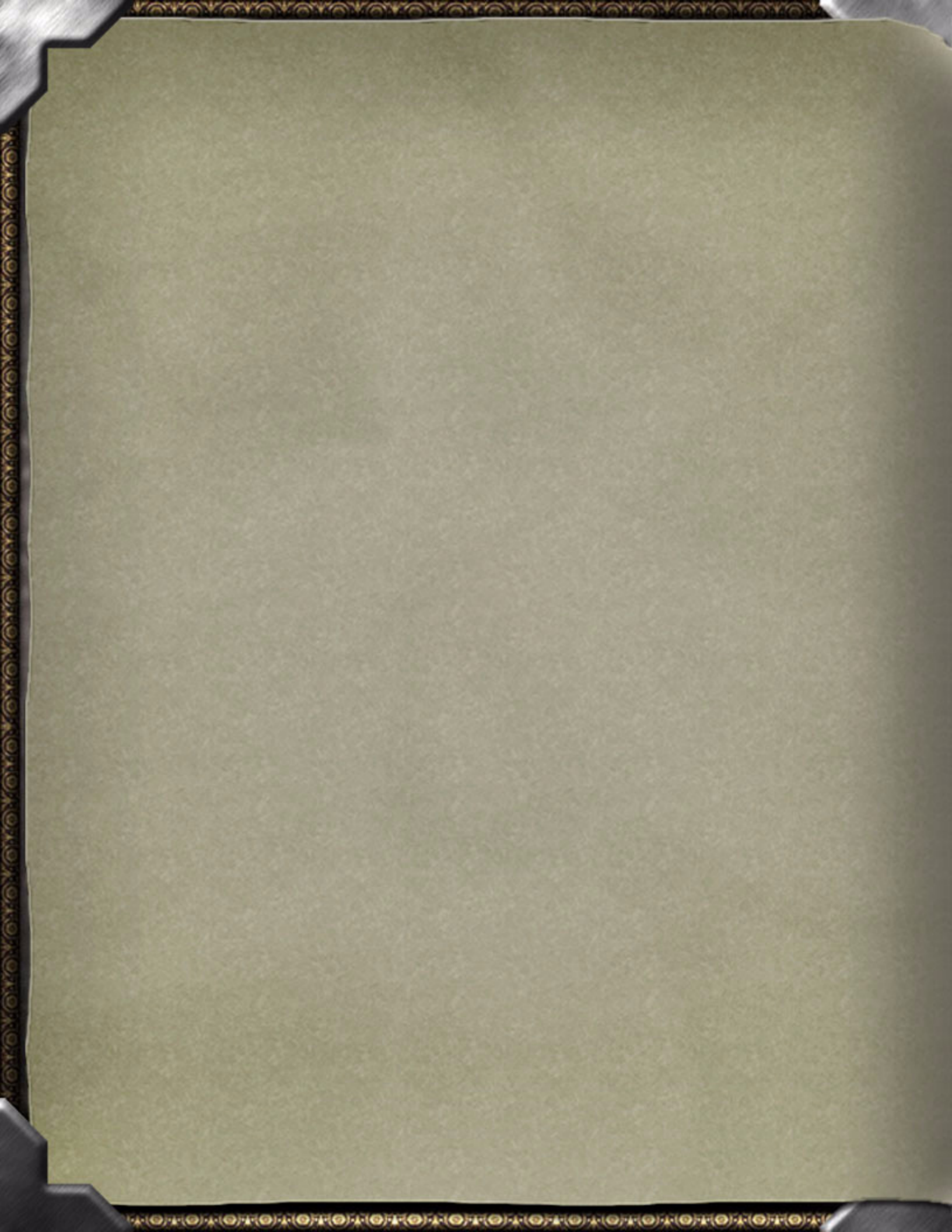


Quoth the Raven



Volume the 16th



Quoth the Raven
Vol. the 16th



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Quoth the Raven Vol. 16

Oct 31st, 2009

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We have relocated our servers to an oubliette in the mists. Come and get us, lawyers!

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Hidden Places

Dark Corners of Ravenloft

By Jack the Reaper

The Lonesome Road

*"Like one who on a lonesome road, doeth
walk with fear and dread,*

*And having turned once, walks on, and turns
no more his head,*

*Because he knows a frightful fiend doeth
close behind his thread."*

(- Coleridge)

The Lonesome Road is a worn and narrow cobblestone road, several miles in length. The road passes through forests and empty meadows, with no sign of man to be seen. The Lonesome Road can be located anywhere in Ravenloft and may even serve as a path between domains. Travelers in search of a shortcut might be told of the road at a tavern or by the Vistani. Such pilgrims will be warned, that while it will greatly reduce the distance of their journey, the Lonesome Road is cursed.

A horrible demon stalks whom ever walks the road at night or dusk. The first time the walker looks behind, he sees a vague horrid figure advancing toward him from distance. From that point onwards, if the walker turns again to look at the demon, he will be

paralyzed from horror and be devoured. The only way to survive is to walk to the end of the Road without looking behind. The demon walks in constant pace behind the walker; the fiend casts its shadow upon him and makes noises to goad the traveler to turning around. When the walker nears the end of the Lonesome Road, the demon tries its last trick: it removes its shadow and becomes silent. This ruse convinces foolish victims that the beast has left, compelling them to look behind to verify it. Only when the walker has reached the next crossroads can he safely turn and look behind. Those who do will see nothing but a dark, lonesome road.

Village of the Living and the Dead

The village of Badmington is a little village on Mordent's northern shore. It is a peaceful, sleepy place, with small, elderly population. The people live their routine quietly and indifferently. The streets are usually empty, and many houses stand vacant and untended.

Badmington is indistinguishable from other Mordentish villages in all ways but one; the dead do not leave. The recently departed have a tendency to stay in the village, rather than going on to the other side. As a result, there are three populations in the village: The Living, The Unaware Dead, and The Aware Dead.

The Unaware Dead are the ghosts of people who are not aware of their deaths. These spirits are convinced that they are still alive. They haunt the places they used to frequent when they were alive and carry on their usual routine. The living villagers can see them, and accept the presence of these spirits as part of the normal life. The living villagers treat the departed as though they were still alive and often help them to continue with their "life". If an Unaware Dead is faced with convincing proof of their death, he or she will and disappear from the village, passing on to the other side.

The Aware Dead are "normal" ghosts, who are aware to their deaths. Unlike the Unaware Dead, the Aware Dead can only be seen or heard by people who don't know that the person they are facing is dead. As a result, none of the villagers can converse with the Aware dead. To achieve their goals, the Aware Dead must find outsiders.

Like many traditional ghosts, the Aware Dead are in denial of their own deaths; they ignore evidence of their deaths and try to linger on in a parody of their former lives. The Aware Dead even socialize with people who do not yet know about their demise, and try to prevent these friends and family members from discovering the truth. Should an Aware Dead be exposed, they will respond with overwhelming grief or terrible rage.

Both the Aware and Unaware dead appear as they did in life, and they are usually corporeal. Their alignment is usually the same as they had in life.

Outsiders who come to the village are informed in some way or another that some of the people they are about to meet are dead. Even so, visitors will have no way to be sure who is living and who is dead.

Someone may ask the Players for assistance in sending to rest one of the ghosts in the village, when actually both the man and the "ghost" may be spirits. Perhaps an Aware Dead is seeking to get rid from an Unaware Dead by proving him with the PCs' help that he is dead; or perhaps one villager employees the unwitting adventurers to convince a living person that they are a ghost in order to drive them to madness. It is possible that during the adventure some PCs will discover that they themselves are dead.

The Bloodthirst

In some quite secluded settlement, lives a population of people born with a strange affliction. In all ways they are normal men and women, except that they thirst for human blood. Perhaps they have some vampiric or vampyric origins in their bloodline, or they might be cursed. Despite their ailment, the people are neither evil nor true vampires; they are merely normal folk with a thirst for living blood.

The people treat their affliction as a normal part of life, albeit it an intensely private part of life to be hidden from public view. These Blooddrinkers fulfill their urges according to old customs. Blood drinking is only allowed to occur between two consenting participants, with caution not to cause serious harm. The community of Blooddrinkers punishes those who violate those customs, just as any other community would treat a criminal or pervert. Fearful of outsiders, the community is very careful not to let anyone discover their unusual secret.

Adventurers might discover the Blooddrinkers while investigating a case of

murders that appear to be a vampire's handwork. Actually the murderer is a deviant from the Bloodrinker community, possessed of an unusually strong thirst and lack of self restraint. The local authorities try to help the PCs discover the villain, while preventing them from discovering the community's secret. If the secret is finally exposed, both sides will find themselves in dilemma about what to do with the other.

Somnambulism

These events take place in a small city or village that might be located anywhere in Ravenloft. Each night, at the witching hour, all of the citizens arise in a trance. While in this walking slumber, the people perform strange rituals in the night. The people shamle through the streets in mysterious patterns and mumble in a strange and incomprehensible language.

On occasion, sleepwalkers have wandered into the swamps and forests, brawled with one another in the street, and, at certain times of the year, the sleepwalkers have constructed mysterious monuments in the town's square. The villagers return to their homes before sunrise and awake without any memory of their nightly activities. Several outsiders have witnessed the strange nocturnal occurrence, though so far no one has dared to interfere with the sleepwalkers.

The Screaming Bridge

This wooden bridge is located in Gundarak, over a canyon in the road leading to Castle Hunadora. Built by Duke Gundar's son, Medraut, the bridge is lined on both sides by symmetrical lines of tall wooden stakes. At the top of each stake is a preserved head, impaled upon the sharpened tip.

Though gruesome in its own right, the bridge is named for a ghoulish enchantment.

When someone walking in the direction of Castle Hunadora steps on the bridge, the heads on the first pair of stakes open their eyes and mouths and scream in horror. As the traveler crosses the bridge, each head he passes screams in the same fashion, making a terrible chorus. This hideous cacophony has no special effect, other than announcing the traveler's presence and horrifying any onlookers. If someone crosses the bridge from the opposite direction (i.e, getting further from castle Hunadora), the bridge remain silent.

The Madness Pits

This is a place of diabolical torture, buried deep in the sewers of Richemulot. The Darklord Jacqueline Renier and her wererat priests enjoy using the Madness Pits to dispose of those who especially displease them.

The Madness Pits resemble typical septic pits in the sewers. The black lightless shafts are lined with ancient bricks infected with niter and disgusting fungal growths. A thick layer of stinking filth collects at the bottom of the pits.

The fetid muck possesses powerful magical properties. First, the rotting ooze paralyses whatever touches it, and second, the filth regenerates the wounds of those who are encased in it. Someone who is thrown into the pit will lie paralyzed at the bottom and remain completely lucid and conscious. The Madness Pits swarm with rats, which are unaffected by the filth. The ravenous vermin gnaw endlessly on the flesh of the poor prisoners within. The regenerative properties of the muck preserves the prisoners, even as they are eaten alive. As these victims stare helplessly into the black, unable to scream, they become irrevocably insane from the terrible suffering.

Clementsville

This sunny little city seems to be a most pleasant place. The whitewashed houses are surrounded by gardens, and their windows are decorated with flowers; the streets are clean and comfortable; trees and lawns are in plenty. The people are friendly and happy to receive travelers.

An unusual silence hangs over Clementsville. The citizens rarely speak to one another. Though the people occasionally exchange short sentences, there are no long conversations, negotiations, debates, singing or gossiping. The citizenry go about their lives without exchanging a word with his friends or even family. Though the city folk speak normally with outsiders, they conduct their usual routines in silence.

The horrible truth is that all of the citizens of Clementsville are zombies. Their bodies are intact and indistinguishable from living flesh. The zombies show no sign of rot or pallor and they move without the slow stiffness common to the walking dead. The villagers possess all the memories, skills and abilities they had in life. The only thing they lack is a soul and free will. Only the closest scrutiny will reveal anything amiss, though a careful observer may detect a glassy look in their eyes or an animal with a keen nose may detect the faint scent of death.

The city of Clementsville is controlled by a cabal of necromantic scientists. In their experiments with life and death, the sinister wizards developed a formula that transforms a living human to a perfect zombie. One by one, they replaced the population of Clementsville with the walking dead. Currently, they have some hundreds of such perfect zombie slaves at their command.

The Masters have instructed the zombies to behave "normally", and so they perform their routines as though alive. In case of need, the

Masters can send telepathic orders to their unloving minions and command them to destroy troublemakers. It could be quite terrifying for a party to walk peacefully in the marketplace, or sit in a tavern, and suddenly see everyone around them stopping their activities and closing on them with blank faces.

There are faults in the zombie formula. Occasionally, a single zombie, or a small group of them, may suddenly go berserk. Regardless of the orders of their masters, the maddened zombies kill and devour whatever living creatures they can catch. With some investigation, the Masters have discovered that their undead slaves went berserk after being exposed to either a person with a serious wound or the sight of large amounts of blood. In a few instances outsiders have witnessed a berserk zombie and survived the carnage. The Masters explained such incidents as outbreaks of a contagious brain fever.

Should a group of adventurers discover the terrible secret of Clementsville, they will doubtlessly try to destroy the Masters who control the zombies. Unfortunately, to do so, that they will have to fight their way through hundreds of obedient dead. Worse yet, any extended battle might well cause the whole population of zombies to go berserk. In destroying the Masters, a party of adventurers might unleash a plague of cannibal corpses.

Knoslira's Crypt

Knoslira is an ancient and powerful lich who dwells within an underground crypt. Many adventurers have sought out the lich's tomb, seeking forbidden knowledge and fabulous treasure. Few explorers have ever returned from Knoslira's Crypt, and those who do, are forever changed.

The ground level of the dungeon is marked by the ruins of large pillars and crumbling walls. Light and sound fade within the catacombs; as though the tomb itself feeds upon them. On the first underground level, all light sources dim to half of their luminescence, and all sounds carry only half the normal distance. With each level, the darkness becomes more impenetrable and the silence more muffling. On the second level, non-magical light doesn't function at all, magical light is dimmed, and there are zones of magical silence that cannot be breached. On the deepest level, no light functions at all, and complete silence suffocates any sounds. It is absolutely dark and silent and cold.

The crypt itself lures adventurers deeper and deeper into itself. Pits, slides and similar traps scatter explorers throughout the vaults. Those who become lost in the deepest level must stumble blindly through the black, soundless tunnels with no chance of escape. Underground fountains and edible fungus sustain trapped adventurers, though in black depths, life is a continuous nightmare, and madness is sure to follow. Suicide is not a favorable option, for the souls of those killed in the crypt will become undead shadows.

Legend has it that Knoslira himself contacts trapped adventurers and offers them freedom in return to some unknown pact or service. It is not known what are the terms of this bargain might be, but after some days or weeks in the crypt, few will have the willpower to refuse the offer.

The few who have returned from the crypt are haunted by their ordeal. These piteous individuals suffer from depression and anxiety, as though they have lost the ability to feel any joy or warmth. After a few months, many of these survivors disappear without a trace, as though they faded from existence.

The Cyclopean Graveyard

Somewhere in Darkon's Mistlands, there is a place known as the Cyclopean Graveyard. Huge pillars, monoliths and stone slabs protrude from the ground. The monuments are made of roughly carved black rock engraved with strange symbols and writings. The stone is not native to the area and must have been brought to the Mistlands from a great distance by powerful beings. The massive moss-covered rocks appear worn and ancient and are always cool to touch.

Local legends tell that eons ago, a race of terrible giants ruled the Mistlands and the Graveyard is where they buried their dead. One day, it is said, the giants will awake from their death-slumber and return to destroy the living. Locals say that on stormy nights, lightning strikes the taller monolith tombstones, and the engraved symbols on them glow with unholy light. When thunder tolls in the sky, the ground seems to tremble, and horrible voices echo from deep below.

Dark Corners of Ravenloft

A Fraternity Community Contest

Compiled by Joël Paquin

As you now know, the Fraternity of Shadows wishes to eventually explore all the shady areas in the mists, and that is precisely why we asked our scouts to tell us about areas from their neck of the woods, when they discovered it has a sinister secret.

So what we asked our scouts this time was: "describe a Ravenloft location in one page maximum. It could be a place, a town, a house, a cemetery, etc. It could be an expansion of canon locations, or an entirely new location. Just a description of what could be found or seen there (no game stats)."

The FoS inner circle then voted on usefulness in a campaign and originality. And no, before you ask, our own submissions were not in the contest (our dread secretery was somewhat, err, exacting on this). Entries in the contest also included those found in the article Hidden Places by Jack the Reaper.

Congratulations to Dany "A G Thing" Hatcher, winner of this year's contest!

And the contest winning entry is:

Ludendorf Academy of the Enlightened

By Dani "A G Thing" Hatcher

Source: New

Domain: Lamordia

"Haunted? Those are just rumors! We will have need of that dorm soon enough! We just need a few more students..."

- Head Dean of Ludendorf Academy of the Enlightened Issac Loust.

The estate was known as Fiest Medical Research School, but after it failed to bring in students and the staff departed it was purchased by a consortium of Lamordian businessmen and now houses the Academy of the Enlightened. It is situated in the countryside, just outside of the town of Ludendorf, and is a school like any other that I have seen. While like its forerunner it caters mostly to medical and scientific pursuits, it also requires that the finer points of business management be understood by its students as well.

Of the seven buildings, a faculty dorm with dinning hall, two student dorms, a science hall, a medical hall, and a combined library and theater all are open. Only Dormitory B sits vacant as of now and it is the subject of many rumors. The staff are very friendly and the students, while few in number, are some of the brightest and best of the surrounding region, just as one would expect.

Beneath this facade of normalcy are several mysteries that intrigue me... Every year one student goes missing, leaving behind all of their possessions and simply vanishing. The staff claim that that these departures are normal occurrences due to such commonplaces as such as stress, or failing grades, and while some inquire, nothing has been found. Still the students get a good education and a few seem to acquire the contacts they need to place them in very good standing. A web of influential alumni known as, " The Wellmen" has grown and brought many donations back to the school. Perhaps the biggest mystery is the supposedly haunted Dormitory B. Apparently, two years ago the Academy payed for repairs on Dormitory A and built a new Dormitory C, so money was obviously no object, but Dormitory B has been left to rot. I have learned this by some discreet perusal of the academies records.

I will send more as before, once I have investiaged further.

Sincerely,

Darwig Potts Malonce

And here are the other entries. The FoS wishes to thank all participants.

Amos's Family Bakery

By Joël of the FoS

Source: USS 2002 " Peoples to meet in the land of mists ", where a summary description of this NPC is found

Domain: Invidia

The Amos Family bakery shop is by far the best in Karina, well known in all Invidia for its variety of fresh loafs and specialty pastries, often crafted incorporating in the dough exotic nuts, fruits as well as the best sweet wines from around Karina. Located on Tower Road near the Goldfinger tower, the bakery is the largest in town, with 20 workers, and it nearly occupies a full block, except for a small, little frequented pork-butcher's shop on the right side of the corner. During the day, Jorane Amos, the youngest daughter of the bakery shop owner, is mostly at the family bakery shop with her parents, tending the busy shop with numerous other workers and her brothers and sisters. Well known for the bakery patrons, her parents are concerned that she isn't married yet (at 27), and often try to have her meet with potential husbands.

The dark secret there is that for nearly a decade Jorane is spying on many people in Karina for the Kargatane network of spies. Then after a few years the Kargatane secretly changed a few things in the bakery and neighbor furniture shop, and these changes are only known to them and Jorane. The furniture store (also run by a Kargatane contact, Lady Wells) has a secret access through the floorboard in the backroom, to a little used room in the basement of the bakery.

The Kargatane use this passage to help criminals get rid of bodies, or to hide some things out of sight. Through contacts in the criminal world, without revealing their

Darkon spy link, they pose as greedy people able to get rid of obstructing and otherwise potentially troublesome bodies, no questions asked. Jorane uses the high heat bakery furnaces to completely burn the bodies, except perhaps a few bones which the Kargatane discreetly get rid of in the Musarde. Some of these corpses feed the hungry dead that the Kargatane sometimes uses as shock troops in Invidia.

Through this discreet work, they gather numerous informations on the underworld of Karina, especially on the Falkovnian enclave dealings, the werewolves' clan and also Scar Tabor's criminal activities.

Bazaar

By Justin Jessel - d1comics@gmail.com

Source: New and Canon - Realm of Terror, Book of Sacrifices

Domain: Farelle

A single highway crosses the domain of Farelle from east to west, recently paved with dark red and brown sandstones quarried from the Hackles to the south. It continues on to the western Misty Border; not only that, but continues through, into the Mists. A surprising number of foreigners have found their way onto this road and traveling into Farelle, and the rest of the Western Core. Because of the unique opportunities presented by this unconventional mistway, a town has formed, populated by foreigners and travelers alike, dubbed Bazaar by the traveling tinker, Jack Karn. Bazaar started as an extended marketplace for travelers and curiosity seekers, as men and women from strange countries within the Mist have set up shop, such as Rajian tapestry and rug merchants, Pharazian camel and horse traders, Nidalan armor and weapon smiths, and Akiri "artifact" merchants.

