

THE FIGHT AGAINST DENDALLEN

The
GRIFFON'S
SADDLEBAG



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Nicrone Dendallen is a human wizard whose passion for self-improvement has become an obsession, focused on removing the inherent limits of his own mortality. His focus on gaining power through sacrifice at any cost attracts dedicated sycophants. Their beliefs make them eager to recklessly endanger their lives for the chance to earn powerful rewards from his hand.

Dedicated and tenacious followers of Dendallen are given tokens of his appreciation: terrifying items made by Dendallen himself, each enchanted with a grotesque balance of strength and consequence.

While Dendallen is a master of the necromantic arts, his frustration with the limits of his mortal body makes him scoff at those who pursue longevity through undeath's tenuous hold on existence. Only under extreme circumstances—or the promise of extreme rewards—is he willing to work with undead creatures or the magic that enables them.

TEACHINGS OF DENDALLEN

Dendallen's belief that self-sacrifice leads to self-improvement is a fervent mantra held by his followers. In general, those that subscribe to Dendallen's teachings believe that in order to truly become greater, you must be willing to let go of the mortal trappings that bind you. The major tenets of Dendallen are as follows:

Embrace Self-Sacrifice. To forget the familiar as a price for greatness is admirable.

Conquer your Limits. To become more powerful is to embrace the purpose of life.

Enforce your Will. To conquer all obstacles in your path is to ensure success.

FOLLOWERS OF DENDALLEN

Use the *Cultist* and *Cult Fanatic* stat blocks in the Basic Rules for followers of Dendallen. Dendallen's more powerful followers can use other humanoid stat blocks that fit your setting and party level. These leaders are groomed to be more formidable than those deemed undeserving, unproven, or mediocre.

Typically, these trusted followers of Dendallen will have overt visual ailments or symptoms of disease, but will be notably more powerful because of it. Elite followers such as this will occasionally wield a *Remnant of Dendallen*, bestowed unto them after they complete a dangerous or otherwise notable feat of faith, loyalty and self-sacrifice. Upon defeating such a creature, your party can take the Remnant for themselves. The particular Remnant each follower wields is up to you, but should be scaled relative to the creature's challenge rating.

SLAYING NICRONE DENDALLEN

Killing Nicrone allows for his spirit to return at a later time (see "Attuning to the Remnants" and "Dendallen's Return" later in this document). His final mortal words should capture his beliefs and foreshadow his return, such as "Giving up your weaknesses grants power beyond compare!"

NICRONE DENDALLEN

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 130 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +9, History +9, Medicine +9

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages Common, (Any three others)

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Staff of Withering. This staff has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn. On a hit, it deals damage as a normal quarterstaff, and Dendallen can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 11 (2d10) necrotic damage to the target. In addition, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage for 1 hour on any ability check or saving throw that uses Strength or Constitution.

Spellcasting. Dendallen is a 19th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *poison spray*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *false life*, *inflict wounds*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *darkness*, *hold person*, *ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse*, *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *haste*, *slow*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *confusion*, *phantasmal killer*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill*, *telekinesis*, *wall of force*

6th level (2 slots): *circle of death*, *disintegrate*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*, *prismatic spray*

8th level (1 slot): *feeblemind*

9th level (1 slot): *weird*

ACTIONS

Staff of Withering. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8) bludgeoning damage

REMNANTS OF DENDALLEN

Items created by Dendallen are called Remnants of Dendallen and double as vessels to store a portion of his spirit. At the time of his death, these Remnants can be scattered around the planes of existence or collected by his remaining devout followers: whatever makes the most sense for your campaign. Any item that bears Dendallen's name in its title is considered to be a Remnant.

Remnants are laced with necromancy magic that forces creatures to sacrifice a part of themselves in order to use them. The sacrifices, while potentially reversible, are more than just skin- or bone-deep. As curses take hold, they begin to gradually provide strength and vitality to the lingering spirit of Dendallen trapped inside them.

If a creature attuned to at least one Remnant is in the presence of another Remnant that isn't attuned to by someone else, that creature must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become obsessed with it and do anything within its power to take and attune to that Remnant before another creature is able to. The obsession lasts until the creature is unable to see or touch the Remnant for at least 1 hour or until it's targeted by either a *greater restoration* or *remove curse* spell.

ATTUNING TO THE REMNANTS

Attuning to three Remnants of Dendallen is a gift as well as a curse. While a creature is attuned to three of these items, it can freely attune to other Remnants of Dendallen. When it does, its attunement to another Remnant ends, as well as its curse.

If Dendallen is dead, being attuned to these items activates a secondary effect once you reach level 15 (or 14 if there are 5 players in your group, etc.). When this happens, the attuned creature's cursed body becomes strong enough to handle the intensity of channeling the *Spirit of Dendallen*. The event is involuntary, and happens either at the end of a long rest or at your discretion. See the stat block for the Spirit of Dendallen on the following page.

