

Land of the Mists



Introduction to the Land of the Mists

I am the Ancient, I am the Land. My beginnings are lost in the darkness of the past. I was the warrior, I was good and just. I thundered across the land like the wrath of a just god, but the war years and the killing years wore down my soul as the wind wears stone into sand. All goodness slipped from my life; I found my youth and strength gone, and all I had left was death.

My army settled in the valley of Barovia and took power over the people in the name of a just god, but with none of a god's grace or justice. I called for my family, long unseated from their ancient thrones, and brought them here to settle in Castle Ravenloft. They came with a younger brother of mine, Sergei. He was handsome and youthful. I hated him for both.

Sergei had plucked from the families of the valley one whose spirit shone above all others: a rare beauty, who was called "perfection," "joy," and "treasure." Her name was Tatyana, and I longed for her to be mine. I loved her with all my heart. I loved her for her youth. I loved her for her joy.

But she spurned me! "Old One" was my name to her—"elder" and "brother" also. Her heart went to Sergei. They were betrothed. The date was set.

With words, she called me "brother," but when I looked into her eyes, they reflected another name: "death." It was the death of the aged that she saw in me. She loved her youth and enjoyed it, but I had squandered mine. The death she saw in me turned her from me, and so I came to hate death, my death. My hate is very strong; I would not be called "death" so soon.

And so I made a pact with Death itself, a pact of blood. On the day of the wedding, I killed Sergei, my brother. My pact was sealed with his blood.

I found Tatyana weeping in the garden east of the Chapel. She fled from me. She would not let me explain, and a great anger swelled within me. She had to understand the pact I made for her. I pursued her. Finally, in despair, she flung herself from the walls of Ravenloft, and I watched everything I ever wanted fall from my grasp forever.

It was a thousand feet through the mists. No trace of her was ever found. Not even I know her final fate.

Arrows from the castle guards pierced me to my soul, but I did not die. Nor did I live. I became undead, forever.

I have studied much since then. "Vampyr" is my new name. I still lust for life and youth, and I curse the living that took them from me. Even the sun is against me. It is the sun and light I fear the most. But little else can harm me now. Even a stake through my heart does not kill me, though it holds me from movement.

I have often hunted for Tatyana. I have even felt her within my grasp, yet she escapes. She taunts me! She taunts me! What will it take to bend her love to me?

—Count Strahd von Zarovich,
Master of Barovia
The Tome of Strahd

Techniques of Terror

I used to love the night, with its quiet and its solitude. Now I fear its approach, fervently hoping that the day will never end.

—Dr. Gregorian Ithousen
The Journal of Dr. Ithousen

Dark gloomy castles, desolate landscapes, black clouds racing against the moon—these are the trappings of the gothic tradition. Early gothic stories told of mystery, fear, and desire. This is the classic horror in which Ravenloft has its roots. It can creep into any campaign, in any world, if you know the elements that give it life.

The Nature of Gothic Horror

Fear is at the heart of every gothic, but it is not born of shock and gory detail. Modern horror may routinely slice, dice, and disembowel its victims to create fear, but gothic horror relies on subtler techniques. It unrelentingly teases and taunts its victims with terrors shrouded in darkness. By the time the true nature of the danger is clear, death by an ordinary knife would seem a relief.

In a slasher film, the question is not so much what will happen as when. After the story ends, the world will again be mundane, if only you can avoid the maniac with the cleaver. In a tale of gothic horror, the outcome is unknown. A sense of danger and foreboding permeates the atmosphere. A dark mystery underlies the horrors, and despite all warnings to the contrary, the characters are compelled to unravel it.

These innocents are trapped in a whirlpool of conflicting emotion, driven by a desire to experience the awful truths they sense are real, and dreading it all the while. With each step, they discover that the world is larger and more twisted than they once supposed, and that man is small, helpless, and naive.

Dark Plots and Antiheroes

Gothic plots are driven by the antiheroes themselves—dark, evil figures whose passions are no longer human. Yet some part of them always remains so, and therein lies the horror. Vampires, ghosts, and werewolves lead the pack of gothic monstrosities. In each case, the creature once lived as a normal mortal, though sorrow and sin often tainted its life. Because they so closely resemble humans and represent the dark side of man, they are terrifying in a way that Godzilla could never be.

