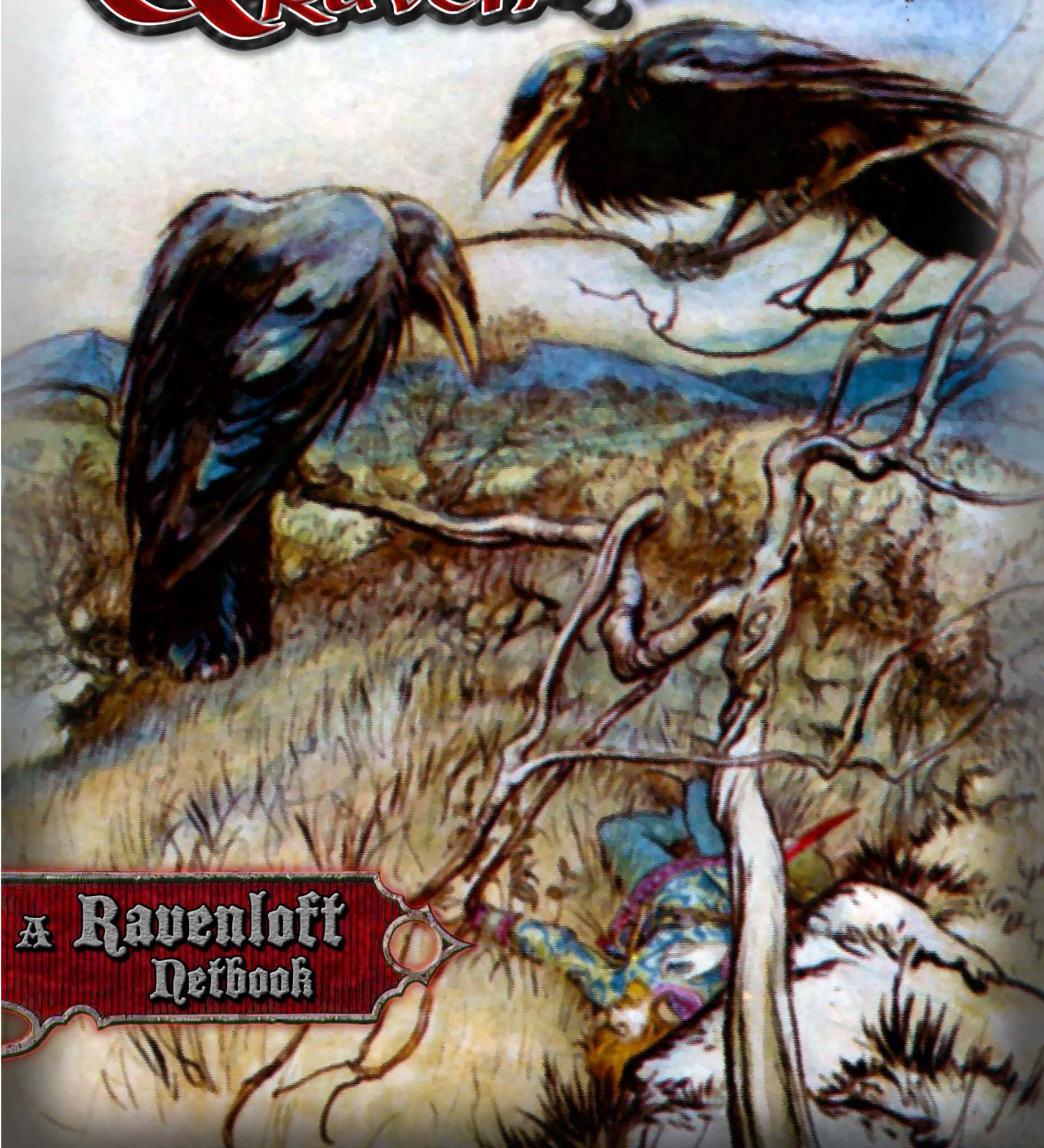


Quoth the Raven

23



A Ravenloft
Netbook

FRONT MATTER

Quoth the Raven #23

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INTRODUCTION

It's an interesting time for Ravenloft.

With the release of *Curse of Strahd* in the spring of 2016, the setting and land of Barovia is back in the public's consciousness. Additionally, the Dungeon Master's Guild website has opened for service, allowing anyone to write content for the world of Ravenloft... for monies! I think this makes a product like *Quoth the Raven* more special: rather than write content that could be sold, the fans composed articles to be given away for free. It really is a product by the fans, for the fans.

As always, the issue has a theme (which generally isn't very apparent or important), and this year the theme is Barovia: the Heart of the Core.

With that I invite you to venture deeper into the book, to unlock its secrets and see what the raven on the mantelpiece is whispering this year.

"Jester" David Gibson
October 31, 2016



GHOSTS OF RAVENLOFT

By JC Stearns

In the centuries since Barovia was plucked from its point of origin and enshrouded in the Mists, scores of adventurers have tried their luck against 'the devil Strahd,' as he is known by his people. Although a surprising number of these heroes survived their ordeal, (Strahd is an apathetic creature, not often given to pursuing vengeance to its fullest potential) those who have perished have often done so in great pain and torment, or with a burning desire to complete an unfinished goal (such as rescuing a loved one, or destroying their undead foe). All these factors that increase the odds of the deceased joining the ranks of the Restless Dead.

Although such tormented souls are relatively powerless against their enemy, given his skill in necromancy and their rather pathetic state, many of them would gladly see Strahd fall and will offer their assistance to any heroes who may stumble across their resting places. Here are a few possibilities.

Solbert

This mountain dwarf hero hails from somewhere beyond the Mists, although he has been deceased for so long he can no longer recall the name of his homeland, his family, or his clan. When the party of

heroes that he travelled with attempted to hunt Strahd in his own castle, they found the vampire more than a match for them, and the party was slaughtered. Wounded and dying, Solbert escaped Castle Ravenloft, pursued by Strahd's minions. The dwarf managed to escape them by the light of day and holed up in a small cavern in the foothills of the Balinoks. There he perished of his wounds, and there the remains of his body and equipment (now rotted to uselessness) still lie.

The dwarven warrior leaps at the possibility of aiding the party. So long as they promise to bring his remains (a skull and a handful of rotted bones) out of Barovia and to inter them in proper dwarven fashion, he will do anything in his power to help the party.

Solbert can remember precious little of his time in Barovia. He does know that Strahd is a vampire, as well as a necromancer. In addition, he is aware of Strahd's skill with illusion spells, as it was an ambush from invisibility which spelled the end of his party.

Felidra

The dusk elf rogue was one of those butchered by Rahadin after the death of Patrina. When Rahadin came to carry out Strahd's grim commands against their

people, Felidra attempted to engage the chamberlain in combat so that his family might escape. Rahadin slew him easily, and made sure to kill Felidra's wife and child before his eyes before he died. Felidra wishes the death of his traitorous kinsman even more than he desires the death of Strahd. His spirit is bound to a simple copper ring, currently sitting atop a gravestone in the cemetery of Argynvost.

If an elf PC (Felidra will only reveal himself to elves or half-elves) is willing to take on his quest for vengeance, Felidra will instruct them to don his ring. While wearing the ring, Felidra will no longer appear or speak, but the PC gains advantage on all melee attack rolls against Rahadin, as well as proficiency with the rapier, stealth, and thieves' tools. When Rahadin is defeated, Felidra's soul moves on and these benefits cease. If a bearer of the ring attempts to leave Castle Ravenloft while Rahadin still lives, they must make a Wisdom save (DC 15) or be unable to exit the courtyard.

Tavgar Brimworth

Players doing an elaborate search of the front courtyard of Castle Ravenloft (or a player with a bird of prey for a familiar) may discover a finger bone lodged between two stones partway up a wall, bearing the marks of rodent teeth. This is all that remains of Tavgar Brimworth. The heroic mercenary entered Castle Ravenloft with a group of heroes intent on rescuing a woman abducted by the Count, only to find themselves picked off one at a time and murdered. Tavgar himself was lured onto the rooftops outside the lounge (area K53) in order to attack an illusory image of Strahd. He slipped on the rain-slick tiles while charging through the phantasm,

missing the parapet entirely and falling to his death in the courtyard.

If the players are willing to lay his remains to rest within a sanctified grave, Tavgar will tell them everything he knows. Although he knows very little of the ground floors and below, he has detailed knowledge of the Rooms of Weeping and Spires of Ravenloft (maps 5 and 6), including secret doors and traps (although not including any current 'guests'). Tavgar will also warn the PCs that any young ladies they may have come to rescue will likely be under Strahd's spell, even if they feign otherwise.

Calhri

The witch Calhri exists as a shade bound within a skull in Baba Lysaga's hut, her spectral light providing a macabre illumination for the evil Lysaga. If Lysaga is slain, Calhri will speak to the PCs. She wishes to find a way to return to life (although she herself has no ideas about how that might be accomplished). In life, she was a wizard attempting to learn from Strahd without becoming one of his playthings. Eventually, she ran afoul not of Strahd but of Baba Lysaga, who killed the upstart mage.

If the PCs are willing to carry her skull lantern with them (she can provide eerie blue light out to a distance of forty feet at will), she will advise them as best she can. (She is proficient in both history and arcana, with a bonus of +6 in each.) She can also direct the party to her spellbook, hidden beneath a loose cobble in the Ravenloft carriage house (K4). Finally, she will advise any PCs to enter Castle Ravenloft through the servant's entrance, providing them directions on how to do so if need be. She will continue to act as an advisor as long as the players keep her around, although she is evil in nature and will encourage anyone

listening to her advice to act in their own self-interest rather than for any nobler purpose.

Jessaven Ventzovich

A paladin in life, Jessaven and her party of crusaders were determined to enter Ravenloft and banish the fiend Strahd once and for all. Although they fared better than most, numerous encounters with Strahd's minions drained their resources, and by the time the lord of the castle engaged them in a final confrontation on the overlook, they were in no condition to stand before him. Jessaven herself engaged Strahd, confident in the ability of her relics to keep her safe. In the end, Strahd laughed at her protections and threw her bodily from the overlook to plummet a thousand feet to her grisly demise.

Jessaven has waited long and hard for adventurers of pure spirit to find her corpse, still lying where she died at the foot of the cliffs of Castle Ravenloft. She will tell her tale to anyone of goodly alignment who approaches, offering anything she has to

them, given freely so that they might succeed where she failed. After delivering her message, her spirit finally lets go.

Her corpse itself has withered to bones, but any one of those bones is a potent weapon. Any divine spellcaster may use one of the bones as a divine focus, and if used while casting a spell on an evil undead opponent, impose disadvantage on any saving throws the undead may take. Her armor is magical as well. In addition to granting +1 to AC, the alabaster breastplate is anathema to the unnatural. If an opponent who is evil or undead grapples the wearer, they take 1d6 radiant damage. If the opponent is both evil and undead, the damage stacks.

JC Stearns is a mad scrivener from the swamps of Southern Illinois. In addition to his frequent contributions to Quoth the Raven he writes for the Ravenloft Corner of the High Level Games blog, and his work can be found in the anthologies *Selfies from the End of the World* and *Fitting In*, both from *Mad Scientist Journal*, as well as the *Black Library*.

SOMETHING LOST

By "Rock"

I need to, need to think. Take stock. Yes, take stock. Need to. I need to take stock, because... because I've misplaced something. No, lost something.

It started when, when we went to the museum. Midge, Charlie, and me. My wife, my son, and me, we were on our vacation. Except, except I remember... I remember saying "I think we've gotten turned around."

She said "No, this is right, I'm reading the map right. It's this way."

So I drove on and we came to the museum. I think it was the museum. It was an old building, very old, very big. We went inside, Midge, Charlie, and me, and I remember saying "I think I've lost my keys somewhere. They're not in my pocket."

Midge said, "You're always losing things, you're hopeless."

I said, "Yes, dear." I said, "Charlie, go look by the car."

Charlie went outside while Midge and I went into the museum's main hall. Midge said, "This doesn't look right." I said, "I told you we were going the wrong way."

I, I, I remember, I remember that it didn't look like a museum at all. Musea have floors and walls of stone, this was all wood. There were no objets d'art, no artefacts. Dusty, frayed carpet on the floor, the pattern lost. Just a mud-coloured painting against the back wall. It looked so old that you couldn't see what it was supposed to be a painting of. There was a brass plaque on the bottom of the frame, but that just read 'Maharta is hungry'.

Midge, my Midge, Midge she said, "This isn't right. You got us lost." I said, "But you were reading the map, dear!" She said, "I should have listened to my mother." I said, "Please let's not fight, we're on vacation."

But she just stormed out of the hall and went back for the front door. I took another look at the ugly, mud-coloured painting (I don't know why I did that), and then I followed her. But there was a turn I didn't remember, and I didn't see Midge or the front door.

"Midge!" I called out loud. "Midge, where are you?"

"Over here!" she called from the distance. "I think I've gotten turned around – are you by the door?"

I told her no, and to come back to the main hall. Then I tried to go back to the main hall, but but I, but I couldn't find it. I think, think I took the right turn back, but but there was another turn, and that must have been the wrong one. So I called to Midge again, and she called back, but I couldn't understand understand her. Midge. I couldn't understand her. She was too far away. So we called to each other again, and I tried to get to her, but I wound up in a corridor I didn't remember. Paintings on one wall, windows in the other one. I heard a sound from by the windows, so I went over and looked.

It was Charlie outside, looking up at me, calling to me. Thick, thick glass, I could barely hear him. Something about, he was yelling something about the door. And about the car. But I couldn't understand

what. I looked for a way to open the windows, and one swung out.

"Daddy!" Charlie called up to me. "I can't find the door!"

That that was not I told him that was silly, he must have come out by it.

"But now I can't find it!" he cried. He was crying crying tears on my boy's cheeks I hate it when he cries.

"Go wait by the car" I told him.

"I can't find that neither!" he cried, and then he just sat down on the ground and bawled.

"Wait right there I'm coming for you" I said. I looked at him, fixed him in my mind and hurried down the corridor, tried to keep in mind where he was so I could look for a way to find him. And I shouted for Midge, shouted for her and then I looked, I glanced at the paintings. And I stopped.

Then I was running, because because because I don't remember why I was running. I can't find the memory. Something bad. Something was bad. There wassomething bad.

My boy. Charlie. I had to get to my boy Charlie, I love my boy, I had to find my wife Midge, I love my wife even if she doesn't love me anymore but just puts up with me now for Charlie's sake. So I shouted for them, shouted for both of them, and I could hear Midge somewhere behind me. So I doubled back and called for her – but I couldn't find the corridor with the windows again.

I lost I discovered I'd lost my hat somewhere. Must have fallen off while I was running. No matter, no matter, it doesn't matter, it didn't matter. I shouted for Midge, but now she was somewhere behind me again. So I doubled back and I bumped I bumped my foot against a doorjamb, because I had lost my shoes. And my socks.

Something something something was not right. I was losing things, too many things. Stay focused, need to stay focused on my things. Call out for Midge, for Midge, but I don't hear her anymore. Where is my boy? Charlie. Charlie is my boy. I'm calling him Charlie now, because I don't remember his name right. I can't find the memory. I'm calling my wife Midge, because I can't remember her name right anymore, either.

When did I lose my shirt? I need my shirt. The air is cold is in this not-a-museum without my shirt. I'd like my keys, please, and my shirt. You can keep my hat, even keep my shoes, even if the floor is rough wood and it hurts to walk on it, run on it, but I do, I'm running full-out down a long corridor because because because it's hard to breathe. The air feels so thick.

I can't remember. I can't remember why I was running, so I stopped running and I walked, air like like slimy, thick. I found a room full of statuesbadbadbadwhyisitbad and I started to run again, ran back the way I came, but I can't remember why and I can't find my way. I can't remember why I was screaming for Midge at the top of my voice. When did I lose my trousers? When did I lose everything?

I came to another corridor, doors branching off on both sides. I limped down the corridor, my blood on the floor because the floor was so rough and it cut my feet and it hurts why does it hurt why am I crying not because of my feet where are my things where am I

A door opened in front of me. Creeeeeeaaaak, went the hinges. So I looked inside, and there was a desk with a chair, and a big bed, and on the desk there was a journal I kept until Daddy told me

*journals were for girls and sissies and also
there was a ballpoint pen*

*if you write a thing down you can't forget
it so I went in the room*

I seem to have lost the door

*my fists beating on the wall, screaming
"Let me out let me out for Heaven's sakes
let me out" and now my hands bleed as well
and my throat hurts from screaming and my
eyes hurt from the tears screaming Midge,
maybe Maggie, maybe Mathilda, maybe
Maharta, 'cause I can't 'member my own
wife's name my wife my wife my life my
wife who hates me 'cause I'm no good but
why*

*sitting here writing down writing it
doen writing it all down but I keep losing
things losing things I need to turn back the
page the page*

*I am here now. I can't find the way out.
I cna can't get out. I have to keep writing. I
have to keep looking at the journal. I didn't
look at the desk and it is gone. I didn't look
at the chair and it is gone. The bed is still
here, but that does not make me happy.
The floor is here. The walls are here. The
air is here, thick and cold. Makes me shiver.
Trembles against me. Feels like feels like
stop licking me stop licking me
pleasepleasepleasestop*

*So long as I look at the journal and the
pen, so long as I keep focused, so long as I
just keep writing, they stay. But but but*

*I've lost something. I've lost everything
and I don't know why.*

*I looked back. I've lost Charlie – is my
son named Charlie? I've lost Midge – I
heard her scream, clapped my hands over
my ears squeezed my eyes shut she
screamed when I opened them the desk
was gone – and I don't even know her
name is was Midge.*

*I I I hope I lost her. Her screams her
screams she has to be gone.*

*But bt bit but now now nownownow I'm
scared because no I lost everything, lost
something, I can't get out, I am here now,
where am I, but please the room is not no
with something footsteps something please
coming closer taking its time no coming
closer I am trapped in here please let me
out but I am alone in this room safe in this
no in this room no no I can't look up from
the book can't look up from the pen mistn't
mustn't look up am I am alone please I am
so alone help me someone help me you are
not here no nonono I need this pen don't
take it away no please please I don't want
to see no please I don't want to go please
please ple*

Eventually, my screams woke people up and they came to see what was going on. When they found me, sitting before the house's open door, crying my eyes out, they found the journal with me. I have no memory of how it came to be there with me, outside the house; I fell asleep for a time, after I last saw my father, shouting at me from behind the window, and when I woke up it was night and I was all alone.

The childless couple who took me away from there and brought me to their home actually tried to use the journal when they were teaching me Mordentish; they hoped that it could be a reference for them to learn my language. Happily, they took it away when I started to scream at its contents, and I learned to speak Mordentish under my own power.

After those kind people, who later became my foster parents, died, I found the journal buried deep in a trunk, along with some other things from my old life. Somehow, my father's car keys were there, hidden inside my neatly folded childhood

jacket. I could no longer ask my foster parents how they came by them.

That was not a good day for me, and I engaged the services of Dr. Mousel to help me cope with what happened. I cannot say that it was a complete success, but it left me a little calmer, better capable of dealing with the loss of my mother and father. It convinced me that I could write the postscript to my father's last words in this same volume, in my mother tongue, without invoking doom.

Loss.

Loss implies that they are gone. Like my father's keys were lost. Like I am lost, for the world looked strange to me after I walked out of the house to find those keys, and it has not looked familiar since. Worse, I know there is no record anywhere here of the world I was born into, the world my parents grew up in.

I do not know how I came to be here, save that the house is to blame.

I have returned there a couple of times over the years, twice, to try and find some trace, to make some sense of what became of my parents. Of what became of me. How did we deserve this? How did the house carry us here? I never found an explanation, but at least I always walked back out into Mordentshire. Whatever happened to my parents seems to have rendered it dormant for a while. Maybe the house is sleeping off its meal? I cannot be certain. But I think it is getting hungry again, for there was a change the second time I went back – the last time I went back, I should say, for I dare not return.

Now, I am here in Dr. Mousel's sanatorium, having checked in of my own free will. You see, I saw something when I went back to the house the second time, and it ... left me shaken. The painting, that damnable painting!

The first time I returned, it was as my father described it; an ugly rectangle of muddy colours, too old and run-together to see what it was supposed to depict.

But the second time... I saw the horror that was Maharta – what I assume was Maharta – feasting on flesh, my mother's flesh. My father was there as well, but I will not say what the bloated, grub-pale monstrosity was doing to him while it ate my mother's carcass.

I fled the house as soon as I could rally myself, ran through the open door – which I had taken the precaution of pounding thick wedges under...

wedges which had slid several inches, while I stood gagging and gasping for breath in the house's main hall.

I have checked the local records as far back as I can, and there are no mentions of anyone disappearing in that house. To all here in Mordentshire, it is just the long-abandoned dwelling of a noble family now lost to the sands of time. So I wonder, does it – or does Maharta – get all of its nourishment from other places?

I do not know. I cannot know. I cannot know how many have already lost everything in that house, all because...

Dear Ezra in the Mists, the plaque beneath the painting. How it shone, nearly hypnotizing me even while the painting made my stomach heave.

All because Maharta is hungry.

Signed:

Arthur "Artie" Brewer

Dread Possibility:

The House may appear anywhere, at any time, wherever the surroundings allow for such an edifice. Going in need not be a death sentence; Maharta sleeps between

her meals and may lie dormant for years, but even in her dreams she is dangerous - and so is the House. It is so easy to get lost in there, as the House's inner architecture warps and shifts as soon as your back is turned. So easy to lose track of your friends. So easy to see some of the mind-shattering art that depicts Maharta and her... pretties.