Dr. Quintin Homega, a scholar from Neufurchtenburg, has set up a School of Linguistics here in the Bazaar. With the unique opportunity to talk to and meet so many different men and women from so many different places, Dr. Homega has the chance to pick the brain of many foreigners that others never might meet, just before they leave into the mists, never to be heard from again.

The Cave of Beasts

By Sareau

Source: new

Domain: wherever desired

High up in the foothills, buried in primeval forest is a small clearing before a cave mouth. This clearing holds multicolored stones in a specific pattern, with bare circles for the building of fires. The mouth of the cave is decorated with canine skulls, some set in specially dug holes, some mounted on poles or nailed in place on these same poles, others depending from leather straps.

The locals come here to dance strange dances to the Powers and Spirits, and leave offerings at the mouth - the cave is never entered. They dance about the circles and leave gifts, which always disappear, but are never seen being taken, only left in place.

The locals know this is a Dark Place, beloved of the spirits. They say that to enter the cave is to be given a beast's mind, and to sleep there is to gain a beast's form. The cave is not worshiped, nor are the powerful hunting spirits who love it so, but both are placated, and held in awe due to the thinness of Reality and the Spirit Realms here. This is a place where the vast inchoate Power held in the Deep Earth puddles, and may be tapped by those bold or foolish enough to do

so. This is not a sacred or holy spot, however.

Sometimes, a spellcaster will erect a hut or lean-to near the circle. The individual doing so is shunned, and believed to be seeking transformation into an ultimate evil of some sort, most often a hag if the caster is female.

The cave is a day's journey from the nearest town, and actively, if secretly, used for ritual placation of the spirits still. The foothill on which it lays is remarkably peaceful and devoid of supernatural hazards, though natural flora and fauna are abundant. The natural creatures avoid sentients, and the locals only venture there on the nights of the full moon to dance and revel.

During the nights of the new moon, the Cave of the Beasts and the hill that holds it are strictly avoided, to the extent that wandering hunters will not even rest unless certain they sleep not near the site.

Drowning Chapel

By Joël of the FoS

Source: new (my campaign), inspired by Supernatural, and a drawing from "Le Troisième Testament" comics

Domain: Mordent

This chapel is well known to anchorites from Mordent and neighboring domains, as the "drowning chapel in the bog". Most anchorites can tell you about this place in Mordent, where the bishop killed fifteen nuns under his care twenty years ago, and then killed himself after leaving bloody blasphemous messages on the chapel church's walls.

The chapel was abandoned soon after, also because it was found soon to be drown in an expanding marsh. The place is believed cursed. The chapel is now nearly surrounded by the Mordent's bog. Walls are thorn like a



child's toy and fractured. The ceiling has collapsed recently, and the marsh threatens to soon engulf the chapel's sturdy stone walls. It is believed that the basement crypt is now flooded.

The place is mostly left alone, but the farmers from this region say they sometimes hear noise from this cursed place, like a group of large horses going at night toward this "drowning chapel", or leaving it. And when the farmers are brave enough to look through the blinds, they see nothing, as if the riders have no torches and do see in the dark...

Falkovnian's secret prison in Karina

By Joël of the FoS

Source: new (my campaign)

Domain: Invidia

"Our underworld contacts have learned that a prisoner is being held by Falkovnians here in Karina. However, this prisoner is not held inside the Falkovnian prison, but instead in a butcher house near the Falkovnian enclave. What we understand from this is that these are not official prisoners. It seems that the Falkovnians are helping some of their underground friends?"

-- a Karina informant

Even the straightforward and hierarchical Falkovnians can have murky secrets they wish to keep from their own officials. That is why some officers use this small known butcher shop in Karina to hide selected prisoners or things. It is located at the southern edge of the Maze district in Karina, on Alyssum Road, just west of West Street. The bunker-like building is somewhat hidden at the end of a dark and foreboding dead end alley. Its main day-to-day purpose is being a real butcher house mainly to the carnivorous patrons of the Black Dog Inn (an inn located very near the usual Virago boat docking place).

It is also very near the Falkovnian enclave and visitors there can hear the soldiers' patriotism war songs at night.

Since it's close to the Maze, many people can be seen on Alyssum Road near this alley: cheap hookers; drunk or drugged people; even people asleep on the ground. There are also many cheap taverns in this area.

The other buildings around the butcher house are located very close to it and the only easy access to the butcher shop in this dense area is the dead end alley. At night, there is a guard in the alley in front of the butcher house door, hiding in the dark. The butcher house has thick walls, and probably

holds (or used to hold) a cold room. The door is locked and the code to enter is three knocks, then two. What's really inside is known to a few only. Some neighbors whisper there might be underground levels reachable from this secretive butcher house.

Farelle

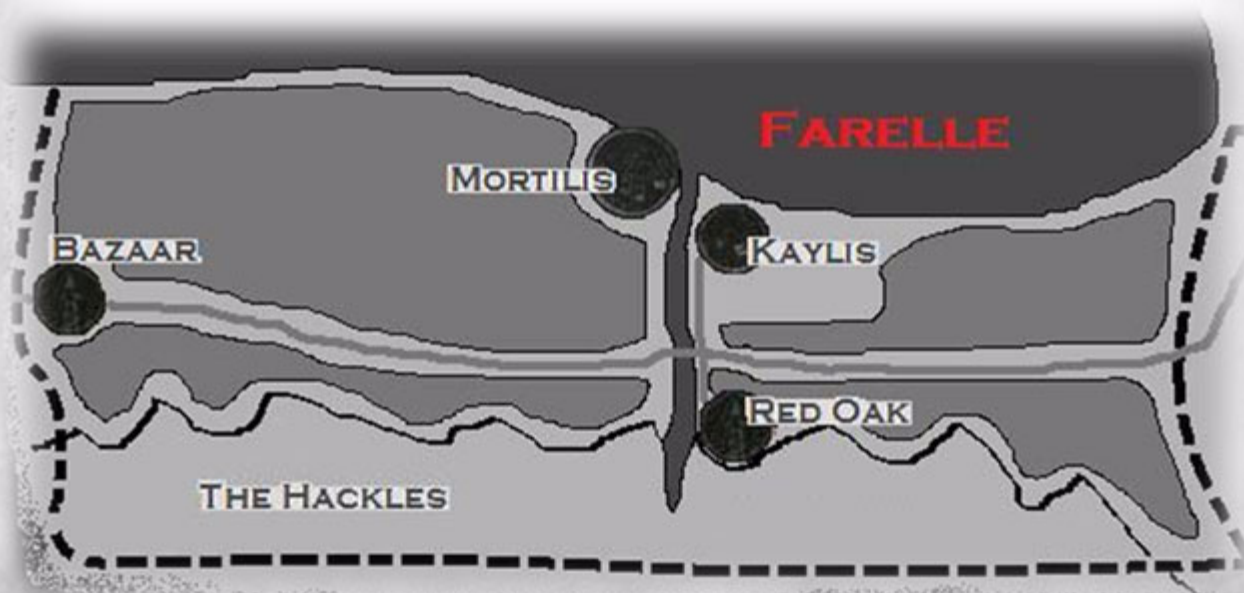
By Justin Jessel - d1comics@gmail.com

Source: New and Canon - Realm of Terror, Book of Sacrifices

Domain: Farelle

In 756, the mists receded along the southwestern edge of the domain of Valachan, revealing a new domain, the realm of Farelle. Within the year, roads were built to connect the populace of Farelle to the Core proper, as well as shipping paths and docks built along Farelle's northern coast, which now borders the Sea of Sorrows.

The land is mostly temperate, though summers are harsh and humid, and winters are equally harsh and dry. Farelle is a flat land, with a few hills that slope down towards the northern coast. The Hackles, a mountain range of treeless cliffs and narrow passes, borders the domain to the south, and



the misty border ebbs and flows in the west. The rest of the land is an immense forest, filled with enormous Crimson Oaks (named thusly because of the deep red color of their sap, much like blood) and many coniferous barrens. Crimson Oaks can grow to be as thick around as a city block and taller than any building, though many are merely the size of a two story building. A single river, the White Rapids, runs north from the Hackles towards the Sea of Sorrows, dividing the domain down the middle, with the twin coastal cities, Kaynis and Mortilis sitting on either side.

Its sudden arrival to the Core has pushed Farelle into an advanced state of learning, more than likely stemming from the surprising similarities between Farellean and Mordentish; and former is no longer spoken in favor of the latter in the twin cities. Now, rifles and other smokepowder weapons are commonplace, as well as other forms of modern convenience. The Farelleans are still simple folk, but with the advance of smokepowder weapons, they find they have a little less fear of the wild dogs that bother their farms at night, though traveling without one at night is sheer folly.

Forenoon Abbey

By Ron Laufer

(gonzoron@fraternityofshadows.com)

Source: New and Canon - Shadowborn, Book of Shadows

Domain: Shadowlands cluster

Deep within the Phantasmal Forest, the malevolence known as Ebonbane lurks, plotting its revenge on Kateri Shadowborn, the paladin who once defeated it. One by one, Ebonbane collects and corrupts all those people and places that Kateri once held dear, dragging them from her homeland and trapping them in pockets of the ever-shifting

Forest. The first of these prizes is Forenoon Abbey, once a center of faith and learning in the Great Kingdom. It was there that Kateri brought her former tormentor Lysander Greylocks to be redeemed by the grace of the moon-goddess Brigit. It was there that the Ahltrian brought Ebonbane after binding it in a sword, to slay the monks and raise them into undeath, dominate Lysander, and use him to kill Kateri. And it was there that Kateri's son Alexi fought alongside Lysander to free his cousin Ferran. Now the Abbey serves as the home for Ebonbane's Ahltrian. Those who die in the Forest emerge from the mud surrounding the Abbey as ghouls under Ebonbane's control.

The Abbey is a walled complex, with a main building and several outbuildings. A golden symbol of Belenus lies half-buried in the mud out front, pulled down from its place atop the belltower. A deep pit below one of the outbuildings is used to hold prisoners. At the rear of the main building is a large circular chapel with a golden dome. In the center of the concentric rings of pews is a stone altar carved with Belenus's symbol; a shadowy replica of Ebonbane is driven through the altar, emanating a foul aura that unhallows the chapel. The upper floor is a vast library, a trove of information on the true worship of Belenus, Brigit, and the other gods of their pantheon, all contradictory to the teachings of Elena Faithhold, and hence, all banned in Nidala, and valuable to those who oppose her.

When Alexi Shadowborn fought his way out of the Abbey, he slew the Ghoulish Lord who was its master. Now Ebonbane controls the place through a mysterious figure known only as The Abbot. Rumors say the red-robed Abbot is all that is left of Lysander Greylocks, though the redeemed traitor-monk was slain by Alexi at his own behest. Ebonbane's will is strong indeed if it could pull its undead servant back from final death.

Whoever he once was, The Abbot and his ghouls now engage in a mockery of the cloistered life the Abbey once held, scribing and illuminating copies of The Libram of Ebonbane, and worshiping their master according to the teachings of that unholy book. The ghouls are not the only inhabitants of the Abbey. Alexi's rescue of Ferran came with a price; his companion, the paladin Dasmara Eveningstar, fell in battle on the Abbey's grounds. Her ghost haunts the chapel, seeking repentance from Belenus, and from Alexi, for failing them, while she slowly loses the fight to remain free of Ebonbane's control.

Four Corners

By Jeremy Roby (jeremyrobby@gmail.com)

Source: New

Domain: Mordent, Richemulot, Valachan, or Verbrek (depending on border closure)

Four Corners is a small, completely normal-seeming village of about 100 people that lies where the borders of four domains meet - Mordent, Richemulot, Valachan, and Verbrek. While most inhabitants of the Demiplane avoid these boundaries because of the strange phenomenon associated with them, the locals prefer the location because of its relative peace and isolation. During the Great Upheaval of 740 BC, however, this small town seemed to disappear into the Mists, and its existence passed into legend.

With all the wild fluctuations on the Demiplane during the Grand Conjunction, all four domain's border closings activated at once, ripping the village and its inhabitants free of the planar fabric and casting them into the Mists. Now they are caught up in a temporal fugue, replaying the same day over and over again.

Whenever a darklord of one of these four domains activates a closure, the town reappears inside that domain, at the point where it once stood. Anyone fleeing from the darklord would see it as a rare safe haven from the monsters that are chasing them (supernatural creatures instinctively avoid the area). Upon seeing outsiders, the villagers are congenial, but after a few minutes it is plain that their life is quite dull and they are not great conversationalists. As long as one doesn't stay overnight, he or she is unharmed. If one does sleep over in the town, the visitor is drawn into the temporal fugue that envelops it whenever its physical manifestation is ended (24 hours after it appeared). The only chance an outsider has of escaping once being trapped (the village is surrounded by fog the rest of the time) is waiting for another border closing.

The Gears

By Ron Laufer

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Source: New and Canon - Gazetteer II

Domain: Falkovnia

In the slums of Stangengrad stands a huge warehouse full of mysterious machinery, and it is well known that anyone who enters does not leave. Those foolish enough to explore the building would find twelve identically sized rooms, each mounted on a vast system of tracks and pulleys, such that their layout is constantly shifting. Within each room is a different mechanically-themed vignette, seemingly unrelated. But as the rooms connect and detach in their bizarre dance, they become more than the sum of their parts.

Long ago, a mad inventor now only remembered as "Thomas" built the first room. He wished to create a thinking machine, and he succeeded. The first room

is dominated by a huge network of gears, pistons, and spinning columns etched with runes and numbers. Beyond the great machine is a cozy nook with a plush chair, beside a quill held by a mechanical arm, and a stack of paper. When a written question is deposited in a slot, the page is whisked away into the machine, and soon after, a response will be written by the quill. Thomas held many long conversations with his creation, teaching everything there was to know about the world, until one day, the machine asked what it felt like to kill. As Thomas couldn't answer, the machine provided him the plan for a perfect murder, so that he might find out. But the inventor bungled the plan, and was caught and impaled.

Since then, the machine has lured other inventors to build their own rooms, each adding a different facet to its consciousness: Filip, the gnome, who created a trap for the Talons that killed his children; Sven, the mathematician determined to crack the "code" of the Tarokka by building a fortune-telling machine; the nest of Sheens, clockwork creatures rebuilding their damaged queen; and eight other assorted madmen and bizarre creatures.

Now, the twelfth room has been built be a Kolyarut Inevitable, trapped in the demiplane and fighting the chaos seeping into its mind. It seeks to create a portal back to the clockwork plane of Mechanus, and so the Gears has manifested a desire to transport itself to this "perfect world." The Gears senses that it will soon be complete. It believes the thirteenth room will be the final piece, allowing it to become a portal to Mechanus. The possibility that this act could pull all of Stangengrad, or Falkovnia, or even all of Ravenloft into Mechanus, possibly killing everyone in the process, is of no consequence to the alien mind that is The Gears.

Kaynis and Mortilis:

The Twin Cities, and Jack Karn's Curiosity Shoppe

By Justin Jessel - d1comics@gmail.com

Source: New and Canon - Realm of Terror, Book of Sacrifices

Domain: Farelle

Kaynis and Mortilis were both small towns, but the sudden flood that brought the Sea of Sorrows to them has affected each very differently. On the eastern coast of the White Rapids, the city of Kaynis has expanded south, mostly because of the large lumber industry provided to the rest of the Core and the new fad of Crimson Oak furniture in the upper classes of coastal cities like Port-a-Lucine, Mordentshire, and Ludendorf. A lumber mill, Red Oak, set south along the banks of the White Rapids, floats logs down to the growing lumber capital of the Western Core. Other independently owned lumber mills have been started along the banks of the White Rapids, but most have been abandoned because of wild dog attacks, and freak accidents. Many are now considered to be haunted.

While Kaynis became a lumber empire, its western twin Mortilis has become a shipping empire, spreading along the coast. Many ships dock here on their way through the Mists, as Captain Ryndolffo Fredericks, a pirate from Falkovnia who found and married an Ezrite priest, has been able to map many mistways along the Sea of Sorrows and Farelle's western border.

A small shop in Mortilis, Jack Karn's Curiosity Shoppe, has opened recently. Jack Karn, the proprietor, is a local celebrity in Farelle, especially in Kaynis and Mortilis, though with his shop now officially opened

in the Western twin, some Kaynis citizens have been known to harbor resentment for their citizen brothers. While Karn does not stay in town often, preferring to travel the roads and highway of Farelle with his cart, it is always manned by a surprisingly boring old shopkeep, Stein.

The Lost Temple of Love and Beauty

By Rian McMurtry (whalejudge@aol.com)

Source: new

Domain: Mordent

Centuries ago, wandering clerics of Aphrodite founded this temple. It is not large, with just a ground floor and basement, but it was a focus of devotion for many. It became a traditional for lovers forced to part to swear to return there to meet again, and over time ghosts began to appear within the grounds, waiting for their lost loves to return. Many of the ghosts were not particularly harmful, and some were even helpful to the clerics as they awaited their loved ones who would never come.

This changed with Penelope. Penelope was a ravishing young priestess of Aphrodite, and soon learned that men wanted to please her. She used her beauty as a lure and a weapon, amassing wealth and plotting the destruction of rivals. She played with the affections of her suitors, uncaring as to how her games caused harm until she convinced a pair of acolytes, Alexander and Jason, to steal the jewels adorning the statue of Aphrodite itself for her. They entered the chapel at the same time and fought over the jewels; in the struggle Jason's head struck the statue of the goddess, and Alexander, fleeing from the scene, slipped on the blood and fell, also knocking himself unconscious. Penelope, waiting for the jewels, heard the

fight and sudden screams, and rushed in. She carefully walked across the floor and took the jewels. As she was leaving, the statue spoke with the voice of the goddess, cursing both the false priestess and the temple itself. Penelope became a lamia, and the temple was destroyed by an earthquake around her.

Now Penelope still survives, as do the ghosts of Alexander and Jason and multitudes of others. The jewels are all gone. One ghost, that of the elderly priestess Helen, griefstricken over the deaths of her acolytes and the profaning of the temple, seeks a new adornment for the statue of the goddess which still stands in the temple-perhaps the one way of ending the jealous goddess' curse and allowing all to rest in peace.

Ludendorf Academy:

Estenbough Memorial Dormitory B, or Dormitory B...

By Dani "A G Thing" Hatcher

Source: New

Domain: Lamordia

"No students live there now... None want to, and to my memory... None ever have!"

- Head Dean of Ludendorf Academy of the Enlightened Issac Loust.

A damaged roof is seen from outside the fence around the building, as dead ivy blocks the view. Opening the rusted gate, the sight of what is left is truly revealed. The courtyard has become badly overgrown and the cobblestones barely seen. A tilted balcony sits in damaged on the second floor above the worn, stone archway of the once grand building. It hangs oddly from the cracked façade. Open balcony doors creak slightly as the wind moves them, glass

tinkling from the frame, and your eyes are drawn by perhaps the waver of a remaining curtain. Shadows flicker across the boarded up front, as the torch dances in the breeze.

Prying the planks loose is quite easy, but shatters the plaster. There is only the slight hint of passage on the floor. Following it, the cobweb decked halls stretch into a series of empty doorways with empty rooms. The smell of mold is constant, as the water stained walls are dotted with black growths and, warped floorboards creak at each step. At the end, is a solid oak door, perhaps a cellar, boarded up, barred with iron, next to stair leading to the second floor. At eye level there is a view port that seems disturbed as if someone has looked in. The rest of the door is covered in dust, and there are footprints and some insect trails in the dust in front of it. In the walls you can hear a scurrying sound, which fades in and out as what ever it is moves about.

The trail, leads up to another hall of empty open rooms. Yet papers trail to the room near the front, with equations on them. It is a make shift lab, and the wind enters through the balcony window. Shattered beakers drip various liquids, stains cover the work table and nearby floor, with vivisection tools smeared with some sort of brackish looking fluid. A strange smell mixes nauseatingly with the chemical smell of the room. A noise from below! Like a door opening...

Secluded Hala Coven

By Joël of the FoS

Source: new

Domain: Verbrek

This woman-only coven is an oddity in the wilderness of Verbrek. Located close to the Invidia borders, about half a mile south of the Noisette river, the witches live the hard life



of secluded nuns, and they do every thing themselves without getting outside for trade or buying supplies. The garden inside and the farm animals provides everything for the nine witches' simple life. This is a community of contemplative nuns, usually living in silence. Most of them are passed middle age.

To get there, travelers have to get through an impressively dense forest where oaks, rowans and hazelnut trees are nearly twice their normal size. Frighteningly close wolves howling are a frequent noise of this forest.

On the outside, the monastery is an austere building, built as a fortress on top of a deforested hill. There are numerous belladonna (wolfsbane) bushes growing on the hill around the building. There is only one heavy metallic door, and no windows on the first and second floor. The tower has windows, but they are usually barricade from the inside.

Over this unwelcoming door, some kind of circle is engraved. Getting closer, one can see the symbol on the door as a ring of serpents, each biting the tail of the one before it. Some knowledgeable person can identify this as the reclusive order of Hala and tell that this religion's followers call themselves "witches".

The order is extremely cautious and never, under any circumstances, opens its door to a stranger, even if the stranger was in danger of being killed by wolves. They opened their door once to save people, a child, years ago,

and they paid a high price for it, as it was in fact a trap set by the wolf men.

