

# Quoth the Raven

24

A Ravenloft  
Netbook

# FRONT MATTER

## Quoth the Raven #24

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# INTRODUCTION

Here we are once again. Halloween and Ravenloft. Chocolate and Peanut Butter. Well... more white chocolate and milk chocolate, as the two are not all that different.

The theme of this year was proposed as Lights in the Darkness: points of light in the night, candles in the window, and champions in the Mists.

There's some fun stuff in *Quoth the Raven* this year. A new domain, some new NPCs, magic items, and a reimagining of Tepest. I hope you enjoy!

Ravenloft seems to be surviving, even if not thriving. PDFs of old books continue to sell well on the [Dungeon Master's Guild](#) and several core books have now been released as Print on Demand products. It is easier than ever to get into Ravenloft, with the choice of several classic setting books from multiple editions. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Gazetteers haven't appeared on the site just yet, but it's probably only a matter of time. If you haven't bought some PDFs yet, I recommend it as a way of voting for 'Loft with your wallet.

"Jester" David Gibson  
October 31, 2017



# TEPEST

# LAND OF THE FEY

An alternative for this Core domain

By: John Berndt

## A short description of Tepest

The Hagwood is a particularly spooky forest with ancient, gnarled trees. There are Treants, undead treants, bloodroot, death's head trees, and other dread plants. Evil fey are particularly present here as well. There are few places as spooky as the Hagwood's depths and the natives will not enter them except, perhaps, to save their own kin, as they consider anyone who enters them too stupid to live. Except for rare instances, crossing the forest is relatively safe if one sticks to the road. The dread plants cannot survive within 100' of the road and the fey mostly stick close to the Three Sisters in the middle of the forest. The Three Sisters are by no means the only hags in the forest. There are a dozen more who all bow before the might of the Three Sisters. There are also three dozen ogres and a half a dozen dread trolls. All of these keep to the center of the forest where the Three Sisters can call on them if needed. None will dare to refuse an order from them. They would rather die, as they would face a fate worse than death if they would refuse.

The Goblinwood is full of goblins, hobgoblins, and orcs, which are all called goblins by the Tepesti, who don't distinguish between them. There are also a dozen or so ogres and trolls. Due to the

infighting, this is one of the safer woods. A fairly well-armed party will usually be unmolested as the goblins are more interested in fighting amongst each other than fighting well-armed, well-trained parties. As in all Tepesti forests, there are also shadow fey.

In the Wytchwood, the Shee, the Sith, Black Sprites, and Boowray predominate. Although not as dangerous as the Hagwood, the natives avoid this place as well, as the fey truly prevail here. However, like in the Hagwood, the road is safe enough, as the fey won't go there. The fey get increasingly uncomfortable as they get close to the road. They must make a DC 20 will save to get within 100' of it and the DC goes up 2 for every 10' they get closer. If they fail their save, they have to retreat back to outside the 100' and can't try again for a day.

The Brujamonte is the safest of the woods, although many Tepesti avoid it as they mistake bruja for hags. They are no more dangerous than anywhere else and those in the know can benefit from their help. The fey here are mostly less vicious than elsewhere and leave travelers alone. That does not mean the woods are



## Viktor Hazan's note to the Fraternity:

We recently received a copy of this Tepest report here enclosed. Please note that it contradicts previous information on file for this forsaken and backward place. Perhaps this is a false history? Past history? If so, who gains advantage at spreading these? Or perhaps it is all true?

If so, we need to go back there soon to verify these information. And find when did it change. I believe it would be an interesting topic to test the scope of my new Iridescent shadow Glass memory project! Who has the time to go back there soon with me?

completely safe. Evil fey, although less numerous, make their home here as well. The relatively few lycanthropes of Tepest also dwell here. There is a pack of werewolves and a den of werebadgers here. Still, if one must wander off the road into the woods, this is the safest place to do so.

There are three villages in Tepest, all in clearings cleared of trees by the settlers. Brigdarow (Population 3000), Kelee (Population 4000), and Vikital (Population 4500) are all rustic and independent but not particularly poor. Famines are rare in Tepest as the population is small and it has many profitable exports, of which wood is the most common, being exported by all three villages. The settlements are rarely harassed by the fey as the Dark Powers have given them all a supernatural fear of the villages. They must make a DC 25 will save to get within 100 yards of the outskirts of any clearing, unless invited by a villager,

in which case they themselves are immune from the fear for a day. The DC goes up 2 for every 10 yards they get closer. Any minion the fey send has the same fear. As such, only small children will invite anyone into the village. This does not protect the villagers from wolves, bears, or goblinoids that wander in on their own. However, the villages are all walled in and have wooden towers on the outskirts. It is well known to the Tepesti that they are safe enough if they stick to the roads and villages, but that if they wander off them danger lurks. As such, they stick to the villages and the roads.

Visitors are only welcome if the populace knows that they come uninvited. This seems strange to outsiders, but the Tepesti know that uninvited visitors are not fey. Since many fey can use illusions to change shape, the Tepesti never invite people into their homes, even friends. However, that

does make them quite willing to have people they know just drop by. When people drop by, they knock and they step through the open door; fey must be verbally invited as open doors are not enough. The Three Hags can't enter a building uninvited but they can enter any clearing without fear. They only visit a village for particular reasons, usually connected to their main interest. They will try to get attractive outsiders to invite them into their room at their cabin or other place they are staying. Being invited to come into any room of an inn or other building allows them to enter the building. Because of this, there are no rooms for rent at inns. Strangers are told to stay at one of the cabins for rent, and there is at least one place in every village that rents cabins. Traders are fairly common in Tepest due to its various trade goods.

Brigdarow borders Brujamonte and contains dozens of vineyards and a half a dozen wineries. Tepesti grapes grow very quickly, ferment very quickly but are only moderately tasty. What they do make is cheap, potent wine. Tepesti grapes are harvested four times a year. Although nobles and rich merchants turn up their noses at Tepesti wine it is very popular among the lower and working classes, as it is a cheap way of getting drunk. The Tepesti make many barrels full of the wine and sell it abroad. It sells at about the same price per gallon as average wine, but is so potent that it takes far less for someone to get drunk. There is a strain of yeast that only survives in Tepest, which can handle higher concentrations of alcohol, and thus ferments it more than other yeast, so the local wine is as potent as foreign brandy.

Brigdarow's wineries are among the biggest in Ravenloft and can produce very large quantities of wine. The winery owners are among the richest people in Tepest and are counted among the aristocracy. They

live in large wooden houses with several servants. They are never seen wearing Tepesti clothing as they are too wealthy for that.

The area around Kelee borders the Goblinwood and has been turned into meadowlands for Tepesti sheep. Tepesti sheep are a hardy breed but can only survive in Tepest. Sheep brought out of Tepest quickly sicken and die. Tepesti mutton is very tasty. The Tepesti have dozens of mutton recipes and Tepesti cooks are in high demand wherever mutton is popular, as they are considered the foremost experts in cooking mutton. Tepesti fresh mutton sells for high prices just outside their borders and their dried mutton sells well everywhere.

Tepesti sheep produce very tough, coarse wool. It is impossible to make fine clothing out of Tepesti wool but it does make very good clothing for the working and lower classes. As long as you are satisfied with cheap, rugged clothing, Tepesti wool is surprisingly easy to work with. The wool is surprisingly easy to spin and can be easily weaved. Tepesti clothing is usually fairly crudely but quickly made. It takes them about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the time to make clothing than elsewhere in the Mists. Although somewhat more expensive than other clothing, it doesn't rip or tear and can last a generation or two. Dirt does tend to cling to it though, and they need more vigorous washing. Tepesti wool is so tough that padded armor made from Tepesti wool has a +2 non-magical bonus. Due to its popularity with rouges, rangers and low-level mages who will risk spell failure for better protection, Tepesti padded armor sells for 5,125 gp. However, the clothing is the big seller, as that is way too expensive for the average person. The Tepesti don't care very much what goes on outside their domain and money is money, so they are



indifferent about whether it is sold to a mage or a rogue. It doesn't affect them at all.

Viktal borders the Wytchwood and is known for its brass jewelry. There are zinc and copper mines nearby. In the copper mines, Viktal's miners also find malachite and azurite deposits formed by the copper. The azurite is unusually resistant to weathering due to the Dark Powers. Tepesti jewelry is cheap and gaudy. However, its very cheapness makes it popular with the lower classes and the stage. They are sold all over the core at low prices.

The mines are rich and extensive. There is enough metal down there to last thousands of years at the rate the Tepesti are using it. The mines are unusually safe with stronger and more numerous wooden beams holding it up than in most places. With only a few thousand people living in Tepest, they can't afford to lose too many so the mine owners are much more concerned about safety than medieval mine owners on Earth. Also, wood is very cheap and woodworking well developed. The miners do put in long hours however.

The mine owners are also wealthy and part of the aristocracy. Although they tend to wear quite a bit of jewelry; it isn't brass and malachite like that of the other residents, but gold and emeralds. Almost everyone wears a lot of jewelry in town; not only is it cheap, it is a form of advertisement to visitors. There are large jewelry manufacturing buildings. Although Tepest is not advanced enough for any really clever mechanical devices, they are otherwise set up as a factory. There are small forges on one end, with the hot metal poured into molds, after which the gems are placed into settings to be shipped out. For the technology they have, it is quite efficient.

The land is ruled by the aristocrats and the inquisition. Of the two, the aristocrats are richer but the inquisition wields more power. The nobles have lost power to the church over the last few generations to the point that they are considered the secular arm of the church. The day to day affairs are run by the local nobles but the big decisions for the domain as a whole are formed by the church.

## The Three Hags: Dark Lords of Tepest

The three hags were three girls left by a Shee when a peasant woman by the name of Rudella Mindefisk prayed for daughters. The fey was flattered by the attention but overestimated the stamina of mortals. Some of the power for the fey magic used to create the daughters was provided by their mother, who died from the strain 2 years later. The daughters were gifted and in more than beauty as each had a talent that would have made them great if they developed it. Their desire for shortcuts out of their backwards village, and from under the thumb of their oppressive father and brothers doomed them. If they were patient, and had developed their gifts, they would have become renowned in their crafts and quite wealthy as a result but they tried to take the easy way out, fell into evil and were turned into hags upon killing a handsome rogue. They then sought out and killed their adoptive father and brothers and upon doing so became the Dark Lords of Tepest. Soon after reaching Ravenloft they heard of Loht and took him as their patron although he is unaware of it. It is the Dark Powers themselves that grant them their powers though they know it not.



## Laveeda Mindefisk

Laveeda was a very good cook with the sole exception of mutton. She had the potential for becoming the best cook for hundreds of miles around. If she would have spent time developing her talents she would have good enough to be the royal cook. However, that talent was undeveloped due to lack of experience and ingredients. She was offered a job as a cook at the local inn due to her growing reputation locally. But, in a backwards village it didn't pay well. If she had stayed and developed her art the reputation of the inn would have grown and eventually she would have wound up at a fancy restaurant, a noble's court, or even the royal palace. Laveeda was turned into an Annis Hag.

**Laveeda Mindefisk Annis Hag 8th level Sorcerer** HD: 7D6+8d4 +60; HP: 110; AC 25; Atk +14; Damage 1D6+7; Saves: +10 Fort +11 Ref +12 Will (+15 Vs Enchantments); SA: Improved Grab, Rake 1d6+7, Rend 2d6+10, disguise self, fog cloud 3X day; SQ: Damage Reduction 3/cold iron, darkvision, spell resistance 24. +3 Save Vs Enchantments, confusion, dimension door, and summon nature's ally V 1 X day, mimicry, hideous, cauldron of life, change shape, keen scent, telepathy, enemy of light, shared fate; Str 25, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 20, Wis 11, Chr 24  
**Skills and feats:** Bluff +25 Craft: Cooking +23 Concentration +15 Knowledge (Arcana) +23 Knowledge (Fey) +23 Spellcraft +23; Fey Heritage, Fey Skin, Fey Legacy  
**Possessions:** Bracelets of armor +3, ring of protection +2, shawl of Charisma +2, hag eye, oil of levitate, +3 Amulet of Mighty

Fists, rod of metamagic (Extend), wand of summon swarm, Broom of Flying

Casts spells as 14th level sorcerer

7th - Insanity  
6th - Tenser's Transformation, Mass Suggestion  
5th - Dominate Person, Baleful Polymorph, Teleport  
4th - Stoneskin, Charm Monster, Fear, Lesser Geas  
3rd - Magic circle vs Good, Suggestion, Haste, Slow  
2nd - Protection from arrows, Bear's Endurance, Bull's Strength, Invisibility, Darkness  
1st - Charm Person, Mage Armor, Enlarge Person, Shocking Grasp, Jump  
0 - Detect Poison, Detect Magic, Read Magic, Daze, Touch of Fatigue, Resistance, Ghost Sound, Arcane Mark, Mending

## Leticia Mindefisk

Leticia Mindefisk was the most attractive of the three girls. Leticia had a talent for jewelry. When she was a child, she used to take twine and string various shells together to make necklaces. When she was a little older, she learned to use some of the farm tools to drill small holes in stones and string them together to make small bracelets and necklaces. A local jeweler was amused by the little girl's jewelry until he saw her make a necklace. She made one very quickly and easily for her age. He asked her questions about how she picked the stones and which stones went together. He was impressed with her answers and took her to his shop. He showed her various jewelry and asked which ones she liked the most and she always picked out the most expensive.



She was apprenticed for a while, but her father took all the money she earned. Angered by this, she started to deliberately make mistakes to get herself fired. If she pursued her craft, she could have become the greatest jeweler in the kingdom after she got from under her father's thumb. Her father merely took this as another sign of her uselessness and abused her more than any of the other girls. She was the one who led the three sisters in murdering their kin.

### **Leticia Mindefisk Sea Hag 9th level**

**sorcerer** HD 3D6+9D4+15; HP 55; AC 19; SA spells, evil eye, hideous, horrific appearance, mimicry; SQ darkvision 90 ft., amphibious, cauldron of life, change shape, enemy of light, spell resistance 14, telepathy, Damage Reduction 3/cold iron, +3 Save Vs Enchantments, confusion, dimension door, and summon nature's ally V 1 X day, shared fate; Fort +6 Ref +7 Will+9(+12 vs Enchantments); Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 13, Chr 26

**Skills and feats :** Bluff +25 Craft: Jewelry +23 Concentration +13 Knowledge(Arcana) +23 Knowledge (Fey) +23 Spellcraft +23, Fey Heritage, Fey Skin, Fey Legacy; Spell Focus: Enchantment as bonus feat; Create Hag Potion as Bonus Feat A Hag Potion is the same as a regular potion except it can contain any spell a hag can cast regardless of level; Create Wand as a bonus feat

**Possessions :** Bracelets of armor +3, ring of protection +2, shawl of Charisma +2 (as cloak), hag eye, Staff of Fire, Broom of Flying

Casts spells as 15th level sorcerer

7th - Delayed Blast Fireball, Limited Wish

6th - Flesh to Stone, Mass Suggestion, Acid Fog

5th - Dominate Person, Wall of Stone, Teleport, Passwall

4th - Stoneskin, Charm Monster, Fire Shield, Wall of Fire

3rd - Magic circle vs Good, Suggestion, Fireball, Lightning Bolt

2nd - Protection from arrows, Melf's Acid Arrow, Continual Flame, Flaming Sphere, Scorching Ray

1st - Charm Person, Mage Armor, Burning Hands, Sleep, Color Spray

0 - Detect Poison, Detect Magic, Read Magic, Daze, Touch of Fatigue, Resistance, Acid Splash, Arcane Mark , Mending

### **Lorinda Mindefisk**

Lorinda was the least bright of the sisters, although that is not saying much, as the girls were all geniuses. Lorinda was fascinated by clothes, and she had a real talent for it as well. When it came to sewing and knitting, she was far ahead of anyone of her age and experience. She also had a real eye for clothing, knowing what colors went together and how they should be made. She made all the clothes in her family and they were the best dressed peasants around.

People in town got suspicious, wondering where the money for such fine clothes came from. The father was confused by the questioning and referred them to his daughter. The clothier's guild was very impressed as she showed them how she spun wool, made cloth and then sewed it together. She was offered an apprenticeship, but this was after she saw what happened to Leticia, so she turned it down. She did not want her abusive father to get her money. She became the most bitter and spiteful of the three girls and



became a Favored Soul of Beshaba. If she pursued her craft, she could have been a great clothier after she left her father.

**Lorinda Mindefisk, Green Hag 5 Mystic Theurge** HD 9D6 + 5d4 + 13; HP 55; SA spells, evil eye, hideous, horrific appearance, mimicry; SQ darkvision 90 ft., amphibious, cauldron of life, change shape, enemy of light, spell resistance 14, telepathy, Damage Reduction 3/cold iron, +3 Save Vs Enchantments, confusion, dimension door, and summon nature's ally V 1 X day, shared fate; Saves : Fort +7 Ref +7 Will +11(+14 vs Enchantments); Str 20, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 13, Chr 25

**Skills and feats:** Bluff +25 Craft: Jewelry +23 Concentration +7 Knowledge(Arcana) +17 Knowledge(Religion) 17 Knowledge (Fey) +23 Spellcraft +23; Fey Heritage, Fey Skin, Fey Legacy, Weapon Focus: Flail, Spell Focus: Enchantment as bonus feat, Create Hag Potion as Bonus Feat A Hag Potion is the same as a regular potion except it can contain any spell a hag can cast regardless of level, Create Wand as a bonus feat

**Possessions:** Bracelets of armor +3 (as bracers), ring of counterspells, Candle of Nightmares, ring of protection +1, shawl of Charisma +4 (as cloak), hag eye

Cast spells as 11th level Favored Soul and 11th level Sorcerer

5th - Dominate Person, Mind Fog

4th - Stoneskin, Crushing Despair

3rd - Ray of Exhaustion, Vampiric Touch, Slow

2nd - Summon Swarm, Web, Tasha's Hideous Laughter, Touch of Idiocy, Blindness/Deafness

1st - Charm Person, Mage Armor, Cause Fear, Ray of Enfeeblement, Unseen Servant

0 - Read Magic, Daze, Touch of Fatigue, Resistance, Acid Splash, Arcane Mark, Ghost Sound, Mage Hand, Message

5th - Mass Cure Light Wounds, Mass Inflict Light Wounds, Symbol of Pain

4th - Cure Critical Wounds, Inflict Critical Wound, Divination, Poison

3rd - Bestow Curse, Contagion, Cure Serious Wound, Inflict Serious Wounds, Remove Disease

2nd - Cure Moderate Wounds, Inflict Moderate Wounds, Death Knell, Desecrate, Hold Person, Lesser Restoration

1st - Bane, Cur Light Wounds, Inflict Light Wounds, Curse Water, Doom, Command

0 - Cure Minor Wounds, Inflict Minor Wounds, Guidance, Resistance, Virtue, Create Water, Mending, Detect Poison, Detect Magic

The Three Sisters have a shared fate. All damage done to any one of them is divided between the three of them equally, if they are within 100' feet of each other. Damage reduction is applied after damage is divided. If only two are alive, it is divided in half between the surviving sisters. They also can cast any spell that either of their sisters can cast when they are that close.

If one of them dies, the others lose 1/3 of their HD, starting with class levels, no matter the distance. If two die, the last one's HD are cut by 2/3. The lost HD return if and when the slain sister is returned to life.

Their cottage is guarded by at least one dread troll and a half dozen ogres at all times. The sisters gain access to any item creation feats they desire to use while they

are within 100' of the cottage. All spells cast by the sisters within that range may be either empowered or extended without using a higher spell slot. The hag chooses which metamagic to apply when casting her spell.

## Personality of the Three Sisters

They are all hateful, spiteful, and petty. They have no desires except to make other people as miserable as themselves. Fortunately for everyone else, their target is usually one of the other sisters. All three sisters blame the other two for her fate but their fates are intertwined. If one of them dies, all are weakened. They are dependent on each other and are strongest when they are close to each other. Their cottage is their place of power and so they are usually found there. So even though they hate each other they can't leave each other. They even cooperate if they think it is in their interest.

They are born schemers. Whatever plans they have are elaborate, time consuming and complex. They never make simple plans as that is boring to them. They are cautious and cowardly. When at all possible they cast protective spells on themselves before entering combat.

Of them all Laveeda likes to get her claws dirty the most. If there is little risk to her she quite happily wades into melee combat. If she has time to do so, she will cast at least *mage armor* and *bear's endurance* before she does so, though. She will prepare with more protective spells, if she has the time and the opponent isn't completely outclassed.

Leticia is a bit of a pyromaniac and will use fire spells in preference to others, except for her protection spells. She likes to loose fiery destruction on her opponents, although acid and electricity will do if they resistant to fire. She has a fiery temper as

well, she is the quickest to anger and that is measured against very serious competition.

Lorinda is the vilest and most spiteful of the sisters. She loves to use "de-buffing" spells on her enemies. She likes causing pain and misery even more than most hags, being a real sadist at heart. She will heal only herself or her sisters. She sticks at home even more than the other two as she is the only healer in the group and she is fully aware how the deaths of the others would affect her.

The sisters all desire things they were once good at. Laveeda loves good food and wine. Her sense of taste has not changed after becoming a hag. Leticia loves fancy jewelry and will try to have any such jewelry stolen for her. Lorinda still loves good clothes and is the best dressed of the three. However, there is a curse attached to these desires. Outside of mutton (which she hates), any food or drink in Laveeda's vicinity spoils or goes off within an hour. She must cook whatever she gets quick before it spoils. When Leticia wears jewelry, any precious metal therein turns to brass, and any stone turns to malachite within 3 days. Any clothing Lorinda wears turns coarse and badly made within a week of her first wearing them.

