DUALINK

Vander, the Hound of the Undercity

Monster



Arcane Edition

Vander, the Hound of the Undercity

Large humanoid (mutated human), chaotic good

Armor Class: 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points: 200 (20d10 + 100)
Speed: 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24	14	20	10	12	16
(+7)	(+2)	(+5)	(+0)	(+1)	(+3)

Saving Throws: Str +11, Con +9, Wis +5
Skills Athletics: +11, Intimidation +7, Perception +5
Damage Resistances: Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities: Charmed, Frightened
Senses: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages: Common, Undercommon, Dwarvish
Challenge: 11 (7,200 XP)

Relentless Endurance. Once per long rest, when reduced to 0 HP but not killed outright, Vander drops to 1 HP instead.

Shimmer Counter. A volatile gauge tracking the corruption coursing through Vander's veins. It represents his gradual loss of control as Shimmer takes hold. He gains, or loses Shimmer as follows:

- Gains 1 whenever he takes 20+ damage from a single source.
- Gains 1 whenever he fails a saving throw.
- Gains 1 each time he drops below a 25% threshold of remaining HP

for the first time.

- Loses 1 if he ends his turn without attacking.

At 10 stacks Forced Transformation occurs, and Phase 2 begins instantly.

The amount of shimmer he has results in the following cumulative effects:

- *1–3 Counters - The Stirring Veins.* Faint violet light pulses beneath his skin. Vander's melee weapon attacks deal +1 damage, and he gains advantage on saving throws against being frightened.
- *4–6 Counters - The Beast Awakens.* His muscles swell and his breath grows heavier. Vander's melee weapon attacks deal +2 damage, and his movement speed increases by 10 feet.
- *7–9 Counters - The Breaking Point.* The Shimmer surges uncontrollably through his bloodstream. Vander gains advantage on Strength checks and saving throws, and his melee attacks deal +1d4 force damage.
- *10 Counters - The Hound Unleashed.* Vander's humanity collapses beneath the Shimmer's weight. He immediately erupts into Phase 2, regaining 30 hit points, ending all current conditions on himself, and triggering an explosive shockwave (detailed in Phase 2).

"The veins start to shine, the breath turns to growls, and the Hound finally wakes."

Mutated Regeneration. At the start of his turn while below half HP and

if he has not taken fire damage since his last turn, Vander regains 5 HP + his current Shimmer Counter. If fire damage prevents this for two consecutive rounds, he suffers Shimmer Backlash, taking 10 force damage as the unstable mixture ravages his veins.

"It heals him, and it hurts him for trying."

Actions

Multiattack. Vander makes two melee attacks, any combination of *Fist of the Hound* or *Crushing Grasp*.

Fist of the Hound. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage. On a hit, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone or pushed 10 feet (Vander's choice). If Vander has 7 or more Shimmer Counters, the attack also deals an extra 1d4 force damage.

"He doesn't swing to kill, he swings to end the fight."

Crushing Grasp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 17). While grappled, the target is restrained and takes 12 (3d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of Vander's turns.
If Vander has 6 or more Shimmer Counters, he can grapple two creatures at once (one per hand).

Ground Slam (Recharge 5–6). Vander slams his fists into the

ground, creating a shockwave. Each creature within 15 feet must make a DC 17 Strength saving throw. On a failed save the creature takes 27 (6d8) bludgeoning damage, pushed 10 feet, and knocked prone. On a successful save the creature only takes half damage, not pushed or knocked prone.

If Vander has 5 or more Shimmer Counters, the DC increases to 18, and the range expands to 20 feet as the floor cracks violently.

Bonus Actions

Shoulder Bash. Vander moves up to 20 feet in a straight line toward a creature. That creature must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or take 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage, be pushed 10 feet, and knocked prone. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

Chain Combo. If Vander hits with a melee attack, he may make an additional **Fist of the Hound** attack against a different creature within 5 feet. This can only be used if he has 7 or more Shimmer Counters.

Adrenaline Rush (Recharge 4–6). Vander focuses his breath, pushing through pain. He ends one condition currently affecting him (such as charmed, paralyzed, or poisoned) and regains 20 hit points.

