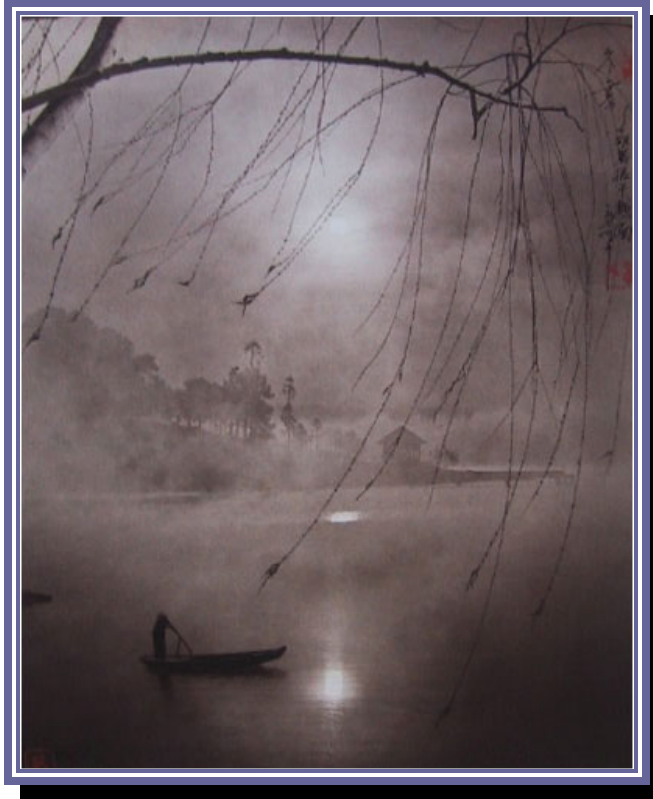


Chilling Encounters



A Mini-nefbook for Ravenloft and Gothic Earth

Chilling Encounters

Diesache the Devourer

Terror of the Frozen Reaches

By Jason "Javier" True

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Diesache the Devourer appears as a huge, pale-grey wolf with eerily green eyes. The beast's lupine body is a mass of powerful muscle covered in a coat of shaggy, oily fur. The sleek, sinewy predator weighs more than 400 pounds, yet moves with astonishing speed. Diesache's jaws are lined with icicle-like fangs, capable of cutting through flesh, bone and steel.

Though fearsome in appearance, the creature is made all the more terrible by the grotesque movement beneath its pelt. The hide of Diesache constantly writhes and bulges, as if *something* is trapped beneath the skin, striving to break forth.

Background

Vinz Bahrsel was a recluse conjurer, living in the icy wastelands of Sanguinia. Famous for his knowledge and power, he was sought by commoner and adventurer alike. Maddened by the distractions of beggars and thieves, Bahrsel created a great subterranean labyrinth beneath Mount Radu. By relocating his laboratory to the center of the maze, Vinz insulated himself from interruptions, for a time.

As time passed, Bahrsel's maze ceased to deter intruders from trespassing and distracting him from his work. Realizing that he needed a more powerful source of protection, Vinz consulted his ancient texts until he found a spell that would summon a powerful creature to serve him. After spending weeks in preparation, Vinz performed

the complex ritual, which briefly tore a rift into a realm of unimaginable realities. As Bahrsel stood agape, the roiling plane vomited forth a mass of writhing tentacles, which subsequently collapsed into a boneless heap on the floor.

With a thorough investigation, Bahrsel confirmed that the aberrant outsider, though potentially powerful, was immobile once removed from its native plane. In order to serve, the creature required an earthly body.

Scouring the surrounding lands, Vinz found a pack of winter wolves. Capturing the largest and fiercest of the wolves, the wizard crafted an enchantment that would combine the lupine beast with the extraplanar entity. Once locked in a cell, the two creatures consumed one another: the winter wolf swallowed the tentacle mass whole, and was thereafter consumed by the outsider from within. The two merged into a single symbiotic entity, a bestial predator ruled by cold, alien intellect.

For over a decade Diesache served its master, protecting Bahrsel's lair and scouring the wizard's realm of intruders. Alone at last, Vinz focused upon his research, satisfied with his new servant. Little did he suspect that with each new victim it claimed, his slave came closer to freedom. Unbeknownst to Bahrsel, the outsider within the beast assimilated the memories of each victim, growing in intellect with each sentient creature it devoured. With the memories it

Chilling Encounters

consumed, Diesache saw worlds beyond the territories of its master, new realms it yearned to explore and new prey it longed to hunt. Eventually, the creature consumed enough memories to gain sentience. Bahrsel, arrogant and unsuspecting, fell victim to the sharp fangs of his own vile creation.

Current Sketch

Diesache the Devourer has been free of its master for over one hundred years, yet it remains confined to its former master's realm. Though Bahrsel's magic failed to control the creature, his wards compel Diesache to remain in proximity to labyrinth.

Though Diesache lacks the magical abilities to escape its captivity, the creature knows that feeding brings it closer to understanding. The abominable thing yearns to escape its prison, its desire increasing as its sentience grows. With each victim devoured, Diesache grows in intelligence, power and hunger.

Diesache the Devourer

Large Outsider

Hit Dice:	6d10+24 (58 hp)
Initiative:	+5
Speed:	50 ft. (10 squares)
Armor Class:	15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14
Base Attack:	+5
Attack:	Bite +9 melee (1d8+4) Tentacles +7 (1d6+2)
Space/Reach:	5ft. by 10ft./5 ft.
Special Attack:	Breath weapon, infectious bite, sprouting tentacles, trip, true strike
Special Qualities:	Absorb memories, acid resistance 10, alternate form, cold subtype, damage reduction 5/+1, electricity resistance 10, fast healing 1, light sensitivity, scent, spell resistance 12

Saves:	Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 18, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 10, Wis 13, Chr 9
Skills:	Hide +7*, Listen +10, Move Silently +8, Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +3*
Feats:	Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack
Environment:	Any cold land
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	9
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always Chaotic Evil
Advancement:	7-9 HD (Large); 10-18 HD (Huge)

Combat

Diesache eagerly attacks anything that enters his territory. The desire for freedom drives Diesache to pursue every possible meal. Oftentimes, the beast shadows its prey to learn as much as it can. When the moment is right, Diesache strikes, pressing the attack until victorious or driven away by an obviously superior foe.

Absorb Memories (Su): Diesache gains the knowledge and memories of any creature that it consumes. This ability allows it to temporarily assimilate all of knowledge of its victims.

Furthermore, whenever the creature devours a living being, it absorbs a number of life levels equal to the victim's total levels or hit dice. If Diesache absorbs a total number of life levels equal to one plus its current Intelligence score, the creature gains a temporary +1 bonus to Intelligence.

If Diesache cannot consume new life levels, the bonus begins to vanish. If the creature goes without food for a number of days equal to its augmented intelligence score, the creature loses 1 of its bonus intelligence points.

For example, if Diesache consumed a pack of wolves with a Hit

Dice total of 11 or more, it would gain a bonus point, raising its intelligence score to 11. To increase its Intelligence score even higher, Diesache would need to consume 12 or more life levels. Unless Diesache consumes other victims, this bonus vanishes after 11 days.

Alternate Form (Ex): If reduced to less than 15 hit points; Diesache takes the form of a grotesque mass of dark grey tentacles surrounding the head of a wolf. Any creature witnessing this transformation for the first time must make a Horror check (DC 18), and they receive a -2 morale penalty on their attack rolls against this form even on a successful save.

Breath Weapon (Su): Cone of Cold, 15ft., every 1d4+1 rounds; damage 6d6, Reflex half DC18. Diesache can use its breath weapon while biting.

Cold Subtype (Ex): Cold immunity; double damage from fire except on a successful save.

Fast Healing (Ex): Diesache heals 1 point of damage each round so long as it still has 1 hit point. If Diesache is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes into a disgusting mass of dark grey tentacles and ooze. This explosion causes no damage, but a Horror check (DC 15) may be appropriate.

Infectious Bite (Su): Supernatural disease – injury, incubation period 1 day; damage 1d4 Constitution. Upon being bitten, a victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or become infected with a disease that slowly consumes them from within. Unlike normal diseases, the infectious bite continues until the victim's constitution reaches 0 (and dies) or receives a *remove disease* spell or similar magic.

If an afflicted victim dies, they animate as a zombie with an intelligence score equal to Diesache's current score.

These husks are compelled to return to Diesache's territory, taking with them as many others as they can find. Once within the Devourer's territory, the Husks undermine their party's defenses and patiently await the coming of their master. Once it has served its purpose, the husk is consumed along with its companions.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Diesache suffers a -2 penalty to all attack rolls in bright sunlight or when within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Skills (Ex): Diesache receives a +1 Insight bonus to Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks as well as a +2 racial bonus to Hide checks.

*Diesache's coloration grants it a +7 racial bonus to Hide checks in areas of snow and ice, and Diesache has a +4 Insight bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Sprouting Tentacles (Ex): Slashing or piercing weapons do damage to Diesache normally, though when wounded by such a weapon, a gaping wound opens in Diesache's hide. From the wound sprouts a dark, greasy tentacle that attacks on Diesache's next initiative, in addition to the bite attack. Each new attack is made at a -2 penalty, due to its Multiattack feat. Thus, Diesache wounded twice with a sword would sprout out two tentacles, giving it a total of three attacks; the bite attack at +9, and the tentacle attacks at +7 melee.

Trip (Ex): When Diesache hits with a bite attack, it can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action (see page 139 in the *Player's Handbook*) without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Diesache.

True Strike (Su): Once per day, Diesache can make a normal attack with

Chilling Encounters

a +20 insight bonus on a single attack roll. On this attack, Diesache is not affected by the miss chance that applies when attacking a concealed target.

Dread Possibilities

- ❖ A wizard's laboratory is rumored to exist within the frozen depths of Mount Radu, presenting an arcane bounty to those strong enough to make the journey. However, the rumors say nothing of the hungry predator that awaits those foolhardy enough to enter its lair.
- ❖ An old companion has come seeking the PCs' assistance in retrieving

some valuable artifacts of which he has heard. While several years have passed since the PCs last saw him, he seems strangely distant in his behavior. Unfortunately, the old companion died several days ago, and his possessed husk now seeks food for its hungry master.

- ❖ Over the course of several days, an entire village has disappeared. The PCs, who knew some of the missing villagers, have gone to investigate. Yet as the PCs discover, while they hunt for clues, *something* hunts for them.

The Snow Queen

A Tale of True Coldness

By David Gibson aka Jester

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I remember it all so well that I could probably relate the entire evening again even if I had not written it down. We were in some rural Invidian tavern off the main roads populated by drunkards, travelers who had found themselves lost and a few gypsy-folk who had elected to avoid the patrols by sticking to the road less traveled. My new drinking partner and I sat in one of the corners tucked away against a thick shadow with the only light being the dying fire struggling like an elderly man against the oppressive weight of time.

My companion kept his back to the wall more out of years of habit than any real sense of paranoia. He struck me as man whose fears were real and quite tangible. He was dressed in well-worn clothes that had seem the touch many needles bent on repair; he wore an old fool's costume, only the once bright colours had long since faded into drab memories of hue and he moved without any sound let alone the happy jingling of bells. There was naught that was happy about this grim gentleman and yet he bore an expression of constant mirth, but to one such as myself this seemed more eerie than comforting.

