

Jeeber



Tiny Vermin

Hit Dice: 2d8 (8hp)
Initiative: +4
Speed: Fly 30 (Good), Climb 10.
AC: 18 (+2 size, +4 Dex mod, +2 natural armor)
Attacks: +5 Sting
Damage: Sting 1d4 (see poison)
Face/Reach: 2 1/2 ft by 0 ft / 0 ft
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Vermin, Fire Resistance 1

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1.
Abilities: Str 3, Dex 18, Con 10
Int --, Wis 11, Cha 6.

Climate/Terrain: River/Swamp
Organization: Solitary, or group (1d6 + Queen [see Queen entry])
Challenge Rating: 1
Alignment: Always Neutral
Advancement: ----

No time in my life has ever been as stressful as my first run in with what at first seemed a harmless insect.

What began as an adventure became a travesty; punctuated equally with moments of boredom and hopelessly perilous engagements. My first foray up the Black River was by steamer, but due to some small disagreements with the Corvis Port Authority I had to find a less than reputable steamship guide. This led me into the company of a man I would spend scattered years following around, Jaechem Caradin.

A smuggler by trade, Jaechem had already dug, waded and swam through many of the environments I was seeking out in my journey. Alas, none of those traits came in handy when our furnace went out one fateful night.

We were sleeping with one of the steamer's groggy crewmen watching the fire and omnipresent clouds of buzzing insects. Needless to say, the idiot fell asleep, and next thing I knew, I awoke tilted on my side, our steamship beached at the edge of the river and half the crew missing. Between bouts of cursing on mine and my guides' parts, we found that on further investigation, the fire had also gone out. With careful hands, we propped the grill open and saw the bulk of what appeared to be a carapace. Attached were two glossy red tinted wings. In fact, the chimney was full of them and the fire had been smothered by lack of air! Naturally, I found this to be fascinating enough to try and gather a specimen. What a fool I was when I was younger.

I pulled out one of the creatures, which I was later informed to be what Jaechem called a "Jeeber". Grasping it aloft with a pair of coal tongs, it shimmered with tremendous radiance in the wings and a dull grey-

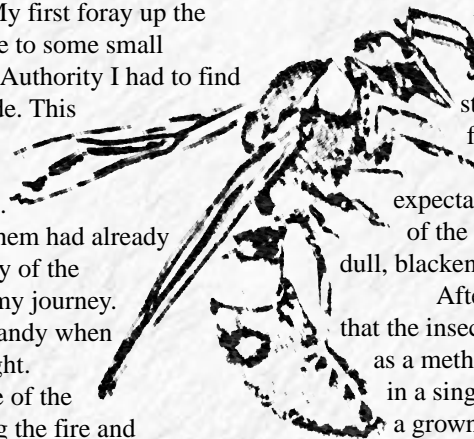
black sheen through the body. It was nearly as hot as an Ogrun's forge, about the size of a raven, and weighed in around the heft of a chicken fattened for Founders Day.

Much to my immense and heartfelt surprise, the specimen hadn't died in the furnace as I had thought, but had rather gone into a deep and euphoric sleep. We had distressed it so much that it, in fact, took a stab at Jaechem with its stinger the size of a knifeblade. Dodging back from it, we stuck it down below water level in hopes of drowning it. Well exceeding my expectations, we watched water boil off the surface of the river for a few moments and then removed a dull, blackened husk that looked years dead and hollow.

After a time, and some examination I determined that the insects inject a strong poison into their victims as a method of hunting. Also, that with enough drones in a single swarm, they might in fact be able to drag a grown man back to their nest, more easily a gobber. We set out into the marshland on foot immediately.

We located the hive the Jeebers had dragged our companions to, only to find corroded skeletons smoking and malformed on the ground around a massively bloated queen clutched to a dead tree. Before our very eyes, we witnessed a swarm being birthed in the form of a large firey pearl of plasmic fluids from the queen's tail undercarapace. Shortly after, we were occupied by a swarm of barely 4 inch long newborns that drove us to the river's edge. With luck, I was able to trap this specimen between my pages as we escaped up river on our boat, less half a crew.

I opened the pages again later to find it had burned an impression but left little except dust. I hope to someday go back to this region to find out how it was they managed to dissolve and ingest our crewmates so quickly.



Combat

Jeebers are unthinking killers with methodical strategies bred into them through many generations of birth, war and death. When it comes to these pests, 'tried and true' could be their motto for they tend not to improvise very well. Their motivation? Heat. As of birth, a Jeeber has been fighting and killing to stay warm in any way it can, through consumption of vital fluids or jamming itself into a furnace.

