

Chapter Five: Swift Scion Artifacts

Some legendary artifacts are made for only the swiftest hands. Most find their way into the possession of rogues, monks, and bards, but a few find homes with fighters who prefer a more subtle approach.

Nyctophobos, the Fear in the Dark

Forged from the essence of the darkest night, the slender black blade known as *Nyctophobos* (NIKH-to-fo-bos) grants its wielder powers drawn from the Plane of Shadows.

When Gods Walked in Liberty

When the city of Liberty was at the height of its power, the gods often came down from their high places to walk its streets and rub shoulders with its mortal residents. Each deity had a favorite place to visit. Lod, the father of the gods, was fond of posing as an anonymous foreign merchant in the Street of Traders. Lani, the goddess of beauty, often wandered in the vicinity of the Beggars' Gate. And Mol, nephew of Lod and god of shadows, roamed the Old Quarter—the place where the thieves of the city ruled. Each deity found diversions and amusements in the city and, for the most part, stayed out of the other gods' ways. But when the deities found themselves at odds, the city shook and mortals died by the score.

Check Required: Knowledge (local) DC 25.

For reasons no mortal can remember, there came a time when Lod sought to expand his influence in Liberty. To that end, he “encouraged” the city guard (known as the Lion Legions) to clean out the Old Quarter. But Mol, protective of his favorite part of the city, drove the guards out again. Over and over the two exerted their influence, creating a vicious circle of events. Each day, the Lion Legions moved through the Old Quarter, arresting suspicious persons, executing known criminals, and burning down the suspected hiding places of the city's thieves and murderers. Each night, filled with some unknown dread, those same guards abandoned the Old Quarter. Thus, the area was just as corrupt and dangerous when the new day dawned as it had been the morning before.

Check Required: Knowledge (local) DC 20.

Lod decided to end this stalemate with his nephew by arming the Lion Legions with magic weapons. For all of two nights, the Lion Legions remained in the Old Quarter to keep the peace. But Mol lost no time in equipping the rogues and assassins of his favorite area with magic weapons of their own. At that point, the Lion Legions ruled all of Liberty by day, and the thieves ruled the entire city by night.

Finally, Lod had had enough. In a great battle that raged through the Old Quarter and cut a

swath of destruction through the Noble Quarter, the two gods fought for supremacy. The outcome was never in doubt—Lod drove Mol out of Liberty. In the morning, those who had witnessed the conflict spoke of dreams in which two colossal forms, one of light and one of darkness, had grappled in the sky above the city. Lod's priests declared that a miracle had occurred. The prince-regent began rebuilding the city, and life in Liberty went on pretty much as it had before.

Check Required: Knowledge (local) DC 20.

But one thing had changed—the city of Liberty was now teeming with magic weapons created by the gods themselves. Most had been destroyed in the divine battle, and many others had disappeared and were presumed destroyed. But a few were hidden away and, as though the god of shadows had planned it all along, most of these belonged to thieves in the Old Quarter.

Though from time to time one or more of these weapons surfaces and is ultimately destroyed, one of them has endured for centuries: *Nyctophobos*—the Fear in the Dark, also called the Shadow-God's Talon. Said to come and go by the will of Mol himself, *Nyctophobos* periodically appears somewhere in the Old Quarter. The residents there believe that the rogue who finds it is destined to become the next King of the Old Quarter—that is, the leader of the Thieves' Guild. This belief is so common that whenever rumors surface of its return, the reigning King of the Old Quarter spares no effort to make sure that the sword finds its way into his possession, lest anyone come to challenge his authority.

Check Required: Knowledge (local) DC 25.

Requirements

To wield *Nyctophobos* as its swiftblade scion, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

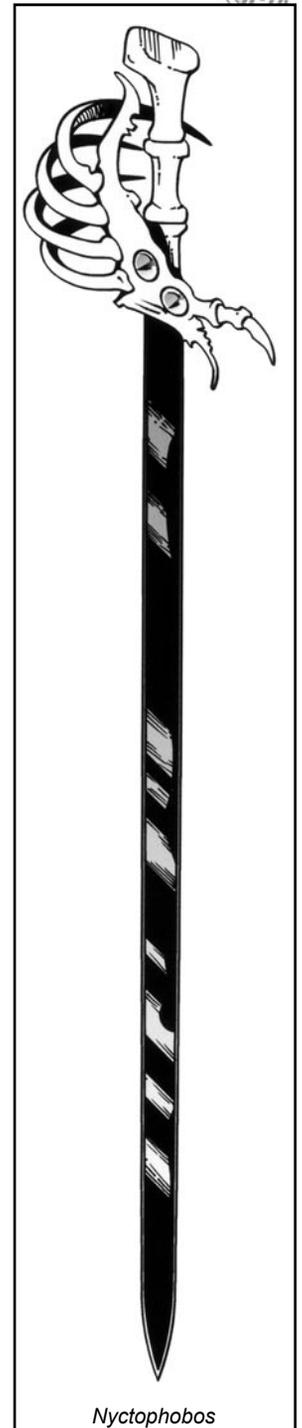
Alignment: Neutral or any evil.