He produced a small bag of halfling weed from some mysterious pocket then lit his pipe. The match highlighted his face in a ruddy red glow while I fumbled with my notebook. His smile widened and he chuckled in a friendly manner.

As I righted my note-taking supplies and picked up my pencil he leaned forward, the light from his pipe gently colouring his features a pale scarlet. "So what do you wish me to talk about?" he asked in his heavily accented Balok. It was not his native tongue and yet he spoke it with practiced ease.

I fumbled one last time then placed my tool to the paper. "Anything." I said calmly. "You could talk about yourself. Or your travels..."

He smirked while drinking the smoke deeply. "I do not usually talk about myself. Ever." Only he spoke it as 'meself' with his accent adding a nasal quality to the rough language.

"Well then how about a story?" I asked politely. "I once heard you say that tales were your trade and stories your profession."

"That is true." He spoke very slowly as he let the smoke float about his head like a twisting grey halo. It fluttered about his dusty pale hair before fading away into the rafters. "That is true. So I will tell you a story then."

I nodded while I scrawled some hasty notes onto the parchment leaning forward eagerly to soak up his words. He leaned back and rested his head against the hard wooden wall as he licked his lips. Then he began to speak again.

"So once long ago, in the same period all such tales take place, there lived a dark and evil fey. This twisted sprite lived in the shadowy realm of his kind where he was

Chilling Encounters

known far and wide as a master craftsman as much as a sorcerer. One day he combined his two callings as he crafted a magic mirror.

“Now this mirror was no ordinary glass, in it everything reflected became dark, twisted and quite ugly. Even the most noble and generous of individuals would seem hideous when placed before it. And those who already had darkness in their soul appeared even worse, so disturbing it could even drive a man insane. Some say it simply showed the darkness in us all while removing the good. Others say that it instead amplified the evil so it far outweighed the good.”

I blinked at this. I do not hesitate to say that this was not the kind of tale I was expecting. “So why would this nasty creature create such a thing?” I continued with my query, still blinking in mild shock. And from the acrid smoke.

“To show what the world was like.” He said with a shrug. “Ask any pessimist and they will agree that there is little real good in the hearts of men. Some people -when they tell this tale- claim that the fey simply wanted to prove that men are a corrupt and foul breed. Others say he wanted to find the one person who was so good their purity would not shrink and had no evil to magnify. And others still just think it was a game.”

“How horrid.” I exclaimed. “But what do you think?”

“Me?” He asked in mild surprise or a good imitation of the same. With a smirk he shrugged again. “Now it is a poor storyteller that injects their own beliefs into a tale, too much of their beliefs anyway, but I think it simply removed the illusions of who we are. Showed people as they were without all the lies we tell ourselves so we can look ourselves in the eye and not be repulsed. The self-deceptions regarding those we think of as our friends. The why, that be less important as figuring out the motives of immortals tends to be more hassle then it is worth, half the time they know not themselves.”

“So then what happened?”

“What always happens.” He said tapping out his pipe as if his words had some obvious meaning. Strands of smoke untangled themselves from the ash in the pipe and spiraled upward weaving a chaotic tapestry. “Other people found out about it. The mirror I mean. As people always do. So of course they wanted to try out this magic mirror. Stand in front of it, look at landscapes and other things of beauty, watch as things grew hideous, you know, the usual things people do when they find an oddity. But of course, someone got carried away and wanted to look at the entire world at once. So he took the glass high up the side of a mountain where he could see everything, only he slipped and dropped the glass.”

“What a tragedy.” I muttered sarcastically.

He smiled. Which is to say his expression did not really change, but there was a subtle highlight signaling amusement. “So the glass fell and fell down the mountain where it struck the ground and shattered into a multitude of pieces. Some as large as panes of glass, some as small of shards of a broken mug, and some so small they could be mistaken for grains of sand.

“But of course the shards did not remain there. Like most things better left hidden or forgotten they were picked up by travelers and the curious who stumbled across them. And the smaller pieces were picked up by the wind and blown across the land. However, this was not the end of the mirror’s power as each piece -regardless of its size mind you- had the same power as the whole. Craftsmen eventually found their way into possession

of some pieces and, seeing the quality of the glass, produced a multitude of items with them. From spectacles to pocket mirrors each more beautiful than the last.”

He paused at that point and poured himself a glass full of amber liquid from the bottle on the table. He drank quickly and deeply with the long practiced ease of someone familiar with hard liquor. The next glass he drank more slowly holding the drink in mouth for a moment before continuing. “Now I bet you’re wondering where this is going, if there’s a point to this. Well, actually all this is just the introduction. The story really begins in Borca, Lechberg to be specific, in one of the poorer sections of the town. There were two youths living in that city who were the best of friends, Kay and Gerda. Their homes were so close together that the roofs touched and the two could travel between houses through attic windows. There they played together as children do.

“During the winters when the windows would frost over and freeze shut the two would stay inside and play there often looking outside the windows watching the snow fall. One day, near the shortest day of the year, a fierce blizzard struck and the pair sat peering through the glass. Kay’s grandmother entered the room and pulled them away from the window cautioning that it was on nights like that when the Snow Queen would come.”

This piqued my interests. I had never heard of this tale before to my knowledge but something rang familiar. “The Snow Queen?” I asked.

The man nodded and took a faint sip of his drink then set to cleaning out his pipe. “The Snow Queen. She is to blizzards what the queen bee is to a hive and has been known to snatch away young men that strike her fancy. The grandmother knew this and kept Kay away.

“But what exactly is she?”

He shrugged. “No clue. A fey perhaps. Maybe some elemental being or winter personified. Or maybe some powerful sorceress with an ice fixation.” He laughed lightly. “What she was doesn’t affect the story as much as who she was, that’s always more important. But anyway...

“Being young both Gerda and Kay promptly forgot about this and resumed their games. But one day, many years later, the two were playing outside and a powerful gust of wind blew across the town and carried with it several of the small shards of the magic mirror. And one flew right into Kay’s eye. He doubled over in pain and blinked, but the small sliver, not much larger than a piece of dust, was deep in his eye. So when he looked up all he could see was what the glass showed him. The houses looked older and decrepit, his grandmother mere moments from death and his darling playmate looks selfish and vain. Gerda and the grandmother came rushing to Kay’s side but he pushed them aside callously.”

“Because the mirror was affecting him?” I asked.

“No, the mirror just shows the world with a different perspective. Some people, when they tell the story, say that Kay fell under the spell of the mirror -that his heart was frozen as hard as a lump of ice- but really he just couldn’t handle what he saw. His darling Gerda, so much like a sister to him, he saw as selfish, needy and vain, concerned more over losing her playmate than for his wellbeing. He saw the withering age and righteous arrogant superiority in his grandmother. Everything he knew was there but refused to acknowledge. He snapped at Gerda and his grandmother; he reacted as anyone would to liars and betrayal. Then Kay ran away as fast as he could.

Chilling Encounters

“He ran through the streets and he ran through the woods. He ran over the hills and up into the mountains. But everywhere he went he saw cruelty, sickness and decay. At last he collapsed in the woods, he could run no more. The first snows of winter fell on him and slowly covered him. Then she found him.”

“The Snow Queen?”

He nodded and lit his pipe again. The smoke had a faint wood scent as it filled the air and he drank it in gladly like a man dying of thirst. “Aye, the Snow Queen. She gathered him up in a blanket of snow and brought him back to her castle. It was built like a snowdrift high in the mountains where the white caps never melted. There she entertained young Kay who found he liked the place.

“The Ice Palace was not decaying and rotting but eternal, the cold kept everything fresh and bright. The ice crystals were radiant and the snow glistened like jewels. Everything inside had been sculpted and carefully decorated as only someone with all the time in the world could do. The Snow Queen herself was beyond age, always beautiful and full of youth and unlike humans she spoke no lies and held no evil in her heart; she was beyond good and evil.”

“So what was she?” I ventured to inquire hesitantly. Halfway through my voice cracked sharply. I felt his icy eyes upon me like I imagined the Snow Queen’s to be. He paused at that moment allowing me to hastily sharpen my writing tool while he mulled over his next words. The blade of my small knife shook ever so slightly in my hand carving a crooked line upon the pencil’s tip.

At last he spoke again. “She simply was. If she was evil then perhaps she did not hide it so the mirror revealed nothing. Or perhaps she was so good and pure like the driven snow that the mirror found no darkness to amplify. Or maybe she was as black a souls as they come but evil in a beauteous way that the mirror amplified. Regardless she was without compassion or mercy. Kay spent many years with the Snow Queen and made many journeys across the land. At one point they found a man freezing by the side of the road. Kay asked why they did not stop to help him and the Snow Queen replied that it was not her task. The man had been outside improperly dressed, he knew the risks and must accept the consequences. She would no more stop to save him than she would every creature in the frozen woods or aid the trees in their winter distress.

“And that was Kay’s life. During the summers he sat idly in the palace with the Queen indulging in whatever struck his fancy, her servants seeing to his increasingly hedonist desires. And during the winters he watched as the Queen walked the land leaving a path of frost and snow and observing the cold face of death, the desperation in the eyes of man and beast alike as they froze to death. The early frost that wipes out a crop or a sudden late blizzard that blocks off a mountain pass. The pain and eventual slumber of livestock left out in the cold. He watched it all; that was his life.

“Then one day, years after he first arrived, Gerda found her way to the palace. She had been searching for him since the day he had left. She had walked for miles and done many things she would refuse to discuss in her quest to find him, by the time she reached the castle she was as different from the little girl she used to be as Kay was from the little boy he had been.

“She staggered into the castle, her clothes worn and ripped to almost shreds and her skin blue from the cold. She walked upon ragged shoes that left her toes exposed to the ice and snow. She was a pitiful sight full of sadness, regret and guilt. At last she found

Kay who still looked upon her with disgust and spurned her away laughing at this dirty creature before him. Why would he go with this filthy girl when he lived in an eternal palace where the snow and gusts of wind looks after his slightest of whims? Gerda felt naught but anger at this and venting all of her frustration she spat in his face, a last sentiment of years of repressed rage. But as luck would have it her spittle struck the eye with the mirror sliver and it was dislodged. It ran from his face like a tear falling upon the icy floor.

"It was then Kay realized what he had done, what he had said and thought and he collapsed to the ground. Gerda, seeing he was a changed individual, carried him from the castle and from there they journeyed home. And they lived happily there until the end of their days."

I blinked in disbelief. "Really?" I asked.

"No. Not really." He said inhaling the final embers from his pipe and then placing it down on the wooden tabletop. "But I'm told happy endings are always nicer, goes over well with the crowds, even if they are never the full truth."

"But then what really happened."

He smiled. "Do you really want to know?"

"Yes." I pressed.

"Alright." He said with a defeated shrug as he leaned back against his chair. "They journeyed home once again where they both worked hard to deny anything had happened. Ignore all they had seen and done and said. Pretend things were what they once were. But things like that never go away; some sins can never be washed away. They become apart of you, part of your soul, part of your blood. You are the sin. Eventually the tension broke and the thin, fragile illusion of happiness shattered. It broke into a million tiny pieces, like a dropped mirror. And all that was left were two people who couldn't stand the sight of each other because it reminded them of their pasts. You can fill in the rest for yourself."

I hastily continued to scrawl down his words trying to record ever sentence as he had spoken it. Frustrated I wished I could capture his inflection and animated body language at the same time. He paused while I caught up to his rapid speech, I finished then looked up at him. "So is this a true story? How did you hear it?"

