



Many Isles



The Monster of Hauthenoy

D&D 5e Adventure

The Monster of Hauthenoy

The party visits Hauthenoy, a charming town just like any other. Its hundred or so citizens work as farmers, woodworkers, and artisans; they have a small church and welcome travellers in their homely tavern. But an ominous atmosphere lingers over the rooves. Empty houses litter the outskirts.

Thriller/Horror. This module is designed to cause suspense among the players, slowly whittling their nerves thin as they desperately try to get to the root of the mystery even as the village succumbs to madness and blood.

Placing the Module. Hauthenoy can very well be inserted into a running fantasy campaign, as a place to which the party might return two or three times, witnessing the false hydra's growth and eventually undertaking something against it. Beware: there is a risk that some characters might fall to the madness, or to the false hydra in its later stages.

The module is set in a generic fantasy environment, which you can easily remodel names and other flavour aspects as necessary for your world.

Alternatively, you can run this as a self-contained two-shot.

Many Isles Setting

If you run this adventure for the Many Isles setting, it fits very well into the [Mruggenrykz's](#) Midterra in 1'200 b. OW.

Running the Module. The idea is for the party to, throughout their stay in Hauthenoy, notice that people are disappearing, and that they themselves are also forgetting things.

Read the "Setting" and "The False Hydra" sections so you understand the locales and various NPCs of Hauthenoy, as well as the nature of the false hydra. You should have a good sense of the village's ecosystem and how the monster will affect it. Then, whenever the party is in town, follow down the "Events" section. The exact way this plays out might vary wildly, be ready to improvise.

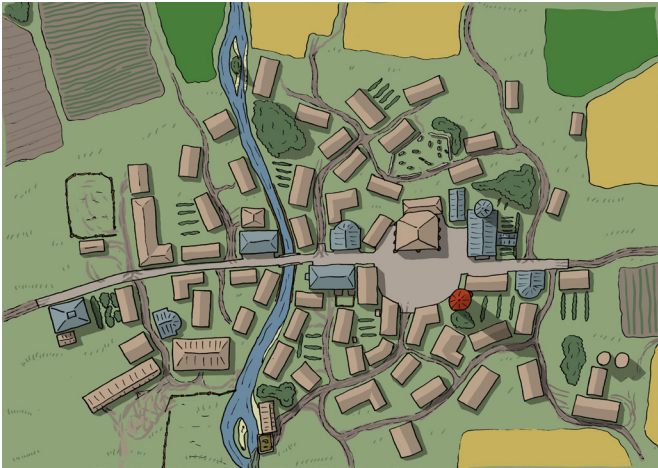
Characters and Monsters

This module uses the D&D 5e RPG system. It is designed for a party of about 4 characters of level 8, has a generic setting, and is rather roleplay- and investigation-heavy, though there are some opportunities for combat.

The false hydra has three stat blocks in the Appendix. For all other stats, look in the *Monster Manual* and *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, or on online sources.



Setting



Hauthenoy is a small rural town featuring stone fundaments, log superstructures, and thatched or slate-tiled rooves. Most houses have one ground floor, a basement, and a granary. The main street and square are cobbled and feature about two dozen oil lamps, which are lit every night. The town hall and wizard's tower lie on the town square, the tavern and other buildings are on the main road.

Decrepit Locations

Each location has a "Decrepit" description. When the conditions are met, the building turns decrepit. This participates greatly to the atmosphere.

The Drunken Hallebarde Inn

This large two-storey building lies on the main road, near the town square. Its flagstone fundament and thick dark oak pillars, along with wide, flat roof, are of dwarven build. The ground floor has room for two dozen diners, a bar, a fireplace and kitchen, and the staff rooms. The basement contains the larder. The top floor has eight rooms, fitting up to 22 people. It's typically used by merchants, adventurers and mercenary bands.

The bar offers basic beverages and food, accepting both barter and various currencies. Rooms can be rented for 9 copper coins. The communal latrine is located some distance away from the main road, though for 1 extra copper, the tavern offers a bucket-carrying service.

Tumbillen and Fargenaut Halbers. The innkeepers are two forest gnomes native to a nearby forest. They purchased the tavern a decade ago and have since run it successfully, earning quite a reputation for their gnomish "bark-toast" featuring mushrooms, garlic and bark.

They are very jovial and forthcoming. Tumbillen takes care of the kitchen and bar, while Fargenaut handles orders, rooms, and the maintenance. She

is also the one to wake the tavern, at the times requested by the guests and staff.

Tiune and Guina. These young women were once the daughters of a more outlying farmstead, which was destroyed by monsters. They sought refuge in Hauthenoy, were temporarily lodged in the tavern, and became the Halbers' employees.

Tiune helps Tumbillen cook and takes care of the tavern's chicken coop. Guina is the serving maid, and she takes care of the cleaning under Fargenaut's direction.

Drunks. Additionally, five farmers – three human, one hobgoblin, one orc – have a reserved table in one corner. They come every evening, drink ale and, on special days, schnaps, going home around midnight.

Decrepit

After Fargenaut disappears.

Guina alone can't really deal with the house. Tumbillen helps her a bit, but besides the well-cleaned halls, everything grows covered in dust. Damaged furniture is not repaired, doors start creaking, and the dining room grows badly aired. The windows are tainted, a stench of fire lingers in the air, and there is constantly a faint haze.

Over time, the group of habitual drunks grows smaller.

After Tuine disappears.

The food grows noticeably worse as Tumbillen doesn't have help and can't procure many ingredients he needs. He serves sour ale, stale bread, and boiled seeds.

Wizard's Tower

The Tower of Uumaev, called Wizard's Tower by the locals, is a stone tower on the main square. It is slightly tilted, has a bright red brick roof, and is rumoured to have a library (a luxurious rarity). The bottom floor is a fancy illusory marble hall several times larger than outside. The mage holds audiences here. Further up are his rooms, lab, and apparently pointless space, which he does not give access to; a hidden trapdoor grants access to the underground library. It features many books, but behind a bookshelf (DC 17 Investigation) lies a thick barred door, which can only be forced open (DC 20 Athletics). It leads into the false hydra's lair (see below). The wizard does not agree to opening it.

Vagast, the village's old elven mage, resides in the tower. He is friendly, but also distracted, and if bored will none-too-gently eject visitors. He will not grant access to the library without good reason, and in general never allows people into the

upper floors. He has **evoker** stats, and can summon a **stone golem** in support if attacked.

