

## ARTICLE

# THE VELLURITH, PART TWO

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More options await you for the Vellurith in this week's column, plus you can get to know several beholders.

### ADDITIONAL GOALS OF THE VELLURITH

A trick built into the game is that the fourth goal is mutable: depending on how this goal is achieved, it may spawn additional goals, adding to the means of winning the game.

If the created race is aquatic in nature, no additional goals are created.

If the created race worships beholders and



flourishes in the surface Realms and in the uppermost layer of the Underdark (just below the surface), the Great Mother will announce in the dreams of all beholders that an additional goal has been added to the Vellurith: Conquer a human realm of expansive size and population (it has become accepted wisdom among those who play the game that this means something larger than a city-state, or a country of three small cities or less) and openly rule it, as a beholder, for at least two summers. This duration is short because it's expected that every player that doesn't achieve this will try to destroy the realm to prevent another beholder from realizing this goal.

If the created race has a hatred of dragons or illithids, and it actively seeks to slaughter them, an additional goal will be added to the game: Destroy the illithid realm of Dkloeldran ("Duh-cloe-EL-dran"), in the lowest of the Deeps of the Underdark, somewhere far under Narfell, and exterminate its every last inhabitant. Dkloeld illithids habitually hunt, capture, and experiment on beholders, and these beholders die slowly and horribly (they are not the same illithids who hold the Blind Beholder captive).

If the created race can mate with beholders to create new sorts of beholder-kin true beholders can rule, yet another goal is added to the game: Beholder rule must prevail over the surface of an entire continent of Toril for at least two years (this goal may be shared among beholders who cooperate to achieve it), with it being understood that no adult or older dragons can exist in the ruled area unless enslaved for "rule" to be claimed.

The Vellurith predates Xroon, and not even the beholders playing the game suspect that some of the goals were in part written by Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, and the possible goals spawned by the fourth goal by Elminster, who have both thus used the Vellurith to manipulate the beholders playing the game to further ends of their own (or rather, of Mystra). It was certainly Elminster's intent when crafting goals to direct the beholder race into tasks that will lead to their disaster and to occupy them long-term to keep them from doing greater harm to others. Apparently, this human drafting of goals purporting to come from the Great Mother is not merely a deception practiced on beholders, but something done with the support or approval of the Great Mother herself—presumably through agreement with Mystryl or the first Mystra.

Mortals can't know why or how such agreement was reached (it may well have been a peace treaty or other arrangement), and Elminster cannot remember any details; he suspects Mystra removed his memories of this (he deems the ability to steal memories "the most insidious power of any god"). Elminster has a notion that Khelben participated in reshaping the ongoing Vellurith in part because of what he foresaw for the Realms (the Sundering) and for himself (he may have wanted to provide a solution to his own future need to be reborn into a young, vigorous body). However, the Sage of Shadowdale cautions that these are speculations based on hints, not facts that can ever be clearly supported.

## THE PLAYERS

The beholders of Faerûn known to be playing the Vellurith include the following:

- **Alarkanamace (“Al-ar-CAN-ah-mace”)**: Often found in the Underdark beneath the Earthspur Mountains; known to have a dark sense of humor and to spare humans who amuse it; vigorous and sly; described by humans who have worked for it as “sleek and jet black of hue.”
- **Aumrandor (“Aw-mm-RAN-door”)**: This beholder is an aggressive killer of its own kind and all others. It wears an ungainly, rusting shell of many melted-together scraps and suits of human armor (and metal shields and weapons, too), and it thrusts its eyestalks out through many gaps in this welded dome of twisted metal. It collects caltrops and spare weapons and magic items, and it stores these items in various compartments on the inside of its armor. It also possesses an item with which it can deftly use telekinetic means to move these items when released. At least one of the many components of its armor shell can magically reflect back some spells at their sources.
- **Balathliyrix (“Bell-lath-LEER-iks”)**: Called “The Red” because of its deep old-blood-red crimson hue, this unusually large beholder has successfully mastered some transformative magic that gives it extra false eyestalks ending in facsimiles of eyes that are actually fanged jaws. It is known to lurk near Waterdeep, where it manipulates mercantile and guild politics in that city (but avoids seeking to directly affect nobles or the Lords of Waterdeep).
- **Claxlarlath (“Claks-LARL-wrath”)**: This beholder loves gold and gems, with a greed that matches the fabled gold-lust of dwarves or the legendary avarice of dragons. Yet rather than accumulate heaps of wealth, it loves to use that wealth as power, to buy land and pay bribes and manipulate prices—through dupes whenever it can, and loyal agents if it must. It cultivates and rewards lawful evil individuals with the talents for diplomacy, intrigue, and mercantile success it desires, but seeks to gain holds over them to ensure their obedience, and always puts each such servant to spying on its others.
- **Crouloodur (“Cruel-OOD-er”)**: This green-tinged, vigorous beholder loves contact with humans, because it’s a sadist that wants to see “the soft, stupid worms” suffer. It often hires adventurers to murder, despoil, and vandalize if it can’t manipulate them into doing so.
- **Drelrathrax (“Drel-RATH-racks”)**: A patient, polite, rather quiet beholder that always has layer upon layer of back-up plans, and avoids unnecessary cruelty (and for that matter, unnecessary anything else.) It finds humankind fascinating, and it lurks to spy on them extensively, as a source of entertainment as well as to learn all it can—in preparation for the day when its deft manipulations give way to open empire, and it becomes the greatest tyrant ever, ruling a vast population of human

cattle.

- **Elorlarrvrix (“El-LORL-lar-vrix”)**: This gentle, soft-spoken beholder is whimsically insane—that is, aside from raging, it is liable to do just about anything, without regard for personal safety, prudence, or consequences. It hates its own kind more than it does lesser creatures, and it will work to weaken, bring down, or frustrate the schemes of other beholders over all else. To do so, it travels stealthily but tirelessly up and down the Sword Coast, both aboveground and below, spying. It has been known to aid humans, elves, and halflings as if it was a kindly friend—but this behavior is done on mad whims, and it is not to be trusted in.
- **Galaklath (“Gal-LACK-lath”)**: A beholder that loves the sewers, cellars, and dungeons beneath large cities, and lurks in such places, gleefully manipulating all the lesser creatures it meets. Extending its reach through manipulations have become an end for this beholder, not just a means; it glories in being able to covertly affect matters, and it cannot resist twisting the efforts of all others by its deeds.
- **Huelglorryx (“Hoo-ell-GLORE-iks”)**: This large, steel-gray eye tyrant grew tired of manipulating humans (in Raurin and Durpar) centuries ago, and it turned to trying to find and make common cause with all the phaerimm it could find. Accidents have robbed it of one eyestalk, and infected two others with parasitic worms so numerous that they have made those stalks almost double the thickness of their fellow stalks, with large, bulbous ends (their powers are apparently unaffected). Huelglorryx has mastered more arcane spellcraft than many human archwizards.
- **Ithkeirlauthlyx (“Ith-clear-LOTH-licks”)**: A sarcastic, mocking beholder that thrives on plentiful contact with lesser creatures of all sorts, enjoying interaction and fascinated with human-dominated society in particular. It refers to itself as “Keer,” and it enjoys combat, getting into fights whenever it can find beholder-kin or other monsters more formidable than “the pitiful” (as it refers to most humans). It regards human wizards and dragons as dangers too great to be ignored; they must be made to meet with disaster by any means it can manage. Since Keer loves manipulation for its own sake and tries to shift beings into particular behaviors merely to see how it can most easily be done, laying mages and dragons low is usually a matter of its manipulations (it even has allies among bandit and adventuring bands and rebels in most places it’s active—and it prefers the Heartlands but ranges all over Faerûn).
- **Jerethilxaur (“JAIR-eth-ill-zor”)**: This nondescript beholder is visually notable only for having one large, protruding tusk-like lower tooth jutting up even when its mouth is closed, the result of old, healed-over damage. It has dabbled for years in developing spells that compel oozes and jellies, with the result that it now

commands and surrounds itself at all times with a bodyguard or private army of a dozen to a score of gelatinous cubes, gray oozes, and ochre jellies. This has made it dominant in whatever locale in the Underdark it happens to be traveling through, and it often ascends into Underdark-attached dungeons and city sewers, where it delights in toying with lesser creatures and forcing them to do its whimsical bidding.