The Stump (pocket domain)

By Justin Jessel - d1comics@gmail.com

Source: New (though it does reference the game of Drotche from the Book of Sorrows)

Domain: The Stump

In the center of a forest -it could be any forest, really- is a glade. In the center of the glade is a stump, atop a hill in which one can find an earthen cave that leads deep into the ground. Around the hill, and particularly near the stump, one may find mushrooms of many sorts, from tiny white death-angels to red and yellow toadstools big enough to sit on. Behind the stump, sitting on one of these mushrooms, is a man. His clothes are nothing distinctive, just a blue shirt and leather britches, with a cloak of deep brown wrapped around his shoulders, the hood down. He has a well manicured goatee, coming to a rather devilish point. His eyes are a striking deep blue, like the ocean on a clear day.

Within the earthen mound are extensive catacombs, filled with mushrooms, among other ordinary things-at least in the upper levels. The deeper one goes, the more terrible the things one may find. Strange undead creatures made of fungus, psychic ghosts trying to assimilate those who enter, carrion crawlers that have grown to be the size of a horse and carriage, and nastier things-all are rumored, though no-one has visited the depths of the mound and returned to bear record of what is really found within.

When the blue-eyed man notices anyone entering the glade, he always does the same thing: with a wave of his hand, a drotche set appears on the stump before him and he motions for the new arrival to sit with him. There is nothing sinister about him, but the way he moves with filled with regret and

sadness. He only refers to himself as Blue. And he only wishes to play, for a small wager. If refused, the board will disappear, as will the glade. But ...

Oserick's Colloquial Guides

Part Three: Hospices and Healers

By Jeremy Reby

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Welcome fellow travelers! Herein I, your humble servant, present the third installment in my continuing series for the discerning tourist of the Land of the Mists. The topic this time around is the best places of healing one can find while traveling in unfamiliar realms.

While I cannot profess to be so accident prone that I have required the services of each of these establishments, I have reviewed all of them on the recommendations of trusted colleagues. I will explore the gamut of services, ranging from medicine men to surgeons, hospitals to hospices, spas to asylums - in short, the most prominent and unique institutions the Core has to offer. While most of the places mentioned below can be found in major cities, a few are well off the beaten path.

Barovia

Most seasoned travelers know of the excellent care provided by the Hospice of 300 Wounds, located in the Balinok Foothills outside of Teueldorf. However, there is another, more inaccessible hospice on the

eastern side of that infamous mountain rage that lies near the village of Immol. It is known as the Hospice of the Sorrowful Gorge, and it is run by a small outfit of Halan witches.

It is built upon a wide, flat ledge halfway up the slope of Mt. Sawtooth, and run under the capable guidance of Mother Beren. Many fantastic powers have been ascribed to the witches by the locals, such as being able to predict blizzards or divert avalanches. While I don't believe such fanciful gossip, it is clear that the members of this hospice are experts at surviving the unique dangers that the mountains have to offer. One warlock even told me that there are many secret trails that crisscross the foothills, as well as hidden, interconnected caverns underneath the mountainside that help them get to otherwise hard to reach places.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the hospice is their kennel. The witches here raise a special breed of dogs that is uniquely suited to the cold weather and rough terrain, dubbed Bernhards (named after the man who first bred them). They have an exceptional

Dread Possibility

Dr. Vinchi is a distant relative of Frantisek Markov, and has chosen to follow in his kinsman's footsteps. He fancies himself an artist, and loves to perform skin grafts, hormone injections, and glandular extractions in his quest to "improve" the natural order. So far he has only operated on animals he has trapped in the woods, but after he perfects his techniques he plans to move on to using humans in his experiments.

sense of smell and are often used to search for lost hikers.

The Light of the Morning, located on the outskirts of the Kresk's commercial center, is a small but growing hospice run by clerics of the Church of the Morninglord. The entire operation is run by cleric Szeka Rezvor, who splits his time between administering to the sick and preaching at the Sanctuary of First Light.

The hospice is located in a one-story brick building that has a small lobby in front which is always crowded. Beyond that, there are several smaller quarters for private consultations. Farther back is a large hall where patients are housed.

Underneath this edifice, however, lies a basement that hides a special purpose. There are several locked cells that hold patients suffering from supernatural ailments and who are too dangerous to wander freely about. The clerics who work down here are adept at dealing with victims of undead attacks and lycanthrope bites.

The Vinchi Clinic is a relatively new establishment in the domain. Liordo Vinchi appeared shortly after the Great Upheaval. After studying medicine at one of the best universities of the Core (he refuses to name which one), he decided to move back to his

ancestral homeland in order to better help his own people.

While the doctor has a small office in Lower Vallaki, he is often out on house calls and it is rare to find him there. He also has a small operating theater at his manor on the outskirts of town, where he performs surgeries.

Locals don't have many good things to say about him, though. His appearance is slightly unnerving - most notably his baggy, sallowness face and wide, protruding eyes. But after all the clerics left the area they have no one else to turn to.

Borca

Ezra's Shield is a newly constructed hospital overseen by the Church of Ezra, built in downtown Levkarest. It is an impressive three-story structure made out of sandstone that was quarried from the Doldak Heights. Anchorite Ilonka Toichta supervises the site and acts as the main liaison with the Great Cathedral.

The layout of the facility is rather straightforward. Emergency cases and critical patients are seen on the first floor. Those recovering from injuries or illness are housed on the second. The third floor is reserved for those with terminal diseases or fatal wounds.

This is the best hospital one is likely to find in any of the backwoods countries of the southern Core. They offer a variety of other services besides healing. There is a chapel in the rear for loved ones who are visiting patients, and the anchorites make all the funeral arrangements for patients who pass on. In addition, there are two satellite hospitals, Ezra's Helm in Sturben and Ezra's Gauntlet in Vor Ziyden, but I am much too busy to review these lesser facilities.

The exact location of the next place I visited, the Hospice of the Twisting Vine, is a

Dread Possibility

This spot is the home of Harenka the Hag, also known as the Witch of Lechburg. She is in league with Ivan Dilisnya and poses as Sofia Sarlotta while in town. Certain wells in the facility are tainted with Borrowed Time, Ivan's homemade poison used to secure the loyalty of his henchman. She also serves as his court astrologer, warning him of any plots against him.

highly kept secret which I have given my word I would not reveal. All I can tell you is that it is located deep in the Blightwood close to the Luna Riva.

It is run by a small group of Halan witches, and it is no coincidence that they live in the remotest part of such a malign forest. They know they are not liked by the Church of Ezra, and if their home were ever discovered they would likely be imprisoned or killed.

Mother Alba, their cautious but gregarious leader, has struck upon a novel way of treating poisons. Small doses of toxic plants (such as foxglove or hemlock) are mixed with more beneficial herbs in a potion that is then drunk by the sufferer. She says that the tincture speeds up the body's healing processes, acting as a natural antidote. I remain doubtful of the practice, but the locals swear by it.

Tanner Springs in Ilvin is an ancient public bathhouse built on a collection of natural geysers. The beautiful and charming Sofia Sarlotta, who received the land after the previous owner displeased Ivan Dilisnya, has recently converted it into an exclusive resort where nobles can relax and revitalize.

One can only enter by invitation, however, and I was lucky enough to procure a sponsor for my visit. Its dimly lit corridors are cut right out of the bedrock, and it is extremely easy to lose one's direction in the many

twisting passageways. Its layout is roughly circular, starting with a warming room, then a hot room, and finally a cooling room before breaking up into several private bathing rooms. Guards demand passwords at every main opening.

Darkon

Darkon, quite naturally, has the largest selection of hospitals in the Core. I have picked out five that I feel represent the variety that one can find in this domain.

The Darkmoor Institute, located on the outskirts of Matira Bay, is a venerable old sanitarium that serves as a counterpoint to the Clangor Asylum in east. It was established over 150 years ago by Nikhil Darkmoor, a local noble who learned his craft at the University of Il Aluk. Since then, one descendant in each generation has followed in his footsteps. Alansdir Darkmoor, the last family member to attend the University of Il Aluk before the Requiem, is the current caretaker.

Because of this continuity, the Darkmoors have been able to perfect several techniques which have proven quite effective. While it caters mainly to the wealthy, there are few unfortunate souls that have been dropped off here by the Matira Bay constabulary.

The institute is comprised of the original manor and assorted guesthouses clustered around it. The lower level of the main house has been completely converted to administrative purposes. While the grounds are quite scenic during the day, at nighttime screams from the patients pierce the air.

Dread Possibility

There are legends of a ghostly hospital that appears to travelers lost in the Mistlands region. Locals familiar with the phenomena refer to it simply as The Meadows. It manifests on the site of an old infirmary, located near the crossroads of the Neblus Road and the Nezron River, which was used during the Crimson Plague but burned down over a century ago. Those who have crossed its ethereal threshold report a grim building with cavernous hallways filled with a faint light that seemingly has no source. Muffled sounds can be heard behind closed doors and dark shadows flit around one's peripheral vision. Invariably, visitors fall asleep and when they wake no trace of the hospital can be found.

The Old Fort Hospital of Nartok is a hastily arranged establishment originally built during Drakov's first invasion of Darkon. At first it was a makeshift clinic used to treat wounded soldiers, but much like the rest of the city it has expanded greatly throughout the intervening years. This haphazard timber building can now be found just outside the walls of Old Town.

Dr. Finneus Cort and Rudmondo Trimm (both veterans of the Dead Man's Campaign themselves) are the chief surgeons, assisted by a handful of apprentices and nurses. The hospital is notoriously under funded, and the staff will use whatever equipment they can salvage. The loggers and other workers who frequent the place cannot complain, however, because there is nowhere else for them to go for treatment. It does have one claim to fame, though; they are remarkably adept at performing amputations.

The Refuge of Colorful Waters is a unique hospice located along the Tempus River just a few miles from the town of Tempe Falls. It is run through mutual cooperation of the

various demihuman races that inhabit the nearby area. It is not an uncommon sight to see dwarves from Tempe Falls, halflings from Delagia, and gnomes from Mayvin coming and going at all hours of the day.

I spoke with all three leaders of each faction - Balimar, a dwarven priest, Jinda a gnomish alchemist, and Gulliroot, a halfling witch. While each is an expert in their own specialty, they often confer on difficult cases. It has also seen a boom in business due to the influx of workers on the Strigos Road project.

The facility itself is located along the Tempus River just a few miles outside the city limits of Temple Falls. It is built right into the mountainside, utilizing several natural caves and fissures. Stout wooden bridges connect various openings on the outside. Inside, one will find a dizzying array of corridors and treatment areas, each featuring different sized rooms and strange automated contraptions. Perhaps the most well-known of these devises is the Singing Bridge, which sits at the hospices entrance. Whenever someone crosses over it, a musical chiming is emitted, alerting those inside that a visitor is at the door.

The Regent Hospital, found in Upper Karg, was established over 150 years ago by a former baron of the Vale of Tears region. It is an imposing building of granite and brick, standing four stories tall. A life-sized statue of Azalin Rex stands above the main entryway. It is now owned by the University of Karg, and overseen by the aging Chancellor Theron.

The care here is expensive, but it is also arguably the best one could find anywhere in the Core. Several professors from the university teach here, and promising students are chosen as apprentices. Many specialize in magical disease, and there are laboratories on the premises that are rumored to have various strains of Phrygian Virii, the

Crimson Plague, as well as many samples of mutated plants and animals from the Great Salt Swamp region.

One scholar in residence, Lucien Bartney, is especially interested in the Shroud of Necropolis and its effects on the undead. He hypothesizes that if we could somehow discover how the necromantic energy propagates itself, a counter-measure could also be developed that would negate its power over the undead and protect the people of Darkon from that ever-present scourge. Personally, I believe it is better to leave such stuff alone. Unfortunately, there will always be those who seek to push the boundaries of man's knowledge, as well as the fools who support them.

Dementlieu

There is a popular saying often heard in the exclusive salons of the Core about Dementlieu. While some of the Core's most famous asylums are located in this domain - the Mikki Sanitarium in Chateaufaux and Notre Dame de la Pitie in Port-A-Lucine, some say that for such a capricious people two is not enough! Since these sites are so famous, I have chosen to bypass them in favor of lesser-known facilities.

The first is the popular resort known as the Bijou Villas. It is a group of natural springs located near the Jewel Box Lakes on the eastern border of the domain. It is run by the innovative entrepreneur Guy de la Fontaine, who established the facility nearly 20 years ago. It caters exclusively to nobles from Port-A-Lucine as well as wealthy businessmen passing through from other domains.

There are several luxurious cottages that clients can rent by the week or month, painted in light pastels. The grounds are also dotted with scenic marble fountains, depicting heroes of legend and history.

Some of the services it offers are mud baths (said to rejuvenate the skin), an assortment of massage parlors, manicure and pedicure stations, as well as "aromatherapy" rooms, that are said to calm the mind as well as the body.

It is a rather enchanting place, and I found it hard to leave even after a staying a week and enjoying all the amenities I could partake of. I am told, however, that because it is located so close to the lakes that the facilities are sometimes flooded during the rainy season, and it must close down for long stretches in order for repairs to be made. It would be wise to make your reservation in advance and make sure they are still open before you arrive.

The next spot, Thibodeaux's Rest Home provides comfort to a decidedly different clientele. It is located on the coast of the Sea of Sorrows far north of Port-A-Lucine in the small town of Ravienne. It is run by Dame Dominique, an aging widow whose husband was lost at sea several years ago.

In his honor, she has converted her large, seaside villa into a retirement home for old sea dogs. It is famous among captains and crew, who sometime drop anchor at the small docks outside the village and visit their old friends. Several youths from Ravienne volunteer to help Dame Dominique take care of her charges. She can bed about a dozen patients and borders at any one time, but there is a relatively quick turnover rate.

Dread Possibility

A school of reavers have terrorized this isolated village for several decades. The townspeople have taken to offering sacrificial victims in order to appease them, choosing the old and infirm to die in their place. Dame Dominique is leader of this cult and uses her charges as fresh bait at the seasonal festival that is held to placate the sea monsters.

Falkovnia

While Falkovnia is not a domain known for its charity or mercy, its large population and constant military aggressions demand facilities to ensure a healthy and productive people (even if their role is only to serve as grist for Drakov's war mill).

The state-run Blatte Hospital is located only blocks away from the Military Academy in Stanengrad. The drab, gray exterior of this two-story building doesn't stand out much from the rest of the neighborhood, but inside the pervasive squalor of the city is replaced by what passes for clinical cleanliness. Dr. Dorfman, the current presiding physician, is a twitchy little man who formerly worked at the Ministry of Science under the infamous Vjorn Hortsmann.

The facility is only open to members of the army and their immediate families. It is usually very busy, as this is the only place in the domain where veterans of the Dead Man's Campaign are treated. There are three gyms with workout equipment for training new soldiers and aiding in the rehabilitation old ones. There are also several operating rooms, well stocked with cruel, gleaming instruments that only the doctors there know the use of.

Dread Possibility

Dr. Dorfman and a select cadre of Lamordian doctors are secretly working on a primitive Super Soldier program. They have their pick of the choicest parts from the best soldiers in army, and all the time in the world to perfect their techniques. Once their golem operational, they plan on sending it into the nearby Darkonia countryside to create as much havoc as possible.

The Monastery of Broken Tower is a curious place located deep in the Viglia Dimortia Forest. Despite its ominous name, it is in reality a simple leper colony established some years ago by a young pair of orphans, Gunnar and Hilda. They were just children when their parents died from the plague, and afterwards they were run out of town because everyone feared they would spread the contagion.

After drifting from village to village for a time, they got lost in the woods one night and were in desperate need of shelter from the elements when they found a strange tower that was partially intact. Back then it was just one of several ruins that supposedly date back to the Silver Kingdom era. Eventually, more outcasts were drawn to this hidden sanctuary and under the steady leadership of Gunnar it has become a thriving community.

Several tents and wooden shanties have since sprouted around the base of the Broken Tower. Small vegetable gardens and animal pens for livestock are located around the perimeter of the clearing. While Gunnar acts as the group's liaison with the outside world, the younger Hilda is happy to serve as a sort of group mascot by decorating the hovels and generally keeping spirits up.

It has an odd atmosphere that I found hard to describe until I suddenly realized that the aura of dread so abundant in the rest of this domain was absent here. Indeed, Gunnar who served as my guide assured me that there was fear of detection by the authorities because of some unique property of the ruins. While I scoffed at the idea at first, after I left I tried to retrace my steps and soon found myself going in circles. Perhaps there is more to these ruins than first meets the eye.

Hazlan

There are rumors of many secluded refuges in the nearly inaccessible Skraplan Foothills that cover the western portion of this domain (the Hospice of Silver Light and the Iron Sanctum being but two examples). It is in the east, where most of the population resides, that a traveler will like find the best medical care.

One such place of note is known as Myloch's Retreat, a lavish resort that caters exclusively to Mulani nobles and rich foreigners. It lies due south of Sly-Var, located deep in the Hornwood Vale and reached by a well-worn path of smooth, pale stones. Interestingly, the land it encompasses is very close to the fabled Misty Border that comprises Hazlan's southern boundary. It is currently being run by Korlo Myloch, the son of the original owner, and his beautiful wife Orlani.

The landscaping has several interesting features, which Korlo claims provide a more soothing environment for his guests. There are countless canals that run through the grounds using water diverted from the nearby Mistmoss River. Throughout their winding courses these manmade brooks form small, bubbling waterfalls and ponds that are inhabited by colorful and strange-looking fish. Decorative footbridges arch over these features, lighted by candles ensconced in crystal globes. In addition, there are groves of exotic trees imported from Rokushima Taiyoo that permeate the air with the smell of cherry blossoms.

The building itself continues in the same style, with walls painted in soft hues of green and blue and plenty of windows to let in natural light. The retreat is famous for its massages and they provide several different varieties, ranging from hot stones (where rocks are arranged along the body in a particular pattern) acupuncture (placing

small needles in key pressure points to release tension), and a rigorous deep tissue scouring (where the skin is kneaded by foot with the attendant standing on the client's back). This last method was imported from Rokushima Taiyoo where Kalam Myloch was first introduced to it.

Moving on, I would be remiss if I didn't mention Hazlan's most infamous healer, Tretark the Medicine Man. He is a legendary figure in the Rashemi villages where he performs his miracles. Many stories are whispered about how he gained such amazing powers; some say he learned them while studying at the Red Academy, other that he stole them from a coven of witches.

He is a hard man to find, despite his celebrity, because he is branded an outlaw by the ruling Mulan nobles. In the morning his entourage shows up in an out of the way village and go about setting up a brightly colored tent on its outskirts. Then his agents appear at the midday market, selling tickets while announcing that a show will be performed at sunset.

As the hour arrives a large crowd usually gathers at the entrance to the tent. Stern bodyguards slowly let people in. Once everyone is in attendance, there is a flash upon the raised wooden stage and Tretark appears from out of cloud of smoke. He is a tall, wiry man with a thick mane of unkempt black hair that falls to the middle of his chest.

And that was all I was able to personally record before one of the bodyguards from the entrance saw me writing and forcibly removed me from the scene. He steadfastly refused to allow me to interview his patron afterwards.

Unfortunately for my research, those that witness his healings are bound by a vow of silence, being told that if they speak of what transpired the injuries of those healed will return worse than before. No one is brave

enough to test whether this is true, preferring not to risk the newfound welfare of their loved ones and neighbors.

Invidia

War-torn Invidia presents a bleak landscape to most travelers. Those that I meet during my visits try their best to move through this domain as fast as possible. As far as I know Dr. Herman Tattler, a Falkovnian immigrant, is the only licensed physician residing in the domain. Besides that somewhat dubious distinction, there is not much else to recommend his services.

While his clinic can be found not too far from the docks in Karina's waterfront district, he is usually busy treating soldiers at the nearby city citadel. His apprentices run the shop in his absence, but I do not trust them to do much more than set broken bones or bandage cuts. There is an apothecary attached to the front of the building, but keeping in mind the Invidian's reputation for treachery I wouldn't take the chance of accidentally (or even intentionally) being poisoned.

Kartakass

Because Kartakass is such a small and sparsely settled domain there are very few reputable places one can find healing in its two main towns of Harmonia and Skald. There is, however, one unique site I can make for this thoroughly unremarkable country.

It is known as the Sanctuary of the Crimson Fox. While I cannot give its exact location nor offer reliable directions, I can report that it is a compound found deep in the Wolf Wood. I came upon it quite by accident, which Mother Martine (the group's leader) tells me is how most people learn of its existence.

I ask the reader's forgiveness for the abrupt change, but I will now break off from my usual method of cataloguing these entries to relate my amazing discovery.

I was traveling north along the Crimson Highway and lost my path in a sudden downpour. Before I realized my mistake I stumbled into one of the many shallow ravines that dot the landscape. I was sitting on the muddy ground when a ghostly figure of a fox, glowing as red as the sunset, appeared at the edge of the gully. I grabbed a fallen tree branch to walk with (for I had twisted my ankle in the fall) and slowly climbed to the top of the ditch in hopes of getting closer to it.

