

THE UNDEAD SEA SCROLLS

A NETBOOK FOR THE RAVENLOFT
AND MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH
CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

The Undead Sea Scrolls

*3rd Edition –
2003*

Some recently unearthed from the
Shadow Rift,
some stolen in Azalin's vault ...

A Ravenloft Netbook

The Undead Sea Scrolls

The Undead Sea Scrolls 2003

Edited by the Fraternity of Shadows:

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Important copyright text on page v !

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Dear Fellows of the Fraternity,

Again we have the pleasure of bringing to your attention the finest academic and artistic efforts of our fellow-members of the Fraternity of Shadows. Reports from across the Core and even more remote outposts are here compiled for the benefit of those who would get a better acquaintance with the World of Shadow surrounding us.

The year has been an eventful one; to mention only one occurrence of importance, the destruction of that beloved gathering place in Vallaki where so many of the Fraternity gathered to discuss issues great and small still resonates among the academic community of the Core. Nevertheless, we press forward undaunted, in the assurance that books and libraries may perish, but Knowledge and Truth are indestructible.

Without further ado, we give you the Undead Sea Scrolls.

Most sincerely,

Grabek Krakul

Kristoff Lutemmi

Professor Erik van Rijn

Professor Viktor Hazan

Ambrose Scully

Dr. Anthony Reuland



The Undead Sea Scrolls

What is the USS ?

The Undead Sea Scrolls (USS) is a compilation of NPCs, monsters, places, gaming techniques and player character and Dungeon Master aids, based on the Ravenloft campaign setting but usable in any campaign. All articles in this year's edition use Dungeons and Dragons 3rd edition rules and the Ravenloft Campaign Setting for Third Edition.

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If you have written something about Ravenloft (domain, NPC or secret society, adventure, rules, story, poem, drawing, whatever !), why not publish it in next year's USS ?

If you would like to submit a Ravenloft-based article to a future version of the USS, please read our article guidelines on our 'Fraternity of Shadows netbook project' board at www.FraternityOfShadows.com, and then submit your article at submission@FraternityOfShadows.com.

The next release of the yearly USS, 2004 edition, is planned for around January 20th, 2005.

Other excellent Ravenloft netbooks can be found at www.kargatane.com, including the famed Book of S- series, and at <http://www.geocities.com/midwayhaven/>

We remain yours in darkness,

The Fraternity of Shadows

Eddy Brennan, Dion Fernandez, Nathan Okerlund, Joel Paquin,
Stephen C. Sutton, Jason True

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Thanks to Jean-Guy M. again, for major major help again on fine tuning the document presentation and for converting the Word document to a PDF document.



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Running the Place

Scientiae Arcanum

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THE BLACK ARTS

THE OTHER WITCHES OF RAVENLOFT

By: Eddy Brennan (The
Lost Hedgewitch)

specializing in the witch spells found in the
Wizard Spell Compendiums.

"But the hag replied..
'This girl that chides
shall soon be plagued
with age as I' "

Cradle of Filth – Beneath the Howling Stars

"But there are many
companions in my infinite
kingdom,
Through magick and
sorcery I've found my
freedom..."

Ancient – Lilith's Embrace

This article introduces
the black witch in the
form of a new prestige
class

The concept of witches in Ravenloft has been around for many years. Hints into the darker macabre aspects of the vistani, the existence of the witches of Hala, possibly even the elusive from the mysterious skurra of Carnival to the Hags of Tepest. Whilst all of these have, at some point or other been discussed or detailed to various degrees, one form of witch has suffered only brief mentions in previous works for Ravenloft (canon or not). These elusive, strange and occult creatures are known collectively as Sorcerous Witches. These obscure spell casters were mentioned in passing in *Van Richten's Guide to Witches* but were largely ignored for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd Edition* for being based around characters that adopted the Witch kit found in the *Complete Wizard's Handbook* or

This article introduces the black witch (replacing the sorcerous witch) to *Ravenloft 3rd Edition* in the form of a new prestige class that may be taken by player characters and non-player characters alike, although the class is better suited to non-player characters over player characters given the life and morals of these darkened individuals. Dungeon Masters that allow a player to take this class unto a character she controls should carefully monitor the character as it progresses. The class can darken and twist even the kindest of hearts in time, rendering the character down the dark path to oblivion, or worse.

Black Witch

The black witch (or warlock, if male) walks a traitorous path through life as she is consumed by a lust for magickal and occult knowledge and wisdom. She shuns others, often works in league with questionable allies, and use dubious sources of information to gain access to what she seeks.

Most black witches come to be what they are through accidents in research; becoming influenced by another outside source, entering contact with an extraplanar entity, or possible just waking up to their talents in the black arts. Many are not spell casters previous to awakening to the black arts, but many were once members of arcane cults or divine groups, including the churches of Hala and Ezra. Anyone may awaken or fall to the influence of another and be drawn into the promises the black arts give. Most that hear this calling may have the strength to fight it off, but some are tempted and eventually lose themselves to the promises they are made. Some lose long battles against the black arts and fall from grace. No one is above the temptations offered by the

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entities, hags, black withes or other sources the black arts are taught through.

Renown black witches are significantly rare in the dread realms, but the number of those in hiding or awaiting discovery may alarm the witches of Hala, who wage a dangerous war against these cursed men and women that tarnish their name.

Like the witches of Hala, black witches do not advertise their true nature, even going so far as to hide it from other black witches until they are certain they are able to trust the other. Even then, this trust is fragile and a slight discrepancy against the other may cause this trust to break and start a rivalry between the pair. Black witches have little trust for others, preferring to fake their way through life as whatever they were before taking up the class or as sorcerers, if they had no magical prowess before becoming what they are.

Race: Human, Half-Elf, Elf, Caliban, and Half Vistani.

Alignment: Any

Hit Dice: d6

Requirements: To qualify to become a Black Witch (Blw), a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +3

Fort Save Bonus: +4

Will Save Bonus: +8

Alchemy: 4 ranks

Bluff: 4 ranks

Diplomacy: 2 ranks

Gather Information: 4 ranks

Intimidate: 4 ranks

Knowledge (religion): 4 ranks

Wilderness Lore: 2 ranks

Feats: Alertness, Jaded, Open Mind.

Special: To become a black witch, the character must be able to cast either arcane or divine spells of 2nd level or higher. Non-spell casters may adopt this class, but only if they are instructed for a year by a hag, another black witch, through the reading of forbidden lore, or by being in contact with an extraplanar entity.

Class Skills The black witch's class skills (and key abilities for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (divine) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken separately) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int), Spellcraft (Int), Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class features:

All of the following are class features of the Black Witch prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The black witch is proficient in the use of only the club, dagger, dart, quarterstaff, sickle and sling; if previously proficient in the use of other weapons she ignores these previous weapon proficiencies, but may buy them back in time at the cost of 500xp for each proficiency feat (as if sacrificing part of her power to gain better weapon mastery). Black witches are not proficient in any form of armor or shield. Note that armor check penalties for any armor heavier than leather armor apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5lb of armor and equipment carried.

Spells: Upon becoming a black witch, the character continues to gain spells, as she would have done in her previous spell casting class. However, if the black witch was drawn from a class that did not allow spell casting as one of its class abilities, she may now develop spells as a sorcerer with a caster level equal to her black witch class level (so as a level 1 black witch, she has the spell casting abilities of a level 1 sorcerer).

Black witches have no preferences in their choice of spells, but many come to favor spells

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of enchantment, necromancy and transmutation later in their careers.

Summon Familiar: On taking the black witch prestige class, the character is able to summon a familiar in the same way as a wizard and sorcerer. These familiars are always dread familiars and the Dispassionate Familiar feat may not be taken to counteract this.

Mislead: The black witch, on becoming 2nd level in the class gains a +2 bonus to all her Bluff, Innuendo and Intimidate skill checks. If for any reason, a circumstance would cause her to lose her ability score modifiers (if normally positive) in these skills, this bonus is also lost until her proper ability scores are restored.

Black Art: At 4th level, the black witch may choose any single spell she is able to cast. From that point on, she may cast that spell as if, she is another two caster levels higher. At 8th level, the black witch chooses another spell as she gains this ability again.

Strong Mind: At 5th level, the black witch finds that her mind is becoming stronger and more resilient to outside influences. She gains a +4 bonus to all saving throws to avoid any form of mind influencing effect that may affect her.

Bonus Feat: At 3rd, 6th and 9th level, the black witch gains a metamagic feat as if she were a wizard.

Beguile: At 7th level, the black witch has gained and researched enough information, or fallen far enough under the influence of the dark forces with which she toys, for her gaze to have become effected. Up to three times each day, the black witch may concentrate on a single humanoid, monstrous humanoid, shapechanger or giant up to 60 ft. away. The target is granted a Will save (DC 10 + black witch level + black witch Cha modifier) to avoid being treated as charmed. If the attempt to charm is done so in conversation with the target, the black witch may add her Mislead bonus to the DC of the Will save. The charm effect lasts for 24 hours, until the black witch chooses to end the effect or she charms another target whichever is soonest.

Hex: At 10th level, the black witch gains the Evil Eye. Through this ability she may cast curses of the embarrassing, frustrating, or troublesome strength upon any target in her line of sight up to once per day. If this ability is ever used to deliver a curse that is unjustified, the black witch must make a powers check (assault, unprovoked).

Temptation: Once a black witch begins to grow in power and recognize the hidden forces within her field, these forces begin to tempt her mind and soul. These forces force the black witch into making her first powers check on reaching 4th level. Each time the black witch obtains a new level in this class, she will be forced to make another powers check. These powers checks have a chance of failure equal to the black witch's class level. Each time the black witch fails one of these checks she gains a 'gift' from the Dark Powers and has her alignment step one place towards chaotic evil, starting with the ethical axis of her alignment (law, neutral and chaos). If the black witch becomes chaotic evil aligned, she falls into the control of the Dungeon Master, becoming a non-player character and a powerful potential villain for them to face in the future.

Though a few black witches remain true to themselves and stave off the temptations that dog them, not many have the willpower to do so. Any black witch that attains 10th level without failing a powers check from temptation gains an additional Black Art.

Reputation: As a black witch continues on her path, she starts to draw unwanted attention to herself. Black witches tread on many fingers and double cross dozens in their pursuit of knowledge in the black arts. The represent this reputation, for black witch may only spend a week in a settlement the size of a small village or larger without risk of coming to the attention of a rival or enemy. For each day after this, the Dungeon Master secretly rolls a check (1% per 500 people in the settlement + 2% per day) at the end of each day the black witch remains in the settlement. If discovered, the result may be any number of things from

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being run out of town, being arrested and tried for various crimes (real and imaginary) or simply being brought to immediate justice at the hands of the rival.

The Black Witch

Class Level	Base Bonus	Atk. Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+1	+0	+2	Summon Familiar
2	+0	+1	+0	+2	Mislead
3	+1	+2	+1	+3	Bonus Feat
4	+1	+2	+1	+3	Black Art, Temptation
5	+1	+2	+2	+4	Strong Mind, Reputation
6	+2	+3	+2	+4	Bonus Feat
7	+2	+3	+2	+5	Beguile
8	+2	+3	+3	+5	Black Art
9	+3	+4	+3	+6	Bonus Feat
10	+3	+4	+3	+7	Hex



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DEMENTED DREAMSCAPES

AN INTRIGNING PROBE OF MAD PEOPLE'S DREAMS

By: Leyshon Campbell

While Dr. Illhousen's Journal gave great detail of the dreamscapes of the "Disturbed"--those afflicted by the Nightmare Court--he made no mention of the dreamscapes of the "Demented"--those with traditional organic madnnesses. Don't be fooled into believing this means these dreams are safe....

This article uses the Lucid Dreaming skill found in the Manual of the Planes, but it is also compatible with the Nightmare Lands boxed set. DM's can substitute the rules for dream-travel and dreamscapes found in Book 2 of the Nightmare Lands by replacing references to Lucid Dreaming with the appropriate Dream-Power.

During my reflections on the moments that brought me to study madness and mental disease, one event stands out that I have never shared till this day. During my youth as a clerk in the Egertan dockyards, I saw boatmen of all types, and thought I knew all their habits. Drinking and brawling were as natural as breathing to these river-gypsies, and even knife-fights were not uncommon between longtime

rivals. Occasionally a man was found murdered or simply never seen again, and tongues wagged up and down both shores about who was responsible. Investigations were rare, as the sailors preferred their own justice and the constables had too much to do as it was. The river life was dangerous enough that many constables and not a few sailors were inclined to let the pitiless water judge men for their crimes.

In a profession so disposed to violent death, it is rare to see men terribly aggrieved over the passing of one person or another, but such was the case when I arrived to record unloadings at the arrival home of the Red Stallion riverboat. The crew had included a young man just learning his ropes who remained true to his homespun upbringing despite the worst the crew could do to persuade him otherwise. Braving insults, threats, sneers, and bribes from fellow mates, he avoided the evils his parents had warned him of and sent most of his money home to them as often as he could. Eventually his devotion to these distant parents won him the grudging respect of the crew, and when the young man was swept overboard, another boatman didn't hesitate to jump and to rescue him.

Stunned as he was by the jib boom's blow, the boy was swallowing water before he could fully react, and his swimming skills were forgotten amid panicked sputtering and gasping for air. When his rescuer arrived he found the youth frantically, heedlessly scrambling for something to hold on to, and far too late he realized that this otherwise harmless and well-beloved youth would fill his straining lungs at the cost of a life. Pushed under by the beloved mate he had come to rescue, the rescuer

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drowned, his floating body supporting the young man until those on board could pull him to safety. Upon regaining his senses, the rescued man was inconsolable at what he had done, and before anyone could stop him he had taken his own life, rendering his friend's martyrdom a useless gesture.

During the months and years since that event, I have returned and reflected on the many psychological aspects of that singularly ghastly event: the suicide of the guilt-ridden lad, the jaded rivermen pierced to the heart by tragedy, and most of all the primal struggle for life between two men whose desperate need overrode all their higher beliefs. Though I didn't see the struggle itself, I have recreated it time and time again in my dreams. Often I was the rescuer, leaping headlong into a black and salty sea to save a storm-tossed sailor, only to awake gasping for air, with the burning tang of brine in my mouth and a terrible warning to be cautious in how I rescued others, lest it cost my life and their soul. Many of the patients I have worked with over these years were like this drowning sailor, their desires to be free of their affliction overriding their senses and making them a threat to those who would save them.

In my scholastic journal on the nature of dreams, I focused primarily on one group of the mentally ill—the disturbed. The other group I labeled the "demented," and explained how their conditions were not caused by their dreams, but by physical or psychological mental illnesses.

The dreams of the disturbed are obviously dangerous places because of the influence of the Nightmare Court, but this does not make the dreams of the demented wholly safe. Indeed, the intimate nature of the mind makes any dream potentially dangerous, and visitors to the dreams of the demented should especially beware the unbalanced mind's clumsy attempts to impose order upon itself.

Visitors are assigned roles by the psyche, and a portion of the dream's energy is bent upon forcing the visitor to conform to these roles.

--G. Illhousen

Entering the dreams of a madman isn't as immediately traumatic as making mental contact with one—it doesn't prompt a Madness check. The inside-out nature of the dreamworld protects travellers from these harmful innermost thoughts by hiding them inside obscure imagery and symbolic relationships. The longer one stays, however, the more the dreamscape's aberrations become apparent, as the visitors get swept away in a maelstrom of emotion. The mind's attempt to impose order identifies visitors as anomalies and attempts to "fix" them by assigning them more appropriate roles. The Nightmare Court's influence actually has a stabilizing effect on dreams, so that any dreamscape they prey upon will cease to be unstable; unstable dreams cannot be found in the dreamspheres that make up the Ring of Dreams, and thus cannot normally be entered by wanderers from the Terrain Between. For this reason, the text below will assume that all "visitors" are dreamers, and "dreamscape" is used in lieu of "dreamsphere."

To create unstable dreamscapes, the dream seed must possess one of the following traits:

- currently suffering the effects of a failed Horror or Madness check
- temporary or permanent damage to any mental ability score
- the Lunatic or Reincarnated feats

Unstable dreamscapes have only a handful of things in common with each other, usually appearing totally normal at first. Canny visitors may notice that the scenes change with greater frequency than normal--often before matters are fully resolved. Some have reported that the dreamscape cannibalizes itself behind the dreamers, so that only a small area (i.e. a 30x30 room) is available at any given time. Should a visitor leave the dream seed's presence or otherwise strain the dreamscape's creative power, the dreamscape's inability to create a larger area triggers a drastic scene change (see below).

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When a visitor enters an unstable dreamscape, he or she must immediately make a Will save (DC=10+dream seed's Will Save modifier) to avoid the role the dream seed has imposed. This save must be repeated at the start of every dream scene (about every five minutes) and every time the visitor fails a Lucid Dreaming check.

Save Modifiers (add all that apply)

ASSIGNED ROLE IS...

- Unfamiliar +2
- Unpleasant +2
- Pleasant -2
- Familiar -2

DREAM APPEARS...

- Nightmarish +4
- Unpleasant +2
- Pleasant -2
- Uplifting -4

MISC.

- Tempting information -1 to -4
- Drastic scene change -4
- Each previous failure -1

Success means no change, while failure causes the visitor to sink deeper into the role they have been assigned. Each failure grants the dream seed a +1 bonus to all Charisma-based checks towards that one visitor for the duration of the dream, while the visitor suffers a -2 penalty to all Lucid Dreaming checks for the same duration. Further, the visitor's experience of the dream changes drastically with each failure, creating several levels or Stages of Immersion. All of these effects are cumulative, and if any of them are countered or removed (an Alter Self spell to counter the effects of Stage 2, for example), they return if the character moves up a stage. Even if all the effects have been countered or removed, the character's Stage of Immersion stays the same.

Stages of immersion

STAGE 1: The Mask

The character is covered by a visual illusion similar to a Change Self spell. All of his or her equipment remains, but using any of it requires that the character disbelieve the illusion (DC=11+dream seed's WIS modifier).

STAGE 2: The Mirror

The character's dreamself acquires all the cosmetic traits of the imposed role, as if under the effects of an Alter Self spell. The role's equipment also becomes real, but the character can also use 50% of his or her original equipment if he or she has disbelieved the illusion (see above). The character can still create basic equipment with a successful Lucid Dreaming check.

STAGE 3: The Stupor

The character's dreamself loses access to all of his or her original equipment, and must make a Will save (DC=11+dream seed's WIS modifier) every round he or she performs any task that is not part of the assigned role. Failure means the character suffers the effects of a Daze spell and is unable to take any action (including Lucid Dreaming checks) for one round.

STAGE 4: The Oblivion

The visitor forgets his or her own identity and is "Immersed" in the circumstances of the dream. Immersed characters act and think as expected by the dream seed, cannot make Lucid Dreaming checks and cannot willingly leave the dream. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect.

Example: Dr. Gregorian Illhousen visits the dreams of one of his patients, a 16-year old boy named Marcus McFehr (Com1, WIS 14). Upon entering, Dr. Illhousen must make a Will save (DC 13) or find himself in the role of Marcus' father Grant. The dream seems pleasant (-2 to save) and has tempting information about the mysterious incident that drove Marcus mad (-4) but Illhousen has no children of his own (+2;

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total of -4); Gregorian fails this save, and takes on the Mask of Marcus' father Grant, requiring a Will save to disbelieve the illusion.

* * *

Sometimes the dreams of the demented are so unpleasant that the dream seed reflexively thrusts another into the center of them, a juxtaposition that deprives the dream seed of the nightmare's therapeutic effects while bombarding the visitor with images and energies that can only do harm. Like a patient afraid of needles, the dream seed substitutes in his place someone who will take his shots for him, thereby keeping himself sick. Like the confused substitute, the visitor will scream at the disbelieving doctors that he is not sick, only to be given a shot that is likely to make him so. Note that I speak only of natural nightmares, not the cruel mockeries inflicted by members of the Nightmare Court. Unlike natural nightmares, visitations from the Court have no therapeutic effects. Fortunately, there are no known cases of anyone pushing such nightmares upon another--one suspects the Nightmare Court is far too canny to be taken in by a simple bait-and-switch.

--G. Illhousen

* * *

SALIENT DANGERS

These are more specific, rarified dangers that await visitors to unstable dreamscapes, their frequency depending upon the dream seed's affliction, the personalities of the various dreamers, and other unique circumstances. A particular dreamscape will only have a few of these features--no less than one and no more than the dreamer's Charisma modifier, if positive. For the purposes of these descriptions, "Immersed" includes the current dream seed as well as any characters at Immersion Level 4.

CANNIBALISM

If an Immersed character has suffered temporary damage to one or more mental statistics, he or she may feed off the mental energy of other Immersed characters, inflicting 1 point of temporary ability damage per melee attack and gaining 1 point for every 2 inflicted (if the victim of the attack is the current dream seed, the exchange is 1 for 1). Note that these temporary points are not the same as healing; the points gained are bonuses that may exceed the original score and that disappear at the rate of one point per day. Until all these "borrowed" points disappear, the natural process of mental healing cannot resume, and the character cannot heal the original temporary damage to mental statistics without the aid of magic. Usually found in dreams tied to creature attacks, Cannibalism is one of the most feared dream dangers. Since it is delivered unconsciously by the physical attacks of an Immersed character, it requires a role in character with such attacks—usually a monster.

Strangely, those with mental damage are often assigned a role similar to the creature that inflicted it, especially if the creature was of a kind that creates servants or reproduces by such attacks.

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CONTRAMADNESS

Contramadness is the result of a therapeutic dream being administered a subject who doesn't need it—the result of a Madness-afflicted dream seed switching places with an Immersed visitor (see Proxy Dream Seed). The healing energies of the dream are not only wasted, they produce a contrary effect (contramadness) determined by the type of madness they are supposed to be treating—mania for depression, obsession instead of revulsion, etc. Upon waking, the visitor who received the energies exhibits all the symptoms of an appropriate Madness, as determined by the DM. Meanwhile, the intended dream seed begins backsliding, receiving a -2 to his or her next save to throw off his or her own Madness effect. Because this was only a single dose out of months of recovery, the contramadness effect fades after $1d4 \times 10$ minutes, but the afflicted character might have to make more checks depending upon his or her actions during that time.

FEYR SPAWNING

The dreamworld, with its ability to create pseudomatter out of psychic energy, offers rare opportunities for the creation of feyrs—monsters composed of negative emotions. Creation of these monsters requires the combined psychic energy of at least three characters Immersed in a single dreamscape, and while in the dreamscape, they must have failed a number of fear or horror checks. Each time such a check is failed, the amount by which it is failed should be noted. Every time the total number of points reaches a multiple of 15, a larval feyr (1 hp) crawls out of the ear of the current dream seed's sleeping body and sets about looking for nourishment. Observing this grotesque spawning in the waking world is cause for a Horror check. Statistics for feyrs can be found in *Monsters of Faerun* or *Dragon Magazine Annual #5*. Most common among those suffering the effects of Severe Horror checks, especially checks failed by 16+ (ones that warrant Madness checks).

LADEN

Most commonly found in victims with temporary ability damage due to creature attacks, a laden dreamscape has been contaminated with positive or negative energy. The differences between the two energy forms is strictly cosmetic: positive laden dreams are brighter, sharper in contrast, faster-paced, and otherwise abundant with life, while negative laden dreams are shadowy, subdued, and lethargic. Either way, the energies of the dream strain the mind-body connection, causing $1d4$ points of damage per failed Immersion save, multiplied by the resultant level of Immersion. Thus a fully Immersed character has suffered $10d4$ ($4d4 + 3d4 + 2d4 + 1d4$) points of damage by the time he or she wakes up.

MISSING DREAM SEED

Sometimes, a dream seed's psyche is so weak that it cannot manifest a dreamself, and is completely overshadowed by visitors upon their arrival. In such situations, all the scenes play out as if the dream seed were present, but one of the visitors is pushed into the central role, becoming the dream seed's dreamself for the duration of the dream. Should the chosen character become fully Immersed in the role, the two psyches begin to chafe against the intrusive nature of the relationship, causing one point of temporary damage to all mental ability scores of both characters. Common among dream seeds who have lost most (75%+) of one or more mental statistics.

PHOBIC DISSONANCE

Found exclusively among those suffering from failed Horror checks, this danger results from the dreamscape being so infused with the dream seed's fears that Immersed characters retain some of the consequences of a failed check upon awakening. The severity of the effect is one step lower than that of the original dream seed, determined as usual on $1d4$. The truly odd part about phobic dissonance is that the afflicted character doesn't always know what he or she is afraid of, even when in the midst of the effect.

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For example, Gaston is Immersed in nightmares (a Moderate Horror effect) spawned by a wererat attack. Upon awakening, he remembers sewers, garbage, a full moon, and terrible thugs who beat him senseless, but the wererat itself never appeared before the dream was disrupted, thus he saw no rats and no transformation. Gaston is perfectly fine until—two days later—he spots a woman cutting a thread with her teeth, whereupon he exhibits Nausea—the symptom of a Minor Horror check. Afterwards, he cannot explain to his companions why he acted that way, nor does he know himself exactly what it was about the scene that caused his revulsion.

PROXY DREAM SEED

Upon failing a Fear or Horror check while dreaming, a dream seed must make a Will save for each Immersed visitor (DC 15) to avoid trading places. Failure causes a massive scene change as the remaining events of the dream draw their substance from the hopes, fears and experiences of the new dream seed. The old dream seed is now a visitor, free to act as he or she wishes, but the dreamscape itself remains unstable due to its dissonant components. By itself, such a juxtaposition is relatively harmless, but it is often a lead-in to Cannibalism, Contramadness or Shared Psyche.

Exemple: tempted into staying too long in Marcus' dreams, Dr. Illhousen fails two more saves and sinks deeper into his role as Marcus' father. Now his Will saves against Immersion are DC 16, while his Lucid Dreaming checks are at a -6 penalty. To make things worse, the dream has turned nightmarish, which adds +4 to the good Doc's saves against Immersion but prompts some Fear and Horror checks. Trying to escape, Dr. Illhousen makes his Will save (DC 13) to avoid being dazed but fails his Lucid Dreaming check, prompting yet another Will save against Immersion (DC 16), which he also fails. He now fully believes that he is Grant McFehr, and cannot escape his "son's" dreams on his own power. He must wait for the dream to end or pray that he is rescued by other dreamwalkers who are more cautious than he.

Marcus' damaged psyche cannot hold out against the temptation to switch places, and soon he sinks back into the background as a visitor in Dr. Illhousen's nightmare about the son he never had.

ROLE PERSISTANCE

For 3d6 hours after waking up, a powerful illusion (phantasm/glamour) causes all formerly Immersed characters to perceive each other in their respective roles. The strength of this effect is determined by the glamoured character's level of Immersion. Fully Immersed characters look, feel and sound like their dream counterparts, with one of these senses disappearing at each lower level of Immersion. Those who only succumbed to Level One Immersion appear totally normal to the senses, but an elusive and lingering impression remains in the minds of those who shared the dream with them (+/-1 to the affected character's OR). Note that this phantasm does not change how the characters see themselves, only each other.

SHARED PSYCHE

Characters with similar alignments, backgrounds, or personalities (DM's discretion) who take turns as dream seeds (via Missing or Proxy Dream Seed) for the same dream occasionally awaken to find their psyches remain intermingled. Every hour for 2d10 hours after awakening, the DM should roll a d20 and consult the following table:

D20 Result Effect	
11-20	None
6-10	Confused; -2 to all attacks, skill checks and saves for 1 hour.
3-5	Exchange sight and hearing for 1 minute, then "Confused."
1-2	Telepathic contact for 1 hour (may prompt Madness checks)

The above list is far from comprehensive; DM's are encouraged to create additional dangers that suit their campaigns. Further, there

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has been little mention of the thousands upon thousands of ways the above effects could prompt more Fear, Horror, or Madness saves, because for the most part such things are unique to the circumstances of the campaign.

* * *

Looking back upon a career that saved many and lost some, I don't know many things that I could have done differently, knowing what I did at the time. Lessons are learned from failure as much as success, and as much as I weep to recall how much my failures have cost others, I refuse to allow the delicate demoness of Regret and Guilt to own my soul. My lessons have been bought at far too dear a price to weep over one second longer. These lessons must be accepted, internalized, and then used to help myself and those I love.

I should have recognized the Nocturnal Sea when it arrived, that still, black and bottomless ocean I had drowned in so many times. The Nightmare Court had long been attracted to my study of the mind before I ever knew of them, and had plucked the ocean from my dreams as a message--a warning. It seemed egotistical at the time to think that the sea had come directly from my own dreams, and so I ignored the warning and blundered heedlessly into a war I could not win. I have learned my lesson: I will not ignore the obvious conclusion solely because it seems egotistical. Applying this lesson to my own requires another harsh admission, that while my study of madness drew many victims of the Court to me, others were not drawn, but sent. The Nightmare Man had already decided that I was interesting to him, and while I was studying him, he was studying me, preparing for a battle against the one man who might one day defeat him. This sounds like preposterous ego, but looking back on the events that brought me and my love to this hellish realm it is undoubtedly the truth.

Looking into my son's eyes, I realize that I will be dead long before he reaches manhood, and my thoughts turn to what I might leave him as a legacy. Looking back into the past, I gather lessons. Looking into the future, I make plans.

One thing is certain: this isn't over.

G. Illhousen



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HALLOWED CRAFTS

CALENDARS, FEATS, RITES AND PRACTICES OF HALA

By: Eddy Brennan
(The Lost Hedgewitch)

A further look at the
behavior, rites and
practises of the Church
of Hala

The Church of Hala is strange religion. Enigmatic and mysterious to all those outside its fold; its practitioners appear as innocent monks and clerics to those not familiar with the creed. Only those within the church itself understand the secret crafts, studies and battles these isolated, often misunderstood, individuals go through for the greater good of the people they serve.

Several books in the current Ravenloft line have discussed several aspects of the Church of Hala and hinted at other things. The most devout of the servants of the religion are the Hallowed Witches (see *Van Richten's Arsenal Vol. 1* for this prestige class), however many more truths, some much greater than those already discussed lay dormant, waiting to be discovered by those willing to seek out the knowledge of the church itself.

Halites dwell in small monasteries, churches and hospices across much of the Core. It is safe to assume that the religion has also spread in secret to several island domains over the years, as the church wages an unending battle against evil and darkness in all its forms. This article discusses and presents a few new aspects and practices to the church that may be used to expand and increase the mystery and greatness of the religion and its followers.

While some of the practices within this article may not suit the canon Church of Hala, I

find they reflect well on a religion that cares for nature, the community and life.

The Great Wheel

The Church of Hala follows the same Barovian calendar as much of the dread realms do, though some within the church often refer to the year as a Cycle or The Great Wheel. Halites observe different holy days and celebrations from those generally noted in other practices, religions and local flavor. The witches follow and celebrate the Esbats and Sabbats (discussed later) across the year. As well, each hospice, monastery or center for the church keeping close watch on these dates, celebrating them in all earnest, yet in surprising secret. Many people that have received healing and blessings from the church during these times have claimed to have benefited better from the Halites than they may have done at other times.

The most notable changes to the Barovian calendar noticed by the outside world are that the Halites celebrate the New Year and first day of summer on different days. In most cases, this is as far as the general public notices these changes. The Church of Hala celebrates the New Year on October 31st, normally a day of dread for many people across the dread realms. This day marks the end of the harvests in many places, but to the Halites it is a day for celebration. In the Church of Hala, this celebration is known as Samhain (So-wen). Halites often give out gifts of fruit and vegetables on this day to the poor and bless small children, regarding them with praise. Young boys in particular are held in esteem, though girls are not unfairly regarded, for they are the future mothers that will give life to the next generation. Iron is often hung on walls and above doors and windows by Halites on this day. October 31st also marks a traditional day on which Halites enter wedlock, the reasons for this

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tradition have long since been lost, forgotten or locked away in secret. The witches of Hala never divulge this information, even when pressed.

On November 1st, the followers of Hala enter a reclusive period. Halites withdraw from people and close their temples to all but the truly needy on this day. November 1st, The Day of Souls as the Halites term it in whispered discussion, marks the start of nearly two months of mourning. On this day they remember all those that have died needlessly in their local areas throughout the year and light a candle for each in remembrance. These candles are left to burn completely, any that fail to burn away completely are noted by the witches marking those they were burning for as possible unquiet spirits that have failed to find rest. Those that are allowed entrance to a temple or hospice when the candles burn sometimes tell of a depressive, saddening aura to the place and those within it.

In late December, the witches rise up in celebration once again, marking then end of nearly two months of remembrance. The hospices and other temples of the religion are festooned with many candles and lanterns, mistletoe and sprigs of berries hang from the ceilings and doorways and great roaring fires are kept burning at all times. The exact day of this celebration varies from year to year, but generally falls sometime between December 21st and 23rd. During this time the Halites hand out gifts to those that come to them that day and they hold prayers, healings and blessings of exceptional merit to those that ask for them. This celebration falls on the Winter Solstice, marking the end of the dark days of the year as from that night on the nights will draw shorter as the sun becomes stronger once more in the sky.

February 2nd marks the first Halite celebration according to the general consensus of the Barovian Calendar. On this day, it is typical of the witches to celebrate life and union in all its forms. This celebration is known as Imbolc (Im-bulk) to the church, though the masses have given it the more common name or

Candlemass. All members of the church spend this day with their families and loved ones. Each member present lights a candle in addition to what other light sources are present. Homes and hospices belonging to members of Hala are said to be warm on this day, despite the probable harsh coldness of the time of year. While it is never explained, witches of Hala urge couples to bed down early that evening. The witches of Hala also retire early that night. Not surprisingly, there are a good many children born nine months later.

On Imbolc, young couples often betroth one another. Some youngsters even disappear into the fields and forests, running about as if the love that nature holds has somehow possessed them. Those youngsters that trespass on farming lands are often scolded for ruining freshly sewn crops. This practice is generally frowned upon by many religions, but the witches of Hala seem to encourage it.

Ostara (Oh-star-a) is commonly celebrated on March 22nd, though it does often deviate in one direction or another. The practice that the church holds on this celebration is the giving of eggs and other dairy based produce to the people. The church often receives gifts of poultry in return from farmers, why they are so eager to give after having their crops trampled the month before is often a mystery. This celebration also coincides with birth and the creation of life. Sprigs of blossoms often decorate the hospices and temples dedicated to Hala during these festivals.

Another tradition time for marriage follows on April 30th, or Beltane (Bell-tane) as the witches refers to it. This also marks the first day of summer in the Halite calendar. Hospices place brooms across the floor of the doorways in and out of the temples and beforehand encourage young couples that are betrothed to wed on that day or the days within a week of it on either side. Some Halites in more remote areas build great campfires that resemble beacons on hilltops prior to this celebration, extinguish every flame in their temples and then light the beacons at sunset. Once these fires are

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blazing, they take burning embers and logs from the blazes to start the fires within the temples. Some followers of the religion besides the witches also follow this tradition in the areas they are practiced. In the last few years, more people have been taking fire from the beacons, whether or not they are members of the church. The witches do not begrudge them an easy source of warmth for the night and have now begun taking burning logs to homes in the villages they serve once their own are burning valiantly in their temples. As the climate is growing warmer during this part of the year, flowers are increasingly coming into bloom and flowers are used to lavishly decorate altars and temples dedicated to Hala during these times. These decorations are kept throughout the summer months and are replaced regularly.

June 22nd celebrates Litha (again with some variation of the date), Midsummer as it is known to most people and marks the longest day and shortest night of the year. Some temples organize festivals for this day that involve pole dancing, feasts, dances, costume parades and other festivities and entertainments. Again these are held in smaller villages and thorps throughout the southern Core and rarely enter larger settlements. The Inquisition has forbidden these festivities in Tepest for the last few years. However, some settlements hold smaller celebrations of their own in village squares, under the guidance of the Inquisition, of course. Though the celebrations are no longer openly dedicated to Hala, many people are happy to see the festivities when they come round each year.

Lughnassadh (Loo-nass-ahd) falls on August 1st and marks the first day of harvest. Halites both give and receive gifts of vegetables and fruit on this day and the week that follows. Altars in the chapels found in the temples and hospices of Hala are covered with earthy brown sheets, which in turn display some of the produce they are gifted with.

The fourth equinox in the Halite calendar falls on September 21st, 22nd or 23rd and is regarded to by the church as Mabon (May-bon).

This day roughly marks the start of the second harvest with same celebrations that follow Lughnassadh.

Esbats

Halites celebrate the full or new moons as much as they do the equinoxes and solstices that scatter across the year (sometimes known as Cycles to those within the church), though these celebrations are not as outward as those described with Sabbats. An Esbat may be at any point when the moon is new or full in the sky. All Halite witches celebrate at least one of these each month. Though there is no penalty for failing to follow this tradition, Haliets take comfort in the tradition of Esbat.

Esbats are a recognition and celebration of life, following from birth, as when the moon is new, to death where the moon has all but vanished from the sky as it wanes into complete darkness.

When a new moon hangs in the sky, Halites see this as a celebration of new birth unto the world. The witches of Hala believe the New Moon is the best time for new creations. Many witches practice some craft during this time with even greater eagerness than normal. Any goods or material products created in this time are often passed on as gifts to others unless they relate directly to that witch, or to their witchcraft.

New moons cannot be seen, for no moon is visible on such a night.

Once the new moon has passed, the moon begins to wax in the sky, seen as a symbolic flow of physical grown and strength to witches. While it is rare for Esbats to be celebrated during this time, it follows as a continuation of creation until the full moon arrives.

When the full moon does arrive, witches celebrate a time of nurturing, parenting and care for those around them. During these times, the moon it at its fullest and strongest the witches of

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Hala see this as the greatest time to cast their arts with the Weave and Hala. These days are also a natural time for Halite witches to wed, if they choose to do so. These same days also mark a time where a wed couple within the church may break their vows of marriage and part each other in peace. Those that are received as neophyte witches are initiated on the night of the full moon.

As the moon wanes, it is said to be a poor time to weave any craft related to magick. The waning moon is symbolic to destruction, aging and eventual death. During these times, Halites are reluctant to perform coven rituals, though individual witches are free to continue to weave their arts as they see fit.

The witches of Hala hold Esbats that fall on the Blue Moon, where the moon is visible in the day sky in great awe. On these days, it is seen as a coming together of man and woman and unity between all.

Esbat Rites

During the time of any Esbat, a coven may come together and work greater magick in the name of their Mother Goddess, Hala. On the days and nights of Esbats, the caster level and DC to save against coven abilities is raised by +1. Any Coven Ability cast on a Blue Moon bestows a +2 bonus.

Sabbat Rites

The Sabbats are the eight solstices and Equinoxes of each year, generally falling at the quarters and cross-quarters of the calendar year set by the Barovian calendar. Where Esbats celebrate the cycles of the moon, Sabbats celebrate the cycles of the sun and commonly link these rites and rituals to manhood. Sabbats were discussed earlier within The Great Wheel and no further description is required of them.

As with Esbat Rites, Sabbat Rites convey a bonus to the caster level of Coven Abilities and the DC to hold them off. In this case, the bonus is +2. On days where both a Sabbat and Esbat fall on the same day, Sabbat Rites supersede Esbats and the bonus granted on these days grows to +4.

Tools of the Trade

Halite witches tend to have access to a vast array of tools and components in their practice if they have the means of using them. A selection of these tools and components are as follows, though there are many more and stranger objects used by Halite witches in their craft. No Halite or other witch will allow another outside their craft to construct their craft items and focuses for them, nearly all are constructed by the witch herself or another close to that person in the craft.

Athame & Sword

The athame (ah-thaw-may) are ceremonial daggers and often take the form of craft focuses for witches. They usually have blades reaching roughly six inches in length and have dark, if not black handles. Swords follow a similar design, but are blades reaching between eighteen and thirty inches in length. The blades of these daggers and swords are intentionally dulled witches believe that if these blades are used to draw blood, their worth is lost forever even if reconsecrated once more. Daggers are more common than swords in the practice of Halite witchcraft, though some high priests, priestesses and hospice leaders wield the latter in Esbat and Sabbat rites.

If used in combat, an Athame is very ill balanced for fighting and conveys a -2 penalty to attack. Due to their dull blades, they only inflict 1d2 points of damage. If used to attack and the weapon draws blood (inflicts damage), the Athame may no longer be used as a craft focus and another must be created.

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The athame and sword are constructed like others, but are simpler to construct. An athame requires a Craft (Weaponsmithing) check of DC 8 to construct while a sword requires a DC 12.

Besom

The besom (bez-um) is a broom with an ash staff, birch twigs and willow bindings. They are generally used to cleanse an area of ill tidings, unwanted magickal residue and the general humdrum of life. Besom make unwieldy craft focuses except to those that practice entirely within their own home or temple.

Besoms require little time and practice to construct and may be constructed even if the maker doesn't have the correct Craft (Woodwork) skill. Those with the skill require a DC 8 to create the besom while those who are unskilled require a DC 10.

Wand

The wand is usually crafted from a dead piece of wood. Halite witches will not go out and cut a piece from a living plant in order to use it in the craft. Hags and other witches that follow darker paths gladly cut up living plants as an insult to the followers of Hala. Oak and Chestnut are favored in the construction of a wand, seen as long living and powerful. Wands are often decorated with beads, feathers, crystals, bones and twine among other items. Each wand is as different as the one before it and often rubbed with fresh lavender, eucalyptus or mint leaves upon construction.

Wands are as simple or as complicated to construct as the maker and user wishes them to be, requiring a Craft (woodcutting) check DC 8 for a basic wand, up to a DC 20 for the most intricately carved and decorated.

Cauldron

Cauldrons come in many shapes and sizes, large and small. Individual witches practicing on their own tend to own small cauldrons that

may double as cooking pots, while larger covens and Halite temples tend to have larger varieties. Cauldrons are crafted from iron, for in the eyes of witches, no other material will do the task. If the iron is hammered and shaped while it is cold then so much the better. Cauldrons typically stand on a separate base or three short legs to keep it stable and from tipping over at inopportune moments. Like besoms, cauldrons are unwieldy as craft focuses and few are used in such manner. Some cauldrons also feature intricate engraving or embossing upon them.

Cauldrons require the Craft (Blacksmithing) skill to construct and all basic cauldrons, no matter the shape or size require a DC 12 to construct. Cold wrought iron cauldrons are troublesome to shape and are difficult to make, requiring a DC 25. If a cauldron is engraved or embossed, the DC for these checks is raised to 15 and 30 respectively. The overall cost of having a cauldron made is left to the dungeon master to decide.

Cup

Cups (sometimes referred to as chalices) vary greatly in material and design. Some are carved from wood, while others are made from ceramics, metal and other materials. Cups make convenient craft focuses for witches who travel frequently, but can still prove to be unwieldy in some situations, such as combat. Cups are usually representative and not used for drinking. Nonetheless, many witches fill them with water, wine or even ale during Esbat and Sabbat rites. If blood is ever placed in the cup it becomes useless as a craft focus.

Cups may be constructed by a witch with the relevant Craft (blacksmith, carpentry, ceramics/pottery) skill. Creating a cup requires a check against a DC 10. If the cup is decorated, the DC for the check is raised at the decision of the dungeon master. Those that are unskilled in the craft skills required to create these items may create a rudimentary cup over time, but they are required to make an unskilled craft check DC 15.

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Crystal

Crystal foci are found in wide variety of shapes, appearances and qualities. Amethyst, quartz, rose quartz, topaz, amber, agate, emerald, jet, olivine, mica, pumice, obsidian, ruby, lava, garnet, aquamarine, jade, lapis lazuli, tiger eye, blood stone and moonstone are but a few examples of the stones and crystals that may be used by witches as a craft focus. Crystals have the benefit of being largely resilient to damage and can remain in use as a craft focus even if they are chipped, broken or shattered, so long as a piece of it remains in the ownership of the witch. Crystals and stones that are to be used as craft focuses are normally fashioned into a piece of jewelry; pendants, rings and bracelets being the more common examples, but earrings are also almost as common.

Witches that have access to the Craft (gem cutting) and/or Profession (jeweler) skills may fashion a piece of crystal or stone into a piece of jewelry. The DC for the checks regarding to the creation of these items is left to the dungeon master to decide. A simple pendant may be created by any witch, even without these skills and require a check with a DC 10 to construct.

Witches may also use pieces of rudimentary crystal as a craft focus, but these items are required to be larger than those that go into making a piece of jewelry and must weigh at least half a pound.

Robe

Robes are convenient and common as craft focuses, outnumbered only by the dagger in their role. Robes may be worn at any time or kept specifically for their purpose as a focus, remaining safely stored until they are be used once more in practice. Many traveling witches rely on robes for their craft focuses, finding them convenient for keeping out the winter chill, doubling as a blanket and being less obvious to others as to its purpose, among many other uses that the garment may work as. Most witches prefer robes that are white or are of a neutral color, such as brown, khaki, natural shades of green, pale blue and others that shades that are

seen in nature. It is rare to see a black robe, but some covens reserve them for Sabbat rites and practices.

Bolline

The Bolline (Bow-line) fills a similar purpose to the athame; however, the blades of these small knives are kept sharp at all times. They generally have blades slightly shorter than an athame that curve forwards toward the tip of the blade and have white, cream handles, often carved from pale woods such as pine. Bollines usually fill a purpose of being used to cut and trim herbs, flowers and other small plants or picking fruit and berries. Some witches even use them to slice fruit while eating.

Bollines are never used to cut flesh, but some witches occasionally cut themselves by accident with these sharp blades, they suffer no loss as a craft focus should they be used to draw blood so long as the blade is thoroughly cleaned by the witch before the blood dries and blessed, by bathing it in water n the next new or full moon.

Bollines are one of the few craft items that witches will purchase from others and will not make themselves, unless they have the Craft (weaponsmith) skill. If a blade of this type of bought from another, it must be bathed in water during the night of the new or full moon to cleanse it and then used to cut at least one plant before dawn.

Other Tools

While those tools listed above are the most common chosen by witches to be a craft focus, the list is far from definitive. Some more examples of tools used by Halite witches are listed here.

Amulets, baskets, beads, bell, books, bowls, candles, candleholders, candelabras, capes, crystal spheres, decanter, divination tools, earth or soil, feathers, dried herbs, holy water, incense, mirrors, pestle and mortar, paper, pendulum, incense burners, pitchers, platters,

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runes, rope, scales, scissors, sea salt, statuettes, string, tarokka, wooden boxes, wooden spoons and drift wood.

As seen, there is a wide selection of options to draw upon that may be used as a craft focus. While some of the above items make good focuses for Halite witches that are likely to use their craft away from home, some would prove difficult, or too fragile to be used in this role. When considering a craft focus for a witch, keep in mind her role and practice, her actions and where she is more likely to use magick. Taking these factors into consideration, a better decision can be made on the craft focus of her choosing.

Feats

The witches of Hala have many practices that they perfect over time as they study and practice their craft. This results in the learning and perfecting of new skills and abilities that, other witches may have learned before them, or those that may have once thought forgotten. Listed here is a selection of new feats that may be taken by witches as they advance in power.

Bless Craft Focus

Hala has blessed your craft focus making it more resilient than other focuses of its kind.

Prerequisite: Craft focus, Hallowed Witch level 5

Benefit: The craft focus of the Hallowed Witch is more resilient to damage and destruction, receiving a +1 bonus to the items hardness and an additional 5 hit points.

Care

You are dedicated to others and your work.

Prerequisite: Hallowed Witch 2, Knowledge (nature), Profession (herbalist)

Benefit: Anything that you grow, cultivate or process for your healing skills has greater effect than normal due to your devotion to the helping of others and the cultivating of plants, receiving a +2 bonus to your Knowledge (nature) and Profession (herbalist) checks.

Charmed

You are especially open to the teachings and ways of Hala.

Prerequisite: Recipient of this feat must be under the tutelage of a hallowed witch. Furthermore, the recipient must possess 4 ranks in the skill Knowledge (nature) and have a Neutral alignment

Benefit: The recipient of this feat may take levels in the Hallowed Witch prestige class regardless of spell casting ability. Non-spell casters do not gain the ability to cast spells, but may use the Witchcraft ability with a caster level equal to your Hallowed Witch class level. Those that were able to cast only 1 type of spell before taking this feat retain their spell casting abilities and gain the benefits of the Primal Magic ability.

Special: This feat may only be taken during character creation and at no time afterwards.

Chosen by Hala

Hala has specially blessed you for your deeds and kindness to others.

Prerequisite: Blessed (see *Heroes of Light*).

Benefit: Those that receive this feat may choose a single Minor Witchcraft Ability to use as a 1st level Hallowed Witch. Like Hallowed Witches, the recipient of this feat is required to create a Craft Focus to make use of this ability.

Special: Should the bearer of this feat lose her status as blessed, she loses the ability to use this feat. The recipient of this feat may not exchange it for another; instead it remains as a nagging reminder of her failures. If the recipient of this feat ever becomes a Black Witch, she regains the use of this feat if she ever passes a Powers Check related to that class.

Create Sacred Space

You are able to create a small space clean from the rigors of everyday life, making it pure for a time.

Prerequisite: Ability to use Minor witchcraft abilities, craft focus.

Benefit: The space about the witch, up to a radius of 10', becomes blessed for a duration of 10 minutes, +1 minute for every level in the Hallowed Witch prestige class. This area acts as a space where covens and solitary witches may use their witchcraft abilities without risk of

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anything disturbing their craft. The area may be crossed by others freely, though their presence will not have any effect on the witch or her practice. If the witch is attacked while in one of these areas, she receives a +4 bonus to her Concentration checks.

Dedicated

You are so dedicated to the helping of others and the cause of good that your focus becomes even more concentrated against your enemies.

Prerequisite: Skill Focus (monster lore), Hallowed Witch or Chosen by Hala, Knowledge (monster lore) 8 ranks.

Benefit: When battling the natural enemies of the Church of Hala (your chosen enemy in the Knowledge monster lore skill) you gain a +2 morale bonus to attacks and saving throws; and a +1 circumstance bonus to your caster level when using Witchcraft abilities to battle that creature.

Find the Weave

When seeking your spells to memorize, you are more efficient at shaping the Weave in your mind.

Prerequisites: Spell caster level 10.

Benefit: While searching the weave to prepare spells, you may do so at an increased rate, requiring only half the time it would normally take to prepare your spells.

Special: This feat suits all spell casters that must prepare spells before casting them. While witches first perfected the talent it has later been adapted for other spell casters.

Handfast

You are adept in the skills of performing Halite ceremonies and rituals for the benefit of others and have risen to the highest rank available for Halites.

Prerequisite: Use Major Witchcraft abilities.

Benefit: With the practice and devotion to your craft, you are able to take the place of a high priest/priestess in a temple or hospice dedicated to Hala or found a new temple of your own. A

suitable location may be discovered through Scrying (DC 20) or you may be eventually guided to one in the next few (1d3+2) months. You may also choose to stay on at your own temple or hospice in line for the position of high priest/priestess when the position as such to open in your current placement.

As a high priest/priestess, your caster level challenges all others of your standing in the same coven as yourself. If more than one character with this feat is within the same coven practicing, each Hallowed Witch with this feat makes a Will save (DC 10 + highest opposed Hallowed Witch level + Highest Opposed Cha modifier). Those who pass by the most are treated as the caster level for the current coven ability. If all Will saves are failed, the usual Coven leader is chosen for the Coven ability's caster level.

Special: Once this feat is taken, you must donate at least 50% of all your income and monetary gains from treasure and rewards to the Church of Hala and other reputable charities, or simply give it to those in need.

Seek Talent

You have a sixth sense that allows you to detect the talent in others around you.

Prerequisite: At least one level in the Hallowed Witch prestige class.

Benefit: When passing within 60 ft. of another Hallowed Witch or someone with the Chosen by Hala feat, the Dungeon Master makes a Will save (DC 20) on your behalf to see if you detect their presence. If this save is passed, you feel drawn to this person and will know within several minutes of meeting them that they are Chosen or a Witch themselves. This feat will not allow the witch to uncover Black Witches or Hags.

Special: This feat may only be taken if it is the first feat taken after adopting the Hallowed Witch prestige class.



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THE INQUISITION TRIALS

TIPS ON USING THE TEPESTANI INQUISITION

By: Eddy Brennan (The
Lost Hedgewitch)

Those perceived as the
damned and unclean in the
eyes of the Inquisition
face a grim end.

Tepest is a land of deep forests that harbor dangerous creatures and horrid nightmares; of these the Three Hags are but the icing on the cake. The dreadful Blackroot, twisted and transformed from its original proud form into the evil treant it exists as today, hides in the southern forest of Brujamonte, luring in the unknowing and feeding on them to fill its unholy hunger for flesh. Goblins stalk the Goblin Wood that dominates much of the northern half of the domain, spreading fear and terror among the human populace. Though terrible, these evils have not been the blight upon the minds and hearts of the Tepestani; instead this place in folklore and terror is dominated by the fey, the Shadow Elves of Arak that shun away from sunlight, that spew froth from the Wychwood, and are today blamed for many mishaps, whether or not they are responsible for these accidents and tragedies.

As the fey scourge continued to spread in the wake of the Great Upheaval that reached its crescendo in the last days of 740 BC, a new order made its way into the world and the lives of the Tepestani, the Inquisition. Armed with a gospel that would lift the domain of Tepest once more from the shadows of evil, rid the world of the plagues of witchcraft and the fey, a lone man with vision, Wyan of Viktal, spearheaded his loyal followers in a holy war against the evils that exist in Tepest. The gospel of this man is

said to have come from Belenus himself, a God of light and the sun that is claimed to be the sworn enemy of the Fey, as the light of the deity's symbol eradicates them from existence.

As the war went on, Wyan and his followers made one discovery after another, many of them false or misinterpreted. Witches sowed whispers of dark delights to the innocent, tainting their hearts from the truth while the fey stole the souls and essence of the people. Armed with these truths, Viktal led his followers on in greater zealotry. New methods and forms of justice were invented to tackle these threats, methods of justice that would leave the innocent cleansed of evil and the damned to suffer eternally for their crimes and sins against the forces of good.

Unfortunately, no form of criminal justice is infallible and it is understood that as many innocents as guilty persons have been condemned to death at the hands of Wyan and his followers.

The Damned

Those perceived as the damned and unclean in the eyes of the Inquisition span a vast array of beings that dwell among the dread realms. Only humans are spared much of this hysterical xenophobia, so long as they do not exhibit any traces of the taints the Inquisition perceive as evil, or influences from the fey. Arcane spell casters must tread carefully in the land of Tepest, they are often suspected as being "Elf Shot", being under the influence of the fey, or being accused of heresy and witchcraft. Clerics are largely exempt from this suspicion, so long as they do not exhibit any traces of taint in their religious practices. Druids may also be largely at risk, as their nature-loving habits may betray

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them to the most zealous of Inquisitors as being Elf Shot, or fey for that matter if they are of non-human origin.

Demihumans such as elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, half-elves, and calibans, are all treated as being either fey or Elf Shot and are quickly apprehended by the Inquisition to undergo investigation and trial for possible crimes. As most of these poor souls are innocent of all real or imaginary charges brought against them, they are unable to confess to such allegations and often end their days soon after being apprehended at the hands of one form of Inquisition torture or execution. It is unknown if any true Arak Fey have been caught in the last seventeen years, but it is reasonable to believe that a rare opportunity has led to the arrest of some of these strange, otherworldly beings.

All demihumans and non-human humanoids that enter Tepest are at risk of being apprehended as suspected witches, fey or being Elf Shot. Human spell casters of any kind other than clerics and paladins are often suspected of the same crimes, but it is easier for some of these classes to clear themselves of the allegations against them. Unfortunately, given the nature of sorcerers, they are often lost to the world through the Inquisition, their natural abilities marking them as witches in the eyes of the law dictated by Wyan and his followers.

Investigational Methods

Through long studies over the past seventeen years, Wyan and his followers have conducted research into possible signs of an individual being a fey, a witch or being Elf Shot, the last being easiest to distinguish. A creature that has become Elf Shot has lost their shadow and has no grip on their surroundings and continues on through their life in a hapless, mediocre fashion. Their eyes are dull and lifeless and it is possible to mistake them for well-preserved zombies if not for the lively color of their skin and distinct signs of life (such as a heartbeat and breathing).

Witches are harder to distinguish; true witches and other spell casters that know of the

Tepestani's superstitious belief that all magic comes forth from witchcraft hide their talents while in the land, using them only if necessary and no other option is open to them. Even in these most extreme cases, spellcasters will attempt to hide their use of magic to avoid suspicion and attention falling upon them selves. In some cases, the Inquisition suspects some individuals, having discerned their abilities through practice and careful study of the individual's nature and habits. Inquisitors have also been known to stage events, hoping to draw a suspected "witch" out of hiding. Though some witches are evil (in the cases of sorcerous witches), many work for the benefit of others, but these premises for the practice of witchcraft fall flat on the ears of any inquisitor. Natural hysteria leads to the death of many innocents that have been accused and convicted of witchcraft. These accusations can be small, from having turned milk sour, causing a baby to cry, looking at an animal that died or disappeared the following night—the list is endless. Though more developed societies shrug off these allegations as nonsense, the same, sadly, cannot be said for Tepest.

To draw inspiration for evidence that can bring charges of witchcraft against a person in Tepest, old records of witch trials can be used to great effect. As hysteria and charges of heresy were common during these times, countless reasons and hooks for a trial can be found quite easily. Old horror movies that feature witches and witch trials are also a great source of information and suggestions on this subject.

Those accused of being fey come quite often, but only a tiny minority of those convicted of being fey are truly members of the Arak of the Shadow Rift. Largely these individuals are demihumans that have strayed off the beaten path or are outlanders unaware of the laws and circumstances that exist in Tepest. Sadly, nearly all of these individuals suffer death at the hands of the Inquisition; very few are pardoned for their imaginary crimes. None are compensated for the harm and loss for personal effects suffered by them. Demihumans are wise to hide any traces of their non-human nature; this can be done with relative ease at a distance, but closer

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inspection will warrant some form of proper efficient disguise. An elf wearing a hat to hide her ears will work on the crowds, but the Inquisition are less gullible and are much harder to trick with such methods.

Crime and Punishment

The Inquisitors have drawn up, invented and brought many different forms of punishment into existence to deal with the scourge of the fey and witchcraft in their land. All of these forms of punishment are cruel and most leave their victims scarred, maimed or worse. Many punishments begin with a trial, though the term is used loosely in regards to the actual events that play out. Routine torture is by far the most frequent form of trial and investigation on a suspect, the victim being pleaded by her torturers to confess her crimes so that her suffering will end. Other forms of investigational punishment have also appeared in the last decade, but routine torture remains the most successful way of drawing a confession to date.

Those tortured by the Inquisition suffer 2d6 subdual damage for each torture session,; if the victim is reduced to 0 or less hit points, she passes out. It should be noted that torture will never result in death, even if the victim is reduced to -10 or fewer hit points. After each session, the victim must make a Fort save (DC 10 + damage received through torture) or suffer 1 point on temporary Wisdom drain. Again after each torture session, the victim must make a second Fort save (DC 10 + half damage taken from torture) or gain a disfiguring scar that raises her Outcast Rating by 1.

If a torture victim has her Wisdom score reduced to 0 or less, her will caves in, leaving her open to suggestion, and she will confess to all the charges brought against her, whether she is truly guilty or not. The Inquisition often plant charges on a confessor to degrade their subject further. After confession, lost points of Wisdom return at a rate of 3 per day.

Though torture is brutal, it is one of the kindest methods the Inquisition use to draw forth information from the accused. Several other examples of trials are listed here.

The Stone Tablet

A punishment method that rose to popularity around 750, these inhuman devices have seen some improvement in the last few years, but not much. The Tablet (often nick named the Sandwich in secret by its users) is a stone table about waist high that rests on an iron frame or a stone block that rests on the floor to the same height. The tops of these blocks and tablets are perfectly flat, but often stained with the remnants of what their former victims have deposited on them. The victim is strapped to the tablet of block and forced to lie on their backs while heavy slabs of stone are placed on them that cover their torso and abdomen. The accused are consistently asked question asked the same questions repeatedly, often for hours on end, sometimes days. Occasionally a stone may be added, removed, replaced with a heavier stone slab, depending on the leniency of the inquisitor in charge of the investigation.

This method of investigation is often reserved for interviewing those that have either met or viewed fey and are suspected of being Elf Shot. If the subject is responsive, she is encouraged to tell the story of her encounter repeatedly until the inquisitor is satisfied that she is either telling the truth or is under the influence of the fey. If the latter becomes apparent, other forms of discipline are put into effect.

For each hour spent on the Stone Tablet, the investigating inquisitor is entitled to make a Sense Motive check (DC 10 + the hit dice of the investigated subject + the subjects Cha modifier), each time this check is repeated, the inquisitor gains a +2 bonus toward succeeding it. Once the check is passed, the inquisitor automatically knows whether the subject is telling the truth or not. If the subject is lying, she is declared Elf Shot and sent away to an inquisition-run sanitarium for treatment.

Unfortunately, the investigating inquisitors work in shifts of roughly 10 hours, if an

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inquisitor does not make his Sense Motive check in this time, the procedure begins anew with the inquisitor that replaces him in the investigation. After 3 days of such investigation (the accused is denied sleep, water and food during this period), if the subject still is not known to be telling to truth or not, they are declared a witch instead and executed.

Though the stones placed on the subjects are heavy, they inflict no serious harm unless more than three times the weight of the subject is placed on her. This then inflicts 1d10 points of crushing damage.

The Scales

No longer used by the Inquisition after it was deemed unsuitable for discerning whether the subject would be a witch or not. The scales were crafted out of iron with one end holding a hammock swing, the other end having a weight hung from it. The premise was that whoever sat on it and was heavier than the weight was a witch, their hearts heavy with the sins they had committed. Dozens were found guilty of witchcraft through the use of this trial, but one was found innocent. A serving girl of the Wayfarer's Fried the inn found in Briggdarrow. The girl was half starved before being brought to the scales and her weight loss had made her lighter than the weight at the other end of the scales. Found innocent of witchcraft, the girl was released only to have accusations of being a fey being hurled at her by the common folk. With this revelation, the girl was executed out of suspicion and the decision was made that the fey were lighter than the weight.

Given that witches were heavier than the weight and the fey were lighter than it, the scales were retired.

Those wishing to use the scales in their games should note that the weight used to measure the accused would not exceed 100 pounds.

The Ducking Stool

This form of investigation is reserved only for those suspected of witchcraft and is practiced only in Briggdarrow and Viktal, at the shores of Lake Kronov. The accused are bound to the seesaw-style stool and dunked into the cold waters of the lake while presiding members of the inquisition preach sermons for the safety of the accused, to find them innocent of the charges brought against them. Not even the inquisition wish to have those brought upon the stool to die at its use.

It is believed Belenus will spare the innocent that he will loosen the bonds of the accused and float them to the surface and the guilty would drown.

This process of elimination can take some time, but it is one of the swiftest forms of elimination at the inquisition's disposal; rarely has the use of the stool exceeded an hour. The accused is repeatedly dunked into the water for short periods of up to several minutes at a time before being raised again for the inquisitors to preach to and beseech the accused directly, begging to them and Belenus for their confession. Again, several have survived the use of this device, but the truth behind the innocence of these accused are most likely to be more mundane than divine intervention.

The ropes of the stool and bound tightly, but an Escape Artist check (DC 20) will allow the accused to slip free of her bonds. While underwater, the rules for Drowning (Dungeon Masters Guide page 85) are brought into effect to determine how long the accused can survive under water.

The stool remains under water for a random period each time, but no longer than 5 minutes before being raised again. Any accused that survived being repeatedly dunked under water for any period over an hour has a chance of being found innocent if a presiding inquisitor makes a Knowledge (Religion) check (DC 18). These checks are repeated every time the stool is raised above water and the accused remains alive after the first hour of dunking.

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Hanging

This form of execution is largely used in the Briggdarrow region, where the inquisition's hold is not as strong as it remains in other areas. The guilty are hanged from a tree at the edge of the Wytchwood and left to die while the public jeer and physically assault the guilty with various improvised missiles. It has been known for several individuals that have been hanged to have died, not from the hanging itself, but a lucky blow from a well aimed rock.

Hanging is seen as a humane form of execution, taking only a few minutes before the guilty are truly dead. However, those hung are often left until the next day before being cut down, to ensure that they are truly dead.

The initial shock to the individual being hanged inflicts a Fort save (DC 15) or their neck is instantly snapped from the sudden fall and snatch from the rope being pulled taut around the throat. Failing this saving throw results in instant death. Even should this save be successful, the victim suffers the loss of 1 point of Constitution each round, should the Constitution score of the hanged be reduced to 0 or less, she dies. If the hanged individual is cut down before she dies, lost points of Constitution return at the rate of 1 point per minute as the guilty regains her breath and orientation. Until all the lost points have returned, she suffers a penalty to all attack and damage rolls, saving throws and checks equal to the total number of Constitution points not yet restored. A restoration spell restores all lost Constitution points so long as the hanged individual is alive.

Burning

By far the most widespread form of execution to deal with witches and the fey in Tepest, the practice of burning the guilty is a tried and tested method that has never failed. Though the innocent also get burned, they were seen as guilty in the eyes of the inquisition and deserved the punishment they received.

Burning a convicted witch or fey consists of a funeral pyre built from roughly six-hundred

to a thousand pounds of firewood placed about a tall wooden pole (often referred to as the stake) that has been sunk into the earth to ensure its stability while the burning commences. The accused is tied to the pole, or stake and burned alive. The inquisition believe the fires are symbolic of Belenus and that the flames are their god cleansing the guilty, allowing them passage to the afterlife so they may find peace at the deity's side. Burnings can take long periods of time before they finally bring the life of a guilty person to an end, the longest on record having measured over seven hours, the guilty being executed cursing those that bore witness until she could do no more than scream in agony as the flames consumed her flesh.

While not a humane method of execution, it is thorough and cleanses all that are brought to the pyre.

As already stated, it takes a long time to burn an individual to death on the funeral pyre. Usually this takes 1d3+1 hours, but if the wood is damp, it can take longer (1d4+3 hours). Working out a rate of damage for a victim being burned is difficult, so instead it is easier to have the guilty lose a percentage of her hit points at set periods while she burns, she dies when her hit point total falls to 0 or fewer.

If the guilty is somehow spared before she is killed through the burning, she may or may not be injured. After 10 minutes, the fires will reach the guilty and burn her for 1d6 points of fire damage each minute. However, she will never be reduced to less than 0 hit points if she has been rescued before death has embraced her. It is common for Grim Reapers to appear when the guilty have been salvaged from the pyre before death, seeking retribution for the life stolen from them.



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NOTES ON THE MAKING OF A CAMPAIGN

By: Joël Paquin

A guide to help design a
Ravenloft campaign from
scratch.

Introduction

Those who are aware of my personal D&D campaign know that I co-DM a 16 years old campaign (this is *not* a typo!) with a Forgotten Realm co-DM friend. The way the campaign works with two DMs is quite cool and I highly recommend it: we (the DMs) share a common PC (a Cavalier named Gotten Grabmal) that we play whenever we are not in the DM's seat. When a DM's adventure is finished, we switch positions: the DM whose adventure is finished becomes the player and vice versa. It's one of the best formulas in my opinion: the DM in the player's seat has plenty of time to plan his next adventure while he is playing in the other DM's adventure.

Also, that way, we always have nasty and fantastic ideas for our players as the two DMs emulate each other and try hard to surprise the other one. I DM Planescape and Ravenloft adventures, while he DMs adventures in Forgotten Realms, and the PCs switch between worlds when the adventures end (they are always afraid when the mist starts rising).

It worked well until the players reached higher levels. Unfortunately for me, the Ravenloft DM, the PCs are now 12-13th levels: the characters are **very** tough for any Ravenloft campaign, with their high levels and numerous magic items found in

Forgotten Realms. The number of new challenges I can offer them with these very capable PCs was becoming smaller over the years, which was becoming frustrating for me and also for the players.

So I made a big decision: soon I will be DMing a new campaign entirely set in Ravenloft with a brand new set of PCs. The other DM will keep the high level PCs in his Forgotten Realm campaign, while I will start anew with lower level (and less equipped) PCs. We will play both simultaneously: two sessions in Ravenloft with me as the DM, then two sessions in Forgotten Realm with my friend as the DM, then back to the plane of Dread, and so forth.

Due to this decision, I had the great opportunity to find myself in front of a blank sheet of paper ...

For about two months, I planned the skeleton of a Ravenloft campaign and had lots of fun doing so. When I finished, I had the idea to write about the creative process, being under the impression that someone might like to read about it.

General notes

A Ravenloft campaign is obviously different from a campaign in other settings where adventures can follow each other without real links between them. While that succession of unrelated adventures can also be done in Ravenloft, a better-planned campaign with

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long-term plans will probably produce more fun and entertainment for you and your players.

- Other miscellaneous stuff - to be inserted in the campaign, as I will see fit.

A good friend of mine, who is an engineer (and still a good person...), once told me something about the 7 “P”s of engineering: Proper Prior Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance.

I have to tell you something: in this new Ravenloft campaign, my players are expecting vampires under every rock on which they will walk (did I ever say how much I love those blood suckers?).

When I realised that fact, under a false pretence, I surveyed them on what else they expect in this new Ravenloft campaign (*so I won't include these critters in my campaigns*). So, sniff, sniff, there won't be any vampires in my campaign, and not too many level draining undead, at least in the first years of it. I do it because it will be a surprise for them not to find them, as well a challenge for me to use something else as villains (mind flayer? Mmm ...).

Step by Step

This step-by-step approach works best for a Ravenloft native party.

However, some parts can work well for a “Weekend in Hell” type adventure in a non-Ravenloft campaign or a campaign with some outlanders.

Those steps are:

- Orientations of the campaign.
- Starting experience level of the PCs.
- Class they want to play.
- Characteristics and background of these PCs.
- Making a list of interesting adventures ideas.
- Putting these ideas in sequence.
- Setting the campaign in the Ravenloft timeline.
- Get information on important domains.
- Stuffing the campaign with NPCs.
- Establishing links between everything.

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1) **Determining the orientations of the campaign.**

The RL DMG has many choices of possible campaign types: are the PCs heroes? Monster hunters? Commoners turned heroes? Mystery hunters? Scholars? There are many alternatives to the traditional "adventurers waiting in a tavern" in a Ravenloft campaign.

This choice of campaign type has an influence (and is influenced by) the alignment of the PCs. Most are good (or neutral, or a mix of both), but evil PCs looking for redemption is also possible (for example: "New rules for the redeemed" by Dion in the USS 2002).

A third thing to check is the level of maturity for the campaign. How far can a DM go in the campaign? If in doubt, discuss it with either one player whom you trust or the whole group. Nothing is more wrong than a DM imposing his frustrations / phantasms / reverie on his players.

2) **Determining the starting level of the PCs.**

We will start with 4th levels PCs, as my players are very experienced in D&D (average well over 15 years for all), and will not like to start over again with low powered 1st-level characters.

Of course, for your campaign, those wanting more challenges can start with lower levelled PCs or even 0-level commoners!

3) **Choosing the class they want to play.**

I privately met with each of the players to ask them what kind of PC they wanted to play in this new campaign. On the whole, it was a balanced thing so I didn't have very much to modify. Otherwise, I would have asked for revisions on their chosen classes.

Clerics chose their deity (with Morninglord or Ezra being the most interesting choice, as per my suggestions to them).

4) **Characteristics and background of these PCs.**

The players performed this step, but I gave them a few guidelines for background. They were told that they may choose whatever background they wanted, but I said there was thing which that united all of them: they are Gundarakites and were up to a few months ago with Ardonk Sverieza's rebels, acting against Barovia's ruling on Gundarak lands!

It strongly hints of possible troubles with Count Strahd, but I have nothing planned on that possibility yet... (although it is something I could use to move them out of town)

When we designed each PC, I made sure that they chose at least one of the RL feats, and not only the ones in the PHB. For example, one character will be a red hair (as I plan to do Castle Forlorn). That will be better for roleplaying as the campaign goes.

5) **Make a list of interesting adventures ideas.**

I threw on a paper all the adventure ideas I'd like to DM in that new campaign.

To do that lengthy review of all possibilities, I browsed through all available sources to me:

- 2nd edition Ravenloft adventures that I own (in paper or in PDF);
- the 3rd edition Ravenloft Gazetteers and other books, particularly for the "dread possibility" boxes;
- the great Book of S_ series of netbooks;
- other Ravenloft netbooks (USS, Quoth the Raven, etc.);
- other stuff on the Kargatane web site (the Online catalogue, the reviews, and CotN-Fiends, for example);

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- reading of other important Ravenloft websites (Alanik Ray, Midway Haven, etc. Please refer to the Kargatane's link section);
- and the most important: personal ideas, of course !

I also added a short list of creatures I wanted to play with in this campaign (ex: Red Widow, Spirit Waif, etc.).

Besides all of these adventure ideas, I wrote the domain where it is taking place (or "any" if that was the case) and the suggested PC levels for that adventure.

6) Sequence of the campaign.

I then bought a large white sheet of paper (4' x 6'). I took my adventure ideas and started putting them in sequence (with an erasable pen!) from what I want to DM first, onto the next adventure idea, then the next, and so on.

It is essentially based on the levels of each adventure, but not only on those criteria. Geography also plays an important part.

This board is now quite messy, as I often changed the sequence until I was happy with it (and it will probably change again in the future as new opportunities and ideas will arise).

For your information, this is more or less what I currently plan to do, in that order (to make it simpler here, home-made adventures are excluded from this list):

- The effigy of Ivan Szimin (BoS) - to make a link with their Gundarakites rebels background
- A short ghost story (may be something derived from "Children in the Attic" from the Haunted Sites Kargatane netbook, or "Barton deForest" from the Forgotten Children netbook). This is to implant the concept that not all monsters are fight encounters.

- Another short story, The Dark Minstrel (Book of Crypts). I'm curious to see how they will react to this odd one.

- The Evil Eye - the first time they will get out of Barovia.

- The White Fiend (CotN-Demon) - possibly in Hazlan or the southern part of Forlorn.

- Castle Forlorn

- Possible diversion on the following theme: the skeleton of Gundar has been found in Hunadora / Professor Arcanus / Civil war in Invidia / Ardonk is Gabrielle Aderre's lover.

- Carnival (encounter while in Mordent to collect information from Van Richten and the twins)

- François de Penible adventure (CotN-Demon)

- Bleak House, Death of Van Richten

- Azenwrath (CotN-Created)

- Servants of Darkness, possibly followed by Shadow Rift (I still haven't made up my mind on this adventure).

(That should keep them busy for a while... ;))

7) The campaign in the Official Ravenloft timeline.

The DM should then set his or her campaign somewhere in the Ravenloft timeline. Please see the timelines in the RL3e book, or the more complete one found on the Kargatane site.

I want to do "Evil Eye" as one of the first modules in my list having its importance in the Ravenloft timeline, so I need to start a few years before the years 746-747 (Malocchio is

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born in 747, according to the timeline). So the campaign will start in 745.

Of course, if the official timeline does not work with what you have planned, you can modify the timeline as you see fit for your campaign!

For my campaign, I needed to make a few changes to the official timeline (the Ardonk Sverieza timeline needs to be moved back in time by about 10 years: Gundar dies in 736, Strahd takes over in 740. In my campaign, Ardonk starts his rebellion sooner, in 742-743. So my players have two-three years of rebellious activities before the campaign starts in 745).

Also, I strongly suggest to start a campaign a few years *before* the current year of the setting (i.e. ± 758 in the RL3e), so you have many years of already written historic events for the entire Core, that you can use as canon background canvas in your campaign.

8) Get information on important domains.

This is done in order to give local flavour to each visited domains.

With the sequence of events planned, I needed all the information I could get on a few domains (Barovia / Gundarak, Invidia, Borca to start). I read everything I could find on these domains, Gazetteer, the Ravenloft setting book, Domain of Dread, with the Kargatane's Online Catalogue as a great reminder.

Taking one sheet for each domain they will cross, I started noting important and mundane local events, superstitions (BoSacrifices), holidays (BoSecrets), etc., to give the players the local flavour background information.

9) Stuffing the campaign with NPCs.

After I had a skeleton of events I wanted to DM, and background information on each domain, I threw on another sheet of paper all the cool NPCs I wanted the PCs to meet during my campaign.

Once more, I browsed through all of the official material, as well as the netbooks, the latter being a great source of good NPCs. The USS 2002 "NPC contest" is also an interesting source of colorful NPCs. I even added some from the MGNB Galen story (the less fantasy ones).

One important note: when possible, especially in the introduction of an adventure, the player characters should meet two NPCs not playing an important role in the current part of the campaign for every "relevant" NPC that they meet. This way, the players never know what to expect.

Other objectives of that diversion:

- It is somewhat predictable if **all** the NPCs they meet are to be important in the next adventure / quest (and you will receive less remarks from PCs such as "OK, she is the next to die")
- I often use them to seed future adventure hooks.
- To have more NPCs than needed is fun due to the confusion it gives to the adventure's intro. However, they also have to meet a few more focused NPCs in order to guide them or the adventure would never start!
- To meet many "irrelevant" NPCs makes them less prone to have suspicions on **everybody** they meet. The great majority of NPCs they will encounter are in fact neutral or good aligned!

Please see the annex to this article for a list of good aligned NPCs in Ravenloft. Unsurprisingly, there are not that many of them!

- It is an excellent way to provide information, conversation, etc. and a cool way to introduce characters you will be able to use afterward, whether you have plans for them (for example: the use of

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François de Penible in my campaign) or not.

The trick for the DM is to "appear" to give the same importance to all NPCs!

Also, when at a start of an adventure, I have a list of 20+ unimportant NPCs, with short descriptive (3-4 words each: personality, manners, type of conversation, etc.), Dragon magazine has articles on making quick NPCs, and a list of 40+ possible NPC names. This secondary list is useful when DMing public events, in taverns, in the streets, in the shops, etc.

I typically have fun when making the secondary NPC name list (nerdish, I know), for example making a list from the Chateaufort-du-Pape wine area producers, or Sauternes wine, or similar "themed" names. These are great names for Dementelieu, by the way!

10) Links between everything.

Like breaking eggs for a cake mix, the making of links was one of the funniest parts. In short, I added the NPCs I had on my "cool NPC" list to my sequence of events board and gave many of them a purpose in the campaign.

Other NPCs are going to be introduced to the players *before* they are taking an active role in the current adventure. These NPCs also often make links between adventures. For example:

- At Karina's festival, they will meet François de Penible who will introduce his theories on pain and nobility. He took temporary refuge from Dementelieu in order to write his first book. The "fiend" adventure will be saved for later in the campaign, and it will be much better as by then they will already know the person.
- At that festival, they will also meet Keith de Lalune (USS 2002). After the Evil Eye events, he will send them for an errand to Lekvarest, for Ezra's church...
- ... where they will meet Tara Kolyana, who will be looking for an escort party to her home domain of Hazlan ("but I would like to avoid

Barovia", she will say - possible adventure hook to be developed on this "dread possibility"). On the way, they will meet the White Fiend, which they will "solve" with the help of Tara. On the way back from Hazlan, they will do the Castle Forlorn adventure.

- Before that, while in Karina for Evil Eye, they will encounter in Gabrielle's entourage Marcos Vedarrak (BoS), who is looking for a meeting with Maloccio for the Falkovnian state (possible adventure hook for later).
- After Castle Forlorn, they will go to Mordent to meet the famous Van Richten for an errand / research (still to be defined). This will introduce the famous character to the PCs. He will discuss with them about some Ravenloft creatures (some that will be met later in the campaign of course, like Azenwrath).
- Then I switch to the "fiend" adventure of François de Penible, and then back to Van Richten with Bleak House.

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11) **Other miscellaneous stuff - to be inserted in the campaign as I see fit.**

Many other ideas didn't took place on the "adventure sequence" white board, for many reasons, one of them being that I wanted freedom, and the capacity to wander away from my planned timeline for a session or two.

This short list includes many interesting NPCs in the Ravenloft Who's Doomed list, the great floating domain of Arlington Farm (USS 2001), a visit to an asylum if a PC needs it (with a possible link with the Nightmare Lands), an encounter with the Red Widow monster, a visit in Darkon and Souragne, etc.

Flexibility is important for events that are impossible to foresee; like the death of a PC, a player leaving the game for a short or even long period of time, or any other important event in the campaign due to the PC's actions.

Conclusion

I hope these guidelines were inspiring. Good luck with your campaign planning!

Joël Paquin

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Annex - A list of Good NPCs

Here's a list of NPCs with these characteristics: they are free willed, have a good alignment, have a fairly detailed background, and they are not linked too heavily to an adventure or a domain. I think most DMs can choose NPCs to use these in his or her campaign from this list - see "Stuffing the campaign with NPCs" in my article.

By the way, in the whole Ravenloft literature (canon and fan-made), these good NPCs are unsurprisingly few in comparison to all the villains! Of course, the list doesn't include evil characters posing as good ones...

I included basic stats, a small resume, and the main places where detailed info is found on each NPC. One should also look at the Kargatane's online catalogue for more information on these NPCs.

The "Ravenloft legendary good NPC":

Van Richten, Rudolph	m, LG, thief	writer of the VRG, disappeared in 750	Bleak House, Chilling Tales, Black Box
Ray, Alanik	m, LN, Great Detective		Gazetteer III, Champions of the Mists
Weathermay-Foxgrove, Gennifer and Laurie	f, LG, Wiz 2nd the twins, niece of Rudolph Van Richten		VR Arsenal I
Weathermay, George	m, NG, Rgr Enemy of Natalia Vhorishkova - werewolf	9/Avn4	VR Arsenal I, Champions of the mists, Black Box
Dragonov, Ivan	m, CG, Rgr 20	well known hero in Ravenloft	Champions of the Mists

A list of good aligned NPC in Ravenloft :

Alexi	m, NG, Ftr 8	Vistani, member of the Wanderers	Heroes of Light
Androv, Sturm	m, LG, Ftr 10th	constable in Kantora	Bo Secrets 1999 - "Lights in the Fog"
Angoriath, Agatha	f, CG, paka rog 6th/Ftr 4		Undead Sea Scrolls 2002 - "Have a few good cats"
Angoriath, Theodora	f, NG, Paka wiz 12 th		Undead Sea Scrolls 2002 - "Have a few good cats"

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Angoriath, Rakaj	m, LG, werepanther Rgr 6/Mon 6	Undead Sea Scrolls 2002 - "Have a few good cats"
Antuns, Joachim	m, LG, wiz 5th Director of the Asylum	Undead Sea Scrolls 2001 - "Asylum"
Brother Dominic	m, NG, Clr 8 Order of the Gardian	Champions of the Mists
Brusov, Rehor	m, LG, monk Head of the "Brotherhood of Psi 8th contemplative power" (Barovia)	of Undead Sea Scrolls 2002 - "Brotherhood of contemplative power"
Canifax, Sir William	m, LG, wiz secluded, retired 12th	Bo Shadows - "Sir William Canifax"
Carnival - various	many freaks with good tendencies, which Hermos (Champions of the mists)	of Carnival
Colaber, Father Morlington	m, LG, P5th (Divinity of Mankind), lives in Paridon	Bo Sorrows - "Brotherhood of Mortis"
Connor, Patrick	m, NG, enemy of the Wolf God in Verbrek Brb8/Rgr5	Heroes of Light
Crawford, Marek	m, LG, Frt 11th retired fighter, more peaceful now: pray (witch hunter) Ezra, friend of Tara Kolyana	Bo Secrets 1999 - "Lights in the Fog"
d'Aloure, Comte Tomas	m, LG, Ftr 7th somewhat secluded (Dementelieu)	Bo Secrets 1999 - "Lights in the Fog"
Drune, Walder	m, CG, thief member of the Society of Huntsmen 3rd	Bo Shadows - "Society of Huntsmen"
Duremke, Likas	m, LG, Pr 7th Reformed church of Bane, Nova Vaasa	Bo Secrets 1999 - "Lights in the Fog"
Durkins, Eward	m, LG mayor, in the "Locknar Cove" domain	Bo Sacrifices - "Locknar Cove"
Duvall, Andres	m, NG, bardic enemy of Azalin lich	RL MC II
Elyzia, Andreas	m, CG, Ftr 6th always follow Rhiannon	Bo Sacrifices - "Valeri Antonin"
Elyzia, Rhiannon	f, CG, Anch 6th follower of Ezra, peaceful	Bo Sacrifices - "Valeri Antonin"
Fritz, Alicia	f, NG, Ftr 6 th lives in Paridon, monster hunter	Bo Sorrows - "Brotherhood of Mortis"
Galbraith, Madeline	f, NG, thief 2nd Ghost watcher / Arcanist 1st	Bo Secrets 1999 - "Lights in the Fog"
Gondegal	m, CG, Avenger (Knight of the Shadow) Ftr10/KoS6	Gazetteer II, Champions of the Mists, Black Box
Haleth	m, CG, thief 6th elf, serve the Order of Keepers (Sithicus)	Bo Souls - "Order of Keepers"
Illhousen, Dr. Gregorian	m, NG specialist in sleep disorder and dream therapy	Nightmare Lands

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Jameld of Hroth	m, NG, Rgr	Sithican elf, enemy of Azrael	VR Arsenal I
Kerutzer, Hilda	14th		
Friedrich	and f/m, LG, Mage artists		Champions of the Mists
Kolyana, Tara	2		
	f, LG, Clr	5 peaceful healer and monster hunter, in	Gazetteer I, Champions of the Mists, Black box (by the way, with a different personality in each of these !)
	(Ezra)	Hazlan	
Kranston, Ronald	m, CG, thief retired	founder of the "Society of Bo Shadows -	
	12th	Huntsmen", lives in Borca	"Society of Huntsmen"
Lady Gowena	f, CG, Ftr 3rd	Maiden, lives in Mordent	Undead Sea Scrolls 2001 - "Lady Gowena"
Lathena, Perseyus	f, CG, wiz 5th	gnome expert	VR Arsenal I
Mader, Corden	m, CG, Aven	member of the Society of Huntsmen	Bo Shadows -
	5th		"Society of Huntsmen"
Maeve	f, Dr 10	druid in Forlorn	Castle Forlorn
Mannon, Hobert	m, CG, Rgr 8th	hired guide and protector	Bo Secrets 1999 -
			"Lights in the Fog"
Martigan, James	m, LG, 0 level	wealthy, look for the destruction of the	Bo Secrets 1999 -
		Phantom Lover	"Lights in the Fog"
Masham, Henry	m, CG	self-created flesh golem	Bo Sacrifices -
			"Henry Masham"
Mitronic, Bela	f, NG, thief 9th	Member of the Knights of the Ashen	Bo Secrets 1999 -
		Bought (see Vorbel, Oswald)	"Lights in the Fog"
Moontide, Jacinth	f, NG, Drd7	sailor on the Nocturnal Sea	Heroes of Light
Morts qui dancet	undead bards	neutral, with good tendencies	Bo Sacrifices -
			"Morts-qui-dancet"
Nabon	m, NG, Ftr3	Stone giant, member of the Wanderers	Heroes of Light
Nahle, Orinda	f, LG, Bar 9th	meistersigner of Chord (Kartakass)	Bo Secrets 1999 -
			"Lights in the Fog"
Nikolas	m, NG, Rgr6	Vistani, member of the Wanderers	Heroes of Light
Otrava, Praesidius Sarlota	m, LG, Anch	Head of the Ezra church in Mordent	Bo Secrets -
	9th		"Anchors of Faith"
Pax, Eia	f, LG, Pal 14	hero, enemy of all undead	Heroes of Light
Phence, Aldo	m, NG, wiz	Member of the Knights of the Ashen	Bo Secrets 1999 -
	10th	Bought (see Vorbel, Oswald)	"Lights in the Fog"
Postoya, Praesidius Levin	m, LN, Anch 11	Head of the Ezra church in Borca	Bo Secrets -
			"Anchors of Faith"
Ragman (Dr. Allandris	m, NG, cursed	absorbs the wounds and affliction of others	Bo Sorrows 1998 -
Murdock)	human		"Tale of the Ragman"
Raining Star	f, LG, Wtch	Hala's follower, Head of the "Hospice of	Undead Sea Scrolls
	12th	Silver Light"	2002 - "Hospice of Silver Light"

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Red Wolf	f, CG, Aven 7th	name: Irvyne Wolfe; enemy of Elena Bo Shadows - "The Faith-hold (with "The Pack") Red Wolf"
Severin, Toret Johann	m, LG, Exp8th	head of the Ezra Cathedral in Lekvarest VR Arsenal I
Shelaugh	f, Dr 12	druid in Forlorn Castle Forlorn
Silverleaf, Cian	f, LG, Ftr 4th	elf, lives in Sithicus Heroes of Light
Snowmane, Larissa	f, NG, Dr 6	own a river boat Champions of the Mists
Stewart, Francis	m, LG	militia leader, in the "Locknar Cove" Bo Sacrifices - "Locknar Cove"
Stillwater, Robin	m, LG, Rgr3	Half-elf, looking for adventure Heroes of Light
Sunstar, Jander	m, CE (book), CN or CG (me)	vampire, enemy of Strahd Champions of Darkness
Suren, Shih	m, LG, Pal6	Caliban, operates in Darkon Heroes of Light
Tallwich, the Giant of Nartok	m, CG, Shaman 7th (giant)	hides in the forest Bo Secrets 1999 - "Lights in the Fog"
Tarinalas	m, NG, Rgr 7th	elf kender, serve the Order of Keepers Bo Souls - "Order of Keepers"
Tatters, Kattinker	f, CG, Sor 8	gnome, flamboyant personality Heroes of Light
Vorbel, Oswald	m, NG, Ftr 14th	Founder of the Knights of the Ashen Bo Secrets 1999 - Bought, a secret society helping those who "Lights in the Fog" wants to flee Falkovnia
Whitmoor, Celia	f, LG, Ftr 6th	(infected werewolf) Bo Souls - Celia Whitmoor"
Wolfe, Carnagan	m, CG, thief 7th,	Mountain Loup Garou Bo Secrets - "Carnagan Wolfe"
Wollcote, Dr. Henry	m, NG	doctor, can raise dead, obsessed by the Bo Shadows - "Dr "rot" Henry Wollcote"

Also, various NPC can be found in the "NPC contest" article (Undead Sea Scrolls 2002 - "Peoples to Meet in the Land of Mists").

If you think of other NPCs that should be in my list, please tell me, I'll update it.



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OF VISIONS INDUCED BY COMA

AN ARTICLE BY DR. ILLHOUSEN FOR THE
DEMENTLIEU FACULTY OF MEDECINE COUNCIL

By: Joël Paquin

"It is by no means certain that our individual personality is the single inhabitant of these our corporeal frames... We all do things both awake and asleep which surprise us. Perhaps we have cotenants in this house we live in."

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894),
The Guardian Angel

Dr Illhousen's new work !
He expanded his
researches to a
fascinating field: the
visions dying people
sometimes have, and their
dread consequences.

This article is in the fashion of Journal of
Dr Illhousen or Van Richten's guides. Notes for
the DM appear as boxed text such as this one.

Introduction by Dr.
Illhousen

I again take the pen on a nearly moonless night. It is now a few years since I've put down my theories on nightmares and of the foul beings feeding on our fears.

I am Dr. Gregorian Illhousen, Chief physician of the Clinic for the Mentally Distressed in Egertus, Nova Vaasa. My journal exposing nightmares was first published a few years ago. In a nutshell, my theories is that there are lurkers in our dreams, exacerbating our concerns and fears in order to feed on these negative emotions. While that field of research through nightmares and madness is nearly endless and could easily take more then a lifetime to explore and comprehend, I recently expanded my researches to a similarly fascinating field: the visions dying people sometimes have.

I found that when people are raised from the dead, or cured from a coma by a healer's practice or healing magic, many have fantastic dream-like tales mostly of short duration. Many similarities with the mechanics of dreams led me to suspect the involvement of the Nightmare Court: there is a consistency of the visions experienced by people of different ages, languages, cultures, religions, backgrounds and education. I first suspected an unknown seventh member of the Court. However, thankfully I do not have proof toward this involvement.

My researches and observations point that many persons in the unfortunate situation of being temporarily near death from injuries or illness have similar visions or eerie experiences. These tell-tales are often thought of as midwives tales by most. It is not only superstitions or tales

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to frighten the weak minded : there is a phenomena worthy of explorations by scholars.

By "dying person", I mean those who get injured to the point of being unconscious, or fall into a coma. That they were brought back from healing, or did die and were raised from the dead, doesn't matter. What is important is the comatose state those persons have experienced.

This article applies to people falling to 0 hit points, or those in the -1 to -9 hit point range. These characters are normally unconscious. That they are stabilised or not is not relevant.

It is thus very difficult, if impossible, to experiment on subjects in this condition, and highly unethical anyway in my opinion. In order to continue my research on this subject, I have written to my colleagues in other asylums, to friendly scholars and to adventurers' guilds in order to collect as many testimonies as possible. Surprisingly, in a bit more than over a year, I was able to compile nearly 125 accounts of such things. I've carefully analysed them and, as I suspected, there are many similarities between them: the shady area near death has similar rules as the dreams and nightmares.

Following are my observations resulting from analysis and cross-checks.

Occurrence

Not all dying persons have these kinds of visions, or recall them when they are well again. My best estimate is that when people are dying, they experience visions about half of the time.

Persons who have sudden or unexpected deaths have fewer chances of experiencing such visions than people having a traumatic event leading to coma, such as a father put through a coma while trying to save his children from the fierce jaws of wolves. Also, strangely, adventurers have higher chances of occurrence for these phenomena, and not only because of

their lifestyle bringing more hazards in their existence.

Analysis shows that people have three types of dying "visions", for lacking better words to communicate the idea: they feel like a ghost watching the current situation, or they visit an eerie place of darkness. More rarely, people have nightmarish visions. It is the latter that prompted me to start investigating the phenomena.

A successful will save DC 15 is what it takes to avoid having "near death" visions. Apply the following penalties to the check:

Sudden, quick death +0

Highly traumatic / foreseen death / feared death - 3

High intelligence (14 or more) - 1
(people with higher intelligence are more sensitive to death and its consequences)

High level
4-6th - 1
7-9th - 2
10-13th - 3
14th and more - 4
(character with higher levels have witnessed death often, and have thought of their own disappearance and its consequences)

If missed, check on the following table for appropriate vision type:

DC missed by:	Event:
1 - 4	Ghost-like dream
5 - 7	Place of darkness
8 or more	Nightmare

First vision type: ghost-like dream

The most common type of vision is to

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experience a short, dream-like trance where the subjects "see" the place where his or her body is. One recurring aspect of those accounts is that the subject is "floating" over the scene where the body is. In fact, people have the feeling they exited their body and they are floating bodiless.

What is eerie is that the subject - in a comatose state - seems to see and hear all that's said or done near his body, even if the subjects eyes are closed for example. When the subject is brought back to consciousness, he or she is able to tell of the experience, and with details he or she could not have noticed in a coma state. The person's description of who was where and what happened, with sometimes many detail, can be frightening.

One could argue that the brain probably continues to work when unconscious, hears what is happening, and recalls it when brought back to consciousness. Like most human experiences, the vision can have a biologically-based trigger; but its impact is most often felt as a spiritual event. It could also be a proof of the priest's teaching, where some aspect of human consciousness may be independent of the body and may survive physical death.

But there is more than that. Consider the following examples where hearing and vision were impaired:

Case #1: Erik (8 years old, Egertus, Nova Vaasa), who was healed by Joshua Curvedtree, healer (I personally know Joshua and he has my trust). Erik fell from a tree head first and went into coma, eyes closed. The local healer was quickly fetched and saved the boy.

Upon waking up, the boy told a strange tale:

I had a dream where I was up in the tree. I saw my mommy crying. She was holding me in her arms. I was not moving. My head and face were full of blood. I wanted to let her know I was fine, but she couldn't hear me. I saw the

healer arrive and he said to my mommy that Hala could not want me to leave my family now. He put strange dried herbs in a bottle of water, shook it, and made me drink. When preparing the bottle for me to drink, my cat Spotty came to sniff the herbs but the healer gently chased it with his foot. Then it ended and I woke up in my mommy's arms. My head was hurting but I didn't cry.

Additional notes from Joshua:

When I arrived, the boy was in a deep coma, unmoving, and wasn't stun. I don't think he could hear what I said. Moreover, his bloody face was in her mother's arms, so he could not have seen me chasing his cat. After a few minutes, when he woke up, he told his mother the dream he just had. She wasn't listening to his words, for being too happy her boy was well, but his tale sent shivers on me when I realised something strange just happened.

Case #2: Gilos (aged 19, Karg, Darkon) was attacked by zombies and fell in the water. His tale when he woke up (I stressed some details by underlining them):

I was fishing with two friends in the pond, when the two waking dead attacked. They sprung from the water behind me and attacked. I fell face first in the murky water. Then I saw everything that followed from the air, like 20 feet from above: my friends shouting and fighting back the zombies with their fishing knives. I was watching it while feeling very quiet. It was like a peaceful dream, even if the events I was witnessing were horrible and I saw my body drowning in the water. I also saw the rescue by Aldea, a ranger. She destroyed the monsters quickly with her powerful arrows.

Then she saw me and turned me face up and got my head out of the

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water. She said "Oh, thank you Ezra, he can be saved" and made me drink a magic potion. The dream stopped and I was coughing water.

When he woke up, Gilos told his friends and the ranger the "dream" he just had - the details he gave were all accurate. Since his head was completely in the water, he could not have seen and heard what was going on.

First vision type: ghost-like dream

This dream-like experience lasts for a short period of time: 3-12 minutes, or the end of the person's comatose state (i.e. back to one hit point or higher) - but not death: a person raised from the dead could "see" and recall a few minutes after his or her clinical death.

Ask the player with a dying PC to leave the room after his or her PC's entry in coma. Then take careful notes of the scene (who did or said what) for the duration of the experience.

Then go to the player and privately describe the player the scene happening around his body, in a tell-tale "floating" experience, with as much detail as possible.

Tell him he feels weightless, peaceful, emotionless.

Fiendish DM can seed doubts of possible unwanted consequences in the player's mind by adding sentences to the description such as "if all is what it seems", "it is unearthly good", "if your senses doesn't betray you", etc.

Consequences: none

course, no two visions are identical, but my analysis showed some patterns.

The pattern (and any single experience) includes all of these things: After a few disorienting moments, where people often feel sick, they see a light, far in the darkness. They all feel compelled toward it. The vision ends while they are moving toward that light. They have the impression they "returned" to their body.

Interestingly, many wake up from that vision with a renewed, strong belief or conviction toward a cause.

Case #3: Father Martins (41 years old, Borca), when a brick wall fell on him by accident. He didn't die from his wound, but was unconscious.

When the bleeding wouldn't stop, I knew I was dying in my beloved Cathedral. I was alone in the dark. It was cold and humid. I felt dizzy and wanted to be away from there. Then there was a golden kind of light, brighter than the sun, but it didn't hurt my eyes. I never wanted anything as much as to go into that light. I felt totally at peace. Then I heard my own father, who died when I was a kid telling me about Ezra's goodness. The next thing I knew, I was slammed back into my body. It felt like a wet sock, and the pain was just awful.

After the event, Father Martins had a renewed faith in his church and takes all possible time healing the sick and helping the poor.

Second vision type: A place of darkness

Without exceptions, those having this type of vision find themselves in darkness. Of

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Case #4: From Van Richten's notes, shared on one of the many discussions we had.

A wizard friend once fell in battle when we attacked the hag. We were able to arrange for him to be raised by a friend anchorite. He told us that when he fell, he found himself in the dark. The darkness was menacing at first, but after a while, his eyes grew better in the dark and he saw he was in an old library, one he never went to before. It was filled with very old and dusty books. He then had the sense he could understand everything, of knowing how the universe works, if he had time to read all the books.

Then he said a light in the distance called him, and he understood he should not be in this library. He reluctantly had to leave the library.

Case #5: Csepan (32 years old, ex-Gundar, Barovia), account sent to me by the chief of a Kresk asylum. He is a locally well known ranger, who died while fighting wolves. Priests raised him later.

I immediately found myself standing in a vertical tunnel. It was dark or but there was a rush of brilliant white fog rushing upward through the tunnel. My brother Varady, who died when I was 15, was on the other side of the upward rushing fog. I felt for an instant that Varady's hand reached out towards me across the rushing fog. He wanted to bring me with him. But I refused: "Varady I have to stay and protect the children." In seconds his presence moved into the rushing fog and upward he went through the tunnel. I stood there and cried. It felt like for hours. Then the tunnel disappeared.

Second vision type: a place of darkness

Describe the player a vision of standing in complete darkness. The PC can't feel the ground. All magical items or spells won't work (an item won't work, a spellcaster will find he does not have the spell in mind, ready to cast - whatever the choice of spells on his PC sheet).

It seems to last much longer then in reality, i.e. 30 minutes or more. Make sure to leave him plenty of time for anxiety and feelings of helplessness.

Then make him or her feel manipulated by unseen forces: when the light is seen from far, tell the player he feels attracted towards it. If he resists, tell him the attraction is growing stronger: have him roll a Will save DC 15 each round until the roll is missed.

Consequence: At the end of the vision, a will DC 15 is made. Success means the vision has no consequence - the PC just remembers the vision.

If the roll is missed, select a cause, a belief that is implanted in the PC's mind. It is usually a strong religious feeling (if the PC was religious) or a good cause (a faith in a mentor or a public personality, a good cause (an orphanage, etc.)). It is usually something the PC was considering sympathetically before the event.

If the DC is missed by 3 or less: upon waking up, the PC remember the vision and has a confuse feeling that the selected cause is something worthy and that he should work for it.

If the DC roll is missed by 4 or more: a strong suggestion has been implanted in the PC's mind - he is now fanatic of that cause. The cause is now an obsession. The PC will do all he can to help the cause. A will DC 15 should be rolled after one month and each month afterward to end the mild insanity.

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Third vision type: Nightmarish visions

Lastly, the third type of visions of the type I've begun to known well: a nightmarish type of visions. This type varies the most and there is no constant characteristic to them, other then being prompted from nearly dying. Upon waking up, the subject of this awful type of dying vision remembers with vivid detail the nightmare. It seems very real to them, and perhaps it was. For most people this experience is unpleasant or terrifying. They are confused for about 10 minutes, as they believe the nightmare was real. But reality takes much longer for some subjects to take hold of and change the nightmare perception to well, just a nightmare.

Thankfully, I've seen just a few cases where the nightmares became recurrent - a good sign of the Nightmare Court's activities, but thankfully the number of similar cases is low, suggesting little involvement of the Nightmare Court in the "dying visions" phenomena.

