

# RAVENLOFT

# GAZETTEER

A 5TH EDITION RAVENLOFT ATLAS



## DARKON

## II: FOREST OF SHADOWS





# THE RAVENLOFT GAZETTEER

## HOW TO USE THIS ATLAS

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This is a series of Ravenloft Gazetteers updated for 5th edition, following closely to the original source material, and in some cases embellished with new information where ambiguity allows. Each Atlas takes on a new domain of Ravenloft, and is separated into parts. For instance, this Atlas is based around the domain of Darkon, and this is the second part of that Atlas, dealing with the Forest of Shadows. Included with every part is a short prologue detailing the nature of the domain and its Darklord. These locations are sometimes bound to the intrinsic nature of the domain, but can usually be ported over to other modules or homebrew campaigns with a little ingenuity.

As time goes on, more areas will be added to the Atlas, and occasional revisions may be made for the sake of continuity. In the fashion of the original Ravenloft Gazetteers, these atlases are a combination of descriptive information, settlements, random encounter charts, boxed text, mechanics, flavour and a variety of other information based on what seems pertinent at any given time. Hack, chop and use as you will. The only person who gets a say in how you use any Ravenloft material is you (and, of course, the ineffable Dark Powers.) Enjoy, and if you like it, the surest way to make sure more get made is to leave a rating (or a review).



## DARKON

We have always been citizens of Darkon

Ave Azalin

long live the king

# PROLOGUE:

## AB INITIO

*I have always been a citizen of Darkon.*

*We have always been citizens of Darkon.*

*You have always been a citizen of Darkon.*

*Ave Azalin.*

*Hail the King.*

## WHAT IS DARKON?

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Darkon is a demiplane nested in the dark mists of Ravenloft. Like the other domains of Ravenloft, the demiplane is self-contained, and difficult to escape from. This has led many to speculate that the domains of Ravenloft hold some kind of purpose, though this has never been revealed. The first and most important feature of a domain is its Darklord. This malevolent being is a creature of darkness that committed a crime so terrible that the mists snatched them away. Many domains spring forth from the evil of the ensnared Darklord, and thus the entire demiplane is permeated by their particular brand of evil.

In The Darkon's case, the Darklord is cursed to rule a land in which he has no interest, desperate to return to his home. Worse, the insidious magic of the domain leeches away the memories of the trapped, making all but the Darklord believe that no other world exists but this one. Known as the Wizard King Azalin, or Azalin Rex, he has ruled Darkon for countless generations, all the while seeking a probing for a way home.

The presence of its Darklord has caused Darkon to develop some brooding and insidious traits.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

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Adventurers who have the misfortune to enter Darkon will eventually come face to face with the ancient and evil lich king Azalin Rex, his hordes of loyal fanatics, resistance fighters and strange creatures that stalk the borders of the shadowy realm. All the time, their memories leech away from them, placing them in danger of becoming true Citizens of Darkon and fading into the backdrop of the Domain of Dread. To defeat Azalin and escape his hellish prison, adventurers will need courage, resolve and cunning.

## THE DARKLORD

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### Azalin Rex

The adventurers' sole means of escape is by confronting Azalin and destroying him, thus releasing Darkon from its age old spell and allowing the trapped inhabitants to return to their homes in other realms.

### The Past

Darkon is an old Domain of Dread. Rumours of the history of the Lich King differ with each telling, though all agree that Azalin is a powerful magician and draconian ruler. Many times in the past has Azalin attempted to escape his prison, and each time has brought retribution on his lands more terrible than the last. Whispers travel around the lands of such events as the Grand Conjunction and the Requiem, though very few Darkonians can remember any specific details about those times. Across Darkon, ruins and devastation evidence the truth of these rumours, telling tales of dark dreams and prices paid. Each time Azalin failed, he grew more desperate.

### Cursed

Despite his mastery of the arcane, Azalin suffers from a blight that prevents him from mastering new magic. This is a source of endless frustration for him, as a creature who sought out undeath as a way to provide himself with time to improve his magical capabilities. It also prevents him from breaking any new ground with magic to help him escape his prison, which undoubtedly explains why each and every one of his past attempts to do so have gone to catastrophically wrong.

### Driven

Even with the curse stifling his exploration of the arcane, Azalin is a rare genius. Blessed with a staggering intellect from birth, he is rarely caught unprepared and manages events in Darkon with an iron fist inside a velvet glove. Though rarely seen in Darkon openly, his spies are everywhere, both in the form of his secret police, and in his magical sensors that scry the land for signs of dissent. In particular, Azalin looks for talented spellcasters ensnared by the mists, and works to assimilate them into his company in the hopes of using their abilities for his own gain.

## MARKS OF HORROR

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Darkon uses several tropes to achieve the desired feel, one which focuses on the nature of life, death and the self.

**Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?** The people of Darkon live in perpetual fear of being branded enemies of the state and dragged to a grisly fate by the secret police, who hide everywhere amongst the general populace. The people of Darkon are often safe from monsters whilst holed up in their cities, but exist in a permanent state of paranoia and stress. The downtrodden civilians of the domain have little personal freedom, and spend their short, bleak lives trying to avoid being implicated in any scandals.

**Pulvis et Umbra Sumus.** The nature of Darkon steals away the memories of visitors, convincing them that they have always lived in Darkon. This has the potential to fuel many narratives, from a desperate “escape against the clock” arc to a “recover my secret past/my whole life is a lie” arc. The slow nature of the change can make for a particularly acute creeping horror as memories are erased and replaced with frightened compliance to Azalin’s rule.

**Memento Mori.** Darkon is a land steeped in necromancy, mirroring Azalin’s dark accomplishments in that field. Corpses freely wander the land, restless spirits linger to torment the living, and old stories are retold endlessly over and over. Much like its Lich master, Darkon can never truly die, only be reborn.

## ALTERATIONS TO MAGIC

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Darkon resides in its own Demiplane, isolated from all others. No spell, not even a Wish spell, allows one to escape. Astral Projection, Teleport and all similar spells cast with the intent of leaving Darkon simply fail, as do all effects that Banish a creature to another plane of existence. These restrictions apply to magic items and artefacts. Magic that allows transit to the Border Ethereal is the exception to this rule. A creature that enters the Border Ethereal from Darkon is pulled back into Darkon upon leaving that plane.

For the purposes of spells whose effects change across planar boundaries, Darkon is considered its own plane. Magic that summons creatures or objects from other planes functions normally in Darkon, as does magic that involves an extradimensional space. Any spells cast within such a space are subject to the same restrictions as in the rest of Darkon.

Whilst in Darkon, characters who receive spells from deities or otherworldly patrons continue to do so. Spells that allow contact with beings from other planes often receive false answers.

## THE POWERS THAT BE

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Like any other Ravenloft setting, Darkon exists and continues to exist by the whim of the Dark Powers an enigmatic entity/set of entities that control (to one extent or another) the creation and maintenance of the demiplanes of dread. The reasons they might do this are unclear, as are the extent of their powers, but several theories are widely agreed upon.

**Ravenloft is a punishment** To become Lord of a domain of dread is to commit a terrible evil, and be stolen away for eternal torment

**The punishment is self-inflicted** A key component of the misery of a domain is the fact that each Darklord is bound by their own cravings and selfish impulses. In Azalin’s case, his need to control the magic of others leads to his inability to learn new spells. His desire to escape leads to being tied up in bureaucracy. His grief over murdering his own son is compounded by walking every day in that son’s bones.

**Time is relative.** Ravenloft’s punishments are infinite, and character spirited away by the mists might later return to find no time has passed at all. Darklords are defeated, and rise again from the ashes to be challenged by yet more adventurers.

**Collateral Damage.** The dark powers are not afraid of collateral damage in their enforcement of the domains of dread. Adventurers die in droves. Innocent citizens picked up by the mists fall prey to creatures of the night. It’s impossible to say for sure who or what the Dark Powers are, but they clearly are prepared to accept bodies piling up by the wayside.

## TRAVELING THE MISTS

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This version of the *Ravenloft Gazetteer* assumes that the borders of each domain are closed, either by the will of the Dark Powers, or the will of the Darklord. In past editions, it has been possible for those who will it to travel between domains. In some cases, suggestions are made to link one domain to another, in case you wish to avail yourself of this possibility.