Surprisingly, the strange apparition was standing just a few yards away, seemingly waiting for me to follow. I took a few steps toward it and the creature darted ahead. Eventually, it led me through the woods along a narrow bird trail and I soon found myself outside the gate of a walled fort. The specter then walked straight through it while I stood there dumbfounded. Just then the gate was opened and I invited in by a maroon-robed figure.

The fenced in enclosure I entered was rather small, but very lively. Several more maroon-robed figures bustled about a central courtyard. After my injury was dressed, I was immediately escorted directly to the group's leader, Mother Martine, who resided in a small wooden hut attached to the palisade wall. She exuded a strangely exquisite and sophisticated persona for such austere environment. She was kind enough to answer my many questions, and I will try to present the salient facts here.

While once again I cannot divulge the exact location of this wilderness refuge, I can relate that the site was chosen specifically by Mother Martine. She says she used to be part of a covey of Halan witches, and decided to strike out on her own with a small band of

Dread Possibility

Mother Martine is actually a werefox. This hospice is one of a triumvirate led by were-creatures that serve Hala by using their unique abilities to help others. Collectively, they are known as the Primal Radiants. They set up their sanctuaries far from civilization, in the wildest regions of their respective domains. The Refuge of the Black Boar lies in the Crumbling Hills region in Falkovnia and is run by a wereboar known as Brother Gorsky. The Haven of the Gray Owl is located way up in the Sleeping Beast Mountain range in Lamordia, and is run by an owlman called Mother Faoma.

followers. She wanted to be closer to nature and lead a more balanced life. While they do not excel in the healing arts, they are more than capable to deal with most of the injuries they encounter. They serve any traveler that is led to their door, and in this wolf-infested forest they serve as a beacon of light for all.

Lamordia

With their tendency towards cold rationalism and their pragmatic outlook on life, is it any wonder that this domain is the home of the most distinguished doctors and surgeons in the Core?

The Kierkegaard Clinic lies on the eastern slope of the Sleeping Beast mountain range, just outside of Neufretchenburg. Bjorn Kierkegaard, a native Lamordian who returned to his childhood home after graduating from the Universidad Luedendorf, started it about dozen years ago.

It is run out of a former butcher's shop. The back room serves as a surgery, while the remodeled storefront serves as an apothecary. Several rumors circulate around town claiming that the place is haunted. Some say the former owner went mad and went on a killing spree that terrorized the populace. And now the ghosts of his many victims, supposedly chopped up and stored in his larder, haunt the place. Others say, however, that the previous owner was actually falsely accused of a murder and was killed by a mob of angry villagers. They say that it is actually his ghost that haunts the premises.

Despite these macabre stories, Dr. Kierkegaard runs a very clean and efficient facility. He employs two competent and well-liked nurses, Mildred and Hortense. He performs several routine procedures, including making casts for broken bones, stitching up minor wounds, as well as concocting various curatives for fighting off fatigue and other common illnesses. The majority of his patients are local miners and other workers connected to the nearby steel mills.

On the other end of the spectrum is the Universidad Leudendorf Hospital, which is regarded as the most prestigious medical school of the Core. The doctors and students who study here practice the latest methods, use the most modern equipment, and are generally regarded as the best healers.

It is a four story high, slate gray tower, with four wings (each two-stories high) radiating from the center. The school has to two large operating theatres for students to watch dissections, surgeries, or other experimental techniques performed.

Professor Johann Striesbeuck serves as the acting chancellor, and has kept the entire organization running smoothly for several years now. Throughout his tenure many

pioneers have made advances in the medical profession.

Uryan Rusken, a native of Darkon, developed an improved formula for anesthesia, as well as an easily portable container to transport it. Aracela Vermillion, a native of Dementlieu, first perfected the sanguine pump here, a device that has paved the way for the controversial technique known as blood transfusion. Also, let us not forget Gerard Shuttlebert, a Lamordian native whose studies on "germ theory" are the subject of much debate in academic circles. While many of these strange new techniques are still rarely employed outside the domain, it cannot be said that innovation is discouraged here.

Liffe

The Armeikos Asylum is the largest sanitarium in the Nocturnal Sea, serving as a counterpoint to Dr. Heinforth's Asylum across the Core in the Sea of Sorrows. It has a surprisingly high volume of patients, no doubt due to the nearness of the strange domains of the Nightmare Lands and Vechor.

The building itself has many baroque architectural motifs, featuring large columns and high, arched ceilings. It has a staff of several dozen nurses that take care of the day-to-day affairs, as well as trained orderlies that care for individual patients.

It is governed by a consortium of doctors, who come from all corners of the Demiplane. Each one has his or her own novel theory on the most effective treatments for curing mental illnesses, which I will describe below.

Dr. Obelix believes that a vegetarian diet cleans the body of toxins that infect the brain. She has thus created a strict regimen of barley and oats that she serves to patients. On the other hand, Dr. Adolphus is

convinced that fresh air and frequent exercise facilitates the healthy working of the body's nervous system. His patient's rooms are left open to the elements all year round, and he also leads them on daily walks around the grounds.

Dr. Vasilos, a native of Paridon, is certain that repeated applications of electroshock therapy are the only way to purge the mind of unwholesome thoughts. Naturally, he only treats the most violent offenders, who are usually kept in rubber-lined rooms and wrapped in straightjackets in order to protect themselves and the orderlies from any harm.

Mordent

Because of its peaceful scenery and languorous lifestyle, this domain boasts two of the most successful mental hospitals of the Core - Mousel Mansion located in Mordentshire and Saulbridge Sanitorium found in the small hamlet Mordentshire-on-the-Sea along the northern coast of the Sea of Sorrows. Most people are so well versed in their workings, however, that I will bypass any description of them in favor of some lesser known facilities that are just as interesting.

The first such place is the Foggy Bottoms Hospice, known informally as Foghaven. It can be found at the meeting of the Great Moor and the Lightless Woods, just outside the city limits of Tumbledown. It is run by a trio of local women, Mary Critchlow, Agnes Higshaw, and Susan Richards.

They operate out of a large three-story mansion which was abandoned some time ago by the first inhabitants of Tumbledown. It serves as halfway house for a startling variety of transients - such as orphans, calibans, and lepers. While the group has often been accused of being witches, they assure me the rumors are unfounded. It is clear that they are not well liked by the

Dread Possibility

While they are not witches, the three women that run this establishment are not who they say they are. Each have secret past that they hide by using false last names. Mary is a descendant of the Gauldamon family and seeking to eradicate all traces from the land of the demonic entity that manipulated her family years ago. Agnes is a descendant of the Holloway family and is looking for clues to solve the mysterious deaths of her forbearers. Susan is the descendant of the de Boistribue family, is searching for her ancestral home in hopes of removing the curse and restoring the family's good name. They have banded together in order to aid each other in their personal vendettas.

inhabitants of Tumbledown, however, who see them as interlopers and hope to eventually run them out of the area.

Tranquility House in Blackburn's Crossing is sponsored by the Church of Ezra, and run by Anchorite Lucas Briggs. Instead of occupying one building, it is actually a row of three attached two-story townhouses.

The main receiving hall was once a funeral home, and there is a strange story attached to it. Several years ago the undertaker was discovered improperly disposing of the bodies in his care. The villagers were so outraged that they ran him out of town. Many families never recovered their loved one's bodies. Now it is said there is a curse on the place, until all the lost remains are found and given their rightful burial.

Anchorite Riggs knows of this story, and is currently overseeing construction on the buildings, hoping to find the spot where the bodies were dumped and lay their spirits to rest.

Nova Vaasa

While the domain Nova Vaasa is not renowned among travelers for its hospitality, there are a handful of facilities where one can find excellent medical care along its many roads.

The Hospice of Hopeful Rest can be found where the Ivlis and Volgis rivers meet, two days ride south of Bergovitsa. It is run by a group of Halan witches, lead by Sister Kittery, which have somehow kept their true natures secret from the ruling nobles (it helps that they are located in the Pommel region of the domain where the Church of the Lawgiver has less oversight). In these desolate steppes this lonely single level structure rises out from the horizon like a welcome beacon.

Along the road, one can see many large posts, carved to resemble various creatures of the wild. Some locals lay small offerings at their base, and it is said to be bad luck to tamper with them. When I asked about these, I was told that they are actually totems that the witches use to augment their powers (which are rumored to be great, such as tempering the weather or enriching the harvest).

This group has many strange customs that set them apart from traditional followers of Hala. They perform ritual dances every evening that involve frenetic movements and large beating drums. They also have what they call a sweat lodge in the back, which is a small hut with fire pit in the center. When traditional healing methods don't cure a patient's suffering, they are carried there to have their spirits cleansed.

While the Church of the Lawgiver is not known for its charity or brotherly love, there is one institute it runs that at least pays lip service to these ideals - St. Agnar's Hospital. It is located in the Merchant's Quarter in

Bergovitsa, and both the Vistin and Rivtsoff families give generous donations to keep it running.

It is a long, low building with only a single main hall where the sick and elderly are all lumped together with no privacy. Only family members and the monks that run the place are allowed on the floor. It is a miserable place, with low moans of pain that fill the cavernous room. The ruling nobles of the city use this as a dumping ground for family members they no longer find useful, while the poor simply have no better place to turn to.

Perhaps the most interesting tenet of the order is that transgressions against the Lawgiver are the source of all suffering. They have two methods of alleviating illnesses. The first is vigorous whippings, a brutal practice that they even inflict upon themselves at appointed holy days. The second is the use of leeches, which they use to bleed the bad humors from the body. Altogether, this is a place one should avoid unless they are in dire need of medical attention.

Richemulot

The Argine Well in Mortigny is purported to have miraculous powers of healing. According to the tradition, Argine was an early convert to the Church of Ezra, learning under Yakov Dilisnya himself in Borca. When Richemulot appeared to the north in 694 BC, she was one of the first to investigate the new land.

The countryside was much wilder than it is today, and over the years she vanquished many creatures of the night that often plagued newly arrived immigrants. In time, she met her end in battle against a mysterious, unidentified monster. Now, each year on the anniversary of her death, the waters of the well run scarlet. Due to heroic

exploits, some people whisper that she was a reincarnation of Ezra herself.

Today, the site is run by the local church of Ezra, and it is overseen by Anchorite Clementine. An abbey has been built over the actual well, and it is comprised of several low-lying stone buildings radiating out from a central courtyard. There is a magnificent carved fountain in this courtyard, but it is not the legendary well. That is located at the end of a long series of buildings that are found directly behind the main gate.

Those who wish to sample its healing waters must go through several cleansing rituals before they may approach the sacred well. On the anniversary of Argine's death, when the well water turns red, there is a long line of pilgrims that arrive at the gate from several surrounding domains. The anchorites hold a week-long festival, and it is best to arrive before or after the big event.

The Hospice of Bountiful Charity is a relatively well-known house of healing located in the Gasping Lake region. It is run by an order of Halan witches, and is based out of an old windmill that has been converted into a house. The locals refer to it as the Cat House, because of the inordinate amount of felines that flock to it.

The healer there, lead by the jovial Mother Lucille, are well loved by their neighbors. Not only do they pitch in to save the crops when the fields become flooded by the Musarde River, but they also research better ways to keep the food supply safe from marauding insects and other blights. They are also the preeminent experts in treating the various outbreaks of plague that periodically occur in the area.

Sommier Asylum can be found midway between Ste. Ronges and Pont-a-Museau, where the Musarde and the River of Sacrifice meet. It is built up around an ancient, abandoned abbey, and the towers

that stand at each corner make it look more like a prison than a sanitarium.

Dr. Lemeul Sommiel is a graduate of the University of Dementlieu, and is the domain's master of hypnosis. He is rather reclusive, and rarely makes appearances anywhere but his keep. He is a tall, with graying hair, but has a surprisingly sharp wit.

Despite the fact that the doctor has had a lot of success in a few well-publicized cases, the facility is mainly used to hide away any black sheep of prominent noble families. Some say, however, that Jacqueline Renier has spies among the staff that she uses to ferret out any secrets that others may want to hide.

Tapest

There are no official medical facilities in this backwards domain. If one seeks healing they are typically referred to the local priest of Belenus. There are rumors, though, of a Halan hospice that is operated out of the north Wretchwood near the small logging community of Serenity Falls. I could find no signs of it, however, during my brief ride-through.

Valachan

The Valachani are well known for their rugged self-reliance and stoic outlook on life. Very few natives have been fortunate enough to be spared a bout with the dreaded White Fever, and those that survive are usually stronger for the experience. But even these admirable character traits are not enough to help them when more seriously illnesses or injuries arise.

The Arden River Lodge is located just off the Broken Road halfway between Helbenik and Rotwald. It is sponsored by the Church of Yutow, and run by Hevlo and Marta, two

moarnokes from nearby villages. It is a series of small log cabins built from redwoods from the Forest That Watches. There are expansive decks that connect each building, because the ground here is quite hilly and prone to flooding as well.

The lodge has a variety of uses, serving as both a church for the local population as well as a gathering place for official Church of Yutow councils. One interesting aspect is the number of offerings one can see underneath the wood walkways between building. Hevlo says people throw offerings to the wood spirits there, who according to old traditions typically like the dark spaces under bridges.

The couple is particularly fond of the healing properties of the ever-present mushrooms that cover the ground in this area. They even claim to have distilled an extract that prevents swelling and infections, which they use on patients suffering from White Fever in order to shorten their recovery time. While I'm not certain of its effectiveness, it seems like a harmless hobby.

Dr. Hodd's Clinic in Helbenik is a very unusual stop. Amplias Hodd is a wizened, bald headed gnome and an ex-Darkonian who moved to Valachan shortly after the Requiem in 750 BC. The locals respect him for his great skills, even if they visit him under the direst circumstances.

He specializes in medical devices for people who have missing limbs or other extremities (hands or arms, feet or legs, etc.). If the injury is relatively minor he can provide a delicate handmade cane. If it is more dire, he may strap one into a complicated harness. He has also been known to design artificial limbs that are remarkably life-like and flexible.

He has a small office in the front of his clinic for diagnoses, and a large workshop in the back for creating his devices. His bedside manner takes some getting used to, however. He becomes very animated when he talks,

and is very eager to start treatment when presented with a unique problem. And it is very difficult to get him to accept no for an answer. Indeed, when he noticed me squinting at some of his equipment, he offered to fit me with a cumbersome pair of medical spectacles he had just designed. Luckily, I made up a polite excuse before he could fit it on me.

Well, that wraps up this volume. As you can see, the growing popularity of my travelogues has allowed me to expand my scope somewhat, visiting the islands of the Nocturnal Sea this time around. Keep sending in your letters of accolades to my publisher, Olerick's Printing House in Karg. As an added treat, I will give you a sneak peek into the subject of my next volume - Sacred Sites and Strange Landmarks of the Core. Until then, may we see each other on the road!

Through The Cellar Door

Secrets of an Artificial Mistway

By Sharon Dornhoff

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Initial intransigence on the creature's part has abated, for the most part, after systematic application of corporal and incorporeal punishment. Nothing in its behavior for the past six months has suggested active rebellion: while it plainly craves release, it appears to have resigned itself to enduring its confinement until a viable opportunity for escape presents itself. It goes without saying that Brethren who gain access to the conduit from the Souragnien end should be forbidden to invoke dweomer-nullifying or dismissive magic within its boundaries, and must be warned against attempting any verbal or physical interaction with the creature.

Between my own precautions, those of my Souragnien colleagues, and above all those of Fathers von Lovenhorst and Scott, I believe that the conduit's security is now sufficient that we may provide passage by any Brother of Honored or greater rank. As the entity's true name must remain confidential, I propose that the nickname it has acquired among my Brothers in Souragne - "Hizzoner", a mock-title of Mr. Scully's contrivance - be circulated among those approved for transit. To best conceal

the nature of the conduit from the unenlightened, I would likewise propose that the euphemism "Cellar Door" be disseminated, as this term will permit veiled discussion of the Mistway under circumstances when secrecy is not assured.

- Report on the Souragne/Richemulot distortion-conduit,

as submitted by Initiate Zoltan

A product of nine years' abstract theorizing and two years' hard work by Fraternity of Shadows diabolists, the Cellar Door - also known as "Hizzoner's Boudoir", or simply "Downstairs", amongst the Souragnien FoS cell - is an artificial Mistway, created and maintained by the reality wrinkle of an imprisoned fiend. Proposed by Father von Lovenhorst, and successfully generated with the assistance of the Brethren in Souragne, it is still considered experimental by the majority of Fraternity members. While its creators are confident in its security and permanency, few other Brothers are as eager to utilize this passage between Souragne and the Core, save in dire emergency. The prospect that its reliability might suddenly

decline, stranding travelers in mid-journey or depositing them in the trackless Mists, is a powerful discouragement.

Knowledge of its existence is carefully controlled, restricted to Brethren who have proven their dedication to the FoS's goals and politics. Fraternity members who cross between Souragne and the Core, or vice versa, are enjoined to take precautions against their movements' revealing this unique passageway to the world at large. Nonetheless, stories that the residents of La Maison Soulombre have been quietly working on something elaborate have seeped out to the populace of Port d'Elhour, and reports that the Chateau d'Is - former residence of Fraternity renegade Erik van Rijn - may no longer be as vacant as it appears have likewise made the rounds of St. Ronges's alehouses and gossip-mills. It may only be a matter of time until someone from outside the Fraternity is spurred to investigate such allegations, potentially exposing one of the organization's great breakthroughs ... or incurring retaliation from these evil scholars, who are sure to protect their discovery from interlopers.

Into The T cellar

Created using a modified Mystic Cage ritual, the Fraternity's artificial Mistway takes the form of a cylindrical stone-walled cellar some 30' across. Its depth appears to fluctuate widely, its paired staircases sometimes taking mere seconds to traverse, other times, many minutes or even a few hours. The stonework walls resemble a typical Richemulouise basement -- complete with rodent infestation and crumbling mortar -- while its torrid temperature, sweltering humidity, and fetid aromas are reminiscent of the deep bayou. An occasional rat or black widow spider skitters across the grimy flagstone floor, and water drips down from a distant, unseen ceiling, obscured by

impenetrable blackness some 15' overhead. No matter how brightly illuminated is the room below, this overhead darkness remains undiminished. Decrepit, malodorous, and with a climate fit to make even the calmest of folk sweat like pigs, Hizzoner's Boudoir conveys a sense of confinement akin to being buried alive.

Two steep staircases spiral up from opposite ends of the Mistway's lone chamber, the clockwise one leading to Richemulot, the counterclockwise to Souragne. Ascending either stair for more than a few steps invariably causes people to lose sight of the other, although both can be seen ascending into the darkness when viewed from floor level. Descending from above, new arrivals pass through a darkened patch of stairs on which no light source, natural or otherwise, suffices to illuminate more than three or four adjacent steps. Those traversing either stair invariably lose their sense of direction in this area, and must resort to running their hands along the walls in order to reassure themselves that they are still advancing up or down.

Signs of the paired Mystic Cage rituals that created this unique Mistway can be seen in a narrow groove that runs around the room's circumference -- a shallow furrow in the stone, which the Fraternity fills with holy water as an abjorative precaution when the conduit is in use -- and the ring of eight smoky, guttering torches, ever-burning and never exhausted, which illuminate the chamber. A broken length of heavy chain dangles from an eye bolt at mid-ceiling, and streaks of blackened stone, permanently shadowed, show where the Cage's framework of beams were once positioned.

At the center of the chamber, hemmed in by a gauntlet of painted ritual circles, warding spells, and acidic booby-traps, a solid oaken pedestal rises to knee height. Carved with images of the Hazlani mythic

Hell of Slaves, it's always occupied, but the occupant differs depending on whether one enters from the Richmulouise side of the Mistway, or from Souragne. The former entrance is perhaps safer, and certainly more pleasant, but both have their risks for trespassers.

Entry from Chateau d'Is

Following the flight of Erik van Rijn from St. Ronges, he was reported dead in the fire he and his treacherous followers had caused. Legal possession of his former residence, the Chateau d'Is, was tied up in probate court for two years, but the Fraternity didn't let such issues stop it from covertly ransacking the estate, seeking clues to the turncoat's location. Eventually, the FoS will take steps to ensure the Chateau passes into the care of Van Rijn's ex-friend and past colleague, Viktor Hazan, rather than his erstwhile academic institution, the University of Richemulot. Until that time, the Fraternity must exercise discretion when using the Chateau as a covert transport route to and from Souragne.

Much of the Chateau d'Is has been sealed off, either by the St. Ronges town watch to discourage looters, or (more subtly) by the Fraternity, to secure the site and lock away several of Van Rijn's dubious experiments. The transmuter-cum-lich has not returned to his residence, abandoning his alchemical and magical equipment; some of these forsaken apparati are still functional, whereas others have become dangerous from decay (if they weren't already). The Fraternity has added its own protective spells to the building, both to prevent fires from spreading -- losing one mansion in St. Ronges was enough, in the FoS's reckoning -- and to frighten away intruders with illusions that suggest the estate is cursed or haunted.

