

## DEMONIC POSSESSION

Sometimes a fiend with at least 4 Hit Dice and a Charisma score of at least 13 has the supernatural ability to shuck its physical form and take on an incorporeal one that enables it to possess other creatures—or even objects. Its incorporeal form has the immunities normal to that creature subtype (see *Monster Manual III* 214 for details). When such a fiend possesses a creature or object, even force effects no longer affect it. Only certain spells and abilities can affect a possessing fiend (see Exorcism, page 26, for details). Any other sort of attack—magical or otherwise—directed against the fiend affects the possessed creature or object instead.

While a fiend is in incorporeal form, its corporeal body (assuming it has one) lies senseless, as if in a state of suspended animation. The body does not require food or air, but direct damage or exposure to an extreme environment can kill it. A fiend can roam incorporeally as long as it desires, but it dies if its body is destroyed. If a fiend's body is attacked or moved while it is in this state, the fiend becomes immediately aware of the

tampering and can return to its body as a free action. Furthermore, successfully casting *dispel magic* (or a similar effect) on its body forces it to return instantly to that vessel. The caster level for a fiend's possession ability is equal to its Hit Dice. A fiend with this ability has a Challenge Rating 2 higher than standard fiends of its kind. For example, a succubus with the possession ability is CR 9 rather than CR 7.

A fiend can only move about in its incorporeal state on the plane where its body lies in stasis and the Ethereal Plane. Thus, a demon using this ability while its body is on a layer of the Abyss cannot possess a creature on the Material Plane.

A fiend in this incorporeal form that moves around on its body's plane has no access to its normal suite of abilities. It has its normal hit points and saving throw bonuses, but it lacks its extraordinary, supernatural, and spell-like abilities. It does retain its normal suite of melee attacks, but they are made as melee touch attacks, and it does not add its normal Strength bonus on damage rolls (since it has no Strength score while incorporeal). While incorporeal on the Ethereal Plane, it has its full range of special attacks and special qualities, attacks normally, and deals full normal damage. If a fiend's incorporeal form is destroyed, the creature's physical form remains in its comalike state for one week while its incorporeal essence reforms. After that time, it either awakens and can resume a normal physical existence, or it can launch its incorporeal form back onto the Ethereal Plane to seek out yet another host body.

A fiend with the possession ability can move between its body's plane and the Ethereal Plane as often as it likes as a free action. Once a fiend is on the Ethereal Plane, it floats through the world insubstantially, seeking a target to possess. If it moves to a plane other than the Ethereal Plane in this form, it is visible, but appears as a ghostly duplicate of its normal physical form. Making a possession attempt is a supernatural ability that the fiend can use at will as a standard action. If a victim successfully resists a possession attempt, it is aware that some outside entity forcibly attempted to gain control of its body, but not the source of the attack.

## POSSESSED CREATURES

To use its possession ability, a fiend must be adjacent to its desired target and in incorporeal form. A *protection from evil* spell (or similar effect) makes any creature immune to possession attempts. An unprotected target must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha

modifier) to avoid possession. An evil target takes a –2 circumstance penalty on this saving throw, and a target that is actually committing an evil act at the time of the attempt takes a –4 circumstance penalty. The DM can roll the saving throw secretly to prevent a player from knowing whether or not his character has become possessed. Once a creature makes a successful save against possession, that fiend cannot attempt to possess that creature again for 24 hours. On a failed save, the victim is possessed.

A fiend in possession of a body becomes part of the victim. It is aware of what is going on around the creature whose body it possesses and can see and hear as well as its victim can. A possessing fiend can, at any time, speak mentally to the creature it possesses in a language that creature can understand, although if the victim isn't very intelligent, its comprehension might be limited.

A creature possessed by a fiend doesn't always know that it is possessed. Furthermore, a fiend can attempt to hide its presence within the possessed creature, so that it can pass through a *magic circle against evil*, enter a *forbiddance*-warded church, or escape detection by a *detect* spell or effect. To hide its presence, the fiend must succeed on a special "mental" Hide check using its Intelligence modifier rather than its Dexterity modifier. The DC for this check is 10 + level of the spell from which it wishes to hide + spellcaster's relevant ability modifier (just like the saving throw DC of a spell). The fiend gains a +4 circumstance bonus on its Hide check if it is not currently controlling the victim.

