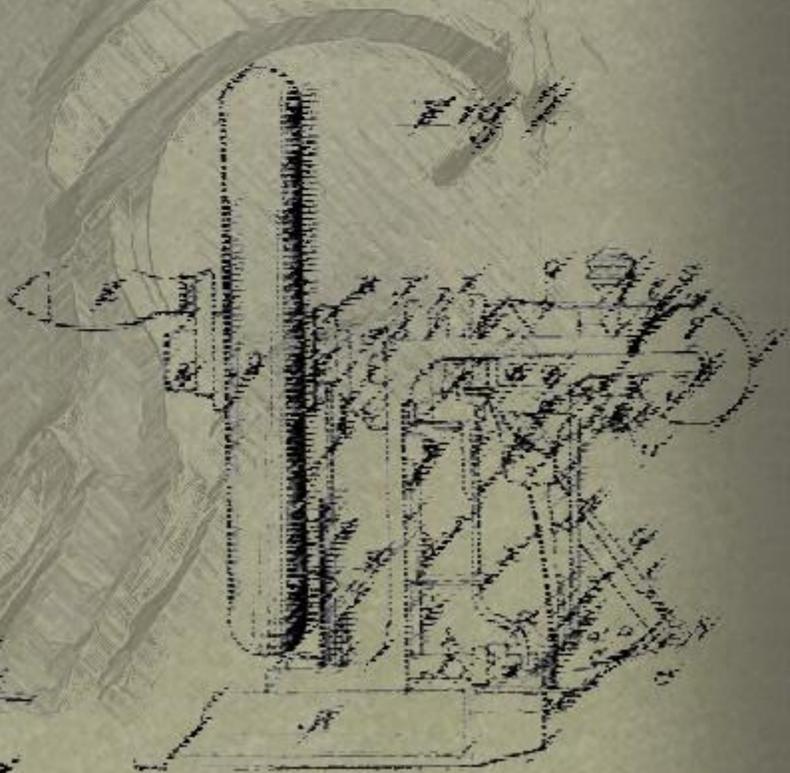
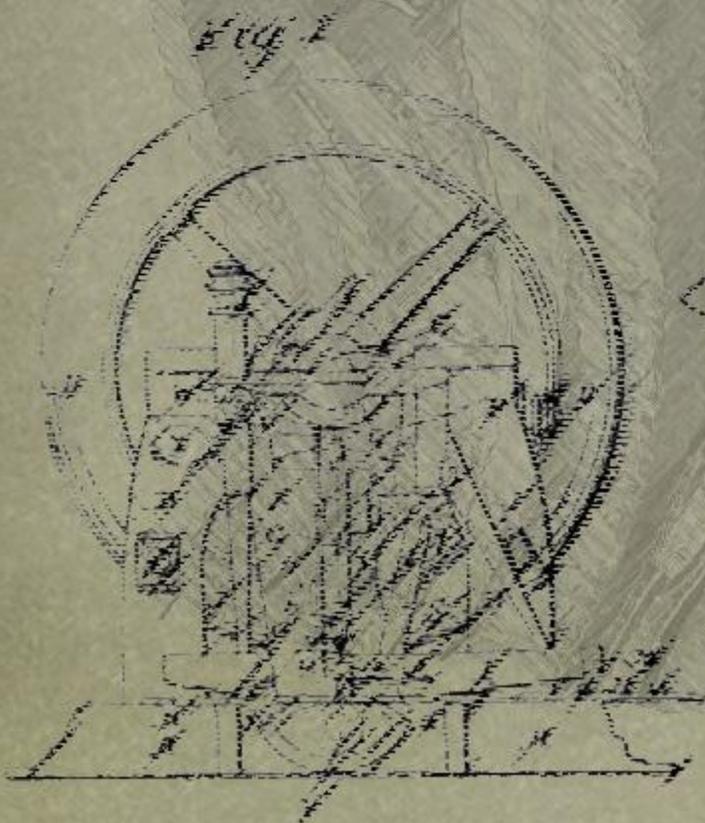
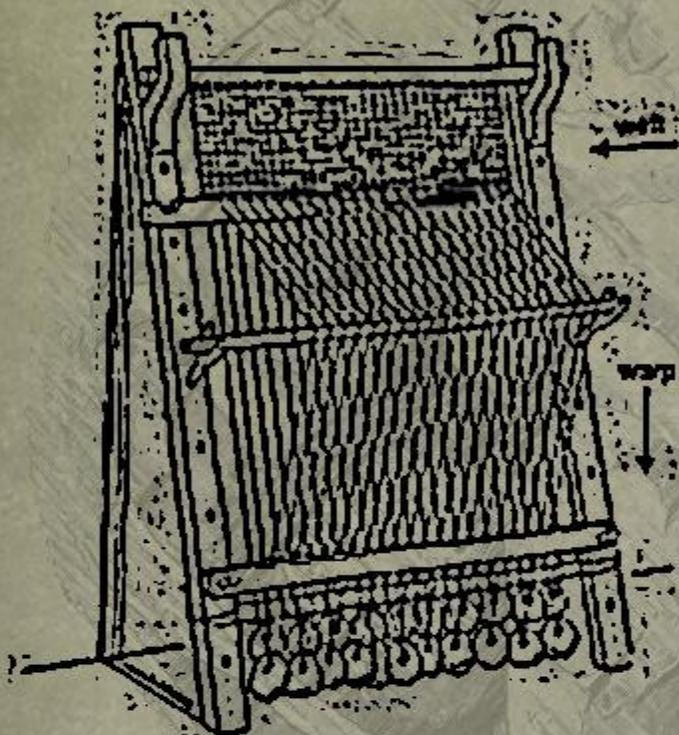
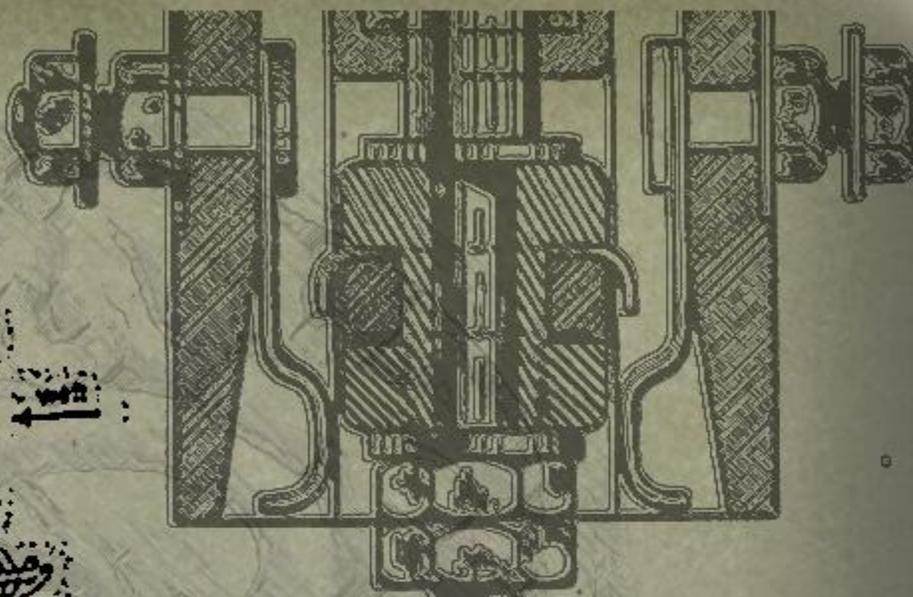


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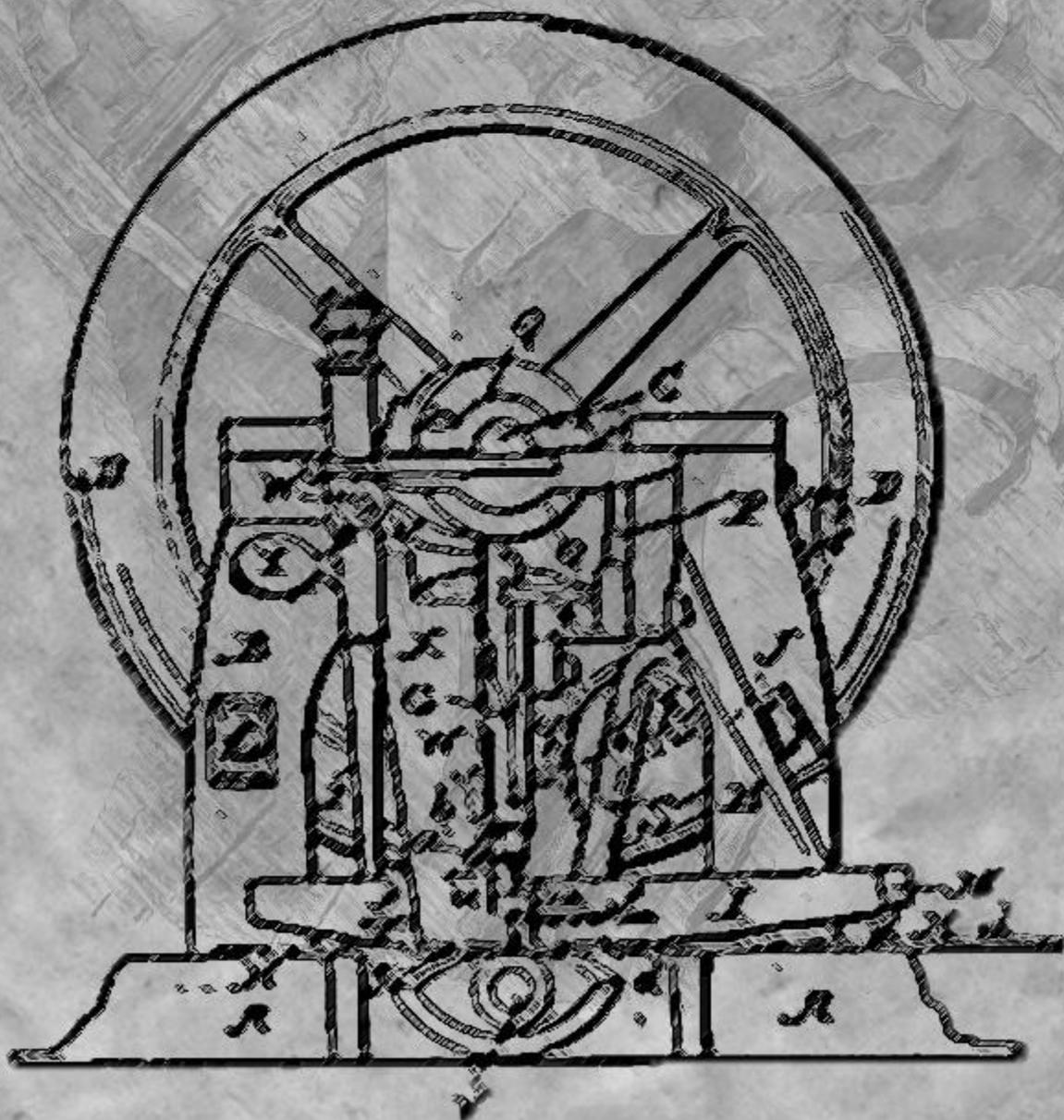


Volume 18



Quoth the Raven

18



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Natural Philosophy

Technology in the Dread Realms

By Stephen "ScS" Sutton

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Humanity is best defined by its unceasing urge to transform the world. Rather than live in harmony with nature, man is driven to bend and warp his environment to fit his short term interests. Humanity, it seems, is possessed by an unrelenting dissatisfaction with the world. Where flows a river, men see bridges; where grow forests, men see lumber; where tower mountains, men dream of gold mines. Whereas the sylvan races revere the forests, and the dwarves venerate the caverns of the Earth, man stands in contempt of crude nature and respects only his own artificial creations. It is this trait alone that I esteem in humanity and wish that my fellow gnomes shared.

Most attempts to alter nature are codified under the term "Natural Philosophy", though there is nothing natural in this human behavior and precious little philosophy. A few self-deluded scholars insist that their work is concentrated on the study of the natural universe and its laws. However, the bulk of mankind's work is performed for that most ubiquitous motivation, material

profit. These practical applications (or abominations) of natural law are termed "technology".

In my many years of studying this great, though doomed, species, I have found mankind engaged in many novel means of bending the laws of the universe to their petty will. Below I have recounted several of the most amusing projects.

- Ambrose Skully

A Stitch in Time

Some years ago I found myself trapped in a gloom shrouded slum know to the world as Ste. Ronges. So backwards and repressive was this city of decay that I could find no civilized boarding house capable of appreciating the pleasure of my company and my philosophy towards the payment of rent. After much searching I found some succor in a dilapidated tenement in the Tannery district. The building was managed by a mad half-deaf crone whose only virtue

was that she was too infirm to collect rent.

Not long after moving into my apartment, I noticed the singularly irritating din coming from the attic apartment above me. The sounds of metal being hammered and scrapped carried day and night. Initially, I ignored the racket and consoled my ears with the sound of a bottle being emptied. Yet patience, like whiskey, is a finite resource, so I began pounding on the ceiling with a broom handle and lending my prodigious vocabulary to entreaties for silence. After a few moments of glorious quiet, I heard a pounding at my door. It was then, in that dingy sty, that I had the singular displeasure of meeting a thoroughly disagreeable human name Jean Claude L'monte.

L'monte was a thin wraith of a man and ugly even by the low standards of humanity. I could barely understand his dialect, and I feel that he must have sensed this, for he mixed his speech with great sweeping gestures of his hands. Somewhere in his tirade he accused me of trying to interrupt his work. I was ready to dismiss this disgusting man when I recognized something of interest in his deep sallow sockets. I saw a quality in those bulging red rimmed eyes; obsession. Those who know my work will know that I am a great student of human mental disorders. I put aside my disgust for the pitiful creature and used my considerable charms to sooth his temper. I wanted very much to see this "work" of his and hopefully learn a little more about what forces can drive men insane.

The garbage strewn streets of Ste. Ronges did not prepare me for the tangled mare's nest that L'monte called home. The floor was an obstacle course of twisted metal, various tools and bolts

of cloth. L'monte had blanketed the walls with papers; some hastily scrawled notes, others crude sketches of machinery. Near to the window was L'monte's workbench, the sole area clear of refuse. Beside the bench, at the calm eye in the center of the mad storm, stood the focus of L'monte's mania; the Automatic Tailor.

It was difficult for me to feign kindness to the greasy imbecile, but eventually I wheedled out the story of his descent into eccentricity. L'monte was, and perhaps still is, a journeyman tailor. He claimed that a guild master, jealous of his abilities, crippled his hand. Though his hand healed, the muscles proved incapable of the repetitive fine motions critical to sewing. The young tailor worked at odd jobs for a smith and developed an incredible mechanical aptitude. Since then, he has spent his time nursing his hatred and developing his design for revenge.

I had never before seen such an alien implement; a demented fantasy of steel and wood. The bulk of it was a wooden desk, though that was only the base of the device. The functional components of the machine sat above and below the flat surface of the desk. It was made of black iron cones, wheels, pulleys, gears and other mechanical apparatus vaguely shaped like the pincer claw of a shellfish grasping the surface of the desk. The top claw terminated in a curved needle which contacted the lower claw through a hole in the desk surface. At the bottom of the desk was a foot pedal, similar to the one a blacksmith would use to power a grinding wheel.

L'monte demonstrated his device with gusto: he pumped the foot pedal and fed a piece of fabric between the claws of the machine. The curved needle darted in and out of the tip of the claw,

drawing a loop of thread which intertwined, leaving a stitch in the cloth. L'monte claimed that the machine created a perfect continuous stitch, at several times the speed of a human tailor. He harangued me with a detailed description of the mechanism, though I could neither understand his technical prattling nor pretend to care. I was far more interested in his plans for ultimate revenge upon the guild that had crushed his puny dreams.

L'monte explained that even a novice apprentice, once trained and equipped with such a machine, would be capable of performing the work of four master tailors. He described his plans to build a dozen more such machines and train assistants. Thus equipped, the crippled tailor believes he will be able to undercut the prices of the guild and corner the garment market in Ste Ronges. This disturbing dream was at once diabolical and pathetically petty, combing two of mankind's most obvious virtues. Had I a drink at the time, I would have toasted his ingenuity. As I did not at the time, I satisfied myself to convince L'monte to give me what little wine he had. An hour later I was back in my room and oblivious to whatever racket Jean Claude was making.

Over the next few days I avoided my unwashed neighbor but made a few discrete inquiries. Jean Claude had tried to find financing for his scheme and been less than successfully. As well, L'monte had been making drunken boasts at taverns about town. Word must have reached the tailor's guild, for a few members of that organization approached me and asked for my opinion of L'monte. I offered my truthful opinion; that L'monte was clearly insane. For some reason, this estimation comforted them. They might

have done well to remember what terrible feats a madman can accomplish.

Fortune and misfortune often arrive together. My mad, half-deaf landlady died before collecting my rent, but sadly, her death was caused by a massive house fire which destroyed my apartment. Jean Claude also survived the fire, though only because he was dragged from the burning building by the fire brigade. It was said that he clung to his prototype, even as his rescuers tried to haul him from the blazing inferno.

Having no success extricating the madman, one fireman blessed with brains as well as brawn tossed the automatic tailor out the window and into the streets below. Only when his crude device was safe from the flames did L'monte allow his life to be saved. All this I learned second hand, for I did not care to stay and watch. Unlike humans, fire holds no fascination for me, and more importantly, I had to find new accommodations.

I do not know what has become of L'monte and his invention, yet still I wish the best of luck to this twisted misanthrope and to his diabolic device. I am greatly in favor of any machine that renders any type of human obsolete.

Champion

If imitation is the most sincere flattery, then there is nothing that technology esteems more than humanity. Technological marvels often ape the human form of their creators to fulfill a twisted self-worship of humanity by humanity. Tales abound of such simulacra, most notably the cautionary tale of Howard Lumley's Automatic Man. Yet, in some rare instances, human designers actually rise above their own petty limitations and create a device that

transcends mankind. The best known such automaton is a technological sensation currently touring the courts and salons of the civilized world. This creation is known far and wide as Champion.

I came face to face with this clockwork contraption in Rivalis while attending a dinner party hosted by a former patron of mine. I had sworn to myself long ago that I would never accept another invitation to a soiree, but promises, like bones and blood oaths, are meant to be broken at an expedient time. After enduring the inanities of conversing with human beings for several hours our host gathered us in the games room to behold the amusements he had arranged. Sadly, there were neither card tables nor dice boards present, but my curiosity was piqued when I noticed the most curious contraption positioned behind a chessboard.

The marvelous device was chaperoned by two presenters. The first was a handsome human with a bright smile and sharp features that bordered on the sylvan. His graceful form was resplendent in the latest of Dementlieuese fashions. Every action and mannerism bespoke grace, confidence, gentility, taste and good breeding. Of course, I loathed him immediately. His companion was a short, round human who fidgeted constantly. Like his partner, he was well dressed, though the clothes seemed ill fitted to him. He said nothing, but seemed to watch over the machine as a mother bird watches her eggs.

The device was a mannequin of the upper torso of a man in a militaristic coat trimmed in gold and wearing a white turban. The face and hands are rendered in porcelain with painted features and

eyes made of blue-green glass. The artwork of the simulacrum was superb; close inspection revealed the most impossibly fine details, from the tiniest little hairs inserted in the eyebrows to the layered brushwork to simulate the texture of skin. In retrospect, it is a tragedy that such a skilled hand was turned to imitating something as base and common as a human.

At the base of the machine's torso was a cabinet made of the finest rosewood and adorned with guided fixtures. Across the top of the cabinet was carved the word "Champion".

During the demonstration, the presenter opened the cabinet doors to show to the audience that there was naught inside the machine but mechanical devices. And what devices there were! A complex network of gears filled every nook and cranny of the cabinet.

The device was pandemonium set to an ordered rhythm. I saw gears, camshafts, chains, pulleys, flywheels, disks, and screws meshing and spinning in a whirling dance of perfect order. I saw several contraptions that have no human name and beheld devices that are beyond even the abilities of gnomes. Within that chamber were even apparatus detailed in the infamous manual "Notes on Animations", the twice-banned book of the mad genius Creighton Arkwright. Truly this mechanical chaos was obsession cast in brass and steel. I must confess that the sight of the mechanism in motion excited feelings within my jaded soul.

Somewhere during the handsome man's spiel I heard him say that the purpose of this great device was to play chess. I nearly choked on my drink to think of this fantastic engine being reduced to playing parlor games.

The handsome man invited our host to be the first to challenge "Champion". The herd of gawkers and I watched the game with rapt fascination. The Champion moved with a smooth economy of motion, much unlike the jerky motion of other clockwork devices. I noticed that the chessboard itself was connected to the greater bulk of the device, by way of a series of camshafts. Each space upon the chessboard was equipped with a tiny pressure plate, which signaled the movement of the chess pieces.

The first match ended quickly, with our host checkmated inside of an hour. Several other challengers matched their wits against the Champion, and each was soundly defeated in turn. I noticed that while the human players required a great deal of time to contemplate their moves, the machine took no time to compute its own efforts, as if it had anticipated its opponent's actions.

Over the hours, I noticed that the mood of the dreary revel became depressed. Though intended as an amusement, the Champion proved to be an unsettling spectacle. Many of the party guests seemed captivated with the mechanism's eyes and their blank, unblinking stare. A few of the human players said that the mannequin's gaze seemed to burn into them. The handsome man laughed at this notion, and spoke bland platitudes to mollify the disturbed guests. I noticed that the short man grew pale at these allegations, though he said nothing.

Having observed the mechanical marvel at work, I felt it time to pose a suitable challenge and matched my own considerable intellect against its programming. The loathsome handsome man and his diminutive friend objected most vociferously, making the ridiculous

claim that I was inebriated and might damage the sensitive device. In response, I stood up on a table and decided to prove to everyone present that I was in perfect control of my faculties. My memory after that point is hazy, but as neither the host nor the other guests are willing to discuss the incident, I deduce that I won the argument.

Since that time, Champion has appeared in a number of different venues, and has thus far trounced all opponents. It seems that even a collection of gears serves as a superior replacement to the supposed human brain. I hope that one day this ingenious mechanism could be turned to a more practical application. With suitable reconfiguration, a mechanical mind such as Champion may prove as adept a general on a battlefield as it is in a games room.

To Count the Stars

Like all pseudo sciences, astrology flourishes in the interface between ignorance and wealth. The nation of Borca is thus the capital of astrological study. The aristocrats of the land are both fantastically wealthy and disdainful of any knowledge beyond etiquette and art. Yet each noble hopes to rise beyond their fellows and so seeks advantage from divining the future. Thus the loftiest aristocrats retain private prognosticators, and even the lowlier merchants consult freelance stargazers. At dusk, an army of astronomers raise a phalanx of sextants skyward to spot celestial bodies, in a futile attempt to predict coming events.

Despite their puerile occupation, some of these charlatans have developed surprisingly sophisticated tools to assist their research. Yet none of these devices

compares to the creation of Maestro Gaius Guillermo.

Gaius Guillermo is known far and wide for his contributions to prognostication. He is held in highest esteem for his dousing compass, which has been proven to point directly to water with nearly fifty percent accuracy. As of late he has turned his genius towards a far more practical project; to count and document every star in the sky.

Sadly, this ambitious project is tainted with the quackery of astrology. Gaius Guillermo promises to use his star map to increase the accuracy of astrological predictions to an unparalleled degree. To accomplish this daunting goal, this natural philosopher has constructed the greatest telescope yet conceived. No doubt this project has incurred considerable expense, though the source of the Maestro's funding remains a mystery.

While touring Borca I made a brief visit to the Maestro's workplace in the hills near Von Ziyden. The building is a great stone tower, covered in grey mortar that has been worked into crenulated pattern so that the tower appears to be a titanic pillar. Sadly, neither the Maestro nor his apprentices have any appreciation for literary works, so I was initially refused admission.

Undeterred, I preyed upon the one weakness that all scientists share: a crippling deficit of money. I used my considerable charms to convince the astronomer that I represented very powerful clientele who might be interested in subsidizing Guillermo's project. Whomever Guillermo's mystery patron might be, he or she must have been frugal. The slightest hint of new money bought me access to the astronomer's tower.

Entering the tower, I found myself perched upon a narrow catwalk hanging in a black cavernous space. The interior of the tower is a vast hollow, running from the top of the spire down into the bowels of the foundation. The walls are coated in a dull matte black paint, absorbing ambient light and obscuring all points of reference. Windows and lamps were absent from the building, the only light allowed were candles carried by the apprentices as they crawled across the ladders and catwalks. Even with my superior visual faculties, I felt as though I were crawling through the void.

The tower, explained the Maestro, was not a workplace but rather it was its body of the telescope. Though vast, the space was not empty; a vast spiral of lenses and curved mirrors circled the tower in a tight helix running from the top to the bottom. This complex progression of lenses magnified the faintest light to perfect clarity.

Atop the tower perches "The Iris", a complicated clockwork mechanism built into a dome of polished bronze. When the telescope is in use, the Iris opens, revealing the primary lens of the telescope. The mechanism of the iris automatically adjusts the angle and direction of the lens and moves the aperture according to the manipulations of the astronomers below.

The spiral of lenses terminates deep in the foundation of the tower. In this "focal chamber" the Guillermo's assistants prepare small trays of gelatinous fluids which are exposed to the light that filters through the telescope. Once exposed to light, the fluids solidify into spongy sheets of jelly, capturing the image to which they were exposed. Guillermo and his assistants then patch the sheets of gel

together into a great mosaic map of the sky.

I was forbidden to see the map, though I was permitted to inspect a few of the gel images. The results were breath-taking. I cannot confirm that the images represented sections of the night sky, for I have never beheld such images while stargazing. The black void seemed to bubble with points of light. The clarity of the images was impeccable and it seemed to show layers of intermixed clouds of stars. There seemed to be great conglomerations of stars and faint blurs that might have been collections of stars even more distant than the powerful telescope could resolve.

