



Artwork by Daihnon

## THE LANTERNMAN

Introduction by Feyfoxen

*“If you find yourself in the swamps late one eve and hear a cry for help, you best keep walking, don’t dare turn around.”*

This expression is sadly common in the marshlands, yet it is one borne of grim necessity. Many horrid creatures call the depths of the mire their home, and mimicry is one of their favorite means of hunting unsuspecting travelers who stray from the few dry paths. For every fool who rushed to the aid of some stranger in distress, some forlorn cry just out of eyesight that lead straight into the jaws of a waiting beast, there have developed over years many ways of calling out and detecting the foul bluffs of these swampland tricksters. But as man grows wiser, so too do the beasts that hunt him, and few of these monsters inspire such frightening tales as the Lanternman.

He takes the shape of a traveler in distress, a merchant or perhaps a lost youth turned about in the dank and the fog. Preying on any good samaritan that rushes to his aid, the beast waits until they’ve drawn close enough to touch, and it is then it reveals its true form, opening its eyes and mouth to reveal an unnatural, terrifying light from within its very being. Stricken by this otherworldly glow, its victims have no hope of escape- and are quickly devoured.

At least, that is what the legends say. Though the Lanternman is indeed a predatory trickster, it is something far more clever than a simple boogeyman- it is, in reality, a will-o-the wisp, one that has grown fat upon the many spirits it has snuffed out. Wearing the bodies of its victims as some sort of macabre puppetry, it has learned to remain elusive, to change its form and tactics with each successful kill, using oft-contradictory tactics and guises to sow doubt among the locals, to raise the specter of doubt as to the Lanternman’s very existence.

But to those who foolishly heed the calls of some lost swamp-bound fool late at night, the legend is all too real- and it’s the last tale they’ll ever hear..

## Tuz’s Fearsome Foes: The Lanternman INFORMATION GATHERING

Investigating the Lanternman before leaving for their hunt may mean the difference between success and failure for the players. Let your players roll Intelligence (Investigation), Intelligence (Religion), Charisma (Persuasion), or other skills that you deem appropriate to learn more about the Lanternman. Different skills used for gathering information may yield different pieces of information being accessed.

**Easy: DC 10** – “Lanternman” is the name the locals have given to an apparition sighted within the local marshes. According to eyewitnesses the Lanternman appears as a man who wanders the marshes at night, calling for aid of travelers. When approached the figure opens its eyes and mouth to shine a sickly green light from all its orifices and attacks.

**Intermediate: DC 13 (Persuasion)** – The players learn of several sightings in which people narrowly escaped the “Lanternman”. According to them the creature reeked of death and was undeterred by steel.

**Intermediate: DC 13 (Religion)** – Considering the reports of the Lanternman, it would not be implausible that the Lanternman could be an undead spirit that haunts the swamps.

**Hard: DC 15 (Investigation or Persuasion)** – The players meet a traveler who is skeptic over the fact that the “Lanternman” who has been sighted is one and the same creature. He retells a tale of a merchant that traveled with a highly skilled group of mercenaries, who allegedly killed the Lanternman during their journey through the marshes. Later they would be decried as liars when more sightings of the Lanternman followed. The traveler, though, sees no reason for the merchant to lie about his encounter.

**Hard: DC 15 (Religion)** – The method by which the “Lanternman” lures travelers into their doom seems similar to how a Will-O-Wisp acts. Though, these spectral creatures can only speak in whispers, nor do they have a physical form.

**Impossible: DC 20 – (Investigation, requires success in both Hard checks)** – With the knowledge you acquired it dawns on you that the “Lanternman” must be a unique Will-O-Wisp that donnes bodies like costumes. The light people saw emanating from the Lanternman’s face is the actual specter. To defeat the Lanternman, the group will have to first expose the Will-O-Wisp and then defeat its true body.

