

Adventure Scenarios

from Alanik Ray's unearthed archives

A MATTER OF FAITH
by J.W. Mangrum

The adventure is set in Il Aluk, but if you're playing in an up-to-date version of RL (i.e. Il Aluk is no more), it could probably fit just as well in any of Richemulot's cities.

One of the PC's either has connections to an established church, or needs the ministrations of a powerful cleric. In the case of my campaign, a PC wanted someone to cast Regeneration for him (he had lost an arm and his face had been mauled).

If the PC needs a favor, the cost for the requested spell is jaw-dropping. (In my campaign, Il Aluk was home to a cathedral to St. Cuthbert. Although pretty much a Good faith, the priests didn't care for "back-sliders" whining for miracles when so many other people could use, and deserved, the priests' time so much more. The clergy set the price at 50,000 gp, which knocked a few players off their feet.)

In lieu of monetary donation, the clergy are willing to work out a deal: you see, they need a favor...

If one of the PCs in the party is affiliated with the cathedral in question, they are simply called upon to perform a mission for their church.

There are five cathedrals in Il Aluk; two of them have lain in ruin for as long as anyone can remember. The other three have to maintain a precarious balancing act to keep their parishioners. You see, most of the upper classes support their faith with donations only because it shows a certain prosperity and generosity on their part. Like most denizens of RL, they really only think about the church when they plan a wedding or a funeral. In other words, they don't really have much faith, but supporting the church puts them in good social standing.

Most parishioners cannot afford to give the cathedral more than a few coppers a year; the cathedrals depend heavily on the donations of their finicky upper-class patrons.

And some of those patrons are going missing. So far, five patrons have disappeared. Each wealthy patron vanished within a day or two of making donations to the cathedral, the only thing they seem to have in common. Typically, these patrons live on spacious estates well outside the city, and were staying in inns in town at the time they disappeared.

If the church's patrons make the connection that donating to the Cathedral of St. Cuthbert puts them on some madman's short list, they'll abandon the Cathedral as fast as rats flee a sinking ship. Without their support, the Cathedral will have to close its doors.

The PCs need to quietly discover the person(s) behind the abductions and put a stop to it. A young couple from two wealthy families are to be wed in the Cathedral in a little under two weeks. If the party can prove that they've ended the threat before the wedding, they get their reward.

As a note, the three faiths I placed in (pre-Grim Harvest's release) Il Aluk were:

St. Cuthbert: one of RL's most powerful priests is an elder here. His faith is strong, but all else is weak. He is aged and blind. Azalin let this powerful priest live only because his frailty renders him as little threat. The priests work for good, but also believe in hard work, a quality Azalin likes to see in his peasants.

The Cathedral of Labor: dedicated to a handful of gods (Zilchus, Bralm, and Shinare) is dedicated to a day's work for a day's pay. In other words, they worship the almighty dollar, and do not believe in charity. Azalin ignores them; they pose no threat, and are popular among wealthy merchants. With the information in Grim Harvest, I might replace this Cathedral with a toned-down version of the Temple of the Eternal Order.

The Cathedral of Traladara: this faith comes from Karameikos, on Mystara.

In my campaign, I decided that clergy in RL (arguably like the real world) can count on never getting any direct guidance from their deities. Thus, left in the hands of mere mortals, philosophies can stray from what the gods actually intended. In Mystara, the Traladaran faith uses the concept of confession cleansing the soul. In Il Aluk, that has somehow mutated into the philosophy that one can find absolution no matter what the offense; it's just a matter of penance. This is a popular faith for those with guilty consciences, and there are a lot of guilty consciences in Darkon. Thus, the Cathedral of Traladara has full coffers, but its priests have largely been abandoned by the gods (they are very low level). Azalin ignores this faith, recognizing its impotence.

There are also the two abandoned cathedrals, both falling to ruin. The average Il Aluk resident would be hard-pressed to identify (or even care) what faiths might have once been worshipped here.

In addition to all this, there are probably a few dozen lone priests, all victims of Darkon's memory-rewriting quality. These lost souls are typically low level and struggling just to get more followers than they can count on one hand.

The Cathedral already sent one of their own to investigate this when they first noticed the problem: a fledgling priest who, before joining the clergy, had served on the city militia and was quite eager to investigate the matter.

This priest has been missing for several days. Although he kept his suspicions to himself, he did keep a few notes. These are given to the PCs, although they reveal little.

The PCs start with the names of the missing patrons, and the inns each was staying at when they disappeared. You can make up details for these patrons and places as you like. At each location, if the PCs give the "scene of the crime" a thorough inspection, they find some puzzling clues. For example, under a bed in one inn, a PC might find a large (2"-3") worm, shriveled, dried out, and quite dead. I had another inn cater to dwarves; thus it had no windows and sturdy stone walls. There had been signs of a struggle; one of the PCs finds a feather, half-embedded in a solid stone wall (someone used Stone Shape to come and go through this wall; when they left, they closed the wall behind them, accidentally catching some of the scattered pillows' stuffing). Etc.

So what's going on? Some of my players' initial suspicions included:

Other Cathedrals trying to eliminate the competition.

A thieves' guild rolling these wealthy folk.

Both wrong: here's the truth.

Years ago, a young, idealistic priest of Sune was travelling along, perhaps with an adventuring party. I named the priest Senshock, after the priest in the Temple of Elemental Evil, but only because coming up with names gives me headaches. Senshock was a dashing handsome young man (beautiful as all clergy of Sune must be), in love with his faith.

Senshock and his party came across an abandoned temple, and entered its catacombs. There, they encountered some sort of undead horror, a walking corpse. Disgusting, translucent worms oozed in and out of the nooks and crannies of the creature's wormy skull. Although the thing was physically unable to escape the catacombs, that didn't stop it from slaughtering everyone in the party, save for Senshock. Senshock fled, wounded but alive, unable to destroy the creature. Soon, Senshock discovered that he had contracted some sort of horrid, leprous disease from the unholy thing's touch. Months went by before he was able to find someone with enough power to cure him of his ailment. By that time, his entire body was covered in open, weeping sores, and these never really healed. Worst of all, his fickle goddess Sune abandoned him. Senshock was a physical and spiritual ruin (I picture Robert the Bruce's father from Braveheart), and he disappeared from public view. Something deep inside him had curdled even more horribly than his flesh.

Now, Senshock is back. His hatred for his former faith has brought him to the cult of Nerull, Oerth's evil death god. He is now also a fairly powerful priest (I made him 9th level.) He's been busy. Senshock spent his years studying yellowed tomes to discover the secrets of the undead creature which had destroyed him, and eventually he found it: the Sons of Kyuss. More powerful now, Senshock returned to the forgotten catacomb, and was able to bring the shambling horror (still wandering those halls) under his control.

Meanwhile, he has gathered a small cult to Nerull in Il Aluk. Besides himself, there are two other priests, and five followers. Priest(ess) #2 is named Lucretia. "Lucy" has worked in the University of Il Aluk's library for more than two decades; her access to the University's older, more restricted tomes aided Senshock's researches to no end. I made her 6th level. The third priest I named Renog; he is a greasy-haired fanatic. The followers are a mixture of Il Aluk people who see nothing wrong with using a little death to reach their own goals. The cult is centered in one of the two

ruined cathedrals, although only Senshock actually stays at that location. Senshock also keeps the Sons of Kyuss trapped in the ruined catacombs when they aren't being used.

Senshock is dedicated to toppling the "hypocritical" faiths of the city, and is starting with the strongest to strike the fiercest blow to all.

Senshock knows that his little cult can't topple the powerful Cathedral's clergy in a "fair fight", so he's cutting their legs out from under them: as the Cathedral fathers fear, he is attacking the faith's wealthy patrons to drive the Cathedral into financial ruin. If Senshock succeeds at toppling the Cathedral of St. Cuthbert, he'll move on to another temple, and another...

Senshock's plan goes like this. Renog (who is willing to do anything and essentially disposable) sits in the Cathedral of St. Cuthbert for hours each day, seemingly in quiet contemplation and prayer. He's actually keeping an eye on the coming and going of the parishioners. When he sees someone make a large donation (rarely done in private; what's the point of giving to charity if no one sees you do it?), he shadows that individual, finding out where that person is staying.

That night, Senshock organizes a strike to take out that patron as quickly and quietly as possible. His weapons: the skills of the cult followers; Nerull's clerical magic; and the barely-controlled Sons. Somewhere, deep in the worm-eaten minds of the Sons of Kyuss, the undead victim's mind is still barely aware of its situation and desperate for release. Senshock controls these creatures through a combination of his Control Undead ability, and promises that he will destroy them if the Sons do his bidding. Typically, Senshock has to destroy a Son after two or three "missions," but each patron killed by a Son has been turned into one himself, generally mere moments after his death. (It's certainly easier to "dispose" of a corpse that can walk.) At the moment, Senshock has three Sons. Two of these are the two most recently killed patrons; the third is the fledgling priest, who got a little too close to the truth.

The PCs have to find a way to discover the identity of the killers. A good way to do this would be to set themselves up as more "wealthy patrons", but be warned that the cultists of Nerull will stalk their victims for the better part of a day before making a move. If the cultists think they're being set up, they may hold off; or they may attack with additional numbers (usually only one priest, one or two followers, and one Son are sent) to take out the interlopers.

Eventually, the PCs should discover the whereabouts of the cult's HQ, and stage an assault to wipe out this blight.

In my campaign, this adventure took a lot of interesting twists; for example, the PCs tried to attack Lucretia at the library, where her friends (who just knew her as a librarian) came to her aid, while others called for the militia. Two of the PCs ended up on trial!

Something you may want to try: when the PCs discover the location of cult HQ, have the cultists kidnap a PC or a favored NPC. Now the party must stop the cultists from sacrificing their friend...

John W. Mangrum

THE MARCH OF DOOM

by J.W. Mangrum

Original Idea (following) by Adam Windsor

751: 5th Invasion of Darkon by Vlad Drakov

Okay, we can assume that Drakov has limited knowledge of the events in Darkon: he knows Azalin is gone, that Necropolis has been created and probably even that the city cannot be entered by the living. The jewel of Darkon is thus denied to him, but he could still capture the setting: so he invades.

His only access is along the road in the Forest of Shadows or along the Vuchar River (the current of which runs the wrong way, making progress along it difficult -- not to mention the mud zombies). Drakov thus invades through the Forest, and loses many men to the werewolves of the area, which enjoy the good hunting opportunity. Nonetheless, Nartok is captured, and eventually Rivalis, though the garrison in the latter city finds itself regularly harassed by robberies, assaults and murders (interesting gaming opportunities present themselves if the PCs were to get involved in a

covert war between Galf Kloggin (the Wererat who is the Forest's "Demi-Lord") (and/or the Kargat) and Drakov's commander in the area.

Drakov doubtless sends sorties against Castle Avernus, which offers many possibilities: there are doubtless defenders, despite the castle's abandoned appearance. Even if these are defeated, difficulties arise. Perhaps a Demi-lich confined into its phylactery in the castle possesses one of Drakov's commanders and leads the attackers into disaster, then quickly brings the other undead under control and closes the castle against attack.

Drakov's army finds its supply lines threatened by Lycanthropes, a fortified undead encampment on its flank, and unrest in the cities it has captures.

Nonetheless, Drakov has enjoyed greater success than ever before: he captures the Jagged Coast area, though Martira Bay costs many troops, and damaging raids by pirates against his garrison occur regularly.

Now Drakov faces another difficulty: all major roads from this location lead to Il Aluk, which he has no chance of capturing. Because he has no way of knowing what exactly is going on in the city, Drakov must encircle it with enough forces to prevent a break-out by the undead, which would require massive resources to maintain and cause a terrible drain on his manpower ...

then of course, there are the desertions and fights caused by rumours that the "death-field" around Il Aluk is slowly spreading, encroaching on the Falkovnian lines

Drakov must now direct what remains of his army through difficult terrain against the dangers of the Boglands (probably the biggest drain on his troops that remains) and the other areas of Darkon and of course, he still has the cankers of Il Aluk and Avernus, plus the smaller sore-spots that continue to bleed him dry.

The question is, will he find it all worth it?

Ya know, the whole Darkonian invasion thing has just stuck in my mind. The horrors of war and man's brutality to man haven't been utilized to date, and they present endless possibilities. I kinda went with the concepts Adam Windsor outlined and ended up with these rough ideas:

Chapter I:

The party discovers signs that Drakov is testing the waters for a new invasion.

(Perhaps, while traveling near the Falkovnian border, the PCs come upon a village which has been razed, the corpses of the inhabitants all dragged into the village square -after their deaths- for no foreseeable reason. Were the Falkovnian seeing if the dead would still rise up to defend their land?)

Can the PCs warn the remaining defenders of Darkon of the looming threat? Do they realize that Azalin was not the only darklord to use spies? The PCs rush to Nartok and report the danger. In thanks, an attempt is made on their lives! There is a traitor in the ranks... The armies of Falkovnia swarm across the border; can they be stopped? As the adventure reaches its climax, the PCs must stop the traitor as the armies of Falkovnia lay siege to the city of Nartok...

Who is the traitor, and why has he sold out his country?

Is it the Baron of Nartok, a man who favors Falkovnian law over the power vacuum left in Azalin's wake?

Is it a high-ranking member of the Kargat, a creature seeking to ensure its own power by rooting for the winner?

Is it Galf Kloggin? Has this little squirmer been promised boons in return for the aid of his supernatural allies?

Or did a mysterious, handsome stranger arrive at the tent of the Falkovnian commanders and offer them the secrets of Nartok's defenses?

The PCs are able to uncover the traitor and put an end to him, but not before the traitor's sabotage has its effect. The PCs gain a small victory, but are forced to flee Nartok as its last defenses crumble against the full strength of the Falkovnian troops...

Chapter II:

Nartok has fallen, marking a Falkovnian victory unseen in the past four invasions. Darkon is shaken. Once past Nartok, the Falkovnian armies swept through miles of Darkonian territory, ravaging villages and turning the peaceful, largely halfling town of Rivalis into a concentration camp. Drakov's forces are now focusing on Martira Bay, while another wing of the Falkovnian army guards from eastern defenders.

The PCs have been pushed back to Martira Bay, where they fall in with the underground resistance forces organized by Alanik Ray. Alanik wants to rescue the people of Rivalis, and turns to the PCs to establish a secret route by which the imprisoned demihumans can be smuggled out of Falkovnian-held territory while there are still prisoners to be saved; rumors have it the demihumans are being shipped back to Falkovnia to face horrible fates.

The PCs must sneak across enemy territory, crossing the horrible scenes of war.

First, they must slip through the fresh battlefields surrounding Martira Bay, where the wounded lie moaning or crying out where they fell, and Things come with the night to sup on the defenseless...

...then the PCs must cross enemy territory, evading the well-trained Falkovnian patrols, and witnessing the aftermath of villages who would not bow to Falkovnian law...

...arriving at Rivalis, the picturesque town now turned into a massive slave labor camp. They must deal with both the sadistic occupational forces and the self-serving demihuman prisoners who have agreed to help patrol their own people. They must find a way to rescue thousands of demihumans, against unstoppable odds. The PCs find themselves in the unenviable position of choosing who leaves, and who stays...

Chapter III

After a costly effort, Falkovnia has taken Martira Bay, although the underground movement continues to cause trouble for the occupational army. The war is grinding to a halt, both sides forced to fight far beyond the limits of their strength.

Rumors have it that Falkovnian morale is fading. Drakov is said to be growing bored of the war, frustrated that he will never be able to walk on his conquered lands, and that his foe Azalin is no longer present to suffer the humiliation of defeat. The Falkovnian ranks have suffered serious losses, and their ranks are now stretched thin. And rumors have it that some of the Falkovnian invaders are starting to lose their memories, suddenly believing themselves Darkonian citizens. Troops have been sent to watch over Il Aluk and Avernus, to make sure nothing stirs in either of those god-forsaken tombs. The soldiers report that something stirs in each. But the orders come: Drakov wants Darkon, and doesn't care who dies, or in what numbers, to reach that goal.

Darkon is demoralized and fragmented, unable to organize a unified front. It is believed that Drakov may hold the western third of Darkon, simply guarding what he has while he builds his forces for a future push east. Rumors have it that the Kargat are playing both sides of the fence; with each Falkovnian victory, the Kargat moves closer to aiding the Falkovnians.

A way must be found to force the invaders back from whence they came. Darkon must find a powerful defender to replace Azalin, who is quickly becoming a folk hero even to those who would have spat at the name before his passing.

The PCs, so valuable to the resistance so far, are given one last mission: to enter Avernus and find anything of value in the war. But Avernus is besieged by Falkovnians; how will the PCs enter a keep when an army cannot? Well, that's what makes the PCs who they are, isn't it. The PCs disguise themselves as Falkovnian soldiers, perhaps even branded on the promise that such scars will be healed later. They must slip into the siege force, and there learn that many of the Falkovnian soldiers are just as tired of war as the Darkonians; the folk of Darkon and Falkovnia have long demonized each other, but the Falkovnians at the front lines are just men, like the Darkonians. They want to go home and see their families, like the Darkonians. They're afraid, just like the Darkonians. The Falkovnian peoples aren't evil, they've simply been beaten into submission by their masters.

The PCs manage to slip into the keep (indeed, there are times when a group of 6 is better than a group of 600). There, they try to find the rumored magical horde Azalin kept, and discover that Avernus' guards are still on alert. The doom guards continue their patrols, oblivious to the siege. Axerock, Azalin's vampiric blacksmith, is still repairing the mystical defenders who are damaged, and sneaks out at night to feed on the Falkovnian troops. Animated by the wave of negative energy released in the Grim Harvest, Azalin's "backup" army of 100+ zombies now wanders about the keep, barely aware of their surroundings...

Battling past Avernus' defenders, the PCs find a number of objects which -might- be useful. Weapons, armor, bizarre contraptions; but what do they do?

It would take months to figure it all out, and they can only smuggle so much out before their inevitable capture.

But there is one defender of the castle who could be of use. Ebb, the [adult] shadow dragon. She has a hatred for living creatures, but enjoys terrifying them as much as destroying them. Up to now, she has been content to sit on her treasures, occasionally taking wing to sweep over the soldiers laying siege to her castle and amuse herself by watching

them scatter like rats. If the dragon lore is true, Ebb is a vengeful, spiteful, jealous creature. The PCs must attack her; not to destroy her, or even to serious harm her. No, far worse.

The PCs have to make Ebb angry, infuriated not only at them but at all those who wear the Falkovnian brand. The PCs have to enrage an adult dragon AND leave her fit enough to wreak her vengeance.

Once enraged, Ebb takes to the air, massacring the soldiers camped outside Avernus' walls (I assume the Falkovnian army lacks magical strength, and would thus be reduced to shooting arrows at their flying attacker). Once they have been wiped out, Ebb flies to higher elevation and turns to the south. Ebb assaults Lekar and Drakov's castle. Not caring about the difference between Falkovnia's leaders and its powerless peasants, Ebb starts laying waste to the city. Drakov is forced to withdraw his troops, calling them all back to Falkovnia to defend the capitol.

The war is over, but at what price? The PCs are responsible for the victory, but are responsible for adding suffering to the peasants of Lekar as well...

And somewhere in Darkon, a mysterious gentleman chuckles once to himself and walks away...

John W. Mangrum

THE PRICE FOR FREEDOM

by R. Sweeney

Basic plot:

Marie begs the PCs to help her raise money. If they are unwilling to give and they don't have a bard willing to help with the fund-raiser, she manages to find a bard to help her. The blacksmith gives Marie a bite-marked coin. Soldiers of the Count come to the concert and make people uncomfortable until the stop giving money. The count arrives, declares the taxes due, and prepares to take the Orphanage. PC or Talis (if you have lame PCs) try to stop the count. Emil speaks up and pays the remainder of the Orphanage's debt. The count, forced to accept the money, leaves.

Marie holds a party at a local Inn, everyone is invited. Michael shows up, offers the count's apologies, and invites everyone who made themselves known during the earlier events at the fund-raiser to a dinner at the Counts. Michael expresses the Count's ardent desire to buy the Orphanage's land for the site of a new mansion he wants to build. He says the count will discuss fair offers at the dinner. Michael assures everyone that the count does not intend to press the issue if Marie decides to reject his offer – provided he is kind enough to hear it. Michael gives attractive lady PCs a pass to 'borrow' a fine dress from the local tailor's shop if they need formal attire.

Dinner comes the next day and Marie turns down the count's offer (the offer is reasonable... but Marie considers the Orphanage's lands to be sacred to the Sainted Mother.) The count concedes and appears to accept this answer. Michael leaves the room and hires Pirro (who is in another room at the manor) to torch the Orphanage. PCs smell the smoke and rush to save the children. The PCs find the bite-marked coin on Pirro's body. One of the brothers tells the PCs that Emil is looking for them. As the PCs approach Emil, they overhear him testing Timber's courage. He scorns the boy as a coward and makes him hold the reins of his horse as the speaks with the PCs about the evening's events. The PCs tell Emil about the coin and their belief that it is the blacksmiths'. Timber tells the Count. The Count sends his men to kill the blacksmith (and smash his teeth.) A boy sees the Count's men pull a long iron box from the ashes of the Orphanage. Gregor (historian-monk) tells the PCs what is in the coffin and a presumption as to why the Count would want it. The PCs must infiltrate the manor and stop the Count.

Cast of Non Player Characters:

Galin Crowkeep (Deceased, former werewolf.)

Galin, after a long career as a respected military man, was forced to resign by his advancing age. Denied the opportunity for death on the field of glory and blood, he grew bitter and continually tried regain his military command, but to no avail until Fate, chance, and a curse restored him.

Surviving an attack by werewolves, Galin contracted lycanthropy. After succumbing to bloodlust for several moons, Galin found his strength and vitality restored. With his health renewed (and indeed even more powerful than ever before) he regained his military command. His second career was marked by military genius and an utter ruthlessness.

In time, Galin came to realize what his curse had cause him to become, not just once a month during the full of the moon, but ever hour of his waking day. His growing aggression had compelled him to take lovers again and his loving wife eventually learned of this. When she threatened to leave, he couldn't control the rage within him. Guilt and anguish drove him finally to seek a cure from Solfa Solwinter for his cursed affliction.

She tried to cure him, but was unable to. Rather than continue as the monster he had become, by day as well as night, he had the Sainted Mother take his life and bury his curse corpse deep beneath her sacred temple.

Rafael Crowkeep (Living descendant of Galin).

Rafael, inheritor of his grandfather's lands, dabbled in the black arts and collected tokens of magical nature. This, in the end, was a dangerous hobby indeed as one of the items he had collected, The Scarab of Set, afflicted him with a wasting illness for which he could find no cure.

As his health slowly declined, Rafael sought a cure with all that was at his disposal. Desperation led to questionable acts and practices. Now, emaciate and gaunt, he has begun to pursue rumors of his grandfather's affliction, believing that the 'curse' could restore him as well...as it did his grandfather.

(Few know of Galin's werewolf nature, since the Sainted Mother is discrete and trustworthy.)

He has currently discovered that the corpse of his grandfather lies beneath the old shrine (currently a temple.) In order to gain access to the lower crypts, he has begun trying to gain possession of the shrine.

As his time grows short, he tries to force a foreclosure on the Orphanage. When that fails, he hires Pirro (a fire wizard) to torch the place. Pirro is paid with the very same money Marie collected to pay the back-taxes on the Orphanage. Thus, when the party kills Pirro, they will find the Blacksmith's bite-marked coin among the loot. (See below).

Michael Tarnok. (Right hand man of Rafael and wearer of the Darkshade armor)

Michael is a warrior of some renown who has been in the employ of Count Rafael for some time. During one of his missions (exploring arcane secrets for the Count's hobby of collecting items of the black arts) Michael recovered the Darkshade armor and the Scarab of Set from a looted tomb. As a reward for good work, Michael was given the darkshade armor. This item, too, had a dark legacy and an evil curse.

As time went by, Michael was slowly drained of vital energy (wisdom) by the Armor. As it drained more of his vital essence, the Armor displayed increasing powers and abilities. Michael slowly came to possess traits of the undead, while losing his humanity, emotions, and independent will.

Michael once loved Leyana, but the loss of his will has prevented him from disobeying his master's commands to punish her when she runs. Michael cannot feel love, but desperately wants to. He may 'fall in love' with a female PC, treating her with respect and trying to woo her affection. His air is respectful and gentlemanly. His gifts are generous and thoughtful... but he will be unable to resist the count's commands.

Michael is armed with normal (non-magical) weapons only but such weapons are of excellent craftsmanship. Rapier, pistols (or drowish hand crossbows), arquebus (or longbow), and poison (drowish).

Michael doesn't eat or sleep. He has the habit of standing absolutely still for periods far longer than a normal man would unless he remembers to shift occasionally to keep guest comfortable. His body heat is considerably lower than normal, but not cold as death. Michael takes half damage from any blunt attacks.

Leyana Bayo (Bard/mage, prisoner of Count Rafael)

Needing someone to aid him in his researches into a cure for his cursed affliction. Count Rafael first hired and then enslaved Leyana. She has tried to escape many times.. and it has cost her.

The first time she ran, she used magic to aid in her escape. The count sent Michael to catch her. He did. Then Count Rafael had Michael slowly remove her larynx while she was fully aware. He did. This not only robbed her of her ability to cast spells, but also of her singing.. something she enjoyed very much. To say the least, she felt betrayed by Michael...and was devastated.

The second time she tried to run, Michael remove her left hand.

The third time, he cut off her right leg (to the knee).

The forth time, he deafened her and removed her ears.

The fifth time, he took out an eye.

The fifth time, she was so severely beaten that she suffered partial paralysis from the blows.

The last time she tried to flee, a fire brand was used on her. Nearly all of her flesh bears horrid scars from that horrible lesson. She will run no more.

Unable to read scrolls, cast spells, speak, beg, or plea, she has developed spells on her own with the power of the written rune. In secret, she has tattooed her body with every spell that can be scribed. She has explosive runes, sepi snake sigils, and Illusionary Scripts. She desires to take revenge upon the Count and Michael but refuses to be subject to punishments again. If she fails again, she will read an explosive rune upon her arm and swallow the fire that erupts (instantly fatal.)

Timber Moccasin (Orphan)

Timber is a small time thief. In return for not being prosecuted for an attempted theft (from the Count's possessions) he was offered a deal. He was to betray the Orphanage and help the Count to force them out. Timber is a 'mole' if you will.

Timber is basically a bully and bigmouth. Deep down, however, he is a coward and backs down from confrontations where he doesn't obviously hold the upper hand. When Emil hears of Timber's reputation as a strong young fighter, he tests him to see if he is worthy to be allowed to join the Paladin's entourage. Timber acts like a coward and Emil humiliates him in front of the other boys.

Emil then proceeds to tell the PCs of a plot element and Timber gladly betrays the orphanage by reporting what he's learned to the Count.

Emil: (Paladin, fallen).

Emil is a fallen paladin. The evils of Ravenloft wore down his spirit until his faith was destroyed. Currently, he is the leader of 15 men (warriors 3rd level), one healer, one mage, and one bard.

Emil was badly scarred by a confrontation with evil. Knowing this, the large man will not remove his armor at any time in front of strangers. He has never removed his helmet since his disfigurement. (Emil fought a black dragon, the acid breath weapon permanently scarred him.) Emil, since he is an outcast, has sympathy for the orphans and other outcasts.

Currently, Emil represents the law which is not controlled by the Count. (He is a marshal or member of the Kargarat if you wish.)

Marie, (Bard)

Marie once entered Darkon and forgot her past. Currently, she believes herself to be a 'Blessed Sister' of the Order of the Sainted Mother. She runs what remains of the temple from Galin's day. The temple of the Sainted Mother eventually became an orphanage where wayward children were cared for and given a chance at life other than a life of crime and abuse.

Marie has access to Divination spells only (she poses as a cleric but has no healing spells.) Marie, a false cleric, is served by three 'Brothers' who are true followers of the Sainted Mother and believe her to be a true cleric.

Marie cares greatly for the children in her charge. She has fought valiantly to save the orphanage but Timber helped the counts men gain entrance to the orphanage and steal what little gold was in the treasury. Since then, the orphanage has been heavily in debt.

With her high charisma, the fact that she carries no weapons and never strikes out in anger, and her bardic ability to influence reactions has enabled her to instill peace in almost any who desire to harm her. Her level and reputation are such that only the emotionless Michael can directly seek to harm her.

She tries to entice a bard PC to give a performance to help her raise money. During this performance, mostly coppers and silvers are given, but the blacksmith makes a display of biting into a gold coin (to prove it's true gold) and places it in the bowl for Marie.

The Count's men interrupt the fund-raiser. Emil, however, steps forward and vows to pay that money which the Orphanage was unable to raise.

<In my campaign, Talis was the performer-bard. When the count interrupted, Talis got hot with him and challenged him to a duel of honor. The count had Michael fight in his place. Michael whooped Talis' butt. Emil, then stepped forward and protected the half-elf.>

Brother Simon (Architect)

Simon is extremely aged. In his youth, he worked on the mansion in which the Count lives. He may be able to tell the PCs of the best way in.

Brother Anton (Healer Herbalist)

Can supply the PCs with Wolfsbane.

Brother Gregor (Historian)

Can (after prodding) inform the PCs of the history of the Count's Grandfather.

Notes: Brothers

These monks are pacifists. They cannot learn weapons, wear armor, or attack with the intent to cause harm and remain clerics of the Sainted Mother. Their spheres of spells are: All, Divination, Protection.

Special Power: Influence reaction (as per Bard): Peace.

Blacksmith:

Enamored to Marie. Timber overhears Emil speaking about the PCs suspicions of the gold coin they found and tells the count. The count has the Blacksmith killed (Face/teeth shattered by a mace).

Pirro (fire wizard for hire)

Pirro wizard-locks the hole building (kinda like 'Guards and Wards', the 6th level spell. Once no-one can leave, he burns the children alive. He enjoys his work. By item or spell, Pirro is immune to normal fire and smoke.

The PCs must rescue the trapped children... and deal with Pirro who will try to divide the party and then surprise them.

Pirro is paid with the same money raised by Marie to save the orphanage.

Sample of the Adventure Session:

In Darkon, I placed an orphanage in financial trouble. One of my PCs, a bard, tried to raise money to pay their backtaxes with a musical performance. He was doing rather well when the guardsmen showed up and put a damper on the event. (They intimidated the crowd, causing them to stop giving money.)

An important event, is where the PCs see a blacksmith bite heartily into a gold coin (to demonstrate it's purity) and drops it into the collection bowl.

Michael, who wears the Darkshade armor I created several months ago, walked through the crowd, causing them to part before him like Moses standing at the Red Sea.

Michael was a greyish skinned man, perhaps in his 4th decade with silver streaks touching his hair at the temples. His skin had an ill pallor to it and his eyes were lifeless and dull. He was extrordinarily thin. (The draining effect of the darkshade armor having made him sometimes forget that he needed to eat.)

The rolling sound of a carriage approaching drew the peoples attention away from Michael. One woman wispered, "the count" and fled. The count stepped out of the carriage, a normal-seeming man with brightly colored clothing. He was younger than Michael, but appeared to be even less healthy. Skeletal-thin, but tall and lanky. He stood unsteadily and approached. When he coughed, blood flecked spots appeared on a bright white cloth he carried.

The count told Marie and Talis that the orphanage's taxes were already past due. He would not accept the money as payment.. but rather demanded that the orphanage be exited at once.

Talis, a bit hot-headed, challanged the count to a duel of honor to settle the matter. (Knowing that the count would choose a champion to fight in his stead.. as is commonly done amoung my nobles.) Talis fought Michael.

Michael was;

a better warrior

untiring
unemotional
patient
and suffered only half damage from Talis' Sais.

Talis was soundly stomped... the count told Michael to bring the boy back to the manor for lessons in civility.

At this point, Emil, an NPC who is a member of the Kargat, stepped forward. He was impressed with Talis' bravery, "the boy had a big mouth, but his heart was in the right place." Emil told the count to leave the boy, accept the money, and he, Emil, would cover the rest of the unpaid taxes.

Emil is not good, but respects bravery and honor. Talis was brave, and the count showed little honor in the way he intended to treat Talis after the contest. The count suspects Emil's connections, and fears angering him.

The count backs down.

The party is taken back to the Inn for a party... Emil comes along.
(Just 'cuz yer evil don't meant ya don't like a good party.) As the celebration dies down, a messenger from the count arrives.

Emil, Talis, Marie, and Sage (who was mouthy during the encounter.. even if she didn't fight) are invited to a dinner at the count's estate.
(Turmerick wasn't invited because he didn't make himself known during the confrontation earlier.) In his note, the count apologises for his rudeness and explains his interest in the property. (He owns a lot of land around the orphanage and wants to build a new mansion on that site...the orphanage is in the middle of where he want's his new home to be.) He proposes to discuss a possible purchase of that land with Marie after the meal.

Michael stands outside the door, and enters at this time. He nods to Talis with respect and turns to Sage (an attractive female). He hands her a note that he says will allow her to freely rent (borrow) any dress she finds in a shop he names. Sorcha complains that she isn't invited to the party (another PC). Michael adds her name to the note, tells her she's invited and can get a free dress for the evening. He bows respectfully to Sage and prepares to leave. (Michael comes off as interested in Sage.)

Emil goes to the party because it's political. He has to go. Sage and Sorcha go to the party because they get cool dresses...and it promises to be fun. Talis goes to the party, cuz he doesn't trust the count worth spit..and desires to protect Marie (NPC), of whom he is quite fond.
Turmeric doesn't say squat, and isn't noticed. He doesn't plan on going.

They go to the party. At the party, everyone dines on good food except Michael, who stands at the door to the place. He is silent, and unmoving. One of the PCs notice that he has stood without shifting his weight for an hour. This is odd.

The count makes his offer to Marie. She refuses, citing an emotional attachment to the land. The count shrugs and tells her that next year, when she can't pay the orphanage's taxes, the land will be his anyway...and says he can wait. No ill will.

Michael has briefly left the room, but no one notices. (He's also very quiet.)

Outside, Turmeric has been making rounds of the manor... checking it out as it were. Hey, he's a thief...who knows what's on his mind. He thinks he sees someone leaving by the side door.. but by the time he gets there whoever it was is gone. He looks for tracks, but he's not the ranger.. she is inside wearing her cool new dress.

Turmeric decides to try picking the lock on the side of the manor when he smells smoke... and hears commotion in the street. Going to investigate, he finds the orphanage in flames.

All by his lonesome, he tries to enter the building and rescue the children trapped inside. Someone has 'wizard locked' all entrances..which forces him to physically batter down the front door to gain entrance.

Opening the door looses a backdraft, which knocks him on his ass down the front steps. Righting himself, he charges into the inferno. While inside, I had him make a constitution check each round or cough and choke helplessly on

the ground. Each round he was within the smoke, he suffered an additional -1 to the check. (Meaning if he started choking, he still had to pass a check to try to leave.) He also took a consistent 1-4 pts of damage per round from fire.

The children were trapped in their room, wizard-locked. He battered the door to the girl's room down. He had some trouble figuring out how to get the girls out, since taking them out the front door would cause them to suffer 1-4 points of damage.. and they probably only had 1-4 hps. They'd make it in one round... if no one tripped.

With some quick thinking, he called to people outside, dropped some sheets to them (the girls are on the second floor) and had them form a net to catch the girls as he dropped them down.

Meanwhile, the sounds of the boy's coughing in the next room are dying down...

He begins choking on the ground helpless for a few rounds before regaining enough composure to lean out the window for fresh air. The older girls have kept dropping their sisters down to those below... so they are saved by the time he recovers.

He tries to leave to rescue the boys, but the floor collapses under his feet right before the door to the hallway. He doesn't fall, but can't leave the girls room that way anymore. He is forced to scale the outside of the building and go to the window of the boys room. (Which is wizard-locked.)

Cursing whoever is involved, he punches through the glass.. putting some nice slices in his wrist. Breaking his way into the room (and bleeding) he drops the unconscious boys to the ground.

By this point, Sage (with keen elven senses) smells the fire even from within the count's manor. Emil, Talis, Sage, and Sorcha leave to help.
(Notice that the count's dinner kept all the heroes he knew about away from the fire until it was too late.)

Emil, who is interested in Damage-Control more than risking his ass to save a few remaining children begins directing the destruction of nearby houses so that the fire doesn't spread. (He will use draft horses to pull down the houses and get the wood away from the fire.) He has to clock a hysterical woman in the face. (She's trying to tell him he can't tear down her house.. not her house.) Emil ain't a gentleman when he's irritated.

Sage has a sword frost brand, which puts out fire in a 10 radius around her. However, the wood quickly reignites after she has passed. Talis has a necklace of adaption, which allows him to breathe normally even in the smokey interior. Together, they meet up with Turmeric, who is trying to break open yet another door. (With older children trapped inside.)

The ceiling collapses on Turmeric, trapping him. Talis is forced to catch a beam that is falling to crush Turmeric's head. He can't move the beam and can't let go until Turmeric is freed.

At this point, the villain appears. Pirro is a fire wizard, pyromaniac. He has a mechanical gadget on his person (flamethrower). He sprays Talis (who can't move) with a stream of fire. Sage intercepts with her sword (which extinguishes the flames). Now, a stream of gasoline is being sprayed at the heroes... soaking all of them. Since they are within 10 feet of Sage's sword, they are safe for now. The fire wizard backs up and begins casting spells at the heroes. (The sword only has a 50% chance to extinguish magical flames.) Sage can't attack from where she is, and is forced to advance to melee with the wizard. (Oh, and her pretty dress is ruined by the gasoline).

Of course, when she goes forward, her brothers (soaked in gas) ignite. they take 1d20 + 10 points of fire damage. Talis is immolated.

Here I need to point out a little fact about Talis. Talis' mother was a witch who was burned at the stake. When he came of age, his mother's spirit bound with him... making him a warlock. A side effect of this, however, is that Talis has had frequent nightmares about being burned alive. This was already clearly explained in previous gaming sessions (explaining why Talis didn't want Sage to learn 'fireball'.)

Well, Talis' mind comes unhinged.

Turmeric finally frees himself as the beam comes crashing down. Still on fire, he launches himself at the firewizard with bloodthirsty rage. He falls hard to the ground. (Fortunately, he passed close enough to Sage for the

flames on his person to be extinguished.) The ground collapses underneath them... they fall to the first floor. The hit hard. The ground collapses. They fall to the basement.

Ouch. Turmeric briefly sees a glyph-covered stone set in the wall when a flaming wine-rack collapses. But he's pressed for time as the building starts to collapse.

Sage extinguishes Talis, wrestles him to the ground. Knocks him out. And throws him out a window to the men with blanket 'nets' there to catch him.

As they grab Talis to pull him off the blanket, the skin on his wrist slides away from the muscle. (This really happens to people with third degree burns.)

Turmeric drags an unconscious mage from the building. Sage jumps clear of the building as it begins to collapse.

The party is forced to use some of their healing spells to keep the mage alive (but he remains unconscious). They use the rest of them on the children. (No one remembers to use some on Talis... figuring that he's alive, just comatose.)

Sage and Sorcha babysit Talis, trying to wake him. Turmeric takes the comatose fire wizard to the jail... where he personally guards him.

(Paranoia... he figures that all the guardsmen are on the count's side and want the fire wizard dead before he can be questioned.)

He hears nothing from Sage, Sorcha, or Talis for hours. Someone offers to relieve him of his guard, but he refuses. The guardsman sits down and watches the prisoner anyway. Sorcha comes down to bring him some food and lets him know that Talis hasn't woken up. He stays at his post.

Emil comes down to see the prisoner. Turmeric talks to Torvil... telling him what he's found. One of several coins on the Fire Wizard's person seems to be the bite-marked coin Turmeric saw the blacksmith put in the collection bucket last night. This implicates the count. Emil needs this verified by the blacksmith.. and to have the teeth-patterns compared. The other guardsman quickly volunteers to do this.

Turmeric's intuition tells him that the blacksmith is as good as dead. He tells Emil that he should have that guard watched...because he suspects his loyalties lie with the count. Emil leaves to put another guard on the first guard.

A few hours later, a guardsman named Jerrad comes down to Turmeric with 'bad news.' First, the blacksmith was found dead in his home. His head was crushed under a falling anvil. It doesn't look like an accident. He also, hanging his head, tells Turmeric that someone broke into Sage's room and slew both her and Talis. He implies that there was some poison on the blade and that since they haven't found Sorcha, she is suspect.

Turmeric is cautious, and tries to catch Jerrad in a lie.. trying to get the guard above to verify his story (and identity.) Of course, both guards are working together for the count. Their stories match.

Not seeing any reason to stay, Turmeric leaves to check on his brother.

Talis, among other things, is a telepath. He is also maddened by his fever. Due to a DM contrivance, Talis, in his fever, contacts Turmeric at this time. "It hurts, make it stop...". This means that Talis is alive! Those liars.

He enters the guardhouse again and melees the first fighter, Jerrad, while the second feeds a potion of healing to the wizard. Turmeric kills the first fighter, avoids the second to take down the firewizard before he can loose a spell. The wizard goes limp and falls to the ground. (He has 1hp but is playing dead.) In the middle of combat, this ploy works. Turmeric drops him to take out the other fighter.

Pirro, the wizard, thinking himself dead, begins casting a fireball spell to take everyone out with him. Turmeric can't get to the wizard in time, but he does dodge out of the open doorway and escapes the blast. (He had 4hps.. he wasn't going to be able to take a fireball from a 14th level firewizard.)

Exhausted and dispondend, he finally goes to see his brother.

Sage complains that Talis has been telepathicly contactiing people in his fever.."and nearly made Sorcha pee down her leg" (Sorcha didn't know Talis could do that.) Turmeric enigmaticly says, "that's all right...Talis did just fine."

During the next adventure, the plan is: Emil can't do anything legally because there isn't enough proof to accuse the count. The party has to take matters into their own hands and break into the castle. There they meet Gwenlin, a bard which the count has basically enslaved. She keeps trying to free herself, but the Michael allways captures her. Each time she runs, a part of her ends up missing. A hand, so she can't play. Her voice, so she can't sing. Her ears so she can't hear her beloved music. One of her eyes... to threaten her with blindness (so she can't see art.) Her foot was hobbled so she couldn't run, then her leg was taken at the knee so she couldn't flee (when loosing the foot didn't deter her). She's been beaten and scarred. It turns out, Michael seemed to like her at one point, but every time she ran, the count had her 'punished' by Michael. Michael displayed no malace while he was torturing her...eerily cold about it.

The count, you see, isn't a wizard, but needs to learn about magic. The best he could do is this Mage/Bard half-elf whom he captured. He forced her to read and study the magic works he'd found.

The count is looking for a cure. Many years ago, he stooped to using a evil item of blackmagic and has contracted a wasting illness. (perhaps a failed powercheck.) He is frantic to get his health back.

His grandfather once contracted lycanthropy.. a curse which rejuvenated his body...making him active, alive, and virile again. The count is trying to uncover his grandfather's corpse, and from the residual blood contract lycanthropy himself. He doesn't want to die...

His grandfather eventually sought a cure.. and went to the orphanage. (For in those days, he head of the orphanage was a saint with healing powers.) They were unable to heal him, and at his request, mercifully ended his tortured existance. His body was buried under the orphanage in a secret room. (The rune covered stone which Turmeric saw.)

The count needed access to the orphanage to get that body. His ill health has reached a point where it will threaten his life..his need now is urgent. So, when he couldn't claim the orphanage or buy it. He hired Pirro to burn it.

The PCs are expected to stop the ceremony/ritual required for the count to contract lycanthropy.

Robert Sweeney

THE AGE OF WISDOM

by R. Sweeney

Malcolm is a man who grew up in an abusive family of <insert city name>. (Perhaps Malcom was an orphan adopted by a family who wanted a free labor...not a child to love.) Now that he is older, however, he has managed (by either luck or skill) to acquire some land for himself.

He is forced to take care of his parents, who are not growing infirm with old age. Since he is already in the 'buisness' of caring for the elderly, he decides to turn this into a career. Thus opens "Malcom Elder care. Care for the twilight years."

Malcom, having learned miserly behaviors from his original family, continues them in the elder home. The rooms are cold, the food is bland, and the elders are treated with distain and cruelty.

At first Malcom works off his inner rage on his parents (locked away from the rest) but later extrapolates his vengence to all of those under his care. No brutally sadistic, no... he is, however, strict and applies the rod to those who sneak out of their rooms, don't finish the food they are given, complain, speak rudely, or disobey him.

Of course, he has a financial stake in keeping the elderly in his home, so he punishes anyone who implies to outsiders that they are not happy here. Some of the more tiresome elderly are given herbal 'medications' to keep them stupid and pliant.

How the PCs get involved....

One elderly woman freezes to death in her bed. She becomes a ghost... but one of weak will and power. Even as a vengeful spirit, the fear Malcom instilled in her during her last years of life prevent her from acting directly against them.

Rather, she 'escapes' the walls of the home and appears before the PCs. She tries to grab and shake a PC to get their attention and plea for help. PCs may see bruises on her ghostly form.

Her presence (and handling of one PC) ages some of them rapidly towards old age and senility. (Preferably almost all...) she flees the PCs when they attack her. Demihumans appear as old as a human of half their age. (Their resistance to time's effects is temporarily removed by her special ability -- max extremely venerable.)

Several PCs are infirm.. and those unaffected must find some place to put them so that they do not danger themselves by wandering off or falling down. The aged PCs do not appear to be able to speak.. only mutter, gibber, and groan.

In town, the PC is pointed towards Malcom's home... where their 'parents' can be cared for while they search for a way to undo the aging.

Wizards have a high chance of spell failure and general senility.

Warriors have lost a great deal of strength. Thieves require the use of a cane or other walking implement to avoid falling down.

Clerics of evil alignment grow dark, cantankerous, and rude. Clerics of good alignment, however, have a interesting form of senility. They occasionally remember things that didn't happen to them... after awhile they should remember being beat that morning only to see their bones are not broken....but another elderly person in the home did suffer that beating. (Their senility gives them the advantage of the elders' wisdom. They gain wisdom and intelligence as per the DMG's suggestions for altering abilities with advancing age.. not just the negative effects felt by the other PCs.)

Option: All PCs of good alignment gain wisdom with this enchanted aging. They 'remember' things which never happened... years of their lives that didn't exist. They 'remember' getting married, having a family, and for some reason being sent to the home.

If the PCs try to fight, they have a THACO or 20 due to their extreme age and easily have bones broken (quickly bringing a halt to their ability to fight.)

The way out (and this would take some forethought in the design of the place) has to do with non-direct means.

- 1) Sneaking out and telling the authorities of what they have seen.
- 2) Setting traps (marbles on the stairs, falling chandelier, etc..)
- 3) Inspiring the 'younger' patients to fight back.
- 4) Finding the room where the old lady who froze to death is still rotting away...(meeting the ghost for a second time.) They can ask the ghost for help, but she is too afraid to face Malcom in person. She could, however, steal a key or find a secret room.
- 5) Finding the hidden room where Malcom's parents are hiding. (Can be useful in reporting his actions to the authorities.)
- 6) Tricking Malcom into going into a room where an elderly patient is supposed to be 'hiding' (ventriloquism... no one's actually in there...) They lock the door after him.
- 7) Poison.

Magical options:

1) scroll tucked in the back of one of the books in the library. There is a book on ghosts and apparitions... inside the back cover is an old greying parchment. Apparently, it mentions a case where a ghost's aging attack was undone by righting the wrong that led to it's creation.

2) Nymphs in the garden (Alternate: a painting of a garden in the main hallway)... dismissed as senility by the guards and Malcom, there are actually nymphs in the garden. These nymphs are saddened by the state of the poor old people trapped here. Only those with a high wisdom (enhanced by age, perhaps?) can actually see them for what they are.

These nymphs believe that ghostly aging can be undone with a special ritual after the spirit has been laid to rest peacefully. They can perform this ritual.

The nymphs can also make a 'potion of vitality' from natural herbs they can gather in the forest. Having been given this potion, makes the PCs a bit more functional.

3) Other ghosts:

One elderly person was beaten for stealing a key. This elder person was beaten to death in the basement. The ghost, however, remembers where it hid the key.. and will tell the PCs.

4) The library:

Again set in the library, this time the PCs learn of a elderly person whom the other patients insists used to sit and read a story about nymphs and forest mythology every day. Eventually, they went to the library to bring him to bed... and he was nowhere to be found.

One of the patients claims the nymphs took him away with them into the book...

(If the PCs read books in the library, they will see a small picture of this elderly man dancing among the nymphs with his cane in hand.)

A PC, who intently reads the book who has a colorful imagination (perhaps being a mage helps) can 'step inside the book' at one point and be with the nymphs. (This can only be done while no one is looking -- not even another PC.)

Althou difficult to drag themselves away, this PC can leave the nymph dance later.. and be free to sneak about the home after night falls.
(Perhaps to truly escape.)

I suppose most PCs won't enjoy being hamstrung and forced to abandon their quick swords for quick wit, but then again some might.

Robert Sweeney

THE PRISONER

by R. Sweeney

Adriana (a drow) is a fledgling vampire, subserviant to Locust, the Master Vampire. Strong-willed, she likes the vampire's power, but wants to be free of her master.

Master Vampire, Locust, is an old and powerful undead, but weak in ambition. He has staked out his own little corner of Ravenloft as a feeding ground. His mortal aide, is Kornic Monkshod, a noble man in the town. Kornic has studied the rites of black magic and become a cleric of evil. He worships the spirit of the Vampire...Locust. Kornic is skilled enough to make magical potions. (From the vampire blood.) He cannot cast any spells above second level..since the object of his worship is not truly a god. However, his ability to make potions from the powerful vampire blood still make him a deadly opponent.

Adriana desired Locust's vampiric power, but quickly tired of his lack of ambition once he brought her over. He won't let her go, and she has begun to despise his weakness.

Kornic protects his lord during the day... and Locust protects his guardian during the night. Adriana can't fight Locust and she must sleep when Kornic guards his lord. Adriana wants someone to break in and kill Kornic.. then kill the Vampire lord (who is greatly weakened during daytime encounters.)

She will be sleeping elsewhere.

Adriana can't really pretend to be a half-vampire, and play on the PCs sympathies to kill her master and free her from the curse, because she's a Drow. (The PCs automatically assume she'd CE.) Why would they risk their lives to save a CE drow? She therefore must force their hand. Options:
Stolen items, blackmail, cursed ring, or kidnapping whichever PC that couldn't show up to play that night. The PCs are FORCED to cooperate.

Alternate:

There has been a rash of murders lately (more than normal). The victims appear to have had their wrists cut and blood drained. Vile black-magic is suspected. Several of the victims recovered are enemies of Kronic (although this take some investigation to discover.)

These murders are Adriana's work. She is dropping clues to get the PCs to investigate Kronic.

Adriana uses pick pockets to drop notes/clues into the PCs pockets.

Adriana acts as a mystery stranger who speaks from the shadows and passes on important clues.

Kronic has been performing rituals/experiments on living subjects..draining their blood during the proceedings. Locust has been collecting street urchins and beggars for his servant. Adriana has also been 'helping'. One of the 'victims' abducted will be someone of importance to the PCs. Adriana has made this victim look like a street urchin (so as not to raise Kronic's suspicions.)

Once the PCs have killed Kronic, it should be apparent that he was a vampire worshiper... at this point they take out the lead vampire. Adriana, now a full vampire, is free of his control and begins collecting her own pack of vampires. (For ambitious plots.)

PCs have loosed a greater evil on the land, and are responsible for bringing her down.

Personalities:

Kronic, nobleman of influence who lives alone in fairly large manor. He has a group of people come in to occasionally clean the place, but mostly no one enters or leaves.

Potions: Potion of mind control (anyone drinking must save vs spells or become highly suggestable for 1-12 turns.)

Potion of gaseous form.

Potion of extra-healing.

Potion of kindred strength.

Potion of wolf-form. (Different for each drinker.. changes them into some animal type that closely matches their personality.)

Vial of blood-gas: Forms cloud of set dimensions. Those within the cloud failing their saves bleed as per sword of wounding.

Potion of cause critical wounds: can be applied to a weapon to inflict additional damage. Kronic is fond of darts.

Locust:

Blood-drinking vampire with "chill touch" spell effect. If he drains blood from an opponent in combat, he drains Con points at 3 / round and heals 5hps per Con point drained. Locust can assume a cloud form with green sparkling motes of light floating about. If a creature is enveloped by this cloud, Locust can drink their blood as previously indicated. Locust has no animal form. Locust can only fly in cloud form. He flies at a rate of 15" even against prevailing wind. He naturally regenerates 3 hps / round. He has no power to charm, but his voice acts like a suggestion spell.

Lesser Kindred:

Created during a ritual by Kronic, Locust drains a victim completely of blood. The corpse dropped in an alley, where it is found by the family and buried. 3 days after burial, Locust retrieves the corpse... which has become a zombie variant that drains blood with a bite. The lesser kindred can drain constitution at a rate of 2/round and heal 5hps per constitution point drained. They may even exceed their normal hp totals briefly, but the excess is lost after 1 turn.

Lesser Kindred can roam by day... they have a low intelligence and obey Kronic or Locust. Another vampire-worshipping cleric could use his 'control undead' power to control them as Kronic does.

Lesser Kindred suffer no ill effects from sunlight, but they avoid it if at all possible.(They perform basic housekeeping tasks for Kronic in addition to being daytime guards.)

Adriana:

As required, the PCs are never in a position to fight her directly during this adventure.

Robert Sweeney

THE ZARTAN ISLE

Scenario 1

by R. Sweeney

Wondering about the Zaratan's involvement in the adventure... the following ideas come to mind.

Appearance: During a storm on the sea of sorrows, the ship finds itself propelled ever faster towards a large island floating a head of them.

Truth: The Zaratan is closing on the ship.

Appearance: As the ship nears the island, a vicious outcropping of coral reef tears into the underside of the ship. The sound of splintering wood reverberates throughout the ship.

Truth: The Zaratan has raised an appendage under the ship. Either the head, or a leg.

Appearance: When the storm ceases, they find the ship strangely perched atop a large outcropping of rock, fully clear of the water by 12 feet or so.

Truth: They are sitting atop one of the Zaratan's limbs, but can't see it as such because of the scale. Speak instead of a rocky peninsula.

Appearance: The villagers dance and sing amongst the caves of the sea shore.

Truth: They are dancing within the mouth of the Zaratan. The PCs, dressed in ceremonial garb might be expected to join the dance. When their group dances within the mouth, the Zaratan gobbles them up.

Appearance: The island rumbles with a sudden earth-tremor. The cave collapses.

Truth: The Zaratan has eaten them.... (They have sustained serious wounds in the process, but no one has died.) Inside the 'caves' under the island, they are navigating rocky corridors with an acidic/corrosive pool at their feet.

