

AGONIA

By D. A. Rathbun

*Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in another's pain,
And perish in our own.*
-Francis Thompson, Daisy

The Land:

The island domain of Agonia is about thirty-five miles long and shaped roughly like a crescent surrounded by the mists, with the open face to the southwest. The majority of the land is made up of rolling hills and flatland surrounding the River Wherren, which runs a course from the north to the southeastern tip of the domain. At the eastern tip of the domain, the river empties into a marsh. The water in the swamp is deep and black, and what solid ground there is consists of constantly shifting sandbars connecting a few rocky islands. No one lives in the swamp, and indeed no inhabitant of the domain remembers there ever being a swamp at the mouth of the large river. The swamp simply appeared during the time the land was enshrouded by the mists that now surround it.

The northwestern portion of the domain is covered in forested badlands. There are a few small hamlets within Agonia, but the major settlement is a village called Saabor. Saabor is located near the center of the domain, where the river bends from the north, and is home to an estimated three hundred inhabitants. In the western half of the domain, there is a lumber town known as Merdoe, which houses another one hundred and fifty souls. Within the northwestern region of the forests, there is a large grove of immense trees known as the Titan Woods, which are rumored to be a dark and haunted area.

Cultural Level:

Early Medieval

The Folk:

The folk of Agonia are by and large simple farmers and herders. They cultivate the fertile fields within the river valley and use the grassy hills to feed their livestock. Most of the folk of Agonia live in the eastern region of the land, but of those who do live in the western half, nearly all are involved with the lumber industry. These settlers trade lumber with the easterners for food and other supplies. The westerners will not cut down the giant trees located in the Titan Woods northwest of Merdoe, for fear of angering the spirits that dwell in those woods, but the normal oaks and pines that inhabit the woods fall to the axe in order to keep Merdoe running.

Both men and women dress simply, more for comfort than appearance. Women tend to wear long skirts with tunics, and kerchiefs tied on their heads, while the men tend towards breeches with a tunic and vest. Pendants and rings are worn by about forty percent of the populace, with pendants being more popular among the men, and rings more numerous among the women.

Agonians have light tan skin and dark hair. Agonian eyes are generally a pale shade of blue, green, or even gray, but auburn colored eyes are also common. Agonians speak their own language, but travelers have a good (70%) chance of meeting someone who has knowledge of at least one of the dialects spoken within the Core.

When a child is born in Agonia, it is given two names. One of these names is a secret name shared only between mother and child, or among those who are truly in love. Any time this secret name is shared with another, it is considered a symbol of the deepest trust between two people. The people of Agonia believe strongly in the power of names, and will protect their secret names as they would the blood in their veins. Knowledge of another's secret name can grant influence over them (much like blackmail), but using such an influence for unsavory means (especially if knowledge of the name was not freely given) will earn their enmity for the rest of their lives. (Using the knowledge of someone's true name against them is grounds for a Power's Check: Breaking an Oath.) The second name is the common name used in everyday conversation, and for signing business agreements.

Within Agonia, a sect known as the Cult of Marikoth exists. Members of the cult live the simple lives of regular folk, and none will reveal their membership in the cult. Once a year the cultists gather at an ancient ruins of a temple located in the western badlands for a ritual known only as the Summoning.

Native Player Characters:

Adventurers from Agonia may be of any class of warrior or rogue, but wizards must be of the Eremite kit (presented in Champions of the Mists). Priests native of Agonia are restricted to specialty priests of the god Mideen. Mideen is a god with two aspects. The first aspect is as a guardian (LG), and the second aspect is that of an avenger (CG). Mideen's priests have major access to the spheres of All, Guardian, and Protection, and minor access to Divination, Elemental, Wards, and Travelers. In addition, those following the teachings of Mideen's guardian aspect gain major access to the sphere of Healing, while those that follow the teachings of his vengeful side gain major access to the sphere of Combat.

Personalities of Note:

Two high ranking leaders of the Cult of Marikoth make a sweep of the domain at the change of every season in order to observe new occurrences within Agonia and report them to their master, Dargen Blackburn. These twin sisters share the name of Andrea. One of the sisters is an accomplished warrior, while the other is said to be a witch that communes with the savage spirits that dwell in the Titan Woods.

Dargen Blackburn is a widely feared personality by the folk of Agonia. He is considered to be a dark and evil blight on the land, but none take action against him. Those who have tried to assault his temple in the west have never returned, and even those who speak against him from afar often develop sudden illnesses and die within days. Blackburn is widely believed to be a powerful warlock, and is presumed to be the leader of the Cult of Marikoth, but since he is rarely seen, he has become something of a boogey-man. Children are told many dark tales of Blackburn when young, and when they grow up, they try not to believe in them.

Travelers to Merdoe may encounter members of the Rolyns family, who though respected, are not well liked by the general populace of the domain. The Rolyns were the first settlers of Merdoe, and have lived there ever since.

Simone Caire, the priestess of Mideen, tends her temple within Saabor. Simone is recognized as the spiritual leader of the church in Agonia, but she is young (only 17,) and unsure of herself. She was appointed to her current position when the former High Priest Tarn died of a mysterious fever in the year 753 BC.

The Law:

Politically, the leader of Agonia is Judge Dermot, the current mayor of Saabor. The mayor is elected by popular vote, and despite several bouts of sickness and infirmity, Dermot has been elected the mayor of Saabor for over ten years. The Judge is highly respected, and well liked by the citizens of Saabor. Should an altercation arise involving Judge Dermot, the populace will side with him without question.

The general constabulary of Agonia consists of (1st level) fighters in leather armor and armed with clubs or short swords. In Saabor, the head constable is a (3rd level) warrior by the name of Brenton.

Encounters:

In the eastern half of Agonia, there is very little to frighten the folk. The largest predators in this area are coyotes, which are quite common. However, the larger population of this area makes encounters with farmers and merchants more numerous. A small clan of merrow has made its home near the area in which the River Wherren empties into the eastern marsh. The merrow are recently arrived, and are, for the moment, unknown to the nearby settlers. The increasing disappearances in the area will however soon attract the attention of the constables.

In Merdoe, adventures may meet Alexandria Rolyns, a mystic of some skill (6th level eremite) who lives just outside the township. Alexandria knows the woods of Agonia better than any other inhabitant, but will admit that there are some areas that she will not enter, so many secrets can still be found within them.

In the western forests, wild life abounds. Bears, wild boars, and the occasional wolf pack populate the woods. The area of the forest known as the Titan Woods is said to be inhabited by the ghosts of warrior savages. (These spirits are indeed those of noble savages, but they long ago gave their lives to protect their sacred grove of behemoth trees. They are now uthraki forest spirits, ((Found in MCA Vol. III)) and will attack any sentient being who enters the Titan Woods without some measure of mystical protection.

The area around the Temple of Marikoth is rarely entered, but is infested with death dogs and giant bats. The interior of the Temple has never been explored by anyone save members of the Cult, at least no one who has lived to tell about it.

Dargen Blackburn
(Darklord of Agonia)

14th level Warlock , NE

AC:	10	Str:	11
Movement:	12	Dex:	13
Level/Hit Dice:	14/10+4	Con:	17
Hit Points:	37	Int:	16
THAC0:	16	Wis:	14
No. of Attacks:	1	Cha:	15
Damage/Attack:	by weapon		
Special Attacks:	Spells, Sleep, Charm, Curse		
Special Defenses:	Wound Closure, Pain Resistance		
Special Vulnerabilities:	True Name		
Magic Resistance:	Nil		

Appearance:

Dargen Blackburn is a feared individual in the domain of Agonia. He stands 6'7" and has a slim build. His hair is raven black, and hangs loosely about his face, often hiding his handsome features. Blackburn's eyes are rarely seen through his hanging locks, but are dark brown in color, almost black. It is said that those who look in his eyes lose their own will, and merely become puppets to the warlock's power.

Blackborn wears a long coat at all times. He wears no shirt or vest beneath it, and his chest is exposed. Across his chest are four long open wounds, looking as though he has just been clawed. The wounds do not bleed, nor do they heal. Around his neck, Blackborn wears a crimson gemstone on a platinum chain. Boots and breeches complete his attire. Despite his somewhat slovenly appearance, there is a feeling of dark power, which emanates from him.

Background:

Dargen Blackburn was born under another name, now forgotten to all but one family. In his youth, Blackborn was a charismatic young man with an interest in the study of mystic power. He often went off to an old ruined temple to be alone, and to concentrate on his mystic thoughts. One day, Blackborn came upon a woman kneeling at the altar in the ruins. The woman was offering strange prayers to the altar in a tongue that he had never before heard. Watching from behind her, Dargen watched as she raised a dagger, and plunged it downward. There was the yip of a dying animal, and as she stood, raising the body of her sacrifice, she spun around and locked eyes with the young man watching. She did not pause in her chanting, and Blackborn found himself chanting the incantation with her.

The witch's name was Selune, and she became Blackborn's mentor from that day forward. Selune taught him of her patron, a mysterious creature from another plane known as Marikoth. She told him that Marikoth was the master of pain, and he gave power to those who provided him with the greatest spectacles. For years, Selune and Blackborn provided their master with sacrifices. Until the fateful day that Blackborn met a beautiful woman in the woods. At first, she was meant to be just another sacrifice, but as he watched her he became enthralled. He

approached her, and talked to her. Her name was Mellisande Rolyns. She was intrigued by this strange man who came upon her in the woods, and wanting to learn more about him agreed to meet him again the next day. The pair met for many days, and their time together brought joy to them both. Dargen never told her of what he did during the time they were apart, simply answering her inquiries by saying, "Dear lady, I am merely seeking to fulfill my desires, and with you, they are fulfilled."

Selune became concerned with Blackburn's absences from the rituals, and followed him one night. The two lovers lay in each other's arms, Mellisande was fast asleep, but Dargen watched his mentor approach. When Selune demanded that Dargen's "little harlot" be taken back to the Temple, Blackburn locked her eyes, and with a poisonous hatred in his voice replied, "If Mellisande comes to any harm, Marikoth will feed upon your pain for decades." Selune was taken aback by the tone in his voice, and the deadly look in his eyes, that she left immediately. Dargen looked down at Mellisande, and swore his love to her. The two were wed soon afterward. Blackburn lived a happy life with his bride, but always concealed the nature of his departures when he spent time at the temple. It was not long before Mellisande was with child, and Dargen stopped going to the temple in order to spend time with his bride. When the child was born, it was Dargen's happiest day, and he renounced Marikoth for his son, who he named Haylon. His life would have a peaceful one, if not for the day of the Summoning.

Selune was attempting to bring Marikoth forth from the netherworld, and had chosen the perfect sacrifice. In vengeance for abandoning her, she would have the child of Blackburn and his harlot. She came in the night, and used her powers to place Dargen and Mellisande in a deep sleep. Then she stole Haylon from his crib and escaped into the night. The next morning, Dargen woke to find his boy gone, and found in Haylon's place a small slate with the glyph of Marikoth inscribed upon its face. Dargen set out immediately. It was dark when Blackburn arrived at the temple, and found Selune in the midst of the Summoning. As she placed Haylon on the altar, Selune spoke to Dargen over her shoulder, "So the errant pupil returns. Marikoth is pleased with your pain. He savors your anguish. But know this, your pain is only beginning."

Blackborn strode up to his mentor, and slid a blade into her back. But as she died she recited the final words of her spell, and after she fell, looked up at him with a bloody smile. A black rift was torn in the air by the altar, and a vague shape approached the entrance. The image coalesced into a form mimicking the appearance of Blackburn, and reached toward the temple picking up the child as it screamed. Blackburn charged the being as it turned back toward the rift, but as he reached out to snatch his son back, a clawed hand shot out from the rift, slashing Blackburn's chest. Before the rift again closed, the entity with his form turned to Blackburn and said, "You have ever been my servant warlock. And you always will be. Your offspring was mine from the time you first invoked my name. Serve me, and you may see him again. Do not, and he will take your place as my chosen disciple. The choice is yours." With those words, the rift disappeared and Blackburn collapsed upon the ground and wept.

A sound from behind caused him to turn around. Standing at the entrance of the temple of the entrance was Mellisande. When she had arrived to see Dargen plunge his dagger into the witch's back, her heart leapt with joy that he had saved their son. But upon hearing the words of the demon, something died inside of her. The knowledge of her husband's evil nature broke her

heart, and though she may have been able to forgive his past before, now it had cost her her child. Mellisande turned away from Dargen and left him in the temple. Her tears did not cease for days. To safeguard her family from any further harm from her deceitful husband, she broke the taboo of her people, and shared her knowledge of Dargen's true name with her family. Mellisande died of a broken heart before the end of the season.

With the death of the last good thing left to him, Blackburn immersed himself in the dark rituals of his cruel master, and soon the mists of Ravenloft came forth to claim the remnants of his fractured soul.

Current Sketch:

Dargen Blackburn has lived over one hundred years since that day. Whether it is Marikoth's power which keeps him from aging, or the hand of the Dark Powers is unknown, but Dargen still appears to be in his late 20's.

Dargen is a bitter man filled with rage. He pursues his goal of summoning Marikoth with a fierce obsession. He hopes to bring Marikoth into the world with the express purpose of killing the fiend who stole his child. Blackburn has expanded the worship of the fiend by starting the Cult of Marikoth. He does not share his plans for Marikoth with the other cultists, but lets them believe that Marikoth will reward his loyal followers. Blackburn initiated the creation of the Cult in an effort to concentrate more power into the Summoning, but it was a failure.

Blackburn has become numb to both pleasure and pain over the past century. He is an artist at inflicting agony for the delight of his master, but no power save that of Marikoth can cause him pain any longer.

Dargen Blackburn's dream of summoning the fiend is doomed to fail by proxy of the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. Marikoth, on his part, continues to teach Blackburn his spells and instruct him on the use of his witching powers. Marikoth is aware of the hatred Blackburn feels toward him, but the fiend is strangely unaware of his disciple's murderous plans. Marikoth exists within a small pocket domain that has attached itself to the domain of Agonia, like a lamprey feeding upon a large fish. Marikoth's pocket domain is known as the Cairn. Details on Marikoth and the Cairn may be found below.

Closing the Borders:

When Blackburn wants to seal Agonia's borders, the mists surrounding the domain take on a crimson cast. Those proceeding into the mists are wracked with pain as they step into the Blood Fog as the native Agonians call it. For every step taken into the mist, all actions the character takes suffer a -1 penalty. Once this penalty equals the character's constitution score, they must roll a system shock roll. If the roll is a success, the character passes out for a number of hours equal to 20 minus their constitution score and when they awake, they find that they have somehow been transported to within a mile of the nearest settlement. If they should fail the system shock roll, the pain caused by the Blood Fog overwhelms them and their heart bursts.

Combat:

Dargen Blackburn avoids physical confrontation, as he is unskilled in the art of war. He does possess a ceremonial dagger, (Which is a dagger +3,) that he can use if pressed. Blackburn possesses a powerful jewel that acts as both a periapt of wound closure and a ring of regeneration. This item has no effect on the scars that cross Blackburn's chest, but those who attack him physically are often taken aback when the warlock they have just skewered on the end of their sword pulls out the weapon without flinching, and has no visible wound.

As stated above, Blackburn is incapable of feeling pain inflicted upon him by any being other than Marikoth. In game terms, Dargen will never be affected by wound penalties unless as stated below.

Blackburn's mystic powers and spells are very powerful, especially if he possesses some token taken from the victim, or knows the victim's true name. Should he possess some personal item from a victim, the range of any spells cast against them is unlimited as long as they are still in Agonia. In addition victims who must save vs. spells under these circumstances save with a -3 penalty. Should Blackburn invoke the true name of his victim, he may affect them anywhere they may have fled to within Ravenloft, and these victims will also automatically fail their saving throws. If Blackburn possesses no token of a victim, or does not know their true name, then these victims gain a +2 bonus to their saving throws.

As a warlock, Dargen Blackburn has the following abilities, which unlike regular witches, he is able to use without first brewing a potion (Except as noted.).

- Blackburn is able to affect an individual with a sleep spell once per day.
- Though Dargen has the knowledge of how to secure a familiar, he has not done so. Exactly why is not known, but it could be that he simply has no desire to gain another potential weakness.
- Blackburn also has the ability to brew a poison (Class L) with the proper ingredients. The poison is of sufficient volume to coat single weapon, and the poison remains potent for 24 hours.
- Blackburn has the ability to beguile one person, or monster, of 8 Hit Dice or less. This Beguiling ability is identical to the fourth level Charm Monster spell.
- Blackburn can also fly, as per the spell of the same name, at will, up to 5 times per day.
- Dargen Blackburn's deadliest power is his ability to call down a witch's curse upon his victims. The duration of the witch's curse lasts 4 to 7 (1d4+3) days. Victims of Blackburn's witch curse will become wracked with painful spasms and fever, and begin to lose Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution at the rate of 1 point per 12 hour period. Should any of these attributes drop below zero, the afflicted person permanently loses one point in that ability. Should all three abilities drop below zero, the victim will succumb to one final bout of painful spasms, and die at nightfall.

Blackburn has two major vulnerabilities. The first is embodied by the open wounds across his chest. Once per month, Blackburn spiritually struggles internally with his demonic master Marikoth. These struggles occur only at night, and can last from hours to days, and no force in the Demiplane of Dread can prevent them. During this period, Blackburn suffers pain unlike any that most could imagine. The pain is so intense that it inflicts a penalty of -4 on any action that

Blackborn makes on during this period. On the anniversary of his son's abduction, these wounds will seep with blood, inflicting 1d3 points of damage due to blood loss every hour.

The second weakness of Blackborn is his true name. Only the Rolyn's family has knowledge of his true name, but they will not act against him. Though they do wish to end his reign of terror, they will not exploit this weakness. Knowledge of Blackborn's true name protects the family from all of his powers. Should a PC gain knowledge of Blackborn's name, they too will be protected from the warlock's power, but will become a target of Blackborn's followers. The only reason that Dargen has not sent his agents to crush the Rolyn's family is the memory of Mellisande. He truly loved her, and does not want to cause her spirit any more pain from his actions, so he has decreed the Rolyn's family "off limits".

Dargen Blackborn's spell book contains the following spells :

First Level: *Detect Magic, Read Magic, Armor, Change Self, Unseen Servant, Wizard Mark, Charm Person*

Second Level: *Choke, Death Recall, Blindness, Summon Swarm, Ray of Enfeeblement*

Third Level: *Pain Touch, Dispel Magic, Phantom Steed, Hold Person, Monster Summoning I*

Fourth Level: *Polymorph Other, Rain of Terror, Phantasmal Killer, Enervation*

Fifth Level: *Animate Dead, Conjure Elemental, Summon Shadow, Nightmare*

Sixth Level: *Contingency, Ensnarement*

Seventh Level: *Power Word Stun*

The Summoning

Once per year, on the fall equinox, Dargen Blackborn will perform the rite of The Summoning in hopes of drawing Marikoth forth into Agonia and destroying him. The Dark Powers have made this an impossible task, and the only things that come through the open rift are minor fiends with limited power and intelligence. Blackborn makes it a practice to eliminate any creature that comes through the rift, and do it as quickly as possible, with the maximum amount of pain inflicted upon the wretched creatures.

The environment of the summoning would be the equivalent of a modern day rave. The cult members each imbibe a diluted potion of delusion, and they dance to the music of bonfires and whatever instruments can be obtained. Often, many cultists disrobe, and some even engage in carnal activity amongst the chaos. It is at the height of this frenzy when Blackborn performs the mystic rites that open the rift to Marikoth's cairn. Since a blood sacrifice is required to power the magic, Blackborn will often single out one or two of those present, and at his command, the remaining cultists fall upon the unfortunates and tear them to shreds. Once the sacrifice is offered, a rift composed of black fire tears open amongst the gathering, and a minor fiend will come through. The only fiends that have been able to cross over into Agonia have been hordlings (MCPA). Only one such creature has escaped destruction at the hands of Blackborn and his warriors among the cultists. This creature's whereabouts are currently unknown, but it is believed that the creature fled Agonia for more hospitable surroundings.

Dargen leads the cult into destroying the summoned fiends by driving them to destroy the "Pretender to Marikoth's glory".

The Rift

The rift that opens between the domain of Agonia and the pocket domain known as the Cairn opens only once per year, at the time of the Summoning. The Rift remains open for one full turn, and acts as a one-way portal that allows one to four entities to cross over from Agonia into the Cairn, but will allow only one hordling to travel from the Cairn to Agonia. Should a being travel to either domain from the other, they will be trapped within the new domain for one full year, until the Rift was again opened. Dargen Blackburn and Marikoth are banned from crossing through the Rift by the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. Should either being try to cross into the other's domain, the black flame of the Rift will inflict a full 2d20 points of damage, and hurl the trespasser back into his own realm.

The Cairn

The Cairn is Marikoth's seat of power. The pocket domain consists of a large keep and the surrounding wastelands. The sky is continually overcast and gray, the climate is cold and oppressively damp, but no rain ever falls. As far as the eye can see, there is nothing but broken gray rock, and the occasional twisted corpse of a tree. The only outstanding feature is Marikoth's Keep. The structure of the Keep looks to be nothing more than a random collection of gray stones of all shapes and sizes, all piled precariously to form a structure. The building is in fact far stronger than it appears. Within the keep, are twisted and broken passages. Many of these passages end sharply at a wall, or sheer drop. Somewhere within these tunnels is the heart of Marikoth's power.

Though the Cairn seems deserted, it is indeed crawling with the hordling servants of Marikoth. These creatures are the only living things that intruders are likely to encounter before the end of the interloper's lives.

Marikoth

The true nature of the fiend known as Marikoth is a mystery. Though he may be of the yugoloth race, there is no conclusive evidence to support this fact. If he is indeed a yugoloth, then why would he be content to rule over creatures so wretched as the lowly hordlings?

What is known about Marikoth is that he seems to gain sustenance from witnessing the inflicting of pain upon sentient beings. Though he may also feed from the agony of lesser creatures, he finds them bland and un-appetizing.

Currently, Marikoth is enjoying the suffering that Dargen Blackburn causes in his name. And he is quite amused at the warlock's vehement hatred of him. Marikoth is indeed unaware of his servant's murderous plans, but even if he did know, it is likely that he would simply encourage Blackburn to try harder. Though Marikoth implies that Haylon is still alive, he will not allow Blackburn to see his son. And the anguish that this causes the warlock is the sweetest ambrosia to the evil demon.

Dustin Rathbun

Angela Foxglove

(Darklord of Vanitas - Vanity)

by R. Sweeney

Main Personalities of Vanitas

Angela Foxglove, actress/singer (Darklord Bard)

[Wolfen](#) (secret)

Chr: 18

Father: Master Richard Foxglove (Bard, Songwriter & musician -cello)

Vampyre (secret)

Cello: [Evensong](#) (magical)

Chr:18

Mother: Jacnith Silkwane-Foxglove (Bard, Musician -violin)

Wolfwere (secret)

Violin: [Ariel](#) (magical)

Chr:17 (16 after childbirth)

BACKGROUND:

Foxglove and Jacnith kept their secret natures from each other, never knowing the other as anything other than a supreme musician. Logically, the two formed a duet.. and then a more intimate couple.

With their musical skill, they were assured a life of relative affluence. Both mother and father possessed personal magnetism and beauty that was truly and utterly stunning. Their child, Angela, surpassed them.

Angela could use her charm and beauty to manipulate people around her with ease. She studied vocal performance (to complement her parents), both singing and acting. Her father taught her the arts of persuasion (a book of persuasive speech) and her mother taught her the refined art of makeup.

When Angela uses all her manipulative teachings, adds her finest makeup, and dressed in regal fashion, her effective charisma jumps to 19. With her ability to alter reactions in addition to her mother and father playing, her charisma jumped to 20 during concerts.

However, Angela had no real love in her heart, simply a manipulative desire which she exercised again and again.

With time, Angela saw the effects childbirth had upon the female of the species and vowed to never beget a child.

Sadly, however, her beauty captured the attention of a lord who took her for his bride. She was well treated and beloved by all of the servants, but she couldn't dissuade her lord from desiring children.

Eventually, she got pregnant. Quickly, she arranged for an end to this pregnancy. Again, she got pregnant.. and again she ended it. Now her lord was a very virile man and began to suspect: so he had her closely watched. When he discovered what she had been doing, he confronted her.

For 9 months no one saw hide nore hair of the lady, Angela. Her lordship had hidden her away in a secret dungeon where no one would help her get rid of the child within her womb.

Unto Angela was born a child, Joy, one of sweet inner disposition to match the external beauty of her mother. Everyone, including Angela, grew to love the child.

Even so, Angela became obsessed with her appearance. After the birth and captivity, Angela felt fatter, less alluring than before. She tried everything she could think of but felt inadequate when compared to her daughter's angelic face and nature.

Time and gravity began to have their toll and Angela strove continually with makeup and corsets to maintain her beauty. But despite her efforts, no one could hold back the hands of time.. Angela began investigating stories and lore from the far lands and even arranged to travel abroad with daughter and husband to search out possible ways of enhancing her beauty. Some complete quackery.

Eventually, however, she run across an item rumored to be magic but haunted: the [Bath of the Morning Sun](#). Angela smoothly charmed the owners of the item and poisoned them. Recovering the bathtub of solid gold, she had it brought to her manor-house.

Jacnith, of course, knew her child's mind and was equally (if not more) obsessed with finding such a cure to the eventual tide of time. Richard had begun dallaying with younger trollups and Jacnith greatly feared losing him and his music. Desparate, she spoke with her daughter at length. Angela agreed to let her mother use the Enchanted Bath first.

Her mother was restored to all her youthful glory. She radiated with vitality and health. Jacnith, quickly dressing in her finest garb, ran off to the city to enjoy the affect her beauty would have on the menfolk.

After Jacnith, Angela seduced another serving boy into the room, where she teased him and taunted him until she got him over to the tub. There he stood in awe of the vastness of gold before him... and she slit his throat.

As his blood spilled into the tub, Angela began adding the pure water that she had already warmed. The color of the blood did not fade as water was added, but rather stayed deep deep red: the color of a full rich wine. She gingerly sat naked in this crimson liquid and soaked in it at length. Dipping her head momentarily beneath the water, Angela stood and got out of the tub. At first, her appearance was quite alarming. Her skin hung wrinkled and pale and she looked grotesque. But that would soon pass. Pulling at her skin, Angela caused the flesh to split and fall away from her like a snake shedding its scales. Afterwards, there she stood, naked but radiant. She eyed herself in the mirror at length, appraising her own beauty. She was so beautiful, so

young, so sexy. Entranced by her own appearance, she smiled. "I'm still the most beautiful woman in all the land. Mother be damned to hell, I'm prettier still."

Now young and beautiful again, she went out on the town, seducing young boys and men at every turn. She toyed with the men.. until she met him. He was a strong mature man with a regal bearing. A knight in shining armor as if out of the storybooks of old. She seduced him.. she did not return home that night.

When she returned next morning, her husband confronted her, berating her for her antics in town.. threatening her. That's when they heard the sound of screaming. Angela rushed to the golden tub and there she saw an old crone screeching as she looked into the mirror. A moment's time had to pass before Angela recognized Jacnith.. now even older and uglier than before. Startled, Angela began to backpedal when she caught a glimpse of her own reflection in the mirror: she was aging, too! Her husband was so dismayed by her sudden transformation to an aged hag that he stumbled backward.. falling down the stairs.. falling to his death.

A sting of young male bodies followed as mother and daughter began to obsessively use the tub to maintain the appearance of their youth. Shortly, however, her mother wept realizing that she could not win this battle.

Jacnith, now an aged woman, left her daughter's home with a warning about the insidious nature of the tub. Jacnith now lives in a meager home teaching children to play beautiful music. She still performs with her violin from time to time, but this time, she must play alone. Richard, her husband, has moved on with his career and takes many young music students for his lovers. Angela sees and knows all of this, making her fear her fading beauty even more than ever before.

Especially since her love affair with the young paladin is going so well.

Young Joy continues to be the delight of the local boys, rivaling even her revitalized mother. Even Angela's paladin, Samson, has complemented the young girl.

Angela tries to compete with her daughter for the paladin's affections... however, late one night as they are delayed returning home, Angela feels the effects of the tub fading. By the time she enters the house, she is in a panic over her appearance, but Samson has yet to notice: he's too busy proclaiming his undying love for her. He's too involved with asking her to marry him. She begs the Paladin to return with a dozen rose, a ring, and a fine silk dress: if he does this, she stammers, she will gladly marry him. The paladin is off.

Fearful that her aging appearance will destroy her one chance at happiness, she flees upstairs quickly searching for the tub. There she sees her daughter, Joy, examining the tub. In desperation, she kills her daughter, using her blood to fill the tub. The hour passes slowly but eventually, she hears Samson returning, proclaiming his love and announcing the fact that he has brought her gifts with him. Quickly, she gets out of the tub.. seeing her aged appearance in the mirror. She cringes, but prepares to remove the second skin as Samson searches for her.

Closer he comes as she tears at her skin: but this time it doesn't come off. She pulls with all her strength, but the skin doesn't split. She screams in anguish as she cries face forward on the mirror.

Samson quickly enters and sees the ghastly scene: Joy with her throat slit on the floor while the tub lies still filled with bloody water. Appalled he stares at the wrinkled hag on the floor, bawling into the mirror and babbling incoherently.

"A woman.. she was a woman.. only a young man.. only a young man works.. oh, what have I done? Oh, my..."

The paladin approaches the bloody woman with his sword drawn determined to arrest her, but she collapses sobbing in his arms. "It's me, Samson, it's me.. my love."

That is when Samons recognizes his lover's eyes in the aged face.. his mind spins agast, unable to accept what he's seen.

Her heart broken by the rejection of her lover, she beats him unconscious with a heavy rock. Emptying the tub, she re-fills it... using his blood.

CURRENT SKETCH:

Angela has later become a [Wolfen](#). She changed to wolfen shortly after her bout of grief and guilt over her actions (killing her child and all), a fact that came as terrible shock to one as vain as she. She associates her change with a look of anger and betrayal from her daughter as she killed her, thinking it to be a curse. She doesn't know about her mother's and father's secret: discovering the true identity of her parents will probably drive her seek to kill them for their unholy legacy.

Angela must always use the tub to restore the physical aspects of her youth, but now she can hunt in Wolfen form, drink the blood of a young man, and regurjitate it back into the tub for her bath.

The number of young men needed to maintain a lifestyle of beauty for long time (in addition to biological concerns of the wolfen) are staggering. She isn't able to cover up so many murders, thus she has to remain concealed for long periods of time. Too many killings would be too easily noticed. There's also the possibility that she can 'feed' off several young men to gain the blood she needs, leaving most young men in town weak and tired. That's the jow of her wolfen abilities.

She has deeply disgusted to turn into a "horrible beast", but since she requires the form to gather the young men she needs for her bath, she cannot avoid transforming and giving to her bestial instincts.

Indeed, in wolfen form Angela is ruled by her bestial nature and has copulated with wolves of the forest. She has given birth to a group of fast-maturing Wolfen who serve her every need. (Insert the grotesqueness of the Wolfen reproductive habits with the added fact that her relations are incestual.)

Her children, the wolven, are vain, conceited, artistic, and uniformly beautiful. The city in which she lives has become a haven for the best and brightest musicians, artists, and artisans. Or at least that is the reputation. In fact, most of these artists are her ever-growing chain of prodigy. She suffers though, in a perplexing manner. With her charisma at full strength due to the youth imparted by the tub, she has an effective charisma of 19 and can seduce, manipulate, and control nearly any man she sees. However, she has come to believe that people only seem to love her because of her skill at manipulation. Thus, while she enjoys the adoration of many, she does not feel loved.. for how could they love her if they knew the truth?

Her entire sense of self-worth and value revolves around her physical appearance. Any blemish, flaw, or wrinkle sends her into complete disarray.

She obsesses over having the very finest clothing and jewelry.

She wants very much to be loved, but surrounds herself with so many lies and illusions that no one can truly love her.. for no one can truly know her. Seeing another in love enrages her.

She tends to fall hopelessly in love with Paladins, who once they find out about her are horrified. She then kills them.

If Angela doesn't bathe regularly, the changes she experiences are absolutely hideous. She doesn't just age gracefully like some women do: 24 hours after her last bath, she ages one year per round. This aging advances up until she reaches an extremely venerable age. During the aging process however, she develops all the worse signs of female aging: sagging breasts, butt, liverspots, her hair turns white, thins out, the skin wrinkles and hangs loosely on her body.

Osteoporosis then sets in, causing her to hunch over. Finally warts, blemishes, and black spreading melanomas form. Eventually, she looks like a hideously old witch/hag/or lich as you see fit. She never decays to dust, however, nor does she become a completely 'clean' skeleton..

The Land:

The Isle of Vanitas is rather small but filled with every sort of beauty: tropical flowers and rare birds live in the forest in the middle of the island, where fresh streams running down from Mount Makal form enchanting crystalline lakes. A few villages are scattered around the isle, each one ruled by a small council of the most prominent families. The island is a veritable paradise to the visitors who frequently stop by to relax... and often aren't able to leave. The islanders come from different countries and have all chose to settle on the isle when they visited it for the first time, bewitched by its primeval beauty and its temperate climate.

The cultural level of the island is Renaissance (the majority of the inhabitants being from Mordent and Kartakass). A few people live in the very core of the isle, and these are the only one that can be really called natives. They are black-skinned and belong to the same tribe that once owned and used the Bath of the Morning Sun. They shun the other inhabitants of the isle and fear Angela, for they know that she possesses their artifact now.

When Angela wants to close the borders, the foreigners on the island feel the sudden and uncontrollable need to remain on the island and to settle here permanently with those dear to them (they cannot leave for they have fallen in love with the place). Once the borders are open again, the foreigners can make a Saving Throw vs. Spells (male Paladins have a -3 penalty): if they succeed, they can leave (they don't feel the urge to remain anymore), otherwise they are bound to the land for at least one year (at the end of which they can roll another Saving Throw).

Bath of the Morning Sun (Artifact)

Background:

A tribe of 'primitives' had a custom. When a mother grew to an ancient age she could choose one last day of youth and beauty. A young man would be led to the edge of a golden bathtub. There, his throat would be cut and his blood poured into the tub. Pure water from melted mountain snow would then be added and the elder woman would bathe in this water for an hour.

At the end of the hour, the woman would drop below the surface of the water and emerge again. Her skin would be wrinkled, old, and white, but then it would split: shedding this old skin would reveal the woman renewed beneath. However, upon the end of the day, the woman would be killed.

Curse:

24 hrs after use, the woman will age rapidly, advancing even past her apparent age before. (Age = Age + 10 years). This aging is cosmetic only (no increases in wisdom or Int, no decreases in Str or Con).

This is why the women are killed after a day. Only the blood of young men works: women's blood is useless.

Other notes:

Jacnith is still around teaching music.

Richard teaches music and has become a maestro. From time to time, he still plays.

The ghost of her daughter, Joy, haunts Angela.

Robert Sweeney

ARAK: SOME THOUGHTS

by R. Sweeney

Male Drow Notes:

Consider Arnack divine. His worship is illegal but the males continue to worship in secret, praying for deliverance. Those who can escape and form a cult devoted to his worship. They consider the madness they suffer in his presence to be communing with his divine power. The insanity and hallucinations are taken as omens and prophecies.

Arnack can sooth his lust on these followers when they enter, but never enjoys the companionship he so desires.

Female Drow Notes:

Once again in power, they use strong magics to protect themselves from the earthquakes sent by Arnack. Otherwise, normal female drow dedicated to establishing rule of drow in Arak. With few non-drow enemies to fight, they have split into clans which continually war with each other. These battles are fierce with much loss of life. New recruits (slaves) are always welcome.

Relevant NPCs:

[Arnack \(Darklord\)](#)

Etiwan

Class: Fighter/mage of level on par with the party.

Etiwan, a pale-white fey elf, entered the mists unwillingly some years ago. He is a descendant of the tribe of male drow Arnack sought to free. On his homeworld, Arnack did succeed in destroying a city of female drow... those male drow who survived won their freedom from his sacrifice and developed their own cultures.

Persecution by other female Drow led cities drove them into exile from the prime plane (except for minor pockets heard of in legends). They eventually took over an alternate earth, where they continue to grow in power until they can return to the original world with spelljammer ships and conquer all drow.

Etiwan seeks to destroy the female drow, but doesn't yet know of the male drow cult. He strikes from the shadows and retreats before the females can strike back. He is alone wolf trying to bleed the females where ever he can.

Further Notes:

This society is strongly male-dominant. (to the point of paranoia). Female drow are pithed at birth (their brains destroyed except for the brainstem, which is required for life.) These lumps of flesh are used for breeding and nothing else.

Residual energy from the chaos-blast has caused permanent genetic instability in these drow offshoots. Being prideful, they instigated a breeding program designed to develop a master race through eugenics.

In this society, Magic has developed more strangely. Some Drow lords are "shapers" or casters of spells. Others, the peasants and slaves, are known as "conduits" those who gather energy for the shapers.

Conduits: gather energy like a mage of their level (i.e., number and level of spells). Conduits channel this energy to the shapers who use it to cast spells. Conduits cannot shape this energy in any way. Without a Shaper to defend them, they are helpless.

Shapers: Shapers do not forget spells as they cast them, since the power for the spell is drawn from their conduit. Shapers can have multiple conduits, but cannot cast spells of a higher level than their conduit can supply the power for.

Shapers can have as many Conduits as their station can buy/support. Conduits are expensive to buy since they are in great demand.

This system developed because the world they conquered is low-magic. On high magic worlds, shapers become normal spellcasters in addition to being able to draw power from conduits. Conduits never gain the power to shape spells regardless of the world which they travel to.

Other elves:

Other elves in Arnack's presence are not driven insane. He will force such creatures into prolonged discussion with him (he is starved for such). Slowly, however, such elves are transformed into drow.. and rendered insane in his presence.

Key to destroying the realm:

Etwian's existence means that Arnack's plan actually did work. When Arnack learns of this, he will laugh in great joy, and permit the chaos to tear him apart.

[PS: Arak disappeared after the Grand Conjunction in 740 BC]

Plot (perhaps a bit forced):

PCs fight female drow. PCs are captured/enslaved. PCs are freed by Etwian and talk with him briefly (learn some of his history). Etwian goes his own way again. PCs fight Arnack's followers and are brought before him. They learn some about Arnack. Etwian learns of the PCs capture, assumes it is another band of female drow, breaks in and rescues them (or tries to). If PCs realize that Etwian is the living result of Arnack's success and TELL Arnack, then they destroy the realm.

Robert Sweeney

ARAK FLESHED OUT

by R. Sweeney

Lord: Male Drow, Arnack

Class: Wizard 18th

MR: 99%

Armor: Drow full chain +5, buckler +5, cloak of protection +5 (drowish, destroyed by sunlight), dagger of venom +5 (destroyed by sunlight), ring of protection +3, 5' radius (not destroyed by sunlight.)

Contingency: iceshield

Protective spells: Stoneskin, Protection from Normal Weapons, Protection from Normal Missiles 10' (permanent).

Personality:

Reactionary male-dominance developed due to strong female-dominance of his race. Sees himself as a champion for the freedom of males from oppressive female rule.

Stubborn, strong willed, clever, genius. While males who gain too much power are usually destroyed (to prevent them becoming a threat), Arnack escaped such fate by proving indispensable to the Matron-queen of his home city. He used his good standing with her in his plans for rebellion.

Crime:

Betraying his race, destruction of his city in rebellion towards female rule.

Drow communities draw strongly from a connection with Lolth, the demon-queen. Arnack staged a failed male rebellion (much loss of life) in which this connection with the Abyss (responsible for the "strange radiation" that empowers their weapons). The Matron tortured him until he agreed to undo the damage. This was actually in his plans. While most of the males were imprisoned deep in the most secure dungeons, he was brought before the nexis with the Abyss. Appearing to be obeying, he completed the destruction of the portal, unleashing h-bomb like waves of chaos through the caverns.

Only the male drow deep within the warded prisons survived.

He had planned on death, but death was not given to him. Rather, the demiplane of dread took the 'martyr' into their welcoming arms.

Punishment:

First, he is physically stuck at the site of the nexis which he destroyed all those years ago. He may not move from the spot on which he now stands. (Or stray more than 10 yards of it at any rate.)

Ever since he witnessed elemental chaos, he has been subject to hallucinations. He continually seeks to exert his formidable will to avoid drifting into a hallucination, but often fails for a moment or two. When he sleeps, however, his guard slips and creatures of living chaos haunt him.

An aura of chaos and psychic anguish hangs around Arnack at all times. Any attempt to communicate with Drow results in the communication being scrambled into complete gibberish. All Drow in his presence are quickly rendered insane by this same aura. This great leader of drow can no longer even speak with those he sought to free from female rule.

Finally, due to his inability to communicate with the males (who secretly worship him), he has been unable to establish a male-dominated tribe of drow. The few female prisoners who also survived, quickly re-established female rule over the survivors of his cataclysm.

The inability to communicate with fellow drow is what causes him to suffer most. Always a people-person with other oppressed males, he greatly longs for his past planning and plotting with comrades to usurp rule from the females. That comradeship can never be his so long as the DP hold him. Arnack may also be a homosexual... thus his aura which drives his own race insane, also prevents him from taking a lover in any meaningful fashion.

Powers:

Arnack can seal the borders of his domain with a wailing wall of madness, that drives those approaching insane if they persist in such a foolish endeavor. In any event, sane or insane, the characters flee back towards central Arak.

Arnack can control weather with ease. He can unleash the monster, Tempest, to rain down upon any at the surface of Arnack. Once per day, he can cause any site in Arnack to suffer a high-magnitude earthquake.

Arnack has complete control over any spider or arachnid within his domain. Any item that affects, controls, or simulates spiders or spider-derived abilities can be controlled by him. All such magic is at double normal strength within Arak (i.e., a thief wearing a cloak of Arachnidia has its powers doubled, but these powers can be controlled by Arnack at any time. A mage under the effect of spider climb spell, leaves himself open to suggestions by Arnack and finds his movement while spider climbing to be doubled). Arnack can also dispel this magic at will.

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realize that Etwain is the living result of Arnack's success and TELL Arnack, then they destroy the realm.

Robert Sweeney

Arca

By M. Morris

"It was like riding a cork through a waterfall sir... And WIND is not the name for what blows in yer face... It's somethin made of iron -- Swings at 'cha from the west -- Never changin... Day in, day out. With seas as high as the mainmast... There were lifelines rigged everywhere sir and there were still sixteen men washed overboard."
"The Cold?"

"Three men froze in the yards.... Frozen stiff... Couldn't get them down without cutting their fingers loose from the shrouds. I was lucky.."
- From *Mutiny on the Bounty*

The Land:

In the world of Carthasana there is a frozen wasteland far, far to the north of the civilized domains. One of those lands was long ago pulled into the mysts of Ravenloft to become, without doubt, the most bone chilling part of the Domain of Dread.

Arca was once part of The White Land, a domain under the providence of the Goddess Sere, Lady of the North Wind and the Cold. The natives of Arca still pay homage to the frozen goddess. If there is an end to Ravenloft, Arca is certainly one of them. It is said this land can be reached from either of the Core's two seas -- simply sail north and don't stop. Eventually the mysts will part and land you in Arca.

Arca is changed to obey the 365 day year of Ravenloft, rather than the 400 day long year of its native world. It is so far north though that here the sun itself will not shine for 65 days of the year. If night alone is terrifying, a seemingly unendless night is doubly so. But this is also the land of the Midnight Sun -- and those coming to this land to engage in sealing or wailing would be advised to try to arrive during this season and not stay for the night.

Arca is a frozen waste where what little existing life there is lives on the sea. There is a scattered amount of Tundra, and penguins, seals, and whales provide a food source for the three Inuit-like tribes which roam the region. Finally, there is one permanently established port for whalers to meet during the summer months. During the winter the place is all but abandoned.

Unlike many areas, where monsters are the greatest threat, the cold itself is the most dreaded adversary in Arca. In the summer temperatures can reach a balmy 20 degrees Fahrenheit (about -5 C) at most. In the great winter night though temperatures can plummet to -50 degrees (-45 centigrade) with wind chills off the sea plummeting to -100. In this environment exposed skin can frostbite in as little as 30 seconds, and the cold can kill outright in minutes. The simple act of picking up a metal dagger can be dangerous, as the metal can flash freeze to the skin and have to be cut off to be removed at all. DM's wishing to deal with Arca are strongly advised to read the chapter on Wilderness Survival in *Dusk: Dungeon Master's Campaign Sourcebook* at:
<http://www.users.kih.net/~dusk/dcsb.htm>

There can be found rules for dealing with the brutal and savage conditions of the land.

Life, what little there is, revolves around sealife. In the summer the natives and whalers gather as much of a bounty as they can from the sea. The former store this beneath the permafrost where it will not spoil and the latter make for home before the winter sets in.

Those who have been transported to Arca and survived tell of a land of haunting beauty despite the deadly touch of Sere, Goddess of the North.

It is said that once one has been in the frozen wastes of the interior of Arca, even Cavitius looks inviting.

Not surprisingly, Icebergs present a deadly foe for ships trying to escape the white land. Some of these behemoths are larger than whole cities by themselves, and have more than enough to crush a ship to splinters

Cultural Level:

Stone Age for the natives. Visiting Whalers from other domains are usually Renaissance in technology level.

The Folk:

Arca has one native tribe known as the Elsani. These people have existed in this region since before they can remember. They are nomadic, travelling along the coastlines of Arca in family groups of no more than 20. During the height of the summer though they gather in large feasts of up to several hundred, then disperse to continue the hunt. During the winter they return to semipermanent dwellings that are relatively well sheltered from the worst of the winter's wrath, or at least the winds.

Native Player Characters:

Player characters wishing to play an native of Arca should consult books on the Eskimo peoples of our own north.

Such character receive a +1 to their initial constitution score and an initial proficiency in Artic Survival. They cannot start with any metal working proficiency, reading / writing or proficiency in weapons not found in their culture, such as the sword. All classes allowed in Ravenloft are allowed, also, North Druids (specialty priests of Sere) are to be found in this region (see Dusk: Divinity)

Encounters:

Artic creatures abound, among the deadliest of which would be the polar bears. But easily the most dangerous encounter isn't a creature, it's the land itself. Without the proper knowledge death is assured in the frozen wastes of Arca. The land, more so than any other, is completely and totally unforgiving.

Magic of the White Land:

Magic is slightly different in Arca, just as in the White Land from which it came. All Elemental Fire Spells are suppressed -- they are considered one level higher than they actually are by the natives. Non natives may memorize them at their actual level, but will find that these spells occupy 2 whole slots (Hence a 5th level invoker memorizing fireball would find both his 3rd level slots occupied for the day). If spell point rules are used then the cost of all fireball spells to

memorize is doubled for non-natives memorizing such spells. In either event, the effective level of the caster is halved, as is the spell's area of effect (if any).

Hence, a 7th level native wizard to Arca casting fireball would find the spell is considered 4th level, and it would deal 4d6 damage on a 10' radius, as opposed to the normal 20' radius.

Ice based spells have their areas of effect tripled, and native casters learn them as if they were one level LOWER than they actually are.

Further, all damage caps and areas of effect on these spells are doubled (cone of cold normally has a 10d4 damage cap, in Arca this is doubled to 20d4).

Other spells which rely neither on fire or ice are unchanged.

Saloi Asani
(Darklord of Arca)

Frost Vampire, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class:	1	STR	18/76 (20)
Movement:	12	DEX	18 (15)
Level/Hit Dice:	8+3	CON	16
Hit Points:	67	INT	15
THAC0:	11	WIS	16
No. of Att.	1	CHR	17
Damage / Att.	1d6		
Special Attacks:	See below		
Special Defense:	+3 weapon to hit		
Magic Resistance:	10%		

*Numbers in paranthesis refer to Saloi's Polar Bear form.

Appearance:

Saloi is a pale, snow white skinned woman appearing to be in her late twenties, standing about 5 feet tall. Her hair is jet black and kept tied back at all times.

Background:

An Elsani by birth, Saloi lived a rather complacent and typical life among her people until they met up with some whalers from the southern lands when she was a young woman. The crew of that ship agreed to work with the natives in order to further each's catch, although the Elsani didn't realize how many whales the whalers where out to slaughter. When they did catch on, they became affronted and left, except for Saloi. She had fell in love with the captain of that vessel, one Andrew Harker. She continued to guide the crew until they prepared to leave. Saloi accidently overheard Andrew dictating a log entry to the botswain of the ship, in which he mentioned that he had a wife and children. Feeling betrayed, she confronted him, and he angrily threw her off the ship into the icy waters. She bitterly cursed him and prayed for the power to gain vengeance. Sere heard her cry, and granted her a new "life."

The following spring Andrew Harker's ship returned. Mercilessly, she captured and killed crewmembers one by one, starting with the cabin boy -- freezing each of them to death. When she finally got to Andrew she tied him to an ice floe and watched as he slowly froze to death. Although an evil goddess by nature, even Sere was affronted by this level of depravity, and she

consented to allow the dark powers to take Saloi and the section of Sere's domain she had tainted into the mysts of Ravenloft for all time.

Current Sketch:

Saloi is a Frost Vampire, a unique specimen unlike any other to be found in the mysts. She desperately wishes to be reunited with the people she forsook, and for whom she claimed to destroy Harker and his crew. But as she is now a creature of the night, they shun her more than ever before. As a result, she has turned to preying upon them in order to sate her hunger for warmth.

Closing the Borders:

Saloi can command the massive icebergs of Arca to block passageway out by ship. Trying to cross the interior reaches of Arca is an excersize in suicide regardless of whether or not Saloi wishes to prevent it.

Combat:

Saloi is a frost vampire, a unique type of undead that must consume bodily warmth -- not blood, in order to survive. Unless otherwise noted, these undead have all the normal immunities and vulnerabilities of normal vampires.

One vulnerability Saloi does not have is sunlight. Since the sun can shine 65 days out of the year in Arca, she must be able to move about in the daytime as well as the night. Sunlight causes her no visible discomfort. Heat and fire are a different matter. Any firebased spell deals double damage to frost vampires (little consolation in Arca since the number of damage dice the spell has is halved by the land itself).

Presenting a flame to a frost vampire works the same as a holy symbol. Whale's oil or blubber seem to have all the effects of garlic and similar items to frost vampires, whereas garlic, or any other material not native to the frozen north doesn't affect them.

Frost vampires must feed on body heat. They need to hug, or embrace their victim to do this, but they need not make any wounds. Each feeding drains strength points, 1 a round. If the victim is completely drained of strength it rises up as a frost vampire in two days. Frost vampires are always icy cold to the touch, to infravision they are still visible except in the coldest of conditions since their body temperatures are far lower than normal.

Saloi is also able to turn into a polar bear, and while in this form she has all of it's natural attacks and abilities. She cannot control normal polar bears or, seemingly, any other natural animal. Whether or not other frost vampires share this weakness is unknown.

Frost vampires do suffer in heated environs. If the temperature of a room is over 40 degrees farenheit (roughly 5 centigrade) the vampire will suffer damage in much the same manner as others suffer in sunlight. Saloi can survive 2 hours in 50 temperatures, 1 hour in 60 degree temperatures, 3 turns in 70 degree temperatures or only 1 turn in rooms where the temperature is 80 or above. Note that this must be the natural temperature of the room -- magically conjured temperatures have no effect other than to cause visible discomfort.

Saloi has no gaseous form. She can meld with and move through the snow at will though. She lairs in the hollowed out heart of a huge glacier several miles north of her favorite hunting grounds.

Michael Morris

ARKSON

By S. Kepper

The Land:

The land of Arkson covers is a pocket domain of about six square miles. In this area there lies a rather high and extremely steep mountain named Mount Highmore by the natives on the northern border, a small town, a paved road leading to the southern domain border and the rest of the area is filled up with a forest.

The town, named Over-Arkson, is built haphazardly and contains about a hundred buildings. One of them is an inn and tavern named "The Foaming Mug", another is an armory where one can buy well-made weapons as well as armor of all types, another is a church to the dwarven god Vergadain, and there's also a general store. In the middle of the town there lies a magical well that can never be destroyed, poisoned or completely emptied. It connects to the wells in both the Zhakar cave complex and the Under-Arkson well.

Beneath the domain lies a second city named Under-Arkson. Its entrance lies a hundred yards north of the town, delved into the side of the mountain. It covers practically the entire domain area and is several levels deep. In these tunnels lie vast veins of gold, silver, iron, coal and most other minerals one would expect to find in the ground. The domain is, however, devoid of all types of gems. The city complex is a little more orderly in design than its counterpart on the surface with its orderly distribution of the different trades. For example, the miners live in one area and the smelters live in another.

A hundred feet up Mount Highmore sits a castle that is in rather good repair. The back and flanks of the castle are burrowed right into the sides of the mountain making it hard to penetrate. The front portcullis of the castle is rarely open, and then only when either of its lords want it to. It is magically sealed from practically all other forms of entry (except for Crono, who can enter at will). A wish spell can dispel this force field for 1 round per level of the caster to a maximum of two turns. From the village the castle always appears dark and foreboding and so they never approach it unless necessary. All the inhabitants know of a mad dwarf who resides in this castle, but none have ever seen him. Occasionally, Malek comes out of the castle to round up some more "specimens" and ingredients for his experiments. No one who has entered the castle has exited alive (except for Malek). Mount Highmore stands about three miles high, defying the laws of physics. It remains wooded until about the halfway mark, with the remainder being rocky and lifeless. The mountain is snow capped the entire year. About three-quarters of the way up the mountain lies another cave complex that belongs to the Zhakar.

All natural resources in Arkson are available in infinite quantities. When the sun rises in the morning all trees grow back to their original heights which limits the expansion of Over-Arkson. The same holds true for the veins of gold and the other minerals and metals; they just "re-grow" at the coming dawn. This is the sole reason for the wealth of Arkson. However, people must be careful, for being in an area that's about to be re-grown (ie. standing on a tree stump) at the coming of dawn, will be inexorably killed with no chance of resurrection. The same holds true for the mines. The natives know this and so they pack their stuff up and retire at the coming of dusk.

Being a floating pocket domain, Arkson is supposed to be rather hard to get to, but that is not the case. Anyone entering the Mists at a domain border anywhere on the Demiplane have a 2% chance of accidentally emerging in Arkson. Anyone who wants to enter Arkson does so automatically. The same holds true for someone leaving Arkson, he/she may choose a domain whose borders are of the Mists and they enter the chosen land, unless it's borders are closed. If no destination is given the PCs are dropped off in a random Mist-bordered domain. Entry and departure from this domain occurs only on the road leading south from Over-Arkson. Anyone trying to leave via the Mists in any other locations will be returned to the exact place they started from.

Cultural Level:

Chivalric, although the Zhakar are, in this case, a primitive people

The Folk:

The dwarves of Arkson and Under-Arkson are of a sturdy sort. They are of the same size and build as the average dwarves on the Demiplane. The dwarves of this domain, no matter what town they live in, are all fabulously wealthy in terms of gold and silver and are lacking in rare gemstones and jewels. The people here trade heavily with all the other domains in order to get these gems. Status in Over and Under-Arkson is determined by the amount of gems one has collected and in end effect, by material wealth. The dwarves that live here welcome traders and travelers, but they always retain their air of suspicion. The languages spoken here are a mixture of the different dwarven languages called Daeen and Barok. Anyone who knows a dwarven language has a 50% chance of being able to understand and speak Daeen coherently.

The dwarves of Arkson usually wear drab clothing (browns, blacks and grays) and very rarely flaunt their wealth, especially with strangers around. They remain suspicious of any non-dwarves and will defend their family hoards with their lives. The style among men and women is to wear their beards down to their belts and to braid them. This goes the same for both the rich and the poor alike. The dwarves of Arkson originated from many different worlds. Some came from Toril, some came from Krynn, while some are even stranded Planewalkers. They all have one thing in common though, they all stayed in the domain of Arkson due to their greed. These dwarves normally worship the god Vergadain, who is their god of both merchants and greed (for dwarven merchants are very greedy!). (For more on Vergadain, see the Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting: Running the Realms)

The dwarves of Under-Arkson wear black at all times and all braid their beards. However it is customary for the females to wear their beards a little shorter than the men. These dwarves are also from other worlds, but unlike their surface cousins, they all come from dark dwarf races such as the Duergar, Theiwar, Therro and Derro. These dwarves are as greedy as their cousins and hoard perhaps more gold and gems. They also worship Vergadain in their own little temple. The dwarves of these two cities are rarely hostile to each other despite the usually hatred found between them on other worlds. Instead the two groups work side by side for the betterment of both their cities. Since the caverns under the mountain are too dark for the surface-dwelling warves' infravision to penetrate the citizens of Under-Arkson do all the mining and preparation of iron and steel. The people of Over-Arkson are in charge of all the trading and basically the preparation of all products they export. They are also in charge of the lumber industry and it's

export. "Arksinian lumber is lumber for life" is their motto and it holds true, for most things built out of it never seem to splinter or crack, and may even last a hundred years without showing age (magically tested!). All non-magical weapons and armors existing in the Ravenloft, Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms Campaign Settings are produced here and are available for the normal price as stated in the Player's Handbook. Their lumber is prized, however, and fetches double the normal price. Since their lands are unable to produce crops, the dwarves import all grain and foodstuffs from other domains. The dwarves of these two cities number each about two hundred. In a cave complex higher up the mountain lives a small clan of Zhakar (from Krynn). They number about 25 and they attack any living beings who trespass on their land. They are all infected by a disease that has a chance of infecting anyone within 5 feet of them. The Zhakar themselves are immune to it, but all other people are affected as per a mummy rot (the Dark Powers changed it a bit!). Someone within the 5-foot range of the dwarf is allowed to roll a saving throw vs. death, with success meaning that he didn't catch it. If the saving throw passes he is immune to the effects of the disease until the following sunrise. If the saving throw fails, the victim contracts the disease immediately.

The Law:

The dwarves have formed a conclave of which 10 members come from each city. Usually the richest people in the two cities are on the council. They resolve most problems with trading and productions, but very rarely pass new laws for reasons discussed later. While all the dwarves have heard of an insane dwarf living in the castle, none of them have had the courage to investigate. They believe that they run the domain and that they make the laws, but they are dead wrong. While they run a well-organized militia with mandatory service they are unable to keep all the laws they want to enforce. Whenever a new law is passed that is not accepted by the domain lord, a troop of Ark-kin customarily eradicate any offenders until the law is dropped. Offenders may also be captured and brought to the castle. The 25 or so Ark-kin also serve as the standing army and answer only to the domain lord.

Native Player Characters:

Player characters from Arkson must be a surface-dwelling dwarf. PCs cannot derive from the underground dwarves due to a lack of wanderlust on their parts. They are content sitting in the gold that they have. (A DM may allow a player to play one of these dwarves, but should adjust the stats given in the Monstrous Manual, as he sees fit) These dwarves must be of any non-evil alignment. They receive the basic abilities that all dwarves get and can be fighters, clerics and earth elementalists. These earth elementalists may rise up to the 18th level. They can also be fighter/clerics if they want to. The earth elementalists only get major access to elemental earth spells, but they receive bonus spells due to wisdom, just like a cleric does. The clerics must be a cleric of one of the dwarven gods, but will most likely choose Moradin. These clerics all receive major access to the spheres of all, war and combat, and minor access to the spheres of healing and divination. All dwarves from this domain receive triple starting money and lose an extra point of their charisma. All dwarves get to choose either the Weaponsmithing or Armorer proficiencies for free.

Personalities of Note:

Other than the lord there are not that many important NPCs for the characters to deal with. One of them is a geist named Crono Beulf who used to be a travelling companion of the lord. He's a

unique, lawful good geist. He appears as a very strong human male who stands almost seven feet tall. He always carries around a six foot long sword and is very intelligent. He can understand any language spoken in Ravenloft. Seeing him causes any natives of Arkson to roll a madness check. For non-natives the sight of him requires only a fear check with a -2 penalty. However, he is forever bound in the lord's curse and can never be slain or turned. He is willing to help anyone who is attempting to thwart the lord of the land. He knows where the Soulforged (see below under Ark's Background) is hidden, but he'll only give it's location away if the cause is just enough. He cannot leave the domain.

Another NPC in this domain is a human necromancer named [Malek](#). He helps the lord in his experiments and is openly hostile to anyone trespassing on his lands. He is a 14th level Necromancer with access to all spells from the school of Necromancy (up to the 7th level) and all minor divination spells.

The head of the church, or the First Axe of Justice as he is known, is a 9th level priest of Moradin. He helps adventurers any time he can, but for a price. He will not, however, go against common sense or the wishes of the council. That also means that he respects the wishes of the domain lord.

Encounters:

Since there are no animals other than rats, birds and insects and no undead or monsters in Arkson, there are no other encounters other than with the dwarven patrols and the Ark-kin. The PCs have a 50% chance of encounter with the militia once per day and night and a 5% chance of an encounter with the Ark-kin.

High atop the mountain there is a chance of encountering a party of Zhakar dwarves armed with clubs and slings.

Ark (Darklord of Arkson)

Unique Dwarfator

Fighter\Cleric (Moradin), Lvl. 7\9, Lawful Evil

Armor Class:	-3 (Scales)	Str:	20
Movement:	12, Charge: 36	Dex:	14
Level/Hit Dice:	8+7	Con:	21
Hit Points:	104	Int:	18
THAC0:	7	Wis:	19
No. of Attacks:	2 or 1	Cha:	4
Damage/Attack:	1d8+13 (Vorpal sword +5)		
	1d4+8 (Punch)		
	2d12+16 (Charge)		
Special Attacks:	Charge, Tail Sweep, Cleric Spells		
Special Defenses:	Regeneration 3HP/round		
	Spell Immunity		
	Needs +3 to hit		
Magic Resistance:	50% (See below)		

Ark appears as a dwarf sized minotaur (four feet tall without the horns). He has metallic-green colored scales that cover his entire body. He has a three-foot long tail and two two-foot long horns protruding from his forehead. At the end of his right arm a Vorpal sword +5 has been magically grafted to his wrist. Seeing him for the first time requires a fear check, while meeting his evil gaze requires a horror check. He is the insane dwarf of which the natives speak, but he is not in the least mad.

Background:

Twenty years ago in the year 731 of the Barovian calendar, Ark was a novice priest of Moradin. He lived in a small village in central Cormyr (Toril) with his friend Crono. In the village, whose name has been forgotten, there had been discovered large veins of mithril and due to their reputation with the stuff, the dwarves were called to mine it for King Azoun IV. After setting up the town the dwarves were awaiting the arrival of Moradin's most precious artifact, the Soulforger, the most blessed of his holy symbols. Ark and Crono's job was to pick it up from Clan Battlehammer and to bring it to the new mine, in order to bless it. But on the way back their party was ambushed by thieves, who killed all but the two of them and ran off with the artifact. Furious at their failure, the head of the new church in the mining town sent them on a quest to retrieve the Soulforger. They started the hunt with the help of a couple of magical tracking devices given to them by the head priest and three days later they found the thieves' camp. There they planned an ambush and killed all but two of the thieves while they slept. They didn't find the Soulforger. Against Crono's urgings Ark tortured and then killed both thieves after they revealed that some of their companions had continued north. Crono realized that something was happening to his friend at that time. He was very worried. He also remembered scenes from their childhood, when Ark would throw rocks at squirrels and birds and then play with the dead bodies. Crono decided that he would monitor Ark closely for any more evil signs. He didn't have long to wait...

They continued north and found the remaining thieves who were eating lunch. Ark attacked mercilessly and killed all the thieves single handedly, except for the one holding the Soulforger, who was gravely injured. The last thief begged for mercy and Ark refused to let him have it. He brutally flayed the skin from the thief's bones, keeping the thief conscious for twenty minutes, before he just passed out. The thief was just left there to rot. Crono, sickened by the abomination who used to be his friend, tried to stop him, but to no avail. When he tried to physically stop the torture, an impossibly sharp blade sprung out from Ark's arm in a shower of blood and he decided against a physical assault. He was instead surrounded by a mysterious fog as Ark picked up the Soulforger.

The next thing he saw after the Mists had receded was that he was someplace else. The landscape around him had completely changed; there were now a range of mountains to the south and a perpetual wall of fog to the north. Ark stood before him, his sword-arm hanging at his side, the Soulforger in his left hand and a gleam of absolute evil in his eyes. Seeing this new sign of evil, Crono decided to act. Without even a word Ark headed to the wall of fog, thinking that he could return to the Realms by walking through it. A few feet before reaching it, however, Crono caught up to him and demanded Ark to give him the Soulforger. Wordlessly, Ark turned around and stabbed Crono through the chest with his sword. He then dragged Crono, who was still impaled

on the sword, through the Mists. Crono, being not completely dead, surprised Ark by grabbing the Soulforger from his other hand and then throwing it as far away as he could. Ark just growled in frustration and smashed Crono's skull to pieces. At this moment he was transported out of the Mists and into a new land, his own domain Arkson, which was awarded to him for his act of ultimate darkness. His appearance also changed to reflect his new soul.

Current Sketch:

Ark is just a shadow of the man he used to be. He is now a brazen warrior who acts on all impulses of violence. He plans far into the future but doesn't hide them, as if he hates the mere thought of intrigue. He longs for only two things: Demiplane domination and the return of the Soulforger. When he first arrived in Arkson, there were no inhabitants, only an empty castle. After he explored the castle, he found out that he wasn't able to leave it. This infuriated him. His powers began to manifest after a long period of boredom in the year 748 and with them came his dreams of conquest.

The first power to manifest was his power to summon dwarves from other planes. He can draw 3 dwarves into his domain each week and has been doing so for the past three years. These dwarves can be of any race or class and immediately forget their past lives upon entering Arkson. These dwarves turned the domain into the thriving industry it now is.

The second and more disturbing of his two powers, is the power to create the Ark-kin. Upon the arrival of Malek in the year 750, the two of them have been creating Ark-kin. One Ark-kin can be created per week. The process requires one willing dwarf for the spell to be cast upon and one unwilling one to be sacrificed. With the near-invincible Ark-kin and the power of his domain to be everywhere at once, he believes that Demiplane domination is possible for him and him alone. Although it is possible for him to accomplish this goal, it is very unlikely since powerful adventures turn up every now and then to thwart his plans. Ark controls the laws in his domain very carefully. He has his Ark-kin descend upon all people he doesn't like and has then brought in for use in the creation of the Ark-kin or just outright killed. Ark is forever cursed by BOTH the Dark Powers and Moradin himself for the betrayals to his faith. Even though he yearns to once again hold the Soulforger, he is cursed to die a slow and painful death every time that he touches it. Every time he dies like this, he will be revived 2d10 weeks later with an even greater urge to regain the Soulforger. To top it all off Crono visits him every evening and taunts him of his knowledge of the Soulforger's location.

Closing the Borders:

When Ark wants to close his borders, a clear force field comes into being around his domain. It cannot be penetrated either physically or magically. Things that fly into it just fall back to the ground, taking the customary fall damage. This border only impedes people from leaving the domain. People may still come in via the normal means.

Combat:

Ark is perhaps one of the most formidable of the Demiplane's lords in battle. He receives a high bonus to the damage he inflicts due to his high strength. He can also cast spells as a ninth level cleric of Moradin. He rarely casts spells in the middle of a battle.

Ark's preferred method of attack is to charge and impale his opponents on his horns. He needs at least 10 yards of distance between him and his opponent. A successfully hit charge attack inflicts a massive 18 to 40 (2d12+16) points of damage. He will then try to trip his opponent using his tail. This attack deals no damage, but it causes his opponents to miss and fumble their weapons for that attack round. His tail attack does not count as one of his allowed attacks per round. When in close quarters he will attack with his Vorpall Sword +5. On a natural roll of 18 or 19, the sword maims the character (DM's choice of limb) and on a natural 20 the victim loses his head (or other vital organ or part of body!). Along with the sword he will try to punch his opponent for 1d4+8 damage. If the punch hits for maximum damage, the victim is stunned for 1d3 rounds.

Due to his hard carapace, Ark can only be hit by magical weapons of +3 or greater enchantment. He also regenerates two hit points a round and is immune to all mind effecting and illusionary spells. Otherwise, Ark may only be hit by spells higher than 3rd level 50% of the time. He is immune to all other spells. As a further power Ark must be successfully be turned as a "Special undead" by a cleric before he can be damaged. If not, he just shrugs off even the most powerful of attacks. Although, if a dwarven priest attempts to turn him they get a +2 bonus to their turn undead rolls. If any priest attempts to turn him with the Soulforger, he has automatic success. After Ark's defense has been lowered, he may be harmed normally.

Note: Even though the Soulforger would cause him to automatically disintegrate by touching him, in a battle it does not. He is so pumped with adrenaline that he doesn't even realize it's within reach. In other words the Soulforger can only harm him, if he willingly touches it. If Ark ever dies, he will be revived 2d10 weeks later. His body can regenerate from the smallest atom, and if none are available he takes on the body of the nearest Ark-kin or dwarf.

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THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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What Daemon has formed this abominable
void,
This soul shadowing vacuum?
Some said it is Urizen,
But unknown, abstracted, brooding secret,
The Dark Power hid...

- William Blake (From The Chemical Wedding,
Bruce Dickinson.)

Enticing malevolence allures
Bastardize the clean and pure
Salvation forever crucified

I choose the other side oh yea-
- **Slayer, Diabolus in Musica**

TOME I

BAROVIA

[Author's Note :

Notations in between [] are DM info only, not really included in Sadash's notes since they are about the game mechanics or things he doesn't know about.

City alignment serves to reflect the general attitude towards strangers from both the commoners and the representants of the law.

Much of the basic information about the Ravenloft setting was left out due to space considerations.]

FOREWORD

You are currently laying your eyes upon a work inspired of madness. What could result of further contemplation is uncertain, for what it contains was never meant to be known by mortals.

This work intends to shed light upon the greatest mystery of humanity, the doings and the origins of what could only be called It.

This compilation consists of the works gathered from my own personal quest. I ventured throughout the misty prison to uncover its deepest secrets as well as its lesser ones. After all, knowledge is power.

Bear in mind that I shall protect this tome of revelations as it was my very eyes. Should you lay your own upon it, be assured it will be over my undead body, for I shall indeed escape the cold grasp of death to further my needs.

Only those of my Qabal, after which I entitled this tome, should ever benefit from the following pages.

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

I understand not what brought me here, and I know not what wretched evil lurks in the dark recesses of my heart, as one might say, but I shall indeed find out. With my powers exponentially increased after a surge of both despair and wonder, I stroll forth in the shadows of this unknown land to confront what I've chased for so many years: the unknown, the unnamed.

I can still feel IT's presence here... But it somehow feels different. Somehow older. Almost timeless...

I have traveled much in this realm, and met many people and seen many things. The knowledge I have gathered is troubling enough. It seems to me that this place is a collection of many alien places. Now I've found the very proof that we are not alone in the universe. As shocking as it may seem, this is not a work of fiction. Sadly.

Maybe I have just fallen in the deceptive works of the unknown powers that I seek, blurring my mind and trapping my soul in this black parody of life, but it all seems so real that I can not deny it. My first thoughts were that I was in some horrible nightmare, but after a while, I discovered how dreams were in this place. The term nightmare takes here a whole new significance. Now, each night, I go to sleep with reluctance, and my exhausted sleep brings me no peace.

I shall thus explore this place and record its truths within this tome, in hope that I might one day find a way to return to my native land with this ultimate knowledge. According to sources I shall only mention later, the answers to the origins of this place are to be found in Castle Ravenloft, in a land called Barovia. For this reason, the first chapter in my book of travels will detail Barovia, the land of the Devil Strahd.

*Sadash Mortero
The Enlightenment*

[The Enlightenment is a qabal presented in The Gothic Earth Gazetteer supplement to the Masque of the Red Death campaign expansion.]

Chapter the First

b

BAROVIA DARKER THAN BLACK

[The following derives mainly from deepening into the hints and descriptions contained in the 3 editions of the Ravenloft setting: the Black Box, the Red Box, and Domains of Dread.]

Barovia is a cryptic land with many ties to its ancient origins. The technology, the lifestyle and the surroundings reminded me of the ancient history of my former home. It seemed at first that I had traveled back in medieval times, in a land out of every descriptions humans could contemplate, except in their twisted minds alone.

I had not much trouble with the native tongue, the Balok, for it had a very Slavic- and German-like consonnance. In fact, the similitude of both languages deeply puzzled my mind... Could there be an invisible link between my Earth and Barovia? Most likely there is. Perhaps some other members of The Enlightenment has found his way here and could be of some help to me, although I doubt this.

I quickly learned that Barovia was ruled by a certain Count Strahd Von Zarovich, resident of Castle Ravenloft. The year of my arrival on their calendar was marked 741. I remember leaving Earth in 1899.

THE BAROVIAN LAND

The first contacts were hazardous enough, for the Barovians are very wary of strangers. In fact, in Balok the word for « stranger » is very similar to the word for « enemy » .

A better term to suit their attitude would be xenophobic. I have learned much in my past and I came to the conclusion that had to keep a low profile if wanted to behold safely without attracting their unwanted attention.

The purity of the landscapes in Barovia is truly worth of note. Vast forests of sub-arctic composition like the Tepurich Forest and the Svalich Woods are renown by the natives for their purity and their deadly inhabitants as well.

By day, Barovia may look like a living portrait of beauty to the naïve's eyes, but at night it changes its face, assuming that of a ravenous predator looking for easy prey.

Being renowned for the stunning beauty of its young maidens, Barovia is the target of annual raids from Falkovnian armies and Borcan merchants. Both of these neighboring nations are prone to slavery and Barovians are considered a rarity worth the price.

The natives of Barovia ironically consider this natural treasure as a curse. Mothers bearing females are deeply grieved, for they know the terrible fate awaiting.

The Vistani (gypsies that travel across the lands of the continent) have proven themselves to be truly accurate in the unborn sex divination business. For a small price, the gypsies will lay hands on the mother's womb and identify the unborn's sex. True raunies always guess right, and charlatans are often far away when the time comes to face reprimand.

The female offspring are thus doomed to be preys from the day they are born. If they can escape some slavery raids, a worse destiny indeed may claim them, for the maidens are the pride and joy of the Devil Strahd. He is known to choose such a child once every few years to stay at his castle.

In ancient times, the parents were pleased with such happening, but they quickly learned that their daughters were never to be seen again after they entered Ravenloft Castle.

BAROVIAN POLITICS

Politics in Barovia is a simple enough matter. The natives have to live their lives in peace and pay taxes to the burgomeisters, who in turn ensure the protection they need against their enemies from Falkovnia and Borca. It is much like a feudal system would work under different circumstances.

Shrouded in ignorance, the Barovians do not seem to understand that the greater dangers come from within.

The small circle of political forces at war between Barovia, Borca and Falkovnia is slowly progressing as the concerned rulers grow stronger with each passing breath. Such strong oppositions from the neighbors incited Count Von Zarovich to start the training of militia.

Though they are small in number, the young Barovian soldiers are truly efficient, for they benefit from the lord's magical influence over the lesser beings. They are now sometimes seen patrolling with packs of wolves or bears at their sides. Some of them even have been trained to command small flying raptures such as owls, hawks or ravens. The Lord named his militia «The Watch», since they are only to keep the roads and villages safe.

[The Watch mainly consists of 1st and 2nd level fighters equipped with short sword and chain mail. All their swords are +1 to hit, due to their high craftsmanship, but they are not magical. Each village has a 3rd level captain that works under the influence of the burgomeister.]

BAROVIAN WEATHER

In Barovia, the weather is a most treacherous element. As the Vistani say : «It reflects the changing temper of the Devil Strahd.» If this were to be true, I would surely believe Strahd's heart to be a most cold and dark one.

In fact, winter lasts for over 7 months and the winds seem to sing an hymn to this long frostbite as they blow freely in and through the mountains that rise in the heart of the country.

It is truly a harsh place to live, and only the strongest survive. Although it's a southern domain, nature here seems to care not about geographics and physics. The weather is truly unique in its location,

for the neighboring domains of Borca and Kartakass display a rather milder climate.

A NEVERENDING TALE RETOLD

During the time I've stayed in Barovia, I have witnessed from afar a recurrent manifestation of the mysterious powers I observe. The long lost love of the Devil Strahd has once again taken form to torment him. The setting in which the events took place were worth of note since they involved outside influences.

Tatyana's reincarnation was captured by a Borcan merchant named Hunekan Hallowyn. The merchant preferred to keep this truly magnificent slave for himself as his favorite plaything.

Since (as I witnessed) the lord cannot leave its lands due to some arcane curse, he was most infuriated with this new turn of events. He was thus forced to find willing and able spies to recover the scent of his dearest. If the Lord of Barovia has a flaw, the love for this woman is certainly one that could be used against him.

Many of the men he sent were killed in the process, for Borcan have developed a great hatred for what they call «their barbaric neighbors». The lord thus had to resort to the use of «strangers», whom he deeply loathes. He thus sought out the bravest and strongest ones to accomplish his deeds.

Everything turned to nightmare for the Count as the first such servants he sent were not labeled as Barovians but rather as magnificent slavery stock. The Lord, in a fit of disquieting rage, sent out the first strangers he could lay eyes upon to continue where the others had failed.

This second expedition also turned out to be a most disappointing one for the Count. These strangers were in fact Hunekan's mercenaries sent on a spying mission. They had joined The Watch and were successful on several occasions at identifying and stopping the next spies sent by the lord of Barovia. They left shortly after a brilliant assault upon the unsuspecting Watch that lost many of its effectives.

The group presently enjoys a high status in the Borcan infantry and is known as the Bloody Shadows. The Barovian lord solemnly swore to extract a most personal revenge for this treachery.

Every Burgomeister in Barovia has now received orders that the Borcans are to be considered enemies of the state and must be killed on sight or better yet, brought to the castle directly, for the Lord would readily prefer to deal with them all by himself. To enforce this law, he has even promised a most generous reward of 10 gold pieces for each Borcan brought to him alive.

THE DEVIL'S DESCENT

The valley of the Zarovich lake is rampaged by the legions of Dorian's goblins. Dorian Greenblood is the goblin king that led a ferocious war against the Zaroviches when they claimed Ravenloft Castle, although this story is lost in the mists of time. I had the opportunity to speak to him and learn of his true fate. This enlightening knowledge is included in the second appendix of this tome.

The Tergs, Balok term for goblins (strange little beasties with humanoid features and disgusting habits), still live in this part of the country. They usually mount worgs charmed by their shamans when leaving their mountaintop. Curiously, their magic seems mysteriously potent, for they can counter the Lord's influence over the lesser beings.

These goblins terrify and pillage the scarce travelers mainly to remind the lord of Barovia of their presence.. Though they are only a nuisance for the Lord and his skeletons, they can cause much mayhem to lone farmers and unwary travelers.

The region is also infested by winter wolves, though they are not hostile towards the populace. The largest pack is lead by Vlubar, The Sovereign-Wolf, named by Strahd himself as ruler over all wolves that live in the Barovian territory. Vlubar leads a ferocious war with the

Wolfbane Terg clan to prevent Dorian from growing in power. I had the chance to learn his past history from a new friend of mine. It is also related in the second appendix.

Members of The Watch are often sent to patrol the Devil's Descent as punishment for misbehavior while on duty. The place is so dangerous that they are always sent in three-men teams.

THE SVALICH WOODS

The Svalich Woods are known to be a gold mine for wizards, as all kinds of herbs and rare plants grow here. Many components used for arcane spells may be found by those who know what to look for.

A Vatraska tribe of Vistani led by Raunie Emmelda comes once a month to replenish their stocks and perform the Lunaset Ritual. They establish themselves in a clearing known to them as the Dark Heart of the Woods. Such a name has been chosen because of the gigantic ebony tree that stands alone, proud and mysterious in the clearing.

According to their words, the Master comes here in the dark of the moon to harvest the fruits of his land. They even let me understand in a cryptic manner that he assists them in the lunaset ritual once in a while.

The Vistani called me Giomorgo, a term I ignored the meaning and still do, but they filled me in on their ways enough for me to feel their unique nature and powers. These people are hard to befriend but they prove themselves to be a most valuable source of information.

Even though the woods look peaceful in their vastitude, they are home to three witches, rumored to be the wives of the Fiend Strahd by the populace. They are known to perform many morbid experiments in the secrecy that the woods offer.

Karmina, Milifyn and Tumere are the recurring terror of all Barovian children living near these woods. Some child's tales (obviously used to keep the children from entering the woods) tell that

the witches come out by night, looking for children to turn into frogs, and eat them in a soup.

I spied on the trio for some time and refrained myself from approaching them only when I understood that they were truly dangerous and powerful. Many spectres of their former victims roam the woods and have kept me fairly occupied. The tale of the Blaudshtein sisters is one of treason and lies, and one that I learned from various sources and is related in the appendix at the end of the tome.

These woods are also infested with perverted forms of animals, resulting from the experiments done by that damned trio. Those who come to harvest the treasures of this forest must be prepared to face the wrath of the witches, who long to experiment on more apt materials, for human visitors are rare indeed.

TEPURICH FOREST

The Tepurich forest is a dense woodscape covered with a rich and thick green fungus-colored soil. The moss expands on the trees giving the place a most odd appearance, much indeed like a living carpet. Wolfsbane grows in orange fungus circles, keeping the wolves at bay, leaving this forest free of access for the other wildlife. This results in a unique multiplicity of lifeforms coexisting in a small, isolated ecosystem. Tuika trees also grow in the forest and as Strahd is very fond of the icy tasted brandy-wine made out of the flowers it grows, it can be a dangerous place to visit.

An old hermit named Segovax lives somewhere in these woods, in a small cottage near a still pond. He lives off the hunt and can easily survive in the safe haven of Tepurich. He greeted me in a very cordial manner, despite my shady appearance. This proves that he's either very self-confident or unwary of death.

He turned out to be both.

Over a wonderful deer meal, we discussed of a great many things, but I insisted upon his coming into the Barovian territory. His tale is simple but interesting nonetheless.

He left the nearby realm of Forlorn a while back and came to Barovia to escape some strange and obscure danger plaguing that land (he refused to tell me more). He's now living peacefully in the woods, though the mere sight of goblins or worgs makes him unleash his terrible rage. His peaceful manners are just a facade for I saw him viciously impale such a gigantic beast with the help of a trap he had previously set up.

This man holds much more knowledge about this place than this very tome could ever contain. He initiated me to some foreign physics and explained to me the nature of this place that he calls the Universal Prison of Evil.

His druidic ways enlightened me in the multiplicity of races along this side of the universe and he explained to me why my magical powers were so much more powerful here. He also directed me to a place called Mordentshire to meet a man named Rudolph Van Richten, who according to his words was much more schooled in the mysteries of this accursed land.

VILLAGE OF BAROVIA (500)

[LAWFUL NEUTRAL]

[Most of what is featured about the village in the adventure modules House of Strahd and I6 is not related herein by Sadas, solely for the sake of repetitiveness.]

BLOOD O' THE VINE

This small inn would not normally be much worth of interest, but since it has been purposely designed not to be so, it got mine.

In this inn I found what I hoped to find in such a place: a powerful secret society. I took a room for a week and started my investigations from within. I finally identified the group as "The

Keepers of the Black Feather", and found out that they all bore the same identifying token : a black bird's feather.

After finding out they were dedicated to a just cause, I chose not to meddle with them for the simple reason that I wished not to blow their cover. I found out that they were led by an elusive character named Pyoor and that they were somehow linked to Immol by a secret underground passageway beneath the inn.

[Information about the Keepers can be found in the Secret societies sections of both DoD, the Black Box and Forbidden Lore boxed set.]

TSER POND AND WATERFALL

I was strangely welcomed to the Tser Pond by a tribe of Vistani called the Zarovan. The leader of this small tribe, Madame Eva, was seemingly expecting me and greeted me inside her vardo, even though we had never met before. All of the tribe knew of my name, of my origins and my purpose as if they could read my mind. Their divinatory ways quickly hinted me that they were no charlatans.

The old, nay, ancient woman greeted me in a strange manner by saying that if I left Barovia, I would die. Although it sounded like a menace, I took it as a warning, for I had previously learned of the choking fog that encircled the village.

I answered by telling her that I knew. Her wrinkled face broadened in a toothless smile. « We are then open for dealings. » she told me. « You give me your Fang and I'll tell you how to leave. »

Fang was a dagger I had stolen in a museum back in England. Needless to say that this relic was one of my most prized possessions. The old hag even knew its name, even though she could not see it, for it was concealed under my thick black robes. At this thought, her face wrinkled and she warned me about greediness as a sin and mumbled something about respect for the elderly.

With a loud and greasy laugh, I took the blasted dagger and threw it on the table with a pouch of 200 silver pieces. Her nauseating smile returned and her eyes lit up. « Go to Barataks summit and fetch me the crystal Mystok on the next fulltide, but do not harm the Mukwhar, else you'll anger the Master. Come back to me if you live

and I shall help you. Bring people with you, for the dagger can not help you anymore. Endarí-vítir. »

[Informations concerning the Vistani can be found in Van Richten's Guide to the Vistani.]

SHEER TERROR

I thus left for the village inn, looking for young blood to help me in my quest. I had no time to discuss and explain so a simple charm did the trick.

Bear in mind that I am not the careless type to use people this way, so I chose some foreigners that would not leave wives or children behind, should they not make it up and down that sheer climb.

The climb proved to be a most treacherous one, especially for somebody my age. My magical powers were thus truly put to a test. Only four out of six of us made it to the top, so hard were the conditions and so inexperienced was our group. The first one died under the winter wolves frozen breath, which are truly annoying up there. My magical flaming whip was just the thing we needed to keep them at bay afterwards.

Another one lost its grip during a steep climb and plunged several thousand feet below us. We were saved by my swiftness of wits, for I used a silence spell just in time to hush his death cry as he fell, else an avalanche would surely have reunited us with our fallen comrade.