## EARLIER ITERATIONS OF DARKON

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The *Ravenloft Gazetteer* for 5th edition is pulled from multiple sources across earlier editions of *Dungeons and Dragons*. In this case, the *Ravenloft Gazetteer Vol II (2003)* and *Sea of Madness (1996)* were particularly helpful references. This product borrows some of the ideas from these earlier sources while presenting an alternative version of Darkon scaled for fifth edition and this product.

## THE LICH'S HISTORY

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### The Legacy of Cain

Hailing from a distant world, the young Azalin was known by a different name and walked under a different sun. He had a brother who was kind and pure of heart, where Azalin was driven and cold. Azalin single mindedly pursued his magic, but pushed beyond his capabilities, and accidentally killed his brother with an errant spell.

### Death Becomes Her

When he ascended to King, Azalin took for himself a bride from one of his conquests. The marriage was unhappy, and unbeknownst to Azalin his wife employed witchcraft to prevent their union from conceiving a child, for she knew the cruelty the wizard king must visit on the babe. He slew his wife for her insolence, and worked foul magic to raise a child from what Could Have Been.

### The Binding of Irik

The son Azalin wrought from magic took after his long dead uncle, and despite his eldritch origins became a man of honour and wisdom. Caught disobeying his father's rule, he was sentenced to death, as per the draconian laws that Azalin himself had conceived. When Azalin heard of the death of his son, he wept. As he grieved, the Wizard king was subsumed by the mists, and the realm of Darkon came to be.

## AZALIN'S MOTIVATION

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Azalin has the following goals.

### Escape Darkon

Azalin has always hated his domain, and resents the rulership of it immensely (this may go some way towards explaining his cruelty towards the citizens). If he can train a powerful spellcaster (perhaps by sending them challenges to develop their strength) he might be able to kill their allies and take them under his wing, using them as a proxy through which to develop new magic and escape.

### Raise His Son

Azalin has many regrets. Chief amongst them is the death of his son, whom he seeks to restore to life. Unfortunately, part of Azalin's punishment is to walk forever in the bones of his son, and Azalin torments himself over this daily. As a result, he takes great personal umbrage at anyone who damages him, not because he cares about being hurt, but because he sees it as a failure to protect his son's remains.

## ROLEPLAYING AZALIN

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Azalin is a magical mastermind, whose theoretical knowledge of spell-craft is unparalleled. Even before his curse rendered him unable to learn new magic, he courted powers that defied belief. His long years searching for ways to extend his powers have made him capable of bending his mind to many places at once.

Though Azalin is not cruel by impulse, he occasionally indulges in what he considers small acts of spite (such as having someone burned for treason) when one of his experiments fails. His whims are largely dictated by the success (or not) of his latest project, which puts him in a bad mood more often than most.

In person, Azalin is cold and distant. He has lost touch with his humanity, and sees the whimpering of squirming meatsacks as far below his concern.

*(It's no concern of mine if your family has....what did you call it? Food? Hah! You should have thought of that before you became peasants!)*

*-Yzma, The Emperor's New Groove*

In life, Azalin was a king, and a king he remains in death. He speaks, and his subjects jump to follow his commands. Orders are issued by courier, by magic sendings and occasionally by royal writ sealed with his skull-like sigil.

If Azalin has a flaw, he suffers from fatal (if warranted) overconfidence. His powerful magic and his resistance to most conventional forms of death have left him in a strange and dangerous complacency. Though he keeps one of his many eyes on adventurers who enter his domain, he expends no serious effort towards their extermination until they stand in the way of one of his motivations. Though Azalin is highly intelligent, he lacks insight into mortal emotions, and often underestimates their will to persevere against the odds.

If roused to action, Azalin sends his servants to deal with the problem until he has no other choice. A party who manages to aggravate Azalin enough that he deals with them personally can expect to face the cold, calculating wrath of a magician drawn away from his study to deal with a minor inconvenience.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It's well known that there's nothing more dangerous on the face of this or any earth than a wizard forced to put his books down and actually use their magic for something constructive



*To walk the Forest of Shadows alone is an invitation to dinner.*

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

In order to reach Darkon, your characters are snatched away by the mists of Ravenloft to meet an unknown fate battling the dark heart of Darkon. Different ways to approach this are detailed below. Use whichever you desire, or invent your own.

### A LETTER FROM A STRANGER

You received a letter recently. It's asked you to come and collect your inheritance, at a place called Richtenhaus. It gives rather peculiar directions, heading out into the wild. It's signed by the Bureau of Rivalian Affairs, on behalf of the King.

Adventurers who find themselves drawn to this hook are whisked away by the mists of Ravenloft as they leave down, appearing near the Richtenhaus. (See Volume I: The Jagged Coast)

### CREEPING FOG

You are traveling down a lonely road, tired from the day's exertions. The weather looks like it might be about to take a turn for the worse, and rainclouds are moving in on the horizon. Before long, a deep and uncomfortably wet fog swallows your party whole.

This is the simplest hook. The rain obscures vision and drenches characters not prepared with magic to keep them dry. When the fog and rain passes some hours later, the characters find themselves having wandered into the Martiran Highway.

As the fog recedes, you hear the cry of gulls in the distance. Rocky earth beneath your feet sprouts grey looking weeds, and the sky retains a bleak, thunderous countenance. The crashing of the waves to the west and the shadow of a vast wood to the north suggest you are not where you thought you were.

## THE MISTS OF RAVENLOFT

A deadly fog surrounds Darkon and engulfs any creature that tries to leave. In the unlikely event a creature manages to crest the walls of Darkon, they enter the Mists. Even flying creatures are subject to the fog's effects, which are as follows:

A creature that starts its turn in the fog must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion (see appendix A in the Player's Handbook). This exhaustion can't be removed while the creature is in the fog.

No matter how far a creature travels in the fog, or in which direction it goes, it gets turned around so that it eventually finds itself back in Darkon.

The area within the fog is heavily obscured (see "Vision and Light" in chapter 8 of the Player's Handbook).

## SUNLIGHT IN DARKON

Darkon is shrouded by the Dark Powers against the light of the sun, moon and stars. Day or night, the light shed by celestial bodies is oddly muted, though it remains bright light for the purposes of establishing vision. Darkonian sunlight is not considered sunlight for the purposes of effects and abilities tied to it.

## AXIS MUNDI

Darkon is a large land with several distinct regions, a kingdom vast enough to be difficult to effectively police, but small enough to cause claustrophobia in an immortal lich. From the gloomy Mistlands through to the Mountains of Treachery, Darkon is a grim frontier of scarred plains, jagged coasts and sinister bogs bounded by the mists of ravenloft. In the center of Darkon, the necropolis rises above it all, a testament to the greatest of Azalin's failed experiments, The Requiem.

## DARKONIAN NATURALIZATION

The earth of Darkon is infused with an insidious curse that removes the memories of immigrant folks and convinces them they have always belonged in Darkon. The curse is slow to act, but once it takes hold there is only a matter of time before the victim succumbs. When a humanoid creature finishes a long rest in Darkon there is a 10% chance it gains a level of Naturalization as it begins to lose its memories to the curse. With each level of Naturalization gained in this way, a character becomes more and more confused as to their origins. Refer to the table below for how each level of Naturalization affects characters.

Naturalization levels can be removed by two means only.

- Leaving the domain restores all memories and removes all Naturalization
- Removing or altering Azalin's Book of Names (see **Part Eight, Castle Avernus**)

Naturalization Table

Level 1	The character begins to suffer occasional memory loss of their time before they entered the mists.
Level 2	The character forgets the names of places and people known before they entered the mists.
Level 3	The character suffers confused nightmares, and wakes up not knowing who they are for a moment.
Level 4	The character begins to react to things in Darkon as if they had known them all along, but forgotten them for a while.
Level 5	The character no longer feels out of place in Darkon, but instead feels a sense of rightness.
Level 6	The character forgets their life before they entered Darkon. They retain all their friendships, bonds and enmity to creatures in Darkon, but rationalise them otherwise.