If he has 8 or more Shimmer Counters, he also regains 30 hit points. This can be used even while incapacitated at the start of his turn.

Legendary Actions

Vander can take 2 legendary

actions, only one at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. He regains all spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Warning Glare. One creature Vander can see within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls against any target other than Vander until the end of its next turn.

Roar of Defiance. Vander lets out a thunderous roar. All hostile creatures within 10 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of their next turn. A creature that succeeds on this save is immune to this roar for 24 hours.

Intercepting Blow (Costs 2 Actions). When an ally within 10 feet of Vander is targeted by an attack, Vander moves up to 10 feet toward the attacker and makes one *Fist of the Hound* attack. If the attack hits, the damage is halved (rounded down), and the ally takes no damage.

"He always takes the hit meant for someone else."

The Hound Remains

When Vander reaches 10 Shimmer Counters, or when the DM rules the stress becomes overwhelming, he erupts in a violent transformation. His body swells with violet energy, veins glowing as his mind fractures between guilt and survival.

Instantaneous Effect: Shimmer-Fueled Rage. When the transformation triggers:

- All creatures within 15 ft. must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (4d6) force damage and be pushed 10 feet. On a success, they take half damage and aren't pushed.
- Vander regains 30 hit points and immediately ends all conditions on himself.
- His Shimmer Counter resets to 0 and no longer builds or decreases.
- Vander becomes resistant to all damage except psychic.
- He can take 3 Legendary Actions per round (up from 1 in Phase 1).

"The protector is gone. Only the Hound remains."

Mechanical Changes

While raging, Vander gains the following benefits for 1 minute:

- His melee attacks deal an additional 1d6 force damage.
- He can make one Fist of the Hound attack as a bonus action on each of his turns.
- He has advantage on Strength checks and saving throws.
- He cannot be charmed or frightened.
- At the end of each of his turns, he takes 5 force damage as the Shimmer burns him from within.

Unstable Momentum. Whenever Vander takes 20 or more damage from a single source, his next melee attack before the end of his next turn deals an additional 2d8 force damage. If he takes damage from fire or radiant during that same period, he instead becomes staggered, losing his legendary actions until the end of his next

turn.

New Action

Gravedigger's Uppercut (Recharge 4–6). A brutal uppercut designed to end a fight. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 23 (4d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be launched 20 feet, knocked prone, and take 7 (2d6) fall damage. If they collide with a solid object, they take an additional 2d6 bludgeoning damage and are stunned until the end of their next turn.

New Legendary Action

Shimmer Pulse (Costs 2, Recharge on 6). Vander releases a brief surge of energy; all creatures within 10 ft. must make a DC 17 Constitution save or take 10 (3d6) force damage. Vander gains temporary hit points equal to half the damage dealt.

Special Weaknesses

Father's Guilt

Discovery Mechanism. A character proficient in Insight or Persuasion who interacts with Vander during combat can attempt to reach the fractured part of his mind that still clings to the man he once was.

Triggering Mechanism. This requires a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) or DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check made as an action while Vander is within 30 feet and can see or hear the character. If the player speaks or acts in a way that directly references his children (Vi, Powder) or his former life in the Lanes, they make the check with

advantage.

Consequence. If the check succeeds, Vander falters momentarily, his expression flickers with recognition or regret, resulting in the following occurring:

- He immediately loses all temporary hit points and takes 20 force damage as the shimmer collapses inward.
- He cannot benefit from *Mutated Regeneration* during that round.
- If this occurs while in Phase 2, he also ends *Shimmer-Fueled Rage* early, reverting to his weakened.

"For a heartbeat, he remembers, the bar, the laughter, the promise. Then it's gone, drowned in violet light."

He was still there, beneath the violet veins and the monster they'd turned him into.

I remember the way he used to laugh, loud enough to warm the whole Undercity. A man who stopped fights with a word and held our broken world together with his hands.

His body twisted, his breath coming in sharp, pained bursts. The creature roared, yet the eyes were still his.

For a heartbeat, the rage faded, and the man we loved stared out of that nightmare and mouthed one word: Please.

Then the shimmer swallowed him again.

And I understood: a monster isn't born when it changes, but when the part still human realizes what it has become.