Once we reached the top, the Mukwahr proven itself to be even more terrifying than the climb. Again, I had to resort to magic to keep the terrible beast at bay since I had been ordered not to fight it. Two more died in the process, and the remaining one did not even think of pursuing the creature after I banished it, so terrified and hopeless he was. Those who died against the Mukwahr gave me an opportunity to observe the fighting habits of the creature. Detailed information is gathered in the first appendix of this tome.

I thus took the Mystok, which proved to be a unique plant indeed. I was almost mad with fury once upon the top for I could not find it, but the keener eye of my last comrade got blinded by a glint of sun

and sought out its source. He started to fumble in the snow, ignoring my loud foreign curses and uncovered the flower from under the snow. I gaped in wonder as I stood in front of this magnificent sight.

The mystok is a glasslike, crystalline flower! No wonder why it was so hard to find under the snow. I took great care in the harvesting of such a natural wonder and quickly uttered an escape spell before the Mukwahr could come back.

My next audience with Raunie Eva was a most perturbing experience. She made me drink a foul tea that made my mind dizzy while her foreign incantations drowned my mind with visions of my former life. She knew where I came from and what I was attempting here. She called me « The eye of Urizen » and the servant of « The Enlightenment », using not my name but that word again, Giomorgo.

During my hallucinations, I saw the veil that clouded my mind pulled back so I could see an eye... one I will never forget, for it was the eye of the Red Death, the eye of the Dark Powers, one of the many faces of It, pulled straight out of my worst nightmares. This eye I shall not describe here for such knowledge brought much unwanted attention upon me. I fear this eye belongs to something nobody should ever see...

I now fear that I have become Unclean. My mind now works in more complex and elaborate patterns that make me understand things that I would not have before. However, I get those terrible visions of this eye... torturing me and taunting me until I faint from headaches. Time now seems a vague dimension in which I don't truly belong.

I remember that Madame Eva told me to come back when my work was done; then I fainted. Of course, when I came back from an agitated coma, they had all vanished like dust in the wind. Only a vial containing a shiny liquid remained by my side. I ignore why, but somehow I feel in touch with these people.

Although I know I could have gone straight to Count Strahd himself to get permission to leave his lands, I wisely preferred not to. The strange Vistani seemed to me far less dangerous than a man

called Devil by his subjects (and I later discovered I had taken the right decision).

Moreover, should the Count have laid eye upon this tome, a curse of unthinkable intensity would have fallen upon me, and certainly upon others of my order as well. Now, by the time he will hear of me, I will be long gone. I just hope that madame Eva can keep her toothless mouth shut for a while...

VALLAKI (1,500)

[CHAOTIC GOOD]

The population of this small and dirty town is mostly made up of lowlives in the like of fishermen, farmers and herdsmen. The valley in which the village is located supports large quantities of Tuika trees, harvested in spring, for the flowers strangely grow during winter.

The Renewal Holy Week is a time where Vallakians celebrate the end of the long winter. These days are a symbol of hope and peace to these people. However, rumors have it that the huge festivities bring unwanted attention upon the Vallakians. The amount of food they gather for this week especially interests the goblin tribes, the Falkovnian armies and the Borcan merchants.

These festivities are always surveilled by the lord's henchmen, who patrol secretly the region looking for troubles. Any captured troublemakers are immediatly escorted to Castle Ravenloft dungeons, for the lord also takes pleasure in these festivities.

VALLAKI'S BURGOMEISTER:

The burgomeister of Vallaki is a treacherous and shady character that caught my eye from the first time I met him. This man, named Gorthmaak Krishnyeff, has some side-business running with one of the Count's relatives in Zeidenburg. I believe him to be a mere plaything for the infamous Count, for only his pityful demeanor could keep him alive and in good health.

Although Gorthmaak is a werebeast, he takes great care to hide this fact. He maintains order in Vallaki with an iron fist and keeps his bestial facade for those strangers that come and wreak havoc in his town. With this in mind, a wise adventurer will most certainly keep clear of his path.

Gorthmaak is featured in the appendix at the end of the tome and therein can be found the causes and nature of his duality within Barovia.

VALLAKIAN INNS:

The Black Night Inn is the only one worth of note in the village. Even though the name might sound quite displeasing, the innkeeper, named Grovniév, is a funny and lifeloving man, even though the majority of the people here are sad or downright unpleasant. He doesn't generally let his distrust show off, but he always insists on getting paid in silver pieces and never, ever allows anybody in after sundown, a common enough Barovian tradition.

He also takes great pride in his homecooked meals like shrimps and lobsters, his speciality being a Snargg filet, a delicious fish that comes from Lake Zarovich. He serves it with a Tuika sauce and some orange mushrooms that he secretly harvests in the Tepurich woods.

I liked the food so much that I stayed in the inn for an entire week. I really took my time to put my most recent discoveries to paper. I had not eaten lobsters in ages. Moreover, Grovniév's recipe is truly excellent, though he tends to overuse garlic. I did not really mind, for bad breath seems a long date custom here in Barovia.

Grovniév secretly deals with Raunie Emmelda of Svalich for spices that makes his fish so special. I had to resort to some lowly divination to learn the thruth behind my meal for Grovniév is very secretive about his ways (a wise habit on his part). Indeed, should his dealings with the vistana be known to all, he would certainly lose his name among the populace, for the xenophobic Barovians normally shun the gypsies, considering them as thieves rather than the enlightened people they are.

VALLAKIAN MERCHANTS

An old dwarf named Branack has established himself in the outskirts of the village where he produces excellent weapons with the ore he gathers from the Balínoks.

[Branack can forge superior quality weapons, somewhat expensive (5 times the cost of PHB), that confer a +1 bonus to hit or dmg, according to the request (either for balance or wieght). However, he keeps them hidden in his store and offers them only to the ones he judges worthy, and of course to Lord Strahd, who took a sudden interest in Branack since The Watch started. He can also forge silver weapons but they are rather brittle and may break if saving throw against crushing blow is failed. Silver is considered as wood for the save.]

Branack also possesses some truly powerful weapons that he keeps in his collection. I guess he would have kept it secret from me since he is wary of strangers, but my sixth sense blatantly instructed me of the strong magics at work in his dwelling place.

After a loud curse against magic-users, Branack finally showed me his impressive arsenal. He forged for me enchanted horseshoes that served me well in escaping Barovia and its giant, hungry wolves. He can also forge good silver, gold or any other non-steel weapons for trice the price if the material is provided. They should prove to be most efficient against the legions of darkness that are, needless to say, a plague in this wretched place.

Branack has lived in peace with the villagers for over 50 years. They accept him despite is non-human nature because he is so darn good a blacksmith. He's in fact one of the best found in the core.

VALLAKIAN CHURCHES:

Volfyan Skolandrosh, a follower of The Beast-Lord, founded "The Lake-House" after the discovery of a marine creature in the Zarovich lake.

The beast in question is an hybrid octopus-shark-porcupine created by Strahd. The ancient vampire created this hybrid in his

early attempts to test a newly created spell. He used foreign species from as far as Mordent and Dementlieu to test his spell.

The Plindar was his first success. He left it in the lake to see how it would survive.

The beast eats the Snargg and lobsters that are abundant in the vast lake. He may also grab a lonely fisher during some blood frenzy that comes during the full moon. The rock-bottom of the lake is littered with unexplored caves, filled with lobsters, shrimps and marine rubies [1000-5000 GP].

Volfyan possesses a couple of those rare blue rubies, since he ventures in the bottom of the lake, with the use of some spells of course. He is studying the Plindar to understand the arcane that created such a beast, all in a vain attempt to recreate it.

VALLAKIAN RUINS:

In the forest that borders the village, a small hut was burned by some angry village mob some years ago. It was the shack of Deebil, an elderly man who had received a gift from the former burgomeister who robbed Strahd and then turned mad.

The gift was a ring of metamorphosis which he used to terrify villagers and rob them, spreading mayhem amongst the townspeople. The ring is still buried in the ashes of the hut.

According to rumors, the old Deebil was so attached to the ring that his spirit still protects it after his death.

In fact, this ring carries with it a minor haunting. I know because I took it, thinking this might help me later, but the rumors soon proved themselves to be right. According to the Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts (a thorough treatise compiled by an authority in the field of the supernatural in this world), which I got Belial knows how in a noble's house in Nova Vaasa, the ghost can be classified a first magnitude one, incorporeal in nature but firmly set to disturb the user of the ring in every way he can. To get rid of the ghost is fairly simple, for he is anchored to the ring. That also explains why the item can still be found in the ashes of that hut. It has proven itself to be more bothersome than helpful.

[Further definitions about ghosts, their forms, curses and powers can be found in the Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts.]

MOUNT SAWTOOTH

In the depths of this mountain lived a colony of evil elves named Drow (fey-like creatures with incredible powers). The underworld they once inhabited was utterly devastated by a silent enemy, a creature whose name I ignore and whose powers I envy much.

All by itself, it managed to drive off an entire realm of these evil elves and construct itself an underwater fortress. Such a creature is however immensely potent and one should never venture in the underworld unprepared, for the « Tentacled-horror », as the Drows called it, awaits. They are now rumored to have left the underworld for a better place named The Shadow-rift.

[The aforementioned creature is an aboleth. After the elves left, it took over much of the underground river complex and managed to multiply itself. However, the aboleths have not much use of the large quantities of silver and gems that the elves harvested and these abandoned treasures still awaits the proud and valiant. The drows Sadash is referring to are obviously the Shadow Elves of the Shadow Rift.]

Obzül is a dark elf that managed to elude the tentacled horror and established himself in the out-of-reach remnants of the Drow's realm.

Now he is attempting to create a flesh golem that would add up the best attributes of elf and human. Up to now, all his efforts have been vain.

He only conceived one functional golem, perverted to the state of zombie. Should he ever make more, he could perhaps destroy Immol.

Such is his goal since the elven community hanged his mother Spectina for her wicked crimes. Their grisly story is further detailed in the second appendix of this tome.

EVERDEEP

Deep down into the mines is hidden an entrance to Everdeep. This underworld is a labyrinth inhabited by horrible brain-eating monsters with incredible psychic powers. Some sages of this world call them mind-flayers or illithid and state that a few years ago there was a whole land populated by these creatures south of Barovia. I am only glad this land has been again sucked into the Mists, for no sane mind should cross the path of these foul beings.

Thank gods, such terrible creatures are not numerous in Everdeep, but they remain truly dangerous indeed. I had to kill one, for it recklessly chased me in the tunnels when I discovered their settlement, and I had a really hard time doing it. It is better not to dig too deep anywhere in the Core, since I have seen many tunnels honeycombing the underground and I suspect they use them to travel through the continent unseen. But should someone be brave, stupid or powerful enough to fight a good number of them, these tunnels could prove a good enough way to exit a domain, for the borders (magical barriers that appear near each nation's borders without a warning, probably controlled by a powerful person inside the domain itself) seem nonexistent in the underworld.

IMMOL (2,000 MIXED)

[CHAOTIC GOOD]

The Immolian community is nestled in a narrow path between the highest peaks of the Sawtooth mountain range. The settlements flank the road, lurking high above the pass, thus offering a perfect frontier protection against neighbouring Hazlan. The scarce travelers are spotted miles ahead and can be dealt with easily enough by the numerous archers. The road is constantly watched and it is nearly impossible to enter Immol without being intercepted or invited.

Rare are the non-human-only communities in this world, and Immol is a perfect example. A lot of half-elves live here, and the Immolian humans normally try to keep their existence a secret. Even a dozen true elves dwell here, but they take great care in disguising themselves even to the humans.

Thus, this village has more than its share of secrets, and its inhabitants tend to be autosufficient and very xenophobic. Humans, elves and half-elves live off fishing and hunting in peace and harmony. Also, the villagers almost ignore the eerie rumors running about the master of Barovia, being geographically cut from the rest of the domain by mount Sawtooth and glad to remain a frontiers community.

Much of the terror found anywhere else is unknown to the Immolians, though they still have their share of problems. However, if there was a place to call haven in the realm of the mists, Immol would truly qualify as such.

IMMOLIAN BURGOMEISTER

The village is under the protection of Frelan Selmanel, a half-elf bard. He tries to keep a pleasant atmosphere throughout the community, atoning the disasters brought by the undead raids sent out by Obzül. He also keeps secret the life in the valley of the ravens, beyond the village.

Frelan is the innkeeper of The Treehouse, where he keeps in touch with his people and organizes events to reassure the villagers in times of crisis. He is the official Burgomeister in the eyes of Strahd and he is granted a unique kind of freedom, compared to the oppression suffered by the other burgomeisters. This is due to the fact that he provides the Lord with an efficient protection from the southern countries. In fact he hasn't seen the lord of the land in seven straight years now. This most certainly means that he is given a fair deal of freedom and trust by Count Strahd.

IMMOLIAN INNS

The "Treehouse" is an enormous inn built amidst a large cluster of trees. This is where major festivities take place all year-long in Immol. This inn is truly a heaven for those who are lucky enough to visit it. Elven touches can be clearly seen here and the joyous and easygoing atmosphere is truly unique, considering this place lies

within the Barovian borders. Many good vintages of elven craft are also available here.

Should a merchant be wise enough to find a way to come and go freely from Barovia, a nice fortune might be at hand here, for the elven wines are truly hard to find elsewhere in the lands of mists.

IMMOLIAN TEMPLES

Mircalak Molmanth, a half-elf, is the High priest in the Celestial House. He is the creator and High priest of this natural church, dedicated to the Raven-god Kreeshaark.

Being erected amidst the giant oaken trees that form the forest, each incrustured with arcane symbols of protection, it is a truly special temple.

It can be animated as a living tree [a treant] and used for transportation or even direct offense against any attackers. Needless to say that this is a most unique display of magical prowess. I discovered that he does so with a special potion brewed for him by the druids of Forlorn.

The temple is where Mircalak keeps a special breed of giant ravens that are trained for mounting by the half-elves for the village defense. They cannot be sold and only the bravest and most skillful of the Immolian riders can use them.

Note that a stranger will never get the chance to have one, unless he shows his merit and his ability to train and handle the creature, which is treated with divine regards inside the community. A great service would also be required. Molmanth also knows that misuse of this gift could lead to disastrous results, for many Barovians would be truly shocked to behold a man flying over their head on a giant bird.

I had the opportunity to help them in their quest against the Half-Drow Obzül and I took time off to learn how to mount them. However, no raven was big enough to accomodate humans, so I left on my horse.

[Those interested and accepted can, for a fair price, be trained to airborne riding and for 1 week of training per 6 pts of wisdom (18=3, 12=4, 6=5...); they can learn for 3 pts of competence spent the war riding training. Only elves and small half elves can mount. To their eyes strangers are all potential enemies and must not leave the valley with any form of knowledge about the very existence of this secret.]

In any case, I have found out that they used a magical tracking device, planted on the raven to gain the knowledge of its location. They also use minor mind-blurring spells to block the mind of those who have seen too much.

THE RAVEN'S LOFT

The valley beyond the forest of Immol is secretly populated and overgrown with lashweed to prevent intrusion. The few who know of it call the place "The Raven's Loft" .

Here the strange half-breed race called Ravenkin (humanoids with torso and heads of giant ravens) lives in secret, obsessed by their quest to uncover the deepest truths of the world where we all are imprisoned. Their researches have all been put in hold however, since they must find a way to defeat the necromancer-priest Obziil and his undead minions that are building a fortress in the wilds.

They are charged (by whom I have absolutely no clue) to protect the tomb of their God Kreeshark until the « chosen ones » come. According to their legends, they will recognize these chosen ones by the tatoos they will bear. The raven-men will lead these people to the tomb to recover the ancient crown of their god, to banish the mists forever and return Barovia to its plane of origin.

The leader of The Loft is a Ravenkin named Akreeakan Olderthanwinter. Apparently he is affiliated with the Keepers of the Black Feather in Barovia, but he stays in this part of Barovia should things ever go wrong for the Blood o' the Vine inn.

[Ravenkin are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix I.]

IRKAT THAAN

High on the tops of the Sawthoot exists a ruined stronghold named Irkat Thaan. It is my belief that this place was the former home of a sect called the Ildi'Thaan but they have mysteriously vanished, leaving only a mute monument behind.

Barovia seems a place where the past is somewhat still alive and I would not be surprised to find out that the Ildi'Thaan are still alive, but somewhere else. During my visit, however, I had not the chance of finding out their whereabouts.

I suspect that the Ravenkin of The Loft to be interested in Irkat Thaan, since the place is presently the nesting place for numerous ravens.

KREZK (800)

[CHAOTIC EVIL]

Deserted and destroyed, this village seems to have been swiped over by a bloodthirsty army. This seemingly ghost town takes a morbid form of life once nightfall invades the townscape. The term « ghost town » truly takes his full meaning here.

Reading an unfinished diary I have collected, I discovered a bit of the story behind all this mess. During the world shattering event called the Grand Conjunction (which happened around BC 735 according to the reports), the town was invaded by the mists and left as prey to the horrible hordes that dwelt in them. Everything was destroyed without leaving a single living being behind. Only the temple dedicated to the goddess Mysteria still stands among the ruins. It lies there alone in the dark, kept in place only by an ambitious priestess's will, so strong that even the Conjunction couldn't overbear it.

KREZK TEMPLE

A very beautiful woman, Deborah Lizbath, dwells in this desolate place, trying to discover what happened in order to bring back life in this once active village. In fact, she is an incorporeal ghost by night, though she's unaware of it.

Over the past years she has tried vainly to bring back the dead children of Krezk, but their bodies, charnel prisons they couldn't bear anymore, turned them into Will-O-wisps by day.

By night, the deserted streets are filled with ghostly children who play in the streets. Despite their ghastly appearance, they seem happy nonetheless and unaware of their true fate. This is quite an horrific sight to behold for the unprepared eye. They are not hostile and they are always willing to play hide and seek. I never could win though, for they could hide in the walls by passing right through them.

KREZK SEWERS

All the magic released by the Dark Powers during the Conjunction lured a fiend that got trapped in the town after the portal closed behind it. It now performs dark rituals by night trying in vain to channel the powers to open a gate to the Nine Hells, his true home.

Kackmathysharp-overlord-supreme-of-the-lava-mephits must capture the priestess soul to accomplish his task, but she has always resisted so far. He uses the ghost children to lure the priestess away from her temple, but she always find a way to escape his clutches.

He now hides in the wrecked sewer system below the city and waits, hoping to find one day a magic-user that will help him. He tried to enlist me on his side once, but I rather despise such creatures and was not very pleased with the way he treated me. He did more ordering than asking. I got most infuriated with him at some point and I cast an ice storm on him, but he did manage to survive, melting the very ground below him. It's upon chasing him that I discovered Merredyn's laboratory.

I searched the place for a long time indeed and I finally found something that was worth the while. The writings of a soul that saw

the very fabric of existence ripped apart, the diary of a man that lived through the Grand Conjunction!

I have incorporated the essential in my own writings for they bear significant knowledge to my quest.

This mage called Merredyn lived in Krezk when the Conjunction occurred. Apparently he was doing researches to bring rock to life in his laboratory, hidden in the sewers of Krezk (in the first layer of the wererats' lair). In the sewer labyrinth, its hideout bears this mark : d.

In the dusty laboratory, I found two tomes secured away in a chest. One of the tomes originally was a stone golem manual but it is now perverted into a gargoyle golem manual. All the components needed have been gathered in the chest. He obtained the materials with the help of the mephitis. The other tome was his spellbook that got corrupted into a vacuous Grimoire. Such an item is cause for much destruction and should be dealt with most care. Let it be known that it can be differentiated from a normal grimoire by the silver whirlwind crest on its sleeve.

I left most of these items where I found them, for I hate to meddle with corrupted magics. I only kept the following pages from the manuscript.

...At last! My experiments may prove to be fruitful after all. With the help of -the mephitis- I could finally increase the malleability of stone. The lava mephitis brought me some invaluable heat to achieve that. Now, with a few well researched spells I can finally bring stone to life!

-The mephitis- is an extraordinary creature indeed! He crossed my path in such an unexpected way that I am beginning to ponder about some sort of divine intervention. This strange creature claims to be an extra-planar one, trapped in here as a punishment. He keeps mentioning tongue twisting names that I believe to be his masters.

He came to me on the strangest day of my life which occurred three days ago. Since then, I haven't slept. It was a strange night indeed. The stars were aligned in an awkward position that got me thinking twice before going out further. My sewer hideout beneath Krezk kept me away from many dangers.

I am careful enough to choose the right time to get out. But on that third day of the newborn fall solstice, some curious things were about to happen and my curiosity was too much to keep myself buried away in these dank sewers.

I came out in the twilight, masked by an invisibility spell I always wear when I come out. Wizards like me tend to keep a low profile in Barovia for its dreaded lord has many ears and eyes. The stars that I saw earlier were now unseen, masked by a bank of fog that obscured the vision to nothing. I had thus wasted a very useful spell, for the invisibility served me no good.

I sought the perimeter covered by this blasted fog, which seemed to stretch endlessly, for I never saw the end of it. Suddenly, in a great sucking sound that came out from nowhere, all the fog disappeared in a sudden bright flash and the ground started to shake. Many voices were raised in unison in the still night air, screaming in fear and stupefaction.

I raised my head towards the skies and what I saw literally disrupted my mind. Up in the sky above, in the direction of the Gundarak border, the sky had been ripped apart!!! Some unseen, unknown force had seemingly tore the very sky in two! A slow and steady pour of bloody mists danced from this wound, covering the land under with seemingly lifelike mist creatures.

Then, a deafening wail pierced the air, almost bursting my ears. As I stood, paralysed, captivated by this impossible sight, something even worse happened. In that growing wound in the sky, appeared a hand. A three digit, clawed, inhuman hand.

I fell on my knees, gaping as the rest of the populace did the same. The hand ripped the rest of the sky apart and... I fainted.

When I woke up, morning had come but I was still invisible. Most of the surroundings were thrashed and only death remained. Devastated, I got back into the sewers, to find out that the colony of rats that were infesting the place grew in alarming dimensions.

Luckily enough, my hideout is ratproof. One thing that disturbed me even more is the rupture that slashed the sewers. It's about three paces wide and perhaps a dozen long but it is deep of four entire sewer levels!

I wandered deep and found out that the lower levels of the sewers were now housing wererats, enough to equal half the former population of Krezk. I avoided them and sought out the end of the fissure. That's where I found -the mephit-, hiding in the molten lava pool.

However, since it was in dire need of assistance, I found it to be quite cooperative. He explained that he came through the rift created by a greater fiend now on this side of the etereal border. As a servant of -a daemon-, -the mephit-,has to keep track of the fiend to escape this place. He is not used to work alone however and has lost its ability to gate in other mephits. I told him that I'd help him escape if he did the same for me.

I ignore what became of Merredyn, for he was not to be found anywhere, but I know that the mephit is still hiding in the sewers, having great fun in slowly devastating the wererats that are starting to leave for more peaceful hideouts. I never heard anything in Barovia about a greater fiend. Perhaps he has moved on?

Upon further exploration in the depths of this gods forsaken place, I discovered the sewer system to be a most elaborated one. In fact, I had to elude myself enough from the true populace of Krezk, a furiously spawning colony of wretched wererats. (Indeed, I found out there are many types of lycanthropes living in this world, but this will be told in another occasion.) They are nearing the hundred and their labyrinth complex is worth some of the largest dungeons I have been cursed to explore. It is some thirteen levels deep!

It is truly a blessing that the mephit's ways are clashing with those of the wererats.

The village is slowly being reconstructed by villagers employed by Strahd. However, the task is an harduous one, for numerous dangers await those who stay during the night. Many died of fright at the simple sight of the playful ghost children. I have studied the habits of Deborah, as well as her interaction with the construction workers that greatly fear her. All of this knowledge is gathered in the first appendix of this tome.

TEUFELDORF (1,000)

[CHAOTIC NEUTRAL]

This desolate place is the host of a terrible evil that wrecks its inhabitants, turning them to unstable people. At a first glance, everything seems to be nice enough but as always in Barovia, never believe what your eyes tell you.

I have found out that the majority of the villagers are infected with a severe phobia. After long researches I have discovered that the source of this seemingly contagious phobia is caused by a magical virus. This singular magic force turns the infected ones into madmen at the sole sight of strangers.

I was able to spot the virus with a simple detect magic spell. It then appeared to me as a mass of miniature magic spots.

Some of the villagers even suffer from alternate phobias as fear of animals or children, which gives place to some quite disturbing situations. Many madmen roam the streets by night.

Watch your back very carefully when walking through Teufeldorf, for daggers seem strangely drawn to them.

[Magical viruses and Phagius are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix III: Creatures of Darkness.]

TEUFELDORF BURGOMEISTER

Unknown to most of the townspeople, the mayor is a son of Phagius, a legendary old wizard from Invidia. This evil man named Talakinen serves "The Rotting Lord" under the authority of Strahd. He pleases the lord's wishes by repelling strangers, or by sending them straight to castle Ravenloft.

However, he is trying to pierce the secrets of mummification and his numerous experiments are filling the nearby forests with sick people suffering from the Kel-Tewar, which is a foreign name given to a disease in every way similar to the mummy rot. He currently needs a Death's Head Tree root that can be found in nearby Forlorn to complete his work.

This final component could give him the immortal state he so much desires. Such a rare and potent component could give Talakinen the ability to turn into a Greater Mummy. Using his

authority, he often lured unwanted adventurers into fetching the root for him in Forlorn but as far as I know, none ever returned.

Well, some did, but they were no longer human.

TEUFELDORF CEMETERY

The cemetery of Teufeldorf is so vast that it covers more terrain than the town itself.

Teufeldorf must have been a sprawling city in the past, for such a great number of dead must come from a numerous population indeed. The remnants of this mysterious civilisation left a morbid enough artistry, for the ancient and elegantly elaborated tombstones are truly works of art. A ghoul lord dwells in this cemetery and has enough to spawn and feed.

This particularly troublesome undead is a mystery as to how he came to be and what he serves. He seems not to be subservient to any dominant figure around. However, many old folks tell that he is the guardian of the cemetery, protecting its buried treasures.

Others say that the dead buried here represent all of the casualties caused by the Devil Strahd himself. The ghoul lord would be an enraged victim seeking to avenge himself, or maybe a minion of the Devil controlling that no dead raises without the Count's permission.

I never got the opportunity to find out what the truth is. I only know that Talakinen Phagius would certainly be able to profit from this whole necropolis if he ever were to mummify himself.

[Ghoul Lords are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix I.]

ZEIDENBURG (1,500)

[LAWFUL NEUTRAL]

This village, which might seem peaceful at first sight, hides an ugly facade. But then again, this can be said of many Barovian places.

The Luna river that flows from Borca and pours itself into the wells is the bane of the city. In fact, its waters are poisonous (probably this is caused by the strange experiments of some infamous Borcan nobles) and they make the villagers suffer, since it poisons the land, the crops and fruits, affecting those who eat them.

Since the poisons are diluted in the flows of the river, the effects are not lethal, but are however very annoying. The poisoned fruits can thankfully be recognised by the purplish hue they bear.

Carnivorous plants also grow due to the poisons. In fact, blood roses are slowly invading the surrounding forests. Many were found bleached white and dead in the woods, drawn by the loveliness of these lethal wonders.

[Blood roses are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix III: Creatures of Darkness]

ZEIDENBURG BURGOMEISTER

Strangely enough, Zeidenburg's Burgomeisters seem to have a relatively short lifespan. The current one is the militia captain, named Ulrick Von Sklebgaerd. He is only filling this post ad interim, since the former Burgomeister was publicly crushed by the Count's henchman, Lord Vasili, for motives of incompetence.

Such a display of violence is not uncommon here, for the populace seems to be a little slow of mind and the Count has to resort to some effective methods to activate their lazy brains.

However, the truth behind all this is that somebody is working behind the scenes to oppose the Count's power. A relative of the Count charmed the former Burgomeister in order to control the city from behind. This ruthless vampiress named Lyssa Von Zarovich has grown a doppelganger plant in the outskirts of Zeidenburg, using noxious concoctions provided to her by Milonovich to help it grow in such a climate.

Furthermore, she has managed to further her plans by pulling the mayor of Vallaki in her schemes. However, she does not entirely trust him and keeps a very careful eye on the man.

[Lyssa Von Zarovich is featured in the Ravenloft accessory Children of the Night: Vampires and in the adventure module Thoughts of Darkness. Doppelganger plants are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix I.]

ZEIDENBURG INN

The Moon River Inn is the home of an innkeeper whose passion for gambling almost cost him the inn a couple of times.

Deyritch Mukavski is an expert in many sorts of games but his favorite are indeed chess, in which he is quite a match. He often plays a meal for a game or a room on a simple game of dice, never refusing a bet. When he wins however, he happily charges double-price.

He often gets visits from thugs who claim having being cheated, but he always manages to lure them into another game and to have them spare him. Before I played with him, I took the liberty to explore his mind to find out if he was a worthy adversary. I found out that he is not quite the type of man who would resort to petty thievery, but he has many tricks to uncover those who do.

Although he is not very rich he has a way of spotting interesting items to play for. His true wealth is thus not accountable in gold pieces, but rather in rare objects that he collected along the years.

Though he lacks culinary talents, the truth behind the horrible taste of his food comes from the fact that he uses food from the banks of the Luna River. These goods are poisoned and sickens the unaccustomed strangers.

But wise as he is, he ultimately found out that a good tuika brandy-wine or similar quality vintage is enough to neutralize the mild poison.

ZEIDENBURG MERCHANTS

An alchemist named Algovertz Milonovich established himself near the river for the wide variety of rare plants that grows on its banks. With the river oddities, he can concoct many poisons, toxins and medecines. He knows where to find Wolfsbane and aconite, amongst others, herbs which he wisely always keep in store.

This strange enough man of science introduced me to some unique remedies indeed. For my reccurent headaches, he gave me a green colored tobacco that dizzied my mind but was strangely efficient against my illness. Though it has terrible taste, this « Devil's grass » works wonderfully on my traumatized mind. He also concocts many kinds of pain killers and other mind affecting drugs, which I took some samples of, just in case.

During the years, he has drawn a large enough number of lawful customers. He is now looking for employees to take his merchandise to Borcan merchants, who pay high prices to obtain such exotic products. The fact that the Lord declared the Borcans « enemies of the state » has slowed his business enough, but a bit of contraband never killed anybody.

[Consult the Complete wizard's handbook for the apotecary and alchemist kits.]

THE DARKSTALKERS

The outskirts of Zeidenburg hide an old barren and decrepit manor, home to the Darkstalkers.

This small group is lead by a reclusive woman named Malice Descordia, although she lives in the Luna Forest. They have all been selected for their uncanny abilities to track and fight vampires, though some of the Darkstalkers are undead themselves.

These people are a mystery and truly impossible to number. Their business is a most dangerous one and their ranks are everchanging. They take great care to avoid discovery and they make sure that their veil of secrecy stays untainted. They are reckless and without any hint of remorse.

The only thing I can say for sure about these people is that they are dedicated to the death of vampires and that they operate in the whole continent. They are not the kind of people who help others directly, but they do act with fearsome determination.

They can be recognized by a single tatoo they bear anywhere on their body, a single black drop of blood.

LUNA FOREST

THE MORTAK GROOVE

In this forest exists a dead place that the Barovians call the Mortak groove. They reluctantly talk about this place of evil and mystery. When they do so, they say that in a 50 paces radius around the groove, all vegetation is dead and a fine sheet of permanent snow covers the ground. The coldness of death haunts this place and a harsh wind always blows through the dead fingers of the trees.

Still according to their telltales, the groove is inhabited by an evil spirit, a "Kyrasis". Those foolish enough to brave the folktales have been devoured alive by the very trees that took a life of their own.

I found out by myself that the trees in question are powerful undead living trees, treants as they're called here. There are seven of them, enough to keep the Mortak groove a well kept mystery. Some places are indeed left better undiscovered.

Even the lord of the land, the Devil Strahd himself, cannot enter this place, something which infuriates him to the highest degree. I had to brave the danger once more to uncover the dark truth behind all this mystery.

The Mortak groove is host of a damned creature, an elven vampire named Malice who has been attacked by Strahd. She became a vampire after the Lord sucked her dry. With her corrupted powers she turned the Luna Forest into a place of undead nature. After some researches, I was able to learn that the word "Kyrasis" was in fact the elven for "Immortal Doom". This names suits Malice very well, for as you'll see in the appendix of my tome, she is truly the Immortal doom for vampires and living alike.

Beign hideous in appearance, she masquerades as an inflicted Kel-Tewar using bandages to cover her ravaged face. Amidst the groove, she guards a magical gate which only opens when the Barovian moon eclipses itself and the mists take a bloody taint. This phenomenon only takes place once per four years, during the highest peak of the winter equinox.

Note that I have not yet witnessed such an event, but merely divinated it. This gate could lead anywhere, and maybe it could be the only way back to my beloved earth.

[Undead and Evil creatures are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix 1.]

GUNDAR RIVER

This river flows from its source in mount Ghakis [more precisely from the tomb of Kreeshark, the Ravenkin's deity], where a magical well has been installed. I truly doubt a whole river could be sourced from such an object but I shall find out soon enough.

The waters of this river is infused with the evilness of Duke Gundar, a vampire that ruled a realm called Gundarak before the Grand Conjunction occurred.

He now haunts the river and brings back to unlife those drowned in these waters. These drowned zombies always attack the first living creature they see.

Lord Gundar appears only by night and wreaks havoc to avenge himself. His tale is told in the second appendix of this tome.

EPILOGUE

It has been foreseen that the year 1351 shall be the last of Barovia. This date will mark the passage of Lord Von Zarovich to the status of Patriarch vampire. Should this day ever come, the powers of the vampire will reach a new height that will make him truly unstoppable. The prison that presently holds him may not be strong enough to hold him at that point.

But before this day comes, the Lord of Barovia shall truly be put to test. As one may have noticed, a lot of opposing forces are growing in Barovia and it is possible to vanquish the dreaded lord by using them. Though it may seem like an impossible task, I am certain that one day, somehow, it will happen. And I hope this tome may provide valuable wealth to anyone who embarked in such a life consuming quest.

I shall now head towards northern territories to meet this notorious Van Richten. I shall thus pass through Borca as my next

step. I hope I will be able to write the next chapter of my tome before death catches me with its cold, unforgiven fingers.

Appendix I

- CREATURES OF THE NIGHT -

MUKWAHR

Strahd's Malefic Meld

[CLIMATE: BARATAKS]

[ORGANISATION: SOLITARY]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE: ANY]

[DIET: FROZEN MEAT]

[INTELLIGENCE: ANIMAL [1]]

[TREASURE: R, SPECIAL]

[ALIGNMENT: NEUTRAL]

[ARMOR CLASS: 2]

[MOVEMENT: 12[UPRIGHT] 15[ON ALL FOURS] 15C[FLYING]]

[HIT DICE: 5+3]

[TAC0: 15]

[ATTACKS: CLAW/CLAW/BITE/HORNS+SPECIAL]

[DAMAGE: 1D6/1D6/1D8/1D4]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS: SHRIEK, HUG]

[SPECIAL DEFENCES: +1 OR BETTER TO HIT, IMMUNE TO COLD]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil]

[SIZE: L [8']]

[MORALE: CHAMPION [15]]

[EXPERIENCE: 2000]

The Mukwahr is the sole dweller on the Baratak mountaintops. Somewhat apelike in stature, it is an undead creature created by Strahd's Malefic Meld spell, combining a grizzly, a gargoyle and a yeti. It has very thick white fur that grows on a somewhat scaly skin. It has two gigantic wings that allow it to fly relatively well for its size.

Its head is bearlike and it has a rock-like horn protruding from its forehead. The wings and the horn obviously come from the gargoyle physiognomy, since they are grey and rock-like in appearance.

Its body is that of the yeti, with sharp and powerful claws that may rend flesh easily. Its appearance can be mistook easily with Yugoloth guardians even by those well versed in extra-planar lore, but it is not an outer planar monster.

COMBAT :

Being very agile and snowwise, the Mukwahr can ambush large parties by luring them into a depression of snow and can even use its bass-toned shriek to cause an avalanche. Though it prefers to take out a group by surprising them one by one, it will rather use the avalanches to cover its retreat if endangered.

[In a fight, it cannot use the bite and horn attack in the same round and if both claws hit in a single round with 18 score or higher, it has grabbed its victim and can squeeze it for an additional 2d6 damage. Furthermore, the victim must roll a saving throw versus stun or be frozen and thus stunned for 1d4+2 rounds. Such frozen victims are usually taken away to the mukwahr's lair and conserved as food.

While flying, the Mukwahr can either make a swoop attack with its horn, much like a charging attack, causing double damage or it can attack with both paws and bite at the same time, though it has to land afterwards. This method of attack grants a +4 bonus to attack rolls and the victim has to roll a save versus stun or be pinned and suffer crushing damage of 1d8 per round in such a position.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

The Mukwahr is not a natural creature and thus has no true habitat nor lives in any society. He is only instructed to let Vistani harvest the mystok freely. Every other living being it sees is to be killed.

ECOLOGY:

The mukwahr is a solitary undead creature that exists for a single purpose only, to serve its lord by protecting the mystok flower from any but the Vistani. This flower is used as an antidote to Strahd's choking fog that surrounds Barovia. Should the creature be destroyed, Strahd would know and prepare to deal with the situation

by himself.

[Strahd's Malefic Meld spell is detailed in the Domains of Dread campaign sourcebook.]

PLINDAR

Strahd's marine hybrid

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : ZAROVICH LAKE]

[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]

[DIET : CARNIVOROUS]

[INTELLIGENCE : ANIMAL [1]]

[TREASURE : MARINE RUBIES]

[ALIGNMENT : NEUTRAL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 6]

[MOVEMENT : 3, SWIMMING 24]

[HIT DICE : 4]

[THACO : 17]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 7]

[DAMAGE/ATTACK : 6X 1D4/2D4]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : CONSTRICTION, INK]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : COLOR CHANGE, SPIKES]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : NIL]

[SIZE : M [7 FEET LONG]]

[MORALE : FEARLESS [20]]

[XP VALUE : 1,400]

This marine hybrid creature is one of Strahd's first successful experiments with his Malefic Meld spell. It is an horrible crossover between a shark, an octopus and a porcupine. The result is truly horrific and very efficient at the same time. The main body of the creature is that of a shark. On each side of its torso, eight tentacles protude, while its whole body is covered with porcupine spikes. The color of the hybrid creature can vary to blend in the marine depths. It usually ranges from green to deep black with specles of blue.

COMBAT :

The marine hybrid is not truly hostile but its main goal is to watch over the Lord's treasure, Strahd's marine rubies.

[The creature can attack with its tentacles (1d4 dmg per tentacle), preferring to use 6 to strike and 2 to hold its prey. Once a tentacle has got an hold, it can constrict (2d4 dmg) and thus rend the flesh with its needles. It will continue to do so until the hold is broken either by greater strength (17) or by getting its tentacle cut off (8 hp per tentacle). In addition, the shark fanged mouth can bite for additional (2d4) damage. If greatly damaged, the hybrid can release a cloud ink 30' high, 50' long and wide to cover its retreat. A severed tentacle can grow back in 2 months.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Strahd's marine hybrid was dumped in the Zarovich Lake by its master after its creation. The beast now lives off by eating snaragg, crabs and lobsters that are legion in this lake. Strahd thought it was a success and proceeded in the making of more melded creatures, leaving the plindar to protect the marine rubies that fill the caverns at the bottom of the lake.

ECOLOGY :

The meld is not a natural creature and thus never interferes with the outside life and will never leave the lake. Its ink can be used to pen magical scrolls.

[Strahd's Malefic Meld spell is detailed in Domains of Dread campaign expansion sourcebook.]

Appendix II

- DRAMATIS PERSONÆ -

VLUBAR, THE SOVEREIGN-WOLF
Winter Wolf Ghost

[CLIMATE : ARCTIC]
[ORGANISATION : PACK]
[ACTIVITY CYCLE : WINTER NIGHTS]
[DIET : NONE]
[INTELLIGENCE : VERY [12]]
[TREASURE : NIL]
[ALIGNMENT : LAWFUL EVIL]
[ARMOR CLASS : -2/4]
[MOVEMENT RATE : 18]
[HIT DICE : 8]
[TACO : 14]
[DAMAGE : 2d4+2]
[SPECIAL ATTACK : FROST, KEEN.]
[SPECIAL DEFENSE : +2/+1 TO HIT]
[MAGICAL RESISTANCE : 30%]
[SIZE : LARGE [10']]
[MORALE : FEARLESS [20]]
[XP : 5000]

Vlubar is a winter wolf ghost. He originally was the leader of the largest pack of wolves in prime material Barovia. The goblin hordes were in a constant state of war with the wolves, for the goblins used the wolves charmed by their shamans as mounts while attacking the humans. The pack Vlubar led was thus decimated and the survivors were charmed by the shamans. Vlubar himself died in the fight against Dorian the Goblin-King.

So much hatred filled Vlubar's soul that he could not truly die without a howling vengeance. And so, obsessed by his vengeance he raised as a ghost from the crimson battlefield the night after he died.

He then recruited a second pack of winter wolves and launched a second attack on Dorian's troops. In the fight he met his charmed companions serving the goblins and slaughtered them all without remorse, so fierce was the flame of revenge burning in his soul. Unfortunately, Dorian proved to be too much for Vlubar for the second time.

Vlubar fled in the chilly night and was later contacted by Lord Strahd after he conquered Barovia and became an undead. Ever since Strahd won the ghostly wolf's loyalty, he has made sure that no goblin ever approaches the Ghakis mountain range. On his part, Strahd named Vlubar Sovereign-wolf of all the Barovian territory. Now, every stranger in Barovia is considered an intruder and he makes sure that his territory is well protected.

On the night that celebrates the grisly defeat he suffered against Dorian, Vlubar attempts a sneak attack against his archnemesis, but he always fails, for Dorian is always well prepared to receive him with the famed goblin's hospitality.

However, Vlubar is a cyclic ghost that only appears during winter. Precisely, he appears running as one with every new snow of a given year. He then has to stay upon the everfrosted tops of the mountains that surround Barovia when the ground becomes greener. In fact, he can not ever set his paws on anything else than snow or ice.

The undead wolf appears as a bestial spirit, much in the preserved form he had when he died. He shows frozen wounds all over his silvery fur, but the blood is crusted and never drips. Even when he stands still, he seems like moving, for there is always a swirl of scintillating snow around him. This blurs him when he runs, making him look much like a snow devil. His icy blue eyes possess a twinkle that hints at his superior intelligence. It is a truly unique and fearsome spirit to behold.

COMBAT :

Vlubar hunts during winter and is always accompanied by a pack of winter wolves. [70% of the time, there are 3d4 worg wolves with them.] They rarely attack humans, save for armed foreigners. Their main target are the goblins.

Vlubar can attack either by biting [for 2d4+2] or unleashing a stream of frost from his mouth. [Once every 10 rounds, causing 6d4 in a 10 feet cone in front of him. A successful save versus breath halves the damage.

Also, Sadash doesn't know it but Vlubar can keen twice per night. However, his keen is a particular one. It only paralyzes humans who fail to save versus death magic, while it kills goblins who fail their save. Humans stay paralysed until dawn and take an ash gray coloration after few hours. The keen attack can be heard from afar but is only effective at a 30 feet range. During full moons, the keen has double range and paralysed humans stay stunned until the end of the full moon. In addition to these powers, the ghost-wolf can charm 24 HD of animals and the constant blurr of snow around him gives a -2 to all opponents attack rolls.]

Like winter wolves, Vlubar is particularly vulnerable to fire. His hatred of fire turned to an allergen for him during his passing to undeath. He will always flee once fire has damaged him. Dorian knows about this weakness and always makes sure that his goblin troops fight wolves with torches. [Vlubar takes 1 additional point of damage per die of damage from fire-based attacks. Being undead, he suffers 1d6+1 damage from holy water and he can be turned as a specter.]

Moreover, Vlubar is a mutable spirit, which means he can shift from corporeal to incorporeal form at will. [When he assumes incorporeal form, he can pass through solid objects as if they were none and can be hurt only by +2 or better weapons. Under this form he can only use his keen or charm abilities. In corporeal form, he can be hit by +1 or better weapons. He can also rejuvenate to full health in an instant but he must rest for half an hour afterwards. To accomplish this, Vlubar has to lie in snow, rolling himself in it until he is completely covered up.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Vlubar is free to wander anywhere in Barovia since his ghostly form is anchored to the domain itself. However, he never ventures too far from the snow, since he cannot tread on clear terrain that is without ice or snow. He always leads a pack of wolves so he is rarely seen alone and as the absolute leader of the pack and he always chooses carefully the ones he travels with. He thus can never be seen with females or cubs in his ranks but he may however have charmed some other creature to flank his troops, like bears or flying raptures.

Vlubar often patrols the Devil's Descent, protecting The Watch from overwhelming forces.

ECOLOGY :

Vlubar is a third magnitude ghost and entered unlife after he was killed by Dorian's wolf-rider goblins. Thus, he shares an adversal relationship with his archnemesis Dorian, and is obsessed with killing him. Should he ever manage to kill the mummy of Dorian, he will probably cease to exist as well. He also has a stewardship relation towards Strahd Von Zarovich.

[Further details and definitions of terms used in Vlubar's description can be found in Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts.]

DORIAN GREENBLOOD *Mummified Goblin-King.*

[FIGHTER 5th / SHAMAN 7th]

[CLIMATE : ARCTIC]

[ORGANISATION : TRIBE]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : TRIGGERED]

[DIET : NONE]

[INTELLIGENCE : HIGHLY [14]]

[TREASURE : D (X5)]

[ALIGNMENT : NEUTRAL EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 0]

[MOVEMENT : 9]

[HIT DICE : 8]

[TACO : 12]

[DAMAGE : 2D8/2D8 OR BY WEAPON +6]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : MUMMY ROT]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : +1 OR BETTER TO HIT]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 15%]

[SIZE : M [6']]

[MORALE : FEARLESS [20]]

[XP : 7000]

While alive, Dorian was the chieftain of the Wolfbane goblin tribe in prime material Barovia. During his life, he was a fierce competitor to humans. He lived for war and nothing else. When General Strahd Von Zarovich came to reconquer Barovia, the goblin hordes had a new enemy to face. The Zarovich family quickly vanquished the numerous goblin clans through nonstop warfare, and only the Wolfbane tribe resisted. The tribe had to flee to the top of mount Ghakis after the conquest in order to survive. The royal family commemorated their victory with a magnificent artwork in Castle Ravenloft's chapel, depicting the flaming goblins fleeing away. An inscription was also made: « The Goblyn-King flees before the might of the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind. »

After establishing his folk upon the treacherous mount, Dorian constructed an underground stronghold and stopped fighting the human armies. The tribe mainly survived by attacking unwary travelers coming through the Devil's Descent to reach the perched castle..

As the years passed, many men were sent by Strahd to finish off the Wolfbane tribe, but their lair atop the Ghakis proved to be almost unreachable and the human armies eventually decided to patrol the Devil's Descent instead of fighting the goblins on their ground. The goblins were thus forced to hunt in the woods but they never truly abandoned the valley. Even in the present days, the Devil's Descent is still a very dangerous place to set foot.

Many years passed and Strahd eventually sealed a pact with the so called Dark Powers that turned him into a vampire. The aged Dorian learned quickly of this new twist of events by using shamanic powers of divination. During a sacrifice he offered to the powers he bows to, Dorian was instructed to surpass death and return from his grave to destroy the vampire Lord of Barovia.

He thus built himself a chamber near an underground river that he knew vampires could not cross. He instructed his men to bury him in a tomb filled with iced water so his body would have been preserved. During this time, the fledgling Vampire-Lord started to extract his revenge upon the evergrowing goblins, but no matter how many he could kill in a year, he was never able to finish them off completely. They seemed to grow at an alarming rate each spring.

Nowadays, the Wolfbane tribe averages 200 souls. The now ancient vampire resorted to the use of his wolf familiars to keep the stock of goblins to such a low number. Vlubar the Sovereign-wolf is also fully dedicated to this cause.

About a hundred years after his death, the spirit of Dorian came back to animate his body, making him a very singular kind of mummy. His corpse was preserved in iced water, giving his body a clear blue hue. His beard, eyebrows and hair are coated with thick white frost, giving him a most ancient appearance. The silver circlet that served him as crown still stands atop his head, proud and perfect, giving Dorian a noble stature, even for a goblin.

COMBAT :

Dorian is a fearsome creature [Fear check at -2] for each who lay eyes upon him. The transformation from mortal to undead has given Dorian supernatural strength [18/00] that makes him a worthy adversary. He can attack with both fists quickly enough, delivering numbing blows that rarely miss their target even if he looks sluggish. Each touch he delivers can affect [unless a save is made against death magic] mortals with a unique form of mummy rot that slowly freezes the victims in a lapse of less than 8 days. The victim slowly feels a burning fever on the first day. [Losing 1 point of strength and 2 points of constitution]. For each passing day, the fever turns into a coma [but the Str and Con still applies] and after three days, the victim becomes incapacitated and will die in four days, completely frozen.

Dorian also retains his former fighter training [he can wield with ease lance, mace, short and bastard sword], though he prefers to fight barehanded.

[As an undead, his infravision is now increased to 60 feet. Priests can turn him with a -2 penalty but that would only serve to force him to use his passage ability. Contacts with holy symbols or holy water cause 1d6 damage points to him. He is also vulnerable to fire and 1 point of damage can be added to each damage die from fire-based attacks. He is however immune to normal weapons and those of +1 or better enchantment cause only half damage (divide only the damage and strength bonus, not the enchantment).

Dorian's passage ability is somewhat similar to a dimension door spell but it can only transport him to a distance of 25 feet and him alone. He can use this power once per

hour and it is the only way to enter or leave his tomb in which he can rejuvenate 6 HP per hour. Any cold-related spell used against him restores 1 HP per damage instead or hurting him.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Dorian is an invoked mummy, meaning that he himself took steps to become undead. It is not truly clear though : it could have been a dark pact too, since he gained the information needed to cheat death through unclean methods. However, it took nearly a century before he could raise from his iced grave.

Currently he only leaves his tomb once every new year to observe his tribe's state and to perform a sacrifice to his gods, waiting for the sign that will tell him how to kill Strahd and rest in peace. However he can be awakened by the shamans of the tribe at any time, if they read one of the Speak with Dead scrolls he left behind. He is currently waiting for the birth of a marked child in his tribe. The prophecies say that this infant, bearing as birthmark the symbol of the tribe (a wolf's skull), will lead the goblins to Castle Ravenloft for the final assault.

The Wolfbane tribe is made up of 200 goblins, including 2 sub-chiefs mounted on worgs and 2 shamans. They live in the Barovian forests and in the tunnels dug beneath the Ghakis (numerous entrance tunnels are located in the Ghakis' foothills). The shamans always keep at least 30 charmed worgs to defend themselves against Vlubar's attacks. When out in the wilds, they always carry torches or similar fire-based weapons to ward off the Sovereign-wolf's pack.

ECOLOGY :

Even though he's obviously evil, he'll rarely command attacks against strangers, except for wealthy ones. [Dorian is a 3rd Rank ancient dead and is only obsessed with killing Strahd Von Zarovich and ruin Barovia. Until this deed remains undone, he can never truly rest.] From the information I gathered, the Holy Symbol of Ravenkind acts as a very powerful allergen against Dorian. [Only at his sight, the Goblin-King's eyes burst into flames. This causes 1d6 dmg per round and also causes him to flee to his tomb and rest for a number of weeks equal to the rounds he was exposed.]

[Spell List :]

[3 - 1st : Ebony hand, Protection from good, Darkness.]
[3 - 2nd : Resist Turning, Charm person or mammal, silence 15' r.]
[2 - 3rd : Life Drain, Dispel Magic]
[1 - 4th : Heart blight]

[Van Richten's Guide to the Ancient Dead was used to create Dorian, who was introduced in *L. Strahd* novel. The Heart Blight spell is detailed in The Complete Necromancer's Handbook.]

SEGOVAX

Forlorn Prophet Druid [10th]

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : TEPURICH FOREST]
[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]
[ACTIVITY CYCLE : ANY]
[DIET : OMNIVORE]
[TREASURE : 8, T, R(X10)]
[ALIGNMENT : TRUE NEUTRAL]
[ARMOR CLASS : 8, STUDDED LEATHER]
[MOVEMENT : 9]
[HIT DICE : 9+2]
[THACO : 14]
[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1(SICKLE), 2(BOW OR BLOWGUN)]
[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 1d4+1(SICKLE), 1d6(BOW)]
[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SPELLS]
[SPECIAL DEFENSES : SPECIAL]
[MAGIC RESISTANCE : Nil]
[SIZE : M (5'6'')]
[MORALE : ELITE (14)]
[XP VALUE : 7000]
[XP : 137,666 NEXT : 200,000]

[STR: 11 CON : 10 DEX : 14 INT : 16 WIS : 17 CHA :15]

[NW PROFICIENCIES : WEATHER SENSE, AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HANDLING AND TRAINING, DIRECTION SENSE, RIDING, SWIMMING, ASTROLOGY, HERBALISM, READING/WRITING BAROVIAN, RELIGION]

Segovax is an elderly druid that has chosen to shun humanity and spend the rest of his existence in communion with nature for reasons I ignore. He has his permanent camp near a small pond deep in the Tepurich forest. He is a very relaxed person outside, but he is still capable enough for a man aged three quarters of a century. His peaceful facade can quickly turn into a maddened image of fury, especially at the sight of worg wolves or goblins that he fights on sight. He spends his days preparing traps and snares to protect his perimeter from any intruder (especially feral beasts).

His past is one blurred by its length but interesting enough. Formerly from Forlorn, Segovax spent most of his youth serving as druid in the forests that blanket the eerie domain of Forlorn. After something horrible occurred to his druids' cove, something he only hinted at, he was forced to leave his grove and started traveling the domains. After around ten years spent wandering from one corner to the other of the core, he finally settled in Barovia, which he considers the heart of the land. The theories he has developed about this seemingly normal, if somewhat darkened place, are truly worth of note. Indeed I have learned much about my purpose here but I shall not express them here : I will save them for a better place and time.

COMBAT :

As a druid, Segovax makes good use of many spells and powers granted to him by his gods. He prefers the use of his silver sickle or bow to fight the goblins and worgs. He is also quite skilled in the use of the blowgun.

He wears the symbol of his faith as a pendant on his shirt. The symbol is a wooden medallion shaped in the form of a tree with misty tendrils instead of branches. He also walks using a staff that has magical properties. [Staff of Wonder with 18 charges.]

[As a druid, he gains a +2 bonus on his saving throws against fire and electrical attacks, he can identify plants, water and animals with perfect accuracy, and move unhindered through overgrown areas. In addition, Segovax can converse freely with animals and is immune to the mind-affecting spells and powers of woodland creatures.

Three times per day, he can shapechange into a mammal, bird or reptile. By doing so, he takes all the animals characteristics and is fully healed after reverting to normal form.

The goddess Daghdha grants him the following additional powers:

- once per day he can heal plants for 1d4, heal animals for 1d6 and resurrect animals of 4 HD and less once per week;
- once per day he can commune with nature and he can predict weather a week in advance;

Furthermore, he is a redhead druid but since he is out of Forlorn, the spellcasting abilities he has are useless now.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Segovax has lived in the forest of Tepurich for almost a decade now. He refuses to join adventuring parties, but he will help them in any way he can if their goals are good.

Also, with some rather cryptic speeches Segovax let me understand that he will never enter Castle Ravenloft, but rather wait for the Lord to come to him.

ECOLOGY :

Segovax is a druid entirely dedicated to the preservation of the Tepurich forest. He never forbids anyone to enter the forest, but rather he waits and watches his visitors. If he judges someone guilty of harming the forest or posing a serious threat to it, he will take any means possible to stop him before further harm is caused.

[SPELL LIST : These spells reflect typical memorization but may change at discretion]

[4+2 - 1st : Bless, Invisibility to animals, Detect magic, Entangle, Log of everburning, Faerie fire]

[4+2 - 2nd : Charm person or mammal, Produce flame, Barkskin, goodberry, Dust devil, Fire trap]

[3+1 - 3rd : Hold animal, water breathing, Plant growth, spike growth]

[3 - 4th : Plant door, Control temperature 10' r., Giant insect]

[2 - 5th : Rainbow, Animal growth]

[Prophet druid kit is detailed in The Complete Priest's Handbook. Log of Everburning spell is detailed in the Tome of Magic appendix. Forlorn druids are further detailed in the Castles Forlorn boxed set.]

KARMINA BLAUDSHTEIN
Spectral Green Hag

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : SVALICH WOODS]
[ORGANIZATION : COVEY]
[ACTIVITY CYCLE : NIGHT]
[DIET : FIL]
[INTELLIGENCE : HIGH (14)]
[TREASURE : X, F]
[ALIGNMENT : NEUTRAL EVIL]
[ARMOR CLASS : -2]
[MOVEMENT : 15, SW 12]
[HIT DICE : 9]
[THACO : 11]
[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1]
[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 1d8+6]
[SPECIAL ATTACKS : LEVEL DRAIN]
[SPECIAL DEFENSES : +1 OR BETTER TO HIT, UNDEAD IMMUNITIES]
[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 35%]
[SIZE : M (6' TALL)]
[MORALE : FANATIC (18)]
[XP VALUE : 7000]

Karmina, while still alive, was much of a seductress. Born young and poor, her parents died mysteriously from some obscure blood-disease as she entered adulthood. She had to find a way to subsist and at the same time take care of her younger sisters, Milifyn and Tumere.

She thus wed an old Boyar for the money and protection he could grant them, but each night, she secretly met with various younger men to consume her youth properly.

One night however, she truly fell in love for the first time in her life. She saw him for the first time when he came to collect the Boyar's taxes, a tall lean man with a dignified gaze and the gait of a true nobleman. His name was Vasili. She quickly arranged for them to meet and Strahd's emissary could not resist such a forwarding woman long (or so she thought).

Lord Vasili got bored of her quickly though and as he discovered that the Boyar could not pay the taxes due, he decided to get rid of both problems at the same time.

He knew that Karmina's sister, Milifyn, was jealous and envious of her sister, so he used her to further his plans. He told Karmina to kill her treacherous husband. In return, he would protect her and marry her. Then he made sure that Milifyn would witness the murder so she could accuse Karmina.

Everything went according to the plan and as Karmina went to Vasili for help, he turned on her and accused her of killing her own husband. Being the representative of Count Strahd, Lord Vasili took the matter in his own hands and quickly judged the woman guilty of murder and betrayal and sentenced her to death before she could reveal anything about their liason.

Her body disappeared from the gallows on the following night. The populace thought that her sisters had taken her to give proper burial, but in fact it was Milifyn that took the body in order to use magics to steal her beauty. However, the dark experiment went awry and Karmina raised from death not quite living, not quite dead.

Karmina and Milifyn abducted their younger sister Tumere and scarred her body and face so she could never live normally again. The younger Tumere was thus forced to hide and join her two sisters in their hideout in the Svalich Woods. This way, the cove was formed and all three turned into hags.

The lord of Barovia learned of this newly formed trio and went to pay them a visit. Karmina went mad at the sight of « Lord Vasili » (for Vasili is only a fake identity of Strahd himself!) and ordered her sisters to attack him, ignoring his true identity. When they understood his true power, he had nearly killed them all. They surrendered and the Lord of Barovia left them, amused by their misfortune, with the warning that they should never interfere outside the forest.

COMBAT :

Karmina is indeed a creature best left alone. Should one be unlucky enough to face her and her wretched sisters, the outcome would be deadly, for her touch alone drains the very life force that keeps us alive. Moreover, she is unusually strong, matching the fiercest of warriors with her bare hands alone. However, her undead status makes her vulnerable to many blessed objects. The sunlight rays are also enough to repel her for some time. She thus only appears at night. In addition, all of the special magics that the hags control as a covey are subject to Karmina's approval, except during the day, for she has no physical form and cannot interfere.

[Karmina's strength is 18/00 and she drains 2 life levels per touch. Those killed by the drain are turned into spectres under her full control. She can be turned by priests as a 9 HD creature and holy water causes 2d4 points of damage on contact. She can also be destroyed by a successful Raise Dead spell. During the day, she becomes incorporeal and can interact with the living only with her speech. Even when incorporeal, the covey is complete and their powers available.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Karmina does not wish to turn her sisters into spectral beings, for she fears that their combined powers could overcome hers. She trusts them in the least and refrained from destroying them only because she is sure she can command their will as long as they remain mortal beings.

Karmina never leaves the Svalich Woods out of fear of Strahd's reprisal.

ECOLOGY :

Karmina no longer needs food to subsist. However, whenever she sees her sisters feasting, she becomes envious of their ability to taste flesh. She tries to compensate this loss by torturing those foolish enough to venture near their lair, and this is indeed the only source of pleasure she is left with.

[When the hags are within 10 feet of each other, they gain some magical abilities that they must cast in tandem. The powers include the following spells : Curse,

polymorph other, animate dead, dream, control weather, veil, forcecage, vision, mind blank. These powers can be used each once per day and are cast at the 9th level.]

[Spectral Hags are detailed in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix III: Creatures of Darkness.]

MILIFYN BLAUDSHTEIN

Annis Hag

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : SVALICH Woods]

[ORGANIZATION : COVEY]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : Night]

[DIET : CARNIVORE]

[INTELLIGENCE : VERY (12)]

[TREASURE : D]

[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 0]

[MOVEMENT : 15]

[HIT DICE : 7+7]

[THACO : 13]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 3]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 9-16/9-16/3-9]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS :

[SPECIAL DEFENSES :

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 20%]

[SIZE : L (8' TALL)]

[MORALE : CHAMPION (15)]

[XP VALUE : 4000]

Milifyn is the sister of Karmina the spectral hag. She was transformed in such a creature by her evil acts and she is doomed to live a reclusive existence because of Karmina's fate and vengeful actions. Together with her younger sister Tumere, she actively seeks to break free from their older sister's control. However, they are not

foolish enough to disobey her, although they always seek to twist her orders by misinterpreting Karmina's words.

Milifyn presently seeks to overthrow her sister by turning into a spectral hag herself. To fulfill this desire, she conducts many arcane rituals with her sister Tumere. Once she finds the way to become undead, not even Karmina would stop her.

Much of what happened to her sister is her fault since she was so jealous of her. In fact, she caused much trouble in the first place because she was stealing money from Karmina's husband, preventing him from paying the taxes that got him killed.

In her true form, Milifyn has deep blue skin and jet black hair, nails and teeth. Her eyes are a dull yellow and as a whole, I can assure that she can strike fear in any living heart.

COMBAT :

Milifyn usually uses her magic ability to assume the form of an infant, in order to lure victims. She often fakes being wounded near the woods border and then she attacks, reverting to her true form.

[Annis hags have a strength of 18/00, infravision of 60-foot range and are only surprised on a 1 on 1d10. If an opponent is hit by the 3 attacks, she can grapple the victim, automatically delivering damage for the subsequent rounds unless the opponent is stronger. Annis can cast fog cloud 3 times per day and change self at will. These powers function at 8th level. Their skin is iron-hard, so edged weapons cause 1 less point of damage against them and blunt weapons cause 1 additional point of damage.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Milifyn lives under the influence of her sister Karmina and can never act against her will. She however seeks to overcome her sister's powers by conducting eerie rituals that could make her undead. However, she still needs the help of a most powerful necromancer to succeed.

It is my belief that perhaps the deadly kiss of Barovia's lord could grant her this undeath wish, but only to leave her more cursed in the end.

ECOLOGY :

Milifyn prefers to feed on infants and sometimes, when she gets lucky, she can lure a pregnant woman and feast on both her and her unborn child. The fetus is a true delicacy for her, since the flesh is tender and juicy, something she never can get any other way.

[When the hags are within 10 feet of each other, they gain magical abilities that they must cast in tandem. The powers include the following spells : Curse, polymorph other, animate dead, dream, control weather, veil, forcecage, vision, mind blank. These powers can be used each once per day and are cast at the 9th level.]

TUMERE BLAUDSHTEIN *Annis Hag*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : SVALICH Woods]

[ORGANIZATION : COVEY]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : Night]

[DIET : CARNIVORE]

[INTELLIGENCE : VERY (12)]

[TREASURE : D]

[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 0]

[MOVEMENT : 15]

[HIT DICE : 7+7]

[THACO : 13]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 3]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 9-16/9-16/3-9]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS :

[SPECIAL DEFENSES :

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 20%]

[SIZE : L (8' tall)]

[MORALE : CHAMPION (15)]

[XP VALUE : 4000]

This hag was once a beautiful young maiden, but her sisters' schemes turned her into a creature of darkness, who now shuns the light it once loved. Although she is now a blackened reflection of her former self, Tumere's most precious desire is to regain a normal life again. She has no interest whatsoever in any of her sister's plans. She obeys only because Karmina's powers are greater than hers and she fears her older sisters. But she secretly wishes both of them dead, forever.

Her chaotic nature makes her rebellious and although she is the youngest and most inexperienced one, she must be dealt with care. Her internal rage makes her a formidable foe that can only be vanquished by strong motives and extraordinary powers.

She tries to distinguish herself from her sisters by wearing dead and dried black roses in her greasy hair. Her face and body, now wrinkled and ugly, still bears the hideous scars that both her sisters inflicted to her.

COMBAT :

Tumere fights much like her Annis sister, but she prefers to use more seductive manners to lure victims, and she has a strong preference for young and handsome men. She masquerades as a beautiful young maiden hungry for love, wishing ardently to explore the pleasures of the flesh, only to reveal her true nature once it has been consumed.

[Annis hags have a strength of 18/00, infravision of 60-foot range and are only surprised on a 1 on 1d10. If an opponent is hit by the 3 attacks, she can grapple the victim, thus automatically delivering damage for the subsequent rounds unless the opponent is stronger. Annis can cast fog cloud 3 times per day and change self at will. These powers function as 8th level. Their skin is iron-hard thus edged weapons cause 1 less point of damage against them and blunt weapons cause 1 additional point of damage.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Though her mind is now a sinkhole of evil, Tumere acts much like a pouting child when dealing with her sisters. She is the one that feels most displeased with her current status and so she often tries to cause quarrels between her older sisters, hoping the argument will

degenerate and the two will one day kill each other. A sort of petty, morbid vengeance for what they did to her life.

ECOLOGY :

Tumere acts much like a heartbreaker. She often infiltrates human communities for short periods of time, in order to wreck mayhem among young couples. She usually targets a newly made couple and tries to steal the groom from the bride. Only when the couple is torn apart by jealousy and lies she feasts. These negative emotions add to the taste of the flesh she ravenously devours.

Since she always chooses a different disguise, the populace of Barovia has come to believe that a mischievous spirit haunts the married couples and has named the fiendish presence « The Widowmaker ». She knows she has no rights to leave the Svalich Woods but she fears no punishment, for she is not happy with her current status. However, Strahd knows that she would prefer death over this accursed existence, so he forgives her every trespass against his law in order to further her torment.

[When the hags are within 10 feet of each other, they gain magical abilities that they must cast in tandem. The powers include the following spells : Curse, polymorph other, animate dead, dream, control weather, veil, forcecage, vision, mind blank. These powers can be used each once per day and are cast at the 9th level.]

VOLFAN SKOLANDROSH

[7th] *Scholar Priest of The Beast-Lord*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : ZAROVICH LAKE]

[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : ANY]

[DIET : OMNIVORE]

[TREASURE : MARINE RUBIES]

[ALIGNMENT : LAWFUL NEUTRAL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 4 (CHAIN MAIL, DEXTERITY)]

[MOVEMENT : 12]

[HIT DICE : 7]
[THACO : 16]
[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1]
[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 2D4 (MORNING STAR)]
[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SPELLS]
[SPECIAL DEFENSES : SPECIAL]
[MAGIC RESISTANCE : NIL]
[SIZE : M (5'9'')]
[MORALE : AVERAGE (10)]
[XP VALUE : 2000]

[STR : 13 DEX : 15 CON : 12 INT : 15 WIZ : 16 CHA : 11]

Volfyan is a priest entirely dedicated to his studies. However, these days he concentrates his efforts on a single creature, Strahd's marine hybrid, which he named The Plindar. He spends most of his time observing the creature in an attempt to recreate it. He has tried many spells and even some biological alterations to attain his goal, but he always failed at one point or another. All of these attempts and his observations have been carefully written down by his scribe, Gustav Verrth. Volfyan has learned that The Plindar is an undead creature, but he is not at all sure whether it was created by a spell or simply animated. He suspects the Hags of the Svalich Woods may be involved in its creation, but he would never suspect Strahd, since he knows near to nothing about the Lord of Barovia.

Volfyan is a very daring man. In fact, he does not seem to fear the dangers that lurk in Barovia and his beliefs in the Great Beast-Lord are absolutely unshakable. This man is almost obsessed by his task and could be a trustworthy ally in a quest for knowledge. He would go to great lengths to achieve his goals, even using most unorthodox methods to reach them. He has a quite unstable temper that often puts him in embarrassing situations. He seems to believe that he holds every truth and gets quickly infuriated when argued with.

COMBAT :

Volfyan is not the type to engage in combat. He will rather try to solve problems through discussion and reasoning. However, he has a tendency to overestimate himself and his beliefs, which can have devastating effects when arguing. He will usually end the conversation with insults if he judges the situation is hopeless. His self-trust is so high that he will rather take a good beating than cower in front of someone. [Should the situation turn particularly dangerous, he will use his powers to flee, usually in the form of a howl, a power granted to him by his deity.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Volfyan currently lives near the Zarovich Lake, in a shrine of the Beast Lord called the 'Lake House'. He chose to live there only to study the Plindar more closely. Should he break its secret or find something of better interest, Volfyan will leave to pursue his quest for knowledge.

ECOLOGY :

Skolandrosh is a priest of The Beast-Lord and his holy symbol is a Howl's claw mounted on a ring that he wears on his right middle-finger. I have discovered that there are many deities in this world that are very similar to Volfyan's god, and this has led me to believe they are one and the same. Volfyan calls the Beast-Lord « Zorgor », however the other two names commonly used when referring to this entity are « Zakhata » and « Maliki ».

[As The Beast-Lord's follower, he can freely speak with animals and can assume an howl's form once per day and he can hear, see and smell though his animal follower Nimble, a small grey rat.]

[SPELL LIST :]

[3+2 - 1st : Detect magic, detect poison, Light, invisibility to animals, invisibility to undead]

[3+2 - 2nd : Charm person or mammal, obscurement, Barkskin, Wyvern watch, enthrall]

[2 - 3rd : Water breathing, dispel magic]

[1 - 4th : Free action]

[The Scholar Priest kit is detailed in the Complete Priest's Handbook.]

FRELAN SELMANNEL

[10th] *Half-Elf Accursed Bard*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : IMMOL]

[ORGANIZATION : SPECIAL]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : ANY]

[DIET : OMNIVORE]

[TREASURE : S, T, R(x100)]

[ALIGNMENT : LAWFUL NEUTRAL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 0 (ELVEN CHAIN MAIL+1, DEX)]

[MOVEMENT : 12]

[HIT DICE : 10 (6 sided die)]

[THACO : 16 (BASE)]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : BY WEAPON, USUALLY LONG BOW AND BASTARD SWORD]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SPELLS]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : SPELLS]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : NIL]

[SIZE : M (5'8'')]

[MORALE : CHAMPION (16)]

[XP VALUE : 7000]

[STR : DEX : 18 CON : INT : 16 WIZ : CHA : 17]

[CLIMB WALLS : 90%]

[DETECT NOISE : 70%]

[PICK POCKETS : 40%]

[READ LANGUAGES : 45%]

Frelan was born in Darkon some 200 years ago and decided to leave the Land of the Dead (as many call it) in search of other elven communities. He travelled much and learned many tales and songs that he now likes to sing in his inn. He had many travelling companions, but the group he holds dearest were « The Slaves of Freedom », a company he founded in Darkon with the purpose to expose the dreaded Kargat's misdeeds. Unfortunately, the group

caused so much troubles to the secret police force that it attracted the unwanted attention of the Sorcerer-King Azalín. The Slaves of Freedom were quickly discovered and decimated. Some of them were turned into undead and enslaved (the ultimate irony!) and Frelan was the sole survivor. However, the Kargat left him crippled, breaking his fingers so he could not play his favorite instrument (the lute) anymore.

After this gruesome episode, Frelan wandered alone and wounded, looking for a place to die. He finally discovered Immol and Mírcalak, the place of his salvation. The old Molmanth took him up and transformed him over the years. He helped him build The Treehouse and helped him manage it. Over the years Frelan took interest in his new business and proved to be a very skilled leader. The Lord of Barovia discovered this after having troubles with the burgomeister of Immol and named Frelan new leader of the community. It's been about 20 years since he was named Burgomeister and he has not seen Count Strahd for 7 straight years now.

This obviously proves that Frelan is trusted and efficient.

Frelan is the political leader and official burgomeister of Immol. He is also the owner and innkeeper of The Treehouse, a truly authentic elven inn. Authentic for the food and atmosphere, because there are no elves here, of course.

Frelan often takes part in night parties and takes great pleasure in singing for the crowd. He is a very responsible man and takes great pride in the well being of his community, constantly trying to upgrade the quality of life in Immol. He also keeps the existence of the valley of the Ravens secret to the great majority of the people.

He always hangs around Mírcalak, his mentor. He will always consult him before taking a decision. He acts this way mostly out of respect for his adoptive father, because he is a very apt leader and certainly does not need constant supervision.

COMBAT :

As a bard, Frelan has a wide variety of means to defend himself. Should he ever be attacked, the half-elf will however prefer to avoid confrontation in order to alert the guards, thus protecting the whole community instead of facing the danger alone.

I have seen him fighting once with an enchanted bastard sword he calls « Berserk », and he seemed to me quicker than lightning [in fact a +2 sword of Quickness]. Moreover, Frelan plays a magical Ocarina that seems to hold many unknown powers. He must play specific tunes to unleash specific powers. [It has the same powers of a staff of power but it cannot be used to hit adversaries and grants no bonus to armor class.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY

Frelan Selmannel is the leader and Burgomeister of the Immolian community and is very serious about maintaining the peace in his town. He is naturally wary of strangers but will treat those deemed worthy of trust with a brotherly attitude. Should someone ever come to Immol needing help, he will always be ready to lend him a hand. He usually doesn't reveal to newcomers his real position of burgomeister, preferring to act as a simple innkeeper. This way he can acquire important information about the people visiting Immol and judge whether to trust them or not. All that matters to him are justice, friendship and peace.

ECOLOGY

Frelan is an half-elf, much like many others in Immol. He likes hunting and is one of the best hunters of the town. This is mainly due to the fact that he can use spells, while other warriors have to get their prey with arrows alone.

[Spell Book :]

[3 - 1st :Alarm, cantrip, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic, detect undead, Identify, Magic missile, message, mending, protection from evil, read magic, unseen servant, wizard mark, shield]

[3 - 2nd :Detect invisibility, ESP, forget, invisibility, knock, mirror image, strength, web, wizard lock]

[2 - 3rd :Dispel magic, Fly, Haste, hold person, hold undead, slow, wraithform]

[1 - 4th :Dimension door, improved invisibility, polymorph self, polymorph other, stoneskin, minor globe of invulnerability]

MIRCALAK MOLMANTH

[10th] *Half-elven Priest of Kreeshark*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : IMMOL]

[ORGANIZATION : SPECIAL]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : DAY]

[DIET : OMNIVORE]

[TREASURE : SPECIAL]

[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC GOOD]

[ARMOR CLASS : 0 (BRACERS OF AC 2, DEX)]

[MOVEMENT : 12]

[HIT DICE : 9+2]

[THACO : 14]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 1D6+1(FLAIL)]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SPELLS]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : SPELLS]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : NIL]

[SIZE : M (5')]

[MORALE : ELITE (14)]

[XP VALUE : 7000]

[STR : 14 DEX : 16 CON : 9 INT : 14 WIZ : 18 CHA : 14]

Mircalak is the major priest and elder of the Immolian community. As a follower of the Raven lord Kreeshark, Mircalak has the duty to train the war ravens. He is quite a busy man, but he still manages to keep in touch with his people.

He mostly spends his time training warriors in the art of mounted fighting and instructing his followers in the art of war strategy. He is well aware of the numerous threats that surround Immol and he efficiently manages to strive clear of most dangers.

Even if he has elven blood in his veins (which is rumored to slow aging effects), he looks old, wise and somewhat eccentric. He always has a frown on his brows, giving him a stern and authoritative look. In fact, he is rather pleasing to have around, as he is lively and quite humorous.

COMBAT :

Despite his look, Mircalak is not an old wizened man incapable of defending himself. Moreover, he can count on the assistance of his followers and guards near all of the time. If he is anywhere near his temple, many priests will come to assist him and warn the guards. If he is not near the Celestial House, then this means he is mounting a war raven and in this case he can be much deadlier with his spells. Should he ever fall or get his mount killed, the Ring of Feather Falling that he wears can keep him safe enough.

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

The half-elfen priest resides in Immol and is considered the spiritual leader of the community. He greatly admires Frelan Selmannel, whom he respects and treats like a son. He will undoubtedly do anything to get him out of danger should the need arise. These two individuals are the leaders of Immol and I suspect that they work under the influence of Akreeakan, the Ravenkin leader. However, they never mentioned him in my presence so I don't really know what kind of relationship they have with him.

ECOLOGY :

Mircalak comes from one of the southern nations and even after so many years in spent Immol, the half-elf still despises the cold, long and harsh Barovian winters. He thus wears Boots of the North to subdue the effects of frost.

[SPELL LIST :]

[6+2 - 1st : Animal friendship, bless, combine, cure light wounds, detect magic, invisibility to undead, protection from evil, sacred guardian.]

[6+2 - 2nd : Aid, augury, charm person or mammal, hold person, obscurement, silence 15' rad., speak with animals, mind read.]

[6+1 - 3rd : Plant growth, cure disease, dispel magic, remove paralysis, emotion control, strenght of one, unearthly choir.]

[5+1 - 4th : Call woodland beings, cure serious wounds, neutralize poison.]

[3 - 5th : Dispel evil, true seeing, undead ward.]

[All new spells above mentioned are featured in the Tome of Magic.]

AKREEAKAN OLDER THAN WINTER

[7th] *Ravenkin mage*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : THE RAVEN'S LOFT]

[ORGANIZATION : FLOCK]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : DAY]

[DIET : OMNIVORE]

[INTELLIGENCE : SUPRA-GENIUS (20)]

[TREASURE : U, I]

[ALIGNMENT : NEUTRAL GOOD]

[ARMOR CLASS : 6]

[MOVEMENT : 3, FL 27 (C)]

[HIT DICE : 7 (4 Sided die)]

[THACO : 16]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 1d3]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : EYE PECK, SPELLS]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : NEVER SURPRISED]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : Nil]

[SIZE : M (5' SPAN)]

[MORALE : ELITE (14)]

[XP VALUE : 3000]

Akreeakan is the elder ruler of the Ravenkins in Ravenloft. He was instructed by Queen Ravenovia and King Barov to watch over their son, who was to become the new ruler of Barovia. He thus established his colony in a reclusive place where he could do observe Strahd's moves without being spotted, protecting him and his people at the same time. Unfortunately, he could not prevent Strahd's corruption and descent into madness and evil, and when he realized what was happening, it was already too late. Barovia had entered

the Land of the Mists, and Akreeakan and his people were trapped there along with the other Barovians. Ever since they have sworn to save Barovia from Strahd's madness, and they try to discover the way to end Strahd's dark curse and return the land to its former peace.

The few elves of Immol nearly worship the ancient Ravenkin as undisputed lord of wisdom and goodness and try to keep the Ravenkin's existence a secret. Akreeakan holds the secret of Kreeshark's tomb, the Ravenkin God. The tomb hold the great scepter and crown relics, which could prove vital in the final battle against the minions of Evil, as an old Ravenkin prophecy tells.

Akreeakan looks much like other Ravenkin save for the fact that his great age made his feathers somewhat silvery in color. His followers thus call him the Silver Raven. He wears small silver chains and a tiny silver circlet on which is mounted a small diamond. **[This is a magical pendant that acts like a non-detection amulet.]**

Akreeakan speaks a wide variety of languages from all of the domains of the core.

COMBAT :

The elder Ravenkin will never engage in fight, he will rather stay behind and use his spells to help his defenders. He however possesses all of the fighting abilities of his species.

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

The Ravenkin are a reclusive lot and will rarely let anyone enter their valley without prior invitation. However, should one make friends with them, it shall prove to be an invaluable tool, for the Ravenkin can freely see and hear through every raven in the land. They can act as the perfect messengers, and they work very quickly. I have had the chance to interest them with my project and they have shared much with me.

ECOLOGY :

As ruler of The Raven's Loft, Akreeakan lives off freely in his valley and rarely leaves it.

[SPELL BOOK:]

[4 - 1st : Nahal's Reckless Dweomer, charm person, detect magic, detect undead, Identify, light, magic missile, read magic, protection from evil]

[3 - 2nd : Hornung's Baneful Deflector, detect invisibility, ESP, forget, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image, web, summon swarm]

[2 - 3rd : Alamir's fundamental breakdown, Fireflow, Spirit armor, dispel magic, flame arrow, hold person, hold undead, slow, wraithform]

[1 - 4th : Greater malison, minor spell turning, Unluck, Ice storm, Phantasmal killer, minor globe of invulnerability, minor creation]

[Due to his Ravenkin nature, Akreeakan spells do not risk wild surges]

[Ravenkin are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix I. Many of the spells above are featured in the Tome of Magic, as well as wild magic and wild surges.]

SPECTINA DOBLUTH

Drow (Shadowelf) mummy

[CLIMATE : SUBTERRANEAN]

[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : ANY]

[DIET : NONE]

[INTELLIGENCE : SEMI (4)]

[TREASURE : Nil]

[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 3]

[MOVEMENT : 9]

[HIT DICE : 6]

[TACO : 14]

[DAMAGE : 1d6/1d6 + GRAPPLE]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : POISON]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : +1 OR BETTER TO HIT [½ FROM OBSIDIAN]]

[MR : NONE]

[SIZE : M [4' ½]]

[MORALE : FEARLESS [20]]

[XP : 3000]

Over a century ago, Immol's leaders were foolish enough to let evil enter their community. A young elven magician was greeted in Immol, despite her Drow nature. She had so much potential and was so charismatic that the elven elders could not refuse her presence among them. However, it did not take long before they realised the error of their ways, for Spectina's necromantic talents were utterly uncontrollable.

She was hanged for her crimes against nature in the small clearing she lived in. The elves shunned this place of evil infused memories and let the carcass of the drow to rot upon the obsidian chain they used to hang her.

However, she had secretly used of her charms to get pregnant by a human and had secretly given birth to a son that she had hid in the caverns beneath the Sawtooth mountains. She raised him for nearly thirty years without anyone noticing.

Her son, the half-drow Obzüil, now lives in the Everdark, the ancient kingdom of the Drows of Arak, which they had fled long ago after raging wars with the now gone Illithids. It was she who introduced her son to the mysterious god of darkness which she names Goryck.

Obzüil somehow managed to grow up and snatch away the body of his mother and take her hands to the Svalich woods hags. For him, they made a many fingered hand of power that he used to raise his mother as a dreadful mummy. This black process turned the half-drow into a creature of the dark, corrupting his mind, body and soul even further.

Spectina is now a 2nd magnitude mummy, created by her son Obzüil to exact vengeance upon the community of Immol. She has two main purposes : to protect her son in the short term and to crush and burn Immol in the long term. Given the fact that she was created by a mortal, she is partly subservient towards her creator, Obzüil.

COMBAT :

Her true strength resides not in her ancient dead status but in the fact that Obzüil used black magics to conceal her state. She appears as a black skeleton rather than a mummified corpse, which can be mistaking enough. She is in symbiosis state with venomous

asps and her whole ribcage is filled with writhing snakes which intertwine and slip through her constantly. Her arms, legs and head are protected in a similar fashion. One witty enough won't fail to notice that both her hands are missing. Those brave enough to withstand this vision are in for a most dangerous fight. [Such a sight is sure to cause a fear check with a -1 penalty.]

[Spectina can attack twice with her arms in any given round, but she always attacks last. If she scores two hits against the same opponent, she grapples her victim's body and the snakes close in for 2d8 additional damage plus a saving throw versus poison (see below). The victim has to roll a successful attack at -4 to break free. Moreover, up to 3 snakes can attack anyone (back included) closing in on her. These asps have AC: 6, HD : 3, THACO : 18 and bite for 1d4 dmg. Their poisonous bite is not lethal but incapacitating. The victim must save at -2 vs. Poison or fall into a coma for 1d4 days, after an onset time of 1d4 rounds.

Spectina can be hurt by holy water or touching her with holy symbols for 1d6+1. She can also be hurt with obsidian weapons for half damage, but she gets stunned for the rest of the round when she gets hit by such a weapon (meaning she can't attack until the next round).

When endangered, Spectina retreats to her snake pit, a 10 feet deep hole in the caverns that is filled with snakes. While in the pit, the snakes cover her body in a cocoon-like shell while she rests for at least half an hour after rejuvenation.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Spectina has lost all her former magical abilities when turned into a mummy, but her walking carcass is still filled with the hatred she had for Immol and only exists to destroy them. She now resides in the Everdark together with his son, serving and protecting him faithfully and dreaming decaying dreams of revenge and doom.

ECOLOGY :

Spectina is not a natural creature of the world and thus needs not to interfere with nature. She now has a vivid aversion to obsidian, which reminds her of her former self. The obsidian chain the elves used to hang her can still be used to put her to rest, since she's stunned at the mere contact of this particular type of rock. Selmannel and Molmath still possess similar chains to defend

themselves, both awaiting her return since the day she was taken away from her clearing.