Case #6: Charles Ward, fighter (23 years old, Richemulot)

I was exhausted. The frog-like monster gave me a final blow with his mace that made me fall on the ground. It was then that I noticed with horror that all my friends were in fact zombies and ghouls ! How did it happen? How could I haven't seen it before?

When he woke up from his priest's healing, he wanted to fight his friends, yelling incoherently. After a few minutes, his friends grappled him and made sure he could not hurt them or himself. His case was treated by a colleague in Mordent. It took him a few days to recover and accept the fact that the nightmare wasn't real.

Case #7: Rebek, mother of two girls (28 years old, Falkovnia)

(...) Then, the Talons attacked us ! I made my horse start running wildly. It ran in the forest until I hit a branch and fell from the horse.

I woke up with a large bruise on the front of my head. I knew somehow that all my friends and my family will die because I ran away and could not protect them. I could even imagine them impaled in the city square ... It is a nightmare I now often have.

Those with the Nightmare Lands boxed set can use this type of guilty visions to attract the Ghost Dancer, and make it a recurrent nightmare.

Case #8: Camilla, a Verbrek wizard, aged 26, had a dreadful vision when she was raised from the dead. She was convinced that she was raised as undead. She had strange body feelings, like a numbness, and was fearing the moment when her companions would find the truth and slay her. She ran away from town for the woods, and came back two days afterward, now realising it was just a nightmare.

Case # 9: Hubert, anchorite (24 years old, Mordent). He had a vision similar to the "place of darkness" vision type, but a nightmarish thought was seeded in his mind.

A cloudy grey mist formed around me. It had sparkling white pinpoints of light within it, and I seemed to float higher and higher when I saw a bright white light in the distance. I knew it was Ezra herself ! It grew in brilliance, yet it didn't cause any discomfort to my eyes. At the same time I felt a pulling sensation from the light. Then I saw Ezra smiling, but her smile was so evil ! It was so horrible to realize my faith was based on lies and deceptions !

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He was for a time convinced that Ezra lied in her teachings, and that She is evil. He is now back to his normal priestly life, but is still shaken by the nightmare.

Case #10: Excerpts from Tara Kolyana's journal, that she shared with me in Hazlan.

When I heard of the accident, I ran as fast as I could to help the wounded. I helped people and fortunately, nobody did die, even if a few came close.

One of them, a Rashemani, told me when he awoken from near death: "I was alone in the dark. I could hear noises, like moans, and I could see figures in the distance. They were people wearing grey robes, and they were faceless. I could not tell if they were Mulans or Rashemanis. I don't know why, but I knew they were in torment. They were gesturing for me to join them. I realized it would be that way forever if I joined them. Then I saw a light in the distance, behind them. It looked like the tell-tale reflection of the fires of hell. Being there was so horrible. What did I do to deserve it? I fear dying!"

Case #11: Notes from a failed suicide (the person asked me to remain anonymous).

I lost consciousness. I could hear this high-pitched laughter, but I couldn't tell where it was coming from. Then I could sense that demons were standing around me, laughing and enjoying it. They thought my death was funny. I was scared. I knew I was about to die and be their slave.

Third vision type: Nightmarish visions

The nightmare types are endless and DM could use all their fiendishness to propose horrific visions and encourage role playing them.

Other possible option would be encountering the presence of deceased loved ones or other meaningful persons.

Consequences: All subjects will believe for a short period of time (2-20 minutes) that the nightmare is real.

After that period, have the subject roll a Will DC 15 or he will continue believing the nightmare is reality for one day. Then roll each day until a successful roll ends it.

Conclusion

I would like to thank you for the time taken in considering my article for your Journal of Medicine. I understand its contents are difficult to believe at first, but it is the result of careful analysis of numerous cases. The new science of exploring the mind is a fantastic field. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any question, or for submitting new "dying visions".

Dr. Gregorian
Illhousen

More thanks

Many thanks to Shane Lacy Hensley and Bill Slavicsek for creating the wonderful Nightmare Lands Ravenloft accessory (TSR # 1124), a highly recommended reading (2nd edition). The great Dr. Illhousen character I borrowed for this article made his first appearance in this must read boxed set.

For those wanting to know more on near death events, I'd suggest the following web site, that seems less prone to spectaculars or

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mysticism : *The International Association for*
Near-Death Studies at
<http://www.iands.org/iands/>

(for the record, I do not believe in the mystical aspect in such "near death" events, and was just tempted to adapt this cool concept to Ravenloft !).



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READY, AIM, FIRE...

FIREARMS IN RAVENLOFT REVISITED

By: Morten Olsen aka
Shady, with Bill
Theodoris and Jaagup Irve

A new look at firearms
rules for Ravenloft, with
a portrait of famous
gunsmith of the core.

In this article I will apply a new look to firearms in Ravenloft. The problem with firearms as they are presented in the standard rules is that there are no incentives to use them. In most cases a crossbow or a bow would be better (a bow or a crossbow doesn't require a feat to use, the damage is almost the same and bows and crossbows can be used no matter what the weather conditions). The advantage of ordinary bows over firearms grows even bigger, when multiple attacks are gained at higher levels. If bows and crossbows were superior to firearms on Earth, as they are in D&D, then nobody would have been using firearms on Earth in the Dark Ages. As this wasn't the case, the rules for firearms have to be tweaked to give an incentive to use firearms in the "Lands of Mist".

Normally it requires the exotic proficiency [firearms] feat to shoot a firearm in Ravenloft. But one of the reasons that firearms were superior to bows was that even an untrained conscripted soldier could use a musket without having spent an extended period of time training with the weapon. If the same soldier was to use a bow, he had to have trained with the weapon for a notably longer time to be able to use it.

All characters hailing from domains labelled CL 8 or 9 are automatically proficient with firearms. Characters from other domains must use a feat to gain proficiency with firearms as normal. If a character from a domain with a CL lower than 8, spends an extended period of time in a domain where firearms are common, she will gain proficiency with all firearms in $[8 - \text{CL of originating domain}]$ months.

Another real-world characteristic of firearms was that their invention spelled the end of the armoured knight on the battlefield. This happened because armour in most cases didn't protect against a bullet fired from a musket or a pistol.

All firearms are given a penetration rating, ranging from 1 (weakest) to 10 (strongest). If a firearm is used on target within $[\text{penetration rating}/2]$ range increments of the user, then the user can deduct the penetration rating of the weapon from the target's armor bonus, to a maximum equal to the armor bonus. Magical armor decreases the range from which a weapon can penetrate armor. For each plus the armor possesses the penetration range decreases by one to a minimum of zero. The wearer of a magical armor can always use the armor's deflection bonus as a modifier to his armor class. Shields don't offer any protection against a firearm (a magical shield still offers its deflection bonus to the target's AC).

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Example: a knight with an AC of 20 (half-plate armor, large steel shield and a dexterity of 12) is fired upon by a musketeer wielding a wheel lock musket with a penetration rating of 6. The knight is within 3 increments of the musketeer. The knight's AC against the shot would be 12 (10+7-6+1). The same example with the knight wearing chainmail would give AC 11 (10+5-5+1). If the half-plate were +3 and the shield +1 the AC would be 16 (10+7+3+1-6+1) if the knight were within 3 (6-3) range increments and 22 if not.

The early firearms had a tendency to make more noise and commotion than having a real effect on the enemy. A lot of people wounded by gunfire lived to tell the tale. But when a musketeer got lucky, then it was possible to take down an elephant with a single shot.

All firearms except the handgonne have a special critical modifier. Whenever a roll to confirm if a critical hit has taken place comes up with a number high enough to be a critical hit, a new roll is made to see if that threat is confirmed. If this roll comes up high enough to imply a threat, a new roll is made and so on. For each confirmed critical hit the damage multiplier rises by 1, starting with $\times 2$ (ie. $\times 3$ if two critical hits are confirmed, $\times 4$ if three are confirmed etc.).

In the standard rules the loading time of a firearm is a standard action, meaning that it is possible to fire a shot every single round of combat. As a round is approximately 6 seconds long, then it would be possible to fire 10 shots a minute with a single firearm. In real life, a person able to reload his musket very quickly would at most be able to fire 4 shots a minute.

The loading times of all firearms are increased, as shown in the table:

Table 1: Reload times of various firearms

	Gunpowder	Prepacked Cartridge
Handgonne	10 Rounds	5 Rounds
Matchlock Pistol	8 Rounds	4 Rounds
Matchlock Musket	9 Rounds	5 Rounds
Wheel lock Pistol	7 Rounds	4 Rounds
Wheel lock Musket	8 Rounds	4 Rounds
Flintlock Pistol	5 Rounds	3 Rounds
Flintlock Musket	6 Rounds	3 Rounds

A pre-packed cartridge is a small amount of gunpowder packed in a paper wrapping. The cartridge is inserted into the barrel of the gun together with the bullet. To be used properly the cartridge should be opened before being inserted. A musketeer would often do this with the teeth. This would often colour both the teeth and the gums of a musketeer black. A pre-packed cartridge thus enables a shooter to reload much quicker than is possible with the use of gunpowder, as shown in the table. A small amount of gunpowder still has to be put on the flash pan to ignite gunpowder in the barrel.

New Feat:

Improved firearm proficiency [General]

You are well trained in the use of firearms.

Prerequisite: Exotic weapon proficiency [firearms] or hailing from a domain with a CL of 8+

Benefit: You reload a firearm more rapidly than others, halving the normal time it takes to reload a firearm (rounded up). If you use want, you can instead use the normal time it takes to reload, if you do this, then the chance of your weapon misfiring is cut in half (rounded up).

This feat doesn't apply to the use of blunderbusses.

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A common problem with firearms was that they had a tendency to misfire. Many muskets blew up in the user's hands, maiming or even killing the user.

All firearms have a chance to misfire as shown on this table. If the original attack roll comes up with a roll in the range given in each entry a misfire occurs.

Table 2: Chance of misfire for various firearms

	Gunpowder	Prepacked cartridge
Handgonne	1-8	1-7
Matchlock Pistol	1-7	1-6
Matchlock Musket	1-7	1-6
Wheel lock Pistol	1-6	1-5
Wheel lock Musket	1-6	1-5
Flintlock Pistol	1-5	1-4
Flintlock Musket	1-5	1-4

The roll that resulted in the misfire should be used together with the result of a d8 (rolled by the DM) to cross-reference table 3 to give the result of the misfire.

Table 3: Result of misfire

		Random roll (d8)							
Attack roll		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	1	Burn	Stuck barrel	Stuck barrel	Hanging shot	Dud	Dud	Dud	Dud
	2	Caught fire	Burn	Stuck barrel	Stuck barrel	Hanging shot	Dud	Dud	Dud
	3	Barrel blown	Caught fire	Burn	Stuck barrel	Stuck barrel	Hanging shot	Dud	Dud
	4	Barrel blown	Barrel blown	Caught fire	Burn	Stuck barrel	Stuck barrel	Hanging shot	Dud
	5	Explosion ×1	Barrel blown	Barrel blown	Caught fire	Burn	Stuck barrel	Stuck barrel	Hanging shot
	6	Explosion ×2	Explosion ×1	Barrel blown	Barrel blown	Caught fire	Burn	Stuck barrel	Stuck barrel
	7	Explosion ×3	Explosion ×2	Explosion ×1	Barrel blown	Barrel blown	Caught fire	Burn	Stuck barrel
	8	Explosion ×4	Explosion ×3	Explosion ×2	Explosion ×1	Barrel blown	Barrel blown	Caught fire	Burn

Explosion ×(1-4) (Su): The barrel of the gun is blown up, small metal fragments hit the user dealing 1d8 hp damage in the process per multiplier (i.e. 2d8 for explosion ×2, 3d8 for explosion ×3, etc.) a successful reflex save (DC 12+explosion multiplier) halves the damage. The gun is destroyed in the process. No bullet is fired.

Barrel blown: The barrel of the gun blows up, instantly destroying the firearm. No bullet is fired.

Caught fire: The gunpowder catches fire. A full round action is required to extinguish the fire. The weapon is destroyed if the fire is not extinguished within one round. If the fire is extinguished, then the gun can be salvaged and used again with a craft (gunsmithing) roll against DC (15). No shot is fired.

Burn: The user is burned by gunpowder. The character takes 1d4 hp damage and must make a reflex save (DC 10) to avoid catching on fire.

Hanging shot: The gunpowder ignites but doesn't fire. The shot goes off one round later, travelling to the maximum range of the weapon. If any targets are located in the direction of the shot when it goes off, an attack roll is made against the target. No attack modifiers are added to this roll.

Stuck barrel: The gunpowder and bullet are stuck inside the barrel. The gun cannot be fired until the barrel is cleaned. To clean the barrel a craft (gunsmithing) roll must be made against a DC of 10.

Dud: The gunpowder doesn't ignite. The character can try to fire the weapon again on her next action

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When fired all firearms make a lot of noise and create a cloud of smoke around the firer. Only the most aggressive animals or those accustomed to firearms will not flee when a firearm is fired in their vicinity. Most of the savage species inhabiting the “Lands of Mist” will also flee.

If a firearm is fired within hearing range of an animal, the animal must make a fear save (DC 15) or flee. Natural predators gain a synergy bonus to this roll equal to the number of other animals of the same species present (i.e. +1 for two animals, +2 for three etc.) to a maximum of +5 for a group of more than 6 animals. An animal can be trained to ignore gunfire. This takes a Handle Animal check (DC 15). Animals controlled by a darklord ignore the fear effect of firearms. Animals controlled by others gain a bonus to this saving throw equal to the charisma modifier of the controller. Any individual hailing from a domain with a CL of 5 or less must also make a fear save (DC 10 + (8 – CL of domain from where the character hails), if the character is not accustomed to gunfire.

It is very difficult to use a firearm if the gunpowder gets wet. Even in damp conditions, it's difficult to keep the gunpowder dry. As firearms developed over time, more care was taken to ensure that the gunpowder was kept dry. It is noted in the descriptions of the various weapons how susceptible to the weather conditions each weapon is. All non-pistol firearms come with a ramrod included in the price.

Pistols and muskets are in many ways almost identical with respect to how they are used. But there is one notable difference: a pistol is close combat weapon, where a musket is used on longer distances. Unless it is noted otherwise, it takes a standard action to fire a firearm.

All firearms except the handgonne can be fired as a standard action. All muskets (including handgonnes) allow an opponent threatened by a character firing a musket to make an attack of opportunity against the attacker. Pistols are never subjects to this, as they are intended for use in close quarters.

Description of the various firearms

Handgonne: The handgonne (or hand cannon) is the first available firearm. On Earth it appeared in the 14th century BC, making it a CL 7 weapon in Ravenloft. The handgonne is a heavy metal tube approximately 3 feet long with a handle made of wood. When used, the handgonne is held in one hand, with the butt of the weapon braced against the shoulder holding the rod. The other hand should then be used to light the gunpowder through a small hole in the rod with a lit twig. As the user has to light the gunpowder manually, it takes longer to fire a handgonne than any other firearm. The wick also had to be lit in advance for the weapon to be able to fire. The handgonne is a very inaccurate weapon, because only one hand is used to hold the weapon when it is fired. It is possible to compensate for this by using a Y-shaped brace or a wall to support the barrel of the weapon. Another problem with the handgonne is that it has the greatest chance of any available firearm to misfire. On Earth there aren't many handgonnes left because of the guns' (gonnes) habit of exploding. Also in rainy or foggy weather it's almost impossible to use a handgonne, because the handgonne is constructed without sheltering the gunpowder from the elements. A handgonne could be constructed with additional barrels so the weapon could be used to fire an additional shot per barrel without the need for reloading. It takes a long time to reload a handgonne as the gunpowder has to be properly stuffed down the barrel of the gun.

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If a handgonne is fired without the use of a brace or if other means of steadying the weapon aren't taken, a -4 circumstance penalty is applied to the attack roll. It takes a full round action to fire a handgonne. A handgonne has a 90% chance of not being able to fire in rainy weather (95% in heavy rain). In general damp conditions this chance drops to 75%. Extra barrels cost +300 Gp and add 8 lbs to the total weight of the weapon. Also, for each additional barrel added, a -2 inherent penalty is applied to the attack roll. The reload time shown in Table 1 is per barrel. The DC to create a handgonne is 10.

Matchlock: Matchlock weapons were used from the middle of the fifteenth century and remained in use until the early 1700's on Earth. Matchlock weapons are therefore CL 8 weapons. The biggest advantage a matchlock weapon had over a handgonne was that matchlock weapons were equipped with a flash pan. The flash pan is a little cup on the side of the weapon on which a small amount of gunpowder is placed. When ignited, the gunpowder on the flash pan would lead the fire into the barrel and thereby propel the bullet. This made the matchlock quicker to fire than the handgonne. On the earliest matchlock weapons, the user still had to manually light the gunpowder, with a burning wick or cord, but later on, a spring mechanism arranged for a burning cord to be applied to the gunpowder when the trigger was pressed. This improved the accuracy of the weapon, as a musketeer could use both of his hands to hold the musket. Like the handgonne the wick or cord used to light the gunpowder still had to be lit before the firearm could be used. With time a flash pan cover was included in the design, making the gun more proof to bad weather.

The price in Table 4 is for a matchlock weapon with a spring mechanism and a flash pan cover. The price is 50 gp less for earlier versions of a matchlock musket.

Early versions of matchlock muskets require a brace or other means of steadying the weapon to avoid a -4 circumstance penalty to hit. Matchlock pistols exist only with the spring mechanism. A matchlock weapon without a flash pan cover has a 75% chance of not being able to fire in rain (90% in heavy rain), and a 50% chance in damp weather. A weapon with a cover has a 50% chance of not firing in rain (75% in heavy rain) and 25% chance in damp conditions. The DC to craft a matchlock weapon is 15.

Wheel lock: Next up was the wheel lock. On earth it appeared around 1517, making the wheel lock a CL 9 weapon. The biggest difference between the earlier guns and a wheel lock was that the wheel lock created the fire to light the gunpowder by itself. It did so by having a little piece of flint (called a pyrite) attached to a spring-loaded arm. When the trigger was pressed, a small metal would be sent spinning. The arm would then strike the wheel, creating small sparks capable of igniting the gunpowder. The pyrite would eventually deteriorate, making a change necessary every 5-10 shots. A wheel lock weapon is better than a matchlock weapon in keeping the gunpowder dry.

A wheel lock has a 5% chance of not firing in rain (25% in heavy rain) and 2% a chance of not firing in damp conditions. The pyrite required to create the spark is capable of firing 5-15 shots (2d6+3) before needing to be replaced. This requires a craft (gunsmithing) check with a DC of 5. It requires a craft [firearms] check with a DC of 20 to create a wheel lock weapon

Flintlock: The most advanced firearm available is the flintlock. On Earth it first appeared in 1612, making it a CL 9 weapon in Ravenloft. But it can only be found with certainty in domains more advanced than CL 9, as there only are 4 gunsmiths in the Core capable of creating flintlock weapons. The difference between the

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flintlock mechanism and the wheel lock mechanism is that the rotating wheel of the wheel lock has been replaced with a striking surface. This made the design simpler and cheaper to fabricate and at the same time also made the weapon more reliable. By the end of the century, effort was made to create pistols capable of firing multiple shots without reloading by introducing a rotating cylinder. Other flintlock pistols were created with an extra barrel so they could be fired twice before the need to reload. Revolvers—the name given to flintlock pistols with a rotating cylinder—were almost as dangerous to use as they were to being the target of, as they often exploded in the hands of the user. Flintlock weapons had the added advantage that they were almost immune to the effects of weather.

The price in table 4 is for a flintlock in a domain where it is common. In all the domains in the Core, the flintlock should be treated as a CL 10 weapon for price and availability. Pistols can be created with two barrels. This costs an additional 300 gp and adds 2 pounds to the total weight of the weapon. A –1 penalty is also applied to hit because of the stability of the weapon is changed. The chance of misfire is increased to 1-6 (1-5 for pre-packed cartridges). If a cylinder is added to a pistol it adds 4 pounds to the total weight of the weapon and costs +1000 gp. The weapon is capable of firing 6 shots before it needs to be reloaded. The chance of misfire is increased to 1-7 (only pre-packed cartridges are supported by revolvers). The flint lasts 2d20+20 shots before having to be replaced. All flintlock weapons have a 5% chance of not firing in rainy weather (15% in heavy rain). A flintlock weapon can always fire in damp conditions. A flintlock weapon requires its creator to have 8 or more ranks in craft [firearms] and a craft [firearms] check with an DC of 20 to create.

Blunderbuss (see VRA page 12): The standard blunderbuss in VRA is a matchlock weapon. But Blunderbusses of later forms of firearms are also available. All blunderbusses are susceptible to misfiring just like ordinary firearms.

A blunderbuss has the same chance of misfiring as a standard firearm of its type. All blunderbusses cost double as much as the standard musket of its chosen type. A blunderbuss still requires its user to have the exotic weapon proficiency [Blunderbuss] to avoid taking a –4 non-proficiency penalty to hit, but the exotic weapon proficiency [firearms] feat is only required for characters hailing from domains labelled CL 7 or lower. Only blunderbusses made with the early matchlock technology requires a brace to avoid giving the user a –4 circumstance penalty to hit. Wheel lock- and flintlock blunderbusses can be used against targets up to 60 feet away, doing a maximum of 6d4 damage (-1d4 per 10 feet away). For wheel lock and flintlock blunderbusses the DC to avoid being knocked down is increased to 17. The loading time for a blunderbuss is 10 rounds/5 rounds with a pre-packed cartridge no matter the type of blunderbuss. All blunderbusses have the same chance of not being able to fire in bad weather as the corresponding musket.

New Feat: Improved blunderbuss proficiency [General]

You are well trained in the use of Blunderbusses.

Prerequisite: Exotic weapon proficiency [blunderbuss]

Benefit: You reload a blunderbuss more rapidly than others. It only takes you 5 rounds/3 rounds with a pre-packed cartridge to reload a blunderbuss. If you decide to use the normal reload time for a blunderbuss, you can instead have your chance of misfire halved (rounded up).

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Table 4: Firearms in Ravenloft

	CL	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range	Penetration	Weight	Type
Handgonne	7	500 gp	1d8	×3	50 feet	-	10 lb.	-
Matchlock Pistol	8	300 gp	1d8	19-20/special	30 feet	3	6 lb.	-
Matchlock Musket	8	500 gp	1d10	19-20/special	60 feet	5	15 lb.	-
Wheel lock Pistol	9	400 gp	1d8	18-20/special	40 feet	4	6 lb.	-
Wheel lock Musket	9	600 gp	1d10	18-20/special	80 feet	6	15 lb.	-
Flintlock Pistol	9 (10)	300 gp	1d10	18-20/special	50 feet	5	6 lb.	-
Flintlock Musket	9 (10)	500 gp	1d12	17-20/special	100 feet	7	15 lb.	-
Handgonne ammunition (10)	3+	5 gp	-	-	-	-	5 lb.	Bludgeoning
Lead bullets (10)	3+	3 gp	-	-	-	-	2 lb.	Piercing
Silver bullet	3+	5 gp	-1	-	-	+1	-	Piercing
Gunpowder, keg	8+	250 gp	-	-	-	-	20 lb.	-
Gunpowder, horn	8+	35 gp	-	-	-	-	2 lb.	-
Pre-packed cartridge incl. bullet	8+	3 gp	-	-	-	-	**	Piercing
Match cord (15 feet)	7+	10 gp	-	-	-	-	1 lb.	-
Flint or pyrite	3+	10 gp	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brace	3+	5 gp	-	-	-	-	2 lb.	-
Ramrod	7+	2 gp	1d4	×2	-	-	1 lb.	Bludgeoning

Handgonne ammunition: Spherical bullets made of lead. Can only be fired from a handgonne as they are larger than the bullets used for every other firearm available. Sold in bags of ten.

Silver bullet: An ordinary bullet made of silver. Has a -1 material penalty to any damage rolls, but adds +1 to the penetration of the weapon from which it's fired.

Match cord: A special kind of cord treated with a chemical substance making it burn slower than normal cord. Is used to light the gunpowder in matchlocks and handgongnes. Burns 1 inch per minute. Has a 25% chance (35% in heavy rain) of being extinguished per round in rainy weather and a 10% chance in general damp conditions. Takes a standard action to light.

Prepacked cartridge: All pre-packed cartridges include a bullet in the price. All characters proficient with firearms can create their own pre-packed cartridges. This requires 1 ounce of gunpowder, a sheet of paper, a lead bullet and some grease. It then requires a character to make a special Alchemy check, which can be attempted untrained against a DC

of 10. The skill Craft [firearms] gives a +2 synergy bonus to this roll.

Flint or pyrite: This is the small piece of flint (or pyrite) used in wheel lock and flintlock weapons. A skilled gunsmith charges 5 gp for changing the piece of flint.

Brace: A Y shaped brace, used to steady a firearm.

Ramrod: A ramrod is used to stuff the gunpowder down the barrel of a musket or a handgonne. It is included in the price given for muskets in table 4. A ramrod can also be used as a makeshift club. All characters are considered non-proficient in the use of a ramrod as a club, as it isn't designed as a weapon.

Parthian rapier: Parthian rapiers are only made with wheel lock or later technology.

The price of a Parthian Rapier is the same as the pistol it is made of +100 gp. A Parthian rapier requires its own exotic weapon proficiency feat and the exotic weapon proficiency [firearms] to use. A -4 non-proficiency penalty is otherwise applied to the attack roll if the character only has the exotic weapon proficiency [firearms] while a -8 non-

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proficiency penalty is applied if the character lacks both feats. To use the Rapier part of a Parthian weapon requires the exotic weapon proficiency [Parthian Rapier] to avoid a -4 non-proficiency penalty. The exotic weapon proficiency [firearms] is not required to use the rapier part of the weapon. A Parthian Rapier follows all other rules (i.e., loading times, misfire and critical multipliers) given in this article. The parting shot option from VRA can still be used.

Firearms and magic

Through some unknown logic is it almost impossible to enchant a firearm. Only a few gunsmiths are capable of creating a firearm, which can be enchanted. But no gunsmith is able to create a firearm that accepts an enchantment with any certainty. Some sages speculate that this is because modern technology and magic are substitutes for each other rather than complements. Also, creators of less modern versions of firearms find that these are easier to enchant than the more modern versions are. Any attempts to enchant the bullets used in firearms have also been met with failure. It has been discovered that this is because of lead lacks the arcane energies required to take an enchantment. Instead of lead, silver is used as the material for enchanted bullets.

When a PC is trying to enchant a firearm, the DM should check to see if that particular firearm is capable of being enchanted. Any given masterwork firearm will have between 0% and 50% chance of being able to accept an enchantment. If the firearm rejects the enchantment, XP spend by the creator are still lost. Each time an enchanted firearm is used, it has a 1%-10% chance of losing its enchantment, becoming a normal firearm in the process. All firearms lose their masterwork bonus through the enchantment process, even if the attempt fails. The only bullets capable of accepting an enchantment are those made of silver

Masterwork firearms

All masterwork firearms created in the lands of mists, is the product of a famous gunsmith. As each gunsmith imbues a little part of himself in the creation of a masterwork firearm, then no two weapons coming from different gunsmiths will ever be alike. Instead of masterwork firearms having a flat +1 masterwork bonus to attack and damage rolls, all masterwork firearms have a special property that is unique to that weapons creator.

Below are given some examples of firearms created by the best gunsmiths of the Core.

DeLong musket

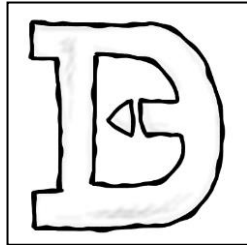
A DeLong musket is created and sold by the gnomish master gunsmith DeLong, who lives in Mordentshire. To buy a musket from DeLong a customer has to show up on the master's doorstep. If the rather eccentric gunsmith decides to invite the customer inside, which isn't always the case, the would-be-buyer must allow the gnome to conduct a lengthy and comprehensive interrogation of the buyer's motives for buying a musket. No one knows for certain which criteria DeLong uses to judge a would-be-buyer's motives as he sometimes won't sell to a person judged by the masses to be worthy of a weapon, while he on other occasions sells muskets to some of the shadiest people in the Core. When a buyer is deemed worthy of buying a musket, he must pay whatever DeLong charges. This varies according to what the buyer is able to spend for a musket. DeLong has on occasions given a poor lad a musket for free, while on other occasions he has sold a musket for as much as 10.000 gp. When a buyer has paid the money charged by the gnome, then he'll get arguably the best gun available in Ravenloft.

All DeLong muskets are created with the flintlock mechanism, as DeLong is one of the few gunsmiths in the core capable of creating these advanced firearms. A DeLong musket has a butt of ebony while all the metal parts are a

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metallic blue. The mark of DeLong is branded on the butt of each and every weapon, identifying it as a work of the gnomish master gunsmith.

The mark of DeLong:



A DeLong musket distinguishes itself by being accurate to a far longer reach than any other known musket. A DeLong musket is also able to take an enchantment with a far greater chance of success than other known muskets.

A DeLong musket is identical to other flintlock muskets except the following: The range increment is 120 feet. The damage is 2d8 and the critical range is 17-20/special. A DeLong musket has a 40% chance of taking an enchantment and only a 2% chance per use of losing the enchantment. A DeLong musket costs whatever the DM sees fit. If an owner of a DeLong musket tries to sell it or if the musket is stolen all masterwork bonuses will be lost. The same will happen if the owner is killed and a stranger tries to claim the weapon. A DeLong musket will lose the stamp on the handle if its masterwork bonus disappears, no matter what caused this to happen.

Göeb guns

Göeb guns are the work of the Lamordian gunsmith Heinrich von Göeb of Ludendorf; the entire von Göeb family is involved in the family business of firearms. Heinrich's brother Arnold is travelling around the Core selling Göeb guns to those willing to pay, be it a petty tyrant, a noble hero or the army of Vlad Drakov.

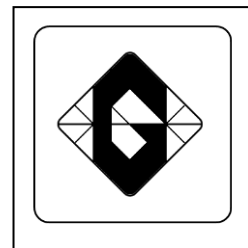
All Göeb guns are wheel lock weapons, created with a butt made of walnut trees while

the barrel has a brownish look. Heinrich creates both muskets and pistols. He still lacks the skill to create masterwork blunderbusses, but he can create ordinary blunderbusses.

Göeb guns are renowned for their reliability. Very few Göeb guns have ever been destroyed by an exploding barrel. Göeb guns are also known for a far greater penetration power than other firearms. Any attempts to enchant a Göeb gun have failed so far. It is speculated that the rational thinking of the lamordian Dakj Fe'nunft is the reason for this.

Both muskets and pistols made by von Göeb only misfire on a 1 or a 2. A von Göeb pistol has a penetration of 7 while a musket has a penetration of 8. All Göeb guns have a 0% chance of taking an enchantment. A musket costs 1000 gp while a pistol costs 800 gp.

The mark of von Göeb:



Nightsky Weapons

One of the most popular gunsmiths in Darkon is the elf Colina Nightsky, living outside of Martira Bay. Shunned by her fellow elves for choosing a rather odd occupation for an elf, Colina thrives among the diverse population of Martira Bay. Colina has 3 apprentices who help her create the weapons that she makes.

Colina creates all forms of matchlock weapons, including blunderbusses. Colina's trademark is the black barrel all her weapons share. Colina usually fashions the butt of the weapon out of a light coloured wood.

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A weapon created by Colina Nightsky can be reloaded faster than other muskets. Also all muskets of Colinas making are more precise than others of their kind. Nightsky Pistols can be loaded with two bullets, making a single shot twice as dangerous. A blunderbuss coming from the smithy of Colina exhibits less kick than others, but the range is equal to that of a wheel lock weapon.

All weapons created by Colina Nightsky can be reloaded 1 round faster than others of its kind. One of Colinas musket costs 850 gp and has a +2 bonus to damage. A pistol of Corinas making costs 800 Gp. It takes 3 rounds extra to load a Nighsky pistol with an extra bullet. The two bullets can only be used on the same target. Two different attack rolls are made, each with a -2 inherent penalty to hit. The misfire chance of the weapon is also increased by 1, when two bullets are fired in one shot. A Nightsky Blunderbuss has a range of 60 feet and does 6d4 damage. The DC to avoid being knocked over is 12. The blunderbuss costs 1.500 gp. All weapons created by Colina have a 25% chance of accepting an enchantment and there is a 4% chance per shot that the enchantment is destroyed.

The mark of Colina Nightsky



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THE SHADOW CURTAIN

AN INTRIGUING LAYER OF GREY BLEAKNESS OVER THE LAND...

"Dear scholar, our universe, that some call the plane of Dread, is said to be a pocket plane within the ethereal plane, isn't it? If so, then tell me why should it have any connection to the plane of shadow? Sure, it is a dark and gloomy realm of dread. Sure, it is an extensive menagerie of undeath and evil, governed by beings so corrupted and evil that they are above comparison to even the most ancient evil gods, believe me on this. That doesn't mean that the Plane of Shadow has any more claim to it than it has to Oerth, where I come from, or any other place. Are you sure there is such a thing here ?"

A conversation with Skeever, year 749

By: Joel Paquin

Not just a higher level
option, the plane of
Shadow in Ravenloft has
many uses for inquirers,
because of a peculiar
emotion-based morphic
trait of the plane !

Notes: This article was written prior to the release of the RL DMG in July 2003. It is coincidental (but cool) that I had a similar idea to "ethereal taint", i.e., strong negative emotions creating near-permanent imagery (in the ethereal sinkholes of evils in the DMG, in the Plane of Shadows in this article) !

Also, in this text, the "material" plane refers to the Ravenloft demiplane.

Introduction

A plane of darkness and evil, Ravenloft is a pocket plane closed to the remaining of the multiverse by the enigmatic entities that created it, for reasons only known to them.

The Ravenloft pocket plane lies hidden in the deep ethereal plane. Up to the Grand Conjunction events (in 740), the plane was enclosed in a bubble of self-containing ethereal space. From the Ravenloft demiplane, planar travel from Ravenloft was restricted to the "border ethereal" (or "near ethereal"). No other planes were accessible.

However, a few wizards have recently discovered that when the Grand Conjunction events created the Shadow Rift, a new coexistent shadowy layer had been added to the demiplane

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of Ravenloft, among other major changes. Perhaps it was there all along, but its discovery is quite recent.

Since 740 - the Grand Conjunction - the most well-informed sages have discussed the idea that Ravenloft is a self-enclosed pocket plane floating in a coexisting closed bubble of ethereal, as well as a closed bubble of shadow matter.

Of course, in Lamordia, few people believe in the existence of the Plane of Shadows, as it doesn't fit anywhere in their cosmology.

However, only the bravest adventurers do visit that plane, as the perils of that magical plane are said to be high. The Ravenloft Plane of Shadow is a place in the image of the Dread Plane: a perpetual twilight place, dark and murky. It is also filled with traces of evil deeds and with shadow creatures.

Everything on that plane is in shades of grey, or black. Other colors are rarely seen, except on visitors that haven't yet been touched by the plane nature (see *index de pénombre* below). However, it isn't dark as night, since a feeble source of light come from the "sky", plunging the shadow realm in a perpetual gloom and twilight.

The Plane of Shadow isn't a new Ravenloft "domain", with its own darklord. It is another dimension, permeating all the plane of Dread material part, like the ethereal plane does.

The Darklords can access the plane of Shadow (the part coexisting "over" their domain), but the sages do not know about it. The presence of a Darklord in the Plane of Shadow haven't been observed or documented.

There is a rumor that Darklords loose many of their powers while in that plane - a false rumor - but few Darklords actually tried to get in that plane and so far they prefer to send minions instead.

Ravenloft plane of shadow traits

The following section uses the *Manual of the Planes* terms and concepts.

The Ravenloft Plane of Shadow is a transitive plane, coexisting with Ravenloft's pocket plane. A limited space exists beyond the near Plane of Shadow, but that "deep" Plane of Shadow isn't connected to the Plane of Shadow of the multiverse. Thus, one cannot use the Plane of Shadow to escape Ravenloft.

Gravity: normal

Time: normal

Size: finite (a "near" - or "border" - plane of shadow, and a limited area lies beyond it – the "deep" plane of Shadow)

Magically morphic: yes, as well as emotion-based morphic traits (see below)

Neutral-evil aligned

Enhanced magic: all shadow-based spells or spells with a shadow component have double duration and effect – please refer to the list of spells in the *Manual of the Planes* (page 62, "option"). Shadow creatures summoned by those spells have double hit dice.

Impeded magic: all light based spells and lights from magical items do not work,.

Dead magic area: a small proportion (5%) of the areas beyond the "near" Plane of Shadow are dead magic areas.

Index de pénombre

The *index de pénombre* is a strange side effect of the morphic plane. It alters the nature of a person's body by creating a permanent link with the plane of Shadows. The link becomes stronger with time and the subject slowly becomes a permanent feature of the plane of

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shadow... up to the point of being unable to go back to the Ravenloft material plane!

A Will save (DC 15) should be made once upon arrival on the plane, and then once for each full 12 hours period spent in the plane of shadow. If that save is failed, the subject's personal *index de pénombre* increase by 5%.

A person with an *index de pénombre* of 0% is untouched by the plane's twisting and the subject appears in full color. With 5% and higher, the person's color turns to shades of grey.

While in the Plane of Shadow, the subject *looks* as if parts of him/herself are turned to shadow in that proportion, starting with the end of the extremities (see table below). The transformation has no physical effect as the subject can still grasp his weapon, use object and isn't able to pass through solid objects.

The suggested visual effects are the following (cumulative):

<i>Index de Pénombre</i>	Visual effect while on the plane of Shadows
5%	one hand look like it turned to a shadow-like substance
10%	both hand
15%	one foot
20%	both feet
30%	one arm
40%	both arms
50%	one leg
60%	both legs
70%	lower trunk
85%	all trunk
95%	head
100%	all body

If the subject goes back to the Ravenloft material plane, his body appearance returns to his normal state. However, the *index de pénombre* effect is cumulative: it is resumed if someone goes back to the Plane of Shadow, at the level it was when the subject left the last time, even if that stay was a long time ago.

DMs should keep secret the *index de pénombre* figure for each players, and only describe the effects of the spell as they happen.

Also, the following table list the effects of the *index de pénombre* connection with the plane of Shadows when back on the Ravenloft demiplane. DM is encouraged to describe the effect as creepy and unnatural:

Index de pénombre's cumulative effects on the material plane:

20%	The subject is pale, and does shun very bright light as it makes his eyes hurts.
30%	His personal shadow moves on its own once in a while (5% per hour for it to happen, effect last for 1-10 minutes). This shadow is harmless and usually mimics the occupation of the subject at another time in the previous day.
40%	The subject's mere presence dim normal lights by 25% in a 30' radius. Magical lights are unaffected.
50%	Spell casting effect (see below)
60%	The subject is now ignored by lower undead (with hit dice equal or lower then wights).
70%	The subject's mere presence now dim normal lights by 50% in a 30' radius; and magical lights by 25%.
80%	His personal shadow is always behaving erratically (as per the 30% effect)
90%	The subject can summon 1-3 shadow and command them (1 / day)
100%	The subject's body essence has completely transferred to the plane of Shadow: that person can't go back to the Ravenloft demiplane, and is trapped in the plane of Shadow*.

* A *wish* spell or similar powerful spell can lower a person's *index de pénombre* by 5-100% (d20 x 5%). Any other ways to bring back a person to the Ravenloft material plane without first lowering his *index de pénombre* is a

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catastrophe: it brings the subject as a shadow monster (a character becomes a NPC).

Spell casting effects: However hazardous to get, a high *index the pénombre* is sought after by some spells casters. At 50%, a caster has a better mastery of spells with a shadow or illusion component: the spell's duration or area of effect is doubled, at the caster's choice.

Attraction of monsters: A person with a high *index de pénombre* has a higher chance than normal to attract the attention of shadow monsters while on the Ravenloft demiplane.

The chance of attracting a monster's attention is 1-10% per month (*index de pénombre* divided by 10%, round up).

Monsters attracted to that person are Bastellus (20% chance), Cloaker - shadow (30%), or Craving shadow (50%). Craving shadows are creatures found only on the Ravenloft Plane of Shadows. They are constantly trying to get into the material plane - they are detailed later in the "encounters" section of this article.

Links

The usual ways to get to the Plane of Shadow are the plane traveling spells, and the *shadow walking* spell.

People using *shadow walking* have a different appearance, modified by the plane: they are like a shadow (the undead) version of themselves - monocolored gray images of what they look in life, but they appear skeletal, desiccated, and their clothing or armor appear to be partially shredded and very ancient! No other effects are felt.

Such traveling spell creates temporary opening and are known to sometimes (10% chance) create a nexus to the Plane of Shadow that remains open 1-100 hours (also, 1% of those nexuses are permanent). Those nexuses are created in places where shadows are found.

A deadly way to reach the Plane of Shadow is to be killed by a Shadow: the body of the victim is transferred to that plane - the person stays on the Ravenloft material plane, as a newly created shadow existing on both places.

It is possible to cross domain borders while on the plane of Shadow, if that domain border is not closed. If the border is closed by the Darklord, the shadow barrier is a shadowy version of the Ravenloft material domain border closure, as effective as on the prime.

For a caster in the Ravenloft demiplane, the Plane of Shadow is invisible from detection spells like *true seeing* - the caster can see in the ethereal plane, but never in the Plane of Shadow.

Inhabitants and encounters

This section lists possible encounters in the Plane of Shadow:

Common:

- ♦ **Undead creature:** Shadow (1-6) (MM). Please see the Van Richten's Guide to the Lower Undead (USS 2002) for more on the shadows.
- ♦ **Shadow ravens:** are native to the plane. They flock in large numbers (6-36), and sometimes the black clouds of ravens come very close to adventurers. Treat as regular prime material raven.

Uncommon:

- ♦ **High level party:** traveling via the plane with the aid of *shadow walking*.
- ♦ **High level spell caster - alone:** traveling via the plane, looking for a dead magic area for their arcane test, or hiding from someone or something.

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Rare:

- ◆ **Undead creatures:** akikage (1) (DoDark), slow shadows (1-3) (4th annual MC, TSR # 2173)
- ◆ **Trapped individuals:** with a 100% *index de pénombre*. Those persons are often mad, and some would do anything to get back to the Ravenloft material world. Few were victims of craving shadows (see below).
- ◆ **Other creatures of shadow:** Shades (a template in FR campaign setting book), bastellus (1), shadow asp (1-6), craving shadow (1) (a new monster, defined later in thi article), unicorn – shadow (1) (all other monsters exc. shades from DoDark).
- ◆ **Fraternity of Shadows member:** Rarely, an arcane caster can be a member of the Fraternity of Shadow, or an Umbrucha (see Nathan Okerlund's article "Scholars of darkness - the Fraternity of Shadow" in the USS 2002).
- ◆ **Shadow dragon:** a rumor states that Ebb, Azalin's Shadow dragon has a secret lair on the Plane of Shadow, and it uses the plane for its trips – many adventurers seek this particular dragon to get more information on its former master. It might be another shadow dragon too (for Ebb's stats, please see the *Ravenloft Gazetteer 2*; for Shadow dragon, see *Monsters of Faerun*)

Very rare:

- ◆ **Shadow elves from the Shadow Rift:** Any member of the Arak race. They do sometimes use that plane to travel outside the rift, as they are more familiar with the shadows, and this way they also avoid most human encounters (DoDark).
- ◆ **Shadow fiend** (1) (DoDark).
- ◆ **Virus – shadow** (MC III, TSR # 2139), or someone or something affected by it.

Special - Keening:

- ◆ **Umbra:** undead shadow elves, devoted to Tristressa – only in the Plane of Shadow

“over” the domain of Keening (see the 2nd edition adventure *Servant of darkness* TSR # 9541 for more information).

New monster: Craving shadow

Medium Fey

Hit Dice 4d8 (18hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

AC: 22 (+3 Dex, +9 other plane) touch 19, on the plane of Shadows 13

Speed: 15ft., fly 40ft. (average)

Attacks: one touch +3 melee

Damage: Cold touch 1d4+1

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 5ft./10ft.

Special Attacks: Shadow transposition

Special Qualities: Fey

Saves: Fort+4, Ref+4, Will+5

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Knowledge (plane of shadow) +4, Listen +4, Sense Motive +6

Feats: Alertness

Climate/Terrain: border Plane of Shadow

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: chaotic evil

Advancement Range: 5-6HD (Medium)

Craving shadows, also known as shadow eaters, are nightmarish creatures for those who got their attention. This little known type of fey appear like a regular undead shadow to observers on the Ravenloft material world or while on the plane of Shadows.

If met as an encounter on the Plane of Shadow, it will flee, but will follow the creature from a distance. When the person is back on the Ravenloft material plane, it attacks.

A craving shadow is an incorporeal creature. It cannot taste, feel or touch anything. This inability drives the creature's existence. It has developed an ability enabling it to switch planes with a corporeal creature, in order to taste what life has to offer to physical creatures.

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Shadow transposition (Su): from the plane of Shadow, the craving shadow is able to hit any creature in the material plane that got an *index de pénombre* higher than 20%. Any successful hit by its cold touch increases the victim's *index de pénombre* by 5-15% (with all effects of that increase).

However, if the monster successfully increases a person's *index de pénombre* to 100%, that person's soul is transferred to the Plane of Shadow, and it inhabits a shadow (undead) body. It is a question of days (2-8 days) before that person become insane and fully behaves like an undead of that specie.

Meanwhile, in the Ravenloft material plane, the craving shadow enters the body and controls it, similar to an odem's possession. That control will last 2-12+4 days before it is drawn back to the Plane of Shadow, leaving on the material plane a lifeless corpse... When transposed to the material plane, the craving shadow tries to taste as much as possible what life has to offer for persons with a physical body, and will do all kind of sins to satisfy that sense hunger.

Move and combat

Normal, i.e. as on the material plane, except otherwise noted in this article.

Features of the Ravenloft Plane of Shadow

Border Plane of Shadow – the “border”:

It is the part of the Plane of Shadow that is coexistent with the Ravenloft demiplane. The physical features of the Plane of Shadow resemble the coexisting material plane, but they are twisted, and somewhat blurred.

Interestingly, the Plane of Shadow will always have ruins in a place where ruins once stand on the material plane, even if those ruins were destroyed, or even if a new building was rebuilt on that same place. Decaying places create strong images in the Plane of Shadows.

Scholars in history often briefly visit the plane of Shadow to find out more about an ancient ruins.

Also, the border shadow has highly morphic traits, but these are based on strong emotions, not unlike the ethereal resonance, but for evil deeds. The plane keep an image resonance of crimes and evil emotions in the material plane, and creates a visual creation / token of that emotion in the Plane of Shadow. For example, in a place where a love betrayal was strongly felt, an image of a broken heart might appear in the border shadow. That shadow token is insubstantial and can't be brought back to the material plane.

Possible suggestions for these emotion-based shadow tokens:

Anger: something that has been broken or shattered with violence - pieces in the air as if caught in a time stop.

Blasphemy: a broken holy symbol (cross, star, or pendant)

Domination/slavery: a whip, shackles

Envy: an open lock or trunk

Gluttony: Cloven bones, marked with teeth bites. If you are really looking for something really evil: a starving child with bitemarks on her arms.

Greed: a gold coin, dripping ichor, or a cracked diamond

Lies: a two-faced mask, with a white and a black side

Love betrayal: the tell-tale broken heart, a dead pair of love birds

Lust: let your imagination run free here, according to the maturity of your group

Murder: a bloodied weapon (dagger, likely), drops of blood standing frozen in the air

Pride: a shattered mirror

Torture: the rack, the iron maiden, flowing iron , etc.

Undeath: piles of bones, opened grave or coffins.

Etc.

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It is still unsure why strong emotion and evil deeds leaves a shadow trace in this plane, but many enquirers have learned to look for clues in these shadow tokens, or to complete information gathered with the ethereal resonance analysis.

A limited Plane of Shadow beyond the "border" – the "deeper":

Some have been heard to call that part of the plane, the "hidden part".

Those areas can be reached by concentrating thoughts "away from the border plane of shadow". This needs a little practice (Will DC 18, -2 modifier per successful attempt).

The size of those areas is small, typically an hemisphere of a size of 10 – 1,000 feet only. Beyond that limit, one cannot move forward anymore. Since these areas are small, the rumors of large shadowy castles hidden in the Ravenloft plane of Shadow are most probably false.

In these areas, the air feel humid and cold. Good aligned players do not feel at ease in this place, and many shadow (undead) lurk in these areas.

A few dead magic areas are found in those bleak places.

Adventure hooks

- ♦ **Recovery task:** a person was killed by a shadow (undead). Her body and equipment vanished (transferred to the border plane of shadow), including an important document / item : recover it !
- ♦ **Murder enquiry help:** to track an elusive killer, a sage asks the player to explore the Shadowy Border to seek out possible shadow tokens where the murders happened. A DM could use the movie "Seven" for inspiration on this scenario.
- ♦ **Fraternity of Shadow:** Senior members of the FoS ask the player to search a specific area's border shadow in order to get more clues about the past of a place. Double-dealing should be the norm, but it can be a test for future members.

Thanks to Gomez (I'm not sure if he does remember !) for his suggestions that I used on shadow tokens imagery.



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SPELLS FROM RICHEMULOT

By: Andrew Pavlides
(alhoon)

This small group of low-level spells can be found in various lands of the Core, but their most frequent users are wererat arcane spell casters in Richemulot.

The wererat sorcerers of Richemulot use them frequently and the human wizards that witnessed them casting these spells had researched magical ways to reproduce these effects.

Horrify

Illusion (mind affecting, phantasm)

Spell Level: 2nd.

Components: V, S

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. /2 levels)

Target: one creature with 6 or less HD.

Save: Will negates (horror)

Drom steadily approached the cloaked man, sword in hand. The villagers have paid him a hefty price to drive this man away with every needed means, even violence.

"Nobody wants you here sorcerer! Take your black arts somewhere else!"

The black man looked back at him, smiling even as he back-stepped towards the stone building he used as a laboratory.

"You seem brave. Can you face your deepest fear?" he said and started chanting

softly moving his hands in what obviously was a spell. Drom cried out and leaped forward, sword held high, trying to reach and attack the wizard before he could throw him his dark magic. Suddenly everything was dark. He was in his childhood bedroom again, a small boy. The moon was waning and its silvery light fell on the bloody, eyeless face of his sister. He could smell again the blood and the terror as well as that fateful night! He knew what would happen next. He had seen in again and again in his worst nightmares. The door would open and a man with a white hood would teach him the meaning of pain.

With the laugh of the wizard ringing in he turned and ran, his sword and shield forgotten in the ground where he had dropped them.

The subject of this spell is forced to view a horrifying phantasm. The subject of this illusion experiences what he is most afraid of seeing. The illusion could be one where the victim's loved ones are maimed, or even a vision of his own demise. This hideous vision prompts a horror save against a DC equal to that of the spell. This spell is similar to the scare spell. It is, however, an illusion effect that horrifies a single creature instead of frightening many targets.

Spirit vampire

Necromancy (Evil)

Level: 3rd

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. /2 levels)

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

Save: Will negates.

The wizard looked at the girl bound on the table. She was a poor beggar, an orphan nobody

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would miss. He had kept his promise after all; she had agreed to help him with a “simple matter” for a plate of food. She looked at him as he approached with fear in her eyes. The incantation he put to her to sleep had worn off.

Her mouth had been gagged in order to prevent her from screaming and the food had been carefully drugged in order to weaken her mental resistance

“Don’t worry” he said “In about an hour you’ll be all right.”

He waved his hands and started weaving the spell he was working on these long months. A green cloud surrounded the now terrified girl and immediately she became pale, her cheeks even more hollow. The whole act lasted only for a few moments. He turned away from the table and under the weak, terrified gaze of the girl picked up a large solid-iron sphere weighing twice as much as he could have lift without the aid of the girl’s life force. He started laughing with pride.

He would give the girl enough silver to feel her plate for more than a week for her “help”. After all she had agreed and soon she would have back all her little vigor, after the spell expired. After all, he hadn’t harmed permanently her or broken his promise. . . Yet even still, he could not understand why he suddenly felt a black spot on his soul.

This evil spell draws from a creature’s life force and fortifies the caster’s physical body. A green cloud surrounds the target and the caster draws its life force. The target creature must succeed at a will save or take 1d4+2 temporal constitution damage. For every five points by which the creature misses the DC, he or she takes an extra point of constitution damage. For example if the DC is 17 and the victim rolls a 6 to the will save, it would lose 1d4 +4 con.

The caster then absorbs this life energy and increases one physical ability (str, dex or con) by as many points as he or she drained from the victim. For example if the caster inflicted 4

points of constitution damage, he could increase his strength by 4 points for the duration of the spell. Any creature killed by this spell, must make a will save against DC 15 or returns as a specter to hunt its killer. This spell requires a powers check.

Rat bite

Conjuration.

Spell Level: 1st

Components: V, S, F

Target: 1 creature

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. /2 levels)

Duration: 1 round

Save: fortitude partial

The hunter had cornered his quarry, trapping the filthy woman against the wagon of the caravan. The woman raised a gloved hand and started chanting in a language he didn’t understand, while a thick mist rose all around the man’s feet. He stepped forward, thoroughly unimpressed with the show. As he began to raise his foot he felt something on his boot.

The mist had started dissipating and he could make out the forms of bloated rats milling around him, regarding him now with gleaming eyes. With a start he kicked off the rodent on his boot. As one, the rats rushed towards him. He kicked out and shouted and waved with his torch, but the rats surged forward, scaled his limbs, crept in his clothes and frantically tore at his flesh. The hunter howled and fell on the floor, tearing off rats along with his own flesh.

Suddenly mists covered him again, and as they past, so too did the army of tiny jaws. The hunter stood up once more and looked around him. The witch had managed to disappear in the few seconds he had been struggling with the rats.

This spell summons a small horde of rats to attack the target. Mists gather around the target’s feet, leaving behind several large rats. These rodents all make a single attack roll using the caster’s base attack bonus, to a maximum of +4. If the attack succeeds, the rats deal 1d6 damage

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+1 per level, up to a maximum of +10. This spell will only function in a domain where rats are part of the natural ecology. The focus for this spell is a glove made from rat fur or hide.

Rat tail

Conjuration

Spell level: 2nd

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 action

Duration: 1 minute/lvl

Save: Fortitude partial

"A new weapon?" The captain demanded, "What new weapon?"

"Those dreadful rat-men used a kind of long rat tail as a whip. When my men and I saw the three with those feeble-looking whips, we thought it was a trick. They left gashes as deep as a sword; one of them decapitated Miot with one stroke! Three of us were wounded and another one was killed. Two are now ill with what the priest calls 'filth fever'."

This spell creates a 10' long magical whip, resembling a rat's tail. The caster is considered proficient with this weapon, but if he or she gives it to another creature, the other user suffers any penalties from being nonproficient with the weapon.

This magical whip is quite different from a normal whip. Foremost, it deals normal, slashing damage. As well, it deals 2d4 damage on a successful strike. The rat tail has a threat range of 19-20 and deals double damage on a critical

hit. It bypasses damage reduction as if it was a magic (+1) weapon. The focus for this spell is a glove made from rat fur or hide.

Rat skin

Transmutation.

Spell Level 2nd

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Duration: 10 minutes/level

"Two men dead and four men wounded fighting three rat-men guards?" The captain asked. "I can't blame you for abandoning the hunt, but you and your men aren't green recruits. Even with this rat tail whip-sword you said, the casualties were too many. Why didn't you use your crossbows from a safe distance?"

"We tried, but they proved almost ineffective. The rats had the toughest hide I've ever seen! Along with the leather armor they wore, it was as if we were striking plate armor! Their hide seemed darker than when we were hunting them and their hair more thick. The cleric you gave us said it was magic. I can't explain it any other way, captain."

This spell strengthens the target's hide, providing a +3 natural armor bonus. The texture of the skin becomes darker and the hair of the target becomes longer and coarser. The focus of this spell is a glove made from rat fur or hide.



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WEAPONS OF BLOOD

MAGICAL WEAPONS IN THE DEMIPLANE OF DREAD

By: Nathan Okerlund

Ideas useful as starting points for the Dungeon Master wishing to create unique, intriguing weapons for his or her campaign.

The Ravenloft Dungeon Master is often faced with a predicament unusual to Ravenloft campaigns; he or she wants to provide the player characters with weapons which will enable them to effectively combat their most dangerous opponents, but feels that something more imaginative and gripping than a standard-issue *longsword* +2 is called for--preferably a weapon with a storied history, an imaginative special power, and a subtle but potentially devastating curse. The following ideas may serve as useful starting points for the Dungeon Master wishing to create unique, intriguing weapons for his or her campaign. The ideas given here are also intended to show some possible sources for enchanted weapons and ways in which a weapon might gain special powers without being intentionally enchanted.

Means of Enchantment

The following are given as techniques or enhancements for the normal process of enchanting a weapon by spells; by themselves they are not sufficient to enchant a weapon (unless, of course, the DM wishes otherwise).

Blood-tempered Weapons

(Darkon, Falkovnia, Burning Peaks, Shadow Rift?)

Among the dwarves of Darkon, a smith completing an especially fine weapon may draw

a significant amount of his own blood and quench the weapon in it; according to folklore this binds the weapon to its forger and teaches it never to let the blood of its wielder be spilled. (Possible weapon qualities: defender)

The weaponsmiths of Falkovnia have been known to quench their blades in the blood of demihumans for precisely the opposite reason: to teach them to thirst for blood. This practice was almost certainly imported from the Burning Peaks, where the servants of Kas the Destroyer routinely used it to finish their blades. It is also said--probably inaccurately--that the shadow fey will sometime kidnap humans specifically for this purpose when forging their finest weapons. (Possible weapon qualities: keen, bane [of creature type in which the weapon was quenched], unholy)

Songforged Weapons

(Kartakass)

The songforgers of Kartakass combined the mastery of weaponsmithing with the mastery of song; they used their voices to help them to forge weapons both graceful and potent. By singing songs of power over the weapons they forged they were able to endow them with a wide variety of unusual abilities; in fact, it is said that a master songforger could shape a weapon purely by the power of his voice. The songforgers of the past worked mostly with cold-forged iron rather than steel. Unlike more common arcane enchantments, master songforgers were capable of enchanting cold iron, which ordinarily resists arcane energies.

Unfortunately, the songforgers are dying out; there were never many, and there are few who have the mental and physical discipline for such a demanding profession. In addition, some whisper that the songforgers are more likely than most to simply disappear in the night--a rumor

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which has made it even more difficult for the few songforgers still alive to find apprentices for their craft. However, a number of songforged blades can still be found throughout the Demiplane, and they are among the most prized of weapons. (Possible weapon qualities: keen, shapechanger bane,

Moonblades (Verbrek)

In Verbrek it is said that a weapon gains special virtue against the forces of darkness if it is forged by moonlight. It is said that if a blade is made only using only moonlight and whatever light the smith can get from the forge to guide his hammer, the weapon will have power to strike were-creatures and the undead. Since forging such a weapon involves standing outdoors under a full moon in Verbrek, these weapons are, of course, extremely rare and valued accordingly. (Possible weapon qualities: shapechanger bane, undead bane)

Vistani-forged Weapons (various)

Many of the weapons forged by the Vistani have strange abilities from sources unknown or not understood by giorgios. From time to time a giorgo may, knowingly or unknowingly, obtain such a weapon. Unless the weapon has been given freely to him it is unlikely to function exactly as its creator intended, but it still may have abilities useful to the user. The reaction of the Vistani to a giorgio possessed of such a weapon will vary, depending on how he obtained it and (possibly) to what use he has put it. Reactions might vary from outrage to fear to respect under different circumstances.

Meteorite Iron Weapons (various)

Meteorite iron has always been thought to have special properties, especially in metal-poor areas such as Kalidnay, where it is sometimes the only source of iron. Weapons forged of such material are generally held to be superior to

weapons forged from mined iron; given that meteorite iron comes from the sky, it is often considered a gift from the gods, or at least considered symbolic of divine power. (Possible weapon qualities: holy)

Lichblades (Darkon)

The name given to these weapons comes from the fact that the iron or steel for such weapons is taken from graveyards, often called lichyards in Darkon, where the tradition of forging this sort of weapon is strongest. It is thought that iron taken from a graveyard (in the form of coffin nails or a rail from a cemetery fence, for example) has special properties which allow a weapon forged from such metal to have special potency against the undead. Of course, the iron so obtained is only useful if obtained during the witching hour, from midnight to 1 A.M., and the constabulary (not to mention the occupants of the graveyard!) are not likely to look favorably on such vandalism. (Possible weapon qualities: holy, unholy, undead bane)

Weapons of Ingenuity

Ravenloft offers a more technologically advanced setting than is found in most high fantasy campaigns, and the Dungeon Master can use this to introduce bizarre and imaginative new weapons into the campaign. Dwarvish craft, gnomish inventiveness, and human ingenuity might create any of a number of new weapons which, although not enchanted, are more effective than simple steel in battling the creatures of the night. The famous Parthian rapier is one example of this type of weapon. The excellent craftsmanship of such weapons is always immediately apparent, although their "gimmick" may not be immediately obvious; they do not radiate magic.

Sellek's Anbaric Blade

The Darkonese gnome Wyndfar Sellek made a name for himself by creating a wide variety of bizarre weapons of variable utility.

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One of his more successful efforts was his Anbaric Blade, a finely crafted short sword with a slightly oversized hilt. His innovation was to hollow out the hilt and add a column of zinc and copper plates in brine into the space created, then sealing the hilt, creating a primitive battery. By depressing a stud on the hilt of the sword, the wielder can deliver an electrical discharge (which Sellek referred to as the "anbaric force") dealing 2d6 hit points of damage to anything touching the blade of the sword. (This includes the wielder, if he is unfortunate enough to accidentally activate the weapon while touching the blade.) Discharging the blade can be performed as a free action, after landing a successful hit in melee combat, for example. The Anbaric Blade takes six combat rounds to recharge itself before its electric discharge can be used again. Otherwise, the Anbaric Blade functions as a masterwork short sword.

Weapons of Obsession

Many of Ravenloft's strangest and most terrible artifacts are the result, not of intentional enchantment, but of the obsession of their creators. For whatever reason the craftsman or artist sets his work above all other considerations, forgoing food, sleep, and human interaction in the endeavor to perfect his creation and pouring his attention, his craft, his love, and even his soul into his work. In his desperation he may even call on outside forces to aid him in perfecting his creation--a request which the Dark Powers are all too likely to honor. A weapon created in such a way receives its power from the obsession of its creator and the touch of the Dark Powers--but that same touch necessarily warps it, and warps those who use it. Weapons of this type will not usually radiate magic, but they will be strangely attractive, and a wielder of such a weapon will quickly come to feel that it is not an ordinary weapon.

Crofenarr's Dancing Sword

Crofenarr's Dancing Sword was the final creation of the Valachani weaponsmith

Crofenarr, who was known at one time as one of the finest bladesmiths of the southeastern Core; something of the story of its creation is known because of Crofenarr's habit of keeping a diary in which he sometimes made note of the work he did. He was commissioned by Baron Urik von Kharkov himself to make a longsword suitable for the Lady Adeline, Kharkov's lieutenant; after spending month in creating the weapon, he presented it to the Baron, who examined and rejected it. Accordingly to Crofenarr's diary, the Baron told him, "The sword is well-crafted, but it is like a dead thing in my hand; it lacks balance, precision, verve. The blade I wanted from you should have been a living thing, striking almost of its own accord."

Humiliated by the Baron's rejection, Crofenarr returned to work, attempting to create a sword that would match the Baron's desired description. His diary details how he poured his time and attention into the task, to the exclusion of all else, creating and discarding blade after blade half-finished. He became obsessed with the idea of making a sword that would be like a living thing, a servant as well as a tool--a sword that would fight on its master's behalf and respond to his very thoughts; but there was no way to create such a weapon from mere metal. Nearing despair, Crofenarr apparently received inspiration from some unknown source. The next-to-last entry of his diary reads, "Today I conversed with a gentleman who gave me some very excellent Advice on the question of the blade I am forging for the Baron. With the Information received I believe I will be able to bring the project to completion at last." The last entry, dated several weeks later, says only, "I have succeeded--perhaps too well. It is alive; It moved under my hand. To-morrow I will bring It to the Baron."

Crofenarr went to the Baron but was not received; in the meantime the Baron had commissioned another smith to make the requested sword, and had already accepted the other's work. Crofenarr was turned away without an audience. It is said that he did not even return to his home after his failure; his mind shattered, he left Valachan to wander the

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Core, and nothing is known of his final fate. The sword he created, however, has become a near-legendary object in the southeastern Core, referred to as Crofenarr's Dancing Sword. According to the stories, it will fight of its own accord and never let harm come to its owner--but the stories also hint that the Dancing Sword has a mind of its own and can never be trusted for long.

Crofenarr's Dancing Sword appears to be a longsword, unusual only in being an unusually well-crafted blade. The only clue to its origin is the image of a coiled snake inscribed on the pommel, which was Cronfenarr's mark on all the weapons he forged. The Dancing Sword acts as a +2 longsword in combat and can "dance"--fighting without a wielder--for up to five rounds at a time, leaving its owner free to pursue other options in the battle. If dancing the Dancing Sword strikes with a base attack bonus of +10/+5. At the end of five rounds it returns to its owner if he is within 30 feet; if he is not within 30 feet or if he does not take the sword back in hand, it falls to the ground and anyone may claim it by picking it up. After dancing for five rounds, it must be wielded by hand for five rounds before it can "dance" again.

At first the Dancing Sword will appear to be merely an unusual and useful weapon, but as it becomes attuned to an owner it begins to become aware of his thoughts and desires. After a period of a few weeks the Dancing Sword begins to behave in a way similar to a dread familiar, leaving its master's side while he sleeps to "take revenge" on those whom its master dislikes. These actions are likely to be prankish--cutting the hobbles on a fellow party member's horse and causing it to run away, piercing the bottom of a waterbag, or excising a few key pages from a spellbook--but if the feelings of its master are strong and persistent the Dancing Sword may eventually launch a murderous attack on the object of its master's hatred. The Dancing Sword has hardness 35 and 50 hit points; it takes no damage from electricity and cold, one-quarter damage from fire, and full damage from acid attacks. Magic missile has no effect. The sword has speed 15, flying, with

perfect maneuverability; it can also slither like a snake at a speed of 15 if it chooses to do so.

Weapons of Tragedy

As is well known to the metaphysicians of the Demiplane of Dread, actions of great good or great evil distort the fabric of Ravenloft itself, creating ethereal resonances which can last long after the deed is done. A weapon used in an especially tragic (or heroic) act--the dagger used by a suicide, a sword used to murder the man who forged it, or the arrow which strikes down a tyrant--may acquire a special aura and unusual combat abilities. The Sword of the Clan ApBlanc, with which Tristan ApBlanc killed his son Morgan, might be considered one example. A weapon of tragedy will not necessarily radiate magic, but will manifest an unusual ethereal resonance to those able to see ethereal objects or through ghostsight.

The Sword of Kolmy Szesstelyn

The Sword of Kolmy Szesstelyn is an exquisitely balanced rapier with an intricately formed basket hilt; the brilliantly polished blade has an abstract geometrical pattern inlaid in gold running along its length. Szesstelyn was one of the most famous of the Kartakan songforgers and was, in addition, a great hero; the ballad "Szesstelyn and Grandfather Wolf" describes Szesstelyn winning a riddle-game with Grandfather Wolf, despite the latter's underhanded tricks. Despite--or perhaps because of--his fame in his native country, he spent most of his life wandering the Core in search of adventure. His sword Needle, which he himself had forged, became well-known as one of the finest songforged blades ever made, but, ironically, it was also the cause of his death.

Unlike most adventurers, Szesstelyn lived to be rather old, but even as an elderly man he wore Needle at his side continually, and one day it attracted the attention of a Nova Vaasan nobleman--Prince Valry Rivtoff. Struck by its craftsmanship, he offered to buy the weapon from Szesstelyn, who refused to sell. Rivtoff,

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piqued, raised his price and was rebuffed again; Szesztelyn flatly told him he would prefer to give up his life before giving up his sword. At this the nobleman flew into a fury and ordered his bodyguards to take the sword, which they attempted to do--only to discover that Kolmy could still use his weapon to good effect. He killed one of his attackers and seriously wounded another before being disarmed. Gloating, Rivtoff told Szesztelyn that his wish would be granted--he would take Szesztelyn's life before taking his sword. He struck Szesztelyn to the heart with his own sword, but as his blood spilled out Szesztelyn gasped, "This sword has shed blood for me, and I have shed my blood for it. It will never have another master."

Prince Rivtoff paid no heed to the words when they were spoken; he took it for himself and used it for a time, but less than a year later he gave it away as a present to a visiting Darkonese nobleman. When later asked why he had given away the sword, he replied cryptically, "Because it was the sword of Kolmy Szesztelyn."

The Sword of Kolmy Szesztelyn, as it has been known from that time onward, has passed rapidly from hand to hand since then; exquisitely crafted songforged blades are always in high demands, but there is something about the sword that makes most of those who have used it uneasy, and it seems the Sword of Kolmy Szesztelyn is never in one person's possession for long...

The Sword of Kolmy Szesztelyn is a +3 defender rapier, and for the first month in which a new owner wields it, it will appear to be nothing more. After a month, however, the current owner of the blade will begin to feel as if someone is watching him; he will begin to see things from the corner of his eye and to have unusual dreams in which the sword is always present. 1-4 weeks after these effects begin to manifest, the blade's owner will begin to become aware of a white-haired man who seems to be following him--appearing in a crowd or in a tavern, perhaps, or passing him on a deserted street. No-one else will notice the old man.

After two months the owner of the sword will begin to become aware of other people invisible to most; at this point the character gains the Ghost Sight feat whenever the sword is within 5 feet of him. After three months the old man--who is, of course, Kolmy Szesztelyn--will begin to attempt to communicate with the character. From this point forward the character is considered to have the Haunted feat as well, with one important difference: Szesztelyn can manifest when he wants to, as often as once an hour, and not only when summoned by the character. This leads to the most dangerous possible side-effect of using the blade: if Szesztelyn becomes excited about something--the possibility of getting vengeance on the Rivtoff family, for example--he will begin to manifest repeatedly, attempting to persuade the character to follow whatever course of action he has in mind. If the character is brought to 0 Charisma by Szesztelyn's repeated manifestations, Szesztelyn can take over the person's body and pursue whatever course of action he wishes to. Szesztelyn can maintain control for as long as the character's Charisma remains at 0 (since the Charisma drain damage is temporary, this means he can usually keep control for only 24 hours at a time). When Szesztelyn controls the person's body, the person has Intelligence 14, Wisdom 11, and Charisma 19; the person retains his own memories but his desires, motivations, morals, and ethics are those of Szesztelyn (who is true neutral in alignment). Szesztelyn's principal desires are to protect the Sword and to take revenge on the Rivtoff family--preferably by humiliation and ruin rather than bloodshed.

If at any time the wielder discards, loses, or gives away the sword, the ghost of Kolmy Szesztelyn will not trouble him any longer. Szesztelyn is actually a geist and cannot be harmed except by destroying the Sword; if this happens he simply disappears and is never seen again. If he somehow learns of plans to destroy the Sword he will manifest repeatedly in an attempt to dissuade its wielder from such an action--which may actually result in his being able to take control of the sword's owner and remove the sword from harm's way.

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Weapons of Blood

Perhaps most powerful and dangerous of all are weapons which acquire their power through decades or even centuries of bloodshed. Certain weapons, through their long use, become something more than inanimate metal; as they are used to defend the innocent or smite the guilty they begin to acquire desires, motivations, and personalities of their own. Weapons of this category do not necessarily radiate magic, but there is generally no mistaking them for ordinary weapons. The Headsman's Axe of Darkon is certainly one such weapon; another example of this type is the sword known as the Black Lady.

Regina Mortuis, the Black Lady

"He smiled and gripped the hilt as I had told him; but as he began to lift that long and shining instrument of death, his face went pale and his arms trembled so that I snatched her away from him before he dropped her. Afterward, all he would say was I've sharpened soldiers' swords before, over and over."

Gene Wolfe, "The Citadel of the Autarch"

Regina Mortuis, usually referred to as the Black Lady, is an unusually heavy and ornate bastard sword. Her blade is forged of some unknown alloy, strong, dense, and peculiarly non-reflective, so that even when highly polished the viewer sees himself only dimly mirrored by the blade. The two-handed hilt is wrapped in black leather; each end of the guard terminates in a human skull no more than one inch across, so perfectly detailed that it seems to be a real skull shrunk and fixed in place by magic.

The Black Lady was used for centuries by a guild of executioners on an unknown Prime Material Plane to effect ritual executions by beheading, and as it was passed from guildsman to guildsman and used in the pursuit of justice it began to acquire a sort of sentience--a result, perhaps, of the many lives it had ended. How she came into Ravenloft is not known; perhaps it

was in the possession of one of those guildsmen when he was drawn into the Mists, or perhaps the Mists took her alone from her world of origin. The lich Phantom's Bane made a study of her qualities--a work found by van Richten and his associates during their search for the lich--but the blade had, apparently, passed out of his possession by that time, as reliable accounts say that she was used by a captain of the Talons in the first Dead Man's Campaign. At the end of that ill-fated military adventure the Talon committed suicide by falling on her, and some versions of the story say that the blade had driven him mad. Less reliable reports have placed her in the hands of several very notable adventurers since then, including Ivan Dragonov and George Weathermay, but none of those stories have been substantiated. Of course, given her qualities, it is conceivable that either or both used her for a brief time, and then chose to discard her.

The Black Lady's history has been one of slaughter, and the aura of death and misery she has acquired over its centuries of use is oppressive in the extreme. A person who has not failed at last one powers check must make a Horror check at DC 10 when he draws the sword; if he fails he must drop the sword in horror and disgust. A person who has never had to make a powers check (a true innocent) must make a Will save at DC 13 to even touch the sword. Simply possessing the blade gives the owner an OR rating of +1 when interacting with PCs or NPCs of good or neutral alignment. In combat the Black Lady strikes as a *lawful keen vorpal sword* +3. She does not radiate magic, but those capable of seeing ethereal objects will perceive her as always being coated in blood. The Black Lady strikes incorporeal beings as if they were corporeal; its ethereal "solid-ness", plus its unusual ethereal resonance, cause it to act as a magnet for ethereal creatures such as ghosts.

The Black Lady thirsts for blood, and when she is drawn she cannot be sheathed again until she has caused the death of an intelligent creature (laying to rest an intelligent, free-willed undead creature is also sufficient). In such a

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case, her bearer must either discard her or go about with the blade drawn--something which is certain to attract unwanted attention of the most pressing kind!

The Black Lady is cruel but just; if she is used to kill an innocent person, her wielder must make a Madness check at DC 10 + the (cumulative) number of innocents the wielder has killed with the blade. Failure of the Madness check plunges the wielder into a black depression for a period of 6-8 weeks; if the Madness check is failed by 10 or more the wielder is driven to commit suicide.

The "innocence" of a person killed with the Black Lady may not always be immediately apparent, and the Dungeon Master may need to

make a judgement call. Killing in combat is, of course, never cause for such a check; killing a person convicted of a capital crime, regardless of whether the person was innocent or not, is not cause for a check except under very unusual circumstances, for example, if the wielder knows the person is innocent. Killing a person whom the wielder know to be guilty of a capital crime is also not usually cause for a check. (This manner of determining innocence may seem overly legalistic, but it reflects the Black Lady's extremely strict and literal desire to punish criminals, rather than to punish evil in any abstract sense.)



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Running the Place

Mythica Nephos

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Beachum's Emporium

WE GUARANTEE ALL OF OUR MERCHANDISE

By: Tami Sammons aka Hadis
Deadstalker

"Beachum's Emporium.
Nearly everything, from
nearly everywhere." This
is the catalogue for the
chain of Beachum's
Emporium shops opening in
cities around the core,
and possibly outside the
core. Everything for
everyone be ye aristocrat
or commoner from clothes
to food stuff to weapons
from all around the core
can be found in the
catalogue.

A hearty, husky man with a barrel chest strode into town. His flaming red, shoulder length hair was charred in places. His full beard a shade lighter than the hair on his head, but just as charred, and where his left muttonchop sideburn should have been was just a black mark. He walked with his head held high and pride in every step, despite the fact that more than half his knee-length, pleated skirt was burned away. What was left of his loose white shirt was also charred and the round leather purse, or rather what was left of it, covered what skirt there wasn't. His matching socks were burned away in the front. And it was obvious by the remains of a matching charred tail that he had a cloak of some kind, at one time. A long sword hung at his side. His four companions walked a few paces behind. It was obvious they were with him, even if they didn't walk next to him, because their clothes, or what was left of them, were also charred. People stopped and whispered as he walked by. They gave him a

wide berth. Some people even snickered. Some women covered their eye and the children's eyes. He paid them no mind. He had a purpose.

He saw a sign a block down.

"Beachum's Emporium
Nearly everything,
from nearly everywhere."

He walked straight for the shop. As he opened the door he heard, "Greetings patron! Welcome to Beachum's Emporium! Please refrain from any spellcasting while in this shop. Thank you and enjoy your shopping experience," spoken in his native Forfarian. A smiling human woman of middle age with small-rimmed glasses stood behind the counter at the back of the room. The red-haired man strode into the shop, his four companions followed. The woman looked over the five people as they entered. Without looking anywhere else, he strode to the counter put both his hands down firmly on the counter and said, "Me name is Seamus McDougall, of Clan McDougall, und I need a new kilt."

"Daenacht hael!" the woman greeted in Forfarian. "If you'll wait a moment, I'll check my inventory and see if we have Clan McDougall's tartan on file. While you wait, perhaps you would like to look in our catalogue. There are several on the pedestals about the room. Perhaps you could find other things you need."

"Thank you," whispered the small elven woman in the group. She swam inside her makeshift dress, a human-sized hooded cloak pulled tightly around her. There were two arm holes cut in the sides. The cloak was charred and had burn holes in it that were tied shut by cords. And there was a cord tied around her waist as a belt. Her hair was unevenly cut very short, just past her pointed ears. A short sword

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hung from the makeshift belt, and a longbow and quiver hung over her back.

The woman disappeared behind a curtain.

The elven woman walked over to the pedestal nearest and looked at the book. There was a small notepad next to the book and a piece of charcoal. The book had a word on the cover saying, "Balok." She opened the book and sure enough, it was written in Balok. Although she could tell the language at a glance, she couldn't read it. She walked to the next pedestal. The book said, "Mordentish." She looked around the room; there were 15 other pedestals with books.

"The books are written in different languages," she announced. "That one is in Balok. You're Barovian right Baltasar?"

"Accommodating," stated in a monotone voice the thick stocky built human in charred robes, with breeches beneath. He had broad shoulders, meaty limbs, and wide hips. His coarse, wavy chestnut hair reached just above his shoulders. He had a maul hanging lightly from his belt. He looked over the counter and read the sign written in Balok above the curtain.

"Beachum's will never knowingly
do business with the
Red Vardo Traders."

"I am Gundarakite," Baltasar said coldly.

"Sorry, I though you were from Barovia."

"I am."

The other two uncomfortably began looking at the other books. Seamus stood motionless at the counter, waiting. Baltasar walked over to look at the Balok book.

"Here's one in Sithican, Leeli," said the thin, fair-skinned man in once finely tailored breeches, high socks, loose white shirt and a buttoned waistcoat, now all charred and burnt mostly on the right side. The three-corner hat hanging low on the right side of his head was

surprisingly the only thing seemingly untouched by flame. He had an empty holster and the remains of a powder horn hanging from his belt on his right hip.

"Thank you, Allistair," the elven woman said softly, walking toward him. "The one next to Baltasar is Mordentish."

As they passed each other Allistair whispered, "he's very touchy about the ethnic differences."

"So I noticed. You might want to take your hat off inside."

Allistair smiled at her and tentatively removed his hat, showing a large burn mark on the right side of his head, where his hair should have been. He began thumbing through the Mordentish book.

The three-foot tall man (?) with the closely cropped mud colored beard pointed at the chin walked to the two-foot high pedestal, his knee-length pants, white shirt and soft ankle-boot were also charred and burnt, like the others. The book was written in gnomish. "Perfect!" he stated cheerfully. Then he heard something. Looking up, he noticed a tall brawny man with a very long sword standing guard in the corner. Despite the over intimidating factor of the guard, the gnome turned his attention back to the book and began leafing through it, humming. He had no weapons visible.

The woman returned through the curtain. The glasses were now hanging on a chain around her neck. "I'm sorry Mr. McDougall, we do not have your clan's tartan on file. However, if you could leave a swatch, we can make it and add it to the file for any future purchases you or your clansmen make. The kilt will take two days to have the pattern made. Meanwhile, we can offer you a single colored kilt at half price now. To wear until your tartan kilt is made."

"Thank you, I'll take it."

She handed him a pair of scissors that he used to cut a large square of fabric off the tail.

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“The half-kilt is one and a three quarters layers of fabric with a waistline and two buttons, one on the inside and one on the outside and a shoulder overhang or cape. The full-kilt is a longer piece of unaltered fabric that wraps around the waist several times, with enough fabric to hang over the shoulder or use as a cape. These come in cotton, flannel or wool, 2gp for half-kilts and 5gp for full-kilts, in bold plaids, earthy greens, browns, and the Tartans.” She put a book on the counter and opened it to a page with the colors. “Here are the colors available.” He noticed the book was written in Forfarian. He touched the color he wanted, a green, in the full-kilt. She placed a note pad on the counter and wrote the order on it. “Will you be needing a sporran also and a simple pin in gold or silver tone to keep the front closed? We do not sell clan pins at this time, I’m afraid.”

“Yes, that will be fine.”

“The basic leather sporran costs 2gp, fur covered is 2gp extra for common animals, horsehair is 3gps extra. The basic leather sporran can be tooled with Celtic weave patterns or the clan symbol, if provided, at no extra cost. Although the clan symbol will take two days. Three leather tassels can be added at no extra cost. Three fur or horsehair tassels can be added for 5sp. The simple pin is 5gp.” She pointed to the book where the Celtic weave patterns were. He pointed to what he wanted and she wrote it on the notepad. “Will you be needing a shirt as well, Mr. McDougall?”

“Yes.”

“Our shirts are attractive, comfortable, and durable, and can be worn as an overgarment or undergarment. Human in sackcloth is 8sp; linen, 2gp; cotton, 3gp; silk, 6gp. Colors are white, beige, or grey. Lace and ruffles, for ladies, may be added for 10sp. Ivory buttons popular in Mordent, are 2gp.” Leeli looked over at the woman and smiled. “Halfling and gnome are one quarter list price, elven and dwarven are one half list price. Will this order be together or separate.”

“Together is fine,” Baltasar said. The gentlemen came over to the counter.

“Breeches, Human in sackcloth are 10sp; linen, 2gp; woolen, 4gp; velvet, 8gp, silk, 16gp. Dwarf and elf sizes are one half price, gnome and halfling are one quarter price. Colors are available in white, black, gray, beige, and brown.” The three gentlemen chose their breeches, which she wrote down. “And most of our clothing can be died nearly any color at no extra charge. The kilts and several of the undergarments,” she looked at Leeli, “we can not dye. However, there is Jurald’s Tailors down the street that will for a small charge. They also do alterations.”

“There are many different types of coats. Waistcoats which are sleeveless popular in Richemulot and Mordent,” she looked to Allistair, “reach to the waist, come in linen for 10sp; woolen, 1gp; flannel, 30sp; cotton 2gp; velvet, 3gp; silk, 4gp; leather, 10gp. Sleeved, full coats and long coats reach from the hips to the knees in linen are 1gp; woolen, 2gp; flannel, 3gp; cotton 4gp; velvet, 6gp; silk 8gp; leather, 20gp. For high collars that fasten tightly up to the throat popular with Richemuloise women, add 10sp. Wide cuffs on the sleeves popular in Kartakass, tails popular in Mordent, or large folded back cuffs popular in Dementlieu, add 1gp. Colors are available in white, black, gray, beige, and brown. Halfling and gnome are one-quarter list price, elven and dwarven are one half list price. ” Allistair made his order.

“The common labor woman’s dress in linen in elf size is 1sp or cotton add ½. Gowns are a simple dress of silk that can later be adorned with lace and ruffles, in elf size is 10gp in ecto-, meso-, or endomorphic body type. The skirt can be made to flair out at the waist popular in Mordent add 1gp. For velvet double price and brocade triple price popular in Dementlieu, these are special order.”

“What about skirts?” Leeli asked.

“Will it be long or short length?”

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“Floor-length,” Leeli smiled, bashfully.

“Skirts come in various lengths, from the knee to the ankle or floor if you’d like. You’ll need to specify length when order. We have a tape measure. Elven sizes in long lengths come in linen for 5gp; cotton, 6gp; wool, 7gp; velvet, 8gp; silk, 9gp. The Hazlani Zarongs, which is an ankle-length clothe that wraps around the waist for 2gp less than the long length price. For pleating, popular in Richemulot, add 30sp for long length. The skirt can be made to flair out at the waist popular in Mordent for 1gp extra. Colors are available in white, brown, black, grey, forest green and the Tartan..” Leeli smiled and made her order.

“Now sir, about your outer garment,” she began, looking at Baltasar. “Was it an open front robe with a tie or more like the closed front cote?”

“Closed front cote I believe,” he replied, in his usual monotone.

“The cote and tunic. These usually reach to mid-thigh, and are sleeved or sleeveless in white, tan, brown, and black. Ankle-length popular in Hazlan, called a Kaftan, is one-quarter more. Human in linen is 7gp; cotton, 8gp; velvet, 10gp; silk, 11gp.”

“Although I am not Hazlani, the ankle-length Kaftan will probably do if it’s baggie. With a tie or sash also.”

“We can make it ectomorphic if you’d like at no extra cost. With or without a hood?”

“No hood.”

She wrote down the order. “Will you be needing any stockings, fullclothes, hosiery, hose supporters or other undergarments, like petticoats, corsets, bodices or garters?” “Shoes or boots?” “Cloaks or capes?” “A Wig?” Allistair embarrassed, put his hand to the burn spot on his head. “Other provisions, backpacks, weapons, musical instruments?”

Seamus’ companions all shook their heads.

“Do you have pipes?”

“The Zulkoon or bagpipes are part of our inventory.”

For the first time, Seamus smiled broadly.

“That’s coming out of your pocket,” the gnome said.

“Fine, Nelleg, the bagpipes will come out of my pocket.”

“Now is there anything else you can think of?”

Welcome to Beachums Emporium!

My family wishes to bring the best merchandise from all over Ravenloft to your city. We have something for everyone, be ye aristocrat or commoner. This was the first store to open with more opening in major cities around the core, and hopefully outside the core soon. Most times, there is no difference between goods garnered from different sources. When there is a difference, we will make a note of it in the description. For these items, if not specified, we will choose for you, from either the largest quantity or closest source. If you do not see something you want or need in our catalogue, please ask. If we do not have it, we will do what we can to obtain it. This is how we get our Beachum’s exclusive items. These items are made specifically for our customers, at their request. We guarantee all of our merchandise. If you are not completely satisfied, we will refund your money.

Beachum’s will never knowingly do business with the Red Vardo Traders.

Consumables

Alcohol, Beer and Wine

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Glass bottles: 10-15 ounces for beer, 20-35 ounces for wine in a leather pouch

Hand keg: 12" long - 8" in circumference, weight about 10 pounds, carries roughly 2 gallons

Cask: roughly 2' long - 18" in circumference, carries 12 gallons

Barrel: generally 3-5' long, as wide around as a healthy man's shoulders, hold 30 gallons

Butt: roughly 6-7' long, wider than a man, standard purchase size for well-to-do manors, estates, and small castles, holds 100 gallons

Tun: generally mounted into the wall of taverns with a tap directly into it, holds 250 gallons

General price rule: Bottle Beer/Wine, 2sp/4sp; Hand keg, 3sp; cask, 2gp; barrel, 5gp; butt, 15gp; tun 30gp (average brew or local domain x0, good brew or neighboring domain x1, fine brew or non-neighboring core domain x2, excellent brew or non-core domain x3)

Borcan beer, wine
Darkon beer, wine
Falkovnia beer
Invidia beer, wine
Lamordian beer
Nova Vaasa wine
Sithicus wine
Tepest beer
Verbrek beer

Alcohol, Liquors

(Served in glass bottles, from 20-35 ounces in a leather pouch)

Barovian Apples Brandy made Nova Vaasan apples, bottle 16gp

Barovian Apricots Brandy made Borcan apricots, bottle 20gp

Barovian Peach Brandy made Nova Vaasan peaches, bottle 30gp

Barovian Tsuika Plum Brandy, bottle 12gp

Kartakan Meekulbrau brew (heady, bitter brew; supposedly relaxes the throat & calms the nerves, improving the imbiber's singing voice, this is an acquired taste), bottle of good vintage 400 gp, bottle of average vintage 100gp (Note: This beverage also stains the lips, teeth, &

anything else it touches a deep crimson for one hour) (Note: A flagon of Meekulbrau provides an extraordinary +1 competence bonus to the drinker's vocal Perform checks for one hour.)

Mordentish Ale (on the bitter side, thick, rich flavor unsettling tendency to taste cold for quite some time, even if left out on a warm day), bottle 30gp

Mordentish Ale, sugared or spiced (served warmed, popular in cooler months & holidays), bottle 15gp

Breads

(Bread sold in 1-pound rounds or loaves, unless otherwise noted.

Loaves can be either whole or sliced.)

Bagel, 2gp/dozen

Banana Nut Bread, 2gp

Barley bread, 10sp

Cinnamon Raisin bread, 3gp

Cornbread, one 1 lb loaf or 6-2 lb loaves, 1gp

Crackers (three dozen/package), 5sp/package

Croissants (Flaky, crescent shaped rolls layered with butter), 2gp/dozen

Crumpets (Round, flat, spongy muffins), 1gp/2 dozen

Gingerbread (shipped in a reusable tin), 1gp

Oat bread, 10sp

Honey wheat bread, 15sp; Beachum's exclusive item.

Nine-grain bread, 18sp; Beachum's exclusive item.

Noodles, 15gp/pound

Pita (Round, flat pockets of bread), 15sp/dozen

Potato bread, 2gp; Beachum's exclusive item.

Pumpernickel bread (a coarse, dark, sour bread made of unsifted rye flour), 15sp

Rye bread, 10sp

Sourdough bread, 15sp/2-lb loaf

Sunflower bread, 4gp

Tortillas, corn or flour, (thin, flat bread), 25gp/2 dozen

Wheat, coarse/cracked, bread, 10sp; fine, 15sp; whole, 10sp

Cheeses

(Cow's milk cheeses are sold in 1lb wheels or loaves, Goat's milk cheeses come in 1lb

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pyramids, rolls, round slabs, and sometimes conical)

(Note of Goat's milk cheese: tends to taste sharper than cow's milk cheese. Goat's milk is more delicate and therefore needs to be handled with greater care. It is also the reason why most goats' cheese cannot be sliced.)

Barovian hard goat cheese, 5gp

Darkon goat cheese (They ripen further during storage and a mould rind forms. The mould rind start off yellow and around eight days change to bluish-white.), 10gp

Darkon Roquefort cheese (strong cheese with bluish mold) 7gp,

Hazlani goat cheese, 7gp

Richemulot Rich sheep cheeses:

Feta cheese (soft white cheese, crumbles easily)

1lb ceramic jar 5gp,

Pecorino cheese (dry, sharp, very hard) loaf 8gp,

Ricotta cheese (soft, dry or moist) dry loaf 12gp, moist in ceramic jar, 7gp

Lamordian goat's milk cream cheese; (Very popular, mild flavor.), 3gp

Tepest goat's milk Camembert cheese; (White mould rind.), 4gp

Corns

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Barley; Barovia, Falkovnia, Hazlan, Invidia, Kartakass, Mordent, Nova Vaasa, Richemulot, Tepest, Verbrek, 1gp

Corn; Borca, Nova Vaasa, Richemulot, 1sp

Oats; Barovia, Darkon, Falkovnia, Invidia, Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, Richemulot, Sithicus, Tepest, Verbrek, 7sp

Millet; Hazlan, Nova Vaasa, Vechor, 7sp

Rice; Vechor, 5gp

Rye; Falkovnia, Hazlan, Invidia, Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, 7sp

Sunflower meal made from Barovia, Nova Vaasa sunflowers, 3gp

Exotics

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Cacao beans; Vechor 20gp

Chevre chaud (A classic cheese dish, it's coated in breadcrumbs or wrapped in bacon and served warmed.), 10gp

Cigars (made from Hazlani tobacco), sold in wooden boxes or 5, 25, 50

Excellent flavor, 5gp, 23gp, 42gp

Good flavor, 3gp, 12gp, 21gp

Fair flavor, 15sp, 6gp, 10gp

Cocoa (ground Cacao beans) 50gp

Coffee beans; Vechor 5gp

Coffee, ground; Vechor 7gp

Hops (to give beer/ales a bitter flavor); Darkon, Falkovnia, Invidia, Hazlan, Mordent, Valachan, Verbrek, 2gp

Olives, black or green; Hazlan, 7gp

Pipeweed herbediable; Richemulot, 5sp

Rice Candies, assorted flavors; Vechor 50gp for 100 pcs

Tea, common 2sp

Tea, flavored numerous varieties; Hazlan, Vechor, 2gp-10gp

Tobacco; Hazlan; fare, 3gp/lb, good, 7gp/lb, excellent 12gp

Vanilla; Vechor 10gp per bean

Flours

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Barley; Barovia, Darkon, Hazlan, Kartakass, Mordent, Richemulot, Valachan, 2gp

Potato; Borca, Barovia, Darkon, Falkovnia, Invidia, Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, Tepest, Verbrek, potatoes, 2gp

Rye; Borca, Darkon, Hazlan, Kartakass, Lamordia, 15sp

Wheat; Barovia, Borca, Darkon, Falkovnia, Hazlan, Invidia, Mordent, Nova Vaasa, Richemulot, Tepest, Valachan, 3gp

Fresh/Dried Fruits

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Apples; Nova Vaasan, Richemulot, Valachan, 2gp/1gp

Apricots; Borcan, Richemulot, 12gp/15gp

Bananas; Vechor 6gp/8gp

Cherries; Richemulot, Valachan, oz 1gp/5sp

Peaches; Nova Vaasan, Sithicus, 27gp/15gp

Pears; Tepest 3gp/4gp

Plums/Prunes; Richemulot, 1gp/3gp

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Grapes/Raisins; Hazlan, Darkon, Invidia, Sithicus, 8sp/1gp
Shadberry (or Juneberry); Richemulot, oz 10sp/5gp

Jams, Jellies, Curds, Marmalades, and Fruit Cheeses

(Sold by the pint)

Butters
Apple, 5sp
Pear, 6sp
Curds
Honey, 2gp
Fruit Cheeses
Apple, 1sp
Jams
Almond, wild, 20gp
Apricots, 20gp
Jellies
Apricot, 6sp Beachum's exclusive item.
Basil, 5sp
Grape, 6sp Beachum's exclusive item.
Mint, 2sp
Peach, 4sp Beachum's exclusive item.
Rosemary, 5sp
Sage, 4sp
Marmalades
Ginger, 20gp
Preserves
Cherry, 4sp

Meats

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Beef; Borca, Darkon, Falkovnia, Hazlan, Kartakass, Lamordia, Mordent (generally considered rather tough for most foreign palates), Vechor, Verbrek
Corned, 3gp
Dried, 5gp
Jerked, 7gp
Sausage, 2gp
Smoked, 4gp
Chicken and Eggs; Borca, Darkon, Hazlan, Nova Vaasa, Verbrek
Chicken, 2cp; eggs 8sp/100, 2sp/2dozen
Lamb; Borca, Darkon, Hazlan, Kartakass, Lamordia, Richemulot, Sithicus, Tepest, Valachan

Barovian lamb sausage (oozing with fat and blood), 7 gp

Fresh meat, 1gp/lb

Meatballs (used to make mititei, grilled pork with lamb meatballs, Barovian favorite), 3gp

Pork; Darkon, Falkovnia, Hazlan, Invidia, Kartakass, Tepest, Valachan, Verbrek

Bacon, 4gp

Ham, 5gp

Liver, 2gp

Salted, 3gp

Sarmale (pork wrapped in cabbage or grape leaves, Barovian favorite), 3gp

Sausage, 1gp

Milk and Butter

(Sold in ceramic jars. Fresh milk is sold in pints; powdered milk is sold in 1-pound; Butter is sold in 1-pound. Read: Fresh/Powdered.)

(Goat's milk: those allergic to cow's milk are able to consume goat's milk, closer in composition to human milk, easier to digest makes it invaluable for children and sick people, it is also sweeter than cow's milk. Goat's milk is more delicate than cow's milk and therefore needs to be handled with greater care.)

(Sheep's milk: has a rich, bland, slightly sweet taste, those allergic to cow's or goat's milk can substitute sheep's milk.)

Cow's milk 1gp/4gp; Darkon, Falkovnia, Lamordia, Verbrek

Goat's milk 2gp/3gp; Darkon, Lamordia, Tepest

Sheep's milk 3gp/4gp; Richemulot, Valachan

Cow's butter 2gp; Darkon, Falkovnia, Lamordia, Verbrek

Goat's butter 3gp; Darkon, Lamordia, Tepest

Sheep's butter 4gp; Richemulot, Valachan

Nuts

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Almond, wild; Richemulot, 3gp

Chestnuts; Richemulot, 1gp

Hazelnuts; Hazlan, 5sp

Sunflower seeds; Barovia, Nova Vaasa, 4gp

Oils, Powders, Extracts

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(Extracts sold in 2-ounce vial; oils sold in regular form in 1 pint or concentrated in 1-ounce vial; powders sold in 3 & 10 ounce vials)
These are Beachum's exclusive items.

Almond extract/oil/ powder, wild, 4gp/7gp-3gp/6gp-18gp
Apple powder, 6gp-18gp
Cherry powder, 6gp-18gp
Hazelnut extract/oil/powder, 4gp/3gp/6gp-18gp
Juniper oil (used for flavoring gin), 7gp
Lavender oil, 5gp
Olive oil, 5gp
Sunflower oil, 3sp
Vanilla extract/powder, 7gp/6gp-18gp
Linseed oil (from Flax seeds used in making paints and printer's ink), 5gp

Seafood

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Cod; Darkon, Lamordia, Nova Vaasa
 Salted, 5gp
 Smoked, 7gp
Flounder; Darkon, Lamordia, Mordent
 Pickled, 3gp
 Salted, 4gp
 Smoked, 5gp
Gray mullet; Barovia
 Pickled, 5gp
 Salted, 6gp
 Smoked, 7gp
Herring; Barovia, Darkon, Lamordia, Nova Vaasa,
 Pickled, 3gp
 Salted, 5gp
 Smoked, 7gp
Lobster; Mordent
 Live, 12gp each
Mackerel; Lamordia,
 Pickled, 3gp
 Salted, 4gp
 Smoked, 5gp
Oysters; Mordent 9gp/12
Pike; Barovia, Tepest,
 Pickled, 3gp
 Salted, 4gp
 Smoked, 5gp
Salmon; Valachan
 Salted, 10gp

 Smoked, 15gp
Sardines; Mordent, 4gp
Shrimp; Vechor
Live, 7gp/12
Smelt; Barovia
 Pickled, 2gp
 Salted, 3gp
 Smoked, 4gp
Sole; Mordent
 Pickled, 2gp
 Salted, 3gp
 Smoked, 4gp
Sturgeon; Barovia, Tepest,
 Pickled, 4gp
 Salted, 5gp
 Smoked, 6gp
Sturgeon caviar; Barovia, Tepest, 40gp
Trout; Valachan,
 Pickled, 4gp
 Salted, 5gp
 Smoked, 6gp
Trout, lake; Barovia
 Balls, 6gp
 Pickled, 4gp
 Salted, 5gp
 Smoked, 6gp
Tuna; Vechor
 Pickled, 2gp
 Salted, 3gp
 Smoked, 4gp
Turtles, live; Vechor 8gp each

Spices

(Seasons sold by the ounce, unless otherwise noted. Seasonings are from Vechor unless otherwise noted)

Angelica 5cp
Anise 3cp
Basil 1sp
Bay leaves (Note: place 1 leaf in flour to keep bugs away) 4gp
Bergamot 3cp
Caraway 2cp
Chervil 5cp
Chives 2cp
Cinnamon 4gp
Coriander 1sp
Cumin 2sp
Dillweed 3cp

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Garlic 1cp
Ginger 4gp
Horehound 4cp
Horseradish 1cp
Hyssop 5cp
Juniper; Richemulot 3sp
Laurel 4gp
Liquorice root 3sp/1 lg
Mace 2gp
Marigold 5cp
Marjoram 5cp
Mint 3cp
Mustard seed 5cp
Nutmeg 3sp/4 oz
Oregano 2sp
Paprika 4gp
Parsley 4cp
Pepper, black/cayenne/white 1gp/4gp/3gp
Poppy seed 8gp
Rose hips 5gp
Rosemary 5sp
Sage 1sp
Salt; Barovia, Borca, Darkon, Falkovnia, Invidia, Lamordia, Nova Vaasa, Sithicus, Block 1 lb/1cp
Granular 5 lb/5sp
Sea Salt; Mordent 1cp
Tarragon 1gp
Thyme, wild; Richemulot 1sp

Sweeteners

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Honey

Hazlan, 2sp
Richemulot, 3sp

Sugar; Vechor

Brown 1gp
Cubes 25/5gp
Granular ½ lb/6gp

Lavender; Richemulot 10gp; Beachum's exclusive item.

Loaf 3gp

Mace 35gp; Beachum's exclusive item.

