

Harpy Aerie

Written by DMDave

Harpy Aerie is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3, 5, 8, or 11**. This document offers details for the 3rd-level version. For the full adjustments for all level ranges, sign up for the DMDave Patreon. While traveling along the coast, the characters are drawn by the songs of deadly winged horrors—harpies! These despicable beasts roost within a series of caverns carved into a seaside cliff.

Adventure Hooks

The Harpy Aerie Adventure Hooks table in the full offers some ideas if you don't have a reason for the characters to investigate the Harpy Aerie. If you need to motivate the party with a monetary reward, their patrons offer 500 gp per level of the adventure.



Background

Long ago, the harpies of the Aerie were peaceful creatures that coexisted with the nearby coastal communities. They were revered for their enchanting songs and their matriarch's ability to control the wind, which made them valuable allies to fishermen and sailors. However, over time their relationship with humans deteriorated as the local population grew and the harpies' nesting grounds were encroached upon. As the harpies' numbers dwindled, they became more desperate and aggressive, eventually turning to raiding and pillaging to survive.

In their desperation, the harpies began to worship an ancient sea goddess named Thalassa, who they believed could grant them the power to protect their nest and drive away their human enemies. In exchange for her aid, the harpies offered her tribute in the form of stolen treasure and sacrifices of captured humans.

Under the guidance of their current leader, a harpy matriarch named Sirene, the harpies grew more organized and ruthless in their raids. They constructed a network of caverns within the seaside cliff where they could roost and launch surprise attacks on passing ships and coastal towns. Sirene has since become a feared figure among the local populace, with stories of her piercing screams and razor-sharp talons spreading terror throughout the land.

Despite their viciousness, the harpies are not mindless monsters. They recognize the importance of protecting their nest and their goddess, and they will fiercely defend both against any perceived threats.

The adventurers must navigate the treacherous terrain of the Aerie and face the deadly harpies and their fierce leader, Sirene. But as they delve deeper into the caverns, they may uncover the truth behind the harpies' desperate situation and the reasons why they turned to Thalassa for aid.

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Harpy Aerie

From the beach, the Harpy Aerie is a daunting sight to behold. High above the crashing waves, the sheer face of the seaside cliff is pockmarked with dark, yawning caverns that seem to swallow up the sunlight. The entrances to these caverns are partially hidden by the overhanging branches of twisted trees, which the harpies have used to weave crude nests and platforms for their attacks.

The trees themselves appear to be diseased and twisted, their leaves wilted and blackened by the acidic excretions of the harpies. Bones and scraps of cloth hang from the branches, evidence of the harpies' previous victims.

Occasionally, the sky above the Aerie is darkened by a flock of the creatures, their feathered wings spanning nearly ten feet in length. The sound of their haunting, discordant songs can be heard from the beach, and the gusts of wind they generate

can be felt even from a distance. The stench of rotting fish and human remains mixed with the sour odor of the harpies' musk wafts down to the shore, a warning of the perils that lurks within the caves.

Despite the inherent danger, the Aerie is also undeniably beautiful. The cliff face is illuminated by the warm colors of the setting sun, casting a rosy glow on the crags and the ocean below. The distant calls of sea birds and the gentle lapping of the waves can be heard over the harsh cries of the harpies.

Approaching the Aerie

Finding the Aerie is easy; getting past its defenses is the difficult part. Characters who take a little time to do research—either with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check or asking the sailors around town with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check—will learn that the harpies are diurnal creatures that can't see in the dark. The best

time to approach the cliff is at night when they return to their caverns.

If the characters make the poor choice of coming during the day, they will have to face multiple harpy defenders. The number of defenders depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Daytime Harpy Encounters table.

DAYTIME HARPY ENCOUNTERS

Adventure Level	Encounter
3rd	3 harpies
5th+	Available in the full version

At night, only a single **harpy** keeps watch—using the light of the moon (if possible) to keep an eye out—but she makes Wisdom (Perception) checks to see with disadvantage, meaning she also takes a -5 penalty to her passive Wisdom (Perception) score. She sings her song whenever she detects someone within 300 feet of the cliffs.