[Further details about the specifics of mummies used in Specfina's creation are detailed in Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts. Shadowelves are detailed in the Shadow Riff module (which was obviously not available to me at the time of creation),]

OBZÜL DOBLUTH

[10th] *Half-drow (Shadowelf) Priest of Darkness*

[CLIMATE : SUBTERRANEAN]

[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : ANY]

[DIET : OMNIVORE]

[INTELLIGENCE : HIGHLY [15]]

[TREASURE : U, P(x100)]

[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : -2 [CLOAK AND BOOTS OF ELVENKIND, 75% INVISIBILITY, + 6 VS FIRE, +3 CHAIN MAIL]]

[MOVEMENT : 12]

[HIT DICE : 9 + 2]

[TACO : 14 [BLADE WHIP], 12 [BLOWGUN]]

[DAMAGE : 2d6 [BLADE WHIP], 1 [NEEDLES]]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : POISON]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : +1 OR BETTER TO HIT (1/2 FROM OBSIDIAN)]

[MR : 50%]

[SIZE : M [4' ½]]

[MORALE : FEARLESS [20]]

[XP : 10,000]

[STR : 12 DEX : 17 CON : 15 INT : 16 WIS : 17 CHA : 12]

ObzüL is a creature that embraced darkness with such a fervor that is rarely seen, even in a place like the land of the mists. He was

raised by an evil mother that spread mayhem and hatred wherever she went and he seems to have followed that path with blasphemous joy.

His mother Spectina got hanged while he entered adulthood and he solemnly swore to take vengeance on the ones who deprived him of his sole parental figure. The obsessive ways of the drow made Obzüil a very determined character and when he learned of her death, he dedicated all his efforts to bring her back to life.

After months of prayers, he was finally instructed to visit the Svalich woods. For the first time in his life, Obzüil wandered out of the underworld. He met with the evil trio of Svalich only to be instructed to bring back his mother's hands.

Obzüil is now turning into a creature of darkness. The abusive use he made of the dark magics for an hate-filled purpose have attracted the attention of a fiend whose name I ignore. Slowly, the transposition phenomenon took place and Obzüil started by growing an extra finger and an extra toe on each hand and foot. This was the connection process. Then, the quickening came over, making Obzüil over 7' tall. Then, the malformation stage made him grow claws and fangs. Now, he has entered the sublimation stage, giving him a deep, growling, fiendish voice that evokes fear [in a 60 feet range] into all those who hear it. According to my researches, he is only steps away from being utterly transformed into a demon. However, he still pursues his goal and does not consider redemption a way of escaping his imminent transposition.

So obsessed he is with his plan that he doesn't actually realize what is happening to him! He ignores is that the transposition process is almost complete and the fiend can now control his body. This means that Obzüil suffers from split-personality and he remembers nothing about the periods when the fiend takes over. As for the fiend, he can control the body only for a couple of hours a day, until he becomes exhausted and loses the hold. The goal of this fiend is unclear, for he is not talkative, considering humans as mere bugs. Surely he plans some sort of soul feast but until Obzüil crosses the edge completely, his plan is unfeasible.

COMBAT :

Obzüil can either attack with his 7 feet long blade whip or use his blowgun with needles coated with paralytic poison [save versus poison at -

2 or stunned for 1d4 rounds]. However, he rarely engages in melee fight, preferring to hide and make use of his spells first. He will often send ghouls or other undead of his creation to fight while he uses his spells from behind.

[The blade whip constricts on a roll of 18 or greater. Once it constricts, no further attack roll is required to hit. After 4 consecutive rounds of automatic damage, it severs a limb.]

Once every four hours, Obzül is prone to a fit of possession. The fiend inside takes control of the body for the next hour or so. This body-control switching process leaves the one in control disoriented and helpless for a few minutes after the phenomenon takes place. Then, whoever is in charge may opt to further his own needs, completely ignoring the current situation.

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Obzül currently resides in the Everdark, the abandoned kingdom of Arak. A subterranean city was inhabited by the evil elves, but an unknown creature of the deeps started to slowly enslave them using telepathic powers and nightmares. Needless to say, they all died or disappeared after fighting in vain against the creature. Obzül took advantage of this opportunity and established himself in the abandoned kingdom. Obzül has so far been able to avoid the creature's notice and lives in the Everdark with his mother and a few undead minions.

He became possessed by a demonic entity after using the hand of power to animate his dead mother Spectina. Now, he keeps falling deeper in the abyss while he tries to put the hand to new uses. By harvesting dead bodies of elves, humans and drows, he is currently creating a zombie golem. Once the creature is animated, he will take it along with Spectina and a horde of other lesser undead to invade Immol in the darkest night the town will remember.

Normally he would rather wait longer and create more servants, but he does not really know what is happening to him. Obzül seems constantly in a hurry and moves with quick, short spasms. His greatest fear is to die before accomplishing his vendetta.

ECOLOGY :

Obzül is a real monstrosity. He now survives only thanks to his passionate hatred for the elves. He went mad a long time ago and there's no way to predict how he'll react in a given situation.

He is used at living alone, surrounded by death and decay, which now seem to him perfectly natural. For this reason, any living being that enters his lair is considered dangerous and must be dealt with quickly.

Obzül still has one intact hand of power, the other has been consumed in the creation process of both his mother and the zombie golem. Should he ever succeed in destroying Immol, the demonic transposition process should finally overtake him, turning him into a true fiend, looking for a quick escape to the abysses.

[Spell List :

(numbers in parenthesis reflects the bonus spells granted when the many fingered hand is lit)

[1st - 6 (10) : Command, 2x cure light wounds, spider climb, spider eyes, Ebony hand (2x command, spider climb, invisibility to animals)]

[2nd - 6 (10) : 3x Charm person or mammal, 2x Hold person, Heat Metal (obscurement, darkfire, silence, mindtouch)]

[3rd - 4 (8) : 2x dispel magic, cause blindness, summon insects (darkness, spellweb, giant spider, Life Drain)]

[4th - 3 (5) : 2x Cause serious wounds, cure serious wounds (cure serious wounds, Heart Blight)]

[5th - 2 (3) : cure critical wounds, Flame spike (undead regeneration)]

[6th - (2) : (Heal, Conjure fire (pyre) elemental)]

[7th - (1) : (unholy word, symbol or gate)]

[The hands of Power are featured in the Forged of Darkness accessory, Forgotten Realms Drow of the Underdark appendix and The Complete Necromancer's Handbook for spells.]

DEBORAH LIZBATH

[8th] Priestess of Mysteria, Haunt

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : KREZK]
[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]
[ACTIVITY CYCLE : SPECIAL]
[DIET : OMNIVORE]
[TREASURE : R]
[ALIGNMENT : LAWFUL GOOD]
[ARMOR CLASS : 10 (NO ARMOR)]
[MOVEMENT : 12]
[HIT DICE : 8]
[THACO : 16]
[NO. OF ATTACKS : 1]
[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : SPECIAL]
[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SPECIAL]
[SPECIAL DEFENSES : SPECIAL]
[MAGIC RESISTANCE : NIL]
[SIZE : M (5'7'')]
[MORALE : CHAMPION (16)]
[XP VALUE : 2000]

[STR:12 DEX : 14 CON : 13 INT : 15 WIZ : 17 CHA : 17]

Deborah is truly a pearl of goodness, almost like no one in Barovia. As a priestess of Mystera, the goddess of mists and mysteries, Deborah holds many powers that can help those lost in the mists, and they are numerous in Krezk. Since her task of saving the Krezk village remained undone at the time of her death, Deborah is now a Haunt, although she is unaware of this fact. She always looks deeply grieved and she is permanently crying, since she can not help the children like she used to. Though she looks in her mid-twenties, her manners are very childish and somewhat annoying when trying to deal seriously with her.

She appears much like a translucent ghost, which terrifies most of whom get a sight at her. She can however assume the form of a hovering ball of light, much like a will-o-wisp. She usually takes this form during the day only or when she faces great danger.

COMBAT :

Her domain is somewhat larger than most haunts. She can freely come and go anywhere in the limits of Krezk, but she prefers to stay near the chapel at any time.

Unlike most haunts, she will never attack mindlessly anyone approaching her, she will only attack to defend herself. She does so by draining the swiftness and vigor of the living at an alarming rate. Once a victim is stunned, she can take over the body by possessing it.

[She drains 2 dexterity points per touch and she will possess the body once it has none left and stunned. However, she will always try to strangle the body she possesses since only evil people will attack her. Thus she can never try to use the possessed body to help her in her unfinished quest.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Deborah remembers all of her former life and can communicate freely with any human. The fact that she does not know of her undead status makes her truly stubborn when faced with such an argument. She will never believe this fact, even when every step is taken to prove her wrong. When helpless and out of argument, she will often collapse on her knees and cry. She will often say as an argument that the will of her goddess made her what she is.

The villagers that slowly rebuilt the city are wary of her since one of them made the mistake of attacking her. She possessed him after a short fight and every villager saw their comrade strangling himself. Since that day, none of the villagers dare approach the chapel where she dwells and most of them will flee at her sight. They named her « The weeping widow » since she always seems to be mourning.

ECOLOGY :

Deborah is clinging to this world by the force of her will alone. She seeks to help the injured with her curative spells but her draining touch can do more harm than good. She often uses her Create Food and Drink spell to feed the villagers in secret, since they would never eat the food she presents them.

[SPELL LIST :

[3+2 - 1st : Animal friendship, Bless x2, cure light wounds]

[3+2 - 2nd : Goodberry, Messenger x2, speak with animals, augury]

[3+1 - 3rd : create food and water, cure disease, dispel magic, cure blindness]
[2 - 4th : Cure serious wounds, neutralise poison]

MALICE DESCORDIA *Elven Old Kyrasis Vampire*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : LUNA FOREST]
[ORGANIZATION : SOLITARY]
[ACTIVITY CYCLE : DAY]
[DIET : VAMPIRE'S BLOOD]
[INTELLIGENCE : GENIUS (18)]
[TREASURE : F]
[ALIGNMENT : LAWFUL EVIL]
[ARMOR CLASS : 2]
[MOVEMENT : 15]
[HIT DICE : 9+1]
[THACO : 13]
[Nº. OF ATTACKS :]
[DAMAGE/ATTACKS :]
[SPECIAL ATTACKS :]
[SPECIAL DEFENSES : +1 OR BETTER TO HIT, REGENERATION]
[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 5%]
[SIZE : M (5')]
[MORALE : CHAMPION (16)]
[XP VALUE : 6,000]

Malice was an elven maiden of Immol that Strahd mistakenly embraced upon a night he shall never forget. The result of this feeding made him learn the true meaning of the elven nature, for when Malice raised as a vampire, the Lord of Barovia was in for a shock. She was very much unlike other undead, preferring to dwell in the light and unable to withstand the night. Upon making this discovery, Strahd swore to himself never to feed on elves again, at least not to their death.

Malice was thus created by error and she discovered this pretty soon. After avoiding death at the hands of her former fellow adventurers (sent by her master to eliminate her), she fled Immol and hid herself deep enough in the Luna Forest. She dwelt there alone for over a year, in order to discover the boundaries of her cursed status along with her new powers all by herself.

She discovered that everywhere she looked, death filled her eyes. She thus never found solace within nature as she would have hoped and swore to avenge herself on the creature who had reduced her in such a miserable state. More, she swore to free the world of such a curse and to fight fire with fire, so that nobody would have suffered anymore like her. For this reason she became the head of a determined group of vampire hunters known as the Darkstalkers, who employ every possible mean to hunt and kill the more cunning among undead.

Malice is unique in the fact that she sustains herself solely on vampire blood. No living creature can satiate her and thus she never feeds upon them. So she often has to travel long ways to feed, even though even simple vampire bats are suitable to ease her thirst, though she needs a vast number of them to survive.

COMBAT :

Malice mainly uses bow, dagger and sword in combat, probably an heritage of her elven past. [She fights with a +1 bonus on attack rolls with these weapons and she adds her +1 and +3 bonuses due to her 18/01 strenght, lowering her THAC0 to 11. When employing any non-crossbow missile weapons, she gains a +4 bonus in addition to all of her other bonuses due to her undead state.]

The arrows she employs for her bows are all made out of the bones of some creature and are often magically enchanted. She can also see in the dark better than normal elves do [nightvision of 90'] and has the keen eyes of the elves to locate secret doors.

Those who see the scarred face and twisted features of Malice are in for a terrible surprise. The famed beauty of the elves is turned into a blackened mockery in undeath. So much dreadful is the sight of her face that it has been rumored to have killed some unlucky victims in the past. [Upon sight of the face of Malice, a saving throw versus paralysis must be made in order to resist being stunned for 1d4 rounds after the sighting. Should the victim fail the throw with a score of 1, it is stricken dead.]

Ordinary weapons are of no effect upon Malice, in fact they pass right through her! Even when enchanted means are used to harm her, she can heal her wounds at a most alarming rate [she regenerates 2 hps per round].

The undead elves are truly a unique kind of undead that are nearly undefeatable. It is truly a blessing that Malice only feeds upon the creatures of the night that stalk us.

The plethora of powers she wields are difficult to catalog, but it is clear that her bond with nature has been horribly twisted. Every plant she touches turns black and withers instantly. Some rumors also say that elven vampires shun the underground and can be destroyed if kept below earth's surface for too long. [Malice suffers 1d4 points of damage for each round spent under the ground or when bathed in moonlight]. She can also command forest creatures as if they were charmed. Wolves [3d6], birds of prey [5d6] and other small mammals [6d6] can come in anytime to assist her.

Malice's most efficient power is certainly her ability to pass through plants. With this power, she can seemingly use man-sized plants to move herself to some unknown location, but this has the effect of quickly destroying the plant. However, the undead and evil treants around the Mortak groove led me to believe that such dead trees are later turned into undead plants.

[At will, she can pass without trace, become invisible to animals and thrice per day she can use these spell-like powers : entangle, warp wood, snare, spike growth, anti-animal shell and once per day she can create a wall of thorns and change sticks to snakes and manifest a giant insect. She is turned like a spectre and she is vulnerable to tree sap instead of holy water. The sap inflicts 2d4 points of damage but must be fresh (harvested in the last 48 hours). In a similar manner, only a line of flower petals can hold her at bay instead of garlic and mirrors. To destroy her, a charcoal stake must be driven through her heart and her head must be cut off and burned in a fire, burning for no less than 24 consecutive hours.

Her ability to transport via plants can not be used to cross each domain's borders, but she can travel through the Core quickly enough by crossing the borders by foot and using her ability to move again freely.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

Malice mainly dwells in the Mortak groove, but her pass plant ability allowed her to explore many domains, so she has many

hideouts in all these lands. In Barovia she mainly feeds on Strahd's servants, never attempting to feed on her creator for the time being.

She founded the Darkstalkers in an effort to free herself of her curse in a most peculiar fashion. By destroying all the vampires, she would eventually die of starvation, but along the way, she ended up creating more vampires than she could destroy, for the Darkstalkers often become vampires themselves during their fight against their dreaded enemies.

ECOLOGY :

She can never make other vampires since her unique nature makes her feed upon vampires only. This does not affect her mood since she can obtain many other servants that can subsist in daylight.

[Elven vampires are detailed in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix I and in Van Richten's Guide to Vampires.]

GORTHMAAK KRISHNYEFF **Lowland Loup-garou**

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : ANY]

[ORGANIZATION : SPECIAL]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : VARIOUS]

[DIET : CARNIVORE]

[INTELLIGENCE : HIGH (13)]

[TREASURE : K, M]

[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 4]

[MOVEMENT : 12, 15 OR 18]

[HIT DICE : 5+4]

[THACO : 15]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 3 OR 1]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 1d4/1d4/2d4 OR 2d4]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SURPRISE]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : Hit ONLY BY +1 OR SILVER]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 20%]

[SIZE : M (6')]

[MORALE : Elite (13)]

[XP VALUE : 2000]

Gorthmaak is originally from Darkon and his natural mischievous nature has led me to believe he could be affiliated with the dreaded secret organization known as the Kargat. Although he came alone to Barovia, something peculiar given his bestial nature (which only reinforces my idea he was actually a spy sent by Azalin to spy on Strahd), he quickly made the right connections. The Lord of Barovia gave him the village of Vallaki to measure his abilities and keep him under close sight at the same time. Lyssa used her charm to get him on her side.

Gorthmaak looks like a middle-aged man in very good health. He is broad-shouldered and well-muscled. However, since he came to Barovia he has become fatter [since the Lord has used him to « dispose » of the bodies of many traitors and potential dangers]. Two uncommon facial features that distinguish him are his left eye, which is milky white, and the 6 inches long scar that crosses it from his cheek to his forehead.

COMBAT

[Gorthmaak prefers to fight in hybrid form, though he will never do so in front of the townspeople. He will flee confrontation in order to come back in his deadly form most of the time.

In hybrid form, he can attack 3 times per round or he can wield weapons with 18/00 strength. In wolf form, he can only attack once but he has speed and surprise as advantages. In any form, he can only be hit by silver or magical weapons. Silver ones do normal damage but magical weapons only do as much damage as their bonus. Blessed weapons inflict 1 point of damage per hit.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY

Gorthmaak currently resides in Vallaki but he often leaves for short periods of time to spend some nights hunting in the wilds. He

also visits Zeidenburg weekly but he does so with great care, and makes sure no one that saw him will live to tell about it.

ECOLOGY

[As a Loup-garou, Gorthmaak can infect others with his deadly curse. However, he was instructed by Strahd not to do so. He was chosen by the Lord to watch over Vallaki because of his hatred facing wolweres that are abundant in the neighboring domain of Kartakass.]

[Loup-garous are featured in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium III: creatures of Darkness.]

TALAKINEN PHAGIUS

[7th] *Priest of The Rotting Lord, Werebat*

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : ANY]

[ORGANIZATION : SPECIAL]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : Night]

[DIET : BLOOD]

[INTELLIGENCE : HIGHLY (14)]

[TREASURE : S, T, R(X10)]

[ALIGNMENT : NEUTRAL EVIL]

[ARMOR CLASS : 6]

[MOVEMENT : 12 (9, FLYING 15 D)]

[HIT DICE : 7]

[THACO : 15]

[NO. OF ATTACKS : 3]

[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : 1d4/1d4/2d4]

[SPECIAL ATTACKS : SPELLS, VIRUS]

[SPECIAL DEFENSES : SPELLS, SQUEAL, SILVER OR +1 TO HIT]

[MAGIC RESISTANCE : Nil]

[SIZE : M (6')]

[MORALE : STEADY (12)]

[XP VALUE : 7000]

Phagiús is an old and somewhat senile priest living in an ancient, ruined cathedral known in Teufeldorf as « The Stargate Cathedral ». Though its former state was once one of splendor, its aboveground structure has now turned into a ruin, while the underground complex is a sophisticated structure where Phagiús and his pet bats live. He passes days and nights in his subterranean laboratory, concocting lethal poisons and secretly trying to pierce that fabled secret to immortality that has led many astray.

Upon his arrival, he took the title of Burgomeister but he never truly interfered with the populace, except to collect the taxes and conduct experiments. In fact, he uses the populace much like rats in a laboratory. He kidnapped a young woman from the village to conduct his first experiments. Using the dormant virus in his body (he is a unique form of lycanthrope, a werebat, as I had the unlucky chance to discover), he infused a unique toxin into the young maiden. He then released her among the living to spread the disease. It didn't take long for the effects to manifest themselves. In a short time, the populace got infected with a unique virus that affected their minds, instauring a powerful form of phobia that cannot be easily repressed. This resulted in a much chaotic town indeed.

Talakinen's wrongdoings made him an accursed person. He now seems stronger and more witty but he gets spooked and stunned by loud noises. He always sleeps in bat form and has taken the habit of eating bugs and insects.

COMBAT :

By his touch alone, Phagiús can infect any living being with his phobia virus. What is even worse is the fact that even a non-infected victim can carry the dormant virus within him and spread the disease even if he does not suffer from it. Miraculously, it seems not to have spread outside of Teufeldorf.

[Upon contact with an infected person, the victim must roll a saving throw versus magic at -2 or be infected. If the victim succeeds, another saving throw versus death magic must be made. If failed, this means the victim does not suffer from the virus but

carries it in a dormant state and can infect other people with it upon contact with skin or saliva.]

As a true lycanthrope, Talakinen can assume three distinct forms. He can change into human, bat or hybrid, the latter is the one which he prefers to assume when engaged in combat, but he rarely does so. The priest also uses a staff with which he can summon swarming insects to various uses. He always carries this black ebony staff incrustated with small black flies sculptures. [This staff has a 130' range and 37 charges. One charge used summons 130 black flies in a swarm that lasts one round and causes 13 damage points.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY

Since the day Phagius claimed the abandoned chapel in the name of Strahd, the place has fallen down. The arched roof is stained with bat's guano and broken in a way to let only one constellation show, the one he names Morgion, in honor of the God of Disease. I suspect that this constellation is just a delusion of this madman, for he is the only one seeing it.

ECOLOGY :

Phagius will not be satisfied until he can surpass his own death and actively seeks to find the ingredients that will allow him to embalm himself.

[He is very near to discover the process of mummification he is looking for, but he still needs a Death's head from a Death's head Tree to raise after his death. The nearby land of Forlorn is known to have a Death's head tree growing in its blood-fainted soil.

Talakinen's past is still a mystery, but I suspect it has something to do with the Kargat of Darkon.

[Werebats are detailed in the Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium appendix I and the Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts.]

DUKE GUNDAR'S GHOST

[CLIMATE/TERRAIN : GUNDAR RIVER]

[ORGANIZATION : SPECIAL]

[ACTIVITY CYCLE : Night]
[DIET : None]
[INTELLIGENCE : EXCEPTIONALLY (16)]
[TREASURE : Nil]
[ALIGNMENT : CHAOTIC EVIL]
[ARMOR CLASS : -5]
[MOVEMENT : 12]
[HIT DICE : 13]
[THACO : 7]
[NO. OF ATTACKS : None]
[DAMAGE/ATTACKS : None]
[SPECIAL ATTACKS : CAUSE WOUNDS]
[SPECIAL DEFENSES : +4 OR BETTER TO HIT]
[MAGIC RESISTANCE : 50%]
[SIZE : M (6')]
[MORALE : FEARLESS (20)]
[XP VALUE : 15,000]

Duke Gundar's story is one filled with hate and treason. The former lord of Gundarak was never truly freed from the curse that bound him to the Demi-Plane. After he died for a second time, he found himself bound again to a new prison, the Gundar River. He was no more a vampire though, but rather an incorporeal undead.

Though he has lost the status of Lord, his existence is still cursed, perhaps even more now than before. The essence of his being took yet another form, that of an incorporeal spirit, to endlessly haunt the river that bears his name, so strong are his ties with his past. Though his powers are still devastating, his limitations have greatly been increased. His only means of revenge on the world that seemingly shunned him are small indeed, even if his powers could devastate entire nations.

It seems that the Duke can never truly be laid to rest. This phenomenon attracted some sages' attention and they now name the Duke's ghost the « Twice Dead Man ».

He still appears much like he did when he was a vampire but he is somewhat translucent and has no lower body except for a trail of

mist-like vapor attached to the river's water. When immersed in water, he seems burning but the flames that torch him are bluish and ghost-like.

COMBAT :

Gundar's ghost cannot truly be engaged in combat since he is condemned to an incorporeal form. His only means of harm are his supernatural powers. To even approach the Gundar river is to flirt with danger, for the ghost can whistle an enticing tune that lures victims as far as 500' feet away from his location [save versus spell to resist]. Such a victim will do anything to reach that point, even if it means he must harm loved ones in the way. At 300' feet, the Duke can cause despair [-4 penalty to save] with his aura of death and foulness. This has a devastating effect on even the most courageous of adventurers, utterly destroying his will to live or his beliefs in success. Once a victim has been lured near the river, the Duke can either charm it [26 HD at time] or use his devastating cause wound power to kill [3d6 dmg per hit and if a % roll equal or less to the damage done is failed, the victim loses 1 charisma point due to a vicious scar. Should a victim fall to 0 charisma, he must roll versus death magic or die, if he succeeds, he is turned into a broken one]. Killed victims are dragged in the river where they become drowned zombies under the control of the Duke [Gundar can control 39 HD of undead at one time]. The ghost of Gundar is immune to Holy water and symbols [He can be turned like a special undead]. Should he be successfully turned by a priest of holy faith, Gundar would flee and return only on the following night.

He is however repulsed by anything related to vampire weaknesses. He thus shuns mirrors and garlic. Wooden stakes can harm him like a magical weapon would do. He thus never comes out under the sun and the fact that he is continually bound to a river brings him everlasting pain. This is why he always seems on fire. [Gundar loses continually 1 Hp per round and must rejuvenate to full health every hour or so and must spend 10 minutes resting after each rejuvenation.]

HABITAT/SOCIETY :

The Duke can never leave the Gundar river but can travel through it as far as Levkarest and even in Invidia. Gundar is doomed to solitude, save for the drowned zombies that lurk on the

bottom of the river. Only the drowned zombies or the charmed persons he controls can further his biddings outside of the river's vicinity. Otherwise, he is doomed to await bypassers that are rare indeed, for the legend of the Twice Dead Man has travelled far and the Gundar river is notorious indeed. Even fishermen have shun the river, for the Duke's arrival simultaneously coincided with a strange phenomenon in the Barovian wildlife. A vast number of fishes where seen floating belly upwards, dead and viciously scarred, seemingly by the Duke's doings.

ECOLOGY :

Duke Gundar's ghost is not a natural creature and thus it only affects life in a negative fashion. Blind destruction is its only means of existance. Gundar is a cursed, reclusive being. He would never pay attention to any who approach him, so mad with fury and pain he is.

[Details about the specifics of ghosts are explained in Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts.]

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Buffalora Cemetery

By P. Lyons

Introduction:

Buffalora Cemetery is a pocket domain with a slight problem. Any body buried in the cemetery will, within seven days, rise again as a zombie. The current cartaker, Francesco Dellamorte, has no idea when this phenomena began, or if other cartakers have had to deal with this "problem". However, he's afraid to tell the city mayor of his problem for fear of losing his job, and anyways, as caretaker, he feels it's his job to deal with the undead problem.

The Land:

The Town of Buffalora is a small town, with generally happy, unaware folk. There seems to be no oppressive lord, and the town is led by a kind, if a bit bumbleing Mayor. Encounters in or near Buffalora are rare, and would be quite a shock to the townsfolk. The cemetery is HUGE, with several old moss covered stones, several mausoleums, and an ossuary. Oddly, with the size of the town, there is almost no way to explain the multitude of graves in Buffalora cemetery, almost as if the living are an afterthought, placed for appearances. And as more die, more move in from somewhere, caravans always bring food for those who do not farm and nobody seems to notice the oddity of the things... except maybe Dellamorte who, when he is not busy killing zombies or killing townspeople, is usually lost in his thoughts on the strangeness of his life...

Little Hidden Tidbits:

Dellamorte (6th level Fighter with firearms proficiency) is in fact, slowly becoming mad from his duty, and the cemetery, and possibly the town itself is becoming a pocket, with Dellamorte (or possibly some other unknown force) behind the zombies, as its lord. At night, Dellamorte will be stricken mad, and will kill townspeople randomly. ("The best way to prevent them from raising as zombies is to kill them while still alive...") Come daybreak, Dellamorte will forget his actions except as a nightmare, but when the new bodies arrive to be buried, he has a sneaking suspicion of his involvement in their deaths. He has also received visions of an entity claiming to be Death, telling him to "stop killing the dead, they're mine." If Dellamorte is just the puppet of this entity, or if "Death" is just a delusion of Dellamorte is up to you.

Closing the Borders:

This has occurred only once so far, when Dellamorte himself tried to leave Buffalora. Fed up with his crimes and with trying to keep killing the dead, he, along with his idiot assistant Gnagi (a human -F2- with mental problems, basically a kid in the body of an adult) attempted to leave. Upon reaching the outskirts of Buffalora, they found the rest of the world to be GONE, replaced with a huge dropoff into a forested valley, and just continuing countryside, as if Buffalora was on a high mountain, with no access to the outside world whatsoever. If Dellamorte subconsciously did it to himself, or "Death" wanted to keep it's plaything nobody knows for sure...

The Lord/s:

Francesco Dellamorte appears to be in his mid to late 20's. Tall and thin, almost to the point of being gaunt, and pale as well, with raven black hair. Although untrained as a warrior, his occupation has led to developing a high measure of skill with the pistol. He is possibly one of the best shots in Ravenloft. He is also going quite mad, and is slowly beginning to lose his ability to

differentiate between the living, and the living dead. Dellamorte is twice cursed, destined to fall in love with a woman, only to kill her, and upon her burial and resurrection, kill her again.

Quote: "The only difference between the living dead and the dying living is that I'm paid to shoot one of them"

Death: a mysterious lord, quite possibly existing only in Dellamorte's head, he/it appears as a classic grim reaper figure, often with eyes of fire. It gave a command to Dellamorte to cease his killing of the dead, and has not appeared again.

Quote: "Stop killing the dead, they're mine"

Special Monster: Buffaloran Zombie

Otherwise normal, the buffaloran zombies are only TRULY destroyed by a blow that destroys the head/brain. Otherwise severed bits will continue to attack, arms crawling and choking/clawing ect.

Adventure Ideas:

1. One day, the PCs wake up in Buffalora, apparently having moved in... except they don't remember having! Experienced adventurers might find the seeming normality and idealness of Buffalora disturbing, or an Oasis in a seemingly endless desert of terror... until they witness an escaped zombie, chased by Dellamorte and Gnagi, or witness one of Dellamorte's rampages. From then on, a way out of the small nightmare that is Buffalora should become top priority.
2. A female PC, part of the group passing through Buffalora, catches Dellamorte's eye. From then on, it's a race to beat Dellamorte's curse...
3. Buffalora's guards are extremely distressed by the fact that they are not capable to identify and capture the mysterious night-killer known as "Death". He always strikes at night but kills without a clear goal nor pattern, and so they ask the PCs to help them unmask the murderer before all of Buffalora's citizens fall prey to his folly.

Perry Lyons

CHURCH OF THE DAMNED

By Stormonu

It exists everywhere in Ravenloft, yet nowhere. By legend, anyone can reach the Church of the Damned from any realm in the core, yet it is not a fixed entity in the Core itself; it is an island adrift in the mists with many ways in, and few ways out.

In this bleak isle of terror sits a massive structure that covers several acres of land. Surrounded by a crumbling wall of stone, the Church of the Damned has withstood the assaults of the darklords for many, many years. The bones of past attackers can be found amidst the ivy growing along the walls, forgotten and unburied (and who animated and stalk those outside the walls, killing them if possible). The main entrance to the Church is a massive double door of cold iron wrought with sacred enchantments that prevent creatures of the supernatural (vampires, werewolves, fiends, etc) from passing through when closed (similar enchantments keep spirits and other evils from passing over the walls). A great knocker in the shape of a gargoyle's face hangs upon the door, and rapping it brings the attention of the gate keeper. This gate keeper, a massive being dressed in encompassing robes of grey, will greet those who approached the door, ask their business, and then grant them access to the Church, if they express they have need of the services within.

Within the stone walls will be found nine massive gothic structures, each many stories high, their tall towers topped with burning braziers. The structures are laid out in a 3 X 3 pattern, and each has a distinct, separate use.

The Northeast Corner is a massive library of tomes of darkness. Ranging in topics from lycanthropy through necromancy into curses, this library is the greatest collection of information on evil in all its many forms. Characters can research any thing of evil they desire in this library, but each week of study within the dark library forces the studier to make two saves vs. spells. If the first is failed, the character falls into a dark melancholy, sure that the nature of evil is so strong its triumph is near (this results in the character gaining only 1/2 normal XP, suffering a -2 penalty to attack and AC when fighting evil beings). If the second is failed, the character suffers a one aspect alignment change towards evil - from lawful to neutral to chaotic, from good to neutral to evil (i.e., a lawful good victim would become neutral good, then if failed again, chaotic good, then chaotic neutral and finally after four failures, chaotic evil). Continuous study has cumulative effects on alignment change, and each future saving throw receives a -1 penalty. It should be noted that the magical texts within the library are kept in a locked vault in the basement, guarded by a Greater Guardian Deamon. Further, though the daytime librarians are mortal monks who tend to the books, at night undead and other evil beings transformed by the evil they found in the books roam the halls, looking for lone victims.

The most Northern building is the monastery grounds where the monks who tend to the Church of the Damned reside. They are filled with crude furnishings and plain stone rooms with a single window outside. Each of the monks lives in solitude - and fear. Some of the monkish wardens who tend to the various levels and sections of the building are corrupt and/or evil, and make their fellow brother's lives a horrid existence. Each corrupt warden is careful to not let his secret be learned, but it is known that the wardens of the Northeast corner of the 3rd storey occasionally sell their brothers into slavery in the domains beyond the church's wall.

The Northeast building is a vast worship hall with many myriad minor temples to the various gods - good and evil worshipped in the domains of Ravenloft and beyond. Known as the Ten-Thousand temples, these temples range from small alcoves holding the chipped and faded statue of a saint to several story tall lavish temples dedicated and bedecked in nauseating grandeur to the mightiest and holiest of the gods. Temples and statues to the evil gods are kept in the winding maze-like corridors of the temple's basement; these "captured" temple trappings have been brought here by various adventurers who intended to keep the items out of the hands of evil. However, some of the corrupt monks have created cults worshipping these dark gods underneath the very foundation stones of the temples above.

The Easternmost building contains the hanging gardens and greeneries tended to by the monks. Some of the gardens contain food-bearing plants that the monks use to feed their masses or to trade with the outside world. Other plants are herbs or roots that have various medicinal quality, ranging from belladonna to mandrake root. While the majority of the build is a grand open-air structure roofed by aged glass panels, there are several side rooms and floors that have been abandoned over the years, some overgrown with plants, others containing the freshly churned ground where an unsuspecting brother monk has become the fertilizer for one of the corrupt wardens new gardens. To deter intruders, some of the corrupt monks have placed deadly plants in the building, of which the untainted monks are unaware.

The Westernmost building contains the stalls where the monks keep herd animals and other such sundry beasts. Stalls can be found for a variety of normal beasts ranging from pigs to sheep to cattle and oxen. These stalls are spread over a wide area of many levels built up with earth, with an ingenious system of waterways and methods for disposal of waste created by the animals within. However, if one delves deep into the bowels of the service areas where tools, butchering and maintenance are done, they will find a sublevel where the corrupt monks have hidden their experiments with mongrelmen and broken ones. These once former monks have fallen prey to the wickedness of their evil brethren, and have been imprisoned so long that their line has breed true as mongrelmen. The mongrelmen hate the broken ones, and will kill them if left unattended with them.

In the Southwest building is the great hall of records. Here can be found the records of all of the proceedings, visitors, exports, imports and decrees that have passed within walls of the church. If one digs deep enough, the corruption within the church could be exposed, but the evil element within the church would be sure to crush anyone who brought such information to light, burning this building to the ground if need be. Here too can be found the high preists of the church and their attendants, who live apart from their monkish brethren. Of the high priests, only one is corrupt, and it is he who fosters and goads the corrupt monks. He turns a blind eye to their deeds in return for power within the walls. He hopes one day to fell the other high priests, and become the greatest worshipped being within the walls. For now, he slowly fosters his plan in secret. Because his evil has twisted his one handsome shape, he now avoids being seen, dealing with his advisors from the shadows of his gold-guilded throne. Though he wears clothes of brochade and silk, his features are horrid and twisted, and he dares not let them be seen.

The Southernmost building is home to the craftsmen within the church, and visiting worshippers. Better appointed than the monkish quarters, depending one one's social class and reputation, they can find from a simple, clean room to a lavish villa secluded within the high walls of the building. The more opulant housing can be found on the higher levels, and of course, the poorer

furnishings can be found below. Hired militia men patrol the halls to keep them safe, and to keep vagrants from wandering into areas not meant for them. Though none of the craftsmen nor visitors is generally corrupt, several are immoral and selfish. Among the militia men however, can be found victims of passing lycanthropes and occasional undead.

In the Southeast building can be found the craftsmen's halls. Here all the material items needed to run the church are made, from replacement windows to new beds to retooled hoes and rakes. Scribes can be found copying old, crumbling passages of canon works to new sheets of parchment, smiths bend to the forge to repair broken and worn tools. Woodsmiths carve new furniture and supply hafts for the various tools that return from long work. Areas that require manual tasks such as smithing, carpentry or stonemasonry can be found in the lower levels, while more aesthetic pursuits, such as the copying of canons, can be found in the upper levels. A wandering visitor might be able to find abandoned shops with odd items locked away from sight within the building, but no evil being can generally be found within this building's halls. However, the agents of evil have locked away some of the more powerful icons of good away in the halls here, and in some places, objects of terrible evil have been locked away and forgotten in the dark halls.

The last, and perhaps most important building within the great church can be found in the very center of the mass of buildings. This low, two story complex has architecture that strikes one as varying between Romanesque (squat and dark) and Greek (with many columns and sculptures). Inside, through a series of torch-lit corridors, one eventually comes to a vast room, bordered by columns depicting the gods looking towards one single point - a silver and gold magic circle as wide as a man is tall. The circle is guarded by two fanatical guards of lawful good alignment at all times, armed with halberds with a silver edge, and curved swords intended for decapitating foes (a successful blow scoring a natural 17+ and succeeding the "to hit" roll by 5 or more successfully decapitates the foe. Those without proficiency cannot utilize the special ability of this weapon, and the church will refuse to forge such weapons for the PC's). There is also a priest of a 5th level within earshot of the room at all times.

The room has one purpose, and one purpose only. Those brought into the circle and left there for 24 hours while an attending priest and his monks perform a magical rite will be purged of any curse or ailment they are afflicted with (this includes death). Those brought into the circle cannot leave of their own accord, and the evil within them will bite and torture the victim in attempt to seek release. Lycanthropes will suffer dramatic and painful changes, as well as feel maddening desire to kill. Vampires will find their stolen blood boil from their bodies as their hunger multiplies with each second. Those affected with disease will find the disease fighting to spread and kill before it itself is destroyed, and so forth. As long as those inside the circle are left untouched, they will survive, and be purged of evil by the time the 24 hours pass. Those who watch the tortured proceedings must beware: those who show pity for the victim risk bringing the evil on themselves - a 15% cumulative chance per display of pity the onlooker displays. This has, in the past, caused some of the priests or monks who were attending the purification ritual to fall prey to the curse that was purged from the victim, and it is where the evil ranks of monks have sprang from.

Characters may learn of the existence of this realm after being afflicted with lycanthropy, vampirism or some other curse of evil. Once the trek has been made to the church, they may

begin to uncover some of the evil within the great church, or find that the curse has transferred from one character to another instead of being purged.

Though it is not unusual for one or two evil monks to be exposed within the church's halls, noone has yet determined or fathomed the depth of evil underneath the structure of the crumbling church. Certainly noone has ever managed to trace the evil back to the high priest who has gained a dark grip over the evil performed in the church.

The Darklord

There is no darklord that this domain revolves around; it was a bastion of good, probably associated with the Shadowborn cluster, that was isolated from the rest of the core in an attempt to corrupt and destroy it. The Dark Powers found that the forces of their darklords could not breach the sacred walls of the church, and changed their strategy - they would corrupt it from the inside so it would fall. The high priest is the closest to becoming a darklord in the domain, but he is not the master of the domain yet... I purposely left him vague because he is as fleeting as the Dark Powers himself, not someone so much who is encountered, but rumored to exist.

Adventure Ideas

The intro I had cut out revolved around the PC's coming to the church to have one of their members freed of lycanthropy. An entire session can revolve around the preparation for the ritual, the ritual itself (which can be extremely dangerous to the onlookers if they or the priest shows pity for their friend) and then possibly a few subadventures while the victim recovers. By the time the PC's leave the church, they should feel that whatever evil was there or that they brought is gone, though they may only have scratched the surface of the true evil within the church. The PC's should believe that they merely found some aberration in the church - they should never get a glimpse of how horribly corrupted the whole place has become. Learning of the corrupt high priest should be nigh impossible.

The subadventures could revolve around any one of the buildings - perhaps a PC gets lost in the Ten-Thousand Temples and stumbles on a cult in the bowels of the church. They destroy the small sect and the monk-warden associated with it, but they have not by far touched or are aware of the other cults hidden in the basement.

PC's might be sent to gather belladonna for the coming ritual and stumble across the dead body of monk. Now either the PC's can attend the ritual and ensure their friend is freed of the curse, or hunt down whoever may have killed the monk. An even worse thought - what if all the belladonna was stolen or destroyed, and the ritual can't be performed until it is found or a substitute found? Add in a time limit, and you've got a great story within an otherwise simple quest.

There are many other possibilities, of course. The PC's may even decide to stay and make the church their "home base". There's certainly enough going on here to keep PC's busy for a while.

Stormonu

DARK CATHEDRAL

By A. Snow

Note: This is based on the Cathedral of the Damned as written by François Mathieu in the netbook Haunted sites.

Introduction

Trevor had been hiding in these cursed hallways for almost a week now, he kept himself alive by eating dead rats and running, he had to run, for no mortal could defeat the beast that stalked these halls. So he was forced to slink through these grey yet somehow hauntingly beautiful passages, each one only leading to another, making difficult if not impossible to escape this cursed Cathedral.

Breathing heavily Trevor rounded the corner, sweat forming on his forehead all this time in hiding having taken its toll of the young thief's mind. Watching all his friends and fellow Monster Hunters die at the claws of the beast that guarded this little piece of Hell in Mordent didn't help matters either. He rounded another corner.

The first thing that caught Trevor's attention was the smell, he smelled flowers from nearby, he hadn't caught the smell of anything but decay for his entire stay here. Rounding another corner his boots no longer stuck against a stone floor but the gentle yet firm touch of grass, he had entered a beautiful garden; everything seemed to be in bloom, daisies tulips, and roses. A small stone pathways lead to the center of the garden and both the beautiful fountain that must have given this room life and the huge opening in the ceiling about six feet above the fountain. The light of the full moon filled the place; it covered everything in a pale white light. Including a small figure sitting by the ornate fountain.

Trevor put his hand on the hilt of his sword he was about to call out to the figure but quickly stayed himself remembering the beast would hear him. But before he could move another step the figure began sobbing and lifted its head. It was a woman...one of extraordinary beauty her slightly curly long blonde hair fell halfway down her back, green eyes watching the moon tears streaking down her pale face, and then she sang. Her voice was angelic, and clear as a bell her song was one of the loss of love. The beauty of the moment almost brought weary Trevor to his knees ignoring the danger he called out to the woman timidly.

"Miss it is not safe here we must return to the village before the beast hears you."

The woman turned her head to Trevor wiping some tears off her pale face and stated plainly. "I cannot leave...and unless you move quickly neither will you the beast will be back...in only a few short moments."

Trevor was about to respond to her, but before he could the sun of another dawn broke over them. The woman merely bowed her head and said through her tears
"It's too late."

With that her form began to change. First she swelled to three times her former size her torso and legs became like that of a huge grizzly bear and, her arms those of a fierce gorilla. Next her hands twisted into the claws of a massive tiger. Finally the head was new as well, she no longer had the face of an angel, and her head was now that of a fierce and rabid she-wolf.

The beast merely leered at Trevor with its rows of razor sharp fangs. Trevor began to stumble backward as the scorpion tail of the beast lashed back and forth, the stinger dripping it's venom, the beast opened it's mouth and to Trevor's surprise it spoke in a female yet cruel voice.

"I finally caught you...thought you were being cute hiding from me for so long, you're going to pay for it now!" With that the beast leapt at Trevor, rending his sturdy leather armor as if it were paper and unleashed its full rage upon the young thief. It was said that Trevor's screams could be heard all the way down in the village that the Cathedral overlooked, the screams were said to last for two whole days and nights. That is how the villagers knew that the monster hunters had failed, and that the beast had claimed another victim.

Setting

In an obscure corner of the domain of Mordent there is a tiny rural farming community called Dorsit. Its people are your average farmers trying to make a living and enjoy their lives, lives spent in the shadow of a great plateau. On the plateau sits a huge cathedral, the building itself is three stories and built in the gothic style with high arches and stained glass windows, with a sizable hedge maze in the front of the building itself. Seeing the building from afar one might just assume that the folk of Dorsit either have a priest who had spent years adventuring, or was able to afford such an expensive structure. Possibly that the locals were blessed with several years of such good harvest that they took the extra money and built the grand cathedral. The truth is much different than first impressions.

The folk are religious enough, but they curse the cathedral claiming the devil lives there. Though not an informed accusation it is as close to truth as the locals would dare comprehend for on that plateau sits the Cathedral of the Damned...and it and it's plateau appeared only 20 years ago. Another thing the locals are unaware of is that there is a mass of tunnels in place of a basement. These catacombs are so extensive that they run all the way into the plateau, and at least some have speculated to a secret treasure. Of course if anyone has made it that far they'd rather find a secret exit, no one who's ever entered the cathedral has ever returned.

Inhabitants

The Plateau is the home to many creatures of the night; most that are cowed by the beast that guards the damned building.

Christian, the mad Vampire

Background:

Christian, he was an arrogant Elf from southern Sithicus who meddled with taxidermy and made it his goal in life to preserve specimens from as many races of monsters as possible. As he set out one fateful morning with the laughable purpose of capturing a vampire and stuffing it for display, fate hit the mad elf between the eyes. By noon time he had found the vampire he sought but the vampire merely shrugged of Christian's petty ideas of restraints, due in most part to it being an Elven vampire, and fed from and mutilated the fool and left for a new abode leaving poor Christian dying.

Strangely enough a woodsman came upon the lair and found Christian. Christian managed to hide the nature of the wounds from the woodsman and when he recovered was sent home. Christian when he got back threw himself into his taxidermy. Then one day he found an Elf Maiden who could draw his attention from his work, but he was dumbfounded about how to present himself to her. So the young taxidermist decided to show her his work and assumed she would find it as beautiful as he did, the young maiden followed him seeing Christian as a cute and begin odd little man. When she saw the fruits of Christian's labors around her she was disgusted and flat out told him that his work was sickening. Christian did not take it well and killed her with a blow over the head with a hammer. Despite her words Christian could not bring himself to hate her so decided to make her appreciate his work, by becoming a part of it. So he stuffed her and propped her up in corner so she could have as long as she'd like to appreciate his hard work.

The girl was fairly popular in town and her disappearance was quickly reported to the town constable who had little problem tracking down the slightly mad Christian. And when the young Taxidermist tried to escape he was killed in the ensuing chase when he was stabbed by the constable's short sword. The funeral was held for Christian, and the next day he crawled from his gravesite the curse of Vampirism in his veins still since his ill-fated expedition.

The fledgling elven vampire made his way north leaving a trail of dead disfigured bodies in his wake that was until he found the cathedral and its guardian beast. A battle ensued and much to the elven vampire's horror he was soundly beaten. The beast offered Christian his life (unlife) in exchange for an eternity of servitude. The recent experience of rising from his grave shattered what little of sanity Christian retained, but not enough where he'd commit suicide in fighting the will of the beast, he became the beast's slave.

Current Sketch:

For the past fifteen years Christian has stalked the hallways of the Cathedral in a search for body parts. Why? You might ask does he do that. He believes that the beast will let him go if he can build a servant more powerful than himself. (The idea is just another insane concept he dreamt up) So he has taken to stitching together the remains of intruders in an attempt to build a better slave, and sleeping in his magically lit coffin. His obsession though has bred a pair of golems who now hide in the dark recesses of the Cathedral.

Appearance:

Christian is an unremarkable elf standing 5'4" and is under weight, even for an elf. He wears his shoulder length light blond hair in a tail, though while he's working more hair is in his face than the tail. His body is covered in the horrible scars that mark him as the elven vampire that he is. He dresses simply, brown pants and a white shirt stained with blood with rolled up sleeves, and is never seen without his brown apron covered in dried blood and other bodily fluids and his long sword is never far from his side. One thing that stands out though are his eyes, they are Violet in color and seem to burn with an unholy determination.

Combat Stats:

[Christian, Fledgling Elven Vampire] AC 2; MV 15; HD 7+3; hp 31; THAC0 13 (12 w/ sword); #AT 1; Dmg; 1d4 or 1d8+3 SA Charisma Drain, bonus w/ swords & Bows; SD +1 or better to hit, regeneration, transport via plants; SV All the weaknesses of a normal Fledgling Elven vampire *; Size Med. (5'4); ML Fanatic (18); Int [Genius] (17); AL Chaotic Evil; XP 3,000.

S: 18/01 D: 16 C: 10 I: 17 W: 05 C: 03

Personality: Insane, Sadistic

* As explained in Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Vol.1 & 2

"Werebat", A mockery of life**Background:**

When Christian first hit upon the idea of building a replacement for him he knew it had to fast and powerful, not to mention terrifying. Then Christian remembered an old story he heard as a child, about the Werebat, an unholy creature that stalked the night on its leathery wings. Christian had his inspiration, and began to collect body parts. After two years of harvesting the needed parts he began to stitch them together, he worked day and night in the bowels of the cathedral until he creature was finished, with that Christian hunched to the ground tired from lack of feeding. But as he fell a large hand caught him, and then Christian saw his creation come to life.

Later the "Werebat" was shown to the beast that called it worthless and ordered it thrown into the catacombs. So there the creation still lives in those deep tunnels beneath the Cathedral, every once and a while it escapes the Catacombs and hunts through the dark halls of the building, one question burning in it's mind. "Why was I abandoned?"

Appearance:

The Werebat stands almost seven and a half feet tall; its body is that of a "normal" flesh golem, huge slightly decayed arms and legs stitched onto a chest covered with stitches and scars that never seem to heal. But it has the head of a giant bat, a head which is slightly too big for the body but is sewn directly onto the shoulders. Those same shoulders which carry a pair of huge leathery (and useless) wings taken from the same giant bat. He rarely speaks, but when he does he uses a low voice and speaks slowly, mostly due to his lack of mastery of any kind of human tongue.

He's deathly afraid of Billie Bonez knowing that his brother is stronger than he is, and he wouldn't dare face him alone. It's motivation is simple, despite it's age it still seeks the approval of Christian and the beast seeing them as the parents he was never good enough for. Of course with every rejection Werebat comes one step closer to becoming the heartless killer he was meant to be.

Weaknesses:

Like many golems Werebat has weaknesses, first on a subconscious level he remembers in life being attacked by a knife wielding Christian, and therefore is especially vulnerable to blessed knives. And like most Golems he has a Zeitgeber, this one is connected to the part of him that is

a bat. Whenever he sees a bat flying he is entranced and will stand motionless for 2d6 rounds as he daydreams about how wonderful it would be to be able to fly.

Combat Stats:

["Werebat", flesh Golem] AC 6; MV 12; HD 9(40 Hp); THAC0 11; #AT2; Dmg 2d8+1/ 2d8+1; SA nil SD +1 or better to hit, hyper regeneration, Immune to cold and electrical attacks; SV Blessed Knives, Zeitgeber, fire & Acid; Size: Large. (7'5"); ML Fearless (19); Int [Exceptional] (16); AL Chaotic Neutral; XP 5,000.

S: 20 D: 18 C: 20 I: 16 W: 02 C: 06

Personality: Insecure, Violent

Billie Bonez**Background:**

After Christian's failure with Werebat he was forced back to the drawing board. He searched for inspiration, and then it struck him like a ton of bricks. As a little elf in Sithicus a dwarf came to his village, Christian was going to run out and make his life hell like the elves would any other outsider until his mother grabbed a hold of him and pulled him back into the house. She scolded him saying that was the dwarf Azrael who served Lord Soth, whom Christian's mother described living death clad in black armor. That description alone was enough to give the young elf nightmares for a month. Nightmares of a towering skeleton clad in heavy armor clutching a huge sword. Stories spoke of him able to kill with a word; needless to say Christian had a lot of work to do if he was to make a creature that would do Soth any justice at all.

So Christian went to work collecting bones from all over the cathedral picking up a few pieces of armor as he went about his work knowing that he was going to need them. Unfortunately after only putting a few of the bones together he knew that it'd never fit his mental image of Lord Soth so he gave up on the armor and concentrated on the bones that he found.

So with all the bones he needed Christian set to work on another long labor in his workroom. Aside from a couple pieces of armor he grafted to the golem's upper torso he totally left out armor and before long Christian had finished this golem which rose to unholy life like Werebat before it. Christian didn't name this monstrosity fairly sure the beast would reject this one as well. To his utter surprise the beast approved of the creation and asked it if it had a name, the golem having no idea asked its "father" who provided the first name that popped in his horribly insane mind, Billie Bonez. The Beast congratulated Christian on a job well done while Christian vowed to himself that he'd create his Vision of Lord Soth even if he had to work at it for eternity to realize it.

Appearance:

Billie Bonez stands at 6' tall and his body is the joining of bones from men and animals. He has the skeletal legs of a horse, along with clawed hands and arms far too long for his body. To top it off he has the head of bull yet the lower jaw of a human skull. When he does speak it's in a low raspy voice.

Deep down Billie is jealous of Werebat and the freedom that he seems to have. That jealousy has long ago turned to resentment and Billie has often tried to attack his "older brother", but

Werebat's smart enough and fast enough to run and hide in the catacombs where Billie is less confident in his ability to find his "brother".

Weaknesses:

Again, much like Werebat, Billie suffers from many common weaknesses of the created. First off Billie, being made of bones, has a serious problem handling blows from blunt weapons. This weakness is so bad that any blessed blunt weapons, regardless of enchantment, will strike him for normal damage. Further more he has a Zeitgeber, one that is linked to his most ardent wish, freedom. He wants to be free but is too afraid of the beast to try for an escape. If someone shows him a picture or even gives a detailed description of the world outside the Cathedral then he will stand in place for 2d8 rounds while he imagines the world outside and the closest thing he can muster to a smile comes across his face.

Combat Stats:

[Billie Bonez, Bone Golem] AC 0; MV 12; HD 14(70 Hp); THAC0 07; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA Laughter SD +2 or better to hit, weapon resistance, Immune to cold; SV Blessed Blunt weapons, Zeitgeber, fire, shatter Spells*; Size: Medium (6'); ML Fearless (19); Int [Very] (12); AL Chaotic Evil; XP 18,000.

S: 19 D: 18 C: 20 I: 12 W: 02 C: 03

Personality: Frustrated, Angry

*All powers and weaknesses of Bone Golems are described in both Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Vol.1 & 2, and VanRichten's Guide to the Created.

The Dark Mother Miranda, Devotion beyond Death

Background:

The life and history of the Dark Mother Miranda are tied to that of the beast and will be discussed below in the description of the beast's history.

Appearance:

The ghost of the Dark Mother appears as small glowing ball of black fire. Her spirit is anchored to her personal chambers where her earthly remains lay impaled on a spear and her altar that allowed her to receive spells from her distant dark god lays smashed next to her corpse. After the arrival of Christian the beast had the vampire lock and board up the Dark Mother's personal chambers so no one could reach her easily.

Weaknesses:

The Dark Mother is a fairly weak spirit and can't even communicate except through the use of her powers of illusions. The only problem with that is she can only produce illusions of sight. If anyone manages to make it into her room she'll use this power to show two instances. The first is the way to break the beast's curse, because she can't take over her Cathedral till the beast is gone. And the second is removing her corpse from its spear and burying her remains in the cathedral garden. Of course if they should do the second she'll only be freed from her room and increased in power. (A Fourth magnitude ghost.) From there she'll most likely enslave some local villagers into rebuilding her altar so that she can receive spells (giving her the spell casting skills of a 14th level priest of the Elder Elemental God, earth aspect. *) and become even more terrible than she was in life.

In her current weakened state she can be struck by silver and weapons of +1 enchantment. Further more as she worshipped the earth aspect of the Elder Elemental God holy water does twice the damage that it normally would to her. Also coming in contact with any lawful good holy symbol would do 1d6 points of damage. Because of the fact that no one has entered her room in years she is totally unaware of her weaknesses.

She can be put to rest only by placing her corpse in a tub full of holy water for 12 hours, after which time her bones will be bright white, afterward she may be buried without incident.

Combat Stats:

[The Dark Mother Miranda, 1st Magnitude Ghost] AC 0; MV: fl 18 (A); HD 3(21); THAC0 17; #AT 0; Dmg nil; SA Illusions SD Illusions +1/ Silver to hit; SV Holy water and Holy Symbols; Size: Tiny (1'); ML [Unsteady] 7; Int [Genius] (17); AL Chaotic Evil; XP 3,000.

S: - D: - C: - I: 17 W: 18 C: 14

Personality: Impatient, Vengeful

* The Elder Elemental god appears in Monster Mythologies

Andros Valkyrie, the Ghostly Knight

Background:

Like the Dark mother Andros' life is tied tightly to that of the beast and will be explained in the background of the beast.

Current Sketch:

Andros now exists as a reoccurring spirit in the cathedral. Once a month on the dawn of the day of the full moon his spirit manifests itself with one goal, to find and be with his love Karalyn. Thus far the beast and its minions have managed to stop him before nightfall every time he has appeared. Despite the power of this spirit he cannot face all of the beast's minions so has always failed.

Appearance:

Andros appears slightly different than he did in life. He is a beauteous corporeal spirit. He stands at six and a half feet, his black hair is cut close to his head and he wears silver plate mail armor with a green shirt and brown trousers underneath and wields a glowing bastard sword two handed. (He focuses his power to cause wounds through the sword.) He has piercing blue eye that seems to betray his warm and loving heart.

Powers:

Unlike the Dark Mother Andros is a powerful ghost. He can call his sword into existence from nowhere (in reality it is ethereal) and it inflicts damage as the cause wounds ability *. He also has a magic resistance of 30% to shield him from magical attack. While most ghosts cannot increase in power Andros actually can, when a good warrior of 10th level or higher dies in the cathedral the warrior hears the voice of Andros asking if they'd like to merge with his spirit to better fight the beast. Andros isn't pushy about it and to date three warriors have accepted the offer. The exact effects of such a union is up to the DM.

Weaknesses:

Unfortunately Andros has his weaknesses. First off because is original sword, the one that he used for years, was made of cold wrought Iron, weapons of that origin can now harm him regardless of enchantment. He is immune to holy water, yet the poison of a scorpion has the same effect as if it were holy water. No matter how he is killed however he will always reappear on the full moon to search for his bride again.

He can only be put to rest when he and Karalyn (the Beast) kiss one last time. Then all the spirits that have merged with Andros will slowly leave one at a time while Andros says his final goodbye and ultimately follows them.

Combat Stats:

[Andros Valkyrie, Third Magnitude Ghost] AC 3; MV 12; HD 10(85 Hp); THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8/1d8; SA cause wounds SD +1 or cold wrought Iron to hit, immune to holy water; SV Scorpion Venom; Size: Medium. (6'); ML Fearless (19); Int [Very] (12); AL Chaotic Good; XP 3,000.

S: 17 D: 15 C: 16 I: 12 W: 15 C: 16

Personality: Kind, Determined

All the powers that Andros exhibits, as well the concept of corporeal ghosts are discussed in VanRichten's Guide to Ghosts

**The Beast, Lady Karalyn Valkyrie
(Demilord of the Cathedral)**

[8th Level] [Human (Cursed)] [Artiste] [Neutral Good (Chaotic Evil*)]

Armor Class: 7 (1)

Movement: 12 (15/18 on all fours)

Level/Hit Dice: 8 (11)

Hit Points: 35 (73)

THAC0: 17 (9)

No. Of Attacks: 1 (3)

Damage/Attacks: 1d2 [Fists] (1d8/ 1d8 / 1d6 or 1d8/ 1d8 / 1d4)

Special Attacks: nil (Poison, Bear hug)

Special Defenses: nil (+2 or better to hit)

Special Vulnerabilities: none (Songs)

Magic Resistance: nil

Str: 12 (20)

Dex: 17 (18)

Con: 14 (17)

Int: 16

Wis: 11

Cha: 17 (3)

XP: 5,000

* The statistics in parentheses represent Karalyn's beast form.

Appearance:

What one sees when they set eyes upon the beast is totally dependant when one looks upon her. If spied during the day she is a monstrosity, she has the torso and the legs of a huge bear, the powerful arms of an ape, the claws of tiger, a tail of a scorpion, and the head of a she-wolf. In all in this form she stands at nine feet tall. The most horrifying thing about this form is how all the body parts of the animals (all of varying sizes) fit together almost as if they were meant to be so. But if one finds the beast during the night they won't spy the beast, instead they'll come upon a sad woman, Karalyn Valkyrie. She stands at a mere five feet four inches in height, and has a slight slender body. She wears her long slightly curled blonde hair loose, as it spills halfway down her back. Her green eyes seem dim as if reflecting her inner suffering. She always appears in a white bed cloth that covers her body and keeping her modest. Those emerald eyes are the only thing that the two forms share though when Karalyn becomes the beast the eyes fill with anger and bloodlust.

Background:

In a far distant realm a young farm girl named Karalyn met an inexperienced swordsman by the name of Andros. The two almost instantly fell in love and Karalyn ignored her parents' warnings about marrying an adventurer. Karalyn left the farm with Andros. As it turned out Karalyn was not without talent. She had the speed and reflexes of a cat, and the quality that earned her true renown; she had the voice of an angel. During their adventures Karalyn and Andros fell even deeper in love and were married on a beautiful summer evening.

The lives of Andros and Karalyn seemed as though they could get no better. Yet news of Karalyn and Andros' battles against evil had by now become well known, due in large part to Karalyn's songs of them. It wasn't long before a small band of adventurers grew up around Karalyn and Andros. This group of heroes, who called themselves the Song Blades after the skills of their two leaders, tore a path along the frontiers of their realm making it possible for good people to live in peace. Between Andros' sword and Karalyn's versatile skills the Song Blades were practically unstoppable. Then word reached the Song Blades of a den of darkness that refused to fall no matter how many heroes marched into its gates. The pit of darkness appeared as a Cathedral, albeit an ornate one, it rested on a plateau in the center of the forest.

The mistress of the Cathedral was a dark priestess whose devotion to dark and purely evil forces had tainted and turned her into a cruel and vicious woman. Rumor has it that before she discovered an altar to her dark god she served a kind and giving goddess of healing and Mercy. True or not it was said that her cathedral contained magic of such evil that no one of good heart could hope to survive a siege of its walls. From the previous attempts it seemed that may well be the case.

The Song Blades rode forth thinking that they had finally found a challenge. So they stormed the cathedral and found entrance very easy to attain, the Song Blades thought nothing of it assuming that the locals had embellished accounts of attacks on the cathedral. When the Song Blades reached the altar of the dark god the Priestess appeared and told them that they were trespassers who must be destroyed. With that the Song Blades were ambushed by a collection of cultists of the dark god. Their numbers were so strong that the Song Blades were hard pressed to defeat

them all, and many of them fell in battle. More and more cultists came out to battle and in the end only four stood, Andros, Karalyn, and two brothers skilled in the art of magic. The cultists backed away in fear for these four had destroyed so many. The dark priestess met them in battle; the remnants of the Song Blades were no match for her magic and in the end they attempted to flee. They ran as fast as they could but Karalyn tripped and fell. The brotherly mages pulled a screaming Andros from the cathedral by force telling him that they would save Karalyn if it took all their strength.

While Andros and the wizards planned a new assault the dark priestess was busy. She had strapped Karalyn to a table and began to perform unholy rites on her, calling forth all of her power, sacrificing fierce beasts in an attempt to have their spirits merge and use Karalyn's body as the vessel for the creature that the priestess was creating. By the time the priestess had finished the creature was exactly what she wished and the golden collar that the priestess put on her beast ensured that it'd remain docile and controllable. Now the priestess had a personal bodyguard who could defend her day and night.

Then Andros and the Wizards returned. They pierced into the heart of the cathedral using stealth this time, instead of force. This time they found the Priestess praying at her dark altar. Andros lunged forward to kill her and found himself caught half way by a claw and a huge arm. The beast attacked and while in close combat with it Andros saw that the creature bore the same eyes, exactly the same eyes, as Karalyn. Andros and the wizards retreated to the bowls of the cathedral and explained the situation to the fraternal spell casters. They agreed to begin a series of spells that would free Karalyn from her new beastly form. The dark priestess had the beast hunt throughout the cathedral and its catacombs for the heroes that came so close to killing her. It was near dusk when the beast found the three, the spell was nearly finished and Andros began to hold the beast off. With one sword swing he sliced the collar off of the beast but he could not hold against the beast, the beast's scorpion tail punctured his chest and slew him. The beast jumped at the nearest mage and ripped him to shreds. The other mage shocked by the demise of his brother stopped chanting his spell and soon joined his brother in death. Then the sun disappeared from the sky and the beast reverted to the form of lovely Karalyn. Karalyn sat among the carnage that she had wrought and cried to herself. She was lost in her anguish over the death of her love and she cursed the priestess vowing revenge.

Much to Karalyn's surprise when the sun once again came over the horizon she resumed the form of the beast, the spell that gave her back her form was incomplete and expelled her curse only at night. The beast though, without its collar had an intellect equal to Karalyn's and the beast too wanted revenge on its creator. Before the day ended the beast had impaled its creator on a spear and crushed her precious altar. With that an unnatural mist rose around the plateau and the cathedral. The next evening they both appeared outside of the tiny town of Dorsit.

Current Sketch:

When the beast first killed her creator she attempted to leave the Cathedral, only to find an invisible force blocking her path, needless to say she was furious. Karalyn just felt it as another reason to be sad. The beast has since decided to make the best of her situation, she has been trying to recruit agents to help her try to gain control of as much of Mordent as they can. Christian is the first of these agents and the going has been slow, not many are brave or stupid

enough to try to pierce the cathedral anymore. The beast has therefore been toying with the idea of sending Christian out to find dark souls that could serve her. The only problem with that plan is that the beast knows that Christian will run first chance he gets hoping to get as far as possible before nightfall. Christian and the golems are unaware that their mistress cannot leave the cathedral and the beast likes it that way, if anyone should learn that secret she'll use any means in her power to silence them once and for all. Of course the fact that the beast becomes Karalyn at night is an even greater secret. The beast's minions aren't aware of their mistress' dual nature and believe the lie that the beast as circulated, "She is someone I enjoy tormenting, and I let her out at night, if any of you harm her you'll face my wrath!"

She's also well aware of how to break her curse. She knows that if Karalyn were ever to kiss Andros that she would cease to be, and therefore whenever Andros' spirit manifests itself she has it hunted down by the Christian and Billie, thus far Andros has never survived till nightfall. What she doesn't know is that if the curse is broken Karalyn could leave the cathedral whenever she wanted.

Combat:

Karalyn in combat is not quite the force she once was, she has lost the song sheets that contained her spells, and her thieving skills have become almost non-existent from disuse. Were she ever freed from her curse she could find new spells and her thieving skills would eventually come back to her.

The beast, on the other hand, hasn't let her skill dull one bit. In any given round she can attack one of two ways, first she could do a series of attacks that consists of Claw, Claw, Bite. The beast may also opt to attack with Claw, Claw, and stinger in one round, and inject the target with poison (Type E. Injected, Immediate, Death/20.) Also if both the claws should strike their intended target the beast may forgo her third attack to place the target in a bear hug which will automatically cause 1d12 point of damage per round until the target makes a bend bar/lift gates roll.

Weaknesses:

The beast is haunted by one weakness; it hasn't conquered the part of it that is still Karalyn. First off the beast will only be able to attack the ghost of Andros if she feels that there is a good chance that he may break the curse.

Further more and to more interest to anyone attempting to fight the beast it has an almost insatiable love of music. The beast is tortured by the fact it can no longer sing pleasing music and the sound of music well done causes the beast to stop dead in its tracks to listen. This is only a temporary solution though, the beast will snap back into reality right after a successful attack has been landed against it.

No matter the form, Karalyn or the Beast, if they are ever slain the other form will rise during the next rotation of the sun and both their existences will continue as if nothing had happened. This will continue until the union of Andros and Karalyn has broken the curse.

Adventure Ideas:

The simplest Adventure could involve heroes sent to explore the cathedral and become entangled in its intrigues. Such an adventure would almost certainly involve finding out the curse of Karalyn, possibly from the ghost of the dark mother, and attempting to assist Andros as he tries to survive until nightfall, of course Billie will still be stalking the halls at night trying to stop Andros.

Even after heroes have broken the beast's curse other adventures could evolve. Christian would most likely evacuate the cathedral. That doesn't have to be the end of him though, he could continue his quest to make a "Soth Golem" possibly culminating in the creation of a Iron golem, one that Christian has no control over.

Of course if the Dark Mother was buried by the heroes then she'll most likely find someone to rebuild her altar and she could become more powerful than the beast ever was. Such an adventure could include a fully powered Karalyn looking to get revenge on the spirit of the woman that killed her husband. But beware the Dark Mother may have more things on her side than cultists. (The Specifics are to be left up to individual DMs.)

Finally there is the issue of "Werebat" depending on how the heroes treated him he could actually become somewhat of an ally. An interesting adventure could involve the heroes trying to find a home for Werebat. This could also be an inventive way for DMs to work the accessory Carnival into their campaigns, as it's one of the few places Werebat would be accepted.

Andy Snow

Garden Of The Damned

By Stormonu

[Its location is not relevant; it could exist in any number of places in Ravenloft. The history of how it came to be is much more important.]

General Overview:

The Garden is little more than a fertile patch of overgrown fruit-bearing plants, with a few vegetables and other plants growing amidst the weeds and creeping vines. The garden covers about a hundred feet in a roughly circular patch of ground, and the growing plants make maneuvering it a maze. A few plant stakes help the vines grow so as to create a wall around the garden, so that those outside cannot clearly see the contents until they pass through the drooping, flowered vines that conceal the entrance.

History:

The garden was never intended to be place where fruit would grow. Many, many years ago it was in truth the burial pit for criminals and murderers. Rather than these unwholesome individuals being given a decent burial, their bodies were cast into a earthen pit and covered with a layer of soil. The bodies were stacked one atop another with no regard for the dead, and no rites were given to prevent the dead from rising. Further, the pit was far enough from any settlement that none feared the dead could bother the living.

So the death pit was used until the pit was filled to the top with soil and the bodies of the dead. It's purpose fullfilled, the ground was abandoned, and forgotten. The "fertile" soil soon became overgrown with weeds and plant life of all sorts, so that even those who had dim memories of the pit could not longer find it among the undergrowth that grew atop it.

Somehow, the presence of the pit eventually drew a witch to the spot, and she set her thatch house nearby. The witch herself was not evil, but was unknowingly tuned in to the spirit world, and the presence of the restless spirits within the pit had drawn her to it. Being also a herbalist, she saw the fertility of the ground over the pit, and cleared it to begin to grow her rare herbs and food for herself.

The herbs and other plants grew quickly on the patch, and the witch sold many to nearby settlements and made potions and other ointments from the plants. At first, the witch suspected nothing to be wrong, but she soon began to discover that those who used her herbs or ate her fruits, became very evil indeed, committing all manners of atrocities. The witch herself, who ate some of the food she grew, found herself the eventual victim of the evil. The nearby town who was a victim to the witches foul deprivations captured and bound the witch, then set her inside her own hut and burned the hut down around her, burning her alive.

But the plants within the garden continued to grow, though many became overtaken with weeds. A strange creeping vine grew to encircle the edge of the garden, hiding everything within. The spirit of the witch still haunts the nearby hut, but she can only be seen during the nighttime hours, howling the pain of her undeserved death to the night sky, and dooming all who hear her.

Properties:

The garden has both a subtle means of attack and a move overt form. The subtle and most common form occurs when someone eats the fruits of the garden. Each fruit (or vegetable, or herb) contains the spirit of one of the dead criminals buried in the garden. The victim who eats the food must save vs. spells at a -4 or be dominated by the spirit within the food. Once night falls, the victim's mind will be pushed into the back seat, and the criminal will seek to commit evil akin to what it did during life. When daylight returns, the victim is left to face whatever deeds the villain has committed.

All of the criminals of the pit were vile murderers, thugs, arsonists and other villains who killed at least one victim to earn their own death. All are unrepentive, and care little for what happens to the host body. If the host body is slain, the villain is cast back into the pit, where he soul regrows into another plant to again go forth once eaten. Once in a victim, the villain remains within the victim until the victim is slain or the villain is cast out with a *Dispel Evil*.

The second method of attack the garden has is with the choke creeper vines that surround the garden. There is 21 HD of choke creeper vines, and they only strike when someone attacks the garden, or attempts to exit the garden without eating something. In the latter case, the creeper vines can form a rough face to attempt to coerce the victims to eat of the fruits of the garden. It will kill those who fail, and swallow the body into the soil of the pit to feed the plants. The DM can decide whether or not the victim's soul passes on, or becomes part of the cursed group (in the latter case, where the victim's soul becomes caught in one of the many fruits, the villains of the garden will ensure that their own plants crowd out and make the victim's plant weak and atrophied).

[*] Because of the evil spirit within the victim, certain spells will affect the victim as follows:
Protection from Evil - when the villain is dominate, it cannot enter an area warded by this spell. If cast on a victim during the day, the villainous spirit cannot become dominate until the spell wears off.

Remove Curse - when the villainous spirit is dominate, casting this spell stuns the victim for 1d4+ caster's level in rounds.

Charm spells - when the villainous spirit is dominate, these spells have no effect

Death spells - These spells will still kill the victim's body, sending the villainous spirit back to the garden

Raise Dead/Ressurrection - This spell has no effect Healing spells - only effective when the villainous spirit is not dominate.

It has no ill effects on the evil spirit, however.

As a secondary means of getting rid of the evil spirits, the DM may allow that if a victim is taken back to the garden and forced to retch the contents of his stomach back onto the soil of the garden (doing this without help of some kind requires a CON check at -6), the evil spirit is cast out. Note that the garden won't take kindly to this act, and the choke creeper vines might try to strangle a victim attempting such to avoid them escaping so easily...

Destroying The Garden:

Though burning or chopping down all the plant life in the garden will certainly put a crimp in the villian's day (if burned, the plants will scream in agony, and if chopped down, the trees within the garden emit a red sap akin to blood), and permanently destroy any plants containing victims killed by the villians of the pit, it will not permanently destroy the garden. Within 2-3 weeks, the garden will regrow, appearing as if it had never been harmed. Any plants that contained the victims of the pit's villians will NOT have regrown, and will not again reappear.

The only way to truly destroy the villians of the pit is to unearth the remains and properly bury them individually at least 500' feet from the garden. The garden will not take kindly to attempts to dig, and will fight to the best of it's abilities. When a body is unearthed during the day, it can attempt to make one attack against the person who uncovered it, striking as a 2HD monster and dealing 1d2 hp of damage. Also, if the body strikes, the victim must save vs. spells or the spirit of the villian passes into the victim, even if the spirit had been in possession of someone elsewhere. Those who are foolish enough to dig up the bodies during the night will find the corpse rise as a coffer corpse and attack (or a 2HD ju-ju zombie if you don't have coffer corpse stats). It's touch requires the victim to save vs. spells or be possessed as above, causing the coffer corpse body to fall inert.

There are at least 50 bodies contained within the pit. The DM may add more if he so desires.

The Witch Of The Garden:

The garden is not the only danger in the area. Those who linger near the garden after sunset risk facing the witch planted the garden in the first place. Her ethereal remains are badly scarred from burns, and her dead eyes glow with an inner flame like crackling embers. Her wrists bear the marks of rope burns, and tattered bits of rope dangle from her scarred wrists. Her once blood-red silken robes are tattered and scorched from the fire, and the bitter smell of smoke and burning flesh can be scented when within 40' feet of her. Those within 20' feet can faintly hear the phantasmal crackling of nearby fire, and those within 10' feet can feel an odd flush of heat about them, as if standing close to a bonfire.

If the witch catches a glimpse of the characters as she wanders about, silently, she will throw back her head and let out a peircing shriek of rage and grief. Those within 120' of her who hear the wail must save vs. death or be instantly immolated in flames, taking 4d8 points of damage per round. The magical flames cannot be extinguished by normal means, and only a Dispel Magic (vs. 10th level magic) or a successful Remove Curse cast on the victim can dispel the flames. Those in flames can do little more to cover their ears and fall to the ground, burning. A successful save vs. petrification at a -4 penalty is required for any other action the burning character attempts.

The spirit of the witch has gone insane with hatred of those who killed her unfairly for the acts of the villians in the pit. She cannot be bargained with, and hates all living life, as well as the spirits of the villians in the pit. She will attack with phantasmal claws those who are possessed by a villianous spirit, and attempts to scare off all others (but never directing them towards the garden, instead attempting to keep them out of it. The witch herself will never enter the garden

willingly) If attacked, treat the witch as having the stats of a banshee (the burning cry replaces the banshee's death keening, in this case).

The only way to permanently lay the spirit of the witch to rest is to either destroy the garden and inform the witch's spirit of its destruction, or to give the witch's charred remains a decent burial AND prove the witch was innocent of the attacks she made in the nearby village. Without doing this, even the destruction of the witch's form will not be permanent, and she will rise again in 5-7 days to continue her haunts.

Adventure Ideas:

The characters could stumble onto the evil of the garden after a young merchant has accidentally found the garden and has been selling the fruits within to local villagers, with disastrous results, possibly blamed on the spirit of the vengeful witch slain many years ago. After tracing the cause of the local's evil deeds back to the fruits and to the merchant who sold them, the characters could be directed to the garden area, and encounter the witch's spirit and the garden. If the characters can avoid being forced to eat the fruit of the garden or being destroyed by the witch's spirit, they can attempt to learn how to destroy the garden (unfortunately, the witch will not be of help in this matter, as she is not going to talk to the PC's, however, the local sheriff in the town is old enough to remember the burial pit, and could provide clues to its destruction).

If the DM is feeling really nasty, the final destruction of the garden could end with the mass arising of the corpses within the pit, and their attempt to possess or destroy the PC's (image that last scene from poltergeist where all the corpses were surfacing - but in this case, also animating and attacking!). Of course, this means the PC's have to be working into the night...

Stormonu

HAZLAN AND HAZLIK

by C.D. Nichols

The Land

Hazlan is a land of huge fields where the populace grows rye, wheat, and other grains. Ancient decrepit windmills dot the land-scape, and tiny villages of white cottages huddle the fields. The realm is very dry and windy and constant brush fires light the sky with a lurid red. Copses of brittle pines mark the few hilly areas, and across the land odd ruins of Grecian, Turkish or Arabic style provide homes for wanderers, hermits, thieves, and less savory folk.

The People

In the villages of the land, simple folk tend the fields reaping and preparing the grains that form the Hazlani's main export. Related industries such as brewing are common as well. Witch-hunters (ala Maleis Malifacarium/Witch's Hammer) travel from village to village, and witch-burnings are not common. The folk here are simple, with maybe a thirty percent literacy rate. People recall the stories of their ancestors, tales of gods among men, great dragons, and foul orc hordes. However, this are just tales, and all dust-gathering memories of great-grandparents.

They live average lives, not terrible by the standards of the land. However, the governors raid the villages twice a year, on certain pre-appointed dates, collecting subjects for Hazlik. Additionally, the military may occupy a town, demanding lodgings and food. Once the military moves in, they rarely move out without direct orders, rather staying and establishing a sprawling tent city of bars, encampments and brothels over the next three or four months. Four or five of this military encampment cities exist across Hazlan at any given time. Alternatively, the governors' press-gangs may abduct citizens into their personal armies. In addition, various cult/occult groups are rampant among the Hazlani people, including one venerating Hazlik, the Order of the Red King. Finally, strange plagues are not unknown here. Ergotism is rampant due to the dependance on grains, leading to persecution of supposed werewolves and vampires. The people believe that Hazlik is in league with "the devil", and that he lets the spirits of hell roam the land.

The Government

The governors run their provinces of Hazlan with a free hand. Most are politics or priests to the old gods, selected by Hazlik for being ruthless enough to keep the people under their boot, while not be quite powerful enough to challenge Hazlik himself. In this Hazlik plays a dangerous balancing act, risking being overthrown by the people or by his lieutenants. A few governors are the generals in the Hazlani military, who, content with the status quo, seek to play their fellows and Hazlik off each other to keep things as they are.

The military under Hazlik and the governors has become a bizzare cross between a chaotic mob of thugs and a regimented order of storm-troopers. The military enforces Hazlik's hatred of wizards, patrolling the borders for obvious magic-users, and searching for those inside the borders that may have escaped their grasp. The governors also raise private armies, empressing the peasants in to service. These armies are sent against various other governors, petty territorial battles that leave ruined crops and slain men in their wake.

Sly-Var

The city of Sly-Var is a slightly different story. Much more advanced than the surrounding countryside, the city is comparable to Il Aluk or Mordentshire. Noted for its light-towers, huge thin brick structures built to house huge bon-fires than light the city at night, the city of Sly-Var is the carbuncle of Hazlan.

The city is ringed by a wall of black volcanic stone, city is sweltering even in winter, and dirty and noisy as only a large city can be. The city rests on a massive collection of dry caverns that have never been adequately mapped. Prominant feature include, the University of Sly-Var, which is partially closed and under repairs due to a raid/book burning by the army, the governor of Sly-Var's manor, a manor house/tower combination that dominates the sky line of the city, the Barrows, the massive slum surrounding the city, the Temple Mound, a hill etched with the houses of worship of the Old Gods, the Red Estate, Hazlik's personal holdings in the city, and Dunkhar's Hall, a theater named for a folk hero who's story is performed daily there.

The architecture of the city tends toward towers and boxy buildings, while structures that exist largely underground are popular also, with colors being white, tan, and grey. However, about half of the buildings are of more typical European styles found in Dementlieu and Lamordia. A brief journey out side of the city are a set of salt and sulfur mines. Laborers from the city journey out to the works at the beginning of the week and return to their homes and families at the end of the week. Similar mines exist in other parts of the domain. Throughout Sly-Var, constantly roving press-gangs seek citizens to take to Hazlik's "Tables". The denizens of Sly-Var are more sophisticated than the peasantry and see their ruler as a man of learning who has master certain esoteric lore and thus gained access to the secrets of magecraft.

Hazlik, the Red King

Hazlik does not care very much about the actual running of his domain. He is content to let his governors run things, though he does keep a eye on them, not letting them get too far out of line. Occasionally, he will hold a council of governors in the Red Estate or his manor, but even then, he will continue to work during the proceedings, as this un-nerves the governors.

In the heart of the Red Estate and certain other locations in the realm lie "the Tables", a collection of surgical theaters and laboratories, where the test subjects gathered by the governors and press-gangs are subjected to biological tests of extraordinary cruelty (think Unit 731 or Dr. Mengele et al). Others are warped into the foul minions of the Red Wizard (MCAnnual3 for details). At times Hazlik sets these beasts loose in the land, other times they escape on their own. These are the creatures of hell the peasants fear. Some are sent to prisons hidden deep in the Hazlani country-side, where they are kept to breed new test-subjects. Others still are forced into testing magic creations for the wizard king, while a few are used in research into methods of escape from the demi-plane. Some female captives are sent to Hazlik's estate, and a few prisoners are kept for Hazlik to express his frustration upon in his torture chambers. Mostly, however, Hazlik remains absorbed in his drive to understand and escape the demi-plane, and expand his mastery of magic.

Christopher Dale Nichols

Hijikal

By M. Graydon

[Henry Stauff](#)'s house, Hijikal, is a floating pocket domain comprised of two floors, a basement, and an attic. It can appear everywhere in the Demiplane, but his Lord has no control over its movements. Most likely, the players will start on the ground floor. It is important to note that though there are doors leading outside the house, none of them can be opened by any power. This also applies to the few windows.

Ground floor

There is a large room with a marble staircase leading up to the second floor, and various shadowy nicknacks in the corners. There are four doors in the room, two on either side of the stairs. One each set of doors, one of them is actually a double door. There is also a large stain glass window with an unidentifiable pattern etched into it.

On the right side of the stairs, the doors lead to the study and the music room.

The study is typical with a secret door in the fireplace that leads to a panel in the wall by the attic door, and a pair of glass patio doors that cannot be opened. There is also a globe of Stauff's homeworld (-Gothic?- Earth) and a telescope. Finally, there is a book on the table, telling of Stauff's life.

In the music room is a grand piano, a violin, a harpsicord, and a potted plant. The instruments are played strangely by invisible hands sometimes.

On the left side of the stairs are the doors to the dining room and the kitchen.

The dining room is normal enough with cast iron chairs that look like spider webs, and plates that look like eyes. There is a green cake on the table with skulls and headstones as candy pieces. The cake will cause a blister to anyone who touches it, and a white slug will form in the blister and crawl out.

The kitchen is also normal except for a few oddities. An Impersonator is hiding in a pot of orange soup on the stove, and there is a secret door in the oven. However, this door can only be exited. Anyone trying to enter will be burnt. There is a door down to the basement and one leading outside.

The Basement

The stairs lead down to a room with nothing but a small hole in the corner. People can crawl through the whole, but once through, a grate will crash down trapping the victims. The only way is forward, into the maze.

In the maze, the players can be attacked by any number of creatures, but the only certain one is the ghost of a young lady killed in the house. After making it through the maze, the players will enter the crypt.

In the crypt, players will be attacked by at least 9 skeletal monsters.

These can be Heucuva, Skeletal Warriors, or whatever else the DM desires. The only way out is to be teleported by lying in a sarcophagus. This takes the player back to the kitchen. Also, in the main room, there is a mural on the floor. Staring into it teleports the player to a secret picture room. Various pictures come to life and attack, including a child vampire, a smoke elemental, and a hearth fiend.