A possessing fiend has immediate access to all of its victim's current thoughts, as though using the *detect*



*An ill-fated victim of possession . . .*

Illus. by W. O'Connor

thoughts spell, except that it automatically reads surface thoughts. If desired, a possessing fiend can probe the possessed creature's memories as well, but the victim is allowed a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier) against this effect. If the save is successful, the victim keeps the fiend out of his thoughts for 24 hours. Whether the save succeeds or fails, probing memories automatically reveals the fiend's presence to the victim.

Physical harm to the possessed creature does not harm the fiend. Killing the possessed victim forces the fiend's incorporeal form back onto the Ethereal Plane, but it is unharmed and can attempt a new possession whenever it desires. Not even other incorporeal creatures can harm a possessing fiend.

A fiend possessing a creature can take any one of six roles with respect to its victim: ally, controller, enemy, mutterer, rider, or transformer. The fiend can switch from one role to another as a free action.

**Ally:** If the victim is aware of the possessing fiend and willing to serve as its host, the fiend can grant a +4 profane bonus to any one of the possessed creature's ability scores. This bonus is granted at the conclusion of a bargaining period between the fiend and the possessed creature (they can communicate telepathically with each other). The fiend is in control of this bonus and can take it away as a free action if the possessed creature fails to act in a desired manner. If the possessed creature continues to disobey the fiend's instructions, the fiend can go from ally to controller or from ally to enemy as a free action.

**Controller:** In the most feared form of possession, a fiend can take a standard action to attempt direct control over its victim's actions. The victim must succeed on a Will saving throw every round (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier + 1 for each previous failed save against control that day) to avoid losing control of its own body.

A successful save indicates that the victim has resisted the fiend, but the fiend can make another control attempt in the next round. A creature struggling against control is staggered (DMG 301) and can take only a single action in a round (either a move action or standard action). If the possessed creature makes three consecutive successful saving throws, the possessing fiend can make no further attempts to control it for 24 hours. However, the fiend still possesses

the creature, regardless of the success or failure of any saving throws against control.

If the possessed creature fails the Will save against control, the fiend has access to all the creature's senses, abilities, skills, feats, and spell knowledge. The fiend now acts as though it is the possessed creature in all respects until control is relinquished or lost. During this time, the possessed creature can still communicate mentally with the fiend and receives all sensory input normally, unless the possessor takes a standard action each round to block the possessed creature's access to its senses.

If the fiend wishes, it can cause the victim to lose consciousness as a standard action (no save).

This condition persists as long as the fiend remains in control or until it chooses to return the victim to consciousness (a standard action).

While in control, the fiend uses its own Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, but it adopts all the possessed creature's physical ability scores. If a fiend with at least 9 Hit Dice and an Intelligence score of 15 or higher can maintain control for at least 10 rounds per day for seven consecutive days, it can also draw upon the possessed creature's spell-like abilities and use them at the same caster level as the possessed creature did. The fiend retains the victim's type and is affected by spells and effects as if it actually were the possessed creature. Thus, a demon-possessed wolf is subject to spells that affect animals, even though it is more intelligent than a normal wolf.

The possessing fiend automatically maintains control of its victim for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier + 1 for each time the fiend has controlled this specific creature before. When the fiend's control lapses, it can attempt to reassert control if it chooses.

Fiends often choose weak-willed creatures, such as golems and other constructs, for their possession attempts. A construct can make a Will save just like any other creature to avoid possession, but it is likely that a possessing fiend can take and retain control because most constructs have poor Will save modifiers. A fiend possessing a construct can aid it as described in the ally entry (see above) but must relinquish direct control to do so, allowing the construct to revert to its prior programming.