Even when Maharta is awake, it is not impossible to escape, provided you use the

(rare) opportunities offered with alacrity and do not allow yourself to become trapped, but when you leave the House, its doors and windows might open on any place. Any place at all. And many of them lie in the Realm of Dread.

And if you do end up getting trapped and Maharta gets you... well. Then, as it says in that famous song, 'You can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave'.

LORRIMAR RADZINSKY

Fools rush in

Paul West

el_gambito2003@yahoo.co.uk

Wooden stake: check. Garlic: check. Holy symbol of the Morninglord: check. Silver dagger: check. Magic sword: check. Lorrimar knew what he was up against, and he wanted to be prepared. He'd done his research, so he knew what to expect. Ever since he'd ended up in this strange, foreign land he knew what he would be facing. By the gods, he'd had enough experience dealing with such creatures in his homeland. Ever since a vampire had killed his entire family, he'd studied them, nurturing his hatred and honing it into a keen, focused desire for revenge. He staked and beheaded the monster that ruined his life five years ago, and he hadn't stopped then. He killed the bloodsucker that had sired that particular fiend, as well as its entire brood. If Lorrimar Radzinsky was good at one thing, it was killing vampires.

It wasn't as though he was motivated by pure vengeance, either. Lorrimar loved the adulation of the common folk, and the gold they heaped upon him for saving them from such monsters. If truth be told, he had barely shed a tear for his deceased family once fame and fortune came knocking on his door.

He worked alone, and he always would. Vampires, werewolves, ghosts - all manner of things that would make ordinary folk tremble held no fear for this mighty monster-slayer. When the strange gypsy fellow handed him a letter from the burgomaster of Barovia village, begging for his aid in

dealing with a "vampyre," he simply accepted that it would be another job and got on with it.

Lorrimar didn't stay long in the village when he arrived. He'd already made his mind up that he would deal with the vampire and leave this miserable land as soon as possible. The weather annoyed him the most. Why did it have to be so cold and misty?

Everyone seemed to be terribly afraid of the local vampire. Lorrimar could understand that. Vampires were frightening opponents for a peasant who didn't know how to kill them. Fortunately for the good people of Barovia, they now had an experienced hunter in their midst. His plan was simple enough: head up to the castle where the parasite made his lair and stake him in the heart whilst he was resting in his coffin, then cut off the head, just to be certain.

It didn't matter to Lorrimar that he'd never heard of the land of Barovia before. He had no idea that when the Mists took him there, he had ended up in a place far removed from the world of his birth. He had a job to do, and he wasn't about to let some gypsy charlatan put him off with warnings about the omnipotence of his target.

Yes, the old fortune-teller had tried to impart some of her so-called wisdom onto him, but he brushed her aside. Lorrimar patiently explained to the crone that he knew what a vampire was, and that he had plenty of experience in destroying them.

Part of him was slightly concerned about the amount of influence this particular creature had on the people and animals of Barovia, but this only spurred him on to get the job done as quickly as possible.

And so, sword in one hand and lantern in the other, Lorrimar Radzinsky marched up the steep path towards Castle Ravenloft. The fog was unusually thick, but he treaded carefully, to avoid making a fatal misstep and plunging to his doom over the edge of a cliff, as he proceeded confidently towards the looming spectre of his target's stronghold.

It started with a tickle in the back of his throat. Lorrimar paused and coughed. Then he coughed some more. Something was wrong. At first he thought it was the thin mountain air, or at worst a chill he'd caught from one of the villagers. The coughing wouldn't stop, and the warrior dropped his sword as he covered his mouth. When he moved his hand away, there was blood on his palm.

Lorrimar continued onwards nonetheless, but with every step he took, every breath was tougher, as if the air itself was fighting against him. His knees buckled, and then he collapsed. What was wrong? Was he ill? He didn't understand.

As he struggled to regain his footing, Lorrimar Radzinsky realised what the problem was, too late. It was the mist. There was something in those vaporous tendrils of fog, some airborne poison, and it was killing him. Through superhuman effort he managed to stand. He thrust his arm out, trying to find the path back to the village through the fog with his lantern which, unlike his enchanted blade, he had managed to keep hold of. Blood dribbled down his chin as he continued to cough, but his desperate search for an escape from his predicament came to an end as darkness and icy cold descended upon him...

Background

In life, Lorrimar Radzinsky was a moderately successful monster hunter who thought he was better than he actually was. His victories were normally brought about by dumb luck more than anything else. His preferred quarry was vampires, since his family had been killed by one such creature long ago. This was the catalyst which caused him to embark on his chosen path with such zeal, but it was his lust for fame and rewards, not to mention his overconfidence, that caused his downfall.

When Lorrimar was approached by the Vistana named Arrigal and handed a letter from the burgomaster of the village of Barovia asking for his aid in dealing with the vampire Count Strahd von Zarovich, he accepted the job with little thought about what he was getting into. The Mists of Ravenloft snatched him up and deposited him close to the village. He found the land to be too dour for his tastes, and decided to hurry up and get the job done as quickly as possible.

Lorrimar encountered Madame Eva en route to Castle Ravenloft, but in spite of her warnings, he ignored her and continued on his way towards the vampire's lair. He already had everything he needed to deal with the count, or so he thought.

What Lorrimar hadn't anticipated was the deadly power of Strahd's choking fog which surrounds his castle and the village of Barovia. He was part-way through the poisonous cloud before it began to affect him. By the time he realised his predicament, it was too late. The would-be vampire slayer choked to death on his own blood in the killing mist before he was anywhere near Castle Ravenloft.

Death was not the end for Lorrimar Radzinsky, though. Though many years have passed since his demise, his spirit

lingers on within the very fog that killed him. Those who have wandered near the road to Castle Ravenloft when Strahd summons the choking mists have reported witnessing a strange light, like that of a lantern, shining within the cloud of deadly fog. A few foolhardy adventurers who have tried to penetrate the mists in order to reach the castle have succumbed to the poison vapours, only to awaken unharmed a few yards away from the edge of the mists with the faintest recollection of icy-cold hands dragging them to safety.

Current Sketch

Lorrimar Radzinsky is now a ghost, but he only ever manifests when Strahd summons his choking fog. He is fully aware of the manner of his death and deeply regrets his arrogance and foolishness in venturing into the lair of an enemy he knew precious little about. He attempts to make amends for this by warning others to stay away from the deadly mists by shining his spectral lantern at them. If this tactic fails, he will physically drag those who fall victim to the poison to a safe place away from the cloud. Lorrimar cannot venture more than thirty feet away from the edge of the poison fog, but this is usually far enough for those he rescues to recover from its effects.

Appearance

Lorrimar appears as a lean, muscular man with long hair. He is handsome and clean-shaven and dressed in chainmail armour. He is completely grey and his form wavers and fades in and out of existence as if he were part of the mists itself (which, in a sense, he is). He has an expression of wide-eyed panic on his face at all times and blood dribbles down his chin. He cannot speak, but his manifestation is usually pre-

empted by the sound of horrible coughing sounds. Lorrimar always carries a ghostly lantern in one hand which shines brightly through the mists.

Lorrimar Radzinsky

First-Magnitude Ghost, CG

Armour Class -1/6*

Movement Fl 12(A)

Level/Hit Dice 4

Hit Points 21

THAC0 17

Morale 20

No. of Attacks 1

Damage/Attack Special

Special Attacks Cause paralysis (victim must successfully save vs. paralysis with a -1 penalty to avoid being held for 2d4 turns)

Special Defences Insubstantiality (corporeal); invisibility; need +1/0* or better magical weapon to hit

Special Vulnerabilities Cannot move more than 30' away from Strahd's choking fog

Str - Dex - Con -

Int 12 Wis 6 Cha 9

Combat

Lorrimar does not initiate combat, and generally does not fight back if attacked unless he believes he has no other option. His touch can cause paralysis, which in turn can be deadly if the victim is left helpless whilst in the grip of Strahd's choking fog,

but Lorrimar will not allow such people to die if he can help it; he will try to drag them to safety whilst they are unable to move. If he is defeated in battle, Lorrimar will rejuvenate within 24 hours unless his spirit is laid to rest. Lorrimar can only be permanently laid to rest if his bones are recovered from the choking fog and given a proper burial in a church cemetery.

Campaign Role

Lorrimar can serve as a cautionary tale for adventurers who are determined to head directly to Castle Ravenloft when they aren't fully prepared to face the dangers which lie in wait for them. He can also be used to rescue characters who fall victim to the choking fog.

The villagers of Barovia might dimly recall Lorrimar's brief stay at the local inn, and that he ignored their warnings and headed into the deadly fog which surrounds the castle. They could also mention his enchanted sword, which was lost along with his mortal remains.

The PCs could also encounter Lorrimar's ghost if they venture close to the choking fog and witness his glowing lantern in the mists. While he is actually trying to warn them away, they will most likely be drawn towards the light like moths to a flame.

If the PCs search carefully, they might even stumble across Lorrimar's skeletal remains on the path up to the castle. He is still wearing his chainmail armour and carrying his rusted lantern, as well as his longsword +2, a holy symbol, a few mouldy cloves of garlic and a rotted wooden stake.

SERGEJI VON ZAROVICH

Lightlord of Barovia

By Mistmaster

Background

Sergeji von Zarovich was born in Vallaki in 20 BC, the second-born son of King Barov IV and his wife. When Sergeji was growing up, he always heard about the glorious deeds of his elder brother, prince Strahd, future king of Barovia.

Sergeji's hero-worship of Strahd never flickered, not even when the war was over and Strahd come back a bitter man.

He modelled himself on the man he was convinced Strahd was, becoming a brave and loyal fencer, with a great reputation for generosity and selflessness.

When Strahd founded a new capital city, the Town of Barovia, to honor their father, in the lands won from the Tergs, and Castle Ravenloft, a new seat to honor their mother, he enthusiastically went to live with him, becoming his second-in-command.

After Barov IV and his wife's deaths Strahd became the king, and Sergeji was the heir to the crown.

His brother was adamantly against the idea of marrying, and Sergeji accepted that.

One day he met a young, beautiful woman called Tatyana; they fell for each other at first sight.

After months of clandestine meetings, Strahd one day simply asked him, "Who is she?"

He told him all; he was worried about Strahd's reaction to him loving a girl below his station, but Strahd chided him for his lack of trust in him. "I have seen many men of noble houses who ran, screaming like little girls, in the battles against the Tergs; and as many peasants fighting bravely! Bring her here, and marry her, if you love her!" he told Sergeji.

His love for his brother in that moment was at its peak, thus, he missed the gleam of envy in Strahd's eyes.

The day after he introduced Tatyana to Strahd, she told him she didn't like the way the Count-King looked to her, but he just smiled and explained to her that it was easy to misunderstand Strahd, as the elder man was never good at expressing his emotions.

Tatyana calmed down, and they went on, to prepare for their wedding. The day they were waiting for came quickly.

Sergeji was nervous as every groom-to-be usually is, even more, because he had learned there was a conspiracy against his brother, to be enacted that very day. But Strahd had smiled a strange smile and assured him that all would be taken care of.

When he saw his brother dressed in his finest clothes, entering the room he was preparing in, Sergeji smiled to his brother. He smiled back, again, weirdly, and took a sheathed dagger out of his belt. "This is the dagger of the von Zarovich. It has been worn by the males of our family during weddings for centuries!" he explained, unsheathing it and coming close to his brother, so he could observe it better.

Sergeji nodded and went to hug his brother. Then, he felt a pang of sharp pain between his ribs. "I'm sorry brother, but this is the price for my happiness!" Strahd said, freeing the dagger from his brother chest.

Sergeji fell on the chair, blood flowing from his wound, confusion and pain clouding his mind. "W-why?" He managed to ask. Strahd didn't reply, as he took a cup, filled it with his brother's blood and drank it.

Under the bewildered eyes of his dying brother, Strahd became young again; He cleaned the blade of the dagger, and sheathed it again, returning it to his belt.

With his last breath, Sergeji did not curse his brother. The only thing he said was:

"Take care of...." he never ended that line. All went black.

So ended the mortal life of Sergeji von Zarovich, a man who loved his brother, his betrothed, and his people.

But death was not the end, only the beginning. As he was passing from the world of living, he saw his beloved escaping death at the hand of his brother. But the darkness with which Strahd had made a pact didn't allow Tatyana to part from the world. Tatyana became the eternal goal of the now immortal Count-King; again and again his brother and Tatyana were doomed to meet and bring sorrow to each other,

with the people of Barovia forced to suffer eternally with them.

This Sergeji could not allow. So the same Mists which had turned Strahd into a vampire, turned Segeji in a ghost.

He swore to protect Barovia, Strahd, and Tatyana, and that is what he still does.

Current Sketch

Many years have passed since that fateful night, and still Sergeji bears his burden; Again and again he has tried to convince his stubborn brother to accept that his happiness never resided with Tatyana, but Strahd has always rejected that, convinced that Sergeji only wants revenge; nothing could be further from the truth.

While he has managed to save some of Tatyana's reincarnations from Strahd, he has always had to accept that they had to leave, for their safety. Currently, he is trying to find someone who could love Strahd and be loved by him, for real, to break that cursed cycle, but the dark side of the Mists keeps thwarting his plans, tempting him to take the easy way out, to marry Tatyana himself and leave. But so far he has resisted this, because it would mean giving up on his brother and, worse, leaving Barovia to the darkness.

Sergeji helps people as he always did in life, and in the many insulated villages of Barovia there is always someone in need of help. He has recruited many like-minded ghosts to help him in this goal, but he has started to look for some living recruits, as ghosts tend to not have the necessary freedom of movement.

As he did in life, Sergeji still helps and advises his brother, and some of Strahd's better decisions came from heeding that advice; pitifully, Tatyana is the one matter Strahd never listen to Sergeji on.

Sergeji acts to counter every scheme of Strahd's which could endanger people, and he avoids bloodshed as much as it is possible. He is smart, however, and will have always a good backup plan.

Death by betrayal had an effect on Sergeji's ethics. Where in life he was straightforward, completely loyal and direct, in death he became more subtle, and prone to use underhanded techniques, to reach his goals; he does still have boundaries, however.

Couples soon to wed are Sergeji's softest spot, and he will always act in person to help such a couple in need.

Sergeji von Zarovich

CG human adult 5th rank ghost,
swashbuckler 20.

Medium undead (augmented humanoid)

Speed: 30 feet, Flying 60 feet, good
maneuverability.

HD: 20 d10+100 (200 hp)

AC: 37 (Dexterity +5, +4 Ghost

Touch Mithril Chainmail +8, Deviation
+9, Dodge +6)

Unprepared 25, Touch 37.

Attack: +5 Merciful

Rapier +36/+31/+26/+21

CMB: +25 (+29 Trip and Disarm),
CMD 35 (39 against Trip and Disarm
Maneuvers)

Special Qualities: Incorporeal, DR
10/Silver and Magic, SR 29, Nimble
+5, Turn Immunity, Beacon of Good
+5, Panache Points 9, vulnerable to
the von Zarovich Dagger, Charmed

Life 7 Times for day (+9 to any Saving
throw). Distinctive ghost abilities: Fly,
Spell Resistance, Damage Reduction
(x2), Aura of Peace 40 Feet radius
(Like Sanctuary, but the people in the
area which pass their saving throw are
still unable to attack Sergeji for 9
rounds, if he doesn't attack them first;
they are immune to this power for 24
hours thereafter; Peoples who fail will
not attack any of Sergeji's allies either,
unless attacked by them first. This lasts
9 minutes.) DC Will Partial 33. Friend
of Animals (Any animal within the Aura
of Peace radius starts the encounter
friendly with Sergeji, and won't attack
him if he does not attack them or their
masters first.) Quick Manifestation (He
can pass from the ethereal to the
material plane and vice-versa as a
move action)

Special attacks: Dexterity Drain, Touch
+25, (1d4 Ability Drain on Dexterity)

Abilities: Str 12 (or - if not ethereal),
Dex: 21; Con: -, Int: 14, Wis: 11, Cha:
28.

Saving Throws: Fort: +15, Ref: +17,
Will: +6.

Deeds

(The deeds marked with * give bonuses
already included in the above stats)

Derring-Do (Ex): Sergeji can spend 1
panache point when he makes an
Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride,

or Swim check to roll 1d6 and add the result to the check. He can do this after he makes the check but before the result is revealed. If the result of the d6 roll is a natural 6, he rolls another 1d6 and adds it to the check. He can continue to do this as long as he rolls natural 6s, up to a number of times equal to 5.

Dodging Panache (Ex): When an opponent attempts a melee attack against Sergeji, he can as an immediate action spend 1 panache point to move 5 feet; doing so grants him a dodge bonus to AC equal to 9 against the triggering attack. This movement doesn't negate the attack, which is still resolved as if Sergeji had not moved from his previous square. This movement is not a 5-foot step; it provokes attacks of opportunity from creatures other than the one who triggered this deed. Sergeji can perform this deed only while wearing light armor or no armor, and while carrying no heavier than a light load.

Opportune Parry and Riposte (Ex): When an opponent makes a melee attack against Sergeji, he can spend 1 panache point and expend a use of an attack of opportunity to attempt to parry that attack. He makes an attack roll as if he were making an attack of opportunity; for each size category the attacking creature is larger than he, Sergeji takes a -2 penalty on this roll. If his result is greater than the attacking creature's result, the creature's attack automatically misses. Sergeji must declare the use of this ability after the creature's attack is announced, but before its attack roll is made. Upon performing a successful parry and if he has at least 1 panache point, Sergeji can, as an immediate action, make an attack against the creature whose attack he parried, provided that creature is within her reach. This deed's cost cannot be reduced by any ability or

effect that reduces the number of panache points a deed costs.

Kip-Up (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he can stand up from prone as a move action without provoking an attack of opportunity. He can stand up from prone as a swift action instead by spending 1 panache point.

Menacing Swordplay (Ex): While he has at least 1 panache point, when Sergeji hits an opponent with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon, he can use Intimidate to demoralize that opponent as a swift action instead of a standard action.

Precise Strike (Ex): While he has at least 1 panache point, Sergeji gains the ability to strike precisely with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon (though not a natural weapon), adding 20 to the damage dealt. To use this deed, Sergeji cannot attack with a weapon in her off hand or use a shield other than a buckler. He can use this ability even with thrown light or one-handed piercing melee weapons, so long as the target is within 30 feet of her. Any creature that is immune to sneak attacks is immune to the additional damage granted by precise strike, and any item or ability that protects a creature from critical hits also protects a creature from the additional damage of a precise strike. This additional damage is precision damage, and isn't multiplied on a critical hit.

As a swift action, Sergeji can spend 1 panache point to double his precise strike's damage bonus on her next attack. This benefit must be used before the end of his turn, or it is lost. This deed's cost cannot be reduced by any ability or effect that reduces the amount of panache points a deed costs (such as the *Signature Deed* feat).

Swashbuckler Initiative (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks. In addition, if he has the Quick Draw feat, her

hands are free and unrestrained, and he has a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon that's unhidden and ready to draw, he can draw that weapon as part of the initiative check. *

Swashbuckler's Grace (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he takes no penalty for moving at full speed when he uses Acrobatics to attempt to move through a threatened area or an enemy's space.

Superior Feint (Ex): If Sergeji has still at least 1 panache point left he can, as a standard action, purposely miss a creature he could make a melee attack against with a wielded light or one-handed piercing melee weapon. When he does, the creature is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC until the start of the swashbuckler's next turn.

Targeted Strike (Ex): As a full-round action, Sergeji can spend 1 panache point to make an attack with a single light or one-handed piercing melee weapon that cripples part of a foe's body. Sergeji chooses a part of the body to target. If the attack succeeds, in addition to the attack's normal damage, the target suffers one of the following effects based on the part of the body targeted (see below). If a creature doesn't have one of these body locations, that body part cannot be targeted. Creatures that are immune to sneak attacks are also immune to targeted strikes. Items or abilities that protect a creature from critical hits also protect a creature from targeted strikes.

- *Arms:* The target takes no damage from the attack, but it drops one carried item of Sergeji's choice, even if the item is wielded with two hands. Items held in a locked gauntlet cannot be chosen.

- *Head:* The target is confused for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect.
- *Legs:* The target is knocked prone. Creatures with four or more legs or that are immune to trip attacks are immune to this effect.
- *Torso or Wings:* The target is staggered for 1 round.

Bleeding Wound (Ex): When Sergeji hits a living creature with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon, as a free action he can spend 1 panache point to have that attack deal additional bleed damage. The amount of bleed damage dealt is equal to 5. Alternatively, the swashbuckler can spend 2 panache points to deal 1 point of Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution bleed damage instead (Sergeji's choice). Creatures that are immune to sneak attacks are also immune to these types of bleed damage.

Evasive (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he gains the benefits of the evasion, uncanny dodge, and improved uncanny dodge rogue class features.

He uses his swashbuckler level as his rogue level for improved uncanny dodge.

Subtle Blade (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he is immune to disarm, steal, and sunder combat maneuvers made against a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon he is wielding.

Dizzying Defense (Ex): While wielding a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon in one hand, Sergeji can spend 1 panache point to take the fighting defensively action as a swift action instead of a standard action. When he fights defensively in this manner, the dodge bonus to AC gained from that action increases to +4, and the penalty to attack rolls is reduced to -2.