The Second Floor

On the second floor is a hallway with 8 rooms. There is a games room with a ghoul in it, an elegant older person's room with a mirror of life trapping and a half-strength blood elemental, a magician's room with a shackled skeleton, a deck of illusions, and an evil wizard trapped in a guillotine. The wizard can still cast spells, and the only way to kill him is to use the guillotine. The other rooms are a romantic harlot's room with a permanent slow spell and some evil shadows (shadows aren't affected by the slow spell), a normal bedroom with a picture of an Imp that comes to life and a carpet that has a confusing effect upon its viewers (confusion spell). There is a bathroom with hairy spiders, and a skeleton in the tub. The rich man's bedroom has a bottle of acidic wine, and a briefcase of cursed coins. There is a secret passage down to the music room here. There is also a door leading to the hidden chapel. In this room are some gargoyles, a skeleton playing an organ, and a phantom scene of Stauff sacrificing a workman. There is a door here that leads to a lab.

In the lab is a man without a brain, a magical virus under a microscope, and a Jacob's ladder. The only way out of here is to enter through a gate into a dark room which teleports people to the Study.

The last room is a doll room. There the anguished cries of the children can be heard from the dolls, but some of them are Carrionettes and Doll Golems as well. They will attack causing confusion amongst the players. Finally, there is a door leading to a staircase that leads to the attic. Stauff has ultimate control over this door, and it only opens if he wants it to. The door is guarded by a Grandfather Plaque gargoyle. The door leads to the Attic.

The Attic

In this room is one of Stauff's victims. A woman's head has been magically affixed to a dress-makers model. She cries out in confusion. The trunk conceals a skeleton monster, whatever the DM feels appropriate. Then there is a door leading to the confrontation with Stauff himself, in a dark room with large windows behind him. Lightning flashes, and these windows can be broken. However, anyone jumping out will die, impaled on countless poisoned iron spikes.

Henry Stauff
(Darklord of Hijikal)

Madman, Toymaker and Half-Demon.

Chaotic Evil.

Armor Class:	8	Str: 10
Movement:	0	Dex: 17
Hit Dice:	7	Con: 13
Hit Points:	27	Int: 16
THAC0:	13	Wis: 10

# of Attacks:	1	Cha: 15
Damage:	1d6	
Special Attacks:	See below	
Special Defenses:	See below	
Magic Resistance:	25%	
Size:	M (6'1" tall)	

Background:

Henry Stauff had ever been an amoral evil man. In the beginning he had nothing, so he started stealing. This eventually escalated into murder. Stauff was a man of fiery passions. If he wanted something, he took it. If something displeased him, he tried to get rid of it, most likely by killing it. Children especially enflamed him. He would spy upon them, seeing them having fun, playing games, and laughing, and be envious of them. This was because Stauff did not have any happy childhood memories of his own to draw upon.

Stauff fell asleep one night, after murdering a woman coming home from choir practice. As he had no place to sleep, he just curled up in the woods. Stauff had a dream. A very special dream. He dreamed of a doll. A little girl's doll. And somehow, Stauff knew that if this doll were made, it would fascinate young girls. And then he knew that this doll would slowly drain the life of the young girl, and bestow it to him! In his dream, Stauff knew he had only to reach out and touch the doll. And so, he did.

At the instant Stauff grabbed the doll and held it, he awoke. The doll was gone, but the haunting image of the toy's face was burned into his memory. Stauff immediately pulled out his knife and searched for a suitable piece of wood. When he found one, he started to lovingly carve the haunting face. Soon, Stauff was done, and the doll was an exact replica of the one in his dream. But then, Stauff didn't know what to do. The children and people around here were too superstitious to accept something for free from a stranger. So, feeling hungry, he stuffed the doll under his arm, and travelled to a local bar. The innkeeper there saw the doll, and said that his daughter would love the toy. The two of them came to an agreement that if Stauff gave the innkeeper the doll, then the innkeeper would provide food and shelter for a week. Stauff agreed. As Stauff slumbered for the first time in a long time on a soft bed, he had another dream. This one was of a puzzle. This puzzle he knew would fascinate young boys, just as the doll fascinated young girls. And so when Stauff awoke, he carved the puzzle.

Henry Stauff grew wealthy. He soon opened up a shop in town, and there he sold all his toys. Everyone wanted a Stauff toy. A Stauff toy was a toy for life! A few months later, the strange virus came, and the children started dying. Lying in their beds, clutching their Stauff toys closely, coughing and spewing up blood, they died. As each child died, Stauff felt himself gain that life.

Nobody figured out that it was the toys. After all, how could a simple toy kill a child? Most of the parents gave back the Stauff toys, hoping that another little child could be comforted from the toy. Stauff took all of there willingly, but he never sold any toy that killed. For unknown to everyone but him, the toys held the children's spirits. Stauff kept the toys as an amusement to himself.

Some of the parents however, buried their children with the toys. This forced Stauff to perform the inevitable, to rob from the dead. Now, Stauff was not afraid of the dead, but he certainly didn't enjoy going into their graves. So, on these nightly expeditions, Stauff would come and go as quickly as possible. Well, Stauff learned something the first time he tried this.

He dug up the grave in the dead of night, and saw the small coffin. The name embossed on the small brass plaque read, "Shanna Garin". He hesitantly opened the coffin. Inside, lay a small girl, clutching her Stauff doll. She looked peaceful, and her skin was white with bluish tinges. Her features were sallow and thin, but this didn't concern Stauff. As he reached for the doll though, the girl's eyes opened wide, and they held a glow of pure malice. Stauff recoiled, and the girl reached for him. She said not a word, but always clutched the doll. Stauff scrambled out of the grave and grabbed for the shovel. Meanwhile, the girl climbed out after him, and managed to slash him with sharp fingernails. He was horrified, and he hefted the shovel aloft and brought it down upon the girl's skull. This skull caved in with a sickening crunch, but still the girl came at him! In desperation, Stauff flung the shovel and fled. The shovel flew straight and hit the girl's arm, knocking the doll away. The corpse immediately fell to the ground. Stauff turned, grabbed the doll, and hastily reburied the girl.

Back at his store, Stauff correctly pieced together that if a corpse of a child killed by the doll held the toy, it could come back to life. But as soon as that touch was broken, the corpse fell to the ground. Stauff had more run-ins with the zombies, but he was prepared. Before touching the doll, he would cut off the arms of the young child with a hatchet.

Then, Stauff had another dream. This was of a great house, a mansion built by the toymaker. He would have this house built upon a precipice above the town. This would be a special house, a house that scared people. Stauff had the house built, and the Dark Powers of Ravenloft finally decided to take him in when he killed the workmen in a bizarre set of rituals and sacrifices. What Stauff didn't know was that a fiend from the Abyss had come in contact with him. When he killed the young women coming home from choir practice, it had been able to flow from her to him. Thus, it had fed him the dreams and powers. It planned to enter the land of the living and possess Stauff with the rituals that were preformed on the workmen of the house, but the Dark Powers drew the house in at this point, and perverted the fiend's wish. Now Stauff and the fiend are one and rule over [Hijikal](#) (their house).

Appearance:

Stauff is a human male that appears in his late 50's. He is actually 354 years old. His aging has been slowed because of the life-draining properties of his toys.

Stauff has a velvety voice and a charming personality. All the same, there is something that unnerves his audiences. He was neutral evil before entering RL, but that changed when the demon merged with him.

Combat:

Since Stauff cannot leave his chair for more than a minute, he is weak in toe-to-toe combat. He has been given a few gifts from RL and from his demon heritage though. He can attack people up to 3' away by whipping a forked tongue. This causes 1d6 damage. He can also spit acid up to

10' and this causes 2d10 damage each round the victim is in contact with it. He can do this once per hour. He can also animate Skeletal hands to attack people, see the Heading Stauff's Skeletal Hands for more info. Stauff can also deaden the air around himself, making any missile attack automatically fail.

Powers:

Stauff has many abilities that aren't combat oriented however. He can automatically hear anything said in Hijikal, and he can view anywhere in the house with an innate Clairvoyance spell. The sight ability is subject to the restrictions of RL. He can project his voice into any room, allowing those there to hear it. He can animate his skeletal hands anywhere in the house, and can command his minions. Stauff can also create any special item he needs, as long as it suits the purpose of turning the "guests" in the house against each other. To date, the only thing he has found that will do this, are letters.

Stauff regenerates 1 hp per round, and cannot be killed while on his chair. The moment he is forced off his chair for more than 1 round, he will be restored or reduced, to an hp total of 14, depending on his hp at the time of leaving the chair. The reason for this is because his demon half shrivels and dies. This makes one side of his body blacken and wither. He loses his forked tongue, his acid spittle, his magic resistance, and his regeneration. He can still, see, hear, and project his voice through the house, and he can still animate skeletal hands. He can also still create items.

Should Stauff survive leaving his chair, then he need only return to it and steal the life force of another being (only humans will do for this) and his demon status is restored. It must be noted, that normally, Stauff can gain energy from any being he kills or compels someone to kill, but to restore demon status, the victim must be human. If Stauff is killed, then his body will burst into flames, leaving a blackened skeleton. The skeleton will still be alive though, and will immediately try to escape. But before it can take two steps, the floor will open beneath Stauff and red tentacles will come out and pull him into a fiery hell. The pit closes after him.

Stauff's Skeletal Hands

AC:	5
Movement:	6
Hit Points:	4 per hand
THAC0:	18
# of Attacks:	1 per hand
Damage:	1d3

The hands cannot preform complex movements such as picking locks, but can open doors or turn pages. They can carry 5 lbs. singly, or 20 lbs. together. They can wield weapons within these limits, and they have a THAC0 of 19 with the club, dagger, or knife. With all other weapons, they have a THAC0 of 24. Any hand-held weapon only causes 1/2 damage (round up). All missile weapons have their range reduced to 1/4 and cause normal damage.

The hands can move anywhere within the house.

Mark Graydon

THE SEVEN ISLANDS OF SIN: ISLE OF DESIDIA (SLOTH)

by R. M. Sweeney

About the ruler of Desidia

Salutations, my good friend,

As I look out upon my plantation, I see a glorious day as if sent by the Creator himself. From here, I can see my slave master leading a group of dark-skinned savages to work the cane fields. They toil so well in this heat, which any of our countrymen would quickly perish in.

Sarah sends you her love. She's been doing much better of late. Her fever subsides with each passing day. Nicko and Amanda are lost to me, sadly, and their Mother mourns their loss.

But more exotic events have motivated my letter than even those. As you recall, your scholarly appreciation for the paranormal awakened in your student an equal thirst for tales of mystery and dark lore. Many times, have I received from you notes detailing such oddities. Now, 'tis time for me to return the favor. *1

The summer heat, here on my Plantation, drains the strength from men quickly as they toil in the fields. The natives here stand up more strongly to its savage thirst for human life, but at times it exhausts even their stamina.

The course of two moons passing, however, found more men dying than usual. Indeed, the deaths caused me some concern about the viability of my livelihood. Fearing the heat simply too much for mortal men, I resigned to allowing the slaves to remain quartered but for the most overcast days.

This, however, proved not to be successful in preventing the diminution of their number. Strange and unusual accidents began to take the men. Concerned, I hired men... investigators they called themselves... to search out the cause of this malady which afflicted my house. (I feared at first, I was the subject of a haunting.)

Now my lands consist of that tract of ground stretched between the Isiro and Uma rivers. (Names given to them by the savages.) My daughter, Amanda, preferred to call them "Willow tree brook" and "White flower river" after noteworthy plant life found along their banks. In the land betwixt these two waterways, my servants tend to two large gardens on either side of the house as well as my two cash crops, tobacco and sugar cane. The sugarcane grows best nearer to the Isiro river, while the tobacco hardly grows anywhere at all. I suppose the soil isn't quite right. I have left a small grove of flowering trees to the rear of my mansion, which produce a fragrant perfume in the spring and a succulent fruit in the fall. A dark green ivy grows amongst those boughs which the natives are good enough to weed out for me. I think, perhaps, they take a fruit or two off the trees when they remove this parasitic vines. They are thorough, however, so I pretend not to notice. *2

These investigators searched the land from one end to the next on a more temperate evening. They worked late covering the grounds searching for signs or clues. One, I do believe, fancied himself a sorcerer... for he patrolled the ground muttering to himself in an odd tongue and make all

manner of strange gestures. Delusional, mad, or a warlock... it mattered not to me. Just let them find the restless spirit and bid it depart.

At dinner, I questioned them as to their findings. What a dinner it was, I must say. Sarah, fortunately for me, cooks most skillfully indeed. A blessing upon us, I assure you for these savages know nothing of art of fine eating. Roast duck in orange sauce, I think it was. Tea or coffee with cream for the guests while I partook of vintage smuggled over from the homeland. My pipe was packed with the finest tobacco my meager lands could produce and my daughter, Amanda, played for us on the harpsichord.

All and all, I must say I enjoyed dinner greatly until I learned that our great investigators had learned nothing at all. I fear my words were perhaps unkind. A somewhat heated debate ensued. I still maintain that I was in my right. My wife, daughter, and son had all begun to catch something of a bug, don't you know, and I had to forestall sending for the proper medicine so that these men could be paid. I expected results, by God, not excuses. *3

My words angered the hot-tempered youth among them. By the look of him, I think he meant to do harm to me. Nicko, oh my brave Nicko. Where ever Nicko had learned to fire my musket, I know not. But glad was I to know he could. The brash youth flopped down in dismay, red stream oozing from his chest as Nicko quickly readied the musket for another shot.

I must say that staring down the barrel of my musket *4 with Nicko's fierce brown gaze behind the sights quelled their sharp tongues but quickly. Nicko had begun to pale with his illness, leaving gray circular patches under his eyes, but his bearing conveyed only strength... not the weakness of one infirm. One of their number tended to the fallen man, while the small wiry man spoke. He looked out the window, at the rising windstorm outside, as he spoke to me.

In the end, we reached a compromise which seemed to suit everyone except for, of course, the wounded man. They then retired for the evening and I took my vintage with me to my own quarters. I chose to retire to bed early, but was awoken by the sounds of battle in the courtyard.

Precious moments slipped away as I gathered my wits still lost in sleep. Dashing for the window, I couldn't be sure exactly what sight I saw. There in the darkness, the brash youth, bandaged but seeming none the less for his encounter with my son, fought against what appeared to be one of my escaped slaves. The battle quickly took them around the corner out of my line of sight. *5

Apparently some lesser commotion that this had stirred my guests from their sleep, for they were already about in the yard...and came running to where I had seen the battle. They stopped just past the corner. One of them stepped forward. When he stood up again, his head hung low.

Sleep took me again and I was to learn nothing more until mid morning the next day.

Sarah told me that our guests had been searching for further clues late into the night, when they heard a commotion. Upon investigation, they found their companion dead.*6 The heat being what it was, they feared that the body would not make a journey for burial and wished to lay their friend to rest in a small section of our family graveyard. My head hurt too much to argue,*7 so I consented. When reason returned to me, I realized that I could always have my slaves dig the youth's corpse up later and move it to the slave's burial lot. They would be none the wiser.

And so the proceedings were under way. One of the fellows handled the last rites himself and the coffin was laid down into the grave. At least that's how it was told to me. My delicate constitution doesn't lend itself to standing outside in this heat*8 waiting for some long-winded holy man to finish his mumbling.

Sometime after noon, I rose from my study and inquired of my son what news there might be.

Nicko told me the strangest things, indeed. According to what he had seen and heard, the brash youth had bled profusely before dying but he did not bleed alone. Someone, or something, had been injured fighting the man, however, and it fled leaving a trail of blood behind. These investigators, it seemed, had tracked the trail to Willow river where they lost the trail. An exhaustive search showed where footprints left the far shore, however. They picked up the trail anew from there.

As light began to fade, the companions returned once again. The report at dinner was somewhat more pleasant than the last. Dinner itself consisted of glazed honey ham with tubers mashed into a paste and served with butter. This time, I provided my guests with juice from the fruit trees behind my estate and a serving of collared greens. The drink went over well, but they hardly touched their greens. My wife had lentils, which she says gives her skin a glow. Age has begun to take the beauty from my wife, and she clings to any old wives tale that gives her hope. *9

As to the report, however, it appears that they followed the trail across the outer rim of my neighbor's fields to a desolate and filthy portion of marshlands infested with various nasty stinging vermin. Prudence is the better part of valor, however, and when the sun began to set, they felt it best to return for the night and begin again on the morrow.

On the morn they left to inquire of my neighbor had he too been losing men as I had been. Sir Goldiard has always been a fine, if distant fellow. Not quite the type to attend the balls and festivals like the other plantation owners, he was bookish and reserved. One wonders what influences forced him to leave my homeland. Once, during my rare meetings with him, I wondered to him aloud what had forced him to leave home and its familiar comforts for this wilderness. "Believe it or not," he told me then "I came here by my own choice to learn of things written about this land back home."*10

I had assured him that our land was particularly dull and lacking anything of interest whatsoever. He politely disagreed and we left the matter at that. We had not laid eyes on each other for several months now.

The sun had passed its zenith and traveled for an hour or two more, when Nicko came running through the grounds away from the willow river. He screamed as if chased by the devil himself and then dropped behind a tree to reload the musket. He took aim as if expecting pursuit and nearly laid low one of the companions as they streamed out of the cane fields after him.

When no pursuit came, they returned to the house and made a most interesting report.

They had come upon the main road to Sir Goliard's estate and had decided upon approaching openly. The front gate stood open while slaves toiled to clear a new patch of field nearer to the swamp. Nicko swore that he had seen some of our own slaves working that field and intended to have words with Sir Goldiard over it. However, as they passed the inner courtyard, his

resolve began to fade. The slaves of the inner courtyard were dull, lifeless, and devoid of expression. The bodies of my neighbor's slaves were emaciate and appeared to be of ill health.

They reached to door, and were forced to knock for several minutes before Sir Goldiard was good enough to answer. Whatever plight had struck his men, Sir Goldiard appeared none the better of it. His own features were nearly as dull and lifeless as his servants. A queer feeling rose in some of them at this time, but they quickly dismissed it when Sir Goldiard motioned them to enter.

They tried to make conversation with Sir Goldiard, but he seemed not to hear them, and returned to the study. Following him, they laid eyes upon a queer man indeed. He was dark of skin as the natives here are and decorated in beads and bones of various creatures. His hair had been drawn into long thick cords and left to hang at all angles from his head. When he smiled, his yellow-gray teeth were cracked and broken in several places.

"Welcome, my guests" he spake in a strange accent. He continued "welcome to your new home..." He laid his thin frame back in the chair as Kunta, a slave of mine known to my son, cooled him with a large feather fan.

The shock was too much for my son, he fled. Kunta, you see, is quite dead. Nicko had buried him in the slave lot not two weeks past. Shortly, Nicko heard the sounds of fighting from within the study as he made to flee. His flight was halted by a swarm of slave-men whom now Nicko could see had died some time ago.

My investment in a musket served Nicko well in the first few volleys, but the swarm continued to approach steadily... as if unconcerned with the losses to their number. Nicko fled to the upper stories so as to maintain distance to load and fire the musket at the seemingly endless tide of restless dead.

He fled through the upper hallways to a guests bedroom from whence he spied a tree growing within the distance of a good jump from the balcony. Tossing the musket to the ground below, he made the jump and dropped safely from the tree. He fled then, never looking back until his feet found himself again on the soil of his home.

Even with collaboration of Nicko's story by the companions, I could not accept such things as anything but the ranting of madmen. I would not, however, permit them to stir up my slaves with their delusions. It was then that one of them came up with a plan to validate their claims. Taking me quickly to the slave lot, they unearthed the freshly dug graves therein... to find nothing. Absolutely nothing where my son swore slaves had been buried not a week past.

Seeing this, I hesitated, and acquiesced to their plans to make the house ready for an invasion by the walking dead.

Amanda and Sarah had continued to suffer from their afflictions and were unable to offer assistance. I, the loyal husband, stayed by my wife's side. She and Amanda suffered a terrible thirst, which kept them drinking large quantities of water and sweating profusely. I sipped wine and quietly comforted them while Nicko aided the others. *11

There was some debate among the others, as I recall. One of them quite loudly argued for flight. The others thirsted for revenge (and retrieval of their friend's corpse, which turned up missing as well.) They were unable to convince the young man to remain, and he sped away aback his horse.

The day passed much too quickly for the companions, and much too slowly. As the golden orb of slid slowly from east to west, they secured what windows and doors that they could. Then it was time for waiting. And more waiting.

The tension hung heavy in the air while the old grandfather clock slowly ticked away the time. Tempers were short, of that one could tell, and so I spake not a word to any of them until sunset. We waited then for several minutes.

At last, I broke into laughter and brought out a bottle of wine. I was teasing them about how silly they all looked when the knock came at the door. I so swear to you by the grave of my mother that I have never jumped so high so fast in all my life. I believe I might have cried out in alarm.

They questioned the knocker at the door, and he replied in a tired exhausted voice: "The bridge has been destroyed by the windstorm. Branches lie strewn about the road, making travel slow and tedious. I knew I'd never make the next town by nightfall and so I have returned." *12

Breathing a sigh of relief, I swung the door wide open before I remembered... there was no bridge between here and Maalam. The bridge was after Maalam.

There in the doorway stood four score of slaves at least, dead and undead by dark magics. This time, there was no breath left in me to scream... no strength in my limbs to run. My mind froze as I looked out upon a swarm of grayed faces and dulled eyes. The stench that flowed from them made my knees weak and my stomach turn. They came at me with arms outstretched, the young man who fled by horse first among them.

I can't quite recall precisely what happened next, but Nicko got me clear of their advanced and opened fire upon them with my musket. The champions I hired charged into the fray with weapons brandished while the holy man spake curses upon the assembled dead in the name of a god unknown to me.

The assembled dead cared not for the blabberings of the holy man *13 and fell upon him in a swarm. His companions, seeming unprepared for this, broke ranks and met the hoard in chaotic melee. Somehow, Nicko and I fled the scene with Sarah, but Amanda fell and disappeared from view. Sarah wanted to go back for our daughter... back into death dealt from the arms of the dead. But my wit prevailed. I told her "Sarah is not back there, my sweet, she has gone on ahead of us. We must not dally here..." In her hysteria she believed my words even though her own eyes had seen her child fall.

We hid from the monsters as best we could behind the large desk of my study, but Nicko knew it was only a matter of time before we were uncovered by the beasts. And too soon his words seemed true. The companions, outnumbered and overwhelmed had fallen back to the piano room upstairs, near to where we ourselves were hid.

Beaten and bloody, we could see from where we hid the Savage-man leading his hell-spawned troops against them. But Nicko, my beloved Nicko. He was so brave. Before I could stop him, he had bounded out the door towards the walking dead, pulling my faithful musket up to his eye, he stood as the dead raced towards him and store death in the eye. Time hung like a taunt string in the autumn wind as I watched. Slowly the undead converged on my son, as he weighed with careful eye his target and took a steady aim. As I feared the dead would reach my son afore his finger could fire its shot, the noise of the musket shook the ribs in my chest.

The Shaman stood there, in utter amazement, as my son's shot rang clear and true across thirty feet to where he stood. Blood sprouted from his head, inches up and to the outside of his left eye. Pieces of his head, flew back in a crimson spray to strike the wall.

But his dead were already committed to their last command... Nicko was torn apart like rabbit thrown to the dogs. When the momentum of their charge died, my son already had.

Without their leader to direct them, the men quickly fell quite and passive. Some poked about their fallen leader with outstretched hands, others just sat and wept. That was the odd thing, weeping. *14

With the pressing attack halted, the holy man was able to examine those men more closely. To his dismay, and horror, he found them living men enspelled by some means. Much later, he found out the manner of the influence the Shaman had held over them. For the men, recovering from his influence, grew greatly agitated... demanding their "somma" and crying out in pain.

I confined the afflicted men behind a secured cellar door, while the investigators returned to the abandoned plantation of my neighbor. Somma, it seems, is some version of plant which the Shaman had given to his slaves to quiet them and keep them easily controlled.

When they were able to coax the brash young warrior, whom Nicko had shot at dinner two nights before, to speak (and not plead for somma). They were able to piece together most of what happened. Blowfish poison, injected via a minuscule dart or a scratch of a fingernail, causes the victim to fall into a catatonic state virtually indistinguishable from death. The Shaman would wait until those affected were buried, and then he would direct his slaves to retrieve the victim (who had been buried alive). The Shaman then exposed the newly awakened victim to "somma". This kept the new slave pliant and submissive, doing nearly anything to receive more "somma". Going without somma brought great pain.

However, I have found quite to my pleasure, that low doses of this substance mixed in with my own anemic-looking tobacco yields a fine blend indeed, suitable for smoking at all occasions. There is a fine pepper-like smell to the pipe as it burns, and the gentle aroma whets the appetite quite nicely, enhancing the pleasure of fine food and wine alike. I would have sent you some, but I only have so much

Sincerely,

Sir Edmond Sloth, Esquire.

*1 Never anything more mysterious than Ouija boards, odd superstitions, or the like.

*2 The vines are some form of carnivorous plant. The natives kill them for self-preservation.

*3 Notice that he continues to drink fine wine, while his wife goes without her medicine.

*4 The musket bears a strange blessing. Once used by Edmond's grandfather in noble battle, the gun has since been linked to the spirit of the great man that died using it. While in the hands of one of Edmond's line, the musket does double damage and bullets fired from the gun are unaffected by magic while in flight. (They pass through the Shaman's Protection from Normal Missile spell.)

- *5 The slave's nails were encrusted with blowfish poison. The warrior was paralyzed.
- *6 Apparently dead, more accurately.
- *7 When he 'partook of vintage' he was getting seriously drunk. He suffers a hangover at this point in the story.
- *8 He was too freaking lazy to stand outside in the heat. There is nothing wrong with his constitution.
- *9 Note that he is as much interested in what he ate, as what they found out.
- *10 Goliard's curiosity brings about his own doom. He went looking to find things better left unfound. They found him.
- *11 More laziness.
- *12 Notice that the "dead" have retained the power of speech. This is unusual for zombies.
- *13 He is trying to turn undead... and these foes are not undead after all.
- *14 No more somma.

Profile:

Edmond is an overweight lazy dandy of a gentleman. His grounds suffer from lack of attention to detail, and most of his money goes towards purchasing the wine he drinks entirely too much of. He makes sure that he is not lacking the finer things in life, even if that means others must sacrifice. He is not a patient man. Other than his slothfulness, his most striking characteristic is his extreme cowardice in the face of danger.

He considers magic to be a silly superstition.

Once Edmond discovers the "somma" he quickly grows addicted to it. Long after the PCs are gone, he drives his slaves harder and harshly in order to produce more of it. In time, his drug addiction and selfishness earn him his own small island in the misty border of Ravenloft.

Robert M. Sweeney

THE SEVEN ISLANDS OF SIN : ILE DU DESIRE (LUST)

by R.M. Sweeney

Lady Aamora Wilkin

Aamora, Lusty Lewd. Takes lovers knowing that her husband will kill them in a fit of jealous rage. Coos over her husband after he kills them, she seduces him and he forgets his rage in passionate love-making.

Aamora enjoys Paris' company and affections. She appreciates his music, wit, and charm almost as much as the more base aspects of their relationships. She toys with arranging for Paris to be caught with her, but he usually escapes or quickly talks up a cover-story. She finds this quite amusing, knowing that Paris' loyalty to his "children" makes him vulnerable, needing her assistance and support to further his goals.

Aamora will also visit Paris' Tavern, delighting in both the young boys and the young girls. Paris remains adamant, however, about not delivering them into her arms. His wards, likewise, know to refuse her advances.
(Although the boys do get tempted... Paris has even lost one or two to her husband's rage.)

Aamora likes to watch her husband visit Paris' Tavern and have even disguised herself well enough to seduce her husband! She delights over these things with malicious glee. Also, since the young men who come to the tavern for sport are so... vulnerable... she takes a few lovers in the alleyways for the perverse thrill of it.

Grendle Wilkin, Noble lord

He tries to maintain an image of propriety. Has affairs and tries to turn a blind eye to his wife's affairs until she flaunts them in front of him. Fearing public ridicule if other nobles learn of his wife's liaisons, he flies into a rage and murders her lovers. He loves Aamora very much and cannot bear to harm her or live without her. After he kills her lover, she tells him of the lovers he's had. (At least once claiming to have lain with the same woman he was sleeping with.)

Grendle Wilkin also suffers from man's common weakness, a beautiful young lady. He, like his lady, disguises himself to attend Paris' tavern or even one of the various brothels he knows of (one of these is run by his wife, who goes by the alias Persian Kitty.) He is anguished over this weakness of his and wallows in guilt because of it. When he gives in to his desires, he remembers his beautiful wife whom he loves very much. He fears her discovery of his liaisons and fears she may leave if she discovers them.

She has warned him that she knows of some of his dalliances. After Grendle kills her lover, she taunts him with this knowledge and feigns considerations of divorcing him. A mixture of rage, jealousy, fear, and guilt produces a reaction she finds most interesting indeed.

Paris: Half-elf bard/fighter/mage

Paris has adopted several orphaned boys and girls (early to late teens). Attempting to find a niche in the local economy so that he can support his adoptive children, Paris began running a bar. His girls are not prostitutes, but they are exotic dancers. The boys (the few he has adopted) also dance from time to time, but usually serve with other skills he has taught them. (Bouncers, acrobats, singers, musicians.)

Paris is extremely protective of his girls, and makes this well known among his patrons. His girls are not sluts, whores, or prostitutes. Anyone suggesting otherwise earns his wrath. Paris is a warrior of extraordinary skill (better than the PCs) and specialized with darts. These darts (ROF as per specialist) are 'exceptional' darts (+1 to hit/+1 damage). With his skill and dex (18) this boots his hitscore by +1 dart +1 specialization +2 dex for + 4 to hit. His damage score is +2 spec and +1 for the dart or + 3. Each dart is covered with a sleep poison strangely reminiscent of drowish poison -4 to saves onset time 1d8 rounds. To hits of those failing their save vs poison (at -4) are at -1 per round since injection during the onset time. (-1 on the first round, -2 on the second, -3 on the third, etc.) Those afflicted sleep for 1-8 hours or until struck hard enough to cause damage.

Paris does not sell his poison.

Paris himself does function as a prostitute. He sleeps with Lady Aamora Wilkin even though he has learned what happens to her lovers who are caught. He is wary and clever however... and isn't caught off guard. So far he has escaped being caught with her. This is owed to both his charisma (17) and skill as a lover which she isn't ready to sacrifice yet to torment her husband's jealousy. Paris lies with Aamora not out of love or even lust. Rather he has his own agenda, most of which centers around keeping his tavern open and legal. He sometimes has his boys dance for her, but has made it quite clear to them and to her that those boys are not for sale. (No touchie!)

Paris is extremely *unhappy* with the way things are working out. Peddling sex is against his beliefs, but he feels he must do what needs to be done in order to deliver the girls and boys in his charge from the squalor in which orphans must otherwise live. Often, when justifying his actions he will grimly say, "I do what must be done" with a dark, angry, almost evil tone. He dances on the edge of darkness to deliver his wards from poverty.

Darklord:

Father Demonstro:

Despite Aamora's lewdness and immorality, it is actually Demonstro, a respected priest of the local religion that is the darklord of this domicile of dread. Demonstro appears to be a preacher dedicated to the purification of the lewd city in which Paris, Aamora, and Grendle live (Sodom-Gomorrah?). While preaching purification from the pulpit, Demonstro secretly burns with lustful passion, a searing fire which consumes him day and night.

The Preacher proclaims to be Celibate and undergoes self-flogging to fight the building urges within him. Eventually, however, he fails... He disguises himself and leaves his monastery dedicated to punishing the whores for tempting him.

The Preacher seduces both men and women in Taverns and brothels around the city of Agon. The curse of the darkpowers is that he is particularly good at seduction, having an eerie pull

upon the hearts of those he desires. The Dark Powers other blessing / curse is an unusually good talent for disguise (so he may go undiscovered). When Demonstro gives in to his urgings, he later declares that the sinners must be punished. His hapless lovers are tortured to death.

While in Demonstro's domain, no PC cleric is able to gain curative magics of any kind. (This is another blessing of the dark powers... it gives Demonstro the political power to wage his war against pornography and prostitution).

Plot:

Several of Paris' girls are mutilated by a strange murderer. Paris is filled with rage over this and feels impotent to avenge them. Demonstro preaches from the pulpit that the law shouldn't waste their time avenging the death of whores when there are more pressing crimes to be fought.

Aamora and Grendle are unwilling to risk the political backlash of defending prostitutes. (Not to mention the political pressure exerted by the only recognized man in town able to perform curative miracles.)

The PCs are caught up in the murders AFTER they realize that Paris' girls are not whores.

Option: Paris thinks one of the PCs is the murderer... and tries to take justice into his own hands.

Option: Paris thinks Grendle or Aamora did it... and tries to take justice into his own hands. The PCs however, discover that both Grendle and Aamora have good alibis (one PCs was sleeping with Aamora?).

Robert Sweeney

INSIDE THE HOUSE OF LAMENT†

By S. M. Witzki

Noncombat Encounters:

- The wind blows through the parlor chimney, causing a low moan.
- Soft creaks and groans are heard -- very much like the sounds of an old house settling.
- A branch taps at the ballroom window (asynchronously, of course).
- A draft creates a sudden pool of cold in a doorway.
- The characters note that a storm is developing, darkening the already dreary sky above the house.
- A branch scrapes at the dining hall window like a claw.
- Floorboards creak overhead as if someone were stepping on them, yet a thin layer of undisturbed dust is present if investigated.
- A draft catches the rocking chair in a child's room and sets it in motion.
- A woman is heard crying in the black suite, but the crying stops when the door is opened.
- The storm breaks and the rain begins, pattering against the windows.
- A draft opens a poorly latched closet door, which creaks ominously on old hinges.
- Objects and furniture change locations slightly while the characters' attention is directed elsewhere.
- Fleeting glimpses of motion are seen out of the corners of the characters' eyes as they explore darkened hallways.
- The rumble of nearby thunder shakes the house ever so slightly.
- The eyes of the gallery portraits seem to follow the characters (a tried but true technique).
- Doors open and shut of their own accord, occasionally locking and unlocking as well.
- Whispering murmurs are heard in the dark.
- The cutlery from the kitchen comes up missing.
- The wind whistles in and out of the chimneys like the sounds of breathing.
- Torches alight and extinguish of their own accord.
- Two feral red gleams of light are glimpsed in a dark hallway, but they quickly vanish.

- A woman's screams echo crazily through the tower.
- Deep furrows are found in the entrance doors, apparently made by claws.
- The characters' reflections in mirrors distort and become ominous -- mouth corners pull up slightly and eyebrows arch to give the appearance of a leer, etc. The effects intensify the longer a mirror is looked at, but disappear if they turn their attention away (continued viewing will cause the effects to reappear, of course).
- The character marked by the house sees Mara's reflection instead of his own, and she reaches out plaintively to him for help, mouthing soundless words as she does so (character's who can read lips will note that she is asking him to release her from her torment).
- The characters discover the missing cutlery -- a knife pierces the pillow of each bed upstairs.
- Monstrous footprints leave a trail in the dust.
- A mist seeps up from the floorboards, putting the characters to sleep.
- The characters unmarked by the house dream of the gallows and later see a frayed rope noose dangling from the dining hall chandelier.
- The character marked by the house dreams of Mara's history, as described in *Darklords*. This character will appear to grow older by the hour.
- The characters become separated when they are alone (refer to the "holding hands" idea in *Darklords* if it's appropriate).
- A note in elegant script appears on the desk in the library. It reads "[PC name] will be coming home soon." The ink is a deep red and the quill lying beside the note smells of blood.
- A phantom pounds on the doors at night, as described in *Darklords* (p52).
- Stairs warp and twist underfoot.
- The nymph spindles on the foyer staircase leer and reach for the characters' ankles.
- Violins play a lonesome waltz in the ballroom of their own accord.
- "Mara is lonely" is scrawled in fresh blood on the ballroom wall. The letters drip slowly down the wall and there is a large pool of fresh blood where the wall meets the floor.
- "[PC name] must die" is scrawled in fresh blood on the foyer floor.

- Bear in mind that the exact location of many of these noncombat encounters can be altered to suit your particular party's exploratory pattern. I give you what worked for me. Note also that many of these encounters can be repeated (and in many cases should be) -- just don't get the players immune to them. Make the house as eerie as possible -- worse as night falls and the storm intensifies.

Combat Encounters:

The following combat encounters are in no particular order, and the size and strength of the opposing force should depend on the relative strength of the characters. Use these whenever the characters are feeling a bit too at ease.

- The busts in the gallery grow arms, legs, and wings, becoming GARGOYLES.
- Empty suits of armor in the ballroom become animated by STEEL SHADOWS (qv The Ruins of Undermountain -- a Forgotten Realms boxed set). *Alternatively, they could be DOOMGUARDS.*)
- CARPET SNAKES (qv Greyhawk Ruins) arise from a bedroom rug and attack.
- A hypnotic tapestry in the game room (depicting the hunt, of course) comes to life, releasing HELLHOUNDS.
- Lightning from the storm briefly illuminates the servant's day room in a brilliant flash, causing SHADOWS to scurry about.
- A moaning emanates from a closet near the foyer, where CLOAKERS (qv Forgotten Realms Appendix) dwell amongst old garments.
- The chandelier in the foyer crashes to the ground, and GIANT SKELETONS (qv Ravenloft Appendix) emerge from the wreckage in a burst of flame. The creatures wield oddly shaped spears constructed from fused chandelier pieces.
- Jars of murky liquid in the cellar contain CRAWLING CLAWS (qv Forgotten Realms Appendix), which break free to attack the characters.
- WRAITHS dwell in the cellar.
- The walls ooze dark red blood and a BLOOD ELEMENTAL (qv Ravenloft Appendix) rises from the mess.

ISLE OF DEMISE

by M. Graydon

Introduction: The Tip of the Finger

In the deep gray-blue expanse of the Sea of Sorrows, many secrets hide. Who can say for certain how many islands float within its misty tendrils? Who can say what wonders lie beneath the cold waves? Who can say what creatures prowl the depths, looking for a meal?

The answer, is of course, no one. At least, no mortal, and many unnatural creatures would have no extreme knowledge of the land either. Even the lord of this realm, Captain Van Riese cannot completely fathom its boundaries or secrets. The truth is, of all the domains in the dark expanse of Ravenloft, the Sea of Sorrows is perhaps the most mysterious.

What then of the islands that seem to float within this sea? Would they not also be subject to the strange laws of the ocean, to be shrouded in fog, mystery and dark horror? None can say for certain.

Off the coast of Lamordia, is an island chain known to the locals as "The Finger." It is of course named such because of its geographical placement of the islands which make up this chain. All the locals of Lamordia know of the largest isle in this chain, that which is named Agony. It is home to a horrible beast the villagers say, and perhaps not any other place in the Demiplane is as feared as this small island. Also known as "The Devil's Domicile," not even young boys will dare each other to go out there.

But what of the other islands in this chain? Surely there must be more, for it is an island chain after all. Most of the islands are small hunks of rock, barely capable of supporting plant life, let alone anything which resembles an animal. However, there is one other island of appreciable size. The isle of Demise.

The isle of Demise is the last island in the isle chain known as The Finger, and it also larger unexplored. There is some known, from some journals that were found, but let us go back a bit in history.

In the year 701 BC, a sailing ship named the Doma Ordana set forth from the city of Ludendorf to Martira Bay in Darkon. She was a small merchant ship, with a crew of perhaps twenty-five. The captain was a Lamordian named Johan Wehner. A fair and intelligent man, Wehner had made the trip from Ludendorf to Martira Bay many times, and knew the route well. Following the old custom of always keeping land in sight, he set off one fine summer day. Of course, out on the sea, the fog was ever-present, but he managed to keep a foggy outline of the coast in view, and he and his crew were content.

Then the storm came. A bad one it was, and hung over the strip of ocean that was south of the Finger, making the ship's normal route dangerous. Wehner decided that instead of weathering the storm, they should skirt around it and travel along the edge of the Isle of Agony, coming around in clear skies. There was some objection to this, but after seeing the storm, most of it let off and the ship started on its new course.

About half-way through the voyage, and half-way around the Isle of Agony, disaster struck. The ship struck something and split open below the waterline. Panic ensued, and the ship sunk rapidly. Unfortunately, most of the crew perished that day. The only survivors were Wehner and five of his crew who managed to cling to floating debris. Shivering in the cold waters, they looked wildly about for any signs that there was safety nearby. They saw the foggy outline of shore, and made for that, cursing their ill luck and dreading the fact that they would have to land on the Isle of Agony.

Luck was with them that day, at least in their eyes. They did not crawl onto a small beach on the Isle of Agony, but on the Isle of Demise, the furthest island in the Finger. Of course, they did not know this at first.

The small beach they crawled onto was deserted, but littered with flotsam. It extended about thirty feet, then abruptly ended at a sheer cliff face. Wehner and his companions scaled the cliff, coming along into the very center of the island, which was a deep jungle. After staying there awhile they ventured onward, and came to a great stone edifice built of a white marble. Entering an archway into the building, they soon became lost within a white maze of featureless halls. Eventually, one by one, they perished as they were transformed into stone statues! Wehner was the last, and he realized that all those who changed had seen someone who was in the maze with them. He tied a cloth around his face so that he could not see above waist level, and eventually he found his mysterious assailant. She was a beautiful shapely woman, but when he attacked her she managed to spit a poison into his eyes blinding him. He fled, and set his journals into a barrel and that is the last that is known of the poor man.

So what is known about the Isle of Demise? Only what these waterlogged journals have released to the world. A tale of woe and warning, and as such many sailors have spread the word, and all avoid the Isle of Demise, like the Isle of Agony. But one must wonder...what treasures and mysteries could such a land hold?

The Isle of Demise

The land of Demise is small, only being about six miles across and perhaps three wide at its farthest point. It is surrounded by a small thirty foot long strip of white sand beach before it ends at an abrupt cliff face. At its lowest point this cliff is still fifty feet high, and at the highest it exceeds two hundred. Climbing this mountain face is difficult, because it always seems to be in a state of crumbling, and thus climbers have a -25% penalty to their chance of successfully ascending.

There are numerous caves along the cliffs, and it is in one at the beach level that the shattered remains of Wehner reside. He is in his nineties now, and quite eccentric. The years of loneliness have worn at his sanity, making him mutter to himself almost constantly. Over the years he has regained the ability to distinguish light from dark, but still cannot perceive anything beyond this. Encounters with this man will likely lead the players to believe that he is a crazy old hermit, but he remembers vividly the monster at the center of the maze of Demise.

Johan Wehner, Male Human Fighter, Chaotic Good

Armor Class:	10	Str:	7
Movement:	12	Dex:	13
Hit Dice:	1 (3 hp)	Con:	12
THAC0:	20	Int:	10
No. of Attacks:	1	Wis:	16
Damage:	1d4+1	Cha:	11
Special Attacks:	Nil		
Special Defenses:	Nil		
Size:	M		
Morale:	Unsteady (7)		

Wehner wears only a suit of rags and has a crude fishing pole he has made from drift wood and debris. He also has some flint and tinder and the dagger that belonged to his mother. Little does he know that the dagger is enchanted. It carries a bonus to attack in combat (+1) and also makes the possessor feel at ease when it is held in the hand. This has the effect of negating an existing Fear Check or giving a +2 bonus to any that must be made.

Other than Wehner, there are few creatures along this beach and in the caves. Occasionally one may disturb a Sandling, and crabs are not uncommon at the water's edge.

Once at the top of the cliffs, the traveller will encounter a stretch of badlands that would appear right at home in the blasted landscape of Bluestpur. Indeed, one of Wehner's crewman had been to Kartakass when Bluestpur was joined to the Core, and compared the land to that dark realm. No foliage grows here, and the only animal life is the occasional beetle that scuttles from one rock to the next. The rock in this region ranges from a blackish color to a normal grey. However, all of it is porous and many of the rocks break upon a solid strike.

Also, the spirits of Althea's victims sometimes find a foothold in this vicinity, and they take on a unique aspect. Much like Althea's lover died, some of her victim's spirits have stayed on, and have roamed this island. Through their unique death, and almost as some ironic joke, they have come to inhabit rocks, and gain some limited control over these objects. However, since they died from being petrified, they absolutely hate the state they are forced into, and attack all living things, in anger. See the new monstrous compendium entries for info on this new type of undead. After travelling about a mile inland, one will come to the Caldera. This is a large depression in the center of the island, about four miles long and one mile wide. It drops down to sea level at its lowest point, and is filled with a verdant green jungle. The image one would get is that this island is really an extinct volcano. There are numerous underground hot springs that bubble to the surface and pockets of steamy mist are common. The one thing that is missing from this jungle is the animal life. No animals larger than the size of a normal insect live in this verdant paradise. There is plenty of natural fruit and fresh water to survive on, so those that can live on these will find life somewhat easier here than other places. Still, the silence of the jungle should eventually get on the nerves of anyone.

Just because the jungle is devoid of animal life doesn't mean it's entirely safe however. There are Retch Plants throughout the whole place, and patches of Oblivix have been found. Finally, in the damper areas of the jungle there have been sightings of Shambling Mounds.

The pockets of steam themselves can be quite dangerous, indeed they mark the spots of hot springs erupting. If one is within ten feet of one of these geysers when it erupts, the victim gets a saving throw vs. breath weapon. If the save is failed, the victim suffers 4d6 damage from violent steam burns. A successful saving throw means only half damage is taken.

And one of the most dangerous things in the jungle isn't an animal or a plant. It is isolated to some small pockets of the land, due to the lack of visitors to this island. As one travels, one may come upon a strange garden of statues. All of them are of humans and demihumans and all look to be in some agony when they were carved. In fact, the truth is that the Petrification Virus is strong in some concentrated areas here, and woe to those that enter the area of dormant spores and statues. Information on the plants described here can be found in the Monstrous Manual while info on the Petrification Virus can be found in the Third Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium.

The weather on the Isle of Demise is hot and muggy, with the occasional rainstorm. These storms prove a blessing on the badlands of the island, as they bring the only fresh water to that part of the land.

The Maze of Demise

In the center of the Isle of Demise lies a great structure created out of white marble. This rock seems impervious to any damage whatsoever, and even appears to be in the same condition it was when first made. The whole structure is circular, being about a mile in diameter.

There is only one entrance to the building, an archway inscribed with strange runes above it. The runes have failed to yield to any attempts to decipher them, both magic and knowledge have failed. The reason for this is because the runes are actually cloaked in an illusion. The illusion is a collection of runes from Althea's homeworld and they mean absolutely nothing. Underneath them are the real runes, which if translated by magic would read: "Maze of Demise."

As soon as one enters the maze, they may very well be doomed. The whole structure is cloaked with illusion spells and the like, which permeate the entire structure. In truth, the maze is quite simple to traverse, but the illusion spells make it nigh impossible.

When one enters the maze, turning about in it offers no help. Already the illusions have taken hold to make it appear as though one has travelled for hours throughout the place, and the viewer only sees numerous passages behind him that branch off.

The whole interior of the maze is just hallways of white marble, featureless except for torches that line the walls every forty feet or so. Occasionally one will come upon a statue that is incredibly life-like. Without a doubt, each statue bears a look of pure horror upon its face and each one is quite beautiful in an eerie way.

In traversing the maze, it is almost impossible. It takes a total of thirty hours of travelling through the illusion-cloaked halls to reach the center. Every level of illusions a character is immune to reduces this time by four hours. Thus, a character with an Intelligence of 25 is immune to 7th-level Illusions and it would only take such a character two hours to traverse to the center of the maze. A True Seeing spell will also help the characters. For every hour that the spell is employed, fifteen hours is taken off the total of thirty. Thus, a character using such a spell for two hours would also reach the center.

At the center of the maze is Althea's home. It is a large area, filled with gardens that are open to the sky (however another illusion makes this look like a solid rock roof from the outside and this illusion is impenetrable by spells), pools of luxuriant water supplied by hot springs, and heaps of coins and artwork scattered around. There are also glimmering fountains of sweet water and comfortable couches and pillows scattered about.

Finally, there is also a special statue here. It is of a large well-muscled human male wearing normal clothing. His right eye has been carved out of the rock and replaced with a crystal of deep purple amethyst. This is in fact, Althea's unwilling mate and the reason she has become trapped in the Demiplane of Dread. It is in fact a Glyptar, the spiritual remains of a Maedar Medusa. He has come to be trapped in the crystal and can animate the statue that he inhabits as a Stone Golem.

Tyrus, Glyptar in Stone Golem, Lawful Evil

Armor Class:	2 (0)	Str:	22 (8)
Movement:	8 (Fly 12 (A))	Dex:	17 (19)
Hit Dice:	14 (1/2)	Con:	20 (9)
Hit Points:	133 (1)	Int:	11
THAC0:	3 (20)	Wis:	11
No. of Attacks:	1	Cha:	8
Damage:	3d8+10 (1)		
Special Attacks:	See below		
Special Defenses:	See below		
Magic Resistance:	Nil		
Size:	M (5'8" tall)		
Morale:	Elite (14)		
XP Value:	8,000 (65)		

*Note the stats in parenthesis refer to the Glyptar when it is apart from the statue.

In the statue form, the Tyrus the Glyptar is considerably more powerful than a stone golem of normal type. No one is sure why this is, perhaps it is because of the different animating force behind the statue, perhaps it is a mysterious effect of the Dark Powers. Either way in his golem form, Tyrus weighs 1,000 pounds and is incredibly strong. A +2 or better weapon is required to harm him, and he is completely immune to the effects of toxins, disease, mind and life-affecting spells and he gains a +4 bonus to any saving throws vs. physical damage, should such a save be allowed. Any slashing or piercing weapon that strikes Tyrus only causes one damage, plus any strength or magical bonuses. If a priest were to cast a Bless spell upon a Pick however, it would

cause full damage each time it hits for the duration of the spell. Three times per day, Tyrus can use an ability that mimics the Slow spell on his opponents.

A Detect Magic spell will not register with Tyrus, because of his unique animation. If mental contact is attempted, the victim must make a Horror check. A Protection From Evil spell does hamper Tyrus, giving him a -2 penalty to attack and the recipient of the spell gets a +2 bonus to any saving throws because of Tyrus. The victim must be careful that he does not break the spell however. If Tyrus is subject to an Animate Rock spell, he gets a saving throw. If failed, he suffers a -4 penalty to all actions while the caster concentrates. An Earthquake spell targeted at Tyrus causes 5d12 damage, unless he makes a successful saving throw in which case he only takes half damage. A Rock to Mud spell causes 3d10 damage to Tyrus with no saving throw, but the reverse of the spell heals him completely! A Stone to Flesh spell allows any weapon to harm him normally for the next round.

If he was to be freed from the statue, he becomes a very quick, flying crystal. He is incredibly weak in the form, but can attack by ramming into opponents with a sharp edge. This causes but a single point of damage, and Tyrus would most likely try to flee combat if he is freed. He has no special abilities in his Glyptar form, except the ability to use Stone to Flesh at will. How this will help him is speculative, but he may try to burrow into the ground using it.

Althea (Demilord of Demise)

History

Long ago on an alternate Prime Material Plane there lived a clan of Medusae. These creatures dwelled beneath the earth in a large cavern complex and were all female medusa, except for their venerated one. His name was Tyrus, and he was a Maedar Medusa. The female medusa fairly worshipped him, as he was the one creature they could spend any time with without becoming petrified. As to his part, Tyrus just basked in the adoration.

Tyrus chose those he would mate with at will, from the most beautiful Medusa there. The children from such a union were always humans however, and were petrified by the mothers. Occasionally the community would have to raid from the surface to steal human males so that more female medusa could be created. The intent of the clan was to create more Maedar eventually, however.

One of the Medusa in the clan, a creature by the name of Althea was cursed, however. She was ugly, even by medusa standards. Her body was beautiful, but her face was blunt and hard, her eyes glittered like black gems and her forked tongue was longer than was usual for a Medusa. Because of her appearance, Tyrus scorned her and would have nothing to do with her. This infuriated the creature and she formulated a plan. Posing as a diplomat from her tribe, she made contact with a community of Drow that lived in the Underdark. All under the pretense of being a diplomatic personage from the tribe, she signed a contract with the Drow that stated if they would fashion a specific magical item for her then her tribe would leave them alone for the rest of time. The Drow community was small at the time and greedy, so they readily agreed, thinking that they could grow large and strong, then destroy the medusa threat.

A few months later, the device was ready. It was a brooch set with a stone of amethyst that would dampen all magical abilities and spells within a ten foot radius. No magic items or innate abilities would function in this area. Wearing the brooch upon her robe, she strode to Tyrus' chambers. Drawing a short sword upon him when he turned his back upon her, she took the Maedar hostage. At first he tried to use his abilities to pass through the stone at their feet, but he found he could not, due to the magic of the brooch. So she took Tyrus hostage, holding the sword at his neck. The other medusa fumed and raged, but none dared get close enough to stop her.

Fleeing into the darkness of the Underdark, Althea told Tyrus of how they would spend the rest of their lives together in bliss and happiness. For his part, Tyrus spit at her. After they had fled for about ten hours from the tribe, and she was sure that none was following her, she stopped. Turning to Tyrus, she said that it was time for her. He spat at her again, saying that he would never submit to her and her ugliness. Althea's rage grew at this remark, and she flew into a rage, suddenly lashing out at Tyrus with her sword. Then she realized as he fell back with a stunned look upon his face that she had struck true, and Tyrus was about to die. Backing away in horror at what she had done is perhaps the only kind thing Althea ever did for Tyrus. For when she backed away, Tyrus was removed from the influence of the brooch and he sent his spirit loose from his body, hoping to find his way back to the tribe. Unfortunately, he was captured in the crystal of amethyst that was set into the magical brooch. The magical backlash that occurred knocked Althea into unconsciousness.

When she awoke, Althea was in a luxuriant garden, in the center of her maze. She soon came to realize what her prison was, and then she found that Tyrus was with her, trapped within the brooch she wore. The brooch was now non-magical, and soon after she petrified her first victim she carefully removed the brooch and placed it within an eye of the statue. Thus, Tyrus was born into the statue.

Althea's goal now is a new one. She desires a mate. She believes that if she can bear a male child to become a Maedar, then she can place Tyrus's crystal within the body and he shall be reborn. Then, he will shower her with the love and affection she feels she deserves. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Dark Powers of Ravenloft made Althea the demilord of a small island in the Finger island chain, and her realm is known as Demise. Her curse is to forever try to have a male child, a Maedar, but unknown to her it is not possible because Maedar are a race apart from Medusa. All she will ever have are female medusa, and she destroys these in fits of anger.

She also has her beloved Tyrus, but he is as cold as any statue towards her. Despite the fact that she has given him a body, he will not speak to her, nor return any of her affections. Nor will he harm her however, for he sees the torture she endures and wishes to prolong it for all eternity. Althea cannot close the borders to her domain, due to her current confinement to the maze. She can however, see through every illusion created inside it, and thus can reach any prey that enters the maze very quickly. She also knows whenever someone enters the maze, and can pinpoint their location within twenty feet.

Althea (Medusa, Lawful Evil)

Armor Class:	5	Str:	12
Movement:	11	Dex:	18
Hit Dice:	6	Con:	13
Hit Points:	27	Int:	11
THAC0:	15	Wis:	10
No. of Attacks:	1	Cha:	6
Damage:	1 or 1d6		
Special Attacks:	Petrification, Poison, Blindness		
Special Defenses:	Nil		
Magic Resistance:	Nil		
Size:	M (6' tall)		
Morale:	Elite (13)		

Althea is horrid to look upon. Her face is covered in small scales like a snakes, and her eyes are nothing but black beads. Her mouth is thin and lipless and her forked tongue slips through occaisionally to taste the air for odors. She speaks her native language and the language of Lamordia with a thick accent.

In combat Althea's preferred method of attack is her gaze. She can affect one creature per round with this attack, as long as the victim is within thirty feet. Such a victim must save vs. petrification or be turned into a stone statue. She can also attack with the asps on her head, but she must be within one foot of the victim to use this attack. The victim suffers one damage and must save vs. poison or die. The asps may also spit their poison at a victim within ten feet every round. The victim must save vs. breath weapon or the poison has hit his eyes and he is blinded until he receives magical aid to combat the blindness. Finally, she carries an ornate short sword (worth 500 gp) and a short bow with arrows. Each of these causes 1d6 damage and sometimes she coats these weapons in the poison of her asps.

Whenever anyone enters Althea's maze, she senses them and goes to spy. She will pick one of the group, the male with the highest charisma and then try to kill off all the rest with her petrifying gaze. When the last male is left she will try to seduce him, but she will cover her face with a vial made of sheer white silk and her head with a turban made of the same material. After bedding the male, she will kill him with her gaze or her asps.

Althea has gained one special ability as Demilord of Demise. She can sing a hauntingly beautiful song that acts as a Charm Person spell to all on the island or within 100 yards of it. However, this charm only acts to compel the listener to go to the center of the island, the maze. Once inside, the charm wears off. Also, those inside the maze can hear the song, but are not affected by it.

STONE SPIRIT

Climate:	Any Rocky
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Always
Diet:	Nil

Intelligence:	Average (8-10)
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Chaotic Evil
No. Appearing:	1-2
Armor Class:	-1
Movement:	6
Hit Dice:	7
THAC0:	13
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage / Attack:	2d6
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	Immune to Lightning, normal fire, and mind spells
Special Weaknesses:	Turning, Cold
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M-L (4'-12')
Morale:	Fanatic (17)
XP Value:	975

The Stone Spirits (also known as Grave Stones) are the spiritual remains of petrified victims, fused with rock from their lamentations. Sometimes (20%) a spirit of a victim who died from being petrified will be drawn to a particular stone of at least a four foot diameter and fuse with that rock. The creature then becomes a Stone Spirit and will viciously attack all life it finds. So far, they have only been found on the Isle of Demise, victims of the Demilord, Althea.

The Stone Spirit appears as a normal rock, until it senses life. Then it uses its innate power of Stone Shape to form itself into horrid face with a leering maw filled with stalagmite and stalagmite teeth. (It may use this power at will.) The creature may roll or form small legs to rush after its prey as well. When the Stone Spirit attacks, it does so with a vicious bite. This bite causes 2d6 damage but other than that has no special effects.

The Stone Spirit is immune to the effects of lightning and electricity which it simply channels down to the ground. It is also immune to normal fire, such attacks merely blacken the stone somewhat. Also, because of its undead nature, it is immune to mind-affecting spells. Against magical and extremely hot fires, it normal damage, but has a +4 bonus to any saving throws it gets. However, unlike most undead, the Stone Spirit is affected by Cold attacks. Such attacks form ice crystals in the cracks of the rock which then melt and expand, rupturing the creature. As such, Stone Spirits suffer double damage from all cold attacks and have a -4 penalty to any saving throws they must make.

The Stone Spirit can be affected by the Stone Shape spell, but it gets a saving throw vs. spells, and the next round it can use it's innate power to change itself back to whatever shape it wants. The creature's Stone Shape power can only ever affect itself. A Passwall spell cast upon the creature will destroy it if it fails a saving throw vs. spells. A Transmute Rock to Mud spell will slow the creature for 2d6 rounds while the reverse of the spell will heal the creature, providing there is mud present to fill in any cracks and breaks. A Stone to Flesh spell reduces this creature's AC to 9 for the following two rounds.

Because it is fused with the rock, the destruction of the stone the spirit resides in also causes it to shatter and it's essence to be blown on the wind. For some reason, dwarves and gnomes are more likely to become Stone Spirits, and there is a 30% chance that such a spirit will be drawn into the rock.

Mark Graydon

THE ISLE OF DERMOCHEL

by R.M. Sweeney & Alastor

Genesis of Dermochel:

Human(oid) peoples first landed on the lost isle completely by accident. Working on the mossy-peat near where the swamplands met the ocean, they were taken by surprise by a fierce wind-storm. They took cover as best they could, only to learn later that the windstorm had torn a large section of peat free from the shore. Swept miles away from shore with no way to steer and no hope of swimming the distance back, they fell into despair.

This rag-tag crew of ocean goers knew, of course, that sea water was salty and not pleasant-tasting, but thirst began to take its toll. Dehydration quickly began to set in. Mad with both hunger and thirst, these victims of fate began to turn a hungry eye towards each other.

Deliria began to set in and one of them overpowered and sacrificed another Human(oid) to a beast-god from his fevered dreams. As he did so, a Zaratan rose from the depths (having just finished one of their 100 year mating rituals (how's that for stamina)).

The peat stuck to its back and the villagers departed their unwelcome raft.

The new culture had severe problems with inbreeding and also developed a cult to the false beast-god. They believe this beast-god (to whom the human sacrifice was made) saved them from the evil clutches of the sea-demon (a being of wind and sea which enjoys tormenting people to death.) The beast-god requires human sacrifices or it will again sink beneath the waves, abandoning them to the sea-demon again.

Those riding upon the waves in vessels or ships are seen as being in league with the sea-demon (having traded their souls for the power to travel the waves safely.) The local people do not fish or build boats of any kind (even a simple raft). Such activities are said to give glory to the sea-demon.

Those who wash up upon the Zaratan's shore after a shipwreck are assumed to be new peoples the Beast-god wishes to add to his worshipers. Those refusing to worship the Beast-god are fed to the Zaratan as an offering/sacrifice to that same god.

Of course, newcomers are used for sacrifices long before natives. Men are sacrificed before women. (For logical biological reasons.... one man can sire many children, but women are the rate-limiting reagent.)

While unworthy of their own domain, the repeated ritual sacrifice and a particularly horrid incident with a ship's crew who came in peace and offered to take the natives to the shore attracted the attention of the mists.

The island is considered a demi-domain, though it doesn't have a lord, and there are no borders. It's called Dermochel (after the latin name of the largest sea turtle), and it travels all over the Sea of Sorrows.

Society and Rituals:

The society is primitive by our standards, sort of like the Easter Island natives. Their leader, called a Temmin, is their general, head-priest and president.

Each year, at the beginning of summer, a middle-aged male (or an adventurer) is sacrificed to the terrible beast-god Leatherback, who will (supposedly) sink into the ocean if a proper ritual isn't carried out.

Well, for one, being thrown inside the gaping maw of the Zaratan seems appropriate. Perhaps drugging the PCs with herbs the Zaratan seems to like (Seasoning.) Or tenderizing them (Torture). Some version of ritualized dance, feast, and headress would be a good start. (The PCs might think these primitives consider them gods or some such... especially if the PCs have displayed magic in front of the primitives).

Leatherback needs these sacrifices to fuel his power, as he is constantly at war with the sea-daemon, Rauth... or so the natives believe...

The People:

The Dermochi appear as humans, except their skin has a greenish tinge to them and their hair is totally dark green. They wear loincloths and feathers, and often have tattoos. They always appear friendly to newcomers, but never offer any help to get them off the island. Quite the opposite, they make them feel welcome and secure... until the time comes for the ritual. The rituals are often bloody and chaotic, and if it is a group of adventurers, the Dermochi, in their frenzy, often don't stop on a single sacrifice... ("The more Rauthan blood is spilled, the stronger Leatherback gets")

Robert Sweeney and Alastor

THE SEVEN ISLANDS OF SIN : ISLE OF VANITAS (VANITY)

by R.M. Sweeney

Main Personalities

Ruler: Angela Foxglove, actress/singer (Bard)
Wolfen (secret)
Chr: 18

Father: Master Richard Foxglove (Bard, Songwriter & musician -cello)
Vampyre (secret)
Cello: Evensong (magical)
Chr:18

Mother: Jacnith Silkwane-Foxglove (Bard, Musician -violin)
Wolfwere (secret)
Violin: Ariel (magical)
Chr:17 (16 after childbirth)

BACKGROUND:

Foxglove and Jacnith kept their secret natures from each other, never knowing the other as anything other than a supreme musician. Logically, the two formed a duet.. and then a more intimate couple.

With their musical skill, they were assured a life of relative affluence. Both mother and father possessed personal magnetism and beauty that was truly and utterly stunning. Their child, Angela, surpassed them.

Angela could use her charm and beauty to manipulate people around her with ease. She studied vocal performance (to complement her parents), both singing and acting. Her father taught her the arts of persuasion (a book of persuasive speech) and her mother taught her the refined art of makeup.

When Angela uses all her manipulative teachings, adds her finest makeup, and dressed in regal fashion, her effective charisma jumps to 19. With her ability to alter reactions in addition to her mother and father playing, her charisma jumped to 20 during concerts.

However, Angela had no real love in her heart, simply a manipulative desire which she exercised again and again.

With time, Angela saw the effects childbirth had upon the female of the species and vowed to never beget a child.

Sadly, however, her beauty captured the attention of a lord who took her for his bride. She was well treated and beloved by all of the servants, but she couldn't dissuade her lord from desiring children.

Eventually, she got pregnant. Quickly, she arranged for an end to this pregnancy. Again, she got pregnant.. and again she ended it. Now her lord was a very virile man and began to suspect: so he had her closely watched. When he discovered what she had been doing, he confronted her.

For 9 months no one saw hide nore hair of the lady, Angela. Her lordship had hidden her away in a secret dungeon where no one would help her get rid of the child within her womb.

Unto Angela was born a child, Joy, one of sweet inner disposition to match the external beauty of her mother. Everyone, including Angela, grew to love the child.

Even so, Angela became obsessed with her appearance. After the birth and captivity, Angela felt fatter, less alluring than before. She tried everything she could think of but felt inadequate when compared to her daughter's angelic face and nature.

Time and gravity began to have their toll and Angela strove continually with makeup and corsets to maintain her beauty. But despite her efforts, no one could hold back the hands of time..

Angela began investigating stories and lore from the far lands and even arranged to travel abroad with daughter and husband to search out possible ways of enhancing her beauty. Some complete quackery.

Eventually, however, she run across an item rumored to be magic but haunted: the Bath of the Morning Sun. Angela smoothly charmed the owners of the item and poisoned them. Recovering the bathtub of solid gold, she had it brought to her manor-house.

Jacnith, of course, knew her child's mind and was equally (if not more) obsessed with finding such a cure to the eventual tide of time. Richard had begun dallaying with younger trollups and Jacnith greatly feared losing him and his music. Desparate, she spoke with her daughter at length. Angela agreed to let her mother use the Enchanted Bath first.

Her mother was restored to all her youthful glory. She radiated with vitality and health. Jacnith, quickly dressing in her finest garb, ran off to the city to enjoy the affect her beauty would have on the menfolk.

After Jacnith, Angela seduced another serving boy into the room, where she teased him and taunted him until she got him over to the tub. There he stood in awe of the vastness of gold before him... and she slit his throat.

As his blood spilled into the tub, Angela began adding the pure water that she had already warmed. The color of the blood did not fade as water was added, but rather stayed deep deep red: the color of a full rich wine. She gingerly sat naked in this crimson liquid and soaked in it at length. Dipping her head momentarily beneath the water, Angela stood and got out of the tub.

At first, her appearance was quite alarming. Her skin hung wrinkled and pale and she looked grotesque. But that would soon pass. Pulling at her skin, Angela caused the flesh to split and fall away from her like a snake shedding its scales. Afterwards, there she stood, naked but radiant. She eyed herself in the mirror at length, appraising her own beauty. She was so beautiful, so young, so

sexy. Entranced by her own appearance, she smiled. "I'm still the most beautiful woman in all the land. Mother be damned to hell, I'm prettier still."

Now young and beautiful again, she went out on the town, seducing young boys and men at every turn. She toyed with the men.. until she met him. He was a strong mature man with a regal bearing. A knight in shining armor as if out of the storybooks of old. She seduced him.. she did not return home that night.

When she returned next morning, her husband confronted her, berating her for her antics in town.. threatening her. That's when they heard the sound of screaming.

Angela rushed to the golden tub and there she saw an old crone screeching as she looked into the mirror. A moment's time had to pass before Angela recognized Jacnith.. now even older and uglier than before. Startled, Angela began to backpedal when she caught a glimpse of her own reflection in the mirror: she was aging, too! Her husband was so dismayed by her sudden transformation to an aged hag that he stumbled backward.. falling down the stairs.. falling to his death.

A sting of young male bodies followed as mother and daughter began to obsessively use the tub to maintain the appearance of their youth. Shortly, however, her mother wept realizing that she could not win this battle.

Jacnith, now an aged woman, left her daughter's home with a warning about the insidious nature of the tub. Jacnith now lives in a meager home teaching children to play beautiful music. She still performs with her violin from time to time, but this time, she must play alone. Richard, her husband, has moved on with his career and takes many young music students for his lovers.

Angela sees and knows all of this, making her fear her fading beauty even more than ever before. Especially since her love affair with the young paladin is going so well.

Young Joy continues to be the delight of the local boys, rivaling even her revitalized mother. Even Angela's paladin, Samson, has complemented the young girl.

Angela tries to compete with her daughter for the paladin's affections... however, late one night as they are delayed returning home, Angela feels the effects of the tub fading. By the time she enters the house, she is in a panic over her appearance, but Samson has yet to notice: he's too busy proclaiming his undying love for her. He's too involved with asking her to marry him. She begs the Paladin to return with a dozen rose, a ring, and a fine silk dress: if he does this, she stammers, she will gladly marry him. The paladin is off.

Fearful that her aging appearance will destroy her one chance at happiness, she flees upstairs quickly searching for the tub. There she sees her daughter, Joy, examining the tub. In desperation, she kills her daughter, using her blood to fill the tub. The hour passes slowly but eventually, she hears Samson returning, proclaiming his love and announcing the fact that he has brought her gifts with him. Quickly, she gets out of the tub.. seeing her aged appearance in the mirror. She cringes, but prepares to remove the second skin as Samson searches for her.

Closer he comes as she tears at her skin: but this time it doesn't come off. She pulls with all her strength, but the skin doesn't split. She screams in anguish as she cries face forward on the mirror.

Samson quickly enters and sees the ghastly scene: Joy with her throat slit on the floor while the tub lies still filled with bloody water. Appalled he stares at the wrinkled hag on the floor, bawling into the mirror and babbling incoherently.

"A woman.. she was a woman.. only a young man.. only a young man works.. oh, what have I done? Oh, my..."

The paladin approaches the bloody woman with his sword drawn determined to arrest her, but she collapses sobbing in his arms. "It's me, Samson, it's me.. my love."

That is when Samons recognizes his lover's eyes in the aged face.. his mind spins agast, unable to accept what he's seen.

Her heart broken by the rejection of her lover, she beats him unconscious with a heavy rock. Emptying the tub, she re-fills it... using his blood.

CURRENT SKETCH:

Angela has later become a Wolfen. She changed to wolfen shortly after her bout of grief and guilt over her actions (killing her child and all), a fact that came as terrible shock to one as vain as she. She associates her change with a look of anger and betrayal from her daughter as she killed her, thinking it to be a curse. She doesn't know about her mother's and father's secret: discovering the true identity of her parents will probably drive her seek to kill them for their unholy legacy.

Angela must always use the tub to restore the physical aspects of her youth, but now she can hunt in Wolfen form, drink the blood of a young man, and regurjitate it back into the tub for her bath.

The number of young men needed to maintain a lifestyle of beauty for long time (in addition to biological concerns of the wolfen) are staggering. She isn't able to cover up so many murders, thus she has to remain concealed for long periods of time. Too many killings would be too easily noticed. There's also the possibility that she can 'feed' off several young men to gain the blood she needs, leaving most young men in town weak and tired. That's the jow of her wolfen abilities.

She has deeply disgusted to turn into a "horrible beast", but since she requires the form to gather the young men she needs for her bath, she cannot avoid transforming and giving to her bestial instincts.

Indeed, in wolfen form Angela is ruled by her bestial nature and has copulated with wolves of the forest. She has given birth to a group of fast-maturing Wolfen who serve her every need.

(Insert the grotesqueness of the Wolfen reproductive habits with the added fact that her relations are incestual.)

Her children, the wolfen, are vain, conceited, artistic, and uniformly beautiful. The city in which she lives has become a haven for the best and brightest musicians, artists, and aritsans. Or at least that is the reputation. In fact, most of these artists are her ever-growing chain of prodigy.

She suffers though, in a perplexing manner. With her charisma at full strength due to the youth imparted by the tub, she has an effective charisma of 19 and can seduce, manipulate, and control nearly any man she sees. However, she has come to believe that people only seem to love her because of her skill at manipulation. Thus, while she enjoys the adoration of many, she does not feel loved.. for how could they love her if they knew the truth?

Her entire sense of self-worth and value revolves around her physical appearance. Any blimish, flaw, or wrinkle sends her into complete disarray. She obsesses over having the very finest clothing and jewelry.

She wants very much to be loved, but surrounds herself with so many lies and illusions that no one can truly love her.. for no one can truly know her. Seeing another in love enrages her.

She tends to fall hopelessly in love with Paladins, who once they find out about her are horrified. She then kills them.

If Angela doesn't bathe regularly, the changes she experiences are absolutely hideous. She doesn't just age gracefully like some women do: 24 hours after her last bath, she ages one year per round. This aging advances up until she reaches an extremely venerable age. During the aging process however, she develops all the worse signs of female aging: sagging breasts, butt, liverspots, her hair turns white, thins out, the skin wrinkles and hangs loosely on her body. Osteoporosis then sets in, causing her to hunch over. Finally warts, blemishes, and black spreading melanomas form. Eventually, she looks like a hideously old witch/hag/or lich as you see fit. She never decays to dust, however, nor does she become a completely 'clean' skeleton..

THE LAND:

The Isle of Vanitas is rather small but filled with every sort of beauty: tropical flowers and rare birds live in the forest in the middle of the island, where fresh streams running down from Mount Makal form enchanting crystalline lakes. A few villages are scattered around the isle, each one ruled by a small council of the most prominent families. The island is a veritable paradise to the visitors who frequently stop by to relax... and often aren't able to leave. The islanders come from different countries and have all chose to settle on the isle when they visited it for the first time, bewitched by its primeval beauty and its temperate climate.

The cultural level of the island is Renaissance (the majority of the inhabitants being from Mordent and Kartakass). A few people live in the very core of the isle, and these are the only one that can be really called natives. They are black-skinned and belong to the same tribe that once owned and used the Bath of the Morning Sun. They shun the other inhabitants of the isle and fear Angela, for they know that she possesses their artifact now.

When Angela wants to close the borders, the foreigners on the island feel the sudden and incontrollable need to remain on the island and to settle here permanently with those dear to them (they cannot leave for they have fallen in love with the place). Once the borders are open again, the foreigners can make a Saving Throw vs. Spells (male Paladins have a -3 penalty): if they succeed, they can leave (they don't feel the urge to remain anymore), otherwise they are bound to the land for at least one year (at the end of which they can roll another Saving Throw).

Bath of the Morning Sun (Artifact)

A tribe of 'primitives' had a custom. When a mother grew to an ancient age she could choose one last day of youth and beauty. A young man would be led to the edge of a golden bathtub. There, his throat would be cut and his blood poured into the tub. Pure water from melted mountain snow would then be added and the elder woman would bathe in this water for an hour.

At the end of the hour, the woman would drop below the surface of the water and emerge again. Her skin would be wrinkled, old, and white, but then it would split: shedding this old skin would reveal the woman renewed beneath.

However, upon the end of the day, the woman would be killed.

Curse: 24 hrs after use, the woman will age rapidly, advancing even past her apparent age before. (Age = Age + 10 years). This aging is cosmetic only (no increases in wisdom or Int, no decreases in Str or Con).

This is why the woman are killed after a day.
Only the blood of young men works.. women's blood is useless.

Other notes:

Jacnith is still around teaching music.

Richard teaches music and has become a maestro. From time to time, he still plays.

The ghost of her daughter, Joy, haunts Angela.

Robert Sweeney

ISLE OF ZARKASIS

by R. Sweeney

Background:

Zarkasis was an Ogre-magi who took to studying the ways of the mind and psionics. He was oppressed by his normal kin, who preferred magic to psionics. Eventually, he grew powerful enough to pose a threat to the leaders of the Ogre magi society and was persecuted. When the higher ranking ogres learned that Zarkasis had been trafficking with the Illithids in return for Psionic instruction and lore, they declared him a traitor to their race. All the Ogre Magi he had swayed to his cause were horribly murdered and he fled in terror.

Hounded from one country to the next, he eventually fled to the sea. Hounded even there, he was eventually pursued and trapped on a small island. In truth, this island was a great mythical and titanic beast known as a zaratan. In a desperate maneuver, Zarkasis performed a Switch Personality maneuver to put the beast in his body, and he in its. The pursuing Ogre Magi band captured and killed the "traitor" in a furious magical onslaught. They never discovered Zarkasis's last desperate bid for life. Feeling successful in their task, they returned home with the ashes of Zarkasis's former body.

The Zaratan had a history of its own. Human(oid) peoples first landed on the lost isle completely by accident. Working on the mossy-peat near where the swamplands met the ocean, they were taken by surprise by a fierce wind-storm. They took cover as best they could, only to learn later that the windstorm had torn a large section of peat free from the shore. Swept miles away from shore with no way to steer and no hope of swimming the distance back, they fell into despair. This rag-tag crew of ocean goers knew, of course, that sea water was salty and not pleasant-tasting, but thirst began to take its toll. Dehydration quickly began to set in. Mad with both hunger and thirst, these victims of fate began to turn a hungry eye towards each other.

Deliria began to set in and one of them overpowered and sacrificed another Human(oid) to a beast-god from his fevered dreams. As he did so, a Zaratan rose the depths (having just finished one of their 100 year mating rituals. The peat stuck to its back and the villagers departed their unwelcome raft. The new culture had severe problems with inbreeding and also developed a cult to the false beast-god. They believed this beast-god (to whom the human sacrifice was made) saved them from the evil clutches of the sea-demon (a being of wind and sea which enjoyed tormenting people to death). The beast-god required human sacrifices or it will again sink beneath the waves, abandoning them to the sea-demon again. Those who washed up upon the Zaratan's shore after a shipwreck were thus assumed to be new peoples the Beast-god wishes to add to his worshipers. Those refusing to worship the Beast-god were fed to the Zaratan as an offering/sacrifice to that same god.

However, with the passing decades, the Zaratan's health started deteriorating both because of old age and because of the sea-demon's attacks. In the end it was able to lure the entity in its mouth and to swallow it, imprisoning it inside there, but this cost the Zaratan a permanent loss of stamina.

Zarkasis discovered too late that he was trapped in a body of a great sea beast who was slowly dying. [Loosing 1 pt of con per day.] A beast of the sheer size of the Zaratan, however, could sustain itself for some time in this way, however. [A 25 constitution, it is likely this Zaratan was the spawn of some titan or another, for it was unusually large even for it's breed.]

In a desperate rush, Zarkasis contacted the a Witchdoctor who lived on the island, along with a group of raft and boat dwelling savages. Promising power (and more importantly the survival of the island they had called home) he entered into an agreement with the witchdoctor that he hoped would sustain his life. Early rituals required the loss of human life: the life-energy pulled from the ritually sacrificed victim would restore some of the Zaratan-beast's lost constitution. With time, Zarkasis hit upon a more sustainable method of sustaining his body's health. Long involved Katas and Religious rituals took the place of human sacrifice, but the "great island beast" still required a vast intake of food.

Zarkasis (Zaratan)

Ogre Magi with Classes/Levels 20

Class: Fighter/Ninja/Psionist

Specialty: Martial Arts Master

Levels: F20/N20/P20

Abilities:

S/D/C: Per Body*

Stats: 25 Str, 25 Con, 4 Dex, Wis 15, Int 20, Cha 12

Alignment: LN (Strongly)

*see Switch Personality Psi power.

Current Sketch:

Zarkasis possesses a paranoid fear of the Ogre Magi, whom he assumes will find and kill him if they discover how he evaded their justice. Thus, he keeps his island and his people secluded from the outside world as best he can. He strives to build up his power-base on this limited island surface until he can take his revenge upon those that persecuted him and slew his disciples among the ogre magi. However, such an attempt is difficult to coordinate to say the least. (Especially, since Zarkasis fears he would have to face the Demi-god lord or the Ogre Magi to accomplish such a task.)

General Overview of the Island

Normal Dimensions: 200 yards radius.

Special Effects: Enlarge/Reduction (see below).

Special Defenses: Invisibility

The island has been inscribed with a special set of psionic circuitry - a psionic technology stolen from the illithids. The island itself has been affected by an "enlargement" psionic power (increased in size to 12 times its normal dimensions) bringing it to over a mile in radius.

Meanwhile, a second set of psionic circuits causes any being stepping foot on the island to be affected by a "reduction" power. Any living being on the island must save vs paralyzation or shrink by one inch. These beings must make this saving throw each hour until they have shrunk to 1/12th their normal size. Thus, for the reduced local population, the island has a girth and

wildlife population equal to an island 12 miles in diameter. Notice, non-living objects/creatures (like ships) are not shrunk along with them.

The isle is assumed to be able to support 120 and 120 children, but a greater number slowly erodes the artificial economy. Only the strongest of the children survive. No one on the island can be said to be unhappy or unwilling, since they are mentally dominated but also culturally taught that this life is the proper way of living laid down by the living god of the island. Discord is unknown among these people. Any with their psionic links/domination removed would immediately seek to reaffirm connection with their 'god' and be aghast that any would seek to sever their tie with their lord and master. Much like the Borg of *StarTrek* fiction, these people possess no individuality. Separation from the collective consciousness of their peers would slowly kill them due to depression and eventually catatonia. They don't have names, but rather numerical labels, such as "Seven of Nine".

The island is protected from outside detection by a vast array of psionic circuitry that covers the island with the psionic power, Superior Invisibility. This protects the island from outside detection to some degree.

Society:

The society is arranged into two basic tiers: Overseers and Thrall.

Thrall are those adults who have been found lacking in the potential for psionic power. However, some thrall still find a way to raise themselves above their peers. These fortunate souls are the clergy, those who worship the great island spirit. Lesser blessed than their psionic rivals, they still enjoy a superior position among the thrall. It is they who assign tasks to the lower cast. Generally, however, less than 10 thrall can be clergy. Typically, only one or two of those clergy can actually work magic, which they channel from Zaratan. Should a newborn thrall demonstrate magical potential, but not psionic talent, he will be inducted into the clergy. However, since only ten such positions exist, one of the current non-spellcasting clergy will be demoted. This would be, needless to say, a great loss of face.

All thrall have multiple psionic powers permanently implanted on them via psionic surgery. Typically: Sight Link, Sound Link, Taste Link, Dominate, Empathy, ESP, Telepathic Projection, Hypnotic Suggestion, Probe and Superior Invisibility.

In addition to their menial tasks, the Thrall are extensively trained in the martial arts. Zaratan has developed a specific routine of martial arts skills to be taught to each of the thrall of the worker class. These typically revolve around health, strength, and stamina.

A general worker thrall will have the following skills:

Class: Shenobi Warrior or Ninja (depending on aptitude)

Level: 1d8

NWP: Endurance, Running, Swimming, Survival (Island), Fishing, Hunting

MA: Ironskin, Leap, Speed, Crushing Blow, Ironfist, Chi Attacks, Meditation, Throw, Great Throw

A typical clerical thrall will have the following skills:

Class: Shenobi Cleric (with or without spellcasting ability)

Spheres: Healing(minor), Creation(minor), Necromancy/curative(minor), plant (minor), all.

Level:1d12

Martial Arts Master

Martial Arts AC adjustment

NWP: Religion, Reading/Writing, Mathematics, Spellcraft, Folklore

MA: Leap, Speed, Crushing Blow, Ironfist, Chi Attacks, Meditation, Incapacitator, Push, Concentrated Push, One-finger Push.

Note: * Cure Disease spell very important to prevent cerebral parasites from plaguing the community.

Some thrall will be trained in stonemasonry, others in metal-smithy, carpentry, paper-making, or tailoring. A small herd of goats and cows are kept on the east side of the island along with some gardens, but most of the community's food resources are pulled from the sea.

Ninja thrall will concentrate on climbing skills, as these come in handy when climbing pine trees or performing other hunting tasks in the jungle areas. These ninja are often sent to collect rare animal parts or plants found growing only in wild untamed jungle areas. Great efforts have been made to cultivate these wild plants and animals in captivity, but to no avail. Owing to the presence of the Su in the western forests, these Ninja are often accompanied by warrior-thrall for protection. The Su, however, don't trouble non-psionics in the jungle areas... well, not overly so at any rate.

The Overseers are charged with the maintenance of the island itself and live a very rigorous and demanding life. They have been heavily conditioned to be ultimately lawful in outlook, behavior, and demeanor. Possessing no trace of emotion, they move calmly and precisely at all times.

The overseer class maintains the continued health of the great island beast by means of a complex kata/ritual. Their day is divided into three phases: Sleep, Work, Kata.

During their Sleep phase, they meditate and regain their strength/vitality.

During their work phase, they use their assortment of psionic skills to support/assist/aid the community's growth and development. This work shift involves a great deal of psionic research and other tasks which interest or excite Zaratan. Great Libraries of psionic lore are maintained and updated daily with the result of new studies into this complex art form.

During their kata phase, they perform a ritual kata led by a witch-doctor (one overseer of high rank is declared the witch-doctor for each shift). As they dance and perform their kata, they learn and perfect the Martial Arts skills Zaratan wishes to teach them. They also, however, grow rapidly fatigued, losing one point of constitution per hour. This energy flows into the Zaratan, who grows invigorated from the sacrifice. At the end of their Kata phase, they immediately retire for sleep.

Overseers are typically:

Class: Psion

Level: 1-12

NWP: Reading/Writing, Astronomy, Navigation, Carpentry, Engineering, Gem-cutting, Spellcraft

MA: Meditation, Chi Attacks, all "touch" attacks, all "push" attacks, all "throw" attacks

Notes: All Psions know Convergence. At the appropriate level, they will converge with a psion who will know Psionic Surgery, ESP, Probe, Mindlink, Sightlink, Soundlink, Tastelink, Dominate, Invisibility, and Superior Invisibility. Once they gain the appropriate level, they will use their work period to implant their links in each thrall and every child. Thus, thrall cannot see overseers above a certain level unless the overseer wishes them to. [I believe this level is 3rd minimum level to use convergence].