Powdered 5gp

Raw (sugarcane) 5sp

Vegetables

(Sold by the pound, unless otherwise noted)

Beans; 12sp

Beets; Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, Cabbages; Barovia, Darkon, Invidia, Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, Sithicus, Verbrek

Carrots; Darkon, Sithicus, 1gp

Mushrooms; Verbrek, 12 lg/5cp

Mushrooms, wild; Richemulot, 12 lg/5cp

Onions; Barovia, 14sp

Peas, dried; Valachan, 6 oz/6cp

Peppers; Sithicus, Verbrek 10sp

Potatoes; Borca, Barovia, Darkon, Falkovnia, Invidia, Kartakass, Nova Vaasa, Tepest, Verbrek, 10sp

Radishes; Kartakass, 1gp

Squash; Sithicus 10sp

Turnips; Barovia, Sithicus, Tepest 4sp

Truffles (fleshy, edible, potato-shaped fungi that grows underground); Richemulot, 3gp

Vetch wort (type of pea) Richemulot, 2gp

Commodities

Adventuring Gear

Alchemical field kit (This padded leather case contains a handful of beakers, bottles, and tiny vials of various chemicals. A field kit is essentially a compact version of the full alchemist's lab one might find in an apothecary shop or wizard's abode. A skilled hunter should appreciate the ability to analyze strange substances or mix gunpowder while deep in an enemy's lair), 100gp, 10lbs

Fuse, clockwork, 500gp, 1lb

Herbal candle, 2cp

Magnetic compass; Dementlieu, 15gp, 1lb

Messkit, 8gp

Razor kit, 5gp

Tripwire alarm, 100gp, 3lb

Animals

Boar; Richemulot, 15gp

Chicken; Hazlan, Nova Vaasa, Verbrek, 2cp

Calf; 5gp

Cattle; Falkovnia, Hazlan, Lamordia, Vechor, Verbrek, 10gp

Dog, 25gp

Falcon, trained; Falkovnia, 1,000gp

Goat; Hazlan, Sithicus, Tepest, 1gp

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Horse; Nova Vaasa (horses prized throughout the Core for their strength, speed, obedience, and beauty)

Draft, 200gp

Heavy war, 400gp

Light war, 150gp

Medium war, 225gp

Riding, 75gp

Hunting cat (jaguar, etc.), 5,000gp

Pig/hog/swine; Falkovnia, Hazlan, Invidia,

Tepest, Valachan, Verbrek, 3gp

Sheep; Hazlan, Lamordia, Richemulot, Sithicus,

Tepest, Valachan, 2gp

Turtles; Vechor, 15gp

Clockworks/Other Specialties

Automaton, fine, 500gp, 1lb

Automaton, diminutive, 1,000gp, 5lb

Automaton, tiny, 2,000gp, 10lb

Automaton, small, 4,000gp, 10lb

Grandfather clock; Dementlieu, 200gp, 80lb

Grandmother clock; Dementlieu, 100gp, 40lbs;

Beachum's exclusive item.

Pocket watches; Dementlieu, 30gp

Mantle clock; Dementlieu, 50gp

Optics; Dementlieu, 20-50gp by special order

Moveable type printing press; Dementlieu, 35gp

Common Alchemical Substances

Anesthetic, 50gp

Catalytic Poison (Most useful in narrowing a list of suspects), 30gp plus cost of poison

Disappearing ink, 5gp per ounce

Ether (non-lethal inhaled poison. Holding an ether rag over someone's face to render unconscious), 50gp/bottle of 6 doses

Glow jar (Illuminates a 5-foot radius with the brightness of a candle for one hour.), 20gp

Heat pouch (Shake or crush, to react, for about six hours of warmth. Worn against skin, offers some protection against cold temperatures), 15gp

Herbal solution, 10gp plus cost of herbs

Night drops (Eyes drops, gains low-light vision for one hour.), 30gp

Pungent powder (If inhaled, loses all sense of smell for one hour.), 30gp

Smelling salts (Exposed to a sleeping or unconscious subject they automatically wake.), 10gp

Fabric

(Sq. yard)

Canvas, 1sp

Cotton; Hazlan, Vechor, 5cp

Flannel (light wool),

Light, 8cp

Medium, 1sp

Heavy, 12cp

Homespun, 5cp

Lace, 5gp

Linen 4gp

Raw wool, 2cp/lb

Sailcloth, 1sp

Silk (2 sq. yards), 20gp

Velvet, 3gp

Wool

Light, 9sp

Medium, 14sp

Heavy, 2gp

Wool, fine; Kartakass, Mordent (known for warmth & durability)

Light, 1gp

Medium, 15sp

Heavy, 2gp

Lumber

(Sold in either green/air dried/kiln dried; price by foot, in 2x4, 4x4 (2x), 2x8 (3x))

Alder, Richemulot, -/-/30sp

Ash, Kartakass, Richemulot, -/-/3gp

Beech, Kartakass, -/-/25sp

Evergreen, rare, Kartakass, 3gp/-/5gp

Oak, Kartakass, 1gp/-/3gp

Oak, black, Richemulot, 2gp/-/4gp

Oak, evergreen, Richemulot, 2gp/-/4gp

Oak, white Richemulot, 25sp/-/3gp, 10sp

Peat (plant covering and fuel), Darkon, Tepest

Pine, Richemulot, 10sp/1gp/2gp

Pine, black, Kartakass, 1gp/30sp/4gp

Poplar, Richemulot, 1gp/-/2gp

Red birch, Kartakass, -/-/25sp

Spruce, Richemulot, -/-/18sp

Timber, Barovia, (2nd to Karakass), Borca, Falkovnia, Karakass (leading supplier), Sithicus,

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Tepest, Valachan, Vechor, Verbrek,
10sp/15sp/1gp

Medical

Chirurgery kit (in addition to the usual bandages and vials in standard healing kits, this padded, compartmentalized case includes 7 knives and scalpels, 2 shears, 5 clamps, 3 sponges, 2 lenses, 10 curved and straight needles and a spool of horse-hair thread, 75gp, 5lb

Herbal Medications (A case containing witch hazel extract (8oz) for bruises, marshmallow-comfrey oil (12oz) for burns, dandelion juice (6oz) for warts and corns, horehound tea (4oz of leaves) for the croup, garlic powder snuff (2oz) for nasal ailments, rose hip marmalade (12oz) for sore throats, marshmallow roots (10 dried) for abscessed teeth, red clover (3oz) for trench foot, conserve of cowslips (10oz) for madness (Note: each has a 20% chance to work in one application except conserve of cowslips, whose effect lies entirely with the DM); 10gp

Hops (a sedative); Darkon, Falkovnia, Invidia, Hazlan, Mordent, Valachan, Verbrek, 1gp/oz

Juniper plant (used in medicines); Richemulot, 10gp/plant

Leaches (10), 1sp

Restraint board, 25gp, 15lb

Sanguine pump, 50gp, 1lb

Straitjacket, 20gp, 5lb

Syringe, 10gp, (10=11b)

Theriaca, (An antidote for many poisons.), 5gp/8oz metal flask (50% effective against class A, B, G, H, and K poisons.)

Ore/Minerals

(For laborers, priests (P), mages (M))

Amber; Nova Vaasa

Block (M) 8sp/1 in cu

Powder (M) 1 gp/12oz

Rod (M) 10gp/6 in

Brass

Bar 1sp/1 lb

Cylinder (P) 5sp/6oz

Dust (P) 3sp/4oz

Ingot 3sp/5 lb

Sheet 1sp/1 ft sq

Strip 3cp/6 by 1 in

Wire 4cp/1 ft

Bronze

Bar 7cp/1 lb

Die (P) 6sp/3oz

Disk (M) 5sp/2oz

Ingot 2sp/5 lb

Sheet 1sp/16 in sq

Strip 2cp/4 by 2 in

Wire 3cp/1 ft

Chalk; Mordent, Nova Vaasa, 1cp/1oz

Coal; Barovia

Chunk 1gp/1 lb

Dust 8sp/1 lb

Copper; Barovia (minimal), Borca, Darkon, Valachan

Bar 1cp/1 lb

Ingot 25cp/7 lb

Sheet 1sp/16 in sq

Square (M) 2cp/2 in

Strip 3cp/8 by 1 in

Wire (M) 3cp/1 ft

Wire 4cp/1 ft

Crystal; Sithicus

Bead/marble (M) 7gp/10

Rod (M) 15gp/1 ft

Square (M) 3gp/1 in

Sphere (M) 20gp/6 in

Gems; Darkon, Vechor

Diamond 150gp/ 1/8 ct

Emerald 140gp/ 1/8 ct

Quartz,

Clear rough-other rough, 1sp-5cp/1 ct

Powder (P) 1sp-5cp/1 ct, 3cp/1 oz

Ruby 150gp/ 1/8 ct

Sapphire 140gp/ 1/8 ct

Gold; Darkon, Valachan, Vechor

Bar 11gp/1 lb

Bell (P) 5gp/3oz

Caltrops (P) 3gp/2oz

Chunk (P) 5gp/1oz

Dust (P) 2sp/2oz

Ingot 29gp/3 lb

Needles (M) 15gp/5

Powder (M) 2sp/1oz

Sheet 9gp/8 in sq

Strip 4gp/4 by 1 in

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Tissue (P) 10gp/5 in sq
 Wire 1gp/1ft
 Wire (P) 1gp/3 ft
 Gypsum (used to make plaster of Paris and cement); Nova Vaasa, Tepest, 1sp/8oz
 Iron; Barovia, Borca, Darkon,
 Bar 5cp/1 lb
 Chunk (M) 5cp/1 in cu
 Chunk (P) 5cp/5oz
 Coin (P) 5cp/1
 Cube (P) 5cp/1 in
 Ingot 4sp/10 lb
 Powder (M) 2sp/6oz
 Rod (M) 3sp/1ft
 Sheet 5cp/1 ft sq
 Strip 4cp/10 by 1 in
 Strip (P) 3cp/5 sq in
 Wire 5cp/1 ft
 Lead; Borca, Darkon,
 Ball (P) 6cp/1 in
 Bar 7cp/2 lb
 Chunk (M) 6cp/1 in cu
 Chunk (P) 8cp/5oz
 Ingot 5sp/10 lb
 Sheet 4cp/5 in sq
 Strip 3cp/4 by 1 in
 Wire 4cp/1 ft
 Marble; Borca
 Chunk (P) 7sp/oz
 Mithral
 Bar 10gp/ ¼ lb
 Ingot 35gp/2 lb
 Sheet 6gp/3 in sq
 Strip 4gp/2 by 1 in
 Wire 7gp/1 ft
 Pearls; Vechor, 20gp each
 Platinum
 Bar 10 gp/ ¼ lb
 Chunk (P) 15gp/1 oz
 Coin (P) 5gp/1
 Die (P) 35gp/ ½ in
 Ingot 50gp/2 lb
 Mirror (P) 40gp/3 in sq
 Sheet 15gp/2 in sq
 Strip 10gp/6 by 1 in
 Tissue (P) 10gp/1 in sq
 Wire 5gp/1 ft
 Wire (P) 8gp/1ft
 Silver; Barovia, Darkon, Vechor
 Bar 3gp/ ½ lb

Chunk (P) 3sp/1oz
 Die (P) 6sp/ ½ in
 Ingot 11gp/2 lb
 Mirror (P) 3gp/2 in sq
 Pin (M) 5sp/5
 Powder (M) 1 sp/1oz
 Sheet 9gp/5 in sq
 Strip 3gp/6 by 1 in
 Wire 2gp/1 ft
 Wire (P) (M) 4sp/1 ft
 Steel
 Bar 3sp/1 lb
 Chunk (P) 1sp/1 oz
 Cube (P) 3sp/1 in
 Ingot 8sp/5 lb
 Sheet 3sp/1 ft sq
 Sheet (P) (M) 1gp/1 ft sq
 Strip 5cp/6 by 1 in
 Wire 3cp/1 ft
 Sulfur; Invidia, 1gp/1 lb
 Tin
 Bar 2sp/1 lb
 Ingot 5sp/5 lb
 Sheet 2sp/1 ft sq
 Square (M) 5cp/1 in
 Strip 3cp/6 by 1 in
 Wire 1cp/1 ft

Skins

(1 hide)

Badgers, Barovia, Richemulot, 2gp
 Bears, Brown, Richemulot, 5gp
 Beavers, Richemulot, 2gp
 Boars, Richemulot, 1gp
 Chamois, Barovia, 25gp
 Deer, Fallow and Roe, Richemulot, 4gp
 Ermines, Richemulot, 35gp
 Fox, Richemulot, 14gp
 Fox, Red, Barovia, 14gp
 Hares, Richemulot, 2gp
 Leather, Hazlan, Lamordia, Nova Vaasa, Richemulot, 2gp
 Lynx, Barovia, 40gp
 Polecats, Richemulot, 25gp
 Otter, Barovia, Richemulot, 5gp
 Weasel, Barovia, 3gp
 Wolf, gray, Barovia, 8gp
 Wolf, Richemulot, 8gp

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Special orders

(These items are dependent on market prices and availability)

Bitterblot (fruit, for divination); Barovia

Vistan's tears: This alpine flower is used for Vistani's legendary curative elixir; Barovia

Quovusp root: Used as snuff & tobacco for divination, 300gp/pouch; Hazlan

Poppy flower (black market product); Hazlan

Meekulbern: This is a very fickle plant. Attempts to transplant this plant have failed. The berries are not sold; Kartakass

Nightblight: This strange form of wolfsbane repels all wolves & wolf like forms of werewolves, wolfweres, many vampires, even spellcasters polymorphed into lupine forms; odorless to all other creatures, potency withers quickly once picked (stench drops by -2 with each passing day after picked); Kartakass

Devil's Tears: These dark red berries, have a hot sensation, and rush of very sweet flavor, used to spice dishes esp. desserts; Mordent

Wraithroot tea: If specially harvested, produces Ghostsight, caution: possibility of hearing the voices of the dead and Paranoia believing the dead are stalking them and friends as malevolent spirits; Mordent

Weapons, bows

(From Valachan)

Crossbow, staking, 80gp, 15lb (CL: 5+, Dmg: 1d12, Crit: 19-20/x2, Rng increment: 10ft, Type: piercing)

Bolts, staking (10), 1gp, 5lb (CL: 2+)

Weapons, firearms

(From Dementlieu, no firearms sold to Falkovnia)

Blunderbuss, 800gp, 15lbs (CL: 8+, Dmg: 5d4-1d4 (dmg decreases by 1d4 per 10ft), Rng increment: 50-foot cone, Type: piercing)

Shot (10), 10gp, 5lb (CL: 8+)

Brace, 3gp, 3lb

Pistol, 250gp, 3lb

Bullets (10), 3gp, 2lb (CL: 3+)

Musket, 500gp, 10lb (CL: 8+, Dmg: 1d12, Crit: x3, Rng increment: 150ft, Type: Piercing)

Bullets, rifle (10), 3gp, 2lb (CL: 3+)

Weapons, Grenade-like Gunpowder
(From Dementlieu, no firearms sold to Falkovnia)

Bomb, 150gp, 1lb (CL: 8, Dmg: 2d6, Blast radius: 5ft, Rng increment: 10ft)

Smoke bomb, 70gp, 1lb (CL: 8, Dmg: smoke, Rng increment: 10ft)

Gunpowder, keg, 250gp, 20lb (CL8+)

Gunpowder, horn, 35gp, 2lb (CL8+)

Weapons, other

Bayonet (narrow, dagger-like blade that can be attached to the end of a musket.), 1gp, 1/2lb (CL: 3+, Dmg: 1d4, Crit: x2, Type: Piercing)

Rapier, Parthian, 300gp, 5lb (CL: 9, Dmg: 1d6/1d10, Crit: 18-20/x2/x3, Rng increment: --/50ft, Type: Piercing)

Sword cane, dagger, 4gp (Dmg: 1d4, Crit: 19-20/x2, Type: piercing)

Sword cane, rapier, 25gp, 4lb (CR: 4+, Dmg: 1d6, Crit: 18-20/x2, Type: piercing)

Clothing

(All our clothing is made of the best materials available. Clothing is available in white, black, gray, beige, and brown, unless otherwise noted. Articles can be dyed nearly any color for 2sp, unless otherwise noted. Please request color when ordering. Articles may be embroidered, simple embroidery free, elaborate embroidery or gold or silver thread is 3sp. All clothing comes in human, halfling, elven, gnome, and dwarven sized. All listed prices are for human sizes, halfling and gnome is x 1/4, elven and dwarven is x 1/2 list price, unless otherwise noted. For larger sizes, add 1/4 list price, unless otherwise noted.)

Undergarments

Bustles: These attach around the waist and extend the curves of the hips or posterior in a complementary fashion beneath the dress. Our bustles are composed of the finest woven steel wire, conforming to feminine contours while not bending except under the most extraordinary stress. We add padding to each of our bustles to

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eliminate chafing. These are popular in Dementlieu. Small or large side bustle, 5gp; small or large rear bustle, 9gp.

Fullcloth: These warm a person from shoulders to ankles. Sewn from two layers of thick-woven linen between which lies a layer of wool. Human, 8gp; Gnomes, 1gp; halfling, 3gp, dwarf, 4gp; elf, 5gp.

Hosiery: wool and linen; Human, 6gp; Gnome, 2sp; halfling, 4sp; dwarf/elf, 5gp. Silk and velvet (double the cost).

Hose supporters: Horse leather, with buckles and straps to adjust to any size, 2gp. Can be dyed for an additional 1sp per order.

Money belt: Closeable compartments can carry up to 40 coins. Easily concealable beneath shirt or pants. 4gp.

Nightshirts, Flannel. Human, 6gp; demihuman, 4gp.

Stockings: Cotton, woolen, or flannel; short or long. Human, 2gp/pair; demihuman, 1gp/pair.

Petticoats, corsets, bodices, and trains of linen, 1-3gp, in white.

Overclothes

Breeches: Human: Sackcloth, 10sp; linen, 2gp; woolen, 4gp; velvet, 8gp, silk, 16gp. With or without leg ties. Dwarf and elf sizes are one half price, gnome and halfling are one quarter price. Larger sizes by special order.

Cannons/trousers: Trousers are 1gp more than cannons. Human: Linen, 4gp; woolen, 6gp; velvet, 10gp; silk, 18gp. Larger sizes by special order. Please specify ecto-, meso-, or endomorphic when ordering.

Capes: Cotton: Half-capes, 4sp; full-, 7sp. Velvet or silk is triple price. To add lining, add together types of material desired, example cotton full-cape with silk lining 28sp. Fur collars, range from 3gp-25gp depending on type

of fur available, this is a special order. Full fur capes are dependent on type of fur available, this is a special order. Wool, flannel and cotton colors: white, brown, black, and gray; velvet and silk colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet.

Caps and hats: There are many varieties of caps and hats, berets, stocking caps, skull caps, fur-lined hunting hats (with ear flaps, if desired), turbans, hoods, and coifs. A variety of materials are used, including linen, cotton, flannel, wool, leather, and fur (doubles cost). Silk and felt are special orders and at triple cost. Most hats and caps: 1sp; turbans and berets: 3sp; fur lining adds 1sp. Colors are available as per capes. Tall bicorn hats popular in Richemulot, 2sp; accents pin in gold or silver tone, 5gp; long plumes or feathers, 10sp-3gp, Grandfather Owl feather 10gp. Three-corner hats popular in Dementlieu and Mordent wear, 2sp. Bonnet and head kerchief, 1sp.

Chemise/blouse/shirt: Attractive, comfortable, and durable, overgarment or undergarment. Human: sackcloth, 8sp; linen, 2gp; cotton, 3gp; silk, 6gp. Colors: white, beige, or grey. Lace and ruffles may be added for 10sp. Buttons of ivory, add 2gp, popular in Mordent.

Cloaks: These are made with a variety of clasps and broaches. Single layer cotton, 8sp; wool, 9sp. Cold weather cloaks are made of several layers of cotton, flannel or wool, which serve well as a blanket, for double the single layer price. Fur cloaks made of common animals are usually available, 50gp. Other types can often be acquired through special order (cost vary, starting at 150gp). There are several styles, with or without hoods (hoods of same material cost ¼ price of cloak). Fur collars, range from 3gp-25gp depending on type of fur available, this is a special order. Even some with inner pouches and pockets for 5sp/pouch or pocket. Colors are white, brown, black, grey, and forest green. The Tartan color (see kilt) costs 2sp more.

Coats: Waistcoats which are sleeveless popular in Richemulot and Mordent reach to the waist, linen, 10sp; wool, 1gp; flannel, 30sp; cotton

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2gp; velvet, 3gp; silk, 4gp; leather, 10gp. Sleeved, full coats and long coats reach from the hips to the knees, linen, 1gp; wool, 2gp, flannel, 3gp; cotton 4gp; velvet, 6gp; silk 8gp; leather, 20gp. For high collars that fasten tightly up to the throat popular with Richemuloise women, add linen/wool 2sp, leather 1gp, others 10sp. To add wide cuffs on the sleeves popular in Kartakass or tails popular in Mordent or large folded back cuffs popular in Dementlieu, add linen/wool 10sp, leather 2gp, others 1gp.

Codpiece: These attach easily to all breeches and cannons. Flat (1sp), bag (1gp) in linen, gold embroidered ornamentation optional (add 1gp). Velvet or silk cost double. Gem encrustation of special order only. Available in blue, red, black, white, or brown.

Cote/Tunic: These reach to mid-thigh, and are sleeved and sleeveless in white, tan, brown, and black. Ankle-length popular in Hazlan, called a Kaftan, is ¼ more. Human: Linen, 7gp; cotton, 8gp; velvet, 10gp; silk, 11gp.

Cravat: A neckerchief, scarf, or necktie popular in Dementlieu, lace or silk, 5sp.

Doublet: These are fronted by a row of buttons with comfortable joints for shoulders and elbows. The stock material is linen. Human, 1gp; gnome, 3sp; halfling, 4sp; dwarf, 5sp; elf, 6sp. For cotton add ½, Velvet or silk, is double, brocade is tripled.

Dress:

Common labor woman's dress in linen, cotton add ½. Human, 2sp; gnome, 7cp; halfling, 8cp; elf, 1sp.

Gowns are a simple dress of silk that can be later adorned with lace and ruffles. Human, 15gp; gnome, 5gp; halfling, 7gp; dwarf, 8gp; elf, 10gp. Please specify ecto-, meso-, or endomorphic. The skirt can be made to flair out at the waist add 1gp, popular in Mordent. For velvet double price and brocade triple price popular in Dementlieu, special order.

Fans: 10sp.

Gloves and mittens: Fine linen gloves, 5gp, or silk, 15gp. Work gloves of canvas or leather, 1gp, and gauntlets, 2gp. Leather, fur-lined gloves, 4gp, mittens, 3gp. Archery gloves, 4-6gp.

Handkerchief: Linen, 1sp; silk, 2gp. In white may be embroidered.

Hoods: Wool or linen, 2sp; fur, 1gp. Most colors available, as per cloaks.

Kilts: A pleated, wrap-around skirt-like garment reaching to the knees worn by Forfarian men. The half-kilt is one and a three-quarters layers of fabric with a waistline and two buttons, one on the inside and one on the outside and a shoulder overhang or cape. The full-kilt is a longer piece of fabric that wraps around the waist several times, with enough fabric to hang over the shoulder or use as a cape. These come in cotton, flannel or wool, 2gp for half-kilts and 5gp for full-kilts, in bold plaids, earthy greens, browns, and the Tartans (the colors and patterns of stripes decorating the garments) only. If we do not have a tartan color scheme, we can add one using a swatch. Typically worn with a pin to keep the front closed; a simple pin is 5gp, specify gold or silver tone.

Purses and sporrans: Linen, 3sp; leather, 2gp; hidden pouches, 5gp, wire mesh inner layer, 7gp. As a bonus, we will embroider (linen) or tool (leather) one initial at no extra charge, additional letters, 1sp each. The sporran is a leather pouch or purse, usually covered with fur or horsehair, worn hanging from the front of the belt by Forfarian men. The basic leather sporran costs 2gp, fur covered is 2gp extra for common animals, horsehair is 1gp extra. The basic leather sporran can be tooled with Celtic weave patterns or the clan symbol, if provided, at no extra cost. Three leather tassels can be added at no extra cost. Three fur or horsehair tassels can be added for 5sp.

Robes: Open front with a tie sash. These come in various lengths, from the knee to the ankle.

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Specify length when ordering. Human: linen, cotton, or wool, 1gp; silk or velvet 6gp.

Sashes: Cotton or wool, 1sp, linen, 2sp, or silk, 10sp. Colors: white, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, brown, and black. Tartan colors 1sp extra.

Shawls: Cotton, flannel and wool, 8sp. Colors same as capes and cloaks with tartan colors 1sp extra.

Skirt: These come in various lengths, from the knee to the ankle. Specify length when order. Human: Linen, 5gp; cotton, 6gp; wool, 7gp; velvet, 8gp; silk, 9gp, for short lengths. Long lengths add ½. The Hazlani Zarongs, an ankle-length cloth that wraps around the waist for 2gp less long length price. For pleating, popular in Richemulot, add 1gp for short, or 30sp for long. The skirt can be made to flair out at the waist add 1gp, popular in Mordent. Colors are white, brown, black, grey, forest green and the Tartan. Vests: Human: Linen, 8sp; cotton 15sp; quilted wool, 1gp; velvet, 4gp; silk, 5gp; leather 10gp; sheepskin, 11gp; woolen lining for leather and sheepskin, popular in Barovia, 1gp extra. Simple buttons are 5sp extra. To stiffen the vest, popular in Hazlan is 10sp extra.

Wigs: Also called Perruques in Dementlieu. Normal, realistic wigs of any color, natural or dyed, with several different coiffures. Please specify the following when ordering: gender of the wearer, costume or formal, powdered or non-powdered, color, the domain and city in which the wig will be worn, and the event at which it will be worn. The crafters will create a wig suitable for your needs. 1-3gp. Ribbons (1sp) and feathers (10sp-3gp) may also be added.

Footwear

Buckled shoes of soft leather, as worn by the Richemuloise, 2gp

Dancing shoes: 15sp/pair.

High black riding boots and high, black boots with hard soles, 7gp

Ladies low boots, hard, with lace up front 2gp.

Low boots, hard 2gp, soft 15sp, animal skin, 3gp/pair, dagger sheaths 1gp.

Sandals: 2gp/pair

Slippers: quilted linen, 15sp; quilted silk, 35gp; wool, 10sp; navy, maroon, brown, black.

Crafts

Musical instruments from Kartakass and Lamordia

Common strings

Bandore (Pandora) 65gp

Cittern 65gp

Dulcimer full-size 60gp, half-size 45gp

Lute; chitarrone 50gp, theorbo 45gp, mandora 40gp, common 35gp

Mandolin 40gp

Psaltery; triangular 65gp, square 60gp

Yarting, all sizes 40gp

Zither 65gp

Elite strings

Harp

Full-scale of wood 75gp

Half-scale of wood 50gp, silver 120gp

Quarter-scale of wood 30gp, silver 75gp

Harpsichord, prices start from 400gp

Lyre 40gp

Rebec 55gp

Violin, prices start from 65gp

Viol 75gp

Winds

Birdpipe 20gp

Fanfare horn 35gp

Horn (brass, bronze, horn, or shell) common trumpet 40gp

Glaur; silver 120gp, electrum 250gp, brass 75gp

Hunting horn; wood 20gp, brass 35gp, shell 35gp, horn 30gp

Longhorn; brass 15gp, silver 35gp, wood, 10gp, bamboo 15gp,

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Tenor longhorns available only by special orders
Sackbut 45gp
Shawm 22gp
Shorthorn 15gp
Songhorn 15gp
Thelarr (or whistlecane) individually 6gp,
complete set 25gp
Zulkoon (or bagpipes) 95gp

Percussion

Chimes; full racks 75gp, small hand-held sets
5gp (this item is a special order)
Hand-drum 20gp
Rattle; small 5gp, moderate 7gp, large 10gp
Tantan 12gp
Tocken; all sizes 25gp
Wargong prices vary with availability (this item
is a special order)

Craft goods

(Price dependent on availability)

Furniture; Barovia, Dementlieu, Lamordia, Nova
Vaasa, Richemulot, Valachan, 4gp-25gp
Ceramics; Darkon, Richemulot, 2sp-4gp
Household implements; Dementlieu, 4sp-10gp
Glassware; Richemulot, 10sp-10gp
Perfumes; Darkon, 10sp-10gp

Toys

(From Barovia)

Animal models, wood, with or without wheels;
recommended ages 2-5. Specify animal when
ordering. 1gp. Horse, dragon, Pegasus, unicorn,
cow, pack mule, elephant, camel.

Dolls, fabric; highest quality cloth and stuffed
with down and felt for softness. 3sp.
Townswoman, townsman, princess, prince,
warrioress, warrior, sorceress, sorcerer,
priestess, priest, female rogue, male rogue, teddy
bear, rabbit.

Dolls, porcelain; Human baby dolls dressed in
swaddling clothes. 2gp.

Puppets, hand; highest quality cloth. 2sp.
Varieties as with fabric dolls.

Marionette; Highest quality wood. As with
fabric dolls and model animals. 2gp each, or 3
for 5gp.

Rocking Mounts; Horse, Pegasus, unicorn, sea
lion, dragon (specify color).

Tops; Made of brass, copper, and bronze; solid
and whistling varieties. 5sp each, or mixed
variety of 5 tops for 2gp.

Transportation

(Ask for designs, market prices and availability)
Ships (not the largest or fastest on the waves,
known for excellent durability in rough weather,
uniquely designed keels which allow them to
navigate much shallower waters than other
vessels of comparable size); Mordent

Ships; Darkon, Lamordia, Nova Vaasa,
Richemulot

Carriages; Richemulot

Carts; Richemulot

Arts and Books

(Ask for specific topics and availability)

Paintings; Borca

Books on Music and Architecture; Borca

Books on arcane knowledge; Darkon

Hiring opportunities

Need an advisor or a court mage, then an
Hazlani mage might be what you are looking
for. The Hazlan magic academies produce some
of the best mages in the core. Ask for
availability.

Need an architect to build that manor house of
your dreams, Borcan architects can help. Ask
for details.

After she completed the order, the woman
went into the back to check on the items on the
list. When she emerged she said, "you're lucky,
our warehouse isn't very busy so most of the
items can be filled today." The she read over
everything to see if she got it right:

1 forest green full-kilt, flannel, 2gp, 10sp

1 tartan full-kilt, flannel, 5gp special order 2
days

1 basic sporran with Celtic weave pattern
number 8 with 3 leather tassels 2gp

1 simple pin, gold tone, 5gp

1 white shirt, cotton, 3gp

1 beige shirt, cotton, 3gp

1 beige shirt, linen, gnome size, 10sp

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1 white shirt, silk with lace and ruffles, and ivory buttons, 6gp+10sp+2gp special order 2 days
1 pair brown trousers, linen, 5gp
1 pair black breeches, with leg ties, silk, 16gp
1 pair beige breeches, no leg ties, linen, gnome size 10sp
1 black waistcoat, velvet 3gp
1 black hip-length full coat with tails, cotton, 4gp+1gp
1 brown hip-length full coat, velvet, elven size, 3gp
1 brown skirt, long-length, cotton, elven size, with flair 6gp+1gp
1 silk gown, died blue, elven size, 10gp
1 brown ankle-length (Kaftan) cote with sleeves, ectomorphic, with tie (no charge), cotton 16gp
1 white petticoat, bodice, and garters, 2gp
1 pair silk hose, elven size 10gp
1 pair silk stockings/hose, 12gp
2 pair cotton long stockings, 2@2gp
1 pair cotton short stockings, demihuman 1gp
3 pair high black boots with hard soles, 2@7gp
1 pair low, soft boots with dagger sheaths, gnome size 15sp+1gp
1 pair ladies low boots, hard, with lace up front, 1" heel, 2gp
1 forest green cloak, single layer wool, with hood, gnome size, 45sp+11sp
1 Champaign blond non-powdered wig, male, hair 16" long, straight, no bangs, no part, long-term daily wear, Mordent, 3gp special order 2 days
1 spool of brown ribbon, 1sp
3 flannel nightshirts 3@6gp
2 flannel nightshirts, demihuman 2 @4gp
1 bronze holy symbol, the Morninglord, 1gp
1 Alchemical field kit, 100gp
1 Pocket watches, 30gp
1 package Smelling salts, 10gp
1 set Herbal Medications, 10gp
1 Chirurgery kit, 75gp
1 Pistol, 250gp
5 (10 cartridge) bullets, 5@3gp
1-2lbs Gunpowder, with horn, 35gp
1 Sword cane with rapier, 1gp/cane, 25gp/rapier
1 whip, 3gp
4 backpacks, 4@2gp
1 rucksack, 1gp
4 bedrolls, 4@20gp

1 bedroll, ½ size 10gp special order 2 days
5 waterskins, 5@8sp
5 messkits, 5@8gp
4 razor kits, 4@5gp
1 box 50 cigars, good flavor 21gp
2lb tobacco, good 2@7gp
1 variety box tea, 7gp
Total: 931gp, 12sp
1 Zulkoon or bagpipes, 95gp special order 2 days

"Now if everything is correct, would you like to check over my math?"

Baltasar checked everything over. "Looks good to me."

"The total is 931gp and 12sp, not including the 95gps for the bagpipes. As noted, the special orders will take two days to fill. The remainder of the items will be ready in four hours. Half is due at time of order the remainder is due upon pickup. The special orders are paid in advance. We have a waiting room through the door on the left if you'd like to wait. Or you can come back in four hours. There are changing rooms as well as a privy to the rear of the waiting room, both are clearly labeled in multiple languages. We do ask that you not eat or drink on the premises."

Everyone in the party looked down at Nelleg. "Do you take gems?"

"Yes we do, at our resale value minus five percent."

"May I use your privy?"

"Certainly, there is a wash basin, soap, and towels," the woman said.

After several minutes Nelleg returned. He handed the woman an emerald. She took an appraiser's glass out of a pocket and examined the gem. After several minutes she wrote something on the order form.

Payment: 1-1ct flawless emerald worth 1120gp, minus 5%, value 1064gp.

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"The emerald is worth 1064gp. That is minus our five percent. Would you like to pay for the whole order now?"

"Certainly," Nelleg said, "including the bagpipes."

"Very well, if you'll wait a minute while I place your order and get your change." She stepped into the back room.

"Is that fair for the emerald?" Baltasar asked.

"Yes, according to their inventory, an emerald is sold 140gp per one eighth of a carat. The emerald I gave her was a full carat. That means it's worth 1120gp, minus the five percent or 56gp, which equals 1064gp. We should get back 37gp and 8sp."

"Maybe you should have checked her math," Baltasar droned.

"I trust you," Nelleg smiled.

"You got that just from a quick glance at the inventory?" Leeli said softly.

"My eyes tend to pick up certain things. Gnomes are big on gems."

The woman returned with a large pouch and a copy of the order form. She placed them both on the counter. "Here is your copy of the order form. If you leave the premises, you will need the order form to pick up your order." A chime sounded throughout the room. Everyone turned to the right wall and noticed a large grandfather clock against the wall. The woman noted the time. "It is now 1:30. The order will be ready at 5:30. Will someone be waiting?"

"Aye," Seamus said. "I'm not leaving without me kilt."

"Very good." She dumped out the money on the counter and counted it out. Baltasar watched her. "Would you like to verify the amount? You may keep the pouch. The special

order will be ready the day after tomorrow at 1:30. Would one of you sign the order form please." Baltasar signed it; then the woman did.

"About the time pieces," Allistair began. "I noticed they are considerably less expensive than if they were bought in Dementlieu. How do you do it?"

"We had trouble selling them in some of the other domains, like Barovia for example. So we made an arrangement with the manufacturers in Dementlieu. We buy larger quantities with simpler designs. We also had a request for a model smaller than the Grandfather clock and larger than the mantle clock that hangs on the wall. Hence the Grandmother clock. Most major business in town have either a Grandfather or Grandmother clock in their lobbies."

"Is there an inn in town?" Leeli asked.

"Yes, if you step outside and turn right, go to the intersection and turn right again, go half a block and you'll see the Roaring Wolf Inn. They have no prejudices against non-humans. They also have a very nice restaurant and tavern on the first floor that are both always open. There are other inns in town, but they have a problem with non-humans." She pulled a card out of a pocket. "Here, if you hand them this you'll get a discount and a free breakfast. We also can deliver the items to the inn for 10gp, if you'd like. It will be an additional 15 minutes on the order time."

"Let's do that," Leeli said, taking Seamus by the arm. "That way you're all cleaned up and ready for your kilt when it arrives."

"Very well," Seamus agreed, blushing.

The woman wrote, Delivery to the Roaring Wolf Inn, 10gp, delivery time 5:45, on the order form. "Would you sign please?" Baltasar and the woman both signed the change to the order form. He gave her the extra 10gp. "You'll need to show the order form when the merchandise is

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delivered. Feel free to verify the order before the delivery person leaves.”

“Thank you,” Baltasar said.

“And thank you. I hope you enjoy your stay in town, and please stop by Beachum’s Emporium again.”

The group went to the Roaring Wolf Inn and had no problems checking in. As she said, they received a discount and vouchers for a free breakfast. And at 5:45 precisely the order arrived and was exactly as specified and in excellent condition. Seamus was thrilled to get his new kilt, even if it wasn’t his tartan. And in two days, the special orders arrived at the inn, as specified. The delivery boy gave the party a ten percent return customer discount card, good at any Beachum’s Emporium location, with a list of the currently open locations and the soon to open locations. Seamus was beside himself, the tartan pattern was perfect. Finally, someone outside Forlorn was able to give him his kilt. And bagpipes also. Now all he needed was his clan pin.

NPCs:

The Beachum family includes Mary and Robert Beachum, Robert’s 8 brothers and sisters, 7 spouses, Mary and Robert’s 10 children, 21 nieces & nephews, and 14 grandchildren. Ages of the Beachum family members vary from mid-60s to early 20s. At any Emporium outlet there will be at least two family members, or at most one ‘family,’ consisting of parents, and any children less than 18 years of age. There are Beachum’s in nearly every domain in the core, but there is not necessarily a shop open in those domains. This does not restrict the family from shipping goods to the shops that are open.

At each shop there will be at least one magic user capable of casting the following spells: alarm, arcane lock, comprehend languages, copy, detect poison, detect undead,

enlarge/reduce, identify, magic mouth, permanency, protection from chaos/evil/good/law, see invisibility, spell turning, tenser’s floating disk, teleport without error or teleportation circle, tongues. While at least one person will be able to cast any one of the above spells, not every magic user will necessarily be able to cast all the spells.

In every shop there will be at least two fighters, of at least 3d level. These warriors do not necessarily have to be family members. There may be any number of clerks working in the store to help fill orders, which will be zero or low-level NPCs. Everyone who works for Beachum’s is completely loyal to the family and their goals.

The shops:

In every shop there is a specially made pair of glasses that has true seeing and see invisibility cast on them with permanency, not necessarily created by a family member. There will be at least two people, at least one being a family member, in the shop at any one time. There are wards and protection spells cast on the buildings to protect it and the people inside. There is also a specially designed spell turning spell cast so that anyone who casts a spell in the shop without permission will have it reflected back on them. Each shop has a specially created teleportation pad, created using a variant of the teleport without error or teleportation circle and permanency. The teleportation pad they use to ‘ship’ the goods from one domain to another. On the doorknob of the shop is a tongues spell that is permanently cast on it and a magic mouth spell cast above the inside of the door also with permanency.

When someone enters the shop, the magic mouth spell says “Greetings patron! Welcome to Beachum’s Emporium! Please refrain from any spellcasting while in this shop. Thank you and enjoy your shopping experience,” spoken in one of the languages the person who touched the door speaks. This is to not only greet the people coming in but lets the family members running

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the shop know someone has entered. No surprises.

Orders:

When an order is placed, the time to fill the order depends on the availability and the amount of merchandise bought. If there are no special orders, the order can be filled within two days, depending on the amount of orders and the number of shops the DM has in operation.

Possible adventure idea:

Beachum's hires the PC's to scout out a new location to set up shop in. This could be any domain or city the DM chooses. The characters could carry a copy, or part of a copy, of the catalogue with them to show the locals what kind of merchandise they could get. The players may have to contend with a populace who do not wish to have such a shop open within their community. The players may have

to grease the wheels of the bureaucracy to overcome law enforcement, permit requirements, special taxation and building availability.

Sources:

Ravenloft Gazetteer Vol. I & III, Ravenloft Campaign Setting, Core Rulebook, Domains of Dread, Van Richten's Arsenal, Heroes of Light, Forgotten Realms Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue, D&D Players Handbook, Core Rulebook I, AD&D Al-Qadim, Arabian Adventures

On Goat's Milk:

<http://quick100.hypermart.net/goatsmlk.html> &
<http://www.trib.com/~kkranch/why.htm>

On Goat's Milk cheese:

<http://www.frencheese.co.uk/glossary/glossary.cfm/lexiconID/41>

On Sheep's milk:

<http://www.sheepdairying.com/Milk.htm>



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People, good or bad...

Scientiae Arcanum

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BELENUS

EVEN THE PUREST OF HEARTS CAN BEAR GREAT PAIN

By: Carrie Kube
(Yaoi Huntress Earth)

After a life of pain, is
an innocent heart worth
it if it's a lie? For a
young man with no memory,
it is something he has to
face everyday.

Appearance

At first glance, one might wonder if this twenty-five-year-old-man is a bit old to be a true innocent, but spending a little time with him one can see the love and joy he shows to his god and everyone around him. Almost as if an invisible aura of light and hope hugged his entire body.

Unlike the rest of the people of Pharazia, Belenus is fair skinned with cinnamon-colored hair that is starting to grow out a bit. His blue eyes are covered with a large white blindfold after blinding himself by his master's command. Otherwise he dresses no differently than the rest of the natives.

History

The word *monster* was the most common word associated to Jonathan Brook ever since his mother was burned as a witch in Tepest. He knew she wasn't innocent, because his grandparents had already filled his head with stories of how his mother would make dark pacts with the Shadow Fey and the horrible curses that she inflicted upon the town. And to make sure he never forgot, his grandparents and the rest of the villagers kept a strict watch on this "demon child" to make sure no signs of Fey heritage wouldn't emerge.

Lonely and ridden with guilt, Jonathan entered the priesthood of Belenus in hopes of proving that he was nothing like his mother. While he was a good and devoted follower, rumors travel like wildfire and his sordid past was eventually discovered by his fellow clerics. Right as the high clerics were about discuss weather hanging or burning would be the better punishment, Jonathan decided to join up with a group of adventurers who happened to be passing by.

Things started to pick up for Jonathan though he was still rather painfully shy around the rest of the party in fear if they wouldn't like him if he revealed too much. So he often put his own feelings and happiness behind that of others in hopes that they would still like him even if he did screw up or they found out. It was that very selflessness that won him the heart of Annya, a Halfling ranger, when he threw himself in the path of a werefox that wanted to infect her.

Due to their opposing races, Annya had kept her feelings for Jonathan a secret until their party came across and recruited a fellow cleric of Belenus named Charlotte. Charlotte's beauty and charm easily broke through Jonathan's barriers, creating a beautiful relationship and stirring a lot of jealousy in Annya's heart. Believing Charlotte to be a monster, Annya followed the cleric around until Charlotte eventually let her guard down, revealing herself to be the werefox that tried to attack their party. With this information in hand, Annya set a trap for their new recruit.

Throwing a lycanthropy inducing potion on her, Charlotte's plans were destroyed at a terrible cost. Annya had underestimated Jonathan's fragile state, driving him to throw himself over the party's private ship and into the cold waters.

Out of some strange miracle, Jonathan was eventually found washed up on a sandbank in

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Pharazia. Battered from the waves and unable to remember his own name, the captain of the enforcers who found him took pity on the outsider. And since he had no memory, Jonathan would be unable corrupt the natives.

Renamed Belenus for the strange necklace he wore with his deity's name on it, the former cleric became an eager and devout follower of Diamabel. This became the perfect propaganda for the dread lord to keep his followers devoted, for if a sinful outsider could become a pure and godly servant, then Diamabel's power was truly unquestionable. Only problem was that as Belenus' faith and purity grew, a change had come over him, transforming him into the epitome of good-a true innocent. Blinded by his regained innocence, Belenus has once again become a pawn and object of jealousy for the forces of darkness.

Current Sketch

As Diamabel's desire to build a religion around himself grows, Belenus has become something of a mascot. And to make sure that he never found out about the darklord's demonic half, Diamabel demanded that he blinded himself as test of faith. Yet, despite all this, the dread lord despises the young man for his purity and would do away with him if his little propaganda machine didn't work so well.

Personality

Old fragments of his past still haunt Belenus to this day, creating an inner sadness that occasionally whispers into his head that his life is all a lie. Deep inside he knows the voices are right, but prefers to drown them out with his new found faith and peace the he has finally found. On the outside Belenus is a cheerful and saintly creature whose personality draws people to him. Co-dependant and eager to please everyone around him, he is able to withstand even the cruelest of abuses and still forgive his tormentor.

Belenus (aka Jonathan Brook)

True Innocent Human, Lawful Good Clr 5:
AC 10; HD 5d6 (27 hp); Init +0; Spd. 30 ft.; Attack: +3 melee, +2 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; SQ Blind; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb (+5), Concentration (+4), Handle Animal (+6), Knowledge (religion) (+5), Listen (+4), Perform (sing) (+6), Ride (+4), Use Rope (+4); Weapon Focus (Quarterstaff).

Weapons: Quarterstaff.

Spells per Day: 5/4+1/3+1/2+1. Cleric Domains: Sun (automatically destroy turned undead once/day).

Confronting Belenus

Due to his blindness and newly gained innocent nature, Belenus tries to avoid fighting and will try to summon Diamabel's soldiers to fight for him and will try to run away. If cornered, he will try to talk the attackers out of it or start blindly swinging his staff, hoping to hit something.

Adventure hooks

- ◆ Annya (Rgr 6) has never forgiven herself for her selfishness and has been searching Ravenloft for Belenus in hopes of redeeming herself and finally professing her love.
- ◆ If one looks closely, characters can notice the fresh cuts and bruises on Belenus' body (all thanks to Diamabel). This might raise some suspicions that will get the PCs in even more trouble than they bargained for.
- ◆ Diamabel might come across some ancient scroll telling of how one can purge the demonic taint from them by sacrificing and consuming the heart of an innocent. And guess who the lucky victim is.



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THE BLANC & NOIR

STITCHED BY FANS, FOR THE FANS

...If they know enough to know,
That when you've bowed,
You leave the crowd.
There was no pain,
No fear, no doubt
Till they pulled me out
Of Heaven...

-Buffy the Musical

By: Dion Fernandez
(MidwayHaven)

When fans go out of their
mind upon the death of
their idols.

When awesome talent and indescribable beauty come together in one body, the attraction one would receive may be more than what he or she could handle. Such people are rare indeed, and if just one of these special people would fade into oblivion or pass away, it is as if a star would have been snuffed out in the dark of night. But their following would live on, celebrated in the memories of those who loved and adored them in life.

However, as is sometimes the case, adoring hearts could not easily come to terms with the passing of such gifted individuals. Admirers would lament with heavy hearts to see them live again, or maybe even to die with them, to take them into the mysterious beyond where talent and beauty mingle in harmony. In the Dread Realms, two such individuals have taken both choices of death and rebirth, twisting them to suit their craving for continued admiration.

The Blanc & Noir

Daneza diPaccio and Rolfo Guieba were two gifted and beautiful individuals from Mortigny, bound together in their early teenage years simply by their love for music and performing. While Rolfo was quick and dashing with his violin, Daneza was equally lovely with her nimble fingers as she played expertly along the keys of the harpsichord. A decade soon passed, and though they never truly loved each other in a passionate and intimate way, they became the best of friends and made beautiful music together. Their good looks and their extraordinary craft also became popular among the people of Richemulot; it was this positive reputation that spread among the folk like wildfire in this land of gossip and intrigue, and due to this the young couple had once even been invited to perform in the Delanuit Estate, home of the Reniers. After their prestigious performance in the court of Jacqueline Renier, the duo had become the Blanc & Noir.

Together, Rolf and Daneza traveled throughout Richemulot and beyond to express themselves through music. Never would a performance be complete without one of the audience bursting into tears, or swooning in the captivating aura the Blanc & Noir exuded. Slowly they had become legends in their own right in the western Core: good-looking, blonde-haired, clean-shaven Rolfo with his neat ivory-white suit, standing tall as he intimately played

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his violin; and of course Daneza, with her hair black as shadow, lips as sharp and red as rubies, and her assortment of gorgeous black gowns as she played the ivory keys.

Their success, however, would come to lamentable tragedy.

It was in 754 when the Blanc & Noir performed for the first time in the hallowed halls of the Port-a-Lucine Opera House. Although no rain fell that dreary night, lightning and thunder punctured the angry evening skies. Daneza and Rolfo had made an impact on the aristocratic audience as they cheered vigorously with tears in their eyes. Amid a thick crowd in front of the Opera House, as the duo were escorted into a carriage full of their belongings, a bolt of lightning struck a nearby spire, creating a massive burst of noise that startled the black horses of the carriage where Daneza and Rolfo were in. The horses reared in fear as they tried to run off in separate directions, fiercely upsetting the carriage itself. Nothing could control the animals' frantic and powerful movements; finally a harness snapped, and one of the horses lunged forward, precariously tilting the flimsy carriage off-balance. A few more moments and the carriage, packed with bags of clothing, props and Daneza's harpsichord, fell to its side, crushing its occupants.

Rolfo died immediately in the unfortunate accident, while Daneza suffered two more days of pain in a nearby healing center before she too died of massive internal damage. Admirers from all over the western Core shortly heard of this accident, trying to understand how such a meaningless tragedy could befall two people so young, so beautiful and so filled with talent. The remains of the Blanc & Noir were returned to Mortigny, buried with honors as well as pageantry fit for heroes.

Their lives would have seemingly ended there, but the story of Blanc & Noir had only just begun.

Fan Base

As Blanc & Noir traveled throughout the cities of the Western Core, they began to gather a cult following due to their beauty and talent. Bars, taverns and theaters were always filled to capacity with admirers, eager to bear witness to the musical duo from Mortigny. Two of these admirers were Anton Rellama, a smug, young bard from Pont-a-Museau, and Julietta Nano, a wandering rogue from neighboring Borca. Wherever the Blanc & Noir performed, these two devotees followed, in essence becoming the performing duo's "Number One Fans."

In spite of their travels, however, Anton and Julietta never got close to Blanc & Noir. No matter what they did, they never got anything from the performing couple: not a wave, not a touch, not a signed souvenir, not even attention. As righteously far as Daneza and Rolfo were concerned, they were admirers, and nothing more.

When the accident in Port-a-Lucine happened, both Julietta and Anton felt like they had lost limbs on their body. They wept like the skies venting with thunder and rain as the bodies of Daneza and Rolfo were interred beneath the hard earth of Mortigny, while they both thought of how they could possibly live another day more without the music and charisma of their beloved performers.

Three nights after the funeral, in a secluded Mortigny tavern, the two admirers came up with a macabre plan to literally make the Blanc & Noir live on. In her travels, Julietta had come upon the journal of a Lamordian alchemist who somehow specialized in "life-giving." Both admirers have heard rumors of experiments in animation by doctors from north in the snowy cities of Lamordia; perhaps, Julietta reasoned, if these stories were true, then they could simply follow the instructions in the journal and bring the Blanc & Noir back to life. Anton was at first queasy about disturbing the restful sleep of the dead, but he too wanted nothing more than owning a piece of the performers; eventually he agreed.

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Devotion Like None Other

Amidst thick fog three more nights later, Anton and Julietta sneaked into the Mortigny graveyard with shovels and a large wheelbarrow stolen from a flower shop. It took them both the whole night to dig up the two coffins of their idols and refill the empty graves with earth, yet somehow only the dying night bore witness to their deeds as they quickly hauled their grisly booty to an abandoned warehouse nearby before the dawn set in.

Six more months of desperate thievery and shoddy experimentation were all it took before the corpses of Daneza and Rolfo were given semblances of life by their most avid devotees. Anton and Julietta were extra careful in preserving their looks and their talent for music, but beyond what they believed to be the resurrection of the Blanc & Noir, Daneza and Rolfo were no longer human: they had become one with the Created. Both Julietta and Anton rejoiced with a slight twinge of fear at what they had done, and when the flesh golems were given back their instruments to perform the music they knew so well, they knew the Blanc & Noir had finally returned, and they were all theirs, not for anybody else.

Something to Sing About

And so, in their lifeless yet familiar fashions, Blanc & Noir played, exclusively for the audience of Anton and Julietta alone, all the music they knew in life. But for all the beautiful music the golems played, they had lost the creativity to make new compositions. Impatient as they were, Julietta and Anton quickly grew bored with their creations' cyclic repertoire, and with fingers pointed at the golems insisted without mercy that they make new music.

Taking these taunting demands as threats, Daneza and Rolfo turned against their makers and hurled Anton like a rag doll. Terrified

beyond speaking Julietta quickly grabbed her unconscious partner in crime by the arm and fled the golems, leaving Blanc & Noir to their fate.

Current Sketch

The Blanc & Noir now wander aimlessly, hand in hand, silently among the twisting streets of the Core's key western cities. Both golems still track their terrified creators, hoping to play music for them again. Sometimes they rest or take refuge in empty or abandoned buildings, and they play the haunting music they have been known to create in life.

Daneza diPaccio

Dread Flesh Golem: CR 7; Medium Construct; HD 5d10+5 (36 hp); Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7, grapple +11; Full Atk 2 slams +7 melee (slam 2d8+5); SA Berserk, Haunting Melody; SQ Magic Immunity, Telepathic Bond, Zeitgeber, DR 15/+1; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Wil +3; Str 18, Dex 16, Con --, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +4, Gather Information +7, Hide +7, Move Silently +6, Perform (harpsichord) +10, Search +5; Ambidexterity, Endurance, Skill Focus (perform).

Rolfo Guieba

Dread Flesh Golem: CR 7; Medium Construct; HD 5d10+5 (43 hp); Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6, grapple +9; Full Atk 2 slams +6 melee (slam 2d8+5); SA Berserk, Haunting Melody; SQ Magic Immunity, Telepathic Bond, Zeitgeber, DR 15/+1; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Wil +3; Str 17, Dex 14, Con --, Int 15, Wis 9, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Balance +6, Climb +4, Disguise +4, Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Perform (violin) +9, Search +6, Tumble +8; Dodge, Mobility, Skill Focus (perform).

Although the flesh golem pair that make up the Blanc & Noir were not created by

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“professionals” such as the scientists and necromancers of the Northwest Core, they were nevertheless given life by the Dark Powers due to the obsessive admiration brought about by their most devoted fans, Anton Rellama and Julietta Nano.

Combat

The Blanc & Noir are not combatants, although when physically provoked or taunted to play music they burst into a terrifying, emotionless rage.

Berserk (Ex): When either golem enters combat, there is a cumulative 1% chance each round that it goes berserk. The uncontrolled golem goes on a rampage, attacking the nearest living creature or smashing some object smaller than itself if no person is within reach, then moving on to spread more destruction. These outbursts usually last 1d4 hours. It takes 1 minute of rest by the golem to reset the golem’s berserk chance to 0%.

Haunting Melody (Su): Whenever the Blanc & Noir play their instruments, any person listening to their cyclic repertoire must make a Will save (DC 18) or be charmed as per the sorcerer spell. This is a mind-affecting sonic ability.

Magic Immunity (Ex): Being flesh golems, the Blanc & Noir are immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. Fire- and cold-based effects slow them (as the spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw. An electricity effect breaks any slow effect on either of them and cures 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. Both flesh golems roll no saving throw against electricity effects.

Telepathic Bond (Su): The Blanc & Noir share a collective telepathic bond with Anton and Julietta, knowing their creators’ every thought, fear, dream and desire. Anton and Julietta, however, have no such bonds with their creations.

Zeitgeber (Ex): Whenever the Blanc & Noir hear the sound of any new music from either a violin or a harpsichord, the golem who plays the corresponding instrument instantly freezes in fascination, unable to react until the music stops. The golem would be considered flat-footed.

Anton Rellama

Male Human Rog3: CR 3; Size M (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 3d6+12; hp 24; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +3, grapple +4; Full Atk +3 melee, or +6 ranged; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +4; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Disable Device +7, Escape Artist +10, Hide +4, Intimidate +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Search +6, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +8, Swim +7, Tumble +9, Use Magic Device +7, Use Rope +10; Blind-fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (kukri), Improved Initiative.

Julietta Nano

Female Human Rog3: CR 3; Size M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 3d6+6; hp 23; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Dex), touch 14, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +3, grapple +4; Full Atk +3 melee, or +6 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5; AL CN; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +7, Bluff +6, Craft (alchemy) +4, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +3, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +7, Gather Information +7, Hide +4, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Pick Pocket +10, Read Lips +7, Spot +4, Survival +6, Use Magic Device +6, Use Rope +9; Ambidexterity, Dodge, Track.

Both Anton and Julietta are on the run, fleeing the heartless terror of their own incidental creations. They now travel the western Core, from city to city, in hopes that they may never be found by the Blanc & Noir. Their luck stems from the fact that other adventuring groups around the Western Core have protected them against the golem duo, and somehow these two rogues have become dependent on such temporal safety. Both Anton and Julietta know that the

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only way to truly destroy the Blanc & Noir is to destroy the two on their own lest they become insane due to the incessant calling in their heads, though they have first and foremost to overcome their cowardice.



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THE DECEPTION CREW

AN ENCOUNTER WITH DEATH OR SLAVERY

"If any man can convince me and bring home to me that I do not think or act aright, gladly will I change; for I search after truth, by which man never yet was harmed. But he is harmed who abideth on still in his deception and ignorance"

Marcus Aurelius, "Meditations". vi. 21.

"Cruel as death, and hungry as the grave"

James Thomson, "The Seasons, Winter"

By: Joel Paquin

At last! What we've all
been waiting for! A new
peaceful kingdom has been
found! An island!
Register now and embark
to this land of milk and
honey!

Dm's note; this article was done in a "mini-adventure" format, with an intro, development and end, facilitating quick insertion in a campaign.

Introduction

Simply put, the crew of the ship "New Hope" is of the most evil breed, hiding their deceptive masters behind a veil of soft spoken lies. They promise a new land of freedom, they deliver slavery. They promise an island of joy, they deliver horror and death.

With these lies, they lull the ignorant and credulous into a voyage to a land of happiness. They are in fact slavers and pirates of the worst kind: the crew of this dreadful ship has terrible alliance with Roberta Sweeton, a ghoulish lord.

So whilst the crew get their monetary wealth and delivers innocent in the claws of death, the ghoulish lord and her minions gains innocent and fresh flesh ...

The land of Evergreen
deception

The usual tactic of this evil band is to send three of them in disguise, to roam the taverns and inns of coastal towns and cities, where the boat has set port for 2-3 weeks.

These first line recruiters look for places frequented by middle class families, be it local inns, or popular meeting places. Their "disguise" allows them to appear as a typical, normal family, but a shining happy one... Their family name is Deemers.

The father - Gordon - looks in his mid-thirties, his hands showing signs of a life of hard work. His clothes are clean and new, like those one would wear on a holy day. The woman - Amy - appears a little younger than him and wears new clothes too. The daughter - Alicia - is looking about twelve years old, and seems a bright, happy child. Alicia is very open to strangers and often makes onlookers smile about

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her childish but bright, candid questions to strangers. Her clothes are white and good looking. The Deemers family gives the overall appearance of looking healthy, happy, and they inspire trust.

If in an inn, the man and the woman drink wine and often toast about that "future trip to freedom". After they picked curiosity, they will gladly explain to anybody curious their future endeavor. The claim they make is that they will soon be boarding for a land "where love is king and love is the law". A sunny land full of fruits and flowers, and most importantly, ruled by a good and benevolent king.

They will add that this realm is without monsters, insisting that the domain is free of whatever creature is particularly haunting the town where they are (creatures risen from the grave in Darkon, huge rats in Richemulot, etc.). They will use any commonly known facts, or any widely known superstition or fireplace tale.

They will add further lies to back up these claims should inquisitive individuals choose to pry further into their webs of deceit. They will talk of better paying jobs, which they found to be an important point in some cities.

They appear very happy to provide this information to anybody, as good-hearted people having such a chance to escape from the bleak life in most Ravenloft towns would. Having "played" that role often in the past, they have a quick answer to most questions, and many fell prey to their high charisma and persuasiveness.

For those hesitating to sell everything and embark the whole family, the Deemers will suggest to "do as they did": they claim the father (Gordon) made the trip alone at first, to see for himself that this place was suitable for his family. They will suggest that if the father can't leave his job to support the family, perhaps his wife could make the trip.

To anybody interested in that new land, they send that person to Mr. Carl Houghton,

Captain of a ship named "New Hope". The boat is at dock in the city port.

They also claim to have quickly sold any belongings they couldn't pack, except a few boxes and wallets of things they want to bring with them to that land of hope - souvenirs, heirlooms, and their gold pieces savings. They claim they can't wait to embark on that ship. In their saying, the departure date is usually two weeks from the meeting in the inn.

The Deemers "family" is in fact a trio of evil slavers in sheep disguise. The man is Gordon Westings, a charismatic thief native of Barovia. She is Amy Wells, a charming ex-prostitute from Lamordia. The "daughter" is Alicia Cipriu, a brilliant female halfling from Darkon, disguised as a human child. The trio usually keeps their true first names to avoid mistakes, and of course claim their last name is Deemers.

Gordon Deemers (Gordon Westings), male human rog5 CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 5d6+10; hp 25; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk Short Sword +5 melee (1d6+2/crit 19 – 20 x2); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (add Dex bonus to AC, cannot be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +5 (+3, +2 Great Fortitude), Ref +7, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Disguise +12, Gather Information +6, Innuendo +8, Listen +7, Move silently +10, Read Lips +8, Search motive +7, Swim +5, Tumble +5; Great Fortitude, Run.

Equipment: short sword, thief's tools.

Gordon Westings was born in a low class family in Immol, Barovia. After a quiet childhood, he spent the first half of his adulthood as a lazy and bored person, stealing whatever he needed to survive off the others. He was destined to a life of small theft until he met Carl Houghton, who promised him a good pay if he "could play right".

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Gordon lives well with the feeling of sending others to an horrible death, as the only thing that count for him is money.

Amy Deemers (Amy Wells), female human ftr2 CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10+2; hp 13; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk Short Sword +4 melee (1d6+2/crit 19 – 20 x2); SA none; SQ none; AL LN; SV Fort +6 (+4, +2 Great Fortitude), Ref +2, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Ride +4, Disguise +5, Handle Animal +4, Swim +10; Great Fortitude.

Equipment: short sword, navy tools.

Amy was recruited by Carl Houghton eight months ago. Having had a turbulent childhood, and fully understanding what she then missed without a happy family, she now has great difficulty to send more innocent children to their doom.

Amy has night anxieties and remorse about the crew's real business, but had kept them silent so far because of death threat if anybody was to leave the crew.

Alicia Deemers (Alicia Cipriu), female halfling rog7 CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (halfling); HD 7d6+14; hp 49; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 ft; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk Short Sword +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 19 – 20 x2); SA sneak attack +4d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (add Dex bonus to AC, cannot be flanked); AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Disguise +12, Escape artist +10; Gather Information +6, Innuendo +8, Listen +7, Move silently +13, Read Lips +8, Search motive +9, Swim +5, Tumble +8, Use magic device +8; Ambidexterity, Dodge; Run.

Equipment: short sword, thief's tools

Alicia is an outcast from Darkon, and still looked for by the militia in Martyra Bay for the murder of a well known merchant.

She hates "ordinary" humans; finding their lives so mediocre and pointless that she gladly sends these people to their death. To her eyes, they are not more important then cattle.

The "Deemers" family is in fact recruiting patrons that appear moderately wealthy at most, as they prefer to avoid patrons that are extremely wealthy and those that have a stronger chance of being missed by their relatives, or have possessions that could be identified easily at a later time. Also, these very wealthy individuals are also usually better educated and often prove more difficult to deceive.

More deceit

The crew sometimes has a "pyramidal way" of recruiting: the Deemers write forged letters from previous victims to their relatives. These letters are based on letters victims write from the boat in the first days of travel, and are thus very credible. The letters invite the relatives to meet the New Hope the next time it is at port in their city. They also invite their relatives to respond by sending them letters (and sometimes money) via the New Hope.

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Alicia also recruits other victims as well, but in the poorest classes of society. In the guise of a child she meets street urchins and tells them she will have a part in the fabulous Carnival traveling show. She claims the Carnival is looking for children for a new attraction. She tells street children that it is easy to run away from their awful life and join the Carnival: a boat is soon leaving for the town where Carnival is currently located. And Alicia adds she knows how to embark the boat without being seen from the Captain ...

In larger cities, many street waifs embark the New Hope as well, guided by Alicia to the boat's hold, "unseen" by the Captain ...

Further enquiry

A person looking for the "New Hope" ship will find it at the local port. Its crew is polite and smiling, which is odd for a boat crew.

The Captain, Mr. Carl Houghton, is always on board, except at night when he can be found at the closest tavern from the port. Mr. Houghton is a charming man, in his mid 50's.

Carl Houghton, male human rog4/Exp6 (boating) CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 4d6 plus 6d4 plus 30 plus 3 Toughness; hp 62; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk Short Sword +9/+4 melee (1d6+2/crit 19 – 20 x2); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (add Dex bonus to AC); AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Disguise +5, Gather Information +4, Innuendo +9, Listen +5, Move silently +8, Profession (seafaring) +13, Search motive +9, Use rope +5; Brawler, Improved Unarmed strike, Lightning reflexes, Stunning Fist, Toughness.

Equipment: short sword, navy tools.

Carl Houghton was born 56 years ago, the son of a wine and spice merchant in Lamordia. He followed his father's life for a while, until he was lured to quicker money by smuggling goods in and out of Falkovnia.

He views this current operation as a business venture only. He is using his "partnership" with Roberta Sweeton as an opportunity to make a quick profit, and do not care about the families he sent to their doom. Houghton plans to have this "business venture" only two or three years before retiring and buying a small mansion in a coastal city. He isn't afraid of Roberta, who in fact he underestimates.

When meeting a "patron", the first reaction of Houghton is to tell that the boat is full for the next departure. If the patron looks right for the operation - credulous and wealthy, like if trying to help, he will quickly add that there "might be room" for the next departure. He will then tell how the land he calls "Evergreen" is perfect and beautiful. Between deceptive lies, he will ask questions about the occupation of the "patron": he is then trying to guess the approximate wealth of this potential family.

If he is satisfied with the answers and thinks that the person asking for information is right for his affair, he will appear reluctant, then he say something like "Well, I know I will regret this, but we could have one more family on board and you appear to be a person whom aspirations for his family are high. If you want to leave for Evergreen, the boat leaves in two weeks." The cost of the travel is 5 gp per person, plus 3 cp per bag, wallet, etc. stored in the boat's hold.

If a prospect hesitates to embark on the "New Hope", Houghton registers that family in his logbook. He will show the names of 5-8 other "lucky families" who are embarking the same day. He also has a book of letters from people and families who made the trip, all forged of course.

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While registering, he will suggest that the family sells everything it can and pack the rest as tightly as possible, as space is limited on the boat. "Money", he says, "will buy you a nice house on a grassy hill. Bring everything you can, you will not regret it."

If a person wishes to go see first, before sending his family, the cost for a two-way travel to Evergreen is 8 gold pieces.

Of course, Houghton will never register a powerful looking person or party. To them, he will say the boat is full and quickly turn them away.

If asked, Houghton claims that the land they are to sail to; called "The Island of Evergreen" lays some six to seven days travel from whatever port the New Hope currently weighs anchor.

When the family has registered, Houghton will ask for the family to be discreet, if possible, "so there is no riot on departure day like last time in (insert whatever far coastal city)".

The departure

The crew of the "New Hope" will instead bring them to death ... or worse...

On the departure day, about 20 to 25 persons embark the boat: about 3 or 4 families, plus lone persons making the trip alone as scout for their family. An additional 4 to 12 street children are also "hidden" in the boat. The ordinary life in many towns is grim and without hope, and the New Hope crew have little difficulty to fill the boat.

Once aboard, the unsuspecting families have companionship from disguised crew members as childless couples, the Deemers family, and Roberta Sweeton herself is often there as a woman traveling alone. They are hidden as additional families to fill the ship's capacity.

In total, the New Hope has a crew of twenty-two, in addition to Carl Houghton. Usually, ten of these crewmembers remain disguised among the passengers until the time is right.

Captain Houghton runs the ship, assisted by the "second" John Sappington, a stern person.

Typical crew member human ftr2/rog2/Exp3 (boating) CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d10 plus 2d6 plus 3d6 plus 7 plus 3 Toughness ; hp 38; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (+Dex); Atk Short Sword +7 (1d6+2/ crit 19 – 20 x2); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Disguise +5, Innuendo +5, Listen +8, Move silently +10, Profession (seafaring) +10, Use rope +6; Sunder, Toughness.

Equipment: short sword.

The crew is well paid and tight lipped, as they are fearful of being Roberta's next meal. They know they can't leave with their life until Houghton calls the end of the operation.

John Sappington, male human Ftr6 /Exp4 (boating) / wiz 3rd CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 6d10 plus 4d6 plus 20; hp 67; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 11 (+Dex); Atk Short Sword +12/+7 (1d6+3/ crit 19 – 20 x2); SA none; SQ none; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Profession (seafaring) +11, Use rope +3; Blind-fight, Dodge, Hollow, Precise shot, Weapon finesse (long sword)

Equipment: long sword, short sword, short bow, garrote, poison, navy tools.

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A cold and stern person, Sappington is often seen snarling. He is a cruel and cold hearted killer, sometimes secretly killing people in the city where the New Hope has landed, just for the mad joy of seeing their blood on the ground. He is the designed assassin in the crew, should need be.

He likes the taste of human flesh, making him often a companion of Roberta in her debauchery and evil acts, as when she hunts in the cities where the boat is at port. He will probably be the leader of the New Hope when Carl Houghton will retire.

The ugly truth on Evergreen

Typically, the Captain of the New Hope will travel the coastal cities from Sithicus to Darkon (in Darkon, the crew would be without Roberta Sweeton, as she avoids that domain), having the Deemers' look for credulous individuals willing to sell everything to embark to the hope of a better life.

They plan to visit each city once every two years at most, in order to keep the awareness of their scam at a low level.

The ship is mid-sized, like the one in the "Ship of Horrors" adventure (a DM could use the boat maps of that TSR adventure, allowing space for the crew, patrons and whatever cargo is required to go into the hold).

A few days after departure, the patrons will find the New Hope instead stopping near a small jagged island. The nameless rocky island is located ashore from Mordent, and is about half a mile long and wide. Some lonely pine trees can be seen on top of the Western cliff side, opposed to the more accessible rocky beach side. There is also a small lighthouse, that the ghouls light during storms to attract unsuspecting boats to it's rocky side for their death.

No matter where the New Hope casts off from, they appear to reach this island shortly

before nightfall. As they arrive, the patrons are persuaded to go ashore to stretch their legs while the crew plots out the course (making excuses about "the mists being thicker than normal").

Once on the island, the disguised crewmembers reveal themselves, as does Roberta Sweeton. One favorite cruel joke of the crew is to drop their disguise and chant "Welcome to Evergreen!" and laugh cruelly at their astonished victims.

With this, Roberta calls to her ghoul pack hidden close by and the fate for many of the unwitting patrons tends to be short and brutal.

The best looking young woman will be taken prisoners and sold into brothels or slavery in Falkovnia for a high price.

The money is taken from the patrons and whatever belongings they brought on ship are used to pay the evil crew, and the rest is hidden on the rocky island. All objects of significant wealth that may not be recognized so readily are sold by the crew on the markets in the town the New Hope next visits, i.e. black market or open air markets if available.

Roberta Sweeton, female ghoul lord* ftr5

CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 5d12; hp 33; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (+4 natural, +2 Dex, +1 dodge); Atk bite 1d4 +2, 2 claws +0; SA Miasma (Su), Paralysis (Su), Ravenous Fever (Su); SQ +2 turn resistance; AL LE; SV Fort +6 (+4, +2 Great Fortitude), Ref +2, Will +0; Str 16, Dex 14, Con -, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Ride +4, Disguise +5, Handle Animal +4, Listen +8, Move silently +8, Search +8, Spot +8, Swim +10; Dodge, Multiattacks.

Equipment: hat of disguise (special magic item given to her by a doppelganger with whom she hunted for a while: it also masks her ghoul scent if she chooses to).

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* See Denizens of Darkness for more information on ghoulish lords.

Roberta is a silent person, who was a cook in a noble person's mansion in Port-a-Lucine. But she was secretly hateful of them and very mad. At night, she often took mad pleasure of haunting cemeteries for the next day's main course. Her madness was never discovered and one day she was killed by an accident: a wild carriage running in the streets trampled her.

Having tasted human flesh, and taken delight in devouring it, she rose from the grave as a ghoulish lord.

In undeath, she had a solitary life until she made a plan to get help from mortals to have more of the type of flesh she found to be particularly craving for: fresh flesh from innocent beings, instead of the already dead flesh she found in graveyards.

She was for a time the companion of Vikedo, a doppelganger with whom she developed a "business" partnership: they killed in the streets, she got the flesh, and he got the cash. It lasted for a few years in Port-a-Lucine until Vikedo was killed by a prey he underestimated.

A few years ago, Carl Houghton met Roberta Sweeney in the back of a seedy Falkovnian inn. She had heard of the greed for money of Houghton, and the complete lack of remorse in him.

Roberta was looking for food and Houghton for money. They devised that deception scheme where both got what they wanted, and have continued with this plan largely unchanged for now nearly 5 years.

On the isolated island, 9 ghouls anxiously wait for her return. The weakest are often killed by the others while they wait for the New Hope to return, or the occasional boat seeking fresh water sources on the rocky island. They sink

their victim's boat away from the island, and swim back to it.

Ghouls CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 2d12; hp 13; Init +2 dex; Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (+2 dex, +2 natural); Bite +3 melee, 2 claws + 0 melee; SA Paralysis, create spawn; SQ undead, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con -, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, escape artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7; Multiattacks, Weapon finesse (bite).

Equipment: none.

DMs wanting to modify these ghouls to make them unique and surprise the players should refer to my USS 2002 article "*Van Richten's Guide to the Lower Undead*" for possible variations on ghouls, or also in the Ravenloft book "*Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead*".

Adventure hooks

DM wishing to add this mini adventure to his or her campaign could start spreading rumors about a "new discovered land" called Evergreen, long before he PCs actually meet the Demeers family.

- ◆ The PCs are in a tavern where the Deemers' put their initial charades to lure in suckers and fools.
- ◆ The PCs are asked by a recruited "prospect" to investigate on the claims of the "New Hope" Captain.
- ◆ The PCs are asked to investigate: the neighbor (or relative) of a departed family saw some of their valuable heirloom objects sold at the market by sailors.

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- ♦ A rumor has it that Carnival is killing street children: children encouraged to join it are never seen again!

Adventure advancement

For higher-level parties, Roberta can be a vampire (or similar powerful undead) instead, holding the charmed crew under her tight grip.

Thanks to my friend Nathan Okerlund for evil ideas and suggestions to improve this article.



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ERICH REINHOLD

THE LEPER BARON

By: Phil Boulanger
(Charneka)

Once a handsome young
Barovian noble, for 100
years the Baron has
haunted the hills near
Forlorn and those of
former Gundarak.

Appearance

The Baron, once a handsome young Barovian noble, descended from Reinhold Dilisnya, a noble who had fought along side Strahd von Zarovich the First to free Barovia from the Tergs. However, following the Dilisnyas' fall of grace, this family had changed their name to Reinhold to avoid the wrath of the Von Zaroviches. In his youth, Erich Reinhold, had a commanding appearance. He was tall, with long shoulder length raven hair and deep blue eyes that provoked awe in the hearts of countless women. His demeanour was gracious in all ways, making him the very model of the perfect nobleman.

Erich is now quite the opposite, for he is now one of the vilest of all the living dead: a vrykolaka vampire. His skin is rubbery and greenish from sickness, barely held to his bones by atrophied muscles. His nose and ears as well as his hair have withered and fallen off long ago. In the shadow of his reeking jaws hides a disgusting, five foot long tongue. This decaying tendril can expand to entangle a victim and then revert to a smaller size in order to fit in the mouth. His once hansom eyes have shrunken to tiny black orbs which turn blood red when he feeds. While the baron feeds, two wicked, needle sharp fangs elongate from his upper jaw. Pieces of the creature's skin constantly flake

from his body, making his appearance become more and more gruesome with passing centuries.

Background

Erich might have led a different life had it not been for his mother and father's vanity. Ludwig Reinhold, baron of the Reinhold holdings in south-western Barovia, led a life of luxury at the expense of the peasants toiling on his lands. His wife, Lady Kristina, was a vain woman more concerned about her golden hair than by her responsibilities as a noblewoman. Their life was filled by shallowness, eccentricities and contempt for the poor. To keep their serfs docile, the couple hired a brutal band of thugs to enforce their power when they augmented taxes on a whim.

Much to the contrary, their son Erich was kind and sweet, caring deeply for the downtrodden, even risking his father's wrath. Erich often received beatings for acts of charity, enraging his parents by wasting the precious wealth that rightfully belonged to their noble blood. Worse than the beating were his mother's strict attentions, for she considered him their legacy. Lady Kristina forced her son to spend hours of personal grooming each day, replacing his wardrobe every month. On more than one occasion, Erich's mother ordered her servants to lynch serfs who she suspected of having so much as touched her son. Before he turned 16 Erich was forbidden to leave the family manor. Still, Erich managed to survive. With effort, he smuggled a few coins out of the manor from time to time without anyone noticing, taking consolation in every tiny rat-tooth coin that managed to reach someone's hands.

After his 18th birthday, the young baron's kindness was submitted to its hardest test on a cold winter night. While he was reading late in

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the evening near the hearth, he heard a desperate knocking on the door. Knowing that the servants were all in bed, he went to greet the visitor. Upon opening the door, the smell of filth assailed his nose. At the door was a group of beggars in filthy rags. Despite the danger, he let them enter so that they could get warm themselves before he would have to ask them to leave. Upon their entry, he discovered that all five were infected with leprosy. The lepers pleaded Erich to help them. One of their comrades could not walk because frostbite claimed all of his toes. They didn't want to abandon him but couldn't carry him with the snowstorm that was raging. They proposed to leave their wounded comrade behind, returning for him when the storm ended. Despite the risk, Erich agreed.

Unfortunately, the leper's foul sent was so strong that Erich's parents knew something was wrong immediately. They called their thugs to search the house and soon they found the intruder hidden in the boy's closet. Ludwig had the leper hacked with an axe before Erich's horrified eyes. The bloody remains were then left in the middle of the village for all to see.

Erich remained silent about the horrible event, sitting and staring for the next two days. Not even his mother's threats budged him so much as an inch. He was freed from his stupor only when he heard a window being broken and his mother screaming. The young noble arose to discover the remaining lepers. They had seen the body of their fellow and wanted revenge upon the butchers. When Erich entered he found the intruders deciding whether kill the baron or kidnap his wife.

The young man arrived in time to position himself between two lepers and his mother. The lepers asked him to stand aside and let them bring justice for their comrade, but Erich stood his ground, allowing his hysteric mother to flee. Thus, the four decided to take revenge by abducting the young Erich. They took the young noble with them and hid in the woods. They pondered about what to do with him and developed a hideous idea. As Erich listened to

their plan, he discovered they originated from an isolated community deep within the valleys, where they had been attacked by a ghoul. They decided to feed Erich to this beast.

The livid Baron organized hunting parties to find his lost son. A mere week after the abduction, his men returned with Erich, though they claimed *something* had followed them. Kristina saw her son sick, feverish and bloodied from numerous bite marks around his body. The henchmen explained they found him desperately holding on an iron bar in a long abandoned house with the bloody bodies of the four lepers. Apparently he had fought some beast that claimed the abductors.

Soon afterwards, it was obvious that something had indeed followed the men back to the manor. A strange gaunt figure stalked the grounds at night leaving strange marks on the walls. Three days after the hunting party had returned it attacked. All the weapons, say the baron's sword, proved ineffective against the creature. Several guards were wounded, but none had died before one managed to hit the creature with a cold iron fire poker. This proved most effective. The next night, all guards were armed with iron tipped arrows. The soldiers drove it out of the manor with several volleys and finished the beast with a strike in the head from an iron crowbar.

With the beast disposed of in the river, all of the manor's attention turned towards the dying Erich. In the weeks following the battle Erich was examined by an apothecary. The physician informed the Baron and Baroness that their son was not dying after all. He had recovered from his wounds but he now suffered from leprosy and the visible signs would soon manifest themselves.

One night, Ludwig and his wife came to their son who opened his eyes and smiled to them. His parents were keeping still and were barely visible in the gloom, a heavy silence hanging in the air. After a moment that seemed to last an eternity, Erich saw his father drive the crowbar into his heart. A funeral followed and

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Erich was buried in the family mausoleum. During the burial, his parents expressed not one single sign of grieving or loss. Still, their son was given a grand resting place. Gossip started amongst the peasants that the Reinholds murdered their son for having been too kind and that a curse would soon fall upon them.

Three days after the burial, Kristina heard her husband screaming in pain. As she arrived to his aid, she stumbled upon her son, fresh from the grave. His once beauteous eyes glowed with madness, his skin and body taken by leprosy. After dropping to the ground, he lunged at his mother and feasted upon her blood as well. The creature, mad with thirst for blood, slew every living thing in the manor before returning to rest in his coffin. News of the massacre spread all over the few habitations surrounding the barony. Panic took hold of the inhabitants and after a week all had fled the cursed land. Since that time, numerous sightings have been made of the “Leper Baron” along the south-western Balinok slopes. Several times, the watchtowers of the mountains were found manned only by rotting corpses.

Current sketch

For 100 years the Baron has haunted the hills near Forlorn and those of former Gundarak. He has proven to be an elusive creature, not staying too long in the same region. The Baron attacks loners when possible, but he mostly feeds on animals. During the last few years, he came back from an extended rampage in Gundarak and now stays near the Blood Fang Hills, feeding on goblins that cross the border of Forlorn. The Baron does not venture into Forlorn since he favors human and animal blood over goblin blood. He often attacks the watchtowers set up along the Forlorn border.

The vrykolaka took back his coffin to the woods surrounding his former birth place. Although Erich usually avoids the manor, he often comes to look at this place where tragedy made him what he is presently. He sometimes returns inside his old manor, following some

odd memory of his former life that suddenly resurfaces only to vanish the following night. When ever he is in the manor, he sleeps in his coffin for a few nights, preying upon whatever he can find before moving to better hunting grounds. The farms and fields have been deserted ever since he became undead. He preys on whoever is foolish enough to venture into the forgotten manor grounds and surroundings. But he hunts from the shadows, never attacking large groups; so, his presence remains a rumour and that of a vicious ghoul. This is nothing worthy of attracting vampire hunters.

Since he was prowling the ancient Reinhold barony, Erich became known as the Baron in this region. Due to leprosy plagues surrounding hamlets, he became known as the Leper Baron in these parts. But no one except those well versed in nobility can make the link between the Baron and the Reinhold manor grounds he haunts.

Personality

Erich became completely mad upon his transformation into an undead creature. Whatever remains of his mind that wasn't shattered is filled with anger directed towards what was inflicted upon him. A tiny part of him remembers that he once was a kind and loving person. But bitterness tainted these tiny memories. He remembers how his kindness was rewarded and how despite that he saved his mother, she still wanted him dead. Every time the Baron goes to sleep in his coffin, he sees the bar being plunged into his heart. And each time, it is as if he dies again and when he wakes up, he has become mad all over again with the thirst clouding his mind.

When he has not fed, his mind is almost completely shattered. Only the thirst drives him in the night and he stops at nothing till he is quenched. Thus he doesn't tolerate other preying children of the night, like ghouls, on his territory – ie his line of sight.

Although he is mad, the Baron can still be reached in some ways. Once his thirst is over,

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his mind starts to work again. The Baron never attacks when he has fed; he simply flees back to his current lair. Within his lair, he weeps in the night asking for his father's mercy. When encountered in this state of mind, Erich can be talked to for a few minutes before his predatory instincts take over again. He is also very protective of his parent's remains which are still where he killed them. Anyone disturbing the bones will be hunted down by Erich.

The Baron also has remains of his former sense of duty towards the downtrodden. If he hears in some way (after having fed of course or when he is weeping) that the needy are being treated poorly by some authority figure, the Baron enters a mad rage and attempts to reach whoever is being unfair to the poor. Clever adventurers can thus use Erich as an ally if they need him to right wrongs. Also, Erich never attacks sick persons or children.

Combat

In combat, the Baron is far from mindless. His primary goal is to feed but it can make basic strategies to attain his goals. Notably, he attacks the most powerful opponents first while they are vulnerable. The Baron is aware of its fast healing and doesn't hesitate to retreat and heal before coming back for its meal.). His favorite strategy is to enter unnoticed into a tight space (a bedroom for instance) where his prey can hardly defend itself or ask for aid. He positions himself near to the victim in rat or vermin form and changes back to its humanoid form in order to immediately feed itself in a sudden attack by grappling the victim. The Baron is a gluttonous vampire. He requires 8 points of constitution (shallow feeding) from sentient humanoids every night or 16 points from animals (shallow feeding).

The Baron carries two diseases. The original vampire who infected him had only Filth fever as a permanent disease but it had recently bitten a leper so it also carried leprosy when Erich was attacked. Since his parents killed him because he had contracted leprosy, it

became permanent in Erich's necrotic system. His leprosy is enhanced and affects victims quicker than the normal disease: Leprosy (DC: 18), incubation period 3d4 days, damage: 1d2 dexterity damage each week. The victim starts to lose his fingers, ears, nose or toes whenever he loses 4 points of dexterity to the disease. The outcast rating augments by one for every 2 points lost to a maximum of OR+5. This disease isn't fatal. Buried victims of his disease or blood drain all raise as Vrykolaka spawns one week after the burial. The Baron can control his spawns but never does so. He always destroys them when he encounters them. The Baron cannot create any full-fledged vampire unless the mortal is reduced to an outcast rating of +5 due to the Baron's leprosy disease and then dies from blood drain (either from the Baron or any other vampire).

When attacking; the Baron lashes at foes with his claws to tear their flesh from their bones. He doesn't have a bite attack but he can drain blood with his bite unlike other vrykolakas. His tongue has not barb at the end but it can be used to make trip attacks to render his prey prone so that it can feed more easily. And unlike most vampires, the Baron cannot summon minions to help him.

His only vulnerability is cold iron and fire. All other attacks are subjected to his Damage and Energy Resistance. He cannot cross any line of salt, for salt represents the burns he would suffer if it was on his wounds. Salt falling upon his gangrenous skin does not cause him any damage however. The Baron can be held at bay by presenting him any Good holy symbol with conviction. Such symbol represents the good that once drove his heart to mercy. Any cold iron stake or bar driven into his heart renders him immobile. If he is exposed to the sun, he suffers awful burns that will destroy him within 5 minutes. He has no other particular vulnerability or allergen. To permanently destroy the Baron, he must be immobilized with an iron bar and he must be buried in a sacred ceremony in his family tomb. Once buried, he must be healed from leprosy (cure disease or any similar spell). Then, if his parent's bones are

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also put to rest besides him, the Baron will find peace in death alongside his parents. Otherwise, even if destroyed by the sun, he reforms in his manor.

The Baron carries nothing of value on his person except old ragged clothing. It is possible to identify his clothing by making a successful Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) check. In his old manor, abandoned somewhere in the Balinok valleys near Forlorn, a trove of riches awaits discovery, along with the corpses of several would-be vampire hunters who were ill-equipped to fight a vrykolaka.

Erich Reinhold

Male Human, Mature Vrykolaka vampire, Aristocrat 10th

Strength	17	+3
Dexterity	23	+7
Constitution	-	
Intelligence	11	+0
Wisdom	14	+2
Charisma	17	+3

OR : +2

Fortitude	+3
Reflex	+12
Will	+9

Alignment Chaotic Evil

Speed	30'
Size	Medium (1.72 m)
Initiative	+11
Armor class	22 (+7 dex, + 5 natural armor)
Hit points	84
Attack bonus	+10/+10/+5 (claws 1d4+3)

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +15, Handle Animal +6, Healing +12, Hide +17, Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Perform (Hapsichord) +10, Ride +10, Search +9, Sense Motives +10, Spot +14

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Spirit of Light (useless now), Weapon Focus (shortbow)

Languages: Balok

Character abilities (DC unless noted otherwise= 18) : Undead, Disease (Fever filth, Leprosy), Blood Drain, Fever Sleep, Create Spawn, Damage Reduction: 15/ Cold Iron, Fast Heal: 5, Turn Resistance +3, Cold/ Electricity Resistance 20, Spider Climb, Alternate Forms (dire rat or rat swarm), Trip Attacks (with tongue)



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HAGS OF VALLAKI

THREE WITCHES IN HIDING

By: Phil Boulanger
(Charneka)

On the road leading to Vallaki, an orphanage is host to rumors... Rumors of witchcraft and evil magic. What the superstitious Barovians don't know... is that this time... the rumors are true!

Louis sat quietly and took a small sip from the warm cup he held to his lips. He would have drunk it in one shot if it hadn't been so hot. When the warm liquid was swallowed, he nodded, indicating it was good indeed. His eyes then fell upon his hostess who was calmly sitting at the other end of the table. Even had it not been as gloomy as it was, he still couldn't have seen her eyes behind that veil. Still, he wondered. Could it be true that she was... It didn't matter. His heart was elsewhere and his reason was all but present. He felt her gaze heavily though, as if she was silently interrogating him. The feeling made him a little uneasy.

As he took another long sip, she finally broke the silence, speaking with a distinctive Invidian accent: "So mister Bonaventure, what is it that really prompted you to return to my humble orphanage? If it truly is your kindness for my children, then your heart is grand indeed." The man before her became uneasy, as if something weighted heavily upon his heart. Her hidden gaze bore into him and very quickly it became too much for him to bear. Without warning, he sprang to his feet; the heavy blanket

that covered him fell to the ground revealing his soaking clothing.

"Madame! I am in love with your sister Monycia! Ever since I caught a glimpse of her, I could not bring myself to think of anything else..." As he opened his heart to her, he wondered what she could have been thinking. He still could not detect emotion, as if she was heartless... And what if it was true; that she was in fact a heartless witch? When he brought that young girl to the baroness, his guide warned him that rumors of witchcraft surrounded the orphanage. But yet, how could a creature such as Monycia be kin to a witch? Monycia was beauty incarnated in flesh, a living breathing goddess. Never in Démentlieu had he contemplated such a woman; he had to see her again.

As all these thoughts raged in Louis' mind, Baroness Invich stood up from her chair. As she walked towards him, Louis swallowed with difficulty. He felt that if she were indeed a witch, she would be eating him within moments. He felt as if he had just failed a test. She spoke while having almost reached him: "So... you traveled for one week to return here for her... You braved this deadly snowstorm for love... Know that my young sister has many suitors and some handsomer than you. What makes you think you would be worthy of her?"

She stopped right before him. For a brief instant he attempted to pierce her veil, wondering what was hidden beneath it but then, Monycia's face came back to his mind: "I can only love her!"

The baroness laughed, but still it was as if she had no face. After turning towards the fire, she continued, "What if her heart is as wicked as her face is beautiful?"

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Louis took a long breath and quietly answered: "Then I will die in love..."

The baroness nodded and turned back to him: "You are honorable indeed, maybe she will meet you tomorrow... but careful for she might turn you into a frog..." The baroness then clapped her hand and an elderly servant came immediately to lead the man to his room. Louis didn't insist anymore. Perhaps Monycia would let him at least see her once more before she would turn him away? Maybe he could ask for a single hair from her? He hoped he would be able to sleep for the wait would be agony if he had to stay awake.

After setting himself for a nice and warm night of rest, Louis found that like a witch, Monycia haunted his every thought, stealing him a welcomed rest. Then, he heard. He heard a woman's voice... it must have been her, for a voice that beautiful could only be matched by her angelic features. The voice came from his door so he sprang up and quickly opened it. Only darkness greeted him. An eerie silence weighted heavily, but he heard her again; she was downstairs. As fast as his barefoot could take him, he descended. He reached the floor but it seemed she was still far. He looked everywhere but could not see in the darkness. But the voice returned and guided him forward. He reached the kitchen, which was still dimly lit. Then he heard the voice one last time and it came from a wall. Quickly, Louis found a hidden door but even though the voice was silent, he still felt her calling and within moments he had torn the door open.

He entered and descended an old stair leading deep in the ground beneath the orphanage. He reached the bottom; a wide cave and found no sign of his beloved but another voice, the same yet different, spoke to him... It spoke a single command, a demand he had to obey as his love slowly turned into obsession as his will slipped from him: "Dig my dear... dig me out...!"

Appearance

The human witch, Mina, is a woman in her late 30s. She is very slim, delicate, and of short build. Her unassuming appearance masks a true athlete, though rarely does she advertise her prowess. She only dresses in black, as would any widow; typically she dons a long black dress and covers herself with an additional fine trimmed blouse. She wears satin gloves on all occasions except for dinner. Her long brown mane is often arranged in elaborate fashions; she often wears it up. Mina's face is always hidden beneath the black satin veil that widows commonly wear. She ties it firmly so that curious people won't just have to swiftly pull it off to see her bare face. Behind this veil, Mina has deep green eyes with long eyelashes. When she was 18, Mina was permanently disfigured by the hag Magravelle; her face bares four long claw scars running from her hairline to her chin. The wounds have swollen and are a sickly red. Half of her nose has been torn off and her lips are divided into four. Mina always speaks with a smooth, appeasing voice.

The second witch Imix is much more ugly than Mina, even with her scaring. Imix is a hunchback crone. Her nose is long and wickedly curved; her long nostrils are always dripping and sniffing for fresh toads. Her skin is wrinkled beyond belief and is almost earth colored; long jowls drop from her chin and neck like a pelican's. Her scalp is bald except for a few random hairs that seem to have come from a horse's tail. Her fingers are ridiculously long and end in sharp claws, her mouth filled with the tiny cone teeth of a crocodile. Despite her wicked smile, her green eyes seem to show gentleness. Imix usually dresses in a simple robe similar to those that monks wear. The crone loves to shape change into a beautiful and provocative young woman with full lips, fair skin and lustful jet-black hair. Her speech is deformed by mad laughter even when she changes appearance. She named her beauteous alter ego Monycia.

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The final witch is the dreaded Magravelle. She is a ghost hag and like other ghosts, she appears like she was at the time of her death. Magravelle is massive, almost the size of an ogre and her muscles (even if they don't serve her anymore) still show clearly. Her skin is dark and crispy like parchment, horribly burned. Her spectral skin constantly peels, revealing bone before healing and peeling at some other random place. Wherever the skin isn't peeling, seeping wounds ooze vile black pus. Her face is one of a mad creature; her nose is pointy and long, her face is narrow like if she was starving with the lips slightly withdrawn, revealing 4 long sharp fangs. She is constantly drooling like a rabid hound and a hideously burned tongue lashes out whenever she opens her mouth. She still has her wild, jet-black hair, which moves as if something lied fitfully beneath it. Her eyes are red bulging orbs of pure malice that look as if they were going to burst from their sockets. Magravelle wears the dark purple tattered robes she had right before the fire claimed her. Unlike other ghosts, she appears fully material but she never appears to be walking. She's always floating a mere inch above the ground her bare burned and clawed feet almost scraping it.

Background

Magravelle the Ghost Hag

The hag that now haunts the Invich Orphanage is named Magravelle and is 357 years old. Her story began in Darkon where she was actually born. Her father was a simple hunter and her mother was a specialist in leatherworking. They lived in a quiet little hamlet near the Forest of Shadows. She was the fourth child of the family and the only girl out of the four. Loving tender parents raised Marielle, which is her real name, yet something was definitively wrong about her. She was unusually big and strong for a girl. Within a few years, she was becoming as tall as her older brother. Inhuman strength inhabited her it seems, for she once broke her brother's arm when she was 6 and he 12.

Worse still was the pure malice that came from her heart. While young, she would torture wounded animals with a horrifying zeal. Still such benign evil passed as children's wickedness until she reached her early teens. Her hair became quite wild and her nose all too long. When she was eating, she showed signs of ravenousness and a taste for blood. Wild rumors started and Marielle found herself becoming more and more outcast. Some were saying she lurked into children's bedroom and tried to eat their toes. Or that she floated in a trance whenever someone coughed three times without anyone saying "Bless you".

Within a few months, everyone in the village was convinced she was becoming a hag or at the very least, that she was the result of hag magic. One night, a mob entered her room and beat her unconscious while she was sleeping. Local superstition had it that whoever killed a hag would be haunted by her forever, so they decided to cast her out into the deepest woods so that hunger would claim her and she wouldn't be able to haunt anyone.

When she awoke, Marielle was in the woods, all alone and lost. Within a few days, she was so weak and hungry that her demise seemed assured. Her clothes tattered, her legs and arms swelled from insect bites and her limbs became so thin one could see her bones. Yet one night she heard strange noises, someone walking heavily in the woods, dragging something. Marielle went to investigate and she stumbled upon a 9-foot tall crone dragging two deer behind her. The girl screamed as she saw the horrible beast before her. Never had she seen the creatures of legend ever. The crone stopped short and looked directly at the helpless girl, her fangs still dripping fresh blood. Then it reached for Marielle and lifted her to her face with just one hand. As she approaches the gaping maw of the beast, Marielle fainted while screaming in agony just at the sight of those fangs.

When she woke up, Marielle was lying on a pile of bones. Screams again echoed through the forest and from the shadows came three cackling voices. They were three, known to one another

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as the Green One, the Wicked One and the Smelly One. With the awful voices of nightmares taunting her, scaring even more to give her a better taste, as they would cook her. How they longed for human flesh after all those years. But still, one noticed something: that Marielle wasn't human after all. At this moment, Marielle realized that the rumors were true. She was a hag indeed! As she realized this, she screamed: "Sisters!"

Marielle was flung three meters away against a tree. "Blasphemy!" yelled the giant hag that had just slapped her. A smaller witch came forth from the shadows: "How dare you call yourself one of us?" Finally the third one, almost as big as the first approaches and revealed the truth to Marielle: "You puny caliban! Your flesh is but a rotten fruit!" Marielle was not a hag, but a deformed human, nothing more. As Marielle reeled at the awful truth, the hags pondered about what to do with her. In the end, they decided to keep her as their slave. Using powerful charms, they ensured her total obedience.

While the hags plotted their foul schemes Marielle labored; lifting heavy loads, hunting animals and searching for the components they needed to power spells. As the years passed, Marielle mastered some crafts and became a craftswoman; hand making whatever the witches wanted to enchant. Even still she was treated worse than an animal, regularly and beaten and always taunted for being an error of nature. At first Marielle dreamed returning to her village to avenge her exile, but as the painful years passed, she decided to rid herself of the hags instead.

For years she plotted; the hags easily manipulated her with their magic and made sure she wouldn't learn any magic of her own. Still, with time she managed to resist her captor's enchantments so that her will became hers again. She knew that the trio was too powerful to fight with sheer strength and their cunning would save them from any direct trap. Still, Marielle was determined.

As she turned 30, the caliban had found the answer. One day, Marielle was quietly resting in the corner the hags had set up for her when she heard the hags speaking. They had uncovered the secret of Spawning, the ritual that could turn any women into an evil hag under their control. As soon as she overheard this, Marielle realized her opportunity, even as several problems presented themselves to her. How would she trick them into transforming her and how would she stay free of their following control? She knew all too well they would only transform beautiful girls in order to send them back to wreak havoc in their homes and that the hags would never make her one of them out of sheer solidarity. Even still, she knew that the three hags despised one another. Marielle decided to trick them by using their own greed against them.

One night, she approached the Green One who was alone, eating toads in a swamp. When Marielle was discovered, the Green One threw her into the fetid swamp and made her drink the stinking waters to punish her. Marielle said she was avoiding the others because she overheard them. The Green One, curious as she was, asked what she could have had overheard. Marielle was a skilled liar and continued to bluff the hag skillfully: "I cannot tell you, for the others will surely eat me for telling you." Again Marielle was pushed under the water, and her torture lasted several minutes before she finally told the hag what she was pretending to have heard: "The potion they brewed was changed so that anyone turned into a Hag won't listen to your commands." The Green One listened and anger took over her. She sent Marielle to find the ingredients to make a potion what would free whoever drank it from the other hags' control.

As the Green One made her potion, Marielle went to see the Smelly One who was preparing baskets of rotten fruits to send to nearby villagers. Just as she did with the Green One, Marielle pretended that she had overheard the other's scheming and wanted to hide. Again she lied to the hag: "They plan to make a special ritual that excludes you, that allows only two hags to finish the ritual without the third one."

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As she heard this, the Smelly One smoldered with rage. So she set about to brew a potion that would allow the ritual to be complete without the other hag's full cooperation, making her the sole master of the spawn.

As the other two were brewing potions, she approaches the Wicked One as she was animating scarecrows to kidnap children. Like her two sisters, the Wicked One became enraged as the caliban approached her and beat her rabidly. When the beating was over, the hag asked her why she was lurking around her. Marielle recounted how she stumbled upon the others while they were plotting something and left before they would tear her apart. Marielle didn't hold for long before she confessed: "The one they plan on transforming will be under their control already, so your commands she won't follow." The hag burned in anger upon hearing such treachery.

She then had this idea: "Freaky One, I shall make you drink a potion that will make you look like the maiden but you shall not be transformed for I will not take part of the ritual." Marielle agreed reluctantly, although she was jubilating inside since her plan was working all too perfectly.

So the three sister hags fell into Marielle's plan, as they were all turned against one another. The Wicked One pretended to go capture the maiden they had chosen and made Marielle appear like her. Then the Green One made Marielle drink a potion that rendered her immune to the others control. And soon afterwards, the Smelly One completed the ritual alone by making Marielle drink yet another potion. Marielle was reborn as Magravelle, a hag uncontrolled by her creators. Her strength was enhanced further more as well as her cunning and wickedness. Her physical appearance became even more repulsive as her skin aged and started to peel off her body.

The Wicked One was the first to fall, as Magravelle immediately turned against her. The other two hags didn't mind since both were persuaded Magravelle was under their control.

To finish the other two, Magravelle once again relied on trickery. Once the Wicked One lay in a bloody pool, she turned towards the other two and said: "I serve you and only you!" The remaining hags were both sure Magravelle spoke them, so both were certain Magravelle would help her defeat the other. The two hags started fighting immediately and their treacherous spawn finished them from behind.

Magravelle began exploring her new powers and strength. She found that her strength was even greater than it had ever been and was savoring it by rending apart every animal she found. She soon mastered the art of shapechanging and entered villages unnoticed. She then put her powers to evil use and began abducting children just to frighten villagers. Her favorite malign deed was to disfigure girls who were beautiful; she wanted to leave them screaming each time they would look upon a mirror. During her days with the Three Ones, Magravelle still managed to learn a few tricks in brewery. But it wasn't until she had become a hag that she could have put those skills into practice. Now she could make potions that mimicked the hag powers she had developed even if she wasn't a trained spell caster.

The hag remained solitary for a few decades. Then she felt she needed to have some company so she used her shape change in order to get pregnant, killing the father soon after. Like she had learned from her former masters, she then switched her baby with a normal human one so that they would raise her. Forty years later, Magravelle returned to her daughter who had lost all trace of humanity and had become a hag. She took the fledgling under her wing. As most hags do, the two despised beauty whenever they saw it. Sarash was merely acting like the hag she was, denied of her former beauty but Magravelle despised it from birth. Never had she been looked upon with anything but hate. Her parents had loved her deeply but she had forgotten about it. If she were denied beauty, then she would deny every other woman she met.