So while they are looking for a way out, they discover other skeletons and perhaps even small ships that have been swallowed up by the monstrous Zaratan in the past. Attacks against the inside of the Zaratan are only as effective as such attacks would be against an island-sized chunk of rock.

Acidic fumes and stale air press the PCs to quickly find a safe exit from the Zaratan's gullet. However, an entire eco system thrives within the Zaratan... designed to make sure this doesn't happen.

The 'water' in these tunnels is, of course, a weakly acidic secretion that slowly dissolves the PCs footwear.. and then begins attacking their flesh. The greater danger, however, is in attracting the attentions of grey oozes and black puddings... or other acid resistant monsters. Ropers and Neo-Oytghs seem appropriate as well as Piercers.

Some past victims of the Zaratan have managed to adapt to the hostile environment within the Monster... in this lightless environment, they rely on sound and scent instead of sight.

In order to maintain the appropriate atmosphere, the PCs should learn relatively quickly of a possible way out. A diary on a destroyed ship perhaps. "Woe am I, for the third and last night of sacrifice has come and past. Now, I and my companions are trapped.. forced to survive as best we can in this hellish underworld within the beast. If we can only avoid the creatures long enough... if we can hold on until the next group of unfortunate victims lands upon this cursed shore.." The idea, not spelled out here, is that the PCs can leave while the villagers attempt the next sacrifice.

Alternately, a magical way out exists on one of the destroyed ships...something in several parts which the PCs must find and put back

together. "If only the Scepter of Seven had not sundered in the battle with the under-dwellers I could leave. My men and I make plans to retake the parts lost to the under-dwellers this evening. May Tempus look with favor on our task..."

Robert Sweeney

Scenario 2

by Alastor

The adventurers, either by chance, fate or purposely (depending on the campaign) get to Dermochel.. They find it is a peaceful island, inhabited by primitive but friendly people (described in our previous posts)... They get acquainted with the land and the inhabitants.... communication is hard, only through gestures, which are easily misinterpreted... The only person who can actually speak with the PCs is the Temmin's advisor, a somewhat civilized fellow, but still a native, named Jeld'Akhan. He tells them certain details (regarding customs, the island itself and religion (Leatherback & Rautha -see Dermochel in the New Domains entry)... But by NO means does he tell them that they are currently on the back of a gigantic turtle!

So the PCs live "peacefully" until one of the natives tells of a dangerous creature roaming the jungles... now this can be anything, providing it is not too dangerous so that the players can't get too hurt, but neither too easy so that the players don't get suspicious... Anyway, the PCs dispatch this meaningless hazard and are deemed heroes... a ceremony is held in their honor... I am abandoning the sacrificial idea, maybe it can still be put in here somewhere, but that's not what is currently on my mind, have to empty that first :)... The Temmin, through Jeld'Akhan, congratulates them and saying that now, that he has found worthy "heroes", he may tell them of his goal...

Now the Temmin wants to help the dying Zaratan attain an undead/immortal state... He needs powerful magic to achieve it.. He's almost ready to do it, but the most important "ingredient" is found deep within the Zaratan itself... It can be anything, perhaps a magical item left over by a previous victim... So the Temmin tells them of this cave found at the base (?) of the island... he tells them to go there and retrieve some item (the one he needs) from the cave... How hard can it be? Right?... It is very important that up to this point the turtle-people seemed very friendly, so that the PCs expect the danger to come right out at them and not from the natives' part...

Jeld'Akhan or the Temmin (what's the diff) gives the PCs a magic scroll of teleportation... it's either custom made (the spell) or the turtle-people have different kind of magic.. anyway the point is that the spell cannot be recognized by a spell-caster in the group... again the trust between the PCs and the natives is important.. the spell is indeed of teleportation but of an object... so the PCs set out, encountering perhaps the jellies and slimes and oozes as well as skeletons and other wreckage.... Not to mention the digestive juices...Now the PCs have a right to become suspicious... If they try to leave, they find that the cave entrance has collapsed (the Zaratan closed his mouth)... They finally find this object they were looking for and use the scroll... and they find out they are still inside the cave, only the object has disappeared...

That's when the horror sets in... especially when they find out they are inside a turtle... Now it's time for them to try to escape and maybe get a revenge on the turtle-people...

Alastor

TO DEATH AND BACK

By Stormonu

"He's dead," Jaelce stated, defeated.

Norrick pushed the cleric aside, his face stained with tears. "You're a worthless fool Jaelce!" He roared, grasping the bloody figure that lay at Jaelce's feet. "Your god is worthless!"

Jaelce only bowed his head, and hoped that the powers would forgive Norrick's anger. Nimblethumbs, the group's scout and scavenger, had died intercepting the beast that had intended to rip Norrick apart. On one side of the village square, the purplish beast lay in a heap, beheaded by Norrick's sword. On the other side, Nimblethumbs torn body lay at Norrick's feet.

"There is a way," a voice from the growing crowd of villagers cooed.

Jaelce looked up, as Norrick spun about, his anger still dark on his face.

Emerging from the crowd was an elderly woman, a crone. Norrick frowned when he recognized the clothing of the lady. She was Vistani.

"If you wish to have your friend back, there is a way," the lady stated.

"What are you peddling, old lady?" Norrick almost sneered.

The old woman stopped short, taken aback by Norrick's disrespect. She stiffened, and pointed her crooked oak cane at Norrick. "I am peddling nothing. There are secrets I know," she stated, drawing close one eye, as if to peer into a magical world. "Secrets I will now reveal!"

With a motion faster than Norrick could have guessed, the old lady spun to one side. Her turn brought her to face a stone fountain in the center of the town square, and without a pause, she stepped towards the fountain and dipped the cane into the black, slimy water. With a dark, gurgling sound, the water receded, revealing a slick staircase down into darkness.

The old lady stepped back as Norrick and Jaelce raced over to peer down the foreboding staircase. Looking back to the old lady, Norrick asked, "What is this?"

With a loud cackle, the lady replied, "The Well of Death!" Staring hard at Norrick, she continued, "it leads to the underworld, child, and to the city of the dead. If you are brave enough, you can retrieve your friend from the clutches of death. If not, death will claim you as well."

Norrick put his feet on the stairs. He did not slip, or fall over dead, as he feared he might. Turning, he leveled his gaze at Jaelce. "Let's do it."

This is an adventure that is best used after a character has died, or if the PC's have lost an important NPC they would care about recovering. To state beforehand, I personally frown on setting up that requires a PC to die in order to play. This should more be an adventure to store and wait until the inevitable event occurs.

The adventure starts with the PC's bringing the corpse of the dead PC/NPC back to the nearest village. A visiting Vistani (preferably one the PC's have had honest dealings with in the past) comes to the grieving characters, and tells them she knows the way for the PC's to revive the dead PC. Turning to the local well, she taps it with a specially enchanted wand, rod or other device. The well is then transformed into a portal that leads to "the underworld" of Ravenloft [Remember, not even extra-planar creatures or items can reach outside of Ravenloft. Even the souls of the dead are kept somewhere in Ravenloft - it is this area the adventure means to flesh out].

The Vistani will not relinquish the device that opens the portal, and it will not work in the hands of any other Vistani that its current owner (it is often handed down from Vistani Madame to Vistani Madame. Whether or not it has charges, is up to the DM).

If the characters accept the challenge to enter the well, they descend the stairs into a gloomy mist. After what seems like hours of descent, the characters arrive at the top of a small dais in a small cavern. Once the last of the characters steps onto the dais, the stairs evaporate into mist - there is no turning back now.

The surrounding cavern floor is covered with the carcasses of the dead.

The sight of the putrid mass of flesh, crawling with maggots and worms, is cause for a Horror Check. The characters will have to cross the decaying mass to reach the triple-arched exit from the cavern. It takes 2 rounds to cover the cavern safely, 1 if running. However, a character that runs must save vs. Dex or fall. Falling into the mass causes it rise and attempt to drag the unfortunate into the mass. Such victims take 2d8 damage per round, and can only free themselves by causing 30 hp of damage to the mass or if characters with a combined Strength of 60 pull the character out. Other hazards in the mass include 1d4 rot grubs/character, yellow mold (a 6HD patch), 1d4 ju-ju zombies. These hazards are only encountered if the characters attempt to search the pile of flesh.

The triple arches at the far exit of the cavern are engraved with an ancient glowing text. Though the writing appears unreadable, anyone making an effort to read can understand the writing easily. Each arch gives a cryptic clue about what lies beyond it.

The first reads "Steaming Mist to gut thy soul, The spirits here do wander" Those passing through the arch find a winding passage beyond, that slowly fillings with stinging mist (save vs. spells each round or become blinded for 1d4 turns). Some 6 rounds into the mists is the source of the mist, a foaming pit of acid. Characters who reach this point blinded must save vs. breath at -4 or fall in. Others must save vs. breath at +4 to avoid. Those who fall in suffer 3d8 damage per round, until the acid is washed off. Beyond the acid pit is a vast, confusing maze filled with the blinding acid. Characters can wander in the burning mist forever, possibly stumbling back into the acid. This way is a dead-end.

The third archway reads, "Walk in hand for death is quick, beyond give prayers of plenty." The hall beyond seems to stretch without limit.

Characters who walk down the path will find a series of pressure plates, with a 1 in 6 chance of stepping on one. Stepping on the plate triggers a deadly trap - roll 1d10. 1 - Blade at waist level causes 2d8 damage if save vs. breath fails. 2 - 10' wide pit trap with spikes, 20' deep, fall causes 2d6 damage, landing on the spike causes an additional 4d4. Pit closes after 2 rounds. 3 - dart trap, character is attacked as if by a 4HD monster, and hit with 3d4 darts. The darts are coated with type A poison. 4 - falling block from ceiling crushes 10' area. Those caught under must save vs. breath or suffer 3d10 damage. 5 - two sheets of blades extend from each side of the wall, cutting those caught between for 2d12 damage (save vs. breath to avoid). The hall is blocked for 4 rounds. 6-8 - 10' section of hall rotates 90 degrees, dumping those who fail a save vs. breath into a blazing furnace for 4d10 damage per round. The trap immediately resets, and those who fall into the furnace will remain trapped until the trap is activated again. 9 - poison gas sprays out from the walls. Breathing it does not kill, it is a contact poison, causing instant death if save vs. poison fails. Those

touching the character for 3d4 rounds will also be affected, but less so (3d10 damage if save vs. poison fails). 10 - A death spell is triggered against the character activating the pressure plate.

The hallway of traps continues into infinity. Those who head back towards the arch find the hall only 100 feet long.

The second archway reads, "The Pale Rider comes to greet all who seek him out." This is the correct hall to follow, and appears black and impenetrable. Not even magical light can brighten it beyond a shadow-laden gloom. The walls of the hallway are sharp and cold, and eyes seem to peer out of every darkened shadow. After traveling down the hall for 5 rounds, the passage suddenly opens onto a vast crevasse - and a sharp drop down.

Characters who had no light to guide them must save vs. breath at -4 or fall to their death in the abyss beneath their feet. Characters who have a light source must save vs. breath at +4 or unknowingly slip to their doom.

Generous DM's might allow falling PC's to attempt to catch the rock wall of the crevasse.

The far side of the crevasse is 12' away. Characters with a running start can jump 2d6 feet (those with Jumping pro may add their level to the jump). Note that if characters do not mark the edge with some sort of light, they may run too far, or jump too early (use a 1d8. 1-3 is that many feet early, 3-4 is at the edge, and 6-8 means the character ran too far). Note that the ceiling is too low to attempt a pole vault, and the tie-rope-to-arrow-and-shoot-across won't work either.

Beyond the crevasse, the hall continues, until it opens into a chamber illuminated with an odd blue light (the magic darkness does not work here).

The light radiates from a wading pool in the middle of the room. Dangling his feet in the pool is an old man, his eyes gouged out. There appears to be no other exit, and once the party enters, even the entryway is gone.

If the characters talk to the man, he reveals that in life he was a seer, and made his living telling others fortunes. When he predicted the death of a nobleman's son, the nobleman had the seer drowned. He will invite them to sit. If the characters attack, he offers no resistance, and can be slain with a single blow.

If any of the character sits at the edge of the pool and looks in, they can make out something moving deep in the water below. If they ask the old man about it, he replies he cannot see anything. If a character focuses on what is in the water (i.e., tries to make it out), a bullette rushed to the surface, rising out of the pool. The bullette attacks, attempting to slay the party, if wounded, it regenerates 6 hp/round. It will not cease to fight until slain.

Once the bullette is slain, the cavern walls seem to fade away, revealing an even larger cavern. The characters will suddenly discover that they are standing in the middle of a great city, whose buildings are pressed together as if leaning on each other for support. A pale gloom illuminates the upper reaches of the city, and the voices of the dead and dying can be heard echoing through the city - along with howls of rage of men and beast alike.

If the characters did not kill the seer or was killed by bullette despite the character's attempts to save him, he offers to take them to their friend, returning to life if the latter case occurred. He will not elaborate on how he knows the character's mission. If the PC's killed him, they are on their own to find the "Dark Power".

The streets of the city are filled with all manner of "undead". Most are harmless, wordless phantoms, who shy from the character if approached.

Others are more sinister, including wraiths, spectres, ghosts, revenants and other non-corporeal undead. If the seer is leading the party, the undead will not approach the PC's. Although a priest character may use the turn undead ability here, it is affected as if in the presence of a Domain Lord.

PC's may also encounter other lost friends or enemies in the street, who will react to PCs appropriately. The DM should prepare a few "disturbing" encounters, even if the PC's merely pass the being by.

Finally, the characters reach what appears to be a great ruined cathedral. Inside, they find the pews have been removed, and replaced by a maze of candles. At the far side of the maze, cloaked in impenetrable shadow, moves a figure of immense proportion, clearly over 25' in height. Only the glowing eyes of the figure can be made out, and they watch the characters as they approach.

The seer will refer to the figure as "Master", to which it nods. The being will offer no answers to questions posed about itself, never giving a name, purpose or other information. It will only ask, "what are you prepared to give for your friends life?"

The characters have several options. A classic is to gamble with "death". In this case, "death" and one PC rolls two dice. Whoever rolls highest, wins. There are no rerolls, and the punishment for losing is instant death. If one PC fails, the others are transported outside, never to return again.

Another option is to game with "death", such as a riddle contest or game of chess. This may be played out to some degree (remember, "death" is quite learned, and has knowledge beyond what the DM might know). Similar to above, with "death" having a Gaming pro of 19 in all gaming forms. Five successful rolls (either without the "death" scoring a success or beating death's roll) is required to win. A player's success is removed each time "death" wins a round without the PC scoring a success, or if he beats the player's roll. The punishment for losing is instant death for the challenger. The others are transported outside, never to return again.

Characters may choose to fight death. If so, the challenger faces a Minor Death (as from the Deck of Many Things in the DMG). Each and every challenger involved must face their own death. Only one needs to be beaten though, to succeed. If the challenger loses, the survivors are transported outside and may never return.

If characters succeed, the seer hands the PC containing a flask containing the soul of the originally deceased character. Moments later, the characters find themselves at the foot of an endless staircase leading up.

When they reach the top, they will have returned to the spot where they have left, and find only a few rounds have passed since they left. If the contents of the flask are poured into the dead character's mouth, he will be revived as if he had just been resurrected.

As an aside, a generous DM may allow any characters who also died in the attempt to revive the PC to be awaiting at the dead PC's side, alive and well.

Note that the DM may want to use this as a further stepping stone. Was "death" a Dark Power? What about the seer? Might he appear at later times to cast the fortunes of the PC's from beyond the grave? Can the PC's be sure that spirit they recieved was not some evil plot by the Dark Powers to revive one of the PC's enemies instead of a friend? Will the revived PC suffer later ill effects? The possibilities are endless, and as in gothic horror, a return to life is not so often a grand thing - look at Pet Semetary!

Stormonu

THE WICKED KID

By R. Sweeney

Brief Overview

Young boy who's family knows magic, but he can't learn any.

Older magi performing magical experiments with the aid of an Imp.

Experiment gets out of hand as the Young boy steals the magi's Imp... rendering the Magi no longer of a level to control the beast.

PCs must return Imp to the evil magi so he can stop his creation.

Young boy is torturing the Imp, trying to get it to accept him as its master and to teach him the ways of magic.

Cast of Characters

Young boy:

<Insert name> I'll call him Ted. He should be disturbingly young, so young that his actions later are shocking. I'd put him at age 10.

Ted lives in a carnival with his brother, father, and several circus performers. The carnival itself makes money from a variety of sources, of which entertainment is just one of them. They also are a motley band of thieves and witches.

Ted, however, no matter how hard he tries, has never been able to learn magic. For some odd reason, he simply lacks the skill. His family, all mages of some sort, derides him and assumes he isn't applying himself. His brother teases him mercilessly with magical 'pranks' or outright attacks.

Ted really wants to learn magic. He tries selling his soul, but can't find any buyers. He murders small animals seeking the attention of the dark spirits. No notice. He then chokes a few kids to death. Again: nothing.

Young boy's family:

Ted's father, the ringmaster, is a master of illusions. His eldest son, a master of conjurations. Together their magic 'act' is impressive. Offstage, their magical prowess is for hire... to discreet customers with deep pockets.

The mother is a diviner. Sister traffics in curses (generally empowering others to curse... and avoid direct powerchecks... For this use, curses and hexes are treated as a minor school of magic including spells such as irritation and contagion and others of the type.) They act as the old gypsy women.

(Note: Here my magic users are assumed to only have access to one sphere of spells and 5% chance per level to read/detect magic of their sphere of mastery. They also have a 10% chance per level of attracting a familiar. Their

familiars add +1 to their level when within 10 yards in addition to the normal bonuses. They can attract multiple familiars, one 10% check every level. These familiars are always of the same type, however.)

The party may meet these people before the actual adventure begins. The carnival is in town and packing up to leave as they get in. Perhaps they see a night's performance and/or need the spell users for some other reason (another quest they are involved in.)

Wizard:

Standard NPC from another world sucked into RL. PCs may be pointed in his direction if they seem to be off-worlders or ask about it. Clerics with unusual holy symbols may find a local talking to them who can share knowledge of the Wizard. This wizard is a NPC necromancer on his way towards becoming a undead golem master. He will, by happenstance, be from an offworld PCs home world. They PCs and this wizard should get together for a nice chat about home... and any leads on how to get back.

Meanwhile the wizard and his familiar (an Imp) are trying to build a Zombie Golem. They are gathering up corpses, animating them, and using them in their creation. (A long process... but since he has the job as he local coroner and funeral director, he has a plentiful supply.) He may make added money by 'sealing' the coffins with a ward or rune for the richer folk willing to pay through the nose for 'protection' from grave robbing.

He happens to be just at the level of power require to create and control the zombie golem. However, he only maintains control due to the added level gained from his Imp.

He invites the PCs to stay with him and really tries to talk them into it. He seems to really miss people from his homeland. He may even offer to share secrets with a practitioner of the arcane just to prolong the evening.

People perusing his works will only have the barest bit of necromancy passed on to them, for the wizard knows the danger of such in the Demiplane. He will offer a trickle and see if they PC offers any of his own. A necromancer PC should be able to figure out that this fellow has more info to offer.

In short, he seems like a very friendly fellow.

Plot

Part 1: The Thievery

The caravan, before leaving, tries to break into the funeral home for they have heard the Undertaker has a small amount of money. The PCs should be involved in the event, capturing (not killing) the interlopers, who are seen to use magic in their defense when the Undertaker unleashes some of his own. The PCs earn the Undertaker's respect and gratitude for their assistance but should keep the Wizard from killing those thieves who surrender.

Back at the Caravan, the Diviner reports on the failed attempt and the Ringmaster comes to recover his thieves. A roleplaying even ensues where the ringmaster informs the PCs and the undertaker that he can make life difficult for them. In short, he coerces or threatens them with curses and magical onslaughts if the thieves are not released. To prove his point, he may evoke a phantasmal killer (which is seen by all, but doesn't attack: it is a demonstration spell only, to demonstrate his power and intimidate the PCs. The spell is a defensive one, visible to all until the first attack upon the ringmaster: at this time the PK closes on the attacker and cannot be seen by the others.) The ringmaster tell him that he can force them to live in a world of endless recurring nightmares and hallucinations until they doubt reality itself and go mad from it. He is deadly serious and the PCs should gather that he's not making idle threats.

He has a hex-ward on him. While the Ward is in effect, he cannot start a combat neither by spell or ordering someone else to fight. If he does so, the rule of 3 is invoked. (Evil returns times three). However, if someone else begins an assault, they will receive a curse in return: at some point over the next 72 hours, they will have an accident befall them where by they take 3x the damage they inflicted upon the ringmaster in an unprovoked attack. The ringmaster does not return attack, but inform the PC of what they have done to themselves. "The best you can do is kill me and find yourself and two of your dearest friends dead within three days time by an invocation of the rule of three."

The PCs should be very ill at ease about this especially the Lawful ones. However, the ringmaster does seem to have the upper hand and definitely seems to have all the bases covered. The diviner, also a psi with telepathy and Clariescient skills, continues to inform the ringmaster of the outcome of #1 her spells and psi kills. She is safely back at the circus.

The hex-witch is close enough to cast her spells, but not in direct view. A warning shot by an invoker with the caravan or a conjured group of monsters (monster summoning I) may also intimidate the PCs. They should give in.

Note: The only importance of this event should be Ted's presence when the Necromancer casts spells or gets defensive and brings up his own displays of power. (Animating corpses). A wolf (pet) of the necromancer changes to a raven and perches on his shoulder as he animates the undead letting Ted suspect something more than your regular familiar. Perhaps the Imp uses its MR to dispel the PK before it attacks his master and is obvious as such or does the wolf to raven transformation mentioned above.

In short, Ted learns that Undertaker has an Imp.

The undertaker, unwilling to face down these magi releases the captives and the caravan departs. XP should be awarded to PCs smart enough to resolve the situation without violence. Roleplaying is necessary if the PCs notice the wizard's wolf-doggie is gone and a raven is hanging on the necromancer's shoulder now. The undertaker will claim that he has reformed he will allow any animated undead to return to their 'eternal rest' saying he merely felt the need to defend himself and momentarily reverted to his old ways.

Part 2: The Disaster

After the PCs leave, the Necromancer finishes his Undead Golem and tries to animate it to kill the PCs (who know his secret) and the ringmaster (for daring to challenge him.) However, Ted has been sneaking around and followed the ringmaster. While the undertaker and the Imp are at an important portion of the ritual, Ted garrotes the Imp spoiling the Necromancer's concentration, knocking out the Imp, and unleashing an uncontrolled monster.

Ted escapes with the Imp. The undead monster bashes the wizard unconscious and breaks down the door leaving. Nearly dead, people are drawn by the commotion in time to save the undertaker's life. He claims bandits from the carnival broke in and tried to kill him but any smart person looking at the door can tell something broke out.

If he feels himself to be in danger of being caught, he casts a spell 'spirit form' or some other undetailed spell and becomes invisible but for his shadow: he slinks away in this form if imprisoned (he is intangible unless in direct sunlight).

So the wizard gets away, trying to flee his creation. The creation, feeling the wizard is not dead, rages and vows to kill him. The town should somehow be isolated from easy flight. Perhaps the woods around the town are haunted, full of ravenous wolves, or otherwise untraversable. Perhaps the zombie golem takes out the ships in the harbor rending their rudders or breaking their hulls.

You could create a 'night of the living dead' scenario as everyone the golem wounds becomes undead within an hour or just have a hulking monster skirting the town trying to kill all it finds especially its master (who can no longer control it.)

The PCs find the text he was working from and learn that he had made a medallion to control the beast. Thus they need to hunt down the wizard and find out about this medallion (the medallion itself is cursed now). They will learn from talking to the wizard that without his Imp, he cannot use the medallion effectively: he has already tried. He says someone or something attacked his Imp and he needs it back to stop the monster, something which he is more than willing to do because the golem wishes him dead.

If questioned about why he tried to animate the golem, he pleads an intellectual curiosity, nothing more, and proclaims to be penitent. He says he never meant for anyone to get hurt and indeed seems to grieve the damage done by the golem. He's badly injured and his body is degrading (the golems touch working into his system like poison). The necromancer must focus all his arcane knowledge on holding back the fell tide of death magic and perhaps can tend to one PC scratched by the Golem. He says he can undo the magic affliction if he can regain control of the Golem, but to regain control of the golem, he must regain his Imp.

The party now has to hunt down the Imp, perhaps thinking the carnival did it, but there is no way to catch up with the carnival which left by sea before the Zombie was animated. There is a time constraint on their search of the town, however, since the people have been scratched by the golem as well as the undertaker and possibly one of their own. The undertaker can't hold off the affliction forever (and seems to be tiring) so if they dally, they may cost their friend his life.

They have to split up and search for clues. Tracking skill from the house may allow the PCs to determine that the kidnapper drug the Imp into the sewers (the undertaker's lair was built in such a way that failed experiments could be dumped into the sewers or an underground river.)

The PCs suffer various encounters within the sewers and are presented with a variety of tunnels to explore. Splitting up would increase their searching speed. If they do not do this, rather choosing to risk the injured PC and Necromancer (and the town as well) they should stand a good chance of failure. (Tell the party to roll a searching die: if they split of let each player roll the searching die).

The party is attacked in the swamp by the Zombie Golem which seeks only to injure them and leave (it doesn't have to breathe so it can flee under the sewer water line.) Now the PCs are afflicted and need to find a cure. To find a cure, they need to find the Undertaker's Imp.

At this point, they carry their torch into a methane rich section of sewer gas (if using a torch or lantern.) The gas explodes, splitting the party in two. If using infravision, the infravision invisible Zombie Golem should attack again: the PCs should then feel a need for mundane light. Then they can encounter the methane gas pocket...

Once split in two, allow both halves of the party to roll a search die to drive home the fact that the group would cover more ground if they split up. Of course, the PCs won't like this idea.

There's always the option, now, of throwing in an encounter with a doppelganger. (Who doesn't know about the thing in the sewers yet but may read it in the PC's mind.) The doppelganger may decide to make lunch of the person they are with to replace that person in the party and get some protection from the Zombie creature they seem to be hunting.

The doppelganger-creature won't really kill the PC however, but rather leaves the PC for dead and steals his items. Another PC may trip over their companion later, providing for interesting possibilities.

The PCs face the doppelganger distraction while their health continues to fail due to the injuries inflicted by the Golem. The doppelganger can scare the PCs by disappearing around the corner while they are in pursuit and appearing to vanish. As they search for secret doors through which he vanished, they find one. They must pass the door in single file (narrow) and the last one gets to see a pile of decaying matter and leaves stand up as they are supposed to pass through. (The decaying matter warps into an image of themselves displaying an ability the doppelganger might have but the PCs hadn't considered camouflage. He tries to replace this PC, but should be slain at this time.)

Part 3: The Confrontation

The secret door through which the PCs entered is the way Ted went. He stumbled upon the door, knowing what to look for since thieves often set up hidden hidyholes like this to avoid the cops and wait until the heat dies down. Thieves in the group should see signs that this used to be a small thief guild house a few years ago but one that has either closed down or moved.

Ted has, however, reset the traps and the PCs may be hit with crossbows, or chimes to alert the boy to their presence unless they Find/Remove traps.

The encounter with the boy should reveal a bound Imp (held in place with metal spikes through his flesh: steel, cold iron, nickel, lead, and silver at the 5 corners of a pentagram). The beast is inside a crudely drawn but effective pentagram (which prevented his teleportation magic).

Ted cut off the Imp's tail with its own stinger (which, strangely, could harm the Imp). He then watched as the Imp regenerated and has been torturing the creature ever since, trying to get it to accept him as its master. Meanwhile, he has milked a good quantity of its venom and has several makeshift daggers fashioned out of its stingers.

Ted fights with two daggers without penalty, has a very high dex, and each dagger insinuates poison upon impact. Other items, such as crossbow-traps of the original guild, have had the Imp's poison applied. The imp-daggers act as exceptional weapons in Ted's hands: +1 to hit and +1 damage. His only true magical item is a garrot that is +4 to hit and can affect creatures requiring +1 weapons to injure. It is, of course, evilly enchanted. People who use it repeatedly suffer compulsions to murder and may wake up with the garrot wrapping itself around their own neck if they haven't fed it recently enough.

The imp has begged to be let go, claiming he can't give Ted magical powers, only enhance powers if he has them. Ted called him a liar and was particularly cruel. He's tried to force the Imp to let him talk to his master: "No you stupid shit, not that stupid wizard, your **demon**-master... I want to talk to him. I deserve magic! I demand it!"

Now, the PCs enter, battle the fellow. By this time the Golem's attacks have drained their strength to a point that the power-mad little boy actually poses a threat. They can overpower the boy (who isn't a darklord but perhaps has finally done something the PCs feel like rewarding.) Should they kill him? Well, they shouldn't kill him out of hand in melee: he will go unconscious but will be in a stable condition. They would have to choose to kill him. He will wake up in a moment (too weak to fight) and tell them he "needs" the quiaist.

He enters his sob story about how he's the only member of his family that isn't a magi and he won't be accepted until he learns to be one of them. This takes some roleplaying on the DM's part, but effort should be made to paint a picture where the poor boy's obsession with gaining magic is understood. The PCs will, of course, be adamant in the need for the Imp to be returned to the Necromancer so the golem can be stopped. The boy tries to talk the PCs into letting him have the Imp back after they have stopped the Golem, even going so far as to suggest that they could have the Imp near the exit of the sewer, close enough that the Undertaker could gain strength from him and control the Golem, end the plague, and cure everyone but also allow the boy to escape with the Imp after it's no longer needed. (This should fly like a lead Zeppelin, but he'll try anyway...)

Finale

Now, of course, the darkest part of the day's events comes when they do return the Imp to the Undertaker and he tries to betray them sending the Golem to kill them. They should be allowed to flee back into the sewer if this happens, but their position will be tenuous indeed. In this event, having Ted alive might actually help them, since he may be able to help them get to the old thieves' hideout again.

If they foresee the Undertaker's betrayal, they can set up the situation in such a way that he dare not turn on them (ie, they can kill the Quiaist, causing him to lose 4 levels, lose control of the Golem, and surely die). Such a Mexican standoff will be full of tension, but in the end the Undertaker should see reason and disband the golem (it falls to pieces: as it does the curse/disease fades from the PCs' system).

The Undertaker, of course, demands his Imp back or the PCs will have a dire enemy on their hands which they probably don't want to face (weakened as they are). They may have found a way around this as well. If not, let Ted save the day -- in his own way.

Ted, if still alive, uses a hidden Imp-dagger to backstab the necromancer (the Imp and Necromancer are staring down the PCs hopefully the PCs don't warn him about Ted). The necromancer is struck by the poison from the dagger, causing both Imp and Necromancer to suffer shock from their connection. Necromancer goes down (dead or not is another matter). Ted slits the Undertaker's throat, then tries to jump on the back of the Imp with his enchanted Garrot and force it to fly away. The Imp does not, however, and instead teleports away, gets its master's soul, and tries to leave RL.

Aftermath

Does Ted manage to coerce the Imp to fly away? Perhaps the Garrot prevents the teleport skill from working? The PCs have an interesting villain for a future time as Ted's character develops.

Does the Necromancer live? Will he hunt down Ted? Will he hunt down the party?

Is the Golem really dead? Or just dormant? Or pretending? Did the necromancer disband it permanently, or just temporarily?

Notice: Despite his actions, Ted has only directly harmed the Imp and the Necromancer as a result of his ambition. Perhaps, he thought the Golem would kill its master and lie at rest. Killing him for this would be unjust. It would also earn an enemy of the ringmaster and his crew.

Robert Sweeney

BLOOD TIES

By R. Sweeney

Note: This can be played right after the adventure *The Wicked Child* presented above. It constitutes part 2 of the mini campaign centered on a little child and may be followed by other adventures detailing the end of this mini saga. The main NPCs that recur in this story are the little child (Ted), his father (the carnival owner and wizard) and his brother.

Part 1: Reunion

A young half-elf child named Ted attracted the attention of the Dark Powers with his actions (see the adventure *The Wicked Child*). They are quite pleased with him: his anger, frustration, and desperation being a very pleasing elixir for their epicurian palates. He has tortured an Imp long enough to gain a blessing.. and suffer a curse. Firstly, Ted has a dagger made from the Imp's sting. This 'weapon' has unholy origins and a history with Ted: in his hands and his alone it functions as a +2 weapon. Also, Ted can gather up magical energy as per normal, but he can't cast it. He can learn magical formulae, but cannot cast them. He can, however, bestow such spellcasting ability on another spell user.

So, after the events described in adventure *The Wicked Child*, Ted and his family venture on, running into a town haunted by three small poltergeists in the woods that occasionally snare small children.

Now we must go a little back in time and complete Ted's true history. Ted was the child of a witch burnt at the stake.. to his mind unjustly. His mother hid him in the woods when the villagers came for her and he was found by a twisted fellow who was his foster father for a few years. Sadly, Ted had a run-in with some boys in the forest who sought to tease him for his half-breed (half-elf) heritage. He killed them. They became poltergeists and Ted was taken by the Forest Druid to his real father (the leader of the circus), since he had become far too dangerous for the hermit to raise.

Years later, Ted is returning to that area with his father's carnival. The poltergeists capture a child and try to get the child's mama to deliver Ted to them, which she does and has her child returned. However, another ghost in town awakes when her son gets near.. and she demands that her son be brought to her or she will go on a rampage through the town. Here the PCs enter the story.

The adventurers are contacted by the mayor of the village or by Ted's father to rescue Ted and bring her to the Ghost lady in time. They will then have to dispatch first the malevolent poltergeists that are now trying to exact their vengeance on the boy. After their rescue mission, the group takes the boy to the town ghost, thinking maybe she only wants to embrace his son one last time. However, it turns out that the Ghost lady planned on sacrificing her son to get a mortal body again. Assuming they discover her weakness (items that were used against her the first time she died), they dispatch her before it's too late.

Now, Ted's current situation is not really enviable. A 20 year old (10 years by human standards) half-breed boy who can't learn magic like the rest of his family, is only gonna live 1/10th his brother's lifespan, envies the 'greater' gifts full elves have, and learns his mamma really was an evil witch who didn't love him. Ted goes to his brother and tries to talk about his problems, but the older elf ignores his concerns. He's much too busy for those sorts of things and Ted is bringing him down: he couldn't care less for his littler brother.

Ted starts to hate his brother. He sabotages the trapeze so that his brother will fall to his death but his brother manages to live anyway. Ted is beside himself.. but gets a grip on his maniacal rage. Still, the Dark Powers are loving this. They begin awakening dormant genes from his mother's side: she wasn't a witch after all.. but a vampire (living bloodsucker).

Ted ceases to be disturbed by signs of gore and gains power to summon magic from blood. 10 pts of freshly spilled blood within 10' = 1 psp or 1/10th of a spell.. which he can grant to a suitable source. Drinking blood, of course, proves more effective: twice as effective!

Part 2: The Blood Vampire

On a trip through Darkon, the family carnival comes across the ground littered with the corpses of Vlad's men from yet another failed attempt to take over the world. All the freshly spilled blood steams in the cool air, forming a faint foggy

mist over the ground. As the carnival moves through (seeking to loot whatever spoils are on the battleground -dad's real ethical), shadowy tendrils of this mist begin collecting around Ted, as if taunting, teasing, or at the very least letting everyone know something isn't quite right with young Ted.

The PCs meanwhile, have been sent to capture some runaway bandit (it helps that the fleeing thief stole something of the PCs.. like one of their horses). He doesn't want to be taken alive and makes sure of it. So his flight and fighting brings him to the Darkon battle ground, where Ted is apparently being 'attacked' by some strange form of blood spirit seeking to enter his body through his eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

When they arrive, the PCs see Ted fall to the ground overcome by the infusion of blood essence (if they have already met him in a previous adventure, they'll recognize him). Some carnival people arrive trying to comfort Ted and calling out for a healer. If a PC tends to Ted, they will later find that 1 or 2 spells they have cast have not been wiped from their memory: a very odd occurrence.

Night is beginning to fall and the father welcomes the party to stay with them out of gratitude for their trying to help Ted. He suspects some form of crimson mist has begun haunting the battle grounds and fears for the locals. If they've met him during the first adventure, he now tries to make amends for the first time they met (see *The Wicked Child*). The party may ask why he doesn't try to kill the crimson mists: he tells them that his profession is entertainment, not monster slaying. He may be able to assist the PCs with a few choice spells (at the DM's discretion).

[Insert possible battle against a Crimson Mist, but not let the PCs fall to this monster]

Night has fallen, when someone sees a figure moving among the dead of the battlefield. From a distance, they may see mists swirling around this figure.. and should be curious enough to investigate.

Out among the battle grounds, a vampire once known to the vampyre that was Ted's mother feeds from the death in the air. He meditates among the dead, drawing up the essence of the spilt blood and causing misty tendrils to flow from the still somewhat fresh pools of blood. As the mist rises from the pools of blood, the blood turns black, clots, and dries. This vampire can feed on the essence of spilled blood and gives rise to the legends of the Ring of Vampiric Regeneration, for he is able to heal by absorbing the essence of spilled blood at a rate of 1/10th the spilled blood within a 50' radius per round (10 rounds can absorb all of it). Fresher blood, such as that freely flowing from wounds, heals 1 pt per 2pts bled. Living blood drunk from the creature directly gives him back hps at a 1/1 ratio. He can also drain blood essence to power his spells.. just like Ted can.

Thus the PCs meet the vampire and perhaps are attacked by him. He is a blood wizard capable of casting grotesque spells such as 'bleeding eyes/ears', 'blood clot', 'ward of bruising', 'blood drain', 'bloodletting', and 'summon blood elemental'. Since he is surrounded by so much blood, he would be a truly potent foe and drunk from the excess may attack the PCs for a few rounds before he realizes their strength. Casting a strange spell 'blood binding' he splashes some of his own blood on one of the PCs and flees.

The forseen crux of the plot involves the vampire capturing at least one of the PCs (possibly a spellcaster) and figuring out about Ted's special gift, which he wants for his own. He then manages to sneak into the carnival's encampment and to kidnap the young Ted, too. He takes his victims inside his lair (the other PCs might want to trail him, but they should leave tracks at some point) where he places the captured PC and Ted in a bamboo cage hanging from the ceiling with several other victims. A dart-poison given by the master vamp every 12 hours disturbs his sleep and prevents memorization of spells. All original spells are lost when the vampire choked the spell user to 'death's door' and then revived him.

The PCs will then try sneaking into the vampire's castle during the day (they'll find his home after some searching where they lost his tracks). Since it's daytime, killing the vampire is lots easier, but they must hurry..

Ted, meanwhile, is locked in a cage with the other scared children. Ted and the wizard need the wizard to cast a spell for their freedom.. and the only way he can do it is having Ted lend him part of his "special power". But in order to do so, Ted must drink blood.. Ted proposes to suck the blood out of a few innocent children (in the cage with him) to do it. Will the wizard let him do it? Will he accept his "gift" knowing where it comes from and how the child got the power he needs? After all, they don't know when and if their friends will come and rescue them, and each hour can be their last one..

And if he does, a Powerscheck is surely required.. maybe marking his descent into Darkness forever..

Spells of the Blood Vampire

Bleeding Eyes/Ears -- effects as per magic missile, but description is of sudden horrible bleeding from the eyes or ears. Note the lost blood strengthens the vamp.

Blot Clot -- affected PC must roll a System Shock or pass out for 1-4 hours as a blood clot in his system give him a stroke or heart attack.

Ward of Bruisin -- suffers 3x normal damage from blunt impacts for 1r per caster level.

Bloodletting -- fireball damage effect for spontaneous bleeding.

Summon Blood Elemental -- self explanatory (similar to Summon Elemental)

Blood Binding -- special vampiric curse. The blood bound is tainted: anyone making skin contact with the blood of the afflicted must save vs spells or become tainted as well. Those so bound loose 1 hp per hour, becoming pale and anemic looking as well as hemophiliacs which occasionally bleed for no apparent reason. The vampire gains the essence of these lost hps. If the victim bleeds to "death", they will become a lesser kindred under the vampire's control. (Remaining fully intellegent but have to drink some kind of blood at least 1/day or die). Once they person reaches 0 hps and begin drinking blood, they seem to slowly recover from their affliction. However, anyone they drink from but don't kill is afflicted with blood binding.

(Note: The PC isn't dead, just cursed and unable to resist the curse: they should be informed. The original vampire can use suggestion on them 1/turn, but nothing more direct unless he kills them outright and makes them his undead slaves.) The cure: the pure of heart get a save every day. (LG paladins and priests). The impure, but good, gain a save every 3 days. The selfish (neutral) and evil gain a save every week. Otherwise only the death of the casting vamp cures it.. or, perhaps, the dust of any vampire sprinkled on the afflicted.

Robert Sweeney

JERHAAD'S WAGON

By R. Sweeney

Jerhaad made wagons. It wasn't much but his career paid the bills. At the very least Jerhaad enjoyed his work, taking care and pride in his work. His work was valuable and he has some small reknown for making good products.

Jerhaad had aged some 40 wintes without taking a wife and was beginning to grow despondent. Still, he had his work, he had his friends, and he had most of his health. Jerhaad never liked to complain.

His skill as a wagon maker had, after all earned him enough of a reputation to have young boys come to apprentice as in wagon making to learn of his skill. So, in this way, Jerhaad believed he had a family. He was their father while they lived with him and he treated them like his sons.

Ah, but not for that blissful summers day. The sun shone as it set, painting the sky breathtaking shades of gold and rose. He had been sitting there, after a hard day's work, just lying on his back chewing on an old piece of straw when they rode by.

Maessur was handsome enough in the face, but his belly had grown with his age. His har had begun receeding at precise part while gray had crept into the sideburns. His skin seemed flushed from either excitement or exertion. Jeraad couldn't really tell which. He was talking to her with all the excitement and energy of a man half his age. Jerhaad smiled at the sight. The man was truly luck.

Fortunate indeed, for the object of his attentions was a delectable lady, the color of the purest creame. Amber locks of hair turned in small curls to fall be side her delicate cheeks only to be swept aside behind her delicate little ear. She wore a bonnet of the finest make tied under her chin to keep that lovely red hair in place as best could be done while riding. Her dress, Jerhaad could see, covered a lithe frame indeed. She seemed delicate, innocent, pure. She looked upon her lover with absolute adoration. Jerhaad's heart wept from her beauty.

The driver of the cart failed to note a rocky patch in the road, and the wheels of the genteel carriage clanged harshly against it, splintering the wooden axle, perhaps already worn from age. The cart came to a screeching halt.

The gentleman, for the first time since they entered Jerhaad's view turned his attention away from the lovely lady. He stepped out of the carriage to examine the damage, giving Jerhaad even more time to appreciate his luck.

He found himself staring as one would look at a painting crafted by a true master. Her eyes were a watery blue that mesmerized him in their depths. "My God, I'm staring... how impolite... how leecherous", he thought to himself, but could not bring himself to turn away.

He sighed.

She returned his stare: not with the devotion he saw her bestow upon the fat man, but not with revulsion either. She seemed to bear no hint of bashfulness, despite remaining innocent seeming, and pure. She was positively perfect.

But Jerhaad knew he brought this torture upon himself, she obviously loved the fat man more than words could say. Jerhaad knew the fat man must be terribly wealthy and tried to banish any thoughts of possessing this particular woman.

He closed his eyes and pretended to sleep.

"You there!" cried a voice that must be the fat man's. "You, sleeping there, would you be so kind as to help a fellow in distress?"

And so, did Jerhaad come to take the three weary travelers in a wagon of his own to his humble abode. There the fat man admired his wonderfully crafted wagons, demanding, simply demanding that Jerhaad craft a new wagon for him to bring his beautiful lady to tour the country in. A carriage, fit for his lady.

And Jerhaad agreed....

Jerhaad was obsessed with making the finest wagon possible. Blood, sweat, tears, and even some of his own money went into its creation. The gentleman did say a wagon fit for that divine lady and Jerhaad vowed he would create just such a thing.

As time went by, the relationship between the Gentleman and his lady began to deteriorate. Jerhaad thought he saw bruises on her tender flesh, showing purple and ugly through her delicate dress. The look of adoration in her eyes turned to hate.

Jerhaad began considering taking his wagon to the gentleman's estate and riding away with her forever. Romantic, foolish notions, he knew, for he was not a rich man and could hardly support so fine a lady. Nightly, he had tortured dreams of what she and he might be doing. Loving or fighting, both tore at his soul.

Jerhaad was spying on them again, when he saw the horrid thing. There, through the window, he could clearly see the gentle man striking delicate lass with a heated poker. His mind unhinged: rage enveloped him.

He returned quickly home to the finished carriage (awaiting only her lord to pick her up). He hitched up the very best horses he had, gathered up his most valuable treasures, and stormed out upon the road like the hand of death.

A storm arose and poured down upon him, pummeling him with its fearfulness. But nor mere storm would turn him from his path... his choice... his life. Yes, he would finally be alive. Not just existing, but living!

Riding at breakneck speed, he saw the black-cloaked gentleman preparing to mount his own carriage. Hell fire fury in his eyes, Jerhaad rode down the man where he stood hooves and wheels tearing into mortal flesh, grinding bones and spewing blood. The carriage bounced hard after running over their victim and Jerhaad pulled his horses to a sudden halt.

-----Ending #1-----

Climbing down from the wagon, Jerhaad ran to the door of the mansion still swinging in the gale. Soaked to the bone from the fury of the might gale, he bounded inside full of energy, vitality, and damn loopy proclamations of love bearing not one whit of resemblance to poetry but for the fervor in which they were spoken.

There, lying in a pool of cooling blood lie the corpse. Jerhaad's stomach lurched. His eyes turned in disbelief and the bloody gruesome poker, the fell murder weapon discarded in a hasty flight.

Tears welled up in his eyes and his heart beat as if to explode. His knees wavered and he collapsed in a shaking fit before the corpse... of the fat gentleman.

"No.... nnnoo .. No!!!!" he screamed in fear, rage, and denial. Tears welled up from within, streaming down his face. Holding his head in his hands he shook, heart dying inside him. He bolted up and out into the tempest again... falling before the crumpled body.

Pulling the heavy raincoat aside with trembling hands, his eyes full upon hers. Anguished, he screamed above the gale: "No!..." and slowly went mad, his cart shifting in the wind, rolling back and forth as if alive.

----- Or Ending #2 -----

Climbing down from the wagon, Jerhaad ran to the door of the mansion still swinging in the gale. Soaked to the bone from the fury of the might gale, he bounded inside full of energy, vitality, and damn loopy proclamations of love bearing not one whit of resemblance to poetry but for the fervor in which they were spoken.

The noise of it deafened him: his lady, whom has always seemed pure and beautiful tore through the house in an absolute rage. Screeching like a banshee she mashed china and glass with the poker used against her. A red, blistered mark from the poker marring her perfect face.

Babbling his proclamations of undying love, Jerhaad fell before his lady. He swore to love her always and forever, paying any price to be with her. He vowed to toil as hard as his poor hands were able to ensure she had every fine thing she could ever want. He begged her to come away with him.

Moved to tears, she cried "Oh, my sweet Jerhaad, long have I wished to be taken from here. Money matters not to me so long as I live in a house with love."

Overjoyed, he embraced her. But she was not finished and spoke on: "But I cannot go, for the master of this house would forbid it."

"My love, my joy, the monster of man who beat you is no more. He fell beneath my wheels as I rode up in rage to save you from his abuse. You are free my love, free to come with me wherever you will."

So saying they embraced again with a fervor that nearly broke the old man's spine. Laughing he told her her carriage awaited, his most magnificent carriage ever. "And you are the only passenger that will ever be worthy of her."

Safely within the carriage and away from the rain they admired his work. They admired each other. They kissed, they touched. They gave in to passionate embrace. The look of love in there eyes burning so bright that its fire consumed their reason completely and they gave themselves to wanton desire right there in the carriage.

As Jerhaad, nervous beyond words and filled with love tore aside her bodice, his eyes grew round and his heart ceased to beat. The look of love in his eyes turned to one of shock and then horror as he gazed upon the criss-crossed scars that marred her flesh. Bile rose in his throat. Color drained from his skin until he was as pale as she.

Her adoring gaze melted as a snowflake in spring. Her eyes flashed rejection and then quickly burned with rage as hot as her passion a moment ago. She reached out to him with hands clearly once severed at the wrists and inside the perfect wagon, the perfect woman tore into Jerhaad's flesh. Inside the wagon, a torrent of blood flowed a grotesque parody or the tempest without.

----- End story, begin explanation -----

The fat gentleman had created a golem bride for himself... and began to suffer the natural effects of a golem's developing psyche. The heated poker is the only non-magical thing capable of harming a flesh golem (from VR guide to the Created).

Jerhaad also possessed an obsessive drive in the creation of his carriage. In his obsession, he spawned a variant golem as well. The wheels of this golem born of obsession had sufficient HD to harm even the golem-flesh of his would be lover. So you see, either he killed his beloved with his creation, or she killed him in the throwes of passion within.

This story, by itself could explain a native PC's drive to destroy the supernatural. Any servant boy at the gentleman's house could well have seen both the flesh golem's creation, the death of the golem, her murderous rage, or the cart unhitch itself from the horses and ride away by itself. (The carriage can love the flesh golem in a way... but never a way that satisfies her.)

The spirit of the murdered man or the young ladies he murdered to get the fresh corpses (notably a paladin and a bard among them) could still haunt the manor where the foul experiments were performed. The coach could roam the hillside, either seeking his love (which spurns the mechanical creation) or to kill the murderer of his creator (as you see fit.)

The golem-lady could also be encountered in the area, especially lone on a silent evening seen in the distance by a PC who grows to love her beauty and desires to possess her. Perhaps she is pursued by the cart and makes up a story about an obsessed man who murdered her husband (the gentleman) and came for her. She may claim she killed the madman in self-defense, but several days after his death, the cart began moving of its own trying to run her down!

Then as the PC is about to fall under the wheels of the hell-cart the innocent girl in need of rescuing may raise her rage to save the PC (whom she now has grown to love) displaying her enormous strength. During this battle, her dress is torn enough to display the scars of her construction.

If the golem-woman was destroyed, the cart remains as a mostly passive magical item. It can roll of its own accord without a horse at a movement rate of 48" across level ground. Also, while hitched to a set of horses, the cart could pull itself along as well, allowing the horses to move at their unhindered movement rate. The walls of the cart would be secure, able to withstand powerful blows and acting as excellent protection vs arrow shot at the inhabitants. To a more magical campaign, the cart may be empowered to ride over water or even fly as the DM sees fit.

Sadly, the cart has the horrible habit of 'accidently' running over lithe young women with curly red hair wearing bonnets and a dress with full sleeves. The first time should seem like a terrible accident. But it keeps happening and always only red haired ladies: then the PCs figure out what the cart is, try to destroy it... only to find it ready to defend itself.

Robert Sweeney

IT

By Stormonu

Prologue

Jaelce clutched her amulet tight to her chest, as a child might clutch a favored blanket. Sitting across from her in the icy tunnel, Norrick stared up the shaft, blocked with tons of ice. The air was bitterly cold, and Jaelce shivered. It was more than the cold that made her shiver. It was the thought of that creature, and where it might be now.

"Do you think it's dead?" she asked Norrick.

"I hope so, because we are." He replied flatly, referring to the tons of snow and ice that had blocked their escape. They had lured it out of the greenhouse, into the cave near the woods. Somehow it had surprised them.

The fight was terrible, and the creature's lashing had brought the roof down on it, and trapped them in the tunnel. In a few hours, they would freeze to death.

"Perhaps Maerus will find us..."

She never finished, as Norrick shot her a glare colder than the cavern around them. "Him?" he snarled. "He found it. He wanted to cultivate it.

Save us? After what we did to his little experiment?"

Somewhere in Ravenloft, lies the ruins of a wizard's house. Winter snow frosts the land about the half-collapsed structure, and it would be choked with weeds if it were not for the icy chill that filled the air. A vile, cold and knife-sharp wind howls through the broken attic of the house and beats at the frosted window panes. The front door lies half ajar, sagging on the mighty hinges. A group of lonely adventurers, caught in the bone-chilling cold have been hopelessly drawn off the path they were following. With trepidation, they enter the cold, stone building, the only protection from the deadly cold outside. Behind them, they seal the door against the cold. Though the wind still howls outside, it sounds only as a distant, desperate cry inside.

The house appears to have been once a fine mansion with several floors and many rooms. It was apparently left in haste, for most of the furnishings lie where they must have been kept when the owner was within. The owner was obviously fond of plants, for the remnants of overgrown and brittle leaves and vines are scattered about the house, now dead due to the cold.

After a quick inspection, the house is discovered to be abandoned, but the upstairs bedroom is locked shut. Forcing the door open, the adventurers are greeted by a fetid stench. Its source is a body lying upon the once-magnificent bed, the remains rotted beyond recognition. At the head of the bed are bouquets of wilted flowers, left in silent memorium to the body upon the bed. After examining the corpse (and the poor character pricking his fingers on the sharp thorns of withered plant consuming the body - this won't hurt the PC, but may make him very afraid later on...), the conclusion is made that poor soul died in sleep, and the plant must have sprouted after the body died.

Cautiously, the characters clear their own rooms out of the plants that overgrew their potting plants over the years, and drift off to sleep. As is normal for such groups, one person decides to be posted as guard over the group.

Sometime during the night, the character on guard hears something, outside the room. It sounds like shuffling feet, and after a moment or two, fades away. Waking his other companions, the guard peeks out into the hall to discover the source, weapon in hand. It is empty.

For three days, the howling winds prevent the group from leaving the house. Slowly, supplies are being used up. The house has been inspected, to reveal nothing out of the unusual, and the kitchen pantry has been fouled by the decayed plant life. Though the priest has administered last rites to the body upstairs, everyone is sure that it is the ghost of the old man walking the halls.

On the third day in the house exploring, one of the characters accidentally stumbles activates a hidden switch in the fireplace, revealing a descending staircase in what was the fire pit. Gathering the others, the group explores the passage.

At the bottom of the passage is found a workroom, with shelves upon shelves of bottled plant matter. Obviously, the former owner was some sort of botanist. Also within the room is found several volumes on regular plants, from the common to the very rare. The workbench is covered with growing pots, but in the cold air, none of the plants have grown. After searching the room intently, the group finds little of value, though they find various herbicides, plant seeds, fertilizers and plant food.

The group returns to the upstairs portion, their mind still somewhat on the workroom below. But nothing will come of it for three more days, and the unusual sounds continue. Posting a guard in the hall or leaving the door open reveals nothing, though the sound continues, further away and out of sight.