Vagast could serve as the party's patron during this adventure.

Decrepit

After Vagast turns mad.

The illusory main hall is suffering from its age. The marble features some broken patches, there are mouldy corners, and streaks of dust descend from the ceiling. A fountain in one corner contains no water anymore. The real tower occasionally flickers through. Likewise, the library is consistently badly lit, and has a very oppressive atmosphere. It is uncomfortable to stay in for long.

Tempus's Church

Along the main road lies a large stone building with wooden roof and tower, a church devoted to Tempus. It is relatively small, fitting only about 50 people. It also has two appendices: a hospital lodging infectious, and a small house for Tieans and Tibau.

It can offer a calm place of veneration to citizens, can heal magically and secularly, and occasionally offers [minor boons](#) to followers. For common folk, the church is also a judicial arbitrator and a mental health clinic.

The parish priest is **Tieans Garfendale**, a middle-aged human woman. She has much experience in preaching, is a charismatic presence in town, and has access to a cleric's spells. She can also grant boons and takes care of the ills and woes of the people.

She also has a human novice, **Tibau**, a young boy. He is learning the craft of healing, and is already well tutored in Tempus ideology. He helps Tieans in many day-to-day jobs, caring for the herb garden and the church's intendance.



Decrepit

After the false hydra matures (Tibau disappears).

Renovations on the building stop. The floors start creaking, several benches are broken, and the herb garden - magically fueled - grows far over its edges.

Town Hall

The town hall proper is a large roofed area of the town square and a small wooden house adjacent to it. It is the meeting ground of the town's elder council, which is usually held in the veranda and attracts a sizeable crowd. More discreet city business is performed inside the house. There is a notice board under the veranda featuring notices like "help wanted", and one contract: "Goblins to deal with" (see "An Empty Lair" below). The hut also features the town annals, thick tomes in which the ealdorman keeps track of important events.

The ealdorman is **Farner Gudson**, the human owner of a large farm. He is respected, though he has little direct authority and acts mainly as a coordinator between the elders, and between the elders and the people. There are four elders, each of whom is responsible for part of Hauthenoy's economy: the farmers, the other workers like herders and woodcutters, the infrastructure, and the artisans. All five elders reside in their own houses.

The city additionally disposes of a volunteer city guard: six people (4 humans, 2 hobgoblins) who own leather armour and simple weapons. They occasionally protect elder councils, support the priest to enforce justice, and lead the town's militia in case of war with surrounding orcs or goblinoids. They have **guard** stats and usually work as farmers.

Finally, there are two more "public employees". The serviceman **Guffy** has a cot in the town hall and performs basic duties such as infrastructure maintenance and lighting the lamps. **Tobie** is a human boy who lives with his farmer family and regularly empties the latrine into the stream.

Decrepit

After serviceman Guffy disappears.

The building's doors creak, there are dull knocking sounds from below the floorboards, and the shutters occasionally creak-creak. The source of these poltergeist-like sounds cannot be clearly made out.

Businesses

Hauthenoy thrives on its local artisans' shops and guilds. It is also a trade hub for the surrounding peasant villages.

The Merchants' Storehouse

This establishment's business model is to buy useful goods from passing merchants, and resell them at a later point either to peasants coming to town, other merchants, or locals. It is quite successful, having a monopoly on most imports.

It is a sturdy log house along the main road.

The Salesmen. Three humans, two of which occasionally work in other businesses, take care of the store. They stringently do not let anyone in, instead serving people from their stall outside.

The Illithids. In fact, the Merchants' Storehouse remains unaffected by the false hydra because it, and its salesmen, are controlled by two **mind flayers** who reside in the basement. They are in Hauthenoy as spies for their Caverealm enclave. If the party investigates the Storehouse seriously, or enters the basement, they discover the lair. For more information, see "Party Patrons" below.

The Guilds

Hauthenoy has three guilds: the Leatherworkers, Cattle, and Woodworkers. Each has a house of their own, which they use for guild meetings and storage. They also close contracts and hand over goods there.

The Gaudren Shop

This small shop looks very similar to the Merchants' Storehouse, is located on the main street not far from the square, and is a dwarven resale point. Though their wares are expensive, they are high-quality tools imported directly from the nearby kingdom, which are worth it in the long run. The three Gaudrens are the Storehouse's only competition.

Other Businesses

There are several other small shops along the main street, including a stables that rents horses, a winery, a carpenter, and a hobby smith. They all "close" at one point or another, until the "Guilds Closing" event when they all shut down.

The False Hydra

The monster of Hauthenoy is a **false hydra**. These legendary beasts are virtually unheard of, not least because of their unique traits.

The Monster. A young false hydra consists of the torso and head of a human, with a very long neck. It has pallid, drooping skin, and wet black holes instead of eyes. It lives underground. At first, the infant false hydra will dig up into an underground lair, perhaps behind some crates in a cellar or in a reservoir.

It will then start singing its blind song. It is a horrid wail, but whoever hears it is immediately captured by its mental influence. They immediately forget seeing or hearing the false hydra; only an uncomfortable impression of heavy air will remain.

Hydras eat humans, naturally. However, to eat, the head needs to stop singing.

"A man is walking along a deserted street. Suddenly he realises that the silence is more profound, as if a loud noise had just ceased. There is a rattle as a basement's grate slides over rough stone. In that darkness, a fleshy face, leering with undisguised hunger. It lunges forward on a thick neck that slides out of the darkness like a sheath, one foot, three feet, six feet long. And then it bites his arm and drags him down that narrow gap, yanking and twisting to fit the man's body through the too-small space. And when the sounds of eating have ceased, the song resumes.

"The man has family, friends who will notice his absence. But the song of the hydra massages their mind, smoothing the wrinkles on their brain. The hydra has eaten the man, who is now known to the hydra. The song erases the memories from their soft heads. They will not notice his absence, nor remember him.

"And in this way, the hydra grows. Its neck stretches long. . . longer. And with it, its influence."

Eventually, the false hydra will be so large as to fill the whole basement with its thick, bulbous body. It will grow additional heads, its necks will grow continuously. It will devour people day and night.

Effects on Humanoids. The false hydra's song erases memories of its victims just like it hides the hydra itself, but it is not a perfect system. Wives find clothes of dead husbands in their pantries; there are spots of blood on the pavement. These gaps largely close themselves up, as the wife will remember her brother left them here last time he visited, and everyone ignores the blood. Humanoids will constantly confabulate to explain away the dissonance in their memories.

