

# The Annis

([Paul Partington](#))

*The door opened into an enormous cavern, impossibly contained within the boundaries of the house. Stairs carved out of rock lead to the floor. Before descending, I looked around. The walls were daubed with strange symbols in a dark red paint and the floor was littered with bones. Against the wall to the left was a bed that looked more like the nest of a giant bird and to the right was an old woman in a tatty grey dress, shackled to the wall. She appeared to be asleep, or unconscious. Walking carefully down the stairs, I almost tripped over a black cat as it coiled round my legs. I shooed it away and off it went, looking at me balefully and hissing. It went towards the old woman and rubbed itself against her legs, which caused her to wake up. 'Lawks!' she exclaimed when she saw me. 'Have you come to rescue me, dearie?'*

*I was not fooled, so I drew my sword and the old woman changed as the illusion was broken. Before me stood a monster, seven feet tall, with dark blue skin and matted jet-black hair in which small bones had been woven. Its nose was long and crooked, and its teeth were yellow fangs. The annis lunged towards me with its razor-sharp talons and I had to fight, not only for my life but for the life of the child I had come to rescue.*

The annis is a shape-changing hag that delights in tormenting communities, causing sorrow and distress amongst the population. They can cause crops to wither and die, summon demonic hounds to spread terror, and slip unseen into homes to capture or slay the occupants. They are particularly fond of making off with children. An annis' favourite meal is the flesh of a terrorised child, but sometimes they will subjugate a child and bend them to their will until the poor youngster is a mockery of human decency.

In their natural form, an annis stands between seven and eight feet tall. Some annis hags are heavily built with inhuman strength, while others are lithe, rangy, and lightning-fast. The skin of an annis ranges from dark blue to black, and its long greasy hair can be any shade of grey from white to black. The face of an annis is that of an old crone. The nails of an annis are iron hard and razor-sharp, and being physically imposing, it doesn't shy away from using its talons in physical combat.

Occasionally, a trio of annis hags will form a coven, although due to their overwhelming arrogance and sense of superiority, this group will not stay together long. Each annis thinks it is the leader and bickering and infighting soon lead to the coven breaking apart. While they are together though, they are even more powerful, able to wreak even greater terror on the populace.

An annis has the following spells available, which it can cast once each day:

**Summon Greater Hellhound:** A huge black canine appears, its slavering jaws terrifying to behold and its red eyes burning with hatred (see Bestiary p. 67). The hound will appear within 2d6 Combat Rounds. Spell Expiry Roll applies, but if the hound is slain, then the annis cannot cast this spell for another seven days.

**Disguise:** as the *Illusion* spell (Dragon Warriors p. 82), except with the limitation that the only illusion an annis can create is to alter her appearance so that she looks like a kindly old lady.

**Iron Cage:** as *Close Portal* (Dragon Warriors p. 80), except a Strength of 19 is needed to open a door held by this spell.

**Incorporeality:** the annis can pass through walls and closed doors as if they were not there. While in this form, the annis is also invisible but cannot interact with the material world (so can't attack, pick up items, and so on). Spell Expiry Roll applies.

**Blight Crops:** this spell causes crops within a half-mile radius to wither and die, effectively reducing crop yield to half. This lasts until Dispelled (with 6 MP) or until the annis is killed, at which point the crops start to grow back again.

If an annis is part of a coven, then each one gains the spellcasting ability of a Rank 4 Mystic.

<b>ANNIS</b>			RE 4
<b>ATTACK</b>	16	Talons (d8, 4)	
<b>DEFENCE</b>	10	Hide (AF 1)	
<b>MAGICAL ATTACK</b>	N/A	<b>Magic Points</b>	None
<b>MAGICAL DEFENCE</b>	9	<b>Health Points</b>	2d6 +7
<b>EVASION</b>	5	<b>Movement</b>	10m (20m)
<b>STEALTH</b>	12	<b>PERCEPTION</b>	9 (Normal)

An annis has partial immunity to non-magical weapons, which cause only half normal damage. If an annis achieves surprise (and its attack hits) or wins two consecutive Combat Rounds, its attack will cause 6 HP of damage as it grabs its opponent with one hand while raking with its other.

Number encountered: 1 or 3 Treasure: 1–3 = poor, 4–5 = moderate, 6 = average.

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