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Gramma Imix

The gentle hag, known as Imix, was born 212 years ago in Darkon. She came from the lands surrounding Il Aluk, the only daughter of a farmer and his wife. Before she could even speak, everyone in the community knew how beautiful she would become. And indeed, her mesmerizing eyes and angelic features captured the imagination of many would-be suitors, who asked her parents for her hand as soon as she was old enough to marry. It seemed to everyone that her future was assured; Emily was very talented in all womanly chores and she was bound to take a husband soon enough. With such a promising future, Emily succumbed to vanity and became more and more conceited about her stunning beauty.

Emily became a gorgeous woman with deep green eyes and jet-black hair, which she grew as long as she could. Her teeth were snow-white and her lips were full. They showed a gentle innocent smile that could melt the heart of any man. Her small nose was set between two high cheekbones and her skin had never endured scars, rash or any other skin problem. It was as smooth as a baby's skin. The rest of her body was seductively shaped and she often took advantage of her generous proportions with daring dresses. Truly, Emily was a work of art made flesh. Emily, however, had one hidden secret that she kept from others at all cost. Not even her parents knew of this. Ever since she had entered puberty, strange powers began to manifest within her. With a few years of practice, she discovered that she was a sorceress of mediocre skill. Magic came from her naturally. She couldn't use...

Except for the jealousy of other girls, Emily never attracted trouble to herself. She always had been careful to never cross the line in the eyes of others. Eventually, she was married to the son of a rich laborer. Although she proved faithful to him, she did flirt freely with other men, since her husband was too charmed by her beauty to object. The first sign of unhappiness appeared for Emily, when she learned that she was barren. This unhappiness

was brief, though. After a few months of grief, she began to consider this a blessing. Again comfortable with her life, she continued as she always had; showing off her beauty at every opportunity.

At the age of 26, all of this changed. She discovered that for several months, her husband was being unfaithful to her. She was completely shocked upon this discovery. How could someone be unfaithful to a beauty like her? This completely devastated her, as she couldn't understand how it was possible. Still, she managed to pull herself back together and decided to take revenge by becoming unfaithful to him. A few months later, her husband seemed to return to normal, as he would no longer slip out of bed at late hours. That's when another tragedy struck Emily. She found her secret lover dead in a lake soon after. Shaken, she took a few months to recover but the thought that she didn't need the dead lover anymore pulled her spirit back together.

With the following event, she understood that some wicked force was working against her. When she returned to her husband in body and soul, he once again became unfaithful, seeing some unseen woman in the night. When she tried to find the woman who was toying with her, Emily strangely discovered that she could find no trace of this mysterious home wrecker. The years passed and again Emily tried to find comfort in other men. Once more they soon turned up dead when her husband ceased to see these mysterious women. Indeed, Emily knew only one thing about her husband unfaithfulness: there were at least two women.

By the age of 30, other men hardly took interest in her out of fear for their lives. Strange rumors began to surround Emily; rumors of witchcraft. Other women in the community soon discovered that Emily could no longer lure any man into her bed and rejoiced. Emily became ostracized from everyone except her foolish husband. Her life was becoming miserable and whatever forces were working against her seemed to have been satisfied.

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Still she would not give up. First of all, Emily left her husband who was beginning to bore her and took all that she could of his money. Making sure he wouldn't pursue her, she fled the community and went far away, where rumors wouldn't follow her. Using her still great beauty and the money she had, she quickly found a new and young husband and began a new life with him. She was highly regarded for the wealth she had brought to the community and her advanced age didn't attract unwanted jealousy from the younger women. The following year was one of bliss for Emily.

One night, upon her return from an evening at the town hall, she stumbled upon a grim sight. In a basket on her house's porch laid the decapitated head of her first husband. Her tormentors had followed her. It started all over again: mysterious forces working against her to make her miserable. But this time, she decided to fight against them. She began to develop her sorcerous skills to find and destroy whoever tried to wreck her life.

A long struggle began as Emily tried to develop her sorcerous powers. At the same time, the unknown forces were still trying to destroy her existence. Emily's efforts were in vain for her powers seemed to stagnate. In fact, it became known that she had unholy powers and soon she found herself exiled from the community. It happened when she was turning forty years old. At that moment, Emily felt as if age caught up with her, even more than usual for a woman. Her hands were twisted and her skin started to droop in huge wrinkles. The worst was her voice, which became hideously deformed.

Not long after her voice changed, Emily found herself face to face with two horrifying women, who were even more ugly than she appeared to be becoming. She instantly recognized these monsters as hags, like she heard in fairy tales. She also understood it had been them who were ruining her life. She tried to attack them, knowing all too well they would eat her anyway. But it wasn't their intention. They explained that they felt a "beacon" coming from her, that she had become a hag and needed

them. Emily wasn't horrified, which troubled her deeply. Yes, ever since she was born, she was a hag. Emily joined their coven as Imix. Within a few months, all trace of her former beauty disappeared from her and she became a hideous crone.

The three hags spent the next few decades spreading misery around them. Magravelle led the coven, since she was the most powerful of the three hags. All three of the hags, even Sarash, despised one another. Deep within her heart, Imix wanted to take revenge on her former tormentors but she was too afraid to find herself alone once more. Imix especially loved to maim beautiful girls after the other hags had eaten their lovers in front of them. One of their victims proved to be the wrong one for Magravelle, but the right one for Imix.

When Imix was 100 years old, the trio entered the domain of Invidia while searching for new hunting grounds. With the growing power of Azalin Rex, they had judged it would be wise to avoid drawing his attention upon themselves. In Invidia, they began terrorizing young women as usual but soon a group that they had never seen before uncovered them. As soon as their presence was felt, witches of Hala started to fight them. The hags were taken by surprise for they didn't expect to be fighting against divine magic. Ironically, they were facing another coven! It started as a physical confrontation with the Halites trying to kill the hags using their offensive magic. Still Magravelle and her sisters managed to flee and they decided to fight back. For the next few years, the two covens confronted one another indirectly. The Hala worshippers were hiding in the populace, and the hags attempted to unmask and kill them one by one. The hags kept harassing the Invidians hoping to force their enemy to come forth. The Halites fought back by tending to those who the hags had wronged.

It was Imix who put an end to this situation with a radical show of power. By coincidence, Imix had heard about a nearby orphanage. Without telling the others, she immediately went there. Without even changing her shape, she

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entered the orphanage mere seconds after the sun had set and began to slaughter everyone she encountered, child and adult alike. As the carnage continued, a Halite arrived to stop her. Indeed, this Halite was the leader of the coven Imix had been fighting. But Imix didn't need to fight her directly, upon seeing the carnage, the benevolent witch threw herself at Imix's feet and begged her to kill her and then leave the orphanage. Imix agreed and cruelly maimed the witch, but the hag didn't keep her promise. Instead, she turned once more upon the helpless orphans and began eating them alive. She heard a whisper, very faint but audible; the halite witch wasn't dead after all. The whisper, almost entirely choked with blood, cursed her. She would see the image of her own death in the eyes of all her victims. As the curse was laid, Imix threw away the body she was holding for it was true. Everywhere around her, the corpses revealed her own demise.

Imix took the dying witch back to the others. She then begged Magravelle and Sarash to heal the witch so that she would lift the curse. The other two laughed at Imix for not withstanding such a pitiful spell. They then ate the Halite while Imix stared numbly at the sight. Soon, with the head witch dead, Magravelle found the remaining Halites and ate them all. Imix tried to take part in this, to ignore the curse, but it was far too horrible for her. Imix was being gnawed from the inside. She withdrew deep into the woods so that she wouldn't risk crossing the gaze of anyone. The other two left Imix alone for a while, not caring about how their sister went.

Magravelle and her daughter went on with their killings, moving into Gundarak. Then one night, as they were plotting to massacre a whole family, someone attacked them mercilessly. It was someone who knew their strengths all too well. It was Imix who had decided to turn and destroy them for the evil they were doing. Imix was becoming a kind-hearted hag, a Bruja. Imix managed to kill Sarash by tearing her apart with her claws, but Magravelle proved far too mighty. Unable to defeat her foe, the good hag fled into the night. Magravelle's scream over her dead

daughter and this treachery was mightier than a banshee's wail.

Mina Invich

Mina is an Invidian noble. She was born to a wealthy merchant in Karina in 718. Her father became rich by establishing trade with Gundarak. She grew up as a spoiled rich girl, who vented her Invidian temper on the domestics and her father's other employees. At first, her father was pleased to pamper his little girl. But as Mina grew up and demanded more and more attention, he began to get annoyed with her. She was the eldest of his child, but he didn't want to see his family business to be ruined by her extravagant lifestyle. He married her away to a young Barovian boyar whose family was deeply indebt. Their lands were on a mountain slope west of Lake Zarovich. It consisted of a manor, and the peasants under the Invich supervision consisted of a few scattered farms along the road leading to Vallaki. Though trade along the road was good, only a handful of farms had to pay the Invich so this trade barely earned them anything. The young Invich agreed to marry Mina for the very generous compensation she came along with.

Mina agreed to marry Boyar Invich for she was tricked into believing he could assure her a life fit for a queen. Her disillusion only lasted for one week, and then she saw how little he could offer her. The mansion was grand but it was empty and without servants. Vast stables stood with no horses, and acres of land remained filled with weeds. The small amount of taxes that they collected from nearby peasants made them live a decent life but never as grand as she expected. Still, every spare coin was spent on decorations for her house. Her more charnel desires were filled with suitors visiting late in the night when her husband was away.

She led this wedded life for three long and unhappy years. Her husband seemed to care enough for her and she began to return the feeling once her level of comfort had become sufficient. She was still a spoiled brat, however, and only by spoiling her could he be sure that

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she would stop seeing secret lovers. Their level of wealth eventually became sufficient enough to hire servants.

Early in the autumn of 736, on a cold night, a mysterious woman asked them for shelter. She was clad in heavy robes to resist the cold wind and she spoke in whispers. The woman claimed to be a wandering midwife, but the Invich refused to let her in. An ill omen seemed to be surrounding this woman so they preferred to leave her out in the cold even if it meant her death. Though her husband was deeply troubled by this thought, Mina didn't loose sleep over it. In fact, among the locals, rumors began telling of a witch was now wandering in the woods not far from the manor. These reports only secured Mina in her decision.

Then she arrived. Later that very season, Mina was brutally awakened from her sleep by screams of agony and terror. As she came out of her room to see what was happening, she saw a giant deformed crone tearing her husband apart in front of her. While Mina began to fall into shock, the crone kept wailing the name Imix. When Mina got back to her senses and tried to run away, the crone grabbed her from behind and tossed her around like a mere doll. Then the monstrous woman, seeing Mina's angelic visage, ran sharp talons deeply into her face, slowly flaying her very flesh. As Mina was being disfigured, another crone arrived and threw herself at the other. A fight went on as Mina held her bloody face within her hands and soon fell unconscious.

When she regained consciousness, Mina was permanently maimed but most of the damage had been healed by her savior: Imix the Bruja, the midwife she refused to let into her home. Although Imix terrified her at first, she eventually began to trust her and even thanked her for saving her life. Imix explained that for decades, Magravelle was tracking her to avenge her treachery. Unfortunately, Magravelle had heard that Imix was at the manor and tried to find her there. Imix wasn't far indeed, hiding in a cave in the forest. The two hags fought and Magravelle was tearing Imix apart. Fortunately,

the kind-hearted hag was not only a bruja, but also a member of the witches of Hala. Using her divine magic, she managed to fight back the physical might of Magravelle and by sheer luck, she threw the malicious hag into a barrel of ale and set fire to her; burning her alive.

Current sketch

Now the three witches reside (or stay restless) not far from Vallaki. After Magravelle's attacks, several children were now orphans. Since their parents worked as servants for Mina, the Invich Manor was transformed into an orphanage. Unbeknownst to the local populace, the orphanage also serves as a hospice of Hala for Mina decided to do as the hag and change her ways. After mourning for her husband, she was inducted into the witches of Hala as Imix's disciple.

However, Magravelle wasn't so easily beaten. Not long after the orphanage was founded, it became clear that the hag's spirit was anchored to the grounds of the manor. Fearing that destroying her remains would make invincible, the orphanage also serves as a prison for the dreaded Magravelle. Mina and Imix were relived to see that the hag could not reach the children's minds so they did not close the orphanage. While Mina manages the daily and public affairs of her establishment, Imix teaches her powerful Weave magic and tries to find a way to permanently destroy the ghost hag.

The orphanage is a great boon to Vallaki, but dark rumors still surround it. Rumors say that Mina practices witchcraft or that she harbors witches. Most people find it troubling that such a kind-hearted woman could also be a witch so they believe she uses her witch magic for benevolent purposes, even if such magic is dangerous and evil. But others, especially a young man named Milovich (whose father was killed by Magravelle when he worked for the Invich family), say that Mina's orphanage is just a façade. That she is a hag hidden by her veil and that she makes dark pacts with demonic beings deep in the manor's basement.

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Interestingly enough, these rumors are somewhat true since she does hide Magravelle's remains in the basement of the manor.

The Manor

The Invich manor is three stories high, excluding the basement. All rooms on the first and second floor are centered around a large hall where the main stairs are. The first floor includes rooms of Hector and Florita, the kitchen (including the stair leading to the basement), dining room, living room (with a hearth and a few book shelves) and the bathroom (with an interior well). The second floor has all the children's rooms. The last floor has only two rooms (one hidden behind the other). They serve as Mina's room and Imix's room, which also serves as a witch's laboratory. The basement is but a single room that once served as a wine cellar. Now it holds the bones of Magravelle. No one is ever allowed down there. The presence of Magravelle's spirit has rendered the manor a rank 1 Sinkhole of Evil. If Magravelle establishes contact with someone (see below), the Sinkhole becomes rank 2, for her wickedness begins to spread. When Magravelle manages to break free (see below), it raises to a rank 3 Sinkhole of Evil.

There is also a small stable on the side of the manor and a few small barns for chicken and sheep behind the manor. They grow their own vegetables during the summer. The rest of the land is forest until you reach the slopes of the mountain. The manor is 200 meters from the main road leading to Vallaki and Krezk.

Personality

Whenever she takes the guise of the beautiful Monycia, Imix pretends to be Mina's sister, which is true in the religious sense. Having changed her villainous ways, Imix is no longer driven mad by the vision of her own demise. The last time she saw it, it was in Magravelle's burning eyes. She never revealed to anyone what her death will be. Upon becoming a bruja, the eyes of Imix became

human once more and betray her benevolence to anyone who looks upon them. The bruja, however, is still as arrogant as any other hag. She likes to taunt mortals by calling them: "my crunchy". Imix joined the Halites in order to help them fight hags. Recognizing that she was one of the fabled bruja, they welcomed her in their ranks. Imix now follows the path that will make her a true Hallowed Witch.

Mina now acts as a benevolent aunt to all kind-hearted people who meet her. The maiming she suffered took away all her pride and fanciful whims and all that remains is humbleness and internal grace. She hasn't taken another husband, but a local priest of the Morninglord is beginning to stir feelings in her heart. But deep down, she misses her former beauty a little. She always veils herself and will not let anyone see her scared face. Still, she will not let pride cloud her strength of will; even with Magravelle constantly whispering to remind her how ugly she is now. To help her manage the orphanage, she hired two servants who were also healed by Imix during their life. Hector and Florita are the only others who know the truth about Monycia. Not even the children know that a hideous hag hides beneath Monycia's charms. But strangely enough, due to the way Imix treats them; they call her Gramma even if she appears younger than Mina.

Magravelle waits and rages. She is a spirit bounded to the grounds where she was burned. Her desire for revenge against both Imix and Mina made her stay in the physical world. Almost mad, she can still make elaborate plans to manipulate other's passions into freeing her (see below). She will not rest until Imix and Mina are dead and the orphanage burned to the ground. Whenever she is free, Magravelle is merely a force of evil bent on making mortals suffer. She is barely aware that she is dead.

Combat

As a special boon given to her by her change of faith, Imix can assume the shape of any halite witch she knows but she needs to

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make successful concentration checks (DC 20) once per ten minutes to keep her voice disguised as well. Since her guise as Monycia isn't one of a witch, she keeps her normal hag voice. It's still the form she prefers to take.

Imix loves to fight, a fleeting remain of her former hag mentality. When she fights in melee, she lashes out with her claws (1d6+4). She also likes to use ranged divine spells (Searing Light being her favorite) against her opponents. Her arcane spells were developed before she became a hag. She always uses her powers to defend others before she defends herself, even if her life is at risk.

Mina despises fighting. She always avoids battle and lets Imix take care of physical combat. She does cast protective spells from behind and heals whoever needs it. Her priest skills are limited, but she takes advantage of them nevertheless. If she does have to defend herself, she uses her +2 rapier she acquired from a Demeulieuese lover. But she does have a secret weapon hidden in her chamber: a blunderbuss!

As a ghost, Magravelle acquired many powers that somewhat compensate for her lost strength. All save DCs against her powers is 17. Magravelle's mere appearance is enough to drain vitality from everyone who looks at her (Horrifying Appearance in Core rule book III). Her touch is a touch of corruption that inflicts 1d6 of damage while it burns the victim from the inside. She can also use a corrupting gaze that makes every vein on a victim's face burst (2d10 of damage and 1d4 Outcast Rating augmentation) unless they make a Fortitude save. She can also use telekinesis to attack at a distance as if she threw the object herself.

One odd power she also developed was her telepathic power. She can only use it when she is imprisoned. Whenever someone feels any strong emotion of lust, anger or jealousy, she can reach into his mind (Will save, DC: 17). When she does so, she can speak to him and even appear (in his mind) to him. And whenever she reached a mind, the link remains until the emotion passed or that the person moves a kilometer

from the manor. If he returns, the link is broken until she tries again. Unbeknown to Mina and Imix, she can enter the mind of anyone who has these feelings. Imix wrongfully believes that children are immune to Magravelle's telepathy. Magravelle could speak to children if they experienced the right emotion. She cannot control directly the person she is speaking to but she can try to convince them. When she uses the power to "appear", treat her image as an illusion, which is possible to disbelieve. It's also a phantasm, appearing only in the minds of those she managed to reach. Magravelle can establish a link between any numbers of people indefinitely.

Gramma Imix

Female Bruja Hag (II), 8th level cleric of Hala/ 2nd level Sorceress

Strength	18 (+4)
Dexterity	10
Constitution	12 (+1)
Intelligence	14 (+2)
Wisdom	16 (+3)
Charisma	14 (+2)
OR	7 (unless disguised)
Fortitude	+6
Reflex	+2
Will	+9
Alignment	Neutral
Speed	30'
Size	Medium sized (4'10")
Initiative	+0
Armor class	18 (+6 natural armor, +2 talisman of dodging)
Hit points	59
Attack bonus	+7/+2

Skills: Bluff Ch+4, Concentration C+4, Diplomacy +2, Handle Animals Ch+5, Hide D+6, Heal W+11, Knowledge (Arcana) I+5, Knowledge (Nature) I+14, Listen W+8, Move Silently D+2, Sense Motives +2, Spellcraft I+11, Spot W+8, Survival +4,
Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Craft Wands, Craft Wondrous Items, Tracking, Skill Focus (Knowledge: Nature), Spell Focus (Divination)
Languages: Darkonese, Balok, Sylvan

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Character abilities: Spells, Spontaneous Casting of cure spells, Turn Undead/Plants, Familiar (black cat Spooky)

Hag magic: Darkvision 60 feet, Hag shapechanging, Invisibility, Speak with animals, Pass without trace, Spell Resistance: 12

Spells per day:

Divine: 6, 5+1, 4+1, 4+1,2+1

Spell domains: Healing, Plant

Arcane spells per day: 6-5

Cantrips: Read Magic, Detect magic, Light, Flare, Open/Close

1st : True Strike, Summon Monster I

Signature possessions: Spooky (black cat familiar), Talisman of dodging (+3 dodge bonus to AC), Wand of Healing, Potions of Invisibility, Crystal ball

Mina Invich

Female Human, 1st level Aristocrat/ 3rd level Cleric of Hala

Strength	14 (+2)
Dexterity	16 (+3)
Constitution	14 (+2)
Intelligence	15 (+2)
Wisdom	15 (+2)
Charisma	14 (+2) [16]
OR	3 (2 from scaring and 1 from witch reputation)
Fortitude	+5
Reflex	+4
Will	+7 (+9 against charms)
Alignment	Neutral Good
Speed	30'
Size	Medium
Initiative	+7
Armor class	13 (+3 dex)
Hit points	29
Attack bonus	+2

Skills: Appraise W+4, Bluff Ch+4, Diplomacy Ch+11, Healing W+6, Knowledge (Literature) I+4, Knowledge (Plants) I+3, Perform (Harp) Ch+4, Profession (Herbalist) I+3, Ride D+4, Sense Motives W+4

Feats: Dead Woman Walking, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Languages: Balok, Luktar, Vaasi

Character abilities: Spontaneous casting, Spells, Undead turning (5/day), Plant turning,

Spells per day: 4, 3+1, 2

Spell Domains: Healing, Plant

Signature possessions: Rapier +2, Blunderbuss (20 shots), Handkerchief of Charisma +2, Potions of Healing, Masterwork harp, Masterwork healing kit, Counter poison (grants drinker another save against any kind of poison), Ring of protection against possession (+2 will saves against charms)

Magravelle

Female Caliban Hag (III), 3rd Magnitude Ghost, 7th level Expert/ 1st level Alchemical Philosopher

Strength	25 (+8)
Dexterity	13 (+1)
Constitution	-
Intelligence	14 (+2)
Wisdom	18 (+4)
Charisma	16 (+3)
OR	12 (7 as a hag, 5 as a ghost)
Fortitude	+2
Reflex	+3
Will	+13
Alignment	Chaotic Evil
Speed	Fly 30' (perfect maneuvering)
Size	Large (7')
Initiative	+1
Armor class	14 when manifested (+3 deflection, +1 dexterity), 18 in ethereal (+7 natural armor, +1 dex)
Hit points	84
Attack bonus	+5

Skills: Bluff Ch+11, Craft (Alchemy) I+11, Diplomacy Ch+3, Hide D+6, Intimidation Ch+11, Innuendo W+1, Jump S+7, Knowledge (Arcana) I+9, Knowledge (monstrous humanoid lore) I+7, Listen W+8, Search I+2, Sense Motives W+11, Spot W+8, Survival W+7

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Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Spell Focus (Transmutation), Known Formulae: Corporal Purifier

Languages: Darkonese, Sylvan, Balok

Character abilities: Hag Magic: Change self, Obscuring Mists, Ray of Enfeeblement, Sleep, Fog Cloud, Invisibility, SR: 14, Corruptive Aura 20': animals become more aggressive

Ghost powers: Manifestation, Horrific Appearance, Corrupting Touch, Corrupting Gaze, Telekinesis, Telepathy (see above)

Signature possessions: None since she's incorporeal



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THE NEW OUTCASTS

By: DarkSoldier

In 756, Kerad Dyilf (USS 2002) has a new group of allies. They can either give you aid, or become the thorn in your side.

“You feel alone, but you’re not. We feel your pain, your frustration, and your hunger for justice. However worthless you feel, however bleak it all seems, you can come to us and trust us. When everybody else turns you away, we will take you in. We give you a chance when nobody else will.”

—Kerad Dyilf, ca. 756 BC

Over the last 20 years, the outlander mercenary Kerad Dyilf has gathered around him a small group of like-minded individuals. They come from radically different backgrounds, but they all share one common sentiment, they would be treated as second-class citizens no longer. Having had a similar experience before, Kerad wanted to create a place for them where they would be treated as equals. Now in middle age, he seems to have mellowed, ranting at Fate less and less, and spending more time helping his new allies find their places in the world.

Kerad has set his “New Outcasts” up as information brokers and trouble-shooters in the downtown area of Pont-a-Museau. For the right price, one can buy information, or gain the services of a bodyguard or two. To the Reniers they are also dangerous wildcards, for none of them have sworn fealty to Richemulot and work against that family’s interests as often as they do for them.

Before leaving them, Kerad offered his New Outcasts one pearl of wisdom, “*The worst*

thing you can do to your enemy is to put him in your debt.” In the spirit of this message, the Outcasts often arrange to put certain public or political figures into their debt, and then use that obligation to the detriment of their own enemies. Though they use this tactic sparingly, their wily machinations have earned the ire of more than a handful of adversaries, who are attempting to drive them away, divert their business, or have them killed.



Amaaera Selvain

Female elf Wiz12: CR 12; ECL 12; Medium-size Humanoid (elf) (5 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 12d4+12; hp 49; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +4 armour, +4 deflection); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2/18-20, +2 rapier) or +7/+2 melee (1d4/19-20, masterwork dagger) or +8 ranged touch (by spell) or +9 ranged touch (by ray); SQ elf traits, raven dread familiar; AL CG; SV Fort +10, Ref +11, Will +15; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +15 (14), Craft (pottery) +8 (5), Gather Information +7 (5), Knowledge (arcana) +18 (15), Knowledge (nature) +13 (10), Listen +7 (3), Spellcraft +18

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(15); Craft Wondrous Item, Eschew Materials, Ethereal Empathy, Expertise, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Voice of Wrath, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (ray). OR 4 (3 racial, 1 *eye of the wicked sight*).

Languages: Sithican*, Mordentish, Draconic.

Wizard Spells per Day: 4/5/5/5/3/3/2. Base DC = 13 + spell level.

Spellbook: 0 – *arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, resistance*; 1st – *alarm, change self, charm person, mage armour, magic missile, shield, summon monster I, unseen servant*; 2nd – *arcane lock, bull's strength, cat's grace, insight, pyrotechnics, summon monster II*; 3rd – *dispel magic, lightning bolt, phantom steed, shrink item, tongues*; 4th – *charm monster, improved invisibility, minor creation, wall of fire*; 5th – *fabricate, prying eyes, sending, wall of stone*; 6th – *eyebite, greater dispelling, greater shadow evocation, shades*.

Signature Possessions: sword cane (+2 rapier), masterwork dagger, *cloak of resistance* +5, *ring of protection* +4, *bracers of armour* +4, *eye of the wicked sight*, *servant candle*, *Boccob's blessed book*, spell component pouch, 2 potions of *cure moderate wounds*, *potion of delay poison*, belt pouch. 207 gp left.



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Amaaera is a beautiful elf maiden with long, silvery hair, always worn in such a fashion to obscure her right eye. Her visible left eye is glimmering amber, but beneath the hair is an eye patch, which in turn covers the glossy black orb that is her right eye. She garbs herself in sylvan colours and walks with a black cane. The walking stick houses a silver-edged rapier blade, which Amaaera can draw with a twist of the handle. In a large purse-like sack Amaaera carries her spellbook. The tome itself has a brown cover, studded with small round gems and bound with brass bindings and a brass chain lock. A black raven accompanies her wherever she goes, usually staying out of sight and watching from afar. This raven is “Korethil”, or “Black Wing” in the Sylvan tongue, her ever-vigilant familiar.

Background

The child of a low house in Mal-Erek, Amaaera received fine tutoring from her parents. Like the rest of her kind, she viewed humans and other humanoids as nothing more than semi-intelligent animals and in all respects, she was a normal member of elven society in Sithicus.

Not so, following the Hour of Screaming Shadows and the apparent destruction of their dread lord. For when Azrael made himself the ultimate master of Sithicus, Amaaera realised how truly sadistic the man was, slaughtering her people for his own pleasure, concealing his true motive behind the “crushing of rebellion against his rightful rulership.” At a meeting of noble houses, Amaaera voiced her opinion that Azrael should be deposed as soon as possible. The others at the meeting derided her, declaring that the elven culture would endure, no matter what despot tried to destroy it. The elders insisted that she had nothing to worry about and should remain silent.

“Well, when Azrael comes and kills your loved ones, you’ll have time to think about what I said,” she told them curtly, and then left.

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A few days later, Azrael thundered into Mal-Erek on the threat of an alleged uprising against his rule. There he cowed the populace into revealing the home of Amaaera, the individual he believed was the leader of the uprising. Amaaera pleaded her innocence, but Azrael personally gouged her right eye, demanding that she confess her crimes. As her face streaked with blood and pain screaming in her head, Amaaera stood her ground and proclaimed that she had never plotted against him.

Azrael had one of his thugs bring Amaaera's father to him. He gave her one last chance to confess, but she remained adamant. In response, Azrael decapitated her father with one swing of his battleaxe. Amaaera's brother came to her aid at that moment, loosing a barrage of arrows into Azrael's thugs, holding him at bay while Amaaera made her escape. She stumbled through the woods of Sithicus for two days, crossing the border with Valachan and collapsing from exhaustion on the outskirts of Rotwald. She awoke a day later, and saw Silas and Kerad sitting next to her. The two adventurers had been on their way to Pont-a-Museau over the Arden and Musarde Rivers. Kerad spoke with Amaaera, and after only a few minutes, convinced her to join him.

Current Sketch

Amaaera joined Kerad because he offered her a place where she could express her opinions without fear of reprisal. After a while living with the Outcasts, Amaaera grew to find disgust in the thought of any one group ruling over another. After her experiences with her new comrades, Amaaera has changed her view of humans and other races, now believing them the equals of elves, a radical theory that would earn her the scorn of her Sithican kin should she ever return.

Amaaera is rather shy and introverted, often found engrossed in a book rather than socializing. Amaaera enjoys simple puzzles and reading; she often borrows Ana's *Dead Travel*

Fast books, and has a copy of each of the *Van Richten's Guides*. Although she finds the life of a monster hunter fraught with life-threatening peril, Amaaera finds a romantic interest in it. Korethil the raven is her only real friend, he is utterly devoted to Amaaera, privy to her innermost thoughts and desires, will do everything in his power to keep her safe and happy, even if it means hurting somebody else.

She is very self-conscious about her eye, although Kerad frequently tells her to forget about it, since she's among people who can see past the superficial exterior. She is very slowly warming up to the idea of not concealing her eye beneath a patch and her hair, but it may be a while before she makes the change.

Using *fabricate* spells, Amaaera creates high-quality earthenware, selling it through a broker and generating income for the Outcasts.

Combat

Amaaera always has at least two *summon monster* spells prepared, in case she needs assistance. When combat seems inevitable, she will cast *bull's strength* on Silas and Kerad, *cat's grace* on Ana, and *improved invisibility* on herself. Amaaera strikes with *magic missiles* and *lightning bolts* while hidden from sight. If she appears to be in danger, Korethil swoops down on her attacker and pecks its eyes out. Against less intelligent opponents, Amaaera tries *prestidigitation* and *pyrotechnics*, hoping that the flashy displays will scare them off. If she faces only a single foe, Amaaera tries *charm monster*, likely avoiding the conflict altogether.

Korethil

Male raven dread familiar: CR 1/6; Tiny magical beast; HD 1/4d8 (12); hp 24; Init +2; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 20 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d2-5, claws); Face/reach 2 1/2 ft x 2 1/2 ft/0 ft.; SA eye peck; SQ familiar special abilities, improved evasion, speak with master, speak with birds; SR 17; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 6.

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Skills and Feats: Listen +6, Spot +6; Weapon Finesse (claws).

Eye Peck (Ex): If Korethil deals a critical hit with his claws, he plucks the victim's eye out of its socket. This blinds the eye and applies a –2 penalty to Dexterity checks, Reflex saving throws, and numerous skill checks. See Table 3-9 in the *DMG* for specifics. A creature that loses all its eyes is blinded. Only the *regeneration* and *heal* spells can cure this form of blindness.

Familiar Special Abilities: Grant master Alertness when within arm's reach; share spells; empathic link (Su); familiar can deliver touch spells.

Anna

Female Corvara half-Vistana Rog4/Brd8: CR 12; ECL 12; Medium-size Humanoid (Vistani) (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 4d6+4 plus 8d6+8; hp 67; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+5 Dex, +4 armour, +3 deflection); Atk +17 ranged (1d8+4 with +1 arrows/x3, +2 mighty composite longbow [+1]) or +12/+7 melee (1d4+3/ 19-20, +2 ghost touch dagger) or +13 ranged touch (by spell); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ moon madness, diluted blood, evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), bardic music, bardic knowledge (+10); AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +15, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +12 (10), Bluff +19 (15), Climb +11 (10), Gather Information +14 (10), Hide +10 (5), Listen +15 (10), Move Silently +20 (5), Open Lock +20 (9), Perform (ballad, dance, storytelling) +19 (15), Pick Pocket +15 (10), Ride +7 (2), Sense Motive +15 (10), Spellcraft +7 (5), Spot +15 (10), Tumble +15 (10), Use Magic Device +14 (10); Alertness, Great Fortitude, Point-Blank Shot, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Voice of Wrath. OR 2 (racial).

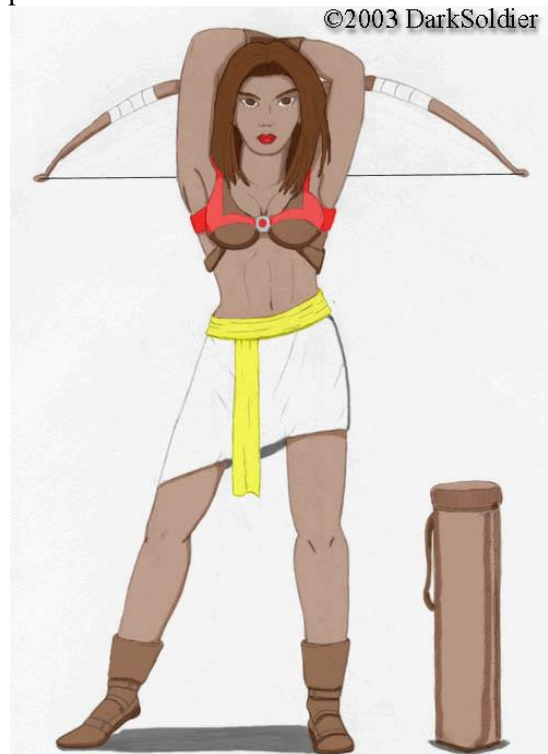
Languages: Vaasi*, *patterna*, Mordentish.

Bard Spells Known (3/4/4/2 per day; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0 – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*,

mending, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*; 1st – *charm person**, *cure light wounds*, *rheumatism*, *siren song*; 2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *enthrall**, *see invisibility*, *suggestion**; 3rd – *charm monster**, *dispel magic*, *sculpt sound*.

*Enchantment spell; save DC = 16 + spell level.

Signature Possessions: +2 ghost touch dagger, +2 mighty composite longbow (+1), quiver of 50 +1 arrows, ring of protection +3, bracers of archery & armour +4, boots of elvenkind, vest of escape, wand of magic missile (1st-level caster), gloves of Dexterity +4, belt pouch, backpack.



At 17 years of age, Anna is a vision of loveliness. She stands 5'6", with flawless chocolate brown skin, dark brown hair, and eyes deeper than the Shadow Rift. Her features combine together to give Anna an almost innocent look, further magnified when she cocks her head and smiles. Many have compared Anna's voice to the singing of celestials, a claim that few deny. The young woman hides a stiletto dagger in the folds of the yellow sash she

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wears around her waist, and is known to carry a longbow and arrows. Ana moves gracefully, and her skirt seems to flow around her thighs, drawing the eyes to her hips and legs. She apparently has perfect curves in just the right places, and she knows it; she's got it, so she flaunts it with her rather skimpy attire.

Background

Before meeting Kerad, Ana lived in abject poverty. She lived with her drug-addled *mortu* Vistani mother in lower Skald, making a living by begging, picking pockets, and occasionally breaking into a house. Despite the potential benefits, Anna refused to resort to selling her body, even to avoid starvation. The half vistana might very well have spent another twenty years on the street had a chance encounter not occurred.

One night while begging on a corner, two strange men approached Anna and struck up a conversation. Unbeknownst to the girl, the pair was in truth a band of mage-finders sent by the Brotherhood of Broken Blades, sent to Skald in search of her mother. Unable to find the vistana on their own, the mage finders decided to use the naive girl to lead them to their quarry. By mere chance, just as the two mage finders approached the girls, two foreign men passed by. Acting on an instinct alone, the strangers followed Anna and the mage finders.

When the hunters drew their weapons Anna tried to escape, only to be grabbed by one of the mage-finders grabbed her. At the same time, the foreign men sprang into action.

The battle was quick and fierce, and though the foreigners defeated the assassins, Anna's mother received an errant sword blow. As the old Vistana lay dying, she thanked the men, and promised to repay them for the kindness they showed. She called for Anna and told her that the two men could give her a better life and with her last breath bade her to serve them. Cradling her dead mother, Anna vowed would, to fulfil her mother's dying wish. The heroic strangers

identified themselves as Kerad Dyilf and Silas Fitzroy, and though they humbly refused Anna's servitude, they gladly inducted her into their band of New Outcasts.

Current Sketch

Anna works as a dancer in a club in Pont-a-Museum. Though some look down on her career choice, she pays them no heed; she likes the sense of power she has over the club's patrons, as well as the earnings. Anna knows the effect her body has on men, and she exploits it to her every advantage. Her attire and behaviour are used as psychological weapons, goading men into underestimating her. Anna insists on having Kerad or Silas escort her to and from the clubs, to prevent unwanted advances.

In her off time, Anna likes to read. She owns a copy of every *Dead Travel Fast* romance novel, despite the poor reviews they've received. Anna loves to tease her friend Silas, though not in the same manner she uses on other men. The half vistana enjoys taunting the caliban in a loving kid-sister manner; she only intends to annoy him, not to cause him any real harm. Silas gets her back by taking advantage of her phobia of spiders, and he leaves fake spiders somewhere close to her.

Combat

Anna does not like to fight, and she does not like getting hurt. Before resorting to her bow or dagger, she tries *charm monster*, *suggestion*, and *enthral*. If all spells fail, she hits her foes with *rheumatism* (*Van Richten's Arsenal*), and then nocks an arrow. Only as a last resort does Anna close to melee with her dagger. Even then she strikes from the side or the back, where she has a lesser chance of getting attacked.

Silas Fitzroy

Male caliban Bbn2/Ftr10: CR 12; Medium-size Humanoid (caliban) (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 2d12+4 plus 10d10+20; hp 108; Init +2; Spd 30

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ft. (base 40 ft.); AC 26 (+2 Dex, +7 armour, +4 shield, +3 deflection); Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d8+8/15-20, +2 *keen longsword*); SA rage 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft., uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), evasion; AL CG; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +14 (10), Craft (carpentry) +13 (12), Handle Animal +12 (10), Jump +11 (7), Intuit Direction +5 (4), Listen +5 (4), Ride +5 (3), Wilderness Lore +6 (5); Back to the Wall, Courage, Expertise, Improved Critical (*longsword*), Improved Disarm, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack (up to +12), Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (*longsword*), Weapon Specialization (*longsword*). OR 5 (racial).

Languages: Balok*, Mordentish, Vaasi. Silas knows a few words from other Core languages.

Signature Possessions: +2 *keen longsword*, +2 *light fortification breastplate*, +2 *large steel shield*, *ring of evasion*, *ring of protection* +3, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *cloak of resistance* +3, masterwork artisan's tools. 110 gp left.

At 19 years of age, Silas stands two inches over six feet and weighs 198 pounds. His grey-green body is bulky with muscle, and his hunched shoulders slope slightly to the right. He has blood-red eyes and straight black hair on his wide head, with bristles on his pointed chin; he is trying to grow a beard like Kerad's, though it is taking longer than he expected. His deep bass voice emanates from deep within his thick neck. Silas has the bearing of a chivalric knight, and wears the armour and sword one would expect such a knight to wear.

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Background

In the winter of 736, a Vistani caravan stopped Kerad Dylf as he travelled from the village of Barovia toward Bergovitsa, in Nova Vaasa. A Vistani woman appeared, carrying a small child, and passed the infant to Kerad, explaining to the bewildered warrior that the deformed boy's name was Silas Fitzroy, and he was to raise the child. Though Kerad frantically explained that he had no idea how to raise an infant, the vistani departed without another word, leaving the child with the adventurer. Despite his inexperience, Kerad managed to take care of the child and raised him as his own son.

Kerad took Silas across the Core, teaching him how to live and how to fight. Most importantly, Kerad taught him to keep his mind open. Kerad demonstrated Barovia, Tepest, Nova Vaasa, Hazlan, and Falkovnia as examples of what ignorance and fear can cause. When Silas was 13, the two were forced to flee the Tepestani Inquisition. At the time Silas wanted to stand his ground and fight, but Kerad

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dissuaded him, warning that violence would only provoke more to take up the hunt against them. Silas matured quickly and remained absolutely loyal to Kerad. They have fought side-by-side and back-to-back many times. In their travels they have influenced many lives, mostly for the better. Recently they have settled in Pont-a-Museau to start the new Outcasts.

Current Sketch

Silas looks fierce, but he is very gentle and reluctant to harm another living thing. His greatest strength is his compassion; despite looking like a brutish ogre, Silas will always lend an ear, or a shoulder to cry on. Emotionally, Silas is the closest person to Kerad. He will protect his “father” with his reputation and his life. Although he knows Kerad is fallible, he still looks up to him as the ideal of what a man should be. He trusts Amaera and Anna like family, and tries to be as friendly and supportive as he can.

Encouraged to find a hobby, Silas has taken up woodwork; his hands have created many fine works that decorate the Outcasts’ home. Silas describes his technique as taking a block of wood and removing the parts that don’t look like his subject. He has recently found a broker to sell some of his carvings and supplement the Outcasts’ income, but he has never met his broker face-to-face.

Combat

An honourable man, Silas always gives his foes the chance to surrender or walk away without a fight. More often than not, they attack first and Silas responds. Against most opponents, Silas strikes to subdue, not to kill, unless a member of his “family” is in genuine life-threatening danger. In such a case, Silas will do anything it takes to protect those in danger.

Rage (Ex): During his rage, Silas has the following adjusted statistics: HD 2d12+8 plus 10d10+40; hp 132; AC 24 (+2 Dex, +7 armour,

+4 shield, +3 deflection, -2 rage); Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d8+10/15-20, +2 *keen longsword*); Fort +14, Will +8; Str 23, Con 18. Climb +16, Jump +13. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, after which Silas is fatigued.

The Truth

“Fitzroy” translates as “King’s son” in the Vassi language. Unbeknownst to any of the Outcasts, Silas is the offspring of Othmar Bolshnik, the ruler of Nova Vassa. Othmar took a fancy to a common peasant woman in 736, and had his men bring her to him. He had his way with her and promptly removed from his home. The woman cursed him for his callousness, swearing that she hoped whatever came of their union would destroy him.

Silas’ mother died giving birth to the monstrous child. Fortunately for the orphaned caliban, a Vistani caravan came to the area during that time and took the infant as they travelled. The gypsies encountered Kerad Dyilf between Barovia and Nova Vaasa, and under the guidance of the Vistani seer, they left the infant with him. According to his mother’s curse, Silas will one day return to Nova Vaasa, confront Othmar, and slay him.



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PHILLIPPE DELAPONT

By: Leyshon Campbell

Philippe Delaponte is an alchemist who teaches anatomy and alchemy in Richemulot. His talents make him a great resource for adventurers, but those who get too close to him may discover that his private ambitions are pitting him against a tyrant with alchemical skills of his own!

Dr. Phillippe Delapont is the only child of Comte Simon Delapont and his wife Moira, and heir to a sizable fortune in Dementlieu. His parents had already buried three stillborn babies before his arrival in 715 BC, so his birth was a joy beyond measure despite the fact that it left his mother unable to bear more children. Whatever malign force slew his siblings continued to try for him as well; within days of birth he contracted a lung infection that weakened his health for the rest of his life, and at the age of seven a riding accident rendered him unable to walk without a cane.

Phillippe grew up between two very different ideas of love. Had his mother exercised her will freely, Phillippe might have grown up spoiled, but his father insisted that Phillippe's station demanded that he be prepared for the burden of nobility. Simon and Moira's devotion to each other kept their battles brief, yet a shadow of this underlying tension loomed larger as Phillippe grew older. During the months of recuperation after his leg injury, Phillippe's love of books grew into a voracious

appetite for knowledge. Eventually he noticed that his father boasted of Phillippe's brilliant mind, and his mother found no argument when her lavishing took the form of new reading material. With this compromise, the tension eased, and Phillippe grew to manhood in a home filled with love and learning.

His parents had provided him with private tutors during the many illnesses that forced him from school, but after his eight months of recuperation they were shocked to discover that the school wanted to hold him back a year. By now the boy's intellect far exceeded his peers, and his parents quickly decided that they would simply provide the boy with more tutors. By the age of sixteen he had exceeded basic education, but was still far too young to take classes at Dementlieu University. With the permission of his parents, Phillippe invited three professors to his family home to discuss matters of law and the sciences. By the time he was finished, two of them agreed to admit him into their classes, not as a student, but as an assistant.

Simon was impressed by his son's cleverness, but unsettled by the idea of a Delapont exchanging his time for pay like a common laborer. His relationship with his son remained cool until nineteen-year old Phillippe announced that he was going to study wizardry. While he feigned happiness during public gatherings, at home he used every threat and lie imaginable to discourage his son from becoming "a circus performer." Phillippe's own anger was kindled as he tried to explain how his poor health forced him to make the most of his intellect. Unable to change his father's mind, Phillippe left, determined to make a life for himself as a mage.

The next few years were a precarious balancing act between gaining the powers he desperately needed and keeping the relationships

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he already had. Were it not for his mother's devotion, he would not have set foot in his old home during those three years, and were it not for this same devotion, Simon would have cut him disowned his headstrong son completely. As it was, Simon merely refused his son any financial assistance, but to his eternal chagrin, Phillippe's own earnings and investments maintained his studies uninterrupted. Who knows how long this precarious situation could have continued, had Phillippe's research into his own illness not accidentally unearthed a bizarre secret: due to a rare blood disorder, Moira Delapont was forever incapable of bearing a living child. The full effect of the disease was discovered five years after Phillippe's birth, and immediately sealed by the order of the Compté.

Confronted privately with the evidence, Simon confessed to the secret that had subtly shaped Phillippe's entire life to date. Moira's fourth pregnancy had ended as the previous three, a stillbirth. The operation that was supposed to prevent this tragedy had further damaged Moira's womb, and Simon had waited in dread for his wife to wake up to discover that she was now, and would forever be, childless. In this state, Simon was visited by three gypsies bearing a sleeping babe only a day or two old. With foreknowledge of his tragedy, they said, they were prepared to help make joy out of his sorrows--for a price. As their words sank in, Simon remembered the grief Moira had suffered after the first three stillbirths, grief that had driven her nearly to suicide. His sole thought during the three and a half hours of bargaining was to spare her more such unspeakable agony. When the gypsies were finally convinced they could get no more out of him, they took the corpse of his infant to a nameless fate, and Simon swore the midwife and doctor to secrecy.

Prepared though he was for the worst, Phillippe's mind still reeled with the magnitude of this discovery. As he watched his father groaning in wretched dread over the imminent destruction of his family, Phillippe also felt a pang of sympathy for the man who had sacrificed so much to adopt him. In an act of equal parts selfishness and charity, Phillippe

promised to help his father keep the secret that would break the heart of a woman they both loved. Having given this reprieve, Phillippe then made his own request, for help in searching out his real family. Swallowing hard, Simon collected himself and acknowledged that he would help where he could.

Struggling to recall the events of that night, Simon remembered that the vistani had shown him jewelry, including a signet ring with the seal of a Borcan or Barovian noble. The gypsies had hoped to drive up the price with verifiable evidence of Phillippe's heritage, but Simon had already committed all he could. A visit to his neighbors in Chateaufaux revealed that such a ring had been bought by a neighboring noblewoman a day after Phillippe's birth. He also recalled that before burning the rags his infant had arrived in, he noted that some were linen, soiled but embroidered, with a stylized letter "L." For Phillippe's part, further probing into his birth illness revealed it was not an illness at all, but the effects of mild poisoning, introduced into his infant frame through his mother's milk. Whatever terrible events had thrust him into the arms of the gypsies, it was doubtful his mother had survived it.

The secret surrounding Phillippe's birth had kept Simon and his father distant for countless years, but somehow sharing it had caused it to lift. Moira never understood exactly how the strife had ended, but she was overjoyed to see father and son united, and she and Simon were like newlyweds. After all the evidence was assembled, Simon blessed his son warmly as Phillippe prepared to confront his past: "You were sent to us to grow and learn, but your destiny lies elsewhere. Seek out that destiny, and know that you will always be my son."

Armed with evidence, and with his health boosted by a toad familiar, Phillippe traveled to Borca, where he researched family records, especially birth and death records for the year 715. After months of searching, Phillippe finally found records of a young couple who died of poisoning within days of the birth of their first son. The murderer was never caught,

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having been chased by the surviving family to the neighboring realm of Dorvinia, and the name of the couple began with an "L." Breathlessly, Phillippe compared the family seal to his father's sketch of the ring owned by their neighbor. There was no mistake; Phillippe Delapont was actually Parthan Leskovich, and his parents were murdered by his uncle, Ivan Dilisnya.

As Phillippe set out for Dorvinia and his destiny, he found the ground suddenly grow unsteady beneath him. Used to stumbling about, Phillippe quickly realized this had nothing to do with his own infirmity. Over the next few hours the land became increasingly unstable as the world was rocked in the turmoil of what would be called the Grand Conjunction. Phillippe arrived at his uncle's domicile only to find that Ivan had fled the earthquakes and the yawning rift in the earth they had produced. When Ivan returned weeks later, he settled in again, barely noting the fact that among the disarray of his estate were a few hobbling prints of "some hunchbacked vagrant." In truth, Phillippe's studies of his uncle's notes laid bare the depth of Ivan's madness and cleverness. Without strength of arms, Phillippe would have to seek out his reckoning in another way, and his uncle's notes had provided him a key. By the time Ivan returned, Phillippe was well on his way back home, ready to brew revenge in a cauldron.

As a Transmuter, Phillippe's nature coincided well with the alchemist's craft--of which he was already fond--but while studying at the university he had heard of something called "High Alchemy." After reading his uncle's accounts of bizzare reagents and impossible results, Phillippe concluded (erroneously) that Ivan was a student of this esoteric branch of the arcane, and that his own destiny was to discover a cure for Borrowed Time. Doing so would free the wretched souls bound to his uncle's whim and bring Ivan's tyrannic reign crashing down around him in a spectacle of justice and revenge worthy of Edgar and Kristina Leskovitch.

Current Sketch

Phillippe's studies into High Alchemy have produced much fruit during the past ten years, but is no closer to a cure for Borrowed Time. Frustrated, Phillippe has begun pursuing vengeance in other ways. Twice Phillippe has secretly sponsored others' quests against the madman Ivan, and while he takes every step to avoid failure, he has no qualms about digging up those who fail and learning the means by which they met their end. Through such means Phillippe has amassed a wealth of knowledge on Ivan's tactics and habits, desperately hoping it will be enough when the final reckoning takes place.

Phillippe's desire to be closer to Borca--and Ivan--have led him to Richemulot, where he currently teaches Alchemy and Anatomy at the Academie De Richemulot. In the Academie's anatomical theatre, Dr. Delapont guides students through autopsies, usually of criminals or unclaimed bodies. His lectures on High Alchemy begin after the dissections are over, where he creates coagulants from the corpses. Although local churches have opposed both practices, the popularity of the classes (and the teacher) ensure their continuance. Within the past two years the Academie has seen an influx of foreign medical and alchemical students, and the deans hope to see more foreign currency in their coffers as long as Phillippe remains.

Now 42 years old, Phillippe maintains contact with his father and mother in Dementlieu, writing frequently and visiting at least twice a year. Pushing seventy, Simon is preparing for the day when he will pass on and his son will add the sizeable family fortune to his own. His account of Phillippe's arrival is kept in a secret vault for Phillippe to do with as he pleases after his father is gone, but he plans to tell Moira the truth before he dies, if he gets the chance. For her part, Moira pleads with her son to give up his bachelor lifestyle and give her a grandchild before she dies. Phillippe has put off marriage for fear of endangering his family, but his fortune and nobility ensure many suitors.

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Lately, his mother has begun correspondence with a few Richemulot nobles, hoping some clever Renier widow might pull her son out of the laboratory.

As yet, Phillippe has neither the means nor the desire to create an alchemical child from a human being. His lab equipment can only support a creature of Tiny size, and he balks at producing anything more self aware than a dog. To date he has created three creatures using the lab: a homunculus and two guard dogs. The homunculus, who he has named Gerast, shares a pond in Phillippe's garden with Phillippe's toad familiar, Cadmus. It can remain underwater indefinitely, needing neither air nor food, and emerges only under cover of night or at the behest of Phillippe or (sometimes) Cadmus. The dogs, on the other hand, are quite visibly guarding his estate, now that they are full grown. Although remarkably intelligent and well trained, their greatest advantage is the telepathic link they share with Phillippe. Any intruders to Phillippe's estate will find these hounds are extraordinarily coordinated and clever in their attacks, and that their master is well prepared should they finally reach him.

Phillippe Delapont

Human Tmr5/Alp5; Cr 10; Medium-Sized Humanoid; HD 10d4; hp 28 (10 w/o familiar or amulet); Init +1; Spd 20 ft (10 w/o cane); AC 11 (Dex +1); Atk +4 Melee, +5 Ranged; SA Spells; SQ High Alchemy, Dead Men's Tales, Spells; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +11; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 21, Wis 16, Cha 17;

Skills: Alchemy +20, Heal +16, Concentration +14, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (nobility/royalty) +18, Spellcraft +18

Feats: Alchemical Homunculus, (Alertness), Brew Potion, Corporeal Purifier, Corporeal Purgative, Craft Wondrous Item, Emotional Purgative, Memory Coagulant, Philosophical Child, Spell Focus (Transmutation), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (alchemy)

Languages: Mordentish*, Balok, Darkonese, Lamordian, Vaasi, Valachani, Sithican

Equipment: Amulet of Health +4, Club of Spell Storing +1(Gentleman's Cane), Alchemist's Laboratory, Signet Ring, guard dogs, familiar, homunculus,

Spellbook: 0-LEVEL Resistance, Detect Poison, Daze, Flare, Light, Ghost Sound, Disrupt Undead, Mage Hand*, Mending*, Open/Close*, Arcane Mark, Detect Magic, Prestidigitation, Read Magic

1st-LEVEL: Alarm, Protection from Evil, Mage Armor, Grease, Mount, Obscuring Mist, Unseen Servant, Detect Undead, Identify, True Strike, Charm Person, Hypnotism, Sleep, Change Self, Color Spray, Cause Fear, Ray of Enfeeblement, Animate Rope*, Burning Hands*, Enlarge*, Erase*, Expeditious Retreat*, Feather Fall*, Jump*, Magic Weapon*, Message*, Reduce*, Spider Climb*

2nd-LEVEL: Arcane Lock, Obscure Object, Protection from Arrows, Resist Elements, Web, Detect Thoughts, Locate Object, See Invisibility, Darkness, Daylight, Blur, Hypnotic Pattern, Invisibility, Magic Mouth, Misdirection, Mirror Image, Alter Self*, Blindness/Deafness*, Bull's Strength*, Cat's Grace*, Darkvision*, Endurance*, Knock*, Levitate*, Pyrotechnics*, Rope Trick*, Whispering Wind*

3rd-LEVEL: Dispel Magic, Explosive Runes, Magic Circle against Chaos/evil/Good/Law, Nondetection, Phantom Steed, Protection from Elements, Sepia Snake Sigil, Sleet Storm, Stinking Cloud, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance, Hold Person, Suggestion, Displacement, Illusory Script, Invisibility Sphere, Major Image, Gentle Repose, Halt Undead, Blink*, Fly*, Gaseous Form*, Greater Magic Weapon*, Haste*, Keen Edge*, Secret Page*, Shrink Item*, Slow*, Water Breathing*

Transmuter: As a transmuter, Phillippe is barred from the school of Evocation.

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Familiar (Dread Companion): Cadmus

Diminutive Magical Beast (toad); HD 10d4; hp 14/5 (see above) ; Init +1; Spd 5 ft; AC 18 (size +4, natural armor +3, Dex +1); Atk -1 Melee; SA Deliver Touch Attacks; SQ Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Empathic Link, Speak With Master; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 1, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 4;

Skills: Alchemy +20, Concentration +14, Heal +16, Hide +21, Listen +5, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (nobility/royalty) +18, Spellcraft +18, Spot +5

(Cadmus grants Phillippe +2 to Con)

Homunculus: Gerast

Tiny Construct; HD 2d10; hp 11 ; Init +2; Spd 20 ft, fly 50 ft (good); AC 14 (size +2, Dex +2); Atk Bite +2 melee; SA Poison; SQ Construct, Telepathic Link, Acid Resistance 20; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 15, Con --, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7;

Guard Dogs

Small Construct (lifelike); HD 2d10; hp 11 ; Init +3; Spd 40 ft; AC 19 (natural armor +6, Dex +3); Atk Bite +4 Melee (1d6+3); SA --; SQ Construct (lifelike), Telepathic Link, Acid Resistance 20, Scent; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 17, Con --, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6;

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +1 (+5 when tracking by scent)

Combat

Due to his low hp and hampered movement, Phillippe's best hopes for combat lie in preparation, spellcraft and surprise. Through his spells, familiar, homunculus, guard dogs and coagulants, he can and will study potential foes extensively. Whenever possible, Phillippe will use diplomacy or flight to avoid combat and will not hesitate to call on the authorities for help. He is, after all, a law-abiding and wealthy taxpaying citizen with many influential friends.

Those who threaten him had better not do it in public, lest they find themselves in serious trouble without Phillippe doing anything at all.

If direct confrontation is imminent, Phillippe prefers to deal with violent foes through aiding their enemies, anonymously if possible. Words in the right ears and anonymous letters have already foiled a few of Ivan's schemes, with no one the wiser. Should this method fail, Phillippe will continue to spy upon his opponents, waiting for them to strike for him at home. Casting Invisibility on himself, he will guide the dogs telepathically and counter spells while Gerast puts spellcasters to sleep. As a transmuter, he is well prepared to back up the dogs with Haste, Bear's Endurance, Cat's Grace, Bull's Strength and Enlarge, or use such magic on himself, all without dispelling his Invisibility. Phillippe's canes count as clubs, and among his favorites are two silver headed ones and an enchanted one from his father, which can store spells.

Should he be caught unawares, Phillippe's goal would be escape, and his Concentration gives him an excellent chance of casting spells that would help, such as Expeditious Retreat, Invisibility, Free Action, Sleep, Slow or Haste. Additionally, his Spell Storing Cane usually carries a Hold Person, which he will attempt to discharge on any spellcasters.

Dead Men's Tales--Due to a number of failed powers checks associated with coagulants, Phillippe has become a repository of buried secrets. He has the ability to recall secrets known by any dead or undead humanoid being by making an Intelligence check with a bonus equal to his Alchemist level. This ability otherwise functions as the Bardic Lore ability. The drawback is that Phillippe has become addicted to foreign memories. Should he go longer than three days without a dose of Memory Coagulant, he begins to develop short-term memory loss (-1 INT per day), which gets progressively worse until he slides into demetia (his INT cannot go below 2 through this). His anatomy classes provide him with enough bodies to suit him for now, but should the school

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cut back on his classes, he may turn to grave robbing to sate his need.

Roleplaying Notes

Phillippe is an extraordinarily learned man, and he knows it. While has no compunctions about admitting errors or faults, he insists that anyone disagreeing with him or pointing out such errors do so politely. He does not suffer fools, and blustering, browbeating, interruptions and insults will only earn his contempt. His self-assuredness falls just short of arrogance, however, and he is eager for new knowledge on any subject.

The campaign against Ivan is slow-moving and nearly invisible, which suits Phillippe's lifestyle and temperment quite well. He is exquisitely careful not to show undue interest should Ivan's name come up, and will always have an excuse for any interest he does show (Borcan investments, former student in Levkarest, etc.) He knows that once Ivan knows of his existence, the battle between them will escalate rapidly until only one survives, and may threaten others in the process.

Though his limp is the only outward sign of his frailty, Phillippe still behaves as he did when his health was weak. He pays almost religious attention to diet, exercise and cleanliness, and dreads taking off his amulet every night to go to bed. Likewise, Phillippe suspects Cadmus' evil nature but is loathe to give him up because the toad helps him maintain his good health.

Adventure Ideas

- ◆ Phillippe as Hireling: Phillippe's years of study and unique gifts make him an excellent source to turn to on any subject, and his credentials make him an obvious choice to consult on the subjects he is well-known for (Alchemy, Anatomy and History). Phillippe usually charges the standard prices as a Sage and an Alchemist, but he has been known to waive all or part of these fees for good causes or ones that

help his personal agendas. Should the party be short on cash, Phillippe may agree to an exchange of services (see below).

- ◆ Phillippe as Patron: Phillippe is an ideal patron--wealthy, available, and always in need of assistance. He has been known to pay adventurers to guard him on journeys or acquire rare alchemical components, and after establishing a working relationship, he may trust a party with more discrete tasks. Through stolen memories, Phillippe may have learned the location of buried treasure or the secret behind a rash of murders. Eventually, Phillippe may bring the PC's into his confidence and reveal his private campaign against Ivan, but only after they have repeatedly proven themselves trustworthy.
- ◆ Phillippe as Villain: Between his familiar, his alchemy, his addiction to memories, and his obsession with his uncle, Phillippe's road from good to bad is alarmingly short for someone who has yet to make an alignment change. Any of these might push him over the edge, and DM's who have used Phillippe in the past might decide to reintroduce him as a villain later. Having won the PC's trust in the past, he may employ them for darker schemes--digging up corpses as "resurrection men" or taking advantage of a secret some dead man was never meant to tell. Alternately, the PC's may find themselves on the receiving end of such a scheme, as Phillippe finally expands his lab to make human-sized alchemical soldiers for his fight against Ivan.



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THE RAVENOUS

HE'S BACK

By Eddy Brennan (The Lost Hedgewitch)

What if Anton Regess
returned
as a Ghoul Lord ?

Those familiar with both the *Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory* and *Secrets of the Kargatane* websites may be familiar with the narratives and summaries I have pieced together in the past on their message boards detailing a campaign I once ran in the setting of Ravenloft called *The Siege of Hunadora*. In that campaign, several major events played out that changed the face of the Invidium in some aspects, among the largest of these changes were the deaths of the Midnight Slasher and Anton Regess, the latter of these returning as a Ghoul Lord who began to wander the Core in hopes of spreading his evil and influence. It is this same version of Anton Regess and his new followers on which this article is based so others that may want to take up this change from the canon setting may do so for their own games.

Anton Regess

Ghoul Lord, Ftr10/Ari3: CR 14; medium-size undead (ghoul lord); HD 13d12; hp 90; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 22 (+4 Dex, +4 natural, +1 Dodge, +3 armor); Atk Bite +16 melee (1d8+4), Claw +12 melee (1d6+4), Windower +17/+12 melee (1d10+6, crit. 19-20 x2); SA Create spawn, paralysis, ravenous fever; SQ Allergen, control craving, keen scent, miasma, regenerate 4, spell resistance 12, turn resistance +2, undead; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +16; Str 18, Dex 19, Con -, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 20.

Skills: Climb +17, Craft (weaponsmithing) +10, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +8,

Hide +12, Intimidate +8, Jump +17, Knowledge (Falkovnian Law) +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +12, Ride +13, Search +10, Sense Motive +7, Spot +11, Swim +17.

Feats: Back to the Wall, Cleave, Dodge, Ethereal Empathy, Ethereal Touch, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Mobility, Multiattack, Piercing Gaze, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse (bite), Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

Signature Items: Widower (+2 bastard sword), studded leather armor

Anton is no longer the proud man he appeared as in life, his Falkovnian eagle brand is still visible on his forehead, but has become distorted with his misshaping of his skin and several wounds that have been inflicted upon the area. His skin is pale, grimy and wrinkle in many places, but appears stretches in others, particularly over his jaw, elbows, knees and taloned claws. His luminescent eyes glow yellow in both light and darkness, a steely gaze piercing all who gaze upon him, filling their hearts with its cold intensity. What remains of his hair is wild and left to its own devices. He has no interest in his appearance.

Anton dresses in old and tattered studded leather armor and retains one other possession from his life, the enchanted bastard sword Windower. Both of these have seen better days and neither have been cared for in a long time. Windower has rusted slightly in time and is encrusted with the stale dry blood and remains of hunks of flesh that have clung to it in time. Anton finds the sword helps him fight off the maddening cravings within himself, keeping it mostly for that purpose, but when he is in full control of his abilities, he wields it with almost unequal skill in combat.

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Background

Anton Regess was once the proud commander that controlled the Falkovnian citizens of Karina, the busy festival town of Invidia. In the year 747 BC, Regess saw a change in the power of the domain; a young and cruel man named Malocchio rose up suddenly and snatched control of the land away from his mother, his actions stealing the very sanity from the half-vistani.

When Regess informed his commander, Lord Drakov of this change in power within the domain, the tyrant of Falkovnia appeared to grow interested in the land and its new master, sending messengers offering a treaty with Malocchio. Malocchio agreed hoping to manipulate the Impaler from the north in time. Regess was now granted more power and more men beneath him in Karina, his forces growing from a meager half-dozen for several score in only a few scant months. He was proud to have the sizable force following him, but he secretly missed the grander forces he once controlled in his fatherland.

In the end days of 753 BC, war started to eat at the edges of life in Invidia and people grew more nervous as the Midnight Slasher became more active once again after almost five years of suffering only a small amount of victims by the insane killer's hand. With his forces stretched between the coming conflict and the latest spat of murders escalating in Invidia, Regess sought out help got it from a band of somewhat inexperienced adventurers hoping to develop their skills and learn others from the Falkovnian commander. Their hunt for the Slasher was a difficult one, featuring several near misses and dangerous encounters with the serial killer.

The growing pressure on Regess was causing his mind to bend and he soon teetered on the brink of insanity. His walk home one night was interrupted by an encounter with a ghoul feasting off the carcass of a dead animal,

though he killed the abomination, the sight haunted his dreams and thoughts and he took to eating raw flesh. As time went on, the Slasher was eventually cornered and Regess personally attended the arrest, when the killer's identity was revealed, he was both shocked and appalled that a woman had committed the killings. The Slasher was taken into custody and tortured while interrogated and eventually executed, the entire time, Regess found his lust for raw flesh becoming harder to control and he found himself taking the life of one of his watchmen when he encountered the unknowing fellow as Regess stalked an animal to eat without success. As Regess tasted the freshly killed flesh of another human, his soul was damned forever.

Several months passed and the domain of Invidia had erupted into full civil war between Malocchio Aderre and his mother Gabrielle. During this time, Karina's street became darker, more foreboding places at night as a new string of killings identical to those of the Slasher started up once again. Determined to find the killer and having come to the end of his patience, Regess called several officers together and went out on patrol personally to deal with the threat, however, what he encountered was nothing he could deal with.

The Slasher, now dead had her soul cast into torment, previously seeking revenge for an event in her childhood, she now sought revenge on he who killed her and Regess delivered himself into her hands blindly. The Slasher found the group and butchered the guardsmen with a spectral blade before killing Regess slowly with the same incorporeal weapon, it's blade cutting deep into his soul rather than his flesh.

When morning came, the bodies of Regess and his men were found where they had fallen, untouched from the moment they had died.

Regess was given a heroes burial in Karina, and perhaps this helped his unquiet soul to stay active, he had longed to return to Falkovnia and lead armies once more, but now that was lost to him forever. When the last rays of sun had

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disappeared into the darkness of night that spring evening, Regess rose out of his grave and decided it was time to claim what was his.

Current Sketch

Anton is a Ghoul Lord in control of a large pack of Ghouls and Ghosts that serve him. He travels from one area to another randomly, making him a hard prey to track for any prolonged period of time and his intelligent military mind is still as resourceful as ever, if not more so as he is more willing to sacrifice those that follow him than he has been ever before.

Anton has made many powerful and famous enemies in the past few years among others he has outsmarted the Weathermay-Foxgrove twins twice and outrunning the famous tracking skills of George Weathermay. The Great Detective, Alanik Ray has suffered a brief encounter with Anton's minions in Dementlieu but Anton had fled during the battle, leaving the cause behind the pack a mystery to the Detective. While Anton has his enemies, he is also not without allies. He quickly expands his pack, killing entire farms to refill the ranks, making sure the bodies are untouched so that they rise to serve him.

Anton takes great delight in having those that oppose him rise to join his ranks and takes great care in leaving their bodies unmolested after their deaths. He feasts on flesh like other Ghoul Lords, but his twisted sense of revenge has become an art form in his care.

Combat

Anton strikes in combat with either his sword or natural weapon, depending on how control he is of his craving and hunger. He uses tactics and lures, readily sacrificing members of his pack to achieve a greater purpose. If he is in need of escaping, he will gladly sacrifice anyone and anything that follows him to ensure his own continued survival. He is not cowardly and prefers to have the upper hand, but if he does

not, he will persevere until it is certain that he cannot win and then escape.

Those that gaze into Anton's eyes while having to make a saving throw against one of his many abilities suffer a +2 modifier to the DC.

Ravenous Fever (Su): Supernatural disease – bite, Fortitude save (DC 21), incubation period 1d4 days, damage 1d4 temporary Constitution and special. Anton's bite can infect its victims with the same feverish hunger that damned him. An infected victim must consume a number of pounds of flesh each day, as determined by the victim's size (see *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead* page 51, or *Denizens of Darkness* page 64). At first, any form of fresh meat will suffice. If the disease claims more than 2 points of Constitution, the victim can only sate the hunger with the flesh of humanoids. If the victim loses 5 points of Constitution, the hunger can only be sated only with the flesh of living humanoids.

On any day the victim does not sate the hunger, she suffers 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage and must make Madness save (DC 10 + 1 per point of Constitution damage suffered). Failure indicates that the victim goes temporarily mad and must attempt to feed on flesh. This disease may be cured only by a *heal* spell; less powerful spells will not suffice.

Paralysis (Su): Those hit by Anton's bites or claw attack must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 21) or be paralyzed for 1d6+6 minutes.

Miasma (Su): The air around Anton is so heavy with the stench of evil that as one nears him the miasma actually begins to resemble a sickly green mist. Any living mortal creature within 60 ft. of Anton must make a Will save (DC 21) or suffer a -4 morale penalty to all attack rolls, checks and saving throws. This penalty persists until the creature leaves the radius of effect. This is a supernatural fear effect.

Create Spawn (Su): any corporeal animal, beast, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, shapeshifter, or vermin

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reduced to 0 or less Constitution by Anton's Ravenous Fever are doomed to rise as a Regess Ghast in 24 hours if the body is not destroyed. If Anton slays the victim with his claws or bite, the victim returns as a Regess Ghoul in 24 hours. These spawn are partially free willed, but Regess uses his fearsome presence to keep them bound to his will. If these creatures are to be sacrificed by Anton, they receive a Will save (DC 21) to break away from Anton's control.

Keen Scent (Ex): Anton has the scent special quality. See "Scent" in chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details.

Control Craving (Ex): Anton may make a Will save (DC 20) before he is ever encountered to determine whether he is in control of his craving and ravenous hunger. If he passes this save, he is in control of his urges, but will use his bite and claws in combat, if he passes the save by 5 or more, he is in complete control and fights with his bastard sword. If this weapon is lost to him in combat, he can still rely on his natural weapons.

Allergen: Anton is fascinated by anything that links him to his former life as a soldier of Falkovnia. While in the presence of such memorabilia, Anton must make a Will save (DC 30) or move to the item and inspect it for 1 minute, leaving himself completely open to attack for the duration. If presented by the mirror from his former office in Karina, Anton must make a similar Will save or flee as he is overcome by the events of his death. Anton recovers an hour later and often seeks revenge on those who reminded him of his current plight. When he finds those that are the source or his remembrance, he will kill them but leave their bodies to rise as ghouls and ghosts to join his retinue.

Anton's Lair

Regess moves his pack every few months to keep the food supply from becoming exhausted and avoiding too much trouble as their presence in any one area is noticed. These lairs are littered with the eaten remains of the pack's victims and have a chance of containing various treasures that belonged to those that have fallen to the ghoul pack. Any treasure these lairs, both current and abandoned may contain is left to the Dungeon Master to decide.

Regess prefers to keep each lair different from the one before, he is not picky with his surroundings and may take up residence in any one of a number of location types (caves, sewers, cemeteries, cursed forests, abandoned estates and building, a careless person's cellar). No matter what, he thinks of his own safety first and prefers lairs that have a minimum of two additional exits to the main one, having the pack create additional passages and exits if necessary.

Anton's Retinue

Since his demise and final transformation into a Ghoul Lord in 754 BC. Regess has collected a small, retinue of undead in his service these creatures are largely Ghouls and Ghosts that have been spawned from his own dark acts against the world of the living, like others of his kind, Regess has the ability to create spawn, but those created in his image are marked by the same curse that made him what he is today. Regess rarely has more than 2-dozen creatures (about three-quarters of these are Regess Ghouls, Regess Ghosts fill the remainder) under his command at any one time, preferring to keep his band small and easy to control.

Both the Regess Ghoul and Regess Ghost follow a distinct template unique to these fell, eternally starving creatures.

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Allergens

Both Regess Ghouls and Ghosts are fascinated but certain items linked to their former lives in the same way Anton Regess is himself. However, if presented by any form of mirror or reflective surface they are become enraged (+2 morale bonus to attack, damage and saves, -2 penalty to AC).

Regess Ghoul

“Regess Ghoul” is a template that can be applied to any corporeal animal, beast, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, shapechanger, or vermin (hereinafter referred to as the “base creature”). The creature’s type changes to “undead”.

Only creatures with 3 or less hit dice tend to become Regess Ghouls, though there are exceptions. Those creatures with less than 4 HD that die from Anton’s bite are raised as Regess Ghosts and are granted additional HD so they make the minimum requirement of 4 HD.

Hit Dice: The base creature’s hit dice are increased to d12.

Speed: As base creature, if the base creature has special movement types (such as flying, climbing, swimming, etc...) these are also retained.

AC: The base creature gains an additional +2 bonus to their Natural AC modifier.

Attacks: The base creature gains a bite attack and 2 claw attacks if it didn’t already have them, it also retains any other attacks it had in life but loses all other natural attacks made with fists or claws.

Damage: The bite and claws attacks of the Regess Ghoul remain unchanged from the base creature if the creature already had these attacks, otherwise they damage rates for these attacks are found by corresponding with the following chart. If the base creature already had these forms of attack the Regess Ghoul receives the damage rate from either the chart or that from the base creature, whichever is greater.

Size Category	Bite damage	Claw damage
Tiny	1d3	1d2
Small	1d4	1d3
Medium-size	1d6	1d4
Large	1d8	1d6
Huge	2d6	2d4
Gargantuan	2d8	2d6
Colossal	4d6	2d8

Special Attacks: The Regess Ghoul retains all the base creature’s special attacks and also gains those listed below. Saves have a DC of $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the creature’s HD + the creature’s charisma modifier.

Disease (Ex): The bite and claws of the Regess Ghoul carries a terrible disease that slowly attacks its victims. Any living creature struck by any attack from a Regess Ghoul is forced to make a Fort save or fall victim to the disease. The disease remains potent within the victim for another 24 hours, after which another Fort save must be taken, if both of these saves are made, the victim is free of the disease, if either of them fail, the victim falls to the disease. The disease incubates for a period of 2 months before its first symptoms start to show, taking the form of paleness and periodic spasms of insatiable hunger. Another month later, this hunger turns to victim toward each raw flesh a Will save (DC 15) may be made to avoid eating this flesh, but each time the hunger is beaten off, the victim gets a stronger craving for raw meat and the DC of the Will save climbs by +2. For each week after the cravings begin, the DC of the initial save grows by +2. Once 4 months since the disease was initially contracted, the victim falls into poor health, losing a point of Strength and Constitution a day, if either of these abilities falls to 0 or less, the victim dies and will rise as a Regess Ghoul 24 hours later unless the body is blessed before that time. The disease may be cured by means of herbalism (DC 25) or a *remove disease, miracle, wish* or similar magic.

Create Spawn (Su): In most cases, Regess Ghouls devour those they kill. From time to time, however, the bodies of their victims (if the Regess Ghoul template may be applied to their

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creature type) lie where they fell, to rise as Regess Ghouls themselves after 24 hours. Blessing the body before the end of that time averts the transformation into one of the hungry dead.

Special Qualities: The Regess Ghoul retains all the extraordinary qualities of the base creature. In addition to this, the Regess Ghouls gains the following.

Healing (Ex): Regess Ghouls heal by eating an amount of flesh equal to what is required for their size category (see *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead*). If the relevant information is not available, have the Ghouls fully healed after they have feasted, they cannot regain lost hit points by any other method.

Turn Resistance: As members of the Hungry Dead (see *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead* for details), Regess Ghouls receive +2 Turn Resistance.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Saves: See *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead*, or +0/+0/+3.

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +3, Wis +1, Cha +3.

Skills: Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Search +4, Spot +5

Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Climate/Terrain: Any land.

Organization: Solitary, Gang (2-4), or Pack (5-10).

Challenge rating: As base creature +1

Treasure: Varies, though some of these creatures inherit some equipment such as armor from those who they once were. Regess Ghouls are likely to discard this equipment in time (25% chance of retaining it at the end of each month).

Alignment: Usually Chaotic, always Evil.

Advancement: As base creature.

Sample Regess Ghoul

This example uses a 3rd level human fighter named Harris as the base creature.

Harris has served under Regess for almost a year and is something of a rebel, even among his kind, only his fear of Regess keeps him loyal, but he is attempting to collect others near his own station in the pack to stand up against their leader. He is intelligent and resourceful, but has a tendency to think of himself before the good of those he is part of, often leading trouble in the direction of the pack.

He wears some remnants of the clothing he wore in life, the uniform of a member of the Port-a-Lucine constabulary, he also retains his short sword from his days in service, though never draws it from its sheaf, his mind overtaken by the craving each time he enters a violent situation.

His frame is tall and he appears imposing, despite his now gangly physique, his eyes are deep pits of watery yellow and a broad vicious mouth filled with razor sharp teeth.

Harris, Regess Ghoul

Medium-size undead.

Hit Dice: 3d12+3 (23hp)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+3 Dex, +2 Natural, +1 Dodge)

Attacks: Bite +8 melee (1d6+2, crit. x2), 2 Claws +5 melee (1d4+2, crit. x2)

Damage: Bite 1d6+2 plus disease, Claw 1d4+2 plus disease.

Special Attacks: Create spawn, disease.

Special Qualities: Healing, turn resistance +2, undead

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +6.

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 16, Con -, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +8, Jump +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Ride +7, Search +5, Spot +6, Swim +8

Feats: Blind-fight, Dodge, Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Finesse (bite)

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Regess Ghast

“Regess Ghast” is a template that can be applied to any corporeal animal, beast, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, shapechanger, or vermin (hereinafter referred to as the “base creature”). The creature’s type changes to “undead”.

Only creatures with 4 or more hit dice may become Regess Ghosts, unless they die from Anton’s Ravenous Fever disease, which grants them additional HD when they transform into Regess Ghosts if they have less than 4 HD (but only to make the minimum requirement of 4 HD).

Hit Dice: The base creature’s hit dice are increased to d12.

Speed: As base creature, if the base creature has special movement types (such as flying, climbing, swimming, etc...) these are also retained.

AC: The base creature gains an additional +4 bonus to their Natural AC modifier.

Attacks: The base creature gains a bite attack and 2 claw attacks if it didn’t already have them, it also retains any other attacks it had in life but loses all other natural attacks made with fists or claws.

Damage: The bite and claws attacks of the Regess Ghast remain unchanged from the base creature if the creature already had these attacks, otherwise they damage rates for these attacks are found by corresponding with the following chart. If the base creature already had these forms of attack the Regess Ghoul receives the damage rate from either the chart or that from the base creature, whichever is greater.

Size	bite	claw
Category	damaged	damage
Tiny	d4	1d3
Small	d6	1d4
Medium-size	1d8	1d6
Large	d6	2d4
Huge	d8	2d6
Gargantuan	4d6	2d8
Colossal	d8	3d6

Special Attacks: The Regess Ghast retains all the base creature’s special attacks and also gains those listed below. Saves have a DC of $10 + \frac{1}{2}$ the creature’s HD + the creature’s charisma modifier.

Stench (Ex): The stink that surrounds the Regess Ghast is a cumulated effect from their depraved existence and eating habits. Those within 10’ of the Regess Ghast are all but overcome with revulsion for these creatures are forced to make a Fort save or suffer the effects of nausea for a period of $1d6+4$ minutes, suffering a -2 circumstance penalty to all attacks, saves and skill checks. Those in direct melee with these fell beasts suffer a -3 penalty if they fail the Fort save, the duration is unchanged.

Disease (Ex): The bite and claws of the Regess Ghast carries a terrible disease that slowly attacks its victims. Any living creature struck by any attack from a Regess Ghast is forced to make a Fort save or fall victim to the disease. The disease remains potent within the victim for another 24 hours, after which another Fort save must be taken, if both of these saves are made, the victim is free of the disease, if either of them fail, the victim falls to the disease. The disease incubates for a period of 2 months before its first symptoms start to show, taking to form of paleness and periodic spats of insatiable hunger. Another month later, this hunger turns to victim toward each raw flesh a Will save (DC 15) may be made to avoid eating this flesh, but each time the hunger is beaten off, the victim gets a stronger craving for raw meat and the DC of the Will save climbs by +2. For each week after the cravings begin, the DC of the initial save grows by +2. Once 4 months since the disease was initially contracted, the victim falls into poor health, losing a point of Strength and Constitution a day, if either of these abilities falls to 0 or less, the victim dies and will rise as a Regess Ghast (or Regess Ghoul if having less than 4 HD) 24 hours later unless the body is blessed before that time. The disease may be cured by means of herbalism (Heal DC 25) or a *remove disease*, *miracle*, *wish* or similar magic.

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Create Spawn (Su): In most cases, Regess Ghosts devour those they kill. From time to time, however, the bodies of their victims (if the Regess Ghost template may be applied to their creature type) lie where they fell, to rise as Regess Ghosts (if 4 or more HD, otherwise they rise as Regess Ghouls) themselves after 24 hours. Blessing the body before the end of that time averts the transformation into one of the hungry dead.

Special Qualities: The Regess Ghost retains all the extraordinary qualities of the base creature. In addition to this, the Regess Ghouls gains the following.

Healing (Ex): Regess Ghosts heal by eating an amount of flesh equal to what is required for their size category (see *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead*). If the relevant information is not available, have the Ghosts fully healed after they have feasted, they cannot regain lost hit points by any other method.

Turn Resistance: As members of the Hungry Dead (see *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead* for details), Regess Ghouls receive +2 Turn Resistance.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Saves: See *Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead*, or +1/+1/+4.

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +3, Wis +1, Cha +3.

Skills: Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Search +4, Spot +6.

Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Climate/Terrain: Any land.

Organization: Solitary, Gang (2-4), or Pack (5-10).

Challenge rating: As base creature +1.

Treasure: Varies, though some of these creatures inherit some equipment such as armor from those who they once were. Regess Ghouls are likely to discard this equipment in time (25% chance of retaining it at the end of each month).

Alignment: Usually Chaotic, always Evil.

Advancement: As base creature.

Sample Regess Ghost

This example uses a 5th level halfling sorcerer named Teresa as the base creature.

Teresa was part of a band of adventurers employed to destroy the pack as they nested in Port-a-Lucine after the disappearance of several individuals, including the lance constable Harris. She and her fellows underestimated their quarry and fell beneath their claws, Regess insisted that Teresa's fallen carcass be spared the fate of her fellows and rose a day later as a Regess Ghost, her first meal on awakening was what remained of her former allies. In the year since she has risen in the ranks, Regess has seen her as a valued part of the pack and has protected her from several assassination attempts from lower members of the pack. She looks up to Regess with some respect, but wants his position for her own, seeing his tolerance for some others in the pack as a weakness.

Teresa's once silken hair has all but fallen from her crown, what remain hangs in thin, dirty clumps. Her eyes remain as large as ever but now shine a putrid yellow and are heavily sunken, her small mouth also hides a vast array of dangerous, sharp teeth that she uses to rend and tear her victims and her meals. Teresa dresses in the rags of the once prestigious gown and robe she wore in life, much of these remain caked with grime, old blood and some remnants of her meals.

Teresa may no longer scribe scrolls; her warped hands make this task impossible, but she may cast spells from those that fall into her hands.

Teresa, Regess Ghost

Small undead, 5th level Sorcerer.

Hit Dice: 5d12 (hp)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 20 (+5 Dex, +1 Size, +4 Natural)

Attacks: Bite +8 melee, 2 Claws +2 melee

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Damage: Bite 1d6+1 plus disease, Claw 1d4+1 plus disease.

Special Attacks: Create spawn, disease, stench.

Special Qualities: Healing, spells, turn resistance +2, undead.

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +9.

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 20, Con -, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 20.

Skills: Alchemy +3, Climb +3, Concentration +6, Jump +3, Knowledge (arcane) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Profession (librarian) +8, Scry +9, Search +4, Spellcraft +9, Spot +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Multiattack, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Personalities of Note

Anton's retinue contains a few notable Ghouls and Ghosts that have survived for some time under his command. Adam is a Regess Ghost of a Paladin that fell to Regess himself in single combat (Pal7) that may Rebuke Regess Ghouls in the pack but has no further powers except spells drawn from the Cleric spell lists. Adam has the domains of Death and Evil. Anton took pride in making sure this thorn in his side joined his ranks and Adam has the ability to bolster Anton's ranks with less powerful undead such as Skeletons and Zombies.

William, a fighter (Ftr5) that the pack brought down battling the avenger Johan Smelvig in Borca, Anton snatched the man's corpse fleeing the battle to feast on later, he rose as a Regess Ghost before Anton found a safe haven to rest and feed on the body.

Finally, a Half-Vistani Rogue named Caldressa (Rog6) joined the pack in late 756 and has gained the unique power of entrancing others with her gaze on her rise to undeath and serves as a scout for possible lairs for the pack to take up residency in.

In addition to these special individuals, Anton's pack currently contains a ghoul created from wolf during a brief trip through Verbrek and a Ghoul raised from a Black Bear in Barovia. Both of these creatures remain near Anton at all times, they are nearly mindless and are the easiest creatures in the pack for him to control.

Adventure hooks

Anton and his pack travel regularly, so they have started stories and rumors about flesh eating creatures throughout several domains throughout the west and south regions of the core. Most adventures that feature The Ravenous will not include Anton himself, he will gladly sacrifice all of his followers in order for him to escape and prolong his existence, allowing Anton to return time and again as a recurring villain and growing threat as time passes and further encounters with the heroes begin to pester him.

Anton is best suited as a villain introduced and built up over a long period.



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SISTERS

"He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the rage and hate felt by his entire race. If his chest had been a cannon, he'd have shot his heart upon it." --
Moby Dick

By: Leyshon Campbell

Already infamous from her
co-authorship of the
Guide to Witches,
Semine's history and
hatred of her fellow
hags--one in particular,
her sister Coraline--are
disclosed in this account
of her descent into
darkness.

While on his quest to exterminate evil, Rudolph van Richten received aid from many good sources, and a quite a few bad ones. Azalin Rex put his mark on the doctor for his own inscrutable purposes, ghouls vented his rage against treacherous vistani, vampires tainted with hubris consented to the good doctor's interviews, and a dark priestess nursed him to health in Har Akir. Yet the most baffling of such encounters involved a hag who seemed genuinely dedicated to the extermination of her own kind, a creature identified as Semine. The information she related to the good Doctor seemed instantly suspect. Were it not for extensive confirmation from other sources, Van Richten might have dismissed it as lies. In fact, Semine had concealed the truth on only two minor issues, and then only because her own experiences were drastically different from typical hags.

While reportedly slain by George Weathermay, it is possible Semine lives on,

either by deceiving her would-be assassin into killing a fellow hag, or by using foul hag magic to be reborn from a cauldron somewhere in Nova Vaasa. Even if Semine has breathed her last, this need not be the end of her as a villain; her hatred of hags may be potent enough to cause her transformation into a spectral hag. Finally, should Semine's tortured existence finally be at an end, her legacy of pain and vengeance lives on in a handful of students and progeny, her aid to Van Richten and other hunters, and her abominable nemesis.

Background

Centuries ago, in a kingdom of elves on a young world still lush and green, a beautiful and talented child was born to a loving couple, who named her Semine. Semine's kinship with the natural world ran deeper than that of other elves, in part because of the time she spent in the deep woods that surrounded her home. By her seventieth year she had become one with the wood, spending more nights under the boughs than in her own bed. Nearing her hundredth birthday Semine's wanderings led her to a squalling newborn girl, still bloody from the womb. The elf woman rushed the child home, where her parents eagerly adopted the foundling. At Semine's suggestion, they named her new sister Coraline.

The cause of the foundling's abandonment was immediately apparent, for Coraline was half human. Semine saw her sister's mixed blood as a curiosity and would whisper to the baby of her eagerness for Coraline to grow up quickly and play with her in the woods. And grow quickly she did.

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Coraline's human blood accelerated her growth, forcing the pace of the household to match her. Semine spent more nights at home, helping her mother keep up with such an active baby. Coraline's rapid learning often forced Semine to take her sister to others more able to sate the child's desires for knowledge. Those she visited were impressed with Semine's kindness and devotion to her "awkward" and "ill-bred" sister, though they quickly learned to curb their tongues in the young elf's presence, for love and wrath are closely connected. After only twenty years, Semine saw that her adolescent sister had outgrown her assistance. In fact, it seemed Coraline was beginning to chafe from constantly reminding those around her that she was no longer a child. Semine decided that having one of her "mothers" move out would ease her sister's transition into adulthood. Having put her own desires aside for so long, Semine finally opened her heart to a suitor, Calimed. The two were wed after a whirlwind romance that the entire community felt bordered upon scandal. Tongues wagged, and even close friends wondered if Coraline's human hastiness was spreading. Now in her own home with Calimed, Semine was forced to divide her attention between her own slowly growing family and a swiftly maturing sister.

Coraline wielded her beauty and her infamy like weapons to ensnare the hearts of daring young men, causing talk of scandal among the elders. Semine forcefully defended her sister with the same excuses she had always used; insisting that Coraline was not an elf, and should not have been expected to behave as one; that Coraline's relative maturity to her peers had made her an outcast; that the elders had maligned her sister and never given her a chance; that her human traits had advantages as well as disadvantages, if people would only look for them. Eventually Semine's arguments won her sister a little respect, and the majority of the elves were content to let the sisters walk their own road, if it made them happy. And happy they were, for a while.

During the next twenty years, Semine gave birth to four children, three boys and a girl, with her sister acting as midwife. Never were the two closer, raising the infants together as Semine and her mother had raised Coraline. Coraline's own lack of children made her all the more eager to assist in Semine's homemaking, but the half-elf could hardly complain; without a husband or even a steady lover, her infamy would have reached scandalous level had she become pregnant. At the age of a hundred and forty, Semine was pregnant with another girl when her sister told her she wanted to explore the world. Semine understood, she had half-expected her sister to search out her own parents, or at least find some human communities in order to understand more about herself. Knowing she would keenly miss her sister, Semine kissed cheeks fondly and saved her tears until after Coraline was gone.

Semine received messages from her sister from time to time, but these became less and less frequent, and at the age of a hundred and seventy, Semine begged her aging sister to return home while she still could. If Coraline loved her human kin so much more deeply than her elven, Semine could not blame her, but she begged with her sister to come home and say goodbye before going back to the people who treated her best. When Coraline's reply never arrived, Semine bitterly accepted her sister's passing. Her mourning lasted over a year, provoking a little resentment in her household. Calimed, especially, seemed distant from his wife, perhaps angry with her for yet again putting her sister above his children.

The rift between the two grew for twelve years, until Semine came home to a find Calimed in bed with another woman. Horrified and furious, Semine screamed with rage as she rushed to pull this intruder out of her bed. Calimed leaped up, blustering excuses and accusations at his wife to avenge his wounded pride, but Semine wasn't listening. She only stared in shocked confusion at Coraline, naked except for silk sheets and a wanton smile, lying in the bed Semine had shared with her husband. In the almost hundred years since she had left,

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Coraline hadn't aged a day! Calimed, too, seemed confused as he stared from sister to sister, apparently not realizing who he had been embracing. Seizing the moment of confusion, Coraline threw the bed sheets over her screaming sister's head and turned towards Calimed.

In the few moments it took Semine to get the sheets off her head, her husband's horrified screams had come and gone, and his lifeless body lay at her feet, arched backward in agony with eyes rolled back in his head. Still screaming in fear and horror, Semine looked up to see her weaponless sister sitting on the bed, still wearing only a satisfied smile. Seeing Semine's confusion, Coraline held up her hands placating and gestured to the corpse.

"He was unfaithful, dear heart," Coraline soothed. While Semine stared uncomprehendingly, Coraline continued. "Surely you wanted him dead. I saw it in your eyes!"

"You're...alive!" Semine stammered. Coraline nodded slowly.

"Alive as ever, and still up to my old tricks. But, like you said, it's not my fault. I'm not to blame for being rash, or thoughtless, or conceited. It's in my blood right? I'm still your dear little sister!"

Stung by her sister's outrageous twisting of her words, Semine sank to the ground and began to weep uncontrollably. Coraline got her attention with a stinging slap, and then proceeded to explain how she had finally found her people, the hags. Abandonment of children at birth was just another custom of the hag folk, along with "testing the fidelity" of married men and slaying those who succumbed to such temptation. Pulling Calimed's limp head off the floor by the hair, Coraline moved his jaw with her fingers in a crude and macabre mockery of a ventriloquist's dummy, making the corpse "confess" his infidelity and "absolve" Coraline of any wrongdoing. Seeing her shaking sister reduced to a speechless and horrified stupor,

Coraline put down the head, shrugged and started to dress. Watching her shattered sister out of the corner of her eye all the time, Coraline turned back to her just before leaving and looked her in the eye.

"You knew what I was when you picked me up," she whispered.

Though it wasn't literally true, Semine pondered the statement over the next few days as she recovered. Had she ignored signs that her beloved sister was a monster? Had she helped make her what she was by excusing her scandalous behavior and encouraging her to seek out her origins? Her sense of guilt and responsibility wrestled with the sheer incomprehensibility of Coraline's nature. She researched in the village, and, as gossip turned cruel regarding the death of her husband, she moved her family beyond the village and pursued answers elsewhere, eventually braving the world that until now was only a legend: the world of men.

Her research came at a bitter price, however. As she studied her foe, her foe studied her, and when Coraline feared her sister might go beyond study into hunting, she decided it was time for a warning. Taking the form of a young elf-maid, she seduced Semine's oldest son, a lad barely a hundred and ten. He disappeared from his mother's house only to return ten months later in a coffin. Accompanying the coffin was a basket containing a baby, with a note from Coraline explaining that the child was Semine's first grandchild, and that Coraline trusted her, above all people, to not judge the babe by her father's faithlessness. As Semine's screams of horror and grief echoed through the hollows of her soul, she found reserves of anger like none she had ever known, and knew that henceforth she would feel no guilt for Coraline's wretchedness. Her studies had confirmed this, hags were born evil, she had learned, and nothing could sway them from this path. Nothing but death. Her eyes red yet tearless, Semine picked up the sleeping infant, took her inside the house, and slew her first hag.

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Having begun her hunting in earnest, Semine knew that her children would be unable to accompany her. With a kiss on each cheek, she left them in the care of the finest orphanage she could find and started off in pursuit of her diabolical sister. Among her allies were the servants of a nature goddess, men and women who called themselves "witches" and "warlocks." This human religion appealed to Semine because of its magical power and its adherence to natural and domestic energies. After achieving sufficient understanding of this sect, Semine resolved to become a witch. For the next twenty years she studied hard and hunted fiercely, yet despite catching and slaying upwards of a dozen hags, Coraline always escaped her. Upon losing the trail, Semine fell into despair and raged against the fates that kept her powers weak, but her cries fell upon deaf ears, if indeed there was anything there to listen.

It was some time latter that Semine received a message. Her oldest living son, Garith, was engaged to be married after a whirlwind romance. The orphanage was asking Semine's permission to give the remaining children into the care of their brother. Sparing no expense, Semine rushed back to the orphanage and demanded that they release her children to no one else but her. After getting their explicit agreement, she hastened to her son's house, hoping she wasn't too late. Garith was shocked to see his mother arrive without any warning, and knew nothing about any romance, let alone a fiancée! Having seen what had happened to his brother, he would hardly let any woman near him, and despite his mother's strongest threats and most heartfelt pleadings, he insisted that he was hiding no secret romances. Finally Semine understood that he was telling the truth, and an awful truth dawned upon her. She and Garith rushed back to the orphanage to find that the confused staff had already released her children to her. Once again, Coraline had perverted Semine's instructions to the destruction of her family, and unless she and Garith hurried, her children were bound for a hag covey's stewpot.

They caught up to Coraline on the road, but the fight didn't go well at all. Garith was no seasoned adventurer; he succumbed almost immediately to Coraline's horrific gaze, as had his father. Alone, with only her own spells, Semine only survived because it served Coraline's demented wishes. Blows from Coraline's cane, a device of foulest hag magic, caused Semine to grow old and wizened with each blow that fell. As her sister collapsed helpless before her, Coraline offered her the cane to walk with.

"You need it more than I," she whispered, "and I have nothing to fear from its aging magic. Hags do not grow old with age, we merely grow stronger!"

With that, Coraline left Semine crippled, weak and hopeless, and took her sister's children to her waiting covey-mates. Joined far too late by her fellow hunters, Semine returned to her books and notes and cried for hours. In her rage, she cursed again what cruel fate made her sister stronger with age, while she grew weak.

"Had I her years, I would hunt them all to extinction!" she screamed.

As she realized what she had said, a terrible thought dawned on her. Poring over her notes, she found again references to a ritual of the hag folk. After magical healing restored to her relative youth, she bid her friends goodbye, went deep into the woods and waited for the new moon. There, on the blackest of nights in the deepest part of the woods she once loved, Semine traded her elf years to dark forces, exchanging them for those of a green hag.

Though she knew many things about her sister's race, Semine was unaware that eldritch forces alert a tutor for every mature hag, and Coraline's covey were the nearest hags. While Coraline herself did not come, her green hag covey mate did, oblivious to her nemesis' new monstrous form. With her previous understanding of hag ways, Semine was an apt pupil, and convinced her teacher to take her to the others in the covey. When the two arrived,

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however, Semine was shocked to discover her former allies had seized upon the absence of the green hag to strike at the remaining two, and were prevailing where Semine had failed for so many years. With Coraline near death and the remaining covey member slain, Semine was about to be robbed of the revenge she had bought with her very soul.

Desperately, Semine flung herself into battle with the witches, cursing them for stealing justice out of her hands. Confused and beset by two fresh hags while they themselves were wounded, the hag hunters retreated. With two blows, Semine freed Coraline from a magical web and watched eagerly as her sister fled into the foggy woods, ready to be chased. Glancing back, she stumbled as she caught a glimpse of desperate witches freeing captive children, rushing them away as flames from the battle licked up the hut where they had been bound. Through the smoke Semine thought she saw flaxen hair and pointed ears, but surely her own children would have been eaten by now. No, this was obviously some deception of Coraline's, preying on a mother's hopes. Her children were dead, crying out for justice. She would not disappoint them. Turning her back on the rescued children, Semine rushed to follow her sister into the early morning fog. She had no idea that the same Powers that had given her hag-body would withhold from her the reason she desired it.

Semine

745-year old elven Hag Wiz3/Rgr8/Avn4; CR 15; Medium-Sized Monstrous Humanoid; HD 3d8+12d10; hp 79; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 25 (+11 natural armor, +4 dex); Atk +17/+12/+7 Melee, +17/+12/+7 Ranged; SA Spells, Soothing Song, Weakening Touch; SQ Darkvision 60', Elf Traits, Hag Powers, Low-light Vision, Scent, Spells, SR 22; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +16; Str 18, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 20;

Skills and Feats: Concentration +12, Gather Information +7, Hide +27, Knowledge (arcana)+13, Knowledge (nature)+9, Listen +31, Move Silently +23, Search +15, Sense Motive

+23, Spell craft +13, Spot +31, Wilderness Lore +23; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Endurance, Jaded, Spell Focus (Divination), Two-Weapon Fighting, Track

Languages: Balok, Darkonese, Draconic, Elven, Sithican, Vaasi

Equipment: Crone's Cane (12 charges remaining), Dead Man's Bottle, 3 Hag Eyes, Assorted Potions.

Hag Powers: At will: Change Self, Charm Person, *Ray of Fatigue, Ghost Sound, *Insatiable Thirst, and Comprehend Languages; 3/day: *Immerse Mind, Invisibility, Tongues, and Water Breathing.

Spells: Semine has not used wizard spells since entering the demiplane; she doesn't even have a spell book anymore. Her most commonly used Ranger spells are Identify Spoor, Entangle, Animal Friendship, and *Rheumatism.

Weakening Touch: Semine's touch can cause 2d4 points of temporary strength damage if her opponent fails a Fortitude Save (DC 22)

Soothing Song: Three times per day, Semine's singing can cause all creatures within a 60' radius to fall asleep if they fail a Will save (DC 22). Those who fail remain asleep for 20 minutes or until awakened (slapping or wounding awakens affected creatures, but normal noise does not. Awakening a creature is a standard action). Sleeping creatures are helpless. This is a Sonic, Mind-Affecting ability.

Darkvision: Hags have 60' Darkvision

Scent: Semine has the Scent ability, as stated in the Monster Manual.

Favored Enemies/Nemesis: Semine gains a +2 to all Listen, Spot, Sense Motive, Wilderness Lore, and damage rolls when dealing with other hags, and a +1 to these rolls when dealing with the undead. When fighting Coraline, she gains a

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+4 morale bonus to Wisdom and Constitution. Semine can deduce Coraline's whereabouts with a successful Sense Motive check at DC 18. She usually takes 10 on this roll, which still gives her the most specific information possible.

Elf Traits: Immune to magic Sleep spells and similar magical effects and a +2 racial saving throw bonus versus Enchantment spells or effects. Semine can make a Search check to spot secret and concealed doors simply by passing within 5' of them. Semine has Low-Light Vision.

Current Sketch

In the decades that followed Semine's transformation, Semine has almost altogether given up extermination as a goal, in favor of torturing her enemies. Semine's desire to see other hags suffer is frustrated by the fact that few hags ever truly love anything or anyone, including themselves, making it difficult if not impossible to torment them emotionally.