Remember that a successful saving throw against a harpy's song only immunizes a target against the effect of that particular harpy. The target is still vulnerable to the songs of other harpies.

Entering the Aerie

Even if the characters get past the harpy defenders, they will still need to find a way into the Aerie itself. There are eight entrances (labeled with letters on the map of the Aerie as shown on page 7). Some are more obvious than others; however, those are better defended and contain more traps and hazards. Furthermore, all entrances require the characters to climb or fly up to get inside.

The Harpy Aerie Entrances table details the entrances and the associated DCs for the Intelligence (Investigation) checks needed to find each entrance and Strength (Athletics) checks needed to climb up to the hole.



Finding the Entrances. Searching for additional entrances requires a character to spend at least 30 minutes within 300 feet of the Aerie, searching the cliffs for alternative ways inside. At the end of the 30 minutes, the character must make an Intelligence (Investigation) check. Compare the result of the check to the DCs listed in the Harpy Aerie Entrances table.

As long as the character's check meets or exceeds the Investigation DC listed for a particular entrance, the character finds it. For example, a character who gets a 17 on their Intelligence (Investigation) check finds entrances A through E but doesn't discover entrance F, H, or I. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check means that the character spots all the entrances. Entrances without an Investigation DC are obvious and don't require checks.

Climbing. The entrances also have Climbing DCs associated with each of them. To reach that entrance without flying or a magical ability like *spider climb*, a character must succeed on a Strength (Athletics) check against the given DC. A character can attempt any given climb twice. The first time the character attempts a climb and fails, they do not suffer any consequences. However, if the character tries again, they fall midway on the climb and take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, landing prone. Once a character attempts a climb twice and fails, they cannot try the same climb again until they finish a short or long rest or find a tool or another method to climb.

HARPY AERIE ENTRANCES

Entrance	Investigation DC	Climbing DC
A	–	17
B	–	17
C	10	13
D	13	10
E	15	15
F	18	15
G	18	15
H	20	20

General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the Harpy Aerie has the following features.

Twisting Tunnels. The interior of the Harpy Aerie is a labyrinth of twisting, shadowed tunnels, reeking of blood and excrement.

Illumination. The harpies of the Aerie have adapted to the darkness of their cavernous home by utilizing bioluminescent fungi that grow in the walls. These fungi emit a soft, blue-green glow that illuminates the harpies' nests, hunting grounds, and communal areas. The harpies have also learned to cultivate these fungi, coaxing them to grow in specific locations to light their preferred paths and rooms.

Echo Chamber. The cacophony of screeching harpies echoes through the passages, making it difficult for intruders to navigate the treacherous terrain. Wisdom (Perception) checks made to hear in the tunnels are made with disadvantage.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the maps of the Harpy Aerie on page 7.

1 – Obvious Entrance

Entrances A, B, and C lead to this small cavern.

As you approach the entrance of the Harpy Aerie, the sounds of flapping wings and screeching voices grow louder.

Encounter: Harpy Guards. Two harpies wait near entrances A and B. However, entrance C is clear, and the harpies aren't focused on it. Unless the harpies are surprised, they attack anyone that comes into this chamber.

Hazard: Loose Rocks. If the characters come in through entrances A or B, the harpies try to surprise them and cut them off. The entrances are difficult terrain.

Furthermore, any time a creature takes damage while standing in the entrance, it must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or slip and fall out of the entrance and back down the cliff side, taking 17 (5d6) damage from the fall and landing prone.

Treasure: Discarded Goods. While the harpies prefer to take most of the “good stuff” for themselves and store it in their treasure room (area 8), they occasionally miss a few valuables. A character who spends at least 1 minute searching the refuse in this room can make a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, they find something useful, as shown in the Area 1 Treasure table.

