

7TH LEVEL



THE DM TOOL CHEST

THE COURTS OF CHAOS

THE LORDS OF MADNESS PART IV

FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

A powerful mage has ripped a rift into the elemental plane of chaos and has crowned himself a Prince of Chaos



ADVENTURE PRIMER

The Courts of Chaos is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 6th to 8th level** and is optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 7**. Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience to reach one-third of the way to level 8. A powerful mage has entered the plane of chaos and absorbed the raw energy into himself. He has crowned himself a Prince of Chaos and plans to invade the material realm with an army of aberrations. This adventure takes place in the [Freelands campaign setting](#) but fits into any existing campaign that allows access to the elemental plane of chaos with only a few modifications. This adventure ends with a challenging boss fight that may result in total party kills.

BACKGROUND

A group of mages calling themselves the Circle of Five have ripped a tear in the very fabric of reality and into the plane of elemental chaos. While his four companions stayed behind to fall into madness, one of the mages entered the plane directly to better feast from the chaotic energy. There he has grown engorged with chaos and become a monstrosity — any shred of any humanity he had left has been obliterated.

The denizens of chaos have started to ally themselves with this new Chaos Mage who entered their realm. With the rift to the material plane still open, they call out across chaos to draw an army strong enough to flood through and cover the Freelands in madness.

ABOUT THE COURTS

Thoveus is the last of the Circle of Five mages still alive — the others all victims of their greed and avarice. Once the pupils

of the Master Elemental Mage Drazor, Thoveus and his band of apprentices opened the chaos rift and tainted the lands around them, resulting in their former master's descent into madness and subsequent death.

Now deformed beyond recognition from the chaos energy pulsing through his body, the pupil has surpassed the master in pure power. Thoveus has crowned himself a Prince of Chaos and used the power at his command to construct an umbral fortress around the rift he helped create. Chaos creatures flock to his banner, and the area around the fort is becoming filled with a nightmare army.

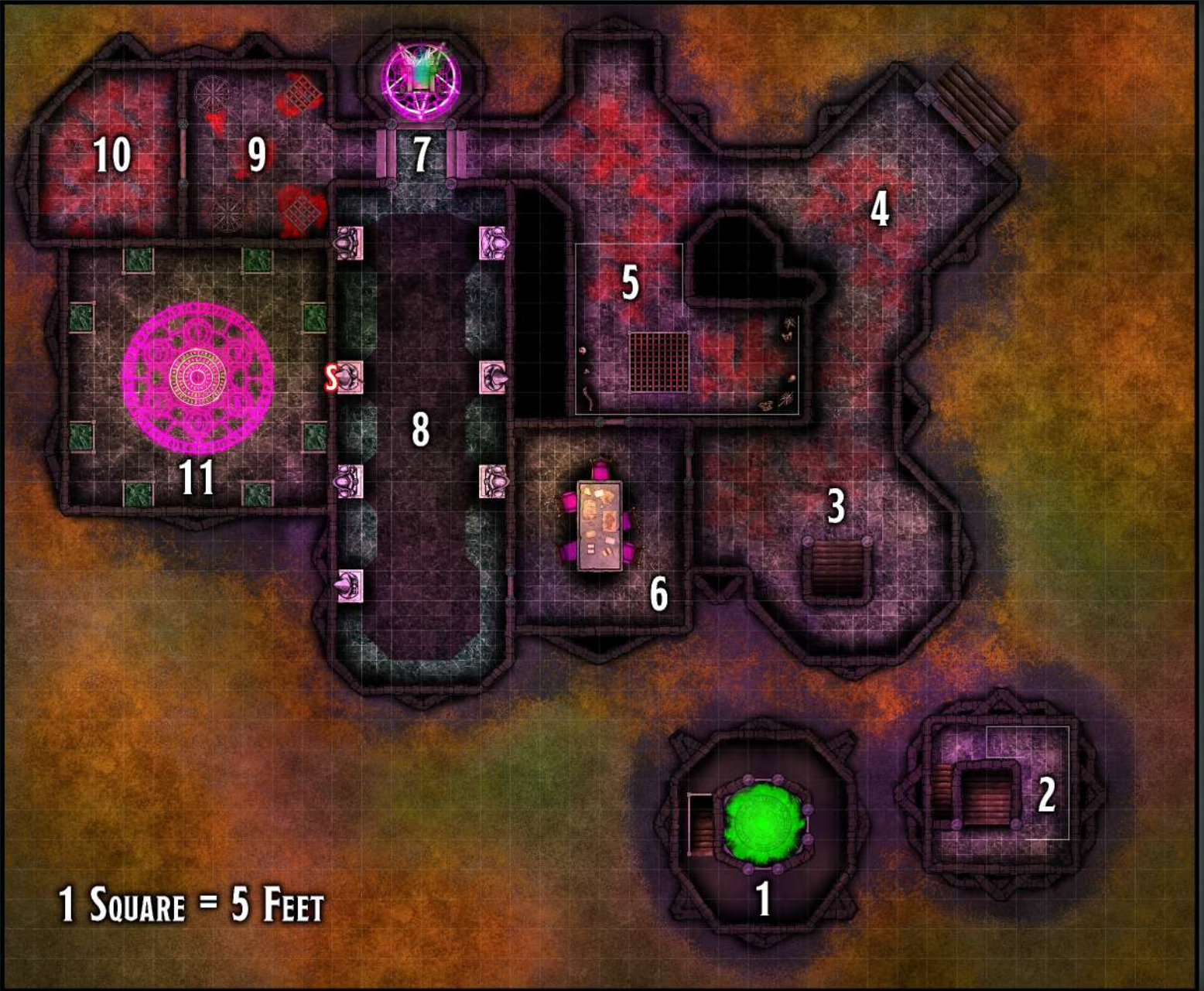
ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your adventurers hooked into this story:

The Portal. Rumours of strange plants and animals in the Verdant Hills combined with flashing lights in the sky were just too much for the adventurers to ignore. The journey through the Shimmering Forest and into the hills was short and led them to the strangest place — a shimmering rift that led them to the elemental plane of chaos and a fortress surrounded by an army of creatures.

The Blight. After a lengthy investigation into a blight spreading in the Verdant Hills, the adventurers find a rift in an underground dungeon that leads to the elemental plane of chaos. Not knowing what they have stumbled into, they entered the rift in hopes of finding a way to close it for good.

The Lords of Madness Part IV. Four members of the Circle of Five have been defeated, and only one remains. The last remaining member of The Five is the anchor holding open the chaos portal corrupting the realm. The adventurers have entered the rift to defeat Thoveus and close the rift once and for all.



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

COURTS OF CHAOS

The Chaos Mage Thoveus built this fortress out of the nightmare energy of the chaos plane. Twisted and jagged spikes thrust up from the barren rock and stab into the sky as if to pierce through it. The twisting madness of rolling lights and clouds roil around the towers and above the amassing army camped just outside the walls.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Chaos Fortress has the following general features unless otherwise noted:

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. Thoveus used his power to construct the fortress out of a glistening organic matter that he pulled from the sludge of chaos. Onyx black and just hard as granite, the entire fortress appears to be made from one singular mass. The ceilings throughout are 10 feet to 20 feet high. Anyone who touches the walls can feel the heat and a pulse as if the fortress was alive.

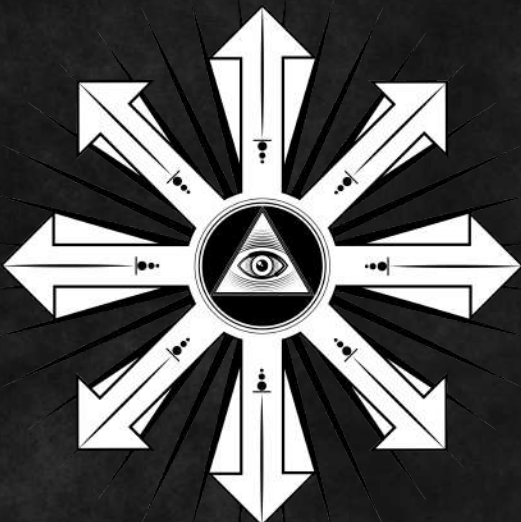
Doors. The fortress doors appear as claws that will retract into the walls when touched, closing again after a moment.

Lighting. The ever-changing colors of the mad sky outside sift through open windows and keep the entire fortress well light in a kaleidoscope of colors.

Sounds. The sounds of sobbing, maniacal laughter, voices begging, and many other random noises seem to come from nowhere and everywhere at odd times throughout the fortress. Some of them are from physical beings in the fortress, while others are incorporeal and have no exact origin.

Plane of Madness. The powerful energies of chaos on this plane are too much for mortal minds to bear. Every hour spent on the plane, each adventurer must make a DC 10 + (hours) Wisdom saving throw or be struck with short-term madness (see madness rules in DMG). After two failed saves, the next failure results in long-term madness, with a fifth failure resulting in indefinite madness. Adventurers who are of Chaotic Alignment gain advantage on these saves.

