

Ravenloft®

Reincarnated



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The Savage World of Ravenloft

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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; thought and passion, 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

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 Deluxe 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 Kargatanë 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 race of shadowy fey, nothing prevents a GM looking to use the "classic" D&D versions of the races 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.

Racial strife is occasionally more of 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.

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 his or her 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 turn men into monsters, apparent punishments

for the crimes of their fathers. 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 frightening 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 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 lacks the obvious flair it has in other realms. Even nonhumans like elves and dwarves are rarer, and 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 the 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 may be indicated by purely physical landmarks. A traveler may have no way to tell she has 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 vapour 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. Travellers 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 is meaningless; unless a traveller uses a Mistway or “current” in the flow of Mist or is escorted by a Vistani or powerful cleric of the goddess Ezra, she has no control over where the Mists will deposit her.

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.

Some scholars of the metaphysical believe that the entire world is merely an illusion, and that every realm within it was once an outworlder nation, drawn into the Land of Mists by forces unknown. Others hold that there are no “other worlds,” and that any “outlanders” are merely delusional fools, poor souls whose minds have broken under the strain of dealing with horror.

The truth, as with so many other things, may be impossible to know for certain.

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 small group 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 his domain. A darklord can trap others in his domain by closing the borders, but he 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, his 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?

No “canonical” explanation for the nature of the Dark Powers will ever be given. They—if there even is a “they”—are the ultimate mystery, and one whose nature each GM must determine for himself. While some explanations have been offered over the years by many sources—including at least one from an official Ravenloft novel—none of those explanations are considered any more “true” than the others.

Decide for yourself, but remember to not lose sight of the details for worrying about the grander cosmological implications. After all, the campaign isn't about the Dark Powers, even if they act as a “grand unification theory of evil.” It's about the player characters, their allies and enemies, and about the people they care about. If the Dark Powers come up in your game at all—which is by no means a guarantee—their mysterious nature can serve as a form of cosmic horror.



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.

1) Race

Humans are the most common characters, but the world of Ravenloft also features graceful elves, doughty dwarves, affable gnomes, and stranger races 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 race, or even play a monster seeking acceptance and redemption.

2) 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 his world and culture, how well he thinks on his feet, and 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 warrior's damage in hand-to-hand combat.
- **Vigor** represents endurance, resistance to disease, poison, or toxins, and how much pain and physical damage a 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.

You have 15 skill points to distribute among your skills. Each die type costs 1 point (starting at d4) as long as the skill is equal to or less than the attribute it's linked to (listed beside the skill in parentheses). If you exceed the attribute, the cost becomes 2 points per die type. As with attributes, no skill may be increased above d12.

Example: Fighting is linked to Agility. A character with a d8 Agility can buy Fighting for one point per die type to d8. Buying a d10 costs 2 points, and a d12 costs another 2 points.

Derived Statistics

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

Charisma is a measure of your character's appearance, manner, and general likability. It's 0 unless you have Edges or Hindrances that modify it. Charisma is added to Persuasion, Socialize, and Streetwise rolls, and is used by the GM to figure out how nonplayer characters react to your hero.

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 tabletop—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 him to be rattled or worse. Toughness is 2 plus half your hero's Vigor, plus Armor (use the armor worn on his torso if not a called shot).

When applying stats such as $d12+1$ to Parry and Toughness, add half the fixed modifier, rounded down. For instance, a Fighting skill of $d12+1$ grants a Parry of 8 ($2 + \text{half of } d12$), whereas a $d12+2$ gives a Parry of 9 ($2 + \text{half of } d12 + 2$).

3) Edges and Hindrances

Great heroes are far more than a collection of skills and attributes. It's their unique gifts, special powers, and tragic flaws that truly make them interesting characters. Every character gets one Edge for free at character creation. Characters can take more Edges by balancing them out with Hindrances.

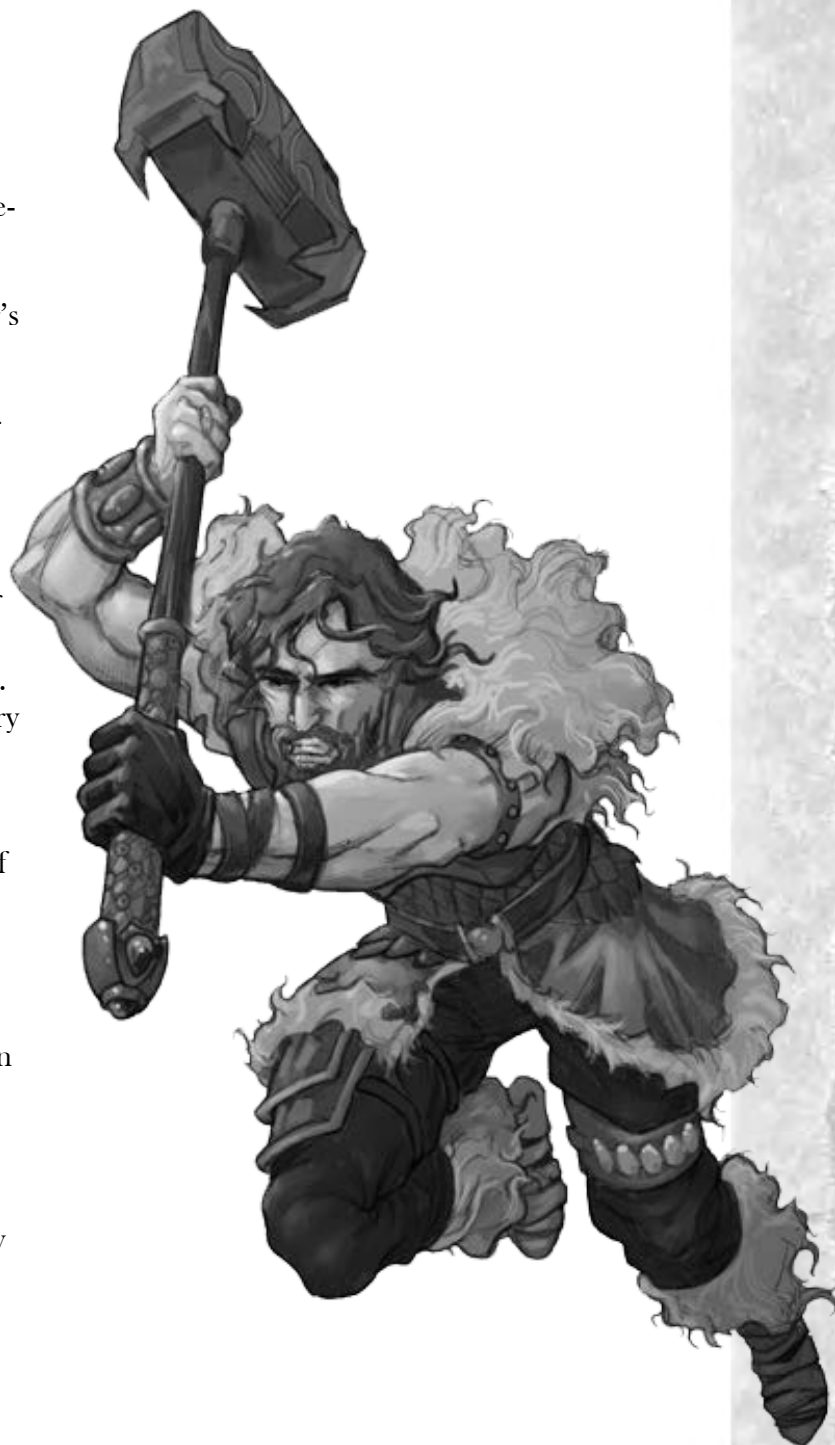
You can take one Major Hindrance and two Minor Hindrances. A Major Hindrance is worth 2 points, and a Minor Hindrance is worth 1 point.

For 2 points you can:

- Raise an attribute one die type, or
- Choose an Edge

For 1 point you can:

- Gain another skill point, or
- Gain an additional 500 silver pieces for starting funds



4) Gear

Next you need to purchase equipment. Some settings may provide your hero with all the gear he needs. 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).

Encumbrance

A character can carry five times his Strength die type in pounds without incurring any penalties. This is called his "Load Limit." A character with Strength of d8, for example, can comfortably carry 40 pounds. (Ignore normal clothes when figuring weight.)

Carrying too much weight inflicts a -1 penalty for every additional multiple of your Load Limit. The penalty applies to all Agility and Strength totals, as well as skills linked to either of those two attributes.

A hero with d8 Strength, for example, has a Load Limit of 40 pounds. He can carry 41-80 pounds at a -1 penalty to his Strength, Agility, and related skill rolls. He could also carry 81-120 pounds at -2, or 121-160 pounds at -3.

Characters cannot regularly carry weight that inflicts a penalty of more than -3. They may be able to lift greater weights (up to a -4 penalty) for a few short steps at the discretion of the GM, or could even drag heavier weights for longer distances at slower speeds.

5) Background Details

Finish your character by filling in any history or background you care to, including his domain of origin. Ask yourself why your hero is where she's at and what her 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? Does he have any distinctive features, like scars or tattoos? Where did he get them?
- Does the character have a family? Any old friends? People he cares about outside the player characters?
- What does the character love? What does he hate? Does he have any regrets? Is there something that makes his skin crawl?
- Does he 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 his goals and drives? What would he 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 him, 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!

Races of Ravenloft

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

Humans are the most common race in the world of Ravenloft, 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. Humans who know the story of their exile tend to treat the fey more fairly, while others fear elves and their kin as spies from a realm of shadowy immortals.

Calibans are humans who suffered exposure to corruption in the womb, resulting in horrible deformities or mental illness, as well as bodies hardy enough to survive the corruption that formed them. Humans mistreat calibans, and some religions even regard their birth as a sign of their parents’ sinfulness rather than random happenstance. Most calibans are second-class citizens in their lands, suffering severe prejudice and becoming bitter because of it.

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. Some legends speak of elves substituting their own children for human babies, allowing the human parents to raise the changeling so that the elf can have a child without having to do any of the work. These tales haunt half-elven children throughout their lives, as does the knowledge of their own difference. A half-elf will outlive all of his human loved ones, but will not live long enough to be ever seen as anything but a child to an elf.

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, and humans find it easy to get

along with them in a way that they do not with the fey races.

The **created** are not a race at all—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 “races” of Ravenloft, are the **dhampir**—men and women 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, such as a **revenant**, a dead person who has risen from the grave seeking justice or vengeance. 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 revenants, 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 races 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 members of other races or subject them to unspeakable prejudice. If anything can be said, humans are the only race truly capable of treating members of another race exactly as they would treat their own—for good or for ill.

Under normal circumstances, humans live a little longer than half a century, 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.

- **Versatile:** Humans start play with one free Edge of their choice. The character must meet the requirements of the Edge as usual.

Caliban

Thankfully rare, calibans are twisted humans exposed to curses or foul magic while still in the womb. The birth of a caliban in a community is often seen as a sure sign of the presence of witchcraft or sinfulness. 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. Calibans are widely considered brutish, savage creatures; their name is a corruption of "cannibal," stemming from their most infamous reputed habit.

In truth, many calibans *are* simple-minded, petty brutes, but this is often the product of their upbringing. Rejected as monsters, most calibans spend their lives hidden in dank cellars or flee civilization to roam the wilds. In fact, 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, but are 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, brutal, and short.

- **Deformed:** A caliban is clearly marked as different by its inhuman heritage. Calibans suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma, as though they possessed the Ugly Hindrance. A caliban can still take the Attractive and Very Attractive Edges to

offset this penalty, however, making them look less inhuman.

- **Low Light Vision:** Caliban eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **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.
- **Terrifying:** A caliban instinctively knows how to use his horrible features to their fullest effect. They gain a +2 bonus to Intimidation rolls, as well as +2 to any roll to resist Intimidation.
- **Unnatural:** Because of their tainted origins, calibans suffer a -2 penalty on any roll made to interact with animals, including Riding. Animal foes 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 to alien or hideous features. Though they are genderless in the physical sense, most created with a human-like appearance associate strongly with one gender or the other; some are even designed to resemble a particular gender from creation.

- **Born Yesterday:** 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, taking a -2 penalty on Common Knowledge rolls.

- **Construct:** Created add +2 to recover from being Shaken, do not suffer wound modifiers, and are immune to poison and disease. However, they do not heal naturally. To heal one of the created requires the Repair skill, which is used like the Healing skill but with no “Golden Hour.”
- **Outsider:** Created are mistrusted by the living. When they go about undisguised, they suffer -2 Charisma with naturally born races.
- **Purpose:** Every created was built for some specific purpose. They gain a free d6 in a skill of their choice, representing the purpose for which they were crafted.
- **Vulnerability:** The created are beings forged with magic, and they remain vulnerable to magic’s grasp. They suffer a -2 penalty on rolls made to avoid magic (including Soak rolls against damage from powers), and any beneficial power suffers a -2 penalty when used on one of the created.

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 he relaxes his control for even a second, and many are the loved ones of dhampirs who met their end in a moment of heady bloodlust.

- **Low Light Vision:** Dhampirs can see in near-total darkness like the undead who share their curse. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Vampiric Strength:** Dhampirs have the incredible might of vampires. They start with a d6 in Strength rather than a d4.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** While dhampirs don’t catch fire in sunlight like vampires, they do find it extremely uncomfortable. All physical tasks made in direct sunlight suffer a -2 penalty. With heavy clothing, dark glasses, and other concealing garb, this could be reduced to a -1 at the GM’s discretion.

Dwarf

Dwarves are a stout race, built as solidly as the mountains they call home. Their skin, typically a light tan or dark umber tone, is coarse and often streaked with soot or dirt, as dwarves take pride in displaying the efforts of their labors. 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 his 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 female 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 are typically very tan or bronze-skinned, often darkened somewhat from long hours at a forge. 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. Most dwarves have red hair, with some having blonde or black, and dwarven eyes are usually brown or dark green.

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 attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Slow:** Dwarves have a Pace of 5", rather than 6".
- **Tough:** Dwarves are stout and tough. They start with a d6 in Vigor instead of a d4.

Elf

Once the nobility of the land of the faerie folk, elves were outcast 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 is 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 races. 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 refusal of 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 steal than do an honest day's work. 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.
- **Low Light Vision:** The character's eyes amplify light like a cat, allowing him to see in the dark. He ignores attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Vulnerability:** Elves have a severe allergy to iron and steel, like the faeries they share kinship with. They suffer +2 damage from any weapon primarily made of iron or steel.

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 that take an Arcane Background Edge gain 5

additional Power Points and the *beast friend* power for free. A gnome's *beast friend* power works only on burrowing animals, and it is an innate power that does not follow the restrictions of an Arcane Background. A gnome without an Arcane Background can still use *beast friend* with his bonus Power Points, but the activation roll is an untrained skill check.

- **Small:** Gnomes average just shy of four feet tall. Their small size subtracts 1 from their Toughness.
- **Smart:** Gnomes are clever and intellectual. They start with a d6 Smarts instead of a d4.

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 elegant frailty; they gain their human parent's versatility and curiosity while tempering their brashness.

Despite their many virtues, half-elves are cursed to fit in with neither side of their lineage. Many humans have been saddled with an unwanted child after their elven lover selfishly abandoned the infant, and even a childhood among elves can be extraordinarily lonely for a fast-growing, curious child. Half-elves will outlive most of their human loved ones, but will rarely live long enough to be considered anything other than a precocious child to elves. They 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 the human ranges than the 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 his choice (as a human), or a d6 in Agility instead of a d4 (as an elf).
- **Low Light Vision:** The character's eyes amplify light like a cat, allowing him to see in the dark. He ignores attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Outsider:** Half-elves are wanderers with no hard roots, rarely accepted by either humans or elves. They suffer from the Outsider Hindrance, giving them a -2 penalty to Charisma with humans and elves.

Smallfolk

Smallfolk are tiny humanoids, easily mistaken at first glance for human children. Sometimes called "halflings," 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 domain 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, though these are often ghettos.

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 weight 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 draw one additional benny per game session. This may be combined with the Luck and Great Luck Edges.
- **Spirited:** Smallfolk are willful and courageous. They start with a d6 Spirit instead of a d4.
- **Small:** Smallfolk average only about three and a half feet tall. Their small size subtracts 1 from their Toughness.

Other Races

Ravenloft is a land of many peoples, and these are just a few of them. A given GM might allow other races in his 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.

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 his life.)

Fate is Fickle

While Fate can be cruel, that cruelty can aid heroes. Whenever an enemy draws a Joker in combat, all player characters receive a Benny. Additionally, all Wild Card Edges gain their benefit whenever *anyone* draws a

Joker for initiative (not just the character who drew the Joker).

God is Cruel

Fate is not a kind mistress in Ravenloft. Player characters cannot spend Bennies to reroll critical failures (i.e., a roll of “snake eyes”).

Gritty Damage

Ravenloft is a world where every injury has the possibility of turning fatal. Every time a Wild Card suffers a wound, he must make an immediate Vigor roll or suffer an Injury. The player makes a roll on the Injury Table and applies the results immediately (but only one Injury per incident, regardless of how many wounds are actually suffered).

Injuries sustained in this way are cured when the wound is healed. Injuries sustained via Incapacitation may be temporary or permanent as usual.

A Shaken character who is Shaken a second time from a damaging attack receives a wound as normal but does not have to roll to avoid an Injury.

Multiple Languages

Many languages are spoken across the Land of Mists. Characters start play knowing a single language (their native language) and learn an additional language for every rank they possess of the Knowledge (Languages) skill. So a character with Knowledge (Languages) d6 knows their native language and two more in addition. The Linguist Edge can allow a character to learn even more languages.

It is strongly recommended that the GM pick a single language as the “default”

language for their campaign and either require that all PCs be able to speak that language (by spending at least 1 skill point) or give them that language for free in addition to their native language.

Power of the Tarot

The wandering folk of Ravenloft use the cards of the Tarot deck (sometimes called the *tarokka*) to fortell 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 his 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 he has 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. This penalty is cumulative with the penalty some monsters inflict for being particularly scary, and it adds to a character's rolls on the Fright Table!

Additionally, the "Mark of Fear" entry on the Fright Table is instead replaced by Dementia:

- **19-20 Dementia:** The hero is Shaken as his mind reels from the abject horror—and breaks! Roll on the Dementia Table to determine a permanent condition that will be suffered by the character from now on. Add any modifiers the character would have suffered on the initial Fear check as well.

Versatile Learning

Characters in Ravenloft can pick up new skills more easily than people in other settings. Buying a new skill at d4 after character creation does not cost a whole advance; it acts just like purchasing a skill at a lower level than its linked Attribute.

Dementia Table

d20	Effect
1-2	Absent-Minded: The hero tends to forget little details. He might misplace his tools or simply forget to change clothes more than once a week. To remember an important detail, he must make a Smarts roll; if he fails, he can't remember it. This Dementia doesn't occur all the time—only when it's important.
3-4	Delusion: The character's mind snaps and he comes to believe in something that is patently untrue. Maybe he thinks he's a werewolf and must be locked up during the full moon, or perhaps he thinks that he is regularly visited by invisible people who whisper secrets to him. He suffers the Delusion (Major) Hindrance and suffers -2 Charisma as a result of being so obviously unhinged.
5-6	Eccentric: The character suffers a fairly minor delusion or habit, something that comes across as annoying but not particularly harmful. Perhaps he smothers his food in vinegar, or maybe he insists on obsessively counting things. He suffers the Delusion (Minor) or Habit (Minor) Hindrance and suffers -1 Charisma from his inability to act completely normal.
7-8	Evil Deeds: The hero's virtue is challenged and he needs a villain to make himself feel better. He chooses a particular person or group as the fixation for his anger and becomes convinced that they are evil and must be stopped. From now on, if the character rolls a critical failure on a Fear check or suffers a Dementia result on the Fright Table, this result becomes more pronounced. At first, the character may only talk badly about his "enemies," but he might later on attempt to ruin them or even kill them.
9-10	Depression: The tortured hero becomes incredibly depressed about himself, the futility of existence, or his chances of surviving another adventure. He often speaks of impending doom—either his own or everyone else's. Every day, the character must make a Spirit roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. If the character is Incapacitated in this manner, he is still conscious but is totally unwilling to motivate himself to action. Fatigue from this result heals at one level per day of rest after a successful Spirit roll.
11-12	Paranoia: The hero believes that everyone is out to get him, maybe even his friends. He is constantly concerned about "them"—some mysterious group that is out to ruin him, harm him, or steal from him. His bizarre claims and tendency to become hysterical about them makes him suffer -2 Charisma.
13-14	Schizophrenia: The character suffers from wild mood swings that can make him seem like a totally different person when they strike. At one moment he might be passive and restrained; later on he's a raving madman with awful hygiene. The character has the equivalent of a Major Delusion, though what that delusion might be changes from day to day (or even moment to moment). The hero's mood swings and bizarre behavior cause him to suffer -2 Charisma.
15-16	Superstitious: The character has found something that helps him deal with the terror he faces. Pick a simple object or routine as the focus of this dementia. As long as the focus is undisturbed, the character is fine. If the focus is lost or disturbed, all Trait rolls are made at -1 until it can be recovered.
17-18	Vacant Stare: The distant look in the character's eyes speaks volumes about the horrors he has seen. He makes all Notice rolls at -2.
19-20	Flashbacks: In stressful situations, the character is overwhelmed by images of past encounters and dead comrades. In combat, the character draws two initiative cards and acts on the worse one; characters who normally draw more than one card (such as from Level Headed) draw one less card than normal instead. If the character has the Slow Hindrance, draw three cards and act on the worst of them.
21-22	Marked for Death: The character's will is battered to a bloody pulp by all he has seen. He receives one less benny at the start of each session.
23+	Psychosis: This character has suffered a shock from which recovery is nearly impossible. He spends his days drooling and drawing pictures of strange creatures, when he isn't strapped into a straightjacket and screaming at the top of his lungs. In general, characters who reach this stage are removed from play; at the GM's discretion, this character might eventually recover from his awful madness—but probably not.

Skills in Ravenloft

The skill list in *Ravenloft* is somewhat different than in the core *Savage Worlds* rules. The full skill list is shown below, with new and combined skills receiving new descriptions. Unless otherwise noted, a skill uses the same rules as found in the *Savage Worlds Deluxe Edition* core book.

Skill	Linked Attribute
Artifice*	Smarts
Climbing	Strength
Fighting	Agility
Healing	Smarts
Intimidation	Spirit
Knowledge	Smarts
Notice	Smarts
Persuasion	Spirit
Psionics*	Spirit
Repair*	Smarts
Riding	Agility
Shooting	Agility
Socialize*	Spirit
Spellcasting*	Smarts or Spirit (see below)
Stealth	Agility
Streetwise	Smarts
Survival*	Smarts
Swimming	Agility
Taunt	Smarts
Throwing	Agility
Vehicles*	Agility

Artifice (Smarts)

This is the arcane skill for the Arcane Background (Weird Science) Edge. Use this skill to activate and build magical-technological devices, ranging from force field belts to steam-powered jet packs to chainsaw-bladed swords to rune-laden wands.

Psionics (Spirit)

This is the arcane skill for the Arcane Background (Psychic) Edge. Use this skill to tap into the inner power of the mind and use psychic powers. At the GM's discretion, you can also use this skill to resist any magical power that would affect your mind and would

normally require a Spirit roll to oppose (such as the *puppet* power).

Repair (Smarts)

The functions of the Lockpicking skill are folded into Repair for *Ravenloft*. This means that the Repair skill is used to pick locks, disarm traps, and set traps in addition to its usual functions.

Socialize (Spirit)

You are passable at the arts and pastimes of your culture, whether music, painting, or gaming. The higher your level in this skill, the more types of socialization you are familiar with and the better your skill with them. Use this skill to impress others with your refinement, artistic merit, or defeat others in petty contests, like gambling or knowledge of cultural trivia.

The functions of the Gambling skill are folded into Socialize for *Ravenloft*. Socialize is affected by a character's Charisma modifier.

Spellcasting (Smarts or Spirit)

This is the arcane skill for the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge. Use this skill to shape magic and cast spells. Scholarly understanding of the principles of arcana would be Knowledge (Magic) instead.

When a character gains his first rank of this skill, he must choose whether the skill is linked to Smarts or Spirit. From then on, Spellcasting is permanently linked to that Attribute.

Survival (Smarts)

The functions of the Tracking skill are folded into Survival for *Ravenloft*. This means that the Survival skill is used to follow tracks, using the Tracking Modifiers table (*SWDE* 27).

Vehicles (Agility)

You have a basic ability to pilot or drive any artificially crafted conveyance, from a

covered wagon to a riverboat. This skill is frequently used with the chase rules.

Languages of Ravenloft

The world of Ravenloft is a rich cultural tapestry, full of numerous races, 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.

