

Manticore

A shape lumbers out of the darkness, shaggy and ghastly, stalking on all fours, covered in a matted coat of red hair. It has the shape of a twisted beast, but a crazed human face peers out of its gore-tangled mane. A whipping shadow cuts the air behind and above it as it moves in.

Lore: The manticore is an ever-starving monster whose body has been twisted into the form of a murderous beast, clawed and covered in stinking hair, culminating in a wild mane. From the center of this mane protrudes the maddened, filthy, ravenous face of the person the monster used to be. A parasitic vine grows from the base of its spine, forming a kind of whip-like barbed tail.

Manticores lair in terrible gardens, which their unraveling psyches shape and cultivate with all the decaying concentration and artistry they can bring to bear. Human corpses form the fertile heart of these gardens, implanted with seeds stored within the manticore's tail. Rotting meat and clotted blood nourish these plants, which send red fleshy stalks erupting up through putrefying flesh and anchor their roots around crumbling bones.

When not tending their gardens, manticores hunt relentlessly, tormented by their never-ending hunger. But for all its fearsome fangs and ripping claws, a manticore cannot digest meat. Humans caught and killed by a manticore are inevitably dragged back to its garden to act as fertilizer for yet more bizarre vegetation, the scarlet fruit of which is the only thing capable of nurturing a manticore.

Those who brave a manticore's lair to slay the beast are advised not to linger until hunger sets in. A human who partakes of manticore-fruit is doomed to become a manticore as well.

Biomes: The Plain of Ash, the Ruins of Anacrethe

Vitality: 32

Base movement: 2

Manticore moves: The manticore possesses the following moves:

- *Claw Strike:* The manticore slashes at an enemy with its wicked claws. Select one *close* target, roll to defend. On a miss, suffer 4 harm. On a 7-9, suffer 2 harm. On a 10+, avoid the attack.
- *Savage:* The manticore leaps at a target, bearing them to the ground and viciously tearing at them. Select one *close*, *medium*, or *long* target, move to close, roll to defend. On a miss, suffer 3 harm and *knocked down*; target loses their next movement. On a 7-9, *knocked down*; target loses their next movement. On a 10+, avoid the attack.
- *Lay About:* The manticore spins and slashes in a wild frenzy. Attack all *close* targets, who must roll to defend. On a miss, suffer 4 harm. On a 7-9, suffer no harm. On a 10+, gain +1 to attack on next turn due to superior positioning.
- *Tail Strike:* The manticore's barbed tail-vine lashes out, injecting a paralytic poison. Can only be used if the manticore has not moved since its last turn or if a death card demands it. Attack one *close* target, roll to defend. On a miss, suffer 3 harm and a stacking -1 to all actions until the end of battle. On a 7-9, suffer 3 harm *or* a stacking -1 to all actions until the end of the battle (player's choice). On a 10+, avoid the attack. If a character suffers -3 or worse due to this attack when their death clock reaches midnight, add this to their Death Move: The character is paralyzed and cannot move, act, or react until several hours pass.

Death deck: When the manticore is attacked, draw a number of cards from the death deck equal to the number of attacks, then resolve them in the order drawn unless a trap card is drawn.

TRAP CARD • Brutal Seize: The manticore, having baited out an attack by feigning a moment of weakness, turns and lunges toward its attacker, snatching them up in its jaws and claws and hurling them away into the dark in a welter of blood. *Cancel all damage and other effects regardless of the results of the attack. Ignore any other death cards drawn.* The manticore moves up to *close* range with its attacker, then hurls them away to *long* range. Suffer 5 harm. Reshuffle the discard pile back into the death deck after this card resolves.

Forelimb (x2): On a miss, suffer *Claw Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm, and next character targeted by *Claw Strike* gains +1 to defend.

Torso (x3): On a miss, move 1 toward attacker and suffer *Claw Strike*. On a 7+, inflict harm.

Gut: On a miss, nothing happens. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, pierce the beast's sensitive belly, inflicting harm +2.

Hip: On a miss, suffer *Lay About*. On a 7-9, inflict harm and suffer *lay about*. On a 10+, inflict harm.

Hind Leg (x2): On a miss, suffer *Tail Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm and stun the beast's leg. It cannot move or use an attack which requires movement on its next turn.

Hind Paw: On a miss, nothing happens. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm and mangle one of the beast's feet: set this card aside from the death deck for the rest of the battle, permanently reduce the manticore's base movement by 1, and restrict *Savage* to *close* and *medium* targets.

Shoulder (x2): On miss, suffer *Savage*. On a 7-9, inflict harm and suffer *Savage*. On a 10+, inflict harm.

Claw (x2): On a miss, suffer *Claw Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm and mangle one of the beast's claws: set this card aside from the death deck for the rest of the battle and permanently reduce the harm inflicted by *Claw Strike* by 1.

Flank (x2): On a miss, nothing happens. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm, and gain +1 to next attack due to superior positioning.

Back: On a miss, suffer *Tail Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm +1.

Spine: On a miss, suffer *Tail Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm and damage the monster's spine: set this card aside from the death deck for the rest of the battle and permanently add +1 to all defense against the manticore.

Forehead: On a miss, suffer *Savage*. On a 7-9, inflict harm and suffer *Claw Strike*. On a 10+, inflict harm and stun the beast, causing it to lose its next turn and forfeit all reactions for the remainder of the round.

Jaw: On a miss, suffer *Savage*. On a 7-9, inflict harm and suffer *Savage*. On a 10+, inflict harm and break the manticore's jaw: set this card aside from the death deck for the rest of the battle and permanently lower the damage of *Savage* by 2.

Ear: On a miss, suffer *Lay About*. On a 7-9, inflict harm -1. On a 10+, inflict harm -1 and disorient the beast: until the end of the manticore's next turn, all defense against it gains +1.

Eye: On a miss, suffer *Savage*. On a 7-9, inflict harm and suffer *Savage*, but gain +1 to defend against it. On a 10+, inflict harm and rupture the manticore's eye: set this card aside from the death deck for the rest of the battle and permanently gain +1 to defense against the manticore.

Neck: On a miss, suffer *Claw Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm. On a 10+, inflict harm, and sever the arteries of the manticore's throat, causing it to bleed out. The manticore dies at the end of the following round.

Mane: On a miss, suffer *Savage*. On a 7-9, inflict no harm, as the beast's shaggy mane turns the blow. On a 10+, inflict harm -2. If the manticore's pelt has been burned off already, remove this card from the death deck and re-draw.

Tail: On a miss, suffer *Tail Strike*. On a 7-9, inflict harm and suffer *Tail Strike* but add +1 to defense. On a 10+, inflict harm and sever the manticore's tail: set this card aside from the death deck for the rest of the battle. The manticore may no longer use *Tail Strike* either on its turn or as a reaction, and a *pristine manticore tail* may be harvested at the end of the battle.

Extra Rules: The manticore has a number of special rules, detailed below:

- The manticore's matted, stinking hair is greasy and flammable. The first time it is attacked with fire, it takes 3 extra harm in the addition to any other death card results as its pelt burns off. This also causes the *mane* card to be removed from the deck and re-drawn if it appears.
- A character with *craftsman* can use a *pristine manticore tail* to create a manticore whip. This weapon may be wielded by any character. It makes a single attack at +1, inflicting 3 harm. On a 10+ result wherein the weapon inflicts harm, it also adds +1 (non-stacking) to all defense rolls against its target for the remainder of the battle. After being wielded in three separate battles, a manticore whip becomes too brittle and decayed to be of any further use.