

MYSTERIES OF THE BORDER ETHEREAL

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MYSTERIES OF THE BORDER ETHEREAL

As the proverbial 'glue' between the various inner planes, the Ethereal realm overlaps and provides a smoky, mirrored existence of its neighbors. The gray, misty expanse is nearly barren, making it hostile towards most life. Despite that hostility, tenacious humanoids, called ethereans, have managed to eke out a living in small settlements, working together under a strict social contract to ensure their collective survival. Despite this stringent lifestyle, ethereans bring life, light, and color to their blase surroundings, delighting in harmless pranks, dramatic storytelling, and costumed theatrical productions.

For travelers on the Border Ethereal, finding an etherean settlement is always a welcome sight, but is not for the faint of heart. Adventurers on the Ethereal can look forward to a multitude of possible dangers and exciting discoveries, as well as unusual rewards and interactions. Mysteries beyond measure await discovery on the wispy Ethereal Plane for anyone brave enough to venture forth.

LIFE ON THE ETHEREAL

While visiting the Border Ethereal is nothing short of memorable, living there is a different story altogether. The Ethereal's supernatural intangibility with everything outside of it makes it impossible to gather resources or materials needed to survive, even though you may be able to see them clearly on the plane adjacent to you. This means that all travelers to the Border Ethereal are forced to come well-equipped with their own supplies of food, water, and other goods they'll need on their journey.

As a result, life as it's known on the Material Plane and beyond is rarely able to find a foothold on the Border Ethereal, rendering it a desolate and largely empty parallel to other planes of existence. Of course, as with everything throughout history, life and magic will often claw their way into even the most remote corners of the multiverse, and the Border Ethereal is no exception. One plant, oemmock, is known to exist natively to the Ethereal Plane, and over millennia has allowed the plane to become a place where life is possible, but still far from easy.

OEMMOCK

Oemmock is a fragile plant that's too mineral-intensive and frail to thrive on the Material Plane. The stable climate of the Ethereal Plane, coupled with its virtually non-existent life there, makes it the ideal home for this miraculously life-giving plant.

The plant grows as a shrub with dim purple leaves and small white flowers. Most grow to be about 3 feet tall by the time they reach maturity, although some varieties are known to grow taller. A tuber, oemmock's roots resemble a common potato from the Material Plane that has only a fraction of the flavor, but typically offers a wider range of nutrients when eaten. Most oemmock reaches maturity in a year but can be harvested for its roots after only four months. Planting an oemmock seed is as simple as releasing it while your hand is underground.

Oemmock leaves can be reduced to produce a foul-tasting mash or drink called oema, and with age can become mildly alcoholic. When grown near water, oema becomes progressively more clear and flavorless, offering a precious means to collect extra moisture on the Border Ethereal. The material remains of the leaves are spun to weave a silk-like fabric called wylle (pronounced nearly the same as "wheel") and are often dyed using the oemmock's flowers, whose colors change depending on the minerals it has access to from the Material Plane. Similarly, the barkly stalk of the oemmock can be crushed and processed to make planks of wood from its stringy pulp and tough exterior. It's using these materials that buildings and clothes can be fashioned on this otherwise barren plane of existence, providing the majority of what little resources natives to this plane have access to. Structures made from oemmock can't be traveled through like ones on the Material Plane, and as a result, are highly sought after. Similarly, thanks to its trans-planar nature, an oemmock structure remains in place when pushed against if it's affixed to a nearby support on the Material Plane, such as the ground, a tree, or other building.

Varieties of oemmock often serve as a settlement's greatest asset or even, on occasion, export. Some oemmock is grown that sacrifices its edible roots to instead pull in more water from the Material Plane, and can be tapped like a tree to collect and release water into the Border Ethereal. Other varieties have been grown to maximize the amount of bark and pulp that are collected when the plant is harvested, and others still are cultivated to grow thicker or richer potato-like roots. These cultivated plants are highly sought after, and as a result, are also the most closely guarded part of any settlement you can find on the Ethereal Plane.

MOURNINGSTEEL

In areas of intense bloodshed, mineral deposits can become suffused with the forlorn spirits of the creatures who were slain there. Such blood-soaked ore is called mourningsteel, and it's through the same process that a soul can become a ghost that such a metal becomes available to the Ethereal Plane. While mourningsteel is a treasured material for enchantment on the Material Plane, it's perhaps valued even more by those on the Ethereal, who use it for all manner of important, yet mundane purposes there. To that end, it's not uncommon for ethereal opportunists to follow the paths of extraplanar wars in order to capitalize on their generation of potential mourningsteel.

