

THE MARK OF DEATH

A CHARACTER CREATION OPTION
FOR THE EBERRON SETTING



BY JEREMY THOMAS

The Mark of Death

For nearly all of Khorvaire's living residents, there are twelve Dragonmarks. Most people know of the titans of industry that are the Dragonmarked Houses, and their mystical birthrights that have given them positions of power and wealth. Ask most citizens of the nations of Khorvaire and they can tell you at least something about House Cannith, House Kundarak or House Orion.

But a rare few know of a thirteenth Dragonmark that used to exist. The Mark of Death has long been considered the most mysterious and ominous of the established Dragonmarks for a variety of reasons -- not the least of which is the fact that it is believed extinct. Once the hallmark of the necromantic House of Vol on Aerenal, both the Mark and the House that owned it were driven to extinction over three thousand years ago amid a rare and brief alliance between the dragons of Argonnessen and the elves of Aerenal after Vol's matron, Minara Vol, had a half-dragon child with the Emerald Claw who manifested a potentially apocalyptic form of the Mark.

As far as anyone is aware, the Mark of Death was stamped out at that time alongside the whole of House Vol. But some believe that members of the House -- perhaps important ones -- survived in some way. That a religion known as the Blood of Vol has spread its way across Khorvaire cannot be coincidence. And somewhere, deep in darkness, perhaps a half-dragon creature seeks a way to bring the Mark she bears back to life...which could bring ruin to her ancient foes, with all of Eberron serving as collateral damage.

USING THE MARK OF DEATH IN AN EBERRON CAMPAIGN

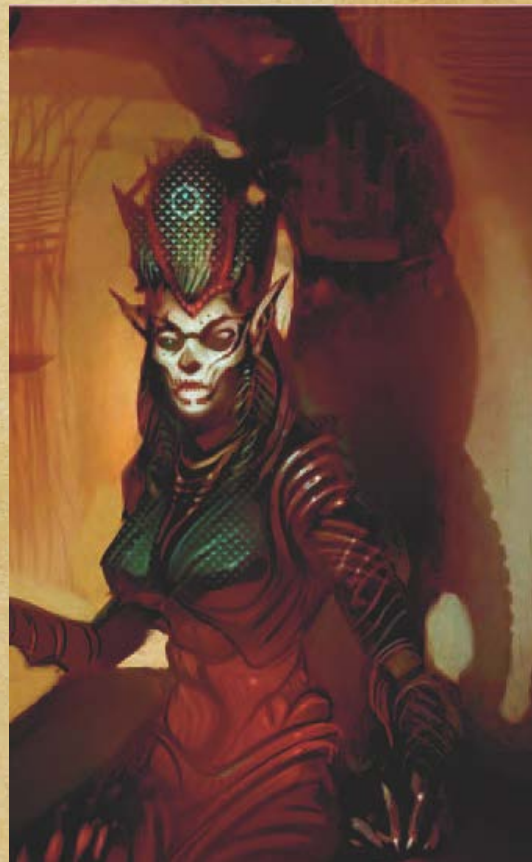
The Mark of Death is fertile ground for a potential campaign story. That said, it must be handled carefully. Eberron has no shortage of mysteries that can become the focus of entire campaigns, and introducing a character with the Lost Mark can quickly turn it into the focus of your storyline. The Aerani elves and the dragons will have a keen interest in anyone who reveals that they have the supposedly-extinct Dragonmark. And that's to say nothing of how Erandis Vol and the Order of the Emerald Claw will react. Long story short, adding the Mark of Death can almost automatically introduce these groups into your campaign as major players.

That said, there is a lot that can be done around these story elements. Someone bearing the Mark of Death may well have a life akin to a fugitive, always keeping outside of the purview of authorities so as not to bring attention to themselves. How will they react if an Emerald Claw cell learns about them? Will they seek out the origin of their mark, and delve into its history -- thus burdening them with

the knowledge of their secret lineage to a long-destroyed house of necromancers?

And what of the established Dragonmarked houses? They may not be too happy at a long-lost Dragonmark resurfacing and upsetting the status quo right when the Last War has just ended. They may view a holder of the Mark as another Aberrant Dragonmark holder...except that the Mark behaves in the same way as a True Dragonmark. But some may view the holder as a useful pawn, not knowing that in doing so, they are making enemies out of some very powerful factions...

As you can see, there are plenty of ways to integrate the Lost Mark into a campaign that fits within Eberron's core themes and moods of pulp adventure and neo-noir intrigue.



MARK OF DEATH TRAITS

The Mark of Death can appear on either elves or half-elves. Due to House Vol's eradication and the Mark's resilience (i.e. the inherent destiny tied to Dragonmarks), the supposition of this document is that it's entirely possible that the Mark has survived by way of being passed on to someone of Vol's lineage. Destiny is not so easily destroyed, after all.

If this is not an avenue you think fits with your campaign, feel free to disregard the half-elf option.

If your character is elven and has the Mark of Death, this is their elf subrace. If your character is half-elven and has the Mark of Death, these traits replace the half-elf Ability Score Increase and Skill Versatility traits given in the Player's Handbook.

Ability Score Increase (Elf). As an elf, your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Ability Score Increase (Half-Elf). As a half-elf, your Intelligence and Charisma scores both increase by 1. In addition, one ability score of your choice increases by 1.

Arcanist's Intuition. Your mark grants you knowledge of lost and forgotten magical secrets. When you make an Intelligence (Arcana) check, you can roll one Intuition die, a d4, and add the number rolled to the ability check.

Gravewalker. You know the *spare the dying* cantrip. When you reach 3rd level, you can cast the *speak with dead* spell once with this trait and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

Dolurrh's Sight. As an action, you can grant yourself the ability to see beyond the veil of life. Until the end of your next turn, you know the location of any undead within 60 feet of you that isn't behind total cover and that isn't protected from divination magic. This sense doesn't tell you anything about a creature's capabilities or identity.

You can use this a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

FEAT: GREATER DRAGONMARK OF DEATH

Prerequisite: 8th level, Character must possess a dragonmark

Your dragonmark has grown in size and power. This enhances your existing dragonmark, and the benefits are based on the mark that you already possess. A greater dragonmark provides the following benefits:

- Your Arcanist's Intuition die increases to a d6.
- Increase either your Intelligence or Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You learn the spells *feign death* and *danse macabre*, each of which you can cast once without expending a spell slot or using a material component. Charisma as your spellcasting ability for both. You regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