Despite the curse, all three will scheme to get their desire as even a short time having it is better than none. Her sisters will then scheme to try and prevent her from getting it. The three will weave elaborate schemes to get what are mostly petty items. Scheming is such a part of what they are that they will risk losing their prize by the failure of a complex plan, rather than achieving it by the simple way.



## Author's Note

I realize some of the sisters' backstory might come off as slightly sexist but they are based on fairy tale and that was part of the era. That is also why I boosted their spellcasting power. If you are going to have witches, have real scary witches – ones that can cast powerful spells not just a minor spell or two.

Also, I felt for quite a while that the hag is a bit weak, particularly in magic, as a whole. They have only a handful of minor magic buffs. So I made the following changes. Ravenloft Hags have the same statistics as their equivalent type of Hag except when changed here.

- Change Creature Type to Fey
- Casts spells as 6<sup>th</sup> level sorcerer
- +2 Int, +2 Cha. Hags are intelligent and have forceful personalities
- Add change shape, spell resistance 10 and mimicry as SQ
- Spell Focus: Enchantment as bonus feat

- Create Hag Potion as Bonus Feat. A Hag Potion is the same as a regular potion except it can contain any spell a hag can cast regardless of level.
- Create Wand as a bonus feat
- Any dread familiar they gain will always be a black cat.

Hags (Including the sisters) are compelled to keep an agreement they make to the letter, as if by a *geas* with no spell resistance; damage inflicted by the *geas* cannot be cured except by attempting or succeeding in carrying out the agreement. They can, and almost always do, pervert the meaning of the agreement whenever possible.

Lorinda Mindefisk was given the ability to cast 6<sup>th</sup> level divine spells as well as sorcerer spells by the Dark Powers. This is only true for her, not the other hags.



# THE JUNGLE OF FIRE AND RAIN

All creatures must obey the Jungle Law

By: M. T. Kelly, Adapted from Rudyard Kipling

*Tyger Tyger burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*  
- William Blake

In the southwest corner of the Steaming Lands cluster has risen a jungle far darker, greener, closer, and lusher than any in the rest of the cluster. It is home to a mix of animals unheard of anywhere else in Ravenloft. It is very similar to The Wildlands, but the differences are stark. As in the Wildlands, all the animals speak like men, though animals from more temperate climates live alongside more tropical animals.

## The Darklord

The undisputed lord of the Fire Jungle is the Tiger S'Khan, who constantly hunts the land looking for men or their children...and one specific man-cub.

## Background

S'Khan was the most fearsome hunter in the jungle that anyone could remember. All feared him - from the tiniest insect to the largest elephant. There was only one beast

in all the jungle that did not: the beast known as ... Man. S'Khan hated Man but rarely thought about it, for the law of the jungle, as practiced by every animal, said that man was an enemy to all, and therefore was to be hunted by all hunters when he dared enter the jungle. Like all of the jungle's residents, S'Khan lived by the law faithfully, and expected all others to do the same, so when he happened upon a man and his cub trying to find their way through the jungle at night, he dutifully, and enthusiastically, took it upon himself to hunt them down and kill them. Unfortunately for S'Khan, the man was carrying the one thing he was powerless against: Man's Red Flower, which man called Fire. Fire was the reason Man was enemy to all. His Red Flower caused the forest to burn, killing dozens if not hundreds of animals at a time. It was for this reason that every animal cooperated to drive Man from the jungle every time he intruded there.

S'Khan managed to corner the two humans in a cave, but the man kept him at bay with his Fire. S'Khan's patience ran out and he charged the man, ripping his throat out even as the man buried his torch in the left side of S'Khan's face, leaving the tiger blind in his left eye and permanently scarred. While S'Khan nursed his wounds, and fed on the man's corpse, the man's cub wandered from the cave and into the jungle. It was found there by a panther named Agra. Agra had been an escapee from a menagerie owned by a human nobleman and knew the ways of men and their cubs. He decided to take the cub to the local wolf pack, which was known to adopt strays from time to time. Chaka, the pack leader, and his mate agreed to take in the cub, but the pack demanded that the cub be spoken for, meaning that the parents must kill an animal to feed the pack and justify the new mouth to feed. Agra responded to this by killing a bull and presenting it to the pack. The man-cub, named Oongli, grew up among the wolves and adopted them as his family. Whenever he wandered from the pack, he would usually find Agra, who became one of his best friends and mentors.

S'Khan became a less capable, but more vicious, hunter after his injuries. It is perhaps this and the protection offered by Agra and the wolf pack that prevented S'Khan from finding Oongli for more than ten years. It was during one particularly dry season, which became a drought, which the fateful confrontation between the two finally occurred. S'Khan had heard whispers of a man-cub being raised by wolves but had never before even caught the scent, but during the drought, the water level of the river lowered to the point where a particular large rock would rise up in the middle of the river. This was known as Peace Rock and

was the triggering sign for what was called a Water Truce.

During a Water Truce, the animals could only drink from the shallow river and thus the animals all agreed not to devour each other while quenching their thirst. Predators and prey were bound by this truce on pain of death but upon scenting Oongli, S'Khan threatened to kill him, as Man is not allowed to live in the jungle by Jungle Law just as binding as that of the Water Truce. When the assembled beasts placed the Law of the Truce above the Law of Man and the Wolves threatened to fight for Oongli, S'Khan backed down, but told the assembly that the Water Truce wouldn't last forever and on the day it ended, he would come for the man-cub. This caused Chaka and his wolf pack to later debate whether to have Oongli leave. Agra convinced Oongli to leave the pack and go to the nearest human settlement for the good of the pack. When they were journeying to the village, S'Khan ambushed them and fought with Agra. Though he beat and mildly injured the panther, Oongli escaped S'Khan with the aid of a herd of buffalo.

Oongli became lost in a part of the Jungle he'd never seen before. He stumbled through the mist into the nest of the giant snake, Chaa. While luring him in by promising to keep him safe, she hypnotized him and revealed that the boy had come to live in the jungle when S'Khan killed his father as they were travelling between villages. She also revealed to him the power of the "Red Flower" and its dangers in her vision. During her storytelling, she attempted to devour him, but a passing sloth bear named Ploo spotted and rescued Oongli, denying Chaa her meal. Meanwhile, S'Khan returned to confront Chaka's pack and demand Oongli be turned over to him; he killed Chaka by throwing him off a cliff when he learned Oongli was on his way to

the Man-village. He then assumed control of the wolves, confident that Oongli would return.

When Oongli heard of Chaka's death, he returned to face S'Khan with a burning torch stolen from the Man-village; S'Khan pointed out that he had accidentally started a wildfire in the process, and that the animals now had more reason to fear Oongli than S'Khan. When Oongli threw away the torch, the tiger attacked, but the combined efforts of Ploo, Agra, and the wolf pack kept him distracted long enough for the man-cub to set a trap in the burning jungle nearby. During their battle, Oongli lured S'Khan onto a dead strangler fig tree and eventually defeated him by causing him to fall into a pit of fire to his death, ending his tyranny once and for all... or so it seemed. A heavy rain fell upon the jungle that night and doused the wildfire. After the rain passed, a thick mist rose from the jungle floor and engulfed everything. When it finally cleared, the jungle had changed forever. Oongli and his friends and family had all disappeared and S'Khan awoke in the cave where he had first killed the man, beside the bones of that kill, with the scent of the man-cub in his nostrils. He immediately set out to find and kill Oongli but couldn't find him anywhere. He stalked every trail in the jungle and even some he'd never seen before, but all he could find was the man-cub's scent. He demanded that every creature he met tell him where the man-cub was, but most of them didn't even know what he was talking about. A few of the older beasts remembered the man-cub but knew nothing of his location. S'Khan began to suspect something had changed when none of the wolves he confronted remembered Oongli and all of them were unknown to the tiger.

The only familiar faces that remembered Oongli were Chaa the snake and King Huey

the great ape, but both of their last encounters with the man-cub had happened before S'Khan's. Strangest of all, there were no more of Man's villages where there had been before. The tiger was stymied, at least until he came upon another man and confronted him, demanding to know where the man's village and the man-cub Oongli were. The man responded by drawing what looked like a large knife and striking at him. All S'Khan could remember after that, before waking up again in the cave next to the bones of Oongli's father, was fire.

## Appearance

S'Khan is a very large tiger measuring ten feet from nose to tail. His most notable features are the burns on his face and his blinded left eye. His coloring consists of black stripes with orangish-brown fur that fades to white as it approaches his paws, which are usually bloodied. He also smells strongly of smoke at all times. Many animals with powerful noses use this fact to avoid him when he is nearby.

## Current Sketch

S'Khan rules by right of might, fang, and claw, but is subject to Jungle Law. Jungle Law is a set of rules long ago agreed to by all its residents. The Law of the Jungle, which never orders anything without a reason, forbids every beast to eat Man, except when he is killing to show his children how to kill, and then he must hunt outside the hunting-grounds of his pack or tribe. The real reason for this is that man-killing means, sooner or later, the arrival of men on elephants, with guns, and hundreds of other men with gongs and rockets and torches. Then, everybody in the jungle suffers. But the reason the beasts give among themselves is that Man is the weakest and most defenseless of all living

things, and it is unsportsmanlike to touch him. They say too - and it is true - that man-eaters become mangy, and lose their teeth. This law has very little impact in the current jungle as Man has almost no presence in it. The only sign of man that still exists are the ruins of a once great city that is now inhabited by King Huey and his apes - and those predate the man-cub. All the villages that had been there no longer exist, as if they had never been. There is one other sign that only S'Khan knows of: Oongli's scent. The tiger constantly hunts the jungle for the man-cub, following the scent. He believes the animals he encounters as he hunts are either ignorant of the boy, or are hiding him. If he believes an animal is hiding him, S'Khan will attack that animal and, if not beaten back by his victim or others, will try to force them to tell him where the man-cub is, usually torturing them to death. Rarely has he ever been convinced by his victim that they know nothing, and usually they are then just eaten.

This does not apply in every circumstance, however. By the Law of the Jungle it is death to kill at the drinking places once the Water Truce has been declared. The reason of this is that drinking comes before eating. Everyone in the Jungle can scramble along somehow when only game is scarce; but water is water, and when there is but one source of supply, all hunting stops while the Jungle People go there for their needs. S'Khan could find Oongli brazenly drinking from the river and wouldn't be able to do anything about it, and he knows it. This applies as well to any animal he thinks might be able to lead him to the man-cub, but, as he's always quick to remind everyone, a Water Truce can't last forever. There are other parts of the Law which may aid or hamper S'Khan in his obsessive hunt, but all have a reason and

are known to the elders among the Jungle People.

## The Land

The Jungle of Fire and Rain bears some resemblance to the Wildlands but the differences are stark. There is no desert land in The Jungle and no consistent grassland except along the river. The jungles of this land are far denser, more humid, and the canopies have more levels. Perhaps what's most different is the yearly cycle of weather. The dry and rainy seasons are much more pronounced. During the dry season, heat creeps through the jungle turning it yellow, then brown, then black. Not every dry season will trigger a Water Truce but it's become much more common than it was. The only consistent grazing land is beside the river. Most grazing animals may be found there but there are clearings in the greater jungle that change every time there's a fire (see below). In the western part of the Jungle rises a large plateau on which sits the ruins of a human city that has long since been taken over by the apes and monkeys of the Jungle. Along the cliffs of the plateau live several nests of bees, the honey of which attracts sloth bears, some of which live in caves at the base of the plateau. The wolf pack have a den in the north of the jungle. Most other beasts have temporary lairs throughout the Jungle that change every time there's a fire.

## The Folk

As with the Wildlands, The Jungle of Fire and Rain is peopled exclusively with animals who speak like men. The mix, however is significantly different. Many of the 'meat' animals that were wiped out by the sleeping sickness in The Wildlands still exist in The Jungle in small numbers. Rhinoceroses, water buffalo, antelope, and warthogs may



all be found here alongside more temperate breeds like deer. More exotic animals such as peacocks, porcupines, muskrats, and kangaroo rats are also found. The mix of predators is also different. There is always at least one wolf pack present in the Jungle; they are rangier and smaller than their cousins in the Core, though no less dangerous to their prey. The solitary predators are even more diverse. Bears, leopards, and panthers may be encountered here in varying numbers, along with jackals, much smaller than their cousins in the Wildlands. Perhaps most notable are the presence of crocodiles who know nothing of King Crocodile and a very few snakes who had been long absent from the cluster until the Jungle appeared.

**The Wolves:** The Northern pack of wolves have a long adversarial relationship with S'Khan. It was their former chief, Chaka, and his mate who took in the Man-cub, Oongli. The fact that Chaka and his family, including Oongli, are all gone is something that S'Khan cannot be convinced of. The tiger constantly harangues members of the pack whenever he encounters them. The pack has learned to stick close together to be prepared in case S'Khan makes an appearance. Some of the older wolves remember Chaka and Oongli but most of the newer generation know nothing of what S'Khan is talking about. Other than that, the wolves think of little more than survival and their next meal.

**Bears:** S'Khan and most other animals who remember judge the bears by the example of Ploo. Ploo the sloth bear was the one who rescued Oongli when Chaa the python was about to devour him. Ploo took Oongli back to his cave and got him to help him gather honey in exchange for saving his life. Eventually, the two formed a strong attachment and decided to stay together until the winter season arrived. When Agra

showed up later, Oongli revealed that he wanted to live with Ploo, but after Ploo spoke with Agra, he reluctantly agreed to send Oongli away to the Man-village so he would be safe from S'Khan. To this end, he even went so far as to say he and Oongli were never friends, hoping his lie would induce Oongli to go to the Man-village, but before Oongli could decide, monkeys under the command of the Gigantopithecus ape, King Huey, abducted him. Ploo and Agra tracked the monkeys back to their temple, and fought them off long enough for Oongli to hide from Huey. The ensuing chase resulted in Huey's apparent death. When Oongli learned of Chaka's death by S'Khan from Huey, he angrily decided to face S'Khan, and stole a torch from the man-village, accidentally starting a fire in the jungle. Ploo and Agra followed him in close pursuit, to help distract S'Khan, alongside the rest of Oongli's wolf pack so that the man-cub could set the trap that later seemingly killed S'Khan. After S'Khan's defeat and the fire was extinguished, Ploo was last seen sometime later with Oongli and Agra, disappearing into the mists.

Ploo's example is fairly typical of the bears of the Jungle. For the most part, they are an affable and easy-going folk. They are omnivorous but prefer fruit, vegetables, and honey to meat. Many bears will make friends among other species, but *none* are foolish enough to try and befriend S'Khan. The tiger has never forgotten Ploo's defiance in both his own face and the face of the law. He judges all bears by this example is often prone to attacking first and asking questions later. Every bear knows well enough to be ready for a fight when they scent S'Khan around.

**Chaa the Python:** Chaa is one of the oldest and most knowledgeable creatures in the Jungle - and one of the most predatory. Anyone wishing to learn the history of the

Jungle may learn some of it from Chaa, provided they can avoid being devoured. Chaa's usual modus operandi is to tell her prey stories while moving her head slowly back and forth to lull them into a trance-like state, then gently suffocate and devour them. Her gentle voice also adds to her formidable hypnotic abilities. She can even sing. One of the stories she most often tells is of her encounter with Oongli. She lured him in by promising to keep him safe, then hypnotized him and revealed to the boy his own history, as well as the power of the "Red Flower" and its dangers. The story, of course, ends with Ploo spotting and rescuing Oongli, denying her of her meal. Chaa lives in a tall tree in the middle of a deceptively peaceful, often misty, grove in the deep jungle. She considers any who enter her lair to be her prey. There is no one besides S'Khan whom she will see differently. Chaa has a lukewarm relationship with S'Khan. She is one of the few beasts who knows the tiger's true nature (see below) and knows better than to try and consume him. Whenever S'Khan tries to consult with her as to Oongli's location, she simply sends him on a random path. If he finds a man, so be it.

**King Huey:** The huge Gigantopithecus ape, Huey, is acknowledged as king of all monkeys, apes, and other simians in the Jungle. He rules from the ruined human temple city which sits atop the western plateau. He is obsessed with man and his fire. He feels that he has risen as high as he can in the Jungle and seeks to become as Man is. He has gathered everything that has to do with Man from the Jungles, some stolen directly from the human villages that used to exist. Some is treasure, some is junk, but all of it is believed by Huey to be able to aid him in his ascension to humanity - if he can just figure out what it's for.

Above all else, he knows that the secret of

fire is integral to his plans. It is the most powerful thing that Man has (that he knows of) and it is the secret he desires most. It was the reason he had Oongli snatched away from his friend Ploo. With the man-cub's disappearance, along with all other humans in the Jungle, he now tries to intercept humanoid intruders to the Jungle before S'Khan can find them and kill them. His usual approach is identical to his attempt with Oongli. He offered the man-cub protection from S'Khan in exchange for the secret of making fire. While accommodating and friendly at first, Huey quickly became spiteful and impatient, refusing to believe Oongli's protests that he did not know how to make fire. He was briefly distracted by the appearance of Ploo, allowing Oongli to be rescued by Agra. However, they were spotted by one of Huey's pig-tailed macaque servants, and Huey ordered the trio to be captured. Emerging from the temple, Huey found his Bandar Log too preoccupied fighting Agra and Ploo to capture Oongli, so he went after the man cub himself. Blocking Oongli's escape, he tried to coerce him into staying, whilst antagonizing him with the revelation of Chaka's death. Oongli refused to stay, infuriating Huey into chasing him through the temple. During his tantrum, he destroyed several of the pillars supporting the temple, causing it to collapse over him. He later emerged from the rubble while the mists engulfed the Jungle.

**Panthers:** Like the bears and Ploo, all panthers are judged by the example of Agra. Agra began to plan for his freedom from the menagerie after his mother died. Once he was mature and strong enough, he broke the lock on his cage and escaped into the jungle, where his ferocity and cunning nature won him the respect of all its other inhabitants, except S'Khan the tiger (likely out of his arrogance). Agra revealed all this

to Oongli later. None but Oongli ever learned that Agra once wore a collar and chain, explaining the cat's special insight concerning men.

After "buying" Oongli's life from the wolves, Agra helped to raise him as one of the pack. Agra shared in many of Oongli's adventures as he grew, and played the role of Oongli's mentor. He continually protected Oongli and taught him to be a creature of the jungle and a member of the wolf pack led by Chaka. When S'Khan threatened Oongli's life, Agra agreed to guide him to the man-village where he could safely live with other humans. However, en route, S'Khan ambushed them. Agra fought with S'Khan and, though he was beaten and mildly injured by the tiger, gained Oongli enough time to escape. They reunited again much later, when Oongli was helping the bear Ploo gather honey (in repayment for Ploo saving him from the python, Chaa). The man-cub announced he wished to stay with Ploo, much to Agra's disappointment. Agra later spoke with Ploo and, after explaining the boy's predicament, convinced Ploo to lie to Oongli and tell him they were never friends in order to ensure he would end up living in the man-village. However, after learning from Huey of the death of Chaka, the boy was furious with Agra and Ploo for keeping the news from him, yet loyal Agra still helped him defeat S'Khan. Agra was last seen sitting with Ploo and Oongli when the mists rose. Because of this, S'Khan bitterly hates panthers. He had begun killing every one that he came across until one finally fought him to a standstill and later told him where to find some men. Even this panther, S'Khan would never trust. He will always see them as 'Man-lovers' (his own words) and will assume any panther that be comes across as an enemy.

#### **Humans and Demihumans in the Jungle:** There are no humans or

demihumans native to the Jungle of Fire and Rain. As such, none of the natives know or understand the differences between them. Any demihumans that find their way to the Jungle will only be seen by the beasts there as Man. They neither know nor care about any differences in race, heritage, or culture. Man is considered an enemy to all the beasts of the Jungle and Jungle Law is explicit about this. This does not mean that any (demi) humans will be set upon the minute they cross the border, however. Most of the beasts of the Jungle are interested only in survival, food, and avoiding predators. They might only attack only if they are attacked or they see a neighbor attacked. Pity the poor big game hunter who comes to claim prizes. A party of (demi) humans who find themselves in the Jungle will hear the usual animal sounds from the Jungle but will notice they sound a great deal like words from the common tongue. Depending on the circumstances, it is not impossible for visiting (demi) humans to make friends among the beasts after they discover that they can talk and begin talking to them. The model of Androcles pulling the thorn from the paw of the lion is a good example. Visitors who do favors for any beast up to a wolf, a panther, or a bear may gain allies among the beasts and, more importantly, knowledge about the land. A warning about S'Khan or Chaa can save party lives. The first monkey or other simian who sights a (demi) human will immediately run to King Huey to tell him. The king will then send messengers to the Men and invite them to the plateau while warning them about S'Khan and other dangers of the Jungle. Those who take him up on his invitation will be expected to share Man's secrets with Huey. Huey has no patience for explanations of the differences between races. As far as he can see, all are Men, all have Man-things, and all know the secret of

the Red Flower. A mixed-race party or a party with no humans can rapidly find themselves facing a very angry giant gorilla by harping on these things. If the party has made friends among the beasts or at least learned they can talk, they may be warned against King Huey by their allies.

## Confronting S'Khan

What S'Khan does not know and may never learn is that the Dark Powers have merged him with a Pyre Elemental. If S'Khan is killed (i.e., reduced to 0 hit points), his remains immediately burst into flames and consume themselves. The pyre will then rise up and attack the tiger's killer(s) while setting the surrounding jungle afire. The resulting wildfire will burn until either the tiger's killer(s) are dead or 40% of the Jungle is aflame, at which time the sky will cloud over and torrential rains will drench the Jungle. When this happens, a large herd of elephants will cross the border from the Wildlands and trample new clearings and paths in the Jungle. This is the only time wild elephants may be seen in the Jungle. Once the fire is out, the mists rise over the Jungle and S'Khan wakes up in the same cave, next to Oongli's father's remains.