These superhuman villains are the source of melancholia that pervades most gothic horror. The monster's existence is rarely satisfying. For many, an intense loneliness or unhappiness drives these dark deeds, though this does not excuse their horrific actions.

Setting

Within the desolate lands of Ravenloft lie the trappings of a gothic scene—castle, mansion, monastery, and crypt. Whatever the structure, it is most often massive and gloomy, with vaulted ceilings, sweeping staircases, and dark endless hallways. A feeling of age and ruin permeates the gothic setting: Dust cloaks the floors, stone walls crumble in decay, and iron gates paralyze with rust. Graveyards veiled in mist; tolling bells; monasteries abandoned save for a few shrouded figures that slip through the passages at night like shadows—these too fit the gothic tradition.

Powers of Nature

Vast landscapes and massive castles may make an ordinary person seem small, but it is nothing compared to one's helplessness before Nature. She can erode one's strength with driving hail, or chill the blood with icy waters. More often Nature seeks to erode the will; ceaseless, cold, misty rains dampen the strongest of spirits. Dark clouds hang in the air like a threat, or gather to signal imminent doom. In the gothic novel, Nature is rarely impartial; she is most often firmly allied with evil, leaving the victim even more powerless than previously imagined.

Sensuality and Seduction

Gothic horror is steeped with sensuality. Villain and victim alike are keenly aware of touch, taste, sound, and smell. Every pore is tuned to danger. When terror is imminent, sensations warp and intensify; the heart quickens, and blood surges, coursing through the victim's brain with a deafening roar.

Seduction is a common theme, but it is not limited to the most obvious romantic sense. Fragrant orchards entice wanderers to linger, though twilight is nearing. A vampire cannot enter a home until the victim, lulled by its charms, invites it in. Somehow, the victims are drawn toward a situation they would normally resist.

Dark Dreams

Darkness slips into Ravenloft the ways a dream creeps into the sleeper's mind: softly, slowly, and unrelentingly. As in a dream, the lines between what is real and false begin to blur.

Elements that echo dreams (and nightmares) fill every crevice of gothic horror. Fog, mist, and twilight all blur the senses to create confusion and uncertainty. Every shadow may be the enemy, every breeze the breath of evil. It matters not if such suspicions are real, because the fear is real. Gothic stories tour the dark, primitive corners of the mind—where the horrors can be just as deadly.

The Domains of Dread

Those mists hem in my lands, ebbing and flowing like the tide. They are like a strange, great sea, cloaking dangers more horrifying than you can imagine.

—Lord Mlios Donskoy
To Sleep With Evil

Strahd's mysterious pact with "Death" irrevocably changed the fate of his land and his people. The land of Barovia was duplicated in the Ethereal Plane, and the people in Strahd's castle at the time were transported to this created land. The new Barovia formed the first domain in the Demiplane of Dread, or Ravenloft as it came to be known by scholars.

Soon, other lands were pulled into the Demiplane of Dread, each imprisoning its own vile lord. Now, the domains of Ravenloft are refuges of ultimate darkness in which the accursed are forever doomed to suffer on their thrones.

Dark Lands

Ravenloft is a world of startlingly beautiful, seductive lands that have at once an allure and a cold, lonely edge. By day, the settings are breathtaking—the windswept heath with brambles aflame in autumn color, soaring peaks with icy summits piercing the sky, mountain streams tumbling thousands of feet into an explosion of glittering spray. But as the sun drifts west, it becomes evident that this is no place for travelers to linger. When night falls, the world is cloaked in impenetrable darkness. A chill rises from the soil and contaminates the air. Suddenly, "breathtaking" has new meaning. . . .

Unlike other worlds, domains in the Land of the Mists do not always follow the rules of nature. Sometimes, the dark powers that rule these lands will increase a domain lord's power as a "reward" for evil acts. When this happens, the domain often transforms as well. These lands can mutate, expand, relocate, condense, disappear, or even link with other realms.

The Demiplane of Dread comprises several distinct regions. The most obvious of these are the Mists. It is from these vaporous swirls that the dark powers draw forth the prisons in which they confine the various domain lords. These misty fingers reach into other worlds and other planes, snatching those evil enough to deserve their own dark prisons. Within the plane of these mysterious vapors lie many different domains. In general, these domains fall into four general categories: Pockets, Islands of Terror, Clusters, and Core domains.