The tour of the facilities seemed most congenial, until I inquired as to how many stars the Maestro and his staff had counted. This question seemed to strike a raw nerve with Gaius Guillermo, and rather than answer, he demanded to know how much gold I could secure for him and when he could expect it. I tried to press him for more information, but he became extremely belligerent. After much argument, I was ejected from the tower.

I made some inquiries in Von Ziyden, and was introduced to Marius De Mancha, a former assistant to Maestro Guillermo. For a small fee, he related his experiences. Marius reported that the Maestro has become extremely frustrated, and as of late, prone to fly into fits of rage. The telescope requires constant adjustment, for reference points in the heavens constantly shift and move in ways that defy logic. Moreover, for each individual star identified, dozens more blurred clouds of stars are sighted.

The true reason that I was not allowed to view the star map was because it does not even exist. Marius explained that a complete map cannot

even be begun until the Maestro has found the utmost range of the stars. Until then, Gaius Guillermo must increase the power of his telescope until all the stars in the heavens are finally in the range of his sight. In the meantime, his mystery patron has become impatient. No funding is to be forthcoming until results are delivered. Yet the Maestro must make increasingly costly additions to boost the power of his observatory.

Marius believes that the task is futile; the number of stars may be infinite and that only a tiny fraction of stars float within visible range of even Guillermo's telescope. The Maestro violently rejects any such theories, and has dismissed any apprentices who have voiced such conjecture. With each passing night, the astronomer comes closer and closer to madness as he stares into the void, searching for the end of the infinite sea of stars.

Little Grey Cells

I have heard some people say that Lamordians are wholly materialistic and have little sense of spirituality. I, too, believed this to be the case, until the dreadful night an angry throng chased me from Ludendorf.

The incident occurred several years ago, before my literary genius was fully recognized. I was destitute and had spent my last few coppers to travel to Lamordia in order to sell the publishing rights to my novella, "Lust for a Zombie". I was shocked to learn that plagiarists had already saturated the market with poor imitations of my story. I was badly in need of cash, when one of the typesetters recommended me to scribe work for a local scholar, currently engaged in scientific research. Of course, such work has always been beneath my

dignity, but I was in desperate need of funds. Thus I came to meet Professor Horst von Liber.

Von Liber was a rail thin man of thinning hair and an unchanging, severe expression. He spoke in a deep monotone voice and stared at the world with unblinking deep-set eyes. He made no idle conversation, nor did he bother me with the details of his work except for the parts that directly impacted my employment. My duties were to tabulate the results of all his research, to catalogue the notes he had accumulated, and to assist in his experiments.

Under normal circumstances, a scientist such as von Liber might have employed a student from one of Lamordia's many academies. However, Liber's theories were controversial to most faculties and were thus unsanctioned by Lamordian institutions of learning. This was because Professor Liber's research focused entirely upon the function of brains of the deceased.

The professor never discussed his theories with assistants, but he had written extensive notes, which were mine to organize. The brain, Liber believed, was the repository of all human knowledge and consciousness. This crenulated conglomerate of pasty grey matter recorded all thought and memory within its labyrinthine jelly. Liber hypothesized that while the fragile mortal body might die and decay, the information stored within the cerebrum remained preserved – much as a book might survive the death of the scribe that wrote it.

Though I chaffed at the degrading labor, I found that the professor's work neatly gelled with my own interests. Should his theories prove correct, I would have gained a portal to knowledge from beyond the grave; were he a

madman, I would be thoroughly entertained.

Liber performed his experiments in a perfectly morbid workshop within a sunken mausoleum. Snugly ensconced in the cold earth, Liber performed his experiments amidst the charnel ruin. I must confess, I thrilled to explore that lightless crypt, with its sepulchral miasmas, and its black vaults draped in the questing tree roots that had broken through the crumbling masonry. It reminded me of home.

Von Liber was assisted by a pair of coarse malingerers who were entrusted to gather the necessary materials for the experiments. Silas and Hog were malformed in both body and mind, devoid of any cultural refinement, and willing to perform nearly any task in exchange for gold. In short, they were typical specimens of the human species. The two obtained human craniums directly from the graves of the nearby potter's field, and in a few instances sought fresher fruit from local hospitals. As Liber was focused upon the mechanical properties of the brain, he was unconcerned with disease or the physical condition of the body.

The majority of specimens were carefully removed from their cranial cases and stored in suspensions of grain alcohol. If there were other chemicals within the preservative fluid, I could not detect them by taste. A few specimens were pickled while still in their heads, and a number of heads were left in open air, adding a distinct charnel aroma to that sepulchral laboratory.

The Professor used a variety of techniques to search for the hidden information coded with the brain. He made a number of cross sections of the brain and suspended the pieces between plates of glass for careful study via a

powerful microscope. Once, he injected a brain with a chemical solution that hardened and remained solid as the tissue decomposed, leaving behind a model of the veins and arteries within the brain. A different time, Liber connected a quill to a guide needle, and tried to create a paper copy of the cerebrum's shape by running the guide needle over the surface of a brain.

Liber's experiments with electricity were his most ingenious. He created series of electrical probes, which were inserted at key points within the brain and connected via copper wires to an apparatus similar to a common physician's stethoscope. As he stimulated the brain with alternating currents of electricity, Liber listened with his head-phones for the tell-tale signs of reactivated thought.

While his experiments bespoke cold, analytical method, Liber's notes revealed the grand purpose to which he was working. He had sketched out the crude details of a complex facility wherein the brains of the world's greatest scholars would be collected, preserved, and read. Minds, both ancient and modern, would be collected and connected into a great network, where they would be preserved against time and calamity. Liber believed that living men would voluntarily donate their brains to further add to this body of ultimate knowledge.

I worked for Liber for some months, until one fateful April night. That previous winter, the city had stored its dead within a waiting vault until the spring thaw when graves could be dug. Several times during the winter, Professor Liber had sent Silas and Hog to fetch one of the coffins of a transient who had died at the free hospital. As the paupers were to be buried in unmarked graves, the city did not record the

number of bodies, and so no one would remark the absence of a few nameless corpses. As we would later learn, Silas and Hog had made a colossal blunder: rather than raid the pauper's vault, all that winter they had been plundering the receiving crypt of the town's most notable citizens. I might confess my own negligence in this regard, for I had dwelled in Ludendorf for some time before then and many of those faces delivered to Liber looked familiar.

By March a mortician made the discovery and raised the alarm. We might have escaped notice, had some superstitious fools not spread rumors of the presence of ghouls, those disgusting corpse eating demons that haunt graveyards. By April, a party had been formed and begun searching the cemetery for the lair of the body-snatchers. Liber's laboratory was invaded by the band of do-gooders just in time to disrupt a promising attempt to reactivate the cerebrum of a former magistrate.

The Professor made some attempt to reason with the crowd. I, however, had lower expectations from the human species and its ability to recognize genius. I slipped away through a little tunnel leading to an open grave at the edge of the cemetery. Sadly, my luck turned as I tried to sneak back into town. I was leaving the graveyard just as a mob was arriving and, being caked in earth and other graveyard debris, was mistaken for a ghoul. I had never before run so far, nor ever again since.

I do not know what became of Professor von Liber. Whether he escaped or was lynched is not recorded, and I am disinclined to return to return to ask questions. I suspect that if he lives, Liber still practices his experiments.

I find it disturbing that base morality still hampers the pursuit of knowledge. Human ignorance stifles the search for truth and shades the light of knowledge. Perhaps, one day, mankind will evolve beyond its crude mental limitations and be ruled by rationality. These uplifted men of the future will embrace the harsh scientific realities of the universe and

forego their ancestor's insane superstitions such as "dignity" or "respect for the dead". Until such a time, men like Professor Liber must perform their work in secret, lest they be branded as madmen and sequestered away in stone prisons, to rot forever inside little grey cells.

Champions of the Mists

The Van Richten Clan for Pathfinder

By David "Lester" Gibson

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The Land of the Mists is worth fighting for; its inhabitants are worth defending. Many have given their lives in the pursuit of the children of the night, and others pick up their legacy and continue where the dead left off.

This article is on heroes, four champions that fought to defend the innocent from the dark. It presents three of the heroes in multiple eras, to be used over different time periods and at different levels.

Doctor Rudolph van Richten

Famed across the entire Land of the Mists, there is no hero as well-known or respected as Doctor Rudolph van Richten. No single adventurer has ever brought so much hope to the land, or banished so much evil as the good doctor; van Richten's name is synonymous with his three weapons: knowledge, wisdom, and indomitable willpower.

Heroes are made, not born – van Richten began his career as a humble surgeon until his beloved son was kidnapped and sold to an undead monster. While van Richten might always have carried a brilliant mind, he had to earn his knowledge and develop his relentless spirit.

The following statistics represent van Richten during the different phases of his life: as an amateur investigator, an expert hunter and, at as a legend at the pinnacle of his career.

Van Richten, the Amateur **CR 3**

XP 800

Male human expert 2, rogue
(investigator) 2

LG Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +6

Defence

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+3
armour, +2 Dex)

hp 20 (4d8 + 2 favoured class)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities evasion

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee sabre +4 (1d6+1/19-20)

Melee short spear +4 (1d6+1)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

Statistics

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 16,
Wis 13, Cha 10

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 15

Feats Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (heal),
Weapon Finesse

Skills Climb +6, Craft (alchemy) +8,
Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +7,
Heal +9, Linguistics +8, Knowledge
(local) +8, Knowledge (nature) +8,
Profession (apothecary) +6, Profession
(herbalist) +6, Sense Motive +8,
Stealth +6, Sleight of Hand +7,
Survival +6, Use Magic Device +5

Languages Darkonese, Balok, Draconic,
Falkovian, Mordentish, Vaasi

SQ rogue talents (follow clues), follow
up

Gear healer's kit, holy symbol, short
sword, 2x short spears (wooden
stakes), studded leather

This is Rudolph van Richten shortly after he began his adventures, around the year 706 in the Barovian Calendar.

Van Richten resides in the city of Corvia in central Darkon although he has not lived there long. He recently moved from his ancestral home of Richten House in Rivalis after the death of his family. Born in 671 BC, van Richten is rapidly approaching middle age but barely shows it; he is active and alert and his hair is blonde and neatly trimmed, although it's showing signs of growing sparse on top. He is a small and thin man with a crooked smile and a twinkle in his eye that still shines through his burden of grief; the loss of his son is still a very fresh wound.

Using van Richten, the Amateur

Van Richten is new to his role as a monster hunter and shows his inexperience. At this period of his career, van Richten is more likely to find himself in trouble than triumphant, and much more likely to require assistance. He has yet to even encounter anything other than vampires, lesser undead, and the Vistani.

First and foremost, van Richten wages a war against self-doubt. He is neither as strong nor as young as other adventurers he meets: this van Richten is a doctor and healer, not a slayer of horrors. While still a force for good he has not yet published any of the Guides that will make him famous and has not even thought about recording his experiences or methods. These are the formative years when van Richten realizes he cannot simply charge into the lair of the beast armed with a sword, he must arm himself with something more powerful than bravado: knowledge. It is also a time when player characters might influence the good doctor, shaping his destiny or aiding him on his quest.

Van Richten is unaware he is under the effects of a Vistani curse that dooms his loved ones while ensuring his long life lived among monsters. While he may fail and suffer defeat, unknowable forces will keep him alive.

Van Richten, the Expert **CR 8**

XP 4,800

Male human expert 2, rogue
(investigator) 7

LG Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +13

Defence

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+4
studded leather +1, +3 ring)

hp 42 (9d8 + 9 + 2 favoured class -9)

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, uncanny dodge

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Platock's Legacy*+7/+2
(1d6+1/19-20)

Melee *vitae seeker* +7/+2 (1d6+1/19-20)

Ranged heavy crossbow +6 (1d10/19-20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Statistics

Abilities Str 9, Dex 11, Con 8, Int 19,
Wis 16, Cha 13

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

Feats Defensive Combat Training, Great Fortitude, Improved Great Fortitude, Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (heal), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +9, Climb +9, Craft (alchemy) +9, Craft (books) +12, Diplomacy +11, Disable Device +10, Escape Artist +8, Heal +11, Linguistics +9, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (local) +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Profession (apothecary) +8, Profession (herbalist) +8, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +9, Sleight of Hand +10, Survival +8, Swim +7, Use Magic Device +6

Languages Darkonese, Balok, Draconic, Falkovian, Mordentish, Vaasi

SQ rogue talents (assault leader, follow clues, hard to fool), follow up, trap sense +2

Gear *amulet of Anubis*, *crimson obsidian ring*, healer's kit, 5x holy water, *Platock's Legacy*, short sword, 2x, silver dagger, small mirror, studded leather, *vitae seeker*

These statistics represent van Richten during the period just after the Grand Conjunction, around 740 BC.

The doctor currently resides in Mordent, after he fled Darkon having discovered the true nature of Azalin Rex. Van Richten is now old; his face is well-lined, his frame weary, and his blonde-gray hair is balding but growing long in the back. Van Richten has seen so much pain and over the years and lost everyone he has ever grown close to. And yet the sparkle in his eye shines as brightly as ever. When not investigating evil, he maintains an herbalist shop in Mordentshire.

His first text on the subject of monsters, *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*, was published in 735. Since then, van Richten has turned his pen to the topics of ghosts, liches, lycanthropes and the created. The guides to the ancient dead and fiends have yet to see publication.

Using van Richten, the Expert

Van Richten has survived his early years and inspired a new generation of monster hunters. In this period, van Richten works as a mentor or ally, accompanying heroes on a mission or training them in the skills needed to combat the creatures of the night. With his reputation established, van Richten might be sought out by other heroes looking for advice or assistance.

Alternatively, van Richten might seek out adventurers to help him research his next book or aid him on a challenging hunt. As van Richten is well known as a champion of good he is frequently approached for help, and he might seek established heroes to look into cases he does not have the time to investigate. Van Richten is still unaware he is the subject of a Vistani curse that targets his loved ones, and so he still spends his days training youthful

adventurers and seeking allies, unaware that fate will conspire to end their lives.

Van Richten, the Legend CR 13

XP 25,600

Male human expert 2, rogue
(investigator) 12

LG Medium humanoid

Init -1; **Senses** Perception +19

Defence

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+4
studded leather +1, +3 ring, -1 Dex)

hp 37 (14d8 + 14 + 2 favoured class -42)

Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved
uncanny dodge, uncanny dodge

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Platoock's Legacy* +10/+5
(1d6/19-20)

Melee *vitae seeker* +10/+5 (1d6/19-20)

Ranged heavy crossbow +9 (1d10/19-
20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks sneak attack +6d6

Statistics

Abilities Str 6, Dex 8, Con 5, Int 22, Wis
19, Cha 16

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 17

Feats Combat Expertise, Defensive
Combat Training, Focused Shot, Great
Fortitude, Improved Great Fortitude,
Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Skill
Focus (heal), Toughness, Weapon
Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +7, Bluff +11, Climb
+11, Craft (alchemy) +11, Craft
(books) +14, Diplomacy +13, Disable
Device +14, Escape Artist +7, Heal
+17, Linguistics +11, Knowledge
(arcana) +16, Knowledge (local) +11,
Knowledge (nature) +16, Knowledge
(planes) +16, Knowledge (religion)
+16, Profession (apothecary) +9,
Profession (herbalist) +9, Sense

Motive +16, Stealth +13, Sleight of
Hand +9, Survival +12, Swim +8, Use
Magic Device +13

Languages Darkonese, Balok, Draconic,
Falkovian, Mordentish, Vaasi

SQ rogue talents (assault leader, combat
trick, follow clues, hard to fool,
hunter's surprise, thoughtful re-
examining), follow up, trap sense +4

Gear *amulet of Anubis, crimson
obsidian ring, healer's kit, 5x holy
water, Platoock's Legacy, pocket watch
of Jugend, short sword, 2x short spears
(wooden stakes), silver dagger, small
mirror, studded leather, vitae seeker*

This is the elder van Richten, from the
period of 750BC, just before his
disappearance.

Van Richten still resides in
Mordentshire, but has passed the day-to-
day operation of his herbalist shop onto
assistants and friends. Age is creeping up
on the renowned slayer: his face is
heavily lined with both years and the
reminders of many roads, but his thin
gray hair is once again well-trimmed. He
is weak and lacking much of the vigor of
his youth. If amused he still displays his
lopsided grin although much melancholy
lurks in the expression and sadness soon
returns.

Recently, his health has taken a turn
for the worse and his own treatments are
proving ineffective. The good doctor is
not just suffering physically; his sharp
wits and keen mind have begun to fade
under the weight of loss and his
remaining friends worry about his sanity.
He has lost almost all of those he once
called "friend", burying those who were
to have carried on his legacy. His eyes
carry the deep burden of sadness and
survivor's guilt.

He has published all his guides save
one, and has made peace with both life

and the Radanavich clan. While he patiently awaits his end he has been working on-and-off on side projects, but he does not expect to complete any.

Using van Richten, the Legend

Van Richten has been attempting to maintain some semblance of a retirement for many years, however there are still monsters to be vanquished and research to be accomplished. If asked for help the good doctor might still offer his aid, but likely only as an advisor. More and more, when approached for help, he passes on the cases to his few remaining confidants and agents. When prompted into action, van Richten is again likely to need assistance to make-up for his frail frame and ill health.

In his twilight years van Richten faces many foes both old and new. Thanks to the Vistani curse, van Richten has many more surviving enemies than friends. With van Richten vulnerable he is facing increasing numbers of old adversaries seeking revenge. Similarly, villains looking to make a name for themselves see the elder champion as an easy way of garnering a reputation. If he is to survive long enough to meet his destiny, van Richten might need assistance or guardians.

George Weathermay

Socially awkward, the young George Weathermay always felt more at ease among horses and dogs than the nobility. George was inspired by Rudolph van Richten and offered his services to the good doctor. The young nobleman swore to defend the innocent and became a self-proclaimed "hunter of evil". Often known by the common folk as just "Weathermay", he singlehandedly

redeemed the family name, which had become shadowed and grim.

The darkness he faced weighed heavier on Weathermay than his companions. Every innocent lost, every victim encounters ate away at his soul. He began to divide the world into black and white, romanticizing those of purity and innocence and mercilessly slaying those he saw as evil. Weathermay found it harder and harder to see the light between the darkness. Lacking the motivational trauma of van Richten to keep him focused, Weathermay found it more and more difficult to feel he was making a difference and continue as a champion. This tension came to a head after he was betrayed by the woman he loved, sending Weathermay down the path of revenge.

George Weathermay **CR 12**

XP 4,800

Male human ranger (beastmaster) 12

N Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +18

Defence

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+4 *studded leather* +1, +1 Dodge, +1 shield, +1 Dex)

hp 102 (12d10 + 24 + 12 favoured class)

Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities evasion

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee *Gossamer* +14/+9/+4 (1d8+3/19-20)

Melee mwk silver hand axe +14 (1d6-1/x3)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +14 (1d10/19-20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Spells Known (CL 9; concentration +12)

3rd— *cure moderate wounds, remove*

disease, strong jaw
2nd— *barkskin, cat's grace, protection from enemy*
1st— *delay poison, endure elements, longstrider*

Special Attacks favoured enemy (undead +4), favoured enemy (+2 magical beast), favoured enemy (+4 shapechanger), quarry

Statistics

Abilities Str 13, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 25

Feats Dodge, Endurance, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by-Attack, Two-Weapon Defence, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Handle Animal +14, Heal +6, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nature) +15, Knowledge (religion) +6, Ride +16, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +10, Survival +18

SQ favoured terrain (plains +4), favoured terrain (forest +2), hunter's bond, improved empathic link, strong bond, track, wild empathy, woodland stride, swift tracker

Languages Mordentish, Balok

Gear *Gossamer* (+2 *ghost touch* longsword) 2x flasks of holy water, silver dagger, silver holy symbol of Ezra

Shadowchaser **CR -**

Male horse (animal companion)
N Large animal
Init +1; **Senses** Perception +1, low-light vision

Defence

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+4 chain barding, +6 natural, +2 Dex, -1 size)

hp 34 (4d8 + 16)

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2
Defensive Abilities evasion

Offence

Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +6 (1d4+6)

Melee 2 hooves +1 (1d6+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Statistics

Abilities Str 19, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 25

Feats Armour proficiency (light), Run

Skills Acrobatics +7, Survival +3

Tricks combat trained (attack [all], come, defend, down, guard, and heel), stay

SQ scent

Cerebus **CR -**

Female dog (animal companion)

N Medium animal

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +1, low-light vision

Defence

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+5 natural, +3 Dex)

hp 34 (4d8 + 16)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion

Offence

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+6)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Statistics

Abilities Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 20

Feats Improved Natural Armour, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +8, Swim +8

Tricks Fighting (attack [all], down, stay), Guarding (defend, guard), heel, work

SQ scent

Artemis **CR -**

Female dog (animal companion)

N Medium animal

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +1, low-light vision

Defence

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 natural, +3 Dex)

hp 30 (4d8 + 12)

Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities evasion

Offence

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d6+6)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Statistics

Abilities Str 18, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 10

Feats Skill Focus (survival), Stealthy

Skills Escape Artist +5, Stealth +9, Survival +7

Tricks Hunting (attack [all], down, fetch, heel, seek, and track), stay

SQ scent

Using George Weathermay

Having suffered through loss and tragedy, George Weathermay is a man driven to the edge. He spends his days on the hunt, persuing the lycanthrope Natalia Vhorishkova. At times he still dallies long enough to help those in need – typically when he can exhaust his anger on a monster.

Weathermay could be used as an ally for a difficult quest. He is unlikely to take assistants or mentor an adventurer as this will only slow his pursuit, but he can be persuaded to join in quick hunts. Weathermay allows heroes to face a foe otherwise beyond them, or even the odds

against a challenging opponent. Weathermay might seek out other hunters if he believes they have information on his prey.

Alternatively, as a fallen hero he might be used as a cautionary tale. Some champions might make it their mission to redeem Weathermay or stop him before he crosses a line from which he cannot return. Or they may believe he has already crossed the line and needs to be stopped. This could be twisted if Natalia Vhorishkova plays the victim, directing adventurers towards Weathermay whom she describes as an obsessed stalker, in an effort to buy herself enough time to escape.

The Weathermay-Foxgrove Twins

The Weathermay-Foxgrove twins were born into one of the last surviving Mordentish noble families and raised in wealth and luxury. After a brutal werewolf attack almost cost the Gennifer her life, the twins were exposed to the supernatural world of their Uncle George and family friend Rudolph van Richten.

After Dr. van Richten vanished, the twins took up his mantle, hunting the creatures of the night and penning new volumes for would-be hunters. The Twins are neither as driven as their mentor van Richten, nor do they see themselves as outsiders like their uncle George. Regardless, the twins have proven themselves as a force of good. They offer a renewed hope that light and bravery did not perish with the good doctor.

The following statistics represent the twins during two different phases of their life: as young, inexperienced

hunters eager for adventure, and as more tempered and experienced champions that have published three volumes and are working on a fourth.

Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove **CR 4**

XP 1,200

Female human (shapechanger) expert 2, wizard 3

CG Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +1

Defence

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 ring)

hp 22 (2d8 + 3d6 + 3 favoured class)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee dagger +1 (1d4-1/19-20)

Ranged mwk pistol +4 (1d8/x4)

Special Attacks hand of the apprentice (6/day)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Spells Known (CL 3; concentration +6, +10 when casting defensive)

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *glitterdust* (DC 15)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 14), *magic missile*, *protection from evil*

0—*detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Statistics

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 15

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 12

Feats Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Scribe Scroll

Skills Appraise +11, Craft (alchemy) +8, Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +3, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Knowledge (religion) +8, Profession (herbalist) +9, Spellcraft +11, Stealth +4

Languages Mordentish, Darkonese, Draconic, Vaasi

Gear 4x flasks of holy water, *ring of protection* +1, silver dagger, silver holy symbol of Ezra

Special Abilities

Arcane Bond (Su): Gennifer's familiar is a cat named Sebastien. It has the following abilities: Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, deliver touch spells.

Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove **CR 4**

XP 1,200

Female human expert 2, gunslinger (pistolero) 3

LG Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Perception -1

Defence

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13 (+3 studded leather, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 33 (2d8 + 3d10 + 5 + 3 favoured class)

Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities nimble +1

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *Parthian rapier* +9 (1d6/19-20)

Ranged +1 *Parthian pistol* +9 (1d10+1/x4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks deeds, grit 1

Statistics

Abilities Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 15

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Parthian rapier), Gunsmithing, Point-Blank Shot, Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +10, Climb +8, Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +8, Knowledge (local) +9, Ride +11, Sense Motive +4

Languages Mordentish, Balok

Gear *glove of storing*, pocket watch, silver holy symbol of Ezra, *vest of escape*

Using the Rookie Weathermay-Foxgrove Twins

Unlike van Richten, who was motivated by great personal loss, the Weathermay-Foxgrove Twins became monster hunters out of a combination of curiosity, thrill seeking, and a small desire to escape their social obligations as nobles. While the Twins have an honest desire to help people and combat evil, they lack the drive needed to keep them fighting the good fight after failure or confronted with a terrifying foe. And unlike their idols, the Twins have to prove themselves worthy, demonstrating that they are adequate successors to the good doctor's legacy.

Heroes can encounter the Twins when recruited to assist them on a hunt; just like van Richten, the Twins seek allies with skills they lack or to assist when pursuing particularly deadly prey. The Twins could also be encountered after a failed hunt, when their confidence is injured and they are questioning their choice of profession. Alternatively, they might seek to prove their worth and inadvertently take on a foe beyond their capabilities. The Twins have also limited their hunts to Mordent and the surrounding lands, so other heroes might be contacted for quests that would extend far beyond their homeland or even lead outside the Core.