Perfect Thrust (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he can make a

perfect thrust, pooling all of her attack potential into a single melee attack as a full-round action made with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon. When he does, he makes the attack against the target's touch AC and ignores all damage reduction possessed by the target.

Swashbuckler's Edge (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, he can take 10 on any Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, or Swim check, even while distracted or in immediate danger. He can use this ability in conjunction with the *derring-do* deed.

Cheat Death (Ex): While Sergeji has at least 1 panache point, when he is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, he can spend all of her remaining panache points to instead be reduced to 1 hit point.

Deadly Stab (Ex): When Sergeji confirms a critical hit with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon, in addition to the normal damage, he can spend 1 panache point to inflict a deadly stab. The target must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw or die. The DC of this save is 25. This is a death attack. Performing this deed does not restore panache to the swashbuckler.

Stunning Stab (Ex): When Sergeji hits a creature with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon, he can spend 2 panache points to stun the creature for 1 round. The creature must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 25) or be stunned for 1 round. Creatures that are immune to critical hits are also immune to this effect.

CURSE OF THE GODFATHER

The Red Death and the Doom of the Corleone Family.

by M.T.

Based on the *Godfather* movies and novels

A curse lays upon an American family of Sicilian descent that poisons each generation and dooms it to tragedy.

History

Sicily has long been a blighted land. Between the various shifting greater powers that tried to dominate its people through invasion, the overwhelming injustice of the feudal system, and the general hot temper of many Sicilian males, it's perhaps to be expected that revenge became a way of life. Children would start early, fist-fighting in the streets, usually with the children of the same families whose men had killed or been killed by men from their own families a generation earlier. The landed gentry, or 'Dons', were supposed to administrate justice in these matters, But given the arrogance and corruption that this class became known for, as well as the inconsistency of the regimes that each different family drew authority from, it should probably also be unsurprising that they, too, became trapped in the constant cycle of insult and revenge.

Two words were passed down from this unique culture: *Omerta*, which, whatever it came to mean later, initially meant that official authorities have no legitimacy, and

are therefore not to be trusted, so a person must get revenge or justice for themselves, and *Vendetta*, meaning blood debt, which referred to the oath of revenge sworn against murderers of members of one's own family.

Don Corleone

It was into this environment that one Vito Andolini was born in the Sicilian town of Corleone in 1891. His was not a wealthy family but they had a house in which to live and clothes on their backs and were well liked by their neighbors and members of their church. For a few short years, Vito, his parents, and older brother, Paolo, led a fairly idyllic life together, but rare is the Sicilian family that knows no tragedy. In 1901, Vito's father was murdered for refusing to pay tribute to Don Ciccio, the local boss. His elder brother, Paolo, swore revenge and took to the hills, leaving Vito as the only male relative to stand beside his mother at the funeral. He was 9.

As the villagers proceeded with the funeral for the elder Andolini, gunshots echoed throughout the valley and one of the neighbor women ran out of the hills screaming that young Paolo had also been killed. Signora Andolini had to leave her

husband's funeral procession to weep over the corpse of her eldest son.

Once both of the Andolini dead were finally buried, Vito's mother took her last remaining son to Don Ciccio to beg for his life. Ciccio refused, reasoning that the boy would seek revenge as an adult. Signora Andolini then held a knife to Ciccio's throat and told her son to run for his life. Vito ran as his mother was shot down behind him and hid in the village. While Ciccio's men searched Corleone house-to-house, family friends smuggled Vito out of Sicily, putting him on a ship with immigrants traveling to America. Ellis Island immigration officials renamed him "Vito Corleone", using his village for his surname. This was often the case on Ellis Island during the time period in which Vito arrived. He later adopted "Andolini" as his middle name to acknowledge his family heritage.

Vito was taken in by the Abbandando family, who were distant relations of his, in Little Italy on New York's Lower East Side. Vito grew very close to the Abbandandos, particularly their son, Genco, who was like a brother to him. He married his wife, Carmela (1897–1959) in 1914; they were married for just over 40 years until Vito's death in 1955. They had four children – Sonny, Fredo, Michael and Connie. They also took care of a friend of Sonny, named Tom Hagen, who later served as the family *consigliere* (counselor). At first, Vito earned an honest living at the Abbandandos' grocery store, but the elder Abbandando was forced to fire him when Don Fanucci, a blackhand and the local neighborhood *padrone* (boss), demanded that the grocer hire his nephew.

During the time afterward, Vito befriended Peter Clemenza and Salvatore Tessio, who taught him how to survive and prosper through petty crime and performing

favours in return for loyalty. In 1920, Vito committed his first murder: killing Fanucci, who had threatened to report him, Clemenza, and Tessio to the police unless he received a cut of their illegal profits. During an Italian festival, Vito trailed Fanucci from the rooftops as Fanucci walked home. He ambushed Fanucci and gunned him down outside of his apartment. Vito then took over the neighborhood, treating it with far greater respect than Fanucci had. It was during this period of his life that Don Corleone gained recognition as a righteous man in an unrighteous world. He could have just become another blackhand like Fanucci, but instead chose to take up the cause of the poor and the needy among the community. When outsiders came to prey upon the Italians of Little Italy, it was Don Corleone to whom they had to answer - and whom they learned to fear. Also, when the wealthy among the community grew indifferent to the suffering of the less fortunate, it was Don Corleone who would take up the case. For all of this, the Don expected both respect and loyalty from his charges, which most were more than happy to give him. All knew that there was implied threat behind the Don's affable counsel, but given the way that things improved under him, all were willing to make allowances.

Vito and Genco started an olive oil importing business, Genco Olive Oil. It eventually became the main legal front for Vito's growing organized crime syndicate. (It was also highly successful in its own right, becoming the nation's largest olive oil importing company.) Between Genco Olive Oil and his illegal operations, Vito became a wealthy man.

In 1923, he returned to Sicily for the first time since fleeing as a child. He and his partner, Don Tommasino, systematically eliminated Don Ciccio's men who were

involved in murdering Vito's family, and arranged a meeting with Ciccio himself. Vito carved open the elderly Don's stomach, thus avenging his family. It was at this time that the Red Death first noticed him.

By the early 1930s, Vito had organized his criminal operations as the Corleone crime family, the most powerful in the nation. Abbandando was the *consigliere*, and Clemenza and Tessio were *caporegimes* (captains). Later, Vito's oldest son Sonny became a *capo*, and eventually Vito's heir apparent and de facto underboss. He had a more difficult relationship with his youngest son, Michael, who wanted nothing to do with the family business. Around 1939, Vito moved his home and base of operations to Long Beach, New York on Long Island.

Luca Brasi

It was during this time period that Don Corleone first crossed paths with Luca Brasi. Brasi had a reputation as a savage killer, making him one of the most feared and dangerous criminals in America; he was the only person in the world whom Vito came to fear. Ironically, Brasi eventually became fanatically loyal to Vito. During the Great Depression, Luca Brasi was the leader of a small but feared gang, which made deals with Vito's oldest son Sonny. The younger Brasi was a crazed killer who murdered an Irish prostitute, hours after she bore his child, then forced the midwife, under pain of death, to hurl the live infant into a burning furnace. The distraught woman, who described Brasi as an unholy demon, sought Vito's protection. Don Corleone intervened, covering up Brasi's crime and earning Brasi's undying service and loyalty. Brasi also wanted to kill adopted Corleone family member, Tom Hagen, for having an affair with the very Irish prostitute he himself had murdered. Before he could

become too much of a problem for the family, Brasi, a drug user, suffered a overdose, which lead to a mental breakdown and stroke-like condition (likely the work of the Red Death, again hoping to tempt Don Corleone). Although Vito disliked and feared Brasi, he kept him in his crime family, knowing that Brasi's formidable reputation would intimidate the Corleone family's enemies. This proved to be a wise, if bloody, decision, because Brasi's savagery saved the family on several occasions. In one two-week killing spree, he murdered six men who had attempted to assassinate Don Corleone. Only Vito, recuperating from the attack, could call him off. It was these six deaths that ended the famous "Olive Oil War." Another early incident involved Brasi killing two of Al Capone's henchmen who were hired to murder Don Corleone. Brasi subdued both men, bound and gagged them with towels and, as Brasi hacked up one with an ax, the other man, terrified, choked to death on the towel.

The Curse

Despite the many illegal and violent things done by the Corleone Crime organization over the years, The Red Death remained unable to tempt Vito Corleone into true corruption. Even its perfect gift of Luca Brasi as family killer failed to foster depravity in the Don. He remained a righteous man in an unrighteous world. He lacked the hubris of other crime lords of his day and more people were better off for his existence than were not. Moreover, Vito also went home to his loving wife, Carmela, every night. Mrs. Corleone knew of the dark nature of her husband's business and went to Mass daily to pray for both his soul and safety. Don Corleone knew this and, more importantly, took comfort in it. Stymied by

this, the Red Death cruelly moved its attention to his children.

Santino "Sonny" Corleone

At age 16, Sonny, Vito's eldest, committed a robbery. When Sonny's godfather, Peter Clemenza informed Vito about it, Vito demanded his son explain himself. Sonny said he had witnessed Vito murder the feared "Black Hand" gangster Don Fanucci, and now wanted to sell olive oil like his father. Vito, understanding that Sonny wanted to join the Corleone crime family, sent him to Clemenza for training.

Sonny "made his bones" when he was 19. By his mid-20s, he was promoted to a *caporegime* in the Corleone family. By the end of World War II, he was his father's underboss and heir apparent, respected and feared as a merciless killer with a fiery temper. While Sonny seemed to have all of the fatal flaws that his father did not, Sonny also possessed a more patient side; at age 11, he brought home a homeless boy, Tom Hagen, asking that he be allowed to live with the family. As the eldest child, Sonny acted as protector to his younger siblings and had a close relationship with his youngest brother, Michael, and only sister, Connie. He was unable to harm women, children, or anyone unable to defend themselves. Sonny married a woman named Sandra with whom he had four children, but still kept several mistresses, including Lucy Mancini, who was Connie's bridesmaid, but Sandra ignored his infidelities for personal reasons.

Sonny gained the attention of the Red Death in December 1945, when Virgil "The Turk" Sollozzo, backed by the Tattaglia family, approached Vito with an offer to enter the narcotics trade. During the meeting, Sonny spontaneously spoke out-of-turn, expressing an interest in the deal that Vito had declined. Vito later

reprimanded Sonny for revealing his thoughts to an outsider. Sollozzo later attempted to have Vito assassinated, believing Sonny, as his father's successor, would bring the Corleone family into the drug trade.

The failed assassination attempt left Vito near death, making the livid Sonny acting boss of the Corleone family. The Red Death quickly took advantage of Sonny's state of mind and used its power to exacerbate his already hot temper. First, Sonny ordered Clemenza to execute Vito's traitorous bodyguard Paulie Gatto. When Sollozzo mounted a second assassination attempt on Vito at the hospital that Sonny's youngest brother Michael thwarted, Sonny ordered Bruno Tattaglia, son and underboss of Sollozzo's ally Philip Tattaglia, to be murdered. Sollozzo proposed that Michael be sent to hear a truce proposition but Sonny, believing it was a trick, refused and demanded that the other Mafia families hand over Sollozzo to the Corleone family or else face war. Tom successfully convinced Sonny to wait because Captain Mark McCluskey, a corrupt NYPD captain on Sollozzo's payroll, had agreed to be Sollozzo's bodyguard. Tom warned Sonny that killing McCluskey would violate a long-standing Mafia rule not to kill members of law enforcement: the backlash from rival Mafia families and law enforcement would be severe. Michael advised Sonny that Sollozzo would never honor the deal and would likely make another assassination attempt on their father to remove Vito's opposition to the drug trade. Clemenza agreed with Michael's theory.

When Michael, who had distanced himself from the family's criminal activity, volunteered to kill Sollozzo and McCluskey, arguing that McCluskey is fair game because he is a corrupt cop mixed up in the drug trade, Sonny, amused by Michael's

proposal but also impressed by his family loyalty and bravery, initially doubted that his "nice college boy" brother was capable of murder. Ultimately, though, he approved the hit. Michael met with Sollozzo and McCluskey at an Italian restaurant in the Bronx, where he fatally shot both men. This ignited the New York underworld's first Mafia war in a decade. Sonny had arranged for Michael to flee to Sicily under the protection of Vito's friend and partner Don Tommasino.

As the war between the Five Families dragged on, Sonny, unable to break the stalemate, ordered bloody raids that earned him a legendary reputation. In retaliation, Emilio Barzini, the real mastermind behind the conspiracy, enlisted Sonny's brother-in-law, Carlo (Connie's husband), to help set a trap. Earlier, Sonny had severely beaten Carlo, upon learning that Carlo physically abused Connie. Ironically, it had been Sonny who introduced the two and encouraged the union. To draw Sonny out into the open, Carlo provoked Connie into an argument before savagely beating her. Weeping and injured, she telephoned the Corleone compound asking Sonny for help. Furious, Sonny sped toward Connie's apartment in Hell's Kitchen ahead of his bodyguards. At the Long Beach Causeway toll plaza, rival mobsters emerged with tommy guns and fatally ambushed him. He died a victim of his own fiery temper.

Michael Corleone

Unlike his two older brothers, Michael shunned the Corleone "family business," wanting an ordinary, more Americanized life. (Vito also did not want Michael to join the Corleone criminal empire, preferring that his favorite son go into politics.) When the United States entered World War II in 1941, Michael dropped out of Dartmouth

College and enlisted in the Marine Corps. During the war, he fought in the Pacific and received a battlefield commission to the rank of captain and the Navy Cross for bravery. In 1944, his war heroism was featured in Life magazine. He was discharged early in 1945 due to a disabling wound; unbeknownst to him, his father had arranged his release. He returned home to attend his sister Connie's wedding, accompanied by Kay Adams, his college sweetheart. Michael stayed for a few weeks before re-entering college without consulting his family.

After the events of December 1945, Michael fled to Sicily and spent two years under the protection of Vito's longtime ally, Don Tommasino. While there, Michael married a young local woman named Apollonia Vitelli. A few months later, Michael was notified that Sonny had been murdered. As he and Apollonia prepared to move to a safer villa in Syracuse, she was killed by a car bomb intended for Michael. Fabrizio, Michael's bodyguard, planted the bomb after being bought off by the Corleones' rivals.

During a meeting with the Dons of the other crime families to establish peace, Vito realized that Barzini masterminded Sonny's murder. After Michael returned to the United States in early 1951 and assumed Sonny's role as Vito's heir apparent, he and his father plotted to wipe out the other New York Dons. First, they deliberately allowed them to whittle away at the Corleone interests in order to lull them into inaction. Meanwhile, Michael convinced his father that the time was right to remove the family from the Mafia. More than a year after his return, Michael reunited with Kay and they married. He promised her the Corleone family would be completely legitimate in five

years. Within two years, they had two children, Anthony and Mary.

Vito semi-retired in 1954, and Michael became operating head of the family. He attempted to buy out casino owner Moe Greene's stake in the Las Vegas casino that the Corleones bankrolled, intending to move the family to Nevada and legitimize all Corleone enterprises, but Greene refused to sell. Before his death in 1955, Vito warned Michael that Emilio Barzini would likely attempt to assassinate Michael under the pretense of establishing peace between the families. Vito told Michael that whoever approached him about the meeting was the traitor within the family. Shortly afterward, on July 29, 1955, Vito died of a heart attack in his garden while playing with his grandson, Michael's son Anthony, a righteous and loving man to the very end of his days.

When *caporegime* Salvatore Tessio unknowingly exposed his complicity with Barzini by arranging the meeting, Michael set the plan in motion to murder the other New York Mafia heads: Barzini, Philip Tattaglia, Carmine Cuneo, and Victor Stracci, as well as Moe Greene. The plot unfolded on the same day Michael stood as godfather to Connie's newborn son. Later that same day, Tessio and Carlo Rizzi, Connie's abusive husband who conspired in Sonny's murder, were also executed. In one stroke, Michael had re-established the Corleone family as the nation's most powerful crime family, and made a reputation for himself as being even more cunning and ruthless than his father, while also finally gaining the attention of the Red Death.

Connie accused Michael of murdering Carlo. Michael dismissed her accusations as hysteria, and, when questioned by Kay, denied any involvement. Kay, initially believing Michael, later observed him

receiving his *capos*. Clemenza addressed Michael as "Don Corleone" and kissed his hand in the same manner that he did with Michael's father. Kay realized Connie's accusations were true - and that Michael had become his father's successor in every way.

Michael's descent into corruption was surprisingly direct. In 1958-1959, the Corleone family had relocated to Nevada while Frank Pentangeli ran the family's operations in New York, Clemenza having died a few years before. Although Michael was the most powerful Mafia leader in the nation, he still actively worked to remove the Corleone family from crime. His efforts had been largely unsuccessful, however, as his many enemies and growing obsession with revenge kept him tethered to the criminal underworld. Michael planned to finally legitimize the family by negotiating with Hyman Roth, his father's former business partner, over controlling casino operations in Cuba.

Hours after his son Anthony's First Communion party, unseen gunmen shot at the Corleone house, nearly killing Michael and Kay. Michael suspected Roth ordered the hit, and believed a mole within the Corleone family aided him. To uncover Roth's involvement, Michael maintained their business relationship, and ordered Pentangeli to settle a dispute with Roth's business partners, the Rosato Brothers. When Pentangeli met with them, however, they tried to kill him, though he survived.

Michael, Roth, and Fredo traveled to Cuba to forge a partnership with Fulgencio Batista allowing them to operate casinos in Cuba without interference in exchange for generous payments to the Cuban government. Michael sent his bodyguard to eliminate Roth on New Year's Eve, but Cuban soldiers killed the bodyguard during the attempt. That same night, Fredo

unintentionally revealed that he was the mole within the family; Michael confronted Fredo and gave him the Sicilian "kiss of death." During the New Year's Eve festivities, victorious rebel forces entered Havana, forcing Batista into exile and ruining Michael's plans. Fredo, fearing Michael, ran off while Roth escaped to Miami.

Meanwhile, Pentangeli, believing Michael had ordered a hit on him, prepared to testify against him in the Senate's investigation of organized crime. However, Michael had Pentangeli's brother Vincenzo brought from Sicily. Just prior to the hearing, Vincenzo and Frank exchanged glances. Understanding the threat, Pentangeli recanted his earlier sworn statements, throwing the hearings into chaos and effectively destroying the government's case against Michael.

Fredo confessed to Michael that Roth's right-hand man, Johnny Ola, had promised to reward him for information about Michael. Fredo also revealed that he resented being "passed over" to head the family in favor of Michael, and that he withheld key information about the Senate investigation. Michael disowned Fredo, and told his assassin Al Neri that nothing is to happen to his brother while their mother is alive — the implication being Neri would execute Fredo after her death.

Meanwhile, Kay decided to leave Michael and take their children with her, believing Michael would always live in a world of crime and violence. Michael asked her to reconsider, but Kay revealed she aborted their unborn son because she refused to bring another child into the Corleone's crime world. Enraged, Michael struck Kay and banished her, preventing her from seeing their children.

Following their mother's death, and at his sister Connie's behest, Michael seemingly forgave Fredo; soon after, however, Neri murdered Fredo on Michael's orders. At the same time, Michael sent Hagen to persuade Pentangeli to commit suicide to spare his family, and had *caporegime* Rocco Lampone kill a heavily guarded Roth at Idlewild Airport upon his return to the U.S.

As with all corrupted by the Red Death, heavy prices came with power. By 1979-80, Michael (now in his late 50s) had moved back to New York and taken great strides to remove the family from crime. He turned over his New York criminal interests to longtime enforcer Joey Zasa and, ridden with guilt over his ruthless rise to power, used his wealth in an attempt to rehabilitate his reputation through numerous philanthropic acts, administered by a foundation named after his father. A decade earlier, he had given custody of his two children to Kay, who had since remarried. He sold his gambling interests to the other Mafia families and reorganized his vast business holdings as the "Corleone Group".

In recognition of his charitable works, the Holy See had named him a Commander of the Order of Saint Sebastian. At this ceremony, Michael and Kay had an uneasy reunion after nine years. Kay wanted their son, Anthony, to have nothing to do with the Corleone "legacy," and told Michael that both she and Anthony knew the truth about Fredo's death. Michael had initially wanted Anthony to finish law school or work for the family business, but consented to Anthony becoming an opera singer.

Michael's new connection to the Church provided an opportunity to take over the large property company, Immobiliare. He was already its largest shareholder, and offered to buy the Vatican's 25 percent

share, which would give him controlling interest. He also took in Sonny's illegitimate son Vincent Mancini, a soldier in Zasa's crew, as his protégé. Michael was troubled by Vincent's impulsiveness and fiery temper, and opposed Vince's romance with his daughter, Mary, for fear that Vincent's growing involvement in the "family business" would endanger Mary, just as it did Michael's first wife, Apollonia.

On the night Michael announced he was dissolving his gambling empire, Zasa wiped out most of The Commission in a helicopter attack in Atlantic City. Michael escaped with help from Vincent and Neri but quickly realized that his old friend, Don Altobello, had conspired to murder him. Traumatized by the attack, Michael suffered a diabetic stroke, briefly incapacitating him. While Michael recovered, Connie gave Vincent her consent to assassinate Zasa. Michael was enraged upon discovering this, and demanded that no similar orders be issued while he is alive.