Mourningsteel can be found by anyone who happens across it on the Border Ethereal or Material Plane but it becomes isolated to only one plane immediately after it's found and harvested. For ideas on what kind of mourningsteel magic items you can introduce in your campaign, see the Example Treasure section at the end of this document.

RECOVERED GOODS

Hapless adventurers or reckless mages will often manage to find their way onto the Border Ethereal without a means of returning home. Their belongings almost always become a part of the Ethereal Plane, unless they manage to find a way back before they run out of supplies. More often than not, however, such travelers will meet their ends by starvation, monsters, or the more unsavory denizens of the Border Ethereal.

EXPERIENCING THE BORDER ETHEREAL

The Border Ethereal, much like the Astral Sea, fills in the interplanar gaps of the multiverse. It is the sheet that covers the Material realm, and as such can be reached into and felt throughout it. While it is always right next to you, you can go for an entire lifetime and never once see it.

Those that visit the Border Ethereal should be ready to experience the following dangers and phenomena:

- The Border Ethereal washes against the edges of the Material Plane, becoming a single realm separated by only a thin veil. Some creatures are able to span this veil, such as ghosts or the more monstrous phase spider, but for the most part, the Border Ethereal is the safely removed vantage point from which to witness the Material Plane. The life, landscapes, and sounds from the Material are seen and heard here, albeit only in shades of gray and softly warbled tones. As a result, many Border Ethereal natives enjoy the challenges and theatrics of neighboring civilizations from across the planar barrier and often use it as their primary source of entertainment.
- While sight and sound can traverse the planar shores, smells cannot. While not completely devoid of smell, the Border Ethereal is most often described as having a faint but pervasive odor akin to licorice mixed with the aftermath of a summer storm. Were wind, weather, or temperatures to affect this plane of existence at all, such odors might become more common or varied. As it is, goods known for their odors, both good and bad, are often coveted by those on the Border Ethereal.
- Light cast by a lantern or magical spell on the Border Ethereal doesn't reflect off of nearby surfaces the way it does on the Material Plane. Instead, the light simply moves through whatever is nearby, making visibility a difficult challenge when traveling.
- Gravity's hold over the Border Ethereal is nothing short of tenuous or elective. Dropping an object there doesn't cause it to fall, but merely to remain in place instead, staying there until it's forced to move again by something else. Similarly, walking across the ground on the Ethereal is as normal as it is to fly, moving in whichever direction you will yourself to go.
- Similarly, very few structures prevent travel on the Border Ethereal. Movement through walls, mountains, or other barriers located on the Material Plane poses no resistance to travelers here. However, common folk tales warn children of the Ethereal Plane to be wary when doing so, as to lose your sense of direction when moving through these expansive barriers is extremely dangerous.
- Swirling mists obscure the paths that lead deeper into the Ethereal Plane and away from where it borders alongside the Material. It's through these deeper paths that inter-planar travel between the Prime Material Plane and the others is made possible, albeit not for the faint of heart.

THE ETHEREANS

Bearing a resemblance to the drow from the Material Plane, ethereans are similarly gray-skinned and willowy in stature but have billowing plumes of wispy, mist-like hair. If only

potentially a distant relative to the fey, ethereans have managed to not only scrape together an existence on the Border Ethereal but have done so with vibrance and infectious charm.

Most ethereans live relatively solitary lives amidst their nuclear families for self-preservation but also thrive in social climates wherever song and dance can be found. While ethereal taverns are rarely found outside of larger settlements, it's not uncommon for ethereans to come together and regale one another with melodic songs, far-flung tales, or the pulpy life stories of whomever it is they've been watching recently from the Material Plane. It's through such true-to-life ethereal storytelling that even the most obscure heroes of the Material Plane, whose deeds may have been completely unseen by others, can live on for generations on the Ethereal as beloved ballads.

SECRETIVE FAME.

When visiting the Border Ethereal and interacting with ethereans, consider what secretive deeds your party may have committed that would have been worthy of ethereal gossip or song. Such stories may even precede your arrival there!