Finally, on the seventh night, as rations are running extremely low, it happens again. The shambling footsteps approach the room, then stop. If the character investigates, he finds standing before him a wide-eyed man, a look of terror on his face. Before the character can say anything, he looks down at his chest. It suddenly explodes with thorn-encrusted vines, attempting to envelope the character. IT has arrived.

IT (Lord of the Ruins)

AC: 8 (4 inside host)

IT has no ability scores hosts mimic victim's stats, with a +2 bonus to STR, DEX and CON

Mv: by host

HD: 16 IT / 6 for hosts

THAC0: 5 IT / 18 for hosts

No. of Att: 6 + 3 IT / 6 for hosts

Dam/Att: 1d12 + special X 6 / 3d8 + special X 3 / 1d8 + special X 6 Special Attacks: infection

Special Defense: immune to lightning, IT only struck by magic weapons Magic Resistance: 10% IT / nil

The true IT is actually a plant creature that dwells behind the mysterious ruined house in a snow-covered greenhouse. IT fills the entire greenhouse with its massive bulk, and the corpses of victims dangle from its vines to feed the plant in the icy realm. As new victims arrive to the house, IT sends a host form to investigate, and discover if prey is within the house. However, IT generally waits until its food supply is low before it sends the host to attack. The first host to attack a new group always has a expression of horror on its face, for that is the last memory IT has to use when assuming the new host form (since IT waits until it low on food, the memories of the original victim have faded, leaving only the last impression the victim had - fatigued, and full of fear and terror)

When seeking new prey, IT produces a plant host of itself (much like a simulacrum), and sends it after prey. This form is known as an "IT host".

IT hosts attacks by means of vine-like appendages, up to 12 in number. Each of these vines attacks as a 4HD monster, and is coated with hundred of needle-like razor-sharp thorns. If the attack strikes, it latches on the victim, mauling him/her for 1d8 damage per vine. However, the most insidious part of the attack is injection. The thorns are hollow, and will attempt to inject plant cells into the victim. If the victim fails a saving throw vs. poison (which should be made in secret), the cells have taken hold, and will begin to slowly eat away at the character, replacing the character's own flesh as it progresses. Over the next 4d6 hours, the character becomes slightly fatigued, suffers headaches, and then at the end of the time period, feels perfectly normal. In truth, at this last stage, the character is merely a shell, and the plant life now controls the character. In another 4d6 hours, the plant life can no longer be contained, and bursts forth, seeking more food.

The destruction of the tissue in the character can be halted by three subsequent Cure Disease spells (one or two Cure Disease spells only halts the progression of the plant life for an additional 1d6 hours) or a Heal spell. The use of a detect plant spell can be used to determine if a character has been infected by IT.

IT itself is a monstrous being, looking like a chaotic mish-mash of former victims. It appears to have a main trunk some 8' around, beset by vicious barbs, humanish heads and animalistic features (such as wolves or other wild animals that accidentally stumbled into the domain). From the trunk extend numerous thick roots edged with sharp barbs. The waving roots are an attack form, allowing IT to strike with up to 6 tentacles per round for 1d12 damage each. The thorns attempt to inject the victim with spores as the hosts do, and cling onto victims until they suffer 12 hit points of cutting damage. IT can also attack with up to three bites against melee opponents (even in different facings, IT has no back) for 3d8 damage. Though the jaws of IT do not latch on as the tentacles do, they can still infect characters.

The plant life is susceptible to cold, and cannot survive outside a host for more than a hour. If the plant life ruptures a host to attack, it must retreat to a warm place or it will die of the cold. Using lightning against an IT host or IT accelerates it's growth, doubling it's hit dice (but not attacks or damage). IT is immune to non-magical weapons.

Background:

IT started as a magical experiment for the wizard, Maerus. Maerus loved plants and kept many around his home for many years. He would often pluck them from the nearby woods, despite warnings from the druids not to do so, and magically enhance them in his home so they would not need constant sunlight, and would remain green year round.

However, Maerus's theft of some of the druid's more rare plants enraged them. Determined to teach Maerus a lesson, they took one of their rarest and holiest plants to a cave near the house of Maerus, and cursed it. Then, carefully moving it to where Maerus would find the plant, they left him to his fate.

Kind Maerus found the plant, and returned with it to his house. He was mystified by the blood-red leaves it bore, and the curious pods that grew from its frail branches. The plant was barely a foot tall, and Maerus cared for it, watching the pods grow with extreme curiosity.

About this time, a group of travelers happened upon Maerus's house. They had been old friends with Maerus, and he allowed them to remain as he continued to tend to the strange plant in his workroom. The travelers intended to stay and pass the coming winter by, and Maerus did not mind. During the weeks they stayed, the travelers saw little of Maerus.

Maerus could find no reference to the strange plant in any of his texts, and began to use magic upon the plant to determine what it was. To his astonishment, his magic could determine nothing. Puzzled, Maerus continued his vigil to observe the plant.

After nearly four weeks of growth, the strange plant was over 5' tall, and the pods were nearly a foot long. Somehow, Maerus sensed the pods were ripe. Carefully, he reached forth to grasp a pod and pluck it. The plant suddenly reacted, wrapping a thin branch around his wrist. Before he could withdraw it, he felt a sharp pain shoot up his wrist. Suddenly, the plant released him, and he withdrew to find his wrist pricked by a multitude of tiny barbs. Outside, the autumn mist was slowly rising as the sun set. A few minutes later, the first flakes of snow began to fall.

Angered, Maerus snapped out of his entrancement with the plant. That night, he carried the thing to his greenhouse, a good distance from the house, barely noticing the light cover of snow that had fallen outside. Winter was early, was all he noted, before leaving the plant in the back of the large room.

That night, Maerus slept fitfully, awaking time and again sweating, his mouth dry. Finally, he rose and went to visit his companions, who he had been ignoring most of the time they had been near. But at the first room he visited, he felt pale and fatigued. His guest tried to help him in, but he felt a sudden wrenching in his gut, so strong, he passed out.

When he awoke, he was back in his bed, and felt much more comfortable.

It was morning, and he rose to make breakfast for his guests. All but one, the one he had gone to visit last night, greeted him downstairs. Perplexed, he went upstairs to investigate. He found the room of his missing guest in shambles, but no trace of the guest at all. A search by everyone through the house revealed nothing.

Later that night, everyone again retired to bed. Maerus again found himself fitful and restless, and went downstairs to make himself something to soothe him back to sleep. In the kitchen, he again met another of his guest, making a sandwich. Maerus greeted him, and then felt the wrenching in his gut. This time, he did not pass out.

As Maerus's chest erupted open and tentacles reached out to enwrap his guest, Maerus felt a cold glee, not born of his own mind. His victim fell lifelessly to the ground without having been able to utter a scream, and Maerus felt a mental tugging in his mind. He must take his guest to his master, It.

However, a gasp from behind him caught him short. Whirling about, behind him, was another of his guests. Though the vines had retracted back into his chest and hid behind his robes, he knew what he must do. But before he could act, she ran up the stairs, calling for the others. Maerus only smiled, turned to his victim, and dragged him outside. It was colder than he expected it outside, and almost withdrew back into the house. But the mental urging of his master pushed him on. Maerus delivered the body, which he placed into the now fully-developed pod, and returned to the house.

Inside, he was met by the other guests, who yelled at him about his deeds. Maerus only smiled as one of them brought their sword down across him. Even as his body erupted with the hideous vines from his chest, he somehow knew this was no longer his body. Somehow, he was elsewhere...

The rest of the group beat Maerus's shell down, but the one who attacked Maerus was unknowingly infected. The next night, that guest attacked yet another guest, but the latter's screams brought the others running, and the infected guest was torn down. But the infection spread, until all were consumed.

Then the light snow whipped into a blizzard, and Ravenloft swept the house up to deposit it over the years into various places within the demiplane. The appearance of the house has changed slightly due to Ravenloft's whims. However, IT has found that it cannot grow past the greenhouse, for the rest of the tiny realm is too cold for it to sustain itself. IT therefore sends out probes to seek new food, and draw it to itself.

IT does not control the borders of its realm. Instead, the entire realm is filled with a vicious, icy blizzard. Remaining outside the house will cause 1d2 damage per round to characters bundled against the cold, 1d8 to those who are not wearing winter clothing. Those inside the house in unheated areas take 1 point of damage per hour if not heavily bundled, 1 point every four hours if bundled against the cold. IT hosts do not take damage from the cold unless they have broken out of their host, then they suffer double damage when exposed to the cold.

Those who investigate outside the house will find a cave nearby (within 4 round of the house), and greenhouse behind the house (a 3 round's walk). The greenhouse is near completely covered with snow, and is depressed into the earth to gain the most insulation. The greenhouse has no windows and only a trapdoor for entry. It is where IT lives, and is magically illuminated and warmed to keep IT from dying. If enraged, IT may follow characters back into the house or the cave beyond the house to destroy the PC's. If IT is destroyed, the blizzard dies out, allowing characters to escape the tiny realm.

However, the plant is a minor evil, and was given a small realm (though intelligent, and hunts human prey out of preference, for there are occasional woodland animals that stray into the realm and are eaten by IT). IT's realm is a half-mile or quarter-mile across. The true evil - and the real victims of the curse, are the Druids who created it,

THE CURSED DRUIDS

Before the Druids of the Grove made their evil plant to destroy Maerus, they were already corrupt. The Great Druid who ruled the Grove had an unusual hatred for those who lived nearby, and the Circle of Druids guarded their woods with jealous and vindictive fervor. They would torture and kill game hunters who entered the woods, even though such folk risked starvation otherwise. The Druids poisoned nearby wells on occasion, killing many folk - the Druids felt it was a form of pest control to keep the population from encroaching on the sacred woods. The Druids also committed other evils, such as blighting crops to prevent the folk from planting and therefore destroying the soil, and collecting tithes with the threat of death to those who did not obey.

Maerus, as a wizard, was able to thwart the Druids attempts to stop him from collecting his plant specimens, which infuriated them to no end. Further, he refused to pay the tithes, which made the Druids furious beyond bounds. Once, the Great Druid and a few followers marched to Maerus's mansion to show the wizard the errors of his ways. Maerus not only defeated them, but made it clear that if they faced him again, they would not survive. Maerus hoped the Druids would get the message, and change their ways.

They did not. As if of one mind, and angered at their loss, they decided they would treat Maerus to the ultimate lesson. Working throughout the next month, the Druids, lead by the Great Druid, transformed their most sacred bush, the Divine Holly Bush, though which they communed to their gods, into an evil trap.

With this act, their gods turned their back on the Druids. The Druids did not notice or care. They hid, and waited for Maerus to spring the trap. Maerus was quick to comply, and the druids raced to the nearby scrying pool to watch what would occur. However, they found they could not bring an image to the reflecting pool. Though angered, they decided to wait - the plot would unfold on its own. Maerus must have magically protected the house, they all believed.

After nearly a month of waiting, the druids were awakened in their defiled grove to the fresh fall of new snow. The temperature had dropped considerably throughout the day, and now that night was upon the druids, the first fall of snow was coming. Packing up their belongings, the druids moved into the nearby caves, where they always waited out the winter.

In the cold caverns, the druids found little warmth. Soon, it was apparent that a blizzard was brewing outside. The druids decided to take shelter further into the caverns, for the snow was accumulating in the upper caves.

For several days, the druids remained amidst the dark, cold lower caverns. They were confounded that their fires burned so low, and their magic seemed of no use to warm the situation. It was during those first few days that the first

of the Druids froze to death. To the Great Druid's consternation, he was not able to summon the reincarnated bodies to the cave.

"It must be the storm" was all he could mutter, though he began to suspect otherwise.

Seven of the twenty-six druids had frozen to death, including the Great Druid's closest advisor, when the caverns began to shake from a mighty fight. Many of the druids cowered in fear as the caverns shook and roared about them. But the Great Druid was unfazed, and went forth to investigate.

As he approached the upper caverns, there was a enormous rattling that echoed through caverns, and then an avalanche of rock and snow filled the cavern ahead of him, blocking off escape out of the cavern. Raising his oaken staff, the Great Druid uttered spells to remove the debris. Nothing worked. Then, he knew, in the winter, his gods had fled.

Quietly, the Great Druid returned the lower caverns. He spoke nothing of the blockage, and would not answer the questions of the other druids. None of the others dared to venture up the cave to investigate either.

As the days passed, the rest of the druids began to slowly freeze to death, until only the Great Druid remained. As the numbing cold finally filled him, and he felt the chill of death closing over him, he felt a strange presence calling to him - offering life, if it would be worshipped as a god. Clinging at the last threads of his life, the Grand Druid hastily agreed. Anything was better than death, and his gods had abandoned him. As he felt the last strands slipping from him, he heard a cold chuckling echoing in his own mind. If his body was not so cold and frozen, he might have thought he felt a barbed coil wrap about his own flesh.

Several hours later, the other druids awoke to the cold cavern. The Great Druid lay in the corner, his abdomen burst out, a hideous plant growth emerging from it. The other druids recoiled in fear, and the plant slithered like a snake out of the room, up the cavern the Great Druid had inspected earlier.

In essence, the remaining druids are "growing stock" for IT. Although they do not fully realize it, each of the druids is infected with the spores that eventually will make it into an IT (the full-grown version). While the IT in the greenhouse is alive, it uses a latent psychic ability to repress the IT spores in the druids does not grow. If IT is slain, one of the spore growths in the remaining druids begins to grow. In twenty-four hours, the druid dies a horrible death as IT grows out of them, where IT then slithers to the surface and takes the place of the old IT.

The druids, of whom nine are left, are afraid for their lives. As each druid dies, a new druid is appointed as the Great Druid, and when IT dies, this Great Druid becomes the new IT.

Because of their state, each of the Druids has gone mad, and is paranoid beyond sanity. Each fully understands that becoming the Great Druid is a death sentence, and the Great Druid lords his power over the others, to ensure he is not killed out of fear by his lessers. The druids are confined to a communal system of caves deep underground, and the passage to the upper caves has been blocked in such a manner that the druids cannot escape. None of the druids can completely escape the company of the others, and no one can escape the company of the Great Druid.

Further, the druids have given up worshipping their old gods and revering nature. They now revere the cold stone of the caverns and the ice that forms within it. They have regained their spell power (granted by an unknown power, perhaps a DP, or IT), and other druidic abilities (except summoning elementals or plane walking) but temporarily lose their ability to cast spells for random periods of time - and always when IT has died, until the new IT has assumed its place in the world above. During times of spell loss, the druids hide in each of their caves, and the Great Druid tends to be in hysteria, or panic.

The Great Druid is always of 14th level ability, and the remaining druids range in level from 1st - 5th. When a new Grand Druid ascends, within a week he will have the powers of an 14th level druid. In no way, however, can any of the druids leave the cavern - if they do, they become mere IT shells (lesser ITs) until destroyed. They cannot return to the cavern if they leave, and all the druids know their fate if they leave.

My final, personal suggestion, is that once all the druids have died, if IT still remains, it recreates the 26 original druids (from its past memory as a druid, with the last druid as the Great Druid, instead of the original leader), and the process begins again once again - eternal torture for the druids, who are forced to watch their companions destroyed one by one, over and over again.

Epilogue

A flash of heat washed over Jaelce as the snow within the tunnel sizzled and melted in the sudden blast. When it had passed, an open passage led out.

In it stood Nicholi, their friend and mage. "You're here!" Jaelce cried in joy.

"Yes," he replied, looking back over his shoulder. "I found the creature's remains, then noticed the blocked tunnel." he shrugged. "I thought it was worth a try."

"But we saw you go down fighting that thing in the greenhouse," Norrick stated, holding his long sword firmly.

"I had some magic protecting me," Nicholi replied, holding his hands up.

"It never touched me physically. Besides, you're free, and the storm's stopped. Can we leave now?"

Eyeing him carefully, Norrick passed Nickoli. Jaelce followed, still clutching her ruby amulet. Nicholi stayed a moment longer, looking deep into the tunnel past where Norrick and Jaelce had been huddling. Before leaving, Nicholi dabbed the two tiny pinpricks upon his fingers into his mouth, pinpricks he had gained examining the dead carcass of It.

Stormonu

THE MONKEY'S PAW

by R. Sweeney

To start, the PCs must meet the following NPC party. (Hopefully on the road.)

General Overview of the NPCs Relationships

Pela loves Jerimiah but hates Sele. Sele loves Pela but scorns Jerimiah's advances. Jerimiah is in 'lust' with Sele, but is adverse to Pela's hero-worshipping love for him. Thane just kinda floats around not understanding that love triangle and trying to keep Grimsha in line.

Grimsha: he's evil so there's any number of things he could do in an attempt to serve his 'master' Jerimiah. Since Jerimiah wants Sele...

Jerimiah: may cooperate with Grimsha to get Sele.

Pela: jealous of Sele, may try to kill the elf.

Sele: really wants Pela, but won't intentionally do evil to get her.

Thane: tries to keep everyone from killing each other.

This group's dynamic discord. Illustrates for PCs (especially argumentative, uncooperative PC groups) the dangers of discord. The intent is to have this group destroy itself as a morality play for the PCs.

BEGINNING

The PCs meet this group on the road... with Jer sparing against Grimsha. Jer is accidentally hit hard in the nose and Pela rushes to aid him.. fauning over him and clumsily banging his nose in her excitement to get close to him. Jer snaps out at her .. "Would you STOP touching me!" Sharp rebuke and look of "I'm gonna cry" should evoke sympathy from the PCs.. but not Jer who has dealt with this incorrigible halfling too often.

Jer tries to get Sele to heal him.. which she does without concern.. but PCs should notice he tries to stand too close to her. Pela gets jealous when she sees this and might spit an angry rebuke at either Jer or Sele. (Still smarting from her repeated rejections by Jer.)

Sele tries to go over and comfort Pela, but the halfling visibly pulls away from being touched by Sele.

Grimsha offers to wrestle a PC for a small bag of silver. Thane tries to discourage the PCs. Dwarf PCs can tell that Thane is a flamer.. but no one else can.

Much dynamics during the introduction of these two groups... PCs should try to make peace with everyone, but they will not be able to do this. Some dialogue would enable the PCs to understand the backgrounds of these unusual demihumans.

The two groups are going to the same location. On the way, the hour is getting late and they see a farmhouse ahead with the lights still on. It's cold and rainy so perhaps asking to stay the night would be a good idea. (The NPC group thinks so at any rate.)

This house falls victim to the story.. "The monkey's paw".

Plot Summary of one variant.(This story is not mine).

An adaptation of a 1902 Gothic tale by the same name with altered characters, setting, and ending. The play now takes place in 1815 just after the battle of Waterloo. Sergeant Donal Morris, a veteran of the battle and cousin of Herbert White, returns to England with a war souvenir he was given by a dying soldier: a monkey's paw. It is said to grant wishes. Morris gets Herbert, who has a drinking problem, drunk. He then presents the paw to Herbert's ten year old son, Daniel. Daniel wishes for 200£. The next day Daniel and his mother, Agatha, are informed that Herbert has been killed in an accident at work. They are offered 200£ as a settlement. Three days later, Daniel tells his mother about the paw and wishes that his father were back from the grave. Suddenly, there is a loud banging at the front door as someone--or something--in a rage tries to get in. Agatha concludes that Herbert was not killed but has returned from a three day drunk. Without thinking, she wishes that Morris had been killed at Waterloo. Everything then becomes calm and Agatha lets Herbert into the house. He does not seem to realise that he has lost three days. Agatha tells Daniel not to speak of it--that drink will do that to a man sometimes. But when Daniel cannot find the paw or the 200£, we are left to wonder: was Herbert drunk, or did the paw send Morris back to die at Waterloo?

The story as I read it:

The Monkey's Paw

BY W. W. JACOBS

(<http://www.bnl.com/shorts/stories/paw.html>)

The only changes I'd add are to have the paw disappear after each wish, winding up somewhere else. There is no mention of a limit to the wishes, but the paw has to be found after each wish. Each wish is, of course, perverted by the paw. Hopefully, the wishes granted by the paw are not flashy - obvious ones. Thus the paw's effects can be 'disbelieved' for awhile then slowly accepted.

The additional trouble starts when one of the chaotic group detailed above (and further described below) gets their hands on the paw.. an event that destroys them as everyone starts making wishes to get what they want.

Pela: "I wish Sele were a rotting corpse seven days dead.. (said in an angry tiff)"

Effects: Sele will later be killed in an accident, buried, and reanimates.

Jer: "I wish Sele loved me" (said in aimless dreaming).

Effects: The 'Dead' Sele begins to love Jer after her reanimation with an obsessive compulsion. This love is grotesque and dangerous to Jer's safety as the undead Sele has great power.

Sele: "I wish Jerimiah would hurt as he's made Pela hurt."

Effects: Jer becomes enamored with Pela. However, she doesn't see him as himself (see later wish).. but rather a stranger. Thus he loves her, but she doesn't return his love and spurns him as a nutcase.

Grimsha: "(Longing to be his own master) I wish I were Jerimiah!"

Effects; Duh, he becomes Jerimiah. Pela loves him. Jer becomes Grimsha, Pela is repulsed by him. The Undead Sele now loves both the apparent Jerimiah (Grimsha, in truth) and the real Jerimiah (in half-ogre body). Grimsha (who knows he's in Jer's old body) could do just about anything.. but it's likely not going to be good. However, he's mostly tormented by the Undead Sele and has time for little else.

Thane: "(Fazzled) I wish all of you guys and your craziness would just STOP!"

Effects: Group runs outside.. everyone chasing everyone in a big circle.. eventually the bodies are found in the surrounding land.. as frozen cold statues. They are stopped alright.. but not cured. Each statue is fully aware and still gripped by their madness. Anyone who sleeps touching a statue will have fevered dreams inspired by the insanity of the pertinent statue. Thane is grief stricken over his poorly chosen wish.

(Thane stays at the house trying to tend to a stone garden around the friends damned by his wish...)

Of course every wish doesn't turn out right, so eventually the hand either isn't found, finds its way into a passing coach and is lost, or the PCs get it and hold onto it to prevent further abuse.

You now have an adventure hook along the lines of the Wishing Imp to torment your PCs with. (Should they ever try to use the paw.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Sele Gladsheilm

Race: Elven

Class: Cleric (healing, animal, plant)

Level: on Par with PCs

Magic Items: Cloak and boots of elvenkind, replenishing wineskin (fills 1/day but wine must be drunk straight from the skin or it sours into vinegar quickly).

Potions: 4 x healing.

Misc: Bunch of Goodberries.

Spells: Sele's curative spells heal % of damage instead of points. Thus her CLW heals 1-8% of damage done. This healing occurs over a time period of 1 round per % healed. Her ability to heal via mundane means is doubled in all respects. (Healing and Herbalism NWP).

Weapon of choice: Bow.

Secondary: Staff.

Note: Orcs are perverted elves twisted by a being known as the Darkling to serve his cause.

On Sele's world there are three major land based elf sub-races. Wilder elves.. CG. Fey (equivalents to the drow, but white skinned with black hair and eyes).. LE, NE, or CE (predominant). Seldare.. LG branch of elves. Elves appear feminine to human eyes (albeit prepubescent females for the men, and small breasted females for the women).

Elves are the mortal descendants of the child of a God and a human. They are highly racist because of this, believing themselves to be divine and humans to be mortals. They are highly selective in their breeding, trying to maintain 'pure' bloodlines untainted by lesser blood. The Seldare are the most successful with this breeding program, but all groups have it. The King of the Seldar is chosen according to the elf with the greatest divine blood in their heritage. The Queen of the Fey is a position taken by force, but usually falls to the purest bloodline due to the fact that the pure bloodlines have longer lives. Because of this, half-elves on her world are extremely rare.

Sele is a Wilder elf, CG. Like all her kin, she is arrogant and haughty, truly believing in the superiority of her race. Due to the importance of bloodlines, an elf would (almost) never voluntarily engage in carnal relations with one of 'lesser' blood.

However, due to a peculiarity of the elves of this world, sex is defined as relations between a male and a female. There is no prohibition between same sex relations. Thus an elf woman and a female human can become very close personal 'friends' without other elves batting an eye.

Sele feels a romantic attraction to Pela, who does not return this feeling.

Pela Willowbrooke (NG)

Race: Halfling

Class: Thief (MS, HS, CW, DN are her major skills)

Level: on Par with PCs

Magic Items: silver whistle (enchanted) (Audible only to people whom she considers close personal friends.)

Potions: 2 x healing.

Misc: Bunch of Goodberries.

Spells: None

Weapon of choice: Darts.

Secondary: Dagger.

Note: Kobolds are perverted halflings, corrupted by a being known as the Darkling.

Other than their black footpads and hairy feet, halflings of Pela's homeworld look like young teenagers of 4 feet tall and less. They are a magical derivative of humans and gnomes. (Distant unremembered past). When they fall in love, halflings tend towards hero-worshipping idolization of their beloved. They are forever stuck in that 12-year-old-girl-crush phase.

The men, try to be heroic, thoughtful, providers for their women, striving to become a 'hero' in their beloved's eyes. The male halfling exists to please his female, the female exists to love the male.

Pele was captured by slavers of her homeworld. She was taken to the kitchen to be a part of dinner, but the cook and his friends chose instead to 'play' with the food. They chose another (near-dead) human male to be their 'dinner-dish'. As they were busy playing with the halfling, the supposedly dead human male managed to cut himself free from the table and slice the throat of the cook. The man (Jerimiah) freed Pela, who developed a hero-worshipping crush on him.

Jerimiah Folkswain

Race: Human

Class: Warrior (ninja)

Level: On par with the PCs.

Magic Items: Boots of kicking (+1-6 points of damage per kick and +2 feet to leaps.)

Potion: None.

Misc: Tae Kwon Do book/manual.

Weapon of Choice: Tae Kwon Do kicking. As specialist fighter +1 ('off hand') attack with other leg. Damage 1-4 per kick + 1-6 from the boots.

Other weapons: Hand axe, throwing (specialized).

Note: Gnolls are perverted humans.

Jerimiah Folkswain is a member of a witch-hunting group. His duty in life to eradicate evil spell-users especially hags and necromancers. He has no fear of or aversion to magic or magic use so long as the users are good of purpose and effect.

He was captured by the Slavers, beaten to death by a person with better kicking style. (He later killed this man and took the magical boots that he now wears off of the corpse.) Nearly dead, he gave up fighting. He was to be the feast at the dinner when, lying on the table, his bleary eyes saw what he thought was 3 slavers molesting a young girl. With hell-fire rage, he managed to force his body into motion again.

After freeing the 'girl' he discovered her to be Pela, the halfling that now has an undying crush on him. He cannot return the emotion, since he sees her as a child. Pela takes every opportunity to touch him and it greatly irritates him, sometimes prompting him to snap at her.

Jerimiah, himself, has a crush on Sele who is beautiful beyond words to him and has a gentle touch surpassing any he's ever known. He is enthralled by her healing skills. He tries to prove himself noble to Sele, but she ignores him. Sele is not infuriated by his attempts to touch her, help her, or court her since she is not tempted in the least to give in. Jerimiah's problem is that he is tempted by Pela's undying devotion but it makes him feel like a pervert.

Thane Mythhammer (LG)

Race: Dwarf

Class: Warrior

Skills (Blacksmith, weaponsmith, armorer of Master-Level skill).

Note: Hobgoblins are perverted Dwarves.

Dwarves (LG) on Thane's homeworld are the creations of Vulcan. They are a worker-race whos creation was ordered by the HighGod so that his favored children, the elves (specifically the Seldare), would have suitable servants to do menial tasks and labors. Dwarves are hard workers, like their creator, and toil without complaint (truthfully, they are obsessive-compulsive workaholics: keeping a dwarf from productive labor is akin to torture). They enjoy service-work and being praised for good performance. Indeed, failing to praise a dwarf for his services greatly offends them: it is as if you have called their work rubbish.

The Dwarves have mind enough to resent their role as servitors to the Elves, who don't seem to praise them enough. Some Dwarves have broken away and started their own kingdoms.

Dwarven craftsmen can fashion enchanted items (or seemingly enchanted items) finding great ease in working these physical spell bindings. However, Dwarves have a hard time using any object not crafted by their own hands. Exactly where this curse comes from none really know. They suspect a dwarf, trying to free himself from service to the elves

stole an item and used it against his creator. The HighGod (as is supposed) then cursed the whole of the species to prevent something like this from happening again.

Dwarven men and women look alike in almost every aspect. Some chide that the only way to tell the sex of a dwarf is to turn it over and check underneath. However, Dwarves know one from the other on sight. Because of the importance of labor for this race, Dwarven male children outnumber female children by a factor of 10 to 1. As a result monogamous relationships are not in their vocabulary (well, beyond the generic word for 'stupid ideas'). Dwarves generally understand nothing of 'romantic' feelings lauded by the other species. Females typically have many husbands and can choose them as they wish. Males consider being in a harem to be a privilege and an honor. Despite this female centricism of the bedroom,

Males still rule. (The leader of the army becomes the King.. and women are too valuable to put in the army, thus they don't become king.)

Dwarves have an inborne abhorrence to the thought of having carnal relations with a female non-dwarf. They are not romantics and thus unlikely to 'fall in love' and even considers such actions. Relations with a member of the opposite sex in the Dwarven society is strictly for the purpose of procreation, not pleasure. However, these workaholics (like the ancient greek soldiers) do engage in dwarf-dwarf male-male recreation. Most humans have a hard time accepting such behavior. Dwarves don't understand the problem, since it's simply a matter of logic given their societal conditions. A dwarf may cringe at Dwarf male non-dwarf female parings, but has no strong restrictions against Dwarf male non-dwarf male couplings. This lack of wisdom sometimes earns beatings when they come to human towns.

Gnomes (none in this party): Dwarves who are fasinated with magic diverged into the Gnomish Race. Male/females ratios have been magical enhanced.. race is bisexual. Sex can be a matter of choice as Gnomes have magical ways to 'switch hats' as they say. (This generally involves a ceremony by the Chief of the clan and occurs over 2-4 weeks.) Note: Goblins are perverted Gnomes.

Gimsha (no last name) (CE)

Race: Half Ogre

Height: 7' (Race varries from 6'11" to 8')

Class: Gladiator (Warrior specialized with two handed sword and two hander style specialization. Due to his large size, the weapon speed of the two-handed sword is decreased 3 points.)

Ogres are the smallest of the Giant-Kin. The smallest of the ogres are too weak to take an Ogre mate and must settle for human captives. Their offspring become half-ogres.

Half-ogres are unable to feel love or happiness. Upon birth, they are ignored by their parents but are free to roam the lair for protection and eat scraps discarded by the adults after they are satiated. Half-ogres are only considered to be men when they have killed their father. The rest are treated with derision.

Half-ogres are used to taking what they want. Gimsha is the same. Morality does not exist in their heads, only consequences for being caught. As such no one trusts an Ogre-kin.

Ogres get pleasure from causing pain and killing. As such some become mercenaries. If they swear fealty to a leader (a contract) they normally keep their oath. Half-Ogres are often made slaves, since if they swear obedience to a master, they are excellent bodyguards. (If they don't swear, presumably they are tortured and asked again.) A half-ogre will lie as he sees fit to anyone other than his master or leader.

Grimsha was captured by the slavers and freed by Jerimiah when he swore to follow Jerimiah. (Jerimiah didn't try to coax this, Grimsha merely stated his offer if Jerimiah would free him. Jerimiah was not going to free the Ogre-kin because of a racial dislike of half-ogres.)

Grimsha is sometimes more trouble than he is worth, since while Jerimiah is free from direct torment by the Half-Ogre, but his comrades are not. Grimsha has no reservations about mixed race pairings. Indeed, Jerimiah has had to kick him in the face when he got too close to Pela.

Additional Notes: Ogres love to wrestle.. they freely invite others to wrestle. However, they tend to strip down to a loincloth before beginning to wrestle and somehow grease is involved. The object of the wrestling session seems to be to pin the opponent on his belly. There's a lot of rubbing involved, but anyone stupid enough to wrestle an ogre deserves it.

Robert Sweeney

AURADREL

by Stormonu

Prologue

Mordor (or one of your PCs name) shook his head to clear the awful ache, only to hear the sound of chains rattle nearby. Lifting his throbbing head, he could barely make out the rusted manacles holding him against the wall. Squinting, he made out that he was in a dark cell, surrounded by stone of unknown thickness. Somewhere to his left, someone else stirred. He couldn't make the shape out, but his attention was drawn toward the thick oaken door by the sudden hissing sound behind it. Tensing his muscles, he prepared ... for anything.

PLOT

[This adventure is best played with a group of 3 characters between 5th - 7th level and is staged in a new Domain.]

The characters awaken from their most recent adventure to headaches and aching bones. Whether having had too much to drink after celebrating their victory at the local inn, or being forced to flee [perhaps into the mist] a Disaster (the crumbling of Castle Ravenloft into chasm below it, the ripping of the land after stopping the Grand Conjunction, the explosion when Azalin's phylacery was destroyed, or whatever), the party awakens to find itself in manacles. They still wear their normal gear and armor, but any obvious weapons have been removed and stored, out of reach at the far side of the dungeon cell they are restrained within. Sadly, thieves picks and other such easy outs have been placed aside as well.

In the hall characters can hear hissing creatures moving up and down the halls, and the clinking of keys. At least once they hear a door open and the frightened pleading of the other room's inhabitant. It ends with a bloodcurdling scream, and the loud crunch of bones.

It should be made obvious that the characters want to get free, and quickly. Wizards or Priests may attempt to cast spells, but their material components have been stacked with the other gear, just out of reach. If they do have the materials they need, they still suffer a 55% chance of failure, -2% per point of Dex over 14. Other methods can be attempted to procure items, from tying socks together and then to a boot and latching onto items, to using belts as lassos (this is where heavy characters are handy), to attempting to rip the rusty manacles out of the wall (bend bars/lift gates at normal chance).

The characters will not draw attention until

- 1) they are about to succeed, or
- 2) they make a lot of racket.

At this time, the guards are drawn to the sound and the characters have one round (they see the door latch slowly turn, before the door opens) and in will step 4 Advanced Lizard men.

The lizard men bear scourges and long swords, and at least one bears a red-hot poker. If they note the weapon pile disturbed or the characters are free, they attack. They only attempt to kill the PCs if they are free. If the PC's are not free, the Lizard men beat the PC's around (being careful to stay out of arm's reach) to at least 1/2 hp, and then strip the PC's of ALL their gear, adding it to the pile just beyond reach. As they leave, one of the Lizard Men accidentally drops a key (the key to the door, not the manacles, unfortunately).

The Lizard Men do not make a second appearance until the PC's are free, and have collected their gear. Until the PC's rest outside the dungeon, however, they are at a -2 to all ability scores, saves and THAC0's from the headaches and bruises. Though magic can heal the bruises, only rest can negate the headaches (and the penalty).

If the characters wish to do a little exploring in the dungeon, they find a number of cells holding 1d4 individuals within each cell. If the party lingers, they attract 2d8 Lizard Man guards, armed as above. If they spot the PC's, they attempt to alert the compound. If they escape, the characters risk facing a force of 8d8 Lizard Men who arrive 4 rounds later. They will be supplemented by 1d4 Lizard Men per round until the PC's escape, or they are overwhelmed.

The exit to the dungeon is straightforward - a long, curving hall about 100' long and 10' wide that heads up a stairwell to a two doors. One door leads out, the other leads upward into a tower, but is magically locked, and no spell can dispel it.

Exiting the dungeon reveals the characters to be at the base of a 3 story black basalt tower atop a large bluff overlooking the sea, with a thin, crooked and treacherous walkway back towards the mainland, and drop of hundreds of feet to the sea below. There appears to be no way to enter the tower, and the top of the tower is empty (for now).

Characters can proceed slowly along the thin walkway at 1/2 normal rate safely. Any faster requires a Dex check, or the character slips (make it look close, but don't kill them). If the character fails a Str check in the following round, or is not dragged back up by his companions, the character will fall, falling 100 feet for a nasty landing on the rocks below for 10d6 damage. Note that the Lizard Men WILL chase the characters out along the thin walkway, and are surefooted enough to receive a +4 bonus to their Dex checks (which are considered 14). If characters attempt to hold the Lizard Men on the walkway, Lizard Men archers set up at the tower base to discourage the characters.

Once past the deadly walkway, and into the hilly seaside beyond, the characters can quickly loose the Lizard Men in the surrounding vegetation, which thickens into a forest deeper inland. The Lizard Men will pursue PC's for up to an hour past the tower, and then leave and return to their home, and report their master about the loss (The Sea Witch).

With the characters now away from the tower, they encounter a wandering merchant with a wagonload of wares heading for the nearest town. After hearing their tale, he offers the PC's a ride to the town, which is through the woods.

The woods are dark and eerie, and the merchant cofides he is glad to have the PC's with them - he knows of the forest's dark reputation. Then, just ahead, four large shapes loom out of the dark woods to block the path ahead. Their eyes glow maliciously in the gloom, and the merchant stops the horse short.

The four creatures are ogres - with an ogre magi standing invisibly behind the other four. The ogres want the PC's to pay a toll - a stiff one - of no less than 50 gp (the DM should assign the toll at least equal to 1/4 the PC's total treasure, possibly asking for some magic items as well). If the PC's agree to pay, they are allowed to pass, but warned they will have to pay the toll again on their return (whether they return or not, is up to the PC's). If they refuse to pay, the ogres part and back away, seeming to clear the way. They wait until the wagon is passing them, then use their clubs to smash the merchant's wagon wheels to splinters, and the Ogre Magi then unleashes a lightning bolt down the path through the PC's. The Ogres then pick through whatever is left, and continue to smash anything that survives.

If the PC's manage to survive the encounter, they shortly reach the town. The merchant lets them off at the nearby inn, and states he will be dropping his (remaining) goods off at the local store. However, the villagers are less than helpful, and extremely suspicious, rude and discriminatory against the characters. They refuse to allow PC's to buy food and lodging (which they always ask for up front), stating that the character's foreign coins are worthless. The characters should be driven to seek the merchant out, who offers to help find the room and board in the town.

After greasing a few palms with the local currency, the merchant leads the group to a rickety little inn at the edge of town. Inside, they find the owner, a 30-year old woman, in distress. "It took my baby!" she cries. If characters take pity on her, she reveals that last night her little daughter - a suspiciously familiar black-haired little girl with doe-like brown eyes named Auradrel - was kidnapped in the night by the town werewolf. She has pleaded for help with the local sheriff, but since he is already swamped with other disappearances, he is of little help. She begs the merchant to take the issue up with the king, for the merchant is well-known and liked. He agrees, and asks the characters to join them.

Hopefully, the party agrees (if they do not, they should slowly learn about the corruption of the local enforcement, and somehow be forced into a confrontation with Foxtail as detailed later). The merchant immediately prepares to leave (procuring another wagon, if need be). If the party inquires about payment, the mother cannot offer much (about 50 sp), but the merchant will be willing to supplement with 50 gp or 1/2 of the toll the characters may have paid to the ogres.

The trip towards the castle entails traveling once again through the woods. If the ogres were not defeated, they return, perhaps trapping the road if the PC's attacked them before. Their numbers should not be replenished. Beyond that, as the group is about to leave the woods and enter the plains leading to the King's castle, the unexpected happens...

As the merchant is rattling off how he intends to approach the king, something reaches down from the dark branches and snatches the stunned merchant before he can even let out a cry of alarm. Before the party can even blink, they hear a gut-wrenching crackle of bones, and blood begins to flow freely from the branches overhead. A Ravenloft troll has just snatched the merchant, and is quickly devouring him. The troll gains a +2 bonus to its initiative, and is 75% invisible in the dark branches. It attempts to make its escape unseen. Even should the troll be caught and killed, the merchant is dead, and mutilated beyond hope of raising. Now it is up to the PC's to talk to the king.

Luckily, if the PC's press ahead, they find gaining an audience with the king a little easier than they might imagine. Within a few hours, they find themselves before the king, who listens to their plight. He promises to "do all he can", and then dismisses them, most likely leaving the PC's annoyed.

The PC's are then quickly hustled from the castle, and told to return home, and that they should best do it before dark. This means the PCs must again return through the dark woods once more. And with the sun soon to be dipping below the horizon, it will be quite close if they make it...

However, on the way back, the characters become hopelessly lost. Without the merchant, and with the darkness descending on the forest, they somehow take a wrong turn that leads them down a trail that fades into nothing.

It's dark. It's night, and they are lost. That's when they hear the growl of wolves, wolves too close for comfort. Suddenly from the trees, a pack of vicious warg-sized wolfs springs out, attacking the PC's (these are 6+6 HD monsters, dealing 2d8 damage with their vicious bite. They snap and lunge at PC's, feigning attacks and drawing the PC's to overextend themselves. Their tactics give PC's a -2 penalty to hit, and -2 penalty to AC. Likewise, the wolves will

attempt to attack so one attacks from the front while the other attacks from the rear or side. There should be at least two per PC, plus four to attack the horse. In a blood-curdling whinny, the poor horse leading the carriage is torn down first, and the wolves threaten to do the same to the rest of the PC's. As more wolves leap from the woods to replace any of the fallen, the fight becomes grimmer and grimmer. Allow the wolves to whiddle away at the PC's for about four rounds, before Foxtail appears.

As the characters fight on, perhaps fighting astride the carriage, a humanoid figure, reddish-orange in color, leaps from the darkness, wielding a long sword. The fox-headed creature rips through the wolves, cleaving at them with his enchanted sword. The fight continues, with this addition striking to aid the PC's. If the characters attack him, he tries to explain he has come to help.

Once all of the wolves have been driven off or slain, the humanoid turns to greet the PC's. "I am Foxtail, a dweller in these woods. You appear to be lost from your hometown..."

Foxtail is cautious about the characters, but attempts to be friendly. He reveals little about his own past, but if questioned about a werewolf or the disappearances, he replies truthfully and grimly, "It is the king's doing." He explains the king is a werewolf and wizard (but doesn't explain how the king became a werewolf), and has been using his magic powers to turn the creatures of the woods into his willing slaves. Further, he has been kidnapping young girls (Foxtail does not know why) and keeping them in his castle dungeon. He has seen and attempted to free the young girls, but

the castle guards and escape route is too difficult for him to handle alone. He asks if the characters will free the young girls (he does not offer to accompany the characters unless directly asked). If asked about Auradrel, and she is described to him, he responds that he does remember seeing her in the dungeon, along with her cat.

If the characters are willing to break into the castle, they will find that once they get past the patrols on the outer wall, the inner court is fairly vacant and poorly watched. Foxtail will either have given the PC's a map to the dungeon, or will lead them to the dungeon. In either case, he gives the party his magic amulet, telling them, "You may need it against King Stephan"

The characters find the dungeon fairly easy, and releasing the girls proves easy once the sleeping guard has been dealt with. Auradrel, and her cat, are among the young, scared girls. However, as the characters begin to exit, they find that one of the nastier cells they passed earlier (which had some hissing, snarling creature in it that snatched at them as they passed) has freed itself. The creature resembles a yuan-ti abomination (11 HD, has the head of a cobra and lower body of a snake. Attacks by bite for 1d4 + poison and tail for 2d6. On a natural roll of 17-20 on the tail attack that hits the opponent's AC, Stephan's son has wrapped his victim in its deadly coils and may squeeze for 3d8 damage per round. The abomination is only harmed by magic weapons, and regenerates 1 hp/round), and is one of the King Stephan's accursed children. The thing attempts to prevent the PC's escape, and may draw guardsmen if not handled quietly and quickly.

If the PC's escape, they may return to the town to reunite the families. If Foxtail was not with the group, he has secretly alerted the townsfolk of the their children's return, and they are waiting in the town square. If any guardsmen follow, they catch up with the PC's at the town, and attempt to arrest them. If the PC's have explained what King Stephan has been doing, the townspeople begin picking up rocks and pelting the soldiers with them, eventually driving them away. This leaves the PC's free for the last reunion - to take Auradrel back to her mother. The reunion should be happy, leaving the PC's with no doubt they have done well. They are free to return to their inn, and prepare for the next adventure.

However, just as the PC's head to their room, they hear a fierce scuffle from below. If they investigate, they find a four-limbed abomination clutching Auradrel and her cat, the mother nowhere to be seen (in fact, the abomination took the mother's form, and the real mother lies dead, stuffed behind the front desk). Seeing the PC's, the thing hisses foully at them, then flies out the door and into the still-night sky, visibly heading south - back towards the sea coast. If the characters do not investigate, they see the thing fly past their window, holding Auradrel and her cat in its clutches.

If the characters pursue, they are able to observe the thing fly south, just moving out of their reach. After what should be a tense race through the woods, observing the flying creature through breaks in the dark's woods foliage, illuminated by flashing lightning, the characters emerge at the sea coast. The creature continues to fly south until the black shape of the Sea Witch's tower comes into view. Cawing evilly at the characters, as if urging them on, the creature flies to the Sea Witch's tower, and disappears as it lands on the top.

As the characters reach the Sea Witches tower, they see an evil and unnatural storm brewing overhead. With a swirling eye the color of blood, the black storm seems focused over the tower. Above, at it's top can be heard a chant that booms over the gathering storm. Streaks of Lightning begin to crackle near the tower, and fierce wind begins batter the coast. The first drizzle of rain is already settling in.

The characters will find they must reverse their course to reach the Sea Witch's castle. Already, and armed force of 6 Lizard Men with bows stands at the tower's base, though the wind gives the Lizard Men a -2 penalty to hit. However, the thin walkway is even more treacherous with the wind, causing characters to suffer a -4 penalty to Dex rolls while on the trail (and normal Dex rolls are required for moving at 1/2 speed, none for 1/4 speed). The door leading up the tower is unlocked, revealing a narrow (1 man) wide staircase up and down. The central area of the tower is open to the sea

below, and though the wind does not blow fiercely in here, Lizard Men from the rooms in the lower cliff march up the stairs to attack PC's. They are armed with 6 spears apiece, and each round 1d3-1 will start ascending the stairs after the PCs, throwing spears to attempt to hit the PC's. Any Lizard Man or character hit on the stairs must save vs. dex (at a -1 per point of damage over 4 hp dealt, up to -8 penalty) or fall to the sea a hundred feet below (8d6 damage, due to the impact with the sea, instead of the rocks).

Once the characters reach the top of the tower, they find King Stephan waiting for them, his broadsword at the ready. Nearby, the Sea Witch has strapped Auradrel down, who is unconscious, and the cat hunches beside her, hissing at all that come near it. The characters have 4 rounds before the Sea Witch completes her chant, and then in the next round, stabs Auradrel to finish the spell. King Stephan will try to hold the PC's on the stairs to prevent them from being able to save Auradrel.

If the PC's succeed in stopping the Sea Witch, as she dies, she attempts revenge by stabbing herself with the dagger (she can do even if reduced to negative hit points, but not if the PC's take the dagger, or reduce her to -10 hp before she can act), freeing the spellbound cat to reveal its true form - that of a Bebilith!!! The creature shows its gratitude by attacking the PC's. Note that it does not attempt to harm Auradrel. The PC's can attempt to escape (the Bebilith will run them out of the tower, but no further), or destroy it. The easiest way to destroy it is to put Foxtail's amulet on the Bebilith, rendering it into the cat form (because it has been in cat form so long, this has become its "true" form), and then destroying it.

With this deed done, the PC's may return to town. However, Auradrel's mother is now dead, and she has no other family. The PC's may choose to adopt Auradrel, but the more likely solution is that they take her to the local orphanage. There, a thin man who somewhat resembles the merchant the PC's met earlier, eagerly takes the child, promising to care for her as he does for the other waifs. As the caretaker prepares to take Auradrel inside, the PC's hear him whisper to her, "Don't worry child, I believe you'll like it here. We'll take good care of you" It is then that a black cat strides up to the caretaker, who bends down to pick it up. Happily, Auradrel cries out "Raven!" and eagerly clutches the cat. Before the PC's can do a thing, the caretaker glances back at the PC's, a wide, mischievous grin spreading across his face, and the two disappear behind the door to the orphanage....

Major NPC's

The Merchant - "Kelatus the book-binder, seller of rare tomes, exotic poetry and books mundane and fantastic" 0 lvl human, 4 hp, Align: NG. His wagon is loaded with books of all types, from poetry to dissertations on undead. None of his tomes are magical, though more than a few speak of supernatural events or items. He is also a moneychanger, and keeps a hidden and locked trunk filled with 100 gp, 150 sp, 25 ep and 250 cp of local coinage. His current cargo also includes several leather and fleece hides, which he has draped as a covering over his books.

Foxtail - 5th level fighter, Werefox (male). hp: 37. Align NG S 16 I 17 W 13 D 15 Co 15 Ch 13 Carries a Long Sword +2 named Dancer and 2 potions of healing. Wears an amulet of Trueform (forces the creature to remain in its true form)

Foxtail is secretly one of the accursed sons of King Stephan. He has been able to remain good because he was not raised in his father's household, but instead by his mother in the woods where he was born. His mother had great woodland skills, and his magical nature allowed Foxtail to grow with the creatures of the woods as his friends. He abhors the unnatural and evil spawn of his father, especially after they killed his mother, and constantly patrols the lands attempting to destroy them, little realizing he himself is one. He has faced his father on one occasion, and discovered the awful truth. Since that time, he has been unwilling to confront his father, but continues his work in the woods, now pitying what he must destroy. He longed to be able to live in the towns of man, and once sought out a wizard to purge him of his animal form. For a month, the wizard worked, creating the amulet he now wears. But to both their consternation, it did not work, for Foxtail's true form is the half-form he is stuck in.

King Stephan - Human infected Lycanthrope, Fighter 9/ Wizard 9. Align CE S 15 I 17 W 16 D 14 Co 16 Ch 16. King Stephan wears plate +1, and wields a broadsword +1, flametongue. He carries a special potion of enrage (transforms him into his hybrid werewolf form in a single round)

Memorized spells (can be cast in his armor because of his special nature as a DarkLord):

- 1st: Burning Hands, Shocking Grasp, Change Self, Wall of Fog
- 2nd: Blindness, Invisibility, Levitate
- 3rd: Blink, Dispel Magic, Vampiric Touch

4th: Confusion, Polymorph Other
5th: Summon Shadow

King Stephan was the son and prince of a mighty wizard king. He grew up in the lap of luxury with everything he could ever want. His father had always told him that whatever he wished, could be his. But what Stephan wanted, was not for him to have. Though his father tried his best to teach Prince Stephan to use his magical powers for more than his own pleasures, Prince Stephan was spoiled. And the thing he lusted for most was not mere power, wealth or fame. It was his own sister. When his sister neared her sixteenth birthday, Prince Stephan plotted with his fellow cousins to stir up trouble in the manner of mischevous teenagers - but Stephan had on his mind darker plots than a mere prank. Using their magic, the Prince and his cousins managed to trick the neighboring duke out of much wealth with an illusion of fine stallions. When the stallions vanished the next morning, and Stephan's treachery came to full light before the duke, he was enraged beyond reason. Gathering his army, he marched to the King's castle, intent on teaching the royal family a lesson. At the castle, the King and his army attempted to negotiate peace and reason with the duke, but Prince Stephan struck once again. Creating the illusion of an asp among the ranks of the King's soldiers, one of the men drew their weapons, which flashed brilliantly in the morning air. The duke responded, and war erupted on the field.

During the confusion, Prince Stephan made his way to the Princesse's chamber, and there quenched his incestuous fires with her body. By the time he was discovered, he was already escaping.

Alerted to his son's treachery, the King used his magic to track down his son. But his son used his own magic to change his shape to elude his father - first to sly fox, then a swift wolf, and finally a cobra when cornered by his father, but it was all in vain. Angered beyond belief, the King cursed his son to animal form for four years - one year for each of his attempts at escape. Not only that, but he cursed his son to be female, and to bear a child for each year of the curse.

Prince Stephan managed to endure his curse, and returned home after the forth year a changed man - or it seemed. Shortly thereafter, his father died, and Prince Stephan became king.

The years in his curse had not made him a better man, but had embittered him. He began to rule his people with an iron hand, clenched in a velvet glove. Unknown to the populace, the King forcibly married his sister, who now cowers as a frightened doe caught before a hunter in a bramble bush. Lust consumed him still, now more a object of revenge than of pleasure. Young girls began to disappear from the local towns, and evil monstrosities - in the shape of snakemen and wolfmen began to fill the woods. Strangely, there were scant reports of a fox-like man, until one day, this son of Stephan faced his own father, intent on his destruction. With cruel malice, Stephan revealed his son's origin, and the son left in disgust, unable to face the horror of his own father.

King Stephan has joined the Sea Witch in hoping to be able to gain a wish or service from the transformed Bebelith.

The Sea Witch - Conjurer 12th (witch kit) hp: 28 Align: CE S 12 I 16 W 16 D 17 Co 15 Ch 9. The Sea Witch wears black robes of the Arch-magi and carries a potion of human control and invisibility. She wears a ring of protection +1. The dagger she carries has been enchanted as the focus for the spell to transform the cat into the Bebilith.

Spells:

none available, they have been temporarily lost to cast the unbinding spell she performs at the end of the adventure.

The Sea Witch's past is mostly a mystery. It is known that at one time the tower in which she dwells was once a lighthouse. Local villagers suspect that she had a husband at one time, who died upon the rocky coast one night when the light of the light house went out. Since that time, she has slowly degenerated into evil, removing the ever-burning bonfire from the top of the old tower to replace it with an altar for blood sacrifices. Many claim she has been attempting for years to find a way to bring her husband back from the dead, but has so far failed. Now an old crone, tales tell of stealing young children in a vain effort to regain the youth for the day she manages to return her husband. Though her reasons for wanting the Bebilith disguised as Raven the cat are unclear, she has bent her forces to find the cat, and bargained with King Stephan to find the foul creature.

Auradrel - 0 lvl human girl. Align: LG

Auradrel is beautiful little girl with raven-black hair and doe-like brown eyes. Friendly and generally unafraid, she appears to be about seven years old, and is always accompanied by her black cat, Raven. Though she is hesitant to speak about, she believes that Raven can talk (it has done so numerous times), and often speaks and talks to it out loud, sometimes even asking its opinion in matters, or pretending to play a game with it (Jacks are her favorite game). Raven has also taught her a song, which she can often be found singing - "Ring-around-the-rosy". She has no idea this poem is actually about the black death.

Raven, transformed Bebilith (appears to be a black cat)

The Bebilith is detailed in the Planescape Appendix. The creature was drawn to the servitude of Strahd a long time ago, before the land was pulled into Ravenloft. Strahd kept the Bebilith in cat form in the crypt, at his disposal. When the land was drawn into Ravenloft, Raven found he couldn't transform out of cat form, but managed to escape from his imprisonment from Strahd. Though the vampire lord has searched the castle high and low for many years for the Bebilith, Raven has been able to avoid him with his plane shift ability. Because he cannot leave Ravenloft, the plane shift ability has been warped to only allow Raven to travel through the mists, somewhat unreliably. That was how he found Auradrel, and lured the young girl to Castle Ravenloft, intent on using her to find the means to free itself of the accursed form.