Pockets

Pockets are the most minor of Ravenloft's terrible prisons. A Pocket domain lies completely within the borders of another, larger domain. Despite its placement

within another land, each Pocket has its own independent domain lord.

Some Pockets are not even physically rooted to a geographical location. Pocket domains that move from place to place are called Floating domains. These can either randomly pop in and out of different domains or move about with the domain lord.

The Pocket domains shown on this map are Il Aluk, Castle Island, and the House of Lament. The area of influence around the Headless Horseman (also depicted on the front), however, functions as a Floating Domain.

Islands of Terror

Though larger than Pockets, Islands of Terror are ringed on all sides by the Mists. An Island realm is generally composed of a lair and the surrounding geographical region. Most of these domains are relatively small, but some have been known to encompass hundreds of square miles.

Islands of Terror are completely isolated by the Mists that surround them. Only the Vistani (a mysterious race of gypsies that wander the Demiplane) and a few priests can navigate these Mists, so the Islands must function independently of one another.

Clusters

Not too long ago, chaos swept through Ravenloft, and the Demiplane was transformed by an event known as the Grand Conjunction. When the Mists cleared, the geography was greatly changed. The most fascinating feature of this new configuration was the appearance of Clusters.

A Cluster is a gathering of domains that, on their own, would probably be considered Islands of Terror. To be sure, most of the currently identified Clusters were forged out of fragments that were previously Islands.

The Core

This map features the Core, which is by far the largest land mass in Ravenloft, comprising over twenty-five domains and two seas. The vast majority of the Core domains have a temperate climate and a rugged, forested geography.

In light of the recent grouping of domains, some believe that the Core itself is little more than a giant Cluster. Whether or not this is true, the Core is definitely the largest (and most terrifying) group of domains in the Land of the Mists. Even more importantly, this continent of discontent boasts some of the most evil beings in the multiverse.

The Core itself seems to center around Barovia, the first domain to appear in the Demiplane of Dread. Barovia's vampire lord, Strahd von Zarovich, seems to be some sort of lynchpin holding the whole continent together.

The Lords of Ravenloft

Everyone is trapped—in one way or another. Some have prettier cages, that's all.

—Anton Misorol
Dance of the Dead

The rulers of Ravenloft's domains do not dwell in the Land of the Mists of their own free will. Rather, they are prisoners of dark powers that hold sway over the Demiplane. While some have come to terms with this fate, others would do anything to escape the shackles of Mist that hold them fast.

Dark Curses

While the domain lords do indeed have great power, each also labors under the burden of a terrible curse. They may have been "rewarded" for their evil acts within their own realms, but this is little consolation. The fate of the domain lords is actually far worse than that of their subjects or the adventurers who explore their domains.

Not only are the domain lords prisoners in their lands, but they are denied that which they most desire. The exact nature of this curse varies, but it will always be such that the domain lord would willingly give up everything to be rid of it. However, through their evil deeds, the darklords inevitably designed their own curses long before the dark powers took notice of them.

Darklords

These oft-called "darklords" are intimately tied to the fabric of Ravenloft. The lord is the very heart of the province. The terrain, the natives, the monsters, the effects of magic, and even the enemies there are all reflections of the cursed ruler.

Adam (Darklord of Lamordia): The monster Adam is a patchwork of body parts from different human corpses—each part perfect, the whole grotesque. Adam was created by Dr. Victor Mordenheim, who used the parts of many dead men to give him life. As he grew older, Adam's unnatural nature manifested in a cruel disposition. Eventually, he murdered the doctor's wife Elise, kidnapped their adopted daughter Eva, and fled into the Mists. That night, he became the darklord of Lamordia, and the land welcomed him.

Now, Adam lives as a recluse, usually dwelling in a cave on the Isle of Agony and living as wildly and freely as an animal. However, he does not want to be a beast; he wants to be human. Though this frustrated creature hates Dr. Mordenheim for creating him, he cannot bring himself to harm his creator. The land has bound them together in both body and spirit. The monster feels the doctor's physical pain, and the doctor, in turn, shares the monster's eternal anguish.

Aderre, Gabrielle (Darklord of Invidia): Gabrielle was born in the domain of Richemulot to an outcast of the mysterious Vistani, the mysterious gypsies of Ravenloft. She grew up bitter and lonely, eventually coming to blame her mother for that loneliness. Thus, when a werewolf attacked her mother, Gabrielle left her to die. At that point, the Mists closed around Gabrielle and brought her to Invidia, where she destroyed the ruler and became the new darklord.