Base Save Bonus: Ref +4.

Skills: Hide 7 ranks, Move Silently 7 ranks.

Feat: Weapon Finesse.

Special: The candidate must have the sneak attack ability.



Nyctophobos

Restrictions

Bright light weakens *Nyctophobos*. In light as bright as full daylight, the rapier's enhancement bonus is reduced by 1 point. These losses are not cumulative (that is, the weapon can lose only 1 point of enhancement bonus, regardless of how long it is exposed to light), and its overall enhancement bonus cannot drop below +1 in this manner. Once the weapon is back in shadows or darkness, it immediately regains any lost bonus.

Attributes

Nyctophobos has the following attributes.

Hardness/Hit Points: 14/8.

Value: To anyone other than its swiftblade scion, *Nyctophobos* appears to be worth as much as a +1 rapier of subtlety (20,320 gp).

Special Abilities

Nyctophobos provides the following special abilities to its wielder, depending upon the

character's level in the swiftblade scion prestige class (see Table 5–1: Abilities Granted by *Nyctophobos*).

Initial Abilities: When first acquired, *Nyctophobos* functions as a +1 rapier of subtlety. Anyone who wields it, whether a swiftblade scion or not, benefits from this ability (see below).

Subtlety: When used to make a sneak attack, *Nyctophobos* adds a +4 bonus to its wielder's attack and damage rolls.

Hide in Plain Sight: Beginning at 1st level, a swiftblade scion of *Nyctophobos* can use the Hide skill even while being observed, for the blade can shroud her in darkness. As long as she

is within 10 feet of some sort of shadow, the scion can hide herself from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. (She cannot, however, hide in her own shadow.) This ability is usable at will.

Shadow's Touch: When its swiftblade scion reaches 2nd level, *Nyctophobos* deals 1 point of Strength damage to each living foe it hits. A creature reduced to Strength 0 in this fashion dies.

Table 5–1: Abilities Granted by *Nyctophobos*

Scion Level	Ability Gained	Caster Level
—	Enhancement bonus +1	3rd
	Subtlety	7th
1st	Hide in plain sight	3rd
2nd	Shadow's touch	1st
3rd	Enhancement bonus +2	6th
4th	Aura of dread	3rd
5th	Shadow's kiss	3rd
6th	Enhancement bonus +3	9th
7th	Shadow jump (40 ft.)	7th
8th	Shadow's grip	5th
9th	Enhancement bonus +4	12th
10th	Shadow jump (80 ft.)	7th

Enhancement Bonus: *Nyctophobos*'s enhancement bonus increases to +2 when the swiftblade scion reaches 3rd level, to +3 when she reaches 6th level, and to +4 when she reaches 9th level.

Aura of Dread (Su): Beginning at 4th level, a swiftblade scion of *Nyctophobos* appears to transform into a living shadow whenever she has the weapon in hand. Every creature within 15 feet of her that has less than 6 Hit Dice must make a successful Will save (DC 15) or take a –2 morale penalty on attack rolls, checks, and saving throws. In addition, the affected creature flees from the scion as well as it can, fighting only if unable to flee. These effects last as long as the scion has *Nyctophobos* in hand. A successful Will save allows the creature to act normally.

Shadow's Kiss: When its swiftblade scion reaches 5th level, *Nyctophobos* deals 1d4 points of Strength damage to each living foe it hits. A creature reduced to Strength 0 in this fashion dies. This ability replaces the shadow's touch ability.

Shadow Jump (Sp): At 7th level, a swiftblade scion of *Nyctophobos* gains the ability to travel between shadows as if by means of a *dimension door* spell, except that the magical transport must begin and end in an area with at least some shadow. The scion can "jump" up to a total of 40 feet each day in this way, although this amount need not all be used for a single jump. However, each jump, no matter how small, counts as a 10-foot increment. At 10th level, the scion can jump a total of 80 feet per day.

Shadow's Grip: When its swiftblade scion reaches 5th level, *Nyctophobos* deals 1d6 points of Strength damage to each living foe it hits. A creature reduced to Strength 0 in this fashion dies. This ability replaces the shadow's kiss ability.

Adventure Hook

While en route to the city of Liberty, the party's rogue encounters a traveling merchant who claims to have the magic rapier *Nyctophobos*, which he is willing to sell for just over 2,000 gp. Whether this weapon truly is the Shadow-God's Talon cannot be determined, but it certainly behaves like the legendary sword. When the rogue arrives in Liberty, though, she hears through the rumor mill that the King of the Old Quarter has recently been seen carrying *Nyctophobos*. Plainly, either the rogue or the king has a replica—but which one?

The King of the Old Quarter, upon hearing that an adventurer has also been seen with the legendary sword, offers to buy it for twice what the rogue paid for it. If the sword isn't really *Nyctophobos*, this is an amazing bargain—but then, why does the king want it so badly? And if it truly is the Shadow-God's Talon, wouldn't the adventurer be a fool to sell it at any price? If the rogue proves reluctant to sell, the King of the Old Quarter endeavors to make life difficult for her until she changes her mind.