DENDALLEN'S RETURN

When the Spirit of Dendallen is channeled by a level 15 creature attuned to 3 of his Remnants, they become momentarily frozen in place. While unmoving, the creature's body begins to overflow in a torrent of green arcane and necrotic energy that spills forth from their back. The energy coalesces above them to form the towering, spectral avatar of Nicrone Dendallen's returned form: the Spirit of Dendallen. Its hulking, necromantically-charged form looms over the hosted creature and drips with ooze-like green necrotic ectoplasm.

The scraps of Nicrone Dendallen's spirit that were anchored in his Remnants combine to form the new spirit. These once-weak shards have been empowered as the attuned creature has sacrificed aspects of themselves through the items' various curses. Removing the worn Remnants from the host (even forcefully) fails to destroy or dispel the Spirit of Dendallen.

The spirit's appearance is that of a huge, muscular lich made of spectral miasma. Depending on the Remnants that

the hosted creature has attuned to, the spirit's appearance may change to reflect the host's Remnants. Regardless of appearance, the spirit's abilities and power are unchanged.

VICTORY OR DEFEAT

If the Spirit of Dendallen is defeated, the host creature gains four levels of exhaustion. In addition, all Remnants of Dendallen on the current plane of existence, even those not attuned to by the host, turn to mush and are destroyed as the magic that anchored Dendallen's spirit is dispelled. All of the Remnants' effects and curses that were affecting the creature end.

If the spirit is victorious in combat and maintains its control over the host, it can spend 1 minute solidifying its ownership and possess the host. Once the creature is fully possessed in this way, the Spirit of Dendallen can stay within the creature's body and command it indefinitely. The host creature shows no outward signs of the possessing spirit. While possessed in this way, the host automatically fails all saving throws against the spirit's thrall.

While Dendallen is proud of his necromantic achievements, his step into undeath is a shameful setback. He will do whatever it takes to remain within the possessed creature and maintain his sense of life unless absolutely necessary. The spirit can reemerge from the possessed creature as an action. When this happens, the possessed creature can resume attempting saving throws to maintain its free will, but they suffer disadvantage on each of these attempts. Use the Spirit of Dendallen's stat block and the possessed creature's statistics for these saving throws.

VARIANT: Limited Host Spellcasting

At your discretion, The Spirit of Dendallen's host gains the following trait for as long as they remain under its thrall.

Adopted Spellcasting. A creature possessed by the Spirit of Dendallen that has spell slots immediately forgets all spells they know and have prepared, which are then replaced by the list of spells that the spirit knows for itself. The spirit's host retains its normal spell slots, but can only use those spell slots to cast spells in their new adopted spell list. If the spirit's host is not a wizard, they can nonetheless cast its spells as if they were spells in the host's class spell list, using its spellcasting ability modifier and spell save DC. If the spirit is destroyed, its host forgets all of the spirit's spells, remembers all of their previous spells, and can (if applicable) spend time preparing spells as normal.

This option is good for when wizards or other powerful spellcasters become the subject of the spirit's control. Given that player character balance is different than creature balance, some spells are disproportionately good for killing fellow players. If you're concerned about the spellcaster turning on its friends and casting fireball with a 6th level spell slot, this option may be right for your game.

SPIRIT OF DENDALLEN

Huge undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 237 (19d12 + 114)

Speed 0 ft. (see the *Attuned Thrall* ability)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	17 (+3)	23 (+6)	22 (+6)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Int +13, Cha +10

Skills Arcana +13, Deception +10, Insight +9

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magic weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious

Senses truesight 15 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Attuned Thrall. The creature that attuned to three Remnants of Dendallen becomes the host to the Spirit of Dendallen, and a conduit through which it can exist on that plane of existence. The spirit can't move on its own and stays centered on the host's space, moving with the creature whenever they do.

At the start of each of the spirit's turns, its host must make a DC 21 Wisdom or Charisma saving throw (their choice) or become charmed, ignoring any immunity or resistance to charm or possession. The charm lasts until the start of the spirit's next turn when the host can repeat the saving throw. The DC of this saving throw lowers based on the spirit's current hit points, becoming 19 at 187 hit points, 17 at 137 hit points, 15 at 87 hit points, and 13 at 37 hit points.

While the hosted creature is controlled by the spirit, the spirit can issue them verbal or telepathic commands during its turn (no action required). The hosted creature does its best to obey the commands to the best of its ability. While the spirit has control of its host, it can force the host to spend any amount of its movement from its upcoming turn in order to move on the spirit's turn instead.

In addition, the spirit has advantage on saving throws against any of its host's spells and magical effects.

Unstable Conduit. If the hosted creature dies, the spirit's body explodes: dispelling the spirit and forcing each creature within 30 feet of it to make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 33 (6d10) necrotic damage, or half as much damage on a successful one. When this happens, the hosted creature is disintegrated and lost, leaving any Remnants of Dendallen behind.

Necromantic Form. The spirit's form allows it to move through any opening large enough for its host without squeezing. The spirit can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. The spirit is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the spirit fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Turn Immunity. The spirit is immune to effects that turn undead.