ETHEREAN CULTURE

Most ethereans are raised to believe that the struggles of the Border Ethereal pale in comparison to the dangers found elsewhere. In doing so, most of them grow up with a shared sense of kinship with their fellow ethereans and respect a traditionally honor-bound system of law. Within larger settlements, ethereal peacekeeping is more tightly enforced by a punitive system of governance, with most sentences resulting in outright branding and banishment.

In general, ethereans have an advanced appreciation of privacy. On the Border Ethereal where virtually everywhere is traversable, having a shared sense of decency and respect has kept the culture and its people from destroying themselves from within. As a result, most ethereans raised on the Border Ethereal are lawful, but like any humanoid, are capable of evil or good.

Despite their typical law-abiding nature, many ethereans also enjoy setting pranks; perhaps as a result of common ethereal entertainment relying on the lives of creatures beyond the Border Ethereal, or even a leftover trait from a potentially old fey heritage. Such pranks are typically harmless and are always in the spirit of good fun. Classic examples include placing an oemmock plank within a door located on the Material Plane or leaving a small cup of water suspended in the air just in front of the face of a sleeping ethereal. This cultural bend towards the harmless and silly has also led to a history of outlandish names for its regions and towns. Similarly, when an ethereal comes up with a nickname for someone, whether it be for a creature on the Material Plane or a fellow ethereal, it's almost always intended to be frivolous.

Fashions among ethereans will also change depending on their location. Most clothes are made from wylle, although clothes from the Material Plane are highly coveted for either their scarcity or raw materials. Oemmock flowers are frequently cultivated to produce vibrant colors, and in some

cases can create even metallic or iridescent sheens when used as dyes. These colors play heavily in the culture and vivacity of ethereal settlements, as well as form pivotal components of their trade. Against the otherwise colorless Border Ethereal, these shocks of welcome color provide a backbone for the ethereans' appreciation of art and theater, allowing for talented artists and craftsmen to earn comfortable livings making paintings, costumes, and other vibrant fashion.

While most ethereans speak Common, secondary languages and unique details of ethereal subcultures depend largely on who their neighbors are across the veil on the Material Plane. Settlements that neighbor dwarven mines are likely to speak dwarvish and develop similar interests, whereas an ethereal settlement in proximity to a dragonborn metropolis may adopt different traits. Similarly, while religion isn't a widespread practice on the Border Ethereal, those that do practice it tend to follow the deities worshipped by their Material neighbors.

ETHEREANS AND DEATH.

Without means of advanced decomposition on the Border Ethereal, adventures and other creatures that meet their end there will often remain until they're found. When an ethereal wants to permanently dispose of another creature's remains, the only option is to burn them. Since burning oemmock is a resource-intensive procedure, most non-degradable remains are typically salvaged and used as materials in things like paints, adhesives, and, if the creature wasn't humanoid, soups. Ethereal remains are kept in predetermined spaces out of sight—typically somewhere suspended in the ground—until a mass cremation ceremony is necessary. Such events are solemn, even for ethereans, but are carried out in a manner to honor the struggles and lives of the deceased.

ETHEREANS ON THE MATERIAL PLANE

While uncommon, some ethereans manage to willingly find their way onto the Material Plane with a hunger for adventure. While there, these wanderlust-driven humanoids enjoy the fruits of the Material, tending to spend whatever coin they earn on lavish clothes, sumptuous meals, and evocative perfumes. While many will stockpile these goods with the intention to bring them home to their family or sell them on the Border Ethereal, most of these adventurous individuals never choose to return. For them, it's often a point of comfort to know that any number of ethereans across the veil may be watching them on their adventures, either living their lives vicariously or recording their travels to share with others

ETHEREAN SETTLEMENTS

Surviving in the gray wastelands of the Border Ethereal is no easy task, and as a result, very few settlements there are large enough to be called a city. Most settlements would be considered a village or small town by natives to the Material Plane, and even then, most ethereal settlements fall parallel to those existing on the Material. By sharing elements of infrastruc-

ture on the Material Plane for their own purposes, ethereans are able to avoid resource-intensive construction and save their oemmock supplies for other uses.

Beyond such 'shared' settlements, ethereans can also utilize the unique aspects of the Border Ethereal to build their homes in ways that would be impossible on the Material Plane. Unbound by gravity or conventional restrictions like temperature or available land, ethereal settlements can exist wherever they have space and access to valuable resources like oemmock or mourningsteel. Buildings can be easily built above the ground, as their material weight is irrelevant, provided that the structures can be kept in place against the force of whatever footfalls might walk on them. Some settlements choose to instead build in the vicinity of a long-lasting or permanent gateway to the Material Plane. By being established near such entrances to the Material or other planes of existence, some ethereal settlements manage to trade with or take advantage of resources from travelers that find themselves suddenly lost on the Border Ethereal.