Michael decided to return to Sicily for Anthony's operatic debut at the Teatro Massimo. Suspecting that Altobello may make another attempt on his life, he had Vincent infiltrate Altobello's regime under the pretense of defecting. Meanwhile, Michael and Kay toured Sicily together, during which Michael asked for Kay's forgiveness, to which Kay admitted she would always love him.

At the same time, the Immobiliare deal had stalled, supposedly because Pope Paul VI had to personally approve it. Michael learned, however, that the Immobiliare deal was an elaborate swindle concocted by Immobiliare chairman Licio Lucchesi, who schemed with Vatican Bank head Archbishop Gilday and accountant Frederick Keinszig to embezzle a fortune from the Vatican Bank, and use Michael's "investment" to cover their tracks. Hoping

to salvage the deal, Michael sought Don Tommasino's assistance who directed Michael to Cardinal Lamberto (the future Pope John Paul I). With Lamberto's prodding, Michael made his first confession in 30 years, tearfully breaking down as he admitted to ordering Fredo's murder. Lamberto told Michael he deserved to suffer for his terrible sins, but that there was still hope for redemption.

John Paul I died soon after being elected pope, poisoned by Gilday. Meanwhile, Michael learned that Altobello (in league with the conspirators) had hired an assassin named Mosca to kill him. After Mosca murdered Tommasino, Michael vowed before his old friend's casket to sin no more. Vincent reported that Lucchesi, working with Altobello, was behind the assassination attempts on Michael.

Weary of the bloody, lonely life of a Don, Michael retired, making Vincent his successor - but not before giving him permission to retaliate. In return, Vincent agreed to end his romance with Mary. That night, Michael, reconciled with Kay and Anthony, watched his son's performance in the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* while Vincent orchestrated the murders of Lucchesi, Gilday, and Keinszig, and Connie murdered Altobello with a poisoned cannoli.

After the performance, Mosca shot Michael, but the bullet passed through his body and killed Mary instead. Her death broke Michael's spirit, and he screamed in agony over her body. He returned to Bagheria, Sicily, where he died in 1997, sitting alone in the same courtyard where he married Apollonia, and crushed by the corruption he'd thought he'd had no choice but to embrace.

Frederico "Fredo" Corleone

The most troubled of the Corleone children began life with a troubled infancy.

Fredo was afflicted with pneumonia as a baby and it was believed that this was the reason for the lack of strength and intelligence he demonstrated for most of his life, though he was also the most obedient and dutiful of the four. Unbeknownst to the entire family, he may also have been molested as a child by his parish priest. Vito Corleone was aware of his son's shortcomings but included him in the family business as much as he could. Fredo became his father's driver and was with his father when assassins working for drug kingpin Virgil Sollozzo gunned the Don down in the street. Fredo, terrified, dropped his gun, and failed to return fire. He could do no more than sit on the curb next to his severely wounded father, and weep. His family bore him no ill will because of this but Fredo may have blamed himself or he may simply have been traumatized. Like many people who suffer deficiencies, Fredo rarely spoke of his feelings.

After Sonny's assassination, Vito chose Michael as his successor of the Corleone Family. This was the beginning of a lasting rift between the two surviving brothers. After peace was made in New York, Michael sent his brother to Las Vegas under the protection of Don Anthony Molinari of San Francisco. While in Las Vegas, Fredo was to learn the casino trade and became acquainted with former hit man Moe Greene, who ran a major Vegas hotel that the Corleone family had bankrolled. Fredo's womanizing began to affect business and Greene slapped him in public over it. When Michael learned of this, he was angered and confronted Greene, but was dismayed to learn that Fredo had fallen under Greene's influence. Michael berated Fredo for openly taking sides against the family during a meeting with Greene and warned him never to do so again.

As Michael reluctantly embraced his new role as Don, Fredo quietly accepted his new place as underboss, though he had nominal power. This further fed Fredo's feelings of personal inadequacy and his inability to act effectively on his own behalf. These character flaws would eventually lead to far greater consequences.

When Fredo's womanizing led him to experiment with bisexuality, rival gangster Louie Russo exploited rumors of it to make Michael look weak, and tried to have him killed while he was with a male lover. In San Francisco, Fredo beat one of his lovers to death after the man recognized him from a newspaper photo. Tom Hagen came in and succeeded in covering up the resulting scandal by claiming Fredo had killed the man in self-defense. Meanwhile, Fredo also had liaisons with many women, having reputedly "knocked up half the cocktail waitresses in Las Vegas." He once met Marguerite "Rita" Duvall, whom Johnny Fontane sent to his room as a prank. Though hesitant, they had sex, and Fredo paid her to tell Johnny it was the best she'd ever had.

Later, At Colma during the funeral for Don Molinari of San Francisco, Fredo got the idea of setting up a necropolis in New Jersey. The Corleone family would buy the former cemetery land, now prime real estate, and also be a silent partner in the graveyard business. Fredo proposed his plan to Michael, wanting to impress and convince him and others of his abilities. Michael, however, dismissed the plan as unrealistic.

That Christmas, Fredo arrived at the Corleone party with Deanna Dunn, a fading movie starlet, whom he married a few months later. Dunn got Fredo bit parts in some of her movies and later, in September 1957, Fredo's Hollywood connections

allowed him to get his own unsuccessful TV show, "The Fred Corleone Show," which aired irregularly, usually on Monday nights, until his death. Meanwhile, Fredo's alcoholism worsened. He discovered Deanna cheating on him with her co-star, and shot up the car he had bought her. When Deanna's co-star tried to attack him, Fredo knocked him unconscious and was arrested. Hagen again stepped in to bail him out, and they got in an argument about Fredo's recklessness and Hagen's blind loyalty to Michael. Despite this, Hagen got Fredo cleared by again claiming the incident was self-defense. It was perhaps this incident that gained him the attention of the Red Death.

Fredo later betrayed Michael after being approached by Johnny Ola, an associate of rival gangster Hyman Roth. Roth, Ola and traitorous Corleone family *caporegime*, Nick Geraci, contrived to use Fredo as a pawn to eliminate Michael. Geraci and Ola met with Fredo when he was blind drunk after having a fight with his wife, and promised to make his necropolis idea a reality in return for information about Michael. Fredo supplied them with information about the Corleone family, particularly financial interests, though he didn't know that Roth's men would make an attempt on Michael's life. Whether this was the result of Fredo's own naivete or a manipulation by the Red Death is unknown.

During a large family gathering, just hours after Michael's son Anthony's First Communion party, Fredo was unable to control his intoxicated wife, Deanna Dunn. When she danced and flirted with another man, he furiously dragged her off the dance floor and threatened to hit her, though Deanna drunkenly mocked him until one of Michael's staff hauls her away. Later that night, unseen gunmen shot at the Corleone house, nearly killing Michael and Kay.

While Michael looked into the assassination attempt, Hagen was ordered to bring Senator Pat Geary under the Corleone Family's control so that he might give his assistance in obtaining gambling licenses. After the senator refused to help, he was implicated in a prostitute's murder, which was a setup by Michael to bring the senator to heel. Hagen offered the Corleone family's help in eliminating the problem in exchange for the senator's "friendship." Hagen told Geary that Fredo operated the brothel, and "it will be as if she never existed." Geary agreed to their terms.

Later, while in Havana negotiating with Roth, Michael discovered that Fredo was the family traitor behind the assassination attempt on him. After previously telling Michael that he had never met Ola, Fredo carelessly blurted out to another person that they had met. When Michael confronted his brother later, he delivered the kiss of death, saying he knew Fredo had betrayed him. Amid the chaos of American-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista fleeing Fidel Castro's rebel army, Michael pleaded with Fredo to leave the country with him, but, frightened, Fredo instead disappeared into the crowd. Michael's men eventually located Fredo and convinced him to return home.

Michael, meanwhile, was indicted by a Senate subcommittee investigating organized crime. Michael's former *caporegime*, Frank Pentangeli, was scheduled to testify against Michael at the hearing. A few days before the hearing, Michael asked Fredo what he knew regarding Roth's plans. Fredo said that, if he helped Roth, "there was something in it for me, on my own." He told Michael that he resented being passed over to succeed their father; he believed that, as the older brother, he should have taken over the family business. When pressed by Michael,

Fredo revealed that the Senate commission's lawyer was on Roth's payroll. Michael disowned Fredo, and privately instructed capo Al Neri that nothing was to happen to Fredo while their mother was alive; the implication being that Fredo was to be killed after her death. At their mother's funeral, and at their sister Connie's urging, Michael seemingly forgave Fredo, but it was a ploy to gain Fredo's trust. Soon after, while Fredo and Neri were fishing on Lake Tahoe, Neri executed him as Michael watched from his house. And so the Red Death used one Corleone to kill another and Michael was thus further corrupted.

Constanzia "Connie" Corleone

Born in 1925, Connie was the youngest child and only daughter of Don Vito Corleone and Carmela Corleone. Her youth was unremarkable and she was rarely exposed to either the family business or the Red Death. This all changed when she married Sonny's friend Carlo Rizzi. Her father was very displeased that Connie married a man who was not only half northern Italian, but also had a criminal history. He only agreed to the marriage on condition that they hold an old-style Sicilian wedding.

Carlo, who had the attitude of a punk, sore at the world, would periodically abuse and cheat on Connie in frustration at being shunted aside by the Corleone family. The night of their wedding turned out to be the harbinger of things to come; he gave Connie a black eye when she refused to give him a purse containing cash gifts from the wedding guests.

This continued and after one particularly bad beating, Connie complained to her father, who refused to help. Vito was, in truth, outraged at how Carlo treated Connie, but felt powerless to interfere;

Italian tradition forbade a father from interfering in a daughter's marriage. Connie's family grew to resent Carlo and his mistreatment of Connie, especially her oldest brother Sonny. One day, when Sonny went to visit Connie, he found her in tears and with a bruised face. Sonny responded by chasing down and beating up Carlo in the street, threatening to kill him if he hurt Connie again.

This got around to Corleone rivals, Emilio Barzini and Philip Tattaglia, who recruited Carlo to bring Sonny into the open. Carlo had a mistress call the house and a fight with Connie ensued, ending with Carlo again beating Connie. Connie called the Corleone compound asking Sonny for help, which caused an enraged Sonny to drive off alone to help her, leaving his bodyguards following in a separate car. At a toll booth along the route, Sonny was shot and killed by Barzini's Tommy gun-wielding men.

Later, Michael returned from Sicily to take Sonny's place as Vito's heir apparent. When Vito passed away, Michael became the new Don and avenged Sonny's murder by having the heads of the Five Families killed and Carlo garroted by Peter Clemenza. Connie flew into a rage when she found out Carlo was dead and blamed Michael, denouncing him in front of his wife Kay.

By 1959, Connie had become a rebellious and temperamental woman. She had remarried, divorced, and had affairs, and remained bitter toward Michael. At the party for Michael's son Anthony's First Communion, she announced that she intended to marry one Merle Johnson, whom Michael disapproved of. After the assassination attempt on Michael and Kay later that night, Connie offered some comfort to the children, but left without a

word after the family deemed it safe. Connie never spoke to any of her family again until she returned for her mother's funeral. She had forgiven Michael, and interceded on Fredo's behalf after Michael disowned him for conspiring with Corleone rival Hyman Roth. Her pleading with Michael to forgive Fredo seemed to have the desired effect and Michael publicly appeared to forgive Fredo. Later after Michael and Kay divorced, Connie helped care for Michael's two children, Anthony and Mary.

Over the following years, Connie's relationship with her family became much healthier and she found herself taking her mother's place as the much beloved family matriarch. Connie also became very close to her nephew Vincent Mancini, Sonny's illegitimate son with Lucy Mancini. Connie encouraged Michael to bring Vincent into the Corleone family and support him in his feud with Joey Zasa, the family's former enforcer. When Michael suffered a diabetic stroke and was recuperating in the hospital, Connie and Al Neri gave Vincent the approval to kill Zasa. It was at this point that both she and her nephew gained the attention of the Red Death.

When Connie traveled with the Corleone family to Sicily, she told Vincent to prepare a counterattack in case Michael was killed. It was at Connie's encouragement that the aging Michael later named Vincent the new Don, though Connie was still unaware that Michael had Fredo killed and said it was God's will that Fredo drowned by accident. This may have been a possible Red Death-induced delusion similar to that of her Brother Fredo's in 1959, or also the product of her own naivete.

When she, along with the entire Corleone family, attended the opera in Palermo where her nephew Anthony was performing, she discovered that her godfather, Don Altobello, had been behind

the plot against their family, and she killed him by giving him a gift of poisoned cannolis. Perhaps later, when her niece Mary was killed by an assassin intending to kill Michael, she, too, was paying the Red Death's price along with her brother and nephew.

Thomas Feargal "Tom" Hagen

Hagen was the informally adopted son of Don Vito Corleone, a qualified lawyer, and the *consigliere* to the Corleone Mafia family. Mild-mannered and soft-spoken, he served as the voice of reason within the family. He was actually of German-Irish ancestry.

In 1926, Sonny Corleone befriended 11-year-old Tom, who was living on the street after running away from an orphanage. Tom saved Sonny from a pimp who was notorious for raping and murdering boys. Sonny was so grateful that he brought Hagen home to live with his family. When Sonny brought Tom, who was the same age as he, home and asked that he be taken in, the Corleone family allowed him to stay. Hagen considered Vito his true father, though Vito never formally adopted Tom, believing it disrespectful to Hagen's deceased parents. Hagen asked to work for Vito after graduating from law school, knowing full well that his adoptive father was the most powerful Mafia chief in the nation. Vito was more than willing to take Hagen into his employ, having often said that lawyers can steal more than a phalanx of gangsters. Hagen married an Italian woman, Theresa, with whom he had two sons, Frank and Andrew, and a daughter, Gianna.

After longtime *consigliere* Genco Abbandando was diagnosed with terminal cancer, Hagen became *consigliere*, succeeding to the post formally after Abbadando's death. Vito was initially reluctant to give Hagen the post full-time,

considering that he was not a Sicilian and his non-Italian ancestry did preclude his formal membership into the Mafia, though he was still given the position. This resulted in the other New York families derisively calling the Corleones, "The Irish Gang."

Though Hagen immersed himself in the Sicilian-American lifestyle, and even spoke Sicilian, he had a "non-Italian" physical appearance, which was often advantageous to his work, allowing him to travel and conduct family business openly without potential witnesses remembering him.

When famous singer/actor Johnny Fontane sought his godfather Vito's help in securing a movie role that could revitalize his sagging career, Vito dispatched Hagen to Hollywood to persuade Jack Woltz, a big-time movie producer, to cast Johnny in his new war film. Hagen offered his benefactor's help with Woltz's union problems and also informed him that one of his actors had graduated from marijuana to heroin. This information would be later used to damage Woltz's studio. Woltz initially rebuffed Hagen, but became cordial after learning he worked for the Corleones. Woltz still refused to cast Fontane, however, who had slept with one of Woltz's protégées, but offered to do any other favor for the Corleones. Hagen declined, and soon after, Woltz awakened in bed with his prized racing stallion's severed head planted under the covers, causing him to cast Fontane in the film.

Hagen also arranged the fateful meeting between Vito and drug lord Virgil Sollozzo. Sollozzo wanted Vito to help finance his narcotics business and provide legal protection and political influence. Hagen was commended for discovering that Sollozzo was also collaborating with the Tattaglia Family, a rival to the Corleones. Vito ultimately rejected the deal, however,

on the grounds that Vito would lose his influence over the judges and police if they knew he was dealing in drugs.

Sollozzo responded by having Hagen kidnapped off the street and informed him that Don Corleone had been shot and killed. He wanted Hagen to persuade Sonny to accept his narcotics deal. Hagen promised to calm Sonny down, but warned Sollozzo that Luca Brasi, the Don's fanatically loyal bodyguard and hit man, would launch a violent reprisal. Unbeknownst to Hagen, Sollozzo and Bruno Tattaglia had already murdered Brasi. The meeting was interrupted when Sollozzo received word that Don Corleone survived the shooting, ruining Sollozzo's original plan. Hagen was allowed to leave unharmed, with Sollozzo telling him to make a deal.

Hagen was devastated when the Barzini Family murdered Sonny and tearfully informed Vito of his son's death. While Hagen loved all the Corleones, he idolized Sonny, and blamed himself for Sonny's murder.

After making the necessary peace with the other New York families, Vito semi-retired in 1954, and his youngest son, Michael, became operating head of the family. Michael removed Hagen as *consigliere* in favor of having his father informally fill the position, restricting Hagen to the handling of the family's legal business in Nevada, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Michael and Vito explained that the Corleones risked inciting a fight with the planned move to Nevada, and they needed a "wartime *consigliere*." Though hurt, Hagen accepted the decision and remained loyal. Hagen later told Michael that he figured out the real reason that he was demoted, though this reason was only alluded to. In truth, Michael and Vito had been planning to wipe out the other New

York Dons to avenge Sonny and establish the Corleones' supremacy — an operation kept secret even from Hagen. Though Hagen did notice that bodyguard Rocco Lampone had been secretly promoted to *caporegime* and hit man Al Neri reported directly to Michael rather than through Clemenza and Tessio. Neri and Lampone would later play a key role in Michael's plan to assassinate the rival Dons.

Hagen was present when Tessio was taken away to be executed for betraying the family and was also present when Connie's husband, Carlo Rizzi, was killed for his complicity in Sonny's death years earlier. Hagen was hardened to violence and accepted that treachery could never be forgiven.

Michael's wife, Kay learned that Michael had ordered his brother-in-law Carlo's death and fled to her parents' home in New Hampshire. Michael sent Hagen there to persuade Kay to return. Hagen ultimately risked his own life by "hypothetically" revealing some family secrets to Kay so that she could understand Michael's motives behind his actions.

Hagen remained Michael's lawyer after their move to Nevada but much to his dislike, his role in the family was reduced. For instance, he was excluded from the negotiations with Hyman Roth. After an assassination attempt was made on Michael's life, however, Michael realized he could not trust anyone in his inner circle and, assuring their fraternal bond and explaining that he withheld information from him out of admiration, Michael proclaimed Hagen acting Don while he left and attempted to uncover his betrayer. In reality though, Michael only gave Tom this position and trusted him exclusively because he barely knew enough to make moves against him. However, Hagen's promotion marked his renewed influence in the family

and secured the formerly abrasive Senator Pat Geary's forced cooperation.

The fall of Fulgencio Batista's regime in Cuba forced Michael to temporarily abandon his plans to become a legitimate businessman, and he resumed his role as the Don of the Corleone family. During the closely following Senate hearings on the Mafia, Hagen was instrumental as the defense for a questioned Michael. Afterwards, Hagen was unable to disguise his displeasure over Michael's increasing ruthlessness and paranoia, questioning the need to kill an already dying Hyman Roth. In response, Michael confronted Hagen about his competing job offers, and obliquely threatened to inform Hagen's wife about his mistress. Challenged point blank to confirm his loyalty to the Corleone Family, Hagen responded to Michael (in Sicilian) that he remained loyal. He dutifully fulfilled his role as legal adviser, and also in the *consigliere's* traditional role as dispassionate Family envoy. He gave Frank Pentangeli, who had betrayed Michael, the "idea" of committing suicide so that Pentangeli's family would continue to be cared for, while agreeing with Pentangeli that the Corleone Family were no longer "like the Roman Empire."

In the period between 1955 and 1962, Hagen once again acted as Michael's right-hand adviser and took an important role in the Corleones' dealings with a powerful political family, the Sheas. Hagen made a deal with patriarch Mickey Shea that the Corleone family would help get his son, James, elected President on condition that his youngest son, Danny, the new attorney general, would take a soft stance on organized crime. Meanwhile, Hagen had set his sights on a political career, running for a Congressional seat in Nevada (which Hagen was initially appointed to) with the ultimate goal of becoming the state's governor; he

was badly defeated, however, and abandoned any hopes of holding public office.

It was at this time that Hagen was called in to cover up for Michael's errant brother Fredo when he killed a man in San Francisco, also bailing him out of jail when he attacked his wife's lover. Hagen and Fredo got into an intense argument over Fredo's recklessness and Hagen's blind loyalty to Michael. Later, when Michael had Fredo killed, Tom guessed what really happened, but embraced willful ignorance of the matter.

In spite of Fredo's death, Hagen personally murdered Corleone rival Louie Russo, who had conspired with traitorous Corleone *caporegime* Nick Geraci to topple Michael.

Hagen later acted as Michael's right-hand man in dealing with the Shea family again, especially Attorney General Danny Shea, who publicly declared war on organized crime. When Hagen's longtime mistress, Judy Buchanan, was murdered by thugs working for Don Carlo Tramonti, Hagen became a person of interest in the investigation.

In August 1964, Geraci kidnapped Hagen and drowned him in the Florida Everglades. Geraci then sent Michael a package containing a dead baby alligator along with Hagen's wallet. This message was similar to the one Sonny received following Luca Brasi's death, in which Brasi's bulletproof vest containing two dead fish was delivered to the Corleone compound. Michael later had Geraci ambushed and murdered. Tom Hagen passed away, oddly, untouched by the corruption of the Red Death, but a victim of the corruption that it fostered.

The Doom of the Next Generation

As the Corleone children aged and a new generation rose to maturity. The Red Death's influence over the family waned, but there were still up and coming family members it could influence.