Create Tendril. If the spirit doesn't have any tendrils conjured, it can use a bonus action to conjure 1 Tendril of Dendallen at any point on a surface within 120 feet.

Spellcasting. The spirit is a 19th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, dancing lights, mage hand, poison spray, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *false life, inflict wounds, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness, darkness, hold person, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, counterspell, dispel magic, haste, slow*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, confusion, phantasmal killer*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill, telekinesis, wall of force*

6th level (2 slots): *circle of death, disintegrate*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death, prismatic spray*

8th level (1 slot): *feeblemind*

9th level (1 slot): *weird*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spirit makes three slam attacks or two decaying ray attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d12 + 5) force damage plus 27 (6d8) acid damage.

Decaying Ray. Ranged Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. Hit: 17 (3d8 + 3) necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or gain one cumulative level of exhaustion that lasts for 1 minute. A creature exhausted by this attack repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, taking an additional 3 (1d6) necrotic damage for each level of exhaustion it has on a failed save, or removing all exhaustion on a successful one.

Conjure Tendrils (Recharge 5–6). The spirit conjures 1d4 + 1 Tendrils of Dendallen at points of its choice on surfaces within 120 feet of it, up to a maximum of six of them at once. Roll initiative for the tendrils, which have their own turns.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The spirit can take 4 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The spirit regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Quick Attack. The spirit makes a single slam or ray attack.

Command Tendrils. Up to 4 tendrils conjured by the spirit can either teleport or make a single grasp attack.

Sweep (Costs 2 Actions). The spirit sweeps with the back of its massive arm. Each creature in a 20-foot cone must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d12 + 4) force damage and be pushed back up to 15 feet and knocked prone.

Quick Cast (Costs 3 Actions). The spirit casts one spell of 7th level or lower from its prepared spells that has a casting time of 1 action.

THE SPIRIT OF DENDALLEN

When the Spirit of Dendallen finally emerges, it erupts from its host in a torrent of sickly green phantasmal energy. The ethereal, ectoplasmic substance whirls around and above the host before coalescing into the spirit's vaguely-humanoid spiritual form.

Dendallen was an egotistical and jealous wizard in life, and death has not changed that. He despises other spellcasters that refuse to submit to him, especially those who deal significant damage to his spirit or to its host. However, Dendallen is also paranoid and desperate to retain his tenuous foothold on this plane, so his spirit will hoard its higher-level spell slots unless it is near defeat.

Resilient Thrall. Once a creature attunes to three Remnants of Dendallen, nothing short of a *wish* spell can break their attunement to the items. However, once the Spirit of Dendallen has been summoned, targeting the host with *greater restoration*, *remove curse*, the "Break Enchantment" effect of *dispel good and evil* or other applicable spells of 5th level or greater grants the host advantage on their next saving throw to resist Dendallen's thrall. Likewise, any game effects that end possession or the charmed condition don't end the spirit's thrall over its host, but do grant the host advantage

on their next saving throw against the spirit's control.

Personal Connections. Characters who share a meaningful personal connection with Dendallen's host can attempt to assist in their struggle against the thrall of Dendallen by reminding them of shared memories, such as telling inspiring stories or making personal pleas. At their discretion, you can choose to reward these attempts by granting the host inspiration to use on their saves against Dendallen's control.

Psychic Roots. After 1 minute of the initial emergence of the Spirit of Dendallen, the hosted creature suffers disadvantage on all saving throws it makes to resist the spirit's *Attuned Thrall* ability. Once an additional minute has passed, the host becomes possessed by Dendallen, as described in the "Victory or Defeat" section of this document.

Undead Nature. The Spirit of Dendallen doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Magical Tethers. When the Spirit of Dendallen is destroyed, all Remnants of Dendallen currently on that plane of existence decay into a gray goo and are destroyed, and any curse afflicting a creature from a Remnant is ended.

TENDRIL OF DENDALLEN

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (3d10 + 6)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	3 (-4)

Skills Athletics +8

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, psychic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Necromantic Form. The tendril can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. The tendril is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Planted. The tendril isn't affected by forced movement, and it doesn't need to make a check to cling to difficult surfaces like walls or ceilings.

Will of Dendallen. The tendril shares a psychic link with the spirit as well as the hosted while it's controlled by the spirit. The tendril doesn't provide cover to hostile creatures against attacks made through the tendril's space by the Spirit of Dendallen or its enthralled host.

ACTIONS

Grasp. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) force damage plus 9 (2d8) acid damage, and if the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 16) and must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be pulled up to 5 feet toward the tendril. Until this grapple ends, the tendril can't grasp another target.

Fling. One Medium or smaller object or creature grappled by the tendril is thrown up to 20 feet in a direction of the tendril's choice and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

Teleport. The tendril withdraws into the surface from which it appeared and emerges elsewhere, teleporting to an unoccupied space of its choice within 120 feet of Dendallen.