As the years passed, Gabrielle slowly became accustomed to her imprisonment. She took many lovers and amused herself by spoiling the relationships of others. She treated her lovers with disdain, enslaving them with her evil eye and discarding them when she grew bored, but none were able to comfort her terrible loneliness.

Even when she had her own child, this loneliness did not abate. Despite her genius in manipulating others, she was no match for her son's fiendish intellect. When he finished toying with her emotions, he wrested political control of Invidia from her, leaving her no choice but to flee her home.

Gabrielle is now a broken woman, trapped by her own grief, guilt, and impotent rage. Nonetheless, she remains a master manipulator, spreading anger, fear, and jealousy throughout her domain, though now those efforts are directed at destroying her son. Despite her obsession with destroying all Vistani and wreaking her revenge on her son, they are forever held out of her reach.

ApBlanc, Tristen (Darklord of Forlorn): Tristen's father was killed by a scavenging vampire. When he arose as a vampire, his conflicting feelings of love and hunger maddened him. He fed on Tristen's mother, but he could not bring himself to kill her. Thus, Tristen was born with vampirism in his veins.

Eventually, Tristen's parents were killed by a mob, so druids reared him. At the age of fifteen, Tristen began to exhibit signs of vampirism. When his adoptive mother discovered his secret, Tristen killed her and drank her blood. As she died, she cursed him to never leave the druids' sacred grove and to live eternally to rue his evil. Since she had just imbibed holy water, Tristen died alongside her.

Tristen's curse caused him to rise that night as a ghost anchored to the murder scene. Strangely, he regained mortal form the next morning. During the day he walks the halls of his castle, which was built on the site of the sacred grove, as a vampyre (a living race of bloodsuckers), but each night he dies a searing death and becomes a ghost once again.

Azalin (Darklord of Darkon): Azalin was once a powerful human wizard-king. When his son Ink led a rebellion against him, he personally executed the boy. From that point on, he became obsessed with obtaining ever more power and magical knowledge, hoping that he could resurrect his son without the human weaknesses that caused him to oppose his father.

In his search, he discovered a process for transforming himself into a lich. As an undead mage, he ruled and tormented his subjects for decades. When they rose

up against him, he fled into the Mists, where Darkon was created for him to rule.

As the years passed, Azalin's desire to escape the Land of the Mists only increased. He was certain that Strahd von Zarovich was the linchpin that held the Demiplane together. After several failed attempts to escape his domain, Azalin enacted one last desperate plan. He built a gigantic apparatus known as the doomsday device. He hoped that the machine would transform him into a demilich, releasing him from the grasp of the dark powers. When the machine was activated, Azalin disappeared. None have seen him since that time, but he is still believed to control that dark land.

Boritsl, Ivana (Co-Darklord of Borca): As Ivana grew up, she was taught to distrust men by her mother Camille, whose lovers tended to disappear mysteriously. Yet there remained in the young woman's heart a yearning to be loved. At age seventeen, she fell in love with a young bard named Pieter. It might have been a happy ending for the pair, but her mother jealously put an end to their bliss. She came to Pieter's bed in darkness and tricked him into believing she was her daughter. When Ivana discovered them, she was shattered. Camille insisted that Pieter had seduced her and expected Ivana to follow in the family tradition and kill him.

Ivana bought a magical contact poison from a necromancer. She applied it to her lips and then poisoned her lover with a kiss. Allowing the resentment over the betrayal to build, Ivana eventually poisoned her mother as well. The dark powers were well pleased with the depth of her wrath, so they rendered her mortal kiss permanent and made her darklord of Borca.

Ivana is bitter to the core, destroying relationships wherever she goes and poisoning any men who dare court her. Ivana publicly disdains romance and love, yet secretly she still longs for companionship. Her curse is to forever pine for another Pieter, but inevitably poison every man she loves.