"It was told to me much like I told it to you here, in a bar not too unlike this one. From an older chap, bent over with the weight of too many years and equally heavy burdens, I think he told it to me because he recognized in me something of himself."

"Oh?"

"Someone carrying a stain they can never wash away no matter how hard they try." He smiled as he tucked his pipe away back in the fold from whence it came. "Us damned gotta stick together." He said with a telling look winking at me.

"What do you mean?" I asked honestly puzzled.

He opened his mouth as if to speak then silently closed it and just smiled. He shrugged yet again and polished off his drink slapping the mug down on the table with a wooden thud. "I hate to spoil the surprise kid." And with that he gathered up his meager possessions and walked away leaving me with a stack of confusing notes and too large a bar tab.



Chilling Encounters

The Magic Mirror

A Minor Cursed Artifact

In the Dread Realms of *Ravenloft* there are many cursed and evil magic items. Some of them are corrupted by darkness that seeps into the item like an evil rot. Others are accidents whose blame rests in ill fortune more than malign will. The worst of all cursed items are those brought into being with deliberate malice and forethought. The Magic Mirror is one of these.

It was created, as related in the above story, by a mysterious fey many years ago where it spent many years serving the amusement of the darker and more morbid fey. It was brought to land of men where it was broken and the shards scattered across the land. While the Mirror itself was fragile and easily shattered even the smallest piece had the power of the whole. It can be broken again and again into smaller and smaller pieces but the power remains.

The Mirror, working equally well as a reflective surface or a pane of glass, acts as a *Gem of Seeing* revealing illusions and other magical disguises save that it is operating continually. However, the Mirror also reveals other equally hidden truths beyond simple illusions. By visible clues it reveals the purity of the individual clearly showing the results of any failed Power Checks or Curses as well as all the believed sins of the individual. However, this is based on the mentality of the person being viewed. As long as they do not honestly believe their actions to be improper then they will not be revealed. A vampire who is racked with guilt over the constant murder of innocents for blood will be perceived as a cruel and emaciated corpse with the blood of

countless on his hands. On the other hand, a vampire who simply views his predation as the course of nature and with no more thought than a man eating a cow would appear deceptively normal.

As it is based on self-perception the believed sins outweigh any actual sins. Someone tricked into believing they have done a horrible wrong will appear as hideous as if they had actually performed the deed. A noble hero, tortured over some perceived misdeed or moment of weakness, will appear repulsive and guilty regardless of the amount of good they have done. The Mirror also removes any self-deception revealing unwanted truths to the viewer. The subconscious is tenacious so even long forgotten transgressions will be shown.

The magic of the Mirror is chaotic and fluid easily warping with exposure to other enchantments. If a piece of the Mirror is used in the creation of another magical item or creature (such as a stained-glass golem or a fetch) then the results may be altered or combined into some variant item. For example, if a wizard uses two shards of the Mirror to make *Eyes of Charming* it might alter the effects so the charmed victim sees everyone as they would through the Mirror, save for the *Eyes'* user. Or it might reverse the effects causing the victim to become horrified at the user. Also, the user of the altered *Eyes of Charming* might only see their victims as weak-willed inferiors worthy of only contempt.

Dungeon Masters must be cautious when bringing a piece of the Mirror into a Campaign; there is a high possibility of misuse if it is not done carefully. Players may try to exploit the powers to speed their investigations or hunt down monsters. At the same time if the Mirror

only gives misinformation then it will be ignored.

No known way of canceling out the Mirror's power is known. It is believed that destruction of the shards, by melting or another caustic form of disintegration, is the only way to end a piece's power. A powerful acid is rumoured to be able to do the job but only the most skilled alchemists could brew such a concoction. Crushing or grinding would only result in many more pieces, only far smaller, and dangerously hard to contain.

Strong divination and enchantment; Caster Level unknown; Weight variable.

The Snow Queen

Female Jack Frost Sor10: CR 16; Medium fey (cold); HD 6d6+10d4, hp 50; Init +4; Spd 30 ft, fly 60ft (perfect); AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 Natural [see possessions]), touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +10 melee (touch 1d6+1 cold); Full Atk +10/+5 (touch 1d6+1 cold); SA Freezing vapour, frostbite, sparkling snow; SQ Alternate form, cold subtype; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +14; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +15, Diplomacy +5, Escape Artist +8, Heal +17, Hide +18, Intimidate +20, Listen +11, Move Silently +20, Sense Motive +18, Spot +11; Alertness, Blind-fight, Dodge, Negotiator, Persuasive, Stealthy.

Languages: Balok, Falkovnian.

Sorcerer Spells Known (cast per day 6/7/7/5/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0 – *arcane mark, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, light, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, touch of fatigue*; 1st – *chill touch, endure elements, obscuring mist, sleep, unseen servant*; 2nd – *detect thoughts, false life,*

gust of wind, resist energy; 3rd – *sleet storm, slow, suggestion*; 4th – *confusion, ice storm*; 5th – *waves of fatigue*.

Signature Possessions: Amulet of Natural Armour +3, Orb of Storms, Robe of Blending.

The Snow Queen is a mysterious being believed by many to be a Jack Frost, however if this is so then she much be the oldest of the race in the Dread Realms. She appears as a tall pale woman much larger than any other of the arctic fey. She has an unearthly beauty with angular, almost sharp features and an aura of danger. Her skin is stark white and her hair the palest shade of blue imaginable. Her eyes look crystalline in nature and have no real colour themselves reflecting all hues equally when the light strikes them. She dresses in long silken gowns, always white or pale blue, and tends to wrap herself in thick fur cloaks that insulate her trapping the cold in.

History

Almost nothing conclusive is known regarding the past of the Snow Queen, or even if she truly is a Jack Frost and not some unique elemental or magical being. The most common legend claims that once she was a mortal woman, a noble in some far away land. There she ruled but was cold and unemotional to her subjects, she cared not for their suffering and problems. She was not cruel or vindictive; she simply was not moved by their plights. The common people said she had ice water running through her veins.

Later parts of the legend differ on how she became the Snow Queen. One version of the tale suggests that she grew so cold that her heart froze one day and she was afraid if it melted again she would change, so she fled into the icy wilderness where she could always

Chilling Encounters

remain herself. Others versions tell that she was hungry for power and claimed even the weather must obey her and struggled until she did control it, but being a cold person she chooses to only bring snow and ice. The final version tells that the one person she truly cared for died in a blizzard, frozen to death outside the castle gates. Her heart froze with him and she vowed to find a way to punish that which took her love from her, but in the long quest to do so she lost herself.

This is but one tale. Others simply maintain that she was never human and that she has always been a faerie. These tales say that she was a powerful fey that lived and grew more powerful with age; one driven to increase her might and fulfill her potential.

What is known is that the Snow Queen found her way to the Core where she made her home high atop the peaks of the Balinok Mountains. There she lives in her castle with her minions; she has almost a dozen lesser Jack Frosts as vassals and other attracts other elemental servants, most often air and the occasional partially frozen water elemental resembling slush more than anything. She also, on occasion, encounters snow golems and bends them to her will, if only for a time.

Current Sketch

The Snow Queen walks the land at winter causing storms and blizzards, or at the very least intensifying them. For the most part she is not directly evil, merely heartless, she simply does not care if others suffer and die. She gains enjoyment from the gusting of the winds and the falling of the snow, to her it is the purest form of beauty.

The Queen also has a fondness for young boys that strike her fancy, youths that seem strong and proud and unafraid

of her. Some say this is because they remind her of her lost love while others say this is simply a desire for companionship. Often, when she sees a youth she fancies, she frequents that town more often than otherwise blanketing it in an extended winter.

She attempts to lure the youth away, either through her charms, special talents or simply as a sacrifice to spare the village from further storms. Some towns, those closest to her castle, often sacrifice boys during the coldest of years in an effort to appease her, sending the youths out alone into the cold. Whether or not this actually spares the town the full wrath of her winter is unknown.

She entertains the youths for a time until they grow too old, they run away or accidentally freeze to death. They are a fleeting diversion and seldom one keeps her interest for more than a few years before she tires and lets her servants do as they will with him.

The Queen is most uneasy during the spring and summer months when she is all but trapped upon the mountain tops. She impatiently awaits winter when she can once again walk the land and see the sights and spread her beauteous touch. She spends much of this time with whatever companions she has taken over the past few winters or dreaming of a time when she will be free to walk unhindered. She has spent much time wondering if there is a way to extend the already long winters of the Core, through magic or some powerful artifact and often investigates rumours of the sort.

Recently, from her servant Jack Frosts, she has heard rumours of a far away land where the summer months are so pitifully short winter essentially never ends. She longs to journey there, if only to vacation away from the Core, but

fears getting lost or finding herself in a much worse land. Her spies also tell her of lands that are sweltering jungles or sun-scorched deserts. So instead she schemes on how to manipulate some travelers into finding a secure way for her.

Combat

The Snow Queen abhors direct violence and avoids it whenever possible preferring to let nature handle the deaths of her enemies for her. If needed, she will send her minions to deal with problems that arise instead of directly becoming involved. If trouble arises upon a mountain she is fond of triggering avalanches to deal with the intruders.

If forced into a fight she has her own powers to fall back upon as well as any magic she may have at the ready. Knowing her enemies are most likely protected against the cold she does prefer to attack the mind or use her other abilities causing frostbite-like fatigue or obscuring her movements permitting her to flee or surprise her foes.

If the Snow Queen is an elder Jack Frost then her powers would be far more potent than any of the common variety. All the saving throws for her abilities are increased in DC by +5 and damage is likewise increase by one die. If she is not then her abilities are truly a mystery.

Lair

The Snow Queen lives in what she calls her Castle, a huge snow drift or tail end of a glacier that has been sculpted by nature into caverns, a series of small caves. She has modified and painstakingly sculpted this over the many long years adding ice decorations, some furniture as well as traps for any invaders.

She maintains a court of sorts in her Castle, serviced by several unseen servants and her fey minions. The Queen strictly maintains a courtly atmosphere assigning Frosts and other minions the ranks of knights, courtiers, pages and other positions. These vary wildly as the Frosts vie for key positions trying to out do each other and impress her with new information and gifts from across the land.

Chilling Encounters

The Ice Queen

Jezra Wagner 3.0

Uri "Shadowking" Barak

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*When she embraces
Your heart turns to stone
She comes at night
when you are all alone
And when she whispers
Your blood shall run cold
You better hide before she finds you
-"Ice Queen", Within Temptation*

Jezra Wagner

The Ice Queen (Regina d'Ghiaccio), Winter Rose, Queen of Spectres

Medium Undead (Cold, Incorporeal, Human)

Hit Dice: 3d12 (Aristocrat) + 2d12 (Ranger) (55 HP)

Initiative : +4 (Dex)

Speed: Fly 30 ft. (Perfect)

Armour Class: 21 (+4 Dex, +7 Deflection) (14)

Attacks: Incorporeal touch +8 (+5); (+1 Dagger +6)

Damage: Incorporeal touch corruption 1d4 + 1d8 Cold + Freezing Touch DC 22

(1d4 +1 +1d8 Cold + Freezing Touch DC 22); (+1 Dagger 1d4 +2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft

Special Attacks: Corrupting Touch, Entrancing Appearance, Freezing Touch, Favored Enemy (Undead) +1, Horrific Appearance, Ice Queen, Manifestation

Special Qualities: Alternate Form, Anchored, Cold Subtype, Incorporeal, Pyrophobia, Rejuvenation, Sunlight Powerlessness, +4 Turn Resistance, Undead

Saves: Fort +4 Ref +5 Will +6

Abilities:

Skills:

Feats:

Climate/Terrain:

Organization:

Challenge Rating:

Treasure:

Alignment:

Advancement:

* Note: Highlighted statistics only apply against Ethereal opponents.

