

does so, *Blackaxe's* wielder must make a DC 25 Will save to avoid being staggered for 1 round from the flow of power. These spell-like abilities trigger during the wielder's turn in initiative, but do not consume any of the wielder's actions in that round.

DESTRUCTION

Blackaxe, it is rumored, was stolen by Treerazer from the demon lord Cyth-V'sug. In order to destroy it, *Blackaxe* must be used against a powerful magical tree, and while the sap on the blade is still fresh it must then be used to sever one of Cyth-V'sug's many fungoid limbs. Doing so causes *Blackaxe* to explode in a burst of obsidian shrapnel and acid that inflicts 20d6 acid damage and 20d6 piercing damage to all within a 60-foot burst (DC 30 Reflex half).

FINAL BLADE (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong ; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 1,000 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

The guillotines known as the *final blades* have become symbols of Galt and the bloody excesses of the Red Revolution, yet the first of these horrific devices were actually built to serve the cause of justice. The *final blades* were originally designed to provide a condemned prisoner a swift and painless death, but also to prevent the resurrection of said victim by trapping her soul within the guillotine's blade upon execution. Every blade has a unique appearance and citizens speak of them as if they are people. In speaking of a condemned prisoner, someone might say, "He'll lie with Bloody Jaine before the sun falls."

Only Large or smaller helpless (or willing) creatures can be executed by a *final blade*. When a *final blade* scythes down to decapitate the target, treat this as a coup de grace attempt on the victim that inflicts 6d6+12 points of damage. A *final blade's* damage penetrates all damage reduction (save epic damage reduction) and negates all regeneration effects. A creature slain by this effect is immediately targeted by a *soul bind* effect that automatically places her soul into the blade itself (no save). A *final blade* has no limit to the number of souls it can hold. It is possible to release a soul from a *final blade* to allow that creature to be resurrected, but the ritual involved is a closely guarded secret known only to the Gray Gardeners.

DESTRUCTION

Although the *final blades* are minor artifacts, they can be destroyed by damage. The exact defenses of each vary, but all have hardness 20 and 200 hit points. When one is destroyed, the trapped souls explode in a wave of necromantic power—some of these souls manifest as incorporeal undead and immediately attack all living creatures in sight. The number and nature of these angry souls varies, but should usually consist of at least a CR 12 (or higher) encounter.

SHIELD OF ARODEN (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

Aura strong abjuration; **CL** 20th

Slot none; **Weight** 10 lbs.

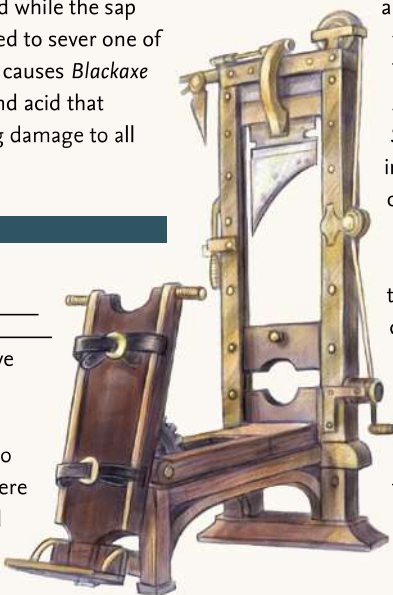
DESCRIPTION

During the battle between the Whispering Tyrant and General Arnisant, the lich unleashed terrible magic upon the outnumbered mortal army. Despite the lich's power, Arnisant was protected from the onslaught by his magical shield, an artifact known as the *Shield of Aroden*. When the two finally faced off, the Whispering Tyrant attempted to use a *wish* to summon Arnisant's heart to his waiting claws. The *Shield of Aroden* prevented this dire fate and instead shattered into a dozen fragments, one of which appeared in Tar-Baphon's hand, fusing with the undead flesh and burning the lich with holy fire. When the flames subsided, the crippled lich was soon locked away in the dungeons beneath Gallowspire, there to rot for all eternity. The *Shield of Aroden* lost all of its power. Its broken remnants have been passed down from one watcher-lord to another without fail. Some say that should the Whispering Tyrant ever become free, the missing piece of the shield would have to be recovered from his bony claw for the fiend to truly be defeated.

This item is normally kept on display in the city of Vigil in Lastwall, though at first glance it is just a collection of wooden shards on a large black silk pillow.

If assembled, these 12 shards would form a round shield with a piece in the center missing. The shield's face is carved to look like Aroden's holy symbol—a winged eye in a circle.

Originally known as the *Shield of Aroden*, most today call it by its new name—the *Shattered Shield of Arnisant*. If restored to its former glory (a task that could in and of itself be a campaign), the *Shattered Shield* becomes the *Shield of Aroden* once again—a +5 *light fortification spell resistance (17) heavy wooden shield*. Once per day, you can invoke a form of *fire shield* that protects against cold attacks and damages opponents with fire and holy damage like a *flame strike* (it is likely that this ability is what burned the lich in his final battle). Once per round as an immediate action, if an adjacent ally is hit by a ranged or melee attack, you can use the shield to redirect the attack to yourself, suffering all effects from that attack as if you were its intended target. All allies within 100 feet of you gain the effect of *bless* and *prayer*. As with a *status* spell, all allies within 100 feet know your relative position and condition. The *Shield of Aroden* bestows two negative levels on any chaotic creature that attempts to wield it. The negative levels remain as long as the shield is held or carried. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the creature holds or carries the shield.



FINAL BLADE