AREA 1 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
3rd	A gaudy-looking <i>bag of holding</i>
5th+	Available in the full version

2 – The Armory

As you enter this chamber, the stench of decaying flesh and rust fills your nose. The room is filled with discarded weapons and armor, likely stolen from the harpies' previous victims. Amid the rusted blades and dented shields, you notice a glint of metal and realize that a few of the weapons are of higher quality, possibly even magical in nature.

The harpies use these weapons to defend their nest.

Hazard: Tumbling Heap. A large pile of armor and weapons, marked “P” on the map, stretches all the way to the ceiling. These are items that the harpies have looked over and decided that they weren’t worth keeping or using. If a creature touches or removes something from the pile, they cause it to tumble over, showering rusted metal and jagged wood everywhere. When this happens, anyone within 5 feet of the pile must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw,

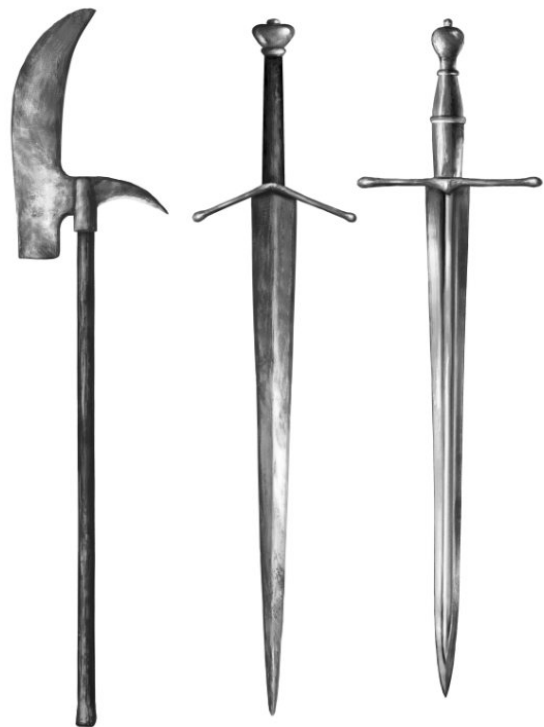
taking 7 (2d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Treasure: More Discarded Goodies. The harpies like shiny objects and often ignore those that have lost their luster. As such, there are some valuables within the large pile (see the Tumbling Heap section). A character who searches the pile and succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers something useful, as shown in the table below.

AREA 2 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
3rd	Horribly stained <i>gloves of swimming and climbing</i>
5th+	Available in the full version

In addition to these magic items, there are plenty of mundane weapons, bits of armor, and other adventuring gear. They all smell terrible but more or less still function as they should. Assume the characters can find one of any object that costs less than 10 gp here.



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Hazard: Slippery Passage. The passage that leads up to area 3 is covered in harpy droppings. A character climbing up the passageway must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to ascend the passage. Failure results in the character slipping back to the room below. A character using a rope to climb automatically succeeds on the check.

3 – The Perch

Entrance D leads into this cavern, the highest area in the complex.

This chamber is littered with feathers and bones, evidence of the harpies' presence.