Gennifer Weathermay-Foxgrove CR 8

XP 4,800
Female human (shapechanger) expert 2, wizard 7

CG Medium humanoid
Init +1; **Senses** Perception +1

Defence

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 ring)

hp 40 (2d8 + 7d6 + 7 favoured class)

Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 silver dagger +4 (1d4/19-20)

Ranged +1 pistol +6 (1d8+1/x4)

Special Attacks *hand of the apprentice* (6/day)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Spells Known (CL 7; concentration +11, +15 when casting defensive)

4th—*scrying*, *shadow conjuration* (DC 18)

3rd—*dispel magic*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *tongues*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *locate object*, *touch of idiocy* (DC 16)

1st—*burning hands* (DC 15), *mage armour*, *magic missile*, *magic weapon*, *protection from evil*

0—*detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Statistics

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 15

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Firearms), Great Fortitude, Scribe Scroll

Skills Appraise +12, Craft (alchemy) +13, Diplomacy +11, Disable Device +7, Knowledge (arcana) +16,

Knowledge (dungeoneering) +11,
Knowledge (local) + 12, Knowledge
(nature) +12 , Knowledge (planar)
+11, Knowledge (religion) + 13,
Profession (herbalist)+9, Spellcraft
+16, Stealth +4

Languages Mordentish, Balok,
Darkonese, Draconic, Vaasi

SQ stone grip

Gear *Brooch of shielding*, 4x flasks of
holy water, ring of protection +1,
silver holy symbol of Ezra

Special Abilities

Arcane Bond (Su): Gennifer's familiar
is a cat named Sebastien. It has the
following abilities: Alertness,
improved evasion, share spells,
empathic link, deliver touch spells,
speak with master, speak with animals
of its kind

Stone Grip (Su): Gennifer's right hand
has been twisted by an unknown form
of magic, blackening and hardening
while still being articulate. Her hand
has hardness 8. This confers no combat
bonus but allows her to pick-up or
touch items that would damage a
normal hand.

**Laurie Weathermay-
Foxgrove**

CR 8

XP 4,800

Female human expert 2, gunslinger
(pistolero) 7

LG Medium humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +6

Defence

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+4
studded leather +1, +4 Dex, +2 dodge)

hp 33 (2d8 + 3d10 + 5 + 3 favoured
class)

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities nimble +2

Offence

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *Parthian rapier* +15/+10
(1d6+2/19-20)

Ranged +2 *Parthian pistol* +15
(1d10+6/x4)

Ranged +1 *pistol* +14 (1d10+6/x4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks deeds, grit 1

Statistics

Abilities Str 10, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 12,
Wis 8, Cha 15

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 23

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency
(firearms), Exotic Weapon Proficiency
(Parthian rapier), Gunsmithing, Point-
Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Snap Shot,
Sword and Pistol, Two-weapon
Fighting, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +16, Bluff +10, Climb
+8, Craft (gunsmithing) +8,
Diplomacy +7, Disable Device +13,
Knowledge (local) +9, Perception +6,
Profession (herbalist) +6, Ride +12,
Sense Motive +4

SQ grit, pistol training

Languages Mordentish, Balok

Gear 4x flasks of holy water, *glove of
storing*, pocket watch, silver holy
symbol of Ezra, *vest of escape*

Using the Experienced

Weathermay-Foxgrove Twins

After four years of hunting creatures of
the night, the Weathermay-Foxgrove
Twins have proven their worth, skill, and
intelligence. They have combated many
potent foes and published four volumes
of monster lore and are currently
planning a fifth. They have struggled
against adversity and horrors and
emerged victorious and stronger.

The Twins are less likely to require
assistance or support, but might still seek
additional allies for complicated hunters
or when facing dangerous foes. As the
Twins expand their influence they

require more help: there are often too many problems to investigate by themselves. They also acknowledge their responsibility to new champions, those inspired by their writings. They mentor and direct when possible, training inexperienced heroes and advising them in methods of the hunt.

Van Richten's Arsenal

A craftsman is only as good as his tools. This applies just as much to champions of light.

After decades of fighting evil and journeys that took him from one end of the Core and back, Rudolph van Richten accumulated a number of fantastic items, tools he used on his hunts, which have saved his life numerous times. While much of her equipment is less fantastic, Laurie Weathermay-Foxgrove is known for her use of the exotic Parthian rapier which is also described below.

Background and further details of the items below can be found in *Quoth the Raven #2*.

Amulet of Anubis

Aura faint abjuration; **CL** 1st
Slot neck; **Price** 2,000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

Description

This amulet is a holy symbol. It acts as a symbol of a god of the same alignment as the wielder.

As long as the wearer does not move, they are under the effect of the spell *hide from undead*. Once the wearer moves, they must remain motionless for an entire round for the effect to begin again.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, *hide from undead*;
Cost 1,000 gp

Trimson Obsidian Ring

Aura moderate necromancy; **CL** 9th
Slot ring; **Price** 51,600 gp; **Weight** –

Description

This ring offers continual magical protection in the form of a +3 deflection bonus to AC and protects the wearer from energy drain. The ring can absorb up to 4 negative levels. These recharge at a rate of one per day.

Construction Requirements

Forge Ring, *death ward*, *shield of faith*;
Cost 25,800 gp

Platock's Legacy

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 9th
Slot none; **Price** 26,710 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

Description

This +2 magic short sword is also an undead bane weapon. Against undead, the enhancement bonus increases to +4 and it deals an extra 2d6 points of damage. The wielder also receives a +2 sacred bonus to saving throws against the abilities of undead.

Construction Requirements

Craft Magic Arms and Armour, *summon monster I*; **Cost** 13,510 gp

Pocket Watch of Legend

Aura strong evocation; **CL** 13th
Slot none; **Price** 24,300 gp; **Weight** 4 lbs.

Description

When this pocket watch is wound backwards it reverses the user's personal time. Once per day this allows the user to ignore the physical penalties of being old or middle-aged, removing the penalties to Strength, Dexterity, and

Constitution (-1 for middle-age or the accumulated -3 for old age). The effects Str 13, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, shatter last for twenty-four hours.

If the watch is wound back again a second time, the user reverts in appearance to when they were an adult. Using this power reduces the remaining duration by half.

Construction Requirements

Craft Wondrous Item, *age resistance*, *youthful appearance*; **Cost** 12,150 gp

Vitae Seeker

Aura strong necromancy; **CL** 13th
Slot none; **Price** 26,401 gp; **Weight** 3 lbs.

Description

This fire-hardened stake (short spear) is a +2 keen weapon. The weapon hungers for blood; once per day the wielder can make a touch attack with the weapon that deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to the Constitution damage dealt by this weapon.

If *vitae seeker* is used against a vampire the weapon's critical modifier increases to x3. If a critical hit deals more damage than the target vampire's Hit Dice + Constitution modifier, the vampire is staked and slain until the stake is removed or it is completely killed.

Construction Requirements

Craft Magic Arms and Armour, *harm*, *keen edge*; **Cost** 2,611 gp

Parthian Rapier

The anathema of honorable duels, this weapon is a rapier with a pistol built into the hilt.

Benefit: Poorly balanced as a rapier, this weapon allows the wielder to fire without having to draw another weapon or fight with a weapon in each hand. Additionally, the first time the pistol is used in an encounter it does not provoke an attack of opportunity. A parthian rapier is treated as a double weapon for enchanting.

(Exotic) One-Handed weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range	Misfire	Capacity	Weight	Type	Special
Parthian rapier, blade	1,350 gp	1d4	1d6	19-20/x2	—	—	—	5 lbs.	P	see text
Parthian rapier, pistol	"	1d6	1d8	x4	15 ft.	1-2 (5 ft.)	1	"	B and P	"

Antunia Papiècu

Falkovnian super soldier

Joël Paquin of the FoS

paquinjoel@videotron.ca

Loyalty means nothing unless it has at its heart the absolute principle of self-sacrifice.

-Woodrow Wilson

Total loyalty is possible only when fidelity is emptied of all concrete content, from which changes of mind might naturally arise.

-Hannah Arendt

Antunia Papiècu

LE medium humanoid (female human Falkovnian tar mummy, Warrior 4), CR 7

Init: +0

Defense

AC: 25, touch 10, flat-footed 25

Hp: 30 (4d12+4)

Resistance to Blows (Ex): Half damage from physical attacks, applied before DR

Damage reduction: 5/piercing

Turn resistance: +4

Immunity: Fire based attacks

Energy Vulnerability: Cold based attacks (double damage)

Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

Offense

Speed: 20 ft.

Base Atk: +4

Melee: long sword +10 (1d8 +5, 19–20), or slam +9 (1d6 +5, 20)

Ranged: heavy crossbow +4 (1d10/19–20)

Statistics

Str 20, **Dex** 10, **Con** -, **Int** 11, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 10

Feats: Alertness (+2 listen and spot checks), Jaded^{RLCS} (+4 vs. horror saves), Power Attack, Toughness^{Pathfinder}, Weapon focus (+1 long sword)

Skills: Climb +8, Handle Animal +7, Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Jump +9, Listen +13, Move Silently +8, Ride +6, Spot +13

SQ: Animal Command (Hawk and Zweifalk^{Ga2}) (Su), Fear DC 12 (Su), Hawk Loyalty (Su), Rejuvenation 6/hour (Su), Undead Traits (Ex), Light Sensitivity (Ex)

Languages: Falkovnian, Darkonese, Low Mordentish

Combat Gear: Long sword, heavy crossbow, 20 bolts, and chain mail

Other Gear: None

Special Abilities

Hawk Loyalty (Su): Antunia (and all Falkovnian tar mummies) cannot attack anyone bearing a visible Falkovnian hawk brand, unless they are attacked first.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Tar Mummies are dazzled in areas of bright sunlight or within the radius of a daylight spell.

Falkovnian Control Word (Ex): – see **template**. At this point, Antunia is not controlled since she is completely trusted.

Tactics during combat: Antunia (like all Falkovnian tar mummies) prefers to use her martial weapon attack, reflecting her past as a Falkovnian fighter. Her goal is to kill her foe quickly so she often uses her power attack feat when appropriate. If needed, she uses her command of hawks and zweifalks (Ga2, p 119) to attack those opponents out of reach, while also attacking them with her crossbow. At any time, when outside, she has 2-4 hawks and 1-2 zweifalks under her control.

Morale: Antunia fights to death.

Appearance: With her armor on, Antunia looks like a tanned and very thin fighter woman of about 40 years old, with broad shoulders and short black hair. Antunia's corpse is slightly withered but not completely desiccated. The Falkovnian hawk brand on her forehead turned blackish during the creation process. To most onlookers, she mostly passes as human, unless people know about Falkovnian tar mummies. She is not wrapped in clothes or funerary bandages like most mummies. Instead, she wears a suit of armor with the

Falkovnian insignia. After 5 years of existence, her skin will wrinkle and crack, showing her undead state.

Background

Antunia Papiècu was born in Lekar's southern slum and raised in poverty. Even as a young adult, she was stronger than many men. Few people picked on her because she would fight back mercilessly. When she got older, she knew that her goal was to become a soldier: rank would raise her above poverty and she could use the strong physical abilities that nature gave her.

Antunia enrolled in the military and liked it from the start. Even in the chauvinistic Falkovnian army, she was able to fight for her place in the sun. Those soldiers that picked on her or tried to force themselves upon her were found unconscious and bloodied from her pummeling.

Antunia was not as cruel with the commoners as the other Falkovnian soldiers, but she was deadly whenever she was wronged. She fought savagely for the state, twice as hard as any man, and her reputation grew. Her superiors truly esteemed her fighting skills and her will to fight for Falkovnia, but her advancement in the military was slow because of her gender.

When her place in the army was secured, she complied with the duty of a woman in Falkovnia and gave two children to the state. The fathers were soldiers whom Antonia chose for their physical strength. From then on, her life was divided between the military and raising her two boys, Léopold and Niapud, to become future soldiers. When she was on military duty, Antunia's mother helped raise the boys.

During this time, Falkfuhrer Vjorn Horstman, head of the Falkovnian Ministry of Science, conducted research on mummification in order to create a super soldier. The year before, the Falkovnian military had annihilated a temple of evil cultists near the Invidian border. The cultists left behind undead minions (Banedead ^{Monsters of Faerun}) that proved to be ferocious, cunning, and atrociously dangerous. The elite Falkovnians troops had trouble dealing with these powerful creatures and were forced to use explosives on the entrance to seal the horrible place forever under tones of rock.

Later, the Minister of Science discovered a way to make similar ferocious unliving soldiers, but to make them obedient to the state. The unliving state of the creatures would not be obvious to the eye as are most undead. Though Vlad Drakov had little hope for success, he approved the unliving übersoldier project.

A select group of Talons and elite soldiers, including Antunia, traveled to the Amber Waste. In the town of Phiraz they found an embalming alchemical specialist, Rashid al-Wawat. From trade spy reports, Horstman knew this man was very close to creating obedient mummy-like creature from immersion in tar pits. Al-Wawat's wife and daughter were also brought to Falkovnia, to help persuade him to work for Falkovnia.

The Falkovnians established the "Teer Stahlmann" research camp in an abandoned mine, north-east of Morfenzi, near the Shadow Rift. The area was secured by the military and only supply caravans were allowed to enter. The Akiri embalmer performed many experiments, killing many Falkovnian prisoners. After a little more than a year,

al-Wawat was ready to test his formula with a real Falkovnian soldier.

Otto Klockar, the Talon in charge of the project, chose a test subject who was both proven in dedication to Falkovnia and expendable: Antunia. She was stripped of her armor and weapons, forced to drink a foul tasting brew, and drowned in the tar pit while her former comrades laughed.

More alchemical treatments were applied by al-Wawat, and nearly a month after her immersion, Antunia was raised to unlife with terrible new powers. She was still completely loyal to Falkovnia and her hate of the state's enemies was as immense as her new strength. Antunia remembered everything in her former life as in a dream; her mind was completely focused on destruction for the glory of her nation.

Antunia's strength and obedience were tested in many ways and she proved to be perfect. Falkfuhrer Horstman was extremely pleased by the preliminary results. His reports to Drakov explained that a small shock division of 40 to 60 of these obedient übersoldiers could easily seize a town, and then leave control to regular Falkovnian troops while these shock troops blitzkrieg elsewhere. Horstman also proposed an invasion of Darkon by these elite troops, to test how these unliving übersoldiers would battle the zombies raised at the Darkonian frontier.

As the first of her kind, Antunia was charged with training the new tar mummy "recruits" and test their obedience before passing them on to Otto Klockar. Antunia delighted in her new status and the fear of her former comrades.

Antunia worked diligently until the day her own sons taken out of the tar pit

as new tar mummies. Old forgotten emotions returned to her dried flesh; she felt pity for her sons and she began to feel hate towards her superiors. She realized that the government had taken from her all that she had ever possessed. From then on, she secretly hated the Ministry of Science and its leader, Vjorn Horstman.

Current sketch

As Antunia trained her sons, she discovered that they have lost all emotion toward her and feel nothing but mindless devotion to the state. She is deeply saddened by the loss but she knows that she cannot turn them to her side. Antunia wants to end this secret experiment and destroy those responsible for it, especially Otto Klockar and Vjorn Horstman. Antunia patiently plots her revenge in secret. As she cannot attack anyone with the hawk brand unless attacked first, she needs help.

Adventure hook:

Traitor or tragic hero?

The adventure begins when the heroes (or a trusted friend) receive a letter from an anonymous source. The message details a frightening Falkovnian “super soldier” program, called the “Teer Stahlmann project” and claims that any of these super soldiers can defeat 15 ordinary soldiers. This program is close to success and that would mean great danger for Falkovnia’s neighbors. The writer identifies the exact location of the Morfenzi secret research camp, and hints that to destroy the soldiers: “do not use fire”.

The informant urges the recipients to destroy the lab, the super soldiers, and all research notes so that the Falkovnians cannot rebuild the research camp after its destruction.

The writer also describes Rashid al-Wawat, a scholar kidnapped from the Amber Wastes and forced to work on this project. The informant proposes that the heroes rescue al-Wawat and his family.

The letter finishes with the claim that “this ill conceived experiment is a dreary bleak spot in Falkovnia’s grandeur”. The question of who wrote this anonymous letter remains a mystery for the moment, though the writing is in Falkovnian script, written by a woman’s hand.

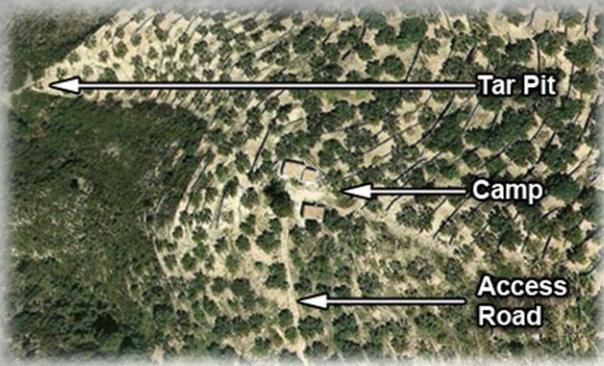
The Teer Stahlmann Project

The “Teer Stahlmann project” camp is located on the top of a hill, in a deserted area of the Crumbling Hills, three miles north-east of the city of Morfenzi (Falkovnia). Only one road leads to this hill and military patrols of 2-4 soldiers (F3) often scout the area half a mile around the camp.

There are three stone and mortar buildings on top of the hill: one is a barrack for the soldiers during the day (weapons and riding horses are stored here; 3-4 guards on watch duty from the roof of this building).

The smallest of the three is Otto Klockar’s house and the last building is a storage building, without windows. The door to this building is heavily guarded (3-4 guards, F3).

Otto’s house is simple and undecorated. A desk contains coded letters from Horstman. If deciphered (Decipher Script DC 25), the players learn among other things that Horstman is putting pressure on Klockar to quickly



increase the number of übersoldiers, “unless he wants to be transformed into one himself”.

Most of the research complex is underground and solely accessible from a hidden trap door in the storage building.

Description of Underground

Rooms:

1. The ladder coming down from the storage building ends here. The corridors are lit by torches posted every 30 feet.
2. One guard is usually on duty here (F3). He has the key to the locked gate to restricted area 3.
3. One guard is usually on duty here (F3). He checks on his colleague in area 2 every 15 minutes. This guard has the key to the locked gates leading to area 4 and both 11 rooms.
4. This area is empty except of the smell of corpses and chemicals.
5. Additional storage (food (5a) and alchemical products (5b))
6. Al-Wawat’s family [wife: Layali (Com1), and daughter Nuzha, 8 years old, (Com1)] is kept locked in this tiny room. They can go outside, under guard, once per day, for 15 minutes. At the end of his long workday, al-Wawat is brought here to sleep.

7. The soldiers sleep here and the room contains many camp beds. Many locked chests contain the soldiers’ pay (20 chests total, with 1-20 gp each). The newly created tar mummy recruits have a bed here too (in the second room number 7).
8. Antunia’s private room for rest and rejuvenation. It contains nothing of value.
9. Al-Wawat’s study (contains many papers in Pharazian and Falkovnian, the sum total of his notes for the creation of übersoldiers). Hidden under a table is an envelope containing the complete list of control words for the Falkovnian tar mummies. There are two other copies of this list; one is kept in Otto Klockar’s belt pouch and the other filed with restricted access at the Ministry of Science.
10. Two laboratories. The scholar al-Wawat spends most of his time here, often alone. The rest of the time, a (bored) guard watches him.



(Room plan from a recycled and modified WotC map, taken from their website)

A cage in one of these rooms restrains a berserk mummy, its mind uncontrollable, and kept here for further study.

11. Two empty rooms, with blood stains on the floor. They are used as cells for people destined to be immersed under tar, or as reanimating rooms for tar mummy recruits.

Optional Event - 1: If the heroes are planning to spy on the camp for a period of time before entering in it, you can add this event.

When the heroes arrive in the area, there are more than 200 soldiers temporarily camped around the hill.

<p>Falkovnian soldiers (200) Falkovnian officers (20) Falkovnian Talon (10) <i>see Gazetteer II, p 101 for stats</i></p>

Some kind of temporary stand has been built in front of a cleared area, for VIP to watch the demonstration. Vjorn Horstman is in attendance, as are other top people from the government, and possibly Drakov (father or son)). Heroes watching the camp are witness to a demonstration of strength from Antunia, who is matched against two waves of 10 soldiers (Falkovnians prisoners) in a fight to the death. The demonstration is outstanding, and short, as Antunia easily destroys both waves of fighters.

This event should persuade the players to do all they can to stop this supersoldier program and will make things more interesting when the heroes encounter Antunia during a battle.

It would be foolish for the heroes to attack the camp this day. The next day the VIP guests and 200 soldiers leave the area for Lekar. Once the VIPs have left the camp, the guards become relaxed,

creating an opportunity for the PCs to sneak in.

Optional event - 2: A squad of 6 powries (Redcap Arak) attacks the heroes while they are spying on the camp (VR's Guide to the Shadow Fey). The redcaps were under orders to turn Otto Klockar into a changeling, in order to control the base.

Optional random event - 3: Isolated hills encounter with a Bloodmote cloud [Libris Mortis] (a swarm of undead mosquitoes).

After they had located the camp, the heroes need to stealthily enter the camp, and (hopefully) destroy all mummies, the lab, and then save al-Wawat and his family.

The mummies attack all persons not bearing a Falkovnian hawk brand.

<p>The following statistics details the number of soldiers of the camp at any time. Adjust the numbers as you see fit for your group.</p> <p>Falkovnian soldiers (20) Falkovnian officers (4) Falkovnian Talon (1, Otto Klockar) See Gazetteer II, p 101 for stats</p>
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<p>Falkovnian Tar mummies (6): medium humanoid (human tar mummy, rank 2, Warrior 3), CR 6; HD 3d12+3, hp: 23; Init +0; Speed 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 10, flat-footed 20); Atk +3 melee long sword +8 (1d8 +5, 19–20), or slam +9 (1d6 +5, 20); AL LE, SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 20, Dex 10, Con -, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10.</p>
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<p>Skills: Climb +8, Handle Animal +6, Hide +8, Intimidate +6, Jump +9, Listen +13, Move Silently +8, Ride +5, Spot +13</p>
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<p>Feats: Alertness, Power Attack, Toughness</p> <p>SQ: Resistance to Blows (Ex), Damage reduction, Turn resistance, Immunity to fire based attacks, Energy Vulnerability (cold), Fear (Su), Hawk Loyalty (Su), Falkovnian Control Word (Ex),</p>

Rejuvenation (Su), Undead Traits (Ex),
Light Sensitivity (Ex)

Languages: Falkovnian

Gear: Long sword

At one point during the attack, things should look bad for the heroes. They will be overwhelmed by soldiers or tar mummies. At that moment, they will get help from Antunia who now has control over three tar mummy recruits. Antunia cannot personally engage in any fight with Falkovnians, but she has control over the tar mummy recruits and can force them to stop fighting.

Antunia is currently free willed, but three people know of her secret control world: Otto Klockar, Rashid al-Wawat and Vjorn Hostman. Antunia does not know that Horstman possess her control word.

After the fight, Antunia states that the heroes have “erased a dreary bleak spot in Falkovnia’s grandeur”. The heroes might realize she is the one who wrote the letter.

The heroes then have a difficult choice: should they destroy Antunia, as she is a living dead creature, or should they help her get her revenge on Falkfuhrer Horstman?

Antunia might eventually agree to, or even ask, to be laid to her final rest by the PC’s, but not before she has her revenge against Horstman.

If al-Wawat and his family survive, the players may have to decide how to get the embalmer and his family to safety, away from the reaches of the Falkovnians.

Recurrence

If Antunia is not killed during this adventure, she is declared an enemy of Falkovnia. If she succeeded in the destruction of the “Teer Stahlmann project” camp and the burning of the creation process notes, she moves on to her next goal: planning the assassination of Falkfuhrer Vjorn Horstman.

Falkovnian Tar Mummies

Falkovnian Tar mummy is a new type of Ravenloft Ancient Dead, based on the Ravenloft Ancient Dead (rank 2) template.

Compared to the ancient dead template, the following features are modified because of the unusual tar immersion creation process: Appearance, DR (always piercing), higher turn resistance, higher speed.

Weaknesses added: Hawk Loyalty (Su), Light Sensitivity (Ex) and Falkovnian Control Word (Ex).

Also, these mummies do not protect a place such as a tomb from intruders, but instead fight at the command of their creator (or anyone the creator passes its control to, here being the Falkovnian state).

Template

"Falkovnian tar mummy" is a template that can be applied to any living creature referred to hereafter as the "base character"). The creature's type changes to "undead." The ancient retains all the statistics of the base character except where noted.

Hit Dice: Increase to d12.

Speed: +10 ft

AC: The base creature receives a bonus of +8 to its natural armor class.

Attacks and Damage: Retains all of the base creature's attacks and gains a slam attack (1d6) if it didn't already have one.

Special Attacks: As base character, plus the following:

Damage Reduction (Ex): The mummy receives damage reduction 5/piercing.

Rejuvenation (Su): As if their physical invulnerability weren't enough, Falkovnian tar mummies are capable of drawing on the Positive Energy Plane to heal damage. This is a relatively slow process (6 HP per hour) and requires the mummy to be inert for one day before the rejuvenation begins. The mummy is always inert during rejuvenation. An inert mummy is incapable of any action and cannot perceive its surroundings; it is effectively helpless. A mummy that has started the rejuvenation process cannot end it until it is completed.

Special Qualities: As base character, plus the following:

Energy Vulnerability (Ex): Cold. The Falkovnian tar mummy suffers double damage from attacks of this energy type.

Immunity (Ex): This type of mummy is immune to fire energy attacks.