## DARKON LORE

Typical Darkonians know certain facts, or have certain beliefs, about their existence and their surroundings. This common lore is summarized here. Characters can learn this information after earning a Darkonian's trust.:

- The King is Azalin Rex. It has always been Azalin Rex. He is very long lived, as he is a powerful wizard. (True, but Azalin's status as a lich is unknown to most civilians.)
- The Kargat are the King's spies, who look for dissent, and will take you away to be dealt with if you cause trouble. (True.)

- Darkon can do strange things to your memory. If you ever leave, you might find you never belonged here in the first place. (True.)
- Azalin can see through the eyes of any corpse in the realm. (False. He can see through his undead, however.)
- Martira Bay is very civilised, and the best place for newcomers.
- Creeana was destroyed by a demon. They say it's still out there somewhere.
- The capital city of Il Aluk was destroyed by a magical disaster. The king was thought dead, but recently returned. Il Aluk is still out of bounds, though, as it kills anyone who crosses the border. They call it Necropolis instead.
- You used to be able to travel across the border to other lands, but the mists have turned away all travel recently. Perhaps the king knows why.
- The king doesn't like visitors. Best keep your head down.
- The king lives in Castle Avernus, near the Forest of Shadows. He's probably very busy fixing it up after it was abandoned for so long.
- The wilderness might not look dangerous, but it harbours a great many walking dead.
- We all wait for the Day of Ascension, an apocalypse when the dead will rise from their graves and take back the world we stole from them.

## DARKONIANS

When Azalin first arrived in Darkon, it possessed some few scattered inhabitants in crude villages. Now, it is scattered with towns and cities, the population bolstered by constant intake from other Domains of Dread and stolen from the prime material plane. All of these acquisitions are naturalized, and become part of the tapestry of the domain. Thus, Darkon is full of humanoids of all races, creeds and denominations.

Darkonians are usually gregarious to a fault, welcoming strangers into Darkon and encouraging them to pay due homage to the Wizard King. Even the untrained eye will detect a trace of fear in this friendly attitude which can be peeled away by a savvy investigator to reveal a deep terror of Azalin and his secret police, the Kargat. Those who express malcontent always vanish from the face of the earth once Azalin gets wind of their mutterings from his informants.





## DARKON LOCATIONS

Darkon is a vast Domain, littered with struggling towns and grisly reminders of past horrors. Everything here is clinging to a life they despair of, and the world is painted in bleak shades of grey, green and yellow. Darkon has been divided into zones for ease of referencing, and each delegated its own chapter.

### Part 1: Jagged Coast

The Jagged Coast is a hilly, blasted heath battered by cold sea winds and haunted by the looming spectre of Necropolis in the near distance. Once a thriving trading post with other domains of Ravenloft, the closure of the borders has left this area of Darkon struggling for purpose and disturbed by strange foreign objects the naturalized citizens can no longer explain.

### Part 2: Forest of Shadows

The Forest of Shadows is a foreboding and evil place, shrouded in rumour and mystery. Here lies the dread encampment of Nartok, the decimated region of Creeana, and the relics of Azalin's failed attempts to domesticate the forest. The region is rumoured to be stalked by the Whistling Fiend, a demon of dark whimsy and terrible destruction.

### Part 3: Necropolis

Once the city of Il Aluk, the city of Necropolis is a ruined crater in the earth scattered with the bones of citizens and buildings alike. Only death resides here now, amongst the ash heaps and paupers' graves. No sane man or woman or Darkon would dare set one foot closer to Necropolis than necessary, and even the walking dead step carefully here.

### Part 4: Boglands

The Boglands was not always dead. They say that in times long past it was filled with wildlife. Sadly, this is no longer entirely the case. The bog is defiled by polluted magic drifting downriver from Necropolis, and only monstrous beasts live here now. The trees that walk the Boglands are said to carry great wisdom, and greater malice.

### Part 5: Mistlands

A quiet and oft-forgotten region of Darkon, the Mistlands harbour both a quiet dread that they might be forgotten, and a keen fear that they might be remembered. Somewhere in the Mistlands, the Lake of Lost Dreams promises answers to those not wise enough to understand them.

### Part 6: Vale of Tears

Harbouring the city Karg, it is possible that the Vale of Tears boasts the highest population of any region in Darkon. The Vale of Tears is watched carefully by Azalin and the Kargat for any signs of dissent. The area is riddled with the living dead, who attack on sight and show no mercy to the living.

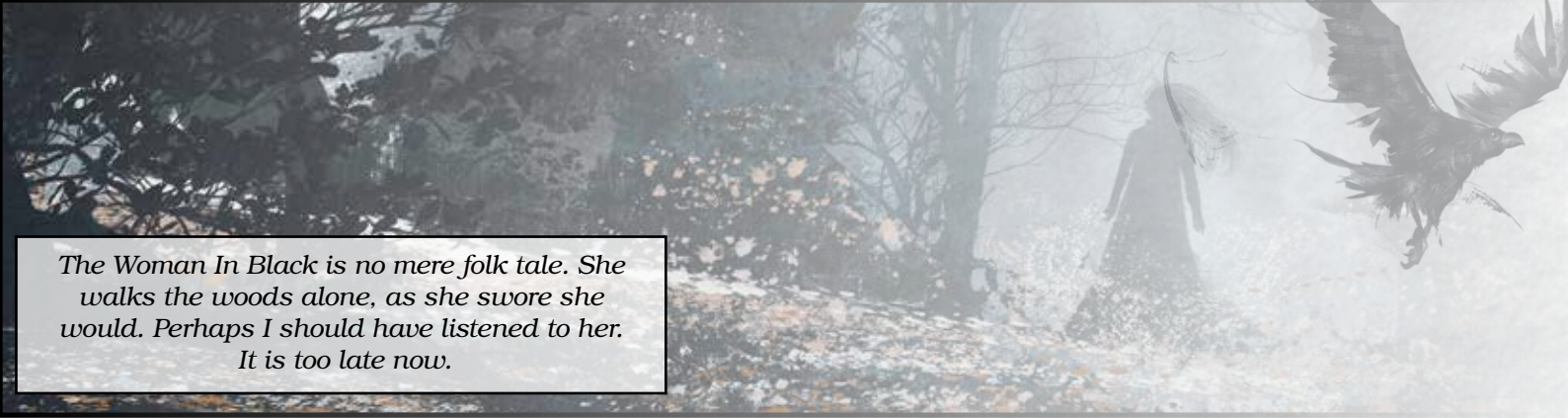
### Part 7: Mountains of Misery

Home to Darkon's tenacious dwarf population, who live one day at a time in the shadow of an active volcano. The threat of wyrms, eruption and corruption make this a hostile environment indeed.

### Part 8: Castle Avernus

The lair of Azalin Rex, warded by powerful enchantments and guarded by legions of the dead. Though the castle can be seen from many places in Darkon, it remains firmly out of reach to anyone who is not invited.





*The Woman In Black is no mere folk tale. She walks the woods alone, as she swore she would. Perhaps I should have listened to her. It is too late now.*

# CHAPTER ONE:

## SILVA UMBROSA

### FOREST OF SHADOWS

*There is a darkness in the wood  
I feel it at the edges of my sanity  
Whispering to me what I could be  
Mocking me for what I have lost*

#### INTO THE WOODS

The Forest of Shadows has defied all attempts to civilise it and bring it into the fold of Darkon proper. Bordered to the north by Rivalis, and to the east by the Boglands, it has ever been an unattractive prospect for both citizens of Darkon and interplanar travelers alike. In the shadow of the dread Castle Avernus, the Forest of Shadows is a dangerous shortcut at best, and a fool's errand at worst. Nestled in the protection of the forest lies the military encampment of Nartok, Darkon's first and best defence against the predations of other domains. This is not by chance - a stone's throw from Nartok travelers can see the ruins of Creeana, a village destroyed by the feared Whistling Fiend some centuries prior.

#### TERRAIN

The Forest of Shadows is obscured by legions of foreboding trees, veiled in a perennial gloom. Firm ground towards the west of the forest becomes wetter the closer one wends towards the Boglands. Strands of floating webs drift through the ever-present dusk, and occasionally a strange keening can be heard on the wind. The trees are twisted claws which reach to block out the sun, and bright yellow eyes stare out from the darkness.

#### RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The Forest of Shadows is a dangerous place. Check for a random encounter after every hour that the adventurers spend on the roads or in the wilder-

ness (don't check if they have already had two random encounters outdoors in the past 12 hours):

If the characters are on a road, an encounter occurs on a roll of 18 or higher on a d20.

If the characters are in the wilderness, an encounter occurs on a roll of 15 or higher on a d20.

If an encounter occurs, roll on either the Terrain or Creature encounter tables below. [Feel free to use both at once, if the situation calls for it.]

d8	Forest of Shadows Creature Encounters
1	Hunting Spiders
2	Werewolf Attack
3	Wandering Bandits
4	Nartok Guard
5	The Woman In Black
6	Prospectors
7	Roaming Dead
8	The Whistling Fiend
9	Eternal Priest
10	Hands of the Lake
11	Shade of Bleak House
12	Crimson Horror

#### Crimson Horrors

Shuffling through the forest, rotting corpses are lurching towards you, hands outstretched. Their skin is pocked with marks and stains from heavy bleeding.

This 2d6 **zombies** who died of the Crimson Death, a plague currently picking up speed in the Jagged Coast (see Volume 1 of the Darkon Gazetteer).

#### Eternal Priest

This **priest of the eternal order** is walking the woods laying the errant dead to rest. They are stationed at the Temple based in Nartok, but have come out of their way due to the sheer number of dead troubling travelers down the road. They can give directions to Nartok, or back towards the Jagged Coast.

**BLEAK HOUSE**  
[See Volume 1: The Jagged Coast]

**CASTLE AVERNUS**  
[Coming soon in Volume 8]



### Hands of the Lake

The leaves rustle, and shadowy, oozing forms forms dart through the bushes across your path. They wobble to a stop for a moment, and shiver as if in contemplation.

These 1d4 **grey oozes** are pollutants from the Redleaf lake. They aren't hostile, just curious.

### Hunting Spiders

The trees are spun thick with webs here. They hang down from every branch. Behind the webs, dark shapes move, eight-legged shadows that loom large in the half-light.

The party wander into the nest of 1d6 **giant spiders**, which are being herded by 1d4 **ettercaps**. Characters unlucky enough to fall prey to the spiders are eaten.

### Prospectors

Two ugly old man are moving through the woods quickly and quietly. One carries a compass, the other a long sword.

These two horrible thugs are looking for the Lake of Woe, where they hope to gain eternal life. They will only give away this secret under duress.

### Nartok Guard

Marching feet crunch over the path ahead. Soldiers in muddy leather pace down a wide path, eyes flickering from side to side for danger.

These 3d6 **guards** and 1 **veteran** are patrolling the forests near Nartok. They aren't interested in a fight for no reason, and can give directions to Nartok if necessary.

### Roaming Dead

Thin, reedy corpses peel away from the trees. Their eyes are grey, and their claws sharp. The sound of breaking branches alerts you to more approaching from behind.

The trees here harbour 3d6 **ghouls**, which prey on unwary travelers and strap them to the trees. Anyone who is strapped to a tree for 24 hours becomes absorbed by the tree and becomes a ghoul.

WHERE IS HE  
WHERE IS THE MASTER



## Shade of Bleak House

The forest dims visibly, becoming almost pitch black. A cold, whispering presence glides through the trees, darker than the night. "Where is he?" it demands in a hoarse voice. "Where is the master?"

This wraith is a servant of Bleak House, and is searching for Rudolph van Richten. The wraith is unaware that the master has in fact traveled away from Darkon to Barovia. If the party are unable to answer its question, it moves on. It only responds with violence if it is attacked, or if it is informed that Van Richten is no longer in Darkon. For more information on Bleak House, see Volume 1 of the Ravenloft Gazetteer: The Jagged Coast.

## The Whistling Fiend

An ear-splitting whistle keens through the air. Sitting on a tree branch above you. A scarecrow-looking figure with a straw hat and a scythe is looking down at you. It smiles wide, revealing hundreds of razor sharp teeth. Even from here, it exudes an almost palpably aura of menace. It swings the scythe, and the air howls in that awful whistle.

**The Whistling Fiend** (see Appendices) likes to play with its food. It scares as many character as possible whilst chasing them with a mad caper. In 1d4 rounds, it gets bored and wanders off into the forest.

## The Woman In Black

The road ahead falls still, and the wind dies. A lone silhouette, all in black, stands alone on the path. She raises her hand, and points at you. A moment later, she is gone, and the wind blows leaves across the path once more.

This spectral manifestation is a bad omen, and her appearance heralds death. Choose a character at random - that character has disadvantage on death saving throws until they die.

## Wandering Bandits

Your first warning is a dart thunking into a tree near you. Then, halflings begin to swing out of the trees on vines, carrying clubs and darts. It's ridiculous, but no less lethal for that fact.

These halfling **bandits** are led by the **bandit captain** Galf Kloggin. They raid travelers for their money and magical items, before returning to their muddy camp in a secret hollow.

## Werewolf Attack

Growling, padding shapes begin to creep toward you from the trees. Wolves, but not as you know them. Their bright green eyes are filled with a malignant intelligence, and they move in a co-ordinated group for your rear.

1d4 **werewolves** and 1d6 **wolves** advance on the party from behind. The werewolves are savage, having eaten too often of the animals that inhabit the woods. They attack only for long enough to drag away a horse, or a hapless party member, before retreating with their spoils. If a single werewolf dies the pack also retreats.

## TERRAIN ENCOUNTERS

d6	Forest of Shadows Terrain Encounters
1	The Walking Tower
2	Pile of Corpses
3	Bandit Camp
4	Spider Nest
5	Woodshed
6	Abandoned Bridge

## Abandoned Bridge

A rickety wooden bridge stands half-rotten over a dry riverbed. Bones litter the floor, and a huge, ugly humanoid is crouched in the shadows under the bridge.

The troll that lives under the bridge has been hiding here since the tributary river dried up. It is a vicious and unrepentant killer, but it has a deathly fear of goats for an unknown reason.

## Bandit Camp

Small tents are placed around the smoking remains of a campfire. Little wooden chairs and half-used bottles of drink are scattered about.

This camp is the current base of the halfling bandit gang run by Galf Kloggin (LE **bandit captain**). The bandits have raided 1d4 uncommon magic items from travelers, which are sitting in one of the tents. Two halfling **bandits** are hiding near the camp keeping watch, and they use their whistles to summon help if they see intruders.

## Pile of Corpses

Your walk is interrupted by a macabre sight. A pile of bodies, green with rot, piled in a ditch. Their faces are open in silent screams, and their eyes have been dug out, bloody streaks staining their faces.

This is a repository of bodies placed in the woods by the Hags of Lake Stagnus as part of a greater enchantment (more information on the witches will be found in Part Four: Boglands).

## Spider Nest

The trees are riddled with spider webs and large cocoons. The ground is sticky with strands of fibrous webbing, and it's hard to move forward without running into a transparent web.

These web-filled areas are difficult terrain. Moreover, a creature entering a webbed area for the first time on a turn or starting its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the webs. A restrained creature can use its action to try to escape, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Each 10-foot cube of giant webs has AC 10, 15 hit points, vulnerability to fire, and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and psychic damage.

When this encounter occurs, there is a 50% chance it triggers a Hunting Spiders encounter from the **Forest of Shadows Creature Encounters** table

## The Walking Tower

A shuddering crash fills the air, and birds scatter everywhere. Lumbering into view, a shifting mass of bricks and mortar walks through the forest, picking up trees and replanting them behind it as it goes. At the top, a little bell swings wildly.

**The Walking Tower** is a sentient bell tower that watches over the wood. See the Appendix for its statistics. The tower does no harm to any creature that respects the living creatures of the wood.

## Woodshed

This little wooden shed has had a hole torn out of it by something huge. On the back wall, written in some kind of ichor, are the words **THERE'S SOMETHING NASTY IN THE WOODSHED**.

This is a woodshed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Is there something nasty in the woodshed? Perhaps.



*To think that the greatest hunter of undead this realm has ever known should become the hunted, and by his own house, no less. It is...amusing.*

## AREAS OF THE FOREST OF SHADOWS

The following areas correspond to the markings on the map above:

### 2A: NARTOK

See Chapter Two: Nartok

### 2B: CREEANA

Broken down houses and shattered wreckages litter the path here. People lived here, once, though the desolation suggests that hasn't been the case for some time. The buildings here have been slashed clean in half by some kind of gigantic blade. A whistling sound drifts through the trees.