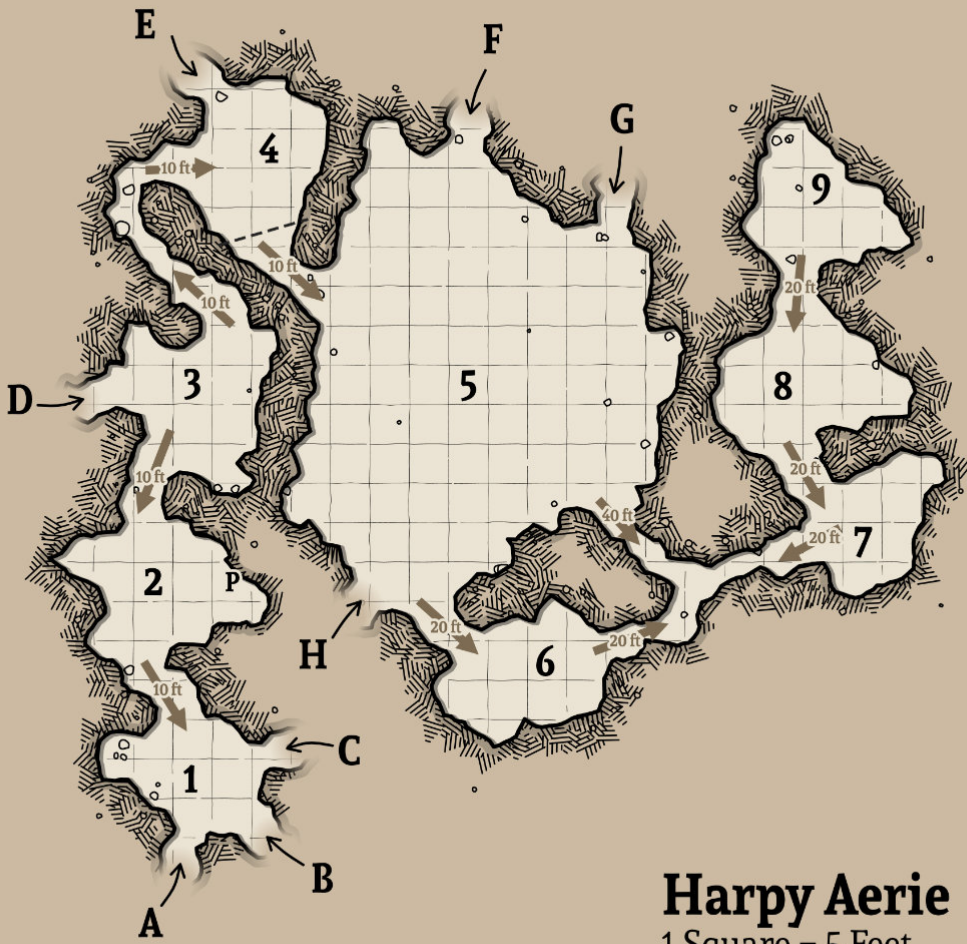
Hazard: Slippery Passage. Both passages that lead away from this chamber (to areas 2 and 3) are relatively slippery, as they're covered in harpy droppings. A character climbing down a passageway must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone and slide down to the chamber below.

4 – The Fungal Forest

Entrance E takes the characters to a twisting tunnel, eventually placing them in this chamber.

As you make your way through the twisting tunnels, the air grows colder and damper. You come upon a smaller cavern filled with bioluminescent fungi that glow with an ethereal blue-green light, casting strange shadows on the walls. The mushrooms seem to pulse with life, casting flickering beams of light that reveal a maze of narrow tunnels ahead.

Trap: Falling Rocks. The harpies have placed a trap here to deter anyone from going deeper into the cavern. A character that crosses the dotted line shown on the map without first succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check trips on a rope, causing rocks to fall from the ceiling. When this happens, all creatures in the room must



Harpy Aerie

1 Square = 5 Feet

Gradual Rise →

make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Additionally, the rocks block the way to area 5. A character can move the rocks out of the way with a successful DC 20 Strength check. Otherwise, the characters must go back outside and find another way into the deeper parts of the cavern.

A character who spots the trap can disarm it with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools.

Hazard: Slippery Passage. The passage that leads up to area 3 is covered in harpy droppings. A character climbing up the passageway must succeed on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to ascend the passage. Failure results in the character slipping back to the room below. A character using a rope to climb automatically succeeds on the check.

5 – The Roost

Entrances F, G, and H lead into this chamber. The first time the characters enter this chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

The stench of musk and decay overwhelms your senses. The chamber is massive, filled with twisted branches and scavenged materials that have been fashioned into nests and perches for the harpies. The floor is covered in a thick layer of feathers, bones, and droppings, which make it difficult to move without slipping or tripping. You can hear the incessant squawking and screeching of the harpies echoing off the walls, making it hard to concentrate or think clearly.