S'Khan knows automatically when (demi) humans cross the border but he never knows where, so he becomes more desperate in his hunting. He will demand the location of the strangers immediately of any beast he encounters. Most beasts, especially smaller ones, will immediately respond, whether they know or don't, out of fear. If they don't know, they may also mention someone else they think might know to take the pressure off themselves. If they anger S'Khan, he may strike or even kill them but he will not take time doing so or stop to eat them. He is consumed by his appetite for Man. He thinks it's The Night of

the Tiger. (see below) When he finally finds the intruders, he will stop to plan. If there is only one or two, he will confront them directly and try to get the location of Oongli out of them. When they don't give him what he wants, he will attack and try to force the location out of them, forcing them to flee or fight back in whatever way they can. If the intruders try to trick S'Khan by giving him a false lead or saying they will lead him to Oongli, S'Khan may be willing to give it a chance, however briefly. His trust in Man is extremely limited. If he learns that they were tricking him or they take too long, he will lose his temper and kill them immediately.

If S'Khan is confronted by a larger sized party, he will approach them a little more cautiously. If he can, he will attempt to isolate one of the party and question them about Oongli in his usual way. If that is impossible, he will approach the party in a more friendly fashion and try to charm or trick Oongli's location out of them. If he becomes convinced that the party knows nothing, he will fade back into the forest and stalk the party, picking them off one by one, if he can, until all are dead or they manage to corner him and trigger his cycle of fire and rain.

## Closing the Borders

When S'Khan wants to close the borders, a large wall of flame rises at the border that cannot be flown over or tunneled under.

# Stories of the Jungle

The Beasts of the Jungle of Fire and Rain have a strong oral tradition and any travelers who manage to get them talking can learn a great deal about the Jungle and its occupants. Here is an example:

## The Story of the First Tiger and the Night of the Tiger

*"In those days there was no corn or melons or pepper or sugar-cane, nor were there any little huts such as ye have all seen; and the Jungle People knew nothing of Man, but lived in the Jungle together, making one people. But presently they began to dispute over their food, though there was grazing enough for all. They were lazy. Each wished to eat where he lay down, as sometimes we can do now when the spring rains are good. Tha, the First of the Elephants, was busy making new jungles and leading the rivers in their beds. He could not walk in all places; therefore he made the First of the Tigers the master and the judge of the Jungle, to whom the Jungle People should bring their disputes. In those days the First of the Tigers ate fruit and grass with the others. He was as large as I am, and he was very beautiful, in color all over like the blossom of the yellow creeper. There was never stripe nor bar upon his hide in those good days when this Jungle was new. All the Jungle People came before him without fear, and his word was the Law of all the Jungle. We were then, remember ye, one people.*

*"Yet upon a night there was a dispute between two bucks - a grazing-quarrel such as ye now settle with the horns and the fore feet - and it is said that as the two spoke together before the First of the Tigers, lying among the flowers, a buck pushed him with his horns, and the First of the Tigers forgot*

*that he was the master and judge of the Jungle, and, leaping upon that buck, broke his neck.*

*"Till that night, never one of us had died, and the First of the Tigers, seeing what he had done, and being made foolish by the scent of the blood, ran away into the marshes of the North, and we of the Jungle, left without a judge, fell to fighting among ourselves; and Tha heard the noise of it and came back. Then some of us said this and some of us said that, but he saw the dead buck among the flowers, and asked who had killed, and we of the Jungle would not tell because the smell of the blood made us foolish. We ran to and fro in circles, capering and crying out and shaking our heads. Then Tha gave an order to the trees that hang low, and to the trailing creepers of the Jungle, that they should mark the killer of the buck so that he should know him again, and he said, 'Who will now be master of the Jungle People?' Then up leaped the Gray Ape who lives in the branches, and said, 'I will now be master of the Jungle.' At this Tha laughed, and said, 'So be it,' and went away very angry.*

*"Children, ye know the Gray Ape. He was then as he is now. At the first he made a wise face for himself, but in a little while he began to scratch and to leap up and down, and when Tha came back he found the Gray Ape hanging, head down, from a bough, mocking those who stood below; and they mocked him again. And so there was no Law in the Jungle - only foolish talk and senseless words.*

*"Then Tha called us all together and said: 'The first of your masters has brought Death into the Jungle, and the second Shame. Now it is time there was a Law, and a Law that ye must not break. Now ye shall know Fear, and when ye have found him ye shall know that he is your master, and the rest shall follow.' Then we of the Jungle*

said, 'What is Fear?' And Tha said, 'Seek till ye find.' So we went up and down the Jungle seeking for Fear, and presently the buffaloes came back with the news that in a cave in the Jungle sat Fear, and that he had no hair, and went upon his hind legs. Then we of the Jungle followed the herd till we came to that cave, and Fear stood at the mouth of it, and he was, as the buffaloes had said, hairless, and he walked upon his hinder legs. When he saw us he cried out, and his voice filled us with the fear that we have now of that voice when we hear it, and we ran away, tramping upon and tearing each other because we were afraid. That night, so it was told to me, we of the Jungle did not lie down together as used to be our custom, but each tribe drew off by itself - the pig with the pig, the deer with the deer; horn to horn, hoof to hoof, - like keeping to like, and so lay shaking in the Jungle.

"Only the First of the Tigers was not with us, for he was still hidden in the marshes of the North, and when word was brought to him of the Thing we had seen in the cave, he said: 'I will go to this Thing and break his neck.' So he ran all the night till he came to the cave; but the trees and the creepers on his path, remembering the order that Tha had given, let down their branches and marked him as he ran, drawing their fingers across his back, his flank, his forehead, and his jowl. Wherever they touched him there was a mark and a stripe upon his yellow hide. And those stripes do his children wear to this day! When he came to the cave, Fear, the Hairless One, put out his hand and called him 'The Striped One that comes by night,' and the First of the Tigers was afraid of the Hairless One, and ran back to the swamps howling. So loud did he howl that Tha heard him and said, 'What is the sorrow?' And the First of the Tigers, lifting up his muzzle to the new-made sky, which

is now so old, said: 'Give me back my power, O Tha. I am made ashamed before all the Jungle, and I have run away from a Hairless One, and he has called me a shameful name.' 'And why?' said Tha. 'Because I am smeared with the mud of the marshes,' said the First of the Tigers. 'Swim, then, and roll on the wet grass, and if it be mud it will wash away,' said Tha; and the First of the Tigers swam, and rolled and rolled upon the grass, till the Jungle ran round and round before his eyes, but not one little bar upon all his hide was changed, and Tha, watching him, laughed. Then the First of the Tigers said, 'What have I done that this comes to me?' Tha said, 'Thou hast killed the buck, and thou hast let Death loose in the Jungle, and with Death has come Fear, so that the people of the Jungle are afraid one of the other, as thou art afraid of the Hairless One.' The First of the Tigers said, 'They will never fear me, for I knew them since the beginning.' Tha said, 'Go and see.' And the First of the Tigers ran to and fro, calling aloud to the deer and the pig and the sambhur and the porcupine and all the Jungle Peoples, and they all ran away from him who had been their judge, because they were afraid.

"Then the First of the Tigers came back, and his pride was broken in him, and, beating his head upon the ground, he tore up the earth with all his feet and said: 'Remember that I was once the Master of the Jungle. Do not forget me, O Tha! Let my children remember that I was once without shame or fear!' And Tha said: 'This much I will do, because thou and I together saw the Jungle made. For one night in each year it shall be as it was before the buck was killed - for thee and for thy children. In that one night, if ye meet the Hairless One - and his name is Man - ye shall not be afraid of him, but he shall be afraid of you, as though ye were judges of the Jungle and

*masters of all things. Show him mercy in that night of his fear, for thou hast known what Fear is.'*

"Then the First of the Tigers answered, 'I am content'; but when next he drank he saw the black stripes upon his flank and his side, and he remembered the name that the Hairless One had given him, and he was angry. For a year he lived in the marshes, waiting till Tha should keep his promise. And upon a night when the Jackal of the Moon (the Evening Star) stood clear of the Jungle, he felt that his Night was upon him, and he went to that cave to meet the Hairless One. Then it happened as Tha promised, for the Hairless One fell down before him and lay along the ground, and the First of the Tigers struck him and broke his back, for he thought that there was but one such Thing in the Jungle, and that he had killed Fear. Then, nosing above the kill, he heard Tha coming down from the woods of the North, and presently the voice of the First of the Elephants, which is the voice that we hear now—"

The thunder rolls up and down the dry, scarred hills, but brings no rain - only heat-lightning that flickers along the ridges.

"That was the voice he heard, and it said: 'Is this thy mercy?' The First of the Tigers licked his lips and said: 'What matter? I have killed Fear.' And Tha said: 'O blind and foolish! Thou hast untied the feet of Death, and he will follow thy trail till thou diest. Thou hast taught Man to kill!'

"The First of the Tigers, standing stiffly to his kill, said: 'He is as the buck was. There is no Fear. Now I will judge the Jungle Peoples once more.'

"And Tha said: 'Never again shall the Jungle Peoples come to thee. They shall never cross thy trail, nor sleep near thee, nor follow after thee, nor browse by thy lair. Only Fear shall follow thee, and with a blow that thou canst not see he shall bid thee

wait his pleasure. He shall make the ground to open under thy feet, and the creeper to twist about thy neck, and the tree-trunks to grow together about thee higher than thou canst leap, and at the last he shall take thy hide to wrap his cubs when they are cold. Thou hast shown him no mercy, and none will he show thee.'

"The First of the Tigers was very bold, for his Night was still on him, and he said: 'The Promise of Tha is the Promise of Tha. He will not take away my Night?' And Tha said: 'The one Night is thine, as I have said, but there is a price to pay. Thou hast taught Man to kill, and he is no slow learner.'

"The First of the Tigers said: 'He is here under my foot, and his back is broken. Let the Jungle know I have killed Fear.'

"Then Tha laughed, and said: 'Thou hast killed one of many, but thou thyself shalt tell the Jungle-for thy Night is ended.'

"So the day came; and from the mouth of the cave went out another Hairless One, and he saw the kill in the path, and the First of the Tigers above it, and he took a pointed stick and throwing it, he struck the First of the Tigers deep in the flank. Thus it happened as Tha said, for the First of the Tigers ran howling up and down the Jungle till he tore out the stick, and all the Jungle knew that the Hairless One could strike from far off, and they feared more than before. So it came about that the First of the Tigers taught the Hairless One to kill - and ye know what harm that has since done to all our peoples-through the noose, and the pitfall, and the hidden trap, and the flying stick, and the stinging fly that comes out of white smoke, and the Red Flower that drives us into the open. Yet for one night in the year the Hairless One fears the Tiger, as Tha promised, and never has the Tiger given him cause to be less afraid. Where he finds him, there he kills him, remembering how the First of the Tigers

*was made ashamed. For the rest, Fear walks up and down the Jungle by day and by night."*

*"And only when there is one great Fear over all, as there is now, can we of the Jungle lay aside our little fears, and meet together in one place as we do now."*

*"Never till the Jackal of the Moon stands clear of the evening mist. Sometimes it falls in the dry summer and sometimes in the wet rains - this one Night of the Tiger. But for the First of the Tigers, this would never have been, nor would any of us have known fear."*

# THREE FAIRIES

A small collection of new angry feys

By: Mikhail "NeoTiamat" Rekun

## Brum of the Mound

*"Look, I'm telling you you're not going to find a better bargain anywhere. Genuine Tergish Akçe's don't exactly show up on the market often. See? It's real silver, got the symbols on either side..."*

*"Stolen? Sir, you hurt me. This beauty hasn't been seen by human eyes since ol' Strahd the First's days. So, want it or not?"*

-Overheard conversation

In the village of Timosi in southern Barovia, if one buys the greybeards in front of the inn a few drinks and asks the right questions, one learns of the Ogre's Mound. This is a hillock in the middle of a field north of Timosi, a perfectly round mound with a flat slab of stone at its summit.

For a few more drinks, the greybeards will tell you even more. If you visit the mound at midnight, braving the Barovian night, then a booming voice will greet you in the old tongue of Barovia. If you're brave, and if you're foolish, then place a single coin upon the stone table and ask the spirit of the Ogre's Mound for its aid. If the spirit agrees, then stay there until the owl hoots twice. And when you return, you'll find the troublesome tree uprooted, or enough firewood to last you the winter, or the field plowed, or whatever it was you asked.

And if the spirit doesn't accept the coin?

Well... the greybeards pause here, and after cadging a few more drinks, admit that no one quite rightly knows...

### Appearance

Brum of the Mound is an imposing sight, to be sure. In his natural form, the Earth-Fey is a huge ogre, a hulking, brutish humanoid the size of a barn, covered in thick and matted hair. His face is a caricature of a man's, with a bulging red nose and curling tusks, and small, porcine eyes. His skin is the color of the soil, a tan brown, and the creature is generally dirty, covered in soil.

And yet, the image of the brute doesn't completely fit. The ogre's clothing is crude, but clean, and the tools (hammers, shovels, picks) at his belt are in good condition. As for his axe... it's the size of a small tree, a woodman's axe with a dull grey blade that nevertheless gleams in the light.

Brum of the Mound is also a shapeshifter, though an imperfect one. His preferred form is that of a great horned owl, with a vast wingspan and piercing orange eyes. Recently, though, he has adopted the form of a caliban in frayed formal clothing, though Brum's knowledge of human fashion is approximately eighty years out of date.

### Story

For centuries uncounted, Brum of the Mound and the people of Timosi have lived

in a kind of truce. Brum dwelled beneath the Ogre's Mound, growing and caring for his horde, polishing the small pile of coins till they shone.

For their part, the people of Timosi viewed their neighbor with a curious mixture of fear and possessive pride. He was an ogre, but he was *their* ogre, and not the violent sort, regardless of the stories they told. Just place a coin upon the stone table, and the Ogre would do what brute strength would do. And if the coin was unacceptable (too cheap, or adulterated, or counterfeit), then the worst he ever did was roar and swear and make the Mound shake until the hapless villager ran in terror, with a few more grey hairs, perhaps, but unharmed.

This idyllic existence has been interrupted, though. For you see, someone has stolen a handful of Brum's coins. How, exactly, something could sneak into Brum's mound, and why steal only a few coins, are questions that Brum cannot answer, and ones that concern him. But the fact remains that he has been robbed, and this is something that cannot be tolerated.

And so Brum has sharpened his axe, packed a few tools, and goes now to find the missing coins, wherever they may be. Brum can smell his missing property, and so Brum is going to find them. And once he finds the thieves, they are going to see that thinking Brum a gentle, retiring giant is the height of foolishness.

So far, Brum's nose has led him to one of the great cities of the Core, but now... Despite his appearance, the earth-fey is not stupid. He can smell deceit, smell fear, and has a prodigious memory. But he has only a rudimentary understanding of human society, of all the rules and regulations and laws that bind it. Moreover, the scent of his missing coins has gone faint and confusing.

At the moment, Brum is bravely searching through the cities, asking people if they know where his coins are, and checking through such collections of coins as he can find. But for his (to his mind, eminently reasonable and well-mannered) inquiries, Brum is rebuffed, accused of panhandling or simply ignored.

And the Earth-Fey, slow to anger, is finding his temper growing increasingly short.

## Brum in Battle

Should the ogre's temper finally snap, then the results are liable to be... messy. Brum is a powerful, ancient Faerie, and his connections to Earth make him slow, but strong, and borderline invulnerable. Spells trickles off his hide, and blows barely do more. And his great, adamantine axe can cleave flesh and stone with equal ease. If the Earth-Fey goes on a rampage, he is liable to level a sizeable neighborhood, or even the entire city. For higher level PCs, grant Brum some powers over weather, or the ability to cause earthquakes.

## Using Brum of the Mound

The key question in an adventure using Brum is "Who's got the coin?" The coins could be anything, from rare Tergish coins of museum quality, to an old Dementlieuse copper Constellation. And they could be anywhere, from the personal coffers of Lord Balfour de Casteelle to in the pockets of one of the PCs.

Now, you can use Brum as a pure brute. Place the coins in the possession of an ally of the PCs, and then let an angry ogre find them. But perhaps more interesting, to my mind, would be to use Brum as a source of suspense. In the Alfred Hitchcock tradition, the bomb that explodes is an action movie, but the bomb that doesn't explode is

suspense. Brum can be the bomb that doesn't explode.

In this kind of adventure, the trick is to get the PCs somehow responsible for finding the coins *before* Brum's limited patience gives out. Perhaps Brum confronts them in the street and figures that humans can find what humans have concealed (which, by the way, may not be the worst way to start a new campaign). Then the PCs have to search high and low for coins that can be of any value, of any rarity, could be completely anonymous or could be heavily guarded, and if they fail, or don't do it fast enough, most of the city will suffer. Could be a good exercise for the PC's investigative (find the coins) and diplomatic (keep Brum mollified) abilities.

And afterwards... well, it's not very likely that a few coins are worth having Brum after you. And yet, someone stole them, and in all likelihood, someone planted them on these people, knowing full well that Brum would go after them with an adamantine axe.

So the PCs now have to deal with someone canny enough to steal from an ogre and use him as a personal assassin, and callous enough to not care about all the innocent bystanders that are liable to get killed.

## The Elegist

*Zig, zig, zig, Death in a cadence,  
Striking with his heel a tomb,  
Death at midnight plays a dance-tune,  
Zig, zig, zig, on his violin.*

*The winter wind blows and the night is dark;  
Moans are heard in the linden trees.  
Through the gloom, white skeletons pass,  
Running and leaping in their shrouds.*

*Zig, zig, zig, each one is frisking,  
The bones of the dancers are heard to crack—  
But hist! of a sudden they quit the round,  
They push forward, they fly; the cock has crowed.*

-Danse Macabre, Op. 40, by Camille Saint-Saëns

There is a hush. The moon hangs low in the sky, bathing the cemetery with its pale glow. A single figure steps out into the graveyard. He raises a violin to his shoulder, and begins to play, a fast, quick little melody, of the sort that causes one's fingers to beat a tattoo in time with it.

The first dancer arises, pushing the barren earth from his form. He is old, but he still remembers a few steps from his youth. His companion is lovely, perfectly frozen in the shape of her burial. Together, they begin to dance. Soon they are joined by others.

By midnight, the entire cemetery is dancing, as fast, clever music fills the air. Thus is the passing of the Elegist.

## Appearance

In person, the Elegist resembles a certain kind of dying young poet. He is a slender-framed youth, clad in black clothing with a white rose upon his lapel. His skin is pale, and his blond curls fall in a disheveled heap about his head. His eyes are large, and dark blue, and the Elegist carries a violin of ebon-wood with him.

The Death-Fey, however, takes the appearance of the dying poet a step beyond. His skin is the pallor of the corpse, and an observant viewer would notice the first signs of decay around his large eyes and his fingers. The Elegist moves in a jerky, uneven fashion, as if a marionette with a poor puppeteer. Those familiar with

such things would consider the Elegist one of the Obedient Dead at first glance.

At the same time, his heart does beat, quickly – too quickly. The Elegist breathes, though he rarely speaks and never smiles. All his uneven movements, likewise, do not hurt his playing ability one whit.

## Story

For all that this Death-Fey rarely speaks and almost never travels beyond the confines of his graveyards, most of the town will soon learn if the Elegist has paid them a visit.

The first few nights (and the Elegist is only ever seen at night), the Death-Fey does little more than play his violin within the cemetery, standing before the headstone of some long-forgotten soul, and filling the night with his slightly deranged music. For now, the Elegist plays slow dirges and mournful laments to the dwellers of the graveyard. Nothing yet has happened. Sometimes, the Elegist leaves after this point.

More often, however, the Elegist's music changes. It becomes quicker, faster, possessed of a rhythm and melody that hint at the Death-Fey's otherworldly origins. Now, the denizens of the cemetery know him, and to this music, they rise up to dance.

Merchants and beggars alike, buried in their finest threads now greatly decayed, the dead open their coffins and pass to the surface in some mystic fashion. Some are zombies, or embalmed to look quite nearly human in their somber suits. Others are skeletons, clad in a few tatters of cloth. Some few are merely ghosts, shadows and echoes of the past. At first, only the bravest and most venturesome of the dead answer the Elegist's call, but in time, they all dance.

Stately waltzes and sprightly mazurkas are the Elegist's fare, interspersed with folk

dances of the distant past. Still, the dances are yet harmless, provided one doesn't venture into the graveyard. The Elegist will not venture forth, and those who avoid the cemetery between dusk and dawn are safe.

Still, it is an untenable position, and eventually the Elegist finishes his visitation in one of three ways. Sometimes, the Death-Fey grows bored and departs. He arrives and turns the cemetery into a nightly uproar for some days or weeks, but then is gone, and the confused and frightened town is left to wonder, and often times to put stouter locks upon the lichgates.

More often, however, the Elegist refuses to depart until a sacrifice is made. Scholars debate and argue for why this is so, but most suspect that he loathes leaving a graveyard unattended, and so seeks a 'replacement' for himself before he leaves.

The sacrifice may be a man or a woman, young or old, but they must be a good dancer and of sound limb, and so most are youths. Sometimes the Elegist makes his requests clear through signs upon the cemetery walls, ominous scribblings in old blood or ink. Other times, the Elegist collects the sacrifice himself, luring them to the cemetery with hypnotic songs.