- **Lraulaur (“Zur-ALL-ore”):** This solitary beholder likes to stay hidden, skulking and spying unseen. To aid in watching others without itself being detected, it long ago developed a spell that enables it to look out of (and even redirect its paralyzing and telekinetic eye ray powers so they are emitted out of) specific ochre jellies that it has magically prepared to be its servitors—a process that permanently turns the jellies a vivid amethyst in hue. These jellies become utterly loyal to Lraulaur, accepting its mental commands without hesitation (the beholder can communicate with, and redirect its eye powers through, such jellies over a distance of about 100 yards). Thus far, Lraulaur seems most interested in Knowing All about creatures around it, not ruling. It destroys any entity that learns too much about it or its activities (or that it detects spying on it).
- **Kelkraummadar (“Kel-CROM-ah-dar”):** This large beholder is afflicted by a fading curse cast by a wizard it killed years ago; the harmless remnant of the curse is that many small eyes of varying sizes appear to open in its body plates, often in clusters of blinking eyes. This is pure illusion, having no effect on Kelkraummadar at all, and it often fades and reappears in “washes” that ripple across the beholder’s body. This beholder is a classic tyrant—it aches to dominate, to give orders, and to cause fear and groveling or hasty obedience in underlings wherever it goes. Threats and punishments and making brutal examples are its constant tools; the only thing that will inhibit its cruelty is the delight it feels in being openly worshiped by lesser creatures, so someone who prays to it on their knees often wins their own survival and Kelkraummadar’s approval.
- **Maerezmnid (“MAIR-ezz-min-id”):** Grim, malevolent, and patient, this beholder likes to play the mastermind, engaging in long-term manipulations and predictions, and using mind-influencing spells and controlled thralls (often human servants) to influence the decisions, lifestyles, and interests of nobility and royalty. Increasingly in the 1400s DR, however, it has begun to shift its interests to powerful merchants and rulers who have seized power rather than inheriting it. Formerly interested primarily in Amn and secondarily in Waterdeep and the developing Silver Marches, it has also begun to range all over Faerûn and to pay attention to portents it believes give some indications of something important, soon to come, that the Great Mother is trying to warn “superior” beholders about without openly informing the entire race, or breaking her long-held preference to seemingly ignore beholders and everyone else. Maerezmnid wants to find out what that something important is so it can prepare appropriately, profit thereby, and become preeminent among beholders.