By default, all people speak their native language (as determined by region) fluently and can read that language unless they take the Illiterate Hindrance.

To know additional languages, a character must purchase ranks in the Knowledge (Languages) skill or acquire the Linguist Edge. Each rank in the Knowledge (Languages) skill allows the character to learn an additional language, as well as allowing him better fluency in all the languages he knows; this skill can also be used to attempt to understand other characters without a common language (such as by hand signs or the like). So a character with Knowledge (Languages) d6 would know his native language as well as two more of his choice, for example.

The Linguist Edge grants a character knowledge of additional languages equal to half his Smarts die, as well as allowing him to make a Smarts check at -2 to simply pick up a new language after exposure to it. So a character with this Edge and Smarts d8 would know four additional languages, on top of his native language and any he might learn through the Knowledge (Languages) skill!

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.

Falkovnian: The national language of Falkovnia, many of the Core 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, both are mutually intelligible and primarily used as a marker of social status. Due to the wealth and prominence of the nations that speak Mordentish, it is one of the most common languages in the western Core. 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, as well as the most common language in the eastern Core. Spoken in eastern Darkon, Hazlan, Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, Tepest, and Valachan, Vaasi is as ubiquitous in the eastern Core as Mordentish is in the west. 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).



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.

Prohibited or Altered Hindrances

- Bad Eyes
- Outsider
- Young

Prohibited or Altered Edges

- Ace
- Adept
- Champion
- Followers
- Gadgeteer
- Holy/Unholy Warrior
- Linguist
- McGyver
- Mr. Fix It
- Thief
- Woodsman

New and Altered 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. You have an illness that causes you frequent pain and fatigue—and will eventually be the end of you.

With the Minor version of this Hindrance, you suffer a -1 penalty on Vigor rolls made to resist Fatigue. The Major version instead gives you -2 on Vigor rolls made to resist Fatigue.

In either case, at the end of every session, draw a card from a fresh action deck. If a Joker is drawn, the illness gets worse. The Minor version of the Hindrance becomes the Major version; if you already have the Major

version, you will die by the end of the next session in which you fail a Vigor roll against Fatigue.

Bad Eyes [Minor Hindrance]

Bad Eyes is a Minor Hindrance in Ravenloft, as spectacles do exist. Even in low-tech domains, it's possible that the character has bartered for them from someplace far away, though replacing them may become a concern if they're lost.

Combat Shock [Minor/Major Hindrance]

Some people freeze up when things get dangerous, and you are one of them. Regardless of the reason, you must make a Fear check (fear/nausea) during the first round of combat. If you have the Major version of this Hindrance, the Fear check is made at -2.

Cursed [Major Hindrance]

A dark fate has hung over you for a long time—possibly since the moment you were born. Allies suffer a -4 penalty when attempting to use beneficial magic on you, and enemies gain a +2 bonus when using harmful magic against you.

Glass Jaw [Minor Hindrance]

You don't know how to take a punch. Maybe you're naturally fragile, or maybe you just stiffen up when someone swings at you. Either way, you suffer a -2 penalty on Soak rolls.

Heavy Sleeper [Minor Hindrance]

You sleep like the dead. Just hope that sleeping that deeply doesn't make you wind up dead for real. You suffer a -4 penalty on Notice rolls to wake up when danger threatens. You also suffer a -4 penalty on Vigor rolls made to stay awake.

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 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 219).

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.

Mistled [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 Mist navigation rolls, as does any navigator you travel with.

Nightmares [Minor Hindrance]

You don’t sleep well. Indeed, your every visit to the land of dreams is a short trip through hell. You toss and turn constantly, and your nightly terrors can even keep up anyone unfortunate enough to share sleeping space with you.

Every day when you wake up, you must make a Spirit roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. This Fatigue vanishes when you sleep again, but it can result in you being almost

constantly tired even when you’re sleeping regularly.

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 world of Ravenoft, as well as a -1 penalty on Fear checks.

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.

Outsider [Major Hindrance]

The Land of Mists is not a kind place to people who are different. You are part of an ethnic group, social group, or other category of people who are looked down on by most people you meet. You might be one of the wandering folk, part of a displaced population, a war refugee, or someone who simply can’t get along in “normal” society.

Alternately, consider the following variants of the Outsider Hindrance:

Corrupt: Your venality and low character are common knowledge, giving you a -2 penalty to Charisma to anyone aware of your untrustworthiness.

Rebellious: You have a problem with authority and you’re not afraid to let people know. You might mouth off, disobey instructions, or fume quietly, but your disrespect is obvious and infuriating. You suffer -2 Charisma with respect to anyone in a position of authority as well as people who want to stay out of trouble with their like.

Sharp Tongue: You aren’t *mean*, precisely—you just have a hard time keeping a civil tongue in your head. You smart off, poke fun, and make judicious commentary

that others might not appreciate. You suffer -2 to Charisma with anyone who doesn't find your idle chatter clever—which is most people.

Ruthless [Minor Hindrance]

You don't take emotional concerns into consideration when you determine your plans. Efficiency and necessity dictate your actions—sometimes to the sorrow of those around you. You judge lives as tokens in the game you play, not as individuals. Simply put, you're a ruthless bastard.

Because of your callous attitude, you suffer a -2 penalty on Persuasion rolls, as well as a -2 penalty on Dark Powers checks.

Slow [Major Hindrance]

Your reaction times would make snails look fast. You draw two cards in combat and act on the worst. If you draw a Joker, you use it normally and ignore this Hindrance for the round.

Additionally, you cannot take the Quick Edge. However, you can improve your reaction time by taking the Level Headed Edge (though not during character creation). Taking Level Headed allows you to draw one card and act normally; Improved Level Headed grants you two cards, and you act on the better of the two.

Weak-Willed [Major Hindrance]

You might be brave on the battlefield, but the idea of being laughed at in public makes your stomach churn. You suffer a -2 penalty on rolls made to resist Tests of Will and Tricks.

Xenophobe [Minor Hindrance]

Humans are so common in the Land of Mists that some of them just don't know what to make of nonhumans at all. You have a dislike or distrust of nonhumans so intense that it actually makes it difficult for you to keep your opinions to yourself.

You suffer -4 to Charisma when dealing with nonhumans, as well as a -2 to Charisma

with humans who find your racism off-putting (GM's discretion).

As might be guessed, only humans can take this Hindrance.

Young [Major Hindrance]

You are younger than normal to be out in the world on your own. This Edge has been altered from the Savage Worlds core rules.

A Young hero cannot raise any physical attribute or any skill linked to a physical attribute above d6 until he becomes an adult and starts with 4 Attribute points instead of 5.

If the hero's race starts him with a physical attribute at d6 or higher, he can advance that attribute one die type before reaching adulthood. (So for example, a young elf would have a maximum Agility of d8 rather than d6.)

Additionally, the character suffers -1 Toughness, as though Small.

On the plus side, young heroes tend to be pretty lucky. They draw one extra benny at the beginning of each game session. This is in addition to any additional bennies gained from such things as the Luck or Great Luck Edges.

If the character should live long enough to mature, the Hindrance doesn't have to be bought off. He's already paid the price for the Hindrance by starting at a disadvantage. He stops getting the extra benny when he becomes an adult, however.

New and Altered Edges

Background Edges

Arcane Background (Magic)

Arcane Skill: Spellcasting (Smarts or Spirit, see below)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 3

Magic is a powerful but subtle force in the world of Ravenloft. While many people regard sorcery with fear and trepidation, its

users know that magic is merely a tool—a force that (usually) does as its wielder commands. It can be used for good or ill, to heal or to harm. While some priests claim their powers come from the gods rather than sorcery, scholars of magic recognize that the prayers used to invoke mystic effect are really no different than the incantations used by wizards.

Many magical traditions exist across the face of the Core, and likely more beyond. While the erudite parlor illusionists of Dementlieu may seem quite different from dwarven rune-casters, Vaasi shamans, or Darkonese collegium wizards, all of them are drawing upon the same fundamental forces of the universe.

Linked Attribute: When this Edge is first taken, the character must choose whether he is from a Smarts-based tradition or a Spirit-based tradition. His Spellcasting skill is then permanently linked with the chosen Attribute.

Backlash: When a magic-user rolls a 1 on his Spellcasting die (regardless of the Wild Die), he is automatically Shaken.

Components: The ability to speak and gesture is an important part of all magical traditions. If the sorcerer cannot speak or gesture clearly, he suffers a -2 penalty to his Spellcasting rolls. A magic-user that can neither speak nor gesture at all cannot use his magic.



Arcane Background (Psychic)

Arcane Skill: Psionics (Spirit)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 3

Psychics are individuals who have discovered a means of tapping into their inner strength and will to alter the world around them. While a wizard needs to speak words of power and gesture to destroy his foes, a psychic can kill with thought alone.

Psionic ability is poorly understood in most places, even more so than magic. Psychics are rare, since the talent seems to be primarily innate rather than studied, but a few mystical orders exist to help potential adepts delve within themselves to uncover their talents.

Brainburn: When a psychic rolls a 1 on his Psionics die (regardless of the Wild Die), he is automatically Shaken. On a critical failure, the character's powers lash out at everyone around him; all characters within a Large Burst Template must attempt a Spirit roll or become Shaken. This can cause a wound for characters who are already Shaken.

Arcane Background (Weird Science)

Arcane Skill: Artifice (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 1

Weird Science is the creation of strange and powerful devices, typically blending science and sorcery in bizarre and unusual ways. Some of its practitioners refer to it as alchemy, magitech, or super-science. Regardless of the exact form, all weird science involves the use of standardized procedures to create objects which in turn can produce powerful arcane effects.

Weird Science is different in that each new power is actually a new "gizmo." The player must write down exactly what the device is when he gains the power. An inventor with the *invisibility* power, for instance, actually has an invisibility belt, cloak, etc. Players are encouraged to give their devices pseudo-scientific names as well.

Artifice is the skill an inventor uses when activating most devices, and raises increase

the effects of the power as usual. If a device uses a different skill, such as Fighting, Shooting, or Vehicles, the inventor uses that instead. A ray gun, for example, uses the Shooting skill, while a "vibro-knife" (a knife with the *smite* power) uses Fighting. Powers that require an opposed roll, such as *puppet*, also use the scientist's Artifice skill.

Each device comes with its own Power Points equal to the inventor's Power Points. An inventor with the *bolt* power and 10 Power Points, for example, could make a ray gun that fires electrical beams. The gun has 10 Power Points it can use to fire the beams just like a wizard would cast the *bolt* spell.

Malfunction: Weird science devices are never perfect technology. They often suffer from spectacular and deadly malfunctions. If a gadgeteer uses a device and rolls a 1 on the skill die used to activate the gizmo, it has malfunctioned in some way and does not work. Draw a card and consult the Malfunction Table below:

Weird Science Malfunction Table

- **Clubs—Catastrophic Malfunction:** The device explodes for 2d6 damage in a Large Burst Template.
- **Hearts—Major Malfunction:** The device breaks down. The gadgeteer may not use it again until it's repaired, which requires a Repair roll and 2d6 hours of work.
- **Diamonds—Minor Malfunction:** The device suffers a minor hang-up. It can be fixed as an action with a Repair roll at -2.
- **Spades—Glitch:** The gizmo activates but does the reverse of its intent. An invisibility belt makes the caster glow brightly, a weapon fires at a random target, and so on. If a reverse effect makes no sense, treat it as a Major Malfunction instead.

New Powers: Each time a weird scientist takes the New Power Edge, he has invented a new gadget. He simply chooses a power and decides what kind of gizmo it's contained in as usual. He can also repeat a power he's already taken. A mad scientist might want to

create two ray guns, for example, so that he can use one and give one to a companion.

Maintaining Powers: Because weird scientists use inventions rather than cast spells, they don't suffer any penalties for maintaining powers, but their devices still pay the maintenance costs in Power Points as usual.

Recharging: Devices regain Power Points just like a character, at the rate of one point per hour. Recharging may represent the device being plugged into an outlet, gathering solar rays, or even fritzing out for a while until it miraculously just starts working again. Regardless of the description, however, it regains Power Points at the rate of one per hour just like other power types.

The Power Edges Rapid Recharge and Improved Rapid Recharge apply to all of the inventor's devices rather than the inventor himself.

More on Weird Science

Weird Science is a little more complicated than other Arcane Backgrounds and requires a bit more explanation. First off, it's important to understand Weird Science isn't used to make mundane devices, even if they are extraordinary. As long as they're possible and aren't too far above the given tech level of the world, they're just "high-tech." Only actual weird science, inspired by, created by, or powered by some sort of supernatural force qualifies.

It's also important to remember that Weird Science doesn't allow a character to make anything he wants. He can only make a device that utilizes one of the powers appropriate to the setting.

Sharing: An inventor can hand his device over to a companion to use. The device works the same for the companion as it does for the owner. If the Artifice skill is required, the companion must make a default roll as usual. That means gizmos are typically more effective when used by weird scientists than in the hands of others.

Soul Drain: Weird Scientists cannot take the Soul Drain Edge.

More Power Points: When an inventor gains more Power Points, he's assumed to tinker with his existing devices and upgrade them as well. This means all of his devices gain the additional Power Points. In effect, if an inventor has 20 Power Points, each of his devices have 20 Power Points as well.

Losing Devices: If an inventor's gizmo is taken away, lost, or destroyed, he can make another in 2d6 hours as long as he has access to a workshop and some basic components. This requires a Repair roll. A raise halves the time needed to create the device. If the original should somehow be returned, it no longer functions (the character doesn't get a "free" duplicate in this way).

Cat Eyes

Requirements: Human only, 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 him 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 Charisma with such animals.

Ghost Sight

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

After a traumatic experience (possibly one that occurred when the character was so young he doesn'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 he 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, he gains a +2 bonus on Fear checks

caused by ghosts. Even when he fails a Fear check from a ghostly source, he rolls a d12 on the Fright Table rather than a d20.

Innocent

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

Your character has an innocence about him that shines through, pure and clear. You gain a +2 bonus on any roll made to resist a power or special ability generated by a supernaturally evil foe. This includes vampire mind control, the stone gaze of a medusa, and spells cast by evil witches and wizards.

Special: You can only take this Edge at character creation. If you ever commit an act that would invoke a Dark Powers check or gain Corruption, you immediately and permanently lose the benefits of this Edge.

Linguist

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+

You have an ear for languages and a rare talent for recognizing similarities between them. You know an additional number of languages equal to half your Smarts die. Additionally, when you encounter a new language, you can make a Smarts roll at -2 to gain basic proficiency in that language; you must be exposed to the language for at least a week before making this roll. You are not considered fluent in this language unless you learn it through the Knowledge (Languages) skill normally.

Veteran of the Dread Realms

Requirements: Wild Card, Novice, Knowledge (Occult) d6+

You have been facing the darkness longer than most people—longer than you care to admit, probably. You've done a lot and seen more than you ever wanted to. You start at Seasoned Rank, which means you have four advances to spend immediately after character creation.

Such experience comes with a terrible price. If you take this Edge, draw a single card from the Action Deck and show it to the GM. He'll compare that card to the table on page 73 to see what dire fate awaits you.

Be warned! The consequences of this choice can be extreme, ranging from serious maiming to insanity—or worse!

Combat Edges

Dart Cloud

Requirements: Seasoned, Agility d8+, Quick Draw, Throwing d8+

You can throw a large number of small weapons in one quick motion, filling the air with deadly steel.

When you use darts, knives, or other small thrown weapons, your Rate of Fire is 3. You can draw and throw as part of the same action when using this Edge.

You suffer the usual -2 penalty on your attack roll for using a weapon with a Rate of Fire greater than 1 when you use this Edge.

Iron Bones

Requirements: Novice, Vigor d8+

You have a combination of muscle density and raw toughness that makes it much harder for you to suffer lingering injuries.

You gain a +2 bonus on Vigor checks made to avoid suffering an Injury when you take a wound. Additionally, when you would take an Injury normally (such as from becoming Incapacitated), you can make a Vigor check without the bonus from this Edge to avoid suffering one.

Phalanx Fighter

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+, 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 armed with spears and shields.

You can wield a spear one-handed while using a shield in the other hand. If you are adjacent to another character who also has this Edge, you gain +1 Armor.

Power Edges

Kinetic

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, Arcane Background (Psychic), Psionics d8+

You are a 'kinetic, a person who has the ability to mentally control a specific element. That element's power seeps through whenever you use your powers, whether you want it to or not.

Choose a single type of Trapping, such as Fire, Electricity, or so on. When you use one of your powers, you must apply one of that Trapping's options to the power if you are able to do so. You may change which Trapping option you use from casting to casting, but you cannot use the default version of any of your powers unless none of the Trapping options would apply. Applying the Trapping costs nothing; it is automatic and free.



Metamagic

Requirements: Seasoned, Arcane Background (Magic), Knowledge (Magic) d8+, Spellcasting d8+

You have extensively studied a particular element or principle and can apply that knowledge to your magic on the fly. Choose a single type of Trappings, such as Acid, Fire, Electricity, or so on. When you cast a spell that you learned without that Trapping, you may choose to apply one of the options from that Trapping as you cast the spell at a cost of +1 Power Point.

This Edge may be taken more than once. Each time it is taken, pick a new trapping.

Professional Edges

Adept

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic or Psychic), Fighting d8+, Psionics or Spellcasting d8+

Adepts are mystic warriors who have trained themselves to be living weapons. Some do so to be ultimate weapons; others do it in the service of a cause or their faith.

The character's unarmed attacks deal Str+d4 damage and he is always considered armed for purposes of the Unarmed Defender rule.

In addition, upon taking this Edge and at each new Rank, they may choose to change the trappings of one of the following powers to work only on themselves but be activated as a free action: *boost/lower trait*, *deflection*, *healing*, *smite*, or *speed*. The character must have the power to begin with, and this does not allow him to activate more than one power in a round.

Armiger

Requirements: Novice, Strength d6+, Vigor d6+

While armor is beginning to fall out of fashion in most civilized nations, especially those where firearms are becoming more common, you are a master of its use.

Any armor you wear is considered to be half its listed weight for purposes of your encumbrance. Additionally, if you are wearing armor that covers your torso, arms, and legs, you gain a +1 bonus to your Parry.

Chosen of Ezra

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Spirit d8+, Knowledge (Religions) d6+, Spellcasting 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.

As an action, the character may spend 1 Power Point to repulse evil—a category that includes the undead, demons, and creatures of the Mists. This ability has a range equal to your Spirit. All evil creatures within range must make a Spirit roll. Failure on this roll leaves the creature Shaken; if it rolls a 1, it is instead destroyed. A Wild Card creature that rolls a 1 instead suffers an automatic wound.

Additionally, if the character knows the *obscure* power, he ignores the visibility penalty from his own casting of that power.

Druid

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

You are an initiate in a secretive religion that worships the forces of nature. You gain a +2 bonus on Spellcasting rolls made to affect plants or animals (including shape changers using the form of animals) with your powers. Additionally, you count as one Rank higher than normal for purposes of using the *shape change* power, if you know that power.

Engineer

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Repair d6+, Notice d8+

This character can improvise something when the need for a tool arises. He suffers no negative penalties on Trait rolls for lack of equipment in most situations.

In addition, given a few simple tools, props, or devices, he can generally rig devices to

help escape from death-traps, weapons to match some bizarre need, or otherwise create something that's needed when such a thing isn't actually present. The extent of this is completely up to the Game Master, but creativity should be rewarded, particularly in dire situations where few other answers are possible.

Familiar

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Knowledge (Magic) d8+

You have acquired a familiar, a magical animal that acts as your companion and helper. The creature gained varies with your Rank when you first take this Edge. Use the table below to determine the type of animal you may choose:

Available Familiars

Rank	Animal Types
Novice	Hawk, rabbit, cat, snake
Seasoned	Dog, wolf, deer, mule
Veteran	Lion, riding horse, tiger
Heroic	Bear, bull shark, warhorse
Legendary	Rhino, great white shark, or a smaller magical creature

The mage and the familiar acquire the Loyal Hindrance with regard to each other. The familiar is not a slave, however, and can refuse to follow orders, especially ones which will cause it harm. Unless ordered otherwise, the familiar follows its natural instincts. For example, a cat familiar may stop to chase a mouse, take a quick nap, or sate its curiosity about a small hole, and it's likely to hide during combat.

The strong bond allows the familiar to resist the effects of *beast friend*. Each Rank of the mage adds +1 to the creature's Size for the purpose of how many Power Points are needed to control it.

The familiar becomes intelligent from his exposure to magic. Remove the (A) listing from the familiar's Smarts.

Both can understand each other's speech. To others, the familiar is simply making animal noises while the mage speaks his normal language.

The familiar is a Wild Card with respect to wounds and the Wild Die, but has no

bennies. The mage may spend his for the familiar, however.

A mage can dismiss a familiar to gain another if he chooses.

At each new Rank, if the mage does not pick an improved familiar, the mage can pick one of the powers below. Each power may only be taken once. If the mage acquires this Edge after character creation, he can choose to gain a higher-level familiar or to add one of the powers below to a lower-level familiar for each Rank he possesses. (For example a Veteran mage who acquires a familiar could either gain a lion as his familiar, or a wolf and one of the powers below, or a cat and two of the powers below.)

Some possible familiar powers include:

- The mage can transfer wounds and Fatigue levels to or from his familiar as a free action.
- The mage may increase one attribute of his choice which is lower than that of the familiar by one die, to a maximum of d12.
- The mage can use the familiar's senses as if they were his own. This requires concentration. The maximum range for this ability is the mage's Smarts \times 100 yards.
- The familiar can use the mage's Combat Edges as its own.
- Any spells the mage casts on himself also affect the familiar. If he casts *armor* with a raise, both he and his familiar gain +4 Armor for the duration, for example.
- The familiar has 5 Power Points, which the mage may use as if they were his own. They recharge at the same rate as the mage's (usually 1 per hour).

Gadgeteer

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Arcane Background (Weird Science), Artifice d8+, Repair d8+

You have resolved the mechanical underpinnings of your magical science, allowing you to produce short-lived devices that fit your specifications.

Once per game session, a Gadgeteer can create a jury-rigged device from spare parts. The device functions just like any other Weird Science device, and uses any power available to a Weird Scientist. It has half the inventor's Power Points, and once these are used up, the gadget burns out and does not recharge. The inventor must have access to some parts and a reasonable amount of time (GM's call, but at least 1d20 minutes) to create the gizmo.

Herald of the Dawn

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Spirit d8+, Socialize d8+, Spellcasting d8+, must know the *light* 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.

A Herald of the Dawn gains access to the Light Trapping for his powers and can choose to apply any of the options from that Trapping as he casts his powers at no additional cost. The Herald gains +2 on Spellcasting rolls made to cast *light*.

The Herald also gains the following new option as part of the Light Trapping:

- *Sunlight:* When the Herald casts *light*, he may choose to spend 1 additional Power Point to have the illumination count as natural sunlight for the duration of the power.

Iron Lord

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, Intimidation d8+, Knowledge (Religions) d6+

The Lawgiver is called by many titles, such as the Iron Tyrant and the Black Lord, and his priests are often called iron lords. The Lawgiver's clergy claim that hearing their god's true name would strike a mortal dead, and they excel at leveraging fear into obedience.

The character gains a +2 bonus on Intimidation rolls, as well as a +2 bonus to resist Intimidation and Fear.

If the character can use magic, he ignores Rank requirements for the *puppet* power, and he gains +2 on Spellcasting rolls to cast *fear* or *puppet*.

Mechanical Aptitude

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Knowledge (any scientific knowledge) d8+, Repair d8+

This character adds +2 to Repair rolls. With a raise, he halves the time normally required to fix something. This means that if a particular Repair job already states that a raise repairs it in half the time, a Master Craftsman could finish the job in one-quarter the time with a raise.

Monster Hunter

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d6+

You are a trained slayer of beasts, ghouls, or other supernatural horrors. You are completely immune to Fear from one broad type of creature, chosen when you take this Edge. This could include ghosts, werebeasts, vampires, constructs, the ancient dead, or some other category; if applied to witches, it includes their castings of the *fear* spell as well.

The GM is the final arbiter of whether or not this Edge applies to a particular horror. This Edge may be taken multiple times, each applying to a different creature type.

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 can reload any personal black powder firearm as a single action (rather than 2 or 3 actions). Additionally, the character gains a +1 bonus on Fighting and damage rolls with bayonets or when using a firearm as an improvised melee weapon.

If a firearm can hold multiple shots, the character can reload two shots per action instead of one.

Mystic Craftsman

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Arcane Background (Magic), Knowledge (Magic) d8+, Spellcasting d8+

You are a skilled crafter of small magics, such as potions, scrolls, or talismans.

Once per game session, you can create a single-use magic item that holds a power you know and are capable of casting. If the power has a Duration, it only lasts the base time and cannot be extended. Anyone may use the item, using your Spellcasting skill at a -2 penalty. The user does not risk backlash.

