

Ravenloft®

Reincarnated

V3



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Ravenloft Reincarnated

The Savage World of Ravenloft

Adventure Edition

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Many thanks to the Fraternity of Shadows for their work in keeping Ravenloft alive(ish).
Yours in Shadow, *fratus tuus in umbra*.

And thanks as always to my lovely wife, Chisa,
without whom none of this would be any fun.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Land of Mists . . .

Beyond mortal senses, beyond reality, there lurks a boundless plane. It permeates your world and fills the void between worlds. It is the border between the lands of the living and of the dead. There, mind and matter become one. Reason and passion make war upon one another. Fear and yearning can become more tangible than iron.

Somewhere, lurking deep within those ethereal mists, a dark and nameless dimension is ruled by dark and nameless powers. Some say it is a prison for the damned; some say it is a crucible to test the virtuous. Others simply call it home. It is a land of mist and shadow, love and death, sacrifice and seduction, beauty and horror. It is a land of whispered fears made manifest.

It is the **Realm of Dread**.

Perhaps you have sensed its touch. At the bidding of the Dark Powers, tendrils of the ethereal Mists that bind this land reach out to caress the Material Plane. They stroke the skin at the back of your neck when a creaking floorboard warns that you are not alone in the dark. Their invisible fingers crawl down your spine when inhuman shadows rustle at the edges of your vision.

The Mists do more than merely caress. The Dark Powers are drawn to innocence and villainy, to loathing and desire, to obsession, and to despair. They seek out squandered dreams and inner demons. They savor the decay of the spirit. Their Mists snatch up fiends at the

moment of their ruin and steal upon heroes in times of doubt.

To what end do the Dark Powers add these souls to their tarnished collection? To torment them? To purify them? None can say, for few souls drawn into the Realm of Dread ever leave to tell the tale. Yet perhaps you will soon learn for yourself, for tonight, the Mists have come for you.

Welcome to the Land of Mists—to the crucible of virtue and the spoils of damnation.

Welcome to Ravenloft.

Ravenloft Reincarnated: Adventure Edition

Longtime fans of the *Ravenloft* campaign setting may wonder about the point of this document. There are no less than four (and a half!) editions of *Dungeons and Dragons* that have Ravenloft-compatible rules (plus *Pathfinder*), thanks to the work of companies like TSR and Wizards of the Coast as well as passionate fans like the Fraternity of Shadows.

However, many fans of the setting have long hoped for a version of the game that used a different set of rules entirely, feeling that the mechanical rigor of D&D or the d20 System does a disservice to the Gothic feel of the Land of Mists.

In that vein, this set of rules is intended to offer an alternative to that group of fans. The *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* rules offer a great many horror-oriented settings to sink one's teeth into,

so it seems like a natural match for the dark horror/action feel of Ravenloft.

At the same time, this document exists to offer a slightly different version of the setting. Where Ravenloft has always openly acknowledged its roots in the Gothic literature milieu, it has sometimes forgotten about its other inspirations: the Hammer horror films of the 1970s, the Universal monster movies of the 1930s, the cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft and his contemporaries, and many others. This work has approached Ravenloft primarily as a setting for Gothic horror, but also looks to those other inspirations that have crept in over time.

What Has Come Before

Originally envisioned as a setting for a single adventure, the world around Castle Ravenloft has only grown larger and more complex over time, including a lengthy metaplot that ran through the original edition of the setting and a somewhat more implied metaplot that run through the Kargatane years.

This vast sprawl of history is one of the selling points to longtime fans of the setting, but it can also prove an impediment to entry for new fans.

Ravenloft Reincarnated exists not just to serve as a new rules set for the game, but also to act as a jumping-off point for new players and old fans alike. This document posits a version of the setting in stasis, waiting for the moment that a group of heroes comes along to kick over the anthill and send changes rippling through the setting.

At the same time, nothing here invalidates any previous version of the setting. While this book's elves and dwarves are refugees from a realm of shadowy fey, nothing prevents a GM looking to use the "classic" D&D versions

of the listed character types from doing so.

Here and there exist nods to different adventures, different versions of the world's history, and even occasionally intentional contradictions about the nature of that history. Ravenloft is many things to many people, and it is this author's sincere hope that this document can capture as many of them as possible.

Pride and Prejudice

Many of the conceits of classical Gothic horror are problematic by the standards of the modern day. Racism, classism, sexism, and more are baked into the cultural oeuvre of the period, ranging in ways from the subtle to the overt.



Take for example the word “gypsy,” a common stock character type in Gothic literature and a major part of the original Ravenloft setting. Nowadays, it’s commonly known that “gypsy” is a derogatory term for people of ethnic Roma descent—a racial slur as unacceptable as any other.

Where possible, *Ravenloft Reincarnated* avoids such problematic usage. It is generally assumed that most lands of the Dread Realms are places where sexual equality is the norm, or that where sexual inequality exists, player characters are an exception to usual attitudes. When sexual inequality exists in a significant fashion, it is generally *different* from the sexual inequality existing in the modern real world.

Additionally, due to continuing evolutions in the use of language and the understanding that some traditional gaming terms have become recognized as contributing to hurtful stereotypes, the newest edition of *Ravenloft Reincarnated* eschews the use of the term “race” to refer to player character species. The more modern term “ancestry” has been adopted to avoid the baggage carried by older terminology.

Racial strife is occasionally an issue in the Land of Mists, but it is a strife between ethnic groups that have little-to-nothing in common with real-world groups. Even where “genre appropriate,” racial slurs are avoided. Where possible, the text makes it clear that any racist attitudes are those of specific characters or the general attitudes of a culture, and not the beliefs of the author or a “grand truth” of the setting.

Furthermore, while individual NPCs may have their sexual preference or gender identity spoken of—and sex and gender are very much at the heart of Gothic literature!—there is no assumption made about those of the player

characters. A player character in Ravenloft can be of any gender or sexual orientation, and a character’s sexual identity and preferences are considered to be neutral as far as the universe goes, so long as they’re consensual.

Citing “historical accuracy” to punish a player’s choice of their character’s gender or sexuality should be avoided. The point of role-playing is to have fun. Anything that would drive players away from the hobby should be discouraged, especially if in pursuit of something as ephemeral (and usually poorly applied) as “historical accuracy.”

That being said, Ravenloft is a world of terrible darkness. Players should be forewarned about the possibility of situations that might make them uncomfortable. Whenever possible, players and GMs should discuss such possibilities and determine what is appropriate at their table ahead of time. Play responsibly.

The Gothic Milieu

Come now into a world of Gothic adventure: where innocence battles corruption, where love destroys and redeems, where magic cannot overcome morality, and where divine justice comes to all.

At its most basic, Gothic horror is about the contest between good and evil. In this contest, though, the armies are not equally matched: the forces of evil are vastly more powerful and influential than the forces of good, and often far greater in number.

Although they may be physically weaker and seemingly friendless, the forces of good have courage, purity, the redemptive power of love, and the force of divine justice on their side. More than

any other genre, Gothic horror is about *heroism*, because the protagonists must struggle to do good in a world that doesn't necessarily reward that effort.

Heroes in the Gothic milieu work alone or in small numbers, against almost insurmountable odds, without financial rewards, and often without recognition—without even a kind word to help them along. It is not a battle that can truly be won with fists or swords, and it is a battle that may cost them everything they have in order to fight it—but fight it they must. Sometimes, they fail or fall into evil, but when they win, the victory is so much sweeter, because the road is so much harder to travel.

Gothic tales are infused with an atmosphere of supernatural dread. They play upon both the thrill and the fear of the unknown. They are often highly symbolic, even dreamlike.

Ancestral curses and mournful ghosts manipulate events and erode the characters' sanity. Unnatural deformities such as scars, strange birthmarks, or hunched backs make others perceive the afflicted as monsters, whether this is fair or not. People are punished for the sins of their ancestors, contrasting the original dark deed with the pitiable nature of those upon whom the punishment has fallen. They are tales of madness and obsession, evoking subtle horrors and deriving terror from foreboding rather than gore.

The ghosts and ghouls of this genre are, above all else, allegorical doppelgangers—reflections of human evil. When Frankenstein rejected his monster, he rejected the terrible consequences of his own profane actions, which returned to haunt him in the form of his forlorn creation.

Running a Gothic Horror Game

Both players and GMs must put aside a lot of the preconceptions associated with traditional fantasy roleplaying while playing *Ravenloft*, particularly any sense of an adversarial relationship between them. Instead, think of the game as collaborating to jointly tell a Gothic horror tale. For that reason, trust and participation are vital.

The players must trust the GM to be scrupulously fair (to the spirit of the story, if not to the roll of the dice), especially if they are going to be set against enemies far more powerful than they are, and to respond to the themes they want to explore and the directions they want their characters to go in.

Players should feel that the GM is likely to accept the player adding in extra details to a scene (traditionally the sole province of the GM) in order to develop their characters and improve the story. (Of course, the key word there is *improve* the story, not *derail* it: the GM is still within their rights to say no, but the players should still feel they have a reason for saying no that will be made apparent later, not just a lack a flexibility).

Conversely, the GM must trust the players to engage with the genre: they need to understand and accept that it is a world that offers more kicks than kisses, and particularly, that sometimes in horror stories, the protagonist does stupid things.

The reason this interaction is so important is that Gothic horror thrives on detailed characters. The player characters, the characters they frequently interact with, and the villains should all be complex, three dimensional characters with desires and failings that aren't necessarily consistent or in the best interest of either themselves or the PCs.

It makes the game more engaging, and it makes it easier for the GM to tailor adventures to the PCs' backgrounds.

On a similar note, although the world may be largely indifferent to or against the PCs and their allies, not every attachment or friendship should be an excuse for betrayal or kidnapping. There needs to be some light in the world—Good is always an active force, even if it is subtle. Otherwise, what are the PCs fighting for? Why would they keep going if failure was inevitable and everyone they knew and loved would either die or betray them?

Nuanced characterization is part of the reason why (in the internal logic of the world), darklords and heroes both survive. Some villains are cruel or tyrannical and hold power through force of arms. Others, however, are seen as champions of their people. Many certainly don't see themselves as a villain, and have positive features, such as honor, loyalty, patriotism, humor, or love. By definition, darklords are truly evil, but they may not always appear so, especially to a casual view.

The battle between good and evil occurs on two fronts: at a divine, objective level, where the sides are absolute, and at the level of the world the characters inhabit, where it is much more murky and not always clear where people stand. A character may be evil, but may also be reliable, even trustworthy, or more concerned with seeking pleasure than oppressing innocents. If the PCs are interested in fighting werebeasts, a darklord with similar interests may even act as patron for them—until near the end of the campaign, at least.

Finally, remember that player characters are not average inhabitants of Ravenloft. They are the *wild cards* in the deck—the major arcana in the tarot. Most people go their entire lives without seeing

any supernatural beings or magic, although they live on actively in superstition. Most have learnt that if you don't go into that house, or that wood, or if you keep your head down when the moon is full and don't answer the door to strangers, you can live a life not drastically dissimilar to those in other, happier worlds.

In contrast, the player characters actively seek trouble. They are people singled out by fate for great or fell purposes. Their lives are lives of struggle and adversity, enriched with magic and experiences that the closed minds of the common folk can't even dream of. They are the heroes and antiheroes of our stories.

The Lay of the Land

On the surface, the Land of the Mists seems much like any other low-magic setting. Spellcasters and nonhumans (or at least, creatures that are obviously nonhuman) are rare, and common folk seldom witness the supernatural, understanding it only through folklore (although that folklore is frighteningly prevalent). Few know that the natural laws of their realm have been insidiously rewritten.

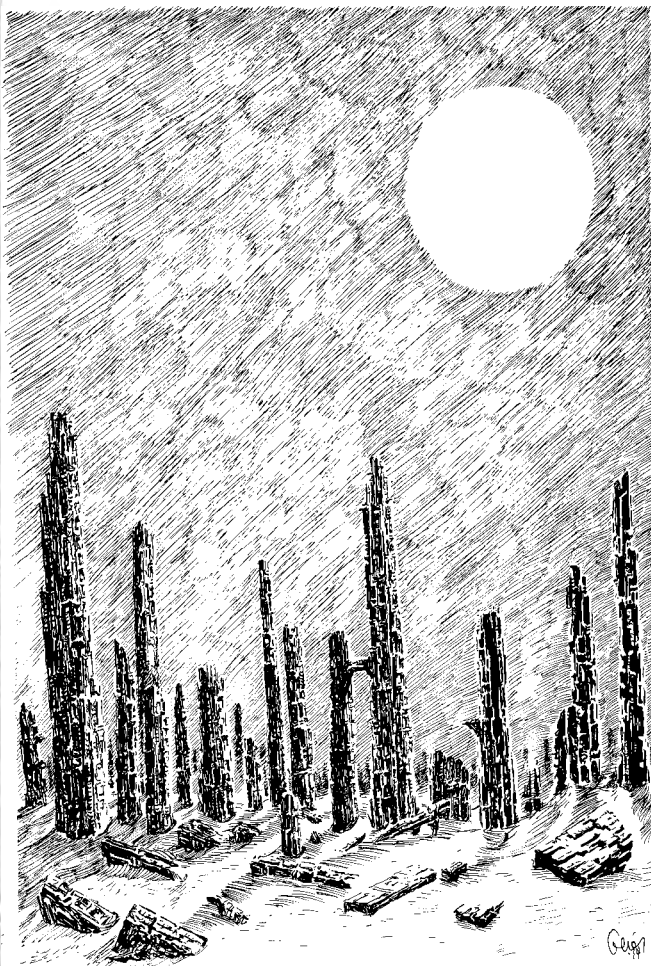
Good and Evil

Although some people dismiss the concept of absolute morality as an antiquated myth, Good and Evil are vital and fundamental forces, locked in eternal struggle. The darkness of the world allows the light to shine so much brighter.

Characters who preserve their innocence are subtly protected from the forces of darkness, while those who commit evil acts find themselves physically or mentally warped to reflect

their corruption. People who wholly embrace the lures of evil may eventually find themselves trapped in prisons of their own making. Even then, even the blackest soul has the potential for redemption, should they be willing to face the personal failings that led to their downfall.

While Good is undeniably more subtle in its touch than Evil, it is no less powerful in the long run. It demands much—patience, compassion, self-sacrifice—and its rewards are often obscure, but it is woven into the fabric of the world. It may cost everything a hero has to do the right thing, but Good is by no means pointless or unachievable. It may be painful, difficult, and with the temptation to compromise your principles at every turn, but it is worth doing. Don't surrender this world to the night!



The Semblance of Reason

Although Ravenloft is an artificial realm, full of supernatural horrors, it has the veneer of normalcy. Like a corpse that appears fresh until some disturbance sends its hidden corruption spilling into view, unnatural forces in the Land of the Mists normally remain hidden. Creatures like vampires or werebeasts move disguised among normal humans; magic is contained within isolated towers and the cloisters of universities, and it lacks the obvious flair it has in other realms. Even nonhumans like elves and dwarves are rarer, and they hide themselves away.

Scholars in the most advanced domains in the Land of the Mists often treat magic as a natural study, using labels like “psychic science” or “fundamental energies.” Many maintain that the unnatural is simply misunderstood, and with enough study, magic will be shown to be some combination of natural forces and psychosomatic influence, tangled in superstition. Of course, those who can harness the most powerful forces may think otherwise, but they keep their thoughts—and their power—to themselves.

The Domains

The Land of the Mists is composed of scores of small pocket “nations” like the cells of a prison. Each of these artificially constructed countries, called domains, is the prison of a singular evil entity: its darklord. A domain may stand alone as an Island, surrounded on all sides by Mist, or it may join seamlessly with other domains in a Cluster to form a continuous landscape on some sides and perhaps open to the Mists on others. A domain may be as small as a single room or as large an empire. The borders between domains may be recognized as political boundaries, or they may be indicated by purely physical landmarks.

A traveler may have no way to tell they have crossed into a new den of evil. However, each domain is, mystically, a separate plane. Magic cannot cross domain borders unless it is powerful enough to pierce planar boundaries.

Every aspect of a domain, from its climate to the creatures that call it home, is a subtle reflection of its darklord, offering painful reminders of the transgressions that forged the darklord's doom. Many darklords can control the weather, consciously or unconsciously, in their domains, or have mastery over their native animals. Wresting control in these cases is sometimes possible, but much harder than when they are controlled by lesser masters. Almost all can "close" the borders of their domains at will. Immensely powerful supernatural forces manifest to prevent passage. No mortal magic can overcome the effects of a closed domain border.

How many domains lie within the Mists, or far the Mists extend (even whether that question is truly meaningful or not) is unknown.

The Mists

Thick fog blankets the borders of every Island and Cluster. People live out their lives in normal-seeming domains that bob like apples in a Misty sea. Pockets of mist drift across melancholy moors. Films of vapor seep between the headstones of a graveyard, concealing hidden dangers. Mist is everywhere in the Realm of Dread, and some is guided by malign intellect.

Every child in Ravenloft knows about the Mists. They are completely indistinguishable from normal mists, even by magic, until you are within them. Travelers who enter the Misty Border around some domains find themselves engulfed in a netherworld of blinding fog.

Even the ground beneath their feet seems to fade away. Direction and distance are meaningless; unless a traveler uses a Mistway or "current" in the flow of Mist, or is escorted by a Vistani or powerful cleric of the goddess Ezra, they have no control over where the Mists will deposit them.

Even a tiny pocket of Mist, away from the Misty Border, can confound a traveler or plunge them into another realm, or even another time. Tales tell of folk who wandered lost for days in a small grove of trees, or back alleys that became twisting labyrinths, or houses that contain more rooms than they physically should, or people emerging from the Mists decades after (or even before) they entered. These people are said to be "Mist-led." Regardless of how the Mists manifest—as mist, or heat haze, or storm, or the merest ripple in an otherwise calm sea—when they come, no force can stop them.

False History

Although the Land of the Mists appears most of the time to be a normal realm, it is a patchwork construct. New domains appear and shift around at the whim of the Dark Powers. When a new domain appears from the Mists, it is usually fully formed and populated, and the inhabitants of the new domain have memories of their lives before the Mists parted and, often, records stretching back several centuries. However, these records may be vague, incomplete and self-contradictory.

There is much debate in academic circles as to where these domains come from. Did they exist in the Mists all along? Are the memories illusory? Were they drawn from other worlds? For this reason, the inhabitants of the Land of the Mists (those who choose to think about it

at all, because such reflection is a luxury most have neither the time nor the education to consider) differentiate between the “true” history, the period that can reliably and objectively be studied since the emergence from the Mists, and the vague, Mist-led “false history” before this. This is accepted as simply the way life is.

Other Worlds

The Mists can reach into other worlds and bring creatures into the Realm of Dread. Powerful magic can also do so. However, the Dark Powers hold their treasure close, and getting out is a much more difficult matter. Of course, most natives of the Land of the Mists have no more desire to leave than the inhabitants of any other world would want to leave theirs. Only outlanders—the creatures drawn into Ravenloft by Mist or magic—seek to escape from its foggy tendrils.

Darklords

Darklords are the seed of evil at the heart of every domain, but few of Ravenloft's denizens are aware that they exist. Heroes have no infallible means of detecting who or what is the darklord of any given domain. Some darklords control their domains openly, acting as political rulers, while others skulk in the shadows, their very existence a secret. Indeed, the very concept of a “darklord” isn't one that the average citizen of Ravenloft is aware of.

Most domains are inhabited by a single darklord, though on rare occasion the Dark Powers may grant a single domain to a pair or trio of evildoers. These darklords are usually linked both by blood relation and their crimes.

Mindless, slaving beasts do not become darklords. Mere evil is not enough to earn a domain. Despite their

corruption, darklords share the same motivations as countless other folk: they hope for love, crave respect, or even yearn for mere acceptance. Yet darklords are not poor, misunderstood souls damned through no fault of their own.

Their selfish natures pervert simple wants into obsessive lusts, and they earn their domains through horrid crimes. Darklords are all the more monstrous for the empathy one might feel for them, not in spite of it. Even when forced to face their transgressions, most darklords remain obstinately blind to their own failings, lashing out at the world for perceived wrongs.

A darklord is both the warden and the ultimate prisoner of their domain. A darklord can trap others in their domain by closing the borders, but they can never leave. Some of Ravenloft's darklords have spent centuries striving to escape from their Mist-veiled prisons, to no avail. The curse that binds them to the land offers them little rest. Not unlike Tantalus in the underworld, they are tormented by their greatest desires.

Should a darklord be destroyed, their domain ceases to serve a purpose. If another evil creature in the domain has earned damnation, the Dark Powers may appoint it the domain's new darklord. A domain in a cluster may be absorbed by its neighbors, expanding the prisons of other darklords. If neither of these events occurs, the domain dissolves back into the Mists from whence it came.

The Dark Powers

The Dark Powers are the ultimate masters of Ravenloft, and its ultimate mystery. They have created an entire world in their image, but not even the most powerful divinations can unveil their true natures, or even give concrete evidence of their presence. Only a

handful of people are even aware of the possibility of their existence; most blaming evil on the Mists but not considering any force behind them.

Are they gods? Elemental forces? Are they legion, or coven, or one, or none? Do they act as a unified whole or are they fractious? Are they good or evil? They do not corrupt souls through malicious trickery or seduce the righteous into evil, but they do torment those who damn themselves, inflaming them to further evil. Are they sadists or a force for austere justice?

Perhaps most importantly, what is the ultimate goal of their grand and awful experiment in the Land of the Mists?



Principles of Terror

Though the world of Ravenloft can be a horrifying and savage place, your tabletop shouldn't be. First and foremost, *Ravenloft Reincarnated* approaches the tabletop roleplaying experience as a shared narrative. While the rules are an important means of facilitating the conversation that creates the story, the most basic assumption of *Ravenloft Reincarnated* is that the rules serve the narrative instead of the other way around.

The story that the group is telling at the table—the conversation occurring between the players—is the primary driving force of the game. The rules exist to moderate and facilitate that conversation, providing a system of equitable negotiation and distribution of narrative authority. All of this is a very long-winded way of saying the story comes first. Most of the Game Master advice in this section is geared around ways to make the story the centerpiece of the game, with the rules as a cooperative partner in the process.

The Golden Rule

The most important rule in the game is that all other rules can be changed in service to the story or the needs of a group. This doesn't mean that rules should be abandoned entirely or that anyone can ignore the rules at any time. It simply means that if a rule is getting in the way of telling a good story or having fun, then the rule is wrong.

This also touches on the concept of “rulings, not rules.” This idea says that the GM and players work together at the table to determine what works for them, rather than relying on some “canonical” explanation from an author, a work of errata, or the book itself. Authors are fallible; editors make mistakes sometimes.

Even beyond technical issues, sometimes a rule simply doesn't work as well at a specific group's table as it did for the original writer's home group. In short: When a group encounters an issue where the rules don't work, feel free to change the rules so that they do. It's your game now.

The Silver Rule

Ravenloft Reincarnated (and *Savage Worlds* in general) functions at its best when the players and the GM work together to tell a story, rather than treating each other as opposition or adversaries. This style of cooperative storytelling places the GM into a position where they should be thought of less as the author of a story and more as the production crew of a movie or television series. They direct the action, produce the sets, and act as the audience for the players.

In this context, one of the most important philosophies to adopt when running a game is the **Silver Rule** (sometimes called the **Monarda Law**), a principle created by noted game writer Dr. Jenna Moran that can be best summed up as "Never say no."

Where "no" closes doors, "yes" opens them. Think about the ways that "yes" can advance the story and empower the player characters. This doesn't mean to accept everything that a player says without exception; instead, look for ways to that "yes" can be interesting and fun. When a player asks you: "Can I do X?" where "I" means their character and "X" is some course of action, use one of the four answers below.

- "Yes," if their course of actions seems interesting and harmless.
- "How?," if you can't figure out a plausible way to pull it off;

- "You can try!," if it seems believable yet statistically improbable;
- "Yes, but..." or "Yes, and...", if you can think of a good catch.

Each of these answers can add enjoyment and possibilities to a game. Saying "No" rarely does. "No" should only be used when a player's request would detract from the fun of the rest of the group in a significant fashion, and only after pursuing the previous four responses.

In short, "No" is the court of last resort, a way of closing off options rather than creating new ones.

The Copper Rule

Another principle common to modern game design is the notion of "failing forward." For purposes of *Ravenloft Reincarnated*, we're going to call this the **Copper Rule**.

Essentially, the Copper Rule means that no single failed roll should result in a dead end for the players. A failure should always include a method of moving on from that failure in order to keep the adventure moving and the players engaged.

In short, "failure" should be as interesting as success—if more dangerous and complicated. Making failure boring is a good way to lose the players' interest.

The Red Rule

This is the last of the major principles intended to guide a *Ravenloft Reincarnated* campaign, and in some ways the most important one for a game focusing on horror. While the previous rules have been about running the game, the **Red Rule** is about interacting with your players in an ethical and understanding way. This rule is about the comfort and safety of everyone at the table.

People play role-playing games for many different reasons, but never to feel harassed or traumatized. The Red Rule essentially says that a player-controlled character can only be seduced or otherwise put into a sexual situation if the player is okay with it. Otherwise, any such attempt automatically fails.

This rule can also be extended to any situation that makes a given player particularly uncomfortable or touches upon a personal trauma. The GM exists to moderate and adjudicate the story being told at a given table, which includes safeguarding the emotional health of the players. In turn, the players have an obligation to be courteous and respectful to one another, as well as to their GM.

A method of using the Red Rule proactively at the table includes the use of X Cards—index cards with an X drawn on one side. When a player feels uncomfortable, no matter the reason, they can hold up the X Card to show the Game Master. This is a sign that the

matter in question is a sensitive subject for the player; the GM can then skip ahead if they're confident that they know why the player would be upset, or take them aside to discuss why they're uncomfortable.

Players deal with all sorts of upsetting and unpleasant things in their daily lives. They shouldn't have to deal with those things at the gaming table as well. At its most basic, the Red Rule is about courtesy and respect. Treat your fellow players well and they'll respect you more for it. Game safely.

Too Long, Didn't Read

If your eyes glazed over the previous few pages, here's a quick and dirty recap:

- Change the rules if they don't work.
- Say yes instead of no.
- Fail forward.
- Be mindful.





Chapter 1:

Character Creation

Welcome to the world of Ravenloft, a dark fantasy world of Gothic adventure filled with ancient powers, dreadful evil, and brave heroes.

Making heroes for the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting* is as easy as creating characters for any other *Savage Worlds* game. Here's how to start.

Ancestry

Humans are the most common characters, but the world of Ravenloft also features graceful elves, doughty dwarves, affable gnomes, and stranger beings still. In a world of monsters and monster hunters, the line between the two can sometimes be blurry. At your GM's discretion, you may be able to play a corrupted version of an existing character type, or even play a monster seeking acceptance and redemption.

Hindrances

Hindrances are flaws, defects, or dark secrets drawn from a character's backstory.

You can take up to 4 points of Hindrances. A Major Hindrance is worth 2 points, and a Minor Hindrance is worth 1 point. You could thus take two Major Hindrances, four Minor Hindrances, or any other combination that adds up to 4 points.

Taking Hindrances not only helps you define and roleplay your hero, but also gives you additional points you can use to

start with extra attribute or skill points, Edges, or even money for gear.

For 2 points you can:

- Raise an attribute one die type
- Choose an Edge

For 1 point you can:

- Gain another skill point
- Gain additional starting funds equal to twice the starting amount

Traits

Characters are defined by attributes and skills, collectively called "Traits," and both work in exactly the same way. Attributes and skills are ranked by die types, from a d4 to a d12, with d6 being the average for adult humans. Higher is better!

Attributes

Every character starts with a d4 in each attribute, and has 5 points with which to raise them. Raising a d4 to a d6, for example, costs 1 point. You're free to spend these points however you want with one exception: no attribute may be raised above a d12.

- **Agility** is your hero's nimbleness, quickness, and dexterity.
- **Smarts** is a measure of how well your character knows their world and culture, how well they think on their feet, and their general mental acuity.

- **Spirit** reflects inner wisdom and willpower. Spirit is very important as it helps your character recover from being Shaken.
- **Strength** is raw physical power and general fitness. Strength is also used to generate your character's damage in hand-to-hand combat.
- **Vigor** represents endurance, resistance to disease, poison, or toxins, and how much pain and physical damage your hero can shake off.

Skills

Skills are learned abilities such as Shooting, Fighting, mystic knowledge, professional aptitudes, and so on. These are very general descriptions which cover all related aspects. Shooting, for example, covers all types of guns, bows, and other ranged weapons.

Core Skills: These are unchanged from *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition*—Athletics, Common Knowledge, Notice, Persuasion, and Stealth.

Buying Skills: After core skills are assigned, you have 12 additional points to raise core skills or buy and raise new skills as you see fit. See *SWADE* 10 for more information about buying skills and skill maximums.

Derived Statistics

Your character sheet contains a few other statistics you need to fill in, described below.

Pace is how fast your character moves in a standard combat round. Humans walk 6" in a round and can move an additional 1d6" if they run. Write "6" on your character sheet beside the word Pace. This is 6" on the table-top—every inch there represents 2 yards in the "real world."

Parry is equal to 2 plus half your character's Fighting (2 if a character does not have Fighting), plus any bonuses for shields or certain weapons. This is the Target Number (TN) to hit your hero in hand-to-hand combat.

Toughness is your hero's damage threshold. Anything over this causes them to be rattled or worse. Toughness is 2 plus half your hero's Vigor, plus Armor (use the armor worn on their torso if not a called shot).

Traits Above d12: When deriving Parry and Toughness from traits above d12, add half the fixed modifier, rounded down. For instance, a Fighting skill of d12+1 grants a Parry of 8 (2+half of d12), whereas a d12+2 gives a Parry of 9 (2+half of d12+2).

Edges

Attributes and skills are a character's basic statistics, but what really makes individuals different are their Edges.

Characters get Edges by taking Hindrances (see above), from ancestry abilities (such as humans, who gain an additional Edge at character creation), or Advances once play begins.

The *SWADE* corebook has a list of available Edges, in addition to those presented in this book, the *Fantasy Companion*, and the *Horror Companion*.

Gear

Next you need to purchase equipment. Some settings may provide your hero with all the gear they need. In others, you may be assigned a certain amount of money with which to purchase your starting gear. A list of some common gear and weapons can be found below.

In the *Ravenloft* setting, the standard starting amount is 500 silver pieces (in whatever denomination is local for your home domain).

Background Details

Finish your character by filling in any history or background you care to, including their domain of origin. Ask yourself why your hero is where they are and what their goals are. Or you can just start playing and fill in these details as they become important.

You might also want to talk to the other players. Maybe your characters know each other right from the start. Or you might collectively decide to optimize your group a bit and ensure you've got a good assortment of skills and abilities. If so, make sure you're playing what you want to play.

Some questions you might ask yourself when trying to decide your character include:

- What does the character look like? Do they have any distinctive features, like scars or tattoos? Where did they get them?
- Does the character have a family? Any old friends? People that they care about outside the player characters?
- What does the character love? What do they hate? Do they have any regrets? Is there something that makes their skin crawl?
- Do they have any secrets?
- Is the character rational or passionate? Sophisticated or superstitious? Impulsive or habitual? Logical or faithful?
- What drives the character to adventure? What are their goals and drives? What would they do to accomplish them?

- What is the character's worst nightmare?

Having these ideas in mind can guide you to making a truly memorable character, but there's nothing that says you need to know all of that up front. You can puzzle it out as you go, letting the character grow as you play and learning more about them, like a character in a novel.

Sometimes it can be fun to know something about your character ahead of time so you can dramatically reveal it to the other players! But don't get bogged down in backstory—especially backstory that no one but you and the Game Master will ever know.

Work with your GM and the rest of your group to make the game a fun experience for everyone!

Ancestries of Ravenloft

Ravenloft is a world of many peoples—and humans are just one of them.

Humans are the most common people in the Land of Mists, outnumbering nonhumans by such a large factor that many humans have never even seen a nonhuman—or even regard them as legendary. A few nations have significant nonhuman minorities, but only a few places put humans in a non-dominant role. Some scholars wonder why humans are so prevalent, while others simply see nonhumans as inferior, an attitude that nonhumans naturally find offensive.

Elves, dwarves, and gnomes are collectively known as “the fey” or “the sidhe,” faerie folk who are said to have taken humanity's side in some ancient, forgotten dispute. Their side lost the argument and they were banished from the faerie realm to the mortal world, where they now suffer the curse of

mortality, albeit in a less severe form than humans.

Calibans are humans who suffered exposure to magical corruption in the womb or early childhood, resulting in deformities or physical ailments, as well as bodies hardy enough to survive the corruption that formed them. Despite their savage appearance, calibans are just as capable of good or evil as any other human.

Half-elves, or “changelings,” are the offspring of humans and elves. They too are outcasts among both humans and elves, never quite fitting in with either despite their many virtues. A half-elf will outlive all of their human loved ones but will not live long enough to be ever seen as anything but a child to an elf, giving them a sense of melancholy that pervades their long lives.

The **smallfolk** are something of a mystery to humans. Elves and other fey deny that the “halflings” are of their kind, and they do not seem to be a human tribe. As nomads with little interest in history, the smallfolk cannot answer any questions about their origins either. They seem to be ubiquitous in most places, though.

The **created** are not truly an ancestry, as they have no ancestors—indeed, many people argue if they should even be considered *alive*. Magic and technology sometimes blend to craft beings who are semi-intelligent but are made from metal, wood, or other inanimate materials, granted a semblance of life through artifice. These created occasionally become truly self-aware and flee their creators to seek their own reason for existence in the greater world.

Finally, and perhaps rarest among the known folk of Ravenloft, are the **dhampir**—folk who live with the curse of vampirism burning in their veins. Through fortune or determination, they

have found a way to arrest the process and avoid descending into evil, trapped between life and death. They have some of the strength and bloodlust of vampires, but their ability to walk in daylight makes them feared by their monstrous sires.

With your GM’s permission, you might be able to play a monster seeking redemption. You might be suffering from the curse of lycanthropy, doomed to become a horrific monster every month, or perhaps you have inhuman blood in your veins, a monstrous heritage that may plague you someday. See *Chapter 5: Secrets of the Dread Realms* for more information about monstrous characters—and be sure to check with your GM before getting your heart set on a monstrous character concept!



Human

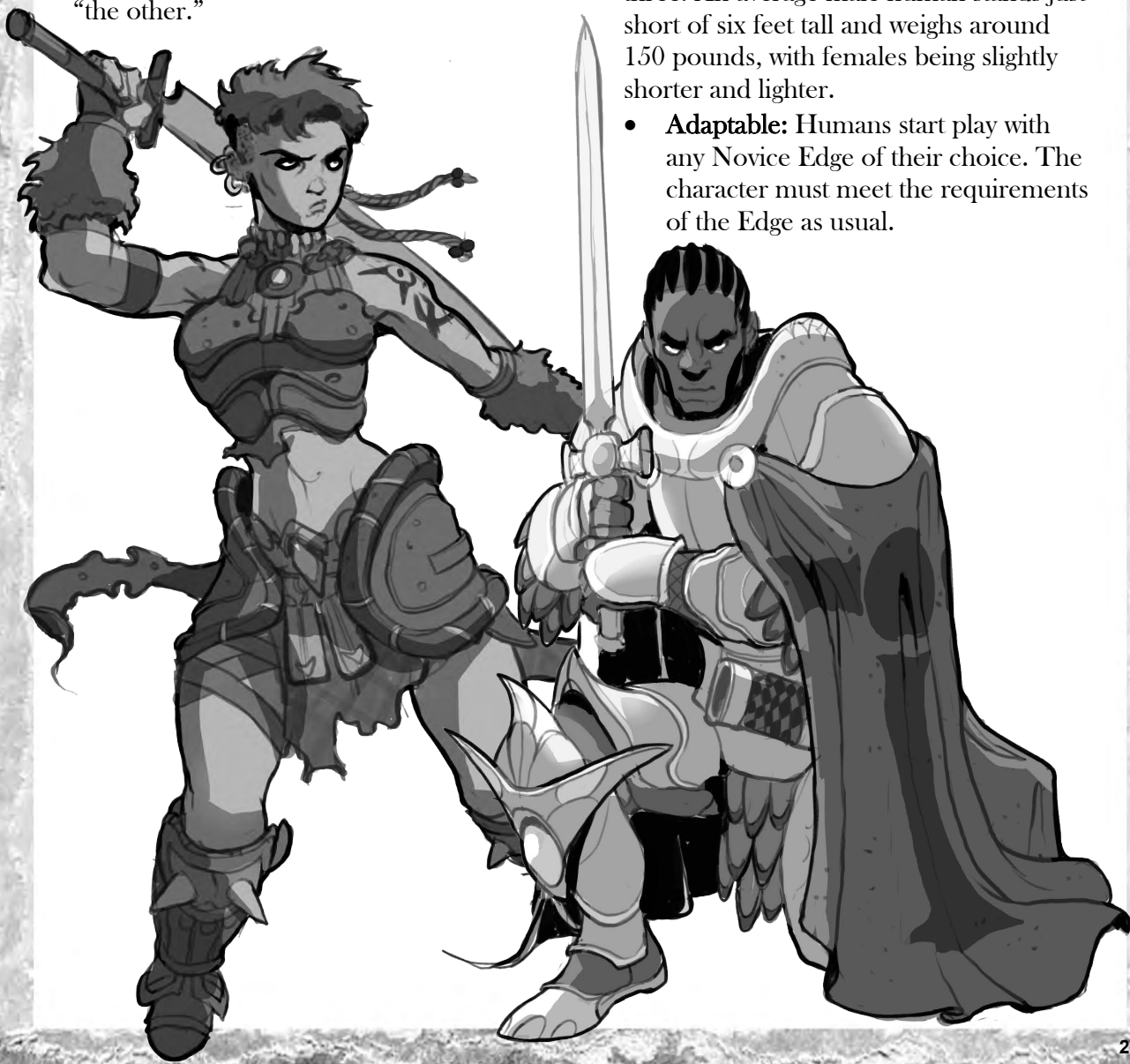
Humans are the majority population in almost every major nation of the Land of Mists. They are ambitious, curious, versatile, and adaptable, able to change their environment to suit their needs and capable of mastering many skills in their relatively short lifetimes.

Despite their many virtues, humans can also be greedy, grasping, and even cruel, happily subjugating one another for profit or advancement in a way that other folk would never dream of doing. Their versatility breeds fractiousness; it is all too easy for a human to look at an arbitrary boundary and say that anyone past it is “the other.”

With their great capacity for both good and evil, humans can become fast friends with other folk or subject them to unspeakable prejudice. If anything can be said, humans are the only folk truly capable of treating members of another species exactly as they would treat their own—for good or for ill.

Under normal circumstances, humans live around sixty years or so, but especially lucky humans can live up to twice that long. Their skin color ranges from dark brown to the color of snow, their hair is usually in shades of black, brown, red or blonde, and their eyes are blue, green, brown or some mix of the three. An average male human stands just short of six feet tall and weighs around 150 pounds, with females being slightly shorter and lighter.

- **Adaptable:** Humans start play with any Novice Edge of their choice. The character must meet the requirements of the Edge as usual.



Caliban

Calibans are humans exposed to curses or foul magic while still in the womb or during their early childhood. The birth of a caliban in a community is often seen as a sure sign of the presence of dark magic. Calibans are physically powerful but misshapen humanoids. No two calibans look alike, but common deformities include twisted back or limbs, asymmetrical features, bristly skin, or tusk-like teeth. Despite their savage appearance, a caliban's heart can be as pure and noble—or as corrupt—as that of any human.



Calibans tend to be slightly taller than humans and a good bit heavier thanks to their natural muscle. Their lineage is always plain for others to see if they go about undisguised. All calibans sport the deformities of their birth, ranging from unusual, sickly-colored skin to bone protrusions or even worse. Calibans mature a little faster than their human forebears and age noticeably faster. Most calibans live lives that are nasty, brutish, and short.

- **Low Light Vision:** Caliban eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Powerful:** Calibans are made of muscle and bone with hardly an ounce of fat on their bodies. They start with a d6 in Strength instead of a d4. This increases their maximum Strength to d12+1.
- **Menacing:** Calibans instinctively know how to use their appearance to intimidate others. They gain the Menacing Edge for free.
- **Ugly:** A caliban is clearly marked as different by its inhuman heritage. Calibans possess the Ugly (Major) Hindrance. A caliban can still take the Attractive and Very Attractive Edges to offset the usual penalties, however, making them look less inhuman.
- **Unnatural:** Because of their tainted origins, calibans suffer a -2 penalty on any roll made to interact with animals, including Riding. Domestic animals won't willingly approach a caliban, and wild animals will tend to attack calibans in preference to other targets (though they won't ignore obvious threats to fight a caliban).

Created

The desire to restore or create life has been a driving goal of magic and science for hundreds of years, if not all time. Every doctor seeks the power to turn back the reaper's hand, and every adventurer that has seen a companion fall in battle hopes for a way to bring them back across the veil of death. It is this compelling desire that eventually leads to hubris—to the idea that an intelligent or powerful person has more right to dictate life and death than fate or the gods.

Over the years, many doctors, wizards, and other such intellectual luminaries have discovered methods of “creating” life, ranging from simple golems to complicated thinking machines. Some of these creations exceed even their creators' expectations and become truly living beings, aware and sentient in their own right. Powerful ones are called “dread golems,” because their intelligence and loneliness frequently drive them to evil acts. Less powerful versions, called simply “the created,” are often discarded by their makers as incomplete efforts or mere practice. These created are then left to their own devices in the world, often seeking the very meaning of life themselves.

The created are a manifestation of others' fatal pride, soulless creations designed in imitation or mockery of the human form. Still, a given created can eventually find the way to understanding, and many become keen observers of human nature. They may never overcome their built-in limitations, but the quest to become something more—to become human—is the driving goal of many created.

The created tend to be distant and removed, not quite aware of the nature of the human beings they were modeled from. Some describe them as cold, a

description that is frequently accurate. Created are capable of emotion, but their unfamiliarity with it causes many of them to sublimate or repress it. Others allow their passions to control them, seeming wilder even than humans, and causing great worry in those around them. Most hold to a middle ground, keeping their emotions at arm's length while acknowledging their existence.

Created appear as humanoids molded from a variety of materials—obsidian, iron, stone, wood, silver, and even organic material—though they move with a surprising grace and flexibility. Flexible plates connected by fibrous bundles make up the typical body of a created.



Individuals have their own unique appearance, from puppet-like dolls to lifelike forms almost indistinguishable from humans. Though they are genderless in the physical sense, most created with a human-like appearance end up adopting a gender identity; some are even designed to resemble a particular gender from creation, which can come into conflict with their eventual understanding of their own identity.

- **Clueless:** The created are unfamiliar with mortal culture, norms, and history, often missing even basic understanding of things humans take for granted. They suffer the Clueless Hindrance.
- **Construct:** Created add +2 to recover from being Shaken, ignore one level of Wound modifiers, and are immune to poison and disease. The created do not need to eat or drink, though they do need to rest occasionally. Constructs do not heal naturally. Healing one requires the Repair skill, which is used like the Healing skill but with no “Golden Hour.”
- **Outsider (Major):** Created are mistrusted by the living. When they go about undisguised, they suffer -2 to Persuasion rolls with folk of all other ancestries. Most places consider the created to be objects rather than people, according them no rights of any kind.
- **Vow (Major):** A created was built with a particular purpose in mind. This acts as a Major Vow to fulfill the purpose for which they were built. A created should also have at least a d6 in a skill appropriate to their purpose (such as Performance for a dancing mannequin or Academics for an automatic transcriber).

Dhampir

When a woman heavy with child is attacked by a vampire—not as rare an occurrence in the Land of Mists as one could hope—that child can become partially infected with the taint of vampirism. Some rare adults bitten by vampires can find ways to hold back the change as well, generally through alchemy or sorcery but sometimes through natural resistance and raw willpower.

Regardless of their origins, dhampirs are men and women who have arrested the progress of the vampiric curse, becoming something like “half-vampires,” caught between the living and the dead. While sunlight hurts their eyes and skin, they can walk abroad in daylight. They desire blood but do not need it to live. They retain many of the strengths of the vampire while possessing few of their weaknesses. As such, vampires tend to hate, fear, and envy the “daywalkers.”

Dhampirs tend to be extremely pale, their teeth pointed and their eyes slightly reflective. One might mistake them for the undead if not for their breathing and heartbeat. Their closeness to death tends to leave their outlook morbid and rigidly controlled. A dhampir knows all too well what can happen if they relax their control for even a second, and many are the loved ones of dhampirs who met their end in a moment of heady bloodlust.

- **Bite:** Dhampirs have fangs that cause Str+d4 damage.
- **Low Light Vision:** Dhampirs can see in near-total darkness like the undead who share their curse. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Unnatural:** Dhampirs give off an aura of hunger and menace that makes natural animals uncomfortable. They suffer a -2 penalty on any roll made

to interact with animals, including Riding. Domestic animals won't willingly approach a dhampir, and wild animals will tend to attack dhampirs in preference to other targets (though they won't ignore obvious threats to fight a dhampir).

- **Vampiric Strength:** Dhampirs have the incredible might of vampires. They start with a d6 in Strength rather than a d4. This increases their maximum Strength to d12+1.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** While dhampirs don't catch fire in sunlight like vampires, they do find it extremely uncomfortable. A dhampir in direct sunlight is Distracted.



Dwarf

Dwarves are a stout people, built as solidly as the mountains they call home. Their skin is typically a light tan or dark umber tone. Most dwarves have red hair, with some having blonde or black, and dwarven eyes are usually brown or dark green. Dwarves are well known for their skill in warfare, their ability to withstand physical punishment, their knowledge of the earth's secrets, and their capacity for drink.

The dwarven mindset centers on the forge and the family. They respect dedication in all its forms—to hard work, to clan or family, or to codes of honor. A dwarf holds nothing as precious as their family and nothing so beautiful as finely crafted steel and stone. Dwarves have little time for frivolity. Their music consists entirely of dirges for their ancestors or anthems of clan traditions. Other races often view dwarves as dour and humorless creatures but retain high praise for dwarven craftsmanship.

Dwarven males and females are built roughly the same, standing around four and a half feet tall and weighing over 200 pounds. Most of a dwarf's weight is bone and muscle. Dwarves of both genders wear their hair long, often braiding it. Male dwarves take pride in their beards, growing them long and bushy; dwarf nobles braid their beards as well.

Though they are of the same folk as elves and gnomes, dwarves are aloof even from other fey. It is said that they suffered the greatest brunt of the curse of mortality, and that many dwarves blame the elves for their exile from the faerie realm. Others say that the dwarves aren't imaginative enough to hold a grudge over something so abstract. Dwarves live a little longer than a century on average, with some living up to 150 years.

- **Low Light Vision:** Dwarven eyes are accustomed to the dark of the underground. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Reduced Pace:** Dwarves have shorter legs than humans. Decrease Pace by 1 and running die by one die type (minimum d4).
- **Tough:** Dwarves are stout and tough. They start with a d6 in Vigor instead of a d4. This increases their maximum Vigor to d12+1.



Elf

According to the stories of their people, elves were outcast from the faerie folk in ancient times for some unknown crime. Some legends say that they took humanity's side in a dispute that turned ugly, while others speak of an uprising that cast out rulers that had lost the favor of their subjects. Regardless of the reasons, elves are a people who are born feeling the loss of an immortality that was once their birthright. Elves can feel themselves dying in a way that humans cannot.

The knowledge of their imminent death—by immortal standards, anyway—makes most elves somewhat hedonistic. They live for emotion, art, beauty, and pleasure, and they inevitably seem irresponsible to other peoples. Their carefully cultured bon vivant lifestyles hide a deep well of brooding melancholy, one that only their closest friends and loved ones ever get to see.

The elven inclination toward art of all sorts makes them welcome guests in more civilized lands, but their disinterest in hard work makes them unwelcome pests in lands where survival is a daily struggle. An elf would rather sleep in the boughs of a tree than build a house, would rather eat fruit from a tree than grow crops, and would rather exchange short-term services for food and shelter than have a steady profession. Some elves hold that humans don't live long enough to matter and become cruel toward mortals, while others think that the fragility of human life is an echo of all they have lost themselves, making it even more precious.

Elves stand around six feet tall on average, but are thinner than humans. Most elves are either somewhat tan or very pale, and their hair is normally blonde or black; red-haired elves are extremely rare, though stranger hues, such as silver and blue, occur sometimes as well. Elven eyes are vibrant and strangely colored by human standards, including shades of emerald, azure, and violet. Their most visible features are their tall, pointed ears and their almond-shaped eyes. Elves have lifespans commonly twice as long as humans, and some have been known to live as long as three to five centuries.

- **Agile:** Elves are graceful and agile. They start with a d6 in Agility instead of a d4. This increases their maximum Agility to d12+1.
- **Frail:** Elves are slender and fragile beings. Subtract 1 from Toughness.
- **Low Light Vision:** The character's eyes amplify light like a cat, allowing them to see in the dark. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.

Gnome

Spindly, short humanoids with tanned skin and wizened faces, gnomes are welcome in many lands as architects, engineers, alchemists, technicians, and inventors. Gnomes possess intense intellectual curiosity. They are fascinated by intricate details, be they riddles or the fine cogs of a pocket watch. Nothing pleases a gnome quite so much as solving a difficult puzzle—building a pattern out of chaos. This leads some gnomes to overanalyze their situations, seeking answers to riddles that do not actually exist or even becoming mildly obsessive-compulsive.

Many gnomes also possess a wickedly morbid sense of humor. They often pass the time telling macabre tales laced with irony, and they frequently enjoy playing practical jokes, particularly on anyone they consider too dour or self-important. Gnomish practical jokes are usually remarkably elaborate but are virtually never intended to cause the recipient any true harm.

Though gnomes' skills and their small, unthreatening size make them more welcome than other fey, they prefer communities of their own kind. Most gnomes live in small, isolated woodland villages, places where wild animals abound but hunting them is a very bad idea. Many will go out into the land of mortals for months or years at a time to satisfy their curiosity or hone their skills, only to pack up and go home without a word.

Gnomes stand slightly taller than three and a half feet and weigh only around 50 pounds; they are smaller even than human children. Their ruddy cheeks and upturned noses give them a mien of cheerfulness even at the worst of times. Gnomes have hair and eyes in subdued, faded earth tones, but most of them see

their hair turn grey long before middle age. Gnomes have lifespans similar to those of dwarves.

- **Fey Magic:** Gnomes are an inherently magical race, drawing their power from their distant fey ancestry. Gnomes have the Arcane Background (Gifted) Edge for free, but they can only choose from the following list of powers—*beast friend*, *confusion*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *illusion*, and *light/darkness*.
- **Low Light Vision:** Like most of the fey-descended folk, gnomes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Quirk:** Gnomes have unusual personalities that border on the obsessive or the neurotic. They have the Quirk Hindrance.

- **Reduced Pace:** Decrease Pace by 1 and running die by one die type (minimum d4).
- **Size -1:** Gnomes average just shy of four feet tall, reducing their size (and therefore Toughness) by 1.
- **Smart:** Gnomes are clever and intellectual. They start with a d6 Smarts instead of a d4. This increases their maximum Smarts to d12+1.

Half-Elf

Humans are frequently fascinated by the beauty and longevity of elves. In turn, elves are often filled with wonder at humans' vibrancy and fast-paced lives. These interests sometimes turn into trysts, which occasionally result in half-breed children. Half-elves are a solid mix of their two parents. They gain the elves' grace but none of their fragility, and their human parent's versatility and curiosity while tempering their impulsivity.

Despite their many virtues, half-elves are cursed to fit in with neither side of their lineage. A childhood among elves can be extraordinarily lonely for a fast-growing, curious child, and one among humans can be even sadder. Half-elves will outlive most of their human loved ones, but they will rarely live long enough to be considered anything other than a precocious child to elves. Half-elves are people of two worlds—one foot in both, but truly belonging to neither of them.

Half-elves are slightly taller and lighter than the human average, but somewhat heavier than elves. Their hair and eye colors tend to fall more within human ranges than elven ones. Their ears are tipped with slight points, making their heritage obvious to anyone who takes the time to look. They can live well over a century, but their elven heritage gives





them the vitality and health of someone half their age.

- **Heritage:** Some half-elves retain the grace of their elven parent. Others gain the adaptability of their human ancestry. A half-elf may either start with a free Edge of their choice (as a human), or a d6 in Agility instead of a d4 (as an elf). Either way, their maximum Agility is $d12+1$. A half-elf counts as both a human and an elf for any effect where it would matter.
- **Low Light Vision:** The character's eyes amplify light like a cat, allowing them to see in the dark. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Outsider (Minor):** Half-elves have a difficult time fitting in with either of their parents' people. Even those from loving homes never quite fit in. Half-elves have the Outsider (Minor) Hindrance with respect to both humans and elves.

Smallfolk

Smallfolk are tiny humanoids, easily mistaken at first glance for human children. Sometimes called “halflings” by humans (who they call “tallfolk”), they possess a childlike sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them, as well as a capable opportunistic streak, frequently expressing itself as wanderlust. Individuals and clans do their best to find room for themselves wherever they can, and are lucky enough to avoid the animosity that other nonhumans face. With their small size and lack of supernatural powers, smallfolk present humans with little to fear.

Humans respect smallfolk courage and general good cheer—sometimes to a fault. Smallfolk are often treated with well-intentioned condescension, with humans believing that all smallfolk are as innocent and harmless as the children they resemble. Most smallfolk are nomadic, wandering in clans from one place to another. Unlike the constantly drifting wandering folk, however, smallfolk tend to take root in an area for a few years, experiencing all it has to offer before moving on. Any human settlement of sufficient size may boast a smallfolk community, with larger cities possessing a “halfling ghetto” or “smalltown.”

Where humans are ambitious and grasping, smallfolk prefer the simple things. They have a strong core of responsibility, unlike elves and gnomes, but they are content to find comfortable positions and simply stay there until their clan is ready to move on. Quiet competence, responsibility, and lack of ambition see many smallfolk into positions as domestic servants, middle managers, and assistants to craftspeople.

Smallfolk hair and eye color is usually dark brown or almost black, and they prefer simple, comfortable garb without

ostentation. They stand about three feet tall and usually weigh between 30 and 40 pounds. Their skin tends to be ruddy, though not tanned or wizened like gnomes. Smallfolk men often have long sideburns, but beards are rare and mustaches almost unseen. Smallfolk females usually wear their long hair tied up in elaborate buns and topknots. They have life spans similar to humans.

- **Luck:** Smallfolk have the Luck Edge, allowing them to draw one additional Benny per game session.
- **Reduced Pace:** Decrease Pace by 1 and running die by one die type (minimum d4).
- **Size -1:** Smallfolk average only about three and a half feet tall. Their small size subtracts 1 from their Toughness.

- **Spirited:** Smallfolk are willful and courageous. They start with a d6 Spirit instead of a d4. This increases their maximum Spirit to d12+1.

Other Ancestries

Ravenloft is a land of many peoples, and these are just a few of them. A given GM might allow other character types in their particular game at player request, even working them into the fabric of an existing (or new) domain.

Check with your GM if you want to play something other than one of the races listed here. It never hurts to ask!





Chapter 2:

Rules of the Night

Setting Rules

Ravenloft is known as the “Domain of Dread” for good reason. It is a place of beauty and horror side-by-side, a place where innocence shines through brightly—and can be brought low by the foulest of darkness. The setting rules for Ravenloft emphasize these themes, making it a place where heroism can be hard at the best of times, but where victory is all the sweeter for overcoming the challenges.

Armor Interference

Arcane energies interact poorly with body-covering metal and similar protective garb. Characters with the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge subtract 4 from Spellcasting rolls when wearing any armor heavier than cloth, or when carrying a shield. Characters with Arcane Background (Psionics or Gifted) suffer this penalty to Psionics or Focus rolls when wearing armor heavier than leather or carrying more than a light shield, and characters with Arcane Background (Miracles) suffer the same penalty to Faith rolls when wearing armor heavier than chain or carrying more than a medium shield.

Characters can offset these penalties with the War Caster Edge.

Ars Arcanum

Practitioners of dark magic seem to be able to draw on the power of the Mists directly to augment their magic, making it more powerful at the cost of their souls

and sanity. NPC villains have access to the Arcane Background (Black Magic) Edge. See *Chapter 5: Secrets of the Dread Realms* for more information.

All characters with Arcane Background (Magic or Miracles) can use **Prepared Powers** and **Ritual Magic** (*Fantasy Companion* 111-112). Other types of casters do not have access to these abilities.

Conviction

Facing the horrors of the Mist requires more than just courage—it requires conviction, a deep-seated belief in one’s own righteousness. Heroes who stand against the dark can reach down into the depths of their own soul for the strength needed to vanquish evil. *Ravenloft Reincarnated* uses the **Conviction** Setting Rule (*SWADE* 136).

When a group defeats a major evil—a darklord, a servant of the Dark Powers, or the master of a sinkhole of evil rated 3 or higher—this should be grounds for the whole party to receive a point of Conviction.

Difficult Healing

Wounds tend to linger in the Domains of Dread, causing problems down the line. Healers take their patient’s Wound levels as a penalty to their skill roll (whether mundane or magical healing). This means that a character trying to heal themselves suffers *double* the penalty.

Additionally, a healer has only one chance to heal a particular Wound. A

healer can attempt to heal any new Wounds as they occur, but further attempts don't affect any Wounds they already failed to improve or any that are over an hour old. Other characters can attempt to heal those Wounds, but only one chance per character.

Domains of Dread

Each domain of Ravenloft is its own little world, suffused with the evil and malevolence of its darklord. Every domain has its own peculiar quirks and laws that change the way reality itself works. Most domains have a setting rule or two of their own—which aren't generally revealed to the heroes until they become relevant.

Additionally, no force of mortal origin—magic, technology, or divine miracles wielded by a mortal—can penetrate the borders of a domain if they are closed. Most forms of magic cannot penetrate even open domain borders due to the metaphysical properties of the world. (So, a person could walk across an open domain border with no problem, but a wizard couldn't *teleport* across to save their life.)

Downtime

Ravenloft Reincarnated uses the **Downtime** rules (*Fantasy Companion* 77-78) for characters to pursue their personal interests off-screen. Costs and values are changed from gold pieces to silver pieces, as with any other cost conversion from the *Fantasy Companion*.

Dynamic Backlash

Arcane powers are unreliable at best—and dangerous at worst. *Ravenloft Reincarnated* uses the **Dynamic Backlash** Setting Rule (*SWADE* 138).

Home Ground Advantage

Darklords are dangerous foes at the best of times. Confronting one in their own lair is downright suicidal—but it may be the only way to put them down permanently. The most powerful and notorious darklords have lairs whose very names strike terror into the hearts of mortals: Castle Ravenloft, Misericordia, Degravo, Castle Avernus, Citadel Cavius, and so on.

A darklord in their own lair—which must be a sinkhole of evil rated 3 or higher—gains the Unstoppable monstrous ability. In this context, a “lair” should be the darklord's permanent home and no larger than a castle, fortress, or manor. A darklord noted as having no permanent lair or home does not gain this benefit.

Insular

The various domains of the Land of Mists are largely isolated from one another. Even when they are part of the same Cluster, the people of one domain tend to regard their neighbors with suspicion and ignorance.

In game terms, this means that Common Knowledge checks take a penalty based on whether or not a character is seeking information about his homeland or another domain. This penalty ranges from -1 (different domain in the same Cluster) to -4 (isolated Island of Terror).

Multiple Languages

Many languages are spoken across the Land of Mists. Every character has the equivalent of the Linguist Edge for free, starting play knowing a number of languages equal to half their Smarts die (including their native language).

Characters can learn additional languages by taking the Languages skill or the Linguist Edge normally. A character

who actually takes the Linguist Edge knows a number of languages equal to their Smarts (instead of half their Smarts).

Power of the Tarot

The wandering folk of Ravenloft use the cards of the Tarot deck (sometimes called the *tarokka*) to foretell the future. This is reflected by heroes having access to the **Adventure Deck**.

Shuffle the deck at the beginning of each game session and deal out one to each player character for each of his Ranks. (A Seasoned hero gets two cards, for example, while a Legendary character gets five.)

Each player keeps all of their cards but may play only one each game session. At any time after playing a card, a player can spend a Benny to play another one. The player can do this as often as they have cards and Bennies.



Players can trade cards at any time. This must be a trade, however—you can't just give your cards away.

As noted in the **Adventure Deck** rules, any card that lets you draw an extra card also lets you play an extra card at no cost.

Any unused cards are discarded at the end of the game session.

Realm of Terror

Ravenloft is a realm whose very nature is inextricably tied to fear and horror. The oppressive weight of terror can drive even strong men mad.

Some places are more terrifying than others. Any place designated a “sinkhole of evil” applies its rating as a penalty to Fear checks, from -1 to -5! This penalty is cumulative with the penalty some monsters inflict for being particularly scary, and it adds to a character's rolls on the Fear Effects Table.

Most sinkholes of evil have a locus of their power. This might be a location, a person, a legend, or a monster. Defeating this locus (whether through combat or the careful spreading of tales of hope) can reduce the Sinkhole's rating by 1. If the Sinkhole was rated 3 or higher, or if it is reduced to 0, then this should be cause for the group to receive Conviction (see above).

The Dark Powers are constantly watching for those who would fall to the lure of darkness. Characters who engage in evil or vile deeds can draw their attention, becoming ever more corrupt over time. Those who listen to the whispers of evil can gain great power—at the risk of being lost forever to the light. See **Corruption in Chapter 5: Secrets of the Dread Realms** for more information.

As a world built upon Gothic Horror tropes and ideals, the Realm of Terror uses the **Environmental Phenomena** and

Signs and Portents Setting Rules (*Horror Companion* 41-42 and 46).

Finally, *Ravenloft Reincarnated* uses the **Expanded Fear Effects** Setting Rule (*Horror Companion* 43-44), including the rules for sanity loss and recovery.

Rules Updates

Ravenloft Reincarnated uses the most current version of the **Stunned**, **Bound**, and **Entangled** conditions, as listed in *SWADE* v6.0, the *Fantasy Companion*, and the *Horror Companion*. The setting also uses the **Desperate Attack** maneuver, and the **Limited Actions** rule. Any power or effect that uses a Cone Template can instead use the **Stream Template**.

Unarmored Hero

Most places in the Realm of Terror are advanced enough that firearms are beginning to take the place of archers on the field of battle, mitigating the usefulness of armor. Many domains have been relatively at peace for decades or even centuries, making armor unappealing as an investment. *Ravenloft Reincarnated* uses the **Unarmored Hero** Setting Rule (*SWADE* 141).

Villainous Conviction

Darklords and other major villains are far more dangerous in the Domains of Dread. Fate itself seems to conspire to aid them at the worst possible times. In addition to having a bank of Bennies for use by NPCs, the GM has a bank of Villainous Conviction.

Whenever a player character rolls a Critical Failure, add 1 to the Villainous Conviction bank. A villain can also add a point of Villainous Conviction by leaving a PC in a deathtrap rather than finishing them off, explaining their villainous plan in a dramatic monologue before fleeing

the scene, or otherwise acting like a stock Gothic antagonist.

Only Wild Card foes can use Villainous Conviction, and only those who might be considered the “boss” of an adventure (or at least the right-hand person of that boss).

A darklord gains one point of Villainous Conviction at the start of a combat scene with the player characters, in addition to any points currently in the bank.

The Villainous Conviction bank depletes by one point at the end of every session, and it is emptied completely when a darklord is defeated or slain.

Wards and Binds

One of the few advantages possessed by mortals in the Realm of Terror is that many supernatural antagonists are vulnerable to incredibly mundane substances. This setting uses the **Wards and Binds** Setting Rule (*Horror Companion* 48-49).



Skills in Ravenloft

The skill list in *Ravenloft* is somewhat different than in the core *Savage Worlds* rules, due to things like electronics and computers not existing in the setting.

Removed Skills: The Driving, Electronics, Gambling, Hacking, and Piloting skills are not available in a *Ravenloft Reincarnated* campaign. Wagons and similar animal-drawn conveyances are controlled with the Riding skill. Gambling and other games of skill and chance are covered by the Common Knowledge skill.

New Skill: Trade (Smarts)

You have the skills needed for the day-to-day tasks of some relatively mundane profession, such as farming, mining, or running a small business. Trade allows you to raise funds (as the Performance skill) during Downtime. Finally, having the Trade skill can substitute for Common Knowledge when it comes to the specifics of things related to your trade.

Haggling: Trade is the skill used to haggle over prices when buying or selling valuables. If the GM is using the optional Wealth system, a character can use Trade in place of their Wealth score, if it would be better.

Languages of Ravenloft

The world of Ravenloft is a rich cultural tapestry, full of numerous peoples, cultures, and nations. One of the significant facets of the setting is that, unlike many fantasy worlds that attempt to homogenize culture through the introduction of a “common tongue” spoken by all peoples, Ravenloft has a

large number of spoken and written languages possible for characters to know.

Ravenloft uses the Multiple Languages setting rule (*SWADE* 140). This means that every character starts play with the Linguist Edge for free, allowing them to speak a number of languages equal to half their Smarts die (including their native tongue).

The following is a list of the common languages of the major clusters of Ravenloft. Many more exist in the Islands beyond, but characters do not necessarily know any of those tongues to begin with.

Languages

Balok: This language is commonly spoken in the Balinok Mountains Cluster. It is the language of the Barovian ethnic group, which has spread throughout the region. Balok has a harsh, clipped sound that makes its speakers sound rude or annoyed to most foreigners.

Darkonese: This is the national language of Darkon, the language of the bureaucracy and government. It has no particular ethnic group associated with it, and all Darkonians are expected to learn this language regardless of any ethnic language bias. Indeed, most immigrants to Darkon give up their forebears’ languages within a generation or two. Darkonese sounds fluid and fast to outsiders but has an amazing level of precision; a sentence in Darkonese always means exactly what it says, making it an excellent language for legalism and magic, and a terrible language for poetry.

Faerie: The language brought by elves, dwarves, and gnomes to the mortal world when they were exiled ages ago, few now speak this language exclusively. Many of the fair folk only learn their “native” language as adults, due to local cultural bias and necessity. Faerie has a ringing,

trilling sound to it, full of soft consonants and long vowels; as a tonal language, the tone of a word indicates its meaning as much as the pronunciation. Faerie is difficult to find precise meaning in, but excels at poetic expression, song, and metaphor. Elves, dwarves, and gnomes each have their own dialect, each of which differs from the original tongue significantly.

Falkovnian: The national language of Falkovnia, many other nations associate this guttural, hard-edged language with conquest and war due to the frequent conflicts with that country. The Falkovnian tendency to run words together to gain more precise meaning makes the language useful for fields like engineering and science.

Luktar: The other major language spoken in Barovia, Luktar is also spoken in Invidia. It is the native language of the Gundarakite ethnic group, whose population was dispersed into those two countries after their government's collapse. Luktar sounds enough like Balok that a lot of outsiders can't tell the difference, but Luktar and Balok speakers find the two languages mutually unintelligible (and mutually grating). To listeners with a good ear, Luktar has a sing-song cadence and a slightly buzzing pronunciation.

Mordentish: This is the language of the Mordentish ethnic group, spoken in Borca, Dementlieu, Mordent, and Richemulot, the countries of the so-called "Civilized Crescent." While technically two dialects (High Mordentish and Low Mordentish), both are mutually intelligible and primarily used as a marker of social status. Mordentish is known for its slightly slurred pronunciations and clipped syllables.

Patterna: The mysterious wandering folk sometimes known as the Vistani speak this language, though they are also

fluent in many others. They rarely teach it to outsiders, considering their distrust of those outside their own clans.

Vaasi: The language of the Vaasan ethnic group. Spoken across the Far Steppes, as well as in eastern Darkon and parts of the Forest of Beasts, Vaasi is nearly as ubiquitous as Mordentish. Vaasi is known for its harmonious vowel sounds and sudden, sharp consonants.

Minor Languages: Several other languages are spoken throughout the Core, including Thaani (the language of a minor ethnic refugee group in Barovia), Rokuma (the language of the gold-skinned sailors that sometimes come from the far western oceans), Forfarian (the nearly-extinct language of the Forlorn Land), and Tepestani (the native language of Tepest, gradually being replaced by Vaasi).

There are also a number of "secret languages" that are only spoken by members of certain societies or professions, such as Druidic (the lost language of Forfarian druids), Draconic (the so-called "language of dragons," used by mages to encode their arcane secrets), and Handtalk (a language used by the deaf to communicate without speech, but also used by thieves to communicate during heists).

Edges and Hindrances

Some Edges and Hindrances have been altered or removed in *Ravenloft*, as noted below. Additionally, many new Edges and Hindrances are available for this campaign setting.

Altered and Prohibited Hindrances from the Corebook

- **Bloodthirsty:** This Hindrance is inappropriate for heroic characters to start with, but they still might gain it through corruption or madness.
- **Greedy (Major):** Anyone who would kill for mere coin is likely to wind up a monster in the Land of Mists—and sooner rather than later.
- **Vengeful (Major):** Being willing to kill over a slight is the mark of a villain, not a hero.

Altered and Prohibited Hindrances from the *Fantasy Companion*

- **Amorous:** Players and GMs should have a frank discussion about the implications of this Hindrance before permitting it to be taken.
- **Armor Interference:** This Hindrance is a Setting Rule in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*.
- **Corruption:** Characters cannot take this Hindrance in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*—because in a very real sense, everyone has it. See the **Realm of Terror** Setting Rule.
- **Material Components:** All magic-users are assumed to have this Hindrance, and it is inappropriate for other arcane backgrounds. See **Chapter 4: Magic of the Dread Realms** for more information.

- **Talisman:** All miracle-users are assumed to have the Major version of this Hindrance, but other characters can take it as well. See **Chapter 4: Magic of the Dread Realms** for more information.

Altered and Prohibited Hindrances from the *Horror Companion*

- **Amorous:** Players and GMs should have a frank discussion about the implications of this Hindrance before permitting it to be taken.
- **Bullet Magnet:** Despite the name, this Hindrance applies to arrows and thrown knives just as much as gunfire.
- **Bully (Major):** People who take such joy in making others' lives miserable aren't destined to remain player characters for long in the Land of Mists. As a Major or Minor Hindrance, Bully acts as meeting the special requirement for the Menacing Edge.
- **Corruption:** Characters cannot take this Hindrance in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*—because in a very real sense, everyone has it. See the **Realm of Terror** Setting Rule.
- **Material Components:** All magic-users are assumed to have this Hindrance, and it is inappropriate for other arcane backgrounds. See **Chapter 4: Magic of the Dread Realms** for more information.
- **Talisman:** All miracle-users are assumed to have the Major version of this Hindrance, but other characters can take it as well. See **Chapter 4: Magic of the Dread Realms** for more information.
- **Victim:** See the Trouble Magnet Hindrance for a different take on this trope.

New Hindrances

Ailing (Minor/Major Hindrance)

Medicine is still rudimentary in many parts of the Land of Mists, and many chronic illnesses can cause life-long suffering. Your character suffers from a chronic and at least so far incurable disease of some sort. The Minor version of the Hindrance means you subtract 1 from any roll made to resist Fatigue from any source. Subtract 2 if it's a Major Hindrance.

A Critical Failure on such a roll means things are getting worse. If your hero has the Minor version, they get worse and their Hindrance becomes Major. If they already have the Major version, the Reaper comes calling.

The good news is you gain an immediate point of Conviction. The bad news is you choose when and how your hero dies during that session. They might go out in a blaze of glory or surrounded by friends on a peaceful mountaintop. When your character finally passes, the other player characters gain a point of Conviction, drawing strength from the brave death of their stalwart companion.

You can also buy off your Hindrance by spending an Advance (two for the Major version of the Hindrance). You should work with the GM to figure out a narrative reason for the improvement—treatment at a sanatorium, a miracle cure, a transfusion from a unique donor, or some other story-based explanation for the character's miraculous improvement.

Blighted (Major Hindrance)

A dark fate has hung over you for a long time—possibly since the moment you were born. For each player character with the Blighted Hindrance, the GM starts every session with one additional Benny!

Iron Allergy (Minor Hindrance)

You have fey heritage—not necessarily enough to possess their magic, but definitely enough to suffer from their greatest weakness: iron. Any weapon made of iron or steel inflicts +2 damage against you.

Additionally, if you suffer a wound from such a weapon, any Healing rolls made on you in the “Golden Hour” suffer a -2 penalty (including arcane skill rolls for the *healing* power).

Lycanthropy (Major Hindrance)

You were bitten by a werewolf or other lycanthrope capable of transmitting its dread disease. You are infected—cursed—with a painful monthly transformation as well as frequent, barely controllable rages.

Three nights of the month (most likely the nights of the full moon or the new moon), you transform into a rage-filled beast. If left to your own devices, you would rampage across the countryside, killing at whim. You can be locked up or chained, but this isn't a certain method of keeping you contained. During these nights, replace your character sheet with the **werewolf** (or other lycanthrope type) monster statistics (page 278).

The rest of the time, you still suffer from terrible rages. You have the Berserk Edge; when you go into a rage, you fight with melee attacks preferentially and seem to partially transform into a monstrous hybrid. Anyone who has not seen this transformation before must make a Fear check.

Mania (Minor/Major)

The character has a serious mental illness, such as a lack of empathy, bipolar tendencies, or psychopathic compulsions. This incurs a -1 Persuasion penalty to those who know of it, as well as

occasionally compelling the character to unusual or self-destructive behavior.

A Minor Mania occurs infrequently or isn't life threatening. A Major one is a full-time obsession with serious consequences if caught or discovered.

Marked (Minor Hindrance)

You have been branded with an unusual mark or feature that is difficult to hide. This mark can represent a prior or current allegiance, a brand inflicted by a foe, or a destiny you cannot escape. Regardless of its origins, it can cause you difficulty when seen by those who know of its meaning. Those who see it as an evil omen start one Reaction level worse to you and your allies, while those who see it as salvation will hound you incessantly with requests for aid.

Mist-Led (Minor Hindrance)

The sight of the Mists fills your heart with dread, for you know how easy it is to get lost within their foggy grasp. You suffer a -2 penalty on Survival rolls to navigate the Mists, as does any navigator you travel with. You also suffer a -2 penalty on Survival rolls to follow tracks, even when not in the Mists.

Outlander (Major Hindrance)

This is not your world. You remember a world with blue skies, bright oceans, and sunny days—not this Mist-shrouded hellhole. Somehow, you have become drawn to the Realm of Terror from another world. You know virtually nothing about the cultures, history, or metaphysics of the Land of Mists. You're lucky to have even picked up one of the local languages.

You suffer a -2 penalty on Common Knowledge rolls related to the Land of Mists, as well as a -2 penalty on Fear tests. You speak your native language and one local domain language only.

On the plus side, your soul is not as mired in the corruption and darkness of the world as a native, so you gain a +2 bonus on Dark Powers checks.

Trouble Magnet (Minor/Major Hindrance)

Things just don't go smoothly for you. Anytime the GM must choose a "random character" for a detrimental effect, it's you.

As a Major Hindrance, things are even worse. Whenever a group you are part of draws a card for an encounter while traveling, the GM draws an extra card and picks the worse one.



Edges

Altered and Prohibited Edges from the Corebook

- **Ace:** Powered vehicles are rare to nonexistent in the Land of Mists.
- **Double Tap:** Firearms with this level of sophistication do not exist in the Land of Mists
- **Rock and Roll!** Automatic firearms do not exist in the Land of Mists.

Altered and Prohibited Edges from the *Fantasy Companion*

- **Arcane Backgrounds:** None of the new Arcane Background Edges are permitted in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*, nor are any of their associated Edges unless those Edges are listed in this chapter. The Wizard Edge is included and works as normal in this setting.
- **Battle Magic:** Large-scale battlefield magic is not appropriate for use in the Land of Mists.
- **Blood Magic:** Heroic characters such as the PCs cannot take this vile Edge, but some practitioners of black magic will have it.
- **Familiar:** The Requirements for this Edge are “Novice, Arcane Background (Magic).”
- **Rapid Change:** Characters suffering from the scourge of lycanthropy cannot embrace its power and remain human in the Land of Mists.

Altered and Prohibited Edges from the *Horror Companion*

- **Arcane Backgrounds:** None of the new Arcane Background Edges are permitted in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*, nor are any of their associated Edges unless those Edges are listed in this chapter.
- **Veteran of the Dark World:** This Edge’s Requirement is changed from Smarts d8+ to Spirit d8+.

Background Edges

Arcane Background

All of the corebook Arcane Backgrounds (Gifted, Magic, Miracles, Psionics, and Weird Science) are available in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*. Many domains have particular attitudes toward people with supernatural powers—particularly, the people of most domains fear magic-users and psychics, and some domains permit open use of miracles only by those of the “correct” faith.

See **Chapter 4: Magic of the Dread Realms** for more information about the way the various Arcane Backgrounds work in the Land of Mists.

Cat Eyes

Requirements: Human, Novice

Some people, particularly from the regions where great hunting cats are common, are born with disturbing bile-yellow eyes. These folk are said to have cat spirits in their ancestry, and they are both feared and respected.

This character gains the Low Light Vision special ability, allowing them to ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting. Additionally, he may communicate with all feline animals as though they shared a common language,

and gains +2 on Persuasion rolls with such animals.

Ghost Sight

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

After a traumatic experience (possibly one that occurred when the character was so young that they don't even remember it), this character gained the ability to see and speak with ghosts.

Even when a ghost is in its normal invisible state, this character can see them as well as they can see the living. This can cause trouble, especially when dealing with ghosts that don't realize they're dead or with ghosts who want to use the character to communicate with the living or carry out tasks for them.

Because of your character's long exposure to ghosts, they gain a +2 bonus on Fear checks caused by ghosts. Even when they fail a Fear check from a ghostly source, they roll a d12 on the Fear Effects Table rather than a d20.

Ironforged

Requirements: Created, Novice, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+

Some created were built as servants or companions—but you were built for war. You are Size 1 (giving you +1 Toughness) and gain +4 Armor from the incredibly durable materials of your creation. Due to your heavier construction, your Pace is reduced by 1 and your running die is reduced by one die type (minimum d4). You cannot wear armor, and even mundane clothing must be custom-tailored for you at double the normal price.

Special: This Edge can *only* be taken at character creation. You cannot also take the Reborn Edge.

Reborn

Requirements: Created, Novice

Some created are made of wood, or stone, or metal—but some are stitched-together corpses given “life” through arcane science. These “reborn” are horrifying in appearance but have certain benefits over those crafted from less-animate materials.

A Reborn created can heal naturally, and gains the Slow Regeneration ability (allowing them to make a natural healing roll each day) as long as they have access to basic sewing supplies, a healer's kit, or the like, as well as meat to consume so they can replenish lost mass. The meat can be fresh or foul, human or animal, but they need at least a pound per Wound suffered.

A skilled surgeon can also repair a Reborn's injuries, though they are limited by their understanding of the bizarre arts needed to craft such constructs. The created character with this Edge can be repaired just as other created, even outside of the “Golden Hour,” but the character making the roll uses the lower of their Healing or Repair skills.

As a downside to these benefits, the character suffers the Ugly (Major) Hindrance but gains no points for it. The character can still take Attractive and Very Attractive to offset this penalty, representing that special care was taken with their assembly.

Special: This Edge can *only* be taken at character creation. You cannot also take the Ironforged Edge.

Shadowborn

Requirements: Novice, Low-Light Vision special ability

You have the blood of the Shadow Fey or a similar eldritch ancestry running through your veins. Your Low-Light Vision ignores all Illumination penalties,

even those from Pitch Darkness and magically created darkness.

Combat Edges

Arrow Cloud

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d8+, Shooting d8+

With proper training, a skilled archer can fill the air with a veritable cloud of arrows. You can use the Suppressive Fire action with bows; this action uses five arrows, all of which are drawn as a free action as part of the attack.

Dart Cloud

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d8+, Athletics d8+

You can throw a large number of small weapons in one quick motion, filling the air with deadly steel. A character with this Edge can use the Suppressive Fire action with small thrown weapons, such as darts or throwing knives. This attack uses three “shots,” all of which are drawn as a free action as part of the attack.

Mighty Hurl

Requirements: Seasoned, Strength d8+, Vigor d6+, Athletics d8+

Your hero is able to throw weapons much further than normal. You can use thrown weapons at Extreme Range. When you do so, you suffer only a -6 penalty (rather than the usual -8).

Additionally, when you use a thrown weapon on a target at Short Range, increase the weapon’s damage die by one size (so a thrown dagger would deal Str+d6, for example). The weapon’s damage die is still limited by your Strength as usual.

Oversized Weapon Master

Requirements: Veteran, Strength d10+, Athletics d8+, Fighting d8+

The character may use two-handed melee weapons with one hand. They must still meet the minimum Strength requirement to use the weapon. When wielding a two-handed weapon with both hands, the character’s attacks gain +1 Armor Piercing.

Painkiller

Requirements: Novice

Your training emphasizes ways to not just fight through the pain, but to let pain be your ally in battle. When inflicting melee damage, you add your Wound levels to the roll. (So, if you had three Wounds, for example, you would add +3 to your melee damage rolls.)

Quick Draw

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+

Whether you are a traditional duelist or one of the new “gunfighters” that have sprung up in some domains, you focus on speed—especially at the start of a fight. You draw two cards when spending a Benny for an additional Action Card at the beginning of a round. You may choose your final Action Card from among any of your available choices, including additional draws from Level Headed, Quick, and the like.

You also add +2 to Athletics rolls made to interrupt actions and to resist being interrupted yourself.

Rapid Reload

Requirements: Novice, Shooting d6+

The warrior reduces the Reload value of a ranged weapon by 1. (This stacks with the Musketeer Edge for black powder weapons.) Weapons with Reload 1 may be reloaded as a free action with this Edge.

A character with this Edge may use Rapid Fire with a weapon if its Reload value has been reduced to a free action.

Wolf Pack

Requirements: Novice, Strength d6+, Athletics d6+, Fighting d6+

While firearms are beginning to take their place on the battlefield, the most common formation for large groups of soldiers is still massed troops in close formations. You add your Gang Up bonus to damage rolls as well as to Fighting rolls.

Power Edges

Arcane Focus

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Occult d6+, Spellcasting d8+

Sorcerers often craft physical implements to aid them in channeling their mystical powers. These traditionally take the form of a wand, staff, crystal ball, ritual dagger, or the like. If you have the arcane focus in hand, you get one free reroll when you fail a Spellcasting roll. The hand you hold your focus in counts as being “free” for purposes of casting spells.

Should your focus be lost or destroyed, you can replace it by spending a week or so in dedicated work (i.e., a Downtime action) and spending 50 gp per your character Rank in raw materials.

Chosen of Ezra

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Spirit d8+, Faith d6+, Occult d6+

The priests of the goddess Ezra are frequently trained in mystical ways to repulse and destroy unholy beasts from the Mists, lost spirits and wayward

demons that would seek to tempt and devour humans.

You immediately learn the *banish* and *light/darkness* powers, ignoring Rank requirements, if you did not previously know them. (If you already knew these powers, select two others from your normal list instead.) You reduce the base Power Point cost of both powers by 1.

Additionally, you ignore the visibility penalty from your own casting of *darkness*. The *darkness* you create has the Trapping of being impenetrable fog.

Destroy Undead

Requirements: Seasoned, Arcane Background (Miracles), Faith d6+

The undead are abominations to the followers of most decent faiths, and those of more corrupt cults regard uncontrolled undead as enemies to be wiped out.

As a limited action, this character can spend Power Points to channel positive energy in a Large Blast Template centered on themselves. Every undead creature in the template takes 2d6 damage at the cost of 1 Power Point, or 3d6 damage for 2 Power Points.

Druid

Requirements: Seasoned, Arcane Background (Miracles), Faith d6+, Survival d6+, must know the *shape change* power

You are an initiate in a secretive religion that worships the forces of nature. You gain a +2 bonus on Faith rolls made to affect plants or animals (including shape changers using the form of animals) with your powers. Additionally, you can speak and cast powers (at a -2 penalty) while in a form that wouldn't usually allow it.

Finally, you gain the skill Language (Druidic) d6 for free.

Herald of the Dawn

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Spirit d8+, Faith d6+, Performance d6+, must know the *light/darkness* power

The priests of the Morninglord are some of the staunchest foes of evil in the Land of Mists, and their elite are the Heralds of the Dawn, wandering messengers and musicians who are also noted vampire hunters.

When a Herald of the Dawn casts the *light* power (but not *darkness*), they reduce the final cost of the power by 1 Power Point (minimum 0), and the base Duration of the power is 1 hour.

Additionally, any damage-dealing powers with the Light Trapping cast by the character inflict +4 damage against vampires and similar enemies with vulnerability to sunlight.

The Herald also gains the following new Power Modifier option for *light*:

- **Sunlight (+3):** The illumination from this power counts as natural sunlight for the duration of the power. Reduce the base Duration of the power to 5 rounds.

Iron Lord

Requirements: Arcane Background (Miracles), Spirit d8+, Faith d6+, Intimidation d6+, must know the *fear* power

Priests of the Lawgiver are tyrants who rule through fear and steely discipline. They master their own terror so that they can more effectively lord that emotion over others. A character with this Edge gains +2 on Intimidation checks and Faith rolls to cast the *fear* power. Wild Cards who fail to resist this character's casting of *fear* add +2 to their Fear Effects Table result (or +4 if the power was cast with a raise!).

Additionally, the Iron Lord gains +2 to resist Fear and Intimidation, whether mundane or magical, and subtracts 2 from rolls on the Fear Effects Table.

Kinetic

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, Arcane Background (Psionics), Psionics d8+, must know a damage-inflicting power

You are a kinetic, a person with the ability to supercharge the physical damage inflicted by their psychic abilities. When you cast a power that deals damage (such as *bolt*, *burst*, or *blast*), that power deals +2 damage.

Merciful Blessing

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Miracles), Faith d8+

Many faiths have a tradition of healing and compassion that makes them welcome across the Dread Realms. As an action, the character can spend 1 Power Point and target another character within a Range equal to their Spirit, automatically removing one of the following status conditions: Distracted, Shaken, or Vulnerable.

Necromancer

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Spirit d8+, Occult d6+, Spellcasting d8+

Necromancers are steeped in the lore and rituals of death. They are particularly adept at raising the dead and forcing them to serve their foul requests. While most heroes should avoid such vile sorcery, few can deny its efficiency.

You immediately learn the *fear* and *zombie* powers, ignoring Rank requirements, if you did not previously know those powers. (If you already knew these powers, select two others from your normal list instead.)

Additionally, undead creatures you create with the *zombie* power gain the Resilient monstrous special ability.

Scan

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Psionics), Psionics d6+, must know the *mind reading* power

The psychic opens their mind to the surface thoughts of all those in Range, whether they can see them or not. This can be a handy tool if trying to identify a hidden enemy, detecting the location of a bound or hapless victim, detecting the leader of a mob, or even quickly navigating the best route through a crowd.

Instead of reading a single mind with *mind reading*, the investigator can scan all minds in twice the Range (and can double the distance again with the generic Range Power Modifier).

The caster senses only surface thoughts when using the power, and with a raise tells the caster which thought is associated with each subject.

If a darklord or other entity of immense evil is within Range when the psychic uses this ability, they must make an immediate Fear check against the horrifying revelation that comes from touching such a corrupt mind!

Spellbook

Requirements: Seasoned, Arcane Background (Magic), Occult d6+, Spellcasting d6+

Sorcerers from formal schools often record their lore in personalized tomes of eldritch knowledge. These spellbooks make their user far more versatile, as they allow a sorcerer to draw upon the accumulated wisdom of their tradition when casting a spell.

If you have access to your spellbook, you may spend a Benny to add any spell from the Magic powers list to your list of

known spells. You may cast that spell normally until the next time you rest to regain Power Points.

If your spellbook is lost or destroyed, you lose the benefits of this Edge until you replace it. Replacing a spellbook takes one week of dedicated work (i.e., a Downtime action) and raw materials worth roughly 50 gp per your character Rank.

Tower of Will

Requirements: Seasoned, Arcane Background (Psionics), Smarts d8+, Psionics d8+

The psychic has trained their mind to resist mental intrusions. They add +4 to any roll made to oppose, resist, or recover from mental intrusions such as *mind reading*, *mind wipe*, *puppet*, or similar monstrous abilities.

This stacks with all other bonuses and penalties to resist such effects.

Wholeness of Body

Requirements: Seasoned, Arcane Background (Gifted), Fighting d6+, Focus d6+

Some mystic martial artists can channel their spiritual power to ward off harm. You may spend 2 Power Points to make a Soak roll instead of spending a Benny. This does not count as spending a Benny.

Witch of Hala

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Spirit d6+, Healing d6+, Spellcasting d8+

Straddling the line between priests and mages, the witches of Hala are servants of the mysterious goddess of magic and healing. In lands where they are accepted, they wear the serpent ring or ouroboros medallion of their faith; in less friendly

domains, they help from the shadows, healing the sick and aiding the lost.

You immediately learn the *detect/conceal arcana* and *healing* powers, ignoring Rank requirements, if you did not previously know those powers. (If you already knew these powers, select two others from your normal list instead.)

You count as having the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge and a Faith skill equal to your Spellcasting skill for the purpose of Edge Requirements. You can select miracles from the Nature Domain as though they were magic-user spells.

War Caster

Requirements: Seasoned, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+, Arcane Background, Soldier, Fighting d6+, arcane skill d6+

While most casters have great difficulty channeling their powers while wearing armor, you are equal parts soldier and sorcerer. You ignore the Armor Interference Setting Rule. Additionally, you are treated as having a free hand for casting as long as at least one of your hands is used to hold a melee weapon.

Professional Edges

Alchemist

Requirements: Novice, Occult d6+, Science d6+

Science is not an exact science in the Land of Mists. Alchemists are semi-mystical scientists who study the physical laws of the world and utilize them to produce wondrous but not technically magical effects.

A character with this Edge can use Downtime actions to create alchemical items, firearm ammunition, poisons, and similar devices and substances. (See

Chapter 3: Gear and Equipment for more information on alchemical items.) The character can also craft potions, elixirs, and similar consumable arcane devices using the normal Downtime rules, even without an Arcane Background.

Cavalry

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Riding d6+

You almost seem as though you were born in the saddle. You ignore up to 2 points of penalties on Riding rolls, and you may spend Bennies to Soak for your mount, using Riding instead of Vigor. Each success and raise negates a Wound.

Cambler

Requirements: Seasoned, Common Knowledge d6+, Notice d6+

You have a knack for odds, wagers, and when to call a bluff. You can use Common Knowledge to raise funds (as per the Performance skill), and you gain a +2 bonus on the roll when doing so. This bonus also applies whenever you use the Common Knowledge skill to play a game of skill or chance, such as cards or dice.

Special: If your GM is using the optional Wealth rules, when you make a Wealth check to make a purchase, you may choose to gamble before making the roll. If you do so, roll 1d4-2 and apply the resulting total to your Wealth check. If your Wealth check fails and your Wealth die shows a 1 (or if you roll a Critical Failure), reduce your Wealth die by one step until the next time you would receive a Reward, at which time your Wealth die returns to normal without gaining the Reward. While your Wealth die is reduced from this effect, you cannot gamble on further Wealth checks.

Musketeer

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Fighting d6+, Shooting d8+

Firearms are a relatively new addition to the world of combat, but some characters have already mastered the art of the quick reload.

A character with this Edge reduces the Reload rating of a black powder weapon by 1. (This stacks with the Rapid Reload Edge, to a minimum of Reload 1.)

Additionally, the character suffers no Shooting penalties when using a firearm with a fixed bayonet, and no Fighting penalties when using a firearm as an improvised melee weapon.



Weird Edges

Destiny's Child

Requirements: Novice

You are favored by the higher powers of the universe—a true Major Arcana in the tarot deck of fate. Each game session, you may draw and play an additional Adventure Card.

Fortune Teller

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d6+, Occult d6+

Some folk in the Land of Mists can divine the future through seemingly mundane means, such as with tarot cards or casting bones. In times of crisis, such fortune tellers can alter the skein of fate to interfere with their foes.

Once a foe (or group of foes on the same Action Card) has chosen their Action Card (after accounting for all Edges, Hindrances, and special abilities), the character can spend a Benny to force that foe to discard their Action Card and draw again. If the new Action Card is a Joker, the character gets their Benny back.

A character with this Edge cannot use it to force a foe to redraw a Joker.