Creeana is a black stain on the tapestry of Darkon's history. Nestled in the Forest of Shadows, it was once a thriving settlement and stopover on the King's Highway. Disaster struck out of the blue one cold autumn afternoon, when a terrible demon strode into the village whistling a jaunty tune and wielding a wicked scythe. By dusk, not a soul remained alive in Creeana, and the village was abandoned by all for fear that the Whistling Fiend might return.

### 2C: KING'S HIGHWAY

A grim dirt trail runs through the forest, occasionally interrupted by jagged flagstones that imply this was once a well-tended road. Web-encrusted trees loom on either side of the path, and the air is muggy.

This path is what remains of the King's Highway, a project commissioned by Azalin to facilitate better supply lines through Nartok and down to the Mountains of Misery in the south. Unfortunately, policing the path only led to misery, and a directly related increase in the number of walking corpses plaguing the forest in the first place. With time, it became neglected, as Azalin found himself engaged by more pressing concerns than civil engineering. In the long run, all the road really achieved was to teach the giant spiders where to find a reliable source of food, which was a win for the local ecosystem, but not so much for Darkonians in general.

### 2D: LAKE WOE

A misty opalescent sheen creeps around the edge of a woodland lake. In the reflection of the water, you seem younger, stronger and healthier.

This lake is the source of a local myth, which suggests that anyone who drinks from the "lake of immortality" will gain exceptional long life. This part is true, and the lake acts exactly as a *potion of longevity*. The lake is guarded by a **unicorn**, which warns all who would drink from the lake that to extend their life beyond its mortal bounds is an act of evil, but otherwise takes no action against them.

### 2E: LAKE REDLEAF

Drifting red leaves float on the surface of this lake surrounded by grey trees. The wizened bark almost seems to form faces, and the water is tinged a subtle maroon.

Lake Redleaf gets its name from the trees that surround it, that are perpetually red at all times of the year. Local lore suggests this is because so many Darkonian soldiers have bled onto this earth defending their homes, but in actuality is due to the high iron deposits in the surrounding earth. Occasionally the mud manifests as an angry **earth elemental**, but mostly this is a quiet place of contemplation.

### 2E: LAKE PLACID

The water here is brown and murky. Dead fish float atop the lake's surface, and corpse debris is piled up at the shore.

Lake Placid has suffered from the corruption of the River Vuchar, and thus is no longer capable of supporting life. Linger by the lake provokes the wrath of the **zombies** lying by the shore, which amble to their feet and attack. There is an almost limitless supply of corpses and **crawling claws** in the lake, which characters who enter it may discover to their misfortune.

# CHAPTER TWO:

## NARTOK

### “FORTRESS DARKON”

*For so long I dreamed of an invincible army  
It was only when I found it  
that I realized it was a trap  
I will not be a slave to the powers that be  
I will not play their games*

#### IA: NARTOK

---

Nartok is a small, insular city on the King's Highway, lodged firmly near the entrance to the Forest of Shadows and with tributary access to the river Vuchar. It holds around 7000 citizens, and a dense military encampment. Most of the city is unprotected by walls, aside from the inner buildings and aristocratic estates which are walled around with a great stone bastion. It serves as both a lookout post to the east, and a holding pen for Azalin's soldiers.

#### NARTOK'S HISTORY

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In the Age of Secrets, Nartok was the location of a lone wizard's tower belonging to the Nightmage. The foundations of this tower are still visible in the present age as the bones of Nartok Keep, build over the tower once the wizard vanished or perished. Supposedly, the secret laboratories of the Nightmage exist under the keep to this day, filled with creatures and magic only a sadistic, crazy old wizard can devise. After the Nightmage died in mysterious circumstances, loggers moved into the area, and set up camp in the shadow of the tower. The tower became a keep, and the keep a castle. Houses popped up around it, until it ran the risk of becoming a flourishing town. It was only after the invasion of soldiers from a neighbouring domain that the construction workers of Nartok decided that enough was enough. Calling out for strong men from all over Darkon, Nartok built a wall to defend the keep against all dark forces and armies of the night in times of war.

#### MILITARY MATTERS

---

Over the years, Nartok has gained a reputation for harbouring an extensive military force. This is still true, to a certain extent. The force held at Nartok is certainly larger than any organized military force held by Azalin at other cities in Darkon. It pales in comparison to that held by neighbouring domains, however, for a very good reason. When the realm is threatened, Azalin raises the dead of Darkon to act as its main defenders. The living defenders serve

only as a distraction...and as a replacement for the dead, should the necessity arise. Darkon has been invaded several times over the centuries by nameless evils and their armies. Each time, the legion at Nartok has sallied forth and suffered a resounding defeat, only for Azalin to contemptuously notice the invasion and raise an army of walking corpses to repel it. In recent days, with the intercession of the misty border, the garrison at Nartok has found themselves entirely idle.

#### BARON VOLKER

---

The twisted and geriatric Baron Volker gained the title after murdering his rather unpopular predecessor in cold blood. The previous Baron was killed atop his own battlements whilst watching his troops die on the battlefield below him. The old baron wasn't missed, and the lack of intervention by Azalin was taken as tacit approval for the move.

#### THE ETERNAL ORDER

---

Nartok harbours a temple which was once sacred to the Eternal Order, a religion founded to placate the legions of restless dead and secretly sponsored by Azalin to keep Darkonians in line. Priests of the Eternal Order gain magical powers from Azalin, though they may not know it. The temple was damaged in one of Azalin's experiments, and priests have been working to make it safe to worship in again.

#### NARTOK LORE

---

In addition to the information known to all Darkonians (see "Darkonian Lore" in chapter 2), Nartok's citizens know the following bits of local lore:

- The local boarding school has a bit of a reputation for unruly kids. (True.)
- The Baron is old and mean. He's also sick, so the soliders do what they like. (True.)
- The entire town was built on the grave of a dead wizard and is cursed as a result. (False.)
- The town has angered the wood by so much logging and woodcutting. Occasionally it sends monsters in to extract payment. [False. The monsters are coincidence.]
- The academies in Nartok are the best in Darkon, and people send their children here from all over the realm. [True.]
- There are several lakes near Nartok, most notably Lake Redleaf and Lake Placid. Both are probably not safe to go near. [True.]
- The Temple of the Eternal Order is the birthplace of death. [False. But the disaster that took place there has definitely contributed to this rumour.]

# APPROACHING THE TOWN

When the characters first approach Nartok, read:

Through the trees, the dirt trail becomes rocky and uneven, as dirt becomes splintered flagstones leading up to simple stone and wood cottages clustered together in the brooding shadow of the wood. Further in, a huge wall of dark stone surrounds a large keep and other ornate buildings.

## HOUSE OCCUPANTS

If the characters explore a residence, roll a d20 and consult the following table to determine the house's occupant.

d20	Occupant
1-3	None
4-5	Kargat Safehouse
6-12	Nartok Soldiers
13-18	Nartok Citizens
19-20	Murder House

### KARGAT SAFEHOUSE

This house is being used as a safehouse by members of the Kargat active in Nartok. The members are human, and messy. Evidence scattered across the house suggests they have royal writs to investigate anyone in the city and arrest them if they catch any hint of suspicious activity. It is implied that the arrest should end in the disappearance of the captives. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a member of the kargat (LE **assassin**) is at home waiting for their next assignment.

### NARTOK SOLDIERS

This house is a barracks for up to 12 guards. At any one time, 2d4 **guards** are at home, with weapons nearby.

### NARTOK CITIZEN

A house of Martiran Citizens contains 1d4 adults (LE male and female human **commoners**) and a 50% chance that the couple have a single child.<sup>1</sup> The citizens are suspicious and not particularly friendly. They explicitly refuse entry to anyone who isn't bearing a writ from the Baron or a higher authority.

### MURDER HOUSE

This house has been covered inside with bloody stains, decaying viscera and desperate handprints from citizens trying to escape. 1d4 human corpses are scattered around the house. These people were killed by a strange visitor who \*(if contacted from beyond the grave) the victims can only describe as "charming", "handsome" or "very finely dressed."