You require access to basic supplies in order to use this Edge, and creating a trinket takes 1d20 minutes.



Necromancer

Requirements: Novice, Arcane Background (Magic), Spirit d8+, 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.

The benefits of the Necromancer Edge are two-fold. First, the Necromancer ignores Rank requirements for the *zombie* power (though he must still take that power as one of his power selections or acquire it with New Power).

Second, when casting *zombie*, the Necromancer reduces the Power Point cost to 2/corpse. Additionally, he may double the cost per corpse to increase the Duration to 2d6 hours with a success, 2d6 days with a raise, or permanent with two raises.

A Necromancer may never have more than twice his Spirit die in permanent undead servants.

Outrider

Requirements: Novice, Agility d6+, Vigor d6+, Riding d8+

The thunderous charge of hooves can mean devastation on a battlefield or victory in a chase. Some riders have training or talent that puts them a cut above the rest.

A character with this Edge gains a +2 bonus on Riding rolls. Additionally, the character can spend his own Bennies to make Soak rolls for his mount. This is a Riding roll at -2 (canceling out the bonus from this Edge); each success and raise negates a wound that the mount would have suffered.

Paladin

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, Strength d6+, Vigor d8+, Fighting d8+

You are a paladin—a chosen warrior of your faith. You have been anointed with oil, blessed by the leaders of your church, and trained to fight evil. Your zeal and idealism are unmatched throughout the Land of Mists.

You add +2 damage when fighting supernaturally evil creatures and gain +2 Toughness when suffering damage from such creatures. This category includes beings that wield evil magic (such as witches), creatures changed by evil magic (such as werebeasts), and creatures that could not exist without evil magic (like vampires and demons).

Ritualist

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts d8+, Spirit d8+ Arcane Background (Magic), Knowledge (Magic) d8+, Spellcasting d8+

You are skilled and patient in the arts of ritual magic, making it far easier for you to gain its benefits.

When you cast a magical ritual, halve the final penalties to your Spellcasting roll (round down). Additionally, when you must draw a card to determine the results of a failed ritual, you may draw two cards and choose whichever you prefer.

Scout

Requirements: Novice, Notice d8+, Survival d8+

You are a master of avoiding trouble in the wilderness. Whenever a group you are part of draws cards for an encounter, draw twice and pick whichever card you prefer.

Thief

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Climbing d6+, Repair d6+, Stealth d6+

Wherever there is wealth, there will be someone who finds it preferable to steal it than earn it. Thieves specialize in acrobatics, deceit, and urban survival.

A character with this Edge gains a +2 bonus on Climbing and Stealth in urban environments, as well as Notice and Repair rolls that relate to traps, locks, and similar devices.

Woodsmen

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Stealth d6+, Survival d8+

The forests of Ravenloft are no place for the weak of heart. Worse than wolves lurk in

the borderlands, and only the canniest woodsmen can survive their dark majesty.

A character with this Edge gains a +2 bonus to Stealth and Survival rolls made in the wilderness.

Social Edges

Fatale

Requirements: Seasoned, Persuasion d8+

You specialize in using your charms and wiles to catch people off-guard. You may use Persuasion to perform Tests of Will, resisted by the opposing character's Spirit.

Followers

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d6+

Heroes often acquire dedicated followers, men and women who seek to support and aid the hero on his journey. You have acquired a small group of loyal helpers.

When you take this Edge, you acquire a number of followers equal to your Spirit die size. These followers are extras and have the Loyal Hindrance with regard to you, but they are not mindless drones. They have needs and wants of their own, and if neglected may well leave or even turn on you. They generally at least require some way to earn income and survive, generally relying on you for their physical needs. As long as their needs are met and their general autonomy respected, they will happily risk their lives for you, though they won't necessarily go into suicidal situations.

The GM determines the followers' statistics, though generally they will use the generic Soldier statistics (*SWDE* 81). Followers come with basic equipment; you must provide anything other than that.

If followers are lost or killed, you can acquire replacements between adventures by making a successful Spirit check and undertaking active recruitment, with each success and raise replacing one follower up to your maximum.

You may take this Edge multiple times to acquire a larger following, though no more than once per Rank.

Low Life

Requirements: Seasoned, Socialize d6+, Streetwise d8+

You are the scum of the earth—and you know it. When you would normally suffer a Charisma penalty on Streetwise or Socialize rolls, as long as you are mingling with the lower class, you instead gain that number as a bonus. (So a -2 Charisma penalty would instead become a +2 Charisma bonus when using Streetwise or Socialize with other social misfits.)

Reputation

Requirements: Seasoned, Intimidation d8+

Whether you are a hero or a villain, your name is widely known—and feared. You may add your Charisma to Intimidation rolls. A Charisma penalty is treated as a bonus for this purpose.

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.

Cuts

Requirements: Seasoned, Spirit d6+

You have hardened your spirit to the soul-crushing terrors that haunt the world. You suffer only half the usual penalty (round down) from Sinkholes of Evil on Fear checks.

Revenant

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+

You have unfinished business—and you were willing to pay a terrible price for the chance at resolving it. You have been reborn

as one of the living dead, a *revenant*. The details are on page 74, should you be brave or foolish enough to take this devil's bargain.

This Edge can only be taken at character creation. Getting it later requires dying and being very lucky—or very unlucky. The GM has more information about the process.

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 +2 bonus on Vigor rolls to resist the effects of poison.

Additionally, if you fail a Vigor roll against poison that would have a result of “death,” you may choose to spend a Benny to become Incapacitated instead. If you survive the 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 are Exhausted; this condition recovers with rest normally.

Legendary Edges

Archmage

Requirements: Legendary, Smarts d10+, Spirit d8+, Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Knowledge (Magic) 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 does not take maintenance penalties to Spellcasting rolls. When the character cannot speak or gesture, he may still cast spells at a -4 penalty to the Spellcasting roll. Additionally, the character no longer suffers backlash from rolling a 1 on his Spellcasting die; he suffers backlash only if rolling a 1 on his Spellcasting die *and* the casting roll fails.

Champion of Dread

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d10+, Guts

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

Additionally, when you fail a Fear check, you may move your result on the Fright Table up or down one category. You never suffer permanent phobias or insanity from a roll on the Fright Table; any such penalties disappear after a night's rest.

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 close combat attacks instead of the usual +1d6

Hand of Doom

Requirements: Legendary, Trademark Weapon, Shooting, Fighting, or Throwing 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 his favored weapon shares his 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). If it is a melee weapon, it gains +1 Parry; if it is a ranged weapon, its base ranges are increased by half again (so a weapon with a range of 12/24/48 would become 18/36/72).

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 near vampires.

Hardy

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d8+, Vigor d10+, Hard to Kill, Improved Nerves of Steel, Iron Bones

You are so tough that only the most serious attacks can inflict lasting injury. You do not suffer a wound from taking a second Shaken result. Additionally, you never suffer an Injury from taking a wound or becoming Incapacitated.

Lightbringer

Requirements: Legendary, Spirit d10+, Vigor d8+, special

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 he be "killed" in such a fashion, he appears dead until his wounds heal.

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

A character cannot take this Edge if he has ever failed a Dark Powers check.

Lord of Death

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

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. This character may have up to twice his Spirit die worth of permanent undead under his control at one time.

Mindbender

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

You are a master of the human mind—controlling it, dominating it, twisting it. You do not count *puppet* toward the number of powers you are currently maintaining for purposes of maintenance penalties, and a *puppet* power you are maintaining cannot be disrupted by suffering damage. Additionally, when you succeed at casting *puppet* with a raise, the duration becomes 1 hour (1/hour).

Tactical Genius

Requirements: Legendary, Smarts d8+, Knowledge (Battle) d10+, Fighting d10+

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, your side's penalty for being outnumbered is halved (round down). If you are fighting an equal or smaller force, remove one token from the opposing side before the battle begins; this does not cause a Morale roll or count toward losses during the battle.

Finally, you are always considered to have at least a +1 bonus on Knowledge (Battle) checks made during mass battles due to superior tactics.

Unstoppable

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

You just won't stop fighting, no matter the odds. Once per round when you would suffer an attack that would reduce you to Incapacitated through wounds, you receive a free Soak roll.



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, 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.

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 Charisma penalty equal to his Armor bonus 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.

Firearms

The advent of firearms has come in most domains of the Demiplane of Dread, though the development of the technology remains in its infancy due to a general lack of open warfare and limited resources. Still, many alchemists earn their keep by making sure their patron stays in a ready supply of black powder for the muskets of the domain’s elite soldiers.

Most firearms have some amount of armor piercing ability, though their range is typically shorter than that of bows and crossbows. They also tend to take a long time to reload—typically two to three actions. Their ammunition is also somewhat more expensive than arrows or bolts.

Virtually every firearm in the Land of Mists is a flintlock, wheel-lock, or other relatively primitive black powder weapon. Still, given the existence of alchemy and weird science, the potential exists for major breakthroughs, such as revolvers, bolt-action weapons, and so on. Statistics for such “advanced” firearms can be found in *Savage Worlds Deluxe Edition*.

Hand Weapons

Type	Damage	Weight	Cost	Notes
Blades				
Bayonet	Str+d4	1	10	See below
Dagger	Str+d4	1	5	+2 to Stealth rolls made to conceal weapon
Great sword	Str+d10	12	40	Parry -1, 2 hands
Long sword	Str+d8	8	30	
Short sword	Str+d6	4	20	
Rapier	Str+d4	3	15	Parry +1
Chains and Bludgeons				
Brass knuckles	Str+d4	1	2	A character wielding this weapon is still considered an Unarmed Defender
Chain	Str+d6	8	20	Ignores shield Parry and Cover bonus
Club	Str+d4	2	1	
Maul	Str+d8	16	40	AP 2 vs. rigid armor, Parry -1, 2 hands
Staff	Str+d4	4	2	Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Warhammer	Str+d6	8	25	AP 1 vs. rigid armor
Axes and Picks				
Axe	Str+d6	4	20	
Battle axe	Str+d8	8	30	
Great axe	Str+d10	12	50	AP 1, Parry -1, 2 hands
Pole Arms				
Glaive	Str+d8	15	25	Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Lance	Str+d8	10	30	AP 2 when charging, Reach 2, only usable in mounted combat
Spear	Str+d6	5	10	Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands

Ranged Weapons

Archaic							
Type	Range	Damage	RoF	Cost	Weight	Min. Str.	Notes
Crossbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	50	10	d6	AP 2, reload 1, two hands
Hunting bow	12/24/48	2d6	1	25	3	d6	Two hands
Longbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	35	5	d8	Two hands
Sling	4/8/16	Str+d4	1	1	1	-	Throwing weapon
Throwing axe	3/6/12	Str+d6	1	10	2	-	Throwing weapon
Throwing knife	3/6/12	Str+d4	1	5	1	-	Throwing weapon
Black Powder							
Blunderbuss	10/20/40	1-3d6*	1	300	12	d6	Reload 2, two hands see below
Flintlock pistol	5/10/20	2d6+1	1	150	3	-	AP 1, reload 2
Long rifle	15/30/60	2d8	1	300	8	d6	AP 2, reload 3, two hands
Musket	15/30/60	2d8	1	250	10	d6	AP 1, reload 2, two hands
Parthian rapier	5/10/20	special	1	200	5	d6	Parry +1 or AP 1, reload 2 (see below)
Pepperbox	5/10/20	2d6	1	200	3	-	Holds 4 shots, reload 2 per shot
Powder bomb	3/6/12	3d6	-	15	2	-	Small Burst Template

Ammunition

Ammo	Weight	Cost	Notes
Arrow	1/5	1/2	
Arrow, chisel	1/5	5	AP 2 against rigid armor
Arrow, slayer	1/5	1	+1 damage
Quarrel	1/5	2	AP 2 (standard crossbow bolt)
Shot (with powder)	1/10	3	For black powder weapons
Sling stone	1/10	1/20	Can be found for free with a Notice roll and 1d10 minutes of searching

Armor

Type	Armor	Weight	Cost	Notes
Personal				
Leather	+1	15	50	Covers torso, arms, legs
Chain hauberk	+2	25	300	Covers torso, arms, legs
Plate corselet	+3	25	400	Covers torso
Plate arms	+3	10	200	Covers arms
Plate leggings	+3	15	300	Covers legs
Steel helmet	+3	4	150	Covers head
Shields				
Small shield	-	8	25	+1 Parry
Medium shield	-	12	50	+1 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots that hit
Large shield	-	16	200	+2 Parry, +2 Armor to ranged shots that hit

Mundane Items

Item	Cost	Weight	Notes
Adventuring Gear			
Backpack	25	2	
Bedroll	25	4	
Blanket	10	4	
Book, printed	10	1	+1 to a specific Knowledge skill chosen when book is purchased
Candle	1/10	1/10	Provides light in a 2m radius for 1 hour
Canteen	1	1	Holds 1 liter of water
Crowbar	5	2	+1 to Strength checks to break open chests or doors
Flint and steel	1	1	
Grappling hook	10	2	
Lantern	10	3	Provides light in a 4m radius
Lockpicking tools	200	1	Necessary tools for picking locks
Manacles	15	2	
Oil, 1 pint	2	1	Fuels lantern for 1 hour
Pocket watch	100	-	
Quiver	2	2	Holds 20 arrows or bolts
Rope, 10m	10	5	
Shovel	5	5	
Soap	1	1/5	
Spectacles	50	-	Negates penalties from Bad Eyes Hindrance
Surgeon's tools	200	5	Necessary tools for Healing skill
Toolkit	200	5	Necessary tools for Repair skill
Torch	1/5	1	Provides light in a 4m radius for 1 hour
Umbrella	5	2	
Clothing			
Boots	10	-	
Normal clothing	20	-	
Formal clothing	200	-	
Desert gear	200	3	+1 to Vigor rolls made to resist hot environments
Winter gear	200	3	+1 to Vigor rolls made to resist cold environments
Food			
Cheap meal	2	-	
Good meal	10+	-	
Trail rations, 1 day	5	1	
Animals and Tack			
Riding horse	300	-	
War horse	500	-	
Saddle	50	10	
Saddlebags	10	10	Can hold up to 100 pounds of gear
Barding	1000	30	Armor +3 for war horse

Weapon Notes

Bayonet: A bayonet is a dagger with a special clamp allowing it to be affixed to a firearm. A bayonet attached to a pistol lets the wielder of the pistol switch between close and ranged attacks as well as act as an armed defender. A bayonet affixed to a rifle increases the damage to Str+d6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands.

Blunderbuss: A blunderbuss has a cone-shaped barrel that fires a spread of metal balls. It deals more damage at close range where the spread is less and more of the shot hits the target. Farther away, the shot spreads more and causes less damage. Using a blunderbuss adds +2 to the wielder's Shooting rolls due to the increased chance of hitting someone from the spread. It deals 1d6 damage at Long range, 2d6 damage at Medium range, and 3d6 damage at Short range.

Parthian rapier: The "parting shot" rapier is a rapier with a pistol built into the hilt. It acts as a normal rapier in close combat and as a flintlock pistol in ranged combat. If the pistol is loaded, then the wielder can choose to make a Fighting and Shooting attack in the same round (with the usual multi-action penalty).

Pepperbox: A pepperbox is a strange firearm that holds four shots at once in four separate barrels. Each barrel must be rotated into place manually, so it is no faster to shoot than a normal pistol, but it can shoot four times before needing to reload.

Powder Bomb: This small metal sphere is filled with black powder and metal shot. When lit (a free action) and thrown, it explodes on impact and deals its damage in a Small Burst Template.

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 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. If the wielder rolls a 1 on his Fighting die (regardless of Wild Die) on an attack, the weapon shatters.





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 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 most domains, the traditional method of learning magic is 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.

Paradoxically, the group that produces the most magic-users is also the group that condemns other traditions of magic most often: followers of religion. While most priests 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 his faith keeps his 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.

So-called “weird science” (or “alchemy”) is a method of using machines and enlightened chemistry to harness and guide magic in ways that the human body and mind cannot. 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.

Perhaps the greatest arcane mystery of Ravenloft are so-called psychic powers. 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.

Ritual Magic

While most mages are able to craft quick “spells” that have a short casting time and limited effects, true power comes from the crafting of a magical ritual. Such magic is not quick or easy, but it can offer amazing results. Only characters with Arcane Background (Magic) may perform ritual casting; weird scientists and psychics have no equivalent ability.

Activating a power with a magical ritual is a Dramatic Task. The time involved for each “action” in the task is typically one minute, but it might also be measured in hours or



days depending on the complexity of the ritual. The usual task duration is five actions, with five successes or raises needed to succeed. If the participants are Shaken or suffer wounds during the casting, an immediate Spellcasting roll at -4 is required; a failure disrupts the ritual immediately, wasting any materials. (See “Failure,” below.)

In exchange for the complication of performing the ritual, the caster can choose one or more of the following options:

- **Double Potency:** Every Power Point the caster spends—whether his own or gained from some outside source—counts as two Power Points for activating the power at the end of the ritual.
- **Extend Duration:** The caster can take -2 on his Spellcasting roll to increase any non-Instant power’s Duration to “Concentration.” He may instead take -4 on his Spellcasting roll to change the power’s Duration from rounds or minutes to days. (Note that a spell cast via ritual still counts toward maintenance penalties and can be disrupted as usual.)
- **Extend Range:** The caster may double the range of the spell by casting it via ritual. He can choose to make his Spellcasting roll at -4 to increase the range to his Smarts in miles and ignore any sight restrictions or intervening obstacles.
- **Increase Damage:** The caster can increase any damage dealt by the power by +2d6, or by +4d6 by taking a -2 penalty on the Spellcasting roll.
- **Increase Effect:** The caster gains a +2 to the spell’s effect (if applicable), such as for purposes of an opposed roll against the spell.

Preparation and Assistance

A spellcaster may prepare for a ritual by gaining outside aid, spending additional time on the ritual, or sacrificing resources. The following circumstances can make rituals easier to complete:

- **Additional Casters:** Assistants with the Arcane Background (Magic) Edge who

know the power being cast may aid the caster by making cooperative rolls at each step with their arcane skill.

- **Participants:** Those who want to help with the spell but have no Arcane Background themselves may do so by making cooperative rolls with Knowledge (Magic) at -2.
- **Materials:** A caster may consume expensive or rare items as part of his ritual. Every ritual is assumed to require some small amount of common items. If a small number of rare, unique, or valuable items are sacrificed, the caster may add +1 to his Spellcasting roll each action. If the sacrifice is greater—a very expensive or incredibly hard to obtain item—he may add +2 instead. In either case, the components are destroyed at the end of the ritual, whether it was successful or not.
- **Time:** Increasing the time it takes to cast a ritual makes it easier to complete. Increasing the time required from minutes per action to hours per action grants to caster a +1 bonus to his Spellcasting rolls. Increasing it from hours to days or days to weeks adds +2 instead.

Failure

Failing at casting a ritual is much more dangerous than the potential backlash from a simple spell. Should the caster fail, draw a fresh card from an action deck to determine the horrible results.

- **Clubs:** The ritual fails, any materials are wasted, and all participants suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Diamonds:** A massive surge of energy is released from the backlash, and all participants suffer 2d10 damage, bypassing Armor.
- **Hearts:** As above, but the damage suffered is 3d10.
- **Spades:** The magical energy releases a dangerous entity into the world—a demon, a ghost, or a creature of the

Mists. The entity starts its rampage with the ritual participants.

- **Joker:** The caster suffers a setback but somehow manages to maintain control. The participants may start from scratch at no penalty other than time. Any materials used in the process are still viable.

Trappings

Trappings are the heart and soul of the powers system. With just a few simple twists, a *bolt* power can represent rays of ice, streaks of light, or swarms of stinging bees.

The powers themselves are designed to be as simple to use and remember as possible. This helps the Game Master remember what all the powers do, and helps players remember the rules for common powers even between different settings. But just because these powers work the same from setting to setting doesn't mean they have to look the same, have the same names (to the characters in that world), or even have the exact same effects—that's where Trappings come in.

When a power is selected, the player may choose to take the basic power as listed in the description with whatever visual effects he wishes, or he can choose to permanently apply one of the listed Trappings to that power, changing its form forever. So a caster who takes *bolt* could take the base power and simply deal damage, or could learn *fire bolt (flammable)*, which has a chance of catching targets on fire but is stopped by immunity to fire. A caster can always take the New Power Edge to learn a different version of a power he already knows, or the Metamagic Edge to be able to apply a single type of Trapping to any of his powers "on the fly."

Each Trapping lists several possibilities for ways that the power could manifest when applied. The player picks *one* of those possibilities for his power when applying a Trapping to it. So a caster using *acid bolt* would also need to pick whether it was "corrosion" or "burn" when applying the

Trapping. For a permanently known power, this is a permanent choice; for the Metamagic Edge, the caster can choose which version of the Trapping to apply when he uses the power.

Acid

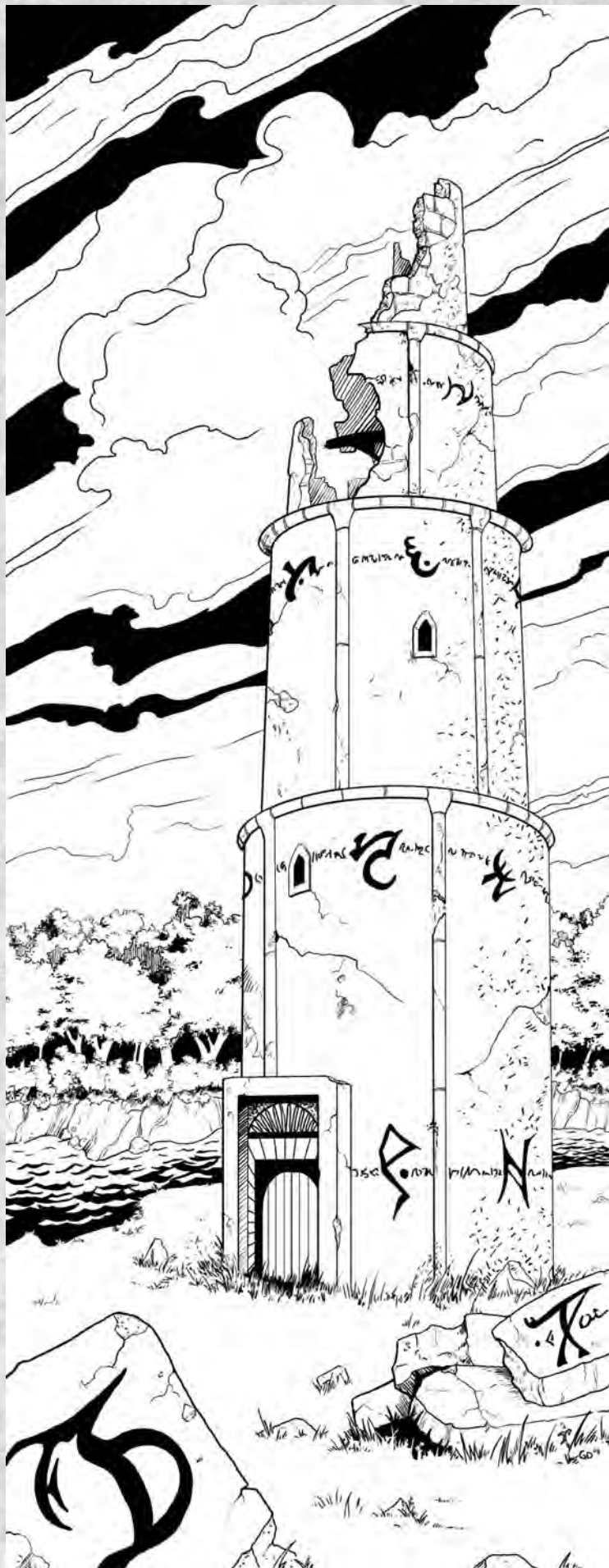
The caster condenses vitriol from the air, converting inert compounds to corrosive fluid. While most often used in attack powers, it can also be used defensively against those who touch the recipient of a beneficial spell.

- **Corrosion:** If the subject of an acid Trapping spell is touched, the victim must make a Vigor roll or suffer Fatigue. If the ability is a damaging attack that results in a Shaken or higher result, roll a d6; on a 6, any material the acid hit is ruined (ruined armor loses 1 point of Armor value instead).
- **Burn:** A power that does fixed damage reduces the die type by one, but does one less die of damage on the caster's next action unless counteracted in some way (generally requiring an Agility check or removing affected clothes or armor). For instance, an *acid bolt* causes 3d4 points of damage when it hits, and another 2d4 damage on the caster's next action as well.

Cold

A power using the cold Trapping drops the temperature precipitously, causing ice and frost to form all around the caster. Such powers can drain the life from a victim, defend an ally from extreme temperatures, or freeze the area around a target to impede him.