Vincent Santino Mancini (later Corleone)

Sonny Corleone and Lucy Mancini were having an illicit affair; Vincent Mancini is the result of that union. Being illegitimate, as a youth he was not included in the Corleone family. Connie Corleone knew about him, however, and was always pleased to play the role of his favorite aunt. When Michael Corleone offered him employment in one of the family's legitimate businesses, Vincent declined, preferring to work for Joey Zasa, who ran the remnants of the Corleone family's criminal empire in New York City. Vincent attempted to ingratiate himself with his uncle by protecting him from rival Mafia families, but Michael was initially hesitant to take an interest in his nephew. He saw that Vincent had inherited Sonny's temper and feared he would suffer his father's fate. Encouraged by his sister Connie, however, Michael took Vincent under his wing and started mentoring him.

Vincent saved Michael from an assassination attempt orchestrated by Zasa at a Mafia summit in Atlantic City. That same night, Michael was hospitalized following a diabetic stroke. Believing Zasa would make another attempt on Michael's life, Vincent murdered Zasa (with approval from Connie and Corleone assassin Al Neri). Among other things, this action also gained Vincent the attention of the Red Death.

Michael was angry that Vincent used violence to deal with Zasa and did so without Michael's permission--even though Vincent used the same reasoning Michael used to justify his killing of Virgil Sollozzo 35 years earlier-- however, he was impressed by his loyalty. When Vincent began a relationship with Michael's daughter Mary, however, Michael feared that his nephew's growing involvement in the family business will endanger her life; he was also concerned about Mary having a relationship with her first cousin.

When Don Altobello, Michael's old ally, betrayed him, Michael had Vincent spy on him. Vincent learned that Licio Lucchesi, a powerful Italian politician and criminal underworld figure, was the mastermind behind the assassination plot against his uncle, and was controlling Altobello, and supporting Zasa.

Vincent asked permission to retaliate, and in his last formal action, Michael tacitly agreed, then formally retired as Don and named Vincent as his successor. Michael's influence had made Vincent into a new

man: wiser, more patient, and understanding his status as the new Don. His first act was to order the instigators of the plot - Lucchesi, Vatican accountant Frederick Keinszig, and corrupt Vatican official Archbishop Gilday - to be murdered. In return for being made Don, Vincent agreed to end his relationship with Mary. That same night, the Altobello's assassin Mosca accidentally killed Mary during an attempt on Michael's life. Enraged, Vincent killed Mosca with a single gunshot. If he recognized Mary's death as the price exacted by the Red Death for its aid, he gave no indication.

The Future

With seven remaining uncorrupted Corleone Grandchildren and one already corrupted, The Red Death may gain further influence over the Corleone family and greater power through them. Their fate will ultimately depend on how the family raises it children from now on.

CORPSE OF THE STARVED GOD

The Role of G'Henna

By Mikhail Rekun

Tropes

In its original incarnation, G'Henna was a rather strange off-shoot of 2nd Edition Ravenloft, a land of eternal starvation that was eventually ejected from the Core in the 3rd Edition. The following article places it in the Core once more, and reimagines it as a land with a complex history and society. This version of G'Henna draws heavily upon historical Tibet as it existed before the Chinese invasion in 1959, as well as on the Bogd Khanate of Mongolia in the early 20th century, and on the Western ideas of Shangri-La, first described in James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*. A good recent example of these tropes can be found in the video game *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*, which deals with the Himalayas and with Shambhala, the religious basis for the fictional Shangri-La.

Purpose

G'Henna is perhaps the purest incarnation of religious horror in Ravenloft. It is a place where a man will starve himself to death with a smile on his lips, because he believes that in doing so, he secures a promised land for his children – yet the truth is that his ultimate sacrifice is nothing but the lies of a madman and the whispers of a demon.

More prosaically, G'Henna is the end of a journey. At long last, the players have crossed tempestuous oceans, burning deserts, and snow-peaked mountains to reach a tiny monastery high in the al-Hajar Mountains, only to find that their work is not yet done. G'Henna is an excellent place to place a MacGuffin, whether some ancient artifact or venerable sage, or else to have a villain flee to after being defeated.

Theme

G'Henna is a terrifying place to outsiders, yet one that seems entirely normal to those who live there. It is best run with the following themes in mind:

- **Religious Horror:** G'Henna is an excellent examination of the dark side of religious faith. Not in the form of nubile sacrifices or dagger-wielding cultists

A Disclaimer ☐

G'Henna is heavily based on pre-1959 Tibet, and the practices of Lamaism and Gelug Buddhism. This is in no way, shape, or form to impugn actual Tibet or Buddhism, any more than Richemulot or Borca are an insult to the French or Italians. Rather, this is to give G'Henna a sense of depth and verisimilitude it has previously lacked.

□ A Credit □

I would like to thank Tomokaicho and the other Fraternity of Shadows forumites for first bringing the G'Henna=Tibet similarities to attention

(though G'Henna can certainly have that if you really insist), but in how far people will go for a belief that is ultimately false. At its best, the players should be horrified not by what the G'Hennans might do to them, but by what they do to *themselves*.

- **Hypocrisy:** G'Henna is a land of holy starvation where abbots gorge on imported fruit, a land of sacred law used to shield the powerful and decadent, a theocracy led by an atheist. Corruption is omnipresent and accepted.

- **Remoteness:** G'Henna is at the ends of the earth. It is surrounded by some of the highest mountains in the Core, flanked by a stormy-tossed sea on one side and a sweltering desert on the other, and with unfriendly border guards to boot. It is far from everything, and reaching G'Henna is a monumental undertaking. Leaving it is even more so.

The Land

Environment

G'Henna is located on a trio of plateaus in the al-Hajar Mountains (trans. *The Stone Mountains* in the Pharazian tongue). They are an extension of the same Balinok mountain chain that runs from Lamordia, down along the eastern part of Falkovnia, through Barovia, western Hazlan, and then down along the western edge of the Pharazian Peninsula. Quite young in geologic terms compared to the rest of the Balinoks, the al-Hajars are jagged, barren mountains that pierce the sky like so many

□ And a Call Back

This article draws heavily upon the society and geography of Pharazia, as described in *QtR 21: The Domain of the Endless Word*. It is advised to read that article, or at least be familiar with the broad strokes, before reading this one.

knives. Indeed, the G'Hennans call the al-Hajars the *Angthang Zhakata*, or the 'Teeth of Zhakata.'

Life in the mountains themselves is simply impossible. The mountains around G'Henna average some 20,000 feet in height, and the tallest, the *Angthang Mudgna Zhakata*, or the 'Fang of Zhakata' reaches 27,000 feet. They are covered by snow almost year round, and the mountainsides themselves are basically nothing but rock, with little soil. As if compounding the trouble, the al-Hajar mountains serve as a rain barrier for the rest of the Pharazian Peninsula, and so by some quirk of geography the mountains are battered by near constant winds, strong enough to blow a man clear off a mountainside – these are the infamous *Mungthang Zhakata*, the 'Breath of Zhakata.' Regular blizzards do little to make travel in the mountains more appealing.

As such, the overwhelming majority of the G'Hennan population lives on three plateaus, the *Khsang*, *Gposang*, and *Gamdo*, which are sheltered from the winds and storms, and are low enough in altitude that some semblance of life is possible here ("low" being a relative term, of course). The average altitude of G'Henna's habitable lands is 13,000 feet, by far the highest settled areas in the Core. Visitors to the country need to be careful to avoid altitude sickness. In terms of habitable land, G'Henna is about half the size of Borca,

GM's Note

Most game systems have some rules governing hostile environmental conditions. Break them out when travelling to G'Henna. PCs will need to contend with extreme cold, altitude sickness, gale-force winds, difficult climbs, and the necessity of carrying all of their supplies with them – and then the GM can throw in an avalanche, a crevasse hidden by snow, a sudden blizzard, or some alpine monster (perhaps a cousin of Jezra Wagner?) Players who finally reach G'Henna should feel like they have accomplished something that few others have.

That said, GMs who don't want to bother with all of this may be able to handwave it easily enough, especially if the PCs are smart enough to hire the services of the Ransha Hajari.

though spread out across an area several times larger.

Still, the three plateaus are able to maintain some level of agriculture. The *Khsang*, or formally, the *Khsang Zhakata*, is the 'Stomach of Zhakata', the largest and also the lowest of the three plateaus. A thin layer of soil covers the rocky ground, and the natural environment tends towards scrubby grassland and thin, scraggly trees. The *Gposang Zhakata*, the Liver, is rather higher and only a third the size of the *Khsang*, but is located near a series of volcanic vents that enrich the soil and allow for serious agriculture, if at the cost of periodically belching poisonous gas up into the air. Finally, the *Gamdo Zhakata*, his throat, is smaller and higher still, and is basically barren. All three plateaus are connected through a series of mountain

passes and are arranged in a very rough triangle – it takes about three or four days of travel to go from one plateau to another. A smattering of smaller plateaus and valleys complete the G'Hennan map.

Despite its harshness, G'Henna can be a beautiful country, in an austere fashion. There are plentiful hot springs, several impressive geysers, and as many awe-inspiring vistas as one cares to seek. The largest canyon in the world, the *Gpoveng Zhakata*, is located in G'Henna, nearly 16,000 feet deep.

Social Geography

G'Henna is a land of villages, a few very small towns, and many, *many* monasteries, spread across the *Khsang*, *Gposang*, and *Gamdo* plateaus and sprinkled lightly across the smaller valleys and plateaus beyond. The G'Hennan population (roughly two million people) is concentrated on the two lower plateaus of *Khsang* and *Gposang*, where some 80% of the population lives.

G'Henna and the God-Corpse

Observant readers will have noticed a certain pattern in the G'Hennan naming practices for their home. This has a deeper meaning. According to the Zhakatan faith, the Provider committed an act of divine suicide, starving itself in order to create the world. As such, G'Hennans believe that they are literally living upon the corpse of their god, and name their surroundings appropriately. Indeed, a common poetic term for the world is the God-Corpse, and a popular Zhakatan saying is "We are maggots crawling in the belly of the Provider," used to signify the humility and to ward against untoward pride.

The G'Hennan Campaign

By and large, G'Henna is a difficult place to run a full campaign. It is incredibly isolated, and the culture, infused by the Zhakatan faith, is a hard one for most players to wrap their heads around. This is not to say it cannot be done (one might have a quite interesting campaign where the PCs are religious reformers, trying to bring about a societal revolution in the face of a monstrous and entrenched hierarchy), but it's definitely difficult.

More likely, G'Henna is an interlude in a larger, globetrotting campaign. Its very remoteness makes it a useful place to stash some important element of the plot. Perhaps the PCs need to learn something about the nature of the Demiplane that only an immured monk can tell them, or rescue some Vossath Nor artifact from the Zhugpo Monastery. In such a case, G'Henna has a full range of challenges to throw in their path – environmental challenges from the mountains, social challenges from recalcitrant abbots, and of course, plenty of terrifying monsters.

Most G'Hennans live in small villages of between twenty and two hundred souls, practicing subsistence farming wherever there is enough flat land to feed themselves and pay for the Zhakatan tithes. There are a bare handful of larger settlements, of perhaps a few thousand people each, usually located in unusually fertile areas (by G'Hennan standards, at least), or around particularly prominent monasteries.

The capital of Zhukar is unusual in that it is located on the *Gamdo* plateau, and is essentially only able to survive due to the import of food from the lower plateaus. It is

by far the largest city, though its population of thirty-thousand qualifies it to be barely a hamlet by the standards of neighboring Pharazia. It is only in Zhukar that one has some semblance of advanced civilization, such as light industry (that is to say, large groups of people weaving) or high culture (such as a small theater that puts on mystery plays).

The distinguishing feature of G'Hennan society, however, is the monastery. Some twenty percent of the male population lives in monasteries, with the largest, the *Zhugpo* Monastery in Zhukar, having six thousand monks in residence. Formally, monasteries are sites of prayer, contemplation, and meditation. In practice however, the monasteries are the driving engines of the G'Hennan state. They are typically the major landowners of their region, and the monasteries themselves are built with thick stone walls that allow them to double as fortresses. Most monasteries are deeply involved in local politics, agriculture, and trade, and are located where the rest of the G'Hennan population is. There are a *few* monasteries that are truly remote, built into the sides of mountains and so separated for most of the year by storms and snow, but they are something of the exception to the rule – if for no other reason than because it becomes very difficult to provision them.

A few monasteries conceal deeper secrets, however. In ages past, the Vossath Nor ruled G'Henna as they did Hazlan and Pharazia, and the ancient G'Hennan kings were of Vossath Nor lineage. Indeed, some say that G'Henna was the last refuge of the Vossath Nor, where they fled when they were overthrown in other lands, taking their most prized possessions with them. Over the centuries, most of their ruins were pulled down, but the Zhakatans built monasteries over them. Now, Vossath Nor treasures gather dust in monastery vaults,

or hidden chambers may lie unseen in the foundations.

The Folk

Social Classes

Traditional G'Hennan society operates under a caste system, with slaves at the bottom, then serfs, then free men, then aristocrats. Parallel and interlinked with this there is a religious hierarchy as well, with monks at the bottom and the Priesthood of Zhakata above.

Beginning with secular society and at the very bottom, one has **Slaves**. Slavery in G'Henna is a fairly weak institution, used mostly as a judicial punishment – if someone commits a crime or falls too deeply into debt, then they may be sold off as a slave, almost always to an institution of some sort (typically a monastery). The majority of slaves are then put to work as farmers, and live lives little different from the rest of the G'Hennan population, save for being poorer still. More rarely, very rich aristocrats or high-ranking abbots may have personal slaves. These are often individuals who have willingly entered into slavery, giving up their freedom in exchange for the life of comfort that their service brings them.

The majority of the G'Hennan population is comprised of **Serfs**. These are peasants as in other lands, farmers who live out their lives trying to scratch a living from the rocky G'Hennan soil. They are bound to the land, and are forbidden to leave their farms without the permission of their masters, who are usually the monks of a nearby monastery. They are also bound up in a series of sumptuary laws, ritual requirements, and other civil and religious regulations that ensure that they remain

teetering just at the edge of absolute deprivation.

A G'Hennan who somehow manages to escape the status of slave or serf (through exceptional hard work, or through the luck of having high-ranking relatives) becomes a **Free Man**. This is perhaps the most uncertain category of G'Hennan society, comprising all manner of necessary professionals and people who don't fit neatly anywhere else – it is here that one finds merchants, secular doctors, the best tradesmen, and so forth. Foreigners are usually placed into this category by default.

Entering into the upper classes, one finds the **Aristocracy**. The aristocracy are those families who have received special privileges and dispensations, and who have amassed a degree of wealth and status as a result. At the lowest ranks of the aristocracy, one finds village headmen, while the higher ranks are those who trace their descent back to G'Henna's ancient aristocratic families or even the historical kings, or who can claim relations to prominent abbots or clergy. In turn, they are usually granted significant authority as lay members of the Zhakatan faith, and those who enter the monastic life are fast-tracked into positions of authority. Most of G'Henna's aristocracy oversees large estates or villages, and has considerable power – if less so than they had before the rise of the Zhakatan faith.

Once, atop the aristocracy one would find the G'Hennan kings, but the rise of Zhakata has seen instead an entirely parallel track of social classes emerge.

At the bottom, occupying a social position halfway between serf and free man, are the **Monks**. If a serf is able to put together a suitable donation, or otherwise convince the local abbots, then a G'Hennan man may become a Monk. In practice, what most often happens is for an entire family

of serfs to pool their resources to allow a young boy or newborn to be entered into the monastic life. The life of a monk is hardly easy, as monks are expected to give everything to Zhakata, to live in holy poverty, celibacy, pacifism, and near-starvation, all the while doing much the same work of tradesmen and farmers in other lands – monks are expected to be useful, whether tending to monastery gardens or practicing a skill such as carpentry or weaving.

That said, the life of a monk is seen as significantly more desirable than that of a serf. To begin with, while the monks are *officially* bound to asceticism, there is an enormous amount of corruption in the system, particularly if a monk is able to amass a little power or influence. And while one's family background and the size of the donation do a great deal to establish a monk's status, it *is* possible to rise through the ranks by merit.

Those who do rise enter the **Priesthood of Zhakata**, and they are the ultimate authority in G'Henna. The most prominent members of the clergy are the abbots who run the monasteries that dot the G'Hennan landscape, but as the country is a theocracy, this category also includes various priests who work as government officials, judges, and so forth. In theory, they are all devoted absolutely to Zhakata and to the greater good of the G'Hennan people, but the concentration of such power results in a class that is absolutely infamous for corruption. G'Hennan abbots have had public mistresses, indulged in embezzlement, and there have even been small, private wars between rival abbots.

It should be noted that while rare, a degree of social mobility is possible in G'Henna, at least on a generational level. A serf family may see their sons inducted as

Sumptuary Laws and Greeting Rituals

Like many a feudal society, G'Henna has a series of extremely strict laws that govern how members of the different castes comport themselves. The most obvious of these are the laws governing clothing. All castes may wear clothing of brown, grey, or black colors, but beyond that there are a series of fine rules. Only serfs and slaves are to wear white, while monks of Zhakata are to wear red, aristocrats wear yellow, priests of Zhakata wear both colors at once, and free men are to wear blue. The clothing of abbots and Khagans are governed by entire books worth of symbolic meaning, determining precisely what they are to wear, when, and in what circumstances.

When a member of a lower caste meets a member of a higher caste, proper ritual is for the lower-caste member to bow, bring their hands up with the thumbs outward, and stick out their tongue. The purpose of this, aside from establishing authority, is also to show that the lower-caste person is not secretly a member of the **Blacktongues**, the evil sorcerers of the Gsang (see further on for more details).

monks, where, if competent and skilled, they may rise into the clergy and then raise their families into the ranks of free men or even aristocrats, ensuring that any future monks from their ranks are given rapid entry into the clergy. While much of G'Henna's upper class can trace its descent back thousands of years, there are also high-ranking abbots who can point to grandfathers who were serfs.

Ethnic Groups

Strictly speaking, the G'Hennans are part of the **Hajari** ethnic group, sometimes called the Mountain Peoples. Your typical Hajari is short, stocky, with skin a kind of light-brown in shade, and with dark hair and eyes. That said, the G'Hennans have an extremely distinct culture from the Hajari who live further down the mountains. Telling them apart is quite simple, actually. The Hajari are famous for their facial hair, with a Hajari's manliness being directly linked to the length of his beard or the curl of his mustache. G'Hennans, meanwhile, are typically clean-shaven, or at most adopt very thin whiskers. More subtly, the Hajari are known for their passionate, brawling, and free-wheeling society founded on herding and mining, giving them a very different affect than the quieter, ascetic G'Hennan farmers and monks.

All of G'Henna is a single ethnicity, and strangers are virtually unheard of. In the entire country, one can find perhaps a half-dozen foreigners in permanent residence, mostly Hajari or Lowland Pharazians, and perhaps as many again temporary visitors. One cannot call the G'Hennans xenophobic. Instead, most of them (all but the most educated elites) have almost no conception of the idea that there might be other races and ethnicities – indeed, many villagers would be surprised to find that there even exists a world outside of G'Henna.

That said, there is one group of Hajari who the G'Hennans are somewhat familiar with. The **Ransha Hajari** are the Hajari that live closest to the G'Hennans, lying due east of the country and at even higher altitude. They are primarily migratory herders, grazing yaks in small valleys dotting the mountainside, moving whenever the grass runs out. Most Ransha live in

transient villages of a hundred or so people, linked together by bonds of marriage and blood into a dozen larger clans. Culturally, the Ransha are somewhere between the G'Hennans and the rest of the Hajari. They worship Zhakata, but their nomadic way of life means that monasticism never really took root, and so a great deal more pre-Zhakatan faith and culture has remained, including the emphasis on clan ties. Evangelizing to the Ransha is a constant program of the more ambitious Zhakatan abbots, but nothing has ever come of it.

It should also be noted that the Ransha are renowned as the very best mountaineers in the al-Hajar mountains, able to climb any peak, in any weather (or perhaps more accurately, having the sense not to climb peaks that will kill them). Anyone who wishes to enter G'Henna without going through one of the few official passes and their border stations will be all but required to hire a Ransha guide to get them there.

Religion

G'Henna is given over entirely to the worship of **Zhakata**, and all other religions are banned, though pre-Zhakata *Gsang* shamanism survives. Non-believers require a special pass to enter the country, one which is given grudgingly, if at all.

According to Zhakatan theology, in the beginning there was Zhakata, the Infinite, the Merciful, the Provider. That was all that there was. But Zhakata grew discontent, for it was alone, and there was no one to share in its bounty. And so, Zhakata committed Holy Suicide, fasting for long enough that even the stars guttered like candles, until it starved. The great god's body became the world, and the god's soul became the Hungry Ghost, the Devourer, and the god's memories were fractured into a thousand

thousand thousand pieces, to become humanity. But a world with a dead god is a fallen one, and brutal, hungry, and harsh, and so it is the duty of all G'Hennans to work to feed their god, to pour enough food down his throat so that the Provider will live again, while also placating the anger of the Devourer.

Folk theology views this in straightforward terms. Give Zhakata enough rice, enough wheat, enough beef, and the Provider will rise up and usher G'Henna into a time of golden prosperity. More advanced theologians view that it is not food that is important, but the act of self-abnegation, as the living memories of the god re-enact its ultimate sacrifice. And when it is completed, then all will be rejoined with Zhakata as one, a new being that is not simply the Provider, but something greater still, the greatness of a god tempered by the suffering of humanity.