Resistant to Blows (Ex): The Falkovnian tar mummy is incredibly resistant to physical attacks. Physical attacks only do half damage, applied before damage reduction.

Turn Resistance (Ex): The mummy receives +4 turn resistance.

Hawk Loyalty (Su): The tar mummy cannot attack anyone bearing the Falkovnian hawk brand, unless attacked first. The mummy could be fooled by disguise, but it will attack anyone bearing a false hawk brand, if it knows the brand to be false.

Falkovnian Control Word (Ex): Falkovnian Tar Mummies are created with a secret control word known to the creator and the mummy to make it obedient and loyal to the Falkovnian state. At the time of their creation, the tar mummy makes a Will save against a DC

24. If the mummy fails its Will save, the control word takes effect. This control word can never be changed and is usually known to very few people. The mummy will obey all commands from a Falkovnian controlling them with the control word.

This control can be verbally passed to another Falkovnian in front of the mummy by this secret control word exchange. If this person is ever killed or disappears, any Falkovnian with the control word could take control of the mummy. The mummies will never be controlled by someone not bearing the Falkovnian Hawk brand. If they succeed the DC 24 check upon creation, this obedience is flawed (DM's choice for what happens and when).

Light Sensitivity (Ex): The mummy is dazzled in areas of bright sunlight or within the radius of a daylight spell.

Saves: Same as base character.

Abilities: Refer to Table 5-3 of Ravenloft Campaign Setting. As an undead creature, the base character no longer has a Constitution score.

Skills: The tar mummy receives a +8 racial bonus to the skills Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, and Spot.

Feats: Same as base character, plus the Alertness and Toughness ^{Pathfinder} feats.

Climate/Terrain: any.

Organization: Solitary or squadron (4-40)

Challenge Rating: +2.

Treasure: If any, masterwork or magical martial weapons and armors.

Alignment: Always lawful evil.

Advancement: By character class.

Salient Powers

Animal Command (Su): These undead are able to exert control over hawks, eagles and Falkovnian zweifalks ^{Ga2}. They can command animals of this species just as an evil cleric can command undead. This ability takes effect as if used by a cleric of level equal to the mummy's Hit Dice.

Advancement

Falkovnian tar mummies are created to be particularly active and might be able to advance in a warrior class: Fighter, Warrior, Barbarian, or other martially inclined class.

Along the River
Mills and Industry in Ravenloft

By Stephen "ScS" Sutton

isawtheraven@hotmail.com

Elora Textiles

Fed by rain run-off, the Grand River flows down from the costal cliffs of western Mordent, down into the low boggy heartland and into the Elora Gorge, a narrow canyon carved by the river into the soft sandstone. The gorge is bordered by forest and farmsteads and crossed at its narrowest point by a wooden bridge. Near to that bridge, perched treacherously on the side of that crumbling chasm, is a wool mill.

The building predates any historical records from the area, though there are signs that suggest that the mill was once employed to grind grain. Old masonry shows that several buildings were erected at the same spot on the river. The remains suggest that successive structures collapsed as the river eroded the cliffs.

The foundation of the Mill is made of stone and mortar, wedged into a notch in the sandstone cliffs. Seated atop the stone foundation, the main building runs along the side of the cliff in either

direction. The structure is made of old wooden beams, darkened by moisture from the river. Where the mill meets the river rolls the titanic water wheel that powers the mill. The wheel is noticeably more recent than the rest of the building, having been installed by the current owners.

The current mill has operated for nearly fifty years, starting when farmers from the hamlet of Salem decided to collect raw wool from the hills and manufacture thread for export to neighboring Dementlieu and Richemulot. Rather than construct their own structure, the farmers repurposed the old abandoned grain mill. Extensive repairs were required, given the great age of the mill, the damp climate, and the unstable cliffs.

The inside of the mill is dark, loud and hideously hot. Teamsters offload bags of raw wool down a chute, which dumps the sacks into a sub-basement cut into the cliff face. There, the wool is washed and bleached. The white wool is dumped into the "carding" machinery, a bank of rollers studded with metal teeth.

The wool fibers are formed into a rope of wool, known as a roving, which is then run to the floor above where it is spun into thread.

These finished threads are either collected and rolled for sale, or fed into the looms in the upper floors. Bolts of cloth are constantly being wrapped in the topmost floor, and may be dumped from the roof onto wagons waiting below. It is said that on a good day, a merchant can exchange a bag of wool for a bolt of cloth without even stopping his wagon.

A small town has grown alongside the mill, expanding and shrinking as the demand for thread rises and falls. Nearly a hundred spinners, weavers and general laborers work in the mill all year round. Several times, the Mill has been closed: once when a lamb-pox decimated the wool supply, and twice thereafter when economics reduced the demand for cloth.

The original owners of the mill have prospered, become wealthy, and intermarried. The mill is owned by the Wainrighte, the Warwick, and the Hammond families, though the day-to-day operations of the mill are overseen by a manager. The current overseer is Kent Johnson, a tall, lean man with ghost-white hair. He is a fair manager who begrudges any expense and tolerates no nonsense. Johnson imported a clock from Dementlieu and forces the employees to work ten-hour shifts all year round, regardless of daylight.

A short time ago, Johnson commissioned a Lamordian engineer to create a water-powered loom, so as to make better use of the river and save on the cost of spinners and weavers. Much to the relief of the weavers, the engineer's design failed. Johnson is looking for a new designer to finish the job, though he has had little luck.

Except for the first year of operation, no one who has owned the Mill has dared to set foot within its walls. Albert Warwick was the first manager and part-owner of the Mill. He was killed in a horrific accident while repairing the carding machine. Rumor has it that some of his hair and flesh made its way into the thread and it is believed that to this day there are people wearing clothes made in part from Albert Warwick.

Meaus Tannery

The waters of the Musarde River flow into the city of Mortigny clean and clear, and flow out yellow and fouled. When the wind blows from the south of the city, it is poisoned by a noxious miasma made of equal parts sewage gas and chemical stink. These foul pollutants can be traced to a single building teetering at the southern-most edge of town: the Meaus Tannery.

The tannery processes the skins collected by hunters from the Verbrek forests and the Arkendale river valleys. The building teeters on the southern edge of Mortigny, at the end of a block of the sagging buildings. Apart from a slaughterhouse, the neighboring buildings are vacant, due to the overwhelming stench of the tannery.

Once upon a time, the Meaus Tannery might have been a model of utilitarian construction; it is tall and rectangular brick building with a great gambrel roof. Today, the building is dilapidated, even by the standards of Richemulot. The masonry is black with the centuries of soot and crumbling from the erosion of the rain. Not one single wall stands straight, the ceilings sag, and the floors slope in multiple directions. The whole worm-eaten edifice leans precipitously towards the river, as if

contemplating a suicidal plunge into the water.

The vicious stink of the tannery is caused by the process of turning hides into supple leather. Raw animal skins are bathed in the river for a day before workers use razors to scrape the skins of what bits of rotting fat and meat remain. To remove the hairs, workers scrub the hides with a caustic solution made from urine, salt, and acid.

The stripped skins are then dumped into rolling drums along with a noxious mixture of raw sewage and cow brains obtained from a nearby slaughterhouse. Water action turns the drums, allowing the skins to be evenly coated by the filth as they fester for several days. Slowly, the vile stew breaks down the hide and softens the skin. The supple hide is kneaded, stretched, and rubbed with wood oils to add color.

Waste chemicals from the industrial process are dumped directly into the river. This run-off gives the city a distinctive stench in far excess of most settlements. Even the rats shun the tannery, which is one reason that the slaughterhouse is located so close to it.

The finished leather is sold throughout the city, where it is made into everything from fine shoes to furniture. Scrapings of leather are even boiled down to make hide-glue. The city of Mortigny depends on the leather produced by the tannery, but the tanners themselves are reviled as pariahs. The tanners are segregated from the rest of town and are forced to live in a special block of houses known as L'puanteur. L'puanteur is a sorry block of ramshackle houses, downriver from the Meaus.

When he is somber, Guy Legros oversees the tannery. He is a failed

merchant who was given the position by a rich relative. The drunkard would have been fired long ago, were there anyone more reliable willing to work in the noxious tannery. Most of the laborers are children, apprenticed to the tannery by impoverished parents.

Ste. Marie Timber

Though there are many uses for bricks and stone and mortar, wood remains the most important building material. Yet, in most domains, the forests are part of the holdings of feudal nobles. These lords and ladies seek to preserve their woodlands for their own use, rather than allow commoners to harvest the timber. Thus, wood for building is dearly expensive. However, nestled in the forests of Verbrek there is a forested land where no man claims ownership and the forest's bounty is free for the taking.

Ste. Marie Timber is a lumber camp in the Arkendale valley, set on the rocky delta where the Red River and Lupin Creek feed into the Musarde River. A consortium from Ste. Ronges founded Ste. Marie in 740, not as a lumber mill but as a trading post to supply the farmsteads of settlers from Richemulot. Almost all of these colonies failed, with the settlers either fleeing, being devoured by beasts of the woods, or vanishing without a trace. During that time the site of Ste. Marie suffered constant attacks. The post was once razed by hostile Verbrekers, and in 746 all occupants of the post were slain by beasts, most likely wolves.

Though the wave of colonists waned, prospectors and lumberjacks continued to flood down the Musarde, despite the frightening attrition. The consortium rebuilt the camp as a lumber mill to

refine the raw timbers harvested by camps along the Red River. The site was reinforced on the landside and river merchant Nathan Timothy was contracted to deliver provisions to the isolated camp.

Ste. Marie is fed a steady diet of raw logs by timber crews working along the Red River, a tributary of the Musarde. The timber crews have found that maintaining permanent camps is hopeless in the Verbrek forests, so instead they wander up and down the river. Trees are felled at timber camps, dressed into logs, and floated down the Red River in packed masses of logs called "jams". Nimble log drivers walk the log jams, using pikes to keep the jam moving. The Ste. Marie Timber Mill sits at the mouth of the Red River where it collects the logs as they flow down the river.

Each day, Ste. Marie Timber greets the dawn with a cacophony of screeching metal and splitting wood. By noontime, the air is infused with a haze of fine wood particles so thick that anything left unattended is rapidly buried in a coating of the sawdust.

The logs taken from the river are sorted by species, scaled to a common length, and stripped of their bark. Raw logs are cut at the "drop mill", a great saw powered by a water-wheel. The hefty blade and its frame is first lifted up by the water-wheel, then dropped, cutting through the log and making a loud knocking noise that echoes for miles. The largest logs are cut and planed by a two-man team in a "saw pit". In this slow, laborious process, the log is suspended above a pit, with one man standing in the pit and pulling one end of the whip-saw, while the other man stands above the log, guiding the saw and pulling the other end.

Unfinished logs are then edged into four-sided "flitches" by water-powered whip-saws. These smaller saws are powered by waterwheels, which turn a crank to move a "pitman arm" up and down, creating a continuous vertical sawing motion. Flitches are dried for several days and then planed into regular planks by a whip-saw. The finished planks are stacked near the river, for later loading onto barges.

The vast majority of the camp workers are laborers from Richemulot or civilized Verbrekers. There is no tavern in the camp, though the camp kitchen sells meals to travelers, albeit at a cost bordering on the criminal. Bunks in the laborer barracks are rented to travelers too sensible to risk a night in the forest. An overseer from Ste. Ronges manages the lumber camp, though these agents rarely stay for long.

The camp is bordered by water to the South and East sides, and a tall wooden palisade on the West side. Ste. Marie is thus protected from the beasts of the forests, though it is completely dependent on the river for supplies. Timothy farms out the Ste. Marie deliveries to lesser merchants, though he extorts a high percentage of the profits, forcing his cronies to charge criminal rates for the supplies they carry. Since Nathan controls the river, Ste. Marie must suffer him and his stooges or else starve.

The summer months are a dangerous time for the camp. The water level drops dangerously low, slowing boat traffic and delaying crucial deliveries of supplies. Worse yet, the slower flow of the Musarde allows wolves from the woods to swim the river and circle around the palisade.

The only land route from the camp is Dead Man's Path, a narrow trail leading

west into the forests. In times long past, the trail was used by hunters, but as the lumber camp grew, so too did wolf attacks. Those who dare Dead Man's Path swear that something more malign

than simple beasts lurk along the trail. The hunters say that they have found strange charms strung up from the trees, including the bleached bones of unfortunate travelers.

More Hidden Places

Dark Corners of the Demiplane

By Jack the Reaper

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Nightmare City

The Nightmare City is a place of perpetual night and horror. The skies are perpetually overcast with dark clouds, lightened by occasional blue and red lightning flashes. The tall gothic buildings have a darkly twisted and surreal look, like a setting taken from a nightmare. Most of the city appears to be vacant, but a sense of imminent dread is in the air, and travelers get the impression that every shadow conceals some threat, that eyes are following them from every dark window. And this impression is very much true.

The Nightmare City is the home of the Nightmare People. Those horrid humanoids are all pale-skinned, bald, and have long, razor-sharp metallic fingernails and sharp silver teeth. Some of them display peculiar deformities, such as patches of flayed skin, terribly scarred faces, burning marks, horns and tails. They usually dress in black robes. [For inspiration, think of characters like the Gentlemen (Buffy episode "Hush"),

Cenobites ("Hellraiser"), the Strangers ("Dark City") and Freddy Krueger ("Nightmare on Elm Street").]

The Nightmare City is a large metropolis, but its actual population is much smaller than its capacity. About 3000 Nightmare People live in the city, along with about 100 human captives. There are also other nightmarish animals and creatures in the city, and some other monsters as well.

The Nightmare People kidnap human babies and little children from the human world and bring them to their city. They wrap their minds with a permanent phantasmal enchantment, known as the Veil, which makes them perceive the world around them as a normal human world: the skies look blue, with a shining sun rising and setting regularly; the city's buildings and streets appear like a normal human city; and the Nightmare People look just like regular human beings. There's nothing to raise the human captives' suspicions about the true nature of the world they live in.

The Nightmare People fill the roles of the human's family and friends. They are the perfect performers, and each of them plays his or her role to perfection, pretends to be the human's parent, sibling, schoolmate, and with time, also his or her spouse and children (the offspring of human and Nightmare People are always Nightmare People).

When they are in a human captive's presence, all nightmare people behave just like human beings, taking great caution not to do or say anything which may break their masquerade. Only when they are certain that no human is around do they revert to their natural behavior. In addition to the Nightmare People, who play the central roles, the Veil also fills the captive mind with illusionary people and animals, which exist nowhere but in his head; he may speak and interact with them normally, but in fact they are just like creations of a dreamer's mind. Those illusions fill the roles of extras in a movie, and are meant to give the otherwise rather vacant city the image of a bustling, lively human settlement.

A captive might live all of his or her life in the Nightmare City, without ever suspecting that something is wrong. The exact purpose of the Nightmare People in doing that is unclear, but it seems they produce some sustenance from the humans' spiritual energies. Other speculation is that Nightmare People cannot reproduce between themselves, and they have to mate with humans in order to multiply.

Either way, when they decide for some reason that a human captive has outlived his usefulness, they remove the Veil from his mind, exposing him to the true horror of his condition, and then kill him horribly and use his spirit in some unspeakable manner. This is the fate of

almost all of the Nightmare City's human captives.

But this is not always the case. Sometimes, the Veil malfunctions, and the captive gets glimpses of the world around him as it truly is. It usually happens when the captive awakens from sleep; he might open his eyes in the middle of the night, and find himself in what seems to be a nightmarish parody of his house, with some horrid being lying in the bed next to him.

The Nightmare People will try to convince this captive that it was only a nightmare, which he is most likely to believe. But the experience might repeat itself, in other places and during waking times, and some other disturbing clues may show up – fissures in the masquerade; an actor Nightmare Man might slip with his tongue, and say or do something he is not supposed to, or the captive may come upon Nightmare People who are not aware of his presence, and see them behave very strangely...

The captive may encounter other captives, who also have figured out some or all of the truth, and cooperate with them. They must be careful to the extreme - as long as their Veils are active, they can't even know whether anyone they meet (including someone they've known all of their life) is a human captive, a Nightmare Man or just an illusion; and if their captors would learn that their secret has been exposed, the captives' lives would quickly come to a grisly end.

It might be easier to pretend that all is as usual when the Veil is still functioning, and everything at least appears normal (even if the captives already know that it's not), but eventually the Veil will collapse, and the captives will have to face the true horror

of the Nightmare City, and try against all odds to find a way out. The best option is to find one of the ways the Nightmare People use to get to the human world and escape through it, but it is a most difficult task. And even if the captives make it with their bodies intact, what would happen to their minds? Can a human being discover that all of his life has been a terrible illusion, his beloved ones inhuman monsters, and remain sane? Will he ever be able to look at the world without the fear that maybe it is nothing but another illusion – to look at a human face without imagining that behind the smile lurks a demon?

'End of the Road' Inn

The PCs are traveling in some unfamiliar city, when a storm forces them to seek shelter. The only place they come upon is a large stone inn in one of the worst parts of the city, which looks as though it was a part of a fortress in its past. The name inscribed on a wooden sign hanging over the entrance is "'End of the Road' Inn".

On the inside, the place is nothing but the most miserable, dismal inn the PCs have ever seen. Everything, from basement to rooftop, is rotten, decaying, dark, dank, dirty, filthy, and bad-smelling. The rooms and corridors are dark, with hardly a flickering candle here and there, which serves only to cast some moving shadows around.

The air is dense, water drips through the ceilings, floorboards and window panes are covered with layers of grime, and some corridors are flooded ankle-deep. Mold is growing freely on walls and ceilings, spider webs are on every corner, and huge roaches, moths and other vermin seem to be fiercely attracted to the guests. The food served

is bland, ugly and watery, and the bedclothes are dank and filthy. And we haven't mentioned the water closets yet...

The inn's staff, and all the other guests of the inn, seem to display every possible kind and level of insanity and weirdness. Some of them are gibbering lunatics, others may look normal at first, but short conversation reveals their real status. Most of the guests are harmless, but some might be dangerous, and others are too friendly. They are all grotesque and bizarre in some way or another, with heavy makeup, old, unfashionable clothes, and all kind of strange appearances and behaviors. Some of the guests don't look quite human; others don't look quite alive.

The PCs might think that they can endure a night in this place, just until the rain stops and the storm clears. They will find out it's not going to be so easy to check out from this inn. Something is really wrong with this place. After some time within, the PCs lose track of time. They won't be able to say how long they have been in the inn, and how much time has passed outside – hours? Days? It's always dark in there, and the storm outside never seems to cease, so they can't even know if it's day or night.

It also becomes increasingly difficult to find the way from one place to another inside the inn. Either the house itself shifts, or it plays tricks with the guests' minds. Every time a PC leaves his or her room, he finds it more difficult to find his way back to it, or to any other location in the building.

Corridors turn in endless circles, door numbers are arranged in senseless order, and every sense of direction is lost. A PC might descend several flights of stairs, only to find himself on the upper floor. She might just leave her

room for a moment, and then find a whole different room when she returns. As a result, the PCs will find themselves wandering endlessly through the house, coming in touch with other guests, and finding no rest or calm. Even when they are in their room, other guests might wander inside at any time – there are no locks on the doors.

When they decide to leave this place, the PCs will not be able to find the way out. They can wander for hours without finding the exit. Sometimes they even forget what they are looking for. The nature of the place, and the contacts with the insane guests, will quickly gnaw at their sanity. They might be persuaded or forced by other guests to take part in all kind of bizarre and depraved activities. Some guests might tell them they know a way out, but ask for some freakish favors in return, and finally only lead them on another goose chase through the inn.

After some conversations and activities with the insane, the PCs may start doubt their own sanities, memories and identities – and the doubts will only make them deteriorate further toward madness. It also seems that their appearances change; looking at mirrors or on each other, they seem to look more and more like the other guests, grotesque and bizarre.

Finally, the PCs shall find a way out of the inn. But when they make their way through the streets outside, they will encounter the local police or city guard, and the truth shall be found out. The denizens of the city consider the End of the Road Inn to be a mental asylum (whether it is – or was once - indeed so, or due to the inn's influence on the denizens' minds), and the guards are sure that the PCs are escapee inmates. In their current mental and physical condition,

the PCs will have a most difficult time trying to convince them otherwise – perhaps they are not even sure of it themselves; and so they may find themselves quickly ushered back into the asylum – and this time it will be the End of the Road indeed...

Quarter of the Dead

The city of Neblus in Darkon is said to be built upon the site of an ancient graveyard from a forgotten age. The locals say that by keeping the dead underfoot, they stop them from rising to reclaim their land. One area, however, has never been completely conquered by the living. The Quarter of the Dead is a dead limb attached to the body of Neblus, serving the denizens as a grim reminder of the fact that the original dwellers of the land have never truly left, and are never far away.

One can live in Neblus for years, without even being aware of the existence of the Quarter of the Dead. Built on the down slope of Neblus' northern hill, the Quarter was abandoned by (or emptied of) all its living residents shortly after its population in unknown, mysterious circumstances. Some whisper that the residents didn't leave, but disappeared; others murmur of some dark entity from the Grey Realm which was responsible to this evacuation.

Most of the streets and entrances leading to the quarter have been sealed and blocked with stone walls centuries ago, giving the impression that there is nothing but a dead end of the street. Denizens will never speak about the District's existence, or even acknowledge they have ever heard of it; if asked about it, they will usually walk away with blank face, fearful eyes and gestures of protection from evil.

There are some towers and tall structures in Neblus from which some portion of the Quarter can be seen, but those towers are usually abandoned, or if populated, have all their windows facing the Quarter permanently sealed. Only by a careful study of the city's layout can one notice that there's a part of the city which is completely inaccessible; and only by a thorough search – or a complete coincidence – can one come upon one of the few entrances left open to the District.

The destitute houses in the Quarter of the Dead are all built of stone blocks, and all the streets are paved with cobblestones. Those pale, white-grey stones are always cool and somewhat slippery to the touch. Many doorways and windows are sealed and blocked, but not all. Since the Quarter is built on a hill's slope, many streets are actually long stairways, leading to the next level.

The streets themselves are narrow and labyrinthine, and one can easily lose his way in the maze of alleys. Some of them are shadowed by large stone arches, looming over the street. As in the rest of Neblus, tombstones and cemetery-styled statuary can frequently be seen among the pavestones and walls. The whole area has a feeling of antiquity about it. Eerie silence is in the air, undisrupted even by the chirping of birds, which seem to be completely absent, along with any other living being – even insects can't be seen anywhere.

There is a feeling of an almost palpable foulness in the stones and the air, and a faint, sweet stench can sometimes be smelled, carried with the wind. Travelers find themselves walking on their toes and speaking with hushed voices, as if afraid to disturb the rest of some sleeping malevolent presence.

At night, the Quarter of the Dead is all dark, though the lights of the city might be seen floating beyond the walls like some ghostly lanterns. Sounds are carried through the air, seemingly from a great distance, but their source is unclear. Sometimes a lit candle is seen in an alcove in the wall or on a windowsill.

Shadows slip swiftly along dark alleys, their murmurings fill the listener's mind with madness. On occasions, parades of dark hooded figures are seen marching on the streets, carrying ornamented lanterns, appearing and disappearing into lightless underground openings, or some evil-looking temples. Strange, unfamiliar stars and constellations are seen in the night sky, staring down on the travelers with cold, baleful light.

The Hall of Doors

Usually considered the stuff of legends and fairy-tales, the Hall of Doors is an extra-dimensional place with countless doors, which might be opened to anywhere in the world (or multiverse). Every door, in every place, might become for a short time an opening to the Hall of Doors.

Nobody knows the pattern behind the Hall's manifestations, if there is any, and many scholars look for a way to intentionally transform a doorway into an opening to the Hall. No such method has been discovered so far, but it seems that strong desire and need may "attract" the Hall of Doors and make an opening appear. The door functions as a gateway only for a short time, a few minutes at most, after which it returns to normal.

The Hall of Doors itself is composed of an endless complex of corridors, stairways and halls, the walls of which are lined with endless rows of doors of

every possible description. Every door may lead to another part of the Hall, or to any other doorway in the world. There is no way to know where any door leads to, and all attempts to chart the Hall have failed. Theoretically, one who knows how to navigate the Hall of Doors can make his way easily to any place across the world or universe, but it is doubtful if there is any being who knows how to do it.

Some Vistani seem to know a way to use the Hall in order to reach some specific locations, some of them might be unreachable by any other means. Curiously enough, it seems that certain children songs contain clues to the pattern and order of doors leading to some legendary places, clues disguised as nonsensical lullabies and playing-songs. It is speculated that some bogeymen use the Hall to reach closets and bedroom doors, carrying away children to some terrible kingdom.

Traveling in the Hall of Doors is very dangerous. Creatures of any kind might be encountered, as well as other travelers of any description, from across many worlds. Even more dangerous though is the Hall itself. The longer travelers stay within the Hall, the greater the risk to remain trapped in it forever.

Doors might lead to rooms without exits, disappearing behind the traveler and leaving him trapped for all eternity; or a traveler may find himself in an endless sequence of doors, in which every door leads only to another door, and so on endlessly. Creatures in the Hall of Doors do not age, and do not require food or drink, so entrapment might be literally forever. Travelers are therefore recommended to leave the Hall at first opportunity, even if the exit they find leads to an unfamiliar location, for

risking the Hall for a better exit might bring far worse results.

It is unknown whether the Hall of Doors is a domain, an oubliette, or something completely different. Who built it? Does it have a will or mind of its own, is it controlled by some force, or does it only twist chaotically between the worlds without purpose? The answers to all those questions are completely obscure.