The overseer class is ranked strongly during the work shift according to their level of psionic mastery. At any point a higher ranking psion can demand the attention and work phase of any lower ranking psion not already commanded by an equal or greater overseer.

Technological Level:

The Psi-technological level of the overseer society has been slowly raised over the millennia to amazing heights. Psionic items and machines are commonplace. Many processes are automatically tended to by weakly powered psionic machines, but closely overseen by the overseer class. Each overseer will be well dressed in a simple blue robe and well tailored sandals. They also possess a variety of psionic items handed down through the ages.

Psionic circuitry will cover nearly every open space of "civilized" land. Indeed, one of the great tasks of the overseers of the current era is to identify and improve the circuitry laid down by a previous overseer of antiquity by incorporating the latest theories and research.

Every individual, thrall or overseer, will eventually be invested with a psionic tattoo (see *The Illithiad*). Sometimes, a person who believes he can improve an existing tattoo will erase and rescribe a tattoo during his work period, even if this tattoo is only on a common thrall. Every member of society will possess two rings that have been psionically empowered.

Typically, the left ring, communicator, will possess the powers of mindlink, dominate, intellect fortress, and psychic crush. The right ring, community, will possess the powers of convergence, cannibalize, appraise, wrench, and introspection. Every ring possesses Int of 18. At this level of intelligence, the rings will possess the powers of "speech", and "telepathy" as per "intelligent magic items" in the DMG. Thus, each individual goes through his life with two genius level counselors to aid and advise him or her.

Given the vast expanses of time used to create psionic technology, many common everyday tasks are attended to or assisted by psionic items specially developed for this case. A forge might contain a psionic anvil with Molecular Rearrangement power. A psionic windmill might use Telekinesis to spin its grinding-stones when no wind is available.

Many people actually possess artificial limbs which are telekinetic-empowered items. (Or clairvoyant items in the case of sense organs that have been replaced.) This melding of psionic metal and flesh can be highly disturbing to people unused to such things.

Special Locations

Head of the Isle

The capital city, Atlantis, Center of culture and society devoted to Zaratan. The citizens ritually rub the head of the Zaratan until it rises up out of the water. They deposit vast quantities of food

(and sometimes human sacrifices if outsiders have landed on the island.) The head then retreats back into the waves.

Tail of the Isle

Thrall here fish "fertilizer" out of the water and transport it to the gardens. This is a disgusting job relegated to the very stupidest of the lesser thrall. (There are many birth defects in a closed population like this island possesses). People assigned to this task are not counted as "population" above. Typically, they live only 12-20 years before dying of infection or disease. They are considered expendable.

Left flank

Gardens have been built here. Various vegetables, grains, and some small pasture land for sheep (from which their woolen garments are made for the lower thrall.)

Right Flank

Wildlands jungles. As Zarkasis occasionally needs rare animal and insect species in addition to herbs and the like for his experiments, these lands have been left untouched. They also happen to be the dwelling place of the Su and proved too difficult to clear out. Thrall sometimes hunt here in the fore sections of the forest where the Su tend to have been pressed back, but only a fool goes to the aft right sections near the tail of the beast, for the Su hunt that area in great numbers.

Mount Olympus

Mount Olympus in the very center of the island normally stands 600 feet above the surface of the water. Thus, to the diminished inhabitants, it appears 12 miles high. Home to several great reflector mirrors and magnifying glasses. These psionic items automatically use Telekinesis to adjust their focus so that their beams are focused on the solar's circle. This creates a great deal of heat and solar energy at that location during daylight hours.

At the very top of the mountain lie 100 mithril obelisks. All of these obelisks possess each and every metapsionic power and an ego score heretofore unheard of. Each possesses a gem that they have empowered to be their personal psionic receptacle. (This doubles their psionic potential.) It is these obelisks that create other obelisks. (The first Obelisk has a Int Score of 19. Each successive obelisk was made by that one with an Int Score of 18, thus all are telepathic and capable of speech). This conclave of psionic items issues orders to the overseers below, directing their psionic research and activities. Mostly, however, they engage in endless psionic debate and discussion. When he sleeps inside the zaratan body, Zarkasis will gird and converge with these obelisks. If all converged together, they will gain access to each of Zarkasis' psionic powers. The major role of these obelisks lies in the defense of the island. Given the vast expanse of psionic power at the mountain top, the obelisks can utilize Zaratan's "control wind" power. Each using this power in tandem, they are capable of causing hurricane force winds to surround the island at all times, preventing ships or monsters from approaching if they wish.

Armada

Several psionic warships (5) have been created over the ages. These ships possess a wide variety of telekinetic powers as well as genius level intellect. Should time of war arise, they will manned

by crew from the island and then do battle. Most of the time, however, they are used as fishing ships, trailing their nets behind them to catch food for the people of the island and Zartan himself.

Forest

Wild and untamed, this area is home to the dreaded Su. These creatures possess both gills and lungs capable of surviving in either land or sea. They possess a special form of psychic drain, allowing them to spend the PSP points of their opponents/victims. (A save vs par applies and indicates that Su cannot drain from that target for a period of 1 day.) Su monsters normally encountered appear in other ways as your typical Su monster from the MM. There are perhaps 100 Su monsters in the forest being supported by unknown means (unknown to Zartan anyway). Due to the delicate population balance, Zartan has been unable to rout the Su from the Wildlands to the west side of the island.

Solar's Circle:

A set of psionic circuitry designed to pull power from heat/fire/and solar illumination. This psionic circuitry represents decades of work by Zartan. When shone upon by sufficient illumination, it "summons" elemental magma as per "summon outer planar being" but only summons inanimate material. Psionic workers (overseers) telekinetically extract this magma and sift through it for valuable elements via Molecular Rearrangement [*]. They specifically extract whatever mithril they can, for this mythic metal forms the basis for the construction of more Obelisks upon Mount Olympus. The mirrors on Mount Olympus focus this light to the Solar Circle. The circle will "fill" with PSPs at a rate of 100/hour.. while such light shines upon the circle, it will automatically pull magma up and transport waste ore back down until it runs out of power.

Excess material, trailings, are telekinetically moved to another point where the Solar Circle circuitry teleports them back into the core of the earth.

[] I don't allow this power to change one element to another.. just move molecules around. Alchemists might be able to change lead to gold, but they require a philosopher's stone. I absolutely refuse to allow psionics to create adamantium from normal rock, which this power would allow if unaltered in this way. Thus, the limitation on transmutation of elements.*

SUBAQUARIA

The Zartan's underbelly is home to a gith-like race of beings. These are the descendants of those few slaves which have escaped Zartan's domination through whatever freakish chance or luck. They have polluted their bloodline through arcane and unnatural acts with the Su monsters, sharing a sick kinship with that monster. They are irrevocably CE in alignment but paranoid of the great sea beast whom they assume is the entirety of the world. [They are pathologically incapable of any other world-view.]

Strongly agoraphobic, they detest open spaces and expanses, preferring to remain secluded in their underwater domain. They have constructed a vast bubble on the underside of the Zartan isle, a bubble constructed of Zygrat web and the silk of a waterspider. Unbeknownst to the Zartan, they have driven spikes into the great beast and slowly drain off blood on which to subsist. They also send people out to fish, for they possess both lungs and gills like their surface kin, the Su.

One out of every 4 of their children suffers from a recessive gene disorder. These children are apparently normal Su monsters as appear on the wildlands above sea. They are teleported to the forest upon birth and explain the high population of Su there. Feeling close kinship with the Surface Su, they regularly Teleport foodstuffs into the wildlands above to sustain their children. The population of Subaquaria measures 120 adults and 120 children, but this number is highly volatile as they breed like rats and regularly engage in clan-conflicts. The entire structure of society regularly switches around as people scramble to the largest and most powerful leader at the moment.

They are all multiclassed. One of their classes is always psion (apparently unhindered by their chaotic alignment as a normal Psion would be), the other can be nearly anything allowed by their CE alignment. Their skills are varied, but they don't typically build or create much beyond the simplest of structures and the great web that contains their city.

Aquinta

The Su-kin leader, if a leader they have, is Aquinta. Her mother was a half-sea elf living on the zaratan isle with Zarkasis first came. She saw the rise of Zarkasis's society and was forcibly inducted into that culture. While searching the forest for rare plants and herbs Zarkasis needed to halt the slow digression in the health of his physical shell, she was attacked and captured by some wild Su monsters. Several days later, and fortunately uneaten by the Su, she escaped. She was, however, with child. Speculation at the time suggested she had given herself to the beasts to buy herself time until she could escape or be rescued - a highly revolting thought.

Her child, Aquinta, was born ugly and disfigured. Aquinta never fit into the Society Zarkasis had in mind and was quickly executed for the good of the society. Her many crimes included: thieving, murder, and nymphomania with an unnatural proclivity for non-humans. After her "death", her spirit could not find peace and raised itself up as a wraith. This spirit long plotted the undoing of all who lived under Zarkasis's rule and everything he stood for. She captured her own mother and forced this woman to be subject to the indignities that created Aquinta herself. In this way, after many miscarriages she eventually began to build an unnatural race of abominations part sea-elf and part Su monster. [With a lot of population inbreeding, of course].

In the subsequent millennia, Aquinta has struggled to plot out the demise of Zarkasis. However, she also possesses an overwhelming and pathological fear of the might of this being. This fear, her "children's" inability to function cohesively, and Zarkasis' great power have kept her unsuccessful for eons. For decades at a time she will fall into melancholy, only to eventually rise and plot Zarkasis's demise again. Often the plots simply falls apart and what she has built decays into ruin as her melancholy returns again. Drowning under the difficulty of defeating one she considers a god, she sinks back into her dark, dark depression, brooding for several more decades and leaving her children without guidance.

Inside the Beast

While none of the surface have ever gone inside the titanic beast to find out, a whole ecology of flora and fauna exist inside the Zaratan's body. Mostly oozes, puddings, and slimes, but other nefarious creatures able to resist acid might dwell there as well. The vast intestines of the beast acts as a near-endless labyrinth of rocky tunnels with a stream of acidic water flowing along its

course. In several places, rocks reflexively crush together, attempting to grind up anything present much as a bird's gizzard would.

Some splinter groups of Aquinta's kin have taken up residence inside the beast, occasionally they will teleport in and out of the monster. These Su-Kin subsist on partially digested animal matter from the intestines of the beast their associates on the underbelly of the beast add some of this matter to their staple diet. (In addition to the "blood wells".)

Current Situation

While this stalemate held for eons, eventually Zarkasis attempted to rise in station to the level of demi-god. He failed, yet is still revered as a demigod by his people/thrall. He gained the power to grant spells of up to the third level to his clerics, but no more than that. Exhausted after this attempt, he had left a weakening in the fabric of reality around him... a weakness that attracted the Demiplane of Dread into a brief conjunction with his home plane.

While the Dark Powers were not entirely disinterested in Zarkasis, they loved Aquinta, his enemy. Holding on to their new captives, they eagerly await the opportunity to form a domain around Aquinta, but she has not yet committed enough evil to deserve this status. Her paranoia and melancholy makes her suitably emotional/frustrated to be a good domain lord, but this paranoia also makes her less likely to take action, and the Powers need evil acts to feed upon, not just evil thoughts. Her ages old act of forcing her mother into unholy union with Su Monsters qualifies, but the Dark Powers need current sins, not those committed eons ago. The Dark Powers will attempt to force PCs into this situation, hoping that they can break the stalemate and unleash a destructive war between these two forces.

Adventure Scenario

Zarkasis's people won't let those go who have stumbled upon their home. They may use some as "breeding stock", but soon it will become apparent that the PCs are not being allowed to leave. Accidents or winds will cripple their ship. Eventually, some of the crew will have been dominated and be subservient thralls. Zarkasis' people will try to avoid direct conflict with the PCs. They realize that once enough crew members have been dominated, the PCs will be unable to leave. (Except by powerful magic, of course). This causes the Atlantians to win by default with no need for a destructive conflict.

Lawbreakers will, of course, be fed to the Zaratan, as will priests not converting to the worship of the "Island God". These will experience all manner of nasty conflict and battle inside the intestines of the beasts, perhaps to be held captive by the Su-Kin and transported to Subaquaria as prisoners or experimental subjects.

With time, the oppressive nature of Zarkasis' society will probably be seen as evil by the PCs. Everyone will be subject to domination, probe, and esp mindlinks at the very least and this invasion of privacy should drive most characters insane with revulsion. Of course, any thoughts they have to rebellion will be instantly heard and acted upon.

Interestingly enough, because everyone "believes" the people thrown into the maw of the beast to be dead, the psionic links (implanted via psionic surgery) vanish, freeing the victim from

domination and control. In many ways, this might be a welcome change. The PCs should then be given a chance to escape the Su-Kin. If captured by the Atlantians, their thoughts will be probed and a war result, each side increasingly desperate to kill the other. In the chaos and confusion, the PCs should be able to get to their ship and leave like the cowards they are. (Assuming they can somehow free some of the dominated crew from the thrall of the overseers.) Of course, there's the issue of SIZE. (The PCs are 1" in height for each 1' they had before but the ship hasn't shrunk.)

Perhaps the Su-Kin have found/developed a weapon that dispels the powers implanted by the Atlantians? This could be stolen by those who are captured by the Su-Kin.. and used to free their crew members. Now free, they can leave.

Alternately, they might choose sides in the conflict and provide a series of feints and attacks. The Atlantians will give the PCs and their Crew freedom in return for their promise to help them in the war to the best of their ability. (If such is offered by the PCs.) Zarkasis realizes that expending PSPs to dominate and control the PCs would be wasteful in light of the immediate threat posed by the Su-Kin.

After leaving the island, the PCs will grow back towards their normal height at a rate of one inch per hour.

JONENMARK

By A. Cermack

The Land:

Jonenmark has been in Ravenloft since BC 632. It is an Island of Terror, completely surrounded by the Mists. It is a large and populous domain, the core of which is dotted with settlements. The largest of these is the capital Brauenburg, home to the current duke of Jonenmark, the political ruler of the domain; it is closely rivaled by the large town Federburg, the geographic center of the domain. The interior of the domain is mostly settled; these settlements are surrounded by lush forests to the south and west, a mountain range, rich in iron, silver and gold to the east, and the Sea of Jonenmark to the north. On the whole, the very land of Jonenmark gives a sense of vibrancy and life. In fact, the domain seems to be physically growing, as if it were seeking to accommodate the expansions of the people within. The truth, however, is that every life taken by [Karl Britter](#) causes the domain to grow imperceptibly; though he does not realize it, his attempts to enhance entropy within his domain only cause it to further recede.

Cultural Level:

Chivalric

The Folk:

The people of Jonenmark tend to be fair-haired and skinned, though exceptions are not at all uncommon. They are remarkably healthy, robust and jovial. They are extremely fertile; multiple births are fairly common events, and the mild climate of the domain combined with the natural health of its people allow most of the children to survive to adulthood.

The large number of people in Jonenmark results in a mostly agrarian society, as large amounts of food are needed to sustain them. The fields are fertile, however, and starvation is rare, save amongst the poor.

The people are bold and adventurous on the surface, but the large number of mysterious disappearances, seemingly at random, has created an underscore of fear and suspicion. Magic-users are particularly suspect, as few believe the disappearances could be the result of anything but magic. The priests of the domain have adopted the doctrine that the disappearances are punishment for impiety; however, the occasional disappearance of a high-ranking clergyman has caused the Church some embarrassment as a result of this teaching. Also contributing to the people's distrust are the strange Mists surrounding the duchy; though they have been there for four generations, the Jonenmarkians remain unable to see them as anything but unnatural. Despite the official church explanations, most of the folk blame the disappearances on the Mists; the rest tend to blame them on outsiders, particularly the Vistani, who have been known to wander into the domain from time to time.

The people of the domain are active in trade with the Core; merchants sailing from the Sea of Jonenmark are frequently able to navigate to the Sea of Sorrows, or, more commonly, the Nocturnal Sea. Most are even able to find their way back, though none could explain how. The language of Jonenmark is unique in Ravenloft.

The Law:

The duke of Jonenmark creates all the laws of the domain; for the most part, these laws are fair and just, and the Duke is well-liked. His laws are particularly favorable toward merchants and traders.

Encounters:

Most encounters in the domain will be with its people, or with the animals of the forest. Strangely, the animals of Jonenmark are quite malicious; for example, it is not at all unusual for wolf-packs to bring down far much more game than they could possibly eat, leaving the rest to rot. Attacks on people who venture within are very common, but the timber of the forest is too valuable to forego. More rarely encountered are werewolves and wereboars.

There are several bands of reavers living nomadically in the Sea of Jonenmark, and they have been known to attack trading ships; the price of hiring a vessel and crew to go out to sea is very high to compensate for the risk of attack.

There are rumors of small but dangerous creatures living in caves beneath the mountains, but these are unconfirmed.

Karl Britter
(Darklord of Jonenmark)

Background:

Karl Britter was born a member of the fledgling middle class of the duchy of Jonenmark, a prosperous, bustling land on an obscure Prime Material world. His father was a merchant and trader of moderate success, traveling the duchy making purchases, exchanges and sales for whatever profit he could. Young Karl followed him in this path, apprenticing himself to his father and learning the "art of trade", as his father called it.

As Karl approached the age of independence, it became clear that he would outstrip the modest success of his father. He had a keen mind, especially for accountancy and logistics, a sharp eye, particularly in the evaluation of goods, and a smooth tongue, aiding him in haggling and the acquiring of information. Perhaps the only barrier to his success was his relative honesty in his dealings; his father was a deeply religious man, and tried to raise his son with those same convictions.

Karl was never quite a believer; the concept of a god or an afterlife was in some way foreign to his very nature. Still, he respected his father and tried to uphold the moral code, if not the theological tenets of belief, that his father instructed him in. Most of all, his father's lessons on the value of hard work and honesty, and the peace they eventually brought, resonated with the young Britter.

Generally, Karl was successful in adhering to the firm morals of his father, and took some amount of pride in that fact. It pleased him to succeed through diligence and effort where other merchants required intrigues and fraud. However, as with many men, there was one area of his life where Karl had great difficulty in remaining upright. His growing wealth and reputation attracted a large number of interested females, and he eagerly returned this interest...to each and all of them. Eventually, his lustful nature caught up with him. At the age of 19, an indiscretion

with the youngest daughter of the powerful burgomeister of Federburg ended in pregnancy, and Karl was forced to take roots and settle, considerably earlier than he would have liked.

"Just as I begin to make my fortune and prepare to strike out on my own, I find myself shackled to a woman and child. Now I shall surely never find the peace my father insisted I would some day earn" Karl thought during the wedding, as he stared at his bride's rounding belly.

However, Karl's young bride, Elsa, was a lovely, charming woman, enough so to make any man proud, and with a sweetness and innocence that persisted despite the loss of her chastity. Karl eventually found himself succumbing to her charms; by the time his twin sons were born, Karl found himself truly in love, and excited about the prospect of sharing his prosperity with his new family. While his marriage limited his ability to travel, he was able to continue in his business by taking several partners to travel for him to the more distant regions of Jonenmark, including his closest friend and virtual brother, one Werner Bissel. Though these partnerships cut into his profits somewhat, he was confident in his ability to expand his dealings and certain that he would be able to provide for his children.

Unfortunately, the fates did not conspire as Britter wished. Karl was a loyal, faithful husband, but his lusty nature remained, and his wife was of very fertile, healthy stock. Shortly after the birth of his first children, the next had been conceived. Karl had planned a peaceful life with a small family, yet after little more than a year of marriage he was the father of three children. A year after that, and he was the father of six.

Suddenly, Karl's once prosperous trading was serving simply to keep his family fed. Karl was forced to work that much harder and plan that much more to maintain the lifestyle to which he had grown accustomed. A few more years and a few more children later, and hard work was, for the first time, no longer enough. Karl began to accrue debts, and his humble pleas to his burgomeister father-in-law fell on deaf ears; the man wanted nothing to do with Britter and his brood. Though he was ashamed and disgusted with himself for it, he was forced to begin cheating his customers, selling inferior goods at high prices, using faulty weights and measures, and paying in clipped coins, all in order to make ends meet. Worst of all, he found himself deprived of the peace he had envisioned. The crying of his babes, the burdens of his wife, the toils of his work and the torment of his actions constantly weighed on his mind, made worse by the robbery and murder of his father and mother on the night of his 10th child's birth.

As the children kept coming (for it never seemed to occur to Karl that a modicum of carnal forbearance on his part might ease his burdens), and without the shining example his father had provided, his activities escalated into bribery, extortion, theft and forgery, with the reluctant aid of his partners. His dealings reached their odious peak when he contrived the murder of a troublesome excise officer. Soon, many more of those who proved an obstacle or competitor to Karl found themselves the victims of unfortunate "accidents".

Eventually, Karl's good friend and partner's conscience got the best of him, and that night he invited Britter to his home to end their association in person. Karl was terrified that his friend would betray him to the law, and in desperation stabbed Bissel's in the back as he turned to lead Britter to the door.

He knew there was no way to cover up his involvement; the local law had been suspicious of him and his activities for a long while, and his association with Bissel was well-known (actually, given Britter's growing "connections", it is very likely that he could, in fact, have covered up his involvement, but desperation and guilt prevented him from realizing it). He hurried to his home to make preparations for flight.

After he quietly rummaged through the various rooms of his home gathering supplies, he paused and took a long look at the sleeping faces of some of his many children (by this time he had 19, none older than 12). A deep feeling of rage and resentment boiled up inside of him. He had worked his entire life and sacrificed everything he once believed to feed these little brats, and now it had cost him his good name and, in many ways, his very life. Within an hour, each of his children and his wife were dead, individually and quietly smothered in their sleep, and so was Britter. Climbing to the roof of his stately home, eager for the promised peace he had so long been denied and for freedom from the terrible guilt building inside of him, he leapt to his death on the cobblestones below, fully prepared to meet oblivion.

And, as his body lay there, a quiet mist rolled in...

Herr Karl Britter

5th Magnitude Ghost, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class:	0	Str:	17
Movement:	12	Dex:	13
Level/Hit Dice:	13	Con:	14
Hit Points:	192 (see Combat)	Int:	15
THAC0:	7	Wis:	7
No. of Attacks:	1	Cha:	15
Damage/Attack:	1d6 damage+STR bonus, drain 5 levels (see Combat)		
Special Attacks:	Level drain, memory drain, cause despair, entrance victims		
Special Defenses:	+2 or gold or silver weapon to hit, ethereality		
Magic Resistance:	None, other than standard undead immunities		

Note: Britter is a corporeal ghost; he can only become ethereal once per hour, for no more than 1 round, before he must become solid again.

Appearance:

Karl Britter appears as he did in life. He is of medium height and stocky build, with dark, thick hair beginning to recede and a thick mustache. His shoulders stoop somewhat, as if under a burden, and his face is riddled with lines of exhaustion. His eyes have a haunted, desperate look that frequently gives way to smoldering rage.

Quotes (to his various victims):

"Shhh, shhh. Do not cry. Soon, all pains, all fears shall cease.

(long sigh as he reaches out) How I envy you..."

"Why do you struggle so? The harder you try, the more you work, the greater the waste.

Everything comes to nothing: my work, my family, my reputation, my life, all carefully crafted, all worth nothing in the end. Why not welcome it sooner rather than later?"

"Look at you. Afraid, just like that coward who betrayed me. Helpless, just like that cow and her simpering brats! Just like them, you are nothing but a leech, a vampire spending your whole worthless life suckling from the hard work and sweat of your betters, draining them by your insistence on drawing further breath! (snarls as he grips his/her wrist) Well, NO MORE!

Current Sketch:

Britter awoke to find, to his deep disappointment and anger, that the peaceful oblivion he had hoped for was not to be. Instead, the Mists had deposited him just outside the town where he had lived, and had taken the entire duchy of Jonenmark into Ravenloft.

Britter is not sure what exactly has happened to him. He does not know that he is a ghost, and has no explanation for why he no longer needs food or sleep or why he no longer ages or breathes.

What Britter does know is that fate has cheated him. Every additional second he exists enrages him. He has tried to commit suicide hundreds of times, but nothing he has tried has damaged his ghostly body. Frustrated by his repeated failures, Britter has turned his rage outward, and has begun sending innocents into the oblivion he desires for himself; he pursues it like an addiction, as it is the only thing that temporarily lessens the pain of his unlife. He desires to pull the entire domain and all within it into nothingness, believing that this will perhaps aid his own descent into true death, but has been frustrated in this goal so far.

Britter is further tortured with the full burden of his living life. He constantly feels the frustration of his life as a crushing weight on his shoulders, and as a deep, unyielding pain in his limbs. Killing someone with his touch eases this pain for a time, but even during these times he is still tormented by the memory of his crimes. He often sees the faces of his wife, children and best friend at the edge of his vision, or peering from distant shadows, and can hear their muffled screams echoing in his mind. This combination of physical and mental torment has left him an empty shell filled with little but anger and shame, eagerly hungering for an end to everything. Except when hunting for victims, which he does often, Britter avoids the people of his domain. He has no permanent residence, instead wandering as he pleases.

Closing the Borders:

When Britter closes his borders, he does it with his subconscious will without realizing it. When the borders are closed, the Mists rise and all who enter become disoriented, returning the way they came.

Combat:

Britter's touch is extremely deadly, draining 5 levels and memories of the past 1d10x10 years from the victim. Victims drained of all levels literally vanish into nothingness, leaving their clothing behind. They cannot be resurrected by any means, as their very souls have vanished. Survivors can regain levels through the normal means. Each level drained gives Britter an additional permanent hit point, pulling him further away from the oblivion he seeks, though he has not yet realized this. His touch only affects humans, demi-humans and humanoids; animals and plant-life are immune to it. He can also cause despair and entrance victims as a ghost of the 5th magnitude, as described in VRG to Ghosts.

Britter can only be turned by priests of gods of hard work, honesty, trade, children or peace. Britter can be damaged by +2 or better weapons, or by silver weapons. Gold weapons, if any are found to use against him, cause him double damage. Gold and silver coins serve as a reminder of how his life was wasted, and he abhors them; if any are forcefully presented to him he must flee. If they are pushed against his skin they cause 1d6 damage per turn. Even if he is "killed", however, he will reform within the domain the next day. These short, tantalizing periods of oblivion only frustrate him further with their brevity.

Britter is different from most ghosts in that he does not haunt the place of his demise; in fact, he cannot stand the site. Britter cannot approach within 100 feet of his former home, making it the only place in Jonenmark safe from his predations. The home was bought at a bargain price by a local merchant, Hans von Bachmann, who then usurped many of Britter's business dealings and forged them into a veritable trading empire. His descendants still live within, forming a large, extended family and his large family (larger even than Britter's had been, as it encompasses several generations; they have added many rooms to fit the family), and are well respected and very prosperous. Britter despises them all, yet cannot harm them; their strong ties to the home protect them even when they are outside it.

Weaknesses:

Britter can only be permanently killed if a memorial gravestone bearing the names of his wife Elsa and his 19 children is erected in the cemetery of Federburg. After his death, the burgomeister had the bodies of his daughter and grand-children cremated and dumped unceremoniously in the Kristal river that runs through Federburg, for he had no desire to cover the cost of a funeral for 20; as such, no proper marker to their deaths exists. If one is erected, Britter will be drawn to it irresistibly, and will stand before it, consumed with grief, for a period of three days. During this time, he will neither acknowledge others nor defend himself if attacked, and if slain by a gold weapon he will not reform.

However, once three days have passed, Britter will have won his internal war with his guilt, and the spell the memorial has over him will be forever broken. The mists will engulf him and deposit him at the spot of his death. Having overcome many of his feelings of guilt and shame, Britter will no longer be barred from approaching his former home, and will proceed to slaughter everyone within. Furthermore, Britter will have regained much of the cunning and subtlety that served him so well in life. No longer will he be content to destroy Jonenmark one citizen at a time; rather, he will seek to plunge the domain into a bloody civil war through manipulation and intrigue. However, even after the three days of grief have passed, if killed by a gold weapon he will be permanently retired.

Unlike other ghosts, Britter has no ability to rejuvenate himself, nor would he use it if he did.

Andrew Cermak

KÔR

by R. Harper

The Land:

Kôr is a large ruined city located on a plateau in a mountainous tropical region [in MotRD, a lost African kingdom between Kenya and Somaliland]. The surrounding area is swamp and jungle. The ruin is 6000 years old, its original builders destroyed by plague although some survivors fled and brought the first civilization to Har'Akir [the Nile]. As a result the ruin houses mummies and inscriptions with a similar flavour (Egyptian) but subtly odd (the mummies, for example, are perfectly preserved corpses).

[In a MotRD campaign, Kôr represents an archaeological treasure trove - a pre-Egyptian civilization of great accomplishment, like Mu or Atlantis, a subject for crackpots but if proven a ticket to greatness and for occultists it could contain secret lore predating the Red Death's entry to the world].

The plateau of Kôr is reached through a series of caves that reach up through the mountain to the fertile plateau. Anyone taken through by the Amahagger will be blindfolded so they do not learn the way.

The plateau is dotted with fields and villages of farmers, and at its centre stands the ruined city - an area of 30 square kilometres, although smothered at its edges by encroaching vegetation. Its ruined wall stands 12 metres high. The city contains temples and palaces, columned streets and statuary - it looks like a capital, religious centre or some other 'showpiece' city more than a normal one.

The main street is broad and paved with massive stones, leading to a great temple. The temple is a series of courtyards, one inside the other and at the centre a winged statue of a woman with a veiled face, standing atop a great ball (globe) inscribed "Is there no man that will draw my veil and look upon my face, for it is very fair? Unto him who draws my veil shall I be, and peace will I give him, and sweet children of knowledge and good works. And a voice cried, 'Though all those who seek after thee desire thee, behold! Virgin art thou, and Virgin shalt thou go till Time be done. No man is there born of woman who may draw thy veil and live, nor shall be. By Death only can thy veil be drawn, oh Truth!' And Truth stretched out her arms and wept, because those who sought her might not find her, nor look upon her face to face.' (The statue represents the Goddess of Truth, the deity of the ancient people of Kôr).

The body of Kallikrates, perfectly preserved, lies in [Ayesha](#)'s chambers (which can be quite a startling discovery for his reborn self to see when such returns - they are twins).

Cultural Level:

Bronze Age. The Amahagger have only simple crafts and few 'treasures'.

Their warriors are fierce and skilled, armed with spears. The ruins of Kôr also hold bronze-age artifacts including modest grave goods.

The Folk:

The present people of Kôr's region are the Amahagger (people of the rocks), 6'+ tall and slender with fine-chiselled features, with something cold, cruel and sullen in their expressions. Although their daily conduct and personal habits are civilized, some of their customs that will alarm a captive or visitor. Their origin is uncertain, but they may be mixed-blood descendants of a few survivors of the plague that destroyed ancient Kôr and other peoples.

The Amahagger consist of ten 'Households' of 4000 - 8000 each, including the largest where the Queen is. Each is ruled by a single "Father" (their loose marriage customs make actual paternity frequently uncertain).

The Amahagger know they are ruled by the immortal Queen, although some of the more educated among them believe it is a succession of women who assume the title of She Who Must Be Obeyed. They never see her true face and do not know her except as She or She Who Must Be Obeyed.

Unlike most societies (of Ravenloft or the 1800's), women in Kor enjoy great freedom. Property passes in the female line, and women choose and divorce their mates at will (a simple public embrace by a woman, if returned by a male, signifies a union). Except for female dominance in inheritance and control over marriage, male and female have equal rights.

Men honour and worship women "up to a certain point, till at last they get unbearable, which, they do about every second generation. Then we rise, and kill the old ones as an example to the young ones, and to show them that we are the strongest." (PC's may notice the absence of old women among the locals, this can be explained by such an episode occurring a few years earlier). Often the 'Households' make war on each other until She sends word that it has to stop, and then they instantly cease. She tend judges whatever the dispute is over and it is settled.

Most intruders are slain unless word comes from the Queen to bring them to her (she always knows when anyone enters her land) - this she will do if she believes the reborn Kallikrates is among them, she believes they may have news of him, or if a learned man or woman is among them with whom she can discuss philosophy.

The Amahagger are called by others "The People who Put Pots on the Heads of Strangers". They kill captives by heating clay pots white hot and placing them on the victim's head; this is preparatory to a cannibal feast. The intended 'meals' of such a feast are treated quite hospitably and fondly (moreso than is usual by these sullen folk) before being seized and 'potted'.

If anyone questions Ayesha about the 'wickedness' of the Amahagger she will make clear she is not of these people, and that but for her restraint upon them they would have destroyed themselves long ago. She holds them in some contempt, and does not concern herself with their petty affairs.

As she said to one civilized observer who saw her condemn rebellious subjects to death by torture, "How thinkest thou that I rule this people? I have but a regiment of guards to do my

bidding, therefore it is not by force. It is by terror. My empire is of the imagination. Once in a generation mayhap I do as I have done but now, and slay a score by torture.

Believe not that I would be cruel, or take vengeance on anything so low.

What can it profit me to be avenged on such as these? Those who live long have no passions, save where they have interests. Though I may seem to slay in wrath, or because my mood is crossed, it is not so. Thou hast seen how in the heavens the little clouds blow this way and that without a cause, yet behind them is the great wind sweeping on its path whither it listeth. So is it with me. My moods and changes are the little clouds, and fitfully these seem to turn; but behind them ever blows the great wind of my purpose."

Closing the Borders:

The swamps that surround the mountain in which Kôr is located are a labyrinthine quagmire at the best of times, and anyone passing through them must also make a Constitution check to avoid contracting a lethal fever (it takes several days to kill, clerical cures can be effective and Ayesha can cure it).

When Ayesha wishes to close the borders, the swamps become impenetrable - anyone entering wanders lost until emerging (if lucky) near where they tried to exit.

Ayesha **(She Who Must Be Obeyed)**

Foreword

Ayesha (pronounced Assha), Queen of Kôr, She Who Must Be Obeyed, Wisdom's Daughter is a recurring character in several books by H. Rider Haggard, and the subject of one or two awful movies. She is a case of doomed and eternal self-inflicted tragedy and supernatural bargains gone awry that typifies Darklords. Her curse is also ready made for adventurers to fall into (the books themselves are set in the late 1800's and provide material that could fit into a MotRD campaign; I recommend Haggard's writing to any MotRD GM's).

A major aspect of the story is the ambiguity of characters and facts, that will confuse adventurers and give a DM latitude to put a unique interpretation on events even if players know the story. Even through the books, the motivation and history of the characters is expanded and conflicting versions offered.

So, while I have written this up with Ayesha as a Darklord - there are actually two other candidates for Darklord in the story. Players should not be certain of who it is (anyone familiar with the book or movie will leap to a conclusion that it's Ayesha - don't let them rest easy in it). Whether or not she's a Darklord, her personal abilities are unchanged due to the Flame of Life - it's only Darklord powers (borders etc.) that differ.

Ayesha, She Who Must Be Obeyed

20th Level Human Priestess

AC: 0

MV: 14

Hp: 80

THAC0: 8

Attacks: 1

Damage: by weapon (1d4 with dagger) or SA

Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 18

Special Attack: Slay Living (see below)

Special Defenses - Awe (see below), Regenerates 3hp/mr, will recover from any damage, can possess and regenerate another corpse if her own body destroyed.

Magic Resistance: 100%

Spells: 12/12/11/10/7/5/2

Background:

The story of Ayesha's beginning is also the story of her future, replayed over and over as the principal characters are reincarnated. Although events play out differently - for Amenartas is as capable of being a vengeful woman when spurned as is Ayesha - they never play out well.

The following story of how Ayesha's curse began can fall into the hands of PC's (to truly draw them in, it should appear as a writing from the ancestor of a PC):

"I, Amenartas, of the Royal House of the Pharaohs of Har'Akir [Egypt in MOTRD], wife of Kallikrates (the Beautiful in Strength), a Priest of Isis whom the gods cherish and the demons obey, being about to die, to my little son Tisisthenes (the Mighty Avenger). I fled with thy father from Har'Akir [Egypt] in the days of Nectanebes, causing him through love to break the vows that he had vowed. We fled southward, across the waters, and we wandered for twice twelve moons on the coast of The Dark Land [Africa] that looks towards the rising sun, where by a river is a great rock carven like the head of a southerner [Ethiopian]. Four days on the water from the mouth of a mighty river were we cast away, and some were drowned and some died of sickness. But us wild men took through wastes and marshes, where the sea fowl hid the sky, bearing us ten day's journey till we came to a hollow mountain, where a great city had been and fallen, and where there are caves of which no man hath seen the end; and they brought us to the Queen of the people who place pots upon the heads of strangers, who is a magician having a knowledge of all things, and life and loveliness that does not die. And she cast eyes of love upon thy father, Kallikrates, and would have slain me, and taken him to husband, but he loved me and feared her, and would not.

Then did she take us, and lead us by terrible ways, by means of dark magic, to where the great pit is, in the mouth of which the old philosopher lay dead, and showed to us the rolling Pillar of Life that dies not, whereof the voice is as the voice of thunder; and she did stand in the flames, and come forth unharmed, and yet more beautiful. Then did she swear to make thy father undying even as she is, if he would but slay me, and give himself to her, for me she could not slay because of the magic of my own people that I have, and that prevailed thus far against her. And he held his hand before his eyes to hide her beauty, and would not. Then in her rage did she smite him by her magic, and he died; but she wept over him, and bore him thence with

lamentations: and being afraid, me she sent to the mouth of the great river where the ships come, and I was carried far away on the ships where I gave thee birth, and hither to [the birthplace of the character's remote ancestors - Athens] I came at last after many wanderings. Now I say to thee, my son, Tisisthenes, seek out the woman, and learn the secret of Life, and if thou mayest find a way slay her, because of thy father Kallikrates; and if thou dost fear or fail, this I say to all of thy seed who come after thee, till at last a brave man be found among them who shall bathe in the fire and sit in the place of the Pharaohs. I speak of those things, that though they be past belief, yet I have known, and I lie not."

As told above, the exiled lovers Amenartas and Kallikrates came to the ruined city of Kôr where they met Ayesha (her version makes Amenartas out to be a witch who bewitched Kallikrates into breaking his vows).

Ayesha was a former priestess and now accomplished mystic seeking the secret of immortality. A beautiful and brilliant woman, she could not bear the thought of her mind and body being destroyed by time. She had come to Kôr seeking the secret from Noor, a mystic and hermit. He had learned it but not used it for he thought it unnatural to escape the wheel of rebirth. The secret involved exposing oneself to an eternal sacred fire that burned within the depths of Kôr, the path to which Noor guarded. This much Ayesha learned by beguiling the hermit, but she would not confront him to gain access to the Fire of Life out of fear of him. She had pacified the locals and was debating her next step, also waiting for the old man to die, when Amenartas and Kallikrates came to the city.

She fell in love with Kallikrates, and when Noor died (within a few days of the lovers arriving - his remains still lie in the cavern path to the Flame), she offered to bring them with her to the Flame, seeking to win Kallikrates and make him immortal. Her version of the story is mostly the same as Amenartas' - when she stepped from the flames, and offered Kallikrates immortality, he turned from her to Amenartas (perhaps making a choice, perhaps simply because her supernaturally-enhanced beauty was too much to behold) and she slew him in jealous anger. There are some differences - she admits to killing him but says it was with a javelin, not by magic (the body of Kallikrates does have a stab wound suggesting in this detail, at least, Ayesha's story is truer). She denies attacking Amenartas and says Amenartas tried to slay her with magic but could not - although she cursed her - this was the point of her transition to Darklord status and the transition to Ravenloft (this can be dispensed in a MotRD setting) - her slaying of Kallikrates combined with Amenartas' curse.

In another version Ayesha was originally also a priestess of Isis and was cursed/compelled by Isis both to execute her judgement on the wayward Kallikrates and to suffer love for him as her own punishment for deserting the goddess in her quest for immortality. Yet another version suggests Ayesha was a spirit (deva) guarding the flame, who fell in love with the mortal and became mortal to be with him - seeking to regain immortality for them both in the flame but being cursed for her betrayal of her duty to live forever without him. Whatever her prior history, it is certain Ayesha was a beautiful woman of great magical power, who loves Kallikrates. Knowing that all souls are reincarnated again and again, Ayesha knew that Kallikrates would be reborn.

She is certain he will find his way to her again.

Current Sketch:

Ayesha is beautiful, imperious and merciless but also fiercely loving and just in an despotic, Old Testament fashion. She has the impatience and intolerance of a 2000 year old being who does not deign to explain or discuss trivia - although she is fascinated with philosophy and news of current events.

She is bored, spending her time in alchemical experiments of various types.

She is served by race of specially bred deaf-mutes (she destroyed an earlier servant race as being too ugly, and a race of giants she bred was destroyed by illness).

Her appearance and words have an overwhelming affect on men. A beautiful exquisitely feminine woman in her late 20's, who speaks eloquently if archaically and avoids meat and strong drink. She dresses in simply in private. When in public she appears swathed in white, her face concealed.

She is a Force cleric in AD&D terms, following a belief system based on reincarnation, and not a deity. Her Spheres of Access are All, Charm, Divination, Healing, Necromantic, Protection (Reincarnate instead of Resurrection), Plant, Summoning & Weather (Minor Access to Animal, Astral, Creation, Elemental, Sun, Time) [as a priest she also has Armour Class Improvement, hence her AC].

The Fires of Life gave Ayesha near immortality and enhanced her beauty. It is not true immortality, eventually she will die but not until thousands of years pass. She herself also knows that when she bathed in the Flame, her heart was consumed with love of Kallikrates and hatred of Amenartas and these two passions have also been increased in strength and made everlasting. As described by an observer "The fruit of her wisdom was this, that there was but one thing worth living for, and that was Love in its highest sense, and to gain that good thing she was not prepared to stop at trifles. This is really the sum of her evil doings, and it must be remembered on the other hand that whatever may be thought of them she had some virtues developed to a degree very uncommon in either sex--constancy, for instance."

Combat:

Ayesha is brave, but physical combat is beneath a Queen. Her loyal subjects are fanatical in their devotion to her - nearby servants, maids or guards are always willing to throw themselves in the way of harm to save her (any spell that does not target automatically may find itself blocked in this fashion - players may feel guilty about killing 'innocents' whose crime is devotion). Anyone who dares attack her will be slain by her magic or overpowered by guards for later execution, as an example.

She never appears among her subjects without muffling clothes that conceal her true appearance (any assassination attempt will have been foreseen and on that occasion the body will be a slave's).

It would take a major feat of stealth to enter her presence armed, without her guards and servants around her; she makes great use of Divination magics to observe strangers. Only "Kallikrates" is ever likely to find himself alone with her - and even then aid will be nearby, and it would require persuasion on his part to keep his weapons.

Anyone confronting her directly must first overcome her beguiling powers. Any male intending her harm must make a Wisdom check to maintain the belief that violence against her is necessary.

Ayesha's exposure to the Flame has given her a power to slay by will any target she can see (this duplicates the spell Slay Living [reverse of Raise Dead] but as an innate ability that cannot be interrupted and has a CT of 4 or Fast). She can do this at will, but anyone who resists this power once (through a saving throw, not some other means) is immune to it.

Ayesha will regenerate from any damage, even taking a new body. If exposed again to the Flame, Ayesha's physical body will be destroyed - its original affects undone, she will age to dust in seconds. She does not know this, but she has no reason to expose herself again (in the book she did so to prove to a doubting reborn Kallikrates that it was safe).

Adventure Hooks:

Amenartas is reborn, and usually meets and falls in love with the reborn Kallikrates before he comes to Ayesha - setting the stage (i.e., she could be an Amahagger woman who saves strangers from death and falls in love with one). She is a strong willed, powerful woman in any life and ruthless in her fashion (if she doesn't win, no one wins). In another version of the tale, she may even be the true Darklord - at least players doing a "spot the Darklord" hunt could be made to wonder which of the two are the Darklord and which the poor, if not quite innocent, soul trapped in the Darklord's curse (if you want to be really perverse they could both be Darklords).

As a one off adventure, Kallikrates could also be the darklord. It was his betrayal of his vows and constant changing of affections, then cowardice, that underpinned the whole tragedy. His evil was the passive evil of someone who seems innocent but is in fact to blame for the destruction of stronger and nobler spirits. Imagine the nasty discovery of adventurers that one of them is a Darklord - a special one whose curse is to be reborn and experience over and over the tragedy he caused without knowing it!

Note: The original book was published around 1887, a copy of the text is located at:
<http://www.bibliomania.com/Fiction/Haggard/She/>

Robert Harper

Marina
(Nocturnal Sea Domain)
By L. De Pippo

The Land:

Marina is an island surrounded by shoals and small islands. The island is U-shaped and in the center has a deep water harbor and the only big city Minos. The open edge of the island, the bay, faces to the north with the city of Minos nestled therein. The isle is in fact an atoll, an island where the mountain forged up from the sea, the coral reef built up around it, and the main island blew itself to kingdom come in a massive eruption. This eruption blew part of the ring out, making the "U" shape.

Big Mountains, above 4000 mts, dot the side and underside of the "U" while near the sea the mountains give way to hill and plains. A single river, known as Giver, crosses Minos. Overall the island is about 20 miles long.

Cultural Level:

Medieval and Classical

The Folk:

The island is inhabited by two different human races.

The hill-folk, as the city folk call them though not to be confused by real hill-folk, are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the islands. They are short, standing about 1.60 m and have olive skin and black hair with usually black eyes. They have not developed tools above bronze working and are extremely territorial. Any intruder found in their ancestral lands, unless it can explain its presence, is killed. The lands of the Agnathi, as they call themselves meaning the first people, are in the hills. They dress in simple clothing and the males carry a spear to show that they are adults.

By contrast the city people, Naxams, are a fair-skinned lot. They average 1.75m and have blonde or light brown hair. They are the descendants of race of explorers that found the island to their liking. They built the city and began trading. They had conflicts with the "hill-folk" and briefly engaged them in wars of annihilation. Now the relationship between them are strained. They trade with Necropolis (Darkon) even though they are at loss about the position of their island.

Native PCs:

Those of Agnathi descent can be warriors, rangers, shamans or bards (without spellcasting abilities). The Shamans are the leaders of their communities and the warriors and rangers are highly respected. The Bards (Trouvadors) roam the communities. Every member of a tribe, regardless of class, receives the spear weapon proficiency for free.

The Naxams can be of any class, except for Anchorites, Arcanists and Gypsies.

Personalities of Note:

Trevor Hunt is the mayor and the half-brother of Elena. He is the only one that suspected about her when she was alive but had no proof.

The Law:

The Naxams have all the normal laws that a medieval society has. Thieves are not tolerated and the mayor is responsible for the peace. Since the island arrived in Ravenloft, orders from the continent have stopped and the people have declared their independence. The taxes are not harsh and are used mainly to supply the merchant fleet.

The Agnathi have few laws and use customs as guides. The Shamans commune with the spirits to guide the people. Lately the shamans have become more demanding and the spirits are more savage. Wise men ponder about the meaning of this.

Encounters:

In the plains there is the possibility of the odd wolf here and there. In the hills the spirits of the Agnathi guard against intruders. The ghosts (second magnitude semicorporeal spirits) are attacking the miners and have become dangerous. Another danger of the hills are the Agnathi huntmen (the chance of an encounter is 25% twice per day).

The sea is full of sharks and the odd Giant Sunstar Starfish (see *Ship of Horrors*).

Estela Arbizu (Darklord of Marina)

Ravenloft Siren, Neutral Evil

Armor Class:	6	Str	10
Movement:	8, Sw 18	Dex	14
Level/Hit Dice:	4	Con	13
Hit Points:	20	Int	18
THAC0:	17	Wis	10
Nº of Attacks:	2	Cha	3
Damage/Attacks:	2d4		
Special Attacks:	Hold, Revulsion, Disease		
Special Defenses:	Immune to sleep, charm, hold, poison and death magic		
Special Vulnerabilities:	Water, Mirrors		
Magic Resistance:	10%		

Estela Arbizu is a hideous undead creature with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a fish. Her hair is tangled and entwined with rotting seaweed, and her body is gray and bloated. She always appears in a rocky outcropping as if unwilling to touch the sea.

Background:

Estela Arbizu was the daughter of Marlo Arbizu a powerful sea captain and Elena Sorin, one of the cloth merchants of the island. Her father was always out in his ship, trading with the continent, and she grew to resent the attention that he paid to the sea.

When she was eight the news arrived to Minos saying that her father had died when his ship sunk. Grief-stricken she cursed the sea and promised never to go into it. Her mother remarried with Charles Hunt and she found herself with a little brother Trevor. When she was nineteen she met Armand Jones, a young and dashing sea captain. Feeling herself attracted to him she began

to court him. He responded her affections and even made the promise to never sail again should she marry him, because she was beautiful.

They were happily married but the lure of the sea proved stronger and Armand began his career as a sea captain again. She was incensed and a messy discussion followed, but she still loved her husband and she promised him to wait for his return.

Alas that was not to be. The day when he embarked, when the ship had not quite left port, the greatest storm in anybody's memory came. It sunk lots of ships, including that of her beloved. Grief-stricken she cursed the sea again and made a vow to forever deny Ny (as the sea goddesses were known) any other man.

It was during that time that the mysterious deaths of the sea captains rocked Minos. Every sea captain was found murdered with a stake through the heart. Of course Estela had committed the murders [1], using her beauty as a deadly weapon, but no matter how many she killed more stepped to take their place. She met a young sailor and fell in love with him, but fearing the lure of the ocean she decided to act in accordance to her oath.

She went to the Agnathi lands in search of the shrine of Solar the flame king. When she found it she asked the priest for a way to kill the sea. The old priest [2] was crafty and gave her a bead of summons so she could call Ny and murder her so killing the sea. Of course the bead was worthless and the priest knew that.

Before issuing the summons she researched the way to kill Ny and found a book [3] in her library that told that to kill the Queen of Ice and Water (as Ny was known) she needed to use an harpoon that had been drenched with the blood of a relative.

Undaunted by the requirements she killed her mother and called Ny. Surprisingly an avatar appeared and she threw the harpoon and hit her. The avatar, livid with rage, told her: "You have done everything in your power to deny me of my domain, and now you want to kill me? I would be amused, but I am wrathful. I will exile you to a place where you will forever live inside me yet never would you be able to stand me. As ugly as your heart is you would become and no harm will you cause anyone on me, until you found the heart of water [4] and deliver it to the priests of fire".

Strange mists rolled and she found herself in the waters surrounding the island, transformed into a hideous parody of a Siren.

Notes:

1) Estela was partially mad so she began her revenge on the sea by killing her lovers (namely the captains). As in the world the sea is represented by a goddess to her it was logical to try to kill her.

2) The priests of Solar are a special bunch (see the Appendix). He was in his burning phase so he tricked Estela without a motivation. As an aside, as with the book, the bead should not have worked and if it was a real bead of summoning it would have called Estela's deity, not Ny.

3) The book she found had not been there before. No one knew from where it came and Trevor could not find any trace of it later.

4) The heart of seas (or the heart of water or the heart of ice as is also know) is a chunk of ice in form of a human heart. It is a sacred artifact of Ny (even though it has no powers) and was to be given to the priests of Solar in exchange for certain favors. The heart was lost when the hill-folk attacked her temple a hundred years ago. The dark ones are the only mountain dwelling Agnathi and are outcasts of their society. They live near the center of the domain in a place heavily guarded by spirits of the deceased. They want to continue the war against the naxams and attack them from time to time. They have been exiled because of that so they hate Agnathi and Naxams.]

Current Sketch:

Estela have been a Siren for only 20 years and still rages against Ny. She found that the water was painful to her, but she has to return to it to sustain her undead (once every week she must spend a day in the water or suffer incredible pain). She still loves the young sailor, but also despises him. She wants nothing more than to be free of her curse for her horrible vissage is a cruel remainder of what she did.

Ironically the heart of water is not in the sea sorrounding the island. The heart is in the possession of the shaman of the Dark Ones tribe and is considered a token of good luck, so the tribe will be unlikely to part with it. The temple of Solar stands in the mountains but the priests will refuse to deal with anything associated with the Queen of Ice and Water so her efforts to escape the curse are doomed to failure.

As for the curse: She cannot bear the thought of been in the sea yet there she is. She hates to touch the water, but must touch it once every day (the week post was a mistake). She considered herself beautiful, yet she cannot present herself to men because they suffer revulsion just seeing her. She still loves a sailor but may never be reunited with him, as he is a "servant" of her worst enemy. She wants nothing more that being loved and kill Ny, but she cannot do that.

Closing the Borders:

Estela cannot close the borders.

Combat:

Estela is unable to attack anyone in direct contact with water or aboard a ship as part of her curse. In those cases she retorts to her magical song that can held anyone on a ship for 5d4 rounds, hoping that the crewless ship will crash into a rock and sink. Anyone who sees her must make a fear check or suffer revulsion (unable to attack for 1d4 rounds rooted in place).

Once her prey is within reach she attacks with her sharpened bony fingers twice for 2d4 points of damage. In addition the victims must pass a saving throw against poison or catch a fatal disease and die of water in the hearth. Any person who dies of her disease will rise as a Sea Zombie (95% chance) or as a Jolly Roger (5% chance) under her control. She currently has 10 such zombies and one Jolly Roger.

Using a mirror can keep her from attacking but she cannot be turned. Any attack using water does 1d2 points of damage. Inmersing her causes her to stop fighting and suffer. When a turn passes she will became water and flow away. When she is killed she will become water as

described above. The only way to permanently kill her (without lifting the curse) is to put the heart of water into her watery form and deal a blow with a flaming sword (not necessarily magical).

APPENDIX

Solar (The three sided one)

Solar is the god of fire and the sun. As the world where Marina originated has three suns, he is a three sided god. Every 4 months his alignment (and that of its priests) change.

The first four months are known to the priests as the renewal phase. He is a NG deity and uses fire to help people, burning evil things or old things.

The next four months are known as the true phase. He is an aloof True Neutral deity interested in the balance. he neither helps nor hinders.

The last four months of the year are known as the burning phase. He is a reckless CN deity that starts fire for pleasure and goes about making mischief. The priests echoes this disposition (This one was the phase that the priest that Elena went to see was).

Ny (The Queen of Ice and Water)

Ny is a CN deity concerned with ice, water, ships, navigation, seas and storms. She is a fickle goddess capable of bestowing her favor upon the unworthy, and not hearing the prayers of her worshippers. She likes the worship of the sailors and will usually appear at least once per voyage to collect gifts or praises. She is not an evil deity but guards her domain with passion. Any attack upon her dominion may invoke one of two responses:

- 1) She will do nothing.
- 2) She will curse the offender to a fate worse than death.

She is not much worshipped than placated, but many sailors like her.

The heart of water Estella has to offer Solar is a relic that Ny intends to use as a peace offering towards Solar. In fact, in the past Ny slew the Solar King's child, for the child was destined to do battle with her. The baby's blood coated the weapon used to kill him and ignited it, scarring Ny badly (thus leading to the belief that a baby's blood upon a weapon allows the baby's parents to attack Ny). Solar has ever since opposed Ny, but she constantly tried to make amend for her sin in order to avoid direct confrontation with Solar.

Luis de Pippo

MORDENTSHIRE FLESHED OUT

by J. W. Mangrum

The Population

The map provided in the original boxed set is pretty vague (as were they all), so it was hard to guess from that what Mordentshire's population might be. *Howls in the Night* describes Mordentshire circa 741 as having a population of about 1,000, with a general store and an adequate blacksmith.

The original map for Mordentshire (provided with *Ravenloft 2: The House on Gryphon Hill*) is basically the same as that in the boxed set, but actually shows the individual buildings and details about 100 inhabitants (it's a great resource). That map makes Mordentshire (at the time it was drawn into RL) look about twice as big as Marais d'Tarascon, the village in *Night of the Walking Dead*. The latter village is said to have a pop. of about 300; thus, I guesstimated that Mordentshire had a population of about 600, and that seems about right.

At that time, there were two kinds of folks in Mordentshire: the ruling family (the Weathermays), and the working class. There were about three taverns in town, two inns, and a boarding house. It had an open-air market, and trials were held in one of the inns' common rooms. Everything in that adventure and the boxed set clearly implies that the main industry is fishing. It's a fishing village. To this day, the Mordentish hold their respect for those who battle the seas to make their living.

Now, about 2 centuries later, Mordentshire seems to have grown a wee bit (as opposed to Martira Bay, which appeared at the same time, started out smaller, and is now one of the biggest cities in the Core). In some notes penned down by the late Dr Rudolph van Richten, we can read the following about Mordentshire:

"The Mordentish seem to have a love for stories and tradition. It seems to me that they wouldn't change much, not because they're backward, but because they like it just fine the way things are. They believe that so long as you mind your own business and stay in town, you'll be okay."

We can assume the population grew mainly from two sources: people fleeing more oppressive lands in the Core (such as their original neighbor, Barovia), or (and mainly) sailors whose ships got lost in the fog and deposited them here. The only people who would want to stay in this quaint, quiet town are those who respect that sort of thing.

And lastly, the emotional reason for keeping Mordentshire fairly small, as opposed to a boom town like Martira Bay: many of its descriptions make me think of a village in a halted stage of decay: the harsh weather erodes the beauty from even the newest of structures quickly, but at the same time we have Gryphon Manor and the town barracks (for the police force). These structures are described as centuries older than the rest of the structures in town, and indeed both hint at an earlier, rougher time when every permanent structure had to be a fortress. Gryphon Manor especially should have long since collapsed into the loam, but yet it still broods in the middle of its swamp. There are a lot of things in Mordentshire that should have faded away long ago, but at some point simply refused to fade any further. Such as the domain's lord. In fact, the only structure in town which has taken time worse for wear is the old village temple (on the boxed set map). This structure was still in use up to the night Mordent entered the mists, when it was struck by lightning and gutted by flames. Now, I picture it as a mossy ruin, totally abandoned. Just a few walls of rough stone, marking the basic outlines of its former glory.

Society and Politics

The upper class may have grown a bit too, from the original two upper class families in town in the RL2, to perhaps just a few more families. Some of these families may have been locals who "made good" in the shipping trade, braving the Sea of Sorrows. Mordent's arrival in RL greatly weakened the upper class (in their original land, the Weathermays were granted control of the region by decree of a now-absent monarchy, and the other upper class family was just visiting; being trapped in the Core probably robbed them of the entirety of their wealth.) In this vacuum of power, the middle class may have had a little room to grow (I'm talking about the various merchants here).

I would guess that the upper classes have built a few manors in the land surrounding Mordentshire (but no more than a few hour's travel from it). For example, the Wescote estate in *Howls in the Night*.

In RL2, the mayor was appointed by the Weathermays, and there was a four-man militia acting as a police force. Not much has changed, I guess, except that with a growing population (and increased isolation), they may have made some basic additions to the standing laws. Somewhere along the line, the militia became a Sheriff and a deputized police force; I'd also guess that the practice of selling criminals guilty of moderate crimes into slavery has ended, partially because their buyers were suddenly absent. The sheriff is either appointed by the mayor or the Weathermays directly.

The Weathermays still hold quite a bit of economic sway, but they've become slightly less important in the running of the town, more of a figurehead. Since they lost their official justification to rule, I'd guess the locals let them remain only because, well, they're fairly efficient and to look at their neighbors, you could do a heck of a lot worse.

Education and Literacy

Although the Mordentish have a solid oral tradition, certain hints tell of a certain level of education among the folk, at least among the middle and upper classes. For instance, George Weathermay's horse is named Perseus: I gathered "the Classics" were a part of his rearing. And don't forget, this was the town where Van Richten penned most of his Guides, meaning there's probably a printer's somewhere. There's also a small schoolhouse near the Mayor's house, although the cost of education most most "commoners" are still home-taught.

Saulbridge Sanitarium

Dr Germain d'Honaire was a mesmerist, not a psychologist. But he is also described as a doctor who treats illnesses of the mind, not just the body. Before Mordent, the only populated (by people) areas of the Core were Arak and Barovia; I'd wager Dr. d'Honaire's Saulbridge Sanitarium was the first asylum for the insane the people of the core ever encountered. Unlike the people before him (and sadly many of the "doctors" after him), Dr. d'Honaire seemed

honestly interested in healing these poor, sick people. Saulbridge has barely changed since d'Honaire's day. A portrait of him has been added in the entry foyer. Sadly, the current doctor in charge of the asylum has the all-too-common impression that his first duty is to keep the insane safely locked away from society. Curing them comes second. In ways, he is little more than a jailor.

Fauna and Monsters

At the time of RL2, Mordentshire also had some fairly fantastic fauna living a stones' throw away from their homes. For instance, a tribe of orcs lived in a hidden cavern system in the northern cliffs. It's likely that after Strahd and Azalin retreated, their minions made short work of these creatures.

John W. Mangrum

MYSTERIUM ARCANUM

By J. Chua

Prologue

"Are you sure this will get the job done?" asked Alfredo as he palmed the finely crafted sword that lay in his hand. So many months he had wanted to prove his worth to his mercenary troupe, but he was met with defeat again and again. This would be his ticket to the top. If it wasn't for that stupid leader of his...well that would soon all end. All he had to do was strike him down in a challenge and then all the men would follow him.

"Yes it will be, it will give your body the ability to strike like a great warrior, greater than most that live in our land" spoke a handsome young youth. His eyes were green as emeralds, his wavy black hair was braided as this tanned skinned merchant looked with his almond shaped eyes at Alfredo, "but are you SURE you want it?"

Alfredo quickly dumped a pouch of gold onto the counter "Sorry, no turning back from our deal, Lucien. With this sword I can claim what is rightfully mine. No more must I keep up my act of wanting to help the sick and the poor.. under my leadership.."

"Save the speech for your men..." Lucien said with a sigh, "now take your sword and go... and know you brought this upon yourself and not I." ...

A few days later, a clean shaven man walks in, his bright golden hair shown through.

Lucien, turning from his large manifest smiled and said "Good morning sir, and what would you like to.."

"You don't recognize me, do you?" the man spoke.

"Hmm... wait..." Lucien said as he looked at the Man's sword, "ah yes... Item 3345, a sword, magically enchanted possessing"

"Possessing the trapped spirit of a Paladin who could only be released if the sword was ever misused." spoke the Paladin, "I thank you sir for.."

"Releasing you? No..no.. that wasn't me.. That was the foolish Brigand who sought a sword which 'would give his body the strength and ability of a great warrior'. How sad... that his soul is now trapped in that very sword"

History:

Throughout the Domains no shop is more notorious than the Mysterium Arcanum.

This ancient shop seems to appear when the Mists hang low over a city... and then disappears again at a later time. It always seems to take up a vacant shop or an empty lot that one could swear was empty yesterday. But there it sits in some small part of the city waiting for its customers. For the most part it seems much of an ordinary shop, selling a variety of things from

adventuring gear to various curios. However, there have been whispers that the Shop contains powerful magical items to make anyones wishes come true... all one must do is ask the Shopkeeper, a certain Lucien Arapada.

Lucien for the most part is a charismatic and handsome man. Around his 20s, Lucien seems to be a very rich person: after all how else could one explain his constant traveling throughout the Core? He knows a good sampling of languages spoken in the Core and some not even heard of. He is a quiet man, but always happy showering his customers with green tea and comments about the weather. That is until someone asks for one of his Special items. The look of happiness and joy dims to a dull graveness.

Lucien has sold many of these items to various people, proving the rumors were true: that his items make wishes come true... in all the wrong ways. All of Lucien's special items carry a special price.

For instance take the situation of Monique d'Porre:

A ravashing thief from Dementileu who could charm a man out of his money within a few seconds. She was an object of desire and she knew it, scowling at the weakness of men. Of course she wanted to marry and steal the riches of a new young rising politician of Port-à-Lucine and so when she heard of Lucien, Monique asked for "something to make all males want me more than anything, than anyone else". After a few warnings which the thief disregarded, Lucien sold her a tiger's eye jewel. And oh, wasn't she the life of the party as all the wealthy men gazed at her, as their wives grew jealous of her. That was until later in the night she slowly changed into a Tiger.. Of course Lucien was one hand for the occasion and promptly spirited her away from the party...to Markovia. And there she and other animals were sold to Frantisek Markov for a few medical texts Lucien had wanted.

Today Monique is called Schala, her "given" name by her Broken One masters. She herself is a Broken One, and Broken in many ways. For now she feels the burning pangs of lust deep within her as any animal feels, as she is part of Markov's breeding project for a stronger type of Broken One. Now Schala must give into the passions of her cage mates as well as her own (despising herself afterwards for stooping to the level of a male and their weakness). At times when parts of her human self set in, she curses herself and the wish she made as well as the Mysterious stranger who made it come true....

In fact, all of Lucien's special items have some how twisted the spirit of the person. Of course no one is around to tell the truth, and Lucien never admits to it unless proof is brought forward. For the most part Lucien insists it wasn't his fault:

"I am but a simple Merchant, dealing out what the public wants of me. It is not my fault if what they want is subject to change..."

Most of Lucien's items are kept in the Vault, somewhere in his shop. As for his shop, it seems to be a combination of gothic architecture combined with Oriental influences. He takes great pride in all of it.

One of the oddest nuances of Lucien is that he rarely leaves it: in fact he's only been seen out of it a few times. Other strange oddities include the fact that he seems to know much about the history of various domains, as if he was around during certain events... he describes some of them as if he had lived during that time!

There is no doubt, Lucien is much of a renaissance man. He is a mountain of small talk and obscure details ranging from politics, religion, magic, to more esoteric subjects such as agriculture and medicine.

How he gets around is a mystery, though there is a rather large grandfather clock in his store. He has been noted to say that he "must leave when it chimes 13". And when it does it always seems to be on a night when the Mists hang low over the town... and the next day he's gone. There have been few acts of physical or magical violence in his store, those that do occur are quickly stopped by a non violent action. In fact, many damaging magical spells seem to fizzle in his shop. When he is inquired about this he only smiles and says "We can't have so much distractions around here: it is a place of business, after all".

About The Lord Of Arcanum:

Lucien for the most part, is a wild card. He seems to bare no malice against anyone, in fact there have been times when he has dissuaded customers from buying any of his special items. He seems to take great pains, but never openly admits to what they actually do.

Another thing about Lucien is that he seems quite aware of the Lords of the Land. He has dealt with a good sampling of them on various occasions, most notably with Vlad Drakov, Azalin, and Markov. He seems to have no fear of them, though he does not act cocky, but rather as any businessman would do. No Lord has ever asked for a special item, though.

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Lucien also has a great reverence for the Vistani, calling them "The People" as if there were no other kinds of people. He has on various occasions, hidden Vistani in his shop. The Vistani in turn call him friend. In fact he supposedly gave a Madame Eva a scarlet coloured neck ribbon at one point in time, as a gesture of friendship.

Jason "Magian" Chua

DEALERS IN DARKNESS

By MagianChua

Introduction

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MagianChua

NECROPOLIS REVAMPED

By C. Phipps

Atmosphere:

Europe during the Black Death. The fields are left unattended or die within days, leaving thousands starving and trade obsolete. The people fear the supernatural more than ever and believe that the "Devil himself" (Death from Necropolis or a suitable mythos deity) has begun to stalk the land. The people live in poverty and no one knows who will die next. The rich find no comfort in their wealth and people turn to religion, drink, or dark worship in hopes of comfort.

Justification:

Thousands have died already, wasting away with the "Grim Fastness" (named after the prison), a disease which ravages the living with incredible accuracy and which leaves victims growing paler with increasing tones till they die - most dismiss the burials as premature when they return. Others, knowing the truth, think that they are the dead rising to take the living for the Reaper. II Aluk was the only city believed totally destroyed by the plague and no one goes to the city since it is known to possess incredible amounts of the plague floating about. Those who do don't come back.

General Mood of the Populace:

Desperation, heroes are incredibly needed in this land as ANYONE will do ANYTHING to survive. Drakov's soldiers find a populous resorting to unheard of before scavenging and robbery with previously law abiding citizens turning into looters and highwaymen. Skeletons line the roads in paths long and far and NO ONE trusts an outsider. Far too many a dark stranger - especially one who has come from II Aluk - has ridden into village and the entire town has been found dead the next week (plague, of course).

New Inhabitants:

The *Grim Harvest* has caused several new types of the undead to emerge from the local populace. The Negative Material Plane connection killing more and more - the number of cold ones in Necropolis as SURVIVORS of the plague is staggering.

The White Vampires (AL: CE HD: ???)

Whether they are vampires created by the *Grim Harvest* or some bizzare product of vampiric experimentation gone horribly wrong; they are some of the most disturbing creatures of the harvest.

These beasts are like normal vampires in that they drink the blood of the living, are pale, and are prenatually strong. They have however some major weaknesses: heal at a normal rate (or semi normal, for they recover from even the worst wounds in a weeks time), have no immunity to normal weapons but painlessness, are totally destroyed by stakes, and supposedly have much worse vunerablities. It is whispered somewhat horribly that these mad creatures are actually humans with a vampire tainted form of rabies which is actually worse for those that hunt them.

The Flaggelates (CG to CE)

Travelling group of heretical Ezraites who have merged with the cult of Immater to spread the message of pain is good for the soul. Torture is a terrible healing art among these monsters and occasionally saints and many sadists have joined the cult for the perverse hope that it offers and the power it gives. These are often the most welcomed men in villages as the painful message they preach is appealing to the populace which has lost faith in a loving deity.

Plague Wererats

A bizzare creation of the Harvest, these fellows are cold one wererats created by surviving the *Grim Harvest*. These wererats are unusual for their fascination with death and tend to congregate into catacombs, funeral homes, crematoriums and moseuleums rather than sewers. They are all albino and more ratlike in their features than most wererats. These monsters take the necessary step to disposing of the dead and their infection carries a terribly painful negative transformation. Some are rumored to be actively trying to spread the harvest from Azalin's books (see *Dungeon Bazaar of the Bizarre*).

And all the while the Grim Reapers in human form are travelling through the streets taking the lives of the survivors.

Charles Phipps

NEVERLAND

By Jack the Reaper

The pocket domain is called Neverland, and it lies inside a dreamscape in the Nightmare Lands. It has two dominant personalities imprisoned in it: Peter Pan (the demilord), and Captain Hook.

The source for this domain is obviously the book *Peter Pan*, but i've added few twists to adjust it to Ravenloft:

- Hook is a ghost, and Peter Pan's father. They both hate and try to kill each other.
- As a demilord, Peter Pan is also evil. He has the power to send his shadow into other domains, where he lures children to come to his land, telling them about adventures and games. If they agree to come (he can't force them, but may use a charm ability), he sprinkles them with a fairy-dust which enables them to fly with him. Then they are transported magically to Neverland.
- Once in Neverland, Peter Pan gradually corrupts the Lost Boys, making them commit darker and darker acts and fail Power Checks, until they become sinister and ghastly mockeries of themselves. Some of them look horrible and beast-like, some of them are angelic in their beauty and innocent-looking, but all of them are totally evil. To seal the transformation, he sends them back to their home, where they kill their parents. Then they are drawn back to Neverland, and are lost for ever.
- Peter Pan hates all adults, and is also afraid of them. He and the Lost Boys are in eternal struggle against Hook and his pirates (who hate children).
- As Peter Pan's father (Hook) has always been cruel to him, Peter Pan's only good memories from his "childhood" were of his mother, who was the only adult who over loved him, but he murdered her. Now his curse is to lose his memories of her; He can't even remember her name, or what did she look like. In effort to regain those memories, he lures from time to time a girl to his domain, as a surrogate to his mother. Unlike the Lost Boys, though, this girl does age in Neverland, and when she becomes an adult the Lost Boys kill her, leaving Peter Pan again without a mother.
- Peter Pan's greatest fear is to age. It is also his weakness: he can be destroyed by aging attacks. As Captain Hook is now a ghost (also murdered by his son), he has the means to destroy Peter Pan with his hook, but considering Pan's agility and ability to fly, this is not an easy task for him. Also, Peter Pan still has the sword which ended Hook's mortal life, and which has the power to end his undead existence as well. So the two are very cautious when fighting each other.
- Hook and his crew are undead, dwelling in the rotting remains of their former ship, which is anchored in a bay. However, Hook has the power to cover his ship in an illusion, which makes the ship look intact and he and his crew look like living humans.
- As Peter Pan only brings children to Neverland, the only way adult adventurers have to get there is by dreamwalking (see Nightmare Lands boxed set). Rumor has it, though, that the tale of Peter Pan and Hook appears inside one of the copies of the Tome of Terror. People who read the tale will be drawn into it, forced to play the role of the children.

- Beside the pirates and the Lost Boys, Neverland is also populated by wild beasts of all kinds, fairy folks (especially baobhan sith and boowray), bizzare dream creatures, and a small tribe of Abber Nomads.

Adventure Hook

A child or children of the PCs (or of their friends, or just some child they happen to know and like) is lured by Peter Pan's shadow into Neverland. They must find the means to get there and save him before he is totally corrupted and becomes a Lost Boy. Of course, they end in the middle of the struggle between Peter Pan and Captain Hook.

Jack the Reaper

NEW EVIL PLACES OF RAVENLOFT

By C.D. Nichols

Briarvale

Domain: Nova Vaasa

Location: West of Arbora

The valley of Briarvale lies between two lines of low hills, just south of the Hazlan border and west of Arbora. The valley's name comes from the fact that the valley is filled with a dense growth of briars, thorny shrubs and barbed vines, in tangled brown mats up to seven feet high. Occasionally, tangled in these vines or littering the ground are piles of bones. Like most of Nova Vaasa, the valley is hot and dry, and also very dusty.

The valley lies on the path of a trail between Arbora and Sly-Var, used for shipping merchandise and such. The trail comes into the valley from Arbora on the western end. Mid-way across the valley, the trail cuts north through the hills. Beyond the hills, lies the village of Hornwood. North of this village, lies the Hornwood region of the Saniset Forest. The Arbora/Sly-Var trade route passes north into the Hornwood, before turning west into Hazlan, and continuing to Sly-Var. On the western end of the Briarvale, the Mists rise up, although one would have to struggle through the thorns and vine to approach them. Interestingly, the Mists here (between the hills that form the valley) tend to deposit people in the domain known as Farelle.

Briarvale is choked with thorn bearing plants of every type. Many are unique to this valley. For instance, there is a vine found here that is as thick as a man's leg with thorns the size of daggers. Another, smaller, briar is the purple color of cold-wracked flesh, and its thorns drip heavy with poison. Also, the few trees here (and also those of the densely forested Hornwood) are afflicted with a strange parasite, which causes heavy growths like sharp horns coated in bark to rise from trunks and branches.

Animals found in Briarvale are not many. Vultures and ravens are common. A small supply of rabbits and other small mammals scurry under the thorns. Small wild dogs have made trails through the foliage, hunting. However, those in the village of Hornwood claim that these wild dogs are huge, rabid man-eaters. What they report is actually the presence of a small clan of were-jackals and were-hyenas on the far south-west end of the vale. Finally, a skeleton may be occasionally encountered.

The south-eastern corner of the valley houses a mystery. Here, under the barbs, lies a ruined tower (it is totally collapsed, unusable as a physical lair). Strange phenomena mark its location - clouds of dust hang in the air around it at all times and at night oddly colored glows shine from under the vines. Also, every so often, a skeleton will wander about the valley, sitting beside the trail at times or shadowing merchants shipping goods. These are relatively harmless (they never attack, even if attacked themselves) and are thought to come from the ruins, though no evidence of this has been found.

The Black Spire

Domain: Hazlan

Location: South of Sly-Var, on former Bluetspur border

A few miles south of the trail between Sly-Var and Arbora, on the former Bluetspur border, stands a spire of black stone. Cutting directly into the wall of the Mists, the spire is jagged and twisting, looking more like a broken-backed serpent caught in mid-air than a object of stone. The Black Spire is of a strange rock, formed in curved planes and jagged edges, shiny and greasy to the touch, not obsidian but similar. This geological anomaly was deposited here during the Grand Conjunction, a reminder from when the domain of Bluetspur was torn away. Very little is known, about it, though idle tongues in Hazlan spin many rumors about it. As the Spire passes into the Mists, one may enter as well. Those attempting to wall around the Spire, will find the Mists parting to reveal that they are circling a different spire in the hellish land of Bluetspur.

Falconmarsh

Domains: Falkovnia/Darkon (more Darkon)

Location: north of the West Timori Road, on Falkovnia/Darkon border, between Lekar and Stangengrad

As the river straddling the Falkovnia/Darkonian border flows past Stangengrad, for a time it turns into a track sliding through cold marshes on either side. This is the site of one of Vlad Drakov's worst defeats in the Falkovnia-Darkon Wars, but little is known of the Falconmarsh itself or what the swamp holds. In 700, as Falkovnian troops prepared to invade Darkon, several groups of soldiers were loaded on rafts and sent to cross the Falconmarsh, so that the Darkon border might be fully held. Not a single soldier made it to the encampment on the far side.

Four years later, Drakov's men again ventured into the Falconmarsh. Of this group, one man arrived in the camp on the far shore. His arms torn from their sockets, he still lived for three days. While he lived, he babbled about the things he had seen in the swamp--strange dark skinned men, something with tentacles and glowing red eyes which drug men to their deaths, strange lights, ghostly faces of dead soldiers under the water, and dead companions which rose to strike their comrades (DMs Note: the creatures here are: moor men, darktentacles, will o' wisps, ghosts of the previous soldiers, and Darkon border zombies).

After this defeat, in 709, in preparation for the war of 711, King Drakov sent three times as many men as before, to clear the Falconmarsh of anything they might find living there. Yet again, the swamp swallowed up the entire force. Following this, Drakov had earthworks studded with sharpened logs erected along the perimeters of Falconmarsh where they approached Lekar, Stangengrad, and the West Timori Road (travellers on the West Timori can on clear days look from the bluff the road runs along, and see the Falconmarsh's earthworks).

On the Darkonian side of the marsh, locals know to stay clear. The only habitation near the swamp is a ram-shackle hut, huddled near a series of choked pools, which flow sluggishly into the marsh. Locals say this place is the home of a crone, who can call the spirits of the Falkovnians the marsh has claimed to her pools, where they may be seen, mouthing strange words and staring with equal parts sorrow and hate.

La Cathedral de Notre Perdition

Domain: Dementlieu

Location: South-east outskirts of Port-a-Lucine

A crumbling Ezran cathedral and monastery, noted for its stained glass and massive pipe organ, and the fact that it is built on the ruins of an other, more ancient monastery. The cathedral has a small local flock, smaller than normal for the religiously disinterested lands of the Core, for the cathedral has an hushed but inauspicious history.

Originally, the site was a monestary of an unknown order, more than a thousand years ago. But, from the remaining records of the time, the monks grew corrupt, holding the nearby communities in their thrall, demanding wealth, slaves, and women. Those who were offered up never returned. Finally, the fathers of the church were given divine revelation that the paladins of the order were to destroy the monastery, as the monk had fallen into irredeemable evil. Thus, the monastery was razed.

In 582, on the site of the privious monastery, la Cathedral de Notre Perdition was built, incorporating elements of the ruins into the design. In 606, the first rumors surfaced, whispers that the monks were not as they seemed, do not truely serve Ezra. Investigation found nothing, and the rumors dwindled into urban legends. Then in 653, three local children disappeared, and on that night, the monastery caught fire, destroying the two upper floors. Nineteen monks died in the flames, as well as the three children. For, when crews cleared away the rubble, the body of one of the brothers, one Brother Eat-Not-of-the-Unclean, was found in an attic chamber with the children's bodies at his feet. Investigations found this tragedy, arson and murder, to be solely the act of Brother Unclean. The monastery was rebuilt, and in time, the people returned to the cathedral, despite rumors that the ghosts of those who died in the blaze haunted the church. All seemed to be on the mend, years passing peacefully, so that the Ezrans founded a orphanage a street over in 700, and a convent two streets over in 711. Things went well until 731. Rumors then spread that the current abbot, one Father Jerome, had fathered a child. Some, crueller voices, hissed that the child was a monster, a hidious monstrosity before Ezra. The Church of Ezra held an inquest, but found no evidence and exonerated Jerome. The rumor is still whispered, but whether it is believed is doubtful. Which brings us to the present.

Sadly, the rumors are true. Father Jerome does have a child. The child is Brother Theodore, the newest monk of the order, nineteen years old. He is a kind, generous young man who has a talent for entertaining children with religious stories. He is quite handsome, with one exception; he has a club foot. Father Jerome is extremely guilty about his son, yet is also intensely proud of him. The truth is, Jerome entered the order to be near the woman he loved. Sister Isolote is a nun in the Ezran covent nearby. She had been betrothed to Jerome, but circumstances tore her away, forcing her to join her convent. Already a religious man, Jerome joined the monastery to be near the woman he loved. They met clandestinely yet were scrupulous about keeping their vows, until eventually, their passion betrayed them. From this moment of weakness, nineteen years ago, Theodore was born. After his birth, in which Isolote died, the nuns place him in the orphanage. There Father Jerome took his son under his wing, raising him in the ways of the order. In recent years, Father Jerome has meditated on his sins, and if confronted by higher ranking clergy, will confess his sins and throw himself upon the mercy of the Church.

Even more disturbing, the rumors of a darkness among the priests is true. A percentage (about 40%) of the monks (and corresponding numbers of the nuns) have become the corrupt pawns of a great evil. The monastery that the current cathedral rests upon was built on even older pre-human ruins. Extending far underground, into catacombs filled with inhuman corpses (and later, human corpses as the corrupt churchmen placed their dead below, some of whom are now heucuvass), the ruins were a place of worship for a great evil. And, that evil intelligence has been bound to this site for more than a thousand years. This spirit reaches up from its tomb, confronting corruptible clerics and seducing them to its cult. Thus the clerics it has a hold upon meet nightly beneath the cathedral, holding strange orgiastic rites and sacrifices. Some of the others, clerics the malignance has no hold on have reported that a devil has come to them in their cells, and offered temptations to them (which the leaders of the convent and monastery take in stride offering appropriate counseling). The evil influence of the ruins has made the area it runs under (which includes the orphanage and convent, as well as the cathedral) into a sinkhole of evil. Father Jerome and Brother Theodore know nothing of this evil under their noses, nor does the Mother Superior of the convent.

[Note that this is fairly Call of Cthulhu influenced.]

Death's Glacier

Domain: Lamordia

Location: Look at the Lamordia map in *Adam's Wrath*. The glacier lies in the Sleeping Beast range between the peak with word "Beast" on it and the peak on which the monastery of Adam's Children lies. Death's Glacier fills the pass between these peaks.

This immense slab of ice rests in the Sleeping Beast Mountains and trails fingers down into the cold swamps of the Musarde Delta. This icy monstrosity blocks the major passage through the Sleeping Beast, cutting off Ludendorf from Neufurchtenburg save by more circuitous routes veering far to the east or west. The glacier's name comes in part from the sheer impassability of the region; hidden crevasses, pitiless blizzards, frequent avalanches and monstrous cave-bears make the passage lethal.

However, the name of the glacier comes from a source other than the brutality of the elements here. Rather, it derives from regional legends that claim that under the ice, one can see the faces of those whom the glacier has claimed, and that the specter of death walks the high pass, cloaked in flesh. There is some truth to these rumors. The glacier contains the corpses of many men and women, and their frozen remains may at time be glimpsed through the layers of ice. In addition, at rare times, one of the bodies may tear itself free of the glacier, stalking travellers as an ice mummy (*Dragon #238*). How and why this occurs is unknown, but the range of these creatures is limited to the slopes of Death's Glacier itself.

The history of Death's Glacier, has the rather geographically anomalous region appearing within Lamordia in the year 601 of the Barovian calendar.

Prior to that, its history is unknown, for the most part. A stone tablet which can be found in the monastery of the flesh golems, tells of how a village existed where Death's Glacier formed, only to be destroyed by dreadful magics as they were engulfed in the forming glacier. The record

hints that a tower may exist beneath the ice, housing the one responsible for the creation of the glacier.

The possible existence of the tower in the crevasses beneath Death's Glacier raise the question of whether Death Glacier is a pocket domain. Possibly. The glacier appears to contain more area than its parameters could contain. However, this may be a kind of spatial illusion rather than a physical fact. Also, the fact that the lord of Lamordia, Adam, has been seen passing into Death's Glacier argues against this place being a domain of any kind. But, the physics of the Mists are largely unknown, and a lord of some sort may yet exist, trapped far below the glacial ice.

[Source: *Forged of Darkness*, back inside cover, Table E-3 *****]

Christopher Dale Nichols

Night Gallery

By Stormonu

The Night Gallery is a wandering art show (a collection of horrid paintings) that travels from domain to domain, picking up victims as it goes. Its Lord is a being known as the [Curator](#), a "Lurch-like" being who loves to talk about the bizarre, frightening or outright haunting paintings in the collection.

The Night Gallery works by drawing a victim to a particular painting. Once the painting has gained the victim's interest, it begins its foul work by manipulating reality. The painting tries to force a victim's hand by tricking them to seek refuge in or from the painting. Once a victim is tricked into seeking refuge in, or accepts refuge from the painting, the painting draws its victims into it, trapping them forever.

An example of the work of the Night Gallery is the Spider Lady Portrait. It depicts a shapely young woman in a red dress with lily-white skin and jet black hair. Her dominating, piercing stare stabs at those who view her. Her arms are poised possessively around her lover, and the lower half of her face is hidden behind the shoulder of her lover. Few details can be made out about the lady's lover, whose back is turned to the viewer. The two seem to be standing in an old attic, surrounded by discarded items from people's past lives. In the shadows of the boxes and crates of the attic can be seen the chitinous forms of spiders, quietly waiting in the darkness. Those who stare long at the painting swear they can see the shadow-cloaked spiders slowly move about.