In practical terms, the Zhakatan faith is hierarchical, and organized along monastic lines (all members of the clergy dwell in monasteries today, though this has not always been the case historically). There are four main ranks, though there are scores of variations between them. There are monks, who are the workforce of the Zhakatan faith. There are priests, who have some level of authority, including the right to preach. There are abbots, who run the monasteries, and who are in most ways that matter the pinnacle of the Zhakatan faith. And finally, there are the Khagans, the Living Memories of Zhakata. They are selected at a young age based on their ability to recall the god-memories of Zhakata. They then undergo a grueling training regimen in theology, governance, and magic, until they take up their positions as the leaders of G'Hennan society, guided by the memories of their

god. Each Khagan is essentially an abbot, but also has unique duties to the faith at large, which gives them particular authority.

As previously noted, the Zhakatan faith has a very serious problem with corruption in its ranks, particularly among the higher priesthood. An abbot is absolute master of his monastery, and has enormous influence over the surrounding villages and towns. If an abbot wishes a monk to fast until death, they have the right to so order it. Furthermore, there is very little oversight over the higher priesthood – problems must be *very* serious to come to the attention of

Sky Burial

According to Zhakatan orthodoxy, the only legitimate end for a human corpse is to be consumed by another creature. Consequently, the G'Hennans practice sky burial. After their deaths, their bodies are taken up to specially prepared grounds on the sides of the mountains, stripped of their clothing, and left to the elements and to the scavengers. As a practical matter, most other funeral practices are difficult to carry out in G'Henna. The ground is far too rocky to make digging graves practicable, and there isn't enough wood to practice cremation. Sky burial is thus both a practical and a religious duty.

the Khagans. As such, an abbot (or someone who has the favor of an abbot) can get away with murder, let alone various financial or sexual improprieties.

The G'Hennan people, for all their faith, are somewhat cynical about such things, and no one thinks twice if an abbot is raiding the till or has a mistress or two on the side. That said, some of the higher

Immured Monks

There is no greater honor in the Zhakatan faith than to become an immured monk, a living saint of the faith. These are monks who are willingly sealed within small caves or tiny rooms inside of monasteries, the entrances are then bricked up but for a narrow slot, which is covered with a cloth. They remain there for the rest of their lives, locked in meditation. Once a day, silent attendants push food and water through the slot. If the food is untouched for several days, the other monks brick up the last gap.

Even among the Zhakatan faithful, those who agree to be immured are seen as extremists and fanatics, but they are also revered as having the courage of their convictions. They live for years, even decades in what is essentially solitary confinement. Many undoubtedly go mad, and it is not at all rare for an immured monk to begin to rant and rave after a few weeks of confinement, ultimately falling silent and refusing to eat. But those who are able to survive are treated as living saints, and many develop strange insights and powers, living for decades beyond the normal span or predicting the actions of the Mists with uncanny accuracy. Gaining their wisdom requires receiving a special dispensation from the abbot, and then convincing the immured monk to speak, neither of which are easy tasks.

There are also dark rumors that not all immured monks go to their living death willingly, but rather are pressured or even forced by unscrupulous abbots.

clergy descend into more lurid sins, the kind of depravity that even they have to hide.

The Zhakatan faith is absolutely paramount in G'Henna, but even it is not entirely without competition. **Gsang Shamanism** is a pre-Zhakatan tradition, which has survived despite the best efforts of the Khagans to uproot it. This is because Gsang is an open secret in G'Hennan society, and far too many high aristocrats and abbots take advantage of it for it to ever be exterminated.

Originally, Gsang was its own, animistic tradition, using fetishes constructed of bone to harness the ghosts of men and animals in order to achieve an effect. A Gsang sorcerer would build a fetish from the head of a bull, and call into it the spirit of the Cow, and increase the fertility and health of a herd of cattle in such a way. Nowadays, this has become blended with the idea that the Gsang are in some way 'stealing' the power of Zhakata, consuming food or corpses left

for the god in order to divert a measure of divine power. Contemporary Gsang Shamanism is characterized by acts of ritual cannibalism and by the construction of charms out of human bone – a trumpet made from a femur, a small drum made from a skull, and so forth.

Technically, the Gsang are illegal, but G'Hennans turn to the Gsang whenever they have a problem which the Zhakatan clergy cannot help with. The Gsang practice divinations, protect against diseases and storms, promise fertility and help with childbirth, and bestow luck upon business ventures. Most of the Zhakatan clergy turns a blind eye to the Gsang, so long as the sorcerers know their place and exercise a modicum of discretion, though there are a few who try to persecute and drive out the sorcerers in their lands.

The Blacktongues

Most Gsang Shamanism is either harmless, or else occurs at the level of mundane criminality, for all that they engage in a spot of cannibalism as part of their worship. But the Gsang have their own dark traditions, and it is from here that the Blacktongues emerge. These sorcerers use their powers in thoroughly evil fashions, raising undead servants, spreading sickness, or stealing from their neighbors. The signature spell of the Blacktongues is called the *Curse of the Wasting Feast*, and involves the Blacktongue concealing a tanned human stomach somewhere in a house. Afterwards, whenever anyone eats inside, every second bite vanishes from their owner's gullet to reappear in the Blacktongue's stomach – essentially, the owners of the home wither away despite eating, while the Blacktongue grows fat on stolen food.

Culture

G'Hennan culture is defined by two facts – the worship of Zhakata and the necessity of staying alive in a foodless, barren alpine environment. As a consequence, G'Hennan society tends towards the ascetic. Learning and scholarship are heavily respected, restraint and humility are respected, and conspicuous consumption of any kind is heavily frowned upon. Even wealthy abbots and aristocrats are expected to show a certain simplicity of style.

Most of what might be considered art and culture in G'Henna is of a religious nature, either made by monks or by secular craftsmen trying to imitate monks. Music tends towards chants or else symphonies of horns (the most impressive being enormous

dragon-horns that can be heard from one mountaintop to the next) and drums. Art leans heavily on geometric symbolism and mandalas, or else on iconography relating to Zhakata. There's virtually no 'entertainment' in the usual sense in G'Henna, other than a few small drabs in the capital of Zhukar.

The one exception to this is festivals. Even the austere Zhakatan faith realizes that people need some sparks of joy in their lives, and so there are a number of bright festivals during the year. They occur roughly every month and a half, and usually include feasting (at least, as much feasting as ever happens in G'Henna, this being the one time that people can get properly full), drinking, dancing, and all manner of peculiar rituals for people to unwind. For instance, during the holiday of *Khazuhakhan*, people perform the Dance of the Hungry Wolf, tying bells to their arms and legs and cavorting around the village or the monastery in order to scare off bad luck (personified by the titular hungry wolf, a performer in wolf skins who's supposed to run away). Another example is the Festival of the Butter Lamp, when monasteries compete with one another to build sculptures out of butter, with the Yagno Khagan judging the very best. These sculptures are then melted down to fuel the lamps of the monasteries in the coming year.

The amount of skill and investment that goes into these festivals varies from place to place. Performers of the Hungry Wolf Dance at the Zhugpo Monaster in Zhukar will have exquisite costumes, carved masks, and decorated bells of silver, while a remote village will content itself with covering the performers' faces in soot and using a few wooden bells. But all across G'Henna, these festivals are the very purpose of peoples' lives, and no sooner has one ended than the G'Hennans begin to look forward to the next one.

The Realm

Economy

Mostly, there isn't any. Much of the G'Hennan population is engaged in subsistence agriculture – that is to say, they focus on producing just enough food to survive and to pay their tithes to the Zhakatan clergy. The G'Hennan serfs make their own clothing, their own tools, their own homes - just about everything. Even the monasteries devote a considerable share of their manpower to basic survival, with many monks spending as much time in the fields as any serf.

As such, there isn't really any urbanization or trade to speak of. G'Hennan villagers barter amongst themselves for what they need, the Zhakatan church takes the rest, and that's about it. There is a very small market for luxury goods – invariably produced in the capital of Zhukar – but it makes up a negligible part of the G'Hennan economy. Most goods that are produced above the village level are made in monasteries, and once again are made for internal use.

There is likewise virtually no trade outside of the country apart from a few Pharazian merchants, who wander in and

out of G'Henna, bringing in expensive luxuries from the desert (perfumes, rich silks, etc) and taking away fine metalwork.

Law

G'Hennan law is based on the ancient edicts of the long-ago kings, with alterations to account for Zhakatan religious practices. On those rare occasions when something very complex occurs, the G'Hennans tend to turn to the sophisticated legal codes of the Pharazians – this most often occurs with what might be called 'white-collar' crimes, rare in G'Henna but more common among the mercantile Pharazians. By and large, G'Hennan law is straightforward, but it has the particular quirk of being extremely strict against wastefulness of any kind, most particularly the wasting of food. This is blasphemy against Zhakata, and is treated as a crime on par with assault or serious fraud. A man who throws away a loaf of bread without granting it to Zhakata risks a flogging.

Polyandry

By G'Hennan law, a bride may choose to accept up to two of her bridegroom's younger brothers as 'minor husbands.' They all live together, and as very often no one will know which of the brothers is the father of any given child, it is common for the children to address all of the men in their family as 'uncle.' Roughly one out of every four marriages in G'Henna is polyandrous. [Their name comes from the belief that anyone who casts the *Curse of the Wasting Feast* finds their tongue turned black. For this reason, formal G'Hennan greeting often involves sticking the tongue out, to prove that one is no sorcerer.]

G'Hennan Mastiffs

Farmers around the world use dogs on their farms, to protect their herds and to scare away pests and predators. So do the G'Hennans, but the G'Hennan Mastiff is a creature of an entirely different level than your typical sheepdog. Enormous, shaggy dogs, with a distinctive curly tail and thick, dual-layered coat, they weigh in at over 200 lbs. They are bred to protect G'Hennans from snow leopards and wolves, and are rumored to have mystical powers of their own, such as an ability to sniff out ghosts or invisible sorcerers.

In point of fact, there are two sub-varieties of G'Hennan Mastiff. The smaller (relatively) and more active *Khsang-Khyi* (which literally means "Dog from Khsang") is typically used by farmers. The larger *Zhug-Ksyi* is heavier, more patient, and rumored to have sharper supernatural senses, and is typically used as a guard animal in Zhakatan monasteries. G'Hennans rarely have sophisticated locks or traps in their homes, but a couple of G'Hennan Mastiffs make for an amazingly efficient security system.

In the conventional sense, there is very little professional crime in G'Henna. It's a rural society, where everyone lives in each other's pockets, and so theft or what-not is virtually unknown. Crimes of passion, meanwhile, tend to be uncovered very quickly and easily. At the village level, most crimes are resolved by community consensus, with only severe offenses being passed up the line to the Zhakatan clergy.

There is a level of law enforcement, however, in the form of the Tson-tson monks. The Tson-tson are a particular sub-

order of Zhakatan monks, usually selected from monks of a more physical bent. Most of the time, they do the heavy manual labor of the monastery, but they are drilled in the use of spear, club, and bow, and are called out when the monasteries need guards or soldiers. Strictly speaking, the Zhakatan clergy are sworn to non-violence, but the Tson-tson are given dispensations by their abbots to crack heads if necessary. They are easily recognizable by their flamboyant robes with large shoulder pads, and their habit of darkening their faces with soot in order to seem more fearsome.

On the occasions that there is a need for a serious criminal investigation – a murder where no obvious suspect presents himself – then the abbot of the local monastery will appoint a special investigator, typically a senior member of the clergy known for their intellect and insight. They are given a squadron of Tson-tson monks as a guard, and sent forth. These senior clerics, who go by a variety of titles, have virtually unlimited latitude to pursue their investigations as they see fit. Magic is commonly used, as is torture to force confessions from suspects.

Official punishment tends to be rare, but very harsh when it occurs. If someone is caught pickpocketing or stealing, they are most likely to be given a long and loud telling-off by their immediate family or by a senior monk, and then told not to do it again. If a crime is impossible to ignore, however, the law codes call for flogging, then a variety of judicial mutilations, the cutting off of hands, ears, and noses, or finally execution – typically by being chained out in the wilderness until the subject dies of exposure.

Government

G'Hennans trace their history back more than twenty-five hundred years, though, to be fair, the first six or seven centuries are

limited to myths and a few registers of kings and nobles, some of whom were likely invented. The original G'Hennan kings were divinely-appointed rulers, and likely had some connection to the Vossath Nor of Pharazia and Hazlan. Sometime around 50 BC, the G'Hennan monarchy entered a long decline due to infighting among the nobility, culminating in the G'Hennan kings pledging fealty to the ascendant Pharazian Empire in 197 BC, in exchange for magical support in a civil war. Despite this, the last king was murdered in 274 BC, and G'Henna entered into a long civil war between rival claimants to the throne. The Zhakatan religious awakening of the 4th century BC saw the creation of a parallel structure of authority of monasteries, abbots, and priests. This came to a head in 371 BC, when the modern G'Hennan theocratic state was established, largely by the then Yagno Khagan bashing heads together.

Today, G'Henna may be best described as a theocratic aristocracy. All of G'Henna is divided into dioceses, each of which contains a single monastery. The abbot of that monastery also serves as the secular ruler of that diocese, seeing to their spiritual (and to a lesser extent physical) wellbeing, and making sure that the tithes are collected. Dioceses may range in size from a tiny monastery with a village right outside, to enormous tracts of land with a town and even subordinate monasteries. In all but the smallest G'Hennan diocese, the abbots then delegate much of the administration of their dioceses to a variety of government officials, who are drawn from the ranks of the G'Hennan aristocracy and who become lay members of the Zhakatan church in the process. It is these aristocratic officials who *actually* collect tithes, enforce order, and otherwise see to the daily business of governance.

Each abbot has enormous power and authority, with significant freedom to govern his diocese as he sees fit. This is restrained by a kind of collegial system. Every abbot falls in somewhere in the order of spiritual precedence, based on a combination of his seniority, his record of accomplishment (both spiritual and temporal), and the prominence of his monastery (again, both spiritual and temporal). Abbots are expected to listen to the recommendation of those above them in the order of precedence, and send a share of their tithes up the line.

Above the abbots still are the Khagans. There are about a half-dozen of these individuals, though not every post is always filled, and they are all abbots of large and prominent monasteries. In addition, each Khagan has authority over a particular important element of the Zhakatan faith – for instance, the *Senden Khagan* is charged with keeping the Zhakatan religious calendar, proclaiming festivals, while the *Kashlon Khagan* is in charge of overseeing the distribution of tithes (in particular, making sure that monasteries send a share of their tithes to him, and he then distributes them to needy monasteries). Over the years, these Khagans have developed an ancillary staff of government officials (again aristocratic lay members) and occupy something not unlike cabinet posts. The *Kashlong Khagan* is assisted by a series of high officials, and together they are essentially G'Henna's Ministry of Exchequer.

The most powerful of the Khagans is the *Yagno Khagan*. He is considered the most attuned to Zhakata of all of the Khagans, to the point of being referred to as the Voice of Zhakata, and is given the task of serving as the final arbitrator of all matters of theology. In effect, this makes the Yagno

Khagan the supreme judicial authority, and by extension, puts him in ultimate control of G'Henna's law enforcement and military apparatus. The most important consequence of this is that the Yagno Khagan may order an abbot investigated for heresy or apostasy, and it is the Yagno Khagan, in concert with a conclave of senior abbots, who will determine the victim's guilt or innocence. In his own right as abbot, the Yagno Khagan also controls the vast Zhugpo Monastery, and the capital city of Zhukar.

That said, the Yagno Khagan does not have unlimited power – he is the most powerful of the Zhakatan clerics, but he still requires the support of other abbots, and especially the other Khagans. It is best to think of him as the chairman or speaker of a very large and fractious assembly. Vastly influential, but not autocratic.

Military

In the conventional sense, G'Henna doesn't have a military at the moment. Surrounded by tall mountains and ferocious winds, it hasn't needed one. There are only a few routes into the country through which even a small company of soldiers can pass, and the G'Hennans have fortified all of them with stout fortress-monasteries with stone walls several feet thick. Siege equipment being much too difficult to get up the side of a mountain, the G'Hennans have never been seriously menaced by foreign invasion – though the invention of cannon means that they may be in for an unpleasant surprise one fine day.

Historically, the G'Hennan soldiers were the retainers of wealthy aristocrats, armed and equipped with weapons of cold steel or with bows and arrows, and sent to fight against other nobles. Armies were miniscule, much as in nearby Pharazia, with an aristocrat with an army of four hundred

being considered a prominent warlord. With the Zhakatan awakening, these private armies were abolished.

In the event that the Yagno Khagan requires more force than usual, he mobilizes the Tson-tson monks of neighboring monasteries, assuming that those of the Zhugpo monastery are insufficient. They are less an army and more a particularly large armed mob, but they have proven sufficient for G'Henna's needs.

Politics

In theory, all of G'Henna is united in the worship of Zhakata and obedience to his abbots. This does not happen.

To begin with, all but the smallest monasteries are an absolute snakepit of personal rivalries and power-plays, as dueling monks and priests duel for the favor of their superiors (as they determine promotions), while simultaneously trying to depose said superiors (as this opens up places to be promoted *to*). At low levels, monks and minor priests will spread malicious rumors, give bribes, or engage in some discreet sabotage. At higher levels, particularly when the position of abbot is up for grabs, blackmail, poison, and black magic are entirely plausible. Compounding matters is that monastic society is ostensibly austere and very closed-in, which means there's plenty of room for secret affairs, high passions, and incestuous rivalries.

Once someone actually ascends to the ranks of the abbot, he must continue to fend off aggressive underlings, while also dealing with rival abbots. Monasteries may feud over religious differences (the Zhakatan faith is hardly monolithic in its interpretation of scripture), over land or people, or even due to personal differences between abbots. To add to the stew, abbots have to deal with aggressive aristocrats

competing for governmental positions, and not at all averse to using their own connections to get what they want.

At the very pinnacle of G'Hennan society, the cutthroat nature of politics quiets down a bit. The leading Khagans are sufficiently powerful that no one has seriously threatened them, and the system of G'Hennan governance requires a level of cooperation between the different Khagans (the Yagno Khagan controls the judicial system, but it's the Kashlon Khagan who pays their salary, for instance). The chance to *ascend* to the ranks of the Khagans, however, is a different story. Theoretically, the Khagans are selected on the basis of their ability to recall the memories of Zhakata. But in practice, one often notices that the priests who go about testing children often find Khagans where they expect to find them, such as in their own families, or in the families of their patrons (or those who paid them well). Whenever a position for Khagan opens up, G'Henna descends into a positive frenzy of competition, as everyone tries to influence the selection for their own ends.

Foreign Relations

Between the mountains, the storms, the desert, the unfriendly border guards... G'Henna doesn't really *have* foreign relations. Most of the world barely knows that it exists, and only a handful of outside scholars are able to comment on it with any level of detail.

Pharazia: There is, of course, one exception – barely. Since 197 BC, G'Henna has been officially a vassal state of the Pharazian Empire, something that has never been revoked. In practice, while Sultan Daud II still appoints a governor to rule G'Henna, said worthy does not actually leave the city of Phiraz, the title having

been ceremonial for close to two hundred years. Similarly, the Yagno Khagan nominally claims to be the chosen of the Sultan, drawing on the ancient authority and grandeur of the Pharazian Empire to augment his own, though he'd be thoroughly shocked if the Sultan ever actually sent him an order. Indeed, the last official communication between the two countries occurred twelve years ago, when the Yagno Khagan sent the then-infant Sultan a (two years belated) congratulations on his ascent to the throne.

That said, there is a modicum of interaction between the G'Hennans and the rest of Pharazia, particularly with the Hajari communities who live lower in the mountains. Mostly this is meager trade that occurs in a few specially sanctioned waystations along the border, where the Hajari trade gold and gems for the G'Hennan's unique textiles, but there are a small handful of Pharazian merchants who have wrangled passes and visit G'Henna, trading various luxury goods and keeping scrupulously quiet about their faith. Travelling with these merchants is just about the only way for most outsiders to reach G'Henna.

The 11th Yagno Khagan

The 11th Yagno Khagan, Petso Rowang, is one of the more active holders of the title, and has been responsible for a sharp increase in the power of the Yagno Khagan and in the centralization of the G'Hennan state. His two predecessors, the 9th and 10th Yagno Khagans, were meditative men who spent much of their time locked away in the Zhugpo Monastery. Petso Rowang, on the other hand, has taken much more power into his own hands, vigorously prosecuting abbots who fall afoul of him, and advancing

his own particular ideas about the nature of Zhakata.

A tall, austere-looking man, the 11th Yagno Khagan is also exceptionally busy, sleeping only a few hours a night and fueled more by the fervor of his belief than by mortal food or drink. He's a micromanager, taking a deep interest both in the workings of the vast Zhugpo Monastery as his personal fiefdom, and in the rest of G'Henna. He travels across the country constantly, imposing himself and his retinue on monasteries while he investigates them down to the cellars for any theological deviations, before moving onwards.

For better or worse, as a result of his constant travels, the 11th Yagno Khagan has become a familiar figure in G'Henna. If before, even most aristocrats rarely saw their ruler, now all but the most remote villages have had a chance to see the head of the Zhakatan church – even if most serfs still only see him from afar. This is of uncertain effect. Very few people *like* the 11th Yagno Khagan. Petso Rowang is a fanatic, and not a particularly likeable soul. Yet few doubt his faith and his probity, which cannot be said about very many in the Zhakatan church. Overall, the 11th Yagno Khagan is respected but not loved in G'Henna.