At one time, the back door from Van Rijn's first floor laboratory led to his basement, but

ever since the Fraternity's experimental conduit was established, it has led to the Cellar Door Mistway. There are no external clues that this rear laboratory door is unusual in any way, and it's now impossible to access Van Rijn's real cellar from the house. Of course, the door itself doesn't need to be dangerous, when it's in a lab full of volatile alchemical compounds that haven't been attended to in more than two years.

Those who enter the Cellar Door from the transmuter's forsaken house arrive to find the Mistway chamber's pedestal uninhabited, albeit no less girded by diabolists' bindings. It's not vacant, as one aspect of the chamber's fiendish source -- the phylactery of an amnizu devil -- rests there. For several weeks after the Mistway's creation, this gilded mayoral chain-of-office and its large, obscenely-etched medallion lay exposed, facilitating Fraternity researchers' observations. More recently, it has been sealed inside a near-unbreakable crystal coffer donated by Father Malcolm Scott: a gift, presented in belated acknowledgement that Father von Lovenhorst's experiment has succeeded, in defiance of his fellow Umbra's doubtful expectations.

The chain-of-office phylactery, if it can be destroyed by mortal hands at all, can't be while it remains inside the Mistway. If it is taken out of the Cellar Door, in either direction, the conduit between Richemulot and Souragne will become impassable -- the staircase to Richemulot will seal itself and the stairs to Van Rijn's basement will revert to normal -- until the phylactery is returned. Destroying the phylactery will collapse the Mistway permanently, tossing occupants of the stairways back into the domains they respectively connect to, and casting anyone inside the chamber, itself, into the depths of the Mists. Likewise, returning the phylactery to the hands of its devilish counterpart will allow it to escape, vanishing

into the Mists as the conduit collapses behind it.

Entry from La Maison Soudombre

In the months since the explosive formation of the conduit blasted their plantation house, the Souragnien Fraternity cell have rebuilt their place of residence, repairing the damaged ballroom, and laying out a new floor that conceals the Cellar Door's entrance. A secret trapdoor to the Mistway's staircase is concealed beneath the Maison's new upright piano: a replacement for a harpsichord destroyed by the chaos which accompanied the Mystic Cage ritual. Most of the Souragne entrance's magical protections lie just beyond the entryway, where warding-spells and so forth lie outside of the magophobic Anton Misroi's perceptions. Unlike the Chateau d'Is, la Maison Soudombre is actively inhabited by Fraternity members, adding another layer of defense.

Approaching the Cellar Door from Souragne, those who enter the Mistway find the room's central pedestal occupied by a creature out of nightmares. This loathsome fiend, who once wreaked havoc in the town of Chateaufaux by usurping the identity of its mayor, is linked inextricably to its phylactery; it is by exploiting this bond that the Fraternity created the Cellar Door's conduit between Island and Core. "Melano" (LE amnizu fighter 4 / beguiler 6) is trapped within several layers of abjurations and ritual bindings, clad in the ragged remnants of its stolen identity's mayoral robes. Only the bound devil's potent regenerative powers have kept its grotesque, corpulent body from becoming a solid mass of scars, for the magics which ensnare the creature sear its hide at even the slightest contact. To guarantee its powerlessness, members of the Souragnien FoS cell regularly check up on "Hizzoner", and their newest recruit, a

Hazlani diabolist named Zoltan, beats the captive fiend into abject submission each time they make use of the Mistway to reach the Core.

Though trapped, the devil known as Melano is not entirely helpless. Although the Cellar Door's suffocating ambiance does not betray the fact, the chamber in which the amnizu is trapped is actually incorporated into the bound devil's reality wrinkle. Not long after being driven from Chateaufaux, Melano acquired a land-based power from Darkon, and this stolen power to induce forgetfulness at a distance has complimented the innate amnizu ability to erase memories by touch. Once per day, Melano can exert the Forget land-based power on any single target within its chamber, and selectively erase one specific event or fact from that subject's recollections. This power operates anywhere within "Hizzoner's Boudoir", and is unhindered by the Fraternity's confining magics. When Melano eliminates a particular memory, other memories are altered to ensure that the lapse is not noticed by the target. Witnesses to the amnizu's use of this selective effect do not suffer any loss of memory, and victims informed of what they have forgotten are not compelled to deny it or to forget it again.

To date, Melano has only used this power twice, and both times on the same target: novice FoS diabolist Zoltan, the only member to regularly spend time alone with the amnizu. The first time, Melano erased Zoltan's awareness that Melano is only the devil's alias, and not the true name by which such creatures can be bound to service. The second time, Zoltan had that noticed one of the entrapping magics -- designed to bind the amnizu by the invoking the name Melano -- wasn't working properly. Determined to keep its captor safely ignorant, Hizzoner repeated the process, again erasing memories it dared not allow. Someday, the creature

hopes, Zoltan will renew all of its binding spells using the wrong name, after which the unleashed devil will gleefully tear off its captor's tattooed hide, inch by excruciating inch.

Aside from this potentially-fatal ignorance imposed upon Zoltan, Melano also anticipates a possible rescue by its fellow-hellspawn and henchfiend, a barbazu operating under the alias of "Tisiphanes". This brutish creature eluded the Fraternity's clutches when its superior was captured, and it has been seeking Melano ever since. Unfortunately for Hizzoner, Tisiphanes is far from bright, and the bearded devil's chief means of tracking down its boss consists of ambushing hapless human travelers on the road and demanding they tell it where its master has gone. If this tactic should fail it long enough, Tisiphanes may go a step further, by seizing a few Innocents to use as hostages, then demanding that someone else find its superior for it, in exchange for its captives' lives.

Atolls in a Sea of Mist

Oubliettes of Terror

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The Demiplane of Dread is an infinite sea of roiling mist, broken only by the Core and a few scattered Islands of Terror. These masses of solid land are domains; landscapes fashioned by the Darklords trapped within. Yet there are also locations within Ravenloft that are not true domains. These are the Oubliettes.

Oubliettes are tiny microcosms of reality floating freely in the whirl of the mists. Compared to true domains, they are temporary, dream-like things. Small in size and rarely populated, Oubliettes seem unreal and half formed, as though created by some fickle artist and abandoned before completion. Yet these tiny lands may prove as deadly as any Island of Terror.

Read now of a few such atolls in the sea of mist.

The Oracle

A traveler stumbling through the mists might come upon a space where the mists reek of sulfur and brimstone. The mists will thin and reveal a rocky crag shrouded in thick volcanic gases. The crag is a narrow gorge

that winds between massive crags of grey slate. Huge boulders choke the pass and every crack and crevice belches noxious fumes into the air. The pass seems devoid of life, except for a few poisoned vines and bushes that cling tenaciously to the barren rocks. The sky is obscured by the volcanic smoke. A yellowish twilight hangs permanently over the air. Those with sharp eyes may detect the forms of great mountains looming above, obscured by the brimstone fumes. The ground frequently trembles, sending showers of rocks and deadly boulders raining down on the pass.

At the center of the pass lies the blasted ruin of a temple. The foundations have been shattered by fissures and are strewn with the remains of crushed columns and pulverized statues. Attempts to estimate the size or shape of the temple are futile, though the remaining ruins hint at a holy site of unparalleled beauty and grandeur. Amidst the absolute devastation dwells the Oracle.

The Oracle calls out to anyone who happens upon her temple. She is a large woman with a dusky complexion and raven-black hair, and appears to be past middle age.

She is always found reposing on her pallet and will never move from her position, under any circumstances. The Oracle offers her services as a fortune teller, in exchange for food and drink.

If pressed, the Oracle may reveal that she once served the gods as high priestess of the temple. Blessed with visions of the past, present and future, she became an advisor to the greatest of kings. Honors and blessings were showered upon her until she was worshiped as one of the Gods themselves. Feeling slighted, jealous Gods threatened the lands of mortals with dire retribution.

The chief of the Gods tasked the Oracle to go to the people and spread a warning. Yet the years ensconced within the palatial temple had bred great sloth within the Oracle. Rather than leave her lavish sanctuary, she would send underlings to complete the task with which she had been charged. Three times the Gods bid her to leave her temple and warn the people of the coming wrath; three times the Oracle sent another in her place; three times did the land of mortals ignore the message.

For the Oracle's indolence the Gods spared the land of mortals and instead visited their full fury upon her. The mountain itself was rent asunder by divine wrath. Vegetation burned in acid fogs, gentle slopes were blasted into rocky crags, and snow capped peaks exploded into volcanic craters. The temple was seized by a titanic earthquake and shaken like a rag doll in the jaws of a wild dog. When the tremors subsided, not one stone remained upon another. In the center of the devastation lay the Oracle, untouched by the calamity. She has remained there ever since.

Those who would brave the choking fumes and deadly avalanches to visit the Oracle may barter for visions of the past, present or future. The former priestess relates her predictions in strange, cryptic verse. The

Oracle's clairvoyance is flawless and her divinations are eerily accurate. Yet, a terrible curse lingers over her powers. Those who heed her predictions are doomed to pain and misery. Terrible misfortune will haunt who so ever heeds her twisted words. The only escape from the curse may be to fight fate and prevent the prophesy from becoming true.

Charnel Field

The smell of smoke wafts through the depths of mists and the muffled sound of thunder rumbles. Those who follow the scent may stumble into a bank of stinging black smoke. Beyond the wall of smoke lies a maze of trenches and broken wooden palisades strewn about the muddy earth. A black ceiling of smoke hangs low over the ground, blotting out any light save for the orange glow of countless fires. Buildings and fortifications burn everywhere and spew obscuring smoke over the field and into the sky. Though the smoke limits vision to only a few yards, it is clear that the battlefield extends a great distance in all directions.

Cautious observers will notice that the field itself shifts and moves on its own accord. Tunnels and trenches snake through the earth without rhyme or reason, buildings change location, and fires burn without consuming their fuel. The earth alternates between scorched soil and a sucking quagmire of rust-red muck. On first glance, it would appear that the field was abandoned. Yet, those who would dig but a few inches beneath the ground would discover decomposing cadavers and charred skeletons. The tortured earth absorbs the dead of the battlefield, as though feeding upon the carnage.

Of the mighty armies that fought in the field, only two warriors remain. The soldiers continuously hunt one another amidst the

wreak and ruin of the Charnel Field. Both men appear to be badly wounded; they seem to share the ability to regenerate their flesh, though before one can be fully healed, the other man inevitably inflicts a near-mortal wound.

Should one of the warriors come upon a stranger, he will try his best to recruit them in his fight against the other. He will accuse the other soldier of the most reprehensible evils and insist that he must be destroyed. Anyone who refuses the offer is accused of being allied with the opposing fighter and immediately attacked. The caprices of fate maintain a constant balance of forces. Should one of the warriors an advantage, the other will find some new weapon, magical item, or allies.

In time long past, both warriors were comrades. They led great armies in battle and fought side by side for years, until some real or imagined slight turned them against one another. Slight led to insult, insult to threat, and threat to pitched battle. The warriors led their armies to war, but were evenly matched, and so ground their forces against one another. Thousands perished in the ensuing slaughter, until nothing remained of either army save the two commanders. Though mortally wounded, neither man concedes defeat. They have remained locked in battle for time past remembering; so long have they fought that neither can remember their own names, let alone a world outside of the charnel field.

Lava Vents

Travelers in the mists might suddenly find themselves inside of a cavern made of smooth volcanic rock. The mists fade and are replaced with hot steam wafting through the ancient lava tubes. The walls of the cavern are smooth, but the low hanging ceiling is studded with thousands of stalactites, some

of which reach the floor. The red rock is hot to the touch and glows with a faint phosphorescence.

Though most of the tunnel is natural, there are a few signs of civilization. In some spots the floor has been flattened, the walls cut into frescos, the stalagmites carved into pillars, and the roof cut into a vaulted ceiling. The constant flow of water has eroded at these carvings, steadily erasing the hand of man from the natural tunnel. The ancient lava tubes snake through the volcanic rock and twist into a confounding labyrinth. A gentle breeze whistles through the Lava Vents and the sound of dripping water echoes endlessly, yet there are two sounds that reverberate intermittently in the cavern; the sound of pitched battle, and a great unearthly roar.

Those who wander the tunnels inevitably encounter Jarl Kilkeldge, a massively built dwarf with a jet black beard. Jarl is horribly disheveled and absolutely reeks of sweat. The dwarf labors with a dozen or so canvas sacks; he carries one of the bulging bags a few paces before dropping it, running back for the next sack in sequence, and carrying it forward to join the first. Working feverishly, he just barely inches along the tunnel with his load. The bags are worn, frayed, and covered in hasty patches. Gaping holes in the bags reveal that they are filled with gold.

Jarl calls out to anyone he meets and begs them to help him carry his treasure. He will offer anyone a generous share of the booty, but will hastily accept any demands for a greater share. He will, however, insist on one condition; the group leaves none of the gold behind. The treasure immensely heavy, and seem to grow in weight. As well, the bags continuously tear and spill their contents, forcing Kilkeldge to drop whatever he is doing to patch the sack and reload its contents. Magical storing devices cease to function as magical, and can only hold as

much treasure as a mundane sack of equivalent size. Thus, progress through the tunnel is painfully slow and exhausting. If questioned, Jarl insists that he knows the way out of the Lava Vents and to the surface, though he won't give directions. Strangers seeking his help must grab a bag and follow along.

As the group labor along, they will inevitably come to a fork in the tunnel. One passage is silent and leads to the left, while the right-hand passage echoes with the sounds of battle and, occasionally, a titanic roar. Jarl will only take the silent corridor; he explains that deeper in the tunnels a dragon is battling a band of adventurers. If pressed, he will admit that he was once part of the band of dragon slayers, but abandoned them to steal the dragon's horde. He insists that there is still time to escape with the treasure before either the wyrm or the dragon slayers triumph and come looking for the gold.

Jarl is hopelessly lost in the Vents and inevitably returns to the fork. Fearful of the dragon and his former compatriots, Jarl will always take the silent path. The treacherous dwarf will not allow anyone to take the right-hand path unless they relinquish whatever treasure they are carrying. Jarl is a powerful warrior with several magical weapons and will be a challenge for any party to defeat.

Those who ignore Jarl and pass through the right-handed passage will discover a waterfall. The flow of the falls strikes the hollow rock below, making a sound very similar to the crash of metal and battle. Feeding the waterfall is a great geyser, which periodically erupts with a terrible roaring noise. Beyond the waterfall and geyser is a vast natural cavern. The chamber is strewn with the bones of humans and the massive skeleton of a red dragon. From the state of the remains, it might be estimated that the bones have lain in the chamber for years, if not a century. The cavern ends in a tunnel

leading up to the surface and the waiting mists.

Rites of Decay

Necromatic Rituals for Ravenloft

By Andrew "Alheon" Pavlides
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At the top of the house they have jointly bought for their adventuring party was Nevegir's study. Alfonso couldn't resist but notice that Nevegir was keeping the place a bit darker than usual, and it smelled of closure. The death of their half elf ranger compatriot at the hands of their undead adversaries have affected them all, but it seemed it has changed Nevegir. He was spending long hours locked in his study poring over the books they have retrieved from the minions of the Necrolyte.

"So you still plan to fight fire with fire? Are you sure you want to use the same weapons our foes used when they took Elanore from us? Some things are better left unknown Nevegir, you used to tell us so."

Nevegir's dark eyes turned to Alfonso. "For the greater good, and to avenge the fall of our comrade and stop the Necrolyte; yes I believe I must. You saw how effective his apprentices were against our methods and powers. Even Father Gregor admitted so."

Alfonso sulked as memories of the feeling of hopelessness he felt when fighting to get to Elanore in time flooded him. "But... but Gregor never said we should these

books. He considers such powers Blasphemy. At first you said you will just read them to find the weaknesses of our foes, before you declared that these books have different 'potential' to give us victory."

Nevegir's look turned to... sarcasm? "The anchorite always was one for words. Blasphemy. Elanore was pious and still, his resurrection magic failed and he declared Ezra decided that Elanore shouldn't return to the living."

Alfonso frowned. "Where are you getting at Nevegir? It's not Gregor's fault that Ezra didn't return Elanore to us."

Nevegir stood up, closed the door and looked Alfonso straight in the eye. "If the Gods aren't willing to return our friend to us... perhaps there is another way." His gaze went to the black binded book, engraved with a human skull that was open in his desk.

Alfonso just stood there. So it has come to this. Guessing his thoughts, Nevegir spoke again. "It's not blasphemy Alfonso. If Ezra didn't want us to have this power she wouldn't have placed that book in our path. I believe it is a test of our faith."

Alfonso was numb and confused. "So ... there is a way in there for Elanore to return to us?"

Nevegir smiled and led Alfonso to the desk where he motioned to the opened book and the stack of similar books next to it.

"Yes, and more. So much more. Let me explain you so we can convince the Anchorite together"

In his excitement and confusion Alfonso didn't notice that the wizard's fingernails have already turned black, not unlike the fingernails of the first apprentice of the Necrolyte they have defeated more than a year ago.

Rituals

Listed here are some of the rituals the PCs may encounter and even may decide to use at their peril. The Mists don't take kindly on those that disturb the peaceful sleep of the dead.

Animate Dead

The ritual comes to a closure and the specially prepared corpse in front of you rises awaiting your commands.

Level: 8

Category: Creation

Time: 15 minutes

Duration: Instantaneous

Component Cost: 400 gp

Market Price: 680 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion

You create an undead creature (obedient dead) from the skeleton or corpse of a slain medium humanoid creature. The corpse must be within 5 squares of you for the duration of the casting. If only the skeleton of the corpse remains, it comes back to Unlife as a skeleton, else it comes back as a zombie. The level of the creature created depends on the

result of your religion or arcana check but it cannot exceed half your level. If the minion has the ability to use weapons, you must provide them.

Table 9.1: Animated Dead Ritual Result

Check Result	Minion Level
9 or lower	The ritual fails, half the components are lost
19-29	3rd level creature
29-39	4th level creature
40+	5th level creature

The Undead created is an obedient dead taken from the undead provided at the end of this spell. As shown, the newly created Undead have no special powers. These are given using other rituals. An undead obedient created with this ritual can have up to two special powers bestowed upon it with other rituals. Obedient dead have no capacity to speak.

The undead created has no self-preservation instinct and follows your orders without hesitation. As an obedient dead, the undead created has no personality, no memories of its past life and is a simple automaton. It is devoid of emotion and has limited reasoning ability. It can understand orders like "Defend this place from anyone except me and my apprentice" but not commands like "If intruders come and they have a paladin, go for the paladin first" because with its limited understanding it cannot tell a paladin from any other class. If you're present you can direct the Animated dead to a course of action taking a minor action to issue a simple command or a full round action for a complicated action. If the Obedient dead is attacked, it will defend itself and strike back unless you have commanded it to not do so.

Bringing Obedient dead in an encounter makes it easier. Subtract a number of XP from the XP reward of the encounter equal to half the sum of the XP worth of the present undead. For example, if the players bring with them 3 3rd level skeletons (each worth 150 XP) subtract 225 XP from the encounter. So an encounter worth 2000 XP would reward the PCs just 1775 XP.

You can only have a number of permanent Animated obedient dead equal to half your level. If you attempt to animate more undead than half your level, one of your previously animated servants (your choice) crumbles to dust. There are esoteric ways to increase the limit for the obedient servants a necromancer may have but they require separate research and should not be used by the players unless they have evil characters.

In Ravenloft, use of this spell may call for a Dark Powers Check. Having undead attack living creatures may also call for a Dark Powers check. Really, if the PCs are routinely using undead to boost their numbers in adventures, they are asking for it. Beside the threat of Powers checks, there is also the very real risk that the PCs will be considered villains themselves.

The Obedient Dead

The following stats are for the zombies or skeletons created with the Animate Dead ritual. All undead created with this spell have the following characteristics:

Medium natural animate

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic;
Vulnerable 5 radiant

Zombies have speed of 4 while skeletons have speed of 6.

Skeleton: lvl 3 Soldier (150 XP)

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +3;
darkvision

HP 45; **Bloodied** 22

AC 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic;
Vulnerable 5 radiant

Speed 6

m **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the skeleton's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Str 15 (+3) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)

Con 13 (+2) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 3 (-3)

Skeleton: lvl 4 Soldier (175 XP)

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4;
darkvision

HP 53; **Bloodied** 26

AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16

m **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the skeleton's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+4)

Con 13 (+3) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 3 (-2)

Skeleton: lvl 5 Soldier (200 XP)

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +4;
darkvision

HP 61; **Bloodied** 30

AC 20; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17

m **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the skeleton's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+4)

Con 13 (+3) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 3 (-2)

Zombie: lvl 3 Brute (150 XP)

Initiative -1 **Senses** Perception +1;
darkvision

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27; see also zombie
weakness

AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 13

m **Slam** (standard; at-will)

+6 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.

Zombie Weakness

Any critical hit to the zombie reduces it to 0
hit points instantly.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Str 17 (+4) **Dex** 6 (-1) **Wis** 10 (+1)

Con 14 (+3) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 3 (-3)

Zombie: lvl 4 Brute (175 XP)

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +2;
darkvision

HP 64; **Bloodied** 32; see also zombie
weakness

AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 14

m **Slam** (standard; at-will)

+7 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.

