

# The Mandragora

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Mandragora, although humanoid in stature, have a distinctly dragon-like appearance with scaly bodies and hairless heads (although some have beards) resembling the dragon of their lineage. Depending on the species of Dragon that they trace their descent from, Mandragora can have wings, horns, or spines. All Mandragora have heat pits situated beneath their eyes that enable them to perceive the infrared spectrum, similar to certain reptiles. This thermal vision is extremely useful in the many dark chambers and corridors of the Mandragora cities and subterranean realms of the UnderEarth. Mandragora have long necks and overly developed shoulder muscles that give them a slightly stooped posture, although this is less noticeable among the wingless Gold Mandragora.

Although omnivorous, Mandragora have powerful jaws, their teeth are razor-sharp and their canines tend to protrude, often curving over their upper and lower jaws. They possess three fingers upon each hand and opposable thumbs with sharp, talon-like nails. They have an extra joint in their legs, with a spur that curves back from their heel, and a long whip-like tail that provides them with added balance. Some Mandragora develop sharp, bony blades upon the ends of their tails, providing a deadly addition to their natural weaponry - others add more mundane blades or clubs if they lack these natural accessories. All Mandragora have wings, with the exception of the ruling Gold Mandragora, and are capable of short flights. Although these wings enable them to glide for some distance, most lack the musculature for sustained flight - the most skilled fliers are the Black Mandragora.

All Mandragora are ambidextrous, and their military training takes advantage of this ability with most Mandragora wielding at least two melee weapons in combat. Human opponents frequently find themselves at a considerable disadvantage when facing Mandragora in combat - Mandragora ambidexterity and natural weaponry, combined with years of experience and training make even young Mandragora deadly opponents. Even without a weapon, a Mandragora still has a pair of claws, their tail blades and their jaws to use. Most Mandragora do not use their jaws to attack - not only do they see it as a somewhat artless attack, it can also put their head within easy range of an attacker's weapon!

On average, a Mandragora attains a height of 6½ feet, and weigh in at around 250 pounds. Female Mandragora tend to be taller than the males and more powerfully built, reaching almost 7 feet in some cases and they can weigh up to 300 pounds. The draconian heritage of the Mandragora means that they inherit some of the long life span of their ancestors, living for around 600 years, but individuals have been known to live in excess of 1000 years. Young Mandragora are known as 'hatchlings' but female Mandragora bear live young - the name is simply to honour their heritage and used as a term of affection when referring to their young ones. Although interbreeding between the different subspecies is rare (and frowned upon in most circumstances), it does happen. In all cases, the resulting issue is of one particular colour. Gold Mandragora always breed true, with hatchlings acquiring their gold coloration at puberty. At birth, all hatchlings have pale colouration with almost translucent scales that darken as they mature. Most Mandragora

reach puberty at the age of 30 human years, normally reaching adulthood at 90.

As a species, the Mandragora are warm-blooded, as are many of the reptiles dwelling upon Lonaraban. The minimal clothing that the Mandragora wear is simple but functional (except for the Copper Mandragora, who are renowned for their love of fine - but gaudy - clothing), depending a great deal upon their environment. For example, the White Mandragora wear furs or thick clothing (as even their ability to withstand the cold is severely tested in the freezing climes of the Lonaraban mountains), but the Gold prefer fine gauzy silks, often in extremely bright colours. Mandragora are extremely fond of jewellery, with both males and females wearing elaborate rings or bracelets on their tails, and earrings and nose chains are also common. The females have a tendency to wear tooth studs, constructed from gems, and teeth and horns enamelled with precious metals are popular. Male Mandragora prefer intricate tattoos upon their arms, legs or wings: whorls and spirals being the favourite patterns.

Mandragora armour is designed to intimidate foes as well as protect the wearer. Most Mandragora wear the insect-like chitin armour or scale armour, often of the finest craftsmanship. The processes used by the alchemists and armourers of Lonaraban give the armour an organic appearance. Some suits of armour have considerable prestige and history attributed to them, either by the wearer or the maker. Mandragora helms are highly individual, usually crafted to the wearer's specifications, with a monstrous aspect designed to inspire fear in an opponent. Rank and house badges are usually affixed to the sides.

There are ten different subspecies of Mandragora, each fulfilling a role (or roles) in Mandragora society, and not all get along with one another. Ancient tales allude to an eleventh group of Mandragora, who kept going after the FirstFall (when the Mandragora first landed upon Lonaraban) and were never seen again. Who these Mandragora were and what they looked like is now long hidden in mystery, myth, and legend. Many Mandragora deny that this other group ever existed.

The Mandragora are divided into two classes of citizen: the High Mandragora and the Citizen caste. These castes comprise as follows:

- High Mandragora: Blue Mandragora, Gold Mandragora, Red Mandragora, Silver Mandragora.
- Citizen Caste: Black Mandragora, Brass Mandragora, Bronze Mandragora, Copper Mandragora, Green Mandragora, White Mandragora.

The High Mandragora are best regarded as the nobility of Lonaraban, but only the Gold represent the real political power base upon Lonaraban. The different subspecies of Mandragora have their own outlook, and the following sections detail each of the various colours and their abilities, together with their own cultural quirks, peculiarities, and codes of behaviour. The various dragon types that the Mandragora have descended from have also shaped their societies and outlook.

Every Mandragora (with a few rare exceptions) are tied to Imperial or Noble Houses of some kind. These Noble Houses are usually an extended family of relatives, with servants from the Citizen Caste. Loyalty and utter obedience to the Noble House is expected, through the authority of the eldest females of the family known as Matriarchs. Male

nobility and lesser females are known as Scions, spending their time indulging in political chicanery as well advancing their own ends in the Senate or the shadows.

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