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“Beyond the Grave: The legends and lore of the wight, wraith, and mummy”

By Tom Moldvay — Dragon #198 (October 1993)

New layout by Steve Stewart.

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# Undead, Vartha

DRAGON #198

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<b>CLIMATE/TERRAIN:</b>	Any
<b>FREQUENCY:</b>	Very rare
<b>ORGANIZATION:</b>	Solitary
<b>ACTIVITY CYCLE:</b>	Any
<b>DIET:</b>	Nil
<b>INTELLIGENCE:</b>	High (13)
<b>TREASURE:</b>	Varies
<b>ALIGNMENT:</b>	Any

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<b>NO. APPEARING:</b>	1 or 2-12
<b>ARMOR CLASS:</b>	0
<b>MOVEMENT:</b>	12
<b>HIT DICE:</b>	9 + 18 (63 hp)
<b>THACO:</b>	7
<b>NO. OF ATTACKS:</b>	3/2, by weapon type
<b>DAMAGE/ATTACK:</b>	2d4 + 5
<b>CRIT. HIT/FUMBLE:</b>	65%(+25%)/35%
<b>SPECIAL ATTACKS:</b>	Spellcasting, magical items
<b>SPECIAL DEFENSES:</b>	Immunity to some spells
<b>MAGIC RESISTANCE:</b>	Nil
<b>SIZE:</b>	M (5'-7')
<b>MORALE:</b>	Fearless (20)
<b>XP VALUE:</b>	18,000

Vartha means "guardian spirit." It is one of the few undead that are not necessarily malign. A vartha is a guardian spirit in many senses. It can be a spirit conjured or cursed to protect a specific area or treasure. It can also be a spirit that appears to aid a character in times of need. Lastly, it can be a spirit sent to hunt down wrongdoers. A vartha does not share the generally gruesome appearance of the undead. It looks like a newly dead corpse, after the body has been treated by a mortician.

**Combat:** A vartha has high attribute scores (Str 18/75, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 15, Ego 15, Obs 17, San n/a). It wears *partial plate armor* +2 (AC 2) and wields a *morning star* +2. The magical items and attribute scores have been calculated into the vartha's statistics.

While it is undead, a vartha should otherwise be treated as a fighter/cleric with the following clerical



spells, each of which can be cast at the rate of one spell per round, once each per day: *bless*, *command*, *detect evil*, *light*, *remove fear*, *sanctuary*; *augury*, *detect charm*, *hold person*, *know silence 15' radius*; *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *locate*, *remove curse*; *detect lie*, *tongues*; and *commune*.

A vartha can be of any alignment. One of evil alignment may have the reverse of appropriate spells (e.g., *curse* instead of *bless*). A vartha is not affected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *cold*, *electricity*, *poison*, or *death magic*. A *resurrection* spell returns it to life as a 9th-level fighter/9th-level cleric. If the vartha serves anyone voluntarily, it need not make a save vs. spells against the *resurrection* spell, and the spell automatically works. The chance for a cleric to turn a vartha is the same as the chance to turn a spectre.

**Habitat/Society:** Vartha vary in motivation. A vartha guarding its own treasure may have voluntarily become undead through greed. A vartha forced to guard a treasure not its own may be under a *curse* or commanded by a more powerful being. A vartha sent by the DM to help a character may be that character's

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guardian spirit, perhaps an ancestor. A vartha hunting down a wrongdoer may have been a marshal in life, continuing its mission after death. Vartha do share one personality trait: they are all highly motivated, even driven, whatever their purpose.