During an upheaval that literally reshaped the land, she and Ivan Dilisnya's domains combined. The two lords now live in their manors at opposite ends of the same domain, bickering and plotting against one another. Each of them constantly seeks a new poison that will kill the other, yet both remain immune to every toxin, leaving only the people of Borca (and its visitors) to scream and convulse under the effects of each new venom.

d'Honaire, Dominic (Darklord of Dementlieu): Even as a child, Dominic could suggest an idea so subtly, so skillfully, that most people would believe it was their own. Often he would pit one person against another, sometimes causing serious damage but never taking the blame. The more chaos, anger, and hate his intrigues generated, the happier Dominic became. As a reward for his evil plots, he was granted the domain of Dementlieu.

Despite his ability to manipulate people, however, Dominic is cursed to never find love. The more roman-

tically attracted he becomes to a woman, the uglier she finds him. To others, his appearance is unchanged, but to her, he becomes repulsive. The curse leaves him bitter and frustrated. He actually killed his first love in anger, for she could not bear the sight of him. Thus, his marriage is one of political convenience, with no emotional bonds.

Dilisnya, Ivan (Co-Darklord of Borca): At age six, Ivan was torturing animals—sometimes to death. At ten, he poisoned a servant's child after she stole a pastry. Ivan laughed as the poor wail died. Finally, at age twelve, Ivan poisoned his mother. Only his sister Kristina could expect no harm from him, for Ivan loved her deeply. However, when she eventually married and had a child, Ivan became intensely jealous and poisoned them all.

For that vile deed, Ivan's own family chased him into the Mists. When he emerged, he found a land to suit his own tastes, and named the land Dorvinia. During an upheaval that reshaped the Demiplane, however, his domain merged with Borca, which was ruled by his cousin Ivana Boritsl.

Ivan never lost his expensive cravings, particularly for fine desserts and rare wines, though he lost his sense of taste upon becoming a darklord. To him all drinks are like bile, all foods are like dust. He feels the loss keenly and would sacrifice virtually anyone and anything to regain his palate.

It is rumored that Ivan often wakes at night in a cold sweat, calling to his sister Kristina in terror. His attendants dare not mention these events in his presence. Her name is like poison; repeat it to Ivan, and he will make sure the results are fatal.

Drakov, Vlad (Darklord of Falkovnia): Drakov headed a mercenary band noted for its ruthlessness and brutality. Underestimating the lich lord of Darkon (now Necropolis), Vlad pillaged a small village in that domain. As was his custom, he had the residents impaled on thick pikes. When the last victim ceased to writhe and moan, the bodies turned into zombies and attacked Drakov's men. In desperation, the mercenaries fled into the Mists.

A new domain opened up for Drakov, and he became its lord. Though Vlad had always aspired to rule, what he truly desired was the respect of other rulers and the strength to instill fear and awe in other lords. However, his former masters were no longer present to appreciate his position, and Azalin of Darkon was so powerful that he looked down on Drakov just as Drakov's former employers did. The other nearby rulers were women and fops, not the powerful men of war by whom Drakov wanted to be acknowledged. Thus, Drakov's power remains unrecognized, leaving him bitter and frustrated.

With no lands to conquer and no leaders to impress, Drakov has developed other forms of amusement. His favorite pastime remains the observation of a slow death. No matter who or what the victim is, he never tires of the sight. He usually has victims impaled while he dines on

his terrace. When Drakov invites guests to witness the spectacle, an orchestra plays in the background.

Godefroy, Wilfred (Darklord of Mordent): Lord Wilfred married Estelle Weathermay and took her to live in his estate in Mordent. When his wife bore him a female child, the vile-tempered Godefroy was extremely angry. During a fit of rage he killed his wife, and when the little girl attempted to intervene, he killed her as well. Then he made it look like an accident in the stable, shooting his best stallion to prove the point.

For the next year, the spirits of his wife and daughter haunted Godefroy, until he finally committed suicide. Not even death would free him from his curse, however. As a ghost, Godefroy fears only his wife and daughter. Each night, Lady Godefroy and her child hunt down Lord Godefroy and tear at his incorporeal flesh, cursing him for their murders. Lord Godefroy always does what he can to hide from them, which is very little. He vents his fear and frustration on those foolish enough to visit the house on Gryphon Hill, which is uninhabited . . . at least by the living.

Harkon Lukas (Darklord of Kartakass): Lukas grew up as a misfit among his fellow wolfweres. He asked too many questions and hated solitude, which was unnatural for his species. When he reached adulthood, Lukas attempted to unify a group of wolfweres into a small tribe, but the solitary creatures shunned him.