**Impossible: DC 20 – (Religion, requires success in both Hard checks)** – The “Lanternman” is most likely a unique Will-O-Wisp that grew powerful by killing many wanderers and feeding on dread, gaining new and terrifying abilities in the process. *[The players will learn that they can create magic items from the Lanternman’s remains.]*



## Tuz's Fearsome Foes: The Lanternman

# THE LANTERNMAN

*Tiny Undead, Chaotic Evil*

**Armor Class** 19, or 14 (puppet body)

**Hit Points** 97 (13d8 + 39)

**Speed** 0 ft., flying 50 ft. (hover) or 30 ft., flying 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	28 (+9)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

**Proficiency** +3

**Saving Throws** Con +4, Wis +6, Cha +4

**Skills** Deception +3, Perception +6

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities** blind, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Ephemeral.** The Lanternman can't wear or carry anything outside of its corpse.

**Incorporeal Movement (Outside Corpse Only).** The Lanternman 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 other than a humanoid corpse.

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

**Puppet Body.** The Lanternman is possessing a corpse that gives it total cover from attacks and effects until the corpse is destroyed, as well as additional actions. It is a medium size object (50 hit points, 14 AC, resistant to cold necrotic damage, immune to poison and psychic damage) that grants the Lanternman a physical form. In this form the Lanternman has a walking and flying speed of 30 ft. and can be grappled, be prone, and restrained. As long as the lanternman possesses the corpse, it is a magical item and cannot be reanimated or brought back to life. The Lanternman can use an action to shed its corpse. Over the course of a long rest, the Lanternman can possess a new humanoid corpse.

**Variable Illumination.** The Lanternman sheds bright light in a 5-20-foot radius and dim light for an additional number of feet equal to the chosen radius. The Lanternman can alter the radius as a bonus action.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The Lanternman makes two shock attacks.

**Shock.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) lightning damage.

**Slam (In Corpse Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d8+3) bludgeoning damage.

**Invisibility (Outside Corpse Only).** The Lanternman magically becomes invisible until it attacks, uses its Consume Life, or uses 2 or more of its Legendary Actions. When the Lanternman turns visible, it does so in a 10-foot-radius flash centered on itself. Each creature in the flash must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of the Lanternman's next turn.

**Magic.** The Lanternman casts one of the following spells, using Wisdom as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 14) without needing vocal or material components:

At will: *Dancing Lights*, *Minor Illusion*, *Silent Image*

3/day: *Major Image*, *Phantasmal Force*, *Silence*



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### BONUS ACTIONS

**Consume Life.** The Lanternman can target one living creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit points. It must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw against this magic or die. If the target dies, the Lanternman regains 14 (4d6) hit points.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Lanternman 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 Lanternman regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Blinding Spark.** A creature within 10 ft. of the Lanternman that can see it must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or is blinded until the end of the Lanternman's next turn.

**Move.** The Lanternman moves up to half of its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

**Shocks (2 Actions).** The Lanternman makes up to 2 shock attacks.

**Devour Life (2 Actions).** Each non-undead creature within 20 ft. of the Lanternman that has 0 hit points and is still alive must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw against magic. On a failed save the creature takes 11 (3d6+1) necrotic damage and the Lanternman gains hitpoints equal to the necrotic damage dealt.



## LANTERNMAN TACTICS

Unless the Lanternman is surprised or ambushed by a group of canny players, the Lanternman will not attempt to engage with a group in a fair fight. It will always work towards setting up a fight in its own advantage. This could be a trap using its own illusion magic, luring the group into an ambush of affiliated creatures, or stalk a group of players and wait until one of them is separate from the group.

Once in combat it will make use of its illusion magic during the first round of combat to disable what it perceives as the greatest threat, such as casting *Phantasmal Force* on a fighter, or *Silence* on a pinned player so they can't call for help. In the following rounds the Lanternman will attack with its Shock and use Blinding Spark against anyone that engages it in melee combat. If the Lanternman has an opportunity, it will use its Consume Life action.

When the Lanternman's corpse is destroyed, it will attempt to escape by using its invisibility, to give the players the impression the creature is defeated. Players that succeeded their investigation should recall that either a Will-O-Wisp can turn invisible, or that the Lanternman used this trick before. If the Lanternman's Wisp form is revealed, or takes damage when invisible through an area of effect, it will continue the fight until it is destroyed.