But parts of the mind remain cognizant of the disturbance. A primordial cluster of neurons fires, saying that something is wrong, creating pres-

sure. A family might lock their muttering grandpa in the basement. People grow paranoid. Many feel watched, because they *are* watched; the hydra is pressing its moony face against the window and fogging up the glass, staring at them with its wet, black pits. More severe symptoms develop. Reminiscing grows stressful, so it is avoided. Memories are distorted. The confabulations pile up, identities become muddled. Friends' faces seems subtly deformed.

Human brains were not meant to bear this weight. Mundane insanities sprout like mushrooms. Nervous disorders. Psychotic breaks.



Metastasis. As the false hydra matures, it grows more heads. The process accelerates exponentially. More blood on the cobblestones. More incongruities festering in heads like gangrenous limbs.

The false hydra gets careless. With every meal, it becomes more powerful, more able to smother mankind. It doesn't need to be careful anymore.

The heads stretch up higher. Their gracile necks sway above the rooftops. The monster has grown feral. The skull bulges with masses of bone. The lower jaw juts out, low-slung, like a dagger in a fist. Soon, it will finish devouring Hauthenoy.

If the party haven't dealt with the beast yet, there is very little they can do. They might try to fight it head-on, but it is at present a seven-headed monstrosity.

If they still fail, or let the monster run its course, it will attain its final form. When a false hydra is mature, having grown seven heads, it begins to sing a new song. This one mentally enslaves everyone within hearing range. It's the equivalent of a broadcast *dominate person*.

The colossal apparatus of the false hydra is now visible. Monstrous heads on tree-trunk necks tower above the town, leaning over rooftops and peering into windows. Its bellowing voices order its mind-slaves to kill that man over there, or to capture the fleeing child over there. (Of course it can talk. It always could. It just never had anything to say.)

It commands its slaves to dig it out of the ground, then carry it on wagons and shoulders to its next feeding ground. When it gets too large to carry they will lash it with chains and drag it behind them like a wailing, blubbery siege engine.

Of course, this is unsustainable. Its slaves cannot farm or hunt sufficient food without leaving the audible range of its song. Unless it raids other food stores, it will starve.

The uncommon adulthood of false hydras is marked by desperate aggression. An animal convulsing as it dies, crushing people and cities under its hungry bulk. It usually heads for the largest cities. Sometimes it succeeds long enough to grow larger and move on to the next city. A tour of death.

In the end, the false hydra will starve as it cannot be transported to the next food source.

Events

The evolution of the false hydra is very flexible. Feel free to adapt it to the game you're playing, by perhaps changing the order of disappearing NPCs or by reacting to characters' initiatives.

The false hydra's growth takes time. At first, it eats only once every two days, and those are rarely NPCs the party might come into contact with. Weeks, perhaps months, may pass between the characters' first arrival and the hydra's metastasis. Use this time to slowly work the dissonance into the character's brains, to litter their actions and letters with moments of clarity.

The chronological events detailed in this section are designed to cue the party that something odd is going on, and give them further ways of investigating.

Fueling the Paranoia

Occasionally, ask players to make Wisdom saves, especially when they get close to the false hydra - for example, when looking into basements or coming near the latrine. Disregard the results, but make hidden rolls of your own as well. On a good roll, you can describe how the character freaks out to the others, even as he forgets doing so.

Also feel free to mention how the characters feel the "oppressive atmosphere", as if there was a continuous sound they could not make out, or as if someone was watching them. See "Hooking" in the next section for more.

Characters Forget. Though the players aren't, remember the characters are under the hydra's spell at all times. They might forget about evidence they uncovered the day before, and have a headache rationalising the dissonance of slipping on a pool of blood. Rely on Wisdom checks to see if characters notice and remember things, and feel free to sprinkle in some madness (DMG p. 259) after too many failures.

Juvenile Stage

The false hydra has a single head and is creeping around the city, mainly ambushing out of basements or the riverside.

Party's Arrival

The party reaches Hauthenoy either as a step on their adventuring campaign - perhaps the local elders placed a contract - or as a wary group seeking a few weeks of downtime away from the hardships of the wilderness.

They are warmly welcomed in the Drunken Hallebarde. Fargenaut is extremely kind, showers them with smalltalk and food, and ushers them to bed. She promises to wake them early the next morning.

Investigation. The innkeep mentions that contracts can be found on the town hall notice board.

When arriving, or at any time afterwards, the characters might notice that there are several homes, mainly in the outskirts, that seem recently abandoned. If they look inside, they find recently settled dust and half-mouldy food. The neighbours all say that no one has lived there for as long as they can remember, however.

Fargenaut's Disappearance

Upon waking up, the party realises it's nearing midday, and Fargenaut failed to wake them.

If they confront Tumbillen, he says he was never married, and that Guina - who usually does the waking - forgot to do so today.

Investigation. In Tumbillen's room, there is a double bed, as well as much female apparel. He declares that it must belong to one of his employees, and that the party shouldn't mix into his business. He does not mention a sister. A few days later, all traces of Fargenaut's affairs have disappeared from the room.

If the party questions the servants, they seem a bit hesitant (stammering and scratching their heads), but seem to agree with Tumbillen that there was never anyone else - except Tumbillen's out-of-town sister, who occasionally helped out - and Guina says that "*aye, I must've done the house by myself always*". After the questioning, they are certain of their view.

Elder Council

The same day, the town holds a council, and Tumbillen recommends it to the party - they might find work or hear news there.

They can attend among the peasant crowd. The town's five elders discuss typical town business, including which wares just came in and out, how much some farms produced, and how the guilds are doing. They also mention in passing that a ownerless trader's carriage has been given to the Merchants' Storehouse.

After the talks, the party can get to know the ealdorman, the elders, the six guardsmen - currently all in duty - the serviceman Guffy, and the boy Tobie. The wizard, Vagast, is also there.

Besides smalltalk and a contract on the notice board, it appears there is not much to do. Some party members can help a farmer clear out a store-

house, others can help with some renovation work at the church, and still others can escort Vagast in some rat extermination.

Latrine Overflowing

Over the course of two or three days, if the party visits the latrine, they will notice it is very full and starts stinking. At the end of this period, they hear - perhaps from the ealdorman, if they have made his acquaintance - that someone has forgotten to empty the latrine. A farmer is ordered to the task.

Investigation. If the characters have met Tobie before, they only vaguely remember him, and believe he might just be a farmer.