It should be noted however, that many travelers have reported a strange figure, looking like a woman dressed in white robes and a hood concealing her face, who sometimes reveals herself to travelers and wordlessly gestures toward some door or another. Others saw her floating in the air along the Hall's passages, singing with a longing voice a song in a language nobody seems to recognize. It is unclear though whether this figure is benign or malign (or neither), and whether she leads those who follow her to their desired destination or to damnation. Some have named this character "The Lady of the Hall of Doors", but this title – as well as its meaning – is dubious at best.

The Pseudonatural Grove

Many travelers in the forests of Falkovnia tell about a mysterious, beautiful Green Maiden, whose mere sight induces blindness, and whose touch deforms living beings into monsters (see Ravenloft Gazetteer II). Some sages have speculated correctly that this Maiden is not a creature native to the Lands of the Mists, but an alien invader from the strange plane known as the Far Realm. None of them know however, that the Green Maiden is only the herald of an invasion by a cosmic horror of a much greater scale.

Following the doppelganger plant which decimated the village of Delmunster during the events of Horror's Harvest (see *Dungeon Magazine* #38), another meteorite fell down from the night sky, crashing in a distant, uninhabited part of the vast Falkovnian forests. Far from being a natural rock from outer space, this meteorite was actually the seed of a horrid entity from the Far Realm, a being named xenorganus by some ancient tomes. Sent across the multiverse, the xeno-seeds plant themselves in the soil of unsuspecting worlds, and immediately start transforming the whole planet into a gigantic, living pseudonatural monstrosity.

The seed of the xenorganus buried itself some hundreds of feet deep in the forest's soil, and quickly developed into a large, fleshy heart-like organ, surrounded by a spherical, protective hard tissue. Pulsing deep below the surface of the earth, the organ gradually transformed all matter in its surroundings into organic matter, forming the body of the xenorganus. Earth transformed into a fleshy substance; stalactites and stalagmites became teeth-like growths; lakes and fountains started bubbling with digestive, acidic liquids and other weird substances; tentacles, antennas and eyestalks sprout from the ground, walls and ceiling; and so on.

The basic structure of the area (tunnels, caves, pits etc.) didn't change significantly, only its composition, so that a cave now looked like a fleshy or intravenous tunnel, a pit like a suction-mouth, etc. One who walks inside the xenorganus will feel the pulsing and pounding of the being, and rightfully get the sensation of being inside an enormous living creature.

The radius of the area affected by the xenorganus spread further like a huge spherical globe, and eventually reached the earth's surface. The ground then changed into a grey, rubbery fabric, reminiscent of the skin of a squid; trees became twisted tumors, their bark transformed into a dark, scaly hide, mouths gaping on their trunks and clusters of eyes sprouting from their branches; bushes became clusters of tentacles, and even stranger things, like brain-shaped giant mushrooms, started growing from the ground.

Animals were driven insane, and some of them were twisted into pseudonatural abominations. The lake in the middle of the grove became a bubbling pool of oily liquid, occasionally spawning bizarre beings. This pseudonatural grove is the haven of the Green Maiden, and she will do everything in her power to protect it and make it flourish.

The only way to stop the xenorganus from spreading its foul essence into the whole world is to travel deep underground into the creature's entrails, find its pulsing heart and destroy it. This is not a simple task, for the creature will protect itself in the same manner a living body fights intruders, using tentacles and limbs, digestive fluids, and creatures spawned from its pools – not to mention the Green Maiden. The heart itself, whose radius is about 5 meters, is surrounded by a hard, spherical envelope of scaly tissue, which must be penetrated in order to reach it. Once the heart is destroyed, the xenorganus is dead, and the whole area will revert to normal in few days.

[For more inspiration on Far Realm invasions and influence, see *Dragon Magazine* #330.]

We Are One

In a secluded piece of land, far from every human settlement, stands the monastery of Havern. It is a massive building made of grey stone, simple and functional, decorated simply with angel statues and murals. The inscription engraved over the heavy entrance doors says "'TILL ALL ARE ONE".

Havern is the home of about 50 monks, half male and half female, of various ages, including children. They live in the monastery itself, or in the several wooden shacks surrounding it. Small wheat field, orchards and bee hives supply the monks with nutrition. Havern's way of life is highly communal, and all possessions are the shared property of all the denizens. There are no distinct families, and all children are raised together by the community. The monks spend most of their time in meditation, study in their extensive library, and prayers. It is said that the perfect harmony of their choir when they all sing the hymns together is of unearthly quality, bringing tears to the eyes of the toughest listener.

A visitor in Havern will be immediately struck by two outstanding features of all the denizens: they are all, men, women and children, exceptionally beautiful, with creamy skin, golden hair and silvery eyes – and they all look exceptionally similar to each other. All monks of the same age look quite identical, and can hardly be discerned from each other – all males the same, and all females the same. It will also become apparent that none of the monks are ever seen speaking to each other, but it seems they share some kind of telepathic link between them all. They speak normally with outsiders, and

actually are all quite friendly and pleasant folk, though reclusive and mysterious.

They always seem to be calm and in self control, never losing their temper or acting impulsively. Even the children seem to be outstandingly mature and intelligent, taking their part in the chores and hardly ever seen playing. When speaking with one of the monks, even with the children, one always gets the impression that there's some secret they hide, that they know something nobody else does.

The story of Havern begins about 60 years ago, in a small, quite normal village named Ordwich. One night, a strange, beautiful rain of liquid golden light poured down from the sky over the village. Feeling a strong sensation of bliss and happiness, the villagers of Ordwich came out of their homes, and let the liquid light wash their bodies. The rain stopped after one hour, but only a month later its results became apparent: all capable girls and women in Ordwich found themselves unexplainably pregnant, even those who had never been with a man.

Nine months after this night, on the very same night, all of them gave birth, each to a couple of golden haired, silver-eyed babies, one male and one female. A few of the babies didn't survive, but most of them did. The villagers were mystified by the strange phenomena, but they felt that the children were not dangerous, and many believed them to be a gift from their god. They became known as "The Angel Children".

As the children grew, it became apparent they were not regular children. They seemed to have a telepathic link between all of them, so that when one of them learned something new, all of them knew about it too, and when one of them

was hurt or in danger, the others knew immediately to come to his help or to call the adults. They never spoke with each other, claiming they "don't have to". They also seemed to have the power to affect the emotions and behavior of regular humans, but they never used it in a wicked manner; and they all were very interested in learning, studying and experiencing new things, as every new piece of knowledge became the property of them all.

Upon reaching the age of 16, the children gathered the people of Ordwich, thanked them warmly for the good treatment, and said that it was time for them to leave. They didn't say why and where they were going, only implied that they were actually not of this world and they had some mission to do. The villagers were deeply sad about their leaving, but they couldn't make them stay; and so the Angel Children have all left Ordwich and established the monastery of Havern.

The truth about the nature of the denizens of Havern is, that not only are they not human, they are not even "denizens" at all. What appears to be a community of several scores of men, women and children, is actually just one being. A celestial entity known as Cheruvim, it has a single mind shared by multiple bodies, which actually function as the limbs of a single creature. The monks in Havern don't have a telepathic link, for "they" are not distinct individuals, just multiple extensions of Cheruvim's hive mind.

The mental capacities of Cheruvim are powerful enough to enable it to control many bodies simultaneously, each in a different manner and in perfect harmony with each other. It can send parts of itself to distant locations, to gather information or otherwise forward

its goals. Each of his bodies can manifest half-celestial and psionic powers, and may sprout wings of white light to fly with. Bizarrely enough, Cheruvim can even multiply within itself, using its male and female components to create new baby-like extensions. For outsiders it might look like incest, but Cheruvim is actually a hermaphroditic being, and all its bodies are parts of itself. There is a limit to the number of bodies it can expand itself to, so it only creates "offspring" in order to replace dead ones, or in case of a great need, carefully keeping the balance.

Cheruvim is a benign entity, but its mind is alien and different from humans'. It is actually appalled by the individualistic nature of humans (and most other creatures, barring, possibly, bees and ants), and sees the fact that every human is a distinct being as an unnatural mutation which must be remedied.

Individuality is the source of all human strife, of hatred and envy and competition, and should all human beings merge into one mind, harmony and peace shall prevail. Therefore Cheruvim devotes its existence to finding a way to make all human minds merge into one. The concept might seem horrid for most people, but few can argue persuasively against the rationality of Cheruvim's arguments. It sees the humans' irrational inclination toward individual existence as part of their deformity, and it is sure that once the human minds shall merge together, "they" will be grateful for what it has done for them.

Therefore it permits itself to perform certain experiments on human subjects, in the belief that the end justifies the means. The exact nature and scope of those experiments is unknown, but some

of them seem to involve experts in the field of mind and body, such as Dr. Dominiani, Victor Mordenheim and Dominic D'Honnaire. None of those men know the true nature of Cheruvim and its purposes. It also seems that Cheruvim's male bodies can mate with human women, which on rare occasions results in the birth of twins, who are actually a single double-bodied being, like a small version of Cheruvim itself. Those "twins" are not mentally connected to Cheruvim, and might live all their lives without knowledge of it. Some of them become great heroes or villains, using their double bodies to their advantage in ways normal twins could not.

Cheruvim might be persuaded to cooperate and help just causes, such as monster-hunting, especially when it thinks it might help it acquire new knowledge. It will gladly share its vast knowledge and experience with heroes, and might even send several bodies to their help. It seems to have a particularly strong antagonism toward the hideous being known as Toben the Many, which looks like a dark mockery of Cheruvim, and will go to great length to destroy as many of its bodies as possible. Some speculate that Cheruvim itself and its experiments have something to do with the appearance of Toben, but it denies it fervently.

Traits of the Mists

Pathfinder Traits in Ravenloft

By David "Jester" Gibson

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Traits were introduced in the *Advanced Player's Guide* and are small bonuses that reflect a character's origin or backstory. Characters start with two traits, which are each about half as powerful as a feat.

Below are new traits designed for the Land of the Mists.

Combat

Cold One: Warmth is unknown to you, absent and forgotten after your encounter with the undead. You have little body heat and even your emotions are muted. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Stealth checks. When facing undead, this bonus increases to +4 until you attack, deal damage, or take any other offensive action.

Firearm Training: Hailing from the Western Core, you're familiar with firearms. Guns remain expensive luxuries in most of the continent but you've picked-up some limited training. You gain a weapon proficiency in an early firearm of your choice.

Monster Lore: You survived an encounter with a creature and this drove you to learn of the legions of the night, so you could face the same type of beast again and triumph. Choose a creature type (excluding humanoid and outsider), you gain a +1 trait bonus on damage rolls against creatures of this type.

Faith

Destined: You have a purpose, a destiny foretold by the stars or prophecy. When near death, fate intercedes on your behalf. You gain a +2 trait bonus on Constitution checks to stabilize.

Ghost Touched: You have encountered beings from the spirit world and have learned how to strike at them. You deal an additional 2 damage against incorporeal creatures, applied after your damage is halved. This damage is doubled on a critical hit.

Magic

Cat's Eye: You have bile-yellow eyes, a rare trait only found among the

people of Valachan. Once per day you may communicate with felines as per the *Speak with Animals* spell.

Cursed: You have fallen into corruption or been punished for some slight, but what does not kill you makes you stronger. While you are beset by ill fortune, you have learned to endure your suffering. Once per day, the GM can ask you to re-roll a skill or ability check, but you gain a +1 to Will saves. This bonus increases to +2 against fear.

Redeemed: Once in the past you succumbed to your inner darkness. You might have been a petty scoundrel or a consummate villain, but after a lengthy amount of soul searching or hitting rock bottom, you sought redemption. You gain a +2 trait bonus to Will saves against enchantments.

Social

Lamplighter: You are one of the elite watchmen of Mordent. You were trained to navigate through and fight in fog-shrouded conditions of your homeland. You reduce the miss chance for concealment by 10%.

Merchant Marine: You have spent your time atop the waves guarding cargo, defending ships, and fighting off pirates. You know how to fight on the water, ignoring up to 3 points of armor check penalty when trying to swim in armor.

Moor-Raised: Dim and dank swamps were your home. You know how to move across the marsh, how to hide among the trees, and how to spot that which does not belong. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Perception, Stealth, and Survival checks in swampland terrain.

Reincarnated: Your soul would not rest and has returned to the world, reborn

in a new frame. While your memories of this past life are limited, sometimes information returns unbidden. Pick one skill, it is always considered a class skill for you.

Town Guard: You served in the militia or city watch of your hometown and the skills learned give you insight into a guard's life. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Profession (soldier) checks. In addition, Ride or Survival (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

Regional

Amber Waster: The sun-blasted deserts of the lands of Har'Akir or Pharazia were once your home. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Survival checks and a +2 trait bonus to Fortitude saves to resist damage from hot environments.

Barovian: Raised on stories of the children of the night, you know the weaknesses of many creatures, having heard their tales all your life. You gain a +2 trait bonus on monster knowledge checks.

Blaustein: This tiny island nation is known for fishermen and pirates, and typically the later. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Profession (sailor) and Swim checks. Swim is always a class skill for you.

Borcan: The land of Borca is known for its poisons, the weapon of choice for intrigue and the nobility. You gain a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against poison. In addition, you are immune to one poison of your choice with a cost of 150gp or less.

Darkonian: You've heard stories of undead and the Pale all your life. Because of this, your mind resists the rigors of the world. You gain a +2 trait

bonus to Will saves against mind-affecting effects.

Dementlieuse: Life at court is filled with half-truths and cunning lies while the streets are populated by confidence men and thieves. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Bluff and Sense Motive checks and one of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

Falkovnian: The militaristic nation of Falkovnia is always looking for new recruits, and much of the populace receives testing or training. You gain +2 hit points and a +1 trait bonus to Climb or Swim checks (your choice) and that skill is always a class skill for you. However, you take a -1 penalty to Diplomacy skill checks with natives of Barovia, Dementlieu, Lamordia, Darkon, and Richemulot.

Frozen Reacher: A land of eternal winter was once your home, so the cold no longer has as much sting. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Survival checks and a +2 trait bonus to Fortitude saves to resist damage from cold environments.

Ghastrian: The small island of Ghastria was your home, a land of artists and poets. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Craft (sculpture, painting, poetry, or writing). Craft is always a class for you.

Graben: You hail from the cold and windswept island of Graben in the Nocturnal Sea. You are used to extreme weather and gain a +1 trait bonus to Survival checks and a +2 trait bonus to Fortitude saves to resist damage from cold environments.

Gundarakite: Raised under tyranny and oppression, first under the reign of Duke Gundar and now under the yoke of Barovia. Regardless of whom your master is, your spirit remains unbroken. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Will Saves.

Hazlani (Mulan): The tattooed elite Mulan of Hazlan rule over the Rashemani. Like most, you received some arcane training in the nation's schools of magic. You receive a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (Arcana) and Spellcraft. Knowledge (Arcana) is always a class skill for you.

Hazlani (Rashemani): With darker complexions, those of the Rashemani ethnicity are laborers to the Mulan. You spent your early life in the farms, mines, or poppy fields. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Profession (laborer) and Survival checks. Survival is always a class skill for you.

Invidian: You have the fiery blood of your kin, quick to anger and the first to leap into battle. You are swift to react to danger and gain a +1 trait bonus to Initiative.

Lamordian: In a land of logic in science there is no place for magic, making you innately resistant. You gain a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against spells.

Liffen: The windswept island nation of Liffe is your home. Music is the lifeblood of your people, from sea shanties to operas. You gain a +1 trait bonus to a Perform skill (your choice). Perform is always a class skill for you.

Nova Vaasan: Horses are common on the plains and ranches of your homeland, and even city folk learn to ride and care for the animals. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Handle Animal and Ride checks (horses only) and one (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

Outlander: You hail from another world, a distant and more fantastic Realm. Knowledge (local) is never considered a class skill for you, but you gain a Knowledge skill of your choice in its place. You gain a +1 trait bonus to

Knowledge (planes) checks, and that skill is always a class skill for you.

Richemuloise: You've been raised in a life of courtly intrigue and backstabbing. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (nobility) and Bluff checks. Knowledge (nobility) is always a class skill for you.

Rokushima Taiyoo: Your land is one of honor, duty, and obligation. You were raised to respect clan and family above all else. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (nobility) and Sense Motive checks. Knowledge (nobility) is always a class skill for you.

Shadowlander: The nation of Nidala, also known as the Shadowlands, is where you were raised. The Knight Protector and her soldiers defend the nation, hunting down criminals, traitors, and sinners. You have learned how to keep your head down and hide your feelings, lest you be judged as befouled or corrupt. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Bluff and it is always a class skill for you.

Sithican: The magical misted forests of the Fey were your home, and you have learned the Fair Folk's art of moving unseen. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Stealth checks. In addition, you gain Elven as a bonus language. If you already speak Elven you gain an additional bonus language.

Souragnien: The swampy land of Souragne is known for its swampland and undead as well as for its widespread faiths. You receive a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (religion) checks, and Knowledge (religion) is always a class skill for you.

Sri Rajian: This exotic and colorful land is known for its spiced food, exotic gods, and bright clothing. But is also known for its art of yoga, which teaches

flexibility and balance. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Reflex saves.

Tepestani: The fearful land of Tepest is threatened by witches, dark fey, and goblins. Its inhabitants learn as much as they can about combating the creatures of the night, hunting out evil wherever it may hide. You can use Knowledge (Nature) for monster knowledge checks in place of Arcana, Local, and Religion (but not Dungeoneering or Planes).

Valachani: The disease, *white fever*, has long ravaged your nation. To combat the disease you have learned to combat infection and avoid illness. You gain a +2 trait bonus on saving throws against disease.

Vechorite: The ever-shifting world of Vechor was your home, ruled by a mad god-king whose every whim or mood altered the very land. Because of your experiences with the maddening realm, you gain a +1 trait bonus to Will saves.

Verbreker: Raised in an uncivilized land, you are experienced with the wilds. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Survival and Knowledge (Nature) checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

Zherisian: The folk of Paridon maintain a characteristic stiff upper lip, and are known as stoic and difficult to discourage and even harder to influence. There is also a deep class divide. Aristocrats always have Diplomacy as a class skill, while commoners always have Bluff as a class skill. In addition, you gain a +1 trait bonus to saving throws against enchantment effects.

Religion

Anchorite of Home Faith (Ezra): You have been tasked with healing and protecting the faithful. Once per day you can invoke the *shield of Ezra*, a misty defense that grants you DR 1/- until the start of your next turn.

Faith of Iron (Lawgiver): The Iron Tyrant rewards obedience and allows his faithful to resist corruption and influence. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Sense Motive checks and saving throws against charm and compulsion effects.

Herald of Dawn (Morninglord): The Cult of the Morninglord teaches that followers must treat others with kindness and defend people against the night. Whenever you channel positive energy to harm undead creatures, add your Charisma modifier to the damage dealt.

Light of the Sun (Belenus): Your god is one of holy light and divine fire, and you are tasked with eliminating the sinful and evil. Whenever you cast a spell with the fire descriptor it deals 2 additional damage.

Witch of the Weave (Hala): You are knowledgeable in the Weave, the magic of nature, and have experience with the natural world. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (nature) checks, and one of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

Campaign

Noble Born (limited to human characters): You claim a tangential but legitimate connection to one of the declining noble families of Mordent or Dementlieu's. You've likely had a comfortable life, far from the wealth and obligations of your cousins. You are

associated with a recognizable name, but this has often be more of a burden to you than a boon: not every family has a positive reputation.

Choose one of the following noble families and associated benefits.

de Boistribue: One of the oldest bloodlines in the realm, and noted for their reclusive natures. Much of the family died in a brutal attack two-hundred and fifty years ago leaving the family scattered. Characters gain a +1 trait bonus to Bluff checks. Bluff is always a class skill for you.

Blackburn-Bruce: A union of two merchant families. The family has a history of alchemy and accompanying dark reputation. Characters gain a +1 trait bonus on Craft (Alchemy) checks and Diplomacy is always a class skill for you.

Gauldamon: Once the lords of the Lightless Forests, the family gave anyone sanctuary in exchange for servitude. The heads of the family died a century ago after slipping into diabolism. You gain a +2 trait bonus on all Diplomacy checks made to deal with outsiders and a +1 trait bonus on Will saves made against their spells and supernatural abilities.

Godefroy: Few remain of this bloodline after its patriarch died in a murder/suicide. They were famous for their tempers and stubborn, inflexible natures. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Will saves.

Holsworth: The original lords of the western coast, the family was renowned for their love of the sea. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Swim checks. Swim is always a class skill for you.

Scottmatter: Great farmers and landowners on the Gray Hearthlands, they were respected for being down-to-

earth. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Profession (Farmer) and Knowledge (Nature) checks.

Halloway: Once humble innkeepers, this family earned a great deal on money on the river trade. They quickly became known for their opulent displays of wealth, until it was said "the river turned against them". You gain a +2 trait bonus to Sense Motive checks but take a -1 penalty to Swim checks. Sense Motive is always a class skill for you.

Mournesworth: Landlords in name only, the Mournesworth were more interested in the divine and spiritual. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (Religion) checks and it is always a class skill.

Weathermay: One of the few noble families to retain wealth and power, the Weathermay's own much of Mordentshire. Once a family of ill repute, the family name has been redeemed when one of its members became a hero of the people. Your starting cash increases to 300 gp.

Westcotes: Rumor says the Westcote family is cursed and their numbers have been dwindling for a century. The few that remain are used to struggling against ill fortune. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Fortitude saves and a Survival skill checks, but take a -2 penalty on Handle Animal checks with canines.

Feasting with the Falcons

A Ravenloft Adventure for 2-5 Characters of any level

By Ken "GonzoKen" Laufer

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In this adventure, a band of heroes finds themselves involved in a web of intrigue, where a simple dinner party among the nobility turns into a murder mystery that could bring two nations to the brink of war. Much of the adventure is based on investigation, social skills, and role playing. Since the only combat is likely to be with the exposed murderer at the end, it can be easily adapted to the level of the party simply by changing the DC's of the skill checks throughout, and the CR of the single foe at the end. (The module as written assumes 6th level PCs.)

The guest list at the dinner party is long, and includes many established NPCs from other adventures. This allows *Feasting with the Falcons* to serve as a jumping off point for any of those other modules, or as a sequel to any that you've already run, where the PCs can catch up with old friends or foes. Of course, some adaptation may be necessary depending on which of these NPCs has been encountered earlier in the campaign. Most of these "guest stars"

can even be removed or replaced with someone similar if their presence would be too disruptive.

Due to the many NPCs, it is strongly recommended that each one be given a picture to serve as an anchoring point for the players. It is also recommended to use miniatures and a battle map, even outside of combat, as the party guests will be milling about the Chantreaux estate throughout the evening. Who is where at what time will determine the participants in conversations, and will also provide vital clues to solve the murder. Each NPC is given a letter and number, so labeled tokens can be used to represent them on the map, and on the pictures.

Background

The Fine Arts department of the University of Port-a-Lucine is offering a grant to an aspiring artist, in any discipline, and will hold a competition to determine the lucky recipient. The Council of Brilliance has taken an

interest in the contest, and Councilor Josephine Chantreaux has graciously offered to host a dinner party at her home, where the final exhibition and judging will take place. To complicate matters, a delegation of Falkovnian ambassadors is in town, looking to establish a trading enclave, and the two heads of the delegation have been invited to Chantreaux's soiree, much to her personal chagrin. Of course, this being Dementlieu, that's only the surface situation, and hidden plots lurk beneath.

Recently, the Falkovnian government intercepted a delivery of firearms bound for the Falkovnian rebellion. Meanwhile, a verified list of high ranking leaders in the resistance has fallen into the hands of one of the Dementlieuse Councilors. The ambassadors' secret mission is to arrange an exchange: King Drakov wants that list and he wants the guns out of his domain for good. Councilor Helene duSuis wants peace with the Falkovnians, and has arranged with Ambassador Vedarrak to trade the list tonight for the weapons and the ensuing Falkovnian goodwill. But Gondegal, the leader of the resistance, has learned about the impending exchange, and is desperate to keep that list out of Falkovnian hands.

The other major plot afoot is the work of The Living Brain. In an attempt to unseat his arch-rival, Dominic d'Honaire, The Brain wants to provoke Falkovnia into war. To this end, he has ordered one of his quislings to infiltrate the dinner party and murder one of the ambassadors, creating an international incident.

Naturally, nearly every guest has an agenda of his or her own as well, though none with political ramifications as large

as the plans of The Brain, duSuis, Vedarrak, and Gondegal.

Guest List

The Council of Brilliance:

C1: Lord-Governor Marcel Guignol

Aging leader of Dementlieu

Infirm and quiet. Attending as a formality.

(See Ravenloft Gazetteer, vol III)

[Possible picture: Alchemical Philosopher from Van Richten's Arsenal with chemicals cropped out]

C2: Dominic d'Honaire

Darklord of Dementlieu, Councilor of Justice.

Slippery, aloof, in control. Attending as a formality.

(See Ravenloft Gazetteer, vol III)

[Pictured in: Gaz III, Domains of Dread, Red Box, Black Box]

C3: Josephine Chantreaux

Councilor of Defense

Heavy-set, middle-aged, grim, socially uncomfortable. Hates the Falkovnians and seethes with barely contained rage at hosting them in her own home. Tense and snappish when they are near. Secretly hiding a village of Falkovnian refugees in the northern part of Dementlieu. Will serve as one of the judges for the contest.

(See Ravenloft Gazetteer, vol III, "Faces of Deception" from The Book of Sorrows)

[Possible picture: Any portrait of Catherine de Medici in her later years]

C4: Jean-Pierre Mont-Michel Theroux

Councilor of the Arts

Outlandish, dramatic fop with a hideous laugh. Head judge of the contest. Mostly oblivious to the surrounding intrigue.

(See Ravenloft Gazetteer, vol III, "Faces of Deception" from The Book of Sorrows)

[Possible picture: "Cavalier" By Ferdinand Victor Roybet]

C5: Helene duSuis

Councilor of Public Institutions

Thin, distant, severe, and ambitious. Attempting to curry favor with the Falkovnians, and to exchange the list of rebel leaders for the confiscated firearms. Open to the idea of a Falkovnian trade enclave.