Semine has given birth to countless hags since entering RL, most of whom she slew immediately. Several have survived to maturity, thanks to their mother's greatest weakness, the desire to let an enemy live for the sake of sport. The general apathy of hags has encouraged Semine to savor the unique horror inflicted on one by being devoured by her own mother. Likewise, bored of slaying powerless young hags to whom she was drawn as a tutor, she now tutors other hags through the Change normally, all the while savoring their horror and disgust at their new lot in life. After depravity, shame, guilt, and hunger have transformed the fledgling hag into a true creature of evil Semine declares a hunt and hounds her protégé to a gruesome and painful death. To date, only a dozen have escaped her, with most of her prey allowed to live for years on end, out of sport.

Combat

Semine loves the hunt; her ranger knowledge allows her to stalk her foes for days in spite of all but the stealthiest precautions.

Once she has selected a target, she will learn as much as possible about her foe, using her Dead Man's Bottle, Hag Eyes and divination magic as well as charming or impersonating the friends and allies of her quarry. After sufficient study, she will begin the slow destruction of everything the victim loves. Semine is loathe to use her Crone's Cane against anyone but Coraline; after discovering it worked equally well against hags as non-hags, she has dreamed of beating her sister to death with it.

While Semine's base CR of 18 would indicate she is far too powerful for most parties to defeat, this is not quite true, for three reasons. Firstly, Semine never uses wizard spells for combative purposes. Second, her avenger powers only pertain to her sister. Finally, Semine takes risks to play with opponents as long as possible before killing them. For these reasons, I recommend treating her CR as 15. While this is still quite powerful, remember also that Semine has hundreds of enemies in RL who might support the PC's in one capacity or another. If the DM wishes to run Semine as a Spectral Hag, applying the ghost template to the above character raises her CR by 2.

Adventure Hooks

- ◆ Egertus fishermen relate a sad tale of unrequited love and illicit passion, ending when a young mother flings her newborn headlong into the Nocturnal Sea. They insist that the woman's ghost relives her cruel and heartless deed every year on the same night, but the exact date has been debated. Regardless, residents of the city saved the "original" child, now a well-respected resident of the city. What these fishermen have witnessed is the despicable Semine throwing some of her hag children to their deaths. Semine's surviving daughter may hire the PC's to lay her mother's tortured spirit to rest. Alternately, the PC's may investigate the haunting and thereby discover the woman's true nature. Either way, the dreadful discovery may lead the woman to try and hide her secret by killing

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the PC's, or it may soften the psychological side effects of the Change, prompting Semine's daughter toward a more neutral form of hagdom.

- ◆ A beautiful young woman approaches the PC's, begging their help against a wicked crone. In truth, the "young" woman is Semine's latest student-turned-plaything. The newly matured hag is hoping PC's, along with her newly-learned skills, will be enough to defend her from Semine. Should the PC's discover her true nature, she won't hesitate to turn on them.
- ◆ The PC's discover that an elderly elven woman named Dilia is searching for Semine. Investigation reveals her as one of Semine's daughters predating her transformation, one of the few people who knows the details of her mother's history. If she can convince them that she is not a hag, Dilia (Clr4/Wiz4/Hwi4) can provide details of her mother's war with Coraline, her studies with the hallowed witches, and much more. Should the two ever meet, however, Semine will undoubtedly accuse Dilia of being a fake; if her children lived, her transformation was unnecessary, and that thought is unbearable. Should she slay Dilia for trying to save her, Semine may once again draw the attention of the Dark Powers, and warrant a domain of her own.

Coraline

649-year old half-elven Hag Rog11/Shd1; CR 15; Medium-Sized Monstrous Humanoid; HD 12d8+36; hp 80; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AC 22 (+10 natural armor, +2 dex); Atk +10/+5 Melee, +10/+5 Ranged; SA Hag Powers, Sneak Attack; SQ Change Self, Darkvision 60', Improved Evasion, Hag Powers, Half-Elf Traits, Low-light Vision, Sneak Attack +6d6, SR 20; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +16; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 19, Wis 11, Cha 22;

Skills and Feats: Bluff +21, Gather Information +21, Hide +33, Innuendo +19, Intimidate +21, Listen +21, Move Silently +17, Perform +21, Sense Motive +15, Spot +21, Use Magical Device +21; Alertness, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Improved Initiative, Mobility

Languages: Balok, Darkonese, Elven, Mordentish, Sithican, Vaasi

Hag Powers: At Will: Change Self, Charm Person, Ghost Sound, Obscuring Mist, Pass Without Trace, *Siren Song; 3/day: Suggestion, Endurance, Bull's Strength, Cat's Grace

Evil Eye: Three times per day, Coraline can cause her inner hideousness to manifest in a powerful gaze attack. A single creature within 30 feet must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or be reduced to whimpering catatonia for 3 days. Those who fail have an additional 25% chance of dying outright from fright. This is a Mind-Affecting Supernatural power.

Water Breathing: Coraline has continuous Water Breathing and can use all her powers freely while submerged.

Darkvision: Hags have 60' Darkvision.

Half-Elf Traits: Immune to Sleep spells and similar magical effects and a +2 racial saving throw bonus versus Enchantment spells or effects. Coraline has Low-Light Vision.

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Equipment: Amulet of Proof against Detection and Location, Cloak of Elvenkind, Potion of Hiding (2), Potion of Love (2), Potion of Sneaking (2)

Current Sketch

Coraline has fled her sister's wrath for centuries, yet she still finds ways to do what she enjoys. In fact, after learning of her sister's new form, Coraline has deliberately taken risks to indulge her, just to torment her sister. Coraline understands Semine's determination, and is fully convinced that she will die one day at her sister's talons. Even still she finds that the most delicious torture she has ever inflicted on Semine is simply to stay alive as long as possible, letting her sister go on hunting, decade after decade.

To protect herself, Coraline formed a covey in Nova Vaasa composed of one of Semine's green hag daughters, and a former protégé of Semine's. Together they have seized the prostitution racket in Egertus using blackmail, bribery, drugs and murder. Their meteoric rise attracted the attention of the mysterious Malken. The dark lord has recently begun grooming the covey with quid pro quo favors, in hopes of bringing the three into his malign network.

In her ascent in the criminal underworld, Coraline has assembled a few devices that aid her in avoiding Semine. Having learned that Semine is able to guess her general location intuitively, Coraline prefers magical items that prevent her sister from diving her location any better. Coraline hides whenever she can, using her cloak and her shadow dancer abilities, and always wears an Amulet of Proof against Detection and Location, even while asleep. Her reliance upon human lackeys and human magic hasn't fully quashed the appeal of hag magic, however: she and her covey have distributed over twenty hag eyes throughout Egertus, and they even have two in Kantora.

Finally, while most of her lovers have perished horribly after tasting her pleasures, a

few have actually prospered from the relationship, at least in the short term. Coraline has been mistress to a number of nobles, young and old, in more than one domain. In the past, these men have served as a source of wealth, magic, information and amusement, and she has manipulated their affairs, with or without their knowledge, to ensure they remain capable of protecting her. Should she decide a man suits her needs; she will milk him of everything he is worth for several years before growing bored and devouring him.

Combat

Coraline usually avoids combat, preferring to use her wiles to ensnare an opponent. When she attacks, she prefers to kill quickly using the advantage of surprise, and will use often sneak attack before hiding again and waiting for another opening. Her cloak and Hide in Plain Sight ability allow her to hide almost anywhere, even immediately after attacking. When she wants to make an example of someone who wronged her, she will use her Evil Eye ability on them repeatedly until they succumb, then pose the body to imply a message to those who find it. If her Evil Eye has had no affect whatsoever after three uses, she will seek other means to destroy the victim.

Adventure Hooks

- ♦ Coraline has impersonated a wealthy young socialite, recently moved north from Arbora. She plans to use her Siren Song in that form as much as possible to allow her allies opportunities to pick pockets and cut purses. After the girl is implicated by repeated use of the ability, Coraline and her allies will kidnap and kill her, making the murder appear like a suicide. The PC's may have been hired by the girl to clear her name or by her family to expose the girl's murderer.
- ♦ A virtuous PC or NPC succumbs to Coraline's Charm and Suggestion powers, inadvertently placing himself in a compromising position with Egertan

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prostitutes. As rumor and slander take their toll on his reputation, a mysterious ally offers to help him clear his name in return for money or a small favor. Is the offer coming from Semine, Coraline, or perhaps even Malken? Could it be a trap to get the character deeper into blackmail and corruption?

- ◆ After a high level party disturbs one of Malken's plans, Coraline agrees to kill them as payment for previous favors from Malken. Depending upon their power level,

she studies the PC's for a while before she attempts slaying and impersonation of family or love interests, culminating in a showdown of sneak attacks and her signature Evil Eye.

*-New Spell from Van Richten's Arsenal

\$-New Magic Item from Dragon #300.



Places...

Mythica Nephos

The Undead Sea Scrolls

The article formerly in this location has been removed at the request of the author.



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TRAVELOGUE OF THE NORTHLANDS

"The man who stands at a strange threshold,
Should be cautious before he cross it,
Glance this way and that:
Who knows beforehand what foes may sit
Awaiting him in the hall?"

From Hávamál (Sayings of the High One)

By: John Kristian Spangberg (the Stoic)

Map by: Asbjorn Hammervik

Small-fame traveler
Winston Smythe was just
going to visit a relative
when he suddenly found a
realm he had never
visited before. He was
not sure where he was,
but he knew one thing for
sure: He was not in
Levkarest anymore.

For the benefit of my fellow Paridoners:

Greetings, fellow traveller. I am Winston Smythe from Paridon. Many would call me a "shootist", as I do carry and occasionally use guns. I prefer to see myself as a traveller. I think travelling and exploring builds our spirit more than fighting does. We grow stronger and better as people, step by step, road by road. Well, enough about me, I have to introduce my fellow travellers. Following me are the "two branded ones", as I like to call them. One of them is a man from Falkovnia, a large soldier called Wiktor. The other is the merchant Rilmanda, from a distant land called Vechor. The reason why I call these men "branded" is because they both have a mark on the forehead. The marks are not identical, and their lands are far apart, so the similarity stops there. Neither of them

offers to speak of it more than this, nor shall I. Though we were not really heading for the Northlands, we ended up there somehow because of a rather unfortunate mix-up. One of the wheels on our carriage had to be mended, so we stopped at a wainwright's workshop in Levkarest. While we were waiting, we entered a tavern and had a flagon of ale, as we were tired and thirsty. The wainwright was quite quick about the job, but just after we left Levkarest, we saw that the carriage was somehow different. We turned around to demand an explanation, but Levkarest was nowhere to be seen. Instead, we found Miklaheim. There, we joined a native skald named Gunnleif Thordarson, a tall, thin man with the traditional hair and beard of the Kosti. He told us not to always use the term "Kosti" for the people living here, because there are quite a few families that are not full-blooded Kosti. This identity crisis only leads to arguments and punch-ups, he said.

The Northlands at a glance

Cultural Level: The northern part is a Dark Age (5) society. The southern is a Medieval (7) society. They were formerly Early Medieval (6) and Chivalric (8), respectively.

Ecology: Full.

Climate/Terrain: Temperate forests, hills, mountains, plains and swamps.

Year of Formation: 752 BC.

Population: 12, 500.

Races: Humans 94%, Dwarves 2%, Elves 2%, Half-elves 1%, Other 1%.

Human Ethnic Groups: Kosti 80 %, Gand 10 %, Esterlings 5 %, Southerners 4 %, Other 1 %.

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Languages: Nornish*, Kamsa, Dwarven, Elven.
Religions: Misericordia, Wutan Pantheon.
Government: Hereditary despotism.
Ruler: Jarl Gravstein Hansen.
Darklord: Jarl Gravstein Hansen.

Landscape

The northern part of the Northlands is quite rocky, getting slowly steeper as you go inland. In the winter, it is very cold and dark here, because the sun never rises above the horizon. Fjords, great inlets of the sea that reach into the land like claws, mar these mountains. The largest of these is called Lanternefjord, as the northern lights and stars lit up the fjord at night. Northern lights are seen as a good sign. Vintersorg is a different fjord further north. At the northernmost point stands a monolith in the memory of the first Jarl, Hakon Silvertongue. Further south, there are also mountains. The tallest mountain in the Northlands is Mount Grimm, located near the centre of the realm. No one lives around it, as it is said to be haunted. The Jarl often sends explorers here, but few return. It is said that the ghosts are the spirits of the Gand, enemies of the Kosti. Initially, we decided to go here, but Gunnleif said it would not be wise for him. He told us to go, if we really were that keen, but we changed our minds when we saw the horror in his eyes. Along the coast are also giant potholes, believed to be inhabited by giants and ogres. We did not see any of these creatures when we passed them. Gunnleif told us he had heard the Jarl's men had killed them all, but he wasn't convinced that all the giants were gone. Southwards, the mountains give way to rolling hills and forests before the land becomes completely flat near Guadaña. Patches of sand, forests and fertile ground exist side by side like a quilt of farmland, woods and desert. In the eastern part of the Northlands, there are great swamps and plains near the city of Retrograd, as well as a great forest called Bjørneborgskog, named after a former city reported to once have been there. In the west, fenlands are also quite common, especially near the city of Bammel, where the land meets the sea again. The sea is quite dominant in the way

people think and live. Because living here is so uncertain, the people have built dikes and breakwaters along the coast. The roads of the Northlands have fallen into disuse, which is evident when you see all the taverns (or *Saalhus*, as the natives call them) that are abandoned. The trade routes are now closed, thus explaining why there is so little activity here. There must have been quite some activity, as I cannot understand how the traffic could support all those *Saalhus*. Though I was asleep in the carriage for the most of our travelling time, it did not seem very far from one town to another. Either the roads have been even worse, or there really was a lot of traffic along the roads. The main road running south to north is called the Silvertongue Road, named after the first Jarl of the Kosti. There is also the Berserker Way from Retrograd to Harang, and the Redtooth Road from Bammel to Harnisch. The Berserker Way is the least used of these, and I can see why. This must be the most miserable road I have ever deigned to use. A bear attacked us, but a few shots in the air scared it. The other main road is the Redtooth Road, which passes the Lake Thonor. The lake feeds the River Trueño, and this river makes the farmland near Schreckenbügel and Guadaña fertile.

Flora

Much of the Northlands is covered in either mountains, heather or wetlands. Because of the mountainous ground, the earth in the northern regions is not ideal for farmland. Instead, people live off the land, hunting beasts, tending to livestock or fishing. Though there are not many farms here, it is amazing how some of the inhabitants live off of berries, mushrooms and herbs. Gunnleif told us that the Gand are experts on how to live off of cloudberry and crowberry. I cannot see how interesting cloudberry can be in a diet, but I didn't ask more after I saw that Gunnleif noticed my disbelief. Further south, there are quite a few farms, growing fruit and grain in an abundance. The farmers sell their goods further north at outrageous prices. Personally, I think the Jarl will put an end to this profit soon.

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Wholesome berries

Cloudberries are not just a simple addition to a Gand diet. When harvested on a night lit by the aurora borealis, cloudberries gain miraculous powers. When mixed with crowberries, the result is a wholesome mixture that can serve as a meal for a whole day. Any Gand can create one dose of this mixture when succeeding an Alchemy or Profession (cook) check at DC 15. A non-Gand must learn the process from a Gand and succeed at a DC 25 check. Actually finding the berries merits no check as long as the berry picker is in an environment where the berries are normally found.

Berserker brew

Seiðmen (seidh- men) use a mixture of berries, mushrooms and herbs to go into a berserker-like state. The mixture was first used by the Kosti, but has since also been used by the other inhabitants of the Northlands.

This trance works as a barbarian *rage* ability used by a barbarian of the same level. Barbarians gain an extra use of this ability. Using this mixture more than once a week can prove debilitating. A person needs to succeed at a Fortitude check of DC 15 (use the modifiers of the normal Constitution score) to avoid damage to one of his mental ability scores (choose randomly). This damage is temporary, but cumulative if a person uses the mixture more than once with each extra use of the mixture. Either Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma is reduced by 2 points for each failed check.

Finding the necessary ingredients for one dose requires a Knowledge (nature) check at DC 15. Like the wholesome berries mixture, actually making the brew requires a Alchemy or Profession (cook) check at DC 15. It does not matter whether the brewer is Kosti or non-Kosti when making the mixture.

The Northlands has the normal type of fauna expected in a temperate climate. Normal types of predators, such as bear, wolf and lynx are the most common. In the mountains near the coast, jettegryter (YEAH-tuh-gruh-turr), or giant potholes, have been found. The Kosti believe that these potholes are pots used by ogres and dread trolls. Their relatives, the giants, supposed live in very small colonies. There are two islands that have a reputation for giants in particular. A tribe of fire-dwelling giants lives on one of them near a volcano, and another tribe lives on the equally cold island next to it. There is a strait between the two islands that is quite hazardous to pass, as the giants neither like each other or intruders. In the waterfalls, the fossegrim play their fiddles. The fiddles of nixies and drownings can be heard over the small ponds of the Northlands, and the mills shelter the mill snarls, which sometimes disrupt the process of making flour or lumber. (Bumblng peasants are a more likely explanation.) Across the plains, deildgaster, or boundary ghosts, walk around carrying hot coal for trying to steal land from their neighbors in life. According to Gunnleif, property is a very important factor in Kosti life. Humph. So Paridoners do not value their property, I gather? Utburds (OOT- bird) (see The Book of Sacrifices) are found near poor villages. The locals claim utburds are the remnants of dead infants carried outside because they were the young of evil spirits.

The fey are thought to be an extension of nature's will, helping or hindering as they see fit. Misericordians believe they are perversions of nature, and have a lot of rituals to keep them at bay. Fishermen tell tales of the draug, or doomed fisherman. These unwholesome mariners supposedly sail the coast in a small half boat to prey on the people lost at sea. Curiously, the sea seems at first glance to be the most normal area in the realm, even though it can be so stormy at times. It hosts normal fish, whales and other animals. Some of the fishermen claim that there are octopi here as well, but we did not see any of these. Superstitious lot. Are octopi found this far north? Bah!

Fauna

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Local animals and native horrors:

Wildlife: CR 1/10: toad; CR 1/8: rat; CR 1/6: lizard, raven, donkey; CR 1/4: cat, owl, pony; CR 1/3: dog, hawk; CR 1/2: badger, eagle, porpoise; CR 1: heavy horse, light horse, light warhorse, mule, octopus, wolf; CR 2: black bear, boar, heavy warhorse, wolverine; CR 4: brown bear, polar bear; CR 5: baleen whale, orca, sirine; CR 6: cachelot whale; CR 8: giant octopus

Monsters: CR 1/6: tiny skeleton; CR 1/4: goblin, small skeleton; CR 1/3: dire rat, medium-size skeleton; CR 1/2: dwarf, elf, feytouched§; CR 1: dryad, grig, large skeleton, nixie, selkie§; CR 2: *deildegast*, dire badger, *fossegrim*, *klabautermann*, *kvernknurr*, ogre, *sylvmora*, *tunkall*, wererat, worg; CR 3: assassin vine*, bowlyn*, dire wolf; CR 4: dire boar, pixie, werewolf, CR 5: *draug*, troll, werebear;

CR 6: annis, bog giant§, jolly roger*, nymph, *oskorei*, shambling mound, wendigo§, will o' wisp; CR 7: dire bear, oread§, sword wraith§; CR 8: treant; CR 9: frost giant, kelpie hunter§; CR 10: fire giant, kelpie§; CR 11: fomorian; CR 12: firbolg, kraken.

Monsters followed by an asterisk (*) are described in the Denizens of Darkness.

Monsters in *italics* are described in USS Netbook 2002.

Monsters which are underlined are described in MMII.

Monsters followed by a paragraph sign (§) are described in the Fiend Folio.

History

Finding a reliable source of information for the history of the land was not easy, because there are hardly any written accounts of it. We had to search the university grounds in Guadafña to find anything. (It was quite strange, as we had to search the library twice to find the book we were looking for. How we could have missed that book in *plain* eyesight will be a mystery to me.)

According to the texts in the book we found, in the ancient days of the Northlands, then known as North Carten, the Kosti revered a plethora of gods. Another tribe also resided here. This people were known as the Gand. The two tribes were scattered across the districts, and they were bitter enemies. Hakon Silvertongue, the first Jarl of the Kosti, managed to gather all of these districts into a single earldom, but this had its fair share of problems. (I suppose we would translate *Jarl* as Earl.) The capital to-be of the realm, Miklaheim, was a constant battleground. Without a proper capital, the land would not be able to be a working nation, and both of the tribes were dependant on it to survive. Only by distributing wealth as they themselves saw fit could their own tribe be safe, and the economy of the country would stabilize. They couldn't share the city, because they couldn't live as two people in one city. The Gand Chief, Aerik Redtooth, came with a controversial solution. They would divide the city, ruling it by turn, and use it five years at a time. After five years in the wilderness, the tribe would be famished, but they would need to make war no more. There was a compromise, and the two tribes both became nomads. Finally a sound mind!

The Kosti were a fierce people back then, and the only way of trade they knew was by looting. Their pillaging made them a feared people. On one of these trips, they reached a country with a new faith. The Kosti were sceptical at first, but finally turned to the new religion. A few stuck with old customs, but the converts did not object to this. The conversion changed the outlook of the Kosti, who saw that there were more things to do than rob, steal and loot other countries. Trade blossomed, and their neighboring countries welcomed their longboats. The father of the current Jarl, Jarl Hans "Trade mender" Kostifostered, saw how vital the trade was, and during his first period of rule in Miklaheim, he encouraged the sailors to develop a trade guild. He saw this as a key to the prosperity of Northern Carten, and suggested it be named so. The guild masters originally thought the Jarl would name it after himself, but decided to go along with his wishes. It was

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named "The Key" and used a symbol of a black and golden key. "The Key" was a huge success, and North Carten grew richer, bigger and more powerful than ever, and both tribes prospered. The Guild demanded a huge toll from those who were not members. More and more lands decided to join "The Key", and some of them even became the subjects of North Carten, which now became known as The Northlands.

Jarl Kostifostered had a son called Gravstein. Gravstein experienced the sharing of Miklaheim. As he grew, his dislike of the concept grew as well. As he was old enough to understand it, his father, who was originally of Gand blood, explained why the city was not theirs to keep for all time. Gravstein was incensed that his father would allow such foolishness, and swore that he would make Miklaheim his, and all of the Northlands with it. After his father's death, he wanted to gather all the means he could, so that swords could be made, and mercenaries paid. Those were the only things he would pay for during his first period in Miklaheim as the city's ruler, neglecting village funding. Instead he raised the taxes. The Kosti villages started to wither, just like the Gand hamlets. A traveler would not have seen the difference between the two peoples when it came to misery. By using the accumulated funds, the Jarl quickly defeated the starving Gand tribes, scattering the poor wretches. When the city gates opened after the allotted five years, the Gand thought they would be let in. It was to be their doom. The next thing Hansen did was to burn every Gand hamlet down, which was even easier than the battle at Miklaheim. When the last hamlet was burnt, he then vented his fury upon the seiðmen, who had won a lot of supporters and converts during the recent years. These became an increasing threat to him and his rule. The Jarl and his men barred every village gate that could be a nest for the unbelievers. Gravstein was not a religious man, but he used the help from the church to crush the seiðmen, which he knew would please the church of Misericordia. In doing so, the Jarl became the high protector of the church. Little did the bishops know that in all secrecy, Gravstein used more from the church's money

than his own, as he was starting to run low on funds. To cover this, he began taxing "The Key" until it nearly collapsed. This was a small feat, considering the famished and poor villages, which couldn't deliver goods to the guild anyway. The church realized what was going on, but then it was already too late. It seems to me that the Jarl has a lot to answer for, but I can see why he shut down this university. We got out of there fast.

Populace

The observant reader would by now realize that most of the people in the Northlands are of Kosti descent. However, there are pockets of Gand, Esterlings or southerners, but the Gand are the largest group of these. All of these three have to assume the life of the Kosti, or they face ostracism. The people are a somber lot because of the restrictions on festivities. This is strange, as the church does not seem to have much authority these days. The Jarl seems to have loosened up a bit lately, because there is an increase of days of leisure. When the Kosti have a *fyrtaften*, or celebration, it truly is a momentous occasion. Archery contests, axe hurling, dance, music and many other things abound. The older Kosti try to teach and impress the younger ones by telling sagas from olden times, as ancestors play a vital part of Kosti life.

The Gand are similar in appearance to the Kosti. At first, they seem to have the same culture as well. However, under their simple, rough Kosti clothes beat vibrant hearts. The Gand wear colourful tunics when they are sure not to be seen, and sing powerful, wordless songs throughout the countryside. These songs, called *joiks*, describes nature, not how it looks physically, but as it is from a spiritual viewpoint. They are well aware that their numbers are diminishing, so they have sworn never to turn in another Gand. The original Gand culture consisted of nomadic life on the plains, living in tents called *lavvos* and herding reindeer. Not very exciting, but I am a city dweller, so I am prejudiced on this issue. Gunnleif told us to be nice if we encountered a person we knew to be Gand.

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The Northlander Hero

Races: Humans are by far the most common race in the Northlands, but pockets of elf and dwarf communities are not uncommon. The demihumans prefer to keep to their own kind, afraid to be branded “fey”.

Classes: barbarians, bards, clerics, fighters, rangers, rogues, sorcerers. There are virtually no wizards here, as the approach to magic in the Northlands is not academic. Sorcerers believe their powers are hereditary. Clerics must follow either Misericordia or the Wutan pantheon. Though both religions are suffering, neither wants to cooperate with the other.

Barbarians and rangers are champions of rural communities, while fighters are their civilized counterparts. Fighters are most often found in the service of the Jarl. Ranged weapons are seen as a coward’s weapon, except for when guarding a settlement. Bards are called skalds, appreciated as lore keepers and singers of praise. Druids are very rare, but a handful of druids are found in the few remote communities where the teachings of Misericordia have not been preached. Rogues take the form of brigands, robbers or thugs; there is little finesse among Northlander thieves, although this does not mean they cannot work for their community in a good cause. An exception is the rogues of Guadaña, who have assembled in a guild. Paladins and monks are unknown here.

Recommended skills: Appraise, Craft (carpentry, leatherworking, shipmaking, weaponsmithing), Intuit Direction, Handle Animal, Knowledge (local, nature), Perform (chant, drums, fiddle, flute, lur, ode, storytelling), Profession (brewer, farmer, fisher, herdsman, lumberjack, miller, sailor), Ride, Wilderness Lore.

Recommended Feats: Ancestral Legacy, Back to the Wall, Brawler, Cleave, Courage, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Haunted, Hearthlore, Improved Critical, Portents, Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus (any sword or axe), Voice of Wrath.

Gand male names: Ante, Anti, Aslak, Joel, Mikkell, Matti, Mattis, Nils, Nilas, Sami, Torjus.

Gand female names: Aina, Biret, Elle, Jovvna, Kaisa, Klemet, Laila, Marit, Sara, Siri.

Kosti male names: Audun, Asbjørn, Bjørn, Brage, Harald, Gunnlaug, Ingvald, Mindur, Oddleif, Terje.

Kosti female names: Alfhild, Angjerd, Berit, Bjørgvina, Bodhild, Gerd, Gjertrud, Ingvild, Møyfrid, Reginleif, Solveig, Svanhild.

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Appearance

The Kosti tribe in the north are a fair folk, sporting blonde or red hair with blue or green eyes. Esterlings look like Kosti, only stockier. Southerners are generally of Kosti descent, but there are a few people with black or brown hair. Some of these have brown eyes. Northlander men normally grow beards or moustaches, which they braid. Some southerners groom and wax their moustaches instead of braiding them. Most Northlander women braid their hair in two pigtails, which hang loosely down their shoulders.

Fashion

The Kosti are practical, seeing vanity as a weakness. People from the hamlets around the earldom wear clothes made of wool, fur or hide. Some of the finer town dwellers have gotten used to finer fabrics, but not that trade has shut down, it is hard to come by clothes made of silk, linen, ermine or cashmere. Depending on the climate, a Kosti man usually wears a blouse, a long jacket over it and a woollen tunic over all, usually with embroidery. He wears long cloth trousers bound by a sash at the waist. Women wear long linen dresses and woollen tunics, woollen socks and leather shoes. In winter, both men and women wear leather or woollen caps and capes. Jewellery is very rare, except for the use of brooches and pins, which is very common, especially when fastening coats or capes.

Language

When it comes to the language both Kosti and Gand speak the same language, Nornish. The Gand also have their own language, but they are afraid to use it. Gunnleif told us that as a skald, he could make out a person's heritage by listening to the person speak. Gand speak in a more staccato way, he told us. It is not a big difference, but to a trained ear, it is evident. On the whole, Nornish is a melodic language,

This also opens for a circular reasoning. "Blood" would be known as "red water" because

though its consonants are harsh at times. The language is full of diphthongs and vowels that are difficult to pronounce. Kamsa is the language of the Gand, which is rarely used. I did not have the chance to hear it, but Gunnleif said it was quite different from Nornish.

Some Kosti take names from their parents, using the first name as a surname to demonstrate their lineage. Kosti men take their surname from their father. Sigurd, the son of Eyolf, would be called Sigurd Eyolfson. A Kosti woman would normally use the name of her mother. Brynhild, daughter of Gunnveig, would thus be called Brynhild Gunnveigsdottir. At other times, Kosti use accomplishments or occupations to describe themselves. If Sigurd Eyolfson became a smith, he might be called Sigurd Smed by those who primarily know him as a smith and not as the son of Eyolf. Brynhild might defeat a troll in defence of her community. She might then be known as Brynhild Trollknusar ("troll-crusher"). Sigurd might grow taller than all of his fellow men in the community. He would then be known as Sigurd Lange ("long") or even Sigurd Langesmed ("long-smith")

DM's option: Chennings

Chennings are an important aspect of the Nornish language. Chennings are analogies based upon fanciful logic often used in contest, just like other people use riddles. The user of the kenning sees things in relation to other objects. "Lightning" can be translated into "wrath of Thonor", which is the Wutan god of lightning. A "battle" can be seen as a "reddening of fields", and the sea as "the road of whales". Most objects have more than one chenning. The moon would in this case be a "silver sun", but the sun would be a "golden moon". The sun could also be called "eye of day", and the moon an "eye of night". A chenning of a particular word could have it's own chenning. "Blood" is often known as "sweat of the sword". "Sweat" can be known as "Thonor's favorite water", because the god likes exercise and physical prowess.

of its color, but "red water" might also be a chenning for "wine". "Wine" is a "fluid of woe",

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because it brings shame and pain if drunk to excess. Another “fluid of woe” is “blood”, because bleeding normally comes from a wound. Because of this complexity, resistance factions often use chennings as a cant to confuse those who should not listen.

A Nornish primer

English	Nornish
Hello	Heydu
Man	Man, kall
Woman	Chering
Male sorcerer	Seiðmen
Female sorcerer	Volvu
Lycanthrope	Hamleypar
Cursed individual	Niðling
Key	Nøkkkel
Magic	Seið

A Kamsa primer

English	Kamsa
Gand sorcerer	Noaidi
Gand community	Siida
Kosti (derogatory)	Stallo
Spirit song	Joik
Tent	Lavvo
Plain	Tundra
Menhir	Seita

Lifestyle and education

Northlanders live in houses made of stone or wood. Longhouses are a common sight in the earldom, as most people live together in large families. A longhouse has usually one large room. The walls are made of wood, in areas where it is plentiful, and the roof is covered with turf. In areas where there are few trees, walls are made of peat blocks and wooden planks are placed on the inside of the walls. Benches for sitting or sleeping on are common around the walls. They are covered with furs, skins or cloths for warmth and comfort. Beds were only used in the wealthier houses. A central fire was the main source of light and heat in the hall and there was a hole in the roof to let out the smoke.

Wooden chests were used to store furs blankets and other household goods. Some southerners and Esterlings live in houses made of brick. The majority of people on the countryside make their living by farming, woodcutting, fishing or hunting. A combination of fishing and farming is quite common in the northern parts, as the soil isn't fertile enough to support them alone. People in the cities are mainly artisans, laborers or craftsmen. Many of these are former merchants or innkeepers who have turned to other occupations in order to support themselves.

Marriage in the Kosti society is an mutual agreement between two families. People seldom marry for love. Legally the woman (or girl, as most women are only 12-15 years old when they marry) has nothing to say about the decision. Her guardian (usually her father) decides whom she should marry, but the marriage has to work. Luckily, this means that girls usually are not involuntarily married away, so they can voice their opinion. When she marries, the girl does not become a part of her husband's family, but she continues to belong to her own family and she keeps her own surname. Kosti women are important in the household, and not even their husbands dares contradict them when it comes to maintaining the household and estate. As a sign of authority, women have the keys of the home, including those of the boxes and chests where the most valuable objects of the household are kept.

I found Northlander food different from the food in Paridon, but I do not have a picky palate, as long as the food keeps me going. The food seems to be quite universal around the Northlands, with only a few differences. The most important of cultivated crops is grain. Barley, wheat, rye and buckwheat are the cultivated crops most commonly found. Living next to the coast naturally makes a person more dependent upon seafood, and the Gand can survive on berries. Porridge, oats, bread or soups of fish or meat is the typical starter dish. Shardbread is also quite common. The bread is called shard bread because it is baked on a shard of pottery. The main dish can consist of a

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multitude of meat. Cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens are all sources of meat. Northlanders who live along the coast use many types of fish; especially eels, whales and oysters are very highly thought of. Vegetables include onions, cabbages, carrots, and peas. During bad winters Northlanders eat anything they can catch, including foxes and ravens, and they make bread from bark. Luckily we did not have to resort to this. For dessert, Northlanders use pies or cakes, with berries being a typical ingredient. These desserts are more savoury than sweet. If not drinking ale or mead, a hot herbal drink or hot milk might keep out the chill. Northlanders use all kinds of herbs and berries to find a flavor that suits them. Some also drink wine, but this is an expensive commodity.

The Kosti ideal is to think twice before one speaks, and to utter only one's most firm beliefs, and only when there is a considered intention. What one says is remembered for ages, and if one says something stupid or "wrong" it will be proof of one's stupidity and general incompetence. Kosti folk are proud and distrustful, but once a friendship is made, it is made for life. Insults, whether real or perceived, are seldom forgotten, and even rarer do they forgive the insulter, unless he makes amends. The most trivial insults are solved at *fyräften* by using normal contest. The men do this by *rævkrok* (ROUGH-crook), where the two contestants lie down on their backs, elbows interlocked, facing upwards. They then straighten the foot closest to the other contestant, and try to "hook" the other contestant's foot, thus forcing him to turn over. Best of three is the norm here. More serious insults call for duels. The most well known form of duel is *holmgang*. The duelists face each other from a different side of a headland, breakwater or even a log. More trivial insults are fought with quarterstaffs; the more serious offences are dealt with using deadlier weapons, usually swords or axes. Often, but not always, enemies make amends before the fight. Most of the older customs from the ancient pantheon's days have been abolished, but a few remain. One of these is the *blodhevn*, or blood feud. If a person kills another person, the family demands retribution, i.e. the killer's head on a

plate. One of his relatives, most likely his or her eldest son, will try to kill the murderer. The murderer's family may then try to kill his murderer, and so on. The jarl tries to curb these bloodsheds, but he has had little success, as he has with his other tasks.

At larger battles, the Kosti grow even more bloodthirsty, which is why they have gained their reputation. They have little patience for weak opponents, and go to battle at camp abandon gleefully with weapons raised and bellowing cries and war chants. Some of the Kosti use herbs, mushrooms or even toadstools to ease their pain and become more ferocious. These Kosti are always those who follow the old ways, worshipping the old Wutan pantheon. They call themselves berserkers or wolfserkers, and use furs from these animals in order to attain their strength. Some of these take this a step further: they attain contact with the animal and become seiðmen. The Jarl's hatred of the seiðmen has just made them craftier.

Education takes place at home. The Kosti believe a good common sense is the best education a person will ever get. Children begin helping out at home when they are very young, often taking over the same craft their parents had. The only kind of formal education is the Lagmannskole in Miklaheim, where the *lagmenn* are educated. (The role of *lagmenn* are discussed briefly under the "Government" section) The Lagmannskole is a great hall close to the castle Miklaborg. Normally, a elder *lagman* searches a community, asking the parents of the brightest children whether they want their children to join. Joining the school is considered a great honor, as the position of a *lagman* means great power.

Attitudes toward magic

For the most part, I noticed that most Northlanders are both drawn to magic and afraid of it. They are afraid of it both because Misericordia and the Jarl are against it. Yet, they seem to be drawn to what is illegal. The word seið means magic in Nornish, so I would presume seiðman always means "sorcerer". It

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seems the Kosti are a bit confused about the difference between a so-called sorcerer, a Wutan shaman and a shapeshifter. Being one of them does not necessarily mean being the other, Rilmanda said. I have never been to her homeland, but are there really no one but us Paridoners and the Lamordians who can appreciate science, the true art?

A man at an inn told us that the correct term for a shapeshifter like a *berserk* (a man that changes into the form of a bear) or a *wolfserk* (a man that changes into the form of a wolf) is *hamleypar* (HAMM-ley-parr). A man can be cursed by a seiðman or wear the pelt of an animal to become one with the spirit of the animal. Well, I always enjoy these legends as long as I am told they are nothing *but* legends.

Runes play a central part in the way Kosti regard magic. This is usually expressed in rune stones. These menhirs have runic writing, pictures or a combination of both. They are usually carved just in one side, but there are some with both sides carved. Most of them are at least partly made to remember some dead relative. They are painted with strong colors and they are placed where many people can see them, in crossings or in the entrance of farms, for instance. The Jarl and his men have tried to remove some of these menhirs, much to the chagrin of the seiðmen.

The runes tells us about the brave deeds of the person it was dedicated to; many times they say he died in far lands, so they make the rune stone in order for his friends and relatives to have a place to mourn. Common elements in rune stones are: the name of the one who orders to make it, the name of the *homaged*, the relation between both, social status and circumstances of the death. Some of them also have a written curse against the one who dares to destroy the monument. If the deceased was a follower of the Wutan pantheon, the rune stone might have an invocation to Thonor, while those who followed Misericordia have a rune stone with a short prayer for the deceased's soul.

Many objects for a daily use, like combs, sticks or jewels have the name of the owner carved in them. Sometimes there are runic messages designed to ward that individual when carrying the item.

DM option: Ley lines and menhirs

Some menhirs have special latent powers that need to be awakened in order to use them. By successfully attuning to a menhir, a spellcaster can cast spells to greater effects. To attune himself, a spellcaster needs to successfully roll a Spellcraft check (DC 15), using the modifiers of Charisma instead of Intelligence. Menhirs are inscribed with runes symbolizing a particular school of magic. As long as a spellcaster is within sighting range of a menhir he has awakened, his effective caster level increases by one when casting spells of that school. A spellcaster can attune to a school only once, no matter how many menhirs he awakens.

Ley lines are the invisible nerves of the land. If a menhir is placed on a ley line, the ley line will conduct the power of the menhir to other menhirs. If a spellcaster awakens more than one menhir (i.e. two menhirs connected to different schools), both schools will be enhanced at the menhirs he has awakened. For example, a spellcaster can awaken a menhir connected to Conjuration, and later awaken one connected to Necromancy. Provided both menhirs are placed on the ley line, Conjuration magic will be enhanced when he is within eyesight of the menhir of Necromancy.

Because the ley lines have been disrupted by the extensive attacks on the menhirs from the Jarl and his men, eight out of ten magic items made in the Northlands will be cursed. The exception from this rule is the niðstang, which never suffers from a chance of being cursed.

New magic item: The niðstang

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The Niðstang, or Niðing Pole, is a Kosti cursing device using ancient and powerful magic. It consists of a tall (7' - 9') pole with insults and curses carved into it, crowned with a severed horse's head. It is placed in the ground near the home of the cursed individual, but off their property and preferably where they are physically or legally unable to remove it. The pole is normally created by a seiðman, but the user carves it with the runes designating its use. A niðstang is never sold. A person who wants to use a niðstang on somebody must perform a service for the seiðman before he creates it. This pole is effective on many levels, as it can have different effects depending on the user's wishes.

First, the pole can be magically charmed to invoke Helia, the Kosti goddess of death and the underworld, and direct her gaze through the eyes of the horse upon the cursed.

Secondly, her gaze is also deigned to disrupt the fey living around the home of the cursed.

Thirdly, having the cursed aware that they have drawn the directed attention and ire of Helia and a seiðman powerful enough to raise a niðstang against them, will heighten their awareness of the curse and its effects, magnifying it. Finally, all who would visit the cursed, will see that they are a niðling who has been cursed for their behaviour and attitudes, and will know to not deal with such a loathsome individual.

In game terms, the user receives a +3 bonus on his Charisma check when pronouncing a curse against another. This bonus increases to +5 when the cursed person is aware of the curse, either in advance or if the curser is present at the invocation. The niðstang can never be removed by the target.

If not using the niðstang to utter a curse, the user can prevent fey from entering a place, it

will work as a *repulsion* spell to all fey in a 100 feet radius. The pole can also work against people, either as a *repulsion* spell or as a means to grant a curse of incompetence. All of the target's checks based on Charisma, except Intimidation, fail. Even Intimidation checks will fail if they are used to further the target's role as a leader or authority figure. This last version is usually reserved for heroes who break their tenets or incompetent leaders. Both versions of the *repulsion* spell and the incompetence curse will last for 3d4 weeks. The only exception to this is Gravstein Hansen. His curse of incompetence has been made permanent.

Creating a niðstang is worthy of a powers check.

Caster level: 11th. *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Voice Of Wrath, *bestow curse*, *repulsion*. Weight: 15 lbs.

Religion

Since there are two religions in the Northlands, I will discuss each of them on its own. The Wutan pantheon is the oldest, so I will discuss these gods first. Before this, however, I will sum the creation myth of the Kosti. Kosti have their own explanation for how the world came to be. In the beginning, a frozen abyss rose from the chaos; twelve rivers poured their water into it. The abyss started to fill up with the ice blocks that water turned into. The abyss filled up completely and from between the ice blocks rose a giant and a horse. The giant created a son and a daughter; the horse made the first god, Wutan, from the ice. Wutan created his own son, called Thonor, god of battle and lightning. Then his daughter, Helia was created, goddess of death and misery. And then started the terrible war between gods and giants. Wutan and Thonor won the battle, and so they created men. This myth existed in this version for many years, but when the faith of Misericordia was introduced, the myth was altered. Misericordia was now the first god, crowned with a laurel wreath, and the giants created Wutan, Thonor and Helia to be used as servants. Misericordia was on her own,

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but she had a bell that she struck so hard that the universe was unmade, and the giants perished. She created her own universe after that, letting the Wutans live because they were so insignificant. These two were now the only surviving agents of the evil giants, and they were so insignificant that even mortals could best them. Their helpers, called seiðmen, were even lower. It seems to me that the faith of Misericordia successfully created a great antipathy with the Wutan pantheon.

Wutan pantheon

The pantheon used to be larger, but most other gods were forgotten when the worship of Misericordia was introduced. There are still signs of these other gods, but they take the form of customs, like before using a new ship for the first time, they inscribe it with a luck rune instead of performing a sacrifice in the sea god's name. The Wutan worshipers conduct their worship outdoors, under guardian trees, near sacred wells, or within sacred arrangements of stones. Sometimes wooden temples are used, with altars and with carved representations of the gods. The summer feast is celebrated on the shortest day of the year, marking the beginning of a new vital circle. The Wutan worshipers celebrate it with big bonfires near lakes or near the sea. The autumn feast is a fertility celebration. A straw horse is taken in a procession on a carriage around the fields and farms to ask for a good harvest for the following year. The winter feast is dedicated to Thonor. It is called the "mother night" because it is the longest in the year. The worshipers set fire to a large trunk of an oak-tree. The trunk is supposed to burn all night and its ashes are kept for the following years' fire.

Wutan worshipers have three main offerings for the gods, usually horses or oxen that have to be apart from the others, as they can't work in the farms because of their status. Their head and skin are offered over pickets of a hazelnut tree, and their flesh is cooked and eaten in a great banquet, along with plenty of beer drunk in horns. The blood from sacrificed

animals is sprinkled with an aspergillum over the attendees and the walls of the temple.

The Wutan Pantheon Revisited

Wutan: WU-tann.

Symbol: Eye surrounded by runes.

Alignment: Chaotic Good.

Portfolio: Creation, luck, magic, wisdom.

Domains: Death, Knowledge, Luck, Magic.

Favored Weapon: Shortspear.

Thonor: THO-norr.

Symbol: Hammer and lightning bolt

Alignment: Chaotic Good.

Portfolio: Battle, strength, weather.

Domains: Air, Healing, Destruction, Strength, War.

Favored weapon: Warhammer.

Helia: HELL-e-a

Symbol: Skull jutting out of a round cauldron.

Alignment: Neutral Evil.

Portfolio: Bad luck, death, magic, misery, thieves.

Domains: Death, Evil, Luck, Trickery.

Favored Weapon: Sickle.

Though the pantheon does not have a central authority, most of the groups have connections with each other. There are groups that conceal their identities, and there are those who perform their rituals openly. The followers of Helia are not always as well liked as the rest of the Wutan worshippers.

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This comes from the difference of opinion between the worshipers, but they are all aware that Helia did play a vital role at the battle between the gods and the giants.

Wutan and Thonor's worshippers pray for their spells at dawn, while Helia's worshippers pray at dusk.

Wutan's clergy are normally high-ranking members of the community, often taking the role as village leader or counsellor. Thonor's clergy are normally the strongest and fittest of the community, while Helia's clergy remain unnoticeable. Most of the enemies of the faith think that there are only two false gods, while Helia is unknown.

Wutan favors wise counsel and strong leadership. He gives inspiration to the skalds, but demands to hear the results afterwards. He watches over travellers on the road, and likes to hear the stories of their exploits. Wutan is a god of action, and dislikes laziness.

Thonor favors physical prowess. Strength and honor is his meat and drink. Contests should never be turned down. Though Thonor is a physically minded god, he would not dare insulting his father by telling his followers to refrain from intellectual contests.

Helia is the princess of eternal night, and all those who favor night over day is her friend. She likes risk takers and troublemakers, helping all kinds of thieves and scoundrels. She is a goddess that can help or hinder as she sees fit.

Misericordia

Most Kosti have been raised the strict, puritan religion of Misericordia. The faithful gather in three forms of temples: small stave churches and meeting houses in the north, and slightly larger cathedrals in the south. Stave churches are made by placing the entire wooden structure on sills, placed on flat rocks as a foundation. The reason for this is to eliminate

the decomposition of the wood. The walls are often covered with a coat of tar. Meeting houses are normally ordinary homes in a town, making it possible to have a sermon without causing too much suspicion. This way, the faithful do not have to meet at the same place for every sermon. Cathedrals are made of stone. They are brighter on the inside than the stave churches, and most often more richly decorated, unless the Jarl's men have looted them. While being one of the faithful is not a crime, most communities need special permits to conduct a religious ceremony. The Misericordians also remember what happened to the Wutan worshippers.

Misericordia Revisited

Misericordia: mis-err-i-KORR-di-a

Symbol: Bell in laurel wreath

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Portfolio: Obedience, piety, purity, poverty

Domains: Healing, Law, Protection

Favored weapon: Light mace

Every temple of Misericordia is autonomous, as there is no central authority. There used to be bishops, but the church could no longer support them. The temples share most of the rites. A bell summons the congregation, and signals the end of the sermon. This is done except in the meeting houses, where the days of worship are announced by word of mouth. Holy days are often "adjusted" to be set at the same days as *fyraftens* to prevent the followers of Misericordia from seeing their kith and kin have fun when they themselves do not. The religious aspect on these occasions is not always just as important as being social. A clergyman might as well be any kind of class, as the clerics do not cling on to their authority as church leaders anymore. This is especially true in the meetinghouses, where the leaders are often experts or commoners.

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Clerics of Misericordia pray for their spells at dawn. The dogma of Misericordia is to work and work hard. Life is a test, and forgoing pleasure in this life guarantees it in the next. Laughter and joy makes us weaker, as we lose respect for the object we laugh at. Misericordia shares your spiritual burden, but you must carry your physical burden yourself.

Non-Misericordian Gand worship the same deities as the Kosti, but take a more "naturalistic" approach to them. I believe the scholars call this *animism*. While Kosti believe that a arc of lightning is caused by Thonor, the Gand believe that the arc **is** Thonor. The Gand may well be the ones least likely to have forgotten the rest of the Wutan pantheon.

The Kosti formerly buried their loved ones in burial mounds, burying the dead, both men and women, with their usual clothes and objects they'd need in the other life, like weapons, board games, jewels or coins. Leaders and important men were buried with their ships and provisions, as well as animals and slaves, because everything should be recovered in the other life. Nowadays all Kosti are buried in graveyards and cemeteries, much as seen elsewhere.

The Realm

The earldom has been ruled by Gravstein Hansen for about twenty years. During this time, he has tried to quash all resistance to his power. Although the active resistance has decreased in numbers, the sympathies from the common man has increased. Finally discomforted by simply staying in the castle, the Jarl is now out doing two things: Crushing rebels and searching for the niðstang that is thwarting his ability to rule. He is convinced that someone is hiding it somewhere. He is also planning to have an heir soon, preferably a biological heir.

Government

In the early days, the different areas were more independent. Although the Northlands was an earldom ruled by a Jarl, there were different districts with their own jurisdiction, represented by the Assembly or *Thing*, where all the free men had the same rights regardless how rich they were. This Thing had both the legislative and judicial powers. People solved their community and individual problems on the *Thing* when they had been unable to solve them on their own.

The Northlands is now ruled by Gravstein Hansen. He lives most of the time in Miklaheim, where his fortress Miklaborg is. The black fortress is situated on a mountain overlooking the city. The Jarl is also represented in the villages, where he is represented by a *lensman*, who works as the highest authority. Laws are either decreed by the Jarl, his *lensmen*, or are developed as customary law. A *lagman*, or law mender, writes down the laws as soon as they get a foothold in society, thereby codifying the laws. The Jarl can change these if it fits him.

Most crimes have a severe penalty. The worst of these is used only on seiðmen, which the Jarl despises, and people involved in blood feuds or illegal trade (i.e. without paying taxes). The prisoner is tied to a breakwater when the water level is low, and left there to drown. Few dare help their unfortunate kin, as the Jarl always posts guards in the vicinity. His men, normally stern and stoic, burst out laughing as the doomed person takes his last gasps of air. Thus, it has become known as the laughing death. Smaller infractions like brawling, drunkenness or forgery are punished by the *gapestokk*, or pillory, a wooden plate with a hole in it. The plate is mounted vertically on poles in the town square where the head of the punished is fastened in the hole of the plate. This form of punishment might be even worse, because all of the citizens know the culprit's relatives, so the relatives share his shame as well. Very deterrent, Gunnleif said.

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Law enforcement

This is a description of a militiaman typical of those found in Miklaheim or Harang. The militiaman can also be used in smaller settlements, except that these militiamen do not have a signature weapon. The militiamen often have a trade apart from their militia activities.

Northlander Militia Human War1, CR ½, Size M humanoid (human), HD 1D8+1, p 5, Init +2 (Dex), Spd 30, AC 15 (touch 12, flatfooted 13), Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, Longsword or Battleaxe, or 1D10+2, halberd), Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft., AL N, SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1, Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +3 Intuit Direction +1 Listen +3, Sense Motive +1, Spot +3; Alertness, Weapon Focus (weapon of choice: Longsword, Battleaxe or Halberd)

Possessions: Hide, weapon of choice (Longsword, Battleaxe or Halberd), dagger, bullseye lantern

Economy

The Northlands is not a domain of trade anymore, although it once was. There are plenty of ex-merchants who still have some of their goods in store, so supplies is not necessarily a problem. An innkeeper keeps his *Saalhus* (the Kosti word for tavern) open to everyone, merchant or otherwise, and many of these doubled as merchants in earlier times. Many of the *Saalhus* are abandoned today, and there are many stories of how the owner left. The Key, a former trade union was taxed to its knees years ago. The majority of the *Saalhus* in the Northlands were run by either the union or associates. Some of the *Saalhus* have been in use by resistance groups. Church renegades, seiðmen, Gand warriors or ex-traders hide in taverns claimed to be haunted. We discovered that a few of the *Saalhus* actually are haunted, but most of them have been rigged either by ropes or magic.

Trade in small communities are not always resolved with money. Bartering or deals are just as common. A smith might need some cheese, so he promises the cheese maker to make a new tool for him, like a knife. He might even make it in advance, so that the cheese maker knows what he gets. There are three kinds of coins in the Northlands: mark, penning and bracteate (brak-teh-AHT) The bracteate is a thin coin made of copper, and is only imprinted on one side with an image of the Jarl. The penning is a coin of normal width made of silver, and has an image of the Jarl on one side and a bell in a laurel wreath on the other. If a person does not have a bracteate at hand and does not have a service to offer, the Kosti break the pennings in halves when buying items of lower cost than a whole penning. The mark is a thick, shiny gold coin, imprinted with the image of the Jarl on one side and the castle of Miklaborg on the other.

Diplomacy

I have not seen any evidence that the Northlands at present has any kind of correspondence or connections to any other land, friendly or hostile. There is evidence in books and even legends that there have been connections to other realms, but where have these gone? I refuse to believe that these lands have just faded away!

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Sites of interest

Miklaheim

Miklaheim is the capital of the Northlands. It holds this position simply because the Jarl lives here. Without the Jarl, it would probably not be the capital, because it is not strategically convenient. At least Wiktor says so. Rilmanda shrugged, but added that the city is too far off to the north, and is too dependent on the trade goods from other cities. The main feature of the city is of course the castle looming on the mountain. Without looking closely, one couldn't separate the castle from the mountain, as it is nigh impossible to see where one ends and the other one begins. A big waterfall runs down the mountainside. In the right moonlight, the citizens swear the water appears red. A center of military activity and administration, Miklaborg itself serves as a fortress, but there are quite a number of sentry posts throughout the city. Further evidence of the Jarl's paranoia, I suppose. The people here are very loyal to the

Jarl. At first, I thought this stemmed from the usual fear, but I was wrong, at least partly. The residents also respect the Jarl, probably because they are the ones that live closest to the Jarl. Gunnleif told us the Jarl is afraid of stirrings among the people, so he is encouraging festivals in some of the largest cities. In Miklaheim, the festivals are always militant in nature. Pageants of local militia groups are most common. Kosti boys in their adolescent years are divided into mock militias, borrowing weapons from their relatives and march around the village to the sound of drums. Boys are trained from an early age to defend themselves and their city. The boys are aspirants for the real militia, so they want to show their skills to the others. They are organized in small platoons, called *buekorps* (bow platoons), named after the fact that the first boy platoon consisted of archers. Later, platoons using halberds, swords, crossbows and spears arose, often passing weapons down from one generation to another. This is a part of the Miklaheim tradition, with fathers urging their sons to join the same platoon as they did. The friendly rivalry between boy platoons has sometimes gotten out of hand and resulted in skirmishes. However, these fights usually end very quickly, because they are aware that they are all defenders of the same city. The pageants serve to ease the rivalry in two ways. First, the boys do something together for a day. Secondly, it takes the edge off the competitiveness by letting the boys compete (almost) harmlessly.

The militia groups, often using the credo or their signature weapon as inn names, run the inns of Miklaheim. The quality of the inns vary, but the owners of the worst inns claim they are not innkeepers, but warriors, and really have no time for it. They need the money, though.

The Lagmanskole is a great hall used to educate *lagmenn*. There is at least one *lagman* in each community. Community leaders are expected to know the *lag* (law), so lensmen also have to stay here to learn the history of the realm and its laws. The hall is also used as a tribunal in some cases. The chief *lagman* of the realm is called the *Overlagman*. This title is currently

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held by Steinawarjar Frøyson, an old, frail man with a wit as sharp as his axe once was.

The other structure we really wanted to visit was Miklaborg, but a stern guard would not let us in.

Where to stay in Miklaheim

Hellebard (good quality rooms, good quality food) is the inn of the halberdiers, located in the north of the town. It is the most successful of the inns, probably because they are less interested in the militia rivalry than the other groups. This leads to more money, which leads to more enmity, which leads to more rivalry...well, you know where this is heading. Anyway, a great place to stay the night. It is run by the faction's leader's father, Skallagrim Enoksson, a shrewd businessman who was once an important trader.

Nordlys, vær min verge (good quality rooms, medium quality food) is the inn of the archers. Named after their motto (northern lights, be my guardian), it is named so because the faction once was crucial to the defence of the town one dark, starless night. Because the aurora borealis was so strong this particular night, they could see where to shoot, and victory was theirs. (Personally, I think the snow might have reflected more light than they know.) The entire city remembers this, and they are the best-liked faction overall, partly because the militia tradition would never have started without them. The inn is in the centre of the town, next to a fletcher.

Miklaheim (large town), Conventional, AL NE, 3000 gp limit, Assets: 600.000 gp, Population: 4000, Isolated (human 97 %, dwarf 1 %, elf 1 %, other 1 %)

Authority figures: Gravstein Hansen (Jarl of the Northlands), male human Brb2/F8

Persons of note: Aeric Skallagrimsson (halberdier's leader), male human F3, Steinawarjar Frøyson (Overlagmann), male human F2/Exp7

Retrograd

This weather-beaten city lies on the moors of Esterled. The buildings are made of stone, often stretching many feet in the air. I must admit we felt humbled by the big towers. Retrograd is a city of a proud people, descendants of the Esterled people. They seem just as solid as the buildings they live in. Because most of the Esterled blood is now mixed with that of the Kosti, they know few of their traditions. Still, when most of the young have gone to bed, and they are sure none of their neighbors will hear them, pureblood Esterleds sing and tell stories of old. The people are contest-minded, always willing to show their physical might. Athletics and drinking bouts are the most innocent ones.

One of the most visited buildings in the city is the gladiatorial arena. Called Harmony of Battle, the young (and I dare say, foolish) compete with each other for fame and glory. Death matches are (thankfully) very rare. Winning a tournament secures a place among the city's champions, an elite guard that commands much respect among Retrograd's citizens. I'd bet my guns could handle that tournament...

In the middle of the city lies the tower of the Czar. A slight misnomer, the tower is actually connected to other towers by bridges. The Czar is held hostage by the Jarl, as he did not want to make a martyr of such a popular figure. The city's champions have not dared to rescue him because they fear he would be slain if they tried. They would feel responsible for his death, so they keep check on each other as a group.

Where to stay in Retrograd

Samovar (good quality rooms, good quality food) is an inn with a sauna and spa. Visitors and citizens alike find a visit here relaxing. After a customer wakes up, he receives a cup of tea and hot bread, which tastes delicious. The downside is that a lot of thieves find their way to

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a person's items in the wardrobe when the owner is dozing off, so book a room with a decent lock instead.

Retrograd (small town), Nonstandard, AL N, 800 gp limit, Assets: 40.000 gp, Population: 1000, Isolated (human 98 %, werebear 1 %, other 1 %)

Authority figures: Czar Nicolin IV (city ruler) male human, Ari6

Persons of note: Pori (city champion) male werebear, F3/Bar3, Waclaw Prindeman (proprietor of gladiatorial arena) F2/Exp3

Harang

Harang has the dubious honor of being the military gathering point in the Northlands. It lies on a hill with great palisades surrounding it. There is an old fort that is still in use, and most Kosti soldiers have been here for at least parts of their training. All the Kosti military leaders have served at Harang at one time in their life. Because there are no outsiders left to conquer or defend against, rumor has it that much of the equipment and soldiers will be moved to Miklaheim very soon. There are also rumors that Gand rebels will try to take over the city shortly after this happens. The rumor may be true, considering the current lensman is a Gand seiðman in disguise. Actually, that would be quite interesting to see. The city used to be an important link on the trade route, meaning a hefty income from tolls, but this income has diminished since. The city, being closest to Miklaheim shares the capital's tradition of the buekorps. Because the city is situated so close to the mountains, quite a number of the citizens are miners. At nightfall, we met a miner named Erlend in a pub near the edge of town. He told us of the hard life of a miner, but that the comradeship of the mining crew was very good. He also claimed to have been helped by the *sylvmora*, a helpful fey creature that helped him out of an accident a few years ago. He nearly lost his arm when a shaft collapsed in the mine. Trapped in a tunnel, he saw a small creature that pointed silently to the end of the tunnel. When he got near what he thought to be the end of the

tunnel, he saw a small passage leading outside. From this day, he always leaves some food and ore in the mine before returning to the town. We found Erlend to be very knowledgeable, and learned quite a bit about the creatures here. I mean, the creatures that are *supposed* to be around here.

The largest dungeon of the realm is located in Harang. A grim structure in stone, this is where the Jarl keeps the people that he does not want people to know have been captured. There was no way we would get in here *and* get out again, we were told.

Harang is also the town with the highest number of dwarves. Granted sanctuary only because of their skills, they give advice to prospectors and create superior metal objects. Most of them are not happy with their situation. Though I am not a dwarf, I sympathise with them.

Where to stay in Harang

Kveldsro (good quality rooms, good quality food) is the only decent place to stay for civilians, if a visitor can stand the Misericordian chants. The inn doubles as a meeting house, so be prepared.

Harang (village) Conventional, AL N, 200 gp limit, Assets 5.000, Population 500, Isolated (human 90 %, dwarf 5 %, elf 4 %, other 1 %)

Authority figures: Wolfgang Vaschera (lensman) male human F4/Sor4

Persons of note: Erlend Gudvinson (miner) male human Exp1, Macnack Oresmelter (chief of dwarven enclave) male dwarf F2

Harnisk

This city is situated close to Mount Grimm. Harnisk, or Harnisch, as it is also known, is the city where the hardest battles between the Kosti and the Gand was. Formerly a trading center, it might have been the capital today. The mix of cultures explains the double name. The original founder was buried on a knoll on the outskirts of

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town. A tree was planted in his memory next to his grave, but according to a local tanner, the tree died a few years ago. The old stave church next to the tree is covered in ivy now, and the planks in the church walls have started crumbling and falling apart. Oddly enough, the ivy has not seemed to fall with the planks, creating a veil around the church. There have been a few skalds that swear the acoustics have improved, though their voices seem somehow distorted. Due to this, sermons are instead performed in the private meeting houses around town.

A small fragment of the Key remains here, consisting of a handful of traders assembled in the guildhall. Both food products and crafted goods are available here, and Rilmanda acquired quite a number of goods she probably is going to trade somewhere else.

Gunnleif told us he were the brother of Magnus “One-eye” Thordarson, the *lensman*. When we asked if we could see him, we were told that *lensmen* are busy people, and that he would not see his brother anyway. Something about choice of profession and difference of opinion, he added cryptically. The eye of the *lensman* had been lost in a battle some time after he was appointed *lensman*.

Where to stay in Harnisk

The Cheese Tap (good quality rooms, good quality food) is a cheese shop and inn. It has a specialty named nøkkelost (cheese seasoned with caraway seeds, cumin, and cloves) and many other dairy specialties. It has a good atmosphere, and very good food if one likes cheese.

Gauntlet and Hauberks (good quality rooms, medium quality food) is a water hole for the traders’ bodyguards. This is a typical place to get a job for mercenaries.

Harnisk (village), Conventional, AL LE, 200 gp limit, Assets: 4.000, Population: 400, Isolated (human 93 %, dwarf 5 %, elf 3 %, half-elf 1 %, other 1 %)
Authority figures: Magnus “one-eye” Thordarson (lensman) male human F3
Persons of note: Gráinne Llaniach (trader), female human Exp2, Donagall Hammarskjold (trader), male dwarf F2, Rhialla Liljesang (trader), female elf Brd2.

Mount Grimm

One night when Gunnleif was asleep, we took out to explore Mount Grimm. Ghosts, bah! The mountain is quite tall, very much like a spire. We left our horses behind, so as not to tire them for the next day. The steep path up to the top winds upwards in a spiral. The black, jagged rock seemed to repel us as we ascended. Wolves were howling, and the wind whipped snow flakes in our hair. As we turned a cliff, we saw a pack of wolves about ten yards in front of us. I raised my hand to stop Wiktor from sheathing his sword. I saw straight into the eyes of the largest of them. It was really intense, especially since I am a city dweller. I have never seen such an intelligent spark in the eye of an animal. And what majestic animals... Then they dashed off, for whatever reason. Puzzled, we started walking again, until we heard footsteps scattering the tiny layer of snow that was beginning to form. A few warriors approached us. They were wearing blue tunics with red and

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yellow trimming on the collar and sleeves. Over this tunic the wore wolf-skin coats. From what I remember from Gunnleif, these were Gand. They stood silent, measuring us. One of them told us to follow him. His voice was stern, but not unfriendly. We did as we were told, uncertain of how many really were there. As the wind grew fiercer, we saw a camp with about twenty to thirty lavvos. A lone elder Gand stood chanting on the outside of the camp. We were escorted into a large lavvo in the middle of the camp. The air inside was full of smoke, but two eyes were clear through the smoke. A man in his fifties greeted us. He told us that he was the leader of the group. They were a resistance group called “The Enemies of Stallo”. *Stallo*, he explained, was a Gand derogatory term for the Kosti. The leader, Ante Choudiak, told us that we were travelling with the brother of a traitor. Gunnleif’s brother, Magnus, had just after he became a *lensman*, led a particularly vicious attack upon the clan of one of his former friends, who happened to be a Gand. None who had offended the Gand could climb the mountain without being attacked by the Gand spirits. Neither could their family. The Gand leader fell silent. The elderly man who had chanted on the outskirts of the camp appeared behind us. He told us to follow him outside. He led us to the top of the mountain, where something was thrust into the ground. From the tales Gunnleif told me, I imagined this was what a *niðstang* would look like. It was a wooden pole taller than me, with a desiccated head of a horse on top. The man told me that this was a *niðstang* used by his blind mentor before he died. The target was the Jarl, because of all the atrocities he had committed against the Gand people. He asked us whether we would help their cause. I looked at Wiktor and Rilmanda, who nodded. Then we were led down the mountain, and they told us not to tell Gunnleif. His brother was soon in for a shock, we were told.

Bammel

Bammel is one of the smallest settlements in the Northlands, but even so, I have to say it is the most beautiful. This is probably why the

town is the fastest growing in the realm. Not able to turn to culture, science, religion or trade, the immigrants come in search for art and beauty, one of the few things the Jarl has yet to destroy. Situated in the western part of the realm, it is dependent on the sea. The outskirts of the town have complex dikes and sluice systems that regulate the water. In the city itself, there are hardly any streets, because the water serves as a means of transportation. The buildings are made of stone, but for the most of them, the material is only as a foundation. Houses in variations of dark green and blue are most common. The people of Bammel exit their homes normally, but use a boat to navigate through the city. The people here are elegant, and their most prized possession is their house. They often decorate their houses with flowers, and during festivals, chains of flowers from house to house across the streets are a very common sight. An annual boat race takes place on the first day of summer. All the townsfolk are out watching this great event.

The villa of Digby is located in the north of town. A wealthy philanthropist, Elias Digby has decorated his gardens with works of art and used the water of the town in a way that enhances the beauty of his art collection. Most of the garden is open to the general public, with dolphin statues and water fountains being the most spectacular sights. A popular person around town, Digby is the man who is responsible for the annual boat race.

The Doge’s complex is the administrative part of the town. The Doge is the ruler of this little town. He kept his title and authority because the Jarl found the village too insignificant. This is where the Doge and his clerks live. The complex is a collection of buildings with bridges both across the water and from the houses. Most of the citizens do not understand why the complex has so many bridges, because it is very quiet for being so big. One thing is for certain: the complex adds to the city’s natural beauty.

Where to stay in Bammel

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The Prince and the Porpoise (good quality rooms, medium quality food) is easily spotted. Digby donated a statue of a porpoise to the owner after having an especially fine meal here. The inn is a haven for skalds, and the evenings are quite lively.

Bammel (hamlet), Conventional, AL NG, 100 gp limit, Assets: 1.000, Population: 200, Isolated (human 99 %, other 1 %)

Authority figures: Doge Joha (city ruler), male human Exp2

Persons of note: Elias Digby (philanthropist), male human Ari2, Øygunn Larsadottir (skald), female human Brd2

Dread possibility:

Though pleasant on the surface, all is not what it seems in Bammel. A host of reavers live in the depths below Bammel. Normally not interested in riches, they raid and pillage the town constantly, the boat race being a big event also in the reavers' mind. As a matter of fact, they are being paid by one of the seiðmen outside the city. He is searching for an object of great importance to him and his followers: A golden necklace with a sun locket. Though the reavers do not know what or why they are searching, they willingly do it in exchange for prey.

Schreckenhugel

Schreckenhügel is a town located on a knoll south of Harnisk. When we approached the city, we saw fields of grain and fruit on both sides of the road. Mills line the road close to the town. This is the first time I really noticed how dramatically the landscape has changed. When we started our journey, I could hardly see a mill or a wheat field. Here, I can hardly see anything else for the mills! The town has a larger population than Bammel, but seems smaller in size. The reason must be that the streets in Bammel are wider because of the water.

The main feature in the city is the cathedral. It is quite strange that a smaller city like

Schreckenhügel can have a larger place of worship than the larger towns to the north. The cathedral serves as a spiritual gathering point for all the farms around the town. Farmers are generous in this part of the Northlands when it comes to contributions. I pity them for their lack of faith in themselves.

Where to stay in Schreckenhugel

The circle of Ull (medium quality rooms, good quality food) is named after the constructor. Ull was supposedly a man who tried to warn himself from evil forces by building a protective circle out of his home. Ull is long gone, but the current owner, Alfred Lange (a giant of a man), converted the manor to an inn. The centre of the circle is now used to eat outside on sunny days.

Schreckenhügel (village), Monstrous, AL N, 200 gp limit, Assets: 6.000, Population: 600, Isolated (human 98 %, dwarf 1 %, other 1 %)

Authority figures: Sigfried of the barren field (lensman), wax golem

Persons of note: Ulrich Weichmann (organist), male human Exp3, Alfred Lange (innkeeper), male half-ogre Exp1

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Dread possibility: Through a ritual, Ulrich has created a wax golem that is a nearly perfect copy of the real Sigfried. Enraged by the ban on religion, Ulrich decided to resort to other means of keeping his job, so the golem killed the real *lensman* when he went for a stroll outside the city. The golem then assumed his role and reversed the ban on religion in the village. Right now, Ulrich is wondering how to use the golem in other ways.

Of course, the religious freedom of this village has not gone unnoticed. The Jarl is planning to do something about this, but first he will see why the lensman reversed the ban.

Guadana

Upon entering the town, we saw that the town, like many of the other town of the realm, had its own architecture. The town is comprised of one-story circular shaped buildings made of brick and stone, with domed roofs. When they had their home built, some of the wealthiest citizens made it possible to open the roofs in the middle. These were formerly used to gaze into the night sky. Most of the larger official buildings are rectangular with flat roofs. The first impression of the town was depressing. Guadaña was once rich in culture and history, but most of it has been erased. We had to ask some of the older citizens to get any sort of information beyond what Gunnleif already knew. A former battleground, the town is used to battle because of its placement. A green oasis in a desert, whoever controlled Guadaña and its surroundings, would be sure never to starve. One of the longest holders of the city were the Moops, a people rich in culture and wealth. This people are all gone now, but their knowledge remains in small doses. The people here do not wear the usual Kosti clothes. They use loose clothes bound with sashes around the waist. I bought one at the market and it is most comfortable. The market was buzzing with people and activity. Though I am not used to these kinds of markets, I liked the atmosphere

there. Oh well, Rilmanda made a profit here. Not far from the market are the university grounds, now falling into disuse. Opposite of the university is a large cathedral, just as neglected. We were told the Jarl's men swept the town, concentrating on the religious and intellectuals. The law of Wulfric the Grey now officially prohibits the large festivals of public knowledge contests. Wulfric is one of the Jarl strongest supporters, but he seems like he is more of a planner than the Jarl.

The university grounds house a trove of books. Most of the buildings are barred or locked, but all of them are connected by a sewer system. The ones that are open are neither attended nor guarded. The town guard feel that the scare of being tracked down keep them away. It is a typical activity among the young people around town to try and sneak inside a library and take a book home. Most mothers do not share their sons' understanding of the word "fun".

Where to stay in Guadana

Cogito (medium quality rooms, medium quality food) is an inn run by one of the former librarians, Pepita. Because she considered herself to be a bit of a student herself, she borrowed books without returning them. When the library closed, she kept the books because she saw no reason to return books to an unused library. She has a small collection of books available for those who are "in-the-know".

Guadaña y Cráneo (poor quality rooms, poor quality food) is a place to avoid. It is a gambler's den next to the local undertaker. After a night here, we discovered that thieves run it, so we fled over to the other inn.

Guadaña (village), Conventional, AL LE, 200 gp limit, Assets: 1.000, Population: 700, Isolated (human 99 %, other 1 %)
Authority figures: Wulfric the Grey (*lensman*), male human, Bar3
Persons of note: Alma Mieda (former head librarian), female ghost, Exp2, Pedro Montara

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(former professor), male wererat Exp5, Pepita de la Drona (librarian-turned-innkeeper) female human Exp2, Doña Paulina (head of thief guild) female human, Rog6.

Dread possibility: Though the university appears to be empty, two figures remain, but not in their former shapes. Alma Mieda was the former head librarian, charged with the duty of keeping knowledge available to all. She was very eager, always ready with an advice on what book to read next, no matter what subject. When the Jarl's men came, she was one of the first to fall. Even in death, she tries to maintain the library, but there are very few visitors nowadays. Pedro Montara was luckier. He escaped through the sewers, but because he was attacked by a wererat, he contracted lycanthropy and had to stay unless he wanted to be tracked down.

Parting thoughts

After Guadaña, we decided to see a bit more of the rural districts where the influence of the Jarl had not been so strong. Wiktor shook his head and mumbled something about Drakov at least having a plan. When we travelled further south from Guadaña, we saw what Gunnleif claimed were ghosts. It seemed like an entire army, and he was so scared that he ran out of the carriage and into the night. When we turned our carriage around to go after him, the fog grew very thick, and none of us could navigate through it. When the fog cleared, we were once more near Levkarest. We decided to ask the wainwright what he meant by giving us this carriage. Oddly enough, he claimed we took the wrong carriage by a mistake, because our carriage was still there. We never saw Gunnleif again, but if he is really out there, I want to dedicate this endeavour to him. Beautiful as the Northlands is, we will not miss it.

Winston Smythe,
esq.



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THE VALLAKI GAZETTEER

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS WITHIN THE TOWN OF VALLAKI, BAROVIA

Compiled by: Eddy Brennan (The Lost Hedgewitch)

This article is the result of a call for articles to help develop and detail Vallaki in larger detail.

Introduction

The Vallaki Gazetteer started as most things do, as an idle idea in someone's head. In the Malodorous Goat Tavern message boards on the Secrets of the Kargatane website, a discussion for new Ravenloft-based net books appeared. One suggestion was for a Gazetteer, or series of them, that would give more flavor to the setting. While a Gazetteer detailing the domain was already underway, it left enough scope to detail much of what is missed in the small space allowed in those products. The rest, as they so frequently say, is history.

As this was a separate project within the Undead Sea Scrolls 2003, it came down to me to review, collect and organize the submissions for this Gazetteer. Many great articles appeared, but several were sadly declined (mostly due to their length and the overall length I wanted for the finished article). So this article is for everyone who submitted to this insane scheme and for the person who initially brought up the idea of a Gazetteer but didn't want to pull it off. I wasn't certain if I could at first, but patience and determination won through.

Or at least I like to believe it did, but most would argue that insanity stole the place of reason long ago.

People of Importance

Vallaki is home to many colorful characters of all walks of life, from the lowliest farmer or herder, to the Burgomaster himself. A small sample of some of the more prolific people encountered in the town can be found here.

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The Ionelus Family

The extensive Ionelus Family is the leading family of this tiny village. This influential family owns almost the entire village, from the famous Vallaki orchards to the terraced farms around the town. Just about every peasant in the village is a serf underneath the Ionelus family. The Ionelus are famous for being crafty, scheming, but ultimately fair.

The family did not inherit their immense power. These holdings once belonged to the Roche family, who were ousted at the behest of Strahd VIII. The Roche family swiftly fell into ruin after their removal from office, but it is rumored that some of their members still lurk about Barovia and plan vengeance against the Ionelus.

Nicolai Ionelus

Nicolai is the canny burgomeister of Vallaki, winning his position through guile and political cunning. When Strahd VIII swept down and removed the Pratori from office, Nicolai was there to fill the vacuum. Nicolai is well known for being gruff, callous, but also fair. He has his hands involved in just about everything that goes on in Vallaki.

Rumors: Nicolai sits aging upon his throne, worried about the future of his family. Currently, he is grooming young Nicolai the Lesser to take his place as burgomeister, something that is causing a stir within the community, because Nicolai is apparently not giving his position to Vladimir, the eldest son. While most don't blame Nicolai for his appointment, it is considered a serious breach of tradition.

Truths: Nicolai is well aware of the Ba'al Verzi's plan to attack him. However, Nadia, who has contacts with the Assassin's Guild, has tipped him off. Nicolai is chiefly concerned with whom the Ba'al Verzi will attempt to use against him, since they typically dominate others to do their dirty work.

Vladimir Ionelus

Vladimir is a savage, reckless noble who grew up spoiled from birth. Rather than participate in politics, Vladimir squandered his youth by hunting in the wilds of Vallaki. Today, Vladimir is only respected for his family name, which he throws around like a weapon. Vladimir likes nothing more than to intimidate and cajole others, no doubt finding pleasure in the domination of those who cannot fight back.

Rumors: It is well known that Vladimir covets his father's position, and he deeply suspects that this position will not be forthcoming. Vladimir constantly schemes and plans, often with his psychotic son and daughter, on how to take the position of burgomeister.

Truths: Vladimir greatly fears losing the burgomeister position to Nicolai the Lesser. He is attempting a take-over of his father's position on two fronts. First, he is hiring the Ba'al Verzi to attack his father. If this fails, he will attempt to destroy Nicolai the Lesser. The only problem with this is the Nicolai the Lesser is constantly under the watchful eye of Dagrís the Cruel. In the end, Vladimir may enlist his son's aid to do away with his younger brother, or gain the aid of Istivan the Knife, since he can play off of Istivan's jealousy of his sister.

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Gaelia Ionelus-Watcher

The beaten and worn wife of Vladimir, Gaelia spends most of her time apologizing for her husband's behavior and keeping her son and daughter out of prison. Her marriage to Vladimir was purely political, and it is evident that the two have little love for each other. Gaelia may be shy and quiet, but the years of abuse have stoked a latent fire within her.

Rumors: Gaelia is not a simple damsel in distress. Many believe that she is currently plotting against her husband, although no one knows exactly what she is doing. Gaelia is very protective of her youngest child, Mimeti. It is well known that she lives and breathes for this strange child.

Truths: Gaelia is indeed plotting against Vladimir. In fact, the depths of her plotting go father than anyone has ever suspected. On a dark night, one year ago, Gaelia, with the aid of Boriska Dolevina, summoned a great creature from the Nether Realm. Gaelia hoped to use the creature to destroy Vladimir, but both she and Boriska were in far over their heads. The creature broke free from the chamber that they had it trapped within and escaped into Zarovich Lake. There, the creature has grown at an incredible rate, festering with dark power. Gaelia is still planning to summon the creature again, and this time bind it to her will.

Matthais and Shara Ionelus

If the sins of the father are carried on by his children, then the sins of Vladimir Ionelus are carried ten-fold through these his two children. These twin terrors have long plagued the village of Vallaki with their excesses. Both are known to be borderline psychotics, with a penchant for getting into reckless fights and numerous duels. If it weren't for their family name, both would have been long since hung by now.

Rumors: Matthais and Shara are rumored to pursue a relationship, much to the shock and horror of the village. While neither of them has committed outright murder, there are rumors that some of the village disappearances from a few years back can be linked to them.

Truths: When Matthais and Shara were both little children, they developed numerous psychotic tendencies. These psychotic tendencies increased when they discovered a dead body one day while playing in the woods. Not understanding what it was, Matthais and Shara stuffed the body's clothes with straw and made a shrine around it. They began to 'worship' the body as their own personal god. Neither of the children really believed that the body was really a god. To them, it was merely a game to play in the woods. But eventually, their madness began to overtake them. They began to hear and receive messages from their 'god,' which they called the *Hungry One*. Sadly enough, the Mists have had no part in this. They have not animated the body or caused them to become mad. Matthais and Shara's madness is their own. Today, Matthais and Shara have numerous bodies that they have piled into a cave as sacrifices to the "Hungry One."

Mimeti Ionelus

The youngest child of Vladimir and Gaelia, Mimeti was born with a placental caul over his eyes, a sure mark of the ability of second sight. Today, Mimeti seems to be living up to his birthright. He is a strange child, often uttering prophecies or predictions. Many in the village fear him, but his family name protects him from the flames or gallows.

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Rumors: Gaelia protects Mimeti with her life and clings to this child obsessively. It is rumored that the child actually drove back a pack of night demons by merely speaking a riddle to them. Supposedly, Mimeti's latest utterances speak of a coming of four heroes that will shatter a great darkness.

Truths: Indeed, Mimeti is not Vladimir's son. He is son of a union between Gaelia and a firshee (a powerful fey being). Gaelia dreams about her once-love each night and savagely protects Mimeti from the entire world. Mimeti receives visits from his father from time to time, though he never tells his mother this. Mimeti has also sees the monster that lives beneath the lake, though he enters a seizure if forced to speak of it.

Svari lonelus

In utter disappointment to his father, Svari has joined the Church of Ezra. Svari is a dedicated priest, who works in the small village temple under Father Toret Mugur. Most of the time, Svari tries to forget about his family and his family name, not even speaking of it to others. Conscience, however, occasionally pulls him back to help his family in times of crisis.

Rumors: Nicolai had hoped that Svari could have inherited the position of burgomeister, but Svari gave up this right when he joined the church. Svari is actually one of the few people alive to ever see the inside of the Tomb of Quinn Roche, though he is loath to speak of it.

Truths: Down in the vault of Quinn Roche, Svari met Pitor Roche, who is the former burgomeister of Vallaki. There in the depths of the vault, Pitor confronted Svari and beat him within an inch of his life.

The creature that now carried the name of Pitor cursed Svari, saying that he would be the cause of his own family's downfall. Svari has told no one of this incident and is terrified of speaking about it to anyone. Also of note is his current affair with Florica Romulich, an affair that would probably get him de-frocked and earn him the wrath of his family.

Nadia lonelus

The infamous "Black Widow of Vallaki," Nadia lonelus is well known amongst the peasantry and nobles alike. Nadia has had no less than four different husbands. Each of them dying off in a mysterious or unforeseen way. Most people of the village have concluded that Nadia is cursed. Nadia has inherited all of her father's guile and cunning. She is an exquisite politician and strict administrator. She is often Nicolai's go-to woman, running the day-to-day operations of the family. Nadia has two young children: Serena and Tari.

Rumor: Nadia would make an excellent replacement for Nicolai as burgomeister, but Nicolai fails to see why a woman should take his place. Nadia has her hand in about as many places as her father, and she even has some resources that her father does not possess. The biggest rumor of all is that she has contacts with the infamous Ba'al Verzi Assassins.

Truths: Nadia does indeed have contacts with the Ba'al Verzi Assassins, but the extent of her information will not likely uncover Vladimir as the hirer of these assassins to kill his father. The reason that all of her husbands have died is because of a curse placed upon her by a Vistani that she angered years ago. Anyone that Nadia loves will suffer a horrible and painful death. Thus, Nadia keeps her children, family, and everyone else at arm's length. She remains loyal to them but will not allow herself to love them.

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It is said that Nadia will be able to break her curse should she ever discover True Love.

Aerianna lonelus

Like Sviri, Aerianna has tried to distance herself from her family's political backbiting and scheming. Aerianna has instead taken up metal craft; becoming one of the finer weaponsmiths in the village, although one would never know this by looking upon her. She has a spectral beauty that makes many think that she is fey-touched. The fact that she is a weapons crafter is a small scandal for the Ionescus, for Aerianna is a noble doing the work of a commoner. Still, Aerianna has patently refused to close up shop, much to her father's enragement.

Rumors: Aerianna is perhaps the favorite of Nicolai. She alone comforts him on long nights, listens to him, and withholds judgment. Aerianna is known for disappearing for long stretches of time from the town. No one knows where she goes, but rumor has it that she keeps a lover in another town. Many comment constantly on Aerianna's appearance – the fact that she looks nothing like either her mother or father. Some say that she is actually fey-born, the result of a romantic twist between her mother, Maedra, and a fey lover.

Truths: Aerianna does not have a lover but certainly is a witch. She practices witchcraft with Lizuca Marusca in a sacred grove outside of town. There are perhaps a dozen members of their small coven, and they practice their druidic rites in the light of the full moon. Aerianna's activities could easily bring ruin to her and her family name. If she was ever discovered, her father would be forced to burn her or drown her as is proper for a witch in Barovia.

As for her strange appearance, Aerianna was blessed by the fey at birth, marked in her crib for a special purpose. However, she is not a bastard child, as some would believe.

Nicolai the Lesser

This young innocent is Nicolai the Elder's last hope for an heir to the burgomeister position. The problem is that Nicolai the Lesser is anything but ready for the position. Young, naïve, and unsure of himself, Nicolai is more of a follower than a leader. Currently, he serves in the town militia, under the watchful eye of Dagrís the Cruel. Nicolai desperately wants his father's approval, but lacks courage and direction.

Rumors: Rumor has it that Nicolai and Nyssa Dolevnia are lovers, but this remains unproven. Nicolai the Elder would frown upon such a relationship, since the Dolevnia clan is Gundarkite by race. Dagrís suspects the love affair and would like nothing more than to rat out Nicolai to his father.

Truths: Nyssa and Nicolai are indeed lovers. What Nicolai fails to realize is that he is a budding paladin. His newfound abilities and powers confuse him, and not even he is aware of what they mean. Nicolai could actually lead his family to greatness if he was aware that deep down lays a truly remarkable leader.

Eval Ostevik (lonelus)

Considered the black sheep of the family, Eval changed his name.

Eval Ostevik was born 45 years ago in Vallaki, from a well to do noble family. His mother died giving birth to him and his father, Nicolai lonelus, cherished him. Nicolai was then and still is the burgomaster of Vallaki (Barovia).

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Eval had a peaceful childhood with his busy father spending a great deal of time with him. When he was eight years old, Eval proudly wore a chain mail shirt made for his size, and that chain mail that bore the armory of Barovia. Nicolai Ionelus often brought his son along on his official duties but never when he met Count Strahd. Eval understood that something was odd with his father's master, but it was only later that he guessed the real nature of the ruler of Barovia...

To the father's chagrin, the boyar and son haven't spoken to each other over the past fifteen years. Eval strongly disagrees of his father "serving the devil Strahd" and did put his father in a few awkward situations in the past due to his overly rebellious temper and loud mouth. Another teen would have probably been executed, if he weren't the son of the boyar...

After a few years of loud confrontation with his father, Eval realized that he couldn't change his father's opinion of the Barovia master. Eval then left his father's manor and established himself in a abandoned house located on a wooded piece of land about three miles south of Vallaki that belonged to his father. It is then that he publicly changed his last name to adopt his late grandmother's.

Using his money to buy supplies to ensure his subsistence, slowly he cleared the woods around his house, and after a few years of solitude, he got himself a small, but well maintained farm. On a personal note, he also gained more wisdom and grew calmer.

Unknown to Eval, his father was still looking after him. Even though he was heartbroken over his son's decision, Nicolai exempted him from taxes and made sure nobody threatened his son's quiet, solitary life. In the first years, he even had some fresh goods delivered to a place he was sure that Eval would find it.

However, it was when Vistani vardos appeared and arrived on his land by the wooden path that his quiet life was forever changed. The gypsies were from the Kamshatskanic tribe, and were led by an elderly *oma* named Sophia. The local populace had refused them camping space in Vallaki over an accusation about a stolen dog. It was a good reason for Eval to welcome them. Eval was also fascinated with the Vistani and was more than eager to observe them from close.

They asked Eval for the fee he wanted them to pay for staying on his land for two weeks, but he told them it was free for them to temporarily camp on his land. He showed them the best sources for pure water and other supplies. He would welcome them and ask nothing in return for this time and at many other occasions since then.

With time, a healthy relationship was established between the tribe and Eval. Both parties respected the other's privacy and tried to lend aid to the other when they could.

One year, they came back to Vallaki with a temporary member, a young half-Vistana named Rosalia. Sophia introduced Rosalia to Eval and she quickly fell for the strong young man. The reverse soon became true for Eval. Between them, it was passion and that strong emotion is still there today, about 8 years after their first meeting. Rosalia left the tribe and lives with Eval on his farm, where she shares the hard task of maintaining it.

Today, the couple is known to shelter most outcasts and Vistani. Considered a friend by a few Vistani tribes, they are often invited to share their meal and songs at night.

They go to Vallaki about two times per month, to get supplies and sell their farm goods.

Eval has started writing his old father about a year ago, and their correspondence is often filled with reproaches and past anger, but at least they are now communicating... The old burgomaster's wish is to hold his son in his arm and make peace with him.

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The Ostevik couple sheltered young Eeve Beiderbecke on their farm when she left her hometown in a hurry with her brother Leon.

Eeve Beiderbecke lived in a now abandoned wooden shack on the perimeter of the Ostevik fields, where she lived with her brother Leon until her death – the “Grave of Eeve Beiderbecke” is located in the woods a few hundred yards from her former house (see that entry in this article).

The aloof Leon Beiderbecke, now aged 12, lives with the Ostevik. He has started talking but seldom does.

Eval and Rosalia should be considered commoners of level 5 and 2 respectively.

Young Leon has strong but untapped and unexploited psionic gifts. He was very affected by the death of his sister. He doesn't seem interested yet by his sister's spell book.

The Ostevik characters were first introduced near the end of the Galen saga – year one.

Get the “Malodorous Goat netbook” at and “Galen Story year one” at for more information on these characters of the Galen saga.

The Dolevina Family

The Dolevina Family has been a family of scholars, sages, and astronomers for as long as anyone can remember. Their bloodline has a reputation for being keepers of hidden knowledge. It is said that they keep dark secrets that even the Vistani do not even know within their stronghold. Even though the Dolevinas are ethnically Gundarkites, they are given great respect in town for their longevity and wisdom. The Dolevinas are said to know more about Barovia than anyone, save the Devil Strahd.

While the Dolevinas are an isolated family, who stay to themselves for the most part, they also run the majority of the town's bookstores and libraries.

Lavinia the Blind

Lavinia is the oldest living person in the village of Vallaki. At the venerable age of 110 years old, Lavinia has seen more Barovian history than anyone else in the village. Despite her ethnicity, she is given great respect for her longevity and wisdom. Lavinia is a renowned scholar, who specializes in the research of relics and artifacts. It is said that she will occasionally buy or trade for such artifacts, if the right item comes to her attention.

Rumors: Lavinia is said to have a vault of mystical items stored beneath the family stronghold. A few thieves have tried to claim these treasures, but all have failed.

Boriska Dolevina

Boriska is the daughter of Lavinia, despite the fact that many fail to realize this at first sight. She is over 75 years old and acts as the family matron, running the family's day-to-day affairs. She is a reputed sage as well, specializing in demon lore and demonology.

Rumors: It is rumored that Boriska had an affair with a vampire, and the offspring of this union was Balthazar Dolevina. There is little evidence to support this idea. If there could ever be solid proof, it would probably mean the death of Boriska at the hands of an angry mob.

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In reality, most believe that Boriska took a lover in town, though no one is sure whom this lover is.

Truths: Boriska did have an affair with a vampire, but the secrets do not end there. Boriska had an affair with none other than Duke Gundar, a fact that she has hidden from Bathazar. Boriska was compelled by Duke Gundar to bear his child, for in the end, he saw his reign coming to close. Thus, Bathazar is the heir to the now-defunct Gundarak throne, though no one is aware of this.

Balthazar Dolevina

Balthazar is strangely robust for a man in his fifties. He moves with a wolf-like grace and his eyes are alight with a savage fire. Balthazar is a hunter of the dead in Vallaki. He has overcome the prejudice of many in the village as a dhamphir, a half-vampire. Balthazar often works with Dagrís the Cruel to keep the village safe. As a side job, Balthazar treats and prepares the bodies of the dead for burial, and maintains the village graveyard. He is also known to be a sage on knowledge of the undead.

Rumors: The biggest rumor is, of course, that Balthazar is a dhamphir, a half-vampire. Balthazar uses his dhamphir status to tout his services as a spirit-finder, and undead hunter. He has won the respect of the village by putting down numerous creatures of the night.

Truths: Balthazar has recently been receiving strange dreams in the night. He constantly dreams of a carnival, which has a long tent filled with all sorts of lurid objects. In the tent is a coffin, and he is drawn to this unknown coffin. Little does Balthazar know that he is being drawn back to his father, who is actually staked and on display in the carnival.

Nyssa Dolevina

Nyssa is a bit of a rebel in her family. Taking after her father, Nyssa is a physical woman, primarily a woodcutter, trapper, and hunter by trade. She knows the environs of Vallaki quite well, and often hires herself out as a guide. Nyssa has not totally divorced herself from family tradition, however. She is a known sage on the topic of lycanthropes of all kinds. Nyssa also acts as the voice of the Gundarakite protest movements in Vallaki. She uses her name to shield her from open attacks in public and seeks to heal the rift between Barovian and Gundarkite.

Rumors: It is said the Nyssa and Nicolai the Lesser share a passionate relationship. If this were true, it would cast a black mark upon the Ionescu family, since one of their Barovian stock would have been caught mingling with a Gundarkite. It is also rumored that Nyssa is a secret member of the Gundarkite resistance, and receives orders from her brother, Istivan, each night.

Truths: Nyssa is worried that her rebel brother's recklessness will ruin the Gundarkite's chance at true independence. She is willing to see Istvan die, despite her deep love of him. Nyssa is the leader of the Gundarakite resistance in the area and holds secret meetings in a forgotten series of catacombs in the graveyard. The catacombs lead into the Vault of Quinn Roche, though no one has ever dared to venture there.

Istivan Dolevina

Istivan is the black sheep of the Dolevina family. Running away three years ago, Istivan has returned, now the leader of an underground Gundarkite movement. Istivan has appeared in town several times but fled each time into the safety of the mountains. It is well known that he has a cadre of like-minded Gundarkites with

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him. No doubt, this band of rebels has a hideout of some sort in the hills.

Rumors: Istivan is a known cutthroat and murderer. It is rumored that a secret entrance that leads into the depths of a mountain hides his hideout. Istivan's attacks appear to be well organized and well funded. Some say that these attacks are simply too well funded. Many suspect that another power lurks behind Istivan, concealed in the shadows.

Truths: Istivan is indeed being funded by several powerful sources. First, the Watcher family, who would like nothing better than to see the downfall of the Ionescus, is funding him. Second, Istivan is receiving aid from the Kargat, who are trying to chip away at Strahd's power base by creating strife in his domain. Both of these forces make Istivan and his band a force to be reckoned with.

The Marusca Family

The Marusca Family is largely a merchant family that nonetheless exerts its influence over the village of Vallaki. First of all, the Marusca Family owns and operates a great deal of the fishing that goes on in Vallaki. They know the best fishing spots on the lake and know more about the terrors that lurk below the depth of the lake than anyone else. The Marusca Family also possesses the secret to making fine fishing nets that reap the most fish from the depths of Lake Zarovich. Finally, the Marusca Family is known to have the 'Gift.' Most of their family members are seers, mediums, midwives, or spirit finders. Their members walk a fine line between folk remedies and outright witchcraft. Thus, the Marusca Family is either respected in the village...or feared.

At the beginning of the campaign, Balinoks owe the Marusca family an ancestral debt.

Gregor Marusca

The eldest of the current Marusca family, Gregor is the lead fisherman in the village of Vallaki. Much of what goes on in the village fishing-wise depends on him. If Gregor does not go out in the morning, you can be sure that no other boats will test the lake waters either. If Gregor stays late in the day, one can be sure that the fishing fleet will remain out as well. Gregor has an uncanny knack for knowing the weather, and he knows more than anyone about the secrets of Lake Zarovich.

Rumors: Gregor never married, and it is rumored that he secretly wed a voyandnoi, an ancient water spirit. Besides this, Gregor is supposed to know the names of almost every nature spirit in and around the lake. He is even said to have visited the land of the dwarves and the land of the elves.

Euodicha Marusca

The sister of Gregor, Euodicha is a known alchemist and midwife. She also possesses the knowledge of the famous Marusca fishing nets. She commands a high position in the village as the community healer. Adding to her reputation is her marvelous demeanor as a bedside physician. Because of her delightful manner, many in the village love Euodicha.

Rumors: Despite her positive outlook, Euodicha bears a heavy grudge against Petru Romulich, whom she believes to be a criminal and charlatan of the lowest sort. Her hate of Petru threatens to start a family rivalry.

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Lizuca Marusca

The daughter of Euodicha, Lizuca is the town's animal whisperer. It is said that Lizuca can coax an old cow to give milk or a rooster to lay an egg. Lizuca's talent with animals makes her popular with peasants and nobles alike. Not only does Lizuca possess an amazing rapport with animals, but she is also a skilled fisher woman, following her in uncle's footsteps. Nowadays, the fish she hauls in everyday rivals her uncle's.

Rumors: It is said that Lizuca can swim like an eel and possesses an uncanny ability to hold her breath for long periods of time. Because of these traits, Lizuca knows the depths of Zarovich Lake like no one else. Some say that she is, in fact, Gregor Marusca's daughter – the offspring between him and a nymph. Other rumors about Lizuca include a past dalliance with Svati Ionescu, which, if true, would certainly put a stain upon the holy man's record.

Randani Hilin-Marusca

Randani married into the Marusca Family, but he fits right into their strange community. Randani is a well-known spirit finder, who often finds spirits in people's homes and chases them out. He runs one of the village's many libraries, which is filled with arcane and mystical information. Randani also uses the library as an informal schoolhouse. Randani teaches a few hours every afternoon, and he is a renowned storyteller.

Rumors: Randani is rumored to have run into a spirit recently that he could not chase out. The powerful spirit was located in the Ionescu Stronghold. Rumor has it that after a pitched battle, involving the death of several guards, the demon spirit fled into the night, vowing to return

Randani maintains a chipper façade about the entire affair, loathing to speak of it.

Lileera Marusca

Ever since she was a child, Lileera has been a spiritual medium. For a long while, the village wanted nothing more than to banish the child, but after she used her medium talents to solve a murder in the village, the town has since changed its tune. Now, people come from all over Barovia seeking Marusca's advice. She is seen as a withdrawn but wise woman, who is viewed with a little pity by some.

Rumors: Lileera's ability makes her a hot commodity for those who wish to speak to the dead. As such, she has become patron for grave robbers, like the few daring souls who have tried to enter the Vault of Quinn Roche. Thus, Lileera has numerous contacts with underworld types, though she tries to remain above such shady dealings.

The Romulich Family

The Romulich Family is infamous for having more skeletons in the closet than any other family in Vallaki. They are known around town as key figures in the Vallaki underworld. As Vallaki is known as a place for dark secrets, the Romulich family is known to be traders of those secrets. Their family does not stop there, though. They are also known as dealers in narcotics and flesh. They run opium dens and pleasure houses. They deal in illicit goods and stolen booty. Just about every form of debauchery may be attributed to their name. And yet, they remain untouchable because of their high status as a noble family in Vallaki. Besides, the Romulich family produces a fine wine that brings in a tremendous profit to the village. Without their wine, the village would be in dire financial straights.

Petru Romulich

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Petru is known about town as “the little devil.” He is an irascible man, who is famous for his short temper and sinister ways. He actually delights in the pain of others, laughing when those who owe him debts are thrown in the dungeon. Petru is a known criminal in town. Everyone knows that he is a smuggler, drug runner, and extortionist, but no one can do anything about it. A position that Petru seems to delight in.

Rumors: Many in the village know that Petru is seeking to take the seat of Burgomeister from the Ionescus. However, doing so is another matter. Most believe that if a war should come between the Romulich and the Ionescu families, then the Romulich family will be swallowed alive.

Truths: Petru is not without cunning or guile. Currently, he is plotting with the Watcher family in an attempt to take down the Ionescus. To vacillate this, Petru keeps constant contact with Gjon – who helps him with the trafficking of illicit goods on the side. He does not know about the Watcher alliance with Istivan.

Ylenia Romulich

Ylenia functions as the town’s madam, overseeing all manners of pleasures for lonely fishermen or weary travelers. Ylenia only employs the best women and promises only the most decadent of pleasures to her clients. Through her clients’ pillow talk, Ylenia knows a great deal about everybody in town, and it is said that there is not a secret Ylenia does not know. Fortunately for most, she is keeping her mouth shut for now.

Rumors: It is said that Ylenia keeps a lover in town, though no one knows whom this lover is. All anyone sees is a cloaked horseman that rides up to the doorstep of the Nymph with her there to greet him. It is suspected that Petru is aware of this affair but could care less.

Truths: In fact, Ylenia’s lover is Laurenica, the bardic vampire of the locale. She is quite aware of his vampiric nature, but her lust and his hypnotic power is blinds her. Laurenica does not feed from Ylenia on a regular basis, realizing that her death or sickness might reveal him. He does, however, use her for political favors.

Mikal Romulich

Mikal is a known smuggler of illicit and stolen goods. He is beloved by many women in town as a dashing rogue and bandit. As a flamboyant criminal, Mikal has had more than one run in with the town’s law – Dagrís the Cruel. His latest confrontation had Dagrís publicly whip him within an inch of his life, an incident that Mikal will never forget. Even now, he schemes for revenge against Dagrís.

Rumors: Many believe that Mikal hoards a secret stash of treasure. They say that he has a secret cave, watched over by the halving family in the mountains. According to rumor, Mikal has a vast and enormous treasure trove, the spoils of over one hundred caravans, hidden in the cave.

Truths: In actuality, Mikal has no cave or riches or spoils. Everything he steals he gives to Strahd, for Mikal is a member of the Ebon Gargoyles, one of Strahd’s loyal spies. Mikal’s position in the Romulich family is ideal, since he can watch all illicit activity in the village, but play the role of the “hero” as well.

Florica Romulich

Every town has one and Vallaki is no exception. There is perhaps no young nobleman who does not know Florica Romulich ...intimately. She has visited the beds of over a dozen young bachelors in the village and some of them not even of noble blood. While many

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noble families might be destroyed by such a reputation, it seems to “fit” the persona of the Romulich family. Florica is no brainless harlot, however. She is as manipulative and deceitful as they come. No less than four duels have been fought over her; two of them resulting in death.