The harpies themselves are everywhere, perched on their roosts or flying through the air with a predatory grace. You realize that you are in the heart of the Aerie, and the danger is palpable. The harpies will not take kindly to intruders in their most sacred space, and they will do everything in their power to protect their home.

The ceilings here are 20 feet high, giving the harpies plenty of room to fly.

Hazard: Difficult Terrain. The floors here are covered in all manner of filth, making it difficult terrain.

Encounter: Harpies. The number of harpies here depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below, divided into whether or not the characters come during the day or during the night.

AREA 5 ENCOUNTERS

Adventure Level	Daytime	Night
3rd	1 harpy	3 harpies
5th+	Available in the full version	

6 – The Prison

The first time the characters come near this area, read or paraphrase the following:

As you make your way through the twisting tunnels, you hear the sound of human voices echoing through the darkness. You soon come upon a small, damp cell filled with malnourished men. The prisoners are haggard and weak, their skin sallow and their eyes sunken in. They are chained to the walls with rusted manacles, their hands and feet raw and bloody from their attempts to escape. The stench of urine and feces fills the air, and the prisoners look up at you with hollow, desperate eyes.

You realize that the harpies have been keeping these men alive for weeks or even months, using them as bait or playthings. The prisoners are barely alive, and it's clear that they won't last much longer in the harpies' cruel captivity.

Encounter: Prisoners. The six prisoners are all **commoners** with two levels of exhaustion. There are no keys to the manacles—the harpies tear the prisoners away when they want to get one free. In fact, some rotting arms are still attached to some



of the leftover manacles. Breaking the manacles requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. Without the key, a creature can pick the manacles' locks with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Manacles have AC 15 and 15 hit points. Freeing the prisoners awards inspiration to all good-aligned characters.

7 – The Altar

The eerie glow of bioluminescent fungi illuminates the space. You see a stone altar adorned with shells, seaweed, and other offerings. At the foot of the altar, you see a pile of bones, and other remains, evidence of the sacrifices the harpies have made to this grotesque shrine.

You can feel a sense of unease in the room, as if something powerful and primal is watching you. This is clearly a sacred space to the harpies.

A character who examines the altar and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Religion)

check recognizes that it is dedicated to Thalassa, an evil sea goddess (see the Background for details).

Encounter: Warped Creature. A horrible creature lurks in the shadows of this chamber. The thing was once a prisoner here but was altered by the dark magic that permeates the Aerie. The Warped Creature's Statistics table shows the stat block it uses, but regardless of its form, it resembles a mutated, water-logged humanoid covered in seaweed and shells. It attacks any creature that isn't a harpy.

WARPED CREATURE'S STATISTICS

Adventure Level	Stat Block
3rd	Mummy
5th+	Available in the full version

8 – The Treasury

As soon as you enter the room you see piles of gold, gems, and other valuable artifacts scattered across the floor. The walls are lined with tapestries and paintings, and the air is thick with the scent of incense and burning candles. In the center of the room, on a raised dais made of old rugs, sits what you can only assume is the harpy matriarch.

She is larger and more fearsome than any of the other harpies you've encountered, her wingspan stretching nearly 20 feet. Her eyes gleam with fierce intelligence, and her talons are razor sharp. She regards you with a mixture of curiosity and hostility, and you can feel the weight of her power and authority.

Encounter: Sirene. Unless the characters were particularly quiet in area 7, Sirene is waiting for them. While she values the treasure, Sirene attacks the characters, hoping to kill them. She will not accept any other outcome. Sirene's stat block is detailed

in the appendix. She fights to the death if she believes that the characters will destroy the harpy eggs in area 9.

Sirene's Amulet. Sirene wears an amulet made of gold molded to look like a singing woman.

Treasure: Sirene's Hoard. Sirene's hoard contains 700 cp; 7,500 sp; 1,000 gp; 80 pp; 50 gems worth 10 gp each; and 120 art objects worth 25 gp each.