Chaotic Magic. The forces of chaos on the plane affect the casting of any spells and cause Wild Magic Surges. Whenever an adventurer casts a spell of level 1 or higher, they must roll 1d20. If they roll a 1, roll on the Wild Magic Surge table (see PHB) to create a magical effect. If that effect is a spell, it lasts its normal duration, does not require concentration, and cannot be influenced by the adventurer casting it.



KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed location of the provided map of the Chaos Fortress:

1 - PORTAL ENTRANCE

When the adventurers have stepped through the rift and arrive on the plane of chaos, read the following aloud:

The rift has led to a tower top in a world of pure madness. A storm of clashing elements fills the sky above with rapidly changing flashes of color and lightning. A wind alternates between a furnace blast of heat and a blizzard's chill rips through the air. The land below is an island floating in this sea of raging light and darkness, and it is in turn covered in a lesser sea of nightmarish creatures. Scale and claw, fang and fur, all blend together in the roiling mass of monsters below.

This is a place of madness — the Elemental Plane of Chaos.

The tower top stands 60 feet above the ground, thrusting into the roiling sky. Jagged spikes ring the tower-top, and small crenels between them give a view of the land below. The rift stands in the center of the area while a set of stairs leads down below.

Hazard: Mental Strain. Anyone looking too long at the sky or over the land must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw with a failure resulting in taking 10 (3d6) Psychic damage and half the damage on a success. The ever-changing landscape and the sky are dangerous for mortal minds to look at for too long.

2 - MIDDLE TOWER

Trap: Black Tentacles. A *glyph of warding* (save DC 18) set to Spell Glyph with a *black tentacles* spell (save DC 18) is set just before the steps leading to area 3. The area covered is noted on the provided map.

3 - LOWER TOWER

A sulphuric stench fills this room, and the sounds of Akthos' screaming echo down the hallway from area 4. This room is otherwise empty.

4 - FOYER

A massive pair of iron doors dominate this chamber. A skylight set in the 30-foot high domed ceiling is open to the air, and the chaotic sky of changing colors roils overhead. Two massive toad-like creatures are playing catch with a small, red-skinned tiefling child, and their gurgling laughter is mixing with his screams as he flies across the room.

Encounter: Not a Toad, Not a Boy. The creatures are a pair of **chaos toads** (see Appendix) and the tiefling is a young **doppelganger** named Akthos (see sidebar). He scurries into a corner, mutters gibberish to himself, and does not participate in combat.

AKTHOS THE MAD

Akthos is an assistant to Thoveus, who followed his master through the rift and has slowly gone insane. Thoveus quickly forgot about his existence once he drank his fill of the plane's ambient chaos energy, and Akthos became the plaything of the chaos creatures in the fortress. His mind cracked quickly in the plane, and he now believes himself to be a child again. He can be convinced to help the adventurers with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check or a DC 15 Strength (Intimidation) check. His information is not always reliable, and he gives incorrect information just as often as correct. A *lesser restoration* spell will cure him of this madness, allowing him to regain his senses, answer questions, and assist the adventurers. He knows the following bits of useful information:

- "The throne grants immense power to anyone who sits upon it."
- "Beware the monster in the grand hall (area 8), it guards the secret door" — Akthos has fallen victim to the *fear* effect of the statue there and believes it to be a monster.

Akthos runs to the rift in area 1 to escape after imparting any information he has to the adventurers.

5 - FLAME CHAMBER

A large grate covers a pit in the floor's center while a chain snakes down from a hole in the ceiling just above it; a metal handle dangles from the end. Piles of charred bones of various creatures sit in the room corners, some with fang marks scoring them.

Trap: BBQ. Pulling the chain handle requires at least 15 lbs of force and results in flames shooting from spouts inset in all of the walls — these are found with an active search of the walls and a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Anyone not standing on the grate must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. The flames subside when the handle is released.

6 - WAR ROOM

A bulky table surrounded by a haphazard collection of what appear to be chairs but could just as easily be described as torture devices sits in the middle of the room. Maps and documents cover every inch of the surface, and a cluster of warriors clad in black armor is discussing them with a priest in red robes.

Encounter: Cult of Chaos. The group of chaos warriors consists of two **cult fanatics**, a **gladiator**, and a **priest** discussing the plans to invade the material realm. They are all immune to the frightened and charmed conditions due to their state of insanity.

Treasure: Maps & Documents. The maps on the table are written in Abyssal and outline areas and information about the plane of chaos. They are worth 1,000 gp to a collector.

7 - THRONE

A short flight of stairs leads up to a throne made of an amalgamation of twisted shards of metal and bone. Strands of chaos energy twist and snake their way around the razor-sharp edges, and it emanates a dull thrum that rumbles outwards.