Str – (12) Dex 18 Con – Int 14 Wis 12 Cha 26
Animal Empathy +4, Balance +4, Climb +8, Diplomacy +5, Heal +5, Intuit Direction+4, Knowledge (Nature) +4, Ride +3, Perform (Dance) +4, Perform (Song) +4, Use Rope +4,

Wilderness Lore +8
Ability Focus (Freezing Touch) (B), Iron Will, Skill Focus (Climb), Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track (B)
Mountains (Mount Baratok, Barovia)
Solitary
9
None
Always Lawful Evil
None

The Ghost of Jezra Wagner has two distinct aspects; a beauteous aspect, reflecting her appearance during life, and a corrupted aspect, reflecting the present appearance of her frozen corpse.

In her beauteous aspect, Jezra is regal and seductive at the same time, truly deserving the title of "the Ice Queen". She is short, barely over 5 ft. tall, but incredibly beautiful. A graceful body, fair, unmarred skin, long silver tresses (which floats like a drowned woman's hair) and pale blue eyes like two frozen pools form her image of perfection, unmatched by no woman

Chilling Encounters

alive. Her ghostly form wears a pure-white dress and a bejewelled fur cloak in the style of ancient Barovia, clearly of the finest making. She carries herself with unearthly grace, never touching the ground and light passes through her as if she were some projection or image. She speaks in a melodic voice, which carries the faint undertones of both melancholy and authority. Jerza is fond of singing, and her sweet voice had lured many a Man to an early grave.

Jezra's corrupted aspect is truly hideous and stands in stark contrast to her beauteous form. She appears as a spectral, cadaverous version of her beauteous form, although due to the cold most of her flesh is intact. Her frostbitten skin is coated with ice and icicles drip off her clothing and long silver hair. A frozen "grin" distorts her face and her eyes glow with hideous blue light. Her movements are stiff and ungainly like some broken toy but she is frightfully fast. In her corrupted form Jezra's voice is cracked and distorted, dripping with icy hatred and contempt to all life.

In both her forms, a Spot check DC 20 will reveal Jezra is shivering from intense cold, unless she has recently drained a victim of his body heat. Temperature within 30 feet of Jezra drops significantly, though not enough to cause actual or even subdual damage.

Background

Winter in the domain of Barovia holds many dangers to Men, but the deadly cold, avalanches, or even the wolves are not the greatest dangers to be found on the slopes of the Balinoks. As the days grow short and darkness engulfs the Land, the Ice Queen rises from her seasonal grave to claim vengeance on the Living.

Jezra Wagner died at the height of her youth, at the mere age of 23, some

75 years after Barovia came into Existence. She was well-known amongst the nobility and commoners alike for her great outer and inner beauty which shone like a beacon in the dark Land.

Jezra's death remains the subject of much legend and debate. Some say she waited for hours in the cold night for a treacherous lover who never came. Others say the jealous Powers under the Mountain envied her beauty and kindness and so they claimed her as their own. The truth of her grim fate is known only to a few, and is one of Ravenloft's most tragic tales.

Jezra Wagner was the daughter of a wealthy Boyar. Her family's property was considered somewhat of a frontier by the folk of Barovia due to its remote location on the slopes of Mount Baratok. However, this pristine land held both joy and wealth for its owners, as a rich vein of silver ran under the Mountain.

Jezra loved the ancestral wild lands of her and cherished every season for its special gifts. No matter the month or how harsh the weather was, she and her older brother Giorgio could be found exploring the Land and relishing Her beauty. Indeed, even after her beloved brother was taken by the Mountain, her love of the Land remained to soothe her pain.

Of all seasons, it was winter that was most beloved by Jezra. As the Land was covered by a cloak of white, she would dash outside to dance and frolic in winter's chilly embrace.

Jezra's end came near the winter solstice. She and several of her friends were climbing Mount Baratok. Jezra was the first to hear the rumbling, and this is what probably saved her from the sudden death that claimed her companions. Shouting a cry of alarm, she pressed her body into a narrow

fissure as the snow swept past her, ripping her companions from their ropes and dragging them to their deaths. In her narrow shelter, Jezra was left unhurt. She found that the small crack she hid in was actually a small cave that ran some thirty feet back into the cliff. The avalanche had sealed the entrance behind her. With horror, Jezra realized she had been entombed alive.

Jezra tried to dig her way out, but each time more snow fell to seal the cave's entrance. It was not long before her candles were used up and the air grew sour. Perhaps she was beginning to hallucinate from the severe lack of heat or oxygen, or perhaps the wicked Powers sent some dread agent to tread with her. Whatever its cause, the cave slowly filled with a ghostly light. Drawing herself from Death's brink, Jezra focused her attention to the mysterious phenomenon, longing to know its nature before she dies.

With delight, she noticed the source of the glow was no other than the shape of her brother, Giorggio. Except for his torn and tattered clothes, he had not changed in the slightest since the day she last saw him. Jezra reached with her unfeeling hand to touch the vision, nearly passing out from the frigid fire in her lungs. Giorggio's image knelt before her and looked at her in eyes which were curious and unrecognizing at the same time.

"Save me" was all Jezra managed to whisper.

"I cannot" came the reply, cold and unfeeling.

Jezra began to cry, the tears freezing on her face. The spirit faded away together with the light, leaving Jezra alone in icy cold darkness. With her last breath, she cried out for someone, anyone to save her from

Death, swearing she would do anything not to end like this.

Somewhere in the darkness of Ravenloft, Jezra's pleas were heard. A strange darkness, deeper than the blackest cave, rose from under the Mountain and coiled around the young woman's body like an ebony serpent. Two pinpoints of unholy blue light was the last thing Jezra saw as the blackness reared up and plunged into her dying body like a cobra striking its prey. Jezra's body twitched violently for several minutes and cries of terrible agony filled the cave as the darkness seeped into her frozen flesh. And just as they began, the unearthly screams suddenly ceased and Jezra's body was forever still.

Gradually, the cold glow returned to the cave. Jezra blinked and opened her eyes. She could feel her body again and the air no longer choked her- but the cold was redoubled. Her flesh seemed to tremble endlessly and her bones pounded with a terrible ache. She cried in agony and rose to her feet, not noticing she was floating a few inches off the ground.

Jezra's only thought was escaping the icy darkness. Had she looked down, she might have seen her own dead body, horribly distorted by the cold that claimed her life. Instead, she plunged desperately into the wall of rock and ice blocking her path, passing through it as if it was mere Mist.

Jezra descended the Mountain and was not far from home when she happened upon a furrier. Normally, she wouldn't have given him a second glance, but for some reason she found herself feeling a powerful craving for the man- or, more precisely, the heat which radiated off his body. Overcome by this desire, Jezra rushed forward and caught

Chilling Encounters

the man in her spectral embrace. It is unlikely he even saw or realized what happened to him. For a brief moment as his body crystallized in her arms Jezra felt a relief from the cold agony of her Existence. Spectral tears covered her face as she wept as delight. However, a few minutes afterward, the agony returned- but Jezra now knew how to ease it, for awhile.

Jezra continued on to her home. Looking through the estate's window, she found her parents weeping for the daughter they had lost. She longed to go to them, to tell them that she survived, but instead found herself drawn to the heat flooding off their living bodies. The spiritual hunger nearly drove her mad, but with a gruelling effort, Jezra tore herself from the window and fled into the night. By the time the sun rose, she left a dozen dead. With each frozen corpse Jezra's pain was relieved, only to return once more as biting as it had ever been.

Current Sketch

For more than three centuries Jezra has roamed the frozen slopes of Mount Baratok, preying on the Living in search of warmth. At first, Jezra struggled against her twisted hunger, only draining heat when she was driven mad by the inner cold. The former Innocent denied her undead nature, believing instead that she was suffering from some horrible curse.

However, the centuries of agony have gradually corrupted Jezra. Ruldolf van Richten's failed attempt to destroy her catalyzed her downfall, forcing her to acknowledge her Unlife- and give in to madness and evil. The fear of Death is Jezra's prime motivation, and she would do anything to continue existing- even though deep inside, she realizes how cursed and hollow her Existence truly is

Her long years of suffering has filled Jezra with envy for the living. The Queen of Specters delights in toying with her victims, tempting her prey with the faint hope of survival before snuffing it out. Still, Jezra is not wholly mad. In her lucid moments, she laments what she has become and longs to be put to rest. In those moments, she likes dancing in the beautiful, wintry groves on the slopes of Mount Baratok- but all Jezra touches withers and dies a frozen death.

Sadly, such moments become increasingly rare as the years go by.

Jezra's unlife is tied to Winter's coming. As soon as the first rays of the spring begin to warm the earth, she is forced to retreat to the mountain cave where she died and inhabit her frozen corpse. Should a living creature approach her body, Jezra awakes immediately, but otherwise she must slumber until the last leaf of autumn falls.

Combat

Jezra is a cunning and wicked foe. Centuries of unlife have hardened her heart and made her adept in the use of her Ghostly powers. Jezra prefers to lure victims with her entrancing appearance and attack them with her Freezing Touch. When fighting particularly powerful opponents, Jezra uses her Horrific Appearance to weaken them and employs her flight and incorporeal nature to their fullest extent, striking from within walls or the floor. In case her foes prove overpowering, she flees to seek out easier prey. Jezra realizes that her corpse is her sole anchor to the material world and will defend it at all costs.

The save DC against Jezra's ghostly abilities is 20 unless otherwise indicated.

Freezing Touch (Su): Living beings struck by Jezra's touch attack must make a Fortitude save DC 22 or be instantly frozen solid. Those who save successfully suffer 1d8 points of Cold damage (no save) each round for the following 3 rounds (this effect can be removed with Dispel Evil or Dispel Magic). Those who fail the save are permanently turned to ice.

The victim can be brought back by the casting of a modified version of Stone to Flesh spell (with the components being a drop of blood and a pinch of snow from the Balinoks rather than earth) followed by Raise Dead or Resurrection. Limited Wish, Wish, Miracle and Simulacrum can also restore a frozen victim.

If the statue is broken or melted, only a True Resurrection spell will suffice to bring the victim back to life. Creatures who die from the Cold damage caused by Jezra's touch are also frozen solid, regardless as to whether or not they passed the initial save.

When Jezra drains a victim of body heat (a victim fails his save), her pain is lessened for a number of minutes equal to his levels or HD. During this time, Jezra is calmer and can even be reasoned with. She shows no interest in combat and flees to dance amongst the snows.

Ice Queen (Su): Jezra's spectral form is infused with bitter cold. As a result, she possesses the following powers:

- ❖ Jezra possesses the Cold subtype.
- ❖ Non-magical fire sources of Small size or smaller within 30 feet of Jezra are snuffed out.
- ❖ Any metal object which touches Jezra's form is affected by Chill Metal, as the spell cast by a 9th level

Druid. Magical items receive a Will save DC 20.