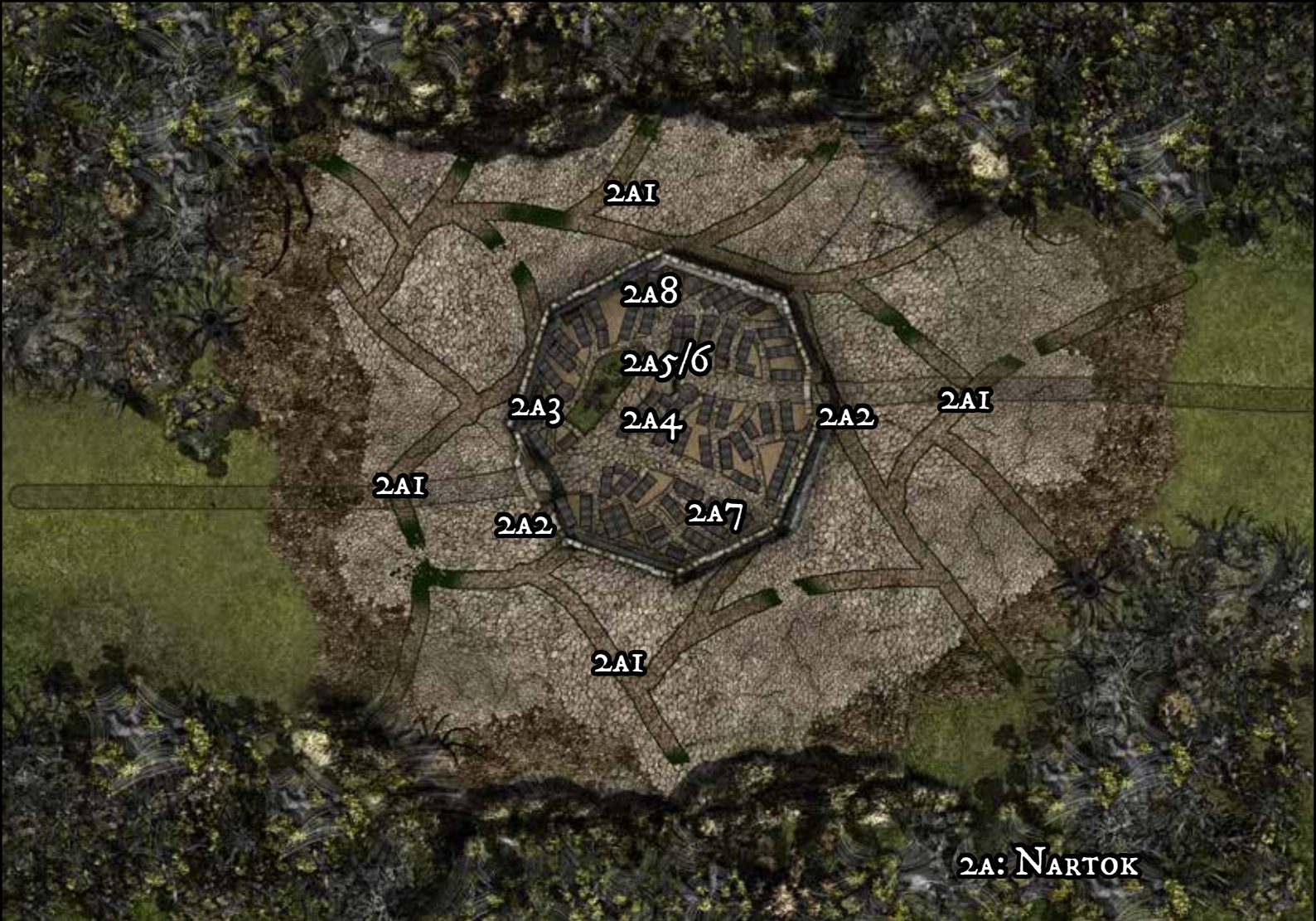
<sup>1</sup> Citizens of Nartok are forbidden more than one child by law. The Eternal Order maintain this is the case to appease the spirits of the dead, who might rise to wreak terrible vengeance if they smelled too much life present in Nartok.

# PEOPLE ON THE STREET

d8	People on the Street (Nartok)
1	A soldier keeping watch on a street corner
2	A man (LN <b>guard</b> ) with a long brush scrubbing graffiti off a wall
3	Two children (LE <b>apprentice wizards</b> ) in baggy black robes hiding behind a barrel eating fruit
4	Two women having brunch outside an expensive tea house
5	A guard arresting a beggar for vagrancy
6	A schoolteacher on her lunch break. She's halfway through a bottle of spirits.
7	A hawker of academic textbooks with a wide stall
8	A woodcutter hauling a cart of logs down the street

## RUMOURS

d8	Rumours (Nartok)
1	"Those kids at the academy are becoming a real nuisance. I wish the baron would get these schools under control."
2	"At night, there's sometimes rumbling coming from under the keep. I'm not making it up, I swear!"
3	"Did you hear about that little girl in the red cape? Got eaten by a wolf. Her grandmother, as well. Terrible business."
4	"I heard the whistling fiend was seen near Creeana. I wouldn't go out there if you paid me my own weight in silver."
5	"No crops coming in from Rivalis lately. What do those bloody lazy halflings think they're playing at?"
6	"I hear the Crimson Death is back. We should close the gates, I don't care how unlikely it sounds, it's not worth the risk."
7	"It's bad luck to chop lumber from the wood, but people keep on doing it. We'll pay for it one of these days, you'll see."
8	They say that there's a lake in the woods that can make you immortal. Not sure I'd bother. Who'd want more of <i>this</i> ?



## AREAS OF NARTOK

The areas below correspond to the locations marked on the map above.

### 2A1 - New Town

Squat ugly little timber huts are crowded together in ugly rows outside the walls of the town. Huge cobwebs string from hut to hut, and laundry can occasionally be seen swaying in the breeze. Dirt tracks wind about the place, the largest leading onward to the vast stone wall.

New Town is the home of the woodcutters, carpenters, vagrants, servants and other lower class citizens not rich enough to afford a home inside the safety of the walls. The people are tired, frightened or dead. **Giant spiders** of all kinds frequently (and successfully) hunt for food here.

### 2A2 - Nartok Gates

A looming stone arch presents the only easy access to the town behind the walls. Gargoyles nest far above, strangled by thick creepers. The arch is blocked by gates of twisted iron. Guards in metal masks hold spears at the ready behind the bars.

The gates are guarded at all times of the day and

night by 2d6 **guards**. The guards admit visitors who don't give them any reason to be suspicious. Anyone who has a cart of wood, or a reasonable peasant disguise is also admitted in daylight hours (though usually with some muttering and dirty looks).

### 2A3 - The Auld Academy

A tall and robust looking schoolhouse leans against one of the town walls, scrawled with years of graffiti and filled with the clamoring of children. A large A is carved over the door, along with a motto in Darkonese "Auribus Teneo Lupum".

This school for gifted children takes in students from all over Darkon to school them in the proper way to behave. Parents apply to the school after donating a not-inconsiderable sum of money out of the goodness of their hearts, after which the child is left in the not-so-tender embraces of the hallowed halls of the Academy. The students here are often spoiled, and as a result they terrorize the town with pranks and nasty tricks, some of which have been known to have lethal consequences. The headmaster, a withered and apathetic wool elf noble called *Archidalscum* by everyone, sees little incentive to try and fix this. He still gets paid, after all, and soon enough they'll be replaced by another years worth of squealing brats.



## TUITION

The Academy sorts the students into 4 houses randomly: Borstal, Asylum, Vestibule and Grave. The students wear black robes that come down to their feet, and bright green socks that stand out from a distance.<sup>1</sup> Lessons are held from dawn until dusk, but many of the students don't bother to turn up. Students sleep in large communal dormitories, though many of the students who run trades in illegal goods can afford to put themselves up in a tavern instead.

## PEOPLE ON THE STREET

d8	People on the Street (Auld Academy)
1	A young boy scrawling profanities onto a wall with a spell.
2	Three girls standing around a bin full of burning books.
3	Two older boys holding the head of a younger one in a puddle.
4	Two parents shouting at a beleaguered looking instructor that their child is a special, adorable miracle.
5	An instructor carrying a great big pile of unmarked papers.
6	Two girls putting a bucket full of poisonous spiders on top of a door so it will fall on an unsuspecting visitor
7	A teacher giving a class on the history of Darkonian farming rotations..
8	The school cook dragging a sickly looking donkey to the kitchens, a cleaver in one hand.