- **Armor:** Beneficial powers provide +2 Armor against cold, ice, fire, and heat based attacks, but fire and heat based attacks count as a *dispel* against them.
- **Fatigue:** Harmful powers using this Trapping require a Vigor roll (at -2 on a raise) to avoid suffering a level of Fatigue, but the power's range is reduced to half.



- *Skate*: A successful casting of a beneficial power results in ice not counting as difficult ground for the recipient.
- *Slow*: A raise on a detrimental power results in the target's movement counting as difficult ground while the power is active (or for his next movement for Instant powers).

Darkness

The very essence of shadows can be called forth by the caster, creating a cloying, choking darkness that can conceal the caster and his allies or blind his enemies.

- *Darkening*: Targets suffer a penalty to oppose the power equal to the current lighting penalty. The caster suffers a -2 penalty in normal light, and the light power works as *dispel* against the power.
- *Shroud*: The target is momentarily shrouded in tendrils of darkness. Targets of negative powers suffer a -1 penalty to all vision-based trait rolls while the power is active or on their next action for Instant powers. Positive effects slightly obscure the character, making him -1 to be hit by ranged attacks.
- *Stealth*: For beneficial powers, the darkness to clings to the target and increases his Stealth skill by one die type, or two on a raise.

Death

The power of death can be tempting for casters, but the lure of necromancy is offset by the slow erosion of the sorcerer's sanity and soul. Such powers fill the living with loathing and dampen their souls.

- *Bone Shards*: Ranged attacks splinter on impact, creating shrapnel that does +1 damage versus unarmored targets but -1 damage versus foes with Armor.
- *Fear*: When a living person is targeted with a power using this Trapping, he must make a Fear check. If this power is accidentally used against an undead target (or an undead is included in the area of effect), the caster suffers a -2 on his

Spellcasting roll to affect such targets. (If both living and undead targets are included, roll once but apply the penalty against the total only for the undead.)

- *Feign Undeath*: A raise on the roll provides a -1 to be hit by undead as they see the subject as one of their own for the duration of the power. Mindless undead won't attack the recipient unless specifically ordered to do so or unless the recipient attacks them first. This effect lasts for the duration of the power, or until the end of the target's next action for Instant powers.

Electricity

The caster calls lightning to his fingertips and electrifies his target. This can be a helpful jolt of energy or a devastating bolt from the blue.

- *Armor Piercing*: The electricity arcs to a foe's exposed areas, gaining Armor Piercing 2.
- *Conduction*: Damaging powers reduce damage by one die type, but add an additional die of damage to targets in the following situations: carrying more than 10 pounds of conductive metal, contacting a source of water, or otherwise touching an electrical conductor of some kind. For instance, an *electrical blast* at maximum effect does 3d4 damage in a Large Burst Template, but if the targets are standing in water, they take 4d4 damage.
- *Jazz*: Beneficial powers "jazz" the target. A successful casting adds +2 to the target's Pace; on a raise, the target's Agility increases one die type for the duration of the power. (Instant powers gain this benefit for the target's next action.)
- *Jolt*: Helpful powers shock a target out of their distraction on a raise, providing an immediate free roll to recover from being Shaken.
- *Spasms*: Harmful powers cause temporary muscle contraction if cast with

a raise; the target has to make a Vigor roll or be at -2 Parry until his next action.

Fire

Mighty goutts of fire leap from the caster's fingers, hot enough to burn flesh and melt steel. For those protected by a fire power, the raging inferno presents a powerful obstacle to harm.

- *Armor Piercing*: Fire and heat bypass cracks in armor. A damaging power gains Armor Piercing 2.
- *Aura*: Beneficial powers surround a subject with a hot or fiery aura. On a raise, the target gains the effect of the *damage field* power that causes 2d4 damage for the duration of the power (or for until after the target's next action for an Instant power).
- *Fatigue*: A heat trapping on an attack forces the victim to make a Vigor roll or suffer Fatigue.
- *Flammable*: With a hit by a fire power, roll for any potentially flammable objects to catch fire (*SWDE* 83).

Light

The power of light can surround the caster, filling those nearby with hope and life, or it can turn a power into a devastating beam of burning radiance.

- *Beam*: Light-based damaging attacks are like a focused laser, providing armor piercing capability. Reduce the damage by one die type, but add Armor Piercing 4 to the effect.
- *Empower*: Those affected by a beneficial power gain a +2 bonus on rolls to recover from being Shaken or to resist Fear for the duration of the power (or until the end of the current round for Instant powers).
- *Enhance*: When this Trapping is applied to the *light* power, it increases the Duration to 1 hour (1/hour).
- *Glow*: Subjects affected with a raise glow for the duration, creating light in a Small Burst Template centered on them. This

can give them light, but also make them targets. An Instant power with that effect allows a character on hold or with the Joker to make an attack for the split second the subject is illuminated (avoiding any darkness penalties to hit them). The character must take their action immediately after the caster's turn to gain the benefit.

Sound

A caster with this Trapping can speak in a voice like thunder or turn magic into raw, powerful music. The sound can be painful to enemies or it can cancel out other noise in the area.

- *Absorption*: Beneficial powers absorb the subject's sound, so Stealth is increased by a die type, but they have to yell to be heard normally and speaking becomes a normal action instead of a free one.
- *Aquatic Boom*: Sound travels better in water than in air. Underwater, an attack power causes +2 damage. In air, however, it causes -2 damage.
- *Deafen*: A raise with the power (or a Shaken or better from damage) results in a -2 penalty to hearing-based Notice rolls for the target until the power ends or they recover from being Shaken.

New Powers

Presence

Rank: Novice

Power Points: 2

Range: Touch

Duration: 10 minutes (1/minute)

Some people just have an aura about them, a presence that makes others respond to them more positively. The recipient of this power gains a +1 bonus to Charisma, or +2 Charisma on a raise.

While this power is active, the recipient can perform a Test of Wills against another character using Persuasion, opposed by Smarts.

Scan

Rank: Novice

Power Points: 1

Range: Smarts × 2

Duration: Instant

Knowledge is power. Being able to use magic to discern an enemy's weaknesses or judge their strengths can be the difference between victory and defeat.

The casting roll is opposed by the target's Spirit. For each success and raise on the casting roll, the caster learns one of the following pieces of information:

- Target's Fighting skill and Parry
- Target's Vigor die and Toughness
- Target's Hindrances
- Target's Combat Edges
- Target's special monster abilities (one per success and raise)
- Target's special monster vulnerabilities (one per success and raise)

A target capable of masquerading as a human through supernatural means that succeeds on the Spirit roll can choose to give false information or no information at the GM's discretion.

Human-seeming undead (such as vampires) and natural shape-changers (such as werewolves) gain a +2 bonus on the Spirit roll to oppose this power.

Wounding Touch

Rank: Seasoned

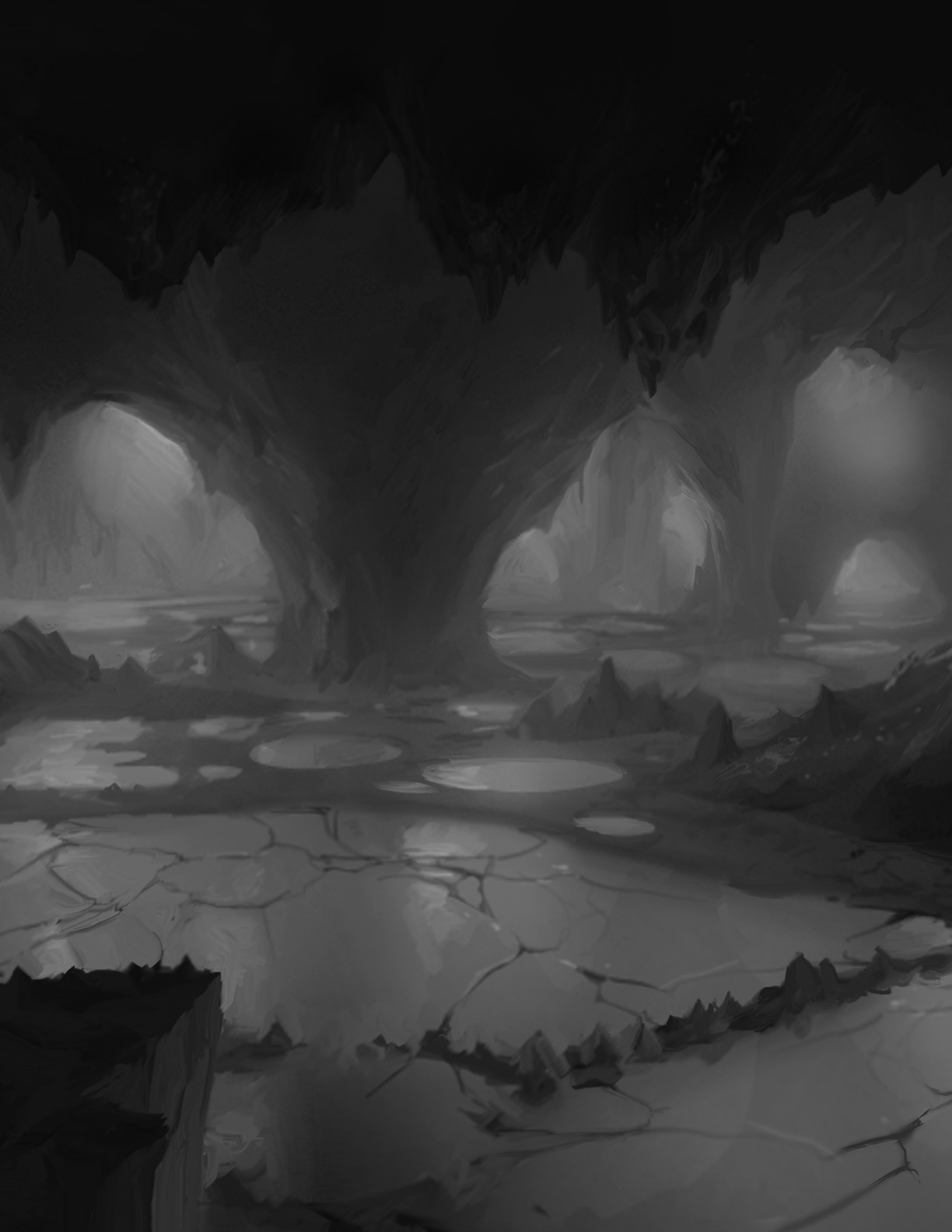
Power Points: 2

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

Some casters don't just want to kill their foes—they want to hurt them first.

The target of this power must attempt a Vigor roll (at -2 if the casting succeeded with a raise) or suffer a temporary Injury. This Injury lasts until the next time the character rests for eight hours, or it can be removed within the Golden Hour by the Healing skill or the *healing* power. Either method suffers a -2 penalty if the original Injury was inflicted with a raise.



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 himself through his 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 his 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 him his greatest desires but leaving them 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 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 his 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 his Spirit roll to avoid being repulsed, while a werewolf who was wounded with silver would gain it on a bonus to Soak rolls (if he made a roll to Soak).

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

Sinkhole Rating 0 (Normal)

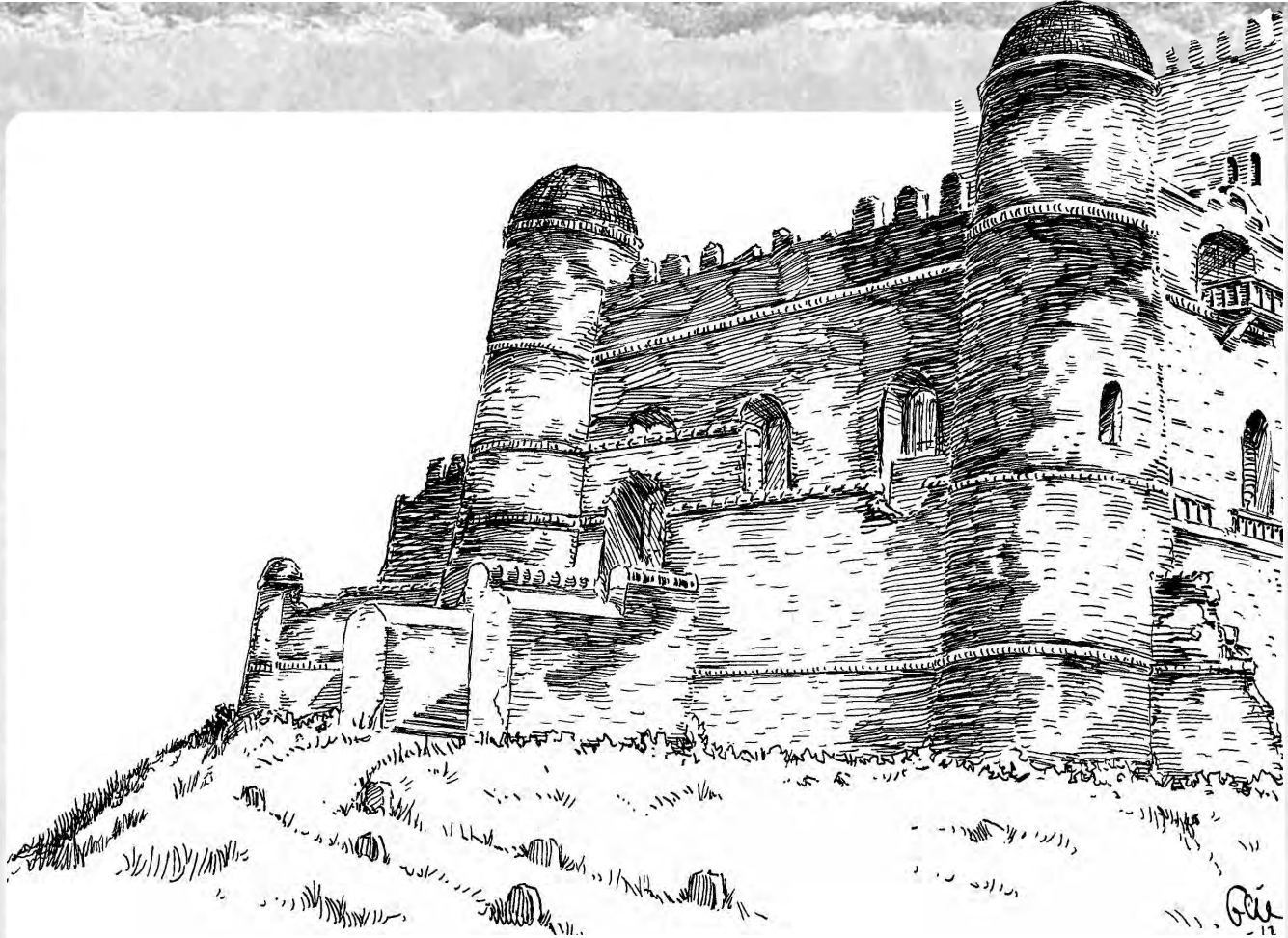
This is a normal place, the default for an area that has seen no particular atrocities or terrors. The natives are friendly, the sky is blue, and you can walk the streets at night. Even Level 0 areas can be dangerous, but they aren't *malevolent* like regions of genuine ethereal corruption.

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 a little weird. 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.

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 him 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 his 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 he has walked off the map entirely. A person who leaves a domain with no clear idea of where he is going just walks out into impenetrable fog, wandering until fortune fetches him up in another land. Even if the traveler decides

to turn around and walk straight back to where he came from, he finds himself lost; he might have walked for a minute or a day, but just going back the other way helps him not at all.

A traveler who walks a known Mistway or has a strong idea of where he is going can be wandering the Mists for hours, days, or weeks before he reaches his destination. The first indication he has that he is 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—he finds himself somewhere else. He might be on the very edge of the domain he entered, or he 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 him to "close" the borders of his 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 his 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 phenomena 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 Knowledge (Navigation) roll. A successful roll lets the traveler and his 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 he wants to go. He must have either been to his destination before, be traveling on a Mistway that is known to go to that destination, or have an extremely accurate description of his 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 he has 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 Clubs card, an encounter occurs. A second card is then drawn to determine what kind of encounter occurs.

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.** The obstacle is a dramatic task.

Hearts: NPCs

The group comes across one or more nonplayer characters such as merchants, hunters, a guide, or even other adventurers.

- **2-5: Hostile.** The encountered NPCs have a starting Reaction of Hostile. Quick thinking or quick talking is needed to avoid a fight.
- **6-10: Unfriendly.** The encountered NPCs have a starting reaction of Unfriendly. They may mislead the PCs, steal from them, or simply bad-mouth them, but they won't start a fight unless threatened.
- **Jack-King: Neutral.** The encountered NPCs have a starting reaction of Neutral. They are indifferent to the PCs unless approached with hostility or goodwill.
- **Ace: Friendly.** The encountered NPCs have a starting reaction of Friendly. They will give good advice, trade fairly, or otherwise have a pleasant encounter with the PCs without any special coercion.

Diamonds: Fortune

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 his way to an adventure of his own and in need of stalwart companions, or perhaps he just has useful information to share with the player characters.

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.

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 divinatorial 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.

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 as noted below, 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 him further into damnation. See below for more information about corruption powers.

Unfortunately, the more corrupt a character becomes, the more difficult it becomes for him to cling to social norms or ethical considerations. For each level of Corruption, the character suffers a -1 penalty to resist the powers of darklords, checks made to keep his anger or lust in check (such as resisting Taunt), and to future Dark Powers checks.

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 her own domain.

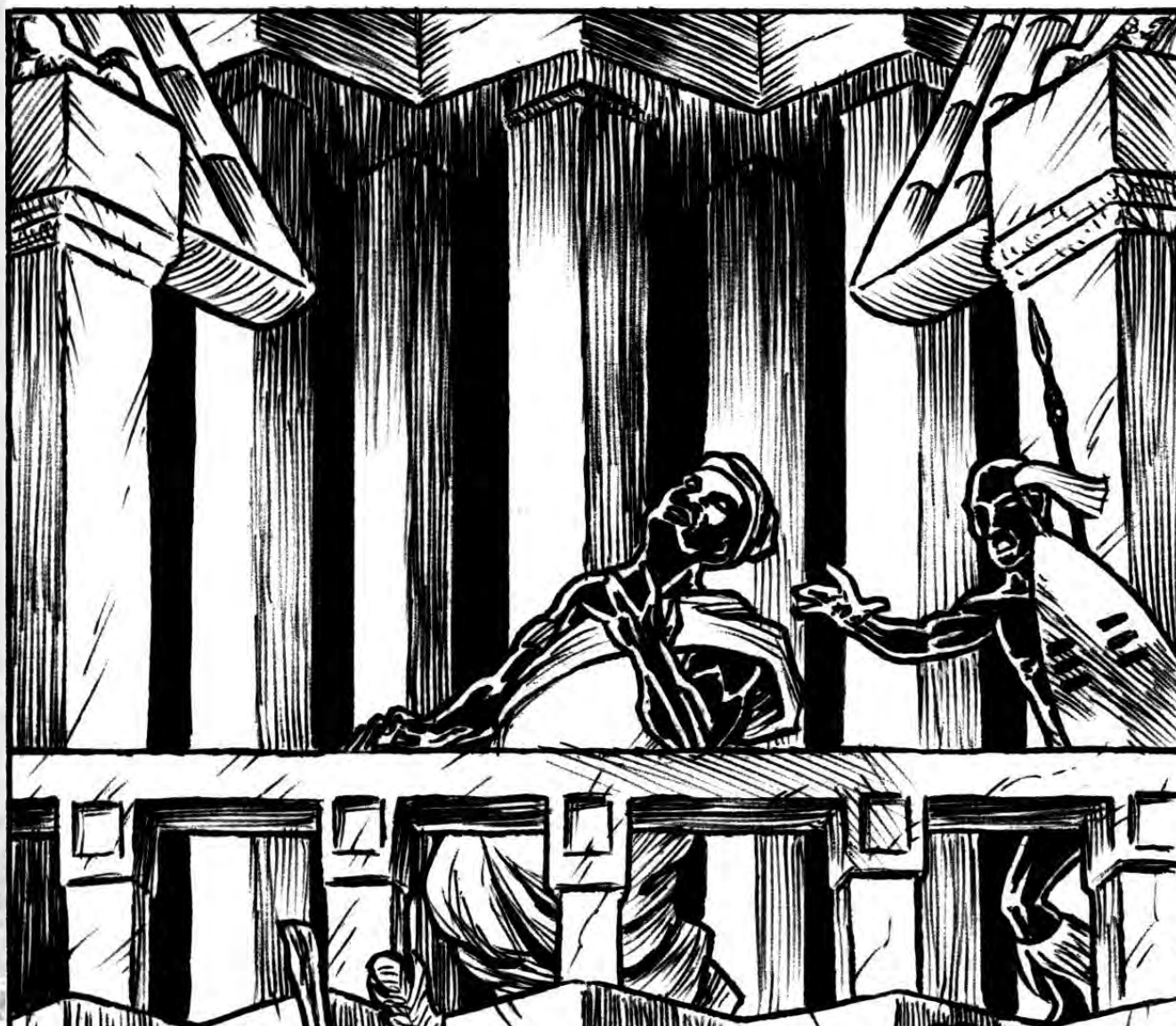
Mortals may never know what the Dark Powers hope to achieve with their dark gifts. Perhaps the Dark Powers act as caring but overly harsh parents, cursing transgressors to frighten them back onto the path of

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. 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 his life against a vicious murderer and kills him 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 his 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 worthy of a Dark Powers check, the GM should tell him so

and give him a chance to change his 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, inflicting -1 penalties to attack rolls in bright daylight; a monk who receives a bonus to her natural armor might grow a thick, scaly hide. 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, she 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 his 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 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 the character's Corruption rank as a bonus on resisting environmental hazards (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 (such as low-light vision, natural weapons that deal Str+d4, or burrowing).
- **Suggested Curses:** Apply 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 Charisma. Gain a new Minor Hindrance. Choose a specific skill the character has at d6+; that skill suffers critical failures with a roll of 1 on the skill die (regardless of the Wild Die), as well as on snake eyes.

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 half the character's Corruption rank as a bonus to Parry or Toughness. Gain Armor equal to the character's Corruption rank. Gain Charisma equal to 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 moderate monstrous ability (such as immunity to poison or disease, improved Reach, or poison).
- **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 aquatic, fear, fearless, 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 she started with. If the corrupted character is a PC, the player may occasionally lose control of her 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 his 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 she 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 his final act of evil, the corrupted character proves himself beyond redemption and seals his fate. The Dark Powers grant the corrupted character his own domain—a prison, molded in his own image, from which he 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 his most desperate desire is placed within his sight but forever just beyond his 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 her 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 her 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, she must do all she can to protect the lives of a group of helpless captives she encounters later on.

It is no mean feat to scrub corruption out of the soul, however. Each time the character meets the requirements for atonement, she can attempt a new Spirit roll with a penalty equal to his Corruption rank. If the character succeeds at this check with a raise, the Dark Powers loosen their grip on her soul and her Corruption rank is decreased by 1. 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 his blackened soul—but in all the known history of Ravenloft, not one ever has.

Veteran of the Dread Realms

The Veteran of the Dread Realms Edge (page 37) allows a player character to start play at Seasoned Rank rather than Novice. It also comes with a dreadful price. Feel free to smile evilly as you check the care draw against the table below—although you might want to keep the result secret depending on what it is...

Veteran of the Dread Realms

Deuce (Unlucky): The character brushed up against something that turned fate against him. He gains the Bad Luck Hindrance. If he's so unlucky as to already have it, this stacks with it, so he starts each session with two less Bennies.

Three (Hunted): The hunter left unfinished behind, and now he is the hunted instead. Someone or something wants him dead. It could be a cabal, a monster, or an obsessed enemy. If it's a single foe, then it's powerful, probably smart, and certainly a Wild Card. That enemy might prefer to make the character's life a living hell instead of killing him outright, but it's not going to be pretty any way.

Four (Indebted): Some powerful individual or cabal knows the character's secrets—something terrible enough that his life would effectively be over if they revealed it—or perhaps he (or a loved one) has an actual debt to repay. Either way, his "creditor" often asks for interest payments and they're never pleasant.

Five (Addicted): The character has turned to drink or drugs to forget the things he's seen and done. He has a Major Addiction to a substance of his choice.

Six (Night Terrors): The hero can never forget the horrors he's seen. They come back to torment him every night. He gains the Nightmares Hindrance.

Seven (Maimed): Some horrific battle ended with the character maimed for life. Roll a d6: on a 1-3, he has the One Leg Hindrance; on a 4-6, he has the One Arm Hindrance.

Eight (Scarred): A close encounter with evil left a terrible memento on the hero's face. He has the Ugly Hindrance.

Nine (Bedlam): The hero has faced the darkness, only to have his mind buckle under the strain. He has the Delusion (Major) Hindrance.