Those women who view the painting must make an immediate saving throw vs. spells. If the save is failed, the painting "attaches" itself to the victim.

The victim awakens the next morning to find herself more beautiful. This becomes more and more pronounced (with Charisma rising at the rate of 1 point per day), until she is beautiful beyond words (Charisma 19). Men become enraptured with the lady's beauty and cannot help but gawk. However, the men's attentions and motives become more and more annoying, until the character cannot help but become frustrated or disillusioned by the attention.

At that time, the painting begins to "call" the victim, letting the victim know that it is responsible for the enhanced beauty. The painting attempts to force the victim to confront it, at which point one of two things happen - if the painting is destroyed, so is the victim's charisma. Burning, slashing or otherwise ruining the painting reduces the victim's Charisma to 0, and forces a madness check for the hideousness of the transformation. If the character has become entranced with the ability to manipulate men, and she desires to keep the power, the painting transforms the victim into a red widow (no saving throw). As a last effort, it attempts to then pull the victim into the painting (Save vs. death is allowed here, but at a -4 penalty). If the victim does not become part of the painting, the painting loses all power over the victim, but the lady remains a red widow.

To overcome the curse, the victim must ignore the call of the painting until the show moves to a new domain. The show generally lasts from 4 - 6 weeks in each domain, and it takes a week to

move the show to the next domain. During the travel time, the painting makes one last ditch effort to capture the victim. While it is being stowed, it reduces the victim's Charisma by 3 points each day, down to 3 Charisma. This last ditch effort is reversed if the victim can resist the call of the painting for the week it is stowed.

Once the painting moves to another domain, the victim's Charisma returns to normal, albeit at a +2 permanent bonus.

There are many, many other paintings, and the painter [Ralpuchio](#) may be somehow involved with the traveling show.

The Curator (Mobius)

Flesh Golem/ 9th level wizard

S18/65, I15, W13, D16, Co18, Ch9

AC: 2

Hp: 40 hp

THAC0: 11

Align: N

#Att: 2 or 1

Dam: 2d8/2d8 or choke

Spells: (4 / 3 / 3 / 2 / 1)

1st: Shocking Grasp, Cantrip, Unseen Servant, Comprehend Languages

2nd: Glitterdust, Detect Invisibility, Wizard Lock

3rd: Lightning bolt, Gust of Wind, Dispel Magic

4th: Evard's Black Tentacles, Vampiric Touch

5th: Mordenkainen's Faithful Hound

Description:

The Curator of the Night Galley stands at 7' 1", looming over all that enter his show. His eyes seem dull and lifeless, except when he talks about the paintings in his gallery, when his eyes seem to glimmer with a fiendish life. The Curator's skin seems pale and cold, and those who gaze closely at him will note the remnants of stitched scars at the base of the back of his neck and just above his collarbone. The Curator has sandy colored hair, though this is usually hidden by the stovepipe hat he wears.

His clothes are dark colors and he favors suits of crimson red, jet black, dark forest green or midnight blue suits. He has been noted to enjoy rain and storms, and has found many times out in the rain after dark, unmoving as he watches the lightning play in the heavens.

The Curator seems to have little personality, and is generally seen looming about his gallery, closing watching those who have come to study the odd paintings. He freely answers questions about the paintings (and even willing to talk about who painted a particular piece, though he never mentions Ralpuchio) or is willing to critique works, though he never mentions any of the magical properties of the paintings. Though the Curator understands the power that some of the paintings wield (and sometimes expresses pity for those caught in a painting's spell), he is jealously protective of the paintings and will fly into a storming rage if anyone attempts to harm

the paintings. If encountered at night in the gallery, he can often be found standing under a single, burning white light gazing into the eyes of the Spider Lady Portrait.

Background:

Ralpuchio made the Curator to care for the paintings of the Night Gallery. Originally, the Curator was to guard the paintings in the dark tomb of a cellar where Ralpuchio had hidden them. However, once Ralpuchio had left to work abroad, the Curator gathered up the dark paintings and struck forth on his own. Over a period of several weeks, the Curator created an identity for himself and founded the show known as the night gallery. Though he found he was immune to the effects of the paintings and their callings, he found his visitors were not so lucky. The Curator dismissed the painting's victims as weaklings, and did nothing to stem their destruction. Sometimes, he encouraged it.

However, when the young lady Delilah came to the show, it changed everything. The Curator met Delilah as she stared into the depths of the eyes of the Spider Lady Portrait. Though to others she might have seemed plain and slight, the Curator found his heart caught in his throat. For several minutes, the two stood staring, lost in their own worlds. Finally, the creak of the Curator's boots as he shifted his weight brought both out of their revelry. Introductions were made, and the Curator found the lady strangely attractive and charming, in a way he never knew before. For the first time in his life, he was asked what his real name was, and he wished to answer. It was at that time - and only for that day - that the Curator adopted the name Mobius. He has never used the name since, nor acknowledges it is his name. She took him to lunch that afternoon, an experience the Curator had never had the pleasure of performing before. Under Ralpuchio's care, the Curator had eaten nothing but tasteless gruel. Lunch with real food and the company of Delilah was a joy he would never forget.

If it hadn't been for the painting's curse, he and Delilah might have become friends - or more. The Curator had even thought of leaving the Night Gallery behind. But it was not to be so. The Curator was forced to watch the curse at work, as Delilah became even more beautiful. He fumed silently at the masses of men whom he watched fall over themselves to be with her, even though they had utterly ignored her weeks ago. And though he saw in her eyes the desire to be with him, he could not break through the wall of men that constantly tried to draw her attention away. It was not that his muscles were incapable of casting aside the others - the weakness was his own insecurity - insecurity in the knowledge he was not a real man, but an automaton - a machine of sort. His fear that she might spurn him should he do something "unnatural" stayed his hand, and furrowed his brow in sorrow and loneliness.

Finally, the night he prepared to pack his show to move on, he found Delilah had sneaked into the gallery to stand before the painting. For several weeks, she had resisted its call, but now she stood before as he had first seen her, utterly consumed by the painting's hypnotic stare. Seeing she was in no danger at the present, and not wishing to disturb her just yet, the Curator went about his work, packing the other paintings to move to the next show. He would ask Delilah to accompany him, if he could be so brave, and she was willing.

At last, the final painting to be packed was the Spider Lady Portrait. As he returned to wake Delilah from her stupor, he found her still entranced by the painting. Shakingly, not quite

knowing why he was nervous, frightened and exhilarated, he reached for Delilah. But before his huge hand could rest on her small shoulder, she stepped forward, towards the painting.

The Curator had seen this before. He wanted to scream out loud, hoping she would stop, but his own fear caught the words in his throat. Delilah never looked back. She simply vanished into the painting and out of the Curator's life forever. Only one tear could escape before his hand fell to his side.

He had his duties. He must pack up the last painting and move on. And so he did.

Current Sketch:

The Curator seems a brooding, unemotional figure. He charges an admission fee of 1 sp per person per show, no exceptions. He is business- like to a fault and acts mechanically in all that he does, as if he possesses no soul of his own. There are only two times when the Curator ever seems to express any emotion. Those who have caught him staring at the portrait of the Spider Lady (which he avoids when others are nearby) can see him shed a single tear before he eventually awakes from his stupor and moves on. The only other time he has been seen acting emotionally is when he takes his lunch once a month at a public eatery. Those who watch him cannot help but notice how jovial the normally staunch Curator appears, nor fails to notice the second plate of food, that remains uneaten, beside him.

Combat:

If pressed into combat, the Curator fights like a madman. With his massive strength, blows from his fists send opponents reeling. Those he does not batter into the framework of the wall of the night gallery he looms over and strangles, driving such victims to the ground as he chokes the life from them.

Generally speaking, the Curator only attacks if he fears his paintings are in danger, or if someone has sneaked into the night gallery to free a friend from the grip of a painting. The Curator can instantly recognize anyone under the thrall of one of the paintings, and will not attack them (even if they have sneaked into the night gallery) unless they threaten to harm the paintings.

Over the years of dealing with the paintings, the Curator has picked up skill with magic, which he uses to protect the gallery from intruders. Most of his spells are defensive, and he is cautious not to unduly tip his hand with his magical prowess.

Stormonu

NOSOS GAZETTEER

By Asplagis

Premise

The first thing you need to think of, is that this place is like *Masque of the Red Death* by Poe only set in a different social context. Instead of aristocratic nobles, we have industrial big wigs. Instead of the plague we have the rampant diseases created by Malus Sceleris and the sordid living conditions of the people who compose the proletariat. In other words, we have a Marxian version of a Poe story.

History of Malus Sceleris

It is important to ponder the history of the lord of Nosos, Malus Sceleris. When he was but a boy, he killed his druid father with diseases because the man wasn't much of a father to him. His life long goal, from then on, was to never be like his father. His father was an awful man and he would go against his ways. Nature is what he cherished the most, he cared nothing for young Malus. So Malus vowed to destroy nature, like it destroyed his childhood. He was jealous of nature. So for the longest time, he carried out his vow.

His ruthlessness and his talents at manipulation made him leader of a young band of ruffians. These pint sized thieves were badly organized, but quite determined. They managed to build up a nice cache of stolen goods, most of which was claimed by Malus. The young Sceleris was quite influent in the group, he was able to persuade the other boys of why he should get a slightly larger part. It made absolutely no sense, but these kids were not very bright to begin with so it was quite easy for him to manipulate them. His excuse was that someone had to guard a large part of the loot, that way it would be easier for the group to have one person keep it, since the whole group would be watching him. In reality, Malus was planning to use the booty to put himself through school.

He did just that, in fact he bought new clothes and was able to pass for someone totally different. No longer would Malus be a street thug, now he would use the way of the mind, he would not shun society and the city, but master it. He didn't want to be a recluse like his father, but a member of the city.

His school days passed quickly and he showed great motivation. His teachers were simply amazed at the boy's progress and soon, many local shop owners had heard of him and his amazing skills. Indeed, Malus was a gifted boy in terms of his oral abilities, he could probably talk someone into buying anything from him. Also, his mind was sharp, he was better at mathematics than his teachers. The boy also had a weird fascination with biology, he wanted to know more about the human body and illnesses. This was puzzling: he was not all that motivated in front of the sciences, but was a whiz at maths. Yet, even though he seemed to be a natural business man, he had a fascination for a completely unrelated subject, human immune systems. This fascination was fueled at school, but after a while, it became obvious he wanted to peruse it in his career. He was quickly offered a high payed job as an accountant for a wealthy noble. The noble was soon to get a nasty surprise: Malus was secretly scheming to take away the man's fortune for himself. He did it through subtle manipulation of numbers and documents, making

him legal heir to the noble's wealth. Now, all he needed was to kill him and he would get the head start he wanted.

He killed him through food poisoning. He managed to convince the cook to leave the kitchen and substituted the good food with some rotten one. The ground meat was easy to tamper with, simply had to put some rotten meat into the good meat. Also, the noble ate his meat rare, meaning the heat would not destroy most of the harmful bacterias. That night the noble had a tormented night, ending with his death in the morning. The cook was charged with murder and Malus was given complete control over the man's asset. Malus then proceeded to build himself an empire.

Recently, technology had become much more advanced. Mechanical devices were becoming much better and more efficient. Indeed, mines were opening up everywhere around town, and Malus had bought them all. He simply used his talent with diseases and manipulation to get people to be either sick at crucial times or simply trick them into signing over their part of the mines. He now had access to the main source of revenue for the town. He was informed that coal mining using machines and the huge factories that produced various merchandises were quickly ridding the forests of its animals. Hunting was very hard, and plants were not really healthy... in fact, where once stood mighty trees, now stood rotting timber. Malus was happy: he was finally getting revenge on nature, the nature that stole his father away.

Soon enough, Malus used his economic powers to put pressure on the local government, making it impossible for them to make a decision without Malus' consent. Religion was next. The local temples were closed down by the local government under a new law which prohibited such "unholy" practices. A new state religion was put into place: actually, the old religion was given a new life... with the head priests being also government officials. Now, both government and religion were part of a superstructure that hung over the structure of society, a structure based upon the conflictual relations between the lower class (the proletariat) and upper class (the industrialists). The superstructure kept making sure the proletariat accepted the dominance of the upper class, using laws, and religious tenets. Soon laws were passed prohibiting association amongst people unless that organization was allowed by the government. Religious tenets said that being poor was not an injustice, for the gates of the heavens would be wide open for these people. It was the following of the virtue and only that, which was of any concern to the religion. Blessed were the poor and the sick and the weak... while the rich business owners rejoiced at their newfound power. Their wealth increased dramatically, while people died in alarming numbers outside their ivory towers. They partied while proletarians had trouble finding food and health conditions were less than poor.

Malus was happy. He had created total inequality, the complete opposite of what his father wanted. The rich were the blessed ones, not the poor.

But one night, Malus held a grand ball where every eminent industrialist was invited, from promising upstarts to greying veterans. This affair was a masked one. People disguised themselves as all sorts of things. One was a priest, another a demon, one woman was an animal and another a mermaid.

But when the great black clock struck eight o'clock, a mysterious figure appeared. Dressed all in green it made the people wary. Green was not a color that Malus liked a lot. The person had a mask, a leaf shaped mask that covered his/her whole face. Malus didn't give much thought to it all: thinking it was but a troublemaker, he would have him killed.

At nine he met the figure again. Angry, Malus verbally interjected the uninvited guest. He asked that the person remove the costume or else be thrown out. The figure didn't even move. Malus, whose anger had reached its limit, asked the guards to escort the intruder to the dungeon, and so they did.

Ten o' clock. As he was dancing with the wife of the current mayor, he noticed the green figure standing silently. Malus was not happy... He shouted at the person: "Who are you ?! How dare you disturb this event so ! If you value your life, you will leave my sight immediately!". The figure walked towards the next room... guards rapidly intercepted it and restrained it so they could lead it down to the dungeon.

At eleven o'clock, Malus had all but forgotten about this affair, when the figure appeared to him again. This time Malus drew a sword and challenged the figure to a duel to settle the issue. The figure offered no resistance and was slaughtered by Sceleris. Its corpse was then dumped in the river near the house.

But as the clock struck the first sounds of midnight and Malus saw the figure again. His constant arrogant smile turned into a visage of disbelief. The green clad figure was there... As the clock tolled, Malus asked the figure to take off its mask. Seeing that it refused, he struck it, making it drop to the floor. What he saw chilled his blood... The face was that of his father. The face he had when he died, covered in marks and completely bloated. Blood was running down his mouth and Malus couldn't believe it. His father was dead... how could he... Then the figure laughed as Malus tried to run away... but the clock tolled for the last time and Malus fell face down into a soft plant of sorts. When he looked up, he saw that it wasn't a plant, but some form of humanoid creature made of vines, compost and leaves. Indeed, when he turned around he saw that all the guests had disappeared and had instead been replaced with these creatures. Malus screamed as the shambling mounds smothered him...

Malus woke up in a cold sweat the next morning, seeing leaves on his body that reminded him that this was no dream...

Malus' Curse

From that day forward, Malus is cursed to face the ghost of his father and must fear the horrible shambling mounds which appear out of nowhere to hunt him.

But the Dark Powers cursed him more... While his vengeance was almost complete, he still needed one last thing to be the opposite of his father. He needed to be a good father. Malus tried and tried, but could not conceive a child of his own. He is completely sterile. Malus is smart, he found a way out: adoption. But even that won't do. Malus' power of disease goes out of control around children he cares for. He cannot care for a child and be a good father, for the child will die of some deadly disease. Many orphans suffered this fate before he understood his curse. No

one has found a cure for the disease yet, and possibly only Malus could find one, but perhaps the key to the cure lies in a past he does not want to face. Malus has everything, but he is incomplete. He is troubled with visions of his father, reminding him of how bad a father the man was... and how he is forced to be like him on that aspect. Also, he always wanted his father to be with him when he was a child: now his wish has come true, for his father visits him every night... but not quite the way he wanted.

Role Playing Malus Sceleris

If the players ever face the lord, then they must be able to see some human traits in the guy. The first and most important trait is his ambition. Ambition is a trait most humans feel is positive, but ambition does not necessarily mean trampling every living thing under foot. Many players have a bent towards playing for themselves or for their "home team" (own culture, group, race etc...), they often fail to see who they destroy and what they destroy in an attempt at reaching a personal goal. It is also a lesson for us all as human beings in real life. Most live in places where personal ambition does come before everything else. North America is filled with social agents that spread the philosophy of the individual. It is like this that you must present Malus, a person that is the incarnation of your typical business man: cold calculated, but always working for his own gain, without caring what he or who he must step on to get to it.

Also, Malus makes sure that orphanages exist, no matter how harsh business men are, many have a weak spot for a very humane cause. Some do indeed care about the environment, others for peace, others help alcoholics etc. Malus helps the orphans. Those born with no parents to raise them are taken care of by state orphanages. But once they reach a suitable age, they are kicked out. Malus cares about the children without parents, not for older teens or young adults with no parents. This should be played out a lot. In a way it is, in his own mind, a way to repent for unbearable uncaringness towards humanity and life.

THE ISLAND OF NOSOS

The place is more or less divided into different districts of sorts: south Nosos, south-central Nosos, north Nosos, east Nosos, western Nosos and the outskirts of town (suburbs of sorts).

South Nosos

The southern Nosos is where the declining Aristocracy live. These lower upper class people are in short numbers and are rapidly being overtaken by the industrial barons. The houses they live in are in better shape than most. Many live in very Gothic looking mansions of somewhat great value. The green areas here are rare, but do exist. Most trees have been cut down to make room for houses, some of the aristocrats live in more than one house, splitting their time between each one. The houses are large and take up lots of space, but in number, they are few. Garbage isn't quite as prolific here as it is in other areas, some of it is being taken out to special areas for it. The rich simply want a certain cleanliness around their homes, but garbage piles up too quickly to be taken care of completely.

The south eastern area of south Nosos is where the true aristocrats live. The south western area is where minor industrialists live. These minor industrialists live in elaborate houses as well, but their relative beauty isn't quite up to par with those of the aristocracy. They often like to build in

height to avoid the garbage, some of these constructions actually looking quite twisted as they try to avoid particularly odorant areas. Windows are rare here and more than one of these places feature large barriers made of iron. These high fences protect the house from vandals and thieves, but aristocrats, in a constant love for beauty, make these fences much more elaborate, often adding gargoyle faces to the doors. In fact, gargoyles are a popular decoration in these areas. They protect the house from damaging acid rain, but they themselves must be changed often due to the toxic precipitation.

South Central Nosos

The south central area splits the minor industrialists and aristocrats. It is an area where we find a lot of trash, but also a surprising amount of green spaces. The people who live here took residence without asking and no one quite remembers when they came around for the first time. The people there are actually abber nomads who wandered into the mists during the Grand Conjunction and were more or less put into the newly formed island. Not too long after settling here, they were pushed around by the city of Nosos which had just appeared: they simply never cared to go far enough to see it... They were only a small number, they didn't need a lot of space, but the city of Nosos grew very fast. It pushed them until they had but a small portion of the land where they could live. After a few weird incidents, it seems the ruling class left them alone and ruled that this small portion of land was theirs. No one has dared break the rule yet...

West Nosos

The western area of Nosos is the industrial area. It is where all the industries are located and where pollution is at its highest. Factories of all sorts are there, from the coal industry to clothes manufacturers to firearms. No one lives there per se, the western/central area is where most of the proletariat live.

The worker's district (westernmost area) is very polluted because a lot of industrial smoke and other wastes are dumped near or even directly into their area. Their streets are often paved with garbage and filth. Kids play near huge garbage piles and the water supply is often tainted with various chemical waste product. The sewers are more complex and numerous here, in fact the sewers are run by were rats and a certain foul wererat named Henri DuCamp, the self proclaimed Roi des rats ("king of the rats"). He is but a small contributor to the rampant diseases that can be found here. People die on the streets in this place and many fall prey to more horrible fates, like dinner for the wererats or the sole foul wererat. The houses here are in ruins and often are nothing more than simple wooden shacks. Some have better houses, they actually have bricks and cement. Some even get to have more than one floor. But no matter how nice they look compared to other worker's houses, they simply fall prey to the pollution. Desolation is high here, prostitutes, beggars and even the sick parade around, trying to get money from the workers who pass by to go to work at the various factories. But these "undesirables" are more likely to be found in the commercial area. Density of the population is very high, and some would say suffocating.

The central area itself is a commercial center where merchants of all sorts sell their wares and build stores. The commercial area is much better of than the worker's district. They are farther away from the factories and industries than the residential area's population. But here few people actually live in the buildings. The numerous buildings are stores of all kinds, from weapons to

clothing to various food markets. Most of the food here is imported or grown in special walled gardens in the suburbs so the prices are steep. Green spaces are almost non-existent, like in the residential area. Indeed, the density of stores is too high to allow much to grow. The soil is constantly being trampled on by hordes of shoppers. The stores are not eye catching buildings, most merchants are too concerned with their profit margins to show off like that. Many of the merchants do live in small apartments in their stores, not trusting anyone and wanting to keep an eye on the goods 24 hours a day. Small time thieves and thugs reside here as well, renting from merchants and such. Thugs often get jobs as guards, no merchant ever trusting their competitor. But even the merchants are not a very wealthy group. They are often times family members of the industry that produces the goods and live on a short leash, selling their skills to the upper class. In fact thugs and thieves probably make as much money as the merchants on average (although they get it from stealing and such). Guilds of thieves rarely gather in this district, preferring the calmer suburbs or the southern areas, but their individual members often live here or in the residential areas. Garbage is actually taken care of here... it is dumped in the neighboring residential area. The streets are actually cleaned up somewhat, otherwise, no one could get in, considering how tightly packed the commerces are.

North Nosos

The Northern area is where we find the "middle" echelons of this society, or rather the members of the suprastructure (those whose job is to maintain the structure of the society). The eastern part is home to the political and religious elite. The leader of the Church of Ezra on this island lives in this area. Some major political figures find themselves in the suburbs instead. Here houses are very elaborate to suit the tastes of the political class and they are amongst the flashiest homes, often featuring eccentric or very popular foreign styles. Some claim to have taken the best architects from various exotic lands to build the plans to the house, some saying that famous architects even came in person. The size of the house represents the relative political weight of the owner, since, all too often, money is power in Nosos. The houses are built solidly, unless the style prevents it. Most are in a state of semi-constant repair, depending on the relative wealth of the owner. For the most part they are beyond anything the lower classes could ever dream of affording, but still not very impressive by foreign standards. Outsiders could probably feel that these houses are those of middle class citizens at best.

Pollution is bad, but not too bad for Nosos standards. Garbage still piles up where no houses are built, but each house has a fair radius of cleanness around it. Green areas are sometimes found, but almost always belong to very wealthy politicians who come from deep aristocratic roots. The rest of the northern area is populated by those who have knowledge (teachers at various places of high learning, scientists) or those of the legal world (judges, lawyers). These people are not quite as fortunate as the political elite, but they scrape up a decent living. They live in rather plain households who usually have a certain Gothic look to them. Judges are most likely to own such an elaborate house, while scientists are the least likely. Everything here is pretty calm, most people respecting them and the authority they have. Still pollution exists and houses needing repair are very common, but sickness isn't as common as in the lower class area. It is comparable to the southern areas. The church of Ezra stands here at the edge of the Northern district and the lower class district.

East Nosos

The eastern area is a mix of merchants, criminals, politicians of low authority, less respectable lawyers and reclusive people of all sorts. It is almost as polluted as the residential district, but generally better off in terms of disposal of dead beggars and other "undesirables". Still the difference is hard to make... Also, the garbage dumps are larger than anywhere else (besides the residential district). The underground church of the God of Disease resides here.

Suburbs

The suburbs are the cleanest areas. Here rich industrials reside in various elaborate houses and mansions of incredible sizes. They are in constant repair and most look very good considering the conditions they must endure. The Gothic style is very popular here, and the houses are often built in height, reaching upwards of 5 floors sometimes. The houses have some green areas surrounding them... some sickly looking grass, twisted trees, half rotten plants. But that's better than what most districts can expect. Reclusive industrials live in walled estates. Instead of having iron gates, they have large walls of stone. These people are the true rulers of Nosos, the biggest and richest industrials around. All industrials look up to these reclusive members of their class. Crime is non-existent in this area, as well trained guards keep a constant watch over the district. Few have ever seen this place, since many have declared the areas surrounding their mansions "private property", and by law this means that they can very well force anyone to leave or even kill trespassers.

THE PEOPLE OF NOSOS

Politicians, judges and lawyers are all the same here. They are simply tools of the upper industrial class. They represent the power structure of Nosos to the people, but in reality have no power of their own, since they do not possess the monopoly of physical violence which is gained through monopoly of the natural resources, of the means of production and of ownership of finished products. They are in fact a form of middle class, but since many are related to the industrial upper class members, they get the job of being the public's representants. Most accept their jobs in stride since the social advantages from them are very valuable. They are the closest thing to a "noble" class apart from the declining aristocracy.

The aristocracy are minor landowners of noble descendance. Their wealth is large, but slowly declining since they do not own any means of production and the lands they own are being bought by richer aristocrats trying to get rich enough to buy their way into the elite. They have little if no political power nowadays. Their authority comes from being part famous families in the past. Many are trying to get out while they can, so that's why they are so eager to sell what they have to the industrial upper class. Famous names include the Baford, Hackensmith, Gedfast, MacLorn and Williams.

The proletariat are downtrodden and have no power. They must sell their work force to live and if anything is to happen to their health, they have no other means of survival but by begging and scavenging. But beggars are hated by the population and generally get bad treatment, same goes for scavengers which are viewed as not much more than rats and vermin. Kids are taught to value

their personal gain has the most important part of living. Individualism is alive and well in this class.

The "richer" workers are often teachers or servants of the upper class. Priests are amongst these "richer poor" as well, except those who are the highest ranked amongst the church hierarchy. The later get to be part of the lower upper class because of their invaluable services. Lower ranked priests often become street cleaners, piling up the bodies of dead beggars and such, also trying to clean up the garbage all around or at least make neat piles and if possible make the smell of garbage a bit more tolerable around the northern districts and suburbs.

The industrials own everything, but each one doesn't own as much as the next one. The rank and file business men usually have a certain amount of land they own and possibly co-own certain profitable businesses, but are usually involved lightly in those businesses. They are often backstabbing each other, trying to buy out the other and possibly gain prestige, money and property that way. They are the more "public" industrials. Some however are much more reserved. In fact, the most powerful industrialists in Nosos are all in cahoots. They form a loosely based organization called the "upper crust". They are loyal to each other and try to maintain their holdings against the threats of smaller business men. They make the laws and decide who will be the "representant" to the public, in other words they choose the candidates for mayor and sponsor them. They also decide the local temple of Ezra's organization. Actually, the head priest of that church is part of the group. Everything is decided by them, but they all obey the whims of Malus. Malus was simply not a very gifted leader and he thought he would do better to have others do that type of work for him, while he decides what the best interests of the group are.

These industrials live in the walled estates and own all the food grown in Nosos, since it is their lands that grow it. Imported food is also theirs, for they own all companies who buy large quantities of it. No one can hope to ever get a share of that market, for the inner circle makes sure that the food sold is theirs and so maintain complete control over Nosos.

The abber nomads are a simple folk and have more or less forgotten many of the traditions of their people. They are close to nature and have grown to be linked to the sickly vegetation. They have maintained a small ammount of greenery in their small plot of land and no one has been able to destroy it or even defile it. Malus tried once and the people he sent were attacked by shambling mounds. This led him to believe that the ghost of his father might be with these people. The abber nomads are quite reviled by the general populace, many seeing them as barbarians or savages. Although the abber were once nomads, they have now become the abber people and have a growing culture based upon a certain worship of nature [Wiccans and Pagans are a good point of reference, so are Native Americans]. But the people of Nosos do not care about their culture, they believe in many stereotypes about the abber people. As such, the abber people live apart from Nosican society. They have no access to advanced technology and live with what they can get from scavenging and nature. Although they grow food, no one wants to buy it or even trade anything for it, many believing "the savages have poisoned the food to get revenge on the superior people", but in reality it is quite harmless and probably cleaner than what they could buy in the marketplace.

Scientists are quite common in Nosos, as are people of some knowledge. Scientists are almost all under contract with a business who asks of them to come up with newer, better technology to exploit the natural resources. They must better the tools and have in many cases tried to adapt mechanical elements to them. Few have had success in this undertaking. To date only one man has had any success and his creations were not really tools, but rather free thinking artificial beings. He was trying to give some form of intelligence to machines, make them able to work on their own.

Doctors also exist, but in limited numbers, most are always on hand to help out the rich industrialists and many of those doctors are actually under contract, meaning they cannot heal anyone but those specified in the contract. They wage a constant war over who gets to work for whom. The medicine practiced by these people is quite advanced by the demiplane's usual standards, some vaccine have been invented, but few are actually known by the public. Some doctors instead choose to practice on the poor, most for humanitarian reasons. They have limited means and often suffer from depression caused by excess work and the general bleakness of the land.

Teachers in general are almost all somewhat skilled in economy. The major branches of study include: theology (Anchorite), technology/mechanics, medicine/chemistry, administration/accounting and law/politics. Social sciences have been forbidden ever since a certain Carl Marks has written books that talk of an alternative to the current system and declares that this system is corrupt. His controversial writings have caused a stir amongst the elite and he has been banned from teaching and all programs in which his philosophies could be taught have been disposed of (philosophy, social studies and studies of the mind). Teachers are kept on a short leash, they have knowledge and could easily cause another stir like Marks'. They often become "friends" of the system: theology teachers, for example, teach about how people must help themselves and the poor are poor because it is what they were destined to be.

The current faculties of higher learning include:

Theological Institute of Saint Leonard the Pious: a University that belongs to the temple of Ezra and teachers there are all priests at the temple. They teach the faith of Ezra and its analysis of society and life. Obviously its teachings revolve around production and non-intervention in the world for it is a creation of God and humans have no right to mess with such holy a creation.

University of Nosos: the largest and most expensive school in Nosos. Everything but theology is taught there. The school could hold around three times the current number of students and still function very effectively, but people cannot afford it. It is renowned for its administrative studies and its accountants are amongst the best.

Baford University: founded by the noble Baford family long ago, this school is rather expensive, but still hosts the greatest number of students. It used to be a place where young nobles learned how the ways of the noble class, but it is now a school like any other. It is not in very good shape and more than one student has been injured here. It hosts an underground magic faculty and some local rumours claim that some desperate nobles once called upon a great evil to do away with the rising industrialist class...

Nosos School of Human Studies: now closed, it was here that Marks used to teach. It is a small run down school, it has since then been the property of wererats who hide in there and have been often forced to share it with thieves guilds of all size and shapes. Some beggars have found a

shelter during the winter time here, however many die because of the hazardous condition the building is in.

Finally, demihumans compose the last group. They are extremely rare and most are dwarves. Dwarves are somewhat accepted because of their great mining skills and their no frills attitude. The richer class wish that dwarves would be more numerous because they are incredible workers and often hold humans to dwarven standards in productivity. Dwarves live near the mines in special areas devoted solely to them. The conditions there are just as bad as anywhere else in the proletarian district. They keep to themselves and bother no one. Elves, halflings and gnomes all avoid Nosos, finding it too bleak for their tastes. A few gnomes have been known to work as inventors for businesses, but few stay very long, finding the working conditions to be absurd. Humans dislike demihumans and often use arguments like "they spread disease" and "they steal jobs!". The government has recently issued special "bonuses" to dwarves from other parts of the demiplane to make them come to Nosos.

ORGANIZATIONS OF NOSOS

The Upper Crust (*secret organization*)

This group is made up of the 6 most powerful businessmen in Nosos next to Malus. They are the true power behind the land, they are the ones who make the laws and the ones who decide everything. Actually they are all under the control of Malus whom they all respect and fear, but they are still the ones who make the unofficial laws, it's just that Malus decides what goals they must achieve with these laws.

The existence of the group dates back to before Malus became lord of Nosos. They were a small group of nobles who decided to form an association to pool together their resources and apply some pressure on the king so he may take decisions that appeal to their best interests. Over time the economy changed and suddenly merchants were getting power. Making goods, finding the primary resources... all this started to appear and modify how they conducted business. The group thus changed its members, from wealthy nobles to wealthy merchants and landowners. With time the group acquired a lot of power and wealth, growing tremendously with the arrival of Malus Sceleris within the economical arena. In fact, he was considered as a possible addition to the group. But Malus had a few tricks up his sleeve and declined the offer. The group was insulted, but somehow couldn't quite hold it against Malus. In reality, Malus had simply used his special charm power on them. He became an associate of them, but nothing more. He was simply pulling their strings as if they were puppets. Eventually the group came to fear Malus, he was a tough businessman and most of them found themselves allied with him in many dealings. Thus Malus took control of the group by pure shrewdness and a bit of manipulation.

After this the group became Malus' "advisors" of sorts, they conduct business for him in areas he has no time for, like the food industry and the maintaining of the suprastructure. Now they do most of the work for Malus who reaps all the benefits.

The advantage of being in this select group is that you are the true power within Nosos' society, yet you have very little that you actually do. Most of the time, they are simply partying or finding

new ways to exploit the land. They must also coordinate their actions, each is more or less given control over certain areas of the economy.

Requirements for the group are that the person must hold a good portion of the food industry and at least be the head of two businesses or one great corporation. Also the members are all LE.

The current members are:

Bishop Eldon III (anchorite 8th) : His real name is Robert Ferr, but he took the name of the high priest he replaced as tradition has it. The man was a graduate of the theological institute of St. Leonard the Pious and for sometime worked both at the local temple of Ezra, taking care of its accounting, but also being a part time accountant for some rich merchants. He struggled for some time, but eventually made it to the top of the temple's hierarchy when he managed to make the then very sick high priest sign a paper informing the church that he had decided upon a successor. This sudden boost in rank gave him power over a large part of this supra structure and along with the wealth of his now deceased parents, he set out to buy land in the suburbs, thus making him owner of part of the food industry.

Roger Tulle (thief 4th) : This simple business man used thieving as a way to gain funds to buy out the competition in the textile business. He specializes in sabotage and manipulation of facts. He made some people believe that his competitors were somehow linked to a rash of deadly fevers that hit clients of the stores. The businesses had to close and were all bought by him, building up a huge empire of textile manufacturers.

Alaster Nor (normal man) : A talented doctor and head of the medical industry. He comes from a long line of nobles and his family was smart enough to take a head start in the practice of medicine a long time ago. They created small labs where herbs could be turned into medicine. They had huge success and Alaster simply inherited the place in upper crust from his father.

Jeremy McUnres (fighter 3rd) : This talented marksman is also head of a large company that deals in weapons. The McUnres factories make firearms and sell them all over the core. McUnres was ruthless to his employee who feared him greatly and worked very hard for fear of his threats. He had started rumours about himself a while back, saying he was quite dangerous to those who were not loyal. The very productive employees made him a fortune and he was easily able to buy his way into the upper crust, although at the same time he is responsible for the death of many due to the massive distribution of firearms.

Alana Green (normal woman) : This woman is the only one to make it to the upper crust. She was motivated by a woman she met once who told her she did not have to take her husband's orders and was just as good as any male. This went a little overboard with her and she became nothing more than a bossy accountant, but her determination impressed many and she got a few breaks at a major lumbering company in her home domain of Kartakass. She was then impressed with tales of Nosos and how advanced the businesses were in that domain. She became head of the company and moved into Nosos. Her smarts lead the company to great success in Nosos and eventually she got an offer to join, although this wasn't a popular decision.

Armand Hobert (normal man) : A lawyer who defended many criminals in his youth. Now in his 50s, he's rich from the many "gifts" received from various criminals he helped out. The money he made helped him buy a number of small mining companies and manufacturers of mining equipment. Got a big break with the dwarven immigration as he made sure to give dwarves a number of jobs. This made him able to buy some farmland where he lives in semi-retirement.

The Followers of Talona

These people are all priests of Talona, a deity of poisons and toxins from the Forgotten Realms campaign. A while back, a small contingent of such priests ran afoul of the mists and got carried into Nosos. Not quite understanding what had happened they decided to look around, only to see that they were lost in some strange city. They decided it would be best to keep a low profile until they get an idea of what was going on.

But no one goes underground without the thieves knowing it, and nothing the thieves know the major crime bosses don't know, and there is very little that the major crime bosses know that doesn't catch the ears of the major corporations, and well there is nothing that gets past Malus for too long. But Malus was intrigued by this so called religion. In fact, he thought this was probably a cover up for some underground scientists trying to work on diseases and poisons. So Malus decided to fund this underground cult secretly in exchange for knowledge on any new forms of toxin or disease. Also, he got the lower ranked priests to help out the Church of Ezra in cleaning up the dead bodies.

The church itself now includes diseases when talking about what Talona rules. They have go around carrying dead bodies to study the traces of Talona (they basically do a form of autopsy to learn what caused the death and see if some form of new disease has appeared). In many ways, they have become researchers who study the result of the diseases created by the lord of Nosos, although they all think it's Talona's handywork.

PERSONALITIES OF NOSOS

Henri DuCamp

(foul wererat)

AC : 5

HD : 5+1 (34 hp)

AI : CE

Int : 10

SA : See below

SD : +2 or blessed silver to hit

Background: Henri was an exterminator in Richemulot. This line of work was hazardous as they come, the rats there are dangerous and aggressive. He never really chose this line of work as much as he was lead to it by family tradition (his grandfather was one, his great grandfather was one and even Henri's father was one...). Besides, he was always rather antisocial, never really was one to talk and make friends. His father spent a lot of time perfecting traps and making new poisons for the vermins. They were on the road a lot, meaning that Henri was left without any friends and animals reacted badly to him, in fact he was always allergic to cats and dogs, this eventually gave him a certain phobia of these animals. The lonely boy decided to put all his time learning the family craft to make something of his life. After his father's death he was the only exterminator in Richemulot. He decided to make his father proud and carry on the proud family business.

But the thing was that his father was never a true exterminator. The Renier made sure a long time ago that no one would dare do this to the rats of Richemulot, whether he used enchanted pipes or

deadly poison, no exterminator would be spared. But Jacqueline did maintain a certain "cover up". She had a few individuals meet wererats under her rule and have these individuals do "mock" exterminations using rats under Jacqueline's control and poisons that were of no use against the rats. Henri had a rather successful run as an exterminator outside of Richemulot, although his techniques and poisons were somewhat dangerous. He used deadly toxins against rats, but didn't really care what effects these might have on people and certainly didn't care what would happen if a rat survived it. Meaning that he caused sometimes more harm than good, being a vermin himself. Eventually his reputation came to the ears of a merchant in Richemulot who offered a huge reward for exterminating the rats who often stole food from him.

Henri went there and got rid of the rats, but also got some unwanted attention from the queen rat. Jacqueline had the lazy exterminator captured for experimentations. She wanted to try out a few experiments with foul rats, a new breed of super rats who carry diseases and seem somewhat hard to control even for her. She thought that the mingling of normal wererat blood and foul rat blood inside a human body could cause an advantageous mutation. This led to the creation of the first foul wererat. But this wererat was much stronger than expected and was quite rebellious. Henri's mind was warped a bit during the whole transformation, the animal side struggling for dominance, but the mind of the foul rat was too alien to truly blend in with the human side, thus causing slightly erratic behavior. He managed to break his bonds and with his mind wracked with pain, he ran away from lab as fast as he could. The mists welcomed him in and he found himself in a new part of the sewers...

The sewers were not the same, the smell of wererats was too faint here and it wasn't Richemulot. He was in Nosos. His mind had finally come to grips with the strange mixture of blood in Henri's body. Henri wasn't horrified with the transformation, but rather felt it was simply a natural progression. The whole ordeal has been erased in his mind and now he travels the sewers with his friends the rats. Also Nosos has a healthy population of foul rats who "befriended" Henri. He talks to them and has even went through a whole ceremony to crown himself king. Indeed his mind isn't quite stable.

Current sketch: Henri was always lonely and buried himself in work to forget about his loneliness, now he has lots of friends, lots of furry little friends. He calls himself the king of rats, but sees Nosos rats as his friends not his subjects. He feels he must exterminate humans because it is his job to exterminate humans who infest the rats' homes. So he goes out at night to kill the inhabitants of decrepit houses and let the rats have their homes back. He is quite mad actually, and the rats obey his mental command and are not there as his friends.

Powers: Command rats at will, unlimited numbers, but can't do anything else if more than 60 rats controlled. Unlimited control over foul rats, always has at least 4 or 5 with him. Giant rats and osquips are controllable only within 50 feet and no more than 10 can be controlled at one time. His bite causes 3d4 points of piercing damage and will cause a serious disease (save vs. poison at -3 to avoid it). He is immune to all toxins and all forms of natural diseases and has a +4 bonus against magical ones. When in rat form treat as foul rat for damage. His bite has only a 1% chance of causing lycanthropy and even so this results only in a normal wererat who is not under his control.

He is a master of toxins and can create multiple poisons from just about anything he finds, but he usually only creates small doses for fun. Also he is immune to weapons of less than +1 enchantment, although blessed silver hits him also. Only weapons of blessed silver do normal damage, others do 1d3 + all bonuses applicable. Foul rats have a better resistance to damage, but since his blood isn't quite "pure", he gets lesser resistance, but his wererat blood makes him invulnerable to nonmagical weapons.

Weaknesses: Deathly afraid of cats which he feels have curses on them and will run away at maximum movement rate to avoid them. Fears dogs and will make a fear check to avoid running away, if he succeeds he will try to kill it first forgetting about anyone else. Cats blood on any weapon capable of hurting him will cause him to save vs. poison or fall "sick". He will run a terrible fever and will be unable to fight or do any activities more taxing than say resting or reading a book or possibly making new poison. Blood of a greater feline (lions, tiger, etc.) will make him save at -2. Dog blood acts as an irritant (treat as *Irritation* spell) if he fails a save vs. poison, blood from wolves and such will give him a bonus of +2 to the save and blood from an unnatural dog (blink dog, death dog etc..) impose a penalty of -2.

Professor Tomoe

(normal human)

Alignment : CN (insane)

HD : 1 (4 HPs)

AC : 10 (8 with dex adjustments)

Str : 9

Dex : 16

Con : 9

Int : 18

Wis : 3 (quite insane)

Cha : 9

Tomoe is quite possibly one of the greatest scientific minds of the demiplane. His field is engineering and mechanics. The 30 years old man has been at it ever since he graduated from Nosos University (he had gotten a special sponsorship from some wealthy business men). He is a tall and thin man, standing 6'2", with long blond hair pulled into a ponytail. His eyes are steel gray and he has a pale complexion even for an inhabitant of Nosos. And right now he is quite insane, although when not working he can seem perfectly normal. He was at the top of his class and has been behind many of the technological wonders of Nosos that he either thought of or created with his own two hands. But since the money came from business men, he was forced to work on production based machinery only. It was a bit heartbreaking for him to know that his great dream of building a thinking machine would come to such an abrupt end, but he persevered, thinking that possibly he could eventually afford working for himself.

At the age of 25 he had amassed some money, and had been luckily spared from most diseases. He realized that his dream was a bit far fetched as he had no success with machines working on their own. It was easy to make machines that move objects along or that help out people, but they were not capable of doing more than one action. He wanted a machine capable of doing many actions...

But while his funds were running low, a stranger appeared to him one day and offered to support his work, saying he had gotten word of how he had built some of the great machinery of the land. The stranger asked that he continue his work, but that this time he would work for another land, the land of Darkon. King Azalin was impressed with the technological wonders of Nosos, he said, and he later wanted to get some mechanical helpers for himself. Raw materials would be provided to Tomoe for free and he simply had to ask if anything was missing. Tomoe readily accepted, finding great hope in the idea of working for the King of Darkon.

The first batch of metal to be given to him was unusual. The metal was black and looked like iron. The agent of Azalin told him it was a special Darkonian metal, harvested by the dwarves. Tomoe was no specialist on the subject and accepted to work with it. The truth was that this strange metal had come from Bluetspur a long time ago. Azalin had some dwarves go there and bring him some samples. They brought back strange meteoric iron in rather large quantities. Azalin got some of his main forge to work with the iron and produce something. The metal proved too soft to be worked into weapons, but was perfect for making pieces armor for the joints. A final point was that it radiated something... not really magic, but some form of power... (actually it was actual radiation of sorts).

For around two years, Tomoe worked on the metal and found himself getting involved to the point of not eating or sleeping. His mind was inspired by some force... as he created the pieces of the machine together he could feel that he would know how to make this machine work. He had all he could ask for in terms of tools and materials. Then he finally finished the machine. He started out with no real ideas on what it should look like, he simply got inspired by the strange metal. All he was actually told was that Azalin wanted an helper... and he created a weird cylinder like machine with treadmills. It had rather skinny arm like appendages and a thick tray to carry things around. He gave it special lenses to detect heat and act as a form of crude vision. Also he gave two feelers that stand underneath it and detect slight anomalies in a given ground to mark it's path. But... how was this machine supposed to work ? That question was all that was left... how to make this thing work... it had a crude engine but nothing to make the engine work. Any form of fire would make the machine melt inside, the metal reacted badly to fire.

He spent the night pondering about that problem, and nothing came to him. He was so close... he had finally thought of everything, but now he couldn't make it work. No one knows what happened after that, but somehow the machine did start to work. And all his subsequent ones did as well... even without the strange metal...

Actually, Azalin wanted to try out cursed objects, cursed tools supposedly created by the weird genius lord Easan the Mad. He was curious about them, but didn't want to create anything he couldn't control in his domain so he sent an agent to let somebody in another domain try them out for him. The result was that with these tools one could create mechanical golems, but the downside was that those golems would get an evil intelligence and the creator would be pushed to create more complex mechanical golems until he hits the pinnacle of success, at which point they stop functioning and the latest greatest creation falls flat...

So Tomoe continued his work and created all sorts of weird creations that run amok all around Nosos. Some of his lesser creations have been destroyed, but they were weak and stupid

compared to the greater constructions like the tin man or his still unliving Eve (who is the aforementioned pinnacle) who is almost completely humanoid looking. He is obsessed with his work and will not stop looking for a way to make Eve live.

The radiation of the black metal from Bluetspur has caused the doctor to become sick recently from radiation poisoning. He is actively trying to find a cure for this illness and has been contemplating putting his intelligence into one of his creations, but he is afraid considering the problems he had with the tin man. He has heard about some scientists finding a way to prevent illness and prolong life indefinitely using a chemical therapy and a process of lowering the body temperature. Although he doesn't trust such a weird and seemingly crazed idea, he has been considering trying it as a last resort.

Also, the Tin man has been causing trouble for the doctor, meaning that many of his creations are now destined for protection instead of general tasks.

Azalin had lost interest in the metal, after finding out about the crazed behavior of the mechanical golems.

The Tin Man

(mechanical golem)

(all stats as anomalous mechanical golem unless stated otherwise)

AC : 0

Mv : 6, 12

HD : 10 (60 HP)

Thac0 : (base) 11

Dam. per attack : 3d10 (punch) 4d8 (blade)

Int : 14

MR : 10% (50% if directly on black metal part)

The tin man is not a normal mechanical golem. He was not truly born out of obsession, but rather from magic and science. His creator was not seeking some grand and lofty goal in as much as do what the cursed tools asked of him. His creator, Professor Tomoe, gave him this name as some form of inside joke, referring to a storybook character named the tin man. The tin man was possibly Tomoe's first truly humanoid looking creation, or at least the first built with this goal. Indeed, tin man has a head made out of the black metal which resembles a normal human head. But the head is more or less coated with this black metal, underneath lies a "skull" of steel. Inside the skull lies wires and bolts as well as two small mirrors acting as eyes. His chest is nothing more than a banged up cylinder made to take on slightly human proportions. This cylinder protects various gears inside that somehow act to make him move as well as protect a small crude engine of sorts. The cylinder is made out of steel and has a small door on the front so that tinkering can be done. His right arm is highly articulated, making him capable of human like actions with it, but his left arm is rather inflexible. The left arm is stiff around the elbow and has to be more or less put into position with the other arm. The hands are made in the same way as the head, but can be detached and replaced with a replacement, which include weaponry and tools. His right leg is almost normal, if rather stiff, while his left leg is like his left arm, stiff in terms of articulations and his left foot is actually a series of small wheels. He walks with a limp

usually, but he can balance himself on one foot and let the wheels do the job, but for reasons explained later, he rarely does that.

The tin man is a very smart mechanical golem for a few reasons. First of all his creator taught him a number of things, including how to help him create other golems. Tomoe saw tin man as a capable helper who was actually able to learn things. The reason for the learning capacity is unknown since the tools had never given his creations so much intelligence, most simply doing a simple task over and over again in a given pattern. Also, tin man had an unusual talent, he could speak. Not only that, but he could record speech patterns and mimic them almost flawlessly. That made the professor suspicious. Rightfully so, since the tin man started enjoying tales of philosophy and lectures about humanity. He got his first taste from some old books the professor had lying around. He then went to hear people around Universities talking about life. Tin man grew to understand the plight of humanity in Nosos, disease and death were much too rampant, but his views on life were based upon what he heard from students who, for the most part, approved of the ways of the industrialists. So the golem came to believe that life was about producing something, doing something in this society. He saw in himself a form of perfect producer, but he felt humans and creatures of flesh and blood were too weak to do this. He made the professor create a few others like him, but all were more or less dumb. The tin man suspected that the professor was holding back on him, that perhaps Tomoe had willingly failed. So he decided to leave the professor and take some of the latter's notes.

After this episode, he decided to go into seclusion, until he would find a way to destroy humanity. That's when he found a sick old man carrying a book. The old man pleaded for help, asking tin man to take the book and spread its word. Tin man enjoyed philosophy and saw that this book was new to him. Written by a certain Marks, he read the man's theories. He then found his idea. He would use mankind's deadliest weapon: itself. He used his mimicking talents by listening to speeches from underground resistance movements and various other public or underground speakers. He studied old theories from books banned long ago. He found out how to manipulate humans the way the upper class manipulates the lower class. Finally, he disguised himself and took on a new identity, as the "iron man".

He now writes books, gives speeches and does whatever he can to get a myth around him. His ways have been heard across Nosos, but no one knows who he is really. Malus is starting to worry about this "iron man", about his ideas of letting the proletariat take absolute power over the upper class, about a supposedly classless society... and about how violence might be the only way to achieve it. He perverted Marks's words to institute a theoretical regime, where he would guide the new society towards a classless system, when in reality his theory is for domination of all humankind.

Special Attacks: The tin man has a strange ability that is beyond his control, the black metal from which he is made of emits radiation that is harmful to living beings. Long term exposure to the tin man results in sickness and ultimately to death.

Special Defenses: The tin man can mimic any voice he hears perfectly and can record up to 2 hours of spoken dialogue. He can keep about 5 different voices in memory without affecting the quality of the imitation too much. But just one more and he has a 50% chance of mixing up one of the voices with another. Again, the differences in voices can affect this limitation, so that he

can carry more similar voices and less if they are very different ones. He has intimate knowledge of rudimentary theories on persuasion and has mastered the use of them, meaning that he can get people to follow him and believe him rather easily (if he can create the proper circumstances).

He has both mechanical and human allies.

Special Weaknesses: The black metal is not very resistant to fire, meaning that all attacks against it with magical fire means that it might start melting (2% chance per point of damage). The black metal is very important to his intelligence and mimicking abilities. Also grabbing objects is now impossible, and if a blade is in place, it has a 25% chance of falling off if it connects with a blow. Calling him tin man is his zeitgeber, meaning that when he hears his real name he starts singing a song from the storybook his name comes from.

Allies: he can create minor mechanical golems to protect himself, they are never much more than simplistic machines with sharp implements or whatever its functions permit has offense. They are more or less moving traps and are used to weaken or slow down foes. His human allies come from his various meetings and underground activities. When in such a meeting he can count on the protection of 1st level fighters giving their lives for him. They will be armed with whatever they can get their hands on, including firearms if possible.

Margaret Retcher, *Mayoress of Nosos*
(normal human female)

This fiftysomething years old woman was called the "iron woman" before tin man thought of the term. She is a cold and ruthless politician and right now, the mayoress of Nosos. No taller than 5 feet tall, with curly white hair, she looks more like a grandmother than a politician. Yet her reign has lasted for over 7 years now. No one has matched her popularity yet. The stubborn woman got elected when she promised more jobs and in fact guaranteed that the unemployment rate would go down at least 50 %. The poor folks got caught up in this fervor and voted in vast majorities for her. The truth was that this only lead to a lot more pollution and the destruction of the minor rebellious political party who promised some cleaning up of politics and of Nosos in general. Ms Retcher was born in a well off noble family, and decided to avoid becoming a relic by engaging herself in the new nobility, the members of the suprastructure. She gained as much wealth and prestige as her ancestors did by licking the King's boots all the time. This heritage lead her to the doorsteps of the upper crust's only female member who had managed to get the rest of her group behind Retcher and got her elected.

Recently, her husband took a greater role in all this. Ronald Meagon is a fiftysomething year old man himself and almost senile. He was a former actor who turned to politics. His marriage to Retcher made possible his entrance into big league politics. He is the much needed public appeal side of the current political party in power. While Retcher is a tough, smart and cold politician, she lacked the public appeal, which her husband supplies. The man harbors deep individualistic values and makes them clearly seen. He has a certain xenophobia, which is starting to irritate the industrialists who worry about where their products will go if he makes any offensive statements. His rant about Kartakan music almost got him in hot water: some good diplomatic actions was the only thing that stood between him and an assassination.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The X-files : here everyone is corrupted, everyone is telling lies, everyone is keeping secrets. With the black metal of Bluetspur in Nosos, it is possible that the Illithids have a homing beacon to find the island and possibly use its population for some grim experiments. Possibly to make sure no one knows about this, the industrialists create a special force assigned to eliminate all evidence of Illithid visitors. Mutations are also quite possible with the toxic pollution around. Let us not forget about killer robots...

Power to the Proletariat! : The rich are trying to escape death and disease while the poor die in pain. The PCs are obviously seen as "rich" and they witness this blatant inequality. What can they do about it ? Who is behind all this ? Can the death of the rich be a solution ?

The native american hook : The tribe of Abber people can be used in a form of native american story. Possibly someone is trying to force them off their land using ancient secrets, believing that their arcane powers must be dealt with with more arcane methods. The PCs might try to help the Abber people by finding out about these ancient arcane horrors locked up by the arrival of science.

The Tin Man : Obviously the PCs must face a mechanical golem with ideas resembling those of Stalin, certainly a great monster himself. This might make the PCs fight for the industrialist class' safety, but at the same time they are helping another monster. Which is the lesser of two evils ? And they can be shocked at seeing their foe revealed as nothing more than a clever machine.

Metropolis : the sleeping robot of Tomoe was more or less inspired by the robot I saw in some clips of it. This adventure involves the PCs facing the discontent of the proletariat and being hired by the industrialists to infiltrate the dissident revolutionary movement. Then they will discover the existence of a sect which preaches the coming of a new woman who will free them of the yoke of the capitalists.. and then they meet Tomoe.. who will they help?

The crazed Exterminator : Perhaps the PCs find themselves running from wererats in Richemulot only to find themselves stuck with a weird threat... a crazed foul wererat who believes humans are the vermins. Maybe one of their friends has been affected by a strange and unknown toxin and the only way to cure it is to find samples of the original toxin, but Henri isn't likely to let any vermin run away with his toys.

NOVA VAASA FLESHED OUT

By J.W. Mangrum

Geographical Notes

The hills to the north of the domain are known as the Koshka Bluffs. Some very nasty business went down here not long after the Grand Conjunction (the module *The Awakening*).

The lakes to the south are known as the Three Sisters.

East of Kantora is a thick, virgin forest known as Briarweed Forest. Since Nova Vaasan wood rots quickly, the woods were left pretty much to themselves. For a while the Forest was used as the hideout of a ruthless and highly successful band of highway bandits lead by a woman named Chezna. After Chezna's bandits were routed some years ago, a cell of druids moved into the area, clearing out the bandits many, many hidden traps. Unfortunately, these druids recently stopped communicating with neighboring cells; they were wiped out from within (See *Children of the Night: Vampires* for details).

The Vaasan Calendar

According to the module *The Awakening*, Nova Vaasa has a 360-day lunar calendar, based on its five moons. Each moon is named after a noble family. Once a year, all 5 moons are new. 180 days later, all 5 moons are full.

I did a little number crunching, and came up with this:

<u>Moon</u>	<u>Noble House</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>Months-Per-Year</u>
I	Vistin	8 days	44
II	Chekiv	24 days	15
III	Rivtoff	40 days	9
IV	Hiregaard	72 days	5
V	Bolshnik	120 days	3

A couple of notes about the calendar:

The night all 5 moons are full is called the Night of Bright Truth. According to local lore, no lies can be spoken on this night (and animals can talk on Christmas Eve...). The Night of Bright

Truth marks the beginning of the Nova Vaasan year. On the Night of Bright Truth, representatives of the 5 noble families hold council in Kantora to discuss the year's business.

The night all 5 moons are new is called the Night of Dark Deeds. As the name implies, lore holds that this night is a time for treachery and evil.

Every night the Rivtoff moon is full, Bergovitsa has a festival day; the shops stay open late into the night.

Nova Vaasa is warm and arid year-round, and as such doesn't have much by way of noticeable seasons. Thus, instead of summer, spring, et al, Nova Vaasa uses two seasons:

The "waning days" are the first half of the year, from the Night of Bright Truth to the Night of Dark Deeds. The "waxing days" are the second half of the year.

Horses

The Great Corral in Kantora has twin uses. During the waning days, it is used for horse trading; during the waxing days, it is used for horse racing.

Speaking of horses, the black Nova Vaasan are widely held to be the finest mounts in the land. These horses are born in wild, then captured and trained by the Vistani.

Noble Families

Each noble family controls an area of land surrounding one of the domain's rivers, and collects taxes from that region. Additionally, each noble family must pay tribute to the Prince.

<u>House</u>	<u>Controls</u>	<u>Castle Name</u>
Vistin	Ivlis R.	?
Chekiv	Little Borchava R.	?
Bolshnik	Borchava R.	Stonegard
Hiregaard	Dnar R.	Faerhaaven
Rivtoff	Volgis R.	Blacktower Heights

Politics & Laws

Prince Othmar Bolshnik is the political ruler of the domain. Although he isn't the darklord, he could easily be mistaken for one. He's a petty bully, who is enforcing a 100% sales tax on all sales in Nova Vaasa. He has recruited a select few true werebeasts to act as enforcers to back up his tax collectors' outrageous demands.

The sheriff of Egertus is in the habit of hiring adventurers to do odd jobs, such as the dirty work of clearing monsters out of the local crypt or two.

Cities and Villages

Kantora is the domain's largest city, and since it houses Castle Stonegard and Prince Othmar, it serves as the capitol as well. Pop. 16,000.

Bergovitsa and Arbora both have population of about 8,000. Liara and Egertus are much smaller; each has a population of 2,000.

The People

Due to the Nova Vaasan climate and the typical peasant's abject poverty, most Nova Vaasans (that is, the lower class) go barefoot. Many Nova Vaasans of all classes wear handkerchiefs as part of their fashion, over their head, tied around their neck or arm, or so forth. In Nova Vaasa, green is the color of mourning, not black.

Here are a few surnames I plucked from various sources:

Skolsson, Valisdottir, Keirin, Tavalys, Turndach, Karlssen, Androv, Andreovich.

Popular local sayings:

"A man without a moustache is like a horse without a tail."

"A horse is the ship of the grasslands. Only a peasant drowns in the dust."

Wildlife and Fauna

The main predator is the plains cat, a vicious breed which resembles a black bobcat the size of a lion, with a screeching howl that sounds like a woman's agonized scream. These creatures are largely nocturnal. Local lore also claims that herds of nightmares stampede across the plains at night, their hooves making the sounds of thunder as they pass.

John W. Mangrum

Speculative Origins of Bluetspur **(with Regard to Asmus Anagoge's *Illithiad*)**

By C.D. Nichols

Foreword

Information used in this essay can be found in *The Illithiad*, *Forbidden Lore*, *Thoughts of Darkness*, and Dragon #150 *The Sunset World*, as well as material from *The Book of Souls*, the Ravenloft campaign setting netbook.

Common Theories About The Forgotten Land Bluetspur

As told by Professor Abelhous Nicholshi of the University of Il Aluk

In the days before the Great Upheaval, the people in the south of the Lands of the Mists knew an ever present fear. For, on their borders lay an enemy as mysterious as the Mists, and as terrible as any horror which lay closer to home. The sunless wastelands called Bluetspur, a place of endless storms and twisted stone, were the source of their omnipresent fears. As reports of hideous monsters preying on the trade-routes of the south spread, so did fear. Then came the Sundering.

After the Great Upheaval ended, and the wastes of Bluetspur fell away into the Mists, the people of the Lands of the Mists eased their worries a notch, glad to be rid of the nightmare place and the creatures in held. But, in the Barovian village of Immol, there were people who knew more about that black land. The Thaani of Immol claimed the dark land of Bluetspur as their ancestral homeland. They knew the horror beneath the peaks of the blasted heath. To the Thaani, abomination has a name: *illithid*.

Until recently, the Thaani tales had been considered just that-the legends of dying culture. Only within the past decade, with the publication of *Speculative Ecology of an Inhabitant of Bluetspur*, has the legend of the illithid empire gained credence. And, now that new materials have been brought at great risk to the remaining faculty of the University of Il Aluk based in Karg, a reconstruction of the last days of the people of Thaan and the nature of the illithid empire of Thaan (Thaan being both the world and the city of the Thaani people), can be deduced.

Recently, our facilities here were called on to examine a bundle the Harbor Authority discovered a local fisherman removing from his boat. On questioning, the fisher explained he had captured it in his nets that day, and, after a brief debate, relinquished the bundle to the Harbor Authority. The bundle proved to be a book and papers in an unknown language, sealed in a water-tight jar. The Harbor Authority then gave the text to our faculty, sorely depleted as we are for translation. The texts proved to be a work entitled the *Illithiad*, which supported the legends of the Thaani regarding Bluetspur.

Therefore, we turn to the question of what do these Thaani legends say? The legends say that prior to the appearance of Bluetspur in the Lands of the Mists, the Thaani lived on a world in the so-called "Prime" known as Thaan. Thaan was dominated by two races, humans on the surface and in the caverns beneath the earth, mind flayers, properly called illithids. The two races had war off and on for eons, but the mind flayers had never been cohesive enough to overcome the humans. Further, the illithids were hampered by their inability to survive in sun-light. For the illithids to overcome the humans, the communities of Thaan's illithids would have to band together.

And so, the illithids, under the banners of the Gatherers, the Darken, and the Awaiters, held a Grand Elder Concord, and launched a plan. For two millenia, the surface world never saw a single mind flayer, slowly forgetting the threat. The their dank chasms, the illithids built huge psionic engines and "spelljamming fleets" [although the meaning of this first term escapes us, it must refer to some particular and powerful energy -AN]. Psionic curcuits laid down pathways channeling energy into Thaan's core, heating the planet's surface through geothermal activity and shifting continents into swampy lowlands. Other engines worked on climate, causing the planet to be universally covered in clouds bringing warm rains. And finally, the great work of the mind flayers, a fleet of psionic engines, which would when the time came, be spelljammed [here the term probably means "transferred" -AN] into Thaan's sun, cutting its radiance to a cold and sullen red glow.

But, as with any plan, there were bugs. Chiefly, the illithid communities, a dozen or so huge illithid metropolises, were afflicted by outcasts, mind flayers which flouted societal norms. Mostly, these were illithids who choose to favor magic over the psionic arts. Others suffered from a disorder called "partial personality", wherein the mind of the creature whose body the illithid usurped at birth still exists in part within the illithid's mind. However, it was these outcast with would lay low all of Thaan.

A group of arcane illithids, outcast from their cities, banded together under the leadership of a alhoon (an illithid lich) who called itself Bluetspur. This cabal of rogue mind flayers gathered others, forming a community far from the ther elder brains. Once they were sure that the community was forming nicely, the alhoon Bluetspur and his cabal sacrificed themselves, tearing out their own brains and casting them into a specially treated pool of brine. As the lich Bluetspur's blackened organ merged, the illithid's mind consumed his minions spirits, and the elder brain was Bluetspur.

The new community of outcast illithid took on the name of its elder brain, as is mind flayer tradition. The outcasts continued to recruit, and turn its attention toward destroying nearby communities to her thralls as food and labor. Breed in from these slaves, and looking for revenge against the illithids who had turned against them by casting them out, the illithids of Bluetspur defied illithid descency. The arcane illithids created a type of undead [1] to use against the other elder brains, for true illithids loathe undead. Even more depraved, the elder brain sent undead emissaries into the Astral Plane to cut deals with rogue githyanki and githzerai. Soon, the illithids of Thaan would perish.

The normal illithids of Thaan then launch their assault, with the planetary conditions change to their liking, though the sun had not yet been dimmed. Now the Tamers and Arisers of the illithid cities waged war on the humans. Weakened by the recent rapid climatic changes, most human cities fell quickly. Soon only Thaan and a half-dozen other cities had not fallen, and the main forces of the illithids were occupying the surface cities. Then, the illithids of Bluetspur moved.

First, the gith hunters were lead by illithid created undead to the astral nodes of the enemy mind flayer elder brains. Faced by hordes of racial enemies, the elder brain swiftly fell. The illithids, suddenly trust into confusion as their mental links died and they were left leaderless became easy prey to Bluetspur's army of psionic undead. In less than a week, the elder brain had siezed the illithid empire as strange new mists enveloped the world.

The death of the elder brain and colapse of the illithid metropolises left many illithid tadpoles unattended, and many died. Those that did not die, these grew, becoming brain eating monsters called neothelids [2]. These creatures are hated by all illithids and slain whenever possible.

The arcane illithids of Bluetspur subjugated their psionic brethren and forced them to march on the remaining human cities. The time that passed as Bluetspur gained control of the illithid empire has allowed the humans to mount a more formidable defence. Many illithid died, though the cities fell in the end. Only Thaan, haven of human psionics, still stood.

Simultaneously, Bluetspur ordered the launch of the sunkiller fleet, powering each ship by forcing the creation of an elder brain on each ship, by killing many newly captured illithids, and dumping their brains into vats of brine. Examining the attack of Thaan, it was found that a psionic shield enclosed the city, preventing the attack. Study by Bluetspur's tacticians showed that by burrowing under the shield, which had been designed by scholars who had not fully grasped psionics, the illithids could attack Thaan. Bluetspur ordered the launch, timing it so that the sun would die as the last human city of Thaan fell.

And so, as the sun died into sullen black and red, as the illithids fed on the brains the last free humans of Thaan, as Bluetspur sent an unknown number of other elder brains into the sun, the Mists thickened, pulled, and tore a chunk of Thaan into the Lad of the Mists.

Prof. Abelhous Nicholai, Karg 751 BC

Notes:

[1] These undead creations are cranium zombies. Illithids of Bluetspur create these by dissolving the top and back of the skull, exposing the brain, then psionically dissolving all but the most basic stimulus/response areas of the brain. Then the corpse is coated in illithid mucus. Finally, a black tincture distilled from secretions made by the elder brain is injected into the corpse. Cranium zombies appear as well preserved though slimy, grey-skinned humans, with exposed brains which glow a distressing green (this is, however, invisible to infravision). Cranium zombies will feed on a victim's brains out of rote mimicry. A cranium zombie has the ability to use the psionic power *ego whip* twice a day. On creation, there is a 5% chance the cranium zombie will go berserk and attack any nearby illithid.

Cranium Zombie

AC 10, MV 6, HD 3, THAC0 15, #AT 1, SA ego whip, SD Spell/psionics immunity, MR 30%, SZ M, ML as per normal zombie, Int 0, AL LE, XP 270

[2] Please see *The Illithiad*, page 95.

Chris Nichols

ROKUSHIMA TAIYOO GAZETTEER

by Asplagis

Introduction

Rokushima Taiyoo (pronounced Ro-kuh-shee-mah Tie-yo, the "o" sounds long) is an island of terror that is accessible to outsiders who brave the mists. Usually people from the eastern coast have an easier time getting there than those of the west. Either way few ever get there. The Steaming Lands and Amber Wastes clusters get easy access to this island, but the people there find the culture too weird for them and avoid it.

The land is described in the Red boxed set but isn't mentioned in Domains of Dread. Here is a brief overview of the four islands that compose the domain and the leader of each island (each is a son of the Darklord Haki Shinpi) and a description of the two sons that died early on before the islands became part of the demiplane.

A little note about the age of the sons: they have a certain gift from the Dark Powers which is to age very slowly. This is because of the fact that they are the reason why Shinpi is cursed: his sons don't get along. In a way the reason why the island exists in RL seems to be more the doing of the sons than of the dad, but then again the father got what was coming to him for raising such awful kids. The sons view this as a side effect of whatever they do. Shunji believes it his the Kami's (spirits) doing, Senzo believes it is his spear's magic, Masashiro feels it is his rather promiscuous lifestyle that keeps his young and Hishugoro feels it is his contact with Himaro. The other two? They are dead, remember, unless...

The Sons of Shinpi

KANEKAZU

The first son- Kanekazu (at supposed death- 6th level fighter, LN) was the pride and joy of Shinpi. He always was his favorite, surely because of his uncanny resemblance to his father. With each year he seemed more and more like his father both physically and mentally, of course with Shinpi being so close to him it is no wonder the boy grew to value the same things as him. He was, like his father, a gifted samurai, only he was kinder and more loyal than his father, following the bushido more closely. He was also the victim of jealousy from his younger brothers, especially Senzo and Shunji. When Shinpi died he wanted to rule saying he was the only one qualified to fill his father's shoes, although he welcomed he would give his brothers powerful positions in the government. This did not bode well with any of the 5 others who all wanted him out of the way, probably the only thing they could agree on. His death was planned by his 5 brothers together. Although Hikaru would die before him, the later was very present in the planning. The murder of Kanekazu was to be by poison as he paid his final respects to his father. He was kneeling in front of a shrine to Shinpi when one of the candles exploded releasing toxic spores. Although the site was never inspected thoroughly, there was a body inside and it was, from what the assassins could see, Kanekazu.

Of course wild rumours abound that he might not be dead...

Physical sketch (at death): around medium height for one of his country. Strong build, yet not overly muscular. His facial features were somewhat feminine (feminine traits were considered

handsome by samurais) with high cheekbones and smooth skin, but he also had the penetrating gaze and firm jaw of many males. Walked with confidence and an air of superiority. He inherited his father's commanding and confident voice.

Psychological sketch: He enjoyed the arts, especially painting, just like his father. He had a good education, although no mastermind he was very bright and was known for his surprising wit. From war to philosophy, he dabbled in many areas of the intellectuals of his land. He felt he was the best of the 6 sons and although he didn't see eye to eye with his brothers he respected them, they were family after all. He always knew he was the favorite so why deny it. But unlike his father he followed the bushido almost blindly.

SHUNJI

The second son, Shunji (6th level priest, LE), was the respectful one. He always held his father in high regard. Actually he felt his father was a wise man and only became wiser with age. But he also felt that the older one gets the more power one gets, as such he had great respect for the elderly priests. His father often brought him to temples where he decided to enroll when he was a teen. Being the second oldest he always hated the idea of being "under" Kanekazu. He wanted him dead so he could get the rightful position of ruler of the clan. He worked with his brothers, knowing that no one man can truly succeed alone and that perhaps they would show him more respect after this murder. They didn't and this led to his conflict with the others. He now rules the south-western island.

His island has a rather high number of older men and also a great number of elaborate temples. His rule is one of traditions. Older folks get more respect and easier lives because of this. His private council is made up of the eldest politicians. These men have the most power next to Shunji himself. The younger people get a lot of trouble from the authorities and many are accused of being rebels and are killed without mercy. This is a problem since the population is getting smaller and older. All the high ranking military men are elderly as well, although most are quite wise and sly.

Physical sketch: He is a 40 year old man that looks like a 50 year old one. He still has strong facial features and smiles only rarely.

He wears long, heavy robes that mark him as the emperor and wise one of this land. He is a rather healthy man for his age, although the accumulated stress of rulership has taken its toll on him. He has some fighting abilities, but is much more prone to outsmart an opponent. He carries a bo staff with him at all time.

Psychological sketch: Smart, sly, wise, all these words describe him. But also he is one who feels that age equals wisdom and power, although this applies to those who are destined to rule and are strong enough for it. He is an adept of martial arts as well as a man of a faith similar to animism where the elder's "kami" (spirits) are very strong and rule life with order while young kamis create chaos. He is quite the snob and feels he earned his place as ruler because he is the eldest son now.

SENZO

The third son, Senzo (8th level fighter, LE), was the largest and strongest of all of the boys. Few could match his power and he was very proficient with swords and spears. His mastery of the large spear was unequalled and he had a love of war and strategy, following his father in battles at a young age. He admired his father's strategic mind and how he fought with his katana. He felt his brothers were too weak to get rulership, he was able to best all of them in battle and he was

especially cruel to Hikaru and Hishugoro when he was young. He rules the large eastern island that he got with the help of superior military tactics. His rule is one of fear and violence. Women are often pushed to become nothing more than future brides with no choice in husband for they are often rewards for soldiers. Others are known to be turned into courtesans to raise the troop's morale. Young men who fit into minimum criterias are drafted into the army. The land itself is faced with extreme climates, the food is not quite plentiful and diseases are rampant. The population faces multiple raids to feed, clothe and pay the soldiers.

Physical sketch: Very tall (6'6") and a very muscular frame. In his mid thirties but his heavy beard makes it hard to know what age he is.

Always in armor and carries a magical long spear +3 offered as a gift by his father. Proficient in many types of weapons, favoring large and heavy ones. His voice rumbles like thunder and his gaze could scare even the most fearless of soldier. His body is scarred in many places and his clothing are those of a great warrior.

Psychological sketch: Although a brute, he has a love for the art of war. Strategies are just as important as brute force, although not superior by any means. He is a stubborn man though, making him take risky actions. He respects a man who can fight, although he would never accept to lose and isn't above using a dirty trick once in a while. His land is organized in a strict hierarchy but lacks formal political power which he cannot and will not represent. He rules too much by force, his generals are faced with appeasing the populace. He simply doesn't care for the weak peasants.

MASASHIRO

The fourth son, Masashiro (5th level thief, NE), he was a smooth talker since his youth. He could always talk his way out of a situation. But he was also quite knowledgeable and observant. He could "see" things that were not meant to be seen. He saw the informal structures of power within his father's clan, he could sense it. He also had a love of power, a desire to rule. His father's control over the clan amazed him. But he was not gifted in physical strength and battle skills like his older brothers, but he didn't feel that it was necessary for a ruler anyways.

Manipulation of perception and of opinions was the key.

He still tries to manipulate his brothers into fighting when a certain truce has been reached. He rules from dawn castle on the north eastern island. The people are rather poor, but also terrorized by rebels who are more often than not paid by Masashiro himself to cause trouble. His men get rid of the rebels and he gets the public's favor. He is known to suckle some politicians who are too free willed into taking part of these schemes, often they lose their heads in the process.

Physical sketch: Rather plump and short (5'4") but a wide grin is always on his fat face. He wears extravagant clothing when with his politicians, but in public appears much more modest. Very expressive face, almost comical. Very talkative, in fact many feel he talks too much. Known to hide various types of easily concealed weapons in his clothing and just about everywhere he can. In his early thirties, he looks like a jovial average man.

Psychological sketch: His love of ruling is large, but not as much as his love of attention. He thrives on being seen in public. Although married he doesn't love his wife very much since he heard she was barren. Always somewhat nervous, not as confident as his older brothers. Makes more attempts at his brother's lives than they do on him. Structure is important in life, but never lets that get in the way of a good opportunity. "If someone is better than you at something, let them do the work for you then take all the credit."

HISHUGORO

The fifth son) Hishugoro (6th level bard, NE), is the second youngest and also the vain one. The rather feminine looking Hishugoro is known for his great beauty. His prettiness was something he had since his youth, making him popular amongst the young girls, whom he often recited poetry to. He loved the arts and often recited poems for his father.

But he was closer to his mother since he shunned the physical arts mostly and needed protection from Senzo's bullying. He was a sneaky child who was also known for his great coldness in emotion. He still seems cold and distant to most people, a sharp contrast from the poems he loves so much. He dabbled in many of the forbidden knowledges and still has an interest in the ancient texts and scrolls. He always thought his brothers lacked the beauty that every leader needs. He remembered how people admired his father's beauty and how people often do almost anything for but simple glance from a beautiful person. Besides he felt his brothers would destroy the beauty of the land with their warfare. He rules the beautiful south eastern island along with his consort the hellish man-devil Himaro. His island is populated by a rather youthful population. Even the poorest of citizens take pride in the beauty of their home. But a grim side to this beauty is the number of hellish monsters running around. The small number of soldiers is offset by a number of fiends and monsters working for him, as well as beings with unusual powers.

Physical sketch: He has very effeminate traits: high cheekbones, delicate features, tender eyes, pale complexion and an elaborate hairdo. He always speaks in a very soft voice and always acts with a certain passiveness and is often seen acting very much like a wife to her husband around his consort/lover Himaro. He almost never smiles, has a rather cold way about him when around others, especially females which remind him of Benesato, the snakewoman who is also lover to Himaro and his principal agent. He wears silken robes of great value and takes great care of his looks.

Psychological sketch: A very smart young man in his early twenties who possesses a quick wit and lots of patience. He takes a great liking to flowers and cultivates many types, including some imported from afar. He also enjoys poisons, in fact some of his flowers are actually known for their poisonous pollen. Poison makes for cleaner deaths. He enjoys power for the feeling it gives him, the fact that he was dominated by his older brother makes his rulership even sweeter. He is known for his burning jealousy when it comes to Himaro. His hellish lover is often his main concern, leaving affairs of state into the hands of his main advisors or even to Himaro himself. He knows a lot of forbidden lore, it is how he got Himaro to come to his court.

HIKARU

The sixth son, Hikaru (at death-3rd level mage, CE), was the youngest and most reclusive of the 6 brothers. Even if he was a gifted intellectual, he was the runt of the family. His brothers tormented him, although Hishugoro wasn't quite as cruel, he often used his baby brother in his plans, getting him to read the ancient scrolls, fearing a possible curse or trap. Hikaru learned a lot of ancient lore this way, but he was born prematurely, meaning he was weak from the start. He was also the son who was the farthest from Shinpi. He looked more like his mother and seemed to have not possessed a specific talent from his father. He was almost always with his mother who entertained him with old superstitions from her homeland (a country much like ICath -China) and also told him of various ghost tales. He grew up receiving little love and although his father felt he was gifted, he wasn't meant for rulership.

His was a secondary role, one of advisor, one he didn't like. He despised his oldest brother for he was so much like their father. But Hikaru felt that when the time came he would outsmart them

all... unfortunately, it was he who was outsmarted... at least that's what his brothers believe. Hikaru was smart and possessed some skill with magics: could he have tricked the ninja assassin?**Physical sketch (at death):** He was 19 when his father died and when his own life ended. He was rather scrawny, with dark circles around his eyes, sign of a lack of sleep as he was tormented by his brothers night and day. Pale and sickly looking with very little physical strength and under average physical condition and health. His face was round and a weird expression of fear and malice was always there. He seemed to be either pondering some scheme or scared of what his brothers would do next. [ref: Hikaru Gonsunkugi from *Ranma ½*]

Psychological sketch: Always pondering and scheming, he would outsmart them all someday. Brilliant young man, although quite complexed because of the lack of love from his parents. He was quite curious, feeling that he would gain knowledge that could make up for his lack of physical prowess. A constant loner, no friends, never wanted them after all he never truly learned what friendship was about. Vengeance was all he that he could think about, from the first rays of the sun in the morning to his dreams at night.

Perceptions of Each Brother

Now each son is in perpetual war with his brothers, although once in a while two will get along and make temporary alliances to confront the other brothers. These are always short and end up in violence. So here you can see how each brother sees the other.

Name of the son :

Name of the brother-

Pros : Why should he form a temporary alliance with him ?

Cons : Why he should just kill him ?

Shunji :

Senzo-

Pros : He keeps the populace disciplined.

Cons : He's a bloodthirsty maniac with little respect for traditional faiths. He would rather use young men than wiser older ones as generals.

Masashiro-

P : He will let the elders have a strong voice and he is wise beyond his years, a good sign.

C : He's a slimy paranoid rat. He simply tries to manipulate whatever social group is the strongest. His lifestyle is far from traditional.

Hishugoro-

P : He treats even the most ancient of writings with a lot of care, keeping the culture and traditions alive.

C : He has dealings with demons and fiends. He refuses to take a wife and have kids, he is unworthy of the clan name.

Senzo :

Shunji-

P : He has the respect of his people and he is good at ruling most of the time.

C : He is old and uses too much outsmarting and not enough force. He lets a bunch of old men decide for him half of the time.

Masashiro-

P : He knows that no one can truly be trusted and isn't afraid of getting rid of those who are of no use.

C : He is a spineless worm. He has little courage and seeks the people's approbation too much.

Hishugoro-

P : He knows what he wants and will use whatever he can to get it, but isn't prone to blindly charging.

C : He is too frail, too much like a female. He values objects of beauty and will not act in ways to endanger them, sissy...

Masashiro :

Shunji-

P : He knows that power isn't something that one man can take by himself and keep without consulting others.

C : He doesn't even manipulate the old fools he asks for advice ! Besides he frowns upon Masashiro's promiscuous ways.

Senzo-

P : He doesn't trust many people, and isn't afraid of getting messy.

C : He doesn't want complex politics and subtle games of manipulation.

Hishugoro-

P : He is devious and subtle.

C : He actually sleeps with men, plus he keeps a lover who is really many times more powerful than him, you don't do those sorts of things ! You keep people who are weaker than you but make them think they are more powerful.

Hishugoro :

Shunji-

P : He knows the value of the old writings and of the ancient's secrets.

C : He is old and ugly and he hates my lover, saying he is an evil kami !

Senzo-

P : Doesn't let anyone step all over him.

C : However he steps on anything he wants. Destroying beautiful houses and flower fields in his battles. His beard makes him look ugly, very unfitting for a samurai.

Masashiro-

P : Knows that subtlety is better than a direct assault.

C : He lets others decide and has nothing but his own good in mind when he manipulates others.

Perception of Haki Shinpi

Now their father has his own views about them.

Shunji: He follows the traditional ways and knows that the elders have wisdom, but he cares too little for the immortality one gets from having children. Also he shows too little flexibility, and has trouble maintaining new generations of advisors.

Senzo: He can best anyone in combat and as such is not afraid of killing and can use his strength wisely. he knows that the populace is to be trampled under one's feet if they resist too much. But he loves battle too much, he forgets that once power is taken it must be maintained, that requires brains, not brawns.

Masashiro: He understood long ago how power is maintained and he knows that trust is not easily gained or given. But he trusts no one and worse he is too spineless to give an order that would be viewed as too unpopular, he is simply too weak to be a ruler.

Hishugoro: He sees that culture and beauty have always been part of the world we live in and they are to be valued greatly for they represent the one thing that makes people see themselves as a unit. But he is simply too afraid of getting "dirty", subtlety is good, but battle skills are also an art. The ancients knew a lot of mystical techniques but they also knew how to fight. His dealings with the underworld is dangerous, one must not let emotions get in the way of common sense. A ruler takes reasonable, calculated risks, not whatever strikes his fancy at the moment.

Powers and Limitations of Shinpi

Haki Shipi's curse is to rule a feuding domain where his clan is divided. But Shinpi does have some limitations and powers that come from being the lord.

Normally he could get his son to follow his advice, after all they respect him greatly. But...

- He cannot appear in front of his sons for they have forsaken his teachings and as such have dishonored him. His shame and dishonor makes him incapable of showing his face to his sons and everyone who sees him and talks of him to the sons gets his head chopped off. The sons consider it a great disrespect to use their father to manipulate their decisions. But that goes for his living sons... his supposedly dead ones however...
- He has the capacity to make some changes in his appearance when he appears. These are simply a friendlier or meaner look, depending on what effect he wants to have on who he appears to. This adds some bonuses or maluses to the saving throw vs. fear caused by a geist.

Shinpi's friendlier look is that of him as a young man, before he decided to rule the islands. He was a handsome, friendly and carefree young man in his early 20's.

His meaner look is that of him in his prime. At that time he was cruel looking, with a tough unforgiving look on his face. He spoke with a commanding tone.

- He can read one of his son's mind for a whole day four times a month if he wants to. He uses this to try and stop the more devastating wars or the assassinations that run the greatest risks if succeeding. After all he wants his sons to make peace and does not want one of them to die like the poor Hikaru and Kanekazu.

Personalities of Note

HIMARO

He is a very large man with mysterious powers. His origins are quite the mystery. He claims to have been once a warlord who died, getting decapitated while riding his horse. His soul went to hell where he fought his way back to the world of the living, bringing part of hell with him. He was summoned here by Hushigoro after following an ancient incantation to bring forth a servant from the great beyond. Actually he was summoned after Benesato mentioned his existence to Hushigoro. Hushigoro was strongly attracted to the monstrous man, eventually becoming his lover.

The relationship between the two is weird, although Hushigoro is technically the master, Himaro seems to act as if he was the one in control. His frequent sexual encounters with Benesato is a good example. Hushigoro could very well dismiss Benesato and keep Himaro to himself but Himaro wants to keep her so she stays. His powers are known to be greater than whatever magical incantations Hushigoro could muster.

His powers are somewhat limited since entering the demiplane, seemingly part of him is still in the hells. Right now he has powerful Regeneration, incredible strength beyond human capacities (19) and some minor shape shifting abilities (can fully transform as a doppelganger for 1 turn before losing his shape, can do this twice a day). He has kept some scars of his death, including one very large scar on his neck, showing where he was decapitated.

