

Kaiptari

Medium Animal (aquatic)

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: Swim 30 ft.

AC: 22 (+2 Dex, +10 natural),

Touch 12, Flat-footed 20

Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+3

Attack: Spines +3 melee

Full Attack: Spines +3 melee

Damage: Spines 1d10

Face/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attack: Thrash

Special Qualities: Threads

Blade Defense

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +1

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 14

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +8

Feats: Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Any oceanic

Organization: Solitary

CR: 3

Alignment: Neutral

Treasure: None

Advancement: 5-6 HD

(Medium), 7-10 HD (Large)

COMBAT

Thrash: By thrashing their bodies about, kauptari can endanger all creatures in their immediate area with their flashing fins and razor threads. As a full round action, their flail lets them make attacks on everything within 5 feet of them for 1d6 points of damage.

Threads: Anything passing within 20 ft. of the rear of a kauptari must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or suffer 1d12 points of damage from the slicing hairs.

Blade Defense: Kauptari get an automatic attack of opportunity against anything that comes into contact with their deadly bodies.



Kauptari The Sabrefin

"Looks like a good haul today, men! Now, let's see what we've caught. Plenty o' cod as usual, but... Gads, what a mess! What the devil happened here? Half the damn catch's in pieces! Ah! A sabrefin! Of all the luck...! Somebody get some hooks and gloves together. We'll have a time cutting that bastard out without tattering the net. Oh, and Kovan, get below and fetch the new boy. If someone's going to clean these guts up, it may as well be him. Good introduction to the job, wouldn't you say?"

- Captain Stobock of the Sultry Maiden

It's a well-known superstition that crossing a black cat's path will cause bad luck, but in my time I've yet to witness any evidence to bolster that irrational claim. It would be far more exact to say something along the lines of "crossing a kauptari's path will cause immediate disfigurement and possibly death." Not only is such a statement more precise than "bad luck," it is factual.

Although they are considered mundane for their lack of exceptional powers, intelligence, or size, kauptari are among the best-defended fish in the seas. They roam unhurriedly through the waters, never fearing the approach of a larger predator. With their natural armaments displayed like ruffled plumage, there are few creatures capable of eating them, and they are also well equipped to catch their own meals.

The kauptari's nickname, "sabrefin," comes from the many sharp-edged spines that sprout all about its body. Their shape and numbers give the appearance that the fish is blossoming with knives. This is somewhat accurate, for the spines are indeed sharp and stiff enough to deliver deep cuts. Because the concentration of these blades is so high, individuals without armor will receive not one but several gashes. Those people that have apprehended kauptari have found that the fins can be removed and utilized as cutlery, but the pains of extracting the broad spines can be more costly than the product garnered.

Less obtrusive but even more lethal than the edged obstructions that cover their red streaked, sand colored forms, trailing behind all kauptari is a wispy wake that turns flesh to ribbons and hews bone more easily than a keen sword. Growing from the tip of each blade is a thread so fine as to be all but transparent, yet stronger than a steel wire several

times its width. So thin are these hairs that if they should snag upon anything but the strongest of materials, they will incise into it and potentially cut through the object cleaner than any hammered metal tool could. Since the threads extend as far as twenty feet behind the kauptari, creatures that pass through the trail are often reduced to dissevered parts. So precise are the slices that some physicians have taken to using saber-thread in their surgeries by fashioning a device called a sawstring. By binding each end of the strand to a metal handle, they are able to hold the line taut and guide it back and forth to amputate gangrenous or otherwise unsalvageable limbs. Other professions have also found sawstrings to be useful, including butchers, carpenters and assassins who use them as decapitating garrotes.

While many of the deaths they cause are incidental, kauptari are carnivores and sometimes kill with intent. If the chosen quarry remains still enough, the sabrefin will calmly swim around it and then close the circle, ensnaring the target in a mesh of lacerating fibers. Should the prey prove too wary to be entrapped, a kauptari will likely just attempt a charge, forcing its bladed fins into flesh and muscle, stabbing and slicing until the victim is lifeless and the shreds can be torn free from the mutilated kill and inhaled into the victor's pug mouth.

Kauptari are indeed a tricky matter to deal with, for a simple mistake could cost one life or limb. As if holding off a hungry sabrefin weren't trouble enough, one must keep a sharp eye opened wide, for if you see one frittering about, its train of deadly strings will be in pursuit, and they are not lines to be crossed. They cannot slit metal, but the threads have a way of sliding along armor plates until they find a chink or crack, so they can often find their way to a point without protection. Constant vigilance is required to survive in the depths of the seas. Constant vigilance!

One day as I was going about my business on the seabed, I faced the dual calamity of an aggressive kauptari on one of my sides and a killer shark on the other. The situation was sizing up to be a grisly mess, but I was able to seize a chance and save my own skin. Advancing on the kauptari, my aim shone true and I impaled it on the end of my reliable harpoon. I was then able to use this helpless foe against the other predatory beast that had been closing on me. Back and forth I swung my sabrefin polearm until the waters were red with the shark's crimson juices. It was so effective that I considered implementing sawstrings into my weapon permanently, but I decided that it served me well enough and I was better off not losing a hand to careless misfortune.



Encounters

Low(1-5): Alveya Ferron-tonde, a wealthy individual with a taste for exotic fish, carelessly let her precious necklace drop into her kaiftari tank. It must be retrieved, but she and her servants have been unable to do so. She is willing to reward anyone clever enough to get the heirloom back without harm to it or her favorite specimen.