The Chaos Throne. A creature who sits on the throne takes 14 (4d6) piercing damage. Spending one hour sitting and absorbing the chaos energy that courses through the throne will have the following results: They gain a permanent madness trait from the short-term, long-term, and indefinite madness tables. A drastic non-helpful physical mutation occurs, such as growing an uncontrollable extra limb, becoming mute, blind, deaf, or experiencing accelerated advanced aging. They gain an Eldritch Invocation (see PHB) as if the creature was a warlock. Prerequisites must still be met, and additional spell slots are not gained — e.g., non-warlocks do not gain warlock spell slots, but non-casters can gain at-will spells.

These effects are cumulative and permanent — only the effects of a *wish* spell may cure a madness trait or reverse a mutation.

8 - GRAND HALL

Rows of statues depicting demons torturing their victims with glee and other grotesque scenes line the walls of the hall. The sculptures are carved from solid bone and are decorated with splashes of gore and entrails.

Hazard: Fear Statue. Anyone looking at the statue in front of the secret door to area 11 must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or fall under the effects of a *fear* spell. The noises of terror will attract any still living creatures from areas 4 and 6.

Secret Door. The secret door to area 11 can be found with an active search and a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check behind the fear-inducing statue. The wall is a visual illusion, and a *detect magic* will reveal it.

9 - TORTURE CHAMBER

Metal cages filled with corpses and soon-to-be corpses hang from the ceiling and sit against the room walls. One human male victim hangs by his ankles from a chain, hoarsely laughing as blood drips from his eyeless sockets.

Tortured Victim. The hanging man is named Kalthis, and he begs for death in exchange for the "Prince of Chaos' secret." He knows about the secret door to area 11, but he refuses to tell unless it's with his dying breath.

10 - PET STABLE

Anyone listening at the door to this room will hear an endless stream of indecipherable muttering from multiple voices. The room is filled with a stench that bursts outward when the door is opened. Anyone standing in the 10-foot square space immediately in front of the door must make a DC 15 Constitution check with a failure resulting in gaining disadvantage on attack, save, and ability rolls for 2 rounds due to retching and becomes poisoned for 1 hour.

Encounter: The Sound of Chaos. Three **gibbering mouters** are piled into this room, created from the tortured bodies of the chaos denizens that Thoveus first encountered in this area. They flow from this area and into the next room, spreading out to catch their new prey, chattering loudly with excitement all the while.

Treasure: Chaos Blade. Among the scattered debris of the cast-off bodies that comprised the gibbering mouter is an ebony-bladed longsword inset with a large red jewel on the pommel: the sentient *Blade of the Blackhearted* (see Appendix).

11 - ARCANE CHAMBER

When the adventurers enter this room, read the following aloud:

Rows of jagged onyx spikes intersect over this chamber's open ceiling, slicing through the sky above to create a dizzying kaleidoscope. In the center of this chaos is a horror of flesh, bone, and blood. Its distorted face is reminiscent of a melted candle, and its grin is that of a shark that just smelled fresh blood. A voice barely recognizable gurgles from the contorted figure:

"Ah, greetings! Have you come to pledge yourself to me? To the greatest Prince that Chaos has ever known?"

Encounter: The Prince of Chaos. Thoveus (**chaos mage** - see Appendix: New Monsters) is completely insane from absorbing so much chaos energy. His body is mutated and malformed to the point of barely being humanoid. He will quickly grow bored of any conversation and fly into a maddening rage. He casts *globe of invulnerability* prior to combat. Thoveus alternates between overly confident Prince to raging beast throughout the fight, putting the full force of his madness on display. When he uses his *Chaotic Consciousness* ability, blood will pour from his eyes, and he clutches his head before chuckling maniacally, "Not today! I am a Prince of Chaos, you fools!"

THOVEUS TACTICS

The chaos mage believes himself to be all-powerful and uses his powers to toy with the adventurers before outright destroying them. He will use his spells to trap (*forcecage*) and control (*irresistible dance*) while laughing at the adventurer's the entire time.

ESCAPING THE FORTRESS

Once Thoveus is defeated, the chaos energy stored inside of his body explodes outward and into the fortress. It starts to crumble as streaks of light and energy spark across every surface. The adventurers will need to hurry back to the rift gate before everything collapses completely.

The rift dumps the party back onto the material plane before sealing with a snap, its link destroyed.



AFTERMATH

If the adventurers manage to defeat Thoveus, the fortress he created and the assembled army are destroyed. Life will begin to return to normal with the rift closed, and the chaos corruption that was infecting the land dissipates quickly.