Eventually, the sacrifice arrives, and thence the Elegist offers a dance with his victim. It seems dreadfully important to him that the victim accept of their own free will, and the Death-Fey does nothing to compel them. Of course, if they refuse, the waiting dead tear them limb from limb, but that is something the Elegist does not tell them.

Then the Death-Fey and his victim dance, twirling through the night as the restless dead look on and keep time, knocking bony knees and clapping decayed hands. A single dance, and if the Elegist is satisfied, then the victim's fate is sealed. While they dance, the waiting dead prepare

a grave, and bring out a headstone for their new neighbor.

At the dance's conclusion, the Elegist shows the sacrifice his or her new abode, and bids them enter their coffin, compelling them with some eldritch magic of the Faerie. Then the coffin is sealed and lowered into the grave, and the Elegist supervises its burial, binding the grave with powerful magics that it is not disturbed or tampered with.

The next day, at dusk, the Elegist is no longer present, but in his stead, the graveyard has a new ghostly member. The sacrifice is translucent and otherworldly, and for the rest of eternity is doomed to dance the night away, waiting for his or her partner's return.

Of course, sometimes the sacrifice is unsatisfactory, or perhaps the Elegist decides these things through pure caprice, but a third option is possible. Very rarely, on the night of the new moon, the Elegist will lead his dancing entourage into the land of the living.

Some of the undead, those buried with husbands or wives, have partners and are harmless. But those without such fellows seek out partners in the dance. They scrabble into windows, break down doors, seek out mortals with whom to share the Elegist's song. This mad collection continues, a hunting of the living until all have a partner, or the night grows late. Before dawn, the Elegist leads his expanded troupe back to the cemetery.

There, with dark magics and vile pacts, he lets his entourage take their dancers back into their crypts and coffins, burying themselves beneath the ground... with their mortal partners in tow. And then the Elegist departs. Few of the townsfolk survive their entrapment below the earth, and even those who are dug out in time... well, let us only say that spending several hours

trapped with a corpse in a coffin does not do one's sanity much good.

## The Elegist in Battle

Aside from simply hoping he gets bored and goes away on his own, the Elegist is a difficult foe to face. The surest way to avoid his dark visits is to give him a sacrifice, a ghostly partner in the dance to replace him after he departs. Some towns, those familiar with his stories, find it the simplest solution.

Actually *destroying* the Elegist is rather trickier. The Elegist knows old bindings and pacts, and mystic songs most have forgotten. Moreover, he usually has an entire cemetery's dead as his servants. That said, the Elegist *can* be defeated.

In particular, the touch of rowan wood is deathly dangerous to the Elegist. It burns his skin, making it crackle and smolder like flaming parchment, and causes the Death-Fey an unholy pain. Were a rowan stake plunged into the Elegist's throat, then his manifestation in this graveyard is ended, and all that is his disappears into an oily smoke. Never again will he trouble that town... though others may feel his sting.

As for destroying him permanently? Well, that requires destroying his violin. One must steal the instrument and smash it to kindling with a rowan staff, and then burn it upon holy ground. The ashes must be mixed with holy water, and then buried beneath a church. Of course, the difficulty lies in the fact that if the Elegist's manifestation is destroyed during this, then the violin disappears. And it is unlikely that the Death-Fey will take the theft of his property lightly.

## Using the Elegist

The Elegist is not a morally complex or elaborate villain. He's frightening, he's powerful, and he's explicitly malicious. His

visits cast a pall of fear over the town where the PCs are staying, and the alternatives are to sacrifice one of the town's own, or else risk unimaginable destruction. Beyond that, destroying the Eelist is simple. Hurt him enough, preferably with rowan-wood implements, and he goes away. Bear in mind that simple does not by any means equal *easy*.

That said, the Eelist also serves as a kind of 'bait-and-switch' antagonist. Most players, hearing about trouble in the graveyard, expect vampires, or liches, or necromancers, or maybe mad scientists looking for Flesh Golem parts. A Faerie is most certainly *not* what they are going to be expecting, at which point he goes and unleashes a wave of zombies upon them, or buries dozens of people alive in graves.

## Cecil, the Master Cat

*"My brothers," said he, "may make a handsome living by joining their shares together; but, for my part, after I have eaten up my cat, and made myself a muff from his skin, I must then die of hunger."*

*The cat, who heard all this, but pretended otherwise, said to him with a grave and serious air, "Do not be so concerned, my good master. If you will but give me a bag, and have a pair of boots made for me, that I may scamper through the dirt and the brambles, then you shall see that you are not so poorly off with me as you imagine."*

-Excerpt from *The Master Cat; or, Puss in Boots*, collected by Charles Perrault

There are many who consider madness to be an essential condition of the Faerie existence. To be a Fey, by the words of these scholars, is to be hopelessly insane and erratic, by very definition. One can no more have a sane Fey than an airborne fish or a wealthy pauper.

Imagine, for instance, a Faerie who has spent months, even years, constructing some vast and labyrinthine intrigue. Every pawn is in place, every rook well-positioned, the knights are ready to charge forth, the bishops have said their prayers, and the Queen awaits only a single word. Does it make any sense, the greybeards ask, for the Faerie to then undermine his own plots and plans, wrecking in hours what took decades to create. Can such a creature be anything other than insane?

The answer to this, Cecil can say, is no. For the Master Cat has done just that many a time over the centuries, and there is always a method in his madness.

## Appearance

Cecil is a cat. To be fair, he is a distinctive feline, an Akiri Mau (*DM's Note: That's Egyptian Mau over here*) with a silvery coat covered in dark spots. Aside from his peculiar coat, Cecil is a muscular, athletic animal with a somewhat rounded face and large, eloquent yellow eyes. His spots form a kind of M marking over his forehead. For some unknown reason, his left, front paw possesses six toes instead of the more usual five.

Physically, that is all there is to Cecil. He imitates the feline form perfectly. But then again, he has been at it since time out of mind.

Cecil's voice is a melodious tenor, though he can mimic most any sound heard. His command of human language is perfect, and where most Faerie are clumsy, or at the least confusing, when speaking, the Master Cat is eloquent and pleasant to listen to.

## Story

Amongst certain circles of Faerie, Cecil is known as the Traitorous Advisor, and this is an adequate representation of his modus operandi. Cecil is a dual-natured Faerie, an



embodiment of the concept of cats, but also of conflict.

Cecil begins his efforts by selecting a mark, who is usually a mortal (though sometimes something more esoteric, such as a vampire or hag), and in desperate straits. They may be a nobleman on the verge of bankruptcy, a peasant who was crippled and fears starvation, or a vampire being harried by ever more persuasive hunters. All that matters is that the mark is desperate for aid. That is when Cecil makes his approach.

Most marks at first doubt their sanity upon finding themselves speaking with a cat, but Cecil has a number of stories he tells about his nature to set his mark at ease. He may be an escaped wizard's familiar, or an ensorcelled human, or even a fragment of the mark's subconscious - whatever the mark would believe.

Cecil then proceeds to offer to 'help' the mark out of his woes. If the mark agrees (and pays some manner of price for Cecil's aid), then Cecil sets to work. The specifics of the price are irrelevant to the Master Cat, so long as the mark does not believe that he works for free.

Once Cecil sets about to save the mark from ruin, he usually succeeds in short order. The Master Cat is an excellent strategist and judge of human nature, and he is completely unscrupulous. Moreover, Cecil can call upon a host of Faerie favors to his aid. One common aspect to Cecil's intervention is that the mark survives over the ruins of someone's corpse. The aforementioned nobleman might find that a wealthy and old aristocrat dies in his sleep, and a 'new will' is discovered which leaves everything to the nobleman, at the expense of the older aristocrat's family. The vampire's hunters, on the other hand, may simply find their camp overrun at night by King Hob's men.

Cecil is careful never to do anything that would make the mark's conscience balk completely (hence why he prefers desperate men), but the mark ascends only as someone else descends.

Moreover, Cecil does not stop just with the prevention of ruin. With his aid, the mark soon ascends to the very top of his arena. The nobleman will soon become the maestro of local fashion and opinion (carefully coached by Cecil, of course), while the vampire will be led to destroy his foes one by one.

In time, however, the mark becomes powerful, respected, his enemies vanquished and defeated. There is no more conflict, and the mark doesn't really need Cecil's help any longer. Whereupon Cecil smiles his feline smile, and turns to offer his aid to one of the mark's weakest foes.

Soon, the mark will find his schemes failing, his fortune tumbling, everything he created destroyed by Cecil and his new 'master', until the mark is worse off, far worse off than he ever was before. Many a mark's last sight was the blade of his foeman, and off in the corner, a spotted, silver-coated cat.

Of course, they can take comfort in one fact. What Cecil gives, Cecil takes.

Cecil is one of the earliest recorded Faerie still active. Cecil first appears in hieroglyphic records of the Akiri courts of Amenmahet II, first of the Ninth Dynasty, which show a speckled cat at the foot of the Pharaoh. Then called Kekel, the feline advisor was considered a messenger of Bast.

It should probably be noted by scholars of Har'Akir that every pharaoh of the Ninth Dynasty died violently, and that the entire Dynasty survived only sixty years (going through fourteen pharaohs during that time period) and suffered three civil wars and two foreign invasions.

Since then, Cecil has been content with creating his chaos on a smaller scale. In truth, all that matters to Cecil is the maximization of conflict. The Master Cat makes certain that his erstwhile masters fight with others on their way up, and once they seem secure, Cecil brings them right back down.

All Cecil cares about is conflict. If he must destroy what he has created only years ago, well then, why not? The more conflict, whether acrimonious exchanges in court or clashes upon the battlefield, the more the Master Cat is happy.

Still, Cecil has to admit that his recent schemes have lacked a certain element of panache. It's been a very long time since the Master Cat has brought down a kingdom...

## Cecil in Battle

On the one hand, Cecil is an eminently easy foe to defeat. He's just a cat. He has no war-form of a Bengal Tiger, he is no mighty mage. He is merely a small, rather quick cat.

Cecil *does* have a few powers, of course. No bonds can hold him, and he can open any door in the world with a bat of the paw. Even the most powerful spells melt away at his touch. Moreover, Cecil can travel instantly to wherever he wants. He merely jogs into the shadows, or the bushes, or somewhere out of sight, and jogs out of the other side of the bush half a continent away.

But what makes Cecil so deadly dangerous is that he knows people. At any given moment, Cecil is running a dozen of his games, acting as infrequent advisor to warlords, bandit chieftains, society grand dames, master merchants, and powerful wizards. Turning any of these against his foes is really very simple. As if that is not enough, Cecil is well-situated in Faerie

society (probably because it is them alone that he doesn't *usually* betray).

If things ever get truly unfortunate, however, one should always remember that cats have nine lives. And while Cecil seems to have used up more than his share, every time he has been killed so far, he has been reincarnated as a newborn kitten *somewhere* in the Demiplane.

It's almost as though Cecil has some way of getting more than his fair share of lives.

## Using the Master Cat

Cecil has two main uses in a campaign. He's an equalizer, and he's an arch-villain. Both of these uses can, and should be used together.

As an equalizer, remember that Cecil loathes lack of conflict. He can turn up to help the PCs, posing as some enchanted mortal or some such, and help them defeat some immensely powerful vampire lord or what not. On the other hand, if the PCs are the ones who are powerful, then they may find that Cecil has attached himself to some two-bit villain of theirs, who may prove to be not so harmless very soon.

As an arch-villain, one need only remember that Cecil's ultimate goal is maximum conflict. Ideally, Cecil wants war, a fragmented civil war which turns brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, with a dozen sides and never any victor. Cecil's done it once before, after all. Perhaps it's time to try again.

Used together, a campaign might start with Cecil helping one foe, and the PCs opposing them. A bit later, when things are looking grim for the PCs, Cecil might switch sides and help the PCs until the foe is defeated, and for a while later. A few successes afterwards, however Cecil might abandon them in favor of a new villain, and may well be manipulating more than one foe towards a clash. Both the new Captain

of the Gendarmerie and the thieves' guild master may have a feline advisor, as well as the local Sentire of the Ezran church. By playing all sides against each other, Cecil will try to create a conflict, and it's up to the PCs to stop him.

Cecil can also be used to string together multiple Faeries who are otherwise unconnected. Seeking to cause some chaos, Cecil might deliver Brum's coins to someone. He might invite the Elegist into the graveyard. He may lead his mark to the Midnight Market to purchase allies such as

Conall. He can be a unifying thread in a campaign - never the main villain, but always the Cat behind the Man, as it were.

In a simpler situation, there's the question of how does Cecil 'refill' his lives. It may take simple time, but for instant antagonism on the part of the PCs, perhaps it requires stealing the life-force of someone or something. Cats are said to have been able to suck the breath (and life) out of newborn babes, after all.

# THE CONFERENCES OF VICTOR GAGNÉ

## Part the First: The Dark Alchemist

By: Benjamin Bauml

Squinting into the dark interior of the Seelewald, I felt as though it were glaring at me, blocking my sight with a palpable contempt. I drew forth the letter I had received from the interior of my jacket, and I surveyed it one last time, gauging how willing I was to follow the invitation—

When I gave the border guard the papers, he turned his head and looked at them out of the corner of his eye, as though he wanted to avert his gaze, but could not. Stiffly, he handed them back, shivered, and had me move along without any further hassle. Even when a Talon accosted me on

Dear Docteur Victor Gagné,

My master would rather like to receive you at his residence at your earliest convenience. As a practitioner of Philosophical Alchemy, you may perhaps be a kindred spirit to him. It was by chance that he heard of your use of memory coagulant in finding that nest of powries near where Mordent, Richemulot, and Dementlieu meet, and he is most excited to know of another alchemist so nearby.

I hope it does not discourage your attendance that my master lives in Falkovnia. Enclosed with this letter is a set of travel papers that will guarantee easy passage through the realm. Make sure to hand the papers to any soldier who impedes you, and you will be relatively untroubled.

To reach my master's abode, travel due north from Silbervas. You will know when you arrive. My master will not allow you to come to harm in the forest.

If you are able, I encourage you to make the journey posthaste.

Sincerely,  
Silas Rabirius  
Castellan to Ewiger Qualensturm

the road, the papers seemed to perturb him immensely, and I was left alone.

Now, standing before the forest, I felt that I could trust Silas' promises regarding my safety, but I still did not fancy the idea of entering the darkness. I tucked the letter away again, straightened my posture, and strode forward.

Walking aimlessly through a forest usually is not conducive to reaching a destination, but I never felt lost as I progressed through the maze of tree trunks. Not a single animal, dangerous or otherwise, crossed my path. After an hour of walking (and thirty minutes of lunch), I reached a clearing made by a circle of black cobblestone. I stood at its edge and surveyed my surroundings. I certainly felt as though I had arrived, but I saw no sign of an entrance. A wind blew through the area, and a lone leaf left the forest and landed in the circle. I stepped forward to retrieve it, and I found that it was a crinkled note. It read—

*Make camp here.  
When the time is right, I shall  
arrive to let you in.*

SR

Once again, I did as I was instructed. I waited for a long while, and, since I had not expected to need to pack more than one meal, I went to sleep a little peckish.

I was groggy as someone shook me awake. A blurry human outline above me flatly stated, "Victor Gagné. Awaken Monsieur Gagné." My vision cleared up, and I saw a raven-haired man with slate gray eyes staring down at me. Despite residing in Falkovnia, his forehead was not marked with a hawk. He wore a black double-breasted coat, ashen breeches, and tall,

ebon-colored leather boots. The only splash of color on his person was a red silk stock tie that made him look as though he were bleeding profusely. "Come. Make yourself ready to enter my master's home."

I shook my head to speed its return to clarity, then asked, "Are you Silas?"

"Yes." He spoke without emotion, and there was no light in his eyes. I could see no hint of the person who had written the letter and note.

I came to my feet and brushed the dirt and leaves off of my clothing. I had not thought I would need to pack a bedroll, and the ground had been softer than the black circle. Silas stood at the edge beside me, muttering something. The language he spoke was foreign to my ears, which bothered me. My father, a former diplomat, spoke every language of the Core, and then some. I was not patient enough in my youth to learn from him how to speak them all, but I could place their origin countries after hearing only a few sentences. Nothing about what Silas was speaking fit in with my experience.

As he spoke, Silas withdrew a black cobble from his clothing and, to punctuate the closing statement of his litany, he tossed it into the center of the circle. Growling like a grave elemental awakening to find itself being trod upon, the circle turned into a stone whirlpool, expanding outward to the edge. Once the change expanded to its limit, it solidified into four symmetrical spiral ramps down to a black floor some ten yards below. Silas turned to me, fixed me in his blank gaze, and said, "Welcome to Untenturm, Citadel of Qualensturm. Follow me."

Down the nearest spiral we went. Upon reaching the floor below, one strange word from Silas sent the walkways surfaceward. As the hole to the outside closed, the room faded from my vision. Before the darkness

was complete, magical light flared from the left hand of Silas. He extended his right hand, palm upward, and, when the hole sealed fully, a black cobble fell into his waiting grasp. He aimed his light around the room, revealing several stone doors. He settled upon one, gestured for me to follow, then went to open it.

Beyond, we entered trailing hallways lit by sunrods. We passed through many passages and staircases, sinking ever deeper into the earth. Occasionally, we passed groups of attendants. They transported crates, assessed the complex, and replaced the sunrods. Each one had the same dead eyes as Silas. What had begun as an impulsive journey was now becoming very unnerving. Given the other residents of Untenturm, what was Qualensturm going to be like?

Down, down, down we went, spiraling, switchbacking, and even using metal-runged ladders on a couple of occasions. I forgot to check my pocket watch, so I lost track of the duration of the descent. Eventually, however, we used one final spiral stair and reached a black iron door that resonated with finality. I could feel that we had arrived.

The door's most prominent feature was a large, metal wheel in its center. Silas wrenched the wheel counterclockwise, then spun it fully five times. With a great heave, he pulled the door ajar, revealing a wood-paneled sitting room.

Gone was the feel of descending into a dungeon. The room held all of the comfort of a lounge, with the scholarly appointments of a study. It was circular, with half of its circumference taking the form of artistically crafted bookshelves. A beautiful harpsichord was off to the right, with a bench before its stacked keyboards and a wooden chair between the side of the instrument and the wall. The journals and sheets of paper on

the surface of the instrument suggested that it doubled as a desk. Opposite the harpsichord was a ceramic masonry heater, tastefully constructed with tiles that mimicked the wood of the room. Between the instrument and the heater, a pair of soft-looking, red, padded armchairs faced each other in the center of the room.

"Sit. Make yourself comfortable," Silas announced, then he swept out of the room and closed the door behind him.

I was taken aback, but I made the best of the situation. I picked the chair facing the harpsichord. From my seat, my eye was captured by a small portrait nestled upon a bookshelf to the left of the entrance. It depicted a youthful man with auburn hair that stood in disorganized tufts. He had heterochromic eyes, one hazel and one green. His nose was slightly aquiline, and his mouth was twisted into a wry smile. I hoped that my host was not the type of person to adorn his office with his own likeness, but, if not, that left the question of who this was. I was jarred back to reality when the door opened again, taking me aback for a wholly different reason.

In came Silas, grinning like a child.

"My apologies that my master cannot be available to welcome you in person, but I will try to suffice. Did your journey go well?" He spoke with an enthusiasm that I thought the entirety of Untenturm lacked. The excited sparks in his eyes made him seem more alive than most people, in spite of his earlier demeanor.

I was so earnestly startled that I failed to respond. His expression metamorphosed into one of concern. "Is something wrong?"

I mentally shook myself out of my surprise and rose to my feet. "Not at all. And yes, my journey went very well."

As we shook hands, he returned to his cheerful state. "I am pleased to hear it. I had been in Aerie prior to our meeting in

the forest, and that went rather poorly. Alchemical reagents are hard enough to acquire without your supplier making the fatal mistake of angering Igor Feiggein." His eyes grew distant, and his smile faded. "I had never seen someone so literally bent over backward." His conviviality resurfaced, and he redirected the conversation. "But let us not get sidetracked into the unfortunate circumstance that is life—if it can be called that—in Falkovnia. Please, be seated." As we sat, he asked, "How do you find Untenturm?"

I replied honestly, "It is a very impressive structure, but it is rather bare and confining outside of this fine room."

Silas nodded solemnly. "Untenturm was built for practicality, but one simply must have a space with homey accoutrements, otherwise the atmosphere becomes palpably enslaving."

At that moment, a pair of attendants came in. Between me and Silas was placed a low table one attendant had brought. Then, the other set upon it a tray bearing pastries, two teapots, several cups, and a decanter of brandy. They refused to divert even the slightest amount of attention from their task, and they left posthaste. "Ah," Silas said, picking up one teapot and peering within. "This is tea from Paridon." He then did the same with the other teapot. "And this is tea from Rokushima Táiyoo. Partake as you wish. I myself am not hungry."

I poured myself some of the Rokuma tea and appropriated a tart from the collection. Just before I began consumption, I brought forth a query, "Is there a particular form of alchemy that Qualensturm specializes in?"

"My master has variegated interests. If you wish, I can show you a few of his most recent innovations." His mouth bent into a closed grin. "Sadly, such things cannot be viewed in the comfort of this room."

I was interested, but I was most certainly not eager to return to the cold corridors of Untenturm, so I replied, "I would like to see, however I think it would be best for me to finish my tea beforehand."

Silas' grin spread to unveil his teeth. "Of course." He turned his head to his left, looked behind himself, then gestured toward the harpsichord as he looked back at me, "Would you care for some music?"

"Do you play?" I was not sure if he meant that he could perform or that he could get one of the attendants to perform.