Finally, Raven did find the tome that would free it from its shape. Having Auradrel steal the tome, he managed to whisk her back to her homeland. From afar, he let the secrets fall into the merchant Kelatus' store of books. Ogres took the book as part of a payment to allow Kelatus to continue to town (the Ogre Magi was the one who originally accepted the magic book). After finishing with the book, the Ogres traded the book to the Sea Witch for some fresh (lizard) meat. When the Sea Witch found the spell Raven had intended her to find, the hunt began. Promising power, she involved King Stephan, who unknowingly captured the girl in his dungeons.

Raven does not intend to fulfill any of the promises it hinted at in the book it let the Sea Witch find, and intends to escape Ravenloft once in its true form. It has mistakenly believed it could not leave Ravenloft because of the cat form, but will quickly discover it cannot escape even in its true form.

Stormonu

FOX HUNT

by B. Miller

Startup

At the beginning of the adventure, the PCs will be on the edges of a woods with several other members of a hunting party. It is approaching dusk, and the quarry this evening is fox. One of the hunters, a man named Kinley, has brought hounds, who whine and jump about nervously, anxious for the hunt to begin.

Night seems to draw quickly closer after the hunt begins. The sky glows red with the dying sun sinking towards the horizon, a red eye that lazily watches the hunters. A few of the more superstitious NPCs make warding signs and make mention of the red sky being a bad omen.

After some time hunting, the hounds finally pick up a scent and charge into the brush. A sleek, furry shape darts off, the hounds in pursuit. The fox provides a lengthy chase for the dogs and the hunters until finally the hunters are able to get in there shots. At this point, allow the PCs to make their shots, allowing them to wound the fox, but not kill it. Once the fox is wounded, it takes off again, the hounds once again in close pursuit.

As the hunters follow deeper into the woods, and the sun disappears below the horizon to make way for the moon, in total fullness, the ground becomes thickly shrouded in fog, partially obscuring vision despite the light provided by the moon. The dogs are heard for a while barking in the distance as they chase their quarry, then they are suddenly silent.

More of the hunters complain about ill omens and evil winds, and some even threaten to turn back, but Kinley won't leave without his hounds. Most likely, the PCs will want to press on. If not, they will become disoriented in the fog and can be steered to where they need to be anyway.

The hunting party will wander through the eerily silent woods for some time, heading in the general directions they believe the dogs were headed. After allowing some suspense to build, a large, wounded fox leaps from the woods, attacking the nearest (NPC) hunter. The hunter is taken to the ground with the fox biting at his arm as the hunter tries to fend the animal off, and a couple of the more nervous hunters take shots at the fox. Allow the PCs to take some action. After a few minutes, especially if the fox takes more damage (this time it should be made to seem fatal), the fox runs off. The hunters claim the fox has been mortally wounded and take chase.

The woods opens up into a moonlit clearing, with the heavy fog clinging close to the ground along the clearing's edges. The trees in this clearing are all dead and twisted, evil-looking things. The fox is up ahead, toward the center of the clearing, lying on its side, motionless.

The fox appears to be dead, but its face is locked into a disturbing, baleful glare. Lying on its side, only one eye stares up, but it is wide open and seems to glare at the hunters. The fox's lips are also curled back in a perpetual snarl, baring rows of sharp teeth. A pool of its own blood surrounds the fox. The sight is particularly gruesome and shocking, forcing onlookers to make a mild fear check.

The fox lies at the base of a dead tree stump which stands about four feet high. On the side on which the fox lies, the bark has been stripped off of the stump and an engraving of what appears to be an evil, animal face has been carved into it. This sight unnerves the hunters further. Even Kinley has apparently forgotten about his hounds and now wants only to flee the woods.

The fox is truly dead, but the paranoid hunters will keep "seeing" it move, causing the others to become even more nervous. The hunters retreat, warning the PCs to do the same in case they feel inclined to stick around and investigate.

Note: need a back-up plan in case the PCs do decide to investigate. I need ways to convince them it would be in their best interests to flee. I also need ideas on things I can use for atmosphere, to build suspense, during the slow parts of the hunt.

The Adventure

It is a month later, on a day after a night of a full moon, and no one from the hunting party at the start has been out hunting since. Whether the PCs realize there was a full moon that night is irrelevant at this point, but this does mark the beginning of a series of mysterious murders that comprise the bulk of this adventure. After the PCs have had half the morning to interact with the town and some of its members, a woman comes in, wailing hysterically. When calmed, she informs those tending to her that she woke to find her husband, Kinley, one of the members of the hunting party, dead behind the tool-shed behind their house. Anyone investigating will find that the circumstances of the death are very strange, for there are no signs of how the man was killed. His face is locked in a wide-eyed mask of mixed fear and pain, and his skin is unusually pale, but there are no signs of injury. If questioned further, the PCs might be able to discover that the woman thought she heard barking off in the distance last night. Several paw prints might be found in the general area.

Encounters

- The PCs learned (hopefully) from the woman whose husband was killed that she heard dogs barking in the night. The night after this murder, one of the PCs is awakened for some reason and hears barking in the distance. If he follows the sound to investigate, he will be led to the house of another NPC member of the hunting party where he will see a dark shape disappear into the woods. (If he pursues, he will not find the figure.) Further investigation turns up the hunter dead in his home, perhaps appearing strangled to death by powerful hands.

- On one of the nights, the PCs and the remaining hunters, and friends and relatives, are huddled together in a cozy tavern, or someone's manor. It is rather late at night, and the moon peeks in through a large window. Suddenly, the faint sound of barking can be heard, and hopefully the PCs have realized by now this sound heralds a new murder. If they don't, one of the NPCs will prophesize there will be another death. Talbot, one of the hunter NPCs, calls to a serving wench to bring him another goblet of wine. She returns with it, and Talbot greedily drinks the liquid to calm his shaking nerves. Suddenly, he drops his goblet, spilling the contents. His face quickly turns green, his tongue swelling, eyes bulging, and he dies, obviously poisoned. A door slams in another room. The PCs follow the sound into the kitchen, where they find the serving girl lying on the floor, her throat viciously ripped out, blood covering her chest. If they peer outside, they will find no sign of the killer, but they may notice paw prints leading from the door. Searching around the serving girl's corpse will also turn up an item which belonged to Jonathon, the NPC who was bitten by the fox in the hunt. Jonathon was with the group at the tavern, but left earlier in the evening, just before the barking of the dogs was heard.

Note 1: what happened is that the spirit fox waited for one of the hunting party to leave, following him until there was no one else around, then she hit Jonathon from behind, knocking him unconscious and leaving him in the woods, then doubled back to the inn. The PCs should find Jonathon the next day, wandering back into town, appearing disheveled due to his sleeping outdoors. He honestly has no recollections about what happened to him after he left the inn. The NPCs will quickly deduce he is a werebeast, infected by the fox that bit him. Their further suspicion is that it is the time of a full moon.

Note 2: I need to figure out a way to try to get the PCs to kill Jonathon, believing he's a werecreature, or perhaps the NPCs will kill him. More evidence, perhaps items belonging to the murder victims, will turn up at Jonathons house. He will panic and try to flee.

- After a few nights of killing, after most of the hunters have been killed, the PCs will discover the body of a woman. (Hopefully Jonathon was killed and the PCs and NPCs believe the threat is ended.) The woman is Kinley's wife, her body already in several days of decomposition. The problem is, they saw her earlier that day, alive and well. Earlier,

they will hopefully recall, she was supposed to stay the night at an NPC's home, a man who was one of the hunters. They should decide to charge to his rescue, figuring he's in danger. They will arrive just in time to witness the man's death, the spirit fox just finishing the chore. This encounter could possibly lead into the next one.

- Eventually, the PCs catch the spirit fox in its fox/hybrid form and should chase it out into the woods. The fox leads the PCs back to the site where their fox hunt had ended a month earlier. There, the fox has quite a few powers, such as being able to use the surrounding vegetation, causing roots and branches to grab and hold the PCs. The fox is too powerful here for the PCs to destroy, but give them opportunity to handle the encounter themselves, perhaps seeking escape. When all their attempts have failed, the undead dogs from the earlier hunt charge in to chase down the spirit fox, causing the creature to flee and forget about the PCs. The PCs will not be able to track or find the fox or the dogs after this, but they might perhaps find a clue that either indicates the identity of the spirit fox, or how to destroy it.

Note: I need to determine what this clue will be.

Notes:

- The creature is a spirit fox, a malicious entity that is similar to a werfox, but that can claim a variety of different human forms, as well as a fox and a fox-hybrid form. The creature can assume the form of any human it has killed.
- The dogs's spirits are stuck on this plane until the spirit fox is dealt with. The dogs bark whenever the fox is about to strike. The dogs are unable to leave the woods, but the spirit fox is tied to its grove (the carved stump where the hunt ended), and cannot wander far from this place for long. The dogs pursue the spirit fox relentlessly in the woods.

Conclusion

By now, the PCs should have some idea of what they're up against. They can spend the day preparing, perhaps trying to find resources on how to deal with the creature. They, and any surviving NPCs will most likely be gathered together for safety, waiting to stage a final confrontation with the creature.

What's Still Needed:

- NPC descriptions (especially names): 5-7 members of the hunting party, so far Kinley, Jonathon, and Talbot; Kinley's wife; relatives and friends of the other hunters; regular town patrons; possibly NPCs who have their own hidden agendas and can interfere with the PCs, possibly seeing them as some sort of threat.
- Ideas for progressive clues to provide the PCs in order to lead them toward the murderer, or even to slightly mislead them.
- Information the PCs can learn, at a local library or mystic's shop, on supernatural entities related to the PCs's problems, such as the spirit fox, the ghost hounds, and perhaps information to slightly mislead the players.
- Encounters and activities, either involved with the plot, or just for distraction. There should be enough going on that the PCs will have a difficult time pinpointing exactly who the killer might be. I'd like to see the characters really starting to mistrust everyone, perhaps even each other, and finding clues that contradict other clues until they might finally have a chance of discerning the truth by the end of the adventure.
- Determine where the adventure will be set (Mordent is suggested).
- Information on how to conduct fox hunts, and information on any actual myths, legends, or suspicions that could be suitable to incorporate in this adventure, would be very beneficial.

Brenton Miller

ALONE IN THIS WORLD

By Stormonu

Prologue

"I don't understand it," Norrick shook his head. "He was here just a moment ago."

Jaelce shook her head, and placed her hand on Norrick's shoulder.

"Norrick, you haven't slept-"

"No, I haven't," Norrick retorted, shrugging off her hand. "Every time I do, I wake up, and someone's gone."

Norrick stepped away from Jaelce, fumbling with the desk where the professor had been sitting a few minutes before.

"First Nimblethumbs, then Derrick, now even professor Jackard is gone."

Norrick turned to face Jaelce, but there was a light brush of wind that carressed his face, and the brief whiff of fetid death filled his nostrils.

Then he noticed Jaelce must have stepped out of the room. Icy fear ran through his veins. Was he losing his mind? Norrick cautiously stepped out of the study, calling, "Jaelce?" The hall beyond, heading towards the foyer, was long and empty. Not a sound filtered through the stark empty hall.

Main Plot

This is an adventure that can be placed into practically any domain in Ravenloft. It centers around the slow disappearance of everyone around a single PC, referred to as the Focus. Whenever the Focus turns his attention away from people, they seem to disappear. This starts innocuously with NPCs and strangers the Focus has no relationship with. For example, while in the local store, the PC may bump into an old lady, and after stooping down to pick up her dropped fruit, he finds she has vanished. If anyone is asked, even other PC's, they never saw her. After several of these vanishings, those who the Focus has a minor relationship with also start to disappear. This might be minor contacts, distant friends of the Focus, or minor NPCs the PC has become accustomed to seeing - perhaps the local barmaid, the local sheriff's deputy or a well-known town guardsman. Once again, other PCs and NPCs don't recall ever have seeing or having met the said NPC. At this point, non-humanoid creatures seem to have vanished. Birds, horses, dogs and other animals appear to have utterly vanished. However, everyone seems to insist these animals have never been in town in the first place.

After a few such disappearances, the Focus moves to the next level - major NPCs start to vanish - the innkeeper ("You can check in, but you can't check out"), henchmen, contacts or close NPC friends. As before, no one seems to know who the PC is talking about. The ring of people the Focus has access to should slowly get smaller and smaller. The PC should get suspicious at this point as the local population seems to take a sharp drop, almost as if everyone were evacuating the city or town the PC's are staying in.

In the final stage, even the PC's friends start vanishing - at an alarming rate. Within 24 hours of the last stage setting in, the PC finds himself completely alone. No other living thing besides Focus remains. Of course, everyone always seems to vanish while the PC is distracted, not looking, or dozing off.

Once the PC gets frantic about the disappearances and is totally alone, the true menace behind the disappearances strikes - A Spirit Naga.

What has really been occurring is that the Spirit Naga has charmed the Focus, tricking the PC into believing that the people around the Focus have been vanishing. So strong is this magic that the PC is being drawn into a pseudo-realm that matches the "real" world (though devoid of people) where his beliefs are being made real. Now that the Naga has the Focus believing he is completely alone, it attacks. It also ensures that when it attacks, the other PCs are not present in the corresponding area. If, at any time the PC thinks to disbelieve the illusion, the DM should secretly roll vs. spells, at a -4 penalty. Success means that the last person the PC saw returns to sight in 1d4 rounds (and they will be able to help the PC in the last fight). If the character continually saves, he might be able to get the whole party back to face the Naga. The Focus can utterly break the charm if he can successfully recall to his mind the first person who vanished (the PC must remember a valid description of the person, and then succeed a save vs. spells at -4). If this succeeds or if the naga is slain, the pseudo-realm shatters like a room of mirrors, dropping the PC(s) back into the town where he had vanished, with everyone returned.

If the Focus PC dies, the Focus's body will simply be found mauled in some dark alley or other out-of-the-way area. Any accompanying PCs will be shunted out of the pseudo-realm, but may become the next target, until the Naga or the PC's, one by one, are destroyed.

Skey-Sha (Spirit Naga)

Chaotic Evil

HD: 9 hp: 64

#Att: 1 THAC0: 11 Dam: 1d3+poison

Current Scetch: Skey-Sha was an evil and savage creature in her own land, far from Ravenloft. She had taken up residence in a large city, within the foul sewers, in her home realm. Using her charm power, she built a secret society dedicated to overthrowing the city and replacing the town leadership with her own foul rule. Her charmed slaves treated her as a god, and made dark and bloody sacrifices to please her foul humor. However, a group of intrepid adventures ruined her plans, penetrating her dark network, and confronting her in her sewage-infested lair. Striking with her charm gaze, she tried to force the adventures to forget her existence, but the plan backfired when the group's mage struck with a Gaze Reflection spell. Caught with her own gaze, she was struck with far more than amnesia. When the charm finally died off, she found herself in an unfamiliar, though somewhat strangely familiar human settlement. It was abandoned, but intact. After exploring, some of Skey's memories began to surface. She could remember once she was a god, and that ...people, yes, people - had bowed and scraped before her. Where had they gone? Skey couldn't remember. Had they infuriated her and she destroyed them? She didn't know. Concentrating on her predicament, she tried to remember

what people looked like. As she concentrated, she thought she saw ...something slip down a sidestreet in the vacant town. Slithering after the shape, she kept concentrating. After chasing the fleeting shape through the vacant streets, Skey finally rounded a corner to find a human cowering in the corner. Suddenly, all the memories came back ... the power she had held, the humans who bowed before her - then she remembered the humans who had come to fight her. In her rage, she attacked the cowering form, striking again and again, until it fell over, silent. As the shape of the human faded, Skey, to her consternation, felt the glory of her past life and her memories slip as well. When the dead human was gone, Skey could barely remember her name. She knew she must concentrate to bring back the memories, and focusing on the strange memories of those who worshipped her seemed easiest.

Since that time, Skey's "remembering" draws a human into her psuedo-realm, drawing her into her "memory". The act of remembering keeps her sane, though only barely. The more the person has been pulled into her realm, the more she remembers the ancient glory of her former life. When the human is drawn completely into her realm, she has all of her memory, and by the time she faces the mortal, the memory of the adventurers who destroyed her world is also present, and she goes into a killing frenzy.

Beyond her ability to draw people into her psuedo-realm, Skey does not have any special abilities above and beyond a standard Spirit Naga.

Skey's spells:

Wizard (5th level casting ability)

1st: Detect Magic, Light, Magic Missile, Phantasmal Force

2nd: Invisibility, Forget

3rd: Lightning Bolt

Priest (4th level casting ability)

1st: Blight, Command, Cause Fear, Fearful Fire

2nd: Hold Person, Silence, 15' radius, Spiritual Hammer

IN THE SHADOW OF THE WILLOW

By D.J. Bandera

Preface

This adventure is set in the domain of Tepest, and sets the characters against the three hag sisters that rule the land. It is designed for 3-5 characters of 5th-7th level. The party should contain at least one priest, but should not contain too many spellcasters. More than one mage and one priest may unbalance the adventure. A bard, while not necessary for the adventure, will receive a bonus near the end of the adventure.

Theme song: Witch's Ride, from Hansel & Gretel, by Humperdinck.

Background

Drax, a ranger, while wandering the forests of Tepest, came across a hag who had imprisoned a young woman. The young woman's name was Elizabeth, and she comes from a moderately wealthy family that lives on the outskirts of the village of Kellee. Drax rescued Elizabeth from the hag's cottage, killed the hag and set the cottage on fire. Merrie the hag, was a child of Laveeda, who days later came upon the ruins of her daughter's cottage. Laveeda swore revenge on the one responsible but at first she did not know who to blame. She soon learned. When Drax killed Merrie, he unknowingly picked up a hag's eye gem set in a medallion, which he now wears as proof of his bravery. Through this gem Laveeda discovered his act, and keeps watch on him while planning her revenge.

Now Drax and Elizabeth are to be married. They are staying with her family. Though Drax prefers the woods but believes it is too dangerous for Elizabeth. Drax lives in a cottage recently built near home of Elizabeth's family. As the wedding approaches Laveeda makes her first attempt against the two lovers, at the same time the characters happen to be traveling through the area.

Part 1 - Introduction

The adventure begins with the characters traveling the road from Liara in Nova Vaasa, to Kellee. As the party approaches the village of Kellee, a shout for help is heard through the woods.

Though the day dawned clear, like it has every day this week, in the early afternoon, clouds began to gathering in the sky. Now the overcast sky blocks out the sun's heat, and the strong wind that has picked up reminds you that autumn is in full swing, summer is gone, and soon winter will be here. Pulling your cloak tighter, you press on down the road. The forests grow thick to either side of the road. This road is one of the few passes through the Balinok mountains. You don't know what awaits you on the far side of the mountains, but you hope to find a way home. Before your mind can wander too far to thoughts of home, your attention is drawn to a rustling in the underbrush to the side of the road. Something is coming.

You ready your weapons for an attack, but instead of some hideous monster, a young woman rushes from the forest into the road. Breathless she holds out a hand to motion for you to stop, while her other hand clutches her heaving breast. She is dressed in a simple white dress, that is slightly disheveled from her run through the forest. After taking a few deep breathes, she asks, "Help me. Please, if you have kindness in your hearts, please help us. Something is wrong with my finance. Please you must help him. I think he is dying."

If the characters refuse to help, she falls to her knees and begs them to help her. Once the characters agree, if they don't the adventure ends here, the woman asks them to follow her to a clearing a short distance into the forest. Along the way she introduces herself as Elizabeth, and tells the party her finance's name is Drax. She and Drax were enjoying a peaceful afternoon alone by the river when he just collapsed. As she watched he began to convulse, and sores grew all over his hands and face.

His face became a sickly green color and he seemed to lose consciousness.

When the characters reach the clearing near the river, they see Drax lying on the ground as described by Elizabeth. The sores ooze puss and some have burst. His skin is a deep green, and he appears to have thrown up a dark red vomit. A priest or a character with the healing proficiency can determine that Drax suffers from the advanced stages of a magical disease.

A cure disease spell or a paladin's ability to cure disease will remove the pox. After a few rounds, Drax will regain consciousness, and thank the party. After an hour Drax will be fully recovered from the experience. The couple will ask the party to accompany them back to Kellee, and promise lodging at Elizabeth's family's home. They are to be married in three days, and ask the characters to stay until the ceremony and experience their hospitality as reward for their actions.

Elizabeth and Drax lead the party through the village of Kellee to her father's home on the eastern side. There they are introduced to her family, which includes:

Her father, Wallace, an easy going widower, aged 60, he is immensely protective of his daughter, but approves greatly of Drax. He will show the characters every courtesy during their stay.

Her younger brother, Stephen, 14. The boy looks very much like his father.

Stephen will become infatuated with one of the strong fighters in the party and pester that person to tell stories of his heroic acts and to teach Stephen to fight.

Elizabeth's older sister, Anna, 30, Anna's husband, Jan (It's a Scandinavian name, pronounced Yuan), 35, and their young boy Cordell, 5.

Anna looks very similar to her mother, much more than Elizabeth, but her mind is not all there (see below). Perhaps because of this, Wallace did not approve of her choice of Jan as a husband. When Jan was forced to close his tailor shop a year ago, without a word Wallace allowed them to move into Anna's old room until he could find steady work. Now Jan works for Wallace, doing odd jobs around the house.

Cordell is a quiet child who is in awe of his uncle, Stephen. He follows the teenager around despite Stephen's protests until Stephen yells at him. Then he goes off by himself to sulk. Due to complications while giving birth to Cordell, Anna cannot have anymore children. This "defect" unsettled her greatly, and often she has "nervous attacks" when she becomes greatly distraught and has to be physically restrained. When six months ago, she had another attack, Jan bought her a puppy. This eased her mind, and now she has adopted the puppy as her "baby." Now the puppy, a collie, named Ophelia, is almost fully grown, but because Anna spoils it the puppy has grown over weight and has a nasty disposition.

The House

(In place of a map, I offer the following description of the house and surrounding land, in the hope that you can use it to reproduce a map yourself.)

The family estate sits a couple of hundred yards from the road. A path leads from the road to the two story house which faces east, towards the village, of Kellee. The house is approximately 70' wide and 40' long.

The front door opens into the family room, which contains some chairs gathered around a large fireplace on the north wall. To the south is an archway that leads into the dining room. On the back wall, the west wall, near the fireplace is a door that leads to Wallace's study, which takes up the north west corner of the house.

Across from the front door, a hallway goes deeper into the house. Between the hallway and the door to the study are stairs leading to the second story.

The hallway goes all the way to the back of the house leading to the back door. Before reaching the door on the left is the entrance to the kitchen. The kitchen contains cabinets and a cooking stove, as well as dishes, food, and drinks. A door in the east wall of the kitchen connects it with the dining room. Across the hall from the kitchen is a door. Behind the door is a small storage area under the stairs.

The stairs lead up to a landing, at which the stairs reverse direction to continue up to the second floor. The stairs lead to a hallway on the second floor traveling west to east. There is a door on either side of the hallway at the top of the stairs. The door to the right leads to the master bedroom, where Wallace sleeps. The door to the left is the guest bedroom where the characters will sleep. There are two full size beds, and cots will be set up in the room to accommodate all of the characters.

The hallway continues to the front of the house. There is meets another hallway running both north and south. To the left or north, the hallway leads to the bedrooms of Stephen and farther on to Elizabeth's which is at the end of the hallway. Both bedrooms are on the left-hand side of the hall, and the right side contains windows looking out the front of the house.

If the hallway is followed to the right or south, it leads first to Anna and Jan's room. At the end of the hall is Cordell's room. There is a door that connects this two rooms together. Both of these rooms are on the right side of the hall, with windows to the front of the house on the left.

From the backdoor a path leads 40 feet to a well. The area between the house and the well has been cleared of trees. Near the northeast corner of the house is a privy. Behind the well a large willow trees stands, with its branches drooping down over a large area. Behind the willow is the outskirts of the forest, which grows thicker the farther west one goes.

To the southwest of the house, about 500 yards through the forest is the one room shack that Drax has constructed. He has cleared the forest in a fifth foot area to create a small clearing around his cottage.

Part 2 - Under the Willow

A. First night

After the characters have been introduced to all of the family members, dinner is served in the dining room by two servants. Note that the servants do not stay at the house, but live in the village and travel back and forth each day. By the time that dinner is finished, the storm that has been building all day erupts. As the downpour intensifies, Drax says a hurried goodnight to Elizabeth, before making a run towards his cabin. The rest of the family retires to the living room, while the servants clean up. The family may ask the characters to tell stories of their exploits while Wallace serves drinks from a small bar. Before long, the family retires to their rooms after making sure the characters will be comfortable in their room.

As the night continues, the storm builds as lightning flashes and the booming crash of thunder shakes the house. Roll a d6 for each character.

On a roll of 5 or 6 that character is having trouble sleeping because of the storm. Of the characters who are awake, pick one of the characters and tell him that he hears a scream, but that he is not sure where it came from because of the thunder. The other characters who are awake did not notice, and if asked by the character, they are not sure if they hear anything or not. The scream is not repeated.

Being unfamiliar with the house it will take the characters a couple of rounds to find and light the small oil lamp in the room. Once the lamp has been lit, and any other character aroused, the party can leave their room to investigate the noise. When they open the door to the hallway, they see Wallace, dressed in his nightrobe holding a candle. He has just left his room and is calling to a figure at the other end of the hallway, apparently Jan.

"Jan is that you."

"Yes, it's me."

"Good. O you're awake as well," Wallace says as he turns and spots the characters. "That scream was it any of you?" he asks.

When the characters respond, no. He turns to Jan and asks, "Jan was that Anna who screamed?"

"No, and not Cordell either. We should check on the others. Come," and he motions with his hand for the characters and Wallace to join him.

As the group heads down the hall the first door they come to is Stephen's. Wallace knocks on the door and asks, "Boy. Are you all right in there?" He gets a mumbled response. Causally he opens the door. The light from Wallace's

candle, and any light source carried by the characters, brightens the dark room. On the far side of the room is Stephen's bed. The covers are drawn up over him, so no part of him is showing. Wallace turns a concerned face to the party, and then turns and slowly walks to the bed. He reaches out a hand to draw back the covers.

Suddenly the covers are thrown back. Stephen seeing someone crouched over his bed, screams. The boy's scream startles Wallace, but once he recovers, he sits down on the bed and hugs his son, asking again if he is all right.

The boy responds that he is fine, but was scared by the scream that he heard, and was hiding under the covers.

After comforting the boy, the group moves on to check Elizabeth's room. Wallace again knocks on the door and calls out, "Elizabeth.

Elizabeth are you awake." No response.

"Elizabeth, it's your father, are you all right." Still no response.

Finally, "Elizabeth, this is your father I am coming in." He slowly opens the door. The light that spills into the room shines on Elizabeth's empty bed. Wallace enters the room, and calls out, "Elizabeth?" The room is empty. If the sheets are checked there are a couple of drops of what looks like blood near the headboard (Note: Neither Wallace nor Jan will do this.)

A search of the entire house ensues. The first person to check the kitchen finds Elizabeth. Dressed in her nightgown, and holding a goblet of wine, she is quite surprised by all the excitement. If asked, she says she was having a glass of wine to calm her nerves. The storm was keeping her awake. When she heard the scream, she was startled and spilt her wine. So she came down stairs to refill her glass.

"But girl, I've never known you to drink." "Oh, it's a habit that I picked up from Drax, besides one needs it on a night like this."

"Ai. I wonder what other bad habits he'll be giving you next?" "Oh, daddy," Elizabeth responds and blushes.

(Note: This is false. Neither Drax nor Elizabeth drink. The characters will have to specifically ask at any meal if they wish to observe the two, to verify this.)

None one seems to know where the scream came from. The family comes to the assumption that the scream came from outside and is therefore none of their business. If the characters want to go outside to search for the one who made the scream, (perhaps it was one of the servants who was attacked on their walk home) the family will become very concerned and try to persuade them not to, telling them monsters and spirits rule the night.

"It is not wise to go out at night, especially on a night like this."

If the characters are persistent, Wallace will tell them that if they do go out he will lock the doors behind and will not let them back in until morning. He does not want any evil spirits coming into the house with the party.

What Wallace does not know is that evil is already in the house.

Laveeda entered the house with her two sisters and kidnap Elizabeth, who managed to let out a scream before they silenced her. Laveeda has now taken Elizabeth's place, by shapechanging into her form. She plans to act as Elizabeth until the wedding in two days. Meanwhile, the real Elizabeth is held captive by Leticia and Lorinda in a secret place.

Note on playing Laveeda. Because of her psionic link with her sisters, Laveeda can play Elizabeth very accurately. The only weakness she has is sunlight. Contact with direct sunlight only harms her slightly (1 hp/ turn), but it negates her shapechanging ability and returns her to her natural form. Thus "Elizabeth" will discreetly try to avoid sunlight, staying in doors, but remaining active, planning the wedding with her sister.

B. Second Day

This day there are no events. The characters can spend the day as they wish. They may want to go into town, after all they will probably need to buy dress clothes for the wedding. If the characters do go into town, the DM could spread various rumors, perhaps leading to other adventures. The characters will also get different reactions from the villagers about Wallace and his family. Some people like the family, and claim Mr. Wallace helps out many in the town. Others are jealous of his wealth and claim he is an evil money grubbing man and a womanizer, and making even wilder claims such as he communes with devils, his daughters are witches, and that the ghost of his dead wife haunts the family estate.

The family members been making plans for the wedding. Elizabeth and Anna spend most of the day together planning the wedding, in doors.

Stephen will follow the characters around, as long as they stay on the estate. Cordell tries to follow Stephen, but Stephen quickly gets angry at him, and pushes him down, telling him to go away or he will tell the little beasties to take him away. Cordell spends the rest of the morning sulking, and most of the afternoon playing with Ophelia.

Drax spends the day at his cabin. While the exterior of the cabin has been finished, he is still has work to do to the inside of the cabin to make it livable for his new wife. He does come by the house for dinner, and leaves soon after.

C. Second night

The DM should choose one of the characters to have the following nightmare. Note what transpires later in the adventure when choosing which character. He should not be the most suspicious player, but not necessarily the most gullible. A paladin would also most be a good choice.

For the rest of this section, the character who has the dream is referred to as the rescuer.

"You are outside. It is such a nice sunny day, not as cold as it has been over the past few weeks. You are seated under the large willow tree in the backyard of the house, resting in the sun after a large lunch. Elizabeth is there, and so is Anna, and Cordell and Stephen. The two boys are playing a little ways off with the puppy. Quite surprising, the puppy seems to be in good spirits today and has not bitten either of the boys in the past five minutes. You look over at Elizabeth and she smiles at you.

You smile back realizing you like her attention on you.

Suddenly, the sky turns black. Dark clouds rolling in and cover the sky. A strong wind swirls around you rustling the branches of the willow.

Lightning flashes over head, and dark rain begins to fall. You see the two boys, Cordell and Stephen, cry out. The rain is burning them. The two boys run for the house. Cordell trips and falls into the mud. He does not get up. You turn to Elizabeth and see she is looking at you with a horrified look on her face. You look to Anna, wondering why she has not rushed to her son's aid. You see why. You stare at Anna's feet swaying back and forth three feet from the ground. She has been hunk from one of the tree branches. You can see the branch wrapped around her neck below her blotted face.

You are pulled out of your shock by Elizabeth's scream. Turning you see she has been grabbed by some of the willows branches and is being lifted off the ground. One of the tree's slim branches is coiling around her neck. As she thrashes about, you try to go to her aid, but something grabs you. The willow's branches have coiled around your arms and chest and are lifting you up. You struggle to free yourself, but the branches are too strong. You feel one of the branches coiling around your neck, and try to scream. Nothing comes out though, and you feel the branch getting tighter, tighter, and tighter."

The character awakens suddenly, to find he has entangled himself in the bed sheets. The character will not be able to get back to sleep. If the character gets up, perhaps to look out the window at the night sky, to get a drink from down stairs, or simply to take a walk to calm himself down, run the following. Note that the window in the characters' room looks out over the backyard towards the willow tree. As he passes a window, he sees a white clad figure running from the house behind some of the trees in the back off the house. (Note: the figure does not go by the willow, but into the tress on the southwest side of the yard.)

If he goes out to investigate, as the character approaches the large tree which he saw the figure disappear around, he hears a growl and then a scream. As he rounds the tress he sees Elizabeth with blood on the front of her nightgown, surrounded by 5 wolves.

5 wolves THAC0 19; Dmg 1d4+1; AC 7; HD 2+2; hp 16; MV 18; SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ S; AL N; ML 9; XP 65.

During the battle, people in the house will begin to awaken, lights thrown on and people rush about. If any wolf receives 1/2 of its hp in damage it will flee. Once the last wolf is gone, Elizabeth will fall into her rescuer's arms. Breathing heavily and shaking physically, she whispers, "I was so scared. Thank you. Thank you. You saved he life."

She looks up into the rescuer's eyes with affection. Then people are heard rushing up, and she will break away from her rescuer's arms as they arrive. Crying that she was trying to see Drax, Elizabeth will be lead by her sister back to the house to care for her "wounds." Wallace will thank her rescuer greatly. Before returning to the house to check on his daughter. If any of the characters claims to be able to heal the girl, Wallace will wave them away, saying her sister can take care of her. The wound was not as bad as it looked.

D. Third day

The next morning when Anna goes to check on Ophelia, she is missing.

The "little beasties" are blamed, and everyone is upset. No sign of the dog is found. Observant characters may notice that Cordell is very depressed. If asked, he claims to have had a bad dream last night, in which the king of the "little beasties" came to his room to get him.

What happened to Ophelia. Last night Laveeda grew hungry. She grabbed the dog from Cordell's room, and snuck out of the house to feed.

Cordell saw her in her true form, but when he told his mother what he saw the next morning, she told him he must have been having a bad dream.

Outside, when Elizabeth saw the rescuer approaching, she summoned a pack of wolves, and threw the remains of the puppy to them. She then had the wolves attack the character to make it look convincing.

Elizabeth spends most of the next day "recovering", more from the fright then from her injuries. Her sister looks after her, nursing her.

Drax hears about the event, and rushes over in the early afternoon to see Elizabeth. After spending some time with her to ensure that she is all right, he seeks out the rescuer and thanks him warmly, saying if there is anything that he could every do to repay the rescuer he need but ask.

Since the wedding is tomorrow shortly after noon, the family is busy cleaning the yard and preparing the food. Again the characters can do what they like, and any offers to chip in on the preparations will be most appreciated.

E. Third night

That night, as dusk falls, Elizabeth will scream. She is in her room, which is dimly lit by a single candle. The first character to answer her call will discover a "little beastly" threatening her with a dagger. The beastly is killed if attacked in one stroke. Once it is dead, it can be identified as a goblin.

Shortly after this event, the rescuer discovers he has a scarf that belonging to Elizabeth, and must have accidentally picked it up when he investigated her scream. When he goes to return it, he discovers Elizabeth lightly clad in only her nightgown. She embraces him saying she fears the beasties. "I was foolish to go looking for one with courage so far off, when there is one so near." Expressing her "love", Elizabeth kisses the rescuer, and tries to force him to spend the night, a prisoner of her affections.

That night, "little beasties" will be discovered throughout the house.

At one time during the night, in each room of the house, one "beasty" will be seen. The "beasties" don't attack anyone, but they do snatch items, throw things around the rooms, and try to frighten the family more than harm them. Only if attacked, will one draw its dagger and attack.

11 "little beasties", goblins THAC0 20; Dmg dagger 1d4/1d3; AC 7; HD 1-1; hp 4; MV 6; SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ S; AL CE; ML 7; XP 15.

Any suggestion to search the entire house that night, will be rejected by Wallace and the rest of the family. "The beasties do not like sunlight.

Best to lock your door, and wait until morning." The characters need not take this advice. However, if they do search the house, they had best avoid Elizabeth's room, or they will expose Elizabeth and one of their companions in the act of adultery. If the rescuer is so caught, he is physically thrown from the house by Wallace in a fit of rage.

The rest of the party will need to do some fast talking to calm him down or they will be forced to leave as well.

F. Fourth day

The next morning, a search of the house turns up nothing, and the preparations for the wedding begin. The wedding beginnings in the early afternoon, and all of the family members are busy up until then.

As the ceremony begins, the family and a small gathering of townfolks form an aisle from the house's backdoor to the well in front of which stands the minister. (Note he is a civil representative, not a religious one.) Drax proceeds from his cabin with two companions. After they take their place next to the minister, Elizabeth, veiled and clothed completely in white, appears in the door way and proceeds down the aisle to the well.

The ceremony is similar to that performed by a justice of the peace, and is over in five minutes.

At the end of the ceremony, Drax lifts Elizabeth's veil to kiss her.

The following describes the scene that follows:

"I pronounce you as one, both husband and wife. You may kiss the bride," the minister directs Drax.

Drax reaches out and lifts Elizabeth's veil, and sunlight strikes her pale face. A ripping sound fills the air.

Elizabeth's pale complexion turns dark black. Boils break out across her face, and the skin of her face seems to loosen and droops down. She grows in size. Too small, tears appear on the wedding dress that struggles to contain her new form. She stands almost eight feet high despite the fact that she has developed a hump in her back forcing her to hunch over. Razor sharp claws burst from her hands.

A mangled dark mop replaces the former auburn color that was her hair. She smiles down at Drax. Her large jaws too big for her mouth, turn her smile into an evil grin.

She bends down and "kisses" her new husband, biting Drax viciously in the face. As Drax falls, she raises her head to the sky and cackles hideously, as blood drips from her gapping mouth.

Fear and Horror checks for everyone. All of the wedding guests fail theirs and either flee hysterically, getting in the characters' way, or remain frozen in shock. The rescuer should probably fail at least one of his checks.

Laveeda next turns and attacks the minister, mortally wounding him.

Next round, she heads for the forest to the west, attacking and killing one of Drax's companions. Once she reaches the treeline, Laveeda flees to the west. Remember that she takes 1 hp per turn when espoused to direct sunlight, so she is heading for the shade provided by the dense forest. If the characters try to chase after Laveeda, her movement rate of 18 allows her to quickly outdistance them. If one of the characters uses magic or has some magical device that will allow

him to catch up with her, Laveeda will turn back and attack. She should be more than a match for a lone character and will kill him unless the rest of his companions reach the area to intervene.

Drax survived the attack (he received 9 hp of damage from the bite), and will want to set out after Laveeda immediately, believing the hag kidnapped Elizabeth in order to replace her. Since he is a ranger, Drax can track the hag and will not lose her trail. He does not ask the characters to come with him, though he hopes they will.

Part 3 The Chase

A. First night - The riddle test

The pursuit last throughout the rest of the afternoon and into the night. Laveeda's trail leads roughly west. Shortly after night fall, it turns southwest towards the mountains of lower Tepest. Two hours after nightfall, when it looks as if it has become too dark to follow the trail, Drax will finally agree to stop for the night.

During the chase, remember the hag's eye worn by Drax. Laveeda and her sisters will be using it to keep track of the characters. The DM should allow the characters a 5% chance per attempt to detect the scrying.

Mages or priests should have a 10% chance. If the scrying is detected, the characters will see one of the hag's image on the hag's eye medallion. Any divination spell cast on the medallion should reveal its powers, as well as its potential as a weapon to be used against the hags.

That night, allow the characters to post a watch, then select the smartest player (player, not character) and run the following encounter when his character takes a turn at watch.

Laveeda has been keeping track of the characters' progress through the hags eye. She circles back during the night to their camp to engage one of the characters in a deadly game of wits.

You stare out at the night, straining to see if anything approaches your camp. Dark clouds obscure the sky, robbing you of the light from the moon and the stars. You realize the night sounds have grown silent, and the only sound you hear is the rhythmic breathing of your companions.

A voice suddenly pieces the silence, "Look, look, look. What tasting morsels we have hear."

Turning to the sound, you draw your weapon, but see nothing. From the other side of the camp a voice speaks, "Well, well, well. It looks as if this one thinks it can save itself from the stew pot." Twirling around to face the other direction, he strain to see the speaker, but there is no one there.

"Yes, this is a feisty one, and may think it can escape the pot, but lets see if it can think. Hmm."

>From another direction a voice says, "No, no. Silly girl, you should not talk to you food."

"We will, we will. Go ahead and ask it. Yes ask it to see it thinks," responds another voice from another part of the camp. All of the voices are female and have the same maniacally tone.

"I will ask it. Yes I will. Then we'll see if it can think like us." Finally one of the voices speaks to you, "What do you say dinner, do you think? Can you play the riddle game?"

The voices all are Laveeda's. She is not very close to the camp, and uses ventriloquism to make it appear that her voice is coming from different places around the camp. If the character tries to wake any of the others, he finds them fast asleep and cannot be aroused easily. If he tries to vehemently to awake his companions he could, but Laveeda will attack him before he can do so. Laveeda has cast a sleeping spell on the characters, making it difficult for them to wake. If combat does break out, each sleeping character should roll a Con check each round. If the character rolls less than half his Con score, he awakens. For each subsequent round of combat, give the characters a one point bonus to their rolls until they all are awake. Laveeda flees if more than 3 characters enter the fight.

If the character accepts the riddle challenge, the rules are as followed. Laveeda asks a riddle, and the character has 10 minutes to answer it. Then the character can ask Laveeda a riddle. The DM then has 10 minutes to answer the character's riddle. XP points should be awarded for correct answers and also if the character can stump the DM. Even if the DM is stumped, Laveeda will not admit to being so. If the character misses two riddles Laveeda attacks and carries the character off from the camp site, so she can kill and eat him without waking the other characters.

Laveeda will ask the following riddles in this order. The DM should feel free to replace this riddles with others, but should not make every riddles very difficult to answer.

1. "What walks on four legs when young, two when mature, and three when old?" (A man)
2. "Blue mirror of midnight's soul, sometime half but always whole." (The moon)

As Laveeda tells this riddle the ventriloquism spell ends, and her voice only comes from one location, that appears to be about 50 yards outside the camp's fire light.

3. "A box without hinges, key, or lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid." (An egg)

When Laveeda tells this riddle she is only 10 yards outside the camp's fire light.

4. "Thirty black horses upon a red hill, now they champ, now they stamp, now they stand still." (Her teeth and tongue.)

When Laveeda tells this riddle, she is on the edge of the camp's firelight, and she can barely be seen. Her face is high lighted by the fire's glow, and the DM should emphasize her large and powerful BLACK teeth, and perhaps imitate her as she runs her red tongue across them.

Sometime after Laveeda tells the above riddle, and before she answers the character's next riddle, the sleeping spell on the other characters wears off. One of the characters may mumble in his sleep, to alert the character on watch that the spell has worn off. Now with a shout, he can awake the entire camp. If he does so, Laveeda flees into the night. In he does not, and has gotten any of the riddles wrong, Laveeda attacks as above, after answering the last riddle.

B. Second day - the graveyard

The next day, the characters travel deeper into the mountains, the hags have had enough fun with the party and decide to destroy the characters. Laveeda's trail leads the characters to a small graveyard. The graveyard is surrounded by a small wooden fence, and is overgrown with weeds. It appears to have been abandoned. Many of the tombstones are so old the names are illegible and some have fallen over. There are two small mausoleums in the graveyard. A short distance into the cemetery the characters come across a large hole in the ground. The hole is 12 feet deep, 5 feet wide and 2 feet across. The hole is fresh, but there is no sign of who dug the hole or where the dirt went.

The hole was caused by a grave elemental ripping itself from the earth. The three hags have summoned the creature to destroy the party. It has concealed itself behind one of the mausoleums and will attack the party as they investigate the hole.

Grave elemental THAC0 9; Dmg 4d40; AC 0; HD 12; hp 84; MV 6; SA 1/hour sink at 12th level; SD +2 or bet to be hit; MR nil; SZ L; AL N; ML 15; XP 7,000.

C. Second day- the cave entrance

From the cemetery, the trail leads another two miles to a cave entrance. The cave is twelve feet high and five feet wide and appears to slope downward. The characters will have to carry their own light source or they will not be able to see as they travel deeper into the earth.

While there are no encounters in the tunnel, that does not mean it is empty. Near the entrance small spiders cast their webs. Flying insects flutter about. Bats roost from the ceiling. Deeper in, worms and crawling insects scuttle out of the characters' path.

D. Optional encounter

The following encounter is optional, and can be run as the party approaches the hags' lair, or as a reward once they have faced the hags and are returning to the surface.

As the party continues down the tunnel, and they notice a small side tunnel and a flickering light coming from it. While Laveeda's tracks continue down the main tunnel, the characters may wish to investigate the side tunnel. The side tunnel, which is a side from a few twists and turns, leads 200 feet to a small chamber. Inside the chamber is a slab of granite, 2' x 2' x 2'. A sword's hilt protrudes from the top of the block, and gives off a golden glow. Attempts to pull the sword from the stone will fail no matter what the character's strength. The stone is resistant to all spells such as transmute rock to mud, or transmute stone to flesh.

If the sides of the stone are examined symbols consisting of bars and dots are found. The bars and dots represent musical notes. A bard or character with a musical proficiency will recognize the symbols on a successful proficiency check. If the character then plays or sings the song, which requires another proficiency check, the sword's glow

brightens and it admits a humming similar to the notes of the song. If the singing character, and only the singing character, attempt to remove the sword while singing the sound, it comes free from the block easily.

The sword has the following powers. It is a flametongue sword with +1 to hit, +2 vs regenerating, +3 vs cold, and +4 vs undead. The sword is intelligent and has a NG alignment, however it can only communicate through empathy. The sword is a long sword why considering size and damage rolls, but is considered a short sword for speed factor and weight. Anyone proficient with a short or long sword can wield it.

The sword is a holy relic of the sun god, Pelor. (From the Greyhawk campaign setting. The DM could substitute another suitable god, which could be Apollo, or Lathander from the Forgotten Realms setting.) As such the sword can be used as a holy symbol by a priest or paladin of that faith to turn undead, or can be used to keep a vampire at bay. The sword enhances all cure spells cast on the wielder. All such cure spells heal at least the medium hp per spell. Thus cure light wounds does at least 5hp, cure serious wounds 9hp, and cure critical wounds 14. If the wielder is NG, the sword reveals all of the above powers to its wielder. If the wielder is any other N or G alignment the sword's functions will have to be discovered. Evil beings holding the sword for more than one round receive 1 hp for every level they have in damage.

How the sword came to be here, and what its history is will be a mystery the characters will have to discover at a later time.

E. The castle

After traveling two hours underneath the mountain, the tunnel opens into a huge chamber over 300' across. The tunnel opens 40' above the surface of a dark lake that fills the bottom of the cavern. The dark waters of the lake look ominous and prevent the characters from telling how deep the lake is. The ruins of a castle perch on a precipice that rises from the middle of the lake. A narrow ledge spans the distance, over 100', from the tunnel entrance with the castle's island. The span is 10' wide near the entrance but narrows to only 5' near its middle. From the castle's one remaining tower, a light glows just bright enough to barely illuminate the entire chamber. The characters have reached the hags' secret lair.

Leticia will meet the characters on the ledge that extends from the wall to the castle grounds. At the center where it is only 5' wide, Leticia waits invisible. Roll 1d6. On a 1-2 the lead character hears a cackle before Leticia attempts to push him over the edge. Otherwise the character has a -4 on his Dex check (see below).

As she appears Leticia will use her death gaze twice, before wielding her long wickedly curved dagger. Because of the treacherous footing any successful hit causes a Dex check or sends the person over the edge, a second Dex check could allow the person to grab the edge, otherwise he plummets 40' to the lake surface, taking 4d4 hp of damage, and unless he can swim he'll drown. Once Leticia is reduced to 20 or less she is knocked from the ledge and falls into the lake.

The ledge leads directly to the castle gates which lie open, the wooden doors long since rotted away. The castle takes up the entire island, so it is not possible for the characters to walk around the outside walls of the castle. Inside the castle walls, the castle looms across a small courtyard. The castle looks ancient and appears as if it will collapse into a pile of rubble at the slightest touch. The castle doors are shut, and the doors look newer than the rest of the castle. The walls of the castle connect with its back, thus there is no back entrance.

The castle doors require an open door to roll to force open. When the doors are opened dust and small pieces of plaster fall from the ceiling, emphasizing the castle's ruined state. The doors open into a large entrance hall. The glow outside is not present inside the castle and the hall is dark. A large staircase to the right leads up to a balcony which runs the width of the hall on the second story. Light comes from down that hallway. If the characters listen, they can hear two people arguing, but at this distance cannot tell who or over what. If the characters explore the first floor, they find nothing but empty rooms, filled with dust, rubble, and cobwebs.

From the top of the stairs the characters can see that the light is coming from under a pair of double doors, down the hall. If they approach the door, they can hear two of the hag sisters arguing. Lorinda and Laveeda are in the room, which is where Elizabeth is held. They never expected the characters to get this far, and are arguing over how they should handle the situation. Lorinda is blaming Laveeda for Leticia's "death" and threatening to leave and let Laveeda handle the mess. Laveeda is threatening her sister, demanding that she not leave.

The room

The room was the grand bedroom of the castle, and has been restored by the hags. The room is 20 feet deep and 30 feet long. Against the right wall is a canopied bed, on which Elizabeth is bound and gagged. On the opposite wall is a large fireplace where a large fire currently is burning.

Two cushioned chairs are pulled close to the fire place. Directly across from the doors is an archway that leads out onto a small balcony. The balcony protrudes from the back of the castle overlooking the lake below.

There are no other doors besides the doors the party enters by.

The two hags are standing in the middle of the room. When the characters enter, the sisters stop fighting immediately to face the characters. In the ensuing battle, the hags fight viciously, but because of their argument do not coordinate their attacks. Laveeda tries to stop any character from reaching Elizabeth and freeing her, though Lorinda will not. If the hag's eye was discovered and is now smashed, Lorinda is the hag who goes blind. She will turn into a bat, and abandon her sister.

Also, if Lorinda is reduced to 50 hp before any of the characters are down, she retreats in the same way.

Laveeda is left to fight the characters alone. The battle ranges all over the grand bed room, but by the end of the 6th round, or when she has only 20hp left, Laveeda will be on the balcony.

On the beginning of the 8th round, Leticia in the lake below, shapechanges into the form of an adult red dragon, and raises her head to the level of the balcony. All characters must make a fear check upon seeing the dragon. Those who fail run screaming from the room, which happens to be the smartest thing to do, as Leticia will breathe fire into the bed room on the next round. Damage from Leticia's breath weapon is 12d10+6. Characters who do not fail can tell what she intends to do and take whatever acts they deem necessary. Note that the characters have all of round eight to act and can act in round nine if they have initiative.

But take note that the breath weapon initiative modifier is only +1.

A possible course of action is given in this example. There are three characters in the party, A, B, C. One of the characters, C, has already fallen in the battle. When Leticia rises out of the water, one of the characters, A, fails his saving throw and runs at his top speed out of the room. At 12 MV, A can easily escape the room and run down the hall far enough not to be affected by the fiery breath. The character who made the save, B, rushes from the balcony and lifts up his unconscious companion.

At the same time, Drax, who made his save, rushes to Elizabeth and lifts her from the bed. On the next round, both had better have a lower initiative roll than Leticia in order to make it out of the room in time.

Leticia's breath weapon will blow down the doors to the room as well as a 5 foot section of the wall to either side. Leticia will attempt to claw her way into the castle but will proceed to destroy the castle. In the first round the balcony breaks off with Laveeda on it, sending her plummeting to the lake. In 5 rounds what is left of the castle collapses into the lake. During this time, if the characters flee across the span, Leticia cannot see them as she is on the other side of the castle. The party can then make it to the surface without being pursued.

Aftermath

In the aftermath of Laveeda's failed plan, her sisters will be very angry with her, and will probably not regenerate her for a few weeks out of spite. Lorinda and Leticia will not seek the characters out, being content to let them go their own way. After all, it was their sister who got entangled with the characters and then fouled everything up. Once they do revive Laveeda though, she may come looking for the characters. Until then the characters will have a few weeks of peace and should be able to leave Tepest for other lands.

Appendix

Hags

Laveeda is an annis

Annis THAC0 9; Dmg 1d8+8/1d8+8 12d4+1; AC 0; HD 7+7; MV 15; SA spells; SD spells; MR 20%; SZ L; AL CE; ML 15; XP 6,000.

Lorinda is a Green hag

Green hag THAC0 9; Dmg 1-2+6/1-2+6; AC -2; HD 9; MV 12; SA spells; SD spells; MR 35%; SZ M; AL NE; ML 17; XP 6,000.

Leticia is a sea hag

Sea hag THAC0 13; Dmg dagger 1d4/1d3 + 6; AC 7; HD 3; MV 12, Sw 15; SA spells; SD spells; MR 50%; SZ M; AL CE; ML 11; XP 975.

Drax is a 5th level ranger

THAC0 16; Dmg long sword 1d8/1d12 +1 and dagger 1d4/1d3 +1; AC 7; hp 34; MV 12; SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; AL NG; ML 15; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Chr 12. Hide in shadows 31%, Move silently 40%, tracking (15).

Equipment: long sword, dagger, leather armor.

HAUNTING MEMORIES

By D.J. Bandera

Introduction

This adventure is set in Falkovnia. The characters are traveling through the forested center of the realm. There they must face a band of ghostly raiders who terrorize the local communities. Unless the characters can unravel the secret of the ghosts, which leads into the past of the region's Dark Lord, the characters and the local residents are doomed.

The adventure is for 3-5 characters of 5th to 7th level. The party should not contain too many spellcasters. One mage and one priest would be about right for the adventure. The characters will be more challenged by this adventure if they have only one or two magical weapons of +2 or greater. Since the main antagonists are only hit by +2 or better weapons, this will require the characters to be creative in battling them.

Adventure Theme Song: Carmina Burana, or some other chanting music.

Part One - It Begins

A. Day 1 morning

The adventure begins with the characters traveling through the central region of Falkovnia. As for why they are there, it is best that the DM create a reason based on his current campaign. Some ideas are, the characters run afoul of Vlad Drakov's men, and have fled to the less populated areas of the domain to hide out until the pursuit dies down, or the mists could have transported them there, in which case they will have to determine where they are on their own.

The interior of Falkovnia has no large settled areas. The terrain is heavily forested, and hilly. The inhabitants gather in small village communities of 20 to 100 people. These communities are unusually gathered near each other and are less than a day's travel apart. No roads connect the villages, but trails wind their way through the forest between the communities. The corrupt members of the local military very rarely travel through this area, as the people are few, poor, and have little to steal. Characters hiding out, will be quite safe from the roving patrols that guard the main roads of the realm. The characters left the roads three days ago and traveled north into the forest, heading for a village called Sibl, where they have been told they can find sanctuary from Vlad's troops.

