

## Staff of Malnefar (Staff of the Wight)

*Staff, rare (requires attunement)*

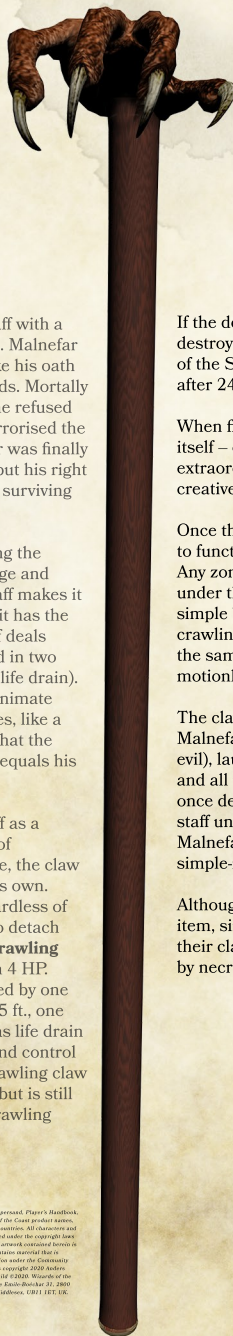
The Staff of Malnefar is a long, wooden staff with a real, but shrivelled, clawlike hand at its top. Malnefar in his time was a famous paladin who broke his oath and turned upon his god – and all other gods. Mortally wounded by his former masters in battle, he refused to let go of life and became a wight who terrorised the land for many years. The wight of Malnefar was finally slain and the pieces of his corpse burned, but his right hand was spared the flames, hidden by his surviving followers, who later grafted it to the staff.

The wight's hand is still fully effective, giving the wielder of the staff the ability to deal damage and drain life like a **wight**. The length of the staff makes it possible to attack opponents within 10 ft. (it has the *reach* property). Held in one hand, the staff deals 1D6+2 necrotic damage (as life drain); held in two hands it deals 1D8+2 necrotic damage (as life drain). The staff's owner also gains the ability to animate those killed by the life draining into zombies, like a wight. The maximum number of zombies that the staff's owner can control at any given time equals his INT score.

These abilities alone would qualify the staff as a significant necromantic item, but the staff of Malnefar keeps a secret. When draining life, the claw at its top slowly gains in force and will of its own. Once it has drained a sum of 100 HP (regardless of the timeframe), the claw gains the ability to detach from the staff to move, think and act as a **crawling claw** (statistics as of *Monster Manual*) with 4 HP. The crawling claw's melee attack is replaced by one attack per turn as a wight (+4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 5 (1D6+2) necrotic damage as life drain as for a wight, including zombie creation and control (see *Monster Manual* **wight** entry). The crawling claw also suffers sunlight sensitivity as a wight, but is still immune to the turning of undead like all crawling claws.



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If the detached crawling claw is reduced to 0 HP it is not destroyed, but disappears, to immediately reappear as part of the Staff of Malnefar. It can then only detach itself again after 24 hours have passed (with full 4 HP).

When fixed to the staff, the claw – just like the staff itself – cannot be destroyed, even by fire. Only extraordinary means can destroy the staff (the DM gets creative within the context of the present campaign...).

Once the claw has detached from the staff this ceases to function as a magic item until the claw returns to it. Any zombie under the control of the staff's owner falls under the control of the detached crawling claw and its simple but brutal mind. Note that with an INT of 5, the crawling claw cannot control more than 5 zombies at the same time (additional zombies available remain motionless).

The claw will try to fulfil the dark ambitions of Malnefar: to eradicate all worship of the gods (good and evil), launching attacks upon temples, churches, shrines and all their servants. Knowing it is vulnerable to attack once detached, the claw will wait until it can leave the staff unseen. Although the claw is not as intelligent as Malnefar was in life, it is both murderous and simple-mindedly malicious.

Although the staff of Malnefar is a specific (unique) item, similar *staves of the wight* (carrying the name of their claws' former owners) exist, highly sought after by necromancers all through the land.



A magic item by  
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