"Not the harpsichord." He stood and walked over to the bench. "But I do not have to." He lifted the seat of the bench, revealing a few piles of music stored within. After a little sifting, he drew three pages out and arrayed them upon the instrument's music desk. As he closed the bench with his left hand, he drew his right across the entirety of the upper of the two keyboards.

I thought I was surprised by Silas' abrupt alteration in demeanor earlier, but the jolt that ran through me when the harpsichord began to play itself nearly caused my tea to become airborne. As an alchemist, I am not unfamiliar with that which is preternatural, but I also know that when something seems to move on its own, that which moves it unseen is often dangerous. Even the most benevolent ghost can cause harm unintentionally.

Observing my perturbation, Silas guessed at the reason, "Don't be alarmed, no spirit manipulates the keys. It is simply a good quality enchantment." He then took note of the melancholy music, "Admittedly, the musical tastes of my master do little to make an animate instrument seem less disturbing. This really isn't tea drinking music." He then replaced the sheet music within the bench, at which point the

harpsichord abruptly ceased its mournful expressions.

As he returned to his seat, clearly trying to come up with some manner in which to fill the time until I finished my tea, the portrait on the shelf again caught my gaze. I took another sip of tea as Silas settled into his chair; then I asked, "Who is the subject of that portrait?"

It was a few moments before my mind registered that Silas had frozen in his chair, not even blinking. In response, my eyes widened, and I subconsciously elected to become still as well. I sat in growing discomfort for what felt like an excessive span, following which I sat in abject terror for what felt like longer. I would have prayed for it to end, had I not been so frightened.

Finally, Silas' eyes refocused and fixed themselves upon me. In that instant, something within them made me wish that we had both remained paralyzed forever. The feeling was too fleeting for me to name, but it was absolutely horrible.

"That is Nask," said Silas. "Qualensturm does not like to speak of him."

My hands were lightly shaking, and they do so every time I think back to that moment.

Silas rose to his feet. "Come, your tea is done, and I have much to show you."

Freed of my fear, I replaced it with confusion, for I was sure that I had a fair amount of tea left. Looking into my cup though, I saw no tea. I set it down slowly; then I stood. Silas ushered me out ahead of him, then proceeded to lead the way.

Back up the spiral stair we went, following which we retraced our steps until we came before a brass door. The inner region was covered in a series of overlaid branching patterns, slightly inset from the smooth margin of the door. The margin was an inch and a half wide in all but five areas.

On the right, there were two sections of the margin that were two inches wide and five inches long. I presumed that they corresponded to some sort of hinges, perhaps inset into the stone. On the left, the three remaining areas were seven inches wide, but only two inches long. My first thought was that they corresponded to sliding bolts, but I saw no way to manipulate them.

Silas placed his hand on the door, and I heard the metallic scraping of deadbolts. Then, Silas pushed upon the door. It was slow to open, as though designed to resist attempts to accelerate it. I followed him in, and he slowly pushed it back closed. He did not lock the door.

The chamber itself was an expansive space, reminding me of a lecture hall from my days at university. Stout wooden workbenches laden with alembics, retorts, and other glassware were arrayed throughout the middle areas, and the walls were inset with several curtained alcoves. The openings peaked a head above my scalp, and their flat bases terminated at waist height. Each alcove bore a metal plaque beside it, inscribed with something resembling the logographic systems of I'Cath, Rokushima Táiyoo, or Har'Akir, except barbed and wickedly curved. I would even go so far as to describe the writing on those plaques as malicious. I thought that it could be the script of the language I heard Silas speak at the edge of the black circle, but I had no way of knowing.

"In this space, Qualensturm has been working on a particular triad of admixtures," said Silas. He approached the nearest alcove and drew back the curtain. In the uncovered space were two levels of racks, both laden with flasks. Selecting a pair from the lowest level, Silas continued, "Allow me to demonstrate its first permutation."

He strode to the next alcove and withdrew its drapes to reveal its contents. Within lay a rather well preserved corpse, garbed in the uniform of a Falkovnian soldier. Great iron manacles bound it to the stone, as though that were necessary to prevent it from wandering off. I furrowed my brow, concerned as I was with the turn I feared this demonstration might take. Meanwhile, Silas set down one flask, pulled an overlarge syringe from his coat, and began drawing the contents of the other flask into it. It looked to be an awkward task, given the use of only two hands, but he managed to support the flask on his left arm, grip the glass body of the syringe with his left hand, and pull upon the plunger with his right. He had half of the flask drawn up when he cast a glance at the body, looked to the ceiling as though doing a mental calculation, then proceeded to drain the flask completely. He deposited the empty flask on the edge of the alcove, then began poking around the dead man's neck. Selecting a spot, he carefully inserted the syringe and flooded the body with its contents. Returning the syringe to his coat, he said, "That ought to have been enough. The effect should become apparent in a few—"

A piercing shriek interrupted his elucidation. The corpse's mouth was agape, its eyes were wide, and its muscles bulged as it strained against its bonds. It thrashed violently, shouting and growling like a savage animal caught in a trap.

Silas knelt down at the side of the alcove and leaned his head close to the animated man. I heard him whisper and entreat it to calm down, and, but a handful of moments later, it ceased its cries and efforts and resigned itself to staring hatefully at Silas. He stood and turned to me, grinning cordially. "There you have it," he said. "Many formulae utilize the detritus of other

beings, but few have any measurable effect on those that are not alive. Here is the first fully necromantic formula, capable of imbuing a corpse with enough negative energy to catalyze its reanimation. Historic, isn't it?"

The moment the first shriek pierced the air, I had leapt backward a few feet. My mouth grew as wide as the dead man's had been, except mine was a look not of anger, but of horror. My initial shock subsided in parallel with the calming of the cadaver, but my eyes were still bulging out of their sockets when Silas turned back to me. I stood silent for a while, then I found my voice, "Why in the world would you make something like that?"

Silas' cheer receded. He retrieved the full flask and gave it an appraising look. "It does have significant drawbacks. For one thing, the creatures that result are uncontrolled. Also, larger creatures require a significantly higher dosage, so cost optimization must be carefully considered when deciding what to animate." He looked back up to me, excitement apparent in his eyes, "But it does have all of the versatility of a necromancer's most basic tool." He turned and walked to the third alcove on the wall. Once again he withdrew its curtain, and once again he revealed a dead person. This one had the stature of a soldier, but no uniform was present to make this certain. Instead, he was dressed only in a loincloth. Also unlike the first, he was manacled to a metal grate which sat suspended over a sort of bathtub in the floor of the alcove. The grate hung by chains which ran into the top of the alcove, and a metal wheel protruded from the side. Silas poured the flask out into the liquid in the tub, then he spun the wheel, lowering the body into the solution. I could hear a sizzling noise as the mixture began to eat away at the man. Once he was fully

submerged, Silas drew the curtain closed. "That will not be a pleasant sight. We can just give it a minute or two."

At this point, it became quite clear to me that I should never have come here. "I think I have seen all that I wish of this. I would like to leave."

Silas' face stayed mirthful, but his gaze became hard. "Oh, please do not cut your visit short. Qualensturm would be extremely put out if you took your leave of us so soon."

I don't think anything could have made me stay at that point, and yet I did. In that moment, I felt as though a hand had clamped around my revulsion and kept it silent. Something had reached within me and diminished my justifiable contrariness. Without that, I suppose my curiosity took over. "You are quite right," I found myself saying. "It would be impolite to depart so soon, and I would be remiss if I did not become more acquainted with your master's work." I suppose this makes it sound like I was not in control, but I felt much less distant from these words than my phrasing would imply. It was I who chose to stay, yet some small part of me was missing, leaving the scales of decision tipped in my host's favor.

"Excellent," beamed Silas. He then turned back to the alcove and peeked behind the curtain. "I dare say it is ready." He proceeded to fully reveal the alcove once again, and he cranked at the wheel to bring the grate back to the surface. This time, the displayed creation was an animate skeleton. Much like the previous revenant, it strained against its bindings—which looked to have shrunk to keep a grip on the thing's much thinner appendages—but it did so with much less of a dreadful din, given that it did not have the organs necessary to generate such noise. It was impressive that the elixir could animate just the bones of a corpse,

given that skeletons lack many of the mechanisms of locomotion that a full body has. This served to show that the reanimating serum only needed to infuse the subject with enough energy to animate spontaneously, rather than necromantically activate the muscles and other motive tissues. I was being far more academic after my disgust had inexplicably receded.

Silas seemed very pleased with my increased agreeableness and fascination. His vigor renewed, he returned to the first

## Alchemical Animator [General]

**Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, Int 13+

**Formulation:** DC 25; 24 hours; 140 gp; Six doses are brewed at once.

**Effects:** A corpse injected with the correct amount of alchemical animator is animated as an uncontrolled zombie. A corpse may instead be animated as a skeleton if it is immersed in acid with the requisite dosage of alchemical animator mixed in. The first method takes only a few seconds, whereas the creation of skeletons takes one round per hit die of the immersed corpse as the acid and negative energy strip away the flesh. As for what the correct dosage is, it depends on which undead is to be created. A skeleton requires one dose per hit die the deceased creature formerly possessed. A full corpse requires twice that amount.

**Partial Failure:** The created undead is not properly infused with negative energy. After a number of days equal to the Alchemy check, it begins losing necromantic cohesion, represented by the loss of 1 point from both Strength and Dexterity each week. When either ability score reaches zero, the zombie or skeleton collapses and begins to moulder at an alarming rate.

alcove, removed a flask from the second level of racks, and said, "The second permutation is even more impressive." He tucked it into his coat alongside the syringe. "Qualensturm put this next subject together in preparation for your arrival. It had to be housed elsewhere in the complex. Come along." I pulled myself away from the skeleton and followed Silas out of the chamber.

Our next stop was but a short way down the hallway. We came to a double door made of a dark metal—perhaps black bronze—which was similar in decoration to the first door, albeit without indications of bolts down the center. Dispensing with the air of the supernatural that came with the unsealing of the earlier door, Silas simply flung the door wide with a strong shove. Had it not been for my strangely absent repugnance, I would surely have fled at the sight of the chimeric monstrosity that was revealed.

In the center of the sizable chamber beyond—clad in metal bands that were supported by thick chains reaching to all corners of the room—was an abomination of three parts. The largest part was its main body, which was that of a mammoth spider. Most striking was its coloration, which was bright red with a black hourglass on its back. Attached to the cephalothorax were a pair of great feathered wings, perhaps stolen from a giant eagle. Worse still was what replaced the head of the spider—a humanoid upper body, perched like a perverse centaur. From whence this body originated, I could not hazard a guess. It bore smooth, pale, purple skin that looked to be dry and cracking, and it had one less finger on each hand than a man. Its most detestable feature was its head, which resembled a four-tentacled octopus

lounging in aberrant glory upon the creature's neck.

The obscenity was not alive, thankfully, nor was it naturally fused. Each distinct fragment was bound to the others with sturdy stitching and barbed, metal pins. I have always thought that the drive of necromancers to construct things such as these was a warped extension of a childhood fascination. Everyone has wondered what would happen if one combined multiple creatures into a single entity, and some never let that lie as idle fancy.

"Magnificent, isn't it?" asked Silas, as he extracted the flask and the large syringe. "This formula is significantly more potent than the last. Its concentration is such that I need not worry about calculating the proper volume for such a complex creature. Wait in the doorway, please," he requested as he filled his syringe. Without the slightest bit of trepidation, he approached the atrocity. Aiming right where a heart might have been on the humanoid torso, he plunged the syringe in and deposited its full payload into the creature. Quick as a flash, he yanked the syringe out and backed a few yards away.

There was but a moment of stillness before the thing awoke. First, its tentacles curled and twisted, then its head lolled around, surveying the room. Its spider limbs and immense wings attempted to move, but they were curtailed by the metal bindings. This did not sit well with it, apparently, and it began to strain mightily. This had the effect of bursting a few stitches, enraging the beast even further. It glared at me, then it glared at Silas. As it met Silas' gaze, however, it ceased its struggles and held itself still. Silas looked to me, the corners of his lips proudly turned up.

## Necrotic Reagent [General]

**Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, Alchemical Animator, Int 15+

**Formulation:** DC 29; 3 days; 1000 gp.

**Effects:** A body synthesized from several dead creatures that is injected with necrotic reagent arises instantly as a free-willed composite undead. All composites created by necrotic reagent gain the Autonomous Body Function salient ability.

**Partial Failure:** The energy released by the reagent is not properly confined to the subject, spreading by spiritual connections to the body parts not used, and unexpectedly creating one or more additional composites. This can happen anywhere from immediately following to within a few days of the initial event. The moment these additional composites arise, all created by the same application of necrotic reagent are linked by the Hive of Bodies salient ability, making them uncontrollable.

He began to speak, but it was in the unfamiliar language he had used outside. In response, the metal bands restraining the creature sprung apart. It stumbled a little under its own weight, but it somehow kept itself upright. Frankly, I am not sure that it could have naturally avoided collapse, but perhaps the energies that had been introduced to it made up for the physical ungainliness. Again Silas went up to the monster, extending his hand toward it. The thing responded in kind, and they grasped each other by the forearm.

Turning to me, he spoke intelligibly, "That is not even the most marvelous aspect of the formula. Observe." At that, one of the vile facial tentacles took a swipe at the extended arm, and it came clean off. Silas tossed it toward me, causing it to land halfway between us. Once it came to rest, it

began to claw its way forward, scrabbling with its digits like a wounded insect. Under normal circumstances, I would have dashed away, but something still compartmentalized my personality, so I instead stood intrigued. Silas continued, "The infusion of energy is so strong, that it opens metaphysical avenues between the associated parts of the whole, thus allowing the limbs to act while unattached."

An attendant entered the room with a spool of heavy thread. He retrieved the discarded limb and set about lashing it back to the beast. Meanwhile, Silas returned to the doorway and began to lead me away, explaining, "Now the third permutation is rather unlike the first two, and has been brewing for some time now so that it might be finished upon your arrival. Come, we have moved it to the foyer for its unveiling."

Up, up, up we went, spiraling, switchbacking, and even using metal-runged ladders on a couple of occasions. Once again I neglected to check my pocket watch, so the duration of the ascent is unknown to me. Eventually, however, we reached the last of the trailing hallways and came to a stone door.

Silas opened the door, returning us to where it all began. The room of black cobblestone was open to the sky once again, and the spiraling walkways were laden with attendants. They held sunrods to hold the dark of night at bay. In the center of the room stood a metal canister two and a half yards tall and equally wide, covered in valves and pipes and dials. Four men labored over this receptacle. Three were nondescript attendants, but the fourth was a raven haired man wearing a black coat, ashen breeches, and tall, ebon-colored boots. He turned to us, showing his red stock tie and dead, gray eyes.

Seeing a second Silas—though his lifeless stare would suggest that this was the first

Silas I saw—caused my suspiciously suppressed alarm to writhe within the mysterious grasp about it, and I could feel the fingers loosen.

"The pressure digester is about to enter its critical stage. Venting can begin shortly," stated the dead-eyed Silas.

"Excellent," said the man by my side. At that, the other Silas and the attendants abandoned the device and moved to take positions behind us. The barest urge to have the situation clarified caused my lips to part, but I was interrupted by the more alive Silas before I could even begin. "We have no time for questions." He then turned to face me. "I cannot hold your sensibilities hostage forever. I need to focus on venting the pressure digester, but I do not want you running off in the interim. As such ..." And the other Silas wrenched my arms behind my back, holding me firm.

Before me, the man I thought to be Silas melted away, his features turning to vapor

and peeling back from his true countenance. Behind the vernier was a hideous form, a spectral skeleton with evil stars dancing in its eyes. Its bones were mirrorlike, and their surfaces fluctuated almost imperceptibly, as though they were coated with a thin layer of quicksilver. It wore a misty, glimmering hauberk and a red silk sash across its torso, and a midnight cloak flowed from its shoulders, reaching out to me like smothering oblivion. A pair of lensless spectacles hung in the air before its vile sockets, and, about its head, a round, oblong crystal traced a lazy orbit. The thing reached toward my face, and I saw that long strips of leather were woven through the bones of its hands. As this deathly grasp approached, the grip on my ability to loathe and be alarmed finally broke. My throat tightened, my eyes bulged, and I wrestled with the adamant clasp of Silas. The phantom phalanges lightly passed through my flesh, giving me a clammy feeling.

## Brew Zombie Fog [General]

**Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, Alchemical Animator, Necrotic Reagent, Int 17+

**Formulation:** DC 33; 14 days; 5000 gp.

**Effects:** Upon the completion of this formula, a zombie fog is created. It is in no way allegiant to its creator.

**Partial Failure:** The zombie fog can raise only as many fog cadavers as half its current hit points, and it does not have its Life Drain supernatural ability. As such, it will inevitably starve to death.

**Special:** This formula must be created using a dangerous piece of equipment called a pressure digester. A pressure digester weighs 55,000 pounds and has a market price of 18,000 gold pieces. A DC 20 Craft (Mechanical Engineering) check is necessary to create one. Using a pressure digester requires greater attention than most alchemical formulae. Every 1d6 hours, roll a d20. On a 1, there is a potentially catastrophic event. The alchemist must deal with this event by making a DC 15 Craft (Alchemy) check, or the pressure digester explodes violently, its heated shrapnel dealing 4d6 points of damage to everything within 20 feet and 2d6 damage to everything between 20 and 40 feet (DC 20 Reflex save for half damage). Another person can deal with the crisis in the alchemist's absence, but this intervention imposes a -5 penalty on the final alchemy check to create a formula with the pressure digester. This penalty is negated if the helper also has the feat needed to create the formula in question.

"Remain calm. You have nothing to worry about," a voice spoke in my mind. "Just resign yourself to watching history be made." The hands withdrew, and the skeleton turned to face the metal vessel.

The cistern began to creak and clang with the building pressure. Its dials flailed wildly in ranges marked in red. With no one touching them, the valves began to move. Not in a way which suggested that their integrity was compromised, mind you; they looked as though they were being manipulated with care and intent. One vent blew open, whistling out a thick steam. More followed, and soon fog gushed from scores of orifices across the tank. This fog rose and coalesced above the watching attendants, and a green glow began to spread from its heart.

Stuck in the infrangible grip of Silas, I came to know fear with greater depth than I had ever thought possible. I could not imagine what was to come next, for the transformation of one's host into an apparition seemed to me to be a point of no return. I cast my gaze about for an escape, but no physical avenue was accessible.

So I prayed for luck at a less physical method of egress. Closing my eyes, I wiggled my fingers, muttered an incantation, and blinked into the Ethereal Plane. The pressure on my arms and shoulders abated, and an assault on my ears began.

A choir of screams accosted me, and I opened my eyes to see the chamber about me transformed. The walls and floors looked to be made of thick chains, and humanoid arms and heads strained to claw their way out of the morass. Each one howled for the freedom it had been denied. One reached for me, and I sprang away, simultaneously returning to the Material Plane. The skeletal phantasm was focused on the fog cloud, but Silas had the dead

alertness of a guardian golem about him. He spotted my return, then called up his own magic, bringing black flames to his fingertips. They leapt at me as he thrust his hands forward, but I blinked once again just before they struck. Not wasting any more time, I sprinted for the nearest spiral walkway. I dodged one imprisoned echo after another, then bounded upward toward freedom, following which I blinked back and collided with an attendant. I was surrounded by several of them, and they seized me immediately. Individually, their grips did not approach the strength of Silas' clutches, but together they were no less inescapable. Luckily, I blinked once again and was free to complete my ascent. Jagged fangs rose around the upper edge of the wall, as though I were inside the maw of an all-consuming beast. With every ounce of strength and fear I could muster, I jumped for my life. My effort was woefully inadequate, but I blinked before impact and hit the real ground running.

I have no idea how long I ran through that forest. Forgive me, but I had concerns beyond checking my pocket watch. When I finally stumbled onto the road, I saw no sign of Silbervas, nor any town. Luckily, I spotted a solitary campfire far down the road. I lurched toward it, thinking that anything would be better than the horrors of Untenturm.

How wrong I was.

## Ewiger Qualensturm

**Male Elan Psionic Lich Psion 6, Psion Uncarnate 10, Thrallherd 4:** CR 22; Size M undead [incorporeal] (6 ft. 6 inches tall); HD 20d12+12; hp 148; Init +3; Speed 40 ft; AC 27 (touch 18, flat-footed 24); Atk +10/+5 melee touch (3d6 plus psychic drain); SA aura of screams, bone command, chilling wind, incorporeal touch, powers,

psionic charm, psychic drain, telekinetic force, uncarnate bridge, undead control, undead mastery; SQ +4 turn resistance, assume equipment, assume likeness, damage reduction 15/ bludgeoning and magic, dark alchemy, fast healing 5, finger of flame, immunities, lich sight, PR 21, repletion, resilience, resistance, thrallherd, uncarnate, uncarnate armor, undead traits; AL LE; Saves Fort +11, Ref +14, Will +25; Str 10, Dex 16, Con -, Int 27, Wis 18, Cha 14.

*Skills and Feats:* Appraise + 8 (+10 when appraising alchemical substances), Autohypnosis +12, Bluff +23, Concentration +25, Craft (Alchemy) +28, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +6 (+8 to act in character), Intimidate +4, Knowledge (Arcana) +9, Knowledge (Psionics) +33, Knowledge (The Planes) +17, Listen +4, Psicraft +33, Search +8, Sense Motive +25, Spot +4; Inquisitor, Up the Walls, Speed of Thought, Psionic Meditation, Psionic Body, Twin Power, Quicken Power, Chain Power, Expanded Knowledge (Psionic Teleport).