An alternative Yagno Petrovna

In his original incarnation, Yagno Petrovna was a schizophrenic madman who created a god, 'Zhakata', sacrificed his brother and several close retainers to the voices in his mind, and received the dubious reward of a Darklordship for it. This is a perfectly respectable and appropriate origin for the Darklord of G'Henna, creating an entire corrupt theocracy out of the fevered dreams of a madman.

On the other hand, if one prefers to sidestep the issues raised by having a lunatic Barovian as the Darklord of a pseudo-Tibetan Domain, then actual Tibetan history provides a very intriguing origin story. In particular, during the 19th century, the 9th through 12th Dalai Lamas all died in peculiar circumstances while still children, not a one of them living to the age of his majority. Though there is little hard evidence, there's certainly no shortage of suspicious circumstances to suggest that they were murdered, though as the historian Mike Dash notes, "The chief difficulty in interpreting the murderous politics of the period is that the story reads too much like an Agatha Christie novel. Every contemporary account is self-serving, and everybody gathered in the Potala's precincts had his own motive for wanting the Dalai Lama dead." Regardless of the truth, this can be easily transformed into an origin for a different sort of Yagno Khagan.

Suppose that the Yagno Khagan is not the paramount figure of the Zhakatan faith, but is instead a ranking official who served as regent for the *true* leader of the Zhakatan hierarchy, while that latter worthy (called, let us propose, the *Ngan Khagan*) is still under-age. What level of ambition, what level of irreligious cynicism would be necessary for such a person to betray their sacred trust, to murder one who is at once a child and also the head of one's own faith? And then, when the next *Ngan Khagan* is selected, to wait until they reach the point of dispensing with their regent, and then to repeat the process. And again. And again. A Darklord-worthy crime, would it not be? And what would be the effects upon the country, if the people came to believe that such a crime had happened – and they would hardly be able to not notice, when the second or third *Ngan Khagan* drops dead in his minority.

For more information, see historian Mike Dash's article *Murder in Tibet's High Places* in Smithsonian Magazine, at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/murder-in-tibets-high-places-62805827/?no-ist>.

ALL TOO REAL

Four Domains Inspired by the Horrors of History

By John Berndt

Freienbauernland

Freienbauernland was once the domain of Falkovnia, but there was a revolution that overthrew Vlad Drakov. The new ruler is an average-looking woman in her late thirties, by the name of Josephine Parkorov. She has blonde hair and blue eyes. She is becoming somewhat heavysset entering her middle age but not fat. She is strong for a woman and is very tall, standing 6'3", thus towering over most men. She has a commanding personality, a nice smile, and a pleasant voice.

The domain looks much the same as ever, as its geography has changed not at all. There are a number of other changes though. The most obvious is that the falcon tattoo on the forehead of each citizen now has a spear going through it. This is to signify the death of Drakov. The names of some of the buildings are changed. For example, if there was an inn named the Falcon Inn it might be renamed something like the Smiling Freeman.

The government has changed officially from an absolute monarchy to a republic. This is somewhat of a façade. The land's official name is The Democratic People's Republic of Freienbauernland. The Revolutionary Party is the real power in the land, which is led by Josephine Parkorov, first speaker and prime minister. It isn't quite a one party state, but it is bordering on it. The Revolutionary Party in fact controls only 60% of the seats, not all of them. But, the other 40% are controlled by

a half a dozen smaller parties. The Revolutionary Party can easily pass any legislation it wants, but sometimes allows opposition parties to pass unimportant laws.

The main opposition is The People's Revolutionary Army, which is a violent group that apparently broke off from the Revolutionary Party. However this opposition is a sham. It was created by the Revolutionary Party to attract malcontents. It allows them to succeed in various criminal acts to attract more members. The dangerous members disappear, while the minor ones are left to be caught by the local authorities. As long as they cause problems only in poor and working class neighborhoods, they are pretty much left alone by the central government. They aren't protected if they are caught in a criminal act; they are just not hunted down by the central government. Once they threaten middle-class and better neighborhoods, things change. In that case, they are hunted down by the central government with its vigor varying based on how much of a threat the criminal is to the central government and how rich the victims are.

There are a large number of rebel groups outside the People's Revolutionary Army, which go under various names such as Freedom's Sons, The People's Guard, the Revolutionary Council, and other pretentious-sounding names. Although a few of them are legitimately interested in bringing true freedom to Freienbauernland, most are just terrorist groups and criminal

gangs. A lot of them are merely upset that they weren't chosen to be part of the new

government and not about what the government is doing.

Josephine Parkorov Prime Minister

CHARACTER NAME	PLAYER	CAMPAIGN	
10 Fighter	Human	Lawful Evil	
CLASS AND LEVEL	RACE	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE POINTS

ABILITY NAME	ABILITY SCORE	ABILITY MODIFIER	TOTAL	WOUNDS/CURRENT HP					NONLETHAL DAMAGE			SPEED							
STR strength	16	+3	HP hit points 80									30ft. (Armored: 20ft.)							
DEX dexterity	10	+0	AC armor class 21	10	+	9	+	2	+	0	+	0	+	0	+	0	+	0	
CON constitution	14	+2	TOTAL																
INT intelligence	14	+2	TOUCH armor class 10	FLAT-FOOTED armor class 21															
WIS wisdom	10	+0	TOTAL																
CHA charisma	16	+3	INITIATIVE modifier +0	0	+	0	+	0											

DAMAGE REDUCTION

SKILLS

SKILL NAME	KEY ABILITY	SKILL MODIFIER	ABILITY MODIFIER	RANKS	MISC MODIFIER
(cc)Appraise	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Balance	dex	0	0	0	0
(cc)Bluff	cha	11	3	8	0
Climb	str	3	3	0	0
(cc)Concentration	con	2	2	0	0
Craft	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Decipher Script	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Diplomacy	cha	17	3	8	6
(cc)Disable Device	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Disguise	cha	3	3	0	0
(cc)Escape Artist	dex	0	0	0	0
(cc)Forgery	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Gather Information	cha	9	3	6	0
Handle Animal	cha	8	3	5	0
(cc)Heal	wis	0	0	0	0
(cc)Hide	dex	0	0	0	0
Intimidate	cha	7	3	2	2
Jump	str	3	3	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (arcana)	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (architecture & engineering)	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (dungeoneering)	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (geography)	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (history)	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (local)	int	2	2	0	0
(cc)Knowledge (nature)	int	2	2	0	0

SAVING THROWS	TOTAL	BASE SAVE	ABILITY MODIFIER	MAGIC MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER	TEMP. MODIFIER
FORT constitution	9	7	2	0	0	
REFLEX dexterity	3	3	0	0	0	
WILL wisdom	5	3	0	0	2	

BASE ATTACK BONUS	10/5	SPELL RESISTANCE	0
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GRAPPLE modifier	13	10	3	0	0
	TOTAL	BASE ATT BONUS	STRENGTH MODIFIER	SIZE MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER

ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	
Unholy Returning Handaxe	+2	16/11	1d6+7	20/x3
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES		
-		3lb, Med,		

ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL

FEATS, LANGUAGES & ABILITIES			
	Simple Weapon Proficiency	Gnome	
Feats	Tower Shield Proficiency	Common	
Iron Will	Weapon Focus (Handaxe)		
Leadership	Weapon Specialization (Handaxe)	Fighter abilities	
Negotiator	Improved Critical (Handaxe)		
Persuasive	Weapon Focus (Shortbow)		
Toughness	Weapon Specialization (Shortbow)		
Armor Proficiency (heavy)	Improved Critical (Shortbow)		
Armor Proficiency (light)			
Armor Proficiency (medium)	Languages		
Martial Weapon Proficiency	Elven		
Shield Proficiency	Dwarven		

Appearance, Traits *

Disadvantages

A rather average looking blonde woman in her late 30's. In her case average means average; she is by no means homely.

History

Parkorov is the daughter of Vlad Drakov; her mother was the wife of a dairyman. The man she knew as her father survived one of Drakov's many wars against Azalin, serving as typical sword fodder. Unlike many of his fellow troops, he followed the banner proudly. He saw all the undead Azalin raised against them and thought it proved that Drakov was right and that outsiders were vile scum who would stoop to anything. He believed that it was a righteous war to stamp out the undead scourge. The fact that it was hopeless was besides the point. There was glory in fighting off the inevitable. Although not made a Talon, he was invited to enlist in the army and he accepted and became a regular soldier. A strict observer of the law and a follower of the Lawgiver, while not exactly thrilled about Drakov's "First Night" rights, he felt it was the ruler's right and never complained

about it. It was merely how things were. He brought up his daughter to respect the law at all times and that Falkovnia had a proud warrior tradition. His daughter eventually found out about her heritage from Drakov and she gloried in it. She might be a bastard daughter, but she was the bastard daughter of the king-fuehrer himself and not all could say that. He allowed her to join the army as a spy and she was good at it. She joined the Revolutionary Army just so she could betray them all to her father and glory in his triumph. But, unknown to her, one branch of the party succeeded in finally overthrowing Drakov. She used her considerable social skills to convince others that it was all part of her master plan. When the leader protested, she called him a liar and had him executed. At that moment, darklordship passed to her. At first she reveled in it, but soon she heard whispers of revolutionaries trying to overthrow her. Her curse is to have groups constantly try and overthrow her and she is always looking for rebels under every bed.

Goal

To stop the revolutionaries once and for all and rule without worry. Of

course, since she is cursed this will never happen.

Carattionia

Warning: Mature Themes and Material

Carattionia is a floating island domain that can show up anywhere there is at least a small lake. It is about 1 km square, and consists of a boat dock, a very lightly wooded area, and a roman style palace. The palace itself is magnificent, being about 350 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 30 feet high. There are many marble statues, which are well made, but sexually explicit and obscene. The domain is known for its wild parties; it is said that any kind of depraved craving can be sated there. Only the richest, most depraved people go there, as it is a steep 5000 gp/day to stay in the palace.

The palace itself is in the style of the Roman Empire at its height. Inside, there are many well-done paintings, which are again, sexually explicit. At the center of the palace is the "party room" where there are the best bottles of alcohol, the finest drugs, and the most attractive prostitutes of both sexes and all races found in the core. The prostitutes look strung out and often show signs of injury, but the kind of guests that stay here don't really care about that. There are a number of gambling tables which favor the house by 5-25% depending on the game. At the back of the room is a door that leads to the throne room, which is decorated with the most magnificent, and obscene, paintings and statues. The throne itself is made of expensive wood and has gold tracings. There is no kitchen, as food and drugs are delivered daily.

The emperor of Carattionia can magically open a trap door, with a slide underneath it, of any size and on any part of the palace he chooses, at will, as one of his dark lord powers. The slide deposits the poor victims in the "gaming area," which is a maze. The Emperor then tells them that if they survive the game they are free to go, and he always keeps his word on this. The rooms are full of constructs, undead, lycanthropes and other monsters. Most of the encounters can be bypassed by answering riddles correctly. However, the monsters are illusions, and work like *greater shadow conjuration* except that he can "summon" any CR6 creature and he can summon up to six of them at once, at will, as a spell like ability, but can control only six of them at one time. He can similarly use *greater shadow evocation* at will as well. He likes interesting matches, however, so the encounters will usually be between party level -1 and party level +1. The maze starts out looking well maintained and clean, but further into the maze, it gets more and more run down as time passes, like the rest of the palace.

There are a large number of bedrooms that visitors can use. They start out elaborate and ornate but run down over time. At first, they are furnished with ornate paintings, plush carpets, and have a spotless appearance, but dust quickly covers all of it. The emperor can use his *greater shadow conjuration* and *greater shadow evocation* in any room as well. When he has nightmares, which is every week or two, he subconsciously uses these powers to play out his nightmares on the people who most annoyed him that day. He can wizard lock any room at will. He has 24 4th-level fighters as guards. He also has a 12th-level elven rogue named Traval, whom he uses as a kidnapper.

Antonio Caratti

CHARACTER NAME	PLAYER	CAMPAIGN	
14 Sorcerer	Human	Neutral Evil	
CLASS AND LEVEL	RACE	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE POINTS

ABILITY NAME	ABILITY SCORE	ABILITY MODIFIER	TOTAL	WOUNDS/CURRENT HP				NONLETHAL DAMAGE				SPEED
STR strength	12	1	HP hit points 16									30ft.
DEX dexterity	14	2	AC armor class 19	0								
CON constitution	14	2	TOTAL	BASE	ARMOR BONUS	SHIELD BONUS	DEX MODIFIER	SIZE MODIFIER	NATURAL ARMOR	DEFLECT MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER	
INT intelligence	14	2	TOUCH armor class 14	1	FLAT-FOOTED armor class 7							
WIS wisdom	14	2					DEX MODIFIER					
CHA charisma	23	6	INITIATIVE modifier 2									

DAMAGE REDUCTION	
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SKILLS					
SKILL NAME	KEY ABILITY	SKILL MODIFIER	ABILITY MODIFIER	RANKS	MISC MODIFIER

(cc)Appraise	int				
(cc)Balance	dex				
Bluff	cha	5		9	
(cc)Climb	str				
Concentration	con	9		7	
Craft	int				
Decipher Script	int				
(cc)Diplomacy	cha	2			
(cc)Disable Device	int				
(cc)Disguise	cha				
(cc)Escape Artist	dex				

SAVING THROWS TOTAL	BASE SAVE	ABILITY MODIFIER	MAGIC MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER	TEMP. MODIFIER
FORT constitution		2			
REFLEX dexterity		2			
WILL wisdom		2			
BASE ATTACK BONUS	7/2		SPELL RESISTANCE		

GRAPPLE modifier		7			
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TOTAL BASE ATT BONUS STRENGTH MODIFIER SIZE MODIFIER MISC MODIFIER

ATTACK		ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL
Unholy Quarterstaff +1		3/-2	1d6+2	20/x2
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES		
		4lb, Med, dual wielding,		

ATTACK		ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL
Unholy Quarterstaff +1		-1	1d6+1	20/x2
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES		
		4lb, Med, dual wielding,		

(cc)Forgery=§	int			
(cc)Gather Information=§	cha			
(cc)Handle Animal§	cha			
(cc)Heal=§	wis	2	2	
(cc)Hide=	dex			
(cc)Intimidate=§	cha	0		
(cc)Jump=	Str			
Knowledge (arcana)§	int	9	7	
(cc)Knowledge (architecture & engineering)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (dungeoneering)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (geography)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (history)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (local)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (nature)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (nobility and royalty)§	int	0.5	.5	
(cc)Knowledge (religion)§	int			
(cc)Knowledge (the planes)§	int			

(cc) crossclass skill
 = can be used untrained § apply armor penalty

Appearance, Traits * Disadvantages

Brown eyes , Brown Hair, 5' 10", 175 Lbs

History

Antonio was born in the Empire of Amaratia, which was the largest empire of his home world. The Imperial line was made up exclusively of sorcerers, who used their arcane might to conquer their empire.

Antonio's father was a sorcerer of epic power. He was raised by his uncle Honorius, who abused him and spoiled him by turns. As his uncle's temper would get out of control, he would beat Antonio mercilessly and then feel guilty about it later and spoil him rotten. The uncle was also a depraved individual who used drugs and threw debauched parties, to which, in his perversion, he invited his nephew. Meanwhile, Antonio's father ignored him, being on the field of battle supporting his armies in their conquests. His mother was bored most of the time and hopped from bed to bed to alleviate the boredom. He soon became even more depraved than his relatives and raped several people of all races and both sexes. He was particularly sadistic in his impulses, deliberately causing great pain and anguish to his victims, both physically and emotionally. He surrounded himself with a number of other depraved royals and nobles, and they encouraged his vices for their own sick amusement. He took to abusing his sorcerous powers, using enchantments and illusions to ruin people's lives. Finally, he came up with a sick plan to

go to an elven village, leading a troop of soldiers in raping all of the inhabitants; when it was done, the Mists took him. His curses are based on the fact he is heir to the Imperial Throne and is quite proud of that fact. Firstly, he rules a tiny domain, not a huge one the size of the Roman Empire at its height. And secondly, when he was the Imperial Heir, he had a flock of servants to clean up after him. His staff now consists of some guards and a bunch of depraved revelers, who have no interest in cleaning, leaving his domain a filthy mess. He covers this up with illusions, but as his drug habits cause him to lose concentration, his control over the illusions slip, revealing more and more the fact that he is living in a decaying palace full of dust and dirt. His domain floats, so his ability to attract new victims is unreliable. Alongside the powers already mentioned, he is unaging and undying. If he is killed, he revives two days later, on the throne.

Goal

Escape Ravenloft back to his home world.

Travel

CHARACTER NAME	PLAYER	CAMPAIGN	
8 Rogue	Elf	Chaotic Evil	
CLASS AND LEVEL	RACE	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE POINTS

ABILITY	NAM	ABILITY SCORE	ABILITY MODIFIER	TOTAL	WOUNDS/CURRENT HP	NONLETHAL DAMAGE										SPEED		
STR strength		12	+1	HP hit points	30											30ft.		
DEX dexterity		16	+3	AC armor class	17	0												



CON constituti on	10	+0	TOTAL	BASE	ARM OR BON US	SHIEL D BON US	DEX MODI FIER	SIZE MODI FIER	NATUR AL ARMO R	DEFLEC T MODIF IER	MISC MODI FIER
INT intelligenc e	14	+2	TOUCH armor class	13	FLAT-FOOTED armor class	14					
WIS wisdom	10	+0					DEX MODI FIER			MISC MODI FIER	
CHA charisma	18	+4	INITIATIVE modifier	3							

DAMAGE REDUCTION

SKILLS				
SKILL NAME	KEY AB ILITY	SKILL MODIFIER	ABILITY MODIFIER	MISC RANKS MODIFIER

Apprais er	Int	3		1
Balance de x				
Bluff	Cha	7		3
Climb	Str			
(cc)Conc entratio n	Con			
Craft	Int			
Deciphe r Script	Int			
Diploma ch cy	Cha	9		3
Disable Device	Int			
Disguise ch a	Cha	7		3
Escape de Artist	Cha			
Forgery	Int	5		3
Gather Informa tion	Cha	5		1
(cc)Han dle Animal	Cha			
(cc)Heal wis				
Hide	DEX	4		1
Intimida te	Cha			
Jump	Str			
(cc)Kno wledge (arcana)	Int			
(cc)Kno wledge (archite cture &	Int			

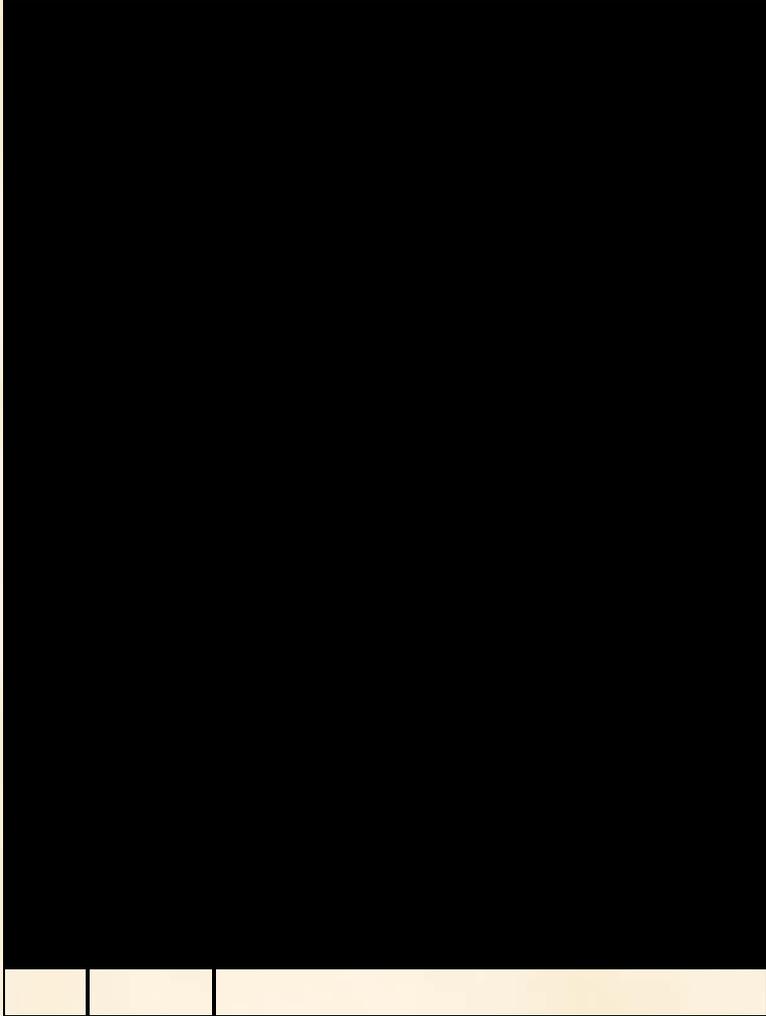
SAVING THROWS	TOTAL	BASE SAVE	ABILITY MODIFIER	MAGIC MODIFIER	MISC MODI FIER	MODI FIER
FORT constituti on			0			
REFLEX dexterity			3			
WILL wisdom			0			

BONUS	BASE ATTACK	6/1	SPELL RESISTANCE	
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GRAPPLE modifier		6			
TOTAL	BASE ATT BONUS	STRENGTH MODIFIER	SIZE MODI FIER	MISC MODI FIER	

ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL
Unholy Longbow +1	10/5	1d8+1	20/x3
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES	
00		3lb, Med, twohanded wielding,	

ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES	



engineer)§				
(cc)Knowledge (dungeointneering)§		_____	_____	_____
(cc)Knowledge (geograhy)§		_____	_____	_____
(cc)Knowledge (history)§		_____	_____	_____
Knowledge (local)§		_____	_____	_____
(cc)Knowledge (nature)§		_____	_____	_____
(cc)Knowledge (nobility and royalty)§		_____	_____	_____
(cc)Knowledge (religion)§		_____	_____	_____
(cc)Knowledge (the planes)§		_____	_____	_____

(cc) crossclass skill
 x can be used untrained § apply armor penalty

1-43lb.	44-86lb.	87-130lb.	130-187lb.	187-260lb.	260-650lb.
LIGHT LOAD	MEDIUM LOAD	HEAVY LOAD	OVERHEAD	LIFT OFF GROUND	LIFT OR DRAG
			MAX LOAD	2x MAX LOAD	5x MAX LOAD

UM	PLATIN	13	5
	GOLD		5
	SILVER		0
	COPPER		0

FEATS, LANGUAGES & ABILITIES			
		Low-light vision	
Feats	Rogue abilities	Proficient with longsword, rapier	
Deceitful	Improved Uncanny dodge	Proficient with most bows	
Negotiator	Sneak attack +4d6		
Persuasive	Trap sense +2		
Armor Proficiency (light)	Uncanny dodge		
	Evasion		
Languages	Trapfinding		
Gnome			
Sylvan	Elf abilities		
Common	Immunity to sleep spells		
Elven	+2 save bonus vs Enchantment spells		

Appearance, Traits *

Disadvantages

He is a blonde haired blue eyed elf with a deceptively innocent appearance.