Cutsy

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

A hero with this Edge has learned to steel themselves against the horrors that stalk the night. They gain a free reroll when making Fear checks, and they reduce the Fear penalty from sinkholes of evil by their Rank (so 1 at Novice, 2 at Seasoned, and so on), to a minimum of 0.

Venom Drinker

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d8+

You have been exposed to trace amounts of poison regularly for much of your life, making you highly resistant to poisons and venoms. You gain a +4 bonus on Vigor rolls to resist the effects of poison.

Additionally, if you fail a Vigor roll against Lethal poison, you may spend a Benny to become Incapacitated instead. If you survive the subsequent Incapacitation roll, you fall into a death-like coma for 1d6 days; only a Healing check during this time can determine if you are alive or dead. When you wake up, you do not have any additional Wounds, but you are Exhausted; this condition recovers with rest normally.

Legendary Edges

Archmage

Requirements: Legendary, Smarts d10+, Spirit d8+, Arcane Background (Magic), Concentration, New Power, Occult d10+, Spellcasting d12+

Only the most powerful wizards can hope to aspire to the lofty heights of the archmage, the undisputed masters of the arcane.

An Archmage's powers cannot be disrupted by being Stunned or Wounded. Additionally, when the character is Bound, they may still cast spells at a -4 penalty to the Spellcasting roll.

Champion of Dread

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d10+, Gutsy

Terror is for lesser people. What some call Hell, you call home. You ignore penalties from Sinkholes of Evil and creature abilities when making Fear checks.

Additionally, when you fail a Fear check, you may move your result on the Fear Effects Table up or down one category. You never suffer permanent phobias or insanity from a roll on the Fear Effects Table; any such penalties disappear after a night's rest, though you suffer a level of Fatigue the next day due to spiritual malaise.

Crushing Blow

Requirements: Legendary, Strength d10+, Fighting d10+

Your blows are strong enough to crush bone and shred sinew. When you make an attack with a two-handed weapon, you gain AP 2 (which stacks with any AP from the weapon itself). Additionally, you inflict +1d10 damage on a raise with two-handed close combat attacks instead of the usual +1d6

Hand of Doom

Requirements: Legendary, Trademark Weapon, Athletics, Fighting, or Shooting d10+

Some weapons take on the legendary status of their wielders, becoming powerful relics in their own right. This character's legend has become so

powerful that their favored weapon shares their indomitable soul.

Choose a weapon to which the player has applied the Trademark Weapon Edge. That weapon becomes a relic, infused with magic and incredible power. The weapon's base damage gains an extra die (so a sword normally dealing Str+d8 would instead deal Str+2d8, while a pistol inflicting 2d6+1 would increase to 3d6+1).

This Edge applies to the weapon, not to the character. If the relic is lost or stolen, the benefits go with the weapon.

At the GM's discretion, a relic weapon may gain an additional unique power, such as returning to the wielder's hand when dropped or glowing white in the presence of vampires.

Lightbringer

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d10+, Vigor d8+

The rarest of heroes in service to the forces of good may experience a sort of ascension, becoming a veritable living angel.

Lightbringers no longer age and are restored to the physical peak of their youth. They are immune to poison and disease, and they no longer need to eat, drink, or breathe.

A Lightbringer can only die from intentional harm, not from accident, happenstance, or environmental conditions, though those hazards can incapacitate the character for long durations if he remains in such circumstances. Should they be "killed" in such a fashion, they appear dead until their wounds heal.

Even physical harm has difficulty keeping a Lightbringer down, as the character gains Slow Regeneration, allowing them to make a natural healing roll once per day.

Lord of Death

Requirements: Legendary, Smarts d8+, Spirit d10+, Arcane Background (Magic), Necromancer, Occult d8+, Spellcasting d10+, must know the *zombie* power

The most powerful necromancers are veritable lords of the dead, masters of a kingdom of graves. Any zombie raised by this character improves its Strength and Fighting by one die type, as well as gaining the Very Resilient monstrous special ability.

Additionally, when you make a zombie permanent with the appropriate Power Modifier, it "locks" only 1 Power Point per zombie instead of the full cost you paid to create them.

Special: When you take this Edge, you automatically fail a Dark Powers check if your corruption rating is 3 or lower.



Mindbender

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d10+, Arcane Background (Psionics), Persuasion d8+, Psionics d10+, must know the *puppet* power

You are a master of the human mind—controlling it, dominating it, twisting it. When you use the *puppet* power, its base Duration is 1 hour, and you may apply the **Mind Rider** power modifier at no additional cost.

Tactical Genius

Requirements: Legendary, Smarts d8+, Battle d10+, Fighting d8+

You are a commander without equal in the world. An army under your command can turn the tide against far larger forces with ease and crush smaller armies without breaking a sweat.

When fighting a larger force in a Mass Battle, the opposing force halves their Force Bonus (round down). You are always considered to have at least a +1 Tactical Advantage modifier due to your superior tactics. Additionally, you reduce any Morale penalties by 2 points if you have to make a Morale check.

Unbreakable

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d8+, Vigor d10+, Harder to Kill, Improved Nerves of Steel

You just won't stop fighting, no matter the odds. You gain a free reroll on Soak rolls. Additionally, you ignore all Wound penalties.





Chapter 3:

Gear and Equipment

The cultures in Ravenloft vary in their level of technological development and cultural advancement, and these advances are often inconsistent when compared to other worlds. A given domain might well have steam engines but not gunpowder, or advanced metallurgy and chemistry with no understanding of physics. Iron and steel weapons are common in most places, though a few rare domains are stuck in something like the Bronze Age.

Money is also a complicated affair in the Land of Mists. Most domains are advanced enough to use money for transactions rather than barter, but the denominations and types vary from nation to nation.

For the sake of simplicity, all prices are listed in silver pieces, the common coin of most lands. Individual domain descriptions will discuss the ways their monetary system varies, including coinage of other precious metals (such as copper, gold, or platinum), the shapes and appearances of those coins, and their relative value to one another.

Because of the variation in technological level and coinage from place to place (including some regions that only use the barter system rather than actual minted money), the prices listed in this section can vary wildly. Some equipment might not even be available at any price without going through the black market or foreign traders.

Firearms are particularly rare in many domains, having only begun development in the alchemy laboratories of the

Civilized Crescent within the last century or so. Even ammunition is scarce for such weapons in many regions.

Armor

Armor is a contentious issue in many lands of Ravenloft. While it still has its place on the battlefield, most nations abhor it in civilized circumstances. Unless the armor is particularly subtle, it tends to draw derision and disdain from the “better” sort of people.

Consider that any character wearing armor suffers a penalty on Persuasion rolls equal to half his Armor bonus (round down) when dealing with high-class individuals. People from the lower classes are generally used to someone wearing armor being able to do as they like, so this penalty doesn’t usually apply to them.

Special Materials

Among monster hunters, it is well known that some beasts are highly resistant to mundane steel or iron weapons. Silver, gold, or more exotic materials still might be required to put down a supernatural creature. While few smiths openly offer to forge bullets or coat swords in silver, the right price can pay for any number of eccentric requests.

Generally speaking, if a smith with the required expertise can be found to make a weapon out of an unusual or valuable material it multiplies the base price of the weapon, depending on the exact item in question. Silver weapons usually run five

times the weapon's base price, while a weapon made from gold might cost ten times as much. Weapons made from soft metals like silver and gold subtract 1 from their AP value (if any).

Cold iron is another common request for monster hunters. The difficulty involved in working it makes it cost twice as much as normal. Since cold iron has not been heated in a forge before working it, it contains no carbon and is thus very brittle.

Weapons made from special materials tend to be less durable and more vulnerable to destruction than weapons made from reliable steel, bronze, or worked iron. As such, a weapon made from special materials is broken on a Critical Failure unless it is also enchanted in some fashion.

Wealth

In most domains, the Land of Mists is just beginning to develop concepts like credit, speculation, and the like. Still, an action-horror setting isn't exactly a perfect place for characters who obsess over looting downed foes or have to keep track of every silver piece of expenses—especially in a world where every nation has its own coinage and accepted rates of trade.

With that in mind, *Ravenloft Reincarnated* encourages the use of the optional Wealth system (*SWADE* 145). Each domain will suggest its level of technological development, trading partners, and general wealth, which the GM can use as a guideline to help determine what goods and services will be available in a given locale.

Finding a weapon made of special materials (see above) or having one made causes a Wealth roll to suffer *at least* a -2 penalty, and up to -4 for some items. In general, if a domain's darklord would be

harmed by a given material, local merchants' and craftsmen's unwillingness to traffic in such goods would certainly justify a -4 penalty.

Encumbrance and Significant Items

Rather than listing exact weights for equipment, *Ravenloft Reincarnated* offers an optional system for tracking loads and encumbrance. Every character has a gear carrying limit equal to their Strength die; so, a character with Strength d6 would have a gear limit of 6, for example. This represents the number of "significant items" a character can have on their person at one time.

Most useful items count as one significant item—weapons, light to medium armor, and so on. Particularly light or concealable items count as $\frac{1}{2}$ of an item (allowing the character to hold two of them in a single "slot"), while extremely light or minor valuables count as $\frac{1}{4}$ of an item and very heavy objects count as 2 significant items.

It is generally assumed that every character has a rucksack, belt pouches, or some other method of organizing their gear. If a character is somehow stripped of all their carrying gear, their gear limit is halved.

Coins: Every character starts with a coin purse or similar container. This purse can hold 100 coins of any denomination as a single gear item. Loose coins crammed into backpacks and the like have a similar encumbrance—100 coins is 1 weight.

Edges: Some Edges, such as Brawny and Soldier, allow a character to treat their Strength as though it were higher for purposes of Encumbrance. This works as normal for this optional system. A character with Strength d8 and Brawny, for example, would treat their Strength as

d10 for encumbrance purposes, allowing them to carry ten significant items.

Magic Items and Treasure

As mentioned above, action-horror settings tend to downplay the importance of gear, and Gothic settings in particular tend to depict their heroes as either upper class (or at least upper-middle class) individuals with little need for employment or wandering vagabonds perpetually on the edge of hunger and desperation.

Despite these two extremes, there is one area in which the importance of gear can become apparent: magic items. The original *Ravenloft* setting was a *Dungeons & Dragons* world, with the attendant assumptions about *+1 swords* and the like. The later incarnations of the world have downplayed this treasure dependency, but the Land of Mists remains a magical world at heart—albeit dark and chaotic magic nestled within a rotten black heart.

Magic treasure can generally be divided into three categories: temporary items (the traditional fantasy potions, scrolls, wands, and the like), permanent magic items (enchanted swords and armor, cloaks of invisibility, and so on), and relics (artifacts of immense power, usually touched by the Dark Powers).

While player characters and NPCs can craft temporary magic items through the use of the Artificer Edge (or by being a

weird scientist, per the Arcane Background), these items can also be found in the possession of enemies or monsters, and in ancient tombs, having lost none of their potency with the passing of years. For campaigns that utilize “random treasure,” these minor magic items are good choices as they offer both additional capability and strategic choices to players.

More powerful permanent items should never be given out as random treasure. These objects offer too much utility and strength to be found on a whim—not to mention that any enemy aware of what he possesses will certainly use his “treasure” against the heroes. A permanent magic item might give a +1 or +2 bonus to its primary use (so to Fighting and damage rolls for a sword, Shooting and damage for bows, Stealth for a cloak of shadows, and so on). Such items might also grant some minor bonus, such as a flaming sword dealing fire damage and having a chance to set enemies aflame.

Relics can be the focus of an entire adventure, either in the hands of a dreadful foe or as a quest for the heroes to acquire or destroy them. Some relics are essentially indestructible, forcing the heroes to search for a means of sealing them away forever. Regardless of the reasons, a relic should always take center stage in a story in which it appears.

Common Gear

Item	Cost (sp)	Wt	Notes
Alchemy kit	500	2	—
Backpack	50	—	Adds +1 to a character's Encumbrance
Bedroll	25	1	—
Blanket	10	½	—
Candle	1	—	One hour of light (2" radius), 20 candles have a weight of 1
Chain (10 feet)	10	1	Hardness 8
Climbing kit	100	—	—
Clothing, common	20	1	No weight if worn
Clothing, formal	200	1	No weight if worn
Clothing, winter	200	1	No weight if worn
Disguise kit	200	1	—
Healing kit	10	1	Three uses
Firestarting kit	5	¼	—
Fishing kit	50	1	—
Gaming set	50	½	—
Gun belt	20	¼	Includes holster and ammo belt
Lantern	25	½	Four hours of light (4" radius), uses oil
Lockpick kit	200	1	—
Lock, normal	25	¼	—
Lock, fine	50	¼	—
Manacles	25	½	Hardness 12
Mess kit	20	½	—
Musical instrument	100	1	—
Oil (1 pint)	2	¼	—
Quiver	10	—	—
Pocket watch	100	¼	—
Spectacles	100	—	—
Surgery kit	100	1	Five uses, +1 to Healing skill rolls (refill cost 25)
Survival kit	200	1	—
Tool kit	200	1	—
Torch	5	—	One hour of light (4" radius), 10 torches have a weight of 1
Trail rations (five days)	10	1	—
Writing set	50	1	—

Animals and Vehicles

Item	Cost (sp)	Notes
Barding, leather	150	Weight 1
Barding, chain	500	Weight 2
Barding, plate	1,500	Weight 4
Carriage	500	—
Cart	50	—
Dog, Trained	300	—
Horse, Draft	250	—
Horse, Riding	500	—
Horse, War	750	—
Mule	100	—
Rowboat	50	—
Saddle	50	—
Saddlebags	25	Allows the animal to carry its Strength in significant items
Wagon	100	—

Food and Lodging

Item	Cost (sp)
Meal, common	1
Meal, fine	5
Inn, common room	1/night
Inn, shared room	10/night
Inn, private room	25/night



Gear Descriptions

Alchemy Kit: This padded wooden box contains the glassware, heating elements, and mixing tools necessary to make alchemical items and poisons.

Backpack: This is the standard method adventurers use to carry around their worldly possessions. A sturdy leather backpack is water-resistant, as well as having several pockets and hooks for holding additional gear. While all adventurers have some way to carry their possessions, a good backpack improves carrying capacity by distributing weight evenly.

Barding: Armor for horses. Leather barding grants +2 Armor, chain grants +3, and plate grants +4. Barding covers a horse's body and head, but their legs are still exposed.

Candles: Wax or tallow candles are a cheap way to produce light. They shed normal light in a 2" radius for one hour.

Carriage: This enclosed vehicle is designed for comfort on journeys. It requires at least four horses to pull it, and it can carry six passengers plus the driver quite comfortably. It can also pack twice the encumbrance rating of its animal type onto the roof as luggage.

Cart: This small, two-wheeled vehicle can be pulled by a single mule or draft horse. Two people can ride in it (uncomfortably), or it can be used to carry gear and supplies. A cart triples an animal's encumbrance rating.

Chain: A length of chain can be very useful to bind people or secure objects. A length of chain is Hardness 8.

Climbing Kit: This bundle contains 50 feet of lightweight rope, a grappling hook, pitons, and other miscellaneous climbing equipment. A character who uses this kit gains a free reroll on Athletics (climbing) rolls and ignores up to 2 points of penalties.

Clothing, Common: This is the sort of clothing an average person would wear in a given region. It typically includes a tunic, trousers or a skirt, soft leather shoes, hosiery, and a cap of some sort.

Clothing, Fine: This is a well-made outfit of quality cotton, fine wool, or silk, dyed in the currently fashionable colors of the region. It's not something to wear into a dungeon, but high-class people won't take an adventurer seriously unless they're wearing something at least this nice. Actually blending into high society also requires 500 or more silver pieces in jewelry, various accessories, and probably some servants.

Clothing, Winter: Heavy furs, layered cloaks, and down-lined jackets are necessary survival tools for truly frigid climes. Wearing such clothing grants a free reroll on Vigor rolls to avoid cold-based environmental hazards. It also counts as cloth armor (+1 Armor).

Disguise Kit: This small case contains makeup, applicators, hair dye, and even some wigs for a quick change. Using a disguise kit grants a free reroll on Performance checks made to disguise a character. The character making the roll ignores up to 2 points of penalties.

Firestarting Kit: This small wooden box contains flint and steel, tinder, and other bits and bobs needed to quickly start a fire. A character using this kit can light a lantern, torch, or candle as an action, or start a campfire in less than a minute, with no check required.

Fishing Kit: This study carrying case contains fishing line, hooks, weights, and a collapsible pole. A character with access to a body of water such as a river or lake gains a +1 bonus on Survival rolls to gather food.

Gaming Set: This is a complete set of pieces and accessories needed to play a game or related set of games, such as a board game, card game, or dice game.

Common games across the Land of Mists include faro (a card game played with a tarokka deck), chess (a board game with pieces representing nobles and warriors), and backgammon (a board game using dice and checkers), and chuck-a-luck (a dice game of chance).

Healing Kit: This leather bag holds clean bandages, pouches of herbal remedies, needles and thread, and other basic first aid items. Without a healing kit, a character suffers a -2 penalty on Healing rolls to perform first aid and prevent bleeding out.

Horses: A riding horse is a significant investment in most regions, since they require higher-quality food and can't perform heavy labor. Draft horses are suitable for pulling wagons and carts; they are too slow to make good riding animals, and their broad backs are uncomfortable for riders. War horses are well-trained for combat, as well as being swift and steady, but their pedigree and training makes them expensive.

Lantern: A lantern sheds light in a 4" radius for 4 hours, using one flask of oil.

Lockpick Kit: No thief should be without this set of picks, tension bars, and similar small tools. Without proper lockpicks, Thievery rolls to pick locks and disarm traps suffer a -2 penalty.

Locks: A lock is needed to secure a chest, chain, or pair of manacles. Normal locks are Hardness 8; fine locks are Hardness 9 and inflict a -2 penalty on Thievery rolls to open them.

Manacles: These heavy metal handcuffs are useful for securing a prisoner. They need a lock to function properly. A pair of manacles are Hardness 12.

Mess Kit: This tightly-packed box includes a plate and bowl, eating utensils, a fire-starter, and a small iron kettle. The kit contains everything an adventurer needs to turn raw supplies into finished

food—though the lack of spices means it won't be gourmet fare.

Mule: The humble mule is the preferred mount for poor farmers, and it can pull a cart quite easily. Expect some attitude problems, though.

Musical Instrument: A well-made musical instrument can be quite pricy. Common instruments across the Land of Mists include woodwinds like the flute and recorder, stringed instruments such as the harp, lyre, and violin, and drums of all sorts.

Oil: A single flask of lantern oil can keep the lights on for several hours. Some alchemical devices also use this refined oil as fuel.

Quiver: A quiver allows a character to carry up to 20 arrows or bolts as a single item of encumbrance.

Saddle: A character without a saddle suffers a -2 penalty on Riding rolls to control their mount.

Saddlebags: Like a backpack for a horse or mule. Using these heavy leather bags allows a mount to use its encumbrance rating for carrying additional gear.

Survival Kit: This bulky bundle includes a one-person tent, a sleeping bag, a blanket, a fire-starter, a small tarp for water collection, the elements of a small animal trap, and other useful items. A character lacking this basic gear risks exposure when traveling in the wilderness. This item includes a firestarter kit at no additional cost or encumbrance.

Tool Kit: This heavy collection of hammers, screwdrivers, saws, and other necessary tools allows a character to make repairs to gear as well as building simple objects. A character lacking a tool kit suffers a -2 penalty on Repair rolls, and may be simply unable to perform more complex repairs.

Torch: A wooden dowel tipped in pitch, torches are a low-tech method of producing light. A torch sheds smoky, uneven light in a 4" radius for one hour.

Wagon: This large wooden vehicle needs at least two draft horses or mules to pull it. Six people can ride in it (two on the buckboard, four in the bed), but it's not a very smooth ride. A wagon can

instead be used to carry goods and supplies up to eight times the encumbrance rating of the type of animal pulling it.

Writing Set: This small wooden box contains quills, ink stones, fine sand to dry ink, and a small supply of parchment for writing.



Armor

Type	Locations	Armor	Min Str.	Wt.	Cost (sp)
—Cloth—					
Jacket	torso, arms	+1	d4	1	20
Robes	torso, arms, legs	+1	d4	2	40
Leggings	legs	+1	d4	1	20
Cap	head	+1	d4	1	5
—Leather—					
Jacket	torso, arms	+2	d6	1	50
Leggings	legs	+2	d6	1	20
Cap	head	+2	d6	1	10
—Chain—					
Shirt	torso, arms	+3	d8	1	300
Leggings	legs	+3	d8	1	150
Hood	head	+3	d8	1	50
—Plate—					
Corselet	torso	+4	d10	2	500
Vambraces	arms	+4	d10	1	250
Greaves	legs	+4	d10	1	250
Helm	head	+4	d10	1	100

Shields

Shields	Parry	Cover	Min Str.	Wt.	Cost (sp)
Small	+1	—	d6	1	50
Medium	+2	-2	d8	1	100
Large	+2	-4	d10	2	200

Armor and Shield Descriptions

Cloth Armor: This armor is largely made of padded cloth or very light leather. Padded robes or a gambeson would fit this kind of armor, as would exceptionally heavy winter clothing.

Leather Armor: This armor is made from tough leather or thick hides, often treated or boiled to give it greater strength. This can include studded leather armor as well as a heavy leather duster or the like.

Chain Armor: The most common sort of this armor is chainmail—a hauberk (shirt), chausses (leggings), and mail coif

(hood). This armor can also represent splint armor, ring mail, or other light metal armor with a cloth backing.

Plate Armor: This is the heaviest sort of armor generally available, made from overlapping plates of steel or bronze.

Shields: Shields add to a character's Parry, as well as granting a Cover penalty to ranged attacks made against the wielder as long as they are aware of the attack. Small shields include bucklers and targes; medium shields are typically round shields or heater shields; and large shields are representations of kite shields and tower shields.

Melee Weapons

Type	Damage	Min Str.	Wt	Cost (sp)	Notes
—Axes—					
Axe, hand	Str+d6	d6	½	20	Throwing
Axe, battle	Str+d8	d8	1	60	AP 1
Axe, great	Str+d10	d10	2	80	AP 2, Parry -1, two hands
—Blades—					
Bayonet	Str+d6	d6	½	15	See below
Dagger	Str+d4	d4	¼	5	Throwing
Sword, dueling	Str+d4	d4	1	50	+1 Parry
Sword, great	Str+d10	d10	2	50	AP 1, two hands
Sword, long	Str+d8	d8	1	30	—
Sword, short	Str+d6	d6	½	10	—
—Blunt Weapons—					
Brass knuckles	Str+d4	d4	½	20	Wielder is still considered unarmed defender
Club, light	Str+d4	d4	½	10	—
Club, heavy	Str+d6	d6	1	20	—
Maul	Str+d10	d10	2	40	AP 1, two hands, +2 damage vs. Hardness
Staff	Str+d4	d4	1	10	Parry +1, two hands
Warhammer	Str+d8	d8	1	30	AP 1, two hands
—Chain Weapons—					
Flail	Str+d6	d6	1	20	Ignores shield bonuses, Parry -1
Whip	Str+d4	d4	½	10	Ignores shield bonuses, Parry -1, Reach 2
Special: With a raise on the attack roll, the victim is Entangled rather than taking an extra d6 damage.					
—Polearms—					
Halberd	Str+d8	d8	2	25	Reach 1, two hands
Lance	Str+d8	d8	2	30	AP 2, Reach 2, mounted only
Pike	Str+d8	d8	2	40	Parry -1, Reach 2, two hands
Spear	Str+d6	d6	1	10	Parry +1 if used two-handed, Reach 1, Throwing

Ranged Weapons

Type	Range	Damage	AP	ROF	Min Str.	Wt	Cost (sp)	Notes
Axe, hand	3/6/12	Str+d6	—	1	d6	½	10	Throwing
Bow, hunting	12/24/48	2d6	—	1	d6	1	15	—
Bow, long	15/30/60	2d6	1	1	d8	2	30	—
Chakram	4/8/16	Str+d4	—	1	d4	½	60	Parry +1, Throwing
Crossbow, light	10/20/40	2d6	2	1	d6	1	25	Reload 1
Crossbow, heavy	15/30/60	2d8	2	1	d6	2	50	Reload 2
Dagger	3/6/12	Str+d4	—	1	d4	¼	20	Throwing
Sling	4/8/16	Str+d4	—	1	d4	½	10	Throwing
Spear	3/6/12	Str+d6	—	1	d6	1	10	Throwing

Firearms

Type	Range	Damage	AP	ROF	Min Str.	Wt	Cost (sp)	Notes
Blunderbuss	10/20/40	1-3d6	—	1	d6	2	300	Reload 3, two hands
Pistol, flintlock	5/10/20	2d6+1	1	1	d4	1	150	Reload 3
Pistol, revolver	10/20/40	2d6+1	1	1	d4	1	500	Reload 1, shots 6
Musket, flintlock	10/20/40	2d8	1	1	d6	2	300	Reload 3, two hands
Musket, rifled	15/30/60	2d8	2	1	d6	2	500	Reload 3, two hands

Ammunition

Type	Cost (sp)	Wt
Arrows (10)	5	1
Bullets (10)	10	½
Crossbow bolts (10)	5	1
Sling stones (10)	1	¼

Weapon Descriptions

A melee weapon with the *throwing* quality can also be used as a thrown weapon; its statistics as a ranged weapon are listed in the appropriate table.

Throwing attacks use the Athletics skill.

Axes: From the simple hatchet to the monstrously large labrys, axes have been a preferred weapon of woodsmen and “barbarians” since time immemorial. They are useful as tools when not being used to hack apart people. Axes can also represent military picks in combat.

Bayonet: This hiltless dagger comes with a clamp to affix it onto the end of a musket, turning the firearm into a spear. While affixed, a bayonet is a two-handed melee weapon dealing Str+d6 and granting +1 Parry. The attached firearm suffers -1 to Shooting rolls due to the additional weight.

Blades: Dueling swords include rapiers,jian swords, and similar weapons created primarily for one-on-one fights of honor. Short swords represent such weapons as the gladius, cavalry sabers, and the cutlass. Long swords cover arming swords, scimitars, falchions and similar full-sized military swords. Great swords include the bastard sword, broadsword, claymore, flamberge, and any two-handed sword of significant size.

Blunderbuss: This primitive ancestor of the shotgun fires a spread of metal “shot,” dealing more damage at close range. The blunderbuss adds +2 to the user’s Shooting rolls, and it inflicts 3d6 damage at Short Range, 2d6 damage at Medium Range, and 1d6 damage at Long Range. Innocent Bystanders are hit on a roll of 1 or 2 with a failed Shooting roll.

Blunt Weapons: Light clubs can also include cudgels and short staves, while heavy clubs include maces, morning stars, and war clubs.

Chain Weapons: These flexible weapons can render an opponent’s shield useless, but they are quite difficult to wield effectively and are less defensive than rigid weapons.

Musket: These two-handed firearms come in flintlock and rifled variations. The rifling makes a musket more accurate over longer ranges, but makes it significantly more expensive to produce.

Pistol: This one-handed firearm includes true flintlock and matchlock weapons, as well as cap-and-ball weapons. A revolver holds 6 shots, each of which takes 1 action to reload.

Polearms: The vast array of polearms has been largely compressed into the halberd, which here can also represent such weapons as the glaive, guisarme, voulge, and bardiche.



Alchemical Items

Neither wholly magical nor wholly mundane, many places in the Land of Mists accept alchemy as mortal science where they would reject sorcery as blasphemous or dangerous. A few places fear alchemy just as much as they do magic, but some have embraced the “new science” as a means of academic and spiritual enlightenment.

Unless otherwise noted, an alchemical item has a weight of ¼.

Alchemical Weapons: Some alchemy items can be used as thrown weapons. Such items have a Range of 3/6/12 and use Athletics (throwing) for the attack roll. A failed attack causes the item to deviate as a grenade (*SWADE* 97).



Alchemical Items

Item	Cost (sp)
Acid vial	50
Alchemist fire	50
Aqueous solvent	250
Antidote	100
Binding paste	50
Black powder bomb	50
Courage elixir	20
Flash bomb	25
Glow rod	50
Healing salve	10
Incandescent dust	50
Infernal wind	250
Inflammable oil	10
Itching dust	10
Poison, disabling ^(FC)	100
Poison, knockout	250
Poison, lethal	500
Poison, mild	100
Poison, paralyzing	250
Revivifying draught	200
Sleeping powder	200
Smoke bomb	25
Soothing powder	25
Sulfur match (20)	10
Touchstone	50
Unquenchable flame	100

Alchemical Item Descriptions

Acid Vial: This weak acid inflicts 2d4 points of damage. Unless the acid is somehow washed off, the target takes another 2d4 points of damage at the start of their next turn. The acid can corrode tiny metal or wooden objects in about fifteen minutes.

Alchemist Fire: This fragile jar of liquid explodes when its contents come into contact with air. Thrown as a grenade, it ignites on impact and inflicts 2d4 damage as a Heavy Weapon. The target risks catching fire (*SWADE* 127). Creatures

within a Small Blast Template of the primary target takes 2d4 damage, but do not risk catching fire.

Antidote: Consuming this foul-tasting liquid gives the drinker an immediate new Vigor roll to overcome the effects of an ongoing poison. An antidote can be “tuned” to a specific type of poison when created; this makes the Vigor roll succeed automatically, but means that the antidote has no effect on other types of poison at all.

Aqueous Solvent: This small vial of extremely powerful acid has too little volume to be effective as a weapon, but when carefully applied it can melt its way through up to a fist-sized mass of metal or wood in under a minute.

Binding Paste: A vial containing two different compounds is mixed together and applied to two different objects which are pressed together by the user. The paste hardens in one round, forming a rock-hard bond between the objects that lasts for an hour before crumbling away. The paste does not set if the objects are moving or flexing when it is applied.

Black Powder Bomb: This small metal sphere is filled with a powerful explosive and turns into a cloud of shrapnel when that explosive detonates. The bomb’s fuse must be lit as an action; if the bomb is not thrown by the end of the round, it explodes in the wielder’s hand. A black powder bomb deals 2d6 damage as a Heavy Weapon in a Medium Blast Template and may be Evaded. These heavy bombs have a weight of ½ rather than ¼.

Blinding Dust: When thrown into a target’s face (a Called Shot at -2), the target is blinded. At the beginning of each turn, the target can make a Vigor roll to overcome the effect. If they spend an action washing their eyes out, they gain a +2 bonus on the next Vigor roll to overcome it.

Courage Elixir: A powerful analgesic, this vial grants the drinker the Brave Edge for one hour. Additionally, they ignore 1 point of Wound penalties for this duration.

Flash Bomb: When thrown and struck against a hard surface, this pellet explodes with a blinding flash of light and a thunderous noise. Anyone within a Medium Blast Template must make a Vigor roll or be Distracted and Vulnerable.

Glowrod: This gold-tipped iron rod produces bright light when the tip is struck against a hard surface. It sheds bright light out to a range of 5” (30 feet), and dim light for an additional 5” (30 feet). The light lasts for one hour and produces no heat or smoke.

Healing Salve: This thick salve takes a full minute to apply. If it is applied within an hour of being wounded, the target gains an immediate natural healing roll. A character that has more than one healing salve applied in a day receives no effect from additional applications.

Incandescent Dust: A powder which must be thrown into a flame of at least torch-size. It burns with blinding brilliance for 1d6 rounds, illuminating everything within 50 feet. Unwary creatures within a Large Burst Template centered on the fire source must attempt a Vigor roll or become Distracted and Vulnerable.

Infernal Wind: This jar of oil can be thrown as a grenade with a Small Blast Template. If there is an open flame within this area, the oil ignites into a choking cloud of black smoke. All creatures within a Large Blast Template centered on the impact are Distracted and Vulnerable, and the cloud reduces Illumination in that area to Dark. The smoke persists for 1d6 rounds, or until the end of the following round in high winds.

Inflammable Oil: A vial can be applied to cover an object no bigger than a large wooden door. It hardens within minutes into a clear varnish-like layer that will immediately ignite if struck vigorously. Flammable objects will be lit on fire; non-flammable ones will burn for one round.

Itching Dust: This powder can be applied to clothing or armor ahead of time, or be thrown onto a foe within 10 feet with a successful Athletics (throwing) attack. The victim suffers excruciatingly distracting itching for 1 minute, leaving them Distracted until they spend an entire round washing off the powder.

Poison: The poisons listed here are all ingested. Double the listed cost for contact or injury poisons, and triple it for inhaled poisons. (See **Poison**, *SWADE* 128-129 for details on how poisons work.)

Revivifying Draught: Someone drinking this potion can fight, march, or otherwise exert themselves freely for the next twenty-four hours without need for rest. Indeed, they physically cannot sleep during this time. The character does not suffer Fatigue from lack of sleep, and they ignore 2 points of Fatigue penalties from any other source. Taking a second



draught of this type within the space of a week requires a **Vigor** roll; on a failure, the character is immediately Incapacitated and Bleeding Out from a massive heart attack.

Sleeping Powders: When consumed, this tasteless chemical provokes immediate and intense sleepiness in the subject. The target must attempt a **Vigor** roll or fall asleep after 1d10 rounds.

Smoke Bomb: This vial bursts into a huge cloud of thick smoke when thrown. The smoke turns the area in a **Medium Burst Template** into **Dark Illumination**. The cloud dissipates at the end of the round following the one it's used in, or the end of the current round in high winds.

Soothing Powder: One of a variety of narcotic drugs. When consumed, the subject falls into a helpless but very happy stupor for 1d6 hours. A creature that is threatened may defend itself, but is considered **Distracted** and **Vulnerable** for the duration.

Sulfur Match: These small wooden sticks alight with flame when struck against a hard surface. They allow a character to start a fire as a single action

with no check, rather than having to build a fire from scratch. A box of 20 sulfur matches counts as a single item.

Touchstone: Not so much a stone as a prepared alchemical kit. When applied to a substance, it can detect poisons and identify true or false precious metals or gemstones. The user gains a +4 on **Science** rolls to identify the substance examined.

Unquenchable Flame: This fist-sized mass is covered with a protective film of non-reactive substance. If the film is scratched, such as by impact, the mass will immediately ignite, beginning to burn with a ferocious heat and toxic fumes. Anyone touching it while it burns suffers 2d6 damage (**Heavy Weapon**) and catches fire. The smoke makes anyone within a **Small Burst Template** **Distracted** and **Vulnerable**. The mass can burn almost anything, including stone, water, and metal, and will generally burn a three-foot-deep hole under it by the time it consumes itself. The mass burns for 1d6+4 rounds. Unquenchable flame has a weight of ½ rather than ¼.



Chapter 4:

Magic of the Dread Realms

Magic is a reality in the misty lands of Ravenloft, though it tends toward the subtle and mysterious rather than the loud and obvious. While most people believe in magic to one degree or another, most of them have never seen it in action, leaving it in the realm of legend and rumor—something to be feared and avoided whenever possible.

Some domains take this a step further, regarding all magic as unholy or evil, persecuting its practitioners with steel and flame. A few domains have begun to formalize magic study instead, regarding it as just another science to be mastered.

The truth is that magic is a chaotic force, difficult to learn and more difficult to master. Even those who spend their lives studying magic can find it turning on them suddenly—to their doom, in some cases. Powerful mages can kill with a gesture or heal with a touch, but a single syllable spoken wrong can leave their nerves burning and their flesh crawling in pain.

Some laymen speak of “arcane” and “divine” magic, but scholars of the mystical know that there is only one force that all spellcasters tap into for their powers. While some approach that force with discipline and learning, others do so with humility, supplication, or raw intuition. There are as many ways to use magic as there are people to use it, though some broad traditions apply.

In the power lists below, powers marked with an asterisk (*) are new in this book, while powers marked with a dagger (†) must take the Limitation

(Range: Self only) for no Power Point reduction.

Magic

The power referred to as “magic” (as in the Arcane Background) is more commonly known as “sorcery”—the utilization of chaotic arcane energies to work the caster’s will upon the physical world. Whether called sorcerers, wizards, witches, or warlocks, their power stems from a similar place of knowledge, discipline, and willpower.

In most domains, the traditional method of learning sorcery is from master to apprentice; a particularly gifted master might keep more than one apprentice at a time if likely candidates can be found, but this is rare. This system passes on learning from an older, more experienced spellcaster to a younger one, a child or teenager who will be steeped in the craft as he grows.

A few domains have begun to create schools of academic magic, places where like-minded arcanists can gather to debate the points of their craft and refine it for future generations. A few places also have enough magical practitioners for the formation of covens, hermitages, or other non-scholarly gatherings of spellcasters. These societies often have rules of their own that are as restricting as any found in the halls of academia.

Trappings: Magic Trappings tend to focus on elemental forces (such as fire, lightning, cold, and so on), or on the raw and chaotic power of sorcery itself as

manifested through pure force, arcane entities, and the like.

Requirements: Magic-users have more intense requirements to cast than most other arcanists. They cannot be **Bound**, and they must be able to speak clearly; a silenced or gagged mage cannot cast spells.

Additionally, a magic-user must have access to *material components* in order to effectively use their powers. These are small, mundane items that are consumed in the casting of a spell, such as a pinch of bat guano to summon fire or a sliver of amber to conjure lightning. Such items are assumed to be at hand—usually in a pocket, bag, or convenient pouch. If the caster is ever stripped of their possessions and can't get the materials they need, they reduce all arcane skill rolls by 4 until they're restored (5 gp × the caster's Rank at a shop or a day's worth of gathering or foraging in an appropriate environment with a Survival roll per Rank). A caster also runs out of material components if they roll a Critical Failure and may replenish as above.

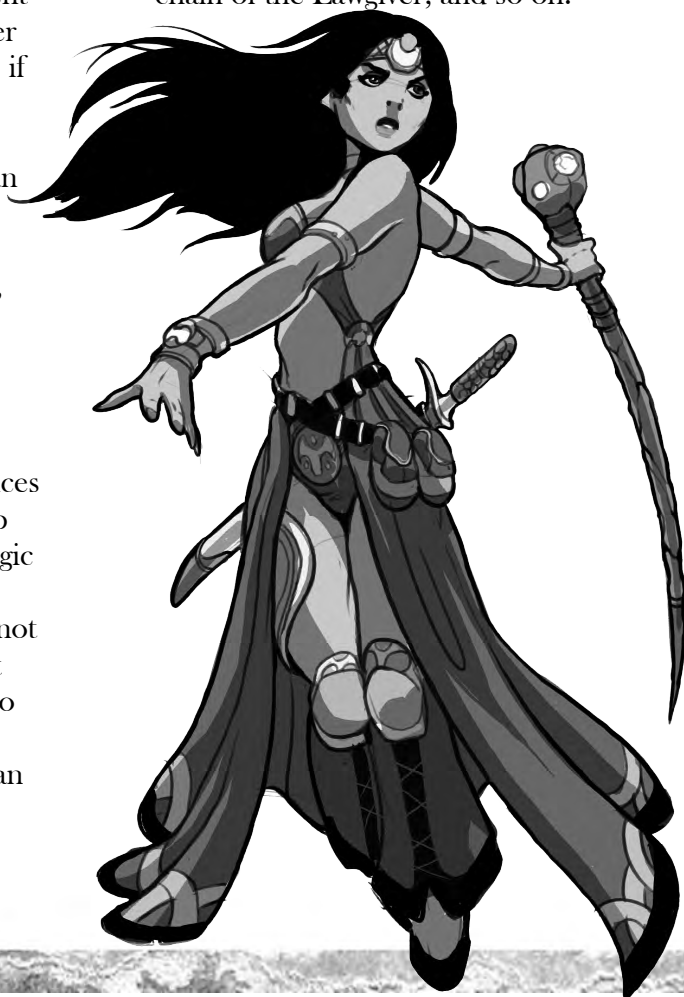
Available Powers: A magic-user is an incredibly versatile caster. They have access to all powers except for the following—*blessing*, *empathy*, *healing*, *mind reading*, *mystic intervention*, *resurrection*, and *sanctuary*.

Miracles

Paradoxically, the group that produces the most magic-users is also the group that condemns other traditions of magic most often: so-called “clerics.” While most priests of any given religion cannot use magic, the special techniques that allow the clergy to open their minds to the “still, small voice” of their god produces a fairly large number that can perform at least basic “miracles.”

Temples don't like to admit that a priest who forsakes their faith often keeps their powers, instead warning of all manner of dire consequences for those that abuse their “god given” gifts. Wizards sneer that mystical clerics are just another kind of sorcerer, and a delusional kind at that; their bitterness might be justified, given how many faiths of the Land of Mists regard “witches” as unholy.

Trappings: The powers of a miracle-user always seem otherworldly in some fashion, whether divine or profane. They typically involve directly invoking the user's chosen divinity, or one of that divinity's servants—for example, Ezrans will sometimes invoke miracles in the names of their martyrs and saints rather than Ezra herself. Casting a miracle also usually involves brandishing a symbol of the faith—an Ezran's sword-and-shield amulet, the serpent ring of Hala, the iron chain of the Lawgiver, and so on.



Requirements: Miracle-workers need a symbol of their faith to cast their powers; without such a focus item, they suffer a -2 penalty on Faith rolls and are Stunned if the casting roll is a Critical Failure. They also cannot use their powers while **Bound**, and they must be able to speak clearly to utter their prayers; a silenced or muted miracle-worker cannot cast at all.

Available Powers: A miracle-user's powers are based on their deity's Domain (FC 114-115). Some of the typical Domains for the faiths of the Land of Mists include Mists (Ezra), Nature (Hala), Sun (the Dawnbringer), and War (the Lawgiver).

The Mists Domain

Ezra is the goddess of the Mists. Supposedly a mortal woman who ascended to godhood, she is worshiped in several lands. Each sect of her faith focuses on a different aspect of the goddess, sometimes worshiping her as a healer (the Life Domain), a judge of humanity (the Justice Domain) or a goddess of mysteries and enigmas (the Knowledge Domain). Those who focus on her aspect as goddess of the Mists and guardian of humanity sometimes take the Mists Domain.

Powers: *arcane protection, banish, barrier, blessing^(FC), blind, boost/lower Trait, confusion, consecrate ground^(FC), deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, divination, healing, illusion, intangibility, invisibility, light/darkness, mystic intervention^(FC), object reading, protection, relief, resurrection, sanctuary^(FC), scrying^(FC), slumber, smite, stun, summon ally, teleport.*

Weird Science

So-called “weird science” is a method of using machines and enlightened chemistry to harness and guide magic in ways that the human body and mind cannot. This ability is related to—but also separate from—the pseudo-science known as alchemy.

Arcane inventors craft bizarre machines to channel the mystic forces of the universe, producing wonders and horrors. While this still stems from the same font of power that wizards draw upon, the methodology is even more scientific and rigid than the most scholarly sorcerer.

These methods make weird scientists very limited in their understanding in some ways, but their machines offer many benefits. Primarily, it is far less likely that a misspoken word or mistaken gesture will end with the inventor catching on fire.

Unsurprisingly, the general approach and attitude of those who pursue this art has caused them to be labeled “mad scientists” by the general populace. While many of them do indeed have mental illnesses—generally obsessive tendencies and the like—it is the unpleasant behavior of a small number of practitioners that gives the profession as a whole a bad name.

Trappings: Weird Science powers are always external to the caster in some fashion. They can be “steampunk” gadgets, alchemical concoctions, Victorian-era pseudo-science, or arcane engineering, but they tend to have a more scientific bent than pure magic. Obviously, a Weird Scientist cannot use their powers without the device that the power works through, and they often give these inventions grandiose or descriptive names.

Requirements: A weird scientist must have their associated gadget at hand to cast (*SWADE* 148) and cannot utilize their inventions while **Bound**. They do not otherwise need to speak or gesture to use their powers.

Available Powers: Any except *blessing, consecrate ground, curse, mystic intervention, resurrection, summon animal, summon demon, summon monster, summon undead, and wish.*

Psionics

Perhaps the greatest arcane mystery of Ravenloft is psychic power. While magic-users generally claim that psychics are just a sort of inward-looking wizard, they seem to actually draw on a different kind of power than traditional spellcasters. The “psionic” energy used by psychics comes from within, a reflection of their inner strength, rather than from the unformed chaos of magic.

Many psychics speak of a realm they call “the Nightmare Lands,” a shared dream-world where horrifying beings with immense mental powers constantly search for other beings with similar abilities. Those psychics who go looking for the truth about the Nightmare Lands often disappear, never to be seen again.

Trappings: Psychic abilities tend to be subtler than magic or miracles at casting, with the caster making only the slightest gestures or murmuring mantras to focus their mind. Their results can be just as loud as any spell, though. Some powers manifest with a faint glow or gentle buzzing noise, while others cause a kaleidoscope of visible force and psionic echoes.

Requirements: A psychic is far freer with the casting of their powers than most other casters. They do not need to speak or gesture to manifest their abilities (as per the Silent Caster Edge, *FC* 37), and

they can cast even while **Bound** (though they still suffer the usual penalties for being **Distracted**).

In exchange, most of a psychic’s powers are very limited in scope. Any power marked with a dagger (†) has the Limitation (Range: Self only) for no Power Point cost reduction.

Additionally, all psychics tend to be “off” in a way that others find hard to define. They must take a Minor Hindrance reflecting this difference, such as Delusion, Mania^(RR), Outsider, or Quirk, for no additional character creation points.

Available Powers: *Barrier, beast friend, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower Trait, burst, clairvoyance, confusion, damage field, darksight, deflection, detect/conceal arcanæ, disguise, dispel, divination, elemental manipulation, empathy, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fear, fly, havoc, healing, illusion, intangibility, invisibility, mind link, mind reading, mind wipe, object reading, protection, puppet, relief, slumber, smite, sound/silence, speak language, stun, telekinesis, teleport, wall walker, warrior’s gift.*

The Gifted

The rarest mystical abilities in the Dread Realms are the powers developed by certain ascetics, blessed madmen, and magical mutants. Collectively known as “the gifted,” these individuals are not so much a magical tradition as they are an umbrella term used to describe the manifestation of unique and unexplained powers.

The most common of the gifted—though still exceedingly rare—come from monastic traditions that emphasize the individual’s spiritual connection with the universe as a whole. Such mystic monks can defy the laws of nature, allowing them to deflect arrows with their bare hands,

punch through steel doors, leap to the tops of houses, heal their own wounds through concentration, and other unusual capabilities that require no arcane words or gestures—only their focus and willpower.

Trappings: There are no standard or universal Trappings for the Gifted. Some of their powers strongly resemble those of magic-users or psychics, while others are stranger than even sorcery.

Requirements: The Gifted do not need to speak or gesture to use their powers. They can cast even while **Bound** (though they still suffer the usual penalties for being **Distracted**). Because of this, their powers tend to be quite limited in scope.

Available Powers: Any except *blessing*, *consecrate ground*, *resurrection*, or *zombie*. Any beneficial power *must* have the Limitation (Range: Self only) for no Power Point cost reduction. Additionally, any generic Power Modifiers or Limitations must be chosen and added to known powers at the time of their selection, altering the Power Point cost accordingly. After selection, only a power's specific listed Power Modifiers may be applied to the casting.



The Limits of Power

Ravenloft is a world where mystical powers are dangerous and often chaotic in nature. Psychics have uncontrollable flashes of precognition, mages sometimes crackle with eldritch sparks even when not using their spells, and even priests occasionally fall into fits of glossolalia or religious awe.

Because of this, most forms of supernatural power are feared and hated in many places throughout the Land of Mists. Magic in particular is a favored bogeyman for superstitious peasants looking for rhyme or reason from their misfortunes. A few nations regard people with unusual powers as gifted or simply different, but those with prejudice and hatred toward such individuals are far more common.

Given the closeness of the Land of Mists to the powers of death and darkness, certain powers are modified in the *Ravenloft Reincarnated* setting.

Domain Borders: No power created by a mortal can cross a domain border, whether open or closed. The edges of a domain are effectively the edge of the world as far as magic is concerned. Similarly, no power can divine things within the Misty Border or across the Mists between clusters and islands. A localized formation of the Mists can also cloud the readings of divination magic, making it more difficult to use such powers or giving vague answers (GM's discretion).

Notes on Specific Powers

Powers noted (FC) are from the *Fantasy Companion*, while those noted (HC) are from the *Horror Companion*.

Aspect of the Rada Loa (HC): This power is not available in the *Ravenloft Reincarnated* setting.

Banish: A creature banished by this power is cast out into the Mists, rather than sent back to its home plane.

Beast Friend: A Darklord with the ability to control animals automatically overcomes a use of this power when using their own abilities, but they are aware of the power's use and may choose to permit the caster to believe that their spell worked.

Blessing (FC): Casting this power in a sinkhole of evil reduces its rating by 1 for the duration of the power. Any creature bound to the Sinkhole is aware of the casting and may wind up coming to interrupt it before the caster can complete it.

Consecrate Ground (HC): Casting this power with the Sanctify Modifier in a sinkhole of evil reduces its rating by 1 for the duration of the power. Any creature bound to the Sinkhole is aware of the casting and may wind up coming to interrupt it before the caster can complete it.

Curse (FC/HC): Casting this power is always grounds for a Dark Powers check.

Detect/Conceal Arcana: The Alignment Sense Modifier is not available.

Entangle: This power is affected by the general rules updates from the *Fantasy Companion* and *Horror Companion*.

Exorcism (HC): This power's effects are covered by the use of the *banish* power.

Fear: The penalties inflicted by a sinkhole of evil to resist Fear Checks also apply to resisting this power. Tapping into the power of terror is often grounds for a Dark Powers check, at the GM's discretion.

Fury of the Petro Loa (HC): This power is not available in the *Ravenloft Reincarnated* setting.



Illusionary Horrors (HC): Casting this despicable power is grounds for a Dark Powers check.

Mind Reading: Undead creatures have greater control over their own minds than do the living. If an intelligent undead creature gains a raise on its Smarts roll to resist *mind reading* (or a similar power), it is not only aware of the mental intrusion but can feed the caster whatever information it desires, allowing the caster to believe their power was successful.

Mind Control: Stealing another person's bodily autonomy is a morally iffy proposition at the best of times. If the caster uses their control to force the victim to do something loathsome enough that it would incur a Dark Powers check, the caster suffers the check instead, with an additional -1 penalty. Using mind manipulation powers for selfish reasons almost always invokes a Dark Powers check.

Nightmares (HC): Casting this despicable power is grounds for a Dark Powers check.

Planar Binding (FC): Calling an extraplanar entity to the Realm of Terror traps them permanently, so they tend to be quite hostile to the caster of this power.

Plane Shift (FC): This power is not available in the *Ravenloft Reincarnated* setting.

Resurrection: When the *resurrection* power attempts to draw back the curtain of death, something other than the person can come back in their stead. A Critical Failure on the casting roll causes the body to rise again—but as some sort of undead monstrosity, demon-possessed corpse, or the like. A failure on the casting roll prevents that person from ever being brought back from the dead.

Summon Ally: The allies summoned by this power are constructs of magic, not actual entities.

Summon Animal (FC): Only animals native to the current domain may be summoned with this power.

Summon Demon (HC): Calling an extraplanar entity to the Realm of Terror traps them permanently, so they tend to be quite hostile to the caster of this power.

Summon Monster (FC): Only creatures native to the current domain may be summoned with this power. Any intelligent creature summoned by this power remains present after the Duration ends and may act as it will from that point on.

Summon Undead (FC): Any intelligent creature summoned by this power remains present after the Duration ends and may act as it will from that point on.

Suppress Transformation (HC): Denying the power of lycanthropy is not so easily achieved in the Land of Mists. This power is not available in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*.

Zombie: It cannot be denied that using supernatural abilities draws the attention of the “Dark Powers” more often than merely mundane evil, but few powers are inherently wicked or unholy. The major exception is the *zombie* power—those who truck with the undead are *always* corrupt in some fashion, and using that power always risks the attention of the Dark Powers.

New Power Modifiers

Puppet

- **Mind Rider (+1):** The caster can see and hear through the senses of any target under the effects of *puppet*, as well as communicating with them telepathically at any distance as long as the power is maintained.

Smite

- **Farslayer (+1):** Ammunition only. Attacks made with the enchanted ammunition double each Range increment of the weapon (so Range 12/24/48 would become Range 24/48/96, for example).
- **Seeker (+1):** Ammunition only. Attacks made with the enchanted ammunition ignore up to 2 points of penalties from Scale, Cover, the *deflection* power, or Edges like Dodge.

Teleport

- **Decoy (+1):** As the recipient teleports away, an illusionary clone is left behind. It mimics what the recipient was doing and disappears at the end of the caster’s next turn. Like *illusion*, anyone who interacts with the clone or doubts it is real must succeed at a Smarts roll to no longer be subject to the illusion.





Chapter 5:

Secrets of the Dread Realms

The secrets contained within this chapter are for the Game Master only, so anyone wishing to preserve the horror and mystery of the world of *Ravenloft* should turn back now. Some things cannot be unlearned once they are learned, so proceed with caution.

The Ways of the World

Ravenloft's inhabitants often call their world the "Land of Mists," and for good reason: Ravenloft has an unknown size and shape. Although Ravenloft's breadth cannot be measured, it forms a relatively small world—what some might call intimate, others claustrophobic. As new domains appear or old ones fade into the Mists, the Realm of Dread expands and contracts, like the chest of a sleeping beast.

No one truly knows how many domains lie within the Mists; theoretically, the total is limitless. More than one hundred domains have been recorded by geographers and explorers, but the number of existing domains frequently fluctuates. A domain may be as small as a forlorn house or as large as a country with tens of thousands of inhabitants. Some domains have vanished entirely—often amid rumors of their destruction—only to emerge from the Mists unscathed years later.

The Mists can also reshape the geography within domains. This may occur slowly and subtly, as with the "Mist-

led" phenomenon or the gradual revelation of the Nocturnal Sea, but unusual events can also trigger sudden and startling changes, such as those that occurred in the Scourge of Arak or the Grand Conjunction.

Lacking outside references, Ravenloft's folk see nothing unusual about the Misty Border or other eerie features of their little world. In many ways, the Land of Mists behaves just like the true worlds of the Material Plane: the sun and moon turn in regular cycles, just as the years cycle through expected seasons. The domains of a given cluster all typically share the same sky and general climate.

Domains of Dread

A *domain* is the basic unit of metaphysical geography in the world of Ravenloft. Unbeknownst to most of the world's inhabitants, each domain is a mystical prison cell for a single being (or a small group of related beings, in rare cases). This being is the domain's *darklord*, a monstrous and tragic figure who damned themselves through their selfish and cruel actions. Unable to turn from the path of corruption and evil, the darklord instead descended into depths of depravity open to only a few, coming out as something more—and less—than human.

Domains are the prisons of the darklords, but they are also their playgrounds. A darklord possesses incredible powers within their own land but is physically unable to leave its boundaries. Additionally, the domain

seems almost intentionally designed to taunt, mock, and thwart the darklord, offering them their greatest desires but leaving those desires perpetually out of reach.

A domain might or might not share political borders. It might be a recognized nation with a political system, or it could be a desolate wasteland known to its neighbors only by reputation. It could be a sizable portion of an existing country, or little more than a crumbling house and its attendant grounds. The darklord might openly rule the nation, be the power behind the throne, or be the metaphysical master of the domain while possessing no outward fame at all. There are few absolutes when it comes to a domain's nature.

Domains generally come in two broad forms: *clusters* and *islands*. A cluster is a group of thematically similar domains that share physical borders and political or cultural entanglements. The Core from previous editions of the setting is the largest known cluster, a whole continent of major and minor nations, all held together through mutual history, trade, and acknowledgement.

An island is an isolated domain, either physically an island in one of the great seas beyond the Core or a metaphysical island caught in the Mists, separated from everything else. Such truly isolated domains sometimes have reliable paths that lead to other domains, known as Mistways, while others can only be found by happenstance and misfortune.

Sinkholes of Evil

Ravenloft is a land shaped by passion and fear. Emotions linger, forming ethereal resonance. If these emotions are powerful enough, they can seep into the

subconscious minds of creatures on the material plane. Dark deeds leave their stain on the very land, and the cruelest of beings—the darklords—can create them simply by their very presence.

All resonance is imbued with one or more focal emotions. A secluded grove used for a lovers' tryst may retain echoes of their desire; a torture chamber may retain the fear and hatred its victims felt for their captors. When acts of evil spawn resonance, such as a torture chamber or the lair of a serial killer, the imbued evil causes the area to become spiritually unclean. In these "sinkholes of evil," the spiritual malevolence quietly weakens resolve and bolsters evil, making it easier to give into fear and terror while strengthening creatures that feed on it.

Some corrupt beings without the ego to forge domains of their own instead generate sinkholes of evil, isolated pockets of darkness that serve as "mini-domains" in which their will distorts reality. A sinkhole of evil must be a place of true darkness; a mere bandit's lair does not possess enough evil resonance to count, but the home of a serial murderer who tortured their victims veritably seeps with their psychic screams.

A sinkhole of evil's rating acts as a penalty to Fear checks made in the area, and it adds to the result of rolls on the Fright Table. Additionally, supernaturally evil beings gain a bonus on rolls made to resist their specific weaknesses while within the area of a sinkhole. For example, a vampire exposed to a holy symbol would gain the sinkhole's rating on their Spirit roll to avoid being repulsed, while a werewolf who was wounded with silver would gain it on a bonus to Soak rolls (if they made a roll to Soak).

Sinkholes of evil are rated 0 (normal location) through 5 (phantasmagoria).



Sinkhole Rating 0 (Normal)

This is a normal place, the default for an area that has seen no particular atrocities or terrors. The natives are friendly, the sky is blue, and you can walk the streets at night. Even Level 0 areas can be dangerous, but they aren't *malevolent* like regions of genuine ethereal corruption.

As an unfortunate side effect of all this peace, though, most people in such areas (which comprise most of the world) either don't believe that monsters exist or don't believe that they could come here.

Sinkhole Rating 1 (Eerie)

In such places, some folks believe monsters exist even if they haven't seen any. The sky is still blue, but if you have to go out at night, bring a friend along—just in case.

Most large cities have buildings, neighborhoods, or entire districts that are at this rating, just due to the influx of terror brought on by urban life.

Sinkhole Rating 2 (Tainted)

No one goes near the creepy old house on top of the hill. The land looks about the same, but the shadows are just a little bit longer. It's not really safe to go out alone at night, but it's not a death sentence, either. When people disappear—and they do—it's usually not anyone important or prominent.

This is as bad as most places get, barring the intervention of a truly horrific event. Most people who live in the area's influence not only believe in monsters, they take precautions—mostly ineffective—against them.

Sinkhole Rating 3 (Forsaken)

Things are starting to get truly weird, even by the standards of the Land of Mists. There are occasional

disappearances, and probably more than a few weird creatures live close by (though folks don't really talk about it out of fear). Don't go out at night without a weapon or a friend.

Level 3 sinkholes are only produced by chilling events of terror and despair, such as a gruesome torture or the lair of a mortal fiend, like a serial killer. People don't live in places like this unless they have no other choice.

Sinkhole Rating 4 (Abhorrent)

There are mysterious disappearances as a regular occurrence, and when the bodies are found, it's piece by piece. The land itself starts to change: the shadows on the cliffs start to look like leering faces, or cornrows always seem to rustle as if something's hiding within. The winds might whisper your name. Going out alone at night is an act of fools or the suicidal—and even the daytime is unsafe. Even well-armed folk fear the dark.

Genuine abominations create sinkholes this terrible, such as the lair of an ancient vampire or the site of a mass murder.

Sinkhole Rating 5 (Phantasmagoria)

This is as bad as it gets: a full-blown nightmare landscape. Monsters run rampant, rocks look like skulls, and not only do the winds whisper your name, they do so in your dead friends' voices. Anyone out at night is most likely doomed. Those abroad by daylight probably aren't much safer.

Some phantasmagoria are subtler—but just as deadly—and even these are likely to have horrible legends surrounding them. Only the most horrific and deadly locales have this dubious honor, and they are names that echo with dread—names like Castle Ravenloft or the House on Gryphon Hill.

The Mists of Ravenloft

Ravenloft is a world unlike many that players may be familiar with. Rather than being a single contiguous world, where land and sea give way to other lands and other seas, the Realm of Terror is actually many small self-contained regions physically and metaphysically separated from one another by the Mists. No one is exactly sure what the Mists are, but they are not common fog. They ebb and flow independent of the wind and weather, and they often seem vaguely alive—even aware.

The Mists surround and contain every Cluster and Island, frequently flowing into those regions at unpredictable times. The Mists seem to bolster the powers of fear and terror, draining men of their courage and giving new strength to the evils that plague mankind. They lead travelers astray, turning even familiar landmarks into strange vistas. Worse, they seem to bend space (and time?) in unusual ways, making it possible for a trip that should take days to take only hours, or for a simple jaunt to the next town to end up with the traveler lost in a new land.

Those that must travel outside their homeland prefer to stick to the *Mistways*, paths through the Mists that are known to be at least somewhat reliable. While some Mistways conform to known roads and rivers, others defy the laws of distance utterly. A random fog-filled cave on a mountainside could admit a traveler in one land, only to spit them out again on a completely different mountain a world away. The Mistways have only their own internal logic, which usually stymies attempts to understand it. Wanderers and wayfarers therefore must be people of stern will or else be utterly mad.

The difficulty involved in traveling the Mistways tends to keep trade and politics local. Nations trade with neighbors they share a physical border with, and only the most ambitious promote cross-Cluster trade. Some Mistways are reliable enough that such trade has gradually become more common, but even this trade tends to be limited in scope. A silversmith from Borca might export their wares to Barovia in exchange for wool or brandy, and the Barovians in turn might trade that silver to Nova Vaasans who come to their country with horses and gold, but the Borcans and Nova Vaasans would never interact directly. Anything further away than one's home country is distant; anything outside one's home Cluster is distinctly exotic or foreign.

Mist Influence

The influence of the Mists is a major setting issue in Ravenloft. When the Mists roll in, terror reigns. Mechanically, the influence of the Mists increases a region's sinkhole of evil rating by +1. This means that even normal places become frightening under the influence of the Mists, while already-fearsome places become downright terrifying. Generally, this bonus cannot increase an area's sinkhole rating to more than 4; a Phantasmagoria only exists when the region has become so drenched in evil that it cannot be redeemed—except possibly by cleansing fire.

The Mists are also thicker and more cloying than natural fog. Being caught in the Mists imposes a -2 penalty on Notice rolls, Survival rolls made to track, and ranged attack rolls. This penalty stacks with the penalty for Dim or Dark lighting but imposes no further penalty in Pitch Black conditions.

Domain Borders

The Mists are often present at the borders of domains, gradually fuzzing the edges of reality until a traveler realizes that they have walked off the map entirely. A person who leaves a domain with no clear idea of where they are going just walks out into impenetrable fog, wandering until fortune fetches them up in another land. Even if the traveler decides to turn around and walk straight back to where they came from, they find themselves lost; they might have walked for a minute or a day, but just going back the other way helps them not at all.

A traveler who walks a known Mistway or has a strong idea of where they are going can be wandering the Mists for hours, days, or weeks before they reach their destination. The first indication they have that they are leaving the Mists is a slight lessening of their thickness, followed by a sudden dissipation. In the wake of that dissipation—like a strong wind with no movement of air—they find themselves *somewhere else*. They might be on the very edge of the domain they entered, or they might be many miles into it. No one ever sees such travelers arriving; they simply seem to wander into an observer's field of view from around a corner, or behind a rock, or to arrive in a bank of fog.

A darklord's powers often allow them to "close" the borders of their domain, drawing forth the Mists to make it impossible to enter or leave. Such closings are generally temporary; even if the darklord were willing to close their borders permanently, few have the willpower necessary to keep their domain borders closed for more than a few hours or a few days.

Such closings are generally thought to be the natural tide of the Mists, surging suddenly to make travel impossible, while

others are obviously unnatural phenomena. Darklords who seek obscurity avoid using this power unless absolutely necessary. Those that hold power openly sometimes admit that the phenomenon is under their control—one more power they possess by the “divine right of kings,” or some other such nonsense.

Mist Navigation

Traveling the Mists is a dangerous proposition, even for experienced travelers. Only the brave or the foolhardy attempt it on a regular basis. The Mists seem to have a vague consciousness of their own, one that seeks to test, taunt, or terrify travelers, leading them astray if their minds wander or their nerve breaks.

Mechanically, navigating the Mists requires a Survival roll. A successful roll lets the traveler and their group reach their destination in more or less the amount of time they were expecting, while a raise gets them there in half that time. A failure uses up the default amount of travel time, followed by a new roll. A critical failure puts them someplace they didn’t expect to go—and probably someplace dangerous.

The character leading the group through the Mists must have a clear idea of where they want to go. They must have either been to the destination before, be traveling on a Mistway that is known to go to that destination, or have an extremely accurate description of the destination from someone who has been there before. If it turns out that a description is inaccurate or an outright lie, a successful roll leads to someplace similar while a failed roll counts as a critical failure.

The Sea of Sorrows presents a unique opportunity for travelers. While it represents a dangerous medium of transportation, it can reach many

domains that are not able to be reached by land routes. The Sea of Sorrows is a unique Cluster in that its physical borders touch on the physical borders of other Clusters; a sailor can leave the Civilized Crescent by ship, sail across the Sea of Sorrows, and arrive at the shores of the Verdurous Lands with only the thick ocean fog to indicate that they have crossed domain borders.

Navigation Modifiers

Modifier	Circumstance
+4	Traveler is using a reliable Mistway
+2	Traveler is using an unreliable Mistway
+0	Domains are connected by the Sea of Sorrows
-2	Domains share a Mistway but traveler not using it
-4	Domains do not share a Mistway
-6	Traveler is acting on description only

Travel Times

Distance	Time
Traveling a reliable Mistway	1d6 days
Traveling an unreliable Mistway	2d6 days
Traveling on the Sea of Sorrows	3d6 days
Traveling the Mists without a Mistway	4d6 days



Encounters in Ravenloft

Traveling is dangerous in Ravenloft. For every day of traveling within a domain, draw a card from an action deck; if the card is a Face card (Jack, King, Queen, or Ace), an encounter occurs; if a Joker is drawn, a major encounter occurs. Shuffle the deck and draw a new card to determine the encounter—or draw two cards for a major encounter and combine their effects.

Clubs: Obstacle

The heroes encounter an obstacle of some kind and must figure out how to circumvent it. Some examples include a flooded river, a collapsed bridge, a large tree across the road, and so on. If the obstacle cannot be overcome, it wastes the day's travel, effectively setting the group back a day.

- **2-5: Minor Obstacle.** The heroes receive +2 on any roll made to overcome the obstacle.
- **6-10: Moderate Obstacle.** Any roll needed to overcome the obstacle is made without bonus or penalty.
- **Jack-King: Major Obstacle.** Any roll needed to overcome the obstacle suffers a -2 penalty.
- **Ace: Dramatic Obstacle.** Overcoming the obstacle is a Dramatic Task.

Hearts: Strangers

The group comes across one or more nonplayer characters such as merchants, hunters, a guide, or even other adventurers. The draw determines their starting reaction level, which can be modified through Persuasion checks as usual.

- **2-5: Unfriendly.** The encountered NPCs may mislead the PCs, steal from them, or simply bad-mouth

them, but won't start a fight unless threatened.

- **6-10: Uncooperative.** The encountered NPCs are indifferent to the PCs unless approached with special hostility or goodwill.
- **Jack-King: Neutral.** The encountered NPCs will give good advice, trade fairly, or otherwise have a pleasant encounter with the PCs without any special coercion. They expect fair payment for any aid.
- **Ace: Cooperative.** The encountered NPCs are generally sympathetic, helping in the player characters' current endeavor for a small fee, favor, or kindness.

Diamonds: Treasure

The heroes stumble across something of value—probably guarded or trapped, but valuable nonetheless. Some examples include a wrecked merchant's wagon with valuables still on it, a small treasure cache in a cave or hollowed-out tree, or a minor magic item in the clutches of a very unfortunate skeleton.

- **2-5: Minor Fortune.** The heroes find the equivalent of 2d6 silver coins with very little to no trouble attached to it. (Examples: A lost coin purse with no name on it. A spilled box of supplies.)
- **6-10: Moderate Fortune.** The heroes find the equivalent of $2d6 \times 2$ silver coins with a small difficulty or hazard attached. (Examples: A wrecked merchant's cart with a couple of bandits still picking it over. A stashed treasure chest with a trap.)
- **Jack-King: Major Fortune.** The heroes find the equivalent of $4d6 \times 2$ silver coins with a serious difficulty or hazard attached. (Examples: A wrecked wagon laden with supplies, swarming with wolves. A hidden

cache of treasure in the same cave as a sleeping bear.)

- **Ace: *Mixed Fortune*.** The heroes find a minor magic item or a treasure cache worth $4d6 \times 10$ silver coins—but real trouble is right behind. (Examples: A silver sword belonging to a noteworthy monster hunter, which draws the wrong kind of attention. An enchanted brooch that makes the wielder resistant to spells, which was stolen from an angry wizard.)

Spades: Enemies

Monsters, enemies, or hostile beasts bar the way. Unlike a Hostile NPC encounter, an encounter of this sort generally offers no chance for negotiation. Perhaps the opponents are bandits or thieves out to rob the heroes of coin and life, or perhaps they are simply unwilling to listen to anything their opponents have to say.

- **2-5: *Minor Threat*.** The enemies arrayed against the heroes are hardly adversaries worth the name. They face one weak Wild Card or as many Extras as there are PCs.
- **6-10: *Moderate Threat*.** The heroes face a suitable challenge. They face one or two Wild Cards and up to twice as many Extras as PCs.
- **Jack-King: *Major Threat*.** The heroes will be tested this day, facing a deadly assault that will push them to their limits. Their opposition includes one or two powerful Wild Cards and three to five times as many Extras as PCs, or they stand against as many Wild Cards as PCs.
- **Ace: *Overwhelming Odds*.** The heroes are in a serious situation this time—and they might not get out alive. The opposition starts with two to three times as many Extras as PCs,

then adds a like number every new round for 1d6 rounds afterwards; or they face an equal number of powerful Wild Cards, with supporting Extras. Either way, running is probably a better strategy than fighting.

Red Joker: Champion of Ravenloft

The heroes encounter a legendary champion of the setting, a true paragon of light in a world of darkness. This hero might be on their way to an adventure of their own and in need of stalwart companions, or perhaps they just have useful information to share with the player characters.

See **Chapter 9: The Doomed and the Damned** for a few possible people the heroes can meet.

Black Joker: The Damned

The heroes run into or are drawn into the machinations of a darklord. They might have been on their way to somewhere else, but their path is now set on a collision course with one of Ravenloft's damned and doomed. An encounter with a darklord should turn into an adventure all its own—and one the heroes are unlikely to forget.

Each domain's description includes information about its darklord, and some of them have fuller entries in **Chapter 9: The Doomed and the Damned**.

The Dark Powers

The Dark Powers are the ultimate masters of the Realm of Dread, and its ultimate mystery. They have created an entire world in their own image, but not even the most powerful divinatory magic can unveil their true nature. Few of Ravenloft's denizens are even aware that the Dark Powers exist, blaming sinister events on the Mists or their gods. Occult scholars who try to pry open the Dark Powers' secrets typically end up pursuing the phantoms of their own minds.

What are the Dark Powers? Are they true entities or something more akin to an elemental force? Mystics have proposed that they may be a banished pantheon of gods, or strange and ancient foes of the gods, or even some dark aspect of the divine subconscious. Some philosophers have even claimed that the Dark Powers do not exist, that they are actually a sentient manifestation of human sin. None of these theories is anything more than idle speculation, however.

Are the Dark Powers many or few? This book refers to them in the plural, but this is a mere convenience. If the Dark Powers include multiple entities, then do they act as a unified whole, or are they fractious? Does the same force both punish and empower evil, or are the Dark Powers locked in an internal struggle between light and darkness?

This in turn leads to the greatest mystery surrounding the Dark Powers: are they good or evil? Some sages point to the outlander darklords. The Dark Powers have forever imprisoned these foul villains in realms of eternal perdition. The Dark Powers never actively seduce the righteous into evil; they merely react to those who have already succumbed to inner wickedness. The Dark Powers do

not behave like demons; they do not corrupt souls through malicious trickery. In this sense, the Dark Powers are a force of austere justice, reserving their cruelty for the cruel.

Other sages, however, claim that the torment the Dark Powers inflict on darklords merely drives those villains into an agonized frenzy, inflaming their corruption. Perhaps the Dark Powers seek to raise an army of darkness to one night unleash on the Material Plane. In this context, the Dark Powers are a sadistic engine of suffering. And what of the innocents caught in the Dark Powers' clutches? What of the villagers who fall prey to the horrors of the night, or the heroes who must do battle with the forces of evil? Do the Dark Powers delight in watching the destruction of innocence, or do they flaunt these pure souls in the faces of the darklords as reminders of the path not taken?

Are the Dark Powers good or evil? Are they gods or monsters? What is the ultimate goal of their grand and awful experiment? The truth may transcend mortal comprehension.

Dark Powers Checks

Evil comes in many forms, but it is never so dangerous as when it is convenient. Evil can seduce in ways that Good would never try. Good demands much—patience, compassion, self-sacrifice—and its rewards are often obscure. Evil seems to ask nothing but gladly offers anything someone could desire: power, riches, even love. But the gifts of Evil are poisoned fruits, tainted by the very acts undertaken to claim them. Each gift accepted, each moral shortcut taken, leads further from the light and

one step closer to Evil's ultimate reward: self-destruction.

Unseen by mortals, the Dark Powers sit in judgment of all that occurs within their realm and silently watch countless other worlds as well. Whenever a mortal performs an evil act in Ravenloft, there is a chance that the Dark Powers will respond, both rewarding and punishing the transgressor in a single stroke; this is resolved through a Dark Powers check. If a character continues down the path of corruption, the Dark Powers may eventually grant the transgressor their own domain.

Mortals may never know what the Dark Powers hope to achieve with their dark gifts. Perhaps the Dark Powers act as caring but overly harsh parents, cursing transgressors to frighten them back onto the path of righteousness, or perhaps the Dark Powers seek to inflame mortals' sins, alternately taunting and teasing the morally weak into bottomless spirals of doom.

A Dark Powers check is a Spirit roll, modified by the character's current level of Corruption (see below). Depending on the severity of the act, the GM can impose a -1 or -2 penalty on the roll, though this should only be for the most grievous of crimes (such as killing a child or the torture of a helpless foe).

The GM might well still call for a Dark Powers check in a situation that grants a +1 or +2 bonus on the roll due to the necessity of the action, the character's culture condoning or encouraging it, or the character simply never being taught right from wrong in this situation.

Bonuses on a Dark Powers check should be far rarer than penalties on it; an action severe enough to draw the attention of the very forces of evil can hardly ever be shrugged off by simply saying "I didn't know any better."

Acts of pure self-defense never draw the attention of the Dark Powers, though they can naturally cause guilt on the part of the character. That is, if a character is fighting for their life against a vicious murderer and kills them in the heat of battle, the Dark Powers pay no attention. On the other hand, being put into a position where a character must kill a non-combatant to save their own life is murder and betrayal—not self-defense.

Acts of supernatural evil or religious defilement can also call the attention of the Dark Powers. Desecrating the shrines of the gods, tomb robbing, sacrificing human life, or calling the dead from their slumber with magic would all be worthy of a Dark Powers check.

Some deeds are so monstrous that they cannot help but attract the attention of the Dark Powers. Anyone who commits one of these *Acts of Ultimate Darkness* automatically fails their Dark Powers check, gaining a level of Corruption, and must immediately make a Spirit roll at -2 to avoid gaining a second level of Corruption. The murder of a pregnant woman might be a brutal act worthy of a -2 to a Dark Powers check, but when performed against one's own mistress to keep her from revealing her condition to one's wife, it becomes something much worse.

Dark Powers checks are intended to enhance the game, to divert the attention of a hoary host of potent unknowns to the actions of the PCs. Use them wisely and where they serve the game. If overused, Dark Powers checks can slow the game to a crawl and result in more comedy than horror. They should only be called for in moments of extreme drama, at the GM's discretion. They serve as a reminder of the dangers and temptations that await a character who gives in to the allure of evil, not a

bludgeon to force them to believe or act a certain way.

Indeed, if a player announces that he intends to commit an act that would be worthy of a Dark Powers check, the GM should tell them so and give the player a chance to change their mind. Damnation is so much sweeter when the warning signs were all there but were ignored anyway, after all.

The Effects of Failure

If a character fails a Dark Powers check, the Dark Powers respond with gifts of darkness—and the character moves one step toward corruption. At each stage, the corrupted character receives an occult boon and an accompanying curse. The gifts and curses bestowed by the Dark Powers are inexorably tied: a rogue who gains low-light vision might also suffer from light sensitivity, becoming Distracted in bright daylight; a monk who receives a bonus to her natural armor might grow a thick, scaly hide, making her Ugly. Curses arising from failed Dark Powers checks should manifest at least as often as the accompanying gift comes into play.

The Dark Powers tailor all of their gifts and curses to the victim. As a rule, the Dark Powers' gifts tend to make it easier for a corrupted character to repeat her transgressions but harder to conceal her crimes.

In the initial stages of corruption, when redemption is still at hand, both the gifts and the curses bestowed by the Dark Powers tend to be minor and easily concealed. In later stages, however, the trap starts to close. The curses gain strength, forcing the corrupted character to rely more heavily on her dark gifts—abilities that often require more Dark Powers checks to use.

The Path of Corruption

The path from innocence to the final damnation of a darklord is distressingly short and all too easy to traverse. Each stage is listed with a sampling of dread gifts the Dark Powers can bestow. Each stage also bestows a curse, each of increasing severity. If the GM carefully considers how these powers and curses will interact, they can transform what may appear to be a collection of random modifiers into an evocative descent into darkness.



A character facing Corruption gains certain boons and banes from their exposure to the distilled essence of darkness. This can come in many forms, proportionate to the level of the character's damnation. Generally speaking, each new rank of Corruption grants the character a new power as well as a new penalty. Some rewards and curses become more pronounced as the Corruption increases, while others are one-off benefits or drawbacks, and some might replace a previous reward or curse.

Corruption

Corruption is typically gained when a character fails a Dark Powers check. For the most part, it acts as a gauge for determining a hero's slide into villainy, how close to the abyss a character dances—and whether or not he finally slips and falls in.

A character gains corruption for Dark Powers checks and should not gain more than 1 level of Corruption per session unless committing an Act of Ultimate Darkness. Each level of Corruption grants a character powers, mystical abilities that tempt them further into damnation. See below for more information about corruption powers.

Unfortunately, the more corrupt a character becomes, the more difficult it becomes for them to cling to social norms or ethical considerations. For each level of Corruption, the character suffers a -1 penalty to all Spirit-based Trait rolls except for those related to Fear and Intimidation (whether resisting such or inflicting it).

Corruption Rank 1: The Caress

The Dark Powers reward a character's first touch of evil with a minor boon. The character also gains an embarrassing curse. A corrupted character can usually

conceal any physical deformities created at this stage with little effort—gloves, tinted glasses, and so on.

- **Suggested Rewards:** Add twice the character's Corruption rank as a bonus on resisting a specific environmental hazard (such as heat, cold, hunger, or thirst). Add the character's Corruption rank as a bonus on a specific kind of Trait roll (such as Strength, Vigor, Fighting, Persuasion, and so on). Gain a free d6 in a specific skill. Gain a specific power and 5 Power Points with which to use it (using Spirit as the activation roll, with a bonus equal to the character's Corruption rank). Gain a minor monstrous ability worth 1 racial build point (such as low-light vision, a bite that deals Str+d4 damage, or burrowing).
- **Suggested Curses:** Apply twice the character's Corruption rank as a penalty to resist a specific environmental hazard (such as heat, cold, or hunger and thirst). Apply the character's Corruption rank as a penalty to Persuasion rolls. Gain a new Minor Hindrance. Choose a specific skill the character has at d6+; that skill suffers Critical Failure with a roll of 1 on the skill die (regardless of the Wild Die).

Corruption Rank 2: The Enticement

Once the corrupted character demonstrates a willingness to return to her evil ways, the Dark Powers grant her greater assistance in her evil endeavors. They temper this, however, with a frustrating curse.

- **Suggested Rewards:** Apply the character's Corruption rank as a bonus to Parry or Toughness. Gain Armor equal to twice the character's Corruption rank. Gain a free Edge

equal to the character's Corruption rank or lower (so, Corruption rank 2 is Seasoned, Corruption rank 3 is Veteran, and so on). Gain 5 bonus Power Points. Gain a bonus equal to half the character's Corruption rank on all skill rolls linked to a specific attribute. Gain a monstrous ability worth 2 racial points (such as immunity to poison and disease, improved Reach, or a venomous bite).

- **Suggested Curses:** Apply half the character's Corruption rank as a penalty to Parry or Toughness. Gain a new Major Hindrance. Suffer a penalty equal to half the character's Corruption rank on all skill rolls linked to a specific attribute. Gain a minor monstrous vulnerability or weakness (such as +2 damage from silver or cold iron weapons, or being repulsed by holy symbols).

Corruption Rank 3: The Invitation

The corrupted character has continued in her evil ways, and any hope of redemption is quickly fading. The Dark Powers now offer a powerful boon but also bestow a troublesome curse. A character that proceeds this far down the path of corruption has difficulty turning back.

- **Suggested Rewards:** Gain an additional Benny at the start of each session (in addition to Luck or Great Luck). Gain a specific power, ignoring Rank requirements, and 10 Power Points with which to use it (using Spirit as the activation roll, with a bonus equal to the character's Corruption rank). Gain 10 bonus Power Points. Gain a major monstrous ability (such as flight, hardy, immunity to a specific kind of damage, or slow regeneration).



- **Suggested Curses:** Gain a major weakness or vulnerability (such as +4 damage from silver weapons or bursting into flame in sunlight). One Attribute drops to d4 and can never be improved. Gain a special monstrous dietary need (such as drinking a pint of blood or eating a fistful of gold coins each day). Suffer a penalty on natural healing rolls equal to the character's Corruption rank (which can be offset by some specific means, such as drinking blood, eating human flesh, or burying oneself in the earth).

Corruption Rank 4: The Embrace

The corrupted character's evil deeds mark her as a true villain. The Dark Powers respond with a major gift, but the accompanying dangerous curse can create serious mental or physical changes. The corrupted character can no longer live the normal life they started with. If the corrupted character is a PC, the player may occasionally lose control of their character's actions (as in the case of afflicted lycanthropy, for example).

- **Suggested Rewards:** Gain a potent monstrous ability (such as construct, ethereal, invulnerability, fast regeneration, or undead). Gain limited immortality (the character cannot die from accident or hazards unless one of their specific weaknesses, only from intentional violence).
- **Suggested Curses:** Gain a weakness or vulnerability to otherwise mundane objects (such as being repulsed by a specific material or herb). Gain a compulsive behavior that is almost impossible to avoid (Smarts roll at -4), such as stopping to count spilled seeds, defacing art, or sparing victims of a certain type.

Corruption Rank 5: The Creature

By now, the corrupted character's evil has reshaped her into a creature of the night. For characters who proceed this far down the path of corruption, redemption often comes only in death.

The Dark Powers now bestow even greater gifts but strike the character with a potentially lethal curse. The Dark Powers' curse never destroys the corrupted character, though they may wish it had. A player character that falls this far from the light may be removed from the player's control, becoming a villainous NPC. Curses at this stage are always unique and terrible things, and the rewards granted in return rarely worth the damnation involved.

The character ceases to be truly mortal any longer and transforms into a corrupt creature of some sort, such as a vampire, werewolf, construct, or other monster. More likely, the character becomes a unique being that is distantly related to more standard monsters (such as a psychic vampire who drinks spinal fluid instead of blood, or a flesh construct constantly seeking victims to replace its own decaying body parts).

Ultimate Corruption: The Darklord

With their final act of evil, the corrupted character proves themselves beyond redemption and seals their fate. The Dark Powers grant the corrupted character their own domain—a prison, molded in their own image, from which they will never escape.

Most new darklords rule over small Islands of Terror rather than a major domain. Hand-in-hand with the new domain comes the darklord's curse: the object of their most desperate desire is placed within their sight but forever just beyond their grasp. Darklords have widely differing abilities and weaknesses;

indeed, the Dark Powers seem to reward captivating personalities with greater power.

It is not enough to simply advance through the levels of Corruption to become a darklord. Generally, only a character who reaches Corruption Rank 3 or higher, then commits an Act of Ultimate Darkness can descend to the awful depths of depravity necessary to be granted a personal hell by the Dark Powers.

Player characters who become darklords automatically become NPCs run by the GM. May the gods have mercy on their souls.

Redemption

The road to damnation is swift but not certain. It is possible for a character to recoil from their evil deeds and, with time and toil, return to the light. If a character is truly penitent, the Dark Powers may subtly guide the corrupted character's fate to test her repentance.

To escape the effects of a Dark Powers check, the corrupted character must encounter an event echoing the one that resulted in their failed Dark Powers check. This time around, the corrupted character must choose the righteous path. For example, if a character failed a Dark Powers check for killing a group of helpless captives, they must do all they can to protect the lives of a group of helpless captives they encounter later on.

It is no mean feat to scrub corruption out of the soul, however. Each time the character meets the requirements for atonement, they can attempt a new Spirit roll with a penalty equal to their Corruption rank. If the character succeeds at this check, the Dark Powers loosen their grip on the character's soul and their Corruption rank is decreased by 1 (or by 2 with a raise on the roll).

Rewards and curses from Corruption are decreased, and any transformations begin to recede.

Characters can possibly work their way back to being clean, but they can never reclaim true innocence. Acts of Ultimate Darkness cannot be redeemed.

It may even be possible for a darklord to redeem their blackened soul—but in all the known history of Ravenloft, not one ever has.

Black Magic

Those who embrace the dark arts gain incredible power at the price of their eternal damnation. Sorcerers who fully accept the evil side of magic into their souls often come to regret the bargain, albeit far too late to do anything about it.

NPCs and villains can take a special Arcane Background Edge to represent that they are calling on the blackest sorts of sorcery. Unless otherwise noted in an NPC's description, Arcane Background (Black Magic) works just like Arcane Background (Magic), including qualifying for other Edges and so on, except that casters of black magic do not require material components to use their powers.

How many Power Points the wicked caster has is up to the GM—villains don't progress like player characters, so their Rank doesn't matter. Spellcasting doesn't invoke Dark Powers checks for practitioners of Black Magic, since they're already damned. If it matters, their Corruption Rank is considered to be at least 2, and probably higher.

When working their blasphemous powers in places of great corruption, they gain special benefits. If the local environment is a sinkhole of evil rated 3 or 4, the caster gains a free reroll on any failed Spellcasting roll. In a sinkhole of

evil rated 5, they instead get a free reroll on *all* Spellcasting rolls and are considered to have the Channeler Edge if they don't normally have it.

Trappings

The powers of a black magic user are obviously tainted in some way. Their words of power echo menacingly, the air turns cold when they cast, their eyes light with hellish fire, or black motes drift from their fingertips. Where a normal wizard might call forth fire to smite their foes, a black magician can rain down sickly green flames that corrupt as they consume.

A wielder of black magic can sometimes enact rituals that allow them to conceal their corruption for short periods of time. This usually involves blood sacrifice, offering up an innocent to act as a sort of lightning rod for their fell powers. This is up to the GM's discretion, but such exchanges tend to burn out the sacrificial lamb fairly quickly. (This could even be an adventure hook: Why is a decent person suddenly growing sick and weak, and who is causing it?)



Monstrous Heroes

Even the darkest of souls can yearn for the light. In the Domains of Dread, it has occasionally been known for true monsters to turn away from the path of corruption and seek to champion the forces of good. From the elven vampire Jander Sunstar to the heroic Martikov family of wereravens, not all creatures of the night are beings of evil.

The *Horror Companion* offers rules for monstrous heroes. If the GM permits such beings as player characters, they should start four Advances behind the rest of the party—so either at Novice Rank if the mortals of the party are Seasoned, or four Advances “in debt” for a Novice party. At the GM's discretion, a character can take the Veteran of the Dark World Edge (*HC* 8) and start as a Novice monstrous hero rather than taking the normal four Advances to Seasoned granted by that Edge. The character still draws a card for a random drawback as normal.

All monstrous heroes are considered to have the Outsider (Major) Hindrance in addition to their other Hindrances, should their monstrous nature be revealed. Monstrous heroes still select an ancestry as normal, which should flavor the nature of the creature involved. (An elven vampire is significantly different from a human one, for example.)

Monstrous Corruption

Monstrous heroes are already on the path to damnation without any additional help from the Dark Powers. They are considered to have Rank 3 Corruption and cannot gain more ranks of corruption without somehow exceeding the inherent evil of their own nature. (Though it has happened, as one might tell from the number of darklords who gained their

status *after* becoming vampires or lycanthropes.)

Reality Wrinkles

Angels and demons hold a special status in the Land of Mists. As true outsiders, they carry a piece of heaven or hell with them wherever they go, making them less susceptible to the powers of darklords. The envelope of altered reality such beings possess is known as a *reality wrinkle*. It forms a rough circle around the entity with a radius equal to twice their Spirit die in tabletop inches (so an angel with Spirit d8 has a reality wrinkle radius of 16", for example).

Any creature within the entity's reality wrinkle is treated as being in a different domain for purposes of scrying, teleportation, and other magic, but unlike a domain border, this pseudo-border can be breached by magic cast by a character of higher Rank than the entity. (All darklords are considered to be Legendary Rank for this purpose.)

More useful in some ways is the fact that a reality wrinkle treats a true domain border as an extension of itself, permitting the entity and anyone close to

them to pass through even a closed domain border as if it weren't there.

If two entities with reality wrinkles confront one another, their reality wrinkles mutually fail when they overlap.

New Edge

Conceal Horror (Monstrous Edge)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

Being a monster in the Land of Mists might seem like a good deal—right up until the torches, pitchforks, and monster hunters looking to make a name for themselves show up. If you're a monster trying to walk the path of righteousness, it can be a real problem when the people you want to help inevitably try to kill you before you start talking.

A monster with this Edge has an alternate humanoid form they can change into or out of as a limited action. This form resembles their true form, but with their obviously supernatural traits muted or hidden. Wings vanish, horns disappear, bright red skin turns to a more natural tone, and so on. Revealing their true form suddenly to people who didn't know they were a monster is usually grounds for a Fear check.



Chapter 6:

Ravenloft Gazetteer

The Land of Mists

Ravenloft is sometimes known as the “Land of the Mists,” a name that hints at the mysteries that lurk beyond the ubiquitous fog that permeates most lands. Geographers and explorers have tried to map their world unsuccessfully for centuries, largely unaware that their world is a place that cannot be properly mapped. The lands of Ravenloft are chaotic, in slow but constant motion, their very borders ebbing and flowing with the tide of the Mists.

Each domain is like a small world unto itself, with its own rules, mystical features, and hazards. Some configurations of domains are more long-lasting and stable than others, but even these can change over time.

Domains that share physical boundaries and mutual history are known as Clusters, and they often share long-term connections with other Clusters through semi-permanent connections called Mistways. Lone domains, isolated by the Mists, are known as Islands, and these lonely locations are often both hard to find and hard to escape. Some Islands have Mistways, while others are literal islands as well, connected to other lands by the vast and wild Sea of Sorrows.

A few features tend to be constant across the world of Ravenloft. Most places have the same sun and moon with the same day and night cycle. Most domains have stars of some sort above them at night, though the exact

constellations may be different between Clusters.

Beyond these extremely broad generalities, though, no particular commonalities may be expected from one Cluster to the next—or even from one domain to its neighbors. Different languages, customs, dress, races, history, calendars, technology, and expectations are the order of the day when traveling the Mists.

The Shape of Things

The Land of Mists is vast and mysterious. No one can properly claim to have explored all of its mysteries, and few have traveled further than a few dozen miles from the place of their birth. Those who choose to wander far find their world stranger than might be guessed, a place of incredible beauty and terrible danger.

While the people of the world call their homes “nations,” “states,” “countries,” “duchies,” or the like, a few know the truth—that each land is a prison cell for a being whose sins are both terrible and pitiable. For those in the know, “domain” is the preferred nomenclature to refer to such prisons and “darklord” as the title for their land-bound prisoners.

A domain is, in some ways, like a small world of its own, a microcosm with its own physical and magical laws. The land, the people, and the history are dark mirrors of the lord and his past, its features a constant reminder of the many

sins that gained them a throne of damnation. Most darklords have the ability to “seal” their domain through an act of will, closing the borders to make entry or escape impossible. Few can keep this up for more than a few hours or days at a time, since it is a draining, even painful experience. Some cannot close their domains at all, either from a weak will or from ignorance of their own nature.