Alternate Form (Su): Jezra may switch between her beauteous aspect and her corrupted aspect as a free action. In her beauteous form she possesses the Entrancing Appearance salient ability while in her corrupted aspect she possesses the Horrific Appearance ability. When Jezra's corpse is threatened (see below) she is forced into her corrupted aspect.

Rejuvenation (Su): If destroyed, Jezra reforms completely within 2d4 days. The only way to permanently lay her to rest is to set her corpse ablaze on a funeral pyre at the summit of Mount Baratok at dawn.

Anchored (Ex): The Ghost of Jezra Wagner is anchored to her frozen corpse and cannot move more than 4 miles away from it. When a living creature comes within 100 feet of her corpse, Jezra becomes aware of the intruder's presence and is compelled to return to her body and defend it. She is forced into her corrupted aspect and her Flight speed triples until she reaches the cave where her corpse is located.

Pyrophobia (Ex): Fire deals triple damage to Jezra. A fire source of Medium or larger size forces Jezra to make a Fear check DC 15 + 1 per Size category above Medium as long as it is within her sight.

Sunlight Powerlessness (Ex): Jezra is utterly powerless in natural sunlight and will flee from it at all costs. If caught in sunlight, she cannot attack and can only take partial actions. This vulnerability does not extend to unnatural sunlight, such as a *Daylight* spell.

Chilling Encounters

Lair

Jezra's lair is the dread Mount Baratok, the tallest Mountain in Barovia. Thick alpine forests cover its lower slopes, giving way to shrubs and barren rock at higher altitudes. The peaks of Baratok are a broken mass of glaciers, jagged cliffs and great chasms. Bizarre ice statues tower over the most isolated reaches of mountain, though no man alive can recall their origin. The peak is perpetually shrouded Mist and its ice cap never melts. Even on the lower slopes, winter persists all year long. Weather over Baratok is particularly treacherous and stormy. Haunted by a grim history and unnatural weather, Mount Baratok is a 1st rank Sinkhole of Evil with no particular taint.

Besides Jezra, Baratok is home to wolves (both mundane and Winter Wolves), bears, zombies (which seem guided by a malign intelligence) and a variety of lesser undead spirits. Such spirits include Wraiths, Spectres and Ghosts of the 1st and 2nd ranks. These lesser geists recognize Jezra's power and leave "the good prey" to her.

The cave where Jezra died lies amidst the middle slopes of Baratok, where the shrubs give way to lifeless icy rock. The cave itself is a 4th rank Sinkhole of Evil, with the taints of Agony and Despair. When viewed on the Ethereal Plane, the ice and rocks constantly twist into crying faces, frozen into the mountain-side.

Dread Possibility: Shadow and Frost

Despite her fearsome reputation, Jezra Wagner isn't the mistress of Mount Baratok. Far beneath the frozen rock, at the Mountain's very core, lies

imprisoned a great Evil. Jezra constantly feels this presence calling to her, urging her to kill. Indeed, it was this entity that was responsible for her transformation to undeath.

Rimmon (advanced 21 HD Gelugon, LE) is an ancient and powerful fiend whose specialty lies in the corruption of the Innocents, like Jezra once was. At the peak of the ancient war against the Neureni Hordes, Rimmon was summoned by Neureni wizards to wreak havoc on the fledgling nation of Barovia. The Devil's manipulations drove Count Ivan Von Zarovich to madness and suicide and pitted Barovia's elite against each other. If not for the leadership of Ivan's daughter, Nicoleta, the nation would have fallen apart. The newly-crowned Nicoleta gathered a cabal of Barovia's most talented mages and priests to exercise the corruption. After months of gruelling effort and mind-bending investigations, the hunters finally tracked down the devil and confronted it in its lair, a profaned temple to the Sun-god Andral on the slopes of Mount Baratok. Its essence bound to the soul of the Mountain, Rimmon proved indestructable. Undeterred, the cabal drove the Devil into a stasis and imprisoned it within its lair, which Nicoleta sealed beneath tons of snow and ice. When Barovia was snatched by the Mists, Rimmon and its prison were taken as well.

In the centuries since its imprisonment, Rimmon's wickedness seeped into the stone and soil, corrupting the Mountain itself. While the Devil is comatose, it remains somehow aware of everything that occurs on the slopes and is able to influence the land in subtle ways. These include altering the weather and the behaviour of native animals On

Chilling Encounters

particularly cold nights, the wind itself whispers Rimmon's evil thoughts.

The ancient ice statues found on Mount Baratok are actually the Arcane mechanisms that hold Rimmon's prison shut. An aerial view reveals the statues are arranged in the shape of a warding symbol, the purpose of that ward revealed by a Knowledge (Arcana) check DC 30. A *Dispel Magic* spell cast over each statue in order (the caster levels to overcome are 11-17) will cause the thick snow to slide from the entrance to Rimmon's lair.

The temple is heavily protected by traps, both magical and mundane, as well as undead and construct guardians. Rimmon's chamber lies in the center of the temple, guarded by the most powerful magics. To ensure Rimmon's eternal slumber, Nicoleta ordered her mages to place a final ward to ensure the devil's slumber. Only the willing sacrifice of an Innocent will break the

wards and awaken the fiend from its dormancy.

Should Rimmon awake, its immediate goal would be vengeance. The fiend would proceed to track down the descendants of its captors and destroy all that they hold dear. Thus avenged, the fiend would return to its old habits. Caring little for material power, Rimmon views itself as a scholar and philosopher. Its goal is showing the World that nothing is pure and Innocence is a lie, and to prove its thesis the devil conducts numerous vile experiments into the nature of morality, with humans as its favourite test subjects. Its personality is sophisticated, cultured and detached, but filled with utter evil and contempt to all mortal-kind.

Rimmon's phylactery is a primordial ice shard, millions of years old. The shard lies hidden at the bottom of a chasm beneath Mount Baratok.

Chilling Encounters

Dark Decent

Optional d20 Rules for Power Checks

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"The dread of evil is a much more forcible principle of human actions than the prospect of good."

-John Locke

Evil begets evil just as violence begets more violence. This is a more than just an expression in *Ravenloft* but a fundamental truth, one of the founding principal of the Dread Realms is that those who commit evil deeds of vanity, convenience or simple darkness of the soul become more powerful at the cost of their humanity.

However, the system in place has not changed since it was first published in the Black Box and *Forbidden Lore*. The mechanics stand out because no other checks or saves have the players rolling percentile die, any possibility of surprise over what the players are rolling is removed. Likewise the system does not take into consideration the alignment of players, such as why evil player characters are subject to a fall while villains and other evil folk are not.

Below are new optional rules for an alternate Power Checks system resembling saving throws or other checks made with a d20. These rules are designed to complement those provided and described in official versions of the Campaign Setting, readers are strongly encouraged to consult one of these such as the *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*.

Making a Dark Powers Save

As per standard saving throws the Difficulty Class is calculated by adding the base DC to any applicable modifiers while the player rolls a d20 adding any save modifiers to the roll. If the result on the die is *equal to or higher* than the DC then the player has made the save.

Dark Powers saves vary from traditional saving throws in that the DC can start or end as a negative number. If the modified DC is less than or equal to zero a save *does not* need to be made. For example, an assault committed by an evil character upon a rival simply does not require a Dark Powers save (Base DC of 2 modified by -2 + -1 for a total modifier of -3. $2 - 3 = -1$). However, if the victim was a true innocent a save would be required ($2 - 2 + 3 = 3$).

Unlike traditional saving throws a 1 is *not* an automatic failure (as modifiers may easily lower the roll below 1) but neither is a 20 an automatic success (although the act would have to be particularly despicable to have a DC so high that a roll of 20 fails). In this regard Dark Power saves are more like skill checks than saving throws.

Dungeon Masters are encouraged to keep the DC secret, players should not know if they have failed or succeeded at the save (if they even know what they are rolling for at all). It should not always be obvious that the character has started down the road to corruption.

Chilling Encounters

Base Save DCs

Below are the Base Difficulty Classes for three types of evil actions. Criminal Acts are those actions that cause harm to befall others and are typically illegal, Unholy Acts are religious or spiritual transgressions and finally Supernatural Acts, which are the use of dark magiks and general crimes against the natural order.

Criminal Acts

Act	DC
Assault	2
Betrayal	3
Blackmail or Extortion	2
Grave Robbing	2
Lying/Deception	-1
Manslaughter	0
Murder	4
Theft	0
Torture	5
Uttering Threats	1

Assault: This covers all manner of physical (and sometimes verbal) violence and aggression that does not result in death. It includes such actions as muggings, beatings, child and spousal abuse and bullying. The perpetrator may or may not be attempting to cause lasting harm on the victim.

Betrayal: This includes the breaking of secular vows and promises and the violation of trust. It can include such simple activity as revealing a secret, as personal as destroying a marriage or purposely breaking a partnership and even as serious as high treason.

Blackmail/Extortion: These acts are the threatening of individuals so as to receive some benefit, often financial. The threats can be physical in nature or some other form of coercion. This

includes armed robbery or forcing someone to break the law.

Grave Robbing: This is deliberate unearthing of corpses or looting of graves and tombs for personal gain. This includes both tampering with a body, theft of grave goods or bodysnatching. Looting the bodies of fallen foes only counts as grave robbing if objects of strong personal value are taken or the body is mutilated in some way.

Lying/ Deception: The deliberate obscuring of facts or the truth for gain is included in this from lies of omission to full blown falsehood. Little white lies, tall tales and exaggerations are generally too minor to be of consideration, it is only when the deception causes harm that the lying becomes worthy of the Powers.

Manslaughter: The accidental death of another sentient being. Unlike murder this was not committed on purpose, death was not intended. Whether or not this action warrants a Dark Powers save is wholly dependant on the situation (and to some extent the modifiers).

Murder: The deliberate and purposeful ending of another's life. The death is simply not an accident. Murder is most commonly the result or revenge or a desire for personal gain although sadism is not ruled out.

Theft: Taking something that belongs to someone else. This can be as cruel as stealing a loaf of bread from a starving beggar to as mild as stealing a loaf from a rich baker to feed a poor family. Theft is heavily dependant on the situation.

Torture: Purposely causing physical, emotional or psychological damage to an individual. Often used as a method of extracting information it is

Chilling Encounters

also sometimes for the sheer pleasure of causing suffering.

Uttering Threats: Direct or implied intimidation -most often of physical violence- to coerce an individual into action. To warrant a Dark Powers save the threatening individual must have the intent and the means to follow through with the threat and the victim must believe threat.

Unholy Acts

Act	DC
Defilement	3
Desecration	4
Oath breaking	2
Violating Tenant	1

Defilement: This applies to the violation of a holy site or object, often causing it to lose its divine blessing. Accidentally stumbling into a tomb is not enough, there must be deliberate intent and disregard for the beliefs of the faith. One simple example of Defilement is the destruction of a temple. This includes grave robbing in some cultures, such as those of the Amber Wastes.

Desecration: Very similar to Defilement, only much worse. It applies to not only removing the blessing of a holy site or object, but causing it to become tainted, corrupt and unhallowed. A good temple is not just knocked down but the land is used for dark rituals.

Oath breaking: Religious oaths and vows are promises to one's deity, breaking one or causing someone to break one through force or trickery is a grave sin. The faithful that violate this often find themselves at odds with their God and who do so quickly clerics lose their divine gifts.