If the party roots through annals in the town hall, they will come across mentions like *"Tobie fell into the latrine"*. However, the ealdorman comments that in Hauthenoy, "Tobie" is just a nickname for "latrine-emptier". The other elders just shrug. The ealdorman also grows more reticent in the future to allow the party access to the town annals.

When asked who usually empties the latrine, the townfolk shrug and name various people who *"sometimes dunnit"*.

Characters looking around the path leading to the latrine can make a DC 15 Investigation check to spot a damaged grate with traces of blood near a basement. If they investigate the basement, they find a bit more blood, and a loose earth soil, but can't make much of it.

An Empty Lair Contract

Both Tumbillen and the ealdorman might mention a contract on the notice board. This might be the reason the party came to town in the first place.

Goblins to deal with
The town has been plagued by a band of goblins. They've made their home in a house at the northern end of down, and refuse to leave. 20 rations, or the equivalent, in payment.
Report to the ealdorman once the task is done.

Investigation. The party can easily find the house in the northern outskirts: it is boarded up, and a Goblin inscription on the door says "don't disturb". The door must be forced open.

Surprisingly, the house is completely empty. Some furniture was banged around a bit, and a traditional goblin firepit-camp was established in the main room. There is little evidence of a fight, though there are massive streaks of blood on the stairs leading into the cellar and in the cellar. The characters must make a DC 18 Wisdom save to even notice this, however.

If they return news that the goblins were evicted, the ealdorman noncommittantly pays the reward. If the characters say there were no goblins around, he shrugs and assumes they *"must've moved out"*, not paying the reward. He makes nothing of it, and some days later, no one mentions this at all.

Mature Stage

At present, the false hydra has three heads and is about the size of a house. It doesn't move far anymore, though its heads can reach across the entire town, slithering along the ground and sometimes causing people to trip.

People start suffering from mental dissonance. All are skittish, several are wary of others, and some farmers turn mad.

The cats in the town now screech and run around; dogs, however, seem unaffected.

Level Up. If you think it reasonable and are playing a longer game, you can allow the party to level up now. The extra level will be very helpful.

Goundren's Disappearance

When characters talk to priest Tieans, she asks where the party's *"stubborn but still quite charming"* dwarf cleric, Goundren, is. The party has never had a cleric.

Investigation. That same day, in their room, characters may notice an adventurer's pack next to a cot. They don't know who it belongs to, it is filled with various bits of gear, and one or two trinkets that could only have come from the party's previous adventures.

The next day, Tumbillen's employee Guina will have put away the cot. None of the staff knows of this Goundren, but don't make much of it, and Tieans forgets about him soon after as well.

The Gaudren Shop's Closing

From one day to the next, the Gaudren shop closes. One dwarf is packing the last things on his wagons. If questioned, he comments that *"I ain't feelin' too well in this town... A lone dwarf, in a human place, can't go well. I've sold me wares to the Storehouse, and I'll leave this accursed place"*. The dwarf does not know about his two brothers, if questioned.

Investigation. If characters decide to break into the locked house, they will find it has been cleared of anything of value; in fact, very little furniture remains. The back door is broken down, there is a trail of blood there, along the steep stairs leading down into the basement, and all over the broken

empty crates in the basement. There is no trace of bodies.

If the characters ask around, they quickly learn that Gaudren gave, not sold, his stock to the Merchants' Storehouse. If they enquire at the Storehouse, the clerk tells them *"the Gaudrens couldn't compete with us, so now they're returning to their mountains. It's natural their products shouldn't go to waste, though"*. She never again uses the plural when referring to Gaudren. She also doesn't let the party enter to have a look at all the wares, though she will show them any item they ask about. She also tells them about contract by her company; see below.

The Prisoner

There is some commotion in the town square; an old human farmer is escorted by two guards, one of whom is in uniform, into the town hall. He is imprisoned in the single strong room there. The guards say he's mad and being kept away *"so he doesn't bother the children"*. One stays in the house to guard him, but allows characters to interrogate him if they so wish.

Investigation. The prisoner has a blank stare and sits with his back against the wall, hectically looking at the room's two windows. He constantly mumbles *"it is watching... the window... it is watching..."*, and little more.

The guard says that the farmer has been growing a bit agitated of late, and that a single man his age should not have been running a whole farm by himself, that he was probably overworked.

If characters visit the man's house, they find it to be quite large, with bedding for 10 people. Some neighbours say he lived alone there and that the beds were for visitors; others say the house has stood empty for a long time. If they visit the fields, they see that most of them are in good shape, and are far too large to have been maintained by a single person. On one, a plough has drawn a strange shape in the ground: it looks like a big ball with stalks radiating out of it.

Strange Notes

On the notice board outside the town hall are two notes that stand out from the usual ones.

Help Wanted

I have seen it Olse has seen it the kid is gone it ate him right in front of me i couldn't see it help they're gone all gone who is around it looks at me black pits help it stares i can't see

Help Wanted

We've need for some hands on the farm, there's far too much for us to handle. Help Vagast help help HELP

Investigation. The second note seems to be written in a dark red ink; DC 18 Nature check reveals it is blood.

Anyone asked about the notes seems disturbed and doesn't comment on them; the elders blame *"some little spren's trick"*.

The same day, both the notes and the notice board disappear. The town annals are likewise gone.

Vagast's Letter

If the party has talked to Vagast about their suspicions.

The town wizard sends the party a quick note:

To the party.

I have found some interesting tomes in my library, which seem to concern illnesses of the mind and certain effe- HELP ME FOR THE PAIN OF TEMPUS HELP ME -seem quite interesting.

Best Regards, V

Investigation. If asked about the note, Vagast says he never wrote it and some funny child must have, but that he did find some interesting tomes. They are dusty books documenting odd mental diseases. One character makes a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw; on a success, they gain 1 Information on the monster (see the next section).

Dissonance Symptoms

The characters start suffering from split-brain: some limbs act independently, outside their conscious control. Their dreams are filled with horrid screeches, death, and a pallid face with wet, black eyes. Perhaps they start hurting themselves. Read "Hooking the Adventurers" in the next section.

The Merchants' Storehouse Contract

If the party hasn't found out about the illithids.

If they haven't yet informed the party of this contract, the Merchant's Storehouse sends an employee to the tavern.

The contract is for one or two adventurers only; they have to appear at a field in the outskirts by dusk, to scout out and gather information on a stealthy monster which is *"stalking the town"*.