(See Ravenloft Gazetteer, vol III, "Faces of Deception" from The Book of Sorrows)

[Possible picture: Portrait crop of "L'Épée" (The Sword) by Alfred Agache]

The remaining Councilor, Claude LaGrange, will not be attending due to "illness".

The Falkovnian Ambassadors:

F1: Marcos Vedarrak

Lead Ambassador from Falkovnia

A dashing perfectionist, but vindictive if crossed. A rarity among his countrymen, his parents were Dementlieuse, and he is suave and sophisticated. A Talon, but also an enchanter, and a member of The Fraternity of Shadows.

(See "Marcos Vedarrak" from The Book of Sacrifices)

[Possible picture: Ezekiel Preston from Children of the Night: Ghosts, with added hawk brand on forehead]

F2: Commander Anton Regress

Former head of the Falkovnian trade enclave in Karina, Invidia

Brusque, condescending, short-tempered, offensive, and uncomfortable, the "bad cop" to Vedarrak's "good cop." Tasked by Minister of Economics, Falkfuhrer Jardian Kovedknochen, to repeat his success in Invidia here in Dementlieu. Target of the murder attempt.

(See The Evil Eye)

[Pictured in: The Evil Eye p.32]

The Artists:

A1: Alexandre du Cire

Wax Sculptor

Creepy, moves slowly, silently, and deliberately, but friendly when given a chance at conversation. Constantly trying to perfect his art, he is very observant of details. Secretly building wax golems, though that shouldn't affect this adventure.

(See Children of the Night: The Created)

[Pictured in Children of the Night: The Created, though cropping out the candle will make him slightly less creepy]

A2: Raphael Vetighetto

Landscape Painter

Pompous, self-absorbed, amorous, vain. Claims to be the son of Borigia Vetighetto, the famous Borcan painter,

but actually an imposter using the name to his advantage.

(See "Art in the Land" from *The Book of Souls* for details on Borigia Vetighetto)

[Possible picture: Esteban from *Champions of Darkness*]

A3: Conrad Shadowlands

Stone Sculptor

Widowed Nidalan, rough and rustic, a weary man with a vacant stare. Brusque and distracted. Originally a miner, now pushed into stonework by his ambitious new bride. Coughs often, due to inhaled dust. Secretly under the control of his vorlog wife, Cynthia DeGreives, though that shouldn't affect this adventure.

[Possible picture: "An-Havva Constable" by Dan Frazier, with the sword cropped out]

A4: Francois de Penible

Disturbing Prose Writer

Intense, well-spoken, bitter, disillusioned with the nobility. Believes that nobles must learn the pain of the masses, lest society collapse. Talks of very little other than the plight of the common classes, and how the nobility is blind to their suffering. Secretly undergoing transpossession by a kyton (devil), though that shouldn't affect this adventure.

(See *Children of the Night: Demons*)

[Pictured in *Children of the Night: Demons*, though some Photoshop may be needed to remove the chains]

A5: Hugues Maigny

Abstract Metal Sculptor

Caliban, surly, taciturn, uncomfortable. Actually not an artist at

all, but a gunsmith from the Rue des Pistolets. Recruited by Helene duSuis to inspect the guns that Vedarrak has promised her; she used her influence to get him entered into the contest. But unbeknownst to duSuis, after he agreed to her charade, he was approached by agents of The Brain, who recruited him to murder Commander Regress at the party, convincing him that a war would be good for his business.

(See *Ravenloft Dungeon Master's Guide* for details on Maigny and the Rue des Pistolets. See *Gaz II* or *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium*, vol II for details on The Brain.)

[Possible picture: Bare-chested caliban from *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*, photoshopped with suit from the male dwarf in the same book]

A6: Angel Pajaro

Opera Singer

Elven, beautiful. Outwardly delicate, but bitter and vain inside. Featured singer at the Port-a-lucine Opera House. Secretly a werefox, though that shouldn't affect this adventure.

(See *Children of the Night: Werebeasts*)

[Pictured in *Children of the Night: Werebeasts*, though her wolf aspect needs to be cropped out.]

A7: Lady Veronica Blackstone

Tragic Poet

Nova Vaasan, young, haunted, brooding. Dressed all in black. Originally from Falkovnia, her family fled to Bergovitsa while she was in the womb. Her father was slain by a young Commander Regress during the escape, and her mother eventually remarried to a Vaasi Lord, who raised her as his own daughter. But Veronica's mother always

remembered the man who killed her first husband and drilled her daughter with thoughts of revenge from an early age. Her works are inspired by the ghost of a dead lover, Sir Rowan Falstone.

(See "Art in the Land" from The Book of Souls for details)

[Possible picture: The Propagandist from Champions of Darkness]

Honored Guests:

G1: Lord Balfour de Casteelle

President of the University

Pompous, elderly, elitist. Often refers to self in the 3rd person. Will serve as one of the judges and award the grant to the winner on behalf of the University. Wizard, high-ranking member of the Fraternity of Shadows. Though both Lord Balfour and Ambassador Vedarrak are Fraternity members, they are both here for their "day jobs." The Fraternity has little interest in tonight's events, and the two will not betray any more familiarity with each other than would otherwise be expected, nor will they partake in any private discussions with one another.

(See Van Richten's Arsenal)

[Pictured in Van Richten's Arsenal]

G2: Lady Cassilda de Casteelle

Wife and protégée of Lord Balfour.
Eager

Driven, in her early 30's. Sorceress and faculty member at the University.

(See Van Richten's Arsenal)

[Possible picture: The Dilettante from Champions of Darkness, with the elf ears removed.]

G3: Cynthia DeGreives

Scribe

Desperate for acceptance in the upper crust. Sad, pensive, anxious. Keeps up a good facade of a prim and proper lady, but hides a manic paranoia beneath it. Using her reluctant husband's sculpting ability to get her foot in the door. Her husband is physically the spitting image of the dashing vampire nobleman, now deceased, whom she once loved. She is trying to fashion his rustic ways into those of a proper gentleman to more closely match her lost love. Secretly a vorlog, though that shouldn't affect this adventure.

[Possible picture: The Vorlog from Denizens of Dread with the tears and blood painted out.]

G4: Marie Delacourte

Socialite and Humanitarian

Naïve, sweet, caring, smitten. Now recovered from the death of her fiancé, Jean, and after inheriting her late father's mill, Marie has found love again, with Francois de Penible. (She has not seen her ghostly protector, Nikolai Melentha, since her father's death at the hands of adventurers.)

Having dedicated much of her time to helping the poor, volunteering at the local Halan hospice, she first latched onto Francois's controversial ideas upon reading his first book. She became one of the most captivated fans of his work, before ultimately meeting the man behind the words at a public reading and becoming smitten with him as well. The pair are recently engaged, and she has not yet told anyone, so she is giddy with anticipation of spreading the happy news. If desired, Marie can be replaced with Louise Chantelle, from the Francois de Penible adventure in Children of the Night: Demons.

(See Children of the Night: Ghosts)

[Possible picture: The Pistoleer from Van Richten's Arsenal with the pistol cropped out.]

G5: Captain Reynard

A captain of the Town Guard

Slender human. Controlled and charming when sober. Jovial and boisterous when drunk. Has been known to earn extra income by providing private protection services for the wealthy. Already rather intoxicated at the start of the party, and passed out drunk by the time of the murder.

(See Children of the Night: The Created)

[Possible picture: "The Laughing Cavalier" by Franz Hals]

G6: Antoinette Reynard

Daughter of Captain Reynard

Young and giggly. Taking after her father in imbibing, she is tipsy and impressionable.

[Possible picture: "Portrait Of A Lady" by Edouard Louis Dubufe]

Uninvited Guest:

G7: Gondegal

Knight of the Shadows, and Leader of the Shadow Insurrection, a Falkovnian resistance organization.

(See Ravenloft Gazetteer, vol II)

[Pictured in: Gaz II, Champions of the Mists, Black Box]

Servants:

Chantreaux has a large staff, as befitting a person of her stature. Most will be unnamed masses, and stay out of the adventure. (Too many suspects will make the mystery overly difficult to

solve, so care should be taken not to throw much suspicion on the household staff.

Chantreaux will personally vouch for any of them as incorruptible, and players should be encouraged to take that as gospel, for purposes of finding the murderer.) In case anyone questions the staff, a short list of named characters follows. Any of these can be assumed to speak for their colleagues:

- Jean Paul - Butler
- Lynette - Maid
- Eloise - Maid
- Celeste - Cook
- Alphonse - Harpsichordist
- Bertrand - Cellist

The only exception to this rule is the maid, Eloise. She is under the control of The Brain and will be serving as an accomplice to Maigny. She has only recently been hired, to replace another maid who disappeared under mysterious circumstances. She comes with impeccable references, but Chantreaux cannot personally vouch for her.

Synopsis

The adventure begins when the PCs are invited to a dinner party. Ideally, they have some prior connection to one or more of the artists competing for the University grant, and are invited to attend in their support.

Alternatively, if they have recently succeeded in a high-profile adventure, that might catch the attention of one of the Councilors, and they may be invited as a reward. In any case, the pretense to get them there is not important, just that they attend. Once at the party, there will be time to mingle and get to know the guests. At some point, the adventurers

will be contacted by Gondegal and told about the list of rebels.

Dinner will be served, then the artists will present their works to be judged. While the Judges deliberate, the party continues, and Maigny sneaks off to murder Regress. The PCs find the body and must solve the murder before the contest winner is announced and the guests all leave.

Optional Setup Encounter

If the DM wants to give the party some early clues, they might find themselves at the Rue des Pistolets (see Ravenloft Dungeon Master's Guide) a day or two before the dinner party. On this street full of gunsmiths and ammunition shops, they notice a lady, in attire way too fine for the neighborhood, discussing something with a shady looking caliban in his gun shop. Councilor duSuis is meeting with gunsmith Hugues Maigny, and hiring him to come to the dinner party to inspect the guns that the Falkovnians promised her.

She will arrange for him to be presented as a sculptor and enter the competition. All he has to do is throw some bits of scrap metal together into a sculpture and show up in suitably fancy clothes, and he will be paid handsomely.

With a DC20 Listen check, eavesdropping PCs can hear a scrap of the conversation. The Lady says, "... can't risk bringing them here." The caliban replies, "You can't possibly think they'll believe me." If the Listen check beats a DC25, they will hear a bit more. The Lady says, "They will believe what I tell them to believe. Friday, 7 o'clock. Dress nicely and don't be late. Do this service for me and you will be well rewarded."

"Friday, 7 o'clock" is the start time for the party. If, for some reason, you need to move the party, change this conversation to match. If Maigny or duSuis are approached, neither will discuss their conversation or admit to any dealings with the other. If pressed, Maigny will close his shop's door and turn the sign to "Closed."

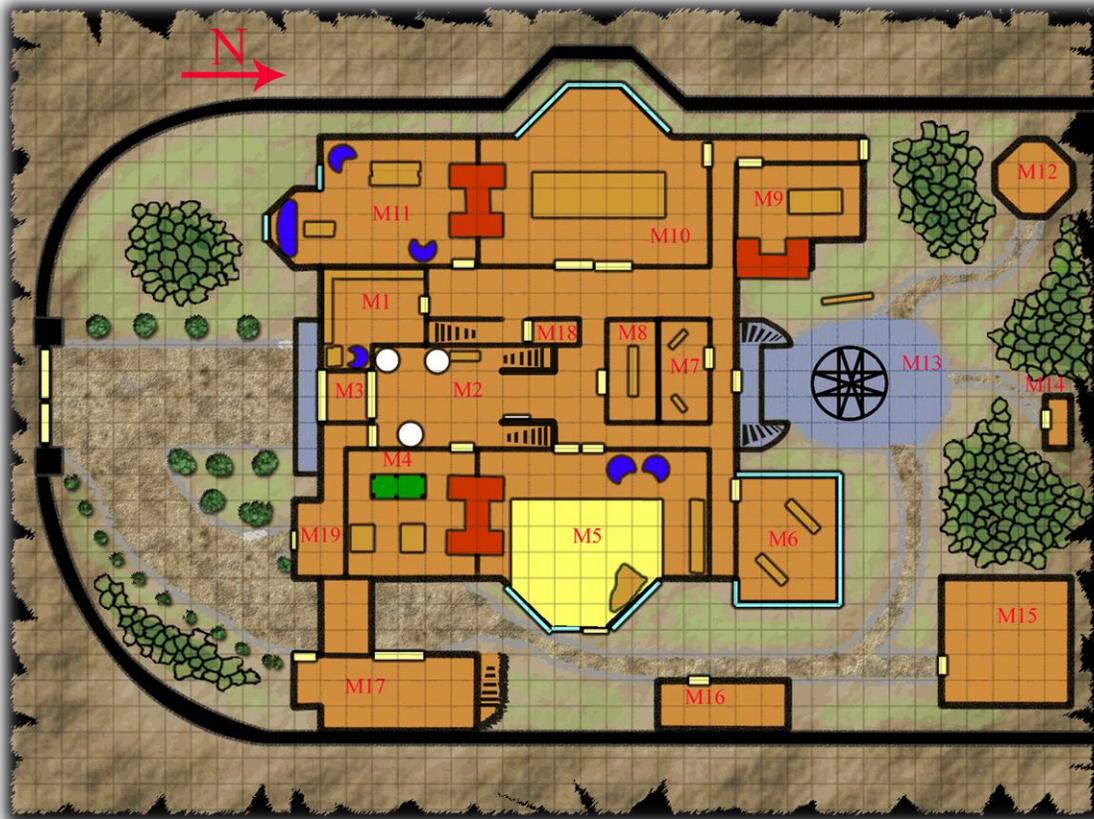
On a DC20 Spot, Listen, or Gather Information check in the bustling Rue, characters may notice or hear gossip about another unusual visitor to the neighborhood. Gondegal is looking for a merchant willing to supply his resistance movement with firearms. His former supplier in Borca went missing, and his last shipment was seized by the Falkovnians. But new laws prohibit anyone here from doing business with him, lest the guns fall into Falkovnian hands. If the party meets with Gondegal or has a prior relationship with him, he may also inform them at this point about the list, especially if they mention that they are invited to the party at Chantreaux's manor.

"I have just learned from a local contact that a list of Falkovnian resistance leaders has fallen into the hands of one of the Dementlieuse Councilors, and the Councilor has agreed to trade it to the Falkovnian ambassadors in exchange for an unknown favor. The trade is scheduled to happen at a party, Friday night, at Chancellor Chantreaux's estate. I must find a way into the manor to intercept that list, but security will be tight, and the Falkovnian ambassadors would recognize me on sight."

Hopefully, the party will volunteer to help. He will implore them to save the implicated rebels, and ask the group to switch the list with a false one, which he gives them. (If anyone expresses

concern about setting the Falkovnians on a list of innocents, he assures them that no one on the false list is "innocent." A quick scan of the list shows several Talons, a Falkfuhrer, and several

Stadtfuhrers, all loyal cogs in Drakov's fascist machine.) Importantly, Gondegal does not know which Councilor has the list, nor which Ambassador will be accepting it.



Map

The Chantreaux estate is a massive mansion, with outbuildings and gardens sprawling beside it, all enveloped in thick stone walls. The walls have iron-barred windows at irregular intervals, and the top of the walls are set with glass shards, making climbing over dangerous and difficult. Wide wrought-iron gates bar the only break in the wall at the south entrance. At the DM's option, Chantreaux may have purchased arcane protective measures from the wizards of the University preventing magical

intrusion or exit. But Chantreaux is not a darklord and the estate is not a domain with closed borders, so escape or invasion is possible with sufficient effort.

Ornate gabled roofs sprawl over the manor house proper, with towers, archways, and buttresses, most ornamental. Throughout the house, the polished wooden floors are mostly covered with ornate carpets. There are three stories and an attic, though only the main floor is mapped. Guards will be

posted at the landings on the second floor, preventing access. If the PCs are persistent, the DM may have to improvise a map, but nothing of interest to the adventure should be found on the upper floors, and the PCs should be encouraged to return to the action downstairs.

Room Descriptions

M1: Library

Bookshelves line the south and west walls, containing a wide variety of well-kept books. In the southeast corner is a reading desk and comfortable chair. If the PCs are nosy, pull some titles from the "Index of all Canon Printed Material in Ravenloft" on the Fraternity of Shadows' Mausoleum page. Chantreaux is not much of a reader herself, keeping the library mainly for the sake of appearances, so there are no particular subjects that dominate the books.

M2: Main Hall/Gallery

This wide entry hall also serves as a gallery of artwork. Several paintings of no importance are on the walls, but four works that are part of the competition wait here under white cloths.

The sculpture in the southwest corner belongs to Conrad (A3), the one on the east wall is du Cire's (A1), and the one beside the small table on the west wall is Maigny's (A5). The covered painting on the eastern wall beside the stairs is Raphael's (A2). On the small table rests a vase of flowers. (Mention it nonchalantly. It will be important later.) Both large sweeping staircases lead to the same landing on the second floor. Guards posted at the top will not allow anyone other than Chantreaux or the servants onto the second floor.

M3: Foyer

The Guards stationed here will relieve the arriving guests of their weapons, locking them in a stout chest, or peace-bonding them. Servants will take cloaks or other personal items to the cloakroom (M19).

M4: Game Room

A fireplace dominates the north wall. The only furniture is a billiard table and two game tables, with chairs. A *drotche* (Vistani chess) board is laid out on one table. The other holds a deck of cards. A dart board is hanging on the south wall, near the southeast corner.

M5: Ballroom

Most of the room is taken up by an inlaid wooden dancing floor. A harpsichord sits on the dance floor, which Alphonse plays throughout the party. Bertrand sits near him on a stool playing the cello. There are several couches, chairs and divans for those who aren't dancing, and a self service, well-stocked bar is in the northeast corner. A fireplace takes up most of the south wall. Much of the east wall is glass, and a door leads outside.

M6: Conservatory

This glass-walled room houses many exotic plants. Two benches sit in the center of the room for admirers of the flora. Much as the PCs may search, there is no secret passage from here to the Salon (M11).

M7: Art Studio

Two easels are set up here, holding works in progress. There are three stools for models stacked in one corner, and a cabinet containing art supplies in another. Paintings line the walls, some by artists sponsored by Chantreaux, and

some by Chantreaux herself. (She has a passable amount of skill, though never found the time to work seriously on perfecting it.) One of the paintings on the south wall covers a secret slot in the wall. Opening the slot reveals two small holes at eye level, which allow someone to peer into the Office (M8) and observe secretly. From the office, the holes look out through the eyes of a portrait mounted behind Chantreaux's desk.

M8: Office

An ornate desk with many drawers sits in the middle of the room. Like most of the house, paintings line the walls. There is one comfortable chair behind the desk, and two much less comfortable chairs in front of it.

M9: Kitchen

Dinner cooks in the massive fireplace. The only furniture is a preparation table, covered in knives, platters, and other cooking tools. A trap door (not hidden) reveals stairs leading down to the root cellar and wine cellar.

M10: Dining Room

A massive table is the primary feature of this room. The table can fit 28 seats (2 people to a 5' square). There are enough settings and chairs laid out for the 20 NPC guests plus the party of PCs. The western wall is mostly glass, but has only an unfortunate view of the stone wall outside. Chantreaux has dressed up the view a bit with some sculptures outside between the house and the wall. The dining hall is warmed by the fireplace in the south wall.

M11: Salon

This cozy room holds several couches, chairs and small tables. A selection of cigars is in a box on one table, beside a

brandy snifter and several glasses. Two windows look out on the south wall, and the north wall holds the fireplace.

M12: Gazebo

At the end of this dirt path sits a wooden gazebo. Don't make it angry.

M13: Patio

A stone porch abuts the house, with two sets of stairs leading down to a stone patio. The main feature of the patio is the dueling circle inscribed in the stones. There is nothing sinister about this symbol, it is merely an aid to practicing fencing forms. (But if the PCs jump to conclusions involving demon summoning, that's perfectly acceptable.)

A portable wooden rack of blunted dueling weapons is set out near the circle, but will be pulled indoors by the servants at nightfall (8PM). Dirt paths lead through the gardens to the outbuildings. The grass off the paths is damp and muddy from recent summer rains. The gardens stretch off to the back beyond the borders of the map, but nothing of interest is back there other than trails through the assorted plants, and a small amount of personal crops for the household.

M14: Outhouse

A wooden outhouse, with a crescent moon carved in the door.

M15: Aviary

Several exotic birds roost in the aviary, along with a coop of messenger pigeons.

M16: Kennels

Chantreaux's prized hunting dogs reside here.

M17: Stable

Chantreaux's own horses are kept here, along with any brought by the guests. A staircase on the north side leads up to the loft. An ornate arch connects the stable to the house, and the road passes beneath it, allowing carriages to enter the large doors toward the back. On rainy days, a carriage can park beneath the arch and a door (not shown) underneath provides dry access to the cloakroom (M19).

M18: Closet

The servants keep cleaning supplies in here.

M19: Cloakroom

Cloaks and other personal items of the guests may be stored here by the staff. There is also a servants' entrance to the manor on the south wall, and a door (not shown) leading out under the archway to the stable.

The Party

Arriving at the Chantreaux estate, in the Domaines de la Vie Éclairée, just outside the city proper, guests will be greeted by two guards (War4) stationed at the front door. Weapons will not be allowed in the manor, unless peace-bonded. Any weapons that might be on the party's person may be checked at the door in a locked chest. At the DM's option, spell component pouches might be considered weapons, and confiscated as well.

Of course, PCs are likely to try to sneak some concealed weapons in. Use the rules for concealing a weapon with the Sleight of Hand skill. The guards have a +4 Spot, +2 Search, and will not frisk anyone unless given a good reason to suspect hidden weapons. Anyone who might have brought along an animal companion, familiar, mount, or the like

will not be allowed to bring their pet inside, but the use of Lady Chantreaux's kennels (M16), aviary (M15), or stables (M17) will be offered, if appropriate.

Once inside, the butler will escort them into the main hall (M2), and invite them to enjoy themselves in the Ballroom (M5), Garden Patio (M13), Library (M1), Game Room (M4), Salon (M11) or Conservatory (M6).

Events

The party runs according to a schedule, but it's not necessary to ruthlessly track time. If the players are having fun with a portion of the evening, feel free to linger on it. If something is stalling out, move on to the next section. The important thing is to cover all the important events in each section of the schedule.

Events that add flavor, but are of lesser importance are listed as "skippable events." In each section, a list of NPC starting positions is given by number. It is recommended to position miniatures of some sort or numbered tokens on the map where each NPC is located.

7:00PM - Mingling, Dancing

M2 - Main Hall: A3,G3 (checking on tarp-covered entries)

M5 - Ballroom: C1,C2 (by fireplace)
A4,G4 (dancing) G5 (drinking)

C3,F2 (talking)

M1 - Library: G1 (examining books)

M13 - Garden Patio (Fencing Circle):
G2,G6 (sparring)

M13 - Garden: F1,C5

M4 - Game room: A1,A5 (playing billiards) A7 (watching them)

M6 - Conservatory: A2,A6

Not yet arrived: C4,G7

Important events:

- If Gondegal (G7) has not yet told the PCs about the list and given them the false replacement list, he is lurking outside the garden wall, and will try to get their attention as soon as they are alone in the gardens (M13). He can pass them the list through a barred window in the wall. (If they have already accepted this mission from him earlier, he doesn't have to actually appear at the party in person.)
- Regress (F2) tries to convince Chantreaux (C3) to allow a Falkovnian trade outpost to be built in Port-a-lucine. She rebuffs him, and he does not take it well, storming out of the room.
- Theroux (C4) arrives fashionably late, proclaiming loudly "I have arrived!" as he enters.

Skippable events:

- Captain Reynard (G5) gets increasingly intoxicated, and offers a drink from the carafe he's carrying to anyone who passes by.
- Angel (A6) storms out of the conservatory (M6) in a huff. Raphael (A2) has made an unwanted pass at her and gotten a slap for his troubles. Undeterred, he will turn his focus on any female PC that he encounters. Whether he is successful romantically or not, he will be sure to ask his quarry to speak well of him with the judges.
- Sometime later Vetighetto (A2) will sneak off to the Kitchen (M9) in order to spike the food with Dapplewort seeds (See Gazetteer vol III, p 12). He hopes to make the judges more susceptible to his suggestions so he can win the

contest. He walks out into the garden (M13) from the rear door, and enters the small back door near the kitchen, picking the lock to do so.

- If any of the PCs are demihumans, calibans, or half-Vistani, Regress (F2) will find something insulting to say about them.
- Antoinette (G6) and Cassilda (G2) are fencing in the outside dueling circle. Antoinette is a bit tipsy, and giggling at her own mistakes. Cassilda challenges one of the PCs to do better, and secretly casts True Strike behind her back (Spot check opposed by her +8 Sleight of Hand to notice). The epees are blunted and no blood will be drawn.
- The PCs may be invited to dance with any of the guests in the Ballroom (M5), or to play darts, billiards or drotche (Vistani Chess, see the Book of Sorrows) with guests in the Game room (M4), or discuss literature in the Library (M1).
- Vedarrak (F1) and duSuis (C5) may be spotted conversing in the garden (M13). They are agreeing to meet later in private to make the trade, after dinner.
- Maigny (A5) has lace ruffles on the end of his shirt sleeves, and they are getting in the way of his billiard playing. He becomes frustrated as he constantly pushes them out of the way, grunting under his breath, "Stupid fancy clothes! How do they wear these blasted things?"

8:00 PM - Dinner is served

All guests filter into the Dining Room (M10). Servants will collect any stragglers. Guests will be seated such that the PCs are split up, allowing for

each player to have different neighboring NPCs to converse with.