Ten (Traumatized): The hero has seen awful things that broke his nerve. He gains the Yellow Hindrance.

Jack (Infected): The last horror the hero fought left him something to remember it by. The hero has a strange wound, infection, or disease that gives him the Ailing (Major) Hindrance.

Queen (Cursed): Misfortune and darkness have fallen on the hero's head. He gains the Cursed Hindrance.

King (Marked): Something awful left its mark on the hero—perhaps a dying curse or a literal mark of evil. The hero's soak rolls are made at -2.

Ace (Forsaken): In a moment of desperation, the hero did something he deeply regrets. Ever since, something has been *wrong* with him. He gains the Cursed and Outsider Hindrances.

Black Joker (Damned): The hero has fallen to the path of corruption, walking the path that will damn his very soul. He starts the game at Corruption Rank 2.

Red Joker (Hero of the Mists): Fate has chosen this hero to combat the forces of darkness. He is a champion of destiny who must not die before his appointed time. The hero gains a +2 bonus on all Vigor rolls. Fate doesn't like to be cheated, though. Whenever the character rolls a 1 on his Vigor die but succeeds because of the Wild Die, the effect is instead suffered by an ally or innocent victim in the current scene. Perhaps a friend takes a bullet meant for the hero, or an ally is afflicted with the plague the destined one avoided. Destiny rarely equals happiness for those around the hero.



Revenants

Death is not always the end. Indeed, in the Land of Mists, heroes and villains alike sometimes find that what waits for them beyond the veil of death is neither salvation nor damnation—but merely more of the same.

A character who takes the **Revenant Edge** (page 43) is considered to have met an untimely end at some point before the beginning of the campaign, only to crawl out of his own grave to try and finish some sort of unfinished business. Only those with incredible willpower and determination can come back from the grave with most of their mind intact, so only Wild Cards can become revenants.

Unfortunately for the newly risen revenant, he didn't come back alone. The Dark Powers are loathe to let anyone slip from their grasp, so the "gift" of undeath is laden with unseen peril. Every revenant has a monster inside, just waiting for a chance to get out and wreak havoc.

Dominion

When a revenant returns from the dead, he carries with him the curse of unlife. His unfinished business and his newly defiled existence combine to create a form of unpleasant madness within him. His ability to keep a grip on his mortal identity is known as *Dominion*. A newly risen revenant begins with a Dominion of 0, representing balance between the human and the monster.

The player and the GM should work out what the revenant's unfinished business is. It could be something as simple as "find the man that murdered me" or as complex as "destroy the Fraternity of Shadows and all who serve it."

When the character is exposed to a situation that reminds him of his unfinished business, he must make a Dominion roll. A Dominion roll is a Spirit check, modified by the character's current Dominion rating.

On a success, the character retains control but is Shaken; on a raise, his Dominion rating increases by +1 and he can act normally.

On a failure, the character's inner demons take over. His Dominion rating suffers a -1 penalty and the GM takes control of the character. The character receives a new Spirit roll to overcome this control at the beginning of each new round; this is not a Dominion roll.

During this period of control, the character's actions should be turned toward destruction and mayhem in line with his unfinished business; perhaps he decides that the shadowy wizard dealing with the party is actually a minion of the Fraternity of Shadows, or that a random stranger with a yellow scarf is actually his murderer. The GM has free reign to act out the character's worst impulses during this time.

Keep in mind that some people don't find it fun to have their character taken away from them or do horrible things because of the result of a bad roll. Warn your players ahead of time that this is a possibility for anyone who becomes a revenant so that there are no misunderstandings or hard feelings later.

Death Marks

It should come as no surprise that anything bad enough to kill a person leaves a mark. A revenant's wounds are all healed at the time of his "resurrection," but the one that killed him always leaves a scar or deformity of some kind.

A hero shot through the heart might have a nasty scar on his chest, for example, while one who was hanged will have a clearly visible rope mark around his neck.

Anyone who can see this mark feels an unnatural chill or sense of horror at such an ugly wound. The character suffers -2 to his Charisma while his death mark is visible.

Additionally, a revenant doesn't look quite like a living person anymore. His complexion is ashen or wan, his nails are yellow and waxy, and he has a faint aroma of decay about him. His body isn't continuing to rot (thank goodness!), but he has a distinct aura of death about him.

Animals can always tell, even if humans can't. Any roll made to control an animal suffers a -2 penalty due to this unnatural aura of death and decay.

The Needs of the Flesh

Revenants are dead—if not gone—and have little in the way of physical needs. While a revenant has no need for food, drink, or sleep, they do require rest and recuperation of a sort.

A revenant needs meat and blood to keep his flesh from falling apart when damaged. A revenant makes natural healing checks just like a living person, as long as they have access to meat of some kind; it can be fresh or rotten, raw or cooked, but the revenant needs to eat at least a pound each day while injured in order to gain the benefit of natural healing.

Revenants don't need sleep as such, but they do need to rest for a few hours each day to avoid mental fatigue. They can get by with about half as much rest as a living person and can go twice as long before needing to make rolls to avoid Fatigue.

If a revenant becomes Incapacitated due to Fatigue from avoiding sleep, however, he makes an immediate Dominion check; on a failure, his Fatigue is removed and he is no longer Incapacitated, but he is under the GM's control—and he cannot attempt a Spirit check to regain control for 1d4 rounds.

Undeath

Crawling out of one's own grave makes the rest of the world seem a lot less terrifying. Revenants gain a +2 bonus on Fear checks.

Additionally, revenants are *undead*. They do not suffer Fatigue from normal sources, and they're pretty much immune to nonlethal damage. While they suffer wounds normally, it's quite difficult to kill a revenant while his unfinished business remains undone.

As long as the revenant has not completed his unfinished business, he can only be permanently killed by being Incapacitated with damage, then having his body completely destroyed through exceptional efforts. This might include burning him to ash, burying him in sacred ground on the night of a major holiday, or cutting off his head with a silver sword.

Regardless of the exact method, a revenant who is simply Incapacitated through injuries and then not permanently destroyed is merely left unconscious for 1d6 days. After that, the character regains enough willpower to drag himself out of his grave again and go scrounging for meat to heal his injuries.

A revenant doesn't really feel pain, but he can suffer wound penalties. This reflects actual damage done to the revenant's body rather than pain or anguish from being hurt. As one of the undead, revenants gain a +2 bonus to recover from being Shaken.

Unfortunately, existing past the pall of the grave leaves even great heroes vulnerable to the siren call of corruption. Revenant characters suffer a -2 penalty on Dark Powers checks.

Harrowing

Revenants can choose to explore the nature of their new condition by emulating other

undead, effectively becoming a unique new form of monster through their efforts. Revenants have access to a new slew of abilities known as "Harrowing Edges," which they can take in place of normal Edges as they advance, as long as they meet the requirements.

Every revenant gains one Harrowing Edge for free when they become one of the undead. Some Harrowing Edges inflict Fatigue on the character for using them; unless otherwise noted, such Fatigue is recovered after one hour of rest.

Facing Death

While the easiest way to become a revenant is by taking the Revenant Edge at character creation, it might be possible to rise from the grave later in a hero's career with the right mixture of willpower and luck.

When a hero dies with unfinished business (GM's discretion), draw cards from a freshly shuffled action desk. The number of cards drawn is equal to the character's Rank (Novice is 1, Seasoned is 2, and so on) plus the size of his Spirit die (so d4 is 1, d6 is 2 and so on). If a Joker is drawn, the character rises again as a revenant. If not, he's just dead.

Becoming a different sort of monster (such as through vampire draining or the like) supersedes the possibility of becoming a revenant and carries its own set of problems.

Harrowing Edges

All revenants gain one of the following Edges for free when they rise from the grave, and they may take any Harrowing Edge that they qualify for when advancing.

Aura of Fear

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

You can share the terror of the grave with those that look upon you. You gain a +2 bonus on Intimidation rolls. Furthermore, Wild Cards who fail must roll on the Fright Table, and Extras who fail are Panicked.

This ability can't be used on the same target more than once per encounter.

Claws

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

You gain sharp claws that cause Str+d6 damage in combat. You can extend or retract the claws at will, and you count as an armed attacker while the claws are out.

Claws, Improved

Requirements: Revenant, Seasoned, Claws

Your claws now inflict Str+d10 damage.

Clinging Shadows

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

The darkness is your home, and you carry it with you. As an action, you can reduce the light level within a Large Burst Template centered on you. Normal light becomes Dim, Dim becomes Dark, and Dark becomes Pitch Black. The light level still counts as the unaltered light level for you.

You can only reduce the light by one level with this ability, but you may keep this ability active as long as you wish. You cannot use this ability in direct sunlight.

Ghost

Requirements: Revenant, Veteran

At the beginning of your action, you may decide if you are corporeal or incorporeal. You must remain in that state until the beginning of your next action; you cannot attack and then become ethereal, for example. While you are incorporeal, you are intangible and immune to non-magical attacks. You are still visible, and magical attacks affect you normally.

You may remain in this ghostly state as long as you wish, but it requires concentration, giving you a -1 penalty on skill rolls while incorporeal. If you suffer damage while incorporeal, you must make a Spirit roll or become corporeal immediately.

Grave Chill

Requirements: Revenant, Veteran

The grave is cold, and you can share that experience with your enemies. You make a Spirit roll to activate this power; on a success, you radiate unnatural cold in a Large Burst Template centered on yourself.

Every living person in the area must attempt a Spirit check or suffer a level of Fatigue. You gain a level of Fatigue automatically when you use this power but do not have to roll. Anyone who gets a 1 on the Spirit die is also Panicked, as per the Fright Table.

The chill lasts a number of rounds equal to half your Spirit die type. You cannot use this ability if you are Exhausted. Fatigue suffered by your victims recovers after an hour in a warm environment.

Grim Stitching

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

You heal much faster than normal people—or even other dead people. You may make natural Healing rolls each day, provided you consume at least a pound of meat for each attempt.

Hellfire

Requirements: Revenant, Veteran

You felt Perdition's flames on your soul while you were dead, and you can share that sensation with your enemies.

As an action, you can blast fire from your mouth or hands, inflicting 2d10 damage to a Cone Template originating from you. This ability uses your Shooting skill to hit targets. A result of 1 on your Shooting die causes you to become Shaken.

Implacable

Requirements: Revenant, Seasoned

It takes a while to get used to the idea that you don't suffer physical pain anymore. Some revenants still grunt when they get hit or cry out when injured.

You, on the other hand, have a handle on your unholy Toughness. You ignore 2 points

of wound penalties. This ability is cumulative with the Nerves of Steel Edge.

Infested

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

Your body has become a home for the unclean—vermin inhabit your corpse. Their proximity to you has given you some level of control over them.

As an action, you can suffer a level of Fatigue to spawn a swarm of insects (*SWDE* 141) under your control. The swarm dissipates when destroyed or after about five minutes. You cannot use this ability if you're already Exhausted.

Soul Eater

Requirements: Revenant, Seasoned

Whether blood or breath, you have the ability to steal vital essence from your foes. When you inflict wounds on an opponent in a grapple (*SWDE* 73), make an opposed Spirit roll. If you succeed, you heal one wound or recover a level of Fatigue.

Supernatural Power

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

This power permanently improves any one of your Attributes by two die types. (For example, a d6 becomes a d10, a d12

becomes d12+2, and so on.) The Attribute you pick may go above d12 before Legendary Rank, but not above d12+2.

This Edge may be taken multiple times, up to once for each Attribute.

Wolf Eyes

Requirements: Revenant, Novice

The hero's eyes are as sharp as a wolf's. He gains a +2 bonus on Notice rolls as well as the Low Light Vision special ability. He ignores penalties for Dim and Dark lighting conditions.

Wolf Eyes, Improved

Requirements: Revenant, Seasoned, Wolf Eyes

The character can see even in pitch darkness and ignores penalties for lighting conditions.

Additionally, the character can literally see other creatures' souls as a kind of aura. With a successful Notice roll, he can determine an NPC's attitude toward him (as per the Reaction Table, *SWDE* 26). A raise can identify whether the target is a supernatural creature of some kind, though not the specific nature of that creature.





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 him 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* 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 his own Land of Mists from whole cloth.

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 thematic purity.

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!

Second, having a vast continent (even if the authors frequently disagreed about the Core's exact size) diminished 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 produced 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 his 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.

Conjunctions

While the Clusters and Islands presented in *Ravenloft Reincarnated* are written as existing separately and independently, the Mists are fickle and chaotic. At certain times, the Mists can recede from a domain's borders to reveal an entirely new land, or one that is familiar to the inhabitants from history or legend. Such sharing of borders can last a few minutes, a few days, a few weeks, or even become permanent in some cases.

These "drifts" in the borders of a domain or Cluster are known as *conjunctions*. During a conjunction, two previously unrelated domains become neighbors; they have a physical connection that a traveler can simply walk across, rather than relying on a Mistway or traveling through the Mists themselves.

Scholars have very little idea what causes conjunctions. Some of them occur on more-or-less predictable patterns, while others seem to occur randomly. Some domains never experience a conjunction, while others experience them frequently. A few, such as the predatory nation of Falkovnia and the time-sundered city of Rookhausen, only seem to exist in states of conjunction, forever drifting from one location to the next.

For those that believe in the existence of "outlander worlds," it is also thought that a conjunction can bring a domain temporarily into alignment with such a world. Scholars who hold to the idea think that these are the times when the Mists scoop up new lands, like a hungry whale devouring krill.

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 archetypal 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 him 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* (and 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 novel *On Stranger Tides*.
- **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 predatory 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 "exotic" view of Asia during the Gothic literature period.
- **The Shadow Rift**, a mystical fairyland where magic is commonplace but mortals are exotic. 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 he is capable of closing his 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 is 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 neighbor.

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.

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, 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.

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. 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 are said to wander the hills and forests of the region, hunting humans for sport and sometimes stealing away children for unknown purpose. 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 XII, 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.

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.

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 short, 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, 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 Tatiana, 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.

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. 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.

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.

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 ridden 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 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.

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 grown 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. His 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.

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; it is not, however, 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 also plays into the personal horror of Invidia.

Themes

- **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.
- **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.

The Darklord

Gabrielle Aderre is a dark-haired 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 has rarely made proclamations, never collected taxes, and seemingly had little interest in actually 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.

Due to the current struggles within the land and Gabrielle’s own conflicted mental state, she cannot close the borders of Invidia.

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.

All five 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.

The five 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 Civilized Crescent 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 the 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, 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, however. 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 longsword, blade down, superimposed on an alabaster kite shield and adorned with a sprig of belladonna. 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 magic of the Church, which is seen as a divine gift from Ezra herself, and 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 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 beautiful 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. Borcans 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 feature; 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.

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 men, 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.

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 Venomous (+0) poison. Ivana can keep the borders closed for days at a time, but rarely does so—especially since Ivan and his chosen agents are all immune to its effects.

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

- **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.

- **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.

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.

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.

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 are 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 dozens of 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 Transalpine 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.
- **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 in regards to governmental corruption is anyone's guess.
- **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.

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, Katrina. Ivan was always erratic, committing his first murder by the age of ten, but he could do no wrong in Katrina'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 have 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.

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 to become Venomous (-2) poison for the next 1d6 days. To Ivan's anger, Ivana and her personal agents are immune to this power, but he is happy to take advantage of the fact that he is in turn immune to her closed borders.

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.

Although Lamordia is a temperate domain, its winters 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 twin 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 well, 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

- **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.
- **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.

- **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.

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.

Mordenheim and Adam are mutually damned, trapped in Lamordia together as joint darklords of the domain. Mordenheim has no knowledge or interest in his spiritual state—and would deny that he had any such thing as a “spirit” to begin with. Adam is more aware of his entrapment, but lacks the willpower to close the domain's borders for more than a few hours at a time. When he can summon up the strength at all, terrible storms wrack the whole domain, becoming especially dangerous at the edges of the country.

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 dusker 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. Mean 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. 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. In game terms, 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 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.
- **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 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.

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.

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.

The Richemuloise tend to 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 man's significance is determined by what he knows—his skills and knowledge, and how he applies 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 feeling of *Les Misérables* without quite as much obvious or abject poverty. 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

- **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.
- **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 talk.

- **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.



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.

Her 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.

When Jacqueline wishes to close the borders of her domain, vast rat swarms rise up 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.

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 himself 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 himself 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 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

- **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.
- **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.
- **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 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 in order 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.

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.

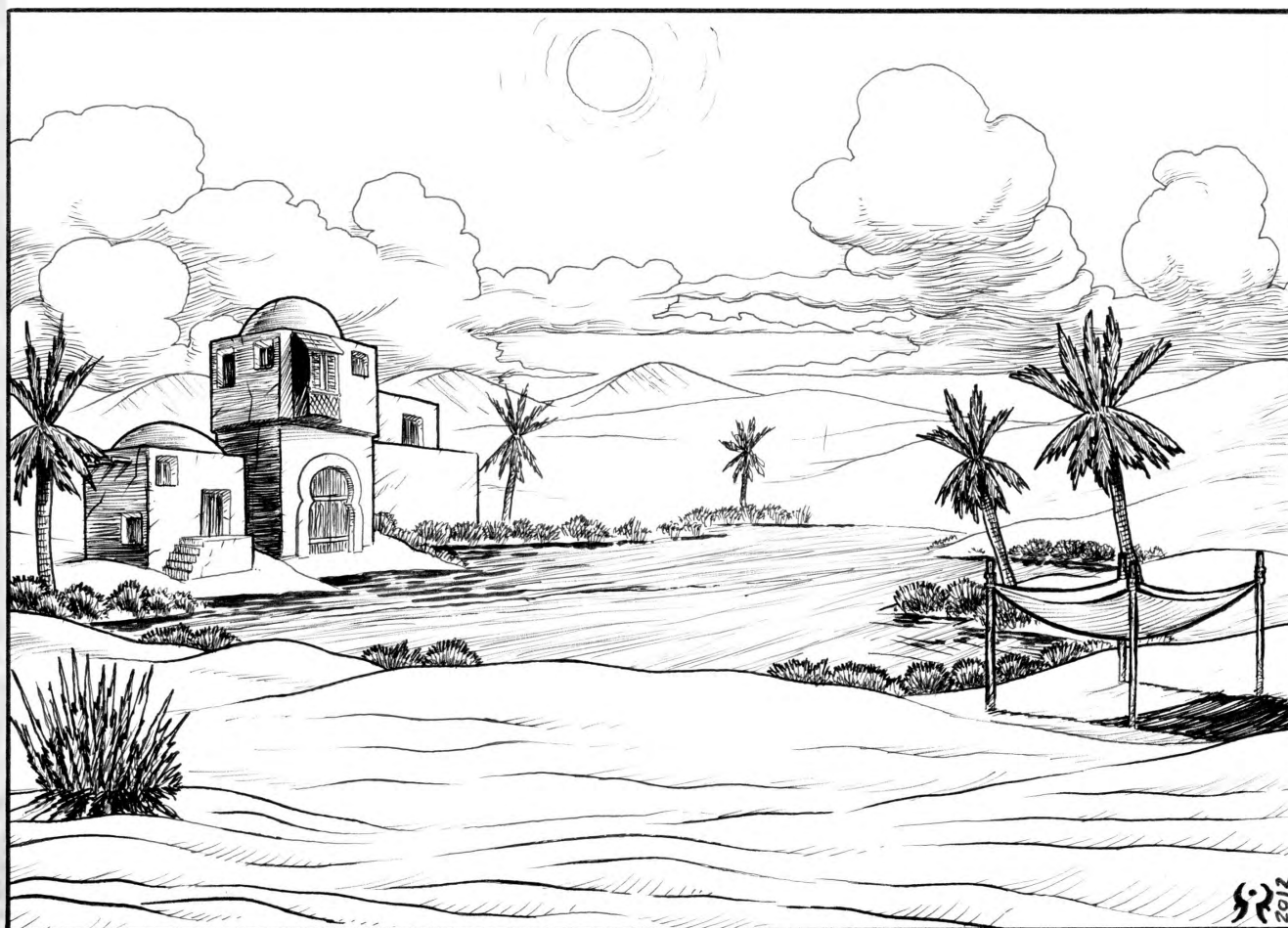
Hazlan

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. Mulan 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

- **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.
- **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. Cosmic horror is a frequent element of stories set in Hazlan.

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 much 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.

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. Hazlik must maintain an arcane ritual to keep the borders closed, meditating before a brazier of special incense. Since the ritual requires great concentration but leaves Hazlik more vulnerable to his perpetual exhaustion, he usually cannot maintain it for more than a few hours at a time.

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 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 about 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.

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 enough 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.

For his part, Malken protects Stanov and his family from the consequences of his own enterprises—mainly because he has put so much time and effort into stealing Stanov's life that he refuses to let anyone else touch "his" property. 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.

Malken's inner turmoil prevents him from closing the borders of Nova Vaasa, though his divided mind effectively protects him from mental assault and his alchemy-infused body makes him virtually immune to most forms of toxins and to anything that would alter his shape.

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 in order 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. All of 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 even 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

All of 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 in order 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.

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.

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.

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 faerie tales, minus the faerie folk 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

- **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 man keeps his problems to himself and hopes others do the same. People are generally friendly without being particularly helpful or cooperative, and they can sometimes be shockingly cruel.

- **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.

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.

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, though like most bards he has incredible vocal endurance.

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 a number of 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 through 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, attempt 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 benefitting at the cost of the vast majority, who remain poor and marginalized.

Themes

- **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.
- **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 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.

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.

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. 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.

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 the most 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 just 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.

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.

Alfred cannot close the borders of the domain in any traditional sense; he lacks the willpower and focus necessary to do so. However, 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.

The Nocturnal Sea

The oceans of Ravenloft have many names in many cultures. The Vaasi 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 Cluster, 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 very nearly 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 Cluster 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 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

- **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—and 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.
- **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.

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 oceans, only to be frustrated anew by his inability to make accurate maps or charts—as though the islands and coasts he discovers move. 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.

Pieter van Riese cannot close the borders of the Sea of Sorrows, nor would he wish to. Any ship on the sea is a potential source of sailors for his own damned voyage.

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.

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’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 fish-men 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.

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 *Lisey’s Story* and *The Dark Half*) 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

- **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 a 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 actually that 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 is a reflection of 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...
- **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.

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 has miscalculated, however, and 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.

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.

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 incredibly 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 white-blond, 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 back-breaking 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 are 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 balmier 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

- **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.
- **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.

- **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.

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 in order 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 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, which he cannot regain while the borders remain closed.

On the other hand, Meredoth’s own lair on the isolated island of Todstein, some miles

north of Graben Island proper, is far more easily 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. Rokume, 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 spend 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 was 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

- **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.

- **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 Darklord

Malus Scleris 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 Scleris 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 then. 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.

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.

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 a reflection 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

- **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.

- **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.”
- **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 Darklord

The darklord of Paridon is unknown to almost all of 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, dopplegangers are somewhat rare and fairly 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 dopplegangers 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 dopplegangers 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.

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.

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 sewers 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 rats and other fell things. 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.

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 populous 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 a spray 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 worse neighborhoods of London. Particularly, it is visually referential to the grimy, dark districts from the film version of *Sweeney Todd*, as well as the run-down and impoverished ghettos of Paris from the various adaptations of *Les*

Miserables. Timor is also supposed to remind astute readers of the relationship between London and its neighbors during the early Industrial Period, or of the way that England historically treats Wales and Scotland. 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

- **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 every Timorese wants 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.
- **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.

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 would show the fools above what "terror" really meant.

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 to or from the city above, she can make it nearly impossible to escape the underground reaches of Timor for anyone foolish enough to enter them. Her real difficulty in enacting her revenge is that the sewers are just as hard for her to navigate as she can make them for others; the entire underground is a vast labyrinth, with her as the monster at its center.

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. 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 harder 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.

Bluetspur

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, so it has no distinct day or night. 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 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. Bluetspur is Yuggoth, or Hell, 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.

- **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.
- **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.”

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 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.

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

- **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.

- **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.

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 evil-doers. 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; spellcasting 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 any version of the setting cannot do without.

Themes

- **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.
- **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.

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 Darkalus. 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 knew their proper place at all times. 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

- **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.
- **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.
- **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." Within this category of "humanity," all others are considered equal from birth, with merit achieved only through service and duty, not inheritance. Quality shows itself in deeds.

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 had 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 is in his sixties or seventies, 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.

Drakov does have 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.

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

- **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.
- **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.

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 kinder 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 to find her queen—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.

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.

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 island's 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 brothers, 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 brothers, followed by the destruction of their islands in horrific earthquakes and tsunamis, has made them more cautious about direct confrontations. Each of them considers himself the only true ruler of all Rokushima Taiyou, with his brothers 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 Tokugawa. 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 works of Junji Ito.