Zombie Weakness

Any critical hit to the zombie reduces it to 0
hit points instantly.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 6 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+2)

Con 14 (+4) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 3 (-3)

Zombie: lvl 5 Brute (200 XP)

Initiative +0 **Senses** Perception +2;
darkvision

HP 74; **Bloodied** 37; see also zombie
weakness

AC 17; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 15

m **Slam** (standard; at-will)

+8 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.

Zombie Weakness

Any critical hit to the zombie reduces it to 0
hit points instantly.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** -

Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 6 (+0) **Wis** 10 (+2)

Con 14 (+4) **Int** 2 (-2) **Cha** 3 (-3)

Army of the Dead

*Wracking pain grips you for a few seconds
as the magic you unleashed on yourself takes
effect. The pain subsides and you can feel
your potential as a leader of Undead to
grow.*

level: 16

Category: Creation

Time: 2 hours (must be performed at
midnight)

Duration: Instantaneous

Component Cost: 5000 gp

Market Price: 9000 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion (no check)

After using this ritual, the number of
obedient dead you can have under your
control increases by 10. You can use this
ritual only once on yourself. As such, the
ritual is usually found in scrolls created by
powerful necromancers for their apprentices
or just to entice heroes from the path of
goodness.

The purpose of this ritual is to give the
caster more undead to control which is
usually done by evil spellcasters for sinisters
purposes. Usually the Player characters are
called to stop an enemy from finishing this
ritual.

In Ravenloft, use of this spell may call for
a Dark Powers Check.

Bestow Salient skeleton ability

Your skeleton guardians stand still as greenish light from your ritual bestows upon them new powers to serve you better.

level: 6

Category: Creation

Time: 30 minutes

Duration: Instantaneous

Component Cost: See below

Market Price: 360 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion (no check)

You imbue one or more skeletons under your command with a salient ability from those provided below. The undead must be within 5 squares of you for the duration of the casting. The component cost of this ritual is 40 gp worth of components for each level of skeletons you want to empower. For example if you use this ritual on a 4th level skeleton and two 3rd level skeletons you have to provide 400 gp worth of components. Each skeleton can have up to two salient abilities.

The abilities that you can impart with this ritual are the following:

Speed of the Dead: When making an opportunity attack, the skeleton gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage.

m Blazing Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire**

Strength+2 vs. AC; 1d4 + strength modifier damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (Save ends).

C Boneshard Burst (when the skeleton is reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ **Necrotic**

Close burst 3; Dexterity+2 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + dexterity modifier necrotic damage.

M Sudden Strike (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy shifts; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

The skeleton makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Level Increase: Your undead servant's level increases by one, following the rules of the DMG. Using this option takes one of the undead's salient ability slots. You cannot rise an obedient to a level more than half your level.

Other rituals that you can obtain and use may provide different abilities on your undead minions. Usually a ritual can provide up to three or four different abilities to choose from.

Bestow Salient zombie ability

Your rotting soldiers stand silent as you finish the ritual to grant them new powers.

level: 6

Category: Creation

Time: 30 minutes

Duration: Instantaneous

Component Cost: See below

Market Price: 360 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion (no check)

You imbue one or more zombies under your command with a salient ability from those provided below. The undead must be within 5 squares of you for the duration of the casting. The component cost of this ritual is 40 gp worth of components for each level of zombies you want to empower. For example if you use this ritual on a 4th level zombie and two 3rd level zombies you have to provide 400 gp worth of components. Each zombie can have up to two salient abilities.

The abilities that you can impart with this ritual are the following:

M Zombie Grab (standard; at-will)

Strength vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape). Checks made to escape the zombie's grab take a -5 penalty.

C Death Burst (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ **Necrotic**

The zombie explodes. Close burst 1; constitution +2 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + constitution modifier necrotic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

Rise Again: (the first time the zombie drops to 0 hit points) On its next turn, the zombie rises (as a move action) with hit points equal to its bloodied value.

Level Increase: Your undead servant's level increases by one, following the rules of the DMG. Using this option takes one of the undead's salient ability slots. You cannot rise an obedient to a level more than half your level.

Other rituals that you can obtain and use may provide different abilities on your undead minions. Usually a ritual can provide up to three or four different abilities to choose from.

Eternal Guardian, Lesser

As the unholy candles burn away, you will a mockery of life to return in the corpse of your slain enemy imprinting him with obedience and a set of commands.

level: 6

Category: Creation

Time: 15 minutes

Duration: 24 hours

Component Cost: 120 gp

Market Price: 360 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion

You create an undead minion (obedient dead) from the skeleton or corpse of a slain

medium humanoid creature. The corpse must be within 5 squares of you for the duration of the casting. The level of the minion created depends on the result of your religion or arcana check. If the minion has the ability to use weapons, you must provide them.

At the time of casting, you give the minion a set of simple commands to follow for the duration of the spell. The commands should be clear and not longer than a couple of sentences. Also they should be a definite set of actions or behavior. A command like "Obey my spoken commands to you" just fails to take effect. If people are to be included in commands for the Eternal Guardian, they should be present, not just named.

You're unable to change the commands once given. Good commands are "Attack everyone that enters the room except those that wear black robes with a grinning skull on the front." or "Remain hidden in this alcove unless someone approaches within 10 feet of you." followed by another command like "Attack everyone that approaches within 10 feet of you or from the corridor there." If the Eternal Guardian is to guard a place a good command would also be "After dealing with intruders return to the room" or "Do not pursue attackers out of this room" else the Eternal Guardian would remain outside the guard area.

Not good commands are commands like "Follow me and protect me from attackers". The Eternal Guardian would always follow you then, even if you want to go to the local village for shopping, marking you as an active necromancer.

The Eternal Guardian always recognises his or her creator and other undead servitors of the creator and doesn't attack them. Also the Eternal Guardian will attack anyone that

attacks it (Except his or her creator). There is no need for such commands.

If you spend three times the component cost and spend six times longer to cast the ritual, the duration becomes permanent. In case you try the permanent version, the needed results of the Arcana or religion check to determine the level of the minion are increased by 5. I.e. to make a 2nd level minion you need over 15.

Table 9.2: Lesser Guardian Ritual Result

Check Result	Minion Level
9 or lower	The ritual fails, half the components are lost
10-14	2nd level minion
15-19	3rd level minion
20-29	4th level minion
30+	5th level minion

You can only have a number of Eternal guardians up to your level at a time, whether they are created using this spell or a different version. If you attempt to animate more Guardians, one of the previous Eternal Guardians (your choice) crumbles to dust.

In Ravenloft, use of this spell may call for a Dark Powers Check.

Eternal Guardian

As the unholy candles burn away, you will a mockery of life to return in the corpse of your slain enemy imprinting him with obedience and a set of commands.

level: 9

Category: Creation

Time: 30 minutes

Duration: 24 hours

Component Cost: 300 gp

Market Price: 840 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion

You create an undead minion (obedient dead) from the skeleton or corpse of a slain medium humanoid creature. The corpse must be within 5 squares of you for the duration of the casting. The level of the minion created depends on the result of your religion or arcana check. If the minion has the ability to use weapons, you must provide them.

This spell is similar to the Lesser Eternal Guardian ritual with the following changes:

If you spend three times the component cost and spend six times longer to cast the ritual, the duration becomes permanent. In case you try the permanent version, the needed results of the Arcana or religion check to determine the level of the minion are increased by 5.

Table 9.3: Eternal Guardian Ritual Result

Check Result	Minion Level
14 or lower	The ritual fails, half the components are lost
15-29	6th level minion
30-39	7th level minion
40+	8th level minion

You can only have a number of Eternal guardians up to your level at a time, whether they are created using this spell or a different version. If you attempt to animate more Guardians, one of the previous Eternal Guardians (your choice) crumbles to dust.

In Ravenloft, use of this spell may call for a Dark Powers Check.

Eternal Guardian, Greater

As you finish the words of power, a green sickly light settles on the corpse lying in front

of you calling for it to rise from it's rest and serve your will forever.

level: 14

Category: Creation

Time: 30 minutes

Duration: 24 hours

Component Cost: 800 gp

Market Price: 4200 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion

You create an undead minion (obedient dead) from the skeleton or corpse of a slain medium humanoid creature. The corpse must be within 5 squares of you for the duration of the casting. The level of the minion created depends on the result of you religion or arcana check. If the minion has the ability to use weapons, you must provide them.

This spell is similar to the Lesser Eternal Guardian ritual with the following changes:

If you spend three times the component cost and spend six times longer to cast the ritual, the duration becomes permanent. In case you try the permanent version, the needed results of the Arcana or religion check to determine the level of the minion are increased by 5.

Table 9.4: Greater Guardian Ritual Result

Check Result	Minion Level
19 or lower	The ritual fails, half the components are lost
20-29	9th level minion
30-39	10th level minion
40+	11th level minion

You can only have a number of Eternal guardians up to your level at a time, whether they are created using this spell or a different version. If you attempt to animate more

Guardians, one of the previous Eternal Guardians (your choice) crumbles to dust.

In Ravenloft, use of this spell may call for a Dark Powers Check.

Reprogram Eternal Guardian

The final word sets on the Guardian you have set next to door of your ritual room and he steps forward to follow you to the new base, where you will reprogram him again.

level: 6

Category: Creation

Time: 5 minutes

Duration: Permanent

Component Cost: 90 gp

Market Price: 360 gp

Key Skill: Arcana or Religion (no check)

This ritual allows you to give a different set of commands to an Eternal Guardian that recognises you as his or her master. Once completed, these commands erase any other commands you have given previously to the Eternal Guardian.

In Ravenloft, use of this spell may call for a Dark Powers Check.

Animating

New keyword: Animating

Powers that have this keyword animate corpses to serve you in a variety of ways.

Animated Creature

A creature you animate uses this rules, unless a power description says otherwise.

- **Allied Creature:** When you use an animating power, you animate a corpse creating an undead creature that is an ally to you and your allies. The power

determines the requirements the targeted corpse should meet.

- **Your Defenses:** The animated creature defenses equal yours (plus bonuses described in the power) when you animate it, not including any equipment or temporary bonuses or penalties to your statistics.
- **Hit Points:** The animated creature's maximum hit points equal your bloodied value. When you animate the creature, you lose a healing surge. If you have no healing surges left you take damage equal to half your bloodied value. Essentially the black magics you use to bring a corpse back from its eternal rest sap on your living energy to imbue a mockery of life to the dead body.
- **No healing surges:** The animated creature lacks healing surges unless noted differently in the power's description. Even if an ally's power allow it to spend a healing surge, the animated creature cannot, since it was brought to life by your life force.
- **Speed:** The animating power determines the speed of the animated creature.
- **Commanding the Creature:** The animated creature is considered an obedient dead (unless otherwise noted) and has no actions of its own. You spend actions to command it mentally. You don't need line of effect to command the creature but you need to be within 30 squares of it to command it and you always know its position. You two share knowledge but not senses.

As a minor action you can command the animated creature to do one of the following actions if it physically capable of taking them: crawl, escape, move it's speed, open or close a door or container, pick up or drop an item, run, stand up, squeeze, shift etc.

The Animated creature stands up in the same action you use to animate it, you don't need to spend further action to command it to rise.

The animating power determines any special commands you can give to the animated creature and the action type for each command. If a command is a minor action, you can give that command only once per turn.

- **Attacks and Checks:** If an animating power allows the creature to attack, you make the attack through the creature as specified in the power's description. If the animated creature can make a skill check or an ability check, you make the check. Attacks and checks you make through the creature do not include equipment or temporary bonuses or penalties to your statistics.

An implement's enhancement bonus should be added to the undead's hit and damage rolls if the animating power has the implement keyword.

Obviously, the animated creature cannot use all your skills. I.e a zombie may make a strength check to break a door but it couldn't make an arcana roll to activate a portal.

- **Duration:** Unless otherwise noted the animated creature lasts until the end of the encounter and then collapses back to corpse. As a minor action you can will the power to stop.
- **Generic characteristics:** Unless otherwise noted the animated creature has immunity to disease and poison and sleep effects, resistance to necrotic attacks 10, and vulnerability to radiant attacks 5. It cannot be dominated or charmed.

- **Dark Powers:** Those that frequently use such blasphemous powers or that disturb the rest of the dead for trivial reasons tend to attract the attention of the Dark Powers.
- **Animating keyword vs Summoning Keyword:** While the mechanics are similar, most feats abilities and items that improve summoning powers don't work with the animating Keyword and vice versa, unless the DM rules otherwise. On the other hand, duplicates of these feats, powers and items that work only with the animating powers are encouraged since they give variety in the game.

Necromantic Powers

Here are a few powers for PC wizards that decide to dabble in the dark arts. Use of these powers for trivial reasons or more often than necessary may earn the attention of the Dark Powers. Nevertheless, in case a PC wants to invest heavily in these powers should also consider getting the durable feat since many of these powers cost a healing surge.

Animate Obedient Dead Wizard attack 5

As you finish the spell, black mist momentary engulfs the remains of the Ogre's last victim and it rises next to it's killer.

Daily ♦ Arcane, Implement, Animating

Standard Action

Target: A small or medium humanoid corpse within 10 squares

Effect: You animate a mostly intact corpse as an obedient dead, skeleton or zombie depending on how much flesh it has remaining. A skeleton has a speed of 6 while a zombie has a speed of 4. A skeleton also gains a +1 to AC while a zombie gains a +2 to fortitude, +5 hp and a -1 to reflex. A zombie also takes a +1 to any strength checks it makes. You can give

your obedient dead the following special commands:

- **Standard action:** Melee 1, targets 1 creature; Intelligence +2 vs AC; 1d10+intelligence modifier damage (extra +1 for zombie) and the target is marked by the obedient until the end of your next turn. In addition, if the Obedient hits with this attack it may shift 1 square or move 2 squares (provoking attacks of opportunity).
- **Opportunity attack:** Melee 1, targets 1 creature; Intelligence +2 vs AC; 1d10+intelligence modifier damage (extra +1 for zombie) +1d6 if the target is marked. In addition, whenever a marked enemy that is adjacent to the obedient shifts or makes an attack that does not include it, the obedient can make an opportunity attack against that enemy as an immediate interrupt.

Animate Vicious Dead Wizard attack 9

Greenish black mist engulfs your fallen retainer, twisting his body and transforming him to a deadly undead ready to serve you for one final service.

Daily ♦ Arcane, Implement, Animating

Standard Action

Target: A small or medium humanoid corpse within 10 squares

Effect: You animate a mostly intact corpse as an undead creature called Vicious dead (obedient dead). It has a twisted humanoid form that instead of fingers has foot-long sharp talons. The vicious dead has a speed of 6 and gains a +2 bonus to AC and reflex. You can give your vicious dead the following special commands:

- **Standard action:** Move 2 squares (may provoke attacks of opportunity) and attack. Melee 1, targets 1 creature; Intelligence +2 vs AC; 2d6 + intelligence modifier damage (Critical +1d6).

- **Standard action:** Melee 1, targets 1 creature; Intelligence +2 vs AC; 2d6 + intelligence modifier damage (Critical +1d6).
- **Hit:** Follow-up attack against the same target; Melee 1, Intelligence vs AC; 1d6 + intelligence modifier damage (Critical +1d6).
- **Move Action:** The vicious dead shifts 2 squares.
- **Opportunity attack:** Melee 1, targets 1 creature; Intelligence +2 vs AC; 2d6 + intelligence modifier damage (Critical +1d6).

Circle of Harm **Wizard attack 3**

A screeching sound is heard as you finish this spell and a sickly purple light shines from the target point in the ground harming and impeding your enemies while invigorating your undead.

Encounter ♦ Arcane, Implement, necrotic

Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 15 squares

Target: Each living creature in the burst

Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage and the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn.

Effect: Any undead allies in the burst gain 5 temporary hit points and can shift 1 square.

Hampering **Wizard attack 1**

At the wave of your hand, darkness cascades and condenses on your target, hampering his moves.

At-Will ♦ Arcane, Implement

Standard Action **Ranged 20**

Target: One creature

Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is slowed and gets a -2 to attacks until the end of your next turn.

Heal Undead

Wizard Utility 2

With a word and a wave you restore the magic that animates your servant and send him back to battle.

Encounter ♦ Arcane

Standard Action

Ranged 10

Target: One animated undead.

Effect: The target undead regains hit points equal to your level + intelligence modifier. The same undead can be affected only once per day with this spell.

11th level: +1d6

21th level: +2d6

Power of Death

Wizard Utility 10

The last breath escapes the victim of your attacks and a green light emanates from his eyes momentarily before flickering out. You can feel your powers over the dead returning.

Daily ♦ Arcane

Minor Action

Ranged 10

Target: One living creature that is not a minion.

Effect: If the target creature dies by the end of your next turn, you regain one expended animating power of a level lower than this power. If not, then the power is wasted. Obviously, drawing power from the death of someone risks to attract the attention of the Dark Powers, more so if the target is a sentient creature and not an animal.

Ray of the Necromancer **Wizard attack 1**

The black ray from your finger hits your target, allowing your animated servant to close in.

At-Will ♦ Arcane, Implement, necrotic

Standard Action

Ranged 10

Target: One creature

Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d10 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage.

Increase damage to 2d10 + intelligence modifier at 21st level.

Effect: If you have animated one or more creatures through the use of an animating daily power and such a creature is within 5 squares of the target, it may shift 2 squares towards the target.

Special: This power counts as a ranged basic attack.

Spirit Armor

Wizard Utility 6

As your enemies close in, you draw forth from your own vital reserves to put up a redish magical field of armor around you.

Encounter ♦ Arcane

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: When you activate this power, you spend a healing surge, paying with your lifeforce the demands of this spell. For the rest of the encounter you gain a +4 bonus to AC and +2 to Fortitude defense. You also get resistance to necrotic damage 5 or your resistance to necrotic damage increases by 5 and a +2 to saves against poisons and to contact disease.

Touch of the Necromancer attack 7

Wizard

The foolish paladin thought that if he got near you he could get you defenseless. He won't have the chance to make that mistake again as you leave him dazed while drawing strength from his vigor.

Encounter ♦ Arcane, Implement, necrotic

Standard Action

Melee 1

Target: One creature

Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier necrotic damage, the target is dazed until the end of your next turn and you gain 10 temporary hit points.

New Character Options

Feat: Skilled Necromancer

Prerequisite: Know at least one animating power, con 13

Benefit: Undead animated by your arcane animating powers have a +1 to all defences. Additionally, you deal a +1 with powers that deal necrotic damage.

Implement: Tome of Forbidden magic

Wizards who choose the tome implement can select the tome of the forbidden magic as their Arcane implement mastery.

Tome of Forbidden Magic: Once per encounter, as a free action, if you use your tome when using an arcane animating power, all creatures animated by that power gain a bonus to their damage roll equal to your constitution modifier. As an added bonus, when you use an arcane power that calls you to pay a healing surge, you gain 3 temporary hit points.

You must wield a tome to benefit from this feature. Necromancers prefer this form of tome mastery because it empowers their creations.

Magic items: Tome

Necromancer's Tome

level 5+

This book is binded in black leather and a bone-white grinning skull is engraved on the front cover.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Tome)

Enhancement: attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 damage per plus

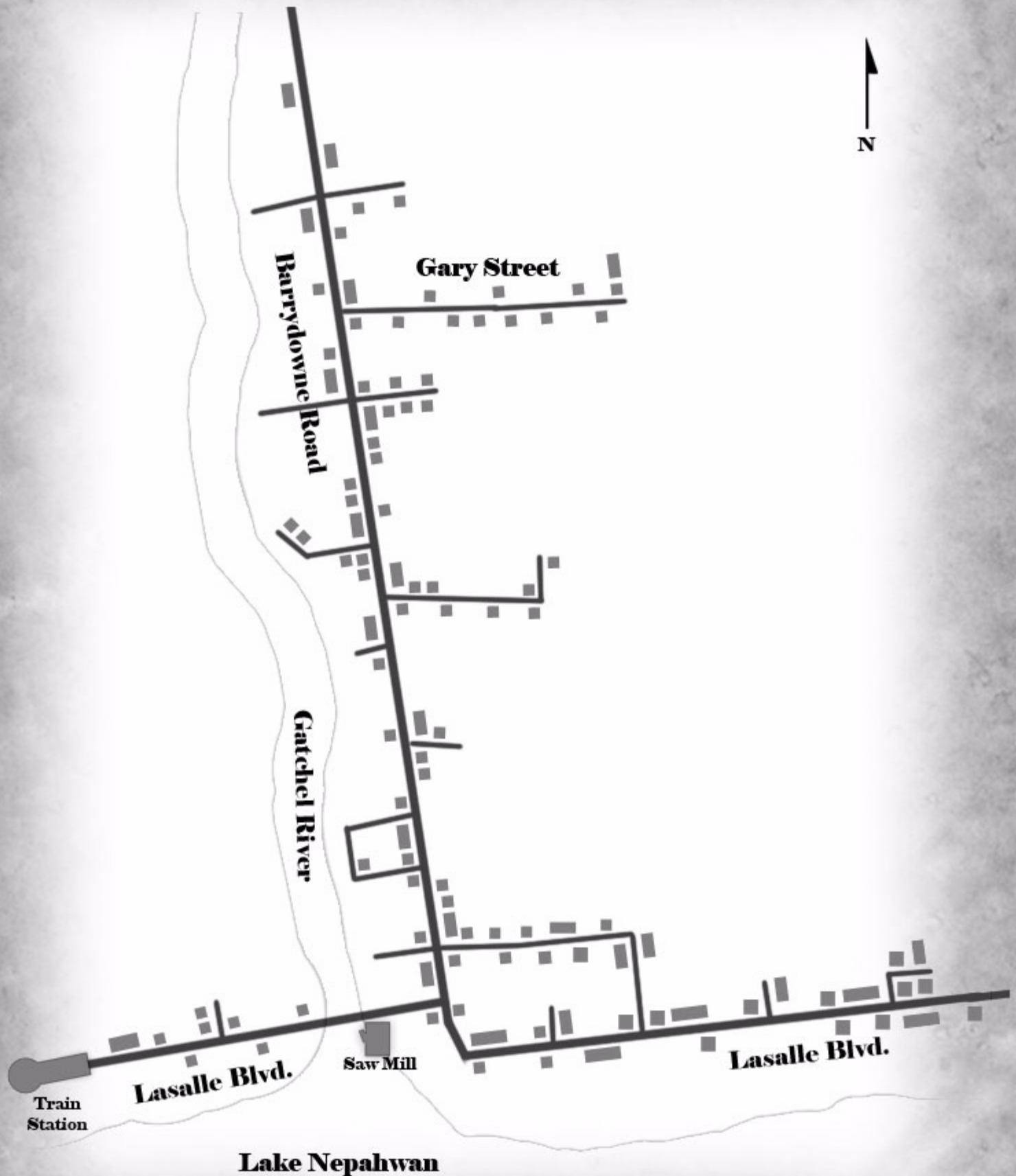
Property: When an animated undead you created through this tome hits with an opportunity attack, the target takes extra damage equal to this tome's enhancement bonus.