Mid(6-10): As a result of his tomfoolery, a child on the adventurers' ship falls overboard. A shout from the crows nest alerts all to a pair of kaiftari approaching the youngster. Now is the time for a display of true heroism!

High(11+): The traps that the smugglers use to defend their secret base are unorthodox to say the least. Sand-filled kaiftari, swung about from chains affixed to their dead mouths, are even more hazardous than a guillotine, but how could landmen like these acquire so many of the dangerous fish? This may well be the work of a naltchea or an arnachixola.*

* For information on arnachixola, see EN World Player's Journal #2.

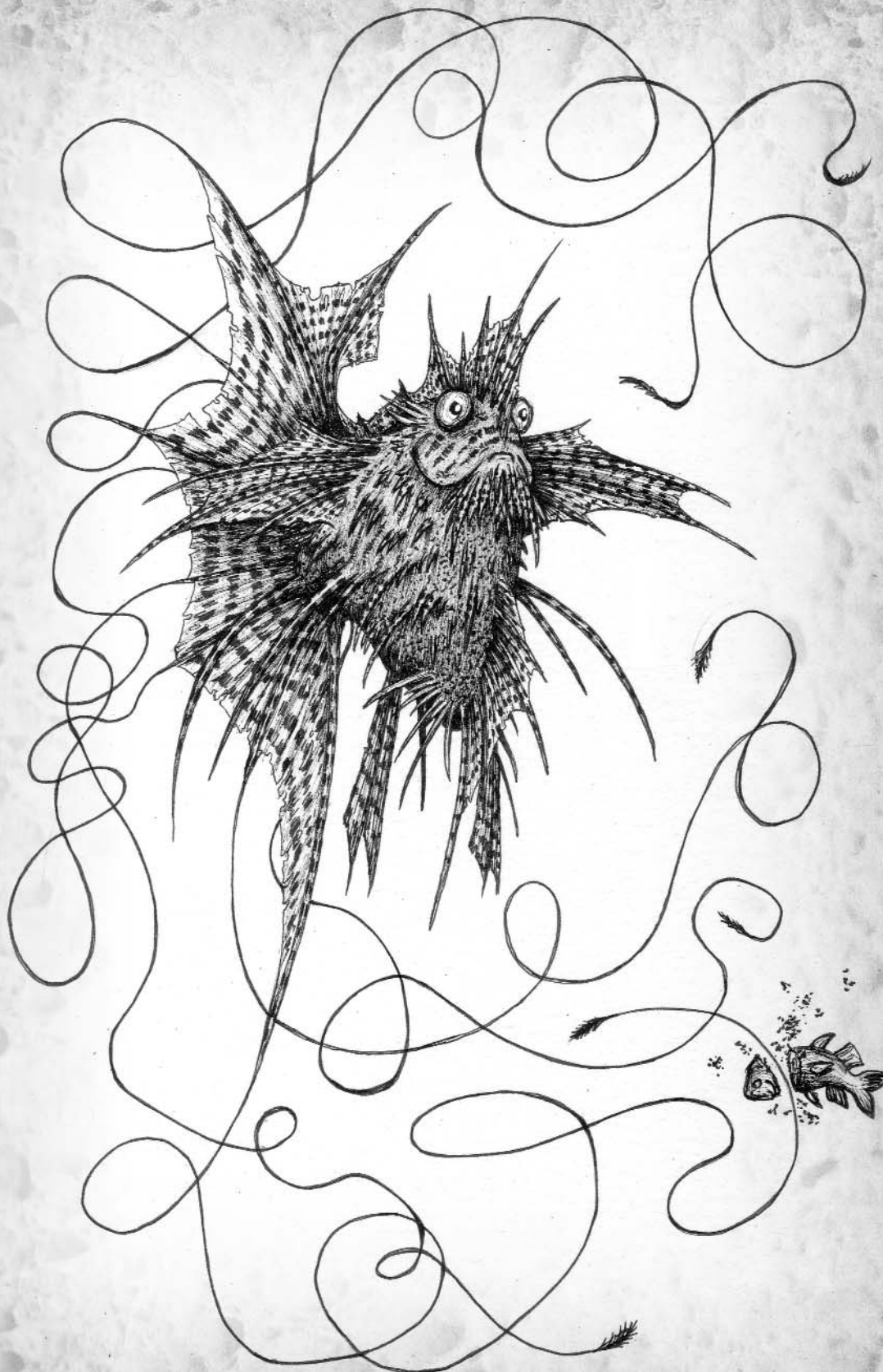
New Weapon

Sawstring: Usually a surgeon's tool, these are sometimes used by assassins. The best approach is a surprise attack from the rear as their use provokes an attack of opportunity. Targets with helmets or neck protection cannot be affected, but others are hit with a successful touch attack, which indicates that the wire has been looped around the defender's neck. The target can break free with a successful grapple check or by cutting the string with a small blade (AC 10, -4 penalty to attack with any weapon larger than Small, 3 hp to cut but 50% of that damage is also inflicted on self). Each round that the saw string is in place, the attacker can garrote for an automatic 1d10 damage (plus Strength modifier), plus the victim suffocates as per normal rules. (exotic-melee)

cost	damage	crit	range	wgt	type
20 gp*	1d10**	-	-	1 lb	S

*This item is extremely rare.

**See above.





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