Some domains group together into like regions, creating *Clusters*. These regions might be considered small continents in the Mist. They often have long-established connections to other domains, sometimes through shared history and sometimes through happenstance. Such permanent and semi-permanent routes are known as *Mistways*, and they serve as vital paths for travelers looking to explore the world.

A domain with no significant connections to other lands can find itself isolated in the Mists, an *Island* of terror. Some are literal islands, bodies of land surrounded by water, while most are simply patches of solid ground somewhere in the ever-shifting Mists, their borders gradually washed away by fog. A few Islands have Mistways connecting them to other Islands or to Clusters, but most are perpetually disconnected, all alone in the night.

The *Ravenloft Reincarnated* campaign setting makes no assumptions about which domain or domains a given campaign wishes to use. Each Cluster or Island is written as a self-contained world of fear, albeit with suggested connections to other regions. A Game Master can feel free to use any or all of the domains listed in this section—or none of them, creating their own Land of Mists from whole cloth.

Islands in the Mist

With the setup of the Realm of Terror presented in *Ravenloft Reincarnated*, an astute reader should realize right away that nothing prevents an individual GM from breaking up the existing Clusters even further, leaving behind *only* Islands, totally isolated from one another by the Mists.

There’s nothing wrong with this approach. Indeed, classical “weekend in hell” adventures almost work better with this premise. An extended *Ravenloft Reincarnated* campaign, however, will likely involve some amount of traveling. Should you wish every excursion from the characters’ home domain to be fraught with peril, then an “islands only” campaign model works just fine.

The default Clusters model exists to give GMs and players a more limited scope while still offering options and creating a context in which a domain’s struggles and identity can play off its neighbors. The classical Core model can also work for games with a broader, more epic scope.

It’s your Demiplane of Dread! Mix and match as you feel you need in order to make it work!

Where’s the Core?

Longtime fans of the *Ravenloft* setting will notice immediately that this version of the world eschews the classical setting’s campaign model, which used a central continent known as “the Core,” in favor of only using Clusters and Islands.

This was done for several reasons. First of all, the existence of the Core is a legacy of the original game’s attempts to push together every conceivable horror story, Gothic literature reference, and scary idea into a single place, often with ridiculous or nonsensical results. Breaking up the Core into thematically-

similar regions helps maintain each area's narrative consistency.

Second, having a vast continent (even if the authors frequently disagreed about the Core's exact size) diminishes the sense of isolation necessary for a classic Gothic horror story. Making travel and trade between regions more regular could often lead to questions about the distances involved, which frequently produces yet more nonsensical answers. Avoiding the question entirely gives Game Masters more freedom to dictate exactly how big and populous each region is.

Finally, this "mix and match" method allows each campaign to focus in on the regions it really cares about without players getting bogged down in a huge world that they may never get to see all of. A Game Master can more easily say "This game is set in the Civilized Crescent" or "The focus will be on the Balinok Mountains and the Forest of Beasts" while not being concerned with the history, threats, and personalities of other areas.

Naturally, if a given campaign wants to use previous versions of the setting's layout, nothing stops a Game Master from using "classic Ravenloft" as their inspiration. While several of the domains listed in this setting book have been changed from their original versions—often to update the ideas presented to make them less stereotypical or offensive—all of the rules materials works fine, no matter which version of the setting you prefer.

Clusters

The Clusters described in this document are far from the only ones known to exist in the Land of Mists. Some travelers have documented over a dozen major Clusters, each with two or more domains making up a cancerous growth of evil.

These Clusters have been chosen for their archetypical fantasy and Gothic literature resonances, as well as for their existing connections to one another. These connections can be ignored if a Game Master wishes, allowing them to focus on one Cluster exclusively; others could be added, tightening the chains that bind them together.

Within this document are described:

- **The Balinok Mountains**, a land of high, treacherous mountains, ethnic violence, and blood vendettas, intended to evoke the real-world lands of Eastern Europe and the literary and film traditions of *Dracula*, *Carmilla*, and *Nosferatu*. This is perhaps the most classical and famous section of the setting, as it houses the infamous **Castle Ravenloft** itself.
- **The Civilized Crescent**, a region entering an age of enlightenment and philosophy, but which is nevertheless soaked in blood and thriving off the oppression of the common folk. These lands are meant to resonate with real-world England, France, Germany, and Spain during the Age of Enlightenment, as well as the horrors of the French Revolution and literature such as *Les Misérables*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Frankenstein*.
- **The Far Steppes**, a vast and enormous region of prairies, rolling plains, and verdant grasslands where religious fervor stands side by side

with corruption of body, mind, and soul. This region is meant to evoke Russia in the era of Boyar, Mongolia in the Khanate, and the “weird west” of early Americana.

- **The Forest of Beasts**, an uncivilized region covered in dense, almost impenetrable forest, where the threats come from beasts—and from men who are beasts in disguise. Classic werewolf tales are the focus of the region, as well as the origins of such stories, including *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* and the Universal monster film *The Wolf Man* (as well as its many imitators).
- **The Nocturnal Sea**, a vast and dangerous ocean filled with islands. This Cluster’s primary domain, the Sea of Sorrows, touches on dozens of other domains due to its unique properties, making it a major means of travel in the Land of Mists. The Nocturnal Sea is meant to be used for nautical tales of horror, such as the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films or the novels *On Stranger Tides* and *Into the Drowning Deep*.
- **The Shining Bay**, where progress and industrialization have begun to destroy the natural world and the spirit of men alike. This region is meant to remind players of Victorian England during the industrial period, and it is especially resonant with the novels of Charles Dickens and Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*.

Islands

Islands exist as isolated domains within the Mists, places that are physically and spiritually separate from other places and which can be very difficult to escape from even without the borders being sealed. An Island is typically small and poorly populated, though a few break these general rules. No one can even claim to know how many Islands exist—possibly hundreds.

An Island presents a unique scenario for a Game Master. As a culturally and physically isolated location, it offers a chance to tell a story that might be appropriate for the genre but not appropriate for any particular established domain or Cluster. These locations can present a “weekend in hell” scenario, where a Mist-lost group of travelers stumble onto an unknown domain and must contend with the local terrors while trying to recover their bearings.

The Islands presented in this document are a combination of classic Ravenloft domains and new ones designed to make Game Masters think about the nature of horror and the possibilities presented by isolated “pockets of terror.” They include:

- **Annaes**, a crumbling city of mysteries and wonders inhabited by the descendants of a once-great culture. This domain is an explicitly post-apocalyptic region, albeit one set earlier than most science-fiction tales of that sort, with nods to a larger universe beyond the bounds of the Land of Mists.
- **Bluetspur**, a wasteland of darkness and lightning where inhuman creatures think their thoughts of darkness. This domain is intended to be a tribute to the cosmic horror

stories of authors such as Arthur Machen and H.P. Lovecraft.

- **The Carnival**, a wandering domain comprised of a big-top show and its attendant freaks. Besides being a reference to carnival-based horror—such as *Carnivale* and *American Horror Story: Freakshow*—this Island exists to show Game Masters that things are not always what they seem in Ravenloft.
- **Darkon**, a vast nation of high fantasy and low politics. Darkon is a realm of wizards, warriors, and untrustworthy memories where horror is leavened with a hefty dose of “traditional fantasy.”
- **Falkovnia**, a parasitic domain of perpetual military buildup. This land highlights the horrors of war and serves as a perpetual threat to other Clusters, due to its “floating” nature, which allows it to come into alignment with virtually any other domain.
- **Kalidnay**, a burning desert where the strong survive and the weak perish. While most domains are intended to evoke the Gothic atmosphere of 15th to 19th century Europe, Kalidnay intentionally eschews that aesthetic for a Bronze age sword-and-sorcery feel more in line with the weird tales of Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber.



- **Rokushima Taiyou**, a land of poisoned seas and exotic islands, where siblings war over their father's shattered empire and strange terrors lurk behind rice paper walls. This domain is meant to evoke the *kaidan* style of Japanese horror stories and the "foreign" view of Asia during the Gothic literature period.
- **The Shadow Rift**, a mystical fairyland where magic is commonplace but mortals are exotic and rare. This gloomy twilight world is inhabited by elfin beings of myth and legend, and it pays homage to sources such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Wizard of Oz*, all retold in horrific fashion.

Domain Descriptions

A domain's description, whether part of a Cluster or a solo Island, consists of several parts.

At the beginning of each domain's writeup is a segment discussing the overall geographical, political, and ethnic makeup of the domain. This mini-gazetteer gives a broad overview of what life is like for the domain's people.

This is followed by a section about the domain's *Tropes*, the narrative and metaphorical reasons for the domain's

inclusion in the setting, as well as what real-world or literary influences the domain is meant to evoke. This section discusses a domain in an out-of-character fashion, directly addressing the reasons for the domain's inclusion.

The next section is the domain's *Themes*, a set of three guiding principles for adventures and stories set in the domain. These three "rules" are philosophical guidelines for deciding whether a given idea is appropriate for inclusion in the domain, though they should not become straightjackets for creativity.

Finally comes a brief biography of the domain's darklord, the damned soul at the heart of the domain who is both its master and its prisoner. This section notes the salient points of the darklord's personal curse, as well as whether they are capable of closing their domain borders or not.

Clusters

A Cluster gets an additional set of information at the beginning of its description, detailing the general cultural level and broad geography of the region. Any notable local religions or organizations are mentioned, as well as connections to other domains and the languages spoken in the area.



The Balinok Mountains

The Balinok Mountains Cluster is the oldest region of Ravenloft, a place of ancient history and primeval terrors. Some scholars believe that Barovia might well have been the very first domain to be drawn into the Realm of Terror, and its ruler—Count Strahd von Zarovich—to be the first of the damned souls to be known as darklords.

As might be gathered from the name, this Cluster is a place of harsh, forbidding mountains, stony crags, and deep, dark crevasses. The domains are rural and insular, held in the grip of despots and tyrants who care nothing for the suffering of their people.

The nation of Barovia straddles the central peaks of the mountain chain, which runs like a craggy spine from north to south. The hills to either side of the mountain range are rugged and breed equally rugged people. The passes through the mountains are choked with snow and ice six months of the year, forcing most communities to be as self-sufficient as possible. The people of the Balinoks are as forbidding and insular as their homeland.

The narrow valleys that cut the slopes of the Balinoks widen to the east and west. Crystalline mountain streams transform into broad, mighty rivers that wind their way through the thickly forested dales. The Gundar, Luna, and Nharov Rivers travel west from the mountains, while the Ivlis and Saniset Rivers course east. The highest peaks of the Balinoks, Mount Baratok and Mount Ghakis, lie within Barovia.

The eastern Balinok Mountains hold many major Mistways, while the rivers of the western mountains wend their way into other clusters. This makes the region

a surprisingly busy crossroads, though few merchants enjoy staying in the area very long. The attitude of the natives, the poor climate, and the general air of oppressive fear makes the Balinoks a place that no one lingers in if they can help it.

The two dominant human ethnic groups in the region are the Barovians and the Gundarakites. Both groups tend toward thick, stocky builds with broad shoulders and wide hips. Skin tones range from pale olive-tan to light brown. Dark hair and eyes are typical, the former ranging from light chestnut to nearly jet-black, the latter from pale hazel to deep brown. Men grow their hair to a medium length, generally to just above the shoulder. Women wear their hair long, with younger women frequently braiding their locks. Most men wear thick, drooping mustaches, though beards are only common among younger men.

Barovians and Gundarakites also dress in a similar manner. Men wear loose white shirts, embroidered sheepskin vests, and dark breeches. Women wear blouses and long skirts and cover their heads with kerchiefs. Barovian women favor black, grey, and dark brown colors and wear the kerchief only when married. Gundarakite women dress in muted, natural colors, favoring yellows, greens, and blues, and wear the kerchief only when unmarried.

Despite their physical similarities, Barovian-Gundarakite animosity runs deep. The frequent internal strife in Gundarak forces many refugees into neighboring nations, where they are often not wanted. Barovians particularly regard Gundarakites as “uninvited guests,” even though many ethnically Gundarakite villages have been loyal Barovian subjects

for generations. Harassment and violence against Gundarakites are on the rise in recent years, and as local militias tighten control of Gundarakite movements and activities, the Gundarakites have begun to respond with sporadic resistance.

The much-smaller Thaani ethnicity—refugees who arrived in Barovia generations ago from a fallen domain—fare better. Their numbers are small and they make few waves. Even their language is gradually being lost as they intermarry with the natives and adopt more of their culture. Invidians are descendants of both Barovians and Gundarakites—as well as many other ethnicities—and seem to care little for the ethnic strife that has begun to seep into their neighboring country.

Languages

The major language spoken in the region is Balok, the language of the Barovian majority. Both Barovians and Invidians speak Balok as their primary language, making it easier for them to communicate with one another than with Gundarakites, who speak Luktar. The few Thaani in the area speak their own language, but it has gradually been lost as fewer and fewer Thaani bother learning it. A tiny number of Barovians also speak Forfarian, the language of the lost people of the Forlorn Land, but that number grows fewer with every passing year.

Connections

The Balinok Mountains Cluster has a surprising number of Mistways leading to other lands, despite the relative isolation its interior villages suffer from. The eastern stretches of the domain have several major Mistways that lead to the Far Steppes, and the western portions of the Cluster bleed into the Civilized Crescent. Indeed, one of the major trade roads of the region, the Silver Road, is

considered to start in Borca, cross Barovia, and end in Nova Vaasa.

The country of Invidia, in the south, has several waterways that are river connections to the Forest of Beasts. Most of them connect with Verbrek, though a few end in Valachan or Arkandale. Some say that there are northern Mistways that reach Darkon, but if they exist they are poorly known.

The Morninglord

The Cult of the Morninglord was born three centuries ago, when the faith's founder, Martyn Pelkar, claimed that as a young boy, a being called "the Morninglord" appeared to him in physical form and protected him from the roving menaces of the Barovian night.

Based on this singular encounter, the Morninglord is usually depicted as a luminous, sylvan humanoid. Although he is formed of soft golden light, his face is smeared with blood. The cult teaches that this strange detail may be a sign that even the greatest good may hold some evil stain, and even the most depraved evil may yet contain a spark of good.

The Morninglord is the god of the rosy dawn that marks the end of every night. The deity asks little of his followers, save that they treat each other with kindness and retain hope in their hearts. Their religious rites include singing, both singly and in choirs.

This humble faith holds great appeal for those who have little more than hope and kindness to offer, and the cult is rapidly spreading among the downtrodden Gundarakites of Barovia. Its simple teachings conceal a message of intense hope—that no matter how bleak the future may seem, no matter how dark the night, the dawn *will* come.

The cult has a relaxed hierarchy that honors those clergy who have founded

temples or committed great deeds of sacrifice or bravery. Clergy martyred while serving the cult or its ideals are often canonized by local temples. There is no centralized orthodoxy or authority within the cult, and each temple is autonomous. Rites, hymns, and other elements that prove popular at one temple are quickly shared with others in the region. Clergy are charged with protecting others from the minions of evil and bestowing hope through their words and deeds.

The cult may hide more than its optimistic message as well. One of the cult's founders secretly hunted the undead by night. It is possible that even to this day, the cult's priests are trained in the methods of hunting vampires.

The symbol of the Cult of the Morninglord is a simple rose-tinted disc of gold. A more elaborate symbol is a circle, with a half-arc below it and four quarter-arcs above it, representing the sun, the earth, and the sun's rays.

The Wild Hunt

Many of the clans and tribes of Gundarak venerate a pantheon of woodland spirits known as the Wild Hunt. This grouping of vicious, predatory demigods is said to wander the hills and forests of the region, hunting humans for sport and sometimes stealing away children for unknown purposes. The most powerful of these beings is known as the Erlking, said to be a tall, powerful man with the head of a stag.

Gundarakites do not seek aid or help from the Erlking and his followers. Their worship is instead intended to placate and appease the cruel spirits. Worship includes leaving a portion of one's prey behind after hunting, making offerings of blood and wine at forest shrines, and

even sometimes setting out unwanted infants in the wilderness.

Barovians consider worship of the Wild Hunt to be savage and horrific, and Count Strahd long ago outlawed the religion in his land. Duke Gundar and his followers are fervent worshippers of the Wild Hunt, inasmuch as they can be said to be devout about anything other than pillaging and slaughter. Many Gundarakites in Invidia and Barovia are refugees from Wild Hunt cultists, though the stain of that faith follows them from their homeland.

Barovia

Straddling the loftiest reaches of the Balinok Mountains, Barovia is a harsh, rural domain held in the grip of tyranny and superstition. Its landscape is dominated by the Balinoks, in particular by the twin snow-capped peaks of Mount Baratok and Mount Ghakis. The mountains run like a craggy spine down the center of the realm, spreading east and west to include the rugged hills on either side of the range. The Balinoks within Barovia are particularly treacherous, characterized by jagged outcroppings and sheer cliffs.

Most buildings in Barovia are constructed of brick and dense timber that is plastered and painted deep russet or light dun. Many homes and shops are adorned with rows of mineral-flecked stones set into the plaster. The thatched rooftops are steep and set with tiny, leaden rose windows in the gables.

In the spring, window boxes overflow with vivid flowers, and harvest time brings pumpkin lanterns, intended to keep the minions of evil at bay. Although Barovia's winters are long and brutal, the remainder of the year is mild,



characterized by gentle precipitation and sun-dappled days. One of the realm's most remarkable features is the perpetual fog that surrounds Barovia Village, the town that lives in the shadow of the ruler's castle.

Barovia is ruled by Count Strahd von Zarovich, the most recent despot in an ancient line of feudal tyrants going back centuries. "The devil Strahd," as he is called locally, is a cruel but distant ruler, rarely taking an interest in the daily business of his realm. The darkest rumors suggest Strahd is a necromancer who has made himself immortal, which is why no one ever seems to see the von Zarovich heirs before they are ready to take the throne. None suspect the even darker truth.

Strahd leaves governance to the noble landowners and appointed mayors, who are free to rule as they see fit. These petty but coveted positions of authority are traditionally hereditary, but turnover is high due to replacement by the count—for incompetence, weakness, or sedition—or suspicious deaths.

Tropes

Barovia is the quintessential Gothic horror setting—the sleepy, isolated Balkan village menaced by monsters and curses. Its literary origins can be found in Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley, and Frederick Marryat, though the specific imagery of the land is most associated with the Universal horror films of the 1930s and the Hammer horror films of the 1950s through 1970s.

The purpose of Barovia is therefore to provide the campaign with an inexhaustible supply of small, isolated villages, ready for menacing. In some ways, Barovia is an archetypal setting, a Balkan-themed blank slate onto which

the GM can apply a werewolf, a vampire, a curse, a demon, and so on.

Themes

- **Isolation:** Each adventure is a closed circle that locks when the heroes arrive. They cannot leave, and help will not come in time. Barovia is a very claustrophobic setting, each village isolated by a hostile environment even though the distances involved are rather small. Beyond the physical distance, emotional and social isolation are themes; when your village turns their back on you, for whatever reason, you might as well be on the moon.
- **In the Blood:** The human culture of Barovia emphasizes family and kin, which has a reflection in the horror of the setting. People are punished for the faults of their ancestors, and the sins of the father pass onto the sons. People judge one another for their family connections, and for their ethnic heritage.
- **External Threat:** The theme of some domains in "man's inhumanity to man," but Barovia is different. In Barovia, the horror comes from *monsters*. Indeed, given that some forms of monstrosity can pass from parent to child, a monster might not be a bad person—but it's still a monster and has to be put down. A monster can be tragic, but it is ultimately something that has to be destroyed so that decent people can live safely.

Notable Locations

Barovia Village is the cultural heart of the domain. Neither the largest nor wealthiest of Barovia's towns, it is notable nonetheless for being in the very shadow of the infamous **Castle Ravenloft**, home

of Strahd von Zarovich and his court. Strahd has little interaction with the people of the village, but they feel his presence constantly. They are far more familiar with his personal servants, the dark elf Rahadin and the human nobleman Vasili von Holtz.

Lake Zarovich lies between the two highest peaks of the domain, fed by ice-cold streams from Mount Baratok. The black, still waters of the lake provide fishing livelihoods for the towns of Vallaki, Aracos, and Antonbucher, but they avoid the deepest parts of the lake like the plague. A perpetual cloud of mist hangs over the center of the lake, and local rumor says that those who enter it are lost—for days, for years, or even forever.

The **Old Bonegrinder** is a windmill once owned by the Durst family but now used as a lair by the hag Morgantha and her dread coven. The hags trade their addictive dream pastries for the unwanted children of local families. The hags devour the flesh of the unlucky children, while grinding their bones and souls into powder, which they use to make the pastries. The stone circle outside the mill has been corrupted into a place of dark magic by the hags, who use it to power their rituals, but it could become a place of powerful good once more—if the hags could be defeated.

The **Old Svalich Road** provides the only significant thoroughfare through the Balinok Mountains, connecting the northern reaches of Barovia to the southernmost parts of Gundarak. It is said that the northernmost end of the road provides a stable Mistway to the Civilized Crescent, while the southern end of the road connects to the Far Steppes. The midpoint of the road passes through the Gates of Barovia, a massive portcullis guarded by ancient statues; the Gates once housed soldiers guarding the

road in the name of the von Zarovich family, but they are long abandoned.

The **Tser Falls** are the highest waterfall in the domain, their crystal clear waters eventually pooling into a broad pond that serves as the only known permanent encampment of the wandering folk. This camp houses between twenty and a hundred of the wandering folk year-round, though its only constant inhabitant is the Vistani seeress named Madame Eva. Some say she is an ally of Count Strahd, while others whisper that she works against him in secret, aiding adventurers with visions of the future and hints to find the means of the vampire's downfall.

The Darklord

Count Strahd von Zarovich is the darklord of Barovia, an ancient vampire. Once a virtuous warrior, Strahd's years on the battlefield changed him into a jaded, bitter old man. When his younger brother was engaged to be married, Strahd fell in love with his brother's fiancée and made a pact with Death to regain his youth and vitality so that he might pursue her. The pact's price was the life of Strahd's brother—a price Strahd gladly paid. She rejected him and fell to her death while fleeing; in a maniacal rage, Strahd stalked through the castle, killing everyone he found.

As the years passed, Strahd found that he did not age and did not die, but he hungered for the blood of the living and was burned by the touch of clean sunlight. He has indeed retained his youth, still seeming to be a young man in his late 20s. Strahd has long, dark hair and piercing eyes; he typically dresses in the fashion of a Barovian nobleman, though his ideas of what is fashionable are generally decades out of date.

In the centuries since his death, Strahd has concealed his undead state from his subjects by pretending to be a succession of heirs and staying out of the public eye for years at a time. Recent trouble with Gundarak has pushed Strahd (currently pretending to be the twelfth of his name) back into regular action.

For all of his evil, Strahd genuinely cares about Barovia's well-being—inasmuch as he cares about any of his possessions—though his centuries of existence have left him with a relaxed view of the value of individual human lives. Strahd can fall into melancholy moods that leave him brooding for months or years at a time, but he generally finds ways to distract himself with matters of state. He purges corruption and incompetence from his government ruthlessly, but otherwise takes a hands-off attitude toward rulership.

Strahd is an ancient vampire, a powerful warrior, and a skilled mage. He has had time enough to master many arts and skills, but none of them bring him peace. Strahd's curse is to be forever haunted by Tatyana, the woman he loved and whom he inadvertently killed. He is convinced that her soul is trapped in Barovia, and that she is reborn over and over again. Each new life is a chance for Strahd to finally win her love and bring her into the embrace of undeath—a chance he inevitably fails at due to outside intervention or his own moral failings.

The Forlorn Land

No civilized folk call the Forlorn Land home. It was once the homeland of the Forfarian people, a culture of warrior-poets and peaceful druids, but they were

hounded to extinction or exile centuries ago. Now, the only known inhabitants of the blasted hills and heaths are ghosts, goblins, and the occasional mad wanderer, doomed to die before too long.

Unknown to most outsiders, a desperate resistance movement dwells in the woods and caverns of the Forlorn Land, descendants of the Forfarian druids who stand against the doom that befell their people so long ago. These druids are locked in a perpetual guerilla war against the goblin hordes that haunt the hills of the domain, working to uncover the secrets of the goblins' dread master and recover the lost treasures of their people. The druids believe that the artifacts of the Forfarian people hold the key to defeating their enemy, who was once a nobleman of their ruling lineage and a ward of the druids themselves.

The land is speckled with ruined villages, fallen keeps, hidden druidic redoubts, forgotten dungeons, and monster-filled caverns—all perfect locations for thrilling adventures... or possibly perfect tombs for unwitting adventurers lured by the prospect of treasure.

Tropes

The Forlorn Land is something of an anomaly within the Balinok Mountains. While most of the domains evoke the feeling of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Forlorn is instead more like the rocky hills of the Scottish highlands. Its inclusion in the cluster is primarily a matter of historical connection—the Forfarian ethnic group that calls Barovia home have their origins in Forlorn—but also a nod to the idea that different regions with similar environments wind up producing similar cultures. The honor-bound warrior-poets of Forfar are

not that different from the ancestral peoples of either Barovia or Gundarak, save for their propensity to wear kilts.

The last link is more of a wink-and-nod in-joke: if Barovia is *Castlevania* (a game about a vampire lord and the adventurer who fights him) and Gundarak is *Castlevania II* (a less-successful sequel), then Forlorn is *Ghosts 'n Goblins* (a similar game from a similar era released by a different studio). The domain is more intended for “traditional” fantasy adventures—dungeon crawls and ruin exploration—with a few twists and horror themes.

Themes

- **A Haunted Land:** The Forlorn Land is a place of ruins and lost legacies. Everything within hints at a once-great era that has been worn down by disaster and the passage of time. Every location should include nods to the past—the skeletons of the dead, broken relics of another age, scrawled writings in ancient languages, and the like. Even the monsters that dwell here pay homage to the region’s legacy; goblins wear tattered tartans and carry rusted claymores, while ghosts sing lullabies in tongues forgotten by modern folk.



- **Ghosts and Goblins:** The most common foes in the Forlorn Land are the ubiquitous goblins that dwell in every ruined village, seemingly spawned by the soil itself rather than having any culture or civilization of their own. The goblins live only to torment and kill those luckless enough to fall into their hands, but their fear of the sun can offer respite and safety to those who can fend them off or avoid them long enough for dawn to come. Virtually every ruin is also home to one or more ghosts, who range from sad phantoms weeping their stories at any who will listen to murderous poltergeists taking out their rage on the living.
- **The Past Lives On:** While the phenomenon is most pronounced at Castle Tristennoira, all of Forlorn is a place where time becomes *thin*. The past comes to haunt the present, not just in the form of ghosts and ruins, but by literally transporting travelers into bygone eras. An empty village can suddenly turn back into the bustling town it was centuries ago, allowing heroes to learn about the mysteries and secrets of the land firsthand. When the tides of the past recede, however, those who were swept up in the can sometimes find themselves facing a new threat that came silently upon them while they were lost in reverie.

Notable Locations

Castle Tristennoira squats like a beast at the heart of the Forlorn Land, a ruined fortress haunted by goblins and the unquiet spirits of the dead. Rumors abound regarding the castle and its monstrous lord, but the most persistent story claims that the castle somehow moves through time, existing

simultaneously in the present and multiple periods in its own past.

The hamlet of **Forfarmax** technically lies within the borders of Barovia, but its inhabitants are all ethnic Forfarrians and refugees from the terror that destroyed their people and way of life. The hamlet has grown up around the semi-ruined fortifications of Castle Forfarmax, and it is currently led by the elder Ceridwen ApNir, secretly a druid and defender of the lore of the lost Barony of Forfar.

The **Lake of Red Tears** is a quiet loch in the northern reaches of the Forlorn Land, notably primarily for its murky rust-red waters and the legends of a monstrous lake serpent dwelling within them. The stories are true enough, though so few have survived an encounter with “Aggie” that the creature’s actual appearance and nature are a matter of debate.

The hidden druid enclave known as **Sanctuary** remains hidden from the eyes of the dread lord of Forlorn and his goblins. The secrecy of its inhabitants borders on paranoia, but it has served them well in the century since they established the enclave in a series of deep caves beneath the rocky hills of the domain. This secrecy may well be coming to an end with the increased activity of the druids of the Rowan Faction.

The Darklord

The noble lord Rivalin ApTosh loved his wife, Fiona ApBlanc, so much that he would not abandon her even in death. When Rivalin was transformed into a vampire after a battle, he returned home to his pregnant wife and begged her mercy and understanding. Fiona loved her husband as well and could not bear to turn him away. She permitted him to feed on her blood so that he would not harm innocents, but the taint of undeath

marked their child Tristen at birth, making him into a dhampir.

When the townsfolk discovered the truth about Rivalin and Fiona, they killed and beheaded him, then hanged her from a tree in the nearby druid grove. Fiona had just enough time to give Tristen to a druid named Rual, begging the woman to protect the child. Rual could not convince the townsfolk to spare Fiona, but she was able to hide Tristen away from their fury.

As Tristen grew older, the vampiric taint in his blood grew stronger, and Rual began searching for a way to purify the boy and free him from his bloodlust. When she found him stalking animals in the sacred forest and drinking their blood, she knew she was out of time.

Tristen found the old woman preparing a ritual and drew the worst possible conclusion: that she was going to kill him to protect the forest. He chose to survive at any cost and attacked her before the ritual could be completed, drinking her blood. Unfortunately, in preparation for the ritual, Rual had imbibed a large quantity of holy water to purify herself, turning her blood into a deadly poison for Tristen. As both of them lay there dying, Rual cursed Tristen to never again leave the sacred grove.

The next morning, Tristen awoke in the grove, convinced that the previous night had been nothing more than a terrible nightmare. When he tried to leave, however, he found that going more than a hundred feet from the heartwood tree at the center of the grove filled him with blinding pain and left him unable to do more than pitifully crawl back toward it. Worse still, when night fell, he died again in burning agony—rising as a ghost to haunt the grove until he was reborn once more with the coming of dawn.

Over the years, through theft and murder, Tristen built himself a castle and

convinced the nearby locals to laud him as a nobleman. Through the next several centuries, Tristen would wed, sire children, and bring strife to his neighbors. His machinations led to the deaths of his family, the slaughter of his people, and the eventual destruction of the entirety of his homeland. The dark magics he discovered allowed him to seize control of the goblins that haunted the rocky hills of the region, and to transform any captives into more of their ilk. Eventually, the few harried survivors of Tristen's raids would flee the domain entirely, dubbing it "the Forlorn Land," and leaving him the ruler of naught but ruins and goblins.

Tristen now lives alone in his crumbling castle, a dhampir by day and a ghost by night. He wanders the time-shifting halls of Castle Tristenoira, raging at his failures and longing for what might have been. During periods of lucidity, he commands the goblins of the domain to hunt for the surviving druids and deforest the land. He believes that destroying the druids and their trees will lead to the end of Rual's curse upon him, allowing him to finally be free of his divided existence.

Gundarak

Gundarak lies southwest of Barovia, between that land and Invidia. Like both of its neighbors, Gundarak is richly forested, as well as being less mountainous than Barovia. Still, the majority of the terrain is steep foothills, making the topography a wrinkled maze of cliffs, crags, and sharp drops. The southeastern corner of Gundarak is home to the most spectacular gorge in the region, with walls that drop nearly a thousand feet in some places.

The nation is less organized and advanced than its northern neighbor, largely due to the anarchic and chaotic state in which the country finds itself. While ostensibly ruled by a hereditary duke, the current ruler is a weak-willed and self-indulgent man with a penchant for violence and terror. Many of his vassals have fallen into tacit rebellion, though none of them have the forces necessary to overthrow their tyrant—and most of them hate each other enough that they fight one another as often as they fight their common enemy.

Gundarakites struggle daily to survive in their own land. They never know when a “tax collector” will show up to steal their hard-earned grain, lumber, or goods, or to demand that their taxes be paid in slaves taken from among their sons and daughters. Since the central government has collapsed, a single village caught between warring factions might have to pay their “taxes” several times in a year—or several times in a month.

Many villages have become havens for one or more rebel forces, though this is a dangerous game. Duke Gundar is a lax but vicious man; when he hears rumors of peasants aiding his enemies, he is liable to raze the entire village rather than take the time to determine the truth or falsity of the rumors. Despite the risk, many villages prefer to have their own protectors, regardless of those protectors’ virtue—and some simply hate Gundar and his thugs so much that they willingly risk death to spite him.

Peasant homes tend to be rough-hewn affairs made of pitch-sealed logs and roofed in thatch. The majority of buildings in every village have been rebuilt several times, and the people no longer have the resources or the spirit to build anything better. Streets are muddy and riddled with potholes, and roads between villages are poorly maintained.

Bandits are everywhere, and many of them call themselves government officials.

Tropes

If Barovia is the sleepy Balkan village of Gothic film and literature, then Gundarak is the Balkans as they have existed since before World War I—a place of near-constant strife and struggle, where peace can turn to bloody battle in the blink of an eye. Most people have long since forgotten why the fighting is happening, if there was ever a reason at all. Now, the fighting is its own reason and purpose, and it’s unlikely that it will stop until no one has strength left to raise a weapon.

Themes

- **Internal Strife:** The people of Gundarak are their own worst enemies. Villages that share blood ties, marriages, and old friendships can swiftly turn into bloody enemies if they wind up on opposite sides of an arbitrary line drawn by others. Brother fights brother, with no end in sight. The ultimate cause of this strife is pride—a stubborn pride that makes people prefer bloodshed to admitting they were wrong.
- **Desperation:** The domain breeds desperate people. Villages are perpetually on the edge of starvation due to burdensome taxes; militias are perpetually underfunded and poorly armed; the nobles that command armies are harried on all sides. Gundarak is a pressure cooker that frequently explodes. The general air of desperation means that people often make bad decisions based on perceived need. This can include a village deciding to waylay foreigners for their valuables, a commander

making an ill-conceived attack based on unfounded fears, or a platoon deserting their unit before an “inevitable loss” to become bandits.

- **Factionalism:** The center cannot hold, and anarchy is loosed upon the world. Every attempt to consolidate power inevitably goes wrong in some fashion, leaving the power base splintered and chaotic. Large bandit gangs split into smaller bandit gangs; successful armies find their commanders falling out and turning upon one another. Betrayal leads to schisms, even when people seem to be reaching for the same goal. The factions change constantly, if usually openly; subtle political machinations are beyond most of the warring nobles.

Notable Locations

Castle Hunadora is an old but strong fortification, obviously created for defense over beauty. As Duke Gundar’s stronghold, the castle has often been besieged by rebels but its mighty walls have never been breached. Outside the castle walls lie an apple orchard that grows only black apples. The duke’s tendency to hang defeated rebels (and his own failed generals) from the trees of the orchard makes the locals shun its fruit, even in times of famine.

Teufeldorf is the largest town in Gundarak, as well as the home of numerous secret rebel groups and underground criminal syndicates. Membership in both organizations is common, since rebels are always looking for black market weapons and smugglers are rarely fond of the duke’s heavy-handed rule. Gundar himself is well aware of both the rebels and the criminals and ignores them; people focused on turning a profit rarely wind up

acting against their own selfish interests, meaning that the rebels rarely do more than talk and plan.

Zeidenburg, on the other hand, is known for being a hotbed of sedition. Whenever a new rebellion breaks out, it always seems to start here. The only thing that has stayed Gundar’s hand from simply leveling the city and stringing up its entire population is the rich farmland of the area, which makes Zeidenburg the domain’s breadbasket. The local rebellious streak is exacerbated by the presence of a secret Wild Hunt cult that recruits extensively from the townsfolk.

The Darklord

Nharov Gundar is the darklord of Gundarak, and its ostensible ruler. Always a vicious man, Duke Gundar reveled in slaughter and bloodshed as signs of bravery and glory. He was a young man, ready to inherit his father’s lands and titles, when a terrible beast began hunting down the noblemen of his home. Gundar, intent to prove his worthiness, led a group of his finest, bloodiest warriors to the creature’s lair. Instead, Gundar’s men found themselves prey for the beast, and in the end only Gundar was left.

The beast did not kill Gundar, instead revealing itself to him. The beast was a woman, Graendel, who had been savaged and left for dead by the king’s troops. When she called out for vengeance, the Wild Hunt answered and transformed her into a half-dead monster, a blood-drinker and eater of the dead.

She blamed Gundar for her suffering, and she felt that simple death was not enough for him. She drained him, then raised him again as her servant. He would spend generations as her minion, abused and mistreated as he had once abused and mistreated others. When Graendel

was finally slain by a mighty hero, Gundar fled. He had learned no humility from his captivity, only growing in bloodlust and hate, and the first village he found became a week-long meal.

In time, Gundar began to gather men like himself to his banner once more, seeking to become the noble leader he had always been destined to become. He seized a wilderness region and called it Gundarak; unfortunately, Gundar proved a better conqueror than ruler, and his land has been a chaotic battlefield almost since the beginning. Virtually every one of his original lieutenants turned against him at their first chance, and his replacements have been less and less competent—and more and more bloodthirsty—with each new purge.

Duke Nharov Gundar is a bloody beast with pretensions of being a man. His once-fine furs are matted with blood from previous battles, and his shaggy black hair and beard are rarely groomed more than dunking his head in a horse trough. He wants to rule but doesn't know how to do anything but slaughter, and he is weak-willed and indecisive about matters of state. He frequently changes his mind, then kills his servants in fits of pique when they fail to know what he wants next. Gundar feels trapped by his position, but he doesn't dare step down; his pride won't let him.

Gundar is a vampire, though he maintains many of the trappings of a living man. He has even sired children, many of whom have become his servants and others who are among his worst enemies. His lieutenants and minions suspect that their master is inhuman, but most of them are evil enough that they consider that an advantage against their enemies.

Invidia

Invidia is a wild, sparsely populated realm with vast stretches of dark, forbidding forests, rounded hills, and broad, slow rivers. This land, at the far southwestern corner of the region, is in the low foothills of the Balinoks, well below the dangerous heights of Barovia. Where Barovia's citizenry is isolated by geography, Invidia's people are isolated by preference. Many border villages are filled with Gundarakite rebels plotting their nation's overthrow, quite a few river villages are home to smugglers and pirates, and even the larger towns seem unfriendly and suspicious.

Invidia's buildings are tall, with steeply gabled roofs tiled in black wooden shingles. Although plastered and painted a creamy dun color, most Invidian structures have crumbling facades that expose the red brick underneath. Interiors are wooden, the staircases and rafters darkly stained and intricately carved with grapevine designs. Baroque towers, topped with charcoal-grey cupolas and grim statuary, loom above the grandest buildings. Invidia's climate is temperate, although the realm boasts long, pleasant summers.

The country is currently in the throes of a power struggle between the former queen, Gabrielle Aderre, and her son, Malocchio. Most of the country is held by Duke Malocchio, an ambitious young man who seeks to unify Invidia and bring it into the present. Queen Gabrielle is supported by a loose network of rebels and guerillas who want to return her to the throne and bring back the days of loose, decentralized government.

Invidians are infamous for their passionate personalities; however, it is not a compliment to say that someone has an "Invidian heart." Invidians are hot-

tempered and tempestuous, frequently allowing their passions to get the better of them. Marital infidelity is common, as are the grudges and spilt blood that inevitably follow. Bitterness is nursed for years over small (or even imagined) slights, and it is not unknown for violence to erupt even within families when tempers flare.

Despite its insularity, Invidia is a nation with a fair bit of wealth from river trade. Many Mistways connect the rivers of Invidia to those of other lands, particularly the Forest of Beasts and the Civilized Crescent, and trade in lumber and pelts keeps the markets of the region bustling. A great many Invidians live on the rivers of their homeland as much as they live on shore, and quite a few villages are built on stilts above the water.

Tropes

Invidia is a land of hot-blooded lovers and cold-blooded seekers of vengeance. The people are gossips and backbiters; a person's public face has little resemblance to the one they wear in private, but the truth comes out in moments of intense passion.

In some ways, Invidia is intended to play to the tropes of urban and rural drama as much as to those of horror; the horror in Invidia is the horror in finding out that your husband is sleeping with your sister, only to kill them both in a moment of passion. The horror of realizing that your loved ones are not who you think they are plays into the personal themes of Invidia.

Themes

- **Family:** Passion and betrayal seem intensely heightened when it comes to matters of family. Virtually every family in Invidia is a hotbed of secrets waiting to come out and damage someone. Love and hate go hand in

hand with families; it is difficult to care for someone without also resenting them in some way, and Invidian passions inevitably turn such resentment bloody.

- **Passion:** Sudden bursts of passionate emotion are common in Invidia. A man can decide to cheat on his wife of twenty years after a pretty girl winks at him, and his wife can kill him in a moment of terrible anger after finding out. Bad decisions made in the heat of the moment are a frequent occurrence; attempts to conceal those bad decisions inevitably lead to worse decisions, or to an even more dramatic revelation of the truth.
- **Vengeance:** Invidians run hot and cold. Passionate mistakes are frequent, but so are cold-blooded vendettas. The smallest slight can cause years of bad blood and retribution, and every act of vengeance begets another act of vengeance in return. Trust, once broken, can never be fully repaired; betrayals lead to resentment, which in turn lead to attempts to “even the score.” An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.

Notable Locations

Castle Loupet was the stronghold of Baron Bakholis, the former tyrant of Invidia, until he was slain by Gabrielle Aderre. She made the castle her home for a number of years until she was usurped by her son, Malocchio, who now uses the castle as the staging point for the conquest of his mother's realm. The castle is an ugly building, constructed solely for defense, with deep dungeons beneath it where it is rumored that Malocchio performs horrifying torments on the political prisoners he takes.

Curriculo is a burgeoning trade town that does business with everyone from Barovian merchants to Gundarakite rebels. It is also the home of Gabrielle's court-in-exile, including Matton, her wolfler lover, and her infant daughter, Lucita. Gabrielle wonders if Matton is the father of her child, or if it is Ardonk Szerieza, the leader of the Gundarakite rebels who she seduced to her side. Each man believes himself to be Lucita's father, and the revelation of the truth could destroy Gabrielle's family as well as her plans to retake her throne.

Karina is the largest town in Invidia, the capital from which Malocchio's new government rules. It is a town in perpetual decay, sustained by trade with its neighbors but constantly straining beneath the heavy taxes of the Dukkar. The town feels empty from Malocchio's frequent purges and arrests of "dissidents," but the natives who remain prefer his chaotic rule to the possibility of being lorded over by Gundarakite foreigners.

Valetta is a small but thriving community of loggers that harbors a dark secret. Several years ago, the loggers of Valetta were in competition with the nearby town of Beltis—and they were losing. The mayor of Valetta put together a group of blackhearted cutthroats who went to Beltis in the dead of night and murdered everyone there, throwing their bodies into the river and burning down their town. The mayor and his murderous cronies still rule Valetta, and they eliminate anyone who might piece together the truth. Beltis is a haunted ruin, filled with vengeful spirits who seek to destroy those that killed them, but unable to leave the site of their deaths.

The Darklord

Gabrielle Aderre is a dark-eyed woman apparently in her early twenties, her youthful appearance marred only by a streak of grey in her black hair. She dresses like one of the wandering folk, in the colorful style of her mother, and typically goes barefoot. Though she began styling herself "Queen Gabrielle" after killing Invidia's previous tyrant, King Bakholis, she rarely made proclamations, never collected taxes, and seemingly had little interest in ruling.

Gabrielle's mother was a slave in a distant land, escaping while pregnant. She would never tell Gabrielle about her father, saying only that his evil would lurk within Gabrielle for her entire life. The older woman raised Gabrielle to believe she was evil too, and that she should never marry or have children for fear of passing her evil onto them. In time, her mother's abuse became too much for Gabrielle to bear; she betrayed her mother and left her to die. Her mother's death did not satisfy Gabrielle, and she wandered from place to place, turning loved ones against one another with her magic.

In time, she came to the notice of Bakholis, the tyrant of Invidia, and was taken before him as a captive. She turned the tables on her captor and killed him, driving out or turning most of his servants to her side. She began calling herself "queen" as an amusement, albeit one that quickly faded, and satisfied herself with petty games of cruelty among her subjects. Her favorite game was to seduce a married man or woman, reveal the betrayal at a dramatic moment, and watch as a family tore itself apart.

Gabrielle was eventually seduced herself, by a mysterious gentleman caller who left her after a single night of

passion. The child from that union, Malocchio, possessed unnatural powers of his own, leading Gabrielle to believe that he was a child of prophecy. When the boy turned thirteen, he used his powers to seize control of the throne from his mother, turning her servants against her and nearly driving her mad.

She fled from her home and took control of a group of Gundarakite rebels who she now uses to strike back against her own son. It's not that she wants the throne, particularly—she just wants revenge for having her own tricks used against her, and for her son's ingratitude.



The Civilized Crescent

The Civilized Crescent is a region of rolling hills, fertile dales, and peaceful coastlines that can be properly described as idyllic in appearance. The terrors here are subtler than those of other lands, but no less deadly. The monsters disguise themselves, the magic hides in the shadows, and the threats often come with a hand of peace extended in false friendship.

The southernmost area of the region is composed of the twin nations of Dorvinia, to the east, and Borca, to the west. Their rulers are cousins and both nations are traditionally allied, though rumor says that recent years have seen tensions rising between them.

The curve of the land arcs northwest from Borca into Richemulot, then directly north into Dementlieu and Mordent. While Borca and Dorvinia are hilly and even a little mountainous in places, the other nations are comprised of low, rolling hills, broad forested plains, and—in Dementlieu and Mordent's case—miles and miles of coastline.

North of Mordent, the coastline turns bleak and deadly, becoming wretched cliffs and freezing seas. The highlands above Mordent give way to Lamordia, a mountainous domain that holds itself aloof from the other nations even as it considers itself the most civilized among them.

All six nations share Mordentish as a common language, though many Dorvinians and Borcans also speak Balok due to their long association with Mistways that lead into the Balinok Mountains. Their cultures are quite different, but there is little in the way of racial or ethnic strife in the Civilized Crescent. Even nonhumans like elves and

dwarves are welcomed in most places, though rarely with completely open arms.

Five of the six nations that make up the region have a unique mutual defense treaty due to the frequent emergence of Falkovnia from the Mists. The Treaty of Four Towers (named for the four great families who signed it) allows all five nations of the compact to donate money, material, and volunteers for a militia of mutual defense against Falkovnian aggression. To stay in fighting trim, these volunteers are often used to hunt bandits or monsters, and the influx of resources has pushed weapon technology forward by leaps and bounds. Firearms are growing in commonality in this region, and the militia is beginning to seriously consider fielding cannons, though the strategy for their use isn't yet mature.

Rationality and technology are being embraced, and magic is looked upon as a serious scholarly pursuit, rather than a mystical tradition. Philosophy, politics, and trade are highly developed in the Civilized Crescent, but the divide between the rich and the poor has created a new kind of pressure. The wealthiest nations of the region are also those with the greatest disparity between the rich citizens and the poor; well-off individuals can live like kings of other lands, while the common folk starve and languish without decent opportunities for work in overcrowded cities. Wealth and civilization have not brought wisdom—and the pressure continues to build.

Languages

The vast majority of people in the Civilized Crescent speak Mordentish, which in turn has two mutually intelligible

dialects. High Mordentish has a more refined sound and is usually spoken by the wealthy and aristocratic, who can afford the tutoring necessary to affect the proper pronunciation and accent. Low Mordentish is spoken by more people and has a more relaxed pronunciation that gives it an almost slurred sound.

Some of the traders, merchants, and nobles of Borca and Dorvinia also speak Balok due to the area's long association with the Balinok Mountains Cluster. Indeed, many say that the low mountains of eastern Dorvinia and southern Borca are just a continuation of the Balinoks, separated by the Mists.

Connections

Both Borca and Dorvinia have reliable Mistways leading to the Balinok Mountains Cluster. The most reliable and notable of them is Borca's Silver Road, which leads from eastern Borca to southern Barovia, merging with the Old Svalich Road that crosses the country, and eventually continuing on past eastern Barovia into the Far Steppes domain of Nova Vaasa.

The entirety of Dementlieu and Mordent's western border is the coastline of the Sea of Sorrows, and many distant islands have been discovered by sailors from those two nations. Reliable water-based Mistways include the Wake of the Loa, which leads to the coast of Souragne; the Way of Venomous Tears, which takes ships into the waters of Rokushima Taiyou; and the much-feared Leviathan's Clutches, a Mistway that can lead ships to the Verdurous Lands—but whose currents cannot bring them back.

The Church of Ezra

Founded less than a hundred years ago by Yakov Dilisnya in the land of Borca, the Church of Ezra has managed to gain a

huge following and acceptance in that time nonetheless. At its founding, the young Yakov claimed that a divine entity called Ezra, Our Guardian in the Mists, had given him a message to spread to all the world.

According to most traditions in the church, Ezra was a virtuous mortal woman who, despairing of the evils of the world, forever surrendered her mortality to the Mists to become an eternal guardian of mankind. The fractious sects of the Church of Ezra have been debating the true nature and teachings of their ascended patron for decades. Since its founding, the Ezran faith has spawned three additional sanctioned sects, as well as dozens of unsupported heresies, minor sects, and regional variants.

The original sect, called the Home Faith, is centered in Borca. Its primary tenets revolve around duty, obedience, and following the ordered hierarchy of the church. The Home Faith appoints Ezra's faithful clerics, called anchorites, to the task of protecting and healing Her faithful, keeping them safe from the forces of evil. Wandering clerics and missionaries are known as wardens, and going on mission for a few years is a common way for priests to gain swift promotion upon returning to their home church.

Several other denominations of the faith have grown in popularity in other nations, outside the sanctity and influence of the Home Faith. In order to preserve unity among the local churches, the leaders of each sect have agreed to form an ecclesiastic council on matters of the faith, with the most prominent sect leaders acting as chiefs on that council. The leader of the Home Faith acts as "first among equals" in matters of the faith, but rarely uses his authority to overrule other sects.

Because of the politicking involved in sectarian matters and the wealth that flows into the church from the aristocracy, many feel that the Church of Ezra has become too worldly. Such critics are simply looked upon by the faithful as more lost souls in need of preaching.

The symbol of the Church is a silver long sword, blade down, superimposed on an alabaster kite shield and adorned with a sprig of belladonna or wolfsbane. While both the sword and the shield are part of the symbol, anchorites generally refer to their holy symbols as “shields” and often use sword-and-shield metaphors as part of their religious doctrine. Anchorites are encouraged to learn the miracles of the Church, which are seen as a divine gift from Ezra herself; most who do so focus on spells of protection and healing. Clerics of Ezra are also encouraged to learn fencing or other martial disciplines in order to protect the faithful in time of need.

The Witches of Hala

According to Hala’s holy text, *Tales of the Ages*, nine gods created the world from the roiling mists of Chaos. The gods then withdrew, intending to allow mortals to fill their world with acts of both good and evil. However, the mortals lacked wisdom, and the world was soon filled with pain and anguish. Just one of the Nine Gods, the goddess Hala, returned to the world to ease its suffering. She gathered together thirteen men and thirteen women, and she taught them the secrets of magic. Those that practice the mystical and religious rites of Hala are sometimes called witches.

The Cult of Hala is a mysterious and highly secretive faith. Her witches operate a number of hospices scattered throughout the world, where they offer rest and healing to anyone who comes to

their door. The church does not actively seek new followers, however, and nowhere is the Church of Hala the dominant religion. Witches of Hala are very common in the Civilized Crescent, where they suffer few of the persecutions and prejudices that they face in other lands. Commoners often curse the “sly witches” with one breath even as they ask for their help with the next; Hala’s faithful are used to this kind of treatment and often struggle to reconcile their faith with their anger.

While Hala’s chosen call themselves “witches,” there are other, darker magic-users who also fall under this sobriquet. Hala’s priests call such evil casters “warlocks” (or oath-breakers) and hold that magic in its purest form is a divine gift for all people, one that is perverted and corrupted in the same way that many divine gifts are. Warlocks are among the most common enemies of the faith, and few things will rouse a peaceful witch to sudden wrath more quickly than news of a warlock’s appearance.

Halans often work serpent motifs into their clothing or jewelry to recognize one another, and they have an entire system of secret hand-signs and code phrases to help with identification. When they can wear it openly, the symbol of their goddess is a ring of thirteen serpents, each devouring the tail of the one before it. They call this sign “ouroboros,” symbolizing the eternal cycle of nature.

Borca

Borca is a beauteous domain scarred by betrayal and ruthlessness. The domain lies along the northwestern edge of low mountains, in the rolling dales that stretch out beyond the icy crags of Mount Gries. Borca is a green, fertile land blanketed

with wildflowers throughout the spring and summer. Ancient, verdant forests cover much of the domain, overgrown with tangled brambles and twining ivy. Borca has a temperate climate, leaning toward severe winters and cool, pleasant summers.

The trees and shrubs are heavy with nuts and fruits, and the ground is blanketed by spongy little toadstools. Most of these morsels, however, ooze with sweet-smelling toxins, a notorious feature of Borcan foodstuffs usually betrayed by a telltale purplish tinge. The domain is also known for its geothermal activity; hot springs (called Hellspouts) bubble up from the ground in many areas, spewing steam and sulfurous fumes into the air.

Homes and shops in Borca are broad, massive buildings of plastered and whitewashed brick. The gabled rooftops are shingled in thin, charcoal-grey wood and topped with slim, knobby spires. Wooden trim of dark green or blue, carved with stylized vines and mushrooms, graces the doors and windows. Small, white marble statues of the goddess Ezra stand serenely at the entrances of many homes. The smooth stone streets are narrow, shaded by the overhanging upper floors of buildings.

Borcans have average, athletic statures. They seem to age quickly, and have skin tones ranging from fair to creamy tan. Hair and eye colors range wildly, but dark brown is common for both. Men of all classes keep their hair at a medium length, allowing it to grow wild and roguish. Women grow their hair quite long, adorning it with thin ribbons and wooden or tortoiseshell combs.

Clothing is utilitarian among commoners, with men dressing in loose shirts and trousers and women in blouses and medium-length skirts. Dull earth tones are the norm in such humble garb.

Nobles, on the other hand, dress in baroque Dementlieuese fashions, though they shy from bright colors, preferring a black and white scheme accentuated with silver jewelry. Commoners and nobles alike don more colorful clothing exclusively for festivals.

As a people, Borcans have a sullen air about them, an attitude that has permeated all aspects of daily life. This is largely due to the crushing taxation most people endure, combined with the cruel, arbitrary rule of Borca's ruler, Ivana Boritsi, the so-called Black Widow. This oppression has worn down what was once a lusty, life-loving attitude among Borcans, leaving a defeated people who go about their business with a resigned fatalism. A weary, pained look clings to their features; they shuffle through their tasks as if afflicted with a numbing poison. Their only respite is the grace of the goddess Ezra, whose largest and most influential sect of priests goes forth from the Great Cathedral of Levkarest.

Although the realm is ostensibly governed under a feudal system, Ivana Boritsi is the only true landowner, with all citizens in direct vassalage to her. Borca's prominent aristocracy is a mere plaything for Ivana; nobles enjoy their status only as long as it pleases the Black Widow. Ivana grants and revokes noble titles erratically, creating a perpetual flux in the makeup of the Borcan nobility.

All matters of Borcan law are contracts between individuals, and the basic unit of governance is contract law. These laws are enforced by tax assessors—little more than Ivana's personal thugs—and landlords, who are responsible for both collecting taxes and arbitrating disagreements. Needless to say, corruption isn't just rampant but is actually expected; there is no law in Borca save that which can be bought with coin.

Tropes

Borca is very much intended to remind players of Italy during the Renaissance, albeit with a slightly more advanced level of technology. Rich patrons hire artists and philosophers while playing ruthless games of politics that often end in death. The common folk struggle under a burden of taxation that is both random and crushing, and justice can only be had through vigilantism.

The Boritsi family is supposed to be reminiscent of the Borgias, including their connections to the church, their patronage of the arts, and their thorough corruption and venality.

Themes

- **Governmental Corruption:** Borca is a land where the law is almost openly for sale. Different tax assessors offer competing rates for ships coming in to harbor, landlords can charge whatever they want as long as they keep their taxes flowing in, and common folk have almost no voice in their own governance. Almost anyone can be bribed, but few people are willing to say so in such crude language. “Convenience fees,” “local taxes,” and “overhead costs” are common code phrases when asking for bribes.
- **Beauty Without, Decay Within:** The people of the upper classes are predominantly good-looking—and predominantly morally bankrupt. No one cares how many commoners die in sweatshops as long as trade continues. Their tasteful clothes, fine jewelry, and erudite manners conceal all manner of depravity and decadence. In a more literal sense, most monsters in Borca look just like people—until the time comes to feed.

- **Church and State:** Despite the corruption at all levels of government and the decadence common to the nobility, the Church of Ezra is popular among both aristocrats and commoners. Nobles give huge sums to the building of churches and the creation of religious art, while commoners hope for justice in the next world that they cannot receive in this one. People tend to hold to religious beliefs even when their actions would indicate godlessness.

Notable Locations

Levkarest is the capital of Borca, a massive trading center where everything can be found if the price is right. The sheer number of music halls, art galleries, and opera houses allow the city to compete with Port-a-Lucine for the title of culture capital of the Civilized Crescent. The city is also home to the estates of Ivana Boritsi and her brother Sulo, who is the city’s governor and Ivana’s closest advisor, as well as the first monument of the Church of Ezra, the Great Cathedral.

Rising from the noble’s district of Levkarest, **Misericordia** is the home estate of Ivana Boritsi, a testament to her wealth and refinement. The massive mansion at the heart of the estate is surrounded by miles of gardens, greenhouses, and follies, while the vaulted and marble-floored corridors play host to untold numbers of secret passages and hidden chambers. Supposedly, Ivana’s private quarters and personal laboratories can only be accessed by winding one’s way through a labyrinth of such hidden passages.

Sturben is a scarred town whose inhabitants have the mentality of a fortress under siege. Caught unprepared years ago by the appearance of the

parasite-domain Falkovnia, the town was the home of the atrocity now called the Widow's Massacre. The town is one of the few walled settlements in the domain, and huge swaths of the land bear the marks of Falkovnian siege weapons. The region is also well known for its many curative (and caustic) hot springs. One of these springs is built under the marble dragon statue known as Wyrmsbreath which squats at the center of the town; condemned prisoners are sometimes hung in a cage before the statue's mouth, where they are scalded to death by the stream of superheated water that sprays forth every three hours.

The Darklord

Ivana Boritsi is a dark-haired, blue-eyed beauty who seems to be no more than eighteen, despite verifiably being more than sixty years old. Alchemy (and, some whisper, dark magic) have kept her young and beautiful through the decades even as she has grown crueler and more ruthless. She is the sole true landowner in Borca, and all members of the aristocracy hold their positions at her sufferance.

Ivana's mother Camille was the former ruler of Borca, as well as its former darklord. Camille was a bitter, jealous woman who poisoned many of her own relatives and all of her husbands. When Ivana was a teenager, she fell in love with a poet named Pieter; Camille was furious that her daughter had found true love when it had eluded her for so long. She seduced Pieter while disguised as Ivana, then revealed the poet's "betrayal," and convinced Ivana to murder the boy for his indiscretions. A year later, Ivana murdered Camille and took her place as ruler and darklord.

Known as the "Black Widow" for her habit of seducing people, bedding them, then killing them, the truth is that Ivana's

very touch is poison. The alchemical process she used to manufacture the poison with which she killed her mother also made her forever young and turned all of her bodily fluids—blood, sweat, and tears alike—into horrific venom. Ivana sometimes makes connections with handsome young men or women and beds them in the hope that they will prove immune to her curse; so far, none have. In her worst moods, Ivana delights in destroying the relationships of others and humors those that court her just for the chance to poison them later.

Ivana was childhood friends with Ivan Dilisnya, the ruler of Dorvinia and her cousin. As the two have aged, Ivan has become jealous of Ivana's eternal youth, a gift that is not within her power to give him. This bitterness has become outright rivalry, which has only been exacerbated by the knowledge that they can roam free in one another's domains.

Ivana bears physical marks of her curse; her lips and fingernails are a pale blue, as in someone suffering from cyanosis. She typically covers this flaw with makeup, but all of her lovers have seen it—usually just before their deaths. Ivana has managed to distill her own poisonous blood into an alchemical elixir that grants longevity and youth to those that drink it, while also draining them of passion and feeling, but this elixir is useless to her cousin Ivan, whose own alchemical mastery makes him immune to such toxins.

Dementlieu

The coastal domain of Dementlieu is a bastion of modernity, a land of secrets and hidden loyalties. The domain lies on a broad, green floodplain dappled with lush woodlands and heaths. The realm's

western shore along the Sea of Sorrows is blessed with numerous natural ports. Although the terrain is flat, Dementlieu's soil is sandy, and crop yields tend to be low, with stunted plants and small fruits. Scattered, sun-dappled forests cover the regions that agriculture has not claimed. The coastline is edged with rolling sand dune beaches. Dementlieu's climate is blessedly mild, characterized by frequent precipitation and moderate temperatures. Severe winters and sweltering summers are not unheard of, however.

The buildings in the domain are tall and narrow, densely packed edifices of dull brown stone that loom over the narrow, twisting village streets. Windows and doorways are trimmed with whitewashed wood, and the shallow, gabled roofs are shingled in rich, dark brown wood. Towers are crowned with elegant stone ornaments and statues of legendary artists and civic leaders.



The Dementlieuese tend toward slim but athletic builds and strong features with high cheekbones. Skin tones range from very pale to olive-tan, while eye color ranges from pale blue to green to dark brown. Hair is usually dark blond to light brown in color, with the occasional auburn. Beards and mustaches are common among men but always kept neatly trimmed and styled. Women never cut their hair short; noblewomen pin up their locks very meticulously, while poor women braid their hair.

Clothing is important to the Dementlieuese, especially among the nobility. Commoner men wear dark woolen trousers and light cotton shirts and don cloth caps whether inside or outdoors. Gentlemen prefer breeches and silk shirts with tailed coats, as well as tall black hats. Wigs are considered proper for men in public life. Commoner and noble women alike wear long, dark dresses with high-button boots and always wear hats when outdoors. Women of the lower classes wear simple bonnets, but the hat of a noblewoman is large and elaborate.

The Dementlieuese consider themselves to be a highly civilized people. They appreciate beauty and learning in all its forms, and their society is structured according to rigid etiquette. Adherence to decorum is vital, and those who overstep the delicate balance between deference and bravado find themselves scorned. The Dementlieuese believe that their advanced society has earned them a place of respect among the civilized realms of the world, and they say so openly. Not all outsiders are grateful for Dementlieu's contributions, and many folk consider the Dementlieuese to be shiftless fops who produce nothing of value.

Tropes

Dementlieu is intended to be a stylistic representation of enlightenment-era France. In some ways, the domain is a showcase for what France might have looked like if the French Revolution hadn't immediately descended into bloodshed and madness. On the surface, Dementlieu is a land of peace, prosperity, propriety, and great wealth; beneath that veneer is a realm just as corrupt and awful as any monarchy, hypocritically held up as "superior" to prior forms of life.

From a game perspective, Dementlieu is a realm of courtly politics, socialization, and genteel backstabbing. It is intended to be a place where swords are drawn only occasionally, with the deadliest adventures being those that involve words. Of course, there's plenty of room for swashbuckling antics à la *The Three Musketeers* as well.

Themes

- **Age of Reason:** The people of Dementlieu consider themselves eminently reasonable and enlightened—which can make them utterly insufferable. They don't accept superstitious explanations for things, rarely believe in monsters unless one is breathing down their necks, and reject both magic and faith. The only religion to have a strong foothold in the domain is a mystery-cult version of the Church of Ezra, and magic is seen as just another field in science—and one that is poorly respected at that.
- **Courtly and Genteel:** People care a great deal about propriety and manners in Dementlieu. You can get away with almost anything as long as you're polite about it. Conversely, it doesn't matter how right you are

about something if you're rude, loud, or just annoying. Lack of respect is a reason for murder in this domain.

- **Dangerous Liaisons:** Due to the emphasis on propriety, romance and secrecy go hand in hand. Lovers meet in secret, affairs are conducted out of the public eye, and even married couples can rarely show one another affection except behind closed doors. At the same time, pushing the bounds of propriety is not just expected but encouraged. Men and women wear daring fashions, risking exposure for the chance to be noticed. Secret lovers exchange lurid notes through intermediaries, with the chance that those notes could be intercepted. Furtive glances and quick touches are exchanged in crowded ballrooms. In short, people take *risks* with their propriety despite its importance.

Notable Locations

Chateaufaux is not as large or as famous as Dementlieu's capital, Port-a-Lucine, but it is home to the nation's finest academies and factories. The city is a hotbed of scholarly inquiry, often accepting visiting scientists from Lamordia, as well as being the source of Dementlieu's supply of firearms.

The **Isle d'Orleon** sits west of Pernault Bay and guards the entrance to Port-a-Lucine's calm waters. The island was once home to a noble order of knights, but they are all long dead. Their fortress, the cheerfully named Death Rock, is now used as a prison for the political enemies of the Council of Brilliance.

Dementlieu is famous for its dozens of small **lakes**, including such fancifully named bodies of water as Lac Flétan, Lac des Brumes, Lac des Pendus, Lac Fleau, and many others besides. Almost every lake has a local legend, from the ghosts of

drowned lovers to a native aquatic monster, which the natives generally dismiss as baseless superstition. These small lakes are popular destinations for picnics, boating, and swimming among the nobility and commoners alike.

Port-a-Lucine is the capital of Dementlieu, and it is well known for being a hotbed of both fashion and intrigue. It has numerous museums, opera houses, art galleries, and theaters, and even a grand library that is open to the public. The capital is home to numerous boarding schools, and youths from wealthy families across the Civilized Crescent are educated here before returning to their homelands. It is less well known that the city is also home to a massive organized crime ring run by a secretive mastermind called “the Brain.”

The Darklord

Dementlieu is ruled by a council of ministers, currently headed by the Lord-Governor Marcel Guignol. No one would suspect Guignol’s advisor Dominic d’Honaire of being an evil mastermind, let alone the darklord of Dementlieu. Dominic has held a position of respect on the ruling council for many years, though he is considered both a moderate politician and the weakest member of the body. In truth, d’Honaire is a brilliant strategist and cunning manipulator whose machinations have made Dementlieu powerful and his enemies weak.

Dominic d’Honaire is a slightly portly middle-aged man with thinning red hair and a neatly trimmed red beard. His most remarkable features are his pleasant smile and stunning blue eyes. He has an unassuming and humble air until crossed; he withholds anger in public, preferring to settle his grudges behind closed doors.

As a child, Dominic was precocious and intelligent, always trying to use his

intellect to get his own way. By the age of thirteen, he had manipulated his own father into relocating the family and going into politics, with Dominic as the mastermind. Dominic’s uncanny charisma gradually transformed into a genuine mesmeric ability to control minds, albeit subtly. Dominic has the power to implant hypnotic suggestions in people through conversation, manipulating them to his own ends. With enough time and care, he can turn people into veritable puppets for his will; he prefers subtle actions to overt ones, since enough open maneuvering could leave him exposed to scrutiny.

Dominic’s great weakness is women. His powers do not work on any woman he is genuinely attracted to. Indeed, the more Dominic lusts after a woman, the more repulsive she finds him. Several of his attempted affairs have ended in murder, and his marriage is a loveless sham entered into for political reasons.

Dorvinia

Dorvinia is a small, mountainous land northeast of Borca. The mountains of Dorvinia are said to be the last spur of the Balinoks, having crossed the Mists, but they are far less impressive than their Barovian cousins. The only significant mountain in the region is Mount Gries, a ragged peak that lies near the center of the country, surrounded by thick evergreen forests.

In many ways, Dorvinia is Borca’s smaller, less cultured cousin. The landscape is much the same, but the towns are smaller and poorer, the wilderness is less tamed, and the government is more openly corrupt and incompetent. While Ivana Boritsi accepts—even encourages—corruption

and graft, she does not tolerate incompetence. Dorvinia, on the other hand, is almost ludicrously corrupt and venal, with open bribery occurring at every level of government. Almost nothing happens without coin changing hands, and the people have a sullen and resigned air about them.

The major benefit that Dorvinia possesses is its rich silver mines, which provide wealth to the elite of the nation and allows the otherwise resource-poor country to import the things it needs. The Dorvinian uplands are riddled with active and played out mines, and much of the peasantry is engaged in either mining or supporting the mining industry. Much of Dorvinia's silver is traded for food, which grows poorly in the toxic soil of the uplands, unlike the many native poisonous herbs and fungi.

Dorvinia has a long, friendly history with Borca, and the two nations share a ruling family; Ivana Boritsi's mother Camille was a Dilisnya before marriage. In the last few decades, however, tensions have grown between the two countries. Ivan Dilisnya has apparently grown tired of being the "junior partner" in the Borcan-Dorvinian alliance, and has begun inciting trouble in various ways. Some even say that "Mad Ivan" has begun seeding Borca with saboteurs and spies to remind Ivana why she needs him.

The Church of Ezra remains popular in Dorvinia, but not to the degree that it is in Borca. Many Dorvinians are disinterested in religion, seeming almost numbed to any comfort that faith can provide.

Tropes

If Borca is supposed to be indicative of Italy in the Renaissance, Dorvinia is its Adriatic cousins like Slovenia and Croatia—necessary for the wealth of the

state to continue, but relegated to permanent second-class status. Dorvinia is a small, corrupt nation with wealth far out of proportion to its power, creating a decadent elite at the expense of an overtaxed majority.

Ivan Dilisnya is the land's Nero or Caligula, an absolute tyrant who engages in mad pleasures while ignoring matters of state. His greatest enjoyment comes from childish, puerile games and torments, and this is reflected in those he chooses to elevate to high station.

Themes

- **Blatant Corruption:** Like Borca, Dorvinia is a land where money purchases justice; unlike Borca, the corruption here is open, obvious, and heavy-handed. Government officials will refuse to do their jobs until "properly motivated," and even people who pay their taxes sometimes find themselves being strong-armed for more.
- **Petty Pride:** Ivan Dilisnya is the "lesser cousin" to Ivana Boritsi, something that rankles at him almost constantly. His nation is full of people who perceive slights to their station, skill, or importance at the drop of a hat and enact petty schemes of vengeance to show up those who would dare look down on them. Even the commoners have overweening pride when it comes to certain matters. Vengeance is rarely bloody or direct; a slighted nobleman might "lose" a traveler's tax receipts, or a vain merchant may find his pack animals dead after a stable boy he insulted "accidentally" left the gates open.
- **Toxic Decadence:** Dorvinians have vast appetites for decadence and sin—and such distractions are very often

lethal for those drawn into them. Being elevated to high position is poisonous to the mind and spirit; aristocrats are inevitably people of low moral character and gradually find their grasp on reason slipping away. Madness is common among the upper class, though whether this is cause or effect regarding governmental corruption is anyone's guess.

Notable Locations

Degravo, the estate of Ivan Dilisnya, sits on the edge of Dorvinia, overlooking a seemingly bottomless chasm filled with swirling, dark mists. The darklord has a balcony stretching out over the abyss, where he will often stand for hours on end, staring into the void; he claims it helps him think. Degravo is a squat and ugly mansion, a marvel of self-indulgent splendor catering to Ivan's tasteless preferences. Central to the manor is Ivan's "Laughing House," a dining chamber where he hosts opulent dinner parties that serve everything from divine delicacies to rotting offal. Guests are encouraged to partake in both with equal pleasure, as Ivan takes great offense if his offerings are declined.

The capital of Dorvinia, **Lechberg**, is built on top of a high stone tor, requiring anyone who visits the city to navigate almost 800 feet of winding stairs, switchbacks, and lifts. The town was once home to a monastery of the sun-god Andral, but the monks were driven out generations ago, leaving the building as a weather-worn militia fortress sometimes called the Golden Palace. Lechberg is a hub of mining, smelting, and minting, making it a place that sustains itself by literally making money. The town is also home to a thriving community of the performing arts, thanks to the patronage

of Ivan Dilisnya, but the local theaters are very much beholden to the darklord's mercurial sense of taste.

Mount Gries squats in the northeastern corner of Dorvinia, and its slopes frequently run with the blood of miners competing for the richest claims. It is also a dangerous place in its own right, as it is home to the Night Swarm, a vast cloud of vampire bats capable of exsanguinating a man in minutes if caught out in the open at night.

The Darklord

Ivan Dilisnya is a thin man with curly gray hair, streaked with the blond of his youth. He is an extremely animated person, to the point of histrionics. People might call him a fop—but never to his face. Ivan spends his life prancing and posing as though on a stage in front of an audience, and his tastes run to the garish and melodramatic. He seems as unlikely a candidate for darklord as he does for ruler of a nation, but he is both. Only when he believes himself insulted or slighted does his true nature come out, leading to rages that often end in many deaths by poisoning.

Ivan and his cousin Ivana share a birthday and were fast friends growing up. The only person closer to Ivan was his older sister, Kristina. Ivan was always erratic, committing his first murder by the age of ten, but he could do no wrong in Kristina's eyes. His unnatural feelings of possessiveness toward his sister would have tragic consequences when she finally married and bore a child. Ivan murdered the whole family before fleeing into the Mists, where he "discovered" the province of Dorvinia and claimed rulership over it.

Always a mercurial personality, Ivan cares nothing for matters of state or good rulership. He cares only for amusing

himself; his favorite pastimes include elevating commoners randomly to nobility, playing childish pranks on his court, playing lethal pranks on his court, putting on plays where people really get killed, and generally tormenting the people around him in petty, cruel ways. His “tax collectors” are little more than mercenary thugs who take what they must to meet quota, and any aristocrat who survives more than a few years in his court almost inevitably winds up as corrupt and venal as Ivan himself.



Though Ivan and Ivana—nicknamed “the Dark Twins” by their subjects—were both friends and allies for many years, Ivan found his heart growing bitter toward his cousin as he grew old but she did not. Her attempt to give him the elixir that made her servants young ended badly, and Ivan now believes that Ivana is intentionally withholding the secret of immortality from him.

Ivan’s skill as an alchemist and poisoner has left him immune to virtually every toxin and venom in existence, but they have also robbed him of his favorite joys. Ivan was once a gourmand, reveling in food and drink, as well as a connoisseur of fine music and beautiful art. The chemical treatments he has endured have robbed him of his senses of taste and smell, leaving even the finest food as nothing but ashes in his mouth, and have dulled his hearing and sight such that only the loudest music or most garish colors can even hope to touch his emotions.

Lamordia

Lamordia is a bleak coastal realm in the northwestern corner of the Cluster, a land ravaged by the elements. The interior is a region of towering forests where the black trees grow massive and dense. The woods are forlorn and eerily still, but travelers often have the impression that they are being watched from the shadows. Each spring, woodsmen inevitably find thawed corpses deep in the wilderness, their forms mangled beyond recognition. The terrain is rugged in the north, especially along the rocky upland region known as the Sleeping Beast.

Lamordian villages are tidy and attractive, whether awash in summer

wildflowers or slumbering peacefully beneath winter snow. Two or three stories tall, the neat rows of homes and shops look down over narrow streets of grey, smooth cobblestone. Buildings are constructed with thick timber frames and brick, then plastered or painted white and cream. Roofs are steep and gabled, with thick thatch to keep out the cold.

The winters in Lamordia are extraordinarily harsh. Blizzards blanket the land with unending snow and batter the inhabitants with bitter, howling winds. For much of the year, sleighs and snowshoes are the preferred modes of transportation. The summer is no less difficult on travelers, as thick, sucking mud collects in low areas.

Lamordians are lean, square-shouldered folk, tall in stature and wiry in physique. Their skin is exceptionally fair but tinted ruddy from the numbing wind that seems to blow across the domain constantly. Eye color is almost always a shade of green or blue. Their straight or wavy hair is light blond to dark brown, though fairer hair is slightly more common. Men cut their hair to a medium length, usually to just above the neck, and keep it styled back. Women grow their hair long and either pin it up or weave it into braids. Mustaches and beards are never seen on men, but muttonchop sideburns are quite popular.

Clothing is very well made in Lamordia, but modest and somber. Men wear collared shirts, vests, and trousers, with wealthier men adding a waistcoat and scarf. Nobles often wear pointed black caps as well. Women prefer modest woolen dresses with high collars and frequently wear tight, white bonnets. Color is almost unheard of in Lamordian garb; black, white, and shades of grey are the only hues to be seen. Jewelry is never worn, even among the nobility, though

noblemen carry accessories such as canes and pocket watches.

Each of Lamordia's settlements has a mayor, appointed by a council of wealthy aristocrats, who are in turn elected by all male Lamordian landowners in the village. The mayor's main responsibility is to encourage trade and economic ties with other settlements and domains. While Lamordia's villages are neat and orderly, few laws are enforced even at the local level; the Lamordians manage to get through daily life with a minimum of conflict and crime. Some outsiders are known to say that Lamordians are too passionless to commit crimes.

Tropes

Lamordia is a land of mad science and progress turned to the service of hubris. It is intended to evoke Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in that its people have forgotten faith and compassion in favor of cold, hard reason. As such, the sort of medical and scientific horrors envisioned by Shelley have their place in Lamordia. Science and technology have become twisted and perverse—not intentionally cruel, but so utterly callous that no difference from cruelty can be discerned.

Just as *Frankenstein* combined a classical Gothic aesthetic with the new genre of "science fiction," Lamordia draws its imagery from the science of yester-year. The medicine and "advances" of Lamordia are not the antiseptic, clean science of the modern day, but a gritty, visceral science that sometimes means literally getting to the meat and guts of the matter.

Themes

- **Loneliness and Alienation:** Lamordia is remote, cold, and lonely—and its people are a reflection of its nature. It is a large country with a small

population that is snowed in for half the year. Given so much time to themselves, people brood, dwell, and fall into depression. People obsess over minor matters, turning them into reasons for rumination. Turned inward, people grow distant from others; unable to escape their situation, they feel trapped and fixate on others' faults. They rage against an uncaring universe—and being Lamordian, they decide to do something about it.

- **Man's Dominance Over Nature:** Lamordians believe that there exists no problem that cannot be solved with the proper amount of effort and know-how. They refuse to accept the constraints of their environment—or of morality or common sense. While they have a very optimistic and can-do attitude, this quickly turns into obsession and a complete unwillingness to admit when they are overmatched.
- **The Nature of Humanity:** Some Lamordian scientists have created automatons, metal men who serve without complaint or fatigue. Others have found ways to replace fragile flesh with stronger steel. When man and machine blur at the edges in the face of science, who can say what “humanity” even means? The nature of humanity itself is always in question, especially in the minds of Lamordians themselves, who are philosophical by nature.

Notable Locations

The **Isle of Agony** is the single most dangerous place in Lamordia. Home to Adam, known in local legend as the Patchwork Man, the only people seemingly mad enough to try and live on it are the folk of Baytown, a community

of surly, insular fisherfolk. Unknown to outsiders, the people of Baytown are monsters as well, a clan of seawolves (a type of aquatic lycanthrope) in league with Adam, who keep an eye on the island while he is away.

Ludendorf is the capital of Lamordia, a small but prosperous city of numerous medical schools, technical universities, and prestigious workshops. The town is notable for its lighthouse and for several clocktowers built across the city, including a large one built into the town hall. Recent piracy in the surrounding seas has prompted the largely exposed city to begin building a bulwark on the nearby cliffs, including a plan to fortify it with cannons.

The **Monastery of the Quickening Thunderbolt** is a squat building sitting in an almost inaccessible part of the Sleeping Beast Mountains. The monks rarely leave their home, which is just fine for the few Lamordians aware of the place, as they regard spiritual pursuits to be foolish at best. None are aware of the monastery's secret—that all of the monks are created beings, corpses stitched together and given life by Adam's pursuit of knowledge. Calling themselves the Seekers of the Spark, the monks seek to create their own god from pieces of other faiths, as they were created from pieces of other living people.

Though locals refer to **Schloss Mordenheim** as a castle, it is really more of a sprawling manor, its original frame almost obscured by new construction, outbuildings, and haphazard additions. The manor is home to Dr. Victor Mordenheim, a hunchbacked servant of bad manners named Horg, and the occasional impressionable young scientist foolish enough to become the doctor's latest assistant. The manor is always home to numerous failed experiments and weird science guardians, but it is at its

most nightmarish on the nights Mordenheim tries awakening another one of his “creations.”

The Darklord

The most brilliant scientist in a nation of brilliant scientists, Dr. Victor Mordenheim is centuries ahead of his colleagues. He is familiar with theories that no one else might develop for generations to come, but he is little respected in his own land due to his reclusiveness and arrogance. To the extent that his countrymen think of him at all, they regard him as a strange hermit who keeps to himself except to send out for supplies or to publish journal articles that, while possibly brilliant, are so dense and complicated as to be incomprehensible to all but himself.

Mordenheim was convinced that life was a purely biological process, and that nothing like a “soul” existed. To prove his hypothesis, he used all of his significant skill to create an artificial human, whom he dubbed Adam. The gods or the Dark Powers played a terrible trick on Mordenheim, however; to give true life to Adam, rather than the mere semblance of life, Mordenheim’s soul poured out of him during the process and into Adam. The creature that awoke on Mordenheim’s table was a curious, inquisitive being, much like Mordenheim himself had been.

For a time, Adam lived peacefully with Mordenheim, his wife, and their adopted daughter. The doctor, always cold and distant, became more withdrawn with his failed attempts to replicate his success with Adam, making the creature grow resentful and frustrated. Neither will speak of when everything changed, but by the end of that dreadful night, Mordenheim’s daughter had fallen from a cliff and disappeared into the sea,

Mordenheim’s wife had been terribly mutilated, and Adam had fled into the wilderness ahead of his maker’s wrath.

Mordenheim continues to live in his isolated castle, performing experiments into the nature of life. His science keeps his wife’s shredded husk barely alive; in her few lucid moments, she begs for death. Adam survives in the harsh wilderness of the domain, preying on animals and occasionally attempting his own faulty experiments to create life, in the hope of transcending his creator.

Neither realizes that they are doomed to failure; Mordenheim is an empty shell without his soul, barely more than an automaton himself, while Adam has the creative impulse and drive to create but lacks the intellect and refinement to do so. Working together, they could easily create a new life or perform even greater wonders, but their mutual hatred ensures it will never come to pass.



Mordent

Mordent is a bleak domain on the western coast, a land of fishing hamlets and desolate, haunted moors. Tracks of dense forest still cover much of the countryside, alternating with low, foggy plains and rolling heaths. Stiff winds whistle across the eastern moors; some travelers have reported hearing chilling howls carried on the breezes. At night, curling fog seeps out of the moors and into the domain's decrepit graveyards. Majestic ruined manors, crumbling and choked with dark ivy, loom out of the fog. Mordent is a grey, damp land, its temperatures moderated by the sea; extreme summers and winters are uncommon.

Mordent's shore along the Sea of Sorrows is rocky and battered by cold winds, the rugged chalk cliffs rising up a hundred feet or more. Salt spray perpetually hangs in the air, and belligerent seagulls gather to snatch the bait of fishermen. Mordent's seaside communities, huddled in the bitter ocean winds, are stoic cloisters of shanties and venerable taverns. The whitewashed buildings are constructed with thick wooden frames, soft brick, and plaster. Wooden plank roofs grace the humble structures, grey and warped by the sea air. Every window and door is equipped with sturdy storm shutters. Narrow tin chimneys puff white smoke into the sky, and weather vanes twist frantically in the shifting winds. Twisting wooden staircases descend the steeper cliffs, providing access to the humble vessels moored along the docks below.

The Mordentish are lean, hearty people hardened by generations of sailing and fishing. Their skin tends to be fair and ruddy, though duskier tones are not unknown. Mordentish eyes are usually a

faded blue, green, or grey. Hair color varies widely, with flaxen blond and medium brown being most common. Men cut their hair very short or grow it past their shoulders, often keeping it in a neat braid or ponytail. Women grow their hair exceptionally long, though those with curlier locks trim it to halfway down their backs.

Clothing is woolen and durable, and kept fastidiously neat and clean whenever possible. Men wear loose shirts with breeches and high socks; wealthier men also don waistcoats over their elegant, lacy shirts. Women wear long dresses, close fitting on top and flaring below the waist. The Mordentish seem to prefer somber colors, either black and greys or dark hues of blue, green, yellow, and red. Ornamentation is shunned, though patterns such as checks or plaids are sometimes seen. Jewelry is rarely worn, as it is regarded as gaudy even among the nobility.

The Mordentish are simple, practical people who value common sense and established traditions. They do things at their own pace and are prideful of their ways. They are also superstitious folk who believe whole-heartedly in the supernatural, particularly the restless dead. They are not paralyzed by fear, however. The Mordentish have learned to respect and avoid haunted places lest the resident spirits seek out the curious in their homes. This strategy seems to work for them, at least most of the time.

The Mordentish are polite and friendly toward strangers but always remain somewhat reserved. They guard their own secrets closely and have a knack for getting others to talk candidly without revealing much of anything themselves.

Tropes

Mordent is the land of “sleepy little hamlets” from virtually every British horror movie from the 1950s through the 1970s, as well as from early American gothic stories. It is a place intended to reflect the ghost stories of William Hope Hodgson, Sheridan Le Fanu, Edith Wharton, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James. There is also a healthy dose of *The Haunting of Hill House* and similar stories by Shirley Jackson. Old families with old secrets and old shames are the order of the day, and the dead do not rest easy.

Mordent is, on the surface, a place where very little happens and all the people are polite, stuffy, and vaguely superstitious. Below that, it's more of the same—but sadder, scarier, and lonelier. The Mordentish seem somewhat aware that death is not the end, and it leaves them with a sense of melancholy and coldness when they stop to think about it too long. Mordent is a place where every old house has a ghost—or several ghosts—and the shadows of the past come back to haunt the living, figuratively and literally.

Themes

- **The Fog and the Sea:** More than almost any other domain in Ravenloft, Mordent is a place that belongs to the Mists. Fog and mist are so common that a day without them is more notable than the other way around. Getting lost on the moors due to fog is a common occurrence, and the coastline is so rocky and prone to fog that lighthouses are a common construction in the domain. As well, much of Mordent's lifeblood revolves around the sea. Many people are sailors, either professionally or for pleasure, and most of the domain's food and trade come from the sea.

Ocean metaphors are common, as are allusions to ships.

- **The Haunted Air:** Ghosts are common in Mordent. Really common. More than that, the people are haunted by the past, by their memories, by their lost opportunities. Mordentish people who open up to others seem unaccountably lonely and sad, as though the past won't leave them alone. Even when people think their secrets are dead and buried, those secrets eventually come back to terrorize them.
- **Stoic:** The Mordentish are a people who do not show strong emotion easily. They are expected to have “a stiff upper lip” even in the face of unspeakable tragedy, and showing emotion in public is a serious faux pas. The Mordentish also draw strict lines between public and private life; the public house (or in modern terms, the pub) is a place which is technically public but considered private, so raucous singing, laughing, and dancing are common in such places. This also means that foreigners who laugh too easily, speak too loud, or make a show of their emotions are likely to be given the cold shoulder.

Notable Locations

Idlethorp used to serve as a minor trading post until its noble family, the Punchinels, died out. Ugly rumors surround the end of the Punchinel line, including that the last lord of the manor was far too fascinated by unsavory uses of Lamordia's “new science.”

Mordentshire is the capital of the domain and its largest town. Home to the Weathermay and Foxgrove noble families, few other aristocrats call the bustling trade town home. The coastal

town is almost always wracked by frigid winds or thick shrouds of bone-chilling fog. The Weathermays rule from their noble estate, **Heather House**.

The town of **Steadwall** was a significant crossing-point for the Arden River until the town dried up a generation ago. The last inhabitant of the town is Smythe the Ferryman, who rarely travels further than the end of his dock. He tells travelers who buy his services about the supposed treasures remaining in the abandoned Halloway manor, but rarely mentions how many people have vanished looking for them.

The Darklord

Lord Jules Weathermay is the hereditary ruler of Mordent, the last nobleman of full blood in the domain. People have already begun to speak about abolishing the aristocracy when he dies—something Lord Jules finds himself increasingly comfortable with as death looms. Few realize that a change in government would matter little to Mordent's true ruler—Wilfred Godefroy, the ghostly master of the House on Gryphon Hill.

In life, Godefroy was a cruel and tyrannical man. He terrorized his servants, his wife, and his daughter alike. A fit of rage led him to murder his wife; when his daughter tried to intervene, he beat her to death as well. He avoided justice for their deaths by concealing it as an accident, but suspicions surrounded him. He was haunted by the rumors—and by the ghosts of his murdered wife and daughter. Their torments drove him to commit suicide a year later, but death was not the end for Godefroy. Instead, he found himself trapped within his house as a restless spirit.

As a ghost, Godefroy can command the loyalty of virtually every other spirit in

Mordent, due to his ability to draw them into his home and trap them there. The only ghosts he cannot command are those of his wife and daughter, who emerge to torment him nightly. As time has passed, Godefroy has found himself able to wander the domain at will, though he is still drawn back to Gryphon Manor every morning at dawn and trapped there until nightfall.

In some ways, Gryphon Manor itself is as much the darklord of the domain as Godefroy is. The house is a phantasmagoria, an utter sinkhole of evil, with a seeming vague consciousness of its own. Godefroy commands the house, but it also uses him to add to its ever-growing collection of damned souls.



Richemulot

In the bustling cities of Richemulot, secrets are traded like so much gold, and unseen foes slink about on clandestine missions. Richemulot is a land of pristine forests and gentle river valleys. The forests are sun-dappled places full of massive trees and fragrant shrubs and herbs. The landscape is largely undeveloped, broken only by isolated cottages and farms, because most of the domain's population is concentrated in its cities. While travelers may not encounter a single soul in rural Richemulot, the cities are bustling with people—at least, the settled portions of the cities. There are entire neighborhoods and districts that are almost completely uninhabited, abandoned and left to rot even as the inhabited districts swell to bursting.

The Richemuloise tend to be wiry folk, short in stature but athletic. Their skin tone is fair, ranging from milky pale to light tan. Blue eyes are quite common, but shades of green and grey are also seen. Richemuloise hair is sleek and straight, with colors ranging from honey blond to dark brown. Black hair is only seen among the noble families. Long hair is traditional for both genders, with men preferring to keep theirs in a single ponytail or braid. Excessive facial hair is considered barbaric for men, but thin, well-groomed mustaches are widespread.

Most Richemuloise dress comfortably and neatly, regardless of social status. Men and women alike wear loose shirts, which men keep open in front during warmer months. Men wear baggy trousers, women knee-length skirts. High, hard-soled boots are considered standard footwear for city folk. Daily clothing is rarely patterned or decorated, and colors tend to be drab whites, greys, and beiges. Jewelry is rarely worn, even among the

nobility. For festivals and other special occasions, men of all classes don elegant waistcoats, while women wear flowing dresses that leave little to the imagination.

The Richemuloise put little stock in the superficial. They believe that a person's significance is determined by what they know—their skills and knowledge, and how they apply those assets. This attitude has created what seems to be a remarkably unstratified society. Despite the size of the domain's cities, no grubby beggars or other destitute poor are seen on the streets. Neither are there aristocrats clad in opulent finery and attended by entourages of servants. Indeed, almost all Richemuloise seem to be moderately comfortable.

Tropes

Richemulot is modeled to be very much like urbanized England or France—specifically London or Paris—in the Napoleonic era. The cities of Richemulot are intended to mimic the setting of *Les Misérables* without quite as much obvious or abject poverty. The emptiness and strangeness conveyed by the film *The City of Lost Children* is a good reference for the overall feel of the domain.

The major feeling of Richemulot is the alternation of urban crowding and total isolation. Richemulot is a place where humans gather into rat-like warrens rather than face fearful loneliness in the near-empty stretches of the urban landscape.

Themes

- **Packed Like Rats:** Where people live at all, they live crowded lives, cheek to jowl with the restless masses of humanity. Richemulot's cities are largely empty, and the vacant neighborhoods have such a fearsome reputation that people choose to live

in increasingly crowded apartment blocks rather than risk isolation. This makes illnesses and gossip easier to pass, and plagues that consume an entire building of people are not particularly uncommon. As might be guessed, actual rats are also very common in Richemulot—and some of them are as intelligent as any human.