By itself, a single Jeeber will attempt to get in close to a target before making its presence known, ambushing from perches on tree trunks when adventurers pass by or dropping from branches to sting someone. In larger groups, they become more bold and attack in the open. When there is a queen nearby, well, all regard for personal safety becomes mute and they'll grind themselves against your defenses until all of them, or all of the adventurers, are dead.

A Jeeber will do everything it can to poison a target and begin the digestion process, trusting its paralysis effects to take hold. Once a creature has died from numerous stings, and poison, the newly cooked fluids are drained from the victim through a long lacerating mouth snout.

Poison (Ex): A Jeeber's poison requires it penetrate the body and once there it raises hell. Initially as a fever of amazing degrees, a rousing bout of regurgitation of one's last meal and then paralysis. In reality, the poison is partly an acid and beyond simple paralysis, it begins digestion. (Paralysis, 1d6 Dexterity, DC 11)

Special Note: A queen carries all of the stats of a standard Jeeber, with these changes: 4HD (24hp), CR 3, Intelligence 9, Poison (Narcotic [as Confusion spell, for rounds equal to 5 minus the victim's Constitution modifier], 2d6 Constitution, DC 14), Sting +6 (1d6 damage).

Treasure

The areas directly around a queen's lair or hive are often talked about as being more rich in simple artifacts than archeological digs from the Orgoth Empire. The corpses, hollow husks, don't have their garb absorbed like their organs, and as such it tends to lay around well after corpse degradation has past.

Also, some Wizards find the paste located in a Jeeber's tail to be quite effective for both alchemy and spellwork, fetching up to 150 gp depending on their state. Since Jeebers tend to burn up inside as they die and leave only a husk, Jeebers are most valued alive. A single live one may fetch up to 400 gp.

An enterprising fellow able to kill a queen and

locate the seediest sort of alchemist to work for them, could distill the hallucinogenic fluids of a queen's tail. A single queen can produce up to 10 vials, which at the highest purity can fetch 200 gp per vial on the right (illegal) market. I'd try Five Fingers, or Cryx.

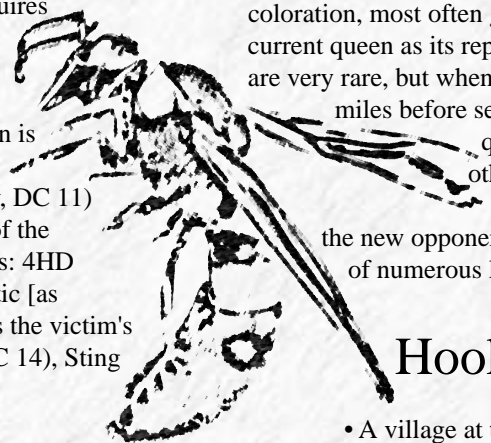
Legends & Lore

COMMON: Jeebers are a pest native to the swamps of Cygnar, with only a very few ranging far enough north to be seen wandering the Khadoran-Cygnaran border.

UNCOMMON: In some ways like a lightning bug, a Jeeber is said to glow faintly red when viewed in perfect darkness and they crave heat, which will make one glow brighter. Willing to go after heat in any manner necessary, they can be quite dangerous to unmoving furnaces, occasionally getting caught and held within the belly of a steam beast.

RARE: The innards of a Jeeber's lower body and stinger can be reduced through distillation to duplicate the effects of their poison. It is rumored that the distilled essence of a queen's stinger fetches high title at private auction in Five Fingers.

OBSCURE: A drone of very particular coloration, most often green, will leave the hive of a current queen as its reproductive instincts kick in. They are very rare, but when they venture out they can go for miles before setting up a hive of their own. If two queens get within a mile of each other, they will smell one another and begin sending their drones to kill the new opponent. This has led to the devastation of numerous large hives.



Hooks

- A village at the edge of the Black River has infected with a strange illness that gives victims chills and palsy. The village elder is an herbalist and speaks about Jeeber poison. It may be hot enough to counteract the illness. If only they could get enough of it...

- A crime lord by the name of Wilson Ren has caught wind of the uses for Jeeber poison as a drug and offers up a bounty of 200 gp per Jeeber queen brought to him alive.

The pests put off enough heat to warm a tea tin, though it may take hours. Only trick would be convincing one to stay still. -- VP