadow spray* instantly loses a point of Strength and is made more susceptible to *fear* spells, suffering a –2 penalty to saving throws against spells of this kind. These effects fade after 3 rounds.

Furthermore, affected creatures must make a successful saving throw vs. spell to avoid the greater effect of this spell. Creatures with fewer than 4 levels or Hit Dice are not entitled to a saving throw. The disposition of any creatures not entitled to a roll, or that fail their roll, instantly changes. Some of the Demi-plane's gloomy nature is passed on to them, making them despondent. Their morale is lowered by 1d4 points, and they are unable to undertake further actions, even if ordered, cajoled, or threatened. Affected individuals defend themselves only if attacked but are 50% unlikely to cast spells, change weapons, or change tactics in any given round for the full duration of the spell.

Undead and creatures from the Demiplane of Shadow are unaffected by this spell.

The material component is a handful of black ribbons that the caster must throw into the air; the ribbons are consumed by the casting.

Weakness (Pr 2; Alteration)

Sphere:	Charm
Range:	10 yds.
Components:	V, S, M
Duration:	1 hr./level
Casting Time:	1 rd.
Area of Effect:	1 person
Saving Throw:	Neg.

By means of this spell, the caster saps the Strength of a single humanoid target of any size. The effects are generally not as pronounced as that of the *ray of enfeeblement* spell, but it has considerably greater duration. Like the *strength* spell, *weakness* has different effects depending on the class of the individual affected, as listed below:

Class	Strength Loss
Priest	1d6 points
Rogue	1d6 points
Warrior	1d8 points
Wizard	1d4 points

Percentile Strength is lost at a rate of 10% per point, while normal racial minimums prevent further loss. This spell is not cumulative with other spells that cause Strength loss but is cumulative with effects such as a shadow's Strength drain. This spell will cancel the *strength* spell and other temporary Strength-enhancing magic, such as a *potion of giant strength*, but starts at the modified Strength score in the case of a *girdle of giant strength* or *gauntlets of giant strength*. Similarly, a *strength* spell will cancel *weakness* and a *potion of giant strength* will override the effects for the duration of the potion. Humanoids without a Strength score (orcs, goblins, most humans, etc.) suffer a –1 penalty to their attack and damage rolls.

The material components for this spell are the priest's holy symbol and a scale of a troglodyte.