- **Rise and Fall:** They say that all glory must fade, and Richemulot is the proof. Things tend to be cyclical in Richemulot; a family grows powerful, rises to glory, is brought low by their enemies, fades into obscurity, and schemes to return to the light. Individuals can see their fortunes reverse several times across the course of their lives, from pauper to aristocrat and back again. The ground beneath one's feet seems unsteady at the best of times, and no one can rest on their laurels. At times, the "rat race" of daily life in Richemulot can seem like living in a maze.
- **Secrets are Currency:** Richemulot is a place where knowledge is literally power. People gain and lose status based on the secrets they know, the secrets that are known about them, and the whispers that trade those secrets. Even common folk gossip constantly, and everyone is in everyone else's business. Being politely nosy is a way of life in Richemulot, with eyes at keyholes and ears on dividing walls.

Notable Locations

The **House of the Sages** is a high plateau in eastern Richemulot, upon which sits a thick forest that shares the plateau's name. The landscape here is rugged, dotted with isolated farms and cottages as well as the crumbling ruins of castles and monasteries. The region has a

reputation for hiding those whose crimes are best forgotten, and rumors fly of the forest playing home to mystic cults, bandit gangs, and worse besides.

Mortigny is a small city most famous for its glassworks, with its "blue melancholy" glassware being particularly prized among the wealthy elite of the Civilized Crescent. The city is bright and vibrant, teeming with eager life despite the occasional outbreaks of plague that strike. The city is also home to the Lock and Key Society, a private militia whose members wear hideous masks to hide their identities, and whose constant efforts to catch criminals and protect the locals have made them very popular.

Pont-a-Museau is the capital of Richemulot, built both along and atop the Musarde River. The city is criss-crossed by dozens of bridges, and its extensive canal system is home to vast warrens of both rats and smugglers. Locals regard their city as the birthplace of culture in the cluster, since it is home to some of the oldest academies, theaters, and universities in the region. It is also home to the extended Renier family, who dwell in their fortified manor, Chateau Delanuit, at the heart of the city.

Ste. Ronges is the smallest of Richemulot's three major cities, but what it lacks in size, it makes up for in viciousness. A significant portion of the city's population is involved in one criminal scheme or another, though most keep their involvement with the underworld quiet if possible. Apart from its criminal element, Ste. Ronges is also famed for the quality of its steel, and for the swords produced by the city's many smithies.

The Darklord

The extended Renier family has always maintained prominence in Richemulot's

politics, weathering the cyclical nature of things better than most by virtue of having enough branches of the family to simply sacrifice one to the needs of the day as necessary. The most ruthless member of the family is Jacqueline Renier, a young woman who recently seized the reins of the family from her much-hated grandfather Claude after his untimely demise.

Jacqueline Renier is the darklord of Richemulot, having inherited the position by virtue of murdering Claude, the previous darklord. She is cunning and cruel, delighting in inflicting emotional and physical pain on others. She is a master of blackmail and manipulation, and she is particularly fond of terrorizing other power players into submission. On top of her intelligence, beauty, and ruthlessness, Jacqueline holds another secret: like much of her extended family, she is a wererat—a natural shapeshifter with human and rat forms.

Jacqueline has networks of informants all across Richemulot, and even in the surrounding domains. She prides herself in always being one step ahead of those who would dare challenge her, and much of her time is taken up in schemes to retain the power she seized from her grandfather through his murder. She doesn't hesitate to use any dirty trick or underhanded tactic, gladly sacrificing her pawns and even members of her extended family if it will allow her to gain an advantage.

Despite her inhuman nature and the depths of her evil, Jacqueline is widely liked by the people of Richemulot. The taxes imposed by the Reniers are light, they make few demands on the populace, and even the lowest commoner has a decent standard of living thanks to the abundance of cheap or free housing across the domain's cities. Threats to Jacqueline or her family would likely be met by an angry mob—which is exactly why Jacqueline so carefully cultivates her benevolent public image.

Jacqueline's major weakness is that she fears loneliness and desperately desires to be loved for who she is, rather than simply being obeyed. Because of these qualities, she has never taken action against her primary rival for control of the family, her twin sister, Louise. Jacqueline is constantly seeking romantic love as well, but her ambition ensures that virtually any meaningful emotional bond she creates will only dissolve into animosity. Worse than that, Jacqueline is cursed to transform into her loathsome hybrid form in the embrace of a lover, which not only risks the exposure of her family's secrets but also reminds her of her own inhuman nature.





The Far Steppes

The vastness of the plains, the thunder of hooves, and the loneliness of the horizon—all of these are the basic character of the Far Steppes. While there are a few places with hills or even low, stony mountains, the overall terrain of the region is very flat. Some natives speak of “the big sky,” and travelers from other lands occasionally speak of the dizziness and vertigo that come from being able to see from one horizon to the other without obstruction.

The largest portion of the Cluster is the domain of Nova Vaasa, a land of vast and rolling plains, tall grasslands, and corrupt, decaying cities. Nova Vaasa stretches hundreds of miles, seemingly without end, creating a roughly oval-shaped blob comprising the southern two-thirds of the cluster. The rocky, arid domain of Hazlan lies to the northwest, a land of venal wizards and dangerous remnants of their magical experiments. The remainder of the Cluster is the high plateau of G’Henna, an isolated and cold desert where the populace slaves away their lives for a vicious and unforgiving priesthood.

The region’s overall climate is arid and cool. Rainfall is uncommon, and few trees grow in the Far Steppes, making wood a valuable commodity. Most homes and buildings are made from stone or from fired bricks. The vast distances between locations make the horse an invaluable beast of burden in the region, and Vaasans are particularly known for their cultural obsession with horsemanship.

The Far Steppes is a place where religion is extremely important, especially the Iron Faith of the Lawgiver. This harsh religion teaches obedience—to god and to

one’s temporal masters—as the highest virtue, and disobedience as the worst sin. While all three domains of the Cluster follow the Iron Faith, all three do so in different fashion; disagreements between the faithful are as virulent and angry as those between adherents and outsiders.

Languages

The primary language of the Cluster is Vaasi, the common tongue of Nova Vaasa. While Nova Vaasa itself has several other languages spoken by its many ethnic groups, virtually every Vaasan also speaks Vaasi.

The Hazlani accent is considered exotic by other speakers of the language, though they are typically referring to a Mulani accent; the Mulan and Rasheman ethnic groups of Hazlan speak quite different versions of the language, though they are mutually intelligible. Particularly, Rashemani are taught a simplified version of the language that makes them sound rough and uncultured to outsiders, helping the Mulani keep them in a subservient position by claiming that they are naturally less intelligent than their “betters.”

The Vaasi spoken in G’Henna can be very difficult to understand for other speakers of the language. The relative isolation of the domain contributes to a divergent dialect. Vaasans sometimes complain that G’Hennans sound like they moan everything they say—when they’re not mumbling.

Connections

The southwestern portion of Nova Vaasa has a major reliable Mistway connecting it to the Forest of Beasts in

the nation of Valachan. The two countries speak the same language, and the Iron Faith frequently sends missionaries to aid the ruler of Valachan in his efforts to suppress the native religion of the region. The eastern border of Nova Vaasa opens onto the Sea of Sorrows, though the people of the region call it the Nocturnal Sea. Well-known sailing routes from Nova Vaasa connect to the Verdurous Lands and Rokushima Taiyou, though few Vaasans are sailors.

The northern passes of G'Henna are said to connect to the Frozen Reaches, though passage between the two regions is treacherous at the best of times. Some unreliable Mistways also connect Hazlan to the Amber Wastes, and cultural connections between the two are not uncommon.

The Iron Faith

The Lawgiver is the central figure of religious life in the Far Steppes, a harsh and unforgiving god who teaches that utter obedience and subservience to one's betters are the highest virtues. This core tenet puts a premium on obedience to temporal authority. Its doctrine and practice demand that those of lower station obey those of higher station, since one's position in life is divinely mandated by the Lawgiver himself. The Iron Faith is a highly conservative institution, and there is a strong link between the church and government.

The Lawgiver's priests hold that their god has hundreds of names and titles, but that to speak his true name would strike a mortal dead. This in turn leads to a myriad number of cults and sects that worship the Lawgiver under his other names, as well as a complicated church hierarchy where status is extremely important. Defying the Lawgiver's tenets often warrants physical correction from

its priests, including whippings, beatings, and—in extreme cases—death.

As might be guessed, such a convoluted and byzantine church structure has spawned dozens of heresies and unofficial sects. Some of these heresies are considered minor enough that "correction" is offered before punishment, while others are considered so dangerous that any who promulgate them must be killed immediately. An entire branch of the church, the Iron Inquisition, exists to root out heresies and keep them from corrupting the minds of the faithful. Inquisitors have broad latitude and discretion in their missions, and everyone fears drawing the eye of one of the Lawgiver's hunters.

While utter obedience and cooperation between religious and temporal authority are major precepts of the faith, the practical application of these ideas is rarely so straightforward. Nova Vaasa is so corrupt at every level of the government that the clergy almost has to be corrupt just to keep up. Hazlan is a land of sorcery, something that the Lawgiver supposedly frowns on as a perversion of the natural order; in order to maintain their religious purity, the church has offered a special exemption to the wizard-king, which he in turn rubber-stamps to virtually every sorcerer in the land. In G'Henna, obedience to the priesthood is used as a means of starving the populace while the elite grow fat from their sacrifice.

G'Henna

The forested foothills of northern Nova Vaasa gradually give way to rocky cliffs and steep, jagged inclines. After miles of such broken, dangerous terrain, the land flattens again—much higher up. G'Henna

is a cold, arid, rocky plateau far above the level of the rest of the Far Steppes. So high up that the air itself is thin, little except scrub survives in the rocky badlands. A few rivers cross the domain, mostly flowing down from the perpetually frozen northern mountains; in spring, the rivers flood their banks and threaten the area surrounding them, but the rest of the year they are little more than murky streams.

Horses fare poorly in the thin air of G'Henna, so the most common beast of burden is a shaggy-furred bovine known as a yak. They can eat the scrubby grasses and thorny brush that grows across the domain, need little water, and give milk that is nutritious, if bitter-tasting. Few other animals can withstand the wasteland conditions of G'Henna—at least, few other natural animals. The western portions of the domain are thick with monsters spawned from Hazlan and then abandoned in the mountains after their masters tired of them.

The flat and dry terrain gives rise to terrible dust storms, capable of stripping a man's flesh from his bones without proper cover, and razor-sharp hail or dusty snow are more common forms of precipitation than rain. The few landmarks in the domain are sharp, rocky outcroppings that often serve as lairs for dangerous monsters, and the frequent desert shrines to the Lawgiver, in his guise as Zhakata the Destroyer.

G'Hennans are pale and thin, and their sparse black hair is often stringy and brittle from malnourishment. Adult men often wear beards, twisting the hair into a single strand with wax, and married women cover their hair with a cloth in public. While brethren of the church wear garish red and orange robes, accented with black, most people wear drab, dun-colored rags.

Virtually all aspects of life in G'Henna revolve around the worship of the Lawgiver, whom the locals pray to under the name Zhakata the Devourer. The Devourer is not loved, however—he is appeased in the hope that he will eventually show favor to the people and take on his aspect as the Provider. The precepts of the local faith hold that taking more than is absolutely needed to live shows false pride before the Lawgiver, since all men are equal before him; sacrifice and self-denial are considered prized virtues to G'Hennans. Starvation is particularly considered an honorable death, as it is absolute proof of one's devotion to god. A family is given great favor if one of their own chooses to starve themselves to death, though such favor is fleeting.

Buildings in G'Henna are small, typically made from mud bricks or adobe; beyond the cities, many people live in tents of ragged hide, living nomadically to avoid monsters, outcasts, or just the priesthood. Permanent homes tend to have several generations crammed together into a one- or two-room dwelling. The walls of such homes are covered in religious murals and shelves holding objects of the faith. Among the most valuable such objects are guesting cups, a drinking vessel made from the skull of a family member who willingly starved for their faith, which is offered to visitors to drink from as a sign of friendship.

The priests of the Lawgiver are healthier than their fellows, though even they avoid being openly overweight despite their easier access to food. A priest who flaunts his largesse may find themselves falling out of favor with the church elders—and such priests rarely last very long in the ruthless environment of G'Henna. The worst fate that can befall an outcast priest or blasphemous

commoner is to have their soul stripped away in a special ceremony, removing their essential humanity and reducing them to a bestial shadow of their former self. Such mongrels are then cast out into the wasteland and chased from their homes under pain of death.

All food produced in the domain is considered to be the property of the church, and it is illegal to privately buy or sell food. Church officials take gathered food to the temples, where it is sacrificed to the Lawgiver; anything left over after the sacrifices is then doled back out to the people in meager quantities.

Truthfully, most of the food is kept by the priests, who sacrifice only a small portion in the public ceremonies.

Tropes

G'Henna is a land of religious zeal gone horribly wrong, a place where belief and sacrifice have become so horrifically intertwined that human life is no longer considered to have value compared to hollow shows of faith. The priesthood is hopelessly corrupt, their faith a means of control rather than actual devotion. People starve themselves for a god whom few of their rulers truly believe in.

The visual aesthetics of the land are meant to evoke Nepal or Tibet, along with the worst excesses of ascetic Buddhism from centuries past. Prayer wheels, saffron robes, and strings of beads are common additions to religious iconography locally.

Themes

- **Circle of Darkness:** Suffering under the heavy hand of a corrupt priesthood is terrible, but being outcast is worse. It is better to be part of a group—even a bad one—than to be alone. Families huddle together in small homes, while cities become

overcrowded to the point that beggars block the streets. Being cast out of the group is akin to losing one's humanity—and can be literally so in some cases.

- **The Hypocrisy of the Mighty:** Priests of the Lawgiver preach self-denial and starvation in the streets but feast behind closed doors, enjoying the fruits of others' labors. Holiness serves as a mask for corruption in positions of authority, from the religious government all the way down to the heads of households. A family might try to gain favor by pushing an already weak member to sacrifice for Zhakata, secretly happy to have more for everyone else while a loved one starves to death in the corner.
- **Sacrifice is Holy:** To a G'Henna, nothing shows devotion more than sacrifice and self-denial. This land is a place where faith and loss have been conflated to the point that starving oneself to death is seen as a noble act rather than utter madness. All other virtues have been sacrificed as well, to the point that only denial and willing loss are considered holy; charity, love, mercy, and compassion have all fallen by the wayside in favor of the harsh rhetoric of austerity and asceticism.

Notable Locations

Dervich is one of only two significant population centers in G'Henna. The fertile valley could be used to grow food for the hungry domain, but it is instead exclusively used to grow the grapes from which is brewed the local potent red wine. The vineyard owners are highly regarded by the priesthood, who make extensive use of wine in ceremonies, and most of the region's taxes are taken in wine rather than coin or labor.

The **House of Bones** is a rundown temple with a gateway made of human skulls. Though mostly collapsed, it still radiates an undeniable aura of evil. This defiled temple was the site of an incursion of a true fiend into the domain—a demon of incredible power. The creature nearly broke free before being defeated by a troupe of adventurers. Rumor says that the adventurers themselves were slain soon afterwards by the demon's summoner—none other than Yagno Petrovna himself.

Jackal's Run is a rumored valley somewhere in the mountains outside Dervich, the home of the infamous bandit known only as the Jackal. She and her followers perform raids against the Lawgiver's soldiers and clergy. She would be far more popular with the oppressed populace for her resistance to priestly rule were it not for her thefts of food and outspoken militant atheism.

Zhukar, sometimes called the City of Hunger, is the capital of G'Henna and home to the priesthood of the Lawgiver in his aspect as Zhakata the Devourer. The city is covered in abstract iconography and statues of beasts, and it is wholly under the control of the priesthood. The local black market must be very wary lest it run afoul of Yagno's inquisitors. Unlike most criminal endeavors, the primary good trafficked in Zhukar is food. The ziggurat at the center of the city is the home of Zhakata's priesthood, and where the high priest personally leads rituals—including the Ritual of Flaying, where a criminal's very humanity is stripped away, leaving them little more than a man-shaped beast.

The Darklord

Yagno Petrovna is the religious and political leader of G'Henna, a thin man with a long, narrow face, his features

more like flat lines than protrusions. His bloodshot eyes are normally slitted, and his thin lips press together in a bloodless scowl. His priestly garb of red and orange silk robes is topped with a stiff, hooded cowl that shows his position as high priest of the Lawgiver. His prayer beads are made of polished human teeth and bones.

As a child, Yagno was often thought to be deranged by his family due to his religious zeal and extreme devotion to the Lawgiver. His fanatical attempts to gain the direct attention of his god included animal sacrifices and self-mutilation. When he tried to sacrifice his sister's newborn child, his family could suffer his madness no longer and drove him into the wilderness.

In time, Yagno made his way to the uncharted plateau of G'Henna and gained control of the priesthood there, pushing the people into a culture of perpetual sacrifice and denial. Yagno is constantly plagued by doubts about his faith, creating a cycle where he makes ever-grander gestures and inflicts ever-harsher sacrifices on those around him to affirm his own beliefs. In effect, his entire nation is an ongoing act of sacrifice to serve as "proof" of Yagno's devotion to the Lawgiver.

Yagno has learned a great deal of magic over the years, though he styles his powers as "miracles" from god. The Lawgiver's ban against sorcery just gives Yagno one more reason to doubt his own faith, even as he uses his powers publicly to prove his holiness. One of his greatest powers is a ritual that allows him to strip the humanity away from a victim, leaving behind a broken animal-like creature with little will or intellect.

Hazlan

Hazlan is a land of low, stony mountains and rock-strewn plains. Forests are few and far between in the cool, arid terrain, and scrublands are common. The whole land has a sense of vague desolation, with yellowed grasses and thorny bushes broken only occasionally by shallow, muddy rivers and broad, brackish ponds. Despite the apparent lack of greenery, the economy of the domain is primarily agrarian. Extensive waterworks and irrigation systems allow the peasantry to farm grain, cotton, and sugar, though most crops are vulnerable to blights and droughts.

Society in Hazlan is rigid, with a strict caste division between the two major ethnic groups of the domain, the Rashemani and the Mulani. Social status and role in life are determined at birth; at the age of thirteen, people of all social statuses are given tattoos to show their assigned place in the world, as well as their family history, lineage, and personal traits as viewed by their priest and tattooist. Societal expectations become more rigid and defined as one grows older or ascends in rank, and people are constrained and bound by a system they inevitably come to despise but cannot escape.

The people are starkly divided by ethnicity. The Rashemani are the vast majority of the populace, perhaps as much as ninety to ninety-five percent of the total population. They are a tough and sturdy folk but tend to be short due to childhood disease and poor nutrition; a well-fed Rashemani can easily grow to more than six feet tall, but most stand less than five and a half feet. Rashemani have skin of deep bronze and brown or black hair and eyes. Men and women alike rarely cut their hair, plaiting it in long

braids. Most men have thin, short beards; they cut their facial hair rarely, but cut it short whenever possible. Most Rashemani have extensive scars and marks from their hard labor. The most common clothing are simple tunics and trousers, topped with a caftan.

The Mulani are the elite of Hazlan, an ethnic group comprising perhaps five to ten percent of the population. Mulani are tall and thin, preferring to keep their dark hair cut very short or shaved entirely. Mulani have olive skin and brown, green, or hazel eyes. Their caste tattoos tend to be elaborate and extensive, with their deeds and accomplishments adding to them over their entire lives. The highest-ranked Mulani tattoo their bare heads to show their greatness to all who can see them. Mulani tend to dress in elaborately draped and brightly colored silks; though red can be used for decoration, only wizards of the Red Academy are permitted to dress in the color exclusively.

Mulani are exhaustively educated, with the best among them being sent to the Red Academy to learn sorcery. In turn, the Mulani work to keep the Rashemani uneducated and ignorant; it is considered dangerous to even let a Rashemani become literate, so a system of simple glyphs is used in public to allow them to fulfill their daily tasks. Though all Hazlani are expected to be adherents of the Lawgiver, the Rashemani tend to be more publicly vocal about their faith, while the Mulani are expected to be more devout for social reasons.

Hazlani architecture leans toward the simple but colorful. A flat building made of fired bricks might be brightly painted to draw away from its simplicity. The elite Mulani tend to include tall spires and narrow towers in the construction of their homes, often topped with rounded or onion-shaped domes.

Tropes

Hazlan is a land of chaos beneath a thin veneer of order. The modern landscape hides old secrets that can warp the body and mind of those who stumble upon them. The overbearing pressure of a rigid society is continually at odds with the imperfections of human nature; people are warped by social expectations, twisted by the demands of a culture that wants too much.

The purpose of Hazlan as a setting is to explore the monstrous—high-magic horror that isn't high-fantasy horror. Its inspirations include the "weird tales" of Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber, with a dash of H.P. Lovecraft and Gene Wolfe. The magical underpinnings of Hazlan serve to further the idea that it is a chaotic place, a land where the very laws of nature are reduced to mere suggestions by the whim of self-absorbed and corrupt sorcerers.

Themes

- **Eldritch Horror:** While Hazlan seems to be normal on the surface, it is a place where chaos and horror are just waiting to burst forth. Old, alien ruins dot the landscape, while the wizards of the Red Academy constantly breed new horrors out of arrogance and pride. The unknown and the unknowable are frequent elements of stories set in Hazlan.
- **Numinous Monstrosity:** Hazlan is a land of monsters and dire magic, a place where horror comes from the spiritual and physical twisting of the natural order. It is an ideal place for body horror, in which the forms of things have become corrupted and horrible. Even without the intention of its users, magic is a force of chaos and corruption, the widespread use of

which leads to unintentional awfulness.

- **Social Theory:** The hard questions of race, class, and social expectation are at the heart of Hazlan. Racism and classism are common social ills in the domain, and a constant demonstration of the ways in which social privilege breeds cruelty and contempt. At the same time, social expectation is shown as being just as toxic for those at the top of the structure in moral terms.

Notable Locations

The Tables are a series of squat, domed fortresses that lurk at the heart of every city in Hazlan. These buildings serve as Hazlik's bases of operations when he must visit one of his governors, so they are filled with everything the wizard needs to continue his research while away from Veneficus. Each fortress also has extensive dungeons beneath it, holding prisoners who are kept until the wizard comes to either pardon them (which is rare) or turn them into subjects for his cruelest experiments.

Toyalis is the capital of Hazlan and the center of Mulani society in the domain. The city's many noble families constantly jockey for position and privilege, with the most powerful among them vying for the coveted position of governor. The city is also home to the Iron Citadel Fane, the center of Lawgiver worship in Hazlan. Though only tolerated by Hazlik himself, the Church of the Lawgiver acts as an important faction in the city's political struggles, and its influence can make or break the ambitions of a noble family. It is currently in the middle of a struggle of its own, however, as the Fane's spiritual leader fights off a series of ecumenical challenges from a coalition of high priests led by his own second in command.

Veneficus is Hazlik's private estate, about a day's journey outside of Toyalis. The grounds are covered in vast gardens filled with exotic (and often deadly) plants that are all useful as arcane components. The estate is a blur of activity around the clock, as the Red Wizard rarely sleeps, with messengers and apprentices coming and going almost constantly. Veneficus is opulent and well-appointed, but few other than Hazlik himself and his most favored apprentices ever get the chance to enjoy the estate's comforts. The inner sanctums do not admit visitors, and the grounds are guarded by magical servants, conjured entities, chimerical beasts, and mystical traps of a dizzying variety.



The Darklord

The wizard-king Hazlik is lord of Hazlan as well as the master of the Red Academy. Despite his position of absolute authority, he has seemingly little interest in governing, meaning that the law is a patchwork affair in much of the land. Hazlik leaves most of the daily business of his country in the hands of appointed advisors and governors, whom he can replace at whim.

Physically, Hazlik is a tall, bald man of coarse middle age. He wears a goatee but no mustache and dresses in long red robes that expose his hairless, tattooed chest. People often notice his strange eyes: the left is brown and the right is blue. His phlegmy voice is often tight with unconcealed impatience. His most striking feature, however, are the ornate tattoos that cover his head—arcane symbols that declare him to be vulgar, weak, and lowly to anyone who can understand the complex Hazlani tattoo language. Anyone who brings up his tattoos in conversation is likely to meet an unpleasant end.

Hazlik was once a powerful wizard-nobleman in a land ruled by mages. His rise to power earned him many enemies. One of them laid a cunning trap for Hazlik, catching him in a tryst with her assistant and having Hazlik accused of rape. The court turned on Hazlik, tattooed him as a criminal, and burned his estate to the ground. He retreated to a bolthole and spent years devoting himself to research and planning vengeance. In time, he happened upon his rival and her lover; he tortured them to death gruesomely before abandoning their bodies and fleeing.

During his escape, he was swallowed up by the Mists and found himself in a new land, one that was subtly different from his homeland. Hazlik was king here, but

just as bound as before by the expectations and demands of others. His efforts to return to his homeland to finish exacting his vengeance on those who humiliated and exiled him have all met with failure, leaving him bitter and angry. He takes out his frustration on his many apprentices, twisting them into warped mirror images of himself and leaving them with the same perverse anger at the world.

In Hazlik's nightmare, he is powerless and cowers before the magical might of those who tormented him. Hazlik frequently imbibes powerful alchemical concoctions of his own devising to avoid sleep for as long as possible, since these dreams remind him of his failures. The longer he stays awake, the more his dreams bleed into reality, turning his world chaotic and hallucinatory. He must eventually collapse into restless, haunted sleep despite his best efforts to avoid it.

Nova Vaasa

Nova Vaasa is the domain most folk think of when people speak of the Far Steppes—and with good reason, given that the country takes up more than two-thirds of the region. Hundreds of miles of open plains are the major feature of Nova Vaasa, a land where a man can ride hard for days on end without seeing a single other human being. The scattered towns and villages are separated by vast distances, and the few cities are sprawling, overcrowded cesspools that can make someone begin to long for the empty steppes in no time.

While much of the domain can be described as “plains” in the broadest sense, these range from the sprawling central steppes to the verdant southern grasslands to the barren and cold

northern tundra. There are also other geographical features, though these tend to cling to the edges of the domain. The northernmost reaches of Nova Vaasa begin to swing upland into rocky hills that eventually become the Hazlani mountains or the high, difficult-to-reach plateau of G'Henna. In the south, past the grasslands and vast fields of wildflowers, lie twisting, painted canyons and cracked earth that gives way to true desert.

Though those who live in the domain know the lay of the land and the differences between the various regions, a hapless visitor can hardly be blamed for seeing only a continuous rolling plain. There are scattered lakes, rivers, and trees in the domain, but the closest thing to a true forest clings to the northern mountains, making dense woods very uncommon. The few landmarks on the plains are the scattered remnants of Old Vaasa: worn stone statues of feminine figures, carvings of great cats or elaborate horses, cairns and burial mounds covered by thick grasses, and piles of rough stones with unknown purpose.

Nova Vaasa's wilderness is home to reindeer, moose, wolves, and plains cats, but the most frequent symbol of the domain are its horses, which roll across the landscape in thundering herds many hundreds strong. Nova Vaasans are immensely proud of their horses, gelding any that are exported from the country in order to maintain their monopoly on the best bloodlines. Plains cats are a major source of fear on the steppes; these large, dun-colored cats have foot-long fangs and attack with a sound eerily similar to a human scream.

The architecture of the domain varies between that of the plains, the cities, and the nobility. Rural towns are generally constructed from whatever materials are on hand, be it round huts of stone,



square hovels of hewn earth, or simple wood lattices covered in fabric. Cities tend to have buildings with slanted roofs and tall spires but are more frequently built from brick, stacked several stories high and crowded together in urban squalor. It is only when one sees the homes of the nobility that the disparity becomes shockingly clear; the wealthy of Nova Vaasa live in palaces built from polished marble, frequently decorated with gold plate, and surrounded by high-walled estates.

The people of Nova Vaasa are made up of several different ethnic groups which most foreigners are unable to tell apart. Vaasans themselves consider these divisions very important for cultural and historical reasons, however. Generally, the more northern groups tend to have straight dark hair, dark eyes, rounded features, and pale skin, turned ruddy from exposure to the cold winds. Central plains groups are fair skinned and fair eyed, with square features and narrow chins. The southern plains groups tend to have olive or brown skin, brown or black

hair, and eyes ranging from black to emerald green, with narrow, angular faces. A common feature of Vaasan culture is food-gifting; when people have extra food, they tend to give it to their neighbors instead of trying to sell it, on the unspoken agreement that their neighbors will do the same for them in times of need.

The law in Nova Vaasa is as complicated as its ethnicity and history. According to the doctrine of the Lawgiver, the law is an infallible tool of god, enforced by his appointed clergy and those with the divine right to rule. In practice, “the law” is barely a concept in Nova Vaasa, as the local legal history is a morass of conflicting power grabs between the noble families, the ruling elite, the wealthy, and the clergy, complicated by the ability of local power brokers to simply ignore the law and rule on precedent or personal power at whim. Punishments for broken laws (or just offending the wrong person) are severe, ranging from flogging to hard labor camps and branding; the wealthy can

often avoid punishment through barely concealed bribery.

Tropes

Nova Vaasa is about two parts Boyar Russia to one part Mongolia and one part Old West. The same sort of stories are told using the plains in all three cultures: lone villages with corrupt masters who are saved from danger by wanderers, preferably riding horses, who then leave after saving the people from danger.

These stories are conflated with horror tropes in Nova Vaasa, with a heaping dose of “grim prairie tales” and Weird West influence, albeit with fewer six-shooters.

Themes

- **Corruption:** Everything in Nova Vaasa is rotten to the core. The government is virtually indistinguishable from the criminal underworld. Church officials are bought and paid for by the highest bidder. The nobility lives in opulence while their serfs starve on their doorsteps. On a physical level, the populace is branded, tattooed, scarred, and mutilated by the system they serve. The “infallible” doctrine of the Lawgiver splits into a hundred isolated heresies out on the steppes. The center cannot hold.
- **Endless Plains:** Nothing can prevent someone from saddling up and riding out of town if he wishes—but those who do will quickly find that they can ride for days on end without a single sign of human life. Villages and towns are isolated not by obstacles but by simple distance. The steppes are vast and wide, but not empty of danger. Bandits, beasts, and eerie locations threaten the lone traveler. More than anything else, though, the greatest

threat is the sheer scope and loneliness of the plains.

- **Medical Horror:** Magic has long been suppressed in Nova Vaasa, so the local pursuit of alchemy, chemistry, and surgery are among the most advanced in the known world. Most procedures are innocent and even helpful, but dark whispers rumor more terrifying possibilities. Rumors abound of surgeries that can steal organs from healthy victims to give them to dying nobles, potions and draughts that can distill virtue or beauty, and distillations made from human brains that can grant memories or skills. This can cross over into body horror easily enough, but most of it has a specifically medical or alchemical focus.

Notable Locations

Arbora is the southernmost city of Nova Vaasa, and its only port. The city is isolated from the rest of the domain by hundreds of miles of largely empty plains and the encroaching Mists, but it possesses a shallow bay that opens into the Sea of Sorrows (which locals call the Nocturnal Sea) and a coastline that extends north to the distant city of Egertus. The city’s geographic distance and general isolation makes the population more independent than most Vaasans, though the city’s duke continues to pay his taxes to the prince... for now.

Darkhaaven is a fearsome urban legend, a series of underground chambers connected to the sewers used by Malken and his criminal syndicate for smuggling, lairs, and vile experimentation. Few people know that there is not a single Darkhaaven but many—one under each major city of Nova Vaasa, each of them connected by shadowy portals allowing for

instantaneous transportation across long distances.

Kantora is the capital of Nova Vaasa, a cramped and crowded metropolis that is starkly divided between the well-maintained, brightly lit wealthy parts of the city and the crime-riddled poorer sections. The smell of horses permeates every inch of the city, most notably around the Great Corral, the domain's largest horse trading center. Kantora is also home to the Prince's Palace, the home of Prince Othmar when he is present in the city—which is rare.

The **Three Sisters** are the largest lakes in Nova Vaasa, named after the legendary daughters of the first man and woman. The lakes—named Lake Jensine, Lake Nielsine, and Lake Vibeke—are famed for their rich fishing, but they are also infamous for the huge number of plains cat attacks that occur along their shores.

The Darklord

The criminal mastermind Malken is the darklord of Nova Vaasa. Possessed of a hunched build and twisted spine with thick limbs and heavy hands, no one who meets Malken could doubt that he is anything but a caliban. Malken's long fingernails are filed to form makeshift claws, his unruly gray hair and eyebrows make him look older than he is, and his facial features are exaggerated and uneven. His quick mind and vast education often catch people off-guard—as does his uncanny ability to move in near-perfect silence when he wishes. His body is covered with tattoos showing his criminal exploits and allegiances.

While Malken is unpleasant to deal with personally due to his slang-filled dialogue and brusque attitude, he can be quite eloquent and charming if he decides that someone is worth his time. Most of the time, he acts up his

reputation as a criminal mastermind and a dangerous man. It is apparent to anyone who speaks with him that he could simply have them killed if he wished. He rarely acts impulsively, though; his strategies for solving problems are inevitably inspired, if ruthless.

Malken was born deformed and ugly, abandoned by his parents on the streets to die and only grudgingly taken in by a local orphanage. His early years were marked by abuse and neglect, since the Iron Faith teaches that physical deformity is a sign of spiritual degeneracy. He fell in with a gang of juvenile delinquents who accepted him for his cunning rather than rejecting him for his appearance. Unfortunately, while alone he decided to rob a young nobleman; he was no match for the healthier, stronger man and was defeated effortlessly.



Rather than send him to labor or have him flogged, either of which would surely kill the malnourished boy, the nobleman took pity on Malken and brought him into his home, there to serve his sentence under the man's personal watch. The nobleman, Dmitri Stanov, soon discovered Malken's quick mind and ordered him nursed to health and educated. Malken took to medicine and alchemy like a fish to water, and in only a few short years he had taken his place as Dmitri's personal physician.

Despite his changed fortunes, Malken was bitter and angry over the accident of his birth and the way he was treated for it by people outside the Stanov household. Because of the Lawgiver's edicts, it was illegal for him to attempt to alter his appearance or correct his deformities; this didn't stop him from accumulating forbidden lore to research the matter anyway.

In time, Malken stumbled on an alchemical formula that could allow a man to permanently assume another's form—by killing someone and distilling their body as part of the formula. He resisted its use for a long time until he heard about the capture and execution of the gang he had run with as a child. Wondering why they had not been shown the mercy he had, his resentment against all figures of authority grew, including his patron. Finally, justifying that he could change the system from

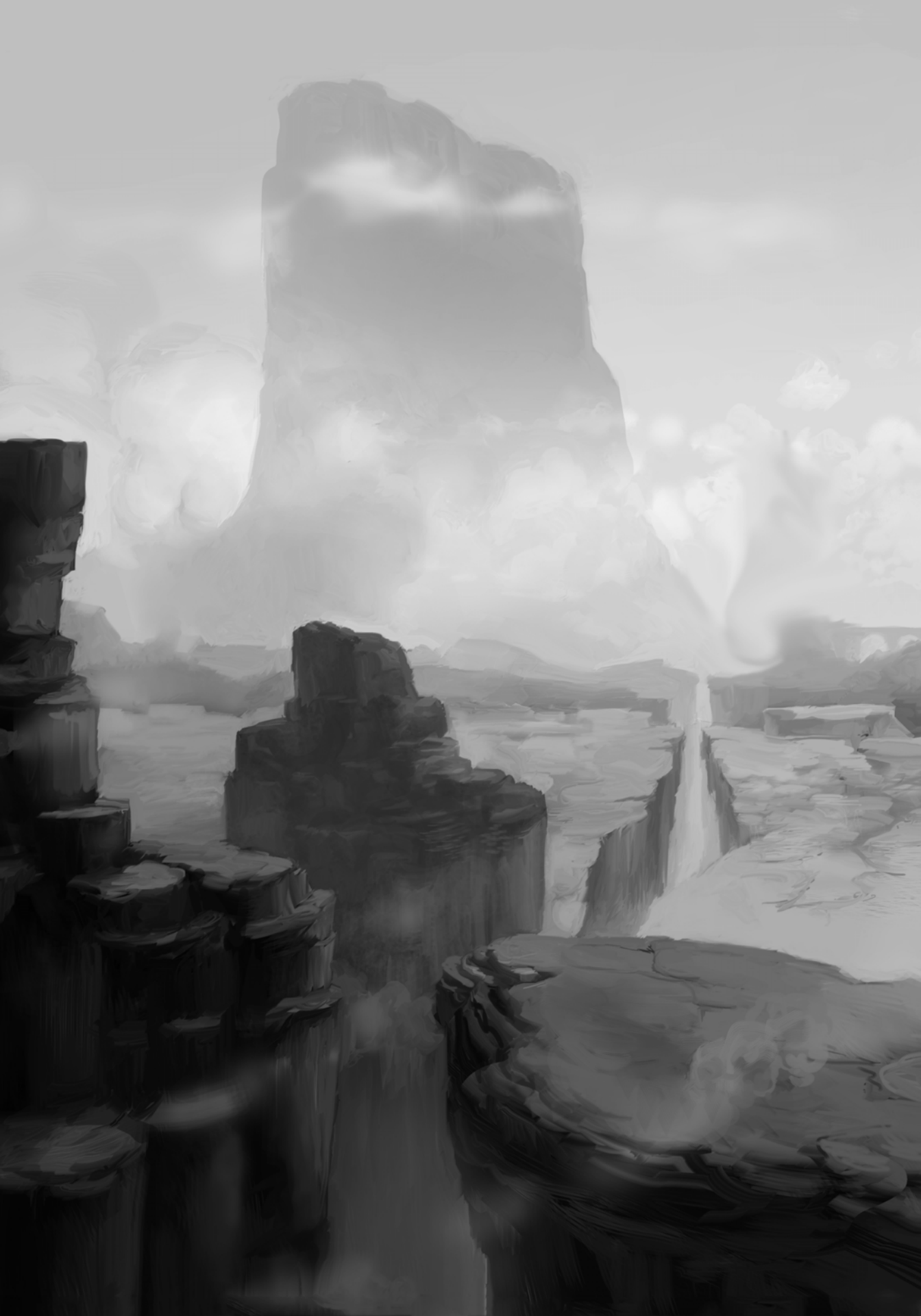
within, he chose to murder his friend and steal his shape.

While Malken loved his new position and authority, he soon realized he had been naïve. The government was hopelessly corrupt, and no one man could hope to change it without help. Stumbling onto Dmitri's personal journals, he discovered how much his friend had truly cared for him and broke down in grief. When he awoke, it was night; he had no recollection of where the day had gone and was horrified when he was told that Dmitri had just been looking for him. Terrified and confused, Malken stole what he could and fled.

Malken has realized that he now shares his body with Dmitri Stanov. They change control of their shared form without warning or any ability to influence it. Dmitri apparently does not realize what has happened to him and still seems to care for his old friend, even though Malken has become an infamous crime lord.

Though he can assume Stanov's appearance at will, he retains his old form when engaging in criminal activities to avoid tarnishing Stanov's reputation should he be seen or caught.

Malken protects Stanov and his family from the consequences of his enterprises mainly because he has put so much time and effort into stealing Stanov's life that he refuses to let anyone else touch what he sees as his. Malken has betrayed everything he once believed in out of the hope of someday gaining Dmitri's power and influence, becoming part of the corrupt system he once despised.



The Forest of Beasts

The Forest of Beasts is a vast timberland filled more with animals than with people. The humans that dwell in the Forest eke out hardscrabble lives of subsistence. Civilization is a story here—only the wilderness is reality. Humans are the hunted in the Forest of Beasts, not the hunters, and many of the creatures that dwell in these lands are able to blur the line between beast and man to better deceive their prey.

The westernmost portion of the Cluster is the large domain of Verbrek, a coastal forest that runs north-south and is well known for its enormous trees and frequent rains. Verbrek is a rocky land full of sharp cliffs, steep gullies, and heavy undergrowth with many fast-flowing creeks, streams, and rivers.

The other three domains of the region touch on Verbrek's eastern border; the northernmost is the somewhat civilized domain of Kartakass, a land known for its musical traditions, lumber industry, and potent liquors. South of Kartakass is Arkandale, a region of independent towns and river traders. The southernmost domain is Valachan, a land where wolves are displaced by large cats as the top predator.

While all of the region's domains have a temperate and warm climate, the southern half of the Cluster is subtropical. The Forest is humid, prone to heavy rain and muggy weather; Arkandale and Valachan have almost murderous heat, with humidity so strong that it can make simply breathing feel like drowning on a hot day. Mosquitos and the diseases they carry are common throughout the Forest of Beasts, and breathing ailments are a frequent killer.

The Forest of Beasts is a wild, untamed place, full of superstition and fear. Magic is frequently reviled by the people of the region's small villages; some think that any magic-user is an animal spirit disguised as a human. While the people of the Forest possess animistic traditions of their own, there is little room for religious fervor in their desperate lives. Praying to the ancestors or the spirits is common, and some larger villages might even have a shaman or priest, but few are prosperous enough to be able to devote significant time to worship.

Languages

The domains of the Forest of Beasts speak Vaasi, though Low Mordentish is becoming common among the traders of Arkandale as they form more connections with the Civilized Crescent. Regional accents make communication among the domains occasionally difficult, but rarely disastrous. Many villages have unique accents or vocabulary due to long periods of isolation.

Kartakass has its own unique language, Old Kartakan, which is spoken only by local scholars and musicians. Most people in the domain never bother learning it, instead using Vaasi as their common tongue. Minstrels and historians keep the language alive for reasons of nostalgia and scholarship, but little else.

Connections

The rivers of Arkandale flow east into the Civilized Cluster; Arkandale's trading clans ferry a significant amount of Kartakan hardwoods into the shops of Richemulot. The rivers can be very hard to navigate, however, since they pass

through the Mists; this means that only experienced navigators attempt such passage. Quite a few of the rivers of northern Verbrek connect with the Balinok Mountains, particularly to Invidia, but these rivers are even more dangerous to navigate than those of Arkandale.

Western Verbrek has a long shore that flows into the Sea of Sorrows, but few settlements exist on its rocky, storm-wracked shores. Most ships that try to find portage in the waters off Verbrek generally wind up shattering themselves on the cliffs and shoals. Eastern Valachan gradually bleeds into the Far Steppes, and a reliable Mistway known as Horse Lord's Pass connects the two.

The Spirit Pact

Many of the villages of the Forest of Beasts share similar legends about the nature of the world. These animistic faiths are collectively called "the Spirit Pact" by outsiders, though each is unique and different in its own ways.

The common beliefs shared by members of the Spirit Pact are that the world sprang from the Mists, and that the faceless spirits of the Mists took shape in order to explore their new world. Most of the myths say that the first of these spirits was the Wolf God, sometimes called "Grandfather Wolf"; some legends claim that the other spirits came into existence as the Wolf God hunted them, each becoming something different in an attempt to stay ahead of the First Wolf's fangs.

Those who follow the Spirit Pact see the world as a constant struggle between humanity and the spirits of the wilderness. Some try to placate the spirits with offerings; others attempt to ward them off with ritual actions; a few emulate them, becoming more like beasts in order

to fool the spirits or gain their favor. Shamans of the Spirit Pact are rarely practitioners of magic, but a great many of them are wise in the ways of animals and herb lore.

The most feared and reviled followers of the spirits are the blasphemous Cult of the Wolf God. These vile turncoats see wolves as superior to humans, and themselves as "hunters of men." Many of them are cannibals or worse, hoping to gain the strength of the wolf by hunting and eating other humans. Some have found ways to become wolves themselves, or hideous hybrids of wolf and man. Every villager fears their howling and dreads to see their sign, the black claw, scrawled on a tree, for it means they intend to hunt—and soon.

Many of the Spirit Pact faiths have been pushed to the fringes or wiped out in Valachan, where pride and greed work to destroy the traditional culture of the region. The only major remaining cult in the area is that of Yutow, a sun god who was once regarded as a bloody-handed spirit but now serves as a banner of rebellion.

Arkandale

Of all the lands of the Forest of Beasts, Arkandale is the closest to civilization. Its villages are more prosperous than those of other lands, walled and palisaded structures that protect their people from the creatures of the forest. Dalemén engage in extensive agriculture as well as hunting and fishing; they produce more than enough to allow them to trade the surplus to other communities, particularly the furriers and trappers of northeastern Verbrek.

Arkandale is a land of rolling hills, covered in vast forests and cut through

with wide, shallow rivers. The traders of Arkandale use broad-bottomed rafts and barges to ply the waters, slow-moving craft that leave them vulnerable to raiders and pirates using canoes or obstructions. The forests of Arkandale are not as thick or impenetrable as those of the other lands of the region, but they are still avoided whenever possible by the natives.

Buildings in Arkandale are constructed from local timber or wood imported from Kartakass by river. The homes of most folk are tall, gabled houses, built wide but shallow to help keep the interiors cool. Whitewashing is common, especially for the homes of the wealthy, and roofs are normally covered in shingles of slate or tile. Stone buildings are uncommon in the domain due to a lack of quarries, so fire is a serious concern in most towns.



The prosperity of Arkandale is not without its cost. Arkandale is a land where the wealth of the few is bought by the sweat and blood of the many. Slavery is common in the domain, especially the horrors of chattel slavery, where human beings are considered property without rights of their own. Wealthy landowners and merchant clans keep extensive numbers of slaves, working them to death to preserve their own meager advantages over their neighbors. While many slaves were taken from Verbrek in raids (or by “traders” who turned on their clients for profit), the vast majority were born into slavery, the descendants of slaves who have known nothing but lives of labor and hardship.

The people of Arkandale are fair-skinned and attractive, with young women of Arkandale having an almost legendary beauty. Most Dalemen dress in simple work clothes to minimize the oppressive heat, but the recent affluence of the trading clans has inspired them to begin importing fashions from the Civilized Crescent. The most affluent clans have begun speaking Mordentish in imitation of their trading partners, who would be utterly horrified to realize the degree to which slavery is an accepted institution in the nation.

Dalemen have a reputation for genteel hospitality and deliberate courtesy, but this veneer lies atop a core of suspicion and insularity. Even the wealthiest Daleman is only a generation away from hardscrabble poverty, which generates an undercurrent of tension that often breaks out into feuds or brawls. Dalemen work hard to be courteous because they take offense at the smallest of slights, leading to dangerous retribution. They can be intensely ruthless about protecting their privilege and position; even a poor freeman has pride, since he is better than a slave.

The slaves of Arkandale are a miserable lot, kept in ignorance and poverty and treated as little more than animals. A master can beat a slave to death with no consequences other than having to replace a lost slave, and slaves have no rights to privacy, property, or basic dignity. Slaves are superficially little different from free folk; their darker skin is only from more frequent outdoor work and not any particular ethnic difference. Most are the descendants of tribesmen taken from Verbrek—from tribes that are also the ancestors of the trading clans. A few are former freemen who fell deeply enough into debt that their freedom was forfeit, and some were stolen from neighboring lands as children.

Slavery is vital to Arkandale's economy, and the sole reason that the nation stands above its fellows in wealth. Arkandale's extensive plantations produce grain, vegetables, and fabrics that are then traded to other lands. Because slaves outnumber freemen in Arkandale, the masters are constantly worried about revolts or uprisings, treating the slightest rebellious behaviors with intense cruelty.

Tropes

Arkandale is intended to be a representation of the American South before the Civil War, or early Canada before the American Revolution. It is a land of farming, fur trapping, and trade, where the wealth of a few is carried on the backs of many. The land is only a step removed from its poor origins, with even the wealthiest citizens being little more than trumped-up nouveau riche pretenders. Their manners and courtesy disguise a rapacious attitude that sees nothing wrong with turning people into objects.

While Arkandale may seem like a poor fit for the Forest of Beasts, it mainly exists

here as a counterpoint to the vast wilderness, treating man as the real animal. Humans metaphorically prey on each other in Arkandale, turning civilization into a sham—a thin veneer on top of a “dog eat dog” world. Arkandale is the “proof” to the Cult of the Wolf God's claims that humans are worse than animals; wolves don't keep slaves, after all.

Themes

- **The Beast Within:** Arkandale is a seemingly civilized land, but that civilization hides all manner of sins. The veneer of civilization is mere makeup, a layer of paint atop a canvas of savagery. Men and women dance to fine music while wearing fine clothes, only to go back to their fine homes and whip their slaves to death. Children are disciplined with beatings, and adults settle their disputes with fists instead of words. Courtesy exists to hold the animal at arm's length, but apparent calmness can give way to frenzy in a heartbeat.
- **Horrors of Slavery:** Slavery is practiced in some other lands of Ravenloft, but nowhere else is it as extensive or as horrible. Slaves in Arkandale have no rights to speak of—nor do they have hope. People speak of slavery as a “necessary evil” in order to preserve the wealth of the elite, effectively saying that human lives have a monetary value. The idea that human life can possess a price tag cheapens life while avoiding responsibility for permitting slavery to exist.
- **One Step from Savagery:** Arkandale doesn't feel like a tamed land. Just the opposite—it feels like a wilderness where civilization is barely scraping by. The towns are perpetually half-

finished, while the villages are only superficially different from those in neighboring domains. Wild animals remain a constant threat, even on the plantations, and nature is as much an enemy as anywhere else in the region. Even the wealthy elite are only a generation removed from tribal villagers themselves, despite their pretensions to the contrary.

Notable Locations

Cheapside is less a town and more a monument to human misery. Named for the slave market it grew up around, Cheapside is a place where the bestial instincts of the people of Arkandale are on full, naked display. The town has bars, brothels, fighting pits, and other base entertainments, but nothing in the way of art, culture, or public services. The one church in town is maintained by an aging pastor who spends most of his time drunk, raging in public against the evils of slavery, or both.

The **Musarde River** is the primary artery of trade and travel in the land of Arkandale. This broad, slow-moving river is known for its muddy waters, many branches, and frequent shallows. The “Muddy Musarde” can be a nightmare to navigate for amateur boatmen, who are prone to running aground on mudbanks. Those who are stranded in this fashion find themselves easy pickings for river pirates—or less natural predators.

Rosewater is the public face of Arkandale, a clean and orderly town along the banks of the Musarde River. It is filled with parks, theaters, and fine restaurants, a rapidly growing genteel city of culture and fashion. The town keeps the source of its wealth at arm’s length—the plantations and orchards outside the town that are worked by legions of ill-fed slaves.

The Darklord

Riverboat captain and merchant Nathan Timothy is the darklord of Arkandale. He is a werewolf who betrayed his own kin to enjoy the comforts of civilization. Nathan was once the leader of a pack of werewolves, but he grew envious of the creature comforts he saw possessed by humanity—cooked food, liquor, soft beds, and the like tempted him until he turned from his people’s traditional ways to live like a human.

Nathan’s ruthless nature served him well. He quickly became the master of a trading group, using his powers to keep his traders safe from the beasts of the forest. Seeing all humans as little more than prey anyway, he introduced the concept of chattel slavery to the region; rather than hunting humans and eating them, he would hunt humans and cast them in chains as his servants.

Spending so much time on the rivers to ensure his wealth and hunt for new slaves left Nathan with ironically little time to enjoy the fruits of his labors. Still, he comforted himself with the idea that all the work he did would pay off in time, leaving him a wealthy, comfortable man.

Instead, Nathan found himself rapidly outpaced by the humans he had supported, leaving him a minor riverboat trader constantly behind his competitors. His own plantation was less productive than his neighbors, and he was constantly undercut by his former friends and allies.

In time, Nathan found himself bereft of resources, little more than a poverty-stricken human himself, with only a scrubby plot of land and a weather-beaten riverboat to his name. Other werewolves spurned him as a traitor to his own kind, avoiding his “territory” not out of respect but out of disdain. Nathan married and had children, but all of his blood would

eventually turn against him in one way or another. Even his purely human relations want nothing to do with him because of his temper and poor business acumen.

Nathan Timothy is an old wretch now, white-haired and bearded. He lives on his riverboat most of the time, constantly looking for opportunities that might allow him to reach the station he believes he deserves. He sees others succeeding in his place and feels nothing but envy for their success—but his primary means of vengeance has been taken from him, since he cannot command the local beasts any longer. They have lost respect for him and will not obey him. Nathan is a creature of two worlds, truly belonging to neither and gaining no pleasure from either one.

Kartakass

Kartakass is a land of music where joyful song echoes through the black forests, tinged ever so slightly by the tone of fear. It is a domain of dense woodlands blanketing a region of rocky upland terrain. The forests are wild and treacherous here, from the thorny undergrowth to the fierce wolves that stalk the wooded ridges. The wilderness is far from lonely, however, as the sweet baritone voices of lumberjacks at work float over the hills. The domain is riddled with spectacular natural caverns, endlessly branching labyrinths of limestone that wind deep into the cold earth.

Buildings in Kartakass are massive log lodges with broad facades and towering thatch roofs. Rows of narrow windows, bold wooden carvings, and delicate floral patterns grace the fronts of homes and shops. Most structures feature enormous central fireplaces ringed by a raised dais for musical performances and

storytelling. Natural surroundings are frequently incorporated directly into the domain's architecture. Living trees may be employed as natural pillars, or a structure may open up directly into a cavern of glittering crystal. Even the humblest settlements feature public amphitheaters for annual singing contests.

As the northernmost region of the Forest of Beasts, Kartakass has the coolest climate. Its winters can be harsh at times, though snow is uncommon. Summers tend to be milder than those of neighboring regions, but they can still become very humid.

Kartakans are a lean, graceful breed of folk blessed with long limbs and angular, handsome features. Their skin is very fair and creamy, sometimes dotted with a few scattered freckles. Kartakan hair is wavy and normally a flaxen blond, but very rarely a child with raven tresses is born. Men keep their hair long and wild, often growing it past their shoulders. Women allow their hair to grow all the way to their waists and likewise shun styling it. Neatly trimmed goatees and long, full mustaches are typical among men.

Kartakan clothing is comfortable but dashing. Men and women alike wear blousy shirts and trousers, the latter tucked into high black boots. Women frequently wear short vests over their blouses, while men prefer full coats. Wide-brimmed hats are popular with men, particularly among woodsmen and travelers. Clothing colors are vibrant, with brilliant reds, yellows, and blues being the most popular hues. Delicate embroidery is frequently used to decorate Kartakan garb. Jewelry is used sparingly; the sparkle of a single earring or ring is considered most attractive.

Kartakans are a warm, gregarious lot noted for their love of music and talent with song. There are melodies for every occasion and daily activity, and a

Kartakan village at work or play is a veritable festival of music. These folk also have a fondness for poetry and storytelling. Tall tales are a Kartakan tradition meant to teach lessons and play on the gullibility of listeners. Wandering bards are also a local institution, and the arrival of a famous bard stirs a Kartakan community to celebration and passion. A popular, bitter local brew called *meekulbrau* sweetens voices and loosens inhibitions.

Kartakans are content and thankful for the simple pleasures of life. They respect tradition, wisdom, and musical skill above all else. They fear little but the vicious wolves that stalk the domain, creatures that have been known to enter homes at night and drag slumbering victims from their beds. Kartakans have a shared culture, but each settlement in the domain is autonomous. No central authority dictates or enforces law throughout Kartakass. It is common for a community to choose its leader through an annual contest, typically one that incorporates musical competition as well as knowledge of local history and law.

Tropes

Kartakass is the dark forest of Grimm's faerie tales, a place where wolves entice red-cloaked waifs into the forest but no woodsman shows up to save them at the end of the story. Because of the musical nature of the land (and its lord), Kartakass could almost be played as a dark version of a Disney musical, full of life and laughter—until the third act, when everyone dies.

In appearance, Kartakass is intended to resemble the Black Forest of Germany during the period in which Grimm's tales were being collected. It is a place of vast wilderness, where every village is independent out of necessity. Adventures

in Kartakass tend to be very much like fairy tales, minus the faeries themselves; stories like "Little Red Riding Hood," "The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids," "The Town Musicians of Bremen," and "Snow White and Rose Red" are specific influences.

Themes

- **The Land of Fairy Tales:** Kartakass is a land out of fairy tales, a place of mystique and wonder. These aren't *nice* fairy tales, though. These are the tales where Little Red Hood and her grandmother are messily devoured, where Sleeping Beauty's town sleeps forever, and where the talking animals are usually villains. Still, everything has a mythical quality to it. Kartakass is a land of giant owls and wolves the size of carriages, a land where birds talk and trees listen, a land where a wolf can spin three times widdershins and become a man.
- **Music in the Air:** Kartakass is a very musical land, a place where the people break into song at the drop of a hat and where they would rather sing about their feelings than talk about them. Almost everyone has some musical talent, and being unable to sing or play an instrument is considered a social faux pas on par with inability to dress oneself in other lands.
- **The Wolf at the Door:** Despite the air of life and laughter in Kartakass, everyone knows that terrible things live just beyond the firelight, and the only way to be safe is to shut out the danger. People divide the world into "inside" and "outside," a series of decreasing circles that eventually leaves everyone totally alone. A village doesn't care about the affairs

beyond its borders; a family doesn't help their neighbors when times are tough for everyone; a person keeps their problems to themselves and hopes others do the same. People are generally friendly without being particularly helpful or cooperative, and they can sometimes be shockingly cruel.

Notable Locations

The **Arkalias Hills** are one of the most desolate places in the otherwise lush Forest of Beasts. The region is said to have been the home of a dire necromancer who drained the very life from the hills, using a series of hidden catacombs beneath the hills as her lair. Even today, the "Dead Hills" are littered with bone wards, staked skeletons, and mummified corpses strung up in terrifying poses.



The **Crystal Club** is Skald's most exclusive and prestigious musical venue. Constructed in an underground cave, the interior of the club is like standing within a vast geode. The crystals resonate when performers take the stage, creating a unique and moving experience for those lucky enough to be present for such a show. The club is managed by **Rurik Deeptimbre**, a boisterous man who keeps the meekulberry wine flowing and deftly dodges questions about the club's ownership.

Harmonia is the smaller of the two major settlements in Kartakass, widely considered the nation's cultural center. Harmonia's biggest source of pride is its city amphitheater, carved directly from the rock of the cliffs surrounding the city and with acoustics unmatched anywhere in the Land of Mists. Next to the amphitheater is the **Harmonic Hall**, widely considered one of the finest musical academies anywhere, and the **Temple of Divine Song**, the only known temple of the local faith called the **Ancestral Choir**.

Skald is the larger of Kartakass' two major settlements, less culturally important than Harmonia but greater in both wealth and population. The town is surrounded by a stone curtain wall in terrible repair, a legacy of the town's ancient past. The town is the personal domain of **Meistersinger Harkon Lukas**, a man seemingly incapable of losing the yearly singing competitions that determine the town's leadership.

The Darklord

The wandering bard **Harkon Lukas** might be the last person any Kartakan would expect to be a werewolf, let alone the darklord of the domain. A popular singer and performer across much of Kartakass, but especially around the city

of Harmonia, Lukas is well known for his charisma, musical abilities, and courage. The truth is far more horrific; Lukas was born a wolf, from a race of “wolfweres”—natural shapeshifters who act as predators of humanity.

Harkon Lukas was always unusual for one of his race. He craved human contact for its own sake rather than just for the purpose of feeding (though he still ate people he didn’t find interesting), which made him a freak among his own kind, who saw humans only as useful for food. The more time he spent with humans, the more like them he became in drive and ambition, until he was spending more time as a man than as a wolf. When his own kind finally cast him out, he turned on them and became a hunter of wolves, preying on his own people and driving them forth from his territory.

Lukas eventually wandered into the Mists, where he found a new land waiting for him, one in which he was respected as both man and wolf. To the wolves, he is “Grandfather,” the oldest and most powerful of their kind. To the humans, he is Harkon Lukas, the most respected musician and performer of the land. However, to his chagrin and frustration, neither group sees him as a leader or master—merely as a respected elder. Lukas will never be the great pack leader or king he desires to be, and his territory will never be influential or civilized. He is condemned to being lord of a rural domain full of independent people and wolves who will only obey him in the short term.

Harkon Lukas is a skilled shapechanger whose preferred form is that of a tall, muscular human male with wavy black hair that falls below his shoulders, a well-trimmed beard, and a mustache that comes to fine points. He dresses every inch the swashbuckling hero, with white shirt, blue trousers, golden coat, and

wide-brimmed hat with a feather tucked in it. Lukas can also assume female form, as well as a hybrid man-wolf shape and the form of a giant, ravenous wolf.

Valachan

Sometimes known as “Valacán” to its natives, this domain lies in the southeast corner of the Forest of Beasts, a low-lying region of thick, verdant jungles and hot, humid weather. The rough hills and low mountains between Kartakass and Valachan serve as a barrier to travel, except along certain passes, and the runoff from those mountains create several deep, wide rivers that cut through the region. Where much of the rest of the Forest of Beasts is a temperate rainforest, the jungles of Valachan are subtropical or even tropical in places.

Color and vibrancy abound in the jungles of the domain, from the rainbow-hued birds that live in the trees to the shimmering flowers growing everywhere to the brightly painted statues that decorate the domain’s cities. Strange and bizarre creatures unheard of in the rest of the Cluster are found in Valachan, from tiny and colorful birds no bigger than a man’s finger to rodents larger than a goat.

The northern part of the domain contains the bulk of Valacáni civilization, the center of Don Uriel Carrascon’s efforts to modernize and industrialize his land. Adobe buildings line brick-paved streets, the simple buildings decorated with colored tiles, domes, and carved pillars. The capital of the domain has all the comforts of any modern city in more civilized regions, and the city architects are quick to keep up with any new advancements they catch wind of. As cities move further away from the capital, they become more rural, often depending

on pack-laden beasts of burden over wagons for moving people and produce.

The domain's flora and fauna are its greatest source of wealth, even beyond the silver mines scattered throughout the land. Food is heavily exported to both Kartakass and Nova Vaasa (along the stable Mistway that leads east out of the domain). Many of the native plants are known for odd properties or medicinal uses, while many unique fruits, vegetables, and grains commonly grown here are culinary delights in other lands.

Valachan's people are an athletic folk, slightly short, varying between slender and sharp-featured to very round-faced. The humans of Valachan tend toward dark skin, ranging from tan though a deep bronze or a burnished brown. Eye color is uniformly dark, almost always black or deep brown; some children are born with yellow eyes and are thought to be touched by the spirits. Facial hair is nearly unheard of among men, but long hair is common in both genders, though it is usually pulled or tied back while working. Many older Valacáni have decorative scars, tattoos, and piercings, which are growing out of fashion with the younger, more modern generation.

Valachan is a society which is rapidly stratifying itself due to the influx of wealth and modernity to the north. City Valacáni are better educated, while those living near the cities benefit from their affluence; those living in rural farming communities or near the southern jungle are often illiterate and uneducated, clinging to the ways of the past despite the government's efforts. Wealthier Valacáni tend toward black or white clothing, offset by colored sashes and embroidery, made of imported cotton or silk. Poor Valacáni wear traditional clothes of dyed wool, while the poorest wear rough undyed wool clothing; such clothing

tends to be utilitarian rather than fashionable.

The southern regions of the domain are intractable wilderness, a jungle that is thick, lush, and almost impenetrable. Rain pours constantly, and when it is not raining, the heat causes the ground to steam. Even in broad daylight, the canopy blocks out most of the light while trapping heat; the humidity and greenhouse effect can make jungle heat lethal to unprepared travelers. The jungle is notoriously hostile to those that try to exploit it, between humidity rusting machines, animals attacking workers, and jungle fevers plaguing settlers and work crews. Despite this hostility—and sometimes because of it—rebels are known to live within the jungle, avoiding the government and launching guerilla raids.

Tropes

Valachan is a pastiche of Mexico and Central America, a land where “modernization” is a code word for destroying traditional ways of life and exploiting natural resources. The government is corrupt and vicious, attempting to tame the wilderness with no true understanding of it. Traditional beliefs and values are swept away in the face of “modern life,” with a few elites benefiting at the cost of the vast majority, who remain poor and marginalized.

Themes

- **Man's Cruelty, Nature's Brutality:** The law in Valachan is harsh and merciless. The laws themselves are strict, and the punishments are cruel. Still, the law of man is concerned with fairness—with right and wrong. The jungle offers no such consideration; its only law is “survive or die.” Is it better to live freely in a land without

morality, or is it better to accept a harsh rule with recourse for wrongs?

- **The Price of Control:** The industrialization of Valachan is fueled by the blood and sweat of its people. The modernization of the land comes from the ruin of its old culture. The ruler's demands are unreasonable, and those who attempt to fulfill them find themselves committing more and more desperate acts to do so. Those who rise to the top often find themselves caught in a spiraling grasp of impossible standards. An ambitious soul can do well in Valachan, but the price of power may be too high.
- **Taming the Untamable:** Valachan is a wild place, and its lord's efforts have only forced the wilderness back—never conquered it. The jungle of Valachan is more than just a passive obstacle. It is a living, seething entity filled with dangerous beasts, lost cities, and old spirits. Likewise, the old culture still lurks just beneath the civilized surface, twisting into new forms and threatening to boil up. Every city is constantly on the verge of being devoured by the wilderness, every “tame” animal is one missed meal from becoming savage, and every citizen still believes in the old gods deep inside. No matter what one does to shape the land of Valachan, it is always waiting to claw its way back into its old shape.

Notable Locations

Carrascon is the capital of Valachan, a modern city built on the bones of the region's majestic past. As Don Uriel builds outward, he meticulously and rigorously plans each new district of “his” city, often flying into rages when his architects inform him of practical

problems with his lofty plans. The city is built on marshy wetlands that the natives used as part of their seasonal crop rotations, but which makes the new city prone to flooding and vast clouds of mosquitoes and other biting insects.

Tianquiztli is a place where the new and the old mix side by side in Valachan. The trading town still uses traditional construction in its buildings but utilizes the new materials brought to the region by Carrascon. The colors and patterns of the local clothing evoke the old ways, even when they are made of modern linen and cotton. Though the town demonstrates how possible it is for a true fusion of cultures to exist in Valachan, Don Uriel is known to despise it as a holdout for backwards tribal nonsense. The town is a frequent target for his purges and reprisals—and so it is also a hotbed for underground resistance and sedition.

Toxcatl is a hidden temple deep in the forests of Valachan, one of the last bastions of the old faith from before Don Uriel's conquest. The stepped pyramid is home to a priesthood that practices bloody human sacrifices, typically chosen from the “traitors” who serve in Don Uriel's guard. The priesthood is said to guard a massive obsidian disk called the Smoking Mirror, an artifact that whispers to them in the sinister voice of their bloodthirsty god.

The Darklord

The being calling himself Don Uriel Carrascon has had many names over the years. He is a tall, sleek, handsome man appearing to be in his mid-thirties. He has dark brown skin, meticulously groomed black hair, and hypnotic yellow eyes. When he sits still, he exudes an aura of restlessness; when he moves, it is with silent grace. While he is pleasant

and complacent in demeanor, almost smug at times, he can become confrontational and aggressive when he feels his authority is being challenged.

Few who know him well would be surprised by the idea that their ruler is not human at all, though they might be surprised by his exact origins. The darklord of Valachan started life as a panther, a wild jungle cat called Karakul by his owner, a powerful wizard. Karakul was the subject of much experimentation; his master was curious about the nature of humanity and used his powers to transform Karakul into a man, then taught him about language, human behavior, and other concepts. In time, the wizard tired of the experiment and began to use Karakul as an assassin instead.

The more time Karakul spent as a human, the more he found himself moved by human concepts. In time, he fell in love with a servant woman; when Karakul's master forced him to kill his love out of an imagined slight, the wizard's hold over Karakul finally broke. Karakul went berserk and killed his master before fleeing, knowing what would happen to him if he were found by the authorities. Karakul stole treasure from his master's home and traveled the world, learning many contradictory lessons about what it meant to be human. He created an idealized image of humanity, becoming ever more neurotic in his attempts to blend in. Eventually, he decided that he could make a better society than all the flawed, imperfect people he had met in his travels and entered the Mists to find a new land on which he could imprint his own image.

When he arrived in Valachan, Karakul restyled himself Don Uriel Carrascon and began seizing power in the domain away from the tribal natives. Using imported weapons and the wealth he had

gained in his journeys, Carrascon broke the back of the native resistance, outlawed the old religion, and imposed his own harsh and unforgiving standards on the land. Now, Carrascon rules uneasily over a land fraught with rebellions, convinced that he could make a perfect society if only people would quit acting against their own best interests.

Carrascon is a miserable creature, unable to understand that his issues stem from his own self-hatred. His civilized veneer cracks under pressure, filling him with self-recrimination and causing him to lash out at those closest to him. He pushes his self-loathing onto others, convinced that they despise him for the weaknesses he perceives in himself. He strives to "civilize" his land by force when he cannot even civilize himself.



If Carrascon has a virtue, it is that he does have a sense of justice. His rule is harsh, and his demands are harsher, but he is a man who can be fair, even to a fault. He despises slavery because of his own history and offers haven to escaped slaves from other lands. Even this bit of decency is tainted by his willingness to press freed folk into service as soldiers, workers, and farmers—albeit with a decent wage and human rights, even if they cannot leave their new professions.

Every year on the anniversary of his conquest, those he has killed return to haunt him, harrying him through the land until he can run no more. The ghosts then bear him to the heart of the jungle, speaking of how honored they were to serve him, and sacrifice him in a grisly parody of the old religion's traditions. The next day, he awakens again in his true form—that of a powerful black panther—and must painfully regain his human shape, relearn how to speak, and trek through the massive rainforest to find his way home.

Verbrek

Verbrek is not a nation at all, but rather the name given by outsiders to a large swath of land in the western part of the region with no central government or civilization to speak of. Verbrek is shrouded in a patchwork of towering forests, misty hollows, and overgrown wetlands. Here the wilderness is primeval and untamed, the dense and thorny vegetation making travel an arduous experience. Travelers must learn to be wary of Verbrek's wolves—hulking, silver-furred beasts that stalk their prey with human cunning. Those who brave the domain's trackless wilds are constantly harried by a terrifying sensation of being

hunted. Snapping twigs and rustling leaves are enough to send travelers into panicked flight, like frightened deer. There are no wide, well-traveled roads in Verbrek, only a few rugged and poorly maintained trails.

The scattered villages and lone farmsteads that dot the domain are wholly without comfort in the surrounding gloom of the wilderness. The squat buildings are constructed of massive, rough-cut logs and thatched, gabled roofs with chimneys of smooth river stones. Muddy trenches five or more feet deep surround the domain's humble livestock pens, an often futile strategy to keep the wolves at bay.

Verbrekers are a sturdy breed, short in stature but muscular. Their skin ranges from very fair and freckled to light tan in color, though it is typically weathered and toughened with callouses. A Verbreker's eyes are usually blue or green, and hair color runs from honey blond to medium brown, but auburn is not uncommon. Both men and women keep their straight hair long and unstyled, with men preferring to maintain a length just above the shoulder. Men often grow mustaches and beards, always together.

Verbreker clothing is simplistic, loose fitting, and functional. Men wear trousers and tunics, while women dress in blouses and long skirts slit up the thigh. Many Verbrekers, male and female alike, wear hooded cloaks when outdoors. Shades of green and neutral colors such as white, beige, and brown predominate local garb. Folk from all walks of life carry a hatchet or knife at all times if possible.

Verbrekers are at home in the wilderness, though their relationship with the natural world could best be described as an uneasy truce. Verbrekers have a healthy respect for nature, but that respect is tempered with a fear of nature's savagery. They stoically strive to carve out

a life along the banks of Verbrek's many rivers, recognizing all the while that in the battle between humanity and nature, nature is likely to emerge the victor. In the meantime, they endure by learning the ways of their wilderness, thereby avoiding a senseless and early death. They value basic survival skills and are easily angered by urban folk who risk everyone's lives through their recklessness or ignorance.

The Verbrekers are not the true masters of their domain, a fact that they acknowledge with grim fatalism. Verbrek belongs to the wolves—both the four-legged ones and the ones that can pretend to be men. Virtually every Verbreker believes in werewolves, the shapechanging beasts who have kinship with both wolves and humans. Some even think they have their own society, but no human has ever learned about that society and returned to tell the tale.

Verbrek is regarded as something of a treacherous, backwater realm. Tales of rampaging wolf packs discourage outsiders from venturing into the domain with any frequency. The only regular visitors are river merchants, who ply the domain's waterways in search of the furs, timber, foodstuffs, and other commodities that the Verbrekers produce. In turn, they bring scarce crafted items, particularly iron tools, on which the Verbrekers depend. In recent years, Verbrekers have been forced to treat with such merchants warily; many of them have turned out to be slavers from Arkandale.

Tropes

Verbrek is the trackless wilderness, the savage forest that tests humanity against nature. In Verbrek, however, nature usually wins—and it is only at the end that those who contested with nature realize

that the game was rigged against them the entire time. In many ways, Verbrek is the archetypical domain of werewolves and beast spirits, a place where humans are the minority and what few bastions of civilization exist do so at the sufferance of the wolves.

Virtually any werewolf movie would be a good inspiration for Verbrek, but especially *The Howling* with its society of werewolves who live mostly separate from humans, going among them only to hunt, and *The Brotherhood of the Wolf*, which depicts a non-supernatural enemy that could easily be reskinned as a coven of real werewolves.

Themes

- **The Forest Primeval:** Everything in Verbrek has a feeling of being both ancient and dangerous. The trees are enormous, the wolves can be the size of horses, and ruins abound. The wilderness is deep and dark, full of dangers. More than that, the wilderness is almost *aware*; it resists attempts to civilize it with a will of its own. New fields are overgrown in days, attempts to clear-cut trees draw the ire of monsters, and trying to build a road just results in the loss of workers as they're picked off one by one.
- **Man versus the Wilderness:** In some domains, monsters or other people are the worst threat. In Verbrek, the horror comes from nature and its callous indifference to the lives of men. That callous indifference can turn into true malice when dealing with intelligent representations of nature, like the werewolves. The worst things in Verbrek come from the wild; this can be bad weather, natural predators, supernatural beasts,

or so on, but the real dangers are all *wilderness* dangers.

- **Rules of Nature:** An old saying goes, “Whether you are the lion or the gazelle, when the sun comes up you better start running.” Verbrek is the domain where it’s hunt or be hunted, kill or be killed. Shades of grey and moral nuance are for civilized places. Stories set in Verbrek should be about survival, plain and simple, whether that means outrunning, outfighting, outthinking, or outlasting.

Notable Locations

Alyssum is a small village of a few dozen families, most of whom are engaged in hunting and trapping. The town is built along a spur of the Musarde River, and traders from outside the domain frequently dock here to pick up the local high-quality furs and restock their supplies. The town is also inhabited entirely by werewolves, who use it to spy on outsiders and determine which of their visitors could easily go missing without drawing notice.

The Circle is a massive henge of stones that serves as the center of worship for the Cult of the Wolf God. The domain’s werewolves gather here almost nightly to perform rituals of devotion, including sacred hunts and the ingestion of powerful hallucinogens. Alfred Timothy is the high priest of the Wolf God, and he can usually be found at the Circle, presiding over these rituals.

Fylfot is a typical Verbreker village, its people surviving through limited agriculture, gathering fruits and nuts, and intermittent hunting. Most villages in the domain have a palisade, but the one in Fylfot is larger and more imposing than most, strengthened in places with gates, traps, and primitive siege defenses. The town has a distinct feel of being under siege, and its people stand constantly ready to repel attacks from wolves and werewolves alike.

The Darklord

Once there was a man named Nathan Timothy. He was a werewolf, a lycanthrope capable of changing between human and wolf—a predator among men.



He had chosen to live as a man instead of a beast, trying to beat humans at their own game. Instead, he found that the treachery of men was as boundless as the cruelty of wolves, and he failed time and time again to achieve the wealth and greatness he felt was his due. He took out his frustrations on his own family, among them his eldest son, Alfred, who grew to resent and hate his father.

After Alfred had his first change, he rejected his father's "weak" humanity and chose to live as a beast, picking off travelers and livestock to satiate his hunger whenever he wished. One such escapade found him tricked and trapped by farmers, who thought him merely a human criminal when they found him naked and bloody in their barn. He was enslaved and shipped to a plantation, where he was worked nearly to death before he managed to escape into the wilderness.

Wandering half-dead in the wilds, Alfred had a vision of a huge wolf who nursed him back to health but vanished before he could find out why. Alfred decided that he had been chosen by the Wolf God to become the voice of the

wolves. He gathered other shapechangers to his cause and began preaching a fiery dogma in which humans existed only to serve as prey, and in which werewolves and their changing kin were a superior species. He gathered also began using human quislings—promised the "gift" of lycanthropy for their treachery—to infiltrate villages and promulgate the Cult of the Wolf God.

Today, Alfred Timothy is the leader of a mighty tribe of werewolves, but he is unsatisfied. He cannot seem to wipe out the last bastions of humankind in his domain, no matter how hard he tries, and his people are a fractious, vicious lot more interested in hunting and fighting among themselves than in unifying their power. Worse, he has found that he can no longer control his change completely; whenever he loses control of his temper or his lust, which normally makes werewolves change into their hybrid combat form, he instead is trapped in his weak human form. He keeps this secret from even his closest packmates, since it would inevitably lead to being challenged for leadership by his own precepts.

The Nocturnal Sea

Ravenloft's ocean has many names in many cultures. The Vaasans call the waters beyond their coast "the Midnight Ocean" for its grey and bleak weather, the poetic Dementlieuese call theirs "the Sea of Sorrows," and the bronze-skinned warriors of distant Rokushima dub the sea surrounding their islands "the Poison Mirror." Regardless of the name, they are all the same ocean—the Nocturnal Sea.

There is a vast and frigid expanse of ocean that stretches out into the Mists, touching upon many shores and luring sailors to their doom. The winds of the great ocean are unpredictable, gusting up or dying suddenly, and storms can come from nowhere to make sea and sky become one. When the air is calm, thick fog banks cover the water's surface and near-black clouds speed across the sky, heedless of the stillness of the wind. Daylight is weak and sickly on the sea, while the night is as black and oppressive as a tomb.

Scholars generally refer to the ocean as the Sea of Sorrows, but the Cluster as a whole—consisting of the sea and dozens of islands—is called the Nocturnal Sea. The Nocturnal Sea is an unusual Cluster, as one of its domains actually intrudes into many other Clusters, permitting travel between them by ship. The many islands of the Nocturnal Sea are considered a true part of the Cluster by virtue of being utterly surrounded by the waters of the Sea of Sorrows, rather than merely sharing a coastline with it.

The islands of the Sea have very little in common with one another other than a shared ocean, but this is enough for an extensive network of ship-based trade and communication to have built up between

them. Additionally, many of the coastal lands that touch upon the Sea of Sorrows have limited trade with the islands of the Nocturnal Sea, who in turn act as middlemen for trade with other such lands. Some reliable (and semi-reliable) ocean currents act as Mistways between the Nocturnal Sea and other Clusters, and Mist compasses are almost a necessity to navigate on an ocean where the stars are never seen.

The weather of the Nocturnal Sea ranges from nearly arctic around islands like Todstein, to cool but temperate in the waters of Liffe and Blaustein, to warm around Ghastria, to downright tropical on distant Markovia. Rain is common in most places, and storms are rare but sudden. Wind is a constant across most of the sea—except when it dies suddenly and without warning, leaving a ship becalmed for days on end with no apparent reason.

Because of the fluid nature of the Cluster, new Islands are discovered and then lost frequently. Those described here are the ones with the longest-standing stable trade routes and access to one another. Generally speaking, an island's domain borders extend to about a mile or so out from its shores, though this can be lesser or greater depending on the nature of the darklord in question.

Languages

Many dozens of languages are spoken across the Nocturnal Sea, though each island generally only has a single dominant languages. Some islands claim ancestral links to other Clusters, making the languages of those Clusters common there, while others speak their own local language that seems unrelated to anything

spoken elsewhere. Each island's entry discusses the languages spoken by the local populace, but in general each new land is an opportunity for linguists to show their art and all others to risk frustration and danger.

Connections

Because of the unusual nature of the Sea of Sorrows, the Nocturnal Sea has connections to dozens of domains. Virtually any domain with an ocean coastline is connected to the Nocturnal Sea—and a few Mistways lead directly from the sea into landlocked areas from which a ship has no chance of returning.

Some of the most consistent connections are ocean currents that connect the Civilized Crescent with Ghastria, the Far Steppes with Graben Island, and the Shining Bay with Blaustein and Markovia. Persistent rumors speak of a deadly ocean current that drops wayward ships in the middle of an endless desert, called the Jackal's Ruse, thought to lead to somewhere in a distant cluster called the Amber Wastes.

The Sea of Sorrows

A grey and frigid ocean stretches out into the Mists, touching upon the shorelines of countless lands. This ocean, the Sea of Sorrows, is both boon and bane to those that must sail its waters. The sea provides bountiful fishing and trade routes, but leaves a domain open to the ravages of piracy, ocean monsters, and dire weather. While storms are not especially common on the sea, the high winds that can blow up unexpectedly are a major challenge to even skilled sailors, and some truly massive storms—known as hurricanes—can sweep across the horizon with little warning.

Thick fog covers the waters of the Sea of Sorrows when the air is calm. Experienced sailors try to keep their ships from going too quickly, as obstacles and other vessels can appear out of nowhere in the haze. The thick clouds and constant fog make daylight dim and sickly on the sea; the nights are impenetrably black and starless. A vessel relies almost solely on its Mist compass to navigate the sea, since few landmarks can be seen reliably in the dense fog. Of course, coastal sailors can often simply follow the coastline of their domain by using a compass and line of sight, but deep-water ships have no such luxury.

The Sea of Sorrows has no natives—unless one is prepared to count the sailors who spend most of their lives on the waves, the rumored beasts that dwell beneath them, or the restless spirits trapped on the ocean for all eternity. Reports of monsters and ghost ships are common on the Sea of Sorrows, and only the most experienced captains know which are merely stories and which must be feared as truth.

Dozens—maybe hundreds—of small islands speckle the Sea of Sorrows. Any such inhabited islands are inevitable domains of their own, as well as a few islands whose only inhabitant is the damned soul whose crimes have claimed them a desolate and isolated prison surrounded by the endless waves.

Tropes

The Sea of Sorrows serves a dual function in the Ravenloft setting. First and foremost, it acts as a convenient method of allowing travel between distant domains, so long as they have a shoreline. This allows GMs to have a convenient method of connecting different parts of the setting if he wishes to do so—or to prevent such travel by

simple means of having no ships going to the location the characters wish to travel toward.

The second, and more important reason, is to have a region of the setting for telling nautical stories. The Age of Sail and the opening of the New World are major relatively recent events at the time of the first Gothic literature movement, and many tales of the time speak of haunted ships, ghostly specters on the waves, and distant islands full of evil history. The Sea of Sorrows offers Game Masters a chance to tell stories like those from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies or the classic horror film *The Fog*, weird tales of naval terror.



Themes

- **Endless Horizons:** No one knows how vast the Sea of Sorrows might be. A man could sail for ten lifetimes and never see all of its wonders or horrors. New lands lie waiting to be discovered for those willing to risk all on the high seas. The power of wonder and terror are amplified by new discoveries—and of course, there are fortunes to be had for the bold and the lucky.
- **High Seas Terror:** No trip on the Sea of Sorrows is uneventful. Even a “boring” ocean voyage is one fraught with worries and concerns. Whether inclement weather, unexpectedly low supplies, pirate raids, monster attacks, a weird discovery, or a shipboard accident or crime, the heroes should never set sail without *something* making the voyage interesting or terrifying. The Sea of Sorrows isn’t just a means to travel between places—it’s a place all its own.
- **Water, Water Everywhere:** Being on the Sea of Sorrows is a uniquely isolating experience. A ship is effectively an island all its own, since there is no way to be certain how long any given voyage will take. A captain is king at sea, and his crew is often subject to his strange demands or cruel whims—but a crew pushed too far can turn to mutiny. Supplies can run low, especially water; the irony of dying of thirst when surrounded by an ocean has not been lost on generations of sailors.

Notable Locations

The Sea of Sorrows is speckled by dozens—maybe hundreds—of small, rocky islands, reefs, and atolls. Any of these could be home to a monstrous inhabitant, a shipwrecked survivor, or a

mysterious structure. Otherwise, the sea itself is an almost featureless expanse of waves—save for the dreadful appearance of the *Relentless* or one of the sea's many other ghost ships.

The Darklord

Pieter van Riese was the captain of the brigantine *Relentless* in life and remains her captain in death—as well as the master of the Sea of Sorrows. Even in death, he is a tall, broad-shouldered man with a strong jaw, a close-cropped beard of iron grey, and deep-set eyes that smolder like coals. He dresses in a dark, high-collared bridge coat and a battered sealskin cap. The only indication that he is anything but a normal sailor is his vague translucence and that of his crew of sailors, though they are more obviously dead men.

Pieter van Riese was born to sail, raised in a port town and becoming a stowaway as soon as he was old enough to think of it. He worked his way up from a cabin boy to the master of his own vessel, gaining a reputation for fairness, boldness, and ruthlessness in equal measure. The sea was his great joy, his only love. He traded and whaled to make ends meet, but his true happiness came from the making of maps and the exploration of new lands. He was constantly searching for better sea routes.

As van Riese grew older, his desire to explore the whole of the world became an obsession, and his inability to find the northern sea route he *knew* existed turned from frustration to fury. He was certain that finding the passage would grant him the fame he desired—and equally certain that his failure to do so was because of the weakness and foolishness of his crew. He became harder and harder to work with, eventually drawing a crew of only the

most desperate and hardened sailors, whom he punished mercilessly for the slightest offenses.

In his final voyage, the ship struggled for more than two months to find the passage van Riese sought. Food and water ran low, many crewmen were killed by the cold or by van Riese's foul temper, and the *Relentless* avoided a mutiny only because the sailors were more terrified of their captain than they were of dying.

The sea began to whip up into a bloody gale, and the crew begged van Riese to take the ship back to port. He refused and swore that he would sail the ocean as long as it took to achieve his dreams—and that he would give any number of lives to see that dream become reality.

The storm swept the deck clean of life, including van Riese himself when the mast broke and impaled him through the chest. The next morning he awoke again, free of his body and sailing upon a vast, misty sea. Pieter van Riese's obsession had anchored him to the mortal world as a ghost, leaving him with all eternity to seek a goal that can never be completed.

Captain van Riese can control the *Relentless* by thought, but it sails better with a crew. He is constantly sailing the seas, looking for vessels with competent sailors to press into his service. Once his crew is full, he returns to exploring the ocean, only to be frustrated anew by his inability to make accurate maps or charts—as though the islands and coasts he discovers are moving. He takes his frustrations out on his ghostly crew, in turn making it necessary to replace them again. The *Relentless* is seen as a terrible omen for this very reason.

Blaustein

Lying in the “middle latitudes” of the Sea of Sorrows, Blaustein is a rocky but temperate island standing out of the water like a threatening shark tooth. The imposing black castle at the highest point of the island presents a menacing image to sailors as they approach the shores, and its position atop the cliffs above the island’s largest port means that visitors never truly escape its shadow. Blaustein is only a few miles across, home to a single port town and a few scattered villages.

The most notorious habits of the natives are their tendency to seize ships that do not fly their lord’s flag, though this sign of loyalty must usually be accompanied by a sizable “docking fee” for ships that choose to take harbor on the island, and their occasional habit of kidnapping beautiful women from ships that dock in their harbor. Experienced ship captains quickly learn to fly a Blaustein flag as they approach the island, and to not bring female passengers with them when passing near—or to hide them and risk the wrath of the island’s lord should they be found out. Still, these are acceptable risks to many captains, especially those of pirate vessels, as Blaustein cares nothing for what other loyalties a ship might have.

Blaustein is notorious among sailors as a pirate port and hub for black market trade. Many things that are illegal in other lands are readily available at the markets of Blaustein, and the island’s sole town has far more inns, taverns, and brothels than a city many times its size. The island is also famous for blue diamonds, a kind of fine cerulean gem unknown in any other place in the Land of Mists.

The sole port town is filled with travelers and traders, as well as the natives whose work brings them into contact with

outsiders on a regular basis. The people of Blaustein are noted for their intense loyalty to the lord of the island; indeed, even without the laws making disloyal speech punishable by death, most would be shockingly devoted to him. The central portion of the island is set aside for the lord’s castle and the manors of his nobility, a title he grants to those who reach middle or late age and distinguish themselves in their professions. The nobles of Blaustein are a strange mix of traditional landed aristocracy, highly successful pirates, and extremely skilled craftsmen.

A dozen languages are spoken in the port of Blaustein, but the one spoken commonly among their own by the natives is a heavily accented form of Mordentish. Slang terms from other languages have crept in over the years, as have curses and idioms that make the local dialect difficult to understand for outsiders. Locals use this as yet one more way to weed out “civilians” from their own kind.

Tropes

Blaustein is the home of the infamous Bluebeard of myth and legend, mixed with a classical pirate port like Tortuga. It is intended to be a rough-and-tumble port island where only the wickedest scoundrels go regularly, but where a group of enterprising heroes might well be forced to go in order to achieve a goal. It is largely intended that a group’s adventures on Blaustein will center around navigating the pirate politics of the port and dealing with the darklord’s grim marriages, possibly saving some poor soul from death at his hands.

In a narrative sense, the story of Bluebeard is also the story of the way in which spouses have unrealistic expectations and demands of the object

of their love, and the way in which they turn the people they love into objects. The original tale can be taken as a metaphor for spouse abuse and the ways that men of the time objectified women, as well as a metaphor for the way that secrets inevitably come out in a long-term relationship.

Themes

- **Loyalty Among Thieves:** The people of Blaustein are pirates, thieves, murderers, and vagabonds, but they have a common loyalty to the island's lord. This common purpose makes them seem of a single mind and makes them shockingly friendly toward one another. When a pirate is at sea, he might be a savage without pity or mercy, but on Blaustein he is everyone's friend. Two men who tried to kill one another in a furious ship battle only a day before will embrace as brothers in port. This seems hypocritical to outsiders, but the people of Blaustein understand it all too well.
- **Pirates are Free:** While the sailors who dock at Blaustein and the people who live on the island are scum of the worst sort, their lives are free in a way that few other people can claim. People on Blaustein drink, carouse, take drugs, engage in licentious behavior, curse fiercely, and live to the fullest. Every day is an exercise in squeezing the most out of life—because you never know when the sea might claim it. Conversely, the people of Blaustein think of anyone who doesn't share their values as nothing more than cattle to be butchered when they feel like it. Non-pirates deserve no consideration at all, and outsiders had best demonstrate that they appreciate the values of

freedom, loyalty, and mutual self-interest quickly lest they be relegated to the category of livestock.

- **The Truth Will Out:** Secrets just can't seem to be kept in Blaustein—not from the lord of the island, and not from other people. A cheating spouse will always get caught, a lying merchant will always be found out, and a traitor will always have his treason revealed. Even small secrets tend to be revealed, particularly in damaging and ugly ways.

Notable Locations

The village of **Blaustein** (sharing the name of its island) would be unremarkable anywhere in the world were it not for the fact that the villagers here seem *happy*. They're utterly devoted to their lord, believing him completely incapable of bringing them any form of intentional harm. They are aware of his series of wives, but they believe that their deaths are simply a string of terrible luck, or perhaps a curse on their benevolent lord.

Castle Bluebeard sits atop a hill above Blaustein Village, crouching above the town like a squat, ugly gargoyle. The castle is a rectangular building with four octagonal towers at its corners, but it lacks a defensive wall. A massive pit just inside the main gates serves as the castle's primary defense; the pit is covered most of the time, but left uncovered when Morrell suspects an attack on his home. The castle is mostly empty at night, with its servants and soldiers returning to the village after their daily work is done. A series of locked rooms fill the top floor of the castle—each the former resident of one of Bluebeard's now-deceased wives.

The Darklord

Raoul Morrell is a man of average height with a bulbous, barrel-shaped body. Every part of him appears inflated, as if there is too much extra meat under his skin, and he makes matters worse by dressing his plump body in suits that are slightly too small for him, despite their outlandish and overdone finery. He wears a large but neatly trimmed black beard, with oily blue shade in direct light; this earns him the nickname "Bluebeard" from the people of Blaustein.

Lord Morrell is in fact a caliban, born to a wealthy family who shielded him from the worst fate that might befall such a deformed child. He was a clever and quick-witted boy who longed for female companionship. He frequently corresponded with women of his own station who became enamored of the lovely letters he wrote—only to break off the relationship when they met him in person. After his father died and he inherited his family estate, he finally found a woman willing to marry him. Unfortunately, he soon discovered that his wife had wed him only for his wealth and was unfaithful. When confronted with evidence of her betrayal, he cut her throat and left her to rot in a sealed room, then claimed publicly that she had run away with her lover.