EXAMPLE ETHEREAN SETTLEMENTS

The following are a few examples of ethereal settlements that can be placed into your campaign.

Fiddlewren is an ethereal settlement that takes advantage of the breathability of ethereal water, being built entirely on and in the ocean along a rocky, mineral-rich coastline lined with oemmock farms whose flowers produce beautiful, glowing pigments. The ethereans here are fascinated by and mimic the fashion of the ocean's brightly colored and bioluminescent inhabitants. Architecture is similarly designed to showcase the majesty and mystery of the sea. Even compared to other ethereal villages, Fiddlewren is reclusive, using their self-sufficiency and underwater isolationism to provide detachment from the violence that so often plagues the surface of the Ethereal and Material Planes.

Novrembroark is a scattered collection of homes placed by the Ethereal Nexus in the Daruuhma Spires on the Border Ethereal. It's here that ghosts are ushered back into the Material Plane to find their eternal solace at the hands of the monks at Durheim Monastery, although only an elite few are aware of the ethereans' hand in their work. While the work performed by the ethereans of Novrembroark is important, it's through the collective effort of countless other ethereal settlements that ghosts are slowly shepherded there from across the Border Ethereal to be safely released away from ethereal civilization.

Orostead is remarkable in that it is one of the only non-ethereal cities to ever be found on the Border Ethereal. The mages of this lake-top city once channeled their tremendous power to shift it in its entirety from the Material Plane into the Ethereal, avoiding an impending danger there centuries ago. Ever since, when calamity seems imminent, the city has been known to transfer itself back to the Ethereal Plane for safety. While there, Orostead maintains friendly relations and trade with their ethereal neighbors, though their stays have never been long enough to warrant establishing any permanent or regularly scheduled commercial networks. Part of this uncommon relationship is to secure their city's safety while on the Border Ethereal. Since the city only needs to be shunted into the Ethereal when it's already in peril, the mages of Orostead know that the sudden introduction of a city's worth of resources into the Border Ethereal could easily tempt the often resource-deprived ethereans nearby to form raiding parties and endanger the welfare of the city in new

and unexpected ways. To prevent that worst-case scenario, the city is generous with its materials and supplies whenever it crosses back into the Border Ethereal, causing the plethora of ethereal settlements surrounding Orostead to be more well-equipped with resources from the Material Plane than most.

Shimm was established in a particularly arid and sandy desert. Although inhospitable on the Material Plane, the Ethereal mists and fog make Shimm a most unusual oasis. The region is rarely visited, so most who would even attempt to see it from the Material Plane find only mirages and hints of something beyond. Specialty oemmock found here gathers more water than normal with its unusually deep and scraggly roots. Tapping its stalk, like a tree for its sap, causes the plant to release any stored water it has inside.

Twertberg was initially formed as a refuge from the otherwise omnipresent dangers of the world's deepest and darkest caverns. The predators of these underground caverns are terrible, but very few can threaten the city's inhabitants on the Border Ethereal. To that end, many ethereans view Twertberg as a zoo of sorts, where one can observe the unfamiliar dangers of such an environment from complete safety. The settlement is strategically placed by large, luminous patches of bioluminescent fungus that provide the area with the bulk of its light.

Valentas rests in an expansive, snowy tundra. The relative emptiness of such a snowy landscape is fascinating to ethereans, who view this settlement as a meditative place away from the passive but chaotic bustle of the Material Plane. As a result, Valentas experiences more turnover than most ethereal cities, as pilgrims and artists of all kinds journey to and from the settlement's austere environment. Oemmock farmed here produces wylle that's especially rich, but grows food that's even blander to the taste than traditional varieties.

Xyzz, pronounced "Zizz", is an ethereal settlement nestled within an existing Material metropolis. Its people use the structures and buildings of the existing city as their own, living their lives almost entirely in parallel to the ones of those on the other side of the planar veil. Oemmock grown here is almost exclusively for consumption and fabric and has been cultivated to produce more food and oema than traditional varieties.