## AFFILIATED CREATURES

Cunning as the Lanternman is, it sees great use for other creatures that can be found in the swamp for its deception and ambushes.

The Lanternman may prepare its ambush near the den of a swamp creature such as a crocodile or a hydra - any creature dull of mind that the Lanternman can easily manipulate through its illusions, and ill enough of temper to attack any intruder it detects. The Lanternman will use these creatures to either secure its escape or to throw a group of travelers into chaos before he strikes.

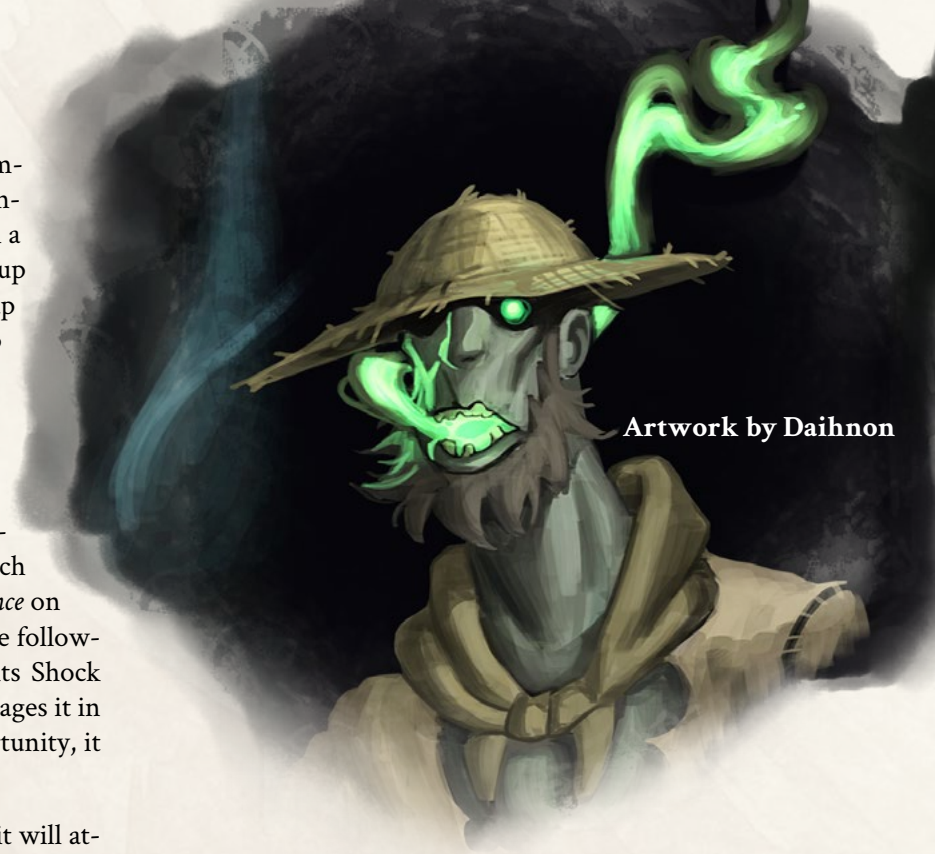
Other undead are used in a similar way; as the Lanternman might lure his prey into swampy graves of restless dead, such as specters, rotted corpses<sup>HB</sup>, or zombies.

Another type of creature that is commonly found near the Lanternman are other Will-O-Wisps that aid the Lanternman to lure other creatures within his vicinity and feed upon the terror and death that he inflicts like bottom feeders.

<sup>HB</sup> Hunter's Bestiary

### Check out my other Content!

I hope you enjoyed this new installment of Fearsome Foes! If you haven't seen it yet, consider checking out my other Fearsome Foes like the [Mourning Blade](#) or [Goliath and Furfeather!](#)



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## PLOT HOOKS

The group might learn naturally of the renowned Lanternman as a local legend by traveling the swamplands it inhabits and peak their curiosity. On the other hand, you can weave a story around the task of hunting the Lanternman to captivate your players and ground the task within your world. In the following are a few easy plot hooks to integrate the Lanternman naturally into your game.