Rumors: There are hundreds of rumors surrounding Florica – whom she’s slept with and whom she hasn’t. There are dozens of rumors every week about her exploits. Perhaps the greatest rumor of all is that she enchants men, using her powers...as a witch.

Truths: Florica has never used spells to get the attention of men. You don’t need magic to do that. Just guile. However, her latest love affair would certainly cause a stir. She is currently seeing Sviri Ionescu. This would cause ripples on a number of fronts. One, Sviri is a priest. Two, Florica is who she is. Three, the Romulich and Ionescus hate each other. While Sviri is infatuated with Florica, he’s just another dalliance to her.

Orinal Romulich

Orinal Romulich runs the day-to-day operations of the family. Despite his youth, Orinal presents a compelling front. He is clean-cut, direct, and forthright. He carries himself like a prince, not the member of a decadent family. Orinal’s well-mannered presentation of himself makes many believe that he is not truly a member of the Romulich family but an adopted orphan or the product of an illicit love affair.

Rumors: Many rumors have it that Orinal is planning to take over the family business, yanking it out from under the legs of his older brother, Mikal. Many also believe that Orinal is attempting to set the family business straight and go complete legitimate.

Truths: The truth of the matter is that Orinal is actually perhaps the most evil of the entire Romulich family. In secret, Orinal is a sadist and murderer, sometimes engaging in hideous and perverted pleasures. The only one in the family that knows this secret is his mother. Orinal is the one who is responsible for killing the poor shepard, who the Ionescu twins now worship as a false god. Orinal has no idea about this, nor does he care.

Characters of Note

While having those of great note and importance within the small, yet thriving settlement, Vallaki is far from complete with the mere mentioned of those famed characters alone. What was Robert of Locksley without his followers? What good is a king in battle without his warriors to serve him and die in his name?

These characters are those of interest and note. While many may go unnoticed by those that greet them day after day, they all have qualities that prove them to be noteworthy within the populace of Vallaki.

Dagris the Cruel

Dagris earned his name through his savage disposition and vengeful attitude. More often than not, he is drunk, and many fear Dagris’s whip. People have a love/hate relationship with Dagris. While he is little more than a town bully, they are glad to have him on *their* side. Which is how some think he got the position in the first place. Dagris has several long-standing rivalries in town. He watches over young Nicolai the Lesser, a position he considers little more than being a baby sitter. He also has a

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deep hatred of Mikal Romulich, the famous “gentleman bandit” in the area.

Rumors: Dagrís is suspicious of Nicolai, suspecting him to be a soft and weak fool, traits that Dagrís will not allow in someone who might be the future leader of Vallaki. Dagrís is also not quite as “drunk” all the time as people suspect. He knows a great deal about what goes on in town, which is having an affair with whom, etc. and he likes to extort people on a regular basis.

Truths: The truth is that Dagrís is being paid by Nicolai the Elder to play the role of drunk bully. Nicolai hopes that his youngest son will take up the position of Captain of the Guard from Dagrís, and once and for all “prove that he is a man.” Dagrís is actually nothing more than a glorified bodyguard for Nicolai’s last hope for the Ionescu line.

Morgalla

Astronomer, sage, and adventurer. Morgalla is a foreigner to Barovia, an occurrence almost as rare as being a demihuman. She moved to Vallaki because of the access to ancient texts and libraries that she has here. She has regular (albeit unreliable) correspondence with her home in Mordent. Over the past year, people have learned to accept her presence, referring to her as “the foreigner.” Her sister, Adria, works at the Blue Wave.

Rumors: Morgalla moved to Vallaki, not just for its forbidden secrets, but because she hoped that she would find a cure for Adria’s “curse.” So far, she hasn’t had any luck, but has found several leads – one lies in a place called the Forgotten Monastery and the other in the dreaded Vault of Quinn Roche.

Truths: Adria’s body was not always broken and twisted. She was once beautiful and capable, but her form was changed when she

crossed one member of the wicked Roche family. Now, the Roche family has disappeared and Morgalla is trying to track down their past.

Tavlis

This bawdy, lusty, and randy gnome is the twisted owner of the Blue Wave and the Hanged Man, the finest tavern and inn that Vallaki has to offer. He first came to Vallaki years ago as a merchant, selling all kinds of strange and exotic crafts. He became rich overnight and used his funds to buy himself both a tavern and an inn.

Tavlis’s wealth could make him a noble in his own right, but his demihuman status prevents it. Tavlis doesn’t seem to mind as long as the money keeps poring into his coffers.

Rumors: It is said that Tavlis used to sell many exotic and rare items. Well, where did he get these items? There are a few rumors. Some believe that Tavlis discovered the horde of a long-dead dragon and made off with the gold. Others think that the dragon is still out there, looking for the treasure. And still others believe he got his treasures from the gnomes, who still bring him gifts from time to time.

Truths Tavlis accumulated his treasure from the horde of a sleeping dragon, which has remained asleep until recently. He secretly fears that the dragon will come searching for its treasure, because Tavlis has spent most of it building his tavern and inn. Little does Tavlis know that the dragon could not care less about him. However, he does know where the dragon’s lair is...

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Narum

The only rival blacksmith to Aerianna Ionescu is Narum, the town's finest metalworker. Narum is a curiosity in the town. He was offered a place amongst the dwarves for a year and a day to learn their craft. He accepted the offer; not realizing that a year and a day in dwarf-time was about ten years in mortal terms. Thus, many believed that Narum was gone forever. However, he returned to find to his horror that the village had moved on without him. His wife had remarried, and his children had grown up. Today, people accept Narum, but he has never lost his mystique or the people's hidden fear of him. He rarely talks of his experiences with the dwarves, and when he does, he describes it almost like a dream.

Rumors: It is said that his time with the dwarves allows Narum to create magical items. It is said that he can make lamps that burn twice as long, horseshoes that put a spring in the step of any horse, and even weapons that hold some enchantment.

Truths: Narum can make magical items; still he is loath to do so, since he fears being accused of witchcraft. Narum also knows many of the dwarves' secrets. He knows where their strongholds are and even knows a bit about dwarven rune magic. (Treat Narum as a sorcerer/cleric who must always use his spells through a rune medium).

Gjon

Gjon is a rarity in town, a Thaani. He looks very different from the usual Barovian populace with his pink skin and red hair (what is left of it). Many in town revile this fat, decadent, and condescending man. He is the chief import/export merchant in town, in charge of acquiring luxury items for the rich nobles of the town. Thus, despite the peoples' hate for this

snobby merchant, there is little that they can do about it.

Rumors: It is known that Gjon has a relationship with Petru Romulich, and that Gjon trades in illicit goods on the side for Petru. It is said that Gjon deals in numerous opiates, even some slaves for Petru.

Truths: The big secret, of course, is that Gjon is a spy for the Watcher family. He is here to ensure that the Ionescu family is discredited, or dismantled.

Bervis the Beekeeper

One of the only other gnomes in Vallaki is Bervis, the mad beekeeper. Most people leave Bervis alone in his cabin. Still, everyone agrees that while Bervis is indeed mad, he is fairly harmless. He pulls the best honey in Vallaki, and makes a good selling of it to Gjon as an export. Bervis does not simply deal in honey, however. His real talent is making alchemical potions. He sells potions of all kinds: philters of love, healing salves...even some say, a potion that will make one invisible.

Rumors: Bervis is most definitely mad, driven to madness by a special poison that constantly runs through his veins. It is said that if Bervis wishes to drive someone else mad, he puts a drop of his own blood in their honey or potion that he sells them.

Truths: Bervis was not driven mad by any poison but by an encounter with Red Alice. Bervis actually visited the Clarion Knight's stronghold by accident when searching for alchemical herbs. He was witness to the myriad horrors there, and it was these things that drove him completely insane.

Adria

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This poor, shunned Caliban works at the Hanged Man under the watchful eye of Tavlís. Her appearance is so disturbing, so hideous, that she works only while wearing a long robe with her face entirely covered. She is not even permitted to cook or serve the food. Instead she cleans rooms and empties chamber pots – the only work she is fit to do, according to Tavlís.

Rumors: Adria was once very beautiful according to some, but suffered a terrible curse from the Roche family, who once ruled Vallaki. It is said that while one of the Roche family was visiting Mordent, they spied Adria and desired to court her. When she spurned him, the young noble spit in her face, cursing her for all time.

Truths: In actually, the ‘young’ noble that was trying to court her was Pitor Roche, the crazed scientist. When Adria spurned his clumsy advances, Pitor had her seized by his men. He subjected her to various experiments until finally attaching her to his newly acquired Apparatus. There, her mind was placed into the body of an old experimental subject of Roche’s, while the juvenile mind of the subjects was placed in Adria’s body so that Pitor could better enjoy it.

Outlanders

While those that dwell anywhere within the dread realms appear vastly human in population, the world is not without the oddities referred to as demihimans. Many see the individuals of such races as unusual, strange and commonly untrustworthy. All too common are those who come into a small town or village, such as Vallaki, and end up hanging at the gallows for crimes they did not commit. If not death, they will be the subjects of verbal or physical abuse and forced to leave town without what they seek. Sometime, they are even robbed by the very merchants that serve them.

Moloch, the Mountain King and the Dwarven Realm

Moloch is the ruler of all dwarves in Barovia and the “shaker of the mountain.” He “rules” the mountains south of Vallaki. His tiny kingdom overlooks the picturesque Lake Zarovich and the town of Vallaki itself. Moloch is called the “shaker of the mountain” because of his ability to shake the mountainside whenever he is angry or upset. He is said to be the sole cause of the constant storms that rage over his kingdom night and day.

Very few have ever laid eyes upon Moloch. Most simply know of him through legend. To date, only one person has ever been confirmed as having seen Moloch – Narum the Smith. Moloch is thought to be an angry, vengeful being that rules over his dwarven kingdom with both greed and wrath. The dwarves are often accused of kidnapping children in the night to force them to work in their mines. Whenever a parent wants to scare their children at night, they tell their children, “beware, or the dwarves will get you.”

Indeed, the dwarves are reputed to be cruel and xenophobic in the extreme. A dwarf in the mountains is completely unlikely to trust anyone he sees. Often dwarves flee or attack on sight. Rumor has it that if one can capture a dwarf, that the dwarf will be compelled to bargain for its freedom in exchange for its hidden stash of gold.

Rumors: It is said by the wise that the storms over Moloch’s realm are not caused entirely by him. Travelers to that forsaken land are said to have spied Moloch on a high peak, striving with some unseen force. Obscure folklore states that Moloch constantly strives with some other, greater being for the control of sky above his kingdom, but always ends up ...

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... losing in the end. Moloch's dark mood, then, is caused by his never-ending defeat.

The dwarves of the mountains are said to, on occasion, take an apprentice into their midst and train them in their craft. Such a person is given an extraordinary opportunity, for they learn the secrets of craft that make all other craft pale in comparison. However, the chosen being is compelled to live amongst the dwarves for ten years. Few are willing to make such a sacrifice, even when they are chosen.

Truths: Moloch has no true control over his kingdom. Earthquakes and storms plague his mountain realm constantly. Because Moloch is a powerful druid, he constantly strives against the forces that threaten to destroy his realm. However, he worries about the day that he finally passes and will be unable to protect his realm from destruction.

Lorelei the Marquessa of Autumn and the Elven Realm

Lorelei is the queen of the local elves and fey in the area. She is ruler of the shee and commander of the Seelie Court around the village of Vallaki. Like the dwarves, Lorelei and the elves are known for stealing children for use in their realm. It is well known that once a year, Queen Maeve steps from the Mists and demands tribute from Lorelei. At that time, Lorelei gives up the shadows she has gathered for Queen Maeve.

Unlike the dwarves, the elves are not seen as active kidnappers. The elves are more likely to take people who foolishly wander into their realm, or people who slight or offend them in some way. Thus, it always pays to be on good terms with the elves.

Being on good terms with the elves often entails leaving them offerings, or paying them respects in one's daily life. Examples of respect include always leaving one stalk of wheat uncut

in the field, or replanting after chopping down a tree for lumber.

Rumors: Lorelei is said to have a special relationship with ravens. It is said that she can speak to them and that they function as her messengers and spies. It is also said that Lorelei is in the possession of a sacred and hidden realm within Barovia. Folklore tells of a place that is devoid of the horrors of the land. No monsters dare show their face there, and no Mists tread upon that place. It is a place of peace, tranquility, and repose. Once any mortal enters that place, however, they may never leave.

Truths: In truth, a celestial treant lives at the core of Lorelei's hidden realm. Because the treant radiates a reality wrinkle, it is a tiny pocket of goodness and light in the realm of Ravenloft. It is a place where the evil of the land does not rule. In addition to that, all beings within the Hidden Realm do not age. Due to an ancient pact, any mortal being entering the Hidden Realm may never leave. Only elves, shee, or fey are exempt from this sacred rule. The occupants of the Hidden Realm are not without their own horrors. All people within the Hidden Realm are condemned prisoners, doomed to watch the suffering of the land all around them, but unable to help in anyway. Thus, they are compelled to go on living forever, watching the world around them boil with darkness, and stripped of any power to do anything about it.

Places of Business

Beyond the people of any place or community, the bones of such a foundation are the structures and needs that it holds. Small marketers to wealthy merchants battle with prices and the gift of the gab for domination. Some businesses that have been handed from father to son for many generations continue the same trademarks that they always have.

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Petru Blacksmith Shop

Situated in the Lower Town and run by Petru Tobeichik (LN human Barovian male Exp5/War1), this shop specializes mostly in providing for the needs of local fishermen (hooks and loads) as well as all-too-common agricultural instruments for nearby farmers and horseshoes/wheel repair for merchants. Arms and armor are not very popular among the local populace, so it's unlikely for the PCs to find anything except simple weapons and leather armor at any given time. If asked for, however, Petru can specifically craft the required weapon or piece of armor for the price listed in the PHB.

Petru lives in a small one-story house built of white washed bricks ten yards away from his smithy with his wife Nastacia (CN human Barovian female Com1) and two of his sons, Sergo and Roman. Sergo (TN human Barovian male Exp1) is the eldest of the two and helps his father in the smithy, hoping to become as skillful as Petru someday. Roman (LG human male Barovian Clr1) is considered a black sheep, however, since he decided to dedicate his life to serving people and became an anchorite of Ezra (he now helps Toret Mugur Costinus about the temple and runs small errands for the church). Roman's clerical carrier may one day become the reason for his banishment out of parents' house, but so far Petru hopes he can return his wayward offspring on the "right path" (with fists and belt, mostly).

Yoshek house

Yoshek (CE male darkling Rog6) runs a pawnshop in his house. He buys everything he deems being of any worth, albeit for a low price. Yoshek occasionally deals in stolen goods, although he tries to be careful and doesn't sell items that were stolen in Vallaki. He travels to Krezk any time his hoard of items stolen in Vallaki grows to a significant size so as to sell the stuff there. Sometimes he actually performs delicate tasks himself, when some wealthy person desperately needs something and knows whom to ask, but these missions are costly.

Recently, he has attracted the attention of The Red Vardo Traders (he disrupts their business and actually refuses to join them) and now seeks some one who could deal with this problem and discourage any future inquiries on their part. Not that he's willing to let his benefactors go away with their knowledge...

Festus the Horse Breeder

The stables under this sign, situated on the western outskirts of the Lower Town, are run by Festus (CG male gnome Exp3/Rog1), one of the few demihumans to dwell in Vallaki. He takes great delight in tending to all kinds of animals and has recently come to profit from his life-long hobby: he breeds and sells all kinds of common mounts listed in the PHB. He reserves his personal care and love for ponies, donkeys and dogs, preferring his employees to tend to larger breeds. Festus lives with his wife, Getra (CN female gnome Com2/Rog1), and two of his employees (Mikhail, LN human Barovian male Exp1; and Nikolai, TN human Barovian male Com1/Exp1) in a small wooden cottage with thatched roof nearby.

At any given time at least one riding dog, two mules, one donkey, four ponies, three light horses and two heavy horses are available for sale. If specifically asked, Festus can rear a warhorse, but it'll take at least a month and will cost 150% the sum listed in the PHB. He is eager to try his skills on exotic breeds as well, but he doesn't feel obliged to go and find some mythical beast himself. If given an opportunity, he would train such a beast for a mere sum of 500 gp.

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Mariska House

This small, two-storied house nestled between its two larger neighbors on one of the streets of Upper Town, is home to Mariska (NG human Gundarakite female Rog7/Ftr2/Exp2), a baker of some skills and talents. She lives on the second floor and the first is being used as a baker's shop. The sign over the door depicts a big and juicy-looking honey cake. When Barovian soldiers killed her husband during the annexation of Gundarak in 740 BC, Mariska chose to leave the life she had in Zeidenburg and moved to Vallaki. Here her skills as a baker proved to be an efficient shield against Barovian ethnic prejudice and open hostility towards Gundarakites. Her cakes and cooking quickly won over the hearts of burgomaster Nicolai Ionelus and several other authority figures, so that now she has a great amount of orders whenever any feast or public ceremony is due. Kind-hearted and cordial, Mariska is eager to sell traveling rations or even cakes and candies (if asked) to adventurers, seeing them as a force of good and justice bringing hope to this land of sorrows. Note that she has never mentioned her surname here, nor is she ever likely to. She chose to leave all her past life behind. However, a storm is brewing on the horizon, since she always runs the risk of being lynched by a mob of drunken Barovian youths. Recently, someone has started to speculate on her past, which only adds oil to the fire.

Chirgeon

Jusuf Hakiam (NE human Thaani male Wiz5), a small and skittish man with gnome-like features and appearance, makes up his living in Vallaki as a surgeon of sorts... He takes great delight in delving into the anatomy of different beings (humans and demihumans included), profiting from his hobby by conducting complex surgical operations for a fee. Jusuf lives in a small two-storied house (he lives on the second floor and conducts his official work on the first) with an attic (where he carries on his research on the anatomy, alchemy and arcane) and a cellar (where he conducts experiments his fellow

townsfolk would consider macabre at best). Jusuf dresses in gold-trimmed purple silken robes and a turban of sorts, and can be found enjoying his smoking pot while recuperating from his work. He is eager to take up whatever job he's offered if he feels he can cope with the task and if it might bring him any closer towards his ultimate goal – creation of life. He has been entertaining the thought of creating a female consort for himself of late.

Holy Sites

When viewing any community from afar, or scrutinizing from within, any foundation that forms the most important landmark on any society is that of ethics and morality. Without these, any community crumbles. While the law of a town may form a great importance on the people that dwell there, such authority overshadows many people, causing them to feel oppressed. However, in earlier times than the one we live in today, other forms of authority, one that was welcomed into the hearts of millions formed a law that took many centuries to replace, the law, or rather lore laid down in religion.

Church of Ezra

On the outskirts of Vallaki, one can notice an old and severely damaged building with a belfry, surrounded by a low hedge wall. This is one of the few local religious building and these days it serves as a church of Ezra. Throughout the years the building was used as a granary, stables and who-knows-what-else, but now as the times of disbelief seem to fade away, and people start coming to church for solace, a small cult of Ezra sprang up in Vallkki. Toret Mugar Costinus (LN male human Clr8) runs regular services in this church, as well as accepting confessions, helped by Roman Tobeichik. The building itself is yet to be repaired, with much of the roof caved in, the bell in the belfry stolen long ago, the ladder to the belfry rotted away and iconostasis yet to be installed. Toret Costinus can provide herbalist healing as well as *cure light wounds* and *potions of lesser*

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restoration for the price listed in the DMG. He has a scroll of raise dead written by a 10th-level Cleric cached away somewhere in the church, but he will only use it on a PC in return for some service to the church. He'll cast the *consecrate* spell before raising the dead to avoid the possible side effects of the latter.

Temple of the Morninglord

St. Martyn's church, a relatively recent addition to the prominent buildings crowded around the town square in the Upper Town, has been finished and blessed only two years ago. Its splendid stained-glass windows depict beautiful, if somber, deeds of St. Martyn, finder of the Morninglord's church in the Land of Mists. Inside, the faithful and even common visitors are taken aback by the richly decorated iconostasis, which is lit by hundreds of candles. A young, optimistic priest, by the name of Demetrius Vasiliev (CG human Gundarakites male Clr1), runs the temple. Demetrius was temporarily appointed to his position until the church found a more competent person for the job. With his father being Gundarakite and his mother being Barovian, Demetrius doesn't feel any prejudices against either of these groups. Having grown-up in a loving and caring family, he actually considers it a personal quest to bring peace and solace to his people and to make them live and prosper peacefully together. At daytime, the interior is illuminated by the sun, but many candles are kept burning all the time, because the storms and rains are frequent guests in these parts and the temple of the Lord of Dawn and Light is supposed to be well-illuminated at all times. However, when such a storm comes to pass or even twilight settles over the town, shadows elongate at the corners and loom under the galleries in the darkness above... At night, the church is immersed in darkness and bizarre noises can be heard in the main hall. Some who have heard them speak of a fiend who might have found a way into this house of god, but Demetrius has so far dismissed these rumors as insubstantial. He might ask adventurers for their assistance, however, if they come asking for his help.

Places of Interest

Even the most tedious and empty of places may have a meaning to someone it is these places that individuals cherish forever with the memories that were birthed at those sites. Some places may have some fame attached while others may be obscure or simply may not exist anymore, made way for in the name of progress or evolution. Some people remember a rose bush in a park for one reason, while another will remember it for something different. While the people and everyday appearances of a place make the flesh of any community, the character comes not from the people but rather the heritage and ancestry of that area.

The Grave of Eeve Beiberbecke

As described by Megan Llewelyn, the Vallaki Witch:

Evee Beiderbecke was a kind, honest young woman with a shining personality to match. I didn't know her half as well as I would have liked, and her sad death rocked the hearts and minds of those that knew and loved her. Though it is easier now than it was then to talk, or at least write of her death and the strange powers at play with her grave, it is better to explain something of this loving young woman to better understand the forces at play at her final resting place.

Evee was a compassionate, mischievous rogue with some talent in the arcane arts and helped a group that I commonly fall in with that protects a strange child named Galen Vallaki. The child appeared one evening outside the Malodorous Goat Tavern; with her friends, Evee was the first to find the child. The child was genderless, so they attempted to give it a name suitable for both genders; this name was Galen, and the last name Vallaki comes from where the child was found.

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For nearly two weeks after the child first appeared, the group, becoming known as The Taverners (with whom I am honored of being a member), traveled much of the Core. During these travels, the group has been dealing with a dreadful Hag and a terrifying werewolf willing to sacrifice her own children to the God she worshipped. Though these trials were hard, Eeve managed to pull through these tasks with some relative ease. It was back in Vallaki that she lost her life against the demon Inajira, whose name and existence I damn for all eternity. Eeve was struck down by the foul magic of the abomination. Despite the best efforts of her friends and allies, Eeve's life was still lost. Knowing that my powers were not enough to save her, I have blamed myself each and every day for her death. If I had been stronger, then she would still be with us, warming our hearts with her easy smile and wit.

That said we buried Eeve just to the south of Vallaki, on the farm on which she lived. Her grave is something of an oddity in Vallaki, and much superstition has risen around it. I must digress that those who visit the area do not listen to these far-fetched rumors; there is nothing ill or haunted about this wondrous woman's grave.

The headstone that marks this place is cut from granite. The stone is cut into a typical headstone with an oval frame at the top and a smooth finish on the face and back; however, the sides retain a rough edge. Engraved on the front of the stone are the words "Here Lies Eeve Beiderbecke. In the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make."

By day, those with a careful eye will notice a soft glow to the headstone. By night, this glow is clearly visible. The source of this light is not known to me, but I have strong feelings that another of our group, one I have not seen since Eeve's death, is the cause of it. I too have blessed the area; a blessing that remains as strong now as it did then, something that surprised me to no end. Blessings normally fade with time, but the one where Eeve's mortal form rests has not. Also, the tree I planted at the

grave has never lost its leaves once, not even in the dead of winter.

Those visiting the grave often feel some closure, as if an unseen force protects them. Eeve was kind and protecting of the innocent, I feel she would be proud to know that she carries on with this practice today, even if through more indirect means. Whenever I visit the grave, despite the safe feeling it seems to project, there is an element of sadness in my soul at the same time. This anguish may be caused by my closeness to Eeve, but other suffering may also be causing it.

Megan Llewelyn
Vallaki January 12th, 757 BC.

The source of the protection granted from being near Eeve's grave is given off by the culminating powers of both Psionic and Weave in origin. The Psionic energy was granted by a man who had fallen in love with Eeve, one Castor Ravenwood, who has fallen out of touch with those that fought alongside Eeve and himself. To this day, his location is a secret withheld from them all. The light given off by the grave is caused by a Continual Light power cast by Castor onto the headstone. The feeling of protection is partially granted by a *Protection from Evil 15 ft. Radius* effect (as per the spell). Megan's Bless spell mixed with this, granting the effects of the latter to those of non-evil alignment.

The Continual Light effect is not as bright as the Continual Flame spell, instead granting its light to 20 ft. in all directions.

Any evil creature that enters the clearing, where the grave is found, will activate a psionic gem that was placed on the grave by Brom van Tassel, another friend of Eeve Beiderbecke. The gem creates an image of a warrior dressed in golden plate armor wielding a greatsword. Though the image cannot inflict actual harm, it's presence and aggressiveness normally chases off those that activate it.

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The Herbalist Cottage

Following an old forest road to the north of Vallaki, many would be surprised to find anything at all, but the sight of a small homely cottage is something that just as many would suspect as welcome with their eyes. The cottage is built from bricks of rough cut local stone, built once as a foresters home, it fell into disrepair in the late 600's after a spat of bloody killings at the hands of a murderous werewolf that haunted the region for some time. The beast passed on in time, but the cottage developed a reputation of being haunted. The road leading to the building went unused and for over 50 years it lay hidden and forgotten among the tall trees, resting near the shore of Lake Zarovich.

As said, the cottage was forgotten, but tales of the haunted building continued to live on long after the location and the truth of the cottage passed from living memory. Those seeking fortune and fame from investigating any truth behind the stories left as empty handed as they arrived. That is until one day in the summer of 753, when a young witch of foreign breed entered the town. She was covered in white gowns the color of pure snow, her head awash with dark tresses and equally dark eyes. Yet despite her alien appearance, something about her calmed the minds of the locals and their usual xenophobic nature was brushed aside enough to grant her some welcome. This young woman was Megan Llewelyn, traveling through the many realms in search of a way home, none knew at that time that she would be soon making Vallaki her new home.

The young woman, secretly a witch, quickly found board in the area within the Malodorous Goat tavern and befriended some of the locals, learning some of the local history and improving her skills with the local tongue, the name of which she learned to be Balok. Though she had no money, she bartered her skills and few possessions against what she required. The local herbalist was an aging man in his advanced years, his memory and skills fading as the days

remaining in his life grew fewer. He saw Megan as something of competition at first, but he eventually discovered her skills stood beyond his when she saved the life of a child he had abandoned for dead. Knowing the youngster superseded his talents; he did the noble thing and recommended her for the position of herbalist. With this, she was accepted.

Megan did not take the ancestral home of the town's herbalist, leaving the old man to live his remaining days where he had spent the majority of his adult life. The burgomaster pushed Megan to find a home. Eventually learning about the burgomaster's daughter growing ill and that a stranger had been discovered and chased from the property one night; Megan offered the burgomaster a simple charm to hang above his daughter's bed. With Megan's aid, the town leader's daughter soon returned to health. At the same time, Megan learned of the haunted cottage and sought it out. Using her ability to scry, she saw the cottage in the woods and visited it immediately. She found the haunting to be just rumor and hearsay, on returning to the town, she asked the burgomaster for the cottage and he accepted, granting it to her as a gift in exchange for saving his daughter's health.

The Practice: Over the past few years, Megan has run her herbalist practice from her cottage buried in the woods north of Vallaki. The cottage lays about half a miles walk from the edge of the town near the shore of Lake Zarovich. When the forest is quiet, the lapping waters of the shore can be heard from the herb garden growing in front of the cottage. Megan is known to have some magical skill to the locals and they dubbed her the Vallaki Witch out of humor and honor, very few of them know that this title is so fitting to her. Megan heals what she can through mundane medicine, only relying on her magic to heal that which natural means cannot.

For the past two years, Megan has had an apprentice named Hans, a local boy that she found in the forests near Vallaki while she was on one of the monster hunts. As well as an

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herbalist, Megan is becoming a popular figure among the townspeople as a protector against what haunts the night and other foes that endanger the town. However, many still find her a troublesome character and suspect her to be the cause of the excess in danger flooding toward the town.

Megan is a redeemed werewolf. The beast within her haunted her for nearly three years before the creature was finally expelled from her body by the most unusual of methods. A lot of the trouble in the town have been caused by her former alter ego when it escaped, but she dealt with the wounded and cured all traces of disease within them before it could take hold. Megan is a Drd9/Hwi5 of Lawful Good alignment, though her class and alignment are unusual, some leniency is granted for the character being an outlander. Megan is described in the Malodorous Goat Netbook.

Hans is a Drd5/Hwi2, Lawful Good and is given the same leniency as Megan, despite his Gundarakite ancestry.



Things that bump in
the night...

Mythica Nephos

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BONE PUDDING ANOTHER MAD WIZARD CREATION ...

By: Stanton Fink (Atma)

A horrid creation of a wretched sorceress that ran amuck... A devourer of the dead that has a taste for the living... Where has it gone to?

Large Undead Ooze

Hit Dice: 10d12(113 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 25 ft., Climb 25 ft.

AC: 20 (-1 Size, +11 Natural)

Attacks: Bite +17 Melee or 4

Pseudopods +12 melee*

*Due to the limits of its programming, the Bone Pudding cannot reach an enemy with more than one pseudopod at a time, so each pseudopod attack must be against a different enemy within reach.

Damage: Bite 4d6+10 caustic ** or Pseudopod 1d6+7+4 caustic **

** Ignores Damage Reduction of Undead with fewer HD than Bone Pudding

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Engulf

Special Qualities: Blindsight, Damage reduction 10/+1, Endoplasmic Fortification, Entropy, Flammable, HP Drain, Necromantic Immunity, Solidify, Stench of Evil, Ooze traits, Undead traits.

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 25, Dex 10, Con --, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 3

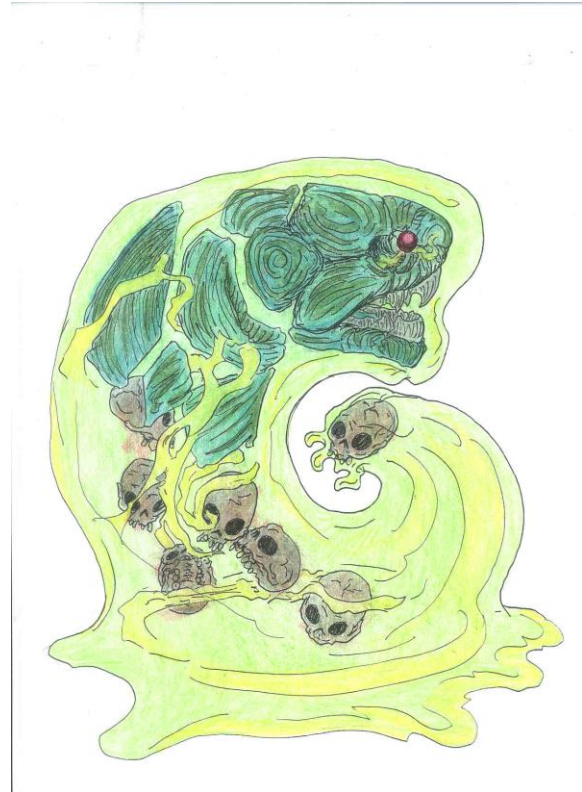
Climate/Terrain:

Organization: Solitary (unique)

Challenge Rating: 10

Alignment: Lawful evil

Advancement: special (see below)



The Bone Pudding appears to be a sausage-shaped pile of translucent green slime. Embedded within the slime is a large skull, vaguely reminiscent of a turtle, or shark, along with at least a dozen human or humanoid skulls floating beneath it. A miasma of sour wine gone rancid follows the gelatinous horror everywhere it goes.

Background

In the year 633, twenty years after the domain of Kartakass formed, a powerful necromancer entered from the Mists and established a lair to the north of Harmonia. No one remembers her name despite her terrible power, and scholars often confuse her with the priestess Radaga.

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Soon after moving in, the necromancer acquired the carcass of a huge predatory fish that had lived in the Lake of Red Tears. Realizing that a fish zombie out of water was useless to her, she sought to modify the carcass in order to maximize the utility of her soon-to-be new pet.

The necromancer acquired several hideous amoeba-like organisms known as “gelatinous cubes” and slew them by charging them with negative energy. She then embedded the fish carcass into the resultant soup and animated the abominable conglomerate, thus creating her beloved “Bone Pudding.”

According to the necromancer’s journals, the Bone Pudding served its mistress as an offal or “garbage-disposal unit.” It was kept in a tiny pit beneath the necromancer’s lair and was fed a constant stream of trash, failed experiments, disappointing servants, and the occasional annoying guest. In the year 691, the necromancer made the fatal error of attempting to improve on the original design. In trying to turn her garbage eater into a guardian beast, the Bone Pudding turned on her, and devoured her.

Current Sketch

The Bone Pudding, like many servitor undead, is extremely simple-minded, and is forever shackled to whatever is left of its “programming.” In this case, it is constantly seeking a stable source of food. Those few scholars and monster-hunters, who have heard of the beast, suspect that it may be in Darkon, preying on the wandering dead there, or it may be in Falkovnia, having been lured there by the mountains of refuse in and beneath its cities. A few adventurers even claimed to have fought with a large turtle-headed blob within Falkovnian sewers. Merchants traveling the eastern stretch of the Svalich Road in 694 BC noted a peculiar odor of sour wine lingering in the air.

Combat

The Bone Pudding will attack any creatures it encounters, because it is either attempting to defend its current food source or it suspects that it has discovered a new source of food. It always attacks undead first, since they are its favorite meal. Next, it will attack oozes and offal. Finally, the Bone Pudding turns its attention to any other creatures. Against a single enemy, it will attempt to engulf it, and then follow up with a bite. When fighting multiple enemies, it will use its pseudopods, attacking each enemy it can reach with one pseudopod. If it is in a hurry, such as when attempting to flee, the Bone Pudding will simply engulf whatever gets in its way.

Engulf (Ex): Like a gelatinous cube, the Bone Pudding can mow down creatures smaller than itself. It cannot make a bite or pseudopod attack on a round in which it engulfs. The Bone Pudding merely has to move over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make opportunity attacks against the pudding, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt opportunity attacks must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 15) or be engulfed; on a success, they are pushed back or aside (opponent’s choice) as the pudding moves forward. Engulfed creatures are considered to be grappled and trapped within its body. If it so chooses, it may automatically bite one trapped victim. The Bone Pudding can hold up to two Medium-size, four Small-size, and so on, creatures at once within its body. Engulfed creatures are drained of $1d8+3$ hp for every round they remain trapped. Engulfed living creatures also risk suffocation.

Blindsight (Ex): The Bone Pudding’s body acts as a sensory organ in much the same manner as an ooze, and can ascertain prey by scent and vibration within 60 feet.

Endoplasmic Fortification(Ex): When faced with enemies that it cannot defeat, or when in danger of starvation, the Bone Pudding condenses into a cyst, 2 feet in diameter. The cyst wall has 50 hit points, a hardness of 30, and break DC of 30. If the cyst wall is breached, the pudding bursts out, and immediately attempts to

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engulf its attackers. If it can not successfully engulf all of its foes within 3 turns, it flees immediately. While in hibernation, the Bone Pudding is in effective temporal stasis: it does not suffer from starvation, nor does it regain hit points.

Entropy (Su): The Bone Pudding can only heal itself by either feeding upon garbage, and carrion, or by feeding upon living and undead victims. For every 50 pounds of carrion or garbage it devours, it regains 1 hp. Furthermore, it loses 1 hit die for every day if the Bone Pudding is unable to feed for any reason.

Flammable (Ex): Bone Pudding takes double damage from magical fire, except on a successful save.

HP Drain (Su): Whenever the Bone Pudding successfully attacks a corporeal undead creature, or an ooze, it is healed for however much damage it has inflicted upon its target.

Necromantic Immunity (Su): The Bone Pudding's creator sought to use it to destroy a rival necromancer, and so augmented her creation so that whenever someone attempts to control it, rebuke it, or target it with necromantic magic, their DC is raised by 10. Furthermore, the Bone Pudding is immune to the effects of either *cure wounds*, or *cause wounds*.

Solidify (Ex): Bone Pudding takes no damage from cold. Instead, cold effects (except *chill touch*, which is necromancy) *slow* the Bone Pudding. If slowed for more than 5 rounds, it will automatically enter Endoplasmic Fortification (see above).

Stench of Evil (Su): As the ability in **Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead**, all good creatures within a radius of 10 feet x Bone Pudding's HD (ordinarily 100 feet, but may change by Entropic Growth) must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ Pudding's HD + Pudding's Charisma modifier; ordinarily DC 15, but may change by Entropic Growth) or suffer a -4 morale penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws until they leave

the area of effect. This is a supernatural fear effect. Neutral and evil characters cannot detect the stench (and are thus immune) at this increased range.

All living creatures within 10 feet of the Bone Pudding must make a successful Fortitude save at the same DC or suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attack rolls, saves, and skill checks for a number of minutes equal to 1d6 + Bone Pudding's HD (ordinarily 1d6+10, but may change by Entropic Growth).

If a creature has the scent special quality, the DC of both its saving throws against this ability increases by +4.

The stench remains detectable for 1 hour in any area where the Bone Pudding lingers for more than 1 hour, or 4 hours for creatures with the scent ability. The lingering stench loses the special effects noted above, but it is noticeable and can be identified by anyone that has encountered the stench before. If the Bone Pudding is tracked by scent after this period, the DC increases by +2 every hour as normal.

Ooze and Undead qualities: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, and polymorphing. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Unaffected by blunt weapons.



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THE ETERNAL

A KILLER BOGEYMAN ON THE RUN ...

"It writhes!- It writhes- with mortal pangs the mimes become its food, and the seraphs sob at vermin fangs in human gore imbued."

Edgar Allen Poe, "Ligeia"

Alignment: Lawful evil
Advancement: none

By: Stanton Fink (Atma)

An unstoppable killer who exists solely to serve the depraved whims of its current master.

Medium Undead (7 feet tall)

Hit Dice: 11d12 (90 hp)

Initiative: +5 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 20 (+5 Dex, +5 Natural)

Attacks: Falchion* +20/+15/+10 Melee

*The Eternal uses a +3 *keen septic falchion of wounding*

Damage: Falchion* 2d4 + 12 + *septic ** and wounding*

** Those struck must make a Fortitude save DC 19, or contract a debilitating disease, as per the spell *contagion*

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

Special Attacks: Frightful presence

Special Qualities: DR 10/+1 or blessed weapons, Regeneration 5, Bending the Land (120 ft.), passwall, *critical vulnerability, immune to piercing and bludgeoning, undead*

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +5

Abilities: Str 22, Dex 21, Con --, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 10

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary (unique)

Challenge Rating: 12



The Eternal appears to be a tall, thin, pink-skinned humanoid, dressed in aqua-colored robes and wielding a large falchion. Upon closer inspection, it is actually wholly composed of pinkish slime that oozes and drips and bubbles constantly. An earring and a row of long teeth dangle from its head, as if haphazardly inserted in by its diabolic creator. The front of its robe displays the crest or insignia of some unknown house, a rampant serpent that coils around three swords.

The Eternal is mute, and makes no attempt at any sort of communication, save a nod, or

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shake of the head to its master in order to convey the status of a mission.

The circlet that controls the Eternal made out of reddish metal, trimmed with black leather on the inner surface of it. It will fit snugly upon the brow of who ever commands the Eternal. The destruction of the circlet is the only way to truly defeat the Eternal.

Background

This creature is one of the more prominent bogeymen lurking in the fringes of Mordentish lore. Who or what the Eternal was in life is unknown. Some claim that it may have been one of the last, cursed scions of the cursed Westcote family of Mordent. Others claim that it was one of the first experiments of the Alchemist. What is known is that this slimy horror is relentless in its tasks.

Current Sketch

According to legend, the Eternal is an unstoppable killer who exists solely to serve the depraved whims of its current master. The very contemplation of what it may do while not in the service of some wicked scoundrel, or vile magician, is enough to make the hair of both children and adult Mordentish stand on end.

Combat

The Eternal's actions depend entirely upon what its controller has commanded it to do. If it has been assigned to retrieve an object, it will head straight for it, cutting down anything in its path, but ignoring those that stay clear of it. However, if commanded to kill someone, the Eternal will first observe the quarry from afar, before stalking it for an hour or so. The Eternal will attempt to use the environment to its advantage; it will set fire to an inn a target is staying in, or attempt to chase fleeing quarry into a bog. If an opportunity for an ambush presents itself, the Eternal will take it. Otherwise, it will simply move in and attack with its falchion. The Eternal will pursue relentlessly any target that attempts to get away,

always keeping up with its Bending the Land ability.

In the rare event that it is defeated, the Eternal will come back after reforming, and will exercise more caution in its next attack. While single-minded in pursuit of its master's commands, the Eternal is not stupid, and will attempt to gain any advantage it can.

Frightful Presence (Su): The Eternal can inspire terror by attacking, by using its *passwall* ability, or by reforming after a critical hit or being destroyed. Affected creatures must succeed at a Fear save (DC 15) or become shaken, remaining shaken until they leave the area of effect. The DC increases to 20 for those who witness its *passwall* ability, or see it reform after a critical hit or after being reduced to –20 hit points.

Regeneration (Ex): Electricity and *holy* weapons deal normal damage to the Eternal. The Eternal must be reduced to –20 hit points for it to be destroyed. Even then, it will reform in 24 hours unless the circlet which controls it is destroyed. This is the only way to permanently destroy the Eternal.

Bending the Land(Ex): As the ability in **Van Richten's Guide to the Walking Dead**. The Eternal can always remain within 120 feet of a target, no matter how fast or how long that target may travel. If the target runs away from the Eternal and looks back, the Eternal always appears to be the same distance away. If the Eternal is monitored carefully while retreating, it disappears into the distance, only to appear again in front or to the sides—still at the same distance. The Eternal may, of course, approach the target should the target stop moving. If the Eternal flees or decides to leave the area, it may do so normally.

Passwall (Sp): By liquefying its body, the Eternal can pass through cracks, or porous surfaces, such as a closed door, locked window, or a wooden wall. Subject to this limitation, the ability is otherwise equal to *passwall*, as the spell cast by a 10th level sorcerer. It can use this

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ability at will. The DC of the Eternal's Frighful Presence ability increases to 20 for any who witness the Eternal using this ability.

Critical Vulnerability (Ex): The Eternal normally takes no damage from piercing or bludgeoning weapons. However, when a natural 20 is rolled on an attack, even with one of these weapons, the Eternal loses its shape and collapses into a puddle of slime. Four rounds later, it will use its Reformation ability.

Undead qualities: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



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NEW HORRORS NEWLY DISCOVERED MONSTERS

By: Uri Barak (Shadowking)

New monsters for the use of devious DM's in the world of Ravenloft, intended to challenge low to mid-level characters.

INQUISITOR

Medium-Size Undead

Hit Dice: 7D12 (44 HP)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+3 natural, +3 studded leather)

Attacks: Scourge +6, Pain Touch +4

Damage: Scourge, 1D6 + 4, Pain Touch

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

Special Attacks: Fanaticism, Pain Touch, Spell-like Abilities

Special Qualities: Divine Resistance, DR 10/+1,

Master Torturer, Turn Resistance, Undead

Saves: Fortitude +7 Reflex +3 Will +11

Abilities: Str 16 Dex 10 Con - Wis 18 Int 14 Cha 12

Skills: Knowledge (Religion) +15, Heal +16, Intimidate +18, Sense Motive +13, Bluff +10

Feats: Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (Scourge)

Climate/Terran: Darkon, Gh'enna, Nidala, Pharazia, Tepest

Organization: Solitary, Witch Hunt (Inquisitor and 1D6 1st level human clerics), Inquisition (Grand Inquisitor, 1D4 Inquisitors and 1D8 1st level human clerics)

Challenge Rating: 9

Treasure: Studded Leather Armor, +1 Scourge of Wounding, Defiled Holy Symbol

Alignment: Always Lawful Evil

Advancement: 8-12 HD (Medium-Size)

Inquisitors are hateful undead created when an especially hated, fanatical priest is lynched by his own flock, who became tired of the terrors

he brought upon them in life- and are unprepared for the far greater terrors he'll bring upon them in undeath. Naturally, they exist only in domains where one of the religions (usually the dominant one) runs an active inquisition. These include Darkon (the Eternal Order and lawful evil Church of Ezra), Nidala and Tepest (the Cult of Belenus), Gh'enna (the Church of Zhakata) and Pharazia (the Lawgivers of Diambelle). The murder of a servant of the dominant religion is already punished harshly in any one of these twisted theocracies, and the rise of an Inquisitor makes an even greater punishment for the guilty locals.

Filled with feelings of anger, disappointment and betrayal, the inquisitor is brought back to an unholy unlife to continue his reign of terror upon his community and show them the wrongness of their ways—at all costs...

Most inquisitors were male human clerics, adepts or experts in life; in undeath, however, they lose their class abilities.

Appearance

An inquisitor appears exactly as it appeared at its time of death, and this appearance is often quite ghastly—an Inquisitor who was burnt at the stake will be an ashen black corpse, an Inquisitor who was hanged will have a broken neck and an inquisitor who was crucified will have gaping wounds on his hands and feet. The white fire of fanaticism and vengeance burns within their eyes or hollow eye sockets.

Inquisitors still wear the robes of their faith proudly, and display their holy symbols where everybody can see them—even though those symbols become defiled by the Inquisitor's unholy nature. Many inquisitors try in vain to hide their undead natures, which they view as an abomination- but they still reek of the grave.

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Personality

Inquisitors are hateful and fanatical beings. They are filled with endless hatred for all "heretics" (all those who disagree with the inquisitor) and especially for those who killed them. They also hate themselves for what they have become, though they view their return from the grave as a "second chance" given by their god to continue their unfinished work at fighting the heathens. At the same time, they view the loss of their divine spellcasting as a test from their god—and their new powers often make up for the loss.

Inquisitors enjoy their new powers and hate their undead nature at the same time- but they view themselves as the ultimate bringers of divine justice and are convinced they will be given eternal rest in heaven once they finish the quest given to them by their god to purge the area (or the entire world, in case of especially ambitious ones) of heretics. They are totally convinced of the justice of their ways, and wish everyone to agree with them and convert to their religion—either through words, magic or torture.

Lifestyle and Society

An inquisitor is created when a fanatical priest or inquisitor is lynched by his members of his own community. His powerful feelings of betrayal and rage, as well as his undying devotion to his god, brings him back as an undead horror to continue his crusade beyond the grave.

While inquisitors may rise anywhere, they are usually slain immediately by undead hunters loyal to the Church in the big cities. Adventurers may expect to meet them only in relatively small and isolated towns, far from the headquarters of the Church.

Several days after rising from his grave and realizing his new undead nature as well as how to use his powers (during this time most Inquisitors also lose their sanity), the inquisitor comes back to the town where he was killed and claims cruel vengeance on his killers, hunting

them one by one and torturing them very slowly until they confess their sins—after which the inquisitor slays them brutally.

After the killers are dealt with, the inquisitor uses his powers to assume control of the town and isolate it from the outside world, as he is quite sure the mainstream church will not appreciate his actions. He then uses torture and intimidation, as well as his *fanaticism* power, to create fanatical minions amongst the townsfolk, who will help him spread his reign of terror. From there on, terror descends upon town.

The religious doctrine becomes the town law, and is followed blindly by the inquisitor and his aides—who expect others to do just the same as they do. All those who do not perform all their religious duties, think, speak, dress and act as they are expected (blind puppets of the religion, willing to do anything the Inquisitor says) are taken to the town church—which becomes the Inquisitor's lair—and are tortured until they confess their sins and "convert to the light" or are just brutally killed in case of some of the worse sins. The church becomes surrounded with the brutalized corpses of sinners, set as an example for all the town to follow. All the citizens are forced to come to church every day of the week and listen to the Inquisitor's fire and brimstone speeches—during which people are often killed in spectacular and gory ways to show the twisted priest's might to the people, and what might happen to those who do not obey his god. The whole town is locked in an iron grip of religious tyranny, and paranoia reigns as the Inquisitor sees everyone other than himself as potential heretics, and will torture or kill for the slightest wrongs. Under the threat of death—or worse—people are willing to admit false sins, inform of the sins (false or true) of their neighbours and give up their closest relatives and friends to the Inquisitor and his minions—just to avoid his "divine punishment".

In the rare cases the inquisitor is satisfied with his grim work and has successfully purged and converted his home area (while not surprisingly, still not gaining true rest), he "realizes" his god has chosen him for a much

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greater destiny, and organizes his faithful into a crusade, which sweeps across the nearby countryside—bringing pain and death to the region, in an attempt to convert everyone into following the true way of his god. Most inquisitors view the mainstream churches of their faith as weak and corrupt, and wish to show them the "wrongness" of their ways. At the same time, slivers of doubt creep into the inquisitor's undead heart—what if they are right, and he is wrong? What if he is an unholy undead abomination, a filthy murderer and nothing more?

Rarely does an inquisitor conquer more than a few villages, before his peasant army is dealt with by the army, the mainstream inquisition or adventurers, and he either escapes to continue his reign of terror elsewhere or is killed and finally wins true rest—while leaving nothing but paranoia and destruction in his wake, showing where fanaticism can lead.

Combat

Inquisitors are terrible foes to face in combat. Their self-righteousness and dedication to the cause makes them truly fearless opponents, even amongst the undead. Yet they are no fools, and will attempt to flee if the battle turns against them—though they will never surrender, and will fight to the death if cornered. On the first few rounds of combat, the inquisitor sends his Fanatic minions forward and uses his spell-like abilities to strengthen himself and his allies and weaken his enemies. He then closes in for melee combat, attempting to subdue foes with his *scourge* and *pain touch* abilities to capture them alive and inflict even greater torments upon them. Even while fighting, the inquisitor will still attempt to use his twisted rhetoric to show his enemies the wrongness of their ways—though he will accept surrender only when his enemies agree to accept his divine punishment (a long session of torture), confess their sins and convert to "the light".

Fanaticism (Su): Once per day, the inquisitor can attempt to *charm* another follower of his own religion by succeeding in a Bluff check. If

the check is successful, the person becomes a Fanatic, whose zealotry is second only to the inquisitor himself. This altered *charm* effect causes the affected person's alignment to shift one step closer to Lawful Evil (causing the loss of some class abilities), and become extremely hostile towards all followers of other religions and other "heretics" branded by the inquisitor. The Fanatic views the undead priest as a saint whose every word should be obeyed—even to the point of death. Their self-righteousness grants them a +10 profane bonus to Will saves against all mind-affecting spells and spell-like abilities used by anyone other than the inquisitor himself. This effect is permanent until removed. For dispelling purposes, this Charm effect is treated as a spell cast by a Sorcerer of double the inquisitor's HD—the best way to remove the effects of fanaticism is through the Hypnosis skill.

Pain Touch (Sp): A number of times per day equal to the inquisitor's charisma modifier, he can cause horrible, agonizing pain to his living enemies with a mere touch. The inquisitor's touch attack replicates a *wrack* spell (see Book of Vile Darkness), cast by a sorcerer of the inquisitor's HD.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): The Inquisitor can use each of these spell-like abilities once per day, as spells cast as a 9th level Cleric: *bestow curse*, *black bag*, *cause fear*, *detect chaos*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *divine power*, *liquid pain*, *sadism*, *symbol* (pain only).

Damage Reduction 10/+1 (Ex): Inquisitors ignore the first 10 points of damage caused by a weapon, unless it is enchanted.

Divine Resistance (Ex): Inquisitors gain SR 20 against the effects of divine spells, due to their strong faith in their god's superiority over other religions.

Master Torturer (Ex): The Inquisitor gains a +5 insight bonus to any Intimidate checks made using torture devices (as detailed in the Book of Vile Darkness), due to his familiarity with the many different methods of torture.

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Turn Resistance (Ex): Inquisitors receive +4 Turn resistance.

Techniques of Terror

Inquisitors are foul undead creatures with great capability to inflict pain and suffering on the living, but the most terrifying aspect about them is that they still consider themselves good and righteous servants of their god. In the name of their faith everything is allowed, no matter how ruthless, and heretics and sinners are punished severely for every little straying from "the straight path".

When adventurers reach a town ruled by an inquisitor, the true nature of the situation shouldn't be revealed outright—some inquisitors even force their flock to maintain a facade of happiness and pretend to love their fanatic tyrant—treating him like they never treated him in life. Some especially ignorant villagers may even truly like the inquisitor, convinced by its rhetoric and speeches at the church. As the heroes spend more time in town (if they are allowed—some inquisitors order their Fanatic minions to hunt down all strangers and bring them to him for interrogation, and villagers who hide strangers are punished), they learn more about the true horror of the situation. They understand "the good reverend" isn't what he seems to be, and the facade of chastity and religious devotion is just a cover for the religious tyranny of a fanatical madman.

It is very hard to organize the villagers against their oppressor, as the fearful, pathetic men and women will usually not have enough bravery to risk torture or death at the hands of the Inquisitor and his minions and will either not co-operate or even inform the heroes' deeds!

The inquisitor's lair—a place of holiness and healing turned into a torture chamber and slaughterhouse in the name of religion—should add further horror to the final encounters with the creature.

The inquisitor shows the dark abyss where fanaticism can lead, and serves as a warning sign for Clerics and Paladins for what they might become if they follow the religious doctrine blindly...

Adventure Hook

An inquisitor was recently discovered and routed in a tiny village in the Mistlands of Darkon. He appeared several days after Valvidos Keldos—a hated half-elf priest of the lawful evil church of Ezra—was hanged at the town square by an angry lynch mob. The Church of Ezra denies any connection to the creature, claiming he was never a priest of Ezra and was actually a warlock using the goddess' holy name to commit his vile acts. While the inquisitor himself was killed by Kargatane agents, some of his Fanatics—most notably the former town mayor—managed to escape to the hills...

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CHILDSNATCHER

Medium Size Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 5D10 + 10 (36 HP)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft. (40 ft., climb 20 ft.)

AC: 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: 4 claws + 9 melee, bite +4 melee

Damage: Claw 1D4 +4 plus 1 vile, bite 1D6 +4 and poison

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

Special Attacks: Horrific Appearance, Scent of Innocence, Poison, Sadism, Dark Gift, Spell-like Abilities, Weave Cocoon, Improved Grab, Snatch

Special Qualities: Regeneration 2/ holy/blessed silver, SR 11, Vulnerabilities

Saves: Fortitude +7 Reflex +9 Will +4

Abilities: Strength 10 Dexterity 18 Con 14 Int 12 Wis 14 Cha 15

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +8, Hypnosis +9, Intimidate +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4

Feats: Weapon Finesse (claw, bite), Vile Natural Attack (claw)*

Climate/Terrain: Underground

Organization: Solitary, Pair, Coven (1D6 +1)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always Chaotic Evil

Advancement: 6-10 (Medium-size), 11-15 (Large) or by character class

Introduction

The childsnatcher is a horrific creature that preys on children, feeding on their terror and despair first before it finally feeds on their flesh. The true origins of these loathsome monsters are shrouded in mists, though there are rumors speculating they might be the creations of the Archdevil Moloch, the Devourer of Children or his wretched consort the Hag Countess (in the Gothica campaign setting, they are said to be the creations of the dread Closet King instead)—as clearly only Hell itself could spawn such vile beings.

Others say they were once child murderers, doomed into this monstrous state by the curse of

the gods—though obviously their new form gives them far greater efficiency at assaulting children than before. According to the Vistani, some of the things lurking out there in the dark shouldn't be questioned at all, just evaded at all costs.

Mothers all over the Core warn their children from never straying away from the path of good and law, or the childsnatcher will come for them and they will never be seen again.

Appearance

The childsnatcher's appearance is truly terrifying, and is the subject of nightmares for both adults and children. A black, bloated spider-like body rests upon eight hairy legs, with the rear six ending in scalpel-like claws and the front two ending in humanlike hands (with retractable claws), which can be used to wield weapons (though the creature rarely does so, for the sake of greater mobility). The creature's fat belly is dripping with blood, bile, pus and its own decaying flesh, looking and smelling horribly. Dozens of small, twisting tendrils lie on the creature's "back", but apparently they have no function besides being there and adding more to the childsnatcher's chilling appearance. Yet, the most horrific thing in the monster is its face—instead of the normal head of a spider, childsnatchers possess the gray faces of dead human children—male or female (though they are genderless by themselves, and breed through a magical ritual—see below), with barbed, venom-dripping mandibles jutting from the sides of their little mouths and 8 beady spider eyes placed randomly around their faces, filled with evil intent and an unquenched appetite for destruction, murder and pain. Childsnatchers literally stink of evil and corruption.

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Personality

The childsnatcher's appearance reflects its personality well, for there is no single drop of goodness, honor or mercy in it. They enjoy nothing more than ruining the innocence of children, both mentally and physically. The sheer terror they cause and the horrific scars their vicious claws and bite leave on their victims leave the few survivors of their attacks scarred and broken for all of their lives, which tend to be quite short—as the childsnatcher often comes back some time later (which can vary from a few days to a few years—the longer the better for the childsnatcher, which likes to increase the terror of waiting) to finish the job, if the ruined child doesn't commit suicide first to end his suffering. However, most victims of childsnatcher attacks are never seen again, as the creature uses its infamous *snatch* power to kidnap the child to its underground lair, where it (and its brethren, in case of a coven) toys with its prey for long days before the child is either released (often after his tongue is removed and he is driven completely mad, so he cannot reveal the existence of the childsnatcher), brutally killed and eaten (which happens most often) or is transformed in a truly vile ritual into a new childsnatcher (luckily, only a full coven of 7 childsnatchers might initiate the ritual and they are thankfully rare)...

The childsnatcher's evil is only matched by its cowardice. As shown from their choice of victims, they prefer to prey on the weakest and most vulnerable members of society—its children—and a childsnatcher will only attack adults when it is sure it can win, or when it cannot escape. They also have several supernatural weaknesses and phobias, connected to the childsnatcher's mystic nature. Basically, they are vile, cunning and sadistic bullies, and while being utterly evil and alien they understand the mortal psyche very well—and especially how to break it.

Even though they are as intelligent as an average human, childsnatchers are naturally mute but they often use their *ghost sound* ability in conjunction with moving their mandibles to

emulate speech. They always seem to understand the language of the domain their lair is located in.

Lifestyle and Society

A childsnatcher's immortal life (they do not seem to age at all—scholars speculate they somehow steal the youth of the children they prey upon) is an infernal cycle of terror, pain and death, ending only when the creature is slain. They emerge full-grown and filled with hatred from their mystical cocoons (see the *weave cocoon* ability below), and live for a short time with the coven that created them until they either leave of their own free will to gain control of their own hunting territory and start their own coven or are driven out by the other childsnatchers, who fear that too many members in the coven will reveal its existence to the local authorities.

The lone childsnatcher travels the underground tunnels which connect to the original voven until it establishes its own lair under a surface settlement, the larger the better—because the absence of children is felt less in places where many people live. The creature leaves its lair at night, hidden in the darkness, and uses its *detect thoughts* ability to find new victims amongst the town's children, little boys and girls whose minds are plagued by anger, fear, doubt and self-loathing. Using its illusion and enchantment spell-like abilities, as well as its natural skill at hypnosis, the childsnatcher induces a sense of despair, loneliness, paranoia and dread into its victims over the course of several weeks to several months. In the rare case someone actually believes the child's tales about the thing lurking out there in the dark, the childsnatcher uses its hypnosis powers to convince them that these are just the mere stories of little children, trying to get attention from the adults the around them. The childsnatcher constantly mocks and taunts the child with the fact no believes him or her, and with glimpses of its true, terrifying form. Truly innocent children (those who never had to make a powers check) are safe from the childsnatcher's grasp, as their inner light literally

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blinds the unholy creature. The creature often attempts to subtly corrupt innocent children to perform evil deeds, so it can lay its claws upon them. The fact that true innocents cannot be directly harmed by the childsnatcher had given rise to the faerie tales portraying the creature as a sort of "divine punisher" of bad children—though no child, whatever his sins were, deserves the fate of becoming a childsnatcher's victim.

When the child victim is left alone and completely alienated from the environment and his or her feeling of dread reaches its climax, the childsnatcher strikes from the shadows, revealing itself at its full horrifying appearance to the victim and snatching it into its lair to a fate worse than death. After several such kills, the monster moves its lair to a new town- or feels itself confident enough to start a coven.

A coven is a gathering of 1D6 +1 childsnatchers sharing the same lair. It is started when several childsnatchers haunt the same area and decide to band together for greater efficiency at hunting and defending themselves instead of fighting each other (which happens more often not, as expected from chaotic evil creatures). Only a full coven of 7 childsnatchers may create a new childsnatcher from a captured child, by weaving a mystic cocoon and performing dark rituals on it over the course of a week. The strongest or most intelligent childsnatcher usually dominates the coven.

Rare particularly intelligent childsnatchers may advance in a character class. Rogues and Sorcerers are the most common classes childsnatchers choose, with their favored class being Rogue.

The concept of religion was until recently considered alien to such vile and unholy beings as the childsnatchers, but some time ago a coven was discovered showing signs of religious activity, including bloody symbols and shrines to the Archdevil Moloch and his wife the Hag Countess where numerous kidnapped children were sacrificed before the coven was destroyed by adventurers.

Combat

When fighting, childsnatchers will use their illusory and hypnosis powers and use every dirty trick at their disposable against their foes—unlike the heroes who came to hunt them, childsnatchers have no morals at all and utilize this unfair advantage well. Heroes who brave a childsnatcher's lair should expect face all sorts of dirty guerilla attacks, horrific sights (like child corpses hanging on web threads from the cavern ceiling, like some sort of twisted marionettes), evil minions and mind games, and even when finally confronted, the childsnatcher will save its last dirty trick and use its captured children as hostages and meat shields against the heroes, both to break their spirits and to ensure its own survival. In the rare event it is pressed into melee combat, the childsnatcher will attack with up to 4 of its claws (it needs the others to support its body weight) and its deadly, poisonous bite.

A childsnatcher will never fight to the death unless it truly must, and will attempt to hypnotize the heroes to let it go if combat turns badly for it—claiming its revenge on them (or more preferably—their children) another day...

Despite being chaotic evil creatures, members of a childsnatcher coven will always co-operate against a common foe. Rarely, they might also ally themselves with other evil creatures in the area, such as hags and lychantropes—though never the undead, as they mortally afraid of them. While childsnatchers have the innate power to animate the dead, they are loathe to use it as they are unreasonably terrified of their own creations. Other childsnatcher minions, which they often bully and torture for their amusement, might include monstrous spiders, goblins and grimlocks, though their most preferable minions are human child assaulters (who are usually pathetic and cowardly lowlives who are easily intimidated into serving the childsnatcher—kidnapping children into its lair—the childsnatcher recognizes its kind), which are used as scapegoats for the creature's acts and a way for

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the childsnatcher to get more children to toy with. If a child assaulter is not already found in the area, the childsnatcher will use its hypnosis powers to create one. Covens also like to create new childsnatchers from captured children, though they do not do it too often because if the coven becomes too large it will surely get discovered by the authorities who will dispatch the police, the army or mercenary heroes to get rid of the coven—and unlike soft children, true warriors are no easy prey.

Horrific Appearance (Su): The mere appearance of a childsnatcher is so horrific and vile that it requires all those who view it for the first time to roll an immediate Horror check at a DC of 20. Whether they pass or fail the check, creatures cannot be affected by the childsnatcher's horrific appearance again for the same day. This is a supernatural fear effect.

Poison (Ex/Su): Bite, Fortitude save 16. Initial damage- 1d4 temporary Strength, Dexterity and Constitution, Secondary damage- *sleep* (as the spell, cast by a 6th level Sorcerer- this secondary effect is considered supernatural)

Improved Grab (Ex): If a childsnatcher hits a Medium-size or smaller opponent with a claw attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +10). If it hits with a claw, it can use *snatch* if the struck opponent is a child. The childsnatcher has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its claw to hold the opponent (-20 penalty to grapple checks, but the childsnatcher is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals claw damage.

Snatch (Sp): Upon grabbing a child (who must be no older than 12), the childsnatcher may initiate its infamous *snatch* ability. Taking 4 rounds of concentration, during which the snatcher is vulnerable to attacks and escape attempts from the child, it may *teleport without error* anywhere into any location within its lair. childsnatchers can only use this ability when

grabbing a child and attempting to teleport to their lair- they cannot teleport outside of it. The childsnatcher can use *snatch* an unlimited number of times per day. It cannot use it while inside its lair.

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): At will: *dancing lights, detect thoughts, death grimace, ghost sound, web, unnerving gaze* (dead children only) 1/day: *alter self, animate dead, cause fear, darkness, invisibility, major image, mirror sending, silence, wither limb* (no corruption cost) 1/three days: *nightmare, sending*

The childsnatcher's spell-like abilities are treated as spells being cast by a 6th level Sorcerer.

Weave Cocoon (Su): This is said to be the most horrid ability in the childsnatcher's dark arsenal. Only a full coven of 7 childsnatchers may use it, on an unconscious, paralyzed, sleeping or otherwise incapacitated child of 12 or less years. First, each must successfully use the *web* spell-like ability on the child. This wraps the child in a fleshy, loathesome-looking cocoon. Then, for the duration of a week, a Nightmare spell must be successfully cast on the child during every day of the week. If the process is successful, at the 7th day a new childsnatcher emerges from the cocoon, created by the trapped child's terror while being inside the cocoon. It bursts out of the child as well as the cocoon, devouring his flesh and killing him. The child may be freed at any time before the process is complete, but it is considered to have failed a Madness check for each Nightmare spell cast on him.

Scent of Innocence (Su): The childsnatcher can literally smell the innocent presence of children. It gains a +4 profane bonus to Spot, Listen and Track checks when attempting to find an escaping child. This bonus is increased to +6 if the child is either good-aligned or never had to roll a powers check, and +8 if both these conditions are met.

Sadism (Ex): For every 10 points of damage a Childsnatcher deals in a round, it gains a +1 luck

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bonus on attack roles, saving throws and skill checks during the next round.

Dark Gift (Ex): Childsnatchers are as evil as some fiends, if not more so. As such, they gain access to a free Vile feat. Popular choices include Dark Speech, Disciple of Darkness (Moloch or the Hag Countess), Evil Brand, Verminfriend and Vile Natural Attack (claw or bite). Childsnatchers are also often subject to the Calling (see Book of Vile Darkness).

Regeneration (Ex): The enchanted nature of the childsnatcher allows it to regenerate 2 HP per round. The creature can only be truly killed by holy or blessed weapons made of pure silver. If the weapon is wielded by a child, it is treated as a Keen weapon and gains a +4 sacred bonus to hit the childsnatcher.

Spell Resistance 11 (Ex)

Vulnerabilities: The childsnatcher has several vulnerabilities, connected to its mystical, vile nature and its cowardly personality. First, it can be turned (but not destroyed) by good clerics as an undead creature of its HD + 2. It also takes 2D6 holy damage from holy water splashed on it. A circle made of the powdered remains of an aborted fetus prevents the childsnatcher from approaching an area. It also cannot attack or use offensive spell-like abilities against truly innocent children, who never had to roll a Powers check.

The word "Torkorprilisvilividi" said 3 times in a row affects the childsnatcher the same way as clerical turning, but if said not in its presence it actually attracts his curiosity and draws it to the area. In addition, the childsnatcher has an unreasonable fear of the undead, and will attempt to stay as far away from them as possible.

Techniques of Terror

A childsnatcher is an inhuman, truly vile enemy. The creature's horrifying and alien appearance, abilities and personality should be emphasized and used to their full extent in any

encounter with the creature. Upon vanquishing such a fiendish enemy, the heroes should feel that they have rid the world of a great evil, and avenged the deaths of its many child victims.

Domains where current childsnatcher activities occur include Dementlieu, Darkon, Paridon and Nova Vasaa—civilized places with big cities, where the absence of a few children isn't felt. Lamordia also makes a popular hunting territory, because of the unbelieving nature of its denizens and their tendency to blame all on Mordenheim or his creation. They usually prey on the lower class, as their parents have no few resources to find their lost children. Some childsnatchers prefer to prey on smaller settlements of their greater vulnerability, but they have to move constantly.

CHEMICAL ZOMBIE

Medium Size Undead

Hit Dice: 3D12 + 3 (39 HP)

Initiative: -1

Speed: 30 ft

AC: 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: Slam +5 melee or Bite +5 melee

Damage: Slam 1D6 +3 or Bite 1D4 +3 and Zombie Toxin

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

Special Attacks: Zombie Toxin

Special Qualities: Great Hardiness, Immunities, Reanimation, Vulnerabilities

Saves: Fortitude +1 Reflex 0 Will +4

Abilities: Str 16 Dex 8 Con - Int - Wis 10 Cha 11

Skills: -

Feats: Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground (CL 8+ domains only)

Organization: Solitary, Pack (2D4 chemical zombies), Ravenous Horde (4D6 chemical zombies), Slain Settlement (10D10 chemical zombies)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always True Neutral

Advancement: -

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Introduction

Chemical zombies are horrifying undead created by twisted science and the possible intervention of the Dark Powers. The one true evidence to their existence comes from the journal of their creator, Dr. Henry Kraus, a scientist from the domain of Nosos, found in the basement of his house by the police after his mysterious disappearance some time ago.

Apparently Dr. Kraus once worked for the Nosos Medical Corporation, and sought to find the chemical formula to eternal life to bring profit and recognition for himself and the corporation by selling it to the nobility and rich businessman of the city. While he worked on the project for most of his scientific life, the true breakthrough on which the basic formula was based were a set of scrolls he bought from a Rajian merchant, who claimed to have bought them from adventurers who stole them from the dread city of the snake-people deep in the jungle.

Using hired thugs of the corporation, Kraus has kidnapped people of the lower class and subjected them to a myriad of horrid experiments involving the toxin, transforming them into the first chemical zombies.

At first Kraus thought he had succeeded in finding the key to eternal life, until he found out the horrid truth about his new creations—while they were seemingly immortal and unnaturally strong and tough, all their brain functions ceased to work except one—the hunger for flesh.

After some chemical zombies somehow managed to escape and pass the toxin to some of Kraus' aides, transforming them too, the corporation proclaimed Kraus' life project a failure, fired him and sealed the laboratory—though they did keep a few samples of the toxin for themselves.

Kraus was ruined, both financially and mentally. All this work was for nothing, as without funding he could not continue it anymore. He became addicted to opium and his

life seemed like a black bog of failure and despair, only eased by the drug—until one day he was contacted by a mysterious gentleman by the name of James Cole. This man—who claimed to be a noble from a land far beyond the sea—somehow knew about the doctor's experiments, and offered to continue their funding as long as the doctor informed him of the results. Kraus immediately agreed.

The next journal entries describe a descent into darkness (though Dr. Kraus was not a moral man to begin with), possibly through the influence of the mysterious patron. In his new secret laboratory, Dr. Kraus created new strains of the toxin and injected them to human test subjects, mutating them into unliving weapons of war for the use of rich nobles and petty darklords. These monsters included the Plaguespawn Zombie and Bio-Horror. Among the subjects for these vile experiments were Kraus' ex-wife (who divorced him after he lost his job) and his very own son!

His most favored project, however, which he didn't share with his patron, was the continuation of his original project with a new purpose in mind—instead of making humans immortal, he now sought to create an immortal master race which would succeed humanity as the dominant race in Ravenloft. This master race project quickly developed into an obsession and he eventually he abandoned and all his other projects and devoted himself fully to it.

When he thought he created the perfect and most advanced toxin his madness led him to inject it to himself, wishing to become the herald of the new dawn of science that is about to come. The journal entries stop here, and Kraus' fate remains unknown—the good possibility is that he either died or was transformed into a mindless horror like his other creations, while the worst one is that he actually became something more than a man.

The police investigators found the journal but it was quickly shredded at the "encouragement" of the Corporation, who sought to defend its good name from dealing

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with such a vile man. Before the case was closed, the police also found out a man by the name of James Cole never existed.

Before his disappearance, Kraus managed to sell some of his creations to various shady individuals and organizations across Ravenloft to get extra cash for his primary research—including a couple vials containing the Zombie Toxin. As such, it is no surprise that these monsters started popping around occasionally—though a major infestation still (luckily) has not occurred.

Dr. Victor Mordenheim of Lamordia managed to capture a chemical zombie and isolate the toxin from its body cells, and now works on his own variants for the chemical horrors, seeking to use Kraus' methods to revive his wife, Elise.

Appearance

Chemical zombies are often mistaken for standard zombies or even members of the living—it depends on their decomposition state and obvious physical injuries. However, they soon to be recognized for what they truly are, because the pupils of their eyes disappear several days after their transformation, their movements become clumsy and cumbersome and their skin turns unnaturally pale, with a slight greenish tint. They decay at a much slower rate than standard zombies, and no chemical skeletons have yet been found.

Personality

Chemical zombies are not evil—they are mindless undead much like their standard, magical cousins. All of their brain functions have ceased to work, and they have only one need now—the need to feed on flesh (of any type). They are relentless in their hunger, and will attack on sight. They will even eat each other and other undead if they are forced to, though they prefer the flesh of the living for some unknown reason (as they are clearly mindless).

Lifestyle and Society

Chemical zombies are mindless undead predators, and have no society to speak of. Most often, they are confined to the laboratories of the mad scientists who created them—often together with other chemical and bio-engineered horrors. Because they are not animated by negative energy, they are uncontrollable by the *rebuke undead* ability of evil Clerics, undead-controlling ability of Darklords and the *command undead* arcane spell, and are used by their creators (or buyers) either as guardians confined to one place or an expendable attack force (the tyrant Darklord Vlad Drakov bought 2 toxin vials, and is soon to unleash them against his neighbor Darkon), which leaves plague, destruction and more zombies in its wake.

Combat

Chemical zombies are mindless opponents, who use their brute strength and the basic understanding they are stronger in large groups to bring down their foes. They are true terrors in melee combat even for high-level characters because the Zombie Toxin (which is delivered by their bite attack) is very hard to resist, and so it smartest to attack them at range with missile weapons or spells. Since they are not animated by negative energy but by the Zombie Toxin, they are invulnerable to clerical turning and rebuking and holy water. Chemical zombies are feared because of their tendency to rise even after thought destroyed, and one needs to inflict a horrendous amount of damage upon them to finally bring them down—or aim for one of their 2 weak spots, the head and spinal column. Finally, they are vulnerable to mercury and are slain by a single injection of the substance (which serves as an antitoxin for the Zombie Toxin), but the only ones who know it usually are the mad scientists who create the creatures.

Zombie Toxin (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 27). Initial damage- 1D4 temporary Con. Secondary damage- zombie transformation. Victim loses 1D4 Constitution points per day

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(no save); when the score reaches zero they are transformed into chemical zombies. The base Toxin only affects medium-size humanoids. When injected into a corpse no more than a month old, the toxin reanimates it into a new chemical zombie within 1D4 rounds.

Great Hardiness (Ex): The Zombie Toxin makes Chemical Zombies unnaturally tough, granting them maximum HP.

Immunities (Ex): Because they are created out of science and not necromancy, chemical zombies are immune to clerical turning and rebuking attempts, the command undead ability of Darklords and other creatures and the *command undead* spell. They are also unaffected by holy water.

Regeneration (Ex): Chemical Zombies regenerate 2 hit points per round, even after brought below zero hit points. The only way to stop this is to bring them down to -39 HP or below. Fire and acid damage is also not regenerated. Chemical Zombies do not regrow lost limbs, but they will keep twitching on the floor even if disabled.

Partial Actions Only (Ex): Chemical Zombies can only perform partial actions, due to their poor reflexes.

Undead (Ex): Chemical Zombies have all the immunities of a standard undead creature.

Vulnerabilites (Ex): An injection of mercury immediately stops all functions of a Chemical Zombie, causing it to fall down permanently dead. Also, a called shot (-4 to hit) to the head or spinal column immediately slays a Chemical Zombie. A Chemical Zombie who hasn't eaten flesh (which isn't its own) for more than a month will collapse and "die", never to rise again- the toxin evaporating from its body.

Techniques of Terror

Chemical zombies symbolize the madness of their creators, who show no respect for the living nor the dead. These shambling, flesh-

eating things were once living people, just like you and me! Their more lifelike appearance makes this fact even more evident than when fighting ordinary decaying zombies. Their large numbers, toughness and tendency to regenerate after suffering grievous injuries also make them horrific opponents, as is their uncontrolled single-minded desire for devouring flesh. They are an unliving example of the darkness obsession combined with enlightenment can lead to.

Recently, there has been a chemical zombie outburst in Greenbay, a small port town of 500 people located near Nosos at the southern edge of the Noxious Bay.

People disappear and re-appear again after several days, changed into ravening cannibals. As the town is only inhabited by poor workers, none hear their cries. The place has been sealed off the world to prevent the plague from spreading by the corrupt police who work for the Medical Corporation. Malus Scleris—the Darklord of Nosos and the secret leader of the Medical Corporation (alongside numerous other companies in the domain) wants to use the place as a testing ground for a new strain of the toxin the Corporation developed from the samples taken from Dr. Kraus' early experiments. The motivations for infecting an entire town remain his own, but are clearly very dark and might be the beginning of a new evil plan

HUSHER

Small Fey (Goblin)

Hit Dice: 2D6 +6 (12 HP)

Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+1 Natural, +3 Dex)

Attacks: +1 Dagger +5

Damage: Dagger 1D4+5+1D6 Sneak attack

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

Special Attacks: Death Throes, Hush, Sneak Attack +1D6

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Special Qualities: Blurred Form, DR 5/Cold Iron, Magic Dagger, Voice Usage, Vulnerabilities

Saves: Fortitude 1 Reflex 5 Will 2

Abilities: Str 7 Dex 17 Con 16 Wis 9 Int 13 Cha 14

Skills Bluff +4, Hide +8, Heal +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +9, Move Silently +10

Feats: Improved Initiative (B), Weapon Finesse (Dagger)

Climate/Terran: Borca, Darkon, Falkovnia, G'henna, Nova Vasaa, Tepest, Shadow Rift

Organization: Solitary, Pack (1D4 Hushers), Black Circle Cabal (1D8 2nd lvl Clerics + 1 6th lvl Cleric)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually Lawful Evil

Advancement: By class (ECL +4)

Introduction

These vile fey are amongst the least of the horrors emerging from the shrouded depths of the Shadow Rift, but are nonetheless the stuff of nightmares- especially for the innocent and the weak who cannot properly defend themselves from their preying.

Hushers are malevolent fey who haunt the night, looking for sleeping victims. Sneaking into their beds, they might kill them—though this is the most merciful alternative. For most often, hushers steal their victims' voices in a magical ritual, leaving them alive- but damned to be permanently mute and alienated from society. The creatures then use their stolen voices to spread evil and mischief amongst mankind, deceiving them into depravity for their own sick amusement.

In the domains haunted by hushers, mothers warn their children not to cry or shout all the time, talk politely and pay respect to their parents and the gods, or the creatures will come for them and will leave them silenced forever. Mutes are also viewed as an ill omen in these domains, and a sign of death.

Specific legends of the hushers originated in Tepest and the surrounding domains shortly after the Grand Conjunction, when the earth itself broke apart and opened a rift into the realm of Faerie. Most scholars of the monstrous speculate that the hushers were but one of the horrors to crawl up from the rift into the world of mankind. This claim is supported by the fact that hushers mostly lurk in these domains. However, tales of people who suddenly woke up mute were heard in the domains even before the appearance of the Shadow Rift, leading other monster experts to speculate hushers naturally arise from areas tainted by years of denial- finally giving a voice to the land's rage—although some of the muting cases in other areas are clearly the workings of other creatures though, like childsnatchers and the brutal bladetongues.

Another theory on the hushers speculates they are somehow related to goblins due to their physical similarities, and an ancient text about the fey claims the hushers were once goblin nobility known for their corrupting and tempting voices, banished from the Unseelie Court, losing most of their powers and their charming voices (and cursed to steal voices which are never as beautiful) and damning their lesser brethren to a life of barbarism in the world of man for trying to usurp control of the Court from the powerful Arak Sith through their charm and guile. Variants of the goblin theory says they were mutated from normal goblins by Hag magic, failed Powers Checks or the dark blessings of the enigmatic god of the Black Circle. Whatever their origins are, hushers are malignant creatures who—despite their small size and low status amongst the fey—should not be trifled with.

Appearance

Hushers are horrible little creatures, looking like a twisted cross between a goblin and an imp and being around 3-4 ft tall. Their flesh is gaunt, hairless and chalk-white with a bluish tint, and is cold like a corpse. It is either extremely smooth or deeply wrinkled. Their nails and teeth, which are quite sharp but too small and fragile to be fit for combat, are a dirty yellow color and their heads are mishappen and appear to be too large.

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Their ears are long and pointed, often decorated with an earring or two bearing the symbol of the Black Circle, and their eyes are bottomless black pits of malice. Their tongue is black and wriggling and is constantly dripping with saliva, and their noses are long and hooked. A ridge of tiny bone spikes runs along their spine, they have a pair of tiny curved horns and they also have a small, stunted tail. Their entire form appears to be blurred and wispy, and they look like they are formed of the stuff of the Mists though they are actually very solid to the touch. The billowing Mists appear to come out of every tiny pore in their body. Hushers usually wear nothing more than an old loincloth, but when walking amongst the mortal races they cover themselves with long, thick hooded robes to hide their unnatural appearance, posing as halflings or gnomes. Hushers are naturally mute, so they are forced to steal the voices of others and use them as their own.

Personality

Most hushers are vile and cowardly creatures like other bogeymen, twisted bullies whose evil is only limited by their fear. Dregs and outcasts in Unseelie Fey society, they unleash their rage, frustration and hatred on those they see weaker than themselves. The hushers are filled with boiling hatred and sadism which they cannot express in words, and like nothing more than to inflict suffering upon their victims by stealing their voices. In some cases, they silence a victim and slowly torture them to death, so that no one can hear them scream. Their skill at the healing arts allows them to make the deaths look natural and hide the bruises, and many cases of "death in the cradle" when babies were found dead in the morning are actually the work of hushers. Many old men who could've lived many more years are also secretly amongst their victims. Yet, hushers more often leave their victims alive after "silencing" them, as they derive even greater satisfaction knowing their victims will forever be alienated and outcast from society, unable to form true relationships and communicate effectively due to their muteness. Especially daring hushers target those who are especially reliant on their

voices, like wizards and bards, and the satisfaction of ruining their lives is almost worth the risk they take at targeting these dangerous targets. Much like they steal voices, hushers can also restore voice to a mute person if they have a good reason to do so (usually if threatened or offered a large enough reward- like another voice), though they often restore the wrong voice (like giving a drunken brute's voice to a beautiful lass) and disappear into the Mists, chuckling evilly.

Hushers are very intelligent, more than the average human, and often advance in character classes. The only drawback to their devious cunning is their unwillingness to risk their hide. They lie, deceive and cheat using their stolen voices, driving humans to terror and madness. Posing as gnomes or halflings and hiding their true form under heavy cloaks, they enter human settlements and attempt to lead them to ruin. Their foul acts often cause the Little Folk to be persecuted even more than the norm in the lands they've passed through.

While hushers are hateful little beings, they realize there is strength in numbers and if several hushers haunt an area they more often band together than attack each other. They are also often bullied around to serve other powerful evil individuals in an area, like childsnatchers, Unseelie Arak, hags and evil mortal spellcasters (in the latter case, they sometimes serve as familiars). As long as they are fearful they can make useful servants, silencing any witnesses to their master's depraved acts, but they constantly plot their master's downfall and one has to constantly be aware of the hidden dagger coming to slit their throat in the night. Acquiring a husher familiar requires one to throw a screaming, living baby into the Shadow Rift as a gift to the creature, and requires a powers check.

Hushers always bully those few weaker than themselves, and sometimes set themselves in position of power in goblin tribes, but they prefer a life of skulking in the shadows to actual social connection.

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In addition to the normal hushers, there are also the followers of the Black Circle. These particularly vile individuals are all hopelessly mad, having stolen a huge amount of voices each. They are religious fanatics, worshipping a nameless entity of unspeakable evil only known for its symbol—the Black Circle. They are far more daring than other hushers, often kidnapping victims to their lair found in the depths of the Shadow Rift and making them scream until no voice or soul is left in them.

Society and Lifestyle

Hushers lead a lifestyle of mayhem, torture and suffering, moving from village to village through the shadows stealing the voices of mortals.

It is unknown how hushers are born- they are all males, so sexual breeding is out of the way unless they mate with goblin females. They might be created out of human children like the original goblins or spawned of the Mists themselves to inflict evil upon man.

The life of a husher is a dark cycle of depravity and sin, only ending in the creature's death. As they are apparently immortal and tend to be very cautious, this cycle is often very long. Thankfully, their overall population in the domains is quite small, and doesn't seem to grow or lessen in numbers over the years (though no one can really verify this fact).

Hushers wander the domains of Ravenloft, rarely staying in one place for long, inflicting death and suffering and leaving people dead and mute in their wake. As night falls and everyone is asleep they sneak undetected into the houses of unsuspecting mortals on their nightly attacks, entering the beds of their victims and stealing their voices using their *hush* power. Victims who wake up before the ritual is complete usually either get their throat slit or see the husher escape back into the shadow—though this is most often dismissed as a bad dream by the rest of society around them (and they are most often silenced later anyway). Sometimes, in collaboration with other monsters, hushers dig

tunnels linking their lairs (if they have a permanent lair) to the backside of a closet or the underside of a bed in a mortal house, and this is the source of stories about "the Beast in the Closet" and "the Beast Under the Bed".

After a husher had stolen a voice, it uses it to torment mortals, deceive and misguide them. Their nightly whispers have driven more than one person mad. There had been more than one tale of a mother lured into the woods in the middle of the night hearing the voice of her dead child (who was silenced and murdered by a husher a few weeks before that), then set upon and murdered by a band of the vile creatures.

The status of hushers in fey society is too lowly to be considered full members of the Unseelie Court (and some legends claim they were actually banished from it in ancient times), but nevertheless they often serve stronger fey due to their fear of them.

Hushers rarely have a permanent base of operations, and tend to spend the days wallowing in their hatred in dark, lonely places like ruins, caves and dark forests, as sunlight is very harmful to them. It is unknown if the creatures sleep or not. Most hushers lair in the upper reaches of the Shadow Rift, in the areas closest to the surface.

It is unknown if hushers eat, though their teeth are certainly sharp enough to tear flesh (but are unfit for actual combat due to their fragility). Quite possibly, they gain sustenance from the voices they steal.

Due to their high intelligence, most hushers advance by class levels. Their favored class is rogue, allowing the creatures to further enhance its natural abilities, though hushers may be rangers, druids, sorcerers or clerics. Regarding prestige classes, powerful hushers tend to become Assassins.

Husher clerics are the most terrifying of them all, and are united in a group known as the followers of the Black Circle. The god of the husher clerics is nameless and only known by its Black Circle symbol, and by the fact it requires

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the sacrifice of voices and mortal souls. Scholars of the occult speculate this entity is actually Erebus, the primordial god of night worshipped by many monstrous creatures and likewise monstrous mortals. Followers of the Black Circle are bound together by their fanaticism and will fight to the death against impossible odds if needed to- either they are completely fearless or their fear of what happens if they "betray" their god is far larger than their fear of any other thing.

They are known to create the monstrosities known as Silent Hounds—terrible canines who exude an aura of unnatural silence around them- deep in their temples in eldritch rituals which involve *fleshcrafting* innocent animals and magically imbuing them with the essence of stolen voices. Hushers use the Silent Hounds to guard their sacred grounds. The followers also hold some form of control over the Howling Fury, twisted insane spirits created from disembodied voices released when a Husher was killed after the original owner of the voice had died, and scream elementals—Mist-tainted versions of sonic elementals. Followers of the Black Circle have access to the domains of Chaos, Evil, Death, Magic, Knowledge, Darkness and Corruption (the latter two are from the Book of Vile Darkness).

All hushers can understand Sylvan, and can speak it once they have stolen their first voice. In addition, they often know the languages of their mortal victims. A typical husher speaks Sylvan, Tepastani and either Balok, Mordentish or Darkonese. All followers of the Black Circle know some words in the dreaded Dark Speech, though only the high priests can fully speak and understand that dire language (for more information on Dark Speech, see Book of Vile Darkness).

Combat

Hushers are bullies and cowards, and are loathe to enter combat unless they are sure they can win—they prefer to slit a foe's throat while he sleeps. While doing combat, however, hushers can be deadly foes to those weaker than

themselves, fully utilizing their natural capabilities, the terrain features and their numbers due to their high intelligence. They often attack in packs to fully utilize their sneak attack ability and using hit-and-run tactics (which mostly involve run). While the common husher uses its magic dagger in combat, more powerful hushers prefer to use bows, which often carry poisoned arrows. Black Circle followers have their hideous creations to aid them in combat, and are far more dangerous due to their magical capabilities and complete lack of fear coupled with a high intelligence.

Only those well-versed in the lore of the fey know of the husher's tendency to explode upon death, and this poses a nasty surprise to most adventurers who battle hushers. When fighting the creatures, it is advised to bring big and loud allies with you (like mastiff hounds or a caliban barbarian) to scare them off and ruin their tactics, finish them off with ranged attacks and spells to avoid their *death throes* ability and use sunlight to burn them to cinders. Bringing a good bard with you or summoning a siren can also be very helpful.

Death Throes (Su): Upon a husher's death, all the voices it has stolen are released in a maddening cacophony of sound. All creatures within a radius of 15ft or suffer 2 points of sonic damage for each stolen voice the husher possessed at the time of its death. A successful Reflex save with a DC of 12 halves the amount of damage suffered, but if the husher had more than 3 voices stored within it at the time of death a failed save means affected creatures are also deafened for 1D4 rounds. Furthermore, if the creature had 6 or more stolen voices, creatures who failed their Reflex save must make an additional Will save with a DC of 15 or be affected by a *confusion* spell, which is treated as being cast by a 6th level Sorcerer.

Hush (Su): This is the most feared ability of the hushers and the source of their name. By attaching their mouth to a sleeping person's mouth for full 4 rounds (an act which requires Concentration) in a kind of twisted kiss, the husher can permanently steal the victim's voice

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with no save. Victims who were *hushed* are rendered completely and permanently mute, and the only way for them to get their voice back is to kill the husher who stole it, have the voice returned by the husher (a very slim chance) or be subjected to a *restoration* spell. During each round the hush ability is being used the victim must make a successful Spot check with a DC of 15 to wake up. If the victim wakes up before the *hushing* is complete or the husher is otherwise disturbed the ability is ruined and needs to be restarted all over again.

The *hush* ability can also be used to grant a voice to a mute person, though hushers rarely do so unless they have a good reason. When used on a mute person, the *hush* ability achieves the opposite effect—giving them a voice instead of stealing one. Also, the victim doesn't have to be sleeping when hush is used the other way.

Hush can only be used on Small, Medium or Large living creatures which possess a mouth.

Sneak Attack (Ex): The husher possesses the Sneak Attack capabilities of a 1st level Rogue, meaning that it deals +1D6 points of additional damage to flanked attack victims.

Blurred Form (Su): A husher's form is blurred, wispy and constantly shifting, as the creature appears to be made of Mists despite the fact it is actually corporeal. In game terms, the husher is constantly affected by a *blur* spell which is treated as being cast by a 6th level Sorcerer.

Damage Reduction 5/Cold Iron (Ex): As one of the Fey, hushers only take full damage from cold-forged iron weapons.

Magic Dagger (Su): Hushers wield a magical dagger made of solid mist. In game terms, this weapon is identical to a +1 Dagger. If the weapon is somehow removed from the husher's hand (like it being disarmed), it fades away into mist, though the husher can summon it once more into its end at the beginning of the next round. The magic dagger likewise disappears if the husher is slain.

Voice Usage (Ex): The husher can successfully use the voices it has stolen as if they were its own. When not being seen and using a stolen voice, a husher adds a +5 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Intimidate checks involving people who knew the person the voice was stolen from. Switching between voices is a full-round action. Alternately, a husher can speak in several voices at once—those who hear this are subjected to a Fear check with a DC of 12. For each voice above 6 a husher had stolen it must make a Madness check with a DC of 16 + amount of stolen voices above 6. This means most older hushers are hopelessly mad.

Vulnerabilities (Ex): A husher has several mystic vulnerabilities connected to its fey nature. First, the *bardic music* ability of a neutral good bard who never rolled a powers check turns them (but not destroys them) as undead of equal HD (the bard uses his level as the “cleric level”).

The song of a siren not yet corrupted by Ravenloft (a standard siren from the Monster Manual II—not the dread or death sirens from the New Horrors) forces them to make a Will save with a DC of 20 or melt away into nothingness (this effectively kills them, and also doesn't activate their Death Throes ability). A certain nursery rhyme common around the villages of Tepest is also said to repel them, though the truth of this rumor is unknown (DM's prerogative). Also, sunlight deals 1D4 points of damage to a husher for each round it is exposed to it, and a *sunburst* spell destroys the creature on the spot in a similar manner to a siren's song, but with no save. They are also considered blinded for as long as they are exposed to sunlight.

Techniques of Terror

Hushers are horrific little beings who can permanently cripple one party member or more using their *hush* ability. The horror of losing one's voice, the horror of having to sleep with one eye open and always watch for the thing that creeps out at night is what makes the creatures scary. Role-playing a mute character, especially

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if such character actually requires the use of his voices (like a Wizard or a Bard) can be very challenging for a PC. Quickly, the party will have to hunt the little fiend who stole their friend's voice as it will be the only way to restore him back to normal. Also, imagine a village constantly terrorized by hushers- a nursery full of babies who can't even cry can be extremely creepy.

Hushers can serve as main villains for all levels, since they are sneaky little bastards and their main expertise is not actual combat. At higher levels, powerful enemies can have husher henchmen—imagine the party wizard memorizing the right spells when preparing to step into the hag's forest den the next den, only to awake completely mute in the morning!

The followers of the Black Circle are the most terrifying group of hushers to encounter. Appearing in the domains only in recent years, tracks show they are based in the Misty depths of the Shadow Rift where they maintain a temple of a sort to their unimaginably evil god, which requires the sacrifice of human voices and souls. They are also known to co-operate with human cultists, who worship the same vile god as they. In the domain of Tepest, the baby daughter of one of Wyan's chief Inquisitors disappeared a few weeks after he burnt a cabal of witches, who admitted to be worshipping darkness itself in orgiastic rites and consorting with the fey. Though the villagers blame the disappearance on the witches' ghosts, it is actually their fey allies—the Black Circle hushers—who kidnapped the baby, and intend to sacrifice it to their god at the next moonless night, which will be within a week—unless someone can stop them.

DREAD BASILISK

Large Magical Beast (Earth)

Hit Dice: 8D10 + 10 (60 HP)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft. swim 20 ft

AC: 18 (-1 size, -1 Dex +10 natural)

Attacks: 1 bite +12 melee, 1 gore +10 melee

Damage: bite 2D4+4 and disease, gore 1D8+4

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 5ft./10ft.

Special Attacks: Blood Pact, Command Reptilians, Disease, Petrifying Gaze, Speak with Reptilians

Special Qualities: Cold-Blooded, SR 12/6, Gemmed Scales

Saves: Fortitude +11 Reflex +6 Will +7

Abilities: Str 18 Dex 8 Con 16 Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 13

Skills: Animal Empathy +5, Intimidate +4, Intuit Direction +4, Spot +6, Swim +8

Feats: Multiattack, Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Warm (Verdant Lands Cluster)

Organization: Solitary, Pair, Cult (1D4 Dread Basilisks and 2D10 1st level cultists- can belong to all NPC classes and Barbarians, Rangers, Druids, Rogues and Sorcerers, plus a high priest—a 5th level Druid or Sorcerer)

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: Standard + 4D4 Gems

Alignment: Always Neutral Evil

Advancement: 9-12 HD (Large), 13-16 (Huge), 17-20 (Gargantuan)

Introduction

Dread basilisks are a race of malevolent, intelligent reptiles who inhabit the tropical areas of Ravenloft.

Those adventurers who brave the jungles and the ancient ruins hidden within them sometimes bring tales with them of encountering entire gardens of human statues, so lifelike it was frightening. Those who inspected them closely even claimed they heard silent moans of fear and pain, though it might have been only their fevered imagination and dread of the situation.

Those fewer still who dared to come into the center of these strange rock gardens and came back bring tales with them of encountering powerful reptilian monsters, who have the power to turn a man into stone with a mere glance- or pass a truly vile disease with their powerful bite which slowly achieves the same result in the end. In other instances, such as in the Raijan village of Kampari, such beasts stood in the

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center of cults which provided them with new victims in return for their own lives.

In the ancient lore of the jungles, these monsters are referred to as "basilisks"—the dreaded kings of reptiles—and are feared by all. Those who claim to come from lands beyond the Mists say similar creatures exist in their own realms and are called by the same name, but they are far weaker and show no signs of intelligence.

The origins of the basilisks of Ravenloft are unknown. They might simply be native lizards of the jungles who adapted a little "too well" to the harsh environment, drawing power from the mist-tainted soil, the results of an evil god's curse on humanity or a magical experiment of one of the evil, forgotten races which inhabit the rainforest (like the yuan-ti). In remnant pages from the Book of Venom—a yuan-ti "holy" book of truly blasphemous content, they are referred to as "adversaries", and there does seem to exist some sort of rivalry between the two monsters—dread basilisks often inhabit ruins of the snake-people's once-glorious civilization. A third, far less-known theory relates them to the legendary Dread Wyrms, saying they might be their young. On several occasions, dread basilisks were co-operating with poison wyrms.

Appearance

The appearance of a dread basilisk brings dread into the heart of the bravest adventurer. Those very few adventurers who encountered them and survived say they resemble a large, muscular predatory lizard, quite similar to the smaller komodo dragon of Sri Raji, who might be a related species. However, dread basilisks are clearly magical and unnatural creatures. Their powerful bodies are mounted on six stubby legs, which end in small yet sharp claws. Their armored rock-coloured (with a green tint) scales are embedded with shining, precious gems of various kinds, which their body produces as a result of their unique metabolism (see below). Like many reptilian species they shed their skin as they grow, and these sheds are sought after by adventurers because of their

great value—often leading to fatal encounters with the creature, who rarely leaves its territory.

Their head is large, with most of it taken by a huge sneering maw filled with jagged teeth, which are powerful enough to cut and grind rocks. On the top of their head is a set of bony horns arranged in a sort of crown, further adding to their regal yet terrifying appearance. Their slitted yellow eyes—usually the last sight of their victims—are filled with malice and content for the warm-blooded creatures, and a desire for domination.

Personality

The most fatal mistake to make about dread basilisks is to think them hulking beasts like their kind from other worlds. They are as intelligent as the average human, though their mind works in ways alien to the human mind.

Dread basilisks are domineering creatures, who like to subjugate the surrounding environment to their will. While among reptile-kin their rule is virtually unquestioned, among humans they have to make an effort to show their superiority. However, the results are often fruitful and they revel in the chaos and mayhem they cause amongst the warm-blooded.

Dread basilisks are slothful creatures, who prefer to have their cultist servants (see below) bring victims to them instead of going on the hunt themselves and leaving their territory—as the territory inhabited by it soon becomes forsaken of all natural animal life save the creature's dominated reptilian servants.

Lifestyle and Society

The basilisks of Ravenloft are far more evolved than their kin in normal lands in physical, magical and mental aspects. Unsurprisingly they are predators, but devour rocks instead of flesh—actually they only gain sustenance from a specific rare mineral called liverock. The terrifying thing about liverock is that it is only found in petrified, once-living

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blood, flesh and bones. As reptilian creatures are somehow immune to their gaze (though not the disease caused by their bite), the vast majority of a dread basilisk's gruesome diet is made of petrified birds and mammals, with humans being a favored treat due to the fear they feel before their die. Liverock also makes a popular spell component amongst immoral spellcasters who live near the jungle, greatly empowering their earth-based spells.

Dread basilisks are spawned from eggs like most normal reptiles, deep within the jungle. The eggs are abandoned by the mother and the young basilisks are left to fend off by themselves. The strongest one devours its weaker siblings and leaves to develop its powers and intellect, and eventually claim its own territory. For some reason, they are attracted to ruins of fallen civilizations—but their territory is quite large, spanning miles around their "stronghold" and only limited by the territories of other dread basilisks or more powerful inhabitants of the jungle.

After establishing its territory and using its magical powers to dominate the nearby reptiles, the dread basilisk sooner or later comes in contact with human civilization—and this is where the true terror begins, and the creature's innate diabolical nature is unveiled.

After spreading terror in the area for a certain time (either directly or through minions) and crushing all opposition, the dread basilisk will often start receiving sacrifices from the humans living near the jungle to appease its "wrath", as this is often the tradition in these areas. By showing its satisfaction from the sacrifices offered to it, the dread basilisk encourages people to continue this gruesome habit.

It revels in the mayhem, paranoia and infighting it causes amongst the lesser "warm-blooded", who argue who will have to go to sate the "lizard-god's" wrath. Soon, this form of frightful worship expands even further, as the creature uses its powers and lizard minions to send "omens" to would-be priests in the village,

people with a skill at leadership and great fear of the beast combined with a desire to use the dire situation to gain power for themselves. Eventually the priest enters the basilisk's stronghold, and comes out changed—immune to the creature's stone gaze through drinking some of its foul blood—and establishing a telepathic link with it. They often start advancing as druids or adepts, taught forbidden lore of the jungle by the dread basilisk. In even rarer cases, they start developing reptilian features themselves (possibly the results of failed powers checks, or from the beast itself!)

The monster projects its vile thoughts through its telepathy and uses its puppet to further degrade the village into evil by following a twisted mock-religion of terror and blasphemy, whose exact rites are different according to the individual dread basilisk (but almost always include the sacrifice of outlanders to "the beast in the jungle") and revels in the priest's own personal corruption. The dread basilisk does all of this to prove the superiority of reptiles over mankind.

Dread basilisks are loners by nature, and will usually attack each other on sight. They mate once per 10 years, and the duration of their lives is unknown—but they are known to become smarter, stronger and far larger as they grow old. The oldest dread basilisk known—the so-called "Mother of Reptiles"—is even said to possess the spellcasting abilities of a high-level druid, and be around the size of a small Wyrmling!