DISCOVERING ETHEREAN SETTLEMENTS

Because structures and cities built by ethereans aren't visible from the Material Plane, adventurers seeking such settlements must either rely on magic to see into the Border Ethereal or cross over into it entirely. Some settlements may be spoken of in certain circles on the Material Plane, but only vaguely, as many ethereans enjoy their relative secrecy away from the more dangerous problems of the Material. Of course, the simplest means of traveling to an ethereal settlement is with the direction of an ethereal guide, but finding one to lead you may prove more difficult than the trip itself.

While traveling across the Border Ethereal is sometimes dull given its inherent lack of wildlife and color, it can still surprise even seasoned travelers with equal parts danger and opportunity. You can use the following table to help determine random encounters while your adventurers are traveling on the Border Ethereal.



EXAMPLE BORDER ETHEREAL RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

2d6	Encounter
2	A slumber phantom (see Ethereal Stat Blocks)
3 – 4	A portal to one of the inner planes: the Material Plane (20%), plane of fire (15%), water (15%), air (15%), earth (15%), fey realm (10%), or plane of shadows (10%)
5 – 7	2d4 phase spiders (40%), 2d6 ghosts (40%), or 5d6 ether fish (see Ethereal Stat Blocks)
8	A herd of 1d10 nightmares
9	1d4 night hags disguised as traveling ethereans
10 – 11	An abandoned stone and mourningsteel castle of etherean make that's only visible on the Border Ethereal
12	A hammerhead ether-eel (see Ethereal Stat Blocks) and 6d8 ether fish (see Ethereal Stat Blocks)

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Consider including the following scenarios if you wish to introduce ethereans, etherean settlements, or the Border Ethereal into your campaign.

EXAMPLE BORDER ETHEREAL ADVENTURE HOOK TABLE:

d6	Adventure Hook
1	The party needs to enlist the aid of a renowned but reclusive etherean mage, but their tower randomly shifts between several different locations across both the Material and Border Ethereal.
2	A renowned thief has run off with a precious relic, hiding it on the Border Ethereal for safekeeping.
3	The party must journey to the Border Ethereal to rescue an ally that was abducted by a slumber phantom (see Ethereal Stat Blocks).
4	After hearing rumors of ethereans being terrorized by a hammerhead ether-eel (see Ethereal Stat Blocks), the party is promised a bounty of valuable mourningsteel for their help by a frantic etherean.
5	One of the etherean cities holds a repository of extraplanar lore, which is exactly the kind of information the party needs to defeat an otherworldly foe.
6	A villainous, or possibly bored, etherean has been wreaking havoc on the Material Plane, then retreating to the Ethereal to avoid capture.

EXAMPLE TREASURE

Adventures on and around the Border Ethereal can reward characters with ethereal-based items like the *ether spear*, *Lady Phantasma's material anchor*, *phase axe*, *phasing bow*, *purging dagger*, *tether tearer*, *spirit cleaver*, *spirit pike*, or *spirit sheath*, fashion-conscious items like the *book of clothier's croquis*, *charlatan's wardrobe*, *dress of many pockets*, *heart of the sleeveless*, *magnificent pocket vanity* and *pomade of ten thousand styles*, or humor-based items such as the *gravity goblet*, *hat trick*, *scroll of the jester*, *storyteller's stein*, *Talyard the great's wand of power*, *tome of dreams*, *tote of tricky treat sugarbombs*, *wand of merriment*, and *waterskin of voices*. Items from other adjacent planes that have crossed over to the Border Ethereal could also be a perfect fit for adventurers around etherean settlements. Further, any item with "mourningsteel" in its name would be a welcome inclusion on the Border Ethereal, such as the *mourningsteel demi-gauntlets*, *mourningsteel half plate*, and *mourningsteel war banner*.

ETHEREAL MAPS

Maps are available for free, courtesy of Cze & Peku, at thegriffonsaddlebag.com/ethereal.



ETHEREAL STAT BLOCKS

ETHEREAN TRICKSTER

Lawbreakers are uncommon in etherean society, but their stringent laws place very little importance on the possessions of the denizens of other planes. Some ethereans make their living by 'liberating' valuable resources from their neighbors on the Material Plane, usually focusing on commodities not found on the Ethereal. For some, this means retrieving basic food, or raw materials for crafting; for others, it means fine jewelry or exquisite art.