Lukas seethed with rage and embarked on a killing spree, venting his wrath on the innocent. When his rage cooled, he decided to enter the world of men, for these extremely expressive creatures fascinated him. For a long time, he hunted and killed the wolves and werewolves that infested the mountainous landscape. Then, one night, he came face to face with Barovia's vampire lord, Strahd von Zarovich, and Harkon Lukas barely escaped with his life, fleeing into the Mists. When he emerged, he was the lord of Kartakass.

Harkon's greatest desire is to rule. He is clever, persistent, calculating, and quite capable of making long-range plans. The dark powers gave him an entire domain to rule, yet it has nothing of consequence for him to control. Kartakass has only a few small villages, and the forests are filled with normal wildlife. In his eyes, being the darklord of Kartakass is a pale shadow of what true rulership means.

Hazlik (Darklord of Hazlan): Because of his aptitude for magic, Hazlik made some powerful enemies in the school he attended. To humiliate him, Hazlik's rivals kidnapped him and tattooed him with symbols of femininity. Hazlik swore vengeance upon his enemies and devoted himself fully to his craft.

One night, Hazlik came upon one of his rivals engaged in romantic pursuits. Catching the two unawares, Hazlik slew them both. Mists rose from the ground, and he was granted the domain of Hazlan.

For all his grand plans, each night Hazlik still dreams of his humiliation at the hands of his enemies. In his dreams, he is always weak and cowardly, while they

stride boldly across the mountains. Thus, Hazlik dreads sleep and uses potions and philters to delay the inevitable. Thanks to this magic, he sleeps only once every few days.

Hiregaard, Tristen/Malken (Darklord of Nova Vaasa): Tristen's father was a noble and fair ruler, but he had one fatal flaw: if he even imagined his young wife was unfaithful to him, he flew into an insane rage. One day he caught his wife in the arms of another man and killed them both. Only later did he learn that the man had innocently been teaching his wife how to waltz. With her dying breath, she cursed him to kill any woman he fell in love with, or any man that crossed him. Unable to face up to his evil deed, Tristen's father killed himself, and the curse transferred to his son.

The curse first manifested when Tristen turned fifteen. The victim was a fair-haired peasant girl who worked as a servant in the family castle. The crime was quickly hushed up, but it left the young boy with deep emotional scars. He was by nature and training both honest and compassionate, yet he had enjoyed killing the girl, even though he felt great remorse about it later.

Six years and nine killings later—each of which gave him greater pleasure than the sensation of love—Tristen was pulled into Ravenloft. As he was drawn in by the dark powers, his personality split. His alter-ego, known to the people of Nova Vaasa as Malken, is an evil killer who feeds upon Sir Tristen's secret jealousies and angers, savagely brutalizing the women Tristen loves and murdering the men who stand in the way of his desires.

Even in his twilight years, Sir Hiregaard is very much the ladies' man, and many women—peasants and nobles alike—vie for his favors, for he showers them with expensive gifts. Still, others do their best to avoid his attention. After all, several of his past lovers have died mysterious, violent deaths, and even more have been left maimed and scarred beyond recognition.

Renier, Jacqueline (Darklord of Richemulot): Jacqueline was born a wererat. She and her family made their home beneath Falkovnia. When Drakov finally tired of their murdering and pilfering, he dispatched his troops to sweep through the sewers, exterminating every creature they encountered. Some of the wererats, including the Reniers, escaped into the Mists.

The Mists opened up new lands for Jacqueline and her family. Her grandfather Claude became darklord of Richemulot. Jacqueline was a dark star, schooled well by her evil grandfather. In the year 726 of the Barovian calendar, she murdered him and took control of the domain. Since then, the population has grown even more with the arrival of refugees from other lands.

Jacqueline revels in her animal nature, but she is a lusty creature. However, she is cursed to automatically revert to rat form in the presence of anyone she loves. Unfortunately for her, she is enamored of a human male named Henri DuBois. Since her last unsuccessful attempt to make him her wererat slave, his whereabouts are unknown.

Soth (Darklord of Sithicus): Soth was a fallen knight of the Solamnic Orders on the world of Krynn. When the Kingpriest of Istar was about to call down a cataclysm, the gods gave Soth a chance to redeem himself by saving the world. Soth, however, was distracted from his quest by petty jealousy, and the resulting destruction killed untold millions. Soth himself died in the calamity as well, but he rose again, a fire-ravaged mockery of his former self, cursed to live the length of each life that was lost because of his inaction.