The lair of a dread basilisk is usually a complex of ancient moss-covered ruins, filled with the stone statues (often half-eaten) of its petrified victims. There is an atmosphere of pain and suffering in the air, as the statues are still said to be partially alive and feel endless torment. Attempts to *speak with dead* done in the area draw a Madness check. This disturbing feeling also bestows a -2 profane penalty on Listen checks.

The basilisk's human minions often place traps and mirrors (to maximize the effect of the monster's gaze) in its lair, further adding to the

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danger of the place. While dread basilisks have no desire for treasure, the ruins they inhabit are often filled with various treasures of lost cultures, which they often use to tempt their human priests to do evil.

A few dread basilisks speak Draconic.

Combat

Dread basilisks are terrifying foes, with their dreadful bite and gore attacks and their most feared gaze power. They often send their animal and human minions to do combat before them, before utilizing their gaze attack and finally closing to melee combat if this fails. Their only drawbacks are their lack of ranged attack and slow speed.

Blood Pact (Su): By drinking some of the vile ichor which is the dread basilisk's blood, a humanoid creature gains special powers. Only the blood of a living dread basilisk will carry such results. Creatures who drink the blood gain an immunity to the gaze attacks of dread and normal basilisks, and establishes a telepathic link with the creature with the range of 1 mile per 2 HD the creature has (the minimum being 4 miles). It also gains a +2 profane bonus to its Wisdom. Establishing a Blood Pact with a dread basilisk merits a Powers check.

Command Reptilians (Su): A dread basilisk may rebuke or command any creature of the Reptilian subtype as an evil cleric of its same HD. Both this power and the Speak with Reptilians power are somehow connected to the dread basilisk's crown of horns.

Disease (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save DC 21 or contact Vile Rigidity (see Book of Vile Darkness).

Petrifying Gaze (Su): Turn to stone permanently, range 40 feet. Fortitude save negates, DC 16.

Speak with Reptilians (Sp): A dread basilisk can *Speak with animals* at will as a 16th level

druid, though this power only affects Reptilian creatures.

Cold-Blooded (Ex): Dread basilisks are cold-blooded creatures, even more than other reptiles. They take one and a half times the normal damage from cold attacks, rounded down. However, a heat or fire-based attack dealing 5 or less HP damage actually heals them by the same number of hit points.

Gemmed Scales (Ex): The dread basilisk's scales are encrusted with shining gems of various kinds. Each dread basilisk carries 4d4 precious gems on its hide, determined randomly. The shining gems grants creatures attempting to spot the dread basilisk in the jungle environment a +4 bonus to their Spot checks. Also, the scales grant the dread basilisk its spell resistance and might be remade into armor.

Spell Resistance 12 (Ex): Against cold spells, a dread basilisk's spell resistance is only 6.

Techniques of Terror

Dread basilisks are fierce beasts to face in or out of combat. Their terror is further enhanced by their abilities to turn humans into stone statues—mere objects—and, in reverse, to use the terror and passion found in their hot blood to make them destroy each other. Adventurers facing a dread basilisk will feel like the whole jungle and its surrounding inhabitants are turning against them.

In the lands of Sri Raji, legends tell of the legendary Mother of Reptiles. This very old, very intelligent and very evil female dread basilisk is said to have caused the downfall of an entire human civilization within the jungle, showing that men are nothing but mindless beasts prone to their hot blood and their instincts, and still lurks somewhere in the ruins—which are also said to contain areas yet untouched by the beast, filled with countless treasures. Another horror said to lurk in the ruins is the 3rd rank ancient dead former high priest of the Mother, whose undying crusade to destroy

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his former false goddess crossed the threshold of
madness long ago.



Horresco Referens*
(The Dread Art
Gallery...)

* Latin for "I shiver from horror while telling the tale"...

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ELLE

By: Conrad Clark

Henley Potts sat, a shadow reflected on the whitewashed tavern wall, his wiry form distorted by the soft lantern light that pushed it askew, lending it ghoulish disfigurement with each gust of fresh sea air. I sat also, nearby with the others, camped before him like an apostle or loyal follower; and I guess in many ways I was.

We were in the Hearing House –a disused tavern, right by the quayside in the Western quarter. The House remained a drinking house of sorts, but was really a place for local workers to settle their differences; aggrieved workers would arrive, pay a small fee or perform a service for the community, and in return have the patron, the old crone Madren, pass her judgement on some contested matter. The folk accepted it too; she was, so they told me, unscrupulously fair, and known to err on the side of forgiveness. It was Madren who had invited all us affected souls, so we might listen to a tale; and not just any tale at that, but one told by the venerable Mr. Potts himself.

Potts was a gentleman from the Eastern quarter –an area of high-culture and luxury unheard of by most here; and though this would normally mark him out for derision, the fact that he funded the House, and maintained his links with the workers, inspired in us a respect that bordered on love.

Madren had persuaded us to rest all quarrels until the eve of the following day. Some were reluctant at first, but at the idea of doing their cases and characters harm through a simple lack of amnesty, fell silent. We sat together then, like old acquaintances, huddled with backs against walls or crouched in the middle of the room, each offering respectful silence to his neighbour –and all of us waiting for Mr. Potts to begin.

A storm was brewing out at sea, pushing a freezing wind inland. We listened as it whipped the waves into a great frenzy and sent them crashing against the quay. We had bolted the door, boarded the windows and hung drapes where we could. It had not succeeded; gusts of chill air still found us from between cracks in the ill-fitting frames and boards. But we were warm enough; for Madren sat with us, a cluster of liquor bottles about her; and we wasted not a moment in making their acquaintance. Very soon tankards were joined, old arguments forgotten, and remembrances uttered.

The evening drew on, and the wind howled harder and colder. Thunder peeled out at sea, and great sheets of lighting lined the edges of drapes and door, illuminating the room. No voice was raised in complaint; it was time well spent, and all knew it; the cunning Madren had worked her spell, and a relaxed mood was on us. Fortunately, this mood was still vibrant when Mr. Potts coughed twice –a sign many of us were accustomed to, for had we been reflecting on things more solemn, the evening might have proceeded differently. As it was, we ended our conversations hurriedly and turned toward him in silence.

Slowly, he began, speaking in a hushed, articulate voice as if answering in confidence a question put to him. He spoke slowly, digressing on occasion to express the opinions we all took for granted; yet there was something more in his voice, something that, complete with the emerging picture, hinted at a difference between Mr. Potts and the rest of us.

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Yes, I remember the time well enough; for it was one of the most peculiar episodes of my life; it was when I learned the truth. Let me tell you fellows, whatever you may presently think, the truth does the strangest of things; it leaves a grubby mark on an otherwise unblemished soul, a slight that draws the eyes back time and over. Some claim that if you fail to get it straight out again—whether by liquor or something else besides—it takes a hold of you. And when that happens, it matters not how you try to ignore it, for it remains with you. Then you have a choice: you can either discover for yourself, or hide away in a hole.

Anyway, it all started in the Red Sails, one of the roughest public houses in Martira Bay. My recollection of the precise reason I frequented that establishment is extremely faint; but I think that my family and I had fallen out at the time, and I had left Karg to find my own way. Regardless, I found myself in Matira without accommodation, and the Red Sails served this end.

Well, one day I returned from an arduous shift, and was sitting down to enjoy some supper when these two fellows walked in. It was a most peculiar scene; they were cursing and swearing one at the other, and at the tops of their voices. It appeared they had reached the height of some terrible row.

“I dunno where it is,” said the rougher looking of the two, defiantly, “so stop buggin me or I’ll smash your skull...”

“Ok! Ok! Calm it down lads, will you,” interrupted the fat barman, Mr. Dipsel, laughing nervously. He raised his palms up to the two strangers, not so much in an act of supplication, rather to defend his establishment from the possible consequence of violence. Dipsel, I had quickly ascertained, was little more than bluff and cowardice; but as most cowards, he was cunning, and shrewd enough to comprehend the effect of spilt blood on his business, and he was well prepared to adjust any personal urge accordingly.

The unshaven thug seemed oblivious to the plea, but then paused and collected himself with a deep breath, before curling his thick, grubby fingers into fists. One of them poked out at his opponent and mock jabbed him in the chest. “You just watch your tongue,” he said in a measured tone, and as if to add a weight of authority to the menace. “Tongues tend ta go missin round ‘ere.”

His verbal adversary, thinner and considerably older, stood red faced with rage, cross-armed, shaking his head violently. “Upstart,” he spat. “No! No! No! I’ll not have it. You dare to threaten an old man with your pugilism. I’ll not have it, you hear. Answer me damn you or I’ll give you the thrashing of your worthless life.”

The spectacle had already won considerable interest. Such behaviour was certainly uncommon, as those who displayed it too frequently often suffered a rapid decline in health, and money for that matter. Probably expecting trouble, Dipsel’s vivacious barmaid, Bess, leaned fully across the bar to get a better view.

It was then that it all threatened to descend into farce; and I confess to being as confused and disbelieving as any. We all watched amazed at the contrast between the old man’s crimson face and his white mop of hair, which shook with greasy fury about him. The effect was further worsened when the fellow, entirely swamped in an oversized white robe, tried to rebuke his opponent; a sleeve rode down and quickly overwhelmed his retaliatory finger, leaving it lost somewhere inside. “Look,” he snarled, pulling the sleeve back into place, “I just wanted to know if you saw anything...anything, damn you!”

“Now, gents, I’m askin you nicely,” cried the barman, fixated by the ungainly garment. “If you can’t settle this proper, you’ll both have to step outside.” The contenders paused, as if considering the remark, and then turned toward the rotund barman, looking him up and down.

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“And what exactly have we done to upset you?” snapped the old man, stumbling on his ample hemline. “If I were you, I’d concentrate my energies on stopping myself from eating.” The barman, exasperated, took a step backwards and reviewed his full figure with a forgiving eye. A bustle of drinkers pressed yet closer about the three men, forming a ring of unshaven flesh, sweaty leather and overflowing tankards. “Fight!” they shouted, laughing and cheering.

“Please,” said Dipsel in a hushed voice while pushing his palms to the floor, “keep it down will you, it’s only the beginning of the evening. Are you trying to ruin me?”

“Oh, come on now,” cried a voice, ignoring the barman’s plea. “Don’t be a coward and show us what you’ve got. Give the old codger a fourp’ny one.” Mr. Dipsel scoured the room, but the commotion obscured his view, and failing to spot a suitable culprit, he refocused his attention on the men before him.

“Look, Mr, I’m sure you’re upset, and you might well have good reason, but we don’t want any trouble here. Besides, I don’t take kindly to you making personal statements of that nature.” The barman punctuated the statement with a reproachfully glower then crossed his arms.

“Well, you are rather fat, are you not,” scolded the old man. “Besides, this is none of your business, is it?” Mr. Dipsel’s nostrils flared and his skin flushed. Looking down at the floor, the barman carefully unfurled his soiled tunic sleeves and then rolled them back up again. Looking up, Mr. Dipsel raised his eyebrows; the frail-looking old man was still there. “Get out of my bar you old bastard,” Dipsel threatened, making a fist, “before I shut that rotten tongue of yours up for good.”

The thug, who had been focusing on the bar area, turned back to the barman. “Hey, I’m doin the threatnin round ‘ere. You keep hands off the tongue, alright!”

The barman gave the man a nervous glance, before throwing his arms in the air. “Fine, you get rid of him then, because if you...” he began,

but a new wave of laughter washed over the room cutting him off. The barman turned to see the old man, stern faced and with fists raised, proceeding to shuffle backwards and forwards like some ill-tempered snowman brought to life.

“Come on then,” shouted the old man, “you first. I’m highly trained you know.”

It was then, along with raised tankards, mock bets and laughter that a loud cascade of noise erupted from the middle of the room; a calamity of upset metal stole attentions away from the men as it continued for several seconds. By the time it subsided, everyone was silent, with most staring accusingly at those closest to the fireplace.

“Now you’ve done it,” said Dipsel, placing his hands on his head. “The watch were bound to have heard that racket.”

The old man looked from the bartender to the thug, his mouth twisting up at the corner. The thug looked at the fireplace, before perusing the rabble; he paused at the largest men in the huddle, flexed his back and then his fingers. Everyone else in the pub turned to see the fireplace in a mess; there were shovels and pokers laying everywhere, and soot covered the area – a great cloud of it billowed out from the chimneybreast and into the room.

“How’d that happen?” said a scrawny-looking labourer. “The thing’s not even lit.”

“Ye stupid oaf,” replied a man in blacksmith garb. “No fire I ever ‘eard of does that, anyway. Ye must ‘ave knocked it all o’er wi’ tha’ thick skull a yours.”

“I’ll find a place for someone’s thick skull on my mantelpiece if they don’t clamp shut the oversized hole at the front it,” responded the labourer.”

“When ye big enough t’ lace your own boots,” said the blacksmith.”

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“Look here,” shouted a youth, spluttering “a footprint in th...”

Mr Dipsel staggered back, his cheek smarting. “I said come on, you cowardly bounder,” roared the vicious-looking snowman. Everyone wheeled round to watch. The barman raised a hand and placed it on the side of his face. Turning, he looked the evil snow menace square in the eye; it seemed obvious that Mr. Dipsel’s threatened ego had been inflamed – though he remained in the pose for several seconds too many. “What, fat infected your brain,” continued the old man, screaming and waving his over-long sleeves about his head. “Dreaming of some slug-butter stew, perhaps. Or are you just plain chicken?” The ill-robed man narrowed his eyes and stared straight back at the barman. Then, adopting the most feminine of mannerisms, he proceeded to run about the circle, crying and wailing, “I’m a short, fat chicken-hearted barman. Oh, what am I to do?” Eventually, he stumbled on his robe and crashed to the floor. The room exploded with laughter.

As he was rising, a voice from the fireplace called again. “I tell ya, there’s a footprint in this soot.”

“Bess? Bess,” shouted Dipsel, spinning about on the spot, “I need you...Now!”

Laughter erupted again, and someone shouted, “She can’t save you, Dipsy. You’ll have to deal with this old man yourself.”

Mr. Dipsel ignored the taunt and continued to scan the room for his assistant; but there was no sign of Bess anywhere. The barman frowned, holding an arm between himself and his ridiculous adversary.

The crowd showed no sign of allowing the matter to rest without some small measure of entertainment: many of them clapped provocatively, while others, too intoxicated to care, shouted insults into the air

“Hey, for sweet Ezra’s sake,” screamed a rough voice, “Won’t nobody listen. I tell you, Sipha’s right. There’s a bloody footprint in this soot, right by the hearth.”

The clapping abruptly stopped and a hustle commenced. Mr. Dipsel watched the ring of men dissolve as people started crowding around the fireplace. “Look at it,” whispered a large man in over-worn Captain’s regalia. “Kind winds preserve us. It looks such a small print. Now, what on all the seas could have made that?”

“There’s something strange here, Cap,” forwarded a crewman, shuddering, “I can feel it. Something unnatural made that print, as sure as I’m alive and drinking.”

“He’s right,” said the Captain. “It would be wrong to stay here after dark. What they say’s right, you know. ‘There’s nowhere safe on land at night. Wait for the light.’” Several seamen mouthed the words with him, before crossing strange signs over themselves. “Sorry Dipsy,” continued the Captain, “but I say those that can should go while there’s still time.”

Mr. Dipsel, showing every sign of being flustered, moved over to the fireplace, pushing several loiterers aside. Carefully, he bent down and looked at the small print. “Steady you all on a moment and bring me a candle,” he said. “It’s much too dark to see properly.” A nearby man pushed his way through to the bar and lifted the hatch.

“Bess?” he cried. “What the hell’s going on?”

Dipsel hurriedly pushed his way after him, before easing through the hatch-hole. He disappeared behind the counter.

We all waited for a shout, a reassurance, anything –we were all of us growing restless, edging around on our seats. “I need some help here,” were the eventual and eagerly awaited words. “She seems to have passed out.”

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Several men rushed through to assist the barman, lifting the barmaid up and onto the counter. I thought for a moment how odd and otherworldly she looked up there, how out of place. Her skin was pale under the light, and her hair, unbound, spilled across and over the bar top, a golden waterfall of reflective fibres. She was almost beautiful, but not quite; there was an air about her, a sense that the vitality of life she displayed earlier in the evening had waned considerably, leaving her somehow spent.

A hacking cough brought me to, and I returned my attention to a conversation between several of the punters. The jovial mood was gone.

“Go on Dipsy, wakes her up or somit,” said a well-blackened worker, “She looks real unwell to me.”

“Get a brandy down her neck,” called another, “that’ll fix her up a treat.”

The barman, however, looked none the better for their naive and altogether useless advice; my impression of Dipsel was changing – here was a man whose evening was going about as badly as one could, and yet his only thought was for another human being. Also, it seemed that we were the only two who could see that the girl was in a more serious situation.

Dipsel was looking her over carefully when a shout went up. “Hey, what the...where’s me purse...where’s all me coin?” The voice sounded genuine and desperate, as of a man who had fooled himself into thinking he had something spare to spend at the beginning of the evening, but did not, and had now come to the crushing realisation he actually had nothing at all. Others joined in, most of them from around the fireplace; I soon realised that for such a poverty-stricken area of the city, a considerable amount of coin had disappeared – a little too much. I checked my own pockets, well aware that I, being a stranger, would soon become a prime suspect. Of course, there was the other two...

It was then that I realised –the two men were no longer there; not a soul had looked at them since the disturbance by the fireplace, and they had apparently slipped quietly away.

The situation interested me, and although I was tired, I could not resist making an examination of the print; perhaps it might offer some clue. I stood up, easing myself off my stool, deliberately showing myself to be unperturbed by the events around me. Brazenly, I approached the fireplace. Many had already left the house, but a small angry mob remained, airing their grievances. I decided not to press them too close, settling instead for a few glances between half offered gaps. I stared down at the mark –a footprint it was, beyond deliberation, yet minute and so perfectly formed that were I not prepared for it, I should have suspected my senses affected. I could not immediately put upon the event any enduring logic: no explanation came to my mind that could account for the little print; moreover, no fireside implement or arrangement thereof was capable of making the mark. It was, true enough, an enigma.

Some of the others continued to stare at it – currently oblivious to their own monetary predicament—as if waiting for it to confirm or add something to their over-simple deductions. I looked about me, at the floor and walls, but found nothing; this appeared to be an entirely individual print, unaffected and alone. A footprint, I was certain, must come from somebody, or something, and despite the odd nature of this one, I could not believe it to be any different. I decided therefore, there and then, to leave the Red Sails and search for either the two strangers or the mysterious culprit.

As I made to leave, Bess stirred briefly, before slumping into unconscious. I looked at her carefully as I passed –there was a spot of blood at the base of one of her petticoats. Mr. Dipsel had yet to notice, and I decided to neither alarm him further nor detain myself. Then, to my great surprise, I proceeded to leave the inn without challenge or accusation.

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The evening air was cold and murky. A small amount of sea-spray settled on my exposed face, and I felt an amount of pleasure at the taste of salt on my tongue. During the day, in the heat and bustle, I was certain that the place would have reeked of old fish and garbage; yet now that the sea had reclaimed it, it was almost pleasant. There was no telling which way any of them had gone, which left me with a difficult decision: I needed to choose a direction.

The streets of Martira Bay, I had learned, were very dangerous, and certainly no place to walk alone at night. So, although the men may well have taken a direct route into the city, I felt compelled to move along the coastline, skirting it in the hope of finding a sign; besides, I preferred the company of the sea.

I had been walking for a while, completely alone and staring across the waves, when a chill infected my body. I paused to pull my jacket more closely about me, and looked up, searching along the edge of the quay. There was something in the distance, perhaps, I could not be entirely certain; at one moment there was a small figure, a child walking, her gaze turned out to sea; while at another, only a remnant wisp of sea fog was there, reflected in the feeble light. A strange coldness crept into me, and my heart began to flutter of itself. Without further thought, I started to run –not from the image, rather toward it. The decision, however, did not seem to be mine. In my head, I longed again for the warmth of the Red Sails, for anywhere but here. But I could not stop myself; I obeyed an instinct far more powerful than anything I could place against it. Running hard now, the blood thumping in my ears, I chased my unknown quarry along the quayside. I looked up again briefly; there was something perturbing about the closing image, something in or of it that touched me even at this distance, leaving me colder in than without. Yet still I ran, although my eyes fell now to the cobbles beneath me. I listened to my feet fall, each one resounding vainly against the ferocity of the waves. Surely, it must be my eyes, nothing more; unless the child was lost from the orphanage, or had fled

one of Dyreth's mills, the thought that she should be out after dark was unthinkable.

I ran on and on, focusing on my footfalls; I ran until my chest hurt; and then further, until the sound of my feet became alien, faint, and then faded altogether. I ran until my eyes ached and bulged, and until my chest, heaving, grasped desperately for even the smallest breath. Finally, I stopped, exhausted; my legs were cramping up with pain, and I was simply unable to continue. Breathless and doubled over, I pressed my palms firmly against my knees. My entire body was hot and aching from the exertion. This sensation, however, did not last long. My skin quickly firmed, and my lips began to swell. I watched from the corner of my eye as my breath extended in great clouds about me, streaming away with each gust of wind. Something that was me and yet not me crept up my spine, until it reached the apex of my neck and I was forced to bring my shoulders up to meet it. Slowly, deliberately, I looked up, unready and yet expectant. A girl stood before me, a child of no taller than three-feet, pale skinned with wavy, white-blonde hair that fanned all about her. She wore a simple blue peasant's dress embroidered with poor imitation white flowers, in which she looked slight and unimposing. Her feet were small and bare, and in her hands she cradled a small doll. It looked very old, the material being very worn and discoloured. I stood speechless, staring, while she fidgeted nervously. After a few seconds, she smiled. This simple act caused a sensation inside of me much like that obtained from strong liquor –a burning from the heart outwards. Her face was so innocent, so delightful, that it made the child appear beyond care. For that reason alone, she seemed strange; but there was something else about her, a presence, a weight of character that demanded of me my undivided attention, an attention I at once felt compelled to give.

"What are you calling yourself, Mr?" she asked in a soft voice. "Cos we don't talk to many strangers do we, Miss Tibbins. We need to have a name. And we only like people that love the sea. Isn't that right?"

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“My name is Hersley. Hersley Potts, if it pleases you,” I replied. “And yes, I do love the sea, very much.” I spat the answer out, only realising after the event that I had done so before thinking.”

“Mr. Potts, hmmm, yes, that will do. Mr. Potts is a nice name. Miss Tibbins thinks so too. She says I ought to tell you my name in return. You won’t forget, will you? I really hate that.”

“No, I will not forget it,” I said, before adding, “How did you catch me so quickly, I must have run past you, surely?”

The girl stepped forward, but just then a swathe of moist, salty air came across us and she turned abruptly toward the sea, staring out across the waves. “I have to get home,” she said, and then added, “Don’t you ever miss your home, Mr. Potts?”

I looked at her for a moment, perplexed, and was about to air my confusion when she continued, “My name is Elle. Do you like it? I think it’s a pretty name.”

“Yes, it’s a very pretty name...but what’s a pretty girl with a pretty name doing out here after dark. You must be freezing. I am wearing a jerkin, and this wind is still freezing me numb.”

Elle walked off along the quay with Miss Tibbins tucked unceremoniously under one arm. The other swung freely. “Don’t worry,” she said, “you’ll get used to it quickly enough. I know you will.”

I followed her, rubbing my arms rigorously every few steps. She moved quickly for a small child, and remained silent while she walked. Eventually, I could contain my curiosity no longer.

“Elle,” I said, “where we are going?”

The child stopped abruptly, then span about to face me, her eyes wide as though with shock

or disbelief. “To find the others, of course,” she said, before turning and moving off once more.

“What. Do you mean the two men, the ones from the inn?” I asked, hurrying to catch up.

Elle did not reply –and I took this as some form of condescension for my ignorance –so I just followed her, dreaming of warm flames and a respite from the cold.

She led me another mile or so along the quayside, and all the while she walked, she looked out across the waves. I looked too, out into the darkness, wondering if the waves had a beginning, or if they just crossed over from nothingness, and that if you could go out there you would find they had no beginning at all.

We stopped at a row of old sheds –disused storehouses I was to discover—and Elle paused in front of one of the doors. “You have to wait here,” she said, “until I call you in. The other two don’t trust strangers any.”

I nodded my assent and proceeded to wrap my arms about myself, rubbing once more. Elle knocked on the door three times and waited. Several seconds later, the door eased open and she disappeared inside. After a short time, the door opened again, and I saw Elle’s face, small and semi-luminous, poke out from inside. “Mr. Potts, you can come in now.”

I stepped inside the low doorway, stooping to avoid the large lintel that dwarfed the main frame. It was then that a large hand grabbed me and pulled me within. I heard the door snap shut even as I was being pinned to one of the shack’s rickety walls.

“Put him down this instant, Udar,” snapped Elle, who stood behind the burly man with her arms folded.

“Yes, let him be,” said a voice from the shadows. “He doesn’t look in any fit state to go far, anyway.”

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The strong arm that held me relaxed, and as it owner pulled back, I could see a criss-cross of scars along it. The man looked at me hard, his eyes burning with distrust. When he spoke, the deep, vibrant tones of his voice echoed throughout the small enclosure. "Elle, why you have to bring him now? We almost have enough. What you want him for?"

"If you must know," responded Elle curtly, "it was Mr. Potts who found me. We were talking about the sea, weren't we Mr. Potts?"

It took me a couple of seconds to recover – here were the two men from the Red Sails, neither of whom sounded or acted anything like they had then. At least it was warmer in here. "Yes! Yes, we were," was all I could manage.

The older man appeared out of the shadows, dressed now in simple travelling clothes. His mannerisms were serious, and he had a critical look in his eye; he beheld me with an air of intelligence and consideration, before finally shrugging his shoulders and saying, "As Udar, I can hardly imagine what good reason you have for wanting him. However, with the exception of tonight's mishap, you have performed so well, and I cannot see the harm." Then, almost as an afterthought, he added, "So what do we have, little Miss?"

Elle held Miss Tibbins up, directly in front of her but facing away, and started rubbing her back. "Well, what have we got then, Miss Tibbins?" she said. "Come on, you know you can't keep it. Cough it up." I stood bemused as the girl continued to rub the doll, addressing it with affection. Had I closed my eyes, I could have believed her talking to a pet – it was much too late for that now. Udar turned away, his skin going rapidly pale. I caught something in his eyes as he stepped into a corner, something irrational; and what ever was the cause of it, it quickly reduced this powerful man to a quivering, timid child. He started mumbling something over to himself, wringing his hands as he did so. His eyes were screwed tightly shut. No one paid the big man any heed; the old man

watched the doll intently, his hands raised before him with the fingers splayed, a look of stern concentration on his face; and Elle continued rubbing, although her tone was almost chastising now.

"Now, what did I tell you, Miss Tibbins. You can't keep them, you know you can't. Cough them up, now."

Elle stepped back, stumbling slightly, before attempting to correct herself. My jaw dropped open. The doll, held firmly between Elle's hands, was wriggling, changing, and the girl found herself thrust back and forth in the process. I stared, fixated, as its features, once faint and nondescript, altered to horrific proportion: a nose, large and beaked, began to protrude from the soft fabric; the chin elongated; the ears pointed and the hair thickened. Slowly, chillingly, the doll took on every aspect of a living, breathing thing; even the eyes, quickly filling with intelligence, darted this way and that. Miss Tibbins twisted her own head and began to survey the room.

"Oh, don't be such a madam, Miss Tibbins, and cough them up," cried Elle, clearly frustrated. The doll caught the old man's eye and grinned up at him. Its teeth were yellow and decaying, but needle-like and doubtless sharp. The old man raised an eyebrow and wriggled a couple of fingers, before returning the smile. Miss Tibbins scowled up at him and spat, her nostrils flaring in irritation.

"Very well, if you should have it so," said the old man, shifting his hands in a complex web of movement. "Then I shall force you." He spoke one word, clearly and with great energy, and Miss Tibbins started coughing. She coughed and retched, her neck extending and her face contorting with spasms of pain and rage. Elle placed Miss Tibbins onto the floor and stepped away.

"Laslos, no, stop it. You're hurting her," she shrieked. "Miss Tibbins can do it herself, if you let her. You just have to be nice."

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Miss Tibbins was on her tiny knees now, retching noisily. Then came the odd sound of things striking the floor. I looked more down and saw coins spewing from her mouth, one after the other, along with the odd ring and small trinket. After no more than a minute, the sounds stopped and the grotesque little creature collapsed onto the floor, seemingly exhausted. Elle stooped down and picked her up, holding her close.

"There, Miss Tibbins, that wasn't so hard, was it," she said soothingly. Laslos –who by now had shown himself a magician of some sort- set himself upon the floor and started sifting through the small pile.

"What about Miss Tibbins' reward?" snapped Elle. "You forgot it again."

Laslos, huffing, rose to his feet and approached the still quivering form of Udar. "Udar!" he said. "Udar, hold out your arm for me." Udar held out an arm, mumbling more loudly now, "No see it. Please, no see it." The magician gave the big man a look of contempt, but disguised it well in his voice.

"There is not need to worry, Udar. We will soon be away from this place and on our way home. We have nearly five-hundred gold coins. Just a few more outings should do it –nobody could want much more than that, not for a map." While he talked, Laslos pulled out a knife and a small cup. Then, drawing the blade swiftly across Udar's muscular arm, he moved the cup to catch the steady stream of red droplets. "There," he continued, "all done." Udar, I noticed, had not even winced.

Laslos took the cup and passed it to Elle, who in turn passed it to the eagerly awaiting Miss Tibbins. I looked on as the little monster lifted the cup with both hands and proceeded to pour the blood into her mouth. Elle, aware of my disquiet, looked at me and frowned. "Elle gets hungry too, Mr. Potts. You wouldn't want her to go hungry, would you?" When I failed to answer, the child turned her attention back to the doll; it had just finished its meal and was licking

its lips. The small cup fell to the floor, discarded. "There, Miss Tibbins, wasn't that nice?" said Elle, stroking the doll's head. Miss Tibbins gave a gurgling mew, before settling down in Elle's arms. I turned to Laslos, and found him already staring at me.

"So, Mr. Potts is it not," he began in a composed manner, "it appears you find yourself in a predicament. For as you have probably gathered, we are collecting valuables, with which we intended to obtain a map, which in turn will allow us to escape this accursed place once-and-for-all." I nodded my understanding of this –but he was not yet done. "So, if you get it into that thick...no, forgive my manners...if you get it into that 'potentially' thick skull of yours to inform anyone, I shall take great delight in making your final few hours a living hell. Do we understand each other?" Once again, I nodded; and then to my astonishment, he reached out his hand and, taking mine, said, "Very pleased, then, to make your acquaintance, Mr. Potts. I do hope it short, unless of course you decide to voyage with us. My name you know already, as you do my companion. By the way, please forgive Udar –he simply cannot cope with anything that fails to act in a well accustomed manner." I heard the door open and saw Elle walk out into the night. Udar, springing to life, pulled it shut and bolted it. "Where is she going?" I asked the magician. I quickly discovered that Laslos had little idea, and that he cared less.

Laslos then told me his tale. He had been on a voyage aboard a large vessel, bound for a place called Calimport – it sounded vaguely familiar then, as I remember. Thick sea fog had sent the ship off-course, and they had drifted for days, trying vainly to gain their bearings; and yet even when the fog cleared, the stars were of no use. The navigator was perplexed; all he could say was, "They're jumbled...they're all jumbled." In the end, short of food and with the crew unsettled and fearful, they had run into a great storm; and undermanned, the vessel had broken up at sea. Fortunately, Laslos had his magic to sustain him, and soon enough made it to shore. Once there, he had found Udar, one of

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the crewmen, half-dead, clinging to a piece of driftwood. They were just leaving, heading inland for aid, when Elle had appeared, stumbling up the shore, soaking wet and covered in strands of seaweed. She was clutching a strange doll. The child claimed it to be hers, but Laslos had other ideas: he recognised the power in it immediately, and assumed she had found it in the wreckage. Thinking nothing more of it at that point, Laslos and Udar had entered the city and enquired after returning vessels. Their search proved futile –for some unaccountable reason, this island, or whatever it was, had neither heard of Calimport nor anywhere else along the Sword Coast. Things seemed hopeless, and they were about to break the news to the child, when she claimed to have met a man on the quayside, a man with a map back home. Naturally, Laslos had been suspicious, but the girl explained the encounter so vividly, and the nature of the conversation struck him as so overtly genuine, that he had begun at once thinking of ways to amass the suggested cost. It was during this time that the magician took a second look at the doll. He quickly discovered its nature, and then found a remarkable use for it; he had the girl, who was expecting to return home with them, release it into areas full of unwary people –inns and such. Of course, the girl could not enter, but the doll could – especially when there was cast upon it a spell of invisibility. Using this technique, Laslos had already amassed several hundred gold coins, or ‘skulls’, as they were known.

After he had finished his tale, the magician looked me up and down.

“You know,” he said, “we could be of some service to one another.”

I responded that I did not know how; however, my eyes betrayed me by searching about the filth of the storeroom. He continued:

“A room with a bath would be sufficient. Of course, I should not expect to stay there –that should be your luxury. And, do not pretend to enjoy suitable accommodation already, or that you are not interested in good room. It was you,

I recall, sitting in the Red Sails, minding your own business; and even I, who have been here but a couple of months, have overheard shipwrights and sailors curse at the state of it.”

Udar spent the whole time watching me. The look in his eyes told me that he would much enjoy ripping my arms off and handing them to me. It was obvious he disliked the arrangement from the way he scuffed his feet on the dusty boards; and yet he said nothing. His confidence, however, had returned undiminished by the earlier incident; he reminded me of a petulant child –impatient and bullish, his moment of weakness long forgotten.

Elle had still not returned when I left them, twenty skulls better off. A brisk walk saw me back at the Sails, where I ordered a nightcap from Dipsel. The place was now deserted, but for a couple of drunkards half-collapsed in a corner. Bess, he told me, had taken to bed; she was feverish...and had a strange bite-mark near her ankle. I feigned surprise, drank my drink and bid him good night.

I left there the following morning, neglecting to attend my employ. Instead, I did as Laslos asked me, and rented a good room in a guesthouse further along the shore. I knew the magician would not be able to attend the room without my intervention, and for that reason, he had little input when it came to choosing the establishment. I ensured, therefore, my contentment and picked one overlooking the sea. The room was of a good size, and comfortable. It also had the advantage of being on the first floor, with a set of stairs that ran straight from my room to the quayside.

I returned to the storehouse to tell them the address. Laslos reconfirmed that only I should sleep there, with he arriving for baths and other such matters; he agreed that it would generate too much suspicion to have three men and a girl share a single room. The magician wanted at least seven-hundred-and-fifty skulls before he

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paid the vendor a visit, which meant several more weeks of work.

I did little at that time, returning to work for a few days, before giving it up –I needed to get my own life on track. I found it confusing that I should be there over a simple argument, and that I should have travelled for such menial work while my relatives lived well in Karg. I made a point of writing a couple of letters –I had neither seen nor heard from any of them since the ill-occasion, which seemed for longer than I could comfortably recall.

I remember Elle being very kind to me at that time; whenever I mentioned my family, she would half frown, then smile and shake her head, before saying: “Mr. Potts, whether you forget all of your family, each and every one, is not matter...just never forget the sea and everything just might turn out all right.” I always smiled and said I would, yet I never really understood.

She visited me frequently at that time, arriving in the evenings with Miss Tibbins. She would always appear shortly after a job was completed, and sit and talk about her home across the sea. Elle was such a good storyteller, that sometimes I could almost see the places and people she talked about –almost.

We set up a system of knocks for security – she seemed to like that—three knocks, two fast and one slow. After that, she would always walk up the old iron steps and knock for me, waiting by the door until I asked her in. On one evening, she asked if she could call me Pirre; she said it was a nice name, and that she missed using it. I declined –the very sound of it sent a shiver down my spine, and I had no wish to hear it again.

She did not arrive for several days after that, and I had no idea where she went. When she saw me again, she told me that things were progressing well; Laslos’ ingenuity impressed her, I could tell –he always thought of new and evermore cunning ways of getting coin from people. But, it was never enough; he was ever

impatient, and Elle always had to get Miss Tibbins to steal more coins. She often appeared with tears in her eyes, distressed at the treatment of her doll –which, happily, had always returned to its normal state by the time it arrived.

On the last day, she arrived early, sometime late in the afternoon –I heard her small feet pounding up the stairs. The knock was hurried and overtly deliberate. I went to the door and opened it.

“They’ve gone!” shrieked Elle. “Gone, gone, gone. Miss Tibbins told me not to trust them, but I so want to get home.”

I stood up immediately. “What do you mean, ‘gone’, Elle? Could they not have just gone out for a while?”

“What, with all the gold?” she snapped. “Sometimes, Pi...Mr. Potts, you can be very stupid.”

I took the comment on board –perhaps I was stupid for talking to Elle as though she were a little girl—choosing not to respond.

“Well, come on then,” she said, “they can’t have got far, not yet. I knew I shouldn’t have told them where the shop was.”

We left then, running down the stairs and onto the quayside. I chased after her, along the narrowing cobbled streets that led into the heart of the city.

“Elle, I thought you said the vendor was only there after hours?” I shouted after her.

Elle stopped, then turned and honoured me with a dazzling smile. “Of course, yes. Mr. Potts, you are brilliant too, sometimes. We should catch them now.” Elle ran off again, sparking up a new and private conversation. “Yes Miss Tibbins, soon you can. Soon!”

After only a short while, we came to the shop. The surrounding area, with its narrow alleyways and poorly cobbled streets, looked

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more like a den for rats than a place for human habitation. I kicked a loose cobble from the pocket that housed it; everything here was run down and decaying, the buildings, the streets, the very atmosphere itself. I stared long and hard at the shop. It was old, filthy and apparently disused; its sign hung down limply on one rusted chain. I peered closer at the faded words, which read: "Vandram Dak Antiques". I pushed the board with my finger, and it groaned like an irritated animal woken from long slumber. "Are you sure Vandram sells anything, Elle?" I said, staring back at her.

"Oh yes," she said, nodding vigorously, "he told me had it himself, the map I mean, when I was strolling along the quay. He said it was very old and very expensive, and that if I wanted it I was to make sure I had lots and lots of gold."

"How do you know he wasn't just lying," I retorted. "Perhaps he was just after what ever you could bring him." Elle stamped her little foot and glowered up at me. I stepped back.

"Do you take me for some kind of fool, Mr. Potts? He showed it me, of course. Well, a little, at least enough of what I recognised. It is real, I tell you."

I apologised in the best manner I could; but she was already discussing the matter with Miss Tibbins, and I realised I had ceased to exist to her, at least for the present. I moved closer to the shop, until I stood at the door. Whereas most of the buildings in this area were decrepit and dilapidated, this was simply incredibly old, as were all of the things piled high inside –it looked as if some mysterious net of antiquity had dredged every piece of bric-a-brac together, and left it in this small space.

It was then that the thought struck me: Either Laslos and Udar had abandoned their search, or they were already inside. I turned back to Elle, "Do you think they are inside? Or, would they have gone back until later?" There was no response. I decided not to push her for the moment; for she seemed detached, estranged from events around her, as though only that

which immediately interested her existed. I remained waiting for several minutes, listening to her debate some matter with her surrogate companion; this child knew loneliness in a way I could not comprehend.

An examination of the door handle revealed that the dust was disturbed. Of course, this did not offer anything more than possibility, and I was not sure which possibility was best; the place did not appeal to me.

"Is it open?" asked Elle from behind me.

"I am not sure," I replied. "I have yet to try."

Elle muttered behind me, and to save her temper I twisted the handle quickly and pushed. The door swung open without effort, and we made our way inside. There were footprints here, two sets, one of them large, and there was little question whose they were. We immediately began walking through the shop, avoiding contact with the mounds of old things that seemed set against our progress.

"Elle," I said, "I cannot understand why thieves do not just take everything. We simply walked in –and there was not even anyone here to stop us."

As we moved around a stack of objects, Elle paused, "Yes," she said, "but Laslos can do funny things with doors. I saw him open a great big one with lots of locks all over it, with just a few words and a needle. I don't think this one would have caused him any trouble."

I quickly discovered that the initial room, rather than being the mainstay of Vandram's antique empire, was little more than a vanguard; for as we passed beyond it, I began to comprehend the sheer enormity of items stored here. All manner of thing were piled everywhere, often stacked so high that they acted more as architecture than valuables. I stopped every few paces, tempted to remove the thick dust from a portrait, or pick up something from a jumble of books or papers. Elle,

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however, had other ideas, and prompted me forward with a series of small coughs and nods. All of this, I thought. All of this, and untouched; it was not even in a position to be seen and bought. It continued as such, until we reached a long set of stairs leading down, and even then, there were things piled high on each step, leaving only a narrow space for passage to the level below. I noticed that some had been clumsily spilled.

"I think they must be down there," said Elle, taking a few tentative steps. "Do you ever feel funny, Mr. Potts, like your body knows something important, but you can't think what?"

"I think so." I replied.

"I feel like that now," she continued, "all funny inside. Miss Tibbins thinks I'm being silly."

I did not respond, but started down the stairs after her, wondering how a girl of such age could understand so much. As we descended, I stopped to touch the walls; they were grimy and damp; it appeared we were further underground than I imagined.

We reached the bottom of the stairs and Elle pushed the door ajar, peering through the opening. "There's a passage, Mr. Potts," she whispered. "Would you mind going first?"

I nodded, before moving past her; I could not imagine that the building went much further, and did not wish for Elle to have to confront whatever we would find. I made my way along the dimly lit corridor, finding it very narrow and constricting. As I proceeded, I felt as though some strange weight bore down on me, perhaps adjudging me with displeasure for my trespass. When I reached the end of the corridor, the sensation stopped and I gasped air into my lungs—had I forgotten then to breath? Composing myself, I stopped to listen; there were voices beyond this passage, voices I recognised. Motioning for Elle to remain, I peered around the corner and into a large room. As the others, this room contained all manner of things;

however, someone had positioned these for viewing—all of them looked especially clean and well preserved. I saw that Laslos and Udar were stooped over, searching, with Laslos examining the contents of a cabinet draw. Before I knew it, Elle was standing by my side, watching with me. Udar spoke, his tone despondent yet bordering on anxiety:

"You say it. You say we have get there before dark. Tide going out soon. How you know they wait, eh? Maybe they go. Leave us here." Laslos continued to ruffle through papers in the drawer. He did not reply immediately, but when he did, it was with barely restrained anger.

"I have told you before, Udar, they will wait. I have paid them to wait, so they will wait. What more do you want me to do? The protective spells on this place are very devious and powerful; and had it not been for me, you would already be like the shell of some dry-sucked insect. The longer you detain me with your idiocy, the longer it will take to find the damn thing."

"I go then," said Udar, "and stop men from sailing."

"Just stand still, damn you," snapped the wizard. "What did I tell you about the circle? Do not break..." he continued, with Udar accompanying him in a tone that suggested blind repetition. "...the circle. Do not cross the circle. Do not go near the circle."

Laslos paused, before looking across at Udar with contempt. "

Udar walked away from the wizard and scuffed at the carpet with his boot.

"Why we not take the girl, then?" said Udar.

Laslos shook his head and sighed, and yet still continued to search.

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“Can you not see anything? Cannot anyone see anything? We are not taking her because the girl is not...” he started, but then abruptly stopped. “What was that?”

I had heard the noise too –it had come from somewhere in that room, although it was difficult to ascertain exactly where. Laslos stood now, searching about him, until he noticed a smudge of powder on Udar’s boot. Hurriedly dropping to a crouch, he found the edge of the circle and moved around it, examining. Abruptly, he stopped.

“Udar,” he cried, “I am unsure which of us is the greater fool. Maybe it is you for being as you are. But perhaps not, perhaps it is I for allowing that to be.” Carefully, the wizard reached into a pocket and removed a pouch. From within it he produced a small amount of power, which he sprinkled over the small gap in the circle. Then he mumbled aloud, “Without the appropriate intonation, this addition is virtually useless. I can only hope it enough.”

In way of an answer, the sound came again. It was a hoarse, almost even noise, which stirred at my insides. Laslos span about him. “Where, where, where? I cannot see it. Udar, arm yourself. What ever it is, it is now your job to stop it.”

The large man pulled out a short sword in one fluid action, and then stood, imitating the wizard’s movements. The next time the sound occurred, another accompanied it; a book tumbled off a shelf, before falling silently to the carpeted floor. Laslos stepped back, waving his arms about him maniacally and speaking strange words into the air. There was a shimmer of light and a stout figure –a dwarf—appeared, carrying with it an axe, moving around the circle toward the breach.

“So,” said Laslos, “you thought to best me. Well, very cunning my friend, whoever you are, but not good enough. Udar! Dispose of it!”

Udar stepped forward, but then stopped. “Is it real? It not like the...”

“No, it’s not like the bloody doll,” spat Laslos. “Now, do your job and destroy it...I mean him.”

Udar closed in on the figure, to the wizard’s screams, telling him to stay inside the circle. By the time Udar understood, the dwarf was at the breach, trying to step inside. It appeared to me as if he was trying to plough through thick mud, his axe held high above his head, moving so slowly that it seemed certain he must tire and stop. Yet he did not. Udar, still confused at the situation, eventually pulled his sword back and swung it with terrific force at his opponent. There was barely a sound, no cry of desperation or pain, only the sound of steel striking something firm but soft. The dwarf staggered back at the blow and overbalanced, falling backward onto an elegant bureau, taking it with him to the floor. Udar folded his arms, satisfied with his work.

I noticed that the air in the room was thickening fast, congealing –it became progressively harder to breath. I stood transfixed as a feeling of both sickness and wrathful energy filled me, pooling in my stomach.

“Not so tough,” said Udar, smiling and looking across at the wizard. Laslos, however, had spent the entire time focused on another draw, and only now paused to offer comment.

“Very good! Now, ensure that he stays that...”

The wizard stopped short then turned about him. I had no doubt he had sensed the same as I, and gained no satisfaction from the observed look of fear on his face. Behind him, a miniature vortex of mist-like particles slowly condensed, amassing first into a rough humanoid shape, before eventually forming with colour and definition. Within a few moments, a man of unremarkable looks and stature stood between the men and the fallen dwarf. He wore a frilled white shirt with minute gold cufflinks, over which was a matching pair of pinstriped trousers and waistcoat. His boots were smooth, black

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and well polished, and his hair, also black, spiked out chaotically. His face looked pale and drawn.

I shuddered along with Laslos, who remained unaware of his location until then. The wizard turned cautiously, a look of surprise crossing his features; the figure was not even facing him; it looked at the dwarf, still prostrate on the floor.

“Have you any idea what that was worth?” he said, walking toward the smashed bureau. “Do you know how long it took me to find it?”

Laslos, initially at a complete loss for words, coughed in a way of heralding some rapidly formulating explanation. It went unrecognised.

“Then why, oh why, did you smash it?” continued the man. “It’s not really the worth of it that troubles me, rather your blatant disregard of my instructions.”

Udar remained still, confused beyond movement by this strange fellow. He seemed just about to make a comment when the man, clutching his hair with both hands, rushed forward at breakneck speed and began kicking the dwarf’s body. Then, without pause, he drew forth a long knife and bending forward plunged into the dwarf repeatedly.

“Well,” he said. “How does it feel to be damaged? A little more than annoying, I presume. And, if this is what it’s going to take for me to make you understand, then so be it.”

The man, rising, then turned to face the pair. Laslos, swallowed hard, and began checking his garments. Udar scratched his head.

“Vandram Dax,” said the man, “Very pleased, I’m sure. And what can I do for you gentlemen today?”

Laslos looked at him for a second, as if frozen, then said, “We are here to make a purchase, if you would be so kind.”

Vandram walked across to the wizard, and then past behind him, before looking over a selection of items stored on a shelf. “So, you are a lover of antiques, as I. What a wonderful surprise, and by what chance...I hardly ever have the chance to entertain down here. Very well sir, what may I offer you?”

“A map,” replied Laslos, a little too hastily.

Vandram rolled his eyes, “Maps. What are they to a purveyor of antiques? Art, my friend, that is the future, not maps. Whereas nature fails and fades then to nothingness, art lives on. Art is beautiful; it is life, a different life, another chance at perfection...You want maps, you say?”

“If you would be so kind?” said Laslos. The wizard looked at Vandram appealingly. Vandram stopped for a second then started looking over some ornaments.

“Hmmm. Well, yes, of course I have some somewhere,” said Vandram. “They can be art objects in their own right, you understand, but not the same as these.” Vandram gestured to a selection of vases.

As the conversation proceeded, I turned to see Udar standing with a perplexed expression, looking always at Laslos for some indication of what was required of him. The wizard watched Vandram like a hawk. I looked across then at the body of the dwarf, and to my amazement witnessed the creature stir. Merely twitching at first, it began by parts to move more and more of its body—fingers, hands, and feet—before slowly raising its head. The eyes, doubtless once proud and stern, looked ahead with a quiet, submissive apathy; and those features that had once made this thing dwarven failed to show through; here was a monster, nothing more. I wanted to shout, to cry out a warning; but what then should I have done; the game would have been up, for I stood no greater chance in a battle against that thing than any stood there. The vendor continued as if nothing whatever were amiss; he entirely ignored the warrior, but had

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picked up a vase and was chatting amiably with the wizard.

“You see here, yes, the floral design, I can’t say I enjoy it to be completely honest...but the workmanship is exquisite, don’t you agree.” Laslos peered more closely at the vase, the skin on his nose furling up as he scrutinized it.

“I can see it’s well made, of that there’s no doubt. However, I must be frank with you, vases are not exactly an interest of mine. I’m more interested in maps, you see.”

Udar crossed his thick arms and scuffed the sole of boot on the carpeted floor. He stared long and hard at both men, annoyance and impatience etched across his face.

Vandram looked down at the area of affected carpet and then stopped perfectly still, staring directly ahead of him; he looked statuesque, devoid of any movement whatever, as if time itself had frozen only him. Then, just as abruptly, he turned to the wizard, a smile spreading across his face.

“Ah,” he exclaimed with immense excitement, I understand now. Forgive me, I beg you. Sometimes I can be entirely self-absorbed.” The wizard began to mutter something about an apology being needless; but Vandram was not listening; he held his hands out before him and placed them upon Laslos’ shoulders, shaking him with a vigour usually reserved for the discovery of a long lost brother.

“You’re a texture man, are you not?” he said, bringing the fingertips of one hand to a point on his forehead. “Yes, I should have seen it before. Smooth vases and ornaments are not for you. You love the feel of things, the sensation of materials under your thumb.”

Laslos, somewhat shaken, stared at Vandram blankly.

“Here,” continued Vandram, holding before him a miniature tapestry, “look at this, will you? I’m sure even a man of your refined taste and

expertise has not encountered one of these before. Well?” Vandram looked earnestly across at Laslos as he brushed a hand gently across it.

“No, I cannot say that I have,” said the wizard. “Do you actually have any maps?”

The dwarf was up now, axe in hand, staring ahead like a soulless manikin. I looked at Elle and saw that she had covered her eyes and was clutching Miss Tibbins to her face. Vandram continued.

“Look at that weave,” he said. “It must have taken years for some poor soul, day after day, year after year, to complete that. You can hardly see it with the naked eye.” Vandram continued on, until Laslos dared to interrupt. Behind all three of them, the dwarf stepped into the circle.

“I hate to be rude,” said Laslos, “but I really need that map.” Vandram fell silent, then push a flattened hand into a pocket. From it, he produced a map. It was a strange thing, not entirely flat, and certainly not made of paper. Vandram held it out, and the wizard took it hurriedly.

“Yes! Yes! Ahaa, there it is, wondrous Calimport itself, and just as I remember too. How much for it then, good sir? And, by the way, how did you know this was the map I wanted?”

Vandram smiled, “Better to think of it as a hunch,” he said. “And, as for the price, well, let me see now...”

Vandram was interrupted by a terrible scream; Udar, his eyes almost bulging from their sockets, staggered forwards, blood pouring from his mouth. There was an axe embedded deeply into his back.

“Hmmm, I say,” said Vandram, “you should be more careful with your feet, young man.”

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Udar fell past both men, crashing heavily to the ground. There could be no doubt that he was dead.

“Anyway,” continued Vandram, “how much coin do you have on you?”

Laslos, his mouth agape, struggled initially for either word or action. Eventually, he turned to make a dash for the door. The dwarf, however, now stood between him and escape, and the wizard stalled. I watched Laslos closely; he began to mumble something under his breath, and all the while, the fingers of one hand worked subtly.

Vandram coughed. “I trust you were going to pay for that.”

A blur of movement beside me brought my attention back to Elle; the doll was once again morphing, coming to life. I wanted to step away, but could not move lest the others became aware of me. Miss Tibbins’ horrible little eyes fixed on me for a moment, before looking toward the wizard. From inside of the room came a roar of sound, and I looked to see Laslos, the area around his hands completely obscured by an outpouring of brilliant orange flame, swaying back and forth. Vandram screamed – whether in rage or pain, I had no idea—and the wizard called out too. Elle placed Miss Tibbins on the floor, before whispering, “Hurry, Miss Tibbins. This is the best chance ever.” I looked down at her even as Miss Tibbins rushed into the room.

Slowly, the glare faded, and within I could see once more the wizard, Vandram, and the dwarf. The dwarf was aflame, although he remained motionless among several other items of antique furniture. These also burned fiercely. Vandram screamed again, and I realised that it was in despair and anger; he looked about him, watching his beautiful things burn, unsure of which to save first. Laslos, unaffected, used the moment well: easily avoiding the dwarf, he proceeded, map in hand, to make for the door. But then it was his turn to scream; too busy with those immediately in sight, Laslos had

overlooked the thing near his ankles, which now fastened onto him amid giggles of delight.

“Get off me, you devilish creature,” he snapped, shaking his leg violently. But it would not. Elle and I watched as Miss Tibbins sank her teeth into Laslos. The wizard cried out in terror and pain.

Vandram, perhaps distracted by Laslos’ outburst, stopped looking at his possessions and turned his attention to the wizard instead. I had never seen a look so calm, yet so full of malice; and were the gaze directed at me, I doubt I could have moved a finger. Faster than thought, Vandram was on the wizard, ripping at him with hard fingernails, cutting into him. Blood sprayed, and Laslos fell to his knees, unbalanced by the assault. Terrified, the wizard attempted to pull himself toward the doorway; but his efforts were vain against Vandram’s strength, and slowly the wizard was lifted off the floor. Miss Tibbins released her grip on Laslos’ ankle and made instead for the map, leaping just in time to grasp it in her two little hands. Vandram continued to lift the quivering form of Laslos until he held him like a child in his arms. I watched Vandram bend over him then, leaning down as if to kiss his face. Laslos screamed in agony and Miss Tibbins fell to earth, running even as she hit the floor. Elle grabbed the doll and lifted her up, taking the map as she did so. As Elle made to run, I glimpsed down at the map, seeing written there a name: Port Vance, if my memory serves. Then she was gone, running along the corridor as fast as my eyes could follow; and I chased her, leaving the cries of the wizard far behind me.

I charged up the stairs after the girl, shouting after her as I went.

“Run Pirre. Run,” said a voice just like Elle’s –though I was not quite sure from where. I caught a glimpse of her then, leaving the shop, and ran yet faster after her.

Through the streets we ran, with Elle ahead of me, always slipping further and further away. We passed people in the streets, who stared at

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me as though I were mad, calling out after me. I did not listen to them; I had only one thing on my mind: I had to catch Elle.

Very soon, Elle disappeared around a corner, Miss Tibbins clutched in one hand. By the time I rounded it myself, there was no sign of her; and though I kept running, it felt strange to do so alone. I found myself near the quay again, by the ships. They were huddled up against the dock, their masts vanishing into the dusky light. One, however, was missing; there was a gap among them where a vessel, perhaps the vessel had been. My heart and lungs disapproving, I urged myself onward toward the ships, hoping against hope that Elle would be there.

By the time I arrived, exhausted and breathless, there was nothing. Or so I thought at first. As I looked out to sea, I spotted in the distance a ship rapidly disappearing, and closer, much closer, the figure of a young girl bobbing up and down on the waves.

“Elle,” I screamed at the top of my voice, uncaring of listeners, “wait for me.”

But she was too far gone to hear me; she was focused on the ship now, nothing more. I jumped into the water and swam out after her, putting every ounce of my strength into each stroke. I tried. By every god, I tried to reach her. But I failed.

When I regained consciousness, there were many people standing over me. At first, I was filled with terror, and tried with great desperation to escape; but strong hands held me down, until someone came to me and poured warm liquid down my throat.

“He has the chills,” one of them said. “Get him warm, he’ll be all right.”

“Tis madness, nothing more,” called another.

I forced myself into a sitting position and tried to look around me. It was dark, and

although some of the men there carried lanterns, I still found it hard to see far. With an element of relief, I realised that I was still by the water. Rising to my feet, the crowd of onlookers broke away from me, and watched me as I staggered toward the waters edge.

“Easy there,” called one of them, “He’ll be back in before you know it.”

I felt hands grasp my arms, and feeling myself pulled backwards, I took my last chance to stare at the waters edge. There, were my eyes to be believed, floated a white rose, bobbing gently on the lapping waves.

“Look,” I cried, “There, on the water, a rose. Can you not see it?” But then it was gone, and sighing at my outburst, strong arms carried me away.

Potts stopped speaking, his tale at an end, and a silence descended upon us. It seemed that someone must speak, when a hollow, metallic sound rang out, lonely and detached, cutting through the gusting wind. It had come from outside, from the quay side of the House. Quickly, there came another—a footstep perhaps—again somehow detached, as though it shared its home with no other sound. At the next instance, every head in room but Potts’ and Madren’s turned toward it, and with each successive ring, tilted higher and higher. There were stairs, then, running up the side of the building? I had not recalled seeing them before; but then I had not looked specifically.

Potts, an inkling of light escaping the corner of his eye, stared straight ahead. He seemed distant, perhaps unaware of what was happening around him. There came then the faintest of raps, three in total, two fast, and the last slow. People looked at one another, and then at Potts—a trick perhaps, to mark the end of the tale? Yet were this true, should not Potts applaud with a smile, and would he not at least be listening.

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The room erupted into activity, with some charging upstairs and others running outside. I did not move; I just sat there with Mr. Potts, watching him as he stared ahead of him. Slowly, those from upstairs wandered down. There was no sign of entry, they said, everything was secure. Some of those who went outside walked in quietly, their skin pale, and immediately picked up liquor bottles, taking great drafts from them. They would not speak. When, after several minutes, the others did not return, we went out to find them. They were gathered about the base of a set of iron stairs, and were looking up with disbelieving expressions. I looked up too, and quickly understood; the stairs were old and had rusted

badly up until the fourth step; but then they ceased; there were no more stairs above that point.

I span around and saw that the others all appeared to share my feeling. We looked lost, as though we were unable to comprehend this truth, this most obvious of truths. I looked beyond them all, to the waters edge, and bobbing there was a rose as white as snow.

The End



EXCERPTS FROM THE REGISTER

A SINISTER GALLERY

"It was night, and the rain fell; and falling, it was rain, but, having fallen, it was blood. And I stood in the morass among the tall lilies, and the ran fell upon my head- and the lilies sighed one unto the other in the solemnity of their desolation."

- Edgar Allen Poe, "Silence = A Fable"

By: Stanton Fink (Atma)

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It, who lies
beneath us all...

It, who is the
master of all lies...

It who is King
of the Darkness of
the Water; It who is
the Mother of the
Chasm; It who is
the Abyss.

One day, one
day soon, It shall
be free of Its
prison.

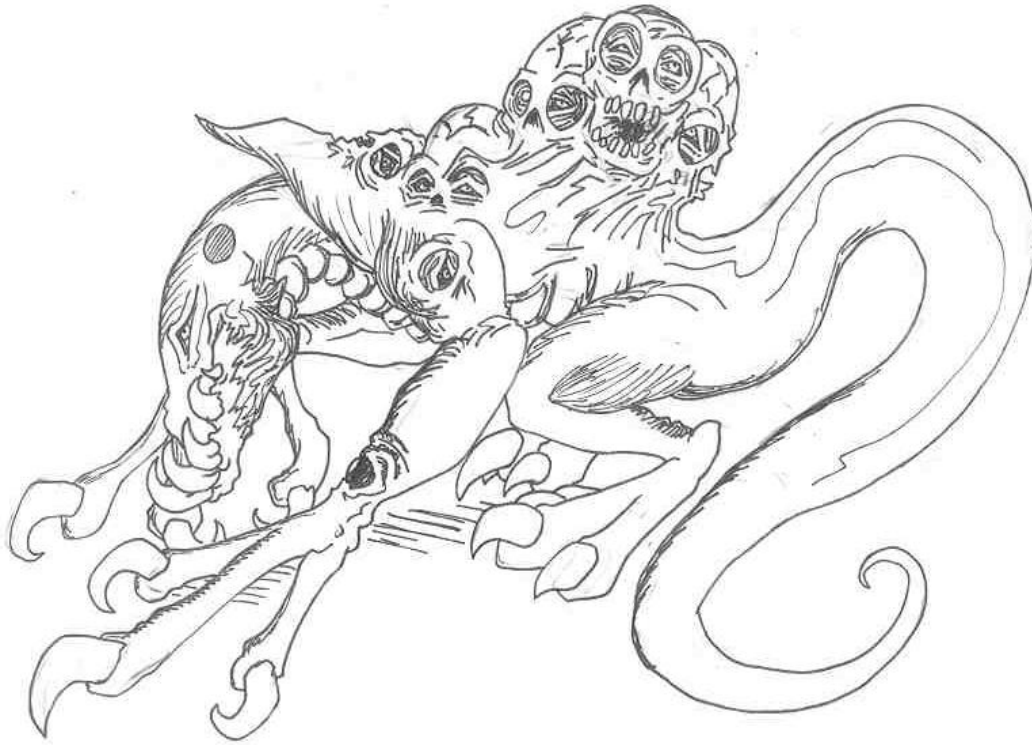
One day, one
day soon, It shall
throw off Its
shackles of mist
and stone.

One day, one
day soon, It shall
rise up once
more, and Devour
everything.

遠龍



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The Kaxatani is a revolting dragon which dwells in barrow mounds, hence the sobriquet of "barrow wyrm." It derives both nourish and power from the dead flesh it feeds upon. Some death magicians seek out the barrow wyrms in the hopes of taming them, and harnessing their power. Such endeavours often end badly, as the mages fail to appreciate the true depths of the Kaxatani's hunger.



The horror known as "Disease" is one of the better known experiments of the Green Empress.

Once, Disease was a rebel leader. When he was brought before the Green Empress, she had him infected with a horrid worm-disease. This disease continues to torment him/it to this day.

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Gemathustra was once a healer possessed of a warped and twisted body, but a loving and gracious soul.

Even the dead could be restored by his beneficent touch.

One day, Gemathustra was brutally beaten by a band of cruel and haughty warriors, and left for dead in a g'henna. However, while he refused to allow his own body die, his soul died in his place.

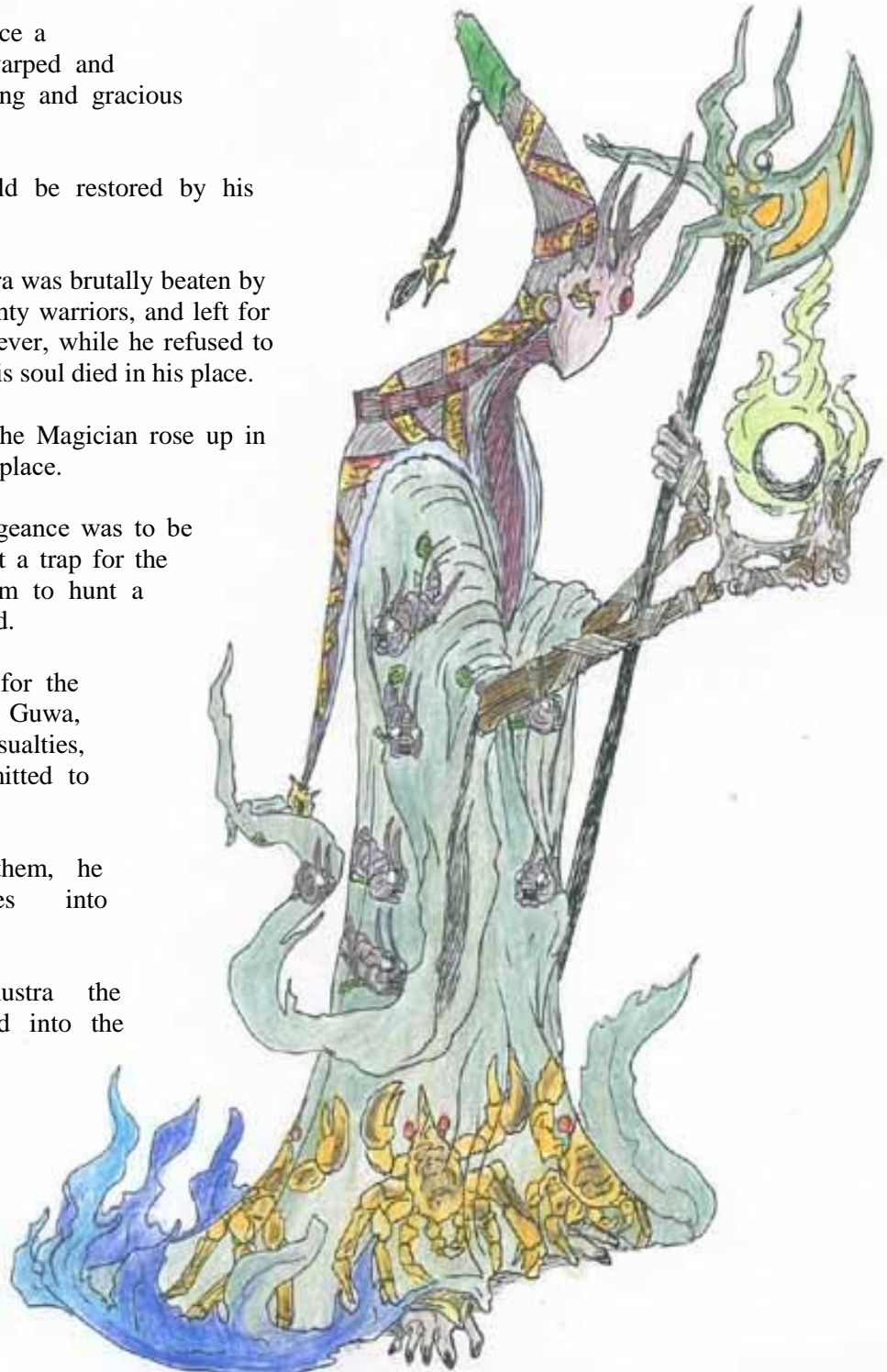
Thus, Gemathustra the Magician rose up in Gemathustra the Healer's place.

The Magician's vengeance was to be long and vicious. He set a trap for the warriors by enticing them to hunt a monstrous beast he created.

The warriors' hunt for the Magician's Beast, Oku Guwa, was fraught with many casualties, and they willingly submitted to Gemathustra's touch.

Rather than kill them, he twisted their bodies into nightmarish forms.

And so, Gemathustra the Magician was welcomed into the Lands of Mist.



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This is the Magician's Beast; the Oku Guwa; the keeper of the Iron Nightmare Mask.

The Magician's Beast has no soul, yet, aches for one of its own. Thus, it seeks to build itself a soul, forged of soul fragments stolen from a myriad of victims.

Oku Guwa's victims do not die, but, live on in a life-as-death, with all of their color stolen from their form.



Our king is almighty!
The Master of the Iron Crown shall be omnipotent
Through his power, Death shall be dismayed.
Through his power, the Darkness shall be averted.
Through his power, Paradise shall be brought to us.
For it is his will, that we shall be happy.

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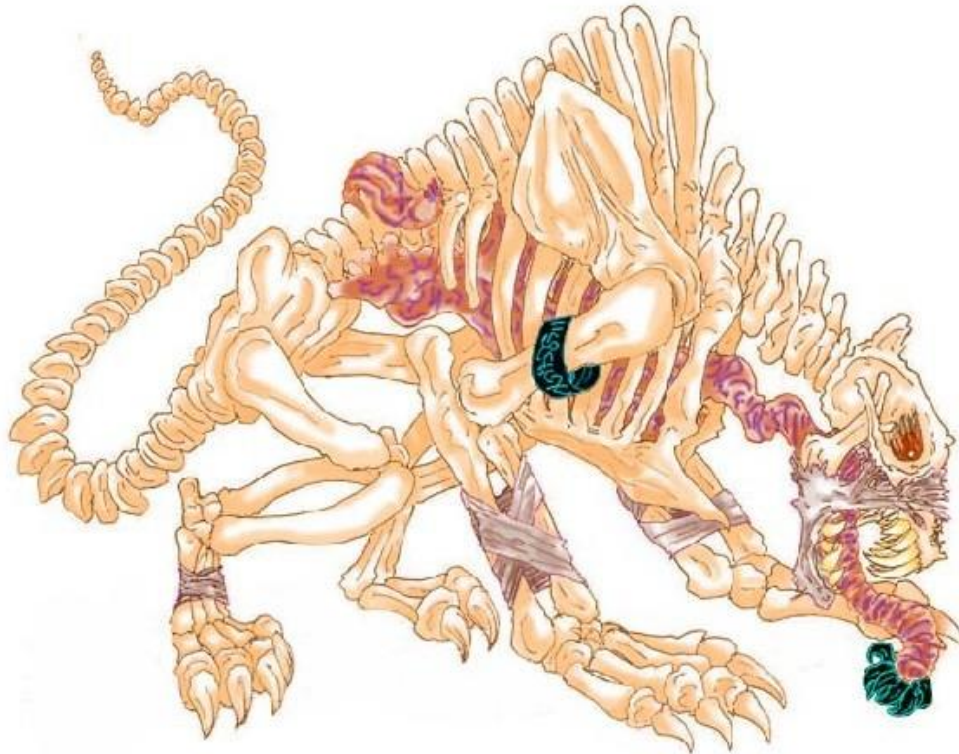
Little is known of the Wormschild.

Alone among the Kings of Darkon, it is said that the Wormschild bargained with the Apokryltaros.

As a badge of his office, the Wormschild wore a blank mask. It is said that only until Darcalus Rex vanquished him was it removed to reveal the Wormschild's true, ruined face, the price he had paid to the Apokryltaros.



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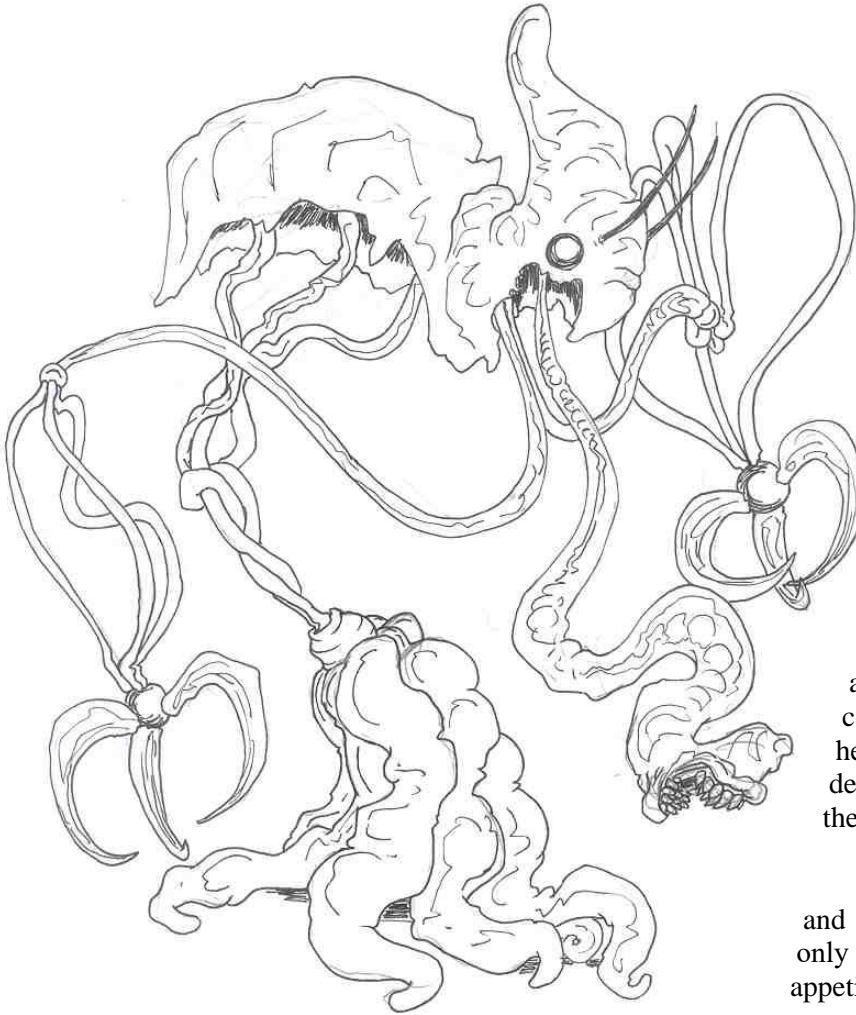


When the Green Empress was alive, according to the author of The Ebon Shadows, she kept a vast menagerie of creatures of an almost infinite array of descriptions, collected from throughout her empire. Among her favorites was a most ferocious, and terrible fanged beast, which the Green Empress referred to as her “qing ai da,” or “precious darling.”

Surprisingly, no actual description of it while it was still alive survives. Most sages, the author excluded, believe that it was a tiger, or cave lion that one of her dukes captured for her.

“Precious Darling” lived for many, many decades, well after the Green Empress’ descent into undeath. When it finally expired, the Green Empress wept for her pet, shedding many crimson tears. Then, she reanimated her beloved horror, making it among the very first undead she created herself.

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A weird and horrifying being that haunts a stretch of forest near the end of the Timori Road, in Tepest. This creature calls itself "Nightmare." Although it claims to be a male, its preferred disguise is that of a kindly old woman who lives in a lovingly furnished cottage. Sometimes she is alone, and begs strangers for company, or she appears with her husband, who helps to demand that their visitors join them for their evening meal.

Husband and wife, cottage, and meals, are all only illusions: only the flames and Nightmare's appetite are real.

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Once, Tsayvetodd was a vain and petulant nobleman.

Then a foolish vampire made him into a vampire, too.

When Tsayvetodd took a bride, he slew her when he realized that she was more beautiful than him.

He sought the aid of a necromancer to make him even more beautiful, but the necromancer took her own life rather than face her patient's wrath over her failure.

So, now, Tsayvetodd surrounds himself with honey-tongued minions who work to sooth their master's battered ego.

The Undead Sea Scrolls



One of the many servants of His Majesties...

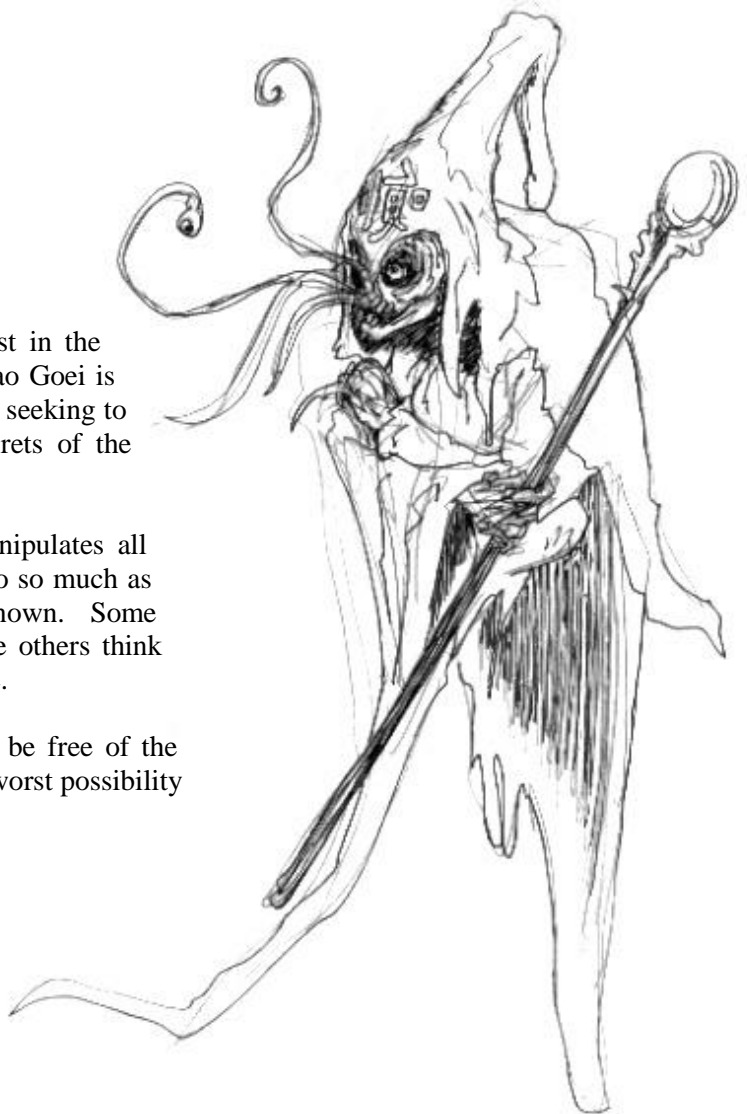
This miserable, deathless soul was once a lackluster pupil of Darcalus the tyrant.

When Azalin seized Darcalus' throne,
his apprentices sought to betray the new king,
and were destroyed physically,
and enslaved spiritually.

This miserable being has been a guest in the House of Death since Time began. The Lao Goei is sometimes summoned by foolish magicians seeking to profit from the future, or unravel the secrets of the past.

It is rumored that the Old Ghost manipulates all who summon it, or worse yet, all those who so much as speak of it. What its plans entail is unknown. Some claim that it seeks to become a god, while others think that it seeks to usurp control of the Universe.

A few claim that it simply wishes to be free of the House of Death. And that, they say, is the worst possibility of all...



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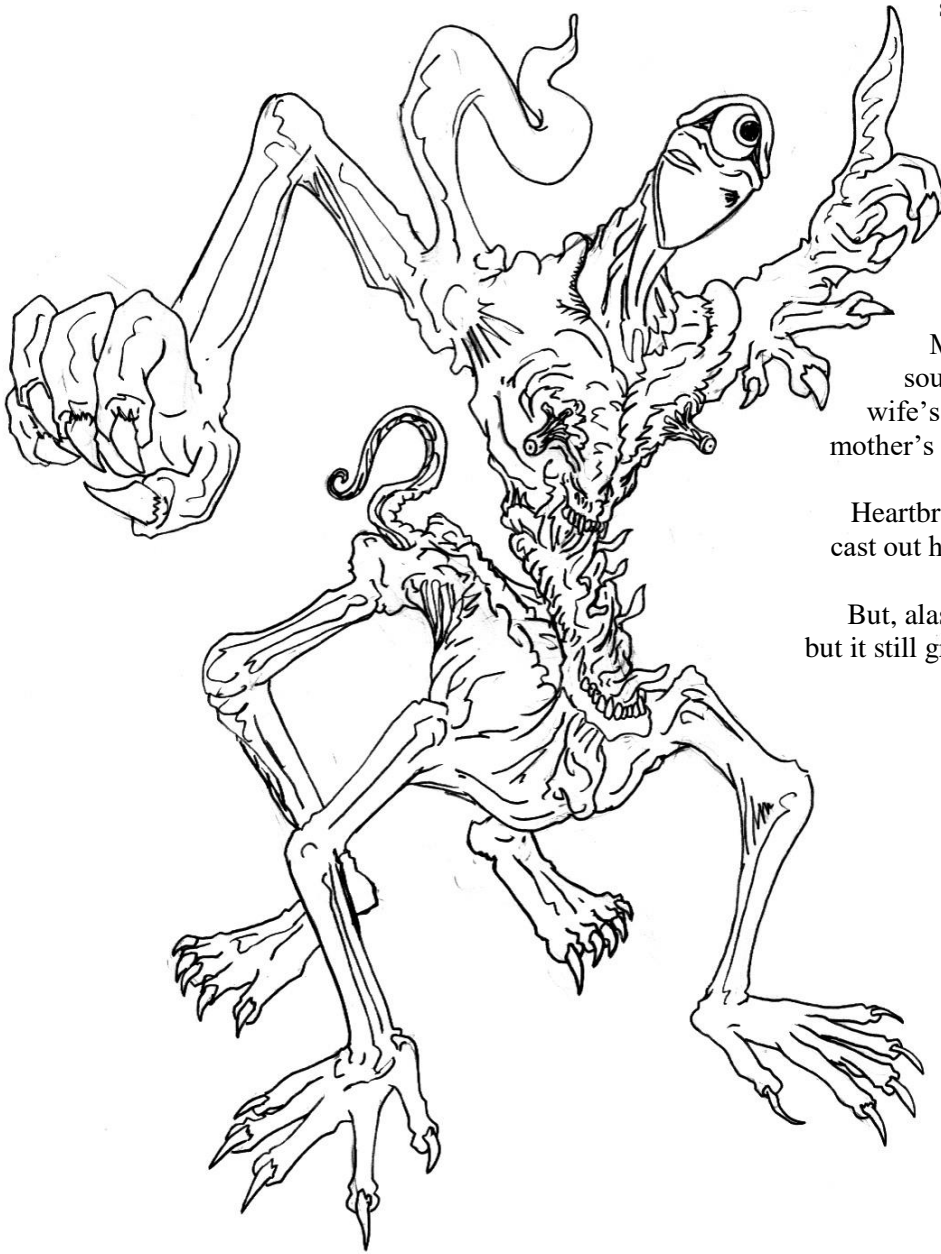
What madness Love
spawns!

The husband
Mordenheim sought to
regrow his beloved wretch
of a wife from the
remnants of her essential
humors.

But, alas! Husband
Mordenheim's wretched son
sought to deny his father's
wife's love, and so ruined his
mother's new form.

Heartbroken, the wretch Mordenheim
cast out his broken wife's broken body.

But, alas! Broken it may have been,
but it still grew!



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THE KINDRED

CHAPTER ONE AND TWO

By: Jared Jenkins

These are the first chapters of a book I am writing set in the Ravenloft setting. I picked up "I, Strahd", a couple of months ago, and since then have been a dedicated fan wishing that I had read the entire series of Ravenloft novels earlier. The love of my Viking heritage shines through in this book and I hope it enthralls all the readers out there as much as it did me when writing it.

Chapter One

□ Hengis Sorensson gazed wistfully at the campfire, lost in his innermost thoughts. The fire was indeed mesmerizing, as the flames weaved their intricate dance illuminating the Norsemen's rugged and worn countenances. Their long ship had run ashore only hours ago after passing through the unsettling fog that ascended on the "Valkerie" all too quickly. The ship wasn't damaged and Hengis was glad for that, for when the Valkerie cleared the fog it skidded to an abrupt halt encountering land almost immediately.

Hengis and his companions knew the waters better than most and in their many years of sea faring, had never encountered a fog that built up so quickly, almost as if someone intended it to. "Almost", thought Hengis as he sat in silence turning over the disturbing realities in his mind. The men all knew that they were headed North from Kargo traveling from a tribal meeting back to their village near Nordvik only a few hours earlier when the fog rolled in. The fog was dense, and the waters grew very still as the ship passed through its serene grey blanket. The men always remained silent when passing through a fog, as it was Clan Ratharri seamen tradition, believing to pay respects to the

wandering souls claimed by the icy waters below. No one would have thought anything odd about fog, but this time was different. Silently, the ship coasted through the undisturbed waters with ease as the temperature seemed to have gotten noticeably warmer. As the mists retreated, lifting the blindfold from the Valkerie, the expected path materializing before them was a foreign one. No more did they see the looming white-capped mountains and frozen peaks that the everwinter ushered in and that they had known most of their lives. They were somewhere else now.

As far as the eye could see grassy plains stretched out merging into ominous dense forests along with some signs of civilization much more populous than in their homeland. The position of the stars were all wrong as well, for mere moments ago they were navigating by the Star of Narmrak, and it was nowhere to be seen now. The Valkerie suddenly shattered the crew's bewilderment by skidding roughly into a nearby riverbank, nearly throwing the captain from her and knocking her crew off balance. Where were they? They had never seen a land such as this, knowing only the frozen wastelands they called home. Then men anchored their ship and had made a camp of sorts close to the riverbanks, for the sun was setting and in a strange land it is always good to have the protection and warmth of a fire.

Hengis Sorensson was a strong well-built man in his late twenties with long red hair that he kept pulled back into a ponytail. He looked to be a little older because of the moustache that had taken him forever to grow. His emerald eyes reflected the light of the flames as he contemplated the predicament in silence. "Hengis!" a voice came sharply

Hengis looked up as if awakened from a trance, "Aye? What is it?"

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"Blast ye I been callin' yer name three times already! What are we gonna do sit here all night?" spat Dufnall Eldgrim, one of the seasoned fighters, nearly falling off of the stone he was seated upon. Hengis smiled knowing how Dufnall was more than superstitious of foreign magics and strange occurrences. Dufnall couldn't sit still and this nights' occurrence unnerved him greatly. He was of normal build, save the small gut contributed to the many ales downed over the years by the nervous man. His blonde beard pulled into a point too, where his nervous habit of tugging downward on his beard remained apparent.

"The brothers Skallagrim were sent out less than an hour ago Dufnall. Have patience, all is well." Spoke Hengis easily

Grimr Fromund, was the clan leader and most respected. His long brown beard withered with age, and his heavily cragged face showed his years. The impressive man had lost an eye as well in a battle fought long ago, which only seemed to add to his imposing stature. With a deep voice he clapped Dufnall on the back heartily booming, "Bahh! Fear ye not Duff! Soon as Alti an' Vekell return, we'll see what they've learned, and then go from there. Hand me that wineskin Uthark, Duff the wreck needs a swallow!"

Uthark, the youngest of the warriors, tossed the wineskin to Dufnall with a smile chuckling to himself. He sat back down and watched the ale spill down Dufnall's blonde, pointed beard. Uthark didn't even have a beard yet and reassured himself that he was quite the man without one, even though he secretly wished he had one. To live up to the reputations of the warriors in his clan was quite a task-after all, they were the elite. Uthark looked around at the warriors in the camp recalling silently the prowess they possessed with admiration. Dufnall was good fighter, seasoned with a sword, but prone to nervousness, which could lead to disaster if not fought. Kjotvi Ingimund and his bother in arms Hvati Thorlaug, were skilled archers, and as such had to be, for they were

hunters back home. They taught the youths how to hunt and skilled them in the use of the bow. Of the two, Kjotvi was more deadly, being methodical--always taking time to get the best shot, as Uthark had witnessed on more than one occasion. In contrast, Hvati's motto was "As long as it dies when the arrow flies." Hvati tried to make more fun of hunting and took more chances, of which filled him with mischievous delight.

He was also skilled at "procuring" items when they were needed the most. No one asked, and was probably better as well that way.

Next, were brothers Orokia, who possessed a strong bond between them. Not only were they family, they fought as one, complimenting each others' skills in battle. Bjarki was the largest man amongst the warriors, easily weighing the most of all. Bjarki never said very much and kept mostly to his brother Brodd. The burly man possessed a talent that was highly revered among their Norse tribe as well, the blessing and the curse of the Were. To outlanders, Lycanthropy was definitely viewed as a curse, but not to the Ratharri. They took different forms, some of the bear, some of the wolf, and in some rare occasions tigers. In the case of Bjarki, whose name ironically means, "Little Bear", takes the form of a great grey bear, bearing razor sharp claws and unmatched strength. To witness Bjarki in combat in any one of his forms was awe-inspiring to say the least, for the terrible damage was truly a spectacle to behold. Brodd, much thinner and shorter than his younger brother, has walked the path of the shaman, and has studied many years in the arcane arts of magic. Brodd always fought alongside his brother supplementing Bjarki with spells of haste, strength and like manner. Together, they are quite a force to be reckoned with. For reasons unbeknown to anyone, Brodd never received the blessing of the Lycanthrope, for possibly the Gods saw his talents excelled in other areas.

Not too far from the campfire, were Archiveld Thimnison, and Ulfar Rognvald, drinking themselves into a stupor. Uthark didn't

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know whether to judge these men as insane or just plain stupid. Never wearing shirts, their heavily muscled torsos bore the colors of the sun, save the many tattoos inscribed in delicate patterns, sometimes traveling the entire lengths of their bodies. Uthark laughed silently thinking the tattoos were the only thing delicate about these blokes. As the two men laughed heartily, slapping one another on the backs, and drinking themselves silly, Ulfar jokingly punched Archiveld in the arm nearly falling over from the last joke told. Archiveld stopped laughing and looked down to his arm as if he was just slapped across the face, stricken with sobriety.

Uthark looked to Hengis as both watched the unfolding scene with apparent concern. With Berserkers, everything was unpredictable and extremely dangerous, and at a moments notice, the scene could go from calm, to a deadly massacre.

"Oi there--Whad ye be hittin me fer?!", spat Archiveld, eyes aflame with seriousness as he shoved Ulfar, already off balance, knocking him to the ground.

Ulfar looked stunned as he found himself on the flat of his back staring up at the black sky. A sudden soberness found him too, as he sat up muttering curses while attempting to stand.

"I'm thinking that ye shoved me Arch. Iffn ye shoved me when I weren't ready fer it, thars gonna be trouble dammit!" shot Ulfar trembling with the boiling rage that was quickly gaining strength.

Hengis nodded to Uthark and Grmr knowingly, and then to the rest of the ten warriors in camp whose attention was fixed firmly on the now highly volatile scene. Bjarki knew his name would be called as it always was, so the giant of a man stood up slowly from the game he and his brother were playing, and trudged over to the quarreling berserkers. The rest of the encampment encircled the two men, completely oblivious their surroundings now, as each man hurled insults back and forth

concerning each ones mothers, and abilities in satisfying the opposite sex. Uthark knew better from times past than to laugh, still recalling the unconscious cook with the broken nose, and he got off lucky. Everyone was in position, and Grmr decided it was time.

"Enough o' this nonsense ye two!!" Grmr bellowed. "I'm tired o' seein' this same scene over an over again! Fer tha love o' the all father, why can't berserkers be more civil?!" For a moment the two men looked towards Grmr and then looked to one another squarely in each other's eyes, completely unaware that Bjarki had silently crept up behind them. Brodd turned back to the camp to ready his medical supplies, for this night, someone would need them for a certainty, although he was sure it wouldn't be Bjarki, there is a first time for everything. Archiveld turned in hesitant defeat to go, when Ulfar chuckled, "Coward!"

The movement was so swift; Bjarki barely had time to react. Archiveld brought his fist back to smash the face of Ulfar in as Bjarki sprang upon the unprepared berserks using his massive hands to clasp the back of the two men's heads, colliding them together with a resound "Crack!" For a while, they stood silent as a look of confusion spread across the mens faces. Dazed, the two men then fell to the ground in a heap, sleeping off the soon to be forgotten confrontation in peace.

"They don't fall for that one every time", Bjarki spoke softly, eyes inspecting the two sleeping madmen.

"Aye but they did tonight!", chimed in Hvati gleefully, gesturing with his hand as if it were holding a bottle of ale, acting as if he were guzzling it, cheering, "Glug Glug!!", causing and laughter and merriment to rise through the warriors.

Soon, Brodd returned with his kit and began tending to the slumbering men's wounds shaking his head in disbelief, smiling widely. Grmr had asked that Dunfall and Kjetvi help drag the men close to the fire and to hide the ale

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so that temptation wouldn't rear it's ugly head. at least not again this night.

Grimr almost wished he didn't bring berserks with him, but their worth had been proven time and time again. One berserk could take down several men, inspiring fear and terror in an enemy's heart-especially when the hand held steel. Their rituals were strange, both before a battle, and when in normal life. Before a battle ensued, the madmen drank themselves silly, often in groups of two or more-the more the better. They then begin singing the songs of battle, some in plea to their god for strength and ferocity, some for a glorious death-they knew the songs by heart. When the time for battle arose, they had worked themselves into frothing, murderous lunatics. Grimr shuddered as the thought of a berserk taking on a Were crossed his mind briefly. Both had their purposes, for the berserk, it was fear, and death. Once, he had witnessed a berserk in his younger days tear a man's head literally from his body with his bare hands. The image of the berserk emblazoned in his memory forever, arrows protruding from his chest as he spun death about him in a whirlwind of destruction. If only they could be made to be socially acceptable at times, maybe it wouldn't be so bad. On the other hand, he thought amusingly, what good is a berserk if he isn't .berserk?

"How did we come to be in this strange place? Why us? Was this the work of some foul mage hired by the Burgomaster of Vorokstov in a plot to rid Nordvik of our kind?"

Grimr couldn't help but announce the possibilities aloud around the warmth of the campfire to his companions. Dufnall huffed audibly at the sound of the word "mage". "I dinnae have a clue. Never seen a fog that thick afore though. T'would make sense fer a mage ta be behind this.", mumbled Dufnall scornfully. "Mayhaps." Kjotvi measured his words cautiously, "we stumbled into another realm". As the words left his lips, a mutual look of confusion settled upon encampment. "What I'm

saying is mayhaps we stumbled through a doorway o' sorts, from our land to this one." Kjotvi's comrades looked upon him with wonder and some confusion, but the greater idea was understood. Their faces demanded an explanation, though, and Kjotvi felt more than happy to give one. "I used ta work in the mages tower south of Nordvik before I came to ye. I were cleanin up one day, and stumbled onto a book left by the master open on the table. I took a small peek, and read something about "alternate planes" of existence and such. Thought it t'were rubbish at the time.", shrugged Kjotvi not fully understanding the concept himself. " "The old coot used to say that there were more worlds out there than this one", and that sometimes doorways could be opened from one to the next".

Grimr scratched his head, and cursed himself for making the trip to the tribal meeting. The meetings only occurred twice a year, and the clan welcomed such times to travel and enjoy the open sky and frozen land. Along the way, they often stopped at villages trading their furs and crafts for much needed supplies and weaponry. Above all, Grimr loved his wife more than anything, and she was with child as well. His second marriage had proved to be everything he hoped for, after loosing his first wife to the red fever. It filled him with purpose and renewed vigor, knowing that his son would be born, and would one day grow into a strong, capable man. His wife was half his age, but they shared a common bond of trust, honor and love. He painfully shook the possibility of not being able to return home from his mind. They would seek out someone in this world-- if that was indeed where they were-another world, and move the heavens and earth below if needed, to return home to his beloved Svanja.

Hengis too, did not wish to remain in this place as well, as none did, for the land here was strange and forbidding. He wished to return to his duties protecting their village back home. Being without the duty of protecting the clan sickened Hengis, for it was all he had ever known. In social gatherings or parties, he could not shed the so-called "armor of protection"; it

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was so much a part of him. His eyes never rested, it seemed, darting from man, woman, and child, to scouring the horizon for any sign of potential enemies day and night. The duty burned inside of him like a hot coal that demanded the working of the bellows. Of course, there were times he could relax in his humble home, bundled up close to the embers of warm hearth, carving intricate designs in the small chests and various jewelry boxes made from some of the craftsmen in the village. It was a lonely existence, because he could never truly relax outside the sanctity of his home. On more than one occasion, he felt nervous pounding within his breast, politely declining invitations from beautiful lasses inviting him to dance. He did not know anything of the sort! Dancing? How could he leave his duty to indulge a silly pattern of walking and moving the arms in an odd manner that made him uncomfortable?

In truth, he longed for it. A growing part of him yearned to understand how the people around him could be so uninhibited, and carefree. To love, to sacrifice everything for love, dedicating all to another individual, was in itself a duty. If he returned home, he entertained the thought of one day trying to grasp the concept of love, for something was missing from his life, and maybe love held that key. An hour passed when the wind picked up slightly as Brodd finished tending the berserkers' bruised, but otherwise fine heads. Brodd gathered up his supplies when the cry came on the wind. Wolves.

Hengis stood up from the fire and peered into the forest. Seeing nothing at first, save the menacing trees which seemed to possess a eldritch life of their own against a canvas of black, the forms of two white wolves then burst forth from the forest at uncanny speed, sending branches and dead leaves scattering. Hengis grew relieved announcing, "Tis Vekell and Altí."

The haunting wind however, carried more cries than that of the fleeting white wolves speeding towards camp. A chorus of cries filled the air, sending a shiver through Hengis' spine. Hengis had been raised around the Weres most

of his life, and feared no Were, nor any animal naturally. As he peered past the brothers Skallagrim, the full moon illuminated the forms of eight black wolves, larger than normal, pouring from the black of the forest, in pursuit. Their size did not bother him much, for they had dealt with Worgs and larger type beasts before near Rathar, their village. Hengis felt something deep inside him stir; something was unnatural about these wolves, although he could not explain it. They were gaining ground quickly, and time was short. They would hit camp soon. whatever they were.

"What is it?" prompted Brodd, concern spreading across his painted features

"Wake the Berserks, and gird yourselves brothers." Hengis announced grimly.

"The brothers Skallagrim are in danger."

The camp scurried around arming themselves with their own respective swords, and axes, and various other types of weaponry. Grímr began barking orders as Hvati began the vigorous slapping of the berserkers' faces in attempt to rouse them. Brodd made his way towards the outer edge of camp, with Bjarki lumbering behind closely. Uthark looked on Hvati's failing scene urgently, as he quickly scooped up a wine skin that the berserks had indulged themselves on earlier. He called to Hvati as he hurled the wine skin to him. Catching it with ease, he removed the top and reluctantly emptied the stout liquid onto the faces of the unconscious madmen. Archiveld's eyes opened almost instantly, sitting up, acting as if he had been drowning in a vast sea gasping for air, while Ulfar groaned hesitantly, but eventually found his way to his feet.

Having the best eye among them, Kjötví strode to the front of their now ready battle line after surveying quickly, calling out, "Eighty Paces!" and drawing an arrow from the quiver resting against his back. Hvati instinctively drew

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as well, as his breathing became more controlled-almost shallow.

The berserks needed no invitation, nor command for their duties, as they did what was needed. Their time however was limited, and the call of "Seventy Paces!" soon cried out damming their ceremony. Guzzling what ale they could find, the two men began shoving one another as they began singing, purposefully. "Hasten our axes, aye smite down our foe The Great Bear we plea give us Victory! For us be no woe, nay the nine hells below A death glory be, may ye give me!

"Lo I do see thy cursed enemy fast Brother the Wolf I do call ye! With us if ye be, our souls won't be cast Stay yer treachery afar evil Loki!"

As the song continued, the berserkers strode to the front of the line now bearing wicked weapons in each hand, being of short sword and axe. In their capable hands, they would make their masters proud. The entire camp now joined in the song, raising their voices in bulwark of power, filling them with courage and strength. The berserkers' eyes soon had glazed over as their trembling bodies quivered uncanny with power-yearning to be released. Like starving wolves, they paced back and forth singing loudly until the time was right.

"Alti n' Vekell Oi!" shouted Hvati

The brothers Skallagrim then sped into the camp, panting, struggling for breath as they rounded the line coming up just behind Grmr. Kneeling down Grmr asked, "What be after ye lads?"

Alti growled in a half-human, half-wolf voice, as his limbs began stretching longer; his muscles coarsed with blood as he swelled almost twice in size, standing as a ravenous white Werewolf. Vekell had already done the same, finally managing to catch his breath in labored gasps, "Worg we guessin', and the other we know not!"

"Other?" thought Hengis as he turned to look upon the advancing wolves again with

concern now seeing three additional wolves, larger than the rest of the black pack, running behind the wall of smaller advancing wolves.

"Sixty Paces! Loose!" cried Kjovti as he brought his longbow up and took aim, releasing the deadly shaft causing the bowstring to hum softly. Hvati followed suit watching the arrows speed towards their potential targets. The first shaft blasted a wolf backwards, sending it rolling down the hillside in which they were advancing, appearing to have been an excellent headshot, and killing it instantly with a piercing yelp. Hvati's arrow missed just barely, sinking somewhere into the ground below.

"Fifty Paces! Loose!" cried Kjtovi again quickly firing off another deadly shot in unison with Hvati. This time however, Hvati claimed one of the farther three wolves as his target as his arrow flew towards its' home. Kjtovi had struck one of the wolves in the chest, causing the wolf to stagger painfully. It did not realize fully what had happened in its' attempt to continue the advance, until its body gave way to the embrace of death. Hvati's arrow, struck the wolf in the shoulder sending it stumbling, but to his shock, recovered quickly, as if the arrow were but a temporary annoyance. "That shot should have stopped the Worg dead in its' tracks.", thought Hvati disturbingly.

Dufnall drew his sword and banged it loudly against his shield as the song reached its' crescendo, invigorating all within the camp as the clash of weapons rang through the men.

"Fourty Paces!-Loose!" cried Kjtovi again as Hengis shouted "Ulfhednarn!!", leveling his many notched battle axe towards their speeding feral foes. The cry echoed throughout the rest of the camp filling the sky with power as the charge began. The berserkers charged headlong into the pack, screaming unintelligibly as foam dripped from their mouths. Meanwhile, the marksmen loosed two more deadly shafts-Kjtovi missing his shot, and Hvati striking home again on the same target last as last time, determined to slay the stubborn creature, but to no avail. The arrow did indeed bury itself into the neck of the

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wolf, wounding the wolf a second time, but did not manage to slow the wolf one bit. Catching the evil red flash from the wounded wolf's eyes, Hvati gasped, "Preserve us Ulfhenarn!" Grimir looked to the Werewolves standing close to him and shouted, "Skallagrim with Berserks an Duff!-Hengis, Uthark, an' I, with the Orokias an' Uthark!"

Grimir raised his sword and bellowed his charge as the entire camp followed him into the fray.

The berserkers had already reached the first of the pack, when one of the wolves launched itself into the air-its' dagger filled jaws eager to rip out the man's throat. The Archiveld did not slow as he brought his heavily muscled arms from his sides in an cleaving arch, as the sword and axe bit deep into the wolfs' sides, sending a howling pain erupting from the creature. The wolfs' jaws snapped furiously writhing in pain as it's life force slowly ebbed away until Archiveld pulled free his axe bringing it down without mercy upon the beasts head ending its' misery.

Ulfar had launched himself into the air, whistling his blades down onto another Worg, as the beast easily dodged the deadly cuts. The Worg took advantage of the missed attack and tore deeply into the forearm of Ulfar, simultaneously raking the man's exposed legs with its razor-like claws. Ulfar howled in pain as he fell to the ground, struggling, as he brought his free arm forward in a vengeful stab, spilling the creatures' blood onto his body. The Cruel wolf in great pain sought to end this mans' life as it lunged forward, ready to tear the face from the wounded man, just as a white mass flew overhead knocking the black Worg from the berserk. The berserker stood painfully, but was nowhere near from being beaten. With only one weapon, he trudged toward his unfinished kill, as blood flew openly from his arm and legs. One of the brothers Skallagrim was ripping the wounded Worg to shreds as another Worg charged. The white Werewolf leapt from his dying foe to the oncoming challenger, howling murderously into the night. Dufnall barreled down the hill, stabbing the dying Worg a couple

of times for good measure, and then continued on.