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, his 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 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 them at their peril.
- **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 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 many of 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 sons 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 sons 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 sons 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 sons 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 sons’ dreams, pushing them to use ever more dishonorable methods in their battles.

When hired assassins gave two of his sons 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 utterly 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 sons have turned into cautious men after the seeming destruction of their brothers' 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 sons will respond. After all, how does one make war on the afterlife?

When he wants to close the domain's borders, horrible typhoons rise up 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 sons 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.

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, 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, unlike many places. 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 to it—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 pillars is a sphere of utter darkness. Impenetrable even to the lightless eyes of the shadow fey, this sphere whispers ceaseless in a 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.

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 slaughter, 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 ruler 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.

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 faith.

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 real prisoners. 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.

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 generations—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.

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 unique 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.

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 have a tendency 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.

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 active 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 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, however; 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.

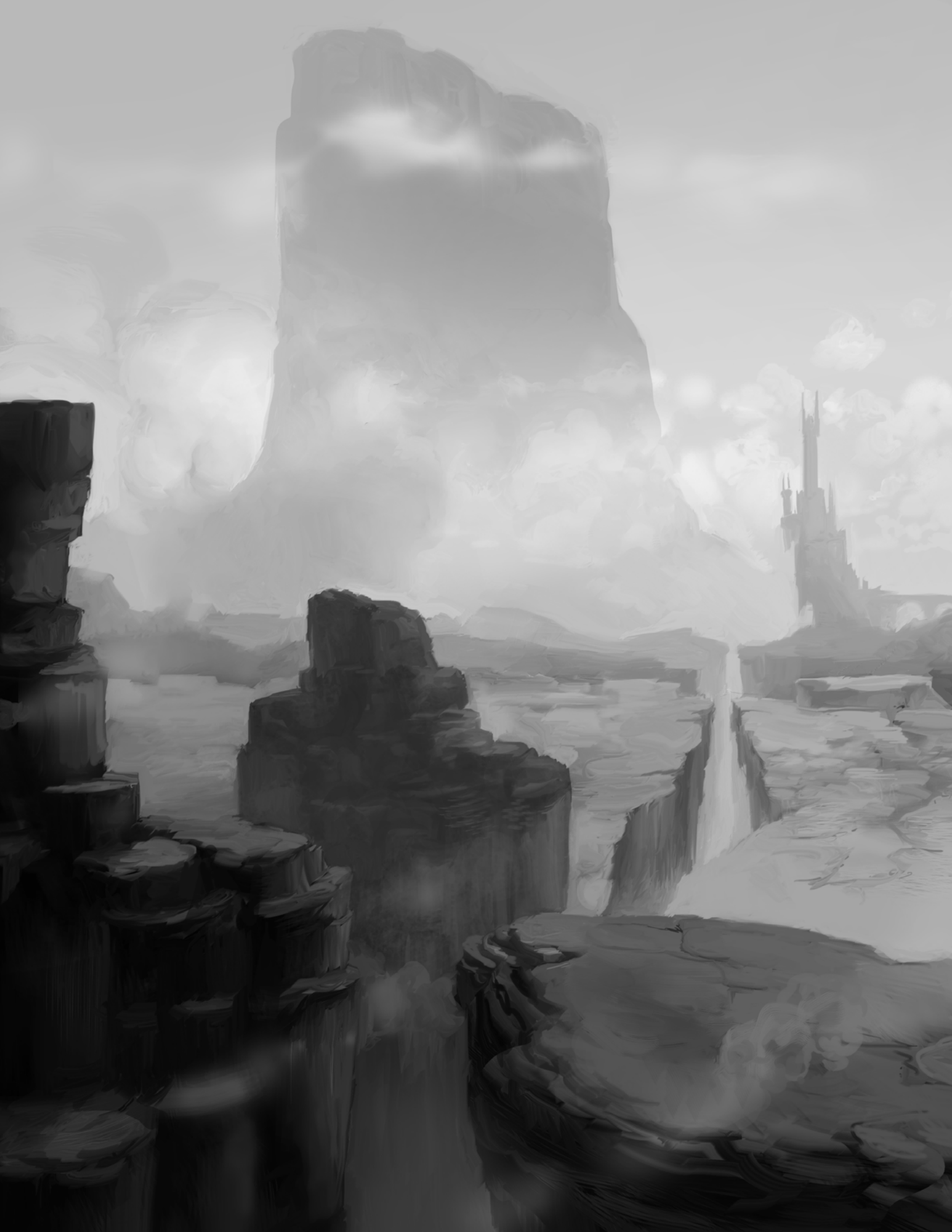
Dread Possibilities

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 page 104 of the *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion*.

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. The *Savage Worlds Fantasy Companion* has a section on loot that can be useful to GMs looking to include a more traditional element of treasure hunting in their games (starting on page 47 of that book). Most monsters in Ravenloft have “meager” or “worthwhile” treasures, with only the most powerful and

wealthy foes possessing “rich” or “trove” loot caches.

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 Talisman 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.

Denizens of Darkness

Akikage (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Gear: Shadow short sword (Str+d6, ignores non-magical physical armor), shadow darts (Str+d4, ignores non-magical physical armor)

Special Abilities:

- **Dodge:** Opponents suffer –1 on attack rolls against akikage.
- **Ethereal:** Cannot be harmed by normal attacks. Takes normal damage from magic weapons and powers.
- **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 unarmed attack 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.
- **Ninja:** Due to their extensive training in life, an akikage gains a +2 bonus on Agility rolls, as well as +2 damage against unaware targets.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer wound modifiers.

Ancient Dead

The ancient dead, or more commonly *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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor versus magic, and +2 to rolls made to resist magical effects.
- **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; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Mummies take +4 damage from fire.

Mummy Lord (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Ancient bronze armor.
- **Fear -2:** Mummy lords inspire utter terror in those who look upon their withered forms.
- **Fearless:** Mummy lords are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor versus magic, and +4 to rolls made to resist magic effects.
- **Mummy Rot:** Any character who is Shaken or suffers a Wound from a guardian mummy's attack must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or contract mummy rot (long-term chronic, major debilitating). Any character who dies from this disease or is killed by a mummy lord's unarmed attacks rises from the dead as a zombie 1d4 hours later.
- **Shuffling Gait:** Mummies 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; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **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: Notice d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Cannot be harmed by normal attacks. Takes normal damage from magic weapons and powers.
- **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; does not suffer wound modifiers.

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: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Cannot be harmed by normal attacks (except for fire). Takes normal damage from magic weapons and powers.
- **Heat Drain:** Within a range of Spirit, the arayashka can drain heat from a single source as an action. Using this ability diminishes a fire by one step; so, a raging bonfire that normally could deal 2d10 damage would be reduced to 1d10, while a lantern would simply be snuffed out. 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; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **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 (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Ethereal:** Cannot be harmed by normal attacks. Takes normal damage from magic weapons and powers.
- **Fear -2:** The banshee’s appearance is a terrifying apparition that can drive even brave men mad with fear.
- **Flight:** Flying Pace 6”, Climb 3”.
- **Keening:** Each round a banshee may keen as an action. Anyone within a Large Burst Template centered on the banshee must make a Fear check at -2 opposed by the banshee’s Spirit 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.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots.

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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Curse:** The first time the characters see an individual barghest they must make a Spirit roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Go for the Throat:** Barghests instinctively go for an opponent’s soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target’s most weakly-armored location.
- **Fear:** The howl of a barghest can inspire panic in all who hear it.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Barghests roll a d10 instead of a d6 when running.

Bat, Giant

Giant bats are larger than regular bats. Despite the fact that most 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 d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Stealth d8

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Echo Location:** Giant bats suffer no penalties for bad lighting, even in Pitch Darkness.
- **Flight:** Giant bats have a flying Pace of 8”.
- **Size -1:** Giant bats measure three feet long, but have a wingspan double that.

Bird of Prey

Birds of prey may be small, but their talons can rip through flesh with ease. This stat block can be used for eagles, hawks, large ravens, and hunting birds of any kind.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d12+4, Stealth d8

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Blind:** When attacking large prey, birds of prey go for the eyes. If the bird scores a raise on its Fighting roll, it hits the character's head (+4 damage). If the character suffers an Injury from the attack, it is always an injury to the eye or face.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Flight:** Pace 8", Climb 2".
- **Size -2:** Birds of prey tend to be around two feet long.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against a bird of prey due to its small size.

Black Sprite

These tiny faerie folk are possessed of 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 sith*), 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, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Faerie Magic:** Black sprites can use the *invisibility* power at will with no Power Point cost, using their Spirit as the arcane skill roll.
- **Flight:** Black sprites fly at Pace 10.
- **Hideous Laughter:** A black sprite's horrible, infectious laughter can shatter the minds of listeners, causing them to laugh along at a joke only the mad could truly comprehend. As an action, a black sprite can make a Taunt attempt at all

creatures within a Medium Burst

Template, centered on the sprite. Each affected creature rolls separately against this Test of Will, but the sprite rolls only once. Creatures that succeed are immune to further uses of this ability for 24 hours.

- **Size -2:** Black sprites are tiny creatures, standing less than two feet tall.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty when attacking a black sprite.

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 d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Berserk:** When a boar is Shaken, it goes berserk. It gains a +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls and +2 to Toughness, but its Parry is reduced by 2. This lasts until the boar is dead or no more enemies are present.
- **Gore:** If a boar can charge at least 6" before attacking, it adds +4 to damage.
- **Tusks:** Str+d4.

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: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** -4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fear +2:** The pathetic horror of the broken one can inspire fear, but they are sadder than scary.
- **Fleet-Footed:** A broken one hybrid running on all fours has a d10 running die.
- **Go for the Throat:** A broken one scoring a raise on its attack roll automatically hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- **Repulsive:** Broken ones are ugly in ways that normal humanoids could never dream to be. They suffer -4 Charisma.

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: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 10 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Tough hide.
- **Bite:** Str+d4, and poison.
- **Poison:** Anyone who suffers damage from the carrion crawler's bite (including a Shaken result) 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: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; 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 still 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:** Carrionettes stand between one and two feet tall.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty when attacking a carrionette.

Cat, Small

This is an ordinary housecat, the sort that might be used as a familiar by a spellcaster or an alternate form by a shapechanger.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 3; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Acrobat:** +2 to Agility rolls to perform acrobatic maneuvers; +1 to Parry is unencumbered.
- **Bite/Claw:** Str.
- **Low Light Vision:** Cats ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Size -2:** Cats are typically less than a foot high.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against cats due to their size.

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 d12+2, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Notice d4, Stealth d12

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Scuttle:** Crawling claws rolls a d4 running die instead of a d6.
- **Size -2:** Crawling claws are tiny creatures.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty to attack a crawling claw due to its size.
- **Throttle:** A crawling claw that scores a raise on a Fighting roll against a victim receives a free grapple attempt.



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: Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **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.
- **Fearless:** Blood mists are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Invulnerability:** Cannot be harmed by normal attacks. Takes normal damage from magic weapons and powers.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots.

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: Fighting d6, Notice d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d10, AP 10.
- **Fleet Footed:** A crocotta rolls a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Size -1:** A crocotta is the same size as a large dog.

Leucrotta (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Taunt d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6, AP 1.
- **Fleet Footed:** A leucrotta rolls a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **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 Taunt rolls and Smarts Tricks.

Death Knight (Wild Card)

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 d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d6, Riding d8, Spellcasting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Hindrances: Code of Honor *or* Bloodthirsty

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command, Frenzy, Level Headed

Gear: Long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 to Parry)

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Armor +3:** Full plate armor.
- **Balefire Weapons:** Anyone struck by a death knight's weapons has a chance of catching fire.
- **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).
- **Fear -1:** The appearance of a death knight is worthy of a Fear check.
- **Invulnerability:** A death knight suffers no damage from 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.
- **Unholy Warrior:** A death knight gains +2 to damage rolls against priests and champions of goodly faiths and +2 Toughness against their attacks.

Dire Wolf

Dire wolves are very large and feral wolves that often live in the same territories as werewolves. They may also be found roaming in packs in the deepest, darkest woods.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly-armored location.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Dire wolves roll d10 instead of d6 when running.

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: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Old-fashioned plate armor.
- **Block:** +1 Parry.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Long Sword:** Str+d8.
- **Sweep:** May make a single Fighting roll at -2 to attack all adjacent characters.

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: Fighting d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Socialize d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Mind Reader:** A doppelganger can use the *mind reading* power at will with no Power Point cost and Smarts as the activation roll. A target has no chance to detect the mental intrusion from this power; answers gained from this ability are generally used to support a doppelganger’s impersonation of a person.
- **Shapeshifting:** Doppelgangers can use the *disguise* power at will with no Power Point cost, activating it with a Smarts roll. They are limited to assuming the form of humanoids of roughly their own size, though they can expand or contract as necessary to change their apparent size.

Dread Treant (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 15 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Thick bark.
- **Camouflage:** When a dread treant holds still in a forest, it can make Stealth rolls as though it had Stealth d12.
- **Huge:** Attackers add +4 to attack rolls against a dread treant because of its size.
- **Improved Sweep:** A dread treant may attack all adjacent foes with a single Fighting roll.
- **Lashing Branches:** Str+d10, Reach 3.
- **Size +6:** Dread treants stand up to fifty feet high.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Fire-based attacks do +2 damage; dread treants risk catching fire on a roll of 5-6 on a d6.

Dream Stalker

The dream stalker, sometimes known as a *bastellus*, is a creature that feeds off its sleeping victims’ fear. It invades its victim’s dreams and insinuates itself into them, savoring the anguish it causes. The creature can then change its form, resembling nothing more than a shadow on a wall or floor, and is easily missed with casual observation. The creature takes on its true form when it feeds: a hulking humanoid shadow, featureless save for its leering smile of a mouth.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Dream Warp:** If the bastellus makes a successful opposed Spirit roll against a sleeping victim within 1”, it turns their dream into a terrible nightmare. If the victim loses, he must make a Fear check at -4. Any result on the Fright Table from a failed roll takes place when the victim wakes up.
- **Ethereal:** Cannot be harmed by normal attacks. Takes normal damage from magic weapons and powers.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison

and disease; no additional damage from called shots.

Drownling

Although death is never fun, 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: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Drown:** A drownling that succeeds in a grapple attack transfers water from its lungs to those of its victim, drowning them. Each round the grapple is maintained, the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue. When he passes Incapacitated, he drowns.
- **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots.

Elemental

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: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Swimming d12+2

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. Whether the target takes any damage or not, a successful attack requires the victim to attempt a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.
- **Gorespout:** Blood elementals can project a torrent of water using the Cone Template. Those in the area may make an Agility roll opposed by the spirit’s Shooting to avoid it or suffer 2d8 nonlethal damage. This puts out any normal fires.
- **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+3, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4

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 a grapple attempt, using the elemental's Fighting and Strength, but after the first action, the grave elemental need not maintain the effect. The arms continue to grab at the victim until he breaks free, at which point they disappear back into the earth.

- **Burrow (10'"):** Grave elementals can meld into and out of the ground.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.

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: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6

Pace: —; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5



Special Abilities:

- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.
- **Ethereal:** Mist elementals can maneuver through any non-solid surface. They can seep through the cracks in doors, bubble through water and rush through thick brush as though it weren't there. They cannot enter any truly airtight seal (GM's discretion).
- **Evil Infusion:** A mist elemental may use the *puppet* power, activated with a Spirit roll. Any creature caught up in the mist elemental's whirlwind is affected as a free action. The mist elemental has 20 Power Points with which to use this power.
- **Flight:** Mist elementals fly at a rate of 6" with a climb rate of 3".
- **Invulnerability:** Mist elementals are immune to all non-magical attacks.
- **Push:** The mist elemental can use an action to push a single adjacent target 1d6" directly away with a concentrated blast of air. The victim makes a Strength roll, with each success and raise reducing the amount moved by 1" (to a minimum of 0).
- **Wind Blast:** Mist elementals can send directed blasts of air at foes using the Cone Template and a Shooting roll. Foes may make an opposed Agility roll to avoid the blast. The damage is 2d6 points of nonlethal damage.
- **Whirlwind:** A mist elemental that does not move on its turn may start a grapple with any adjacent creature without an opposed Fighting roll. Attempts to escape from a mist elemental's grapple must use Strength rather than Agility.

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: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Notice d6, Shooting d8

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. Any creature struck by their attacks has a 1 in 6 chance of catching fire. The skeleton or zombie itself suffers 1d10 damage each round at the start of its turn. It checks for this damage before rolling to recover from being Shaken.
- **Elemental:** No additional damage from called shots; Fearless; Immune to disease and poison.
- **Invulnerability:** Pyre elementals are immune to all non-magical attacks, but suffer 1d6 damage when doused in at least a gallon of water, +2 per additional gallon.
- **Fiery Touch:** Str+d6; chance of catching fire.
- **Flame Strike:** Pyre elementals can project a searing blast of flame using the Cone Template. Characters within the cone must beat the elemental's Shooting roll with Agility or suffer 2d10 damage, plus the chance of catching fire.

Ermordenung (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Socialize d10, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +4

Special Abilities:

- **Assassin:** Ermordenung gain +2 damage on a successful attack against an unaware target.
- **Immunity:** Ermordenung are immune to all poisons and toxins.
- **Poison Touch:** An ermordenung can deliver deadly poison with just a touch. This requires a Fighting roll with a +2 bonus. A touched victim must attempt a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a Wound. This also affects anyone who has intimate contact with the ermordenung, such as a kiss or a lengthy embrace with skin contact, which increases the penalty on the Vigor roll to -4.
- **Very Attractive:** All ermordenung are extremely good-looking, giving them a +4 bonus to Charisma.

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 d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Blob:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **Engulf:** A gelatinous blob may make a grapple attack against every creature within its template. On a success, it has engulfed those foes. Each round the

grapple is maintained thereafter, an engulfed victim suffers 2d4 damage. A creature killed by being engulfed is absorbed and added to the blob's bulk.

- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Mindless:** A gelatinous blob is immune to Fear and Tests of Will.
- **Variable Size:** The blob begins as a Small Burst Template (Size +2). For each victim it absorbs, it grows 1", adding +1 Size (and Toughness), with no upper limit.

Ghost (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d12, Taunt d10, Stealth d12+4, Throwing d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Thrown objects (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Ethereal:** Ghosts are immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks.
- **Fear -2:** Ghosts cause Fear checks at -2 when they let themselves be seen.

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 wound. A raise on the Fighting roll causes the victim to suffer -2 on the Vigor check.

- **Materialize:** The ghost can become visible as more than a faint outline, typically appearing as it did at the moment of its death. This manifestation can cause a new Fear check the first time it happens in an encounter.
- **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 to activate this power.

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 counts as a Test of Wills, using opposed Spirit rolls; the ghost suffers a -2 penalty on this roll.
- **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 a barrier of salt, and a handful of salt thrown at it can disrupt it, if not necessarily cause permanent damage. Throwing a handful of salt at a ghost is an Agility Trick.

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Survival d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** 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:** Victims of a ghoul's claw attacks must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots.

Goblin

No one is sure of the origin of the hideous humanoids called goblins, only that they are a serious problem throughout many domains. 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 d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Infravision:** Goblins halve penalties for bad lighting against living targets (round down)
- **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 is Incapacitated from a goblin's bite attack, he suffers the effects of the Ugly Hindrance until fully healed.
- **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. Some corpse golems utilize animal parts.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Armor +1:** Hard skin and muscle.
- **Berserk:** Corpse golems have the Berserk Edge.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fear:** Characters seeing a corpse golem must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Slow:** Corpse golems have a Pace of 4 and roll a d4 for their running die.

Glass 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 d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Armor +3:** Glass golems are depicted wearing plate armor. Despite being glass, it is magically hardened and acts as metal armor.
- **Camouflage:** When guarding a temple, glass golems stand motionless in stained glass windows, appearing to be part of the scene. When in this environment, detecting them requires an opposed Notice roll at -4 against their Stealth.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Glass Shield:** Glass golems normally carry magically-hardened glass shields. +1 Parry; +2 Armor to ranged attacks that hit.
- **Glass Sword:** Str+d10. The edge is razor sharp and never dulls.
- **Size +1:** Glass golems average 8 feet tall.
- **Weakness (Blunt Weapons):** Glass golems take double 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+1

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 15 (5)

Gear: Great axe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, requires 2 hands)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +5:** Magically hardened metal.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Improved Sweep:** Metal golems may attack all adjacent creatures at no penalty.
- **Size +2:** Metal golems stand over 10 feet high and weigh 6,000 pounds.

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: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Magically hardened stone.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from called shots; Immune to poison and disease.
- **Fearless:** Golems are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Improved Arcane Resistance:** +4 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +4 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Size +1:** Stone golems stand over 8 feet high and weigh 4,000 pounds.
- **Stone Fists:** Str+d6.

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.

The statistics here are for a Medium swarm, but Large swarms have been known to form as well.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: 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.
- **Split:** When the swarm is first wounded, it splits into two Small Burst Template swarms. The Toughness of each swarm is lowered by -2 (to 4). When these swarms take a wound, they are dispersed and become ineffective.
- **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 (Wild Card)

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. If its steed is killed, it can summon a new one at sunset on the next night.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Riding d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

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. They cannot be begged, pleased, or bargained with.
- **Invulnerable:** The grim reaper is immune to attacks from non-magical weapons. If slain with magical weapons, the grim reaper is simply disorporated; he forms again at sunset the following night in the place he was defeated, ready to try again. The only way to permanently kill the grim reaper is to use the *banish* power on it (which inflicts one wound per casting as usual) or to kill him with a blessed weapon.
- **Reaping Strike:** As a Fighting attack, a grim reaper may claim the soul of a victim. Any target struck by this attack suffers no damage; instead, they make an opposed Spirit roll against the grim reaper. A failure renders the character Incapacitated, but no Incapacitation roll is necessary; the character is unconscious, alive but unresponsive until the reaper takes him away or until the reaper is defeated. If the reaper is defeated or driven away, the victim awakens 2d6 minutes later, Exhausted but otherwise unharmed. This attack can only be used against the reaper’s intended targets (so only once per combat, generally).
- **Scythe:** Str+d10.

- **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 (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Magic) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** -2

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: *armor* (iron skin), *boost/lower trait* (blessing/curse), *disguise* (magical disguise), *fear* (hideous visage), *obscure* (dark cloud), *puppet* (persuasive words), and *quickness* (superhuman reflexes).
- **Ugly:** Hags are hideous old-seeming crones; they suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma.

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.

- **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.
- **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.

- **Amphibious:** Sea hags can breathe water as easily as air. They have a swimming Pace of 8.
- **Evil Eye:** As an action, a sea hag can meet a living creature's gaze and burn out its life force. The targeted creature must attempt a Vigor roll or suffer a wound. This does not affect any creature that cannot see.
- **Fear -2:** Sea hags are more horrific in appearance than other hags.
- **Horribly Ugly:** Sea hags suffer -4 to Charisma 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: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Climb:** Head hunters can climb on any surface with a Pace of 4".
- **Fear -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, 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; treat the body as a separate creature with its current Vigor determining its Toughness, and 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). Each week the hunter inhabits a body, that body's Vigor die reduced by one; if the body's Vigor die drops below d4, it withers into a husk, and the head hunter must find a new source of food.
- **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 2d10 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 -2:** Head hunters are very small, roughly the size of a human head.
- **Small:** Attacks made against a head hunter suffer a -2 penalty due to the creature's tiny size.
- **Vulnerability:** Head hunters and their webs suffer double damage from fire, and their chance to catch fire is increased by 1 whenever they would have a chance to do so.

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: Fighting d6, Notice d10, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **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:** Flying Pace 6", Climb 0".

- **Powers:** Imps have 20 Power Points and know the following powers: *bolt* (blast of darkness), *detect/conceal arcana* (smell magic), *entangle* (animate small objects), *invisibility* (vanish from sight), *obscure* (mist), and *shape change* (tiny animals only).
- **Lending:** An imp can share its Power Points with its master. It cannot be forced to share its power.
- **Size -2:** Imps are the size of a cat or other small animal.
- **Small:** Attacks made against an imp suffer a -2 penalty due to the creature's tiny size.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Demons take normal damage from cold iron weapons.

Leanhaum-Shee (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d12+2, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +4

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 lose one die from his Vigor. When his Vigor drops below a d4, he dies. One die of Vigor is recovered each week if the leanhaum-shee's hold over the slave is broken.

- **Seductive:** A leanhaum-shee can use Persuasion to make Tests of Will.
- **Unearthly Beauty:** A leanhaum-shee is incredibly beautiful, and has +4 Charisma.