Violating Tenant: Different from oaths and vows in that tenants apply not only to clergy but common followers of the faith. They are small sacred laws

such as not working on the holy day or eating (alternatively not eating) a particular meat or plant. Tricking or forcing someone to violate a tenant is as bad as someone doing it themselves.

Supernatural Acts

Act	DC
Casting an evil Spell	-4 + 1/spell level
Casting a necromantic spell	-4 + 1/spell level
Casting an evil necromantic spell	-3 + 1/spell level
Crafting an evil item	average DC of all spells
Crafting a Dread Construct	HD of construct x 1/2
Laying a Curse	-1 + 1/rank of curse
Using an evil item	DC of spell, as above

Modifiers

The action itself tells only half the story with the situation and circumstances also dictating the DC of a Dark Powers save. Below are two charts, the first of which contains modifiers for the DC itself and the second containing modifiers that affect the character's die roll.

For example a rogue steals a purse from a noble who he had been watching for some time. If the thief merely wanted the coins for personal gain and general fun then the DC would be 6 (For Pleasure and Premeditated, $3 + 3 = 6$). If, however, the thief needed the money desperately to pay the medical costs of loved one then the DC is 3 (just Premeditated) but the thief gets a +2 bonus to their d20 roll so success is almost guaranteed. This time.

Circumstances do not excuse all actions, especially those such as torture or assault that are still considered evil.

Chilling Encounters

However, the situation does affect whether or not the Dark Powers are likely to notice a transgression.

If an evil act is committed while the individual is in the grip of a terrible anger or bestial frenzy then the Powers are simply less likely to take an interest than if it is a coldly calculated deed.

DC Modifiers

Act is... Mod.

Brutal or Severe	+2
For Pleasure	+3
Impulsive	+0
Instinctual	-1
Justice	-2
Premeditated	+3
Prolonged	+2
Provoked	-1
Scarring	+3
Vengeance	-1

Character is... Mod.

Evil	-2
Good	+0
Neutral	-1

Faith is...* Mod.

Enemy or rival	-1
Evil	-1
Good	+1
Neutral	+0
Own	+3

Victim is... Mod.

Archenemy	-2
Family	+2
Friend	+1
Innocent	+3
Monster	-3
Rival or foe	-1
Stranger	+0

* for Unholy Acts only

Brutal or Severe: This applies to acts that are particularly intense or cruel. This category does not only relate to

physical acts but any evil actions. Betraying one's country to its enemies is much more serious than betraying one's neighbour. Likewise stealing a single gold coin from a pauper is far more harmful than stealing a handful from a noble.

For Pleasure: The deed was done for sheer pleasure and self satisfaction. There were no ulterior motives beyond personal enjoyment. This particularly applies to sadists

Impulsive: The act was done on the spur of the moment with little forethought and preparation. This applies equally to snap decisions or momentary whims.

Instinctual: Similar to Impulsive actions only there was absolutely no thought involved. The individual simply reacted.

Justice: The individual is doing what the law dictates they do. Often similar to revenge only this is based less on personal beliefs and more on societal values. Killing an escaped murderer who was sentenced to death is an example of justice.

Premeditated: The act was planned out with extended forethought and preparation. Often several days pass between planning and execution.

Prolonged: The deed lasts an extended length of time. This is different from long time-consuming actions in that Prolonged ones are purposely made to last for a greater period. They are often performed slowly in a leisurely manner.

Provoked: The act is pushed upon the individual. They are not forced to act but that are spurred towards action. An individual assaulting someone who picked a fight with them was Provoked, they are still guilty of Assault though.

Scarring: The action is purposely made to leaving lasting marks on the victim whether physical, emotional or psychological. Gaslighting and other lasting mental abuse can be consider Scarring just as easily as branding or other physical wounds.

Vengeance: The individual and action was motivated by revenge over some real or perceived wrong. This is similar to but different from Justice in that the motive is more personal and less the will of the people.

Save Modifiers

Character is...	Mod.
Delusional or insane	+1
Enraged	+1
Frightened	+1
Jealous	-1
Panicked	+2
Failed Saves*	-1/check
Negligent	+1
Saving Lives	+2
Self Defense	+3
Self Preservation	+1

* for each Dark Power save the character has failed and for which he has not yet been redeemed.

Delusional or insane: If the character is emotionally disturbed or otherwise unbalanced they are simply less accountable for their actions. This is especially true while the individual is suffering from hallucinations or other serious madness.

Enraged: The individual is angry and acting more out of rage and fury than rational thought. Actions tend to be hastily thought out or even instinctive. A barbarian's *Rage* ability, while similar to this state, is not the same as that is invoked.

Frightened: The person is scared and reacting instinctively, fearing for their life. In game terms the victim has suffered a Minor or Moderate Fear or horror effect.

Jealous: Envy is motivating all actions to an intense degree. While selfish in nature jealousy still leads to irrational behavior so the subject is less accountable for their actions, they are at the mercy of their emotions. This is sometimes paired with impulsive behavior, but not always.

Panicked: Similar to the Frightened condition only far more intense, the sufferer is under the influence of a major fear or horror effect, sometimes even both.

Failed Saves: For each and every failed Dark Powers save the character has not yet found redemption for there is a cumulative stain on the soul. Those that repeatedly fail saves are more likely to do so.

Negligent: The character simply failed to do something or perform a task though either distraction, laziness or other factors. This only occurs when the individual was obviously remiss in their duties.

Saving Lives: The individual strongly believes that their actions will directly save lives and that inaction will result in death. This is different from being threatened or put under duress in that the person chooses to do wrong.

Self Defense: This is similar to being Provoked in that the individual is threatened and acts to defend themselves. Most often the person is directly attacked and acting in response. This usually applies to actions affecting the person being defended against.

Chilling Encounters

Self Preservation: Similar to Self Defense only there is no direct physical threat only an implied one. Responding to presumed danger is acting under Self Preservation. Usually the person affected is not the one inspiring Self Preservation. Assaulting someone in a dark alley presumed to be a mugger is Self Defense, fleeing and leaving a companion behind from the same presumed mugger is Self Preservation.

When to make a DP Save

There is no strict rule for when a Dark Powers save is necessary, no single line that has to be crossed for an action to warrant the attention of the Dark Powers. However, there are some rough guidelines that, while not always applicable, can be of use.

Firstly the action must be purposeful and the motive must be to commit a wrongdoing. The individual must know what they are doing is not good, believe their actions are evil and do it anyway. Even they commit a terrible evil deed with good intentions -if they were honest at their attempts at nobility- then they need not make a Dark Powers save.

The often quoted phrase that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions” is often used to justify DP saves after such actions, but these saves are not always warranted. If doing evil for good reasons warrants a check then it is the result that matters and then committing good deeds with evil motives would not call for a DP save.

For example, killing someone believed to be a murder only to find out they were innocent may be a tragic mistake, but it is not evil. Killing a stranger for fun who later turns out to be a serial killer wanted dead or alive is evil regardless of how many future victims

are saved. It is what is in the person’s heart that drives Dark Powers saves.

The motives of the Dark Powers are opaque but it is clear they both reward deliberate evil actions performed with forethought and malice. Animalistic and savage killers are simply not ‘rewarded’ as often for their deeds, no matter the severity of the crime.

Similarly, if a person is forced to commit evil deeds through trickery, force, intimidation or the like then they are not directly responsible for their actions. If someone has no choice and their life is at risk then they need not make a Dark Powers save. It should be noted that committing evil deeds to save one’s life may be excused as long as no one else is harmed by the actions. If someone else is affected negatively then the person is putting their safety over someone else’s and that is evil.

At the same time Dark Power saves should be used sparingly unless the characters frequently do evil deeds. Asking for rolls after every mild transgression slows the game down, as does calculating the endless DCs and balancing motives.

One small way around these tedious moments is to simply have the players roll their saves and write down the numbers and figuring out later at a later time if they passed or succeeded. As decent down a Path of Corruption needs not be instantaneous there is no need to show the effects that very second.

Failure

When the character’s save is less than the DC then the character has failed the DP save. The mysterious Dark Powers have noticed the deed and will now pay closer attention to the individual. If they were innocent then

they have lost this condition forever, they are tainted by the darkness. However, there are degrees of failure. The decent into darkness and corruption is not absolute.

Mild failure: If the save was failed by 1-4 (i.e. the DC was 3 and the character rolled a 1 or 2) then the individual has not greatly attracted the attention of the Dark Powers. They are still considered to have failed their save and suffer a penalty to future saves. However, mild failure does not result in additional powers or curses; there is no decent down a Path of Corruption. They are simply at greater risk of future failure.

Additionally, a mild failure is easier to redeem ones self from. Darkness has not fully ingrained itself into the soul of the individual and can yet be cleansed. See 'Period of Grace' below for more information.

Mild failure in no way means the character has gotten away; regular failure, even mild, puts the character at greater risk of future failed saves and increases the chance of committing an Act of Ultimate Darkness! An individual that commits many mild sins without atonement is just as damned as one who commits a few major transgressions.

Moderate Failure: If the save was failed by 5-9 points then the character has truly succumbed to darkness and advances along a Path of Corruption (see page 101 of the *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*). If they are not already on a Path they begin one now. There is no Period of Grace for a moderate failure, redemption from the stage can be a long an arduous process.

Major Failure: The save has been failed by 10-14 points. The act committed was particularly cruel and evil or the individual had already failed a

number of Dark Power saves. The individual, having proved themselves to be habitually evil or capable of dark deeds advances along their Path of Corruption by two steps! If they have not already started a Path then they are thrust immediately to the second stage!

Act of Ultimate Darkness: The character has failed their Dark Powers save by 15 or more! This is generally accomplished by having failed a number of saves before AND committing a truly evil and despicable act. The individual has proven themselves to be dark souls and are thus greatly rewarded but also greatly damned.

The individual is thrust forward a full three entire steps along their Path of Corruption. If they are not already on a Path, which is unlikely, they begin on Stage Three! After an act of Ultimate Darkness the individual is often well along their way to becoming a darklord if they have not become one.

Paths of Corruption

These are essentially unchanged from the rules presented elsewhere (consult the *Ravenloft Players Handbook*) save for the method or reaching them. Paths of Corruption are descended down after each Moderate or higher failure of a Dark Powers save.

It is recommended that the corruption not be instantaneous. The character should not suddenly have talons burst forth from their hands; this is abrupt and impacts the mood. Instead the changes should come over a period of time causing the victim to question if it is the result of their deeds or another factor. This also gives the DM time in and out of the game to tailor an appropriate curse for the players; a generic Path should not be shoehorned into the game.

Chilling Encounters

Also, the final stage in every Path of Corruption is that of the Darklord. This stage cannot simply be reached by casual evil deeds and regular minor transgressions. It can only be granted through the approval of the Dark Powers, usually accompanied by an Act of Ultimate Darkness. The person can continue to fail Dark Power saves, even major failures, but often will not move beyond the Creature stage, they just sink deeper into sin and closer to their eventual fall.

Redemption

Redemption is a slow and gradual process where the person atones for their deeds and makes amends for those hurt by the actions. If this is not possible then the individual must face the same temptation again and this time chose a higher path.

Roughly, a sufferer of a failed save must make any and all reparations they can to their victims (or the family and friends of the victim is dead). Furthermore, they must face a similar event to the one where they chose darkness, only this time they must choose the righteous way. This must be repeated a number of times equal to the amount the save was failed by. After this the individual gets a one-time chance to re-roll their Dark Powers save (only this time with an additional penalty for the failed save) and cleanse themselves of their sins.