Soth existed in an unfeeling, uncaring state for centuries, until the inner fire of a warrior woman named Kitiara Uth Matar stirred something within him. Because he caused her death in an attempt to make her his eternal companion, he was doomed to become the darklord of Sithicus.

Lord Soth now reigns from Nedragaard Keep. A gift of the dark powers, the castle taunts him mercilessly, for it constantly changes size and shape so that he cannot maintain the flawless military order to which he is accustomed. Soth's greatest desire is still to possess Kitiara, though he never seems to catch more than echoes of her passing.

The Three Sisters (Darklords of Tepest): Soon after Laveeda, Leticia, and Lorinda were born, their mother sickened and died. Their father unsuccessfully set about trying to rid himself of the girls, but he eventually accepted the fact that they could not be dismissed, demanding that they keep his house tidy and cook for him and his sons.

Often left to themselves, the girls spent much time plotting how they would leave the farm behind. They needed gold to make it on their own, but they did not know where to get it. Then, a wealthy man sought shelter at the farm one stormy night, and they murdered him for his money. Rather than bury the body, they cooked it into stew and served it to their unsuspecting father and brothers. That plan worked so well that they continued the practice for several years.

Eventually they realized that they could not make enough money this way, so they decided to entice some traveler to take them away. Before long, a roguish dandy came along, but he had no intention of taking any of them away with him. Instead, he masterfully played them against each other until their jealousy for one another peaked. Ultimately, they murdered him so that none would lose him, but as they did so, the Mists claimed them, depositing them in the new domain of Tepest.

Timothy, Alfred (Darklord of Verbrek): Alfred is the son of Nathan Timothy, werewolf and former darklord of Arkandale. Nathan paid little attention to his son, so Alfred left Arkandale while still a young man and wandered the Demiplane for a while.

Much later, after a night of slaughtering sheep, Alfred was captured by some townspeople who were going to burn him alive. A band of Vistani rescued him. The leader agreed to set Alfred free if he would promise to grant safe passage to all Vistani he might encounter in his lifetime. Though Alfred agreed, as soon as he was set

free, he attempted to kill her. Drawn by his treachery, the dark powers granted him the domain of Verbrek.

Alfred Timothy hates all non-werewolves. Any traveler who enters his domain uninvited, or without a Vistani escort, becomes "game"—meaning both "prey" and "entertainment." Those caught by the werewolves are stripped of all possessions and informed that they have half an hour to run. When the time expires, the werewolves begin the hunt. If the "game" can reach the border before the creatures catch up, he lives. In the interest of sport, the creatures may grant extra time to a victim whose ability to flee is obviously poor. Then again, they may not. . . .

Tristessa (Darklord of Keening): This young shadow elf assassinated a drow high priestess of Loth and took control of the temple herself, changing the teachings to suit her own purposes. Though this religion was outlawed in Arak, Tristessa persisted in spreading her evil teachings.

When she was finally captured, Tristessa and her baby were staked to the ground on the surface of Arak. Unable to hide from the sun, which is deadly to shadow elves, she and her child died from exposure to its deadly rays.

However, Tristessa's evil had grown so great that upon her death, she was awarded her own domain. She now rules Keening, where she haunts its lands as a banshee, cursed to forever search for her lost baby. She has gone mad with grief over the loss of her baby, often destroying those she encounters with her pitiful wail.

Von Kharkov, Urík (Darklord of Valachan): Von Kharkov was born a panther, but a wizard transformed him into a full-grown human and trained him for combat. Because of his feline heritage, he displayed a strong tendency toward violence and treachery.

In his travels, he learned of Azalin's secret undead police, the Kargat, so he sought out a vampire to induct him into the ranks. When his master was killed twenty years later, he fled into the Mists once more. This time, the dark powers embraced him and created the domain of Valachan.

While prowling about his new prison, he found a small statuette of a cat in the lower reaches of his keep, which transformed into a living beast and hunted Von Kharkov. Such was his confidence in his lordly might that he did not fear it, so the cat mauled him badly. To this day, that magical item is the only thing he truly fears.