The appetizers are quail eggs over foie gras. The main course is a hearty crustacean stew, which is followed by a cheese course, including several varieties, along with fresh, crusty bread. A crisp golden wine is served throughout. By the end of dinner, the PCs should have met all of the party guests and conversed enough with them to at least put a face to each of their names.

Important events:

- Soon after the appetizer is served, Guignol (C1) and d'Honaire (C2) leave the party, to attend to some important matters of state. They will not return.
- Regress (F2) continues to insult the other guests, and Vedarrak (F1) must smooth things over. He may mock Cynthia's (G3) lack of manners, as she unknowingly uses the wrong fork, or lambast Theroux (C4) for wasting government money on something as frivolous as art. Or he may find another insult for any "half-breed" or "inhuman" PC. The point is to give as many people as possible a motive for killing him.
- Astute observers may notice that Councilor duSuis (C5) has a rolled piece of paper (the list) sticking out a bit from her purse. (Spot DC23 unless someone is actively scrutinizing her, in which case it becomes a DC19). She may touch it from time to time to make sure it's still there.

Skippable events:

- Captain Reynard (G5) has become quite drunk and clumsy. He may

knock over some food onto another guest.

- Eloise the maid leaves a note with Regress's (F2) meal. The note reads, "Meet me outside at 9 to discuss shipment." She is just following the orders she was given by associates of The Brain, and in fact, can't even read the note herself. A Spot check (DC20) will allow an observer to notice Regress finding a piece of paper beside his napkin, reading it quickly and pocketing it. If the spot check exceeds DC25, Eloise will be noticed as the one who left the note.

8:30 PM - Presentations:

The remaining guests file into the Main Hall (M2) for the presentations from the artists.

Important events:

- First up is du Cire (A1), who reveals a perfect wax replica of Lord-Governor Guignol (C1)
- Next, de Penible (A4) reads an excerpt from his new book, *The Pain of Plenty*. It gets excited applause from Marie (G4), but uncomfortable glances from most of the nobles.
- With a flourish, Vetighetto (A2) reveals his painting, "Parnault Bay at Night," a haunting and beautiful landscape.
- With detached disinterest, Maigny (A5) reveals his piece, a tangled mass of welded metal. When asked what it is, he says gruffly, "It's untitled. It represents my soul."
- The group adjourns to the ballroom (M5) where the band accompanies Angel (A6), who sings the aria from *Le Mort de mon Couer*. Regress (F2) gruffly blurts out, "Acceptable,

for an elf." Vetighetto (A2) steps up to defend her, saying, "In Dementlieu, we do not speak so to a lady." Regress storms off, retorting, "In Falkovnia, we do not dress livestock in a lady's clothing." He heads to the Gardens (M13) to cool off. Getting a bit lost in the unfamiliar manor, he exits the house from the door near the kitchen (M9), which is now unlocked.

- Blackstone (A7) reads a dark, brooding poem from her work, Love Songs and Grave Poems, dedicated to Sir Rowan Falstone.
- Conrad (A3) shyly explains that his sculpture is of a folktale from his homeland, Banemaw the Dragon. He removes the tarp, revealing the rough-hewn, almost tribal, stonework column, depicting a great reptilian beast with a menacing mouth of fangs. It is vibrant, and heart-felt, but gets a cool reception from the nobility, with a few mutters of "barbaric," and "amateur." Conrad takes everything in stride, but Cynthia (G3) is distraught.
- While other contestants are presenting, Maigny (A5) lingers near the vase on the table in the Main Hall (M2). As arranged by The Brain, an accomplice amongst the servants (Eloise, the maid) has left a weapon in the vase. It is a dagger made of psionically hardened glass. Crystal clear, and covered by the water in the glass vase, it is virtually undetectable, but Maigny knows it will be there, and when he's sure no one is looking, he will slip it into his pocket. Since he can bide his time a bit, and wait for just the right moment, consider him to have "taken 20" on the Sleight of Hand check, even though that's not usually

allowed. With is +11 modifier, that makes a DC31 Spot check, hopefully unachievable. However, with a DC20 Spot check, one might notice water dripping from his sleeve ruffles later.

Skippable events:

- Reynard (G5) is hopelessly drunk, and stumbles to a couch in the ballroom (M5) to pass out. He won't wake until morning.

9:00 PM - More mingling while the councilors deliberate

After dinner, the guests split up to various locales:

M4 – Game room: A1, A5 (Playing *drotche*)

M12 - Gazebo: A2, G6 (Courting)

M13 - Garden: A6, F2 (Arguing)

M11 - Salon: C3,C4,G1 (Deliberating)

M8 - Chantreaux's Office: F1,C5

M5 - Ballroom: G5 (passed out on couch) A3,G3,A4,G4 (dancing) G2, A7 (Talking)

Left the estate: C1,C2,G7

Important Events:

- The most important event in the adventure occurs now: Maigny (A5) murders Regress (F2). First, Angel (A6) gives Regress a piece of her mind; she doesn't want to risk exposure but threatens to make him regret his words when next they meet, and leaves him with a scratching slap across the face before huffily stalking around the east side of the house and back inside through the ballroom door. Regress remains outside, stewing, and waiting for de Suis, whom he expects to meet him there, thanks to the note Eloise slipped him at dinner.

- Maigny (A5) is going to use his unwitting drotche partner, du Cire (A1) as his alibi. The Brain has provided him with a psionically charged item to assist him. A small doll, wrapped with wire, holding a small crystal, the item functions in a similar fashion to a psionic tattoo (or magic potion), allowing anyone who thinks the word "continue" while holding it to trigger a one-time manifestation of the "False Sensory Input" power. This power will affect only one target, and will feed that target false sensory input that results in an illusion of the user continuing whatever task he was doing when he triggered it. In this case, du Cire will be made to think that Maigny is still playing drotche, even if he leaves the room. As a psionically created item, the doll retains just enough intelligence to make reasonable moves for the duration of the effect, which is 9 minutes, (rather than "Concentration"). At the expiration of the 9 minutes, the crystal will shatter, and the target's senses will return seamlessly to normal. By that time, Maigny will have sneaked out to the garden, stabbed Regress in the back with the glass dagger, slipped the dagger back into the vase and returned to the game, where he will concede and take du Cire to the bar in the Ballroom (M5) for a congratulatory drink.
- A woman can be heard screaming out back. Following the sound leads to the gazebo (M12) nestled at the back of the garden. Vetighetto (A2) and a very drunk Antoinette (G6) are enjoying each others' company there, and the screams are sounds of pleasure, not pain. The PCs will need a reason to find the body in the

garden. If they aren't heading out back for any reason, this event can be used to lure them in that direction. If they are already in the garden, the screams can temporarily make them think the murderer has struck again.

Skippable events:

- Vedarrak (F1) and DuSuis (C5) are meeting to make the trade. Hopefully by this point, the PCs have identified DuSuis as the Councilor with the list, and somehow swapped lists with her. If not, Gondegal will not be happy, and his people will be in danger. (The real list includes Falktalon Oswald Vorbel (from the Book of Secrets) and several lower level officers in the Falkovnian military. If the real list makes its way back to Drakov, everyone on it will be rounded up and executed. The same is true of the false list, of course, but everyone on the false list is an evil Falkovnian loyalist.) This meeting will likely take place without notice by the PCs, but if someone listens at the door, or finds the spy hole in the art studio (M7) that looks in on the office (M8), they might witness it. She passes him the false list of rebels, and asks for her payment: the cache of captured guns. He is surprised that she expected him to personally bring them here. Instead he passes her an address where the guns are being kept (a warehouse in the Quartier Merchand). When Vedarrak leaves, DuSuis searches Chantreaux's desk and pockets a large rolled paper from the drawer. (The map showing where Chantreaux's village of refugees is located.)
- Cynthia (G3) finds an excuse to leave the dance floor and sneaks over

to the door of the Salon (M11) to listen in on the deliberations. (Leaving her husband bewildered and awkward in the company of Cassilda (G2) and Veronica (A7), or perhaps dancing with Angel (A6) when she returns from the garden.) If noticed near the Salon, she will duck into the Library (M1) and feign interest in a random book.

- Dessert is served on silver platters by the staff, using rolling carts to bring pastries to each room. (Eloise brings the dessert to the Game room (M4), so that none of the other staff sees du Cire playing drotche by himself.)

Investigation

It is difficult to predict what tactics the PCs will use in their investigation of the murder. Lacking modern forensics, it will be hard to come up with conclusive proof that Maigny is the murderer.

The DM is encouraged to allow any sufficient circumstantial evidence that points them at the correct perpetrator to be enough to "convict" Maigny, even if it wouldn't normally stand up in a court of law. Several clues are presented below (both true clues and red herrings), but if they PCs pursue an unexpected tactic, the DM is encouraged to reward them with some sort of clue, even if it needs to be made up on the fly. Careful monitoring on the DM's part will be required during the investigation. If the PCs piece the clues together too quickly, some distractions and red herrings will need to be used. If they are floundering, more hints will need to be dropped.

Upon first finding the body, Regress will be face-down in the mud, near where the rack of fencing weapons used to be. If the PCs contact Chantreaux, she will beg them to keep the murder a

secret and investigate the matter quietly. She doesn't want to alarm the other guests until the murder is solved. If the Falkovnians find out, and there is no appropriate scapegoat, it could mean war! She will tell Vedarrak that Regress took ill and order her servants to hide the body. Since Captain Reynard has passed out drunk in the ballroom (M5), it is up to the PCs to solve the murder and avert an international incident!

The Clues

A PC with the Track feat can find several different tracks with a successful Survival check. A DC10 shows signs of a brief struggle near the body. A DC15 shows boot prints leading to the body from the kitchen door, and then back to the kitchen door. A DC20 shows that the prints to and from the door are not the same, and that the prints to the door actually start at the patio (M13), not the body, and only pass by the body on the way to the kitchen door. (The prints to the door are Vetighetto's from earlier. The prints from the door are Regress's himself, coming out here.) A DC25 shows another set of prints (Maigny's) coming from the patio to the body and back. These prints can't be followed farther than the patio, since the stones hold no prints, unless the PCs have access to the Scent Special Quality or other means to follow the trail.

If the tracker makes a DC15 Knowledge (nature) check, he or she will also notice some bird footprints near the body. These belong to Lord Balfour's owl familiar, Lupzig, who witnessed the murder, then flew down to inspect the body. Lupzig is now hiding in the trees in the garden, and if anyone in the party has access to speak with animals, he could be questioned as to what he saw. Lupzig is not too helpful in identifying

the murderer, however, since all humans looks similar to him. He can confirm that the murderer was male, at least, or perhaps more if the PCs seem in need of help.

Examining the body with a Heal check of DC15 shows the cause of death: a puncture wound to the back of the neck, entering above the edge of his armor, pointing downward into the vital organs. It seems to have been done by someone tall and strong.

Searching the body can provide two more clues, with a Search check of DC15. First, the note passed to Regress by Eloise, which lured him out to the garden. Second, if the mud is wiped from his face, several fresh scratch marks can be seen on his cheek (left by Angel).

The dogs in the kennels (M16) saw Angel stalk by, but didn't smell any blood on her. If the party can speak with animals, this should exonerate her of the murder.

Magically inclined PCs might attempt to use speak with dead, Ethereal Empathy or other similar abilities on the corpse. Thankfully, this won't ruin the adventure, because Regress doesn't know who killed him. Maigny came from behind, with a silent sneak attack. Between the darkness and pain, he didn't see his attacker during their final struggle. Having no reason to suspect Maigny, he would assume his enemy, Chantreaux is responsible, either directly or through a lackey. He believes the note is from duSuis, so he might also assume she double-crossed him.

Since Maigny returned the glass dagger to the vase without washing it, the blood on the dagger has dissolved into the water in the vase. A Spot check of DC20 or a Search check of DC15 in

the Main Hall (M2) will notice the red tinge to the water, and a close examination of the vase will reveal the clear glass dagger outlined by the red water around it. A Gather Information check of DC20 will find someone who noticed Eloise, the maid, near the vase early in the evening.

If enough clues point to Eloise and she is interrogated, with a successful intimidate check (DC20) she will break and implicate Maigny. If pushed further, she will reveal the involvement of The Brain. However, doing so will trigger a psionic trap that will shut down her brain and kill her.

Du Cire is utterly convinced that he was playing *drotche* with Maigny, but if the game room (M4) is searched, a Search check of DC15 will notice that the red pieces on the *drotche* board (Maigny's) are undisturbed from their starting positions, while the black pieces (du Cire's) are positioned as though they played out most of a game. A search check of DC20 will reveal the small wire-wrapped doll holding a broken crystal on Maigny's seat. A DC25 Psicraft check (or Spellcraft, if using the psionics-magic transparency rule) can detect the residual energy in the doll and determine its use.

Regress's blood spattered on Maigny's shirt ruffles during the murder. He ripped them off and threw them in the ballroom fireplace. With a Spot check of DC25 or a Search check of DC20, the bloody ruffles will be seen smoldering in the ashes. If anyone noticed him struggling with the ruffles earlier, upon viewing Maigny after the murder, they may realize that they are missing with a DC15 Spot check.

Vetighetto's scheme to influence the judges with Dapplewort can be a source of red herrings. In addition to the boot

prints, the lock on the garden door near the kitchen (M9) shows signs of picking (Disable Device check DC10 or Search check DC20 to find). Also Dapplewort seeds can be found in the kitchen and sticky Dapplewort residue on the kitchen doorknob. (Search DC20 or Profession (Herbalist) DC10)

If the PCs attempt to search the guests for the murder weapon, or get the guards to do so, they find a few concealed weapons. Cynthia has a Stiletto tucked in her bodice, and Penible has a dagger in his boot. Neither weapon shows signs of recent use, but they could have been cleaned. Conrad and Marie swear by their respective lovers and provide alibis, if they can be believed.

Maigny, Chantreaux, and Angel are not the only ones who would want Regress dead. He has insulted nearly everyone at the party by this point, including the PCs. In addition, Blackstone has a personal grudge. If questions, she will crack quickly and exclaim dramatically, "My father was killed by Regress! We fled Falkovnia in the black of night when I was a babe in the womb. I didn't kill him, but I'm glad he's dead."

One of the guests may offer the "helpful" idea that a ghost might be responsible. All these old manor houses are haunted, everyone knows it.

Several books have been disturbed in the Library (M1). It's a Library, so this isn't that unusual, but might send overeager investigators on the wrong path.

If the secret of the murder gets out somehow, DuSuis might implicate one of the PCs to divert attention from Maigny. Though she doesn't know he did it, she doesn't want their arrangement

to get out, and she doesn't want to lose his services when she goes to get the guns from the warehouse.

Conclusion

The judges will finish their deliberations around 10PM, and the guests will be called together in the ballroom (M5) by the servants for the announcement of the winners. Hopefully, the PCs will have solved the murder by now. If so, this is a fine time for a "big reveal" scene in which the investigators announce that Regress has been murdered and present their evidence against the killer. If they don't realize this, Chantreaux may pressure them for an answer.

When Maigny is accused, he will first indignantly deny his involvement, "Oh, of course, blame the caliban! So much for Dementieuse enlightenment! My whore of a mother crosses a witch while with child, and I have to live with this face and the prejudice of fools. I don't see any fingers pointed at the pretty elf-maid." Presented with any evidence, he will continue to sneer sarcastically, "That's your evidence? Oh, very good, Alanik Ray, Sedgewick will be proud." But if pressed further, perhaps with one last piece of evidence, he will attempt to barrel past his accusers and escape, running into the main hall (M2), or barreling through the ballroom window. This should be taken as "proof" of his guilt, even if the case is otherwise shaky.

A fight will probably ensue (remember that the PCs are probably weaponless) and Maigny will fight to the death. If Eloise's cover is blown, she will attempt to aid him. Though she is not at all trained in combat, she will have a sharp kitchen knife hidden on her person and can provide flanking to allow

Maigny to sneak attack. If subdued and captured, he will first claim to have thought up the idea on his own, to spur a war and help his business. But when confronted with evidence that he had high-powered help, he will implicate The Brain. However, doing so will trigger a psionic trap that will shut down his brain and kill him.

The party will obviously have a pall cast over it, but Theroux will not be denied the opportunity to announce that Raphael Vetighetto is the winner of the contest.

As the party breaks up and the guests start to leave, DuSuis offers the rolled up paper from Chantreaux's desk to Vedarrak. "Josephine's little bird sanctuary. It's right here. I trust you'll have no difficulty dealing with it?" She hopes that revealing Chantreaux's refuge will appease the Falkovnians as a show of good faith and apology for the death of Regress.

If the PCs solve the murder, Chantreaux will reward them with a payment of 4000gp, delivered to wherever they are staying via messenger the next morning, and they will have made an ally of her. If the PCs successfully switched the lists and report back to Gondegal, he is shocked to hear that Vorbel's name was on the list. He is a well known, high-ranking Falkovnian, thought to be firmly on Drakov's side. If he is truly a sympathizer, he would be a valuable ally. Gondegal thanks the group and plans to return to Falkovnia to warn the people on the list that they have been discovered. While he doesn't reward them monetarily, they have secured a great ally for the future.

NPCs

Most of the NPCs shouldn't need detailed stats. If needed, some can be pulled from the books that reference them. Otherwise, the following summaries should suffice. Since Maigny will probably be fought in the climax, full stats for him are provided.

- C1: Lord-Governor Marcel Guignol (Male Human Obedient Ari5)
- C2: Dominic d'Honaire (Male Human Ari10 + darklord abilities)
- C3: Josephine Chantreaux (Female Human Obedient Ari4/Pis2)
- C4: Jean-Pierre Mont-Michel Theroux (Male Human Obedient Ari5)
- C5: Helene duSuis (Female Human Ari7)
- F1: Marcos Vedarrak (Male Human Ftr6/Enc10)
- F2: Commander Anton Regress (Male Human Ftr5)
- A1: Alexandre du Cire (Male Human Ari6)
- A2: Raphael Vetighetto (Male Human Ari4/Rog2)
- A3: Conrad Shadowlands (Male Human Com6)
- A4: Francois de Penible (Human Male Ari5 [Transpossessed with Kyton (Devil)])
- A6: Angel Pajaro (Female Elf Werefox Wiz4) {Though originally a Half-Elf, the "Elfmaid" SQ of the Werefox template has made her indistinguishable from an Elf.}
- A7: Lady Veronica Blackstone (Female Human Ari4)
- G1: Lord Balfour de Casteelle (Male Human Ill18)

- G2: Lady Cassilda de Casteelle (Female Human Sor9)
- G3: Cynthia DeGreives (Female Human Vorlog Com2/Rog6)
- G4: Marie Delacourte (Female Human Ari2)
- G5: Captain Reynard (Male Human Ftr6/Due2)
- G6: Antoinette Reynard (Female Human Ari1)
- G7: Gondegal (Male Human Ftr10/KoS6)
- All servants: Human Com1

A5: Hugues Maigny GR

Male Caliban Ftr1/Rog6
CE Medium Humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Balok, Mordentish, Darkonese, Falkovnian

AC 13, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 10
hp 40 (7 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +2

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee Unarmed Strike +8 (1d3+3)

Ranged Pistol +8 (1d10)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Sneak Attack +3d6, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush

Abilities Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6

SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, Trapfinding, Trap Sense +2

Feats Improved Unarmed Attack, Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Exotic

Weapon Proficiency: Firearms

Skills Bluff +6, Craft (firearms) +13, Craft (Clockworks) +11, Disable Device +11, Forgery +11, Open Lock +13, Sleight of Hand +11, Tumble +4

Without access to weapons, Maigny will use his unarmed strikes (preferably with Power Attack and Sneak Attack damage if possible) or attempt to Bull Rush his way out of the estate. If he manages to secure a firearm from somewhere, (like the locked weapons chest, or maybe a display on the wall) he will use that instead. He has no desire to fight to the death, and will take any opportunity to escape, or hide in the manor until he can do so.

Elements of Terror

Dread Elemental Domains

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Thanks and credit: with thanks to Ewan Cummins (he helped write the Dread Elemental Domain of Pyre and helped me think through the other domains as well), Rafael (for thinking of a pyromaniac treant) and Rotipher of the FoS (for helping me with the Mists domain).

Domain of Grave

The Dread Elemental Domain of Grave is known to few in the Land of Mists. It is always found underneath the earth. It sometimes appears only if one delves deep into the earth; other times it can be found just by digging a shallow hole. The domain itself is a seemingly endless field of graves and mausoleums, with a few dead trees every few hundred feet. Gravelights can sometimes be seen floating above some of the graves. This domain is the only place other than Darkon where gravelights can be found.

Packs of ghouls and other undead roam the massive graveyard. This domain is also the home of all grave elementals that are summoned in the

Land of Mists. The sky is pitch-black with no stars in sight. This is because the "sky" is actually tons of rock that make up the surface of the Land of Mists.

This domain's origins lie in the realm of Darkon, about a century or so back, during the 7th century on the Barovian calendar. In that realm, there was a man named Adros Janol, who was quite an adventurer. He traveled all throughout the land, braving the Mists and the dangers that lurked within to win glory and riches. And he did all of this alone, facing down horrors that would send even hardened adventurers running.

His adventuring career proved quite profitable and he enjoyed it immensely for a decade. To him, it seemed as if none of the horrors that lurk throughout the land could truly threaten him. This all changed when on one of his journeys in Darkon he ran afoul of a powerful and hideous creature of the Mists. He refuses to speak of the encounter, but it is known that he nearly died and that afterwards he quit his adventuring career.

Adros had a younger sister, Serisia Janol. She would stay at home in the town of Maykle while Adros was off exploring. Adros deeply cared for her and would take care of her and see to any need or want she had. He would bring her gifts back from distant cities and towns he had visited. She loved him dearly for taking care of her and for being so kind as to bring her gifts.

There is no account of their parents, and it is not known if they were living or deceased during this time. She always envied her brother for his journeys, but she knew that he would never permit her to go with him, as he was far too protective of her.

Still, despite this, she decided one day to ask him if she could go with him on his travels. He refused to take her with him, as she expected. It was shortly after this that he had his brush with death and returned home. Serisia noticed that he stayed home for an unusually long time after this adventure and asked him why he was not leaving to explore the land again, as usual. He responded that the adventuring life was not his anymore, and that he would be staying home with her. She was disappointed by this, as she always loved to hear tales of his heroics.

One day she decided to ask him if she could travel the land herself, if he went with her (she was unaware of his near death experience, as he never told her about it). He refused and told her that it was not safe to travel far in the Land of Mists, and that it would be best for her if she stayed home.

Despite his warnings, she chose to set out one night when he was asleep. She took some of his old adventuring gear, food, and some money she had saved up, figuring she could buy more

appropriate weapons and armor for herself when she reached a major city.

Adros awoke the next morning to find his sister gone and some of his old equipment missing as well. He did find a note left for him that said she was going to go traveling for a while, and that she could handle herself. Adros was furious with her and ripped up the note in anger.

He chose not to pursue her, figuring that she would come back after a day at most, but a day passed and she did not return. Then a week passed, and then a month, and a month became a year. At this point, he had still convinced himself that she would be coming back soon, even though he had said the same thing to himself months ago. He eventually decided to set out after her, though he feared he had let too much time pass already, and that he would not be able to find her.

He set out from their home and as he passed through small communities he asked if anyone had seen a young woman who matched her description. At first, he found no one who knew who she was, and he feared he may have to leave Darkon to find her. But while he was traveling down a road one day, he ran across a rather strange group of individuals: a human man who wore the symbol of Ezra in the form of an amulet around his neck, an elf who wore a colorful robe, and a halfling who carried a multitude of weapons on his small frame.

When he spoke to them and asked about his sister, much to his surprise, they said they had seen her, but also that she was no longer among the living. She had joined up with them and had helped them deal with a number of problems, such as exterminating a nest of undead that were causing trouble for a small community. She also helped them fight

of a band of lycanthropes that attacked them in the wilderness. They told him that she had died fighting off a human necromancer; the necromancer used a spell that instantly slew her.

They were able to kill the necromancer, but because of the nature of the spell the necromancer used on her, the priest of Ezra was unable to even attempt a resurrection, and he knew of no one else who could try. They had entrusted her body to a local small community and went on their way. They told him that they were sorry for his loss, but that there was nothing they could do. They did give him the name of the small community so that he might go and see her grave.

Adros left them in a daze and decided to go and find her place of rest. He found the community that the group had told him about, but when he talked to the people who lived there, they said that they hadn't seen anyone who matched his sister's description in the past year. Adros insisted that she must be buried in the community's small graveyard. He went to look himself, but could find no tombstone with her name on it.

He asked if maybe she had been buried without one, but the locals told him that everyone who is buried in town, even outsiders, would have a tombstone made for them as a sign of respect. Adros left the community thinking that perhaps he had the wrong town, and continued looking for his sister's resting place. His search eventually took on a dark side as he began sneaking into graveyards at night and digging up bodies to see if they belonged to his sister.

At this point, he began to believe someone or something was hiding her from him, and further, that this entity

had put her in a grave that was also someone else's. He began hiring unscrupulous people to help him with his task, but he knew that he had to silence them afterwards, as graverobbing often carried a severe punishment in Darkon because of the fear of the disrespected dead rising to attack the living. So he murdered every person he hired and simply tossed their bodies in the graves they had dug up, leaving town the next day.

During the time he was doing these dreadful tasks he sometimes would notice that his skin would feel a bit strange. It would feel cold and lose its color a bit; other times it itched fiercely. He also noticed that his teeth appeared to be just a little bit larger and sharper than normal. He quickly dismissed the oddities with his skin as the result of having perhaps rubbed it on some poisonous plant by accident. He dismissed the slightly larger and sharper teeth to be his imagination; he was sure his teeth had always been like that and he had just never noticed before. He also started to take any valuable he found in the graves he dug up; they would be gifts for his sister, even though she could no longer enjoy them.