Investigation. A female human employee of the Storehouse, armed with a shortsword, awaits the party at the meeting place. She insists that only one or two characters perform the contract, because it might otherwise *"allow the beast to spot you too soon. There is no danger, if you hide well."*

Following the clerk's instructions, the characters hide in some bushes and spend several hours looking out at dark fields, the low building of the latrine, and the river. They spot nothing of interest; nevertheless, the woman - who stayed a fair distance away, but not out of sight - says that for their compensation, the characters should come to the Storehouse. She invites them in.

Let the players make Intelligence saves. On a 20 and above, they will have faint memories of violet light, probing tentacles, and intense fear. In either case, they find themselves arriving at the Drunken Hallebarde, with very approximate recollections of going into the shop, receiving payment from the woman, and walking to the tavern. They have a pouch with 15 gp, and somehow learned 1 Information.

If the characters somehow determine how much time has passed, they realise they spent a whole hour in the Storehouse.

If they investigate the Merchants' Storehouse seriously, they discover the mind flayer lair; see "Patrons" in the next section.

Tiune's Disappearance

Tiune, one of the Drunken Hallebarde's employees, disappears overnight.

Investigation. As usual, none of the staff have any recollection of her, mumbling something of a *"temporary help"*. There remains evidence of Tiune for a short while, then it disappears.

Each character must succeed on a daily DC 18 Wisdom save to continue remembering Tiune.

Guilds Closing

Many guilds were doing very badly recently. Deals were failing, people at reunions were missing. Lacking superintendents, the Leatherworkers and Woodcutters closed down. The Cattle is still open, and people occasionally go into it, but leave when they see the building's abandoned state and see that there isn't anyone around to talk to. Many of those who walk away again say they were just passing by.

The Merchants' Storehouse, which still has a full staff, continues working as normal.

All other businesses have shut down by now.



Trail of Lanterns

Characters might notice one night that only half the lanterns are on.

By the time this happens, Guffy has disappeared, and Vagast has gone mad. Most people believe this is *drim-ur*, the madness that afflicts elves of old age. He occasionally shrieks *"it watches!"* and does not want anyone to enter his tower. If the party does not somehow pacify or neutralise him when investigating, he summons his golem and attacks.

Investigation. The town square is nicely illuminated, but suddenly - at the height of the tower - the rest is dark. There is a conspicuous trail of blood leading from an unlit lantern, near which lies a tinderbox, to a torn-up grate in the Wizard's Tower.

Through estimation, the characters can guess the grate lies beyond a wall in the library, and they can find the hidden door which leads into the false hydra's lair.

Metastasis

A few days after Guffy's disappearance, if the party is not preparing a genius plan, the false hydra finally undergoes metastasis and grows a seventh head. It then starts singing its new song.

Hauthenoy is lost.

Player Response

Though there is no quest necessity for the party to actually get involved into the false hydra business, they will most likely be hooked by its very suspicious symptoms and try to learn more about Hauthenoy's plight.

Hooking the Adventurers

Besides the obvious discontinuities in their surroundings (Fargenaut disappearing, their mysterious lost party member...) the characters might be hooked by slowly succumbing to the madness themselves.

Dissonance causes serious mental issues; perhaps they are affected by split-brain, where parts of a character's consciousness notice the monster and develop into multiple personalities, or limbs act of their own free will.

A character wakes up and discovers that someone has scratched "IT'S WATCHING YOU RIGHT NOW. THE WINDOW" into their chest, and there is a bloody stylus in their left hand.

A character receives a distressed letter from their mother, who wants to know why the last letter they sent contained the sentence "it ate him ate him in front of me but i did not see it ate him" inserted in the middle.

The party's dreams are filled with dirges, spilling from the mouths of faceless people. And somewhere, a pale face, whose eyes are nothing but wet, black holes.

Responding to the Hooks. After at most a few weeks, the various symptoms of the false hydra should have unsettled the party enough that they decide to investigate. "Party Patrons" below offers a series of NPCs who can help.

Party Patrons

There are several NPCs in Hauthenoy who could either help the party find out more about the monster, or direct them to others who can.

Tumbillen Halbers

The gnome, being the local tavern's patron, is likely to be the party's first contact. He is knowledgeable about the goings-on in the village; for example, he would know about any commotions on the square. If questioned about events, he will refer the party to the ealdorman; for more esoteric business, he will mention the wizard.

Gaining Information. If the players spend a long evening with him and he gets drunk, or if he is

otherwise inebriated, he will mumble something about "fleshy face, always watching" and "blood, blood everywhere". The party gains 1 Information.

Ealdorman Farner Gudson

Farner Gudson knows of everything that is happening in the village; he is a charismatic presence and has many connections to even the most outlying farmsteads. He also controls the city guard and the town hall.

At first, he is somewhat suspicious of the party, though they can quite easily gain his trust. If they fail to do so in the early stages, he soon falls to madness: he occasionally jerks up as if seeing something hidden, laughs loudly, and is very suspicious of the characters. This also happens if he befriends them, but it takes longer and he continues trusting them.

Gaining Information. If Farner allows it, a character can spend one day poring through the town's annals. They must make on a DC 17 Wisdom save; on a fail, they may never attempt this again; on a success, they gain 1 Information.

Wizard Vagast

Vagast is an old elf, and the mage of the town. He is the man of reference for esoteric knowledge or magical aid, if not health-related.

Being rather wise, he has suspicions about what might be going on, but he won't help the party immediately; they'll have to earn his trust by proving their involvement in Hauthenoy's issues first. Afterwards, he'll let the characters do research in his library - though he doesn't enter it himself, as he is feels uncomfortable in it.

Gaining Information. Characters can spend one day researching in the tower's library. They must make a DC 20 Wisdom save; on a fail, they will need to make the check again each evening before being able to do library research again. On a success, they gain 1 Information.

The Mind Flayers

The Merchants' Storehouse is actually a front for a mind flayer cell in Hauthenoy. They are on a surveillance/scouting mission and have their lair - furnished in the illithid style, with purple lighting, satin walls, and absurd furniture - in the basement.

If a few characters discover them inadvertently, have them roll a DC 19 Intelligence saving throw; on a success, they see and remember the illithids, otherwise they find themselves on the way back from the shop to the tavern, having faint memories of making a small acquisition.