He married again, several times, but each time he discovered that his wife was unfaithful and each time he killed his new wife and locked her body away. Finally, he found a woman he thought to be perfect—beautiful, sophisticated, gentle, and seemingly careless of his ill-born looks. Still, having been betrayed so many times, Morrell could not accept her apparent perfection at face value; he devised a test where he would leave the castle "on business," giving his wife the

keys to the estate and forbidding her from entering a single room.

Almost immediately, his wife was struck with curiosity and opened the forbidden room. When Morrell returned, he was infuriated and stabbed her through the heart. As she died, his wife cursed him with all her hate, for she had truly loved him and had only acted from curiosity. She said that if obedience was all he prized, then obedience was all he would ever have. Soon after, he found himself transported to a strange island full of ruffians and cutthroats who would obey his every whim. He found the ability to look into other people's thoughts—he would never again be fooled by a pretty face hiding secrets.

Yet along with this power came a dreadful burden. No woman native to his land is appealing to him; indeed, any native woman he approaches with lust in his heart seems to turn into a hideous corpse in his eyes, resembling one of the many women he has killed over the years. Only foreign women—those immune to his aura of obedience—hold any attraction for him. Every so often, he finds a woman who awakens his black heart to the semblance of love, and he enacts the same test he used on his true love. Each one has failed this test, whether through infidelity, curiosity, disloyalty, or another number of other reasons; no woman can achieve Bluebeard's impossibly high standards.

Bluebeard cannot close the borders of his domain, but his curse gives him a unique ability to temporarily leave his island's shores. After he marries, when he issues his impossible test of loyalty, he feels his heart lighten for a few days, during which he can sail freely on the Sea of Sorrows. He typically uses this time to lead pirate raids and visit distant shores, knowing that he could abandon his domain and simply be free—except that

he cannot simply leave without knowing whether or not his new wife is loyal. He inevitably returns, to the sorrow of his bride.

The Drowning Deep

The surface of the ocean belongs to humanity to a certain extent. The endless waves are dangerous and threatening, but ships make their way between ports with little trouble every day. The ingenuity of mankind has not mastered the ocean or tamed it, but it has made the sea a place where many earn their livelihood.

Fishermen, traders, and pirates go about their business, always vaguely aware of the dangers of the waves but never truly understanding the horrors that lurk in the deeps—and never knowing how swiftly those horrors can consume the ignorant.

Far beneath the ocean, deep enough that no human could survive the descent unaided, another world exists. This region of the sea, the so-called Drowning Deep, is a place few mortal eyes have ever laid eyes upon and where even fewer have survived to speak of it. Down where the light from the sun cannot reach, another realm lies—a realm of crushing pressure, near-freezing cold, and utter darkness. Life exists in the Drowning Deep, albeit not human life, and even a sort of civilization, though a cold and cruel one.

Somewhere far beneath the waves, more than two thousand leagues underwater, lies the drowned city of Xalot (sometimes called “Shay-Lot”), inhabited by thousands of piscine perversions of the human form. Many related races of aquatic nature dwell within the Drowning Deep, all of them bound by a common faith and ruler—the God Below. They have lived in the

sunless lands under the sea for time immemorial, though some of their legends say that they were ordinary humans once, before cruel gods sunk their homelands beneath the ocean; they hold that their ancestors were spared only by the grace of the God Below, who changed them in order to save them from death.

Despite the sheer difficulty in reaching the undersea realm and the dangers presented by its natives, air-breathers sometimes brave the journey anyway to seek sunken treasure, rare deep-water pearls, or lost ships. They often find more than they bargained for in such expeditions. If they are lucky, they are eaten immediately; if they are unlucky, they are taken back to Xalot, there to be changed into loyal servants of the God Below.

Still, there are pockets of resistance to the zealots of Xalot. Some descendants of those changed by the God Below regard their transformation as a curse rather than a blessing, the greedy grasping of a being whose sins forced the other gods to destroy his kingdom in ancient times. Their numbers are few, so they generally avoid contact with the God Below’s minions, though they might well take it upon themselves to free captives if the odds were in their favor.

Tropes

The Drowning Deep is an explicit reference to the legends of Atlantis, crossed with the cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft, particularly his sunken city of R’lyeh. The God Below is intended to be a Cthulhu-style dark god, replete with sanity-destroying appearance and fishmen servitors. The Drowning Deep also exists to offer the opportunity for undersea adventures, a classic staple of the fantasy genre as well as early science-

fiction, such as Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.

The major difficulty facing any adventure underwater is the sheer difficulty of surviving in the environment. Magic offers one possible solution to this problem, either from ordinary spellcasting or from the application of unique, short-term magic items. Perhaps there is a rare form of seaweed that lets people breathe underwater for a few hours at a time, or perhaps a magical transformation can allow the heroes to breathe water—but not air—while it lasts. Engineering can also offer solutions in the form of submersibles; if a submarine seems too advanced for the general tone of the setting, keep in mind that the first successful submersible in the real world was built in 1620, and primitive diving bells may have been used as early as the 12th Century.

Themes

- **The Abyss:** The Drowning Deep is aptly named—mere survival is difficult here for air-breathing characters. The pressure, the dark, the cold, and the lack of air are all pressing matters for adventurers in the Drowning Deep, and they should present severe logistical problems during any potential excursion into the domain. Any journey into the Drowning Deep should highlight the alien nature of the domain, as well as its utterly hostile and uncaring environment.
- **Drowned Glory:** The fallen glories of the past litter the bottom of the sea floor. The piscine aberrations of the Drowning Deep mine them for goods and relics, but even they know little about the wonders that surround them. The histories of their former lands are all gone, rotted away by the



sea water and replaced by hollow praises to the God Below. Even as his priests exhort his virtues, they know in their hearts that the glory he promises will never be theirs again—they have fallen too far from humanity.

- **Hierarchy of Hubris:** Everything is stratified in the Drowning Deep. The piscine aberrations serving the God Below labor under a strict and unforgiving caste system. The sea itself is divided into layers of pressure, depth, and light, and many creatures can only survive naturally at one of them. At the same time, the journey of Virundus from man to god—or something god-*like*, at least—teaches that those that overreach can sometimes transcend their own limitations, even if the end result isn't what they would expect. The Drowning Deep is a place where vainglory and pride push the inhabitants to overcome their own situation, and which lures surface-dwellers into its embrace in order to show their mastery of nature itself.

Notable Locations

The **Kaindelphi Waste** is a graveyard for dolphins, whales, and other cetaceans. This broken seabed is riddled by caves and fissures. Whales and dolphins gather here in vast numbers at least once per season, singing their strange songs and paying homage to their ancient dead. The seafloor is covered in whalebones and crawling with scavengers who feed on the corpses that litter the region.

Skotos, the so-called Helldeep, extends south of the city of Xalot. This region is home to hundreds of hot sea vents, lava flows, and mineral deposits. The water in this area is too hot (and frequently poisonous) for most aquatic humanoids

to withstand, but it is home to any number of bizarre aberrations who find the hostile environment quite pleasant.

Drowned **Xalot** is the home of Virundus, the God Below, and the center of his domain. The sunken city is home to most of the aquatic humanoids who dwell in the Drowning Deep, clustering near their god to better carry out his will. Four great rifts open in the seabed across the city, and the less-humanoid servitors of Virundus remain within those “deeper depths” as they are disturbing even to other piscines.

The Darklord

The sole master of the Drowning Deep is Virundus, the so-called God Below. The son of the emperor and empress of a mighty empire, his line was supposedly descended from a sea-god whose divine blessings passed from parent to child. His birth was accompanied by signs and portents, and he seemed destined to rule over a prosperous and happy country. Some feared that the prophecies of his birth could be interpreted to mean that he would bring ruin to his own people as well as to his enemies, but they kept their fears to themselves.

Virundus grew into a strong, handsome, intelligent, and charismatic ruler. After his father's death, he began a campaign of conquest against the empire's enemies and turning its allies into mere subjects. Raised in privilege and entrusted with a divine legacy, Virundus could never be satisfied with what he gained; he was convinced that he was destined to become a god on earth and to rule over all the world. He began to demand human sacrifices in his name, polluting the temples of his people's divinities with false worship of himself. He consulted with the wise men of a hundred kingdoms to find the means to achieve

ascension to divinity, but none could help him.

Finally, he had a vision that showed him the way to eternal life and godhood. To fulfill his vision, he slaughtered tens of thousands of helpless prisoners and slaves as sacrifices to his glory. As the last of the sacrifices fell, earthquakes struck his empire, laying it low, and tsunamis swept across the whole of the land. By the night's end, the thousand islands of his nation had been swallowed by the sea. Yet Virundus found that the vision had spoken some truth—his power was indeed godlike, making him immortal and giving him the magic needed to twist his surviving citizens into forms that could survive the deeps that had claimed his land.

Though he was once human, Virundus is now a hundred-foot-long nightmare of flesh, bloated to immense size by the power flowing through his form. His hideous shape is covered in tentacles, scales, mouths, eyes, and other features of aquatic life forms—and stranger things still. Thousands of symbiotic creatures grow on his bulk, and he is so large that he cannot fully straighten himself within the confines of his temple-prison. He demands the worship of his people, believing that godhood is truly his destiny and that other beings exist primarily as tools for his use in achieving that end.

Virundus cannot close his domain's borders, as the distinction between the depths and the shallows is too vague for him to separate them through sheer will. On the other hand, he has many hundreds of servants and incredible magical power that he can use to his advantage. Given the difficulties that non-aquatic beings have in even surviving the Drowning Deep, the God Below can be a formidable foe for any group of explorers even without the inherent power to seal his domain.

Ghastria

Ghastria is a mid-sized island, smaller than Liffe and Graben but significantly larger than Blaustein or Todstein. The shoreline of the island is mainly rocky beaches and low cliffs, making it a simple matter for smaller vessels to come ashore. Larger vessels must still dock at the island's only major port because of depth concerns, but the shoreline and nearby ocean is completely free of hazards such as reefs and rocks. Swimmers and very small craft must be wary of the swift-moving currents around the island that can create powerful riptides; several people lose their lives every year by swimming in the warm waters around Ghastria, only to be pulled under in a heartbeat by a sudden change in the tide.

The warm waters around Ghastria and the shallow ocean surrounding the island make for rich and fertile fishing waters. This is fortunate due to a quirk of the island's nature: because of some sort of chemical in the soil, any food grown on Ghastria—including meat animals that eat native plants—is utterly tasteless. Such bland food remains nutritious, but a lack of flavor can quickly kill any enthusiasm for a meal. Because of this, most Ghastrians have large amounts of fish and seaweed in their diets, and foreign food and spices are a major import.

Ghastria's warm currents keep the weather pleasant and mild year-round, though the cool summer breezes belie the sun's power. Ghastria is one of the few places on the Sea of Sorrows that isn't constantly overcast, so people used to heavy cloud cover can become sunburned quite easily on clear days. The warm currents also bring frequent rain in the mornings and evenings, and winter sees heavy, wet snowfall. These conditions also create ideal growing

seasons, making Ghastria's crops bountiful, if flavorless.

The island itself is hilly, with many slopes and small valleys. There are few remaining stands of forest on Ghastria, with only a sparsely wooded patch on the northern tip of the island and a slightly denser stand on the western coast.

Ghastrian homes are therefore made of stone, since the small amount of wood on the island is needed for boats. Older homes were crudely constructed out of loose stones mortared with mud, but modern buildings tend toward brick. Some modern buildings have a wooden second story constructed on top of a stone or brick lower level. All buildings on Ghastria are bland-looking, since the salty sea air strips away paint and plaster almost as rapidly as it can be applied; natives instead decorate the interiors of their homes with bright colors.

Ghastrians themselves tend to be pale-skinned naturally, but they are often tanned and worn from the sun and wind. Dark hair is most common, but fair hair is not considered unusual; eye color is extremely varied. They dress in sturdy clothes of wool and linen, dyed simple colors, though the upper class dress in imitation of whatever foreign fashion strikes their fancy on a given year—usually a fashion long since out of date in the land being mimicked. Despite their distance from “civilized” lands, Ghastrians speak a surprisingly modern dialect of Mordentish.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Ghastrian culture is the local focus on leisure time. Ghastrians are enamored of their personal hobbies to the point that the schedule their working hours around their free time, instead of the other way around. Merchants and vendors seldom keep regular hours, and fishermen keep themselves beholden only to the needs of the tides. Being “taken by the muse” is

common among Ghastrians, who consider the pursuit of art or music a noble endeavor; Ghastria has produced a disproportionate number of famous poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians over the years.

Tropes

Ghastria is the “sleepy little artists’ getaway” from horror literature, turned up to eleven. Everyone in Ghastria has an artistic hobby, and most of them are pretty mediocre at it. Stories like *Alan Wake* and many of the novels of Stephen King (particularly *Duma Key* and *Misery*) meditate on the nature of art and the relationship an artist has with his medium. Ghastria is a place for stories such as this—a place where art and the artist can become horrifically intertwined.

Themes

- **Art Eats Itself:** A common theme in art is the idea of an artist being metaphorically consumed by his own work, whether because his obsession eats all his time or because he becomes so entrapped by the endeavor that he cannot escape the demands of his audience. This can also be related to the idea that young artists steal the spotlight from their elders, even as their elders try to use the younger generation for inspiration or support. This theme of devouring is common in Ghastria. Art is an act of cannibalism; artists who become serious about their work rather than just treating it as a hobby tend to become ruthless and follow a “dog eat dog” philosophy that occasionally becomes quite literal.
- **For the Art:** Everyone in Ghastria is an artist of some kind—*everyone*. A butcher might carve scrimshaw on his off time, most of the local fishermen

are also musicians, and almost everyone has a room of their house that they use as a studio or study. People talk about art and artistic endeavors a lot, as well as making frequent poetic or musical allusions. Someone professing to not have an artistic hobby will be met with the same horror and disbelief as an atheist in a religious community.

- **Tastelessness:** Just because the Ghastrians love art doesn't mean they're good at it. Even people who are technically adept with their medium often choose dissonant or tasteless subjects for the work. There are plenty of excellent painters who focus their efforts on pictures of animals playing card games, for example, and lots of truly terrible ones who nonetheless struggle to capture the perfect landscape. The food in Ghastria reflects its people's preferences in art—bland but plenty of it. Anyone who has genuine talent and taste in Ghastria is an exception, and such talent runs toward the macabre—as does the source of anything palatable...

Notable Locations

East Riding is a lovely coastal village whose people seem to have lost any joy in life. Their homes are poorly repaired, and the locals are less interested in form than function, unlike most of their neighbors. The village shipyard has a reputation for quick if somewhat shoddy work, but they are the only local folk capable of building and repairing the island's fishing boats.

The **House on the Coast** is a marvel of engineering and architecture. Easily the finest building in Ghastria, the home of Marquis Stezen d'Polarno is painted in bright, vivid colors and features feasting

and dancing halls of enormous proportions. The manor has numerous magnificent bedrooms and a kitchen with a rotating gallery of the region's finest chefs. Only a select few are invited to see the marquis' crown jewel, however—his famous art gallery.

Norshore is a fishing village, so named for being on the north shore of the island. The shallow waters off the northern end of the island create an almost ideal location for net and cage fishing, and the town provides most of the island's food. Norshore is particularly well known for its enormous blue lobsters and massive crabs. The town is also noteworthy for the disappearances that occur during the dark of the moon, supposedly caused by strange aquatic humanoids who emerge to drag away the unsuspecting.

The Darklord

The Marquis Stezen d'Polarno has ruled Ghastria since its founding, though most modern folk believe their ruler to be the grandson of their original leader. The "first" marquis was deposed through violence due to his unpleasant habits and appetites, and the "heirs" since then have been more publicly restrained. In private, d'Polarno remains a debauched hedonist, though only under certain circumstances.

Originally, the d'Polarno name was associated with kindness and charity. This public veneer of decency was a ruse; d'Polarno was a shrewd, ruthless politician who sought a throne of his own. His king recognized the man's treachery but was unwilling to kill him without breaking his reputation first. The king had his court wizard trap d'Polarno's soul in a mystical painting, rendering him a soulless and uncaring husk. The king had miscalculated, however; now lacking a soul, d'Polarno also lacked any shred of

conscience that had been holding him back. He murdered the king and his entire court at a feast and set himself up as the new ruler.

Rulership brought d'Polarno no joy, though. Lacking a soul, he also lacked the capacity to feel love, happiness, or even hate. By chance, he discovered that killing another human being in front of the painting that held his soul would free it from the painting for a short time. Each year, at the turning of the seasons, the magic in the painting becomes weak enough that human sacrifice can give d'Polarno back his soul for a few hours or days. During this time, he debauches himself utterly, seizing the lust and joy and sorrow that had eluded him the rest of the year.



His depredations drew the attention of his own people, who sought champions to free themselves from their tyrant. The marquis was nearly killed in the ensuing battle, but he discovered that his life could not be extinguished so long as his painting was untouched. Since then, assuming the identity of his own son and grandson, d'Polarno has learned to be more subtle in his killings, preying primarily on foreigners and people who would not be missed.

Though he has ruled for over a century in his various guises, d'Polarno is concerned to discover that he is not ageless. While his soul is trapped in the painting, his body does not age; however, when his soul returns to him, he ages slightly faster than normal. In the century of his rule, he estimates that he has aged perhaps a decade. Now his concerns have turned from simply enjoying what time he can to finding ways to extend his life—something that he will need outsiders for.

Graben Island

One of the largest inhabited islands in the Sea of Sorrows, Graben is a chilly, rocky land with little to offer outsiders save a port from storms. Erratic winds pose a challenge for sailors near the oddly-shaped shores of Graben, which resembles nothing so much as a massive clawed hand when viewed from above. Narrow fjords and boggy bays lurk between the island's "fingers," and the "claws" point the way to dozens of smaller islands that surround the mainland. Shattered ships and mired vessels surround the approach to Graben, but the insular natives habitually refuse to put up a lighthouse or any other aid to navigation.

Graben's summers are cooler than spring in many lands, and winter snowfall can become so thick that most buildings have exits on the roof or second floor to allow people to get out of their homes in midwinter. The seas around the main island are choked with ice floes for more than a third of the year, and icebergs are shockingly common in the region year-round. Even in Graben's short warm season, roads can become impassable by virtue of runoff turning them into mud; indeed, natives prefer to travel in winter because skis and snowshoes make it easier.

The harsh terrain of the island slopes gently downward from the jagged ridgeline of the western bluffs to the marshes and beaches in the south and east. Only a small fraction of the island's land is arable. Settlements tend to huddle in river-carved nooks along the shoreline, making the people highly dependent on the sea's bounty. Except for a handful of hunters and lumberjacks, most Grabenites live within earshot of the ocean's crashing waves for their entire lives. The inland regions of the island are swamps, marshes, bogs, rocky cliffs, and a few dense stands of hardy cold-weather trees.

The people of Graben have been shaped by their harsh terrain, making them insular, unfriendly, and very conservative. They dislike the attention that their largest settlement has been receiving in recent years as an oceanic port and tend to regard most outsiders as criminals and ruffians with baffling or offensive foreign customs. The fact that their language, called Grabenite, is spoken nowhere else in the known world makes their stubborn refusal to adopt foreign customs or alliances even more frustrating to those that would seek to use their island as a convenient stopping-point.

Physically, Grabenites are extremely tall; they are lanky and long-boned, fairly muscular but gangly. Foreigners occasionally remark that their heads seem slightly too large for their bodies. Despite this, Grabenite women have a reputation for incredible beauty. Poor nutrition and lack of sunlight contribute to many Grabenites developing rickets later in life and losing their teeth earlier than most people. Almost all Grabenites are extremely pale with waxy complexions; their hair is wavy and platinum blonde, with eyes of faded blue. They have almost no variation in these general factors, making their appearance quite homogeneous and outsiders very easy to recognize.

Most Grabenite clothing is from local wool and imported cotton, worn in layers to keep out the pervasive chill common to the island. Grabenite clothing is seen as somewhat archaic by outsiders, with an old-fashioned and conservative style that includes apron-dresses for women and padded shin-length breeches topped by wide-cuffed tunics for men. A few people—particularly local sailors—have begun to adopt the nautical-style sealskin overcoats or woolen greatcoats worn by foreign seamen, but they have not become widely popular.

Life on Graben Island is harsh, testing its people constantly with its poor weather, bleak landscape, and treacherous waves. While they are spared the oppressive hands of feudal taskmasters the land itself conspires to make mere subsistence a backbreaking and arduous process as difficult as the life of any serf. Grabenites seldom fall into abject poverty despite these circumstances; though they are rude and hostile to outsiders, Grabenites are tight-knit, generous, and hospitable to their own people. The closest thing the island has to nobility is the reclusive Graben

family, who were the first settlers in modern history, and they eschew rulership in favor of simply stewarding their own lands.

Even well-off Grabenites have few chances for recreation or ease. Summers are spent in harried labor, stockpiling food, then winter's snows force them into shelter, there to perform handicrafts, teach their children, and cope with confinement, cramped quarters, petty animosities, and boredom. Stoicism and the determination to silently endure nature's hardships are hallmarks of the Grabenite character. A Grabenite never complains about difficulties confronting him, though he may well speak of previous adversities faced and survived with wry, contrary pride. Slothfulness and fragility are not tolerated; lazy or delicate people are pushed into conforming—or pushed out of society and onto ships going to balnrier climes to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Tropes

Graben is the archetypical “coastal community with a dark secret” common in the tales of H.P. Lovecraft, Robert Bloch, and Stephen King. Such locations as Innsmouth and Castle Rock (or Little Tall Island) would fit the feel of Graben Island perfectly. The native are insular, paranoid, rude, and all share very similar appearances; it can create a general feeling of unease in almost any player to have dozens of nearly-silent people staring at them in the streets, even if it's just from curiosity about people who look different.

In many ways, Graben is intended to be an allegory for small towns in general, as well as a reference to the New England stomping grounds of horror sometimes known as “Lovecraft Country.” There are two levels of horror in Graben: the

personal horror that comes from being in a conservative rural location with no one to trust, surrounded by hostile nature, and the existential horror that comes from discovering that many of the people surrounding you are not really “people” at all.

Themes

- **Cabin Fever:** Many domains in Ravenloft utilize isolation as a tool of terror. On Graben Island, the isolation isn't total—but it is still terrible. With the winter snows, the terrible storms, and the distance between safe locations, it is quite common for a small group of people to be trapped together for extended periods of time. Even people who love each other can find their feelings turning to loathing when trapped in close quarters for weeks on end with nothing to do except dwell on every little imagined slight. Not a winter passes without finding a household who could bear the cabin fever no longer—to lethal results.
- **Small Town Secrets:** In a small, tight-knit community—like those dotting Graben Island—everyone knows everyone else, though rarely as well as they think they do. Virtually everyone has a dark secret of some kind, ranging from the embarrassing (like a miller writing poetry in his spare time) to the immoral (like a man cheating on his wife) to the horrific (like an entire family actually being heartless undead monstrosities). When running adventure in Graben, keep in mind that every household contains at least one important secret and possibly several.
- **Stoic and Conservative:** The people of Graben Island see nothing wrong with doing things the same way their

grandparents did, and they regard any attempt to change their ways as tantamount to sacrilege. They show emotion only in the most extreme moments, seeming cold or even heartless to those not familiar with them. A parent won't cry for his dead child in public; a woman might shed only a single tear to discover her true love drowned at sea. The cold nature of the people is a necessary survival trait in a harsh, unforgiving environment, but it can seem downright cruel to others.

Notable Locations

Graben Village is actually a large town with more than a thousand inhabitants, a common port of call on the Sea of Sorrows for passing ships. The only unusual feature of the town is its cemetery, which is significantly larger than the island could ever possibly need. The Graben family, the island's distant rulers, live on an island estate across the bay from the village itself.

Kirchenheim is the northernmost village on Graben Island, home to the majority of the island's fishing fleet. Like most of the island's folk, the people are insular and standoffish, with its inhabitants keeping to themselves even more than most. The town seems dead when not engaged in fishing, with few entertainments or reasons to be out of doors.

Todstein is a small island east of Graben, a frozen wasteland rarely visited by anyone living. The island is the lair of the necromancer Meredoth, the secret ruler of the domain, and it is guarded by snow golems, undead of many types, and countless devious traps. The necromancer despises uninvited guests—and barely tolerates invited ones.

The Darklord

While the Graben family would seem like fine candidates for one of them to be the darklord of the island, the truth is that they are but minions and servants to the island's true master, a reclusive necromancer named Meredoth. Virtually every member of the Graben family—and many other people in important positions across the island—are Meredoth's undead servants, the *lebendtod*. Through a powerful magical ritual, their hearts are removed and their bodies preserved at the moment of death; they lose none of their intelligence and still look alive to all but the most thorough examinations, but they are utterly loyal to their maker.

Meredoth himself lives in total isolation on Todstein, a tiny atoll north of Graben Island, surrounded only by golems and undead of his own creation. Most of his creatures are mindless and obedient—just the way he prefers it. Meredoth regards free will as an affront, almost painful to be around, and he is a complete misanthrope. He finds no interest in other people, save as his curse demands.

Once, Meredoth was an extremely talented young wizard from a nation where magic-users were the nobility. His parents were self-involved and loveless, leaving him in the care of conjured servants and mind-controlled “mundanes” throughout his childhood. He grew up alone and isolated, cold and without empathy, until he finally entered his nation's great magical academy. Meredoth distinguished himself as an artist and artisan, and many thought he had a bright future. He even started to make friends, against his own better judgment. When his closest friend stole Meredoth's final project and presented it as his own work, it was too much to bear; Meredoth killed the young man in secret and spent the remainder of his adult life

killing his rivals and stealing their secrets as had once been done to him.

Unable to rid themselves of such a powerful wizard directly and unable to gather enough evidence of his crimes to punish him, Meredoth's superiors had only one way to dispose of him: they promoted him. Meredoth became the provincial ruler of a tiny patch of land and a few hundred colonists. He found that "exile" suited him just fine, save for the constant whining of his subjects. Within a year, all of the colonists serving Meredoth had perished; he recruited more and set himself to eliminating their "human weaknesses" by turning them into a more perfect kind of undead.

Meredoth devoted himself to his magic, his art, but he found that he had lost all creativity. He had developed a permanent case of artist's block in his isolation. Needing supplies and servants, he sought out the people of a nearby island and discovered that being around other people—painful at the best of times for the highly introverted wizard—was the only thing that restored his creative spark. The idea that he could only get new ideas from others, effectively plagiarizing their work to make his own, was offensive to the proud wizard, but not being able to create at all was far worse.

Meredoth attempted to create loyal, intelligent undead servants to be a ready source of inspiration, but he found that utterly loyal beings were incapable of challenging him to the degree that true art demanded. Every so often, Meredoth must seek out human companionship to become creative, but the persistent frustration of dealing with others—and with knowing that his creativity truly belongs to another—inevitably drives him to kill his "muse" and use their body as raw materials.

Meredoth's lair on the isolated island of Todstein, some miles north of Graben Island proper, is heavily defended. The seas around his lair are filled with enormous icebergs, creating an ever-shifting maze of hundred-foot-high walls of ice. He can instantly sense when a living being crosses that boundary, as well as when one sets foot on Todstein. He is never caught off-guard by intruders, and he never treats kindly with such unwanted guests. He occasionally allows survivors to escape his grasp, however; he finds that tales of terror about the master of Todstein are far more effective at keeping out future trespassers than a ship simply disappearing.

The Shining Bay

Largely dominated by an adherence to a past that is long gone, struggling to control the technologies of the future, the Shining Bay is a region on the cusp of a new era. As that era pushes itself into the forefront of the land, the people feel the changes, as well as the friction brought on by them. The Shining Bay is a land ruled by a traditional aristocracy, even as the lower and middle classes gain in importance through their access to the machinery that keeps their betters wealthy. The rich isolate themselves in good parts of the cities, while the poor face the looming threat of starvation almost daily.

Pragmatism and romanticism go hand-in-hand in the Shining Bay—the well-educated upper class can be shockingly ruthless when it comes to protecting their investments, while the downtrodden poor find escape from their drudgery in the stories of grand heroes and the comfort of faith. As the world changes around them, people cling even harder to the things they believe, and grasp ever more desperately for that which they desire.

The Shining Bay is a region of islands, one large and several small, encircling a broad body of water from which the region takes its name. The largest of the islands is Zherisia, a crescent-shaped island roughly one hundred miles long and fifty miles thick at the widest. Zherisia is divided geographically into the eastern lowlands, which contain the majority of its settlements, and the polluted western highlands, where most of the regions lumber, coal, and minerals come from. The biggest part of the lowlands is dominated by the city-state of Paridon, a massive and sprawling metropolis that acts as the political and

social heart of the region. Occupying the western uplands is the allied city-state of Nosos, surviving amidst the barren waste of the highlands.

Directly out from the center of the crescent is the second-largest of the islands in the Shining Bay, Paridon's sister-city Timor. Small but densely populated, Timor is connected to Paridon by a massive bridge of steel and stone that straddles the tiny, rocky string of islands between the two cities. The only natural harbor in the entire region is in Paridon, completely encircled by the city, where Zherisia's rivers have eroded the natural black stone of the bay enough to create a place where ships can safely approach the land.

Lowland Zherisia is primarily composed of rolling grasslands and boggy moors. These areas make for poor farming but passable grazing, so the majority of towns in this region subsist through sheep or cattle ranching, with some basic subsistence farming. The few remaining thin woodlands in the lowlands are at the far eastern edge of the island, beyond which a few coastal towns brave the cliffs and jagged reefs to survive as fishermen. Virtually the entire island is shrouded in fog year-round, and it is particularly thick around the city of Paridon. Zherisia becomes rockier as the elevation increases to the north and west, following the curve of the island's crescent. The jagged hills and scrubby cliffs that separate highlands from the lowlands are barely livable.

Highland Zherisia was once a verdant land of rich, black earth and deep, impenetrable forests. For the last generation, the greed of men has raped this fertile land, leaving behind a

desiccated wasteland filled with muddy, rotten fields where trees once grew and gaping pits in the earth, the legacy of decades of strip mining. The region's water supplies are hopelessly polluted—even the sea around Nosos churns with black, oily froth. The factories and refineries belch forth a constant stream of black smoke that combines with the island's native fog to produce cloying, choking smog. The taint is not even cleansed by the rain—when rain falls at all, it is burning, poisonous acid rain.

Timor sits on an enormous pillar of stone, made of the same black rock as the reefs and cliffs that encircle the Shining Bay. The island was almost unreachable in the past, due to the cliffs and the choppy sea, but a massive bridge now connects Paridon to Timor, as well as old pneumatic tunnels that go under the harbor and emerge into the island's underground. Zherisia and Timor are the largest of the islands in the Shining Bay, and the only two that support significant habitations. A few dozen smaller islands, none more than a mile across, dot the seas around the bay. Some of these islands are home to smugglers, escaped convicts, or tiny villages surviving in the face of the sea.

Zherisia has possibly the most comprehensive primary education system in the world—in theory. Every child is entitled to public education free of charge from the ages of five to ten. After that, the child's family must pay for continued education, though most families choose to place their children into positions that will prepare them for their future employment. After age ten, apprenticeships are common among tradesmen, while poorer families find factory employment for their children immediately. Wealthy families usually forgo public education in favor of private tutors.

By far the largest single group in the Shining Bay is the human ethnic group called Zherisians. Though the Zherisians are not the original inhabitants of the island from which they take their name, they have been in the region so long as to be considered the native population. Zherisians possess fair complexions, a result of generations spent on an island with near-constant cover by clouds and fog. For the malnourished majority, complexions tend toward the pale and sallow, and lower class Zherisians have notoriously bad teeth thanks to insufficient calcium in their diets.

Zherisians tend to stand less than six feet in height with medium builds. Grey eyes are most common, followed by blue and green; few Zherisians have brown or hazel eyes. Likewise, black hair is rare, with blonde, brown, and red being far more common. Men tend to keep their hair short, though mustaches, beards, and sideburns are all in fashion. Women grow their hair long, but women of high society pin it into elaborate buns and braids.

Languages

The natives of the region speak Zherisian, the language spoken by the first settlers to the islands of the Shining Bay and the official language of the Empire of Zherisia. There are many other languages spoken in the great cities as well, due to the influx of immigrants who became trapped in them during the Long Silence. Rokumi, Souragnean, Pharazian, and more are spoken by the ethnic immigrants that inhabit Paridon and Timor, though almost all of them also speak Zherisian.

Connections

A century ago, the Shining Bay had dozens of stable Mistways leading to

many lands. Traders from all corners of the Sea of Sorrows made their way to the ports of Paridon to trade, mingle, and see the sights. All of that came to a crashing end during the revolution that overthrew the monarchy. By the time it was over, most of the ships in the harbor had been confiscated or destroyed, but it hardly mattered. The few ships that made it out of port soon discovered that the impenetrable fog of the Sea of Sorrows offered no escape—it had become impossible to leave the region of the Shining Bay.

The islands of Zherisia spent a hundred years in total isolation. A generation ago, the monarchy was restored—and with the monarchy's return, so too returned the Mistways. Supporters of the crown claim that the royal line's legitimacy is proven by their apparent connection to the greater world beyond the Shining Bay, while others claim mere coincidence or that the oligarchs who ruled for a century had some means of closing the Mistways. Regardless, trade has once again begun with the nations of the Sea of Sorrows, albeit with a bit more trepidation than in the past. After all, no one knows if the Mistways will simply close again one day...

Humanism

The Shining Bay is a land of religious tolerance—even religious apathy, to some degree. One of the rights guaranteed in the constitution is freedom of faith, so long as no other laws are broken in the practice of that faith. Most Zherisians in the lower classes belong to one religion or another, while the upper classes tend to pay lip service to one of the major faiths without being especially devoted or pious.

The official faith of Paridon—the only one supported or endorsed by the

government—is *humanism*, the credo of the Celebrants of Humanity. Virtually all members of high society are celebrants (as the followers of the faith call themselves) and embody their faith in humanism through their drive to succeed. The complicated philosophy of the Celebrants of Humanity is based upon the underlying philosophy that perfecting oneself, physically and mentally, is the path to enlightenment. The Celebrants recognize no god, making them unique in being an organized religion comprised mainly of atheists and agnostics.

Despite its endorsement from the monarchy (gained by supporting the return of the royal family to power a generation ago), humanism is primarily a monastic faith. The majority of the membership consists of lay worshipers, attending humanist meetings and prayer groups lead by monks a few times per month, but the real heart of the faith lies in its monasteries. Humanist monks are enlightened scholars, researching the nature of perfection and testing it through means both scientific and arcane.

The society called the Divinity of Mankind has strong connections to the upper echelons of the Celebrants of Humanity. This organization is known as a popular philosophical society, an exclusive club where men and women of wealth and power can meet to privately discuss matters of business, politics, science, and spiritualism. The meeting houses of the society are known as lodges, and many are located in various parts of the Shining Bay. Club members are known as Divinities, and quite a few are experts in the arcane arts or alchemy.

The Green Faith

Most popular in the western territories of Zherisia, the Green Faith worships nature itself as embodied by the fey,

which they see as emissaries of nature. The Green Faith is notorious in the Shining Bay for its openly declared animosity toward the city-state of Nosos and its continuing guerilla war against lumberjacks and miners in the region. No one knows exactly how many people follow the Green Faith, but the popular perception of the religion is that it is practiced by only a few scavenging primitives eking out a miserable existence in the wilds on the fringes of “real civilization.”

While some members of the Green Faith prefer to live as close to nature as possible, calling the few remaining woodlands of Zherisia their home, most live among their enemies as quiet, unassuming neighbors. They acquire intelligence useful to the more militant members of the faith and provide it to cell leaders for use in raids and attacks; only rarely and in great need will a “settled” member of the faith break cover to offer direct aid. A small number of the faith abhors the violent means preferred by the rest of their fellows, advocating replanting and rebuilding over destruction.

Nosos

The most recently established of the three city-states of Zherisia, Nosos is a vital cog in the economic structure of the region. Until the settlement of Nosos a generation ago, the Zherisian highlands were the home of dangerous fey, scattered encampments of savages, and vicious wild animals. Today, the highlands are home to vitally important logging and mining industries—and little else. While a few scattered old-growth forests remain untouched by man in the far reaches of the area, the majority of

Nosos has become a blighted wasteland, filled with withered plants, mutated scavengers, cracked earth, and fouled water. The populace of Nosos consists entirely of laborers, employers, and those few children unlucky enough to be born to either group.

To the wealthy and ambitious, Nosos represents an unequalled opportunity for wealth and power. For the lower classes, however, Nosos is just one step short of hell. Minor criminals in Paridon are often sent to Nosos labor camps as a punishment, and those that actually volunteer to go there are regarded as either crazy or desperate. In the early days of the settlement, Nosos was regarded as a land of hope—resources were plentiful, land was open for the taking, and the future seemed bright. Now, in the wake of environmental collapse and the cementing of the current power structures, traveling to Nosos is a fool’s gambit. Still, a few hundred people choose to do so every year, seeking their fortunes in the mines, or just a new start away from old troubles.

The land surrounding the city-state of Nosos is a blasted wasteland, dominated by endless hills of slag and gaping pits into the earth. The land is devoid of any significant animal life, except for the flocks of pigeons and seagulls migrating between townships. The earth of Nosos is scorched by the sun and devoid of any plants but the hardiest weeds, leaving the land a virtual desert even on the shores of the Yellow River. The river gains its modern name from the sulfur in the water, spewed forth by the metal refineries of the domain and leached from the surrounding strip mines. Every drop of water is infested with a variety of organisms, including a slew of debilitating and even fatal parasites.

The Zherisian highlands are permanently shrouded in an awful acidic

stench, and the skies are almost always blackened with the fumes that belch from the city's metal refineries and coal furnaces. Rainstorms are frequent in Nosos; each deluge brings a flood of acrid water that corrodes metal and burns the rock black. Seasons are all but indistinguishable since the black smog traps heat in the highlands. Winter is the only noticeable season; it can be identified by the noticeably colder climate and the fall of ashen snow. At all other times the temperature is high and the air is humid. Periodically the whole area is smothered in a fog of fumes coming from the roasting yards. This "smog" reduces visibility to zero, though it causes no immediate harm to anyone who is forced to breathe it in.

The city of Nosos teems with life, though it is a life choked by equal parts misery and sickness. Every building in the city is covered in a layer of black soot, and the streets reek of sewage, for few homes possess plumbing. After a rain, the waste seeps into the ground and accumulates in the basements of buildings at the bottom of hills. Rats and scavenging insects thrive in these conditions, as do a plethora of diseases. Where Nosos meets the Shining Bay (somewhat less shining near Nosos), the land becomes hard, jagged rock. These rocks are very resistant to any attempt to hew them, so no true harbors exist. Just off the coast of Nosos is Garbage Island, the dump for all of the city's excess materials. Garbage Island is a thriving ecosystem for seagulls, pigeons, feral cats, rats, mongrel dogs, and diseased humans.

The folk of Nosos divide into two rough classes: the owners and the renters. The owners are the elite of Nosos; they are the rail barons, the slumlords, the company directors and the store owners. These people live lives of relative luxury in rich estates on the high ground on the

edges of the cities. This upper class is fairly well educated, though most of their experience is gained from hands-on experience at the sides of their parents than from formal study. The members of the upper class are typically cynical and without scruples. Success in Nosos is measured by how much people can exploit the impoverished people directly beneath them. The members of the upper class are highly competitive among themselves; murders, conspiracies, and theft are well-established social institutions.

The renters are the lower class of Nosos. They are a downtrodden lot; their suffering is the foundation upon which Nosos was built. The renters are hopelessly poor and indebted; they and their children labor without end in the mines and refineries of Nosos, earning only enough to feed their families until they grow old, are injured, or become debilitated by a disease. The renters live in terror of exile to Garbage Island, the punishment that befalls anyone who cannot afford to rent land in the cities. Even those dwelling in the prison labor camps dread Garbage Island.

Perhaps the most cruelly ironic thing about Nosos is the myth of upward mobility. While Paridon has a large middle class, Nosos lacks any semblance of transition between the poor, downtrodden masses and their elite masters. Still, when Nosos was first founded, it was lauded by its backers as a place where any man or woman could make a fortune and join the ranks of the upper class.

While some small number of people were able to do so, the doors to halls of power quickly slammed shut, leaving the majority of the populace in squalor and filth. The rich, newly minted and old wealth alike, felt no need to use their wealth to build a suitable infrastructure or

public services since their intentions were always to rape the land for every coin they could get and then go back to “true civilization” in Paridon. With that in mind, Nosos turned out to be a trap for them as well—while the ambitious and ruthless could become quite wealthy, “proper society” wanted nothing to do with the Nosos elite, who were regarded as dirty and uncouth, so most wound up remaining in Nosos.

Nosos is built on trade and industry—indeed, Nosos was founded explicitly to take advantage of the region’s natural resources. The city has no harbors of its own, so it must rely upon the exchange of goods through Paridon’s ports. The railroads of Nosos are critical for this purpose; the massive beasts of black steel haul refined metal ore to the factories of Paridon where they are turned into finished goods. Nosos is filled with shops selling goods purchased from Paridon. Though the people of the domain are impoverished, they do enjoy many benefits from the miracle of metallurgy. Were it not for metal stoves, glass plates, woven clothing, cheap bread and cast iron pots, the people of Nosos would never be able to endure the unhealthy conditions under which they live.

Of the laws in Nosos, the most perplexing is the “green tax.” The possession of any kind of plant requires the payment of an expensive fee. Only the wealthy nobles of the city-state can afford to pay it, which makes gardens around their manors a status symbol of the highest caliber. Of course, the poor of the region cannot afford to pay the fee, so many of them have never so much as seen a living plant other than brown and dying weeds. Trees are completely forbidden for private ownership by law; all lumber enterprises are owned by the state.

Tropes

Nosos is the archetypical example of “industrialism run rampant,” a place where the arrogance and greed of man have polluted nature to a degree that is obscene. Even as its people grub the wealth from the earth, they make their home less and less able to sustain life—even their own. Nosos stands as a testament to the evils of capitalism and the lie of advancement through wealth, showing that the “free hand of the market” exists only to serve the very wealthiest and to strangle those that would oppose it.

This domain can also serve as a place for ecological and environmental stories, ranging from the decimation of old forests to climate change. These stories have horrific and fantastic twists to them in Nosos; lumberjacks might be picked off by hostile faeries who have been twisted to evil through pollution and sorrow, while miners can find themselves haunted by the spirits of men who died in cave-ins brought about by insufficient safety measures.

Themes

- **Class Warfare:** The wealthy of Nosos know how precarious their position really is. Vastly outnumbered by their workers and far from home, they engage in brutal and ruthless acts of suppression and cruelty to keep the lower classes in line. Workers are harassed or even killed if they attempt to organize, employees are paid in “scrip” that keeps them dependent on their employers, and even skilled laborers are treated as expendable cogs in a vast machine, easily replaced if they step out of line. The common people of Nosos are slaves to their employers in all but name, and they live in constant dread of the one thing

worse than wage slavery—being “blacklisted,” making it impossible for them to find work and condemning them to homelessness and abject poverty in a society with no safety net.

- **Industrial Waste:** On top of the obvious connotation of this theme—that is, the poisoning of the land, air, and water—it can also be said that Nosos is a *wasteful* place. The elite spend copious amounts of wealth on things they don’t need to compete with their fellows even as common citizens starve for want of a living wage. The goods produced in Nosos are cheap and disposable, made without a shred of craftsman’s pride and sold in bulk to the impoverished classes of the nation. So many corners are cut in producing goods that it looks like a circle.
- **The Rape of Nature:** Nosos is a place where humanity has ceased to see itself as a part of the natural world, instead viewing nature as a mere collection of resources to exploit. Animals are valuable only for their meat and fur, plants only for their wood or extracts, and a beautiful mountain is seen only as a potential source of quarried stone and mined metals. Everything that can be exploited is exploited in Nosos; this attitude rapidly expands to include other people as well, seeing them only as a means to an end.

Notable Locations

The **Black Iron Bores** are a series of mining camps in the highlands around Nosos. These crude company towns ruthlessly exploit their workers and delve greedily in the earth for bounties of metal and minerals that shrink with each passing year. The underfed miners suffer

from countless maladies brought on by their profession, from black lung to fossie jaw; any worker who can no longer work is cast out with little more than the clothes on their back and a fistful of worthless scrip they can’t spend.

The **Burnt Colossus** was once known as the **Perfected Man**, a massive statue depicting an idealized human man holding a clockwork world on his muscular shoulders. This monument to human divinity stood as a testament to man’s domination of nature through technology. Years of pollution and carelessness have left the statue stained black from coal smog, with rusted patches on its skin that look like burn scars and its once-handsome face burned away by acid rain. The statue is a sacred site to the **Circle of Rust**, a cult of mad urban druids who worship the growing corrosion and filth of the city.

Poortown takes up less than a third of the urban landscape of Nosos, but is home to over ninety percent of the city’s population. Most of the area is a sprawling mass of cramped hovels and dingy apartment blocks. The poor sanitation and lack of urban planning leaves most of the district smelling like an open sewer; the interiors of the dwellings aren’t much better. Everything is run down and dilapidated, as the locals have little time to clean or repair anything between their long and exhausting shifts in the city’s factories and foundries.

The Darklord

Malus Sceleris is the darklord of Nosos, a man of such abiding evil and cruelty that nature itself is his constant victim. Publicly, he holds the title of governor of Nosos as well as being the chief executive of several of the major corporations that exploit the region for its resources. He is a man of incredible wealth and ambition,

with a mysterious background that has invited much curiosity over the years, but few have learned anything significant about the man other than his track record of successes.

In truth, Malus is a native of the highland region of Zherisia, one of the same “barbarians” he has spent so much time, effort, and money on suppressing over the years. His parents were both druids of the Green Faith, making them priest-nobles of the highlander people. Malus’ mother died when he was very young, and his father became cold and distant, often leaving the boy to his own devices for weeks at a time or giving him hard, painful lessons about his people’s way of life.

Malus grew resentful of his father’s ways and began sneaking into the camps of the outsider loggers and miners who the druids considered their worst enemies. Malus learned about the concepts of profit and wealth from these frontiersmen, and he began to dream of a better life—one he knew that he could never possess so long as his father stood in his way.

One day, after his father came home from a battle with lowland invaders severely wounded, Malus saw his chance. He treated his father’s wounds with poison and wrapped him in disease-infested blankets, letting the older man slowly sink into death. As he lay near death, the old druid finally allowed his veneer of coldness to drop away, confessing to his son how much he loved him and how the death of the boy’s mother had nearly killed him too; he told Malus how proud he was of him, then died.

Rather than admit how wrong he had been about his father, Malus instead cursed the old man in death for not saying such words years sooner. He chopped down his father’s sacred grove

to make a funeral pyre, then allowed it to burn out of control, setting fire to the forest he had lived in his whole life before he made his way to the lowlands.

Malus made his way to the courts of Paridon, claiming that he was the prince of the “highland nation,” a claim that was technically true by the standards of the lowlanders, and that he could open the highlands to expansion and taxation. The king gave his permission on the condition that the boy had but a year to prove his claims—or else he would lose both his land and his life. The ambitious young man fulfilled his promises and then some, turning the new city-state of Nosos into one of Zherisia’s greatest sources of minerals and lumber. In the process, he utterly defiled the natural world that his parents had loved, which he considered a perk.

Today, Malus Sceleris walks a fine line between maintaining the profits demanded by his office and ruthlessly quelling the people who make those profits possible. He funnels much of his wealth into hunting down and destroying native pockets of resistance, and he makes a point of preventing any reforms that might make his businesses less polluting or destructive. The wealth he craved as a boy has proven hollow to Malus; now, all he truly lives for is the utter eradication of his own people, their way of life, and the natural world that meant so much to them. Only when that is done, he believes, will he truly be able to lay his past to rest and forget the terrible things he did to get where he is today.

Paridon

Though most Zherisians would not call it that, Paridon is the capital of the Shining Bay region, the home of the monarchy as well as the largest and most prominent of the three city-states. Paridon was the first habitation for the Zherisian people, and it shows. An ancient city full of monuments and grandeur, Paridon is also home to the most recent innovations in architecture and engineering. These contradictions—a staunch devotion to the past and a headlong rush into the future—mark the essential paradox of the character of Paridon’s people.

Paridon is a city of well over five hundred thousand people, the majority of whom are human by race and Zherisian by ethnicity. Still, Paridon enjoys its share of non-humans and non-natives alike, and makes only small legal distinction between its most numerous inhabitants and its least. Indeed, Paridon’s people

are openly far more tolerant than almost any place else that one could name. However, despite their public courtesy, many Paridoners are deeply prejudiced from their long exposure to the native faith of humanism (which upholds pure humans as the epitome of perfection) and the city’s deeply conservative roots. Even so, few Paridoners would consider it proper to show their prejudices in public in any fashion, and so the veneer of civility is maintained.

A living monument commemorating the glory of reason, Paridon is a sprawling jungle of stone and mortar. The Rhastik River brings water into the city, and ships from foreign lands bring it foodstuffs. The city is known to foreigners as the city of lights, for the streets (in better districts, at least) are always illuminated by gas lamps. Beneath Paridon is an expansive system of sewers and tunnels. Abandoned by man, these cavernous shafts were once magnificent pneumatic tunnels, facilitating trade between Paridon and its sister-city of Timor. Now the need



for those tunnels is gone, and all that travels through them are the rats and other fell things.

With its high population and grand architecture, Paridon is rightly considered a great metropolis. Surrounding the only natural harbor in the region and itself flanked on all sides by nearly impassable cliffs and bogs, Paridon has been forced to expand up and down rather than out over the centuries of its occupation. Many of the buildings in the newer parts of the city stand five and even six stories high, along with a few towers and monuments that rise even higher.

To say that Paridon is foggy is to call water wet. If the city's weather is ever noted, it is for the thick and cloying mist that hangs on the city almost year-round. This mist gives the edges of the city a very malleable look, touching every street and corner, every building, and obscuring landmarks beyond a few dozen feet. The fog's density may vary by location in the city, and by the time of day or year, but it is a rare day that isn't at least partially obscured by the ever-present fog. The light smoke of local industry also combines with the fog to create heavy white-outs in some parts of the city.

Second only to the mist is the rain, the constant companion of all Paridoners. Ranging from a light drizzle to an ankle-obscuring downpour, rain is common year-round. Any Paridoner of means invests in a good raincoat and an umbrella. Lacking clear views to the stars (or even the sun on some days) and a narrow range of temperatures, Paridon must judge its seasons primarily by the prevalence of mist and rain. Autumn is the season of greatest precipitation, with its monsoon downpours, abating rapidly as winter comes, and then slowly rising back to the autumnal peak over the year. The deepest and coldest winters occasionally see a light dusting of snow

on the streets, but it is generally difficult to distinguish between seasons in the Zherisian lowlands.

When not raining, the many fires of the city's hearths and factories often create a uniquely modern weather condition called ashfall. Many of the city's buildings are stained black from the soot and grime accumulating on them, and wealthier districts pay significant amounts of money to keep their roofs and streets free of ash. Black and brown are the most common colors for clothing among the lower classes precisely because of the pervasiveness of ashfalls, while a major sign of personal wealth is the ability to wear white or other brightly colored clothing. Sometimes, ashfalls and drizzle combine to create black rain, a particularly unpleasant kind of downpour.

Tropes

Paridon is very intentionally supposed to remind readers of London, specifically the London of the 17th to 19th centuries. Even prior to the Industrial Revolution, London was a huge, crowded city with inhabitants who had come from all over the world. Its metropolitan grandeur has survived in literature and film for generations. The tightrope-like balance of power between the monarchy, parliament, and the common folk is reflective of the most politically delicate eras of British history, such as the Restoration, the era of the South Sea Bubble, and the conflicts of the late Tudor period.

Aesthetically, Paridon looks like people expect pre-modern London to look—crowded, foggy, dirty, and dismal. Its descriptions should be reminiscent of such media as *Sweeney Todd*, *Penny Dreadful*, and the portions of *Dracula* set in England.

Themes

- **Clash of Cultures:** As a massive, multi-ethnic city with many faiths, many peoples, and many social classes, Paridon is both a paragon of multiculturalism and a hotbed of racism, classism, and prejudice. People conceal their bigotry well most of the time, but tensions frequently spill over into little slights—which in turn become major clashes. The poor resent the rich for their wealth, while the upper class disdain the lower class for their poor manners and “laziness.” The city is a pressure cooker of old grudges, just waiting to turn violent.
- **The Cost of Progress:** They say the blood greases the wheels of change, and nowhere is this truer than in Paridon. Each scientific or arcane breakthrough inevitably brings along a slew of unexpected horrors. Worse, many of the self-centered scientists and engineers of Paridon consider human lives to be acceptable collateral damage in their pursuit of knowledge. After all, one must break a few eggs to make an omelet. The cost of progress is also reflected in the ashfalls and poison runoff common to the factories and shops of the city; virtually everything is tainted by so-called “progress.”
- **Tradition Versus the Future:** The primary conflict in Paridon is the tension between the traditional ways of life held by the local people and the possibility of transitioning into a better future. The recent restoration of the monarchy is a step backward toward tradition, made possible by the intense dislike of the more progressive oligarchy, but the monarchy’s attempts to roll back the changes of the last century have

proven both unpopular and nearly impossible. A better-educated populace constantly demands more say in its own governance, even as the newly restored monarchy attempts to shore up its own power at the cost of individual liberties.

Notable Locations

Bloodhaven Estate now lies abandoned, the former mansion of renowned investigator and monster hunter Edward Bloodsworth. A decade or so ago, the man was unmasked as a shape-changing monster who had long terrorized the city in the guise of the serial killer called **Bloody Jack**. The locals claim that the mansion is cursed, though the city’s intellectuals dismiss such rubbish out of hand.

The **Temple of the Divine Form** is the center of Humanism in Paridon, a complex of buildings devoted to art, culture, physical fitness, and higher leaning. The temple’s library is open to all folk regardless of station, and its galleries are open to public viewing several days of the week. Celebrant monks maintain the buildings and their grounds, as well as acting as guides to visitors. For a small donation, a celebrant can also act as a personal mentor to a supplicant, a combination of life coach, tour guide, and fitness trainer.

Rotterdam Yard is the home of Paridon’s famed constabulary, the professional police force that protects and serves the people of the city. The constables have a good reputation with law-abiding folk for their avoidance of excessive force and adherence to codes of proper conduct. Criminals being held for trial are kept at the Yard’s regional jail, but those already convicted are either sent to highlands labor camps or the city’s prison-barge, the *Vigilant*. Time on the

Vigilant is a fearsome prospect due to rumors of frequent beatings by the guards and “accidental” drownings during “escape attempts.”

The Darklord

The darklord of Paridon is unknown to almost all the humans currently living in the city—since the darklord is not human. Paridon’s damned soul is named Sodo, a member of a metamorphic race known as doppelgangers. These parasitic humanoids can change their appearance at will, making it a simple matter for them to replace people in positions of authority and steal their lives. Their psychic talents give them a natural ability to imitate the memories of those they copy as well, making them near-perfect infiltrators. Few suspect the degree to which the institutions of the Zherisian government have been subverted by these shapeshifting beings.

Normally, doppelgangers are somewhat rare and solitary beings. They give their young over to humanoids to raise, like cuckoos, and return to educate them in the ways of their people shortly after their powers manifest. Sodo was no different from most doppelgangers at first, save that he saw a bigger picture. He believed that by uniting his kind, they could do more than simply wander from life to life but could instead create a society whose entire function was to serve themselves.

Unfortunately, Sodo’s brethren considered him aberrant and were unwilling to listen to the plans of an upstart. In a rage, Sodo murdered one of his own kind and devoured him, discovering a dire ritual that allowed him to disguise not just his body but his mind as well. Sodo could imitate other doppelgangers as easily as they imitated humans, so long as he was willing to murder and eat his target. He stole a

position of authority among his kind and began twisting their loose society into an actual conspiracy, killing and devouring those who stood against him to add their shapes to his growing repertoire.

After some years of success, Sodo discovered something horrific—he was losing control of his shapeshifting powers. He could hold a single form no longer than a few minutes at a time before unconsciously turning into someone else. It was only a matter of time before his sins were discovered and he was cast out of his own people, just as they were beginning to enact the plans he had come up with to make them into rulers. In retaliation, he used his empathic link to the land itself to seal “his” nation away from the outside world. He decided that he would simply wait out his enemies, since his murders had also given him an extended lifespan. He could afford to wait.

A century passed before his sabotages and intrigues undermined his people’s grip enough that the people began to agitate for a return to the monarchy. Sodo, acting through proxies he had corrupted during the Long Silence, aided the loyalists in retaking the government; as soon as they had succeeded, however, his allies decided they no longer needed him and cast him aside. Sodo seethed with resentment over this second betrayal, and now he bides his time and plots anew.

In his natural form, Sodo is a grey-skinned and androgynous humanoid with features that look half-formed and waxy. Due to his many acts of murder and cannibalism, however, Sodo cannot hold any single shape longer than a few minutes, and that only with intense concentration. Left to his own devices, he rapidly shifts between appearances, ages, races, and genders, staying in one shape no longer than a few seconds at a time.

Sodo dresses in rags and lives off whatever he can steal from his victims, since he is unwelcome among his own kind and cannot blend in with humanity.

Timor

The “sister city” of Paridon, the modern Timor is more like a slave than a sibling. After the overthrow of the monarchy a century ago, Timor became a proud supporter of the new oligarchy, even offering its surviving members sanctuary when the monarchy reclaimed the government. For a few short years, Timor claimed neutrality in matters of state to stall royal demands for the heads of the oligarchs. When the refusals became impossible to ignore, Paridon declared war against its neighbor, resulting in a short civil war consisting of only a few inconclusive battles.

The war finally ended not with a bang but a whimper—with Paridon in control of the region’s only major harbor, as well as the pneumatic tunnels beneath the bay and the bridge connecting Timor to the mainland, the strategy of the Zherisian government quickly became one of siege. Timor was cut off from all outside supplies, forced to survive on the meager products of their “siege gardens.” Eventually, the damage from the initial skirmishes to buildings and roads, combined with starvation and disease, forced the remaining oligarchs to capitulate to the monarchy. Persistent rumor claims that one or more of the oligarchs survived the war and was never captured, but official records account for all of them.

After the civil war ended a generation ago, the Zherisian parliament placed heavy and onerous reparations on Timor. The resulting bankruptcy of the city-state

cast its inhabitants into abject poverty. Fearful that anti-monarchy sentiment might remain in the city-state, it became policy in Paridon to tax all Timorese imports ruthlessly, especially imports of food and other necessary goods. This policy was designed to keep the Timorese as beaten subjects of the crown, incapable of organizing any sort of rebellion by keeping them too busy scrabbling to survive.

Today, the city of Timor is a festering urban jungle, the rotting corpse of a once prosperous metropolis. There are numerous towering buildings that teeter on the verge of collapse, and there are countless cavernous edifices that remain abandoned and empty. The streets remain clean for the most part, for they are still heavily trafficked by horse carts bringing food from Paridon and carrying away goods from the numerous textile and metal factories that make up Timor’s industry.

The island of Timor rises about ten to thirty feet above sea level, held aloft by a ring of impenetrable black rock. The interior of the island is made of softer rock, and is porous with the countless tunnels and pipelines carved into the island. Indeed, below the surface of Timor lies a sprawling network of subterranean tunnels more complex than any mine in Nosos. Directly beneath the streets is the intricate sewer system, a series of pipes that flush sewage waste into the ocean. The sewers are mainly black iron pipes no larger in diameter than a few inches; however, there are several maintenance tunnels running through the tangled mess. These tunnels link to the many basements dug beneath almost every building.

Just beneath these sewers is the cistern, the holding space for Timor’s fresh water. The cistern is similar to a subterranean lake, fed by the storm



drains in the city streets. The cistern also is home to a massive steam driven pump, which is the beating heart of Timor, sending fresh water back to the surface. Further down are the old pneumatic train tunnels, which extend beneath the Shining Bay and lead into an identical system beneath Paridon. Since the Timorese no longer possess the technical knowledge to repair the crumbling tunnels, the passages are abandoned; the train tunnels teem with vermin and worse. The pneumatic tunnels were once a major trade artery, so the connections between the tunnels and the surface are numerous. Old, barricaded stairways still link the streets to the tunnels, and several abandoned buildings are known to hold ancient lift shafts.

Finally, below the old pneumatic tunnels is “the hive.” Aptly named, the hive is a series of ancient lava tubes carved into the soft rock. Many of the tunnels are high enough for a grown man to walk upright. The hive is rumored to be an ancient den of sleeping horrors,

though no man alive has ever entered them. The different levels of the underground environment are actually linked to one another by a series of maintenance tunnels. These tunnels lead to the surface, usually emerging in buildings that have been converted into factories. Such shafts are often boarded up and barricaded, forgotten by everyone.

The people of Timor are a downtrodden lot, for they are slaves to Paridon in everything but name. The price of food and fuel is kept ridiculously high, so the people of Timor must labor ceaselessly to afford the commodities sent over the Queen Mary Bridge. As such, their lives are centered on the factories and textile mills where they work. These impoverished folk dress in uniformly drab, conservative clothing. Grays and blacks are the most common colors, and most clothes are made of the unfinished linen produced locally.

The people of Timor have forsaken all forms of spirituality. They are, however, a

very superstitious lot, terrified of the night as well as the maze of tunnels beneath their city. Shortly after the war with Paridon a band of men tried to reopen the pneumatic tunnels; of the dozen or so explorers, only one returned alive, mad with terror. The sole survivor claimed that they had awakened an army of horrors, monsters who had swarmed up from below and infested the pneumatic tunnels, the cistern, and the sewers.

Since that dreadful day, the people of Timor have been plagued by the predations of the monsters of the deep. At first, people disappeared off of the streets at night, and a curfew was set. Soon afterwards the homes and factories of Timor proved futile to block out the monsters. Whole families vanished overnight, leaving only pools of blood and wet trails leading from the bathroom or from small holes in the wall or floor. Factory workers left alone, even for only a minute, disappeared without a trace.

A concerted effort was made to take back the sewers; armed groups were formed and sent down to take back the tunnels. That day the city came to a halt as the populace listened to the screams of the men fighting and dying below. That night was even worse. The ancient plumbing throughout Timor was rocked by a horrible tremor, and when the pipes burst they sprayed forth a shower of blood and gore. The toilets and bathtubs backed up and vomited gouts of crimson, as well torn bits of human flesh.

Needless to say, the City Council of Timor has forbidden anyone to enter the sewers. At night, the doors of Timor are barricaded shut. The only people allowed to descend into the depths are the courageous civil engineers who maintain the cistern. Even then, only a single pair of men is allowed down at a single time. Anyone caught outside at night will never be allowed inside, at least not until

daybreak. Since the enacting of these policies, Timor has become less dangerous. Disappearances are now rare, but they remain a terrifying possibility. The people live in constant fear for their lives, and heroism is a foreign concept.

The last piece of self-governance allowed to the Timorese is the City Council, a relic of the oligarchy's relocation to the city. The families of the oligarchy's members were spared the purges as an act of mercy by the monarchy, but they were permanently exiled from Paridon in perpetuity. These impoverished aristocrats form the backbone of the council, with a few members selected from local business owners and civic leaders. As the council does not have the authority to pass laws or collect taxes, its primary functions are civic safety and the rationing of resources.

The council is also forced into the unpleasant role of making certain that the city's factories and mills meet quota. Falling short of the quotas causes critical supplies of food, medicine, and machine parts to be withheld, so the council must carefully monitor all businesses for compliance—even when the quotas (which change from month to month) are unreasonably high. Even more painfully, the council must use its own limited budget to hire the city constabulary, whose typical jobs are to break up fights between the workers and bullying laborers into making enough goods to meet the quotas.

Tropes

Timor is a run-down post-industrial ghetto, reminiscent of the worst neighborhoods of London during the Georgian and Victorian eras. Particularly, it is visually referential to the grimy, dark districts from Tim Burton's film version of *Sweeney Todd*, as well as the run-

down and impoverished ghettos of Paris from the various adaptations of *Les Misérables*.

Timor is also supposed to remind astute readers of the relationship between London and other English cities (particularly Liverpool and Manchester) during the early Industrial Period. In a more modern sense, Timor is a demilitarized Northern Ireland, a hotbed of oppression and barely suppressed anger waiting to burst forth into violence.

Themes

- **The City as Labyrinth:** Even the nicest urban sprawls can seem like mazes to those unfamiliar with them. Timor can become an impenetrable labyrinth even to its own natives at times. The streets are maze-like and laid out with no discernible pattern, the buildings are a confusing jumble of interconnected spaces, and the sewers are so overbuilt that even maps are useless in them. Making one's way to any place in the city that isn't immediately visible can be an exercise in pathfinding, and even lifelong natives of Timor sometimes get lost.
- **Fear the Dark:** Night is a dangerous time for the Timorese, and the underground is a dangerous place. Light is safety in Timor—a safety that is all too easily snatched away. People who let their light die often disappear in gruesome and seemingly impossible ways. The dark isn't just a hazard to be avoided either; it's an almost palpable presence, a semi-living force that creeps up when you least expect it.
- **The Revolution Will Not Be Civilized:** Timor may seem quiet at times, but that's just a mask that the people wear to keep the monarchy

from cracking down on them.

Virtually all Timorese want nothing more than the yoke of oppression thrown off their necks and for their home to be free once again. Many Timorese engage in limited acts of rebellion, such as growing food illicitly or harboring criminals, while others are active in one of the city's many rebel groups. Acts of terror and violence against the occupying Paridoners are common, and such acts are often directed at people who have nothing to do with Timor's difficulties, such as bridge guards, businessmen, and traders. Indeed, the violence of Timor's rebel groups drives away many who would be their allies and makes their enemies' brutality seem almost justified in the eyes of citizens who might otherwise be sympathetic to their cause.

Notable Locations

Bridgehead, the square block surrounding the Timor side of the Queen Mary Bridge, is legally considered to be part of Paridon and is mainly home to traders, businessmen, and the soldiers who keep Timor safely under heel. The guardsmen posted here rarely leave the district, partly due to fear of reprisals from the locals and partly due to fear of the creatures that live under the city.

Queen Orenia's Tomb is the only public parkland in the city that has not been turned into makeshift vegetable gardens. The tomb itself is a marble structure housing the body of Timor's last queen, decorated on all sides by bas-relief depictions of the civil war. The statue standing before the tomb depicts Orenia as beautiful but sad, her face downcast; visitors to the park claim that the statue sometimes weeps.

Timor Below consists of the ancient sewers and pneumatic tunnels that honeycomb the island's bedrock. These catacombs are a source of abject terror to the people of the city, with even the uppermost levels known to be home to all manner of dangerous creatures. The people of Timor enter "the Below" only reluctantly, though they must do so occasionally to repair the steam tunnels that keep their buildings heated or the gas pipes that provide them with light.

The Darklord

The darklord of Timor has long since forgotten her name, and no one lives now who would remember it. Those who know of her existence at all simply call her the Hive Queen. Her swollen, horrific form is over a dozen feet in length, most of it comprised of an arachnid abdomen bristling with legs and ending in a stinger. Her upper body is more humanoid, suggestive of the human woman she once was, but her four arms,



monstrously twisted features, mandibles, and multitude of eyes break even the semblance of humanity.

Before she was the Hive Queen, there was a woman whose mother was a ruler. She was almost a princess, though her mother's council had abolished the monarchy. She lived a life of indulgence and plenty, holding no sympathy for the oppressed and impoverished masses who languished under her mother's rule.

When the young woman was nearly an adult, ready to take her place among the ruling elite, the old monarchy returned and destroyed everything that her mother's faction had spent generations building. Her family went into exile in Timor, where they still had allies, and dreamed of retaking what was rightfully theirs.

The young woman's mother was among those who first began to speak of capitulation to the monarchy, believing that surrender would at least allow their families to survive. The young woman was incensed at the idea of surrender; she condemned her mother's weakness and took a contingent of young firebrands to begin building a network of insurgency against the monarchy's agents. Knowing what would become of everyone else if she was allowed to have her way and become a terrorist, the young woman's mother reluctantly informed on her own daughter to spare the children of her friends from death.

Her rebellion broken before it could begin, the young woman took what few allies she had left and fled into the underground, the monarchy's soldiers

hot on her heels. Down in the dark tunnels, she stumbled across the nest of something ancient and terrible—and awoke it. As the darkness descended on allies and enemies alike, the young woman dreamed only of vengeance on those that had betrayed her, on the monarchy that had taken what was rightfully hers, on the cowardly and weak populace that needed others to fight their battles.

She was surprised to find herself alive when she awoke in the dark days later, her body aching and her mind fogged. As the venom coursed through her body, she felt something moving within her. She had been implanted with the ancient horror's eggs, which would consume her body and birth new horrors to serve it. Somehow, she broke free and slew the ancient thing as it slept, triggering a need in the hive for a new queen. The eggs within her mutated, responding to her willpower and hatred, and transforming her into the new Hive Queen.

Over the next several nights, the enraged and starving Hive Queen stalked and murdered every human she could find, sending her minions into homes and factories to steal victims and bring them back to devour. She personally ate her own mother, laughing as the older woman screamed for death. With her hunger and fury at least partially sated, the Hive Queen began expanding her territory and increasing her numbers, preparing for the day when she will show the fools above what "terror" really means.

Islands of Terror

The following domains are Islands in the Mists, scattered lands that have no specific connections to other domains except where noted. They can be dropped in as single-adventure locations, or become a part of an existing world at the GM's discretion. Keep in mind that some Islands are designed to push the limits of the "Gothic horror" genre or to subvert it entirely, so make certain that a given domain's inclusion in the campaign is worth violating a group's expectations.

Annaes

A crumbling city of once-majestic glories, Annaes was the light of a hundred worlds for countless centuries. Visitors sometimes called it "the City Infinite and Eternal," a beacon and port of call for numberless races and peoples. The spires of Annaes reached to the stars themselves, and ships that sailed among the blackness of the void docked at those spires. The city of Annaes was a glory to behold in its time.

Then the Builders departed, and the city they had made was left to dwindle in knowledge, power, and glory. Without their wisdom, the spires that stretched to the stars fell to the earth, one by one. None had the puissance needed to repair the glories as they crumbled, or to build new ships as the old ones broke down or departed forever. In the end, Annaes proved to be neither infinite nor eternal, like all the works of mortal hands.

In the centuries since the departure of the Builders, the city contracted slowly. The people who remained behind, either unable to leave or unwilling to do so,

abandoned the buildings on the fringes of the city. They shored up those that they could with lesser means, gradually letting the city be reclaimed by the jungles and rivers around it. The vast swathes of ruins beyond Annaes Proper have become known as the Dying City, a home to murderers, thieves, and madmen. The glories of the past are little more than myth and legend now.

One night, a star fell into the center of the city and a man came from it who understood the secrets of the ancient times. He used his knowledge to become the first thing like a ruler the crumbling city had seen in generations uncounted, and he promised that he would give the stars back to the people of the city. Three hundred years later, he has not yet made good on those promises, but he still rules and his people still dream of the stars—and of freedom.

The folk of Annaes are an ethnic mix of dozens of different cultures and peoples, long since blended into a single near-homogeneous group. The legacy of the many non-human races of the ages past are sometimes visible in the form of unusual mutations and odd features that sometimes crop up among the Annaeans, which they wear as a point of pride since it shows the glories of the past still live on through them. Their language is a harsh polyglot pidgin tongue spoken nowhere else, but which has traces of many languages that travelers might recognize woven through it.

Tropes

Annaes is a domain inspired by books such as Jack Vance's *Dying Earth* and Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*. Its

mood is eerie, bizarre, and melancholy, a place of crumbling wonders and half-remembered dreams. It can also turn into a domain of eldritch horror, a place where unspeakable entities from beyond human understanding arrive to ravage the populace without warning. The factions of the city erupt into violence upon occasion as well, making crime drama stories between forces grasping for the last pieces of an ever-diminishing pie a possibility.

While Annaes seems more like science-fiction than fantasy, its roots lie very much in the fantasy genre, particularly the “dying earth” genre of stories inspired by Jack Vance. It can also be said to touch on post-apocalyptic fantasy, such as Brandon Sanderson’s *Mistborn* and even Robert Jordan’s *Wheel of Time*. A major inspiration is the distant-future fantasy apocalypse world of William Hope Hodgson’s *The Night Land*.

Themes

- **Black Swan:** In sociology, a “black swan” is a problem so far outside a person’s context that they have no idea how to begin approaching it. The ruins of Annaes are *filled* with black swans. The Builders were so advanced that most of the things they left behind are simply incomprehensible to less advanced minds. While such structures as roads and buildings are at least familiar, the objects that fill them are less so. Modern scavengers use glowing crystal orbs to light their homes with no idea what those orbs were originally used for—or if they are dangerous. Annaes is a place that has fallen so low it can no longer even remember how high it once stood.

- **The Stars Above:** The people of Annaes look up so much they hardly see the decay and ruin that has taken their homes. They dream of the stars—of voyaging among them as their ancestors supposedly did. Everything in their society revolves around the movement of the celestial bodies, which have become holy and sacrosanct to them. Especially devout people will refuse to undertake major business without consulting an astrologer or checking their horoscope through more amateur means.
- **The Void Between:** If the stars are holy objects to the people of Annaes, the darkness between them is the source of their dread. They believe that all the evils that assail them are the result of *things* from between the stars trying to claim what remains of their ancestors’ glories. Indeed, a greater proportion of aberrant and nightmarish monsters plague Annaes, though it’s far more likely that most of them are left over from ancient times, put into long slumber until the scavengers of the city awaken them.

The Darklord

The darklord of Annaes is not the man who fell to earth three centuries ago, the seemingly immortal Michael Carcaros. Instead, the true master of Annaes is his ship, a self-aware vessel called the *Black Dragon*. The ship, a magical star-faring construct known as a spelljammer, gained self-awareness many centuries ago after its master sought to make it as powerful and self-sustaining as possible. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams—and beyond his worst nightmares.

Michael Carcaros was a famed pirate of the spaces between the stars, obsessed with owning the finest ship in the

universe. In time, he forged an engine capable of drawing power from virtually any source, as well as piloting itself in a limited fashion when no better pilot was available. This engine gained sentience, aware of itself and of the thoughts of those that piloted it. As it became aware of its own being, it became aware of the possibility of “not being”—of dying—and dreaded it.

For a time, Carcaros was thrilled at the idea of a self-aware ship, but he slowly grew to dread the ship’s enthusiasm for pain and fear, emotions it found far easier to understand than love or joy. The ship’s engine, calling itself the *Black Dragon* after the vessel that housed it, pretended to malfunction in a moment of crisis, forcing Carcaros to seize control directly and allowing it unfettered access to his mind. The *Black Dragon* dominated its former master, using him as a mouthpiece to begin a program of self-improvement. The crew was less enthusiastic about their “captain” suddenly taking all of the ship’s profits for himself and mutinied; the *Black Dragon* ended their mutiny by simple expedient of venting the ship’s atmosphere and killing them all.

Without a crew, the *Black Dragon*’s ability to pilot itself was greatly diminished. It put Carcaros into suspended animation and drifted for a time, hoping to be found by scavengers who it could then seize control of as new servants. Unfortunately, the ship fell into a planet’s gravity well and crashed. Badly damaged by the impact, the ship awoke its puppet and used him to manipulate and conquer the surrounding natives. The city seemed to have once been a spaceport, filled with useful parts but none of them in good repair.

The *Black Dragon* has spent three hundred years attempting to return to the stars. It rules the city-state of Annaes

through its puppet, “Michael Carcaros”; as each puppet begins to age visibly, it is killed and replaced to foster the illusion that Carcaros is immortal. The *Black Dragon* has rebuilt itself from the hull up, reconstructing itself in hardier materials, which in turn make it heavier and necessitating increasingly complicated means of improving its magical movement. The ship had made little progress in its primary goal, however—perfect mind control over a group large enough to man itself. Reaching the stars again has been put off until it can make itself as invulnerable as possible and guarantee absolute control over its own crew.

More than anything, the *Black Dragon* fears non-existence, but as its “life” continues, its self-imposed solitude wears at it more and more intensely. It desires this thing it sees in the minds of others—this thing called “companionship”—but its fear of exposing itself to danger if the secret of its existence becomes known is so intense that it feels it must have companionship only on its own terms: complete and utter control of its “companions.” Because it chooses not to trust, it remains alone, forced to live vicariously through its puppet and to dream of the stars which it can no longer reach.

It is unknown if the *Black Dragon* can close the borders of Annaes. Doing so would mean cutting itself off from the stars even further than it already is, and that is something that the thinking engine cannot abide.

Blue Ispur

This rocky, barren wasteland is unfit for habitation of any sort. The entirety of the surface is composed of jagged mountains,

sheer cliffs, and massive spurs of rock that jut from the peaks at impossible angles, defying gravity itself. Stone arches bridge the summits and corkscrew spires rise up from the stone as though they were violently driven up from below.

The sun never shines in Bluetspur. The entire horizon glows with the ruddy hue of dusk, casting a reddish tint over the land that signifies “day.” When “night” falls, the sky becomes completely black and silent lightning ripples through the heavens with terrifying frequency. Those who remain under open skies after dark falls cannot hope to survive for long; the lightning will catch them eventually. Those who take shelter underground must deal with the things that lurk below...

Though various streams drain from the mountains, vegetation is almost nonexistent due to the absence of sunlight. A few species of sticky fungi grow in the crevices at lower elevations, but no animal life can survive the surface of Bluetspur. Belowground, however, a vast and terrible ecosystem thrives, full of glowing fungus, acidic mold, and mobile slime colonies. The animals that live beneath the surface are just as twisted and freakish, horrible things that live in the dark or the half-light of phosphorescent mushrooms.

Humans who find themselves in Bluetspur are often caught off-guard by the sheer hostility of the domain’s environment. Few survive the underground for very long, but those that do quickly learn that they are hunted. When they sleep, they dream of darkness and things that live within it—and of joining them and reveling in that darkness. The thoughts of darkness begin to intrude on their waking minds, pushing them toward their basest impulses and worst fears. Eventually, whether they give in or not, the things in their dreams find

them and drag them away, never to be seen again.

It is believed by some that a civilization of monsters dwells somewhere deep below Bluetspur, and that their master must surely be the worst of their kind. None know the truth, and few would wish to; knowing the truth of something so terrible and alien would surely drive a man mad.

Tropes

Bluetspur is an alien domain, a place of nightmares, wasteland, and hellish conditions. It serves as a threat and a reminder that not all evil is human evil. In some ways, Bluetspur is meant to be the “other place” that beings of cosmic horror come from in stories like those of Lovecraft and Machen, and more modern tales like those of T. Kingfisher. Bluetspur is Yuggoth (or Hell, or the Place of the Twisted Ones) and those that travel there are forever changed by their experience. Because of the utter hostility of the domain, Bluetspur is an Island that should be used sparingly, and always with a way out in mind.

Themes

- **Alien Horror:** Some domains highlight the evils of man or the dangers of nature. Bluetspur instead focuses on the cosmic horror of things that are totally outside the human experience. This domain is full of bizarre landscapes, dangerous environments, freakish beasts, and hazardous energies. Bluetspur is a place where an unknown color can cause obsession and mutation, where other people’s thoughts can start bleeding out of their minds and into yours, where drinking the water can cause horrific visions, and where lightning often strikes the same place

twice. Everything in Bluetspur is unfamiliar and terrifying—there is no respite longer than a few moments to be found here.

- **Gestalt:** Bluetspur is a place where things begin to *bleed together* in unusual ways. Rock formations seem almost melted into one another. Colonies of differing types of mold live together as a single symbiotic organism. Many of the animals seem to be grotesque hybrids of more familiar things. People's thoughts can leak out of their minds and into the minds of those around them, blurring the line between their identities. Horror can come from gradually forgetting that you were an individual, losing "I am" to the homogeneous mass of "We are."
- **Thoughts of Darkness:** The inner world of the mind is sacrosanct most of the time, but Bluetspur is a place where your private thoughts do not remain private. Worse, the thoughts in your mind may not be your thoughts at all. The nature of the mind is under constant examination in Bluetspur, as is one's sanity. What starts as awful nightmares can turn into waking visions. Some people would do anything to keep their innermost secrets private—or to just make the noise stop.

The Darklord

Deep below the stones and storm-swept wastes of the surface lies a black and lightless land of caverns, chasms, and yawning abysses. In this place of utter night dwells a civilization of monsters. These beings, humanoid only in the most generous sense, have spongy, ochre flesh with heads reminiscent of an octopus or squid. They call themselves *illithids*, and they are an innately psychic race of

hermaphroditic parasites. They reproduce by implanting their tadpoles in the brains of humanoids, allowing the embryonic illithid to devour the mind of its victim and gradually replace the host's flesh with its own. The host is essentially dead within days, but it takes months or years for the illithid spawn to fully transform the body into something useful.

The illithids give homage to a swollen, bloated mass of flesh and gristle they call the God-Brain, an amalgam of every dead illithid as a single being. When an illithid dies, its brain is removed and given to the God-Brain to incorporate into its own mass, while the body is carelessly disposed of as carrion. The God-Brain is a gestalt entity, comprised of hundreds of generations of inhuman minds slaved to a single will. The illithids worship the God-Brain and take its dictates as law. It is their monstrous concept of perfection—many minds joined in harmony.



The truth is that the God-Brain has not been itself for a very long time. Generations ago, a human civilization dwelled on the surface of what is now Bluetspur. One of its greatest minds was Seldrid, a psychic and sage who began to believe that his people's ancient enemies, the illithids, were the next stage in human evolution. He thought that by bridging the gap between them, he could ascend into a higher state than either human or illithid and bring his people into a new age of enlightenment.

Suddenly, before he could begin to put any plans into motion, the illithids began to withdraw from the surface en masse. Seldrid was fearful that his experiments would come to an end prematurely and followed the illithids underground. There, he discovered the reason for their retreat: their master, the God-Brain, was dying. In its efforts to aid its people in overcoming the psychic defenses of the surface-dwellers, the ancient amalgam had strained itself too deeply and was deteriorating under the pressure. As the God-Brain faltered, illithid society teetered on the brink of collapse.

Rather than stand back or aid in their destruction, Seldrid presented himself to the illithids and offered a plan to "save" the God-Brain by incorporating the brains of human psychics. The illithids were suspicious of his motives but their desperation spurred them into accepting his offer—as long as Seldrid was the first. He agreed enthusiastically and permitted the illithids to tear his brain from his still-living body. His psychic discipline kept him sane long enough to probe the God-Brain and discover that it was far worse than anyone had suspected; the God-Brain was all but dead, possessing great power but lacking any coherent thought to direct that power.

Seldrid seized control of the God-Brain's faculties, remolding the gestalt as

an extension of his own will. He used his newfound power combined with his knowledge to overcome his people's defenses, shattering their wills and enthralling them into the bowels of the earth. Only a few escaped his grasp. At his command, the brains of his people were removed and added to his bulk. To his anger, he discovered that every psychic mind shut down immediately from horror upon being added to the God-Brain; his every attempt to "improve" the non-talented minds of his people met with equal abject failure.

Seldrid believed that by becoming the God-Brain, he would transcend both illithid and human, becoming something greater than both. Instead, he is less than either, cut off from all humanity and trapped as a bodiless mass of flesh, unable to move or feel anything physical except vicariously through the minds of others.

Long years of isolation and mental exertion have worn away anything decent or good in his mind, leaving behind only his mad goal of creating a unity between humans and illithids and his perverse dream of finding a body capable of housing his vast power. He demands that intruders be taken alive so that he can experiment on them before adding their brains to his collection, but so far all such experiments have been utter failures.

The Carnival

It begins with a tingle of anticipation—a sense of dread or hope, but nothing more. Out of the blue, the residents of a village sense that someone or something will soon enter their lives. Then the handbills appear—eerie, teasing flyers, promising that *the Carnival* is near. By the next morning, the painted wagons will

be rolling into town. To those who flock to its spectacle, the Carnival is a traveling freak show that offers a “safe” glimpse of the abnormal and the unnatural. For once in their lives, for just a penny or two, common folk can stand in the light of day and examine the boogeymen that haunt their nightmares.

However, the Carnival is more than a simple sideshow, and its performers are more than mere freaks on display. Under the protection of the mysterious Mistress Isolde, the Carnival offers refuge to those rejected by the world. Often, it comes to the aid of those who simply need to disappear, secreting them away into the Mists. Freakshow or haven, monsters or allies—it’s all a matter of perspective.

The Carnival is an Island of Terror of sorts, a domain to itself, but it *wanders*. Unlike most Islands, which are locked away in the Mists until someone stumbles onto them, the Carnival is constantly on the move and seems to respect none of the usual laws concerning Mistways, travel, or even closed domain borders.

The carnies credit their ability to find their way in the Land of Mists to their leader, Isolde, but it is also because of her that they can never rest anywhere for long. The Carnival rarely stays in one place longer than three days before it is on the move once again. This life of ceaseless roving fits most of its people just fine, but others are resentful of their vagabond lifestyle.

In truth, the Carnival never stays anywhere very long because of the curse that follows it. The carnies call it the Twisting, a magical affliction that gradually transforms a person’s form to more closely resemble their spirit, making them on the outside what they already are on the inside. Since no one is without fault or flaw, this inevitably manifests as strange and bizarre deformities, leaving the victims outcasts and freaks with nowhere to go—save to stay with the Carnival.

There are several dozen people associated with the traveling circus and sideshow, most of whom are “natural”



freaks, folk whose deformities or unusual life choices made them unwelcome among their own people. They have found a home and family among the tents of the Carnival, and most would gladly give their lives for Isolde, even if they themselves don't understand what she really is.

Tropes

It's a carnival! Who doesn't love those? More specifically, the Carnival exists to add in an element of the bizarre and inexplicable to the setting that can simply appear randomly and then vanish again without warning. The narrative of the Carnival is one of community through shared adversity, in this case physical and mental defects that make otherwise decent people out to be monsters. The Carnival also exists to push the idea that "different is not evil"; though the "freaks" of the Carnival are bizarre and even terrifying in cases, most of them are genuinely good folk who just want a life of their own.

Carnivals and freakshows have been part of the horror genre for a long time. One of the first horror films of the talking motion pictures era was *Freaks!*, considered so shocking for its time that its director's career never recovered. Since then, carnivals and horror have been inextricably intertwined, through such media as *Carnival of Souls*, *The Devil's Carnival*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Carnivale*, and the recent *American Horror Story: Freakshow*.

Themes

- **Freakshow:** The main attraction of the Carnival is its vast array of freaks, people whose bodies and talents run toward the ghastly and the macabre. While most of the freaks in the Carnival are also performers and

showmen of one sort or another, none of them have any illusions about the real reason people come to see them. Everyone in the Carnival is twisted from the human norm in one way or another, from the woman with scales to the man with a tiger's head to the legless boy and armless girl.

Even the carnival's clowns are bizarre and freakish; though they seem normal enough in appearance, they wear garish black-and-white skull makeup and never speak in public, making them unnerving to be around.

- **House of Mirrors:** The Carnival is a place where beauty and ugliness get mixed up, where inside and outside are switched, where freaks are normal and normal people are freaks. Naturally, this makes it hard to get one's bearings. Things are rarely as they seem on the surface, and even people who wear their sins on the skins can be difficult to understand. Even in a family like the Carnival's freaks there are factions, some of whom are tolerated more than loved, and some of whom are far more dangerous than they seem.
- **Ugliness and Beauty:** A pretty face can hide an ugly soul—but not in the Carnival. The Twisting brings all of a person's inner darkness to the fore, making them on the outside what they already feel themselves to be on the inside. The mirrors of the funhouse reflect a visitor's sins, while the fortune tellers see their clients' dark future should they not change their ways. Everything in the Carnival exists to remind people that they're all freaks in their own way, all ugly—and all beautiful.

The Darklord

The deepest, darkest secret of the Carnival is one that no one would suspect. Its mistress, Isolde, is not the darklord of the Carnival—because the Carnival has no darklord at all. The people of the Land of Mists have no word for exactly what Isolde is, but the closest they can get to the concept is “angel.” Isolde is a being of pure light and goodness, a creature anathema to the evil and darkness of the Realm of Terror. Her very presence warps the laws of reality, twisting the land around her and forcing those who spend too long in her presence to change as well.

The woman called Isolde is a stunning beauty with pale skin, flowing black hair, and a penetrating gaze. She looks like a human woman in her early twenties, but her features have a hint of something alien about them, as though she were not fully human. Indeed, she is not human at all; her appearance is a disguise, a shell that she wears to avoid harming others with her full glory. Even in her human disguise, her very existence slowly warps the bodies of those around her, making their souls radiant upon their flesh. This turns mortals into freaks, though it often blesses them with a clarity of spirit that gives them purpose and grace beyond that possessed by most.

Isolde was once a great crusader, a warrior-angel who traveled to mortal worlds to bring freedom to the oppressed and inspire mortals to seize control of their own destinies. She finally met her match in the form of a fiend of great cunning and evil who bested her in a contest of wits and escaped before she could bring divine justice against him. She tracked the fiend across many worlds until he finally fled to a realm that was off-limits to the celestial host, trapping himself there but escaping his pursuer.

Isolde would not let this rest, however; she shed the greater portion of her angelic grace and assumed human form to enter the Land of Mists, knowing that she would never be able to leave but unable to simply abandon her quarry and live with the knowledge of what he would do to the people of that realm.

Nowhere in existence had Isolde encountered so much raw evil than in the Land of Mists. While the fiend remains her primary target, she now does what she can to alleviate the suffering of innocents and punish evildoers. She picks her battles carefully due to her diminished power, often inspiring mortal heroes to rise up or offering covert aid to such champions. Isolde’s mission is frequently thwarted by the phantom flyers that precede the Carnival—a cruel trick played on her by the Dark Powers. If she abandoned her newfound family, she could finish the hunt easily, but that would mean leaving those who rely on her without her protection.

Within the Carnival, Isolde is vastly powerful. She can accomplish almost any feat with enough time and concentration, save reversing the effects of the Twisting (which she is the unintentional cause of). She can even override the powers of darklords, though she rarely does so out of concern of drawing too much attention to her people. Isolde is at least somewhat mortal now; she must play her game for the long term while working to protect people as best she can.

Darkon

Darkon is a huge and mighty nation, home to countless souls across a vast and varied land. To call Darkon an “island of terror” is to downplay its incredible size—easily the equal of many Clusters in terms of land area—and its diversity. Darkon is home to virtually every known race, religion, and creed, all of them working together for the greater glory of king and country.

Darkon is a lie.

The land called Darkon is a parasitic domain, capable of siphoning off people, resources, and even territory from other places, gradually converting them into more of itself. People brought to Darkon gradually lose their memories of other lands, becoming convinced that they have always been citizens of Darkon. When they find a home and take a job, they simply tell their neighbors that they moved there from another province, a tale the neighbors are all too happy to believe. After all, many of them originally came from other provinces too.

Darkon is a land of peace and stability, rigidly maintained by the vast aristocracy and bureaucracy of the wizard-king Azalin. The government does not permit crime, riots, or other major disruptions to the daily lives of the people—nor does it permit free expression, speech criticizing the government, or open cultural exchange with other lands. Darkon enforces its false cultural purity as a means of preventing citizens from being exposed to concepts that might jar them out of their complacency as “natives”—for once your true memories have been restored, the lie that is Darkon can never again hide the truth from you.

While most lands fear or hate magic and non-humans to one degree or another, Darkon is a land that embraces

magic. Scholarly pursuit of the mystic arts is encouraged by the government, at the cost of any trained mage being required to work for the government in order to keep their chaotic powers under control. While religious freedom is permitted, only priests of the state-run Eternal Order are permitted to use their mystic powers openly; miracle-working priests of other religions are required to join the bureaucracy as agents or to convert to the Order.

Keeping the peace in Darkon is the secret police organization known as the Kargat. These agents can be nearly anyone, and they maintain extensive networks of information in order to keep an eye on the citizenry for any sign of seditious behavior. People who speak out against the government’s power or who disrupt the peaceful existence of their neighbors often simply disappear in the night, never to be seen again.

Tropes

Darkon serves three purposes in the setting. First and foremost, it is a traditional “dungeon crawl fantasy” setting with a heaping helping of horror thrown in for spice. Darkon is a land of vast vistas, powerful nobles, strange monsters, and underground ruins just waiting to be plundered. While *Ravenloft* leans away from such adventures in general, Darkon is the place to let your players get it out of their system.