**Enemy:** The opposite of an ally, this sort of possessor is a serious hindrance to its victim. The possessing fiend usually takes this role after failing to control its victim, or when the victim has made it angry by failing to follow its directives while it was acting as an ally. The possessing fiend can impose a -4 profane



... could transform  
horrifically at any time

penalty to any one of the victim's ability scores. The fiend is in control of this bonus and can take it away as a free action. Typically, it removes the penalty after working out an agreement with the possessed creature through telepathic negotiations, and it might thereafter revert to an ally (a free action).

**Mutterer:** A mutterer enjoys planting barely perceived whispers in its victim's mind in an attempt to influence her actions and, with luck, drive her insane. A mutterer has the same characteristics as a rider (see below), except that every so often, the mutterer cajoles, criticizes, warns, or otherwise influences its host. These "mutterings" don't always come in the form of words. Sometimes the demon passes on whatever strong, negative emotion it is experiencing to the victim, causing its host to feel frightened, anxious, angry, or sad without knowing why.

Whenever a character possessed by a mutterer is alone or under extreme stress, the demon might strike (DM's option). The character receives emotions, advice, or other "mutterings" and might feel the desire to act on them or try to "get them out of his head." A character plagued by a mutterer must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier). Failure means the victim must either perform a specific action in response to the demon's mutterings (DM's option) or spend a round befuddled, as if under the effect of a *confusion* spell. A successful save leaves the victim in control of its mind and actions but does not automatically tip the demon's hand—the host might still have no idea that it is possessed.

Mutterers often drive their hosts insane, or at least give them the appearance of insanity because they have a difficult time not talking back to the voices in their heads. Creatures playing host to mutterers often appear agitated or exhausted (since some mutterers deprive their hosts of sleep), and many actually develop physical tics.

**Rider:** Much of the time, a possessing fiend simply rides along with its victim, giving no clue as to its presence. The fiend might combine riding with hiding to get into an area protected by *forbiddance* or slip past a *magic circle against evil* near a target it could not otherwise approach. A fiend in the role of rider might eventually decide to take on the role of ally or controller instead. Doing so makes its presence known to the victim, although a victim with a low Intelligence score might not understand what is happening to it.

**Transformer:** This demon wants to use its host to gain a foothold on the Material Plane. To that end, it utilizes its considerable power to transform all or part of any creature it possesses into its own demonic shape. This process usually takes considerable time and effort on the part of the demon, but the overall effect is devastating.

A transformer demon can attempt only one change per day, and that change can never encompass more than one-quarter of the host's body. Whenever it makes such an attempt, the host must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Con modifier) to resist the change. Failure indicates that some part of the host's body transforms, either becoming identical to the corresponding portion of the possessing demon's normal form or gaining some sort of fiendish physical characteristic (see the Fiendish Characteristics sidebar). Whether the initial save succeeds or fails, the host must immediately attempt a Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier). Success means that she can communicate this transformation (or attempted transformation) to others, and the demon cannot stop her from doing so in any way. Failure means the host attempts to conceal the transformation for as long as possible.

Complete transformation takes at least four days (one for each quarter of the host's body). Once a victim has been completely transformed, the demon has essentially taken the host's place. At that point, the demon has access to all the powers and abilities it normally possesses. The victim is trapped within the demon—effectively functioning as a "rider" in the demon's body—and can neither communicate nor exercise any power.

Transformer demons seldom, if ever, leave their host bodies willingly. Killing a transformer demon slays the host but frees its soul for the purpose of a *resurrection* or *raise dead* spell. A transformer demon cannot be banished once it has fully changed its host, but it can still be exorcised. If the fiend is forced out of the host's body by any means, the victim must attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier). Success frees the character of the demon and returns her body to normal; failure means the victim dies of shock but can be *raised* normally.

Some demon cults consider voluntary transformation a religious rite. In such cases, cultists possessed by transformer demons willingly fail saving throws to resist transformation. As is their nature, however, transformer demons often use full transformation as a "reward" for the cultists offering themselves for sacrifice.

### Using the Levels of Possession

Possessed NPCs can present an entertaining challenge for the characters, but running possessed PCs makes life difficult for the Dungeon Master. However, this situation can be rewarding, as long as the DM allows the player a certain amount of control. The following tips might help.