"Having traveled through these dark woods for three days, you were looking forward to the safety of human civilization again. But it seems that you will have to wait a while longer. The small village you have just entered has been burnt to the ground. The remains of about a dozen buildings lie spread around a large clearing in the forest. You see the bodies of more than a score of people lying about. There is no sign of any survivors, and no sign of the village's attackers."

A search of the village uncovers 47 corpses scattered throughout the clearing. A few have been burnt by flames. Many more show signs of violent deaths, and 9 of the victims have had their throats slit while standing against a tree, as if executed. The attack looks as if it took place no more than one day ago. No sign of the attackers is uncovered, and their trail disappears in the thick forest surrounding the village. After the party has finished searching the village, they can press on northwards towards the village of Sibl.

B. First Night

That night the camp is set up on a rise. The land slopes downward at a gradual angle, allowing the characters to see a good distance to the west. After nightfall the lights of a small village appear far in the distance. If the characters want to travel to the village instead of camping out, tell them it will take them a couple of hours of traveling in the dark to reach the village, which is out of their way.

Around midnight, the village is attacked and destroyed. The characters are alerted to this as the first buildings are set aflame. Read the following to the character on watch at that time.

"The silence of the dead of night is interrupted by voices. It sounds like singing, coming from far away. You turn to the village in the distance and realize the wind is carrying the voices across the distance from the village. As you listen closely, it sounds more like rhythmic chanting than singing. It strikes you as strange that the entire village (and it must be the entire village for the sound to reach you) would wake in the middle of the night and gather to chant.

The chanting begins to fade a few moments later, and you see one of the small lights of the village suddenly brighten. Another house suddenly grows brighter, and then two more. You strain to see what is causing the lights, and then you see it. The houses are on fire! The village must be under attack!"

As the party races towards the village there is a 10% increasing chance per turn, that they come across a patrol of 4 swordwraith scouts. If the wraiths have surprise they will track the party and attack if possible. If they are surprised the wraiths will attempt to flee and lead the characters away from the village.

No matter how quickly the party responds the town is destroyed and the attackers are gone before they arrive. If the party destroyed or chased away the scout patrol then 10 refugees escape east towards the characters. If not, only 1 scared young boy, David, makes it away.

If the party meets any refugees they must appear calm and unthreatening to the villagers or they will run away. The villagers will not talk of the attack, and only stare mutely at characters asking about it, but can tell the party that the next village is a day's travel northeast. It is called Sibl, and is where the villagers will head.

Part 2 - The Enemy Attacks

A. Day 2

On the afternoon of Day 2, the party enters Sibl. They can see that the village is preparing for battle. The men of the village have gathered in the center of town, carrying crudely made weapons to practice with. The town's defenders are led by Lieberman, a strong lumberjack, who wields one of the town's few real weapons, a large ax. Lieberman drafts every able body man and any strong looking woman in the defense of the village. The rest of the town's inhabitants, women children and the elderly are being sent north to another village, called Goli.

When the characters first reach the clearing, five of the village's men stop them, and demand to know their names and purpose. If the party are traveling with any refugees from the other village, they will vouch for the characters. Otherwise, the five men question the characters extensively. The characters are then pressed into duty.

The villagers have built a 4 foot high wooden wall around the village. There is only about 50 yards of clearing between the wall and the surrounding woodlands, allowing an enemy to approach very close before being spotted. From survivors of other attacks the villagers have learned that the attacks come at night, and from the west. Lieberman place most of his 35 man force on the west side of the village. The villagers will not send out a patrol unless the characters suggest it. The patrols have a 50% chance of discovering a 4 wraith scouting patrol that night. Otherwise, the second night passes uneventfully, as does the next day. During this time the characters can help the villagers prepare defenses in any way they wish.

B. Day 3, night - The attack

About an hour before midnight, read the following to the characters.

"Late into the night, you stand among the defenders of Sibl, waiting. These simple peasants grip their crude weapons with determination to defend their homes. But you can see they are nervous. A middle-aged man to your right paces back and forth in agitation. The man to your left stares out into the darkened night, not speaking a word. Others mumble conversations, but no one talks loudly. They have lit many torches to light most of the village, but their light does not penetrate the thick darkness of the forest, such as short distance away.

The silence of the night is pierced by the chanting of many voices. The chanting is low, but still audible, and is coming from the woods on the west side of the village. The villagers gather nearer, straining to see the chanters, but the darkness of the woods reveals nothing. As you gaze into the darkened forest, you think you see red fire flies. But the small red lights you see don't move erratically as fire flies do, and they travel in pairs. Suddenly the volume of the chanting increases greatly, and the tempo increases. A score of figures, with red glowing eyes, break from the cover of

the forest and charge.”

The nature of the attackers, while not apparent at first, quickly becomes clear as the twenty swordwraiths attack the west side of the village. After 5 rounds of fighting, or if half of the swordwraiths are beaten down, the attackers break off fleeing into the woods. Twenty-one of the villagers pursue the fleeing figures into the woods. The characters can join them, or remain in the village. The fleeing wraiths lead their pursuers into a clearing a quarter of a mile from the village. In the clearing an ambush has been prepared. On one side of the clearing are ten more swordwraiths. These swordwraiths are mounted on undead horses, and charge into the villagers. Once the ambush is sprung, the fleeing swordwraiths turn back and attack as well. The pursuing villagers are all killed. At the same time twenty more swordwraiths attack the town from the east. They set fire to buildings, and attack the remaining defenders of the village.

The village will be destroyed, unless the party miraculously manage to defeat the entire band of swordwraiths. For the party to remain alive, they must either flee the village to either the north or south, or hide from the attackers. If the characters do hide from the wraiths, they can follow a group of the attackers back through the forest.

C. Burial mounds

The wraiths’ path remains visible for three hours after they have passed. After that it begins to fade, and by morning, it appears as if the path never existed at all. Following a group of swordwraiths, the characters are lead to a large burial mound in the forest, ten miles to the west southwest of the village of Sibl.

As long as the characters remain hidden, they can watch the swordwraiths gather in a circle and spend the rest of the night talking and boasting about the night’s battle. Before dawn, the swordwraiths retire into the mound, sealing the entrance for the night.

The burial mound is a man-made hill, 50’ tall, and almost 100’ in diameter. There is only one entrance into the mound, blocked by a granite door, 1’ thick. To open the door requires a knock or more powerful magic, or a combined strength of 50. Behind the door, a short narrow hallway leads deeper into the hill. The hallway leads to a circular room at the center of the mound. The room’s ceiling is domed and made of marble blocks, into which is carved various epithets and slogans praising the valor of fallen warriors. The walls of the room are earthen, and the twenty swordwraiths lie in small niches carved into the earth.

During the day the swordwraiths are vulnerable. They must rest during the day, to heal any wounds they have received. During the daylight hours, the swordwraiths are vulnerable to silver weapons or weapons of +1 or better. While not harmed by sunlight, swordwraiths will avoid exposure to it at all costs. If the characters try to block the entrance to seal the wraiths inside, the wraiths will be trapped in the mound for three days. It takes them that long to dig out another exit.

Part 3 - Final Stand

D. The Village of Goli

Twelve miles north of Sibl, is the next village, Goli, where all the surviving refugees from the destroyed villages have gathered. Goli is the last village in the area. The men here expect an attack and are building defenses including (pits, spikes to slow a charge, buildings set to explode if they are set aflame, rope snares to dismount riders.) There is a total of 60 men and women waiting to fight. Those people who cannot fight will be sent north into the hills to hide.

Since the characters have already faced off against the attackers, the villagers will be grateful for any advice the characters can give them. If the characters ask to be in-charge of the village’s defenses, the townsfolk agree, and will follow the characters’ orders.

The village of Goli is the largest in the area. Here the people have cleared some of the land around the village for farming. The fields are on the south and west sides of town and are not very large, but they do give the defenders a clear view of attackers coming from these directions. Any attackers would have to cross the 300 yards of clearing to reach the village.

The characters have the rest of that day, and the next to prepare the villagers for the attack. On the night of day 5, the swordwraiths will attack the town.

E. Day 5, night - The Battle of Goli

An hour before midnight on the fifth night, the chanting begins. It comes from the southwest, and draws the defenders into the fields. Unless the characters make other arrangements, 1/4 of the force is left in town, and the rest await the attack in the fields.

The attack comes from the south and west. What remains of the cavalry attacks from the west, and rotates south. A group of twenty swordwraiths on foot attack from the south and try to drive the defenders into the path of the cavalry. The ten remaining footsoldiers enter the town from the east and attack the defenders in the village.

The men in the field are all lost, but the men in the town manage to hold out for a little while. Depending on where the characters are, they may be fighting for their lives. If they joined the men in the fields they will be hard pressed on two sides by the swordwraiths. However, if they remained back in the village, they face only 10 swordwraiths. The villagers occupy half of the wraiths, leaving five for the party to attack. After 10 rounds, the swordwraiths in the fields finish off the last of the defenders outside the village, and join the fight raging in the village. As the battle rages on, most of the town is destroyed. One of the swordwraiths will be seen stooping down to examine the tracks of the refugees that fled the day before. On the next round the rest of the wraiths flee into the night.

Eight of the defenders will have survived the attack. They will have seen the swordwraith studying the refugees' trail, and will wish to rush off to protect the refugees. The party can travel to the refugee camp, or can pursue the fleeing swordwraiths.

F. Pursuit

The wraiths' trail is just as visible as the previous one. However, the swordwraiths will prepare an ambush for anyone following them. Five swordwraiths will spring from concealment and attack. If the PC's are victorious they can continue down the trail. If the characters flee, they will lose the trail and not be able to find the swordwraiths' destination. Otherwise, the characters can follow the trail to another burial mound.

Part 4 The Good Old Days

A. Burial Mounds

The trail leads roughly west for fifteen miles. The characters will not reach the end until after dawn. The trail ends at a collection of burial mounds. Three of the artificial hills are grouped in a clearing in the woods. The opening of each of the mounds faces the center of the clearing. In the clearing's center is a pedestal, here the dead would be laid out with honors before their entombment. The pedestal is occupied when the characters arrive. Lying on it, dressed in full armor, with sword and shield, is the body of an old man. If approached, the dead man speaks, "What are you youngsters gauging at? Don't you know how to show your respect."

The "dead" man is Mircea Buchen and he is not dead, though he longs to be. Mircea Buchen was a lieutenant in Vlad Drakov's army when it first entered Ravenloft over 50 years ago. He fought with the troops in the first two invasions attempts of Darkon as well as attempts made on other domains. He has been retired for many years now. During his retirement Buchen tried to forget the years of military failures spent in Ravenloft, and day dreamed of his youth when victories were common and death in battle was honorable. He is disgusted with the lack of victories of the falkovnian army.

As he grew older, he began to wish he had died in one of the many victorious battles of his youth. His one desire was to die honorably in combat. To avoid what he considered the pitiful sight of the falkovnian soldiers, he took to wandering in the wilderness, where he lost himself in imaginary battles from his youth. He also secretly hoped to be attacked by some wild creature so he could die while fighting. One day he came across the burial mounds in the forest. Over the years he had forgotten, but upon seeing them he remember their purpose. This was where the death from the first invasion of Darkon were buried. Most were part of Drakov's original army and had been friends of Mircea. Here they had been buried with full honors after their fall in combat.

Mircea's dreams and desires for the good old days awakened the spirits of his former comrades. Each night as he lays sleeping, his former friends arise as sword wraiths, and instilled with dreams of former glory set out to recapture those dreams. The wraiths set out for the Darkon boarder in an attempt to invade the land again, but discovered they were unable to travel more than 50 miles from where Mircea lay sleeping. Unable to fight their hated enemy, they attacked the only people they were able, those in the nearby villages. They see these battles as training, or a warm up to their planned invasion of Darkon.

Mircea will converse freely with the characters, talking about the good old days, honoring those who have fallen in combat, and even the history of the dark lord, Vlad Drakov. If the characters listen patiently to his stories,

Mircea will take a liking to them, and ask them to recount stories of their feats.

If impressed by their accomplishments, Mircea will confide in the party, telling them of his desire for death in combat. He will challenge one of the fighters in the party to honorable combat to the death. Refusals or patronizing ("Sure, why don't you fight the wizard. We'll even tie one of his hands behind his back.") will insult him greatly.

If any of the characters accept, Mircea asks for a few minutes to prepare himself, before meeting his opponent in the middle of the clearing. Mircea is still a skilled warrior, but his strength has waned. Beginning on the fourth round of combat, he begins to tire, resulting in a -1 to hit, damage, and initiative rolls. Every other round after that, subtract another 1 point as his exhaustion builds. Mircea will be grateful if he is killed before the tenth round ends. After that he will be so exhausted, he will see his death as a mercy killing, and not honorable death in combat. If killed before then, he will see his death as honorably facing a more powerful foe and being defeated.

Once defeated, the swordwraiths will no longer rise at dusk to terrorize the land. However, the characters must bury Mircea with honors. This means lying him on the pedestal and paying their respect to a fallen soldier for the rest of the day and night. At dawn he should be entombed in one of the burial mounds. If this is not done, Mircea will rise as a swordwraith in ten days, and will re-animate the other swordwraiths, and lead them on raids throughout Falkovnia.

Mircea Buchen 6th level fighter THAC0 15; Dmg by weapon; AC 2; hp 35; MV 9; SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; AL LE; ML 14; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Chr 15. Equipment: Longsword 1d8/ 1d12, shield, and plate mail armor..

B. Failure - the assault

If the characters do not defeat Mircea the rest of the swordwraiths attack the refugee camp on the night of the sixth day. The remaining footsoldiers charge the defenders on top of a small hill and attempt to send the refugees into flight, while the cavalry waits to run them down. Unless the characters can defeat the remaining swordwraiths, the refugees are slaughtered.

Appendix

40 Swordwraiths THAC0 13; Dmg by weapon; AC 3; HD 7; hp 35; MV 9; SA 3/2 attacks per round. Each hit drains 1 Str from victim; SD Immune to sleep, charm, and other mind-affecting magic. Turned as vampires. +2 or better to be hit; MR nil; SZ M; AL LE; ML 20. Equipment: Longsword 1d8/ 1d12, spear 1d6/ 1d8, battle ax 1d8/ 1d8, or lance 1d6+1/ 2d6.

The swordwraiths are the spirits of Mircea Buchen's fallen comrades. Their spirits have been drawn back to their bodies by Buchen's intense memories of the past. During combat, all of the swordwraiths perform a war chant to inspire themselves, and send fear into their enemies. The chant, which is spoken in an ancient language of Kyrnn, causes all creatures with less than 1 HD to fight at -1 to hit and morale due to fear. Any creatures greater than 1 HD can make a fear check to avoid this affect. The swordwraiths do not quite understand what has happened, and do not at first realize they are undead. As such they are not aware of all of their abilities and do not take advantage of them. While the wraiths are immune to weapons of less than +2, the swordwraiths do not realize this and will defend themselves from all attacks, and may even retreat from someone who is a better fighter. Gradually they will uncover their potential, but until then their tactics do not take into consideration the fact that they are immune to most forms of damage, and are not aware of how little a threat the local townsfolk pose to them.

While the swordwraiths can be defeated in combat, as long as Mircea is still alive they will reform in a weeks time. Thus only by granting Mircea his request can the characters lay the swordwraiths to rest. However, if any of the characters should take something from one of the burial mounds, be it a sword or a shield, the body whom it was stolen from will rise as a swordwraith and track down the thief. The swordwraith will not stop until the thief is dead or the object is returned. If defeated in combat, another swordwraith will animate and seek out the thief.

10 Undead horses THAC0 18; Dmg 1d6/ 1d6/ 1d4; AC 7; HD 3+1; hp 16; MV 18; SA nil; SD immune to sleep, charm, hold, and other mind controlling spells, and cold. Turned as wraiths; MR nil; SZ L; AL N; ML 20.

Daniel J Bandera

A BIT RIPE THIS SEASON

By Skippy <wclarke@PDQ.NET>

"A Bit Ripe this Season" is an AD&D Side Trek adventure for any number of characters of any level, as the resolution can (and should) be met with no combat. DMs could use this adventure to help younger players with their "role"-playing skills, or to give older players a break from "hack-and-slash." The party should consist of good aligned characters, and at least one character who has an interest in nature and its creatures (elf or ranger).

The module should be placed in a wooded area of any temperate climate where there was no frost the previous winter or where fall has arrived late. The adventure can be set in any gaming world (this could even be run in a Ravenloft campaign where there has been a recent encounter with were-creatures).

The Intruding Bear

The characters are entering a small logging town, known as "Logston." They enter through the southern road, known as "Trade Road." The town is a small logging town. As the party enters the town read the following:

As you enter the town you see a quiet little town that seems to be laid out with an exact design. Small cottages dot several side streets on the left and right. Sitting behind one of the houses to the right you see two boys about ten years old. They are sitting around a large basket of berries. Their faces, necks, and hands are red from eating the berries. They laugh very loudly at some private joke and then try to quiet themselves after one of them falls over backwards.

Upon reaching the "Y" in the road, read the following to the players:

The silence of this small town is broken by the scream of an obviously terrified woman. The scream comes from the west end of town. You all immediately turn your heads, only to find that buildings on the main street obstruct your view.

This last year has been an unusually warm one (either there was no frost last year or a late fall this year) and the fruit trees have not shed their bounty. In fact, the fruit has actually fermented while hanging on the trees, causing any creature whom eats them to become intoxicated. The mother bear who has caused the commotion in town has been feeding herself from this food and is now somewhat intoxicated. As the heroes round the curve in the road read the following to them:

Upon rounding the corner you see a crowd is beginning to gather in the street. The distraught woman is standing in front of the inn and is being held back by two men as her screams turn to sobs of distress.

As you move closer you are able to better determine what is causing all the commotion. A brown bear is in the middle of the street, and it is hovering over a toddler who was playing there. The bear is not being aggressive and is simply sniffing the child and nuzzling the child with it's nose. Every so often it will turn its head towards the gathering crowd and looks at them. It seems confused

The woman continues to try and break free from the men, pleading the following: "Someone, help my baby... Please someone do something...

Don't let it hurt my baby..." Each one of these cries is interspersed with tears of desperation.

Then one of the men holding her offers a response with, "Just wait it out... The bear hasn't hurt anyone yet... It always just leaves... If we don't startle the bear, it won't hurt the baby."

Bear, Brown (1): INT semi; AL N; AC 6 (3*); MV 12 (6*); HD 5+5; hp 28; THAC0 15 (12*); #AT 3; Dmg 1-6(+3*)/1-6(+3*)/1-8(+3*) (claw/claw/bite); SA Hug, Intoxicated Rage; SD none; SZ L (9' + tall) ML 10 (15*); XP 420; MM
*The parenthetical values represent the bear in her intoxicated state.

Any provocation will cause the bear to enter an explosive rage, much like that of a berserker. The bear is intoxicated and is protecting what she thinks is a cub, this is a very deadly combination.

The mother bear has two cubs of her own and has recently found two orphaned cubs, which she has taken as her own. She has not been able to kill enough food for herself and the four growing cubs. She feeds the cubs primarily off of the kills, while she has resorted to natural vegetation as her staple food. Due to her current intoxication, her inhibitions regarding humans have greatly diminished. She has wandered into the town, once again, confused and afraid.

If anyone attempts to talk with animals (or any similar actions), success is guaranteed. The bear is quite in the mood to talk, but its speech is slurred, making it incomprehensible. The bear will understand anything said to it, but it will not be able to respond in a coherent manner.

The mother bear is not combative in her current state and currently is thinking that the baby is one of her cubs. She is currently trying to figure out whether the "cub" is really hers or not.

It should be impressed upon the heroes that tangling with a bear is a bad thing to do, and that confronting the bear will assuredly bring harm to the child. If the child is harmed, the town will turn against the heroes. If the heroes leave the bear alone or simply speak with her, she will soon realize that the baby is not hers and leave the town.

When she leaves she walks in not-so-straight lines. Once she reaches the trees she will begin to run towards her grove. Once the bear leaves the town, people rush around the mother and child, impeding the progress of the heroes out of town.

Over Hill, Over Dale

The real fun of the adventure now begins. The bear is making no attempts to hide its way through the woods, and its weaving path could be tracked by even the most inept adventurer. The woods quickly grow dense, and even though the bear is moving at a reduced rate, this is its home and it can easily outdistance the PCs. The PCs movement rate with no backpacks, flowing clothing or accessories would be 6, general movement is slowed to 4, and movement with large animals or horses is a crawling 3. This slowed pace is not intended to make the PCs lose track of the bear, but to give them an opportunity to gather clues as to what has happened.

Any ranger or elf PC should be given a chance to make an intelligence check to notice that there are still berries hanging from the trees, much later in the season than normal. The berries grow wild in the woods and are commonly known as "wild berries." They grow on trees in bunches like grapes, and are very commonly used for wines, jams, and preserves. Any character from the region should also be allowed to make an intelligence check to remember that either fall is late this year or that there was no frost last year.

Along the way the PCs should have several encounters with wildlife that have also partaken of the natural wine. Several bird encounters are outlined here as an example. Other encounters could include chattering squirrels, kamikaze chipmunks, or other native forest creatures. (When playtesting I randomly rolled a pixie that worked well. The pixie was intoxicated and did nothing but "buzz" the party, cast dancing lights, laugh, and then fall over, before flying away).

Bird, Small Songbird (d3+1): AL N; AC 7; MV 1, FL 36(B); HD 1-2hp; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1 (beak); SA none; SD none; SZ T (6" - 9"); ML 8; XP 15

Eating just a few of the alcoholic berries proves quite intoxicating for these small birds. Their reactions to their inebriated state should prove comical and informative.

Hanging Around: One small bird has passed out while sitting on a low tree branch. Even though he is now hanging upside-down, his feet are still clamped tightly to the branch. The bird is fine and can't readily be awoken. Poking the bird may elicit a small flutter of the wings or warble; but it will cause it to swing gently underneath the branch.

Crash Landing: While one bird is perched on a low branch another one comes in for a landing and misses his mark totally, plowing into the seated songbird. The end result is much like "Hanging Around" except that the bird is awake and can't seem to convince itself to let go of the branch.

Buzzing the Tower: One or more birds may begin to fly very low over the party, trying to get the party involved in some sort of childish play-time. The birds will not actually run into party members but will fly close enough to where the heroes will seek cover.

Bar Room Quartet: One or more birds will begin to sing a song that is quite off-pitch, often taking the song to places it was never intended.

Other birds will join in the festivities and begin singing. Soon the quartet will begin to sound like a bunch of drunken sailors enjoying themselves at a local tavern.

Any PC that attempts to talk with the birds will find them full of chatter and quite excited. The birds don't have the vocabulary to correctly explain their drunken state, but will try to express how they feel with more common expressions.

Home Sweet Home

After the PCs track the bear for several hundred yards, they reach a clearing in the woods. The clearing is about 10 yards across and is flanked by a tall, rotted tree stump and its broken trunk, leaning next to it. There are also a couple of large rocks in the area. The PCs should be able to get close to the clearing without drawing the suspicion of the mother bear, she is not very alert in her current state. When the PCs approach the clearing, read the following

The mother bear is lying in the back left corner of the clearing, next to a tree stump. There are four bear cubs in the clearing as well. Two of the cubs are playing with each other. They are fighting as cubs do, though they are missing each other widely with their paw swipes, often falling on their faces or backsides in the process. Another bear is trying in vain to climb a tree. He can never get over three to four feet off the ground before falling. The last cub is lying on its back. If you aren't mistaken you would swear that this last cub is smiling, and is actually laughing - or what you think a bear would look like if it were laughing.

Bear, Brown (Cub) (4): INT semi; AL N; AC 10; MV 6; HD 1+1; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-3 (claw/claw/bite); SA none; SD none; SZ S; ML 6; XP 105; MM

If asked the mother bear will tell the PCs that two of the cubs are hers, the other two were orphaned when a hunter shot their mother. She is unable to fully hunt for herself and all four cubs. She has supplemented their diets with the "wild berries." The PCs should be near a resolution at this point.

Possible Resolutions

Though there are many resolutions to this adventure, they can be as simple or as elaborate as the PCs wish, several are outlined here.

--The least desirable is that the players kill the mother bear and possibly her cubs. This option should not be taken if this adventure is run for the proper party.

--Another option is for the party to help the mother bear and cubs get drunk and pass out on the berries, and for them to then clear out the berries in the region. This would take some time, but is possible. A similar option would be to trap the bears and then clear the area.

--The party could offer to help the mother supplement her food supply by hunting for her or with her.

The townspeople will help with any of the above ideas, they may also be inclined to process the berries into wine and then have a festival in a week's time and invite the party back. It could even become a yearly event.

Experience points in the adventure should be awarded for good role-playing. If the PCs intentionally kill the bear or her cubs, impose a penalty of twice their XP on each PC. If the PCs attack the bear while it is near the baby, impose an XP penalty of ten-times the bear on each PC, for the bear's and the child's lives. If the PCs accidentally kill any of the bears, during a non-lethal plan, award no XP for the bear or her cubs. If the PCs complete the adventure using a plan that placed the bear or her cubs in possible danger, award them twice the XP of the bears. If they resolve the issue without ever placing the bears in any harm, award them four-times the XP of the bears, along with role-playing bonuses.

THE HAND

By Matthew Barrett <furndr@TENFORWARD.COM>

I combined three ideas from the original black book (Jack is Back, The Beast, and The Hand) to create this:

The PC's arrive in town somewhere in Nova Vaasa to learn about a mysterious strangler who has recently been victimizing the townsfolk, particularly--but not exclusively--young women. The townsfolk tell them that the stranglings are the result of a curse, and the PC's learn the following story:

About a century and a half ago, the ruling families of Nova Vaasa were taking sides in a bitter power struggle that eventually led to almost thirty years of war. It was the custom of battle to capture the enemy's flag only upon their surrender, and this could never be by force. The flag was then taken as a trophy and a sign of fealty to the conquering house.

One family's warriors committed a heinous act of cowardice while fleeing the battlefield, siezing the standard bearer during their retreat and commanding him to give them the flag or they would kill him. He cursed them for cowards and traitors, vowing to retain the standard in his hands until they found an honorable way to take it. He swore that though they would kill him, they would never remove the flag from his hands nor gain the respect they tried to take by force.

Kill him they did, only to find his words were all too accurate: even in death his hands gripped the flagstaff and refused to let go, even tightening their grip. With their pursuers close behind, the wretched soldiers cut the man's hands off and rode off with the grisly trophy they had forfeited their honor for.

The rest of the prophecy continued to bear out: the hands could not be removed, having seemed to dug unto the wood and become part of it. Instead of rotting, they became dried and mummified, and their presence in the less-than-noble family's vault became a sign of shame and scorn from tother houses. Nobody would take the flag from them, not even the family that it belonged to, who had buried their standard-bearer with honors, if without his hands. The treacherous house quickly began to decline in respect and wealth, and it began to be noised about that when the last member of the line fell in disgrace, the hands would release, and that they should be buried with their owner then at last.

The PC's arrive just after the last member of this infamous family is about to be married. She would be the last of her name, and the curse would be complete, but that her husband, one of the growing middle class, agreed to take her name when they are married. His family gains nobility, hers gains a chance to continue, and it would seem that both sides benefit.

When she is found murdered in her bridal bed, her ashen-faced new-husband-turned-widower describes a severed hand waking him up in the middle of the night, and turning to see her strangled corpse lying next to him. Everyone begins to speak about the hands coming to life, angered at the prospect of having to wait another hundred years. Then the groom's mother is found dead, and then another woman, and the townsfolk realize that the terror has only begun....

Naturally, the PC's will investigate, and most of the reports are consistent with the legend and the rumors. But at some point, they will confront the hand themselves, and at that point, they will have to separate truth from legend. Although it stays in the dark most of the time, they will eventually see that the hand they are chasing belongs to a WOMAN, and that there is another story they must discover on their own:

The groom in this adventure has had many affairs throughout his short life, and one in particular many years ago with a young, beautiful servant girl who was hopelessly, madly in love with him to the point of obsession. His mother told him to do something about the girl before she started a scandal that would prevent them from gaining the nobility they sought. So, he arranged to be rid of her. Telling her he was going to marry her and run away with her, he told her to meet him by the river at night. He gave her a ring, took her out in a boat, and pushed her in. She struggled to get back in, and he drew his sword and finished the job. Only upon returning to shore did he find her hand still clinging to one of the oars, neatly severed just below the wrist by his blade. He tried to get the grisly thing off, but found it was gripping the oar too tightly, as if still exhibiting the desperate need to live that she had when he finished her off. Slick and smooth from the trip in the water, clinging tenaciously to the oar with rigor mortis, the hand defied his best efforts to remove it.

After a while he was forced to leave the hand there and go back for it in the morning. That night, he regretted not using his sword, which he had avoided using for fear of damaging the oar and arousing suspicion. He was awake most of the night, and went early the next morning to dispose of the hand properly, only to find it gone....

The groom was the one who committed the first murder, after his new bride found out about his affairs on their wedding night. She threatened to have their marriage annulled and cut his family off from nobility forever, and in a rage, he struck her. Drunk with rage and wine from the wedding, he passed out and awoke to feel fingers against his cheeks, caressing him. He turned and found his wife dead, and the hand that he had cut off his lover beside him in bed, still wearing the ring that he had placed on it. He screamed in mortal terror, causing the hand to flee and the servants to come running. He was stammering about a hand, and they inferred the rest.

The groom is the truly evil one in this adventure, having embraced evil on a number of occasions. The hand is killing people to win his affection again, and out of jealousy. It kills his mother because it thinks she made him stop loving her, kills two of his other lovers out of jealousy, kills a few other women because they appear to be getting "too close" to the object of its affections, etc. It spends a lot of time around him, but never tries to attack him. He is trying to

destroy the hand without anyone knowing the truth; he will try to keep the "standard bearer" rumors going as much as possible.

If/when the PC's expose him, he flies into a rage, and swears revenge. I hope to make him a recurring villain in my games, as he tries to get even with those who ruined him. I can see him living deep in the woods by the river, having a few special "gifts" from the Dark Powers for his fiendishness....

Here is the order the murders will proceed in unchecked. A "g" refers to someone killed by Martin Greysmere. An "h" refers to someone killed by Marta.

Day 1--Aladrine Greysmere (g/h) Killed on the wedding night (Night 1)

Day 2--Martin is horribly shaken, people begin to talk about the hand coming to life for revenge. Tell PC's the above story. That night, Martin's mother dies in her sleep (h)

Day 3--Martin is still inconsolable, especially horrified after the death of Bess Avereas. [(h) Killed during the day, after a tryst with Martin, where he explains he wishes to continue their "arrangement" later, perhaps setting a date, or delaying things if the PC's are already close.] He blames himself, naturally, and the villagers begin to assume that anyone who befriends Martin will fall victim to the curse. Very few of them actually begin to avoid him, but they are searching for an explanation.

Next deaths, spaced according to DM's taste:

4th--Telli Voracon--servant of Martin Greysmere (h) Killed for her proximity to Martin (she holds the position formerly held by the hand's owner.) If he is bold enough, he may have made some advances to her. This girl dies while serving Martin's dinner, hopefully with the PC's around to witness that Martin isn't responsible. After this death, the villagers refuse to help defend him, convinced tha justice is taking its course.

5th--Pwenton Robb (g) Manservant of the Avereas. Killed by Martin with Marie's help because he discovered Martin's cover-up of the tryst with Bess. (Day 4)

6th--Marie Heliand (h) Kills herself while waiting for groom to arrive at their tryst, as she sees the hand approaching. After participating in murder #5, she acts differently, being wracked with guilt. (Day 4)

7th--Vors Umisteed (g) Little boy who works for Martin Greysmere. Killed because he noticed the ring on the hand at Telli's death (Night 4)

Hand spotted often, trying to get near Martin; he claims that it is making attempts on his life, but this is false. These encounters are interspersed with the deaths. Martin will try to reinforce any explanation as to why the hand does not kill him, as his repeated survival becomes questionable. His most likely course is to lament that the hand intends to punish him for extending the Greysmere name, by killing all those associated with him.

Marta can be laid to rest in a few ways: by "taking" Martin into the river with her (her ultimate goal), by destroying her ghost in the river, by sealing her completely in the river, or by having her "marriage" to Martin annulled. This last two methods are most favorable for many reasons: first, they allows Martin to face justice, which lawful PCs will prefer, and second, they are as easy as removing the ring from her hand and throwing either the ring or hand into the river. Throwing the hand into the river forces Martin's original prayer into effect, binding her to the river forever--though she will have one last attempt to take him if he is nearby. Throwing the ring into the river ends her delusion of being married to him, and she leaves.

Matthew Barrett

FIVE DEADLY HANDS
By R. Sweeney

Deadly Hands

Activity Cycle: Nocturnal

Diet: None

Alignment: CE

MV:9"/3" jump 10'

HD:1+2

#A:1/round

Damage/Attack: 2-8

Special Defenses: Immune to Turning, Charm, Sleep, Hold, +1 or brass weapon to hit.

Special Attacks: Spells, (Charm Hands, Create Hags Eye, Wizard Mark)

The hands originate from an Egyptian land, perhaps Anktepot's. They were the hands of 5 former slaves who had worked on a royal tomb. These slaves escaped and plotted to pilfer the royal tomb of its treasures. Instead, they were caught, their hands dismembered, and these hands mummified and placed within the tomb to act as its guardians.

The 5 deadly hands regenerate one hp/round. (Other hands created by them regenerate on hp per night.) If 'destroyed', that is reduced to less than -10 hps or 'killed' by fire or acid, they reform in one hour. If a created hand is reduced to less than -10 hps, it is permanently disabled.

Magical weapons, fire, silver weapons, or holy water is required to harm them. Holy water burns the hand for 3d8 points of damage and represents one of their great weaknesses. Further, they cannot cross a line of copper or brass, nor can they touch copper items. (They were originally created in the Age of Brass, not the Iron Age). Even a line of copper coins prevents them from crossing on that surface or jumping over the line. However, they can crawl on walls like a spider.. and thus can walk across the ceiling and drop down inside the circle provided the ceiling is at least 10' away from the copper items on the floor.

The 5 original hands may work a few magical spells/magical effects. By tapping their claws together in a rhythm, they can *charm* the hands of any opponent unless that opponent makes a save vs spell. Charmed hands become sentient and telepathically linked to the remainder of the colony of hands.

They will attack their possessor as if they were deadly hands severed from the body. They also seek to cut themselves free at the earliest opportunity. Once they have done this, they scuttle away to join the group.

The victim normally bleeds to death shortly thereafter.

Note: each of the victim's hands save separately. If the saving throw for a given hand is made, the victim need not fear losing control of that hand for the remainder of the day, but the 5 deadly hands can tap out their spell anew the next nightfall.

The 5 deadly hands can also remove the eye of a victim and cast an enchantment over it so that the whole of the group can see through it. This eye can be left unattended and still provide the group with clairvoyance.

In all aspects, it functions like a "hag's eye" yet looks like a dismembered human eye.. still moist.

The 5 deadly hands can also scribe a wizard mark independently of each other.

Each of the original 5 hands can move silently, and hide in shadows with 95% probability.

The hands were each placed in a specially scribed sandstone box. This box would open and release the hands when any items were disturbed in the burial chamber or when an inscription on the boxes was read aloud. (Comprehend Languages Spell, Tongues Spell, or Thiefling Read Languages skill). Note, however, reading the inscription aloud will only open the box if the words are pronounced in their native language (Egyptian).

Five such boxes, one for each hand, were created.

One day, looters robbed the tomb. The hands were released and fought the looters. The hands, however, were easily dispatched.. and the tomb looted anyway.

The hands, of course, reanimated one hour after being destroyed and pursued the looters. Since their own strength was not enough to defeat the looters, they charmed other hands.. severed them.. and added to their group. The hands came in a deadly swarm.. slaying any looters they could catch up with. Some, however, scattered to distant lands. A few, by serendipity, managed to trap a severed hand in the enscribed boxes.. the hands immediately went to stasis.

These boxes, with the hands locked inside in stasis were sold by the looters. The hands sought out the looter, avenged their crime, and then proceeded to search for the artifacts taken.. especially their 5 enscribed boxes without which they cannot rest.

Notes on Ka:

Ka is a philosophical belief akin to Chi, Karma, Dharma, Ying/Yang, or the Rule of three. Basically, peace, balance, kindness earn positive Ka. Rage, Anger, Hatred, and intolerance/bigotry build negative Ka. One group of egyptian style sorcerors were basically people who learned to develop negative Ka. The undead, according to Ka philosophy, represent and unnatural accumulation of negative Ka. Think along the lines of "use the force, Luke".

Event 1:

Otick Feelam recieves a package from art and relic smugglers. Not wanting to endanger his family by reading the box at home.. he rents a room at an Inn where the PCs are staying.

"As you eat your evening meal, you see a slightly overweight balding man huff and puff his way into the inn with a box tightly clutched under his arm. He goes to the bartender and quickly drops down money for a room.. picking up a key and immediately scurrying upstairs."

Play:

Otick will go upstairs and try to decipher the runes on the box, He speak the heiroglyphic language in which they are written (egyptian).

Thieves listening at the door, familiars eavesdropping from the windows, or clairauidience spells will reveal his words as he recites the inscription as he works on it. He speaks in a forigen language, but can be understood by a Comprehend Langauge spell.

Upon reading the words, of course, the box pops open. Otick leans timidly forward to see what's the matter. He will be immediately attacked by the hand. Other hands, roaming the city in pursuit, begin making their way towards their brethern who has just awoken. They will climb the walls outside the inn to get to the window outside Otick's room. Familars or Thieves clinging to the wall will be crawled over by the hands, but not attacked unless they initiate a conflict.

Otick starts choking and thrashing around. Much like the Professor Vale Druij story from a few months ago, but the time the PCs break into the room.. locked from within, they will find Otick choked to death. If they examine the wound, they may notice he was choked by one hand.. a very strong and powerful hand. Unlike the Professor Vale story, no blackening of the flesh or other poisoning will occur. [This is a low-level adventure].

They will see the box lying open.. but no sign of the spidery hand.. which has moved to hide under the bed. Of course, those searching the room will find the hand.. and it will attack. Meanwhile, hands outside the window will start trying to claw their way inside.

There should be enough hands to challange the PCs, but only one of the original mummified 'deadly hands'.

The scene should be a basic slaughter fest.. but with the Barkeep and other Patrons of the bar who have come up to see what the comotion was being attacked and slain. Several hands try to grab the box.

The hands move by crawling on their fingertips and jumping, but cannot drag themselves along the floor as if by magic. Thus, to take the box, two hands grasp it on either side and lift it off the ground with their bloody stumps of wrists. Four other hands crawl underneath.. and rest the box upon their bloody stumps. The original two hands then flip over and stabbing their claws into the wrists of the hands underneath.

The whole looks sort of like this:

```

w_____w
h|_____|h
 ffw      wff
   h      h
```

f f f f f f

There will be a pair of hands on each corner.. thus the construct takes 8 hands to lift and carry the box away.. however, they can climb walls like a spider and still maintain a hold on the box.

The PCs, of course, should be able to kill a few of the hands and keep the box from being taken away. The hands then flee, intent on vengeance for their 'slain' members.

There should be enough hands present do some great damage to at least one PC. The encounter should not end until at least one PC has been reduced to 25% of their base hps.. if not less.

Event 2: The cops

Of course the town cops are going to want to come by and question the PCs at length. PCs that explain that they heard words in a foreign language coming from the other side of the door will be, of course, asked why they were listening to the door. The PCs will be asked how they knew the deceased. When the PCs tell their tale of severed hands, their state of inebriation will be questioned... but eventually they will be believed. (Especially if they have severed hands to show as evidence.)

If any PC is foolish enough to go out alone at night.. say to burn down a church.. they will stumble onto a small nest of these severed hands. After they run back in fear and horror to the Inn, they should lock the door and try to get some sleep. Use as many hands as necessary to impress upon the PCs the danger they represent.

If possible, the DM might want to 'show' the hands using their claws to tear away the hands of a slain prostitute or beggar that they've murdered.

Thus, the PCs return to the Inn with some more information than when they left.

Event 3:

The PCs will have nightmares. Evil, rageful, intolerant, bigoted PCs will be strongly pulled by the Dark Ka of the severed hands. Their nightmares are filled with bloody stumps and hands running around like spiders .. all over the room and all over them. Their own hands start turning against them.. leaving them helpless in the face of the onslaught. They are tortured, their flesh rended, torn, people who have hurt them or angered them in the past appear in the dream to taunt/goad them.

Good PCs also suffer nightmares, but to a lesser extent. Peaceful, Kind hearted characters are harder for Dark Ka to corrupt.

The Descriptions should get the PCs to suspect the DM will have them wake to find severed hands really crawling all over them.. and this fear can be used to create a 'false alarm' (a common horror tactic). The wake up suddenly feeling something crawl over them.. but it's only a rat.. or a few cockroaches. Not one of the unholy hands.

Both groups face the morning tired and fatigued. Evil PCs can only 'remember' half of their spells. Good PCs have no such hindrance. This of course, has no effect if the PCs don't need to remember spells. (Half their spells don't vanish.)

Note: Good and Evil may not directly correspond to positive and negative Ka. A rageful, but noble hero might still exhibit behavior and personality more strongly aligned with Dark Ka. I find it hard to believe a peaceful and harmonious evil PC.. but it could happen.

Event 4: Day in Town

As the PCs go about their business in town, they should find a crowd of people gathered around. Any curious PCs discover that a body of a prostitute has been found. She was murdered and her hands removed. (The stumps appear to have been chewed off by a wild animal.) The guards that arrive with a cot look sick and grumble, "Gods, that's the 4th one this morning!"

The PCs are free to do with their day what they will. There is no sign of the crawling claws. The mystery box has been taken into the possession of the guards and the PCs are asked if they can decipher the writing on the box. They may or

may not be able to.. and they may or may not admit to being able to. If they can..and do.. decipher the writing on the box, they discover a bit of the history of the hands (DM discretion). None of their powers or weaknesses are listed.

If the PCs have used holy water, and seek some of this water to battle the hands should they come again, they will find a priest in town with a few vials to sell, DM discretion.

Event 5: Nightfall.

The PCs really, really, really should be inside at nightfall. Everyone else in town will be.

If the PCs are in a bar/inn/restaurant at night fall, they will hear a young girl in the kitchen being attacked. They can enter and drive off the hands, but they will see the girl grab up a great big copper pot and smash one of the hands flat. Depending on the situation, they might also discover that fire can damage the hands if there is any reason for one of the hands to fall into the fireplace.

The hands will quickly leave with an ornamental knife. They drop the brass knife into a cloth and from a piggy back arrangement. One hand rests on top of the knife and wraps its fingers around the other hand with the knife resting between them wrapped up. The bottom hand has its fingers pointed towards the ground and scurries away quickly.

One can explain what this looks like by clasping the back of the left hand with the right with a pen sandwiched between the back of the left hand and the palm of the right.

The knife, of course, is brass. (The hands can't touch it.) The owner of the bar, who collects knives, recently purchased the knife at the market.

The owner of the market shop was sold the knife by a thief/smuggler. He says the owner of the bar is a collector of ancient knives. (The party learns his provided they can 'convince' or charm the owner of the shop to spill the beans. Bribery, threats, or 'Charm Person' spells can help with this.)

Back in one corner of the shop, the PCs find an old sandstone box.. yes, another hieroglyphic box. The shop owner admits to selling such a box to Otick. This box is open and empty.

All of these events, however, cannot happen this night unless the PCs go outside and try to track down these people. This would leave them open to ambush by the hands.. and they should be afraid of them by this point.

Event 6: Indoctrination/Invitation.

The PCs will be attacked in their sleep, if possible. Hands have moved into their rooms and hidden under the floorboards. They will wait and creep up when they feel the time is right. Of course, the PCs have their nightmares again.

A watchful guard should help, but it's difficult for the PCs to sleep with a light on. They toss, they turn, and they get slowly grouchy. If the light does not go out, they will not get enough sleep to memorize spells in the morning. If the light goes out, the hands sneak about very stealthfully.

PCs who the hands sense are open to Negative Ka will have an upside down ankh scribed on their forehead. It appears as a bloody scratch wound but can only be removed as per a Wizard Mark spell. (ie, cure light wound attempts do not work.)

PCs so marked will be pulled towards the Dark Ka. They must make wisdom checks when frustrated or thwarted or be affected as if by the wizard spell "Emotion:Rage". This effect also happens when they engage in battle.. wisdom check avoids. PCs who do not wish to 'fight' this 'gift' do not need to roll a wisdom check, but will incur a powercheck for their embracing Dark Ka.

Removal of the 'brand' removes the 'blessing'.

Adventure threads from Event 6 onwards:

Investigating the shopkeeper allows the PCs to discover who recently purchased Egyptian artifacts and recover them. If the PCs give the artifacts to the hands, the hands will not fight them.. but will take the artifacts and leave. (However, the PCs don't know if the hands are returning the relics to the looted tomb or gathering the relics for an evil ceremony to

summon a greater mummy, a demon, or whatever.) Indeed, if the party befriends the hands in this way, their own 'charmed hands' will return to them.. even magically reattaching to their former owners. Such reattached hands are infused with Dark Ka, however, allowing those possessing them to attack with their fists as if they were +1 enchanted weapons. On the downside, however, the hands are enscribed with the upside down ankh, and the person with such regained hands suffers as described above. If the rune is removed (as per Wizard Mark spell), the hands lose their special powers and become normal again.

Note:until the rune is removed, the hands are burned by contact with holy water.. just as the severed hands would be. Anyone washing their hands in holy water.. and taking 20 points of damage.. will have washed off the rune. However, magical curing would be needed to restore function to the hands without great scar tissue forming.

The hands will want the boxes.. and they will attack anyone possessing them. In this adventure, the shopkeeper and the town guard each have a box.
(The town guard holds Otick's box as evidence.)

The boxes can be used to contain the hands. Any hand wrestled into the box goes inert. The box can be closed, sealing the hands in stasis. If one of the 5 deadly hands (the hands that appear mummified and can tap out a spell to 'charm hands') are trapped in a box, they hands can no longer cast 'charm hands' and lose the ability to increase their number. So long as they do not recover their imprisoned fellow, they will be easily hunted down by attrition. However, the stone box can be opened by the touch of another mummified hand (but not any of the lesser hands created from victims).

The hands move across walls and other surfaces, thus 'tracking them' is difficult. However, magic..such as 'locate object' on the brass knife might allow the PCs to root out their lair during the daylight hours. The hands lie in topor during the day unless disturbed. Sunlight, however, does not harm them. The hands, of course, have recovered the other boxes.. and the PCs could then trap the immortal mummified hands in their own box. Once all 5 hands are so trapped, all other severed hands become inanimate. This does not reattach hands to the PCs if they have been severed. One might need to contact the Vistani in this case.

Perhaps by divination or other methods (such as consulting the Vistani) the PCs might learn that the boxes can be burned in a great fire.. hot enough to melt sand into glass.. with the hands inside. If this is done, those hands will be forever destroyed.

If the situation arises, the Hands will ambush the PCs and attempt to slay them. Any 'slain' evil/Dark Ka PCs will be dragged back to a secluded location. There, they will be tortured for days by the Hands. The rage and frustration of such tortured PCs will grow and fester. At the end of this period (unless rescued by other PCs) they will have 'learned' the NWP of "Dark Ka Manipulation". (If they don't have a NWP slot open, the next available slot will be 'lost' when they DO gain the opportunity for a NWP slot.)

Particularly peaceful people, full of "positive Ka" will also be captured. The hands will attempt to torment them into learning "Dark Ka" but the PC gets to choose if they 'learn' this NWP or not. Despite their most horrible tortures, the Hands cannot corrupt a victim unless that victim chooses the path of darkness. A victim that resists this temptation has a 5% chance of learning "Light Ka Manipulation" due to his choosing the path of peace instead of aggression. This NWP would be gained "free".. that is at no cost.

Note: This means only 'middle of the road' types need fear death at the "hands" of these particular enemies. (Ain't I punny.)

NWPs:

Dark Ka Manipulation: (Wis -5)

One who has 'learned' dark ka manipulation must make a wisdom check to avoid flying into a rage when provoked (DM's discretion). However, once enraged, they can make a Dark Ka Manipulation check (wis -5) to gain the benefits of a luckstone for any Rage filled, hateful, or bigoted behavior.

However, any attempted actions requiring peaceful concentration (such as picking locks or pockets) are affected in the reverse fashion until the rage subsides. In order to break free from his rage, the character must make a wisdom check at -1 for every round they have been enraged. (A "1" always passes).

Using Dark Ka tempts the Dark Powers.. a 1% powercheck each time the Player chooses to invoke the gifts of Dark Ka.

Each time the Dark Ka practitioner goes up a level, their NWP score increases by one, but their wisdom check to break free of their rage is penalized by one as well. Thus, with time, one will become consumed by the "Dark Side".

The only way to escape this path of decent into darkness would be to learn "Light Ka Manipulation".

Light Ka Manipulation: Wis -8

The PC will have to remain peaceful and free of rage in order to use Light Ka. Every time they are enraged or behave in an hateful or bigoted manner, their Light Ka score is penalized by 1 until they atone, make ammends, or a month passes. Even magically invoked rage causes such a penalty unless the practitioner makes a save vs spells. Light Ka is a demanding path and if not actively roleplayed by the PC, the DM can assign reductions in the score according to their discretion. Once someone's adjusted LKM score falls a negative number, the 'lose' the skill and must relearn it from a Master of the Art.

One who manipulates Light Ka can make a NWP check to cause any peaceful, noble, or kind hearted actions they take to be affected as if by a Luckstone. They can *attempt* to invoking Light Ka once per day per level.

Unlike Dark Ka, which comes easily, Light Ka can only be improved by Devoting additional NWP slots to this profficiency.

Someone in the grips of Dark Ka that learns Light Ka Manipulation ceases his decent into Darkness with each passing level.. provided he completly renounces his Dark Ka powers. If, at any time, he falls back on manipulating Dark Ka.. he loses his ability to manipulate Light Ka and must relearn the skill from scratch.

As a person formerly in the grips of dark ka rises in levels, he suffers a one point reduction in his Dark Ka NWP score. When that score drops to less than 5, he or she can no longer manipulate Dark Ka and have broken free from it's grasp.

Treasure:

Any number of egyptian relics can have been collected by the Hands. PCs who destroy the hands can keep the relics. However, since this amounts to looting a tomb.. or keeping the artifacts from a looted tomb.. a 1% powercheck applies. The value of this treasure is left to the DM's discretion.

Robert Sweeney

THE HARPIES' NEST

By R. Sweeney

Preface

This adventure idea involves little more than simple fighting, but there is a cursed woman, a gilted lover, and some interesting scenery (300' mound of compressed earth in the middle of a field). As a minor adventure, it gives the PCs a chance to kill something, but can still be a tense adventure. (fear of falling, etc..)

Rumors:

Seven years ago, a harpy was spotted in the low hills north by northwest of here. She claimed one of those hills and cursed the land around it. Her singing closed the north road between here (Clamond) and Richtone.

A woman scorned and jilted some years ago gave herself into anger and murdered her lover and his new found love in their sleep. The dying husband cursed his lover, she became a harpy cursed to haunt the land were once they kissed each other for the first time.

Tis no harpy, but a hoard of banshees that dwell there.

The harpy killed a passing band of warriors in the King of Ekbir's employ.

The sole survivor of that band tells us that the harpies are not one.. but a dozen or more.

The earth split one day and steam issued forth. A great hill no lies there.. giving the harpies an aerial abode.

The harpies are witches.

The adventure hook:

The PCs are hired by a governor of the territory to try to drive out the harpies. He offers 600 coins worth of local goods (gemstones of low to moderate value OR foodstuffs/equipment).

Alternate, they don't know where they are going and stumble across the harpies' road.

The monsters:

Skya, the leader. Harpy with 8 hps/hit die. She also wears a "ring of earth elemental control". Repeated use of this item allowed her to create the mound. Currently, a tower of compacted dirt rises some 300 feet into the air. It's base is only 50 feet around. Only the magic of the ring permits such a structure to be maintained. At the top, rest the harpies in their small cubby holes.

Other Harpies: 4 hps/hit die

The danger:

The harpies, while living together, have never learned to get along. Indeed due to political infighting, they often refuse to come to the aid of their sisters.

When the PCs approach, the Harpies start singing. Bards should sing a countersong to negate this effect. This allows communication, where as the wax-stoppers-in-the-ears also helps, you can't talk to each other.

Elven PCs are "made" for fighting the harpies. Their High Elven MR renders them strongly resistant to the singing and touch-charming effects. Since they have forewarning, bards should be able to 'inspire' their fellows.

Harpies, who notice the PCs will come to investigate.. 0-2 per round. (1d4 - - 2, negative #s being treated as 0s). No matter how much noise is heard, the arrogant and politically divided harpies will not come more quickly than this.

Harpies should continue to come until at least one PC is reduced to 0hps and/or charmed.

At this point, while they defeat the remaining harpies and snap their buddies out of the charm. (Remember, harpy charm simply means they don't protect themselves from attack and/or move towards the sound of the singing.) A good slap will do it once the harpies are no longer in sight.

At this point, the party should heal themselves as best they can before climbing the tower. The goal is, of course, to have the party use up all their curative magics before they reach the top.

Now, someone would have to climb the 'tower' mound to get to the remaining harpies. As they climb 1-4 more harpies come out. These harpies try to dislodge the climber and cause them to fall to the ground. Once they are dispatched, the climb to the top is unimpeded. (Thus, it would have been a good idea for some bow wielding PCs to stay on the ground and cover their allies climbing the mound).

When the party approaches the top, they hear much squawking and shrieking.

A cloud of harpies flies away from the top and towards the horizon. (They have decided that the party was unstoppable, a political battle resulted in a new harpy leader being chosen and all harpies who can still do so, flying away.)

There will be just one harpy left up there. An old fat woman harpy who can no longer fly. However, she will have the ring of elemental command and know how to use it. (See DMG).

The PCs will also find 10 male prisoners, partially eaten (unnecessary parts like arms and legs) and embedded in the rock. (Harpies reproduce by having sex with a human male. These were the breeding stock of prisoners.)

The only other item of note is a large oak tree with a Troll embedded in its roots that grows from the very pinnacle of the mound.

If the old harpy is slain, the party has a few rounds of warning... impending doom approaches. The tower, no longer maintained by the holder of the ring, starts to collapse. The party has to climb down a 300 foot tower of compacted earth in 9 minutes or (basically) be crushed to death.

Of course, anyone taking the ring and wearing it will benefit from "feather fall". The ring (should anyone look at it, has a picture of a person drawn to appear 'falling' and a feather.)

Only one safe way down. Several PCs up top. (The ring)

PCs can safely climb down 30 feet of tower per round. Faster than this takes a dex check or they start sliding (30 yards per round).. taking d6 pts of damage per 20 feet that they slide. They have to make a save vs paralyzation in order to stop sliding and continue a controlled descent.