If a character resists the check, or the whole party barges in on them, and the false hydra has reached maturity, the illithids will at first try to bargain. They also want the hydra gone, and in exchange for the characters' efforts and a promise to be left alone, they will let the players go unharmed. If they haven't yet done so, they give the party 1 Information before showing them out and mentioning that if all else fails, the party can always become their champions.

Working with the Illithids. Out of goodwill, the illithids are ready to give the above-mentioned information and a recommendation to dig up information in the Tower's library.

If the party is desperate, they can offer themselves completely to the illithids. They are made into their mind-slaves: tadpoles are implanted into their brains just like the store clerks', but their ears are also mutilated (they now permanently suffer from the *deafened* condition) and they gain a 20-foot one-way telepathic speech ability. They know all basic Information and the deafened ears Counter.

The characters must now follow the illithids' orders; they may not leave the town, they must protect their masters, and they must kill the false hydra. Afterwards - if they survive - there will undoubtedly be more tasks for them.

Information

There are several mechanics listed above which can result in the party gaining 1 Information. Alternatively, whenever characters make significant discoveries or successfully track/remember a disappearance, you can award them additional Information.

Basic Information is a series of eight scraps of information, known to all characters, which represents them drawing conclusions from the evidence and allows them to eventually uncover the false hydra.

Basic Information Table

- 1 It stares. The window. Always. Black pits.
- 2 Have you seen it? It sings, yet you cannot hear it.
- 3 The mind cannot not hear it. It goes mad.
- 4 In old myths, towns were found completely empty, with nothing but a large pit in the middle.
- 5 It is below you, always. Its long necks rise high, its wet eyes stare at you, but you cannot see it.

- 6 When you see the monster, you forget. When it feasts before you, you forget. Even when you remember, you soon forget.
- 7 As it feeds, the monster grows. It gains heads. Its thirst for blood is always greater, and it will never stop, never...
- 8 When the false hydra grows its seventh head, its song turns the town into its slave. Do not let it grow so far.

Once the Information table is full, each additional Information learned gives Counters against the monster. If you choose, you can give Counters before Information is complete. Choose Counters learned randomly by rolling 1d6; if the specific Counter was already discovered, you may allow the characters to reroll, depending on the quality of their source.

Counters Table

d6	Counter
1	The cats sense it. The song deafens them, but they still feel it. A cat will stare into its black eyes.
2	You will forget seeing it, but you might not forget seeing its reflection.
3	Its song charms you; if you resist charms, you can resist its song.
4	Sounds louder than the hydra's song, such as shouting or music, will hurt it and stop its song.
5	The heads... they sing and they bite. Cut the necks, but do not forget the heart.
6	Its powers are carried by its song. If you stop hearing it, you stop forgetting it.

At any time during the Information- and Counter-finding, the party can choose to go and fight the false hydra. Whenever they do, follow the guidelines below. If the party knows too little, they might not even be able to see the hydra, let alone fight it; if they attack it with too great of a disadvantage, they might be killed. Make sure the players are aware that against such a mysterious and powerful monster, they should be as well prepared as possible.

Fighting the Monster

The false hydra is located beneath the town square, but its heads can be encountered on the surface anywhere in Hauthenoy, once it has grown enough. As a juvenile, it burrows around, so its real body could also be encountered and fought outside the lair.

Fighting Methods

There are several Counters to the false hydra. The party could use some or none of these, granting various effects as listed below. If they make up their own methods, use your own judgement, but they should have little beneficial effects: this is a legendary monster, and preparing properly beforehand is important for success.

Cats. The party can try rounding up cats. The animals will reliably stare at the closest head's face, but will also be scared and try to get away. This is a very ineffective way of trying to fight the monster (they will know the head's approximate location, but be fighting an *invisible* monster and be prone to forgetting what they are doing/writing it off as a bout of madness), but can be used as a warning system. Perhaps the characters will keep a note on their arms saying "when the cat freaks out, it is watching".

Mirrors. Viewing the false hydra indirectly through a mirror can work, though characters will forget seeing it after a short moment. Still, if they are given enough/raid empty houses, they can gather handheld mirrors for the whole party. They can ignore the hydra's song as long as it is reflected in a mirror they can see at the start of their turn, but have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Spells. Though anti-invisibility spells won't work, anti-charm spells might. Reasonable spells of levels 3+ can have some effect; perhaps the character shrieks out and yells "it's right there AAAH" and promptly forgets about it, or they see glimpses of fleshy limbs throughout the day. They cannot gain immunity to the song in this way, however; rather, give them a +2 bonus on Wisdom saves.

Silencing spells, meanwhile, could be very effective. While a character is deafened, they are immune to the song.

Potential usable spells: *Arcane Eye*, *Detect Evil/Good*, *Dispel Evil/Good*, *Foresight*, *Protection from Evil/Good*, *Silence*, *True Seeing*

Be Louder than the Hydra. This is false information; the hydra's song pierces through all other sounds. However, singing brazenly or standing together and yelling at the unseen can strengthen

willpower, so perhaps grant the characters a one-time Wisdom save advantage.

Cut the Necks. This is an effective fighting method.

Deafen Yourself. This method is the one used by the illithids, and it works; deafened characters are immune to the hydra's song and can see it normally. Covering one's ears, singing loudly, or even stuffing them won't work, however; the cover needs to be complete to block the song. Consider granting characters advantage on saves if they have near-perfect auditory blocks.

Sounding for it. Knowing that the hydra physically exists around them, the party might try sounding the monster out. For example, they could walk along all roads and see when they trip, or swing a chain around. Note that someone who trips over a neck would confabulate and forget this, but another person witnessing this might notice something is off. The hydra can only be noticed indirectly.

In the end, this method is very ineffective at fighting the monster, but it could help confirming its presence and learn more Information.



Surface Battle

Most likely, the party will apply some of the methods listed above, see the heads sprouting from several locations around the town square, and fight it there. This is well and fine; they can fight the hydra on the surface.

Allies. Few people are ready to aid the party. Perhaps some guards can be convinced, and Vagast - if he is still sane - could give some fire support. The illithids will not come out into the open.

Fighting

Run the battle normally, keeping in mind the hydra's body remains out of reach; there are only heads and necks to fight. Keep the battlefield large and use the necks' high mobility to the hydra's advantage. If the party starts teaming up on one neck, it will retract and pop up again somewhere else.

When most of the heads have been cut or severely damaged, the hydra will retreat them underground to its lair. It will continue singing, however.