ETHER FISH

These small, silvery fish have developed the ability to shift between the Ethereal and Material Planes as a potent defense against their numerous predators. Ether fish can be found most reliably near bodies of fresh water, although their ability to fly notably adds clouds to the list of possibilities. Students of the Ethereal Plane speculate that the creatures—which have never been observed eating insects, algae, or similar visible food sources—might derive nutrients through environmental absorption.

HAMMERHEAD ETHER-EEL

The Border Ethereal has comparatively little fauna, but there are a select few notable apex predators to be found. Hammerhead ether-eels are one such predator, uniquely adapted to the shifting fog of the Ethereal realm. Their massive size belies their sky-slithering speed, resulting in horrifying tales from the few souls lucky enough to survive such an encounter. Indeed, even hinting at the trademark X-shaped head of this creature among ethereans is seen as taboo, foretelling doom for a settlement.

SLUMBER PHANTOM

Of all the terrifying spirits and terrors that lurk within the Border Ethereal's gauzy embrace, none is more horrific than the slumber phantom. With its completely unknown origins, most people on the Material and Ethereal Planes know only legends of the phantom, calling it a sandman, boogeyman, or other such monikers. Regardless of name, one aspect of the stories is certain: if it decides to haunt your dreams or hunt you physically, you're best off praying to your deity of choice for a swift end.

Undead Nature. A slumber phantom doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ETHEREAN TRICKSTER

Medium humanoid (etherean), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (leather)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The trickster's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible), *minor illusion*
2/day: *invisibility*, *misty step*

Spectral Sight (Recharges After a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the trickster can gain the effects of the *see invisibility* spell for 1 minute or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The trickster makes two attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Etherealness. The trickster enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.



ETHER FISH

Tiny monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover), swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	4 (-3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Amphibious. The fish can breathe air and water.

Ethereal Sight. The fish can see 30 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

ACTIONS

Ether Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage plus 1 force damage.

Etherealness. The fish enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

HAMMERHEAD ETHER-EEL

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 363 (22d20 + 132)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover), swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	20 (+5)	23 (+6)	5 (-3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saves Dex +11, Con +12, Int +3, Wis +8, Cha +8

Skills Athletics +11, Perception +14

Damage Resistances force

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages —

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Amphibious. The hammerhead can breathe air and water.

Blood Frenzy. The hammerhead has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Ethereal Sight. The hammerhead can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Magic Resistance. The hammerhead has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The hammerhead's weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hammerhead makes three attacks: one with its bite, one with its slam, and one with its tail.

Banishing Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by the hammerhead. A swallowed creature is considered to be on the Ethereal Plane, it is incapacitated, and it takes 22 (4d10) force damage at the start of each of the hammerhead's turns. A swallowed creature can make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On a successful save, the creature reappears in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of the hammerhead.

If the hammerhead takes 50 or more damage in a single turn, it must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which reappear in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of the hammerhead. If the hammerhead dies, a swallowed creature can make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. On a successful save, the creature reappears in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of the hammerhead. On a failed save, the creature is no longer incapacitated, but it is banished to the Ethereal Plane.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. This attack deals double damage to objects and structures.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) force damage.

Etherealness. The hammerhead enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

REACTIONS

Spectral Strike. When the hammerhead takes damage from a creature it can see within 120 feet of it, it teleports to an unoccupied space within 5 feet of that creature and immediately makes one slam or tail attack against it.

SLUMBER PHANTOM

Large undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 230 (20d10 + 120)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	23 (+6)	22 (+6)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	21 (+5)

Saves Con +13, Int +8, Wis +11, Cha +12

Skills Perception +11, Stealth +20

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 300 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 21

Languages understands all but doesn't speak

Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

Energizing Aura. Any creature other than an undead that starts its turn within 30 feet of the phantom must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target falls unconscious for 1 minute. Whenever an unconscious target takes damage or another creature uses an action to try to shake it awake, the target can make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Ethereal Form. While on the Material Plane, attack rolls against the phantom are made with disadvantage unless the phantom is incapacitated. In addition, the phantom can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Ethereal Jaunt. As a bonus action, the phantom can magically shift from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, or vice versa.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the phantom fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The phantom has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Spectral Enthralment. Whenever the phantom reduces a humanoid to 0 hit points, the target dies and a specter rises from its corpse. The specter acts immediately after the phantom's initiative count and is under the phantom's control for 1 hour, after which time it vanishes.