One night, while he was performing his task of searching through graves, he and the people he had hired to help him came across a mausoleum in a cemetery. They had already dug through all of the other graves that Ardos suspected might have contained his sister's body (He never had any real explanation for why he chose to dig up certain graves and not others; perhaps he had some sort of secret criteria he chose by). He had a feeling his sister had to be in the mausoleum, so he and his hirelings went in and began searching through the remains of the people inside.

However, the mausoleum was enchanted to seal itself up and not open up again until a certain word was spoken outside its doors. Trapped, Adros and his companions tried to figure a way out, but no matter where they looked or what they tried, they found no route of escape. Whoever knew the word to open the mausoleum was either long dead, or had forgotten about the mausoleum and did not come to check on it anymore.

Eventually hunger and thirst began to set in. Adros decided to silence the men he had hired at this time, both because he had been planning to do so anyway, and so that he could have a food source. He managed to kill the two men he had brought with him without much trouble, and he feasted on their flesh.

After he did this, he heard a rumbling sound, and looked to the doors of the mausoleum. He was astonished, and horrified, to find them opening. He thought it was whoever maintained the cemetery coming to see why the mausoleum had sealed itself off. Instead, he found no one was at the doors.

He tentatively stepped outside and noticed that the cemetery he was in was much larger than the one where he had entered the mausoleum. He also noticed that the sky was pitch-black and the air was completely still. He did not take many steps out of the mausoleum when he felt his entire body being enveloped in excruciating pain and he fell to the ground, crying in agony.

He writhed on the ground for what seemed like hours, and when the pain finally subsided, he looked at his hand and noticed the flesh was now desiccated. He felt his face and felt his skin drawn tightly over his skull. His teeth were also much larger than they had been before. He finally realized that his cold and itchy skin and larger,

sharper teeth had been warnings for him to turn from the path he was taking, warnings that went unheeded.

He ran back into the mausoleum, shut the doors, curled up into a ball and tried to cry, but he could not. He closed and opened the doors to the mausoleum again, hoping that he would emerge back in the cemetery he had been in before, and also hoping that he would be restored to normal, but he only saw the endless field of graves and the pitch-black sky. He was now trapped in this dead realm for eternity.

Adros Janol

Male Human Ghoul Lord Fighter
7/Rogue 5, AL CE

Adros Janol can actually be fairly civil when encountered, if he does not have a craving for living flesh at the time. If he is in a "good" mood he may ask anyone who enters his domain for news of the outside world, and invite them to try and find a way out for themselves. If he desires living flesh, however, he will attack any living person and devour their flesh. He has no control over the undead or grave elementals in his domain, but they will also never attack him.

Border Closure

Adros Janol cannot close the borders of his domain, so people who enter can leave as soon as they can find a way out, be it via magic or by being lucky enough to find a portal that leads out. (There are about a half a dozen portals out of the domain known to Adros, he may share the location of at least one of them if he can be convinced to do so).

Domain of Blood

The Dread Elemental Domain of Blood is a swampy realm filled with noxious gases that rise from the red water. Red fog can frequently be seen in the air. Stirges can often be found in swarms, especially around the pools of pure blood that are scattered about the red soil.

The origins of this domain lie on the world of Krynn on the continent of Ansalon. The world had suffered from an event called the Cataclysm, in which the gods hurled down a fiery mountain to restore balance to the world. The gods took their priests with them, away from the world, and since that time the world has not seen any new priests. The most profound effect this had on the world was that healing magic was no longer available to mortals. People dying from disease became far more common than before. People did start to become more skilled at mundane methods of healing, but these were nothing compared to the healing power once wielded by the clerics of the gods.

In the city of Palanthas, about one hundred and fifty years after the Cataclysm, there was a young man named Firal, who worked as a healer. He was skilled in herbology and even knew how to perform some surgical procedures. He was well-known and well-liked throughout the city because of his knowledge of healing procedures. Although he never charged much for his healing services, he still managed to make a comfortable living for himself in Palanthas. He had a friend named Jorah, whom he had known since they both were young boys. Jorah was a merchant who mostly sold weapons and armor

throughout Ansalon, a profitable business in the post-cataclysmic world of Krynn.

As the two of them got older they were not able to spend as much time together as they would have liked, due to Jorah's chosen profession taking him all over Ansalon. Jorah still liked to stop by Palanthas every chance he got to see his friend Firal, however, and it was on one of these visits to Palanthas, after he was coming back from a trip to Nordmaar, that he fell ill with some kind of fever. He felt as if his blood was burning in his veins and arteries.

He went to see his friend Firal, certain that his friend could heal his malady. Firal had never seen the sort of illness that plagued his friend before, but he was certain it had something to do with his blood. He thought that if he could replace his friend's "bad blood" with healthy blood, he would be able to cure him. He ran into a dilemma of where exactly to get this healthy blood. He certainly could not give his own because he estimated that he would need to drain and replace nearly all of Jorah's blood.

He at first tried to get people to donate small amounts of blood. He would use some medical apparatus that he himself had crafted for the procedure, but he had no luck in convincing anyone to donate any amount of their blood. With Jorah's condition worsening by the hour, he knew what he had to do.

Firal would take in patients as he normally did. He would take them into his home, where he did all of his work, under the pretenses of helping them with whatever was making them ill. He checked to make sure they were not suffering from anything that might potentially make their blood bad for transfusion, and then he would render

them unconscious with a chemical concoction. It was easy to do this as he was a trusted man in the city of Palanthas, so if he thought people needed to be put under for whatever procedure he needed to do, they would believe him.

He performed the procedure to drain the blood from several patients, with complete success. He buried the bodies in his garden of medicinal herbs. He stored the blood in sealed metal containers, chilled with ice he purchased at great expense. No one suspected a thing, at first. He did get people asking after friends or family members who had come to him, but he simply told them that he had treated them, they had left, and he had no idea where the missing people could be. For the time being, everyone who talked to him accepted this. He was finally ready to try to replace Jorah's bad blood with the healthy blood that he had drained from his patients.

Using the medical apparatus that he himself had made, he slowly drained his friend's blood and began to replace it with the blood from his now dead patients. Jorah was delirious at this point and had no idea what Firal was doing. At first, it seemed the process had worked. When he was done, Jorah was finally able to talk coherently, and his fever had gone down.

However, only a day after the procedure had been performed, Jorah's condition began to worsen again. Firal was convinced that he needed more healthy blood, so he again began to drain the blood from his patients in order to use it to cure Jorah. He did the procedure on ten patients before people began to notice that something was amiss. The news of so many people having gone missing when they went to see Firal

began to cast suspicion on even Palanthas's beloved doctor.

He soon found the Palanthas City Guard knocking on his door, asking to do a search of his house. He let them in, but they were unable to find the bodies buried in his garden. Firal did the procedure to replace Jorah's blood again, with the same results as the previous attempt. Jorah recovered for a short while before becoming ill again. Firal was nearly driven to despair at this point. He thought that maybe he should try and gather more blood, but he was uncertain whether repeating the procedure would have any more effect than it had before. He also felt terrible guilt over murdering his patients to help Jorah, but he did not regret his decision.

He was trying to fall asleep one night when he heard someone knocking at the door of his home. At first, he thought it was someone who was desperate to be treated, but when he went downstairs to check, he noticed the noise was not coming from the front door, but from the door in the back of the house that led to the garden. Jorah was still sleeping fitfully in one of the rooms he treated his patients in, so he knew he could not have gotten up and wandered outside.

He went and opened the door to his garden only to be confronted with the horrific sight of his once buried patients all shambling around his garden. They were twisted, rotted, disgusting creatures. One must have bumped against the door. They soon saw him and began to advance on him. Firal only had a mace for protection, so he barricaded the garden door. He could not run away into the streets, as they would follow, and his secret would be found out if anyone recognized their twisted features for one of the missing people.

He barricaded himself inside Jorah's room and waited, trying to figure out what he should do. Soon enough, the undead creatures broke through his garden door and began to pound on the door to Jorah's room. Jorah was sleeping, but not very restfully. He tossed and turned in his sleep and mumbled incomprehensible sounds. Firal grasped his mace, as he knew the undead creatures would soon break through the door and the furniture he had put in front of it. In just a few moments' time, they came bursting through.

Firal began to lay into them with his mace; he managed to kill four of them before the other six overwhelmed him and pulled him to the ground. They began to rip and bite into him. He tried fending them off, but they were too strong for him and he soon felt the excruciating pain of being devoured alive. The creatures seemed especially fond of his blood. He lost consciousness, his only regret that they might begin to feast on Jorah when they were done with him.

To Firal's surprise, he found himself waking in damp soil. He opened his eyes and looked around to see red soil with a large marsh in front of him. He also noticed there was a strange red fog in the air. He saw some fat, red, mosquito-like creatures that he had never seen before, flying above the red marsh water. He got up and decided to explore his surroundings, and perhaps find a way out of this strange swamp.

Firal

Male Human Expert 10, AL NE

Firal can be frequently found wandering the domain; he has set up a small shack built out of what few materials he can find in the swamp. Firal

knows he is not a warrior, and so will usually not attack anyone who enters his domain. He has somehow managed to get a hold of some medical instruments, perhaps taken from some hapless soul who found himself trapped in Firal's domain.

Curiously, most who enter the domain find themselves taken by an illness very similar to the blood sickness that afflicted Firal's friend. If Firal comes across any of these sick people, he will offer to heal them, but only if they can first find a way out of the domain for him. Many have died searching for an exit to the domain for him, either from their illness, or from the creatures that lurk in the swamp, and even those who did find a way out for themselves, soon found out that Firal could not exit the domain at all.

Firal has all but given up finding a way out and now spends most of his time wandering the domain, when he is not in his shack fiddling about with his medical tools. He has actually tried to cure the illness in a few of those who entered the domain, and he has noticed that it is very similar to the illness that afflicted his friend, but all of his attempts to cure the illness have failed, and in all cases, the person has died, often screaming in pain.

He has even begun to try the same process that he tried on Jorah, by luring in people who have not yet been afflicted with the illness and draining their blood to cure someone who has been afflicted. But all of his few attempts have ended in failure.

Firal has no command over the blood elementals in his domain or any other creature, but they will also never attack him, and so he can wander freely without ever coming to harm.

Border Closure

Firal cannot close the borders of his domain. He knows the location of several exits, but he will rarely, if ever, give out this information to outsiders because he likes to have subjects to test out his medical procedures on.

Domain of Pyre

The Dread Elemental Domain of Pyre came to be when a young treant named Tindertwig thought that his fellow treants had become too stagnant and set in their ways. This thought was spurred by his interest in humans, who seemed to live life at a much faster pace than treants did. He found their fast-paced lives fascinating, and he wished to learn more about them. He also thought the forests he lived in could benefit from controlled burnings to help new life grow. He got the idea when he heard from a friendly druid that in some forests in other lands natural forest fires would occur so that old, dead wood and plant life could be cleared out to make room for new plant life.

He proposed the idea to the Elder Treants, but they ended up expelling him from the forest because they thought his ideas dangerous. Tindertwig was able to find some welcome in rural communities that had a druid or ranger in residence, but he found that he found no welcome in large cities, or even rural communities without a druid or ranger. People ran away from him in terror, or ran him out of any town he approached.

Tindertwig began to grow bitter; he came to see that the people from the world outside the forest were just as unable to accept something new, as were the Elder Treants.

Tindertwig grew angry and bitter at humans, and even at any other races that took up residence in towns and cities. An idea formed in his mind. If he could start a fire in a city, and then stop it from going out of control, surely he would be hailed as a hero and finally find complete acceptance among town and city dwellers.

Twindetwig decided that he would start a small fire in a nearby city, then let it grow for a bit, just enough to be noticed. Then he would put it out. His plan might have gone perfectly had it not been for an unexpected windstorm which blew through the area the night he set the fire in the slums of the city. The fire grew too great for him to control and he was badly burned while he was desperately trying to put it out. Tindertwig fled the city and took refuge in a nearby river to assuage his burns.

Meanwhile, in the city, the fire continued to rage out of control. Hundreds lost their lives and many more lost their homes. Someone must have seen Tindertwig setting the fire, as he soon found groups of men coming to look for him. He had gone from a freakish curiosity to a hated and hunted public enemy.

The first men that came for him were found crushed to death. Tindertwig then ran to the woods of the city's remaining park, but he was smoked out by the humans in the city. He escaped by floating down the river and hiding in the forested hills south of town. There, he decided he would return to the city and explain his error, and hopefully regain his chance to teach.

The people of the city would not listen to him, and he had to flee from the city once again when he tried to approach it. The people of the city began

to cut down trees to rebuild what Tindertwig's blaze had destroyed.

Tindertwig grew even more upset at the people of the city. He decided that it would be better to burn them out and grow new people who he could teach and guide: people who would listen to him and not be tainted by the ignorant views of the current city dwellers. Soon fires began to break out on the outskirts of the city and nearby farms, always at night. A charred, twisted giant of living wood was seen stalking the lonely hills and creeping along the riverbanks to hole and sink boats with his mighty fists. Dozens of men and women were killed or driven from their homes in terror.

Tindertwig eventually began to study fire magic, so that he could better learn the nature of the element and start fires without the aid of any tools. It was during this period of time when a group of humans came to cut wood from the forest where Tindertwig was staying.

Tindertwig knew them to be from the city he had nearly destroyed the night he was burned. In anger, he decided he would use his newly learned fire magic to burn them alive. He carefully approached the group of human woodcutters, the words to a fire spell on his wooden lips. The woodcutters recognized who he was and began to flee in terror, but Tindertwig let loose his spell and brought forth a great column of fire on them. They all died, screaming in pain.

The fire from his spell was stronger than it usually was, and the surrounding area was caught in flames. Tindertwig began to panic, as the fire was spreading quickly and too fast from him to control, just like that night in the city. He tried to put out the fire using some water magic he had also learned, but it was no use, and soon the fire had engulfed nearly all

of the small forest. Tindertwig tried to escape from the forest, but he found there was no end to it.

He soon found himself back at the site where he had burned the woodcutters to death. Their remains were still smoldering. Much to his surprise, their remains caught fire suddenly and rose in a great conflagration. They formed into what looked like fire elementals, but had the woodcutters' remains visible in their bodies.

They began to chase Tindertwig, so he ran from them, but soon, more of these strange fire creatures began to join in the chase and no matter how much he ran, he could only find temporary reprieve from them. Tindertwig was now caught in an eternal chase, one from which he may never escape.

Tindertwig

Treant Wizard 5, AL CE

Tindertwig can often be found running from the pyre elementals that eternally chase him. Tindertwig has little patience for outsiders and will often simply attack anyone who is in his way, as he has come to hate nearly every sentient being.

Border Closure

Tindertwig can close the borders of his domain, by causing a wall of impenetrable smoke to rise up near any exits. He rarely chooses to do so, however, as he is often more focused on escaping from the pyre elementals.

Domain of Mists

It is believed the Dread Elemental Domain of Mists came to be about two

centuries after the Demiplane first formed, a little over four centuries ago. The domain itself simply appears to be an endless foggy plain, with a single, small town on its landscape. Most people who enter the domain do so by getting lost in the Mists.

The people of the town are mostly human, and they all have no memory of their lives before they came to be in the domain of Mists. They are all terrified of a ghost who is said to roam the endless foggy plain on which their town is situated. They are also frightened of wandering mist elementals that are often found near sites where The Ghost, as they simply know him, has been.

The Vistani can sometimes be found traveling across the domain; it is rumored that they utilize this land to travel quickly across the Core. The origins of this land are a mystery to most everyone in the Demiplane, but the following is the truth of this land's origin.

There was once a Vistani woman named Veria. She was known to often get close to Giorgio men and women. She found the lives of Giorgios, who so often stayed in one place for their whole lives, fascinating. She often wondered what they did to keep themselves from being bored, besides their daily toils. She would often spend time in Giorgio cities whenever her tribe stopped to stay nearby one for a while. While she found the idea of staying put in one place for so long rather boring, she did find the cities that the Giorgios built amazing and full of surprises.

She made friends quickly, and so she had a number of friends in every city she visited, and she always made a point to visit them again when she returned to the area. Other Vistani looked upon her strangely, but they did not stop her from

making friends with Giorgios. She made close friends with one particular Giorgio man and always came to visit him when she could manage to sneak away.

Her friendship with this man eventually grew into a romantic relationship, and one day she found herself with child. She searched for him when she visited the town he lived in, so she could tell him that he would soon be a father. Unfortunately she could not find him.

She heard rumors that he had disappeared one night on the way back to his dwelling from a tavern, perhaps the victim of some of the many creatures that dwell in the Land of Mists. She despaired at not being able to find him, but accepted it and eventually she had the child.

She kept him and named him Tirian, after his father. She raised the boy and although he never quite fit into Vistani society, he still managed to make friends with the full-blooded Vistani. He was good friends in particular with a Vistani youth named Leran and the two boys spent many hours together playing as youths. While Tirian may not have had access to all of the gifts that full-blooded Vistani receive, he still did quite well for himself as he had quite the talent for tracking, both mundane forest creatures and also the dangerous creatures that can roam the Land of Mists.

On more than one occasion, Tirian managed to notice the signs of a dangerous creature such as a werewolf nearby before anyone else noticed. This earned him great respect amongst the Vistani he lived with, and he truly felt like a full-blooded Vistani.

One day he noticed what looked like deer tracks leading to a nearby creek. The tribe needed more food, so he

decided to go and see if he could find the deer and bring it back for food. His friend Leran went with him. A short while later, Tirian came back to the tribe without Leran. He told his mother that he could not find the deer. His mother asked where Leran was, and Tirian told her that Leran said he was going to stay behind for a bit to have some time to himself.

His mother accepted this explanation. Hours passed and Leran did not return, so another Vistana decided to go and look for him, as they were going to leave their current campsite soon. The Vistana came upon Leran's corpse; Leran looked to have died from a stab wound between his ribs.

The Vistana returned and immediately asked to see Tirian. Tirian asked him what was wrong and the Vistana accused him of murdering Leran. Tirian was confused, as he left Leran perfectly alive by the creek several hours ago, and he saw no tracks of anything dangerous nearby. Tirian's mother defended him, saying he would never hurt anyone, let alone any of his friends.

The accusing Vistana pointed out that Tirian always carried a dagger with him, and that Leran had died from a stab wound. The Vistana asked to see Tirian's dagger; it was perfectly clean, but the Vistana said that that just meant Tirian had cleaned it off in the creek before he came back. The elders of Tirian's tribe met and agreed that with what evidence they had, Tirian had to be the culprit.

They decided Tirian's punishment would be exile from the tribe. Tirian was furious with them, and tried to argue he would never harm his friends, but the evidence was against him. His mother tearfully told him that leaving would be

best, but that she could not go with him, as she had duties to the tribe.

Tirian become angry with her and began to yell at her that she was just like the rest of them. In his anger he drew the very dagger that was the supposed murder weapon used on Leran and stabbed his mother with it. She fell to the floor of their Vardo, and as she lay dying Tirian looked upon his bloodstained hands in horror.

He ran from the Vardo and into the nearby woods. He was seen, and soon there were shouts from the campsite that Veria had been murdered by Tirian, her own son. Tirian ran, but a group of Vistani caught up with him and he was shot in the leg with an arrow. Despite this, he still managed to continue running on pure adrenaline and hide from the Vistani.

His leg wound was bad, and he had no way of treating it. The wound soon became infected and he was forced to limp about to even move. While he was in this state, he came upon a lone campfire with a man sitting before it.

The man was wearing expensive-looking armor and was polishing a finely crafted dagger. He noticed Tirian approaching and immediately got up and threatened him with the dagger, saying he had run across another one of his kind (Vistani) earlier and he had killed him, but was disappointed that he had no gold on him.

Tirian looked upon the man in anger, but could not do anything to harm him as he was too badly injured. The man took Tirian's anger to mean that Tirian was angry at him for threatening him. He killed Tirian with a quick thrust of his dagger into Tirian's ribs and spat some slur against Vistani. Tirian's last sight before he died was of the man rifling

through his pockets looking for gold or anything else of value, but with his dying breath, Tirian cast a curse on the entire tribe of Vistani he belonged to. He cursed them so that no one would ever believe a word they said. Vistani were already distrusted, but the reputation of his tribe (who were regarded as actually being fairly trustworthy) would be utterly ruined.

His entire tribe was driven to ruin because of his curse, as they could not get anyone else, even other Vistani, to cooperate with them. No one would lend them assistance, and the entire tribe was killed when set upon by a pack of werewolves. They tried sending someone to another nearby Vistani tribe for aid while they holed up in their vardos, but because of the curse the messenger was not believed. And so the tribe was slain by the werewolves, as was the messenger himself, when he returned to the tribe to see if they had managed to fend off the creatures.

Tirian awoke on an endless foggy plain. He thought he was in the afterlife, but he soon found out that he was still in the mortal realm when he noticed he could pass through a nearby tree. He clenched his ghostly fists and let out a wail of anger. Now, he is an angry ghost who lashes out at anyone who comes near him. He wanders the endless plain, never to know rest.

Tirian

Male Vistani Ghost Ranger 9, AL CE

Tirian can be found wandering the domain. He will rarely engage in civil conversation and will instead lash out at anyone who even comes near him. On the rare occasions that he does not lash out and attack, he will usually be weeping and endlessly repeating the words "I didn't do it" to himself. He has command of the mist elementals that wander the domain, and he will not hesitate in calling some to help him fight.

Border Closure

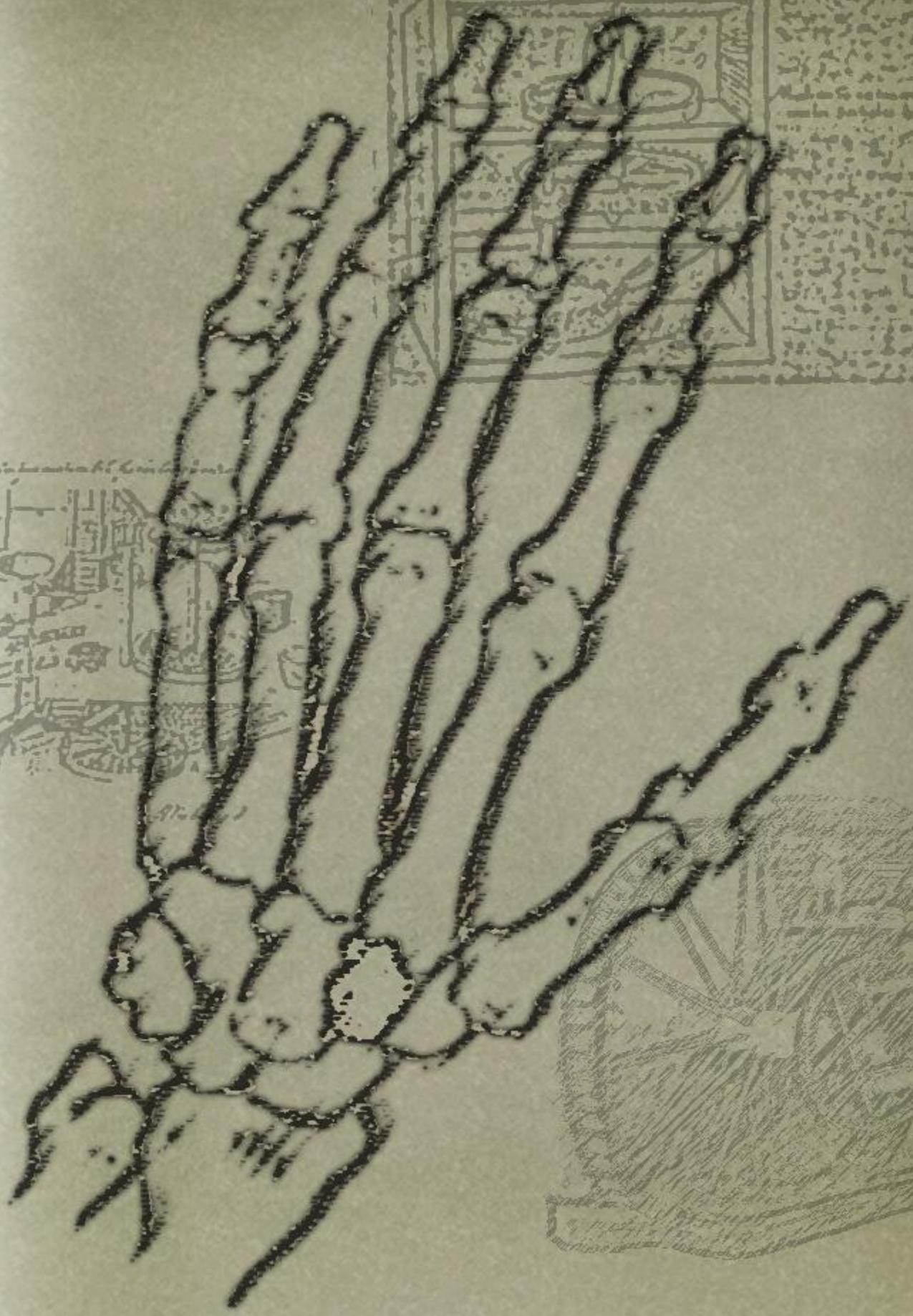
Tirian can close the borders of his domain and even shrink the size of his domain by causing Mists to rise up and close off any area he chooses. Anyone who enters the Mists is simply turned back. Otherwise, it is possible to leave the domain by wandering into any fog bank, but where the person will end up is unknown. They may be deposited back into the demiplane proper, or they may end up elsewhere. No one who has exited via these means has ever returned to the land, which is why those who live in the small town do not leave using this method, as they are terrified of what may happen to them.



The work in the garden of the King's house



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