*Languages:* Varcyrric\*, Draconic, Elven, Infernal

Note that “Varcyrric” is a language from Qualensturm’s home world. When speaking audibly with most denizens of the Dread Realms, Qualensturm is in constant mental communication with Silas, who speaks Darkonese, Falkovnian, Mordentish, Balok, and Vaasi (and Draconic, but Qualensturm needs no help with that). Qualensturm relates what he hears, Silas translates it, Qualensturm relates what he wants to say, Silas returns how to say it, and Qualensturm parrots it. Given the speed of thought and how much they have practiced, this allows Qualensturm to carry on conversation convincingly in most cases.

*Powers:* 264 power points per day; 1 — *call to mind, detect psionics, force screen, mindlink, mind thrust, psionic charm;* 2 —

*concussion blast, forced sense link, psionic identify, psionic suggestion; 3 — body adjustment, crisis of breath, energy burst, false sensory input; 4 — death urge, psionic dominate, telekinetic maneuver, schism; 5 — catapsi, mind probe, psychic crush, shatter mind blank, psionic teleport; 6 — breath of the black dragon, co-opt concentration, mass cloud mind; 7 — crisis of life, decerebrate, ultrablast; 8 — bend reality, recall death.*

Qualensturm has unique displays. His auditory display sounds like screams in the wind, his material display forms as thick ground smoke, his mental display generates the impression of evil laughter, his olfactory display smells of ether, and his visual display takes the form of a fiend-shaped red aura that flashes about him. Qualensturm’s manifester level is 15<sup>th</sup>.

*Possessions:* Sash of Protection +5, Mithral Chain Shirt +5, Hand Wrappings of Dexterity +6, Skin of the Psion, Cloak of Resistance +5, Ioun Stone (lavender and green ellipsoid), Lore Spectacles (as a Lore Ring, *Complete Arcane* page 144)

## Background

Before coming to the Demiplane of Dread, before he became one of the elan, the man now known as Qualensturm was a human adventurer on an alternate Material Plane. He and his close companion Nask were an inseparable duo, renowned far and wide for their exploits. As they neared old age, they detested the idea of retiring, so they petitioned the Cullers to rebirth them. The appeal looked to be long in consideration, but, in the interim, they refused to slow their activity. It was during this time that Qualensturm’s world collapsed.

On an escapade deep below the earth, they came across a great vein of adamantine, and Qualensturm cut free a

sample to present to prospective mining companies. He handed it to Nask for safekeeping, then they departed. Little did they know, this vein was claimed by a terrible aberration, and, when it found that its possession had been defiled, it slipped into the Plane of Shadow to catch the one responsible.

Qualensturm and Nask were nearing a city when their horses reared, and Nask fell off. Qualensturm managed to regain control of his steed, then raced off to retrieve the more errant specimen fleeing into the woods. Just as he left Nask's sight, the aberration appeared in a blur of chitin and fangs. It tore Nask to shreds, reclaimed the rock fragment for which it had made its crusade, then slithered into the darkness between worlds. When Qualensturm returned, he first blamed himself for leaving Nask alone. Once he discovered that the adamantine sample was missing, he blamed himself further.

He had been passingly ethical in his life preceding this trauma, but his sense of right and wrong was entirely shattered in the face of the evil that befell him. How could there be universal morals when something so terrible was allowed to happen? Worse still, the Cullers soon approved Qualensturm's request, so he and his new mindset would not be so quick to die.

Following his transformation, he began to focus on the expansion of his mind and the pursuit of alchemical science. To support himself, he joined a company dedicated to the recovery of religious relics. When his warped moral compass came to light, he was bound by divine contract to do no harm to his compatriots. He found this incredibly insulting, as he held no intention of doing them harm.

Eventually, the mission of the company drove it to follow its directive into the Dread Realms. There, Qualensturm discovered

## Dread Possibility: Der Untergang des Kingfuhrers

Unlike many prisoners of the Land of Mists, Qualensturm is quite aware of his proximity to being bound to the land, but he does not fear it. He sees it as an ascension, even though it would curtail his freedom, and he wants to ascend on his own terms. Not wanting his domain to be Untenturm alone, he has set his sights on the throne of Vlad Drakov. He schemes slowly and carefully about this, not wanting to stick himself with an unsatisfactory situation.

that the divine contract was impotent—he found freedom in a cage. When the Mists released his comrades, he elected to remain behind.

During his early years in the Demiplane, he traveled extensively, gathering as much information and experience as possible. Somewhere along the way, he learned the secret of psionic lichdom. Before he could implement it, he was drawn into Bluetspur. Apparently, he was a little too much trouble for the illithids, because he made his way back to the Core.

Following his brush with a fate worse than death, he elected to settle in Falkovnia, creating Untenturm in the dark of the Seelwald. He abandoned life, surrounded himself with psychic slaves, and dove deep into the pursuit of alchemical philosophy, all of which has brought him to the fifth stage of the path of corruption.

## Current Sketch

Qualensturm is almost constantly consumed with his work and his planning. Some of his experiments are mild amusements, while others are part of long term goals.

For all his cold calculation, he is probably one of the most welcoming of Falkovnia's residents. His only companions in Untenturm are his believers and his thrall Silas, so he is incredibly lonely. Any who enter his citadel are sure to be met with the utmost friendliness, assuming they do not enter with intent to do harm. Any free-thinking being is sure to be regaled with laboratory tales and pressed for stories of life outside. Should one desire to leave, however, one shall be met with the utmost resistance. A well spoken person who truly intends to return may be granted a temporary escape, but Qualensturm would sooner see all those who would leave forever strapped to a table and harvested for his experiments. Crossing the threshold

### Dread Possibility: Wiedergeburtsminister Qualensturm

Recently, Qualensturm has played with using the title Wiedergeburtsminister (Rebirth Minister) in place of Ewiger (Eternal). Perhaps it is just a joke owing to his recent success with necromantic alchemy, but perhaps it has dire implications. Qualensturm has never discovered nor heard rumor of a conclave of Cullers in the Dread Realms, but, if he has extrapolated his personal psionic transformation to other individuals, he could potentially create his own generation of elans. He would be the sole arbiter of accepted applicants, leading to a particularly vile strain being rebirthed into the world. Furthermore, given his scientific curiosity, he would be sure to try and apply the transformation procedures to nonhumans, and who knows what horrors may result?

of Untenturm is likely to be a one-way trip for most who can reach it.

From his affable demeanor and his excitement regarding alchemy, you would never guess that anything is wrong, aside from the obvious, in Qualensturm's heart. However, there are times when a war rages within. Qualensturm knows plotting constantly will run his brain ragged, so he occasionally takes a respite from his work. Unfortunately, without something to occupy him, his resting contemplations inevitably turn to Nask. This begins pleasantly, with memories of the time they shared. It soon sours, however, as Qualensturm comes to remember that such times can never again be. He still cannot tolerate the fact that Nask is gone forever. These thoughts darken to self loathing when Qualensturm thinks on the idea that, even if Nask were to return, he would probably abhor what Qualensturm has become. At best, these times lead Qualensturm to glide through the forest around Untenturm, lashing out at anything that interrupts his grief. At worst, Qualensturm has considered destroying his phylactery, and worst is becoming increasingly common.

### Combat

Qualensturm likes to interact rather than attack. If he can keep an encounter peaceful, he will. He uses his *psionic charm* liberally to set people at ease, either to calm them in the face of his gruesome tastes, or to take the edge off of his *aura of screams* for those who cannot resist it themselves. If he believes that violence is imminent, he will play with his opponents' minds, turning them against each other and themselves. He likes to spare people, if only to tear into their memories and use them in despicable experiments. He will involve his believers in combat if he thinks they will be useful. His thrall Silas may be involved as well, but

Qualensturm will withdraw him if he is at risk, since a replacement would simply not be the same.

## Special Attacks

*Aura of Screams (Su)*: Qualensturm is continually surrounded by haze of horrific psychic feedback so intense that it mentally scars even nonpsionic creatures. All creatures within a 60-foot radius of Qualensturm must succeed at a DC 22 Will save or be shaken for as long as they remain within that radius of Qualensturm. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

*Bone Command (Su)*: Qualensturm can create structures of bone at will. The use of this ability requires that bone be present; Qualensturm cannot create bones from nothing. The size and strength of the bone structures should be determined by the DM and are dependent on the amount of bone present.

A common use of this power is the creation of a swirling mass of bone splinters, similar to the blade barrier spell. The radius of the bone barrier is dependent on the amount of bone present, and it does 10d6 points of damage. In other respects, it is identical to the blade barrier spell.

*Chilling Wind (Su)*: At will, Qualensturm can exhale a 50-foot-long cone of icy wind that lasts for one round. The wind deals 1d10 points of cold damage to those caught within, and the terrible howling that accompanies requires the affected to make a DC 15 Fear save. Any liquid within the cone freezes.

*Incorporeal Touch (Su)*: Qualensturm can make up to three melee touch attacks per day that each deal 3d6 points of damage if they hit. Qualensturm's Strength modifier is not applied to this attack, but it is effective against corporeal creatures (and against incorporeal creatures while Qualensturm is corporeal) A miss still counts

as a use of the ability. While uncarnate (see below), Qualensturm can make melee touch attacks at will that do not count against his uses of this ability.

*Psionic Charm (Ex)*: Once per day, Qualensturm can manifest *psionic charm* at a reduced power point cost. The cost of *psionic charm* is reduced by 4, to a minimum of 1 power point. The effect of this power is still restricted by his manifester level (15<sup>th</sup>).

*Psychic Drain (Su)*: Any creature with psionic power points that Qualensturm touches must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be drained of a number of power points equal to twice the physical damage dealt. Qualensturm cannot gain more power points than he would normally have available in a day. The stolen power points remain in Qualensturm's reserve until used normally.

Psionic creatures without power points and nonpsionic creatures must instead succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma damage (Qualensturm's choice). Qualensturm gains 1 power point from a successful use of this attack.

*Telekinetic Force (Su)*: While incorporeal, Qualensturm can use a telekinetic force effect as a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The save DC is equal to 22, and the manifester level is 15<sup>th</sup>. Even while corporeal, Qualensturm can use this ability, but only three times per day (uses while he is uncarnate do not count against this use limit).

*Uncarnate Bridge (Su)*: As a creature of pure mind, Qualensturm has become more closely attuned to the minds of other creatures. He has the ability to transport himself via the minds of living creatures. Once per day as a standard action while incorporeal, he can seamlessly enter any living creature with an Intelligence score

and pass to another living creature with an Intelligence score that is within line of sight of the first creature.

Qualensturm must be in a space adjacent to the entry creature before transporting, and he appears in a space adjacent to the destination creature after transporting. The entry and destination creatures need not be familiar to the character. Qualensturm cannot use himself as the entry or destination creature. Neither creature need be a willing participant.

When exiting the destination creature, Qualensturm chooses an adjacent square in which to appear. Entering and leaving a creature is painless, unless Qualensturm wishes otherwise. In most cases, though, the destination creature finds being the endpoint of a mental bridge surprising and quite unsettling.

If he desires, Qualensturm can destructively exit the destination creature. If the creature fails a DC 23 Will save, Qualensturm tunes his mental form to destructively interfere with the target's mind. He bursts forth explosively from the creature's body, dealing it 10d6 points of damage.

**Undead Control (Su):** Liches are lords of the undead. Qualensturm may attempt to command any undead that has up to ten Hit Dice. The range of this power is 20,000 feet. Qualensturm must have some way of perceiving the undead he is attempting to command.

Attempting to control an undead within range is a free action, and Qualensturm may make any number of such attempts in a round. The targets are allowed a DC 22 Will save. Targets that save cannot be controlled that round, but Qualensturm may try again the next round. Targets that fail the save can be commanded by Qualensturm as if by an evil cleric, save that Qualensturm may issue orders as a free

action. The maximum total Hit Dice of undead that can be controlled by Qualensturm at one time is 60.

Undead under Qualensturm's control have glowing pinpoint eyes like Qualensturm himself. This is not a mere cosmetic modification, as Qualensturm is able to see through the eyes of any of the undead he controls. This can be done regardless of the physical condition of the undead creature's eyes. Qualensturm can likewise hear as if he were standing in the undead creature's place. Qualensturm can exert his senses through only one of his controlled undead at a time, and while he does so, he is unable to sense through his own eyes or ears. However, Qualensturm immediately knows if he is being attacked, and he can switch between his own senses and those of his controlled undead as a free action.

Qualensturm instantly loses control of undead that move beyond the range of this power.

**Undead Mastery (Su):** Qualensturm can exert limited control over a greater number of undead and to a greater range than normal. He can control undead up to a distance of 27,000 feet and can control 270 Hit Dice. He does not have to perceive the undead; all undead that are not currently controlled are affected.

The undead do not get a save, but those of 9 Hit Dice or greater are immune. All Qualensturm can do is summon them to him or command them to attack a specific target or targets. More detailed control is not possible. Qualensturm cannot use his undead control ability while he uses undead mastery.

## Special Qualities

**Assume Equipment (Su):** Qualensturm can designate 10 pieces of his worn equipment (including armor and weapons)

to become incorporeal when he uses his shed body ability. This has no effect on the equipment's function, but now when Qualensturm is incorporeal, he can enter or pass through solid objects while wearing nothing other than the designated equipment. Once designated, the equipment automatically changes to incorporeal when he sheds his body, and it returns to corporeality when he does. Qualensturm can change his designations as he desires.

**Assume Likeness (Su):** While incorporeal, Qualensturm can assume the likeness of any Small, Medium, or Large creature as a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. His abilities do not change, but he appears to be the creature that he assumes the likeness of, allowing him the ability to effectively disguise himself and bluff those who might wonder at his true nature. Each physical interaction with a creature requires a successful Bluff check (opposed by the creature's Sense Motive check) to convince the creature of his new appearance. Qualensturm must not do anything to give away his true (incorporeal) nature in order for the bluff to be successful; for instance, if he accepts an item from another creature only to have it fall through his immaterial hands, the Bluff check automatically fails. However, a Bluff check would be allowed if Qualensturm uses his telekinetic force ability to hold the received item.

When using his assume likeness ability, Qualensturm has an additional +10 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks. If he can read an opponent's mind, he gets a further +4 circumstance bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks.

**Dark Alchemy:** Qualensturm has no formal training in alchemical philosophy, but his dedication has caused the Dark Powers to supplement his skill. He may create any

alchemical formula he learns of without having to take the associated feat. Since his alchemy is the result of dark desire, any alchemical lifeforms he creates (homunculi, philosophical or enlightened children, etc.) gain the Dread Golem template.

**Fast Healing (Ex):** Qualensturm constantly draws on his phylactery to bolster his life force. He heals 5 points of damage each round as long as his phylactery is intact. His distance from his phylactery has no effect on this ability.

**Finger of Flame (Su):** Qualensturm first drew the attention of the Dark Powers through the use of a *nightmare candle*. For this, he was granted the ability to ignite materials with but the touch of a finger. This ability cannot be used offensively. All flames within 50 feet of Qualensturm look like dancing demons.

**Immunities (Ex):** Qualensturm is immune to cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting effects.

**Lich Sight (Ex):** Like most undead, Qualensturm has darkvision out to 60 feet. In addition to this, he cannot be blinded or impaired by any light no matter how bright, even from a magical source. Spells such as *flare* have no effect. Likewise, magical darkness does not limit his vision. In the eyes of a lich, it is as if neither darkness nor light exists.

**Resilience (Su):** When Qualensturm takes damage, he can spend power points to reduce its severity. As an immediate action, he can reduce the damage he is about to take by 2 hit points for every 1 power point he spends.

**Resistance (Su):** Qualensturm can use psionic energy to increase his resistance to various forms of attack. As an immediate action, he can spend 1 power point to gain a +4 racial bonus on saving throws until the beginning of his next action.

**Thrallherd (Ex):** Qualensturm's effective Leadership score is 26, meaning he can have 135 first level believers, 13 second level believers, 7 third level believers, 4 fourth level believers, 2 fifth level believers, and 2 sixth level believers. His thrall may be 17<sup>th</sup> level at maximum. His current thrall is Silas (Wizard 7, Alchemical Philosopher 10). Silas is skilled in the playing of bagpipes, and owns a set of *bagpipes of inharmonious vengeance*.

**Uncarnate (Ex):** Qualensturm is a being of pure psionic consciousness, making him permanently incorporeal. If he desires, he can become corporeal once per day for up to 1 minute, but he spends the rest of his time as an entity of mind untethered by the physical world.

While incorporeal, Qualensturm has no natural armor bonus—and, unlike other incorporeal creatures, does not gain a deflection bonus from his Charisma modifier. Qualensturm can enter or pass through solid objects, but must remain adjacent to the object's exterior, and so cannot pass entirely through an object whose space is larger than his own. He can sense the presence of creatures or objects within a square adjacent to his current location, but enemies have total concealment (50% miss chance) from him while he is inside an object. To see farther from the object he is in and attack normally, he must emerge. While inside an object, he has total cover, but when he attacks a creature outside the object he only has cover, so a creature outside with a readied action could strike at him as he attacks. He cannot pass through a force effect.

Qualensturm's attacks pass through (ignore) natural armor, armor, and shields, although deflection bonuses and force effects work normally against him. He can pass through and operate in water as easily

as he does in air. He cannot fall or take falling damage. He cannot make trip or grapple attacks, nor can he be tripped or grappled. In fact, he cannot take any physical action that would move or manipulate an opponent or its equipment, nor is he subject to such actions.

Incorporeal creatures have no weight and do not set off traps that are triggered by weight. An incorporeal creature moves silently and cannot be heard with Listen checks if it doesn't wish to be. It has no Strength score (though it is included for when Qualensturm becomes corporeal), so its Dexterity modifier applies to both its melee attack rolls and its ranged attack rolls. Nonvisual senses, such as scent and blindsight, are either ineffective or only partly effective with regard to incorporeal creatures. Incorporeal creatures have an innate sense of direction and can move at full speed even when they cannot see.

**Uncarnate Armor (Su):** Qualensturm gets his armor bonus to AC even while incorporeal. However, unlike other incorporeal creatures, he does not gain a deflection bonus to Armor Class from his Charisma modifier. This ability works even if the armor being worn becomes incorporeal (such as through the use of the assume equipment ability).

## Lair

Untenturm is a labyrinthine complex replete with all manner of laboratories and scientific equipment. It is a rank 3 sinkhole of evil, bearing the taint of lust and despair. Qualensturm hides his phylactery—the beating heart of a yugoloth that he found and killed—in a completely walled-off laboratory beneath his sitting room. He occasionally uses it as a grotesque pump when he works down there.

# THE ZEINDOST DOMAIN

A new domain of intrigue near the sea

By: Mistmaster

*Author's Note: Ravenloft's Core is, for the greater part, an inhospitable place, full of narrow-minded and prejudiced people; so, as is fitting with this issue's theme, I present you with a Domain which is all the opposite. It has its own shades, but it is a far lighter place than most.*

## Domain Overview

The domain is a patch of land locked between the Sea and the Mountains; the cities are all located on the coast. The domain forms a horseshoe gulf, called the

Gulf of Whisps. From West to East we have the cities of Rotehafen, the main military port; Gesteinhafen, city of artists and scholars; the Capital City, beautiful Doppelhafen, seat of the Government, and the richest Merchant city of the Southern Core; Kromsabelhafen, the city of the Werebeasts; and lastly, Laatsehafen, city of the living dead. Latsehoope is a fortress island at the mouth of the gulf.

## The People

Zeindosteins are a people of merchants, seafarers, and, sometimes, pirates; they

## Zeindost

**Culture level:** Chivalric

**Ecology:** Full

**Climate & Terrain:** Temperate, the fertile coast is separated from the rest of the Core by the Gesteinvall Mountains, heavily mined and quarried, but not populated by any sizable community.

**Languages:** Zeindosteian (Dutch), Zherisian, Valachan, Dementlieuse, Mordentish, Lamordian.

**Religions:** Church of Ezra (LN Sect), Cult of the Morning Lord, Church of the Lawgiver, Cult of Oceanus, Culto of Lathurr, Divinity of Mankind.

**Races:** Human (Zeindosteunian 70%), Aquatic Humanoids (10%), Werebeasts (10%), Sentient Undead 5%, Other 5%.

**Governement:** Constitutional Presidential Federal Republic - every City is a city-State.

**Ruler:** President Karl van der Rund.

**Darklord:** Captain Morgan van Techtohvan

**Lightlord:** Lady Kalista van der Bergen

**Analog:** United Provinces Republic XVII-XVIII centuries.

**Capital City:** Doppelhafen (4100) (LN, Double of Standard)

**Important towns:** Rotehafen (3150) (NG, Double of Standard), Gesteinhafen (2870) (CG, Double of Standard), Kromsabelhafen (1990) (N, Double of Standard), Latstehafen (780) (LE, Double of Standard), Laatsehoope (200) (N, Half-Standard)

**Borders:** North: Valachan, Hazlan, Mist. South: the Nocturnal Sea. The Domain includes the tiny island of Laatsehoope.

value personal freedom and civil freedom as the most important things; people are to be judged on the basis of their actions, not because of their look. Werebeasts and even sentient undead, as long as they behave, are welcome in Zeindostein. If someone can communicate, think, and argue for itself, then it's a person, and it can get citizenship. Citizenship is acquired by paying a fee, after five years of residence and tax paying. Residents enjoy all civilian rights; they simply can't vote or be voted for in the Municipal and General Assemblies.