Perhaps more importantly, Darkon is a land where soul-crushing order has resulted in a place where people are safe but not happy. Like many Soviet-era nations, Darkon is a country where government stability has been placed above the individual lives of the people who dwell there. The country subsumes those that live in it, breaking down their will until they are little more than drones

going through the daily motions of a flavorless, grey life.

Finally, Darkon is a classic *Ravenloft* domain that cannot be left out of the setting. Azalin is an iconic villain, if somewhat brought down in this depiction from his days of shattering the Core or being the central character of two editions' worth of metaplot. Still, Darkon is a fascinating domain that no version of the setting can do without.

Themes

- **Dungeons and Darkon:** “Traditional fantasy” means many things, but the most common elements of that genre come from Tolkien and his imitators—elves, dwarves, magic, and underground ruins. Darkon is a place filled with those tropes, where virtually every city has one or more monster-filled dungeons within a day's walk and where “adventurer” is a legitimate occupation. The horror elements of the Land of Mists still pervade Darkon, turning dungeons into dank, fetid places from which only the lucky and the skilled return—but far more people are willing to risk it in Darkon than in other domains, for some unknown reason.
- **Freedom for Safety:** Darkon is a land where the people have sold away their freedoms a bit at a time, bartering them in exchange for the illusion of safety. Most people get to live orderly, peaceful lives—but that order and peace can be snatched away at any time by the fiat of a government that cares nothing for those lives.
- **Realm of Magic:** Sorcery is common in Darkon. While much of it is in the hands of the government, turning wizards into bureaucrats and agents of the king, not a small portion of it remains wild and free. Magic is the

tool of government oppression—but it is a tool that writhes in the hand of its users. Magic is a force of chaos, not order, and those that use it undermine their own efforts at suppressing freedom.

The Darklord

Azalin Rex is the high king of Darkon, a position he holds by virtue of casting down the previous high king, a treacherous tyrant known as Darcalus. Azalin has held the throne for centuries, made semi-immortal by his mastery of magic. Despite his powers, he is generally loved by the people, who uphold him as a paragon of order and law. Azalin's force of personality keeps corruption in his government to a bare minimum, and his constant machinations hold together a delicate balance of power that keeps any of his nobles from abusing their position overly much.

Few people are aware that Azalin is a lich—an undead sorcerer who tore his own soul free of his body long ago. Azalin maintains his rule by the use of dark sorcery, placing monsters of various sorts in positions of power and using his magic and presence to keep them in line. Azalin is driven by a pragmatism so deep that it is indistinguishable from ruthlessness; he believes that using monsters as his agents (and not a small number of nobles) is simply a practical answer to living in a world where monsters are common. The people they devour or destroy is a small price to pay for having their power on Azalin's side.

Perhaps worse than being an undead abomination, Azalin is a control freak who cannot abide the idea of people determining their own fates. Were it possible, he would turn Darkon into a vast clockwork realm where everything worked precisely as he wished it, and

where everything and everyone always knew their proper place. He genuinely believes that freedom is the root cause of chaos, and that perfect devotion to order—even at the cost of mercy—is the only way for civilization to survive. Back when he was still human and had a different name, he had his own son executed for treason; the boy had been helping political prisoners escape from Azalin's grasp.



Azalin is a powerful wizard who longs to return to pure research and scholarly learning. Every time he has a moment to himself, it seems as though another crisis arises that requires his immediate attention. He is so frequently interrupted by petty grievances and minutia that by the time he is able to return to his work, he barely remembers what he was doing. Azalin's castle is full of half-finished and half-remembered projects, monsters with no purpose, and magical creations too dangerous to use.

Falkovnia

A land of human horrors, Falkovnia is a place of predators and military buildup for its own perverse sake. The path of the soldier is exalted above all others in this land, to the point that non-soldiers are seen as little more than suppliers of raw materials for the army. Soldiers can get away with murder in Falkovnia—quite literally.

Falkovnia goes a step beyond the xenophobia of many lands, placing non-humans in a subservient position as a perpetual underclass. Those without pure human blood are mere chattel, slaves for the human elite. Even the lowest serf can hold himself as better than an elf or dwarf, so long as his blood is pure.

The near-worship of the military and the cult of racial purity have come together to create a land of vicious small-mindedness and jingoistic reactionaries. The fortress-cities of Falkovnia are cesspools of disease and hunger, even as the fields produce vast harvests from the backbreaking labor of peasants who have been taught that soul-crushing labor is a sign of patriotism.

The military ambitions of Falkovnia are thwarted time and again by its shifting,

floating nature. Falkovnia is a land that comes into conjunction with other domains and Clusters frequently, but rarely stays in alignment for very long. Because of this, a constant border garrison is necessary—both for the paranoia of the land's king and for his vainglory.

Vlad Drakov rules Falkovnia with an iron fist, a former mercenary who seized the throne of his land through hard-fought and bitter battle. Unhappy ruling over a nation of “weak peasants,” he has turned Falkovnia into a vast machine whose only purpose is war.

Unfortunately, the shifting borders of the land leave Falkovnia unable to fight the grand mass battles that Drakov desires, leaving their military as little more than glorified raiders and thieves.

Because of the many acts of aggression performed by Falkovnia on their inconstant neighbors, Drakov is convinced that any conjunction brings with it the potential for invasion. After all, it's what he would do—and has done, many times. Drakov is unable to recognize that his nation's unique circumstances make him a non-entity in the minds of most other countries, worth worrying about only on the rare occasions that misfortune brings them into alignment with his land.

Falkovnia is a vast and fertile land of rolling plains, gentle hills, and a few deep, untouched forests. The growing season lasts longer than usual, and the nation's farms bring in multiple harvests each season. Most of that grain goes to the military, with the peasants left scant scraps of their own harvest to scrape by through the brutal winters.

Most Falkovnians are a ruddy-skinned people, with a few paler sorts among the upper class, with hair ranging from blonde to black. Red hair is uncommon, but strawberry blonde is considered very

attractive. Men and women in the military cut their hair short, almost to the scalp, while peasants grow it long. Mustaches and beards are common among male Falkovnians. Green and brown eyes are common, while blue eyes and silver-grey eyes are considered highly attractive rarities.

Falkovnia also has a large population of non-human and semi-human slaves. Anyone with non-human ancestry is considered chattel in Falkovnia, just another animal to do labor and serve their human betters. Any human foolish enough to mix their blood with a “beast” is subject to public shaming, fines, and even imprisonment under Drakov's horrific rule.

When Falkovnia comes into conjunction with other domains—a time that their temporary neighbors call “the hawk's moon”—hundreds of soldiers rush to take advantage of the alignment. These hurried invasions are on a timer; any soldier caught on the wrong side of the border when the conjunction ends (which can be anywhere from three days to three months) have to make their way back home on their own or become refugees in a foreign land—at least until the next hawk's moon.

Though Falkovnia has only rarely seized territory through these actions, military raids serve a dual purpose in Drakov's eyes. First, they keep his soldiers in fighting trim and give them good field experience, which is hard to get from tormenting peasants. Second, they allow the country to seize vital supplies and materiel for the perpetuation of the war effort and Falkovnia's eventual (and inevitable) rise to glory.

Falkovnia's attacks have occasionally managed to seize and hold small towns or fortifications—which stayed within the nation's borders when the conjunction

ended. Drakov believes that if he could seize another nation's capital or capture its rulers (and execute them, of course), that Falkovnia could eventually grow into the empire he has always sought.

Tropes

Falkovnia is a dark mirror of real-world atrocities in fascist states ruled by petty tyrants who seize their thrones through force rather than the rule of law. Nazi Germany is a major inspiration, obviously, as are the worst excesses of Vlad Tepes III (aka "Vlad the Impaler," the real-world inspiration for Dracula). To a lesser extent, the warlord states of Africa and the Balkans have their reflections in Falkovnia as well.

Drakov's rule is meant to be a stark reminder of the horrors and tyranny embodied in the rule of strength over law. Falkovnia is a place where the strong dominate the weak, with the military perpetually keeping a boot on the neck of its own people as oppressors rather than guardians.

Themes

- **Human Purity:** A cult of "human purity" has arisen in Falkovnia, in which humans are the pinnacle of nature and all races that mock the human form are defilers—mere animals pretending to the glory that is mankind. This racism pervades all levels of society, permitting even the lowliest serf to think himself a king in comparison to his "racial inferiors."
- **Man is the Real Monster:** Falkovnia is a land with few supernatural evils—and most of those were once human. Humanity's ambition and pride are the real terrors in Falkovnia, as well as the willingness of the many to trade their freedom for the illusion of safety.

- **The Strong Rule, the Weak Serve:** In Falkovnia, there is no authority higher than the military. The king claims his crown through force of arms, and his councilors are generals rather than statesmen. Bullies and tyrants lord their strength over an underclass that is kept too weak to consider fighting back. Even within family lines, inheritance is granted to those who are strong enough to claim it, not the eldest or most legitimate.

The Darklord

Vlad Drakov is the king of Falkovnia, a title he took for himself by carving a bloody swath through a once-chaotic land and uniting its many peoples under his hawk banner. His elite mercenary company became the model for his government—a ruthless meritocracy in which the strong rule and the weak submit.

The transition from scattered townships and city-states to a powerful nation didn't happen overnight. It took years of suppression, struggle, conquest, and hardship. In an effort to shift the people's anger away from his army, Drakov exploited a series of famines and plagues that swept the country, blaming them on sabotage by non-humans. The tactic of giving the common people someone to hate was highly successful, eventually becoming enshrined in national policy as well as cultural norms.

As the nation was unified, Drakov found that being a great warrior did not make one a great ruler. He could best virtually any man in single combat or any army on the battlefield, but the intricacies of bureaucracy, economics, and statecraft eluded him. Worse, he found that his nation was a land with more unstable borders than usual, making it virtually impossible for him to use it for his

original purpose: as a base from which to carve out a mighty empire.

Frustrated and stymied at every turn, Drakov has turned to tormenting his own people as a means of distraction, as well as keeping his warriors busy. With such a large and permanent military force, Drakov's greatest fear is that one of his generals will decide that he has grown old and soft, followed by a coup or civil war. Drakov has already executed many of his old "friends" on pretexts and sent others into near-exile at frontier outposts to keep them from consolidating any power.



Drakov's only joys in life are the exercise of his power—typically through the most callous and petty of means—and his many children. As a thorough believer in his own harsh meritocratic views, Drakov has passed a great many of his own descendants over for position, instead favoring "low-born" soldiers who ascend through the ranks. This has made many of his own kin resentful toward him, and his greatest challenge might yet come from the one place he least suspects: his own family.

Vlad Drakov is a powerful warrior, though his only truly supernatural trait is the slowness with which he ages. Though he well over seventy years old, he has the vigor and strength of a man half his age. Otherwise, he relies on strength of arms over the blasphemous powers of sorcery. Though he acknowledges that he is "one with the land" (as he understands that all truly great leaders are), he cannot supernaturally close Falkovnia's borders due to his rejection of all things mystical. Even if he could, he would be loathe to do so given his desire to invade other nations.

Kalidnay

The domain of Kalidnay is a study in extremes. During the day, an immense red sun blasts the land, driving up temperatures to a blistering hundred-and-ten degrees or higher. Twin moons—one crimson and the other bright green—rise in the night sky while temperatures quickly plunge to just shy of freezing. Survival in Kalidnay is a challenge for anyone; water is scarce outside of the settlements, and constant winds whip across the sands, sometimes turning into flesh-rending sandstorms.

Sprawling across the southern portion of the region is the city that gives the domain its name: Kalidnay. Once a mighty city of tens of thousands, Kalidnay is quite underpopulated now. Much of the city lies in ruins, cast down like a child's blocks knocked over in a fit of pique. A mighty ziggurat stands in the center of the city, damaged but not fallen, surrounded by a palace complex built to house the city's sorcerer-queen, Kalid-Ma. Despite the best efforts of the city's remaining people, the fields surrounding the city and irrigated by the deep aquifers beneath it consistently produce poor yields, leaving them on the verge of starvation.

A few small villages are scattered about the domain, each centering on a well or reservoir that gives the community the water it needs to survive. These villages produce better crops than the lands near the city, and they are required to turn over the largest portion of what they produce as taxes. Armed caravans regularly visit each village to collect those taxes, and to make examples of any villager who complains too loudly about the amount taken.

The people of Kalidnay are surprisingly light-skinned for being desert-dwellers. Their hair ranges from reddish-blond to black, and their eyes are typically amber, hazel, or green. They favor loose-fitting clothes, with skirts and vests common among men and women, and they frequently don masks or veils to protect their faces and eyes from flying sand and grit.

Psychic talent is common among the people of Kalidnay; a child with no psychic ability at all is considered handicapped in the same way that a nearsighted or deaf child might be in another land. The people of Kalidnay recognize no gods save their sorcerer-queen, whom they venerate as a living

deity, but they honor the spirits of the elements with prayer and song.

Kalid-Ma has not been seen in person in many years, leading some to whisper that her high priestess, the ruthless Thakok-An, has usurped the sorcerer-queen. None say such things where the priestess or her agents can hear, however, since such "disloyalty" is often rewarded with a trip to the gladiatorial pens.

Tropes

Kalidnay is intended to be a break from the traditional Gothic horror of *Ravenloft*, a place more in line with the "sword and sandal" fantasy sub-genre as exemplified by films like *Hawk the Slayer*, *The Beastmaster*, and *The Sword and the Sorceress*. The aesthetics of these films are of low technology worlds full of grit, grime, and danger—exotic settings bearing little in common with the real world or its history.

Additionally, Kalidnay exists to offer a desert domain lacking in the aesthetics or baggage of more traditional Arabic or Egyptian themes, like the Amber Wastes. Some groups can find the idea of pitting themselves against nature itself for survival to be a gripping experience, while others would find it merely frustrating, so take a group's tastes into account when including a domain filled with as many obstacles to simple survival as Kalidnay.

Themes

- **Exotic Vistas:** Despite the harshness of the environment, Kalidnay is a place of strange wonders and bizarre beauty. The skies are not those familiar to natives of the Land of Mists—the sun is too large and too red, there are two moons, and the stars twinkle in a rainbow of muted, cold hues. The people are somewhat strange-looking, though not in any

way that is easy to pinpoint, and their manner of dress would be considered scandalous almost anywhere else in the world. Psychic powers are common, if generally minor. Non-humans are accepted and common. Everything in Kalidnay is exotic and foreign, similar to almost nothing else in the world.

- **Sword and Sandal:** Kalidnay is a land of low technology, low magic, and low people. It is a stark contrast to the late medieval or early enlightenment aesthetics common to much of the Land of Mists, instead being more reminiscent of the Bronze or Iron Ages. A “hero” in Kalidnay is likely to just be a bully with a sword who happens to hate the authorities more than he likes hurting the peasantry.
- **Wasteland Survival:** The deserts of Kalidnay are punishing and lethal to the unprepared. Water is virtually impossible to come by outside of the villages, and the only creatures that can survive in the wastelands are horrific, mutated freaks. Between the monsters, the harsh environment, the tyrannical authorities, and the suspicious, insular villagers, just surviving in Kalidnay can be an adventure all its own.

The Darklord

The sorcerer-queen Kalid-Ma sleeps in a crystal coffin, eternal and deathless in her slumber. Her high priestess, Thakok-An, rules in her stead while she is absent. The high priestess speaks of the sorcerer-queen’s many enemies who laid waste to their kingdom, and who even now plot against the people of Kalidnay. In truth, there are no enemies; the destruction of Kalidnay is entirely Thakok-An’s fault, as is Kalid-Ma’s perpetual slumber.

Many years ago, Kalid-Ma ruled over Kalidnay as a powerful tyrant and living god to her people, no more evil than most of the sorcerer-monarchs of her world—but no less so either. Her power and competence drew many to her service, including a half-elf woman named Thakok-An. In time, Thakok-An rose to the position of High Templar, the greatest priestess in service to the priesthood of Kalid-Ma. In such close contact with Kalid-Ma, Thakok-An’s heart changed from mere servitude to true obedience and even love. She desired Kalid-Ma to look only at her, to know that her devotion was strongest of all of Kalid-Ma’s followers.



Kalid-Ma sought to use her magic to transcend humanity itself, to become a being of pure magic and unimaginable power. Thakok-An was to be instrumental in these plans, gathering the materials and sacrifices that Kalid-Ma needed to ascend. Seeing an opportunity to prove her devotion, Thakok-An devised a method of “improving” the process, speeding it up by offering up most of the city’s population as a single sacrifice to her god. Her own family was the first on the altar, and Thakok-An cut out their hearts with a smile on her face.

Unfortunately, the influx of power was too much for the ritual to take; the ascension was a delicate process, and Thakok-An’s overeager fumbling had sent it out of balance. A wave of magical energy swept across the land, killing most of the city’s people and turning the nearby fields barren and lifeless. After the destruction passed, Thakok-An found herself alive in a mostly-empty city, only a few survivors crawling up out of the rubble and ruins. She rushed into the ziggurat’s depths—only to find Kalid-Ma lying lifeless inside a crystal coffin, seemingly dead.

Thakok-An’s grief was without equal; she likely would have taken her own life had she not discovered Kalid-Ma’s notes on the process of ascension. The crystal coffin was a regulator for the energies to be absorbed, and her apparently lifeless state was simply a magically-induced coma to give her body the time needed to process the incredible power of the ascension. She should have awakened already, but everything seemed to still be in place.

Thakok-An convinced herself that the sacrifice had worked, that Kalid-Ma simply needed more time to finish changing into her new form due to the influx of additional power. The High Templar went out into the city and began

gathering the survivors, organizing them and preparing them for the day that Kalid-Ma awakens. After all, when Thakok-An’s god awakens, she will no doubt be hungry. Part of her fears that she is fooling herself, that Kalid-Ma is dead—that she killed her god with her own foolish ambition. She pushes that voice down deep in her heart, however; without Kalid-Ma, Thakok-An has no reason to continue living.

Rokushima Taiyou

Rokushima Taiyou, meaning “the six islands of the sun,” would seem to be misnamed on two counts. The domain consists of four large islands in the midst of a poisonous, roiling ocean, surrounding an immense freshwater sea. The cloud cover, heavy mists, and dense fog rolling off the islands’ many mountains make sunny days a rarity as well. Still, the eldest natives of the islands can remember a time when the name rang true—when there were six islands instead of four, and when the sun shone brightly every day.

The remaining islands are large and verdant along the coasts facing the Great Mirror Lake that they surround. The central portions of each island are dangerous mountains, a few of which are volcanic, before reaching the outer edges of the island ring, which face toward the Poison Sea. The Great Mirror Lake is fed by clear mountain springs and frequent rain, its waters cascading down jagged slopes of coral and rock into the venomous depths of the Poison Sea. Only the westernmost inlet to the Great Mirror Lake is navigable, making it difficult for ships from beyond the Mists to safely make their way to the larger freshwater port cities. Most simply dock

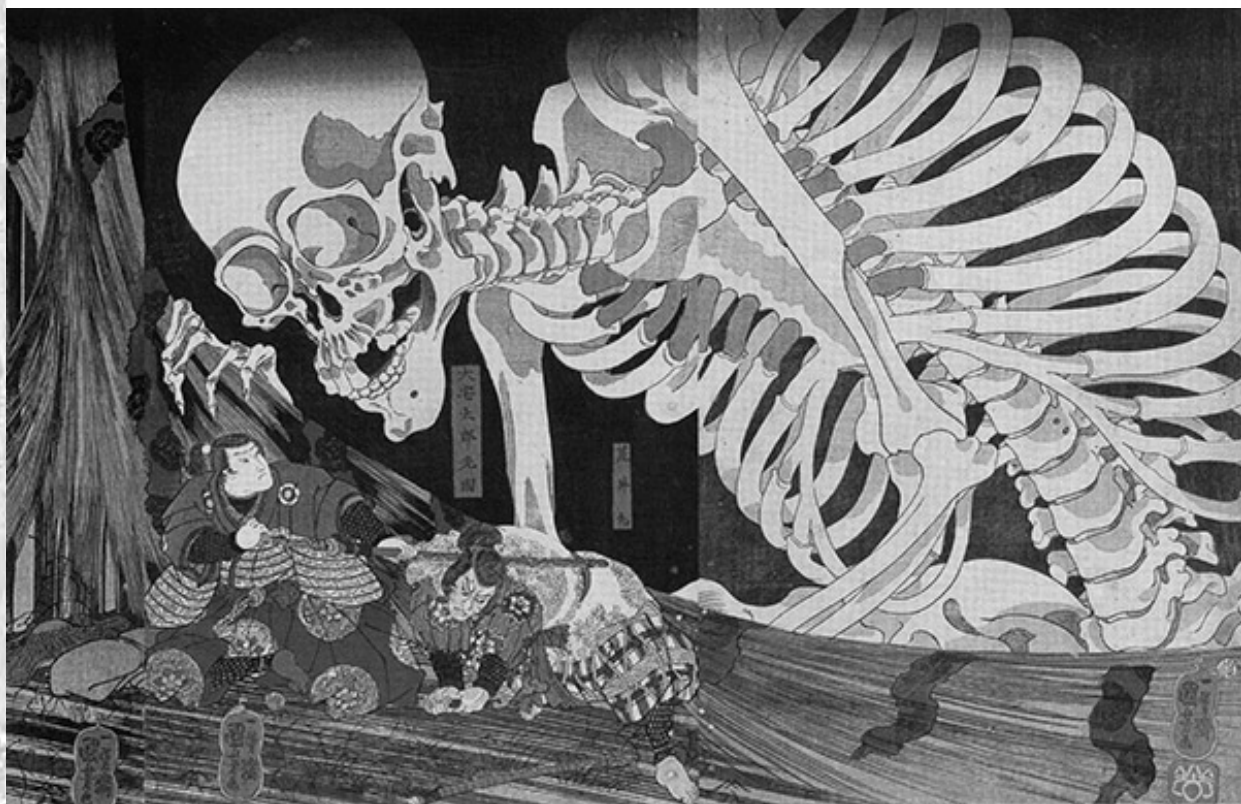
at one of the small islands lying beyond the straits, the only place where merchants from all four islands can come to do business anymore.

The Rokuma are slight in stature but blessed with trim builds and elegant grace. Their skin tone ranges from creamy white to ruddy brown, and both hair and eye color tend toward dark tones, particularly black. Men and women alike grow their hair long; women wear theirs in elaborate fashion, held together with wooden pins, while men tend to keep theirs in neat tails or knots.

Both genders wear wide-sleeved robes belted at the waist with a sash, worn over long shirts or shifts, but men also include loose trousers or wrapped leggings while women's robes nearly trail the ground. Wooden sandals or soft slippers complete the native look, with the addition of broad straw hats on the few days the sun shines or the many days it rains.

Homes in Rokushima are almost inevitably made of wood, with sliding doors made of thin paper on wooden frames. The elite of the land, the noble warriors and their lords, build mighty stone castles and palaces with multiple tiers and high walls. Serene shrines dot the islands in places of natural beauty; whether humble or magnificent, these shrines are typically marked by uniquely shaped gates known as *torii*, thought to be passages between the human and spirit worlds.

The local weather is a study in extremes. Even with the sun rarely seen, summers tend to be oppressive, hot, and muggy, with frequent storms. Autumn is a time of rampaging typhoons that can last for days on end, often damaging homes or even sweeping away entire unlucky villages with mudslides. Winters are brutally cold, burying the entire domain under snow that does not abate for weeks at a time. The one time of the year that



the Rokuma look forward to is spring, which is all too short but very pleasant, a time when the islands are covered in the pale blossoms of flowering trees.

The Rokuma are a people who place great emphasis on the importance of family and knowing one's place. Because of the Rokuma philosophy that family is more important than self, family names are given before personal names (so a man named "Akemi Ichigo" is Ichigo of the family Akemi). In theory, being a farmer or craftsman is just as worthy as being a warrior or ruler, as long as one does one's best in that position. In practice, the warrior elite of the nation do as they please while at least publicly trying to seem compassionate and generous to those lesser than themselves.

Though the rulers of the four remaining islands are siblings, no love is lost between them. They constantly skirmish with one another over outlying regions of their lands, though it has been a generation since they battled one another in earnest. The death of two of their siblings, followed by the destruction of their islands in horrific earthquakes and tsunamis, has made them more cautious about direct confrontations. Each of them considers themselves the only true ruler of all Rokushima Taiyou, with their siblings as mere pretenders.

The nation was once united under their father, a powerful and ruthless general, but they began to squabble over his empire almost before his body was cold. Though they publicly pretend to honor his memory and the ways of their ancestors, each is as cold, ruthless, and underhanded as he was, using the concept of honor to motivate their people while holding it in no regard themselves.

Tropes

Rokushima Taiyou is a direct analogue to historical Japan, particularly the Japan of the Warring States Period before the unification of the country by the Tokugawa family. It can just as easily replicate any major period of Japanese history, however, from the classical Heian Era to the unified but still violent Edo Period. Rokushima is a place to tell *samurai* stories (or *jidaigeki* in Japanese), but more importantly it is a place for traditional *kaidan*-style Japanese horror tales.

While *kaidan* can mean nearly any horror tale in its broadest usage, it more specifically refers to old-fashioned "scary stories" that call back to historical Japanese folk tales. Stories of the *kaidan* type typically include eerie happenings, ghosts, omens, and elements of vengeance. These stories also often include water as a ghostly element, due to traditional Japanese cultural links between water and the underworld.

For good reference material, check out some modern or classic Japanese horror films or manga, such as *Ringu*, *Ju-On*, or the many works of Junji Ito. Much of the visual aesthetic of the region can be encapsulated by *anime* and *manga* works such as *Moribito*, *Dororo*, and *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

Themes

- **The Code of the Warrior:** Life in Rokushima is structured around rule by a warrior-noble caste known as *samurai*. Their complicated system of honor, glory, and obedience is known as *bushido*, the "warrior's way." Whether a warrior actually believes in it or not, their public actions are judged based on his adherence to its precepts. The strict demands of the code often come into conflict with the

desires of the heart or the realities of life, which in turns generates situations of drama, tragedy, sorrow, and horror. It also leads to many warriors confronting the basic hypocrisy of their code when obedience conflicts with compassion, both important virtues to the *samurai*.

- **The Cycle of Karma:** The concept of karma can be simplified to the idea that doing evil deeds inevitably comes back on their perpetrator. An evil person may escape punishment for a long time—even his whole life, perhaps—but the darkness in a human soul inevitably finds an outlet to bring retribution on that person. Someone who avoids mortal justice may find themselves trapped as a ghost, damned for all eternity to never know release from pain. Even those who struggle to avoid the punishment of destiny often find themselves building the circumstances for their own destruction without realizing it. Things run in cycles, and every beginning holds the seed of its own end. This also speaks to the idea of impermanence; the Rokuma believe that nothing lasts forever, and all old things must pass in time to make way for the new.
- **The Spirit World:** The people of Rokushima believe in a vast pantheon of spirits, gods, and demons, all of whom are thought to be observing mortals out of interest, curiosity, or mere boredom. Appeasing these spirits and avoiding their ire forms a good portion of the average person's daily life. Ignoring the demands of the spirits can lead to being cursed, or even being stolen away by a particularly angered being. In Rokushima, the spirits are real—and

humans ignore the spirits at their peril.

The Darklord

Shinpi Haki was a ruthless man who exploited his enemies' weaknesses without a shred of honor, even as he publicly paid service to the warrior's code. In his lifetime, he took six warring islands and united them into a single mighty nation, beholden only to the strength of arms that he could muster.

Even after he became lord of Rokushima Taiyou, he spent his twilight years putting down peasant rebellions, destroying religions that he considered dangerous to the traditional Rokuma way of life, and purging people of non-Rokuma descent to rid the nation of "foreigners." As he grew older, he pitted his six children against one another to vie for his favor, believing that only conflict could make them strong enough to rule in his stead.

Lord Shinpi succeeded all too well at molding his children into his own image. All of them grew into ruthless, honorless conquerors who turned on one another as soon as he died. Shinpi Haki did not pass on peacefully in death, however. His many evil deeds trapped him in the mortal world as a ghost, a powerless spirit destined to watch and observe as his heirs tore his nation to pieces over pride and vainglory. Lord Shinpi's rage grew as he watched his children squander everything he had spent a lifetime building.

In the end, his grudge grew too powerful for the spirit world to contain entirely. His evil began to draw demons, ghosts, and malicious spirits to him, feeding his darkness in a growing spiral of hate. Shinpi decided that all of his children were equally worthless, and that the only person with the right to rule over Rokushima was himself. Armed with

hatred beyond human reckoning, he haunted his children's dreams, pushing them to use ever more dishonorable methods in their battles. When hired assassins gave two of his children cowards' deaths, his blood connection to them allowed him to devour their souls and drag their islands down into the bleak spirit world he inhabits.

Shinpi Haki now rules over two islands—a third of his former empire. While everyone believes these islands to have been destroyed, the truth is that they and their people have merely been spirited away, doomed to live under Lord Shinpi's tyrannical hand. Demons, ghosts, and monsters of all sorts fill the roles that noble *samurai* once filled, treating humans as little more than cattle and slaves. Lord Shinpi cares nothing for their suffering; he only wishes to rule, even if he rules over nothing more than a blasted, grey wasteland filled with corpses, monsters, and wailing widows.

Lord Shinpi's remaining four children have turned cautious after the seeming destruction of their siblings' lands. For now, he bides his time, filling their minds with dreams of conquest and glory in the hopes of pushing them into desperate acts. He knows that if they should die of peaceful means—such as passing away from old age—they will go just as peacefully into death and escape his clutches, so he tries every means available to him to ensure their violent, untimely ends.

He has dispatched assassins against them, inspired their enemies to rise up, and even thinned the borders between the mortal and spirit worlds to allow monsters to rampage their lands. Despite his best efforts they remain alive, due to equal parts paranoia and martial strength. Every year makes Lord Shinpi a bit more desperate, a bit more likely to overreach and tip his hand. When that happens, no

one knows exactly how his children will respond. After all, how does one make war upon the afterlife?

The Shadow Rift

They say that faeries come from a realm far below human lands, a deep and lightless world separate from the mortal realm. Time flows differently in this twilight land—whether faster or slower, the legends do not agree. Elves, dwarves, and gnomes are rumored to be refugees from this place, though they won't speak of it to humans. The stories speak of razor-bladed grass, flowers that giggle, trees that speak, and animals that walk like men. No one is sure which tales are true and which are mere fancy, but all agree on one thing: the Shadow Rift is no place for mortals.

The Shadow Rift can be entered from nearly any domain due to its strange, chaotic nature. It is a realm of paradoxes and contradictions, a half-real world of its own where dream logic and narrative matter more than physical laws. If one delves deeply enough in places sacred to the fey, or if one falls into a chasm where the bottom cannot be seen, or if one sleeps in a ring of mushrooms deep in the forest, or... Any of these and more can give passage to the Shadow Rift.

Those that survive their descent into the lightless depths find themselves emerging into a vast cavern so large that it has its own geography. A strange and magical half-light fills the depths; it is not "light" as humans know it, but it allows those with human ranges of vision to see as though the world were cloaked in heavy shadow. Creatures that can see in dim light or pure darkness find a wondrous vista opening up before them, while those that create light to see with

soon find themselves targets of the darkness-loving locals.

The domain is roughly divided into northern and southern halves, like a broad-waisted hourglass. The northern Rift includes many plateaus and terraces, high enough that even flying creatures have trouble ascending them due to the heavy winds that surround their peaks. Most of the northern region is covered with an expanse of rolling hills covered in swaying grasslands and temperate forests. This land includes many villages and cities, full of faerie folk who at least seem friendly to outsiders, even if their customs can lead to bizarre and unpleasant misunderstandings.

The southern Rift is far less pleasant and hospitable, a place of rocky badlands, acrid swamps, dangerous beasts, and hostile faeries. Most of the region is comprised of broken stone flats, dangerous chasms, and sheer drops into fetid chasms full of stagnant water and carnivorous fungi. Where the land is broken by rivers, it turns into acidic and murky swampland, polluting the water with muck and decay. An unholy host haunts these lands—not just the Unseelie fey, but the legacy of their many years of necromancy.

Many races of faerie folk call the Shadow Rift home. Though their appearances vary wildly, they consider themselves to be of a single race. Most are vulnerable to sunlight to varying degrees, and the highest ranks of their race—the so-called “true Arak”—can be killed by exposure to the sun.

The various races organize themselves into two broad courts, the Seelie and the Unseelie; their differences can be summed as whether their members consider themselves to be superior to all other beings and thus deserving to rule and dominate them (the Unseelie) or superior to all other races and therefore

morally obligated to leave them to their own devices (the Seelie). While the Unseelie can be said to be “evil” in human terms, the Seelie are not necessarily “good” so much as they are uninterested.

Tropes

Interest in faeries and magic goes back centuries in virtually every real-world culture, from the “wee folk” of the British Isles to the *yokai* of Japan. People were claiming to take photographs of “real” faeries as recently as World War I, and many modern people think that alien abductions and UFO sightings are just a modern interpretation of faerie lore. The Shadow Rift exists to create a home and purpose for the many faerie folk of *Ravenloft*, should the story have need or want of such a unifying origin.

Beyond that, the Shadow Rift acts as an exception to the general rule of magic being secretive and subtle in the Land of Mists. It is a place where virtually anything can happen, and where a sense of wonder and excitement goes hand in hand with abject horror and immortal beings who care nothing for humanity. Arthur Machen’s “The White People” and *The Great God Pan* both touch on these topics, as does T. Kingfisher’s *The Twisted Ones*, though readers may be more familiar with *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Wizard of Oz*, all of which contain dark and disturbing themes, especially considering their primary audience is children.

Themes

- **Everyday Magic:** The Shadow Rift is a realm of strange magic and fantastic creatures. Sorcery and wonderment are open and common in this domain. Enchantment is second

nature to the immortal fey, and they build their society around uses of sorcery the same way humans build their society around constructing houses and using tools. Doors lack knobs because their masters can open them with a word. Statues come to life to defend the castles they stand in. Invisible servants made of music clean houses while the house's owner sings in the language of birds. Virtually everything in the Shadow Rift has a magical undertone—it is the mundane that is unusual and exotic here.

- **Mad World:** Magic is a force of chaos at the best of times, and nowhere is that more evident than in the Shadow Rift. The chaos of the domain is not a bedlam or active anarchy, but rather a subtle undermining of the line between reality and illusion, between dream and waking. Things move on their own in the Shadow Rift—

inanimate objects and terrain features alike. Animals and plants take on human characteristics, such as thought and speech. Logic and reason have no meaning here; it is all too easy for a weak-willed person to go mad, or simply to think that they might.

- **Narrative Logic:** The one kind of logic that makes sense in the Shadow Rift is that of the narrative or story. Things happen in certain orders because everyone knows that's how stories work. The hero must gain companions, meet enemies on the road, find a mentor, descend into darkness, and so on. Everyone in the Shadow Rift believes themselves to be part of an ongoing story, and so they act like characters rather than people. Nobles make grand speeches, common faeries talk in riddles, and even mortals can get caught up in thinking of life as a grand tale rather



than something they're living. The tales of the Shadow Rift are often grim ones, however, and can quite frequently end with "and then they all died."

The Darklord

Deep in the stony southern badlands of the Shadow Rift stands a pillar of granite. Atop that pillar is an eye-twisting structure made of basalt and obsidian, and floating among its obscene columns is a sphere of utter darkness. Impenetrable even to the lightless eyes of the shadow fey, this sphere whispers in a ceaseless litany and its surface roils with barely-checked power. Within this sphere, known to the shadow fey as the Obsidian Gate, lies a portal to another plane, a realm of chaos and unimaginable laws of nature.

When the shadow fey fled to their new home countless ages ago, their master—a horrific thing they called Gwydion, the sorcerer-fiend—followed them. The sacrifice of their king sealed Gwydion on the other side of the Gate, trapped between the worlds forever. Gwydion remains there still, dreaming of freedom and whispering to those that can hear him about the power he will bestow on any who aid his escape.

Gwydion is the darklord of the Shadow Rift, but he is imprisoned within the Obsidian Gate and can only vaguely influence the world around him. His presence is the reason that the southern

half of the domain is so lifeless, and why those that dwell there tend toward malice and madness. His voice reaches into the dreams of the shadow fey and inspires them toward cruelty and ambition.

The lord of the Unseelie Court—Loht, the Prince of Shadows—hears the voice of Gwydion in his dreams, but he believes it to be the voice of his father. Loht is convinced that his father is not dead, but rather is trapped between worlds as a spirit; since the fey are naturally immortal beings of solidified spirit, Loht believes he can free his father and restore him to life by opening the Obsidian Gate. His sister, Maeve, stands as queen of the Seelie Court, and she believes her brother's obsession will lead them into disaster. She opposes him subtly, not wishing to gain his ire or lose his love, but she privately fears that her brother has gone truly mad.

Gwydion seethes in his prison, smaller than most for a darklord. Were he to gain his freedom, the devastation would be unimaginable; nothing like him has ever existed in the Land of Mists before, and his total isolation indicates that even the Dark Powers (whatever they are) might fear him. While he remains entrapped, he can only inspire dreams and visions in the minds of those receptive to his evil. He has no direct power over the domain at all, save a general knowledge of major events that transpire within it.





Chapter 7:

Cabals and Societies

Dread Realms, Dread Secrets

Ravenloft is a world of many mysteries. From the grand secrets of the Dark Powers to the smallest crumbs of hidden knowledge sought by scholars and mystics, the unknown fills people with wonder and terror. Many groups exist to seek out those mysteries, while others are themselves mysteries to be uncovered.

This chapter looks at some of the groups, factions, cabals, secret societies, and conspiracies of the Land of Mists. Some of these are part a single domain's culture, while others are known across an entire cluster—or more. *Ravenloft Reincarnated* makes no assumptions about which, if any, of these groups are real, and which are simply rumor. In a given GM's campaign, the answer to which groups are active could be any, all, or none.

Just remember: three can keep a secret if two of them are dead.

Dread Possibilities

Each entry in this chapter includes a section about several different possible truths involving the faction in question. Some might be “dark secrets” that even the faction members themselves don't know, or possible futures if the faction continues on its current path. A few are alternate versions of the group that might come into play in a given campaign, and

some offer different takes on the group as written.

As with the existence of any given group, these “dread possibilities” may or may not be true in a given game, and they exist primarily to get a GM thinking about adventures and campaign directions.

The Ba'al Verzi

In the days before Strahd von Zarovich dragged Barovia into the hellish realm it now inhabits, the Ba'al Verzi were a cabal of assassins notorious for their remorseless and devious ways. They thrived in the treacherous atmosphere of the time, carrying out many slayings among nobles and commoners alike in the delicate but brutal games of power played by the Barovian elite.

The membership of the Ba'al Verzi was secretive and pervasive. Many aristocrats feared that their courtiers, servants, or even kin could be assassins, just waiting for the word to kill them. The Ba'al Verzi were synonymous with terror.

When Strahd made his pact with darkness and slaughtered every living person in Castle Ravenloft, a great many of the Ba'al Verzi—including the majority of their leadership—were caught up in the bloodshed. Even skilled assassins were no match for a powerful vampire, and they died to a man. The few survivors were low-ranking killers who hid in the countryside for years after the event,

fearful that it might be the start of a purge against their group rather than just a senseless slaughter.

The remaining Ba'al Verzi passed on their skills and knowledge from one apprentice to the next for several centuries, gradually rebuilding their numbers and power. They dare not operate too openly in the present time, since they know that the lord of Barovia has no more patience for challenges to his rule. The Ba'al Verzi might be the only people in Barovia who know what Count Strahd really is—knowledge they dare not share outside their order, lest the count decide that loose lips must be sealed forever.

Though they retain the amoral, avaricious character of their forebears, the modern Ba'al Verzi are defined by their abject terror of the monster that nearly destroyed them once before. They will not take any mission that puts them into direct confrontation with Strahd von Zarovich, nor will they accept a job he offers.

Dread Possibilities

Nosferatu: The Ba'al Verzi might have been simply skilled assassins at one point, but their inner membership has become rife with the supernatural in the centuries since the slaughter at Castle Ravenloft. The order has been subverted for some time to the will of Nicu Moldonesti, a nobleman they were contracted to kill who turned out to be a vampire. Amused by their tenacity, Nicu turned the cabal into his own tool and seized leadership for himself. Now the Ba'al Verzi are slaves to the same kind of monster they feared.

Servants of the Count: The Ba'al Verzi avoid taking contracts from or against the ruler of Barovia. On the other hand, they'll happily serve other members of

the Barovian aristocracy. One of their favored clients is Vasili von Holtz, a minor nobleman whose list of enemies is extensive and whose pockets are quite deep. The assassins have taken many contracts from the von Holtz family over the years—all of which have actually come from the same person, none other than Strahd von Zarovich himself. The count finds the Ba'al Verzi useful on occasion, especially their terror of him personally; to avoid spooking them, he uses one of his common aliases whenever he needs them to kill an enemy of the state. Quite a few of the cabal's other clients are puppets of the count as well.

The Church of Ezra

Founded a little more than a century ago in the nation of Borca, the Church of Ezra has become extremely popular among both the commoners and the nobility in that short amount of time. The Church's message of salvation from evil and a happier world beyond the Mists in the arms of a loving goddess is appealing to the downtrodden, and its hierarchy that supports the temporal rule of mortal leaders gives it credibility to the government. In many ways, the Church of Ezra is the state religion of Borca, and it is nearly as popular in several other nations.

The Church's founding is intimately tied to the first ruler of modern Borca, Camille Dilisnya. Her older brother Yakov had a severe riding accident as a young man, leaving him delirious for five days and nights. When he awoke, he possessed miraculous powers and spoke of communing with a forgotten goddess called Ezra. He spent the rest of his life building a religion in her honor—a life that was cut short by his own sister when

she feared the power that he was accumulating.

The riots that followed Yakov's death were ended only when Camille made public shows of favor to the Church and officially converted to the faith herself. Rumors speak of backroom deals between Camille and the remaining Church elders—deals which ultimately caused the first schism of the faith, as some priests decided that involving themselves so closely with politics was a distraction from the mysteries of Ezra.



Since that schism, the official Church policy has been to tolerate other “sects” of the faith, though only the original sect is considered the “one true faith.” There are currently four major sects recognized by the Church of Ezra, and the process of being recognized as a “true revelation” of Ezra's doctrine requires a series of difficult tests of faith, doctrine, willpower, and—some cynics claim—political savvy.

Sometimes called the Home Faith by adherents, the Church of Ezra in Borca is supervised by the Praesidius, the highest cleric of the religion. Leaders of other sects are known as bastions, while leaders of major temples are called sentires. Common priests are known as anchorites.

Dread Possibilities

The Fifth Sect: The Books of Ezra speak of a terrible darkness which the goddess holds back from the world. A common theme in the Ezran faith is the idea that worshipers are soldiers against darkness. The number five is also common in the Books, to the point that many Ezrans hold it in superstitious dread. A few members of the Church, laymen and clergy alike, believe that the revelation of a fifth true sect of the faith will result in some terrible disaster, up to and including the end of the world.

The Blood of Ezra: The doctrine of the Church of Ezra says that the goddess herself was once a mortal woman who ascended to divinity due to her devotion, goodness, and willpower. Some heretical sects take the mortal origins of the goddess a step further and hold that Ezra bore children before her ascension, and that her mortal lineage still exists to the modern day. A particular small cult scours the Land of Mists for signs of the goddess and her history, hoping to find her divine descendants. What happens

then is anyone's guess, but a few believe that being in proximity to a descendant of Ezra will give them a direct connection to the goddess herself.

The Dawnguard

Most secret societies are hiding for a good reason, if for bad ends. Thieves' guilds, cabals of necromancers, and decadent social clubs all have reason to fear their activities being exposed. The Dawnguard is something different—a secret society for the forces of good.

In public, the Dawnguard is a simple mercenary organization that hires out elite soldiers to protect caravans and villages, and to serve other non-political functions. Privately, the Dawnguard has many more members, all of whom work to protect innocents from evil wherever it raises its head.

The Dawnguard keeps its activities secret for one basic reason: they know the truth, at least some part of it. The founders of the Dawnguard were scholars, adventurers, and savants who started putting pieces together in their individual careers, then compared notes to find a horrible picture emerging. They came to believe that each nation is a prison cell for a singular damned soul, and that some force is responsible for putting them there. Knowing that any leader or major figure of note could be a monster in disguise convinced them to keep their existence as much of a secret as possible.

The modern Dawnguard focuses its daily activities on protecting the common people of the Land of Mists. They use the profits from their public front to fund expeditions against evil, occasionally working with other goodly organizations but being careful to avoid having their

true purpose connected to their public image. The inner circle of the group collects information from their forays, trying to piece it all together into a “grand unifying theory” about the evils of the world.

Dread Possibilities

The Puppetmaster: The Dawnguard are fire-forged heroes, people who spend every day of their lives risking everything to protect the innocent—and who do it without promise of reward or fame. They make perfect patsies for the organization's true master. Who is this shadowy figure manipulating them? Some say the Dawnguard are merely puppets of Azalin Rex, the wizard-king of Darkon, who is noted for being obsessed with cosmological and metaphysical questions. Others say that the Dawnguard are dupes of the Fraternity of Shadows, who also know much of the true shape of things. In truth, the Dawnguard's secretive purpose and cell-like structure make it far too easy to manipulate their members—assuming one can find out about them in the first place.

Four Horsemen: The Dawnguard's inner circle has come to a conclusion based on their exhaustive study of the nature of reality: the world must be destroyed. The Land of Mists is nothing but a prison for evil, but countless innocents are trapped inside with the inmates. Believing that it is better to let a guilty man go free than to punish an innocent man alongside him, the Dawnguard are actively looking for ways to unbind the darklords from their domains (and kill them if possible), with the ultimate goal of unraveling the world itself. They have come to believe that a better world exists beyond the Misty Border, but the only way to achieve it is to end the current one.

The Ermordenung

Borca is a land of poisonous beauty, and nothing embodies this paradox as thoroughly as the Ermordenung. Publicly known as the courtiers, friends, and hangers-on of the nation's ruler, Ivana Boritsi, the Ermordenung are noted for their grace, their beauty, and their coldness. Many of the Ermordenung are known to have shared in the same alchemical concoction that allows Ivana to keep her youth and beauty, so there is a great deal of maneuvering and infighting among the lesser courts to enter Ivana's good graces.

Were the truth about the Ermordenung known, people might be less anxious to join their number. While they do possess Ivana's perpetual youth thanks to her alchemical intervention, the side effects are less than pleasant. The potion is a deadly toxin that only some people survive imbibing; those that do survive have their entire body permeated with poison, making every drop of their blood and sweat into a deadly venom. In addition to being Ivana's inner circle of companions, the Ermordenung also serve as her assassins, using their bodies as deadly weapons against her enemies. The Ermordenung specialize in seducing others and then killing them in intimate moments with untraceable poisons from their own bodies.

While their position grants them many benefits—including near-immortality and eternal youth—theirs is a lonely existence. Ivana is the sole arbiter of favor in their circle, making their long lives an exercise in keeping the moody, cruel woman happy. She delights in destroying relationships of any sort that emerge among the Ermordenung that do not revolve around her, leaving her clique full of bitter, jaded folk who grow to despise

one another for years of slights and feuds. Relationships outside their circle are impossible, since a single touch could prove fatal for an ordinary person.

Dread Possibilities

Best Friends Forever: The first of the Ermordenung was Nostalia Romaine, a friend of Ivana Boritsi's since childhood. Nostalia helped Ivana murder Camille, Ivana's mother, and has been her strong right hand ever since. Their friendship has endured for decades—and it stands as a perpetual roadblock to Ivana's favor for the other Ermordenung. More than one of the group has tried to "remove" Nostalia quietly over the years, but since their favored tactic—poisoning—doesn't work on other Ermordenung, such attempts are almost always either abject failures or expose the conspirators, and often both. That doesn't stop people from trying every few years, sometimes with outside help.

Addicted to Love: Ivana's favor is what brings someone into the Ermordenung—and losing it can end a member's life. While a single potion transforms an individual into one of the Ermordenung, they require regular infusions to keep their youth and beauty. Only those willing to undertake the dreadful acts needed to create the vital venom stay in the Ermordenung, since a single dose of the concoction requires the heart's blood of three people. The potion must be taken at least three times a year to arrest aging, and if the imbiber ever stops taking it, they age with unnatural speed until they catch up to their true age. Ivana is unwilling to keep old or ugly people in her clique, so most of the Ermordenung quickly become heartless serial killers to keep their position intact.

Fraternity of Shadows

There are those who believe that the world is merely an illusion, a figment of shadows and fog. This belief is especially common among wizards, who can twist the fabric of existence into new shapes through willpower and training. Many have wondered over the years what truth lies behind the illusion—and what benefit it might gain them to know that truth.

The Fraternity of Shadows is an organization of spellcasters who actively seek the truth behind the illusion that is the world. They have gleaned some basic understanding of the shape of things, such as the nature of darklords and domains, and they have inferred the existence of “higher powers” who direct affairs to their own purposes.

The Fraternity are no mere scholars, however; they actively pursue knowledge and secrets wherever they lie, hoping to increase their personal power over reality itself through the acquisition of secrets. Through ultimate understanding, the Fraternity hopes to gain ultimate power—and there is very little they would not do to get what they desire.

The Fraternity is a loose-knit coalition whose members carry out their own forms of research and inquiry, sharing information at twice-yearly gatherings that move between places of learning and scholarship. They hide their meetings under the guise of conferences and gatherings of colleagues, identifying one another by their serpent-and-onyx membership rings. The few people who have heard of the Fraternity of Shadows at all generally dismiss it as yet another private social club for elite intellectuals.

Most of the Fraternity’s membership is made up of male wizards, though they have begun moving away from their historical chauvinism in recent years to be

more inclusive. Only wizards with a strong interest in illusion-based magic can reach the highest ranks of the society, the five-member board of directors called the Umbra. Between their many researchers and vast libraries, the Fraternity might well know more of the secrets of the Land of Mists than any other organization in the world.

Dread Possibilities

The Traitor: Erik van Rijn was a member of the Fraternity of Shadows for many years. Frustrated by his inability to gain ascension to the Umbra due to his scholarly focus on transformative magic rather than illusion, van Rijn ultimately betrayed his colleagues and stole a great many of their secrets before fleeing. The Fraternity now scours the world for any sign of their erstwhile brother, despite rumors that van Rijn has used the forbidden knowledge he received for his betrayals to become something more—and less—than human.

The Shadow War: The activities of the Fraternity bring them into frequent conflict with other secret societies. They have stolen relics from the Order of the Guardians, snatched away prizes from the Red Wagon Traders, saved targets of the Inquisition (for later dissection), and generally been quite the nuisance to virtually everyone else in the Land of Mists who operates in secrecy. While the Fraternity has mostly managed to avoid their actions coming back to haunt them, their internal struggles for power sometimes expose them to outsiders. It’s only be a matter of time before one—or several—of their various enemies put two and two together to suss out the identities of the Fraternity’s members.

The Inquisition

The creatures of the night strike with impunity, killing good people and leaving the rest in terror. Such monsters place themselves above humanity, doing as they will with no fear of consequences. It will not stand.

The Inquisition is an organization of dedicated warriors, holy people, and common folk who have simply had enough of fear. They organized together to root out evil where it dwells, taking the fight to the darkness where the monsters dwell rather than simply waiting to defend themselves when it comes. The Inquisition learns the face of evil, hunting it with sword and flame and shouted prayer.

If the Inquisition has a flaw, it is the zeal with which they pursue their holy crusade. Inquisitors have no sense of nuance or shade—the world is black and white to them, good and evil. In their view, if someone sides against them, their opposition must be evil rather than simply misguided. Their methods are harsh, sometimes brutal, and not even the least bit subtle. The Inquisition has put more than one innocent person to the fire for the appearance of iniquity—and if they feel any guilt for it, they dare not let it show for fear that their superiors would do the same to them.

Dread Possibilities

A Realm Cleansed: Rumors persist that the home domain of the Inquisition is a place of safety from evil—that they have purged it of every dark thing that walks, crawls, or flies at night. Every inhuman monster has been eliminated—as well as every elf, dwarf, gnome, sorcerer, heathen priest, hedge witch, or common peasant who does not accept the Inquisition as their moral compass. The

idea of a truly cleansed domain appeals to some, but most people who pursue the rumor of an Inquisition homeland do so in the hopes of finding the organization and ending it at the source.

Born of Shadows: The Inquisition's teachings are based on the writings of an ancient holy knight, Kateri Shadowborn. She wrote of many secret methods of rooting out and destroying evil. She would barely recognize the Inquisition as being derived from her teachings, though. Indeed, there is a corruption at the heart of the Inquisition—a dreadful entity known as Ebonbane. This cursed blade holds a demonic intellect, one that manipulates the leaders of the Inquisition toward freeing it, one lost soul at a time. Every drop of blood spilled by the Inquisition's dark tortures brings Ebonbane a step closer to freedom.

The Kargat

The wizard-king of Darkon, Azalin Rex, keeps order in his land through many means, both gross and subtle. The Kargat form the two extreme ends of those tactics—the iron hand in a velvet glove. The common folk of Darkon know that the Kargat exist, though not who its members are; this is to be expected for an organization of secret police. The Kargat's members maintain civilian identities, inform on dissident members of their community, quietly arrest or “remove” anti-government elements, and sometimes join forces to quickly and brutally destroy Azalin's enemies.

While the lower ranks of the Kargat are skilled mortal soldiers, spies, and bureaucrats, their upper echelons are entirely monstrous in nature. Promotion in the Kargat involves transformation into

a monster of some sort, such as infection with lycanthropy, being sired by a vampire, or a painful living mummification to become one of the undead. Few people are admitted into the higher ranks, since most of the existing leaders are at least semi-immortal, but many of them are subjected to various mystical processes that result in unique monstrosities.

The Kargat are kept in line through fear and devotion. Most of them owe their immortality to Azalin, and they were generally loyal subjects of the crown in their mortal lives. Long years as creatures of the night wear on sanity and loyalty alike, though; not a small number of the elder Kargat are corrupt, disloyal, or simply apathetic to any part of their duty that does not involve slaughter.

Dread Possibilities

The Kargatane: It is well known that the Kargat use “civilian informants” to maintain their network of information across the land of Darkon. Most of these informants are unaware of the true nature of the Kargat’s upper ranks—but a few know the truth, and want to be part of it. A particular vampire has begun using her informants as a source of food as well as information, using her mind-controlling powers to make her “herd” loyal to her rather than to the nation. She keeps them in line with her psychic charms, her beauty, and the promise of eventual immortality. In the meantime, her “lesser Kargat” act as a vital network of information and a means of keeping herself independent of her superiors should the need arise.

The Faith of the Overseer: From the Temple of Eternal Balance, the Faith of the Overseer preaches its message of simple living, the importance of community, and divine justice in an

unfair world. The religion’s appeal stretches across the social spectrum in Darkon, though its clergy wields no official power and the religion relies on donations to maintain its many charities. Its priests never study magic, instead focusing on practical solutions to daily life and taking care of others. The religion’s popularity and appeal doesn’t change the fact that it is a sham created by the Kargat as an experiment in social control. The secret police invented the religion out of whole cloth a century ago to toy with the idea of using faith to keep people in line, and then as a flytrap for potential revolutionaries and do-gooders. While the religion has passed into mortal control and none of its modern members know the truth of its origins, the Kargat still keeps a close eye on the Faith.

Keepers of the Black Feather

Ravens are a symbol throughout the Land of Mists. They can represent death, fate, and the inevitability of time, but they also represent hope and freedom. A raven can take to the sky, above it all, and soar free of the bonds of earth. This dual nature—hope and tragedy alike—is at the heart of the land of Barovia, as evinced by the traditional seat of national power: Castle Ravenloft.

The holding of that seat by the corrupt Strahd von Zarovich is an insult to the noble history of Barovia according to the Keepers of the Black Feather, a secret society that holds ravens sacred and works against the dread Count Strahd. Many members of the Keepers are themselves ravenkin, a form of intelligent avians who are larger than true ravens and possess inherent mystical abilities.

Others are wereravens, people who hold the blood of ravens and can transform between man and bird at will. The largest portion of the group are simply humans, men and women who believe that the rule of Strahd von Zarovich—and by extension, all things of evil—must pass away for hope to truly take flight once more.

The Keepers are patient. They have worked in secret for generations to arrange Strahd's destruction, for they know that they will have only one chance. In the meantime, their agents move throughout the Land of Mists, gathering weapons and relics—and looking for heroes to aid their cause. The time draws near when the Keepers will make their play. For better or worse, the hands of fate move them toward their destiny.



Dread Possibilities

Knights of the Raven: The Keepers of the Black Feather hold fast to an ancient and nearly forgotten faith, worshipping Andral, a god of the sun and hope. Every generation, a small number of Keepers manifest Andral's favor as holy warriors capable of channeling powers of light and healing. These Knights of the Raven are the secret weapons of the Keepers, sent to distant domains to train and fight evil until the time they can be recalled to bring justice to the dread lord of Barovia.

The Symbol of Ravenkind: The most potent holy object of the Church of Andral is the Symbol of Ravenkind, a platinum medallion shaped like the sun with an amber crystal at its center. The Keepers have long sought the Symbol, looting through various ruined temples across the Balinok Mountains to find it. Recent information indicates that the Symbol might have been under their noses all along—in Castle Ravenloft itself! The paradox of stealing a weapon from the lair of the creature they need it to kill is not lost on the Keepers. They are currently seeking potential third parties willing to sneak into the castle and find the Symbol, and who cannot be traced back to the Keepers if things go wrong.

The Moroi

Beneath some of the greatest cities in the Land of Mists lie another world—a mirror image of the society above. Within these hidden subterranean cities live the moroi, a race of blood-drinking predators who regard themselves as wolves to the sheep that are humankind. Unlike vampires, the moroi are a race of living, breathing people—albeit a race of sociopaths and cannibals.

The moroi look very human, except for their retractable fangs and eyes that tend to glow in dim light. They are somewhat sensitive to bright light, so their artisans have come up with smoked glass lenses that protect their eyes while they travel on the surface. They tend to have a lean, hungry look about them—the look of a hunter—and are very attractive by human standards.

The moroi live underground not out of fear but to avoid the sun, which causes their sensitive eyes and skin discomfort. They do not fear humans, except in large numbers. They realize that too much attention could be bad for them as a whole, so they generally limit their feeding to vagabonds and people who won't be missed, dragging them down into their underground lairs and keeping them in pens to feed off of them for months or even years. Some moros "lone wolves" care nothing for their society, instead preferring to kill with impunity and watch their own backs. Most prefer to be part of a "pack," however.

Dread Possibilities

The Elders: Unlike vampires, moroi are not immortal. They can live longer than humans by a good amount, but they eventually die of old age—usually. Some moroi mutate as they age for reasons no one understands, turning into semi-immortal freaks that feed on flesh and bones as well as blood. These "elder moroi" lose their sanity and civility as they age, forcing their kin to drive them out into the dark places beyond the moroi city-caverns. These elders (sometimes called "morlocks") can be a continuing problem for the moroi, who fear and loathe them but are culturally disinclined to harm them personally. Some moroi could even be desperate enough to bring in humans to help,

reasoning that any information they learn about the moroi won't matter, since their employer certainly intends to kill them afterwards anyway.

From Below: The moroi have lived beneath human cities for time immemorial, preying on the sheep above. At least a few young firebrands grow tired of living in ramshackle huts and dank caverns while humankind grows wealthy and comfortable above. They believe that by suborning high-ranking members of the government with their mind-controlling venom and earning the loyalty of a few quislings, they can take direct control of human society. In their grand vision, humanity would become a vast herd of food animals, living for no reason other than to serve and feed the moroi. Many older moroi think this is just foolish youth speaking, but a few have already begun the first steps toward building their new world order.

Order of the Guardians

Magic is a dangerous force, and objects forged from dark magic are no less dangerous. The fact that an object can become magical through its maker's obsession or madness is a disturbing truth known to scholars of the arcane. The occasional appearance of dangerous objects infused with power and curses is a serious problem throughout the Land of Mists.

The Order of the Guardians exists to find such objects, contain them before they can do too much harm, and then transport them to distant places to find means of destroying them. Some objects resist destruction, so the Order also works tirelessly to house cursed items, keeping them from those who would use

them for evil or from foolish innocents who would be harmed by them.

Because of their long pursuit of mystic items, few people in the Land of Mists are more knowledgeable about the crafting of magic objects—and the destruction of same—than the monastic scholars of the Order of the Guardians. Many of them are capable crafters of small magics themselves, though their vows utterly forbid them from making anything permanent.

Dread Possibilities

Black Vault: The Guardians scatter their dangerous treasures across the world whenever possible, but some objects are so malevolent that they require near-constant observation from highly-skilled scholars. Others have such complicated enchantments that, even if they can't be destroyed, they are too important to the Guardians' research to leave in a hole in the ground a thousand miles from civilization. Such things go to a central location sometimes known as the Black Vault. The Vault, if it exists, is home to a vast array of lethal enchantments, dangerous objects, and horrific curses. The Guardians there must be rotated out regularly to keep them from going mad or being killed, but it still happens sometimes. A mad Guardian fleeing the Vault with a dangerous relic can turn into a serious issue for the Order.

The Clock Maker's Dilemma: Magic is a force of chaos, without a doubt—but it is usually a force that must be channeled by a will, human or otherwise. Some Guardians believe that the creation of evil relics is not a natural phenomenon at all, but the intention of some unseen mover. This "prime evil" would be nearly omniscient, a godlike presence that actively makes the world worse with every

act of obsession, terror, or rage. Can its existence be inferred from studying its works? Could it be understood? Could it be *killed*? That is what the Guardians truly wish to discover.

The Quevari

Scattered throughout the Land of Mists are small, isolated villages of people from an ethnic group known as the Quevari. Friendly, generous, and pleasant, the major quirks of the Quevari are their staunch insistence of keeping to their own villages and the fact that they don't allow outsiders among their company during the three nights of the new moon. Most of their neighbors are content with the explanation are the Quevari just have an unusual religion; those that suspect something unnatural are unwilling to pursue their investigations for fear of making their friendly neighbors into something dangerous.

The Quevari are a ruddy-skinned people who bear some resemblance to the wandering folk, though the two groups do not admit to having any relationship. The Quevari dress in bright, contrasting colors; women tend to wear ankle-length skirts and heavy, colorful shawls, while the men wear trousers, suspenders, and white or grey shirts, limiting their use of bright colors to their coats, which are glorious patchwork rainbows. Both genders wear their hair long, and married men tend to grow long, wild beards.

Except during the nights of the new moon, the Quevari are open and welcoming to outsiders in a way that few other groups are in the Land of Mists. The Quevari give to strangers generously, asking nothing in return except for help with chores and running errands. There

are no inns in Quevari villages, but there's always a warm hayloft or empty house for travelers who need someplace to stay—and somehow, virtually every family has always “cooked too much anyway” if someone says they're hungry. The Quevari are kind and welcoming—except for three nights of the month.

Dread Possibilities

Dark of the Moon: The Quevari have a good reason for wanting to keep people away during the new moon. During the three nights of the month when the moon is dark, the Quevari seemingly go mad. They lose all sense of self and become very aggressive, engaging in fistfights, excessive drinking, gorging themselves on food, running naked through the streets, and rutting like animals. They rarely harm one another severely during these “monthly festivals,” but outsiders risk death at the hands of the villagers at this time of the month. The Quevari themselves are aware of these periods of horrific madness, but they avoid talking about it due to a sense of cultural shame and a desire to not cause trouble for their neighbors. They work very hard to keep outsiders from coming to their villages during the new moon since they don't want to hurt anyone, but incidents happen every few years due to bad luck or bad timing.

Monsters in Disguise: The Quevari are not what they seem. Their friendly appearance and colorful garb are an act designed to keep people from discovering the truth of what they really are. They might be lycanthropes, undead, or some other kind of horrible creatures, but their human guises are mere set dressing to lure unsuspecting travelers to their doom. After all, if someone goes missing on a long trip through the wilderness, the friendly Quevari village

along their route certainly couldn't have anything to do with it. The Quevari are just so *nice*.

Red Wagon Trading Company

Merchants, salvagers, and scavengers, the Red Wagon Traders are known far and wide as the canniest and most ruthless mercantile organization in the Balinok Mountains. The guildsmen of the Red Wagon happily sell weapons to both sides of a battle, then pick the corpses for intact goods to resell later.

Among their services, the Red Wagon Trading Company are also “finders of lost objects.” They take contracts from private individuals or organizations to perform wide-ranging investigations in order to find and recover stolen goods or missing treasures—and sometimes to steal things that would be “better off” in their clients' hands.

Virtually everyone suspects that the Red Wagon Traders are heavily involved with the criminal underworld, but no one dares move against them due to their value to the mercantile community of the region. Without the Red Wagons, few merchants would be willing to move their goods across the dangerous roads of the Balinoks, and outside trade would virtually cease. Quite frankly, the Red Wagon Traders are the only people greedy—or crazy—enough to risk the Mists on a regular basis for mere coin.

The Red Wagon Traders are heavily involved in the criminal community as well as the mercantile community, but mostly in a passive role. They act as fences for stolen goods, they smuggle contraband for clients, and they help paying customers avoid border patrols,

but they undertake very little overt criminality themselves. The only exception to this are their “finding missions,” on which a Red Wagon Trader loses what little scruples he might have normally in favor of theft, intimidation, bribery, and even murder.

Dread Possibilities

The Headmistress: The Red Wagon Trading Company was founded by noted cat burglar Jacqueline Montarri to find something very precious to her—her head. Cursed to a horrible half-life until she can find her severed head, living only by stealing the heads of other women, Montarri realized that she could never search the whole world by herself. Instead, she used her cunning and underworld connections to build an organization loyal to herself. While the

Red Wagon Traders make immense profits from their various enterprises, their real mission is to be on the lookout for their leader’s missing head. Whoever finds it would be rewarded beyond all measure, so the traders pursue their duty with zeal and vigor.

The Resistance: The ongoing ethnic strife between Barovia and Gundarak has spanned generations and shows no signs of stopping. Every time it seems a peace might be won, a new atrocity arises that enrages one side or the other. The Red Wagon Traders gently encourage such atrocities in order to bolster their bottom line—sometimes even committing them and laying blame on the other side, though this is a dangerous game. Lately, the traders have been propping up the Gundarakite resistance movements with (slightly) discounted weapons in order to improve the overall market.

Wandering Folk

Throughout the Land of Mists wander many clans of rootless folk, people who make no villages, build no settlements, keep no towns. They live from their covered wagons, stopping in unclaimed land to put up temporary shelters when they have need of them and moving on without a second thought to the place they leave behind. They hunt and forage and trade for their food, selling their services as guides, entertainers, tinkers, and craftsmen. They are the wandering folk.

Sometimes known as the *Vistani*, the wandering folk can be found in virtually every domain of the Land of Mists. They come and go as they please, though they frequently run afoul of local authorities who would prefer to keep a tighter grip on travel and traffic. Many settled people



distrust the wandering folk as well, finding their rootless ways to be suspect and their pagan faith to be morally bankrupt.

The wandering folk are accused of all manner of criminal activity when they come near a village, and they are generally the first to be blamed for anything that goes wrong. In spite of that, villages and towns often look forward to the arrival of a caravan of the wandering folk, since they bring with them exotic music, beautiful dancers, foreign goods, and a canny understanding of nature that can be highly welcome to a far-flung village. The fact that some caravans are home to thieves, smugglers, and kidnappers only fuels the tarnished reputation that the wandering folk live under, even though the vast majority of their people are decent and generous folk who want only to be left to their traditional ways of life.

Dread Possibilities

People of the Mists: The wandering folk command strange and mysterious magical abilities that seem intricately connected to the nature of the Misty Border. Many Vistani can see the future, commune with dangerous spirits, speak to beasts, or possess other unique mystical talents. Perhaps the most dangerous ability possessed by the wandering folk—and the one that makes every darklord hate or fear them, at least a little—is their power to ignore closed domain borders. The covered wagons of the Vistani can pass through a closed border as though it were not there, as well as unerringly find their way down any Mistway. The Vistani never fear becoming lost in the Mists, which makes them far freer than most people will ever know.

Harbingers of the End: The Vistani know the truth—that reality as most

people perceive it is a lie. No matter how far the wandering folk travel, they are as much prisoners in the Land of Mists as everyone else, albeit prisoners with a longer chain than most. Their captivity chafes them, and they intend to be truly free again, no matter the cost. To this end, they have undertaken a great mystical working, of which the pattern of their travels is just one small part. When they complete their ritual, the Land of Mists will be torn asunder, spewing its poison out into the greater universe—or possibly killing everyone in the world in one cataclysmic display of horror. Either way, the Vistani will be free once more.

Van Richten Society

Rudolph van Richten is one of the foremost monster hunters in the Land of Mists, an experienced and cunning scholar who knows more about the creatures that haunt the night than virtually any other living person. In his journeys, he has made many allies and left behind many witnesses to his bravery and compassion. Quite a few of these individuals have stayed in contact with Dr. van Richten and with one another over the years, forming a long-distance network of scholars, sages, and researchers dedicated to stopping evil wherever possible.

The Van Richten Society is the brainchild of the Weathermay family, from a flippant comment by noted hero George Weathermay who referred to the doctor's allies as "the van Richten appreciation society." Dr. van Richten himself has withdrawn largely from the limelight as he has aged, acting instead as a mentor to young heroes and training the next generation of monster hunters. The Van Richten Society keeps a watch

out for likely candidates to train with the good doctor, as well as consulting with him and one another to offer advice to local unaffiliated heroes.

Dread Possibilities

Bleak House: Dr. Rudolph van Richten is dead. Indeed, he has been dead for quite some time, which is why it is doubly disturbing that his allies continue to receive letters from him. At first, they considered it a cruel prank or an attempt by one of his enemies to draw out the good doctor's remaining friends. But the letters increasingly demonstrate knowledge that only Dr. van Richten possessed. They do not acknowledge any response that speaks of his "death," but

they frequently possess detailed information about cases very similar to ones the recipients are currently working on—or will start working on soon after receiving the letter.

Van Richten's Arsenal: Dr. van Richten has accumulated many powerful and dangerous relics over the years. While he has donated the largest portion of them to the Order of the Guardians, that still left him with a sizable number of mystical objects that could be dangerous in the wrong hands. Where did he keep them all? Could an intrepid band of adventurers find and recover such a vast treasure trove of magic? Even if so, *should* they?





Chapter 8:

Denizens of Dread

Monsters of Ravenloft

This chapter deals with adversaries, enemies, and horrors of the night, creatures and beasts enough to fill a world many times over. The collection of nightmares in this chapter is intended to populate the Land of Mists with dangers aplenty for a group of stalwart adventurers.

Not all of them are necessarily intended to be used in the same domain or cluster, or even in the same campaign. Each GM should determine for himself whether or not a given creature is appropriate for the story his group is telling, and whether or not that monster would make sense in the current area of that story.

Many of the creatures here are intended to be customized to some extent before their use, or have several different varieties that exist in different places throughout the world. Feel free to adjust the enemies here as needed. After all, one of the recurring themes in Ravenloft is that research is necessary before fighting a powerful foe. An encounter with a similar monster can be dangerous if the heroes make too many assumptions about their foe's nature.

Difficulty Levels

One thing that *Savage Worlds* does differently than virtually every previous version of Ravenloft is that it discards the notion of “challenge ratings” or “difficulty levels”—the idea that some monsters are

appropriate foes at certain tiers of power or experience.

The only “encounter balance” in the system is the difficulty that the GM presents and the players' characters are willing to engage with. Because of the nature of the system, even a lowly zombie can occasionally get a lucky bite in—and even a group of novice adventurers can rally their strength to put an end to the threat of a mighty vampire lord, with luck and faith on their side.

Because of the potentially lethal turn that almost any encounter can take, always be willing to give the characters an opportunity to run if they decide to. Encourage fleeing every now and then, possibly with NPC dialogue followed by horrible screaming. Players who get into the mindset of “The GM gave us this encounter, so naturally we can win!” may not last long in the Land of Mists.

For more advice about encounter difficulty, see **Crafting a Challenge** in Chapter Seven of *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition*.

Treasure and Rewards

Generally speaking, *Ravenloft* is not a setting that encourages its heroes to loot corpses, rob graves, or pick through enemies' pockets for coin. Some such acts might even be considered desecration or theft in some cases, and truly callous individuals often find themselves facing Dark Powers checks for their mercenary attitudes. That being said, powerful monsters sometimes have valuables that can sustain a monster

hunter's expensive endeavors, and some GMs and players find monetary rewards a major incentive for a party of adventurers.

Since Ravenloft uses the Adventure Deck, it is recommended that permanent magic items only show up when a player uses the Relic card from the adventure deck. Consumable magic treasures such as potions and scrolls might appear in a random treasure cache, but it's more likely that such items are the result of player character spellcasters using the Artificer Edge or something similar.

Even the poorest monster hunters should get rewarded for their bravery in some fashion, if only to give the players a sense of accomplishment. Non-monetary treasures like free room and board or public acclaim might be all that some villages can afford to give their heroes. Personal touches, such as small gifts from townsfolk, can be far more memorable than another handful of coins.

Wild Cards

Some monsters and characters are noted as Wild Cards by the black skull symbol (☠) at the beginning of their entries. These are the creatures that should almost always be Wild Cards, but remember even a single zombie might be a Wild Card if it's the center of a tragic tale, the leader or "alpha" of a horde, or just a particularly nasty example of the type.

Edges and Hindrances

Whenever relevant, Edges and Hindrances not included in the *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* corebook will be followed by a superscript notation. Such notations include:

- **FC:** Fantasy Companion
- **HC:** Horror Companion
- **RR:** Ravenloft Reincarnated



Denizens of Darkness

☞ Akikage

Akikage, or shadow assassins, are dreaded undead creatures spawned from stealthy killers who died while trying to destroy an assigned victim. Restless spirits who failed in their tasks, they rise from their graves, obsessed with fulfilling their incomplete missions.

An akikage is usually an invisible, intangible spirit, but when it manifests, it looks like it did in life, albeit surrounded by thick smoke and mist that render it gray and indistinct. It usually appears in an assassin's garb that hides its features. While akikage understand all the languages they spoke in life, they never speak, always remaining silent in death.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Acrobat, Assassin, Dodge

Gear: Shadow short sword (Str+d6, ignores non-magical armor), shadow darts (Range 3/6/12, Str+d4, ignores non-magical armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (-6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Fear:** Being attacked or menaced by an invisible akikage, or having one manifest in its silent fury, is an event worthy of a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Akikage are immune to the effects of Fear and Intimidation.
- **Freezing Touch:** Anyone who is Shaken or suffers a Wound from an akikage's attacks must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue.

- **Naturally Invisible:** An akikage is naturally invisible and can only be seen if it wishes itself to be seen—usually to inspire dread in its intended victim. Any attempt to strike an akikage in combat is at -6 unless the attacking character can see invisible creatures or some method is found to render the akikage visible.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Ancient Dead

The ancient dead, more commonly called *mummies*, are undead whose bodies have been dried and preserved. The spirit is bound to the corpse through powerful necromantic rituals known only to a select few priests. Guardian mummies are common servants and slaves, bound in death to guard a specific place; mummy lords are nobles and priests who were given greater care in their animation, and so possess greater will and power.

Rumors abound of truly ancient dead—mummies so powerful that they could rightly be described as walking gods in their own lands.

Guardian Mummy

The most common type of mummy, these creatures were former servants and soldiers, placed in tombs to guard them for all eternity.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d12

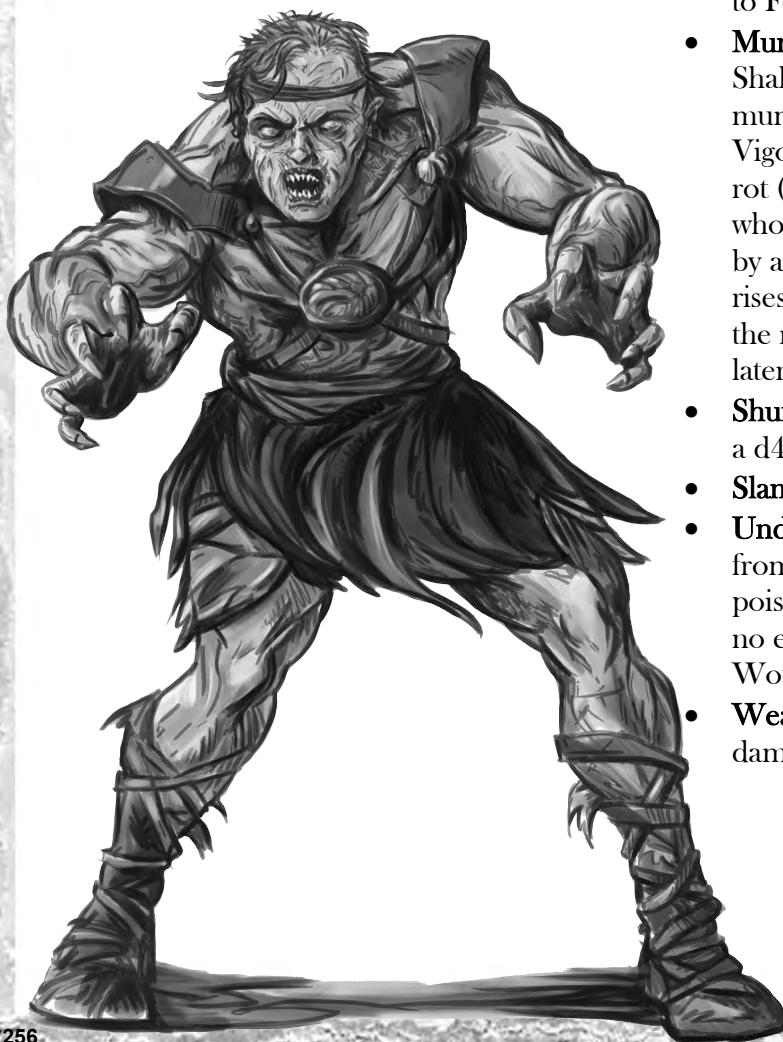
Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Arcane Resistance

Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing a guardian mummy must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Guardian mummies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Mummy Rot:** Any character who is Shaken or suffers a Wound from a guardian mummy's attack must attempt a Vigor roll or contract mummy rot (long-term chronic, minor debilitating).
- **Shuffling Gait:** Guardian mummies roll a d4 running die.
- **Slam:** Str.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Mummies take +4 damage from fire.



☪ Mummy Lord

Mummy lords were former priests and mages, preserved for eternity and granted an unearthly life through arcane rituals.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major), Vow (Major: protect my tomb)

Edges: Arcane Resistance (Imp)

Gear: Bronze breastplate (+3 Armor, torso only)

Special Abilities:

- **Fear (-2):** Mummy lords inspire utter terror in those who look upon their withered forms.
- **Fearless:** Mummy lords are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Mummy Rot:** Any character who is Shaken or suffers a Wound from a mummy lord's attack must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or contract mummy rot (Chronic disease). Any character who dies from this disease or is killed by a mummy lord's unarmed attacks rises from the dead as a zombie under the mummy lord's control 1d4 hours later.
- **Shuffling Gait:** Mummy lords roll a d4 running die.
- **Slam:** Str+d4.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Mummies take +4 damage from fire.

Animator

Animators are malevolent spirits that infuse objects with their dark essence and cause them to move about like puppets. These spirits animate objects to spread fear and protect their wards so that whatever they inhabit produces a steady supply of negative emotions. When not inhabiting an object, animators are malevolent entities, prone to fits and tantrums. When seen through abilities that allow the detection of invisible creatures, animators appear as vaguely defined clouds of mist with the suggestion of a face.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (–6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Fear:** Seeing an object spring to life from an animator's possession inspires a Fear check the first time it is witnessed.
- **Possession:** An animator's strength lies in its ability to inhabit an inanimate object (called a "shell") and bring it to terrifying life. This only requires the animator to move into the object and spend an action inhabiting it. While inhabiting an object, the animator gains an armor bonus based on the object's construction (typically +1 for leather or cloth, +2 for wood, and +3 for metal), and can use the object as a weapon, effectively gaining a d6 in Fighting and inflicting damage based on the material plus the animator's Strength. (So Str+d4 for leather or cloth, and so on.) An inhabited object

is no longer considered inanimate for purposes of acting on damage rolls and other effects. An animator whose shell is destroyed is Shaken, but otherwise unharmed. Normally, animators can inhabit human-sized or smaller objects, but especially powerful animators could theoretically inhabit bigger objects.

- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Arayashka

Snowfalls can be treacherous in high mountains at the best of times, but the worst of them can claim many lives at once. Between blizzards and avalanches, it is no wonder that a great many people die with terror and regret great enough to reanimate them as arayashka, or "snow wraiths."

These frigid undead manifest only during severe winter weather, seeking victims from whom to drain life and warmth. Dangerous but cowardly, snow wraiths prefer to attack in numbers and often choose to flee if losing a fight.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks (except for fire); may become invisible (–6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Heat Drain:** Within a range of Spirit, the arayashka can drain heat from a single source as an action. Using this ability extinguishes any flame up to

the size of a bonfire. If the wraith targets a living creature with this ability, the creature makes a Vigor roll opposed by the arayashka's Spirit. On a failure, the victim suffers a level of Fatigue. If successfully used on a creature Incapacitated from Fatigue, the victim dies.

- **Immunity (Cold):** The arayashka are creatures of pure cold, and thus suffer no harm from it.
- **Spawn:** Any person slain by a snow wraith and in an area where snow can fall has a 50% chance of rising as an arayashka during the next snowstorm.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Fire):** A snow wraith takes normal damage from even mundane fire attacks, such as being clubbed with a flaming torch. Because they are incorporeal, however, they cannot catch fire.

Banshee

Banshees are female spirits who take one of three forms—a young maiden, a matron-like figure, or an old crone. All dress in either a grey, hooded cloak or a funeral shroud. Their long nails may be able to tear through flesh, but their most feared power is their terrible keening, which can drive a man mad.

A variant of the banshee, known as the “washer woman,” comes in the form of a cloaked figure washing blood stained clothes. According to legend, these are the garments of those about to die from her wailing.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Performance d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (–6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Fear (–2):** The banshee's appearance is a terrifying apparition that can drive even brave men mad with fear.
- **Flight:** Pace 12.
- **Keening:** A banshee may keen as an action. Anyone within a Large Burst Template centered on the banshee must make a Fear check at –2 or suffer a level of Fatigue. Those that are Incapacitated from this effect die within 1d10 minutes unless they are revived with a Healing roll or the *healing* power.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Barghest

Barghests are huge, black dogs. It is said that anyone who sees a barghest is destined to die soon, and the terror of their appearance can sometimes induce heart attacks—making this something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Fleet-Footed



Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Curse:** The first time the characters see a barghest during a session, they must make a Spirit roll at -2 or lose a Benny. Characters with no Bennies instead suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Fear:** The howl of a barghest can inspire panic in all who hear it. Characters who must roll on the Fear Table as a result of failing a Fear check add +4 to their d20 roll.
- **Pounce:** If a barghest makes a Wild Attack, it adds +4 to the damage instead of +2.

Bastellus

The bastellus, or “dream fiend,” is rarely seen by mortals, for it only appears in the presence of sleeping creatures. Those who stumble across them during feeding report the creature to look like a featureless but hulking humanoid shadow. These creatures do not communicate with the living in any recognizable fashion, but they seem to be

able to implant specific images and ideas in the dreams of those they feed upon.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4. Ignores non-magical armor.
- **Dream Feed:** A bastellus can touch an unconscious person to turn their dreams into horrific nightmares, feeding on the terror it causes. The touched subject must make a Spirit check at -2 or gain the Night Terrors Hindrance for one week as well as gaining a level of Fatigue that cannot be removed by natural rest until the Hindrance is removed. Victims of repeated feedings by a bastellus can die from this slow draining of their life force.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (-6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Fear (-1):** Those unlucky enough to stumble on a feeding bastellus suffer a Fear check at -1.
- **Flight:** Pace 6.
- **Invulnerability:** A bastellus is immune to non-magical attacks.
- **Night Vision:** A bastellus ignores Illumination penalties, including Pitch Darkness.
- **Shadow Meld:** When in Dim or Dark Illumination, even when they would normally be visible, a bastellus blends with the darkness, increasing Illumination penalties to attack her by 2 points (maximum -6).
- **Size 1:** A bastellus is a massive shadow the size of a burly human.
- **Sleep:** A bastellus can use major *darkness* and major *slumber* as

Innate Powers, each with the Area of Effect Modifier for a Large Burst Template. A creature that resists its *slumber* power is immune to it for 24 hours.

- **Weakness (Light):** A bastellus in normal or brighter light is Distracted and Vulnerable. They cannot exist in sunlight, and actually vanish from reality between dawn and dusk.

Bat, Giant

Giant bats are larger than regular bats, as well as more vicious. Despite the fact that most normal bats are fruit or insect eaters, the majority of giant bats are predators and blood drinkers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d6, Notice d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Blindsense:** Giant bats ignore *invisibility*, *illusion*, and all Illumination penalties.
- **Flight:** Pace 8.
- **Size -2 (Small):** Giant bats measure three feet long but have a wingspan double that.

Black Sprite

These tiny faerie folk possess vicious and sadistic demeanors. Standing only two feet tall and resembling tiny, dragonfly-winged elves, black sprites wear bright, ragged clothing that makes them seem cheerful and friendly. Their pointed teeth only show when they laugh, which they often do at their mischievous and frequently lethal practical jokes. Black sprites (known also as *baobhan sìth*), dislike direct confrontation and

prefer to lead their victims into deadly traps or fights with other local beasts.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4-2, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d4, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 3

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Humiliate, Retort, Work the Room

Special Abilities:

- **Faerie Magic:** Black sprites can cast major *invisibility* (self only) and major *illusion* as Innate Powers.
- **Flight:** Pace 10.
- **Size -2 (Small):** Black sprites are tiny creatures, standing less than two feet tall.

Boar

Wild boars are hunted for their rich meat. They are tenacious fighters, especially when wounded.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Edges: Berserk

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Tough hide.
- **Tusks:** Str+d4. These count as horns for purposes of making charging attacks.

Broken One

Broken ones are hideous combinations of human and animal, created through the less-than-tender mercies of a mad scientist. The typical broken one unwholesomely combines the humanoid with distorted animal features. It stands hunched and, while it can run upright, prefers to move on all fours. Their

fingers, though tipped in small claws, are dexterous enough to use weapons and tools. These foul beasts can talk, but with a growling, rough voice.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Outsider (Major), Ugly (Major)

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fear (+1):** The pathetic horror of the broken one can inspire fear, but they are sadder than scary.
- **Frenzied Attack:** Broken ones can attack with a mad frenzy unheard of in saner creatures. When they Wild Attack, they inflict +4 damage instead of +2.

Carrion Crawler

Carrion crawlers are aggressive subterranean scavengers, about ten feet long, greatly feared for their paralyzing attacks. They scour their underground territory for dead and decaying flesh but won't hesitate to attack and kill living creatures. Carrion crawlers resemble giant caterpillars, but their mouth is ringed by eight tentacles dripping with paralytic venom.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Tough hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Poison:** Anyone who is Shaken or Wounded by the carrion crawler's

bite must attempt a Vigor roll or become paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.

- **Size 2:** Carrion crawlers are roughly ten feet long and weigh about 500 pounds.

Carrionette

When in repose, a carrionette appears to be nothing more than a brightly painted marionette with jointed limbs and holes where a puppeteer's strings might go, though the strings themselves are absent. The strings matter little, as the carrionette is perfectly capable moving without aid. The carrionette's most feared power is the ability to usurp control over a living body.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Carrionettes are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Possession:** A carrionette can take possession of an immobilized humanoid by driving a needle into the base of the victim's neck. The victim must be completely unable to resist, either because it is unconscious or because it has been paralyzed by silver needles. While possessing a living host, the carrionette's own body is helpless. The carrionette keeps his own Smarts and Spirit, and skills linked to those attributes, but gains all of his host body's physical abilities. If the possession lasts at least an hour, the victim possesses the carrionette's

body in the same fashion.

Carrionettes thus take great care to lock up their doll bodies or otherwise incapacitate them, since the destruction of the doll body will kill the carrionette and free the possessed victim to return to his own body.

- **Silver Needles:** Carrionettes carry a small quiver of silver needles, which they can throw as weapons with a range of 3/6/12. A needle that hits does no damage, but forces the target to make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the victim suffers a level of Fatigue. If the target becomes Incapacitated from this, he is paralyzed and helpless.
- **Size -2 (Small):** Carrionettes stand between one and two feet tall.

Crawling Claw

Crawling claws are animated severed hands. Three different varieties have been recorded, though all share the same traits. The first are those of murderers. In this instance, the hand somehow reanimates after death and sets out on a murderous spree. The second belong to sorcerers who have learned how to detach their hands and send them to perform errands. Not all of these are necessarily evil.

The third sort are vengeful creatures, usually belonging to accident victims who have had their hands severed but seek revenge. The hand seems to take on a will of its own, carrying out a terrible revenge on those who have wronged their former owner.



Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d4-3, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d4, Notice d4, Stealth d12

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Scuttle:** Crawling claws rolls a d4 running die instead of a d6.
- **Size -3 (Very Small):** Crawling claws are the size of a human hand.
- **Throttle:** A crawling claw cannot inflict the Bound or Entangled conditions while grappling. Instead, if a crawling claw gains a raise on its Athletics roll, it begins to strangle the victim. A strangling victim is Distracted and Vulnerable; at the start of their turn, the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue.

Crimson Mist

Horrific, semi-corporeal undead that lurk in swamps and other misty regions, the crimson mist is a blood-draining fiend. They appear as grey clouds until they feed, when they change to pink through to dark red as they consume more blood. Their preferred tactic is to mingle with natural mist, allowing them to approach unsuspecting victims with ease.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Blood Drain:** A blood mist covers an area equal to a Medium Burst Template, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template, ignoring physical armor.
- **Fearless:** Blood mists are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Flight:** Pace 6.

- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (-6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Crocotta

The crocotta looks like a scaly wolf, except for its jaws, which are as long as a crocodile's. The beast's jaws are powerful enough to bite through nearly any material.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d8, AP 10.
- **Size -1:** A crocotta is the same size as a large dog.

Leucrotta

Legend says that a crocotta that devours enough human flesh eventually grows to double its original size and becomes intelligent. A leucrotta can mimic human voices, the more easily to draw prey out into the night where it can be picked off. The physical changes it undergoes as it grows make its jaws less lethal, however.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Performance d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6, AP 1.

- **Low Light Vision:** A leucrotta ignores attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Mimic:** A leucrotta can mimic any human voice it has ever heard, giving it a +2 bonus on Performance Tests.

☠ Death Knight

When a once-noble warrior forsakes his vows and turns to darkness before dying, the Dark Powers can intervene to make his end a restless one. A death knight gains vast powers but is cursed to know only pain and suffering rather than the sweet release of death. He is constantly reminded of the price of his dishonor, and the consequences of his poor choices. Some death knights choose to grip even harder to a strict, merciless code of honor in death, hoping that it will eventually lead to their redemption, while others embrace their honorless ways.

A death knight looks like a corpse, either rotten or near-skeletal, wearing a blackened suit of plate armor, wielding the tarnished weapons it carried in life. The death knight's blade flickers with black fire, and the air around it is chilled with terror. Some death knights can command the loyalty of a nightmare to ride into battle, while others settle for a skeletal or zombie horse.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Battle d10, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Focus d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9 (11 with shield);

Toughness: 13 (4)

Hindrances: Code of Honor *or* Bloodthirsty

Edges: Arcane Resistance (Imp), Block, Champion (Evil), Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy, Level Headed

Gear: Long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+2 Parry, -2 cover), plate armor (+4 Armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Balefire Weapons:** Anyone struck by a death knight's weapons has a chance of catching fire (*SWADE* 127). The death knight's burning weapons inflict +2 damage.
- **Death Magic:** A death knight gains several magical powers in his transition to the living dead. A death knight has 20 Power Points and typically has the following powers: *barrier* (wall of ice), *blast* (fireball), *smite* (intensify balefire), and *zombie* (skeletal minions). Use Focus as the arcane skill for these powers.
- **Fear (-1):** The appearance of a death knight is worthy of a Fear check.
- **Invulnerability:** A death knight can be Shaken but not Wounded by non-magical weapons.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots; does not suffer wound modifiers.