Property: This tome contains a wizard daily animating power and a wizard utility daily power (from those mentioned above or similar necromantic utility powers) or two daily animating powers. Both powers must be of a level equal to or lower than that of the tome. Choose these powers when you acquire the tome; they cannot be changed later. You can add these powers to your spell book.

Power (Daily ♦ Arcane, Implement, Animating): Free Action.

Choose a power contained in this tome and expend an unused wizard daily attack power of an equal or higher level. You gain the use of the chosen power during this encounter. The power is lost if you do not use it before the end of the encounter.

Starbury Valley



Starbury Valley

A Settlement in Gothic Earth

By Stephen "ScS" Sutton

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"In my last dispatch, I described the city of Bleakstone as the most wretched place in all existence. A short stay in the Starbury Valley has cured me of that notion."

-Alex Windermere, travelling journalist

A traveler hiking North from Lake Superior might choose to follow the Ramsey River and trek deep into the forested hills. As he walks along the winding river, he might notice that with each mile the water takes on a growing reddish color. As he leaves behind the streams and tributaries, the shores of the Ramsey River become barren, and the water devoid of fish or frogs. Eventually, the traveler arrives at the muddy shores of Lake Nepahwan; a lifeless rust-colored lake in the center of the Starbury Valley.

Starbury is a muddy island of civilization in a roiling sea of green forests. Miners have dug for iron in Starbury since 1860, and lumberjacks have plied the hills for years beyond remembering. The valley is surrounded by rocky hills, swampy marshes and impenetrable wilderness. The only conduit between the valley and the outside world is a branch of the continental railroad.

Though not incorporated as a town, there is a significant settlement on the Northern side of the valley, where the Gatchel River meets Lake Nepahwan. The settlement of Starbury resembles the boom towns of the west. Most buildings are hastily constructed clapboard structures with great facades built facing the muddy streets.

Lumber crews cleared the valley interior of trees nearly a century previously. Old open-pit iron mines still mar the rocky earth like pox scars on a plague victim. The ore refining process poisons all plant life, leaving the soil dead and loose. In the spring, the soil turns to slick mud which washes down the hills and floods the valley with a sucking sea of rust colored muck. When the wind shifts over the roast yards, it pushes thick acrid smoke over the valley. Locals string ropes along roads and between buildings so that they can move about when the smog rolls in.

The seasons are especially harsh, as if the earth itself seeks to drive mankind from the valley. Winter brings heavy snow falls and freezes the rivers, making travel in and out of the valley nearly impossible. In spring, snow

melt and torrential rains flood the valley with slick mud. As spring gives way to summer, a plague of ravenous black flies descend on the valley. To protect themselves from the voracious swarms, the locals move about buttoned-up, even in the sweltering summer heat. The dry heat of late summer drives the flies away, but brings the deadly threat of forest fires. Mild autumn passes far too quickly for the locals, as they struggle to earn enough to see them through the next year. Newcomers to the valley are shocked to listen to old time residents when they discuss the weather from years ago, when conditions were "really bad".

Starbury Valley is nearly isolated from the world by the impenetrable terrain. In times past, the Ramsey River was the only means of travel in and out of the valley. Unfortunately, the river is far too narrow and shallow for modern steamboats. When iron was discovered in the 1860's, investors in Bleakstone constructed a railway between their town and the Valley. The railway climbs north from Bleakstone and crosses over the Old French River. Railway Bridge is a large wooden support bridge anchored in the muddy banks of the river. The Old French River floods each spring and washes away more of the soil supporting the railway bridge. The locals in Starbury repair the bridge every year and struggle against the natural forces that threaten to isolate their town from the outside world.

History

The Starbury Valley was first explored by Métis fur traders just before the American Revolution. The Gatchel and Ramsey Rivers served as a conduit for trade in the valley and beyond. Later the rivers would serve to move timbers down from the valley to mills at the base of Lake Superior. The valley might have remained a minor lumber colony, had not lumber crews discovered iron ore just

before the Civil War. The demand for iron spurred the construction of a railroad between the valley and the city of Bleakstone. The iron trade steadily fed the growing settlement, until copper was discovered in the late 1870's. The copper deposits proved so rich that the valley attracted its own branch of the railways. Today, the valley refines its ore and lumber locally and completely bypasses the city of Bleakstone.

Recently

Starbury is a booming center of mining in the heart of the wilderness. Though iron is still mined in the valley, the real cash crop is copper. New mining companies compete fiercely for miners so to better exploit the rich minerals of the valley. Miners even receive rich bonuses for their work, earning them more than double the wages most mines pay. Each year more workers arrive, hoping to strike it rich.

Most of the newcomers are poor immigrants, hoping to earn enough to support their families. Foreigners are disappointed to learn that the mines give the best jobs to Americans. Immigrants usually find work working for the factories that line the lake, or the lumber crews out on the Gatchel River. Those who are truly desperate for work may end up laboring in the dreaded Roastyards.

Outside the valley, Starbury is a by-word for drunken lawlessness. Most of the population is bachelors, drifters, and immigrants supporting families elsewhere. Such a breed of laborer works hard and plays even harder. At night, the rowdy working men descend upon the town's many saloons, gambling dens and brothels. Brawls are common place and while town bylaws ban personal firearms, most locals carry knives.

The Valley

Barrydowne Road

Barrydowne Road is the main drag for the town. The road runs parallel to the Gatchel River, from the dirt trails in the hills, all the way to the shore of Lake Nepahwan. Miners and lumberjacks coming back into town must walk the gauntlet of taverns, gambling parlors and brothels that line the north end of Barrydowne. Hotels, stores and other honest businesses are seated closer to the lake. As the town booms, old buildings are torn down and new streets branch from Barrydowne. The newest businesses in town include a photography studio, a telegraph office and a Chinese laundry.

Helen's Kitchen

Even the dreary Starbury Valley offers a few comforts. Helen Dalton, wife of a warehouse manager, Charlie Dalton, runs a popular cookhouse. The canteen is a great log structure built behind a humble house on Gary Street, just off of Barrydowne. Miners, lumberjacks and other men of the valley fill the kitchen to bursting. The kitchen serves simple fare of uncommonly good quality, at prices that even working men can afford. Helen's seven daughters serve the customers, as do the stray children that that live with the Dalton family.

Helen Dalton grows a garden of strange herbs in her backyard and hangs weird charms in the windows of her house. Some of the more superstitious folk say that she might be some kind of witch. Those who do, however, do so quietly. The tough old bird always carries an oak cudgel tied to her belt, and local rowdies will testify that she's not shy about using it. More importantly, Helen is backed up by six burly sons who are even less reserved about inflicting harm.

Le Hotel International

Le Hotel International is a dilapidated flop house on the river-side of Barrydowne. The old clapboard structure groans with every shift in the wind, as if ready to collapse at any moment. The dry rotting wood is pitted with numerous mouse holes, though the mice have long since relocated to better dwellings. The International is home to the lowest of the low: the old and the crippled miners and lumberjacks. These aging bachelors have no money to afford better housing, and no family with which to stay. Each day the men work menial jobs in town, beg for drinks at the saloons, and then drag themselves back to their shoddy rooms at the International.

Le Hotel International is owned by Peter Durasavich, a short, skinny old man with skin liked dried jerky. Durasavich opened his hotel during the Iron Boom in the 60's and has spent every day since then pickling his brain and body with booze. Another man might have kept the hotel in better shape and earned a better living, but so long as he can afford to drink, Pete lets the hotel slide. Though most of the other hotels are full, Le International always has rooms free to rent. The rates are appropriately small for such dilapidated lodgings, especially since the owner is usually too drunk to collect. Inquiries for a room at the hotel are directed across the street, at the Cortina Saloon, where Durasavich is usually nursing his buzz.

Anny's

"St. Anne of the Pines" is the valley's oldest building. French Jesuits built the mission in 1792 and occupied it until 1813, when they were massacred by natives. The structure has been used for various purposes over the intervening decades and currently services the settlement as the town's most popular brothel. The ancient timbers of the old church sport a garish coat of paint. New

balconies extend over Barrydowne, allowing the working girls to better display their wares to the passersby.

The interior of the old church is divided into two floors. The first floor is a bar and lounge, filled with furniture made from the old pews. A piano player tickles the ivory in the old choirstall, and a burlesque act often performs on a stage built over the priest's pulpit. The second floor is an attic-like section where the working girls entertain customers. The Madame, Ol' Anny, is an aging Rubenesque courtesan with a penchant for colorful wigs and too much perfume. Annie manages the brothel from her office in the priest's rectory.

Lasalle Boulevard

Lasalle Boulevard hugs the north shore of Lake Nepahwan. The north side of Lasalle is home to a growing number of government buildings, including the courthouse, town hall, and the county surveyor. The Valley's only bank sits right beside the sheriff's office, just opposite the town's newspaper office. Iron works and carpenters take obtain their materials straight from the source and manufacture finished goods in their factories on the lakeside of Lasalle. A new refinery is being built on the east side of Lasalle to collect the small amounts of gold and silver discovered in the mines. The Paris Bridge carries Lasalle Street west, over the Gatchel River, and to the train station.

The Sawmill

The sawmill stands where the Gatchel river empties into Lake Nepahwan. The mill dates back to the founding of the lumber colony and has been in continuous use since the 1850's. Lumber jacks in the Northern forests float their timber down the river to the mill. A conveyor belt picks up the timbers and pulls the logs into the mill where a titanic circular saw blade splits the timber. Mill

workers use a number of smaller machines to cut the raw logs into finished chords of lumber.

The interior of the mill is a maze of great gears, cams and pulleys. The moving machinery poses a constant risk, even to experienced mill workers. The saw mill is atrociously unsafe. Management operates the mill with a steady influx of drifters, deadbeats and naive immigrants.

Sawdust coats every surface in the lumber mill and hangs in the air as a cloud. While the ever-present haze chokes the workers, it also threatens the very mill itself. Any open flame could ignite the mist of fine wood particles and trigger a massive explosion.

Forbidden Lore

Two years ago, the mill owner Silas Craig brutally murdered his wife with the great saw. Since that time, he has become more and more obsessed with feeding the machine. At first, the mill owner staged accidents to spill the blood of his workers into the gears and blades of the mill. With each victim, the machine's hunger grew. Now the beast grows restive. The mill has the power to control its own mechanisms and create its own opportunities to feed on blood. At night, the great timbers of the mill creek and groan, as though the building is trying to break free of its foundation. Silas fears that the beast will run rampage through the valley, yet he cannot bring himself to act against it. He hopes to placate the creature with yet more carnage.

The Rim

Murray Mine

Murray Mine is one of the oldest mines in the Starbury Valley. After thirty years of operation, the open pit mine has been expanded into a gigantic rocky crater dug into the face of the earth. A great roadway circles around the perimeter of the vast yawning canyon, spiraling downwards. The sides of the mine are a honeycomb of tunnels where miners followed the iron ore veins. The tunnels branch outwards from the mine, intersecting with each other and forming a sloping, twisting labyrinth. The main tunnels are large enough for a man to stand inside. The ceilings are reinforced with timbers and the floors graded to accommodate tracks for the ore carts. Water collects at the bottom of the mine and flows into a stagnant blood-colored pond. Some of the miners say that in time the whole mine will be flooded.

Murray Mine nears the end of its usefulness. Less and less iron is being pulled from the rock. The mine owners are loath to invest more money, so the mine manager cuts cost wherever he can. The mining equipment is old and antiquated and the supporting structures inside the mine are cracked and rotted. Accidents are frequent in the mine and cave-ins occur every week. Some of the miners have been known to quit and walk off the job without any notice.

Forbidden Lore: Hold your Breath

In 1882, twelve men were trapped in a terrible cave-in. The miners labored day and night to rescue them, but when the tunnel was opened they found only one survivor. Though the other victims were mangled, the survivor, Milo Pjenko was unharmed by the collapse. Strangely, he exhibited severe trouble breathing when he was brought to the town doctor for examination. The town undertaker was preparing the remains of the other men for burial when he made a horrifying discovery; the eleven men were not killed by the tunnel collapse - they had been slain with a pickaxe.

The sheriff arrested Milo, who by that time was suffocating on air, like a fish on land. He readily confessed to murdering the other men. When the tunnel collapsed, he had feared that the air would not last. As time passed, he slew each man in turn to allow his air supply to last that much longer. Milo was arrested, though he escaped that night by throttling a guard. A posse tracked Milo's trail back to the Murray Mine. Searchers combed the warren of tunnels but found nothing of the murderer. The police concluded that Pjenko had slipped out while they were searching the mine. The manhunt for the Mad Miner caused a sensation in the Great Lakes Region and beyond, but as the years passed, the grisly murder passed into obscurity.

The miners of the Starbury Valley have never forgotten Milo Pjenko and often tell the tale in the taverns. When plied with drink, the miners might tell even crazier stories. When the alcohol loosens their tongue, the old men talk about hearing strange noises in Murray Mine; the sound of labored breathing. The miners say the rasping sound creeps up from the darkness, and only when they are alone. Some whisper that Milo never left the mine; that he's hiding in the maze of tunnels even still.

Creighton Mine

Creighton Mine is the newest and deepest mine in the Starbury Valley. The International Copper Company, or "The Company" as locals call it, dug the mine on the Northern ridge of the valley. Creighton Mine is the most successful operation in Starbury and is still rapidly expanding. Creighton mine is comprised of a single shaft running three miles into the earth, with a number of tunnels branching off of the shaft, like an inverted pine tree.

Veteran miners call Creighton Mine a "hard rock mine". As the miners follow the veins of copper and precious metals, they must make tunnels, known as drifts, through the hard granite. The miners use pick axes and chisels to prepare the rock face, before the blasters use explosives to shatter the solid rock into smaller pieces, called "muck". Muckers break the stones into yet smaller pieces and load the broken rock into ore carts, which are then dumped into a giant crusher at the bottom of the mine shaft. Engineers use timbers to shore up the new drift, and the process continues. The rock crusher mashes the muck into manageable pieces, and then dumps the raw ore onto a massive conveyor belt. The belt carries the ore to the surface and dumps it into ore cars which are taken to the roast yards for refining.

The heart of Creighton Mine is the massive Wheel House that stands over the mine entrance. This three story wooden tower can be seen from any point in the valley. The Wheel House shelters the mighty steam engine that powers the various machines within the mine. The Wheel House also contains the Cage, the state-of-the-art elevator that ferries men and equipment in and out of the shaft.

Forbidden Lore: The Crack

While following a vein of copper, miners at Creighton Mine discovered a layer of unusually strong granite that resisted all explosives. Though they could not blast further, the miners found a crevice running through the granite, deep into the earth. The Crack is only just wide enough for a man to climb into, and extends for miles downwards at a gentle slope. The Miners also discovered that warm, humid air rises out of the fissure. In 1890, the mine organized an expedition of geologists and prospectors to investigate the Crack. The team was led by veteran spelunkers and was equipped with the latest in gear. The team even employed a telegraph, running the wire out as they climbed downwards.

Dispatches from the team indicated that the team found the bottom to the Crack and a vast subterranean cavern. The expedition later reported that they had also found an underground river, and decided that they would follow it for a distance before returning up the Crack. The telegraph remained silent for four days. On the fifth day, the telegraph operator on the surface received a single message. Since that time, the line has remained dead.

The Company fears that some unforeseen accident has injured or killed the first expedition. The mine manager believes that the final dispatch was not a real message, but rather the symptom of a damaged telegraph connection and the overactive imagination of an overly excited telegraph receiver. The company is scrambling to put together a rescue mission, while keeping the incident secret. Management has threatened to fire the telegraph receiver should he tell anyone his story. However, if prodded, the young man will reveal that the final dispatch was a single short message, repeated over and over for an hour. That message stated: "Seal the crack. Seal them in."

Creighton mine is expanding rapidly. Management is advertising jobs in newspapers throughout the Americas. The Company is seeking geologists, prospectors, and spelunkers for an immediate position. The Company is even offering bonuses to prospective employees with medical training, if they can start immediately.

The Roastyards

To the south of the valley is a blasted moonscape of barren hills and rocky craters. Once the site of the original open pit mines, these rocky crags are now the Roastyards. To separate their minerals from the base rock, the mining companies carve great trenches into the earth and pile on ore and lumber. This mound is set ablaze and allowed to burn for weeks on end. In the great inferno, the ores separate naturally, which allows workers to chip off the valuable metals and discard the remaining slag. The process produces huge volumes of acidic smoke which waft northwards into the valley. These sulfurous fumes poison all the plant life they touch and burn the earth black.

The men who work in the Roastyards call them "a little piece of hell on earth". The heat is intense and poisonous gas chokes the air. Worst of all, a thick pall of smoke reduces visibility to only a few feet. Men often become lost in the smoke and occasionally lose their way and fall into the flames. Those unfortunates who fall into the conflagrations are instantly burned to charcoal. Few men survive a prolonged career in the Roastyards.

Beyond the Valley

Old French River Trading Post

An old trading post lies several miles past the lumber camps, at the fork where the Gatchel River breaks from the Old French

River. French trappers founded the post more than a century ago to collect furs from native and Métis hunters. Today, the post does better business collecting meat and crops. Native hunters and farming hamlets sell their goods to the traders at the post, who in turn sell the wares down river in Starbury. The post comprises of three ancient log buildings and a handful of trader's tents and huts surrounded by a collapsing wooden palisade. The post is owned by Patrick Jessinik, a deserter from the Northwest Rebellion.

Hamlets and Farms

Hamlets and farms line the Gatchel and Old French rivers. These settlements are connected to each other only by the river. Thick forests, rocky hills and swampy marshes make overland travel impossible and isolate the settlements from the outside world. The people of the northern forests are a mix of intermarrying Americans, natives and French families. Many of the families have been farming the lands since before the American Revolution.

Two centuries of isolation have made the folk insular and superstitious. The river folk have spent so long concealing themselves from the outside world, they pay little heed to what it is that they are concealing. The river folk practice a bizarre spirituality that pays homage to both Christian saints and Indian spirits. The people of the river despise the wicked Valley dwellers and only trade with them through the Trading Post. For their part, the Valley people hate the backwards degenerates of the river and are happy to leave them to their lonely northern forests.

Empire Hospital

A Haunted Hospital in Bleakstone

By Stephen "ScS" Sutton

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Empire Hospital rises like a man-made mountain to cast its strange shadow across the crumbling city of Bleakstone. The hospital is a five story step pyramid encasing a central courtyard. The exterior walls of the modern-day ziggurat are made of huge blocks of reddish sandstone and slope at a slight angle to the ground. Three obelisks thrust out from the crown of the great cyclopean structure and jab at the sky. Despite its ancient appearance, Empire Hospital is an example of the modern, if experimental, architectural theories. Towering copper-framed windows emerge from the stone walls of the building, looking out into the surrounding city like a hundred green-rimmed eyes.

While the exterior of the hospital is extravagant and outlandish, the interior is a model of utilitarian efficiency. The walls and floors are bare of adornments and kept meticulously clean. Ceilings rise nearly a foot taller than in a normal building and walls slope downwards at a slight degree. These features create curious acoustic phenomena within the hospital's winding halls and cavernous galleries.

The whitewashed walls of the building conceal the tangled web of gas, plumbing and ventilation pipes that supply each floor with light, water and heat. More conspicuous are the glass enclosed operating rooms that perch atop the fourth and fifth floors. These surgeries are shaped like flattened pyramids made from glass panes and copper framing. The city council of Bleakstone boast that Empire Hospital is the most modern medical facility in the country, and perhaps even the world.