Magiasacra

Magiasacra is a very high magic domain, with a whopping Realm Magic Rating of 6, and is very technologically advanced to boot as it is CuL 9. This domain practically breathes magic and spellcasters seem to be in heaven here. It is a good sized island with a big city of 75,000 inhabitants in it. It is populated by a mixture of elves, humans

and half-elves mainly. It is very cosmopolitan and race based OR for common races such as elves, dwarves, and gnomes are ignored. Uncommon races have theirs reduced by 2.

The city itself is very rich and the prices here are 2.5 x normal. The wealth is shown in the attire and housing of the inhabitants. Even the poorest wear clothes of average quality and it goes up from there. The poorest inns have the accommodations of middle class inns and it goes up from there as well.

The city guard is made up of mid- to high-level fighters in chain mail to full plate with battle axes carrying shields ranging from small to tower and four throwing axes

each. Their weapons, armor and shields are always magical. They also all have *belts of strength* and *amulets of health*. Still, with all the magic flying around they are more the first line of defense, not the last. Nearly all of them are former members of King Arnaud's pillaging army. Due to their well-earned incorruptible reputation, they can count on the other citizens for back up if need be when arresting someone. Although treated condescendingly by the spellcasters, the guards enjoy their job. They are well aware that their superiors in the army were both condescending and brutal, and they aren't usually risking life or limb on the job. They get higher pay, better treatment in general than as raiders, and rarely is someone trying to kill them. It is rumored that occasionally one of the guards will be used as a lab experiment but that is a fraction of those killed in the various wars.

The city also has lots of temples dedicated to the various gods of magic and psionics throughout the multiverse - pretty much everyone from Mystra to Vecna. If the god or goddess is of magic, chances are he or she has a temple here. The temples themselves are huge as they all have research libraries and laboratories.

There are a number of medium-sized libraries, which cost 1 gp per day to visit, and specialize in every type of knowledge except spells themselves. The huge central library, which is about the size of the New York City Central Library, has books on every knowledge and craft skill in any of the books. You can have the books copied for you at the cost of the bonus to the skill squared x400 GP. Even the central library doesn't have information on actual spells themselves. Spellcraft certainly, but not particulars of individual spells, as they aren't allowed to cut into the magic selling business.

There are a number of magic shops that specialize in various types of magic selling at twice the normal cost and there is also Barnaby's which is a sort of centralized super magic shop that sells at 2.25x normal price but has everything. It is the size of a typical block in downtown Chicago and four stories high. It has every item in any of the books barring artifacts, relics, and other unique items. They are also willing to make custom items at 3x normal cost.

Non-spellcasters are looked down upon, since almost all of the natives are spellcasters, blessed by the gods of magic and have a +6 to intelligence and a +4 to Charisma and Wisdom. They see non-spellcasters as barbarous cretins. Fortunately, they are more condescending than vicious and it is pretty unlikely for a non-spellcaster to be attacked for no reason. They are likely to be treated as dim-witted children more than anything else. Occasionally, non-spellcasters who won't be missed are picked up for experimentation secretly and illegally by the more sinister temples, such as Vecna's. Of the spellcasters, druids have the least prestige; they are considered rustic hicks that know nothing about scholarship. The only way for a druid to get a decent amount of respect is to set up an outdoor research center of some sort.

The main danger for PC's is the many high level evil spellcasters of all descriptions who might use them for experimental test subjects. All sorts of transmutation magic might be used on them, they could be killed and their bodies used in experiments to create a new type of undead, magical illusions could be created to test their sense of fear. Be creative, any Ravenloft GM should be able to come up with plenty of ideas for high level casters.

Amaud Dubois

CHARACTER NAME	PLAYER	CAMPAIGN
13 Fighter	Human	Lawful Evil
CLASS AND LEVEL	RACE	ALIGNMENT
		EXPERIENCE POINTS

ABILITY NAME	ABILITY SCORE	ABILITY MODIFIER	TOTAL	WOUNDS/CURRENT HP	NONLETHAL DAMAGE	SPEED
STR strength	16	+3	HP hit points 94			30ft. (Armored: 20ft.)

DEX dexterity	12	+1	AC armor class 21	10	+8	+2	+1	+0	+0	+0	+0
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CON constitution	14	+2	TOTAL	BASE	ARMOR BONUS	SHIELD BONUS	DEX MODIFIER	SIZE MODIFIER	NATURAL ARMOR	DEFLECT MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER

INT intelligence	14	+2	TOUCH armor class 11	FLAT-FOOTED armor class 20
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WIS wisdom	8	-1	TOTAL	DEX MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER
CHA charisma	17	+3	INITIATIVE modifier +5	-1	+4

SAVING THROWS	TOTAL	BASE SAVE	ABILITY MODIFIER	MAGIC MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER	TEMP. MODIFIER
FORT constitution	10	8	+2	+0	+0	
REFLEX dexterity	5	4	+1	+0	+0	
WILL wisdom	3	4	-1	+0	+0	

BASE ATTACK BONUS	13/8/3	SPELL RESISTANCE	0
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GRAPPLE modifier	16	13	+3	+0	+0
	TOTAL	BASE ATT BONUS	STRENGTH MODIFIER	SIZE MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER

ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL
Unholy Battleaxe +2	19/14/9	1d8+7	20/x3

DAMAGE REDUCTION	
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SKILLS

SKILL NAME	KEY ABILITY	SKILL MODIFIER	ABILITY MODIFIER	RANKS	MISC MODIFIER
(cc)Appraise	int	2	2	+0	+0
(cc)Balance	dex	1	1	+0	+0
(cc)Bluff	cha	13	3	+10	+0
Climb	str	3	3	+0	+0
(cc)Concentration	con	2	2	+0	+0
Craft	int	2	2	+0	+0
(cc)Decipher Script	int	2	2	+0	+0
(cc)Diplomacy	cha	15	3	+10	+2
(cc)Disable Device	int	2	2	+0	+0
(cc)Disguise	cha	3	3	+0	+0
(cc)Escape Artist	dex	1	1	+0	+0
(cc)Forgery	int	2	2	+0	+0
(cc)Gather Information	cha	3	3	+0	+0
Handle Animal	cha	19	3	+16	+0
(cc)Heal	wis	-1	-1	+0	+0
(cc)Hide	dex	1	1	+0	+0
Intimidate	cha	23	3	+18	+2

RANGE	TYPE	NOTES
		6lb, Med,

ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL

RANGE	TYPE	NOTES

Jumpꙵ	str	3	=	3	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (arcana)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (architecture & engineering)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (dungeoneering)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (geography)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (history)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (local)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (nature)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (nobility and royalty)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (religion)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc)Knowledge (the planes)ꙵ	int	2	=	2	+ 0	+ 0
(cc) crossclass skill						
ꙵ can be used untrained ꙵ apply armor penalty						

FEATS, LANGUAGES & ABILITIES			
	Shield Proficiency	Gnome	
Feats	Simple Weapon Proficiency	Orc	
Power Attack	Tower Shield Proficiency	Giant	
Improved Critical (Battleaxe)	Cleave	Common	
Leadership	Great Cleave		
Negotiator	Improved Initiative	Fighter abilities	
Persuasive	Weapon Focus (Battleaxe)		
Toughness	Weapon Specialization (Battleaxe)		
Armor Proficiency (heavy)	Improved Sunder		
Armor Proficiency (light)	Combat-Reflexes		
Armor Proficiency (medium)			
Martial Weapon Proficiency	Languages		

Appearance, Traits • Disadvantages

Standing 6'2" and weighing 250 lbs with a red beard and green eyes Amaud is an imposing figure. He normally wears his magic chainmail, carries a tower shield, and has a battleaxe on his back. On his sides are no less than four throwing axes.

History

Amaud Dubois was the king of an uncivilized kingdom. Though uncivilized, his troops were very disciplined and the law was very strict and hierarchical. When a famine struck his people, he was able to unite them around the idea of conquest. Kingdom after kingdom fell under his rule. His rule was very harsh and his people took many slaves. After he put down an uprising, enslaving half the population and putting to death all the elderly and handicapped people, he heard of the rich domain of Magarcia. In his arrogance he disregarded the rumors that the inhabitants were chosen by the gods of magic as their people, and he planned to make them his

next conquest. The goddess Athena, whose portfolio included psionics, gave a vision to the city dwellers. If they surrendered, they could dump off all their unwanted government positions, by giving the barbarians high sounding titles but with responsibilities that were actually scut work. This they did and, at first, it fooled the barbarians; by the time they found out about it they were used to it. They soon figured out that they would be crushed by the spellcasters if they revolted, and besides they were living better than ever and no one was trying to kill them. The mages were condescending but all but the leaders were used to that. Although Amaud is officially "king," the real power lies in the magic guilds and temples, where he has no influence at all. Worst of all he lives in fear of all the spellcasters around him, including his wife, and is even more terrified that people will find out about his fear.

Goals

Escape Ravenloft and try founding a kingdom without all the mages. To conquer his inner doubts and fears about the mages

and to be regarded as a respected king. He has found that trying to accomplish any of these goals is hopeless due to his curse.

Metropia

Metropia is one of the most populated domains in the Mists. At the northeast end of the island sits the city of Shining Hills with a population of 100,000 halflings. The city is surrounded by a wall, twenty feet high, with a cannon and mounted muskets on top. Normally the walls are guarded only by the cannon, but during a time of emergency the militia will muster and man the muskets. The city is known for turning out wool clothing, furniture, cigars, pipes, and wood carvings in large numbers. Water wheels power the domain's many clothing and furniture factories, as well as its ammunition and gun factories.

There is a large bat cave right on the shore of Metropia which, along with the sulfur deposits to the east, supplies the saltpeter for the ammo factory. There are large military outposts guarding both. Travelling further southeast, one can find mostly sheep pastures, tobacco farms and light woods, where the rural population lives. Sheep are raised for both wool and mutton, with mutton being a big part of the halfling diet; the halflings have dozens of recipes for mutton.

The further one gets from the city, the wilder the land grows; light woods turn into thick forests, where halfling foresters chop down trees by the hundreds and send them off to the nearby sawmills, which deliver the lumber to Shining Hills. Deeper in these woods, it is even more wild yet - full of fae, worgs, treants, and halflings similar to those of the world of Athas (see the *Dark Sun* campaign setting). These halflings are cannibals and, using irregular warfare methods, are more than able to hold their own.

On the Southwest side of the island is an area known as the Dark Woods, where fey are truly abundant; there are a number of undead treants along with the live ones, and here dwells the dark lord in all his hatred. He is obsessed with burning down the city and forcing the halflings to "get back to their roots," but always fall far short of that goal. The fae, worgs, and treants are unable to get closer than two miles to any halfling settlement of a population of 100 or more. Although the Athasian halflings are able to raid the towns, there is a 1 in 5 chance for each one to defect to the other side and for every week they spend there. The civilized halflings see this as proof of their superiority. The Dark Lord also can only command domestic animals and his animal companion has been switched from a badger to a sheepdog.

Adair Deepburrow

CHARACTER NAME	PLAYER	CAMPAIGN	
12 Druid	Halfling	Neutral Evil	<input type="text"/>
CLASS AND LEVEL	RACE	ALIGNMENT	EXPERIENCE POINTS

ABILITY NAME	ABILITY SCORE	ABILITY MODIFIER	TOTAL	WOUNDS/CURRENT HP							NONLETHAL DAMAGE SPEED		
STR strength	6	-2	HP hit points 96								20ft.		
DEX dexterity	14	+2	AC armor class 18	=10	+3	+2	+2	+1	+0	+0	+0		
CON constitution	14	+2	TOTAL	BASE	ARMOR BONUS	SHIELD BONUS	DEX MODIFIER	SIZE MODIFIER	NATURAL ARMOR	DEFLECT MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER		
INT intelligence	14	+2	TOUCH armor class 13	FLAT-FOOTED armor class	16		DAMAGE REDUCTION						
WIS wisdom	19	+4	TOTAL	DEX MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER	SKILLS							
CHA charisma	14	+2	INITIATIVE modifier +2	=2	+0	SKILL NAME							
SAVING THROWS	TOTAL	BASE SAVE	ABILITY MODIFIER	MAGIC MODIFIER	MISC MODIFIER	TEMP. MODIFIER	KEY ABILITY	SKILL MODIFIER	ABILITY MODIFIER	RANKS	MISC MODIFIER		
FORT constitution	11	=9	+2	+0	+0		(cc)Appraise	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0	
REFLEX dexterity	6	=4	+2	+0	+0		(cc)Balance	dex	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0	
WILL wisdom	13	=9	+4	+0	+0		(cc)Bluff	cha	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0	
BASE ATTACK BONUS	9/4	SPELL RESISTANCE		0			(cc)Climb	str	0	= -2	+ 2	+ 0	
GRAPPLE modifier	3	=9	+2	+4	+0		Concentration	con	17	= 2	+ 15	+ 0	
ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	(cc)Craft	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
Unholy Club +1	9/4	1d6-1	20/x2	(cc)Decipher Script	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES	(cc)Diplomacy	cha	19	= 2	+ 17	+ 0					
10		3lb, Med,	(cc)Disable Device	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0					
ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	(cc)Disguise	cha	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
				(cc)Escape Artist	dex	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES	(cc)Forgery	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0					
				(cc)Gather Information	cha	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	Handle Animal	cha	17	= 2	+ 15	+ 0				
				Heal	wis	4	= 4	+ 0	+ 0				
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES	(cc)Hide	dex	6	= 2	+ 4	+ 0					
				(cc)Intimidate	cha	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
ATTACK	ATTACK	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	(cc)Jump	str	0	= -2	+ 2	+ 0				
				(cc)Knowledge (arcana)	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				
RANGE	TYPE	NOTES	(cc)Knowledge (architecture & engineering)	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0					
				(cc)Knowledge (dungeoneering)	int	2	= 2	+ 0	+ 0				

	=	+	+
	=	—	+ —
	=	—	+ —
	=	—	+ —
	=	—	+ —
	=	—	+ —

1-15lb.	16-30lb.	31-45lb.	45lb.	90lb.	225lb.	PLATINUM	5106
						GOLD	8
						SILVER	0
						COPPER	0
LIGHTLOAD MEDIUMLOAD HEAVYLOAD LIFT OVER HEAD EQUALS MAX LOAD LIFT OFF GROUND 2x MAX LOAD PUSH OR DRAG 5x MAX LOAD							

FEATS, LANGUAGES & ABILITIES

	Languages	Resist nature's lure	Rusting Grasp 2X/day
Feats	Sylvan	Trackless Step	
Track	Elven	Woodland stride	
Empower Spell	Common	Nature Sense	
Eschew Materials	Halfling	Animal companion	
Leadership		Wild empathy	
Negotiator	Druid abilities		
Armor Proficiency (light)	Wild shape (dire)	Halfling abilities	
Armor Proficiency (medium)	Wild shape (Tiny)	+2 save vs fear	
Shield Proficiency	Wild shape (4/day)	Dark Lord Powers	
Simple Weapon Proficiency	Venom immunity	Warp Wood 3X/day	

	Wild Shape (Large)	Shatter 2Xday	
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Druid spells				Obscuring Mist	Neutralize Poison	Cure Critical Wounds	
Spell	Save DC	LEVEL	SPELLS PER DAY	BONUS SPELLS			
					Pass without Trace	Plant Growth	Death Ward
14		0	6	0	Produce Flame	Poison	Hallow
15		1st	5	+1	Shillelagh	Protection from Energy	Insect Plague
16		2nd	4	+1	Speak with Animals	Remove Disease	Summon Nature.s Ally V
17		3rd	4	+1	Summon Nature.s Ally I	Sleet Storm	Transmute Mud to Rock
18		4th	3	+1		Snare	Transmute Rock to Mud
19		5th	3	0	Level 2	Speak with Plants	Tree Stride
20		6th	2	0	Animal Messenger	Spike Growth	Unhallow
-		7th	-	-	Animal Trance	Stone Shape	Wall of Fire
-		8th	-	-	Barkskin	Summon Nature.s Ally III	Wall of Thorns
-		9th	-	-	Bear's Endurance	Water Breathing	
					Bull.s Strength	Wind Wall	Level 6
					Create Water	Cat.s Grace	Antilife Shell
					Cure Minor Wounds	Chill Metal	Level 4
					Detect Magic	Delay Poison	Air Walk
					Detect Poison	Fire Trap	Antiplant Shell
					Flare	Flame Blade	Blight
					Guidance	Flaming Sphere	Control Plants
					Know Direction	Gust of Wind	Control Water
					Light	Heat Metal	Cure Serious Wounds
					Mending	Hold Animal	Dispel Magic
					Purify Food and Drink	Lesser Restoration	Flame Strike
							Bear's Endurance, Mass
							Bull's Strength, Mass
							Cat's Grace, Mass
							Cure Light Wounds, Mass
							Dispel Magic, Greater
							Find the Path
							Fire Seeds
							Ironwood
							Liveoak

Read Magic	Owl's Wisdom	Freedom of Movement	Move Earth
Resistance	Resist Energy	Giant Vermin	Owl's Wisdom, Mass
Virtue	Restoration, Lesser	Ice Storm	Repel Wood
	Soften Earth and Stone	Quench	Spellstaff
Level 1	Spider Climb	Reincarnate	Stone Tell
Calm Animals	Summon Nature.s Ally II	Repel Vermin	Summon Nature.s Ally VI
Charm Animal	Summon Swarm	Rusting Grasp	Transport via Plants
Cure Light Wounds	Tree Shape	Scrying	Wall of Stone
Detect Animals or Plants	Warp Wood	Spike Stones	
Detect Snares and Pits	Wood Shape	Summon Nature.s Ally IV	
Endure Elements			
Entangle	Level 3	Level 5	
Faerie Fire	Call Lightning	Animal Growth	
Goodberry	Contagion	Atonement	
Hide from Animals	Cure Moderate Wounds	Awaken	
Jump	Diminish Plants	Baleful Polymorph	
Longstrider	Dominate Animal	Call Lightning Storm	
Magic Fang	Greater Magic Fang	Commune with Nature	
Magic Stone	Meld into Stone	Control Winds	

Appearance, Traits •

Disadvantages

Short, even for a halfling, Adair stands 2'9" and weighs 32 lbs.

History

Adair was born into a poor family, which barely supported itself hunting small game, such as rabbits and small birds.

Unfortunately he was born into a drought-caused famine, and grew small and weak as a result. His rage at being bullied as a child made him seek small but vicious animals to befriend, such as badgers and wolverines. When he was ten, he was apprenticed by a druid who taught him the way of the wild. The druid taught him that nature was based

on the survival of the fittest, but that sometimes that meant cunning as much as brute strength. He also taught him that one must rely only on oneself for survival. Young Adair took this to heart and decided only the ruthless and cunning survived, and that only by relying on the simplest tools can one remain strong. Only the weak used horse-drawn plows and traded for what they needed; the strong relied only on themselves. He preached that message and was ignored and mocked until the next drought-induced famine. The nearby cities survived it quite well by trading for food and Adair used that fact to rally his people behind him. They too would be fine if it weren't for those city dwellers stealing all the food for themselves. They needed to sack the nearby cities and take their food.

Halflings were numerous in the area and many of the urban inhabitants were halflings themselves. Those that followed Adair sacked the nearby cities and took their wealth. One of his biggest opponents was his own sister, who tried to turn him from his dark path. She gained a larger and larger following, as more halflings started questioning the righteousness of these wars on the settlements. One day he killed her in her sleep and the mists claimed him.

Goals

To sack the city and to return the halflings to their rural life.

The author wishes to thank all those who contributed to the Café de Nuit forum thread, "[Challenge: Darklords based on these RL people.](#)" Character Sheets made using Redblade 3.5.

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Quoth the Raven



It's time to return
to Barovia

Enter the Mists once again,
experiencing new horrors, or
seeing old horrors again from a
different
perspective.