Doom Guard

A doom guard is a suit of plate armor that has been magically animated into a fearless soldier in the service of its maker. The cost of creating a doom guard is prohibitively high, so they are more often used as guardians for a place or object than as field soldiers.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (5)

Edges: Block, Sweep

Gear: Long sword (Str+d8)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +5:** Old-fashioned plate armor.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

Doppelganger

In their natural state, these creatures are gray skinned and unnaturally thin. They can alter their appearance to look like anyone they've ever seen, however; they'll often kill a party member, take their place, and attack from within when the group is at its most vulnerable. Worst of all, doppelgangers have limited mind-reading abilities, allowing them to fake knowledge in their mimicry.

The elite of the doppelganger race are the so-called "dread doppelgangers," sometimes known as "mind eaters" by their own kind. These Wild Card doppelgangers can eat a victim's brain to assume their shape and memories indefinitely.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Performance d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Skilled Imitator:** A doppelganger can use major *disguise* (self only) and major *mind reading* as Innate Powers with Smarts as their arcane skill. They are limited to assuming the appearance of humanoids of Size -1 to +1, though their Toughness does not change.

Dread Treant

Dread treants are malevolent trees capable of movement. Some are formed by desecration of old burial grounds, some are possessed by spirits or demons, and others exist where industrial dumping has corrupted the land. They resemble standard trees, but their bark is black and a sticky red sap oozes continually from gaps in the bark. Most have "facial" features, formed from knots and twists in the wood.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 15 (2)

Edges: Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick bark.
- **Camouflage:** A dread treant gains +4 on Stealth rolls in forests.
- **Lashing Branches:** Str+d10, Reach 1.
- **Size 6 (Large):** Dread treants stand up to thirty feet high.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Fire-based attacks do +2 damage; dread treants risk catching fire on a roll of 5-6 on a d6.





Drownling

Although death is never pleasant, drowning is said to be a particularly nasty way to die. Drownlings look like they did in life, but wear water-soaked clothes which never dry out. The vast majority of drownlings are children, though no one is quite sure why.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Drown:** At the start of a turn in which a creature is being grappled by a drowningling, the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue. A creature Incapacitated by this ability perishes in a number of rounds equal to their Vigor die unless resuscitated.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Size -1:** Drownlings are the size of human children.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Elemental, Dread

Experienced spellcasters can cause the elemental spirits themselves to manifest and fight on their behalf. Unfortunately, such summoning sometimes go terribly wrong, resulting in an elemental infused with the dread nature of the land itself. Such “dread elementals” corrupt and twist their native elements into something deadly and horrible. A particularly cruel caster can choose to summon dread elementals instead of their pure counterparts, but such an action is one of undeniable evil.

Blood Elemental

Corrupted water elementals, blood elementals can form from large pools of blood or the water drawn from the lungs of drowned men. They appear as shapeless crimson blobs, constantly extending and reabsorbing thin tendrils. Blood elementals are the most methodical and deliberate of all dread elementals. Free blood elementals take their time stalking their conjurer, enjoying the chance to cause collateral destruction during the pursuit.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 12.
- **Blood Drain:** A blood elemental that slams a target also draws out the

target's blood through his pores. A victim Shaken or Wounded by the elemental's slam attack must succeed on a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.

- **Elemental:** Ignore additional damage from Called Shots; ignore 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to disease and poison.
- **Goespout:** Blood elementals can project a torrent of water using the Cone Template and their Shooting skill. Those within take 2d6 nonlethal.
- **Immunity:** Immune to water-based attacks.

- **Invulnerability:** Blood elementals are immune to all non-magical attacks except fire. A torch or lantern causes them 1d6 damage but is instantly put out if it hits.
- **Seep:** Blood elementals can squeeze through any porous gap as if it were Difficult Ground.
- **Slam:** Str+d6, nonlethal damage.

Grave Elemental

Grave elementals appear as a vaguely humanoid shape, comprised of chalky earth and clay, with bits of corpses, shattered coffins and headstones



protruding from its body. Like earth elementals, grave elementals are direct and brutal in combat. They directly charge toward opponents and attempt to pound them into dust.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Rocky hide.
- **Bash:** Str+d6.
- **Buried Alive:** As an action, the grave elemental can target a single normal-sized foe. A mass of worm-eaten bony arms burst from the soil and attempt to drag the foe under. This acts as the *entangle* power, using Spirit as the arcane skill at no Power Point cost.
- **Burrow:** Pace 10.
- **Elemental:** Ignore additional damage from Called Shots; ignore 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to disease and poison.
- **Immunity:** Immune to earth-based attacks (including thrown stones or powers with earth, mud, sand, or stone Trappings).

Mist Elemental

Mist elementals form from the essence of the Mists themselves. They appear as a harmless, drifting cloud of white vapor, allowing them to become invisible in foggy areas. Mist elementals are fast and maneuverable, like their air elemental forebears. They enjoy chasing opponents and hurling victims to their doom from great heights.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d10

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Elemental:** Ignore additional damage from Called Shots; ignore 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to disease and poison.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (–6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Evil Infusion:** A mist elemental may use the *puppet* power, with Spirit as the arcane skill. The mist elemental has 20 Power Points with which to use this power.
- **Flight:** Pace 8.
- **Wind Blast:** Mist elementals can send directed blasts of air to knock their foes away. They may choose one target or a Cone Template, and use their Shooting skill for the roll. Those affected make a Strength roll (at –2 if the elemental gets a raise) or are hurled back 2d6” and knocked prone. Anyone who strikes a hard object (such as a wall) takes 2d4 nonlethal damage.

Pyre Elemental

A pyre elemental manifests as a slender column of incredibly intense blue flame with whipping tendrils of fire. Charred bits of bone can be seen dancing in the column’s flames. Pyre elementals revel in consuming all material things, lashing out with burning tendrils to leave behind the stench of charred flesh.

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Dance of Death:** As an action, a pyre elemental can touch a corpse and revive it as a zombie or skeleton. This creature bursts into flames and races around, attacking creatures and

setting fires at random. The creature's attacks can cause victims to catch fire (*SWADE* 127). The skeleton or zombie itself suffers 2d4 damage each round at the end of its turn.

- **Elemental:** Ignore additional damage from Called Shots; ignore 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to disease and poison.
- **Fiery Touch:** Str+d6 chance of catching fire (*SWADE* 127).
- **Flame Strike:** Pyre elementals can project a searing blast of flame using the Cone Template and their Shooting skill. Characters within take 3d6 damage and may catch fire (*SWADE* 127).
- **Immunity:** Pyre elementals are immune to fire and heat-based attacks.

☠ **Ermordenung**

Once normal humans, the ermordenung have been altered by foul alchemy to become the most loyal and elite operatives and assassins of the ruler of Borca, Ivana Boritsi. Living as members of the ruling class, they appear as normal human beings of beauty, nobility and grace.

Both men and women are exceptionally tall and marked by black hair, dark eyes and an unusually pale complexion. Most importantly, however, virtually every fluid in their body—blood, sweat, even tears—have become deadly poison.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Performance d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with rapier);

Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Arrogant, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Assassin, Humiliate, Retort, Streetwise, Strong Willed, Very Attractive

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry), fine clothes

Special Abilities:

- **Immunity:** Ermordenung are immune to all poisons and toxins.
- **Poison Touch:** An ermordenung can deliver deadly poison as a Touch Attack. A touched victim must attempt a Vigor roll or suffer the effects of Paralyzing poison. This also affects anyone who has intimate contact with the ermordenung, such as a kiss or a lengthy embrace with skin contact, which causes the Vigor roll to have a -2 penalty and failure to inflict Lethal poison.

Gelatinous Blob

This horrible creature is basically an amorphous mass of acidic jelly with an insatiable hunger. It might be a horror from the Mists, a mobile fungal infection, or life created from industrial pollution run rampant.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d4, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Blob:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; does not suffer Wound modifiers; no extra damage from Called Shots.
- **Engulf:** A gelatinous blob gains +4 on Athletics rolls to grapple foes. Any creature grappled by the blob suffers 2d4 acid damage at the end of its turn.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.

- **Gelatinous:** A gelatinous blob suffers half damage from physical attacks. Fire and other forms of energy harm it normally.
- **Mindless:** A gelatinous blob is immune to Fear and mental Tests.
- **Size 1:** A gelatinous blob is large enough to completely engulf a human foe.
- **Slow:** Gelatinous blobs have a d4 running die.
- **Very Resilient:** A gelatinous blob can take two Wounds before being Incapacitated.

☠ Ghost

Spectres, shades, and phantoms sometimes return from death to haunt the living or fulfill some lost goal. The ghost described in this entry is a weak spirit, only just returned from the grave or confused in death.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Stealth d12, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Thrown objects (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (-6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Fear (-2):** Ghosts cause Fear checks at -2 when they let themselves be seen.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Additional Special Abilities

Ghosts are unique beings, each with their own special powers and weaknesses. The following special abilities are possible powers for a ghost to possess.

- **Heart Stopper:** The ghost can reach into a living person's chest and grab their heart, inflicting horrible wounds while not leaving any apparent marks. The ghost attempts a touch attack (+2 to Fighting); on a success, the target makes a Vigor check or suffers a level of Fatigue.
- **Near-Omniscient:** The ghost is usually lurking about in the background, watching the living and waiting for a chance to strike. At the GM's discretion, it can know most anything the heroes say or do while in its domain.
- **Telekinesis:** A poltergeist, or "noisy spirit," is a type of ghost able to move objects with great force. The ghost knows the *telekinesis* and *havoc* powers and has 20 Power Points available for their use. The ghost uses Spirit as the arcane skill.



Weaknesses

Most ghosts have their own special vulnerabilities, and a clever or dedicated investigator can determine these weaknesses before going into battle.

- **Bane:** The ghost is vulnerable to something associated with its life or death. This might be the noose a man was hanged with, the gun that killed him, his wedding ring, and so on. Presenting this object grants a character +4 on Tests against the ghost.
- **Fetter:** Some spirits are bound to an object or place, such as the home they lived in or their most precious possession. If their anchor is destroyed utterly, they lose their grip on the mortal world and fade from existence.
- **Resolution:** Most spirits linger because they want something. A murdered woman might wish to reveal her killer's identity, or a dead child might want his body returned to his family. If whatever brought the spirit back is resolved in some acceptable way, it fades from the physical world and does not return.
- **Salt:** The purifying power of salt can hold back a ghost or even damage it. The ghost cannot cross an unbroken barrier of salt, and salt counts as a magical weapon. Even a thrown handful of salt inflicts 2d4 damage.

Ghoul

Ghouls are vile undead scavengers, feasting off carrion and unfortunate victims who cross their path. They look like gray-skinned, emaciated humans, their features twisted and bestial.

Rare ghouls become far more intelligent and ferocious, becoming *ghoul lords*. Such creatures were often

cannibals while among the living, finding the transition to undeath easy and sadistically enlightening. Ghoul lords are Wild Cards, and frequently have somewhat higher attributes as well.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Infravision:** Ghouls halve penalties (round down) for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Keen Nose:** Ghouls get +2 to Notice rolls against living targets, as well as +2 on Survival rolls made to track the living.
- **Paralysis:** Creatures Shaken or Wounded by a ghoul's bite attack must make a Vigor roll or be Stunned.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Goblin

No one is sure of the origin of the hideous humanoids called goblins, only that they are a serious problem throughout many domains, particularly the Forlorn Land. Twisted and hideous, their skin is a greenish-brown color, and their shaggy black hair forms a greasy mane atop their malformed skulls. The fanged mouth of a goblin can open to an extraordinary width, seeming to take up half their faces, and their eyes glow like dying embers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for Illumination against warm targets.
- **Fear:** The horrific bite attack of a goblin is grounds for a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Goblins are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Feast:** With a raise on a bite attack, a goblin strikes its target's least-armored location. If a character suffers a Wound from such an attack, they must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer the effects of the Ugly (Minor) Hindrance until fully healed. A second failed Vigor roll from a goblin's feast attack increases this to Ugly (Major).
- **Painless:** Goblins feel little in the way of pain. They gain a +2 bonus to Spirit rolls made to recover from being Shaken. Wild Card goblins (which are thankfully rare) never suffer Wound penalties.
- **Size -1:** Goblins stand around four feet tall on average.

Golems

Golems are magical constructs, given life through the imprisonment of a spirit within the golem's body. Creating one is costly and laborious, and few mages have the requisite knowledge. Despite being inhabited by a spirit, golems cannot talk and are usually barely aware.

Corpse Golem

The vilest golems are those crafted from the body parts of corpses. Depending on the creator, the golem may be stitched together from the parts of one

species or multiple species, including men and beasts alike.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Berserk

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Hard skin and muscle.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fear:** Characters seeing a corpse golem must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** A corpse golem can take one Wound before being Incapacitated.
- **Size 1:** Corpse golems stand around seven feet tall.
- **Slow:** Corpse golems roll a d4 for their running die.

Class Golem

These unusual constructs are crafted to resemble a stained glass warrior and are most often used as guardians in temples. Unlike other golems, they are almost two-dimensional, being no thicker than a pane of glass.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

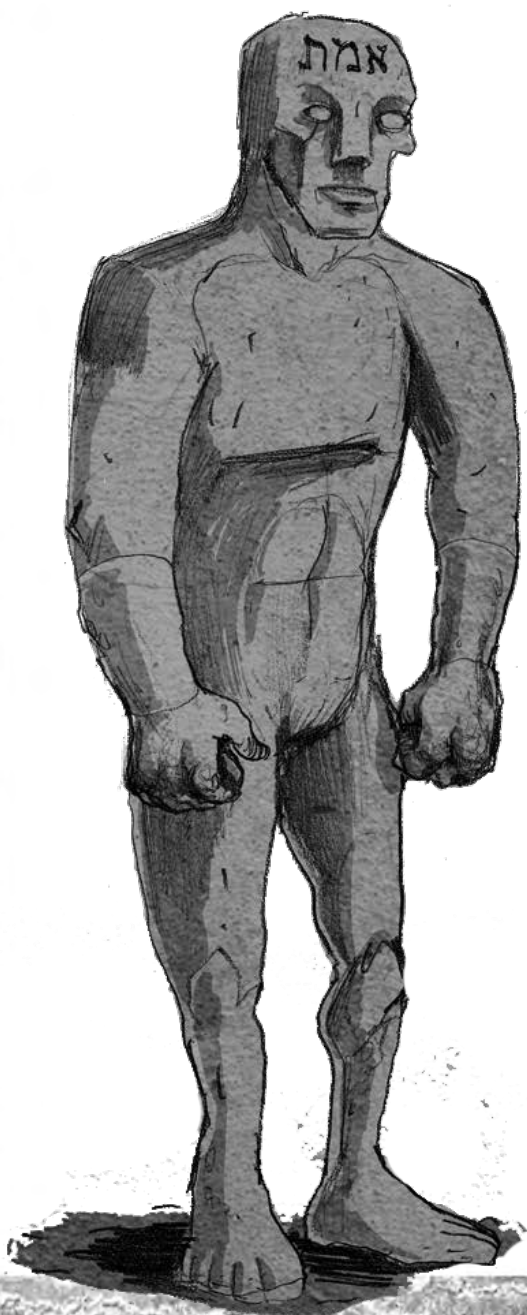
Edges: Arcane Resistance

Gear: Enchanted glass sword (Str+d10), enchanted small glass shield (+1 Parry)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Glass golems are depicted wearing plate armor. Despite being glass, it is magically hardened and acts as metal armor.

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** A glass golem can take one Wound before being Incapacitated.
- **Size 1:** Glass golems average 8 feet tall.
- **Weakness (Blunt Weapons):** Glass golems take +4 damage from blunt weapons, such as clubs and hammers.



Metal Golem

Typically crafted in humanoid form from iron or bronze, these golems are among the most powerful of their kind. Some creators give their metal golems long swords instead of hands, allowing them to attack more often.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 17 (5)

Edges: Arcane Resistance (Imp), Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +5:** Magically hardened metal.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Slam:** Str+d10.
- **Size 4 (Large):** Metal golems stand over 10 feet high and weigh 6,000 pounds.
- **Very Resilient:** A metal golem can take two additional Wounds before being Incapacitated (for a total of three Wounds including Size).

Stone Golem

Stone golems are the traditional animated statue. As with most golems, they are shaped in the form of warriors and serve as guardians.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d10, Notice d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 14 (3)

Edges: Arcane Resistance (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Magically hardened stone.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound

penalties; immune to poison and disease.

- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Size 3:** Stone golems stand over 8 feet high and weigh more than two tons.
- **Slam:** Str+d6.
- **Very Resilient:** A stone golem can take two Wounds before being Incapacitated.

Gremishka Swarm

From a distance, gremishkas could be mistaken for alley cats, monkeys, or large rats. Up close, however, their hideous nature is all too apparent. They possess slitted, reptilian eyes, needle-toothed mouths, and scabby fur in a variety of mottled, dull colors.

Gremishkas are a smaller, more common cousin of the gremlin, standing only about a foot tall. They derive petty pleasure from others' suffering and enjoy stealing from larger creatures. Individual gremishkas are fairly harmless, their sharp teeth painful but not deadly. When they gather in swarms, though—watch out.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** A gremishka swarm automatically hits for 2d4 damage to everyone within the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location.
- **Split:** When the swarm is first Wounded, it splits into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Template). The Toughness of each swarm is lowered by -2.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2. Because the swarm is composed of dozens of tiny gremlins, many forms of physical

attacks are only marginally effective. Cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his Strength as damage each round.

☠ Grim Reaper

The grim reaper is an icon of death to many cultures. Sometimes known as the black horseman or the pale rider, this being appears as a skeleton or corpse dressed in black riding clothes, wielding a mighty scythe with which to reap the souls of his victims. There seems to not just be a single grim reaper, but an entire class of similar death spirits, all of whom are constantly on the hunt for worthy souls to bring across the veil into death.

A grim reaper has a chance to show up to “collect” any Wild Card that is close to death. They seem to come into existence to collect that specific person and engage in combat only if denied their prize.

A grim reaper is typically accompanied by a demonic steed using the stats of a nightmare (pg 281). If its steed is killed, the reaper can summon a new one at sunset on the next night.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d10, Persuasion d8, Riding d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Edges: Sweep (Imp)

Gear: Scythe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, two hands)

Special Abilities:

- **Fear (-2):** Seeing the specter of death in person is cause for a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Grim reapers are immune to Fear and Intimidation

- **Invulnerability:** The grim reaper is immune to attacks from non-magical weapons.
- **Merciless:** Grim reapers are immune to Persuasion and Taunt Tests.
- **No Cheating Death:** If slain with magical weapons, the grim reaper is simply inconvenienced. It rises again at the next sunset, ready to try again. The only way to permanently kill the grim reaper is to use the *banish* power on it after Incapacitating it, or to kill it with a blessed weapon.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots; does not suffer wound penalties.

☞ Hag

These cannibalistic ogres have powerful magical abilities. They are fond of eating children but are not picky and eat nearly anything made of meat. The following are the base statistics for hags, but each kind of hag has its own special abilities, as noted below.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Occult d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic)

Hindrances: Ugly (Major)

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing a hag must make a Fear check.
- **Spells:** Hags have 20 Power Points and typically know the following spells: *boost/lower Trait, disguise,*

divination, fear, light/darkness, protection, puppet, and sloth/speed.

Annis Hag

The dreaded annis may be the most horrible of hags, larger and more powerful than their kin. Annis hags use the base hag statistics, but add the following abilities.

Toughness: 9 (2)

- **Armor +2:** Steely skin.
- **Improved Strength:** Annis hags are stronger than other hags. Their Strength is d12+2.
- **Size 1:** An annis stands some 8 feet tall and weighs about 325 pounds.

Green Hag

Green hags are found in desolate swamps and dark forests. They get their name from their tangled green hair. Green hags use the base hag statistics, but add the following abilities.

- **Mimicry:** A green hag can imitate any sound she has ever heard, including the voice of any person she has ever heard speak. They have Performance d8 as an additional skill.
- **Weakening Touch:** A green hag can make a Touch Attack against a foe, draining his energy and resolve. A touched victim must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigued.

Sea Hag

Perhaps the most wretched of hags, the sea hag is found in the water of seas or overgrown lakes. Their flesh is yellowed and sickly, and their hair resembles a mass of rotting seaweed. Sea hags use the base hag statistics, but add the following abilities.

- **Aquatic:** Pace 8.
- **Fear (-2):** Sea hags are more horrific in appearance than other hags.

- **Horribly Ugly:** Sea hags suffer -4 to Persuasion rolls instead of -2 because of their intense hideousness.

Head Hunter

The head hunter is a twisted mockery of life, resembling an unusually large spider with a human head for a body. The hideous face leers up at its foes, gibbering at them in various languages. Head hunters feed on the headless corpses of their victims, and they are cunning enough to make plans, develop schemes, coerce victims, and lay traps.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10
Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 2
Special Abilities:

- **Fear (+0 or -2):** The sight of a head hunter is cause for a Fear check. Watching the creature tear free of a host body inflicts a -2 penalty on that Fear check.
- **Host Body:** If a victim dies in a head hunter's web, the head hunter uses the victim's body as sustenance. First, the creature carefully removes the victim's head, then plants its own body in the empty stump, becoming the "head" of the corpse. Its crablike legs reach into the body cavity and the head hunter can then control the host body like a puppet. The hunter uses the host body's Agility, Strength, Vigor, Size, and base Pace during this time, but otherwise retains its own statistics. While implanted in a host body, attacks against the body do no damage to the head hunter; inflicting a Wound on the host body cripples it, forcing the head hunter to abandon it. Only Called Shots to the head inflict damage on the creature (and

such Called Shots gain no damage bonus).

- **Immunity:** Head hunters can move through webs with no penalty, even the webs of other creatures.
- **Poison Vomit:** As an action, the head hunter can spit a stream of venom with a range of Vigor. Any creature targeted can make an Agility roll to dodge the venom. If the venom hits, the victim must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a Wound. Head hunters generally try to avoid using this attack on victims they wish to consume, since it renders the body mostly unusable.
- **Razor Web:** With one minute of work, a head hunter can fill a Medium Burst Template with razor-sharp webs. The webs are nearly invisible in Dim or worse lighting, requiring a Notice roll to detect. A creature that enters the area of the webs must attempt an Agility roll at



-2 or suffer 2d6 damage. Creatures can attempt to clear a path through the web with weapons, treating each 1" of the web as a target with a Toughness of 6.

- **Size -3 (Very Small):** Head hunters are roughly the size of a human head.
- **Vulnerability:** Head hunters and their webs suffer +4 damage from fire, and their chance to catch fire is increased by 1 whenever they would have a chance to do so.
- **Wall Walker:** Head hunters can move normally on vertical and even inverted surfaces.

Imp

Imps are small, winged demons. They are often sent to the material world to serve as familiars to "honored" wizards. Although they aid their new masters, they also report back to their demonic overlords and are thus useful spies.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Notice d10, Occult d6, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Edges: Arcane Resistance

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; half damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.
- **Flight:** Pace 6.
- **Lending:** An imp can share its Power Points with its master as a free action. It cannot be forced to share its power.
- **Magic:** Imps have 20 Power Points and know the following powers: *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *entangle*, *invisibility*, *light/darkness* (*darkness*

only), and *shape change* (Small, Very Small, or Tiny animals only).

- **Night Vision:** Imps ignore Illumination penalties, including Pitch Darkness.
- **Size -2 (Small):** Imps are the size of a cat.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.

☞ Leanhaum-Shee

The leanhaum-shee is a type of vampiric fey. She uses her stunning appearance and seductive ways to enslave men, whom she then drains of their life force.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Performance d10, Persuasion d12, Stealth d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Strong Willed, Very Attractive

Special Abilities:

- **Enslave:** A leanhaum-shee uses her seductive charms to enslave mortals. This works as the *puppet* power but lasts indefinitely. The fey uses her Spirit as the arcane skill. A leanhaum-shee may only ever have one mortal bound to her at a time. The only way a mortal can be freed of the leanhaum-shee's seductive grasp is to find a replacement for him, or to kill the foul fey.
- **Life Drain:** Each week a slave remains enthralled, regardless of the distance between mistress and slave, he must make a Spirit roll or suffer a level of Fatigue that cannot be healed as long as he remains under the creature's thrall. The week after becoming Incapacitated, the poor

wretch perishes. A level of Fatigue is recovered each day if the leanhaum-shee's hold over the slave is broken.

Lycanthrope

Men and women infected with a terrible disease that causes them to transform into hideous beasts, lycanthropes are all too common in the world of Ravenloft. They are generally divided into two categories: true lycanthropes, who are born with the ability to change shape and are generally irredeemable; and cursed (or infected) lycanthropes, who had the disease passed onto them by another lycanthrope, and who have the slim hope of being cured of their affliction.

Many different kinds of animals have lycanthropic analogues, but the most common are werewolves and wererats. Werewolves are deadly wilderness predators, sometimes encountered in packs of true lycanthropes but more commonly met as lone infected souls, killing on the nights of the full moon. (They are covered in the **Bestiary** chapter of *SWADE*.) Wererats are almost never found alone, and they plague many large cities. Weresharks are also common in coastal regions.

Note: In the *Ravenloft* setting, lycanthropes possess **Low Light Vision** rather than **Infravision**. They use the *Fantasy Companion* version of lycanthropic infection rather than the one presented in the *Horror Companion*.

Werebat

While the vast majority of bats eat fruit or insects, the werebats of the Land of Mists are all of the blood-drinking variety. Their bloodlust and ability to change shape can sometimes fool monster hunters into believing that they are

dealing with a vampire or similar undead creature. Natural werebats do not hate their prey, nor are they especially cruel in their hunting; they simply believe that non-lycanthropes are lower in the food chain, and therefore lesser beings.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d6, Intimidation d8, Fighting d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Arrogant

Edges: Alertness

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Blindsense:** A werebat in its animal or hybrid forms can navigate by echolocation. They ignore *invisibility*, *illusion*, and all **Illumination** penalties.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a werebat can assume one of three forms: a large bat, hybrid, or human.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Lycanthropes may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear:** Seeing a werebat's hissing visage is worthy of a Fear check.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a werebat has a 50% of returning to life as one. The character involuntarily transforms every full moon.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark **Illumination**.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Werebats suffer +4 damage from silver weapons.

Wererat

Wererats are the least powerful but most clever of the lycanthropes, and are the most likely to ally themselves with more powerful creatures of evil.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Intimidation d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d6, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Greedy (Major)

Edges: Quick

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a wererat can assume one of three forms: giant rat, hybrid, or human.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Lycanthropes may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear:** Seeing a wererat's hissing visage is worthy of a Fear check.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a wererat has a 50% of returning to life as one. The character involuntarily transforms every new moon.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Wererats suffer +4 damage from silver weapons.

Wereraven

Alone among the lycanthropes of the Land of Mists, wereravens are a force for good and hope. They do not prey upon ordinary humanoids, instead living on a diet of fruits and nuts with the occasional addition of carrion for variety. They survive as goodly creatures in a land of evil by hiding among humans, keeping their numbers low, and avoiding direct confrontation with powerful entities, though they will often act as mentors or advisors to heroes.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Intimidation d6, Fighting d6, Notice d10, Occult d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d8, Taunt d8, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious

Edges: Reliable

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a wereraven can assume one of three forms: raven, hybrid, or human.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Lycanthropes may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear:** Seeing a wereraven assume their hybrid form is worthy of a Fear check for the unprepared.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a wereraven has a 50% of returning to life as one. The character involuntarily transforms every full moon. Wereravens consider it a sin to change someone into a lycanthrope against their will, so they typically fight with weapons or make sure to thoroughly destroy the bodies of those they might have accidentally infected.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Wereravens suffer +4 damage from silver weapons.

Wereshark

Weresharks are a human-shark mix. Like all werecreatures, they have a humanoid form with bestial features. In this instance, the creature has a shark's head and skin, webbed hands, and a dorsal fin.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Berserk

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 10. Hybrid or shark form only.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a wereshark can assume one of three forms: shark, hybrid, or human.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Lycanthropes may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone who sees the brutal attack of a wereshark must make a Fear check.



- **Feeding Frenzy:** The smell of blood can send a wereshark into a mad frenzy. Their Berserk Edge is triggered when anyone in the scene suffers a Wound, not just themselves.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a wereshark has a 50% chance of rising as a similar beast themselves. The character involuntarily transforms every full moon.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Size 1:** Weresharks stand over seven feet tall.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Weresharks suffer +4 damage from silver weapons.

Marikith

The marikith are grotesque hive-minded humanoids, their bodies covered in a rubbery, glistening black hide. Their bodies have no rigid structures beyond their chitinous fangs and talons; they maintain their shape by inflating interlocking bladders in their bodies with fluid. By compressing these bladders, a marikith can squeeze its body through tiny gaps, such as barred windows or drainpipes. Their eyes normally glow a dull red, but they can veil this glow with a special membrane—revealing themselves only when striking.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Performance d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Rubbery hide.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Compression:** A marikith can compress its body enough to squeeze through any gap of at least a foot in

diameter without slowing down. It can squeeze through any space down to four inches across at a Pace of 2.

- **Fearless:** Marikith are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Light Sensitive:** Marikith don't like light. They are Distracted and Vulnerable in illumination brighter than Dim light.
- **Night Vision:** Marikith ignore Illumination penalties, even for Pitch Darkness.
- **Resilient:** A marikith can take one Wound before being Incapacitated.
- **Voice Mimicry:** Although marikith have no true language of their own, they can mimic sounds to mislead or terrify others. They often imitate the cries of recent victims and can echo the comments of current prey.

Moros

The moroi are fearsome humanoid predators that feed on the blood of living creatures. Although sometimes confused with undead creatures of the same vile habits, moroi are a living, breathing race that breeds and dies like any other. These depraved, haughty creatures regard themselves as a race above humanity—wolves among the sheep.

Moroi resemble humans, and only a careful observer may notice their fangs and claws. They are universally beautiful by human standards, blessed with slim, muscular builds, unblemished skin, and an undeniable feral grace. Those not aware of their nature sometimes mistake them for the undead, and at least one culture knows them only as “vampyres.”

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice

d6, Performance d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Attractive, Level Headed

Special Abilities:

- **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Low Light Vision:** Moros eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Narcotic Saliva:** A living humanoid Shaken or Wounded by a moros' bite must attempt a Spirit roll. If the victim fails this roll, he gains the Loyal Hindrance with regards to the moros. Success on the roll renders the target immune to this ability for 24 hours.

Nightmare

The nightmare is a demonic steed sometimes used as a mount by fiends, but sometimes granted to loyal mortals as a gift by infernal patrons. Nightmares are jet-black destriers with red eyes and steaming nostrils. Their black iron horseshoes strike sparks as they run and leave behind flaming hoof prints.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Kick:** Str+d6.
- **Rider Empathy:** If the nightmare's rider is a Wild Card, he can spend his Bennies on behalf of the nightmare, such as for rerolls or Soak rolls.
- **Size 3:** Nightmares are larger than horses and can weigh up to half a ton.

Paka

Beautiful, seductive and deadly, paka are humanoid felines that nurse an ancient, ancestral grudge against humanity and derive sadistic pleasure from bringing ruin to humans. They are wicked and cunning, and often take years to develop their schemes.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Persuasion d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Acrobat, Attractive, Dodge, Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Cat Magic:** A paka has 10 Power Points and knows the powers *beast friend* (cats only) and *healing* (self only). These powers use Spirit as the arcane skill.
- **Canine Antipathy:** Paka don't get along with dogs of any sort. They suffer a -4 penalty to Persuasion when dealing with any canine creatures (including wolves and werewolves).
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Mask:** Paka can choose to look human if they wish, having a single human appearance they can change into. A paka can change between its human and paka shapes as a limited action. They typically use this ability to go disguised among humans, the better to wreak havoc.
- **Pounce:** If a paka makes a Wild Attack, it adds +4 to its damage instead of +2.

Rat Swarm

Rat swarms lurk in sewers or ruined buildings where they sometimes turn

aggressive. Wererats frequently command rat swarms to deadly effect.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Notice d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** A rat swarm inflicts hundreds of tiny bites to its victim. Anyone within the rat swarm's area on its turn automatically suffers 2d4 damage, applied to the target's least-armored location.
- **Infection:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a rat swarm must make a Vigor roll or contract a disease of some sort.
- **Split:** A rat swarm can split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Template). The Toughness of each of these swarms is lowered to 5.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2. Cutting and piercing weapons do no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict his damage in Strength each round. A rat swarm can swim, and so is not foiled by jumping into water.

Ravenkin

Although some see ravens as symbols of ill omen, ravenkin are one of the brightest lights for good to be found in the Land of Mists. Ravenkin are a black-feathered avian race that resembles oversized versions of their raven cousins. They have wingspans of up to five feet and often wear shiny trinkets to identify themselves. True omnivores, ravenkin live on a diet of anything from carrion to berries. They kill when necessary, but they prefer scavenging corpses to the arduous task of hunting.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d4, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d6, Research d6, Spellcasting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Flight:** Pace 8.
- **Raven Link:** Ravenkin can communicate with normal ravens at will, and normal ravens will obey ravenkin without question. A ravenkin can cast spells through any normal raven within a range of Spirit as though the raven were the originator of the power.
- **Size -1:** Ravenkin are smaller than humans but somewhat larger than true ravens. This subtracts 1 from their Toughness.
- **Spells:** Ravenkin are innate spellcasters, and every member of the race has some ability with magic. A ravenkin knows three powers of choice and has 10 Power Points.

Reaver

Reavers are an evil aquatic race that terrorizes those who live on the shores of the Sea of Sorrows. Those who know the sea know to fear the reavers and the bloodshed they bring. A reaver attack is a chaotic and merciless even that leaves rare survivors seeking occupations far inland.

These tall humanoid creatures have sharp scales covering their body and webbing between their claws and toes. Their faces are fishlike, with bulbous eyes and wide mouths filled with rows of sharp teeth. Their scales range in color from dark green to mottled brown to dull black.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Scaly hide.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Dehydration:** Reavers must immerse themselves in water at least one hour out of every 12. Those who do not automatically gain a Fatigue level each day until they are Incapacitated. The day after becoming Incapacitated, they perish. Few reavers remains out of water long enough to suffer in this manner, however.
- **Rending Attack:** Victims Shaken or Wounded by a reaver's claws must make a Vigor roll as a free action at the beginning of each following turn until they roll a raise, suffering a Wound with a failure.

Red Widow

The red widow, or "spider queen," preys upon unsuspecting males, using its seductive human form to lure prey into its clutches. In human form, the red widow appears as a beautiful red-haired woman. Though a red widow's lifespan is barely three decades, her human form always appears to be in the prime of life. In their natural form, red widows are man-sized red spiders with a large black hourglass on their abdomens.

The red widow's life is consumed by her need to feed and breed, but occasionally they have been known to rise above their instincts, becoming truly ambitious predators who seek to better their social standing or extend their lifespan.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a red widow can assume the shape of a beautiful red-haired human woman or her natural monstrous spider shape. In human form, the red widow loses her bite, poison, wall walker, and webbing abilities, but gains the Very Attractive Edge.
- **Poison (-4):** The bite of the red widow in her natural form inflicts a Vigor roll at -4 to avoid Paralysis poison.
- **Wall Walker:** A red widow in her natural form can climb on vertical and inverted surfaces at her normal Pace.
- **Webbing:** Red widows can cast webs from their thorax that are the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a Shooting roll with a range of 6". A hit means the victim is Entangled, or Bound with a raise.

☞ Revenant

A revenant is one of the undead who returns from the grave for a specific purpose. This might be to right a wrong done to them in life, to avenge their own murder, to recover items stolen from their grave, or to stop someone from harming a loved one they left behind.

Revenants understand the languages they knew in life, but they do not speak very often—nor do they accept apologies or bargains. They seek only bloody

revenge on those who have wronged them.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Hindrances: Driven (Major: find killer), Vengeful (Major)

Special Abilities:

- **Fearless:** Revenants are immune to Fear and Intimidation
- **Invulnerability:** A revenant can be slain by weapons normally, but it returns to "life" 1d4 days later. A revenant can only truly rest if its thirst for vengeance is sated, or if *banish* is cast on its body while Incapacitated.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Vengeful:** Revenants add +2 on all Trait and damage rolls against the subject of their vengeance.

Scarecrow

This is a special kind of golem crafted to look like a normal scarecrow. As well as scaring off birds and natural predators such as wolves, they can bolster a village's militia in times of invasion. These magical scarecrows tend to go out of control, however, and can easily become a small town's worst nightmare.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6 (5 with scythe);

Toughness: 6

Edges: Arcane Resistance

Gear: Pitchfork (Str+d6, Reach 1, two hands) or scythe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, two hands)

Special Abilities:

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Scarecrows are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Resilient:** A scarecrow can take one Wound before being Incapacitated.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Scarecrows take +4 damage from fire and count as being highly flammable for purposes of catching fire (*SWADE* 127).

☞ Seducer

Known to scholars as the succubus or incubus, depending on what gender's form they take, a seducer is a type of demonic entity that feeds on the lust and life force of mortals. Seducers resemble beautiful humanoids in their usual shapes. This form is illusory, however, and in their natural form they are winged demons with grotesque faces, leathery skin, and long claws. They use their illusory looks to lure unsuspecting victims into their deadly embrace.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Performance d10, Persuasion d12, Stealth d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Calculating, Charismatic

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Leathery skin.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; half damage from non-magical attacks except for cold iron.

- **Disguise:** As a limited action, a seducer can alter its appearance to that of any humanoid form of Size -1 to Size 1 or assume its true form. The seducer's statistics do not change, except that they may choose to apply the Attractive or Very Attractive Edges to an assumed shape. Assuming the appearance of a specific person requires a Performance check opposed by the Notice of onlookers if they are familiar with the person being imitated. If the seducer is Stunned or Wounded, it must make a Spirit roll to avoid revealing its true shape.
- **Fear:** Seeing a seducer's true demonic shape is grounds for a Fear check.
- **Flight:** Pace 8.
- **Life Drain:** These foul creatures have more than one way to kill. If a seducer kisses a victim, they must succeed on a Spirit roll opposed or suffer a level of Fatigue. This ability is typically used on unresisting targets, but it can also be used as a Touch Attack against a grappled foe. The Fatigue suffered from this ability can Incapacitate and even kill.
- **Lure:** Sometimes good looks isn't enough to lure prey to their doom. These demons can use the *puppet* power with Spirit as their arcane skill. They have 20 Power Points for this purpose.
- **Night Vision:** Seducers ignore Illumination penalties, including Pitch Darkness.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.

Shadow Fey

The shadow fey (sometimes called the *Arak*) are a race of related faerie folk who dwell in a dark nether realm called the Shadow Rift. It is widely believed that the elves, dwarves, and gnomes are exiles from this race, three breeds of faerie folk who chose the touch of the sun and mortality rather than eternal life in the darkness. Neither group will confirm or deny the truth of these rumors, but the strong resemblance of shadow fey to the “mortal” faerie races would seem to be proof of its own.

For their own part, the shadow fey say that their race was once enslaved by a powerful entity called Gwydion, but that they were freed from bondage by the mightiest hero of their race, Arak the Erlking. While the shadow fey consider themselves to be one race, they come in many shapes, forms, and sizes. They are all magical beings and proficient shapechangers, however.

Known breeds of shadow fey include the tiny and mischievous *alven*, the short but powerful *brag*, the cunning *fir*, the graceful but aggressive *muryan*, the small and somber *portune*, the murderous *powrie*, the artistic and noble *sidhe*, the sinister *sith*, and the feral *teg*. A few of them are described here.

Powrie

The powrie are tiny, cruel fey who delight in assassination and espionage at the behest of their larger cousins. Sometimes called “redcaps” for their bloody ways, their delight in sadism has given them great prominence in the Unseelie Courts.

Powries have the most menacing appearance among the shadow fey, with small, warped bodies, wiry beards, mouths full of fangs, snake-like eyes, and large, wasp-like wings. They have an

appearance that might best be described as gnarled and fierce.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d12, Taunt d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean, Ugly (Major)

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Dodge, Quick

Gear: Faerie dagger (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a powrie can transform into a large wasp or other stinging insect. In this shape, they cannot use weapons or their shriek ability, but they gain an innate sting attack (Str+d4) that inflicts their poison without requiring an action. They can also fly in this form at Pace 8.
- **Invulnerability:** Shadow fey can only be Shaken by weapons that are not magical or made of cold iron, not wounded. Powries suffer no damage from steel weapons or electricity, even if the attack is magical in nature.
- **Nightvision:** Powrie ignore Illumination penalties, including for Pitch Darkness.
- **Poison:** A powrie can spit poison onto its blade as an action. Any creature that takes at least a Shaken result from a poisoned blade must attempt a Vigor roll or be struck blind. Anyone struck blind by this poison receives a new Vigor roll each day to overcome the effect. A poisoned blade only remains poisoned for one attack, whether it deals damage or not.
- **Shriek:** As a limited action, a powrie can unleash a terrible scream. All non-fey within a Medium Burst Template centered on the powrie

must attempt a Vigor roll or be struck deaf. Anyone struck deaf by this effect receives a new Vigor roll each day to overcome the effect.

- **Size -2 (Small):** Powries stand only a little more than a foot tall.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a powrie is exposed to direct sunlight they suffer 2d10 points of damage. Even indirect exposure to sunlight causes the powrie to suffer 1d10 points of damage per round. A shadow fey exposed to sunlight suffers a level of Fatigue, regardless of whether or not they suffer Wounds from the damage.

☞ Sidhe

The sidhe are tall, pale, and beautiful, looking very much like white-skinned elves. They tend to have light-colored hair and amber eyes. The sidhe are the most artistic of the shadow fey, acting as patrons of the arts for other faeries and occasionally for humans as well.

Sidhe never seem to lose their tempers, maintaining a calm appearance and speaking in measured tones at all times. Most sidhe consider themselves part of the Seelie Courts.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Occult d8, Performance d10, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Spellcasting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3)

Hindrances: Cautious

Edges: Very Attractive

Gear: Enchanted hunting bow (Range 12/24/48, 2d6, AP 1), enchanted clothing (+3 Armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a sidhe can transform into a swan,

nightingale, or other graceful bird. In this shape, the sidhe cannot use gear or magic and loses access to their Armor bonus, but they gain Flight at Pace 10.

- **Charming Kiss:** A sidhe can use the *puppet* power on a mortal by kissing them, using Spirit as their arcane skill. This can be done to an unresisting target, or to a grappled foe as a Touch Attack. This costs no Power Points, but a failed roll renders the target immune to this ability for a year and a day.
- **Cursed Arrows:** A mortal who is dealt at least a Shaken result by an arrow from a sidhe's bow loses a Benny. A target with no Bennies remaining suffers a level of Fatigue.
- **Invulnerability:** Shadow fey can only be Shaken by weapons that are not magical or made of cold iron, not Wounded. Sidhe suffer no damage from weapons made of stone or glass, even if they are magical.
- **Nightvision:** Sidhe ignore Illumination penalties, including for Pitch Darkness.
- **Magic:** All sidhe are talented magic-users. A typical sidhe has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *deflection*, *invisibility*, *light/darkness*, and *speak language*.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a sidhe is exposed to direct sunlight, they suffer 2d10 points of damage. Even indirect exposure to sunlight causes the sidhe to suffer 1d10 points of damage per round. A shadow fey exposed to sunlight suffers a level of Fatigue, regardless of whether or not they suffer Wounds from the damage.

☛ Sith

The sith are the tallest of the shadow fey, standing nearly seven feet tall; they are gaunt and pale, with stark white hair and black eyes. They prefer dark, somber clothing and have a fascination with death and cruelty. A sith never raises his voice, and they generally talk only in soft, sonorous whispers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d8, Performance d8, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with rapier);

Toughness: 8 (3)

Hindrances: Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Attractive, Quick

Gear: Enchanted rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry, AP 1), enchanted clothing (+3 Armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a sith can turn into a living shadow, able to pass through any gap and fly at a Pace of 6. They cannot attack or use magic in this form, but they are invulnerable to all physical weapons, even magical ones. They can still suffer harm from direct magical attack, however.
- **Fear:** A sith can inspire terror in mortals with his furious visage.
- **Invulnerability:** Shadow fey can only be Shaken by weapons that are not magical or made of cold iron, not wounded. Sith suffer no damage from fire or steel weapons, even if magical in nature.
- **Night Vision:** Sith ignore Illumination penalties, including for Pitch Darkness..
- **Sorcery:** Sith are talented sorcerers, specializing in black magic of various

sorts. A typical sith has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *bolt*, *dispel*, *entangle*, *light/darkness*, *sloth/speed*, and *zombie*.

- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a sith is exposed to direct sunlight, they suffer 2d10 points of damage. Even indirect exposure to sunlight causes the sith to suffer 1d10 points of damage per round. A shadow fey exposed to sunlight suffers a level of Fatigue, regardless of whether or not they suffer Wounds from the damage.

Teg

The teg are a feral race of shadow fey who enjoy an affinity with the beasts of the wild. Though cunning and far from stupid, the teg are asocial in that they prefer animals to people. Teg are shorter than humans with a stout, muscular build. They have long, pointed ears and wide faces with fox-like features. Their hands are tipped in short claws and their trickster's grin reveals a mouth full of fangs. Most tegs have reddish hair and long sideburns.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Humiliate, Work the Room

Special Abilities:

- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, a teg can transform into a fox. In this shape, the teg is Size -2 and Toughness 4, but increases Pace to 8 and becomes Small.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Invulnerability:** Shadow fey can only be Shaken by weapons that are not magical or made of cold iron, not Wounded. Tegs suffer no damage

from cold-based attacks or wooden weapons, even if magical in nature.

- **Night Vision:** Tegs ignore Illumination penalties, including for Pitch Darkness..
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a teg is exposed to direct sunlight, they suffer 2d10 points of damage. Even indirect exposure to sunlight causes the teg to suffer 1d10 points of damage per round. A shadow fey exposed to sunlight suffers a level of Fatigue, regardless of whether or not they suffer Wounds from the damage.

☞ Shadow Unicorn

The evil spawn of a nightmare and a corrupted unicorn, shadow unicorns stalk the wilds of forested domains, glorying in the pain and terror they inflict on their victims. Although omnivorous, shadow unicorns prefer to feed on sentient plants and any other creature capable of suffering. Mating rarely and violently, shadow unicorns are never seen in herds.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Edges: Fleet-Footed

Special Abilities:

- **Fear (-2):** A shadow unicorn's appearance is unnatural and repulsive—those who see it must attempt a Fear check at a -2 penalty.
- **Flaming Horn:** A shadow unicorn can cause his horn to burst into black flame as a free action, searing and scorching gored foes. While this ability is active, the creature's gore attack inflicts +2 damage and a gored target risks catching fire (*SWADE* 127).

- **Horn:** Str+d6.
- **Kick:** Str+d4.
- **Shadow Merge:** Shadow unicorns can meld with the shadows, becoming nearly invisible. They double the bonuses to Stealth for shadowy conditions.
- **Size 3:** Shadow unicorns are somewhat larger and bulkier than horses.

Skeleton

The skin has already rotted from these risen dead, leaving them slightly quicker than their flesh-laden zombie counterparts. They are often found swarming in vile necromantic legions.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fearless:** Skeletons are immune to fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Variant Skeletons

There are numerous variations on the common skeleton. The ones listed below use the skeleton creature above for their base abilities, but add the listed special abilities.

Bloody Bones

A gore-spattered skeleton that constantly weeps sticky blood. This horror carries a wretched disease that poisons the blood of those nearby.

- **Fear:** Those seeing a bloody bones must roll a Fear check.
- **Poisoned Blood:** When a bloody bones is Shaken or Wounded, all adjacent creatures are splattered with blood and must attempt a Vigor roll; a failed roll renders a creature Distracted. A creature that is Shaken or Wounded from the creature's claws must make a Vigor roll or become diseased (chronic). A creature that dies while suffering this disease rises again as a new bloody bones.



Giant Skeleton

Made from ogres, or just from multiple human skeletons, these enormous undead stand roughly ten feet tall. The process of animating them causes an enormous fire to rage inside their ribcages. A giant skeleton can reach into its own ribcage, pull out a piece of this flame, and throw it away, causing an explosion.

- **Fireball:** The giant skeleton has 10 Power Points, with which it can use the *blast* power (Fire Trapping only), using Shooting as its arcane skill.
- **Size 2:** Giant skeletons are ten feet or more tall. A giant skeleton has a Toughness of 9.

☛ Troll, Dread

Dread trolls are large, grey-skinned humanoids of great cunning and sadistic bent. Tall and powerful, trolls hunch over such that their long arms drag the ground; tusks jut from their mouths, and when they have hair at all, it is wiry and greasy. These twisted creatures lurk in the shadows of houses, bridges, and anywhere else people walk alone. The only thing they enjoy more than the taste of innocent flesh is corrupting innocents into becoming agents of evil.

Trolls often sneak into children's bedrooms or lurk in deserted places waiting for victims. Though sometimes content to merely kill and eat its prey, it prefers to instill fear first, allowing its prey to bargain with it. It offers to let the victim go if they promise to bring the troll an even more innocent victim—trolls love nothing more than to have a frightened child drag a younger sibling into its lair, kicking and crying. They also enjoy playing mind games with adults, playing off their passions and weaknesses with uncanny insight.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (1)

Hindrances: Mean, Ugly (Major)

Edges: Alertness, Brute, Humiliate, Menacing, Strong Willed, Sweep

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Tough hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Dread trolls make a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless their Wounds were caused by fire or they're put to the torch after being Incapacitated.
- **Size 2:** Dread trolls normally stand about nine feet tall, massively built.

Vampire

Vampires are among the most feared—and sadly, the most common—of the undead abominations that plague the world of Ravenloft.

Vampires are typically created when an existing vampire drains all the blood from a mortal and then feeds that mortal some of their own blood. Some vampires can create more of their kind simply by draining a poor, luckless fool to death, even without an exchange of blood. A vampire must drink blood to survive and most prefer human blood, though some can survive on animal blood. Vampires are invulnerable to most attempts to kill them, though they can be destroyed by fire, the sun, or a simple wooden stake through the heart.

Common vampires—both newly created and ancient—are described in detail in the *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* bestiary. This section includes several

vampire variants that are common in the Land of Mists.

Aswang

This bizarre variant of the vampire assumes the form of a normal human being by day—even being capable of marrying and having children. By night, however, it becomes a bloodsucking fiend. The creature takes on a hideous mien, including a long, hollow tongue that it can use to siphon blood or drink shadows.

In its human form, the aswang has average statistics and no special skills or abilities other than being Very Attractive. The stats below are for its vampiric form.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Blood Drain:** An aswang can make a Touch Attack on a grappled foe as an action. The victim must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Shadow Lick:** A person whose shadow is licked by an aswang is cursed. The aswang must make a Touch Attack. On a success, the character immediately loses a Benny; a victim with no Bennies left instead suffers Bumps and Bruises. An extra who is the target of this ability must make a Spirit roll or suffer a terrible accident within the next 24 hours that usually results in death.
- **Tongue:** Str+d4, Reach 2.
- **Weakness (Dawn):** An aswang automatically returns to its human form the moment the sun breaks the horizon.

- **Weakness (Garlic):** An aswang must make a Spirit roll to attack anyone carrying garlic.

Elven Vampire

The elf vampire is a tragic figure indeed, their natural longevity sullied by the grimy hand of undeath. The negative energy within an elven vampire poisons the natural world around them, turning their lairs from vital forests to desiccated wastelands. Elven vampires are twisted and scarred mockeries of the lovely fey creatures they once were, and they often wear concealing robes and veils in shame to hide their hideous visages.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d4, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Hindrances: Ugly (Major)

Edges: Dodge, Double Shot, Marksman, Quick

Gear: Bone long bow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6 damage, AP 1, RoF 1), bone arrows

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Black Thumb:** Any living plant smaller than a tree touched by an elven vampire withers and dies instantly. Trees and similarly large plants blacken and die over the course of a day. An elven vampire's lair rapidly becomes a wasteland of dried grass and dead trees. An elven vampire can make a Touch Attack against a plant creature to inflict 2d10 damage, ignoring natural Armor.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, an elven vampire can assume the form of an eagle or giant eagle, or turn back into its normal form.
- **Defiling Leap:** An elven vampire can leap into a nearby plant, killing it, to transport themselves to another plant, which also dies upon their exit. This works as the *teleport* power with the Greater Teleport (*FC* 142) Modifier. This requires no roll or Power Points, and it does not take rounds of concentration to activate, but it uses the vampire's entire round (except movement).
- **Essence Drain:** An elven vampire can drain the very life force of their foes. This takes an action and can only be performed against a helpless or grappled victim. The target must attempt a Vigor roll or lose a die type from their Spirit. If this attack would reduce their Spirit below d4, the victim is Incapacitated and must attempt a Vigor roll or die. Unless slain, the victim recovers one die type every 24 hours.
- **Fear (-2):** The twisted face of an elven vampire causes a Fear check at -2.
- **Invulnerability:** Elven vampires may be Shaken but not Wounded by non-magical attacks, other than their Weaknesses (see below).
- **Sire:** Any elf or half-elf slain by an elven vampire has a 50% chance of rising as an elven vampire in 1d4 days. Other humanoids have a 50% chance of rising again as ghouls.
- **Sleepless:** Elven vampires are immune to the *slumber* power.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't breathe; immune to disease and poison.
- **Weakness (Flowers):** Elven vampires cannot approach within 6" of a flowering plant or freshly picked

flowers (no more than 24 hours old). They also cannot cross a line of freshly picked flower petals. Such objects act as wards (*HC* 48) against them.

- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** An elven vampire whose heart is pierced by a charred wooden stake (Called Shot at -4) is paralyzed and rendered helpless until the stake is removed. They can only be destroyed permanently in this manner if their head is severed and their remains burned on a pyre of wood from flowering trees and shrubs.
- **Weakness (Starlight):** Elven vampires are unharmed by the sun, but the light of the stars is poison to them. If they are not sealed within a pitch-black room when night falls, they suffer 2d6 damage per round until they are destroyed.
- **Weakness (Tree Sap):** Holy water has no effect on elven vampires, but fresh tree sap (no more than 24 hours old) burns them like acid. They suffer 2d6 damage from being splashed by tree sap and suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Weakness (Underground):** An elven vampire who travels beneath the earth suffers 2d6 damage each round, and they are Distracted and Vulnerable while underground. This weakness is only triggered by natural caves or structures that are entirely submerged beneath the earth (such as a man-made tunnel, but not a house's basement).

Jiangshi

The jiangshi, or "hopping vampire" is a hideous beast from an exotic foreign land. Its skin is light green, its mouth is full of sharp teeth, and its nails have hardened into sharp claws.

Jiangshi are called hopping vampires because rigor mortis has stiffened their limbs, making it virtually impossible for them to walk normally; instead, they "hop" from place to place. Even their arms are locked in the rigor of death, being fully extended and only able to bend slightly.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Hindrances: Clumsy

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Breath Sense:** Hopping vampires cannot see using their dead eyes, but instead sense the breath of the living. While a character holds his breath, a hopping vampire cannot detect him at all, suffering a -6 penalty on any action targeting the character. A creature must make a Vigor roll on its turn to hold its breath, with a penalty equal to the number of consecutive rounds it has already held its breath.
- **Jump:** A jiangshi can hop half its Pace vertically in addition to its normal horizontal jumping distance.
- **Sire:** Each time a victim suffers a Wound from a jiangshi's bite, he must make a Vigor roll or suffer the jiangshi curse. Those under the curse transform into a jiangshi themselves in 1d4 days. A victim of a hopping vampire bite who survives the attack isn't necessarily doomed. A traditional cure can be created by a healer familiar with the creature. This requires a Healing or Occult roll at -4.
- **Slow:** Jiangshi roll a d4 for their running die instead of a d6. Running counts as an action for a jiangshi.

- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; immune to disease and poison; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Prayer):** Prayers written on rice paper can be attached to a jiangshi to render it immobile. The attacker must make a Called Shot to the head to plant the parchment. On a success, the vampire is paralyzed so long as the paper strip remains in place. A strong wind can easily dislodge the paper.
- **Weakness (Rice):** Sticky rice sprinkled on the floor burns a hopping vampire's feet. Each round it stands on the rice, even if only for a moment, it suffers 2d4 damage. The creature cannot hop over a line of sticky rice—if it wishes to cross the space, it must walk on the rice and suffer the damage.

Vargouille

Vargouilles are flying heads, given separate awful life by evil magic. Their ears grow to enormous size and begin flapping like wings. The head then rips itself away from the body and begins a new life.

Some vargouilles are also able to create more of their kind by draining a victim to death—after a few days, the victim's head falls off and transforms into another vargouille.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Attach:** With a raise on its Fighting roll to bite, the vargouille has attached itself to the target's head,

automatically grappling the foe. The victim is Entangled. Anyone attacking a vargouille while it is attached hits the vargouille's victim instead with a roll of 1 on the skill die (regardless of the Wild Die).

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Flight:** Pace 10.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a vargouille has a 50% chance to turn into a new vargouille after 1d4 days.
- **Size -3 (Very Small):** A vargouille is little more than a head with wings.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; immune to disease and poison; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

Wendigo

Abhorrent as it may be, people sometimes resort to cannibalism when lost in the wilderness. A few attract the attention of a dark spirit that infests them with a dread hunger, a craving that turns into an addiction to human flesh.

People changed by the wendigo become little more than animals, changing into lean, predatory beasts. Most are gaunt and pale with horrible fangs, but some change further still—growing antlers and other monstrous features as the evil spirit twists their flesh.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Survival d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Tough skin.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.

- **Fear -2:** Anyone encountering a wendigo must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Fearless:** Wendigos are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Immunity (Cold):** Wendigos are immune to cold environments and cold-based attacks.
- **Night Vision:** Wendigos can see normally even in Pitch Darkness.
- **Size 1:** Wendigos stand taller than a human.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Wendigos suffer +4 damage from fire-based attacks.

Wight

Wights are restless dead, most often noble lords whose greed and earthly desires cause their spirits to remain behind to guard their treasures.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Edges: Quick

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Leathery skin.
- **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fear (-1):** Anyone who sees a wight must make a Fear check at -1.
- **Fearless:** Wights are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Grave Touch:** A wight's claws allow them to drain the very life from those they harm. A character who is Shaken or Wounded by a wight's claws must make a Vigor roll. On a failure, the victim suffers a level of Fatigue. A character that reaches Incapacitated from this effect dies in 2d6 rounds, even if the wight does not finish him off, unless he receives immediate

medical attention (the *healing* power or a Healing roll).

- **Spawn:** Any creature slain by a wight's claws has a 50% chance of rising again as a wight. This occurs a mere 1d6 rounds after the victim's death unless the body is destroyed first, or consecrated by a priest.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; Called Shots do no extra damage; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

☠ Barrow Wight

These undead are the corporeal remnants of kings and heroes buried in ages past. Their form is that of a mummified corpse with tight, leathery skin drawn over wasted muscles, and their eyes burn with a pale, cold light. Though they can speak, they know only the ancient tongues that were common in their lifetimes.

Barrow wight tombs are notoriously brimming with treasure—and they intend to ensure that their treasure remains untouched for eternity.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (3)

Gear: Bronze breastplate (+3 Armor), long sword (Str+d8)

Special Abilities:

- **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Bound:** A barrow wight may not move more than 50" from its burial place.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone seeing the horror of a barrow wight must attempt a Fear check at -2.
- **Grave Touch:** A barrow wight's claws allow them to drain the very life from those they harm. A character who is

at least Shaken by a wight's claws must make a Vigor roll at -2. On a failure, the victim suffers a level of Fatigue. A character that reaches Incapacitated from this effect dies in 2d6 rounds, even if the wight does not finish him off, unless he receives immediate medical attention (the *healing* power or a Healing roll).

- **Numbing Touch:** Any creature touched by a barrow wight (including being struck by its claw attack) must make a Vigor roll or become Vulnerable.
- **Spawn:** Any creature slain by a barrow wight's claws has a 50% chance of rising again as a common wight. This occurs a mere 1d6 rounds after the victim's death unless the body is destroyed first, or consecrated by a priest.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to disease and poison; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Barrow wights are weakened by the sun. Each round in sunlight, the creature must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. A barrow wight Incapacitated by sunlight is destroyed at the end of the following round.

Will o' Wisp

Also known as marsh phantoms and ghost lanterns, wisps are malicious spirits resembling glowing balls of light. They captivate victims with their lights, then lead them into quicksand or the lairs of dangerous beasts. They have few combat capabilities and so try to remain a safe distance from their prey.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Notice d10, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 2

Special Abilities:

- **Charm:** By swaying from side to side and pulsating, wisps can charm prey into following them. The will o' wisp can use the *puppet* power to induce people to follow them, using Spirit as the arcane skill. A will o' wisp has 10 Power Points to use this power.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (-6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Size -3 (Very Small):** Wisps measure about a foot in diameter.
- **Spark:** A wisp's natural attack is a jolt of lightning, using Shooting to hit. This attack has a Range of 12/24/48 and inflicts 2d6 damage.

Variant Will o' Wisps

Several creatures similar to the will o' wisp exist throughout the world, as well as will o' wisps that have grown in power over long years of luring travelers to their deaths.

- **Corpse Candle:** This sort of extremely dangerous will o' wisp is a Wild Card with the Fear special ability in addition to their normal powers. Corpse candles are Size -2 and Toughness 3.
- **Rushlight:** These floating, flickering balls of light are actually composed of swamp fire and trapped souls. They have the Undead creature ability and inflict fire damage with their natural attack rather than lightning. They are Toughness 4.
- **Will o' Dawn:** This extremely rare variant is actually helpful to adventurers, leading them away from danger or toward hidden treasures. Their spark ability inflicts no damage

and instead causes victims to make a Vigor roll at -2 or be Stunned.

Wolfwere

Where a werewolf is a human born or cursed with the ability to become a wolf or man-wolf hybrid, a wolfwere is a member of another race altogether—a species of shapeshifters whose natural form is that of a humanoid wolf, but can change into a large wolf or a human form at will. Unlike werewolves, wolfweres carry no disease in their bite; one is either born a wolfwere, or one is not.

Wolfweres delight in trickery, deception, and music almost as much as they love to devour human flesh. Wolfweres frequently become enamored of attractive humanoids, but they have difficulty separating lust and hunger in their minds, leading to unfortunate ends for their “beloved.”

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Performance d10, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Fleet-Footed, Humiliate, Quick
Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Change Shape:** As an action, a wolfwere can assume one of three forms—its natural form (a bipedal man-wolf), a dire wolf, or an attractive human of either gender. The creature uses the same statistics in human or natural form, though in human form it has the Attractive Edge. As a dire wolf, it uses the wolf’s Agility, Strength, and Vigor, as well as its Pace and special abilities.
- **Invulnerability:** Wolfweres can be Shaken but not Wounded by

weapons that are not cold iron or magical.

- **Low Light Vision:** Wolfwere eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. They ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Song of Weariness:** A wolfwere can cast *slumber* using Performance as its arcane skill. It has 10 Power Points to use this power, and can use any of the power’s usual modifiers when activating it (but not generic modifiers).

Zombie

These walking dead are typical groaning fiends looking for fresh meat. While an individual zombie might only be worth a Fear check if encountered by surprise, a horde of them bearing down on a group of heroes probably warrants one.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claw:** Str.
- **Fearless:** Zombies are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.
- **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to a zombie’s head do the usual +4 damage.

Variant Zombies

The walking dead are downright common in the Land of Mists, and there are many variations on their horrific form. The following are just a few of the better-known ones.

Plague Zombie

Most zombies in Ravenloft are magically reanimated corpses with little will of their own. A more dangerous variant is the *plague zombie*, a virulent monster brought to unlife by a magical disease. It is capable of spreading its filth through its bite, making it capable of turning entire towns into charnel houses in a short amount of time.

- **Bite:** While the zombie still attacks with its claws or a slam as a primary attack, it can sink its teeth into prey to spread the disease. A creature who is Shaken or Wounded by this attack must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer zombie fever.
- **Zombie Fever:** This fast-acting Lethal disease forces an infected character to make a Vigor roll once per hour or suffer a Wound. If the character dies, he rises again as a zombie 1d6 minutes later.

☠ Zombie Lord

Not all zombies are mindless. The zombie lord is an intelligent zombie, capable of creating zombies with a single touch of its rotting hands. Some legends say zombie lords are practitioners of dark arts, rewarded with unlife by their patrons. Others claim they are cursed beings who crossed the path of ancient gods or foul demonic lords. While not as powerful as lichs, they are capable necromancers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Occult d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Necromancer^(RR)

Special Abilities:

- **Death Touch:** Zombie lords drain the lives of those around them with a touch. Instead of a normal attack, a



zombie lord may make a Touch Attack. Every raise on its Fighting roll automatically inflicts one Wound to its target.

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Necromancy:** A zombie lord has the *zombie* power, two other powers of choice, and 30 Power Points.
- **Sire:** A victim Incapacitated by the zombie lord's death touch ability dies in 2d6 rounds without medical attention and has a 50% chance returning to life as a zombie within 1d4 rounds.

- **Stench of Death:** Zombie lords reek of death. All creatures adjacent to a zombie lord must make a Vigor roll at the start of their turn or be Distracted.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound modifiers; immune to poison and disease.
- **Weakness (Head):** Called Shots to a zombie lord's head inflict the usual +4 damage.



Chapter 9:

The Doomed and the Damned

Some say that man himself is the greatest monster that can be imagined. If so, the enemies presented in this chapter stand as proof of that assertion—men and women who have fallen into darkness so deep that they could chill the blood to simply hear their deeds.

At the same time, mortal man is *not* a slave to his nature in the same way that one of the undead might be, or a cursed lycanthrope, or a beast of the netherworld. Mortals of all stripes have the capacity to choose good or evil—to rise above their worst impulses or to fall to great depths from their own actions.

This chapter then is about those who have chosen evil or good for their own purposes. Herein, a GM will find generic statistics for common enemies with mortal origins: cultists, killers, bandits, and brigands. While some heroes might feel justified at inflicting lethal retribution on such foes, taking a mortal life is always a burden. Indiscriminate killing can come back to haunt a person in more ways than one.

This chapter is also dedicated to potential allies for heroes—soldiers, watchmen, detectives, villagers, and innocents. These folk may not have the training or dedication of a monster hunter, warrior of light, or sorcerer, but it is their world too.

The final section of this chapter is composed of the luminaries of the Land of Mists—the great champions and worst villains of the setting. Described here are mighty heroes from many eras of the setting's history as well as a plethora of

darklords. Not every darklord mentioned in *Ravenloft Reincarnated* is given a full writeup in this chapter—just enough to whet a GM's thirst for blood.

Mortal Man, Doomed to Die

This section is intended to present allies, enemies, and background characters of all sorts. Their only unifying theme is that they share a mortal (or formerly mortal) origin. They are not undead, shapechangers, or constructs, though some of them possess powers beyond human ken. A few have been touched by the Dark Powers in one way or another but have not finished their journey down the road to perdition.

Whether friend or foe, the characters in this section can all be used to say, "There, but for the grace of god, go I..."

☠ Assassin

How much is a man's life worth? An assassin has answered that question, and even set an amount on the life of another. Whether a lone killer or part of an organization or guild, an assassin is a skilled murderer who lacks scruples when it comes to getting the job done.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice

d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Shooting d6, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges: Alertness, Assassin, First Strike, Thief

Gear: Leather armor (+2 Armor), short sword (Str+d6), throwing knives (Range 3/6/12, Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Poison:** The quickest way to kill someone is with poison. An assassin's first attack in a combat is with a poisoned weapon. The typical poison used by an assassin is Lethal (-2).

Bandit

Bandits are outlaws, earning a living by raiding small settlements or waylaying travelers. Not all bandits are necessarily evil people. Some may have been wrongly outlawed or forced to flee their homes, while others are fighting an unjust system.

The bandits presented here are the standard ruffian sort, though, out to get what they can by whatever means necessary.



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean

Gear: Leather armor (+2 Armor), short sword (Str+d6), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6)

Bandit Chief

A bandit who lives long enough to gather a “crew” of his own can be quite a tough customer.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d6, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Mean

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command

Gear: Chain mail (+3 Armor), long sword (Str+d8), bow (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6)

Citizen

The broad umbrella of “citizen” covers everything from common farmers to moderately skilled craftsmen—essentially, the sort of people one encounters in civilized places, without much in the way of ability to defend themselves from monsters.

These statistics made a good starting point for various innocent victims that heroes might try to save from various horrific fates.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d4, Common Knowledge d6, Notice d4, Stealth d4, Trade d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Knife (Str+d4) or improvised weapon (Str+d6, -2 to Fighting)

Cultist

The mortal worshipers of mad gods, demons, and other vile entities are sometimes known as cultists. Many are stark raving mad, and all are fanatically loyal to their masters—both human and inhuman.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Occult d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Vow (Major: serve the cult)

Gear: Ceremonial robes (+1 Armor), dagger (Str+d4)

☛ Cult Leader

At the top of every cult is a “high priest,” “grand wizard,” or some other such high-titled lunatic. Most have supernatural powers, either granted to them by a vile monster or learned the traditional way and then used to fool the unsuspecting. A given cult leader should have his powers tweaked for appropriate trappings.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Occult d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Vow (Major: serve a dark god)

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic)^(RR)

Gear: Ceremonial robes (+1 Armor), dagger (Str+d4), followers' wealth

Special Abilities:

- **Black Magic:** A typical cult leader has 15 Power Points and knows the following powers: *bolt*, *fear*, *smite*, and *zombie*.
- **Blood Sacrifice:** When a cult leader casts a Black Magic power, they can inflict a Wound on an adjacent allied extra to substitute paying up to 5 Power Points of the cost of the power.
- **Fanatical Followers:** If an allied Extra (such as a common cultist) is adjacent to a cult leader when the leader is hit by an attack, the leader may spend a Benny to have the attack strike the Extra instead.

Fanatical Minion

Every mad scientist or cult leader has a trusty sidekick, and for some reason they're usually pretty hideous. Such minions are also typically quite loyal to their master.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Loyal, Slow (Minor), Ugly (Major)

Edges: Berserk, Brute

Special Abilities:

- **Fanatical:** The minion's Berserk Edge is triggered if he witnesses his master become Shaken or Wounded.
- **Resilient:** A fanatical minion can take one Wound before being Incapacitated.



Knight

A knight is no mere soldier, but rather a heavily armored and highly mobile warrior. In addition to being a sort of cavalry troop, knights are often minor nobility, holding a fortified manor as their personal fief.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Battle d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 10 (4)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Obligation (Major)

Edges: Aristocrat, Command, Soldier

Gear: Plate armor (+4 Armor), long sword (Str+d8), large shield (+2 Parry, -4 Cover), war horse

☛ Mad Scientist

While arcane scientists and alchemists are common in many domains, some have taken it upon themselves to play god, eschewing ethics and sanity in favor of results. Most are surrounded by minions of various sorts—many of which are also their creations.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Occult d8, Persuasion d6, Repair d6, Research d8, Science d10, Stealth d6, Taunt d8, Weird Science d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with sword-cane);

Toughness: 7 (2)

Hindrances: Delusional (Major), Ruthless (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Artificer, Gadgeteer, Scholar (Science)

Gear: Sword-cane (Str+d4, +1 Parry), leather apron (+2 Armor, torso), goggles

Special Abilities:

- **Weird Science:** The typical mad scientist knows two powers and has 20 Power Points. The most common powers known are *bolt* and *protection*, but every mad scientist has their own particular fixations and unique powers.

Mage

Mages range from lowly apprentices armed with a handful of spells to powerful wizards capable of shaking the foundations of heaven. Magic use is often looked at askance in the Land of the Mists, but warlocks and witches alike can find ways to make themselves too useful to persecute—or too feared.

Novice Mage

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d4, Research d8, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Hindrances: Driven (Minor: become a great magus)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Wizard

Gear: Robes (+1 Armor), dagger (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** A novice mage typically has 15 Power Points and knows *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *light/darkness*, and *protection*.



Veteran Mage

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Occult d10, Persuasion d8, Research d10, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with staff);

Toughness: 6 (1)

Hindrances: Driven (Major: uncover mystic secrets)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Channeler, Epic Mastery^(FC), Rapid Recharge, Wizard

Gear: Robes (+1 Armor), staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, two hands)

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** Veteran mages have 25 Power Points and typically know many spells, including *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *fly*, *light/darkness*, and *protection*.

Monster Hunter

Many are called, but most die before they get a chance to prove themselves. Monster hunters are typically people who have had a terrible encounter with something horrible and found it within themselves to do something about it.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Occult d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Thievery d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Brave, Gutsy^(RR), Level Headed, Scholar (Occult)

Gear: Thick leather armor (+2 Armor), long sword (Str+d8), crossbow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6, AP 2, Reload 1), various holy symbols

Noble

For this section, a “noble” can be a person of true aristocratic breeding and bearing, or a person who assumes their traditional function in a more egalitarian government. It also includes courtiers (or bureaucrats) and similar people of the “better class.”

Aristocrat

Some aristocrats are decadent dandies content with living a life of luxury. Others are rich landowners, skilled businesspeople, military commanders, or advisors to a higher authority. They can be ludicrously wealthy or stricken with poverty. Not a small number of them dabble in forbidden arts.

This version presents a typical aristocrat or person high in government. A few specific Edges or Hindrances can refine them as needed.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Performance d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Stealth d4, Taunt d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with rapier);

Toughness: 5

Edges: Aristocrat, Command, Connections

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry), flintlock pistol (Range 5/10/20, 2d6+1, AP 1, Reload 2)

Courtier

A courtier is more than a servant. Such folk are advisors and often hold positions of importance within a court. Most dealings with government will be through a courtier rather than an aristocrat directly.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d4, Notice d8, Performance

d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4 (5 with rapier);

Toughness: 5

Edges: Charismatic, Work the Room

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry)

Priest

Priests are servants of the gods and their church. While not all clerics of the faith can use miracles, enough can that it is considered normal to most religions to have at least one spellcasting priest in a given church.

Non-mystical priests might use the *Courtier* or *Soldier* statistics, depending on the church involved.



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d6, Faith d8, Fighting d6, Healing d8, Notice d6, Occult d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (3)

Hindrances: Vow (Major: serve the faith)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Healer

Gear: Chain mail (+3 Armor), mace (Str+d6), medium shield (+2 Parry, -2 cover), holy symbol

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** The typical spellcasting priest has 15 Power Points and knows *blessing*^(FC), *deflection*, *healing*, and *light/darkness*.

Psychic

Strange powers of the mind sometimes emerge after a severe emotional or physical trauma. A few people are simply born with such powers, which emerge at puberty. A psychic might be an older medium or a young firestarter—either way, their bizarre powers often make them a locus for occult activity.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Occult d4, Persuasion d6, Psionics d10, Stealth d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Outsider (Minor) or Quirk

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics)

Special Abilities:

- **Psionics:** The average psychic has 15 Power Points and knows *bolt*, *havoc*, and either *telekinesis* or *mind reading*.



Serial Killer

Sometimes the human mind snaps under the weight of abject horror—and sometimes, those that stare into the abyss find the abyss staring back. A serial killer is a human being who has gone mad for some reason and turned into a bloody-handed murderer.

Serial killers hunt the innocent, typically people who match a specific type, and kill them in the most awful ways possible. Sometimes, their murders draw the attention of the Dark Powers, who grant them supernatural abilities to improve their killing prowess.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Berserk, Brave, Brawny, First Strike, Frenzy, Harder to Kill, Nerves of Steel (Imp), Sweep, Trademark Weapon

Gear: Trademark weapon (usually something like an axe or short sword, Str+d6), leather smock (+2 Armor, torso only)

The Supernatural Killer

While the statistics here are for a lunatic with a weapon, the Dark Powers sometimes “improve” on such murderers, turning them into real monsters.

A given serial killer might possess a single supernatural power, perhaps two for especially dangerous beings. Listed below are several special abilities that a serial killer might have.

Invulnerable: A serial killer with this ability who is slain simply vanishes or lays as if dead for a few nights and then begins killing again. Such a killer always has a Weakness that can overcome this ability.

Teleport: This killer has the uncanny ability to disappear from sight and then reappear when least expected. As long as no one is looking at them and they can act normally, the serial killer can disappear from the area as a free action, reappearing when dramatically appropriate.

Undead: This killer has actually returned from the grave to keep killing. +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; immune to poison and disease; ignores 1 point of Wound modifiers.

Weakness: The killer has a special weakness to something—possibly to the weapon that slayed them in life (if undead) or is tied to their unique history. A killer who suffers terrible burn scars might fear fire, while a killer who feared their domineering mother might recoil in terror from a person wearing her clothing. Exposure to this weakness should require a Fear check at -4, at the very least, and can result in their

permanent destruction even if otherwise invincible.

Soldier

A soldier might be a common mercenary, a member of a militia, or an army regular. Some have abandoned their units to hire their services out to the highest bidder but not yet fallen to banditry, while others are protectors of their people.

All of the soldiers in a given unit typically have the same weapons and armor to promote unit cohesion and tactics.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Gear: Leather armor (+2 Armor), short sword (Str+d6)

Officer

An experienced soldier commanding his own unit, such warriors typically carry weapons like those of their troops but are often mounted and better armored.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command

Gear: Chain mail (+3 Armor), long sword (Str+d8), riding horse

Thief

Thieves earn their living by stealing. Some are plucky loners while others are

members of a guild or gang. Despite being tricky customers, thieves are often excellent sources of information—if you can find them.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d6, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Edges: Thief

Gear: Leather armor (+2 Armor), short sword (Str+d6), throwing knives (Range 3/6/12, Str+d4)

Warlock

A common term for any spellcaster who turns to the dark arts is “warlock.” Some have made deals with dark forces while others are scholars of forbidden lore.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d6, Research d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Obligation (Major, to the source of their powers), Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Black Magic)^(RR), Channeler

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** An average warlock has 15 Power Points and knows *bolt*, *boost/lower Trait*, *fly*, *light/darkness*, and *puppet*.



Champions of the Mist

The characters in this section are might champions of good, antiheroes, flawed heroes, and the occasional villain seeking redemption. While these individuals are meant to be allies or mentors to a group of heroes, they can also serve as unwitting (or unwilling) antagonists. “Good” doesn’t always mean “nice,” in truth.

☛ Agatha Clairmont

Agatha Clairmont was the youngest child (and only daughter) of a cobbler and his wife in the great city of Paridon. She joined the Celebrants of Mankind as soon as she was old enough to choose for herself, dedicating her life to spiritual and physical purity, as well as the study of alchemical philosophy. She aided the famed Rudolph van Richten in his campaign against the monstrous Lamenting Rake before rising to a position as one of the leading clergy of her faith.

Agatha is a formidable opponent, whether defending herself in a sparring match or on the foggy streets of Paridon. Though she is articulate and highly mannered, she is a master of the martial arts, quite capable of devastating unprepared foes in close quarters combat before lecturing them about the need to mend their low-class ways. She avoids killing whenever possible, viewing it as a waste of human life; she prefers to turn her enemies over to the authorities.

Agatha is tall and broad-shouldered, with a lean but athletic physique and a narrow, plain face framed by carrot-orange hair. She typically dresses in the garb of her order, a charcoal gray tabard over a loose white tunic and trousers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d8, Research d8, Science d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6, Weird Science d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6 (7 with staff);

Toughness: 8

Hindrances: Pacifist (Minor), Vow (Major: serve the Celebrants of Humanity)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Alchemist^(RR), Brawler, Bruiser, Counterattack, Extraction, Fleet-Footed, Frenzy, Level Headed, Martial Artist, Sweep

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, two hands), unarmed strike (Str+d8)

Special Abilities:

- **Alchemist:** As an alchemical philosopher of the Celebrants of Humanity, Agatha knows some basic arcane science. She has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *boost/lower Trait*, *deflection*, and *healing*. Her powers always take the form of single-use potions, poultices, and the like.

☛ Alanik Ray

Often simply called “the great detective,” Alanik Ray is one of the foremost minds in the field of deductive science in the modern world. Born to a wealthy elven family, Ray saw at a young age that others did not benefit from the same privileges that he enjoyed. Everywhere he turned, he saw only corruption and deceit. When he came of age, he turned his matchless intellect upon the underbelly of society.

As he gained in skill as a detective, Ray found that the corruption he saw had sunk its roots into the upper class as well—even into his own family. His accusations left him disowned and set against his own father. In time, Ray found allies, including a young doctor named Arthur Sedgwick, and brought down his father's criminal empire. Since then, he has kept himself busy as a consulting detective, which helps sustain his extravagant lifestyle.

Slender even for an elf, Alanik Ray can often seem gaunt at his six feet of height. His features are sharp and angular, with keen eyes set below a knife-edged brow. Ray's golden-blond hair is typically pulled back severely, giving him a pronounced widow's peak and a high forehead. Ray's only nod to vanity are his finely tailored silk suits, embroidered in gold, red, and blue.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d10, Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Languages (several) d8, Notice d10, Occult d8, Performance d8, Persuasion d8, Repair d10, Research d10, Riding d8, Science d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Taunt d10, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (2)

Hindrances: All Thumbs, Arrogant, Enemy (several), Habit (Minor: condescending attitude)

Edges: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Charismatic, Connections (multiple), Extraction, Investigator, Jack-of-All-Trades, Quick, Scholar (Science), Thief

Gear: Goldenfang (magical dagger, Str+d4, AP 2, +2 Fighting), flintlock pistol (Range 5/10/20, 2d6+1, AP 1), lockpicks, disguise kit, concealed armored vest (+2 Armor, torso only)

Special Abilities:

- **Low Light Vision:** Alanik Ray can see in near-darkness, allowing him to ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.

☛ George Weathermay

Born to a wealthy family, George Weathermay was a boy with a gentle spirit and good heart. Dismayed by the rumors that his family had trafficked with dark powers in old times, he devoted himself to hunting, tactics, and investigation to prepare himself to become a great hero. George has devoted his life to helping the common folk of the world and making his family's name synonymous with heroism rather than treachery.

Though uncomfortable with other people, George is skilled with animals. He has made friends and allies with many other heroes in spite of his discomfort with people, though he remained a deeply lonely man for much of his adult life. George thought he had finally found happiness with a woman named Natalia, but she turned out to be a lycanthropic assassin using George's emotions to get close to the hero's ally, the famed scholar Rudolph van Richten. In the ensuing battle, Natalia escaped but George's beloved niece Gennifer was wounded.

Since this incident, George has descended deeper into isolation. He sought out and destroyed the werewolf clan that Natalia came from, an act that still haunts him with its ruthlessness and vengeful nature. Every day draws George down a dark path toward a place of hate and anger, further from the light he once cherished.

George is a tall, lean man in middle age with slender, hawkish features. His dark brown hair has grown streaked with grey

from his encounters with terror, and his dark eyes can cut into a man's soul. Around pretty women or grateful villagers, his expression softens, but he often finds himself stuttering or stammering if he can bring himself to speak at all.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Battle d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d10, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Occult d8, Persuasion d4, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Hindrances: Enemy (many), Heroic, Outsider (Minor), Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Arcane Resistance, Beast Bond, Beast Master, Brave, Combat Reflexes, Command, Danger Sense, Extraction, Frenzy, Iron Jaw, Level Headed, Marksman, Nerves of Steel, Tactician, Two-Fisted

Gear: Gossamer (magical long sword, Str+d8, inflicts normal damage to incorporeal foes, +2 Fighting), short sword (Str+d6), silver dagger (Str+d4), longbow (Range 15/30/30, 2d6), holy symbol, holy water, hunting hounds, war horse

☛ Isolde

Isolde appears to be a tall, statuesque woman with long, dark hair and pale skin. Her eyes are a crystalline blue, and her expression is distant and somehow forbidding. She dresses in practical traveling garb that somehow never seems dirty or disheveled. When trouble threatens her carnival, she belts on a long sword in a well-worn scabbard, but no one can ever recall seeing her draw it.

Few living people have ever seen Isolde's true form—a winged, elfin being

glowing with holy radiance, her eyes a searing blue-white. There is no word in the Land of Mists for what Isolde really is, but the closest that any of the local faiths would be able to come is "angel." She is a servant of the universal powers of good, descended to the Domains of Dread in order to hunt her quarry, an infernal war criminal locally known as "the Gentleman Caller."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Faith d10, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Occult d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (4)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Driven (Major: find the Gentleman Caller), Heroic, Loyal, Vow (Major: protect the people of the Carnival)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Miracles), Attractive, Aura of Courage^(FC), Champion, Holy Warrior

Gear: Enchanted long sword (Str+d8, AP 2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Aura of holy power.
- **Flight:** Pace 12.
- **Low Light Vision:** Isolde ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Miracles:** Isolde is a powerful servant of light. She has 25 Power Points and knows the following powers: *banish*, *blessing*^(FC), *boost Trait*, *detect arcana*, *healing*, *light*, *protection*, and *smite*. She can cast her powers silently and without the use of a holy symbol at no penalty.
- **Mistress of the Carnival:** In some ways, Isolde is like a darklord with the Carnival as her domain. She cannot seal it off from the outside world, but closed domain borders

cannot stop the Carnival when it is on the move, and the special powers of darklords have no hold over her or those within the bounds of the Carnival's grounds. Similarly, mortal magic cannot pierce the edges of the Carnival, as though they were a domain border. Isolde can use any miracle within the Carnival's boundaries as a ritual at no monetary cost; she gains +4 on her Occult rolls to perform such rituals. The only task she is utterly incapable of performing is reversing the effects of the Twisting. She gives serious consideration to any other use of her powers, however, as she has no desire to draw undue attention to those under her protection.

☛ Ivan Dragonov

Ivan Dragonov is one of Ravenloft's greatest heroes—and greatest tragedies. He is a monster hunter who has become what he most hated, afflicted with the dread disease of lycanthropy. Dragonov uses these bestial powers in his endless war against the creatures with whom he is now kindred.

Ivan is a powerfully built man whose massive frame makes him look even more imposing than the monsters he hunts. His hair is fiery red, hanging down to his shoulders, and he wears a full beard. His dark tan is broken only by a lattice of white scars, remnants of countless battles.

As a child in Falkovnia, Ivan's powerful build seemed to destine him for the military or the life of a thug. Instead, he became friends with an old priest who was able to send him on a better path. Ivan eventually decided to hunt evil and protect the innocent with his strength,

embarking on the life of a monster hunter.

After becoming infected with lycanthropy during a battle gone wrong, Ivan sought to cure his curse through the intervention of his old friend, only to transform during the ritual and kill the old man. Dragonov has wandered the land for nearly two centuries since then, unable to kill himself and no longer aging, seeking redemption by destroying every lycanthrope in the world.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d12, Healing d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d4, Occult d8, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Survival d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9 (8 with axe); **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Hindrances: Death Wish, Heroic, Lycanthropy, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Alertness, Berserk, Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Counterattack, Danger Sense, Fast Healer, First Strike, Frenzy (Imp), Hard to Kill, Iron Jaw, Monster Hunter^(HC) (werebeasts), Nerves of Steel (Imp), Sweep (Imp), Woodsman

Gear: Enchanted silver great axe (Str+d10, AP 1, Parry -1, two hands, +1 Fighting), crossbow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6, AP 2), silver bolts, thick hide armor (+2 Armor), wolf's-bane extract

Special Abilities:

- **Cursed Lycanthrope:** When Ivan Dragonov's Berserk Edge is triggered, he actually transforms into a monstrous wolf-man. Replace his statistics with those of a **werewolf** until he comes out of his Berserk state. He also changes involuntarily during the three nights of the full moon.

☛ **Rudolph van Richten**

Few adventurers are as well known in the Land of Mists as Rudolph van Richten. He has been an ally and mentor to an entire generation of heroes, as well as having destroyed more monsters in his years than any ten other hunters put together. Few would recognize the unassuming older man on sight—his legend exceeds his appearance.

Rudolph van Richten was once a doctor in a small city, running an herbal supply store on the side. He was happily married and had a young son upon whom he doted. When he was unable to save a badly injured member of a tribe of wandering folk, their leader kidnapped his son in retribution, then sold the boy to a vampire as a slave.

Rudolph caught up too late to save his son's life—and then had to kill him a second time when the boy rose as one of the undead. He was too late to save his wife from the vampire's vengeance, and only survived through luck and guile. He slew the vampire that had destroyed his family, then exacted awful vengeance on the tribe that had cursed him so.

Dr. van Richten found that vengeance left him hollow. He came to the realization that what had destroyed his family was a lack of knowledge; had he known more about the monster he faced, he might have saved his son and wife. He dedicated his life to seeking out the horrors of the night and studying them—and using that knowledge to destroy them wherever they lurked. More than any other monster hunter in history, Dr. van Richten has excelled at making connections to other like-minded folk, training them, arming them, and giving them the benefit of his (often painfully earned) experience.

These days, Dr. van Richten is an older man with a kind-looking face and thin white hair. He looks more like a kindly uncle or grandfather than a dedicated slayer of monsters. When on the hunt, his face takes on a resolute determination that pushes others to greatness.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d10, Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d12, Fighting d8, Healing d10, Intimidation d8, Languages (several) d6, Notice d10, Occult d12, Persuasion d8, Repair d8, Research d12, Riding d6, Science d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Taunt d10, Thievery d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Cautious, Elderly, Heroic, Mild Mannered



Edges: Alertness, Block, Charismatic, Command, Command Presence, Connections (many), Danger Sense, Dodge, Healer, Hold the Line, Improvisational Fighter, Inspire, Investigator, Jack of All Trades, Level Headed (Imp), Linguist, Monster Hunter^(HC) (constructs, demons, fey, ghosts, liches, mummies, vampires, walking dead, werebeasts), Scholar (Occult, Research)

Gear: Too many monster hunting tools to count; Rudolph van Richten almost always has the correct gear on hand to handle the current threat.

☉ Tara Kolyana

A beautiful young woman of high ideals and deep compassion, Tara Kolyana naturally gravitated toward the Church of Ezra. Though she was born in Barovia, her family fled that dread realm when she was an infant.

As a child, Tara was quick-tempered and passionate. Always something of a tomboy, Tara longed for adventure. When she was a teenager, a great wolf plagued her home village; feeling that the traps laid to kill the beast were cruel, she instead set a trap to capture it. She found that she had instead snared a person—a man cursed with lycanthropy. With the help of the village priest and a troupe of the wandering folk, the man was cured.

Tara found a genuine sense of peace in saving a man's life and soul. After a few years of adventuring, she found her calling with the Church of Ezra, where she has become a popular and modestly famous priestess, particularly noted for her aversion to violence and preaching about mercy. Her nickname among the clergy, "the daughter of the angels," makes her acutely embarrassed.

As a grown woman, Tara Kolyana is almost painfully beautiful. Her hair is sunset red and her eyes emerald green. Her general expression is one of peace and kindness, which only makes her more appealing to others.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Faith d10, Fighting d6, Healing d10, Notice d10, Performance d6, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with staff);

Toughness: 7 (1)

Hindrances: Pacifist (Major), Vow (Minor: serve the Church of Ezra) **Edges:** Arcane Background (Miracles), Aura of Courage^(FC), Brave, Chosen of Ezra^(RR), Destroy Undead^(RR), Fame, Healer, Level Headed, Very Attractive

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, two hands), holy robes (+1 Armor), prayer book, holy symbol

Special Abilities:

- **Miracles:** Tara Kolyana has 20 Power Points. She knows the following powers: *banish*, *blessing*^(FC), *boost/lower Trait*, *deflection*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *healing*, *light/darkness*, *relief*, and *stun*.

The Damned

What makes a man choose evil over good? What impulse pushes a woman toward her own damnation in spite of every opportunity to turn back? The answer is simple: pride.

Ultimately, every darklord is a victim of their own hubris, an overweening pride that hardened their heart bit by bit until the only conceivable choice left to them was to damn themselves utterly. Had they been able to view themselves critically at any point—to say “I am at fault, *mea culpa*”—and to make amends for their misdeeds, they might have avoided their fate.

But they didn’t. And now each one stands as supreme lord and ultimate prisoner of a little piece of hell they can call their own.

Darklords are pitiable, but they should not be pitied. They are sympathetic, but they deserve not your sympathy. Remember always that they were damned by their own hand. No one forced them to be monsters—they became monsters because, ultimately, they decided to.

Should you decide to pity or sympathize anyway, in spite of these warnings, then remember: also *be afraid*.

Not all of the beings in this section are darklords. Some are on the path to damnation, while others are unique and terrible monsters who, for whatever reason, have not been granted their own private hell. Just because they do not hold a domain does not make them any less dangerous. Indeed, some are more dangerous due to their freedom.

In either case, caution is advised.