These redemptive acts must be repeated for each of the steps the character is down the Path of Corruption, starting with the highest step and working back down. Even if more than one step was ascended at once, say through a Major Failure, each step must be redeemed individually. In the event of attempted redemption from Major

Failure then all steps require the same number of righteous acts. Recovering from an Act of Ultimate Darkness is a truly daunting process.

Additionally, the taint of minor failures cannot be cleansed until the character has stepped off their Path of Corruption even if these failures occurred after they were several steps in. For much more information on Redemption see the *Ravenloft Player's Handbook*.

Period of Grace: Corruption is not an instantaneous occurrence. It takes time for the darkness to seep into one's soul. For mild transgressions there is a brief window where the person can make a second chance to fight off the darkness. This is the Period of Grace.

If after a Minor Failure the sinner honestly and truly experiences guilt and remorse for their actions then they can make a second attempt at their Dark Powers save. However, they must do so at the same DC plus 1, for they are still considered to have failed a save.

To gain this one chance a person must go through a period of recrimination, penance and inconvenience. It is not enough just to say they are sorry but they must make some attempt at reparations to those harmed or perform some act of reparation, often while denying themselves something. They must also do so not knowing for sure if they have failed the save or not, for minor failure there are no outward signs.

Dungeon Masters are advised to encourage role-playing for this as well as other possible penalties such as tithing. It might be tempting for Players to abuse this rule, offering hasty apologies after every evil deed in the hopes of staving off punishment. The DM, as the stand-in for the Dark Powers, is permitted to

Chilling Encounters

waive this rule if it is being violated. The Powers should spot phony sincerity where it exists.

There is no set time for the Period of Grace. It can be any length of time from a day to a week depending on the circumstances. A period longer than this

should be very rare and reserved for people honestly too busy to atone (i.e. without disrupting the campaign). For a rough rule assume that a person has 5 days minus a number of days equal to how much the save was failed.

Chilling Encounters

Northern Frights

Horrors of Gothic Earth

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Brocken Spectres

"At last," said Hawley. "We have reached the summit, you and I!"

A moment later, Hawley's boasting was cut short as a fog descended over the mountain. As we stood there blinking, we heard the haunting strains of mournful bagpipes.

"Hawley," I said, "I thought there was no settlement on this mountain."

"There is not," said he as he peered into the fog.

A moment later, I was overtaken by a fit of melancholy such as I have never experienced. A huge, lumbering man--a full 10 feet tall, if he was an inch!--clad all in grey lurched forward out of the fog.

Large Fey (Incorporeal)	
Hit Dice:	4d6+8 (22 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (-1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	30ft. (6 squares)
Armour Class:	9 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +2 natural)
Base Attack/Grapple :	+2/+11
Attack:	Touch +1 melee (1d6+5)
Full Attack:	Touch +1 melee (1d6+5)
Space/Reach:	10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attack:	Frightful presence, psychic feed, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 5/cold iron, incorporeal
Saves:	Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities:	Str --, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7

Skills:	Climb +12, Hide +1, Intimidate +8, Listen +3, Search +3, Spot +4
Feats:	Ability Focus (B), Improved Initiative, Mimicry (sounds)
Environment:	Any forest and mountain
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	4
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Often chaotic evil
Advancement:	5-7 HD (Large), 8 HD (Huge)

The Brocken Spectre (Brockengespenst) is a rare creature that haunts mountains and alpine forests throughout the world. Called the Brenin Llwyd (grey king) by the Welsh or Am-Fear-Liath-Mor (great grey man) by the Gaelic Scots, Brocken Spectres are enormous grey-colored men. They may appear as grey-colored silhouettes, giants covered with greyish fur, or old men clad all in grey clothing.

Often, the appearance of these giants are explained as witchcraft and deviltry, but in truth the spectres are a race of vampiric fey, drawn towards mountainous regions for reasons not yet known.

Combat

Although physically formidable, the average Brenin Llwyd does not charge into combat. Rather, it will use its *ghost sound* ability to create the sounds of laughter, music, screams or weeping to disorient its foe. It then approaches to the distance required for

Chilling Encounters

its frightful presence ability to take effect.

Frightful Presence (Ex): A Brocken spectre's mere presence is enough to trigger this ability. Will save DC 15.

Psychic Feed (Ex): A Brocken spectre derives nourishment from the very soul of terrified victims. If it succeeds at a ranged touch attack against a victim who has succumbed to its frightful presence ability, the Brocken spectre may drain 1d4 Wisdom.

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day--*ghost sound, obscuring mist*. 1/day--*crushing despair, solid fog*. These take effect as the spells cast by a 4th-level adept. It may cast these as a standard action.

Hungry Jack

Male wendigo Dandy 7: CR 9; medium fey (cold); HD 7d6+14; hp 52; Init (+5 Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 120 ft.^W; AC 19 (+5 Dex, +4 deflection); Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk sword cane +10 melee (- as rapier), or bite +6 melee (1d6+2); Full Atk 2 sword canes +6 melee (-), or bite +6 melee (1d6+2); SA disease, maddening whispers, ravenous bite; SQ regeneration 5, influence, intimidation bonus, corner of the eye, masque of the form, wind walk^W; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +4 (Fear +4, Hor +4, Mad +4); Str 12, Dex 21, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +10, Bluff +13, Connoisseur (wine) +6, Diplomacy +14, Equestrian +11, Forgery +11, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +7, Hide +13, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (etiquette) +12, Knowledge (government) +12, Knowledge (Michigan) +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Search +11, Sense Motive +7, Spot +10, Survival +10; Track^B, Weapon Finesse (sword cane)^B

Languages: English, French, Iroquois.

^W Abilities marked with a superscript W are usable only when Malinbois is shifted into bestial wendigo form

A gray-haired old man sits on the bench outside the cabin, idly swirling wine in a glass and chomping on a cigar as his piercing eyes look at you. Although aged, the years have been kind to him. Two old hound dogs lie dosing at his feet.

Background

Joseph Malinbois is the great-grandson of Frederic Malinbois, a French nobleman who came to Fort Mackinac, on an island in Lake Huron, in the 1700s. Frederic was garrison commander at Mackinac, but within a few generations the family declined in wealth and influence. By the 1820s, hardship had reduced their holdings to a single logging company on the northern peninsula of Michigan. Run by Joseph, William and Bernard Malinbois, the company suffered from the bickering and greed of the three brothers.

In 1831, the lumberyards were set ablaze, destroying the Malinbois' livelihood. Though the arsonist was never caught Joseph believed that his brother William was responsible. Joseph, a compulsive gambler who had amassed considerable debts, confronted and killed his brother out of desperation. Bernard walked in during the murder, and so Joseph killed him as well.

After coming to his senses, Joseph dragged the bodies into the forests outside of town and buried them in shallow graves. By the time he was completed with his grisly work, it was night. He began making his way back to the city when he was confronted by an

ancient Indian medicine man. He derided Joseph as a kin-slayer and murderer. Joseph, still unhinged, flew into a rage and slew the Indian. Before his death, he spat a curse – “though rich, you will always know hunger.” And it was true.

Over the next several years, Joseph became possessed of a ghastly hunger – a craving for human flesh. At first, he confined his predations to transients, people who no one would miss, but after a time he hungered for sweeter meats. Men, women and children began to vanish from the streets of Sault Ste. Marie, lost to the predations of “Hungry Jack”. No one suspected that the mysterious killer was in fact the wealthy Malinbois, warped by his sins into wendigo.

After years of successful hunting, Malinbois became careless. In 1846, the police questioned Joseph in connection with the disappearance of a young woman. After the police left, Malinbois fled his home for the safety of the woods where he had buried his brothers.

Current Sketch

Joseph Malinbois now goes merely by the name Hound-Dog Jack. To this day, Hungry Jack is known as a bogeyman in northern Michigan, a tale told to keep children away from the wood. Fearful of discovery, Malinbois rations his supply of human flesh. Ever watchful for victims, Joseph preys on loners, drifters and those who become lost within his woods. Despite his precautions, however, the locals have come to know that the infamous “Hungry Jack” lives within their forest.

Combat

Malinbois is a crafty foe, and believes in the power of fear. Though he derives no special sustenance from it, he

believes that fear and blind panic add a certain flavor to the meat of his victim. For this reason he often stalks his prey for several days. Then, when he is ready to close in for the kill, he shifts into his bestial wendigo form to inspire the maximum amount of panic.

Disease: Fort save DC 16. For more information, see the creature's entry in the *Fiend Folio*.

Maddening Whispers: Will save DC 19. For more information, see the creature's entry in the *Fiend Folio*.

Skills: Like any other wendigo, Malinbois has a +8 racial bonus to his Hide, Move Silently, and Survival checks (figured into the skill values given).

Lair

Joseph Malinbois lives in a makeshift cabin in the forests near Sault Ste. Marie, above the graves of his brothers. His cabin is stocked with the flesh of those he has waylaid and, incongruously, with a collection of fine wines. He shares his cabins with the dogs that give him his name.

Black Dogs

"I was walking home from the pub late last night," Winthrope had told us, "when, quiet as you like, a big old black hound, the size of a bullock, came trotting along the road behind me. It didn't make any sound, just padded along behind me."

Medium Outsider (Incorporeal)

Hit Dice:	6d8+18 (45 hp)
Initiative:	+6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	50 ft. (10 squares)
Armour Class:	16 (+2 Dex, +4 deflection)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+6
Attack:	Bite +10 melee (1d8+4)
Full Attack:	2 claws +10 melee

Chilling Encounters

	(1d6+4), bite +10 melee (1d8+4)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attack:	Frightful presence, trip
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., scent
Saves:	Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 18
Skills:	Hide +11, Intimidate +13, Jump +13, Listen +15, Search +11, Spot +15
Feats:	Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	5
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Usually chaotic evil
Advancement:	7-12 HD (Large), 13-18 HD (Huge)

A black dog is a strange sort of protective spirit, similar but not identical to the grim. Though menacing in appearance, black dogs are not evil, though their notions of protection may be quite strange indeed. They are compelled to follow travelers who pass through their territory, either shadowing them silently or hounding them by howling in the distance.

Although the spirits often take the form of a dog, this is by no means their only shape. Records exist of such spirits manifesting as large black cats or pastoral animals such as goats, cattle, or horses. These spirits are always black in color and tend to frequent lonely roads, bogs, cemeteries, and rivers.

Black Dogs are native to northern Europe and the British isles, though some have appeared up in the United States.

Combat

Though normally content to shadow travelers, black dogs are fearsome in combat. Woe be to the traveler who challenges one of these spirits.

Frightful Presence (Ex): When a black dog snarls or howls, the target must make a Will save (DC 17) or suffer from the effects of this ability.

Trip (Ex): If a black dog hits with its bite attack, it may attempt a trip on an opponent without making a touch attack and without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the trip attempt fails, the target creature cannot attempt to trip the dog.

Skills: Black dogs have a +4 racial bonus to Listen, Search and Spot checks.

Salient Abilities

Each Black Dog is a unique creature, blessed with distinctive powers. The DM may enhance a black dog with 1d3 of the following abilities. These salient abilities may also be applied to create unique Yeth hounds.

Bog Haunt (Su): These dogs have the ability to disappear into a marsh or bog. It is identical to *meld with stone*.