Zeindosteins value elegance and cunning; brutish behavior is very frowned upon, but Zeindosteins are a forgiving and understanding people. On the minus side they can be swayed with money and bribes, unlikely to directly harm, but easily to favour and help a particular person. They see bribery as a part of the competition, and corruption, as a lubricant, which in small doses can help the wheel to spin better. Zeindosteins respect the Sea and its laws.

## The Famed and the Infamous President Karl van der Rund

(LG Male Old Human Expert 7)

Illustrious academic and lawyer Karl van der Rund is currently serving his fourth quinquennial mandate as President. The leader of the Unitarist Progressive Party, he is one of the most appreciated political leaders of the domain. Shrewd, but ethically righteous, van der Rund is currently hiding the initial stage of a serious illness of

**Adventure Hook:** If the adventurers include powerful clerics or other healers, they could be discreetly be contacted by van der Rund's staff, to try to cure his condition. Should they not keep their mouths shut however, they could soon find themselves in the brig of a galley.

suspected supernatural origins; his death or retirement could be very dangerous for the country's stability.

## Allan Kyne

(LG Lebendtod Rogue (Courtier) 9)

A lebendtod created on Todstein Island, he managed to run away and landed on Zeindost, where his peculiar nature was not regarded as something abominable; he is the current Vice-president of the Republic. He loathes the Undeath party as sectarian and subversive.

He is unaware that he is unwillingly poisoning the man he most admires, President van der Rund, thanks to a curse van Techtovaan put on him. Should he become president, he would be highly divisive, favouring the Darklord's cause.

**Adventure Hook:** An agent of Meredoth, in league with van Techtovaan, tips off the characters about Allan's role in the poisoning of the president.

## Mayor-Governor Jan Hopperhein

(LN Adult Human Aristocrat 3/Fighter (Privateer) 3)

Retired Capitan Hopperhein left the command of his ship "Der Zeespeer" after losing his left leg; nowadays he serves as the Mayor and the Governor of the capital city of Doppelhafen. However his new life is grating on his nerves and he is starting to use unhealthy drugs, which makes him blackmailable by any who would acquire this information.

**Adventure Hook:** The adventurers casually (or not) assist in the delivering of drugs to Hopperheim.

## **Mayor-Governor Wilhelm van Karg**

*(NG Adult Human Alchemist (Healer) 10)*

A physician, a soldier, and the savior of many lives, Doctor van Karg specialized in Lamordia and is one of the best in his field; He is also a pretty good strategist, and is renowned for taking over his unit after his commander died during a pirate raid. He won the election as Mayor-Governor of Rotehaven by a landslide. However, he has a public soft spot: His son Karel is a Half-Flesh Golem. Van Karg turned him into one to save his life after an accident. The boy has been the object of hostility by the right-wing of the opposition; should he ever fall prey to the golem madness, the fallout would be fatal for his father's career. Van Karg is also an advocate of Half-Golemization as a free treatment, financed by the government, for serious conditions.

**Adventure Hook:** The adventurers uncover a plot to unleash Karel van Karg's Golem madness during a gala of the Half-golemization Foundation.

## **Mayor-Governess Gretl Halegrun**

*(CG Middle-Age Human Bard 5)*

Madam Halegrun ran for Mayor-Governess of Gesteinhafen as a joke; her victory came as a surprise to everyone including, chiefly, herself. Anti-conformist and not very prone to compromise, she has quickly turned the previously rigid academic city in a lively artistic paradise. Somehow, the number of visitors the city gets allow for

**Adventure Hook:** Recently, some events have been marred by accidents, which maybe happened thanks to someone. The Mayor-Governess is investigating personally on the matter and could hire help.

its finances to survive the Mayor's extravagances.

## **Mayor-Governor Hieronymus van Fellemaan**

*(N Adult Seawolf Fighter (Privateer) 4)*

Van Fellemaan is the Chairman of the Weres Equality Party, the main party in the diverse Zeindosten werebeast community; he is also the elected Mayor-Governor of Kromsabelhafen, the only city-State in Zeindost where the shape-changer and were population is the majority. An afflicted Seawolf who successfully was taught to control his beast, he made quite a career in the Zeindost Navy, winning a recent skirmish against Zherisia. Recently retired, he easily won the hearts of his fellow weres; He could be the first meta-human to be elect President, come the next elections.

**Adventure Hook:** Recently, Werewolf cultists of Fenris the Wolf God, from a Verbreker sect are starting to seed dissatisfaction within the were communities; van Fellemaan is heavily interested in stopping the unrest, no matter the cost, and is hiring all the help he can.

## **Madfang**

*(CE Middleaged Werewolf, Oracle of Fenris 7)*

Madfang is the head of the Sect of the Bloody Moon, a Verbreker-born sect which emphasizes the role of weres as predators. He is secretly sponsored by von Techtochhaan.

**Adventure Hook:** The adventurers know that werewolves are full-righted citizens in Zeindost, but how will they react when they stumble upon a fight between werewolves of the city watch and apparently human protesters (who, in truth, belong to the Bloody Moon)?

## Mayor-Governor Hans Begraafplaats

(LE Awakened Sea Zombie Rogue 4)

Hans Begraafplaats was one of Captain van Techtovhaan's crewmates, and one of the first to be turned in a Sea Zombie, than awakened to become one of his primary political pawns. While evil, and firmly on van Techtovhaan's side (mostly), Hans is a fairy honest, efficient, and reasonable administrator, and the mixed living-undead community of Latstehafen have high esteem for him. He is aware of his master's ultimate goal of breaking the egalitarianism in Zeindosten society but, while collaborating, he is not very enthusiastic in doing so. He could sabotage, very discreetly, his master's plans if he was sure to get away with it.

**Adventure Hook:** Recently the dead are dying; undead citizens are being permanently killed and the Mayor-Governor is hiring living help to protect his people. In doing so, he hopes to invigorate the links between the undead and the living.

## Captain Morris Bloedbaard

(NE Adult Human Rogue (Pirate) 10)

Captain Bloedbaard is a pirate, and van Techtovhaan's unofficial enforcer and executioner. While evil and merciless, he cares deeply for his son, a boy of seven called Vilhelm; the boy is currently a hostage of van Techtovhaan.

**Adventure Hook:** The adventurers find the infamous captain Bloedbaard drinking himself to stupor, lamenting his fate.

## Kalista van der Bergen

(NG Adult Female Selkie, Cleric 14 of Oceanus)

Once a human lady of a rich family, she dedicated herself to Oceanus, Lord of the

Seas, to save her land from a terrible strife. Oceanus turned her in a selkie, and bound her to the sea; she can never leave the sight of the sea, or she will die. This makes contact with her former family quite complicated. But she uses her position as Voice of Oceanus to protect the peace of Zeindost, and she is very busy, trying to counter van Techtovhaan's schemes.

**Adventure Hook:** Kalista's son, Mark, has been kidnapped and brought near the misty border, on the mountains; The Voice of Oceanus asks the adventurers for help.

## Klaas the Fisherman

(NG Old Human, Oracle 3)

Saved by the Voice of Oceanus, lady Kalista, during a storm, old Klaas has been chosen to preach Oceanus's message of peace and bounty in all the ports and on the mainland, where his Voice can't go.

**Adventure Hook:** Old Klaas brings the adventurers an omen of Oceanus.

## The Darklord: Morgan van Techtovhaan

NE Medium Undead Rogue (Pirate) 14

(Aquatic, Augmented Humanoid) (128 hp)

Speed: 30, Swim 30

Initiative: +10 (+14 in Shipwreck Hall)

Armor Class: 34 (38 in Shipwreck Hall)

(+7 Dex, +4 Deflection, +1 Dodge, +5

Natural Armor, +7 Armor), Flat-footed 26

(30) Touch 22 (26)

Space/Reach: 1 square /1 square

Combat Maneuver Defense/Combat

Maneuver Bonus: 33/+19 (37/+28 Disarm  
Maneuvers)

Str: 18, Dex: 26, Con: -, Int: 14, Wis: 13,  
Cha: 18.

**Saving Throws:** Fort: +9, Ref: +16, Will: +9

**Special Qualities:** Undead Traits, Damage Reduction: 15/Magic and Piercing SR 27, Curse of the Darklord, Vulnerable to Electricity, Immune: Cold, Fire Resistance 15, Unflinching (+4 against fear and Mind affecting effects), Evasion, Uncanny Evasion, Rogue Talents (black market connections, finesse rogue, firearm training, rope master, rogue crawl, improved evasion), Trapfinding, Rejuvenation.

**Special Attacks:** Create Spawn, Awake Undead, Sneak Attack (+7d6).

**Attack:** Melee: +3 Sharp Unholy Rapier (+23/+18/+13, crit 16/20 x2, Damage 1d6+7, +2d6 vs Good.

Ranged: +3 Long-range Pistol (+22, crit 20 x4) Damage 1d6+3 (Touch attack in 40 feet)

**Skills:** Acrobatics: +25, Bluff: +25, Climb: +22, Diplomacy: +22, Escape Artist: +25, Intimidate: +22, Knowledge (local): +20, Perception: +19, Profession (Sailor): +5, Sense Motive: +19, Swim: +16.

**Feats:** Combat Expertise, Dodge, Greater Disarm, Greater Feint, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Sea Legs, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness, Weapon Finesse.

**Challenge Rating:** 21

**Equipment:** Unholy +3 rapier, +3 Long range Pistol, +3 Chainmail, +4 Belt of Agility, +2 Headband of Authority, Practical Backpack, 20 +1 Cartridges, 100 pp, 300 gp, 400 sp.

## Background

Born of an impoverished aristocrat family, Morgan van Techtovaan struggled to regain wealth and influence and became a rich merchant captain. However, a rival company, who employed inhuman sailors, soon managed to put him out of business, turning him to acts of piracy. Finally, his wealth and influence grew to the point that he managed to gain the rank of Corsair. Increasingly greedier and more ambitious, he sought to become President, but his blatant intolerance for non-humans got in his way. To achieve his goal, he needed to sow fear of the diverse, so he struck a bargain with an infamous monstrous pirate fleet, headed by the notorious Captain Haldan Shrude, to attack his homeland. Unknown to Morgan, Shrude was also necromancer, who commanded a fleet of Sea Zombies. Betrayed by Shrude, as he had betrayed Zeindost, he was turned in a Sea Zonbie Lord, but as the mist engulfed Zeindost, Oceanus struck at Shrude, killing him through his chosen priestess, and gave free will to all of his slaves, who were welcomed into the Zeindosten community. Now a Lord of Sea Zombies with great powers, no one in Zeindost was aware of Morgan's treachery, but he was no more near to achieve is goal that he was before.

## Current Sketches

Captain van Techtovaan is still one of the wealthiest and influential people in Zeindost, and his publicly known state as an undead wouldn't be a problem at all, if he did not loathe it so much. He detests his own green skin, his constantly soaked hair, and the smell of salt and fish that follows him constantly. More than all of that, however, he detests the fact that his diversity is completely accepted by the majority of Zeindosteins; his curse prevents him from managing to break the habits of

open-mindedness and tolerance of his fellow Zeindosteins. Also, the curse stops him from directly holding political power. He has lost three elections straight, against current president van der Rund. He is also constantly foiled by Lady Kalista, the voice of Oceanus, over whom he holds no power or threat.

However, his net of power still allows him to stir troubles, giving him connections even beyond the Domain borders.

## Combat

Morgan has many henchmen, human or otherwise, to do his dirty work for him; if he is forced to fight, he will usually try to keep his distance, if he is faced by more opponents, trying to fell and raise some to even the odds. If he is one-on-one, he will try to disarm his opponent and then feint to sneak attack. If he can't win, he will try to parlay or run.

## Special Abilities

*Create Spawn(Sp):* If he kills a humanoid he can reanimate it as a Sea Zombie (Max 20 controlled) or a Sea Zombie Lord (Max three controlled at any given time) under his control.

*Rejuvenation:* If killed, he is reborn in three days, from a pool of unholy salt water with a corpse in it, hidden in Shipwreck Manor. Should the corpse be destroyed or removed, the process will be halted. Should the water be sanctified, it will be halted too. The moment the conditions are met again, the process restarts.

## Lair

Shipwreck Manor is a heavily fortified manor built on a ship graveyard; it is a Rank 4 Sinkhole of Evil that can induce the Rage, Despair, Hate and Fear effects (DC 23 Will Negates).

## Closing the Border

When Morgan whises for the border to be closed, every person who tries to leave or enter in Zeindost is caught by apathy and decides to stop and turn back.

## Fauna

The waters of the Gulf of Whisps house many kind of sea-life, from seals to sharks, to tunas, to whales, in the waters just outside the gulf. Hawks and mountain Lions are found on the mountains, together with mountain goats.

## Flora

Several kind of seaweeds are born in the Zeindosten water, of which, the Beastleash is the most coveted; Drinking a concoction made with Beastleash allows werebeasts to retain their mind when they change, for the next week.

## Local Horrors

Every kind of sentient creature can find its home in Zeindost. Many defy stereotypes, and live peacefully. Many Sea

## Dread Possibilities

Haldan Shrade's Ghost still haunts the Gulf. He is trying to form a spectre crew and he wants to use it to conquer Zeindost. He is secretly helping von Techtovaan because a divided Zeindost shall fall easily to his hand. He is behind the accidents in Gesteinhafen as well as the killing of the undead in Latstehafen.

Zombies, however, are in league with von Techtovaan.



# THE MARAUDERS' LEGACY

## Five magical items with a heavy soul

By: Jim Stearns

In the year 700, a group of adventurers infiltrated Castle Avernus. Several of their allies had been abducted by the minions of the lich ruler Azalin, and the heroes feared they were destined to be the victims of some form of dread experiment. Months of planning and research yielded much information about the castle, but little in the way of how to defeat its foul monarch. When Azalin Rex turned his attention from his studies to deal with an external threat, the heroes sprung into action, utilizing the intelligence they'd gathered to stage a daring daylight raid.

To the shock of many, the adventurers managed to navigate the castle with a combination of stealth and guile, where they discovered their worst fears to be true: they found their friends and allies, along with scores of others, imprisoned to serve as Azalin's test subjects. The heroes freed the prisoners, but while covering the villagers' retreat, were overpowered by Azalin's elite forces and captured themselves.

When Azalin returned from the border skirmish that had taken him from Castle Avernus, he discovered that over two score prisoners had been reduced to a mere five. The heroes expected the lich-king to explode with wrath, but the truth was much

more horrible. Azalin could always find more slaves for his research. He tasked his soldiers with replacing the lost prisoners, even as he began his experiments anew, with the captured invaders as his first subjects!

Their souls were tortured, broken, and ripped from their mortal frames, their essence used to enchant and power magical devices of Azalin's creation. Still chafing beneath his new restrictions, Azalin struggled to discern the rules of his prison. As part of his research, he sought to understand the nature of spiritual transference.

The magical items that were created during these experiments were given to loyal members of the Kargatane, but rumors began to circulate that the legacy of Mekhai's Marauders may not have come to an end. One by one, each of the owners of the items that had been created with the souls of a Marauder met a bizarre and grisly demise when their magical item suddenly ceased to work, or even began operating against them!

By the time Azalin learned of this, all five of the items had moved beyond the borders of Darkon. He would love to retrieve them to see how their souls managed to survive the transition. So far, this project is a mere

side curiosity, and hasn't extended beyond offering a reward for any of the items returned (double the item's market value). This has been enough for a few avaricious sellswords to attempt to hunt down the items. So far, none of them have been successful.

## Mekhai

Even before meeting his compatriots, Mekhai had sworn his life to rescuing those trapped in slavery. Despite rescuing scores of people, he rarely formed close attachments. Choosing to travel with someone represented a commitment to him, and this bond was not one he shared lightly. His past remained a mystery up until the day he died, although he often referred to time spent 'in the arenas,' and was known to play to the crowd on the few occasions his group fought in public.

After the heroes were tortured to death, Mekhai's soul was used to enchant his own blade, a short, thick sword with a curved blade, razor sharp along the inner curve. The sword functions as a +2 kukri (treat as a +2 short sword if you do not have rules for kukris). If the user is fighting in defense of someone who is either helpless or an Innocent, they may choose to sacrifice a number of hit points after making a successful attack (up to a maximum equal to their character level). If they do so, then they add +1 to damage for every two hit points lost in this manner.

## Adex

Adex was born Adeleine L'Exter, but by the time she was an adult had taken to eschewing the typical Paridonian womens' fashions in favor of a sensible pair of trousers, waistcoat, and top hat. The scholarly work of 'Monsieur Adex' is still regarded highly in many circles in Paridon,

particularly regarding the pseudonatural creatures that became the group's specialty. Having lived through Bloody Jack's brutal reigns of terror, Adex was adamant that no one would cower in fear in their home if there was anything that could be done about the matter.

After her death, Azalin utilized Adex's spirit to enchant an ornate walking stick. Thigh high and topped by a silver head in the shape of an apple, the cane would be right at home in the hands of a noble in Paridon or Dementlieu. (This cane was never actually owned by Adex, it was a gift to Azalin from a Renier outcast he once aided.) Its owner is immune to fear effects so long as they hold the cane. If held aloft, this protection can be spread to allies: by sacrificing a number of hit points (up to a maximum of their character level) the wielder may grant a morale bonus to saves against fear effects equal to the number of hit points sacrificed. Any ally already affected by a fear effect may attempt a new save, with the added bonus. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the wielder's charisma bonus.

## Teacon

When Mekhai rescued a young Vaasan girl from a villainous fleshmonger, he had no idea how important she would be to his life. With no one to return her to, Mekhai was forced to keep the girl with him, and it was this bond that would eventually lead to his connection with all of his other companions. Adventurous and friendly, Teacon was truly the heart of the band of heroes. She put her skills as a footpad and cutpurse to use for her adopted family more than once. Teacon was the only hero not to be tortured to death by Azalin, instead falling to a Kargatane's sword after escaping her cell. If she had fled Castle Avernus, it's

likely she could have evaded the lich's minions for some time, but she insisted on trying to rescue her companions, and perished in the attempt.

Teacon's set of thieves tools, adamantine with ivory handles, became the final resting place for her tortured soul. The two dozen picks, files, and probes are housed in a roll of supple leather, inked on the central inside corner with the letters 'T+L' inside a heart. As well as being nigh unbreakable, the tools confer a little of Teacon's enthusiastic spirit. The bearer of these tools receives a +2 bonus on any roll for a skill in which they have no ranks (or proficiency). In addition to this, if the user fails any roll to free a close companion from true danger, (picking a lock on the cell the night before their lover is executed, untying a kidnapped child from an abductor's bonds) they may suffer 1 point of constitution damage and attempt the roll again.

## Leston

If not for Teacon, Leston O'Kenrey would have met his end in a Tepestani hangman's noose. Although Mekhai would have preferred not making an enemy of the Inquisition (a foe his band would tangle with several times over the years), at Teacon's insistence they disrupted the execution to rescue the young sage, who would become a valuable and loyal asset for the group. Young and charismatic, Leston was also cavalier and foolhardy, his bravado getting the group in trouble more than once. Had he continued to treat his studies of the arcane with the devil-may-care attitude he took to the rest of his life, he likely would have perished in a magical accident before reaching old age anyway.

Leston's soul was used to empower an enchantment on a cheap copper ring (the ring was worn by Teacon in life, a cheap

bauble that was won for her by Leston when the group visited a traveling carnival). In addition to a thick green stain on the finger, Leston's ring gives its wearer a +2 enhancement bonus to Intelligence, at the cost of reducing their Wisdom by 1. Once per day, a user of the ring may cast a prepared spell without losing the spell from memory, by spending twice the spell's level in hit points.

## Dunverk

In many ways the polar opposite of Leston, Dunverk's approach to the supernatural was one of terrified avoidance, his only forays into spellcasting intended to prevent or abjure other arcanists. His life among Forfarian descendants living in Barovia left him extremely superstitious, and with a suspicious regard for personal hygiene. ("A vampire wil not byte what is too foul to abyde," he once wrote.) He and Mekhai grew close during the group's adventures in Barovia, sharing a quiet intimacy that kept each other grounded during the worst of their travels. In the end, he was the bravest of his fellows. Azalin's notes report that he was the last of the group to succumb to death, never once having cried out.

When the heroes were captured, the Kargatane discovered a book of arcanabula on Dunverk's person, stolen from Azalin's personal library during the raid. It was this slim tome that Azalin chose to impart Dunverk's soul onto. Its pages are filled with cramped writing, the margins overflowing with notes on all manner of monsters and arcane esoterica. Any rolls made to research the supernatural (including researching monsters or learning new spells) receive a +2 if the user consults the book. This bonus increases by +1 each day that the wielder forgoes restful sleep, to

a maximum of their character level. (If the user does not need restful sleep for any reason, they gain no benefit from this item.) When the user sleeps, including magical or induced sleep, the bonus resets to +2.

Finding the Marauders isn't a difficult task; each of the items has been in use almost continuously, passing from owner to owner, since their creation. Further, the items seem to have an affinity for one another. Items created from the spirit of a Marauder grant a +1 bonus per item possessed to investigative rolls to find another specific such item. While groups that own multiple items can pool these bonuses, a single individual cannot combine the bonuses from extra items they own.

## Dread Price

A savvy reader will note that each of these items utilizes the wielder's own life force to power its secondary effect, the hallmark of necromantic magic. Despite the beneficent nature of the items, they do incur Dark Powers checks to utilize. The checks for activating Adex and Mekhai are equal to the bonus received. For Leston, it is equal to the level of the spell recalled. For Dunverk, the chance is calculated weekly, and is equal to one less than the highest bonus the item granted. Teacon's activated ability incurs a 3% check each time the activated ability is used.