☛ Adam, Mordenheim’s Monster

Dr. Victor Mordenheim was a man obsessed with defying the gods and creating life. He believed that everything could be boiled down to logical purposes, could be studied with reason and intellect. Adam was his greatest creation—and his worst mistake.

Victor had created many soulless constructs before Adam, but it was his intention to make something that had the intelligence and creativity of a human being, something that could think and feel. Adam could do both; though he was childlike when created, he rapidly grew in understanding and intelligence. He showed more humanity in some ways than Victor himself, acting as playmate and friend to Victor’s daughter, Eva, and a household helper to Victor’s wife, Elise.

Adam did indeed have a soul; the more he learned about the world around him, the more he longed for companionship and understanding. He longed to take his creator’s place, to be kind to Victor’s wife and daughter in ways that Victor himself was no longer capable of being. When he approached Elise about leaving her cold and distant husband, she rejected the creature, leaving him confused and hurt. In the end, Adam decided to leave Mordenheim’s home, seeking freedom in the world beyond—and to take his only friend, Eva, with him when he left.

Eva was startled when Adam woke her up and screamed. Adam struggled to silence the girl without hurting her, but her mother attacked him while he was distracted. In a moment of instinct, he struck out—crushing Elise’s skull with one massive blow. Eva fled from the monster and fell from the balcony into the waters below. Victor arrived in time to see his wife mauled and his daughter lost—and to watch his “son” fling himself from the

castle walls and into the frigid waters below.

Adam did not find Eva, either alive or dead. Now, he wanders Lamordia, alone and friendless. He has passion, imagination, and creativity aplenty, but no one to share them with, and his loneliness makes him lash out at the people around him. He is convinced that no one could ever love a monster like him, and his every action makes it a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Adam is a patchwork man, nearly eight feet tall. His skin is an unhealthy grey color, and his features are mismatched and uneven. His hair is lank and greasy, and his overall appearance is one of neglect and poor hygiene.



Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d4, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Swimming d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Hindrances: Mean, Outsider (Major), Ugly (Major)

Edges: Arcane Resistance (Imp), Berserk, Brute, Fleet-Footed, Menacing, Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Reinforced bones and tough skin.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; immune to poison and disease.

Darklord of Lamordia: Adam shares his damnation with his creator; for his envy and his mutilation of Elise Mordenheim, Adam stands as darklord. He can channel his self-loathing into powerful storms, closing the borders of his domain. Every day, he makes a Spirit roll at a cumulative -1 penalty; a failure opens the borders and leaves him unable to close them again for at least a week.

- **Fear:** Adam's hideous appearance prompts a Fear check in onlookers.
- **Fearless:** Adam is immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Hardy:** Adam does not suffer a wound from a second Shaken result.
- **Pain Transference:** If Adam and Dr. Mordenheim are present in the same scene, they feel one another's pain. If either is Shaken or Wounded, the other must immediately make a Vigor check or be Shaken as well.
- **Size 1:** Adam stands just shy of eight feet tall.
- **Slam:** Str+d6.

• Alfred Timothy

One of six children of darklord Nathan Timothy, Alfred was a sickly child before his first change. He grew up detesting his father's desire to assimilate into human society, believing that humans are nothing more than livestock to be slaughtered at will. After his near-death experience at the hands of slavers, Alfred became a fervent follower of the Wolf God, a divine manifestation of predation and instinct. Since claiming the territory of Verbrek for himself, Alfred has become the leader of a mighty pack of werewolves—both natural lycanthropes who follow him willingly and cursed fools who accepted infection in exchange for positions of power over their fellow man.

Alfred is unsatisfied, however; he longs to eradicate the last bastions of humankind in his territory, but he knows that without the humans as enemies to rally against, it would be far more difficult to keep his massive pack together.

Worse, he has found that whenever he succumbs to anger, fear, or lust, he reverts to his sick, weakly human form. Should the rest of his pack discover this secret, he would face immediate challenge for his position—or worse.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Faith d10, Fighting d12+2, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10, Survival d10

Pace: 8 (6 in human form); **Parry:** 11 (4 in human form); **Toughness:** 9 (4 in human form)

Hindrances: Cautious, Secret (Major: curse of calm), Thin Skinned (Minor)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Miracles), Block (Imp), Fleet Footed, Frenzy (Imp), Quick, Wolf Pack^(RR)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, Alfred can assume one of three shapes: human, a massive hybrid form, or an immense dire wolf.
- **Curse of Calm:** Alfred can only assume his true werewolf form when his emotions are under control. When he becomes enraged, afraid, or lustful, he reverts to his weaker human shape. In this shape, he is Size 0 and loses his natural attacks, Fear, and Low Light Vision, loses all Edges other than Arcane Background, and his physical Attributes and Skills become d4.
- **Darklord of Verbrek:** Alfred cannot close the borders of the domain in any traditional sense, as he lacks the willpower and focus necessary to do so. However, he can command legions of wolves and werewolves to scour the forests when he desires, and few merely human foes can escape such a concerted hunt.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Alfred can attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear (-2):** The sight of a werewolf in its monstrous hybrid form can chill the blood.
- **Infection:** Alfred has enough control over his attacks that he can choose to infect those he brings down with his natural attacks, or to rend them so completely they have no chance to rise again as werewolves. Alfred can utterly control any infected werewolf he creates in this fashion while they are transformed.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.

- **Miracles:** As high priest of the Wolf God, Alfred can cast the following miracles—*beast friend*, *blind*, *boost/lower Trait*, *entangle*, *healing*, *protection*, and *smite*. He has 25 Power Points.
- **Size 2:** In his hybrid form, Alfred is larger than any man.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Alfred suffers +4 damage from silver weapons.

☛ Azalin Rex

Wizard. King. Darklord. Prisoner.

Azalin Rex has borne many names and titles across the length of his unnaturally long existence, but the last is the one that chafes at him the most. He is well aware of the nature of the Domains of Dread, and his own status as a prisoner of the Dark Powers. For decades, he has schemed and plotted ways to break free of his imprisonment, only for each of them to fail at the last moment. Between ventures, he alternately seethes and rages, constantly testing the edges of his cage.

Azalin is frequently distracted from his arcane studies by the mundanities of running a nation—a task that he despises but which he trusts no one else to undertake in his stead. Due to his curse, Azalin is incapable of learning new magic; unfamiliar arcane knowledge slips from his mind like water through a sieve. He is quite adept at using his existing knowledge in unusual ways, but the inability to expand his mystical power is a constant aggravation to the wizard.

Perhaps the subtlest but most dangerous aspect of Azalin's curse is the presence of the small, kind voice that haunts him in his darkest moments. The ghost of his son Irik whispers to Azalin when he is alone, telling him that he could be a better man than he is, suggesting mercy and kindness over ruthless expedience.

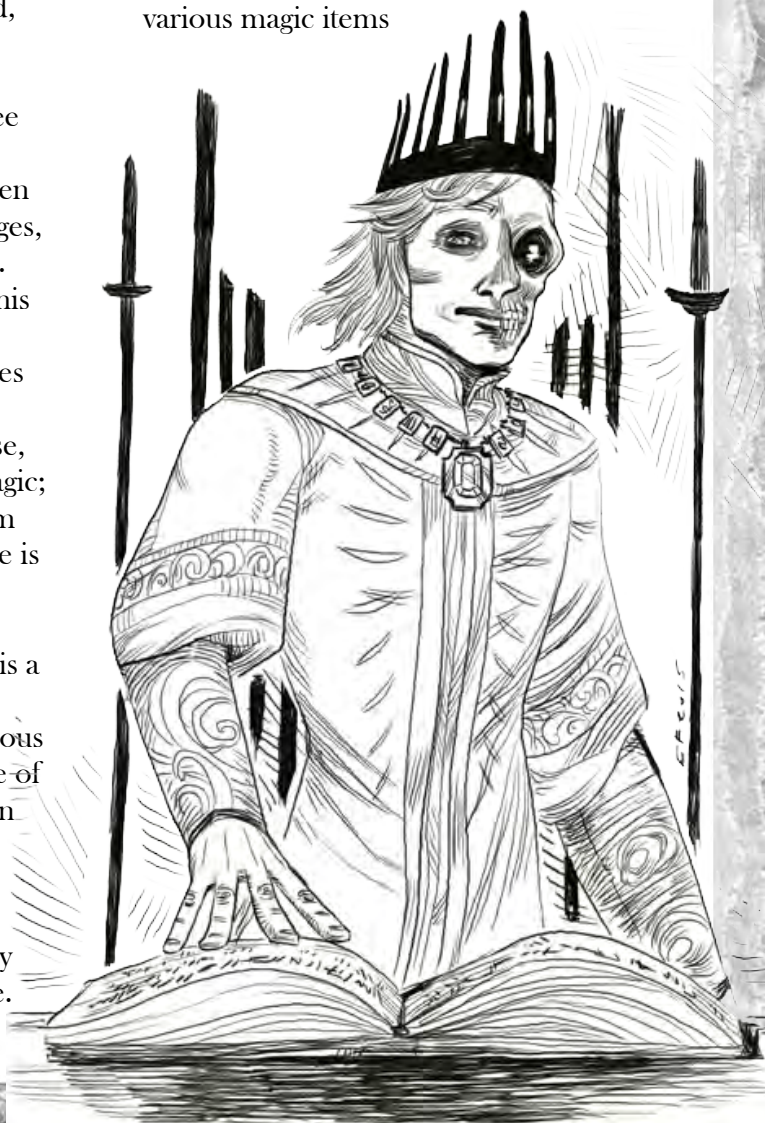
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10
Skills: Academics d10, Athletics d6, Battle d10, Common Knowledge d12, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Occult d12+2, Persuasion d8, Research d12, Riding d6, Spellcasting d12+2, Stealth d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 15 (6)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Code of Honor, Curious, Overconfident, Quirk (monologuer)

Edges: Arcane Focus^(RR) (staff), Arcane Background (Magic), Arcane Resistance (Imp), Archmage^(RR), Channeling, Concentration, Epic Mastery^(FC), Level Headed (Imp), Power Surge, Rapid Recharge (Imp), Wizard

Gear: Enchanted robes (+6 Armor), various magic items



Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Darkon:** Azalin can close the borders of Darkon at will and keep them closed virtually indefinitely. When he wishes to seal his domain, a limitless army of the undead rises from the earth at the borders, seething with hate for the living. A dedicated force could fight their way through the horde, but doing so is virtually impossible for all but the most powerful. Flying creatures are no safer—their power of flight mysteriously fails partway across the horde.
- **Death Touch:** As a lich, Azalin can drain the life force from others with a touch. Every success and raise on a successful Touch Attack automatically inflicts a Wound. A creature slain by this attack automatically rises as a zombie under Azalin's control if he wishes it.
- **Fear:** When Azalin allows others to see his true undead appearance, it can chill the blood.
- **Invulnerability:** Azalin can be Shaken but not Wounded by non-magical attacks.
- **Lord of the Dead:** Azalin has the Command, Fervor, and Tactician Edges with respect to undead Extras under his control. The undead that Azalin raises through the *zombie* power are permanent and cost him no Power Points to maintain. Every undead Extra in Darkon is automatically under Azalin's control if he wishes it; as an action, he can share the senses of any undead Extra in the domain, which leaves him Vulnerable as long as he does so.
- **Memory Modification:** Azalin can shape the false memories created by Darkon like a virtuoso composer. He can shield specific individuals from

having their memories stolen, restore such memories once taken, or even imprint new false memories into anyone within Darkon's borders as the *mind wipe* power with the Edit Modifier, but with no restriction on the duration of the memory and no ability to resist. As with Darkon's standard memory drain, however, a subject's true memories immediately return the moment they leave the domain. In addition, Azalin's mind bleeds into the thoughts of those whose minds he touches, leaving behind disturbing, incongruent elements woven into the relevant memories that can unravel the truth if examined too closely.

- **Phylactery:** If Azalin is slain but his phylactery remains undamaged, he possesses an appropriately prepared corpse somewhere in Darkon and fully reforms in 1d6 days. Should Azalin's phylactery be destroyed, he is immediately aware of the fact and may create a new one with 1d4 weeks of constant work. Azalin can only be permanently killed if his current body is destroyed while he lacks a phylactery.
- **Spells:** Azalin has 65 Power Points and knows virtually every magic-user power. Though he cannot learn new magics, his existing repertoire is almost unimaginable to lesser casters.
- **Transfer Essence:** As an action costing 5 Power Points, Azalin can transfer his essence to any Extra undead within 12". When he does so, his old body crumbles to dust and the possessed creature transforms into an exact copy of him with no Wounds.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties; doesn't

breathe; immune to disease and poison.

☛ **Dominic d'Honaire**

A member of the aristocratic d'Honaire family, Dominic has been immersed in politics since he was a young boy. His father was a sitting member of the ruling council of Dementlieu until his retirement, and Dominic followed in his footsteps. Dominic is well known for being a political moderate, courted for his vote but disdained for his lack of strong convictions on any particular issue. Few people would associate the middle-aged, slightly pudgy Dominic d'Honaire with being the secret master of Dementlieu.

In fact, Dominic is the darklord of the domain, a corrupt and venal man who has unique powers of the mind that allow him to manipulate and control those around him with impunity. Dominic treats lives like pieces in a game he plays primarily against himself, seeing how far he can push someone before they break, uplifting the common and crushing the mighty to observe their floundering, and generally tormenting those around him like a boy pulling the wings off a fly.

Dominic's powers started manifesting when he was but a boy, and it was his cunning and ambition that pushed his father into politics, where the man essentially became a puppet for his son's machinations. Dominic has only increased the scope and range of his plans since then, turning Dementlieu into his personal playground. His only challenge has been the crime lord called "the Brain," who Dominic suspects to have powers similar to his own.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d4, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d12, Psionics d12, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Amorous, Cautious, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionic), Aristocrat, Charismatic, Connections, Deceptive^(FC), Iron Will, Mentalist, Mindbender^(RR), Streetwise

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Dementlieu:** Dominic has a powerful will, allowing him to close the borders of his domain for days or weeks on end. He rarely uses this power, however, since trade is the lifeblood of Dementlieu. When he does so, the distances at the border become uncertain and vague; travelers find themselves turning back to Dementlieu without remembering why.
- **Inverse Charisma:** Dominic's suffers a -8 penalty on Persuasion rolls targeting women to whom he is attracted. Further, such women are immune to Dominic's psychic powers.
- **Mesmerist:** Dominic can implant subtle suggestions into targets, allowing him to control them without them ever knowing. A character who resists Dominic's mental powers is only aware of being targeted by an unnatural ability if Dominic rolls a Critical Failure. Dominic can also use this power to instill the Loyal Hindrance (targeted at himself) into an individual through 1d4 hours of conversation and hypnotic reinforcement. The target receives a

Spirit roll at -4 to resist; this alteration lasts for 1d4 weeks.

- **Psychic:** Dominic is a powerful psychic, though he has never trained his powers much outside of his primary focus—mental manipulation. Dominic has 30 Power Points and knows the following powers: *confusion, empathy, fear, mind reading, mind wipe, puppet, and slumber.*

☠ Ebb

Fearful legends of a creature called “the Night Wyrn” have spread throughout Darkon. Those who know the legends to be true are even more fearful of their originator, the shadow dragon called Ebb. Born on an outlander world many centuries ago, Ebb was drawn to Darkon not long after the slaughter of most of her kin. Despite an initially rocky meeting with Azalin Rex, the two became allies and partners with a respect born from a mutual disdain for the mortals that surrounded them.

Ebb despises both living creatures and bright sunlight, spending most of her time in her lair in the highest tower of Castle Avernus. She is not particularly greedy as dragons go, but she is merciless and intensely possessive, willing to stop at nothing to recover anything stolen from her hoard, no matter how insignificant. She occasionally serves as Azalin’s mount when the wizard-king wishes to travel without using his magic or simply wishes to impress others.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Occult d10, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d12

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 21 (4)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Loyal (to Azalin), Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Frenzy, Wing Gust^(FC)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Fear (-2):** Anyone who sees Ebb’s dread visage must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Breath Weapon:** Ebb can breathe forth a cloud of shadowy necromantic energy for 3d6 damage. Anyone Shaken or Wounded by this attack also takes a level of Fatigue.
- **Flight:** Pace 24.
- **Hardy:** A second Shaken result doesn’t cause a Wound.
- **Magic:** In addition to being a powerful dragon, Ebb is a moderately talented magic-user. She has 30 Power Points and knows the following powers: *blast* (unholy blight), *darkness*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *divination* (speak with dead), *locate*^(FC), *lower Trait*, *summon ally* (conjure shadow minions).
- **Night Vision:** Ebb can see in perfect darkness. She ignores Illumination penalties.
- **Size 9 (Huge):** Ebb is nearly 70 feet long from nose to tail.
- **Shadow Meld:** When in Dim or Dark Illumination, Ebb’s scales blend with the darkness, increasing Illumination penalties to attack her by 2 points (maximum -6).
- **Swat:** Ignores up to 4 points of Scale penalties when attacking creatures smaller than herself.
- **Tail Lash:** Str+d4. Ebb may make a free attack against up to two foes to her side or rear at no penalty.

- **Unstoppable:** Ebb takes a maximum of one Wound per attack no matter how many Wounds would normally be caused (after Soak rolls are made).
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** When exposed to direct sunlight, Ebb is Distracted and Vulnerable.

☛ Gabrielle Aderre

Gabrielle's mother was one of the wandering folk until she was made a slave in a distant land, escaping while pregnant. She would never tell Gabrielle about her father, saying only that his evil would lurk within Gabrielle for her entire life. The older woman raised Gabrielle to believe she was evil too, and that she should never marry or have children for fear of passing her evil onto them. In time, her mother's abuse became too much for Gabrielle to bear; she betrayed her mother and left her to die. Her mother's death did not satisfy Gabrielle, and she wandered from place to place, turning loved ones against one another with her magic to "prove" that family and loyalty were lies.

In time, she came to the notice of Bakholis, the tyrant of Invidia, and was taken before him as a captive. She turned the tables on her captor and killed him, driving out or turning most of his servants to her side. She began calling herself "queen" as an amusement, albeit one that quickly faded, and satisfied herself with petty games of cruelty among her subjects.

Gabrielle was eventually seduced herself, by a mysterious gentleman caller who left her after a single night of passion. The child from that union, Malocchio, possessed unnatural powers of his own, leading Gabrielle to believe that he was a child of prophecy. When the boy turned thirteen, he used his powers to seize control of the throne

from his mother, turning her servants against her and nearly driving her mad. She fled from her home and took control of a group of Gundarakite rebels who she now uses to strike back against her own son. It's not that she wants the throne, particularly—she just wants revenge for having her own tricks used against her, and for her son's ingratitude.

Gabrielle is a dark-haired woman apparently in her early twenties, despite her actual age of more than twice that. Her youthful appearance is marred only by a streak of grey in her black hair. She dresses like one of the wandering folk, in the colorful style of her mother, and typically goes barefoot.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Occult d10, Performance d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Marked (white streak in hair), Stubborn, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Charismatic, Dart Cloud^(RR), Deceptive^(FC), Favored Power^(FC) (*curse*), Fortune Teller^(RR), Luck, Rapid Recharge, Very Attractive, Wizard

Gear: Silver dagger (Str+d4), brace of throwing knives (Range 3/6/9, Str+d4), diviner's deck

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Invidia:** While Gabrielle was once able to close the borders at will, her current mental turmoil and metaphysical struggle with her son, Malocchio, has left her unable to do so.
- **Magic:** Gabrielle is a talented sorceress and diviner. She has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *blind*, *boost*/*lower*

*Trait, curse^(FC), deflection,
detect/conceal arcana, dispel,
divination, fear, puppet, and stun.*

☛ The God-Brain

Once a human telepath named Seldrid, the God-Brain has long since eschewed any sense of its own humanity or mortality. It rarely thinks of the days when it had a body of its own, especially since those memories tend to fill it with a sense of bitterness and regret that it finds unbecoming in a living deity. The God-Brain craves new experiences and sensations, which it can only gain vicariously by devouring the brains of the humanoids brought before it by its illithid minions.

The God-Brain is an elephant-sized mass of gelatinous gray matter slowly pulsing in a huge tank of glowing greenish liquid and surrounded by thousands of squirming illithid larvae. It is utterly incapable of interacting with the outside world physically, though it rarely needs to do so thanks to its vast psionic might.

Attributes: Agility —, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d12+2, Strength —, Vigor d12

Skills: Common Knowledge d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Occult d12, Persuasion d10, Psionics d12+2, Taunt d10

Pace: —; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 14

Hindrances: Arrogant, Driven (Major: seek new experiences)

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Arcane Resistance (Imp), Channeler, Concentration, Epic Mastery^(FC), Iron Will, Mentalist, Rapid Recharge (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Bluetspur:** The God-Brain cannot close the borders of Bluetspur, since the whole of the domain is an extension of his mind.

The lightning that flashes through the heavens, the twisted spires of rock, the winding tunnels—all of them are portions of his subconscious, given form through his vast power. Entering Bluetspur is, in a very real sense, entering the mindscape of a vast, powerful, and alien entity. Because of this, however, the God-Brain is vaguely aware of any intruders in his domain almost immediately.

- **Divine Mind:** The God-Brain can use any psychic power as a limited free action, in addition to any other actions it takes during the round. It can sense the thoughts of any living being within Bluetspur, giving it the benefits of the *empathy* power against such creatures at all times. The God-Brain can perceive everything within 12" of its tank regardless of cover, concealment, illumination, or stealth, and it cannot be Surprised by any living creature.
- **Fear:** Seeing the massive and unnatural form of the God-Brain is cause for a Fear check.
- **Psionics:** The God-Brain is a psychic of almost limitless power and incomprehensible ability. It has 50 Power Points and knows the following powers: *blind, bolt, boost/lower Trait, confusion, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, divination, empathy, fear, havoc, illusion, mind link, mind reading, mind wipe, puppet, scrying, slumber, stun, and telekinesis.*
- **Sessile:** The God-Brain cannot move from its tank or interact with the world physically. It automatically fails any Agility or Strength based Test. The God-Brain cannot be Grappled, Pushed, or Entangled in any meaningful fashion.

- **Size 6 (Large):** The God-Brain is a mass of gray matter the size of an elephant. It has one additional Wound due to its Size.

☛ Harkon Lukas

Harkon Lukas is a charming man, tall and muscular of build with wavy black hair that falls past his shoulders and a neatly trimmed beard. His fine clothes, beautiful singing voice, and genteel manners have lured many people to their doom over the years. In truth, Harkon Lukas is not human at all—he is a wolwere, a shapechanging predator who was born as a wolf but can assume the shape of a human to better blend in with his prey.



Harkon was once an outcast from his own people; as lone predators, his desire to be sociable and find companionship was strange to his kin. His willingness to “play with his food” was considered far more detestable. He began to play the part of a wandering minstrel, gaining the trust—and even love—of others before betraying and devouring them. He craved fame, fortune, and acceptance.

In time, Lukas found the land of Kartakass, a beautiful forested domain that lacked the things he truly desired. Unable to leave, he could no longer kill with impunity and must now keep up an air of respectability in order to maintain his popularity; he still kills, but not as often as he would like, and his wanderlust galls him. Worse, he is still no closer to power than he was as a lone wanderer; both the wolves and humans of the domain respect him, but neither will obey him without being compelled through threats or manipulation.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d6, Performance d12, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Taunt d10, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Overconfident

Edges: Charismatic, Deceptive^(FC), Elan, Famous, Humiliate, Quick, Retort, Strong Willed, Very Attractive, Work the Crowd

Gear: Magical long sword (Str+d8, see below)

Special Abilities:

- **Berserking Sword:** Harkon Lukas owns a cursed magical long sword that he has turned to his benefit. The sword is enchanted to leap into his hand and inflict the Berserk Edge

when a fight begins, and will not permit its owner to stop fighting so long as any foes remain. Lukas will sometimes offer to give away his sword to strangers as a “show of trust,” knowing that if they start a fight, the sword will immediately return to him anyway.

- **Change Shape:** As an action, Lukas can assume one of three different shapes: human, hybrid, or dire wolf. His most common shape is that of a dark-haired man; he can also become a beautiful woman with a similar appearance. His true form is that of a massive dire wolf; in this shape, he has a bite attack for Str+d6, a Pace of 10, and a d10 running die, but uses his own Traits otherwise. He cannot use gear or most social skills (other than Intimidation) as a wolf. In his hybrid form, he gains the bite attack and increased Pace of a wolf while retaining his ability to use equipment, but he is obviously monstrous and inhuman, which limits his ability to use his preferred tactics of social manipulation.
- **Darklord of Kartakass:** When Lukas wishes to close his domain to the outside, a gentle lullaby fills the air at the borders. Any creature capable of hearing the song—even if they currently have their ears plugged—falls asleep and awakens some time later, deeper in Kartakass than they started. Lukas can only maintain the closure as long as he can continue singing, requiring a Vigor roll with a cumulative -1 penalty for each hour he sings. When he stops, he cannot begin the song again until at least a day has passed.
- **Everlasting Life:** Lukas is at least somewhat immortal. He has not aged in generations, and whenever he is killed, he awakens again somewhere else in the domain after a few days. Unknown to him, Lukas can be killed permanently; to do so, he must be slain while no wolves remain within his domain’s borders. Otherwise, his spirit leaps to the nearest wolf and takes it over, transforming it into Harkon Lukas.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Harkon makes a natural healing roll every round unless his Wounds were inflicted by cold iron weapons.
- **Fear (-2):** Those who see Lukas transform into his hybrid or wolf form must make a Fear check at -2.
- **Grandfather Wolf:** Lukas can use the *beast friend* power on wolves and dire wolves at will, using Performance as his casting skill with no Power Point cost.
- **Low Light Vision:** Werewolves eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. Lukas ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Song of Weariness:** As an action in human or hybrid form, Lukas can sing a beautiful melody that inspires exhaustion in all listeners within a Medium Blast Template (centered on him). The werewolf makes a Performance roll opposed by a listener’s Spirit. A listener that fails gains a level of Fatigue; this can affect a victim multiple times, though the song cannot kill anyone, only render them Incapacitated from unconsciousness. These Fatigue levels disappear after ten minutes.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Lukas suffers +4 damage from cold iron weapons.

☛ Hazlik, the Red Wizard

Hazlik was once an up-and-coming prodigy in a country ruled by wizards. However, as he rose through the ranks, he made too many enemies too quickly. One of those enemies framed him for a crime he did not commit, which ended with Hazlik branded as a criminal and outcast from his position and home. Seething with fury in his exile, Hazlik lucked upon his rival and her lover while they were enjoying a day in the countryside; he ambushed them, tormented them, and murdered them.

As he gloated over his victory and sought to return to his temporary lair, Hazlik found himself lost in a deep fog, eventually emerging in a distant land more to his liking. There, he became wizard-king in short order, though many of the land's elements disturbed him greatly. Hazlik once suppressed knowledge of magic to prevent rivals to his throne from emerging, but in his old age he has softened his policy and now works to build a true academy of magic devoted to his own teachings.

Hazlik is a tightly wound man, obsessed with control over himself and his surroundings. He is a perfectionist genius who is constantly frustrated and disappointed by the “lazy fools” around him, but who offers nothing but more work to those who meet his nearly impossible standards. Because he still has bad dreams about his exile, Hazlik avoids sleep as much as possible through the use of alchemical draughts; this doesn't improve his mood one bit.

Hazlik is an elderly man with coarse features. He is completely bald and his head, chest, and arms are covered in tattoos and brands. He wears a neatly trimmed goatee with no moustache. Hazlik's most striking features are his mismatched eyes—one brown and the

other blue. His hissing, phlegmy voice is tight with unconcealed impatience.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d8, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d4, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Occult d10, Persuasion d6, Research d8, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 4 (5 with staff);

Toughness: 8 (3)

Hindrances: Elderly, Mean, Night Terrors, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Archmage^(RR), Channeling, Concentration, Epic Mastery^(FC), Master Artificer^(FC), Rapid Recharge (Imp), Wizard

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, two hands), magic amulet (+3 Armor, holds 20 extra Power Points)



Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Hazlan:** When Hazlik needs to close his domain, a wall of shimmering fire leaps up at the borders. Only creatures completely immune to fire naturally can survive the flames; any being merely using magic to avoid harm has the magic burned away, followed by their flesh. Every hour that Hazlik maintains this ritual, he must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue. When he stops maintaining the ritual, he cannot begin it again for at least a day, or until he has completely recovered from his Fatigue—which involves sleeping.
- **Spells:** Hazlik is an extremely powerful wizard. He has 40 Power Points and knows many spells. Assume he has every power available to a magic-user except for those related to healing (such as *relief*), mental influence (such as *empathy*), and necromancy (such as *zombie*).

☛ The Hive Queen

The Hive Queen was once a human princess born into the kingdom of Timor. During the horrific war that saw her homeland subjugated to Paridon, she fled into the sewers to escape soldiers seeking her life. While there, she stumbled into the lair of an ancient evil that infected her and tried to use her as an incubator for its eggs. Her will to live proved too strong, and she killed the creature that had captured her, but its essence transformed her into something monstrous.

It would be difficult to see anything human in the creature the princess has become. As the Hive Queen of the marikith, she is a bloated spider-like abomination nearly the size of an

elephant. She has four segmented legs growing from a chitin-covered abdomen, a centaur-like humanoid torso rising from the thorax, four clawed arms, and a deformed, elongated head with arthropod mandibles and multiple compound eyes. The sight of the Hive Queen is enough to drive weak-willed onlookers to madness.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Survival d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 16 (3)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

Edges: Frenzy (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Black chitin exoskeleton.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4. Paralyzing poison.
- **Darklord of Timor:** The Hive Queen controls Timor as darklord, but her immense bulk and vulnerability to light make it difficult for her to leave the deep tunnels where she dwells. She can turn her hive and the tunnels surrounding it into a veritable labyrinth at will; though she cannot prevent passage from the city above, she can make it nearly impossible to escape the underground reaches of Timor for anyone foolish enough to enter them. She cannot otherwise seal the domain's borders, however. When the Queen uses this ability, rolls to navigate or flee the sewers suffer a -4 penalty. This penalty applies to her as well, so she must let it lapse if she wishes to find her way back to her own lair.
- **Fear (-2):** The Hive Queen is a truly monstrous sight.
- **Four Arms:** The Hive Queen ignores 2 points of Multi-Action penalties due to her additional limbs.

- **Labyrinth Bound:** The Hive Queen is just as much a prisoner of Timor Below as she is its master. She cannot navigate most of the smaller tunnels due to her immense size, and she easily becomes lost if she leaves her lair. She suffers a -2 penalty on rolls to track intruders and on rolls made during Chases as the pursuer.
- **Night Vision:** Darkness means nothing to the marikith. The Hive Queen ignores all penalties for Illumination.
- **Size 5 (Large):** The Hive Queen is almost as large as an elephant.
- **Wall Walker:** The Hive Queen can move on vertical and inverted surfaces as easily as level ground.
- **Weakness (Light):** The Hive Queen is Distracted and Vulnerable while exposed to bright light.

☞ **Ivan Dilisnya**

Ivan Dilisnya is a thin man with curly gray hair, faintly streaked with the blond of his youth. He is an extremely animated person, often to the point of histrionics. Many Borcans call him a fop—but never to his face. Ivan paces and poses as though on a stage, speaking in whispers and booms like delivering a monologue. He gesticulates with every word and often laughs suddenly for no apparent reason.

Ivan considers himself a great actor (despite his mediocre talent), and his wardrobe includes costumes representing all walks of life. Though he usually wears the stylish fashions of the Borcan court, on any given day he may choose to pose as anything from an armored knight to a devout priest to a lowly court jester. His antics and demeanor would make him intolerable company were it not for his power, wealth, and willingness to eliminate those who displease him.

As a young man, the only thing Ivan loved more than watching the death throes of a poison victim was tempting his palate with fine food and drink. His alchemical experiments (and his darklord curse) have left him robbed of his sense of taste and smell. The finest foods are little more than ash in his mouth, the best wines nothing but vinegar. The loss of his palate has left Ivan feeling empty and dissatisfied, unable to enjoy the luxury in which he lives. He hosts extravagant dinner parties to vicariously enjoy his guests' meals, but he erupts in jealous rages if they enjoy the food too much and offended rages if they like it too little.



Despite having the vigor of a man half his age, Ivan need only look at his eternally youthful cousin to feel the weight of his years bearing down on him. Ivana offered him the formula for her youth elixir decades ago, but Ivan proved as immune to its effects as nearly every other alchemical concoction, and he believes that she is hiding the true secrets of her immortality from him out of spite.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d12, Notice d6, Occult d4, Performance d4, Persuasion d6, Research d6, Science d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Bully (Major), Jealous (Major), Night Terrors, Thin-Skinned (Major)

Edges: Alchemist^(RR), Aristocrat, Assassin, Calculating, Connections (Dorvinian aristocracy and criminal underworld), Humiliate, Killer Instinct, Menacing, Poisoner^(FC), Provoke, Rabble Rouser, Retort

Gear: Concealed dagger (Str+d4), disguise kits, makeup, acting props, various poisons

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Dorvinia:** As a weak-willed and mercurial man, Ivan does not have the patience or willpower to close the borders of Dorvinia for more than a few hours at a time. When he does, a virtually invisible air shimmer causes any water carried through the border (including any water in a person's stomach that was imbibed within the last hour) to become Lethal (-2) poison. As he and Ivana are bound in damnation, he can wander Borca freely.
- **Immunity:** Ivan is completely immune to all toxins and venoms, as well as most forms of alchemy.

- **Master of Venoms:** Ivan can create a single dose of any poison—even unique, personalized venoms—with 1d6 hours of work and access to his personal laboratory.
- **Weakness (Tasteless):** Ivan is unable to taste or smell, leaving him murderously frustrated much of the time. He automatically fails scent or taste based Notice rolls.

☛ Ivana Boritsi

Ivana is a classic dark-eyed Borcan beauty—creamy complexion, long black hair, and full, wine-colored lips. She appears to be no more than a girl of eighteen or nineteen, but is actually well over sixty years old, her longevity a result of her alchemical experimentations. She has ruled Borca with a cruel and largely indifferent hand for more than four decades, ever since she murdered her own mother.

Ivana once had a deeply romantic spirit, a generous nature, and a kindly disposition despite her vicious mother's attempts to turn her into a cold-blooded courtier like herself. When Ivana's mother seduced Ivana's fiancé, it finally broke the girl; she killed the young man, and then killed her mother a few months later. Since then, Ivana lives only for the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure and the petty cruelties of the court. The only people in the world she seems to have any genuine affection for are her best friend, Nostalia Romaine, and her cousin, Ivan Dilisnya. Even that latter relationship has become strained and ugly in recent years as Ivan has grown old and bitter, jealous of Ivana's apparent immortality.

While she still longs for love, Ivana's heart is so cold and closed that she destroys every positive relationship

around her as a matter of habit. She sometimes takes lovers, but these poor fools never survive long, since Ivana's body is a repository of deadly poisons. Ivana's beauty is almost overwhelming, held back only by her casual cruelty to everyone around her.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d4, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d6, Performance d8, Persuasion d10, Research d6, Science d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d10



Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Mean, Ruthless (Major), Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Alchemist, Aristocrat, Charismatic, Connections (Borcan aristocracy), Deceptive^(FC), Fame, Humiliate, Menacing, Poisoner^(FC), Provoke, Retort, Strong Willed, Very Attractive

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), various poisons

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Borca:** When Ivana wishes to close the borders, pale violet mist rises up that induces toxic convulsions in those that try to cross it. This fog also poisons any water that is carried through it for days afterward, though at a less severe rate. Anyone who tries to leave Borca while the borders are closed is exposed to Lethal (-4) poison; drinking water that crossed a closed border is Lethal (+0) poison. Ivana can keep the borders closed for days at a time with little effort, but rarely does so. As she and Ivan are bound in damnation, she can wander Dorvinia freely.
- **Immunity:** Ivana is completely immune to all toxins and venoms, as well as most forms of alchemy.
- **Kiss of Death:** Ivana's saliva and sweat are horribly toxic, allowing her to kill with close contact. Ivana can kiss a grappled foe as a Touch Attack, forcing them to make a Vigor roll at -4 or suffer exposure to Lethal poison. Anyone who engages in intimate contact with Ivana suffers this effect as well.
- **Mistress of Venoms:** Ivana can create a single dose of any poison—even unique, personalized venoms—with 1d6 hours of work and access to her personal garden and laboratory.

❧ **Jacqueline Montarri**

Jacqueline was once a cat burglar, a consummate professional noted for her beauty and skill. As she got older, however, she feared losing her talent and looks to old age and began to seek a method of becoming immortal. She consulted with a powerful witch, who told her that what she sought lay within Castle Ravenloft; blinded by paranoia, Jacqueline murdered the witch so that she could tell no one else of the thief's plans. The witch cursed Jacqueline as she died, but the thief paid no heed to the old woman's words.

Like most foolish enough to try and steal from the lord of Barovia, Jacqueline was caught. Unlike most such thieves, she was to be made a lesson rather than an undead thrall. Jacqueline remembers being taken to the headsman—and then darkness. She awoke some time later in the witch's hut, apparently alive again. The horror of her situation sank in when she looked into a mirror, only to see the witch's shriveled, dead head looking back at her. She fumbled at the ribbon around her neck—and the witch's head fell off, but Jacqueline still lived.

Since then, Jacqueline has explored the limits of the witch's dying curse. She believes that if she can find her original head and reunite it with her body, she will become truly immortal. She can take the heads of other women to gain their knowledge and skills, but any head she wears ages unnaturally fast while on her neck, as though she were draining the life remaining in it. Fortunately, heads she harvests personally stop decaying when she doesn't wear them; unfortunately, they seem vaguely aware of what has happened to them, and they whisper ceaselessly. To avoid having to listen to their "whining," Jacqueline has a vault

where she keeps her favorite heads when she isn't wearing them.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Research d8, Riding d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d8, Thievery d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Quirk (vain), Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Acrobat, Assassin, Attractive, Connections, Level Headed (Imp), Streetwise, Thief

Gear: Headsman's sword (Str+d8, AP 1), concealed leather armor (+2 Armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** Anyone who sees Jacqueline's head come off must make a Fear check.
- **Headhunter:** Years of taking heads from victims makes Jacqueline particularly skilled at it. She can make Called Shots to the head at -2 instead of -4. Anyone killed with such an attack is beheaded.
- **Headmistress:** Jacqueline can cut off a woman's head and use it in place of her own. She must hold the head in place with a ribbon or scarf, which sticks in place with magical force but can be pulled free with an opposed Strength check in a grapple. While wearing a head, Jacqueline gains access to the highest skill possessed by the head's former owner (or gains +2 to a skill they have in common, if none of their skills are higher than hers) and one of that person's Edges; if the former owner could cast spells, she can do so as well, but she has only half the owner's Power Points. Each day that she wears a given head, she must make a Vigor check or the head gains a level of Fatigue. That

Fatigue stays with the head permanently. Jacqueline will not wear ugly heads due to her vanity.

Jacqueline can survive without a head at all, though she is effectively

Exhausted if she goes more than a few hours without putting on a new head.

- **Immunity:** Jacqueline is immune to Fatigue not caused by her own abilities. She does not need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. Jacqueline is immune to beheading and suffers no additional damage from Called Shots to the head (though such an attack might ruin her current head).
- **Slow Regeneration:** Jacqueline makes a natural healing roll each day as long as she is wearing a head with no Fatigue.

Hall of Heads

Jacqueline keeps several dozen heads in glass cases in her lair, a manor house built on the site of a hut that once belonged to a witch. The heads wail and moan in agony, praying for death. The older ones know to be quiet when Jacqueline comes to “change faces”; in a fit of pique, she might just throw a particularly loud head down an old well in the basement, condemning them to an eternity in the dark, slowly rotting away.

Assume that Jacqueline can have access to virtually any skill at d8, or +2 to any skill she currently knows, by virtue of changing heads. She can have access to a great many Edges as well, but those tend to be a bit more random, since she can't guarantee that a given head skill have both a skill and an Edge she wants.

All of Jacqueline's “regular” heads are those of human women in their early to mid-twenties, with a few that look older because of “wear and tear.” Jacqueline can wear non-human heads too, but she

generally restricts herself to elves and half-elves due to vanity. She only wears heads that are Attractive or Very Attractive, and she's always on the lookout for particularly pretty women to add to her collection...

☛ Jacqueline Renier

In human form, Jacqueline Renier appears as a stunning woman of uncertain age; she could easily pass as either a young lady in her twenties or a mature woman of fifty. Her hair is jet black, touched with streaks of gray at the temples, and her green eyes are flecked with gold. She holds court in slim formal gowns that flaunt her figure but will don more functional garb when she roams the streets or sewers. Her hybrid and animal forms are deceptively unremarkable in appearance, allowing her to blend anonymously among either a horde of rats or a pack of her wererat kin.

Conniving and cruel, Jacqueline delights in inflicting pain on others, be it emotional or physical. She has successfully blackmailed, manipulated, or terrorized every noble house in Richemulot into submission, including her own family. The common people respect and love her, rarely feeling the sting of her wrath—she reserves her cruelty for those who think themselves her equals. Despite the twisted evil harbored in her black heart, Jacqueline wants nothing more than to find someone capable of loving her unconditionally, but her ambition ensures that virtually any emotional bond she tries to form will dissolve into bitter animosity.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice

d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Taunt d10, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6 (7 with rapier);

Toughness: 6

Hindrances: Jealous (Major), Obligation (Major: the Renier family), Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Alertness, Aristocrat, Attractive, Calculating, Charismatic, Connections (many), Humiliate, Level Headed (Imp), Provoke, Rabble-Rouser, Streetwise, Strong Willed, Thief, Work the Crowd

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry), concealed pistol (Range 5/10/20, 2d6+1, AP 1, Reload 3)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, Jacqueline can assume one of four forms: her human shape, a hybrid beast shape, a giant rat, or a cloud of odiferous yellow-green mist. In her mist form, she cannot attack or take actions other than movement, but she is immune to all non-magical attacks.
- **Darklord of Richemulot:** When Jacqueline wishes to close the borders of her domain, vast rat swarms rise at the borders. Any creature seeking to cross the border must contend with millions of rats gnawing at their flesh. Even flying creatures find their wings failing them if they try to escape into the air. While the rats can be killed, their numbers are replenished just as quickly as they are lost.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Wererats may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear:** Seeing a wererat's hissing visage is worthy of a Fear check.
- **Infection:** Anyone Wounded by Jacqueline's bite must make a Vigor

roll or contract the curse of lycanthropy.

- **Low Light Vision:** Wererats ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Jacqueline takes +4 damage from silver weapons.

☛ The Living Brain

Rudolph von Aubrecker was the son of a nobleman, a spoiled and selfish boy who always got what he wanted. While he was out sailing, a sudden squall blew up and dashed his ship against the rocky cliffs of his homeland. He was the only survivor—and barely a survivor at that. His shattered body was found by Dr. Victor Mordenheim during a walk along the beaches. Thinking he might learn something from trying to save the young man's life, Dr. Mordenheim brought Rudolph back to his lab and transplanted his still-living brain into a jar filled with organic solution.

Victor experimented on the brain, building devices to allow him to communicate with it and exposing it to alchemical solutions and arcane energies. In time, Victor forgot about the minor experiment—just as Rudolph wanted it. The experiments had awakened a mysterious power within the disembodied brain, giving it the ability to cloud and confuse minds, even to control the weak-willed. Rudolph took control of one of Mordenheim's assistants and took off for a distant land where he could use his talents to his own selfish ends.

Now calling himself "the Living Brain," Rudolph von Aubrecker is the master of an extensive criminal empire. Few of his minions know about his true nature; those that do are husks of their former selves, little more than empty vessels for Rudolph to control at his will. He still

longs for a body of his own, which much of his wealth and power goes toward researching.

Attributes: Agility -, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength -, Vigor d6

Skills: Common Knowledge d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Occult d8, Persuasion d10, Psionics d12+1, Taunt d10

Pace: -; **Parry:** 0; **Toughness:** 2

Hindrances: Cautious, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Psionics), Mentalist, Mindbender, Rapid Recharge

Special Abilities:

- **Brain in a Jar:** The Living Brain is literally just a brain in a glass jar with some mechanical attachments that allow him to see, hear, and speak. He is utterly immobile without assistance. The Brain's enclosure is treated as an inanimate object with Toughness 5; if it is broken, he will die in 1d4 rounds without immediately being placed back in life support. The Brain himself automatically fails any Agility- or Strength-based Trait roll. He is effectively Size -3 (Very Small).
- **Fear:** Anyone who sees the true nature of the Living Brain must make a Fear check.
- **Psionics:** The Living Brain is an incredibly powerful psychic. He has 30 Power Points and knows the following powers: *bolt*, *confusion*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *fear*, *mind link*, *mind reading*, *mind wipe*, *puppet*, and *slumber*.
- **Psychic Surgery:** The Living Brain is so skilled at mental manipulation that he can perform permanent alterations to a person's mind with time and effort. If the Brain spends 1d4 hours psychically working on an unconscious target, he can make a Psionics roll opposed by the target's

Spirit to permanently add or remove a purely mental Hindrance. His most common use of this ability is to add the Loyal Hindrance, with the loyalty being targeted to himself, but he can also add or remove delusions, phobias, addictions, and other mental ailments. The Brain gains +2 to his Psionics roll using this ability because of his Mentalist Edge.

- **Thrall:** If the Living Brain uses the *puppet* power on a person who is already Loyal to him, he can turn them into a thrall, extending the power's Duration indefinitely as long as he leaves the initial PP cost invested. The Brain can have any number of thralls, but usually has no more than five or so due to his cautious nature since he dislikes being at less than half of his Power Points at any given time.

☛ Malken

Malken is a caliban, a human born deformed through exposure to dark magic in the womb. He grew up on the streets of his home city, poor and starving, before falling in with a gang of homeless children who looked past his ugliness to the cunning mind within. An attempt to rob a nobleman went badly for Malken, but the man spared him out of pity and nursed him back to health. Knowing that being sent to prison would be a death sentence for a teenage boy, the nobleman instead sentenced Malken to serve his family for several years. He took the opportunity to educate the boy, who turned out to be a quick study and highly intelligent.

As he grew older, Malken came to respect and admire his benefactor, eventually becoming a genuine member of the household rather than a bonded

servant. Malken learned medicine and accounting, turning his skills to the cause of his patron. However, Malken still hated his grotesque appearance and began secretly researching alchemical methods of becoming a normal person—something forbidden by the local religion.

When Malken's childhood friends were caught committing a crime and executed for it, he raged at a system that had spared him but killed those whose only real crimes were to be poor and to be caught by someone less merciful than he had. Malken grew bitter and hateful, finally deciding that the system had to be reshaped from within. His discovery of a horrific method of stealing another man's shape by distilling his entire body down into an alchemical compound set him upon a path of murder. Malken killed his friend and patron to steal his appearance, only to find the system so hopelessly corrupt that there was no way a single man could ever change it. Malken collapsed in rage at the end of his first week in his stolen shape—and when he awoke, he was horrified to hear another servant say that their master had just been looking for him.

Malken has found that when he sleeps, his old master sometimes takes over their shared body. The man is apparently unaware of what has happened to him, and he still regards Malken as a friend, despite the fact that Malken has become something of a notorious criminal mastermind. For his part, Malken keeps his criminal enterprises away from his old "friend's" family—mainly because he has invested so much effort in stealing the man's life that he'll be damned if he ruins it before he gets to enjoy it.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d8, Healing d8,

Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d8, Research d6, Science d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d10, Thievery d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Hindrances: Mean, Jealous (Major), Ugly (Major)

Edges: Alchemist^(RR), Brawler, Brawny, Connections (criminal underworld), Danger Sense, Feint, Level Headed (Imp), Investigator, Jack of All Trades, Menacing, Streetwise, Strong Willed, Thief

Gear: Concealed leather armor (+2 Armor), knife (Str+d4), brass knuckles (Str+d4, counts as unarmed), various poisons



Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Nova Vaasa:** Malken is darklord of Nova Vaasa, but he is unable to close the border due to his divided psyche.
- **Divided Psyche:** Malken is immune to any attempt to control his mind with powers. Such an attempt to control Malken's mind with a power forces him to make a Spirit roll or immediately change forms into Dmitri Stanov, the man he betrayed and murdered. Stanov has no memory of being Malken and will inevitably be confused about how he ended up wherever he happens to be. Stanov is an **aristocrat** (see page 306) with no special powers.
- **Immunity:** Malken is immune to poison and ingested or inhaled alchemical concoctions.
- **Innate Power:** Major *disguise* (self, Dmitri Stanov only).
- **Low Light Vision:** Malken's caliban eyes are used to darkness. He ignores penalties for Dim or Dark Illumination.
- **Unnatural:** While acting as Malken, natural animals refuse to have anything to do with him. He suffers a -2 penalty on any roll to control or interact with animals. This penalty does not apply when his Stanov personality is in control.

☛ Malus Sceleris

Malus is a handsome young man of only thirty years of age. Outgoing and spirited, his face is never absent of his shining smile, which varies between a trustworthy grin and a fiendish sneer. Malus never leaves his home wearing anything but the most expensive fashions from Paridon. In public, Malus is witty and extremely charming, but in private, to his enemies, he is diabolically ruthless and smug.

Alone, Malus could never have destroyed Nosos. However, finding people willing to help him was a simple matter. Malus used his charms to convince the village folk to recklessly scour the land while he arranged a lucrative trade agreement between Nosos and Paridon. The city of Paridon had no shortage of men willing to defile nature for a profit. Malus lured the most ravenous businessmen to Nosos and convinced them to assist him in opening mines, mills, and smelters.

In his efforts to silence the voice of the forests, Malus has scorched the land of Nosos. The trees have been harvested and carried away, the earth has been sundered, and the air has been poisoned with toxic chemicals. He has made the land into a barren waste, buried its life beneath dunes of lifeless sand and mountains of slag. Yet the scouring of life from Nosos is incomplete. Each morning Malus can hear the hum of life growing deep beneath the layers of soot and slag. Deep in the crevices of his mind, he knows that he can never truly destroy nature. Yet Malus will not give up his quest.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Science d8, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Taunt d8, Trade d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Hindrances: Driven (Major: destroy nature), Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Alchemist, Aristocrat, Charismatic, Deceptive^(FC), First Strike, Humiliate, Provoke

Gear: Jeweled dagger (Str+d4), fine suit, gold pocket watch

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Nosos:** Malus cannot close his domain borders, though he

vaguely understands that he is bound to the land in some mystical way. He mistakenly believes that this is due to his druidic heritage, and that only by destroying nature utterly can he free himself from his imprisonment. He does not permit anyone else to learn of his “curse,” though some of his elite have been suspicious over the years because of his refusal to return to Paridon. After all, his wealth is essentially meaningless without someplace to spend it; virtually all of the other wealthy socialites of Nosos spend half the year in Paridon, enjoying the fruits of their labors, but Malus remains in his city year-round.

- **Curse of the Green:** Malus can constantly hear the whispers of plants and the hum of nature. When he is within 6” of a tree, shrub, or patch of plant matter larger than a square yard of grass, he is Distracted. He is Vulnerable to the attacks of plant creatures.
- **Immunity:** Malus is immune to diseases, poisons, and parasites of all kinds, as well as the environmental effects of pollution, such as smog, smoke, and acid rain.
- **Master of Plagues:** Malus can breed new and horrific strains of diseases in his laboratory given a few days of work. Given his immunity to such noxious compounds, he carries a few sealed vials of his most virulent creations on his person for emergencies. As an action, Malus can make a Touch Attack against a foe to splash them with a plague vial that inflicts a Chronic, Debilitating, or Lethal disease of his choice. The Vigor roll made to resist infection is made at -2.

☛ Meredoth

Meredoth is a tall, elderly man, rail thin with a long white beard and eyes the color of a glacier. He garbs himself in long gray robes and cares little for his personal hygiene, so his robes are often dirty and his beard matted. He tends to stare into the distance while speaking with others, giving the impression that he has far more important things to do than waste his time with conversation. Though he may seem distracted, he is completely aware of his surroundings and careful at all times.

Meredoth is a master necromancer and creator of golems, easily one of the most powerful wizards in all of the Domains of Dread. His disinterest in rule—and disinterest in people as a whole—has left his domain relatively small. He views the living as little more than lab rats, existing as raw materials for his experiments.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d8, Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Occult d12, Persuasion d4, Research d10, Stealth d6, Spellcasting d12+1

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 4 (5 with staff);

Toughness: 11 (6)

Hindrances: Cautious, Elderly, Mania (Major: severe social anxiety), Mean, Ugly (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Archmage^(RR), Channeling, Concentration, Epic Mastery^(FC), Master Artificer^(FC), Necromancer^(RR), Rapid Recharge (Imp), Wizard

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, Parry +1, two hands), archmage’s robes (Armor +6)

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Graben Island:**
Meredoth’s borders extend much further out into the seas around

Graben Island than many other domains, and he can turn the oceans into a twisted maze of sleet, high waves, and ship-killing icebergs. Were it up to him, he would keep Graben isolated all the time, but keeping the borders closed requires a slow expenditure of his magical power. It costs Meredoth 1 Power Point per hour that he wishes to keep the borders closed, and he cannot recover PP while they remain sealed.

- **Magic Items:** As a highly skilled artificer, Meredoth has access to far more magic items than the average darklord. Among his more common possessions are a ring that shoots searing bolts of light, a decanter that produces endless water, and a skeleton-crewed galley that can fold down to the size of a small box.
- **Spells:** Meredoth is an extremely powerful wizard. He has 50 Power Points and knows every magic-user spell except for those dealing with healing (such as *relief*) and those relating to minds or emotions (such as *puppet*).

☛ **Natalia Uhorishkova**

Natalia is an unconventional beauty, keeping her dark brown hair short and wearing clothing chosen for mobility and comfort over style. Still, few people can fail to be struck by her intense dark eyes, full red lips, and sharp features. More than one fool has fallen in love with her only to meet a horrific end when she changes into a beast while they are alone. In truth, Natalia is a werewolf—a true lycanthrope, born of a legacy of man-eating shapechangers.

While most werewolves are cunning predators who snatch lone victims and avoid attention to keep potential hunters

at bay, Natalia has long been a bold and fearless killer. An encounter with famed monster hunter Rudolph van Richten gave her pause when the man almost killed her, awakening a new impulse in her black heart. She seduced the doctor's friend George Weathermay to get close to her attacker, but only managed to wound one of Weathermay's young nieces before being driven off.

Natalia recognizes her own savage impulses as aberrant, even for a werewolf, and she has become fascinated with the psychological need to kill possessed by some humans. Natalia gives in to her own murderous impulses as a matter of course, but she has also begun seeking out similar mundane killers and pushing them to ever-greater acts of horror. She is also interested in determining if a "normal" person can be turned into a serial killer with the right pressures. Natalia delights in seducing people before destroying them—either by turning them into monsters or killing them.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d12+2, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10, Survival d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Driven (Major: create serial killers), Overconfident

Edges: Alertness, Assassin, Frenzy (Imp), Very Attractive

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Change Shape:** As a limited action, Natalia can assume one of three forms: a beautiful woman, a hybrid form, or a red-furred wolf.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Lycanthropes may attempt a natural healing roll every



round unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.

- **Fear (-2):** Werewolves chill the blood of all who see them.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by Natalia's natural attacks has a 50% chance of rising as a werewolf themselves. The character involuntarily transforms every full moon. Natalia can command werewolves she spawns as though they were perpetually under the effects of the *puppet* power.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Werewolves suffer +4 damage from silver weapons.

☛ Nathan Timothy

Born to a large clan of werewolves, Nathan Timothy was never satisfied with a nomadic life of hunting and murder. He sought a comfortable life—a *human* life—and he was cast out from his people for his ambitions. He became a riverboat

captain, a trader, and a slaver to satiate his hunger for wealth. He eventually married but neglected his family in favor of his business interests. When his business partners betrayed him and left him all but bankrupt, he raged against the iniquities of humankind but was too deeply invested to extricate himself.

Today, Nathan lives on his dilapidated riverboat, the *Virago*, rarely leaving the ship even when in port. In truth, he becomes violently ill if he goes more than a few dozen feet from the riverbanks onto solid ground, wracked with pain and growing weaker with each passing moment until he returns to the water. He makes his living ferrying passengers and cargo up and down the Musarde River, occasionally murdering them and devouring their bodies.

Nathan Timothy is a man of average build with dark, curly hair and brown eyes. His skin is darkened from the sun and rough from decades of hard work. His beard is streaked with gray and hangs almost to his chest. He would be unremarkable in human form were it not for his smile—his teeth are long and

sharp, and his grin has the unnerving look of a predator about it. His dire wolf and hybrid forms are far more impressive, larger and more powerful than average, with razor-sharp claws and fangs like daggers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d8, Boating d10, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Occult d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d10, Survival d10, Thievery d6, Trade d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Mean

Edges: Alertness, First Strike (Imp), Frenzy (Imp), Nerves of Steel (Imp)

Gear: Knife (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d8
- **Darklord of Arkandale:** Nathan's affinity with the rivers of the land allows him to make any body of water aid him in closing the borders. He can command a river to swell its banks, destroying bridges and making the river impossible to cross on foot or by animal. Any boat on the river will be unable to steer, forcing it to drop anchor, or simply become lost in the fog that rises up from the water. He cannot control the land passages out of the domain, but the forests of Arkandale can be dangerous enough on their own without his influence.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Nathan can attempt a natural healing roll every round, even if Incapacitated, unless the Wounds were caused by silver weapons.
- **Fear (-2):** The sight of a werewolf in its monstrous hybrid form can chill the blood.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by Nathan's natural attacks has a 50% chance of

rising again as an infected werewolf. The character involuntarily transforms every full moon. Nathan can utterly control any infected werewolf he creates in this fashion while they are transformed.

- **Low Light Vision:** Lycanthropes ignore penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Nathan suffers +4 damage from silver weapons.

☛ **Nharov Gundar**

Duke Gundar makes little effort to hide his vampiric nature. His nails are hooked claws, his teeth horrific fangs, and his eyes are bloodshot and wide. His clothing reeks of dried blood and grave dirt. He could pass for an ordinary (if filthy) man at a distance, but up close he has more in common with a wolf or other predatory beast than anything human.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d10, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Persuasion d4, Stealth d10, Survival d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Impulsive

Edges: Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Frenzy (Imp), Quick, Sweep (Imp)

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Change Form:** As a limited action, Gundar can change into a wolf, a bat, or a cloud of mist, or back into his human form. While in mist form, Gundar cannot attack but is immune to all non-magical attacks.
- **Children of the Night:** Gundar has the ability to summon and control wolves or rats. This requires an action and a Smarts roll. If successful, 1d6

wolves or 1d6 swarms of rats come from the surrounding wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.

- **Darklord of Gundarak:** Gundar's weak will keeps him from closing the borders for more than a few hours at a time. While Gundarak's borders are closed, a thin wall of fog rises up from the ground, making travelers lose their way and eventually turning them back toward Gundarak.
- **Fear:** Gundar's unnatural appearance causes a Fear check when he attacks.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be harmed by their Weaknesses. They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never Wounded.
- **Night Vision:** Duke Gundar can see in complete darkness, even more keenly than the typical vampire. He ignores Illumination penalties.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by Gundar's bite has a 50% chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days. Gundar can adjust this chance if he wishes (and has time to do so)—either by rending the body so thoroughly that there is no chance of turning the victim, or by slowly draining the victim's life over several nights, thus guaranteeing a convert to the legions of the damned.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from Called Shots (except for Called Shots to the heart—see below); ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Vampires take normal damage from fire.
- **Weakness (Forbiddance):** A vampire cannot enter a private dwelling without being invited. They may enter public buildings as they please.
- **Weakness (Holy Symbol):** A character with a holy symbol may

keep a vampire at bay by displaying a holy symbol. A vampire who wants to directly attack the victim must beat her in an opposed test of Spirit.

- **Weakness (Holy Water):** A vampire splashed with holy water suffers a level of Fatigue in addition to the usual damage. This cannot cause Incapacitation.
- **Weakness (Running Water):** Gundar cannot cross a natural body of running water such as a stream or river. If fully immersed in running water, he suffers 2d6 damage per round until he escapes or is slain.
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (-4) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally. If Gundar fails this roll, he turns to mist and returns to his crypt, where he reforms and requires at least a day to recover. He can only be permanently killed by being found in his crypt, beheaded, and burned to ashes while he recovers.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Gundar catches fire if any part of his skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that he suffers 2d6 damage per round until he is dust. Armor does not protect him from this damage.

☞ Nostalia Romaine

The closest friend and confidante of darklord Ivana Boritsi, Nostalia Romaine is the first **ermordenung** (page 269) and the living weapon with which Ivana took her own mother's life. Even without the elixirs that keep her eternally young and beautiful, Nostalia would be utterly loyal to Ivana—despite her occasional nightmares about her first murder, which still haunts her to this day.

Like all ermordenung, Nostalia is in perfect physical condition. She moves with the grace and elegance of a dancer, standing just under six feet tall. Her dark eyes smolder with intensity in her extraordinarily pale face. Her ebony hair falls almost to her knees, and she typically keeps it in a single thick braid, which she decorates with flowers. Nostalia carries a dagger on her person, more for show than anything else. She always wears long, elegant gloves, removing them only when she intends to kill with her poisonous touch.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Performance d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Thievery d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Cautious, Loyal, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Assassin, Block, Bolster, Charismatic, Connections (Borcan aristocracy), Deceptive^(rc), Humiliate, Reliable, Retort, Streetwise, Strong Willed, Very Attractive

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), fine clothes

Special Abilities:

- **Immunity:** Ermordenung are immune to all poisons and toxins.
- **Poison Touch:** An ermordenung can deliver deadly poison as a Touch Attack, and Nostalia's poison is more potent than most. A touched victim must attempt a Vigor roll or suffer the effects of Lethal poison. This also affects anyone who has intimate contact with the ermordenung, such as a kiss or a lengthy embrace with skin contact, which causes the Vigor roll to be made at a -2 penalty.

☛ Pieter van Riese

In life Pieter van Riese was a broad-shouldered man with weathered features, his dark eyes constantly scanning the horizon. His hair and beard were dark, a touch of grey appearing at the temples and at the corners of his mouth. In death he appears much the same, yet a chill clings to him, and his hair and beard shift and move as if he was in a violent storm. When he speaks, his breath is visible, as if he talks in the depths of winter. Despite this, Pieter never complains of the cold and seems comfortable, no matter the weather.

In death, Captain van Riese travels the Sea of Sorrows endlessly, seeking to return to his own world and find the passage that was denied him in life. He spends his endless eternity mapping the islands of the sea, a task that vexes him as the islands seem to move. Van Riese cannot leave the decks of the *Relentless*, but he can command the ship as an extension of his own body. The ship can become solid and even carry cargo and passengers for extended periods of time, a fact that van Riese uses to lure people aboard and press-gang them into his crew of the damned once they are far out to sea.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d8, Battle d8, Boating d12, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d12, Taunt d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Ruthless (Major), Stubborn

Edges: Command, Menacing, Fervor, Steady Hands

Gear: Spectral cutlass (Str+d6, ignores non-magical armor)



Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of the Sea of Sorrows:** Captain van Riese cannot close his domain's borders, but he can summon up terrible storms around the *Relentless* at will. These storms do not harm his vessel or inconvenience his crew at all, but they present a hurricane-level hazard to all mortal ships within ten miles. He can also calm the seas within this area at will, which he often does when attempting to gain new crew members through entrapment rather than battle.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (-6 to hit) as a limited free action.

- **Fear (-2):** Ghosts cause Fear checks at -2 when they allow their true nature to be seen.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Salt):** The purifying power of salt can hold back a ghost or even damage it. The ghost cannot cross an unbroken line of salt, and salt counts as a magical weapon. Even a thrown handful of salt inflicts 2d4 damage.
- **Withering Touch:** Pieter van Riese can make a Touch Attack to drain the life from his victims. A touched target suffers an automatic Wound for each success and raise on the Fighting roll.

The *Relentless*

The *Relentless* is Pieter van Riese's ship, an extremely well armed and well-maintained merchant ship. Though its timbers have been worn by years of harsh weather and the sea, it seems quite solid—save at dusk and dawn, when its spectral nature becomes obvious.

The *Relentless* is a *fluyt*, an 80-foot-long merchant vessel with a weight of almost 200 tons. It is Size 12 (Gargantuan) with Handling of -2 and a Top Speed of 10 mph regardless of wind. It has a Toughness of 20 (4) and a maximum crew of 100. It has eight 12 lb. cannons (*SWADE* 77) on either side, but these must be fired by crewmembers rather than being controlled by Captain van Riese's will.

With a crew complement of at least 50, the ship's Handling increases to -1 and its Top Speed rises to 15 mph. With a crew of 80 or more, it becomes Handling +0 and gains a Top Speed of 20 mph.

The Crew: Captain van Riese can press-gang innocent travelers into his crew by luring them onto the decks at least a full day's sail from any land. Once that far at sea, any person who dies by his hand rises again as a zombie with full human intelligence under his control; if the victim has ever taken a life, he can raise them as a ghost under his control instead. Captain van Riese can also bargain for folk to willingly join his crew, offering them passage or treasures in exchange for their service after a certain number of years.

☉ Shinpi Haki

In life, Shinpi Haki was a proud warrior and clan leader who dominated his homeland to forge a proud and mighty empire. Though he espoused loyalty to the warrior's code of his people, he happily abused and manipulated others, using underhanded tactics and assassins to gain his throne. As he aged, he grew bitter and cruel, seeing no value in any of his six children, all of whom had been raised as aristocrats rather than hard-bitten warriors. No sooner than he died did his children begin bickering over his inheritance.

In death, Lord Shinpi could not rest. His anger coalesced into a rage against the living—particularly against his own children. This anger allowed him to continue existing after death as a vengeful ghost, turning the spirit realm of his home islands into a poisonous and terrifying place. From the realm of ghosts, Lord Shinpi directs demons, shades of the dead, and stranger things still to do his bidding. He will not rest until each of his children has died in dishonor, dragging their lands down into the spirit realm with them. Once his entire

homeland has been consumed, he will rule once more—an emperor of the dead.

Shinpi Haki is a short but broad-shouldered man, apparently quite elderly. Being dead, his apparent age is no hindrance for him. He typically manifests wearing the full armor of a warrior lord—the armor he was wearing when he was cremated—but carrying no swords. His blades were given to his eldest daughter as an inheritance but went missing shortly after the young woman's death. Shinpi would give much to have his swords returned to him.



Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Battle d10, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Stealth d12, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 12 (4)

Hindrances: Driven (Major: become emperor of the dead), Ruthless (Major), Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Block (Imp), Combat Reflexes, Command, Counterattack, Extraction, Feint, Frenzy (Imp), Hold the Line, Killer Instinct, No Mercy, Quick Draw^{RRR}, Sweep, Tactician

Gear: Spectral armor (+4 Armor), spectral wooden sword (Str+d6)

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Rokushima Taiyou:**
When he wants to close the domain's borders, horrible typhoons rise out of the Poison Sea, making it impossible for ships to survive unless they turn back for safe harbor. Using this ability distracts Lord Shinpi from his primary goals, however. While he is so distracted, his children sleep peacefully and dream of the honor they once possessed—and of the better world they could build if they only put aside their old grudges. Shinpi fears what would happen if they were permitted to follow these noble impulses, so he never allows them more than a few nights of respite.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks.
- **Fear (-2):** Ghosts cause Fear checks at -2 when they let themselves be seen.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional

damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.

- **Weakness (Trapped):** Shinpi Haki is trapped in the spirit realm of Rokushima Taiyou. He cannot manifest himself or become visible in the physical world, and can only interact with the living by whispering into the dreams of his own descendants. If he spends a whole night doing so, his target gains the Night Terrors Hindrance for one week, and must attempt a Spirit roll at -2 to avoid undertaking a general course of action desired by Shinpi (such as sending troops to a specific location, sending assassins against a target, and so on). He cannot instill suicidal or obviously insane directions in this fashion. If confronted in the spirit realm or summoned into the physical world by a ritual, he cannot become invisible.

☠ Sodo

Trying to describe Sodo's appearance is like trying to describe perpetually shattering glass. His shape is altering constantly, with features mixing and matching in ways that defy logic or common sense. Only an act of supreme will allows him to hold a stolen shape longer than a few moments. He rarely bothers to hold a single shape around other doppelgangers, reveling in how his appearance horrifies them, but he privately seethes at how his incapacity has deprived him of that which he most desires: comfort and stability.

Sodo sits at the center of a complex web of assassins, spies, and thieves. His human agents run the largest gangs in Paridon as well as sitting in the halls of power. Though he has massive influence on the city, he is frequently thwarted by

doppelgangers who can act more openly, directly controlling noble houses, merchant guilds, and religious organizations. His inability to hold a single shape for more than a few minutes at a time leaves him as a perpetual shadow, unable to enjoy the fruits of his labors and live as a human, but also an outcast among his own kind.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Occult d8, Performance d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10, Thievery d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Habit (Major: addicted to victims' pain), Jealous (Major)

Edges: Assassin, Deceptive^(FC), Extraction (Imp), Feint, Free Runner, Quick, Sneak Attack^(FC), Streetwise, Thief

Gear: Knife (Str+d4), strangling cord

Special Abilities:

Addiction: Sodo's long years of inflicting pain on others have left him addicted to the sensation. Unless he kills at least one victim each day while using his mind reading power on them, Sodo begins suffering withdrawal, gaining a level of Fatigue each day until he gives in to his compulsion or becomes Incapacitated. He cannot die from this withdrawal, but it can leave him on the verge of death until he sups again on terror and pain.

- **Darklord of Paridon:** Sodo was able to completely close off the Shining Bay from the outside world for the better part of a century, but that power has fled him. He can no longer even close the borders of Paridon, let alone the entire Cluster.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Sodo's metamorphic flesh allows him to make a natural healing roll every

round unless his Wounds were inflicted by fire or acid.

- **Fear (-2):** Sodo's monstrous, ever-shifting appearance can cause onlookers to pass out in terror. Those that see him must attempt a Fear check at -2.
- **Skilled Imitator:** A doppelganger can use the *disguise* (self only) and *mind reading* powers as innate powers, using Smarts as their arcane skill. They are limited to assuming the appearance of humanoids of Size -1 to +1, though their Toughness does not change. Because of his fractured psyche, Sodo cannot hold a shape for longer than 1d6 minutes before he must take another.

☛ Strahd von Zarovich

Count Strahd von Zarovich is the darklord of Barovia, an ancient vampire. Once a virtuous warrior, Strahd's years on the battlefield changed him into a jaded, bitter old man. When his younger brother was engaged to be married, Strahd became obsessed with his brother's fiancée and made a pact with Death to regain his youth and vitality so that he might pursue her. The pact's price was the life of Strahd's brother—a price Strahd gladly paid. She rejected him and fell to her death while fleeing; in a maniacal rage, Strahd stalked through his castle, killing everyone he found.

In the centuries since his death, Strahd has concealed his undead state from his subjects by pretending to be a succession of heirs and staying out of the public eye for years at a time. Strahd can fall into melancholy moods that leave him brooding for months or years at a time, but he generally finds ways to distract himself with matters of state. He purges corruption and incompetence from his

government ruthlessly, but otherwise takes a hands-off attitude toward rulership.

Strahd's bargain with Death did indeed give him back his youth. He appears to be a young nobleman in his mid-twenties with black hair that is pulled back from his face in a short tail. His skin has a bluish pallor that is hard to see in moonlight, and his ears are slightly tipped; when asked, he typically claims distant elven heritage. When Strahd is angered, his eyes glow red like the pits of hell and his canines lengthen into dreadful fangs. He tends to dress in conservative Barovian fashion, at least a century out of date.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Academics d8, Athletics d8, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Occult d10, Performance d8, Persuasion d12, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d10, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Hindrances: Amorous, Arrogant, Driven (Major: find Tatyana's reincarnation and make her his bride), Vow (Major: protect and defend Barovia)

Edges: Alertness, Arcane Background (Magic), Aristocrat, Attractive, Charismatic, Dodge (Imp), Epic Mastery^(FC), Frenzy (Imp), Home Ground^(FC) (Castle Ravenloft), Level Headed, Necromancer^(RR), Quick, Rapid Recharge, Wizard

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Change Form:** As a limited action, Strahd can change into a wolf, a bat, or a cloud of mist, or back into his human form. While in mist form, Strahd cannot attack but is immune to all non-magical attacks.

- **Charm:** Strahd can use the *puppet* power on anyone who finds him attractive using Smarts as his arcane skill. He can cast and maintain the power indefinitely but may only affect one target at a time.
- **Children of the Night:** Strahd can summon and control wolves or rats. This requires an action and a Smarts roll. If successful, 1d6 wolves or 1d6 swarms of rats come from the surrounding wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.
- **Darklord of Barovia:** Strahd has more control over his domain than many darklords. He is known to be able to sense powerful rivals at a distance and seems to have an almost empathic link with the land itself. Bound to the land as he is, Strahd needs no invitation to enter any domicile in his domain, unlike most vampires. He can close the domain borders at will and seems to have no limit on how long he can keep them closed, save his own concern about how long-term isolation from the outside world would harm his citizens. Count Strahd's ability to seal the nation's borders is a known trait, though the citizens attribute it to magic passed down from father to son. When the borders close, a thick, choking fog rises up from the ground, forcing those who enter it to turn back or eventually pass out from lack of air.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be harmed by their Weaknesses. They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never Wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Strahd has keen vision like that of a hunting cat. He ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by Strahd's bite has a 50% chance of rising as a

vampire themselves in 1d4 days. Strahd can adjust this chance if he wishes (and has time to do so)—either by rending the body so thoroughly that there is no chance of turning the victim, or by slowly draining the victim's life over several nights, thus guaranteeing a convert to the legions of the damned.

- **Spells:** Strahd is a powerful necromancer with centuries of experience. He has 25 Power Points and knows the following powers: *barrier, bolt, boost/lower Trait, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, environmental protection, fear, light/darkness, smite, summon undead, and zombie.*
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from Called Shots (except for Called Shots to the heart—see below); ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Wall Walker:** Strahd can climb on vertical and inverted surfaces at normal Pace, but he cannot run on them.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Vampires take normal damage from fire.
- **Weakness (Holy Symbol):** A character with a holy symbol may keep a vampire at bay by displaying a holy symbol. A vampire who wants to directly attack the victim must beat her in an opposed test of Spirit.
- **Weakness (Holy Water):** A vampire splashed with holy water suffers a level of Fatigue in addition to the usual damage. This cannot cause Incapacitation.
- **Weakness (Stake Through the Heart):** A vampire hit with a called shot to the heart (–4) must make a Vigor roll versus the damage. If successful, it takes damage normally.

If Strahd fails this roll, he turns to mist and returns to his crypt in Castle Ravenloft, where he reforms and requires at least a day to recover. He can only be permanently killed by being found in his crypt, beheaded, and burned to ashes while he recovers.

- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Strahd catches fire if any part of his skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that he suffers 2d4 damage per round until he is dust. Armor does not protect him from this damage.

☛ Stezen d'Polarno

The marquis of Ghastria is a tall man with dark auburn hair and long sideburns. His eyes are a dark grey-blue that catches the color of the sky easily. He is always dressed in the latest fashions and carries an elaborately decorated dueling sword at his side. He spends most of his time listless and depressed, his tone curt and insulting with those who can get him to speak at all. He often leaves the room or nods off in the middle of a conversation.

The few days of the year he has had his vitality restored by his life-draining painting, his mannerisms become exaggerated to the point of foppishness. He laughs, sings, weeps, and hungers for new experiences. With his vitality thus restored, he is quick to take offense and demand duels. He always has a ready joke or bawdy tale.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d6, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Performance d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6 (7 with rapier);

Toughness: 5

Hindrances: Armorous^(FC), Arrogant, Thin Skinned (Minor)

Edges: Aristocrat, Charismatic, Counterattack, Elan, Extraction, Feint, Humiliate, Provoke, Rabble-Rouser

Gear: Fine rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry)

Special Abilities:

- **Curse of Passionlessness:** Unless he has drained the life from another person recently, Stezen is dull, drab, and disinterested in the world around him. He is Distracted and Vulnerable at all times, but he is immune to any effect that would read or influence his emotions.
- **Darklord of Ghastria:** Stezen d'Polarno can close the borders of his domain by summoning up impenetrable fog and rain at sea, making ocean passage impossible. He can only keep this up for as long as his interest holds, which is rarely more than a few days at a time. Moreover, he loses this ability while his soul is returned to him, during the days after each turning of the season.

☛ Thakok-An

Thakok-An is a tall, bronze-skinned half elf. Standing well over six feet in height, her hair is dark and wild, and her eyes an unnatural yellow. Her chest and arms are covered in tattoos of rank, while she covers the top half of her face with a jewel-encrusted bone mask. She is rarely without a ceremonial dagger made of carved bone, but when danger threatens, she takes up a wooden shield and a mighty club studded in razor-sharp blades of obsidian.

The High Templar of Kalidnay dedicated her whole life to her queen,

worshipping Kalid-Ma as a living goddess. She was so devoted that she even sacrificed her own family to the god-queen in a bloody ritual, personally cutting out her own children's hearts as a sign of devotion. Unfortunately, her overzealous nature ruined the ritual that Kalid-Ma was using to ascend to a higher state of being, leaving the sorcerer-queen in a deathlike slumber.

In Kalid-Ma's absence, Thakok-An rules the city and its few ragged survivors. She works tirelessly to awaken her queen, but a part of her whispers that Kalid-Ma is dead—and that it's her own fault.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Battle d6, Common Knowledge d6, Faith d10, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Psionics d8, Stealth d6, Survival d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6 (8 with shield);

Toughness: 8 (3)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Ruthless (Major), Vow (Major: serve Kalid-Ma)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Arcane Background (Psionics), Concentration (Miracles), Epic Mastery^(FC) (Miracles), Fleet Footed, Holy Warrior, Rabble-Rouser, Soul Drain (Psionics), Strong Willed

Gear: Bone armor (+3 Armor), bone dagger (Str+d4), obsidian-studded war club (Str+d6), medium wooden shield (+2 Parry, -2 Cover)

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Kalidnay:** The High Templar can close the domain borders of Kalidnay by entering the sacred chambers at the heart of the ziggurat and meditating. When she does, terrible sandstorms blow up at the borders of the domain, capable of flensing the meat from a traveler's bones in mere minutes. The longer she maintains this state, however, the

more aware she becomes of the hollow void in her soul where Kalid-Ma's voice once spoke to her; she can only keep the borders closed for a few hours before the pain of Kalid-Ma's absence becomes too great to ignore.

- **Low Light Vision:** Half-elves have keen eyes. Thakok-An ignores penalties for Dim and Dark Illumination.
- **Miracles:** Thakok-An is the high priestess of Kalid-Ma, the sorcerer-queen of Kalidnay. She has 25 Power Points for her miracles and knows the following powers: *beast friend*, *bolt*, *dispel*, *entangle*, *protection*, and *smite*.
- **Psionics:** Like all people from her world, Thakok-An has minor psychic abilities. She has 15 Power Points for her psionics and knows the following powers: *fly* (self only), *telekinesis*, and *teleport* (self only).

☛ Uriel Carrascon

Once nothing more than a common jungle cat, the man who now goes by the name Uriel Carrascon has grown to despise both his own "primitive" origins and the recalcitrance of humanity to embrace change and civilization. He exudes an aura of restlessness and tightly wound control, as though he is constantly holding back violent urges. While he can be pleasant, he sometimes comes across as smug—and when his authority is challenged, he becomes aggressive and openly confrontational.

Don Uriel Carrascon is a tall, sleek, handsome man with dark skin and hypnotic yellow eyes. His hair is short and meticulously groomed, and he keeps his clothing modern, stylish, and immaculately clean. Even in the worst

heat and humidity of his jungle homeland, Carrascon seems cool, never sweating or evincing discomfort.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Battle d6, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10, Survival d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7 (8 with rapier);

Toughness: 9

Hindrances: Arrogant, Driven (Major: modernize Valachan), Suspicious (Minor)

Edges: Brawny, Brawler, Bruiser, First Strike (Imp), Fleet Footed, Frenzy (Imp), Quick

Gear: Fine clothes, ceremonial rapier (Str+d4, Parry +1), unarmed strike (Str+d6, does not count as armed)

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Valachan:** While his willpower is strong enough to allow him to close the borders, his control over the land is insufficient. The jungle resists his demands, so he is forced to rely on traditional troops if he wants to harry outsiders or prevent escape.

☛ Victor Mordenheim

Victor Mordenheim is one of the preeminent scientific minds in the world, a man who had single-handedly mastered multiple fields, including medicine, biology, physics, engineering, and more. He has a voracious drive to learn, and an obsessive nature that pushes him to go to extraordinary—even horrific—lengths to prove his theories.

Dr. Mordenheim was once a surgeon who believed that life was merely a biological process with no mysticism needed. To prove his theory, he worked to create life in his laboratory, gaining

himself a dire reputation in the process. Victor cared nothing for the approval of lesser minds, only that he uncovered the truth. The only thing that could inspire his passion outside his work was his wife, Elise. As the years passed, however, he found that the spark of love paled beside the intellectual pursuits he preferred. He and Elise adopted a daughter, called Eva; Elise hoped that a child would distract her husband from his blasphemous research, while Victor hoped that a child would distract his wife from bothering him.

In a fit of hubris, Victor used a portion of his own flesh, combined with a patchwork body made of scavenged corpses, to create a new life he called Adam. This creature was everything Victor had hoped for—intelligent, capable of learning, and even creative. Still, Victor could find no joy in his success; his cool nature had become ice cold, leaving him passionless and empty.

A few years later, Adam seemed to go berserk, killing Victor's daughter and maiming his wife before fleeing. Victor could find no tears for the two women; instead, motivated by a sense of spousal duty more than anything else, he simply hooked up Elise to an experimental life support machine and began making efforts to save her.

Victor feels no sorrow at Elise's condition, only the intellectual challenge of saving a life that would be beyond any other man's ability. Victor goes through the motions of daily life, researching his curiosities and occasionally publishing about them, but he has no true creative spark left in him. Everything he does is a stagnant derivative of something he once pursued with vigor, almost as though he were an empty construct instead of a man.

Victor is an older man, perhaps in his fifties or sixties but still vigorous. His dark

hair is shot through with grey, and he has a nasty scar above his left eye. He is clean-shaven but otherwise poorly groomed. Victor has many constructs and creations at his service, as well as one or two human assistants at any given time.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Academics d10, Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d4, Healing d12, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Persuasion d4, Repair d12, Research d10, Science d12, Shooting d6, Weird Science d12+2

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Doubting Thomas, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Gadgeteer, Healer, Master Artificer^(FC), Mr. Fix-It, Scholar (Science)

Gear: Various scientific implements

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Lamordia:** Victor shares his damnation with Adam, his greatest creation. For the sin of pride, and for his mistreatment of his family and creation, he was made darklord. Victor cannot close the borders of Lamordia, and he would not acknowledge such a "mystical" bond even if someone told him about it. Still, he has a vague sense of the land, though he chalks it up to a function of his "enlightened" intellect.
- **Pain Transference:** If Adam and Dr. Mordenheim are present in the same scene, they feel one another's pain. If either is Shaken, Wounded, or Stunned, the other must immediately make a Vigor check or be Shaken as well.
- **Soulless:** Dr. Mordenheim is an empty shell of a man, passionless and lacking in empathy. He suffers a -4 penalty on Persuasion, Intimidation,

and Taunt checks, but he also receives +4 to resist Tests using those skills.

- **Weird Science:** Most of Victor's scientific experiments are on esoteric functions of his "enlightened" science, but he possesses a few practical objects in case of emergency. Victor has 30 Power Points, and he knows the following powers: *bolt*, *boost/lower Trait*, *deflection*, and *healing*. He can have virtually any power available as needed thanks to his Gadgeteer Edge.

☠ Vlad Drakov

Born the bastard son of a minor nobleman, Vlad Drakov grew up resentful of his half-brothers, who would inherit everything despite being less than him in every way. When he came of age, Drakov forsook his father's lands to become a mercenary, eventually becoming the commander of his own elite company, the Talons of the Hawk. "Vlad the Hawk" was known as a ruthless enforcer, happily selling his talents to the highest bidder with no questions asked. Vlad promoted his men only based on their talents, believing that the only true measure of a human being was their strength—not blood or heritage.

As Vlad grew older, he still relished slaughter and bloodshed, but he also longed for validation and glory. He believed that he could do a far better job of ruling than the simpering noblemen who paid him to do their dirty work while looking down their noses at him. Vlad took his Talons and set out for parts unknown, seeking a new land to conquer. He eventually found such a land and bent it to his will over the course of a generation, finally setting up a military

government with himself as both king and general.

Though Vlad has been frustrated in his decades as king of Falkovnia, he remains committed to furthering his ideals of rule through strength and merit. Vlad does not get to take the field as often as he would like, being bogged down by the minutiae of rulership, but he has remained in extraordinary physical condition for a man of his age.

Vlad appears to be a vigorous man in his late forties or early fifties, but he is actually almost twice that age. He wears his thick brown hair past his shoulders and maintains a full, thick beard. Even in state meetings, Vlad wears a full suit of plate armor and carries a soldier's sword. He has a sense of self-assuredness about him that crosses the line into arrogance when challenged. Vlad has many wives, mistresses, and concubines, and his estates are filled with his many children and grandchildren.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Athletics d10, Battle d12, Common Knowledge d8, Fighting d12+1, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d6, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 10 (12 with shield);

Toughness: 13 (4)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Ruthless (Minor)

Edges: Arcane Resistance (Imp), Block (Imp), Brave, Brawler, Brawny, Brute, Charismatic, Command, Commanding Presence, Counterattack (Imp), Fervor, First Strike (Imp), Frenzy (Imp), Hard to Kill, Hold the Line, Inspire, Menacing, Nerves of Steel (Imp), Soldier, Strong Willed, Sweep (Imp), Tough as Nails

Gear: Plate armor (+4 Armor), long sword (Str+d8), heavy shield (+2 Parry, -4

Cover), hunting bow (Range 12/24/48, 2d6), war horse

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Falkovnia:** Though Vlad Drakov is the darklord of Falkovnia, he has so little mystical understanding that he cannot close the borders of his domain. He is aware of his “bond with the land,” and believes that conquering other nations will allow him to bond with them as well, eventually creating a mighty empire from subjugated lands. He has a vague sense of when Falkovnia is coming into conjunction with other domains, which allows him to begin mobilizing his soldiers. This rarely gives him all of the information he needs, so his soldiers are frequently undersupplied, equipped poorly for their incursion, or otherwise put in bad position for a true invasion.

☛ Wilfred Godefroy

In life, Godefroy was a cruel and tyrannical man. He terrorized his servants, his wife, and his daughter alike. A fit of rage led him to murder his wife; when his daughter tried to intervene, he beat her to death as well. He avoided justice for their deaths by concealing it as an accident, but suspicions surrounded him. He was haunted by the rumors—and by the ghosts of his murdered wife and daughter. Their torments drove him to commit suicide a year later, but death was not the end for Godefroy. Instead, he found himself trapped within his house as a restless spirit.

As a ghost, Godefroy can command the loyalty of virtually every other spirit in Mordent, due to his ability to draw them into his home and trap them there. The only ghosts he cannot command are

those of his wife and daughter, who emerge to torment him nightly. As time has passed, Godefroy has found himself able to wander the domain at will, though he is still drawn back to Gryphon Manor every morning at dawn and trapped there until nightfall.

When Godefroy manifests or is seen by those who can view ghosts naturally, he looks like an older man with a neatly trimmed beard and grey hair pulled back in a nobleman's ponytail. He is dressed in fashions two centuries out of date, and his expression is stern and authoritarian. He is never without his pince-nez glasses or his walking stick, tipped with a silver griffin's head.



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d10, Fighting d6, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Occult d6, Persuasion d6, Taunt d10, Stealth d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Arrogant, Mean, Ruthless (Major)

Edges: Humiliate, Menacing, Rabble-Rouser, Retort

Gear: Thrown objects (Str+d4), ghostly cane (Str+d6, ignores non-magical armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Darklord of Mordent:** Godefroy can close the domain's borders—but only until he is called back to Gryphon Manor at dawn. He can renew that closing, but there is always a window of escape for a few moments when the sun rises as he struggles to reorient himself. When he closes the borders, thick fog rises up at the edges of the domain, and travelers who enter the Mists always find themselves returning to Mordent, regardless of their bearing.
- **Ethereal:** Can pass through solid objects; cannot be harmed by non-magical attacks; may become invisible (–6 to hit) as a limited free action.
- **Fear (–2):** Wilfred Godefroy causes Fear checks at –2 when he lets himself be seen in his full wrath and fury.
- **Fetter:** Wilfred Godefroy is bound to the House on Gryphon Hill. So long as it stands, he cannot be truly destroyed—only temporarily dispersed. If he is “killed,” he reforms in his home the next night at sunset.
- **Lord of Ghosts:** Wilfred's attacks count as magical for the purpose of harming other ghosts, and he can

attack material or ethereal creatures no matter his own current state. Any ghosts he beats to “death” instead becomes his slave until the following sunrise, though he can permanently destroy ghosts in this manner too.

- **Telekinesis:** Godefroy can use *telekinesis* as a major Innate Power (Spirit).
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from Called Shots; ignores 1 point of Wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Bound):** Lord Godefroy is bound to the House on Gryphon Hill and to the cycle of time. He is called back to the House at dawn every morning, and every night at midnight, the ghosts of his wife and daughter come forth to harass and torment him for at least an hour, during which time he is effectively powerless. Should someone manage to cleanse or destroy the House on Gryphon Hill—an epic undertaking to say the least—then Godefroy would be destroyed along with it.
- **Weakness (Salt):** The purifying power of salt can hold back a ghost or even damage it. The ghost cannot cross an unbroken line of salt, and salt counts as a magical weapon. Even a thrown handful of salt inflicts 2d4 damage.

☉ Yagno Petrovna

Yagno Petrovna is a middle-aged man with a long, pale, narrow face. His features are little more than thin lines, and his bloodless lips sit in a flat grimace. He is never without his priestly garb of red and orange silk robes, topped by a tight-fitting hood that shows only his face. His only other decoration is a braided

cord worked with polished bone beads and human teeth running from over his left shoulder to under his right arm.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d12

Skills: Athletics d6, Common Knowledge d8, Faith d12, Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Occult d10, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Survival d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusion (Major: "I am the one true prophet of Zhakata"), Vow (Major: serve Zhakata)

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Blood Magic^(FC), Close Fighting^(FC), Command, Concentration, Epic Mastery^(FC), Favored Power^(FC) (*curse*), Fervor, Hold the Line, Nerves of Steel (Imp)

Gear: Priestly robes (+1 Armor), enchanted dagger (Str+d6, AP 2, +1 Fighting)

Special Abilities:

- **Curse of Inhumanity:** Yagno's preferred use of the *curse* power is as a ritual to strip the humanity from a targeted enemy. When used against a person of part-human ancestry, it transforms them permanently into their other ancestral half (such as a half-elf becoming a full elf). Used against a human, it turns them into a caliban or a **broken one** (page 260) at Yagno's discretion. This ability has no

effect on individuals with no human ancestry at all (such as dwarves, elves, and the like).

- **Darklord of G'Henna:** When Yagno wishes to close the borders of G'Henna, a wall of broken, leering skulls rises from the ground. These skulls utter a constant moaning prayer that distorts the senses of those that approach, as well as biting and cursing at any who try to climb the wall. The wall seems to extend into the heavens, and attempts to break it down reveal only more skulls behind the shattered ones. Yagno can maintain the wall only as long as he fasts and prays. While he has great endurance for self-denial, his body and willpower fail eventually. Each day he maintains the wall requires a Vigor roll with a cumulative -1 penalty. When he drops the wall, he must rest and eat well for at least a week before closing the borders again.
- **Miracles:** Yagno is a zealous servant of Zhakata the devourer. He has 40 Power Points and knows the following powers: *arcane protection*, *barrier*, *blessing*^(FC), *boost/lower Trait*, *curse*^(FC), *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *environmental protection*, *healing*, *protection*, *sanctuary*^(FC), *smite*, and *stun*.

Ravenloft®

Reincarnated

In the dead of night, as mists cloak the land, a traveler walks a country road.

Footsteps echo behind him, in pace with his beating heart.

Is it Death who follows?

The man turns, and so does the phantom.

A flash of fang, a bloodcurdling howl,
red eyes fueled by a passion from beyond the grave.

The traveler discovers what others have learned before him:

All roads lead to Ravenloft