**Allies and PCs:** Only a rare PC can form an alliance with her possessor and still retain a nonevil alignment. Still, an unwary or desperate PC might try to bargain with a possessing demon. If a deal is struck, the demon should continue to prompt the character to perform more and more evil acts until she either rebels or becomes completely evil (usually becoming an NPC).

**Controllers and PCs:** In general, this sort of possession should be limited to NPCs, since it takes the game out of a player's hands. However, if the DM has reason to suppose that the characters can fight the demon off or the affected PC can resist control on a regular basis, this arrangement can make an intriguing storyline. If possible, allow the player to run the character even while he is possessed, but be careful—few players can truly act chaotic evil with respect to their own parties and still ensure that everyone enjoys the game. On the positive side, a PC/controller relationship can be used to end a demonic possession in a climactic way.

**Enemies and PCs:** The enemy fiend works well as a possessor of PCs. This creature makes life difficult for its victim but does not really prevent her from doing whatever she desires. A player willing to roleplay this situation can add drama to the game for some time (although not indefinitely). Furthermore, an enemy possessor can become an ally (and vice versa) if necessary.

**Mutterers and PCs:** As DM, you might want to pass notes to the affected player or even apply secret modifiers (usually +2 or -2) to the character's d20 rolls to reflect the mutterer's growing influence over the character. If you know that the player in question can handle the intricacies of playing a possessed character, you might want to let him in on the secret early and keep the truth from the rest of the players for a while.

**Riders and PCs:** If the PC has reason to suspect the demon's presence, you might wish to give the player clues occasionally. Otherwise, its presence should remain a secret. Make sure the rider attempts to hide from the PCs whenever necessary.

**Transformers and PCs:** This situation is quite difficult to run, but it offers a great deal of drama. The affected PC usually gains some interesting—if horrific—benefits and might be forced to hide the affliction from others. In addition, she might have to deal with the possibility of a horrible death in a short period of time. When a transformer possesses a PC, all the characters should undergo a rollercoaster ride of situations and emotions as they race against the possessing demon's attempts to transform and permanently inhabit their friend.

## POSSESSED OBJECTS

A fiend can possess a magical or mundane object of at least Tiny size but no larger than Huge. An item that is held, worn, or carried by a character uses its owner's Will saving throw modifier to resist possession. An unattended magic item gains a saving throw as if a spell were being cast upon it. In either of these cases, the Will save DC is  $10 + 1/2$  fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier. A possession attempt automatically succeeds against an unattended, nonmagical item.

A fiend that successfully possesses an object becomes a part of that object. While so joined, the fiend can see and hear to a distance of 60 feet from the object, but it can't use darkvision or blindsight, even if it ordinarily has these abilities. It remains vulnerable to spells that affect outsiders, extraplanar creatures, or evil creatures (such as *holy word* and *holy smite*), as well as mind-affecting spells and abilities. Physical attacks and most spells (such as *fireball*) don't affect the fiend, though they might affect the object. Damaging the object does not harm the possessing fiend, and if the object is destroyed, the fiend simply assumes its incorporeal form and can choose a new host object or creature.

A fiend can attempt to hide its presence within a possessed object in order to pass through barriers, such as a *magic circle against evil* or a *forbiddance* effect, or to escape detection by means of spells such as *detect evil*. To determine its success, use the same rules as you would for a fiend hiding in a creature. If the spell in question ordinarily detects or targets only creatures, the fiend gains a +8 circumstance bonus on its Hide check because it is within an object.

A fiend can also possess a quantity of substance that has no fixed shape (such as a pool of water or a dust cloud) or is part of a larger object (such as a section of wall). The maximum

amount of substance that a fiend can possess in this manner is an area or a volume no larger than 10 feet on a side.

A fiend might choose to possess an item as the first step toward possessing a character. The possessing fiend gets a bonus on attempts to possess a creature that carries, holds, or wears an item that it already possesses. For each consecutive day the possessed item was worn, held, or carried by the target before the possession attempt, the DC for the target's Will save increases by 1 (maximum increase +10).