(10 feet/round). Sliding PCs must roll a dex check every third round or fall uncontrollably off the mound (treat as if falling the full remaining distance).

People with tumbling skill and dwarves or gnomes (who's -4 AC benefit vs giants, I've always assumed comes from a sort of tumbling) take half this damage.

Another option is for one character to "Hug" another while wearing the ring and do a "geronimo" leap. The feather fall affects the first guy, but since he's holding the second, both make it to the ground safely. (But you would REALLY have to trust the inscription on the ring....)

Explanation: (From captives or Old Harpy if her surrender is accepted – possibly no explanation at all).

The first harpy (fat woman) was the cursed jilted woman mentioned in the rumors. Her singing brought men to her and she had children by them (a lot of harpies). The tree above was the tree that she and her lover first kissed under. (Sans the troll). The troll was drawn up later... compelled by the harpy charm. They fed off this creature for awhile.

A party of adventurers came to fight the harpies and were slain shortly after the harpies were first discovered. One of them, a magic user, had a "ring of feather falling" which the lead harpy took because it was pretty. Later, when a Xorn came into her chambers to steal some of the collected gold, she fought and charmed him. (Eventually killing him). This however, activated the ring and she was able to use it to its full potential. She slowly built up the mound. She embedded the troll in the rock near the tree.

Slowly, as time wore on, the tree continued to feed off the regularly enchanted earth (repeated 'move earth' power to build the tower). The regular killings and troll blood that often spilled upon the ground gave the Tree some evil vital energy. It began growing its roots into the Troll.. slowly developing a symbiotic relationship with the troll.

The Troll's vitality aided the tree resist disease and grow/heal quickly.

In return, the tree gave some glucose to the troll to keep it alive when the harpies didn't let it eat the scraps of their victims. When the troll did feed, however, the tree took some blood from the troll and fed in a parasitic fashion. When victims were scarce, the great tree produced enough fruit and food (for the troll, who was then nibbled on by the harpies) to support the group.

The harpies generally preferred to eat the troll flesh and those who could fly would leave, charm/summon humans or animals of any kind, and feed them to the troll. Then they would eat trollflesh until satisfied. All this semi-magical troll flesh and blood consumed greatly increased their vitality and fertility. Allowing them to quickly increase their numbers. Over crowding, however, led to severe political infighting.

Resolution:

The last scene should be a tense-feeling one if described correctly.

Characters are capable of a noble scene where they catch another PC and they feather fall together OR slipping the ring onto another's finger and taking his chances with the leap themselves.

The ring only functions as a ring of feather falling until the wearer slays a creature of elemental earth. Other treasure should be rolled up normally from the treasure type listed in the monster manual for the Monster Type "Harpy."

Note also, that if the PCs slay the Lead harpy right out, they won't have time to save the other captives. 10 men come crashing to the ground with the pillar of rock.. crushed to death. DONT LET THE PCs FORGET THIS.

Therefor, if you've been tempted to use failed Powerchecks to give your PCs added spice, don't. Design a curse for them (with an escape clause of some kind) that the dying men cast upon them.

Also, there are other Harpies around.. not nearly as many as this area had, but they may take up with a nearby domain lord for mutual benefit (and remember the PCs).

Robert Sweeney

THE WOLF HUNT

By Stormonu

Off through the new day's mist I run
Out from the new day's mist I have come
We shift, pulsing with the earth
Company we keep
Roaming the land while you sleep
Shape shift - Nose to the wind!

Of Wolf and Man - Metallica

Kartakass - a land synonymis with the word wolf, is the setting of this adventure. Three nights proceeding the full moon of the autumn harvest, characters take lodging in an seemingly restful and comforting inn. During the night's respite, one wolwere per PC, each armed with a knife coated with sleeping poison (save vs. poison at -2 or be unconscious in 1d4 rounds for 2d8 hours), slip into the PC's rooms and attack the PC's. The wolfweres attempt to lower the character's guard before attacking, either pretending to be servants delivering food or cleaning the rooms, having purchased a bed in the room with the PC's, or plain sneaking into the rooms while the PC's sleeps.

If the PC's manage to fend of the wolfweres, they may still learn about the hunt (preferably just after it starts), and attempt to save the other NPC's from their horrid fates. In this case, the DM should adjust the strength of the foes (perhaps 3 wolfweres and 6 dire wolves per PC) to balance the greater firepower available to the PC's.

If the wolfweres manage to subdue some or all of the PCs, they spirit them to the adjacent abandoned warehouse and hide them in the basement, devoid of armor, weapons and most of their gear. They are kept drugged until the night of the full moon, where they are then awakened and taken to the deserted streets of the city.

There, the PC's are tossed together with a rag-tag group of other folk who have been captured in the previous nights. There should be at least 1 NPC per PC present. Surrounding the group are snarling wolfs and half-men half-wolf creatures, who delight in making sport of the characters. Each of the other NPC folk who have been captured shake in fear, crying for mercy, to which the vicious captures ignore.

As the were's prepare to descend upon on of the innocent to make bloody sport of them in their impatience, a thunderous boom brings order to the chaotic host. Those who turn their attention to the source meet the gaze of a tall (almost 8 foot) werebeast like, yet unlike the brethren surrounding the PCs. This half-wolf beast bears a silver sickle in one hand, and wears a coat made from the skin of his past (human) victims. He wears a skullish cap made from the face of a man, and he carries a gnarled staff in his other hand.

This staff is decorated with carvings of wolves chasing and devouring men, and is capped with the carved image of a great wolf's head, its eyes made of tiny, glowing rubies.

The great wolf-man greets his "brothers", and wolf and wolwere bow in respect (but keeping their eyes on the prisoners). The wolf-man then addresses the "victims" - telling them how they should be glad that they have been picked to provide their brethren with glorious sport in the name of their god (named Nobius, it is a great wolf who hides behind the moon and conspires to swallow the sun). To show their devoition to Nobius, the PCs and the NPCs are to be hunted throughout the night, and their carcasses will be left to rot in the sun to the glory of Nobius.

The wolf-man tells the simple rules to the characters - run, and try to survive. The wolves and wolfweres then back away as they break into a bone-chilling assortment of howls, hoots, and raucous, anticipated laughter. The howls are echoed by howls even farther away, in the wilds, and echoes further outward like ripples cast upon a clear lake.

With his eyes glowing in anticipation, the wolf-man bids the PC's well.

"Run and live. Stop and die." The PC's and NPC's are given five rounds to start their flight, then the pack takes after them.

There are several things the DM should stress immediately. 1) If the PCs stay to fight, they'll be chopped to hamburger. 2) Most of the NPCs don't stand a chance of surviving the night without the help of the PCs. 3) PCs won't get any help from the locals - they have barred their doors and windows, and PCs will likely be torn to shreds before get into a house. 4) With almost no cover, remaining in the town/city/village is suicide - the PCs best hope will be the foliage and natural obstacles in the wild.

The PCs should be stripped of almost all of their gear - no weapons, no armor, and the only clothes they wear are simple white shirts and burlap pants the wolfweres have dressed them in. Their shoes are little more than rough sandals. Any scrolls, tomes or other such items have been taken, and rings, amulets, bracers and other such decorative items have been confiscated as well. These items have been taken to the shaman's hovel and hidden, and if the characters survive the adventure, they can attempt to retrieve these items (minus any items the DM may feel the characters should no longer keep, having been sold to purchase slaves, drink or simply traded for silver).

In the initial hunting pack, there should be at least one Wolfwere and two dire wolves per PC. These initial wolfweres, as followers of the god Nobius, are immune to silver weaponry, but are vulnerable to gold. At least 1 Wolfwere per three PCs should be using one of the PCs weapons or magic items that can be used against them, if taken. For every two hours the PCs survive, an additional Wolfwere and two more dire wolves join the hunt. These additional wolfweres have the normal vulnerabilities to silver. Each NPC is hunted by a dire wolf, plus one Wolfwere per three NPCs. For each additional hour an NPC remains alive, an additional dire wolf joins the hunt, and there is a 10% chance another wolfwere joins as well. The wolfs and wolfwere latecomers are attracted by the hunt in progress, and may come from opposite directions as the hunters, perhaps cutting off PC's attempts to escape (the "grenade" scatter table [pg 89 of newest book] from the DMG could be used to determine where the opponents come from, treating a 1 as the direction the character is traveling).

The greater wolfwere shaman, named Sharzalus, does not join the hunt, but instead awaits its outcome in the town, in the hovel where the PC's equipment is kept. He has the abilities of a 7th level fighter and 7th level priest. He will be guarded by two lesser wolfweres, and three dire wolves.

If forced into combat, he may use some of the PC's equipment against the party. Sharzulas, and his bodyguards, as followers of Nobius, are immune to silver weapons, but are vulnerable to gold ones. Sharzalus can also only be hit by weapons of a +2 nature or better. Weapons of +1 enchantment can harm the two lesser wolfweres.

Here are some tips for making the wolf hunt a little more tense:

1) Don't give the players time to think. Give them about 10 - 15 seconds to state what they are doing, visibly timing them with an egg counter or other device

2) Ambush - The hunters don't simply follow the PC's. Some may race ahead to cut the PC's off, or run them through deadfalls to slow or delay them

3) Numbers - the hunters outnumber the PC's. If the PC's break up, there will be fewer hunters after an individual; if the PC's stay in a group, the hunters attempt to swarm and take down one PC/NPC at a time, utterly overwhelming them. Try and make it clear the best chance the PC's have of surviving is to split up and draw the hunters off

4) The NPC's count - The DM should do his best to ensure the PC's attempt to save the NPC's. They should be played as more than a cardboard collection of stats. Though many are helpless, and a few make good fodder to scare the PC's into acting appropriately, the DM should also play on the PC's sympathies, forcing the PC's to risk their lives to save the NPC - for that is a mark of a true hero. Appropriately played, when the PC's finally turn the tables on their attackers, they destroy the former hunters to avenge certain NPC deaths - NPC's who they hardly knew a few hours ago.

Pacing Techniques:

To increase the drama of the hunt and the chase, I suggest using both individual initiative for the PC's and random-rolled movement rates. Walking PC's move at a rate of $2d6 + 6$. Jogging PC's move at a rate of $2d6 + 12$, and running PC's move at a rate of $4d6 + 12$. The wolves move at a walking rate of $2d8 + 8$, move at a canter at a rate of $2d8 + 14$, and run at a rate of $3d8 + 14$. Encumbrance subtracts one full dice per category of encumbrance (-1 for light, -2 for medium, -3 for heavy). In any round that a character is jogging or running and rolls the same number on all dice, that character must make a save vs. petrification or stumble and fall. Hunters who roll the same number on all dice temporarily lose the character's trail unless they successfully save vs. petrification. A character can walk for 10 rounds per point of constitution without fatiguing. A character can jog for 5 rounds per point of constitution without fatiguing, and a character can run for 2 round per point of constitution without fatiguing. The endurance proficiency doubles the allowable time, and the running proficiency likewise doubles the allowable time. Possession of both quadruples the total

time allowed for walking, jogging or running. Characters who have reached their safe limit must make a saving throw vs. death for each additional increment of time or become too exhausted to continue. This results in a -2 bonus to AC and THAC0.

Characters who force themselves to continue past this point (with a CON check at -6) continue to save at each further increment. Failure of the second saving throw results in the character being too exhausted to do anything.

Please note that combat should be treated as if the character is jogging.

A character who is attempting to hide his trail must move no faster than a walking rate of 6. If a character attempts to throw an attacker off his trail, he must have at least a lead of 6, and make a save on 4d6 vs. intelligence against a 4d6 roll by the hunter. Each hunter rolls individually and is considered to have a skill of 15 (not actually intelligence, but a combination of skills that grants this number). Whomever rolls higher without exceeding their skill roll is successful in either evading (if the hunted), or snooping out the character (if the hunter).

A hunter who has lost the trail of a victim can attempt to pick it back up by not moving at a rate greater than 6. If the hunter succeeds a 4d6 roll vs. a skill of 11, the hunter may resume to track the victim. If a hunter fails three checks in a row, he has lost the trail completely. If others have picked up the trail, he may follow them, however.

Wolf Attack Tactics

To simulate "wolf-pack" attacks, the following rules are suggested:

1) The Feint: When surrounding a foe (a preferred method of attack), wolves on one side of the PC's try to draw their attention to allow the other wolves to strike to behind. To simulate this, the feinting wolf snaps at the PC, and if the PC fails a WIS check, his guard has been lowered, allowing a wolf to the rear of the PC to attack with a +4 bonus to hit. The feinting wolf gains a +2 bonus to AC. Note that if the PC turns next round to face the attacker that struck him from behind, the wolf that was to the rear (and now being attacked) will likely feint so the wolf now to the back of the PC can strike at +4, keeping the PC off balance. Characters who specifically state they are wise to the attack gain a +4 bonus to the WIS roll (they still can be fooled).

PC's cannot perform this attack without all PC's being involved taking a weapon proficiency slot to learn the coordination required to perform such a feat.

2) Heel Nip: Wolves who are close to running characters may try to bring them down by nipping the heels of the foe, severing the tendons in the foot and crippling the foe. This is a called shot at a -8 to hit (note that PC's heels will be AC 10, modified by DEX defensive adjustment, unless they are wearing hard boots [AC 8], chain mail [AC 5] or plate mail/full plate [AC 2], and since most PC's won't have their armor...). If the wolf strikes with a heel nip, the victim must save vs. petrification, or have their movement rate halved, rounded down. If the heels on both of the PC's legs are taken out, the character can only crawl at a rate of 3.

3) Knockdown blow: Used either on fleeing opponents, or those simply standing still, the wolf leaps at the opponent, making a called shot attack at -4 to hit. However, the wolf can ignore armor (but not shield), and victim still gains the use of DEX defensive adjustment to affect AC. If the blow strikes, the victim must save vs. petrification (at -2 if the victim was jogging, -4 if the victim was running, at +2 if the victim was not moving at all, and at +4 if the victim was suspecting the attack) or be knocked down, losing all rounds for the current round and automatically losing initiative for the next round.

If the attack fails, the wolf falls to the ground, stunned for 1 round (+4 to be hit, cannot make any attacks next round).

Pulldown: Essentially an overbearing attack, one or more wolves latch onto the PC and attempt to drag them to the ground to rip them to shreds. Each wolf involved makes a to-hit roll vs. AC 4 (modified by DEX). If they latch on, the victim must save vs. Strength on 4d6 while the wolf saves vs. a score of 14 + 1 per additional wolf adding to the attack (up to 6 for human-sized creatures). Whoever rolls higher without exceeding their target number has won. If the wolves succeed, the PC is dragged to the ground, and must either spend a round regaining his feet (and not attacking), or fight from a prone position at -2 to hit. The successful use of this attack is often followed up with a Throat Strike.

Throat Strike: This is a vicious blow the wolves may use to quickly dispatch with a foe. Once the victim is in a position where the wolf can reach the victim's throat (usually prone or on all fours), the wolf can make an attack roll at -8 to strike with the throat strike (note that most armors do not protect the throat; chain mail, plate mail/full plate being exceptions, so the attack will be against AC 10). If the attack strikes, the victim must save vs. petrification or has suffered a grievous throat wound that _triples_ the damage from the bite attack, and stuns the victim for 1d4 rounds.

Obstacles in the Hunt:

What would the hunt be if it didn't offer some unique terrain features the PC's had to cope with? Here are some suggestions:

- 1) The ravine: Lined by thick brush at its edge, the steep ravine is difficult to see until one stumbles through it. Anyone jogging or running who encounters the ravine must save vs. DEX (at -2 or -4, respectively) or tumble into the ravine, taking 1d4 points of damage as they tumble into the 8 foot deep, 5 foot wide ravine (it runs about 400 yards in length)
- 2) The forgotten homestead: Surrounded by overgrowth, the ruins of this three room house contain a few odds and ends that can be made into crude clubs or knives. Though the structure is rickety, it can help provide some defense against the wolves (though the wolfweres will likely be able to break down or circumvent any barriers) Hidden in one of the rooms is a silver butter knife that inflicts 1d2 points of damage, but will be useful against the wolfweres, but not the ones faithful to Nobian.
- 3) The cold ford: deep in the woods, a swift, icy river runs. Characters brave enough can attempt to ford it or hide in it (roll depth randomly on 1d20 + 1d12, and roll width on 3d20). The water of the river is icy, and those who linger in it must make a save vs. CON each round or suffer 1 point of hypothermia damage. If characters use the ford to attempt to throw off the hunters, the river reduces the hunters chance to find the trail to 6.
- 4) The bramble bushes: a section of the woods contains a tangled mass of brambles. Those daring enough to brave the brambles must make a DEX check at a +2 bonus if creeping along (Move 3), DEX at no modifier if moving slowly (Move 6), at -2 if walking, at -4 if jogging, and at -6 if running, or suffer 1d2 points of damage from the tangle of thorns. The thorns reduce the wolves tracking skill to 9 if the PC takes no damage and tries to evade the hunters, or if the hunters lose the trail. If the PC has taken damage, the hunter's score to track increases to 17, because the victim has left traces behind.

Sample NPCs:

Akkath: A stout, well-muscled merchant, he will not let his fears of the wolves overcome his own bravado. If given the chance, he would rather die facing the enemy head on than running himself to death.

Mauri: A middle-aged widow who has lost some of her vigor with the loss of her husband, she is deathly frightened by the hunt. She has no survival skills of her own, and will surely die if not aided by the PC's.

Luis: About eighteen, the hunt frightens Luis. He realizes how dangerous the wolves are, and how even more dangerous the wolfweres are. He will bolt to save his own skin at the first opportunity presented to him. Luis is very cunning, and will use this cunning to his best ability to remain alive. His infamous quote about this situation: "I don't have to outrun the wolves; I just have to outrun YOU."

Viperous: An outcast of wolfwere society, Viperous is a half-breed unable to assume wolf or half-wolf form, and has all the vulnerabilities of the other humans in the hunt. Though he is powerless against the wolfweres now, he would love to turn the table on his oppressors. He will be unwilling to trust the PC's at first, but if they prove to be his friend and ally, he will do his best to help the PC's, and knows where the shaman is keeping the PC's items.

In the meantime, he will do his best to ensure his survival, even if this means abandoning someone else to the hunters

Malaki: A young farmer unwillingly drafted into the hunt, Malaki is sensible and plain scared. Though he has some ability to dodge the hunters, without aid from the PC's, this kind young man will likely die before dawn. His knowledge of the woods (he has wandered in them many times) may be of great aid to the PC's in avoiding pitfalls and deadend trails or leading the hunters into good places for ambush. He only has a 20% chance of knowing the location of the forgotten homestead in the woods.

Stormonu

ADVENTURE IDEAS

Heart of the Tarrasque
by R. Sweeney

Picture a barbarian / wildman who has found a woman he can truly love. He is happy and contented. However, a more civilized culture nearby raids his lands to seize them for their own. (Not an evil bunch, but they need more land for their people.)

His life is shattered, his wife killed (or captured). In bloodthirsty rage, he begins murdering women, children, cattle, anything of value to his enemies. He is consumed by rage and commits endless atrocities with Guerilla tactics.

However, he cannot avenge himself against the actual people who killed his wife...

He willingly enters into a pact with a witches' coven for the power that is required. He is given a formula for a potion that will enhance his strength. He uses the potion repeatedly, becoming more and more monstrous with time. Eventually, he becomes a mindless raging monster... the Tarrasque.

The people the Tarrasque attacks however, have learned how to avoid its wrath. A pure and innocent girl, chained up to a ceremonial post, acts as a sacrifice to the monster.

When the monster sees the girl, it is touched by her beauty and takes her away (the villagers think it eats her.) In truth, it falls in love with the terrified woman and slowly changes back into a human form.

For awhile, the man is happy and content... living with his new bride as a wildman would. She, meanwhile, never stops being frightened of this terrible temper. Eventually, some minor failing on her part (anything from burning dinner to trying to leave) causes him to kill her in rage.

This begins an anguished period of self-hate which he directs to anything unfortunate enough to come across his path (changing back into the Tarrasque.) Given time, he remembers his first wife and those who took her from him and again turns his attention to the civilization, who produces another 'bride'.

After taking a new bride, there is a general 1-4 year period of downtime where he is 'happy' and the monster is not seen. After this period, the monster wanders the swamps and outlands.. killing indiscriminantly, but not in any organized fashion. So long as people don't stray too far at night, they are relatively safe. This lasts 1-4 years. At the end of this time, the monster remembers its original rage and directs its attention against the town.

The natives cannot leave this land, because a phantasmal killer looking like the Tarrasque attacks any who try... even during the monster's downtime. The locals think the monster steps forward from the mists every 2-8 years. They will not willingly enter them.

Solution?: none, the monster is well-nigh unstoppable.

Robert Sweeney

A Ghostly Bar
by R. Sweeney

A ghostly bar is not quite complete, but these are the plot lines I plan to use / steal.

Owner of an Inn / casino is cheated / swindled out of his establishment by his nephew. He discovers that this is happening, but not in time to stop it. In despair over his loss, he kills himself (drinking poison and playing a baleful tune on the piano while it slowly kills him. -- Thus the title, A Ghostly Bar, as in musical bar...) The piano is in a secret room, unknown to anyone else.

He becomes a ghost, which haunts the casino.

Guests within the manor slowly began to die. Accidents, murders, madness, and poisons slowly take the guests. When they finally think to leave, they find themselves trapped within the casino by swirling mists. The mists turn back all trying to leave.

Only the nephew remembered what had happened the last time. Again and again he relived the terrible haunting. Each time, he died at the very end, when the ghostly song sounded for the final time and ceased. Nothing he could do changed it. Nothing. For many, many, years, he relived this hell set for him by his ghostly punisher. Vengeance served.

The nephew painstakingly recorded the horror that had become his life in a diary in his room. This is the key to escaping the prison.

Part of the key to survival is a PC's bardic ability to play a counter song. This can temporarily abate the haunting and forestall doom. (Causing ghostly apparitions to cease while he plays.)

The secret to survival, lies in being the 'three foreign investors' who bust the house at craps. No, they do not get to walk out. (So you've seen the Star Trek episode?) They are part of the story, where the nephew loses the casino despite his treachery.

A ghost continues to haunt until a wrong thing is set right. The secret to escape lies in winning the casino, finding the secret room, and returning the deed to the original owner (or at least his corpse). Now satisfied, the casino dissolves back into the mists.

One of the trapped 'players' is a darkling vistana. She tells the players (in a tarot session) that their only chance of escape lies in solving the mystery before the final notes sound. Once killed by the ghost, there is no hope of escape. She knows, she has tried.

She can say no more, as the ghost has arranged her death at this time. (Along with a blast of music from the organ a window blows open, sending a gust of air to whip the cards up off of the table. One card, the devil, slashes her throat open.)

The vistani woman was part of the original cast. Her powers allow her to vaguely peer beyond the trap of the loop (the fact that she can read the tarots/tarokka and see what's going on each time is good. Her powers are somewhat independent of the loop). Sadly, she has learned that since she died in the first loop, she can't change anything..

Warning: The PCs can be killed! If they are killed, they are trapped as regular characters in the loop... unable to change anything the next time through!!! (This is a one-chance thing.)

The counter song could give the PCs time to discover the diary and the secret piano room. Since the nephew is still alive living this hell, he would recognize the PCs as new to the loop, and attempt to get their help. He could fill them in, and the party will be aware that he's different because he seems to know everything that's happening before it does. Still, he's mad... mad I tell you. Not very helpful. Finding the diary will be more helpful.

Robert Sweeney

Plant 9 From Outer Space

by R. Sweeney

Part 1

PCs have to contact the vistani for some reason. They are told of a vistani camp that has been stationary for several days. During the trip, they see small meteors fall from the night sky. Local inhabitants (a guide perhaps, or someone else travelling the same road as the PCs, or the people with whom the PCs rent a room for the night) tells them that the meteors showers have been going on for several days now... and that they are delightful to watch.

The PCs get to the vistani camp to find them in a festive celebration watching the meteors. (Like watching a fireworks display.) The gypsies say that the meteor shower is a good omen for them.

In truth, one of the first meteors contained a doppelganger seedling. It grew, took over the oldest vistani woman, and slowly dominated the entire group. Several days ago, the last few vistani figured out what was happening and tried to stop the plant, but they failed.

The store of food and provisions are low because the food cart caught fire during the fighting between the vistani and the plant's thralls. The Vistani will, however, happily chop up the corpses of their departed brethren to make a soup for the PCs. (They have already eaten...)

Several of the gypsies are actually doppelganger monsters (not of the plant type). These monsters gladly join the party at dinner.

The vistani woman (matriarch) will not be able to see the party this night, but they will get a chance to speak with her on the morrow. During the night, one PC is taken over. In the morning, the old woman tells the party that they will have to remain for another day... for she has to make an item for them. They stay... another is controlled. Odd behavior by the vistani or their former party members should alert them before the end of the second day. (The controlled party members try to convince the PCs that everything is ok.)

When it comes to blows, the vistani-podlings try to split the group up. Once split, doppelganger monsters duplicate absent PCs and get their mark to lower it's guard. Then they attack -- or lead the PCs into another trap.

If the party gets close to killing the doppelganger plant, it will cause the remaining podlings to drop to the ground before it is actually dead. One of the doppelgangers (or a PC they don't know is controlled) will try to tell them where their friend's pods are so they can kill it and get their allies back.

Perhaps this doppelganger or podling pretends to be of the original group... which escaped being controlled. It gives them good information about the doppelganger plant and helps them destroy it. It leaves at least one pod alive, however....and with time the plant will grow back.

This NPC doppelganger may choose to travel with the PCs... carrying seedlings with it and planting them in the towns as the PCs leave.

The doppelganger plant's original intent was to get vistani-slaves to spread its seeds to the far corners of ravenloft. But it will be just as happy to use the PCs to this end.

Intent of the adventure:

Long lasting problem (wide spread podlings).

Control weakest PCs and show them cunning new ways to use their powers... especially in ways that take down the more powerful members.

Part 2

In any case, Kino Rassio, vistani, rescues a seedling of the doppelganger plant from destruction and sells it to Dr Branson Kimble in Il Aluk. The plant, too young and weak to dominate, is starving to death. Dr Branson Kimble is a respected botanist at a university there. His fascination: carnivorous plants.

Dr Branson, an avid lover of plants, believes that man and plant can be fused to form a superior life form. To save the plant's life, he grows it in a hydroponic vat of plasma. This way, the plant grows and prospers.

The Doctor has been using tissue samples from Audrey, the name he's given to the doppelganger plant, in his experiments. While other carnivorous plants can move, none come near to the intelligence of the doppelganger plant. Neural tissue from Audrey is integral to his experiments.

The PCs have discovered / tripped over an unusual strain of carnivorous plant. When they enter the next Inn or tavern, they hear two bards talking about various monstrous plant stories. The tide of their discussion turns to selling these stories to Dr Branson Kimble. The bards wish aloud that they had an unusual species of plant-life to sell to him, for the university pays well for such finds.

Of course, they know where they can find/capture a suitable strange plant...

Or, later, the PCs are hired to bring a strange plant to the Doctor...

Or, later, the PCs get into some trouble and have to go to the professors at the University of Il Aluk to find the answers. (Lycantrophy, curses, plagues, whatever...)

Unfortunately, not only has the doppelganger plant grown large enough to dominate victims, the plant has actually dominated Dr Branson Kimble. With it's Genius-level intellect, the research progresses rapidly. (Even more so, when Il Aluk's top minds are each dominated.. allowing the plant to draw upon each individual's knowledge.)

A dangerous storm rages outside while the Professors invite the PCs to join them in celebrating Dr Branson's latest achievements. (Discovering a new Genus of the Phyla Carnivasea.)

<Insert encounters with several walking plants... domination of a sleeping PC.. and combat with various plants. Audrey possesses a weakness in her instinctive fear of fire.. The PCs are able to use this.>

Audrey has become mobile due to her experiments and manages to flee.

She takes up residence in a carnival wagon.... (see the adventure *The Little Circus of Horror*)

Robert Sweeney.

Q'uellcinthalinash, the doppelganger plant manages to get control of a circus ringleader (he is a psychic). The ringleader has the other circus members empty out one of the wagons, he doesn't give them any reason. During the night, the doppelganger plant moves into the empty wagon. (okay, okay, that's not really realistic, Doppelganger plants can't move, but hey, I'm the DM. I like the idea of the doppelganger plant being like Audry II from Little Shop of Horrors) The ringleader puts a large lock on the door, and forbids anyone to open it, this is backed up with a psychic suggestion. The circus performers, being loyal (and hypnotized), respect his wishes. The Circus moves on to the next town. The ringleader falls ill from some sort of "wasting sickness" (actually the doppelganger plant consuming him). The ringleader appoints someone else to take care of the circus. This new ringleader isn't controlled, but he/she has been hypnotically suggested by the old ringleader to keep the wagon with Q'uell under lock and key.

Q'uell's tactic is to keep the circus moving, taking control of the townspeople they entertain rather than the performers. The circus will notice a increase in funds because of "donations". They will be able to support more performers and become famous. People will welcome the circus into the town, even though there are rumors of a strange "wasting disease" that seems to follow the circus where ever it goes.

Q'uell will have a pretty cozy time with the circus. He is supplied with plenty of food, and he only has to deal with the occasional newcomer in the circus (they don't have the hypnotic suggestion) who decides to take a peek into his wagon. The PCs can be brought in in a number of ways.

- 1: one of the PCs relatives can fall under the sway of Q'uell while the circus is in town.
- 2: There could be an interesting powerstruggle in Dementlieu between The living brain, Q'uell, and Dominic if the circus wanders there.
- 3: If there are players that are Thieves or Bards, they may want to join the circus.
- 4: Any PC priest w/ a plant diety will sense something "wrong" coming from the wagon.
- 5: Psionic PCs will notice the hypnotic suggestion placed upon the original members of the circus, prompting an investigation. Etc.....

Mark Harrison

The Pumpkinhead
by R. Sweeney

A farmer's child is accidentally killed by the negligence of another (or a group of people.) In rage, he goes to a witches' coven and is told how to avenge his son. Taking his son's body to a cursed plot of swampland, he gives the corpse to a evil plant. From his rage, the Pumpkinhead monster grows.

The farmer later regrets his decision...but the Pumpkinhead cannot be stopped. Pumpkinhead is the incarnation of the farmer's rage. Only the farmer is safe from its attacks.. but everyone remotely associated with those who killed his boy are punished.

The farmer is an odd lord. A good man fighting his own rage.

Solution:? A second pumpkinhead is created to avenge the deaths caused by the first.

Robert Sweeney

The Standing Stones
(short adventure ideas by R. Sweeney)

Stonehenge like ideas (stolen from various unknown sources).

a)

Exit/portal. Stonehenge itself has been rumored to be a portal to other places. During a certain astrological configuration, the stones could become portals to different places. Ideas: An unseele realms, Bluetspur, Arak, the first plane of hell, or home. As a nexis to the other world, ghosts and spirits would be drawn to it.

b)

Trapped/imprisoned. A "badguy" <insert badguy here> was trapped many years ago in a central stone by various druid-types. (They couldn't kill him). The druids could only keep such a powerful nemies imprisoned for as long as they maintained their concentration. Taking up positions around the 'prisoner stone' of astrological power, they allowed themselves to also be changed to standing stones. In this way, they could maintain the spell down through the ages.. so that the beast might never be freed. (Of course, if their stones are broken or tipped over -- or just worn away by time, their spell of binding will begin to fail.)

<This plot stolen from old Dungeon module I read once. "Bad guy" was a vroek (demon).>

c)

Cursed forest of stone. The circle is a result of an ages old-curse. Anyone moving through the area might (insert slim chance here) become a standing stone themselves. These stones can 'speak' to sleepers within <insert arbitrary distance here> during their dreams. Touching the stone has a chance to free the imprisoned person and trap the PC.

<This storyline stolen from Greyhawk>

(Additional plot not found in Greyhawk)

Perhaps the circle of stones is trying to finish an incomplete pattern. <Insert bad thing here>. Astrologers should be able to figure out something about the stones being astrological markers due to their placement.. and perhaps gain a glimmer of a clue as to the pattern to be formed and the anticipated effect.

d)

Empowerment: Sparks fly from a nearby stone, striking the PC and driving him to the ground. PC immediately suffers one Darkness point of corruption (as if they failed a powerscheck). In their dreams they are told of an evil thing they must do to keep this 'gift'. Not horribly evil (as to be rejected out of hand) but a continuing thing.

This is the work of an evil creature trapped in the stone, forces from the other side of the portal to hell, or a side effect of the pattern being completed.

The werewolves hold this place as sacred, because it granted them their shape-shifting powers. In order to remain werewolves, they must perform a 'hunt' at least once a month.

Example: Talis, wandering aimlessly through Verbeck spies the werewolf pack toying with a young warrior. They strip him of his weapons and let him go. Talis knows of this game, they are the hunters.. he is the hunted. Hardly fair by any means. Pausing, Talis considers that the doe might not think it particularly fair that Talis hunts with a bow.. but quickly dismisses it.

"Not my problem," he says to himself as he sees the young warrior's other companions still tied up in the circle as the pack leaves to chase their prey. Knowing that he lacks silver or magic to harm the monsters, Talis wisely chooses not to attack the pack, but rather try to free his companions.

As he wanders about the standing stones (trying to stay upwind of the remaining guard and still free the captives), he brushes against one of the stones.

Fire engulfs his mind as visions of this place's evil history flood his brain with the suffering of those the werewolves have tortured here. Children, women, parents pleading for mercy, noble warriors slowly torn to pieces, the brave and the cowardly feeding the monster's appetites... some living... some dead. He cries out with the shock of it.

The remaining werebeast assaults him... invulnerable to Talis' best attempts at defense.

During the battle, Talis' head soundly strikes one of the stones.. his vision blurs and he feels on the point of unconsciousness. Looking at the stone, he has struck, however, he is startled to see skeletal hand within holding aloft a blade of dull black metal. A skeletal head, shrouded in robes, with a crown of black, thorny roses, appears at the other end of the arm. It holds out the dull blade hilt-first to Talis.

The blade is of course magical.. and enables Talis to kill the werewolf. However, it also bears a curse of some kind. Perhaps it is the sword of Arak. Perhaps, it requires the blood sacrifice from an aware (conscious) living creature once per week to continue functioning. (This creature need not die, but simply loses most of it's blood which is burnt.) Perhaps the sword imparts great skill with torture.. enabling the PC to discover secrets from those captured. Whatever, the possession of the sword is evil and corrupting.

Other options:

Silver fangs: Can harm werewolves, but somewhat noticeable to normal folk and if used in combat, the possessor enters a bloodlust (haste). Bloodlust ends once the user consumes 1 lb of meat from anyone he or she has slain.

Gains the power to 'speak with dead'... a necromantic spell which is cause for it's own powercheck.

Gains a minor curse spell power (also calls for a powercheck).

Gains variant of evil eye.. those gaized upon by the eye are -5% normal luck (-1 to any d20 die roll.) In order to maintain use of the eye, the owner must intentionally blind some sentient creature once per week. Failure to do this turns the power of the eye against himself.

Can drink the brain-fluid of a member of his own race to gain a Wild Talent Psionic power. PSPs are only recovered by drinking brain-fluid. (3 PSP per INT point of person slain to gain the fluid.)

Robert Sweeney

The Idol

by B. Trevelyan

1) Have the PCs go through hell to get the idol. They'll probably take a small group into the forest with them to get the idol (baggage handlers, guides, translators, experienced Western travellers/hunters etc.) have most of this group killed off by disease, the local wildlife, natives, traps guarding the idol and a hostile colonial presence. After grabbing the idol from the clutches of the fiendish Belgians and looking around some ruins the few in the group who manage to make it out (say only a quarter of those who went in) get back to where they came from (say New York).

2) The idol spends some time in the local museum during which several disasters take place (e.g. curator killed, blamed on thieves; small fire; display collapses on some visitors crushing them). At this time the PCs resident archaeologist (or a member of the museum staff) manages to decipher some inscriptions found at the ruin. These spell a dire fate for everyone who keeps the idol from where it was taken.

Then the PCs discover the idols been stolen...

3) At this point there are two things are going on:

a) A qabal has stolen the idol and the Evil Mastermind who engineered the theft is having it planted in the possession of the group's foes who are being killed by the guardian creature (an Invisible Stalker would be good for this). Naturally he only directs expendable lackeys to plant and retrieve the idol so he doesn't touch it and isn't hunted down by the Stalker (the lackeys, of course, are). For an added twist the Mastermind could be the person at the museum who worked on the inscriptions (and sent the PCs to get the idol?... knowing about it's curse from the start?...).

b) The Stalker (after taking a while to warm up) is hunting down all those who have handled the idol (in reverse order). So the various lackeys are getting killed as are people (at the museum) who handled the idol after the PCs (if you want to emphasis the point about the lackeys then have the PCs witness the idol's theft and later find the mashed up body of someone they recognize as being the thief).

So the PCs are now all marked men (they'll figure it out after a long enough trail of corpses - just make sure you tell them who does what to the idol after they hit the museum). The only way they can redeem themselves if putting the idol back where they got it from (yet more inscriptions I'm afraid). But first they have to get it back. (The stalker can be killed but will reform after a while, it buys you time though. Destroying the idol will mean you end up dead).

4) The PCs then get the idol back. Perhaps someone survives an attack and goes to the PCs for help. A saga of attempted thefts, chases, foiled (& successful) assassination attempts and frantic searches through people's wardrobes follow.

Or you could make the PCs do it the hard way, chasing up leads on mysterious killings they find in the newspapers.

5) The PCs finally get the idol back. Only to be told it's museum property. So they have to arrange their own theft. They then have to travel back to Africa, survive a situation which is even worse (Re: Colonial Wars), thwart the machinations of the Qabal they've crossed and dodge the clutches of Leopold II evil minions yet again. Before they can return the idol.

And at the end they're left with their lives, a lawsuit for theft, the hatred of the Evil Leader of a Sinister Qabal, a *lot* less money (the museum's not going to pay for the second trip) and (for any museum official implicated in the theft) the loss of their jobs (and possibly Malaria).

That'll teach them for meddling with things Best Left Alone.

Of course that's just an outline, many other things can happen or be protracted (maybe they're caught by the Belgians on the second trip who then have the idol shipped back to Europe?). The qabal gets some more shots at it, the PCs have to escape the Firing Squad etc... Or the police could keep it as evidence, or the museum could auction it...

If you play up the race against the clock aspect up it might work quite well.

Barry Trevelyan

The Curse

by R. Sweeney

Let's take a dwarf, any old dwarf, who also happens to be a cleric. He doesn't quite like magic (because it's unreliable for him) and doesn't trust mages (his race can't use wizardly magic.) Dwarf has a bad run-in with some magic wielding 'heroes' <insert standard adventuring party here>.

This Dwarf goes to complain to the local lord and get the "there's nothing we can do" run around. Still pissed, he goes to the KING. Now the king has seen enough evil necromancers in his day to be a bit pissy about the 'sorcerors' himself and wouldn't much mind taking them down a notch or to. Problem is, he can't.

The Dwarf gets the king to fund some research of his. Finding and killing a legendary 'disenchanter' beast, the Dwarf begins experimenting with various ways to weaken or undo magic.. which he considers unnatural and dangerous. (Of course he is using magic to do this, but never mind that.)

He discovers a substance in the disenchanter beast's intestines that absorbs and catalyzes magic. Drawing on the strange properties of this substance he builds an alloy of Adamantite, Mithril, silver, and gold capable of 'housing' and protecting the substance. He makes spikes out of this substance and performs tests.

These spikes of 'darkmetal' absorb any and all magical effect cast at or withing a certain radius of the spikes. (The radius increases with increasing mass of 'darkmetal'. Magical energy is absorbed and channeled harmlessly into the ground.

One day, forces who don't want magic weakened break into his lab and kill him, destroying all of his notes. With his dying breath, the Dwarf curses them. "You think to destroy my brain-child, my creation, but you cannot. The knowledge has already been passed on and has a life of it's own now. It is unstoppable. It is inevitable. My secrets, once learned, cannot be unlearned. It will grow in time, until it has destroyed your black arts completely."

Game effects: A one pound spike absorbs one spell caster level of magic with a radius of 10 feet. (Making a 12th level mage cast spells at 11th level if his spell begins or passes through this area). Additional pounds of metal can augment this effect. 2 pounds = -2 levels in a radius of 20'.

The Dwarf knew he couldn't go out and get another 'disenchanter' beast to make another batch of 'darkmetal' so he developed a way to use existing darkmetal as a base to create more. However, unknown to him, the metal grows in size all by itself. (Slowly, but in proportion to the ammount of magic it absorbs.) The dwarf (while alive) had affixed the first spike to the top of the King's castle.. and proceeded to try and make more.

The darkmetal acted like a lightning rod, protection the king's castle from lightning. However, unknown to the dwarf, the darkmetal was able to absorb the elemental power of the lightning strike to grow.

Over time, the darkmetal began to grow down the castle walls.. slowly replacing the mortar and stone with its enchanted alloy. Other monoliths secreted away at other points in the kingdom also grew in a similar way. Magic began to fade... but no one truly knew why. In this lower-magic area, guns (arquebuses) became more common and miracles more scarce.

But problems only began en mass when miners, digging beneath one of the monoliths hidden in a hilltop ran into a vein of black metal that they took for adamantium. Sure that they had hit the motherlode, they began mining and exporting this precious metal.

A boon time hit the kingdom as the metal brought wealth and influence. The new king had gates and signposts made of this metal.. as well as statues to honor his dynasty of weath and affluence.

Magic had long since been declaired illegal in the kingdome, and thus newcomers did not often complain to the locals of the magic dead aspect of the land. Even items would occasionally be drained of their power. (The power of the gunner squads intimidated these newly magic-weak into not mentioning anything and quickly moving on.)

The Bad Thing:

These spikes really do drain off magic into the ground (as to any items made of darkmetal which lie against the ground.) Unfortunately, this DOESN'T disperse or destroy the magic.. raw unshaped magic has been dumped into the ground for years... polluting the ecosystem. Just lately, the levels of this raw magic have begun to exceed the spikes' abilty to neutralize... and its leaking out in strange forms.

A bizare blight has fallen upon the land... cattle are born mishapen and strange... the insane develop frightening powers and abilities. Madness sweaps across the cities as fevered dreams haunt the citizen's sleep. The clocktower suddenly starts running backward, water runs uphill....

The PCs (unfortunately in the middle of things) are conscripted into uncovering the source of this strange plague. As a payment-in-advance, they are given suits of complete "adamantium" armor as well as weapons of exceptional quality.

From one maddening event to another, they PC should (in time) realize that the places of these strange happenings also have a high presence of darkmetal... (the poor areas are unaffected, while mines of darkmetal and smithyshops are common targets.)

The solution: Historical research to discover that 'darkmetal' isn't adamantium. Find out what happened to the dwarf (who has begun haunting the castle where he was slain). Discover that darkmetal has filled the walls of the castle. Learn about the 'curse' cast by the dwarf. Learn that the mage who slew the dwarf was of a very specialized school.. bloodmage. To destroy the towers (cursed to have a life of their own until they destoryed 'your black art') the PCs have to find the last bloodmage (with a most unholy collection of blood/pain spells), kill him, and throw every last trace of his work against one of the spikes.

Note:

When the spikes are destroyed, all items forged of the darkmetal disintegrate into useless dust. (The castle will collapse because so much of its mortar has been replaced with darkmetal). Certain people may (for politcal reasons) not want the PCs to succeed. The 'adamantium' is the staple of the kingdom's economy, buildings may collapse, wealthy families have been amassing their wealth in 'adamantium' bars and need time to change out the metal... and there may still be a sect of people who fear magic and don't want it comming back.

Robert Sweeney

Dark Reflexes
By R. Sweeney

[This adventure ties in with the cursed Black Book and its current owner, the myserious mage named the Mirror Man. See the article detailing him and his book for further information.]

Researching the history of the mirror involves going to the first recorded mention of it the PCs can find: a currently haunted house somewhere in Ravenloft (Darkon being the most logical choice). There a phantom shift of some kind might indicate a tale of jealousy and betrayal, which prompted a scorned woman to try to imprison her beloved's vain mistress in a mirror of finest silver. Then, she would threaten to destroy the mirror and the trapped spirit, unless her 'beloved' remained true. He could speak to the trapped spirit if he were 'good'. Eventually, in a jealous rage she sold the mirror to a traveling man involved with magic and her 'husband' went into a rage trying to beat out of the wife what she had done with it. Her guards then killed him, but the duo still haunt the house.

They get a chance to see a phantom shift appearance of the traveling man and get enough clues to try to trace down who/what he was. He has, however, become a darker figure over the years: a keeper of ye old shoppe of dreams, the seller of objects useful for all sorts of special things. (Reference to a magic shop of cursed objects like Friday the 13th, the series, or to the mysterious dealers described in the article *Dealers of Darkness*, by Magian Chua.)

After a few hops and adventures, the PCs follow the mirror's history to the house of the book's author, not a man seemingly interested in the type of book that turns out to hold the mirror. In fact, he summoned a spirit and was killed by it somehow.. resulting in a beast/enemy that the PCs encounter and must thwart. In doing so, they learn that this spirit kept some of the author's books.. and might discover this time that they have often been covered with 'secret page' spells and the like. Giving them hints about the mirror man's book. His true obsession was in summoning spirits.. a picture in one of the books shows him using a mirror.. like the one the PCs were tracing to trap a demon of some sort.. a small impish demon, but a demon none the less.

The next logical step is to talk to a wizard or vistani about the possible effects of breaking a mirror like the one they've been tracing. They might learn that most spirits would be released, but just as likely, they could be trapped in the shards that remain.

Pieces now fitting into the place, the PCs can decide what to do about the Mirror Man.

Robert Sweeney

House of Shadows

By B. Boozer

Many years ago the Dark Powers pulled in a small portion of the Demiplane of Shadow and created a large pocket domain which floated among the Mists. The pocket's 500 square yards in area and consists of a two-room cottage amid a forest of tall, grey trees. The cottage is home to Pazel Yanwysc, a wizard-shade who was known for his cruelly vicious ways before his sudden disappearance from his estate. Finding himself a prisoner, he searched for a way to escape, and through his magic he discovered the expectant mother. He worked a spell to replace his soul with that of the infant, so that he could have a human body and be free of his prison. But his efforts didn't work.

The baby was born deformed with two heads, as a result of Yanwysc's magicks, and though he wasn't able to steal the child's soul and replace it, he was able to reach into the dormant head of the child, and from there he hoped to control the boy. When the dormant head was cut off, the part of Yanwysc's mind that had reached out to it was cut off as well, leaving the wizard-shade insane. He came to think of himself as the personification of death, and he referred to his prison as the plane of death.

Meanwhile, the boy was not unaffected by the shade's mental presence, and he feels drawn to the pocket domain, resulting in his ability to summon it as he grows older. Generally, this summoning comes when he's been upset by something; he also suddenly finds himself able to reach out and affect things as if they were shadowstuff.

Yanwysc had pretty much forgotten about the boy (as well as just about everything else), but when the boy summons the domain, he appears within it, and as the summonings become more frequent, Yanwysc takes greater notice of the boy and begins to devise ways of trapping him inside the pocket domain.

The boy has been well-taught by his parents and is basically good, but he bears an unconscious resentment toward them because they cut off his other head.

First, the players must meet this family. They could encounter their home while on a journey and a storm could persuade them to stay indoors for the night. During this time, their son is melancholy, he complains of feeling empty and of having nightmares about the Land of Death, where skeletal spiders and sinister hounds eye him hungrily. The following morning the party awakes to screams. The mother is found in the hall-- She explains that she had been walking down the hall until she saw the son in the shadows of an alcove. Suddenly, big shadowy arms reached out for her. She screamed, the boy ran, and the arms fell to the ground, pieces of tapestry. The boy has run into the woods outside the house. If pursued, he will attack pursuers with the limbs of trees (as if they were shadowstuff) but not specifically attempt to kill anyone. Confronted, he will cry out, "They did it! They killed me!" Afterward, he sobs loudly but says nothing more. Returned to the house, he has forgotten most of the incident and runs to his parents' arms.

The party should be intrigued enough to want to figure out what's going on. (1) They'll need to find out the nature of the boy's powers and (2) what happened to his other head.

(1) Through chance they should discover that upsetting the boy triggers his abilities. Anyone touching him when they are triggered will be transported to the pocket domain. The boy can bring them back, but if they made him angry he might not be inclined to do so. Other strong emotions might also trigger his powers.

(2) An explanation of what happened when the boy was born could come from one or both of the parents' diaries, a houseservant, divination spells, etc. Of course, the parents aren't likely to share their diaries and servants aren't keen on talking to strangers. If confronted with most of the truth, the parents may own up to what they've done. They're not necessarily ashamed of it, but it is painful to talk about.

Eventually, the suppressed memories of that early trauma overpower the boy and he takes the entire household with him to the pocket domain. (It would be a good idea to make sure all the PCs are in the house before this happens.) Yanwysc's own diary will reveal his part in the boy's past, but he won't be eager to let others see it, either. (He believes it was written by a divine being and can be read by none other than he; of course, he can't remember how to read...). Yanwysc's insanity has stripped him of his wizard abilities, but as a demilord he has a few nasty special abilities and he can manipulate shadowstuff into some pretty horrific (if unstable) creatures.

Defeating Yanwysc destroys the pocket domain; the PCs and the family return to the family's home. The boy appears to have lost his power to summon the domain. (He hasn't lost the power; there's just not a domain to summon-- if another piece of shadow were brought in, though...)

Details on shades and encounter tables for the Demiplane of Shadow can be found in Dragon #213.

Bil Boozer

THE BLACK DUKE'S LEGACY

by R. Sweeney

Fiend Used: Black Duke (VanRichten's Guide to Fiends, MCII)

Vistani: Kamii

Resources: Guide to Hell

The Plot

Mouse (Talion Enyaad "Retribution to the Nines") was born of Rosalyn, a vistani seer, and Jericho and offworlder devil-slayer. Rosalyn's clan had been slain by the Black Duke for some slight real or imagined. Rosalyn's mother, the Raunie, cursed the Duke that the child of her child would be a weapon against him. Rosalyn, the sole survivor, fled into the Shadow Rift and there she met with an offworlder Jericho whom she seduced with the promise of an heir destined to be a slayer of devils. She sired the child and then left the Shadow Rift. (The child was left in the rift). When she left the rift, she had been got with a second child by Jericho. The progression of this pregnancy was in keeping with the amount of time since the last time the Duke saw her.

The Duke, hunting the heirs of the vistani that had cursed him, caught up with Rosalyn, Jericho, and Jericho's band less one thief who was left behind to watch over the child as he grew to maturity in the Shadow Rift. Due to the time-dilation of the Shadow rift, the Duke slew Rosalyn before she could have had a child outside the rift, and thus believed the line dead.

The rest of Jericho's group fought in RL, but avoided the Black Duke, until such time as they managed to find an exit. However, during the exit they were separated to the four corners of the world on which they materialized.

Jericho 'awoke' in a leper colony. The lepers believed he had been born of a leper woman and raised with them the whole time. He, however, until that day had been mindless and inert. He awoke, without any sign of leprosy and full articulate & educated. He left the canyon and returned to the realms of men where he tries to find his father and rejoin the Order of Devil slayers as a member of La Croix Black, rogues or hellblades.

Possessing a 'mask of disguise' he poses as someone older than he really is and thus receives training and is allowed out into the world at a much younger age. (14). Shortly after beginning his adventures, he falls feverish and is brought back to the Inquisitors (see Guid to Hell Cleric kit) for healing and examination. He is found to be burned by holy water and they believe he is being transpositioned. They begin the exorcism ceremony .. intent on killing the boy if the ceremony fails.

Aquinas, the only surviving member of the group to which the father belonged, has rejoined the Order and hears about the strange transposition case. Going there, he tells the order the truenam of the devil and they manage to expel the Black Duke.. who had been attempting to transposition with "Mouse" across the rift that separates the demiplane with the rest of reality. The boy, grateful to Aquinus, returns to adventuring.

Back in the Order, Aquinius pleads for the boy's survival to the rest of the Order. The order has determined that they boy is devil-kin and not the child of Jericho. Aquinius agrees and postulates that he must have raped Rosalyn or somehow used his charm and polymorph powers to convince the two that they had bedded, but had actually sired the child himself. He posits that, since the boy is the Black Duke's kin, that they Duke can transposition with him across the planar rift between Ravenloft and the rest of the world. He suggests that the boy be watched, not killed, because he's fated to be a weapon used against the Duke.

Aquinus suggests that they wait in secret for the Duke's next transposition attempt and, when it happens, use the devil's true name to imprison it in a gem via trap the soul. Thus removing the Duke's evil from Ravenloft but also preventing him from simply rejoining the legions of hell if killed on the material plane.

Aquinus implores the Order to tell the boy that his 'change' was a result of the transposition.. not to tell him about his fiendish blood lest the boy kill himself in a fit of depression.

Aquinus then offers to personally oversee watching the boy.. to make sure he does not 'transpose' while unwatched.

Aquinus then returns to his study where he contacts his fiendish ally. While in ravenloft, he had been so desperate to escape that he entered into a pact with the Black Duke. He would get the Black Duke's scion out of Ravenloft so that the Duke could use him as a 'stepping stone' to leave. In return, the Black Duke aided the party to escape RL. Now corrupted by devilish pacts, Aquinus entered into a period of research during which he tried to divine the Black Duke's true name. He was able to make contact with one of the Black Duke's political enemies in Hell, and secure the cooperation of this power for mutual benefit. The Black Duke would be humiliated, the Priest would gain diabolical power, the Fiendish enemy would gain a 'mole' in the Order of DevilSlayers, La Croix Rose, and be able to direct their attention where he wished.

Aquinus did not speak the Black Duke's name at the exorcism, but made one up on the spot. He then convinced the Duke that the boy would be slain before he could transposition, and that he should try again later. The Duke agreed. Now Aquinus awaits the Duke's next transpositioning attempt. When it happens, he plans on using a Mage with Trap the Soul spell to imprison the Duke and secure his services. The duke, after Thomas has finished with him, will be returned to hell, where his former enemy will gloat over the Duke's manipulation and service to a mere mortal.

However, the Black Duke has another Ace in his pocket which Aquinus does not suspect. Rosalyn had been tempted to evil and diabolistic rituals. Because of this, she had been transpositioned herself by an Eyrines. Rosalyn, therefore, was not truly slain, but only appeared to be slain in front of Aquinus. The Child, Mouse, is actually a full blood demon.. not a partial demon. Special rituals were used during the pregnancy to bind mother, father, and child together.. so that were one goes, all could go.