Turn Immunity. The phantom is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The phantom makes two Life Drain attacks. It can use its Dream Eater in place of one attack.

Life Drain. Melee Spell Attack: +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 36 (8d8) necrotic damage, and the target must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken, and on a successful save, its hit point maximum is reduced by half that amount. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The creature dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Dream Eater. The phantom taps into the nightmares of one creature it touches. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be subjected to the effects of the *phantasmal killer* spell for 1 minute (this effect doesn't require the phantom's concentration). The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. An unconscious creature makes its saving throws against this effect with disadvantage, and whenever it takes damage from this effect, the phantom regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The phantom can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The phantom regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Ghostly Swipe. The phantom makes a Life Drain attack. Before or after the attack, it can move up to half its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Ethereal Banishment (Costs 2 Actions). The phantom casts *banishment* (save DC 20), requiring only somatic components and targeting a creature it can see within 5 feet of it. If the target is native to and currently on the Material Plane, it is banished to its corresponding location on the Ethereal Plane, instead of a harmless demiplane. If the target takes any damage while there, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the spell on a success. If the phantom concentrates on the spell for its full duration and the target is in the phantom's Energizing Aura when the spell ends, the target doesn't return.

Devour Dreams (Costs 3 Actions). The phantom causes a wave of dread to erupt from a point it chooses within 120 feet of it. Each creature within 30 feet of that point is subjected to the phantom's Dream Eater effect.

ETHEREAN

RELISHING THE TASTE OF FRESH MEAD AND FLAVORFUL BREAD, LINNIT'S long, slender legs swung happily off the sides of the worn barstool. His colorful, silken tunic shimmered in the lantern's warm firelight, which seemed to be at odds with the tuft of misty blue hair that danced atop his head. Nimble, gray fingers plucked carefully at his food to make sure that any crumbs and spills were kept to a minimum.

Linnit's smile was easy and disarming, for it was the grin of a person experiencing the simple joys of life for the first time. Although he had grown up not too far from this tavern, no one there had ever seen him there before today. He, on the other hand, already knew everyone's names and stories, but had been cautioned by his mother to keep that information to himself. After all, he'd been coming here for decades.

As he finished counting the coins from his purse, Linnit's eyes flicked to the side at something that only he could see. He broadened his smile and waved before handing the coins over to the man behind the bar.

"Thank you for the meal, Roark. It was, truly, the best I've ever had."

"Thank yeh kindly, stranger. Safe travels," said Roark with a nod as he began to clean.

Linnit chuckled as he slid his slender frame off the stool and onto the sticky floor to pick up his belongings. With a final smile, he made his way to the door.

Ethereans are, as their name would suggest, the unlikely settlers of the Border Ethereal. Thereans experience the Material Plane from a distance, viewing it through the gray and muffling barrier between the planes of existence. Most thereans live in small communities spread throughout the Border Ethereal and find joy in poetry, art, and theater that offsets the drab and relative lifelessness of their home. While only a few monsters are able to threaten those on the Border Ethereal, therean survival is only maintainable through their tenacity and shared sense of decency. For many thereans, the relative safety of the Ethereal Plane outweighs the richer experiences of the Material, but for those that do manage to cross that planar threshold, there is simply no comparison.



AN OBSCURE LINEAGE

Ethereans resemble elves with light gray skin, but their hair and eyes are distinctly different. Many thereans' eyes and hairs are either purple or magenta, but it's not unheard of for them to come in a full spectrum of colors—a curious result of living extensively on the Ethereal Plane. Further, an therean's hair drifts and floats on its own, as if carried by an invisible current, before evaporating into nothing at its ends.

DECENT BY NECESSITY

The Border Ethereal allows for a free range of movement in any direction, including through solid objects located on the Material Plane. As a result, privacy is extremely coveted by those on the Ethereal Plane, who are constantly aware of the near-impossibility of complete safety from others. Over generations, therean culture has grown to uphold and teach a powerful focus on common decency between them. This often translates to relatively lawful communities among thereans, who expect that their safety and privacy will be respected in exchange for their own adherence.

However, whether it be in accordance with a potentially fey ancestry, or merely in defiance of the strict social structure that they live in, most thereans have a deep appreciation of harmless pranks and practical jokes. In general, as long

IDEAL TRAVEL COMPANIONS.