Breath Weapon (Ex): Black dogs with this ability may project a 10-foot cone every 1d4 rounds. This breath weapon does 1d6 damage for every 2 HD (Ref save DC 16 for half). The energy type varies, but it is most often cold or fire.

Cacophony (Su): As a free action, the hound may summon up a vast racket, often sounding like screams or rattling chains. While the cacophony is in effect, all attackers have a -2 to initiative and attack rolls due to disorientation. This clamor does not inspire frightful presence.

Demon Speed (Ex): The hound may rear up on its hind legs and add +10 ft. to its base movement rate.

Fiery Claws (Ex): These hounds can cause their claws and teeth to become sheathed in flame. Each of the dog's attack will do +1d6 fire damage.

Hell's Burden (Su): The dog may transform into a Small humanoid form. It will leap onto a victim's back and attempt to grapple him. If the dog succeeds, the victim takes 1d6+4 points of damage each round until the grapple is broken by a Strength check. The black dog transforms back into canine form once it leaves its victim's back.

Hound of Grue (Ex): A black dog with this ability is particularly hideous and the DC to resist its frightful presence ability has a +4 modifier.

Mind Blast (Ex): When this beast activates its frightful presence ability, a Madness save is prompted rather than a Fear save.

Spell-like Ability: The black dog can use any spell of levels 1-6 (most often *bestow curse*, *eyebite*, or *ghost light*).

Sample Black Dogs

The legends and lore of Europe abound with appearances of Black Dogs. Different regions seem to spawn their own breed of Black Dogs. Below are some of the most well known varieties.

Aufhocker: This hound is German in origin. It is identical to the Kludde, except that it lacks that dog's shapeshifting abilities.

Barguest: This black dog haunts the uplands of northern England, particularly Durham, Northumberland, and Yorkshire. It possesses *ghost light* as a spell-like ability and can use the *shapechange* ability to transform into a bugbear or a headless, blood-drenched phantom.

Black Shuck: This black dog haunts the roadways and marshes of East Anglia. Black Shucks possess a breath weapon (icy mist) and the ability *bog haunt*.

Devil's Dandy Dogs: These creatures are native to the United States.

A devil's dandy dog is in fact a Yeth hound with the salient ability *breath weapon (fire)*.

Gytrash: Also known as Striker, the Gytrash haunts Yorkshire and Lancashire. It possesses the ability of *cacophony* and can use *bestow curse* as a spell-like ability.

Kludde: The Kludde haunts the roadways of Belgium. It possesses the abilities of *demon speed*, *hell's burden*, and can *shapechange* into the forms of a cat, dire bat, or small pony.

Moddey Dhoo: The Moddey Dhoo is an especially gruesome hound with one huge eye in the center of its head. This breed haunts the Isle of Man, in particular, the grounds of Peel Castle. It is especially aggressive, and has the special abilities *mind blast* and *hound of Grue*.

Padfoot: This dog haunts Yorkshire and is unique in that it always appears as a white dog. It possesses the ability of *cacophony*.

Plat-eye: The Plat-eye is a black dog native to the southern United States. Often encountered at night, most travelers see only its huge glowing eyes. It has may cast *eyebite* as a spell-like ability.

Snarly Yow: This dog is native to Turner's Gap, Maryland (in the South Mountains near Hagerstown). Except for its notable aggressiveness, the Snarly Yow is identical with the Gytrash.

Chilling Encounters

The Monoliths

Mysterious Monuments

By Coan "Coan" Harvey

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"Dear Sirs, it is my duty to report to this board a disturbing phenomenon by which stone monoliths spontaneously appear on previously bare structures. My investigations have revealed that no records of construction exist, nor can anyone recall when the objects were constructed. Even more startling, the surrounding populace behaves as if these inexplicable obelisks have stood there for years. The local populous seems to ignore the presence of these puzzling structures until an outside observer draws attention to one.

I submit to the chair photographic evidence of such 'Monoliths' in parts of Africa, Asia, New York, and even Russia. Indeed, if you would look to exhibit 6B, you will find something most odd; an elongated slim cylinder-like object hovering, yes hovering, above our very own Government House in London. Though I do admit it is night, the shape is quite clear!"

Furthermore, I have documented a case in the Australian city of Perth where no one would admit to the existence of such an obelisk in the central square of St George's Terrace, regardless of photographs 8 through 14, which prove its existence!

I am also of the opinion that the monoliths have some effect on the surrounding citizenry, with crime and commitment to state hospitals in these areas being larger as a per population--

**- Professor Thomas Bodsworth,
May 7th 1890, London**



Unfortunately, the minutes of Professor Bodsworth's are incomplete: Attempts by this Board to record the lecture proved futile in the uproar instigated by the Professor's "unorthodox" theories.

Though his lecture was rescheduled for later this month, Professor Bodsworth has since been arrested on the charge of murder. The courts have deemed the Professor mentally unfit and have since remanded him to the custody of London Sanatorium. This Board has sequestered the Professor's work for review and storage until such time as he returns.

**- Rathbone Hendrickson,
Chairman of the Royal Historic
Society**

Chilling Encounters

Mystery of the Monoliths

The Monoliths, also known as 'les estructuras el desconocido' among other names, are believed to originate in ancient Egypt, though such structures have also appeared in Celtic, Chinese and South American architecture. Though dismissed as a unique form of decorative architecture, these stone towers represent something much darker.

Throughout history there are numerous records of mysterious objects spotted in the sky. These obscure accounts report of towering vertical objects, floating free in the air in defiance to all known physics. Less fantastic, though no less startling is the spontaneous appearance of monoliths around the globe. The back pages of architectural journals abound with the mystery of impressive obelisks which stand prominently in public places, yet fail to appear in plans, records, or even in the knowledge of locals.

It is believed by some fringe historians that the obelisks are signs of mysterious conspiracy with tendrils stretching around the globe. As sightings of large objects (sometimes as many as 13) standing tall and unmoving in the sky begin to reach the ears of a select few, stone structures continue to appear among towns and abandoned farmlands.

Monolith researchers delving into ancient history have uncovered evidence of sites where monoliths once stood, but from which they have since disappeared. The excavation of such sites has revealed tunnels dug into the earth, and in some cases, human remains.

Even more distressing are the rumours of strange happenings in proximity to these structures. Folklore tells of sightings of men and women who walk on all fours as crabs, spouting

inconceivable nonsense in a mixture of languages.

It remains unclear why only a handful of people have noticed these unusual occurrences. Photographs reveal the location of these architectural enigmas; numerous photographers discover their shots of the sky ruined by dark images, quickly dismissed as birds or improper chemical reactions.

There has been talk amongst Monolith researchers of a secret cabal in Tibet. That mystical kingdom remains the only realm known not to have been host to these obelisks, though settlements surrounding the kingdom are visited by monoliths with disturbing frequency.

To this day the monoliths remain a mystery. Few scholars are aware of their existence in ancient lore, and even fewer recognize these objects when they appear in broad daylight. Investigators of this phenomenon remain quiet, lest they be branded as fools or madmen by the public. Yet, still these fringe scholars search for the truth, silently delving into the mystery of the monoliths.

Forbidden Lore

Unbeknownst to the masses, human society has been infiltrated by a malign force. Strategically placed around the globe, the Monoliths serve as "listening posts", intended to observe humanity. Bound to one another by an intangible network, the monoliths gather information at the behest of a mysterious force. It is theorized by investigators of the arcane that these obelisks are sensors, gathering observations in a vast experiment – an experiment where humans are the lab animals. Perhaps the increased appearance of these structures in recent years suggests that the experiment nears its end.

Monoliths

Monoliths are uniform in size and shape: Each obelisk is seven feet in width and twenty five feet in height. The four-sided structure tapers to a width of three and a half feet at the top. The top of the monolith is capped by a small pyramid. The structure is made of grey granite and is supported by a squat cubical base.

It is considered an object and thus always fails reflex saving throws. The structure is immune to poison, sneak attacks and critical hits but it is not immune to mind effecting spells. A typical Monolith has the following stats:

Hp: 250

Hardness: 20

Int: 20 Wis: 20 Cha: 6

Fort: +15 Ref: Na Will: +17

Alignment: Lawful Evil,

If a Monolith were ever severed from the 'Mind Web', its stats drop to the following:

Int: 16 Wis: 12 Cha: 16

Alignment: Neutral

Fort: +15 Ref: Na Will: +9.

Combat

With a hardness of 20 and so many hit points an obelisk in its prime is nigh impossible to 'kill'. It can however be destroyed by vast amounts of explosives.

Memory Modification (Su): Monoliths can alter and remove the memories of those around it in a radial range of 300ft. This ability manifests itself with a nearly inaudible hum originating from all around the target. This effect is undetectable unless the victim makes a successful Listen check against a DC of 20.

For each day a Monolith is embedded in the ground without moving, this radius increases by 50 feet to a maximum of 1 mile. A Monolith can



erase or modify up to 4 hours of memory, or one spell slot, per use of this power. The effects of this ability increase by an extra hour for every year the obelisk has been in place, up to a maximum of 24 hours.

This unexplained power is limited. Anyone with foreknowledge of the Monolith's power is immune to this effect, so long as they are conscious. Sleeping person cannot maintain their mind's defence and are vulnerable to the objects insidious influence.

Victims of the monolith may attempt a Will saving throw of DC 20. If a person succeeds, they are immune to the memory modification ability for 24 hours and become aware of 'something tugging at their mind like a memory of something important'.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day - *Persistent Image*; At will - *Detect thoughts*, *Suggestion*, and *Telekinesis*. These effects are as spells cast by a 14th level sorcerer (save DC 14 + spell level) and have a range equal to the Monoliths Memory Modification radius.

Fly (Su): This ability is a Monolith's only method of travel. While in motion the monolith moves at a base speed of 15 feet and clumsy manoeuvrability.

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Mind Web (Su): A Monolith is in constant telepathic contact with the 'Mind Web', a network that connects it to all other Monoliths as well as 'The Masters'. This connection is not impervious. An anti-magic shell will sever the link, as will similar effects. Though it is possible to separate a Monolith from the influence of 'The Masters', the sudden disconnection may force the monolith to retreat, or perhaps even enrage the sentient structure.

It is not known whether or not this ability would allow it to communicate with human beings, nor is it known if such contact would induce madness.

Shimmering (Su): Monoliths may become invisible and intangible by 'shimmering'. This ability is similar to the spell *Ethereal Jaunt*. While shimmering the monolith shifts between the prime material plane and the near ethereal. This ability may be used at will, though only at night. In this manner a Monolith could 'shimmer' out of sight one night, begin its travel to a nearby country and 'shimmer' back into existence when it finally arrives.

Warping Madness (Su): Monoliths radiate an intense field of energy, affecting humans in a profound manner. For each week a monolith stands in place, the DC of any Madness check made within 1 mile of the structure increases by +1. Within 50ft of the Monolith the DC increase rises to +2

for every week the Monolith has stood in place.

Should a person fail 3 consecutive madness checks within the Monolith's field, the victim's body begin to warp. Over the coming days the subject changes into a hideous aberration, similar to a Backwards man or a Broken One (see *Denizens of Darkness*). These beings fall under the direct control of the Monolith.

Obelisks occasionally use their powers to "gas light" victims to create new minions. Once the monolith moves on, these warped minions retreat underground to form cults to worship their silent masters.