**Corpse Hunt.** A character the group is looking for (either because they have an item that they need, or has important information) has allegedly traveled through the swamp and never arrived at their destination. It turns out that the Lanternman has killed this person and is now possessing their body. If the group wants to recover the character, they must hunt the Lanternman.

**Haunting Journey.** The group is traversing the swamps and notices a humanoid shade off in the distance, as if they were being followed. The Lanternman has found his next target and is quietly observing his prey to learn more about them. During the group's next stop in the swamps they learn of the legendary Lanternman. Soon after they continue their journey the Lanternman becomes active, trying to break their will through illusions and tricks over the course of their journey, in the hopes to soften the group up before delivering its attacks.

**Just an escort.** A wealthy merchant has made a dark pact with the Lanternman. In life the Lanternman was the merchant's partner whom he left to die in the swamp. The debt for his life must be paid with equal value, so the merchant hires the players to 'escort his goods through the treacherous swamps'. Little do the players know that the route leads through the Lanternman's hunting grounds.



## TREASURE

As a haunting specter, the Lanternman has no use for worldly wealth. But as a cunning hunter it appreciates the value of treasure as alluring bait. While the Lanternman as a wisp cannot carry any valuables, it might leave behind treasure where it falls into the swamp and remembers its location to use for its traps. Thus, the players might find miscellaneous treasure spread among the swamp that serve as the specter's hunting ground, left behind by the Lanternman's victims. Perhaps one of these treasure piles serve as Lanternman's bait to position the players for his attack. Otherwise, the Lanternman's current body might still carry precious baubles or magic items.

Regardless of how well the players have done during the investigation, they will have the option to fashion the remains of the Lanternman into a set of Fool's Candles (1d4+2, or another amount that you deem fit). Any group whose investigation gave them insight into the Lanternman's unique nature will get the option to fashion either a Wisp Lantern or a Weapon-O-Wisp from its remains.

### Wisp Lantern

*Rare wondrous item (requires attunement)*

This magic lantern emits light like a common lantern and its flame creates no heat and doesn't use oxygen. As an action, a creature can open the lantern to release up to 3 spectral wisps which fly up to 30 ft. to unoccupied spaces. Each wisp emits bright light in a 20 ft. radius and dim light in an additional 20 feet. During each of your turns you can use a bonus action to command the wisps to fly up to 30 ft. to a space that you can see or recall one or more of them back into the lantern. When you start your turn, any wisp that is 120 ft. or further away from you is destroyed.

Additionally, as a bonus action you can command one of these wisps to attack a creature within 30 ft. of itself that you can see. The creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 lightning damage on a failed save and half as much on a successful one. The wisp is then destroyed.

The lantern can hold up to 3 wisps at a time and recreates a destroyed wisp at the dawn of each day.

### Weapon-O-Wisp

*Rare weapon (requires attunement)*

This magic weapon has a +1 bonus to attack and damage. Additionally, whenever you hold this weapon in your hand, you can use a bonus action to have it shed bright light in a 5 foot-radius and dim light in an additional 5 ft. for as long as you hold it or until you use another bonus action to end the effect.

When you deal damage against a creature with this weapon and reduce it to 0 hit points, or deal damage to a creature that currently has 0 hit points, you can kill the

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creature and gain 3d6 temporary hit points or an amount of temporary hit points equal to the killed creature's maximum hit points, whichever is lower.

### Fool's Candle

*Uncommon wondrous item (consumable)*

These candles were created from the Lanternman's tallow. Any of these candles carries a sliver of the creature's illusionary powers that can be released once it's lit.

A creature can use an action to light one of the illusionary candles while visualizing an object, a creature, or visible phenomenon not larger than a 20 ft. cube. For as long as the candle is burning, it creates an image of the visualized thing at its position. The image is not animated, nor can it be moved unless the candle is moved as well and the image the candle creates cannot be changed once it was lit. One candle burns for a total of 1 hour before it is consumed.

The illusion is not solid and a creature can use an action to examine the image and determine that it is an illusion without having to touch it with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Once determined, the creature can see through the image and see the burning candle that created it.



**Wisp Lantern & Fool's Candle**  
Artwork by DM Tuz



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