## 2A4 - Curwen's Folly

There's a nasty blackened stain on the ground here. In the right light, it might look a little like a person.

This is where the old Baron fell to his death after being pushed from the battlements by his mutinous henchmen. When he struck the ground, he uttered a dying curse with his final breath. The ground he touched as he died became inimical to settlement, as did the keep (which now suffers from the predations of a night-time horror as a result). The ghost of the dead Baron lurks here still in the Ethereal plane, though cannot travel more than 5 feet from his place of death. He also refuses to materialize, though may deign to bitterly complain about his fate to anyone who can see into the Ethereal plane. Banishing or destroying the Baron ends some of the difficulties facing Nartok Keep.

## 2A5 - Nartok Keep

A circular tower rises out of the sea of houses and schools, wrought from old stone and covered in climbing plants. Repairs made to the sides and windows of the tower are evident. The tower leans slightly to one side across a rocky rise, and reeks of unfinished business. Ravens flutter about the top floor.

This is where the Baron Volker keeps his quarters and slowly decays whilst waiting for orders from Azalin. The keep has many floors containing both an armory for the soldiers, a small prison for anyone who crosses the baron and a suite of private chambers in which the Baron lives. The Baron himself rarely deigns to exit his rooms for anyone less important than Azalin himself.

## 2A6 - Nightmage's Dungeon

Accessible by secret tunnels under Nartok Keep, the relics of the Nightmage have long been out of bounds, by Azalin's decree. In the distant past, Azalin slew the defenders of the dungeon and discovered the grisly fate of the Nightmage. In a failed attempt to uncover the secret of lichdom, the Nightmage became an undead horror called a **boneclaw**. The dying curse of Curwen's Folly brought the boneclaw to Nartok keep, and even now the monster stalks the streets of Nartok at night. It claims one victim every thirteen nights. If it is destroyed, it reforms in 24 hours in this location. There is nothing of magical consequence in then Nightmage's Dungeon - Azalin confiscated it all when he investigated the place.

## 2A7 - The Season's Turn

The Season's Folly is a small, ugly looking inn which advertises reasonable "student" rates on food and lodging. Raucous laughter echoes out into the street.

This run down inn provides a shoddy service for a rather ludicrous price, something the wealthy and careless students don't seem to mind one bit. Older students [CN **nobles**] from the academy can almost always be found here drinking away their inheritances. Anyone who wants to find rumours, lore, or someone to gamble with is likely to be in luck.

<sup>1</sup> In theory, these socks are intended to keep away rats. This efficacy of this has never been proven.



*Ah, such light, and devotion. Once, I thought it would bring me solace. Would they, I wonder, worship Death with such reverence if they knew it for what it truly is?*

## 2A8 - Temple of the Eternal Order

A large crumbling ruin of grey stone towers over you. In places, human faces are carved into the wall, screaming at some unknown terror. Dead stalks and vines cling loosely to the bricks. The roof has been damaged by age and neglect, and some of the stone supports have fallen. Steps lead up to the main floor at the front of the building, though significant holes in the walls grant access from many angles.

This was once a temple of the Eternal Order, until one of Azalin's mad plans to escape his confinement devastated it, leaving it in ruins and tainted by a necromantic corruption. Now, priests of the Order work day and night to cleanse the ruins and bring them back under control. Their efforts have so far been unsuccessful, but they persevere.

### CLERGY

There are three **priests of the eternal order** (see Appendices) at work restoring the temple to its former glory. All three priests are courteous but unwelcoming to strangers, asking them to keep out of the temple, as it is not safe.

- Bishop Jeremias Grimshaw is an elderly man with a hook nose and a perpetual frown.<sup>1</sup> His position as Bishop is indicated by the gold sickles embroidered onto his grey robes. He keeps an imp as a familiar called Kwelkoth, which takes every opportunity to be a nuisance whilst remaining invisible.
- Dominique Nagy is visibly a dark elf, with jet black skin and high pointed ears. She keeps her hood up at all times, and keeps to the shadows of the temple in the daytime. She wears a set of silver rings on one hand. She was born outside Darkon, but believes she has always lived in the domain.
- Burlin Netherwood is a forest gnome, with a matted beard and fraying robe. He likes to hunt down tiny animals with his *ring of animal friendship* and then engineer macabre ends for them with his tinker's tools.

### INSIDE THE TEMPLE

The temple has been tainted by the magical disaster of years past, and the stench of necromantic magic is perceptible to any spellcaster that steps within sight of the interior.

The inside of the building is just as ruined as the exterior. Everywhere, bricks and ruined hallways lie in puddles of rain and rotting plants. The northern half of the temple is stained black, and smells sharply of decay. Candles line the floor, and soft chanting drifts through the nave.

The interior of the temple is subject to the following effects:

- Undead standing in the temple have advantage on all saving throws.
- Living creatures in the temple are poisoned until they leave its grounds.
- Living creatures cannot rest within the bounds of the temple.
- If a creature dies within the bounds of the temple, it rises as a zombie at the start of the next round. The zombie is hostile to all life.

### CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Befriending (by some unspeakable good fortune) any of the priests working to cleanse the temple might prompt them to ask for help in doing so. This requires the characters to stand and guard the priests as they conduct a 12 hour ritual between dusk and dawn to banish the influence of death from the temple. During the night, as each hour strikes, an **avatar of death** manifests at the door of the temple to strike down the priests. As the priests must fully concentrate on their chanting, they are unable to defend themselves. Successfully defending the priests for a full 12 hours causes the ritual to succeed, and the temple is cleansed of the influences specified above. In addition, the priests are grateful enough that they willingly cast any of their at-will spells on behalf of the characters should they wish it.