- **Moglorryx (“MOGG-lore-icks”):** This battered and scarred beholder loves battle, and it revels in carnage—personally causing it, that is. No manipulation of underlings for this beholder, who prefers spells with which it can surround itself with an arsenal of floating, clashing edged weapons that it can thrust messily at foes. It won’t hesitate to use its eye rays, but prefers to spill blood, and so it will indulge in the wielding of sharp-edged weapons first. It also loves manipulating lesser creatures to bring about battles it can enjoy watching and swooping down to take part in. For reasons known only to itself, Moglorryx prefers the open wilderlands of surface Faerûn to settlements, and it almost never descends into the Underdark.
- **Mryllythrix (“Muh-RILL-ith-rix”):** Lofty and sneering, this beholder likes frequent contact with humans, as long as it can use such encounters to demonstrate its utter superiority, and “train” humans (who are so regrettably stupid and slow to learn) of how they should flatter, praise, fear, and above all obey beholders—and Mryllythrix before all other beholders, of course. This beholder enjoys social turmoil and has discovered that aiding malcontents and the oppressed, and providing leadership to downtrodden slaves, serfs, and the poor that directs such folk to challenge, thwart, disobey, or openly attack authorities, nobility, and rulers, is more than good fun—it is what Mryllythrix loves to do and finds fulfillment in. Obviously, this work is what the Great Mother intended it to do.
- **Nrantlor (“Nur-ANT-lore”):** This slate-gray beholder specializes in breeding monsters and experimenting with such beasts to graft on new body parts and otherwise “augment” them to be more fearsome and formidable—while training them to serve it, of course. Nrantlor maintains several lairs for itself throughout the Heartlands, and these are all infested with guardian monsters. It is not above hurling its monsters at human and other settlements it believes need weakening—which is just about all of them it happens to notice and take an interest in. Nrantlor believes that organized societies of all sorts are a “stain” on the world that should eventually be swept away to yield a chaos of wild beasts ruled over by beholders hunting for sport. However, it wants to spy on the strongest and most successful cities and rulers first, so as to thoroughly understand them and see what has led to their success, in case there’s something that should be salvaged. Good ideas and techniques transcend species; bright thought and performance are their own rewards.
- **Nylurace (“NEYE-lur-ace”):** This beholder is a deft diplomat that seldom acts in an arrogant manner or reveals anything more than an attitude of kind curiosity, understanding, and empathy. It avoids personal combat and being present at incidents of violence whenever possible, but is far from the kind angel or warm-hearted mother it likes to portray itself as (though it has been called both of those

things). Underneath, Nylurace strives to understand what motivates lesser creatures to love and be loyal, so it can use this knowledge to build a loyal army of humans, elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, orcs, and the like to serve it. It has hit upon the notion that breeding specific individuals can bring out desired traits, so among humans and hobgoblins (where it enjoyed initial success with its dabblings) it is increasingly—through manipulated agents rather than directly, of course—playing matchmaker. (If nothing else, the right unions result in amassing ever-more lands, wealth, and family businesses under its sway.)

- **Orprurlryx (“Oar-purr-EARL-rix”)**: Known as the White Beholder or the White Eye because it is overly large and has a mottled and veined-looking grayish-white hue, this beholder is also known as being one of the most arrogant of its kind. Apt to be terse, to say little and think much, it can be very subtle and think many consequences and nuances ahead.
- **Rhalimxarlgas (“Ral-imm-ZARL-glass”)**: Large, purplish-brown, and vigorous, this beholder travels constantly, seeing much and interacting with many. It is not above befriending lesser creatures and coming to their aid or assistance to build useful contacts and some measure of real loyalty among creatures that would otherwise loathe beholders.
- **Xithallowthlan (“Zith-THAL-oh-thlan”)**: Now possessed of a preening pride after its personal augmentation (of many eyes) by the Great Mother, this large, visibly old beholder has turned its manipulations to arrange ever-greater personal pleasures. It loves bathing in warm steam from the heated blood of humans (or preferably, of lesser beholder-kin), and of devouring choice sweet desserts of the sorts concocted and favored by humans. “Wallowing in hedonism as it bides its time before next seeking to achieve anything in the Vellurith,” Elminster judges.
- **Xyxikarph (“IKS-ih-carf”)**: This beholder is likely to be eliminated by the Great Mother, her agents, or humans purporting to serve the Great Mother. The voice in Xyxikarph’s lair is Elminster’s, but he was “putting on an assumed voice” when he spoke, and so he has not been identified as the speaker by any beholders—yet.

## XROON UNDYING

All the handful of beholders who know the fate of Xroon assume the Tyrant of Tyrants has been reborn as a vigorous young beholder that retains Xroon’s full knowledge, experience, and mastery of magic—but Elminster has recently come to hold the view that Xroon may well now be in human form (perhaps an augmented human shape, but something that with proper garments can pass for human). So the question Elminster now ponders is this: of all the millions of humans who dwell on Toril, who is Xroon?