Thus, when Aquinus has set up his 'treason' he will have more than he bargained for as Momma, Daddy, and Baby will ALL be present. Three Devils dancing on his head. And woe befallth the earth...

The Inquisitor was part and party to his own downfall, as he created the medallion that Mouse believes his mother gave him.. but which, in truth, prevents his demonic blood from becoming fully manifest, and sheilds him from the devil-slayer's detection attempts.

Involving PCs

The PCs can be involved in either Ravenloft or their home world. If involved in their home world instead of Ravenloft, They should befriend Mouse and know him to be good through and through. Slowly, they should discover his fanatical devotion to slaying devils.. and then be party to his 'fever' and 'possession'. They should meet Aquinus during this process and be warned by him to watch Mouse for further signs of change and let him know immediately.

They have thus, become involved in Aquinus' plots and might learn a bit about him and suspect him before the summoning/transposition which Aquinus hopes will cumulate in an imprisoned devil. Maybe, Aquinus even approaches and evil PC to 'cooperate' promising great rewards.. even giving him an impish familiar/aide to help. (Altho such an aid would have to be hidden from Mouse, who can 'detect devils' as he's been trained to do such by the Order).

With some mistrust of Aquinus, they should then see Mouse again being transpositioned. They may or may not tell Aquinus about this depending on their level of mistrust. Perhaps they contact someone in the Order that suspects

Aquinas instead. Mouse might then have to be 'rescued' by Aquinus in order for the latter to fulfill his goals of trapping the Black Duke. The PCs then would have to enter Aquinus diabolical lair and 'free Mouse' before the summoning concludes.

If they fail or stumble along the way, Momma, Daddy, and baby are reunited.. and Aquinus has been Transpositioned by his erstwhile ally, the Fiend from Hell who had been posing as an enemy of the Duke. These 4 devils now unleashed upon the earth could result in some epic battles. Or, perhaps, the mists of ravenloft reach out to reclaim the whole lot of them.

"Mouse" however, is not really evil.. or at least not really on momma and daddy's side. Knowing the precariousness of his position, he descends into the role of 'counterspy' and passes information along to the PCs in order to help them slay the Devils. In the end, he turns upon his father slaying him.. fulfilling the Raune's curse.

This plot could fuel an entire campaign....

Robert Sweeney

Tailormade Horror
by XXX

Now, imagine that the PCs get a riddle clue from a killer / villan like such:

"I used to live in <city name> where we had, and still have, several cemeteries in which nobody living in <city name> may be buried under penalty of law.

I don't much like laws... You will find your next clue, in the coffin of the one whom I buried there in defiance to your petty mortal laws..."

So the PCs go looking for a cemetery with some rules governing who may be buried there... so they can find the right grave. However, the villian has simply buried a living person in a fresh grave. Unless the PCs understand their need for haste.. they may be too late.

This person, buried alive by the villan, has his or her eyes and mouth sown shut, and hands sown crossed over to the flesh of his or her chest. The poor victim, wimpering, suffocating, and freaking out must be quickly unearthed. Seeing what the monster has done would be call for a horror check.

Next Step

"What you are I once was, what I am you will become. What am I?"

The answer is, a skeleton.

This is a simple riddle for the PCs to solve when plagued by a riddler / villian. In a room with various items, books, bracer, and a skeleton. (Add detailed room description..and perhaps a picture.

The next clue is inside the skeleton.

Dominic Falls

By Randir

The following adventure is intended for use with native Ravenloft characters and takes place prior to the "current sketch" section in the Ravenloft Boxed sets. The levels of the characters are not important, since combat is optional. Also some of the reference material in the RL Who's Doomed section is now shown to be wrong... at least partially...

Setting: Dementlieu (ca. 730 - 734)

Major Themes:

manipulation

true love lost

self destruction

mob mentality

What Has Been Changed:

This adventure is about Dominic's first love, which according to the who's Doomed section he killed out of anger.. The truth of the matter is far more moving story of true love and best laid plans turning astray...

I'm Gonna Tell You A Story:

The adventure is actually a story told by an old man in Dementlieu some time in the distant future (ca 770?) to his grand children. It is assumed that the storyteller is telling it from a first hand account with additional information gleaned from other sources.

It is to be implied that the old man is actually one of the characters. However, the children should always refer to him as grandpa. The game should begin by the players deciding what types of kids they would like to play.. and begin to pester "grandpa" to tell them a story. After some side stepping and teasing and foreshadowing, he begins as follows:

"Okay, okay, my darlings... now are you going to let me tell my story, or are you going to guess it? (laugh) The tale I am about to tell you is about a young man, not much older than you are now. He learned to love, and how to lose, and how to pray, all in a single night. It all began on a stormy night, not quite totally unlike this one.. (sigh)... Beneath the angry heavens, warm and dry inside Lord Dominic's mansion, the band did play. And play they did, upon our hopes and dreams, upon the heart strings of every costumed lady. For you see, Lord Dominic held a Masquerade for everyone in the land. And on the stage, dressed in his kingly splendor, he would sing a song so sweet and tender, even old-body Grump could be brought to tears..."

The Masquerade:

At this point the players should take control of their normal characters. If you are using characters who have played games before, this is actually more of a flash back, and so **YOU CANNOT KILL YOUR PLAYERS!** More so, this adventure is meant to test you abilities to scare and horrify without the use of a physical threat..

They are talking / dancing / drinking with a good friend of theirs a beautiful lady of refinement and breeding, who as it happens is also blind. As such the true significance of the Masquerade is totally lost on her, since she has always told the difference between people by their voices (note this is a subtlety that your characters will hopefully pick up very quickly and should lend very well towards a discussion about the nature of disguise and reality...). A good player will try and disguise is voice or do something equally cute. Encourage them but do not force them: forced flirting is too contrived. If you have a female player around who is similar to who you think Miranda is, brief her and have her play the part.

Lady Miranda Truelley, [if you are lucky your players may catch the significance of her name: Spanish "mirar" means to see, to look at, and "True-ly", i.e. she sees the truth] should come across as a good natured young lady, who does not flirt, but rather in her strong willed way, tries to promote "cerebral" conversation.

This should first start off with her making a comment about how she finds the Masquerade amusing... that she is its queen (lord) and is master of identity. Kept in a light and cheerful banter, it should be a rather free form discussion about appearances and reality. The irony that only the blind can truly see should become painfully obvious.. a few "examples" should be "pointed" out:

Lady Beth Truelley, Mira's little sister who is dressed up as a widow, in a black wedding dress. She has come into quite a bit of money. Cold and aloof, all men are as dead to her as her "late husband".

Father Jebidiah Crow is dressed as the black bird of the same surname. His highly vocal fire and brimstone sermons are also quite fitting. He is also the drunkest and loudest of the party goers, a regular follower rabble rouser.

Lord Dominic d'Honaire is not dressed in a costume and stands out above everyone else on top of the stage. Miranda points out that even he is not what he seems. Miranda obviously has a soft spot for him and his VOICE.

[All of this is rather obvious foreshadowing and indicative of their characters.. Care should be taken not to reveal any more about each character through Miranda than can be observed by looking at their costumes...Most importantly Miranda should come across as totally innocent.. but not naive.. She should not let the players wander among the other guest.. Essentially the players should already feel like they are stuck in a web...]

After a while, Miranda will ask the characters to escort her and introduce her to Lord Dominic. As fate would have it, her blindness to physical appearance is the greatest curse Dominic could suffer.

If you read through the description of Dominic in the Who's Doomed of Ravenloft, you should note that his curse is that the women he loves find him repulsive. For our purposes we will take this to mean that he appears to be physically grotesque as per a lower Charisma. He however is still a charming speaker.

It turns out the Miranda's blindness allows her to ignore the physical change. Although she can see that he is a manipulator, and a schemer, she feels sorry for him, in that he has no one who keeps him company. The most eligible man in the land, and not even a fiancée. Needless to say they hit it off wonderfully and Dominic proposes to Miranda after only about two hours after meeting her. Finally it looks like he will be happy!

The players and characters should not be aware that Dominic is actually a Dark Lord. Also he should come across as someone they actually like! He should be personable and down right friendly. He will be frank and honest with the characters in what he says (after all the truth is as good as a lie in most cases, he is a manipulator.. through and through).

Interlude:

What happens next should be up to the players. They may wish to finish off the Ball mingeling with the guests and maybe finding some companionship of their own. This is also a good time to take a short break.. and catch your breath.. If you ordered a pizza just before starting it should be here about now (about 30 minutes to this point).

The players should be free of plots and schemes when on their own time. They should only feel "rail roaded" when they are around Miranda, her family, or Dominic. This contrast will make the feeling of being trapped... puppets on supernatural stings... be much more potent latter on. However, a thin illusion of self control should be maintained regardless.

The Unexpected Visitor:

When the players return to one of their houses for the night. There should after a short time come a rapping on the door, a frenzied, impatient rapping. Soaking wet from the rain, Miranda stands in the door way, sobbing. She has just come from seeing Dominic. She tells them that when she returned home, her father had a visitor, form out of town and informed her that she was to be married to this mysterious young man of whom she had never heard before. When she heard this she ran to see Dominic and asked him to talk some sense into her father and also officially ask for her hand in marriage. Dominic eagerly obeyed her request fully aware that he can not loose Miranda no matter what the cost. Miranda then asks the PCs to do some spying for her. She has no idea who this mystery man, St. Gregory Germain, could be and why her father was so emphatic that she marry right away.

At this point the players will no doubt decide to take up Mira's wishes. Even if they know who Dominic really is (as per the RL setting) and know that he is a hypnotist. Chances are they realize that if Dominic does use his powers on Mira's father it would not be a bad thing.

Hopefully this will not be the case at all and so will also be more than willing to help out anyway they can. This is also a very obvious case of "The DM wants you to do this for sake of getting the story going".

St. Gregory Germain is staying in the inn outside of town just past Father Crow's church.

On the Road Again:

As the players head towards the inn, they will inevitably meet Father Jebidiah Crow, some where near the church. Turns out that Fr. Crow is now quite sober: apparently he has had enough experiences that have shook his faith that he has gained the ability to shake off intoxication. Father Crow will no doubt ask them their business and actually knows quite a bit about St. Gregory Germain. Turns out that 20 years ago Fr. Crow had actually known the man while serving in Darkon as a court minister.

Turns out that good old St. Germain has been wandering between the courts of Ravenloft as an honored guest for over 400 years! Legend has it he was once a moral man, who gave up his humanity for the sake of occult power.

Things Father doesn't know:

St. Germain is really a supernatural entity who grants magical "favours" to people of noble blood. However the cost of this spirit's service is the life of the noble's first born. It is how he maintains a physical presence. Sire Brian Truelley, as a young man signed a pact with St. Gregory Germain and has since learned much about the occult. This is a very bad thing...

What This All Means:

Upon hearing that St. Germain is in the area, Father will insist that the characters take him to see Dominic. He informs them that St. Germain will not be found at the inn. If the players insist they will not find any evidence of him being at the inn and will have to return regardless.

Dominic Falls:

This is really the final act in the entire adventure: most of it should remain unclear and hazy. Essentially what happens is up to the players and the DM, but the following must happen. Father Crow convinces a depressed Dominic (who did not manage to convince Brian - the first time he could not do so in his life!) that they must organize a purge of the town. Apparently his beloved's father is really a warlock and so must be put to death. Dominic with Father Crow's help incites a mob of righteous witch hunters to hunt down Brian and stone him.

Miranda tries to stop the mob from killing her father who finds that his source of supernatural power has deserted him. She is burned at the stake at the order of Father Crow.

Dominic finds out and is completely broken. After some prodding he accepts a marriage with Beth Truelley, to take care of her now that her father is dead, a marriage of convenience..

The players themselves should have nothing to do with the killing of Brian and will probably chase after St Germain who will escape. They will not be able to prevent Miranda from being lynched.

After the wedding, a heart broken Dominic will reward them for their help and friendship and thank them for making him happy at least for a little while. Chances are your players have suffered the loss of someone they loved.. or broke up with a girl friend. The realization that Dominic destroyed the one he loved while trying to save her from a fate worse than death, while hideous and depressing, is still a success, especially when the players latter realize what a monster Dominic can be.

But that my darlings is a tale for another day.

David J. Goehrig

Dark Reflexes

By R. Sweeney

[This adventure ties in with the cursed Black Book and its current owner, the myserious mage named the Mirror Man. See the articles detailing him and his book for further information.]

Researching the history of the mirror inside the Black Book involves going to the first recorded mention of it the PCs can find: a currently haunted house somewhere in Ravenloft (Darkon being the most logical choice). There a phantom shift of some kind might indicate a tale of jealousy and betrayal, which prompted a scorned woman to try to imprison her beloved's vain mistress in a mirror of finest silver. Then, she would threaten to destroy the mirror and the trapped spirit, unless her 'beloved' remained true. He could speak to the trapped spirit if he were 'good'. Eventually, in a jealous rage she sold the mirror to a traveling man involved with magic and her 'husband' went into a rage trying to beat out of the wife what she had done with it. Her guards then killed him, but the duo still haunt the house.

They get a chance to see a phantom shift appearace of the traveling man and get enough clues to try to trace down who/what he was. He has, however, become a darker figure over the years: a keeper of ye old shoppe of dreams, the seller of objects useful for all sorts of special things. (Reference to a magic shop of cursed objects like Friday the 13th -the series, or to the mysterious dealers described in the article Dealers of Darkness, by Jason Chua.)

After a few hops and adventures, the PCs follow the mirror's history to the house of the book's author, not a man seemingly interested in the type of book that turns out to hold the mirror. In fact, he summoned a spirit and was killed by it somehow.. resulting in a beast/enemy that the PCs encounter and must thwart. In doing so, they learn that this spirit kept some of the author's books.. and might discover this time that they have often been covered with 'secret page' spells and the like. Giving them hints about the mirror man's book. His true obsession was in summoning spirits.. a picture in one of the books shows him using a mirror.. like the one the PCs were tracing to trap a demon of some sort.. a small impish demon, but a demon none the less.

The next logical step is to talk to a wizard or vistani about the possible effects of breaking a mirror like the one they've been tracing. They might learn that most spirits would be released, but just as likely, they could be trapped in the shards that remain.

Pieces now fitting into the place, the PCs can decide what to do about the Mirror Man.

Robert Sweeney

Adventure Hooks About Madness

By C. Phipps

Warning: although based on many loevcraftian stories most of these are markedly different so don't worry very much about them spoiling the tales.

City of the Deep

The players book passage on a ship going through the Nocturnal Sea as they come across the burned flotsam of a warship with a lifeboat floating nearby - the survivors having all committed suicide. Around the neck of one of the crew is a ivory head with laurels amulet. Taking the boat aboard (for vauable treasure is aboard it) they discover each night their dreams are haunted by dreams of strange Kraken like creatures, and a beautiful beyond belief underwater city. The crew begins to go insane with mutinies and suicides and murder. More horrifying is that the crew (including the PCs) are all developing horrible mutations (gills, webbed fingers, soon scales ect). And the crew eventually sees signs of a beautfiul "aurora borealis" type island JUST below the waves. Pity the fools who throw away the amulet for it is the holy symbol of the culture who once ruled the city before the current Darklord with polymorphed sahuagin-men took over. It prevents the mutations and hold the key to curing them before the "devils of the deep come to claim their new members".

The Illithid Dark Spawn

Long ago in Bluetspur there was once a Alhoun who like the High Master opposed the Elder Brain and wished to upsurp him. The Darklord was far less merciful with this Alhoun and his men chased him across the Demiplane until they cornered him in the caverns below Arak. There they found him already in possession of a tome he had discovered hours before in a shattered temple of Illithid gods that the Elder Brain had outlawed the worship of: the Book of Souls. Using the book of evil he became a hideous huge bloblike Draconic thing and his powers were magnified tenfold. The Mind Flayers of course took the easy solution and entombed him there and gaurded him with spells, the beast at that point fell asleep. However in his dreams he reached out to many a young lad and lady awakening their potential to mysteries better yet left unexplored and now they research the proper rituals to unleash him - and even better deliver the Book of Souls back to him.

A Minds' Game

A researcher in Lamordia contacts the players and says that he has managed to create something truly awesome and wants to test it on those who have experience in the unexplained (it is useful if he has been introduced before as a useful and likeable sage). He then shows them a device he created when a book fell into his hands: the Apparatus plans. Lacking the rod, his genius (and the Dark Powers' meddlings) allowed him to modify them and he has turned the machine into a device capable of awakening all the senses mankind has surpressed for eons. What the players don't know is that he is quite mad and now is nearly an omnipotent 18th level psionist whose new found power has allowed him too much knowlegde of the Demiplane's true nature. Using the device he has summoned many Nightamrish creatures as his servants and might as well disintegrate all his house servants to display his power. His goal is not to destroy the PCs but to allow them to run his mad mental mazes and heaven help them if they prove adept at this for the reward is to receive the same power he has.

Bloodline

A distant relative of one of the PCs contacts him following their genealogy and coming off as a greatly likeable fellow says he is an explorer and that he has discovered that their family, in addition to having a history of suicide and madness, has had many branches that have ended up traveling to the Steaming Lands. After months of research he has acquired an artifact from his family there with natives to help him deliver it. The artifact is a hideous white ape that looks disturbingly human and familiar. As he invites the PC for a few days of chat, it becomes apparent that their host goes insane and vanishes. The ape is inspiring this madness as gruesome murders begin. In truth the ape is actually the relatives' (though not the PCs) ancestor who was a wereape and whose blood has been passed on as a "holy lineage" among the steaming landers. The PCs can either try and drive the foreign blood out (probably impossible) or slay their own friend and relative. Particularly cruel DMs might have the Ape inspire similar feelings if not out and out lycantropy in the PC.

Mind Hunters

A shipwrecked sailor is found in the domain the PCs are traveling through (be it land locked or not) and is gibberingly insane complaining about "Dagon", "fish men" etc. The PCs will hopefully want to deliver him to a nearby asylum - those checking his belongings will find morphine (or its equivalent) and a journal that says he is making his way to the asylum and tells of his horrific marooning and that only under the drugs does he become rational. Oddly enough he seems to have past several other mental houses on the way to him. PCs who have had close associations with Dr. Illhousen should probably have his newly vacated (but refilled oddly by a new staff) be the one. There they find the doctors VERY concerned about him. PCs who stay nearby will be haunted by the most terryfing dreams imaginable and find that similar plagues are affecting the townspeople. The twist is the man survived being shipwrecked on Bluetspur and has his psionic talents awakened in the meantime. Since then the Illithids want him back and have taken over the nearby asylum and sent out a mental call (what they've done to the patients in the meantime is better left unexplored). The PCs have delivered him into the enemies' hands and soon he'll be back in Bluetspur if they don't discover the treachery soon.

Charles Phipps

Ravenloft Adventure Hooks for Low-level Characters

By R. Sweeney

Divorce

Jon marries Sandy, a marriage of convenience since Sandy comes with a Dowry. However, Jon grows tired of Sandy. Their first child (a girl) is a bad birthing and nearly kills Sandy. Thinking to be rid of Sandy, Jon gets her pregnant again. He tarries in getting the midwife/doctor. She dies, but not before she realizes his intentions.

The weak ghost haunts the place giving subtle clues as to Jon's wickedness and Jon wants to get rid of her before she makes him go completely crazy. Obviously he hires the PCs, who must then understand who is the real Evil in the story...

Kidnapped?

Carrol Ann has gone missing. The family suspect their old enemies (some other family) have kidnapped her. Actually, however, there are signs of a haunting that the father ignores.. being too scientific minded to accept this kind of stuff.

Carrol Ann has fallen down a well. Teetering between life and death, a minor ghost has found her.. and tries to get the PCs' attention so that they can save her. However, the ghost isn't very wise and uses phrases like "I have Carrol Ann, come get her." This sends the PCs looking for a way to get to the geist's other side. There is a weak spot in the division of worlds here, a spot where the poltergeist was slain years ago. Going to the other side runs the PCs into the Cult leader who sacrificed the geist. The geist however urges the PCs to leave quickly.. and the PCs can see a 'weak ghost'. The geist explains that Carrol Ann will remain here forever soon unless the PCs find her...

Werewolf

Straight forward gothic werewolf story. One character has become infected by a werewolf (but not controlled). The moon rises high and a mob runs around in a panic (à la, the Silver Bullet) trying to find the 'killer'. The PCs don't have to and shouldn't try to fight the infected werewolf. Rather, any flying wizard's familiar simply follows the werewolf until it collapses and changes back to normal form. Then the PCs gather the infected individual up. They can make arrangements for the victim to be 'chained up' by a close friend every full moon.

Insert short adventure to get 'tongue' of a cave fisher. How do you fish for a cave fisher? You tie your buddy up (in full plate armor). You let him walk into the strands. You get a horse and Oxen to pull him out.. dragging down the cave fishers to where you can fight them with arrows. The Cave fisher's tongue should be strong enough to bind the infected Werewolf.

A Ghoulish Problem

A crazed person, a father who lost his only son, tries to rebuild his boy from dead body parts. The PCs are called to investigate reports of Ghouls devouring corpses in the cemetery, only to discover that surgical-sharp blades are being used to retrieve the needed organs. They must locate the father *before* his golem is animated.

Count De Monet

A barovian nobleman/tax collector has been skimming funds for his own illicit plot. The reports indicated that the orphanage is behind on their taxes, but a greater amount than they really are.

(But they are behind). Strahd 'penalizes' the orphanage, and gives them a limited time to make good on their debts. The head of the orphanage implies that the Tax Collector is less than honest to the PCs. A simply sneak and peek adventure concludes that the Tax Collector has a small drug business/gambling problem on the side and that he's taking some cash from the 'pot' to cover it. Telling the Count about this results in the Tax Collector's quick/public disposal and more leniency for the orphanage.

Temptation

An Imp walks up to a PC wizard with a *Book of Vile Darkness* or some such magical tome. It can increase Intelligence, Levels, or whatever the DM likes. He tries to tempt the PC. The PC is expected to waylay and kill the Imp, then burn the book. (Which he would gain xp for). Should he deal with the imp, however, he would gain an imp familiar, the book, and make the first step down the ladder of corruption (Powers Check 1 failed automatically).

Creaky old bones

Skeletons and Zombies have taken to haunting and old cemetery. People avoid it at night. In truth, however, a puppeteer has been using 'fake' skeletons to scare people away while he digs for a certain (lost) tomb with a special magical dummy inside.

Dolly

A magical Doll in the hands of a local school girl. She's been picked on (PC's witness as background activity while they are doing something else.) The doll is sentient and teaches the girl how to use her latent Psi powers (wild talent) to gain revenge. PCs must confront the girl and try to sway her back to the side of 'good' before she's too far gone. The Doll must be taken and destroyed.

When designing adventures for any level, the Dm is limited only by their imagination. As you can see, these are very low level adventures, which any reasonable PC could survive.

Robert Sweeney

The Black Duke's Legacy

by R. Sweeney

Fiend Used: Black Duke (VanRichten's Guide to Fiends, MCII)

Vistani: Kamii

Resources: *Guide to Hell*

The Plot

Mouse (Talion Enyaad "Retribution to the Nines") was born of Rosalyn, a vistani seer, and Jericho and offworlder devil-slayer. Rosalyn's clan had been slain by the Black Duke for some slight real or imagined. Rosalyn's mother, the Raunie, cursed the Duke that the child of her child would be a weapon against him. Rosalyn, the sole survivor, fled into the Shadow Rift and there she met with an offworlder Jericho whom she seduced with the promise of an heir destined to be a slayer of devils. She sired the child and then left the Shadow Rift. (The child was left in the rift). When she left the rift, she had been got with a second child by Jericho. The progression of this pregnancy was in keeping with the amount of time since the last time the Duke saw her. The Duke, hunting the heirs of the vistani that had cursed him, caught up with Rosalyn, Jericho, and Jericho's band less one theif who was left behind to watch over the child as he grew to maturity in the Shadow Rift. Due to the time-dilation of the Shadow rift, the Duke slew Rosalyn before she could have had a child outside the rift, and thus believed the line dead.

The rest of Jericho's group fought in RL, but avoided the Black Duke, until such time as they managed to find an exit. However, during the exit they were separated to the four corners of the world on which they materialized.

Jericho 'awoke' in a leper colony. The lepers believed he had been born of a leper woman and raised with them the whole time. He, however, until that day had been mindless an inert. He awoke, without any sign of leprosy and full articulate & educated. He left the canyon and returned to the realms of men where he tries to find his father and rejoin the Order of Devil slayers as a member of La Croix Black, rogues or hellblades.

Possessing a 'mask of disguise' he poses as someone older than he really is and thus receives training and is allowed out into the world at a much younger age. (14). Shortly after beginning his adventures, he falls feverish and is brought back to the Inquisitors (see Guid to Hell Cleric kit) for healing and examination. He is found to be burned by holy water and they believe he is being transpositioned. They begin the exorcism ceremony .. intent on killing the boy if the ceremony fails.

Aquinas, the only surviving member of the group to which the father belonged, has rejoined the Order and hears about the strange transposition case. Going there, he tells the order the truenam of the devil and they manage to expel the Black Duke.. who had been attempting to transposition with "Mouse" across the rift that separates the demiplane with the rest of reality. The boy, grateful to Aquinus, returns to adventuring.

Back in the Order, Aquinius pleads for the boy's survival to the rest of the Order. The order has determined that they boy is devil-kin and not the child of Jericho. Aquinius agrees and postulates that he must have raped Rosalyn or somehow used his charm and polymorph powers to convince

the two that they had bedded, but had actually sired the child himself. He posits that, since the boy is the Black Duke's kin, that they Duke can transposition with him across the planar rift between Ravenloft and the rest of the world. He suggests that the boy be watched, not killed, because he's fated to be a weapon used against the Duke.

Aquinas suggests that they wait in secret for the Duke's next transposition attempt and, when it happens, use the devil's true name to imprison it in a gem via trap the soul. Thus removing the Duke's evil from Ravenloft but also preventing him from simply rejoining the legions of hell if killed on the material plane.

Aquinas implores the Order to tell the boy that his 'change' was a result of the transposition.. not to tell him about his fiendish blood lest the boy kill himself in a fit of depression. Aquinus then offers to personally oversee watching the boy.. to make sure he does not 'transpose' while unwatched.

Aquinas then returns to his study where he contacts his fiendish ally. While in Ravenloft, he had been so desperate to escape that he entered into a pact with the Black Duke. He would get the Black Duke's scion out of Ravenloft so that the Duke could use him as a 'stepping stone' to leave. In return, the Black Duke aided the party to escape RL. Now corrupted by devilish pacts, Aquinus entered into a period of research during which he tried to divine the Black Duke's true name. He was able to make contact with one of the Black Duke's political enemies in Hell, and secure the cooperation of this power for mutual benefit. The Black Duke would be humiliated, the Priest would gain diabolical power, the Fiendish enemy would gain a 'mole' in the Order of DevilSlayers, La Croix Rose, and be able to direct their attention where he wished.

Aquinas did not speak the Black Duke's name at the exorcism, but made one up on the spot. He then convinced the Duke that the boy would be slain before he could transposition, and that he should try again later. The Duke agreed. Now Aquinus awaits the Duke's next transpositioning attempt. When it happens, he plans on using a Mage with Trap the Soul spell to imprison the Duke and secure his services. The duke, after Thomas has finished with him, will be returned to hell, where his former enemy will gloat over the Duke's manipulation and service to a mere mortal.

However, the Black Duke has another Ace in his pocket which Aquinus does not suspect. Rosalyn had been tempted to evil and diabolistic rituals. Because of this, she had been transpositioned herself by an Eyrines. Rosalyn, therefore, was not truly slain, but only appeared to be slain in front of Aquinus. The Child, Mouse, is actually a full blood demon.. not a partial demon. Special rituals were used during the pregnancy to bind mother, father, and child together.. so that were one goes, all could go.

Thus, when Aquinus has set up his 'treason' he will have more than he bargained for as Momma, Daddy, and Baby will ALL be present. Three Devils dancing on his head. And woe befalleth the earth...

The Inquisitor was part and party to his own downfall, as he created the medallion that Mouse believes his mother gave him.. but which, in truth, prevents his demonic blood from becoming fully manifest, and shields him from the devil-slayer's detection attempts.

Involving PCs

The PCs can be involved in either Ravenloft or their home world. If involved in their home world instead of Ravenloft, They should befriend Mouse and know him to be good through and through. Slowly, they should discover his fanatical devotion to slaying devils.. and then be party to his 'fever' and 'possession'. They should meet Aquinus during this process and be warned by him to watch Mouse for further signs of change and let him know immediately.

They have thus, become involved in Aquinus' plots and might learn a bit about him and suspect him before the summoning/transposition which Aquinus hopes will cumulate in an imprisoned devil. Maybe, Aquinus even approaches and evil PC to 'cooperate' promising great rewards.. even giving him an impish familiar/aide to help. (Altho such an aid would have to be hidden from Mouse, who can 'detect devils' as he's been trained to do such by the Order).

With some mistrust of Aquinus, they should then see Mouse again being transpositioned. They may or may not tell Aquinus about this depending on their level of mistrust. Perhaps they contact someone in the Order that suspects Aquinus instead. Mouse might then have to be 'rescued' by Aquinus in order for the latter to fulfill his goals of trapping the Black Duke. The PCs then would have to enter Aquinus diabolical lair and 'free Mouse' before the summoning concludes. If they fail or stumble along the way, Momma, Daddy, and baby are reunited.. and Aquinus has been Transpositioned by his erstwhile ally, the Fiend from Hell who had been posing as an enemy of the Duke. These 4 devils now unleashed upon the earth could result in some epic battles. Or, perhaps, the mists of ravenloft reach out to reclaim the whole lot of them.

"Mouse" however, is not really evil.. or at least not really on momma and daddy's side. Knowing the precariousness of his position, he descends into the role of 'counterspy' and passes information along to the PCs in order to help them slay the Devils. In the end, he turns upon his father slaying him.. fulfilling the Raunie's curse.

This plot could fuel an entire campaign....

Robert Sweeney

Brave New World

(An alternative scenario post-Requiem)

By G. Leach

Imagine the terror and panic to be had the day Darkon/Necropolis suddenly sank into the sea.

That's right: when a group of high-level adventurers discovered Azalin within Necropolis and managed to defeat him, Darkon's soil began to split up.

Immediately, the oceans began to close on Darkon/Necropolis as it began to sink. Within twenty hours, the most vast domain in Ravenloft, and one of the oldest and most notorious, was at the bottom of a new ocean. The inhabitants of the domain were either transformed into merfolk or sea elves, and a new domain was created where Necropolis was - the Darkon Channel, connecting the Sea of Sorrows and the Nocturnal sea.

The rushing waters also peeled away mists, revealing a new landmass - a domain known only as the New World, with primitive inhabitants and a wild Darklord.

Already the governments of certain domains are fighting over colonization rights in the New World, completely unaware of the grim fate that awaits them at the hand of the domain's unusual darklord.

Azalin is not gone, obviously. He is still around and any merman or sea elf in the Darkon Channel who feels the need to go exploring the ruins of Darkon beneath the waters will find that the city of Il Aluk has vanished...

Somewhere within a First Layer domain, under a rock, perhaps, or maybe tucked in the corner of a closet in a tiny frame house, there exists a pocket domain - a sprawling metropolis in miniature, perhaps half the size of a playing card. This tiny city, unbeknownst to all, is a miniature home for the dead. Microscopic spirits and ghosts and spectres walk the streets as they have for hundreds of years, and like he has for hundreds of years, a lone lich, now many times smaller than a flea, plots on his escape from his new, humiliating prison, or at least the day when he will be restored to his once vast domain...

The sinking of Necropolis Created Several new, mostly unpopulated Domains in addition to the Darkon Chanel. Two domains were created from parts of Necropolis that did not sink: Nartok, encompassing the city of that name and part of the Forest of Shadows (although Castle Avernus did sink) and the Mountains of Misery. As a result, Falkovnia and Tepest are still landlocked.

The appearance of the New World has sparked off a craze for colonization by ambitious seafaring nations with strong governments with capital. The New World itself offers many new natural resources, including gold, coal, salt, rich farmland, even tropical rainforest in certain places. Dementlieu has claimed the largest chunk of territory, as they were the first to establish a colony...keeping under the wraps, of course, the fact that the very first colonial villiage established by Dementlieu vanished mysteriously without a trace. Since then, Lamordia, Nova Vaasa, and Nosos have gained holdings. In addition, the landlocked Falkovnia has established sea outposts in Dementlieu and Nartok, much to the displeasure of their respective governments,

and established a navy for colonization. They have gained a chunk of the new territory and are fighting to expand.

Little do the land-hungry southerners know that the land they are colonizing at their whim is old and home to many ancient cultures, and the dark entity that protects the land is bound to get angry sooner or later.

Colonization efforts, curiously, have begun in the Wildlands. Only Falkovnia and Nosos have attempted to colonize these wild regions. However, plague and danger are the rule, and colonists fight for their daily survival.

Georgie Leach

The X-files

By C.D. Nichols

The X-Files contains many ideas that are appropriate for use in Ravenloft - below are a some of the episodes and the possible adventures that might result from them...

Squeeze

Make Tooms(the mutant) a murderer who was drawn to Ravenloft many years ago (like +100 yrs). He has failed several Powers Checks and has earned the following changes:

- his eyes glow yellow when he is experiencing strong emotion,
- he has stopped growing,
- he is forced to hibernate for thirty years at a time to maintain his youth, if he fails to return to hibernation with in one year of waking, his age starts catching up with him,
- to enter and survive hibernation, he must consume five human livers,
- he hiberates in a nest made of trash bound together by a glue-like substance he produces from the bile in the livers,
- his skeletal and muscular structures have changed so that he can squeeze through very small openings (vents, chimnies, barred windows, etc).
- He finds the taste, smell, and texture of decaying meat appealing

Jersey Devil

Feral humans are hunting the populace of a small village. Not much else, but go for the idea that these are humans preying on humans in the most literal sense. Skin thieves have a passage in their description that ties them to this.

Ice

In the Arctic (Vorostokov in our case) the research team is infected by a parasite from a meteor buried in the ice cap that hit thousands of years ago (of course Ravenloft hasn't existed thousands of years, but...). The parasite is a worm that feeds by attaching to the hypothalamus(?) and absorbing its secretions (it could feed on Psi Points or Spell Levels or Int or Wis or whatever too). Anyhow, the effect of this is that the person's emotional state changes. They become paranoid, then angry, finally homicidal. The best way to do this is to create a claustrophobic feel and emphasize that no-one can know for certain who is infected and who isn't.

Eve

OK, this is sorta strange, but here's the idea. The corruption of the human body is a horrible thing. Well, a darklord (Azalin or Vlad Drakov are good here) is trying to create a super-soldier (or spy or something). They have taken the best female they could find and created clones of her altering their genetics so that they look normal but are super-smart, super-strong, and very insane. Now, something has gone wrong and several prototypes have escaped. They look like young girls, but are hardened killers. Also, a design flaw causes their bodies to start going bezerk, changing and growing increasingly inhuman. A special type of golem might be appropriate.

Beyond the Sea

A murder similar to the ones committed by a convicted criminal occurs and had bearing on the characters. The murderer however is in prison (I assume there are a few of these in Ravenloft...Falkovnia and Darkon might have them) awaiting execution. Visiting him for answers, the prisoner (who has escaped the noose before, and claims to have achieved contact with the spirit world from that brush with death) channels the spirit of some one close to a character. Is it real or is the prisoner trying to fore-stall his execution? Who did commit the murder?

GenderBender

Various people die in flop-houses and bordellos in the seedy part of the city, but the death of a prominent man's son, and later his daughter point the characters to an odd religious sect in a near by rural area. The sect called the Kindred, have a rogue(s) among them, one who hates the open land and seeks the city. Why did witnesses say that the victims entered their rooms with women and men came out? Why draws back the rouge Kindred and what do the crop circle that dot the land near their compound mean?

Young at Heart

An enemy from long ago, returns as a broken one. He lost an arm and other bits to the characters, but a wizard found him and repaired the damage using grafted salamander(or whatever) flesh. The wizard has been studying aging and used a process on the villan which makes him about 20 years younger. Healed and escaped, the villan has bided his time. Now he has selected the character who destroyed his arm as his victim. He methodically stalks and kills the friends and family of that character, strangling them with his new inhuman hands...

Darkness Falls

In Forlorn, a band of Gundarakian loggers cut a tree that has stood for thousands of years (the Mists pulled it from a Prime World at the same time as Forlorn). Inside the tree is a swarm of ancient insects (tiny mites), released when the loggers chop down the tree. The mites sting and poison the loggers to death and cocoon their bodies as food and breeding ground. The loggers families are worried and the characters are hired to find them. They go to the logging camp, and find the cocoons. Trapped for the night (make something up), the characters find that when darkness falls the nocturnal mites swarm. First, the characters must survive the night, and then stop the menace from spreading.

Born Again

The daughter of a slain city guard grows more like her father each day. But when she starts following various guards and they start turning up dead, she is arrested for their murders. The characters are asked by the mother to help prove her daughters innocence. The girl begins to display strange powers (telekinesis and spontaneous image creation), and it develops that her father was murdered by corrupt guards, one of whom is seeing the mother. The father has returned in the shell of his daughter to bring revenge on his killers.

The Host

A mage in the capital of Richemulot (name escapes me) has discarded an experiment into the sewers below the city. Unfortunately, it wan't quite dead. It is a Broken One, a combination of a fluke worm and a man. Driven by vague emotions and primitive instincts, it has three goals- reproduction, revenge, and return. To reproduce, the flukeman bites a victim with its powerful suckered mouth injecting an egg. The egg grows in the host's gut for three days, then burrows up the digestive track and is vomited up as a small fluke worm. It escapes to the nearest water source where it will grow into a flukeman like its parent. the Broken one will attack many of the sewer dwellers attempting to reproduce. Second, the thing is aware of who created it and knows that the creator caused it incredible agony. The flukeman will try to return to the wizards dwelling and slay him, preferably by implanting an egg (this is fatal as the worm eats its way to the mouth). Finally, if the other two goals are acheived, the Broken One will head the sea, the largest water source that exists, and from there can access the waterways of Ravenloft.

Blood

Somehow, a town has been infected with madness. Previously calm and rational people have become hopeless mad and are killing their neighbors. What has happened is a contaminant has been introduced into the environment that causes people to hallucinate. People see their greatest fears, writing moves and shifts producing horrid messages about crimes and depravity, voices whisper goading one to the brink. Who or what has caused this? The characters must find the answers before they too succumb to this deadly contamination.

Sleepless

Dr. Domaniani's project for another dark-lord has bred more madness. To create a soldier who need not sleep, but can fight by day or night with no rest, Heinfroth removed portions of the brains of five men. While the men, needed no sleep, they required certain compounds of herbs and minerals to replace the chemicals created in sleep. These compound were the only things that kept them relatively sane. The darklord whom they served tested them by having them raid a tiny island domain to retrieve an item the darklord desired. They did not get the item however, as they soon turned from their assignment to slaughter the people of a small jungle village, and eventually the local darklord pushed them back into the Mists. Enraged the unsleeping soldiers master withheld their compounds and locked them in a cell together. In the madness, two of the men killed each other, one simply died, but two survived by removing the traces of the compound left in the bodies of their comrades and consuming them. Eventually, the remaining soldier managed to escape their master. One worked at a bar, eventually inheriting it. The other turned to religion, and find his life wanting. After 18 years, he has decided that he has been called to cleanse the world of the evil that he was part of. He has six targets- the darklord, Daclaud Heinfroth, two doctors who assisted(one an

innocent man forced to participate due to threats to his family), the remaining soldier, and himself(will commit suicide at end of mission). The characters must stop him before he kills innocents (the soldier/barkeep and the good doctor). However he kills in an unusual manner...he projects dreams. He can at will project an entirely convincing dream, such that the person experiencing the dream is convinced it is real. Therefore, if the person in the dream dies, they really die because the mind and body are totally convinced that it actually is happening. The bodies will display the secondary signs of the cause of death (i.e. a burn victim will not be burned, but a high internal temperature, pugilist position, and internal bleeding would have occurred)

Firewalker

Miners fall sick at a mining camp, and (your cleric's religion)'s temple sends a priest to help them. When no-one at the camp is heard from again, the characters happen to be in the area and are asked to look into the matter. When they get there, they find that there are substantially fewer miners(no priest) and they appear to be sick. The characters are then told the camp is under quarantine, and they must stay until they are certain the characters have not become infected. In truth, the miners opened up a thermal shaft. When the shaft was opened, a fungus on the wall unleashed a spore cloud which grew in the miners lungs. The fungus is an slightly intelligent silicon-based organism. It over-ran the bodies of the miners(externally noticable only as flu-like symptoms) until it erupts through the walls of the throat and releases spores. These spores if inhaled within two minutes of release will grow in the lungs. The original miners passed their infection to a second group of miners and the priest, who have passed it to the remaining miners. The first and second groups of victims are dead and have been tossed into the thermal shaft. The remaining miners are attempting to infect the characters, who are the to spread the fungus to the nearest city. All of the miners will have died by dawn on the third day at the camp, due to the fungus mutating (so make sure the camp is located more than three day travel from anywhere important).

Excelsus Dei

An elderly man from Rokushima Taiyoo is selling medicine to the cities rich elderly. They begin to exhibit signs of renewed youth, and senility disappears. Unfortunately, they are attracting unwanted attention. Their homes are rife with jealous spirits of those who die old and bitter, denied the joy of their youth. The servants are being attacked or possessed. Things are being written and painted on walls that no living mind would conceive. Seems that some of the town's more notorious party-goers have turned up missing at the same time. The Oriental man is murdering the young and burying them in a special garden. From their bodies, he grows a special Rokushima Taiyoo mushroom called speaks-with-dead that he dries and makes to pills. The pills then transfer the youths' energy to the aged.

Aubrey

50 years ago, a string of murders occurred with a bizarre MO. Now, murders with the same pattern are occurring. Has the killer returned? Actually, the grandchild of the original killer is repeating the crimes. The grandchild has certain genetic traits that the killer has as they have resurfaced. If the killer survives, their grandchild will commit the crimes yet again. (Curse may be better than genetics)

Irresistible

A death fetishist is stalking the (dead) women of the city. He collects the hair, nails, and fingers of his victims. His madness is growing and he will soon turn to making live girls into dead ones for his collection. The dangerous bit is...he looks totally normal, a perfectly respectable person in every way.

Dod Kalm

Trapped on an abandoned ship, the characters are aging at an incredible rate. If they do not get away, they will die of extreme old age in a couple of days. All the water on the ship and in the ocean around them is the cause of the aging and touching it speeds up the process. The crew abandoned the ship in the middle of the night and took all the life boats. Worse, the boat is crumbling as a strange crystal growth bores and splinters the wood.

Humbug

Set this in I'Morai. Citizens and performers are being killed strangely. When the characters search the freak show for a killer, where to they look? The answer is to a man who has a parasitic twin, and the still stranger fact that the brothers are enemies. The parasitic brother has found the means to detach itself and is seeking a new host/brother. However, as the parasite finds, when it tries to attach, it merely tears the potential hosts side to shreds, killing it.

The Calusari

The off-spring of a Vistani woman and her giorgio husband becomes possessed by the dark spirit of his still-born brother, who seeks to kill the living family, in a pact with a dark power designed to give it life. A mystic group of Vistani males(!?!) enlist the characters aid in protecting the family and exorcizing the spirit.

F. Emasculata

In Nosos, the lord is testing a new plague on the population of a prison. A nearly unstoppable disease (description if desired later...), the darklord is pleased. Unfortunately, two of the prisoners escape, and flee the realm. The darklord does not wish others to study his creation and the characters are chosen to hunt the carriers, and stop them before they pass the plague on.

Our Town

In a town famed for its live stock and poultry, bonfires are reported in the pastures and several people go missing. Fearing a cult, the local noble asks the characters to investigate. They visit the town and find the locals reluctant to help. As the characters, investigate, a woman in the town becomes insane. She is incurable, but an educated doctor or similar will identify the cause as kuru, a brain-disease caused by eating contaminated nuerol matter, especially noted among cannibals. As a few days pass, three more fall to the disease. Finally, someone steps forward and tells the characters about a respected elder of the town who travelled abroad and brought back a cult. The person explain that most of the people in the town are older than they appear and provides records to prove it. The rituals of the cult are that by eating a person one consumes that persons longevity, extending the life, but only if the head is saved and treated. Leftovers are ground and mixed into the livestock and poultry feed. Guess what? The characters (and the nobles men if the call in back-up) get to break up the cult. (I think you should watch this one to get an idea of what it's about)

El Mundo Gira

Rather complex, this has great potential to be translated to Ravenloft. Strange events, passion, vengeance, deadly plagues, and desperate people all mix together to form a plot-line suitable for Ravenloft. It is rather complex so I recommend view the show first. Nova Vaasa might be a good setting for this.

Die Hand Die Verletzt

A group of youths are discovered in the woods, dead in a grisly fashion which mirrors the legacy of a coven of witches from long ago. The parents ask the characters to search for the killer. A page at the scene leads the characters to the school where a new teacher is educating the children about things they should not know. The teacher is an evil being who is feeding on the energies of her students. When a group of students attempted to contact a being capable of destroying the teacher, she took steps to prevent this. What is the goal of this teacher and what is the connection to the town's history of witchcraft?

Fresh Bones

A commander in the Falkovnian army has found a way too improve the army's capabilities. He intends to use the secrets of a captured Souragnian voodoo priest to form an army of zombie slaves, and is extracting the information from the priest through careful application of fear and pain. The secrets lie in a pact with a graveyard loa(voodoo spirit) and a powder that "zombifies" living beings (zombie cucumber is the name). One of his privates gets wind of the plan and informs the characters, telling them of the tiny village that will be turned into zombies. He is then arrested and disappears. The people of the village have been dosed with the powder, and once the pact is made, they are doomed. The characters must stop the destruction of the village and the further strengthening of Drakov's armies.

D.P.O.

Several people die due to lightning strikes. A behir (or a wizard or something) is suspected. The reality is that a shunned youth in the area is responsible, due to a strange ability to command and control lightning and other forms of electricity.

Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose

A killer is stalking the fortune-tellers of a city, slaying those who can not answer his questions. When a man approaches the characters, and shows them the newest victim (before the guards find it) they are drawn into the hunt. The man possesses a gift and a curse, he can see the manner of a person's death. As the hunt progresses, the killer begins to target the man helping the characters. Will the killer be caught before he kills again? Will the death-seer see a character's death? (Watch this episode before trying this...is very good, but kind of strange)

The List

A killer is executed, but before dying promises to return for revenge on those who wronged him. Shortly, those whom he targeted begin dying. The killer left a list of those he sought revenge on, but it has disappeared. The thing is, the killer has returned as a fly (swarm?), but can manifest briefly to exact his revenge.

2Shy

The lonely women of the city are disappearing. Love letters are found at the home of each one. The cause is a man who has become unhuman... like an insect he digests his food outside his body, using an acidic secretion. He also lacks certain fatty acids needed to keep his skin from deteriorating, and must extract these from the fat tissues of human beings. He romances women, seduces them, captures them, and uses his digestive secretions to remove the substances he needs. He is a scholar and translates romantic works, using them in his love letters (a clue).

The Walk

A soldier is wounded in battle, left paralysed. He becomes bitter and blames his commanding officers. He discovers a means to project his spirit out of his body, and uses this ability to destroy the lives of his former officers, destroying all they hold dear but allowing them no escape. (Watch this...the way the crippled soldier is stop would earn a big powers check)

Revelations

A killer is targeting stigmatics (or something similar). Most are simply side-show hoaxes and traveling evangelists/con-men. But one true stigmatic (sigh...watch the show) exists. He is in danger, but is protected by a loyal servant. The killer believes he has been chosen by a dark power to destroy those who bear the holy marks. He has the ability to cause his hands to heat up to very high temperatures (sear flesh and melt metal). The boy's father is in a madhouse, but in his madness speaks of things to come, especially dealing with his son.

Syzygy

A rare astrological alignment causes a small geographic area to experience bizarre phenomena and rampant madness. As the area begins losing its grip in/on reality, two people born at the same time on the same day, begin to develop dark powers (its because they were born at an astrologically significant moment). Can the characters ride out the stars alignment or will they too become slaves to the stars?

Grotesque

An artist is caught after a series of brutal murders. The artist claims a demon possessed him and forced him to commit the crimes. Shortly, the killings begin again. Is the artist's story true? Possibly. But the officer in charge of the investigation has disappeared... has he succumbed to the madness of the artist? (has a frightening bit with clay sculptures that can be worked into a story line about clay golems).

Pusher

A powerful noble is being threatened. Someone claiming responsibility for the death of several somewhat less prominent figures, all of whom apparently committed suicide, has sent death threats to the noble. When a favored servant winds up dead, the characters are hired as extra guards. The assassin is a man who has discovered an ability to command people's minds with the sound of his voice. He uses his ability to drive his victims to commit suicide. His gift is also a curse as the ability slowly destroys his body each time he uses it, and has reached the point where he will die at any time (therefore he is targeting bigger and bigger prey).

Teso Dos Bichos

A burial urn of a shaman is disturbed and taken to a museum. The spirit of the shaman is disturbed and begins haunting the museum, slaying researchers and guards. The curator hires the characters to find the cause of the deaths. Blocking their search is a researcher who through a substance called yaje, is in contact with the spirit. If the urn is destroyed, something very unpleasant will happen(??? I can't think up everything). To lay the spirit to rest, the urn must be restored to the place where it was discovered.

Hell Money

About an the organ donation black-market, this one is not easily translated into Ravenloft. The game might be interesting in Rokushima Taiyoo, or the organ thieves could be selling to ghouls, necromancers, and golem creators.

Unruhe

The part on psychic photography doesn't work, but the rest might be good. A man is kidnapping people and giving them lobotomies. One patient is found wondering around a field muttering the word "Unruhe" (german for unrest, but you can them say whatever is needed). When someone close to the characters is next to go under the knife (really icepick), it is a race against time to find the madman.

Teliko

An African outshoot of humanity, the teliko have no pituitary gland. They survive by stealing the pituitary glands of humans to gain the needed hormones and whatnot. Now one of these creatures has journeyed into the city. He is hunting the darker skin city dwellers (part of the thing is that the teliko preys on dark skinned folk to gain more pigments) and leaving behind bleached and broken corpses.

Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man

Nothing here for Ravenloft, but I want to point it out as a prime example of creating a plausible and sympathetic villian with a rich background. However, there is a silly bit at the end.
Christopher Dale Nichols

Adventure Hooks for Bluebeard

By P. van Rooden

- The adventurers arrive at Blaustein just in time for a wedding to take place. The wedding, of course, of the lord and a lovely young damsel. While at first the party may join the celebrations (the ship's provisions may give them a more hearty welcome than normal), they soon find out that all is not well when they find the young damsel crying. Her true love, Emiel, is in Bluebeard's dungeon, and she is forced to marry the brute lest her lover is executed for 'high treason'...
- If there is a young woman (PC/NPC) on board, she will mysteriously vanish after the first night on shore. This is not Bluebeard's doing, but that of a villager who desperately wants to please his lord with a new wife. Bluebeard may or may not be interested in the new bride.
- Bluebeard recruits the PCs to hunt the ghosts in his castle. He will not, of course, tell the truth about them (that they are his former wives), instead claiming they are disillusioned ghosts from an old and distant past. PCs will probably not have much trouble recovering the truth, after which they have to find a way to get out under their 'contract' with the lord.
- Bluebeard may ask the PCs to escort an 'ambassador' of his to the isle of Ghastria, where he is to woo a new bride for his master. As an alternative scenario, Bluebeard may try to make a trade going between the islands.
- The dead body of a girl (Bluebeard's last wife) is found on the shore. This is not Bluebeard's doing, but that of a valpurgeist, who was hung at the gallows by Bluebeard for failing his duty as a chamberlain. The valpurgeist cannot harm Bluebeard, which drives him insane. After a few days, he starts targeting the lord's henchmen, including the PCs.

Pierre van Rooden

Time of Unparalleled Darkness

By R. Sweeney

Preface by A. Ray

The Gentleman Caller is a most obscure and unscreed character that seems to go around the demiplane of dread to sow the seeds of discord, corruption and destruction. Everything in his trail soon becomes rotten, tainted and doomed, and nothing seems to stand in his own passage. According to the canon material released by the Kargat, the Gentleman Caller (who appeared first in the adventure The Evil Eye, then in Bleak House and Children of the Night: Vampires) is an incubus, who, among the other things, seduced the darklord Gabrielle Aderre of Invidia and spawned Malocchio, the Dukkar who now rules over Invidia and threatens Vistani all over the demiplane. This is the base from which Robert Sweeney starts his disturbing scenario that involves the Gentleman Caller, Malocchio and the Vistani in order to explain what will happen in BC 775, when an Time of Unparalleled Darkness has been foreseen by the Kargat.

A Possible Scenario for the Time of Unparalleled Darkness

In Ravenloft, there is a theory that the "Dark Powers" exist. And, pretty much, the DMs 'know' he, she, it, or them exist and are 'behind' the 'powerchecks', trapping the lords, and similar events. It has been stated, however, that they don't 'tempt' or 'force' people to fall into darkness.. and thus they must somehow be bound by or respect a creatures' free will. We know very little about the DPs, but we have 'observed' a strange tie between them and the vistani.

The vistani themselves can roam about the demiplane at will. They don't *Seem* to be a 'pocket domain' with a travelling lord like the Headless horseman, but one could also see how this could happen. They appear, however, to have a strong tie with the lands, perhaps due to almost druidical investigations of the demiplane, perhaps because they are in some way tied to the DPs. They also have the ability to divine the future (and any other attempts at fortune-telling are hindered or made more difficult, supposedly by the DPs. I believe the DoD section on Psionics is where I get that idea from.)

The Vistani, therefore, seem to be some force in opposition to the DPs, but not overtly in opposition. More like a Neutral force with some dark tendencies resisting (where it can do so without being destroyed), the manipulation and plots of a demon. The vistani are not 'glowing points of goodness and light', but they don't really seem overtly evil either. They seem to have a tie with the DPs, but often aid Adventurers and PCs in their fight against the DPs. One might speculate that their ability to shape or control the mists might be employed to cause the mists to seekout, capture, and bring to RL good heroes from other realms to battle against the forces of darkness accumulating here. Conversely, the DPs send out their misty tendrils to bring in potential evil people, hoping they will become darklords.

Now, I don't overly try to examine the DPs goal, but find the sort of Alienist viewpoint preferable. While mortals may not understand why they do what they do or how it profits them, they have a 'calling' to collect these dark souls that makes perfect sense to their Alien thought patterns. There is some extra-normal logic at work, perhaps tied to the illogical logic and mathematics employed in spellcasting and perhaps more like the logic of a being that can think of 7 or 8 dimensions whereas we can only think in 4.

