

THE FLESH WALL

The existence of such a creature calls into question the capability and control of every god in these lands. If they had power, why or how could such a thing exist? The Flesh Wall exists to grow and spread for reasoning beyond mortal comprehension. The wall knows only growth and hunger, it hungers because it grows and grows because it is hungry.

DEVOURING WORLDS FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

Where the abomination originally came from is anyone's guess. Some say it was created by a deranged wizard, others, that some eldritch horror seeded it so it could consume all. What is known is that it grew from a small lump of flesh, with a blinking eye and a few stray teeth, found in a jar. Once a curious being of flesh and bone touches it, it is already too late!

A Spreading Teratoma. A small mass of cells, confused of their purpose and corrupted, cause the cells next to them to follow suit, creating eyes, teeth, hair, mouths and other body parts to grow where they shouldn't. A simple touch is enough to start this process in another creature. Over a period of several months, this initial growth will continue to spread over a creature's body, eventually causing it to be unrecognizable.

The mental influence of the Flesh Wall progresses at a similar rate. As this is a natural occurrence on some levels, it sometimes causes those afflicted to simply hide the anomaly if possible, until it can be dealt with. Whatever the reason one might hesitate to destroy it, it may already be too late, because as the growth spreads, so does its influence.

The First of Many. When the jar was first encountered, its discoverer was overwhelmed with a desire to remove it from the jar, and keep it. When they did, they grew a spreading teratoma. This is when the mental influence began. It started subtly. They were morbidly curious about the growth, often desiring to hold it and feel it pulsate. Their fascination grew until they could think of little else. While this was happening, they were still active in their community, spreading teratomas to everyone they encountered. As their condition worsened, they started to desire an expansion of their physical form. It began with consuming the flesh in the jar. It spread with learning that they could absorb small life forms like bugs and rodents directly through their skin. As time passed, their victims became larger. They began absorbing animals, and their transformation became apparent to those they had not already spread to.

No One is Safe. As these fleshy growths started to spread to other life forms, they compelled those afflicted to touch others with joyful and neighborly handshakes, even pats on the back. From household pets to wild animals, all became infected. With the increase in size and scale, the new growths on infected people implores the hosts to seek out the wall and provide it sustenance, and just as well because by this point, the teratoma is difficult to conceal. Entire communities have enabled the Flesh Wall. Having spread from person to person, the wall uses its influence to varying degrees. Sometimes it embraces and absorbs a person or animal immediately to continue its growth, others it allows to continue life as normal, infecting others and spreading mind-affecting tumors until their growths become difficult to hide. Whatever the case, eventually all is absorbed.

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FLESH WALL

Large aberration, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 5

Hit Points 294 (14d10+70)

Speed 0ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	0 (-5)	20 (+5)	5 (-3)	5 (-3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +9

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Immunities acid, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses tremorsense 30 ft., passive Perception 7

Languages understands Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Gnomish, Goblin, Halfling, and Orc

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Wretched Smell. Each creature that is within 60 feet of the Flesh Wall must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against poison. On a failed save, the creature spends its turn retching and reeling. Creatures that don't need to breathe or are immune to poison automatically succeed on this saving throw. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Flesh Wall's Wretched Smell for the next 24 hours.

Teratoma. A creature that touches the Flesh Wall or makes any kind of bodily contact with someone else who has a Teratoma must make a Constitution saving throw of 17 or contract a Teratoma growth on their body immediately in a random place. Those that are afflicted with a Teratoma and start their turn with 120 feet of the Flesh Wall must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save the creature moves half its speed toward the Flesh Wall and cannot move away from the Flesh Wall. On a successful save the creature moves half its speed towards the Flesh Wall. At the start of its turn, the creature can make another Wisdom saving throw. Fire damage of 5 or more removes all effects of the Teratoma, but leaves it intact.

Actions

Multiattack. The flesh wall makes two attacks. One with its Bite and the second with its Many Arms.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Many Arms. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained. The Flesh Wall can constrict up to three targets in this way.

Absorb. The Flesh Wall absorbs one medium or smaller creature that is grappled by it. The absorbed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the Flesh Wall, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the Flesh Wall's turns. The Flesh Wall is healed by the same amount of damage done to the absorbed creature. The Flesh Wall can have only one target absorbed at a time. If the Flesh Wall dies, an absorbed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 5 feet of movement. Willing creatures can be absorbed without needing to be grappled, however only one creature can be absorbed at a time. An attack against The Flesh Wall that deals fire damage will cause an absorbed creature to be expelled from The Flesh Wall, prone.