If they are unable to stop the Prince of Chaos, he leads an army of chaos creatures through the rift and invades the Freelands, toppling armies until he eventually builds an empire of darkness on the ruins of the continent. His reign of terror lasts for thousands of years until his defeat at the hands of a party of adventurers.

CREDITS

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Chaos Mage Design: [DMDave](#)

A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL
MY PATRONS, YOU ROCK!

APPENDIX: MAGIC ITEM & MONSTERS

BLADE OF THE BLACKHEARTED

Weapon (longsword), very rare (requires attunement)

This cursed magical sword comprises an onyx blade, twin silver snakes entwine for the handguard, and a black leather grip that bears a deep red tint — the only hint to its bloodthirsty nature.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. It has the following additional properties.

Always at Hand. You become attuned to the Blade of the Blackhearted once you use it to draw blood for the first time. Once attuned, you are cursed to forever have it equipped — the blade will magically appear in your hand after 1 minute, even if thrown away. The blade will be the only weapon you are allowed to use in combat while cursed. A *remove curse* spell will allow you to unequip the sword, but only a *wish* spell will break the curse.

Fear Aura. When you wield the Blade of the Blackhearted unsheathed, you have advantage on all Intimidation checks.

Bloodthirsty. The blade requires its wielder's blood to be spilled by its edge once every 24 hours. For every 24 hours without being fed blood, the blade gains a -1 modifier to its attack and damage rolls. These modifiers are cumulative.

Unnatural Wounds. Hit points lost by this blade can only be healed through magical means — resting will not work.

Sentience. Blade of the Blackhearted is a sentient, chaotic evil weapon with an Intelligence of 16, a Wisdom of 12, and a Charisma of 18. It has hearing and darkvision out to a range of 60 ft. This weapon can understand Abyssal, Common and can communicate with anyone who's wielding it telepathically. While you are attuned to it, the Blade of the Blackhearted also understands every language you know.

Personality. The Blade of the Blackhearted is cold, brutal, and seeks combat at any opportunity. It wishes to be used by vicious creatures who will drench it in blood. It will cruelly mock and jeer its wielder at any sign of mercy or perceived weakness.



CHAOS TOAD

Large aberration, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	6 (-2)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances acid, lightning, necrotic, poison, thunder

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Chaos Toad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Regeneration. The Chaos Toad regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Chaos Toad makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) poison damage. The target is grappled, escape DC 15 until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the Chaos Toad can't bite another target

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage plus 5 (1d10) poison damage.

Swallow. The Chaos Toad makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the Chaos Toad, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the Chaos Toad's turns. The Chaos Toad can have only one target swallowed at a time.

If the Chaos Toad dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 5 feet of movement, exiting prone.

CHAOS MAGE

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (14d8 + 42)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	9 (-1)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Int +8, Wis +3, Cha +2

Skills Arcana +8, Perception +7

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Chaotic Consciousness. If the chaos mage fails an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead. When it does so, it takes 3 (1d6) psychic damage.

Magic Resistance. The chaos mage has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Reabsorb. As a bonus action, the chaos mage can reabsorb one of its chaos spawn within 5 feet of it. The chaos spawn is destroyed, and the chaos mage regains hit points equal to the chaos spawn's current hit points.

Regeneration. The chaos mage regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point. If the chaos mage takes psychic damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the chaos mage's turn.

Spellcasting. The chaos mage is a 14th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, dancing lights, firebolt, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *expeditious retreat, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, mirror image, scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, dispel magic, fireball, hypnotic pattern*

4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles, dimension door, ice storm*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, cloudkill*

6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability, irresistible dance*

7th level (1 slot): *forcecage*

ACTIONS

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage.

Firebolt. Ranged Spell Attack: +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) fire damage.

REACTIONS

Chaos Spawn. If the chaos mage takes 10 or more damage from a single melee weapon attack, it expels a part of itself which then gains sentience and acts as a **chaos spawn**. The chaos spawn appears in a space within 10 feet of the chaos mage into which it can fit and remains until it, or the chaos mage is destroyed. Chaos spawn summoned in this way roll initiative and act in the next available turn. The chaos spawn has hit points equal to the amount of damage the chaos mage took that resulted in its spawning. The chaos mage can have up to three chaos spawns created by this ability at a time.

CHAOS SPAWN

Tiny ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 7

Hit Points Special (see the chaos mage stat block for details)

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	5 (-3)	17 (+3)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-1)

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Attach. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage, and the chaos spawn attaches itself to the target. While attached, the chaos spawn doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the chaos spawn's turns, the target takes 7 (2d6) poison damage. The chaos spawn can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the chaos spawn.

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