Development: Kill Some Pirates. Sirene recognizes the value of the characters. At some point during the encounter, she offers the characters some of her treasure if they are willing to fight some of the pirates that have been giving her trouble. These could be pirates of your choice or the pirates of Corsair's Fury featured in *Dungeons & Lairs #73: Pirate Cove*. She offers to give the characters half her hoard if they leave and another 500 gp if they take care of the pirates for her.

9 – The Nursery

As you enter this area, you see a group of young harpies huddled together, their eyes wide with fear as they look up at you. They are guarded by an older harpy, who sings a soft, mournful song to calm them. Although they are still fearsome and dangerous creatures, it's clear that they are vulnerable and in need of protection.

The walls of the nest are lined with sticks and other materials, and the air is thick with the smell of blood and feathers. You can see that the young harpies are still developing, their wings and talons not yet fully formed. The older harpy regards you warily, clearly aware of the danger you represent.

Encounter: Harplings. The older harpy has only 14 hit points. The harpy hatchlings are noncombatants with AC 10 and 2 hit points

each. The older harpy will grab her club and defend the young but won't fight unless she absolutely has to.

Aftermath

Here are three possible outcomes for this adventure:

- If the characters are able to defeat the harpies, they will have saved the local coastal communities from a terrible threat. News of their heroism will quickly spread, and they will be hailed as saviors and celebrated by the locals. In addition, the treasure in the harpies' nest will be theirs to claim, providing them with a significant reward for their bravery. However, the characters may also have made powerful enemies of any surviving harpies, and they will need to be wary of retaliation in the future.
- If the characters fail to kill the harpies, they will have to flee the Aerie and return to civilization empty-handed. Word of their failure will spread quickly, and they may be viewed as cowards or failures by the local communities. In addition, the harpies will continue to wreak havoc on the coastal areas, raiding and pillaging as they see fit. The characters will need to live with the knowledge that they were not able to save the innocent lives that were at stake.
- If the characters take Sirene's offer and hunt the pirates, they will have chosen to ally themselves with a dangerous and amoral enemy. If the characters are able to defeat the pirates, they will have earned Sirene's gratitude and possibly a share of the pirates' treasure. However, Sirene is not a reliable or trustworthy partner and may use this distraction to move her nest to another location. They will also have made powerful enemies in the pirate community, and they will need to be wary of retaliation in the future. Ω

Appendix

<h3 style="margin: 0;">Sirene, the Harpy Matriarch</h3> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Large Monstrosity (Harpy), Chaotic Evil</i></p>	<p>Spellcasting. Sirene casts one of the following spells, using Charisma as her spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14).</p> <p>At will: <i>command</i> 1/day each: <i>fog cloud, gust of wind</i></p>												
<p>Armor Class 13 Hit Points 120 (16d10 + 32) Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.</p>	<p>BONUS ACTIONS</p>												
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">STR</th> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">DEX</th> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">CON</th> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">INT</th> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">WIS</th> <th style="padding: 2px 5px;">CHA</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">16 (+3)</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">16 (+3)</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">14 (+2)</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">9 (-1)</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">13 (+1)</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">17 (+3)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	<p>Luring Song. Sirene sings a magical melody. Every humanoid and giant within 300 feet of Sirene that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed until the song ends. Sirene must take a bonus action on her subsequent turns to continue singing. She can stop singing at any time. The song ends if Sirene is incapacitated.</p> <p>While charmed by Sirene, a target is incapacitated and ignores the songs of other harpies. If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away from Sirene, the target must move on its turn toward Sirene by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet of her. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks, but before moving into damaging terrain, such as lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than Sirene, a target can repeat the saving throw. A charmed target can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If the saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.</p> <p>A target that successfully saves is immune to Sirene's song for the next 24 hours.</p>
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA								
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)								
<p>Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +6, Wis +4 Skills Perception +4 Senses passive Perception 14 Languages Common Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) Proficiency Bonus +3</p>													
<p>ACTIONS</p> <p>Multiattack. Sirene makes three attacks: one with her claws and two with her mace.</p> <p>Claws. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.</p> <p>Mace. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.</p>													