Bile and Blood. The Flesh Wall vomits a viscous black bloody ichor in a 15-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In both scenarios, the Teratoma ability is triggered.

SAMPLE STORY BEATS

RUNNING BODY HORROR GAMES

Body horror is a subgenre of horror that is often underestimated. It's not just gross, gory stuff! It's really about the manipulation of the natural state of our bodies, which makes us uncomfortable because we don't have control over the changes, and it's a part of our identity that is changing. Body horror starts with the threat of changes that WILL take place unless avoided. Its best moments are defined by the fact that they aren't acts of immediate violence, but more the after-effects of something that is changing a body; this is similar to a werewolves transformation, or a chestburster from the Alien franchise.

ADVENTURE SETUP

A town beset by thieves and raiders requests the help of a cleric and their apprentice. The cleric disappeared for some time to seek a means to rid the town of their problem. Sometime later, the apprentice returns, noting the lack of raiders to the townspeople. The cleric kept their promise! While they are never seen again, the townspeople celebrate the cleric all while the teratomas spread from apprentice to townspeople to livestock and beyond.

STORY BEATS

- 1. Establish Normalcy / Comfort** In this story of an all-consuming wall we want to start a few or all of the players off having been infected by an innocent handshake. In this stage, our story beats are about trying to contrast the upcoming horrors. They are aiding the growth of an abomination, some knowingly and compulsively and others through their own willful ignorance. On the surface, everything must appear too good to be true.
- 2. Establish Threat / Unease** Here is where you can start to tease that something may be wrong. The whole point to this is to invent some scenarios that could be explained away as odd, curious or circumstantial. This creates curiosity in the party. The animals are almost all gone, and the ones that remain are dead, with a couple strange mutations.

3. Sign Posts / Dread At this stage we want to give the party clear warning signs, as the next steps to come are made even better when there were clear signs presented to run. This is a crucial step. The heroes need to be presented with irrefutable proof that horror is afoot, because they cannot be heroes without seeing the signs but persisting anyways in order to right the wrong. There's people breaking their mental prisons and yelling about the end times, all while the party starts to develop strange mutations of their own. In order to build tension, bounce back and forth between this stage and stage 2. If solid unease and dread are established the payoff will be much better.

4. Impending Doom / Terror This is the height of fear. The party cannot have been confronted by the monster quite yet. As soon as the monster is seen, the tension is released. This stage is all about going over the top without the confrontation. If the monster is not resolved, this terror will spread. There are wildly mutated villagers and animals making their way towards the location of this community's terrible secret. Finish this stage completely before moving on to Attack/Horror.

5. Attack / Horror Now the party sees the monster! Let the players see the physical form of what they have dreaded. This is the final stage and once this has been reached. There is really no going back. The tension has been completely released. If the players fail to win the day or the monster escapes, you can start the process again, but faster. Start back at Unease but move through the stages quickly because the players will not likely gain the same feeling twice unless a new threat has emerged or the original has gotten stronger. This is where the party comes face to face with the Flesh Wall and must destroy it before it absorbs them in its never-ending, unnatural quest for growth.

For more information on running RPG horror stories or the horror matrix, check out the Bones of Horror episodes 1-3 of the Hook&Chance podcast at www.hookandchance.com

Stage / Feeling	Establish Normalcy / Comfort	Establish Threat / Unease	Sign Posts / Dread	Impending Doom / Terror	Attack / Horror
Psychological	Townspeople are friendly and welcoming, joyous of the visiting party	A visiting hunter admits they haven't seen carnivorous animals in days	A screaming villager with momentary clarity screams about visions of a wall that encircles the world collapses at the party's feet	Most of the villagers have disappeared upon the party returning to town	The players with teratomas are being compelled and beckoned to come closer
Unnatural	Townspeople talk of how crime-free the area is, things are good	The priest's original lab location is found along with an empty jar - some teeth and blood remain.	Animals have run away except the ones tied up, which are losing it.	The only life encountered in the forest is wildlife walking in the same direction to the wall.	A 30ft tall wall cuts the forest in half, looming over the party
Gross Out	Small patches of hair are noticed by the party on NPC's	A dead bear, with a few patches of fur growing excessively and extra lower teeth is discovered	The party members that have been touched grow large teratomas	They discover people that are unrecognizable, covered in growths, making their way to the wall	See the evil priest/cleric or remnants of them within the wall, smiling.