Elsewhere, the other half of the warriors sped down the hillside encountering Hvati, while Kjotiv moved to assist the Skallagrimms.

Hengis surged forward screaming as a Worg sprang into the air towards him snapping savagely. Hengis hefted his axe with all his might splitting the wolf clean in two, in a spray of gore and blood that didn't even give the poor beast time to let loose protest. Brodd Orokia who was following closely, felt a wave of nausea overcome him, fighting to ignore the gore and blood that now covered his body. Grimir merely laughed as he charged forward bellowing, "Have at thee!!" Uthark kept close to Grimir, brandishing a well-balanced war hammer and small shield, these being his favored weapons. Grimir brought his sword arm high in feign as he approached another Worg, still keeping his eye on the separate three wolves. The Worg came in low missing the swipe of Grimir's shield, sending the creature headlong into Grimir knocking them both over. Uthark rushed forward to take advantage of the Worg's prone state while Grimir recovered. Shaken, the Worg stood only to be brought down by the crushing weight of a fine war hammer. The "Crack!" sounded awfully loud to Uthark as he smiled, viewing the convulsions of the dying creature. Grimir stood and chuckled, ruefully, "Oi that one were mine!" Uthark replied gesturing to another approaching Worg, "Finders Keepers!"

Bjarki and Brodd were headed towards the remaining three that kept back while their group finished off the last Worg. It seemed that the Skallagrim brothers' group was finishing up the last one as well. Bjarki clasped his two-handed hammer tightly as the normally quiet giant issued a hearty war cry like no other. Brodd stopped and began murmuring a series of arcane words forgotten long ago, closing his eyes in concentration. A light blue aura shimmered around the form of his brother, as Bjarki began to feel his skin become more resilient. The great man smiled as he neared the three wolves meeting the charge of one, as it broke free of the

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others, which now stood with an unnerving calm. While the wolf hurled itself towards Bjarki another wolf used this as a timely distraction. The other wolf burst forth charging towards Brodd who was lost and unaware in concentration, casting a spell of haste upon his brother. Bjarki saw the fleeting wolf from the corner of his eye hurtling towards his brother and decided to deal with this one quickly. Bjarki took his giant hammer and swung it hard crushing the wolf in the side of the face spinning it full circle as the war hammer slipped from his hands. He had little time! Bjarki roared in protest as he stomped towards the wolf, not noticing the two shafts protruding from its neck and shoulder, while the change was already beginning. Muscle burst forth tearing his clothing to shreds as thick tufts of hair soon began covering his entire body. The wolf was inches from Brodd's concentrating face when a huge bear claw tore the head from the wolf, spraying hot blood again showering his brother. Startled, Brodd looked up in confusion and disgust. The other wolf began backing off snarling and bearing teeth towards the lone wolf, after witnessing the bloody scene. The Werebear Bjarki roared threateningly at the retreating wolf as his brother Brodd looked to the ground where a body and head lay. Those of a woman.

"Bjarki! Hold!!" screamed Brodd as he looked down in nauseating disbelief. By now, the others were running to meet up with Bjarki and his brother, issuing curses as they charged the last of the wolves. Among the confusion were war cries, feral growls of wolf and bear, insane ramblings of madmen, and murmuring? Brodd knew those sounds all too well, being the sound of spellcasting. Looking to the standing wolf, which remained calm throughout it all, a stark realization slapped him hard-but by then it was too late.

A red haze ascended upon the warriors paralyzing them in place. Brodd could do nothing as he sat watching his allies frozen in stance, realizing that he was paralyzed as well. The quiet saturating the air after the completion of the spell was thick, mocking the frozen expressions of the warriors coldly. Brodd's eyes were already fixed upon the lone wolf, while the

other injured wolf hobbled humbly towards the master. Evil magic permeated the air and Brodd could feel it in his very bones.

The lone wolf began to shimmer as an ethereal mist began gathering around the wolf, enveloping it in a cloud of grey as the other wolf did in like manner. As the mists dissipated, the form of a man and woman could be made out. Soon, a distressed looking woman, with pale white skin became clear. She wore a white gown and was beautiful in appearance, save the swollen side of her face-a gift given to her from Bjarki's hammer. The woman looked as if she had done something wrong and winced away from the now completely visible man standing in the lone wolf's place. The impressive looking man too bore pale white features, in stark contrast to his black hair. His impressive manner of dress showed him to be someone of stature as well, possibly being that of a Lord or King. A handsome red amulet hung from his neck glowing deep red, piercing the black night.

Silhouetted against the depths of the forest and his black cape, the ghostlike man broke his serious demeanor and spoke, "Welcome to Barovia, my land. I suppose I should introduce myself, although of what benefit it accomplishes, is unforeseen at best." "I am Strahd."

Chapter 2

The shaman struggled to move but found himself completely helpless under the power of this imposing man. Frozen in place, the rest of the clan seemed like heroic statues carved in homage to their patron gods. The pale man was speaking some sort of strange language and Brodd couldn't make the sense of it, although he understood that the pale man was pleased.

"I...am Strahd." Uttered the man coolly. "Of course you already knew that, and I, in like turn became aware of your mission long before you ever entered my realm. You see... Azalin *thinks* he is most clever, but to underestimate me is utter suicide!"

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Grinning, he started off to inspect the warriors more closely lamenting, "I must admit your prowess is indeed impressive. I haven't seen fighting like that in quite a while." Strahd strode to each warrior inspecting each one shortly, until he reached Bjarki. "Magnificent." Purred Strahd. "My eyes have never beheld such a creature as this. I have only read of Werebears in volumes of lore till this day.", announcing proudly.

Suddenly, as if embarrassed Strahd spat "Oh but where are my manners? You must forgive me; I must be sure to include the formality of learning what I can from you before you are to be destroyed and reincarnated as one of my servants. Yes...that would please Azalin I think.", grinning a macabre smile. Strahd waved his hand as he looked in Brodds' direction. Brodd fell to the ground heavily, feeling control return to his body once more. Immediately, Brodd stood up saying, "*Nier tanal ye rihj lier wiv ye azgardi ut?*"

Strahds' eyes narrowed balefully, thinking the strange words to be some spell, but soon relaxed when the words produced silence. "What kind of game is this? Speak fool!"

Brodd, with a look of confusion, spoke again, "*Nier tanal ye rihj lier wiv ye azgardi ut?*"

Strahd considered the implications that lay before him. This man appeared to speak in a tongue unbeknown to this realm, for Strahd new most of the languages, given the timelessness of immortality. If indeed this man spoke a new language, chances were that these mortals might have come through the mists, or that another realm succumbed to the hunger of this plane. Either way, the count had to find out.

The woman near him had wandered close to the frozen body of Ulfar, blood still flowing freely from his terrible wounds. By now, his rage had subsided as well, causing the pain to become a overwhelming reality; He surely would have collapsed if not for the spell holding him fast in place. Ulfar was swooning with pain

inside barely keeping consciousness as his vision blurred in and out. Before him stood a beautiful raven-haired Valkrie, come to take him to Valhalla...her beauty called to him. He wanted to reach out and embrace her as another wave of pain surged causing his eyes to blur again. When sight returned to him again, before him stood a demon. The beautiful woman's eyes glowed with an otherworldly fire as sharp pointed fangs protruded from her mouth shining wickedly as she smiled. He prayed to Ulfhednarn that he banish this demon and return the Valkrie to take him to the halls of Battle and Feasting. Visions! Horrible visions of life and death sped throughout his mind...for he knew he would perish soon...

Strahd caught the woman staring into Ulfar's still face. She felt a burning hatred penetrate her very being as she turned to see Strahd's eyes aglow with deadly warning. The woman backed away reluctantly, from whence she came. Turning his attention back to the shaman again Strahd began muttering a quick spell magically enabling them to converse and gestured for the shaman to speak once again.

"Who are you and why have you attacked us?" asked Brodd warily

It seemed Strahd could be correct.

"I am Strahd Von Zarovich, ruler of Barovia, the land in which you are standing.", eyes brimming with renewed interest. "I attacked because my spies informed me of a plot to usurp my throne, and the details involved a raiding party entering my land, simply put."

Strahd, did not believe the shaman's question entirely. It could be a well-contrived ruse, in order to get close to him where they would strike at his weakest point. He also reasoned that this had also been the case with the necromancer Azalin Rex. Strahd had invited the powerful mage into his very castle as a quest to solve the mysteries of the mists that imprisoned them both in Barovia, while he absorbed any knowledge Azalin reluctantly parted with. Azalin too, had used that convenience, to learn

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all that he could from the Count as well, even violating the sanctity of his private journals, discovering the true identity of Strahd. Strahd had used Azalin, and in turn, Azalin did Strahd.

Strahd thought to himself, “What better way to learn from my enemies than to keep them close? Besides I succeeded in surviving with Azalin in my home, who is more powerful, it seems, than this band of savage warriors. They also certainly do not seem to possess the treacherous ambition the burned so deep within the soul of Azalin.”

“We are not mercenaries, nor do we serve any master. We know nothing of any plot, and were brought here not of our own will.” Brodd spoke firmly, while catching sight of Ulfar’s horrible wounds. “Ye must release him an’ let me tend to his wounds Lord Strahd!” exclaimed Brodd as he rushed over to Ulfar already unshouldering his medicine bag in urgency.

“Very well, I shall release your companions, but I am to be assured that their battle lust has expired against me before I do so, agreed?”, Strahd spoke, more demanding than asking.

“Agreed!”

Uttering a couple of magic words, the red haze binding the warriors began dissipating, until all traces vanished, causing the warriors to collapse.

Brodd struggled as he caught the bulky form of Ulfar in his arms, lowering him gently to the ground as he shouted, “Tis’ alright brothers! Touch the man not, and assist me with Ulfar!”

Hengis dashed towards Ulfar waving the rest to follow. Archiveld hurried next to his friend Ulfar looking down in shock as he closed his eyes.

Archiveld and Ulfar fought most of the time, of course, but a kinship existed among them, in battle, as brother, and in friendship. Archiveld had little fear of anything on the battlefield; being too crazed most of the time to

notice. The berserks spent most of the time drinking together off the battlefield as well, challenging each other in feats of strength, and in stories of battle. But now something clutched his heart painfully—The cold reality that Ulfar could die.

Biting his lip and leveling his eyes toward the count he spat, “If he dies, I will return the favor.” Strahd welcomed a challenge, for it always deemed itself an opportunity to show his power and superiority. Strahd’s eyes flashed eagerly, “My friend, death comes to us all at some point. Let us hope that he does not grace us with his presence twice in one night.” Archiveld did not miss the underlying threat, as the rest of the men did not either. Archiveld started off towards the Count, just as a firm grasp clutched his arm.

“Worry ‘bout Ulfar, Arch. Leave it be.”, soothed Hengis. Brodd called his brother forth, Bjarki, as the Count stood peering on with curious anticipation. Brodd removed a deep red vial from his bag as he removed the top, emptying its’ gaseous contents onto the dying Ulfar. The shaman then placed his tattoo-covered hand over the gaping slashes, chanting softly. Bjarki stepped forth still in *Were* form, hunching down as he placed his massive white paw onto the chest of Ulfar. The chanting grew louder and more poignant, as the air heightened with magical energy. A blue light began pulsing around the furry claw of Bjarki, appearing to be seeping into Ulfar’s chest as the light filled his unconscious body. Brodd’s chanting took on an otherworldly voice, sounding as many echoing voices, as the pupils of his eyes vanished leaving only white. Brodd trembled with power, as his chanting grew in unison with the light’s brightness, finally sending a great light to burst forth calming the air as the magical hum of energy melted in peace. Brodd, opened his normal eyes once more as Bjarki removed his paw, waiting in silence.

Ulfar’s nose began to twitch as if some bothersome fly were assaulting it. The wounds were completely gone, leaving only minute scars as evidence they had even occurred. Moaning

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softly, Ulfar's eyes opened slowly seeing his friends standing all around him from above.

"Is...is this...Valhalla..?", he asked smiling widely as if in some grand dream. The group burst forth in cheer, relieved that the magic succeeded.

"Nay ye durned fool! Ye sees any nekkid women 'ere?!", chuckled Archiveld extending his hand in assistance to help Ulfar to his feet. Laughter burst forth as Brodd stood, thanking the gods. Grimr had been silently watching the Count the whole time noting the counts more than keen interest in the spell casting. The Count as well had never witnessed this form of magic. In some ways, it reminded him of Visanti magic, appearing to be a part of the people. Maybe there was something useful that could be learned from this foreign magic user.

Sweeping in a low bow, Strahd spoke, "It is good that your friend lives. Again, my condolences... as one must do what is necessary to protect his realm. I must consult with my informants to discover the true whereabouts of these mercenaries. In the meantime, I ask that you stay with me in my home for I am no novice to Magic, and could be of some use to you plight to return to your home. The night is not safe here, as well we have discovered, and there are things about much more worse than wolves."

"You attack us unwarranted, almost kill one of our own, and expect us to come to your home? Fer what!? Ye gonna *eat* us next?!" cried Archiveld setting his jaw in a firm line.

Strahd simply smiled at hearing that comment.

"Of course not. I explained why there was an attack. My sources told me of "assassins" entering into my realm this night, so I spoke to my children...", gesturing to the slain wolves, "to keep a wary eye out for any unusual activity. As such, they did their jobs well don't you agree? For they located strangers to this land, and now by fates hand, we have met. You have been brought here although, you know not how,

and are far away from your homes, from the looks of your clothing and manner of speech."

The warriors looked to one another concerned.

"I, as Lord of Barovia, have only my hospitality to offer, as well, an explanation of how you came to be here. You may take the offer or leave it as you wish... Know that if you decline my offer, cause no trouble in my lands, else the punishment will be swift, and merciless."

Grimr spoke as if wounded, "We didn't cause the trouble here Lord Zarovich, it came to us, and we're takin' care o' it. We have no want ta' stay here, only ta return home to our villiage and families."

Hengis interjected, "Aye but we also have no intention of stirring any up while we're here M'lord.", playing on the nobility side of the Count. "Let us talk for a moment, to make a decision we ask ye."

"Granted."

The group of warriors got in their "huddle" as the brothers Skallagrim returned to their normal man forms. Bjarki remained his Were form, still not comfortable with the current situation. Dufnall was the first to whisper in a hysterical tone, "I don't like this not one bit dammit! Thar's somethin' evil 'bout that one—I seen it with me own eyes!"

Brodd sighed as he shot back whispering, "Duff, he's a mage! They have powers like that! Am I evil for having powers as well?!"

"How should I know?!" squinted Dufnall as he began unconsciously walking backwards before bumping into Bjarki.

Kjotvi spoke, "What other choice do we have? The wilderness? Aye he is powerful but what if what he's sayin's true?"

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Vekell hushed, “Look we coulda taken him had we more time. All o’ us in his castle ‘gainst him—specially now since we know he’s a mage—we know what we’re up against, in case it turns ugly...I says Aye.”

Alti nodded in like, “Aye me too.”

Dufnall squealed, “Not fer all the gold in Drazhguls’ mountain ye hears m—!!“ , as a giant bear paw covered his face, muffling his continued protests.

Grimr nodded to Bjarki in thanks adding, “Duff an I are in as well.”

Uthark replied, “I got a bad feelin’ bout this. I can’t put my finger on it, but what the hell? I’m in.”

Brodd looked to Bjarki reading the worry in his brother’s eyes. It was not normal for Bjarki to show worry of any kind and this unnerved him greatly. This man, had great power over those Worg, and there was still the question of the dead female to be answered. What was it? A Lycanthrope? This was the only conclusion Brodd had to offer, but it bothered him as well knowing that an attempt by the Skallagrims must have been made to communicate to these propped Werewolves and Worgs for that matter. Could they not understand? Brodd motioned to Bjarki to come closer. “Bjarki, are ye able to communicate with the woman ye hit?”

Bjarki shook his head somberly, “Nay. No response”

Maybe it was an illusion of sorts to enable them to travel without suspicion.

Hvati whispered flatly, “They ain’t natural. That woman Bjarki took care of...had two shots buried in her, courtesy o’ me. A *Were* could’ve taken the shots, but Bjarki’s sayin he can’t speak with em’... Maybe they ain’t Weres? And iffn’ they aint’ *Weres* they aint’ Normal!”

“Whatever they are, will have to be discovered at the right time brothers. Do we accept this invitation?—Brodd?—Bjarki?”

“What other choice is there?”, sighed Brodd, “Count us in.”

“Archiveld? Ulfar?”, asked Hengis, “What say ye?”

Ulfar and Archiveld looked to one another, both thinking the same thing. If a favorable chance presented itself for revenge...they smiled, replying in unison, “Aye.”

Brodd turned, and called out, “We accept.”

Reinmehr shot up in a cold sweat screaming at the top of his lungs. As his heavy breathing gradually subsided, he realized it was only a nightmare that had so terrified him and thoroughly soaked his undergarments with sweat. The man blinked a few times as he looked around the room to ensure that nothing was out of the ordinary before tearing the odd looking nightcap from his head, using it to wipe the glistening drops from his face. It was then that the chamber door burst open spewing forth a stumbling lanky individual and a burly follower, both wearing expressions of purpose.

“Brother Reinmehr! All is well?” cried the lanky man as he spun about the room throwing back curtains and opening closet doors thrusting the symbol of the Morninglord about maniacally, causing the lantern in his other hand to swing about wildly. Thren, the burly companion, sighed in relief as he released his grip on the long sword buckled around his side.

“You had another nightmare Brother Rienmehr?”, asked Thren as he caught the wandering priest with one hand, not taking his eyes from the deeply troubled Reinmehr.

“Yes...I suppose I did...”

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“Well...all seems to be well. Brother Mirnim has sanctified this chamber, and has ensured that the Morninglord is with you.”

Brother Mirnim bubbled forth as if awoke from a trance sputtering, “Yes-Yes!! The Morninglord is indeed with you Brother Reinmehr! No evil shall fall upon you this night! Not with the blessing of his hand, and the protection of his servants!”

Thren wondered if Brother Mirnim was always this zealous, or if he had simply been so caffeinated from the pots of coffee he readily drank that he could no longer control his body. Mirnim was always like that, since the first day they met. Thren did admire his devotion, but at times, his rattling behavior could be more than a little testing. A Paladins’ duty was never finished it seemed, for the path of righteousness included patience. Thren smiled as he patted Mirnim on the shoulder calmly stating, “Brother Reinmehr...the dreams...they are more often now aren’t they?”

“...Yes...I’m afraid they are. It is always the same thing...wolves—a pack of them coming to this temple and to our town...slaughtering all in their path. Only one thing though...one is a large bear and his ferocity is unmatched. As they breach the temple they slaughter all inside and the bear changes into a man. The man stands upon the altar and in his hand is a key, so bright that it cannot be looked upon directly...I have no idea what this means brothers, and yet I have prayed to our Morninglord for direction and understanding. Maybe I am not...worthy?”

“Do not say such things Reinmehr. You have served here a long time, and all know that the Morninglord favors you with visions and dreams of prophecy. We all must cultivate patience, if we are to have understanding and continue along the path of righteousness in this cursed land.”, soothed Thren

“Yes...you are right Brother Thren. All will be revealed in his own due time.”

As if on cue, the lanky priest clutching the holy symbol tightly threw his arms up repeating fervently, “Yes! All shall be revealed in HIS own due time! For he shows us the way in which we ought to live! Praise be to the Morninglord!”

Smiling, Thren shook his head as he turned towards the door, scooting the still ranting priest from the chambers gently. “Pray for understanding again Reinmehr...and pray for sound sleep, you look as though you need it.”

Nodding in reply, Reinmehr drew the covers close to his neck as he yawned exhaustingly. “Well shall see you in the morning then Reinmehr. Good night.” Said Thren before closing the chamber doors engulfing the room once more in darkness. Reinmehr remained sitting in silent prayer to his god for peace and understanding for a few moments, before laying back into his somewhat comfortable bed. He did not open his eyes in the darkness for the shadows in his chamber often played tricks upon his weary mind. Soon, he drifted off into much needed slumber, feeling an inner peace of mind knowing that at the morning would soon arrive and that a new day *would dawn*.



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TALE OF A DRUNKEN WRETCH

By: Luiz Eduardo Neves
Peret
(Lord Arijani)

(Told by Emmanuel d'Orville, in a tavern
somewhere in Port-a-Lucine)

Come closer, come closer! Yes, my lad, it is I who was motioning to you from the corner. I took the liberty of hearing your conversation with the other two fellows over there.

Now, I have nothing against those pointed-eared fey people that some call “elves”, but I confess I felt rather comfortable speaking with a fellow human. You were talking about strange disappearances, right?

Now, come closer and let this old man tell you a tale of a strange disappearance. It is also a tale of love and loss. If you like my tale, you could be as kind as to buy me another drink?

No, no, my friend, please don't take me for granted just yet! I assure you that my tale is legitimate; I not only saw it but took part myself! Most people look at me and only see a drunkard and a beggar, but they know nothing of the horrors that stalk the land in many disguises. They should know better and look deeper than that.

I lived all my childhood and most of my teens at a small village called Derny, a few miles to the east. I was a 15-year-old boy when my father, a strong, kind man, was approached by a group of old friends of his. They wanted him to leave his family for a while and once more “face the dangers of the night” to help them

investigate the disappearance of a young widow in a nearby town.

I knew that my father had been an adventurer before meeting my mother, as he used to tell us many tales of his past endeavors, but I also knew that, upon taking her to the altar some 16 years before, he had vowed to dedicate the rest of his life to his family. However, the thirst for adventure never left him. He assured my mother that it would be a simple matter and he would be back in no time with yet another tale to tell our neighbors.

Unfortunately, he never returned alive. By the vague accounts of his friends who brought his body, they found the track of another widow who had been acting strangely for the last few days and had decided to investigate the case, fearing for a serial killer of some sort. They finally found her wandering the local graveyard, but were attacked by a pack of monsters in the misty night and my father was badly injured by their claws and teeth. They never found either of the missing widows or their kidnaper, if that was the case whatsoever.

I cried for several days. My mother was so distressed that she looked ten years older than her forty. Yet, she was still beautiful and strong. A few months after the burial, however, the strange events began.

I was busy most of the day helping a neighbor with his crops in order to make some money, so I first missed the details of her change. She would begin to sing an old song my father loved while doing her normal housework. Then she began to make his favorite meals, and act as if he were alive. After a few days, I finally took a closer look at her and noticed that, while she was obviously happier than before, she

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seemed more tired and worn. I immediately feared that whatever had happened to the other town's two women was also affecting her.

I sent for my father's friends. They arrived just in time: as we tried to talk to her, we found that her bedroom door was locked – my mother *never* locked her room. Grimmell, the dwarf, approached the door to hack it with his axe, but suddenly the wood itself warped in the form of a clawed hand and attacked him. As I stared, shocked, they finally managed to destroy the door and entered the room. Then I saw my mother, and I saw Him.

She was locked in the embrace of a large man and did not raise her head even to acknowledge or presence. He, on the other hand, stared at us in a mild surprise. He was my father! Yet, he was not, I knew it. The face was his, but the expression in the eyes... there was something terribly wrong. As he grinned to us a feral smile, I could see his left foot stepping forward from the shadows. It was not a human foot, but the scaly, black foot of a monster. I cried in despair, and He vanished in a puff of mist, taking my mother away just as the heroes approached.

"To the graveyard, quickly!" shouted Enolle, the priestess of Ezra. They all darted out of my house, and although she told me to stay, I felt a compulsion to follow, to see my father again.

In the nearby graveyard, we found my father's grave undisturbed. However, right behind it there was a freshly opened grave, full of white mist, with four hideous, black statues guarding its corners. My mother was standing right before the hole, and my "father" was there, too. He smiled that feral smile once again and said "You are too late. Love can no longer be denied." With that, they both jumped into the grave, as the four statues came to life.

It was a terrible, long battle, as I recall. I stood hidden behind my father's tombstone and watched as the five heroes finally destroyed the monsters by the first light of dawn. However, as they approached the grave, they saw that, as the first sun ray touched the misty hole, the fog dissipated to reveal undisturbed soil, just as if there had been no grave there at all. I never saw my mother, or my "father" again. And I never had the nerve to take on the mantle of the adventurer, for the horrors that I witnessed that night stalked my nightmares for years. Only when I drink do I sleep comfortably, without dreaming.

Such tale, isn't it? Now, my young lad, don't I deserve that drink?



Masque of the Red Death

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CAPTAIN NEMO

TJE BOATMAN'S CALL

By: Asbjorn Hammervik
(Malken/Ezekiel)

The worlds most famed
submarine and it's
captain returns to Gothic
Earth.

It's sometimes hard to say who's the most famous, Captain Nemo or his amazing vessel, The Nautilus. Created in 1869 by science fiction pioneer Jules Verne, Nemo is a classic Byronic hero with his dark visage and misanthropic viewpoints. Yet he also possesses redeeming traits, which makes him perfect for a Gothic Earth campaign.

Adapting a loved and respected character for Masque of the Red Death can be a daunting task. Even though I've done my best to represent the good captain as Verne portrays him, I've also taken some liberties to fit him into the Gothic Earth milieu. More about this incorporation can be found in the back of the article.

Captain Nemo

Captain Nemo (Smart 7/Charismatic 4): CR 11; Medium-size human (cursed); HD 7d6+4d8+11; hp 50; Mas 12; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; Defense 20; touch 20; flat-footed 17; BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d4, knife) or +9 ranged (2d10, Electrogun); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; AL Organization, Self, Freedom, Equality; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +9; AP 6; Rep 4; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Occupation: Adventurer (Steer Swim, bonus feat: Personal Firearms Proficiency.)

Talents: Savant Craft (Mechanical and Pharmaceutical) Linguist, Plan, Coordinate, Inspiration.

Skills: Craft (chemical) +13(8), Craft (Mechanical) +13(8), Craft (Pharmaceutical) +13(10), Craft (Visual Art) +10(5), Decipher Script: +13(10), Intimidate +10(8), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) +15(10), Knowledge (Art) +15(10), Knowledge (Behavioural Sciences) +13 (8), Knowledge (Current Events) +7(3), Knowledge (Earth and Life Sciences) +17(12), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) +15(10), Knowledge (Theology & Philosophy) +17(12), Navigate +15(10), Perform (Keyboards) +10(8), Repair +15(10), Steer (wis)* +12(8), Survival +9(6), Swim +14(12)

Languages: Polish, Latin, Urdu, Hindi, English, French, (R/W and speak all.)

Feats: Archaic Weapon Proficiency (Harpoon), Brawl, Combat Expertise, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Renown, Thrustworthy.

Possessions: Nautilus Pin, Electrogun*, Knife,

Steer(Wis): As Drive, but for nautical vessels.

Electrogun: The Electrogun is Nemo's invention, and uses pressurized air to fire a lead-weighted glassbulb in a steel capsule, which detonates on impact, causing 2d10 electrical damage. It has a maximum range of 5 increments. (Electrogun/2d10/20/Electrical/50 ft/Single/5 int/Large/11 lb)

Captain Nemo appears, at first, to be a very vital man. Asserting his age can be difficult, but a careful observer will note that some of his bushy eyebrows and dark hair is streaked with white. He's a high man, well over 6 feet, and his confident attitude and slim, athletic figure underlines this impression. His eyes are deep black, and when he watches you from under his majestically bushy eyebrows, you feel pierced by his gaze.

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Nemo's temper can be compared to the element in which he spends most of his time. Usually, he is calm, yet brooding, like the deep, dark water of a secluded pond. When his anger is roused, however, he can be as frightening as a winter storm. His skin, however, always remains pale and white, never betraying his temper. His name, Nemo, is Latin for No-One, and this is how he likes to appear, as no one, as an unknown factor.

Background

Nemo's background can at times seem as enigmatic and shrouded in mystery as himself. Very few men alive, besides his crew, have ever gotten close to him for a longer period of time. In 1867, a French professor by the name of Pierre Aronnax disappeared in the Pacific Ocean, along with his manservant Conseil and Canadian whaler Ned Land. Nine months later, they were found along the coast of Lofoten, Norway. With him, he had a journal, which later became the basis for Jules Verne's work *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*.

Jules Verne was a close friend of Aronnax, and like him, he had an immense fascination for science and numbers. Aronnax' journal, chock full of scientific observation, was therefore left largely complete, although expanded upon and slightly edited, of course. Aronnax thought little of it, afterwards, but Jules Verne slowly became obsessed with the enigmatic Nemo.

Searching for No-One, however, can be very difficult. Captain Nemo had severed all of his ties to the world above, and Verne's search was mostly in vain. However, while Verne couldn't find Nemo, Nemo soon found him. One late evening in the fall of 1873, the captain approached Jules Verne. He offered the writer the opportunity to listen to his story in exchange for one thing: in the next book, Jules Verne would kill Captain Nemo for good. Thus, they would both be better off. Captain Nemo wished to remain anonymous, and Jules Verne would satisfy his curiosity. The Mysterious Island was

published in magazine form from January to December of 1874.

Nemo's Story in the Mysterious Island

The Mysterious Island centers around American civil war escapee Cyrus Smith and his comrades. They are stranded on an abandoned island and manage to build all manners of amazing things, including their own foundry and telegraph, through the help of a mysterious benefactor. Finally, it is revealed that their helper is none other than Captain Nemo. In the last scenes, Captain Nemo tells them his whole life story before he dies in his submarine. They then sink the submarine and leave the island for good.

In this book, Captain Nemo reveals that he is originally an Indian, Prince Dakkar, the son of a rajah of the then independent territory of Bundelkund and a nephew of the Indian hero, Tippu-Sahib. He was educated in Europe, where he learned to hate his "English oppressors." In 1857, he helped organize the great Sepoy revolt. Actually, he didn't as much organize it as lead it. He fought among the frontlines and was wounded ten times in twenty battles. But the revolt failed, and he fled the country with several of his likeminded men. On a lonely island in the pacific, he constructed the Nautilus, within which he roamed the sea for ten years. At long last, he out survived all his crewmembers and died alone.

Nemo's story in this novel is interesting, and certainly plausible. However, Verne planted several discrepancies in the story, and really didn't put so much effort into this as several of his other novels. In addition, this novel paints a less misanthropic picture of the captain than the first, authentic record produced by Aronnax.

In truth, Captain Nemo was never an Indian. However, there were some grains of truth in the story told to Verne.

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Captain Nemo's true name is Nikodem Szlachic, and he was a Polish count. He was wealthy, well educated, and quite the metropolitan. He was educated in Oxford and subsequently went to India. He did indeed sympathize with the downtrodden Indians, and he funded the Sepoy revolt out of his own pocket.

However, in India, he also found a nemesis. By funding the Sepoy revolt, he ran afoul of the vile Professor Moriarty, who had been scorned by his own country and his rakshasa brethren, and now wished for nothing else than the oppression of India to continue. Nikodem managed to tumble many of Moriarty's crime connections, and soon, he confronted Moriarty himself. He was aided by other rakshasa, among them was Moriarty's own mother, and on a cliff high above the Arabian Sea, they fought a fierce battle in late 1857. As the professor plunged off the cliff into the frigid waters below, he lay a mighty curse on him: "May you never find a home or rest again, neither below nor above the waters!"

As the revolution itself faltered, thanks to weary soldiers and brutal countermeasures by the British forces, Nemo left India for his home country of Poland. He thought little of the Professor and his curse, but directed his intellect towards the subjects he had studied in England; naval vessels and the prospect of underwater travel. He wanted to ply the world beneath the waves.

Above the waves, however, things were stirring. Professor Moriarty had not forgotten his adversary, and slowly, he tightened his vast net around him. Some deep, organizing power indeed. The professor's contacts reached deep, and Nemo's daughters and wife were raped and killed by Russian forces during the Polish insurrection in 1863. His father had also been present, and with his last breath, he informed his son that not all of the soldiers had been Russian. The last of them had informed him, in fluent English, that "Professor Moriarty sends his regards."

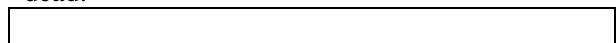
Nemo was furious. His whole family eradicated, his possessions stolen, he severed his ties with the world, and brought his Qabal with him under the water. He established several bases on uninhabited islands around the world, and continued the fight from under the water. Slowly, he rebuilt his fortune, by carefully, and anonymously investing money he scoured from shipwrecks, especially Spanish galleons that had been carrying South American gold.

Current Sketch

Nemo is cursed. Around him, several of his crewmembers have already perished either in battle or of disease and old age. He has found, however, that he himself does not seem to grow old. He has sailed under the sea for close to thirty years now, and he was already in his forties when he left Poland. Yet he appears only a few years older. The rakshasa's words have come true, for he finds no rest, and no welcoming home.

He has been recruiting new crewmembers, but the old ones have been dying faster than he has been able to recruit. Currently, there are only nine crewmembers aboard the ship. Together, they form a tight woven Qabal, which work with freedom fighters all over the world, promoting the ideals of the French Revolution: Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood. Nemo has read Karl Marx, but believes himself to be above such ideologies. The Qabal has no name, as all its members know each other, and do not need to identify themselves as anything more than the crew of the Nautilus. Hence, they all carry a silver pin in the shape of a Nautilus-shell. The crewmembers are all likeminded of Nemo, brilliant minds and able bodies - Together, they built the Nautilus. In addition, they all share a certain misanthropic view of humanity.

Nemo's feud with professor Moriarty has not flared up lately, but Nemo tries to keep himself up to date on the movements of the professor, who has long since written him of as dead.



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Forbidden Lore: The Nautilus

Captain Nemo's amazing vessel, the Nautilus, is powered by an exotic new energy source; electricity. Although by 1890, electricity is rapidly becoming a widely used energy source, no one has as of yet managed to employ it with the same efficiency as Captain Nemo. While he did not go public until 1873, there is evidence to suggest that the man who laid down the foundation for the generator, James Clerk Maxwell, was influenced by Captain Nemo's thoughts. All credit cannot be given to the Captain for this technology, though.

Deep within the bowels of the Nautilus, strange machinery operates night and day. At the center of this strange device lies a brilliant, glowing material, a strange, crystalline substance, which drives an extremely efficient generator that powers the entire Nautilus. When Nemo tells Professor Aronnax that "Your electricity is not my electricity," he is indeed speaking the truth...

The origins of this mysterious power source are dubious. Nemo claims that he found it on the ocean floor, whilst testing one of his early prototypes. He sometimes refers to it as Orichalcum, the mysterious power source of the Atlantians, but whether this is true or not, is uncertain.

Dread Possibility: Although this seems like an enormous benefit, it also has far reaching implications for the crew and the captain himself. Unknown to them, this strange crystal is infused with ethereal resonance and a latent intelligence. Through the submarine, it has developed a burgeoning conscience, making the ship an entity of it. Nemo himself swears that sometimes he can hear the ship whispering to him, comforting him in his loneliness and goading him to new heights or depths, depending on your point of view. The ship and the Captain are slowly developing a symbiotic relationship...

Combat

Usually, Nemo tries to stay out of combat, preferring to either avoid or subdue his opponent verbally. The captain considers himself above physical violence, despite his sometimes-excessive use of it through his submarine. If push comes to shove, however, he is an able combatant, and depending on the situation, he will try to knock out his opponent. He only uses his electrogun and knife on animals, and the most rabid of men.

Lair

While The Nautilus can traverse the seas for months without needing refueling, and the crew gathers most of their food from the rich sea, repairs are occasionally needed, and other needs may arise. At such times, Nemo docks the submarine in a volcanic cave somewhere in the Pacific, a location resembling his hiding place in the Mysterious Island. He takes great precautions, making sure that he is not followed, before he docks.

Using Captain Nemo in your campaign.

Nemo is an interesting figure, and could be used both as an adversary and potential patron. He sometimes goes to extremes against what he perceives as the horrible crimes of the imperialistic empire Britain, and it is likely that a concerned government will send out expeditions to deal with the problem, should he start up his campaign again.

If the PCs have crossed professor Moriarty's path, they might find a valuable ally in the Captain.

The PCs could be in need of rescuing, should they end up in a shipwreck for some reason or another.

The captain could even be adapted for a Ravenloft campaign. Imagine what could have happened if his misanthropic sides got the better

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of him, goading him towards destruction. A cursed submarine would make an original and claustrophobic domain for a Nemo turned Darklord.

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GOTHIC KRISTIANIA

By: Asbjorn Hammervik
(Malken),
with help from: John
Kristian Spangberg (the
Stoic)

...that strange city no
one escapes from until it
has left its mark on him.

- Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*

A concise visit of Oslo
in Gothic Earth.

Today, the capital of Norway is named Oslo. However, throughout history it has carried many names. In the 1890's, it was named Kristiania, reminding its citizens of the time Norway was under the rule of the Danish king Christian IV.

Kristiania is located in the deepest arm of Kristianiafjorden, The Firth of Kristiania, by the mouth of the river Akerselva. The city is said to have been founded by the Norwegian King Harald Hardrule in 1050. In 1624, a huge fire ravaged the city, and when the Danish king rebuilt it, he named it after himself. By 1890, the city was in rapid growth, and from 1888 to 1900, the population soared from 138 000 citizens to 228 000, making it the fastest growing city in Scandinavia.

Thus, the people living in Kristiania in the last decade of the 19th century were living in a historical time. Not only was the city changing, growing larger and more urban by the month, it was also a time of change for the little country of Norway. People living in the capital were in the midst of history. Politicians were heavily debating the fate of the Swedish-Norwegian

Union, a union that mostly benefited Sweden, and people could feel a change was near.

As the city was growing, however, not only did it experience the joys of modern life—tramlines, modernism and art—it also experienced the problems associated with growth: crime, illness and increased poverty. In the face of these problems, class struggle and bohemian movements arose, gathering artists and writers to the city. Many people also emigrated to America, both from the city and from the countryside. In many cases, they moved to the city first, hoping to earn enough to take the boat to America. However, many of these hopes were never fulfilled.

Forbidden Lore

The city is old, and its history is rife with ghosts and tales of the supernatural. There are many factories and workhouses that are ideal places for unnatural creatures to hide, and tales of haunted rental yards abound.

Akershus Festning: The old fortress overlooking the city has served as both royal castle, prison and library. There are numerous tales of ghosts hunting the building, the most famous of which is the Malcanis, a ghostly dog that is said to haunt the old hallways of the keep. It takes the form of a huge, black dog, with glowing eyes and a torn leash. There are also the Nightpyres, little creatures the size of newborn babies, but with the body of frail, thin women, and skin like dark leather. They were said to appear just before a fire, and carried glowing fires in their arms, while moaning hoarsely.

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Some of Gothic Norway's
greatest sons...

...the writers...

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Ibsen is generally acknowledged as the founder of modern prose drama. He left Norway for Italy in April 1864, and traveled abroad for the next 27 years, returning to Norway only for brief visits. During this time, when he lived in Rome, Munich and Dresden, Ibsen wrote most of his best-known works. Ibsen returned to Norway in 1891 and continued to write until he had a stroke in 1900. George Bernard Shaw called him the greatest living dramatist in a lecture entitled 'The Quintessence of Ibsenism'. Ibsen's anarchistic individualism made a deep impression on the younger generation outside Norway, where he was considered a progressive writer.

Forbidden Lore: Ibsen is fairly well known in Europe in the 1890s. Some of his countrymen see his trips across Europe as necessary to inspiration, while other sees him as unwilling to recognize that he comes from a distant part of Europe. In reality, Ibsen works as a courier for Die Wächtern.

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910)

A friend and rival of Ibsen, he also wrote plays of social realism. Bjørnson campaigned widely for liberal and national ideals, and became an extremely popular national figure. From 1866 to 1871 he was editor of the Norsk folkeblad, which he made the mouthpiece for his ideas on political and social reform. Bjørnson's involvement in cultural and political battles marked his fiction, in which his urge to teach his readers occasionally guided his pen more than artistic aims. In the 1870s and '80s Bjørnson spent long times abroad and in 1881 he visited the United States. In 1893 Bjørnson settled on a

farm, travelling from there to Denmark, France, Germany, and Italy. He wrote of the evils of industrialization, defended oppressed minorities and joined Emile Zola in the famous Dreyfus Affair.

Alexander (Lange) Kielland
(1849 - 1906)

Kielland was perhaps the foremost prose stylist of his day. French literature and rationalistic view of the world deeply influenced Kielland, but he also read John Stuart Mill and Charles Dickens. As a novelist he was faithful to realism and rejected the other dominant trend of the period, naturalism. In 1878 Kielland went to Paris, where he met Bjørnson, and showed to him his stories. Throughout the 1890s, Kielland lives in Stavanger on the western coast of Norway for the most of the time, working as burgomaster and (later) journalist.

Jonas Lie (1833 - 1908)

Like some of his Norwegian contemporaries, Lie was also was influenced by Émile Zola, but he rarely used his writings for the more direct type of social discussion, which gave many novels of the time the tone of tracts. Lie lived most of his younger life in northern Norway. The seafarers, winter storms and storms at sea, Russian traders, Lapps and Finns, inspired Lie's imagination and in his books he often returned here. Toward the end of his life Lie became more pessimistic and naturalism gave way to mystic views. He and his wife lived in Rome for some time, and from 1882 to 1906 they lived in Paris.

Knut Hamsun (1859 - 1952)

Among Norway's most prominent and gifted writers, Hamsun's work still stands today as great psychological dramas. From 1888 and to 1909, he lived in Kristiania, where he wrote novels such as Sult (Hunger), Mysterier (Mysteries), Pan and Victoria. He would go on to write things that would influence European and American literature forever. He felt a strong

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anti-Anglicism, and supports the German empire wholeheartedly, a viewpoint which will serve to discredit him later. In the 1890's, however, he was a reputed and promising young writer, with outspoken views about British imperialism.

...the artists...

Edvard Munch (1863-1944)

The man who later came to be among Norway's most recognized claims to fame, Edward Munch, was born and raised in Kristiania. He lost his mother when he was five, and all his life was steeped in tragedy. He lost several siblings to death, and in 1890, his father died.

Edward Munch made his breakthrough in 1885 with his Sick Girl, breaking all the realistic traditions of the era, and launching a new, expressionistic movement. By the 1890's, he was already known, and in 1893, he painted his most famous work, the Scream. He continued to influence Norwegian and International art beyond the 19th century, and his full worth is only realized much later...

Forbidden Lore: A deeper, darker secret lies behind Munch's lurid landscapes and depressive subjects. During his stay in France, his father died, and he sought consolation in drink and women. He experienced the vile underbelly of Paris' nightlife, and one dark night, he glimpsed something beyond human comprehension in the desolate graveyards surrounding Notre Dame. To this date, he has refused to speak of this again, but sometimes hinted that what he saw was not the work of some evil force, but the evils of humanity.

Christian Krogh (1852-1925)

The very mentor of the Norwegian artlife in the 19th century, Christian Krogh is a well-known figure in Kristiania, and was both a skilled artist and a writer. He wrote several

books and painted several very lifelike paintings that brought the social problems of the new age into light and in to the lives of the upper class. Several of his books were confiscated and removed from print due to their sensitive nature.

...the explorer...

Roald Amundsen (1872 - 1928)

As a youth he insisted on sleeping with the windows open even during the frigid Norwegian winters to help condition himself for a life of polar exploration. His mother wanted him to become a doctor but he left his job in 1894 and entered the Norwegian navy. He spent the following nine years studying science. He took part in a Belgian Antarctic expedition in 1897, during which he developed a fascination with Antarctica from the time he first glimpsed its frozen terrain. Humans had not yet traversed Antarctica, a continent the size of Europe and Australia combined. Amundsen aimed to be the first.

DM's note: Though Amundsen is still young during the 1890s; he is remarkably knowledgeable about travel and surviving in cold climates. Later in his life, he will achieve his lifetime goal: To reach the South Pole. He will be luckier on the whole than his contender, Robert Scott. The race leads to much debate in years to come.

...and the explored.

or

What Nansen found in the arctic...

Black deinonychus

Large magical beast

Hit dice: 4D10+12 (34 HP)

Initiative +2 (Dex.)

Speed: 60 ft.

Armor class: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex., +5 Natural)

Attacks: Rake +6 melee, 2 claws +1 melee, bite +1 melee

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Damage: Rake 2d6+4, claw 1d3+2, bite 2d4+2
Face/reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10ft.
SQ: Scent, choose entrance
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +8, Jump +13, Listen +13, Spot +13, Wilderness Lore +10
Climate/terrain: Warm forests, hill, plains and marsh
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge rating: 4
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large)

This creature, though thought extinct, has survived due to the extreme cold of the northern regions of Gothic Earth. First discovered by the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen and his men, the creatures were thawed out of the ice by a mere accident. When setting up camp, a few of these monstrosities charged, leaving the explorers running for their lives. Thanks to the coloration, the explorers spotted the camp and left the camp for the monsters, which were lethargic from their long sleep. Just as savage as the ordinary dinosaurs, this breed has been tainted by the Red Death. They are smarter than the average type, and also given a special form of teleportation that only work near man-made structures. Similar in shape to a normal

deinonychus, this strain is black with needle-sharp pincers instead of talons. They are 12 feet long, but only 6 feet tall.

Combat: This type of dinosaur uses the same tactics as its cousins, using talons and bites. When charging, it uses only its rake attack, dealing 2D6+6 points of damage.

Choose entrance (sp): This limited dimension door is unique to the black deinonychus. When entering man-made structures, the black deinonychus can choose which entrance to use. For example, instead of using a door and walk all the way through a corridor, a black deinonychus can use the doorway to teleport to the door at the far end. Thus, if it were chasing a person, it would now be in front of him instead of being behind him. Multiple doors give the black deinonychus even more opportunities.

Skills: A black deinonychus receives a +8 racial bonus to Hide, Jump, Listen, Spot and Wilderness Lore.

(Note to the reader: Fridtjof Nansen, the great Norwegian explorer and humanitarian, is described in the Gothic Earth Gazetteer, pg 42)



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MI ULTIMO ADIOS

A SINISTER DIALOGUE IN A PHILIPPINE JAIL CELL

By: Dion Fernandez

It was a cold and slightly breezy night in Manila as the bronze bells of the Cathedral rang midnight in. The mighty black walls of Intramuros, the Inner Conclave loomed over the sleepy city, a testament to three hundred years of Spanish dominion. Towering over the Conclave was Fort Santiago, an impregnable bulwark housing the Spanish Civil Guard. Beneath the cobblestones, the gaslights and the adobe buildings, Intramuros was another world; an endless maze of prison cells housing both the damned and the wrongly accused.

That night, a mysterious visitor silently slipped into Intramuros, leaving only a shadowy memory in its wake. Effortlessly, it glided along the deserted streets, through the rusty iron gates of Fort Santiago like a ghost, into the underworld of the prisons themselves. The figure was barely noticed; the sharp and watchful eyes of the *Guardia Civil* sensed only a cold whisper and a faint sliver of mist.

Torches barely illuminated the dark and dank chambers. The jail cells were hardly sanitary; mold and mildew coated the adobe walls, puddles of acrid water seeped through cracks and corners. In one such cell, an oil lamp was needed to light the darkness which torches could not reach. A simple wooden table had been set inside the cell, along with a quill, an inkbottle and a few pieces of parchment.

It was this cell that the shadowy figure wished to visit. From outside the bars of the cell it could read the flowing scribbles on one of the parchments: "*Mi Ultimo Adios*." The oil lamp on the table had long burnt itself out in the night, and the faint yet thick odor of smoke wafted through the cell. The figure's vision turned towards the reclined entity behind the wooden

table. In his sleep, Doctor Jose Rizal dreamt for the last time.

But these were not pleasant dreams. These were dreams of people screaming, of guns firing and battleships sailing through rough tropical seas. And no matter how cold and silent it was throughout Manila that night, Rizal awoke in sweat. Through the darkness Rizal caught a glimpse of a hooded woman in his jail cell, whose hand he held tightly in his grip. For now, it seemed to him that her identity was of no importance; he wanted to know how she entered the cell that was still locked from the outside.

"*Por favor*, Jose," the woman pleaded softly with a smirk on her face, "is that how you treat women now that you're in jail?" Her voice was different, yet familiar altogether to the doctor. As his eyes got accustomed to the unearthly mix of amber torchlight and darkness, he slowly recognized the face in front of him.

"Leonora?" he gasped.

"Hush, now," the shade replied quickly, putting a single finger on her delicate lips. Her cold, whispery voice sent a chill crawling up Rizal's spine. "Yes, dear Jose, it is me."

Still groggy from his sinister awakening, Rizal shook his head in disbelief. "But, no... you're dead. From a fever--"

"Yes, I *am* dead, I suppose," Leonora replied in return, gently pulling back her gray cowl to reveal a delicate face with almond eyes framed in long, curly hair.

"Why have you come here, spirit?" asked Rizal, knitting his brow as he looked at his most unusual visitor. To him, the ghostly Leonora who stood in front of him now looked as alive as the day he denied her love and left her, as he

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sailed away to distant Europe. "Why come now, on the eve of my execution? Are you Death, come to take me?"

There was a silence before Leonora could speak, as she listened to her former lover's whispers echoing across the dank walls of the cell. "No, Jose. I come to give you praise, for all the work you have done, before they take you and we claim you as one of us...one of the Dead."

"Then you only come to but mock me here," Rizal said firmly, turning away from the shadow from his past, "leave me, I bid you. I have no use for worthless visitors, living *or* dead."

Leonora gasped, as a single tear streaked down her right cheek. "You deny me again, Jose? After all these years, you still think you alone could change the course of the world!" Shadows slowly shifted in the faint fires as she walked to the bench where Rizal reclined. "Where was the Jose I knew from long ago, the brash youth with a quick mind and a sly tongue? I could have given you everything... but you chose to become a doctor and link with La Katipunan, the Resistance! You deny listening to reason? To Truth?"

"And what *is* the Truth, then, Leonora?" snapped Rizal, surprised to see her ghost sitting intimately beside him on the old bench. "'The Truth Shall Set You Free,' they all say, but look, spirit, look where I am now because of the *Truth!*"

"*Silencio!*" came the coarse and angry voice of a Guardia Civil from far up the hall.

"*Hijo de p--*" Rizal softly cursed. *This is madness! Here I am chiding the dead!* "Is this why you have come here, Leonora? To show me my guilt for choosing another life?"

Moments passed before Leonora could answer his question. "You know me better than that, Jose," the ghost whispered, wiping the tear on her cheek with her fingers, "shortly after I was introduced to you, I knew too well that great

things were in store for you." Leonora tried to laugh, exhaling a quick breath of air as she smiled. "You had everything. You had talent, skill, wisdom beyond your years-- what man in his right mind wouldn't envy you for these?"

The doctor stayed silent as he listened, setting his eyes from Leonora's face, gazing out the metal bars of his prison. He didn't notice that his hands were gently clasping those of his dead love as she spoke. "When you left to pursue higher learning, I tried to deny the truth between us. But when I tried to bury inside, it flourished for all the world to see. The grief I felt was overwhelming. So deep, that I..."

"Wasted away," Rizal finished, "to...die alone." The revelation struck him like cold lightning.

The ghostly Leonora lifted a hand to gently stroke Rizal's face. "I'm so sorry, Jose. Please don't be angry with me. I always knew that you never loved me." Leonora could have turned away but she wouldn't, while Rizal sat transfixed by the awful truth of her words. All these years of traveling and uncovering hidden truths, he had forgotten to pull the veil off his truth, his own.

"So you return here tonight, my last night, to tell all. Is this why you have arrived?"

"More than that, Jose, *mi amor*," Leonora answered silently, calling him beloved now that her secrets have been revealed, "I...I come in urgency. Now that you stand at the edge of two worlds, powers that be have decreed that I speak of things only a few would know."

Rizal reluctantly gazed back at Leonora's deep-set eyes. "Things? Tell me, spirit, are these eldritch powers as insipid as to hide secrets from me that I already hold in my grasp? Her I am, in this godforsaken place, because I have torn away the veil of ignorance and revealed the Truth for all the colony to see!"

"But the question is do they *want* to see the Truth, Jose? The *Nuestra Señora* still stands in

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the Cathedral, worshipped as divine by throngs of the faithful."

Rizal heard the skepticism in Leonora's voice. "In time, they will see. I have merely presented the key, it will be up to them to open the door. That is why I linked with La Katipunan, so they could carry on the work I started."

"La Katipunan? They are fools! Their only fuel is resistance! This mindless passion blinds them from the mechanisms of higher orders." The spirit stood up from the bench and slowly paced to the bars of the prison. "They are slowly falling into a trap that they may never escape from." The chime-like shifting of Leonora's dress fold sent shivers up Rizal's spine, and he remembered that he was conversing not with a human being, but with the spirit of a woman long dead.

"So what are you saying, Leonora? That all we have done--all *I* have done-- is for nothing? That I would die at daybreak for a lost cause?"

"The Philippines, the world, is changing as we speak. There is no such thing as a lost cause, Jose. The problem is we all are but pawns shuffling back and forth from power to greater power."

"If you're referring to the purchase of the Philippines from Spain to the United States, then you bring me nothing new. I know of the Paris Treaty."

Leonora shook her head. "No, no, Jose. The secret I bring is beyond the squabbles of nations or empires. I talk about a greater conflict, a greater power which seeks to destroy everything you have accomplished."

Shivering in the early morning air, Rizal turned to Leonora's shade. "A hidden power?" he surmised.

"Indeed," Leonora replied, "an *unseen* power, an immaterial force hiding behind history's curtain, manipulating the destiny of mankind for the past six thousand years. Yes, *mi*

amor, there lurks a hidden power, with conquest and death as its tools."

"Inasmuch as this concept of an...omnipotent evil is intriguing, spirit, I choose not to believe."

"Countless lives have been sacrificed," Leonora droned on, "millions of brave souls have been silenced. This degenerate cycle of death has only but flourished in countless ages! If they could not stop this, then by what chance could you?"

It took some time before Rizal composed himself and faced Leonora's shade again. As he raised his head to ward her, she saw a small smirk form on his grim face as he started to speak. "Mankind chooses its destiny, Leonora. I sincerely believe that such a godlike evil, if it ever exists, would not be as so foolish as to enslave man and his dreams for the future."

"The world is changing, indeed, as you say. The Philippines may, in a short while, be free, but empires may enslave the nation again in its infancy. Yes, the despicable icon in the Cathedral may be of evil origin, but who's to say that such a holy place would eventually purge itself?"

Leonora squinted her hypnotic eyes. "I...I don't understand."

"You see, spirit, in the end you bring me no arcane secret at all. The unseen evil that you say exists never was an external force; it is *within all of us*. Man is capable of performing glorious acts of good as well as of darkness."

Quicker than Rizal began to realize, Leonora's spectral form began to wither and fade with his rebuke. "And if the world to come would be overwhelmed by a baneful entity such as you speak, then it has in the end sealed its own fate! *By its nature absolute evil collapses upon itself!* And if you say that our world is dominated by this evil now, then that only serves the fact that this world *needs* evil to balance the good!"

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Leonora gasped, her translucent tears of anger and grief briefly sparkling in the darkness. "You will *never* understand! Your words only reflect guilt and despair!"

"Guilt, my sweet Leonora? *I* am not the one who has returned back from the land of the dead!" With a sense of purpose he fixed his eyes on the shade as it receded back into the formless mass from where it emerged. "I may never see the shining sunrise of my country, but those who do see it will welcome it, and will never forget those who have languished in the night."

Within a few brief moments, all that was left of lovely Leonora was a still silhouette on the adobe wall, and a cold whisper that seemed to call back to him, "farewell...welcome."

Rizal opened his eyes. He felt himself reclining back on the bench. Outside his cell, the bells of Manila Cathedral rang in a new dawn. The sky was still a dark indigo, yet he could hear the solemn voices of townsfolk as they slowly walked their way to Bagumbayan, the hill of execution.

*La Nochebuena se viene,
La Nochebuena si va--*

A midnight litany prayed at daybreak. Strange, Rizal thought to himself, just like in my writings. Had the previous night ever happened? Had the spirit of long lost Leonora really come and reveal these secrets of a manipulative, godlike evil? Was there really no hope for humanity at all, as she had so despairingly recounted?

A metal clank and the stern pattern of echoing footsteps jolted the doctor fully awake. Three Spanish guards and a Dominican friar emerged from stairway and converged in front of his cell. For the doctor, the sun had finally set, and Leonora's ghost stood waiting for him at the gates of Hades. He saw the sunrise one last time, on Bagumbayan, as bullets mercilessly tore through his body. But for those who watched, for those who witnessed Rizal's death, that same sunrise which dawned on Manila was but the

first in the Philippine's struggle to change the fate of the world.

On December 30, 1896, Doctor Jose Rizal was executed on charges of treason. The *Nuestra Señora*, the Red Death's surrogate in the Philippines, stood unchallenged within the confines of Manila Cathedral.

Two years after Rizal's public execution, La Katipunan would lead the fight for Philippine independence from Spain. On June 12, 1898, the Philippines would be proclaimed a Republic, the first in Asia.

Two weeks after the declaration, American troops would enter the Philippines via Manila and the easternmost islands. Within three years, the United States would declare the country as a colony.



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THE RED BARON

RITTMEISTER MANFRED ALBRECHT FREIHERR VON RICHTHOFEN

By: David Cicalese

It wasn't the final
flight of the Red Baron ...

Biography

Born May 2, 1892, Richthofen showed interest in the military at a young age. Enrolling in the prestigious Wahlstatt military academy at age eleven he quickly excelled in military tactics and earned a partial scholarship at the Royal Military Academy at Lichterfelde. Manfred was a far better athlete than he was a scholar, and applied his horseback riding skills to become a cavalry officer. He was commissioned in April, 1911, in the 1st Regiment of Uhlans Kaiser Alexander III. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1912.

However with the new advancements in weaponry early in the twentieth century the role of the mounted officer quickly become unfashionable. When the war broke out in 1914 Manfred looked to the sky for new challenges and a way to help his country. Although originally only an observer Manfred took to flying like second nature. Under the tutelage of his boyhood hero Oswald Boelcke he received his first unaccredited kill versus an allied craft on only his second outing. His skill grew exponentially throughout the war earning both the Orden Pour le Mérite (aka the "Blue Max") and command of his own elite squadron called Jagdgeschwader 1 ("Fighter Wing 1"). It was at this time he ordered all those serving under him to paint parts of their aircrafts red in solidarity. Richthofen himself painted his Dr.1 triplane all red giving him the nickname, The Red Baron. In his short four-year career he accumulated sixty-

three confirmed kills of allied aircraft. It was in the air over Bray that this notorious flyer met his end. After chasing a British biplane into allied airspace a single stray bullet entered Richthofen's chest from the back killing him instantly. His body was recovered by Axis troupes and was given full military honors.

Forbidden Lore

Richthofen fell under the influence of the Red Death at a very young age. Growing up in a wealthy home in Breslau, Germany the young Manfred would pass hours shooting small animals in his father's woods pretending he was on the front lines. Those that did not die instantly he would throw in cages to watch the wounds slowly kill them. Upon his entry into the military academy his malice only increased. Cadets that did not yield to his whims soon found themselves beaten and tortured under the hands of Richthofen and his cronies.

There was only one other cadet that Richthofen looked up to, Oswald Boelcke. Ten years older than Manfred, Oswald's presence was one of total obedience. All lower ranking cadets snapped to attention upon the mere mention of his name, which was mentioned with hushed tones along with stories of ruthless enforcement and often bloody consequences. Manfred envied this power and secretly coveted it. Quickly becoming Boelcke's protégé Richthofen bode his time until one daylight battle in October 1916. Chasing a British pilot over the French countryside Richthofen saw his chance. Maneuvering into place he flew his plane in a nose dive past fellow wingman Erwin Böhme. Unable to steer out of the way Erwin tried to bank to the right only to crash into Oswald in a fiery crash. With his only companion out of the way and the only witness

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disposed of, Manfred quickly rose through the ranks. The Red Death however would not let such an act go unnoticed. As his plane burned up around him Oswald cursed Richthofen. "I will that you never see the end of this war alive!", "he screamed as he slammed into the hard earth. Hearing this the Red Death smiled and a few days later Boelcke rose as a revenant, his eyes burning with hatred for his killer. Trekking across the countryside he finally arrived at Richthofen's hangar. Stealing a handgun from a dozing guard he entered the passengers' seat and waited for his quarry. While in the air he rose from his seat and shot once, killing Richthofen instantly.

As Richthofen's body was laid in wait a light red mist seeped from the coffin....

As the Red Death never truly disposes of its playthings, Richthofen has risen as a fourth magnitude ghost. As he remembers all his former glory Richthofen's soul burns for what has been taken from him. Refusing to believe the war is near an end he has rebuilt his plane from stolen and salvaged parts. As Richthofen has bonded to this plane the Red Death has willed it to run on ectoplasm Richthofen extrudes. Richthofen can rebuild the plane in 1d20+10 days after its destruction, while Manfred still flies the skies over Europe hunting those that still display allied colors.

Rittmeister Manfred
Albrecht Freiherr von
Richthofen

Medium-size Undead, Ghost (3rd Rank), Soldier 8: CR 10; AL NE; Hit Dice: 8d10 (48 hp); Initiative: +6 (+2 dex, +4 Improved Int); Speed: 30'; AC: 12 (+2 Dex); Attacks: Luger +8 melee (1d6); Face/Reach: 5/5 ft.; Special Qualities: Undead, Horrific appearance, Immunities, Manifest (Su), Raise soldiers, Rejuvenation, Turn Resistance 4; Saves: Fortitude: +6, Reflex: +4, Will: +8; Abilities: Str 15 (+2), Dex 14 (+2), Con * (0), Int 14 (+2), Wis 15 (+2), Cha 16 (+3).

Skills & Feats: Craft (Mechanical) +10, Intuit Direction +7, Knowledge (Tactics) +7, Knowledge (Military History) +7, Ride +5; Speak Language (German, French); Armor Proficiency (all), Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Martial Weapon Proficiency (all), Point Blank Shot, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Finesse (Luger).

Appearance

Richthofen in his corporeal form appears as a tall (5' 11") well-dressed man with a neatly trimmed mustache. He is dressed in the common garb of a WWI fighter pilot including a leather jacket, black gloves and an ever-present scarf. However, Richthofen is clearly distinguished by his eyes should he take off his goggles: two glowing black pits filled with everburning pinpoints of fire replace his former eyes.

Special Attacks

Manifest (Su): The Red Baron appears much as he did in life. The main exception is a small bullet hole clearly visible in his back.

Horrific Appearance (Su): Once per day the Baron can distort his face into that of a horrid flaming skull. Anyone who looks at the visage must make a Fort save of DC 10 + 1/2 Baron's HD + Cha mod or lose 1d4 points of Strength, 1d4 points Dex and 1d4 points of Constitution for 1d6 hours.

Raise Soldiers (Su): If the Baron is forced to the ground on any former WWI battle field he may call into being 1d20 + Charisma modifier (4-24) Skeletons and 1d10+ Charisma modifier (4-13) zombies to come to his aid.

Special Qualities

Incorporeal (Su): The Red Baron cannot be hit by less than a +1 weapon, 50% chance of ignoring any physical blows, can pass through solid objects, can turn invisible at will.

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Undead: The Baron is immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease and death magic.

Turn resistance (Su): The Baron gains a +4 on all turn attempts.

Rejuvenation (Su): While in the air the Baron heals at the rate of 1hp per round.

Adventure hooks

- ◆ Planes have been disappearing over a field in France. When the the PC's investigate they find a graveyard of decaying planes striped of their parts.
- ◆ During a London airshow a ghostly biplane attacks. The PC's must act fast to keep the Baron from killing the airmen.



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SPECTERS OF THE TOWER OF LONDON

SHADES OF NOBILITY, TRAPPED IN STONE

"Just gone for a walk
round the block. Anne
Boleyn."

-graffiti found near Hull, England.

By: Dion Fernandez

The Tower of London once
served as a prison for
the living: even now it
still does, for the
countless spirits of the
dead trapped within its
gray walls.

Chapel of St. Peter
April 30, 1893.

It had rained earlier in the afternoon, but close to midnight remnants of storm clouds still hovered over London. Lightning illuminated the far horizon, and the faint rumble of thunder could still be heard. Within the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, a ring of white roses and candles encircled four people, patiently waiting for the right moment to arrive.

Damion Willicks shifted his weight on his chair. He, along with the three, had come to great lengths just to hide this ceremony, to keep it secret from the Crowclipper Guardians who wandered the Tower. So far, to him, everything had gone as planned.

Finally, from afar, the mighty bells of Big Ben boomed throughout London: midnight. The Hour of Summoning. In the makeshift circle of flame and flower, Martha, the eldest of them,

slowly turned her wrinkled face to the rest. She looked up at Damion with dark eyes and parched skin that reflected the eerie gold of flickering candlelight.

"It is time."

The crone's voice echoed the urgency of their work. With renewed haste Damion and the others converged in the circle, hoping that weeks of covert preparation and hidden planning would not come to naught. With a withered hand similar to a corpse's, Martha whisked away the dried leaves on the ancient floor to reveal a small, flat tombstone.

"We summon thee, spirit, from the world beyond," called Martha as the others joined hands in the gloomy light, "come to us now!"

For all that he has seen all these years, however, Damion still considered himself a skeptic. He never showed his emotions, typical Englishman that he was, and he inwardly pondered on his belief that such ritualism wasn't necessary to call an entity from beyond.

His nervous thoughts were interrupted by a fierce breeze that blew out all but one candle flame, which inexplicably still stood upright. A swirling fog slowly seeped into the chapel from the windows, bathing the interior with an odd mixture of blue and yellow light.

And from deep within his mind, and yet so far away, Damion heard the whispery voice from beyond the grave. It seemed to emerge from the wind, random hollow voices that melded into one. Damion felt a prickling sensation running up his back. For some instinctive reason, he slowly, reluctantly, turned his head around, peering beyond the protective

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confines of the circle, into the deep darkness of the chapel around him.

Somehow, some force seemed to marshal the luminous fog, forming a sphere a meter across. Like a giant soap bubble it hovered in the air for a moment, then it began to elongate, forming folds and indentations. Damion realized almost instantly that it was assuming the nebulous form of a human being, the folds of its gray vestments flowing like thin curtains in the nocturnal breeze.

What frightened Damion more was the fact that the feminine phantom was headless. "Help me," the voice in his head whispered, "help me..."

Martha's voice called out, with purpose yet with compassion, seemingly so far away. "I rebuke thee, spirit, never to walk the world of the living again! Begone now, be at peace! May you--"

Without warning, the chapel doors swung open with massive force, interrupting the exorcism. The last remaining candle flame blew out, surrendering to the cold wind that invaded the old sanctuary. An eerie cackling filled the silent void, overwhelming the senses like the malicious laughter of madmen. Only then did Damion realize what the sound actually was, and his eyes widened at the folly of what they have done.

The cackling of a thousand crows.

Dark-winged heralds of the Crowclipper Guardians.

Suddenly, hundreds of crows swarmed into the sacred chapel, from the alcoves, the windows, the ceiling. The headless phantom queen they had summoned had long since vanished, disappearing in a spine-chilling moan of pain and agony. Their sacred mission was a failure.

"They've found us!" Martha cried out. "Quick, into the shadows!"

The four scrambled out the circle of white roses and hid in the dark recesses of the chapel where not even the swarming crows could not find them for the present. From where he hid, Damion could clearly see the outline of one of the Clippers, shears in hand, held like a butcher's knife ready to hack away. Behind the entity, out beyond the doors of the chapel, loomed their last hope for safety: the White Tower.

Damion waited for the right moment, for the Clipper to get out of the way. Right then, as the tiny window of opportunity opened, Damion gave the signal.

"Now!" he screamed to the others. Amid the dark flock of flying crows and the eyes of the grim Clipper, the four shot out of the darkness, fleeing for the White Tower with their lives.

Crows flew around the four, swooping down with sharp talons and piercing beaks, trying to hinder their escape. Among the dark swarm hovered the Clipper, joined by three more of his kind, shears ready to stab. Beneath them the wet earth splashed, but they ran on, their thoughts directed solely to the safety of the White Tower.

Somehow, for what seemed like an agonizing eternity, the four reached the White Tower's confines. The crows continued to fly around them, halting abruptly outside the boundaries that marked this place of safety. As the tired refugees looked towards their chasers, the Clippers gave out a chilling grimace before floating backwards into the darkness beyond. The vicious crows themselves mysteriously vanished back into the nothingness they came from.

Damion breathed out a sigh of relief. For an old woman, Martha showed great strength that night, though now she was extremely tired. Their carefully-planned mission to free a tortured soul had failed, but as soon as the sun rose over London, they would leave this place and, in a future time, return to try again. For now, however, they all needed to rest.

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The Tower of London

London is the center of the world in Gothic Earth, where the evening fog clings tenaciously to old brick walls, and where gaslights eerily shine their faint glow on cobblestone walkways. At the center of it all is the imposing Tower of London, an eighteen-acre complex of towers, houses, and fortifications. This huge and looming structure is a testament to England's rich monarchical legacy, but it also hides a history of perversity, horror, blood and death.

The Tower of London is one of the world's bloodiest sites--and also, some say, one of the most haunted. Its history is deeply woven with its notoriety of being a killing ground, a prison and a place of torture. It has been witness to countless hangings, burnings and beheadings. Here peasants as well as nobles met their deaths, and even the heads of royalty were host to the executioner's axe. Centuries of structural improvements may have altered the way the Tower has looked, but even the finest architecture could not exorcise the restless souls within.

The Tower of London once served as a prison for the living: even now it still does, for the countless spirits of the dead trapped within its gray walls. It is an overwhelming sinkhole of the dead: spiritualists, psychics and mystics would go mad just by simply being in the premises. Most peculiar of all is the significant number of the specters of royalty that haunt the Tower. Some qabalists are convinced that the spirits of royalty will forever remain trapped in the Tower of London, never to rest, eternally feeding the growing strength of an Unseen Evil.

Legacy of Lost Londinium

The ancient empire of mighty Rome engulfed the lands of the Mediterranean like an iron hand wrapped in a velvet glove. Its influence stretched from the Gothlands of the North to Carthage and Egypt in the South, from Anatolia to the East--and the Gallic lands of Britain to the West. The old walls of Londinium

marked this edge of the Roman world where the sun sank and the endless unknown seas began.

The Romans who came here firmly believed in the Lares, spirits who took care of households and fields. Unknown to their worshippers, however, these minor gods have been fighting a losing battle against an unspeakable evil, unleashed in Egypt thousands of years before their time. All hope, however, was not lost; mystics knew that whatever this unknown evil was, it was still too young to conquer an island across the seas from Armorica (France). On a desolate hill outside Londinium's walls, statuettes of the Lares were buried deep underground, and consecrated to become a holy place, a sanctuary that would hopefully forever withstand the grip of the coming evil.

With the fall of Rome, Londinium was abandoned. So it remained for a thousand years, as the forgotten Lares watched over this piece of hallowed ground.

In the eleventh century, however, the spirits of ancient Londinium awoke to find new invaders treading on their tranquil land. William the Conqueror, knowing nothing of the Lares or their battles with the Evil Beyond, found the ruins strategically attractive in his wars, and soon built a garrison over the sacred hill of the guardian spirits. As a last resort, the Lares entered into the Conqueror's dreams and pleaded with him to keep their hill sacred. William humbly complied and in 1078 started work on the White Tower, built to secretly serve as a haven to the household spirits who watched over their sacred hill.

But unknown to either the Norman invaders or the Lares, it was already too late. Warlike and bloodthirsty, the Normans have inadvertently attracted the Red Death to the crumbling Roman walls of Londinium.

The Undead Sea Scrolls

Corruption

As years lumbered by the Tower complex began to take shape, stone by bitter stone. Meanwhile, the taint of the Red Death had corrupted the earth spirits not already under the White Tower's immaculate protection. These Lares became thirsty for souls, hungry for anyone who dared cross them and the timeless land they stood vigil over for the past thousand years; they took the form of men surrounded by crows, constantly circling William's White Tower in a dance of mockery but never descending upon it.

London then quickly took shape along the Thames, around the massive Tower complex which eventually became the seat of English monarchy. The Tower also began to gain notoriety as a mighty prison: beneath the spires and the brick walls, dank chambers and dungeons were built to receive hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prisoners who were imprisoned, tortured, and killed.

A History of Hauntings

THOMAS À BECKET

Thomas à Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury when assassins hired by Henry II killed him in 1170. The king had expected Becket to be on his side with him against the Catholic Church, but the Archbishop chose to side with Rome instead. Three years after the assassination Becket was declared a martyr and canonized, while Henry was forced to do penance for the murder.

Becket, however, was not killed in the Tower of London. Nevertheless, this apparently has not deterred him from choosing the site as a place of his vengeance. Henry III, Henry II's grandson, ordered a tower to be built in honor of the slain Archbishop, only to see the near-complete structure collapse twice: once in a storm, the second for no apparent cause.

With Becket's death, the Red Death's work for the Tower seemed to come to completion:

henceforth, any soul that died within the Tower may never leave on its own. Also, as descendants of Henry II attempted to build structures inside the Tower, their constructions would always collapse. Mystics have frequently seen the ghost of Becket batter at the Tower's stonework with his cross, as if defying the edifice itself.

THOMAS À BECKET, Male 3rd-Rank

Ghost: CR 12; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 8d12; hp 87; Init +5 (+1 Dexterity, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+1 Dexterity, +1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +8 melee, staff (+4 melee); SA Manifestation, Spectral Batter; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; AL LN; Save Fort +6, Ref +2, Wil +6; Str 11, Dex 15, Con --, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +5, Heal +5, Knowledge (England) +7, Knowledge (religion) +8, Mesmerism +3, Perform +4, Prognostication +4, Sense Motive +3; Endurance, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership.

Manifestation (su): Sightings of the Archbishop's ghost are frequently reported in and around St. Thomas's Tower, Lanthorn Tower and Traitors' Gate. His ghost could only be seen by mystics, although his powerful, rebuking voice could be heard all around the Tower of London.

Spectral Batter (su): Becket's cross-shaped staff can inflict an earthquake (as per the spell of the same name) within a range of 20 feet if he uses it to batter a Tower wall.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of Becket's ghost causes all within a 20-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 10) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Becket's ghost has +3 turn resistance.

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KING HENRY VI

York and Lancaster fought the bitter War of the Roses when Henry VI ascended as king of a ravaged England. His newfound fortune, however, was bittersweet: being a Lancaster in a predominantly Yorkist environment, he was locked up in the Tower while Edward IV (of the Yorks) grabbed the throne and became King. Henry was eventually stabbed to death on May 21, 1471, praying in a small chapel. His ghost still haunts Wakefield Tower where he was assassinated.

KING HENRY VI, Male 3rd-Rank Ghost: CR 14; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 5d12; hp 44; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11(+1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +2 melee; SA Manifestation; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; Al N; Save Fort +2, Ref +4, Wil +3; Str 9, Dex 10, Con --, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +6, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +4, Innuendo +4, Knowledge (England) +6, Knowledge (English Monarchy) +7, Knowledge (Catholicism) +3, Perform +5, Ride +6, Speak Language (French) +3; Endurance, Great Fortitude, Leadership.

Manifestation (su): King Henry's ghost manifests itself in and near Wakefield Tower, his hands perpetually clasped and his head bowed in deep prayer.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of King Henry's ghost causes all within a 20-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 14) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): King Henry's ghost has +2 turn resistance.

KING EDWARD V AND RICHARD, DUKE OF YORK

The intertwined lives of the monarchy did not do well to redeem the Tower's notoriety. As time passed, even children fell victim to the

vicious struggle for power generated by the Red Death.

Young Prince Edward was only twelve years old when he ascended the throne in 1483. The older Duke of Gloucester, however, also coveted the title of King. He declared Edward and his younger brother Richard as illegitimate heirs; the Duke of Gloucester eventually became King Richard III. Tower lore has it that the new King ordered the boys to be locked up and murdered in the Bloody Tower, which takes its name from this horrendous deed. Ever since then numerous apparitions of the spectral boys have been sighted walking hand in hand; they are never seen apart.

KING EDWARD V AND RICHARD, DUKE OF YORK, Male 2nd-Rank Ghosts:

[bracketed entries are stats for Richard, otherwise, same as Edward] CR 10[8]; Small-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 1d12; hp 9 [6]; Init +1 (+1 Dexterity); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +3 melee [+2 melee]; SA Manifestation, Dream Walk; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; Al LN; Save Fort +2[+1], Ref +3[+2], Wil +1; Str 7[5], Dex 12 [13], Con --, Int 12[10], Wis 11, Cha 13[11].

Skills and Feats: Hide +4, Perform +2 [Hide +3, Listen +2, Perform +2]; Lightning Reflexes, Toughness [Alertness, Toughness].

Manifestation (su): The boys' ghosts have frequently been sighted walking around the Bloody, Salt and Wakefield Towers, especially during foggy nights.

Dream Walk (su): The boys' specters can manifest themselves in the dreams of anyone sleeping within and fifty feet around the Tower.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of the boys' ghosts causes all within a 10-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 8) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

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Turn Resistance (su): Each of the boys' ghosts has +2 turn resistance.

QUEEN ANNE BOLEYN

One of the more popular ghosts haunting the Tower of London is Queen Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII. Unable to give birth to a male heir, Henry charged Anne with doubtful accounts of adultery and witchcraft. Sentenced to death by beheading, Anne nevertheless got her wish of importing a bladesman from France; she feared the executioner's axe, which never did sever heads with one clean swoop. In 1536, she was beheaded with the sword on Tower Green and buried in the Chapel of Saint Peter ad Vincula. Her headless ghost has henceforth been seen all over the Tower complex.

QUEEN ANNE BOLEYN, Female 4th-Rank Ghost: CR 15; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 9d12; hp 83; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12(+2 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +4 melee; SA Manifestation, Dream Walk, Weapon Invulnerability; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance, Fog Shroud, Axe Fear; Al LN; Save Fort +6, Ref +3, Wil +6; Str 12, Dex 11, Con --, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 19.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +7, Animal Empathy +4, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +4, Gather Information +7, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Catholicism) +6, Knowledge (England) +7, Knowledge (Europe) +4, Listen +12, Perform +5, Psychometry +3, Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (French) +5; Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will, Leadership, Toughness.

Manifestation (su): The Queen can manifest herself anywhere in the Tower, especially in the Chapel of Saint Peter ad Vincula. She is occasionally sighted accompanied by ghostly courtiers.

Dream Walk (su): Queen Anne's specter can appear in the dreams of anyone sleeping within the Tower of London. Her headless form is

enough to affect any three sleeping targets at a time as if by a nightmare spell of the same name.

Weapon Invulnerability (ex): Queen Anne's regal shade cannot be harmed by slashing weapons of any sort.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of Queen Anne's headless ghost causes all within a 40-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 18) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Queen Anne Boleyn's ghost has +4 turn resistance.

Fog Shroud (su): Queen Anne's ghost can envelop herself in an obscuring mist (as per the spell of the same name) at will. It takes effect as if cast by a 10th level sorcerer.

Axe Fear (su): Queen Anne fears the execution axe; as such she cannot go within ten feet of any axe or any other weapon similar in shape and form.

MARGARET POLE, COUNTESS OF SALISBURY

Countess Margaret Pole was the last of the female Plantagenets after the Tudor dynasty took over the throne of England. Despite her old age and political harmlessness, Henry VIII ordered her beheaded for treason in 1541. Margaret, however, saw herself as too proud to bend over the chopping block and in a fit of rage fled the axeman. The grim chase around Tower Green eventually ended with Margaret being hacked to death by her executioner. A ghostly reenactment of the chase is sighted every May 27 around Tower Green and its infamous chopping block.

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MARGARET POLE, Female 3rd-Rank

Ghost: CR 12; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 3d12; hp 32; Init +2 (+2 Dexterity); Spd 50 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dexterity, +1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +2 melee; SA Manifestation, Wail; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; Al LN; Save Fort +3, Ref +3, Wil +4; Str 11, Dex 14, Con --, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +6, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (England) +6, Knowledge (Europe) +4, Listen +9, Perform +3, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (French) +6; Alertness, Iron Will, Run.

Manifestation (su): The Countess of Salisbury manifests as an old woman running around Tower Green. The ghost manifests only in the three nights before and after May 27 of each year. Her wail, however, could be heard year-round.

Wail of Rage (su): Margaret Pole's ghostly wail acts similarly as the charm spell, and can affect any single person anywhere inside the Tower of London. The person affected by this ability feels herself drawn to the chopping block on Tower Green. Each round, the victim of this wail must make a Will save (DC 18), or she would blindly put her head on the chopping block, where 1d4 rounds later an illusionary axe would try to "behead" the victim; the victim must roll a Will save (DC 9-character's level) at the last round to negate the equivalent of a Power Word: Kill spell.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of the Countess's ghost causes all within a 30-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 12) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Margaret's ghost has +3 turn resistance.

LADY JANE GREY

Fifteen-year old Lady Jane Grey was poised to become Queen of England, as planned by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. She, however, had a tenuous claim to the crown, while the public recognized Mary as the rightful heir to Edward VI. On February 12, 1554, after being imprisoned in the Tower on dubious counts of treason, the young Jane was beheaded. Royalty had again fallen victim to the Tower's curse, and the machinations of the Red Death: every year on the anniversary of her death, her nebulous shade would materialize near the Salt and Wakefield Towers, floating in midair. Some would even claim to hear her sorrowful cries, the result of being a pawn for selfish motives.

LADY JANE GREY, Female 3rd-Rank

Ghost: CR 11; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 43; Init +1 (+1 Dexterity); Spd Fly 30 ft. (poor); AC 12 (+1 Dexterity, +1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +3 melee; SA Manifestation, Wail; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; Al N; Save Fort +3, Ref +3, Wil +4; Str 10, Dex 13, Con --, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +7, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +5, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (English royalty) +6, Listen +3, Mesmerism +3, Perform +4, Speak Language (French) +6; Dodge, Leadership, Run.

Manifestation (su): Lady Jane's ghost can appear on the ten nights before and after February 12 of each year. She is not seen anytime else, although her supernatural Wail could be heard anytime year-round.

Wail (su): Lady Jane's ghostly wail acts similarly as the mass charm spell, and can affect a maximum of ten people anywhere inside the Tower of London. Those affected by this ability feel themselves drawn to the area between the Salt and Wakefield Towers.

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Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of Lady Jane Grey's specter causes all within a 20-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 15) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Lady Jane's ghost has +4 turn resistance.

GUILFORD DUDLEY

Duke John Dudley, in his abortive scheme to take over the English monarchy, wed his young son Guilford to Lady Jane Grey. As the weak King Edward VI lay dying, the Duke persuaded him to appoint Jane as his successor. Eventually, after only a fortnight, Queen Mary took the throne and ordered both Guilford and Lady Jane imprisoned in two separate towers. Soon after, both were beheaded on accounts of treason. Worse still, Lady Jane had to watch as Guilford was led to Tower Hill and beheaded under the executioner's axe. Guilford's ghost now haunts the Beauchamp Tower, across the complex from the Salt Tower, forever torn apart from Lady Jane's shade by the Red Death's malice.

GUILFORD DUDLEY, Male 2nd-Rank Ghost: CR 10; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 5d12; hp 47; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11(+1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +2 melee; SA Manifestation, Wail; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; Al N; Save Fort +4, Ref +4, Wil +3; Str 13, Dex 10, Con --, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (English royalty) +4, Knowledge (Protestantism) +4, Listen +3, Psychometry +2, Ride +6, Wilderness Lore +4; Alertness, Endurance, Far Shot, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Run.

Manifestation (su): As with Lady Jane's ghost, Dudley's specter manifests only within the ten days before and after February 12 of each year. He manifests as a weeping, agonized youth.

Wail (su): Guilford Dudley's ghostly wail acts similarly as the mass charm spell, and can affect a maximum of ten people anywhere inside the Tower of London. Those affected by this ability feel themselves drawn to Beauchamp Tower. Lady Jane and Guilford can never wail at the same time.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of Guilford's specter causes all within a 20-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 15) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Guilford Dudley's ghost has +4 turn resistance.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

With the dawn of the Age of Exploration, the Tower of London continued its reputation as a place of fear. Anyone could be called up to the Tower, never to be seen again. The noted English explorer Sir Walter Raleigh was no exception; he gained the wrath of King James I and was eventually convicted of treason; Raleigh's public popularity, however, led the King to stay the execution. Instead, in 1616 he was released to voyage to the New World in search of gold and territories. The expedition failed, however, and in its course Raleigh began to molest Spanish possessions. Clearly violating royal orders, Raleigh was re-imprisoned in the Tower and was beheaded in 1618 on counts of treason. A battlement adjoining the Tower Armory and Bloody Tower became known as Raleigh's Walk because he often strolled there; on moonlit nights his ghost walks the rampart.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH, Male 4th-Rank Ghost: CR 14; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 7d12; hp 60; Init +5 (+1 Dexterity, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+1 Dexterity, +1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +3 melee; SA Manifestation, Footprints; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Fog Shroud, Turn Resistance; Al LN; Save Fort +5, Ref +5, Wil +4; Str 13, Dex 14, Con --, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 15.

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Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +3, Climb +8, Cra ft (Gunsmithing) +4, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +6, Innuendo +3, Intuit Direction +5, Jump +4, Knowledge (Americas) +3, Listen +9, Mesmerism +2, Ride +5, Speak Language (Spanish) +2, Swim +4, Use Rope +4; Far Shot, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (pistol), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw.

Manifestation (su): Sir Raleigh's ghost manifests only during the nights of the full moon and only on Raleigh's Walk and Tower Green, although his footprints could be seen year-round.

Footprints (su): Sir Raleigh can cause footprints to appear on Raleigh's Walk and Tower Green. These footprints seem to be embedded in the masonry as if carved, but they eventually disappear after 1d3 days.

Fog Shroud (su): Sir Raleigh's ghost can envelop himself in an obscuring mist (as per the spell of the same name) at will. It takes effect as if cast by a 10th level sorcerer.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of Sir Raleigh's phantom causes all within a 30-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 12) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Sir Raleigh's ghost has +3 turn resistance.

JAMES CROFTS, DUKE OF MONMOUTH

King Charles II pushed to have his illegitimate son James Crofts be recognized as Duke of Monmouth, but never allowed him to go higher in the monarchy. A movement arose to have the Duke to succeed him in the throne, but the King would not touch the topic of succession; in 1685 Charles' brother ascended the monarchy as James II, a Catholic. Duke Monmouth, a Protestant, asserted his right to the crown but the King, as always in the history of the grim Tower, locked up his challenger and had him beheaded the same year.

JAMES CROFTS, Male 2nd-Rank Ghost: CR 10; Medium-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 36; Init +4 (+4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal touch +2 melee; SA Manifestation, Tortured Visage; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Turn Resistance; Al LN; Save Fort +2, Ref +4, Wil +2; Str 11, Dex 12, Con --, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Bluff +3, Climb +4, Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +3, Knowledge (Catholicism) +4, Knowledge (Europe) +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Speak Language (Italian) +2; Expertise, Improved Initiative, Run, Track.

Manifestation (su): Duke Crofts's ghost manifests itself as a young man with long hair and cavalier garb. Both his neck and face are bloodied from the ethereal resonance of his execution. He is most frequently sighted among Bell, Beauchamp and Deverex Towers.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of the Duke's ghost causes all within a 20-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 12) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): Duke Crofts's ghost has +2 turn resistance.

THE MARTIN TOWER BEAR

By the 19th Century, the Tower of London had long ceased being the center of English monarchy. One cold winter night in 1815, however, a sentry saw a huge bear rear from behind a door in Martin Tower. He lunged the creature with his bayonet, only to see it pass through nothingness. When the terrified guard awoke from fainting the next day he was able to tell his story to the other sentries--the day after that he died of sheer terror. The phantom bear has since then appeared three times to three different groups of people in and around Martin Tower.

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An apparitional bear is not as misplaced as it seems in the Tower of London. Henry I kept a menagerie in the complex, which was transformed into a zoo. The custom of keeping wild animals in the Tower ended in 1835, when another sentry was mauled by a lion.

THE PHANTOM BEAR OF MARTIN TOWER, 2nd-Rank Ghost: CR 10; Large-sized undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 47; Init +3 (+3 Dexterity); Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +3 Dexterity, +1 deflection); Atk. Incorporeal bite +5 melee; SA Manifestation, Spectral Roar; SQ Undead, Incorporeal, Aura of Fear, Turn Resistance; Al N; Save Fort +4, Ref +2, Wil +3; Str 16, Dex 15, Con --, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Hide +4, Jump +3, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Swim +2; Alertness, Toughness.

Manifestation (su): The phantom bear manifests itself as a huge rearing bear with black fur in and around Martin Tower.

Spectral Roar (su): Anyone within earshot of the spectral bear when it roars (100 feet) must make a Will save (DC 10) or be mesmerized by the unearthly sound; people who fail the save are unable to do anything for three whole rounds.

Aura of Fear (su): The mere sighting of the phantom bear causes all within a 20-foot radius to make a Will save (DC 14) or be overcome by fear, as per the spell of the same name.

Turn Resistance (su): The spectral bear has +2 turn resistance.

The Victorian Era

In the 1890's, the Tower of London stands silent. Gone are the endless and tortured wails of the damned, gone are the glamour of the royals. Now only soldiers stand guard over the ramparts and the towers, oblivious to the Tower's bloody history and its frightful legacy.

With the advent of the Spiritualist Movement, mystics and qabalists have quietly diverged on Tower, seeking to release the thousands of spirits imprisoned within its ancient walls. Some meet with success; most come out barely alive, never wishing to enter the Tower of London again.

Lore of the Crowclippers

Power, greed, lust, wrath--all the sins of Man are concentrated in the history of the Tower, the heart of London, the center of the world. For such it became an easy target for the machinations of the Red Death and its minions, feeding on the souls of men regardless of age, gender or rank. The Tower of London is filled to the brim with countless souls; numerous lesser ghosts of first and second rank also haunt the Tower, the victims of torture or the pawns of the nobles. Many of these nameless shades are sighted surrounding those listed above; most are seen headless, victims of the executioner's axe.

London lore states that any crow that flies beyond the Tower would herald the end of the English monarchy. Qabals, meanwhile, speak in hushed tones of the Crowclippers who for some mystical reason can never enter the White Tower. They are the embodiment of the ancient Lares of Roman lore, corrupted long ago by an unseen evil's malicious influence. Their fate is to stay forever within the walls of the Tower, watching over the crows, clipping their wings so not one may leave and destroy this source of power for the Red Death. In a sense, the Crowclippers keep the monarchy alive, but for all the wrong reasons.

The White Tower

At the center of all this Evil stands the White Tower, a mighty tribute to Norman conquest, the first of all structures to stand in the grim complex. Here, where England's crown jewels now rest peacefully, the few remaining Lares untainted by the Red Death's corruptive influence still keep watch against their Crowclipper counterparts.

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No restless ghost haunts the sanctified halls of the White Tower. In 1845, excavators discovered a secret chamber beneath the imposing Norman structure, which well could have served as a temple. Discovered on the "altar" were the mummified remains of a dead cat: according to Norman superstition cats were seen as the guardians of the dead, and thus prevented a house or a building from haunting. No such cats buried in such a ceremonial way were ever found within or beneath the other structures that make up the Tower.



The Obituary (Credits) †

† Uri Barak (Shadowking)

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I'm from Ramat Hasharon, Israel. I played regular D&D a few times but didn't like it much but after I've read translated copies of Dance of the Dead and Heart of Midnight I seriously got into DMing and the world of Ravenloft. Love going to the beach when I can, listening to music and going to clubs (mostly metal), interested in mysticism and magic, drumming (started recently), playing my computer and write game material to use in my campaigns. Currently I'm working on setting the basis for my upcoming campaign, the Shadow of God.

† Phil Boulanger
(Charneka the Gypsy)

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Thanks to the USS editors for publishing my stories on the net! They came straight from my campaign where I take quite a pleasure from torturing my players! I've been dming in Ravenloft for almost 7 years now and I think I earned myself a domain!

† Eddy Brennan
(Wiccy of the
Fraternity)
(USS editor)

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Member of the Fraternity of Shadows and a person of many tastes. I have had some success in the professional animation, design and illustration fields and since decided to try and write a book of poetry, I also have plans for a novel in the future (when he finds a good proofreader). This years articles have begun to lean in a different direction, more towards general information and ideas for games, they are all fun to write. Previous work in the Online Ravenloft Community may be found in the Kargatane's Book of Sacrifices, Midway Haven's Crisis in Hunadora (a long narrative compiled by the kind souls at the Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory), The Malodorous Goat Netbook as well as previous Undead Sea Scrolls netbooks and the first Quoth the Raven. This years efforts I believe are among the best I have produced thus far and can't wait to see where I go next with those tiny particles of inspiration that strike me so frequently.

Other than Ravenloft, I have many interests including theology, some parts of history, folklore, mythology, reading, the occasional video game, art, poetry and writing in general.

† Leyshon Campbell
E-mail: cleyshon@hotmail.com

Leyshon Campbell is a Psychology student at Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, Florida, where he lives with his wife and daughter. The rumors that he proposed to his wife on Halloween and they married on Friday the 13th are true, but the rumor that his daughter is named Merilee is false. Still, she's growing up a little monster--Daddy read her "Carnival" in the hospital, and she wants a plush Cthulhu doll

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for Christmas. Leyshon and his wife are hoping that she is the first of many such creatures.

† David Cicalese
(Jasper o' the Nine
Lives)

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Ever since I picked up a used copy of Gothic Earth Gaz, I was hooked on the idea of MOTRD. The Red Baron is just my way contrabution to keep the sorely overlooked line from fading away.

† Conrad Clark
(Chaos Nomad or Nomad)

E-mail: Dyazion1@aol.com

The essence of Ravenloft is already in us; it exists in the repressed and or neglected parts of our psyche, searching for a way to manifest. And, to me, this manifestation, Ravenloft, allows us to explore that part of ourselves...Nah, cut the crap. It's just a game...almost. That said, I love it; and I've found, and will find it, fascinating for years. And, it's good to co-exist with so many others who have such energy for the setting. Thanks to all who push it onward.

† Darksoldier

E-mail: dfloyd84@yahoo.com

I am the creator and webmaster of SteelFalcon.Net, which hosts my semi-famous d20 Modern NetBook of Famous Characters. My gaming interests include D&D, Ravenloft, Star Wars, and the World of Darkness, creations for which can be found at my website.

FOR DRUSILLA
FROM DARKSOLDIER.



Can I please have my arm back?

† Drusilla
(FoS dread receptionist)

E-mail: as far as we can see, not computer
literate yet

Has been workoing as secretary to the Fraternity of Shadows for the past year and shows no signs of leaving, much to the dismay of her employers who have done everythign short of throwing her out physically. Of course, they are to afraid of her to do this so they sit quietly behind their desks and hope she doesn't notice they are there. Drusilla sorts all the incoming submissions, e-mails, slanderous messages, death threats and shreds them or turns them into paper dollie chains for her own entertainment. She is also good at keeping debt collectors away, though removing the bodies can get tedious. Other than this last contribution, she doesn't really do anything but she's still an asset to the team.

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† Dion Fernandez
(Dion of the
Fraternity)
(USS editor)

E-mail: souragne@yahoo.com

Dion is a 23-year old masterals student living in Baguio City, Philippines. He has been a Ravenloft fan since 1998, has contributed fan-based articles for the campaign world, including the Worlds of Ravenloft series of netbooks, and manages the Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory. Dion is also a local folklorist and scholar of urban esoterica, whatever that means.

† Stanton F. Fink
(Atma Weapon)

E-mail: apokryltaros@earthlink.net

Stanton F. Fink, resident entomologist of the big pile of ash that used to be the Malodorous Goat Tavern. Was last seen in the web of a Dementileuese Red Widow. The Widow, in turn, was last seen screaming "HELP ME HELP ME" over and over again.

† Asbjørn Hammervik Flø
(Malken/Ezekiel)

E-mail: aflo@online.no

Asbjørn is a smart 2/dedicated 1 hero, born and raised in Norway, Giants Homeland. He was born in 1985, and by some freakish incident of nature, is still alive today. In his 18 years, he has contributed nothing to the betterment of the human race, and he is quite pleased with that. He likes roleplaying games, cats and people sending him money in little envelopes. Or people buying him drinks. He's not picky.

He would also like to extend a great thanks to JohnKristian, AKA the Stoic, for putting up

with his endless lazyness and work-o-phobia
(And one homie who left us all too soon.)

† Jared Jenkins (Hengis
the
Hammered)

E-Mail : hengis80@hotmail.com

A musician, painter, writer at heart whom would rather the world return to the dark ages enabling people to settle their differences with the tip of their swords and not with the push of a button. I love playing video games as well, (darn well there went that theory..) such as NWN for the PC, and other misc. time consumers. I firmly believe that imagination is father of invention, so do not ever give up that creativity!

† Carrie Kube
(Yaoi Huntress Earth)

E-Mail : yaoi_huntress_earth@hotmail.com

When not in the net world, I'm your typical one semester to go college student and Ravenloft junkie. I'm happy to once again be part of the Undead Sea Scrolls.

† Author Removed at own
request

† Nathan Okerlund
(Nathan of the
Fraternity)
(USS editor)

E-mail: Nathan@FraternityofShadows.com

I'm a graduate student in San Francisco; I teach headless cockroaches to avoid electric shocks and perform other services to humanity. Among them are money laundering (I

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recommend Tide), finding life mates for single socks, feeding Drusilla, and contributing to and editing the Undead Sea Scrolls.

Three and a half years in the Mists and counting...

✝ Morten Olsen (Shady)

E-mail: airmorten@get2net.dk

I live in Copenhagen, Denmark and attends University of Copenhagen (economics). In my spare time i play football (plays qb for the local team - the Demons), while finding time to DM my group of 3 players. I am known as a killer DM - only rarely will a PC survive to level 3 !

The article contains new rules for firearms in the "Misty Realms". The firearms in this article are designed to be more lethal than the standard firearms in the d20 rules, while being more historical correct in their use. New rules for masterwork firearms are also presented. No longer will a masterwork firearm just have +1 masterwork bonus. Instead all masterwork firearms have a specific bonus, determined by the creator of the weapon. Some examples of masterwork firearms are provided at the end of the article.

✝ Joël Paquin
(Joël of the
Fraternity, or Gotten
Grabmal)
([USS editor](#))

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Joel@FraternityofShadows.com

The 2003 year was full of changes for me. Again, I'd like to thank my family and friends for support.

✝ Andrew Pavlides
(alhoon)

E-mail: apavlides24@hotmail.com

I'm a 24 years old Greek and I play D&D since I was 9 - 10 years old. My favorite world is Ravenloft and while I don't have all the 3E products, I support the line as much as I can. I play and DM Ravenloft about 3 - 4 years, since I read "I, Strahd. The War against Azalin"

The article "low level spells" is about a number of spells that can be used to surprise unwary players. While the spells are low-level, they are of the sort that is usefull to most wizards or sorcerers.

✝ Eduardo Peret
(Arijani)

E-mail: rakshasa2001@hotmail.com and
lord_arijani@yahoo.com.br

Eduardo "Arijani" Peret lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He's currently involved with several projects, including the writing of articles and reviews for Rede RPG, Brazil's largest RPG-related website, and the future release of a brand-new D&D setting. He's also taking the M.A. in Communication and preparing for an one-year Specialization course in Culture-Oriented Newspapers, both at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. This is the main reason why he's not currently sending as many articles to the USS as he used to, but hopefully all this shall change in the future.

✝ Tammi Sammons

E-mail: tami_sammons@email.com

As for me? I'm a 39 (40 depending on when this is published, Jan 24th) stay-at-home-mom and homemaker. I was in the US Air Force for 10 years. My husband is currently in the US Air Force. We have a very active 7 year-old Gemini son. We currently live in Maryland, USA. My

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favorite D&D/AD&D worlds are Ravenloft and Planescape. I enjoy reading and listening to music. My favorite books/series are the J.R.R. Tolkien and Harry Potter books, the old Ravenloft books, the Forgotten Realms Dark Elf books and classics like Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allen Poe and Emily Dickenson. My music tastes are broad, including pop, opera and industrial/goth.

✚ John Kristian Spångberg
(The Stoic)

E-mail: john.spangberg@student.uib.no

In real life, The Stoic is known as the 22-year old John Kristian Spångberg, who is currently studying law at the University of Bergen in Norway. He's close to his 11th year of role - playing, but is currently on a hiatus from active gaming, as he has yet to start a campaign away from home. He's been playing Ravenloft for about 9 of these years. When not studying or using a computer, he's watching TV, reading, playing in the student band or listening to music, with Mike Oldfield being one of his favorite artists.

✚ Stephen C. Sutton
(ScS of the Fraternity)
(USS editor)

E-mail: isawtheraven@hotmail.com or
Stephen@FraternityofShadows.com

Member of the Fraternity of Shadows, Pre-service Teacher and Dungeon Master wannabe. I have been a fan of Ravenloft since '97, and spent a lot of time on the Kargatane site during its big hay-day. Since then I started the netzine Quoth the Raven, become an editor for the Undead Sea

Scrolls, and now serve as the web master for the Fraternity of Shadows website and message board.

✚ Jason True
(Jason of the
Fraternity)
(USS editor)

E-mail: Jason@FraternityofShadows.com

A 27-year-old man living in the suburban jungle of the Windy City (Chicago, Illinois), who has been a teacher, a pharmacist, and will soon be a doctor. When I am not busy with finishing my degree or working, I enjoy spending time with my wife or persuing my role-playing interests. I have been a fan of the Ravenloft setting since the spring of '95, although my travels didn't bring my to the Secrets of the Kargatane until the beginning of '97. Since then, I have been busy reading and occasionally contributing my own little tidbits to the community. I have been a member (and the Tavern moderator) for the Secrets of the Kargatane message boards, the DM for the "Halfling Walks" series, a writer and editor for the Quoth the Raven netzines, a Member of the Fraternity of Shadows, and most recently an editor for the USS netbooks.

The Fraternity of Shadows would like to thank everyone involved with the USS Gazetteer trail run in this years netbook. Though you cannot all be thanked individually due to Dru shredding every bit of information we had on these brave souls, we would like to thank you collectively and hope you continue to support the USS, QtR and perhaps other USS Gaz projects, FoS website projects and so forth.

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May Hala (or Ezra, etc...) bless you all for your fine work. This years USS Gaz on Vallaki was something of a success, we can only hope that future USS Gaz projects go just as well. Again, thank you to all of you for all your support.



**And thanks again to all those who submitted articles
or were involved in this netbook !**