If the party has no clue about how to find the lair and the hydra is close to metastasis, a Storehouse clerk comes running and gasps, *"in the library... look for a door... it is below you."*

Failing the Fight

It is completely possible that the party loses to the hydra, perhaps because they attacked it prematurely. In that case, give them options to get out, perhaps by running away and soon afterwards succumbing to the song once more and forgetting about the fight.

You can allow the heads to drag lone unconscious characters underground, eating them but in exchange staying out of the fight. As long as there isn't a TPK, there are a few backup characters available:

Wizard. Vagast, even in his mad state, might convince himself to stand and fight, grudgingly joining the party.

Rogue/Ranger. Some unexpectedly physically capable Storehouse mind-slaves might be sent to help the party fight. They don't want to waste themselves, though, as servitude comes before sacrifice.

Paladin/Cleric. Tieans Garfendale, a loyal follower of Tempus, might throw off the yoke of the song and help the party fight the monster.

Fighter/Barbarian. Some town guards might join.

Miscellaneous. Fresh adventurers could enter the city in their travels.

The Lair

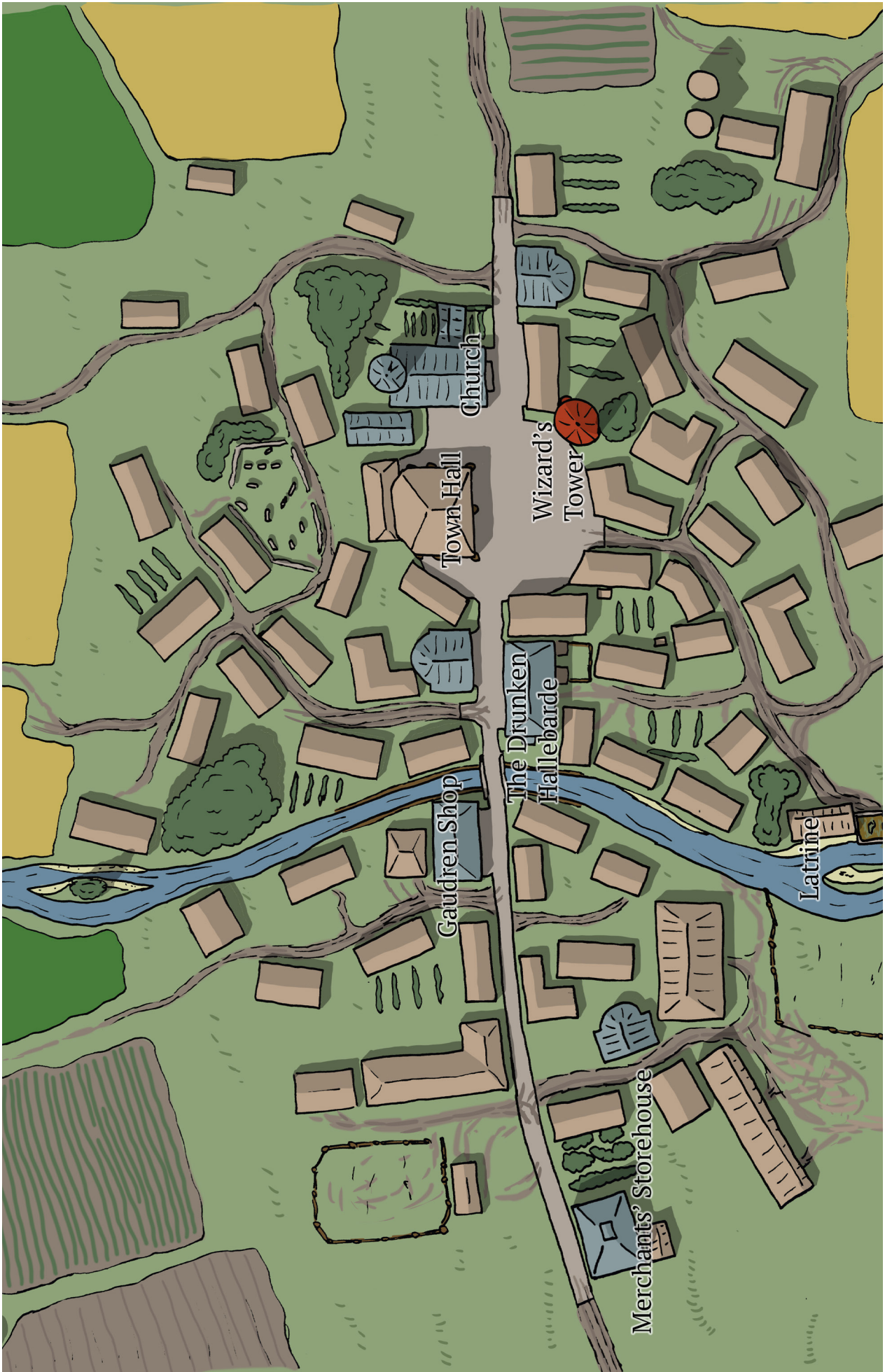
The false hydra's real lair is located in a room below the town square, once a weapons and food stash. It is connected to the wizard's library by a long, dark corridor, which features one small grated window opening up onto the town square and a barred and hidden door leading into the library.

The party might reach the hydra's lair by randomly discovering it, tracking it down, or by pursuing the wounded hydra. In any case, the monster does not retreat further.

Fighting

The storage room is quite large - about 75 feet on one side - but is only 10 feet high and features several stone columns. The hydra's bloated body sits in the centre, likely filling much of the area, while its heads can burrow beneath and above it, granting them some mobility and cover.

When characters attack the main body, describe the splashing and rending of flesh, and actually reduce the surface it fills. When heads are cut off, let them and their necks lie in the way, forming difficult terrain. The false hydra is huge, and fighting it should have a real effect on the terrain.



References

The Monster of Hauthenoy was published by the [Many Isles](#). You can download it from the QR code on the last page.

Credits

Thank you to [goblinpunch blog's article](#) for the inspiration.

We used Rachel Morgan's [The Fase Hydra](#) product on DMs Guild as inspiration for our stat blocks.

We used [homebrewery.naturalcrit.com](#) for the monster stat blocks.

Additional thanks to u/Corberus, u/SunfireElfA-maya, and the Many Isles community for feedback.

Images

Title page: [village square](#) by Vitya83 on DeviantArt

Wizard: [image](#) by obsidian portal

Tavern: taken from Genshin Impact

Spooky hydra: image on goblinpunch's blog

Hydra head: image on goblinpunch's blog

Dark hydra: image on goblinpunch's blog

Further Resources

If you're into minis, schlossbauer created an awesome [false hydra miniature](#) on thingiverse.