Von Zarovich, Strahd (Darklord of Barovia): After making his pact with "Death," Strahd was pulled into Ravenloft, where he became the first darklord. Though Strahd is an ancient vampire and the absolute ruler of Barovia, he suffers the curse of forever seeking out Tatyana, to no avail. Her body was never found after she plunged from the tower battlements of Castle Ravenloft, and through the years there have been repeated sightings of women who so closely resemble Tatyana that they could only be her reincarnations. Finding one of these women, obtaining her, and finally winning her love is Strahd's obsession. Strahd would do almost anything to regain Tatyana.

Beginning a Ravenloft Campaign

To begin your own campaign in the Land of the Mists, you need only the RAVENLOFT® rulebook *Domains of Dread* (2174), the *Player's Handbook* (2159), the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* (2160), and the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendices I & II (2162). These four products give you everything you need to adventure in the Demiplane of Dread.

What Other Products Are There?

Like all of the AD&D® campaign settings, the RAVENLOFT line has many optional sourcebooks and adventures. Though these are not necessary to run an adventure in the Demiplane of Dread, these game products can enhance any campaign of darkness:

- *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* (9345)—The Demiplane's leading expert on the supernatural reveals the powers and psychology of these unholy immortals.
- *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts* (9355)—Dr. Rudolph van Richten again comes forth, to discuss the incorporeal undead.
- *Van Richten's Guide to the Lich* (9412)—Van Richten exposes the secrets of these undead masters of the arcane.
- *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts* (9416)—Van Richten discloses the truth about Ravenloft's many shapeshifters.
- *Van Richten's Guide to the Created* (9417)—Van Richten investigates both golems and the madmen who create them.
- *Van Richten's Guide to the Ancient Dead* (9451)—Van Richten dares to divulge the secrets of the ancient tomb of the mummy.
- *Van Richten's Guide to Fiends* (9477)—Van Richten presents his findings on these beings from the Abyss.
- *Van Richten's Guide to the Vistani* (9496)—Van Richten comes forward one more time to examine the mysterious nomads of the Mists.
- *Forged of Darkness* (9510)—This product presents a collection of magical items tainted by the Demiplane of Dread.
- *The Nightmare Lands* (1124)—This accessory contains everything necessary to adventure among dark dreamscapes and twisted nightmares.
- *Children of the Night: Vampires* (9513)—Utilizing the secrets revealed by Dr. Rudolph van Richten, this book contains thirteen unique vampire adventures.
- *Children of the Night: Ghosts* (9555)—This book contains thirteen unique ghost adventures.
- *Champions of the Mists* (9541)—This accessory contains new kits for player characters native to Ravenloft and presents possible allies for any party of heroes. (This product will be available in June 1998.)

- *Children of the Night: Werebeasts* (9583)—This book contains thirteen unique werebeast adventures. (This product will be available in October 1998.)

The Ravenloft line also boasts many exciting novels:

- *Vampire of the Mists* (8056)
- *Knight of the Black Rose* (8057)
- *Dance of the Dead* (8058)
- *Heart of Midnight* (8059)
- *Tapestry of Dark Souls* (8060)
- *Carnival of Fear* (8061)
- *I Strahd* (8062)
- *The Enemy Within* (8063)
- *Mordenheim* (8064)
- *Tales of Ravenloft* (8065)
- *Tower of Doom* (8067)
- *Death of a Darklord* (8068)
- *Baroness of Blood* (8069)
- *Scholar of Decay* (8070)
- *King of the Dead* (8071)
- *To Sleep With Evil* (8072)
- *Lord of the Necropolis* (8073)
- *Shadowborn* (8074)

Where Can I Buy Ravenloft Products?

If you are looking to buy a RAVENLOFT product, the easiest place to start is your local bookstore or hobby shop. If they do not have the product you are looking for, try one of the retailers listed on our website at [www.TSR.com/faq/order.html](http://www TSR.com/faq/order.html).

Where Can I Get More Information?

If you have any questions about the RAVENLOFT line, you can call our customer service department at (206) 204-0933 or email them at questions@wizards.com.

To subscribe to the Ravenloft mailing list, send email to LISTSERV@oracle.wizards.com. In the body of the message, you would send your request followed by your name. Thus, if your name is Harkon Lukas, you would say "SUB RAVENLOFT-L Harkon Lukas".

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