# ARCHIBALD EVERLAST

## The Wandering Crow

By: Mistmaster

The sun was lazily setting on the horizon, and the old man stopped his wagon just beside the road. A flick of his fingers and a camp set itself, and a fire was lit.

The old man sat on a rock by the bonfire, a pot of supper slowly cooking on it. He stirred it every so often, while he read a book.

"I suppose you were waiting for me!" said a voice from the shadows.

The old man lifted his bespectacled head from his reading and his deep green eyes twinkled, as he gave the newcomer a warm smile. "Sit down, my boy!"

The newcomer, dismounting his horse, scoffed at being referred to as a boy, but sat on a log all the same. "I'm near my seventieth birthday, old crow; I'm anything but a boy!" he stated, as the other man filled his bowl. Said other man chuckled merrily, "Forgive me Rudolph, but, for me, most people are boys, even one as renowned as a writer, as a teacher, and as a monster hunter as you."

Rudolph van Richten sighed, but nodded. "I suppose you are right, Archibald!" he said.

"So, have you something for me, other than this supper? By the way, it's very good."

Archibald smiled. "Thank you, and yes, you are right. I do have something for you, about the person you are looking for. Once again, however, I must ask you, is it right

for you to hunt him like an animal, just for what he is?"

Van Richten sighed, stopping his eating. "We have already had this discussion, my friend, more than once; a vampire is an unnatural being, which preys on the living. He might seem human and remember things and emotions of his past, but it's all facade; at the core, he is a beast, one who should have been dead a lot of time since, like all undead!" He regretted the last line the moment he said it, as the older man calmly stated, "Aye, we should all be dead a lot of time since."

Van Richten opened his mouth to apologize but Archibald raised a hand and stopped him. "You have said nothing to be sorry for; undead creatures, indeed, are unnatural and, for the most part, they are evil threats; however, I still wonder if, with the appropriate guidance, intelligent beings could not be able to follow the straight and narrow path," he said.

"Not all evil is born from ignorance, Archibald," started van Richten. "Sometimes, too much knowledge is the seed of it."

The elder man looked at him kindly. "Rudolph, as I told you last time, there exist many kinds of ignorance, all of them equally dangerous." He then gestured towards his wagon and a book flew towards his hand. "However, this is a diary of the person you are pursuing; knowing him better would allow you a crucial advantage. Maybe,

knowing him better, you could even decide to try another way," he said, giving him a pouch.

Van Richten opened the pouch to find finely ground red leaves in it. "Blood Cedar leaf powder!" he said, astonished. "A pinch can placate the thirst of vampires for weeks; it's a really expensive item, worth its weight in platinum, and this would be at least one pound!" he added, awestruck. "More than enough time for a trip south, don't you think so?" Van Richten nodded. "Not even Zeindost can redeem all the evil of this misty world, Archibald!" he pointed out, as he stood up, after finishing his supper.

"No, my friend, but, it is a possibility which is worth offering to someone who was, once, an innocent person."

Van Richten nodded and carefully stored the pouch inside his coat and the book inside the saddle bag.

"Sleep here tonight, I will watch over you."

Van Richten nodded gratefully, as he prepared his bed for the night, near the fire. That was the first night Rudolph could sleep without worrying, in many years - a rare luxury, for one like him.

Later, that night, as Van Richten slept deeply, a shadow stopped some thirty feet from the man's horse, who was suddenly quite nervous.

"I'm afraid, my friend, that I can't allow you to come closer," he said, calmly, yet colder than usual, to the shadow, who took the shape of an elegant man on a coal-black, red-eyed horse.

"That's a pity!" he said in an affable tone. "I am a seeker of knowledge, after all!"

"You are a seeker of many things, my friend. Pleasure is one of your main objectives, strife, the other one, suffering,

for others, the third!" calmly replied the old man.

The elegant stranger chuckled, changing his shape to one the old man was more familiar with. "Tales about you are not exaggerated, old crow; still, you are only one person, and you are fighting against impossible odds!"

"There are many people, in these misty lands, which walk the same path I do, gentleman!" he stated proudly. "Yes, but like you, they often walk alone!" the stranger said before he disappeared in the darkness, bringing with him that aura of uneasiness.

"Yes," murmured the old man, looking at the sleeping form of van Richten, "often, but not always!"

## Background

Archibald Everlast was born in a prime material world 900 years ago; since his youth, he was a lover of knowledge, not for knowledge's sake, but for the good that knowledge can do. Possessing a bright intelligence and genius-level memory, he achieved great academic success in many fields - especially in medicine and engineering. The accomplished polymath spent many years wandering his own world, gathering knowledge and helping people; on his travels, he met Elyana, a bright, spirited woman, with whom he fell in love. She followed him in his travels and married him; they lived together a long life, with the only sorrow of being childless, but, one day, in a small village, a misled mob killed his wife on false grounds of sorcery. While the mob was trying to kill him too, and the Mists started to surround the village, instead of cursing them and their leader, he cursed ignorance, as the root of all evil.

Such a stance surprised the mysterious Powers who rule Ravenloft, and so the Mists took him, and his dead wife, resurrected her, and turned them immortal, releasing them back into their world. They stopped aging and lived happily together for two hundred and thirty years, before, once again, they were taken by the Mists and sent on the road to Vallaki.

Here, the couple ran afoul of count Strahd and his "court wizard" Azalin, who decided to sacrifice the two immortals in a ritual meant to break their imprisonment.

But the couple sacrificed themselves instead to stop them; Elyana was freed from the Demiplane, and Archibald apparently died in the botched ritual. But in truth, he found himself on his wagon, on a misty path; surprised to be alive, he quickly realized that alive was not the correct description for his state. He needed no more food, drink, or even breath, while he could, remarkably, still do all these things, if he wished to. He now possessed great magical powers that he did not have before, and he knew that his goal was only one, as the lich he was now: seed knowledge in the misty world, and defeat ignorance, and with ignorance, evil, once, and for all.

## Current Sketch

Archibald Everlast roams the demiplane of dread freely in his wagon; he owns several libraries and estates in various cities, but he prefers to wander, to pursue his primary goal: the diffusion of knowledge.

In his mind, knowledge and ignorance have several different declinations; being one of the most powerful spellcasters in the whole demiplane, the old crow is not bothered by bandits, harsh conditions, or even darklords' schemes. However, he doesn't wish to spend his time fighting

directly with the likes of Strahd, Azalin, and such powerful individuals, so he keeps a low profile while roaming their lands.

## Appearance

Archibald appear as a smiling old man, in his late seventies, the age he had when he became immortal; he has twinkling green eyes, golden spectacles on his hooked nose, a balding, white-haired head, and a clean-shaven face. He wears a black cloak and grey-black robes, hence his nickname, the wandering crow.

## Relationships

### *Rudolph van Richten*

Van Richten is Everlast's favorite pupil and one of his best friends; he tutored the good doctor in medicine, before he became a monster hunter, and taught him monster lore, after. They, however, never agreed on Van Richten understandably vengeful stance. The two still collaborate when they can, but Everlast is deeply convinced that the root of every evil is ignorance, while Van Richten thinks that selfishness is. This is the reason why Rudolph is an hunter and Archibald is a teacher.

Van Richten knows that Everlast is an undead, and keeps the secret.

Van Richten's nieces and other pupils do know the old Crow, and they know that he is older than he appears, but not much more. (Adventure Hook: the old Crow could be sought on the orders of the Weathermay-Foxgrove sisters to inquire on the current state of Dr Van Richten.)

### *Strahd von Zarovich*

For all his power and knowledge, in Everlast eyes, Count Strahd is one of the more obtuse dumderheads of the whole demiplane. He has offered him Blood Cedar Leaf Powder more than once, and it was refused every time. He is a puppet who

sees himself as a puppeteer, and Archibald pities him for that. When in Barovia, Archibald resides in Vallaki, in the Crow's Nest Library. Here he is often graced by the presence of Strahd himself, who abides to a sort of truce; Everlast keeps a couple of the many secrets he knows about Strahd to himself while in Barovia, and Strahd will never violate Everlast's properties, nor he will attack, directly or by proxies, the old crow nor his employees. Everlast agreed to this for the sake of the people who work in his estate. In their meetings, he often tries to make Strahd see the light, and realizes that his obsessions cloud his judgements, but, in seven centuries, he has not succeeded, yet.

He has helped people to fight against Strahd, albeit indirectly, but he knows the real truth, only Strahd can kill off Strahd once and for all.

(Adventure Hook: The adventurers need to consult an old tome, and go to the Crow's Nest Library.)

#### *Azalin Rex*

If there is a person in the Demiplane who truly wants the old Crow destroyed, that person is Azalin Rex. Archibald Everlast represents everything Azalin could have been that he is not; Everlast sometimes feels sorry for Azalin, as being unable to learn new things is a doom worse than death, in his opinion. But in his view, Azalin truly forsook the pursuit of knowledge when he chose the path of tyranny and pride. Every year he gifts the Lich-King of Darkon with a copy of his own spellbook (which contains, pretty much, all the spells ever created). Every year, Azalin burns the book that he can't memorize (but which he could use, if he was less prideful), and tries to kill Archibald, and fails.

(Adventure hook: The adventurers are contacted by an agent of the Kargat undercover, falsely informed of an evil lich

approaching the town they are in, and given a powerful anti-undead weapon to use against Archibald.)

#### *Victor Mordenheim*

Victor Mordenheim is regarded by Everlast as one of his bigger failures, for he was, once, his favorite pupil; but Victor's pride obfuscated his genuine wish of using knowledge to help people. Victor's own ignorance regarding his own limits and the understanding of his fellow human beings has cost the man dearly. More than once Archibald has told Victor that he has to make peace with Adam if he wants to heal Elise, but he was rebuked every time.

(Adventure Hook: During a snow blizzard in Lamordia, the adventurers are saved by an old man in a wagon. As a thank you, the old man asks them to work as mediators to reunite a father and son.)

#### *Alanik Ray*

Alanik Ray has been another of Everlast's pupils, but, while intelligent, the Elf lacks enough compassion to really stand out. Nevertheless, Everlast appreciates the genuine efforts of Alanik to uncover the mysteries in Dementlieu. (Adventure Hook: The adventurers discover that Alanik Ray has been kidnapped by minions of the mysterious crimelord, The Brain. They must contact an old friend of his, to get the help they need for a rescue.)

#### *The Gentleman Caller*

Everlast has had more than one encounter with the Gentleman Caller, and the fiend is one of the few creature who earns his loathing, not his pity. Oh, Everlast deems him deeply ignorant, as the rest of evil people are, but fiends are especially so, as they embody and embrace evil, and thus ignorance. (Adventure Hook: Recently, Everlast found and adopted one of the Gentleman Caller's many children, and, being a firm believer that nurture will beat nature, he is raising the cambion boy to be

a good person. Worried that the old crow might indeed succeed, the Gentleman poses as a desperate father whose only son has been kidnapped by an evil sorcerer, and ask their help to rescue him.)

## Everlast's Wagon, Unique Magical Vehicle

Pulled by a magic female mule, which never tires or gets scared, called Ely, the Wagon inside is a ten story library, which hoards hundreds of thousands of books. It also houses a large alchemical lab, a well-furnished pantry and cellar, an observatory, and five bedrooms with baths. The Wagon, however, can't move while more than five persons are inside it.

A permanent ward against evil exudes from the Wagon, in a 50 feet radius. Everlast can allow any creature into the ward or banish that creature as a free action.

## Everlast's Stats

He is a Lich without the paralyzing touch ability, with 20 Wizard levels, and access to

every kind of magical item. He has a 30 Intelligence before applying modifiers. He is also immune to positive energy damage, turning, and controlling, and his spell resistance is 35.

*Everlast's Spells:* Everlast can prepare and cast up to ten spells for every given level every day, chosen from every existing spellcaster list and he can change one of them on the spot as a full-round action, at will.

*Curse of the Wanderer:* Everlast can't stay in the same place for more than a month; if he does, a major curse (at the discretion of the DM) strikes his closest ally and can't be removed until Everlast returns to wandering.

*Navigate the Mist:* Everlast can navigate the Mist with absolute precision.

*Immune to Border Closing:* Everlast can ignore the supernatural part of Border Closings. He still needs to face any physical threats posed by the border, but he has the power to ward them off. Passengers on his wagon are similarly protected.

# **BUCK**

# **THE GHOST DOG OF THE NORTHLAND**

**A Masque of the Red death deadly creature**

**By: M. T. Kelly, with inspiration from Jack London**

In the back country of the Yukon wilderness, there is a great treasure guarded by a terrible ghost. Woe to those who brave or foolish enough to seek the one in the face of the other.

Buck, a large and powerful St. Bernard-Scotch Shepherd, lived happily in California's Santa Clara Valley as the pet of one Judge Miller, until one day he was stolen by the gardener's assistant and sold to fund the man's gambling addiction. Buck was shipped to Seattle in a crate, starved, and ill-treated, so that when the crate was opened, he attacked the nearest man. This "man in the red sweater" beat Buck badly with a club, teaching Buck to respect the "law of the club." It was the first of many harsh lessons Buck was to learn in his coming journey. Buck was then sold to a pair of French-Canadian dispatchers from the Canadian government, François and Perrault, who took him with them to the Klondike region of Canada where they trained him as a sled dog. From his teammates, Buck quickly learned to survive cold winter nights and the pack society. A rivalry developed between him and the

vicious, quarrelsome lead dog, Spitz. Buck eventually beat Spitz in a fight "to the death." Spitz was killed by the pack after his defeat by Buck, and Buck eventually became the leader of the team.

The team was then sold to a "Scottish half-breed" man working for the mail service. The dogs had to carry heavy loads to the mining areas, and the journeys they made were tiresome and long. One of the team, a morose husky named Dave, became sick and eventually had to be shot to end his misery, teaching Buck yet another hard lesson.

Buck's next owners were a trio of "stampeders" (Hal, Charles, and a woman named Mercedes from the United States), who were inexperienced at surviving in the Northern wilderness. They struggled to control the sled and ignored warnings that the spring melt posed dangers. They overfed the dogs and then starved them when the food ran out. On their journey they met one John Thornton, an experienced outdoorsman, who noticed how poorly the dogs had been treated and their weakened condition. He warned the trio

against crossing a river, but his advice was ignored and Buck was ordered to move on. Exhausted, starving, and sensing the danger ahead, Buck refused and lay unmoving in the snow. After Hal began to beat Buck, Thornton recognized Buck as a remarkable dog. Disgusted by the driver's treatment of Buck, Thornton hit Hal with the butt of his axe, cut Buck free from his traces, and told the trio he was keeping him, much to Hal's displeasure. After some argument, the trio finally left and tried to cross the river, but as Thornton warned, the ice broke, and the three fell into the river and drowned, along with the sled and neglected dogs.

Thornton took Buck back to his cabin to nurse him back to health. Buck came to love and grew devoted to Thornton as time went by. He even saved Thornton when the man fell into a river. After Thornton began to take him on trips to pan for gold, a bonanza king (someone who hit it rich in a certain area) wagered Thornton on the dog's strength and devotion. Buck won the bet for Thornton by breaking a half-ton (1,000-pound (450 kg)) sled free of the frozen ground, pulling it 100 yards (91 m), and winning US\$1,600 in gold dust. A king of the Skookum Benches offered a large sum to buy Buck, but Thornton had grown too fond of him and declined. Later, When Thornton and his friends continued their search for gold in a valley with a rich deposit, Buck explored the wilderness and socialized with a timber wolf from a local pack. One night, he returned from a long hunt to find that his beloved master and the others in the camp had been killed by a group of Yeehat natives. Buck then did something that almost no other dog would do - he took revenge.

The Yeehat tribes tell the story as follows.

"The Yeehats were dancing about the wreckage of the spruce-bough lodge when they heard a fearful roaring and saw rushing upon them an animal the like of which they had never seen before. It was Buck, a live hurricane of fury, hurling himself upon them in a frenzy to destroy. He sprang at the foremost man (it was the chief of the Yeehats), ripping his throat wide open till the rent jugular spouted a fountain of blood. He did not pause to worry the victim, but ripped in passing, with the next bound tearing wide the throat of a second man. There was no notwithstanding him. He plunged about in their very midst, tearing, rending, destroying, in constant and terrific motion which defied the arrows they discharged at him. In fact, so inconceivably rapid were his movements, and so closely were the Natives tangled together, that they shot one another with the arrows; and one young hunter, hurling a spear at Buck in mid-air, drove it through the chest of another hunter with such force that the point broke through the skin of the back and stood out beyond. Then a panic seized the Yeehats, and they fled in terror to the woods, proclaiming as they fled the advent of the Evil Spirit.

And truly Buck was the Fiend incarnate, raging at their heels and dragging them down like deer as they raced through the trees. It was a fateful day for the Yeehats. They scattered far and wide over the country, and it was not till a week later that the last of the survivors gathered together in a lower valley and counted their losses."

As for Buck, wearying of the pursuit, he returned to the desolated camp. Thornton's desperate struggle was fresh-written on the earth, and Buck scented every detail of it down to the edge of a deep pool, muddy and discolored from the sluice boxes, effectually hiding what it contained, John

Thornton; for Buck followed his trace into the water, from which no trace led away.

All day Buck brooded by the pool or roamed restlessly about the camp. Death, as a cessation of movement, as a passing out and away from the lives of the living, he knew, and he knew John Thornton was dead. It left a great void in him, somewhat akin to hunger, but a void which ached and ached, and which food could not fill. At times, when he paused to contemplate the carcasses of the Yeehats, he forgot the pain of it; and at such times he was aware of a great pride in himself, — a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang. He sniffed the bodies curiously. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a husky dog than them. They were no match at all, were it not for their arrows and spears and clubs. Thenceforward he would be unafraid of them except when they bore in their hands their arrows, spears, and clubs.

That night, he was attacked by an entire pack of wolves. Buck's incredible fighting abilities vanquished every wolf there, until he found that the same timber wolf he had socialized with was in the pack he fought. Buck followed the wolf and its pack into the forest, answering the call of the wild.

## Current Sketch

The years were not many when the Yeehats noted a change in the breed of timber wolves; for some were seen with splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and with a rift of white centering down the chest. But more remarkable than this, the Yeehats tell of a Ghost Dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it has cunning greater than they, stealing from their camps in fierce

winters, robbing their traps, slaying their dogs, and defying their bravest hunters.

Nay, the tale grows worse. Hunters there are who fail to return to the camp, and hunters there have been whom their tribesmen found with throats slashed cruelly open and with wolf prints about them in the snow greater than the prints of any wolf. Each fall, when the Yeehats follow the movement of the moose, there is a certain valley which they never enter. And women there are who become sad when the word goes over the fire of how the Evil Spirit came to select that valley for an abiding-place.

In the summers there is one visitor, however, to that valley, of which the Yeehats do not know. It is a great, gloriously coated wolf, like, and yet unlike, all other wolves. He crosses alone from the smiling timber land and comes down into an open space among the trees. Here a yellow stream flows from rotted moose-hide sacks and sinks into the ground, with long grasses growing through it and vegetable mould overrunning it and hiding its yellow from the sun; and here he muses for a time, howling once, long and mournfully, ere he departs.

But he is not always alone. When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack.

## Forbidden Lore

What no one knows including Buck is that when Buck sought revenge against the Yeehats, he gained the attention of the Red Death, which expanded his mind and body so that he became the monster dog he is



now. The more people Buck attacks in a rage, the more the Red Death changes him. He can already sense when humans enter his pack's territory. It can only be guessed what abilities he may gain next. It's not even known if he is living or dead.

## Confronting Buck

Buck *hates* people. Without exception. No matter age, color, gender, or origin, all are Buck's enemies. Any who entered Buck's territory will automatically gain his attention and he will immediately begin to stalk them until he kills them or drives them from his land. His unnatural strength, speed, and cunning make him an almost impossible foe to defeat, especially for trail walkers who have been traveling for many days on short rations. If Buck sees a dog being beaten by a human, he will immediately attack regardless of the odds against him. His pack has expanded to include many sled dogs he has freed from cruel masters.

Buck also reserves a special animosity for the Yeehat Natives. They are the only people he will go out of his way to attack. If a party has Yeehat members in it, Buck will hunt and attack them first before any others. If Yeehats enter his territory, they are the only ones Buck will follow out of his territory until he's killed them. Strangely, when Buck attacks a family of Yeehats and there is a baby or small child present, Buck will kill the others and leave the little ones be. This isn't a gesture of kindness. Buck was never exposed to human young and, as such, doesn't recognize them for what they are, so he ignores them. Many a Yeehat family camp has been found torn to pieces with survivors barely old enough to walk. It can only be guessed as to how long this will be the case.

The only thing that might save a person from Buck is the intercession of another

dog. If Buck attacks, and a dog or group of dogs come to that person's defense, Buck will back down. He will even turn against his own packmates if they won't follow him in this. He respects and will even defend a bond like the one he had with John Thornton. The pack will still harry the intruders until they leave, stealing their food, destroying their equipment and such, but will only attack again if attacked.

Buck is also still partially obedient to the law of the club. If a person raises a club before Buck can get his teeth on them, Buck will back away. If the person then attacks with the club, Buck will fight a retreating battle, while his pack, according to the law of the fang, will form a circle around the two combatants until one goes down. They will then set upon the fallen. Buck is also still vulnerable to gunfire. If Buck is shot or otherwise killed, he will wake up next to the pool where John Thornton lies on the first night of the next moon. There is still a large gold deposit where John Thornton and his friends were prospecting, but no one can get close enough to it to even learn that it's there.

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# Quoth the QRaven

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Step into the Mists

once again, revisiting the fae  
woods of Tepest that are unlike  
what you remember, travelling  
to steaming jungles, and to lands  
previously unknown.