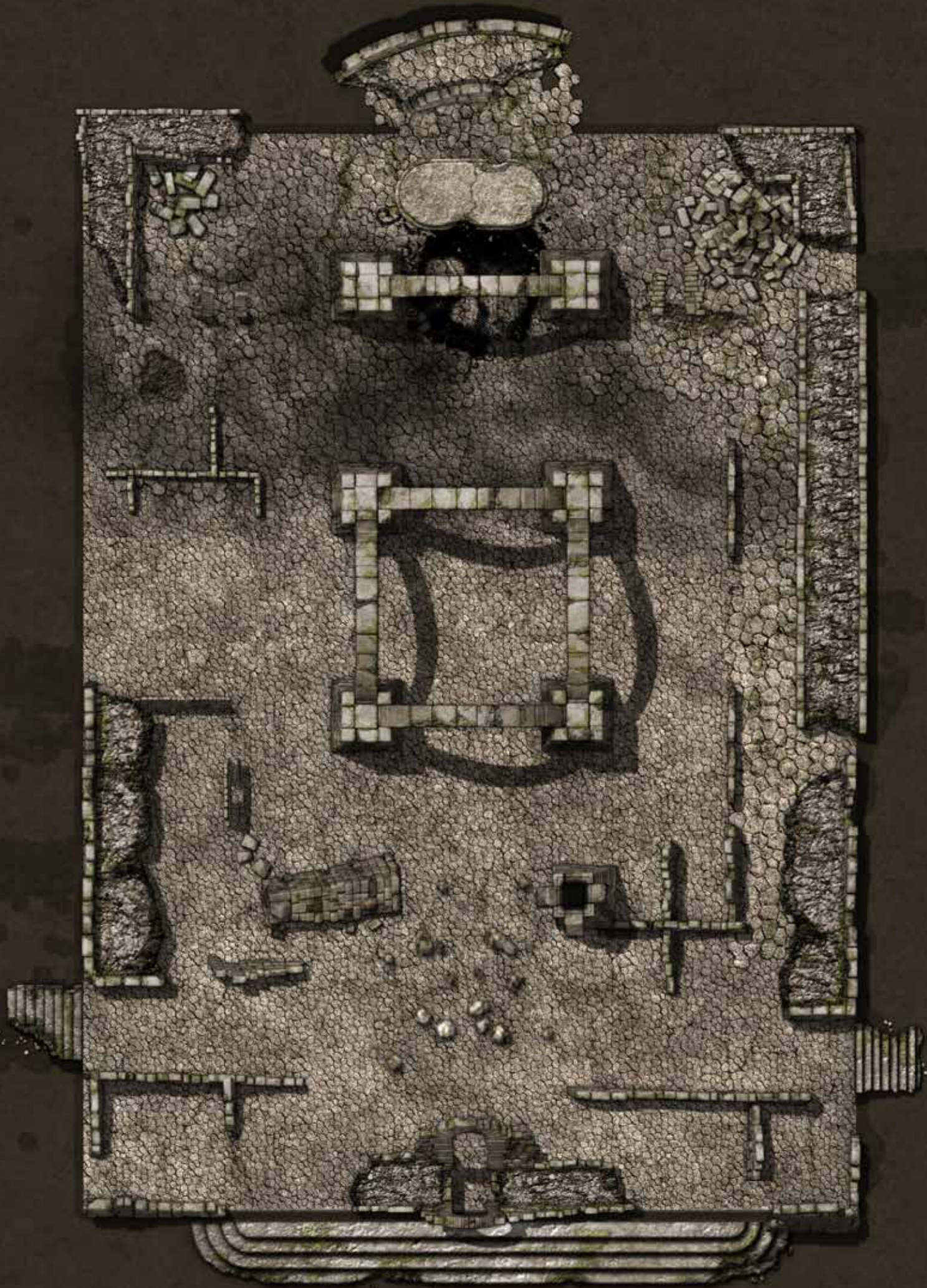
### DEATH SPEAKS

If the ritual fails, read the following:

A hoarse whisper sounds through the chamber, filling the eaves with a hollow malevolence. "Fools," the voice rasps. "Wretched mice who think they are safe because the cat is out of sight. You have made a mockery of my sacred place, and your lives are forfeit."

At this point, the temple becomes irradiated as if under the effects of a *forbiddance* spell targeting all creatures except undead. Characters who stay in the temple for long are likely to perish. The voice belongs to Death, the spectral figure of entropy which lurks in Necropolis, nursing its wounds and its ego after Azalin's return stripped it of power.

<sup>1</sup> Some people in Nartok have been known to suggest that Jeremias doesn't know how to laugh. They would be wrong in this, as Jeremias merely finds it an inefficient use of air and time.



2A8 - TEMPLE OF THE ETERNAL ORDER

# I: MONSTERS AND NPCs

Ravenloft harbours horrors both old and new, the ever changing mists conspiring to introduce adventurers to new vistas of horror. New monsters that appear in this volume of the Gazetteer are described below.

The monsters and NPCs are presented in alphabetical order.

Creature	CR
Baron Metus	17
Cerebral Vampire	6
Greywood Treant	9
Gullspeaker	4
The Thinker	10
Vistani Ghost	4

## CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

### The Whistling Fiend

The whimsical and deadly Whistling Fiend is so named because of the sound its scythe makes when slicing the air towards an intended victim. It appeared in Darkon around 500 years after Azalin's arrival, and has remained in the Forest of Shadows ever since, after destroying the village of Creana. Azalin's failure to track down and destroy the fiend speaks to some interesting questions about how it arrived in Darkon in the first place. Questions that the citizens would rather not ask, for fear about what it might reveal of their King. Either way, decades after the disaster, the sound of whistling in the trees is still enough to send the locals running for shelter.



*I have been master of these lands for eternity  
a thousand lifetimes blended into one  
and yet there are still forces in this world,  
shadows of the past of which I know little*

## WHISTLING FIEND

*Huge fiend, chaotic evil*

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)  
Hit Points 406  
Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29 (+9)	14 (+2)	26 (+8)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	25 (+7)

**Skills** Insight +11, Perception +19  
**Damage Resistances** Cold, Lightning  
**Damage Immunities** Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks  
**Condition Immunities** Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Poisoned  
**Senses** Truesight 120 ft., Passive Perception 29  
**Languages** -  
**Challenge** 26 (90,000 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The Whistling Fiend's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 23). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *minor illusion, invisibility*  
3/day each: *fear, blur, dimension door*  
1/day each: *mislead, greater invisibility, locate creature*

**Legendary Resistance (1/Day).** If the Whistling Fiend fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

**Magic Resistance.** The Whistling Fiend has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Magic Weapons.** The Whistling Fiend's weapon attacks are magical.

### ACTIONS

**Scythe.** Melee Weapon Attack: +17 to hit, reach 10 ft., up to three targets. Hit: 28 (3d12 + 9) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of the Whistling Fiend until the end of its next turn.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Whistling Fiend can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. It regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Savage (Costs 2 Actions).** The Fiend makes a Scythe attack against each creature within 10 feet of him.

**Detect.** The Fiend makes a Wisdom (Perception) check..

**Move.** The Fiend moves up to its speed.

## Priest of the Eternal Order

Often dressed in dour blacks and greys, Priests of the Eternal order draw their power ostensibly from their sacred rituals designed to placate the dead. In actuality, their power stems directly from Azalin, though many of the Order have no idea.

### ETERNAL ORDER PRIEST

Medium humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)  
Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)  
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** WIS +4, CHA +7

**Skills** Arcana +4, Deception +7, Perception +7, Religion +4

**Senses** Passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Darkonian, Abyssal

**Challenge** 4

**Innate Spellcasting.** The priest's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks), requiring no material components:

At will: *mage armour*, *gentle repose*, *detect magic*, *detect evil and good*, *speak with dead*

1/day each: *harm*, *power word pain*, *mind blank*

**Spellcasting.** The priest is a 17th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following spells:

**Cantrips (at will):** *toll the dead*, *chill touch*, *thaumaturgy*

**1st–5th level (4 5th-level slots):** *inflict wounds*, *fear*, *life transference*, *death ward*, *danse macabre*, *negative energy flood*

**Aura of Death.** This creature emanates a deathly aura that extends 30 feet in every direction from its space while it isn't incapacitated. The aura is blocked by total cover. While in the aura, the creature and any friendly undead are immune to the frightened condition and have resistance to radiant damage. Enemies suffer disadvantage on death saving throws while in the aura.

#### ACTIONS

**Mace.** Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage.

## Walking Belltower

The walking belltower stalks the Forest of Shadows, tending to its upkeep like a mother to her babe. It is one of the great mysteries of Darkon.

### WALKING BELLTOWER

Gargantuan construct, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (Natural Armor)  
Hit Points 314 (17d20 + 136)  
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+0)	8 (-1)	27 (+8)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Saving Throws** CON +14

**Damage Immunities** Cold, Fire, Poison, Psychic; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Adamantine

**Condition Immunities** Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Stunned

**Senses** Truesight 120 ft., Passive Perception 10

**Languages** --

**Damage Threshold 50.** The Walking Belltower has immunity to all damage unless it takes an amount of damage from a single attack or effect equal to or greater than its damage threshold, in which case it takes damage as normal. Any damage that fails to meet or exceed the object's damage threshold is considered superficial and doesn't reduce the object's hit points.

**Immutable Form.** The tower is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

**Magic Resistance.** The tower has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Siege Monster.** The tower deals double damage to objects and structures.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The tower makes two melee attacks.

**Slam.** Melee Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 29 (3d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

**Hurled Stone.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, range 200/800 ft., one target. Hit: 43 (6d10 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

## Avatar of Death

These hideous manifestations of entropy are the heralds and messengers of Death, a figure of evil that hides in the Necropolis.

### AVATAR OF DEATH

*Medium undead, neutral evil*

Armor Class 20

Hit Points 1 (1d4)

Speed 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

**Damage Immunities** Necrotic, Poison

**Condition Immunities** Charmed, Frightened, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Unconscious

**Senses** Darkvision 60 ft., Truesight 60 ft., Passive Perception 13

**Challenge** 4

**Incorporeal Movement.** The avatar can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Turning Immunity.** The avatar is immune to features that turn undead.

#### ACTIONS

**Reaping Scythe.** The avatar sweeps its spectral scythe through a creature within 5 feet of it, dealing 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

*The pretender known as Death I allow to walk freely in his nightmare of a tomb. The streets of Il Aluk shall forever be a memory I treasure, but memories belong in the past.*