Lich (Wild Card)

Perhaps the most diabolical creature in the world is the lich—a necromancer so consumed with the black arts that he eventually becomes undead himself. The statistics here are a very basic starting point for a lich; any lich to appear in a campaign should be a fleshed-out character with his own goals and motivations, altering the statistics here as necessary.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (occult) d12+2, Notice d10, Spellcasting d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Death Touch:** Liches drain the lives of those around them with a touch. Instead of a normal attack, a lich may make a touch attack (which gains a +2 bonus as usual). Every raise on its Fighting roll automatically inflicts one wound to its target.
- **Necromancer:** Liches are necromancers first and foremost. The undead they raise through the *zombie* spell are permanent, so they are usually surrounded by 4d10 skeletons or zombies as they choose. Some liches have entire armies of the undead at their disposal.
- **Phylactery:** The process of becoming a lich involves the creation of a magical soul jar called a phylactery. This object can take nearly any form, but they are usually small, portable and finely crafted. If a lich is destroyed, his essence returns to his phylactery, where it rests and regenerates for 1d6 days. After this amount of time, the lich possesses a corpse or manifests a new body, fully healed and ready to exact vengeance. If a

lich's phylactery is destroyed, he is immediately aware of it. Once the phylactery is destroyed, a lich can be killed permanently; if the phylactery is destroyed while the lich is regenerating, the result is the same.

- **Spells:** Liches have 50 Power Points and know most every spell available.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer wound modifiers.

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. Wererats are almost never found alone, and they plague many large cities. Weresharks are also common in coastal regions.

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: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claw:** Str+d4.
- **Fear +2:** Seeing a wererat's hissing visage is worthy of a Fear check, albeit not a very strong one.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a wererat has a 50% of returning to life as one. (If they do so, they were not actually "dead," merely terribly wounded.) The character involuntarily transforms every new moon.
- **Invulnerability:** Wererats can only be Shaken by weapons that are not silver—not wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Wererats ignore lighting penalties for Dim and Dark Lighting.
- **Quick:** Wererats discard and redraw initiative cards of five or lower.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Wererats suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

Wereshark (Wild Card)

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 d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12, Notice d12+2, Stealth d6, Swimming d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Fear:** Anyone who sees the brutal attack of a wereshark must make a Fear check.
- **Feeding Frenzy:** Once there's a significant amount of blood in the water (usually one Wound), weresharks go into a feeding frenzy and add +2 to their attacks and damage for the rest of the fight.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a werecreature has a 50% chance of rising as a similar beast themselves. (If they do so, they were not actually "dead," merely terribly wounded.) The character involuntarily transforms every full moon.

- **Invulnerability:** Weresharks can only be Shaken by weapons that are not silver—not wounded.
- **Size +1:** Weresharks stand over seven feet tall.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Weresharks suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

Werewolf (Wild Card)

When a full moon emerges, humans infected with lycanthropy lose control and become snarling creatures bent on murder. Some embrace their cursed state and revel in the destruction they cause.

The creature described below is a werewolf in his cursed shape, a powerful man-beast capable of rending flesh with claws and unable to reason at more than a basic level.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Climb d8, Fighting d12+2, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Swimming d10, Stealth d10, Tracking d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Fear -2:** Werewolves chill the blood of all who see them. Creatures who fail this roll from observing a transformation are frozen for a round before the normal effects of the fear set in.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a werewolf has a 50% chance of rising as a werewolf themselves. (If they do so, they were not actually "dead," merely terribly wounded.) The character involuntarily transforms every full moon.
- **Invulnerability:** Werewolves can only be Shaken by weapons that are not silver—not wounded.
- **Infravision:** Werewolves can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Werewolves suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

Marikith

The marikith are hulking, 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: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Tracking 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 one foot diameter without slowing down. It can squeeze through any space down to four inches across at a Pace of 2".
- **Darkvision:** Marikith can see in total darkness. They ignore penalties for poor lighting, regardless of how dark it is.
- **Fearless:** Marikith are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Light Sensitive:** Marikith don't like light. They suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls in torchlight, and a -4 penalty to all rolls in direct sunlight or the equivalent brightness.
- **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, ivory skin, and an undeniable feral grace. Those not aware of their nature sometimes mistake them for vampires, and at least one culture knows them only as "vampyres."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Socialize d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +2

Special Abilities:

- **Attractive:** Moroi are good-looking by human standards, giving them +2 to Charisma.
- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Level Headed:** A moros draws two cards for initiative and acts on the better of them.
- **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 bitten by a moros for at least a Shaken result must attempt an opposed Spirit roll against the creature. If the victim fails this roll, he is treated as though he were under the effects of the *puppet* power with regard to the moros. This power has a duration equal to the attacker's Vigor die in 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 steeds 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 d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Fleet Footed:** Nightmares roll a d10 for their running die rather than d6.
- **Kick:** Str+d6.
- **Rider Empathy:** A nightmare's rider can spend his bennies for 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: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Persuasion d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2

Special Abilities:

- **Attractive:** In both their human and feline forms, paka are exceptionally good-looking, gaining a +2 bonus to Charisma.
- **Cat Magic:** A paka has 10 Power Points can knows the powers *beast friend* (cats only) and *healing* (lick wounds). These powers are activated with a Spirit roll.
- **Canine Antipathy:** Paka don't get along with dogs of any sort. They suffer a -4

penalty to Charisma when dealing with any canine creatures (including wolves and werewolves).

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Dodge:** Opponents suffer a -1 penalty on all attack rolls against a paka.
- **Fast:** Paka roll a d10 for their running die instead of a d6.
- **Mask:** Paka can choose to look human if they wish. A paka can change between its human and paka shapes as a free action once per round. They typically use this ability to go disguised among humans, the better to wreak havoc.
- **Pounce:** A paka can make a claw attack at the end of a run action with no penalty.

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: Notice d6, Swimming 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.
- **Climb:** A rat swarm can climb with a Pace of 4".
- **Infection:** Anyone Shaken or wounded by a rat swarm must make a Vigor roll or contract a long-term, debilitating disease.
- **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 Ravenloft.

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: Fighting d4, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Magic) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Spellcasting d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities:

- **Claw/Peck:** Str+d4.
- **Eye Peck:** If a ravenkin inflicts an Injury with its attack, that Injury is always to an eye.
- **Flight:** Ravenkin have a flying Pace of 8" and a Climb of 2".
- **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 two powers from the magic list and has 10 Power Points.

Reaver

Reavers are an evil aquatic race that terrorizes those who live on the western shores of the Core or those who travel on 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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Scaly hide.
- **Aquatic:** Pace 10.
- **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.

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 its 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: Climbing d12, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities:

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Human Form:** A red widow can assume the shape of a beautiful red-haired human woman in the prime of her life. In this shape, the red widow loses her bite, poison, spider climb, and webbing abilities, but gains +4 Charisma (as though she possessed the Attractive and Very Attractive Edges). Her Pace drops to 6 in this form as well.
- **Poison:** The bite of the red widow in her natural form causes instant paralysis for those who fail a Vigor roll at -4. This paralysis lasts for 2d6 minutes.
- **Spider Climb:** A red widow in her natural form can climb on virtually any surface without a roll.
- **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 3/6/12. Anything in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

Revenant (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

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; immune to disease and poison; no additional damage from called shots; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **Vengeful:** Revenants add +2 on all Trait and damage rolls against the object 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 have a tendency to go out of control, however, and can easily become a small town’s worst nightmare.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Gear: Pitchfork (Str+d6, Reach 1, requires 2 hands) or scythe (Str+d10, -1 Parry, requires 2 hands)

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; No additional damage from

called shots; Immune to poison and disease.

- **Fearless:** Scarecrows are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Scarecrows take double damage from fire.

Seducer (Wild Card)

Known to scholars as the succubus or incubus, a seducer is a type of demonic entity that feeds on the lust and life force of mortals. Succubi and incubi resemble beautiful females and males respectively. 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: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d12+2, Socialize d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +6

Special Abilities:

- **Bedroom Eyes:** A seducer's unnatural aura of charisma and seduction allows them to use Persuasion to make Tests of Will, opposed by the target's Spirit.
- **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.
- **Life Drain:** These foul creatures have more than one way to kill. If a seducer kisses a victim, they must make a Vigor roll opposed by the demon's Spirit or lose one die of Vigor. If Vigor drops to zero, the demon has sucked out the victim's life force, killing him. Assuming the victim survives, lost Vigor returns at the rate of one die per day.
- **Lure:** Sometimes good looks isn't enough to lure prey to their doom. These demons can use the *puppet* power using

their Spirit as their arcane skill. They have 20 Power Points for this purpose.

- **Very Attractive:** Seducers resemble stunningly beautiful people in their illusory form. They can assume the shape of any humanoid. Their illusory appearance gives them +6 Charisma. A *detect arcana* spell can penetrate the illusion.
- **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: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d12, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3; **Charisma:** -6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean

Gear: Faerie dagger (Str+d4)

Special Abilities:

- **Alternate Form:** As an 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.
- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Darkvision:** Powrie ignore attack penalties for poor lighting, including Pitch Darkness.
- **Dodge:** Opponents suffer a -1 penalty on attack rolls against a powrie.
- **Flight:** Pace 8", Climb 4".
- **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.
- **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.

- **Quick:** Powries discard and redraw initiative cards of five or less.
- **Shriek:** As an 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:** Powries stand only a little more than a foot tall.
- **Small:** Opponents suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against powries due to their small size.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a powrie is exposed to direct sunlight, he suffers 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 he suffers wounds from the damage.

Sidhe (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Magic) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Socialize d10, Spellcasting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8 (3);

Charisma: +4

Hindrances: Cautious

Edges: Very Attractive

Gear: Enchanted hunting bow (Range 12/24/48, 2d6, AP 1)



Special Abilities:

- **Alternate Form:** As an action, a sidhe can transform into a swan, nightingale, or other graceful bird. In this shape, the sidhe cannot use weapons or magic and loses access to their Armor bonus, but they gain Flight 10" (Climb 2").
- **Armor +3:** Enchanted clothing.
- **Charming Kiss:** A sidhe can use the *puppet* power on a mortal by kissing them. This requires a Touch attack (+2 bonus) and uses Spirit as the activation roll, but costs no Power Points.
- **Cursed Arrows:** A mortal who is dealt at least a Shaken result by an arrow from a sidhe's bow loses a Benny.
- **Darkvision:** Sidhe ignore attack penalties for poor lighting, including Pitch Darkness.
- **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.

- **Sorcery:** All sidhe are talented magic-users. A typical sidhe has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *deflection* (lucky misses), *invisibility* (fade from sight), *obscure* (fog cloud), and *speak language* (speak from the heart).
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a sidhe is exposed to direct sunlight, he suffers 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 he suffers wounds from the damage.

Sith (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Magic) d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Socialize d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5 (6 with rapier); **Toughness:** 7 (2); **Charisma:** +0

Hindrances: Mean

Edges: Attractive

Gear: Enchanted rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry, AP 1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Enchanted clothing
- **Darkvision:** Sith ignore attack penalties for poor lighting, including Pitch Darkness.
- **Fear:** A sith can inspire terror in mortals with his furious visage. As an action, a sith can cause a Fear check for any mortal that can see him. Whether they succeed or fail, this ability cannot work on the

same mortal again until 24 hours has passed.

- **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.
- **Shadow Form:** As an action, a sith can turn into a living shadow, able to pass through any gap and fly at a Pace of 6" (Climb 3"). 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.
- **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* (black bolt of doom), *dispel* (rend magic), *entangle* (skeletal arms), *quickness* (supernatural speed), *obscure* (cloud of darkness), and *zombie* (undead servant).
- **Very Quick:** A sith discards and redraws initiative cards of ten or less.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a sith is exposed to direct sunlight, he suffers 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 he suffers 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: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Alternate Form:** As an 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 opponents suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against him.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Confusing Howl:** A teg can loose a powerful howl that confuses mortals. The teg can take an action to make a Smarts trick against all mortal targets within a Medium Burst Template, centered on the teg.
- **Darkvision:** Tegs ignore attack penalties for poor lighting, including Pitch Darkness.
- **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 or wooden weapons, even if magical in nature.
- **Trickster's Blessing:** Tegs receive a +2 bonus on Trick maneuver rolls.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Each round a teg is exposed to direct sunlight, he suffers 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 he suffers wounds from the damage.

Shadow Unicorn (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d8

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9

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. This ability costs 1 Power Point per round. While this ability is active, a gored target also risks catching fire. A horn cut from a living shadow unicorn retains these powers, effectively becoming a short sword that can burst into flame.
- **Fleet Footed:** Shadow unicorns roll a d10 for their running die, rather than a d6.
- **Gore or Kick:** Str+d6.
- **Shadow Merge:** Shadow unicorns can meld with the shadows, becoming nearly invisible. They double the bonuses to Stealth for shadowy conditions.
- **Size +2:** 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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Varies

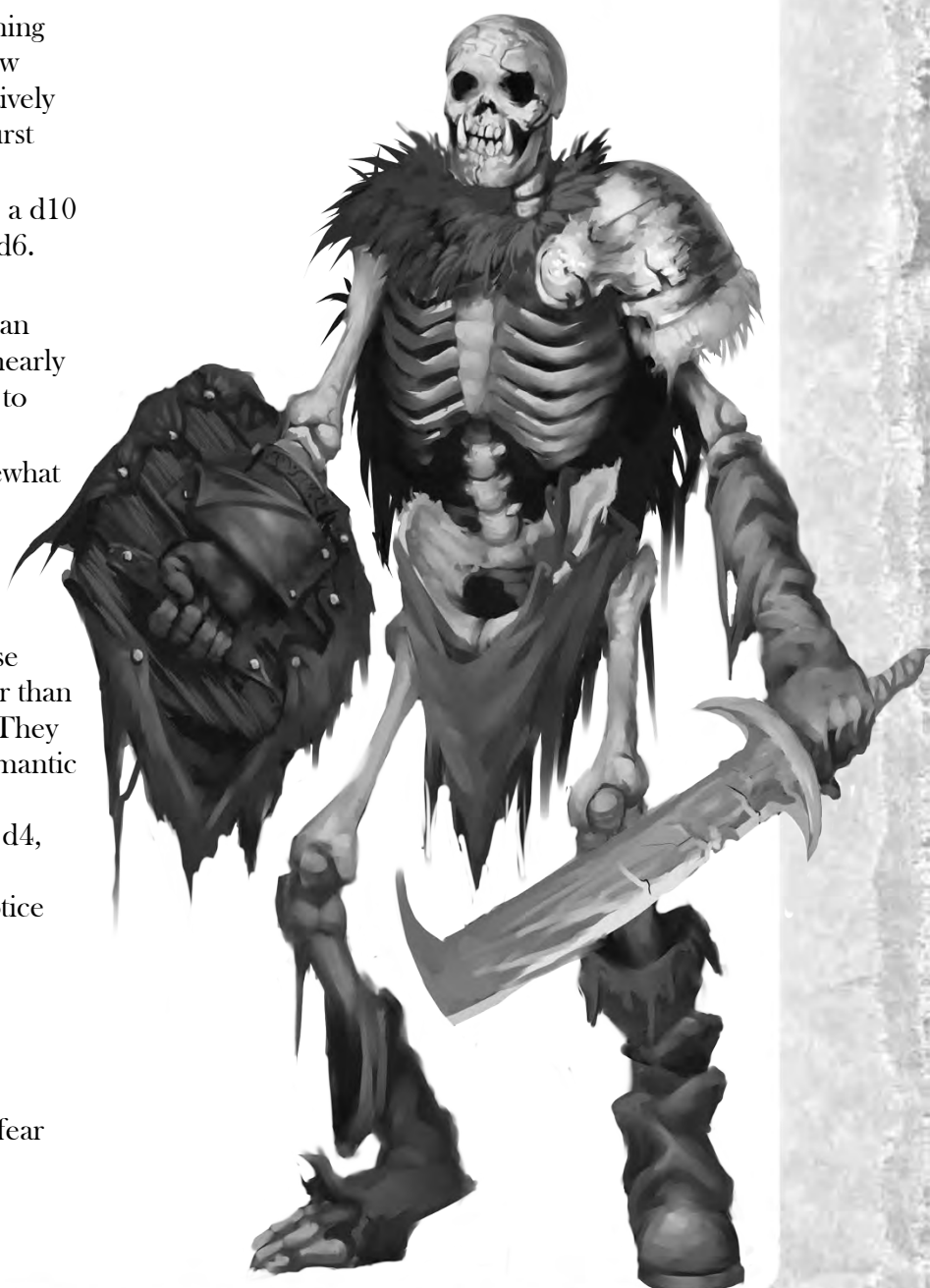
Special Abilities:

- **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; no additional damage from called shots.

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 struck by an attack that deals at least a Shaken result, all adjacent creatures are splattered with blood and must attempt a Vigor roll to avoid being Shaken as the blood burns their skin. A creature that suffers a wound from the creature's claws must make a Vigor roll or become diseased (long-term chronic, majorly debilitating). 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, activating it with a Shooting roll.
- **Size +2:** Giant skeletons are ten feet or more tall. A giant skeleton has a Toughness of 9.

Troll (Wild Card)

Sometimes called “dread trolls” to distinguish them from the far rarer green-skinned and slow-witted variety, 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, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1);

Charisma: -4

Special Abilities:

- **Alertness:** Trolls have keen senses and paranoid dispositions, giving them a +2 bonus on Notice rolls.
- **Armor +1:** Tough hide.
- **Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Fast Regeneration:** Trolls make a natural healing roll every round and gain a +2 bonus to recover from being Shaken. They cannot use this ability to heal wounds inflicted by fire, which must heal normally. Even if killed, unless its body is burned, a troll will recover from its wounds and rise again.
- **Just Awful:** Trolls are cruel and enjoy taunting others, as well as being physically hideous. They suffer a -4 penalty to Charisma.
- **Rend:** If a troll grapples a foe, it deals claw damage on a successful roll instead of just Strength.
- **Size +1:** Trolls normally stand about nine feet tall, massively built.
- **Strong Willed:** Trolls are stubborn and wickedly clever. They gain a +2 bonus on Tests of Will, whether they are initiating or defending, and +2 to resist Tricks.



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.

Vampire, Ancient (Wild Card)

Blood-drinkers of lore are more common in the world of Ravenloft than mortals would wish. The statistics below are for a vampire somewhat below the legendary Count Strahd, but far above those bloodsuckers fresh from the grave. The abilities listed below are standard—the GM may want to add other Edges as befits the vampire's previous lifestyle.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Swim d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Change Form:** As an action, a vampire can change into a wolf or bat with a Smarts roll at -2. Changing back into humanoid form requires no roll, just an action. Ancient vampires also have the ability to turn into mist. This requires an action and a Smarts roll at -2.
- **Charm:** Vampires can use the *puppet* power on anyone who finds them attractive using their Smarts as their arcane skill. They can cast and maintain the power indefinitely, but may only affect one target at a time.
- **Children of the Night:** Ancient vampires have the ability to summon and control wolves or rats. This requires an action and a Smarts roll at -2. If successful, 1d6 wolves or 1d6 swarms of rats come from the surrounding wilds in 1d6+2 rounds.
- **Claws and Fangs:** Str+d4.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Vampires may make two attacks per round without penalty.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be harmed by their Weaknesses. They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never wounded.
- **Level Headed:** Vampires act on the best of two cards.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by an ancient vampire's bite has a 50% chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days. The vampire 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); no wound penalties.
- **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 sprinkled with holy water is Fatigued. If immersed, he combusts as if it were direct sunlight (see below).
- **Weakness (Invitation Only):** Vampires cannot enter a private dwelling without being invited. They may enter public domains as they please.
- **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 it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampires catch fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust, or they are out of direct sunlight and spend an action putting out the blaze. Armor does not protect them from this damage.

Vampire, Young

Blood-drinking fiends are far too common for the tastes of most adventurers. This is a relatively young vampire minion.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Swim d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Claws and Fangs:** Str+d4.
- **Frenzy:** Vampires can make two attacks per round with a –2 penalty to each attack.
- **Level Headed:** Vampires act on the best of two cards.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be harmed by their Weaknesses. They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never wounded.
- **Sire:** Anyone slain by a young vampire's bite has a 50% chance of rising as a vampire themselves in 1d4 days.
- **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).
- **Weakness (Fire):** Vampires take normal damage from fire.
- **Weakness (Garlic):** Vampires suffer a –2 penalty to Fighting attacks against anyone who carries garlic.
- **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 sprinkled with holy water is Fatigued. If immersed, he combusts as if it were direct sunlight (see below).
- **Weakness (Invitation Only):** Vampires cannot enter a private dwelling without being invited. They may enter public domains as they please.
- **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 it fails, it disintegrates to dust.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Vampires catch fire if any part of their skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that they suffer 2d10 damage per round until they are dust, or they are out of direct sunlight and spend

an action putting out the blaze. Armor does not protect from this damage.

Aswang (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Blood Drain:** An aswang that scores a raise on its Fighting roll has grappled its victim and impaled him with her long, hollow tongue. Each round the victim remains impaled, on the aswang's action, he suffers a level of Fatigue until he dies. If the grapple is broken, the aswang's tongue withdraws. An ally may attempt to sever the tongue (Toughness 3), but a roll of 1 on the Fighting die hits the struggling victim instead.
- **Shadow Lick:** A person whose shadow is licked by an aswang is cursed. The aswang must make a touch attack (+2 bonus). On a success, the character immediately loses a benny; if the character has no more bennies when this ability is used, he cannot gain any more during the current session. 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.

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: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Bite/Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Breath Sense:** Hopping vampires cannot see using their dead eyes, but instead sense the breath of the living. A character who holds his breath in combat can make a Vigor roll at the start of each round. On a failure, the character breathes and the vampire can detect him normally. A character cannot hold his breath for more consecutive rounds than his Vigor die; each round after this, he takes a level of Fatigue until Incapacitated. While a character holds his breath, a hopping vampire cannot detect him at all.
- **Cure:** A victim of a hopping vampire bite who survives the attack isn't necessarily doomed. A traditional cure can be created by a scholar or priest familiar with the creature. The most important thing is that the victim not stop moving until the cure is taken; if he does, his blood congeals and there is no hope.
- **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, he must make a Vigor

roll or transform into a jiangshi himself after 1d4 days.

- **Slow:** Jiangshi roll a d4 for their running die instead of a d6.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to disease and poison; does not suffer wound modifiers.
- **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. 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.

Vargouille

Vargouilles are flying heads, giving 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: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 1; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities:

- **Attach:** With a raise on its Fighting roll, the vargouille has attached itself to the target's head, automatically grappling the foe. Anyone attacking a vargouille while it is attached hits the vargouille's victim instead with a roll of 1 on the attack die.
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing the creature must make a Fear check.
- **Flight:** Pace 10", Climb 2".

- **Infection:** Anyone slain by a vargouille has a 50% chance to turn into a new vargouille after 1d4 days.
- **Size -2:** A vargouille is a small target, being little more than a head with wings.
- **Small:** Attackers suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against a vargouille due to its tiny size.

Wendigo (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d12, Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Stealth d8, Survival d10, Swimming d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **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 in all but complete darkness, which they treat as Dim light.
- **Size +1:** Wendigos stand taller than a human.
- **Weakness (Fire):** Wendigos suffer double 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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1)

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:** Wights' claws allow them to drain the very life from those they harm. A character clawed by a wight for at least a shaken result 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).
- **Quick:** Wights redraw initiative cards of five or less.
- **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; no additional damage from called shots.

Barrow Wight (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** Ancient bronze breastplate.
- **Bony Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Bound:** A barrow dweller may not move more than 50' from its burial place.
- **Bronze Long Sword:** Str+d8.



- **Fear -2:** Anyone seeing the horror of a barrow wight must attempt a Fear check at -2.
- **Magic:** Barrow wights have 15 Power Points and know the following powers: *fear* (unearthly scream), *lower trait* (curse), *quickness* (supernatural reflexes), and *obscure* (mist).
- **Numbing Touch:** Any creature touched by a barrow wight (including being struck by its claw attack) must make a Vigor roll. A failure inflicts a -1 penalty to Agility rolls and Agility-based skill rolls; this penalty is cumulative, to a maximum of -4. The penalty disappears after a night's rest.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to disease and poison; does not suffer wound penalties.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Barrow wights are weakened by the sun. Each round in sunlight, the barrow dweller must make a Vigor roll or become Exhausted.

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 no 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: Notice d10, Shooting d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 3

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 to activate the power. A will o' wisp has 10 Power Points to use this power.

- **Size -2:** Wisps measure about a foot in diameter.
- **Small:** Attackers are -2 to attack wisps because of their size.
- **Spark:** A wisp's natural attack is a jolt of lightning. This acts as the *bolt* power, but the wisp uses Shooting to hit and costs no Power Points. The attack always deals 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 lose the Small ability; they are Size -1 and Toughness 4.
- **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 *bolt* rather than lightning.
- **Will o' Dawn:** This extremely rare variant is actually helpful to adventurers, leading them away from danger or toward hidden treasures. These creatures lack the spark ability, but they can use the *stun* power at will, using Spirit as their casting ability.