A fiend possessing an object can take one of four roles with respect to its victim: controller, corrupter, enhancer, or watcher. These roles are defined below. The fiend can switch from one to another as a free action.

**Controller:** The possessing fiend can control the movement of any object with moving parts, such as a wagon, clock, or crossbow. For example, a possessing fiend can make a wagon steer toward a pedestrian on a street or roll out of a stable with no horse pulling it, cause a clock to run slow (or even backward), or make a crossbow cock and fire (but not aim or load itself). Possessed objects with wheels or legs cannot move faster than the fiend could move in its corporeal form.

A possessing fiend with at least 10 Hit Dice and a Charisma score of 17 can force even an object with no moving parts (such as a table or a statue) to animate. The possessed object functions as an animated object (MM 13). However, no fiend can control an animated object that has a Challenge Rating higher than its own.

**Corrupter:** A fiend in the role of corrupter causes the object it possesses to radiate an evil aura of a magnitude equal to its own (see the *detect evil* spell description, PH 218–219). Nothing about the object's appearance suggests that it is possessed. Anyone touching the possessed object must succeed on a Will save (DC  $10 + 1/2$  fiend's HD + fiend's Cha modifier) or be affected as if by a *bestow curse* spell (caster level equals the fiend's Hit Dice). However, the subject does not necessarily know he is cursed or that the effect came from the item. The curse lasts until removed with *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish*, even if the fiend vacates the possessed object. A particularly crafty corrupter fiend might possess a small fountain to bestow its curse on anyone who touches or drinks the water. Similarly, a corrupter might possess a patch of ground, thereby delivering the curse to anyone who walks over it.

**Enhancer:** In the role of enhancer, a fiend can enhance a Tiny or larger weapon or suit of armor as if it were magic simply by possessing it. The fiend can duplicate magic item

## FIENDISH CHARACTERISTICS

When a character gains demonic characteristics—either from possession by a transformer demon or by some other means—certain mechanical benefits or drawbacks might come with his altered limbs. The exact mechanics are up to the DM, but the following table provides a few suggestions.

A character might gain a benefit and no drawback, or a drawback and no benefit, or both a benefit and a drawback (provided that they don't conflict) from a single transformation. Various combinations of effects are recommended for multiple transformations. PCs should not aspire to possession by a transformer demon, since such a creature can kill them fairly easily, given time. But the acquisition of benefits and drawbacks can make the fight against transformation that much more interesting.

Affected Body Part	Benefit	Drawback
Claw/arm/hand	Unarmed damage bonus	Loss of fine manipulation ability
All upper limbs	Strength bonus	Loss of fine manipulation ability
Torso	Natural armor bonus	Resistant to healing
Legs/lower body parts	Speed bonus	Speed penalty
Head	One spell-like ability	Charisma penalty

powers worth 2,000 gp per Hit Die it possesses. For example, a hezrou (9 HD) could possess a longsword and bestow up to 18,000 gp worth of powers on it, causing it to function as a +3 longsword, a +1 unholy longsword, or any other magic longsword whose combined properties are valued at up to 18,000 gp. A fiend possessing a suit of magic armor or a magic weapon can increase the item's powers by the same gold piece value. Beginning on page 216, the *Dungeon Master's Guide* gives prices for various enhancements.

The fiend is in control of the powers it bestows upon the item, and it can take them away as a free action if the creature using the item does not act in a manner that the fiend favors. The object loses all powers bestowed by the possession when the fiend leaves it.

Despite the fiend's ability to duplicate the abilities of magic items, a nonmagical possessed item doesn't actually become magical. *Detect magic* does not reveal an aura, but *detect evil* does. In addition, smart characters might notice that the possessed item behaves strangely or has an unusual appearance. For example, a magic weapon that isn't of masterwork quality is a tip-off that its power stems from an unusual source. In addition, a character who succeeds on a DC 25 Search check while examining the item notes some peculiar feature about it.

**Watcher:** A possessing fiend in the role of watcher can see and hear out to 120 feet as long as the possessed object remains stationary.