He wants his full powers back, but somehow knows that he might need to do someone or something dark a favor. He follows Hushigoro (which he likes simply for his qualities as a lover) for now.

BENESATO

A shapely and lovely young woman who bears some snake like traits. Her eyes seem devious and sneaky, her body moves in a slithering way and she is known for swiftness and great agility.

This snakey woman is something of a demon or devil who was summoned here by Hushigoro. He later needed strong servants to combat the troops of Senzo. He was intrigued by the drawings in an ancient lore book so he got her to serve him with some ancient incantation.

She served and still serves as an assassin, she is faithful to his orders being bound quite tightly. But she tricks him often, in fact she knew Himaro would be too powerful for Hushigoro, but she just forgot to tell him that...

In reality her skin is but a shell, much like a snake she can shed it. Her inner body is nothing but snakes inside a shell of human skin. She can shed it to leave with a new human skin already there or simply burst in a shower of snakes. Her human form can still let go of some snakes (after all the human body has some holes in it..). Also she can use weird hypnosis created by the

movement of snake tatoos on her body. These tatoos can actually come to life as real snakes. These skills make her quite an assassin.

MUSHA NOMINUKE (drunkard warrior, 5th level fighter, CG)

A young drunkard who is quite good with a sword, when he isn't too drunk. He has become quite a problem for Shunji who cannot get rid of him. He is an orphan and as such was considered to be undesirable by the ruler Shunji. He grew up knowing of how most orphans ended up as manservants for old men who would treat them with little respect. This made him quite mad and he became something of a delinquent, often coming to the orphanage drunk during his early teens. He didn't chage one bit when he hit adulthood and was thrown out of the orphanage and into the streets. But he also learned how to defend himself, learning a modicum of martial arts and getting some practice with a sword when he couldn't afford sake.

He spends his time doing odd jobs requiring muscles to buy more sake. He simply doesn't seem to care much about life, having been told since he was young that life is a thing of destiny and that the young are too "chaotic" to be of any real use. Yet he always seems to get mixed up in the schemes of Shunji and in a way likes to make "jijii" (grandfather) mad. He actually cares about the young who faced the same problems he did when young. Although a lot of his wisdom concerns sake, he does try to teach the youths he meets to stand up against the seiji (government).

NAOKI KENNINFUBATSU/AIKO KIYO (Naoki who has much courage/perseverance)/(Pure child)(7th level fighter, NG)

The two names are for the same person, only it all depends on the sex he/she is at the moment. Actually Aiko Kiyo is her real name, a female name, but she poses as a boy most of the time. The reason is that she just didn't understand why she, as a woman, had to be "lower" than a man, she just didn't see the differences between her and the boys. She beat the boys at many physical discipline in her youth, often besting her older brother at archery. Yet her mother kept laughing and saying she was a silly girl and that unless she behaved like a lady she would never marry. But she didn't care about marriage, she simply wanted people to realize that she was good at a lot of "boy's stuff". Needless to say she grew up quite bitter and frustrated.

At age 21 she found her older brother wounded in a field, he had been beaten up by a thug. Taking him home she swore to avenge him, which brought a severe reprimand from her mother. Knowing she would be recognized if she set out to fight the bully, she donned a disguise. First she got a shirt that was overly large and underneath used a wooden girdle to hide her chest. She put on a large brimmed hat, wore rough pants and set out with her brother's sword. She followed the same path as her brother had and like him faced the bandit. The man was not expecting such swiftness and his sword strikes to the stomach did not seem to go through. She beat him quite easily, and then showed him that she was a woman, humiliating the bandit, sending him into early retirement.

Once at home her brother's wounds were festering. Seemingly the bandit used some kind of poison or something. Soon after he died in agonizing pain. The family buried him near the home in a modest but beautiful garden/shrine. But a few nights after the burial, Aiko woke up in the middle of the night hearing noises from behind the house. Fearing soembandits might be

comming for revenge she quickly grabbed a dagger and went out to find a most disturbing site. Her brother's body was actually coming out of it's grave, helped by two other men. She didn't believe it and quickly ran back in the house and hid in her bed. She didn't sleep at all that nght. The next morning she investigated the site. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed, until she noticed that her brother's sword scabbard was empty. They had left his sword in its scabbard after burying him. Something was up, it wasn't a dream... Looking for a clue she found a very rare and beautiful flower, one no peasant family could ever afford... In fact only one person had such rare flowers, the lord of the land, Hushigoro.

Ever since that day she has been on a quest to find out the secrets of Husigoro. She created the male identity of Naoki so that she could investigate properly. She also mastered the use of many weapons and uses her girdle has a hiding place for weapons and items as well as for protection. She tries to rally people to help her in her fight against Hushigoro and his hellish minions.

TAKASADA KIYO (8th level thief, LE)

He is a very loyal minister of Masashiro and also the leader of a secretive band of thieves/ninjas. He seems like a rather normal politician of middle age, but he really is a skilled ninja assassin who is fiercely loyal to his master. His intelligence merited him a "promotion" as an official member of the political structure of Masashiro's governement. He is a man without a past, having erased every memory of his past and he also tries to be a man of no desires. He feels it is his destiny to help Masashiro. Actually he was tricked by the later. It had gotten to the ears of Masashiro that Takasada was known for his sessions of fire reading, being quite superstitious. So Masashiro rigged the fire reading with the use of a dust that has makes the person who's pores touch it, higly vulnerable to suggestions. Masashiro made sure he mentionned how he would make quite a good employer to Takasada before and after the reading. The dust had it's effects and Takasada is totally under Masashiro's spell... at least that's what Masashiro thinks... Can such an intelligent ninja be tricked so easily? Takasada climbed the ladder of the governement and the assassin guild rather rapidly for a man with no desires...

Other people of importance

Jubei: Wandering mercenary known for his fairness and skill with the katana (based on Jubei from Ninja Scroll).

Master Kuroyama: A perverted old man who is said to be senile and has been exiled from Roshiya under orders of Shunji. He claims many wild things, from his supposed duel with a young Senzo (which he claims to have won) to tales about how the two other brothers might not be truly dead... and that there was a seventh child of the clan...

Mayonaka: An ancient eastern vampire samurai that roams about the islands of Rokushima Tayoo (see Ravenloft MC2 for major details).

Mochimitsu: A heavyset high priest of a buddhist-like sect (the believers of the peaceful o which is slowly gaining in popularity). Shunji despises him greatly, so does Senzo.

Ryonusuke Kanbe: Leader of a rebelious force inside of Senzo's island. Trying to bring people to overthrow the ruler.

Seigozen: Wife of Masashiro, who isn't too happy about her husband's affairs. Known to have had contact with some of his high ranking daijin (ministers)...

Tadashi Asa: Kizoku who is currently feuding with Mayonaka. Mayonaka in a gesture of honor decided to protect a couple from the Kizoku. He did it because of how the woman reminded him of his sister. He has worked for Hushigoro and has special status in the ruler's land.

Political and Power Structures

The political and power structures of the land vary from one island to the next and as such here you will find how each son organizes politics and power in his island.

Senzo's Shogunate

The eastern island: Of course here the military rule. They do say that they are the bushi (samurai) class, and as such are the ones who rule. They frown upon luxury (well at least for the citizens) so they like taxes (and raids if the need arises). Consider the Kamakura era (1192-1333) as something of a guide.

Senzo values two things in his soldiers: loyalty to him and combat skills. But in terms of ruling, he values the loyal ones above the great warriors.

Of all the soldiers whom Senzo considered "loyal", Mitsuyori Asai stands as his prime example. Senzo often uses Mitsuyori as an example when speaking to other soldiers. He gave the later the highest rank in terms of rulership, which is regent to the Shogun (leader of the shogunate). He is the one who basically is second in command. More loyal a man has not been born. He would die for his shogun, not only out of honor but in a way, out of friendship. He and Senzo are also very close friends. This friendship is badly seen by others, who feel that the friendship might be an unfair edge for Asai. Senzo is a difficult man and friends are not a commodity he likes to have, yet, he came to respect Asai, even calling him brother at times. Asai never truly leaves Senzo's side although he sometimes acts as ambassador since the island is very large.

It is said that Senzo met Asai when he was recruiting soldiers. A young Asai asked to be in the army, but he failed his battle against another soldier there to test his battle skills. When Senzo turned to go to another one, an assassin disguised as a soldier threw a dagger at Senzo. Asai, although rejected by Senzo, got in front of the dagger and protected his lord, even if the later could have easily survived. Senzo was impressed by the young man and made him official member of the army.

Aside from Senzo, Yorimitsu Minamoto is the greatest fighter in the eastern island. He wields the greatest military power and is feared almost as much as the shogun himself throughout the island and even in the neighboring ones. He is a very muscular man in his early 40s who leads the troops into most of the great battles against the southern island. He is said to be the Oni slayer. He is also said to be possessed by the spirit of the Oni he killed and when in battle his Oni side tries to get out. He is abnormally calm when not in battle, which furthers the rumours of his Oni side, for he would try and appease it as best he can.

His political power is strong (daiymo), but he uses it rarely. Battle seems to be his true concern and would rather defeat an opponent in battle than with laws. In theory he can do just about

anything he wants and can force his ways upon anyone in the land except the regent and the shogun. Even without the title, he could still probably have a similar effect upon people simply with his fierce ways. He has many young bushi as personal guards and servants.

There are various numbers of high ranked officials and daiyos of various power, but they are often replaced. The power structure here is one based on Senzo's perception of loyalty or one's battle skills, so it is hard for it to maintain itself for long. The most powerful new ronin often become the daiyo when the later dies. The two characters above show the general type of person to hold a position of power. The bureaucracy is limited, with the more loyal types assigned to these tasks.

The populace is simply ruled, with no real nobles. There is a division in between the richer folks than others, but the rich are terrorized by the shogun and have no power. Women however face the worst, since the prettiest ones are "reserved" for daiyos and high ranking officials to become their wives. Less pretty ones are used as courtesans for the soldiers on the front.

There are often minor clans who come to the forefront of the political life. They usually have little power and are quickly muted. Most houses are simply rich families.

Although many rebellions have occurred thanks to the Tengu, only one group has had any longevity. They are a nameless organization that is led by Ryonusuke Kanbe who presently is being advised by a Tengu, whom he feels he will use only for his wisdom and not let the later take over. His troops total around 170 people, amongst them 75% are rebel fighters/soldiers, 10% peasants, 5% rebellious rich people and 10% are intellectuals muted by the lord. They are underground and act in guerilla tactics. Women are also part of the organization, since he wants to free his own sister from her forced marriage to a general. His only hope lies in the Tengu's strategies which to date have helped a great deal. The group is scoffed at by Senzo who knew of its existence quite some time ago. Haki Shinpi has been known to help out the young man to give his son a lesson in humility, to teach him that ruling with power only makes no sense. They are the only counter force to the army's regime.

Hishugoro's Island

The southern island: Hishugoro heads the government in the island, although other houses do exist and try to influence the powerful leader. The head of each house is represented in the government, but all must follow Hishugoro, for he has the final word on everything. They, in theory, could take over the power if Hishugoro were to die or if somehow their houses could get more power.

The power itself is informal to say the least. The houses wage a form of war against one another. Each one trying to prove its superiority over the other. While the houses' power in the eastern island is based upon war and power, here the houses wage a more subtle war. They use rather underhanded tactics and test the strength of the house by attacking each member's loyalty. Anything to make the house members lose trust in each other and weaken its strength. This is a tactic employed by Haki Shinpi and now used by members of houses other than his own.

Hishugoro has no need for the power games of the other houses. Himaro and the shinma are the muscle behind his clan. The head of each house knows that Himaro is somehow related to demons or devils and as such know that Hishugoro cannot be replaced, not unless Himaro is out

of the way, which seems an impossible task. So they try and get as much power as they can, stepping on the other secondary houses along the way.

The four other houses are described shortly below.

The House of Ichijo

Ruler: Akinori Ichijo

This house has gone through some tough times. Apparently a few members tried to plot against Himaro. The foolish men were killed with their own trap, bringing great shame to the house. Now it is trying to rebuild itself: unfortunately, their leader right now isn't very well liked by Hishugoro, meaning his head might roll soon, weakening the house further. The current ruler is a young man, like many of the members. He is a man of great passion, but his vigor has been reduced with the knowledge of how short his life might be.

The House of Kaga

Ruler: Toshimitsu Kaga

This house is one of the most ancient in all the land, some say it dates before the entrance of the house of Shinpi with Haki at its head. They were always the "runner-ups", always strong and stable, but never quite enough. Lots of health problems led to the death of most of their best people. This clan accepts only family members. They have quite an extended one at that, over 30 members. Of course only about 10 are actual members of the political life of the land. Their latest leader is young and like all leaders of every house in the land, handsome. He is known for his womanizing ways and some doubt his leadership skills. He has shown much deviousness in his words. Some folks claim his house might be the next one to rule the island if Hushigoro ever dies.

The House of Kawashi

Ruler: Yoshihisa Kawashi

This is the newest house. The strong ties between the members of this small house made it powerful. The other houses respect their skills at politics and they are known for their popularity amongst the older folks. The leader is nearing his 40's and has taken many strong positions that many believe sound a bit familiar with what Shunji says in the neighboring island. Rumours abound about a possible connection between the two.

The House of Konoe

Ruler: Shinji Konoe

This is a clan known for its melting pot aspect. It was created out of the fusion of smaller clans around the larger Konoe family. Marriages and alliances worked together to create a clan that was big enough to challenge the others. The main problem with this house is that it suffers from instability. Not everyone wants to be known as a Konoe, many feeling their ancestral family name should be used or at least referred to. Shinji's calmness and persuasiveness are the only

factors working to avoid inner turmoil. The clan is actually well seen amongst the population, since some of the families were actually already beloved before entering the larger clan. Shinji himself is considered quite handsome (some young ladies saying he is the closest thing to their lord Hishugoro, the later being known as the handsomest/prettiest man in the land). In fact, Hishugoro himself has admitted that Shinji is good looking, quite a statement from such a vain source.

The government has no other real posts besides the heads of the houses and their advisors. The ruling clan does have the right to nominate mayors and chiefs of security. The ruler controls the finances personally, but lets an accountant do the job so he can occupy himself to more important things.

Security is handled by a shinma, yorika (police officer) Hitadama (falling star/fireball). This shinma looks rather human, only his eyes glow red when he is angered and when one is close to him, he seems to be abnormally warm. He simply enforces the laws and has access to a few thugs to help him. They usually do not do much else but send out warnings. If any real crime is done, Hishugoro favors a more subtle approach. The shinma controls fire and as such can cast a fireball as a 7th level mage or a flame strike as a priest of similar level. He is immune to firebased attacks, his clothing is similarly immune. He is known for his slyness and quickness in action.

The mayor of the capital is named Osamu and like all political figures possesses natural good looks. He is fond of theater and has been known to be more of an actor than a mayor, then again his powers are quite limited. He is around 50 years old, although still somewhat young looking. He dresses in luxurious robes and has a love of hats. He is a pleasant man who like every citizen makes sure his home looks pleasing to the lord. He took the role of mayor a number of years back, he was part of the house of Konoe during it's best days. He keeps it because no one really wants it. He is more of an intermediary between the house of Shinpi and the people.

The house of Shinpi is composed of one member, Hishugoro, but he has many servants and has the shinma on his side. The other houses can only count on their limited armed forces (around 20 well trained samurai, fighters and thugs per house).

The shinma themselves face problems. The shinma under the rule of Hishugoro are all lawful or neutral. Only, the neutral and lawful are not getting along well. Himaro is a lawful shinma, but the neutral shinma have trouble with his authority. They are leaderless, but they try to coordinate their actions in an effort to stop Himaro and possibly put the lawful shinma to sleep. Also, the nightmare mist is believed to hold the slumbering leader of the chaotic shinma. Himaro is powerful enough to try and wake him only to try and put it under his spell.

Monsters such as Kizoku's and werefoxes get special status and answer directly to Hishugoro. Many are spies for him.

Shunji's Holy Land

The southwestern island: here the political and religious authority is the same. Shunji acts as both spiritual and political leader. His rule is absolute and the other priests view him as their destined ruler.

The power is divided in classes based on age. The exact ages for each class vary with the composition of the priest population. The elder priest compose the council of elders that guide Shunji in his decisions. They have both formal and informal power, for Shunji must hear their advice, although he does not have to follow it. Yet Shunji does follow their words closely, in fact he takes few decisions without asking their opinions first. The council has the power to command any of the lower classes, but usually they are busy with other things.

The middle class form the core of political actions. They discuss politics, economics and such things. They vote on each idea proposed in pure democratic fashion. They have the power to order about the lower class as they see fit.

The lower class forms the active group. From security duties to religious services they are the ones who carry out orders and execute them. This class is mostly composed of new priests, but it is actually smaller in number than the middle class. The population must obey them for they act in the name of Shunji.

The current lineup of the council is the following:

Mamoru: Youngest member of the council (53), almost as conservative as Shunji. Talented speaker and known for vibrant speeches about culture. He loves the arts, which has led him to consider the newer forms practiced in the other southern island. Shunji does not trust him as much as the others.

Akishige: Oldest member (84), was the one who initiated many young priests into the temples. He has become quite close to Shunji, something of a confidant to him. A very nice and gentle old man, he is the moderate one of the council (oddly enough). He often tries to calm Shunji's anger fits at the youths of his land. He's the only one in the council who believes in doing something for the people.

Toru & Taro: These twins are both 60 and are the main link to the middle class. They are also said to be traitors. Something about them seems "not right" somehow. They look mischievous even at their advanced age. Actually they are possessed by a shinma who used their close bond to possess them both. They have ordered many public beatings and such violent acts (the shinma is chaotic).

Rintaro: The typical "yes man". Unlike the others he seems to have little pride and crumbles easily under pressure from Shunji or the council. Actually he is quite smart and devious when properly motivated (he is not quite as sober as the other priests, so sakè and women are often a good way to get to him). He is 58 years old.

Kosaku: This smart man is one of the principal advisors of the council, knowledgeable in many teachings of ancient philosophers. He's 63.

The middle class has one moderator who more or less acts as link to the council:

Akihiro: This large priest is known for his sense of humour. But when it comes to protecting the old ways he is quite serious. He seems like a major candidate as he grows older to be part of the council. His past is shrouded in mystery, he claims to be an orphan that was raised by some

travelling shintoist priest. He came to the temple with considerable skills for one so young. He has been known to perform fire readings. His skin is always quite cold and pale for some reason.

Masashiro's Land

The northern island: here the power is really in the hands of Masashiro. But yet there is a government and many pressure groups ranging from nobles to merchants to religious groups. The populace is quite satisfied with their "fair" ruler and has been for ages...

The government is held by the most popular clan. Usually the clan keeps his power until the populace has had enough and demands a new clan to rule them.

It is composed of various ministers and they all reside in the council. They are chosen for their skills by the head of the clan who then asks for approval by the rest of the clan. The ministries are often disbanded and then recreated later on. Clans here do not have to be bound by bloodlines, but they must all be very close and in many ways consider each other as family, even leaving their old family names behind.

Masashiro made sure to compose a council of "yes men" or easily manipulated or corrupted ministers. Since corruption is so frequent, Masashiro routinely kills those who disagree with him, making the lineup of ministers quite unstable. Those who stay for any length of time become depressed and often are left broken men. To date only three have stayed for a rather long time (around 8 years minimum). These are :

Sotaru (Minister of economy): He is nothing more than a greedy merchant who knows how to make himself "invisible" yet still manages to influence others. He still owns many stores and uses his position to favor them. His position is safe since his greed has brought in a lot of riches into the government. The sly old man is actually quite generous, that's because he knows that he'll get back what he gave one way or another. He is a prominent member of the merchant's association. He feels he is outsmarting everyone, although Masashiro discovered his plots long ago.

Masashi (Minister of defense): Actually this man is going to die soon. He was a high ranked soldier from the eastern island but was tired of the fighting and wanted a better life. He defected to this place. His skills made him quite a popular mercenary, eventually Masashiro hired him for a job, to be the interim Minister of defense. He accepted the role and kept it since then. He is now aged (60) and very bitter. He doesn't like this land anymore, he hates the backstabbing and manipulation. This is seen as a sign of treason by the lord who will make sure he dies soon enough.

Takasada Kiyo (Chief advisor): This man was already described above. He is a former assassin, brainwashed and turned into a loyal minister of Masashiro. The only man trusted by Masashiro and as such he got the highest rank he could get.

Ushio (Public Relations): This is a lawful shinma. He tries to manipulate the whole government and is trying to do so without Masashiro noticing. Of course his powers help him a lot. Masashiro knows someone is messing with his ministers, but he can't quite put the finger on who is doing it or how.

There are a few organisations who try to influence the power. They are rated in terms of political importance and of social importance (the numbers between the parentheses) on a scale of one to five: 1=almost laughable/very unpopular or little known and 5=very influent/highly popular.

They are:

The Merchants' Association (5/3)

The only group that truly does have an influence on the power. Since they are the ones with the money, they fill Masashiro's pockets. Also they have contacts with merchants outside the island and as such have access to foreign goods like firearms. They are rich and want more money. The small artisans and shopkeepers are not represented here, only the larger shops.

Important Characters: The minister of economy is the head of this organisation and owns many large shops and has tried to get rid of thieves that bother his business with the help of the church of Ezra and the believers of the Peaceful One (Buddhist type sect).

Courtisans (4/1)

Masashiro loves the courtisans, but if the knowledge of his frequentations were to be known... He tries to keep them happy the best he can and as such they have some leverage. Obviously they are seen as criminals and are not proper citizens.

Important Characters: Yuri (lily) is the favourite courtisan of Masashiro, but in fact she is the head of the thieves' guild.

Thieves' Guild (3/1)

The thieves have organized themselves quite well and they are satisfied with their stealing from the rich merchants and nobles. They have links to the corrupted ministers, sometimes sending one of their own into the government. They lack the motivation to get into politics right now, although they do try to favor the merchants by all kinds of acts. They are often blamed for crimes they never committed, sometimes their actions are directed by Masashiro himself thru a double agent.

Important Characters: The minister of defense is plotting with them to take over the government. The guild's leader is actually also a courtisan (Yuri, see the courtisans).

The Believers of the Peaceful One (2/5)

This is the most popular religion in the island and has grown to have some influence over the people's opinion and because of this they also get some political power. They try to bring peace and harmony to the people through prayers and meditation. Various sects coexist peacefully.

Important Characters: Moshimitsu is a wandering priest who was the founder of the main temple in the mountains and brought the religion to the city. He would like to see the courtisans disappear for they are immoral and has taken steps to try and convert thieves to his religion so they cease their old ways.

Assassins' Guild (0/0)

Actually they have recently disbanded, or have they...

Important Characters: Takasada was a member of the guild, came close to the leadership position, but it folded when the ninjas started getting to be the more popular way to get rid of someone.

Church of Ezra (LN branch) (2/2)

Relatively new to the island, in fact they just built their first church. The high number of poor people is keeping them busy for now. They are currently trying to strike deals with the government, exchanging certain imported goods for more care for the poor and perhaps more influential roles for the church in the city. The Church brought the first firearms to the island. The priests have few followers, most just doing lip service in exchange for some help.

Important Characters: Xavier is a priest who's sole purpose in life is conversion. He goes on great pilgrimages, finding new lands where he can spread his fate. He plans on leaving for Sri Raji next... although right now he wants to try and push the believers of the Peaceful One out of his way.

Nobles (3/2)

They are seen as greedy and envious people by the commoners. They are believed to be in league with the thieves by the merchants. The churches constantly ask them to help the poor. Not easy being a noble in this place. Yet they control the courtesans and as such they get a lot of informal power over Masashiro. But the nobles are also haughty and slightly ignorant of the proper ways to manipulate others. They get angry and they ask Masashiro to change the situation which he does, but slowly the tables turn against them, and they lose the power they had gained so far. This cycle repeats every 3-4 years.

Important Characters: A certain noble, Teruo Washio, has been seen with the wife of Masashiro. Some say he has the weirdest mole on his hand... like a crescent moon...

Faiths in the Islands

The Way of the Kami

The first and most widespread is the traditional shintoist faith. Actually it isn't true shintoism like there was in Japan, but rather a faith based on that one (kinda like Ezra on the mega-Christian church idea). It is widely practiced in the South: in fact it is the only faith in Shunji's island.

Its principles are that everything has a kami (spirit) and as such one must be respectful of all things, from the smallest bug to the highest mountain, although some kami are of lesser importance than others. As such some kami must be asked for forgiveness more often than others. For example, the kami of a bug does not require a full prayer if squashed, although a priest might pray for all bugs he might squash in one prayer. But if he were to build a house he would do a ceremony devoted to the ground to get the approval of the earth's spirit before doing anything.

Priests of this faith are those who have a special status that lets them use the kami of certain things for certain tasks. This translates into the casting of spells. By using many fire kami, a priest could cast a flame strike. But the priest needs time to ask for the express permission to use the kami in such a way, otherwise the kami will feel slighted and will not cooperate. This translates into special prayers dedicated to the kami the priest wants to use. He must do this at dawn and the kami will grant the permission until the day has passed. Thus the spells he got will not be granted until he casts them, but rather only until the end of the day. The greater the task required to the kami, the longer it takes to get its permission. These prayers are actually praises directed at the kami. The kami of a fire will be told that it is bright and warm and to the wind, a priest might say that it is pure and clear. The kami are very vain and as such great care must be taken to thank them and praise them when the priest prays. [You might compare this faith to the Athasian Druid who worships the spirit of the land and gets his spells from it.] And like the Athasian druid, the shintoist priest cannot choose to control everything. He must decide what he will specialize in early on. He can choose to be closer to nature kami, while another might choose more human kami. In game terms the priest must choose his spheres by checking with what a specialty priest of a faith representing what he chooses to specialize in gets. So a priest of a death god might get necromancy, reversed healing and such... so kami of life/death would give similar spheres, while nature kami would be closer to what a druid gets.

The powers of a priest extend beyond simply using kami of other things: they have mastery of their own kami, meaning they can use their own powers. This translates into access to the sphere of thought automatically and the same for divination. All priests can curse or bless using what he specializes in. So a priest of nature kami could make one get bad luck with nature, like say tools getting broken, animals attacking etc. or bless, i.e. catches lots of fishes, finds a rare herb etc. In game terms they can cast a special bless/curse as described above 1/day/level starting at the third level. This curse/bless can get more powerful in time, so with every 3 levels, the curse can be more bothersome by one level [I would suggest using the table for curses detailed in the Red box]. Turning the undead is a task that not all priests do well. Some are better at turning the evil undeads than others, depending on what they specialize in. One thing is for sure, very few would dare use the undead even if they can control them. In game terms again, this means that you can add or take off levels when seeing if a priest can turn or not. But since they are turning evil spirits, physical undead are harder to turn, while uncorporeal undead are easier. Even evil priests will very rarely control the undead, even if they can. Neutral priests are even more unlikely to control an undead. Good priests will never do it.

The priests are not fighters, although they know how to defend themselves. They prefer martial arts and simple weapons, although they are allowed any bludgeoning weapon and spears. They also wear rather light armor (nothing giving more than AC 5) and some carry shields, but usually they fight barehanded or with a two-handed weapon.

The ways of this faith are obviously linked with respect and some humility. However Shunji has brought a much stricter way of life for the followers of this faith. They have to respect the elders for they have praised the kami more than the young and also the elder have a better contact with the kami. The elders are to be seen as having very strong kami, that has learned to discipline itself and it is harder to make it bend to one's will. This is basically to say that the elders are wiser than young people, although they use the elderly man's kami to explain this. The

youngsters are to be considered frivolous, with a weak kami that they have not yet learned to control. As such the hierarchy in the temple is based on age. For Shunji, all of society has to follow this hierarchy, not just the priests. This hierarchy means that all priests are lawful, although they might be good, neutral or evil.

Speaking of Shunji, he is rather young compared to the other members of the temple. He is in his forties, while many priests are in their 50's and a small number is even older. In most temples of this faith, this would not be. Shunji wouldn't be considered the highest ranking member, but perhaps an intermediate one. But Shunji as the head of state has declared that the animist faith be the official religion and also that he should be both the political and spiritual leader. The temple agreed, afraid of what he could do if they refused. As such Shunji offered the idea of being "wise beyond one's years", that some people are destined to be greater than others, that their kami is naturally stronger than most. This explains Shunji's power in the temple. The myth claims that only few beings are gifted this way.

The priests are allowed to get married, but must sacrifice rank for marriage. They will never rise beyond the intermediate level in influence. This is because the union makes the kami less focused on itself and other kami, but rather focused on the union between the two kami. Since females cannot be priests (in Shunji's view at least), the two kami cannot grow together and as such one would be separated from the other, leaving it weak. But marriage is still viewed as positive amongst young priests as they know that their children have a greater chance to have a stronger kami than most. This of course makes the older unmarried priests happy, since they get control of the temple and can impose their traditional ways. Females can become priests in some of the factions of this faith, especially in the south eastern island ruled by Mushigoro. One temple there is even said to held solely by priestesses, but the older ones still maintain the power. The traditional ways, as set by the priesthood, are based on respect of the elders, respect of all kami, respect of laws handed down from generation to generation, respect of the ruler and his decisions, respect of the power and authority of the temple. The elder priests hold much power in the south-western island, but elsewhere this domination of the old over the young isn't quite as severe. They also are against any form of outside culture, although they do tolerate the small chinese-like village of fishermen who hold on to their traditional ways (pressure to convert them has been made in the past, anyway). Architecture, the arts, everything is like it was in the "old days", meaning that buildings are a bit outdated (but this is by no means such a bad point). [The Edo era (1600) is a good reference point for this "old way".]

As a side note, the gods are seen usually as being better than mortals, but they are not worshipped by these priests who would rather deal with the gods' creations. However, they accept the worship of the gods, although these faiths often meet rather grim and mysterious ends.

The Way of the Peaceful One

The other faith of importance is a buddhism like faith. It isn't new, but for a long time it was more or less prohibited since Haki Shinpi didn't want religions rooted in foreign lands to come in and mess with the people's beliefs. With the quarreling brothers, it was easy for the once popular faith to come back. But the problem is that it has come back in factions. The basic tenet is that there are no gods and that power comes from within. There is such a thing as good and evil, but again this vision varies from sect to sect. Some try to "save" themselves, caring little for others,

while others try and help others find salvation in their faith. Amongst the individualistic ones, many live as traveling philosophers who go around seeking enlightenment. While the others are benevolent souls who seek to enlight everyone, becoming street preachers.

It is the second type that is the most prolific, the first type being more or less reserved to the intellectuals. [The Jodo Buddhist are the inspiration for this sect.] They are rather liberal in their ways usually, some sects preaching stricter lifestyles than others. They prefer peace to war and as such would only rarely shed blood for their faith. Some factions in the North east are much more combative, often having minor battles with Senzo's men. In game terms, consider your typical priest to be something of a traditional monk mixed in with a bit of Shinran (who can be compared to Jesus Christ in some ways). This means that he will shun armor and deadly weapons (slashing/piercing/metal bludgeoning). Martial arts based on throws and holds are preferred and may use some wooden weapons. The more combative ones might consider the use of armor (up to scale mail) and metal bludgeoning weapons.

These priests also possess some magical power, although limited: it is a question of how combative they are. The combative ones are said to be less focused and as such have not gained a good mastery of themselves which in turn makes them a bit less talented in spell casting. In game terms the non-combative ones gain more spheres and more major accesses and also possess the ability to turn undeads with a penalty varying on the sect. They also possess natural healing abilities (lay on hands as a paladin) and can detect magic once per day. The spheres are related to humans and the afterlife, meaning they get access to necromancy, healing, thought and other spheres dealing with life and thought. They can also entrance a crowd (s.t. vs. spells -1 per 3 level of the priest or gets an urge to listen to the priest's preaching). Some very esoteric ones (the intellectuals) also get the ability to fly or levitate once per day for 1 turn per level. The more combative ones get spheres related to war and combat mostly. Although they do get the traditional spheres, they do not get any of the special powers of the other priests and turn undead with a -3 level penalty.

The various sects all have one thing in common, no real formal leader.

The more combative ones recognize the skills at tactics and the strength of faith of certain priests, but even so they have little use for hierarchy. More peaceful ones simply rarely get together, so very little need for leadership there. Only the intellectuals mentioned earlier do have a formal leader who is a role model for other priests.

Females are welcome in some sects, but when they do join they rather join the peaceful ones, where they get more freedom. The combative ones feel women are useful around the temple, but not on the battlefield. The intellectuals shun females altogether.

The sects have no real friction between them, although there are heated discussions about how to promote the faith and what the faith is really about. But recently one priest has gotten a lot of attention and might be able to tighten the links between the three groups: Mushimitsu is his name. This jovial heavyset man could be compared to a more peaceful Shinran mixed with a bit of Buddha himself. He travels the land preaching strength of unity and also strength of spirit. He would like the people to stop listening to the four sons of Shinpi and get some good rulers.

Shunji obviously detests the faith and Mushimitsu especially. Senzo agrees that he is a menace as the more combative ones already hold some influence over the populace. Masashiro doesn't care: he often claims to be on his side to get the people's approval. Hushigoro is left cold by the "fat pig".

The Church of Ezra

Recently, Masashiro has let the Church of Ezra bring in some of its priests into his island. It is a lawful neutral church, although a number of priests are also lawful good. They bring in more advanced weaponry in exchange for some liberties and a bit of help in installing themselves. Already this has raised the ire of Shunji who plans on trying to get the outsiders out.

The Shinma

If the faiths are important, it is because there is a strong link with the supernatural forces in the Islands of the Sun. Everyone knows of ghosts and such spirits, but a more subtle and dangerous force is rising: the Shinma.

Himaro, Benesato and many of the servants of Hushigoro are shinma (demon-gods). They are fiends that actually lived in the prime material plane. They found the other planes too dangerous for them and decided to get power on the prime. They used various means to get what they wanted from humans, from impersonating deities to impersonating important figures. Their origins are similar to other fiends, in other words veiled in mystery. Some say they are offsprings of various fiends types mating with each other (a Baaetzu and a Tanar'ri for example). Others say they are the fears of humans incarnated into beings. Yet others say they are offshoots of humanity and demihumanity. One thing is for sure, they had the powers of fiends, although they had different motivations. They sought a place of their own, a place where they would be lord and masters, just like the Tanar'ri claimed the chaotic lower planes and the Baaetzu claimed the lawful ones. They were also quite varied in terms of the lawful-chaotic axis, meaning they weren't quite as united as their fiendish bretheren. The prime material plane had at that time all the makings of a place they could conquer and live in without anyone bothering them. The humans were for some a source of sustenance, for others a race to enslave and to others an amusing diversion. So a small number of them decided to make the trip and ended up in various places on the prime, including Rokushima Taiyoo before it became part of the demiplane. These fiends were no match for the other fiends that populated the planes, but they were quite stronger than the humans. They came in three varieties, the lawful ones (***gouhouteki***), the chaotic ones (***kontonshiteiru***) and the neutral ones (***noyutoraruu***).

The ***gouhouteki*** and ***noyutoraruu*** both found it useful to look more pleasing to human eyes and as such took on more human forms. This allowed them to infiltrate human society to carry out their purposes. The ***kontonshiteiru*** however preferred to install fear into the pitiful humans and also found their monstrous forms much better for the carnage and violence they had in mind when going there. That is not to say that all the lawful and neutral ones have a human form or that this form is their only one. Nor do all chaotic fiend always shun a human looking form. Actually for many of the less powerful lawful and neutral shinma, the human form they took became permanent with time. In fact most of the shinma came to lose power rapidly and as such most decided to try and get a better link with the plane. To do this they needed to "go to sleep" in

the bowels of the earth. Some however were not pleased with this (especially many chaotic ones) and rebelled. To make their kind more powerful they needed as many "sleeping" shinma as possible; besides humans had begun to hunt the shinma rather successfully. The wiser shinma decided to entrust guardians with the job to hunt those shinma who were not sleeping and get them back to sleep. This job was offered to a vampire who would be granted special powers to get the shinma to sleep.

The real story behind the great shinma slumber is actually that one shinma had a change of heart and began caring for the humans. It did not wish to see these people killed by his fellow shinma so it tricked the rulers into the slumber. This is a rather old and obscure legend that only the oldest inhabitants know. But many still fear the shinma.

Their shapes, forms and powers vary. But even the most powerful shinma is no match for a Tanar'ri or a Baatezu. Their powers are usually focused on one particular type of ability (control over one element, over a certain type of animal, illusions, mastery of charms etc...). Although they may have more than one power, they are all focused on one "theme". Possession is a power that is present in some shinma, but only a minority can possess another being. Those who do usually only "hide" in the mortal shell with no control over it [similar to Baku in *Vampire Princess Miyu*, or the woman in *Ogre Slayer* who had "demon/ogre children" in her]. Most shinma possess greater than normal physical abilities (if applicable). Mental abilities are usually higher in the lawful and neutral branch that have human forms, while physical power is better for the chaotic ones who maintain monstrous form. The power they control also has some effect on their forms, even in human form they will have some characteristic that hints to their power. For example, Himaro's control over his own body is represented by a scar indicating that his head had been severed, Benesato has a very snake like gaze and often has snake tatoos on her body hinting that she has power over snakes (her whole body is created by snakes). Hit dice and such are relative to the shinma, they can go from 1 to 10 and maybe more. No shinma has any kind of instant death power, level drain or other form of deadly/negative plane attack.

Some do practice "human" skills such as thievery and fighting with weapons. Magic is something only those shinma with human forms can use. They can reach a level limit of 7 as spellcasters (specialist mage and shintoist priest only), 8 as psionicists and 10 as fighters and thieves.

To this day most of them sleep, although Hishugoro has carelessly let a few of them escape slumber, hoping to bond them to his will with magical scriptures. Although weaker ones might have been affected, he called off a rather powerful one, Benesato, who tricked him into calling forth a leader of the lawful shinma, Himaro. Himaro is slowly coming to understand that their slumber was actually useless, since he hasn't grown in power, so he plans on waking a number of lawful shinma to help him conquer this island. Some rather dumb and weak chaotic shinma have been awakened too, although they are used as guards and often quickly disposed of.

The shinma have the same weakness to "holy" things as all fiends do, but apart from that they have also been known to be vulnerable to certain incantations. These incantations are considered "lost" by most, but Hishugoro has knowledge of a few ruins where there might be such power... Magical items created on some lower planes have been known to be quite effective against the

shinma, too. They are usually invulnerable to non-magical weapons, some powerful shinma being affected only by weapons of +2 or greater enchantment, but none are known to be better protected than this. Other weaknesses exist, but they are very characteristic of each shinma. But one weakness is common: their powers will decrease with time. This plane isn't theirs and never was. They have yet to become one with it and as such they are faced with decreasing powers. Slumbering will slow down the process incredibly, but the idea of being in almost constant slumber is annoying to the shinma. They need to know how to become one with the plane, leading them to perhaps discover the power rituals that other fiends use.

Possible Shinma Encounters

Himaro and Benesato: servants of Hishugoro... for now...

Onbu (carrying on one's back): A weird chaotic shinma that looks like a small child. It goes to the house of parents who have no child and begs them to adopt her/him (it can be of whatever sex it wants). The parents are usually very desperate for a child and this seems like a blessing. But they are soon cursed with an impossible child that seeks to get one parent to hate the other. It always has a certain "not so innocent" look on its face and is always listening. Its powers include persuasion and minor charm. It is a minor chaotic shinma that seeks to cause trouble more than anything else. But if angered it can grow to be violent, going on infanticide sprees. It will capture babies and feed on them, then give the bones to the parents in a picnic basket. It cannot stand milk. If forced to drink some it will choke and unless it finds some tea it will die. The sight of milk drives it away.

Kekkou Baba (sweet old woman): A neutral shinma that is a great gourmet, with one meal it enjoys beyond everything else: human meat. It took on the form of an elderly widow who enjoys having guests that she can cook for. She is quite fat and a weird smell accompanies her, a smell of sweat and meat. It has complete mastery of poisons which it can produce from its pores at will. She can also use her saliva instead, biting her victims. This poison is of whatever type she wants: she prefers sleeping poison since, unlike other poisons, it doesn't make human meat stingy and hard. She detests any form of food with alcohol in it and cannot stand rotten food.

Ushio Akazetsu (Ushio evil tongue): This lawful Shinma is master of deceit and of double talk. His tongue is actually a slim and worm like. Tall and slim, he has a mocking, wicked look on his face and his grin seems to hide something. He has found a niche amongst the politicians of Masashiro's government. He enjoys ruling and fooling people into doing what he wants. He can hypnotize someone as per the spell (cast at 6th level) at will, and has also access to these spell like powers: forget, slow, friends and confusion. He can use each of his spell like powers three times a day. He cannot stand to be tricked, tricking him will transform him into a snake. If killed as a snake he will be permanently killed.

Other Monsters

The shinma are not the only unique monsters found here, a few are quite special in their own rights.

The Tengu

These monsters are said to be born out of rebellion and chaos. They live for social disorder. Murdering powerful leaders, teaching to rebel leaders, anything goes with the Tengu. Few will actually see a Tengu, for they are often hiding in the shadows. Even if they would do anything to incite chaos, they prefer doing it with stealth and manipulation. But if one is "recruited" by a Tengu, one will see a tall man with a very long nose and a red face. Their faces are monstrous and gremlin like, with pointed ears and fang filled mouths. They wear long robes with wooden sandals and are known to enjoy fans made out of bird feathers.

Their favored technique of chaos is the rebellion. They find a person who they feel could be a good leader and teach him to the "way of the rebellion". Now these creatures are rather well known, but for many would be rebels, the superior intellect of the Tengu is their only hope. The Tengu knows a lot about war, subterfuge and even political manipulation, making it a perfect advisor. Every rebel leader thinks he/she can control the Tengu, use it, instead of it using him/her. This is but delusion on their part for the Tengu are too crafty to be used like this. As soon as the new order is in place it will raise another rebellion. Some try to kill the tengu, but they are very hard to kill for they possess not only superior tactics and experience, but also possess various means of escaping and watching from afar.

No one knows where the Tengu come from with any certainty. Some say they are the spirits of rulers who were denied their destiny. Others say they form when a rebellion occurs and fails. Others state that they are the creation of some evil god.

They are often accompanied with lesser Tengu who act as servants, doing anything the greater Tengu commands. They are often left with whoever the Tengu is working with to help out physically. They look like smaller Tengu (average human size). They follow any orders blindly. In game terms the Tengu is nothing much than a very smart (17 int & wis scores) and quite tall (6'6" to 7'4" on average) man. It possesses around 4+2 hit dice on average. They can bite for 2d4 points of damage, but they disdain physical combat. Since they are non-combative they have strong evasive and defensive capacities. It can teleport without error back to its lair twice per day and can create a dimension door up to five times a day. When it has a fan, it can fly 24(c) for any length of time although it must flap the fan for one round before taking off. Its capacities at manipulation derive from charisma and intelligence (consider their charisma/leadership scores to be at least 16). They disdain magic as well, preferring their minds and other talents to get what they want. Since they are such non-magical creatures they have resistance to spells (between 25-40%) and are not hit by weapons of less than +1 enchantment. Lesser Tengu have no such powers, except for flight and the magic resistance (spells and weapons).

The lesser Tengu are more likely to fight (1d6 damage with their bite) but have less hit dice though (3+2 HD). They never run away (morale 20) if ordered to do something. They see every order as a chance to prove themselves and to learn the techniques of the greater Tengu. They have something of a teacher/student relationship.

Tengu find nourishment in chaos and rebellion. If they do not "feed" at least once every two months, they soon die.

The true origins of the Tengu is in fact a mystery, although it is true that the spirit of great rulers who did not die in very honorable circumstances are often turned into greater Tengu. Yet still the population of Tengu does not quite fit with the number of such great rulers and as far as anyone knows the Tengu females have never been seen. Lesser Tengu do become greater Tengu if they prove to be worthy.

Most of the Tengu are found in the eastern island of Senzo where chances at rebellion are at their peak. Saying one has the nose of a Tengu is a grave insult (means that the person is a troublemaker). But having the eyes of a Tengu is a compliment (means the person is very observant).

The Oni

The Oni is similar to a satyr with the upper body of an oriental ogre. At one point they were lesser Shinma, but through mating with "lesser" races (humans and ogres) they lost most of their powers and became nothing more than another species of the ogre. Some Oni lineage have mixed their blood so much that they spawned the oriental ogres. But the oriental ogres actually took step to try and regain the magic they lost. These ogres actually studied and learned how to get back some of their powers. Although local variant on the tale say the oriental ogre actually struck unholy deals with various kami (spirits) to get back their powers.

But the Oni still exist, although none have any magical powers left. They are dumb and slow, just like the ogres. Their faces are "demonic" looking (horns, long fangs and a nasty "evil" expression) making many speculate that they are still demons with magical powers.

The Oni is simply a variant on the ogre now. They use big spiked metal clubs as weapons (3d6 damage 1-handed, 5d6 2-handed), and they are completely like ogres. They sometimes gore people with their horns for 2d4 damage and are not above biting (2d4 damage). They have an aversion to soy beans for some reason. They only eat human flesh, although they can go for months without food or water. They do not form clans, but some do have human slaves (mostly women with whom they mate for they cannot mate amongst themselves since only male Oni exist). Nowadays they are all but extinct, since it is said that women have found ways to abort Oni children and kill further spreading of the foul race. Those who do abort in such a way find themselves with a form of lycanthropy in which they turn into an Oni when their children are threatened or they face great danger or something along those lines.

The Satori

The Satori is a weird creature that looks like a gaunt elderly man. Indeed they are very thin (skeletal is a better word) and they are also quite hairy, their whole body being covered in white hair, but still this does not make the Satori look suspiciously inhuman. They always have a

wicked grin on their face, and are often fond of heckling people who pass nearby. While they heckle, they slowly gain contact with the person's mind (similar to the psionic power). Eventually they enter their victim's mind and proceed to bother it forever, especially during times where concentration is important. They can read their victim's mind and sense through his senses. One tale even tells of a Satori who once invaded a farmer's thoughts at night forever making him unable to sleep (or do just about anything else in bed...). Most victims end up going mad.

These beings were once living beings of an elderly age with a very bad attitude. Nothing ever was to their liking, nothing was good enough, nothing was satisfactory. Many died at the hands of a frustrated relative who could not stand to hear their elderly relative all the time. The young were their preferred targets. The young were always at fault and were incapable of doing anything well. The domain of Shunji houses a number of such "grumpy old men" and only time will tell how many will become a Satori.

The Satori are not truly dead, nor truly alive. They are called spirits even if they have a physical body. They possess the ability to contact the mind of people as per the psionic power/nwp, only the victim does have to make a saving throw vs. spell to avoid getting invaded. After contacting a mind they can automatically use a mindlink (again as per the Psionic power). With this mindlink they heckle and bother the person until he/she goes mad. No single moment will be spared, unless the Satori wants quality over quantity... Then it can have lots of fun... In fact having fun is the purpose of all this. They make up for the fun they didn't have in life, only theirs is a perverted fun that comes at the expense of others' sanity. If physically destroyed (it has about 5 hp) it will reshape within a few days and continue to heckle. The only way to get rid of it is to turn the tables on the Satori. This requires a psionicist of some talent possessing the same powers as the Satori (contact/mindlink). It has been said that some psionicist have to face the Satori inside of the victim's mind, which often leaves the victim in a catatonic state for days... and many die afterwards. For all purposes treat the Satori as a 10th level psionicist with access to the powers as explained before.

Unique Ghosts

Ghosts are also important, especially amongst the immigrants from the southern land that stood before Rokushima Taiyoo became part of the demiplane. Many tales revolve around them and most of the time they are inspired by true ghosts who roam the land. But these spirits are often quite hard to distinguish from the living, some saying that it has to do with one's conception of death. Below are detailed two unique ghosts.

Naoko Junjou (child naïve/pure heart)

Naoko was born into a very loving family in the rough lands of the eastern island. But her parents felt she was a gift from the heaven and deserved better, she deserved the best. So they moved down south to the southern torment ruled by Hishugoro. Instead of growing up to become the wife of a soldier she would grow up to become the wife of a handsome and gentle artist or peasant. They tried to give her as much love and attention as they could, as hard as it was while each held down a job.

Yet she did grow up the way her parents wanted her to. She was a gentle, loving soul of great beauty. But at the age of 9 her mother fell ill. This illness was due to the pollen of flowers from Hishugoro's private gardens. These flowers were all poisonous and their pollen was carried by the winds into the fields where her mother worked. At her death bed she asked her husband to take care of their daughter and make sure she stays pure. But most of all, to make sure she marries the perfect husband as they had always wanted. The man wept and nodded, promising to devote his life to fulfill his wife's dying wish.

The parents had already kept her from the "outside" world since a very tender age, making her somewhat naïve and younger in mind than her age would suggest. This not only continued, but intensified with time. She knew nothing of death, disease or suffering. She knew nothing of the worries of the adults, in fact she knew nothing of the world around her. Her life had been games and strolling through vast forests filled with cherry trees, playing amongst the blossoms. Her father tried his best to keep her "pure" as the couple had done in the past. They loved her too much to let her see the imperfect world around her.

At age 16 she was blossoming into one of the prettiest teens of the island and already some young men had an eye for her. It was time for the epuration of the candidates for her father. So for 2 years the man refused to grant her daughter's hand in marriage to anyone, for none were close enough to perfection. But as time went by, his health was getting shaky. The man was a potter, but the clay he used was taken from a lake near the deadly flower gardens of the lord. The exposure was not as great and frequent as his wife had suffered, but enough to make him realize that the process had to be hurried.

His plan was simple: scare off the candidates that were not suited for her all at once. His idea was to make up a curse of some sort so that only her daughter's true love would still want her despite her cursed status. The young woman accepted her father's "game" even if she had no clue what it was truly about. This "curse" went along perfectly. One suitor was a young man who was considered by most young ladies the handsomest man next to the lord Hishugoro. But the effeminate looks of the young man and his arrogance did not please the father who sought a man with the beauty traits from his old land not the ones from this place. So he told his daughter to prepare the tea and to put in some "spice". Actually it was an herb that caused many skin disorders when ingested as well as violent vomiting streaks. Once the young suitor drank the tea, he started feeling nauseous. Then he ran outside nearly vomiting on a few young ladies who were passing by. This was a shameful display and over the next few days he was reported to have lost some of his hair and his skin had become twisted and sickly looking. He committed suicide, unable to live with his ugliness.

Another suitor tried to fondle Naoko when he saw how naïve she was. Although he didn't do much, she told his father how the man touched her so he told her to rub some oil he had given her on the front of the man's pants. This oil had properties of enraging animals like dogs. She took him to the woods and did as her father said, then left him giggling all the way. The man followed her but he ran into a bunch of dogs who quickly chewed at his groin trying to attack the odor. The man was castrated at the end of all this. But he spread the word of her curse, how no man could have her for she would only bring pain to him.

The tactic had worked too well for now no one wanted to even let her live in the outskirts of town. At the same time her father fell ill and the 20 year old with the mind of a 12 year old watched silently as his father cursed his fate. He had failed his wife and his daughter. He couldn't just die yet.... not until she was married as he had promised his wife. Something or someone heard his plight since after his demise his soul came back to the mortal world, where he began to roam as a ghost. He saw his body naturally mummified by the poisonous pollen. His body would not change, his face wracked with pain. The young woman thought her father was asleep and tried to wake him up. She had no idea what death was, so this was a natural reaction. When she saw the father didn't awake, she thought he was only very deeply asleep, so she decided to give up and left the room. She went out and rejoined her friends, a bunch of 12 year old girls (they were after all of her mental age).

The ghost of the father was happy beyond belief: the gods had given him a second chance at life. This time he would not fear disease nor age. He knew from the first moment he came back that his new form had many powers and limitations. He knew he could finally make sure his daughter stay pure by preventing her from aging and also he could watch her every move without being seen by others. Finally he could move objects with his thought to compensate for his constant etherealness. But he was unable to use his powers at night, becoming a totally powerless geist. He talked to his daughter, explaining that he had taken on a new form, like a butterfly. She was of course quite amazed, her amazing father had truly outdone himself this time. Her friends seeing her talk to some invisible person were a bit scared, thinking she might be mad. They didn't hesitate to tell all this to their parents who then prohibited them to meet that crazed girl again. But her father didn't give up. He told her they were going on a trip all across the land to find her a husband which he referred to as a "special friend".

Even in her rather retarded state of mind she still feels emotions as any child would. But how strong can a 12 year old's feelings be? Somewhere in her heart she knows what love is, but she also loves her father and would not love someone her father doesn't approve of. Yet with time she has seen many boys that she had feelings for, but all were too young: most of them had crushes on her like a boy has a crush on his teacher. Actually, one of these boys grew up and still loves her: Konatsu is his name. But he is not perfect according to her father, so she must renounce any feelings she might have for this very close friend.

She keeps going along with her father, trying to find a husband, even if they will never truly find one. No man like the father seeks would really want a 12 year old girl.

The only way to bring about the final rest of her father is to marry her to someone she truly loves, even if her father disapproves of him. But for this she needs to "grow up". This could lead to some interesting roleplaying opportunities as the PCs must try and educate the child like woman into some of the more complex mysteries of life such as death and birth and love.

Ryouko (dragon & tiger/hero)

This man is a legend amongst the people who migrated from the vast land that once existed south of Rokushima Taiyoo in the Prime. They are prud people who lead simple lives. Many are forced to live outside of the main cities or face assimilation. Their culture is in constant jeopardy... Yet they have a rich culture of heroes who with their wits and strength manage to save the people.

These are but tales that are used to give courage to this folk, to give them hope. Yet some of these tales are true.

One tale tells the story of a young man who grew up in the small village of immigrants near the westernmost border of Rokushima Taiyoo. He was a gifted boy, who some say was born with the speed of the wind and the strength of a dragon. He was a wise boy, who learned quickly, making his parents very proud. At 8 he was adding his own modifications to ancient martial arts, by the age of 12 he had mastered 4 of the most difficult schools. Yet he vowed never to use his skills for anything but a just cause. He was proud of how his people stood up for their ways, their tales, their tongue and their freedom. As an adult he became protector of the village. Whether it was an Oni trying to kidnap some young girl to enslave or Shintoist priests trying to convert the townspeople, he was there to protect his people.

But Shunji hated the man. He was making a mockery of his best soldiers and priests. So he ordered the man to be killed using any means necessary. He did what no Shintoist priest had dared to do yet: he actually used the kami of the dead to destroy the man whose name was never known.

That night the town was attacked by men who had been long dead, their traditional burying grounds churning out the living dead. The man fought against most of them, even managing to destroy a few of them, yet no one would help him, nor did he want any help. But he suddenly stopped in front of a number of them. He had realized something, he had violated one of the most sacred laws of his people, the respect of the dead. His eyes filled with tears as he let the dead kill him, not even letting out a scream, feeling his dishonor was too great. Shunji could not believe it, he could not believe how the man would give up his life for some tradition. But then he thought of himself, how he was a man of traditions and how he had given his life to the pursuit of those ideals. He had killed a living incarnation of what he was of what he always wanted his people to be.

The townspeople were completely shocked. Their hero had fallen. What was there left to do? They did what the man did, they stood motionless waiting for the dead to arrive, thanking the hero with their silent prayers and telling him they would finally meet in the heavens. They had such faith in the man, such undying respect for him that his soul could never truly die; also the man had sworn to protect his village and his people forever and he had never broken an oath. This psychic energy and the emotional content of all this made the soul of the man rise from his body as a ghost. A wondrous ghost, dressed in the robes of the greatest of legendary heroes with a shining golden aura about him. He ordered the dead to go back to their graves for they had no business amongst the living and the dead did as he commanded. Shunji's priests tried to command them but they failed. The man then came closer to Shunji. They met and the man said that he would not mock Shunji and that he would not punish him for his misdeed: the spirits of the dead would decide his punishment. But for now Shunji had to promise to leave the village and never bother it again or face his wrath. Shunji was amazed: the man could have exacted his vengeance right there, humiliating him, but he had chosen to let him live. Truly the ghost had kept the noble spirit of the nameless man. After their meeting, Shunji left the village and never returned, and some heard him uttering the name Ryouko... The townspeople know the ghost as that to this day.

Ryouko is a lawful good ghost of fourth magnitude. He possesses the power to turn undeads as a priest of 11th level. He is a mutable spirit who masters many forms of unarmed combat. He has incredible speed, acting first in any round. He is immune to all weapons of less than +3 enchantment. He radiates a 40' aura similar to a Continual Light spell cast on himself. His presence can make his allies feel more confident adding +2 to all their rolls. He is anchored to his village and cannot leave it.

His tale is one of the most important known in the small village. His passing into unlife was a consequence of his undying loyalty and the people's faith in him. He can be used to make gloomy players realize that not all things are corrupt or bad in the demiplane. In fact the same can be said for Naoko.

The Folk and Native PCs

This section deals with the native characters of Rokushima Taiyoo. But before that a little note on technology. Most of the places here are considered to be of medieval to chivalric level so adjust equipment accordingly.

Also, the language spoken in the islands is the same one, with minor changes in accents. Only two priesthoods are available, Shintoist and Believers of the Peaceful One, except where noted. Gypsyies are not found here and half-vistanis are never natives of this island (same goes for demihumans, except where noted).

The Eastern Island (Senzo's)

Tech Level: Medieval (Kamakura/Civil war era)

The people here are oppressed and terrorized. They live their lives in constant fear much like those living in Falkovnia. They are often sick and thin because of malnutrition. The soldiers here get a lot of the food produced and the rest of the population is left with the crumbs, so to speak. Males are taught to be strong, powerful and obedient from their tender youth to their young adult life. Parents dream of sending their boys away to the army (at least most of them do) since this means a lot of money and food for them. Senzo has a deep sense of family ties and strongly believes that children should always respect their father and take care of their parents. This is why the soldiers of Senzo receive special allocations for their parents. These parents are as close as one gets to nobility in the island.

With the breeding the male get, they often grow to be taller than usual (many reach 6 feet tall for an average height of 5'4" for the population of the other islands of the domain). They are also quite aggressive in behavior. Women on the other hand are taught to look as fragile and beautiful as possible. Women try to look as young as possible to attract the attention of the lord of the land who arranges marriages with soldiers. Again, marriage with a soldier means benefits for the parents, so they educate their daughters into the art of being appealing and "proper" (which means extremely subservient, responsible for the children's welfare, eager to please her husband in any ways he sees fit etc.). Women often do look younger than they are and actually do not grow to be very tall (5' and shorter on average). Women wear kimonos which vary in beauty to represent the rank of her husband (mother or wife of a soldier are considered highest ranking).

Heroes from this island are rarely female. Those who do decide to go out on adventure often do so out of disgust for their roles. Many try to pass for males to avoid undue attention. Heroes from this island can be of any class, but spellcasters are very rare. Anyone rolling 85% or more for their social rank are from noble families and get only a 10% reduction on starting funds. Others get only half the usual gold for their class. The rough nature of this place means that all heroes are particularly tough themselves, so they get a +1 bonus against all saves vs. any checks for exertion or fatigue. Many hold grudges against the army and war. Only human characters can be native of this island.

The South-Eastern Island (Hishugoro's)

Tech Level: halfway between medieval and chivalric (Meiji era)

Here the people are amongst the most beautiful in the land, just like the vast plains and forests here are amazing to behold. But male beauty here is quite different from the criterias other islands have. Indeed, men here are very effeminate. They all strive to look like the lord of the land, Hishugoro. Hishugoro is said to be the most handsome man in all of the four islands by most women here. All men try to be thin and graceful like him, with high cheek bones and eyes shining like black pearls. Most do wear a bit of makeup from time to time, but many prefer a "natural" look. They wear long robes or whatever is in fashion. Indeed fashion can change rapidly here, although it only changes slightly from one point in time to another, the classics never grow old.

The women are similar to the men, although they behave in a slightly more "schoolgirlish" way, often giggling amongst themselves and such. But apart from that an outsider might have a hard time telling the two sexes apart. Hairdos are the only real difference. Men like to leave their hair loose, while women prefer to use complex knots and other styles to wear their hair "up". Even this is not an absolute, many women do leave their hair loose just as men sometimes take the time to do something with their hair.

Here people enjoy the arts and recognize beauty in both inner and outer ways. Although their lord is the "blind spot". Many legends tell of people who had ugly hearts and lost all their beauty because of this. But even so, many "ugly" people end up being somewhat excluded socially. For example ugly ones may not participate in such cultural events as theater.

Women and men treat each other more or less as equals. A rare sight indeed in this domain. Still women are not allowed to act and many jobs are not for women.

All this applies to city folks. Those who live on farms and such are more down to earth and although they still take great care about their beauty, they favor more roughness for their very physical job requires it. Most of the "ugly" ones end up as farmers or in other physical work sectors.

Elves exist on this island and are actually seen as nearly perfect examples of beauty. The elves do not mix in with the humans much, but they do appreciate the attention (as anyone would). However some humans have grown jealous of the elf's natural effeminacy and wish to see them disappear into the forests and stay there. The elves are usually partly neutral in alignment, trying not to get their already large egos too big. But some do think they are superior and the humans

should be the ones leaving: these are the evil elves. Some say that deep in the earth some darker elves exist. They were elves who had grown to be too vain and were punished by the gods to stay underground where no one would see their beauty again. Many say this is why the elves try to stay far from the humans. Still the resemblance between the city dwellers and the elves is fascinating. This occurrence has led to many crossbreedings that have in turn led to a small number of half elves. The half elves who do not have the elven ears look just like any native and might just be able to pass for a native of the other islands. Elves often have very long slim ears (I suggest watching *Records of Lodoss War* for an idea of what elves look like in the island). Heroes from this island must have at least 11 in charisma (appearance, comeliness etc...) to be from the city, otherwise they come from the countryside. Whatever the case, they all get a +1 bonus to all reaction checks with outsiders because of their friendliness and politeness. This increases to +2 for reaction checks with those of the island. But decreases to -1 with inhabitants of Shunji's and Senzo's islands. No modifiers apply for those of Masashiro's island. City dwellers master at least one form of art (theater, poetry, "weapon handling"...), but they are vain and will not buy anything of a quality level lesser than average and will always try to buy the best quality of products available. Others do not receive these modifications, but still value the beauty of one's home and possession and will try to make their belongings look as pleasant as possible (shining their weapons and armor, not wearing stained clothing, etc.).

The PCs can be of any class, including bards. Magic isn't truly feared, although only creative, positive, "pretty" magic is allowed. Destructive magics will get the caster a lot of negative attentions. Here elves exist and as such can be chosen by players, although they are usually at least partially neutral in alignment (although CG and LG elves do exist, they are much rarer).

Half-elves are also common but are hard to distinguish from usual city dwellers.

The South-Western island (Shunji's)

Tech level: Medieval (Asuka era)

The inhabitants of this isle are aged, just like the buildings, yet they are, just like the architecture, still very much able to stand against the younger ones. Traditional values are highly regarded: indeed one of the prime ways of obtaining power in this island is to be either old or very strict in your defense of tradition. Here the elders are respected greatly, even seen as superior citizens. Things change slowly and the people are just as stable as the ways of the shintoist priesthood. The priesthood is the center of power and being a priest means the person gets a lot of respect. Women here are not badly treated, but few do anything else than staying in the house and raising the children. Young adult men are told to work hard, while elders are told to guide the young. The clothing here is often drab and rather stern looking. Women wrap themselves up in silken kimonos and wear complex hairdos. The men have short hair when young and let it grow with age. Beards are usually reserved to men in their forties at least. Women change little with age: they usually wear makeup when young and use less when getting older.

These folks are simple and do not like things that make a lot of "noise" or get too much attention; as such firearms are seen as dumb and useless cranks. Men get minor schooling in martial arts and don't possess firearms.

There is another culture living side by side with Shunji's people. These simple folks are said to be mysterious at best and are not exactly well liked by most people. They came from a land south of where Rokushima Taiyoo used to be. Physically they look similar to the usual inhabitant of the island, although the men wear silken shirts and pants of various colors, different from the traditional martial arts uniform preferred by men of Rokushima Taiyoo origins. Their dialect is similar to that of all inhabitants of Rokushima Taiyoo: they even claim that they are responsible for it and that their land gave birth to the islands inhabitants. They feel not like the immigrants, but rather they consider themselves the ancestors of this culture. This makes Shunji quite angry and as such people from this culture are seen as half-mad and dangerous and normally shunned. They lead simple lives as farmers and fishermen. They seem to hold many secrets and hold on to their traditional ghost tales very dearly. They are similar to Vistanis in terms of how they are seen elsewhere in Rokushima Taiyoo. The women of this culture are identical to the other women of Shunji's island.

Heroes are usually men, but again some women like to live wildly and decide to break tradition. These women are seen as dumb or even crazed. But men are too peaceful to do much: besides none would dare strike a woman (at least not one that isn't married to him). Female heroes start with only half usual funds and a female carrying a weapon is frowned upon in her land, meaning most try to use weapons that are concealable. Female priests do not exist: only men are allowed to choose that class, and the only faith possible is the shintoist one. All heroes get etiquette proficiency for free and men get some knowledge of martial arts (adjust to fit your system). All people here respect their elders and must always show great respect to them (wisdom check or agree to do whatever an older person asks of them). Mages are rare, but not unknown amongst the mysterious immigrants. Thieves are usually young (maximum starting age of 23) while priests are older (minimum starting age of 30). Shintoist priests are never immigrants, but they can be of the many sects of the Believers of the Peaceful One.

The Northern Island (Masashiro's)

Tech level: Chivalric, some renaissance (Edo era)

This is a melting pot of cultures, ways and beliefs. The Believers of the Peaceful One have a church almost next to the one devoted to Ezra. The people live tightly, stuffing themselves in houses that are almost abnormally close to one another. Although the culture does tend to be closer to that of Shunji's island, one can easily say that it is a mix of the three others.

The one thing that these people do have in common is a tendency to regroup themselves into minor factions to defend their ways and force the government to enforce them. But actually they also have a problem in common: poverty. The corrupted government uses a lot of funds... and the population is unaware of just how much riches the land holds but are stolen by the government. Thieves are running loose and cutthroats are just as numerous. It is said that most ninja clans have some form of headquarter here for assassination is common. But the people care little: they are too caught up in their own petty quarrels.

Heroes from here are obviously going to be thieves more than anything else. Priests can be of any of the three religions and any faction of the Believers of the Peaceful One may be chosen. Mages are rare since most of the ancient places have been raided or are cursed so that no one dares risk visiting them, meaning that the art of magic is more or less lost. The characters gain normal

starting money only if the roll 90% or more for their social class. Otherwise they lose 1/4 of their starting funds, and 1/2 if they are of the lower classes.

The people here do know how to spot a bargain though and may be able to get a 10% discount on anything they buy, knowing many ways to cut corners without cutting quality. Many people here have knowledge of the going on in politics and other subjects so the local lore proficiency: as such any class may purchase it for 1 slot.

Rumors

-Haki Shinpi might be able to take on living form for brief periods.

-The two other sons of Haki Shinpi are not dead...

-If the two dead brothers are still alive, an old perverted hermit is said to be the only living soul to know of their locations. But the senile old man might not part with his secret quite easily...

-Hikaru is not truly dead and is using powerful necromancy to raise an army of undead to march against his brothers.

-The dead of the southern torment (Hishugoro's island) are rising... but is the lord really behind it? Maybe the shinma are responsible... unless someone else exists who knows the same foul secrets Hishugoro knows... His dead brother Hikaru is the only one who possessed this knowledge, but he has been dead for quite some time... hasn't he?

-The drunkard might actually know a person of great importance that could make the power balance in the islands shift: a powerful warrior who taught him his skills.

-The drunken warrior of the western island is certainly talented, but he admits that someone taught him his skills. To teach such a drunkard the use of a sword like that means the teacher was incredibly skilled. Some say only Haki Shinpi was ever that good, although perhaps his deceased first son was as talented... but they have both been dead long before the drunkard's birth...

-The seventh child of Haki is a girl...

-Those who claim that Haki had a daughter named Yohko cannot say whether she is still alive or not... if she was, she'd be quite old by now...

-But who says Haki had a daughter? Perhaps his sons have a half-sister... Some rumors say the father wasn't a native, that her eyes are blue like the water of the great mirror lake: a rare occurrence amongst native women.

-The shinma hunter in the southern island is said to have blue eyes...

-The nightmare mist might be home to the spirits of the victims of the brother's endless wars or maybe it's actually the home of Himaro's fiendish allies...

-What does lie behind the nightmare mists? Is the leader of the chaotic shinma truly slumbering there? Maybe it is something far worse...

-A sea serpent is said to be hiding in the nightmare mist. Maybe it's the leader of the chaotic shinma Himaro is so worried about...

-Seigozen might not be barren, but rather her husband Masashiro might be.

-Seigozen has been receiving visits from a handsome young man lately: he makes her happier than Masashiro. Yet some say he has a weird mole on his cheek... might be only a shadow...

-Takasada is working undercover to get rid of Masashiro and take over himself.

-The kami (spirits) in the eastern island might be growing tired of being called upon by the priests, they might teach them a lesson...

-Hishugoro is cultivating flowers capable of putting one to sleep forever. He seems not to be interested in the cure.

-Almost every known poison has a cure that can be found in Hishugoro's gardens.

- The "ugly" ones might be plotting to try and get beauty for themselves with the help of a succubus and some ancient magics...
- It might be possible to get out of the demiplane through one of the portals Hishugoro creates to summon fiends from the earth.
- Himaro might have a number of powerful fiendish allies coming up soon...
- Benesato might start her own assassins guild turning her followers into Yuan-Ti like creatures.
- The Peaceful One might actually exist, but he might not be what everyone expects... perhaps Shinpi himself is beyond this cult?
- Many old tales speak of sealed wells that hide dangerous ghosts imprisoned.
- The mysterious immigrants in the western island are said to have ancient lore concerning magic that is actually not evil...

Adventure Hooks

- If the two dead sons are still alive, then perhaps they might be a source of adventures as the PCs try and find the first son for his dad, Haki. Haki might use the PCs in a grand scheme to revive his dead sons and perhaps bring back order.
- If Hikaru is alive he might be using the dead to claim the islands. Perhaps he is an undead himself, a powerful lich or a ghost with undead controlling capacities.
- Finding a cure for some disease or poison might require a trip into the fields and gardens of Hishugoro. But he has shinma guardians as well as dangerous plantlife.
- Finding the old hermit might take the PCs into the mountains of the island where they might have to face some nasty cave dwellers, perhaps a perverted version of dwarves thinking the PCs are after their treasure...
- Political intrigue can be abundant in the northern island. The PCs might get in the middle of a plot to kill some minister who got on Masashiro's badside.
- Perhaps the PCs might save the lord Masashiro from some akikage who seeks to kill the one who humiliated him.
- The revolution brewing in the eastern island might find powerful representatives in the PCs or perhaps the PCs could be the new tactical advisors. However, the Tengu do not like to be so rudely displaced and their vengeance could be quite nasty...
- Religions might start warring in the northern island. Anchorite PCs could try to reason with the priests there or join their crusade...
- Perhaps they could learn much of the land from the stories of the immigrants... This could easily lead them to some wild goose chase or perhaps a lot of puzzle solving to find some clues to a mystery involving those people.
- Finding a husband for the poor girl wandering around in the southern island might be a daunting task... but her father might be an even bigger problem. The rewards could be a really good feeling inside each player, to show them that Ravenloft doesn't have to be gloomy all the time: happy endings do happen... sometimes...

Links and Resources

<http://www.us-japan.org/jassw/what/LettersFromHyogo/tips.html>

(a few pronunciation tips)

gopher://wiretap.spies.com/00/Library/Article/Language/grammar.jap

(quick and dirty guide to japanese)

<http://www.magi.com/~ttoyooka/oshiro/>

(architecture of japanese castles)

<http://www.calpoly.edu/~akanemot/japArch.html>

<http://www.infoweb.or.jp/r-yamate/waza.htm>

(japanese architecture)

<http://www.io.com/~nishio/japan>

(monsters and events, mostly for Shadowrun)

Part 1

Hishugoro Shinpi: Yurimaru from *Ninja Scroll*

<http://nightfall.simplenet.com/NinjaScroll>

Hikaru Shinpi: Hikaru Gosunkugi from *Ranma 1/2*

<http://info.pitt.edu/~jslst29/ofung!/homepage.html>

Senzo Shinpi: Zhang Fei from the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* video games.

Part 2

Benesato: Benesato from *Ninja Scroll*

Himaro: Himaro Gama from *Ninja Scroll*

Jubei: Jubei from *Ninja Scroll*

Master Kuroyama: Jubei from the *Fatal Fury* games

Mochimitsu: Rokkon from *Phantom Quest Corp* (no links worth noting)

Ushio: Aboshi from *The Hakkenden*

<http://home.ica.net/~sumyee/Hakkenden/Index.html>

Xavier: Xavier, the real life priest who brought Christianity to japan.

Part 3

The oni, satori and tengu are legendary monsters not found in anime but more complete descriptions can be found here:

<http://www.io.com/~nishio/japan/critter.html>

The shinma: The shinma from *Vampire Princess Miyu*

<http://www.csclub.uwaterloo.ca/u/mlvanbie/miyu/miyu.html>

Part 4

Elves of the south-eastern island: The elves from *Records of Lodoss War*

<http://nightfall.simplenet.com/Lodoss/lodoss.htm>

Naoko's father: Soun Tendo from *Ranma 1/2*

<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/6413/frames.html>

Ryoko: Bruce Lee

Glossary

(note: all terms in Japanese never have plural forms)

Aiko Kiyo : Pure (Kiyo) child (Aiko)

Real name of the young heroine of the south eastern island (see Naoki Kenninfubatsu).

Akazetsu (Ushio) : evil tongue

Impolite nickname given to the public relations minister of Masashiro's government.

Asuka era : Era spanning 592-710 A.D. in real life Japan.

Bushi "class" : Meaning the samurai in their social standing.

Bushido : Way of the warrior

The code of conduct followed by samurai. It told samurai that they could be role models by leading life with austerity, temperance, loyalty, self-discipline and willingness to act at any time. It also said that a samurai must commit suicide rather than face humiliation/dishonor. They died by slitting their abdomen. Nonetheless, the bushido urged samurai to show interest in the arts as well as fighting skills.

Daimyo : Feudal lord

In the eastern island, the daimyo is a trusted general who is given political power over a certain area.

Edo era : Era spanning 1603-1897 A.D. in real life Japan.

Gouhouteki : Lawful

Used to describe lawful evil shinma (see shinma).

Hitadama : falling star/fireball

Name of the current chief of police is the south eastern island.

House : Political party or a clan.

Kamakura era : era spanning 1192-1333 A.D. in real life Japan.

Kami : Spirit

Base of the shinto faith (see shinto).

Kekkou Baba : sweet (kekkou) old woman (baba)

Refers to a shinma that looks like a friendly elderly woman who poisons her guests to eat them afterwards (see shinma).

Kenninfubatsu (Naoki) : Who has much courage/perseverance (Naoki who has much courage)

Heroic alter ego of a young woman in the south eastern island.

Kontonshiteiru : Chaotic

Used to describe chaotic evil shinma (see shinma).

Kizoku : Vampire like monster who charms wives and make them kill their husband (see Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium III).

Meiji era : Era spanning 1867-1911 A.D. in real life Japan.

Musha nominuke : drunkard warrior

A travelling mercenary who works for sake or money to feed his alcoholism.

Naoko Junjou : Naoko (child) Junjou (naïve/pure heart)

A young woman cursed to forever roam the land as an adult with a child's mind. Her father's ghost is constantly trying to find a suitable husband, but ends up using her to drive him off. The methods can be quite cruel.

Noyutoraruu : Neutral

Used to describe neutral evil shinma (see shinma).

Onbu : To carry on one's back (a baby)

Expression used to refer to a child like shinma that drives its adoptive parents crazy (see shinma).

Oni : Ogre like monster.

Rokushima Taiyoo : Six islands

The name of the domain.

Ryouko : Dragon & Tiger/Hero

Legendary man who protected his people's culture from invasion by Shunji's priests. Now a ghost who watches over his native village.

Sake : Rice wine.

Samurai/Bushi : Warrior who follows the bushido (see bushido).

Satori : Weird evil monster/spirit that looks like an old man and invades his victim's thoughts until the later his driven mad.

Seppuku/Harakiri : The suicide ritual of samurai (see bushido).

Shinma : Fictional term meaning gods/demons

In Rokushima, a race of fiends.

Shinto : Faith based on the real life Shinto faith and animism.

Its tenets are that spirits are in everything and as such even inanimate objects deserve respect. Priests are those who have a special relationship with the kami (spirits) and can ask favors from them.(see kami)

Shogun : Army general.

Shogunate : Government ruled by a shogun (see shogun).

Tengu : Human looking monster that causes rebellions and chaos by helping populations in their rebellious activities and inciting them to violence.

Yuri : Lily

Courtisan and secretly an assassin active in the Northern island.

THE TALE OF AVONLEIGH

By Kitsune

Listen now to the tale of Avonleigh and Morgoroth...

Morgoroth, fleeing his past and a knight intent on killing him, came to Lord Shadowborn of Avonleigh and head of the Circle, a great group of paladins. Morgoroth pledged himself to Lord Shadowborn and became his trusted advisor, though the other members of the Circle distrusted Morgoroth. Despite his dark and necromantic ways, Morgoroth was loyal to Shadowborn, and was completely trustworthy.

Morgoroth entered the forests of Avonleigh and using his fell magic, brought forth a great mansion, Teregon Manor, the house built by magic. He lived there, carrying out magic experiments within its walls. Phantoms of those killed by Morgoroth came to dwell in the woods around Teregon Manor, and was from then on known as the Phanstamal Forest.

Now Lord Shadowborn had a sister, Aurora, whom Morgoroth fell in love with. But Morgoroth could not imagine that Aurora would have any interest in someone as dark and vile as he, so he remained silent, and would not profess his love for Aurora. Aurora, however, also fell in love with Morgoroth, but for reasons in cannot remember, also remained silent.

The years past and Morgoroth served Lord Shadowborn faithfully. But then Aurora was to be made a priestess of the god of Avonleigh, and there after she would not be allowed to marry. Now faced with this fact, Morgoroth decided to break his silence, but when he professed his love for Aurora, she ran from the room crying. Morgoroth was certain he had horrified her, and he was crushed. Aurora was not horrified, instead she was crying because now that she had entered the church, she could never have what she truly wanted, to be with Morgoroth as husband and wife. Morgoroth fled back to Tergeron Manor.

Soon afterwards, Lord Shadowborn called Morgoroth, Aurora, and the Circle to an important conference. Aurora avoided eye contact with Morgoroth there, further breaking his heart. But it was not the worse to be revealed there. A valient knight by the name of Lambert came to Avonleigh to request the aid of the Circle in apprehending a villious necromancer, whose name he did not know. He described to the Circle the heinous deeds of the necromancer and the Circle rose up in anger, swearing to the destruction of this necromancer. Within, Morgoroth felt a chill, for he was the necromancer Sir Lambert sought and Lambert was the knight who forced Morgoroth to flee his stronghold. Quietly, Morgoroth made a discreet exit and returned with all speed to Teregon Manor.

But on his way there, the knight Lambert caught up with him. Lambert, uncertain at the meeting with the Circle, was now certain Morgoroth was the necromancer he sought. Lambert attacked Morgoroth, and Morgoroth slew him with his aresenal of spells.

Enraged, Morgoroth returned to Teregon Manor, swearing that if the world thought him to be evil, then by all the gods he will return to his old ways. Thus ended Morgoroth's attempt at redemption.

Morgoroth teleported into the church of Avonleigh as Aurora was being made priestess. He bound her with spells and took her with him back to Teregon Manor, encasing her in a glass coffin and leaving her in eternal slumber.

During this time, the Circle was trying to convince Lord Shadowborn that Morgoroth was the necromancer the knight Lambert sought. Disbelieving and horrified, Lord Shadowborn fled the Circle and rode to Teregon Manor, needing to hear his friend Morgoroth say it was not true. At the gates of Teregon Manor, Lord Shadowborn again came face-to-face with Lambert, now a walking, rotting corpse. Shadowborn destroyed the abomination, freeing Lambert's spirit, and strode boldly into Teregon Manor... and was never seen again.

The Circle, bent on rescuing Lord Shadowborn and destroying Morgoroth, attacked Teregon Manor. But less than half reached its gates as the spirits of the Phantasmal Forest fell upon them, draining them of their lives. The rest perished within the walls of Teregon Manor as the Mists of Ravenloft ripped the portion of Avonleigh in which Teregon Manor and the Phantasmal Forest lay out of that prime and placed it within the Mists.

Morgoroth was no fool however, he knew he was trapped somewhere. He devised a plan to use a mirror to create a gate out of Ravenloft. The Dark Powers were wise to his plan though, and as Morgoroth entered the mirror, they caused the mirror to shatter into 13 shards. The shards were scattered though Teregon Manor and Morgoroth himself was trapped within the walls of Teregon Manor and became much like the greater animators of lore. Thus he was trapped even worse, most of his great magical powers lost to him while within the walls of Teregon Manor. Though he did slowly learn of other abilities he now possessed in his current state.

Eventually, a brave group of fools found their way through the Mists and into Avonleigh. They fought their way through the Phantasmal Forest to Teregon Manor, drawn by the light in the belfry. They gathered the 13 shards and pieced them together in the old frame that originally held the mirror.

Morgoroth was free! A great battle followed, and Morgoroth slew most of the company. The rest fled to the belfry, intent on waking Aurora, who still slept within the glass coffin. They hoped to escape Avonleigh and Ravenloft by a silver portal that was prophesized to appear when the priestess is awakened. They did not succeed, Morgoroth used his spells to destroy them as they rang the bells that would shatter Aurora's glass coffin.

The domain of Avonleigh lies in a state of eternal night and temperatures seldom rise above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Twin moons, Alyn and Zyla hang in a starless sky. No light within Avonleigh can produce a glow brighter than that of a campfire. Most of the domain is covered by the Phantasmal Forest, which is full of any kind of spectral undead. The River Avalon flows from Wyndham Lake and out into the Mists. Also, there is Devonshire Pond, Shrappcroft Marsh and an area known as the Old Fens. The King's Highway comes out of the Mists and leads directly to Teregon Manor, which is at the heart of the domain.

In the year 747 of the Barovian calendar, Avonleigh joined with two other lands also associated with the Shadowborn line and curse. Shadowborn Manor came out of the Mists, its Lord an intelligent artifact sword known as Ebonbane. Forged with the darkest of spells, Ebonbane was made to slay Lady Kateri Shadowborn and it succeeded in ending her mortal life. Lady Shadowborn still haunts her Manor. The land of Nidalia also joined with Avonleigh and Shadowborn Manor. Nidalia is ruled by Elenia Faithhold, a once mighty paladin who rode beside Lady Kateri Shadowborn in holy quests. Faithhold allowed her desire to destroy evil consume her, and is now a fallen paladin, coldly murdering any who she suspects of harboring some evil. Together, Avonleigh, Nidalia, and Shadowborn Manor make up the Shadowborn Cluster.

For many years, Lady Kateri Shadowborn was thought to be the last of her line, though another Shadowborn has surfaced of late, pledging to fight evil and redeem the Shadowborn name. Sages are now compiling his story for release to the masses (the novel "Shadowborn" due out in 1998).

In honor of the Circle of Avonleigh, another group calling itself the Circle has formed in Ravenloft under the guidance of Alexi Shadowborn. Instead of paladins, this Circle is made up of avengers sworn to oppose the evil of the domain lords and shine the light of truth and justice on the darkness. These Knights of the Shadows meet every year at a circle of standing stones in a grove within Avonleigh (see *Domains of Dread* Secret Societies).

Within Azalin's Black Vault in the Grim Fastness of the now destroyed city of Il Aluk, lies a relic of Morgoroth's reign before he came to Avonleigh. Known as the Headsman's Axe, its whereabouts are now unknown (see *Forged of Darkness*).

Morgoroth

In his human form, which may be the one you use, he is a 13th level Necromancer. No necromantic spell can function in his land unless he wishes it to. His stats are Str:12 dex:15 con:16 Int:19 wis:16 Cha:17. He has 50 hp and a magic resistance of 50%. He can cast any necromantic spell in just one segment. All other spells he casts are half there normal casting time. He can also summon spirits most of these spirits will be harmless but, 20% of them will have the powers of shadows. He can do this summoning once a day. With 4d4 spirits arriving. In the final encounter of the game he was able to summon much more than this. With all of them being more dangerous forms of undead. I believe this was done to make the fight more interesting.

He is clean shaven and looks to be in his forties. He has a commanding presence (Cha 17).

In the game the players try to put the mirror back together. If they do they release Morgoroth but, he is still tied to the mirror. There for, shattering it again will return him to his earlier state. Until he is freed by the PCs no one can go into the bell tower where Aurora sleeps. Morgoroth still loves Aurora and he seems to mourn the death of his friend Ferren. In his first form he can do just about anything the DM finds creepy. He is after all the house and there for has much control over it. His power over mirrors is most prominent. He can make anything appear in them he wants.

Dreamweaver Kitsune of the Fifth Tail

SHARGOBAR

By Jack the Reaper

The Land:

Shargobar is a drown city, in the cold and dark deeps of the Sea of Sorrows. The city was once marvelous, as can be seen from the remains of the architecture, statuary, and monuments. The style is Greece-like, with marble pillars and delicate statues the like of which can be found on the island of Demise. No doubt that this sprawling metropolis was once the jewel of the cities. But its beauty has been forgotten along with its former name: Algae cover the crumbling stones, ship-wrecks rot in the parks, and skeletons adorn the roofs and the streets. And now the only denizens to be found there are not the proud and happy humans who must have lived there in the past; Now the only residents are the horrors of the deep, the shark people, the sailor's bane - the sahuagins.