Monster Stat Blocks

Stat blocks for the juvenile, mature, and seven-headed false hydras.

JUVENILE FALSE HYDRA

Large aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 100 + 50/head

Speed 5 ft.; burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)

Condition Immunities. blinded, charmed, deafened, grappled, prone, stunned

Damage Vulnerabilities. fire

Saving Throws. Wisdom +9, Charisma +9

Senses passive perception 19; darkvision 120 ft.

Languages All languages of its victims

Bling Song. (Activated with Sing Action) All hostile creatures within hearing range of the Hydra must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw at the start of their turn. If the Hydra sings with more than one head, the creature must subtract 1d4 from their saving throw. On a failure, the creature forgets the Hydra is there.

Deafened creatures are immune to this effect.

Multiple Heads. The hydra has between 1 and 2 heads. If it takes more than 22 damage, or a critical hit, to a neck, it must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw; on a failure, that head is severed and the hydra loses 30 hit points. If the hydra has no heads left, it dies.

Reactive. For each head the false hydra has beyond one, it gets an extra reaction that can be used only for opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The Hydra can make one claw attack and as many bite attacks OR Sing actions as it has heads on its turn.

Claw. Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d8) slashing damage.

Bite. Melee Attack: +7 to hit, reach 15ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Sing. Instead of biting, the hydra can sing with its head. This triggers the *Blind Song* effect during the next round.

Bonus Actions

Regrowth. The hydra can use a bonus action to begin regrowing a head that has died. It takes three Regrowth bonus actions to fully regrow a head. It regains 20 hit points each time it uses Regrowth.

MATURE FALSE HYDRA

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 150 + 50/head
Speed 5 ft.; burrow 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	21 (+5)	21 (+5)

Condition Immunities. blinded, charmed, deafened, grappled, prone, stunned
Damage Vulnerabilities. slashing, fire
Saving Throws. Wisdom +10, Charisma +10
Senses passive perception 20; darkvision 120 ft.
Languages All languages of its victims

Blind Song. (Activated with Sing Action) All hostile creatures within hearing range of the Hydra must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw at the start of their turn. If the Hydra sings with more than one head, the creature must subtract 1d4 from their saving throw. On a failure, the creature forgets the Hydra is there. **Deafened** creatures are immune to this effect.

Multiple Heads. The hydra has between 3 and 6 heads. If it takes more than 25 damage, or a critical hit, to a neck, it must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw; on a failure, that head is severed and the hydra loses 30 hit points. Individual heads can move up to 15 feet during the hydra's turn. If the hydra has no heads left, it dies.

Reactive. For each head the false hydra has beyond one, it gets an extra reaction that can be used only for Wail and opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The Hydra can make two claw attacks and as many bite attacks OR Sing actions as it has heads on its turn.

Claw. Melee Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10ft., one target.
Hit: 5 (1d8) slashing damage.

Grapple. If the Hydra succeeds on a claw attack, it can choose to grapple the target instead of dealing damage. (The hydra can only grapple one creature at a time and can not use its claw attack while grappling a creature.)

Bite. Melee Attack: +9 to hit, reach 15ft., one target.
Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Sing. Instead of biting, the hydra can sing with its head. This triggers the *Blind Song* effect during the next round.

Bonus Actions

Regrowth. The hydra can use a bonus action to begin regrowing a head that has died. It takes three Regrowth bonus actions to fully regrow a head. It regains 20 hit points each time it uses Regrowth.

Reactions

Wail. After taking damage, the hydra can use a reaction to wail with one of its heads. Creatures within 5ft of the head when it wails takes 2d4 psychic damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The hydra regains spent legendary actions on the start of its turn.

- **Hide Head.** The hydra buries one head. Buried heads cannot take actions, but also cannot be attacked.
- **Emerge Head.** A buried head appears in an empty space and attacks a creature within range.



SEVEN-HEADED FALSE HYDRA

Gargantuan aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 550
Speed 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	21 (+5)	24 (+7)

Condition Immunities. blinded, charmed, deafened, grappled, prone, stunned

Damage Vulnerabilities. slashing, fire, acid

Saving Throws. Wisdom +11, Charisma +13

Senses passive perception 21; darkvision 120 ft.

Languages All languages of its victims

Bling Song. (Activated with Sing Action) The false hydra casts *dominate monster* in a 200 foot radius around each of its singing heads. The Wisdom save is 13 + 2 for each singing head. Blind Song can be used again without breaking concentration, but ends whenever a creature does not hear the song.

Deafened creatures are immune to this effect.

Multiple Heads. The hydra has 7 heads. If it takes more than 25 damage, or a critical hit, to a neck, it must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw; on a failure, that head is severed and the hydra loses 30 hit points. Individual heads can move up to 15 feet during the hydra's turn.

If the hydra has no heads left, it dies.

Reactive. For each head the false hydra has beyond one, it gets an extra reaction that can be used only for Wail and opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The Hydra can make two claw attacks and as many bite attacks OR Sing actions as it has heads on its turn.

Claw. Melee Attack: +10 to hit, reach 15ft., one target.
Hit: 9 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Grapple. If the Hydra succeeds on a claw attack, it can choose to grapple the target instead of dealing damage. (The hydra can only grapple one creature at a time and can not use its claw attack while grappling a creature.)

Bite. Melee Attack: +10 to hit, reach 20ft., one target.
Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Sing. Instead of biting, the hydra can sing with its head. This triggers the *Blind Song* effect during the next round.

Bonus Actions

Regrowth. The hydra can use a bonus action to begin regrowing a head that has died. It takes three Regrowth bonus actions to fully regrow a head. It regains 20 hit points each time it uses Regrowth.

Reactions

Wail. After taking damage, the hydra can use a reaction to wail with one of its heads. Creatures within 10 ft. of the head when it wails takes 2d4 psychic damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The hydra regains spent legendary actions on the start of its turn.

- **Hide Head.** The hydra buries one head. Buried heads cannot take actions, but also cannot be attacked.
- **Emerge Head.** A buried head appears in an empty space and attacks a creature within 10 ft.
- **Wail.** All creatures within 20 ft. of one emerged head take 2d4 psychic damage.

The Many Isles

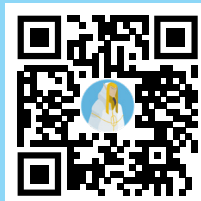
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