### Intelligent Items and Demonic Possession

Demons sometimes possess intelligent magic items, but more often, they simply masquerade as intelligent items. Few tricks make a demon happier than allowing a paladin to think she's just discovered a magic, intelligent sword that she can use to fight evil, then watching her face when she later discovers that her weapon is the home of a creature she has sworn to fight.

A demon possessing a magic item has control over the magic of the item and can turn it on or off at will. The demon might also be able to provide additional enhancements for the item as an enhancer, or even use some of its own powers through the object.

### Exorcism

Possessing demons are tricky creatures. They know they occupy a position both secure and vulnerable while possessing a

creature or object. However, their chaotic nature makes discovery almost a forgone conclusion given time, so most demons rarely grow too comfortable in any host's body. Once discovered, those who can deal with such matters are inevitably summoned, and rather than go gently, most demons would fight attempts to drive them from a prized host. Removing an unwilling demon from a creature or object can be accomplished in but a few ways. Some individuals specialize in such matters. The sacred exorcists (see page 56 of *Complete Divine*) are quite accomplished at driving possessing fiends from their hosts. Unfortunately, these individuals are constantly seeking new signs of possession at the behest of their churches, and far too few of them exist to help as many possession victims as tend to crop up.

That said, spellcasters have a few weapons at their disposal to help deal with these unruly fiends. A few spells, in particular, come in handy when a possessed creature or object is encountered.

*Banishment*, *dissmissal*, *dispel chaos*, and *dispel evil* can all drive a demon from its host's body. In these cases, despite a lack of line of effect, the caster can force a possessing fiend to succeed on a Will save. If it fails, it is not necessarily forced back to its home plane, however. Instead, the incorporeal form of the possessing fiend is driven out of the host and back to the fiend's own body. A fiend driven out in this method can immediately attempt to find its former host however, so this method typically requires a quick *protection from evil* spell cast on the former victim to prevent repossession.

If *protection from evil* is cast on a possessed creature before a demon is driven out, it suppresses the fiend's ability to influence its host for the duration of the spell—the fiend is essentially unable to do anything except leave the host. This is often enough of a solution to drive a demon from the host's body. Many lack the patience to wait even the short amount of time it takes for the spell to wear off.

In addition, the *exorcism* spell, found on page 92 of this book, specifically allows a cleric or paladin to drive an offending fiend from a host's body. While the spell is far more specialized than those spells previously mentioned, its focus makes it probably the best tool of the job (short of finding a sacred exorcist).

## WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT POSSESSION

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (religion) and Knowledge (the planes) can attempt skill checks to determine what they know about possession. When a character makes a successful skill check, read or paraphrase the following, including the information from lower DCs.

**DC 10:** Fiends can possess creatures and force them to do their will. The motivations of these possessing fiends is as varied as the demons themselves. Evil creatures are more susceptible to possession, but no one is really safe.

**DC 15:** Fiends can also possess objects, although they usually do so to get to people. When a fiend possesses you, it can use you as a puppet, but sometimes it just lurks in your body, whispering dark ideas or waiting for the right moment to take control.

**DC 20:** Fiends that have possessed you still have a body, but they keep it hidden away somewhere safe. The part of the fiend that possesses someone is a sort of apparition version of the demon. Some fiends can warp your body when they possess

you, eventually twisting you into their own physical form and permanently taking over your body.

**DC 25:** The apparition version of a possessing fiend is incorporeal and able to move to and from the Ethereal Plane as it pleases. While moving about incorporeally, a fiend's body is vulnerable to attack, if you can find it.

**DC 30:** If you can trap a possessing fiend's incorporeal body outside the host, you can destroy it, although you need the same kind of magic and weapons to do so as you would if fighting a ghost or shadow. If you attack the fiend's body, it can instantly return to its corporeal form, although this means it has to leave its possessed victim.

**DC 40:** A fiend's body while in its incorporeal state must be on the plane of the creature it possesses. So if your neighbor is possessed, the demon's body is somewhere on the Material Plane. If you destroy a demon's incorporeal, possessing form, the demon goes into a coma for as long as a week, and its body is completely vulnerable during this time.