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, wolfwere carry no disease in their bite; one is either born a wolfwere, or one is not.

Wolfwere delight in trickery, deception, and music almost as much as they love to devour human flesh. Wolfwere 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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Socialize d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: 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 +2 Charisma (as the Attractive Edge). As a dire wolf, it uses the wolf’s Agility, Strength and Vigor, as well as its Pace and special abilities.
- **Fleet Footed:** Wolfweres roll a d10 running die instead of a d6.
- **Invulnerability:** Wolfweres can only be Shaken by weapons that are not cold iron—not wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Wolfwere eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Song of Weariness:** As an action, a wolfwere in human form can sing a beautiful melody that inspires exhaustion in all listeners within a Medium Burst Template (centered on the wolfwere). The wolfwere makes a Socialize 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.
- **Trickster Wolf:** Cunning and deceptive, wolfweres receive a +2 bonus on Trick attempts and Taunt rolls.

- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Wolfweres suffer normal damage from cold iron weapons.

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: 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; immune to poison and disease; no additional damage from called shots (except for called shots to the head).
- **Weakness (Head):** Called shots to a zombie’s head are +2 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. On a raise with a Fighting attack,

instead of dealing extra damage the zombie instead bites its foe, inflicting *zombie plague*; with two raises, it bites and gets the extra damage.

- **Zombie Plague:** A creature bitten by a zombie for Shaken or worse must attempt a Vigor check at -2, with a bonus equal to his current Armor rating in the bitten location. On a failure, the character contracts zombie plague, a short-term lethal disease. On a failure, the character dies in 2d6 rounds and rises again as a zombie 1d6 rounds after that. A success inflicts a level of Fatigue. A character who fails the roll can be saved with magical healing before the disease runs its course (-2 to the casting check), or with a Healing check at -4.



Zombie Lord (Wild Card)

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 liches, they are capable necromancers.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Magic) d8, Notice d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Death Touch:** The touch of a zombie lord can drain the life of its victims. Instead of a normal attack, a zombie lord may make a touch attack (with the usual +2 for a touch). 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 and 30 Power Points. Any zombies the lord creates are permanent.
- **Sire:** A victim killed by the zombie lord's death touch ability has a 50% chance of dying and returning to life as a zombie within 1d4 rounds.
- **Stench of Death:** Zombie lords reek of death. The first time a character gets within 3" of a zombie lord, he must make a Vigor roll or be Shaken. Whether he succeeds or fails, he is then immune to the stench for 24 hours.
- **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 head); suffers no wound modifiers.
- **Weakness (Head):** Called shots to a zombie's head are +2 damage.





Chapter 9:

The Doomed and the Damned

Enemies and Allies

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 (Wild Card)

How much is a man's life worth? An assassin has answered that question, 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: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Shooting d6, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: Alertness, First Strike, Thief

Gear: Leather armor (+1), 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 requires a Vigor roll at -2 to avoid suffering a wound, but some use even more lethal concoctions.

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: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1);

Charisma: -2

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Mean

Gear: Leather armor (+1), various weapons (typically short swords, Str+d6)

Bandit Chief (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8 (2);

Charisma: -2

Hindrances: Greedy (Major), Mean

Edges: Block, Combat Reflexes, Command

Gear: Chain mail (+2), various weapons (typically long sword, Str+d8)

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.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (pick one) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Knife (Str+d4) or improvised weapon (Str+d6, -1 attack and Parry)

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: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Loyal (to the cult)

Gear: Ceremonial robes, dagger (Str+d4).

Special Abilities:

- **Fanatical:** If a cultist is adjacent to a cult leader when the leader is hit by an attack, the follower may attempt an Agility roll. On a success, the cultist suffers the attacks instead of the cult leader.

Cult Leader (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Spellcasting d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Arrogant

Gear: Ceremonial robes, dagger (Str+d4), followers’ wealth

Special Abilities:

- **Black Magic:** A cult leader has 15 Power Points and knows the following powers: *bolt* (shadow blast), *fear* (aura of power), *obscure* (cloud of darkness), *puppet* (hypnotic voice), *smite* (black fire on blade), and *zombie* (special powder).

Deformed Minion

Every mad scientist or cult leader has a trusty sidekick, and for some reason they’re usually deformed in some way. Such minions are also typically fanatically loyal to their master.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Lame, Small

Special Abilities:

- **Fanatical:** If Deformed Minion sees his master take a wound, he goes berserk (as per the Berserk Edge).

Innocent Victim

Most horror tales need victims. They can be innocent bystanders, suffering from a curse or legacy that they didn’t earn, or poor fools who stumbled into something bigger than they can understand. Heroes should try to keep them from their fate... though it may not always be possible.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (trade or profession) d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Improvised weapon (Str+d4, -1 attack and Parry)

Knight (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Riding d8, Socialize d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9 (3);

Charisma: +2

Hindrances: Code of Honor

Edges: Command, Noble

Gear: Plate corselet (+3 torso), chain mail (+2 arms and legs), helmet (+3 head), long sword (Str+d8), medium shield (+1 Parry), war horse

Mad Scientist (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Knowledge (Weird Science) d12, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Delusion (Major: can create life)

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), New Power, Power Points, Scholar

Special Abilities:

- **Weird Science:** The typical mad scientist has two or three “gadgets” with 20 Power Points each. The most common powers known are *bolt* and *deflection*.

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Magic) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points, Wizard

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** A novice mage typically has 15 Power Points and knows *armor*, *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, and *light*.



Veteran Mage (Wild Card)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Magic) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points, Rapid Recharge, Wizard

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** Veteran mages have 25 Power Points and typically know many spells, including *armor*, *bolt*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *fly*, and *light*.

Monster Hunter (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (specific monster type) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)
Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal
Edges: Arcane Resistance, Brave, Quick
Gear: Leather armor (+1), long sword (Str+d8), crossbow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6, AP 2), 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 business people, 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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Socialize d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2
Edges: Command, Connections, Noble
Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry), pistol (Range 5/10/20, 2d6+1, AP 1)

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: Fighting d4, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Socialize d6, Streetwise d8
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2
Edges: Charismatic
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: Fighting d6, Healing d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Socialize d6, Spellcasting d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Hindrances: Vow (serve the faith)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Healer, New Power, Power Points

Gear: Chain mail (+2), mace (Str+d6), medium shield (+1 Parry), holy symbol

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** The typical spellcasting priest has 15 Power Points and knows *deflection*, *healing*, and *light*.

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: Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Psionics d10, Taunt d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Psychic), New Power, Power Points

Special Abilities:

- **Psionics:** The average psychic has 15 Power Points and knows *bolt* and *havoc*, and either *telekinesis* or *telepathy*.

Serial Killer (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10

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 expect. As long as no one is looking at him and he 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; does not suffer wound modifiers.

Weakness: The killer has a special weakness to something—possibly to the weapon that slayed him in life (if undead) or is tied to his unique history. A killer who suffers terrible burn scars might fear fire, while a killer who feared his domineering mother might recoil in terror from a person wearing her clothing. Exposure to this weakness should require a Spirit roll at -4 to avoid becoming Shaken, at the very least.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8; **Charisma:** – 6

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Mean, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Berserk, Brawny, First Strike, Frenzy, Harder to Kill, Improved Nerves of Steel, Sweep, Trademark Weapon

Gear: Trademark weapon (usually something like an axe or short sword, Str+d6).

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 d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Gear: Leather armor (+1), various weapons (often short swords, Str+d6)

Officer (Wild Card)

An experienced soldier commanding his own unit, such warriors typically carry the same weapons as their troops but are often mounted and better armored.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d10, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command

Gear: Chain mail (+2), helmet (+3), various weapons (often long sword, Str+d8)

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: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Repair d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: Thief

Gear: Leather armor (+1), short sword (Str+d6), throwing knives (Range 3/6/12, Str+d4)

Witch

A common term for any spellcaster who turns to the dark arts is “witch.” Some have made deals with dark forces while others are scholars of forbidden lore. Some individuals labeled as witches are merely nature-worshippers or hermit mages, however.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), New Power, Power Points

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** An average witch has 15 Power Points and knows *bolt*, *boost/lower trait*, *flight*, *puppet*, and *telekinesis*.

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 as well. “Good” doesn’t always mean “nice,” in truth.

Agatha Clairmont (Wild Card)

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 articular 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.

Though Agatha Clairmont is past her fortieth year, her decades of strict adherence to physical and spiritual excellence have kept her in peak condition. Better described as handsome than attractive, Agatha is tall and broad-shouldered, with a lean 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: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Socialize d6, Spellcasting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6 (7 with staff); **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Pacifist (Minor), Vow (Major: Celebrants of Humanity)

Edges: Adept, Arcane Background (Magic), Brawler, Bruiser, Counterattack, Extraction, Fleet Footed, Frenzy, Level Headed, Sweep

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, Reach 1, two hands)

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** As an alchemical philosopher of the Celebrants of Humanity, Agatha knows some basic magic. She has 15 Power Points and knows the following powers: *boost/lower trait*, *deflection*, and *healing*. She may cast any of these powers on herself as a free action once per round due to her Adept Edge.

Alanik Ray (Wild Card)

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 dedicated 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: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d12, Knowledge (Forensic Science) d10, Knowledge (Languages) d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Repair d10,

Riding d8, Shooting d10, Socialize d8, Stealth d10, Streetwise d12, Swimming d8, Taunt d10, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2

Hindrances: Arrogant, Enemy (several), Habit (Minor: addicted to luxury)

Edges: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Charismatic, Connections, Extraction, Investigator, Jack of All Trades, Quick, Quick Draw, Thief

Gear: Goldenfang (magical dagger, Str+d4, AP 2), pistol (Range 5/10/20, 2d6+1, AP 1), lockpicks, disguise kit

Special Abilities:

- **Low Light Vision:** Alanik Ray can see in near-darkness, allowing him to ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Vulnerability:** Like all elves, Alanik Ray has a severe allergy to iron. He suffers +2 damage from any weapon primarily made of iron or steel.

George Weathermay (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d10, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7 (1);

Charisma: -2

Hindrances: Enemy (many), Heroic, Outsider, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Alertness, Ambidextrous, Arcane Resistance, Beast Bond, Beast Master, Brave, Combat Reflexes, Command, Danger Sense, Extraction, Florentine, Frenzy, Level Headed, Marksman, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Tactician, Two-Fisted

Gear: Gossamer (magical long sword, Str+d8, inflicts normal damage to incorporeal foes), short sword (Str+d6), silver dagger (Str+d4), longbow (Range 15/30/30, 2d6), holy symbol, holy water, hunting hounds, war horse

Ivan Dragonov (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d10, Fighting d12, Healing d6, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Lycanthropes) d10, Notice d10, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10, Survival d12, Swimming d10, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 7

Hindrances: Death Wish, Heroic, Vengeful (Minor)

Edges: Alertness, Berserk, Block, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Counterattack, Danger Sense, Fast Healer, First Strike, Hard to Kill, Improved Frenzy, Improved Nerves of Steel, Monster Hunter (Lycanthropes), Sweep, Woodsman

Gear: Silver great axe (Str+d10, AP 1, Parry - 1, two hands), crossbow (Range 15/30/60, 2d6, AP 2), silver bolts, wolf's-bane extract

Special Abilities:

- **Cursed Lycanthrope:** When Ivan Dragonov's Berserk Edge is triggered, he actually transforms into a monstrous wolf-man. He receives the usual benefits of this form, but also attacks with a natural bite instead of his axe. His bite deals Str+d6 damage, and anyone killed with this attack has a 50% chance of instead surviving but being infected with lycanthropy. In this form, he is also immune to non-magical weapon attacks; he can be Shaken by such attacks but not wounded. When he comes out of his Berserk state, he receives an immediate natural healing roll.

Rudolph van Richten (Wild Card)

Few adventurers are as well known in the Land of Mists as Rudolph van Richten. He has been 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 him 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: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Languages) d8, Knowledge (Magic) d10, Knowledge (Occult) d10, Knowledge (various monsters) d12, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Repair d10, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Socialize d6, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Taunt d10, Throwing d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +2

Hindrances: Cautious, Elderly, Heroic

Edges: Alertness, Block, Charismatic, Command, Command Presence, Connections, Danger Sense, Dodge, Healer, Hold the Line, Improved Level Headed, Improvisational Fighter, Jack of All Trades, Linguist, Monster Hunter (many), Reputation, Scholar

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 (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Healing d10, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Religion) d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Riding d6, Socialize d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6; **Charisma:** +4

Hindrances: Pacifist (Major), Vow (Minor: serve the Church of Ezra)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Brave, Chosen of Ezra, Healer, Level Headed, New Power, Power Points, Very Attractive

Gear: Staff (Str+d4, +1 Parry, two hands), prayer book, holy symbol

Special Abilities:

- **Spells:** Tara Kolyana has 20 Power Points. She knows the following powers: *banish, boost/lower trait, deflection, detect/conceal arcana, dispel, greater healing, healing, light/obscure, stun, and succor.*

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 (Wild Card)

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 d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Swimming d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2);

Charisma: -4

Hindrances: Mean, Ugly

Special Abilities:

- **Arcane Resistance:** +2 Armor against damage-causing arcane powers and +2 on trait rolls to resist opposed powers.
- **Armor +2:** Reinforced bones and tough skin.
- **Berserk:** Adam has the Berserk Edge.
- **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; no additional damage from called shots; immune to poison and disease. As a living construct, Adam *does* suffer wound penalties.
- **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.
- **Fleet Footed:** Adam has a Pace of 8 and a d10 running die.
- **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.
- **Sweep:** Adam can attack all adjacent foes by taking a -2 on his Fighting roll.

Dominic d'Honaire (Wild Card)

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 crimelord 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: Fighting d4, Intimidation d10, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Politics) d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d12, Psionics d10, Shooting d6, Socialize d12, Streetwise d10, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5; **Charisma:** +4 to -4 (see below)

Hindrances: Cautious

Edges: Arcane Background (Psychic), Charismatic, Connections, Mentalist, Mindbender, Noble, New Power, Power Points, Strong Willed

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 Charisma bonus changes to a penalty when dealing with 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 succeeds in resisting one of Dominic's powers must attempt a Notice roll at -4; a failed roll means that they do not recognize the origin of the effect, while a critical failure means that

they do not know (or remember) that anything happened to them at all. 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.

- **Psychic:** Dominic is a powerful psychic, though he has never trained his powers much outside of his primary focus—mental manipulation. Dominic has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *confusion*, *mind reading*, *puppet*, and *slumber*.



Harkon Lukas (Wild Card)

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 werewolf, 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: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Music) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Socialize d12, Stealth d10, Streetwise d10, Survival d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7; **Charisma:** +6 (+2 when Bloodthirsty is revealed)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Overconfident
Edges: Charismatic, Fatale, Reputation, Quick, Very Attractive

Gear: Rapier (Str+d4, +1 Parry)

Special Abilities:

- **Change Shape:** Lukas can assume three different shapes as an action. His most common one 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 the **Bite**, **Go for the Throat**, and **Fleet-Footed** abilities of a dire wolf, but uses his own Attributes. He cannot use gear or most social skills (other than Intimidation) as a wolf.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Grandfather Wolf:** Lukas can use the *beast friend* power on wolves and dire wolves at will, using Socialize as his casting skill with no Power Point cost.
- **Invulnerability:** Lukas can only be Shaken by weapons that are not cold iron—not wounded.
- **Low Light Vision:** Werewolf eyes are accustomed to the dark of night. Lukas ignores attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Song of Weariness:** As an action in human form, Lukas can sing a beautiful melody that inspires exhaustion in all

listeners within a Medium Burst Template (centered on him). The werewolf makes a Socialize 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.

- **Trickster Wolf:** Cunning and deceptive, werewolves receive a +2 bonus on Trick attempts and Taunt rolls.
- **Weakness (Cold Iron):** Lukas suffers normal damage from cold iron weapons.

Gabrielle Aderre (Wild Card)

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 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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Magic) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Socialize d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Taunt d10, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** ?; **Toughness:** ?; **Charisma:** +6

Hindrances: Stubborn, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Charismatic, Dart Cloud, Fatale, Luck, New Power, Power Points, Quick Draw, 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:** Gabrielle is the darklord of Invidia. While she 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.
- **Powers:** Gabrielle is a talented sorceress and diviner. She has 20 Power Points and knows the following powers: *blind*, *boost/lower trait*, *deflection*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *divination*, *fear*, *puppet*, and *stun*.

Hazlik, the Red Wizard (Wild Card)

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 (d10 with ritual magic)

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d10, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Magic) d12, Notice d6, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d6
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5 (11 with ritual magic); **Charisma:** -2

Hindrances: Elderly, Mean, Nightmares
Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Archmage, Metamagic (Fire), New Power, Power Points, Ritualist, 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.
- **Ritual Magic:** Hazlik regularly protects himself with powerful rituals that give him long-lasting magical benefits. He generally has the following spells active on his person at any given time through ritual magic: *armor* (+4 Armor), *deflection* (-4 to incoming attacks), *detect arcana*, and *boost Vigor* (Vigor d10, Toughness 7).
- **Spells:** Hazlik is an extremely powerful wizard. He has 30 Power Points and knows many spells, including the following: *armor*, *barrier*, *blast*, *bolt*, *boost/lower trait*, *burst*, *damage field*, *deflection*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *environmental protection*, *fly*, *stun*, *summon ally*, and *teleport*.

Ivana Boritsi (Wild Card)

Ivana is a classical 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 really 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 in spite of her vicious mother's attempts to turn her into a cold-blooded courtier like herself. When Ivana's mother seduced Ivana's fiancée, 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: Fighting d4, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d12, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Socialize d12, Streetwise d8, Taunt d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7; **Charisma:** +6

Hindrances: Mean, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Charismatic, Connections, Fatale, Noble, Reputation, Very Attractive

Gear: Gear

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 Venomous (+0) poison. Ivana can keep the borders closed for days at a time with little effort, but rarely does so.

- **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 or held foe, forcing them to make a Vigor roll at -4 or die in 2d6 rounds. A success inflicts 1 wound and Exhaustion, while a raise on the roll allows the victim to ignore the wound. Anyone who engages in intimate contact with Ivana suffers this effect as well.

Jacqueline Montarri (Wild Card)

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 of 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 d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Repair d8, Riding d6, Socialize d6, Stealth d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1);

Charisma: +2

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Quirk (Vain), Ruthless

Edges: Acrobat, Assassin, Attractive, Improved Level Headed, Thief

Gear: Headsman's sword (Str+d6+2, AP 2, two hands), concealed leather armor (+1)

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 by an active opponent 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 moments 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.
- **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 better, and she's always on the lookout for particularly pretty women to add to her collection...

The Living Brain (Wild Card)

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 d4

Skills: Intimidation d10, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Psionics d12+1, Socialize d10, Streetwise d12, Taunt d10

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 0; **Toughness:** 2

Hindrances: Cautious, Ruthless

Edges: Arcane Background (Psychic), Mentalist, Mindbender, New Power, Power Points, Rapid Recharge

Special Abilities:

- **Brain in a Jar:** The Living Brain is literally just a brain in a 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 ability or skill roll.
- **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* (mind bolt variant), *confusion*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *fear*, *mind reading*, *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 Incapacitated 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, the Duration becomes 1 day (1/day). The Brain can have any number of thralls, but usually has no more than ten to fifteen due to his cautious nature since he dislikes being at less than half of his Power Points at any given time.

Malken (Wild Card)

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 teenaged 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 changes shape, his old master takes over. 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: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Healing d8, Intimidation d10, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Alchemy) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Repair d8, Shooting d8, Socialize d8, Stealth d10, Streetwise d12, Taunt d10, Throwing d6

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (1);

Charisma: -4

Hindrances: Lame, Mean, Ugly

Edges: Brawler, Brawny, Connections, Danger Sense, Improved Level Headed, Investigator, Jack of All Trades, Strong Willed, Thief

Gear: Concealed leather armor (+1, torso), 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.
- **Immunity:** Malken is immune to poison and alchemical concoctions.

Natalia Uhorishkova (Wild Card)

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: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Stealth d10, Streetwise d8, Survival d10, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7; **Charisma:** +4 (+0 when Bloodthirsty is revealed)

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Overconfident

Edges: Alertness, Assassin, Fatale, Frenzy, Very Attractive

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d8.
- **Fear -2:** Werewolves chill the blood of all who see them. Creatures who fail this roll from observing a transformation are frozen for a round before the normal effects of the fear set in.
- **Infection:** Anyone slain by Natalia's natural attacks has a 50% chance of rising as a werewolf themselves. (If they do so, they were not actually "dead," merely terribly wounded.) 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.



- **Invulnerability:** Werewolves can only be Shaken by weapons that are not silver—not wounded.
- **Infravision:** Werewolves can see heat and halve penalties for bad lighting when attacking living targets.
- **Weakness (Silver):** Werewolves suffer normal damage from silver weapons.

Strahd von Zarovich (Wild Card)

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.

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+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d12, Investigation d8, Knowledge (History) d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Spellcasting d10, Socialize d8, Stealth d10, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10; **Charisma:** +6

Hindrances: Arrogant, Vow (Protect and defend Barovia)

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic), Attractive, Charismatic, Improved Dodge, Improved Frenzy, Level Headed, Necromancer, New Power, Noble, Power Points, Quick, Rapid Recharge, Wizard

Special Abilities:

- **Change Form:** As an action, Strahd can change into a wolf, a bat, or a cloud of mist with a Smarts roll. Changing back into human form requires no roll, just an action. While in mist form, Strahd cannot attack but is immune to all physical weapons.
- **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 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.
- **Claws and Fangs:** Str+d4.
- **Invulnerability:** Vampires can only be harmed by their Weaknesses. They may be Shaken by other attacks, but never wounded.
- **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*, *boost/lower trait*, *detect/conceal arcana*, *dispel*, *environmental protection*, *fear*, *light/obscure*, *smite*, *summon ally*, and *zombie*. Where possible, his powers use the Death trapping; for example, his summon spells only call undead, while his *environmental protection* can only be used to shield himself from sunlight.
- **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); no wound penalties.
- **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 (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 requires at least a day to recover. He can only be permanently killed by being found in his crypt, beheaded, and burned to ashes.
- **Weakness (Sunlight):** Strahd caught fire if any part of his skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After that he suffers 2d6 damage per round until he is dust, or out of direct sunlight and spends an action putting out the blaze. Armor does not protect him from this damage.

Victor Mordenheim (Wild Card)

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: Artifice d12+2, Fighting d4, Healing d12+2, Knowledge (Sciences) d12, Notice d10, Repair d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5

Hindrances: Arrogant, Ruthless

Edges: Arcane Background (Weird Science), Gadgeteer, Mechanical Aptitude, New Power, Power Points

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 or wounded, the other must immediately make a Vigor check or be Shaken as well.
- **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’s devices have 20

Power Points, and he knows the following powers: *bolt*, *burst*, and *deflection*. He can have virtually any power available as needed thanks to his Gadgeteer Edge.

Vlad Drakov (Wild Card)

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 on the basis of 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 verges on arrogance. 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: Climbing d10, Fighting d12+1, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Battle) d12, Notice d10, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Survival d8, Swimming d10, Taunt d8, Throwing d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 11 (3);

Charisma: +2 (-2 if Bloodthirsty is revealed)



Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty

Edges: Brave, Brawler, Brawny, Charismatic, Command, Commanding Presence, Fervor, Hold the Line, Improved Arcane Resistance, Improved Block, Improved Counterattack, Improved First Strike, Improved Frenzy, Improved Nerves of Steel, Improved Sweep, Inspire, No Mercy, Quick Draw, Strong Willed

Gear: Plate armor (+3), long sword (Str+d8), 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.

Wilfred Godefroy (Wild Card)

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: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12+2, Notice d12, Taunt d10, Stealth d12+4, Throwing d12

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Gear: Thrown objects (Str+d4)

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:** Ghosts are immaterial and can only be harmed by magical attacks.
- **Fear -2:** Ghosts cause Fear checks at -2 when they let themselves be seen.
- **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 deals Str+d12 damage when attacking other ethereal beings. Any ghosts he beats to “death” instead becomes his slave until the following sunrise, though he can permanently destroy ghosts in this manner too.
- **Materialize:** Wilfred can make himself visible to mortals, though he rarely does so outside of Gryphon Hill. This manifestation can cause a new Fear check the first time it happens in an encounter.
- **Salt:** The purifying power of salt can hold back a ghost or even damage it. Wilfred cannot cross a barrier of salt, and a handful of salt thrown at him can disrupt him, if not necessarily cause permanent damage. Throwing a handful of salt at a ghost is an Agility Trick.

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