

KARETH DREAD

Kareth Dread

Large Monstrosity (Legendary), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (13d10 + 52)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Con +7

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +4, Survival +5

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Common but doesn't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus: +3

Totem-Back (Soul Burden).

The Kareth Dread carries 1d4 + 1 stone totems on its back at the start of combat. Each totem grants it +1 AC and +5 temporary hit points.

Destroying a totem (AC 12, 15 HP) reduces both its AC and removes the temp HP. Totems can be targeted with a called shot (disadvantage on the attack unless using ranged/spell attacks).

Soul Echo. (Recharge 5–6)

The Kareth Dread mimics the voice of its victim, whispering into their new victim's mind. One creature within 60 ft. that can hear must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed until the end of its next turn. While charmed, the creature is considered distracted, granting the Kareth Dread advantage on its next attack against them.

Folk Horror Aura.

At the start of each of the Kareth Dread's turns, each creature of its choice within 10 feet must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of their next turn. A creature that succeeds is immune for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack The Kareth Dread makes two Stoneclaw attacks.

Stoneclaw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Tail Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

LEGENDARY ACTION (Optional at Night Only)

The Kareth Dread can take 1 legendary action, only usable at night:

Wailing Whispers. The Dread causes eerie whispers to echo. One creature within 30 ft. must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be unable to take reactions until the start of its next turn.

Also known as "Totem-Back", "Stonefather", or "The Thing from the Dust". Roughly ogre-sized with a hulking upper body, long arms with clawed hands. Its legs and hips are squat and compact, giving it a loping, unstable gait. Skin, cracked and scaly, like sun-dried stone or kiln-baked earth. Sometimes bits of clay flake off when it moves. Several upright stone totems embedded in its back. These stones are worn and ancient each one tied to a soul it has claimed. Thick tail covered in small shards of stone—each clinks softly as it walks.

"When the moon hangs low and the wind dies still, that's when you listen for the stones scraping in the dirt. That's when the Kareth Dread walks. A beast born of punishment, they say. A child who defied their tribe's laws so greatly, the Stone Shamans bound the child's spirit into a giant stone and cursed the child to forever bear the burden of there disobedience... carved into stone for all to see."

"It stalks the lonely roads and fields at night, lookin' for wanderers who ain't where they're supposed to be. And if it finds you? It don't kill you—no. It carves your sins into it's stones and drags your soul into them. That's why every time someone sees it, it's got one more totem on it's back than before."

— Old Zivah, storyteller of Dustreach Hamlet



BEHAVIOR AND LORE

It only appears at night and only in areas where roads meet open land (crossroads, old fields, dried riverbeds). It is drawn to those who have strayed from where they are meant to be (e.g., kids sneaking out, travelers camping off-road, those fleeing obligations).

Locals believe it cannot be seen directly at first—only glimpsed through reflections, or heard through the dragging of its tail and claws on the dirt. Its presence causes strange effects: candles flicker blue, dreams become vivid, and whispers echo in silence.

Some versions of the tale say if you leave a carving tool or a piece of unmarked stone at a crossroad, it may take that instead of a soul—but only if you're pure of heart.

Optional: Nightbound Curse - It cannot be harmed until a player declares their intended destination and purpose—forcing them to face their sense of direction or duty.

LAYER EFFECTS

When the Kareth Dread is encountered in its haunting grounds (such as crossroads, old fields, dried riverbeds or ruined watchtowers, old stone shrines), the following effects may apply:

The area within 60 ft. is dimly lit, even if it's bright outside with moon light.

Small rocks shift and move subtly, creating difficult terrain for non-native creatures.

“Wait, that’s not a rock!!!”