Ravenloft, after all, does not simply choose the "most evil" creatures from any world, but seems to pick and choose these evil creatures according to some pattern incomprehensible to the mind of man. We only have one domain of mindflayers, no domains of drow, no beholders, no domainlords who are evil dragons, etc. Sheer evil isn't what they are going for and they actually seem less interested in elemental evil of those species than they are of humans and demihumans.

Why? Who knows...

But there's that 'connection' between the vistani and the DPs.

Now, consider the Gentleman Caller's actions. What if the Gentleman caller isn't an incubus at all, but a 'created son' of the DPs or their avatar in some way. His schemes and their motivations are equally incomprehensible. If we posit that the vistani and the DPs are enemies with some bizarre connection, the GC's attempt to create a 'son' with vistani blood (and a Dukkar at that) could be seen as an action akin to the Devil, in Revelations, sireing an anti-messiah.

If one works with this 'suggestion' the GC becomes much more ominous and the Dukkar's status as the "Begotten and Not Made" son of the Dark Powers... creepyness just oozes all over that. Giving thought to the Vistani's belief that the Dukkar will be disastrous to the Vistani and the foreshadowed "Time of Unparalleled Darkness", we get a picture akin to Armageddon. Perhaps that day the darklords' borders will fall and war will rage across the corew. Perhaps, the demiplane will converge with another Prime Material world. Perhaps mortals will finally see the face of those ruling them from behind the misty veil. Perhaps...

But whatever it is, a Cloud of Imminent Doom seems to be descending over Ravenloft.

Robert Sweeney

Adventure Scenarios for Merilee

By M. Barrett

Here's some adventure hooks I've developed using Merilee. I'm using the slightly altered version of her that I wrote for my campaign, but I don't think it would be too hard to adapt these to the standard version of Merilee, or to many other vampires for that matter.

Bear in mind that I've developed these ideas to reflect Merilee's unbelievable intelligence, as well as her desire to be free of the body of a child, or at least more powerful. I loved Merilee's motives in Darklords, but was miffed that with all that brilliance and cunning, she never **did** anything to fix her situation. From the description in the book, she had brains to beat some patriarch vampires, and what did she do all day? Hang out with Adam, feeling sorry for herself!

So here's my ideas on using Merilee as a powerful and ambitious villain for an adventure:

1) Merilee has charmed herself a "family" to travel the core with. They are all humans that resemble her in a way, and they provide a decent source of blood as she roams around trying to learn new things about her condition. This allows her to feed without alerting anyone in the neighborhood to her presence. To defend her family, she may summon wolves and bats, or perhaps have some minor controlled undead that she commands to follow them and guard their sleep as they travel.

2) Merilee is in the process of building such a family, or replacing one that was destroyed somehow. This means she spends a lot of time in human company. To hide her condition, she drinks boiling water to keep her body temperature up so infravision does not reveal her. She also feeds more frequently so as to keep her skin from being pale and cold. Merilee may approach PC's about becoming part of her new "family."

3) Merilee is feeding on villagers, but is framing someone else as a vampire to cover her tracks. She charms the person and makes them impersonate a vampire, perhaps using herbal medicines to simulate death. They have a coffin in the graveyard and everything; the only problem is they are innocent! Imagine the PC's horror when they realize they staked a living person!

3) Merilee has a scroll of **polymorph** that she has acquired somewhere, and hopes it would be useful to her to acquire a new body. She knows from her use of charmed protectors, however, that charmed wizards have an increased chance of spell failure, so she wants to strike a bargain with someone.

Perhaps she charms everyone but the mage in a particular party, and agrees to let them go only when the spell is properly cast.

Perhaps she offers an arcanist some unique insights into the mind of vampires, even helping him write a treatise and take credit for it. After 162 years as a vampire, Merilee would have a lot of insight to offer!

4) Whether from the previous experiment or another, Merilee has started using polymorph magic to get around in the daytime.

(VRgtV says that a vampire is polymorphed only until it changes form again, so while this is dangerous, it gives Merilee incredible power for the time she has it.)

5) When caught by the party, Merilee breaks down into tears and claims she was turned into a vampire two months ago, and plays the scared little girl thing *again.* She tries to get sympathy from the party to have them play into her hands, perhaps sending them on a search for some components that are supposed to turn her back into a mortal--actually part of Merilee's neverending plots. This could be a great excuse to use #4, by having Merilee claim that the spell will turn her back into a normal girl again. They cast the spell, test things out to make sure she isn't a vampire anymore, and perhaps she even joins their group for a while, knowing full well that she can change back whenever she wants!

6) Merilee has heard of Lyssa Von Zarovich and would like to find out if Lyssa's trick would work for her. She tries to manipulate the party into helping a ghost attack her, hoping that the aging will either grow her into an adult vampire or send her into a later age category. (DM's choice as to whether it works or not.)

7) Merilee has heard of the Apparatus and wishes to switch bodies with another vampire. She charms a group or individual, travels to find the Apparatus, and when/if she finds it, she drains one of her charmed servitors to the point of death and places the body in one sphere. She stands in the other and waits for the body to start to rise as a vampire, and then throw the switch, (or commands someone else to throw it.) Of all her schemes, this is most likely to work, and you can bet she will have her final revenge on that prison that she called a body.

If her victim in this was a PC, you had better have the others intervene or be ready to write the PC out in a spectacular way, because with her own mind and the body of a "normal" vampire, Merilee is going to wreak havoc on that poor body of hers with no consideration for who's in it now.

Merilee Current Sketch

Merilee started a serious campaign of venturing out from Lamordia about 15 years ago. She has developed a remarkably complex system for securing a place to stay in each area. Considering that she destroyed Keesla while the two were traveling, and knowing the difficulties in traveling as a vampire, Merilee takes a lot of precautions.

First, at any time, she has at least three coffins or other such areas for sleep. In the area she just left, you will find her underlings digging up her last coffin and preparing to ship it to another location. When she knows where she is headed next, she always has a coffin buried somewhere in the area at least three days in advance, and there are always servants watching it. Thus, there is always one coffin in front, one behind, and one where she is currently staying. In addition, Merilee has several strategies for quickly acquiring a new place to stay in an emergency, and she will implement one of these the moment she suspects her normal sleeping area of being compromised.

Merilee, like all of her kind, requires some relic of her former life to sleep with. In her case, this is a child's toy. Merilee always sleeps with a doll of some kind, although it needn't be one she owned in life--those have all gone the way of all the earth. Yet, as much as she despises her

childlike appearance, her condition forces her to buy (or steal) a new doll every few years. She has a small collection of them saved up, so as not to be without one should she be forced to find new refuge.

One advantage of this is that a little girl with a doll collection is far less conspicuous than a man who ships barrels of earth wherever he goes. In addition, the doll has completed the psychological effect of her childlike state on more than one occasion: a warrior once opened her casket, knowing what he faced, and saw her sleeping so peacefully, alabaster skin, blonde ponytail, blanket and doll in hand, and the sight gave him such pause that her ghouls were able to attack before he could strike. To be sure, the unfortunate man had learned far too much by then, and when Merilee awoke, she put to rest his doubts as to her innocence for good....

Merilee is capable of commanding undead as a Mature vampire; up to 48 hit dice of them at one time. Merilee is always on the lookout for new undead servants, as she considers them far less risk, and far more expendable, than charmed servants. She keeps her charmed human friends with her, leaving the undead to menial tasks such as the burying and retrieval of her coffins. She prefers ghouls and ghosts especially because of their paralyzing touch and higher intelligence, and uses ghosts as leaders whenever possible. One of the most valuable things about undead to Merilee is that they cannot reveal who is directing them, whereas a charmed or blackmailed human could expose her under the right circumstances.

Merilee prefers to travel by charming herself a family to protect her, but this is not always feasible.

Instead, she often finds a single companion to charm, an adult traveling the same direction who can pose as a parent. When the charm wears off, the adult will often think that they have just helped a runaway, and will justify it to themselves somehow, not even realizing that the idea to help was not even theirs. In addition, as helping a runaway is a crime in many areas, these people will often stay silent about the encounter to avoid punishment.

In my campaign, I plan to have the characters come across what appears to be a band of marauding ghouls in a graveyard, and they inadvertently prevent the burial of one of Merilee's coffins. Forced to take shelter at an orphanage, Merilee charms the people in charge and sets up a temporary base. When the PC's find children who are being carefully fed on, Merilee tries to pin it on the lady of the house, and even goes so far as to pinch the skin around her neck to bruise it, throwing suspicion off herself. If the players are not smart, they will end up staking an innocent woman, and Merilee will gain a bunch of new helpers....

Matthew Barrett

Holy Wars In Ravenloft

By Asplagis

The Factions

- Church of Ezra (LE branch & LG branch)
- Followers of Uhlo (meaning "the beyond" or "the one" in some obscure prime material tongue)
- Followers of Diamabel

Church of Ezra

The faith of Elena Faithhold is indeed represented in the core, but it has slowly been absorbed by the lawful good and evil branches of the Church of Ezra. Many have been given duties as missionaries or even as protectors of the various churches dedicated to Ezra.

The neutral branch of the CoE has preferred not to enter into any conflict, saying it isn't Ezra's will to fight, rather Ezra protects. So they protect the poor and protect small villages from the destruction caused by some of the more aggressive actions taken by the different faiths. They have agreed to protect the other branches of Ezra's faith if the need arises, but feel it hasn't come to this yet.

The branches of the Ezra church are informal. The branches see themselves as all part of the same faith, but they do fraction themselves in certain aspects, notably how they perceive the other faiths in the core and what they do about this situation. It's a question of how to better worship and follow Ezra's word rather than a true separation within the church.

The lawful good branch feels Ezra is threatened by the aggressive way Otto Rudnik (prophet of the Uhlo) is putting together his religion and how the followers of Diamabel have been found guilty of great profanities towards the CoE. They feel they must protect themselves against the threats, but nothing more... except for gaining new followers, which is always important, but if at all possible without violence.

The lawful evil branch feels that other religions are a slap in the face of Ezra and cannot allow them to gain any ground and they feel any means are necessary in order to protect Ezra and make sure its teachings are spread throughout the land and not blasphemous lies.

The Followers of Uhlo

This religion is actually based around the teachings of a certain Mikhael Rudnik, a mysterious outsider who comes to enlighten the masses. He says that the deities of death worshipped in the southern core are actually all one and the same. They worship Uhlo, which in his native tongue means the Beyond or the One. He originates from a distant prime material world where he was a travelling prophet for the ruling monotheistic religion, the Church of Uhlo. Uhlo's words are contained in a large black book that Otto carries with him at all times. This book contains teachings which explain the origins of life and death, it speaks of the afterlife in great details, urging people to believe in Uhlo to assure themselves a proper afterlife. They must follow his words to make themselves worthy of being his Children.

The virtues are actually quite individualistic and centered around a strange fascination with death. Indeed, high on the list of virtues is the respect of the dead and the many of their rituals have a connection with death. Another highly praised value is the conservation of traditional ways, and how nothing comes to pass without Uhlo consent. This means technology and science are not quite appreciated, and scientists, doctors and other men and women who represent higher learning are viewed with great mistrust.

Individualism is also a strong value, Uhlo wanting his children to be able to fend for themselves and to make sure none get lazy. People should avoid doing too much for others, to help others one must help himself first.

The alignment of the church is actually moderately lawful evil, but some people have come to worship in Uhlo in a more chaotic good way, depending on how they perceive Uhlo's words concerning individualism. Some keep closer to their original faiths and stay neutral, especially in very underdeveloped and rural areas.

Otto has been spreading his teachings across the southern core, making frequent stops in places where a god of death (be it Myrkul, Bane, Cyric etc...) is already worshipped.

He feels that the Northern core has been fooled by their blasphemous unnatural creations (technology) and that it has made them go toward a false idol (Ezra) in search of their lost spirituality. They scoff at death and try to cheat it whenever they can (medicine). It is time for the those who hold the truth to rise up and show their fellow men the words of Uhlo. Notice that Mikhael does not say that violence is the key, although he is much more aggressive than the CoE in terms of gathering followers and what he says about other religions.

As for the followers of Diamabel, they are following a devil in disguise. They are wayward children who could not help but be fooled, they live in a harsh land and their minds are not as advanced as those of the inhabitants of the core. Still, they are violent, dangerous and erratic, so they must be dealt with swiftly and harshly so they can learn the true ways of Uhlo.

Mikhael is a very ethnocentric person, and feels the cultures of the southern core (who are very close to the ones of his native homeland) are vastly superior to any other. If a land isn't like his, then it means the people running it are either delusional or have been fooled by some blasphemous lies. This has kept him from going to Vallachan and Sithicus, he feels that these primitive beings need time to evolve before being able to understand the words of Uhlo. Mikhael is a 12th level lawful evil Priest of Uhlo. His priests gain spheres and powers according to the original deity they worshipped, but lose 2 levels. They cannot go higher than 7th level in their original with their deity's spheres and granted powers, after which they must swear a greater bond to Uhlo. (I suggest the generic death god priests in the Necromancer handbook as a model for priests of Uhlo).

The Followers of Diamabel

They came to the core with orders to find brothers and sisters to share their faith with and tell them of the arrival of their savior Diamabel. They entered the core to find Nova Vaasa first. The recent attacks by the Imperial Throne of the Faithless had left the Church of Ezra in shambles. The major church of the land and its most important priests had all been eradicated by the

fanatical group. This left the scene wide open for a new actor in all this, the followers of Diamabel. Physically, the population of Nova Vaasa found the Pharazians to be rather similar to themselves, accepting them as distant brothers. They talked greatly of their savior and the population in search of a new belief accepted Diamabel's with open arms. Nova Vaasa has become the home of more than one temple dedicated to Diamabel and Ezra is quickly losing ground, and the Imperial Throne has been focusing their attacks on the CoE.

The population of Northern Barovia (former Gundarakites) have come to see the Morninglord in the descriptions of Diamabel, and feel that the two are one and the same. Half of the time, they name their Morninglord "Diamabel". Strahd cares little for the Gundarakites and their beliefs, but has decided that if ever they cause any trouble or start expanding too much, they shall be punished.

Valachan had been more or less spared the religious troubles until some of the dark skinned inhabitants started taking a liking to the words of the followers of Diamabel and are slowly warming up to their teachings. The paler inhabitants care little for religion in general, but like some groups of the darker skinned inhabitants, they have faith in Ezra. Vob Kharkov is uncertain about letting the faith of Diamabel into his land, but he remains neutral, for now... But Valachan has become a major element in the war between Ezra and Diamabel.

Hazlik has been a great opponent of the faith of Diamabel, actively hunting its followers within his domain. He has given a lot of freedom to the followers of Uhlo to make sure Diamabel's followers get crushed.

Points of interest for the religions:

-Valachan: It has quickly become a symbolic land for Ezra and Diamabel, the winner of the holy war there will get a huge push in their favor. The natural resources and the access to the Sea of Sorrows is a major goal. Mikhael cannot believe that these people can actually learn Uhlo's words correctly so he refuses to even go there...

-northern Barovia: The Gundarkites there are devout worshippers, whatever the faith may be, so it would be a great gain for any one of the three faiths. But the Morninglord is too much like Diamabel and the population needs support, meaning Diamabel is almost assured victory... still, many have good contact with Borcans and have warmed up to Ezra, so the fight is far from over. And Strahd does have the final word on who stays and who leaves.

-Kartakass: They have been greatly ignored, but are quite possibly the next target after Valachan and Barovia. They worship nature gods and those associated with happiness and bardic skills (music, song, arts in general). If anything, all three want to change this more or less pagan-like domain into a more "proper" one. Harkon is doing his best to avoid any conflict within his land, and has been communicating with Hazlik about a possible alliance... Hazlik is unsure, but the economical prospects of exclusive rights to Kartakan woodland resources is non-negligible. A rich merchant who now resides in Nosos and still has a lumbering company in Kartakass is opposed to talks with Hazlan about selling woodland resources, but Harkon could care less about what she thinks...

-Sithicus: Although none of the religions dare to impose their ways within the limits of Lord Soth's land, each has been trying to convince the later of giving them a small place to call their own to build a temple. Soth has responded by slaying those who even dared ask him such a ridiculous thing. Thakisis is here to stay... and the elves are not interested in human religion anyways... If Mikhael gets enough power from this war, he might go after the elves, whom he feels are evil and dark fearies who come from the darkest side of the afterlife.

-Falkovnia: Drakov's men are officialy hunting down anyone associated with this holy war business and dares enter into Falkovnian territory. In fact, they are very suspicious of anyone showing signs of particularly strong attachement to the three faiths in question (i.e. clearly waving a holy symbol around, praying openly...).

-The Eternal Order: This faith hasn't been able to do much in recent history outside of Darkon. The Kargat's influence outside of Darkon hasn't been solid enough to compete with the strongest faith in a given domain. The Northern core is solidly supportive of Ezra, whereas the south is mostly going into the hands of Diamabel and Uhlo. Falkovnia and Kartakass are the only really neutral domains, with Barovia being partly neutral due to Strahd's influence in his domain.

-The Nocturnal Sea domains: Meredoth isn't concerned with all this, and as for the islands, well it's still mostly Ezra, but Uhlo has been gaining popularity.

-Nosos: Malus Sceleris has a lot to smile about these days, his timber companies in the core are making a lot of money off of this. All three faiths consume a lot of wood to build and repair their temples and such. Also, the coal produced in Nosos is being exported to the core to be used by the faiths for many purposes, including powering steamboats for those trips along the rivers.

-Rokushima Taiyoo: Xavier, an anchorite trying to convert the inhabitants of these oriental islands, is trying to double his efforts at converting the people of the north eastern torment, in a symbolic gesture. He plans to go to other islands to spread the word of Ezra.

-The northern core lords: They are not happy with all this. They are afraid that the populations might start fighting and therefor leave the domains weak against a possible attack by Drakov. The Brain in Dementlieu is also worried about this, but feels that this is the perfect time to try for a little takeover. Louise Renier is planning something similar herself... Darkon remains aloof from all this, the population safely staying with the Eternal Order, although Uhlo has had some success in small villages. The respect of the dead being popular in Darkon made Uhlo's faith easy to assimilate.

-Tepest: this is Ezra's territory. Tepesti want nothing to do with the other religions and feel that Ezra will banish these blasphemers before long. The Three Hags care little for what happens, except that it may mean less food for them.

-Southern lords: Most are cautious but are confident that the faiths will break it up eventually and reach a status quo. At worst, they are prepared to influence the outcome so that the status quo is maintained.

-Nidalia: Elenia Faith-Hold has some contact with the troops she sent and is pleased to hear that her faith is represented even in such a far away place. She believes Ezra to be a simple cultural reference, and as far as she knows, the differences between anchorites and her faith are non-existent.

-Sri Raji: Business as usual... unless that Marilith pretending to be Kali spreads her ways to the core and make the battle a four way war.

-Strahd: he is not talking to the southern lords, he feels Hazlik and Malken are mad, Harkon is weak, Urik is dumb and shortsighted, Drakov is too bloodthirsty for his own good, Gabrielle Aderre is an untrustworthy Vistani wench and her son needs some time before he can be any kind of force. Basically, no one is worth much and if anything should happen, his domain will remain stable, silly mortal priests cannot alter Barovia as they wish, those who try will get what they deserve...

Possible causes of the war and important events:

- [The Imperial Throne of the Faithless](#): Lord Samoth's group of fanatical atheists has been terrorizing the core for quite some time. They are behind many of the misunderstandings between the faiths. Samoth has had members of his group forge documents and give out false rumours in an effort to start a war between the faiths. This, he hopes, will weaken them all so he can take over and impose his grim new world order.
- Murder of Brother A'lil of Diamabel's troups by an anchorite assassin in Egertus (actually a member of the ITotF in disguise who planted some false clues leading to the CoE).
- Desecration of a number of minor temples of Bane in Hazlan by some members of the church of Ezra (they were young, angry priests of the LE branch). This lead to Hazlik's strong and vocal opposition to any religion that he does not approve of.
- A skirmish between priests of Uhlo and those of Diamabel in the middle of a small northern Barovian village. No deaths or injuries, but much friction.
- Lynching of Diamabel's priests by anti-Diamabel peasants still swearing allegiance to Ezra in many small villages of Nova Vaasa (Tristen Hiregaard had his hands full with this one). Malken killed some reported members of the lynch mobs, murder was blamed on the followers of Diamabel.
- Vallachan was called primitive by Mikhael during a speech in Hazlan.
- A small underground temple of Uhlo is found within ruins in Pont-a-Museum in Richemulot, Ezra's church is said to be greatly offended by this heresy. Same thing happens in Dementlieu three weeks later. Priests of Ezra say the faith of Uhlo is a slap in the face of Ezra's greatness.
- Levkarest makes the practice of any religion besides Ezra, illegal.
- Some adventurers discover that many official documents of the three religions have been tampered with, especially those of Ezra's church. The three faiths point the finger at each other. Former members of Nidalia's church actually say that this outrage will result in severe punishment by Ezra's hand... shades of Elena Faith-hold...

- Nocturnal raids upon a church of Ezra in Nova Vaasa by the priests of Diamabel. The ITotF burn down the church afterwards.
- Same thing happens to a church of the Morninglord in Viaki.
- Unofficially, the three faiths have declared war upon each other... Samoth is happy...

Author's Note:

Mikael was based upon a real life figure, one of the most horrible man Québec has ever known, Maurice Duplessis. The man tried to ban all religions but Christian faith, tried to isolate Québec from the world resulting in Québec being nearly 50 years late compared to other provinces and the U.S. . Blatantly racist and a master at political tinkering (messing with the voter's mind by promising them personal gifts for a vote for him and threats of violence against those who didn't).

Asplagis

Pride

By R. Sweeney

Summary: The antagonist, a vain man, strives for physical perfection and nearly preaches racist dogma (during life). Age begins to advance upon him, and the man grows fearful of losing his playboy lifestyle. Obsessed with physical beauty, he tries to maintain his beauty at all costs. Sadly, a terrible accident scars him and he wallows in despair.

Seeking to restore his beauty, he commits dark crimes against his brother.. for which he is blessed/cursed by the dark powers. During this process, his body is transformed in hideous ways. With the aid of a spirit, the Lord manages to restore his beauty by inflicting his deformations on his captive brother.

The players are drawn into the scenario when the 'ugly' brother escapes and 'kidnaps' the Lord's bride. She is also physically beautiful, but vain. The ugly brother knows that the Lord 'needs' a new beautiful victim to regain his beauty when the mutations appear again. He is trying to protect her. She, despite all reason, grows to love him. The PCs are charged with rescuing her from the 'Beast'.

The players quite possibly kill the beast and return the woman to the vain lord. This would be sad, for they will have judged the man by his exterior, and slew the wrong 'beast'. Still, several months later, they may happen to find a lab assistant disposing of a twisted body.. and learn what happened to the blushing bride under her master's care.

Long:

Sir Geoffrey Goodwall plied his trade as a skilled tailor at 3254 Primrose Blvd. No shortage of lady-friends did this fine young man suffer, for every lady would, at one point or another, visit his fine shop and beg him to employ his grand skill to craft the most exquisite garments in the province.

Well known the locals, his reputation asserted that his hands bore a seemingly mystical skill with cloth, needle, and thread. None other could match the quality of garments produced by his person. His wares fetched exorbitant prices.... Allowing Goodwall to assume some manner of station in society.

Goodwall proved to be a proud man, dressing himself in the finest of his own productions and taking meticulous care with his personal grooming and choice of society friends. The man and his clothes seemed to match well, for his face was among the most handsome. Many a lady begged his favor, quite a few received it.

Thus did Goodwall, with good fortune in business and good help in his shop manage the life of a playboy in the town elite. Occasionally, as he so desired, he would fashion the gowns and dresses himself, but more often now he left such menial tasks to his qualified help. He, on the other hand, oversaw all aspects of design and purchasing.

His twin, Derrick, shared Geoffrey's fortune with business and ladies, but he held lesser aspirations and preferred to make his living upon the stage and in screen writing as well. Derrick was as dashing a figure as his brother, but not nearly as vain, easier to talk to, and not nearly as wealthy. Actors were, after all, a poor lot. But Derrick enjoyed life nonetheless.

As time moved ever forward, Derrick assumed the older parts in the screen plays, but mostly settled for writing for the theater. He enjoyed the work as much as acting and no longer had to worry that a wrinkle or bit of gray hair would spoil his career.

Geoffrey, however, did not take to aging so well. He had enjoyed his time as the dream of the daughters of the elite. With age, he faced only the pale prospect of being a respected, but old, business man.

He tried every manner of folk cure to restore his hair, his youth, and his status. Slowly, but surely, it fell apart. Various books on alchemy he studied seeking a 'cure' for the very natural condition of aging. He became convinced that people were pointing out his sagging gut, his fading hair, his wrinkled face as he made his way in society events.

Late one night, there came a knocking at the door. Alarmed, he froze in bed and chose not to answer the summons. Yet still, came the knocking on the door until Geoffrey feared he could stand it no longer. With great trepidation, he slowly made his way to the door and opening it found nothing there but for an ancient tome on the doorstep.

Upon reading this tome.. a tome normally devoted to the creation of those monstrosities, golems, Geoffrey became convinced that he could use the knowledge contained in this tome to surgically improve his looks. He began the legally perilous work of anatomically dissecting the dead. His looted cadavers, however, only showed him that to do the work he intended, he would need some form of living tissue to work with.

He began his dark path by seducing a poor street waif with the promise of warm food and shelter in return for implied carnal knowledge. The street-orphan reluctantly agreed and became his first living test subject.

This young boy remained alive for several weeks before his usefulness to Geoffrey ended, and he was permitted to die.

Geoffrey had learned, however, several secret steps towards the improvement of his various sagging body ailments and thirsted for still more of this forbidden knowledge. Working away at several alchemical preparations, Geoffrey felt light headed.. and woozy.. Trying to get up to open a window, Geoffrey cursed his own foolishness at not making sure the ventilation was sufficient for his delicate work. Dizzy, he tripped, and fell. Bottles, vials, and various instruments shattered to the ground.

He awoke several minutes later with a painful sensation on his cheek.

Alarmed he ran to a wash basin and washed off the chemicals, but it was by far too late. A look in the mirror revealed a wound that would surely become a dreadful scar. He rages at himself, in his pursuit of youth, he had cursed himself with this injury. Long moments he looked in the mirror.. as if pondering whether he should quit.. or wondering if he was beyond the point of no return on this venture.

In the end, he decided to graft a piece of skin over the injured part.. but for this he would need another victim. Out into the streets he went once more to find a street-urchin, but finding none, he managed to secure the services of a common hooker. This poor creature, driven by necessity into the trade just recently could not have expected the welcome Geoffrey intended for her. Her last pleas for mercy told Geoffrey of her poor child she'd left at home while she sought to get food for them any way she could.

Geoffrey either chose not to hear her.. or didn't care. Somewhere, somebody's mother never came home.

Pouring over the tome in a desperate attempt to figure out how to graft the tissue, Geoffrey paused to look in the mirror and mark the size and are of tissue he needed to cover in order to conceal his would from the laboratory acid. As he intently examined himself, he saw and almost imperceptible quiver in the glass. Looking, watching for it to repeat, he eventually began to see some faint outline in the surface of the looking glass.

The ghostly reflection spoke to him.. and professed to being something of an expert in the Arts. Geoffrey has begun to study. After much discussion with this ghost, Geoffrey learned that this being was the author of the very book he had spent many hours pouring over. Geoffrey complained that many sections of the book had been destroyed by the previous owner's ill care. The apparition replied that the segments lost could be replaced. And began to fade from view.

Geoffrey begged the apparition to come back, but with it's fading words, it answered "The blood of those that die on thy table commands me forth from the mirror. Choose carefully should thee wish to hear of me again, for my secrets are dark and forbidden to men. You have been warned."

Warned he was, but care he did not. He worked on the corpse upon his table.. carefully excising the proper amount of the young woman's delicate facial skin. Tediously, meticulously, he sowed the skin onto his face in place of his own wounded tissue. Carefully, he covered the newly sewn skin with gauze and investigated the mysteries of the book with the remainder of the corpse left to him.

Soon, however, the stress of puzzling out the missing sections of the text became too much for him.. and he longed for an easier way.. a quicker way.

Thinking back, he remembered the apparition in the mirror. Shortly thereafter a young girl disappeared from her backyard and was lain out upon Geoffrey's table. Again the apparition appeared and coached him in the ways arcane and forbidden. Upon the end of its time, the specter warned Geoffrey again.. "The blood of those that die on thy table.."

The next day, Geoffrey awoke alarmed. His hand upon his side revealed a scaly callused patch of skin. Warty, unsightly and misshapen. He frowned.

Still, he knew that this would be only a minor matter to fix, now that he knew the secrets of grafting skin.

(Hint: The ability to summon forth the apparition was the granted power of a failed powercheck. The negative side effect is a wound or scar on Geoffrey's person. This scar can be healed by this skin grafting technique, but it reappears within 3-4 days afterwards.. simply in a different location.)

As time (and victims) marched onward. Geoffrey grew in skill with his baleful profession, but also in curses. The fingers of his hands had grown quick, sure and dexterous.. but they had also become thin, emaciate, and unhealthy looking. Dark purple veins oozed with blood visibly under the thin pale skin. The bones and tendons could be clearly seen. He had to take to wearing gloves to hide this affliction when in public. Even the skin grafts didn't help for long.

Derrick, meanwhile, remained content with his poorer lifestyle as a playwright and had managed to amass some respect in society for the detailed plays he created. He continually invited Geoffrey to his debuts, but was often, if not always, turned down. Geoffrey's studies left him little time for such fanciful pastimes.

As fate would have it, one day he had decided to go to a play with a prospective love interest of his. This young thing laughed and enjoyed the performance immensely. At the end, the playwright was honored and she uttered compliments on how dashing and debonair he looked, stately and refined with his slightly graying hair. Geoffrey simmered that he should have to work so hard to stave off the signs of age, while his brother gained only recognition and respect with his aging.

Back at his studies later he worked upon the corpse of his latest date. The spirit of the mirror came to life again. Geoffrey complained loudly and long to the spirit about his many scars, lacerations, and blemishes that kept appearing every couple of nights. The spirit sadly told him, "You are accumulating too much dark vitae in your blood.. you must remove it and replace it with the healthy vitae of another person. In doing so, your afflictions shall be passed on to them and you shall be renewed."

Geoffrey, of course, had a perfect victim in mind...

Effects: Geoffrey and the spirit invented a machine much like a modern dialysis unit. (But utilizing necromancy magic). They would drain the blood from one patient.. distill it.. and pump it into the other. On one side, a tube from Geoffrey would pass into the machine. On the other, a tube from Derrick. Inside the machine, the contraption removed the pure vitae from Derrick's blood and purged the corrupt vitae from Geoffrey's own life fluid. Derrick, now a prisoner of his brother, became burdened with the physical manifestations of his brother's crimes. Geoffrey continued to enjoy several benefits of his dark powers.

Geoffrey:

Spirit Advisor (mirror, conditions stated above.) Dexterity 25 with hand/manual dexterity tasks. As well as all tasks directly involving needles or scalpels Specialist skill with the surgical scalpel .. 1-3 pts of damage +1 to hit / +2 damage. (THACO as fighter of same level.) Rate of Attack: 4/r.

Dex to melee to hit added to Melee attacks with the scalpel.

Blighted touch.. drain 1-4 pt Chr per touch at will.

Appears to be permanent but 'regeneration' heals.

Class: Archanist

Level: 10th

Spells used (Through scalpel..)

Chill Touch,

Spectral Hand (scalpel 'flies')

Vampiric Touch

Enervation (only targets touched by scalpel in one round.. up to 4).

Animate Dead -- Touch

(only victims slain on his table and only for 1 turn/level.

However, victim is continually affected by Animate Dead.

As soon as they fall... reanimating unless physically destroyed entirely.)

Special benefits:

In return for his limited spell selection, he can cast 3 x more spells than a normal necromancer of his level.

Derrick:

Curses: Claws, teeth, horns, scaly hide, tail, wings, hunched back, club foot.
Resulting powers: Damage 1-4, 1-4, AC 5, 1-2, Fly 6", (none), Jump 15' up 30' forward.
+ move 15" on all fours.

Class: Bard 10th (Enchantment spells only)

Geoffrey has neared the end of his ability to drain Derrick and has started courting Amanda, a beautiful young woman. Derrick hears Geoffrey considering using her with the dreadful machine.. or for skin grafts.

Appalled, he renews his efforts to break free and sneaks away.

Derrick will kidnap the woman trying to save her.. Geoffrey will hire the PCs to recapture her. She will have fallen in love with the "Beast" but the PCs will have seen the beast use enchantment spells to protect himself..

thus suspect magic is at work. They may not realize until it's too late that the "Beast" wasn't a beast inside.

If returned to Geoffrey, Amanda will eventually be used for experiments and vitae draining. A disfigured corpse will eventually be disposed of in the alley.

Notes: The Machine can only be used on one who is 'pure and good' thus most people Geoffrey hooks up to the machine fail to work. Only Amanda and his brother have worked thus far, but anyone Geoffrey grows fond of will work.

The 'spirit' is Geoffrey's remaining humanity... cursed to watch the sad remains of himself struggle to avoid the rigors of age... and his curse. The spirit is bound to obey Geoffrey and provide information he requests (info granted by the DPs.)

If Geoffrey is ever destroyed an Imp will steal the book and carry it off to it's true creator, Sin. Lord of the Seven Isles.

Geoffrey is proposed as a possible Incarnation of Evil. He could be either, Envy or Pride.
(Depending on what parts you wish to play up in his history.)

Robert Sweeney

The Town of Evil

By Jonathan Philpot,
with Special thanks to:

Nick Rice, Nothri, and the members of the Ravenloft Discussion List

This is a Ravenloft Adventure for 3 or 4 mid-level characters (adjust as needed) with a variety of character classes. The adventure is set in the town of Della Mirandola, and partly in the nearby village of Tillich. The adventure starts with the heroes stopping to rest in Tillich, where a young girl who begs them to search for her brother approaches them.

I apologize now for those lusting after game statistics, I usually do those off the cuff, depending on how the characters are doing, so that's the way everything is presented here.

And so it begins....

As the tired and weary heroes walk slowly through the streets of Tillich, they find themselves on the receiving end of hostile, distrusting stares. Women grab their children and walk swiftly into their houses, slamming the door with grim finality. The men cast hostile glances and then look down, muttering as they return to their work. Tillich does not seem to be a friendly place.

[Most natives of Tillich will not speak to the PCs. If the PCs attempt to detain a local and make him talk, they will notice a small mob forming. If they persist in their behavior, the mob starts throwing rocks. The idea is to scare them off, not kill them, so adjust the strength of the mob as necessary. Under no circumstances should they get a friendly reaction from anyone except Moira or the tall lanky man.]

Just when the heroes can take no more of the open hostility, a tall, lanky farmer stops in front of them. "You'll be lookin' for the inn?"

The heroes nod. "Down the street and around the corner. You'll want to be in after dark. Folks don't like strangers, and it could be dangerous after dark." The farmer's face splits into an evil leer, "and we certainly wouldn't want anything bad to happen to our visitors now would we?"

[Do whatever is necessary to get the PCs to go on to the inn. Once there they can eat and get rooms. While they are eating, Moira approaches.]

After the heroes have located the inn, imaginatively named The Tillich Inn, they go in and occupy one of the booths. In the inn, they are greeted with suspicious stares followed by feigned indifference. The bartender himself comes from around the bar to take their order.

As the heroes finish eating, one of them notices that a young woman is staring at them with burning intensity.

[The young woman is Moira Eliot, a local woman whose brother is missing. If the PCs address her in any semi-respectable way, she tries to hire them to find her lost brother Paul.]

One of the heroes gives the woman a tentative hello. Failing to return it, she none the less immediately starts to speak. "I heard there were mercenaries in town. Don't say you're not mercenaries, because I know you are. You wonder around and fight things for money, and that's mercenaries, and that's you. I've got money, and I want to pay you to fight things, specifically the things that have my brother."

Moira pretty much won't take no for an answer, which shouldn't be a problem anyway if the heroes are worth their salt. Once they've agreed to find her brother, she explains that he went to Della Mirandola to try and buy a good horse, and possibly some silk for her to make a dress. That was four days ago, and she expected him back on the second day, if not the first.

[If the PCs ask about money, Moira has a small sum, (it's all she has). If they demand more, she offers them the money that Paul took with him, which they will only get if they can find him.]

With Moira as an escort, the whole face of the town changes. She makes introductions at each store the heroes visit, opening stores that were closed and lowering prices that seemed unnaturally high. On their return to the end the heroes find that their meal is free, and so is their rooms. Of course, Moira informs them, they are expected to leave in the morning.

For the short trip they were expecting, the heroes find the trip to be unnaturally long. Despite their best effort, they arrive at Della Mirandola well after nightfall. As they approach the Town Square, they see the orange glow of several large bonfires, dancing in time to a rhythmic chanting of an alien tongue.

[Stress the ominous and alien nature of this scene to keep the PCs from charging in.]

When the heroes decide to hide and watch, they see that almost the entire town is gathered in the square, and many seem to be wearing some form of ceremonial robe. As they chant, the townspeople dance around an emaciated figure in the center of a large raised altar. Soon the music increases in tempo and the villagers seem to be in frenzy. As the music gets faster and faster, one of the townspeople screams, and climbs on to the altar/stage. Seizing a long ceremonial dagger, he begins to carve himself, screaming and chanting all the while. As chunks of flesh fall from his body, the surrounding townspeople seize them up, hungrily devouring the man's raw flesh. With a final scream

of ecstasy the man plunges the dagger into his throat, falling to the feet of the emaciated figure, who immediately begins to lap at the blood gushing from the terrible wound.

[Fear and horror checks all around. If the heroes remain hidden, they may notice that the emaciated figure is not so emaciated at this point. In fact, instead of looking like a dry withered husk, he appears to be a very old man. With help, he gets up and leaves the stage. Observant PCs will notice that it is the night before the full moon. Smart players will wait until morning before exploring the town. If they don't wait, and insist on entering the town immediately, they will find that most people seem somewhat confused. No one will talk to them, and all will hurry home as quickly as possible. There is no sign of the priest or the emaciated figure.]

Della Mirandola

There are things happening in Della Mirandola. It is a true town, somewhat large, and somewhat modern, at least by comparison to the neighboring village of Tillich. When the heroes enter the town, it is just after sunrise. The town is surprisingly active. People are friendly, smiling and waving to one another, and everyone seems to be in good cheer. Even the heroes find themselves the recipients of a few friendly nods.

About the Town

Looking around town, the heroes will find a large marketplace, set up in the middle of the Town Square where the altar was the night before. Looking closely, they might find blood stains on the cobblestones, but these are hard to spot, as they are in the pen where the livestock is kept.

Also in the town is an old church. It is obviously very ancient, and it has a certain air of mystery, making the heroes uncertain as to whether it has been abandoned or not. Near the church is a smithy; just down the road is a small tavern, Elaina's Peace.

[At this point there are several things the PCs might do. If they find the bloodstains and start asking questions, the townspeople will tell them that it's from the slaughter of the livestock. If they should mention what they saw the night before, the villagers will give them a somewhat suspicious stare, then tell them they should talk to Roland. That particular villager will tell them no more. It is then up to them to find Roland.]

*If they don't find or mention the bloodstains, they will probably investigate the church or the inn. No one at either place will admit to knowing Paul Eliot. If the PCs investigate the church, they will find that it appears long abandoned, although with recent signs of use. If they remain in the church for more than a few rounds they will be approached by a man in priestly garb who introduces himself as Roland. Observant PCs might notice occasional glimpses of tattoos that emerge every so often from Roland's sleeves and collar. If the PCs ask Roland about Paul Eliot, proceed to **Encountering Roland**. Anyone else asked about Paul Eliot will give the PCs a slightly funny look, then say that they don't know him.*

If the PCs just go to the inn and ask no questions, they will be allowed to wander the town freely until it's time for the evening meal, at which time a stable boy from the inn will summon them for dinner. The PC's food is spiked with a powerful drug that will make them sleep the whole night through. If they somehow manage to stay awake, they will see a repeat of last night's scene, except this time the old man will become even younger, appearing middle aged. If the PCs don't manage to avoid the drug, tell them about it as a dream.]

The Truth about Roland

Roland was once just a normal carpenter, involved in the restoration of the old church. While restoring the bedroom of one of the acolytes, he found a loose stone in the wall, poorly mortared in. Inside he found a diary and a large, ancient book, covered with mysterious inscriptions. Because Della Mirandola is something of an enlightened town, many people know how to read, including Roland. When he got home he immediately started reading the diary, and discovered that it belonged to Raymond Spivy, a former acolyte of the church. From the diary Roland learned that Spivy had discovered the secrets of immortality, and that the secret was contained somewhere within the great book (The Gathering Book), that Roland had found. In addition to that, Spivy left instructions for anyone finding the diary on how to bring him back from "the places between" should someone want help translating the book. It was these instructions that Roland set out to follow.

The first thing Roland had to find was Spivy's body. He searched the church graveyard, but could find no stone marked with Spivy's name. Finally, as he continued to restore the church, he found a small crypt, accessible only through the basement, which contained the remains of all the priests and acolytes who fell in the service of the church. In the crypt Roland found Spivy's remains.

Following the instructions in the diary, Roland made a powder from Spivy's remains, and then performed a blood ritual over three nights, at the time of the full moon. Despite the sacrilege, Roland performed the ritual on the church's altar. In addition, because of his squeamishness, he used the blood of an animal instead of that of a person. Because of the blood (the altar may have also had something to do with it), Spivy materialized as less than whole. He appeared as a dry, desiccated husk, barely able to move or speak. None the less, he soon became stronger with the help of Roland. In return for his aid, the still skeletal Spivy tutored Roland in the black arts, and helped him to translate the Gathering Book. It is this translation which has slowly transformed Roland.

Roland was a shy man, very quiet, and not very popular with the villagers. As Roland learned more and more, it seemed that everyone became entranced by an aura of power that came off of him. When he spoke, people listened. At first it was little things, and then, as Roland's power grew, he found that the townspeople would do anything he commanded. By the time Roland attained this level of power, small tattoos started

appearing on various parts of his body. In addition to their appearance, when not watched, the tattoos change shape and size, and even seem to move.

Right now Roland has bewitched the townspeople into helping him restore Spivy completely. Because the ritual can only be performed over the three days of the full moon, it has been a full month since Spivy was raised. The PCs witnessed the first night of Roland's efforts to restore Spivy when they arrived at Della Mirandola. Whether the ritual is completed or not is up to them.

What Happened to Paul Eliot?

At this point, the PCs know nothing about Spivy or the purpose of the moonlit rituals. They may or may not have encountered Roland, although once they start asking questions about Paul, he will appear almost immediately. It's important to note that witnessing the ritual has made the PCs immune to Roland's charm. Also immune are any townspeople that wear a holy symbol of the church that Roland desecrated. These people mainly consist of a few old women and one inexperienced cleric, but they will help the PCs discreetly if they can.

But the question remains "what happened to Paul?" Paul was in town when Roland bewitched the town. He too is charmed, and being from out of town, has been selected as Roland's special assistant, mostly because he's expendable. Roland is grooming him to be the last victim consumed in Spivy's rite of restoration. Paul believes that he is undergoing special preparation for "the priesthood," unknowingly preparing himself so that his vitality may be consumed.

For the most part, Paul remains locked in the upper part of the church. Even if the PCs somehow find him, he will refuse to leave. If they try to kidnap him, he will raise such a ruckus that Roland will arrive with several villagers almost instantly. If the PCs attempt to talk with Paul, he will explain with pride his role in the ritual. If the PCs can somehow dispel the charm, (by putting a holy symbol on him or charming him themselves), Paul will admit that he is scared, and he doesn't think he can get out of the mess that he's into.

Encountering Roland

When the PCs encounter Roland, whether it be in the church or after they have been inquiring about Paul, they will find him dressed as a priest, and (as previously mentioned) might be rewarded with an occasional glimpse of a tattoo peeking from under his robes. After Roland introduces himself, he will invite the PCs to walk with him through the town. As they walk, Roland greets everyone that they pass, sometimes giving orders rather harshly. If they question him on this, he explains that "now is an important time for the church, what with its restoration and all."

If the PCs question him about Paul, he will tell them that he has become a man of the cloth, and is sequestered in private prayer. As they walk, Roland is trying to charm

them. If they appear to accept his explanation of Paul's whereabouts, he will believe that he succeeded.

The Meeting with Merriam O'Connor

As the PCs continue to walk with Roland, he continues to greet everyone that they come across, including a little old woman that is briskly sweeping her walk. When he speaks to her, she gives a curt "Good-day Father Roland, nice seeing you," and scurries back inside. Intelligent PCs note that she seemed almost afraid.

The Truth about Merriam

The truth is that Merriam is afraid of Roland. Under her clothes she wears a small holy symbol, the same as that of the now-defiled church, and is not charmed by him. In addition to the ritual last night, Merriam has seen the unnatural way that the townspeople obey Roland. She is also hiding the cleric of the church who came to Della Mirandola to sponsor the church's restoration. Both of them fear for their lives. If the PCs return to talk to Merriam privately, they must somehow prove that they are not one of Roland's thralls. [*Explaining that they want to save Paul would be a good way.*] If they can do so, she will introduce them to the cleric, and give them what information she has.

Information that Merriam might reveal includes Paul's whereabouts. Specifically, she will report his status as a member of the cult, saying, "He's gone over to the purple robe." If asked about the purple robe, she explains that it's an old wives tale, and that "going over to the purple robe," means following the ways of evil. [*For more information, see **The Legend of the Purple Robe.***] Merriam will also tell the PCs about the diary Roland found. She doesn't know what's in it, but she saw him reading it several times before the recent trouble started. She also knows of a few of the townsfolk who have not been charmed, including George Willis, the town smith. Although they don't know for sure, Merriam and the cleric, Father Occam, suspect (correctly) that the holy symbol is what protects those who are not charmed. Before the PCs leave, he will give them each a small holy symbol, and an extra one for Paul. He will also bless their weapons if they ask. [*Blessed weapons give them a +1 bonus to hit both Roland and Spivy.*]

What Now?

At this point in the adventure, I have to ask, "what now?" Unfortunately, I can't tell you that. There's no telling what the PCs will do. I can only write what I think they will do, and you'll have to improvise depending on how it all comes out.

The Games PCs Play

Here's what I think they might do:

Smart players might try to break into the church in search of Roland's diary. While it's a good idea (and certainly worth an XP award), the diary will not be of much use, as it is in a language foreign to the PCs. If they somehow translate it, (read magic, etc.), they will discover that there is a counter-summoning spell that would return Spivy to "the places between." Unfortunately, the ritual is much like the original, and no good PC would have any part of it.

Another thing they may try is to break into the church and rescue Paul, assuming that they can get the holy symbol on him and get out without getting caught.

They also might try to keep up the act of being charmed, with the hope of going to the ceremony and rescuing Paul then.

OR they could do something else entirely.

Solutions with Problems

Here's what I think will happen if they do something predictable:

If they try to break in and free Paul, let them. When they put the holy symbol on him, he will come to his senses, admit to being terrified, and agree to go with them. As the DM, you have several options at this point. You could let them escape with Paul. That would effectively end the adventure, although leaving a town in the thrall of an evil sorcerer might be considered by some to be an evil act. Or, if they think of it, Paul will agree to play along until the ritual, pretending to be charmed like everyone else, with the understanding that the PCs will rescue him during the ceremony.

Of course you could always let them put the holy symbol on him, and be captured while trying to escape.

Or, if you want to make it really hard for them, Paul himself could fight them as they try to make him put the holy symbol on. This would also probably lead to their capture, although Paul would not be free of the charm in this case.

If the PCs get captured, proceed to **Captured!**

If the PCs escape with Paul, Spivy will be unable to complete the ritual. He will have to wait another month and start the whole thing over. This could give the PCs time to get back to Tillich, and possibly raise a small posse to free Della Mirandola. How this works out is up to you.

If any of the other possible outcomes come to pass, proceed to **The Final Ritual**.

If they don't try and make contact with Paul, and instead continue their charade and go to the ceremony, proceed to **The Final Ritual**.

If they do something unpredictable, you are on your own.

Captured!

If the heroes are captured, Roland has them tied up and kept in an abandoned building to await the ritual. He plans to add their essences to Paul's, making him more powerful than before. Unfortunately for him, Merriam has other plans.

Just before nightfall, Merriam, accompanied by Father Occam and George Willis, will come to rescue the PCs. She and her companions will touch the PCs guards with their holy symbols, freeing their minds. Then they will release the PCs. *[If the PCs managed to get hurt while getting captured, you could use the two guards as extra muscle if needed.]*

The Final Ritual

Again, I have to stress that I can only guess what the PCs will do. This is written with the idea that they will try to grab Paul during the ritual. It shouldn't matter whether he is a willing participant or not. If the players decide to do something else... you're on your own.

For the final ritual, a stage has once again been set up in the middle of the town. Several woodpiles are prepared for the bonfires to come. A small building, scarcely more than a shack, has been erected at the far end of the stage. On the stage itself, a large pentagram decorates the floor.

When the ritual begins, the fires are lit, and five purple-robed figures climb onto the stage. Almost immediately, the alien chanting begins. Roland emerges from the darkness, followed by Paul, both of them wearing a purple robe. Spivy follows slightly behind them, his robe is bright white. Slowly they climb onto the stage and move to the center of the pentagram. The five purple-robed assistants each take a position inside the pentagram at one of the points.

With a guttural moan, Roland starts the chant. The five purple robed assistants join in. Paul stands there looking somewhat confused.

[One way or another the PCs should be free at this point. They should be ready to charge the stage. When they attack, they will be in for a few surprises. If they try missile fire, they will find that the pentagram blocks all normal missiles. Likewise, magical missiles or attacks can hit no one inside the circle unless the caster is standing on the stage.]

As the townsfolk begin to chant, the lines of the pentagram flare with unholy light. Spivy moves to the center and begins to chant with Roland. Paul begins to look frightened.

[At this point, if the PCs do nothing, Paul's life energy will be consumed and Spivy will be restored. If they're heroes of any calibre, they won't let this happen.]

With a shout, the heroes storm the stage. Spivy roars with anger. Immediately, Roland grabs Paul and drags him into the small building at the end of the stage. Two of the purple robed assistants turn and follow. Still chanting, Spivy and the other assistants turn and face the PCs.

As the PCs attack, Spivy makes an arcane gesture. Immediately the lines of the circle flare even brighter than before and the three remaining assistants begin transforming into horrible monstrosities.

[Make this encounter as tough as it needs to be. There should be a good chance that the PCs might fail, on the other hand, they should have an equal chance of success. I suggest having Spivy and all three of the assistants have some form of magical attack, (Spivy of course uses spells). In addition, the three changed assistants should be physically tougher than Spivy, who is physically weak. How tough is up to you.]

The battle rages on for what seems like forever. The three creatures attack with spells as well as with tooth and claw. It looks grim for the heroes until one of them manages a lucky blow on Spivy. With a deft slice of the sword, the hero cuts a ragged gash across Spivy's throat. As Spivy's corpse sinks to the ground, there is a bright flash of magical light. For just a second, a blue tattoo-like glyph appeared in the air above Spivy, then it was gone.

Before the heroes can investigate the glyph, the remaining creatures let out unholy screams. With Spivy gone, their magic consumes them. Their howls seem to linger as their bodies are consumed in flame. Strangely, their robes remain unharmed.

[At this point, don't let the PCs forget about Paul.]

As the howls of the creatures fade away, our heroes burst through the door of the shack. As the door splinters, they find Roland standing over Paul, almost as if he had just released him from a deep passionate kiss. As the heroes storm into the room, Paul falls weakly to his knees. "Help me," he begs feebly before slowly toppling face first onto the floor.

The remaining two of Spivy's purple robed assistants move to attack as Roland makes strange clawing gestures at the party while opening and closing his mouth in a mute parody of speech.

The heroes fight valiantly, and soon the evil mages are no more. Despite their best efforts, Paul drifts in and out of consciousness, only once waking enough to speak. "Take me home," he mumbled before once again falling back into unconsciousness.

Back in Tillich, Paul recovers quickly. The whole town expresses it's gratitude, and Moira rewards them with a small sum of money (it's a lot to her).

Aftermath

What Really Happened

The joke's on the PCs. Unbeknownst to Roland, his tattoos weren't a symbol of his growing power, they were a "safety net" for Spivy. When Spivy was killed on stage, his essence (soul if you want to call it that), displaced Roland's. Anyone examining Roland's body will find that the tattoos are gone. Using the newfound strength of Roland's body, Spivy transferred his essence once again, this time in to Paul. Paul was displaced in to Roland, and Roland was the one who died on stage.

When the PCs burst in to the shack, they saw Paul beg for help, then fall to the floor. What they really saw was Spivy in Paul's body, doing his best to trick them. When they saw Spivy mouthing words and clawing the air, what they really saw was Paul, trying to overcome the shock of the transfer and tell them what happened.

So, in summary, the PCs killed Paul, and not only set Spivy free, but delivered him to a whole new town in which he can work his evil. (I told you there'd be a sequel.)

What Happened to Della Mirandola?

Della Mirandola is now something of a ghost town. All of the inhabitants who actually ate the flesh of another were driven mad, as were many that participated in the rituals at all. Most of the normal people moved away, some to Tillich, some elsewhere, although a very few did stay in Della Mirandola. One such person is the cleric who commissioned the restoration of the church to begin with. He feels somewhat responsible, and has dedicated himself to caring for those whose minds were broken by the experience.

Last But Not Least

The Legend of the Purple Robe

This is just a legend meant to throw the PCs off. It's only meant to be a red herring, but you can turn it into an adventure hook if you so desire.

The original ruler of Della Mirandola was a wizard who called himself Saint Andreas. No one knew why, as he claimed no religious affiliation, and was also something of a tyrant. He ruled through fear and force, his main henchmen being five very potent mages. All of them, Andreas included, wore the purple robe. As some of the wizards were native to the town, and were not known to be too bright, it was speculated

that something about the robes gave the wizards their power. Despite several attempts to capture one of the wizards, it was never proven one way or the other.

Eventually, Saint Andreas blew himself up. At least that's the general assumption anyway. Late one night an alien scream filled the air and then the top level of Andreas's tower exploded in a shower of brick and stone. The next day found the two remaining levels of the tower undamaged, and no sign of the Saint. He is presumed dead.

As for his henchmen and the purple robes, each one was found dead in his bed, with no apparent cause of death. As for the robes, there was no sign of them. They disappeared without a trace.

Because of the local wizards in the service of Saint Andreas, "going over to the purple robes" became a saying for anyone involved in any kind of mischief, implying that they were consorting with evil or doing evil things.

And that, as they say, is that....

The End