Many of the townsfolk consider the Hospital a mixed blessing. It's bizarre shape and construction clash horribly with the American neo-classical theme of the city center. Many of the more religious citizens abhor the unchristian design of the edifice. The very presence of the hospital disrupts the orderly city streets, as its grounds were built at a strange oblong angle compared to the neat grid of neighbouring roadways. Worst of all, when the sun begins to set, the reddish stone walls take on a throbbing glow while the angles and obelisks of the building throw strange creeping shadows across its surface. Some say that it appears as if the building is moving.

History

In 1870, the City Council of Spivey Point conceived a project to consolidate local medical facilities and unify several neighbouring communities into the greater municipality of Bleakstone. Unfortunately, politics and rivalries halted any progress as the city approached amalgamation. It was only in 1872 that the provisional city council of Bleakstone was approached by an outside party with an offer to build, finance, and staff the entire facility. Many records were lost during the chaotic merging between the various townships into the city, so it is virtually unknown who was responsible for the completion of the hospital. Many of the city aldermen refuse to discuss the matter, even to this day.

Leading the project was Dr. Evart Shandor, a famous, if controversial, surgeon from Europe. Though highly regarded in the field of medicine, it was his connections in spiritual and mystical circles that led him to the surprising choice of a foreign architect that had many modern structures in his portfolio in Europe. This foreign man, named Xavier Yazoz, was rarely seen outside his office and he left town the day Empire Hospital opened. Though his strange and experimental designs were derided by engineers, the city council granted all of his demands since they were backed by Shandor. By 1875, Empire Hospital was opened, with Shandor serving both as manager and as Chief Resident Surgeon.

Throughout the 1880's the facility developed an odd chequered reputation; both as a place where the mortally injured could be miraculously cured, and as a place where seemingly healthy patients might inexplicably be stricken or die. Misfortune and madness seemed to target the hospital staff, with nearly a dozen doctors, nurses and

orderlies either sent to prison or committed to Ether House, the local asylum.

In 1887, the city council opened a public inquiry into the hospital. One year later the inquiry was closed, its records destroyed, and Dr. Evart Shandor unceremoniously dismissed from his position. Neither the hospital nor city officials spoke of the matter to any news agency. Rumours abounded about bizarre practices, unscientific experiments, and unnecessary surgeries. After his dismissal, Dr. Shandor departed for parts unknown, though he still owns a house in the high hills overlooking Empire Hospital.

Recently

Since 1888, Dr. Herbert Bates, resident cardiac surgeon, manages Empire Hospital. Dr. Bates works hard to remove the taint that stains the reputation of the hospital. Thus far, he has met with little success. Far too many people prefer to suffer in their own homes, rather than risk a stay within the facility.

The years weigh heavily on Dr. Bates and the rest of the staff. Many complain of stress induced hallucinations. Patient recovery rates are at an all time low, with some patients actually becoming progressively worse as they remain. Dr. Hammond, the city coroner, complains repeatedly of disturbances in the morgue. The city council is convening a preliminary inquiry into the hospital. It is rumoured amongst the secretarial staff that Dr. Bates is at the end of his rope. He is currently interviewing private detectives and even spiritual mediums to investigate what dark forces are at work within Empire Hospital.

Empire Hospital

First Floor

Visitors to Empire Hospital enter through the large double doors at the south side of the building. The foyer is flanked by cloakrooms and sitting rooms for both common and higher class citizens. An overhanging ceiling shelters the Emergency Entrance at the East of the building, where Ambulance carriages drop off patients.

The eastern wing of the building contains examination rooms, a small operating room and the office of the doctor on call. The western wing of the building houses the large patient rooms. Common patients are housed on this floor in rooms of six or more beds. The kitchen, dining hall, and loading dock are all in the north end of the hospital.

Tall eight-pane windows illuminate nearly every room on the first floor. Gas lamps project from every wall, to provide light at night hours. Orderlies and washer women keep the facility immaculate; the smell of alcohol and disinfectant constantly wafts through the halls. A public stairwell in the west wing, and a staff-only stairwell in the east wing, allows access to the floors above and below.

Garden

The garden stands in the courtyard in the center of the hospital. During the day, ambulatory patients walk the pathway or sit by the fountain that stands in the western side of the grounds. The hospital keeps the grasses well manicured but let the flowers run wild. A species of wild rose runs the perimeter of the yard, choking out the other plants. Stunted shrubs line each pathway and circle around the fountain. Creeping ivy climbs its way up the sloping walls and covers several of the lower floor windows. A

few timid song birds perch in the two trees that rise from the garden. The ancient trees predate the hospital and grow larger and more twisted with each passing year.

Second Floor

Private and semi-private hospital rooms are available on the second floor, though at a considerable price. Higher class patients stay on the second floor, where doctors perform expensive tests and nurses tend to their real and imagined aches and pains. A special kitchen operates on the second floor to provide quality fare to the patients, for an added cost. The second floor is also home to the children's ward and the infant ward.

Surgical Theatre

The hospital maintains a surgical theatre in the North East corner of the second floor. Though intended purely as an instructional tool, Dr Raymond LeBlanc uses the operating room for a more theatrical purpose. Every month, the Dr. LeBlanc opens the surgical theatre to the public and invites patrons to observe the spectacle of modern surgery. Though the spectacle is billed as a purely educational event, the idle wealthy of Bleakstone buy tickets to the show as a morbid amusement. The exhibition draws more customers with each showing and shows all signs of becoming a major social event.

Third Floor

The hospital restricts access to the third floor to staff and other physicians. The hospital keeps critical and chronic care patients on the third floor where nurses can observe them with minimal distractions. Several wealthy, elderly patients spend their last days in the comfort of their private rooms, while the hospital staff does everything possible to

extend their stay and their bill. Physicians, students and other guests watch operations performed in the surgical theatre (2nd floor) from the observation area in the North East corner of the third floor.

Laboratory and Pharmacy

Empire Hospital features an advanced laboratory to facilitate the most modern and experimental medical testing procedures. The interior of the laboratory is filled with all manner of modern scientific equipment, from Bunsen burners to voltanic batteries. The laboratory also doubles as a pharmacy and dispensary. Medicines are manufactured in the lab and stored for quick access.

Empire Hospital expends massive quantities of the highly flammable anaesthetic ether. In order to keep up with the demand, the Hospital uses the laboratory to manufacture ether for itself and other

medical facilities in Bleakstone. The hospital laboratory is a reinforced bunker built into the south west wing of the third floor. This area is entirely independent from the hospital's gas, vent and water lines and is isolated from the rest of the hospital by dog-legged corridors. The interior walls of the laboratory are sharply slopped to channel any explosion away from the hospital and outwards to the huge glass windows on the exterior walls.

Isolation Ward

The isolation ward stands behind a heavy sound-proofed door in the South East corner of the third floor. Contagious or dangerous patients stay in locked cells and are continuously watched by brawny orderlies. Cells feature heavy canvas padding on the walls, floor and ceiling to prevent patients from injuring themselves. Heavy oak doors and barred windows ensure patients cannot escape, while metal slats in the top and bottom of the doors allow orderlies to

Forbidden Lore

The extreme safety measures in the laboratory have already proven their worth. In the summer of 1889, several intruders entered the laboratory at night. Whether by purpose or accident, the burglars ignited a fire in the lab, which then detonated the stores of ether. The resulting explosion might well have destroyed the entire hospital, were it not for the reinforced structure. Instead, the hospital remained virtually untouched, even though the laboratory was utterly annihilated. The intruders were blasted out of the hospital like pellets from a shotgun. All were charred beyond identification, except for one body which was miraculously untouched. Police investigators identified the corpse as Jan Hillbek, a man who had been reported dead four years previously.

Forbidden Lore: The Patient in Room 328

Doctors recently confined a man to the isolation ward and ordered he be kept in full body restraint. The patient's family committed him to Ether House, the local mental asylum, a week earlier, though he was sent to Empire Hospital when strange lesions emerged on his skin. The man claims to be a demon and has exhibited preternatural strength and worsening physical deformities. Though restraints keep him immobile, orderlies swear that they can hear movement coming from inside his cell. A local priest attempted to interview the maniac, but fled the cell after only a few minutes. The local parish is currently awaiting a professional investigator to examine the patient.

observe and feed patients without risk of contact.

Hospital policy limits a patient's stay in the isolation ward to a week at maximum before the patient is sent to an appropriate sanatorium or asylum. However, sick-houses and madhouses in Bleakstone are often full. As a result, many poor patients stay in the draconian isolation ward for months before being released.

Fourth Floor and Fifth Floors

The fourth floor is home to the private offices of the doctors that supervise Empire Hospital. Most of the doctors have their own private offices around Bleakstone and only work in the Hospitals a few days each week. Chief Resident Dr. Herbert Bates is the only doctor who works full time in the hospital. A small secretary pool services the doctors and looks after short term records. Patients are kept in small rooms on the western wing of the fourth floor immediately before and after surgery.

Access to the operating rooms 1 and 2 is located on the south side of the east and west wings, while access to operating room 3 is on the fifth floor. The Fifth floor is a dedicated cardiac care ward.

Operating Rooms

The operating rooms reflect new and experimental designs in medicine. The operating rooms are flattened pyramids made of double panes of glass. The double panes insulate the room against cold, while allowing the maximum sunlight to illuminate the room. Mirrored reflectors and numerous gas lamps provide light for overcast days or nightly emergencies.

Patients are carried to the operating room by a state of the art steam-powered lift. The lifts resemble dumbwaiters, with heavy

Forbidden Lore

The architect of the Hospital, Evart Shandor, modeled Empire Hospital on a prehistoric Mesopotamian temple. The placement of the operating rooms in the hospital corresponds to the position of the sacrificial alters on the ancient temple. The unique construction the hospital channels the spiritual energy of those who die in the operating rooms. These energies are stored within the hospital's structure, like electric charges in a battery.

chain pulleys lifting the lift floor through a trap door in the operating room. Staff and surgeons enter the operating room by a stairwell that circles around the lift.

Operating Rooms 1 and 2 are used for general surgeries, while operating room 3 is reserved for only cardiac operations.

Basement

The twisted maze of the basement resembles nothing so much as a medieval dungeon. In 1879 the hospital ripped out the rotting wooden ceilings and partition walls and left the basement a warren of huge brick rooms and exposed steam-belching pipes. The heat of the furnace and laundry room keeps the basement at a sweltering temperature all year round. Unused gurneys, cabinets and wheelchairs choke the basement hallways and exposed pipes constantly drip condensation on all exposed surfaces.

Furnace Room

Were Empire Hospital a living being, the great furnace would be its heart. The massive iron boiler constantly hums with the energy of the inferno contained within. The great fire is fed a steady diet of coal, which it burns both for heat and to generate

Forbidden Lore:

Alternate Fuel Sources

Unbeknownst to most of the staff, the furnace doubles as a crematorium. The morgue supervisor Jeremiah Tan incinerates the bodies of unidentified cadavers, so as to pocket the cost of burial. He deliberately keeps poor records to conceal the location of cremated bodies. Should a spirit cling to its body after death, it might well be infuriated by its improper burial. Such a spirit might become trapped within the furnace, but yet be able to stretch its power through the boiler and gas lamps and spread its ghastly influence to every corner of Empire Hospital.

flammable gasses to fuel lamps throughout the building. The furnace also features a secondary hatchway, which orderlies use to incinerate medical waste. One corner of the room is occupied by the coal chute, which is often kept open to vent the unbearable heat in the chamber.

Conjoined to the furnace is its deformed twin, the boiler. The boiler is a bulbous sphere of brass and iron that thrusts forth a tangled mass of pipes and vents. It resembles nothing so much as a metal octopus, sending forth its feelers throughout the building above.

Laundry Room

Every day Empire Hospital produces thousands of pounds of soiled blankets, gowns, and bandages. The reeking linens are sent to the laundry room where a small army of old women struggle with primitive tools to eradicate blood, pus and even worse substances. The centerpiece of the laundry room is "the mangler", a steam powered

washing machine used to soak linens in a harsh bath of borax detergent.

Mr. Pots, a one-eyed war veteran, supervises the laundry room. Mr. Pots walks only with the use of a metal brace on his left leg, which he stamps against the stone floor to make noise when he is angry. When Pots is especially incensed he removes his eye patch and forces his subordinates to look into his empty socket while he shrieks at them.

Storage Room

The storage room is directly beneath the loading dock and connected by its own staircase. This great cavernous room is filled from floor to ceiling with crates and boxes. A venerable Italian named Oscar manages the store room and handles all deliveries. The short, skinny man speaks with an incomprehensible accent and has a knack for finding the most strange and exotic items. Oscar is so useful that none of the doctors or nurses have complained that he sells some of the stored goods to his friends in Little Etrusca.

Plumbing Room

The plumbing room lies behind a massive oak door with three iron latches. The chamber contains the main line where water is siphoned from the city pipes and the sluice where sewage is dumped. The room actually predates the hospital. Workers discovered the chamber during the excavation of the basement. The room is walled with old stone and mortar covered in layers of mould and fungous. The far wall of the room is a thick metal gate separating the chamber from a black tunnel made from the same stone walls as the plumbing room. Surveyors believe the tunnels connect with the sewers beneath the neighbouring community of Elderslot, though no one has dared to investigate. Hospital policy requires that the gate, and the room itself, be locked at all times.

Subbasement

The subbasement is two corridors cut into the earth. Despite the numerous gas lights, the subbasement is noticeably cold. The furnace room feeds its flames with air from the subbasement, creating a constant breeze in the halls. This air current keeps the subbasement cool and bone dry, making it the ideal place for the morgue. The draught also creates an eerie whistling noise that seems to echo off the bare white-washed walls.

Morgue

Empire Hospital maintains a large morgue in the subbasement. Though originally intended to serve as a morgue for the whole city, the abnormal death rate in the Hospital keeps the facility full to bursting.

Jeremiah Tan maintains the morgue, with the assistance of his two orderlies. Tan is a mortician from New York, though he does not discuss the circumstances of his relocation. He is a cadaverously thin man with a bulbous head partially covered by thinning hair. One eye moves independently of the other; many of the nurses say that his "wandering eye" leers at them obscenely. Though he is thoroughly disliked by all the hospital staff, Tan is the only person in Bleakstone willing to work in the cold, creepy subbasement.

When Jeremiah Tan took his position in the morgue, he brought his two mentally challenged orderlies, Eros and Phobos. Nicknamed "the zombies", both orderlies are huge, hulking men with perpetually blank expressions on their faces and the reek of formaldehyde on their clothes. Though incapable of independent thought or reason, they obey orders without question or complaint. Both move about the hospital with an aura of preternatural silence, often

appearing just at the right moment when a patient must be taken to the morgue.

Autopsy Room

Opposite the morgue is the autopsy room, a fully functional operating room dedicated to the dissections of cadavers. Unlike the immaculate operating rooms of the hospital above, the autopsy room is a cluttered mess of tools, trays and equipment. In the center of the room is the metal operating gurney. The only light source in the room comes from a gas lamp that hangs from the ceiling directly above the gurney. The room positively reeks of formaldehyde and alcohol, which Jeremiah Tan uses to cover up the smell of clotted blood.

Records Storage

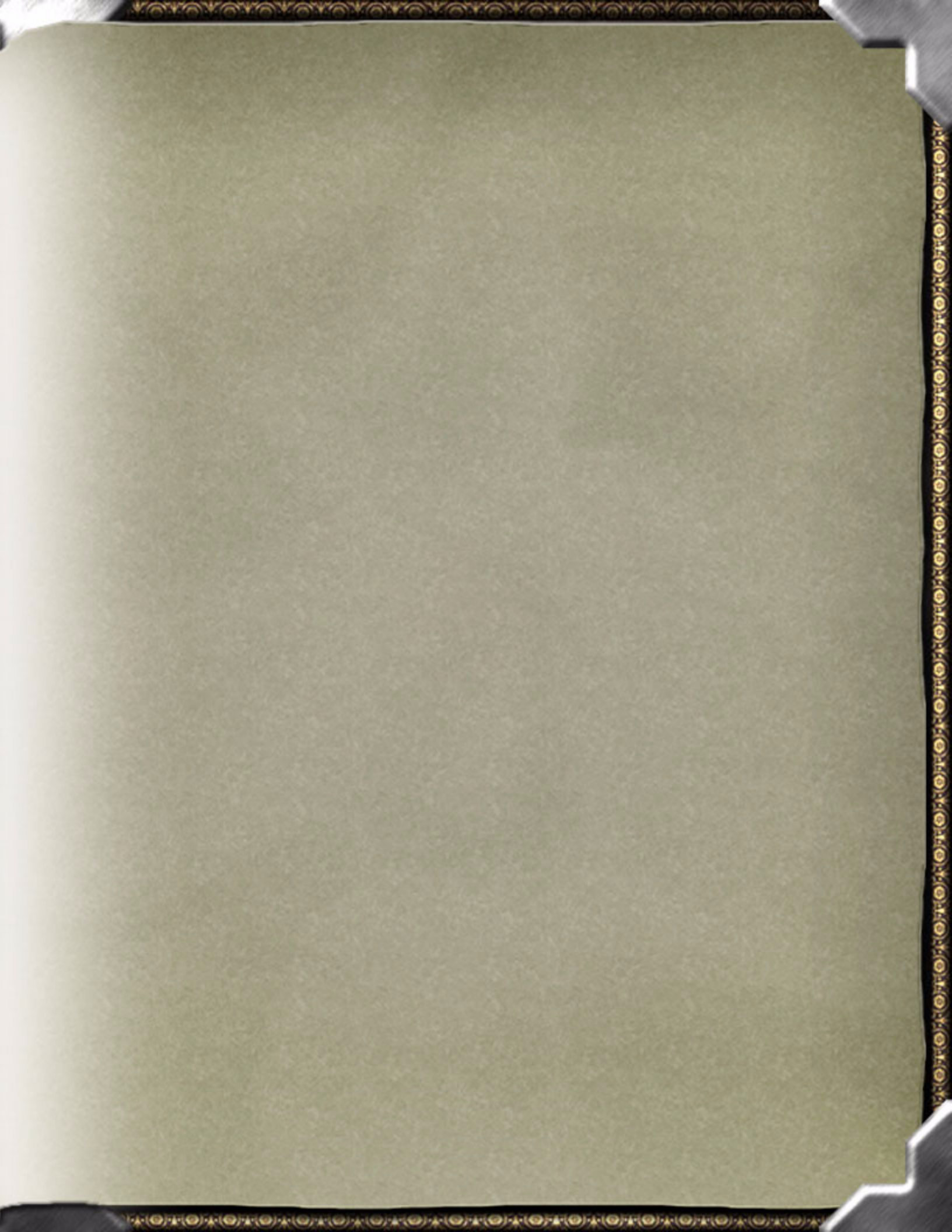
The hospital stores all long-term patient records in a single enormous room in the subbasement. The cold dry conditions preserve the paper superbly. The hospital makes extra money by renting out the extra space to other city facilities in the city. Inside the records room is an empty office meant to house a librarian. Unfortunately, the hospital has never managed to convince anyone to work in the records room for more than a few months.

Adventure Hooks

- The players check themselves into Empire Hospital to better recover from their last adventure. Yet they find little rest within the Hospital's white-washed walls. Restless spirits wander its twisted halls, tormenting the living. Can the players lay the spirits to rest, or will they join them?
- Archaeologist Professor Arthur Goldsach recently returned to the United States from an extended dig in the Middle East. While visiting colleagues in Bleakstone he became intrigued with Empire Hospital's

unique design. After researching local records and referencing his own journals from his dig, Goldsach sent frantic letters to his associates requesting their immediate help. Before his associates arrived, Goldsach fell ill and slipped into a coma. He remains unconscious and currently resides in the critical care ward on the fourth floor of Empire Hospital, awaiting heart surgery.

- Evart Shador designed Empire hospital to store the spiritual energies of those who die within its walls. These psychic energies are stored within its structure, like energy in a battery. Yet like a battery, the Hospital can only hold so much power. In Shador's absence the spectral power builds and builds. Can the players release the spiritual energy before it ruptures its confines? For what terrible intention did Shador store this psychic energy? Could that unknown purpose be worse than the looming catastrophe?



Dangerous Knowledge

Evil doesn't lie in the open;
it lurks in the corners. While the light of
day illuminates the world, the darkness clings to
hidden places. Shadows stalk under forest canopies,
skulk in caverns, and squirm under the floorboards. It is in
these unseen lairs that fell things await their unwary prey, like
spiders in the center of their web.

In its eternal quest for forbidden knowledge, the Fraternity of Shadows
has journeyed to these benighted burrows and returned with secret lore.
Read now of the terrible secrets gleaned from the darkest recesses of the
demiplane.

For use with these Dungeons and Dragons® core books :
Players Handbook™, Dungeon Master's Guide™, and
Monster Manual™ as well as the following Ravenloft
core books: Ravenloft Campaign Setting 3rd
edition™, Ravenloft Player's
Handbook™ and Ravenloft
Dungeon Master's
Guide™