It's easy to assume that an etherean is elven at first glance, and as such, those that approach an etherean are often surprised when their interactions aren't nuanced with haughty sophistication. Most ethereans are eager to make friends that aren't other ethereans and eschew sweeping generalizations. Earnest and excitable, ethereans make for spectacular traveling companions for people who enjoy conversations and storytelling.

as it's in good fun, moments of levity like these are part of the fabric that keeps ethereans happy and entertained in an otherwise quiet and dull world.

WORLDS TO EXPERIENCE

Ethereans typically take up adventuring when the routine of the Border Ethereal no longer interests them. Such ethereans often go searching for a means of travel into the Material Plane, but only some manage to find them. Those that do are thrust into a world suddenly bound by gravity and rife with danger, but also filled with opportunity and new experiences. Many ethereans will happily accept contracts to travel great distances or visit exotic realms, regardless of danger, in order to make the most of their life beyond the Border Ethereal.

Ethereans will often choose to spend their coin on brightly colored and ostentatious clothing, seemingly making up for the limited color palettes they may have experienced on the Border Ethereal. Others fall victim to new vices, but more often than not, strict etherean resourcefulness is enough to prevent all but the most vulnerable ethereans from becoming addicted to the pleasures of the Material Plane.

ETHEREAN NAMES

An etherean has a given name, a family name, and possibly a nickname. Etherean nicknames often sound purposefully silly, and are just as likely to be self-given as they are by friends or family.

Male Names: Antham, Corifir, Genoven, Hanshen, Hosh, Irsht, Luddin, Osvo, Pragil, Quord, Tryll, Ulram, Waylon

Female Names: Cheyl, Crena, Destva, Euranya, Jeun, Kline, Krimme, Ozla, Prinn, Tresht, Ura, Vass, Vertra, Vione

Family Names: Atvash, Brenniwick, Orelet, Ouly, Pientrafit, Promuna, Reffra, Wrenylin, Yrelift, Zucha

ETHEREAN TRAITS

Your etherean character has a variety of traits as a result of their unique plane of origin.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 2, and one other ability score of your choice increases by 1.

Age. Ethereans mature at the same rate as humans but live a few years longer.

Alignment. Because of the strict code of conduct that's necessary when living in etherean society, most ethereans are lawful out of a sense of honor or decency. However, many

ethereans enjoy setting silly pranks, provided that they aren't mean-spirited, in order to fulfill some of their more chaotic leanings. They have no particular inclination toward evil or good, although many that survive in the more untamed corners of the Ethereal Plane will end up evil out of necessity.

Size. Ethereans are about the same size as humans and have willowy builds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet. While on the Ethereal Plane, it increases to 35 feet.

Darkvision. Accustomed to the chaotic and often unavoidable lighting of the Border Ethereal, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Misty Sight. Your eyes are naturally attuned to the Border Ethereal, allowing you to always see out to your normal range while on the Ethereal Plane.

You can also use a bonus action to focus on seeing the normally unseen. For 1 minute, or until your concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell), you can see invisible creatures and objects as if they were visible, and you can see into the Ethereal Plane. Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Veil Shift. You can use an action while on the Material Plane to slip into the Ethereal Plane, and vice versa, until the start of your next turn. Any object you take while on this other plane of existence is left there when you return to your original one. While on the Ethereal Plane in this way, you can only affect and be affected by other creatures on that plane, and you still move as if you were on the Material Plane. Creatures that aren't on the Ethereal Plane can't perceive you or interact with you while you're there, unless a special ability or magic has given them the ability to do so, although you can still see and hear them. Once you use this trait, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language of your choice. Ethereans tend to learn the languages of neighboring creatures from the Material Plane.

CREATING YOUR ETHEREAN.

When creating your etherean character, use these traits as a guide, rather than a rule. A typical etherean is naturally charismatic, which is reflected in the Ability Score Increase trait, but yours may be quiet and reserved by comparison. In that case, increase one ability score of your choice by 2, and another by 1. Alternatively, you can choose three different ability scores to increase by 1.

Similarly, your etherean may never have ascribed to the rigors of etherean society and has fully embraced their chaotic leanings. And, like all humanoids, size is hardly a defining factor. When you select this race, you can choose to be Small, instead of Medium.

Lastly, the suggested age trait is just that: a suggestion. In your world, it's possible that their passable fey ancestry is more concretely evident, resulting in a longer life span. Regardless, the lifespan of most player characters in fifth edition is about a century—presuming they don't meet a violent end on an adventure.