Status:

The domain is considered a core domain, like the other islands in the Sea of Sorrows, though it is under the surface of it.

Cultural Level:

The architecture is classical, but the sahuagins' level is about stone age.

The Folk:

About 300 sahuagins live in this ruined city, with their sharks, sea zombies and some other horrors. They are like the sahuagins of other worlds (see the Monstrous Compendium), in both appearance and behavior: they kill for pleasure, sink ships, and raid on coastal villages. They have special air-pockets in Shargobar, in which they keep air-breathing prisoners to be tortured, eaten, or sacrificed.

Strangely enough, the sahuagins of Shargobar do not worship the shark-devil which is being worshiped by sahuagins in other worlds. While they still hold sharks in great respect, and use them for mounts and guards, they now seem to worship a man-like god, whose statue looms in the center of the town. This statue looks like a muscular, bearded man, who holds a golden trident in his hand. They call this god Nimrod, and how did they come to worship him, is unknown.

The Law:

The sahuagins of Shargobar have no king; Instead, the high priestess of Nimrod is the ruler of the city. The sahuagins believe that she is the voice of Nimrod, and obey her every whim. The other priestesses enforce her rules, and she has a group of wereshark-sahuagins as her entourage and body-guards. She lives in a temple-palace, near the great statue in the city's square.

Personalities of Note:

There are no personalities of note in Shargobar, except for the high priestess. "Visitors" to the domain will probably not like to meet her, however.

Native PCs:

As only sahuagins infest shargobar, no player characters can originate in this domain.

Encounters:

Besides the sahuagins, visitors are most likely to encounter other kinds of sea monsters too; Sharks, giant squids and octopi, sea zombies, lacedons, scrugs, and other beasts.

Nimrod
(Darklord of Shargobar)

Armor Class:	-3	Str	25
Movement:	Nil / 8 (see below)	Dex	10
Level/Hit Dice:	12	Con	25
Hit Points:	100	Int	12
THAC0:	8	Wis	15
No. of Attacks:	1	Cha	10
Damage/Attack:	3d6+5		
Special Attacks:	Spells		
Special Defenses:	See bellow		
Magic Resistance:	Special		

Background:

Many decades ago, there was a beautiful city, built on an island in the ocean of an unknown world. The city, whose name is long forgotten, was said to be blessed by the gods themselves. Its buildings of marble and temples of gold, its all kinds of art, and its high cultural level were famous all over the world, and visitors from all the lands came to view its glory. The kings of the city-island were good and just people, and also acted as priests of the gods. They ruled their realm with a benevolent hand, and the people thrived under the bless of the gods bestowed by them.

But from the long line of the kings finally came a black ship. Nimrod Ar-Zahav, who aspired for more than just authority, had proven to be the downfall of the beautiful city.

At first, Nimrod was a fair king like his predecessors. But in his middle years, when gray had started to spread in his beard and each morning seemed to be colder, Nimrod found himself terribly afraid from the possibility of dying. The greatest healers of the realm could do nothing to stop the hand of time. The greatest wizards couldn't save him from the scythe of Death. In despair, Nimrod finally came to this sollution: Gods were immortal. If he could become a god, he will be immortal too. He believed that, if he will be worshiped like a god, he would really become one.

With the help of his advisors, Nimrod first installed minor changes in the prayers and rituals carried by the folks, slowly insinuating that the king is a divine being, the equal of the gods. Then the king-worshipping gradually became more pronounced, while the other gods were pushed aside.

Not too many years passed before the king declared himself as the most superior god, claiming that all the other gods were nothing but his servants. But yet Nimrod was not a god, even though

he came to believe it himself, in his madness. A different form of rituals had to be performed, then. And the stench of burnt human sacrifices started to fill the temples, the victims slaughtered by the fanatic priests of the "god-king". The denizens were divided into two groups: The heretics and the believers, with the former becoming an outlawed minority, hunted and being sacrificed by the priests.

The once proud city became a corrupted place of blasphemous horror. The gods weren't going to ignore this situation, and sent dire omens to the city. A huge eagle-like cloud covered the sky, hiding the sun, the sea roared ominously, and smoke started to rise from the top of the island's highest mountain, the sacred Melentar. Yet Nimrod ignored the omens, now whole-heartedly believing that he was indeed the highest god. And his worshipping took fouler and fouler forms. And then, the gods reacted. Flames and burning stones bursted from Melentar, tremors shook the island to its foundations, and the sea rised with gigantic waves, to cover the blaspheming land. The city which was once beloved of the gods, sank in the sea, never to be seen again.

Nimrod saw all of it. Mad beyond hope, he laughed as the sea covered his kingdom, and cursed the gods until his lungs were filled with water, claiming that they are powerless to destroy him. Then he disappeared along with his realm under the waves of the ocean.

No trace of the drowned city has ever been found in the following centuries by the brave explorers of this world, and the tale is often considered nothing more than a legend. But the city still exist, now hidden by the currents of Ravenloft's Sea of Sorrows. Even more terrifying, Nimrod himself is still alive, and now he is the darklord of the domain, which is called Shargobar by its sahuagin denizens.

Appearance:

Nimrod looks like a powerfull and muscular man, with flowing beard and hair. His face are always contorted in a mask of inhumane rage and hatred. He dons a golden crown on his head and holds a gold trident in his right hand. He is about 6 meters tall.

The Dark Powers granted Nimrod his desire: He is no longer aging, and he would never die. He has now tremendous power and a whole city of faithful sahuagins to worship him. However, Nimrod is not at all satisfied from his current condition, which is quite understandable: The Dark Powers transformed Nimrod into a marble statue.

Trapped in a body of stone, Nimrod can't move even his little finger, doomed to stand motionless and to lament inside this shell for all eternity.

His white marble body is now covered with green moss and algae, but is still an impressive and awesome sight. He stands in the city square, and rituals are frequently being carried for him by the sahuagins. Nimrod greatest desire now is to be released from the statue shape, or at least to be able to move again.

Combat:

Though he can't move, Nimrod can cast all the spells from the following spheres at will, by thought only: Animals, Elemental Water and Air, Summoning, Weather, Sun (reversed only), and Divination. All of them function as if casted by a 20th level priest.

Nimrod can speak telepathically to the high priestess sahuagin. It is unknown if he can communicate also with other sahuagins; so far he didn't, but perhaps he just don't want to. He is able to communicate with humans too, but this kind of contact requires them to make a madness check with -4 penalty.

Nimrod's stone body is invulnerable to any kind of attack, and even spells such as stone shape or transmute stone into mud won't affect him. He has 100% magic resistance.

Nimrod might be able to move for short periods of time: all that has to be done is to remove the gold crown from his head. If that happens, Nimrod will still be a statue, but he would be able to move normally. When mobile, he can attack with his trident, inflicting 3d6+5 points of damage, but has only 50% magic resistance and can be harmed by stone-affecting spells.

However, a part of Nimrod's curse is that he will always try to prevent the crown from being removed, attacking with spells and summoning his servants to protect it. Even if the crown has been removed, Nimrod will do all in his force to get it back and put it again on his head. That will re-petrify him and he knows that, but he has no other choice.

In fact, if his crown is removed, he's able to walk again, BUT he's destined to be corroded by the water pressure and currents if he doesn't don his crown again (and wearing it obviously means returning immobile). So, for each minute he spends without his crown he loses 1 HP and if he reaches 0 HP.. he turns into a human, retaining his former old body! And this means he begins aging again and above all he can die (he's underwater without the ability to breathe water!). Nimrod doesn't know this: he only knows (because he experienced it once) that without the crown he can move but will eventually dissolve.

Also, Nimrod probably walks the sea once in a while: he simply orders the priestess to take off his crown and goes about his kingdom to observe what it has become now, a sunken ruin full of monsters (another bad curse for his ego!). Once he dons the crown again his wounds heals at the rate of 1 HP/minute.

Closing the Borders:

When Nimrod wants to seal the borders, the city is surrounded by a gigantic whirlpool. Anyone who tries to get through it will suffer damage and finally will be thrown into Shargobar again, dead or alive.

Current Sketch:

Nimrod tries to find a way to get permanently freed from his stone body. Now he believes that if he's worshipped enough, he will be able to become mobile. The sahuagins carry bloody rituals for him, raiding coastal villages and attacking ships by his name, but so far it didn't help.

Many legends has it that one day, when the stars will be right, the whole city of Shargobar will re-surface from the depths of the sea. This ascension is considered a bad omen, heralding a time of evil and darkness.

Using Shargobar:

Obviously the PCs will have to go underwater in order to interact with the sahuagins and discover Nimrod's curse or explore Shargobar. The main problem here will be providing the party with means of surviving underwater. The most effective and simple is to give the PCs some Potions of Water Breathing, but the DM should come up with a good explanation (maybe they are on a ship transporting a load of this kind of potions to some wizard in Darkon or another island of terror). Another way is to have the party wizard know this same spell and cast it on the other members of the party before it's too late. The problem with this scenario is that the mage won't probably have enough Water Breathing spells for all the party...

A third solution is to have some of the ruins of Shargobar holding air bubbles big enough to support the party while they hide there.

The final way of letting the PCs interact with Shargobar is to bend the rules a bit. Simply, imagine that the Sahuagins know how to prepare a certain Breathe Water potion extracted from special fishes they give to their prisoners. The potion lasts only some hours (which is good for the shauagin since they will usually sacrifice the prisoners alive in a matter of hours), so the PCs are forced to find their way out of the prison and after that out of the shauagins' realm BEFORE they run out of air (alternatively they could try to "persuade" some sauaghin to give them another potion...).

Jack the Reaper

SITHICUS FLESHED OUT

by J.W. Mangrum

Foreword

Everything I say after this is a mixture of what has been produced in TSR products (the basic set, *Knight of the Black Rose*, *When Black Roses Bloom*, and a short story in *Tales of Ravenloft*, "The Rigor of the Game") and my own extrapolations from that material.

General Overview

Soth's domain is called Sithicus: in the local tongue, this name translates as "land of spectres". Sithicus is located in the SW corner of the Core, and alone among all the domains, its population is mainly demihuman. To be specific, elven.

These elves show the same superstitious racism toward humans that humans elsewhere in the lands of mist show demihumans; the Sithican elves rationalize the treatment they receive elsewhere to justify their own coldly hostile attitudes, and why most of them do not leave Sithicus, despite that staying is terribly unpleasant for them.

Lord Loren Soth considers his past very important; in a fairly masochistic manner, he emotionally feeds off of hearing the tale of his own downfall told to him. Soth also considers himself to be the master of his own destiny; he takes full credit, and full blame, for everything he does. Part of Soth's curse in Sithicus is that the land is slightly skewed; elements of his past are presented before him, but they are always a wee bit wrong. What always seems to be skewed is Soth's image in the eyes of the Sithicans; it infuriates Soth to hear his past told incorrectly.

Basically, Sithicus could be seen as a warped version of Ansalon, much in the same way Forlorn is a warped version of Scotland. Sithicus is heavily forested, and the sun struggles to break through the evergreen canopy. The soil is rocky and mossy; I picture the Sithican woods as a shadowy play of greys and dark greens. A wide variety of serpents, venomous and otherwise, can be found coiled under Sithicus' boulders.

Over the course of several months in 741, Sithicus nearly collapsed as Soth lost interest in his domain (see *When Black Roses Bloom* adventure). In September of that year (the Sithicans use the Solamnic calendar, however), the problem was resolved. Since that time, Soth's handful of servants have been searching the domain for -something-, although few are those who learn what this -something- is and survive to spread the tale.

Many people believe that Sithicus has no moon. In truth, it does, but that moon is Nuitari, one of the three moons which orbited Krynn. Briefly, Nuitari is both a black moon (thus nearly invisible) and (as some see it) the god of evil magic; as it waxes and wanes (over the course of an 8-day cycle) it affects the spell-casting power of any mages in Sithicus.

Inhabitants of Sithicus

Elves

The Sithican elves resemble the Silvanesti elves of Ansalon, both in appearance, attitudes, and culture. In fact, they claim to have originally come from Krynn, although were another Krynnish traveler to encounter the Sithicans, he would discover that just about everything the Sithicans say about themselves and their former homeland is wrong.

The elves of Sithicus call themselves the "Kaelinosti", which they claim means "people of the dawn". Those familiar with the elven tongues of Ansalon claim the actual translation is closer to "people of twilight."

Elves from Krynn quickly detect that the Sithican dialect is a strange, pidgin cross between the Silvanesti and Qualinesti languages. The Sithican elves slightly accent their sibilants when they speak. From this, their human neighbors often call them "those hissing elves," also making a subtle connection between the Kaelinosti and the serpents of Sithicus.

They live in a highly regimented society, where the caste into which one is born determines their role in society. There are three elven cities, all built using the same basic architectural principles: wood and stone buildings and walls, forming a series of concentric rings. The further one goes into the city, the higher the social class of the inhabitants. Each city has its own ruler, but all

three rulers must pledge their allegiance to the (thankfully) seldom-seen Lord Soth. The buildings and decorations have a rushed, half-finished look to them; many buildings have been allowed to fall into disrepair. Each city is surrounded by a huge, overgrown wall of thorny brambles, a protective measure, but these brambles aren't tended well and large patches are dead or dying.

The Kaelinosti are a somber people, and their music usually takes the form of woeful dirges. Why are they so distraught? In most worlds, elves have an affinity for nature, and feel an innate connection to the wilderness. In Sithicus, the elves feel no connection to the land, and they sense this loss.

Although the Sithicans' neighbors aren't largely aware of it, there is a second type of elf found in Sithicus: the "Mileinosti", or "feral elves." These elves superficially resemble the Kagonesti ("wild elves") of Krynn. They haunt the hilly woodlands surrounding Mal-Erek, a region called the Steel Hills. These elves are stronger than their kin, have tanned complexions, brown hair, and glittering amber eyes. They are feral killers, but quite cunning; they have avoided Soth's persistent attempts to exterminate them for decades. They use ritual scarring to signify position in the tribe and important deeds. They roam in packs, and although they usually keep to themselves, they won't hesitate to attack anything which intrudes on their territory, be it elf, traveller, or one of Soth's servants. They also engage in cannibalism. In fact, in many ways it seems that all the "humanity" has been stripped away from their souls, leaving nothing but highly intelligent, dangerous predators.

Soth's Servants

Soth does not have many servants. The most notable is Azrael, Soth's brutal senechal, the only dwarf in the land. There are few Sithicans who wouldn't like to see Azrael's head on a pike, but they know to harm Azrael is to bring down Soth's wrath, and few doubt that Soth would hesitate to destroy one elven city as a lesson in obedience to the other two. Azrael might be as fearsome as he is because he is Soth's only -willing- servant.

In NE Sithicus, more than a day's hike from Har-Thelen, "live" Soth's other servants, the kender. These kender are known as deeply unnatural creatures; native Sithicans can sense their presence, and do well to avoid them.

Vistani

Soth also keeps a small tribe of Vistani captive in his realm; using sentinel bats to keep track of them, these Vistani ("the Wanderers") are allowed to roam Sithicus, but kept from crossing its borders.

Other folk of note

Sithicus is known for its banshees, elven spirits who roam the Sithican night. A chorus of these spirits sing Soth's history to him every night. Unlike on Krynn, he has no choice in the matter, and the banshees also always get the important facts wrong.

There are also rumors that Soth's lost love, a human known as "the Blue Lady", roams the domain as well. The Sithicans claim that Soth first found himself in Sithicus after following the Blue Lady into the mists. The rumors of the Lady have become more common in the last few years (after the near-collapse), although no sane Sithican would ever admit to having seen her; such tales bring Soth's attention.

Somewhere in Sithicus is an order of the Guardians, who call themselves the *Keepers of the Coil*. They watch over a mechanical serpent, one which apparently can be used as a frighteningly dedicated assassin. This order is small, and its main defense is keeping its location (and existence) well away from common knowledge. It is rumored that the Guardians first set up shop in Sithicus after taking the Shadow Serpent (as they call the artifact) from a decimated party who had attempted (unsuccessfully) to use it against Soth himself.

Soth, Darklord of Sithicus

Lord Soth himself is seldom seen, usually keeping to his wretched keep, Nedragaard. (On Krynn, Soth's home was Dargaard Keep; his home in Sithicus is an imperfect copy of that structure, so he has named it thus. In Solamnic, "Nedragaard" means "not Dargaard".

Soth is typically thought of as a "black knight", an evil human warrior who has brought a cursed existence down upon himself thanks to his trafficking with evil forces. This isn't entirely correct. If people aren't sick of this info already, maybe sometime I could give a brief history of Soth, the Cataclysm, the War of the Lance, and Krynn, -as the Kaelinosti tell it.

John W. Mangrum

SOLANICA

By C. Phipps

Prologue

The adventurers smiled as they drove the stake into the vampire Kovalis' heart as he somehow (through magic no doubt) spoke in their minds:

"I will give you a means to grant you every wish should you not destroy me: but beware it shall attempt to pervert your every desire!" The warrior Christos walked over to his laboratory and picked up a small stone statue, an imp by appearance.

"Yes.. wish on it..." Kovalis said. The fighter turned to his friends and ordered them not to finish him off "The stake will bind him forever. This is a much better curse for that creature!"

Placing his hand on the Wishing Imp he began to murmur: "Imp, I wish...." he thought to word this carefully "TAKE US TO A REALM OF BEAUTY AND PLEASURE FROM THIS REALM'S EVIL!" and in a flash of light they were gone. Though now incapacitated and unable to move, Kovalis smiled in the darkness of his crypt..

The party appeared in the center of a beautiful sun bright forest. For the first time since they had arrived in that accursed land the feeling of overwhelming evil was gone from their bones and they stood in a place more beautiful than any of their homelands combined.

"It worked! We are finally gone from the Dark Dimension!" Roland the elderly wizard of the troop said as they shouted and danced for joy. But they suddenly stopped as Roland fell down to the ground dead with an arrow in his back.

"Wonderful shot, Captain. The trespassers shall learn to respect my authority." The feeling of overwhelming dread returned when the party looked around to see a fabulously dressed man and a large amount of soldiers beside him on horseback.

"Destroy them. I have had enough looters of my property in the past few years to serve a lifetime." The adventurers drew their weapons vainly as the warriors descended on them, the Prince casting illusions which transformed their weapons into snakes and made them strike each other as often as their foes. The Prince finished watching and then proceeded to ride back to his home.

Next to the corpses, the [Wishing Imp](#) smiled at its grisly deed.

The Land:

This free floating Island of terror is at first glance Ravenloft's earthly Paradise. Covered in beautiful fields of flowers and forests of infinite majesty, the sun seems to shine two thirds of the time.

The few mountains are snowcapped and all the weather is fair save a few summer showers. In the center of a lake in the middle of the Domain is the giant city-state named Solanica. The city is a place filled with marble buildings and giant homes with gold often used to bedeck even the homes of the common people.

Gardens are a common occurrence, along with parks filled with gentle animals of all types and shapes.

Cultural Level:

Classical ([Prince Cyrus](#) comes from a Medieval world)

The Folk:

Solanicans are a fair skinned carefree lot. All people seem to be of exceptional physical beauty and speak a dialect of Elvish origin, dressing in the finest clothes and living in what could be defined palaces by most Ravelofts peoples standards. The wealth of the people is clearly evident in all things and even the commoners eat on gold dishes.

The people seem to do for all intents and purposes absolutely no work, keeping lithe only by regular athletic contests to which all citizens and foreigners are invited to participate. These events are the main form of entertainment and great prizes are given to the victors.

How people provide for themselves is a fact that may be a mystery to most outsiders, and indeed to most commoners. In fact, traders brought to Solanica by the mists after hearing of the "Golden city" supply the population with most of their goods and food: in exchange the people trade vast wealth for "exotic" items, borrowing from friends when they run out. These spendthrift ways are eventually going to destroy them as Prince Cyrus knows (and has begun a thriving slave trade to try and offset the loss and gain actual workers).

The people are also exceedingly debauched to say the least. With loose morals supported by an odd religious establishment (there are no official religions but cults to gods of wine and love are most frequent).

Native PCs:

Solanican Player characters can be of any player character class except Thieves (which do not exist here for the need of theft has never occurred to the spend minded people). Wizards are all Illusionists as that is the only magic known to them (there was none until Cyrus came, if there had been a land...). Clerics must be of a love or pleasure supporting deity, (though it should be noted quite a few of the cults are shams), Bacchus and Venus most common. Characters also suffer a -1 to Constitution due to lack of stress. They do however gain a bonus +1 to Charisma due to the peoples excessive social lifestyle.

Personalities of Note:

Miranda is the second most powerful figure in Solanica as she is leader of the largest cult, worshipping a goddess called "The Maiden of Love" and has additional power as Prince Cyrus' mistress (unknown to all, the Maiden of Love is a myth made up by Miranda who is a Succubus in disguise). Also prominent is the Dwarf Ironbones, a warrior from Krynn leading the last rebellion against Cyrus and repelled by the Solanicans.

The Law:

Prince Cyrus is recognized as absolute tyrant by the people of Solanica. His harsh laws (death for theft and greater, maiming for all other offenses) enforced by foreign mercenaries swayed by promises of wealth and privilege here. These harsh laws are not fully enforced here as the guards are heavily bribed into avoiding "misunderstandings" in the first part of their stay; eventually they grow as decadent as the population and ignore infractions as much as they do.

Anyone who dare preach against the Cities' lifestyle is considered heretic and is likely to be stoned or at the very least exiled by an angry mob.

Closing the Borders:

Whenever Prince Cyrus desires to close the borders of Solanica, a mystical aura sets over the edges of the domain and when travellers approach it they are possessed by the desire to remain in Solanica and will find some reason to stay. This is a very dangerous power as over fourteen rebellions have occurred against the Darklord for travellers finding their reason to stay in overthrowing the tyrannical lord.

Encounters:

Undead and unintelligent monsters are totally unknown in Solanica (save a few vampires which have journeyed here most find it unappealing however due to the excessive amount of sun). The forests however are filled with Satyrs, Nymphs, and even a few conclaves of Elves who long ago journeyed from Sithicus and have become as decadent as the humans living here. Also in the darker places of the forest are rebels who, having been informed or having foreseen the danger posed by the cities wicked ways, have vowed to overthrow and destroy what they perceive as its cause: Prince Cyrus.

Prince Cyrus (Darklord of Solanica)

8th level Human Illusionist

Lord of Solanica

Armor Class: 10

Movement: 12

Level/Hit dice: 8

Hit points: 20

Thaco: 19

No. of Attacks: 1

Damage/Attacks: By weapon

Special Attacks: Spells

Special Defenses: Spells

Magic resistance: Nil

STR: 15

DEX: 13

CON: 12

INT: 16

WIS: 15

CHR: 16

Prince Cyrus is a handsome man with short blonde hair and is always dressed since his elevation to Lord in the finest and most comfortable robes and silk slippers. His body and demeanor still bear the look of a man devoted to work and war but is slowly beginning to show traces of his pampered lifestyle.

Background:

Prince Cyrus was born on an yet unknown Prime material world, the only son of a foppish king who had driven up incredible debts paying for his lavish lifestyle and had more or ignored the matters of state, contently believing he had no real need to.

When he was five years old he heard one of the palace servants say this "That great rewards would come to those who worked hard and long for it but those who received all that they had

freely would lose it." this was a piece of profound wisdom to the young lad for it certainly applied even to his young mind for he had often heard his fathers counselors complaining and yelling about him when he wasnt around.

When he was seven this came to a head, a rebellion led by the nobility broke out and overthrew the King, slaying him and all of his elder sons. The leader of the rebellion, a kindly old paladin, spared Cyrus's life because of his age and later gave him minor lands and title to ease his troubled conscience as he assumed the crown of Cyrus's family.

Cyrus, a mere child seeing his Father's defeat, vowed he would not be like him and that he would follow the servants' advice, spending all of his time and labor in regaining his crown and punishing those who had wronged his family's honor, enjoying the spoils of victory only after he had earned it.

Working day and night for over a dozen years, studying magical illusions to aid in his work, he accumulated a fortune in his province and formulated a perfect plan. The summer of his nineteenth birthday, Cyrus' assassins slew the majority of the nobles who had rebelled against his family, in their beds, just as an army of mercenaries in the young prince's employ poured over into the Kingdom.

In the face of the horrific war that would result and vastly losing wealth and resources to the man he knew in his heart was the "rightful" king, the Paladin signed him over his own sons as his heir apparent asking only that Cyrus turned his army back. The Prince agreed and asked them to come to a celebratory banquet. There Prince Cyrus had the Paladin, his family, and the remainder of his supporters poisoned.

Content now to rule and to enjoy his life, he rode back to his family's ancestral castle to assume the rulership of the land. But while he was riding in the forest, he saw a strange mist growing around him, and when he emerged he was in front of an estate ten times as luxurious and in the center of a realm which was far richer than his own. He had become Darklord of Solanica.

Current Sketch:

Prince Cyrus is absolute ruler of the Island of Terror of Solanica. A land far more beautiful and prosperous than the one he had fought decades to acquire. As a lord he has begun to enjoy all the benefits and luxuries enabled to one of his status, far more so than even his father. However the very proverb that drove him to reconquer his father's kingdom is now haunting him. In his mind he has done absolutely nothing to deserve such wealth and privilege and although he enjoys it as well as he can it is ash in his mouth because he "knows" it will eventually come crashing down on him. Worst still are that his people are the same way caring nothing for work and freely believing that the island shall always be a paradise. All attempts to *motivate* them into productive citizens have failed miserably and even his magic is no solace to him now for he cannot even work to improve THAT as it comes freely to him without need of study. He is ironically in his mind a pretender to a throne not his. Also, as a result of his curse his palace is regularly visited by a ever growing number of what appear to be finely dressed people of the domain. They speak and give invaluable information on the rebellions before leaving. Only Prince Cyrus truly sees them for what they are, the tormented and decayed spirits of those he has slain whose only crime has been trying to improve a society he himself loathes. Believing

only some great work could have caused this, he has begun an active (and fruitless) pogrom for a powerful priest or wizard who summons these figures (he most fears the ghost of the paladine king).

Combat:

Prince Cyrus relies on a few hired foreigners he has acquired through the years (he does not trust "the decadent mass") for his protection and avoids combat using elaborate methods, including booby traps (in his palace), carefully cast spells and secret passages. He also uses magic freely for as Darklord he now possesses a unique gift: he no longer forgets spells when he casts them and can cast them over and over if need be. Indeed if he has time to prepare before being attacked, he will cast so many illusions the PCs may end up fighting an army of lies! Also for some reason he can use a bow and arrow without penalty possessing a magical +3 and using it as a fighter of the same level as his own.

Charles Phipps

St. ARIEL'S CATHEDRAL

By B. Cole

History:

St. Ariel's Cathedral is over a hundred years old and was built to honor the saint, Ariel. At the age of sixteen she led a small band including herself and six others against an army of darkness. The unit battled its way through the enemy ranks, and to the fort in which a very powerful Plague Paladin controlled the army. By the time St. Ariel had made it to her rival, all her allies had been slayed, and with her last breath, she sacrificed her life to put down the menace.

The Land:

St. Ariel's Cathedral is not exactly a "land". It is actually a pocket domain, a single building built to honor St. Ariel and praise Poepea (Po - pee - a), goddess of purity. The temple was erected on a planet far away, that had longed since washed away sins from its earth, or so it was believed. However, not longer than three months ago the cathedral was taken from its home plane and placed in Falkovnia, thought to be the work of a very powerful incubus.

From the outside, the temple has completely unscathed off-white walls. These walls are made of a stone found very rarely in its home plane, and not anywhere else in the Domain of Dread. Carved into the stone are pictures of storm clouds, with angels plummeting from the dark skies. The stained glass windows are each decorated with one of the comrades of St. Ariel's death throws. Most notable, by those who witnessed the cathedral's sudden shift of location, is that the ornate marble statue of St. Ariel holding her sword of light and fire, which used to be found standing over the main doors into the cathedral, is missing.

Inside large pillars supporting the ceilings twists and turn on nights that the incubus is active, though normally and always during the day, they are not especially noticeable. Odd art work also adorns the more private chambers of the cathedral, and a few secret passageways twist and turn to different private chambers in the building.

Cultural Level:

Medieval.

The Folk:

The priests and priestesses that live within the cathedral are a suspicious lot due to the recent activities. Though they still remain hopeful, they have taken up blessing with holy water every person who enters the church. By doing this they hope to ward off the evil that has recently been haunting their place of worship.

The Law:

There are no set of laws specific to the cathedral, and generally the laws of Falkovnia are practiced. However, while inside this former holy place, it is encouraged that you keep your thoughts, words, and actions pure.

Native Player Characters:

Player character's from St. Ariel's Cathedral will all be priests of the goddess Poepea. Major access to the spheres: All, Healing, Protection, and Divination. Minor Access to the spheres, Creation, Gaurdian, and Law. They may be of human, half-elf, or halfling stock. Due to the pampered life they have lived inside the church they suffer a -2 to fear checks, though those around them are inspired by the priests strict morale codes and gain a +1. All those priests who came with the church from its previous location receive a +3 vs. possession. The weapon/armor restrictions of clerics are limited only to bludgeoning weapons, and they can wear only light armor (scale maximum) and use no shield. Also Celibacy/chastity is a vow all the priests have to make (which makes Father Icharus all the more despicable for his actions –see below). The symbol of the deity is a pentagram surrounded by three uneven starbursts (as the pin).

Personalities of Note:

Father Icharus Hiedler gained popularity after recuperating from an incubus attack. While under the demonic influence he raped, then killed the nun Maria Po, and suffered a near fatal dagger wound down his chest and torso. Though most view him as an ideal priest for his ability to fight back against the demon which possessed him, a few view him with suspicion.

Carmen Po, Maria Po's half-sister, is the only member of the church who suspects Icharus himself is behind all the incubus activity. Before the night on which Icharus killed her dear sister, Maria told Carmen of how quire she thought the young man had been acting, and of the odd looks he had been giving her. When Carmen woke up to the news of her half-sister's death, she had already decided that Icharus was to blame. She now hides her suspicion of Father Icharus, trying to get as close to him as possible, waiting for just the right moment. She hopes to subtly seduce Icharus, then slay him, while they lay together.

Encounters:

The recent activity of Father Icharus Hiedler has opened the doorway for many evil spirits of possession. Though none as powerful as he, the demonic forces control weak minded creatures (birds, mice, domestic pets) and sometimes inanimate objects (bed sheets, daggers) but never holy symbols or relics. The chance of these encounters are 5% during the day, and 15% chance at night.

In addition to these many large rats infest the basement of the cathedral, as well as bats who inhabit the bell tower. Both of these creatures have double their normal hit dice, and their normal damage. Chances of encounters of these creatures are 10% during the day, and 50% at night (0% inside the safety of the guests or priests cells).

Father Icharus Hiedler (Darklord of St. Ariel's Cathedral)

7th-Level Incubus Priest, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class:	7	Strength:	9
Movement:	14	Dexterity:	17
Level/Hit Dice:	7	Constitution:	15
Hit Points:	49	Intelligence:	15
THACO:	14	Wisdom:	16

No. of Attacks:	1/1	Charisma:	7*
Special Attacks:	Possession, read emotions, cause emotion: lust		
Special Defenses:	Charm, regains lost hit points through sexual intercourse		
Magic Resistance:	70% resistance to spells specified for humanoids only		

* His low charisma is simply to get across the point that even though the local clergy have been deceived by this man, he is quite disgusting and crude to most visitors.

Appearance:

Icharus is a short man, in his early forties. He has a very demented and unclean air about him, though is trusted by the general populace of the cathedral. Father Icharus has a widow's peak (a widow's peak is when the hair loss begins at the front and center of the hair line), though has shoulder length brown hair. Always dressing in the Poepea robes of a holy man, he may only be distinguished by a pin over his heart. The pin is of a three uneven starbursts surrounding a pentagram.

Background:

Raised in a quaint village, in the thick of thin woods, Icharus Hiedler was a spoiled child. He was the youngest of seven, and the only one remaining in the house. All throughout his life his parents had been weary of the perverse cruelty the boy sometimes displayed. When he became seventeen he gave his parents the first real reason to be cautious of their malignant son. Brutally beating his girlfriend for not displaying enough affection, his parents forced him to join the priesthood of Poepea or be kicked out of the household and never shown hospitality from the village again.

At first he thought perhaps he had been too hard on the girl and actually agreed that learning the teachings of Poepea may be his calling in life. As his training went on however, he became less and less enthusiastic. When his training was finished he decided that joining the church had not been a complete waste, and that he now could use his position to protect himself. Very confident that he could successfully have his way with any priestess or parishioner that entered the cathedral, he began choosing the "lucky ones".

The very first one that caught his eye was the sister of a girl who he was trained with, the first "lucky one" was an older priestess Maria Po. He planned the dark scheme out for about two months, designing an story that would excuse him from his unholy act. Then one late winter night, he stole into Maria Po's cell, by means of secret passages that ran from his cell to hers, and raped her. On completing the despicable act, Icharus was attacked pathetically by Maria Po, but slew her with a steel dagger.

When the morning came, and he was convicted of the heinous crime, he immediately admitted to it, claiming that he had been possessed by an incubus. Trying to resist and to stop the hellish creature, he provoked Maria's attacks, for he was convinced that death was better than a life poisoned by the incubus' influx. Unfortunately, Maria perished under the incubus' blows, but her sacrifice served to free him of the creature. Astonished priests immediately awarded him with an medal of bravery for living through the terrible experience, celebrating grand funerals for the martyrdom of Maria Po. From that moment, Father Icharus was revered as a pious man who had been tested by the goddess, and who'd passed that test. However, when priests sent word to the

village of the recent events, they found they were no longer surrounded by the innocent forests of old, but by a forest filled with dark and menacing creatures.

Current Sketch:

Icharus now keeps to himself, and upholds only the most strict discipline and morales. After recent changes, he has found that he has the abilities of an incubus, and so never commits his foul acts in his form, but in the form of others. He maintains his recently gained status by constantly studying his holy text, and always quoting from it.

Closing the Borders:

If Icharus deems to close his borders the chathedral doors shut and lock. Should anyone try to enter during this time, they will be unable to. Anyone trying to exit will find that even if they break down the doors, or break open a window, hordes of bats and rats will swarm into the building, possibly drowning the escapee. The only restriction Father Icharus has, is that the borders may not be closed on Sunday mornings.

Combat:

Though he will always try to avoid combat, Icharus will attack with a steel dagger if backed into a corner. The medal he recieved from the church is magical, and allows him a +2 to emotion inducing spells. Should he be weakened to the near point of death, he will immediately possess a priest and go about raping the nearest preistess to gain back hit points. After he has regained hit points he will return to the exact point he left, so heros still waiting their may fight him again. However, Father Icharus does have a weakness: if the person he is possessing is killed, he is immediately shoved from the body and with no hit points regained, and if attacked while in this befuddled state, he may be killed.

Spell List:

(Note that he no longer gains spells from Poepea, as other priests in the domain do, but from the Dark Powers which have given him more suitable spells)

1st level – Command (2 times/day), Cure Light Wounds, Emotion Read, Know Age;
2nd level – Silence, 15' Radius (2 times/day), Hold Person (2 times/day), Obscurement;
3rd level – Meld Into Stone, Feign Death;
4th level – Mental Domination.

Benjamin Cole

The Twilight Zone

By Stormonu

The Land:

The Twilight Zone is an isle/realm within the Demiplane of Dread, on par with the Nightmare Lands. It can only be reached by entering the mists. Unlike the other realms of Ravenloft, the Twilight Zone doesn't focus on an entrenched Dark Lord. It instead focuses its dangerous attention on those who are drawn to it, whether they are good or evil.

[The Sterling Man](#), a mysterious, well-dressed man, is the Dark Lord of this realm. He can sometimes be seen at the periphery of vision, watching events unfold around the visitors to his realm. None is sure what the Sterling Man's abilities or curse exactly is, though it seems he is forced to bear witness to the horrors of others.

The Twilight Zone, in its natural form, appears as a bleak landscape, lit by the dying fires of the setting sun and the glimmer of stars in the heavens. However, this landscape is rarely ever seen, for it is often cloaked. In its cloaked form, the Twilight Zone can appear as any place on this world - or even take on an alien semblance. The realm always conforms itself to the personal horror of those who are visiting. It may take on the form of a town well known to the visitor, or may appear as a land most inhospitable to the victims.

What goes on in the Twilight Zone? Well, the land takes a slow, cruel bend to shatter the mind of its victims. When first visited, it may seem mundane or plain to ward away suspicions, or force the victim into a defensive state of mind by starting very hostile. As time passes, the Twilight Zone eats away at the sanity of its victim, attempting to force them towards madness and self-destruction. Irony tends to be the rule of the day in the Twilight Zone.

The Twilight Zone captures and holds its victims until either the victim(s) conquer their own horror, or succumb to it.

DM Notes:

Putting this into play can be difficult. Since the Twilight Zone is so mutable, the DM needs to think ahead to what kind of personal horror he can inflict on those who travel there. Here are a couple of examples.

In this first example, the group has just completed an adventure where they slew an infected werewolf that was rampaging through town. As they depart the town, the group happens to be forced into the mists, and emerges in what appears to be the group's hometown. A day after the group settles down and rests, they soon are confronted by a werebeast, which intends to slay the group. Over the course of several more days, the group keeps encountering a lone werebeast, intent on killing the group. The characters are forced to hunt down friends, relatives and well-known members of the community.

Whomever they focus their attention on protecting turns out to be an infected werebeast. The party doesn't know what is going on, and the events will likely drive them to a crusade to find the

truth. In the end, the party discovers THEY are the carriers of the infection and have spreading it to their friends and destroying them. Now that they know who caused it all, how are they going to handle it? And what is the rest of the town going do about the PCs?

In the second example, the Twilight Zone focuses on a single individual's faults. One member of a group, a wizard, has been collecting tomes of dark lore for some time now. Hearing of a rumor of a vast library of such books, the wizard convinces his group to travel into the mists looking for it.

Tumbling out of the mists and into the Twilight Zone, the group does indeed find the library - seemingly forgotten and abandoned in a quiet little town.

The group investigates the library and the wizard finds the books he was looking for - and their guardian as well. The group fights and defeats the guardian. After doing so though, creatures of doom begin to plague the town causing all kind of mayhem. The cause turns out to be that the "guardian" the characters slew was holding the dark creatures back from the quiet town.

Until a new guardian is found - a man of wizardry and knowledge of the dark fiends themselves - the town and lands beyond will be plagued creatures of darkness. Will the wizard be willing to giving up his life to quell the evil? Will it be in time?

As stated before, the Twilight Zone captures and holds its victims until either the victim(s) conquer their own horror, or succumb to it. In the cases above, the lycanthropic victims have several choices, none too pretty. They can submit themselves to the same punishment they dealt their companions, they can flee into the wilderness or they may destroy the village. If the characters make the hard choice and submit themselves to the same punishment they inflicted on their companions, they should be able to escape (appearing in a nearby realm unscathed after they submit to the punishment) from the Twilight Zone. If they took the easy way out (fleeing into the woods or destroying the town), a madness check is required, and the victim(s) are released to the outer world, still infected.

In the case of the wizard, if the wizard accepts his post as guardian and manages to quell the creatures of darkness, he may be released (maybe the old guardian comes back). If an "easy way out" is taken, such as pressing someone else into the role of guardian or fleeing the town altogether, a madness check is required, and the consequences of the PCs actions stick, meaning creatures may spread to formerly safe havens, relentlessly tracking the PCs.

The Sterling Man **(Darklord of the Twilight Zone)**

0 level human

S12 I15 W13 D12 Co12 Ch15

AC: 9

Hp: 5

THAC0: n/a

Align: N

Att: nil

Description:

The Sterling Man appears as a lightly tanned man in his thirties. He is dressed in somber, formal suits of midnight blue or blacks.

He appears impeccably immaculate, with not a hair out of place, and his steel gray eyes have a way of penetrating into the heart of those he gazes at. The Sterling Man has a quiet voice, though he rarely speaks to anyone. He has been noted at times smoking white cigarettes.

Current Sketch:

Though the ruler of the lands known as the Twilight Zone, the Sterling Man seems detached from his surroundings. He is rarely spotted in his own realm, and when seen, may appear to be part of the surrounding crowd, though his clothing certainly always makes him stand out. If confronted, he seems to be amiable, answering questions somewhat elusively, if at all. His humor is dry, and he has a startling sense of being able to point out the ironies of life, to his own amusement. The Sterling Man never fights, and fades out of existence if attacked. In some cases, attacking the Sterling Man has been known to break the spell of the Twilight Zone, erasing the landscape and allowing its victims to escape into the mist.

How the Sterling Man came to be is unknown. There is very little information about him, and he rarely gives insight to his true identity or purpose. It is known that the Sterling Man once had a family and lost a child to a tragic accident, but little more is known. Some have speculated that the Sterling Man came from Lamordia, and may have been a doctor or playwright in that place.

Stormonu

VALACHAN: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

By Dhul Gan

The Law

Baron Von Kharkov rules the land with an iron claw. His word is law. His edicts are handed out by the Magistrates, the three rulers of the cities, who are so thoroughly dominated by Urik's will that they unthinkingly carry out mass killings and public executions whenever the Baron wills it to be. The executioners even have their own guild in Valachan.

These mass killings are held whenever something disrupts the Barons "tranquillity" so that those who "wronged" the Baron turn themselves in for fear of more innocent lives being lost. A constant witch hunt is in effect so all mages that show their "witchcraft" are executed in the town squares. The killings are usually hangings but for the mages and peoples who have earned the dark lord's wrath Public Torture is used.

The Land

"Valachan" translates into "the panther's hunting ground". Valachan's three major cities (Helbenik, Rotwald, and Ungrad) are all built in a classic medieval style. The Magistrates live in large manors in the city center, which is directly in the center of town square, where most merchants have their shops, guilds have their halls, rich make their homes, and the militia have their headquarters\jail (mostly jail). Ungrad is the only non walled city, as the other two are trade towns. In Helbenik, there is a large literacy spike as the first major university has opened. In Rotwald, elven refugees who have gathered enough willpower to flee from sithicus have been entering the city. The government lets in these refugees freely, though the locals have been giving the elves a hard time (pointy eared freaks!). And in poor forgotten Ungrad nothing seems to ever happen, except that there is an underground cult who wish to throw off the Baron.

In the wild there is mostly panther packed canyons and boar filled forests, with a small hamlet here and there. Yet near the fork in the Arden river near Helbenik, an orcish tribe that once lived

in Mordent has taken up residence in the canyons. Only the Dark Powers know what they were fleeing from.

The Religion

The state religion is the worship of the god of loyalty, Yutow the Peacebringer. Yutow's theology is based on obeying the law and the master of the land, keeping the peace, and bringing in a plentiful harvest. [Probably LN.] Baron von Kharkov finds this theology useful in controlling the populace, so he does not disturb the church. Note, however, that he keeps tight controls on the church: the temple in Habelnik is probably the only one (although there may be another in Rotwald), and if the priest rises above 3rd level he succumbs to "a nasty accident."

The People

Most of the people of Valachan are dark skinned humans, with the exceptions of the relatively small numbers of orcs and the the Kaelinosti elves from Sithicus.

The city of Helbenik is the most advanced in Valachan due to the trade with Mordent. Helbenik has the best scholars and blacksmiths, and, for some reason, gets hit with White Fever the most. White Fever is (in the eyes of the Valachanese physicians) a malingering virus that cause blood to be evaporated from within the body, cause terrible weakness, and is transmitted by the bite of an unspecified insect.

The people despise the baron and find little solace in science and religion. They would rebell but lack the strength of will, and the strength of arms. Yet one group living in Ungrad thinks they have a chance of starting a rebellion. They know that Kharkov is a vampire. They know that he is vulnerable to the powers of the Cat of Felkovic and they plan to use this artifact to kill Kharkov. (Unfortunately, they don't know much about the Dark Powers or Darklords.) They are called the Cult of the Cat and they are led by a group of mages headed by Cassandra Felkovich IV.

DhulGan

VERBREK DETAILED

by J.W. Mangrum

General Overview

Verbrek has a quite a number of tiny little hamlets, and the forests in Verbrek are thick and virgin wood, with many ancient trees with massive trunks. The woods press in on the tiny settlements, and are thick with all manner of wildlife (most of which is harmless). There's no real government of any sort; each human settlement is small enough to handle problems on a case-by-case basis. Werewolf villages are much the same, but there will typically be one man, woman, or couple who are nominally in charge (the alphas). Of course, Alfred Timothy is the true Alpha of the pack as a whole.

The People

The inhabitants, both human and werewolf, are simple folk. Literacy is uncommon. Most of the humans are craftsman who sell their wares to the boatmen who sail up and down the Musarde. (Before the GC, they sold their wares to Nathan exclusively.) It isn't as clear what the werewolves do for a living. They don't raise crops, and only a few have livestock of any sort. A few werewolves do learn an honest trade, however, so they can earn some gold for their occasional trips to "the big cities" like Karina.

Although the werewolves of Verbrek don't think twice about hunting any human they find in their woods at night (or in the day, by their mood), they typically don't go after the human inhabitants who live along the river. The werewolves of Verbrek are considered adults only when they have stalked and killed a sentient creature; typically, these young pups go into the neighboring domains to seek their prey. To quote an old rule of the wild, "don't s*** where you eat." The werewolves prefer to cause trouble a little farther away from their lairs.

"Travelers" in Verbrek (anyone the werewolves don't recognize) are at great risk. The werewolves' main "sport" is to capture travelers, take their belongings, and haul them to the circle. The prey is then released with a head start but nothing more than the shirt on his back. If

he reaches the border before the werewolves catch him, he lives. If not, well, it's an image best not lingered on.

The Religion

The werewolves worship Alfred's wolf god, each to his own degree of faith (unlike Zhakata, the wolf god does exist). A small number of shrines to the wolf god are scattered across the domain, deep in the woods. Typically, they are scarecrow-like figures created by mixing human and wolf bones. The werewolves come to these totems to worship and leave sacrifice (generally some poor, mutilated woodland creature).

Some of the humans have come across these totems; some believe them to be the corpses of the "wolves that walk like men." A helpful human would gladly warn of these wolves, coating it with the abundance of folklore the humans have built up around the "shadows of the woods." Any PC with a knowledge in anatomy (perhaps Healing, Veterinary Healing, Animal Lore, etc.) could tell that these figures are artificial creations.

Of course, the most sacred shrine for the werewolves is The Ring, but few humans have ever found these megaliths and lived to tell the tale.

Moonflowers

There are a few legends surrounding the woods of Verbrek, although they aren't often heard. Many surround the flora of the area; the locals have an extensive body of herbal lore. The most interesting of these herbs is a flower which may only exist in legend.

Among a select circle of individuals with certain, specific "interests," the incredibly rare Moonflower is said to be highly prized. These delicate, light blue flowers bloom from spring through fall, but only under the light of the full moon. Each plant has a 50% chance of producing 1D4 blossoms per month.

Something within the flowers inhibits the transformation processes of lycanthropy. If an infected lycanthrope eats a blossom within an hour of his involuntary transformation allows the individual to make a save vs. Polymorph to resist the change.

Consuming 10 blossoms makes the save automatic, and prevents voluntary transformation for 6d4 hours.

Although moonflowers may be cultivated, transplanted plants have a 50% chance of dying within a week. These flowers are known to grow in only one other place in the multiverse: the Principalities of Glantri on the world of Mystara.

Two groups seek these blooms. Obviously, those suffering from the dread disease seek the blooms to control their curse. However, they have a more insidious use. It is said if that the Vistani, who can travel this domain without fear thanks to a promise they extracted from its lord, take ten blossoms, they can mix them into a magical salve. If this salve is rubbed into the flesh of a shapechanger as it lays dying, it will remain in whatever shape it held at the time of death. Wolfweres, especially Harkon Lukas, value this salve for its uses, as his extensive werewolf-skin rug will attest.

Moonflowers are typically only found in the south-west corner of the domain, near the Circle (and the largest concentration of werewolves).

John W. Mangrum

Virisa

By A. Lafond

The Land:

The island of Virisa lies in the Sea of Sorrows, just 30 miles south of Blaustein. Virisa is quite large, spanning roughly 50 miles east to west, and about 40 north to south. There is one large river, named for the island, that extends nearly two-thirds of the way inland, originating on the southwestern shore, winding its way roughly northeast. At the end of the river is a small lake, only 5 miles long and 2 wide. The city of Virisa lies at the shore of the lake where it meets the River Virisa. The town of Telgen lies on the other end of the river, where it opens out into the Sea of Sorrows.

The rest of the island is scattered with various small villages, and contains a lot of farmland and open plains, with only two small forested regions. These are the Forest of Screams, named only recently for the acts Willem has performed there, and the Shifting Woods, so named for the great number of people who've lost their way in this forest, several never returning again.

There are a group of hills, known as the Ducan Hills, in the northeast. An unnamed river originates from these hills, flowing out to the east. Several mining villages lie on this river, along with some farms out beyond the hills. In the southeastern region of the island are the Virisan Plains. These plains are where the various herd animals roam, as well as roughly 500 shepherds who have taken up herds of horses, cows, or sheep. No villages exist here, since the shepherds roam with their herds to new pastures regularly. The villages along the shores of the Sea of Sorrows are fishing villages. Another river flows out of the Sea of Sorrows from the north, flowing inland, along which many more farms are built.

The city of Virisa is a relatively large walled city, with a population of just over 11,000 residents. It is the center of civilization on the island, ruled by the mad Lord Willem Ducas with an iron fist. There is a small port here, where merchant ships from abroad dock, coming upriver from Telgen. The taxes here are fair, and the level of education above average, making it a suitable place for many to live, if one doesn't mind the screams that can be heard from the keep up on the cliff overlooking the city. Two other advantages are that there is much less crime here, as well as the promise from the lord that the people of Virisa will not be harvested for dinner.

Telgen is the only other settlement of any great size on the island of Virisa, having a population of 2,000 citizens. Although not as large as Virisa, it has a larger port, a better economy since all merchants from abroad dock at Telgen, and one does not have to listen to the screams of humans being cooked alive. However, there is more crime here, and this town is not under any form of protection from the lord's cannibalistic practices. Most have just given in to it and counted this possibility as just something that happens, like earthquakes or hurricanes.

Due to the scarcity of forested land, the majority of meat comes from the horses and other plains-dwelling animals on the island, as well as various farm animals. There are many farms dotting the island, from which many of the lord's victims come. The population of the island is divided roughly in half between the towns and the villages, with a total population just a bit over 20,000.

people. With 11,000 between Virisa and Telgen, and about 500 shepherds on the plains, that leaves roughly 9,000 among all the villages. About 1,000 of these are from the fishing villages, 300 from the hunting villages (one by the Shifting Woods, and three by the Forest of Screams), 200 from the mining villages, and the other 7,500 are farmers.

Cultural Level:

Medieval.

The Folk:

The total population of the island remains at just a little over 20,000. The people of Virisa are dark-haired and have darker eye colours. Hair colour ranges from black to (very rarely) a coppery red colour, while eyes tend to be hazel, brown, gray, and the like.

Occasionally, due to mixing with outsiders, a lighter-haired child may be born. Most of the people are well tanned, the farmers moreso than the city dwellers.

The people are divided into several classes. The farmers make up the majority of the lower classes, although the few criminals that manage to survive in Virisa also fall into this category. There are no beggars, for they are quickly rounded up and put in the lord's pens, where all future meals are kept. The shepherds, the fishermen, the miners, the hunters, and the farmers all belong to the lower classes.

The middle classes consist of merchants and other well-to-dos. This class is relatively small, though there are quite a lot of merchants who come in from other lands to trade with the people of Telgen and Virisa. Few merchants from abroad ever learn of the habits of the lord, and those who do learn of this do not live for long. As such, no outsiders are allowed any farther inland than Telgen on the Holy Day. Lord Ducas' personal soldiers make sure of this.

The upper class citizens consist of Lord Ducas, his three sons and his daughter, his personal loyal followers, and his chefs. It has long been known that if you are a good chef, you can make a rich living cooking for the lord. All personal chefs of the lord are granted protection from being eaten themselves, and are paid richly. However, if one ever displeases the lord, they are known to disappear very quickly.

Lastly, there are the Disciples. Dressed in black chain mail armor, white skull-faced helmets, spiked gauntlets, and long, wicked blades, they are an order of warriors devoted to the Lord Willem Ducas. They are of a class all their own, a force of semi-religious soldiers fanatically loyal to the lord, willing to commit even suicide if the lord wills it, trained to believe the lord to be their god. Though the lord had only 100 men in this force when he assumed lordship of Virisa 32 years ago, their numbers have long since grown, for every parent must give up their first-born son to the lord within one year of the child's birth.

In the past 20 years, the lord has expanded this to include daughters as well, for he has learned that, when trained properly, they can be even more ruthless than men. Lord Ducas' army now numbers well over 1000, with about 35% of them women.

Having literally spent their whole lives being trained to be soldiers, they are completely ruthless, cold, unemotional, and fanatically loyal. The perfect soldiers. It is these soldiers who keep the populace in line.

The Law:

Ever since Lord Willem Ducas has assumed lordship of Virisa, the law has changed quite a lot from the way it was when his parents ruled. Captured criminals are no longer kept in dungeons, but are instead put into pens, where they become livestock for the lord and his men. However, there are the luxury suites, that are used for keeping those who are to participate as the hunted for The Great Hunt. Wanting them in prime physical condition, Lord Ducas pampers them, which includes fine living quarters. Of course, they're never allowed anything beyond food and clothing, to prevent them escaping, and are heavily guarded by Willem's top Disciples.

Basically, The Great Hunt has been a tradition for 30 years, only 2 years after the domain was formed. Each year, new guests of honor are found, chosen by the darklord. Though he often chooses months in advance, he sometimes chooses even as close as a couple weeks before the Hunt, and those of his prisoners who have been chosen are never revealed to the people until the day of the hunt. This always is a topic of conversation as the day approaches, as many lay wagers on who, among the prisoners, will be selected to participate. Of course, they never speak too much of it, for strangers may wonder at what they talk about. As far as outsiders ever know, it is an annual tradition where several prisoners are selected to attempt to escape the island. If they escape, they go free, if not, they are executed. Though natives know the truth, outsiders do not. Those who fail become the lord's dinner. And so far, he's had a great feast for 30 years straight. Also, all families must give up their first born child to the lord before they reach a year in age, where they are then trained to become Disciples. They enforce the law with ruthless efficiency, keeping the people in line through fear.

For all purposes, in Virisa the law is Lord Willem Ducas. He can change the law whenever it suits him, and none can stand up to him, keeping him the supreme ruler over Virisa. At present, the lord has made it illegal for weapons to be carried, which makes it easier for his men to sieze others as livestock.

Merchants and visitors from other lands are still allowed their weapons (allowing the Disciples to distinguish them from the citizens), though they must be limited to only one, and that weapon must be peace-bonded. Weapons not able to be peace-bonded must be turned in to the Disciples until they leave, or kept on the ship.

The only priests allowed in Virisa must worship Ducas, and are as loyal to him as the Disciples are. It is illegal to practice sorcery in Virisa without the lord's personal permission.

Native Player Characters:

No player character from Virisa may be priests or wizards, since the priests are thoroughly evil, and the wizards exist only among the lord's personal followers. Fighters are the most common, though it is conceivable for thief characters to exist as well, though they are likely from Telgen, since crime is almost nonexistent in Virisa. Bards also exist among the people, making this a

possibility. Rangers, gypsies, and psionics are all extremely rare on Virisa, though not completely nonexistent.

All PCs native to Virisa automatically pass any horror checks required due to acts of cannibalism. If they must witness events where humans (or demihumans) are devoured by various beasts (ghouls, some werebeasts, etc), they receive a +3 bonus to their horror checks. Additionally, any native PC who has the cooking NWP (or who later learns it) automatically receives a +4 bonus to the proficiency check.

Personalities of Note:

An underground force has begun to form in the town of Telgen, consisting of men and women against Willem's rule. They take great pains to hide their presence from the lord and his Disciples, and try to find ways of usurping Willem's rule and disposing of him. As yet, they have not learned the secret of how to kill him, for they are aware of his ability to regenerate from even the most grievous of injuries. The leader of this force, a woman by the name of Amelia Celane, is a Knight of the Shadows. As yet, Willem is unaware of her presence, for she tends to remain in hiding, so the Disciples have no chance to recognize her.

Encounters:

Plains -- Very likely to run into the shepherds, with their herds.

Sometimes, one may run into a patrol of Disciples, but this is very rare.

Forests -- The Forest of Screams is a normal enough forest, containing various woodland creatures that the hunters of the nearby villages hunt to bring to market. The Shifting Woods generally meets with hostile woodland creatures along the lines of werebeasts, ettercaps, and the like. There are natural creatures here, too.

Sometimes (5%), one may run into a hunting party from the nearby village. These people are the only ones brave enough to face the dangers of the woods. They tend to provide the more exotic meats to the market in Virisa or Telgen.

Hills -- These hills are mostly just low, grassy hills, with a small rocky region towards the center. It is from this central region where the best mining is, thus encounters in this region occur mostly with members of the mining operations in this area.

Lord Willem Ducas (Darklord of Virisa)

10th-Level Human Fighter, Lawful Evil

Armor Class: 4 (9 unarmored)

Movement: 12

Level/Hit Dice: 10

Hit Points: 71

THAC0: 11 (+1 with shortsword, +1 for strength)

No. Of Attacks: 2 (with shortsword)

Damage/Attack: 1d6+3 (swordsword) or by weapon (+1 for strength)

Special Attacks: Specialized in shortsword, single-weapon style specialization (1 slot -- +1 bonus to style)

Special Defenses: Cannot be killed normally (see below)

Magic Resistance: Nil

Str 17; Dex 10; Con 15; Int 17; Wis 8; Cha 16

Appearance:

Willem is a large man, both in height and strength. Although he is an old man at 61 years of age, he still appears to be a young man, appearing to be only 29 years old (*). He stands at 6'5", and weighs in at over 200 pounds. He has dark black hair and steely-gray eyes.

His face is unmarred, having spent his life as a wealthy noble. He keeps his face clean shaven, and his hair is worn in a single ponytail.

Willem is usually not seen wearing any sort of armor, for he often acts the part of a noble, wearing rich clothing in a rather pompous style of dress. However, when he does dress for battle, he wears a suit of chain mail armor and carries a shortsword. The shortsword is sometimes also seen on his belt when he is not dressed for battle, but this is usually only seen at ceremonies where he is making a public appearance.

Background:

Willem was born into a wealthy noble family, who ruled the city of Virisa. The family holdings, a small keep overlooking the city from a short cliff to the north of town, was a large enough place that he could do pretty much whatever he wanted without his family knowing about it. As he grew older, he began to pick on the weaker children, for he was unusually large for his age, and made full use of this advantage. He learned at a young age that size and strength can quite often get you what you wanted, and that others can do very little to stop you. He enjoyed beating up the other children, a fact which made things quite difficult for his parents, who tried to control him, and often chastised him for his behaviour.

By the age of 14, he had learned to keep things quiet, so his parents don't learn of his actions, so he began to threaten those he beat on with promises of death if word gets out. As a result of this, it eventually happened that he killed another person. He hid the body in the river, which caused quite a scandal a week later when the body was found. However, no fingers pointed Willem's way, and he got away scot free. Willem realized how easily things could have turned against him, so he decided to destroy the bodies in the future. Thus, the next time he killed, he took the person out into the woods near the city, and tied him to a steel pole he had driven into the ground. Then, after gagging him, he set the man on fire.

He calmly sat there and watched, as the man burnt to death, feeling an odd sense of power in taking the life of another man. As he sat there, watching, an odd thought struck him. He got up and, while the man was still alive, writhing in agony, Willem took his knife and cut the man's arm off. He then began to eat the man's flesh, as the man was forced to watch.

This went on for several more years, with a handful of people disappearing mysteriously, along with a large number of newborn children. Some feared some sort of powerful beast hunting those who strayed too far out of town, others thought it simply murder.

Eventually, however, at the age of 29, Willem was discovered. Someone had found his secret spot out in the woods, and saw Willem kill a man and eat him. Word soon got to Willem's parents, who were horrified at this news. They confronted him about this, hoping what they were told wasn't true. They told Willem what the man told them, who was also present to confirm his

story. Willem struck his parents, knocking them out cold. Then he beat the other man nearly to death, and dragged all three of them out to the woods, where he tied them all to the stake and burnt them all, this time without any gags. It was at this time, as Willem dined on the flesh of his own parents, that the mists claimed Willem, including Virisa and the island it was built on, which included several smaller villages and a second small town known as Telgen. Willem was 29 years old when he was drawn into Ravenloft, in the year 719 on the Ravenloft timeline.

With his parents dead, the rest of the people, still not knowing what had happened, made Willem lord of Virisa. The people had come to love him, for he had long since kept his darker dealings secret, and seemed to the people as the epitome of a good ruler. However, once they made him lord, he began a rule of tyranny, keeping the people in line through fear. He chose his most loyal supporters to be his personal bodyguards. He formed his own personal garrison of fanatically loyal warriors, trained from birth to be fearless warriors and brutally efficient. These he had stolen from their cribs before even a year old, and the oldest of them were now 15 years old. They were all strong warriors, who betrayed no emotion at any time. With this new force, numbering well over 100 men, he could keep the populace in line.

He made demands on the people, requiring each family to give up their first-born sons to his personal training regime, before they even reached a year in age. Through this, he would ensure a constant supply of loyal soldiers. His cannibalistic tendencies came out in the open, which he used to keep fear in the peoples' hearts, and so they would know their fate if they broke the law. Those who stayed within the law, and who served him faithfully, would be spared their place on the dinner table, instead leaving that fate to those from the surrounding villages and the town of Telgen.

Willem began to have the people cooked in the courtyard just outside the keep, instead of in the woods, and the citizens of Virisa eventually grew accustomed to the sounds of screaming emanating from the keep every week, when a new person was cooked.

Current Sketch:

Although Willem used to cannibalize others as revenge, and for the sense of power he received in doing so, he now no longer feels the power he once did. Coupled with this is the fact that he always feels the pain of those he eats. Whenever he eats a new victim, the next day he always feels the pain they felt as they were cooked. However, he has long since lost the will to stop eating the people, for although it causes him great pain, and no longer gives him the sense of power he craves, he has discovered a side effect that has persisted since the day the mists swallowed him -- perpetual youth. As long as he continues, he will not age a day.

Too obsessed with this to ever stop cannibalizing others, but always forced to feel the pain, he has been driven slowly insane. He has felt the excruciating pain of a slow death a thousand times over, and yet lives. Though his men are fanatically loyal to him, the people grow more scared every day of his increasingly mad nature. In his insanity, he has decided that everything will finally be set aright again if only he manages to capture, and eat, one who is worthy. He constantly hunts for someone who is skilled enough to elude him, for only someone this skilled can provide him with the sense of power he craves. Thus, he invented The Great Hunt, an event he calls once each year. He selects from his prisoners the best of the best, and personally takes a

hand in their care and feeding, making sure they are at their healthiest when he sets them free. The rules are simple -- they get caught, they are eaten. But if they make it to the shore and off the island, they go free. So far, none have escaped the island in the 30 years since the Hunt began. On the day of The Great Hunt, when those set free are captured by Willem personally, the victims are dined on by Willem and those closest to him. The Great Hunt has existed for 30 years. It was on the first Great Hunt that he discovered his inability to close the domain borders. He believes it has something to do with his promise that the victims will be allowed off the island if they manage to escape. The Great Hunt is an event that spans an entire week.

During the rest of the year, two people are cooked each week, prepared in whatever manner Willem decides upon that week. That day has been declared as the holy day, and Willem always gets first pick, with his followers getting the lesser cuts. Enough is saved for Willem for the rest of the week, although the rest of his men must dine on lesser animals on those days. Only on special occasions is this format broken, such as his birthday, the anniversary of his attaining lordship, and when receiving important visitors, as well as the day of The Great Hunt.

Closing the Borders:

When Willem decides to close the borders, any who attempt to leave the domain find a horde of ghouls rise up out of the sea around the island and come to shore, attacking any who attempt to leave. The ghouls that attack those attempting to flee when the borders are closed instead attack to paralyze or incapacitate, then bring the characters back to the lord. If paralyzed by the touch of these ghouls, a character can never again regain control until he reaches the courtyard of Willem's keep.

The only exception to this is on the day of The Great Hunt, when Willem is unable to close the borders. On this special day, Willem must stop the person from leaving by his own devices.

Combat:

Although skilled in several weapons, Willem favors his shortsword, a weapon worn only by the nobility in the world he hails from. In addition to the shortsword, he also skilled in the use of all other blades and bows. He wears chain mail armor when prepared for battle, and is skilled at using his free hand to help block blows (+1 bonus to AC) if it is free.

Willem now has superior tracking skills. He is an infallible tracker, and can move at his normal movement rate while tracking under normal circumstances. Attempts made to conceal tracks or take hard to follow routes instead simply apply a modifier to Willem's movement rate while tracking. (Determine all tracking modifiers, according to PHB. Divide result by 3, rounding down, to find by how much his movement rate is reduced. -6 penalty for non-rangers does not apply in this case. His movement cannot, however, be increased.)

Willem can be killed on any day, but only by those declared to be his dinner, and only in the courtyard, or wherever they are to be prepared. However, if it is not after The Great Hunt that Willem is slain, he can restore himself to life by assuming the body of one of his Disciples. From this point, the body will gradually change to Willem's original form (2 months), and he will be the same as he was before. Only if slain by those who have been captured on The Great Hunt is he unable to assume a Disciple's body.

However, even slaying him on other nights, forcing him into a Disciple's body, is a minor victory, for he is unable to do anything during those 2 months, for the pain of the transformation is too great for him to do any more than lay on his bed, contorted in pain. During this time, no humans are ever cooked.

* This would make his date of birth be 690 on the Ravenloft calendar, although he wouldn't have been taken by the mists until the year 719. Thus, Virisa would have been an existing domain since the year 719 on the Ravenloft timeline.

DISCIPLES OF VIRISA

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any/Any
FREQUENCY: Very Rare/Common (in Virisa)
ORGANIZATION: Troop
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Cannibalistic
INTELLIGENCE: Very to genius (11-18)
TREASURE: Varies
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil
NO. APPEARING: 11 (10 plus sergeant)
ARMOR CLASS: 5 (10)
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: By level
THAC0: By level
NO. OF ATTACKS: By level
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8 (longsword)
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE: See below
SIZE: M (5'0" to 6'8")
MORALE: Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:
1st level 420
2nd level 975
3rd level 1400
4th-5th level 2000
6th level 3000

Appearance:

The Disciples, a group of humans raised from birth to become the personal army of Lord Willem Ducas, are a ruthless and bloodthirsty bunch. No Disciple is ever seen in public without their uniforms, which consists of black chain mail armor, closed-face helmets painted white with a face-plate shaped as a skull, spiked gauntlets, and Virisan livery underneath. Over their chainmail they wear a black tabard displaying the Ducas family emblem. On their belts they carry long, wicked blades, as well as a dagger for backup. Some are seen with light crossbows in addition. In a single troop (consisting of 10 soldiers and their sergeant), there are usually at least four carrying crossbows.

Underneath their armor, the Disciples are just regular men and women. However, as they have been raised from birth to be soldiers, they are nowhere near average. They have cold, emotionless eyes, short-cropped hair (men) or braids (women), clean-shaven faces, and a well-defined musculature. All the Disciples are quite strong and healthy, for those who aren't are culled. They are also trained to understand a wide variety of battle tactics, and are usually quite intelligent. Every Disciple has a strength score ranging from 16 to 18/00, and a constitution score ranging from 15 to 18. Their intelligence ranges from 11 to 18, with the more intelligent receiving the higher ranks. (Though there are some of high intelligence among the lower ranks who just haven't been discovered yet.)

The Disciples are fanatically loyal to their lord Willem, and would willingly sacrifice their own lives if he asked them to. This bond with their lord is so great, they are actually capable of minor spell-like abilities. However, their ability to draw on their faith in the Lord Ducas is nowhere near as great as the Ducan Priests.

Combat: The Disciples are all skilled warriors, trained strictly in the fighting arts. Every Disciple has all the abilities of a fighter of the appropriate level. Every Disciple, at 1st level, is trained in the same weapons: longsword, dagger, and crossbow. Each Disciple is proficient in the use of these weapons, with specialization in the longsword. Their non-weapon skills vary, but the more common ones are blind-fighting, endurance, horse riding, hunting, running, swimming, and tracking. As they progress, most tend to increase their skills in the weapons they already know, while a few will practice other weapons.

A Disciple's hit dice, THAC0, and number of attacks are all dependent upon the level of the disciple. As mentioned above, they all have the hit dice and THAC0 of a fighter. Number of attacks for a 1st level Disciple will be 3/2 with the longsword, and just one attack/round with either dagger or crossbow. A higher level Disciple of at least 7th level will have a higher rate of attack, as per the Player's Handbook. All Disciples start at 1st level with maximum hit points, as a result of the rigorous training regimen they go through for the first several years of their life before becoming full Disciples.

In addition to their fighting skills, all Disciples have the following innate spell-like abilities, usable once/day unless otherwise noted:

Cure Light Wounds (3/day)

Light (2/day)

Cloak of Bravery (on self only)

Detect Lie

Free Action

All of these abilities function at the minimum level necessary for a priest to cast it, or at the Disciple's current level, whichever is greater. Lastly, all Disciples have a degree of magic resistance. Because of their fanatic loyalty to their lord, they are immune to any type of mind-affecting magic. This includes spells such as charm person, fear, and emotion, to name a few. They can still be held via hold person, and they can still be affected by beneficial charms, such as cloak of bravery.

Habitat/Society: The Disciples are a group of humans bred for combat since their youth. They are the first-born child of every family, given to the Lord Willem Ducas within a year of their birth. Those who refuse to give up their first child usually disappear shortly afterwards. The training program begins as early as within the first year of their life, during which time they are fed various nutrients and raised to be prepared for the training program when they become old enough to start. As they grow older, they are trained in their fighting skills, battle strategy, loyalty, how to control their emotions, and other such things that make them what they now are. They are also trained to know the truth about cannibalism (as Lord Willem Ducas sees it), and are fed human meat on special occasions.

By the time the training program is complete, the child has become a cold-hearted killing machine, fanatically loyal to the Lord Ducas.

At the age of 15, the child becomes a full Disciple, and joins their ranks. At this point, he is considered to be an adult.

The size of the Disciple army is now well over 1000 men and women, with about 35% of these women. The breakdown of the army according to level is shown below.

1st level 50%
2nd level 30%
3rd level 10%
4th level 5%
5th level 2%
6th level 1%
7th+ level 2%

A standard troop of Disciples consists of 10 soldiers and a sergeant. The soldiers usually consist of 1st or 2nd level Disciples, while the sergeant is usually from 2nd-4th level. Any Disciple of greater rank than this is usually not a part of a troop, instead being a part of the upper hierarchy of the army. The troop of 11 men is the standard patrol unit, found both within and outside the cities.

From time to time, situations will arise where a Disciple has to be sent off the island of Virisa and to the mainland. Usually, this is to capture somebody specific, or to gather information, or sometimes to make diplomatic missions. Because of this, a Disciple can be encountered off of Virisa, though they are very rarely encountered. During such times, Lord Ducas will usually choose a Disciple whose service has been exemplary, for such a mission is usually a high honor. The reason for this is because the depopulation concerns do not apply to them on the core, for the population there is sufficiently high to support that Disciple's diet of human meat. Sometimes the Disciples will duel (non-lethal) for the honor of being the one selected to travel to the core.

Ecology: The Disciples consider themselves to be on the very top of the food chain, above all the regular humans. This is the way they view their cannibalistic ways. They view the lesser humans pretty much the same way most humans view a cow, a horse, or a pig.

However, they are also aware that eating solely human meat will eventually result in depopulation, a fact driven home by the Lord Willem Ducas. Thus, their diet usually consists of the meat of lesser animals, saving human meat for special occasions. Only the most influential of the Disciples has a diet consisting solely of human flesh. These Disciples are Willem's closest aides.

Alan Lafond

ZOOROPA

By The GL Fly

Location:

Zooropa is nestled just beyond Kartakass, touching Kartakass, Sithicus and a touch of Hazlan on the southern core. The Darklord is known only as Mr MacPhisto, and his nemesis, just as infamous, is called (in hushed tones and whispers) the Fly.

History:

Born twins Paul and Don McFistus on an unknown land, perhaps because its truly unexplored or simply because they never speak of its name, but it's unimportant now. They grew up on the streets with their family, living in slums and alleys and such. Paul and Don were bards, singers, songwriters, and by ten, they were performing, panhandling rather, in the streets and a few inns. All the money they made, they split with the family. All the twins were interested in was bettering their family: Paul, for health and security and safety; Don, for status and power among the nobles.

So it went until they reached seventeen years that the twins became rather famous as singers in the land. They played clubs and taverns, and won many a maiden's heart. Their family was rather well off, for lower class, and they were content. Or so it seemed. Often the two would argue over the fate of the land. Paul believed strongly that it mattered not the state of the world and nobility, so long as he ensured that those he loved were safe in life. Don believed that to deny that power was the only actor which held true clout in the lands was idiocy. That to truly secure safety, they must become better and bigger than the ruling class.

What happened upon their nineteenth birthday is unknown, but much speculation exists. It is said that Don had returned from a gig at a tavern, while Paul had remained to have a bite. On the way home, Don was drawn to an alley where a dark being had taken interest in his lust for power. The being promised Don power to rule all that he saw, and he wanted nothing in return save for a favor at some time in the future. Don was seduced by this promise of power, but was a smart man. He wanted a taste to test its truth. The being complied and gave Don a dosage of his might. Within months, Don and his brother were THE talent in the land. Don's music and charms seemed to hypnotize crowds and the mere mentioning of his name would make men long to hear him play. Women wanted to be with him, men wanted to be him, and his brother, Paul was just along for the ride. Don and Paul performed for the king one day, and that night as he slept in the royal guest rooms in the castle, the dark being returned. It offered to bestow the remainder of his might, or remove it all, but Don was addicted to his new power, so begged for the rest of it. So, the being laid his hands upon Don, and gave him the full extent of his gift. Then left, but his presence never left Don's Mind. That night, Don McFistus ceased to exist and Mr. MacPhisto was born.

It began slowly, little examples, little displays of his new power. One barfight ended with three dead and McFistus to blame. The men were wanted felons, so McFistus was let off unharmed. His skin had slowly paled to a white color, and his brow nearly peaked, almost as though horns were waiting to burst from his brow. His eyes had turned red, and his teeth pointed. Paul was

unworried by all this, because he was confident in his brother's good judgement. In fact, the two worked together.

By the time they reached twenty five years, they were building a revolutionary movement to overthrow the "evil" king. MacPhisto's (as he now liked to be called) charming skill was so absolute that noone doubted his speeches on the King's cruelty and injustice. So, the Twins and a rag-tag militia killed the king, his family, half the nobles, and took over the seats of power. They ruled together, Brother Kings, for over five years. Paul with honesty and justice, and MacPhisto with an iron fist. He had begun, since that first night, to slowly loose his mind. He began to become totally power mad, and paranoid. To this end, he created his own personal guard unit he dubbed The Lemon Police. They were always with him, protecting Their Majesty. Early in their Rulership, MacPhisto had revealed the truth of his situation to his brother, who was skeptical, and gifted Paul with power of his own. He could absorb anything he touched at a whim, healing him, and then draw this new energy from within him and turn it into a new thing entirely (absorb a chair, heal himself some, and draw it out and form it into a sword, etc.). He dubbed his brother The Fly, after his tendency to wear black, reflective clothing. Fly was growing more and more suspicious of his increasingly mad brother, until one day he outright denied to follow orders. He refused, and then begged his brother to look at what he was becoming. At this, MacPhisto scoffed. He had supreme power, so what needed he this "justice"? MacPhisto became paranoid that his brother would kill him, and outraged that his only true friend after thirty years would attempt an assassination. So, he warped The Fly's power into a curse, and began to torment him. MacPhisto went out and personally murdered their sister, mother, and father. That night, Zooropa entered Ravenloft as an island. MacPhisto took Fly's fiancée as a new addition to his Harem, and banished his twin to wander the land eternally. The Fly was made as immortal as his mad, demonic brother, and could never again leave Zooropa. Mr. MacPhisto would, through time, create an extremely addictive drug with which he would control those he feared would plot against him. They don't obey, he withholds the drug. So they obey completely. The Lemon Police patrols the land, squelching that which MacPhisto fears may be an uprising.

Meanwhile, Fly must now absorb matter to live. He cannot eat, taste, anything. He can only absorb to survive. Sometimes he may absorb without realising it. Suddenly fall through a chair, fall through a wall, put his hand through a table, etc. He moves alone, never taking partners, for fear of hurting them. He always wears large, jet-black goggles which hide his empty blackened eyes.

MacPhisto felt Fly would always want to see the bad in people, so now he can't NOT see it. He will always see the darkest secrets someone possesses whenever he looks upon them. But he will forever fight his brother to make him realize his insanity. MacPhisto, meanwhile, as Darklord, is cursed to never leave his domain... but more. He will never trust a single soul. Even Edge, the head of the Lemon Police, is doubted. Thus, MacPhisto will be forever fearful of his own demise, always afraid. He cannot sleep, he cannot eat, he can only sit in fear Forever. He still goes out, meets the populace, stays with his harem, but he is ever fearful of death, even though he cannot die.

Mr. MacPhisto
(Darklord of Zooropa)

8th Level Bard, _-level ____ (DM choice)

Chaotic Evil

AC:	-5	Str:	18
Move:	6	Con:	18
Level/Hit Dice:	(DM choice)	Dex:	16
Hit Points:	70	Int:	10
Thac0:	5	Wis:	11
No. Attacks:	2, 1 by weapon	Cha:	19
Damage:	1d6 or by weapon		
Special Attack:	drugging touch gives euphoria for 1d10 rnds, Any/DM choice		
Special Defenses:	Regenerate 3 hp/round, only harmed by +1 or better weapons, gaze paralyzes victim spell, any other of DMs choice.		

Appearance:

Mr MacPhisto dresses in all gold suits, shiny and reflective, and wears golden shoes with four inch platforms. His skin is ash white, and his eyes glowing red. He appears to be about 34 years old, and human, though his actual species is unknown. He has two protruding red horns on his forehead, just below his hairline. His hair is raven-black, and a bit unkempt. He has a hoop earring in each ear, and has a tendency to smile a broad, sinister grin. He often wears large, ornate golden jewelry, pinky-rings, necklaces, etc.

Background:

MacPhisto grew up a poor bard with his twin brother, Paul. They grew to popularity as bardic singers, and soon made a great reputation for themselves. MacPhisto grew to desire and crave power, moreso than happiness, as he thought only power could bring peace. All he ever wanted was some peace. To be able to rest, not fighting for each meal. But even when it seemed he'd have that, it wasn't enough. One night he made a deal with some demon or another in which he would get a taste of total power, and if he liked could have more. He wanted more. He accepted, later, a bargain to have total power in exchange for a favor, when the time came. Trite, I know, but it worked, and MacPhisto that night became what he is to this day. He came to a quarrel with his brother after a time, when they were twin rulers of the lands they inhabited, and MacPhisto became paranoid that his brother had betrayed him, so in an instant, he murdered his brother, cast his body to a watery grave, turned the Brother's fiance into one of his harem girl/junkie whores, and murdered most of his own family in order to get revenge on his only friend, flesh and blood, for betraying him. He was pure evil, and those events brought him, as well as the domain Zooropa, into the demiplane of dread.

Combat:

MacPhisto prefers not to fight, opting to let his elite fighting troops, the Lemon Police, do his dirty work for him, but if engaged, he fights ion one of two ways. First, and always, he will fight with stealth, and assassin-like quick lethality. He strikes in the back, when you're down, whenever he can get in a sucker-shot while you're off guard, with the least threat to him. Second, and only if cornered, he fights as a madman, which is just what he is. He'll thrash and slash anything in his way.

His touch is capable of delivering a narcotic contact drug at will. If skin-to-skin contact is formed, the opponent must make a save vs. paralyzation or be drugged and euphoric, unable to fight well for 1d10 hours. After each successive failure, there is a cumulative -1 penalty (after three fails, -3 to save), until at -5, the character must roll percentile dice under a 25% or be addicted to the drug. The addiction will not cause the opponent to befriend MacPhisto, necessarily, but he will wish to get more of the drug whenever possible. Women seem to be more susceptible to its effects and must roll under 40% or be addicts. His eyes can paralyze with sight if the opponent fails a save vs. spell.

Current Sketch:

MacPhisto holds up in his massive mansion/fortress in the dead center of the domain. He occasionally goes out to meet the populace, but otherwise deals only with his staff. His staff is entirely female, and he keeps a large harem. These women he finds on his country tours, then makes addicts of them, and when they need the drug, he offers them a position in his keep. They always accept. He is eternally paranoid, never able to be at peace as he always desired, never able to rest. He has eternal insomnia, and he is always watching his back. To this end he formed the Lemon Police. An elite squad of men-at-arms (considered 5th LN Fighters) who either guard MacPhisto personally, or watch over the populace at intervals, on guard for a coup. Thou MacPhisto is effectively immortal, each time someone is able to kill him, he simply goes into a sleep, then awakens in 1d12 hours, fully restored with no memory of the events in that time. Thus, he still believes himself capable of death, and fears it heavily.

His only strong weakness is for women, attractive women (all those in his keep are Cha: 16+), and that could conceivably be his downfall. It is unknown whether or not he can actually be destroyed.

DM Notes: I left a great deal open to discretion, as his biggest use is as anything you want. In my campaign, he has used powers and skills to put him as a mage, fighter, thief, assassin, necromancer, vampire, anything. The heroes should never know what he is. He is whatever you need at the time. As for the being who empowered him, and what he must do for repayment, it's all up to you.

The Fly (MacPhisto's Nemesis)

10th Level Human Bard

Neutral (good)

Armor Class: 0

Movement: 16

Level/ HitDice: 10

Hit Points: 60

THAC0: 10

No of Attacks: 2

Damage: 1d20, or by weapon

Special attack: Absorption

Special Defense: Sense evil intent, see evil history, need +2 weapon to hit, 80% magic resistance vs. cold, dark, electricity based attacks, regenerate 1hp/1hp damage from drain attack.

Appearance:

The Fly is a medium height, medium build, with raven-black hair. His skin is pale, but not overly-pale. He wears all black, a shiny black coat and pants, and oversized black goggles. Behind the goggles, which no one EVER sees, his eyes are swirling black voids. They appear as looking in a black as night storm cloud, with occasional purple thunder breaking through. He is MacPhisto's twin.

Background:

The Fly is MacPhisto's thought dead twin brother. The truth is far more painful. When MacPhisto first became empowered, The Fly was overjoyed that his brother would finally be happy. MacPhisto gifted him with the power to absorb any matter he touched. Absorption would revive him, and renew his strength.

He was MacPhisto's right hand for ten years before he could no longer take the dwindling sanity, the violent temper, the outright cruelty and manipulative manner of his brother. He approached him in an attempt to find out what had changed, and his brother went mad. He instantly slaughtered him, ripped to shreds by his own bare hands. His last sight before blackness was of MacPhisto, his life-long friend and brother and hero, turning maliciously toward his only love. When he awoke, there were monks all around him. His body had washed to the shore of their monastery, and he was revived by them.

He soon learned of his curse. In being killed by the source of his power, his blessing became a curse. He could no longer fully control his absorbing power. In the river, he absorbed water and fish until he returned from the dead. He also MUST absorb to live. He is devoid of all taste, all flavor. If he fails to absorb what he needs, he goes into a death-like trance, absorbing everything he touches until he is "full." The hungrier he gets, the less control he has over the absorption. He also sees first the bad things in a person. Whenever he looks upon you, he sees first all the dark clouds on your soul. He also detects any evil intent directed toward him.

He stayed with the monks for a while until he couldn't take it any longer and left to find his brother and fiancée and make a new life.

Combat:

In combat, The Fly is a deadly opponent. His power, given to him by his brother, allows him to drain any and all matter into himself, when he does this, his body begins to take on the color of a black hole, swirling purple energy within. He can then draw this energy out from within him and re-form it into an item of his choice. If, for example, he absorbs a table, he may then draw the raw energy from within him and form it into a chair, or sword, or anything he desires. The new item is permanent and just as real as anything else. However, if he draws the energy out of himself, it loses any nourishment, and he is left hungry. In battle with a human, he can attempt to absorb for 1-20 points of damage. Additionally, any attack which hits for more than 15 points of damage acts as a severing attack, and roll randomly for what body part is absorbed. He regenerates on a hp for hp basis. He can gain hp from inanimate objects, but not as much, the DM may determine what he deems necessary or appropriate. Also note that absorption takes time. How much is dependant upon the size of the object. A chest, for example, would take considerably more time than a thumb-tack, and give considerably more hit points.

Current Sketch:

When the Fly discovered what happened to his fiancée, and his family, he went into a rage. He has devoted his life to the death of his brother. It is his only hope. He will not make any friends or acquaintances, and lives apart from society. He is too afraid that he will lose control of his power and hurt someone he loves. He did once fall in love again, but just as they embraced for the first time, he drained her into himself as energy, never to return. This pushed him over the edge. He will stop at nothing to end MacPhisto's life. However, he cannot die until MacPhisto dies, so no matter how many times MacPhisto has him eliminated, he's always back. Also, at the moment when MacPhisto dies, if this ever should happen, the Fly will instantly die himself. However, death would be a far more forgiving course than the living hell he now lives.

The GL Fly

